

REFLECTIONS BACK WHEN

Two Years To Complete
Four Years To Write
A Lifetime To Enjoy

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INTRODUCTION

“All the coconut scented
bodies, parading in
seemingly never-ending
lines, as they strive for
the tanned Australian image”.

If you can remember back to when “dope” was the guy who sat in front of you in Maths, when “hash” was the stuff that Mum served up at Breakfast, and “grass” was the thing that needed mowing before you could go anywhere on Saturday morning, then you should remember the old term, “Surfari”.

You'd all pile into the FJ, or Dad's new HD Holden, and head religiously from Sydney, along Highway One, to some of those little known surf spots situated in the North. You know the ones, Angourie, Lennox Head, and a small point just out from Kempsey - called Crescent Head!!

If the car held together long enough, or the surf was fading, or both, you would head even further north to Noosa Heads, that small coastal town with it's two little shops, and retired people wandering leisurely around, whilst the never-ending swells pushed onto a variety of points, causing endless lines of uncrowded waves to form.

Well, that small coastal town is no more. The two shops have made way for Restaurants, Boutiques, Restaurants, Souvenir Shops, Restaurants, and, you guessed it, more Restaurants. The retired people are still there, but they now live in multi-million dollar prisons, with names like Florida Quays, Pacific Palms etc. But without a doubt, the best thing to NOT change, is the quality of the waves. They may be a lot more crowded now, but they are still there.

After putting up with years of cliches, such as, on-going performance, transient fluid drive delight, surrealism reflected in aqua tranquillity, and so on, I decided to sit down and write a Surfers Diary.

So if you're into “surrealistic reflections and images striving for unity with perceptive tranquillity”, then read no further.

“REFLECTIONS BACK WHEN” tells a straight forward, uncomplicated story.

SIT BACK AND ENJOY.

AWAY TO WHERE?

The scene that greeted us, was one of both fear and excitement. The swells came steaming over the horizon in never ending lines, holding a constant 8 foot. They smashed hard on the rock bottom, out from the point. The walls were steep and glassy, and stretched out for what seemed to be 50 yards or more.

It would be fair to say that this story had it's beginnings back in the latter part of 1966, when John and I lived in the Western Suburbs of Sydney. Our conversations, as always, centred around Surfing. How nice it would be to go off in search of surf...constant surf, not just the three weeks each year, but for months, maybe years. The latter statement seemed somewhat optimistic, but the seed had been planted in our minds, and it just needed cultivating.

Within a few months we had tendered our resignations with respective employers, and were heading up the Pacific Highway in the old Plymouth. We were progressing along quite nicely until just before Coffs Harbour, where the generator light began to flicker on. One day, and \$18 later, we were away again.

We turned off the main drag, and made our way towards a makeshift car park. Getting out of the car, we strode towards the edge of the hill.

They rose from the bottom as if pushed by some mighty force, 5 to 7 foot, holding their shape through two bowl sections, and into the shore break. That was the scene we first laid our eyes on as we looked over Angourie.

As it was early in the day, we were able to take full advantage of the excellent conditions, and by the sound of the weather reports, these conditions could remain for quite a while. After putting up a storm cover in the bush at the base of the hill, we headed for our first quality surf for quite a long time. As we paddled out through the shore break, we could see the swells pushing around the point, and rolling over to form big, fast tubes. John took the first wave, about 5 foot, dropped to the bottom, cranked a big bottom turn, and commenced to drive hard through the fast collapsing section, pulling off as he reached the end. When he paddled out again, he was "absolutely stoked". The next set came through, and I paddled for the second one, again about 5 foot. As it tubed over, I cut a sharp right turn,

stalled, and then drove hard and high along the wall of glass. Behind me, I could hear the tunnel being filled in by tons of water, but I certainly wasn't going to look around to see it. I climbed up and over the wave, only to be confronted by 8 foot of white water. I paddled as hard as I could towards the on-coming wave. I rolled under my board, and hung on for dear life as the white water surged over me. After what seemed to be an eternity, I emerged to see John doing a spectacular "over the falls" wipe-out. He was tired, but still very keen, when we finally retrieved his board. We continued to surf these conditions for nearly ten days, at which time the onshore winds began to blow. The decision was then made to move further North.

At Lennox Head, the waves were small, but held a good shape, so up went the shelter once again, and after a large breakfast of peanut butter sandwiches and a can of Coke, we headed for the water, and another perfect day. The outside temperature was about 80 degrees, whilst the water was around 70. We rode these small conditions in the area for nearly four weeks. The waves were so small on some days that we'd even attempt to ride our boards upside down. Riding beside each other and trying to swap boards was another good time spinner. In this particular exercise, we achieved about 10% success, the remainder of the time requiring a long 15 yard swim to the shore.

After a month of small surf, and generally slumming about, we decided to go after bigger waves again, so each night, we would descend on Byron Bay to try to get some news on where the surf was. It was four days before word got through to us that the area around Greenmount was shaping up for some hot waves. The weather charts were favourable. So without further ado, John and I headed north towards Greenmount.

BAYS, BACK AND BEYOND

The scene that greeted us through the early morning haze, was one of both fear and excitement. The swells came steaming over the horizon in never-ending lines, holding a constant 8 foot. They smashed hard on Schnapper Rocks, pushed past Rainbow Bay, finally falling onto the shore at Greenmount. The walls were steep and glassy, and stretched out for what seemed like 50 yards or more.

Before long, we were paddling hard around the on-coming swells, keeping an ever watchful eye on the horizon. When we finally got out the back, we found two others out. They were Greg and The Son. They said that the surf had been gradually building up over a couple of days, but there had also been schools of sharks cruising the area, so most surfers were giving the place a wide berth. As we sat out the back talking to Greg and his mate a medium set came swinging in from Schnapper Rocks. The Son dug in.

“Out the back” was the cry, as swinging around to face the horizon, we saw a mountain of clear green water coming towards us. Greg headed out to the shoulder, whilst John and I paddled towards it. I had a quick look along the wall, swung my board around, and dug in. The wave peaked in front of me as I stood up. Burying my arm deep into the face of the wave, I drove hard for the shoulder. It would have to have been the biggest wave I had ever been on, so I wasn't sitting around to admire the thing. The lip was thick, and folding over fast. I managed to stay ahead of it, finishing off with the old “junior birdman pull-out”, right on my face. I paddled into shore, and then ran back along the path to where I could get back into the line-up, thus saving that long paddle back out. When I reached a spot where I could enter the water, I stopped for a moment to watch John and Greg taking the same wave. John took off inside Greg, dropped low, and then climbed high over the top of him, and into the shore.

The four of us surfed the area for a few weeks, and at night we would invade the beer gardens or local disco's.

Inevitably, the onshore winds arrived, and drove us from the water. The 2½ months of “high living” was telling on our finances, so after a quick conference, it was decided we would have to head back to Sydney, and work.

(What a dreadful thought!).

We were listening to one of the local radio stations on the way back to Sydney, and we heard that the Tuncurry area was receiving good swells, so a quick detour brought us out at the main beach at Forster.

When we awoke on the first morning, it was not a very favourable sight. The swell was very small and a bit on the choppy side, but undaunted, we managed to fill in the morning with a bit of surfing before retiring to the tent for some intellectual stimulation, namely; Surfing World, Playboy, Surfing World, Agatha Christie and Surfing World. Down on the cold sands the next morning brought more dissatisfaction, with the surf being even smaller and choppier than the previous day. We still managed a quick session in amongst the fishermen, and their lines. Wednesday dawned ultra rough, so it was straight back to Sydney, and that work!

We scanned the local papers for nearly three weeks, but had no success. Eventually however, we got referred to a company down near Circular Quay. They were looking for people to work on a Merchant Ship leaving for “The States”. This was too good to be true, getting paid to go overseas, and there was every chance we'd be there long enough to do some SURFING, U.S. style. Needless to say, we didn't need too much pushing. We had already sold the old Plymouth in order to maintain us through our job seeking, so there was nothing holding us back. It was full steam ahead, so-to-speak, for the U.S.of A.

COOL CURLS AND CASH

Finding ourselves in San Francisco with \$1700, and a lot of surfing to do, we headed out to Berkeley, to an address we had been given on the ship. We would be able to stay there a couple of days while we planned our trip. Berkeley was a very unpleasant place to be at this time. There were riots in the Colleges, National Guards wandering the streets with loaded guns, definitely not the place to be in the middle of the night, or for that matter, out alone. We decided to head the 60 miles or so down to San Josa, buy a couple of boards, find some cheap transport, and SURF. The boards cost \$40 each from a sea side board shop, while transport came in the shape of an old Short Wheel Based Land Rover, painted in a very inconspicuous shade of bright yellow. It looked as though it had been in one too many Baja Desert Races, but what can you expect for \$350. Anyway, it would serve the purpose, we hoped.

We would only be able to remain about two weeks, so we weren't going to sit around. Our first stop was to be Point Sur, south of Monterey. Upon investigation, it was found that the onshore wind had blown up and messed the ocean around too much to be appreciated. We continued down the coast for about another 140 miles, winding up in the vicinity of Point Conception, just north of Santa Barbara. The winds were still unfavourable for any surf, so we settled in for the evening, getting a really early start the next day.

The morning dawned cool and crisp, as we headed further down the coast. Finally, in amongst the early morning mist, we saw a point sheltered by a steep hill. It was Point Dume. Out from the point was 5 foot of tubing wave. The boards were off the car before the next set had formed, and we were just about in the water before the following one. We had the opportunity to revel in these conditions, we were alone in a surfer's paradise, waves, sunshine, waves, warm water, and more waves. Between sets we could sit quite alone and look back to the shore line. To the right of us, was the start of the area around Santa Monica, whilst to the left, was the flat coastal plain stretching back to Ventura.

Being "tourists" in a foreign land, we were a little unsure of ourselves, but when other surfers from the area found out we were from "down under", they quickly befriended us, and took us to all their favourite haunts around Huntington and Newport. While we were at Huntington Beach, we saw these crazies on boards wearing crash helmets. They were shooting the pier that stuck out into the water. One slip, and they would have been cut to ribbons on the barnacles that were growing on the pier's supports.....crazies!! We stayed in the Los Angeles area for another few days, and then surfed our way down as far as Imperial Beach, near the Mexico Border.

Like most good things in life, all this had to end, as we were due to get the ship back in another four days. But just before leaving the Huntington area, we sold our 4WD to one of the guys we had met before, and our boards back to the place where we had originally bought them.

DANCELAND AND DAMAGE

We eventually arrived back in Sydney via Melbourne. Being about \$3000 better off, and with a lot of surfing to catch up on, we plonked ourselves at the North Narrabeen Camping Area, retrieved our surfboards from our parents and set about looking for a set of wheels to get us back on the road again. We decided on an ex PMG Kombi. This would make an ideal home on wheels for us, as we could fit it out a little bit, and sleep in it whenever we had short stays anywhere. We also bought an annexe tent that could be used for extended stays. So after about a week of PRE-pares and RE-pairs, everything was set. It was north again towards sunny Queensland.

