

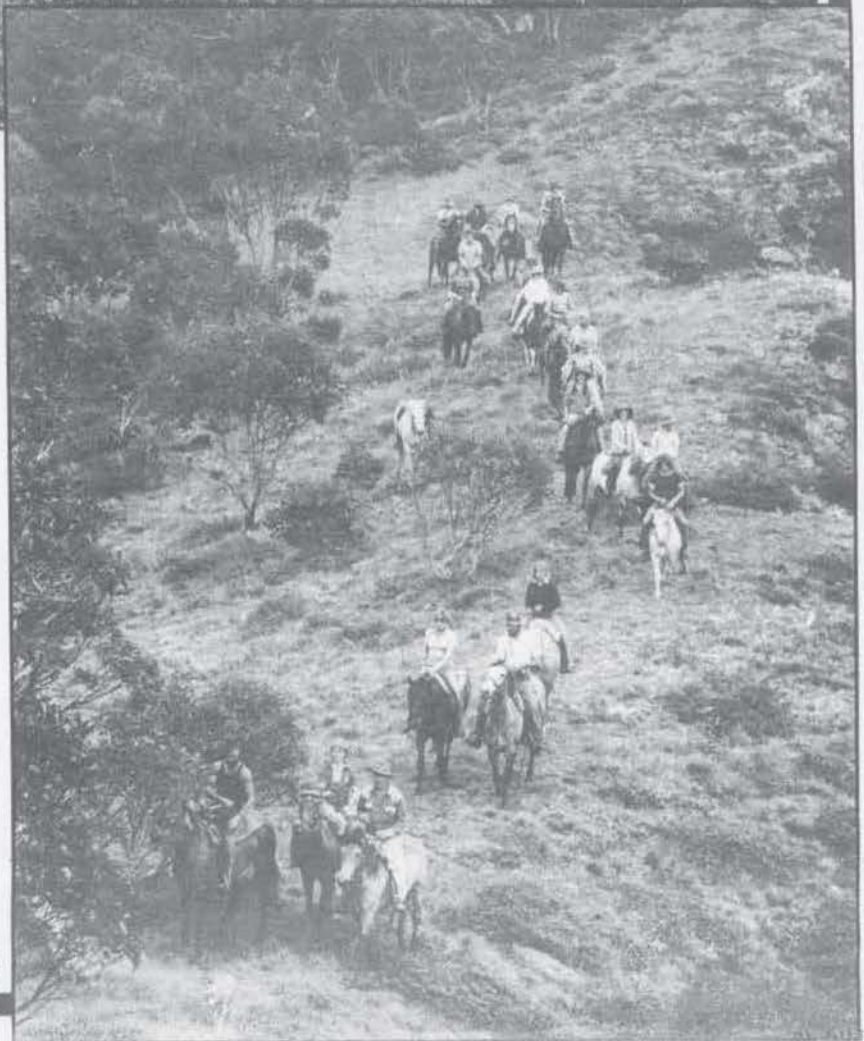
# THE EASY RIDERS

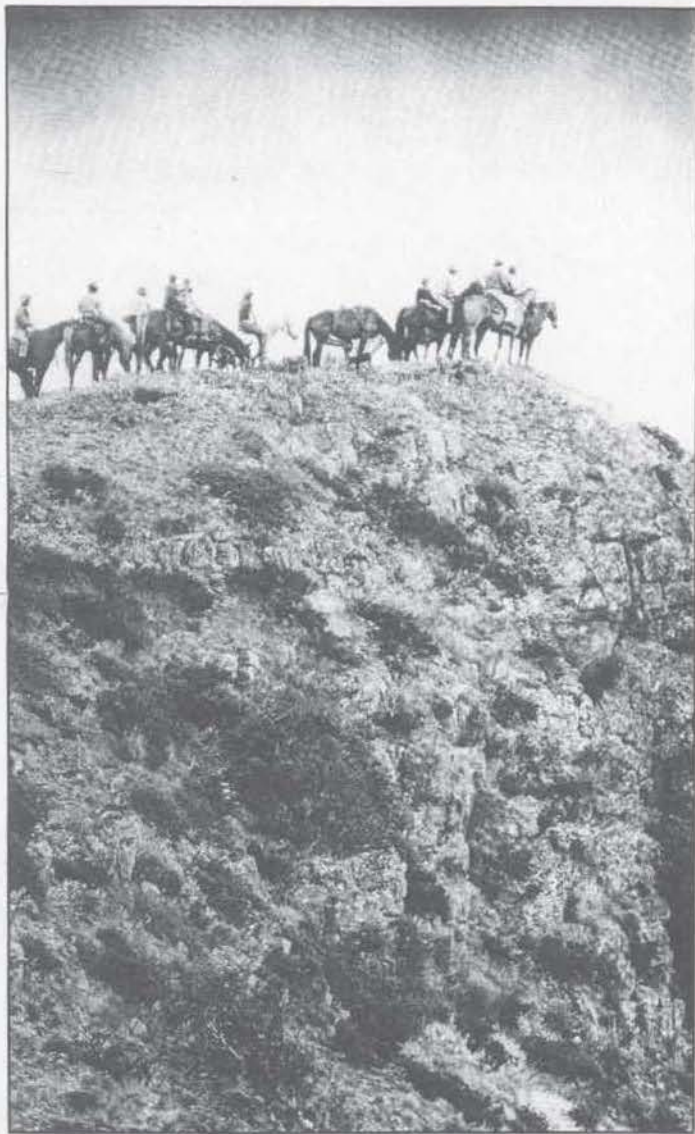


IT IS ANOTHER WORLD UP THERE IN THE HIGH COUNTRY. YOU CAN RIDE THE RANGE AND GAZE AT LENGTH OVER THE RUGGED BLUFFS, VALLEYS AND GORGES OF VICTORIA'S ROOFTOP.

**You could  
be in it  
when they  
hit the  
high trail**

• Turn to page 28

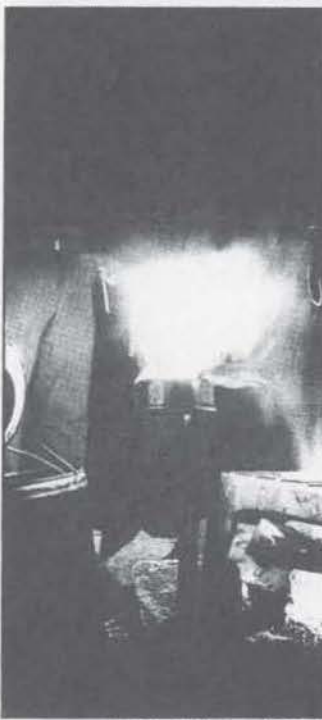




A WELL-EARNED rest on top of Helicopter Spur, on Bluff Range.



MORNING washtime . . . Victorian bush style.



THE sounds of the bush at night echo



behind her as Jocelyn Lovick cooks pineapple fritters on an open fire east of Mt. Howitt.



TWO young girls under a bush shower.



STAN McKay watches two girls crossing a river.

# NINE-TO-FIVERS RIDING BACK INTO NATURE

"KIDS and adults alike come here raw, not really knowing what to expect," said Jack Lovick.

"A few are frightened at first. Frightened of the horses, the size of the country . . . even us, I guess.

"But everyone learns quickly. They relax with their horses and begin to get involved with the whole concept. They lose their fear and gain confidence. They continually ask questions about riding, bushcraft and what makes us tick.

"By the third day you wouldn't believe they had never seen this country or ridden a horse before the trip".

This country, two words that, in this case, mean a lot. This is the kind of country that makes blokes like Stan McKay tell his wife that when he dies the Lovick boys have instructions to throw his ashes from the top of Mt Howitt.

"If a bloke ever gets the chance to start again, there couldn't be a better spot," Stan says in his bushman's way.

Stan works with the Lovick family of Merrig, acting as a guide on the trail safaris the family runs up to the high plateau country of Victoria's Great Divide.

He puts in as many hours as he can taking nine-to-fivers, so-

countants, laborers, doctors, school kids, grandsons and dads and their sons into the grand mountain bush they would never normally see.

The Lovick mountain-men have been a part of the high country history since 1865, when old Bill Lovick went to the Hawqua River diggings and established the first hotel in the area.

It later moved to Merrig and was in the family until 1956. It sits in the low hills below Mt Buller.

