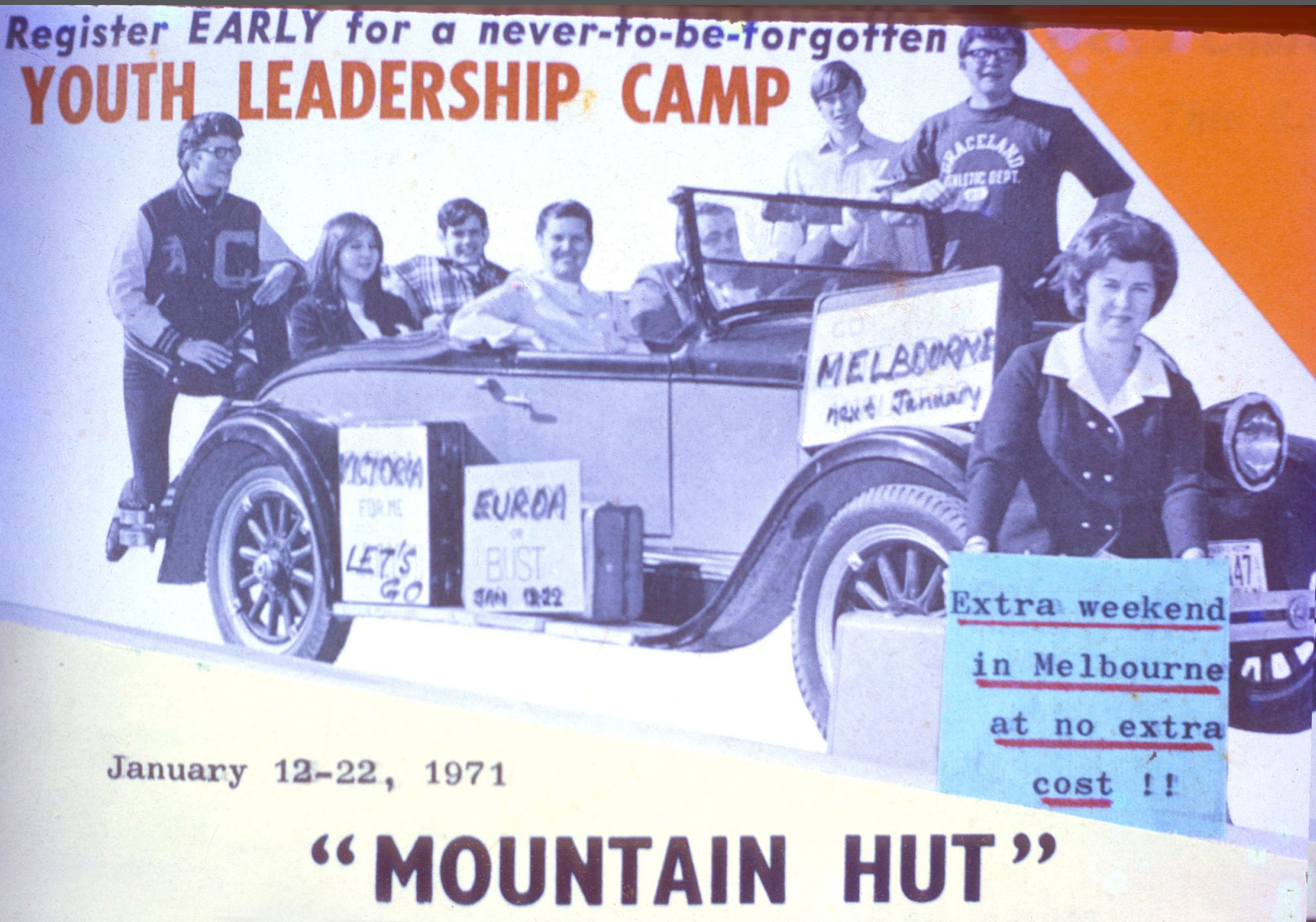


Mountain Hut Leadership Camps 1970-89

by Rick Sarre - June 2020.



The staff from 1971.

R: The late Dick Nies, Peter Ridge, the late Peter Taylor, the late David Judd, Paul Rixon, Daniel Das (Fiji),
F: Frank Flood, the late Connie Zirkle, the late Bev Doig (USA).



