

The Mountaineer

October 2001

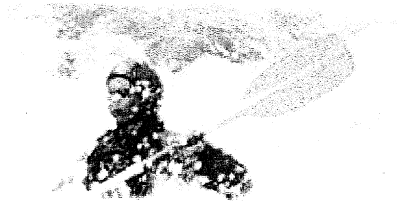
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From the Editor

Have you ever browsed through old editions of the Mountaineer? You can find them in the club library, in front of the ski store. Dip into the past and see what OXOs were up to. - it will amaze you. Epic ascents of mountain peaks, exploratory descents of rivers, long distance ski touring, exploratory walks in new areas, trips across Australia and around the world, and timeless introspection into the value and experience of wilderness.

A feel a tinge of sadness when I read an old Mountaineer... for the simple reason that I lament not being there myself, on that trip, being a part of it all.

A great thanks to all who contributed to this bumper edition of The Mountaineer. Special thanks to Enmoore and Fiona for help with editing. If you didn't contribute this time, have a great summer and write something for the February O-Week edition.

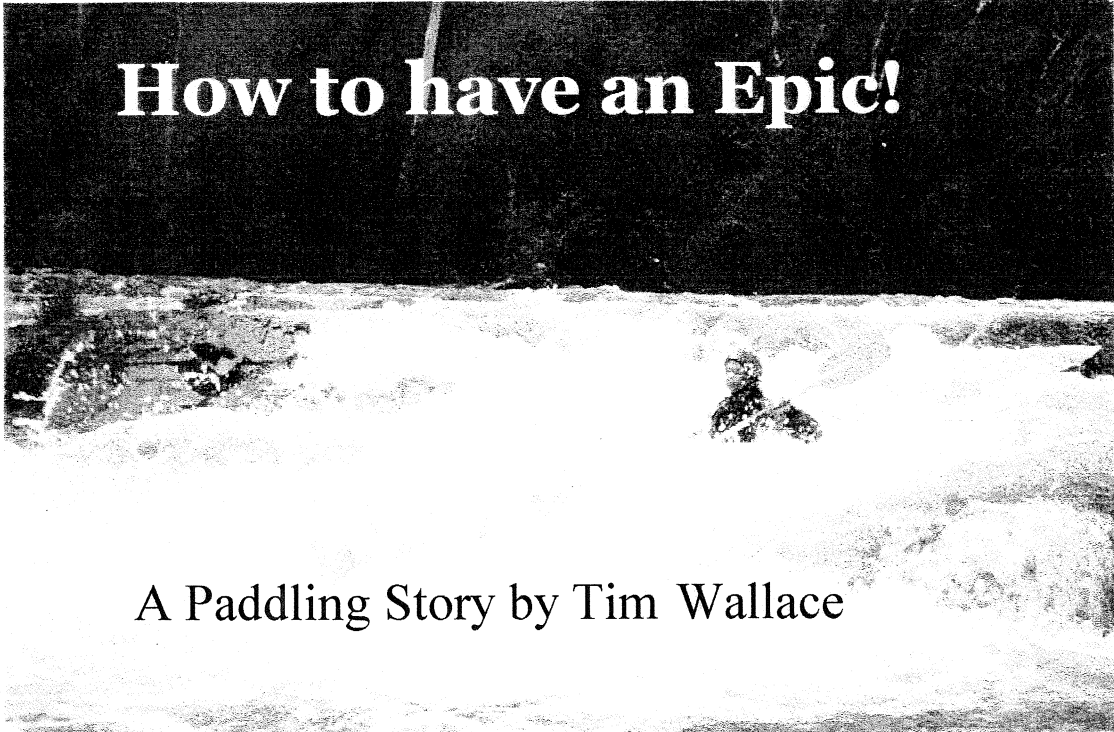
[Front Cover] Jill Fagan, Nowra [Right] Tim, Bluires
[Back Cover] Marcel Geelen, Bolivia



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How to have an Epic!



A Paddling Story by Tim Wallace

This weekend long course is set in the remote, picturesque high country of Victoria and outlines the steps that need to be taken if you want your next trip to be truly epic.

Freezing cold is the only way that I could describe our recent trip to the Mitta Mitta River in North Eastern Victoria. The adventures started early, that is to say it was Saturday morning before we actually got on to the freeway (after leaving Melbourne at 12:00 on Friday night) and copious quantities of Coke were had to keep us awake on the six hour drive. For me at least, Coke was enough to keep me cognisant during what I termed the 'graveyard shift'; 2:30 - 4:30am. However Dave wanted more - he wanted Red Bull energy drink. In its absence had to settle for a putrid concoction called 'Black Stallion', which, it was suggested, had actually come out of a black stallion. My shift of the drive was relatively uneventful, except for the mandatory tunes emanating from Dan's car (the best of...well, something...including 'Tragedy' and 'Mamma Mia' - ask him if you can borrow it one day). After retiring the driving to Dan at 4:30am and curling up in one of the many sleeping bags strewn around the back of the nimble paddling station wagon, tragedy struck when a spiky brass plate, conveniently

positioned in the middle of the road, tore through the front passengers wheel. A quick change was made and we were off again, arriving at Anglers Rest campground at 6:10 am. Below is a transcript of the conversation recorded at 8:27am:

Dan: Fuck off
Dave: I'm gonna kill you
Ian: [unintelligible noise]
Steph: [Sleeping noise]
Kate: uh?

My attempts to get everyone up at 8:30 were greeted with various responses, and so, after (literally) a couple of hours sleep, we began to contemplate the day's paddling at 9:00am (8:00 for me and 8:20 for Dan when I woke him up). It was decided, after much umming and aching that we would paddle the Big River to Bundarra river section of the Mitta, supposedly a pleasant 12km section of grade 3. As we drove up to the put it eventually transpired that a significant element within the group would prefer to run the more challenging gorge section and with a bit of convincing ("no, you won't die" type of thing) so did everyone else. Thus, a couple of hours and a bit of car based jiggery pokery later, we arranged the shuttle. The river

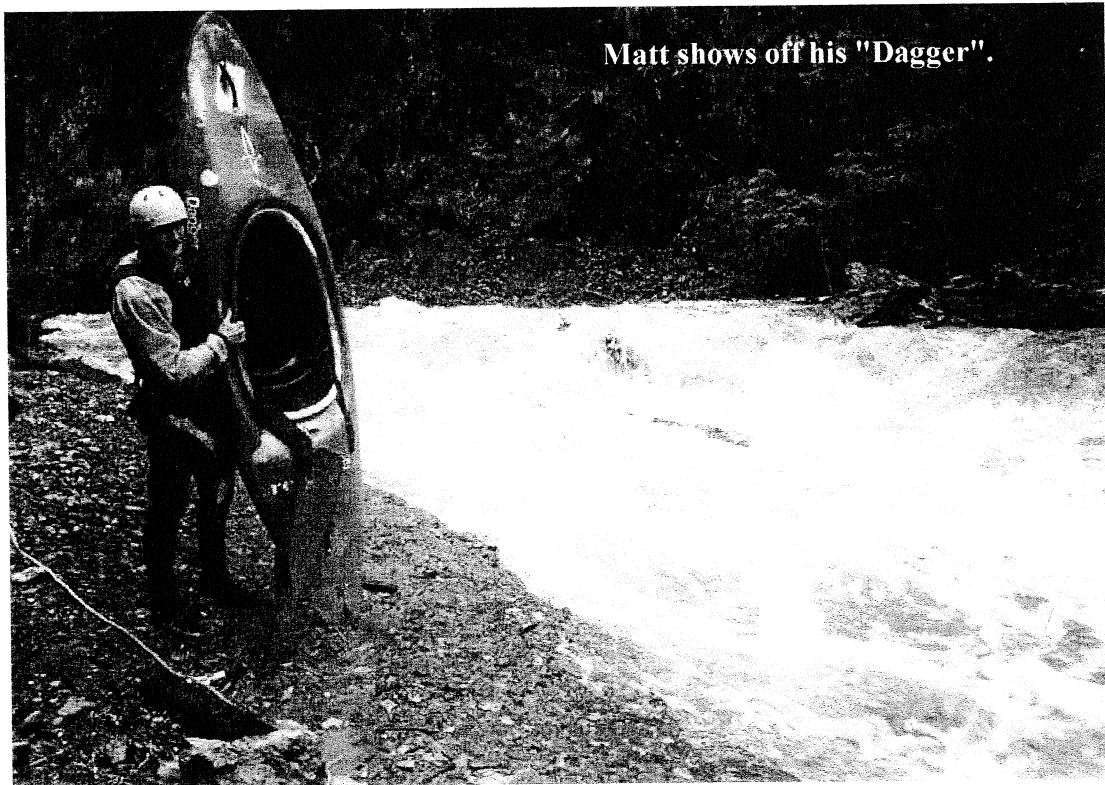
began pleasantly and stayed pleasant all day, with moderately difficult rapids of between grade 2 and 3+ dotting the entire length of the river. This, combined with the spectacular mountain scenery provided a fantastic day for all. Particularly exciting was the gorge it's self, a narrower, more creek-like section of the trip that dealt out frequent and high quality drops, chutes, holes and wave trains. After such a fun day what better way to round it off than with, well, a few rounds. Iain, Steph, Kate and Dan the Pom decided that the lure of the Blue Duck Inn's famous gastronomical delights were too great and they left me and Dave to fend for ourselves with the following, rather paltry list of ingredients:

(The following is a recipe, so don't laugh)

- 10% full MSR stove
- 3 packets of 2 minute noodles
- 2 capsicums
- 1 tin of tomatoes
- Explosive mixture.

