

At last it's time to write again to let you know what I've been up to since I left Mittagundi in late March of this year, and to try and explain what I've done with all that time, and what my plans are now.

Well, once the writing of 'the book' was done, and I could clearly see that Mittagundi was ready and more than able to take off on it's own under it's new leaders Rick and Mick, I also started to realise that nearly all of my possible future plans were going to be severely limited if I continued to base myself at Glen Valley. The obvious thing to do was to make a move.

But to where? I had heaps of ideas about how I could best continue to help mix mountains and young people together, for the benefit of both (and me!). But exactly where, when and how it was best to go about it I found very difficult to see clearly right then.

I decided to make the break anyway, and to leave my hut for the use of all ex-staff (including me!). "Anywhere will do," I thought. "Just to make the break is the main thing." And not surprisingly, I ended up soon after, with Claude and a trailer-load of junk, at good old Merrijig! What wonderful friends I have over there. The Klingsporns, the Dunlops, the Murphys and so many more. It is really quite hard to just walk away from a place that has meant as much to you as Mittagundi has to me, and head off to 'nowhere in particular' with no real plan at all. I found it was anyway. I would have been stonkered without some very strong friends, I know. I knew that I was going to miss the place, the people, the busyness, the purpose, and of course, the 'dawg', a hell of a lot.

I decided to just concentrate on keeping busy. Ross Matlock, Jan Taylor and me had been planning to completely rebuild Ritchie's Hut on the Howqua, with the help of some voluntary unemployed kids, for quite a long time. I decided to plough straight into that project. The plan was to complete the job in a month, by which time the infamous Mittagundi book, for which I was by then in debt over to the tune of nearly \$30,000, should be printed and ready. I'm so glad that we pushed on with that project, now. We were up there for nearly a month, during which time we completely restored the whole hut in the traditional hand-split slab style, and built a very substantial post & rail yard next to it. We had an enormous clean-up of the whole area too, and, "vandals permitting," I reckon that we have ensured that Ritchie's Hut will remain one of the best examples in the State of a traditional bush hut, for at least another 40 years to come. (Who knows though - a couple of months later, vandals burnt the Six Mile Hut on the Howqua, to the ground. Ritchie's however, has one big thing in it's favour - to get there you just have to walk.)

My sincere thanks to the Dunlop, Klingsporn and Murphy families, Rob and Geoff Ritchie, Graeme and Chris Stoney, Steve Ware, David Yencken, the Lovick family, Peter and Judy McCormack, and the many others who helped us in so many ways during that month. Also to all those who walked the 5 miles in and out to help us during the month, and to the great team of young ex-Mittagundians who turned up to help us carry in the mountain of gear, food, tools and building materials that were needed to take the job on. We can just be thankful that at least the 14 bags of cement only had to be carried in, and not out again at the end! Thanks also to Anita, our 'project cook.' But mostly I want to thank Ross and Jan, who both toiled away all month to ensure that we finished a really top-class job on the hut, and who were both fantastic and invaluable friends to me during what I must admit, I found a very difficult month.

So we emerged from the Howqua in late April, (in pouring rain and a roofless Land Rover - reminiscent of the 8 Mile days), with a job well done behind us, and 5000 copies of 'Something Small' waiting for me in a factory down in Melbourne.

I left Claude with the Klingsporns, my books and photos with the Dunlops, my horse with Les Murphy, and the rest of my worldly possessions stacked in various garages and shed corners all around Merrijig. I squeezed some clothes, my filing cabinet and the food left over from Ritchie's Hut, into the VW, and headed somewhat miserably for Melbourne.

I knew that I had to sell lots of books quickly to pay off all my debts before I could do anything else. And at this point, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of you who loaned me money for the printing of the book. There were 14 of you altogether who helped with sums of money, and hundreds more who bought copies in advance, and I

could never have even attempted it without that sort of support. I only hope that you were all happy with it. I know it's a bit rough around the edges, but I hope it captures what Mittagundi is all about, and I think that it also has a good deal to say about the two most important issues around today - our young people and our environment.

