



THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER is a monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers Inc, PO Box 431 Milsons Point 1565. To advertise in this magazine, please contact the Business Manager.

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THE SYDNEY BUSH WALKERS INCORPORATED was founded in 1927. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening at 8 pm at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli (near Milsons Point Railway Station). Visitors and prospective members are welcome any Wednesday.

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Jim Callaway & Wilf Hilder

# JUNE 1999

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## The April General Meeting

*Reported by Barry Wallace*

The clock stood at 2006, the president, as chairman, sat in the chair, and the 18 or so members present, herded together from the various rooms where they had sat, stood or slouched and conversed on various matters, were called to order and the meeting begun. There were no apologies. New members Pamela Irving, Michelle Bandler and Matthew Howe were welcomed to membership in the usual way.

The minutes of the previous general meeting were resting at the secretary's office for the time being, so these must wait another day. Reasonably enough there were no matters arising.

Correspondence included two letters from Ray Hookway regarding the possible purchase of a scanner to assist with magazine preparation, from Jeff Francis, regarding plans for the Sydney Water Catchment Management Authority, from Mike Belshaw, enclosing draft plans of management for Wildlife Refuges, from Confederation enclosing an outline for a classroom training session for abseiling, from the NSW Premier thanking us for our letter regarding the Timbara Gold Mine proposal and advising that it has been forwarded to the relevant minister, and from Huldah Turner asking that we cancel mailing of the magazine. The meeting resolved to send a letter to the Premier regarding the Dharwal SRA. There were no other matters arising from the correspondence.

The new treasurer reported that we began with \$10 504, received income of \$13 746, and disbursed \$15 186 to conclude with a balance of \$8 573. The higher than normal outgoings are the reinvestment of a maturing bond.

The walks reports began with a summary of the reunion statistics. Bill Hope's walk the same weekend was deferred. There was no report for Allan Donnelly's walk and the report for Ralph Penglis' Sydney Harbour

Walk (around the edges that is) was lost somewhere in care of the Walks Secretary. Nor was Sandy Johnson spared. The fetching postcard he sent to report his walk was out there with Ralph's report, waiting to be fetched.

Bill Holland and the party of 4 on his midweek walk out from Mountain Lagoon on the Tuesday went as far as the lookout above the Colo River/Tootie Creek junction before deciding the side trip to the river was not worthy of the day.

Wayne Steele led a party of 4 on his walk from Kanangra Walls to Carlon's Farm over the weekend of 19, 20, 21 March. David Carter reported 9 on his Ettrema trip, which he described as enjoyable. Nancye Alderson led the 13 starters on her easy Saturday walk from Linden to Hazelbrook through overcast and cool conditions. Ron Watters' Sunday trip out from Carrington Falls had a party of 8, encountering slippery, wet conditions with leeches in abundance, on what turned out to be a long day. They returned to the Robertson pie shop at dusk and headed back to the city.

As it approached Liverpool one of the vehicles gave voice to such strident sounds of mechanical distress that the driver elected to park it in a side street for further attention. Not wishing to unduly delay his passenger's return to her car at Strathfield as a result of the failure, the driver escorted her to the Liverpool railway station and then went back to deal with the matter of the vehicle. This seemed all right to the passenger as she sat in a train in the station waiting for the off. There was even the reassurance of a passing security patrol.

A short while later three policemen approached her and initially requested, and then insisted, she get off the train to answer some questions. Curioser and curioser. The object of their interest was the violent circumstance, be it assault or affray, that had caused the back of her shirt to become soaked with blood. She initially denied that the shirt was soaked, but after a double take

when they suggested that she remove it, she did this, and discovered that not only was it soaked, but one of the leeches was still attached.

The task of removing the leech worked its way down the police hierarchy present until the lowest ranked officer donned rubber gloves and did the deed. On his enquiring of the Sergeant as to the intended disposition of the arrested leech, the only advice available was to make sure he didn't "let that thing loose anywhere in here". As to resuming her journey, well, "that shirt will never do, you will be pulled over at the next station if you are wearing that". She explained as how day walkers don't carry much in the way of a wardrobe, but the officers insisted, and then arranged for the station lost property room to yield a tee shirt around the right size to meet the requirements of the moment. The train ride and drive home was something of an anticlimax after all that, but it was a great story to tell the driver when he rang later to check that she had arrived OK.