Available from the Mediterranean Wholesalers on Sydney Road, the mysteriously named "Explosive Mixture" had the power to transform our meal in to a truly great feast (well, almost), which after consuming was talked about

for hours (minutes) in the pub to the snobs who had paid many dollars between them to be fed. An absolutely epic night of drinking followed and Steph ended up the least well off. When defining a round, we might say that it is "when someone buys a jug and everyone has a pot from it" however Steph the "Frenchy" as Dan was taken to calling her, lost something in the translation to English and decided that her round would be a Strongbow. If you have met Steph you will understand that although she is an extremely imposing physical presence, such an approach was bound to end badly. Thus, this rather admirable approach got the better of her when she revisited her dinner on the banks of the Cobungra a few hours later (although there were other victims - the next morning I mistakenly accused her of eating rice for dinner, when in actual fact the pile of vomit I was pointing to belonged to someone else). The night in the pub was full of excitement, from dancing with the local, pyjama-clad female netball team to averting our eyes when one of them sat up on their table for some show and tell - luckily no one was too severely traumatised (except those in front of her) and we continued drinking. The epic qualities of the drinking in the Blue Duck that night were however, to be matched if not exceeded the next day. The next morning,



Matt shows off his "Dagger".

nursing varying degrees of beer (or Strongbow) induced trauma, we set about planing the days adventure. Once again we revisited the banks of the Cobungra. Today was a day for creeking. The only possible option we could see was the Lower Cobungra, still evidently up above normal levels, and something we had seen the day before where it joined with the Mitta. Our adventures began in a deceptively pleasant way, small gentle rapids (ripples) no harder than grade 2 for a couple of kilometres. Then the horizon disappeared. What followed was a rocky, mega steep, 1km section of creek that contained within it some nasty/fun (it depends on who you are) paddling. Opening her account early, the first casualty of the creek was Kate, who got pinned and subsequently bailed from her boat on the first rapid. Not to be deterred (Not that she had another choice) She got back in her boat and continued on. With a bump here and scrape there, we bounced our way down the creek until it was time for some inspection. The low level meant that we were constantly banged from left to right down chutes sometimes wide, sometimes not so wide. About half way along the creek, we observed from a gentle pool that the horizon seemed to disappear (again), and everyone was in agreement that we should have quick glance (read: extensive inspection). Scrambling along the bank we were greeted with a most impressive site. A 50 meter cascading grade 4 rapid. Dan and I had a chat about it and he decided that he would run it via a small chute on river left so as to avoid a boiling hole right at the top that seemed to be retaining some of the material that occasionally floated by (including part of Kate's boat!; some foam that she had jettisoned earlier). With several deft strokes Dan easily paddled down the rocky chute, avoiding a large pour-over and adjacent rock (which was forming a stopper on two sides) around in to the main current and in to a nice eddy behind a rock where he set about getting out his bargain \$60 waterproof camera for some action shots. Steph, Iain and Kate were still in a pool on the far right of the creek about 50 meters upstream and communication was difficult. We signalled to Steph to come over and Iain and Kate got out and portaged the rapid. Steph

A second later a violent hand-roll erupted from underneath his boat and he came up - minus his fibreglass shaft paddle, which had snapped on a rock at the bottom of the stopper.

promptly came over and entered the channel just above the cascade (getting pinned upside-down in a drop pool along the way, then rolling up in the split second before she was pinned again!) and Dave and I gave her the beta for the next rapid. While she was scouting it I ran it without any drama (thankfully). Next down was Steph who ran it in the main current, having no problems with the stopper that Dan and I had avoided. This made the start somewhat simpler, however the risk of getting pinned was still dangerously high. One theory came about that you only had to do a handful of strokes, but if you fucked them up you were in serious trouble. Dave came down quickly after and we regrouped in the next pool. For the next few hundred meters the Cobungra continued on with pleasant grade 3 to 3+ creeking until it made an abrupt, rocky dogleg, where we decided to jump out and have a scout. Iain decided that breaching his boat and swimming just above this unpaddlable rapid would be more fun, and I

watched helplessly as his boat floated by, shortly followed by Kate's boat. Where as Kate's boat was retrieved quickly and easily by Dave, Iain's boat decided to rejoin the main current for a time until it found a rather nice spot underneath an inaccessible drop just above an unpaddlable section, where the creek was broken in to several small channels, none of which were wide enough to run. Dan and I quickly tried to work out a way to access Iain's boat while the rest of the team put themselves back together and tried to warm up. Once again, it was left to Dan to do the honours. Attaching a throw line to his rescue vest, he told me

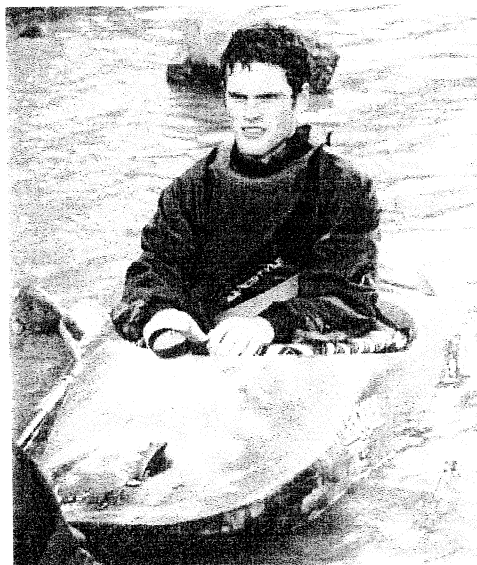
(pommy accent) "If I fall in to the current in the first couple of meters, try and pull me back to the rock. If I'm any further out, you'll have no chance ... so let go"

He proceeded cautiously to edge his way across on submerged and invisible rocks which he had located with his paddle, all the time dangerously close to being washed away. When he got to Iain's boat, it was a simple case of attaching another throw line to it and letting the others deal with it. With this mess cleared up, our increasingly cold party continued on. Nice clean rapids ensued for the next couple of

hundred meters. We could easily see the other side of the valley that the Mitta ran down and realised we were very close to the confluence. On perhaps the second or third last rapid tragedy struck. The rapid was a one meter pourover that formed a nasty stopper at the bottom, not that retentive, but messy enough to ensure that absolutely everyone came out of it with the nose of their boat pointing almost vertically up in to the sky at drastically varying angles.

Everyone got out of it (alive) and the description of Iain's impressive efforts are outlined next: After dropping over the pourover, he was flipped upside-down and held in the stopper for a second or two after which he floated out upside down. A second later a violent hand-roll erupted from underneath his boat and he came up – minus his fibreglass shaft paddle, which had snapped on a rock at the bottom of the stopper. I saw a couple of bits of paddle bob down a few meters in front of him for a second, until they were swallowed up in the frigid, tannin stained waters. Escaping to an eddy, we set about extracting the split paddle from Steph's boat. Herein lay a problem. Unfortunately, due to a factor not widely known in the club **[ALL MUMC PADDLERS READ THE FOLLOWING SECTION!]** the two Werner splits are not identical. We had the blade and middle section one and one blade from the other. This meant that it would not join together and it was the wacky Dan elected to paddle C1 for the rest of the rapidly escaping day. Dan did not realise that the split floated, hence when he was flipped upside down in a stopper, letting go and hand rolling was not an option. He decided it would be more entertaining for those of us who were watching from the Mitta to rearrange the C1 paddle for a standard paddle roll – only a couple of meters from the final one and a half meter drop, the same drop on which Kate continued her unfortunate run in with the creek by getting pinned at the bottom of! By this stage it was at least 4:00 and we had little light left. When everyone reached the confluence, about 20 meters downstream, we got out to stretch our legs and work on a battle plan. Kate was becoming increasingly cold and it gradually dawned on us that she was becoming hypothermic. Shivering incontrollably, her voice had become slurred and by the time we reached the emergency take out at black duck hole she was having panic attacks. Never one to shy away from some fun, Dan shed his paddling gear and ran up the extremely steep hill, intending to hitch

