

Police Corruption Scoop Leads To Royal Commission

An exclusive story on corruption in the New South Wales Police Service by Sydney Bureau reporter Morgan Ogg played a significant part in the establishment of a Royal Commission into the Service.

Morgan's May 8 story contained allegations of police involvement in drugs importation and distribution, murder, prostitution, money laundering and other crimes made in a series of statutory declarations by a source known



Morgan Ogg.

only as 'Mr Black'.

The allegations were repeated in State Parliament by Independent MP John Hatton two days later, which led to the setting up of a Royal Commission.

"Morgan's story was a phenomenal scoop," said Deputy National News Editor John Coomber.

"He had the story to himself, with a 48 hour jump on everyone else. It was interesting that the Sydney Morning Herald decided not to run a line of it, yet splashed the details after Hatton got up in Parliament.

"Plenty of our other subscribers used it appropriately - the Illawarra Mercury ran it all over the front page and others followed suit.

"We will recommend that Morgan nominates the story for a Walkley Award."

Morgan, who has been with AAP for 10 years, said he had been working on the story for several months.

continued on page 4

NEW TRADE SERVICE OPENS BUSINESS WINDOW TO ASIA

AAP's newest information service, Asia Pulse, brings together the best range of business leads and market intelligence sources on the booming Asian economies, including China.

"If you are serious about doing business in Asia, Asia Pulse will put you in touch," is its marketing slogan.

The service allows subscribers to access more than 70 categories of information covering major areas of business interest, from agribusiness, automotive and aviation to banking, chemicals, communications, consumer goods, energy, technology, transport etc.

It was developed using market research to find out what type of information Australian companies already get from Asia, what information they need and how they want it delivered.

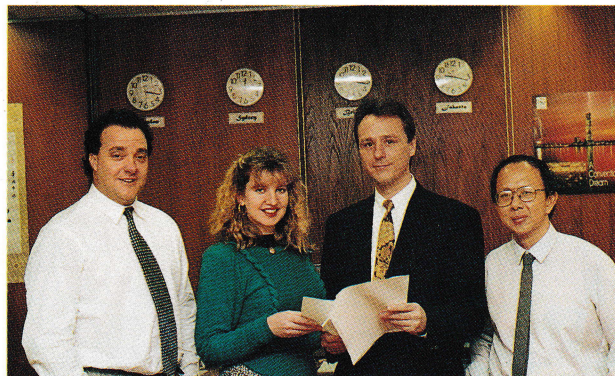
The on-line service, delivered to a personal computer or network, allows a subscriber to access specific information on a market by linking their country of interest with a particular industry, for example CHINA and TEXTILES.

Asia Pulse has exclusive rights in Australia and New Zealand to Xinhua's China Economic Information Service (CEIS), which provides news and detailed economic data on China's business and commercial activities.

"Ninety per cent of the material on Asia Pulse does not appear on any of AAP's other wires," said Chris Pash, Manager, Asia Business Services.

The service was jointly developed by Chris and Ian Pemberton, Business Manager, News Services, with Group Manager, Northern Region, Ross Gilligan, acting as marketing consultant.

Other members of the team include Senior Analyst Michael Byrnes, a former Financial Review correspondent in Asia and author of a book, *Australia and the Asia Game*, due for release shortly, and analyst Bernard Lim.



Ian Pemberton, Sherree Chambers, Chris Pash and Bernard Lim in the Asia Pulse office.

The service delivers about 70 stories a day plus tenders, statistics and a wealth of contributed data containing specialist business analysis, reports, ratings and advice.

Contributors so far include Standard and Poor's, Moody's Investors Service, Minter Ellison Morris Fletcher, Murdoch

continued on page 4

Cafe Society and Controversy at ATUG

The annual ATUG conference and exhibition, held in Melbourne in early May, proved a big success for AAP Telecommunications, whose theme was 'Smart Communications For Smart Business'.

The smart decision to have a relaxed Italian cafe theme to the AAPT stand, together with a lively and at times controversial speech by Chief Executive Barry Wheeler created something of a buzz about the company.