Nigel Weaver's Sunday walk out from Carlon's Farm did not go, but Roger Treagus had the 22 starters on his trip from Gordon to Narrabeen ploughing through an exceptional number of spider webs in hot conditions the same day. It all ended with ice creams at around 1730.

The following weekend, 26, 27, 28 March saw Jim Rivers, with a party of 5, rerouting his walk in Ben Bullen State Forest due to a scarcity of water in the area. Roger Treagus was out there again that weekend as well, leading a party of 18 on a post polling-booth Saturday walk in Ku-ring-gai Chase. Bill Hope's Sunday sprint down the Nattai River did not go, but Lucy Moore reported 11 on a glorious autumn day for her walk out from Hazelbrook.

Easter weekend was one of mixed weather, depending on where one was at the time. Ian Wolfe, and the 3 on his Four Peaks trip, encountered bad weather conditions, aborted the trip and came home early. Paul McCann had 9 on his Wild Rivers National Park walk but that is all we know of it.

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Ian Rannard had 16 on his Megalong Valley walk. They encountered wet conditions for most of the trip, with persistent drizzle. A total of 5 people dropped out along the way and the rest became steadily more soaked as time went on, despite a wide range of different raingear and strategies. Rik King had 13 on his Widden Valley trip. Again conditions were wet, with heavy rain throughout the walk. Worse still, the low cloud base obscured all the views that were to have been a feature of the walk. Ken Cheng reported warm, partly sunny conditions for the 12 walkers on his Saturday Wondabyne area walk.

The weather next weekend wasn't much better. Bill Holland allowed discretion to rule and relocated his Colo River walk to Georges Plains, somewhat to the West. They visited a property that is subject to a Voluntary Conservation Agreement and the only (honour is satisfied) attempt at a walk, by Ian Debert, ended badly with Ian spraining an ankle. Maureen Carter's Glenbrook Saturday walk was cancelled due to the leader being unavoidably detained somewhere in Borneo. (No we don't know what the weather was like there.)

Ralph Penglis' Sydney Harbour Heritage walk had 14 starters and once more we do not know the weather. A little further south Jim Calloway reported a party of 9 with rain for around 75% of the time on his Waterfall to Heathcote Sunday trip and beaucoup leeches. For some reason Jim described the day as enjoyable.

Wilf Hilder's midweek walk out from Glenbrook on the Tuesday attracted 11 starters. They experienced some difficulties with a local subdivision, but it was ever thus; and they were distinctly marginal in terms of catching the train. Perhaps they were trying to provide a suspenseful end to the walks reports.

The Conservation report saw passage of a motion that we donate \$100.00 to support the Wilderness Society campaign against uranium mining at Kakadu. We have written to congratulate the NSW Premier on re-election to government.

Confederation report indicated that Nuri Chorvat has resigned as Confederation training officer and as delegate to the putative National Confederation body. Maurice Smith has taken up the position of delegate to the National Confederation in his stead.

## **SBW PHOTOGRAPH AND SLIDE COMPETITION**

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 1999. \$300 total prize value

For full details refer to 12 of the Winter Walks winner of each category,



page 6 of the May 1999 Magazine or page program. There will be a \$50 gift voucher, for the kindly donated by the following bushwalking shops:

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The memorial service for Anzac day at Splendour Rock has been abandoned for this year, due in part to access uncertainties. It will be resumed next year. There was no general business. The president appraised the meeting of recent committee activities which were reported in the May magazine. The club has instituted a walks incident reporting system with a filing location for completed and reviewed reports to be finalized. Leadership training nights will continue to be scheduled on the social program and interested presenters are welcome to contact the committee for details. After announcements the meeting closed at 2118.



### ALEX COLLEY'S 90<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY

Sun. Aug. 1 at 7 Terrigal Av Turrumurra

**Commencing at noon. Lunch provided.**

The president invites all SBW members (past and present) to help Alex celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Alex became a member of the SBW in 1936 and it was Tom Herbert, the then president, (and fellow Sydney University economics undergraduate), who nominated him for membership. His first walk was from Mt Jellore to Hilltop and Alex took over the walk at the Nattai, as he knew the way to Hilltop. In April 1937 he joined Max Gentle and Gordon Smith on a three day trip, Katoomba, Kanangra, Katoomba. Six others joined the party and the group became known as The Tigers. A number of Alex's walks were probably 'firsts', in the northern Blue Mountains they included; Putty to Coricudgy, Cudgegong Valley and thence Rylstone, Wirraba Range to Newnes, Apsley River to Kundarang Brook, Tenterfield to the Clarence River via the Mann River.

