

# the Sydney Cyclist



NEWSLETTER OF THE SYDNEY CYCLISTS' CLUB AND THE SYDNEY CYCLING CLUB

NOVEMBER 1983

## BUNDANOON 83

The second annual Southern Highlands Tour began with an early start for several of the Club riders as they rode into Central Station to catch the train for Penrith. At about 8:00 a.m., Bruce Vote, Hugh Milner, John Burraston, Dave Stakes, John Beauchamp and Paul Montesin left for the ride through Mulgoa and Oakdale down towards Picton. The day was overcast, but the rain kept away except for a few sprinkles. The boys rode on along the old road into Thirlmere. When Bruce appeared out of the mist to visit the local Devonshire Tea shoppe, the owners look of surprise could have been anticipated. Who would expect a 'grown' man wearing lycra knicks and an Italian jersey to step in out of the weather. After morning tea, it was on along the old road through Hilltop and into Mittagong for the lunch break. Paul, Hugh and John voted to eat at the local Italian pasta emporium, while Bruce and the others met us at good ole Charlies on the highway. After lunch, new groups formed with Paul joining our new rider, Jean Smith for a ride straight to Bundanoon; with Dave and John Burraston following close behind. Bruce, Hugh and John Beauchamp decided to be the ironmen and went out towards Fitzroy Falls, they decided to turn right at the last intersection towards the Hotel and didn't miss anything, as the mist had once again closed in and the falls were obscured. My daughter is still a bit sceptical about the falls which are supposed to be there...

Upon arrival at the Bundanoon Hotel, we all made for our rooms and discovered that Cathy Fry, Gary Jennings, Alan Smith, Gwen and friend had already arrived. After several ales and games of snooker, everyone was ready for the evening feast. (We were still remembered from last year !) No records were set this year; however, the staff of the hotel did their best to fill us up with whatever was available.

After dinner, several brave souls went out into the mist for the annual glow worm hunt, led by Suzannah. We got down to the glen and the little fellas were there waiting for us, as usual. Quite a splendid showing actually.

We awoke to a very heavy mist, and breakfast dragged on until moves were finally made to get started, with the 'A' graders planning to ride to the Gong. They rode along the Kangaloon road through gothic-like archways created by the avenues of trees, over Mt. Murray to the Macquarie Pass. Hugh Milner, being the only rider with a light was elected to be the 'first to be hit from behind' for his foresight in being so equipped. Many worn out brake blocks later, they made it down to the coast and got to the station (pub) at Wollongong, and on to Sydney.

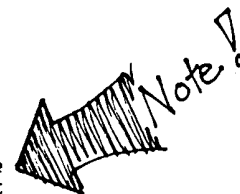
The rest of us spent the day having Devonshire Teas in the many pleasant shops in Bundanoon, before setting out to drive back to Sydney.



## BOOK NOW !!!

By the time you read this, you should have received a letter regarding the need for some positive action on your part. Get your response in for the pre-Christmas Dinner so that the Social Secretary, Paul Montesin will know just how many can be expected for this gala event.

phone: 519-6215



### Christmas Social Function

### 6 Dec. from 7:00

OUR INTREPID REPORTER, LEO SCHOFIELD HAS RECENTLY WRITTEN THIS RESTAURANT UP IN HIS COLUMN IN THE S.M.H. SO YOU HAD BETTER TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY BEFORE THE 'TRENDIES' TAKE OVER.....

**PRE-XMAS  
DINNER**

### THAI ORCHID RESTAURANT

628 CROWN STREET

SURRY HILLS (100 METRES FROM  
CLEVELAND ST.)

\$13.00 PER PERSON

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE - SEE YOU THERE !!!

# A pleasure bicentennially recommended

**B**ACK in 1888, the residents of Sydney threw themselves solidly behind the celebrations to mark 100 years of European settlement in Australia.

Out in the suburbs, spec builders erected Centennial Terraces, shop-owners labelled their new emporia Centennial Stores.

And in more public places, plates and plaques and all manner of memorials were thrown up to mark our inexorable march in the general direction of nationhood.

But surely no commemorative initiative was as bright and as farsighted as the one that resulted in the dedication of 540 acres of turf in the eastern suburbs to public use.

