

BRINE TRUST

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*In this exclusive excerpt from his memoir, **Life Of Brine**, Phil Jarratt reflects on '70s travel in California and Bali as the roving editor of Australia's Tracks magazine, his naked surfboard thrown in the aircraft hold, a thin fold of travellers checks in his man-bag, his senses yearning to be assaulted.*

Tracks was going gangbusters, its circulation growing by a thousand a month and advertising revenue up ten percent every issue. It seemed like people were lining up to throw money at Albe Falzon, who was now the sole owner of the magazine.

One of the more interesting benefactors was the American Express corporation, who wanted us to partner in a travel venture to be known as the Tracks Travel Company. Bali surfing packages were starting to mushroom, largely due to the ground-breaking work of Jack de Lissa and Rennie Ellis at Bali Easyrider Travel, and AmEx had its eye on that, but their initial interest was in the fiftieth of the United States, Hawaii. The general idea was to create a Bali-style surfer holiday in Hawaii and give it some cred by putting the *Tracks* name on it. In my view it was never going to work - in those days the vast majority who went to Hawaii for the deeply challenging waves of the North Shore were elite surfers and self-starters. But how quickly I fell into line when Albe asked me to fly to Hawaii and put together a magazine supplement to promote the new partnership!

As an afterthought Albe said: "They're giving us two tickets so Frank will go with you and take the photos." Frank Pithers was the Tracks staff photographer and photo editor, which meant that when Frank emerged from the dark room, you only ever saw the single print that he'd selected for use. As editor I objected to this, but that was only the professional side of the animosity between us. He was an excellent photographer and he had a sick sense of humour, which I appreciated, but he also had a rather menacing demeanour, particularly around me. Great. It was a nine-hour flight. I wondered how we'd survive that much proximity, but we did. Maybe our relationship was making progress.

Our mission was to sample what the AmEx tour intended to offer and present a glowing report that would be the centrepiece of the introductory editorial and advertising campaign. The problem was that it was a winter season package and we were there at the height of summer, which meant that the North Shore of Oahu, the home of the biggest waves in the known world, would be like a lake. Actually, that was only one of the problems. Another was that the North Shore accommodation for the tour was not on the North Shore but a half hour drive away at Laie, and yet another was that the motel was attached to the Mormon-owned Polynesian Cultural Centre, and was alcohol-free.

Frank and I bonded over our desire to spend as little time as possible in the AmEx Mormon prison. In fact we didn't last a night, driving our cheap rental car back to Waikiki and checking into a motel in the middle of the Ala Moana sin strip. This was the first experience of Hawaii for both of us, and we badly needed direction, but none of our pro surfer mates

were in town to give it. In the morning, however, Frank, I had to admit, had a very good idea.

Queensland surfer Paul Neilsen, the 1972 Australian champion, had been one of the first Australians to establish solid social connections in Hawaii, a fact demonstrated by his closeness to the legendary Aikau family, and underlined when he flew his glamorous Waikiki squeeze, Faye Parker, out to Australia for the 1975 contest season. We had both met Faye at Bells and in Sydney and instantly liked her brash charm and naughty aunty persona. Mysteriously, Frank had her number.

“So glad you called,” Faye gushed. We were invited to lunch at the Outrigger Canoe Club and a luau dinner at her home in the hills above Diamond Head. Faye had been married to the actor Doug McClure and the star footballer Don Parker, among other prominent men, and was well connected with the local entertainment crowd, as well as the surfing fraternity, and the point where those two groups collided, which was the hit TV show, *Hawaii Five-O*. At the Outrigger she introduced us to the former world surfing champion and boss of the emerging pro movement Fred Hemmings, but her real coup for the day came when we arrived at her place for the hilltop luau to be greeted by James “Jimmy” MacArthur, “Danno” in *Hawaii Five-O*.

Ironically, given the fact that Faye, Paul Neilsen and his older brother Ricky were all staunchly anti-drugs – Ricky had famously flushed another surfer’s stash down the toilet at the 1972 San Diego world titles – that evening at the luau was my first encounter with cocaine. I walked into a bathroom and discovered several of the guests chopping up the powder on the marble top. No one said a word, just handed me a cut-down straw and watched as I nervously hoovered up a long line. I discovered that Frank was already in on the action, and suddenly we were the life of the party, laughing uproariously at our own jokes and sharing tales of derring-do. It was a long night, probably much longer for those who hadn’t taken the magic elixir that removed self-doubt.