To sell books I had to go to Melbourne. That decision was easy. Putting it into practice when you have lived like I have for most of your life, is nowhere near as simple. One great thing happened to me then. Gerry Gerrish's family offered me a 'home away from home' with them at Camberwell for as long as I needed it. Just what I would have done without Bill and Lesley and their tremendous family, I hate to think! I arrived in early May, thinking that I might need to stay for a month or maybe a little longer. Now its October, and I'm still here! How they have put up with me, my 5000 books, my car, my phone calls, my clothes, and perhaps especially my boots, for so long, I really don't know. But not only have they given me a great place to call home, (and office, and bookstore!), but more importantly, they have given me just the very friendship, care and support, (not to mention seemingly endless cordon-blue cooking), that someone in my situation needed so much. To Bill, Lesley, Gerry, Jane, Tim, Prue, James and Pete (my office assistant!), my most grateful thanks - I could not have done without you.

The Gerrish garage was soon full of books - roughly 5000 of them! Mt. Book, we called it, and it looked depressingly huge! But we were soon eating into it, and selling them fast. Packing, addressing and posting books became a big part of each day. Since then we have sold over 3500 of them. And we have paid off our debts and put nearly \$20,000 into the bank as well. We've pushed it and promoted it in a hundred different ways, and all I can say is that the sales have been a great boost for me, and an enormous relief. Never again will I ever even contemplate writing another book, I promise, but I must admit I can think of very few other ways in which I could have raised as much money to get going with again so quickly. Thankyou to all who have bought copies, and especially to those who have made donations as well, (perhaps most especially to the Carey family whose donation was in memory of Matthew, a great young friend of mine who died recently in an accident, and to the Lucas family from S.A., who paid \$5000 for 4 books without ever having even seen Mittagundi!). More about the book later. Suffice to say here that it has been a great success so far, and that most people seem to really like it, (but I spose they would'nt tell me if they didn't!). To everyone helping still with it's sales, again my grateful thanks.

The time at Ritchies Hut gave me many opportunities to think about the future. I went for long walks up the Howqua nearly every night. By the end of that month, I had pretty much decided what I wanted to do and why. Also where I wanted to do it, and even what I wanted to call it.

Wollangarra is a word created from two aboriginal words - Wollanbin meaning 'high places', and Koolangarra meaning 'young people.' As with the word Mittagundi, there's a bit of poetic licence involved. It sort of depends on which tribe you came from, or which aboriginal words book you use, but the name not only has a good sound to it, but more importantly, it does sum up the over-riding aim of this new project - that of fostering and building up a partnership which I see as a natural, obvious and invaluable one; a partnership between a strong and growing group of concerned and caring young people, with what is left of our very special Victorian mountains. It seems to me that every ongoing generation of young people, living as they will in an inevitably increasingly complicated, confusing and high-tech world, will need more and more, the peace and quiet, the natural beauty, and the down to earth challenge (not to mention the clean water supply), that these wonderful places are so good at offering. Conversely, if our mountains, or even just some of them, are going to have a hope of surviving the next few decades in at least some form of natural and unexploited serenity, they are going to need a fair few extremely genuine and committed young friends to help them, and the sooner they are gathered together the better.

So Wollangarra will be, like Mittagundi, all about making opportunities available to young people to meet and work with people from all parts of the community; to escape from the confusions of life in a big city, and have time to think about where they are going and what they want out of life (hopefully returning from the experience a little more

able to sort out the garbage from the quality, and a little more determined to live, admittedly within the constraints of the community that they are part of, in a thoroughly purposeful and positive way); to be reminded that life is, and always will be, just as much about down-to-earth nature as it is about technology; to experience the satisfaction of achievement, and the fun of honest, hard work; and to be part of a community where people are still the main concern and material things play a very small role.