a ride back to the put in. While he was away having fun, we carried the boats and coerced Kate up the half an hour climb. Probably an hour and a half later (no one had a watch) all the gear and people landed by the road, whereupon we set about waiting for Dan (the favourite activity was running around in circles to keep warm). During the two or three hours between when Dan left and when we heard the scream of his engine as he hammered along the lonely mountain road, Kate had got colder and we were getting more desperate. Dan skidded to a halt and we loaded Kate in to a sleeping bag in the front seat with the heating on full blast while we did the shuttle. Iain, Kate and I kept Dan company as we blasted across the countryside, Dan relating his experiences whilst getting the car. Two cars had passed him as he ran and walked the 10km to the car. Both travelling the wrong way, and he was forced to do the whole thing by foot. As a result of the judicious blasting employed, the shuffle took a little over an hour. By the time we got back to Black Duck hole, where we had exited the river, it was 7:30 and we were bloody hungry. At around 10:30 we regrouped in Bairnsdale for pizza, then continued on home, reaching the boat sheds at 2:15 am, Monday morning. Some quick sorting (throwing) of people's stuff in to piles ensured, then we were off. Dan dropped me home at 3 am and I dropped in to bed. My exam for this subject was at 9:30 that morning, and was luckily, easier than predicted.



Evil Tim.

*"Do you like it stiff or
do you like flex in the
tip?" (Joel)*

*"Fat is best!"
(Rich)*

**"I don't remember the
Olympics, but my Mum
had the Willy toy." (Anon)**

*"I'm going hard with
no protection!" (Ian)*

*"Wide cracks
are a hard
route." (Tim)*

**"I like my
holes wet
and
slippery!"
-Kath**

*"There is no-one more
modest than me." (Rich)*

**"I don't have a big ego, it's just
that my ability hasn't caught up
with it yet." (Joel)**

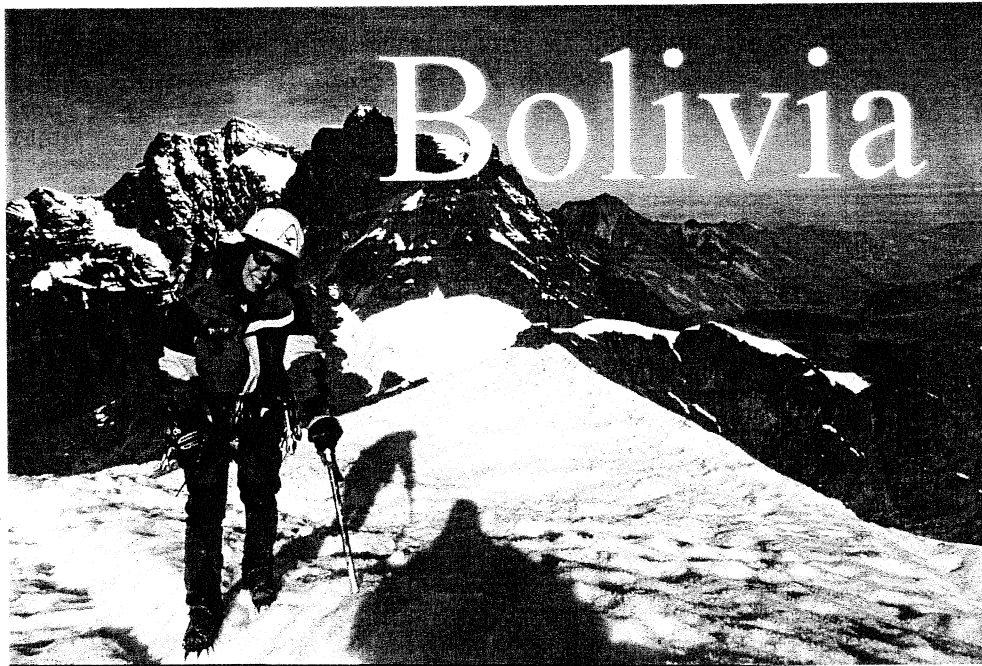
*"I tried them on in the
shop and it was so painful
that I just had to buy
them!" (Nic)*

Oh

**"So what's happening with
the Belgian girl?"
(Nic)**

**- "She's introducing me to a
new tongue."
(Rich)**

Mountaineering in



By Enmoore Lin

More and more OXOs have been discovering the delights of climbing in the Bolivian Andes.

With exceptionally stable weather during the dry season, good freezes, straightforward access and hundreds of impressive 5,000m+ peaks to choose from, it's a mountaineers playground. All this set on a backdrop of a stunning landscape with a fascinating history and culture... Bolivia is pretty hard to beat.

Photos by Marcel Geelen and Stu Dobbie.

Puente Roto base camp, 11am, light snow. More waiting. Stu and I were packed and ready to leave, although we had not yet decided in which direction: down to the road-head or up to high camp? Going up involved numerous hours climbing over treacherous wet and slippery rocky slabs to an exposed high camp. An American team had decided not to climb, declaring it too dangerous for their porters. Now that the dry season was coming to an end, snow was falling more frequently. The poor weather usually blew away by mid-morning, but sometimes it stayed around. We did not have enough food for another day's wait at base camp and as more time passed, it seemed less and less likely that we were ever going to climb Illimani.

Having flown over Illimani and spent far too much time gazing wistfully at its triple peaked crown, we felt like we had to climb it. The

mountain dominates the view from La Paz, a giant sprawling city perched on the edge of the altiplano back across the valley, where we had lived in and out of for the last few months between forays into the Cordillera Real mountains.

Illimani looked like it sat on the city fringes, but it was actually a three-hour drive to the road-head. Protests and demonstrations are a way of life for the inhabitants of La Paz, but in the last few weeks we had watched as they grew in intensity and inconvenience. Not wishing to miss out on our last climbing objective, we opted to arrange a ride from a fellow called "Oscar", who supposedly was in possession of a suitable 4WD.

Our partnership with Oscar did not get off to a good start. The promised jeep failed to materialize. Muttering about engine problems, Oscar picked us up instead in a beat-up minibus that looked like it had just been hired

off the street. Still, a bus was better than nothing. We did not travel very far before we had to stop. Just beyond the city limits, we encountered a group of protestors who were blockading and digging a trench across the road.

These sort of protests in Bolivia are a common occurrence. The main road in La Paz is subjected to daily blockades by a plethora of groups, from teachers wanting pay rises and students demanding extra funding, to campesinos protesting against government proposals to introduce a water tax. These demonstrators would be peacefully dispersed through the judicious use of tear gas. (And beware any unsuspecting gringo who gets too curious - it stings!)

What we were now experiencing, however, was a rise in the intensity of these demonstrations. Different groups were rallying simultaneously and beginning to blockade all the roads leading out of La Paz. A total shut down of transport and supply lines was planned. The country was slowly coming to a halt.

Stuck on the only road towards the Illimani massif, we queued up behind buses and trucks. We climbed a small hill and watched the road being dug up as truck drivers milled around, put their hands in the pockets and chewed coca leaves in resignation. The bus passengers got out and started walking. Oscar suggested that we head across the altiplano and climb Sajama instead. While we were conferring, a jeep came from nowhere and sped along a steep and deeply gouged track that ran parallel to the blockaded road. Oscar decided that the track was also worth trying in the minibus. We watched in alarm as the definitely non-4WD minibus negotiated the car-swallowing ruts, occasionally on two wheels. But we were through, and continued down the road through the beautiful polychrome formations of the Palca Canyon to the road-head and the start of the mule trail to Illimani's base camp.

The following morning, while we munched on breakfast in our tent at base camp, a campesino came to the door, offering his services as a porter

for the climb up to high camp. We chatted to the campesino as he tried on and modeled Stu's climbing helmet. It was all very cute and entertaining. Little did we know that while we were talking, the campesino had an off-sider beside him who was pulling out ice-tools from under Stu's pack. The campesino left after we declined his services, but we later noticed that there were two people further down the valley. Curses and consternation greeted the discovery that an ice-axe and an ice-hammer were missing. Stu embarked on a chase for the campesinos, but with no idea of where they were headed, proved to be fruitless.

With Stu no longer in possession of any ice-tools, our climbing plans began to unravel. Fortunately, the US Cavalry came to save the day. A party from the American Alpine Institute, who we had earlier encountered at Condoriri, arrived in the afternoon. They brought with them an entire village worth of porters, cooks and mule drivers. One of their porters was an ex-mountain guide who agreed to lend us one of

village where their porters and cooks hailed from would lynch anybody that came to steal from their clients. Armed again with ice-tools, our only obstacle was now the weather.