Suitably planted with avenues of exotic palms and vast circular beds

fiercely municipal-looking canna lilies, dotted with no fewer than a dozen lakes and much marble statuary, ringed with impressive spear handed iron palings set — seemingly for all time — in sandstone footings and broken at appropriate points by titanic entrance gates, the space became, in time, the 220 hectares of Centennial Park.

Time has not always been kind to this great urban park. Within my memory an attempt was made to blow up some of the statuary with sticks of gelignite.

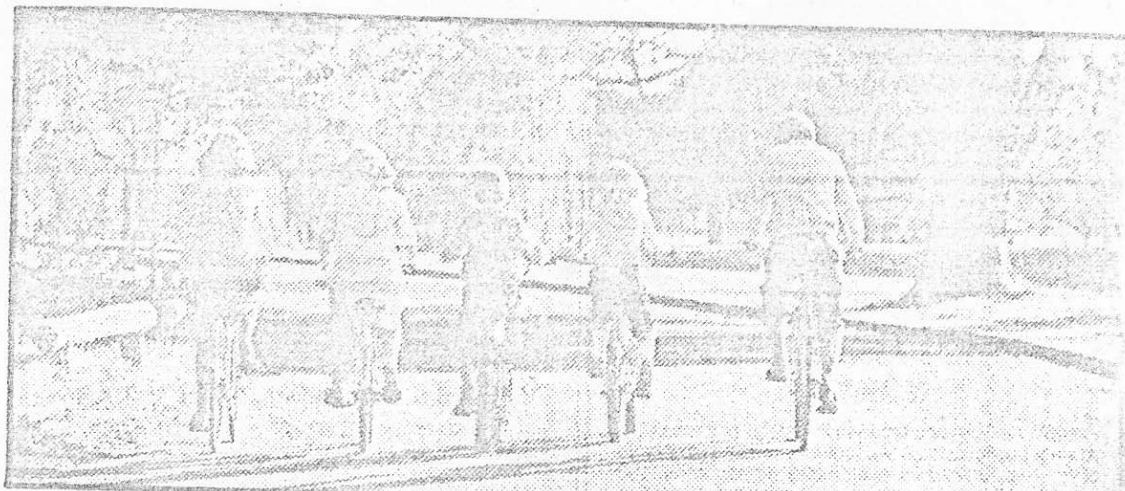
This resulted in what remains of the marble wrestlers, figures of the Seasons and, I think, Sir Henry Parkes being removed for safe keeping to a fenced compound where they stand armless, legless and in some cases headless, looking for the world like a set for the last act of Don Giovanni, waiting somewhat impatiently for someone to decide what to do with them.

Then there was the attempt to grab a large slab of the park for parking. "Centennial Park ... a lot of park or a parking lot?" challenged the banners at one of the first of the urban protest groups of the '70s.

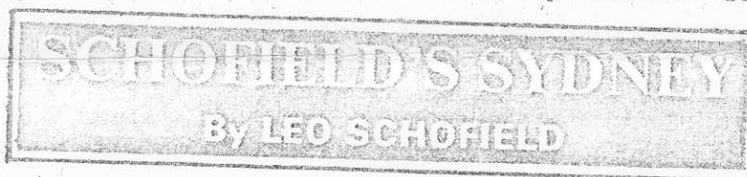
This dire proposal brought Patrick White out of his Martin Road mansion and on to the soap-box for what was to be, for such a private person, the first of a powerful sequence of public protests. White threatened to go and live in Adelaide — "the only civilised city in Australia" he called it — if the monstrous plan proceeded.

It didn't, although the decision not to ball up a little more of our environment was uncharacteristic of the Askin Government.

At that time Centennial Park was a kind of Oran Park East, a leafy speedway, a rat run for people in a hurry to get from Randwick to



Cyclists enjoy one of Sydney's treasures — Centennial Park.



Alexandria, Woolhara to Botany or Bondi to Central. If a speed limit existed it was comprehensively ignored and folks using the park for passive recreation ran the risk of being converted to bumper-bar fodder.

The general standard of maintenance was pretty abysmal too. Planting had been neglected and the proud manicured park of 1888 was looking pretty rosey by the early '70s.

Then, improvements got under way. Not suddenly but quite gradually, someone in the appropriate State Government department began to take a lively interest in CP.