But Wollangarra will differ from Mittagundi in one very important way. It will put at the very top of its list of aims and priorities, above all these other things, a strong, vital and practical message of conservation, and it will offer ways of putting its ideas into positive, nitty-gritty practice; real ways of attacking the problems that young people are finding themselves increasingly surrounded by, rather than by preaching more and more endless gloom and doom.

I believe it is now extremely important that we start to see, and to show our young people, that any real conservation, of any real value, must be reflected and demonstrated in our lifestyle and not just in our rhetoric. So much of conservation today is about protests and rallies and car stickers. It all seems so negative, and so often it seems it is those who are protesting who are the very causes of what they are protesting about. Our generation talks more about conservation than any generation ever has. But we also pollute and desecrate our environment far more per head, than any previous generation could ever have dreamed possible. And Australians must rank as some of the greediest users of resources per head, in the world. Surely now it is time that we backed up our concern for the environment that we all profess to have, with a far more searching look at the shortcomings and excesses of our lifestyles and at how each one of us is, through our own way of living, causing the very problems that we so readily bemoan. And maybe it is already well past the time that we should all start looking honestly and critically into some of the countless small ways that we can at least contribute towards finding solutions for at least some of the mounting numbers of frightening problems that we are discovering all around us, by modifying those lifestyles and becoming more willing to get in there and do something about it, rather than being content with simply whinging about what the government is not doing about it. We, as users of timber, are the real loggers. We, as users of electricity in a thousand small ways, are the real hydro-electric dam builders. We, as willing and often far too careless consumers, are the real causes of so many of the huge problems now facing the very environment that makes life possible.

At Wollangarra I want to take groups of young people, (admittedly only briefly), back to a simple, down-to-earth, way of life, amongst a remote, small and recognisable community, where hard work, good honest fun, and and real practical purpose are part of every day. And where a real love and care for the mountains, and the environment in general, is encouraged in every possible way, and is backed up by a commitment to get out and do something practical towards their protection and long-term well being.

I want to do this in three stages. Firstly, I want to run a whole range of trips and expeditions into the mountains with small school groups (during most weeks of each school term), during which the major aim is to show the young people involved what a tremendous asset we have in those mountains, how many wonderful places are still left at least relatively unruined in our country, and to try and foster a real love and care for these places, combined with a genuine desire to become part of looking after them.

Secondly, I want to encourage as many of those kids involved in these trips as possible, to come back on a whole range of school holiday projects, such as hut restorations, track building, dunny digging, snow pole upkeep, large scale clean-ups and so on, where they can actually put their 'money where their mouths are', and get up and do something about looking after an environment that has become special to them, and which is obviously threatened. It is at this level of the project that we should be able to bring all sorts of different young people together in a similar way to that of the courses at Mittagundi.

And thirdly, I want to try and take things an important step further in what I see as real 'conservation' for young people to be involved in. I would like to try to set up in many (hopefully all) of the schools that become involved in the program at Wollangarra, a 'Wollangarra Club.' This club would encourage those who wanted to try, to think about and to put into practice a whole range of ways that they might be able to contribute to the well being of our environment by simply becoming more

Careful, selective and prepared to make concessions in their own personal lifestyle, and maybe (if their family was also willing to try), in the lifestyle of their family. Those involved could opt for small, (but, to me incredibly important) commitments or undertakings, such as not accepting unnecessary plastic bags at supermarkets and shops, rejecting some types of spray cans, not buying Saturday newspapers until the various sections are offered separately, encouraging any form of re-cycling or energy conservation, or simply becoming far more selective about the packaging and brand names of the products that they buy. Later they might choose to progress to larger and more serious commitments such as deciding that the family could try doing without air-conditioning in the house and the car, as indeed everybody managed quite well without until about ten years ago, when this, one of our greatest ozone-eating habits started to become a carefully promoted way of life.