After a couple more days surfing and soaking up the atmosphere of the South Shore, we headed for the airport, less than confident that we had covered the job, but Frank would have to be the one to explain that to Albe. He was going home, I was going to California. For some reason that escapes me now, when we picked up our complimentary tickets from Pan American Airways, they were round trips to Rio, via Honolulu, Los Angeles and Guatemala City. I had work obligations in Sydney, but seriously considered blowing them off and doing the whole trip. Given our failure to produce the goods in Hawaii, this may have been too much, even for as easy-going a boss as Albe, so I compromised with a stolen week in California.

California was another first for me, and I have to admit I was horrified as we dropped through the intense grey marine layer that I took for smog on descent into Los Angeles International. I rescued my naked Brothers Neilsen swallowtail (I still had no board bag) from the baggage carousel, rented a Ford Pinto and headed for the freeway. It was six on a gloomy Friday afternoon and I had no idea where I was going. I turned right onto the 405 and edged south, listening to a new band called The Eagles on the radio.

The stop-start traffic was too much to bear so I took the first beach exit south of the airport and found myself at Redondo Beach. A few blocks back from the beach a neon sign caught my eye: EL RANCHO MOTEL – COLOR TV NO POOL – WE JUST LOOK EXPENSIVE – VACANCY. I pulled into the drive and paid fifteen bucks for a room on the first floor.

That night I drank at a sleazy Tiki bar on the Redondo Pier and listened to a country rock outfit butcher the Eagles songs I'd heard on the radio earlier. It could have been depressing, but I found myself in the first throes of a love-hate relationship with Southern California style (or lack of) that endures to this day.

I skipped Hollywood and the theme parks and drove north on the 101, casting an eye over the famous but ridiculously crowded Rincon Point and coming to rest somewhere on the Montecito coast just south of Santa Barbara, where I could see waves breaking beyond the beachfront estates. I parked down a side street, grabbed my board, jumped a few fences and paddled out to a glassy head-high right with only a handful of surfers on it. As I reached the zone I nodded and smiled, as you do when you're new to a break. No one smiled back but one guy paddled directly over to me and asked where I was from. I told him.

"Australia! No shit! That probably explains it. See, this is Hammond's Reef, it's private."

"I'm sorry, I had no idea. (All those signs, all those fences, who knew?) I'll catch a wave straight in."

"Hell no, you're here now, let's surf."

My new friend was a long-haired, moustachioed Aussie-ophile named Tom Sims. When he found out I worked for *Tracks* and Albe Falzon he almost lost it. "No shit! Hey fellers, this guy writes for *Tracks* and he knows all the *Morning of the Earth* dudes!" I was no longer an intruder, I was an honoured guest.

After our surf, Tom guided me up into the Montecito hills to his mud-brick cabin, set between Spanish-style stucco mansions. I was staying with him, no excuses accepted. We'd skate the hills all afternoon, party all night and surf again in the morning. I suddenly realised that there were skateboards everywhere I looked, but most of them were unlike any I'd seen in Australia. They were around a metre long with beautiful polished wood decks that gave a very different kind of spring as you leaned into turns. These were the big guns of the skate world, and after he'd whipped up an avocado salad (that was another thing that was plentiful) for our lunch, and we'd smoked a fat joint, Tom took me out to show me how to ride them.

I've never forgotten that session, speed-warping down smooth, paved hills in the blue-grey of evening, occasionally catching glimpses of the ocean below us. Tom was fluid and fast, no tricks, just speed-lines all the way. Following behind him, I was scared shitless, but I made the runs unscathed, and when we settled back at the house and drank some beers, I felt a wave of contentment come over me that skating has never induced since. I invested \$50 in two of his guns to take home, but they were rarely used.

Before a fire that night, a little twisted to be sure, Tom Sims told me about his bold plan to make the sliding game his own. "I'm going to take skateboards to the snow," he said. One of his financial backers nodded sagely from an armchair opposite us, sucking a joint through his teeth. "I'm gonna make a fucking fortune!" He cackled manically and got more drinks.

Before the end of the '70s Tom Sims had won a world skateboard title and patented a snowboard design. By the mid-'80s he'd added a world snowboard title to his collection and the name Sims was synonymous with the best skateboards and snowboards in the world. He made his fortune, and some. We'd just gotten back in touch through social media when he died of a heart attack in 2012.

