

The Sands of Time... and El Gorah.

BYLINE: AAP Correspondent
Jane Eyre

DATELINE: El Gorah

HEADLINE: The Resourcefulness
of a Long Distance reporter.

On assignment with Foreign Minister Bill Hayden in the Middle East in the latter part of January, Jane visited the Australian contingent with the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai and wrote a feature on their helicopter pilots.

To file it Jane had to hitch a ride in a jeep with a Fijian driver to the nearest telex machine on the sprawling El Gorah MFO base. That meant a trip to the British signals unit several kilometres away through a sandstorm and in near zero temperatures. Jane gave her copy to a British officer who assured her there would be no problems. It was handed over to a Dutch telex operator.

Jane went back across the desert to wind up the day at a dinner in the MFO Officers' Mess.

Not quite. Jane sensibly took the precaution of checking the progress of her copy. It was still in the queue, she was told.

Jane cajoled another jeep ride, this time with a Uruguayan driver. She had to give directions in French. When they got to the British signals unit, Jane was told her copy had to be stamped military priority. Otherwise, there was no guarantee when it would get through.

So it was back across the desert again to the Officers' Mess, where Jane appealed for someone to pull rank. An American colonel got on the phone to the signals unit and made the necessary order.

Jane went back across the desert again, just to make sure. She found

her story on top of the pile stamped "Military Priority". It was filed to Sydney within minutes (and at least 12 hours before the other Australian correspondents travelling with Mr. Hayden were able to get their copy sent).

The following day, Jane's story was bylined in the Sydney Daily Telegraph and the West Australian, among others.

Jane's next stop was Jerusalem, where she accompanied Mr. Hayden on a U.N.-sponsored tour of a Palestinian refugee camp on the West Bank, and her story on the diplomatic storm that ensued was the front page headline story in the Melbourne Age and the West Australian, as well as featuring prominently in most other newspapers and broadcasts.

Keystone Kops!

Back home, there were adventures too. In the last hours of the month, a desperate gunman seized hostages in a Sydney bank and led police, ambulances and newsmen on a chase back and forth across the city before being shot dead in a showdown at the Spit Bridge.

Reporters Craig Regan and Anabel Gomez, in the AAP news car, were part of the pursuing

cavalcade all the way. As Craig and Anabel testified afterwards, it was like something out of a Mack Sennett film sequence – if it hadn't been so deadly serious.

In the newsroom, Sydney bureau editor Tony White and his staff – Libby Moffet, Diana Plater, Bruce McDougall and Chris Zinn – had a long day, feeding updates to chief subs Kevin Ricketts and Greg Wilson, who kept the story moving at a fast and accurate pace.

Sydney cricket writer Ross Mullins had the satisfaction of accurately predicting the cricketers who would be chosen to tour the West Indies this year, making it two years in a row he has correctly read the selectors' minds (last year, the "Mullins team" was selected to tour Pakistan).

He was also at the Sydney Cricket Ground to report on the end of an era when Greg Chappell and Dennis Lillee retired from international cricket.

Ross and our other staff cricket writers this season – Peter Fogarty in Melbourne, Wayne Heming in Brisbane and Tim Dornin in Adelaide – scored bylines too numerous to mention, a tribute to the consistently high standard of their coverage.



Around the Traps.

Our Canberra staff managed to keep politics on the front pages with the continuing Federal-State row over the introduction of Medicare, the change in the National Party's leadership and the return of Mick Young to the Ministry, and the Cross Inquiry's findings on allegations involving Ian Sinclair.

Among numerous Canberra bylines sighted were Craig Skehan on the front page of the Brisbane Sun with a forecast rise in the Medicare Levy, and Peter Logue on the front page of the Adelaide Advertiser and in the Brisbane Sun for his witty report on the one-day game between the Prime Minister's XI and the West Indies.

Peter's feature on ALP factions was also widely used, while Bill Goff's preview of the High Court's 1984 agenda was bylined in the Australian and Tim Dobbyn's cover of Hazel Hawke's address to the National Press Club was bylined in the Adelaide Advertiser.