I believe that so many young people are just itching to do something to help the environment, but feel overwhelmed by the immensity of so many of the issues. Maybe this sort of a project, offering the re-assurance of knowing that many other like-minded young people throughout the community were also having a go at doing their bit, might give them the confidence and motivation to be part of it too. We have to start somewhere. I don't want to create a whole army of raving greenies and protestors. I simply want to show some of our young people the realities of cause and effect, and offer them a way of at least making a start down the track which I firmly believe holds the only real, long-term solutions. These issues are, I believe, incredibly important. And it would seem that the time for tackling them is fast running out. Quite obviously, unpopular government decrees, which will hurt, will only come once the situation with the environment is desperate. To me there is a huge risk that that will be too late. The only other answer, and perhaps the only real one anyhow, must come from within the community itself, and in many small ways. Our kids, I believe, are already starting to show us the way. We need to re-inforce in them the vital importance, in so many ways, of the things that go on, or could go on in our small local communities all the time. In a world that constantly pushes to our young people the glory and impressiveness of bigness in almost everything, we need to balance that all the time with a strong plug for the quality and importance of smallness and local communities living ordinary lives. What better way to do it than by letting them experience life at a place like Wollangarra or Mittagundi for a short time. Such places can't offer instant answers of course, or solve all the confusion in many young minds overnight just like that. They can be great places to think, talk and toss ideas around at though, and from which to head back into life with a more balanced idea of what is going on, and a commitment to try and contribute to solving what is wrong, or even being prepared to recognise it. At present we take several factors naturally and almost automatically into account with every decision we make. Things like safety, legality, morality, the possible effect on others and so on. It seems to me that the next generation has to take on board one more factor that the previous generations failed to - the impact on the environment of every decision we make. Thinking in these terms will be absolutely vital. We are just scratching the surface now. I hope that Mittagundi and Wollangarra are steps in the right direction for our young people. They are, after all, the ones who will pay the price if we do not tackle the job sufficiently well now.

I am really keen to give Wollangarra a try, and I suspect that I am in for another 10 wonderful years in the process. I will need lots of help of course. But I suspect also, that all who get involved will come away with one very important message from it all; that a materialistic, money based, resource-hungry lifestyle is definitely not the only way to find quality and happiness in life. Indeed the opposite is often the case. Balance is surely one of the key words for the future, and places like Mittagundi and Wollangarra are I believe, essential experiences for modern, high-tech young people, if the eventual balance between technology and nature is to be one that allows for long-term human survival of any real quality.

I'm waffling again! Sorry! As if the book wasn't bad enough! So lets get down to the nuts and bolts of the whole thing.

After much searching and trooping around, I have found what I believe to be the most ideal site that we could ever wish for, as a base for such a project. Early on I decided that the Licola area was the most suitable one left in the mountains for our purposes. Up that way, the

Gilder family own most of the freehold land, and because of their strong support for what we are doing, we have succeeded in buying the most wonderful block of 90 remote acres of land, deep in what is known as the Macalister River Gorge, and accessible only on foot or by raft. I am extremely grateful to the Gilders for taking us on in this way. They probably need a crowd like us up behind their property like a hole in the head! I sincerely hope that they never have cause to regret it. So the land is bought, and the proceeds of the book so far have come close to covering the purchase price. Wollangarra is a registered, independant, non-profit organisation just like Mittagundi, and is the proud owner of 90 acres of inaccessible land, and a virtually empty bank account! The local Maffra Shire have indicated strong support for our project, as have the local Conservation, Forests and Lands officers. Licola is right on the edge of the very best of what is left of our most remote and beautiful mountain country. Names like Tarli Karng, Mt Wellington, Mt Howitt, Mt Magdala, The Crosscut Saw, Mt Buggery, Mt Speculation, The Crinoline, The Razor, The Viking, The Wonnangatta Valley, The Sentinels, and many more are all relatively close. It is also only about 3 hours from Melbourne. Naturally it is therefore an area that suffers an enormous invasion of motorised recreationalists of all sorts nearly every weekend and public holiday. Certainly it is only the single-handed battle that the Gilder family has fought against abuse and littering, that has resulted in the area still being as outstandingly beautiful and relatively unruined today. Our remote little spot should be well protected from all of this however, we hope. We have been tremendously lucky to find it, and even more lucky to have been able to buy it. Let me tell you a little bit more about it.