I had only been back at work for a month or so when it was time to go to Bali again. A big influx of leading surfers was underway and I convinced Albe that, since he'd virtually invented it, we needed to keep covering the island of the gods. I'd been dating a girl who worked at The Scullery in Avalon, so I invited her to come with me.

In those early days of surfer settlement, everyone tried to be "Bali-er than thou". Considering I'd only been there once before, my own contribution to the argument over whether we were indeed destroying the Bali we came to enjoy was as naïve as it was trite. However it speaks of the times.

The Kutarese, the hippies will tell you, are prime examples of what the tourists are doing to Bali –these people who live close to the sea and the devils within, far from the gods who guide the mountain people. It's hard to tell just what the Kuta locals think of us. They realise that tourism has brought them wealth that much of the population will never know, but they cling to their family traditions, make their offerings to the gods, respect authority at every level and generally shun the freedoms of western life. "They're funny little people," my girl said, watching them take breakfast of tea and toast to a statue in the garden. But no doubt they think we're funny big people, giving them enough money for a week's rice in exchange for clothes we'll never wear and paintings we'll never hang.

That season I worked with Jack McCoy and Dick Hoole, good photographers who had formed a business partnership called Propeller, and together we documented the return of Gerry Lopez, fast becoming the surf god of Bali, and the performances of the young Australians Tony "Doris" Eltherington, Larry Blair, Peter "Grub" McCabe and Terry Richardson.

Surfers were arriving from all over. You never knew who you might find paddling out. One morning Jack McCoy screeched his bike to a halt in front of my room at Sunset Beach Bungalows. "Grab a tape recorder and jump on," he said. "Dora's in town and he's agreed to an interview."

Miklos Chapin Dora, better known as Miki, was the black knight of Malibu, a legendary figure in Californian surfing, probably the best to ever ride the fabled waves of First Point, Surfrider Beach. It was said that Miki had never worked a day in his life, that he was a conman and a fraudster who was on the run from the FBI. And now he was waiting for us in

his room at the Legian Beach Hotel. Dora was gruff when we knocked on his door. It looked like we might have woken him. As he let us in he said, "No interview, no photos."

But we spent two hours with him in that darkened room. Then in his early forties, Miki was deeply tanned, unshaven and wild-eyed. He spoke in staccato bursts about all kinds of weird shit. I was fascinated by his unusual delivery, by his dark-eyed outlaw aura. The rant, not so much, but I listened intently, then got McCoy to drop me at the cane juice bar in Kuta, where I sat in the corner and scribbled down every bit of the conversation I could remember. We published this "unofficial interview" in *Tracks*. It took Miki more than twenty years to forgive me.

Tracks continued to assault the senses and grow ever more popular. Effectively, this meant that editorially we could pretty much do whatever we wanted.

At the same time, the magazine's content was becoming more diverse. We looked for ways to marry diversity with outrage, and found them constantly. When an earnest hippie named Jan Whiting (who was to become a colleague and a dear friend) contributed an article about saving trees by using water rather than paper in your ablutions, we titled it, "How to wipe your bum". When an excellent rock journalist named Annie Burton wrote a considered piece about misogyny and sexism in surfing, Frank Pithers talked our beautiful secretary, Mary, into posing naked on the sand with a paper bag over her head to illustrate the point, which unwittingly I'm sure it did.

We seemed to have no filters, but nor did anyone else in the youth culture of the time. After hearing the hit Melbourne band Skyhooks belt out a moving rendition of their party anthem, "Why Don't You All Get Fucked," on a paddock near Bells Beach, I had become friends with lead singer Graeme "Shirley" Strachan. A tradie and a surfer from Phillip Island, Shirl seemed diametrically opposed to the Carlton arty farty sensibilities of his band mates Red Symonds and Greg Macainsh, and whenever the Hooks were in Sydney, he would bail out on the band and make a bee-line for Whale Beach to surf and hang out.

On one of these visits, after a session at the Wedge and quite a few beers, I persuaded the rock star of the year to drop his dacks (pants) and pose reading the latest issue of *Tracks* sitting on our backyard dunny (toilet). We ran Shirl on the bog as a full page. Only fervent pleading from his manager, Michael Gudinski, stopped us from putting it on the cover.