"AAPT was one of the key topics of discussion at ATUG - and that's not our view alone. The fact that we electronically recorded 700 leads or expressions of interest in our products is eloquent testimony in itself," Barry said.

Marketing representative Melanie Corke said the coffee shop theme of the AAPT stand



Max 'Tangles' Walker with Melanie Corke.

came about partly from the inherent difficulty in exhibiting services, and partly from the desire to create a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere where AAPT staff could sit and talk to clients.

"We had hostesses serving coffee on the stand and they were incredibly busy the whole time. There were also usually three to four sales staff working, who would sit down with customers, share a cup of coffee, find out about their business and what they needed.

"It created an atmosphere that made it easy for our sales reps and there was no hard sell involved. It was a great success and gave us more leads than any other exhibitor."

A sign on the stand invited customers to swap a business card for a fresh cup of coffee, and over the three days 700 did just that.

"Our whole objective was to meet as many clients as we could. We also held a lunch and two dinners, which featured guest speaker Max 'Tangles' Walker. He was extremely popular and guests were given a copy of his latest book, which many of them had him autograph."

Barry Wheeler's speech, which questioned the practical application of new communications technology, was delivered in his absence by Oscie Brown, Director, Network Services.

In it he expressed fears that technological developments might be outstripping the capacity of users to develop applications for them.

"This may be heresy in some quarters but I frankly am not willing to believe in the inevitability of information super highways and the blind assumption that they're going to deliver some new dimension to the quality of life just because some boffin in sandals and a cardigan says it's going to be so," Barry said.

He warned against "rushing headlong into the creation of another Field of Dreams," citing Videotex and ISDN as cases of technology running ahead of applications.

The "brave new world" of broadband services, he said, may also have more to do with assumption about what the market wants and needs than with commercial practicality. Little emphasis had been put on basic business elements such as products, market size, demand, costs, revenue and earnings.



The AAPT hostesses in front of the popular ATUG stand.



A smart idea: the AAPT 'Italian cafe' stand at ATUG.

The speech created quite a stir, according to Brian Perkins, Director, Regulatory Affairs.

"Barry's views were picked up by a number of people as ATUG progressed. In the beginning there seemed to be a common view that the information highway and so on was all going to happen tomorrow and I think Barry's paper triggered off a lot of thought. In the final session of ATUG a number of speakers spoke in support of what Barry had said, that we needed to slow down and have a good look at this new technology to see if there was a business use for it."

In the speech Barry also argued strongly for the principle of equal access - the right of any service provider to be granted use of the broadband network at a rate equal to any other comparable supplier - should an Australian broadband services network be created.

He said regulatory bodies must ensure that any such network involved the structural separation of carriage and content, which was vital if Australian consumers were to derive maximum benefit.

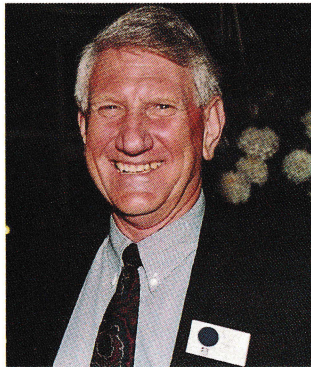
"This view has been moulded through bitter experience. Service providers such as AAPT, while we have our own switches, billing system and an extensive infrastructure, are dependent on the carriers for transmission capacity and, like most Optus customers, on Telecom for customer access to competitive services through the local loop.

"And I have to tell you, when a carrier is in such a position of dominance, where it exercises stranglehold control of a desirable commodity such as the local loop, then the word 'altruism' is not part of its lexicon."

Giving Service Providers More Say

A peak body formed last year to represent Australian telecommunications service providers, including AAP Telecommunications, will have a significant bearing on the industry's future, according to its Chairman Brian Perkins.

Brian, Director, Regulatory Affairs for AAPT, said the Service Providers Action Network (SPAN) Inc. gives members a stronger voice when dealing with government and regulatory bodies.