The block is in two sections. One on either side of the river. Most of it is very steep, heavily timbered country, and you would need to be a mountain goat to even reach a lot of it. The centre of it though is a small, semi-clear and really beautiful little river flat on the south side of the river. It is about 5 acres I suppose, and heavily infested with rabbits and blackberries. But it has the potential to be cleaned up into an absolutely perfect site for our base. To reach the land you have two choices. Either raft or canoe for several miles down through the rather remote and inaccessible Gorge which we are at the foot of, or walk up the south bank of the river for about half a mile, (over Crown Land), where at present there is not even a foot track. This will become the main access for us of course, and a good walking track (which we fully intend being the only access ever to Wollangarra), will be one of our very first jobs. Along this track must stagger every person, animal or thing that will ever visit, live at, work on, be eaten at, or be used at to build and run Wollangarra.

"What a ridiculous hassle!" I hear you all saying!

Maybe so. But I also think that in a few decades time we just might find that we have created a unique asset for young people of future generations - one small place that has not been dominated by, or ruined by the inevitable invasion of vehicles that any road of any sort always seems to bring. It will also be this remoteness that gives the place a special atmosphere, and which provides heaps of fair dinkum purpose to the daily activities of the young people staying there. Like Mittagundi, our base will be all old-style and wood-fired. No electricity, and lots of firewood collecting. No switches and a very obvious reason for every community job. No hiding from 'cause and effect' when it comes to Nature too. Nobody to pester us, but nobody to run to for help either. It will be a very real little community that lives up there on that little river flat each week. It will be the remoteness that also hopefully ensures that this special little spot remains just as it is now - peaceful and unruined. But perhaps a little better looked after!

So, what are our plans for this great little spot? Unlike Mittagundi, it will not be a place where groups of kids live and work for weeks at a time. Rather it will be a base to begin and end all our expeditions and projects from, a place to store our gear at, a place to keep our pack-horse at, a place for our staff to live at, and a place for all our supporters, friends and a whole range of young people from all sorts of backgrounds to visit, enjoy and learn from.

It is my plan to build (during 1989, and with lots of help), a fairly large, traditional, pioneer-style building, which will provide simple but comfortable accomodation for the staff, and the participants of each course. Also a large old 'Barn' type building, a good sized Woodshed, a bush shower (reminiscent, but perhaps more attractive than 'Helen'), and some good old (and very deep) bush dunnies. Our plans

also include a large wood-fired stove, an old single-cylinder sawbench, gas lights and a kero fridge. Because the timber is not suitable up there, everything we build from will have to be carted in. In keeping with our philosophies about the environment, all the buildings will be made from recycled, second hand materials. We have already purchased 1000 second-hand railway sleepers, and 30 old SEC poles. All of these of course, will have to be hauled in along that track before they can be cut into slabs and posts for the buildings. So will the roofing iron, the flooring, the nails, the windows and doors, the furniture and fittings, the boiler, the stove, the fridge, even the sawbench, and heaven knows what else, before the job is done! Work parties and good times seem destined to become frequent events in 1989! We have already organised the purchase of the stove, the boiler and the sawbench, as well as a fair bit of hiking gear. This has all been funded by donations and the proceeds from the book. Jim Presser has donated some new gas lights and a whole mountain of camping gear for the initial base camp, all in memory of his son Russell, who many will remember as a Mittagundi student. But every time I think it through, I think of something else we will need.