I seemed to be surfing less and enjoying it more. Or at least enjoying the fact that I could hang out with the surf stars without having to pretend to be one. One of the reasons that the act of surfing had taken a step back in my life was that I had fallen in love with another girl who worked at The Scullery. It might seem like I was working my way through the female staff, but this one was special, and, of course, she had history. She was the former wife of one of Australia's greatest rock stars - then battling heroin addiction - with whom she had a young son.

I took on the baggage gleefully, with no thought of consequences, and proposed to her when we stayed at Brian Singer's house for the Bells Rip Curl Easter Pro. I even bought her a

dog! We planned to marry, soonish. It was always going to end in tears, and I should have known that from the very early days, when I was hustled out of bed and out of her house on Christmas morning because the rock star was coming to see his son. But love is blind, and I hung in until the bitter end.

Heartbroken again, I moved into a rental house just a few doors down from the *Tracks* office, sharing with some new friends from Cornwall, surfboard shaper Paul Holmes and his partner, Simonne Renvoize. Paul was a talented writer and had also done some editing, so he soon became associate editor while shaping part-time. We also had a job for Simonne when our secretary, Mary, unexpectedly landed an extra's role on the feature film *Mad Dog Morgan* and, on completion, ran off with its star, Dennis Hopper, to Texas. Simonne took over as my secretary.

I threw myself into work, as many surf trips as I could fit in, and an increasing flirtation with cocaine, which suddenly seemed to be everywhere on the Peninsula. Then I met another girl. Her name was Jackie and she lived right across the street. She had just split up with her American musician husband and was sharing an old beach house with another American musician. I knew she had a young son, Sol, because he used to find his way up to the *Tracks* office from time to time to play with Frank Pithers' young son, Zahn. I didn't find out about the one-year-old daughter, Sophie, until Jackie appeared at the door one day with a little cutie on her hip.

Jackie Sadler had arrived from England with her parents and sister as "ten pound Poms" on the liner *Oriana* in 1963. A dozen years later there was no trace of an accent. She was a slinky, sexy thing who spent a lot of the summer on the beach topless, her tan complete but for a tiny white bikini stripe. But she also had a sharp mind, a wicked tongue and we laughed about the same things. She'd seen me on TV, doing the surf report from a lumpy bed, her friends had warned her off me as a shallow, self-obsessed womaniser, but it still began to happen. And it happened very fast, and once again I found myself taking on the mantle of stepdad with no thought for the consequences, nor any comprehension of the years of bitterness and rancour that lay ahead before time would heal the wounds, and the children's father and I would form a friendship based on, among other things, our mutual love of surfing.

And once again, just as a relationship was developing into something serious, perhaps even lasting, I was committed to a long trip away. I kissed her and the kids and took off for California and Hawaii for two months.

My second trip to California was on another weird cheap ticket, this one requiring me to enter via Vancouver, Canada. No one knew that there was good surf a ferry ride away on Victoria Island, so I planned not to linger there, but I found I couldn't rent a car to take over the border, so I took a cheap room near the bus terminal and grabbed a Greyhound to Seattle in the morning. Again I had trouble negotiating a one-way rental to Los Angeles, but for an arm and a leg National kitted me out with a white 1976 Buick Century coupe with layback seats, one for me and one for my board.

I filled the centre console with ice, jammed a few Coors beers in there and drove south through the redwood forests of the Pacific North West, Waylon Jennings thumping out of a country music station and keeping me awake. In the early hours I pulled into a parking lot behind a roadhouse, pushed back my seat and slept like a baby. In the morning it was a short drive across the border into California where I found inviting waves at Crescent City. Over the years I've surfed up and down the West Coast, and had plenty of good sessions and plenty of shockers. I've surfed lonely coves in Big Sur and been chased out of the water by a psychopath at Huntington Pier. Much of it has become a blur, but I can remember every detail of those first surfs, with Tom Sims at Hammond's Reef in 1975, and with a couple of throwback locals in ducktail wetsuits at Crescent Beach in 1976. My diary notes tell me that the water was a chilly forty nine degrees Fahrenheit and that the large pebbles on the shore made minced meat of my feet, but they don't mention the head-high sets bobbing up in the murky water or how I had to learn to dodge the logs in the line-up. All of that is etched in the memory bank.

In the afternoon I drove the beautiful coast road through tall stands of redwoods to a town called Fort Bragg, where I rolled into an old-style saloon and drank a beer while I consulted a tourist map. Mendocino was just down the road. I'd heard of Mendocino, courtesy of a '60s hit for a band called the Sir Douglas Quintet.