Alex was elected to the SBW committee in 1937. Over the years he held the positions of conservation secretary, editor and president.

In 1984 he was awarded an order of Australia for services to conservation.

For further details contact Shirley Dean on 9810 4268 or Helen Gray on 024464 1724

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### Telephone answerers required.

Two members have volunteered to answer the new 0500 club telephone number when required but the club would like to obtain at least two more volunteers.

Full details are set out on page 2 of the May magazine.

## The Short Cut

### *A Kimberley Incident*

by Geoff Wagg

Our Party of nine SBW members had walked out to the falls on the Mitchell River on the northern edge of the Mitchell Plateau in the Kimberley at the end of June 1997. This was only a couple of hours easy going, mainly along Merton Creek because we were camped by our vehicles at the end of the road and all too close to the helicopter pad where the joy flights took off. It was a beautiful day as most days are in the Kimberley at that time of the year and we had made a reasonably early start for us. Mercifully the din of the helicopters was largely diminished when we put a ridge between them and us. We skipped past Little Merton Falls planning to explore its aboriginal art sites fully the next day because we were hot for the BIG one; the Mitchell Falls. The track took us through open forest for about a kilometre then led down into the shallow course of the pleasant open creek that it followed all the way until it confronted us with the impressive slot of Big Merton Falls. The wet in 1997 had been big and late so the creek was still flowing strongly and the falls made a brave show but although it was enough to get the cameras clicking we were still panting to see the BIG one. We were not kept in suspense much longer. Our track crossed the creek and climbing a low hump led us right to the brink of the Mitchell Falls.

But this wasn't BIG. It was **HUGE**. We stood at the edge of a giant horseshoe shape, about half a kilometre wide and twice as long, gouged in the ancient rock and polished by ages of rushing water. The roar of the falling water filled the void and engulfed us where we stood. Our eyes followed the smoothly flowing river as it plunged, foaming down the first drop, then skirting a platform leapt into the green pool below and then another and another until finally gathering all of its force it gushed

from a notch into the sunlit gorge beneath a welter of spray and rainbows. A thought at the back of our minds said, "if this is impressive now, try to imagine it at the height of the wet season". Still ever and often, above the noise and fury of the water, came the-CHOP-CHOP-CHOP-CLAK-CLAK-CLAK-of three or more helicopters plying overhead.

For a time then we went our own ways exploring and taking photos before re-gathering for lunch in a shaded overhang below the further lip of the main horseshoe. While eating our sandwiches we were vastly entertained by a group, younger, (and sillier) than we, who dangled themselves to the next lower level, via a chimney, with a snatch strap.

It was about this time that Shirley mentioned a fine group of figures, painted in the Bradshaw style, that she had seen under a rocky outcrop a little way up Mitchell River when she had been here with Willis on a previous trip. We decided that as we had finished lunch and as the entertainment with the snatch strap seemed to be over, a small exploration up the river was just the thing to occupy the rest of the afternoon.

As soon as we had left the shade of the overhang the heat struck us in a way we had not noticed before. A rogue helicopter swept up over the edge of the gorge and briefly deafened us before chopping off into the distance followed by our curses. Our route took us first along a dry rocky cutting where the sun shimmered off the walls on either side. On reaching the main stream the heat was not so intense, but by the time we had gone about a kilometre and explored a few low ridges. A sunny tree-fringed pool with water lilies was too good to pass. We swam and lazed and the afternoon almost stole away. Almost but not quite. George is not one to be diverted from his object for too long by such a languorous activity. After a brief dip he was off exploring and his shout from upstream was what eventually got us moving again.

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Quite a distinctive outcrop, undercut on all sides with several tunnels through its base, it must have been just above flood level and there on a sheltered wall were the paintings. Dark brown on the cream rock, these wonderfully animated figures with their headdresses, weapons and belts seemed as fresh as yesterday, they were so full of life. We were excited, and as usual we expressed this by taking a great many photographs which took a great deal of time. Finally someone noticed the sun, well down toward the horizon. "Time to make tracks!" Yes indeed we had some way to go. "Don't worry said George, there's a short cut. If we just go up this ridge behind us we can cut off that big bend and drop back down just at the falls." Helen made a face like someone who had been on George's short cuts before but she stayed loyal. Joan and Frank decided to return the way we had come; the rest of us followed George.