We got as far as Maclean in the north of NSW, when some rather impolite crud came sailing past us and deposited a rock right in the middle of the drivers windscreen. Being a split windscreen, we figured it wasn't going to cost much to fix anyway, but in our ignorance, we pushed the broken window out, and then had to suffer the indignity of freezing our faces off as we drove the rest of the way to Coolangatta. Everything was closed by the time we arrived, so next morning we found a windscreen fitter, parted with \$20, and headed towards Noosa.

There was a good swell running when we arrived at the first beach, but every man and his dog was out. Moving around to T-Tree and National Park, we found exactly the same thing. After a quick discussion, we wandered back to the van and headed over to Noosaville, and food. We spoke to a guy in the milk bar, who informed us, amongst all his Far Outs, Too Much and Right Ons, that the crowds were here for a contest being held on the following weekend. It was a spontaneous decision that we return to our old faithful Greenmount. It had been good to us on our last visit, and we hoped it would be again this time.

Greenmount had turned on once more, with a good 3 to 4 foot swell breaking on the point and following the rocks into shore. The best bit was that there were very few people in the water. We grabbed our boards, ran out along the path, and into the water. When we got in amongst the other surfers, we were greeted by a familiar call. Greg and The Son, the guys we'd met on our last trip up here, were now living in the area, and had permanent access to these little watery delights. We sat together talking between sets, and that night, we invaded "Danceland", only to find out that we made 33% of the entire place. We then progressed to the beer garden opposite the Surf Club, where we met with far more success. It was some time after 1am when we left the beer garden, and crawled into the back of the van for a good long sleep.

10am found us just starting to stir. When we looked out of the van, we saw the sun beating down on the glassy swells. Adorning the white sands, were brown bodies, almost all of them being of the female variety, you know the ones, those with the two big board-lumps sticking out front!! Just riding in after a morning session was Greg and The Son. They had been out since sunrise, and had come in to do a spot of bird watching - the two-legged, non-flying variety. The water was crystal clear and superbly warm, so warm in fact, that I managed to discard my wet suit top, but John, who must have shares in White Stag, wouldn't part with his. The waves broke just in front of the rocks, and made their way into the beach. John took the first one, about 3 foot, turned and crouched through the fast falling section, out onto the shoulder, where he did a series of cut-backs and stalls, finishing off with a standing island pull-out. As he paddled back out, I took off on another 3 footer, turned and ran to the nose. The board pearled, and that was that. Meanwhile, Greg had decided that getting into waves was far more rewarding than giving girls the optic nerve, so he was back in the line-up once again. He got himself involved in a gnarly 2 footer, and naturally let all of Queensland know about it.

“Hey man, did ya see the supreme energy generated into that radical late turn, just like the pro's”.

John and I took the next wave together. John cut back, and I rode high over the top of him. On the next wave, John planted his weight on his back foot, turned, and ran to the nose. As the wave folded over in front of him, he moved back, dropped below the falling section, up the other side, and put “five on the nose”. After doing a series of back-flips etc, he rejoined us.

At about 3pm, Greg and The Son departed for work, while we had a few more waves, and what was left of the sun. At 5pm, we snuck into the local Caravan Park for a hot shower. We met Greg and The Son just after midnight, and together headed off to Surfers. Before the night was out, we had been picked up by a group of girls, told in no uncertain terms to not loiter around the streets, and were given a fairly hard time by a group of dagos who were driving through.

The following day it drizzled with rain, so we all went out and just lay around on our boards, catching the occasional wave. John and I had decided to stay for about two weeks, and then start heading back towards Sydney, to see what was doing.

EXCESSES AND QUICK EXITS

We departed Coolangatta at about 6am, reaching Byron Bay at about 8. The surf was fair down at Clarkes Beach, and we managed to fill in a couple of days before moving on. We only got as far as Lennox Head. The surf was 4 to 5 foot off the point. One morning we were woken by the sound of a crashing surf. When we looked out onto a sun-drenched ocean, we saw lines of swells which seemed to extend to the horizon. They were forming off the end of the point, and folding over along the rocks, forming fast, hollow tubes. We picked up our boards and walked out towards the point to find an easy access into the take-off area. I stood on the water's edge summing up my chances, while John jumped in during one of the infrequent lulls. He sat for a while off to one side of the break, before moving into the take-off zone. The first one he took was about 5 foot. As soon as the wave picked his board up, he rose to his feet and turned. The wave peaked behind him, and curled over to form a tube. It started to pick up speed, and was gradually catching up, but he saw it coming and pulled out. Just then, I started to paddle out, but as I was getting over what I thought was the last wave of the set, a freak one came sneaking through, catching me inside. It broke about 10 foot in front of me. I rolled under my board and hung on as the white water came down on top of me. Even though I had all my weight hanging underneath, the front of my board was tossed around as I was dragged about 30 feet back towards the rocks, with my toes scrapping along the bottom. When the wave finally released it's grip on me, I paddled out to the side of the swells and watched for a while. Meanwhile John was taking off on everything he could find, having some great rides, and some very mean wipe-outs. On what was to be his last ride of the session, a 7 footer, he took off deep inside - too deep - turned sharply at the base, and started to climb. He got to the top of the wave and prepared to re-enter in front of the peak, but just as he turned, the wave curled over, and down he went, board and all, like a human pile-driver. As if that wasn't bad enough, the wave then proceeded to pick him up and dump him again. By this time his board was rolling up and down on the rocks, but was salvaged before any real damage was done. John eventually made it into shore, a little worse for wear, but still smiling. His tube suit had a 7 inch gash in the back of it, legacy of being bounced off the bottom. After watching John's exploits on these seemingly nice waves, I decided that wet enough was good enough, so I also paddled in. We headed back to the van, dried off, had a bite to eat, then headed to the local beer garden for some turps and sunshine. The fresh prawns went down well too.

We remained at Lennox Head for another four days, and then started to make our way to Scotts Head. On the way, we stopped at Evans Head, but only filled in about an hour there, as the swell was decreasing fairly quickly. When we were about 12 miles out from Scotts Head, the van developed a rumble in the front end.

Upon investigation, it was found to be the front wheel bearings. We pulled into Macksville and had it repaired. When we finally got on the road again, the swells had decreased to almost nothing, so we by-passed Scotts, and headed for Crescent.

There was a 3 foot wave breaking off the point, so we settled in for a couple of days. On the Saturday, all the weekend surfers started moving in for their quota of waves. It had dropped to about 2 foot, with only a fair shape. It was extremely crowded so we didn't go out at all during the weekend. On the Tuesday morning, a couple of ladies pulled in. They said that they were going to be staying about a week or so, and of course, John and I would ensure that they, and we, would have a good stay. That night, we all headed into Kempsey in the van, had a meal, a bit of a wander around, and then came back to Crescent and took off up the beach a bit, spending a couple of hours by a fire on the sand.

FOLLIES AND FOOLERY

Next morning, the entire place was deserted. No tents, cars, caravans or girls. Just the dew covered ground, with dry patches where the tents had been. When we looked out at the point, it was like a mill-pond, not a ripple to be seen. We went over to the kiosk and bought a few provisions. We decided to go and have a bit of a look around the Trial Bay area, famous for its old gaol. We asked directions from the shop owner, and headed off.

We headed out along the river bank, passing through a couple of small villages, one of which we stopped at for a quick beer and a game of pool, old abandoned farm houses and sheds, and miles of open grazing land. The gaol was so-so, good if you're into the penal system of our forefathers. It was low tide at the time, and the sand appeared to be fairly firm, so we decided to drive out onto the beach. We deflated the tyres to about 15 psi and headed down onto the beach. That is where we stayed, up to our hub caps in soft sand. So much for the "legendary traction afforded by rear engine, rear wheel drive". After much digging, we were eventually helped out by a Land Rover. The owners were also surfers, but because the swell was non-existent they had been doing a bit of free-boarding behind their truck. They invited us to join them for the rest of the day.

The principal was simple, just hold onto the end of the rope while the truck raced along the water's edge, pulling you through the water on your surfboard. We all had a few goes, with varying degrees of success. One particularly memorable run was had when John got onto the rope. He took off with great style, zig-zag up the beach he went. The only problem was that when the truck turned away from the water, John didn't let go quick enough. Well, his board stopped when it hit the sand, but John didn't. He just kept sailing up the beach, a mass of tangled arms and legs. We all had a good laugh, dried off, then John and I said farewell to our new found friends and headed back to Crescent for a late lunch, then a spot of rest and recuperation, before heading off to the Golf Club for the night. We finally hit the sack at about 3am.

It was around lunch time when I managed to drag myself out of bed and over to the showers. When I returned, John was just beginning to stir. The ocean was still dead flat, so we did a spot of spearfishing, managing to score a couple of little ones. At least that saved us from having to eat pies and coke for tea. The next morning the surf was still totally flat, so we headed off.

GETTING SQUARE

The track into Yagan was a lot rougher than we had imagined, but we got there in one piece. To get down to the beach you had to pass through private property. There was an entry fee of 20 cents. The surf was about 4 to 5 foot, so it was definitely worth the cost. There were half a dozen others out at the time, so a couple more wouldn't make any difference. The water was chilly, but crystal clear, as we paddled out. I took the first one, turned and climbed, dropped down, crouched through the fast collapsing section, out onto the shoulder, and over the back. John took off with a guy inside of him, but following a quick cut-back, John had the wave to himself. The surf held up for the remainder of the day, so we decided to hide the van under an umbrella of trees, and remained there for a while.

After the swell started to decrease, we moved out to Forster. There was a small wave breaking off the baths, so we paddled out for a few. John was doing a few fin-first take-offs, until his stomach started to wear a little thin. There were a few others in the water at the time, so we were all in there together, hassling and jostling for these "monsters". One guy was getting particularly obnoxious, screaming and shouting as though he owned the very ocean itself. John and I took the same wave that he was on, one on his right, the other on his left. We both turned towards him. Now all he had to complain about was sore knee caps. I paddled for a fair wave, and the loud mouth caught it on the shoulder. I called to him, but he chose to ride on regardless. I rode underneath him and gave him a gentle nudge. I then scooped up his board and carried it into the shore break. This seemed to slow his mouth down a little bit anyway.

Deciding to put in a few extra days at Forster, we erected the annexe tent. That evening we headed off to Taree for a meal, a few tinnies, and a movie. Arriving back at the camping ground at about 1.30am, we looked at where we thought we were camping, only to find that our annexe tent wasn't there. We knew that we'd had a few beers, but surely we weren't that drunk. In the dew covered grass we saw foot tracks leading from where we thought we had camped, to behind another tent. When we crept over to have a look, we found our annexe tent shoved underneath a box trailer. Then we noticed the surf boards that were also there. It was the camp of the loud mouth that we'd had the run-in with out in the water. John wanted to race straight into their tent and start punching everyone in sight. Must have been the alcohol talking, because normally, neither John nor I were what you would consider aggressive. In fact, I usually won all my fights by at least 100 yards. I managed to persuade John not to carry out his threats, but instead, we simply took our annexe back, and stored it in the van. We figured that the loud mouth would keep. When we woke up later that morning all the guys from the other tent were sitting around, so we called out to them, saying that it sure was a funny joke, and

really had us worried that we must have been so drunk, that we didn't even know where we had stayed. One of the guys called back to say that that should make it all even. (That's what he thinks!)