Some of the things we will need to put our minds to include a cement mixer, cement, windows, mattresses and pillows, old style kitchen gear, paint, a water line, the unavoidable telephone, radio communications, two second-hand Land Rovers, chooks, a camp 'dawg', countless hand tools, a mountain of building materials, a trailer, a chainsaw, a workshop, plumbing fittings, an office, first aid gear, a rescue stretcher, a pamphlet about us, sponsors for kids who need help to attend, and many, many other things. We also need to fund the construction of a short road and a small car parking area somewhere in the clear country downstream, and to think about how we are going to feed everybody whilst all of this is going on. And then there is always our old enemy - public liability insurance.

In other words, if you think you can, please help! Starting from 1990, I see me and three or four staff running the place full time, but in 1989 (the building time), it will be me and who-ever is around to help. We will need carriers, builders, cooks, fund raisers, supporters, and people with all sorts of skills that I haven't even thought of yet. We haven't finalised the Council of Wollangarra yet, but those definitely on it so far include Chris Dunlop, Ross Matlock, Neil Derrick, Jill Sykes, Ross Stevens, Chris Balmford, Virginia Wiseman, Gerry Gerrish, Jan Taylor, Rose Gilder, Liz Marsh and me. To all of these people, my grateful thanks. If we turn out to be only half as happy and successful as the Mittagundi Council did, we'll be doing pretty well.

If you recieved this newsletter, you are on the Wollangarra mailing list. Perhaps you could let me know of others who should be, or if you don't want to be! Soon the detailed plans for this summer and for 1989 will be finalised. Firstly the legal mechanics of the land purchase must be in place though, and I must shift up onto the block, shift all my stuff there, and build some form of temporary shelter for the first year or so. But once all this is done, if you are good at clearing blackberries, swinging picks, digging holes, nailing nails, mixing cement, catching rabbits, cooking rough food, telling yarns or carrying heavy things for long distances, you can be assured of a warm welcome at Wollangarra for a long time to come! If you think that you can help us with some gear, or in any other way, we would love to hear from you. It all has to happen in 1989. Apart from anything else, we need to buy 24 sleeping bags, 24 rucksacks, 24 parkhas, 12 tents and about 40 pairs of hiking boots. There is an enormous amount of money to raise.

So let me warn you about some coming events! Firstly, let me make a promise that there will only ever be one Wollangarra raffle every five years! Now let me tell you about the first one! (To be held later this year or more likely in the first half of 1989). David Breadmore of Four Seasons Hotels, has generously offered a week for two at one of the Top End Kakadu Hotels, and free air fares both ways. What a wonderful start! Thanks David, very much. More news about that later.

The infamous Bruce Latimer has offered to run a teams 'trivial pursuits' night in Melbourne during 1989. "Suitable for all ages," Bruce assures me! And with Bruce as MC, it is a guaranteed good night for everyone. More news about that later too.

It is also our plan to run an annual sponsored (by the mile), walk along the Great Divide from Wollangarra to Mittagundi. A hell of a long way! This event is destined to become an epic, and will obviously be for limited numbers. So if you are a keen walker, and don't want to miss out, then you'd better keep your ears open for the date of the first one, hopefully in late 1989.

And then sometime each year, starting in 1989, we plan to have an annual Bar-B-Que/picnic event actually at Wollangarra, which will include a raft race down the river, and a free raft ride in for those who are officially designated as genuine cases of need!

But for now there is one big way in which you can help us to get underway - by helping us to sell the rest of the first edition of the book as soon as we possibly can. Preferably before I leave Melbourne. Christmas is coming up, and at \$20 they really are an ideal present for young and old. With only 1200 left they are sure to become collectors items, as there will definitely be no more hard cover editions printed, ever. If everyone could take on say six to sell (preferably paying in advance as it really gets incredibly hard to manage otherwise), the job would be finished so quickly. And quite honestly, I'm starting to stagger with it a bit! Please could you take some on if you possibly can. It would put some money into the empty coffers straight away.