This year we celebrate 50 years since the first Mountain Hut Leadership Camp which was held January 13-23, 1970. From that camp (situated in the Strathbogie Ranges, not far from the current Kallara campgrounds) until January 1989 there were 19 such events at that site (in January 1986, a Canberra gathering was convened by (then) Apostle Ken Robinson instead). I attended eleven of them, so I am well qualified to write this short reflection on the way in which they touched the lives of the hundreds of students (and staff) from all over the country who attended them. Indeed, many students and staff came from other countries, too, including New Zealand, Fiji, New Caledonia, Canada, Singapore, and the US.

It is worth reciting at the outset the names of the various camp directors who gave of their time and talent to bring to fruition what was often said to be one of the best experiences of one's life in the Australia church. They are David Judd, Peter Taylor, Syd Jacka, Ray Burdekin, Jack Imrie, John Taylor, Barb Bryan (now Brock), Brian Entwistle, Malcolm Stephenson, Ross Judd and myself. The first camp had 31 campers which included seven class leaders (Dawn Langman, Jocelyn Wilson, Jack Gunning, Peter Taylor, Paul Rixon,

Ted Booth and David Judd). The cooking and grounds duties fell to Evelyn Rooke, Ath Williams, and George and Vicki Squire. By 1977, the camp had grown to 106 participants. The last event, in 1989, had 70 campers which included 13 staff and 12 internationals. Counting from the registrations we can see that over 1,400 attendances are recorded. Discounted for multiple attendees, it is likely that at least 500 campers had the "leadership" experience. These camps were thus undertakings of significant proportions in the life of the church.

The late David Judd, who led the first three camps, was the architect of the venture, converting what had previously been conducted as the Wandell College model of older youth training into a 10-day residential camp. He and Shirley and their three boys had been assigned back to NSW from Tahiti in May 1969, and David was appointed as the Director of Religious Education for the church in Australia. The first camp was entitled "Leadership Training School," later "Leadership Camp" and by the end it was simply "Leadership." Ten days allowed for a significant amount of learning and fellowship. But it was very tiring. One significant shift in the timetabling that we initiated in

First camp (photo credit David Judd who is behind the camera, and below) from Jan 1970



1977 was to have mid-camp rest day. We determined that for campers and directors alike, a commitment to Zion can still accommodate a sleep-in.

As many readers will know, I am a church camp enthusiast. It all started early in my life. In December 1970 I had been to Tiona reunion with my grandparents, then drove back for Grace Valley reunion (January 4-10) and then 10 of us from Adelaide drove the 12 hours to Euroa for my first leadership experience (January 12-22, 1971). It was life-changing. Here was a small (53 campers) mountain top group exploring what it meant to be a faith community. The worships were creative; the learning instructive; the relationships life-affirming.

After Mountain Hut closed in 1990, the camp moved to Koonjewarre (Qld) (from 1991), then one camp in Adelaide (1994), and finally from 1997 at Kallara (Vic). In 2000, it was renamed "Discover." From 2013 until 2015 it became "Exploration." There is little doubt that the church has been strongly committed to pursue leadership training for these two generations. David Judd's spark lit a significant flame.

Our Mountain Hut Leadership reunion gathering this year has been postponed until October 2021, but when it finally happens it will no doubt provide a marvellous opportunity for those who attend to rekindle the flames that were started in our collective hearts by dedicated and tireless visionaries over five decades ago.



David Judd

"The year I co-directed Leadership Camp with Rick Sarre, we were following the HUGE and important footprints of Ray Burdekin who believed that one of the director's roles was to clean the latrines. Rick and I did that faithfully, and it somehow became an honor - knowing it would make Ray smile. I would end up spending time at four of those life-changing Leadership Camps and that experience left me with memories of camaraderie, hilarity, deep peace, and a lifelong community. "

Barb (Bryan) Brock

"For me Leadership, as an isolated church member, was a place of peace, harmony, laughter, learning and the basis of wonderful memories."

Sharon Hunter (nee Dyett)

"Leadership became an annual pilgrimage for many. Highlights included singing whilst washing dishes, sunrise worships, great classes, and the time and opportunity to develop friendships that have lasted a lifetime."

Paul Judd

"Leadership Camp instilled knowledge, laughter, worship, prayer, contemplation, nature and, above all, the acceptance and love for all who participated."

Tony Prescott



Rosanna Bakker, Arlene Cooper, Anne Haworth, Annie Robinson, Adele Unger - 1974