When we went down to check out the surf, it was much the same as yesterday, only a little bit hollow. We had a quick bite to eat, then hit the waves. They were still only about 2 foot, but as we said, a bit more hollow. I took off on the first one, turned, stalled, and then drove off the shoulder, and over the back. John was a little slow to get going, but soon settled into some solid surfing. He took off on one, stalled, and as the curl caught up with him, pushed the nose hard up into it. The board followed the wave over in a superb re-entry. He finished it off with an "Hawaiian Junior Birdman" pull-out, flat on his back. We took off on the next one, and attempted to swap boards, both ending up with a swim to shore. We tried to take another one together, this time John tried to jump on my back. We sank like a rock. During the afternoon session, we had a mild panic when a dolphin suddenly surfaced near my board. I let out a mighty scream, and paddled to shore, shouting Shark, Shark!! John was laughing so hard, he almost had a hernia. After he had stopped giggling to himself, he paddled in and dried off. We headed back to the camping area, had a late lunch, then another session, before retiring to the "local" for a few ales, a bit of a feed, and then dream-time.

John was woken by a car going past the camping ground, and when he looked out of the van window, he saw that the camping area was beginning to fill with other surfers who were coming in for the weekend. It was some unearthly hour of the morning when he woke me with his plan.

We crept around the other cars in the area until we found one that had surfboards stored underneath it. After we were sure that there were no prying eyes around, we carefully slid one of the boards out from under the car, and carried it over to where we had found our annexe. After that, we retired to the van to await the action.

HARASSMENT AND HEADING HOME

We only had to wait till about 6am before the fur started to fly. The guys from the car were swearing and yelling about someone “lifting” one of their boards. John told them that he thought he had seen a guy carrying a board over to a tent. He pointed in the general direction of the loud mouth's tent. The guys from the car started over towards the other tent, whilst John and I thought that it would be a good time to maybe head off in search of some other surf - preferably in New Zealand.

We arrived back in Sydney at the start of the “School Boys Championships”, so spent a few days living out of the van, and watching the action. Our funds were seriously depleted by this time, so the question we then had to ponder, was whether to remain in Sydney where there was easy work, or head north where there was good surf, but the work was not as easy to come by. A phone call to the surf shop at Burleigh Heads soon answered our question. There was little-to-no surf to be had up north at present, so Sydney it was. We were soon leaving the offices of our new employers, having successfully managed to get some work. I ended up pumping petrol, while John got a job as a Storeman in a car accessories shop. We found a house to rent only a few streets from the ocean, so we were able to surf as much as our jobs would permit us to. We managed to pool about \$800 in a few months, and this, along with what money we already had, saw us financial enough to head off again.

We stopped at Taree on the first night, parking down one of the side streets. We made Coolangatta at about 5.30pm the next day, and watched a few surfers sapping the last waves before dark. We parked the van on the boardwalk and converged on the “Swinger Disco”. We stayed there until closing time, then headed back to the van, and sleep.

I was woken by John shaking me, and when I got my senses about me, I realised that there was a bright light filtering through the back curtains. We both got up and opened the sliding door. Standing behind this bright light, were two very large cops, and kidding they didn't give us the third degree. After the ordeal, the upshot of the whole thing was that there was no overnight parking along the boardwalk any more. If we continued to remain there, we could face a fine. When we asked if we could park up one of the side streets for what was left of the night, we were given the same answer. You can stay anywhere you like, but if we see you, you'll be fined. They then told us to clear off. They drove off, and we sat for a moment waking up properly, before deciding what to do. We eventually decided to go to the local caravan park, just behind the Sunset Strip. As we were backing out of our parking spot, we noticed the same cops slowly cruising back down the beach-front

road, probably to check us out again. We made out like we didn't notice them, and slowly made our way over to the camping area. The place was totally packed out with permanent vans, and touring caravans. There was a tiny area set aside for tents, but it was overflowing as well. We decided to go out along the Tweed Heads road back towards Banora Point, and stay up a side street for the night. The sight of a patrolling police car soon made us think again. We eventually decided to “squeeze” in on the edge of the tourist area back at the caravan park. This we did, and once again, dropped off to sleep.

INQUISITION AND INJURY

I thought I was having a bad dream when John started to wake me up again. It was about 8.30am, and we had only been asleep about four hours. When I regained my senses, again, I saw John standing at the door of the van arguing with some guy. When I got up, I found out that it was the caretaker of the park, and he was going off his face about us coming in and setting up camp without his permission. We tried to explain that we had arrived very early in the morning, and were fully intending to pay for an extended stay. That still didn't satisfy him, as he went on and on and on and... In the end, we told him he could stick his caravan park, as we wouldn't stay anywhere that was run by a person of his obvious bad manners and lack of public relations. He then told us we would have to pay for the night we had already spent. What night?, we only stayed about four hours. He pulled out his receipt book and started to write. \$3.60 for a four hour sleep. That was 90 cents an hour!!, a bit too steep. We paid our money, mainly because we didn't want to run foul of the law. He then told us to "clear off".

It was 9am before we got our first taste of Queensland juice for quite awhile. There had been a few small changes made to the area since we were last here. The board riding and swimming areas were now divided by a yellow nylon line connected to a marker buoy. Of course, there were the inevitable ones who were not satisfied with the area they were given, and they attempted to take off from further around the rocks, and then ride across the face of the bodysurfing area. The fast approaching rocks generally sorted out the good from the not-so. The surf averaged out at about 4 foot, and every man and his dog were in the line up.

It was turning into a rat-race in the water, so John and I decided to leave the battle zone while we were still in one piece. As we were drying off, we discussed the possibility of getting into a unit for a period of time. We could use it as a central point for all our tripping around. We had parked the van behind the Life Saving Club, under the shade of one of the large trees. When we got back to it there was a parking fine under the window. "Parking in a Non-Parking Zone" was the charge, \$10 was the Fine. We had a look up and down the gutter, but couldn't see any signs which indicated that parking was prohibited, so we headed up to the Police Station to see why we were fined. When we inquired at the counter, the cop asked us if we were from interstate. We said that we were, and he told us that "up here" the area immediately behind the Surf Club was classified as "No Parking". He said that the reason for this was that during the heavy tourist times all the boardwalk area is full, and if an emergency vehicle needs to get to the Club House, or down onto the beach, they would be hindered by all the vehicles parked in front of it. It sounded like a pretty lame excuse to us, but we parted with the money anyway. Didn't have a choice really.

With all that out of the way, we set about trying to find some accommodation, but most agents were a little dubious about letting to young surfers. We did eventually find a place along the beach-front road at Coolangatta, the Coolabah, \$30 a week. After we settled in, we hung around the beach for the rest of the day, and then converged on the Swinger Disco till about 1am, when we wandered home.

We awoke at about 9am, and looked out onto Greenmount Point. There were heaps of people on the sand, and just as many in the water. The surf was around 3 foot just out from the body surfing area, and some of the rides being had made it impossible for us to just sit around and watch. By 12.30pm the water was becoming too crowded, so we moved around to Rainbow Bay, where, although a lot smaller, was certainly less crowded. We were only in the water about 15 minutes when a mild disaster struck. While I was riding behind one of the young locals, his board speared back and hit me in the hand. I ended up with 4 stitches, and 10 days out of the water. I tried wrapping a bread bag around it, but it didn't prove to be very waterproof, so 10 days it was going to be. Other than not being able to surf, which was bad enough, I also couldn't drive properly, so I had to be ferried everywhere.

JOE, JUST SIGHTSEEING

Being out of the water meant that we had time to explore some of the “unwet” areas, such as the hinterland behind the Gold Coast, the local animal parks, and a number of other “touristy” things that people do when they don't surf???

When my hand had finally healed enough to go back into the water, we spent a lot of our time alternating between Kirra, and the right-hander off The Rock at Currumbin. In the very early hours of the morning there was a 2 foot wave breaking just in front of the bus shelter at Kirra. This would generally hold up for about two hours before beginning to deteriorate. At that stage we would head up to Currumbin.

The Rock at Currumbin produced some really good quality waves that would extend right into the channel. They broke with just enough power and curve to make nose riding a full time experience. We met a guy out in the water, also from Sydney, who had suffered from Polio as a child, but had found that he was having difficulty in standing up on a board because of his poor balance. So, undeterred, he built himself a belly board, and was ripping the Currumbin curl to pieces. Because of his low posture, he was able to tuck right inside the wave, and hang just near where it was filling up. John was getting some great nose rides, with one producing a 100 foot long, hanging ten, screamer. We met up with the belly boarder on a number of occasions whilst out at Currumbin, and spent some good quality wave time together. After about two weeks, it was time for him to head back to Sydney, and off to work. He wished us well, and hoped that one day he would be able to do the same thing as us.

In the next 7 or 8 weeks the Coolabah became quite famous with the other surfers and locals in the area. Hardly a day would go by without a car load of surfers blasting their horn as they drove by in the search for a few waves. Of course all this good living had to finally come to an end as we moved north once again. We were now heading back to Noosa. The surf in that area had been kind to us in the past, and we hoped it would be again.

We pulled up at the entrance to National Park during an absolute downpour. In the past six hours, they must have had about 3 inches of rain, and the winds that were still howling weren't helping matters any. The van was being rocked from side to side as the gusts of wind tore through the park. We felt a little vulnerable sitting underneath the trees, so we moved around to the main beach, and parked in the surf club car park. The weather forecast was for high winds associated with a rising swell. We drove to Noosaville to escape the wind, have a bite to eat, then bunk down for the night.

KING NEPTUNES GOLD

The wind had virtually died during the night, so we jumped over into the front of the van and headed back up the hill to Noosa. When we reached the top, we stopped dead in our tracks. Main Beach was breaking at 12 to 15 foot!! We looked at each other, and then back at the surf. There were lines of swell stretching out to the horizon. We drove down to the car park where lots of other surfers had gathered. Everyone was just looking out to sea in amazement. There were four riders out, all huddled together near the point. One dug in as a wave approached. His board appeared to be going backwards as he was picked up by 12 foot of green mountain. He rose to his feet and took the drop. Straight down, as if he stepped into an empty elevator shaft. When he reached the bottom, he turned hard and drove for the shoulder. There were a few more surfers waxing up, ready to head out. We drove around to National Park. The place was packed with cars, most of which had boards either strapped to the roof, or lying down beside them. In all the time we had been travelling around, we had never seen anything as big as this before. It was magnificent to watch, but appeared somewhat frightening to be out in. Not that we had to worry about that, because there was no way on this earth that I was going out there, and by virtue of the fact that John didn't exactly leap out of the van when we had stopped, told me that he wasn't going anywhere either. We walked around to T-Tree, as the surf pounded against the rock face. The Boiling Pot was absolutely murderous, sending spray far above where we were walking, which was pretty high.