New planting of trees was undertaken, speed limits were imposed, a one-way and access system that positively militated against use of the park as a short-cut for motorists was introduced. Then a cycle track. Galvanised pipe safety fences behind which joggers would leap like matadors at a corrida to escape the lunging automobiles, were removed and replaced with more sympathetic low log fences. This process is continuing on the southern side of the park right now.

Of course the fitness fantasia has something to do with this renewed interest in CP. A few straggling Commodores from the Acropolis Driving School are about the only automobiles you encounter here on a brisk morning so the space is now free for the runners, walkers, promenading pooches and yoga students. Not to mention the cyclists.

I am of this latter group. Not a serious cyclist mind you, THEY wear proper cycling gear, thigh-bugging black shorts, colourful Italian shirts, sexy black cycling shoes and sleek crash helmets and

push their featherweight machines around the circuit at a breathtaking pace.

I have a serious bike but take things a little easier. Loathing jogging I chose this particular form of exercise as it gives one the opportunity to enjoy the beauties of the park while trying to keep a wayward waistline under control.

The serious cyclists see nothing but bitumen. Travelling in packs of 20 and more they are directed by a leader and follow him blindly. "Right" he yells and they turn right, rushing by with a mighty whoosh of wheels and a flurry of obscenely muscled legs that have been shaved smooth as a baby's bum because the hair might impede speed.

They don't get to see and enjoy the skim of frost on the grass, the soft light coming in at right angles through the she oaks, the clouds of

sulphur-crested cockatoos of White's short stories.

It's exhilarating and despite the punishing pull up Lock Avenue at the end of the ride, curiously satisfying. One sees familiar sights and faces, notes peculiarities of habit and appearance. One seventy-year-old runs, albeit fairly slowly, in a snap brim Panama hat.

Another younger guy jogs with a bag over his shoulder which he fills with fresh horse manure for his garden.

Back on Oxford Street facing the lead-laden emissions you can at least feel that your lungs have been temporarily emptied of junk and your mind of unkind thoughts.

What a nice idea it would be if a few more parks of this kind existed around Sydney, particularly in the bleaker areas to the west and south. I've got a great name for it, Bicentennial Park. Our next centennial needs projects with vision. Barbecues at Bandywallop and bonfires at Brewarrina are all very well. But a park gives more people more pleasure for a whole lot longer.

LEO HAS ALSO  
COMMENTED ON THE  
THAI @REHID  
VENUE FOR OUR  
DINNER!  
PRE-XMAS

"Aerodynamic shift levers!!"

What? Was this exclamation aimed at me? Did I *have* aerodynamic shift levers? I was cruising along the path adjacent to the West Drive on my blindingly new but tastefully understated Trek 715 bicycle when this unidentified voice suddenly called out from nowhere. I continued pedaling. I have heard stranger things in New York City's Central Park, with nary an eyelash batted.

"Hey, Trek lady! You!" Now there was a chorus of voices yelling. I suddenly realized, at *me*. I stopped and turned around. What I saw before me was a motley half-dozen people lounging on a park bench. They were surrounded by bicycles, fine bicycles—placed on the benches, propped against the backs of the benches, laid on the pathway. A quick mental calculation told me that I was standing amidst approximately \$10,000 worth of steel and aluminum. Ah, these were serious cyclists. And they wanted to talk to me!

Yes, the sweet taste of acceptance into Central Park's large clique of racers. In years past, I used to pass large groups of these cyclists, all in various states of repose. But passing by on my 15-year-old battered and beaten five-speed Pierce-Arrow with the worn lambswool seat cover did not exactly engender excitement among them. Whenever I passed by a crowd of the cognoscenti, I would slow down, earnestly trying to see a name, a logo, on the down tube. What were the people in-the-know riding?

"Gosh, I need a new bike," I would always say to myself. But I wouldn't dare stop

## Bench-Warmers

### Or, How to Knock 'Em Dead in Central Park

Marion Kufert

among these sleek, gleaming machines and their well-muscled riders. "Gosh, I need to lose ten pounds" was the thought that would immediately follow. And with that, I would snap back to reality and be on my way. The intimidation that I felt was acute, at best. I often wondered whether these racers ever actually *rode* their bicycles. Whenever I passed by, they would all be clustered around, with their bikes prominently displayed. They were deep in debate: "Yes, but the Concor Profil saddle weighs a full 30 grams less than the . . ." "Now, these new aerodynamic rims are far stronger than those

concave rims" . . . "My double butted spokes . . ."