Brian Perkins.

"For a long time AAPT was the de facto representative of the service provider segment of the industry but the government wasn't comfortable with that.

I was encouraged by (former Communications) Minister Beddall to start SPAN so the government and Austel could interact with a more representative group.

"Before SPAN was established the government and Austel automatically consulted Telecom, Optus and ATUG on telecommunications issues. Everyone else was left to their own devices."

SPAN has defined service providers as anyone who uses telecommunications services to create new services to end users - such as alternative long distance service providers like AAPT, 0055 operators, paging companies, etc.

"We're gradually identifying more and more players. The trouble is, most of them aren't registered so its very difficult to find out where they are. But gradually the message is getting out. We were delighted with the results from the ATUG conference and we're getting a lot of enquiries for membership, which is good."

Brian said SPAN has been accepted by Austel on all its major committees, and is regularly consulted by the Minister and the Department of Communications and the Arts. He is in little doubt about the organisation's future.

"It's going to be a very big segment of the industry, because all the forthcoming pay TV operators will be service providers. In the future such things as access to the information highway will be of equal importance to all

service providers and we'll be taking that up as a major issue one day."

Brian said SPAN takes up "a fair amount" of his time. "We're looking at establishing our own secretariat and we will get to a size in the not too distant future where we will need to employ someone to look after SPAN activities."

Brian, who has more than 40 years experience in the telecommunications industry, joined AAP in 1984 as Assistant General Manager responsible for sales and marketing for what was then AAP Reuters Communications and joined AAPT when it was created in January 1992.

"My role is to be aware of the political environment, to be aware of new legislation that is being proposed or formulated and be involved in that on behalf of the company, and to ensure there are opportunities for us to develop our business.

"I've got a very large network of people I keep in contact with regularly who provide me with a lot of information about what is happening and what is proposed.

"We have difficulties with the carriers from time to time and it's my job to represent these to Austel for resolution. There are marketing practices that the carriers indulge in that can be harmful to service providers. We have to be constantly vigilant about what's going on in the market place."

Brian said the last five years have seen more changes in the Australian telecommunications industry than the previous 40 put together and he predicts the next half dozen will be just as interesting.

"It's going to be dramatic because in June/July '97 the government has committed itself to opening up the whole industry to full competition. Later this year the government is going to initiate a complete review of what has happened since 1991 and it's going to develop a view as to what should happen post-1997."

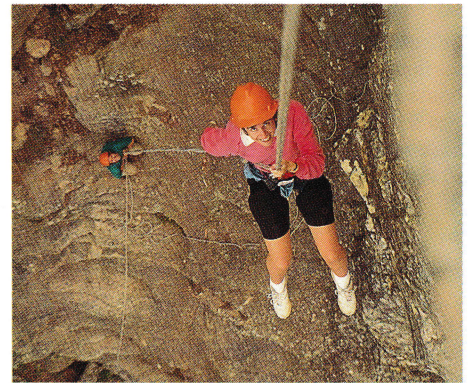
"The review is going to be very wide ranging. It will look at the role of pay TV operators, the role of convergence and examine the whole legislative environment and may lead to changes in the Act. Currently we operate under three acts - the Telecommunications Act, the Radiocommunications Act, and the Broadcasting Act - but because of the way technologies are converging there is a case to be made that these Acts should be combined.

"SPAN will be very much involved in that review. There are huge opportunities for new players in the service provider segment. I think SPAN is going to be very important - and I'm not alone in thinking that. I think government believes that too."

The Spirit of Abseiling

The AAPT Billing team spent a day in the Blue Mountains recently feeling nervous, challenged and exhilarated by turn, as they took up the challenge of abseiling.

"It was a team building day - we have a lot of new staff and we work in a high pressure environment. We felt a day like this would be very beneficial," said Manager Jennie Sparke.



Claire Krieger on the ropes.

The day's events included several team building exercises, culminating in abseiling down some fairly sheer cliffs.