T-Tree was 15 foot and roaring. There were half a dozen boards and a couple of mats out at the point. We stood there for an hour or so, took a few photos, and then wandered back to the main beach car park.

About three hours later an ambulance was seen heading towards National Park, probably to pick up a surfer who had deposited himself on the rocks or something. We found out later that a mat rider had been killed when he was washed up at the Boiling Pot. It made us appreciate the awesome power of Mother Nature, and how she will extract the ultimate in sacrifices from those who are unprepared.

In one of our quieter moments, I penned this poem, in recognition of this Force. I titled it;

KING NEPTUNES GOLD.

Down upon the golden sand
Amongst the swaying trees,
Saw the surfer bronzed and tall
His hair blown in the breeze.
The rolling surf came tumbling in
And fell upon the shore,
Like giant-white mountains pushing up
From off the ocean floor.
With heart in mouth he paddled out
To face them where they're born,
Like white horses charging on
Till twilight meets the dawn.
He dug right in and spun around
“Go back you foolish fellow”,
Cut right, turn hard and drive along
“Your body be too mellow.
The great white mount came crashing down,
”Escape me if you dare“,
He'll paddle out, rest awhile
And try again (with care).
Turn hard, dig deep and drive again
Become one brave and bold,
For on this wave, this very day
You'll know King Neptunes Gold.

The surf remained big for another three days, but by that time we were back down in the Greenmount area where the surf was a good deal smaller. There were some good waves to be had around at Schnapper Rocks, some running all the way into Rainbow Bay. A guy on a "Kentucky Fried Coolite" board was absolutely tearing the place to shreds. Greenmount and Kirra were very crowded, but in superb shape. We remained here for a few days, and then made our way to Kings Cliff via a very pot-holed, water filled dirt track which skirted the beach front. We bought a few supplies near the main road, then made our way to Byron Bay.

LUNACY, LAKES AND THE LAW

One of the most unbelievable things that had ever happened to us, and will probably remain that way, occurred on the road into Byron. We were about two miles out of town when we were pulled over by the Police. We hadn't been speeding, so we assumed that something must have been hanging loose from the van, or maybe a brake light was out. When we stopped, the two cops came over to us, one on each side of the van. They asked to see our licences, rego papers etc. They asked us to get out of the van and open the side and rear doors. They told us to take our boards down off the racks, and remove the mattresses from the bed. They removed our hub caps, the rubber ends off the racks, ferreted through our belongings inside, even tapped our boards, and held them up to the sun. It was only then that we realised that they were searching for the "evil weed". We had a little bit of a laugh to ourselves, watching the antics of these two "gentlemen" in blue. By the time they had finished their "search", our gear was strewn all over the side of the road. They told us to continue on through Byron Bay and out the other side, no detours.

It took us a few minutes to regain our senses, and then shovel all our stuff back into the van. By this time it was early afternoon, and we were feeling a little hot and hungry, so when we got into Byron we grabbed ourselves a hamburger and coke, and continued on our way.

We drove straight down to Lennox Head and stopped on the grass near the point. There was a reasonable surf running at the time, but we had to re-arrange the back of the van, paying strict attention to the fact that the boards would now be travelling inside the van. As we were rummaging through the back of the van, one of the guys who had just come out of the water came over to us and asked if we had just been through Byron. We told him we had, to which he said to come and have a look at the back of his Camper. He owned one of those new Toyota Hi-Ace's with all the custom built fittings in the back. He too, had gone through Byron, and had obviously encountered the two cops that we had met. It looked as though a bomb had gone off in the back of his. It made us think that maybe we weren't so bad off after all.

Scotts Head looked very inviting when we arrived in the middle of the night. We parked at the end of the dirt track, just at the headland. The next morning was a classic; warm, clear water, nice clean waves, no breeze, and no one else in. We soon changed the latter. There was a group of dolphins out enjoying these early waves too. This time though, I knew that they were there, so I wasn't going to perform my walking on water trick again, like at Forster. The swell was 2 to 3 foot, breaking along the rocks. We stayed for a few days, parked out at the end of

the dirt. It was great to be able to wake up first thing in the morning, slide the side door open, and look out at the waves. We met up with a young guy out in the water who lived locally, his family owning one of the banana plantations on the road into town. We were invited out to the farm to see how they graded the fruit, and boxed it for market. We made the fatal mistake of offering to give them a hand for what we thought would just be for something to do, to have a bit of a change from sitting on the beach between sessions in the water. It turned into a couple of days of really hard slogging, days that we were quite glad to finally see come to an end.

We moved on down to Crescent Head, and then onto Port Macquarie via the old punt. It was a terrible road to the punt, loaded with pot-holes and chatter bumps. After a short stop-off at Point Plummer, we boarded the punt for the trip to Port. Spent two days in the area, looking around and surfing a few spots in the Lake Cathie area. Leaving Port, we drove on to Seal Rocks. There was none of the open land and beach side parking that we had enjoyed before. Instead, the whole area was fenced off, with signs saying, "No Camping in this Area", and "Pay Fees before Setting Up Camp". The swells were clean and small, so a couple of dollars spent for a few days of good surf, would be well worth it. We headed over to the house where the Caretaker was, and asked for a site for the week.

"That'll be \$11.50", said the Caretaker. We told him that we didn't want a powered site, just a small area up the back somewhere. He told us that it was good that we didn't require a powered site, 'cause there wasn't any here anyway. All sites were \$2.50 per night.

\$2.50 for an unpowered site!! We thought he had to be kidding, but he wasn't. We told him thanks, but no thanks, walked back to the van and started to get ready to hit the water. Just as we were walking away from the van, the Caretaker was loading a pile of rubbish bins onto the back of his tractor. He drew up next to us and told us not to plan to stay overnight in the car park or we would be moved on real quick. Isn't it nice to meet such polite country folk?

We surfed a lot of good clean waves over the next few hours, at which time we decided we had better go in search of some sort of accommodation for the night. We headed up the track to Yagan, but were greeted with the same sort of "No Camping" signs. We did an immediate about-face and headed out towards the Myall Lakes road. This dirt road was used by the Mining Companies and was kept in excellent condition. With any luck we would find somewhere to camp overnight. As we came over one of the hills heading towards the turn-off, we found the Caretaker from the camping ground stuck up to his axles in dry sand. He had turned off the road to head along a bush track to dump the rubbish, and had

slipped into a soft sandy patch. We wound down the window as we drew along side of him, and shouted out, “Hey, you need some help?. Well ask someone who cares, you gronk!” Isn't it nice to meet such polite surfers?. We drove off, leaving him to his dilemma.

MAGIC MOMENTS

We took the Myall Lakes turn-off, and drove along for quite a few miles. The sun was just beginning to set as we found a track that led right down to the lake's edge. There was a small boat ramp carved out of the bank, and, with the exception of a couple of birds dipping for food, the surface of the lake was absolutely motionless. We parked ourselves on the far side of some large bushes, so-as-to shield ourselves from the road. We scrounged some wood that was lying on the ground, and built a small fire to cook a meal. We sat there listening to the radio for quite some time. The night was very warm, so we quickly let the fire die out, and then headed off to sleep.

Waking the next morning to the sound of the water birds was something that is very difficult to describe. When I stepped out of the van, it was like stepping in front of a huge postcard. The sun was almost coming over the sand hills, whilst the water on the lake was as smooth as silk. The reflections from all the trees along the bank made it very peaceful indeed. An old derelict boat lay partly submerged, with it's V-bottom wedged firmly in the sand. Around the edge of the water, some small birds were darting about in an attempt to get an early morning feed, which reminded me, a good meal in front of all this would be very fitting. So over a warm breakfast of beans and bacon, we watched the sun come up, and listened to the bush come alive.

It was the start of the Christmas holidays in N.S.W.now, so the family groups would be soon moving into these sort of areas, and this would spell the end of the uncrowded, unspoilt conditions we were used to. We headed back to Sydney, and some more work. This was to only last about ten weeks, because we had our sights set on Western Australia, and a place called Margaret River, which we had seen mentioned in an article in a surf mag.

We were all packed and ready to go by the beginning of March. The temperature in Sydney was soaring, whilst the wave quality was taking a real nose dive. In the time that we were back in Sydney, we had about nine days that would rate as reasonably good, as far as surf went. The rest of the time was just so bad that it was hardly worth even getting wet. Anyway, you try and move in the water during the Christmas break, and you'll know what it's like. It will be good when surfing becomes less popular?? It was great to be heading away.

NEW HORIZONS

The trip across the Nullarbor was uneventful. The last 200 miles or so to the Western Australia border was still dirt, but the van handled it well. When we got to Norseman, we were stopped at something like a Tick Gate, but instead of looking for fruit and veges, they were checking for Firearms. You apparently need a special permit or something to carry guns in W.A.

From Norseman, we turned south to a small coastal village called Esperance. The water, though bitterly cold, was crystal clear, and the lightest light blue we had ever seen. Wests Beach seemed to be the local beach for the area. It was a strange set-up, with a rock shelf stretching the length of the beach, about thirty feet off shore. The waves would break along this shelf. The road along the coast was flanked by sand hills on one side, and the beach on the other. The road itself ended at a car park which was only a short drive from Wests Beach. The whole area was known as the Bay of Isles, which was very apt, for the entire area was dotted with rock outcrops extending out to sea. We had a couple of surfs at Wests Beach, both on the beach itself, and also off the western point. Neither wave was much to write home about though.

On a short trip east of Esperance, we found an area out from a small settlement called Condingup. This area was dotted with a number of small coves and secluded bays. We drove up the sandy track to reach a rocky platform overlooking one of these small coves. The map showed it as Hell Fire Cove, but by the look of it, it was more like Heaven. Pure white sand and a light blue ocean. The water was cold, but the waves were hot. There was a superb 3 foot left breaking off the rocks. So it was off with the boards, on with the wetsuits, and into the water. We were sitting out the back looking towards the beach. The only sign of human habitation were two sets of footprints leading into the water. The remainder of the beach was void, save for the tufts of salt bush that were growing along the sand ridges. The water was crystal clear. So clear in fact, that when John rode past me on a wave, I could see right through it, and pick out both his outline, and that of his board. The waves just kept rolling in hour after hour. Schools of Whiting and Mullet could be seen darting across the sandy bottom.

We spent the night in front of a roaring beach fire, listening to the radio and eating toasted sandwiches. At around 10pm the fire had died out, so we made our way back up the hill to the van. As we were walking back we stopped and listened. Between breaking waves, there was absolute silence, except for the sound of my watch and heart beat. There was no moon out this night, so we were in total darkness as well. It was an eerie feeling. Then the silence would be broken by the sound of the next set of waves.

The following morning was another classic. Same size, same direction, same shape. We spent the morning in the water, and the afternoon exploring some of the other bays in the near vicinity. Almost everywhere we stopped had good rideable surf, but nothing quite as good as Hell Fire Cove. That night we dined on fish and some pippies that we had dug up.