My mind snapped back to the present and all the voices suddenly talking to me. "Oh . . . yes, the shift levers. They're Sun-Tour Microlites. You like them?" I heard myself say.

Then came the barrage of questions. "Did you just get the bike?" "Where? How much?" "Is that a Campy crankset?" "What's your gearing?" "Are those clinchers?" Without blinking I ran off every detail from the spec sheet that I could think of, amazed at my fluency in "bike talk." Yes, this woman actually knows what she's talking about, they nodded in agreement. Yes, I nodded back, obviously pleased with myself.

#### Dream Bike

You see, I have been searching for this bike for the past 18 months. I have, in my possession, catalogs from every major bicycle manufacturer. I have scrutinized countless pictures, compared more frame angles and wheelbase lengths than I care to remember. I have studied gearing tables until the numbers started to swim before my eyes. It is entirely possible that I have visited every bicycle store in the tri-state area. "Oh, it's her again," the storeowners must say to themselves as I walk through the door. "Let me guess—you want more catalogs, right?"

Meanwhile, every few months, all my friends would ask whether I had found a bike yet. All I could do was sheepishly answer that I was still looking. I never expected them to understand—I tried, in vain, to explain how I had almost settled on a bike, but it didn't have brazed-on guides on the top tube for the brake cable. No, that just couldn't be tolerated. I wasn't sure that I liked the seatstay flutes on another bike. There were too many decals and designs on a third model. "Marion," one friend told me as I came to him in desperation, "there's no such thing as a dream bike." "No, it's out there," I insisted. "I just have to keep looking." And now here I was, beaming like a proud mother, showing off my dream bike to an appreciative audience.

Who were these people anyway? They could have been an offshoot from the cliques that gather at the Boathouse, or the group at the 72nd Street transverse road. I soon learned that these people had dubbed themselves SESPABRA—The Sixty-Eighth Street Peanut and Beer Racing Association. It was an appropriate name; every afternoon, a few of the guys would venture out to the real world of Amsterdam Avenue in order to make a "deli run" for beer and munchies. Deli runs were also made for lunch and dinner. Indeed, as I came to know "the guys," I learned that the better part of each day was spent warming the benches. I once wondered aloud whether mail delivery could be made in care of their benches.



Andrew Meyer



## Bench-Warmers

During the summer, the park's six miles of roadway were closed to motor traffic from 10 AM to 3 PM and then from 7 to 10 PM. Since everybody did their training rides and tours in the morning, they would relax and congregate during the afternoon and wait until the roadways were once again closed to motorists in the evening. Lazy afternoons were spent discussing bikes, races, and life, with lots of jokes and horseplay. We also watched all the joggers, skaters, and strollers pass us by.

### De-railery

But behind all the jokes and the sarcasm, Central Park's "cycling society" is cheerful, friendly, open, and varied. We had young BMXers, teenagers from fancy private schools, college students, racers from every surrounding borough, middle-aged men. Our love of cycling binds us together, and we all have a good sense of humor. Nobody is allowed to take himself too seriously; in fact, it was a type of unwritten rule: Don't come to our bench if you can't take a joke. One of our favorite cyclists—Javier—whom everyone affectionately calls "Caviar" because it rhymes, is leaving for the night. Michael calls to him that on his ride home, he should be careful "not to take any wooden fish eggs." Stupid? Yes. Hilarious? Definitely.

One frequently had to defend his bike against friendly verbal onslaughts. One joker once regretted to inform me in low, tragic tones that (Gasp) hadn't I heard that the company that made the tubing for my bike was under investigation for (Horrors!) selling straight-gauge tubing to my bicycle manufacturer, yet claiming that it was double-butted? Someone else points to my anatomically designed saddle. "Look at the bumps on that saddle!" he exclaims. "It's like sitting on another behind! And that freewheel!" (Everyone is practically rolling on the ground with laughter.) "It's so big that it'll take you straight up to heaven!"

And who could parry against: "What's that on your saddle?" (A worn lambswool cover.) "It looks like a fungus is growing!"

"I like the way the tread is completely worn off your tires . . . Saves a lot of weight that way, eh?"