The patch of country we were moving through had been burnt by an early season fire so we made good progress to the top of the ridge. Here, it became obvious that things were a bit more complicated than we had first thought. We started to wish we had a detailed map or a compass or even a torch. George was contemplating a bold cross-country bid straight to camp but the chickens won the day and we started to make our way back toward the Mitchell River. But where was the river? Well it had to be down there somewhere. We should be able to see the helicopters circling the falls from here; that would give us our direction. We stared but the sky flooded with the pale light of late afternoon was completely clear. Isn't that typical? Never a helicopter around when you need one!

We were in a fair sort of hurry by now. We made our way through some very interesting rock formation, if only we had the time to explore them. The undergrowth was starting to thicken up too as we left behind the burnt area. We were crossing an awkward, tangled scree when a vine caught

George's foot and brought him crashing down amongst the rocks. He sat up with blood coursing down the side of his face. "I'm alright," said George in a way that sounded like he was trying to convince himself.

Examination showed that most of the blood was coming from his ear, where a crack on a sharp rock had split the cartilage leaving a nasty gash. The speed with which we got George bandaged up and underway again was evidence of our faith in his toughness and also our desire not to be benighted. Dropping lower we met our next obstacle a body of water, but not the Mitchell River, at least not the one we knew. These streams have a habit of forming many courses during the flood season, but which stream was this? We needed an urgent answer and we got it. The chop - chop - chop of a circling helicopter, glowing like a firefly in the last rays of the sun, gave us our direction. So, helicopters have a reason for existence after all.

We soon picked up the track and made good time retracing our steps of the morning. Helen, and the rest of us too for that matter, kept an anxious eye on George whose bandaged head gave him a slightly piratical look, but his stride never faltered. Complete darkness finally overtook us as we dropped down to the last creek crossing. We splashed through and climbed up to the road and five minutes later were sitting around the fire that Joan and Frank had going, waiting for the billy to boil. The continuing saga of George's ear and how we "rushed" it to hospital, well, that will have to wait till another day.

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## Obituaries.

In recent months the club has suffered the loss of four members through death, Frank Leyden, Tine Matthews, Suzanne Garland and Jean Kendall. Club members who knew them well have contributed the following remembrances.

### Frank Leyden

*by Reg Alder*

Frank joined the SBW in the early 40's and was very active. His specialty was extended walks but he was also a keen skier and helped to build the Lake Albina ski lodge.

He was a keen black and white as well as colour photographer and a devotee of classical music, always seeking perfection in sound. Frank was a fastidious person in every way and was noted for his walks-record keeping which he analysed carefully after each walk to assist in the planning of future walks.

He was raised as a strict Catholic but in the 1960's became interested in Scientology, discarded his Catholic faith, resigned from AWA where he was an engineer, and went to Grinstead in England, the headquarters of the Scientology movement. He became deeply involved in the sect and though he only intended to go for 18 months he did not return. He continued to walk in England with the Ramblers and remained an SBW member up to his death.

### Memories of Tine Matthews

*by Shiela Binns*

Tine arrived in Sydney in the latter half of 1953 and having been a member of the Melbourne Bushwalkers immediately joined the SBW.

We were both living in bed-sitters and whilst waiting for a tram home after a week-end walk we decided to see if we could find a flat to share. They were as scarce as hens' teeth in those days, but Tine was fortunate to move into one with another girl who was planning to vacate shortly and when she did, I moved in.

An extended Christmas walk had been planned in the Snowy Mountains from Three Mile Dam to Kosciusko and then to Corryong. Tine was able to come for the first week, and I think that is when she first met Don. Soon afterwards we were on a Mitchell's Creek walk, again with Don as one of the party. Thereafter he became a regular visitor to the flat. He'd drop in unexpectedly at any time and it was lovely to see the developing happy relationship.

Tine and I shared a pleasant and compatible two years, no great 'crises' to mark the time but pieces of trivia come to mind, such as Tine's ability to fall asleep in any situation. One day whilst ironing I noticed her sitting by the ironing board, fast asleep but still staying bolt upright! Another time we went to a Brahms concert which finished with the Third Symphony. On the way home Tine said, "that was a very short symphony" – "Yes you slept right through the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> movements" – still bolt upright. Our landlord had a pet kangaroo, rescued as a small joey. It hopped all around the place. Early one morning, I heard it hopping down our hallway, then silence. I went to investigate, and there was Tine sitting up in bed, feeding it grapes.