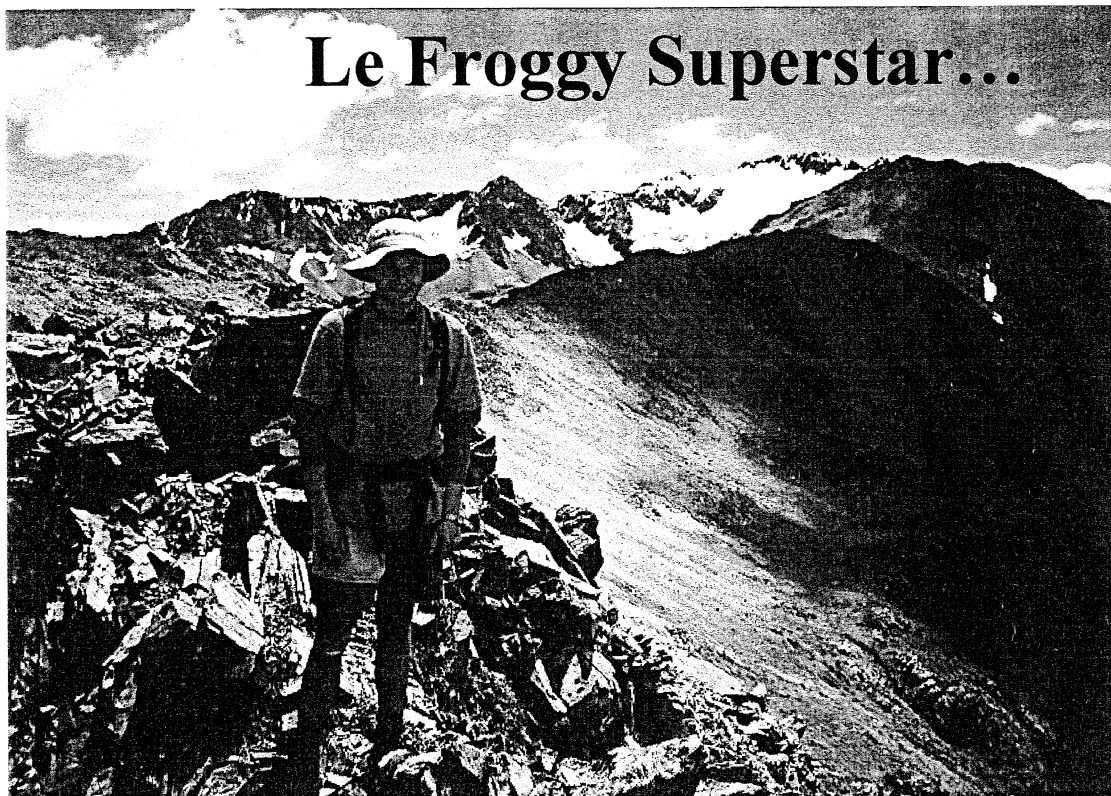
The day we planned to head up to the Nido de Condores high camp, the skies were a leaden grey and it snowed all morning. It eventually stopped snowing around midday, which left the minimum time needed to reach high camp before darkness fell. The route from Puente Roto (4500m) to Nido de Condores (5500m) traversed the steppe and its criss-crossing alpine streams, before ascending the sharp ridge towards the south peak of Illimani. The scramble up scree and broken rock was interrupted by climbs up vertical rock gullies. With full packs, this was a rather tiring undertaking. We arrived at high camp and its tiny rock platform at dusk. Faced with an alpine start the next morning and several hours of snow melting and dinner preparation before getting any sleep, it was not going to be a restful night.



his ice-axes, which were sitting in his house a few kilometers away. We learnt that the thievery that occurred at Puente Roto was the work of another village. The police had visited them in the past and two brothers were now languishing in San Pedro prison. This did not seem to stop the robberies. Surrounded by locals, the AAI team was confident that there would be no more problems. The theory was that the

Beep, beep, beep...one o'clock in the morning and all I wanted to do was throw the alarm out of the tent. A quick peek outside showed that it was snowing lightly. We decided to go back to sleep and check the conditions again later.

2 am, clear skies. Time to move. There was supposed to be a technical section not far from high camp, that climbers had a habit of throwing



Le Froggy Superstar...

...Has A Great Day Out

I was carefully skiing down a steep slope, on what was the first skiing weekend of the year for me, when I decided to stop and enjoy my surroundings. I had just started to ski the infamous Avalanche Gully on the East Face of Mt Feathertop. Although I had met a couple of people on my way to the top following the 'normal' route, I

found myself completely alone as soon as I crossed the ridge and started my ski descent. The contrast between the sunny ridge and the isolated shaded East face was quite amazing.

I had left Hotham and Diamantina Hut in the morning and had skied along the Razorback to the summit in slightly more than 3 hours.

After this nice warm up I was ready for some action. The action was now right here, in the form of an awfully steep gully that I had decided to ski. I had been wanting to ski the steepest slopes on the East face since I first went to Feathertop in winter. On this brilliant Sunday of mid August (the weekend after midnight ascent),

"I had been wanting to ski the steepest slopes on the East face since I first went to Feathertop in winter."

the conditions were for once perfect for such a challenge: no cornice at all on the summit due to the rather late start of the ski season (and the rather poor effort of the skiing convenor for the year 2000/2001 :-), more than enough snow on the face to cover all the rocks, and a brilliant sunshine. The snow was packed enough to rule out any objective avalanche danger, but soft enough to try to stop an hypothetical fall.

Although I was enjoying every minute of my solitude on the East face, the thought that "maybe this whole 'solo ski descent wasn't such a good idea after all" did cross my mind at the time. What if I fell and broke my leg? How long would it take for my two companions Richard and Dimi, who were yo-yo skiing at Hotham, to realize that something had gone wrong?

I quickly decided not to think too much about such a possibility and to focus on the task ahead of me. The task was actually more 'below' than 'ahead'. I had just come near a change of slope to an even steeper section and I could not really see where the next three turns would lead me. I knew that there wasn't any cliff in the gully, so it had to be a steep snow slope. The next few turns confirmed my opinion. Things were getting steeper and steeper, and therefore more and more interesting. The adrenaline pumped up. I could hear my heart beat against my temples. In a not so nice but ultra safe turning technique, I kept skiing down. I got in some sort of rythm, breathing after

each turn, and skiing without stopping. In fact, on many occasions, I have found that stopping halfway down a very steep slope is not a good idea, because for me the first turn is the hardest: getting the momentum going is pretty much half the job. Moreover, as soon as you stop, you have too much time to think, and if you start wondering why in the world you're doing what you're doing, the probability of a fall increases dramatically.

When the gradient went back to a more normal value, I relaxed a bit more and managed to link some nice turns. I stopped at the bottom of the slope, when the gully becomes really narrow with small cliffs on each side,

*'I wanted to christen
my new ski boots in
the nicest possible
way...'*

slightly above the tree line. I was relieved and extremely happy.

From down there, the East face was looking quite impressive, with all the slopes in the shade. I quickly put my crampons on and put my skis on my pack. I grabbed my ultra light ski-mountaineering ice axe (also known as 'oversized snow peg by the participants to last year's July trip to the Main Range) and started walking up. The snow was very soft at the bottom of the face, which meant that the effort required to break a trail was quite consequent. To make things

harder for myself, I picked a slightly different route on the way up, through the steepest couloir I could find. Things got even steeper than on the way down. To give you an idea of the slope, the tips of my skis (which were on each side of my pack) were getting caught in the snow above my head from time to time. I would probably have used two tools if I had had two, but the snow conditions were so perfect that day that I managed just fine with my 'snow peg'. From the top of the couloir, I reached the South Summit along an easy slope.

Back at the top more than an hour after having left it, I just sat there for a while and enjoyed the moment. Unfortunately, a quick look at my watch indicated that I had to get going if I wanted to be on time to meet Dimi and Richard at the bottom of the North West Spur. The skiing down the 'easy' side of Feathertop was a pure delight. No stress, no risk of sliding more than 50 meters before hopefully stopping. Really nice. All in all, this sunday of mid August was a great day out, and probably one of my finest days of skiing in Australia. The slope was steep, pretty much at the limit of what I could have safely skied for a first ski trip of the season. I'm glad I didn't ski down the couloir I went up. It would have been pushing it just a little bit too far on a solo trip. Maybe another time, if I can find other people to come along.

Le Froggy (a.k.a. Nicolas Hohn) is currently in Nepal, getting scared and cold while attempting to climb Makulu II. (7600m) with a French expedition.

Oxomoron!