The address for all book business from now until the end of the year will be:

Ian Stapleton, P.O. Box 77, Camberwell 3124.

The books cost \$20 if you can arrange to collect them, and \$25 if you want them posted to you. But there's a special deal on packs of 6 which are prepaid for - \$130 including postage and packaging. That's a pretty good deal I reckon. And if you live in W.A. or Qld, you might care not to stick to the postage discount too mercilessly!

Cheques should still go to 'The Mittagundi Book Account.'

I really feel that they are good value, and now that the expenses are paid, absolutely all the money will go to Wollangarra, straight away now, when we really need it. If you already have some books at your place, unpaid for, could you let me know how you are going with them as soon as you can, so I know how many there are left to sell.

More on books. And another way that you might be able to help.

If enough people were prepared to loan us some money for 4-6 months, we could then fund a soft cover and upgraded reprint of the book. The sales of this would give us a steady auxiliary income for several years to come. I have had quotes from four printers, and we would need just over \$14,000 all up to print another 5000 soft covers which could retail at about \$15 each. It doesn't take much arithmetic to see that we wouldn't need to sell too many copies to cover costs (approximately 930 copies), and we would hope to be able to borrow the amount in lots of \$500's or \$1000's. If present sales of the hard backs is any indication then we would have no difficulty in recovering our money and paying back our debts within a few months. Please don't feel pressured in any way at all, but this may be a way in which some people are happy and keen to help.

I would also like to tell you about the newly formed Victorian Outdoor Education Trust, (VOET), which is an umbrella organisation that we have set up specifically to maintain an advantageous legal link between Mittagundi and Wollangarra, and to ensure that both organisations always remain close and united friends, whilst each can still retain it's own individuality and drive. The trustees of the VOET will soon be chosen from amongst the more senior members of the Mittagundi Council, thus leaving 4 or 5 positions there to be filled by some younger people. The Trust will have two main purposes. Firstly it will give both places the advantages of working together in such areas as taxation and insurance, as well as in various legal matters. Secondly it will undertake, in time, to raise funds for allocation to either or both organisations to be able to draw from in the future. These funds will tend to be of the nest egg type, held especially for such things as future land purchases or the funding of future wages. I'm sure that the creation of such a body will prove to be an enormous source of support and confidence for both our organisations. Both Mittagundi and Wollangarra Councils will operate quite independantly as Mittagundi's has always done, but the existence of the trust will help considerably to ensure that both these small organisations can remain viable and workable undertakings amongst a world increasingly full of 'bigness', well into the future. Bloggs will head the Trust. How about that for a good start!

Now a few other things. Firstly my delighted congratulations to Rick Lindsay on his appointment as Mittagundi's new director. Many of you will know that Rick was a keen hiker as a kid at Timbertop when I was working there, and he has taken an active interest in Mittagundi ever since he left school. His year with us on the Mittagundi staff was marked by two things - endless good humour, and equal amounts of hard work. I'm sure that Rick will put his own unique stamp on Mitta

gundi and it's work very quickly, and I look forward to watching him guide it's growth over the next three years. To Rick Harrison and Mick Jaeger who scored the difficult job of taking over the place from the guy who started it, what can I say, except thankyou and well done. I'm sure Rick Lindsay would be the first to agree with me in recognising that his time at Mittagundi will have been made so much easier because of the sensitive management from Rick, and the tireless work from Mick that have characterised the last two years up there.

I recently travelled to Omeo to help celebrate Cec Cooper's 90th birthday in the Omeo hospital. Yes, he made it! And he reckons he'll get to 100 too. He was just as chirpy and cheeky as ever, and it was beaut to see him looking so well.