"What goes on in Mendocino?" I asked the bartender. "Ain't nothin' there but hippies an' drugs," he said. I left a couple of bucks on the bar, ran to the Buick and pointed her south.

Just outside of town I picked up a hitchhiker in a fringed buckskin jacket who squeezed under my surfboard and directed me to the Caspar Inn, where the joint was jumpin' to a very good three-piece band. The clientele ranged from ageing flower people in robes to hip cowboys and bikers in leather. I made some friends, and as night turned into morning we progressed to the Seagull Inn where a shambling drunk of a man joined our group and began dunking cigarettes into a vial of hash oil and passing them around. I was introduced to Gene Clark, founding member of The Byrds, who had moved to Mendocino to overcome his drug and alcohol problems. That didn't seem to be going well.

Nursing a hangover, in the morning I drove to Marin County, north of San Francisco, and found my way to John Grissim's converted wine barrel home at Stinson Beach, where the former editor of *Tracks* limped out to greet me. (Clearly the Filipino faith healers had let him down.) Grissim had a super-sized can of Foster's beer in one hand and a fat joint in the other.

"Jeez, mate," he called in mock-Aussie, "How ya bloody been, ya bastard?" I had never heard Grissim talk like this. I guessed he was excited to see me.

Grissim said that between Stinson and nearby Bolinas there was plenty of surf, but I noticed his board, which stood decoratively between the fridge and a framed *Rolling Stone* cover, was not waxed. But we tried, and were rewarded with a few small sessions at a break out in front of the Bolinas Lagoon and at Stinson's main beach.

I liked the pace of life in West Marin, full of hippies and dreamers, and Grissim did a good job of introducing me around. In the main street of Bolinas there was a saloon on one side of the road called Scowly's and on the other Smiley's. Behind the bar at Smiley's we found Jim Anderson, the least known of the London *Oz* obscenity defendants but a better known gay rights activist. Down on the beach I met the famous Mitchell brothers, Jim and Artie, who were then making a fortune out of porn films like *Behind The Green Door*. We went back to their beachside compound for drinks and the ubiquitous lines of coke. They seemed like fun guys, but Jim would later shoot his brother dead.

Grissim also spent a lot of time on the phone lining up interviews for me in San Francisco. The prize among these was a marathon three-hour session with the enigmatic Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane. I walked into that one a little bit in awe, and walked out a little bit in love.

On my final weekend in the Bay Area, Grissim got me invited to the party of the year, at the crumbling North Beach art deco mansion of the avant garde German-born artist Wilfried Satty, famous for his psychedelic poster art and his illustration of the works of Edgar Allan Poe. There seemed to be bars set up in dark alcoves on every floor of the rambling house, and around each of them the star power was dazzling. In that corner Jack Nicholson juggling several drinks as he moves to a table; in this one Grace Slick deep in earnest conversation with Paul Kantner; over there the singer Dan Hicks and *Rolling Stone* publisher Jann Wenner. It was Disneyland for starstruck drooling dickheads. I tried to stay cool but just couldn't.

When most of the guests had drifted off, I found myself with Grissim and Satty and a few others in a vast drawing room, full of overstuffed furniture and with dark art on the walls. When I enquired about his art, Satty signed a collection called *Time Zone* for me. I still have it, with its scrawled pencil inscription "to Fil" and its Gothic panoramas, these many years after he, too, died young. Two men at the drawing room table, who turned out to be half of a San Francisco band called The Tubes, were pouring powder onto the glass top and arranging it in thick lines. Fearing it might be heroin, I asked Satty what it was. "It's called green," he said. "It will take you to places you never dreamed existed."

A Tube pushed a straw under my nose. I inhaled deeply and the night developed a mind of its own. I still had my copy of Satty's book as I made my way through the grey dawn streets to my hotel, but that is all I can tell you.

I was running out of time. I ditched the Buick and flew to LA, hoping to renew my acquaintance with surfing. Two things were different about Southern California this time. One, the weather and the surf were a lot better in November than in the gloom of June. Two, the longboard was back. Less than a decade since the nine foot plus Malibu disappeared off the face of the earth, expunged by the shortboard design revolution led by Bob McTavish in Australia and Dick Brewer in Hawaii, a shift that sent many big manufacturers to the wall holding massive inventory, the damned thing was back.