Other AAP credits in January included:

BRISBANE: The Age gave AAP a front page credit for Brisbane's story on preparations for Cyclone Grace, while the bureau's cover of the foot and mouth extortion threat was sighted in the Melbourne Sun and Sydney Telegraph (on the front page with AAP credit), the Australian, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Canberra Times and the Adelaide Advertiser, among others. State political roundsman Jamie Collins, as usual, had a big haul of bylines, mostly in his home state. **HOBART:** Andrew Darby's stories on the claimed sighting of a Tasmanian tiger were used all over the country, and he scored a byline in the Melbourne Age for his droll feature on the man who was allergic to ants.

DARWIN: Brian Johnstone's big hit of the month was his interview with Fred Gray, whose wife Marjorie lives in England because she can't stand the Australian heat.

PERTH: Mark Smith scored bylines for his stories on such diverse subjects as VFL football, the future

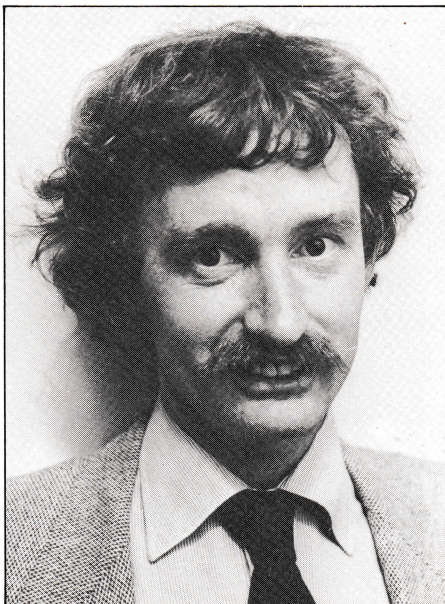
of the minerals industry, and a new taxation shadow over petroleum.

SYDNEY: Mike Visontay, who joined us as a cadet at the start of the month, grabbed a swag of bylines, including one in the Courier Mail for his preview of the Tamworth Country Music Festival. Another cadet, Louise Williams, scored bylines for features on middle-aged unemployment (Hobart Mercury) and discrimination against women in sport (Newcastle Herald). Diana Plater's feature on the Mulawa women's prison was widely used, as was foreign exchange roundsman Ron Corben's feature on the future of the dollar (sighted in the Courier Mail, West Australian and Sydney Telegraph, among others).

Virginia Small joined Finance to assist Ron in covering the money market and immediately scored a good display in the Sydney Morning Herald for her feature on the impact of the dollar float on the secondary mortgage market (regrettably unbylined and unattributed).

ADELAIDE: With Sydney and Darwin, Adelaide was a major contributor to the floods stories, which were widely used, though mostly uncredited. The row over South Australian politicians getting a salary rise was another winner for the bureau.

LONDON: The bureau's most popular byline this month was Ron Watson, who scored well with the story on the unusual marriage of Fred and Marj Gray and his feature on trouble brewing for tea lovers, among others.



WELLINGTON: John Coomber's feature on New Zealand trade unions bracing for a shakeup was used in the West Australian and Adelaide Advertiser, among others. His cover of the Trentham yearling sales also got good play, including a byline in the Sydney Morning Herald.

PORT MORESBY: Chris Pash went to Rabaul at the end of the month to report on the threat of a volcano eruption there. His story on preparations for evacuation of the town's population was bylined in the West Australian.

JAKARTA: Leigh Mackay covered a conference of non-aligned information ministers, which won considerable space, mainly in the metropolitans.

Comings and Goings.

After a total of 13 years with the company, Editor-in-Charge Brian Kinsella left at the end of January to start a new career as a barrister. He was replaced by National Desk Editor Ross Gilligan.

Ross was a member of AAP's old Wynyard House brigade before going to London and the United States to work for Reuters and later on U.S. West Coast newspapers.

Sydney bureau day editor Kevin Ricketts has moved to the National Desk to replace Ross.

Adelaide bureau chief John Feary is leaving the company in March to take up a position with the New South Wales government.

John will be succeeded by Don Woolford, another Wynyard House veteran and a former AAP correspondent in Port Moresby. He is currently a lecturer in journalism in Adelaide.

In other changes, Jeff Turnbull transferred from Sydney to Melbourne and Ian Williams moved from Sydney to Adelaide last month.

Also on assignment overseas was Canberra bureau chief Bruce Jones, with Prime Minister Bob Hawke on a tour of Asia.

Howard Northey left London to cover the Australian cricket tour of the West Indies.