"I've got to admit I was petrified!" Jennie said. "But it was very interesting to see how everyone reacted. We learned that no-one is perfect, and we realised that we don't listen to each other as much as we should. That's a lesson we've brought back to the office."

Jennie said the Billing department is expecting a hectic year, with the migration of the AAPT billing system, currently based in the US, to Sydney adding pressure to the existing workload.

"The telecommunications market is moving so fast and we're out to stay a step ahead. Our customer base is expanding rapidly and we expect that to continue."



(Standing): Allison Wiskar, Dougald Knuckey, Scott Johnson and Melissa van-Huizen, with (front) Claire Krieger and Jennie Sparke.

Asia Pulse

continued from page 1

University, Arthur Andersen, Colliers Jardine and Hambros.

"These companies and many more to be added later are keen to cooperate in the Asia Pulse venture because it provides mutual advantages and is a logical extension of their own marketing efforts," Ian said.

Two highly prized sources of information are the World Bank in Washington and the Asian Development Bank in Manila.

"We can issue \$1 billion worth of tender information from those two sources in one day," Ian said.

"It's estimated that infrastructure projects worth more than a trillion dollars (one thousand million) will be carried out in Asia over the next 10 years and funding for most of those projects will be channelled through the World Bank and the ADB."

"We are often 10 days to two weeks ahead of anyone else with tender information out of Asia," Chris said.

"And all tender information and every story we provide has contact names and numbers so that subscribers can make follow up enquiries.

"We have been unable to find anything as good as this service anywhere else in the world and we are very keen to sell it offshore. The Americans in particular have shown interest and we hope to market it there and in Europe next year."

Ian describes the service as the merging of market intelligence with news.

The service also carries the Department of Foreign Affairs subscription cable service from its embassies in Asia and produces detailed industry reports on China's key economic interest areas including the automotive industry, textiles, energy, communications, food, services, aviation, health, education, mining and plastic and packaging.

Its first, on the automotive industry, sold in the US, Hong Kong and Japan and foreshadowed major government policy changes two months before they were officially announced.

Corruption

continued from page 1

"It was really a flow-on from the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) inquiry into police. A number of people were disappointed with ICAC's findings and felt it didn't adequately address the problem of corruption," Morgan said.

"I started looking into various areas and the focus became a Crime Commission investigation called Operation Asset held some years ago. Asset had exposed a large network of current and former police involved in various criminal activities and it

Editors Confer in Big News Week

The next time he's faced with a slow news period, Editor-in-Chief Peter Brown knows what to do to liven things up - call a bureau chiefs' conference.

A long planned and long awaited conference of the chief editorial representatives from each mainland Australian bureau - the first in a number of years - came close to being postponed when John Hewson called for a leadership spill to be held on the conference's first day, May 23.

The program was reshuffled to allow Canberra bureau chief Tony Vermeer to fly back to the capital for the vote and the others to lock in with their respective bureaus by phone.

On the second day, Darwin correspondent Gordon Feeney had to scramble when a tragic accident on the high speed 'Cannonball Run' through the NT outback claimed four lives.

In between, NSW police made their first arrests in the backpacker murder inquiry after the biggest criminal investigation in the nation's history.

Despite these distractions, the bureau chiefs managed to cover a range of subjects of specific editorial interest and be briefed on a number of AAP marketing activities, including the exciting new Asia Pulse service.

"It was an ideal opportunity for the people who shape the company's editorial output to talk face-to-face with the people who market it," said Peter.

never came to any real result. The question became, what happened. The more people I spoke to the more it seemed that the police had failed to do a proper job, for whatever reason."

Morgan's contacts put him in touch with a former officer who had good knowledge of what evidence the police had of this corrupt group. "He signed statutory declarations to the effect that they'd failed to properly investigate a number of the allegations."

Morgan's story was mentioned in State Parliament and prompted a call by Minister Terry Griffiths for an urgent report on the matter from Commissioner Tony Lauer. It also led to a visit by police to AAP's Sussex Street

Chief Executive Lee Casey had set the scene on the Monday morning by giving the conference an overview of recent developments at AAP, where the group was going and what role Editorial would play in future expansion.