Recent Observations: A New Trend In MUMC

By Jill Fagan

On the recent climbing trip to Nowra, Newcastle and the Blue Mountains, a distinct new behavioural trend was noticeable. It is traditional on climbing trips, for participants to try to improve their climbing: to do harder, longer, more challenging or scarier routes. On this trip, the focus was arguably elsewhere...

Despite the widely held notion that Melbourne University attracts the highest achieving students from around the state, one must sometimes wonder exactly what the students achieve to such a high degree. Common sense and intelligence were certainly not strong points on the recent climbing trip; it seems that the participants strived to develop their skills in a new arena: foolishness. The inspiration for this new push to break the limits was undeniably due to Timothy Wallace. Tim's skills are highly developed, and at times his acts border on being suicidal in nature. Indeed, it seems that while other apprentices on the trip were trying their hardest to impress others with acts of a limited degree of stupidity, Tim seemed to display acts of obscene stupidity with regular occurrence, and with an apparent complete lack of effort. He was an excellent role model for other aspiring masters of foolishness and stupidity. In the past, the leaders in such endeavours within the MUMC climbing sector have been Dale Cooper and Cuan Petheram. However, most of their inspiring acts of foolishness were assisted by alcohol, Kombi vans, or a climb called Pilot Error. The emergence of the foolishness leadership from Tim Wallace represents not only a new generational era within the club, it is also an extension to new heights of achievement, since Tim seems not to require such props as alcohol in order to commit inspiring acts.

Below is a summary of the achievements of trip participants on the recent training camp in NSW. It is anticipated that their skill levels will advance on future climbing trips, and their gradual improvement will be reported in coming issues.

Tim Wallace *'An inspiration for us all'*

Tim's exploits were many and regular, as mentioned. Tim and Katie went to do a climb called Minotaur in the Blue Mountains, and Tim abseiled to the bottom of the cliff *and* pulled the ropes before realising he had left the guidebook at the top. The pair had to pick a random route, with no idea of its difficulty, to climb back up to the abseil point. Upon retrieval of the guidebook, they abseiled back down again, this time with the book. Tim led Minotaur (a 40m grade 19 traverse with somewhat sparse protection in spots), and made Katie second him with a heavy backpack.

In the Blue Mountains, the climbers camped in a cave each night, which was much like a balcony with a large overhanging roof. Wandering the wrong way at night would mean a fall of up to 6m before hitting the ground. At camp one night, Tim stepped over the fire in the cave, fell over, and rolled and rolled towards the edge of the cliff. By sheer miracle, he stopped at the very last minute, resting precariously on the brink of the drop. (NB: I am advised that alcohol assisted in heightening the degree of stupidity of this act.)

Tim's heightened powers of stupidity dictated that he refused to clip the bolts on a climb called SSCC3, and from the height of the second bolt he took an 8m fall onto a peenut (VERY small wire thingy) in sideways (NOT the preferable orientation), clearing a ledge by millimetres, and landing upside down. Luckily, Tim seems to have advanced life preservation skills, and was shaken and bruised, but not hurt.

Tim started doing a fearsome climb called Psychodrama, and fell off the dyno about 5m up, landing on the head of his belayer, Katie. After trying several times and deciding he was unable to do the dyno, Tim removed his protection and hooked his nutkey onto a ledge, clipped the rope through and lowered off this. Tim is to be congratulated on this act of foolishness, which is officially classed as suicidal.

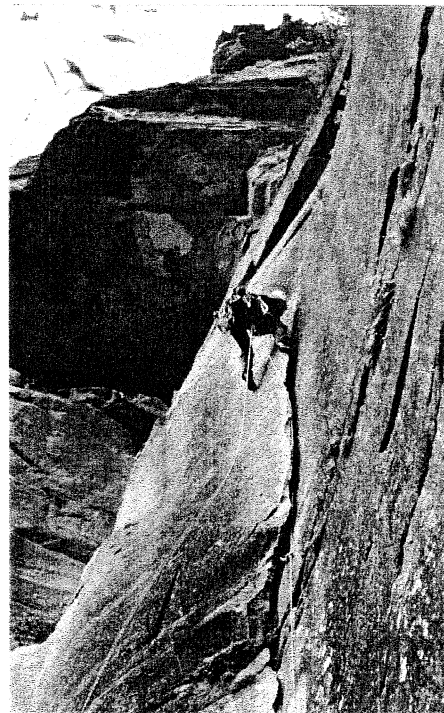
At the top of a climb called Flight Line, Tim set up a rather insecure belay, then proceeded to belay Jill up the climb, without advising her that the act of seconding the route may be life threatening. While opponents of the Stupidity Movement within MUMC may argue that this presents an ethical dilemma, it is clear that involving others in your act of stupidity is an advanced skill, and apprentices should take note of the method used by Tim in this example.

Paul Bowden *Advanced Apprentice*

Tim's fall onto Katie's head from the (increasingly accurately named) Psychodrama, had a significant impact on Paul, who decided to emulate Tim's achievement. However, Katie reports that Paul outperformed Tim, and actually landed quite heavily on her head, inflicting some pain. Paul is to be congratulated for not only emulating Tim's effort, but also for bettering it significantly.

Once he climbed the dyno at the start of Psychodrama, Paul then continued up the rest of the 50m pitch. En route, Paul hung on the rope twice, to take off his shoes and relieve his toes from the discomfort of his close-fitting climbing shoes. It is debatable whether this act should be classed as one of stupidity, however, since it may be better described as one of incredible laziness.

Paul assumed navigational leadership of the team on the outing to Boronia Point in the Blue Mountains. The guidebook suggested a walking time of 15 minutes to the crag from the road. However, due to Paul's considerable efforts, the climbers walked for close to 3 hours, and descended (then re-ascended) a long and steep hill before reaching the cliff. Note that in this case, Paul directly involved not only himself, but also four others in his act of foolishness. This is highly commendable.



Doing something which severely inconveniences a sizeable group of people can also be considered an act of foolishness. Paul demonstrated this skill when disappearing without a trace shortly before the two cars were packed and the other 7 people were ready to drive from Nowra to Newcastle. After close to an hour, he returned, having finished his phone conversation with his girlfriend in Melbourne. Paul then proceeded to feel very car-sick on the windy roads to the beach due to excessive alcohol consumption the previous night. This is considered very stupid.

Katie Webby *'Bloody Katie'*

As the reader may realise, several mildly stupid acts of Katie's have already mentioned, namely: (a) climbing with Tim; and (b) climbing with Paul. When considering significant acts that Katie herself has

instigated, they are disappointingly few in number. Nevertheless, Katie is considered an Advanced Apprentice, due to the gravity of one particular act, which was not trivial, and warrants special commendation.

Katie was climbing in fine style up an off-width corner crack called Amen Corner, and decided to wedge herself in the crack for a rest. While wiggling out of the crack to continue climbing, Katie slipped and fell about 5m, hitting her (helmeted) head and landing upside down. The back of her head, *underneath* her helmet, was split and bled profusely. It takes skill to injure a part of your body which is covered by protective armour of sorts, and Katie's effort was duly admired by all climbers present. Katie also superficially damaged other body parts, such as her upper back. After being lowered to the ground, Katie's normal selfless behaviour was taken to new heights of foolishness, when she refused for some time to let anyone place a piece of clothing under her bleeding head, lest the clothing become stained by blood. She preferred to rest her wounds directly on the rock as she lay on the ground. Upon deciding she was capable of walking the 30 minutes back to the car with Paul and Jill, Katie tried to hoist a backpack full of climbing gear onto her damaged back. Luckily, other climbers prevented her from this self-destructive act. Katie then proceeded to walk up the hill so fast that Paul and Jill had to yell to her to slow down, fearing they would hyperventilate and be unable to drive Katie to the hospital.



Katie spent 4 hours in the hospital. The doctor asked her if she had been horse riding as well as rockclimbing, which Katie took to mean that she smelt like horse manure. Upon returning from the hospital, Katie decided that she would partake in the drinking of a cask of Berri Estate. She proclaimed herself unable to stand up after drinking one glass. Katie wore her helmet (complete with go-faster blood stripe down the back) continually for the next four days, while climbing, while cooking, while eating and while driving in the car. It could be argued that this act is one of practicality, since the helmet prevented anything from touching the stitches on the back of her head, and it allowed her to wear her Petzl headlamp without pressure on her wound. However, it deserves a mention in this report, since wearing her helmet every waking hour certainly meant that she *looked* very stupid.

This act in its entirety is one of great importance and is worthy of emulation. Not only is the act fundamentally stupid, the detail of the incident reveals several layers of stupidity in the way the act was carried out and dealt with. Widespread recognition has been granted in the form of the new title 'Bloody Katie'.