But the pub life was an anomaly. The bush beckoned them; it called out to the men who knew it best.

The farm and the original 'hut' on Mt Buller before the skiers came) were being neglected.

It was in '56 the Lovicks went back to their mountains.

They were forced off the Buller 'hut' in 1958 and into the back country. It was a park-horse job along dangerous and seldom used cattle tracks up onto the Bluff Range and King Billy ridge.

A hard reunion it was. But over the past 15 years they have made it accessible to four-wheel drive and in the later years introduced hundreds of city-siders feeling the urge to get rid of their suits for a week or so

and have a good look at where they really live.

Jack Lovick, 55, and patron Saint of the mountains, established Lovick's Trail Safaris five years ago. It was a "back to nature" exercise which Jack has been able to keep exactly that way: it is the bush as the bushman lives it.

Jack and his sons — John, 27, and Charlie, 24 — run the tours. They last from a two-day weekend trip to 16 days covering a huge stretch of mountains across the Divide.

Provisions, tents and personal gear are loaded aboard four-wheel drives and taken to each of their suits for a week or so

and have a good look at where they really live. Each night is different. It seems to be the atmosphere of the place that brings all ages together.

"They get to love it like I do. The vastness, the peace. There's an easiness which breeds strength. It is hard to explain," he said.

There is a way YOU can experience this life on an eight-day safari run by Jack and his gang.

One of their trips is the first prize in our life. Be in it competition, being run by the Youth, Sport and Recreation Department. Details on page 14.

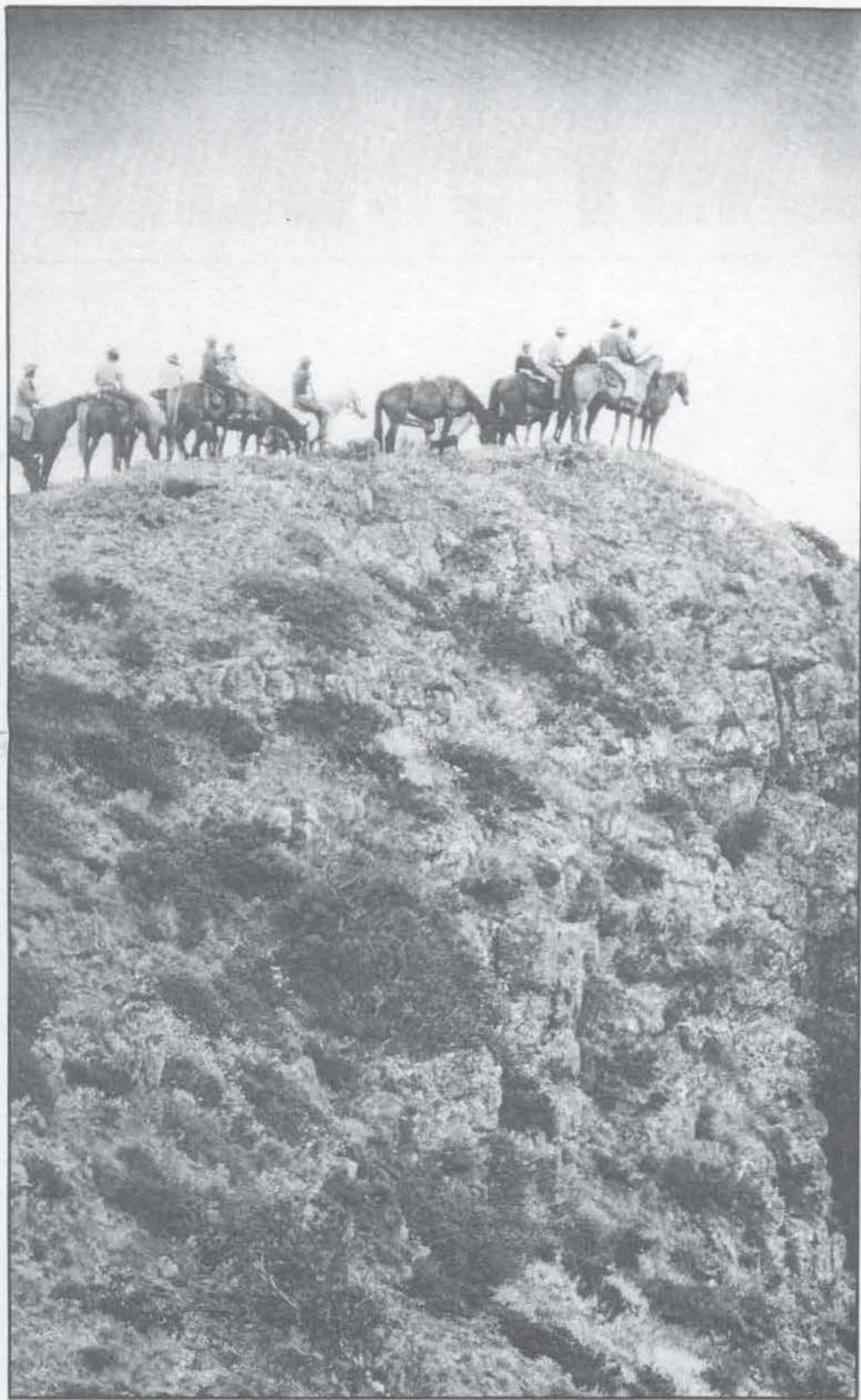
steaks cooked on an open fire. The enthusiasm in Jack Lovick is contagious. He has that honest ability to bring the tourists back to nature, involving them in the chores and personal responsibilities of gear and horses.