Pictured left to right are Tony Vermeer (Canberra), Deputy National News Editor John Coomber, editorial secretary Karen Fornito, Steve Dettre (Sydney), Joanne Williamson (Broadcast Desk Editor), Chief Executive Lee Casey, Royal Abbott (Adelaide), Editor-in-Chief Peter Brown, Paul Reid (Brisbane), Giles Parkinson (Finance Desk Editor), Judy Hughes (Perth), Tom Hyland (Melbourne), Gordon Feeney (Darwin) and National News Editor Col Burgess.

"It was great to be briefed on all of the company's activities and for the Chief Executive to put it all into perspective for us," said northern region news editor Paul Reid.

"It's easy to fall into the trap of concentrating so much on your own little corner that you forget how much else is going on at the same time."

The conference was also valuable in enabling the bureau chiefs to put faces to names; many had never met.

A rollicking informal dinner at the home of News Editor Col Burgess on the Sunday took care of that and broke the ice for the days that followed.

"My daughters told me to never again complain about the noise that their friends make," said Col.

offices where they interviewed Editor-in-Chief Peter Brown and Morgan and requested his notes and documents.

"They issued a short statement saying they had been thwarted in their investigation of the allegations by our refusal to hand over documents, which wasn't strictly true. When they came down we didn't have any documents to give them," Morgan said.

"It was a very stressful time. I was working considerably more than a 40 hour week and dealing with people who were very stressed, some were even frightened. If what people are saying is true then we have an enormous problem that hasn't been dealt with."

Annual Report Sees Strong Revenue Growth

AAP Group revenues are expected to continue to rise sharply in 1994 to a total of \$208.5 million, Chief Executive Lee Casey said in the company's annual report for the calendar year 1993.

The strongest growth would come from AAP Telecommunications Pty Ltd which was projected to move into profit only two years after entering the deregulated telecommunications market.

AAPT ended 1993 with an annualised turnover in excess of \$60 million.

Gross sales for the Group rose by 16 per cent to \$161.2 million in 1993, with the sharp rise in telecommunications revenue more than offsetting a three per cent fall in the news and information sectors.

The Group's holding company, AAP Information Services Pty Ltd, recorded an operating profit of \$6.8 million compared to \$4.6 million in 1992.



Chief Executive Lee Casey.

"This was reduced by a combined net operating loss recorded by our communications subsidiaries and as a result the company returned a consolidated net profit after tax and outside equity interests of \$510,000 for 1993 compared with \$186,000 the previous year," Mr Casey said.

AAPIS contributed \$101.4 million or 65 per cent of total revenue and the communications subsidiaries \$57.1 million, up 81 per cent on 1992.

"We are looking to further strong growth in both revenue and profits in 1994 with a balanced contribution from the information and telecommunications sectors," Mr Casey said.

Projections for this year are for revenue of about \$100 million from AAPIS and for \$108.4 million from the communications companies.

"The Group's news and information services came under increased competitive pressure in 1993 and this combined with the lingering effects of the recession saw a decline in revenue compared with the previous year," Mr Casey said in his review of 1993. "However this was offset by improved margins and with conditions in the financial markets improving towards the end of the year, indications were that these revenue trends should be reversed in 1994.

"The year saw good growth in our electronic information services with sales of NewsTrack up by more than 30 per cent and the successful launch of Travel Net, a real time service of domestic and international flight arrival and departure information. Racing Services electronic form services also showed good growth.

"AAP Communications Services continued its expansion in designing, installing and maintaining local and wide area networks while at the same time scaling down its role in hardware sales. In line with this policy, the company sold its Videoconferencing hardware sales business to the US company PictureTel, but will continue to maintain this equipment.

"Towards the end of the year, the Group's successful MediaNet services were merged with a new range of facsimile store and forward products in AAP Facilities Pty Ltd and preparations made for expansion of these services to the Asian region."