The wedding was quite unforgettable for me. Tine's sister Truus came up from Melbourne. I had never met her. Tine, like all brides, was late, probably because the journey to the church was through peak hour traffic, but eventually the organist, Don's Aunt Nancy, played the Bridal March. I turned around and then back to Grace and Geoff Wagg sitting next to me and said, "that's not Tine, it's her sister". After two years of sharing a flat with Tine somehow I knew the difference between her and her identical twin! These are some of the memories but the overall one is of a happy, pleasant and enjoyable two years in my life that will not be forgotten.

## Vale Suzanne Garland

by Greta James

Suzanne Garland died on Sunday 30th May after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Suzanne was a wonderful friend - thoughtful and sensitive but, at the same time, down to earth. We first met about five years ago when she joined the club. She loved the bush and took to walking with characteristic cheerfulness and determination. Little by little, Suzanne told me of her full and interesting life - her childhood in Neutral Bay, her years as a ballet dancer, her time as a TV producer in Canada and, more recently, her work as a lawyer in Australia.

She faced her illness with characteristic courage talking about how, like climbing a Kanangra ridge, you just had to put one foot after the other. Throughout, she remained interested in what people were doing and always enquired about bushwalkers' exploits. Even in this last month, she enjoyed passing on SBW news. No matter how ill she was, she always diverted the conversation away from herself and took an interest in other people.

SBW has lost a very special and gracious member. Goodbye Suzanne. We will miss you.

### Goodbye

*A poem by Suzanne's niece, Louisa Lynch.*

It's time for us to say goodbye,

You're an angel now so spread your wings and fly.

Fly far away from all your pain.

You have escaped now, you are free once again.

You fought hard for so long in every way,  
But the battle is over so you leave us peacefully today.

You will be missed terribly; you were an inspiration to me.

I am grateful for all you did, this I hope you can see.

So this is goodbye to my Aunty Sue.

Always know that I will forever miss you.

## Tribute to Jean Kendall

by Tony Crichton

Our club has lost a most highly respected and capable bushwalker and cyclist. Jean Kendall received severe injuries in an accident whilst riding in a 600 km cycling endurance event near Tamworth around 6 pm on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May. Ambulance and Police rushed her to the Tamworth Hospital Intensive Care Unit but she died soon after arrival.

Jean was a kind and caring person who had a special affinity for, and ability in, helping children with disabilities. She had worked with the Autistic Society and the Spastic Centre and had set up a program for autistic children in Sri Lanka. Her temperament and personality were perfect for helping people in need.

Upon joining SBW in March 1991, Jean quickly showed herself to be an exceptional bushwalker. With her beloved partner Jan Mohandas, Jean walked on every available weekend or holiday. Her ability, enthusiasm, determination and love of the bush took her on the hardest of walks such as the Western Arthurs, Precipitous Bluff, Federation Peak, the Three Peaks in 4 days and the K to K. Jean was always happy and friendly and it was a pleasure to walk with her.

In recent times she completed numerous endurance cycling events, displaying great tenacity and courage and achieving considerable success and popularity in the cycling world.

Jean will be deeply missed by all of her SBW friends. She was an inspiration and a delight to all who knew her.

## **A Message from Jan**

I wish to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to all those Sydney Bushwalker friends of Jean and myself.

The kindness shown to me at this difficult time was of great comfort to me and I was touched by the presence of so many people at Jean's funeral.

Many thanks for your support.

Jan Mohandas

*Jan went overseas on June 9<sup>th</sup> and will be away for at least two months. He deeply regrets that he will not be able to reply individually to all of the letters and cards that he received.*

## **Bundeena to Otford by Night**

*by Ian Rannard*

For most people the idea of bush walking at night has very little appeal. The thought of stumbling around in the dark with nothing much to see just doesn't seem sensible. But given a few important requirements a night walk can be an enjoyable experience.

Those requirements are: an area with features that can be seen in low light conditions such as open farmland, the harbour foreshores or ocean beaches and with a near-full moon, and a torch with a long-lasting bright beam.