Ian Gould *Apprentice*

Ian is quite a new recruit to MUMC, but is fast rising in the ranks of the Stupidity Movement. He committed two acts worthy of mention. The first was on the famous roof climb Spinning Blades at Nowra, which has historically been the scene of many acts of gross stupidity by new recruits. Ian's effort was spectacular. When climbing, Ian ignored all warnings from onlookers, and wedged his foot into a niche in the roof. He then fell off, but his foot remained firmly wedged. There was enough slack in the rope to leave his entire body weight hanging from his ankle, which he had sprained only one week previously. It was bent at an alarming angle. While other climbers were convinced that his ankle was severely damaged, it seems that Ian has body parts which are well acclimatised to acts of foolishness, and his ankle did not suffer.

Ian's first lead on traditional gear was in the Blue Mountains, and Ian picked possibly the most stupid route and the worst conditions for his first lead. Ian chose a grade 14 off-width corner, with limited protection, and led it on double ropes. He started in the rain, before he reached the top it became dark, and he did not take a torch. Ian made an excellent effort here, and I am confident we can expect bigger and better epics in the future.

Jill Fagan Apprentice

Jill's efforts centre around one morning's activities, and a climb called Graveyard Wall. Jill knew that Graveyard Wall was too hard for her, but climbed it regardless. She took numerous falls on a very dodgy rusty piton that stuck out of the wall 2 inches, before placing another more solid piece above it. Before the final traverse, Jill clipped a bolt that was almost out of reach, causing seconder Tim to pendulum 6m and crash into a corner after unclipping the bolt. These violations of basic leading practices are particularly stupid when coming from a former MUMC climbing convener.

Graveyard Wall finished on a highly inaccessible ledge, and Jill abseiled to the ground and pulled the rope before realising she had left her shoes on the ledge. This is probably an attempt at emulating Tim's effort with the guidebook. However, Jill should be congratulated for pulling the ropes *before* realising where her shoes were, and for leaving them in a highly inaccessible location. Later, Jill and Ian were sitting at the base when Tim finished another climb and threw the shoes down. One of them hit Ian in the head, although Ian ran to avoid it, which shows significant directional stupidity on Ian's part.

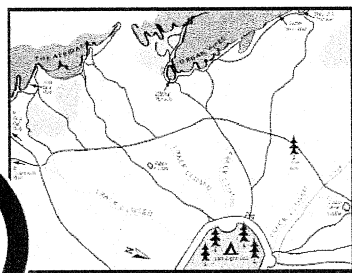
arapiles REPAIR PROJECT

The maze of climbers' tracks around and below the cliffs is obvious and ugly.

Not only that, but we spread weeds through rare native plant communities already struggling to survive on this 'island' in the Wimmera.

As a result we have closed some tracks.

Study this map, follow the signs...



and please...
don't take short cuts!

Contact us now and join in the next work day.

Victorian Climbing Club 0419 563 733 www.vicclimb.org.au	Friends of Mt Arapiles 5387 1356	Parks Victoria 5387 1760
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AN INITIATIVE OF **VCC** IN CONJUNCTION WITH **Parks Victoria**

Alison Thomson, Mark Beerman, Anna Hyland Novices

Despite considerable efforts, the results from the Novices are limited at this stage. However, it is worthy of mention that the Novices were not present at the advanced training camp in the Blue Mountains, since this was restricted to Apprentices and above. It seems that Nowra was far less conducive to stupidity than were the Blue Mountains.

Alison made a valiant attempt on one of the many rainy days in Nowra, by taking it upon herself to squeeze down into a cave-like hole which was full of possum excrement. Alison clearly shows promise. Mark made a commendable attempt to appear stupid at dinner time, when he insisted he had never tried chilli, and didn't even know the name of the vegetable we call eggplant. Anna's behaviour was worrying. She seemed at all times to be poised, eloquent, intelligent and coordinated. I have no doubt, however, that close involvement with principal protagonist Tim Wallace will eventually have a positive effect on Anna, and we can expect bigger and better efforts in the future.

Bondage

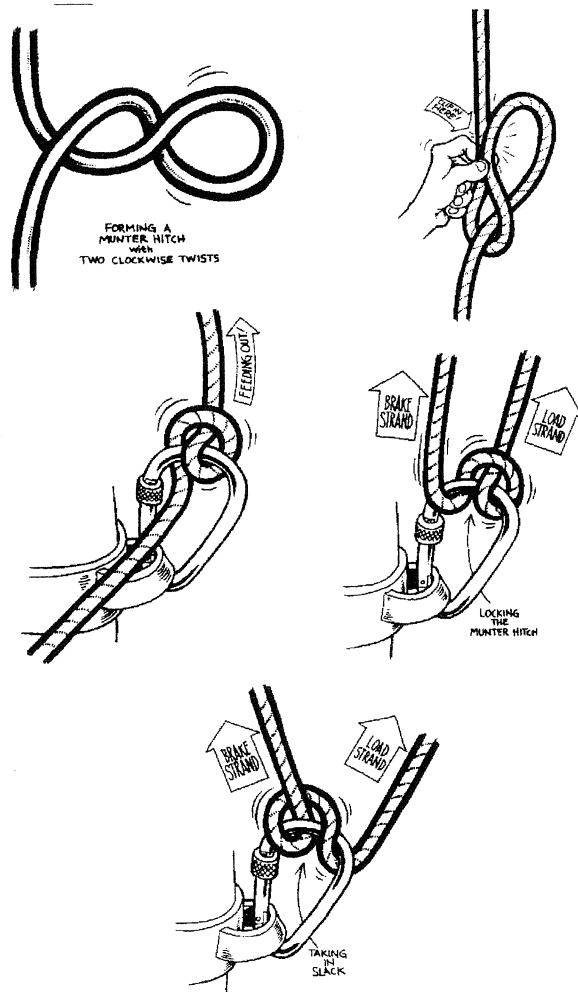
on the Rocks

Here's the deal: you've just finished the tricky second-pitch traverse on The Bard when, nervously setting up the anchor, you drop your belay device, which goes clattering to the ground. Now how is your partner going to get to you?

Or you're canyoning, and find the next pitch involves an abseil right through a freezing waterfall. One of your party could get stuck on the rope halfway down, and you need a way to lower them before they get hypothermia.

Or you are ski-mountaineering, and you want to use a short rope to abseil over rock bands and obstacles, but you don't want to carry too much climbing gear.

Fortunately there is a solution in the form of a knot - a knot so versatile it has two names: The Italian, or Munter Hitch. Have a look at the diagram, or get someone to show you how to make it. As you can see, it is like a clove hitch, but with a twist taken out (in French it is called a demi-capestan, because a clove hitch is a capestan.)



The result is a knot that lets you run the rope out, or take it in quite smoothly, but will lock off when you put both strands of the rope together. And just in case you think a mere knot is not strong, in case of a fall the Munter Hitch will actually hold a force of 2.5 kN -

compared with just 2 kN for most belay devices.

There's some things you have to remember:

- You bring the braking hand *forward* to lock off the rope, not back like you do with most belay devices - don't mix the two up!
- The knot "turns around" when you switch from taking in rope, to locking off or letting rope out. So be careful when you lock it off.
- The Munter Hitch can twist the rope, so try to minimise this by holding the rope firmly when you feed it in and out of the carabiner. Pear-shaped, rather than D-shaped carabiners tend to work more smoothly as well.

So for simplicity's sake, and to reduce shock loads, a conventional belay device is still best for belaying the leader. But here is when you can use the Munter Hitch:

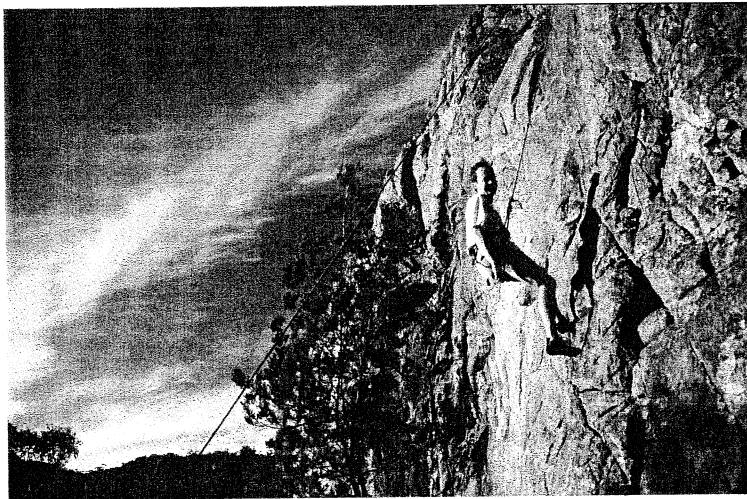
* **Belaying:** if you drop your belay device, just run a Munter Hitch through a 'locking carabiner on your harness, and belay away. More generally, when you have just led a pitch and are bringing up the second, it is often best to belay directly from the anchor. In this case, where it is more convenient to lock off the rope by bringing it forwards, the Munter Hitch is easier to use than your belay device. It is also very quick to escape the system if your partner is in trouble. Just bring forward the rope, and while it is locked off tie two half hitches in front of the hitch. You are now free to render assistance.