With the exception of a couple of trips into Esperance for supplies, we remained around these coves for nearly two weeks. During that time, we saw three other people, all fishermen. This was one place where you could get total solitude. There was a great abundance of aboriginal middens in the area, extending from Esperance all the way past where we were now camping. The area around Esperance was very heavily populated with aboriginals, unfortunately most of them, drunk out of their minds. We stayed well clear of them.

ODOURS, OVER-CHARGING AND ALL YOU CAN EAT

Albany, a whaling town about 300 miles west of Esperance, was next. The water around here was running blood red from all the whales that were brought in from the Bight. We did the “tourist thing”, and visited the Whaling Station. It was one of the most gruesome places we have ever seen, and the smell was really bad news. To think that they make perfumes out of this muck. The factory workers at the station carve the whales to pieces with huge blades on the end of long sticks. These blades just pass through the whale flesh like a hot knife through butter. You wouldn't like to get your leg in front of it by mistake. A number of the whales that were brought in had large pieces out of them already, even before they were hauled up out of the water. We were told that this had been caused by sharks having a bit of a feed as they were being brought in behind the ships. Needless to say, swimming is not one of the more popular pastimes in Albany.

From Albany, it was another 220 miles to our destination, Margaret River, that full-on spot that everyone was raving about. When we got there, it was the pits. Nothing but 2 foot wind chop, breaking out on a reef. It certainly didn't look like the 10 foot plus place that was featured in the magazines. We did manage to spend a couple of days there, checking out the local area. Met a young guy there by the name of Ian, a really hot surfer, who said that the waves we saw in the mag. were definitely for real, and that we were just here at the wrong time.

From there, we headed up to Perth to have a look around. The camping was really expensive, \$4.00 a night for an unpowered site, \$4.50 with power. We decided to stay a week, so we set up our annexe and used the camping area as a base. We were driving around on a Saturday evening, when John spotted a party in progress. He suggested that we should try to get into it, as we hadn't been to anything for quite awhile. We drove past a couple of times and noticed that it was spilling out onto the front lawn and footpath. We parked the van around the corner and picked up a couple of empty Coke cans from out of the back of the van. John said that he would wander in first, and if he wasn't turfed out after about ten minutes, I should do the same. So he wandered down the street, stopping for a minute near some of the party go'ers who were out on the front lawn, then he disappeared around the side of the house. When he hadn't returned after about ten minutes, I headed in the direction of the party. When I got around the back, I couldn't see John anywhere. I thought that maybe he was getting beaten up inside the house, or something like that. However, he did eventually appear, loaded with a plate of eats, and an icy can of turps in his hand. We had stumbled onto an engagement party, and the food and drinks were being turned on by the proud parents. We simply mingled with the other people there, and stuffed ourselves silly with all the food we could get our hands on. No one questioned who we were, so we just kept on keeping on.

Towards the end of the night, John said that we should try to stock up on a few drinks to take with us. So we did. It was simply a matter of going into the Laundry, pulling a can from the tub, and shoving it in your pocket. By the time we had driven away from the party, we had about 3 dozen assorted cans of beer and soft drinks.

We left Perth, and headed North a short way to a place called Mullaloo. It was a nice quiet little coastal town, with a couple of small beach breaks. While we were there, we tried the same party trick again. This time, we had ventured into the middle of a 21st.

We thought we were in for another great night, only to discover that the guy's parents were Seventh Day Adventists, and it was a “dry” party. Well, you can't win them all.

Heading back across the Nullarbor, we stopped at Balladonia to fill up with petrol. While we were there, a guy in an old Ford pulled in. He was from W.A., and was heading home. He told us that he had just come from an area near Penong, called Cactus Beach. He reckoned it had the best waves in Australia, but was fairly hard to get to, mainly because of the sandy access tracks. Despite the directions he gave us, we still managed to get ourselves lost, but eventually found the place, by back-tracking from Ceduna.

PERFECTION BEYOND PENONG

The view looking West along the Bight was unbelievable. Just sheer cliffs which literally fell into the ocean, and the sand in the area was pure white. It reminded us of a rugged version of the area around Condingup. The surf was about 5 to 7 foot, and an absolute glass-out. Not a puff of wind anywhere, the sun beaming down, and the waves were beckoning. Someone had built a crude shelter out of galvanised iron and pieces of old sack. The entrance way, and only source of natural light, was facing directly towards the line-up. What a sight to wake up to. The water was like ice. It chilled us right through our wetsuits. We paddled out together, both feeling a little apprehensive, though neither of us showed it to the other. We reached a good take-off area about half way along the line-up. The waves were just peeling off in perfect formation. We both paddled into the first one, about 6 foot, rode it for about 100 yards before pulling out. It was impossible to describe the feeling of having rode, what would have to have been, the best left-hander, EVER. You just felt like yelling and screaming. We paddled back to our take-off point, sat and waited. John just kept on slapping the water, and saying things like, "This is great", "What a gas", "I'm absolutely stoked". I found myself sitting on my board and shaking. I told myself that it was the cold, but on reflection, it was more likely the exhilaration of this place.

I turned and paddled for the next one, again about 6 foot. As I dropped down the face I began to turn. The wave was so clean that I could hear the board rushing across the water. This sound was soon replaced by the thunder of whitewater, as the wave folded over. I accelerated across the wall, cut back, turned again, and accelerated once more. As I got closer to the beach the wave lost a bit of it's size, so I slowed the board down, waiting for the critical section of the wave to catch up. As the white water got closer, the wall became more upright. When it had caught up to me, I moved towards the front of the board to pick up some more speed. As the wave started to fold over just behind my right shoulder, I crouched down, grabbed hold of the outside rail, and pulled it as hard as I could, causing the board to dig deeper into the face of the wave. I stretched my left leg forward, so that my foot was right on the nose. The wave was now folding completely over me. This was it, hanging five, inside the tube.

KABOOM!! That was the noise I heard as I was swallowed up and dumped. I was pulling so hard on the front of the board, that the back broke free and spun around. The wave then picked my board up, with me still on it, and threw it up and over the falls. After I surfaced, picking sand out from between my teeth, I retrieved my board, and paddled back out to where John was sitting. He was giggling like some demented old fool. After he settled down, he told me that he was watching my ride. He saw me crouch down, and then nothing, until the nose of my board came

shooting into the air, with me still hanging grimly onto the rail, and my foot still planted on the nose. He said that I held that position all the way over the falls. Neither of us ventured that deep into the wave again.

We set up camp inside the makeshift shelter, but that only lasted one night, as the cold of the night nearly saw us freeze to death. The following morning, the same perfect conditions prevailed, with the swell down a little, at 4 to 5 foot. Paddling out into the early morning line-up was a lesson in agony. I'm sure that the glass was going to crack on the bottom of our boards. It was almost impossible to put a decent layer of wax on. We could only stay in the water for an hour at a time. Any longer than that, and you froze. We managed to get a good beach fire going, so we could thaw out between sessions. Even with these near perfect conditions, it was very difficult to leave the warmth of the fire, for the cold of the ocean. We only stayed another four days, before moving off towards Bells Beach in Victoria.

QUENCHING A DESIRE

South Australia was fairly unimpressive until we got down to Mount Gambier, and then Portland, which was just inside the Victorian border. We stayed there overnight, and then made our way along the Great Ocean Road. The weather was bitterly cold and blowing very hard as we made our way East towards Bells. We stopped at a couple of the Lookouts, but were not too keen to get too close to the edge, because of the wind.

When we got to Bells Beach it was about 1pm, the wind had died quite considerably, and there was obviously a bit of surf around, because there were 4 or 5 other vehicles parked at the top of the hill. We got out of the van and made our way over to the hill-top. Looking down the cliff gave us our first view of Bells Beach. It wasn't really a beach at all, but rather a wave that was breaking onto the cliff face. There was a good 5 foot swell running, and the other surfers in the water were getting some good waves. It was quite a let-down, considering everything we'd heard about the place. But we were determined to surf Bells, even if it was straight into a cliff.

After we had donned our wetsuits, we started to ease ourselves down the narrow, slippery track that led to the base of the cliff. As we looked over the edge, we hoped that we could retain our footing all the way down, as a fall from here, would surely kill you. We eventually made it down, and got into the water. The waves were actually breaking in front of the cliff, but then seemed to follow the rocks around further. We sat out the back for a while, watching how the waves were forming, and how the other surfers were handling them. Eventually we moved into position in the line-up. John took the first one, rode for about 50 yards, then pulled off. When he paddled back out I asked him what it was like. All he said was, that if this was the famous Bells Beach, then he'd rather stick to Sydney. I took the next one and only rode it about the same distance as John, before pulling off. I paddled back out, thinking to myself, why the heck do they rave about this place so much. It was putrid. I got back out to where John was sitting, talking to another surfer. John and this other guy were laughing away to each other. When I approached them, they told me that where we were wasn't Bells at all. Bells Beach was that one down to our left. This had some other name, like Little Rincon, or something like that. The guy said that the swell wasn't any good for Bells today, so everyone was up here. I asked him how we get out of here once we have finished our surf. He laughed again, and said that he had seen us trying to scramble down the edge of the cliff. Then he pointed down towards Bells, and told us that there was a set of steps leading up to the cliff top. That was where everyone entered and exited the water. Everyone but us, it would appear. I wasn't too keen about this spot, so I told John I was going to head in, via the steps this time. John was about two foot

behind me when I turned around to see how things were going back at the take-off area. He wasn't very keen either.

We stayed there overnight, but in the morning the swell was exactly the same, so we packed up and continued on towards New South Wales.

ROB AND RENEWALS

We arrived at Eden around 9pm. The town was virtually shut down, with the exception of the local pub, which was still buzzing with the half stewed fishermen. We headed out towards Ben Boyd to find a nice quiet place to camp for the night. A narrow dirt track led to a cleared grass area behind the beach. The salt bush was quite high, and acted as an ideal windbreak. Someone else had obviously camped here recently, because there was a circle of rocks which had formed the surrounds of a camp fire. After tucking the van neatly between the trees, we bedded down for the night.

The following morning was cool and crisp. Great excuse to light up the camp fire. So we propped our barbeque plate up on some of the rocks, and soon had it sizzling. On with the eggs, on with the bacon, and down the hatch. The beach was actually a fairly large secluded bay. It looked directly across to Eden itself. After breakfast we headed back to the township, picked up a few groceries, and then made our way to the main beach. There was a reasonable 3 to 4 foot peak forming in the middle of the beach. The wind was blowing lightly across the waves, causing them to chop up a bit. We paddled out for a couple of hours, and ended up staying till close on dark. The waves were very gentle. They peaked on a sand-bar, and peeled off left and right. I was trying to perfect my fin-first take-offs and spinners, while John was sharpening up his nose riding skills. My best wave for the day was a left-hander, about 3 foot. As I took off I planted my weight on the back of the board, stalling on the long wall. As the wave peaked up behind me, I moved forward. The nose of the board was still riding high, so I moved further forward. Still high, so further forward again. I was “five over” and moving fast. No side slipping, no grabbing rails, and no Kaboom. As the ride came to the end I quickly moved to the back of the board, aimed it up the face of the wave, and kicked out. The board, caught by the wind, spiralled up into the air, and over the back of the wave.