ConferNet Impresses VIPs at PNG Expo

Queensland Premier Wayne Goss was a surprise visitor to the AAP Communications Services stand at the Port Moresby Rural Telecommunications Expo in April.

The stand showcased the videoconferencing via satellite capabilities of the ConferNet System.

Mr Goss and local VIPs who visited the stand, including former Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare and PNG's Chief Justice Sir Arnold Amet were very impressed with ConferNet's capabilities, said Bernie Seth, Communications Services' Business Manager, Radio Systems Division.

"We had a very good reception," Bernie said. "Mr Goss, who happened to be in Port Moresby at the time for Queensland/Papua New Guinea Business Week, was pleased to



Bernie Seth (left) at the ConferNet stand in PNG with Queensland Premier Wayne Goss and Austrade Senior Trade Commissioner Ken Johnson.

learn that Queensland is taking a leading role in developing the technology.

"We currently have a system set up between Cairns TAFE and the aboriginal community of Doomadge near the Gulf of Carpentaria."

Bernie said the stand demonstrated ConferNet's remote area videoconferencing system and included a video of the highly successful network established two years ago in the Tanami Desert area of the Northern Territory.

"The PNG people were very pleased to see AAP taking a leading role in bringing this technology to remote ethnic communities.

"We believe that our products are well suited to distance education in rural communities and for supplying them with other voice and data services."

Bernie added that Communications Services is pursuing several opportunities in the PNG market and has been shortlisted to move an Intelsat antennae from Port Moresby to Lae.

French Fries and Fishes in the Great Outdoors

And Lands The Big Fish Back at Head Office

What does a French man do when his wife flies off to England for six weeks to show off their one-year-old daughter to the in-laws?

Well in the case of AAP Facilities General Manager Steven French, he plans an adventure holiday in the Northern Territory fishing for trophy barramundi with a group of unlikely companions he met up with for the first time at Darwin airport.

They turned out to be good solid working lads from Adelaide - Griz, Jacko, Wrinkles, Gunther, Papa Smurf and their guide Digger. Since everyone had to have a nickname, they christened him the MD.

"The other five were all mates and they were apparently very concerned about a Sydney business manager joining their group," Steven said. "Even when I arrived in my shorts, they didn't think I looked much like a fisherman."

But fish they did, from sunrise to sunset every day for five days, in open aluminium runabouts on the muddy Mary River some 200 km southeast of Darwin.

"We'd be black and greasy by the end of the day. The temperature was around 40 degrees so you had to smother yourself in 15+ sunscreen. There were three of us to a boat, plus the guide. I was lucky enough to strike the trophy fishing season and some huge barramundi were landed."

Steven's biggest was about 8kg but a record size fish, estimated at around 40kg, was caught by another boat only 50 metres away.

Steven thought on one occasion he'd hooked one just as big.



The record catch.

"One hundred metres of line screamed out and the rod bent double," he said. But after a 20 minute struggle all he'd managed to haul alongside was a giant stingray, which they let go.



'MD' hard at work on the lookout for barramundi.

"Originally, I'd intended to go to the UK with my wife Gillian and our daughter Kathryn but I just could not get away for that length of time," Steven said.

"So I decided on a one-week adventure holiday where I'd be guided, looked after and have a bit of a laugh, and I enjoy fishing. The deep sea game fishing boats were booked out and I finally settled on Big Barra Fishing Safaris of Darwin.

"Let me tell you, for a Pom who has lived in Australia for 12 years, this was wild country. The river was full of salt water crocs, some of them very large.

"Our base was called Shady Camp because it had three trees. The rest of the landscape was bare to the horizon. We stayed at the old buffalo abattoir, which is now backpacker accommodation."

And all for only \$200 a day, plus airfares.

"We had a great time. It was a real laugh," Steven said. "The guides were excellent, tremendous fishermen, but very different and some parts of the lifestyle took a little getting used to.