Jack measures the success of a trip by the way each person cares for the first-class stock horses he has picked by hand and sorted into a top bunch.

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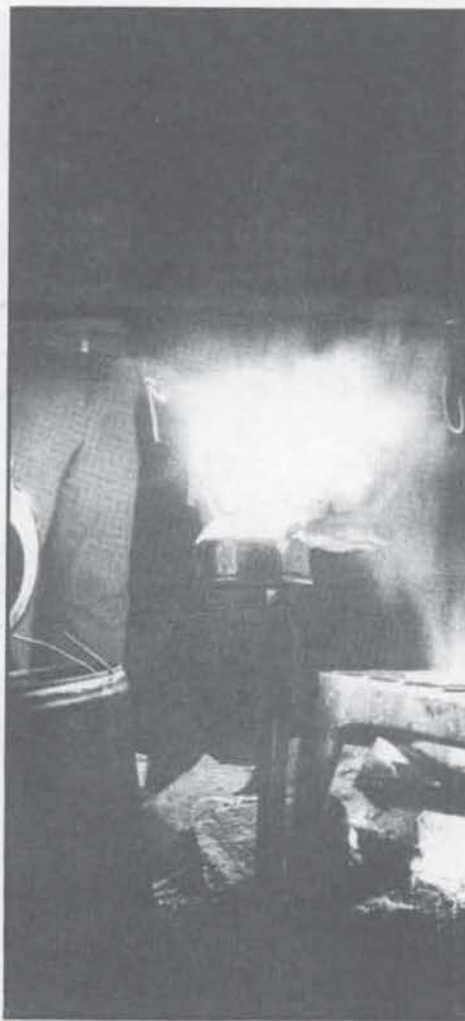
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JACK Lovick after a day in the saddle.



TWO young girls under a bush shower.

Reporter NICK MOUNTSTEPHEN, above, finds out anyone can take part in the safari as he puts his horse Denny over a fallen log on the trail. Photographer LES O'ROURKE on Bluey follows.



Behind her as Jocelyn Lovick cooks pineapple fritters on an open fire east of Mt. Howitt.

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Provisions, tents and personal gear are loaded aboard four-wheel drives and taken to each night's stop-over. There is a

bush hut at each site where some of the cooking (prepared by the wives of John and Charlie) is done.

After a day in the saddle the tour, which could comprise as many as 25 in all age groups, arrives at the camp-site, which is already bustling.

During the day they have crossed rivers, ridden across dangerous spurs, jumped logs and streams, and observed bush life many thought didn't exist.

The riders can look forward to a huge bush meal at the end of each day. Speckled trout caught that day in one of the streams and barbecued as an entree. That's followed by



STAN McKay watches two girls crossing a river.

steaks cooked on an open fire. Each night is different.

Summer in the mountains is a pictorial dream: Wild flowers in blues, mauves and pinks, the ghostly, stunted, white-trunked snow gums.

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