"Herbie Fletcher is making and surfing eight foot nose riders," I wrote in the December 1976 issue of *Tracks*. "Art Brewer at *Surfer* has a brand new double-ended Stretch...and up at

Pacific Palisades, yesterday's hero Lance Carson is back in business with nine foot hot doggers."

Although it would take nearly another decade to reach Australia, California's longboard renaissance was laid out for me in all its glory when Denny Aaberg took me for a surf at Malibu on a very late season south swell. Denny, who with brother Kemp was Malibu aristocracy, had been to Australia and we had many mutual friends. He was a writer too, and had written a hilarious and well-received article for *Tracks* called "No-Pants Mance". As we cruised around the First Point line-up, sneaking waves off shortboarders with our superior paddling speed, Denny commented: "I think eventually there will be two accepted styles of surfing, shortboard and longboard side by side. The guys who were hot ten years ago will be stars all over again."

If you had said this at 54th Street in Newport Beach, or at Narrabeen or Kirra in 1976, you would have to wash your mouth out with soap (as my mum was wont to say), but Denny was proven right.

Denny had developed "No Pants Mance" into a screenplay that glorified surfing's golden years and lamented their passing, and the Hollywood producer and director John Milius – himself a one-time Malibu surfer – had purchased the rights. *Big Wednesday* was now in pre-production, and Denny arranged for me to interview Milius at Burbank Studios. I wrote in *Tracks*:

*I found Milius in a plush director's office going through the final draft of the script with Denny Aaberg. The walls of the air-conditioned suite were lined with a curious blend of culture symbols: stuffed bears and hunting trophies and faded photographs of great days at Malibu in the 1960s. Milius himself looked a little like Sean Connery in *The Wind and the Lion* (a recent Milius film)...he played menacingly with a paper knife while we talked.*

Milius was a big man with a penchant for the grand gesture and grandiose turns of phrase. Waving his stogie around, his feet on the desk, the afternoon sun filtering through the window and catching the smoke in blue shafts, he said: "This is probably the most personal film I will ever make. This is surfing's *How Green Was My Valley* – the loss of an aristocracy, the end of an era."

John Milius may have been overcooking the egg, particularly in the light of *Big Wednesday*'s mediocre box office when it was released in 1978, but it did speak to my generation of surfers, and to all those that have followed. It is still surfing's leading cult classic today.

Mary Camarda's romance with Dennis Hopper was over and she was living in West Los Angeles at La Cienega. I stayed for a few days and was amazed at her connections. She was another John Grissim! I found myself sitting four tables from the stage at the Troubadour Club on Waylon Jennings' opening night, courtesy of *Billboard Magazine*. The back of my ticket read "Unlimited free drinks".

While staying with Mary I received a phone call from Simonne Renvoize in the *Tracks* office, relaying bad news. The pioneer surf film-maker and publisher Bob Evans had died suddenly

of a brain haemorrhage in Florida, while roadshowing his movie, *Drouyn and Friends*. He was forty seven. When Stephen Cooney and I rented together in Whale Beach, “Evo” was our neighbour, and I dated his kids’ nanny. We became friends, frequently sharing an evening scotch on his veranda. I was at the media preview of *Drouyn*, which Evo believed was his best work, and celebrated with him and Peter Drouyn, the temperamental but hugely entertaining subject, into the wee hours. I was devastated.

As an afterthought, Simonne said: “Oh, and Albe has sold *Tracks*.”

“He’s fucking what!”

But he had, to an English publisher named Philip Mason, a stuttering dandy of a man who in those days bore a passing resemblance to the singer Bryan Ferry, and dressed the part. Philip published *Rock Australia Magazine (RAM)* – where my Grace Slick interview was published - and was looking to create a stable of youth publications. I had no right to, but I felt slighted that Albe hadn’t consulted me before the deal was done. I felt like he’d thrown us to the wolves. Overnight we’d gone from a boss who was a laidback surfer to one who was an ambitious businessman with one eye forever on the budget. I wondered if *Tracks* would survive.

Of course, my fears were unfounded, and a very different form of *Tracks* still thrives as it approaches its fiftieth anniversary. I was out of the editor’s chair by the end of the ‘70s and off on journey that would see me in and out of the surf media and industry like a demented yo-yo. But the current editor of *Tracks* is a kindly soul and I find myself with a column up the back of the mag, where I can make appropriately grumpy noises from the gallery.