"I'd wake at 4 a.m. to the sound of the first beer can being popped, and one of our party was capable of having six before breakfast.

"The other five want me to go back there with them next year," Steven said. "But I may not have the stamina."

Steven caught six barra and was filmed landing one of them by a crew from The Great Outdoors. The program is due to be shown on Channel 7 on June 17.

Watch out for the hat!

But it's not all barramundi fishing in AAP Facilities. There are other big fish to be caught as the division showed with the landing of a new contract worth close to \$2 million a year.

After 12 months of product development and negotiations, AAP Facilities has signed its most important contract so far, with a major financial institution to deliver its financial statements via facsimile.

"About a year ago, while promoting AAP Facilities at a conference, I was approached by our client to provide a facsimile solution to a business problem they faced: How to deliver individual statements automatically to between 50,000 and 100,000 customers on a weekly basis," said Steven.

The solution was to develop a new Facilities product called "Matchmaker" which matches the information from a customer file to a form shell containing delivery details.

"At the press of a button by the client, the complete content of a customer file containing many thousands of records is automatically delivered to the fax machine of our client's customers," Steven said.

"The scale of the project represents a significant opportunity for AAP Facilities," he added.

"The fact that the mainframe that contains the customer records is in Phoenix, Arizona, only goes to further demonstrate the complexity of the business solution.

"We must remain open minded and flexible in our approach to potential customers' business problems," Steven said, "because the satisfaction of their needs turns their problems into opportunities.

"And there are plenty more big fish out there."



Steven with the one that didn't get away.

New Roles for News Agencies Seen at PANPA

Media analyst Fred Brenchley suggested to newspaper proprietors at the recent PANPA Conference on the Gold Coast that they should combine forces to develop electronic newspaper delivery to the home or office through AAP.

The coming revolution in mass communications could be the saviour of newspapers facing a continuing slide in Monday to Friday circulation if they took advantage of the marketing opportunities it would provide, he said.

The digital broadband technology that would deliver improved communications and entertainment options, including pay TV, to the average householder would allow newspapers to be read electronically rather than on paper.

Mr Brenchley said the two major publishing groups, News Ltd and Fairfax, should combine to develop on-line newspaper delivery, possibly using the telecommunications resources of AAP, which they already jointly owned.

"Imagine a new AAP product called Australian Electronic Newspapers," he said.

"AAP would aim it directly at the business audience, the most likely to pay for such a service and generate a new electronic readership for newspapers."

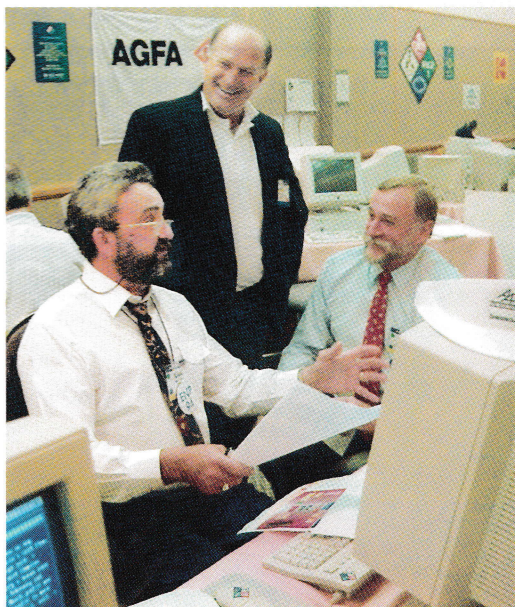
The annual conference of the Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers Association, attended by 1,040 delegates, also featured for the first time a special session on What Newspapers Want From News Agencies.

Production Editor Geoff Want suggested that newspapers should set up a wire service committee, which could be organised through PANPA, to keep their needs constantly under review.

"This would assist AAP greatly, particularly when planning changes to networks or communications protocols, or product developments," he said.

Media Marketing Director Robin Strathdee said one of the most valuable services agencies like AAP could provide to newspapers was the range of ad-ons that were available in addition to the traditional world and national news wires and pictures.