Another thing worth mentioning here is to ask you to avoid buying our book in bookshops if you can. We virtually had to give some to a distributor initially, but we get less than \$2 per book when he sells them that way. Whereas we make about \$14 per book if we sell them our selves. If he still has any left in 6 months, we get them back to sell ourselves, so we are hoping he will sell not too many!

Lots of people ask me about my old mate Boofa. Well time is starting to catch up with her at last. And if you have ever watched her for ten minutes whilst any kids are around, you will realise why. Nine years of unbridled and often spectacular enthusiasm for absolutely everything including rocks, sticks, chooks, horses, goats, birds of all sizes (especially 'wongs'), falling trees, rolling logs, flying wood chips, rabbits, kangaroos, cows and even thunder have finally taken their toll. The winters up in the snow perhaps even more so. The Glen Valley winters are severe, and her arthritis hits her hard then. I had taken to carting her over to my place in a wheelbarrow even before I left. She just loves the place and the kids, but she just can't help herself with kids around. She ends up a crippled ruin within 10 minutes. So when she started finding it really hard last winter, the Mittagundi crew rang up, and we decided that it was time for Boofa to retire with Sue Steel, Boofa's co-owner, to the warmer climates and easier living conditions of Taggerty and Broadford. It had to come I suppose, but Mittagundi without 'Fat Fuzzyness' will take a bit of getting used to I'm sure. What a great mate she has been to all of us though, and how many difficult kids has she helped us to reach. If any dog ever deserved a comfortable retirement, it would have to be her, and I know Sue is seeing that she gets it.

Wollangarra stickers will soon be available by the way, and I hope to announce soon who our patron will be. It might well be a while before we can take on the financing of windcheeters and tee shirts though.

My thanks to John Bugg and Chris Noble of GGS Highton, for taking on the printing of this first newsletter, and to Robyn Hay who is silently suffering the presence of the Wollangarra sawbench in her back yard until we move up there. She claims to agree with me when I tell her how beautiful it is, but I'm sure she is just being polite! I wonder if anyone has a spot available next year where we could store 5000 books if we got them printed. They obviously need to be in a dry, fairly secure spot, and they take up about a quarter of a single garage!

And lastly, the booksellers prize is shared by Simon Swaney and Lesley Gerrish who both accounted for around forty sales. A great effort, and thankyou both. Your prize? A free raft ride into Wollangarra at some future date! But Slither, you might have to paddle yourself!

So there you have it! A new idea. A new project. A new friend for Mittagundi. And why not? After all, we know there are enough keen and worthy young people out there to take on 50 such places. I'm willing to give it another 10 years, and by then I think it might be time for me to go out and make some money for myself. We'll see. Right now there's too much else to do to even think about that. I hope to shift up to Wollangarra fairly soon, but I suspect there's another month for me in Melbourne yet. But I'm certainly going to be a lot easier to contact before I leave. So if you think you can help in any way, I'd love to hear from you soon, ESPECIALLY IF YOU THINK YOU CAN TAKE ON SOME BOOKS! To contact me in Melbourne, write to P.O. Box 77, Camberwell 3124. Once I shift to Licola, the address is simply c/o Wollangarra, Licola, Vic 3858. (Postman twice a week from Heyfield.). I hope that you are as excited about Wollangarra as I am, and I look forward to showing it to you one day.

Ian Stapleton.

STOP PRESS !! (PLEASE READ THE NEWSLETTER FIRST). The actual processes of purchasing this unique block of land, (surrounded by Crown Land and totally inaccessible by vehicle), have been unbelievably drawn out and complicated. We have been hanging on various decisions for nearly 6 months, and the hassles seem never-ending. Now, (Nov. 16), just when it all seemed to be sorted out at last, it looks to be in doubt once again. Please assume that Wollangarra will definitely start somewhere very soon. Wherever we end up building, the important thing to concentrate on now is selling books for Xmas, as it will not be cheap wherever we go.