* **Abseiling:** using the Munter Hitch to abseil is sometimes unnerving, but works fine. You should take care that the rope is running in such a way that it won't unlock the carabiner's gate. The advantage is that you only need a carabiner and a sling (to make an improvised harness) to make short abseils, say on a skiing

or bushwalking trip, where you don't want a great deal of climbing gear.

* **Canyoning:** This is a technique that lets you create a releasable abseil system. If you are abseiling with a backup, as you want to do on a long pitch, you could be in trouble if you lose control of the rope under a waterfall. You may be stuck on your prussik, and being quickly weakened by the freezing water, you may not be able to free yourself - and you could drown as a result.

To make this system, attach to a



Nic Hohn just hanging around at The Lion's Head, Victoria Range. Photo SD.

carabiner a Munter Hitch tied off with two half hitches, the same as escaping the system. (It is good to clip the bight of rope to another carabiner to ensure it can't come free.) You can then abseil on one strand of the rope. If you are in trouble, your partners at the top of the pitch can release the half hitches, and controlling the munter hitch from above, lower you to the bottom of the pitch. Reattach the rope conventionally for the last person.

For more information, and an animated demonstration of how to tie the Italian/Munter Hitch one-handed, see the Petzl website: <http://www.petzl.com/FRENG/tech/knots.html>

By Richard Salmons

One advantage of the physics library is that it has many useful journals. Another is that the photocopier is in front of the window, giving me the opportunity to look out across to the hills. Mt Juliet had beckoned for awhile, but in dry weather had been bypassed for Lake Mountain or thereabouts, and in the rain wineries had been preferred to its slippery slopes. Winter had been dry, so the last Saturday in September looked to be a good day.

We left Melbourne at dawn, driving through what arguably is the best time for hiking, but allowance was made since Katherine and Che had just returned from a sun-filled excursion to the Prom. Breakfast completed at a Healesville bakery, we left the car at the roadside and ambled along a Melbourne Water road for an agreeable distance. The turnoff to Juliet is marked "walkers must return by same track"; this hopeful use of the imperative augured well for the trip. The walk looks relatively

steep on the map, but we still went up through the tall trees in good humour. The vegetation varied along the way, so the lack of far-reaching views was no matter, especially when we caught a last patch of yellow wattle blossom near the summit. Cairn spotters would do well to include Juliet on their itinerary; the top is marked by a solid four-metre (almost belljar) construction with moss in all the right places. In a fresh breeze, we contented ourselves with lamingtons, pistachio nuts and oranges. The descent into an increasingly warm morning had its ups and downs; as with the previous walk of the season, we met no one else. A pair of kookaburras marked our departure from the forest and return to the highway.

The bushwalking section of MUMC runs trips almost every weekend from February to December. Some are outrageously epic, others just plain enjoyable. Trip sheets are in the green trip folder in the clubrooms.

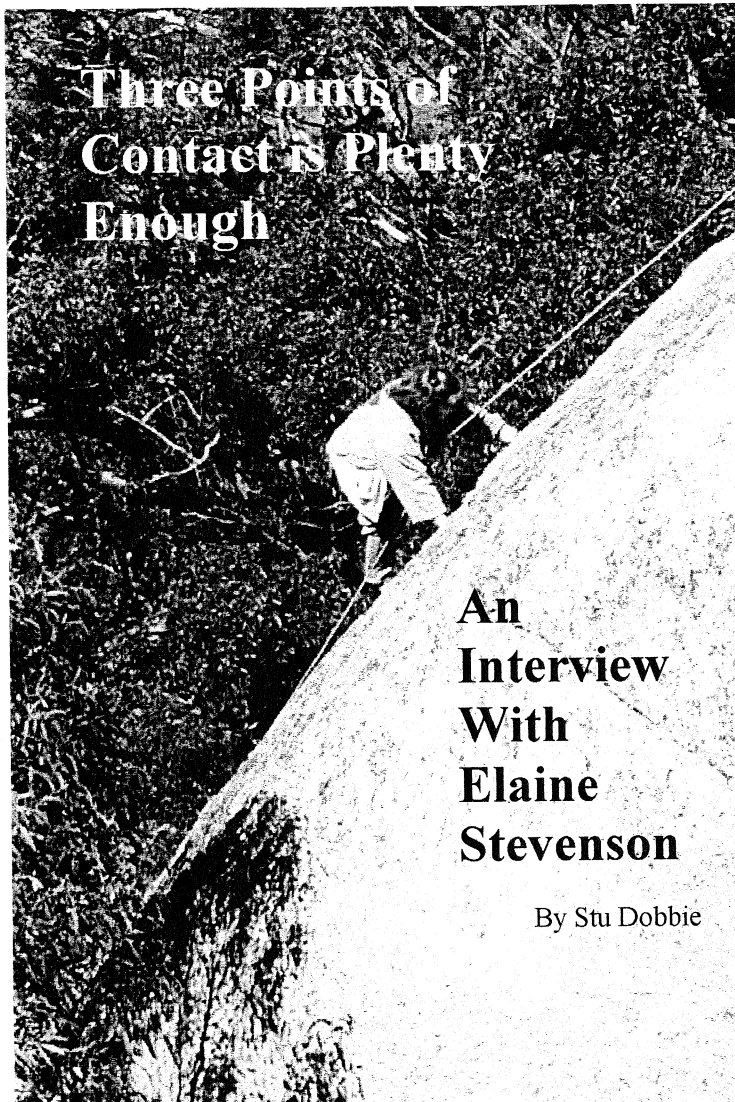
Andrew Oppenheim
(Bushwalking convenor)



No, that's not the bushwalking convenor. It's Andrea Kneen in NZ.

Bushwalking





Three Points of Contact is Plenty Enough

An Interview With Elaine Stevenson

By Stu Dobbie

There is a story here somewhere, I thought. A one-legged climber? Wow. Fantastic. Brave.

I had heard about Elaine before I first met her. She was causing some consternation at a Victorian Climbing Club committee meeting. Apparently she was wanting to run a trip. "The problem with Elaine...", someone started. But never finished. Everyone there seemed to have a problem. But nobody could tell me what that was.

On a day trip to Black Hill, I led up a nice classic 17 face route as

Elaine squatted below a gumtree and belayed. I belayed her up on a munta hitch, and she climbed, rested, tugged, climbed, and hopped her way up. But she got to the top, grinning, and commenting on the features of the climb and the nasty reach problem at the start. (The only reach problem I get is when I don't reach the belay before my arms give way!)

Her system consisted of free climbing what she could, sky hooking, pulling on gear, whatever for the rest. Back in the 70's this style of ascent would

have been the norm. (Remember, one of Chris Baxter's Grampians bash fests was supposedly freed at grade 12!) Apparently some of the VCC old guard were now pooh-poohing her tactics. But how many climbers do I know who have bashed, tugged and pulled their way up aid routes around the world? I'll put my hand up. Nothing new here.

I asked Elaine why she took up climbing. Aren't you making life hard for yourself? Most of us struggle to get up on all fours.

There were several choreographed answers. "Because the crutches stay on the ground", was a good one. "I get a kick out of the impossibility of it...". "Because bushwalking is boring". (My favourite.) But after an hour I had my interview pad filled with reasons. But I had no answers.

Elaine has been hopping around forever it seems. Watch her dart around on crutches across uneven terrain, over fallen branches and through sand, just to get to the cliff. I was impressed, and thought back to the four weeks of my life when I suffered a leg in plaster and kangarooed my way up and down the hallway of my shared-house, bashing into bookcases and hat stands. Ten minutes to the shops and I was buggered. But Elaine had joined everyone for a climb at Mt. Difficult the previous weekend!

Elaine got into climbing a few years ago. She would have taken it up earlier if she had known she could do it. Only by hearing about others did she realise it was feasible. Before that, she bushwalked, skied (one ski & two poles), and caved.

Being a researcher in the public sector, Elaine is familiar with organising. She contributed to the growth of an outdoor club when studying at Lincoln Institute (now part of LaTrobe Uni). And now she's already thinking about doing an ACIA instructor's course and running MUMC trips in the future. No slouch, she is a regular at the Mill, and already has the beginnings of an over-use training injury!