After our long session, we were ready for some warm tucker, so we made our way to the local pub for a counter meal. While we were in there, we took note of one of the fishermen who was having a beer at the bar. He was about 6 foot 3 tall, and had arms on him like tree stumps. He was huge. That was until another fisherman came in. This guy was so big that his shadow almost darkened the entire doorway. He walked up to the first fishermen, spoke to him for awhile, then gave him a “gentle tap” on the side of his head. This gentle tap knocked the other fisherman flat on his back. We suddenly found our counter meal far more interesting than what was transpiring around us. Fortunately, things quietened down almost as quickly as they started. We headed back to our previous nights camp spot, and settled in for a good sleep. We made our way up to Narooma the following day. It was pouring

rain and blowing a gale as we pulled up in the main street. The aroma coming from the Fish Shop was too good to by-pass, so we headed inside to warm up. The owner of the shop was a guy called Rob. As well as running the shop, he was also a Professional Fisherman, and one of the hottest local surfers around. We spent about an hour with Rob, talking about surfing, fishing, travel etc. He invited us to stay at his place, with himself and a “couple of friends”. We arranged to meet him later that afternoon when he would take us to his house. Until then, we just drove around looking at the potential of the numerous small beaches in the near vicinity.

We headed back to the shop at 5pm and met up with Rob as arranged. We followed him across the bridge, and then turned left, away from the water. His house was situated half way up the hill, and gave a really good view of the channel and the main beach. The house itself was a split level design, with a verandah sticking out from the top floor. This verandah afforded an even better view of the ocean and surrounding areas. Did Rob say a “couple” of friends? When we went in through the front door, there were bodies everywhere. Must have been at least 10 people lying around on the lounge floor, warming themselves in front of a blazing fire. Out of the midst of all the bodies came a face that we had seen somewhere before, but where? Then John suddenly trigged. It was Joe, the Belly Boarder we had met up at Currumbin in September last year. He had gone back to Sydney, but the travel bug had got him, so he bought himself a new Holden Panel Van, and headed off. He had met up with Rob about 3 months ago, the same way that we had, and he was now working with him on his boat. Some of the other guys were also fishermen, the remainder were local surfers.

After a night of numerous surf and fishing stories, we headed out to the van for what was left of the night. But Rob insisted that we stay in the house with the rest of the tribe. We thanked him for his offer, but made the observation that there wouldn't be enough room to put our heads down, let alone the rest of our bodies. He laughed, and told us that we could have the garage, if we wanted to clean it up a bit. While the idea of staying in something bigger than the van for a few nights certainly appealed to us, we were a little bit concerned about the words “clean it up a bit”. Besides, when we came in, we didn't remember seeing a garage. When we got downstairs, Rob stopped, unlocked a sliding glass door, and pulled the curtains back out of the way to reveal the garage. It was a room about 10 foot by 12 foot, complete with a couple of beds, a wash basin, and cupboard. Behind another curtained opening was the toilet. This was great, and the stuff we had to clean up was merely some of the extra fishing gear and a few cardboard boxes. Within 20 minutes, we were wrapped up in the bed clothes, and nodding off fast.

SLEEP, SLEEK AND SLASHING

The wind had died completely by the time we dragged ourselves out of those warm beds. It was about 9.30am, and we were feeling mighty hungry, so we decided to head upstairs and have a cook-up. When we opened the door, the place was deserted. We cooked our breakfast and then headed up to the shop to see Rob. It was still closed when we arrived, so we thought we had better ask around, to find where he might be. We were eventually directed to a boat shed down near the bridge. Rob's car was parked out the front, along with several other vehicles, so we went inside to see him. The guy working in the boat shed said that Rob, Joe, and a couple of others, were out fishing. They had been out since 5am. He said that if we came back at about midday, we'd probably catch them.

The main beach wasn't doing much, so we continued along the dirt road to the next one. There was a 3 to 4 foot right-hander breaking off the rocks. It had a steep take-off, and long wall which carried right into the shore-break. The water was certainly a lot warmer than Victoria had to offer. I paddled into the first one, about 4 foot. The wave sucked up quickly as it passed over the cungie covered rocks. By the time I stood up, the wall was nearly vertical. I dropped down the face and turned hard to prevent the nose of the board from going under. But under it went, and I came crashing down in front of the wave. I knew I was going to get pounded by this wave. I didn't have long to wait, as the wave crashed down on top of me. I surfaced in time to see my board being washed up onto the beach. By the time I'd retrieved it and paddled back out, John had already ridden a couple of nice waves. I dug in for my next effort, again about 4 foot. Again the wave walled up too quickly for me. I tried to pull back off the wave, but my board had other ideas, and so we both went over the falls. This was becoming a bad habit, all this swimming into the beach for my board. As I was paddling out, yet again, John took off on a clean 4 footer. He got to his feet, took the near vertical drop successfully, which was more than I was doing, and turned across the long wall. He headed off into the distance, turn, drive, turn, drive, all the way into the shore-break.

Fortunately for me, it was getting close to midday, so we dried off and headed back to the boat shed to meet up with Rob and the others. By the time we got there, they had already arrived back. There were boxes of fish piled up on the wharf, and still more being off-loaded from the boat. Rob's boat was a beauty. It was made out of aluminium and was powered by two 50hp outboard motors. He had special tubes made up to stick his fishing rods in. We stood around for an hour or so, while Rob and the others cleaned their catch, then headed up to Rob's shop to drop off a fresh supply. They then took the remainder to the Wholesaler.

That afternoon we all headed back to the beach where John and I had been earlier in the day. The tide had come in quite a bit, so the waves were more full and had

reduced in size. It was a case of “instant crowd” once we all hit the water. Joe had certainly improved his surfing. This prolonged holiday was obviously good for him. As up at Currumbin, he was tucking right into the critical section of the waves, and unlike us poor stand-up surfers, his belly board had instant acceleration, and he could get it riding up nearly vertical walls. Rob was really hot as well. He took off from right on the peak, would drop to the bottom, and then do one of the biggest turns I've ever seen. His board would practically be heading straight up the wave again before he would throw it back down, and then carve his way across the wave face until he reached the shore-break. When mortal men would pull out, Rob just kept going until the wave completely swallowed him. He would do this wave after wave, and keep coming up smiling.

We continued to surf till twilight, then all made our way back to the house and got the fire blazing. Tucking into some fresh fish and washing them down with a few cans was an ideal way to end this day. After a bit of a sit around John and I headed down stairs, and off to sleep.

It didn't feel like we'd been asleep any time at all when we were woken by Rob banging on the glass door. Some time during the evening we had said to him that we'd like to go out with him one day when he went fishing. This was that day. We wrapped up in our winter woollies, and headed off to the boatshed. Within half an hour we were speeding out along the channel, heading towards the open sea. There was a 4 to 5 foot swell running and so we timed our run to coincide with the lulls in the swell. It was a fantastic feeling, racing out over the ocean. We headed out towards Montague Island, with the intention of sheltering between it and the mainland.

TURNING GREEN AND TURNING ON

Something I never really knew, was just how sick a person could get, and not actually die. From the moment the boat stopped I was hanging over the side, feeding the fish. The others, in amongst all the laughing, were trying to suggest all different ways to make me feel better. Suck Oranges, lie down and close your eyes, stick your head between your legs, were just some of the suggestions. All I wanted to do was get back onto dry land. In the end, Rob dropped me off on Montague Island, and while they headed off fishing again, I spent the time with the Lighthouse Keeper, wandered around on the island, or just laying down on the off-chance that my head would stop spinning. I was picked up again at about 12 noon, and we made our way back over to the mainland. I spent the rest of the day flat on my back in front of Rob's fireplace, while John and the others went for a surf. The next couple of days were fairly uneventful. The surf had fallen to about 2 foot, and the wind had come up a bit. All in all, not a very pleasant combination.

There were a couple of incidents that occurred that stood out more than anything. One was the day Rob nearly lost his boat, and could have been his life as well, in a mishap as he was heading out for a days fishing. As they were leaving the channel, a couple of waves started to loom up a little quicker than they had estimated. In order to get over them, Rob had to accelerate a bit harder than normal. As the boat hit the first swell, it became airborne, but instead of landing in the trough between the waves, the boat hit the face of the next swell. The jarring effect was so severe that the mounting bracket holding one of the motors on, snapped. This caused the motor to fall off the back. This in turn, pulled the fuel lines out of the other motor, causing it to stop as well. The motor that had broken off was still hanging off the back of the boat, suspended by the steering cables. Rob and the others were stranded, just out from the channel, and the swell was slowly pushing them towards the rocks. We saw them waving frantically at us, signalling us to get help, so John jumped in the van and raced back to the boat shed. Within ten minutes, one of the other fishermen was racing out through the channel, to where Rob's boat was bobbing around. The rescue boat attached a line to Rob's boat, and started to tow it slowly towards the channel, but they decided against trying to come in through the channel, because the motor that was still hanging off the back, was creating a lot of drag. This was causing the tow boat to go slower than the swell that was coming in. This could lead to a wave breaking over the boats, which could create the very real danger of a capsized. It was decided that they would head out to Montague Island, and do the necessary repairs there, as the Lighthouse Keeper had a block and tackle on his wharf. They made it out to the island, completed the repairs, then made their way back to the boatshed. Rob said that it

was the most frightening thing that had ever happened to him during his time as a professional fisherman.

The other incident was one that had happened some time before we arrived at Narooma. Rob related it to us one night around the fire place. Six people went out fishing on this particular day. The swell was running quite high, at about 6 to 8 foot. It was a fairly tricky journey out, but well worth it, as they hooked into a mass of fish. So many so, that they had to cut their day short by about three hours. The swell was still high, and the tide was on the way out. The water was literally rushing out of the channel, into the open ocean. Rob had to position the boat in the trough between the swells, and by using the throttle, try to ride into the channel in this position. It was going well until they hit the out-going tidal rush. This, combined with the added weight of all the bodies and fish in the boat, caused them to slow dramatically. The following swell caught up to them, picked the boat up, and pushed it down the face into the trough again. This was something that Rob had done deliberately on numerous occasions before, but not with all this extra weight on board. Anyway, the boat moved ahead of the swell a little, but the swell peaked up, and broke over the back of the boat. All the occupants of the boat had a death grip on anything that was bolted down. After the foam and spray had subsided, Rob looked around to see if everyone was all right. All he could see was three of the boxes of fish slowly sinking into the channel. The wave had swept them overboard, and into the deep blue sea. All the other people on board were drenched, but safe. Rob said that he can laugh about it now, but back then, all he could see was \$200 plus, slowly sinking to the bottom.

John went out with Rob, Joe and the others on a couple more occasions, but I was quite happy to stick to my surfing. I had one really hot session while the others were off fishing. It was at the main beach where there was a 3 foot peak forming about 200 yards down from the channel. The right-hander was fast and hollow, whilst the left was much slower, and very full. I could paddle onto the peak, and then chose the direction I wanted to go. I found that if I got into a good position on the right-handers, I could just stay ahead of the whitewater. No cut-backs, bottom turns etc., just straight across the face, and then pull out. On the left-handers, I was able to stand, take the drop, then do a slow turn, and move up and down with ease. This left-hander would eventually fade away as it hit some deeper water.