The Coast Track between Bundeena and Otford has many features that look good in moonlight. Saturday night February 6th 1999 was just after a full moon so armed with long-lasting bright-beamed torches, three of us set out on the 6.30pm Saturday ferry from Cronulla with the intention of walking from Bundeena to Otford Railway Station in time to catch the 6.21am train back to Sydney on Sunday. (This walk was in the Walks Programme as going from Otford but for various reasons I decided we'd go in the opposite direction).

From the outset things went well. Unlike the day-trippers that crowd the ferry on a

typical weekend morning, the passengers on this ferry were locals returning from shopping trips loaded with pot plants and plastic bags. Even Bundeena seemed different on this warm summer evening. Children were playing in the streets and neighbours, chatting over side fences, called out to ask what were we doing walking south at this time of day.

With a light northerly wind at our backs and the sun setting on our right we descended to Marley Beach where we had tea as the twilight faded into dark. At 8.30pm we started walking again, using our torches to avoid the occasional rock or root on the track. Now I know that there is a school of thought that says when walking at night one should take only a small torch and use it as little as possible, on the basis that the continual low light levels will optimize one's night-vision. But although this is true and a good practice for some people, I prefer to take as large a torch as practicable and to use it as much as possible on the basis that I'm less likely to trip over and hurt myself. A relatively powerful beam of light helps overcome the apprehension most people feel when starting off in the dark, improves the performance of those with less-than-normal night-vision, and is very helpful when you are searching for the track after you have wandered off it at the last bend. I use a Dolphin torch slung over the shoulder with a cord so that the torch rests on the opposite hip where it can be steadied and directed by the hand without that hand having to bear the weight of the 6-volt battery.

As we climbed out of little Marley the pleasures of this night walk became more apparent. The glow of Sydney's lights away to the north behind Gibbon Hill provided enough light to see the outline of the moorland and hills on our right. Out to sea the lights of fishing vessels glinted over the water. Below the cliffs waves, larger than usual from some far-off cyclone, could be heard crashing against the rocks. On the track, a boldly marked snake (later

identified as a Bandy-Bandy) raised a loop of its body in salute as we passed.

At 10.10pm we passed through Wattamolla where a fisherman, on hearing of our plan, thrust cans of Pepsi into our hands. At 11pm we passed through Curracorang exchanging 'good-nights' with some campers. Away in the north-east the moon rose through a golden haze. At 11.40pm we reached Eagle Rock, and after midnight managed to lose the main track by walking off it up a side track. It took twenty minutes of backtracking while repeating the phrase 'Where is that bloody track?' over and over before we were back on course. At 2.00am we were overlooking Garie Beach and at 2.30am walking along it under a magnificent arch of cloud that extended from horizon to horizon. A quick calculation showed that at our present pace the original plan of having a couple of hours sleep at North Era would put us way behind schedule, so we decided to go without sleep but to continue to have many short rests.

At 3.25am we crossed the small wooden bridge behind South Era SLSC and began the climb up Burgh Ridge, admiring the lights of Port Kembla and Wollongong to the south. Garrawarra was reached at 4am and Otford RS at 5.45am, where tired but happy we breakfasted in the pre-dawn light. Thankfully the train was near-empty so that few people witnessed the sight of the three of us sound-asleep from Hurstville to Central, the end of a satisfying and enjoyable walk.

*Participants were: Margaret Sheens, Glad and Ian Rannard.*

### Climbing Mt Kilimanjaro

#### *Part 4 of Jan Szarek's African Odyssey*

In Serengeti, I had noticed that the French Guyanese couple smoked but they did not smoke on Kilimanjaro. Most porters and guides smoke, some even right up on top. Some tourist are amused by the sign: 'Please Do not Throw Cigarette Butts on the Track'. They wonder who in hell might be

smoking here. This sign applies mainly to local people.

During preparations for the climb, a Yugoslavian Mountain Rescue Service man, in his mid-thirties, was prominent in our room. He was very sure of himself, giving advice to every one around on how to dress and what to do. Because of his overconfidence he was walking too fast. Next day, one hour after starting the final climb, he dropped out due to a headache.

We first met the athletic-looking American wrestling coach in his late twenties on the first day of the walk. He overtook our group walking like a soldier with over-boiling energy. In Kibo Hut, he looked sad and had a strong headache. During the final climb, he decided to walk more slowly, and, displaying strong determination, made it to the top.