"I have to compliment you on that custom paint job you have there. I like the effect of all that cracked and chipped paint. What a creative, artistic representation of our urban environment!"

We were a constantly revolving group. Riders would drop by after their century rides to Bear Mountain. Others would stop to catch up on local news, or just to hang out. People left, but rarely would a formal "Goodbye, have a good evening" be exchanged. Everyone knew that everyone else

would return; their departure was just a temporary absence at most.

## The Search

Simply everybody is in the process of looking for a new bike, has ordered one from overseas and is awaiting shipment, or is plotting his contacts in the bicycle industry that will enable him to acquire that rare and exalted frame. Every fifth person has a resale license that enables him to buy bike equipment directly from the distributor, or

has a friend who works in a bike shop who can almost "get it for you wholesale."

Joey is anxiously looking for a new bike. His Gios Torino still looks good to me. No, Joey says, thoroughly disgusted. "Everybody and his second cousin have the Torino these days. I want a bike that no one has ever even seen!" His words begin to trail off. "A bike that will make children gasp, women weep with joy, grown men stop . . ."

Well, for those of us who aren't getting a new bike, we sure are going to take care of the old one. Jeff inquires of a friend whether

he would like to help him with his monthly bike cleaning. The friend casually asks what's involved, imagining a quick wiping of some grease. "Well, first," Jeff begins, "we have to clean and polish 72 spokes." But others will undoubtedly follow a different route: Tom has brazed and built up a half-dozen fine custom bikes with only the best tubing. He has purposely painted one of his bikes a flat "battleship gray" color and then let a couple of years' worth of dirt, grease, and grime accumulate on the bike.

Of course, he has absolutely no intention of cleaning it. This is Tom's insurance that a fine custom cycle—which no thief would imagine it to be—will not be stolen.

But when you bring your bike into the park, it had better be in tip-top condition. During many a conversation, I have seen the eyes of one party roam toward the bike of the other party for a rather unnerving critical scrutiny of the machine. People—as a matter of course—regularly tweak my spokes together to check the state of the spoke tension, they snap my brakes, and roll the bike back and forth to test my headset.

### A Breed Apart

To the general public, we are a strange breed. We keep to ourselves—we know better than to try and explain our "madness" to the outside world. Jimmy is busy-ing himself with applying yet another patch to his BMX inner tube. "Throw the tube out? Why? Because I already have 13 patches on it? No! I'm going for the record that Big Buddy held—15 patches!"

Bob is a fan of tandems; he has four hanging from his living room ceiling and has just ordered a custom triple bicycle. He also has five "singles" hanging from his bedroom ceiling.

Frank seems to be a member of the Bike-of-the-Month Club. He has more bicycles than there are days of the week, and probably spends hundreds of dollars each year for bicycle supplies and accessories alone.

Frank has just ordered a whole box of Phil Wood grease. "Frank," Bob questions, "a whole box?" Frank replies in all seriousness that it's good grease and he likes it.

Bob cracks, "Yeah, but are you going to lube your bike or wrestle in the stuff?"

### Kaleidoscope

The park scene wouldn't be complete without the local colorful characters. Every summer, I'm told, new cyclists to befriend arrive while others that were known disappear from sight. The ones that leave become almost legendary; those who remain become nostalgic and reminisce about a "Guerciotti Gwen," for example, fondly recalling stories about them. "Who was this Guerciotti Gwen?" I ask. "What was her last name?" Nobody knows. "What did she do?" They aren't quite sure. But they can certainly rattle off every component that she had on her bike. When pressed they have to admit that they know nothing about many individuals. They are simply Robert "Bianchi" or Fred "Masi." There are people whose names we don't even know—they prefer to be known simply as "Ciöcc" or "Tuna."

As the summer draws to a close, many of the park "regulars" are disappearing. The evening arrives earlier. The leg and arm warmers are being unearthed, and the rollers are being dragged out of the closet. The promises echo in my ears:

"Yeah, I'm gonna train real hard this winter."

"I'll be awesome next summer, a real animal."

"I'm counting on becoming a Cat. 2 racer in '84."

"I'll have the new bike by March."

And I'm going to lose those ten pounds. ☹

GOSH, READERS!  
DOESN'T THIS SOUND RATHER FAMILIAR?  
ONLY THE NAMES AND PLACES HAVE  
CHANGED...