UNFORTUNATE CHOICES

Money was starting to get low again, and we had been away from home, on and off, for about sixteen months. We came to a decision, that it was time to head for home and...settle down!! But of course, there were still quite a few beaches between here and Sydney, and after all, we didn't have to be home, just yet. So after two weeks with Rob and the others, we said our farewells, and headed North towards Sydney.

We were only on the road about an hour, when we saw a mud-covered station wagon, with a couple of boards on top, waiting to pull onto the Highway from a narrow dirt track. We put our blinker on, and turned onto the track, stopping beside the other vehicle. They told us that there was a small surf to be had if we followed this track all the way to the end. The only trouble spot was about half way in. There was a long rutted mud hole. If we kept to the right, we'd get through all right. So we headed in, and sure enough, there was a mud hole. We kept to the right as instructed, but when we were about half way through, the front of the van sunk into a gigantic hole, which stopped us dead. The trouble was, when they said right, they meant right on the way out, not on the way in. When we got out and surveyed our situation we found that the front was buried up to the bottom of the spare wheel, which was bolted to our bull bar on the front. We just stood there a while looking at the van, hoping it would simply jump out. It didn't. The only way we were going to get "unstuck" was to firstly try to jack the front up a bit, then put some tree branches under the wheels, then we'd have to dig the exit of the hole out a bit.

Jack, branches, dig, that was the sequence of events that took place over the next two hours, before we finally managed to drive free from all the mess. Although it was now late in the afternoon, and getting on towards Winter, we were so hot and dirty, that when we got to the end of the track, we threw off all our clothes, and ran into the surf. We lasted about two minutes before the cold took hold, and we raced back up to dry off and warm ourselves. It was a fairly good spot. It provided a large grassed area to set-up camp on, and the waves were right outside the front door. There was only a small wave at present, but we thought it would be worth hanging around for a while. So we settled in for a few days.

VANDALS AND VICTORY

It was some time in the middle of the night when we were woken up by horns blasting, and people yelling and screaming. We pulled the rear curtains back to see what was going on. There were about five other cars parked in the same area, and all the occupants were totally drunk, and stumbling all over the place. We thought we'd let our feelings be known, so we threw open the side door of the van and jumped out. The first thing that greeted us in the light of one of the cars was some guy squatting next to our van with his trousers down. We could only guess at what he was going to do next. When we saw just how many drunken bodies there were, we decided that it wouldn't be wise to mount a challenge. So instead, we just smiled, and started making out like we were really pleased to see them. We figured that they would burn themselves out in an hour or so, and we would be able to get back to sleep. Two hours had gone by, and they were actually getting louder, and more aggressive. Some of them had started to rip down small trees, and were starting a fire on the beach. Slowly the others were being drawn towards it, until finally, all of them were gathered around. We felt that now was a good time to get out of the place. The few things we had stored outside the van were quickly and quietly loaded back in, as we mentally mapped out the way we would go. It would require us to first reverse into some low bush, and then just charge off between a couple of their vehicles a car and some low scrub, down onto the track, and off. So I put the van into reverse gear, and with my foot on the clutch, started the engine. As soon as it fired into life, I dropped the clutch, accelerated and turned. We flew backwards into the scrub as I jammed on the brakes. I then grabbed first gear and took off. From our grassed camping area, we bounced down onto the track. Next thing we heard was a smashing sound on the roof. John looked out through the still open rear curtains to see a few of the guys running after us and throwing bottles and cans at us. John just kept on yelling at me to go faster, in case they decided to jump into their cars and try to chase us. I didn't need any prompting, I was off like a scalded cat. As we approached the mud hole, we hoped like crazy that the right side, would be the right side. Our headlights firstly picked up the bog, then the outline of another vehicle with it's doors open. This other vehicle was stuck in the same place that had caught us out. We slowed as we came towards the hole, but didn't see anyone near the vehicle, so we could only guess that it must have been abandoned by the drunks who would no doubt come back when they were a little bit more sober, and try to dig it out. Suddenly in my rear vision mirror I picked up the flickering of lights, as they filtered through the bush behind us. Again, I pushed my foot through the floor, as we flew through the mud, and off towards the main road. We looked back, but the lights had gone, so we assumed that they stopped at the car stranded in the mud.

We made our way up the Highway towards Nowra. There was a sign-post pointing to the right that read "Currarong". John said that he'd been there once with his parents, and it was a nice quiet little village, so we turned onto the dirt road for the 20 or so miles to our new destination. In the light of our high beam we could see small sandy tracks leading into the bush, and we assumed, to the beach-front as well. Turning down one of these, did indeed, lead us to the beach-front. We pulled into a small cleared area, turned the engine off, and simply fell into the back, and dropped off to sleep.

WHICH BREAK, WHICH WAY

It was after midday before I finally started to move. There was a really bad smell floating around inside the van. I knew John's feet were rotten, but I didn't think they were that bad. I pushed the side door open to escape the stink. I stepped down, and took a deep breath of fresh salt air. The smell was almost overpowering. I coughed uncontrollably for about 30 seconds, and had tears streaming out of my eyes. The air nearly made me throw up. With my T-Shirt pulled up over my mouth and nose I had a quick look around to try and find where the smell was coming from. A quick circle of the van revealed nothing, so I wandered down to the beach. Still nothing. As I was walking back up to the van, I caught sight of something underneath it. I got down on my hands and knees and stuck my head under the front. It was the remains of a dead horse. When we swung into our parking spot, we must have driven right over it. I couldn't stand the smell any longer, so I shut the side door, jumped into the front and drove off. It was only then, that John woke up. He didn't believe me when I told him what had happened, so I stopped the van, and told him to walk back and have a look for himself. He was only gone about a minute, when he came running back.

We pulled up in front of the General Store to get a bite to eat. It was School Holiday time in New South Wales now, and the shop appeared to be the local meeting place for the surfers and miscellaneous other young people around the place. While we were waiting for our food to be cooked, we got talking to a few of the guys that were in the shop at the time. Most were from Sydney, down here for the holidays. Some had been coming down here for years. They said that the surf in Currarong itself was nothing to write home about, but further up the beach there were some good peaks and banks. After we grabbed our lunch, we headed back out along the road we'd come in on, to try to find some of these peaks and banks.

A sandy hill-climb led us to a cleared area overlooking the water. The beach itself stretched for miles. It was broken up by four reefs which jutted out from the beach. They were, First Reef, Second Reef, Hammerhead and Kinghorn. We found ourselves half-way between Second and Hammerhead. The waves were only about two foot, but the day was good, and the water was clean, so in we went. It was a very pleasant way to spend the rest of the day. There were a variety of banks to choose from, and the entire stretch between the two reefs was dotted with little groups of surfers.

During the night, the wind came up, and by morning, so had the swell. We looked back down towards the town, and saw that Second Reef was about 5 foot. We jumped in the van and headed back down there as quick as we could. There were

two others out in the water. The wave was very short indeed. It featured one heck-of-a-drop, and a wall that only lasted about 40 foot. There was a marker buoy bobbing about just where the surfers were sitting. We paddled out and joined the others. The marker buoy was connected to a lobster pot on the bottom, and the surfers were using the buoy to hold onto, so that they could maintain the same take-off spot all the time. One of the surfers paddled for a wave that didn't seem to exist. All of a sudden it reared up out of nowhere. He jumped quickly to his feet, turned about half-way down the wave, shot out to the shoulder, and up and over the back. It didn't look like such a good wave, but we thought we'd hang around for a few, and then maybe head back up towards Hammerhead. I paddled for the next one, and one of the guys yelled to me to start paddling away from the peak. I looked around, but couldn't even see a peak worth paddling away from, so I just kept going in the direction I had originally intended. Next thing I knew, I was looking straight down a 5 foot vertical slippery dip. I didn't even get time to stand up before my board dropped straight down the face of the wave, and buried itself in the reef. I also fell straight down the face, and likewise, buried myself in the reef. It hurt the first time I hit it, but when I bounced along a bit further, I really knew what hurt was. I didn't stop to check myself over, I just swam for the safety of some deeper water. Meanwhile my board had survived the fall, and was floating around in the deeper water just off to the side of the break. The guy who had called out had caught the wave after me, so he paddled over to see if I was all right. I told him that I was a little bit sore on the back and legs, but otherwise everything seemed to be in the right place. It turned out that these two guys were brothers, Warren and Keith, they lived down here and worked in Nowra. John stayed out surfing with them for the rest of the day while I rested on the beach. For such a small wave, it really packed a punch.

XENO WAYS AND WAVES

The next day Warren, Keith and another couple of carloads of surfers were going to head over to Jervis Bay, to a beach called Target. They said that it should be really good, as the prevailing wind was directly off-shore, and the swell direction looked good. So we packed our boards into the van and all headed off in convoy. The road out to Target was unbelievable. If you weren't dodging huge pot-holes, then you were having to negotiate tree roots. We came to one uphill section and everyone stopped and got out. This was the spot where man-power took over from horse-power. The track was very soft sand, so one by one, each vehicle would rush at the hill, and if it started to slow down, all the people would get behind it, and start pushing. It only took about ten minutes, and all the cars, including the van, were successfully over the hill and making the final descent to the parking area. We could only catch a very small glimpse of the ocean from between the trees, and couldn't see the beach at all. One of the guys with us said that it sounds good, so let's go. It was the first time we had ever done a surf check by listening to the waves.

When we eventually made our way down onto the beach, we found that the guy was right, it did sound good, and looked good too. The beach was only about 200 yards long, bordered on each end by rocky outcrops. The wave was a right-hander, about 4 foot, and broke from one side of the beach across to the other. Just beside where the wave peaked there was an undertow which the surfers used to get out the back. Towards the end of the beach there was a small sand-bar, and this would cause the wave to form a bowl section in front of the main part of the wave. It looked great.

Before long, we were all in the surf and having some great waves. I took off on one, and as I drove across the face, I could see the bowl section building up in front of me. So I crouched down and charged head-long into it. Next thing I knew, I was out the other side. As I pulled out, some of the others there were cheering and jumping up and down. They said that I just disappeared into the bowl and suddenly re-appeared out the other side. We all had a great day out there, and were sorry when it drew to a close. The trip back out to the town was uneventful, as John and I headed back up to the track between the two reefs, got a bit of a fire going, and settled in for the evening.

The wind sprang up again during the night, and by morning the surf here was chopped to pieces. We decided to go back out to Target. I wasn't too sure whether we'd be able to get out there without some assistance, but as John said, if we get caught we can always leave the van and walk the rest of the way in. So off we went, out along the dirt track, over the tree roots. As we were getting near to the sandy hill, a Landrover came from the other direction. It was a couple of

fishermen. We stopped them and asked what it was like. They told us that the surf was so big that they weren't even game to go out on the rocks to fish. They told us that it could be up around 8 to 10 foot. We thanked them and pushed on towards the hill. Instead of stopping at the bottom, we got a bit of a run-up, and using second gear, pulled ourselves over the top. By the time we got to the parking area, we could already hear the sets coming in. They certainly sounded like they were 8 to 10 foot.