In Kibo Hut, every one went to bed at six o'clock but most people couldn't sleep, but lay in bed with closed eyes. At eleven o'clock everyone arose and had a meal. The final climb of Kilimanjaro began at midnight. There are several reasons for such an early start. Before the sun rises the ground is frozen and climbing is easier. Many people do not like climbing in the heat of the sun and most people like to reach the top at sunrise. If one decides to start later he/she will be alone. Most people wear a head torch but it is usually not needed because of moonlight.

The ascent is very steep but is easy because the track zigzags. Walking was so slow that one felt like sleeping. It was a long caravan of people walking in a long queue and looking like lunatics. A short distance after the start, some people turned back. After two hours we passed the 5000m mark. We rested at a cave at about 5200m. About this time one of our guides turned back due to a headache. After the rest, the long queue of people split into several small groups, each subgroup having its own guide.

In our group the Frenchman looked weak, his steps were unsteady, his speech was slurred, and he had a headache, typical symptoms of

altitude sickness but he was determined to press ahead. When we got to the ice level it became quite slippery. The walking sticks, hired at the beginning of the walk, became useful for the first time. After six hours of climbing, our group arrived at Gillman Point, 5680m. It was quite a relief. The sun was slowly rising over the clouds and it looked like the view from a plane at high altitude as we were above the cloud level. Gillman Point is completely covered by spiky ice due to continuous melting during the day and freezing at night. I had a painful fall on the ice, peeling skin from my hand.

I was overdressed. Before the walk the German from my group was scaring me with stories of how cold it is at the top, with hurricane-like winds. He persuaded me to dress up as for a trip to the South Pole and I wore three layers of clothing: thermal underwear top/long johns, normal jumper/trousers, and an outer shell of Gore-tex parka and trousers.

It was too hot, and it is difficult to remove some clothing, particularly thermal underwear, due to the freezing wind. Good gloves, however, are essential.

Sometimes drinking water freezes. It is best to carry the water bottle near the body under your wind proof jacket, to keep it warm. The same applies to cameras that stop working at low temperature. My video camera was carried in contact with the body and worked well.

The English woman was the strongest member of our group. The German was strong but coughed unhealthily. I felt well but weak. The Frenchman arrived, looking weak, about ten minutes after us.

The top of Kilimanjaro, the Uhuru Peak at 5896m, is 200m higher than Gillman Point, and is a 1 ½ hr walk from there. The German was determined to reach the top and after a short break he departed with a guide. The Frenchman could not continue, his English wife did not want to leave him behind and turned back also.

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I was tired and felt like vomiting so I decided that it was not worth the effort. If the whole of our group had gone, I would have made the effort.

One can relax on the way down. The whole trek from Kibo Hut to Uhuru Peak is only 4 km for a 1200m climb. It takes eight hours up, but only two on the way down. At one stage the Frenchman was so weak that he could not walk. He tried to sit down and rest, but this was unwise as prolonged resting at the same elevation can make the sickness worse. With his wife holding him by one arm, and me holding him by the other, we slowly walked down. After few hundred metres, he recovered and walked by himself. He was lucky. About two or three people are carried down each week by local rescue teams. About five or six people per year die, some people suffer medical problems like asthma or a heart deficiency and should not have attempted the climb. At Kibo Hut we exchanged experiences.

Few people actually enjoy the final climb. The Norwegian woman from our room did not have any problems with the altitude, but she did not enjoy the walk.

I had one extra unused day and was contemplating spending it in Kibo Hut and making another attempt. The climb the next day should be easier due to acquired acclimatization, but I decided that it was not worth it. I had seen 99% of the mountain and the remaining 1% was not worth the extra effort.

Soon the German arrived, proud of his achievement of reaching Uhuru Peak. Our group assembled for a group picture. At about midday, people started on the way back to Horombo Hut. It felt like a second day of trekking even though it is still the same day that we climbed Kilimanjaro. After descending a few hundred metres the Frenchman's headache was gone and he felt well. Descending is the only way to cure altitude sickness. In this section of the walk we enjoyed the mountain scenery and the night in

Horombo Hut was the best we had in the whole trek. We slept like logs.

The next day after breakfast, the group farewelled me. They descended, but my extra day was spent around Horombo Hut and on a walk towards Mawenzi Peak. It is the second most distinctive peak in the Kilimanjaro massif. A three hour walk takes you to its base but the top can only be reached by rockclimbers.

(To be concluded next month )



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