How do people react at the crags? I've already mentioned the VCC. But Elaine has plenty of friends to climb with, and gets no flack from MUMC. Is our younger generation more accepting and inclusive? Elaine claims that disability and exclusion hasn't been an issue

before she took up climbing. I don't know if I believe that, but from what I've seen in the reactions by others, there is an issue there somewhere. Some people do some navel gazing, some are obstinate - grasping at rules, precedents and personal expectations, and others just don't care - you tie in, get on the rock, you're part of the team.

Ambitions? The joy of moving over rock has it's appeal, as it does for all of us. So far she has concentrated on free routes. But on aid routes it's a more level playing field. She has plans for routes some of us only dream about; Sirocco, The Kachooong Roof, etc. Routes that make kudos no matter what style you climb them.

Our Smith St. café slowly emptied, the remainder of my Sticky Date Pudding went crusty, and our meandering conversation drifted from topics such as VCC politics to the benefits of disabled parking permits, and slowly but surely we found ourselves talking about climbing. About training, about technique, about places to visit and climbers we'd met. Perhaps climbers can be singled out by no other factor than their propensity to talk about climbing! And in the end I had my answer. Elaine climbed because she was a climber, and loved climbing. Everything else was peripheral. There was no story really.

Upcoming Trips

ROGAINING

27-28 Oct Roving 15 hr Rogaine
Avoca area
Matthew Thomas 9737-9565
1-2 Dec Victorian Rogaining
Championships

BUSHWALKING

12-14 Oct Bogong x2
Cam Quinn 9387-4785, 8344-9980
Advanced

20-21 Oct Crinoline

Doug Bambrick 9329-5351
Intermediate

26-28 Oct Lake Mountain

Cathedrals

Andrew Oppenheim 9345-7378
Beginner

24-25 Nov Mt Feathertop and
MUMC hut

Andrew Oppenheim 9345-7378
Beginner

1-9 Dec Overland Track
(Tasmania)

Andy Selby-Smith and Andrea
Kneen

Intermediate

14-20 Dec Overland Track
(Tasmania)

Peter Hield 0434-070-379

Intermediate

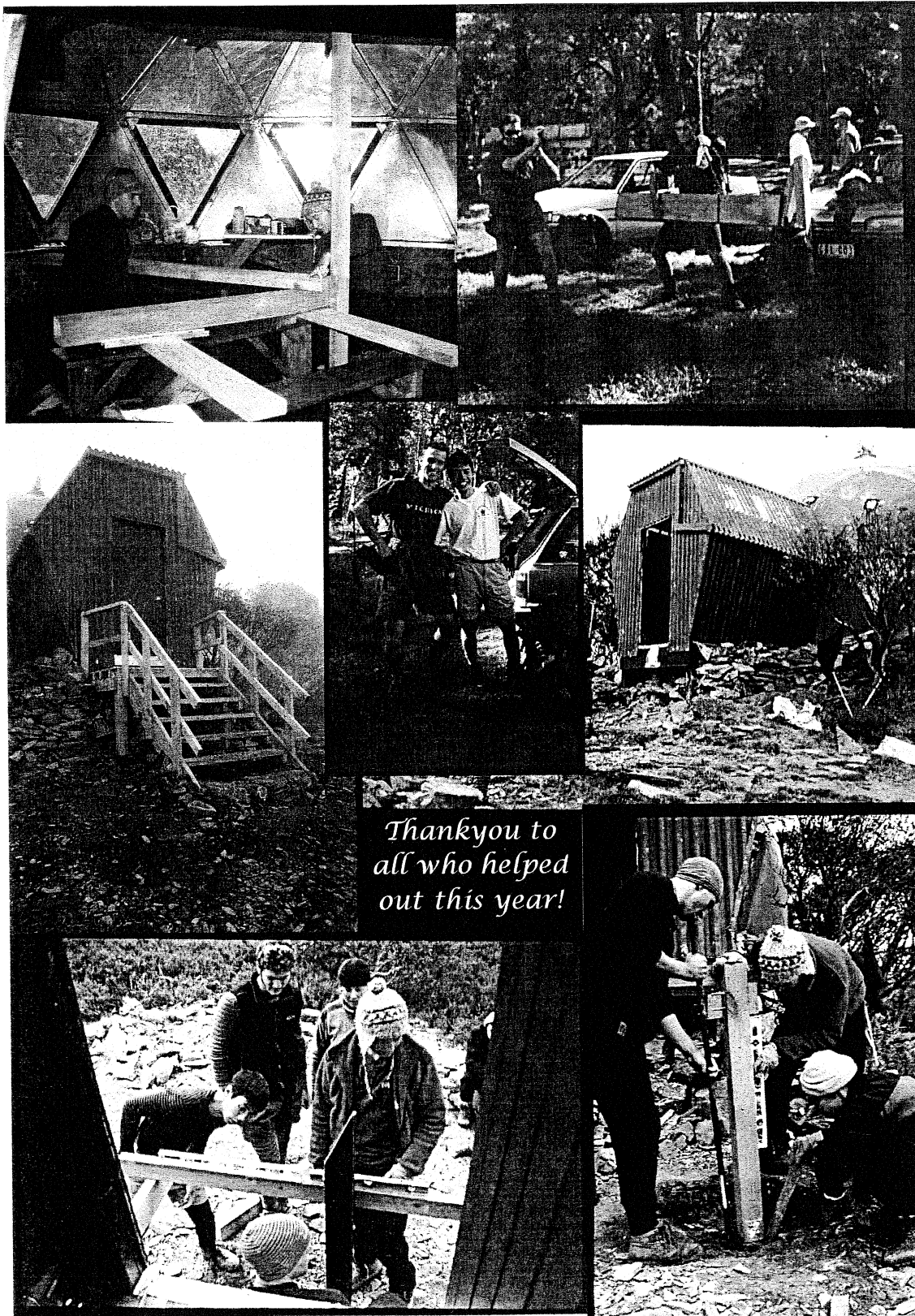
KAYAKING, CLIMBING,
CANYONING, CAVING

Check out the trip folders or talk
to the convenor. Trips are often
run at short notice.

SKIING

See you next year!

MUMC MEMORIAL HUT MAINTENANCE



Where did we come from?

A retrospective on Letters to the Editor to The Mountaineer

July 1976

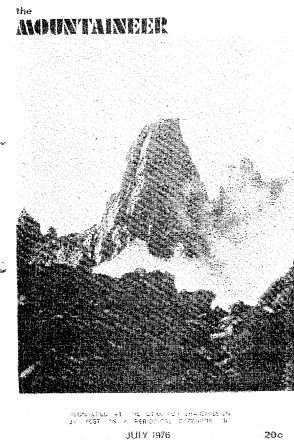
I am tired of having to fight for acceptance as a serious mountaineer just because I am a woman. Women are viewed by society as husband-hunting fragile objects incapable of doing anything strenuous. However, more and more women are discovering how strong they are and enjoying activities formerly reserved for men. Women, too, respond to the challenge of mountaineering.

Why are women treated differently from the moment they step into Aikman's Road and join M.U.M.C.? It is quite revolting how older club members "check out" female freshers -, and make tenting arrangements according to physical appearance on beginners' bushwalks.

Because rock climbing and canoeing are more physically demanding, women attempting them are treated badly. If a woman shows talent for the activity she is flattered and praised in a way that implies that she has done better than she really has and, at the same time, what she has done is downgraded.

Because of the stereotypes inflicted by society on women and men, men are afraid of being thought weak because women are as good as they are. Can they really be so superior if their egos are deflated so easily! Mountaineering would be so much more enjoyable if women and men could break out of roles imposed by society and accept each other as mountaineers.

Gretel Lamont



May 1976

It is in my opinion that this club has made a very great mistake in publishing the guide to "Bushwalking In the Victorian Alps". The information it contains is generally enough to enable one to tackle some of the hardest walks in the state with little fear of getting lost. Whilst this is a worth contribution to the safety of the bushwalking public, in my opinion it destroys wilderness values.

Tackling the unknown, the uncharted, is part of the true wilderness experience. To travel down a wild river, not knowing what lies around the next bend, to climb a mountain not knowing what is on the other side, is a true adventure. The spirit of adventure becomes harder to maintain with the ever increasing number of guides being published.

A guide gives the timid, the faint hearted, encouragement to tackle what he otherwise would not. Today much of south-west Tasmania, one of our last remaining "wildernesses", has been so well track noted that "every man and his dog" seems to go there. Those wonderful tales of impenetrable scrub, foul weather, rocks, leeches and mud have taken second place to the route guide. People aren't scared by the southwest any more!

Let us preserve true wilderness. Ban the route guide! Write no track notes. Exaggerate and distort your experiences and so preserve for others the thrill you felt on discovering for yourself.

Jolyon Shelton

The Michelin Man