YOU NEVER KNOW TILL YOU TRY

Try more like 15 foot, and closing out. That was what we were greeted by when we eventually got down onto the sand. There was just one huge long wave crashing down right across the beach. No wonder the fishermen didn't want to go out onto the rocks. We stood at the base of the hill we'd just walked down, and watched as wave after wave crashed onto the beach. They were bigger than the waves we saw at Noosa back in November last year, and where those ones were beautifully shaped, these ones were just one big ugly wall. There wasn't any future here so we trudged back up the hill again and made our way back to town. We swung by Warren and Keith's place, but their car wasn't there, so we headed back down to the General Store. They weren't there either, but from the shop we could look along the length of the beach, all the way up to Kinghorn. The whole beach-front was being affected by an onshore wind, so we grabbed something to eat from the shop, and sat in the van watching the ocean.

Our day-dreaming was interrupted by the sound of a horn. We turned to see Keith pulling up beside us. He told us that he and Warren had gone out this morning to where we were camping, to take us out to a really isolated and rarely surfed spot, but found that we had headed off. We told him what we had done, and he said, that was the reason why they went out to this other place, because the conditions were completely wrong for Target, but it was more than likely that this other place could be picking up the dregs of this swell, and according to Keith, it was. About 6 foot of short, sharp tube. We asked him why he was back here, if the place was so good. He told us that he had come back to buy some food and drinks, because it was so good, that they were going to stay until dusk. He invited us to go back with him, but warned us that it was a hard slog, especially with a board. We followed Keith up the main street, turned off, and headed towards the scrub. After leaving the main dirt road, we bounced our way along a narrow, overgrown track. It only lasted about 200 yards, and stopped at a small creek which emptied into the sea on the edge of a small secluded beach.

Well, that wasn't such a hard slog. Don't know why Keith bothered to say that it was. So where's this isolated spot? Keith smiled at us, and pointed to the other side of the creek. About two miles in that direction, and we have to walk all the way!! Keith grabbed the food, and we unloaded our boards, wetsuits and towels. Was it really two miles? It felt every bit of two miles, and we'd only covered about 500 yards, but we were assured it was worth the trip. After a further twenty minutes or so, we started to see glimpses of the ocean off to our left. We appeared to be walking parallel to the sea, and not getting any closer. When we finally came to the end of the track, we found ourselves on a hill, looking into a bay with a large outcrop of rock in the centre. Off to one side of this outcrop, was a 6 foot tube. The

ride only lasted about ten seconds, but it was ten seconds of vertical walled, spray-shooting tube ride. Keith lowered the food down to his brother who was waiting at the foot of the hill, then our boards and other gear followed. For us, it was a hand over hand scramble down the face of the hill, using tufts of blade grass for support. Once down at sea level, we dived into our wetsuits and paddled out.

The wave was breaking in very shallow water, thus giving it that tube shape. It would peak up very quickly, and throw straight over. The safest way to catch the wave was to paddle across it, so that when you stood up you were already heading in the right direction and didn't have to be concerned about turning. John paddled into the first one. As his board got picked up by the swell, he sprang to his feet, his board both dropping down and heading across the wave simultaneously. The lip threw out over his head as he tucked down underneath it. Momentarily he disappeared into the wave, then after a few seconds he re-appeared. I wasn't too keen about the take-off, especially after the dumping I received at Second Reef, so I sat out in the deep water for well over five minutes before I ventured into the take-off area. John took the next one, leapt to his feet, as he streaked across the face. He again, completely disappeared into the wave, and when he came out he was shouting his head off. He said that it was the most incredible feeling, actually being inside the wave, and then all of a sudden back out into day light again. Keith took one with the same result. Both John and he were trying to talk me into getting into it, but I was still feeling hesitant.

I could feel my heart up in my mouth, and my pulse racing, as I paddled for my first wave. Was I facing far enough towards the shoulder? When the wave picked me up, should I jump straight up? Just how shallow was it here? All these things were spinning around in my head as I began to get picked up by the wave. I leapt to my feet as the board dropped about 3 foot down the face. I looked up to see the top of the wave starting to come over. I could see myself being driven into the rocks, again. I don't quite remember the word I said, but I know it wasn't too polite, as I shut my eyes and waited to get hit. Next thing I knew I was off the wave and starting to lie back down, and paddle out. John asked me how I liked my first real tube ride. I told him that I didn't know, because I had my eyes closed. Keith went into fits of laughter. I'd got so anxious about the wave, that when I finally built up enough courage to go for it, I closed my eyes, and missed it.

ZERO DEFECTS

John yelled in agony as he surfaced. He had taken off on his next wave, the same as before, but instead of his board dropping down the face, the wave picked it up and threw it over the falls. John had landed heavily, and had hit his foot on the edge of his board, twisting his ankle. By the time I retrieved his board and got back to him, he was nearly crying with the pain. Keith and I helped him into shore and up to our towels. The side of his foot was swelling up now, and it hurt to move it too much. We wrapped a T-Shirt around it, to try and keep the swelling down, and to give the ankle some support. The next problem was to get back to the vehicles. Here we were, four people, one an invalid, four surfboards plus a quantity of towels and the like. Finally, it was decided that Warren and Keith would carry three of the boards between them, I would carry my board, plus as much of the other stuff as I could, and we would all wear our towels around our waists like skirts. John was going to have to lean against me for support. Warren and Keith would go ahead of us, put their gear in the car, and come back to help John. It was a long two miles, but we all survived. We took John to Warren's house, and his mother wrapped his foot in a proper pressure bandage.

By the next morning, most of the swelling had gone down, and he had far more movement in it. The day had dawned very overcast, but the wind had swung around to be directly off-shore. I had a look down towards First Reef and could pick out the shape of a good clean 3 foot right-hander. We drove down to the shop, walked across the small river outlet, and up to First Reef. John wasn't going to risk hurting his ankle any further, so he sat on the beach while I paddled out for a few waves. The weather started to close in, so John headed back to the van, while I thought I would just have a couple more waves and then head in.

The rain suddenly started to pelt down. It was actually stinging me on the face and arms, so I lay in the water beside my board. It was a strange feeling to be lying there and looking out to sea through the sheets of rain. The rain was actually making it easier for me to see the waves forming, and although the surface of the water was being peppered by the rain, it remained very smooth and even. I took off on one wave, and as I was carving my way across the face, I was being hit by this driving rain. I had to ride with my hand held above my eyes so-as-to shield them from the stinging effect of the down-pour. After the rain ceased, the ocean turned on a "glass-out". Next thing I saw was John hobbling down the beach with his board under his arm. Sore ankle or not, if I thought I was going to have these waves to myself, I had another thing coming. What a great ending to our time away, 3 to 4 foot of glass, a light off-shore wind and no one else around. The thought that we were heading home was still in the back of our minds, but for now, that is where it would stay.

The scene that greeted us, was
one of both dismay and disappointment.

The wind chop came blowing in
from over the horizon in never ending
lines, holding an intermittent 12 to 18".

It flopped on the sandy shore.
The steep and glassy walls were no more.
We had arrived back in Sydney.

EPILOGUE

It's been nearly 32 years since this story ended, and my life, along with everyone else's in the world, has changed quite a lot.

Boards have gotten shorter and shorter.

Hair has gone the same way. Also a lot thinner and greyer.

I went through all the phases of changing boards, but have now gone back to the "Mal".

On the other hand, John never got rid of his. He is still riding the same one he had all those years ago!!

Our lives, as I said, have changed.

We are both married now - not to each other.

I eventually married John's younger sister.

John married a local girl also.

Between the two families, we have seven children, and they all love the ocean. They didn't have much choice really.

John settled into the business world quite well, has a comfortable little house, in a comfortable little street.

He drives his family to the beach every second Sunday.

My life didn't quite end like that.

We bought our comfortable little house, in a comfortable little street.

I had a comfortable little job.

I surfed every second Sunday as well.

Six years of that was enough for me.

I sold up - We packed up - and....

WENT SURFING!!

Living behind the foreshore of the National Park, one gets to see the mundane existence of the “tourist class”. All the coconut scented white bodies parade in never-ending lines, as they strive for that “tanned Aussie” image. They strut about, putting on their aires and graces, nodding and smiling at each other, and frankly not giving a damn about anything, except the “mighty dollar”.

It has been many years now since leaving that intellectual tread-mill, and taking “root in the forest”. The area is on the boundary line of the National Park, and overlooks the northern entrance. Our house is extremely basic, cool in winter, warm in summer, but very waterproof. All the modern conveniences abound, including a roof, stone floors, and four walls.

A track of sorts exists from behind the house, coming out at the end of a cul-de-sac near town. It is well worn, and only the local fishermen ever bother using it. It's a 4WD track at the best of time, and in the wet, well, it's a gas!!

My day is spent with surfing, photography, interspersed with the gardens and animals. There is a large cleared area behind the house where all the vegetables are grown. Between them, and the milk from our goats, mixed with the meat and fruit we purchase from town, our diet remains pretty stable. Supplementing this, is the occasional fish caught off any one of a number of points in the area.

I do a bit of casual cleaning at night in the local Caravan Park. But primarily, we live off the interest of our savings from the sale of our home back in Sydney. It would be a lie to say that there is no full-time work available in the area, because there is, but my day is full, and burdening it with more work would only take away the time I need to enjoy life. The small amount of money that I do gain from my job goes to pay for those constantly nagging expenses that crop up, like car rego, licences etc.

It was probably the children more than anything, that prompted our move. We wanted somewhere where they could grow and develop without the unnecessary pressures that exist within the western social system. They attend a local school, for we all require a basic education. It teaches interaction and a certain amount of self reliance. Their remaining waking hours are spent with play, and learning skills which will help in their everyday lives. Play though, is foremost, as it is one of the few ways left for children to express themselves. Abstract thinking is encouraged, with an equal amount of attention paid to reward AND punishment. Secondary to my surfing, photography has been emotionally rewarding, if not quite as financially rewarding as I would have liked. When the swells rise, so too do the number of amateur camera buffs. On a good clean day, there are as many photographers as surfers in the line-up, all jostling for that award winning shot. It

was this reason in part, that has kept me out of the line-up during photo sessions, and up on the relative safety and sanity of the beach. It costs a good deal more with the lenses and such, but I find the added expense is far out weighed by the range of angles that I can get, and with the 500ml lens set up, looking straight down the line, the shots are very comparable to most of these other shutter-bugs.

Just remember when you're out in the water hassling for waves, that God made them a long time before he made you or I, and they will probably be around along time after we're gone. There is no such thing as "my wave", so why not stop screaming it out every time someone looks like they are going to steal "your wave" away from you. There are plenty to go around - God made certain of that. Maybe we'll meet on a wave one day - maybe not!

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