"Because of our close connections," he said, "it is easy to overlook the large range of ad-on services already available, including MediaNet, NewsTrack, stock exchange tables



Photographed in the PANPA Chronicles newsroom with the digital camera and using only natural light are the paper's News Editor Alan Armsden, the former Editor-in-Chief of the Hong Kong Standard, AAP Production Editor Geoff Want and the Chronicles Production Editor Bob Howarth, Editorial Technology Manager at Queensland Newspapers.

and racing form, sports results and communications networks.

"Additional services are limited only by our imaginations and support from our newspaper clients."

One possibility was digital delivery of newspaper advertising material throughout the country, with AAP's Advertising Services Network (ASN) already being used by several News Ltd and Fairfax newspapers.

Geoff said that AAP would also be implementing in the next few weeks a bulletin board backup service which media clients could dial into to download news items in the event of communications problems.

"It is now possible utilising AAP technology, primarily Magnews, to introduce a low cost, effective and user friendly back-up system that will overcome the concerns of all news wire clients," he said.

"They will dial Magnews when necessary, search the database for copy required, then get off and process the material before calling again.

"The system is such that all clients can be serviced during a major outage, or only one in the event of an isolated fault."

He also outlined plans for datastreaming of the news and picture services, formguide

and stockset down a single 19.2bps channel.

Robin said there had been a very pleasing level of inquiry at the AAP stand, which this year featured the new Magnews service, NewsTrack for Windows, news graphics and the Photo Library.

Associated Press, which shared the AAP stand, used the conference to demonstrate its new digital camera specially designed for photojournalists.

The camera uses a computer disk rather than film, allowing a photographer to take and transmit pictures from remote locations to a newspaper within seconds via a laptop computer and cellular phone.

The \$30,000 camera also allows the photographer to add voice "captions" to each picture through a small microphone on the camera, and each disk can hold up to 75 compressed colour images.

"Increasingly, PANPA is providing a focus for production, promotions, marketing, design and editorial aspects of the newspaper industry, not just in Australia but in the Pacific region as well," Robin said.

"If you supply services to the newspaper industry, as we so obviously do, then you have to keep in close touch with the trends and developments which could change what our customers are seeking from us.

"The annual conference is one of the best ways of doing this. Of course it also presents the chance to meet many of our clients together in one place and to foster personal relations."

Robin said that the electronic publishing project called PANPA Chronicles, now a part of every conference, offered AAP the chance to showcase its text, pictures and graphics services.

Media Manager Leigh Mackay, technical support staffer Graeme Finley and communications specialist Chris Knighton arrived early at the conference to help ensure AAP services were running smoothly into the PANPA Chronicles newsroom.

"Chris and Graeme worked really hard before and during the conference because they knew AAP credibility was on the line," Robin said.

"Leigh's efforts were rewarded with plenty of AAP credits in the finished product. He also made strategic use of our give aways of polo shirts with PANPA Chronicles displayed on the front and AAP on the sleeves and on the eye shades," Robin said.

Opportunities in Telecommunications, Financial Markets and Asia will Provide Exciting Growth

Neil Aveling, at 44 the youngest member of the AAP Group Executive Committee, represents the new business school approach to professional management that will take the company through its most exciting period of growth over the next several years.

Neil joined AAP in 1984, just after the Reuter float, when AAPIS was formed and the company changed from being a members' cooperative to a private company.

"My very first task was to sort out the details of the sale of the 13.9 per cent of shares which AAP Pty Ltd held in Reuters on behalf of its members," he said.

Since then he has played a leading role in three other critical corporate restructures over the past 10 years.

"I regard myself very much as a person who gets things done, rather than one who says, 'Wouldn't it be a good idea if we did this,'" Neil said.

"I came in to help manage the change process 10 years ago and I have been deeply involved in all of the other major contracts and partnerships entered into by AAP since then as well as the reorganisation of companies within the AAP Group."

These include the restructure of Comco, the joint venture communications company originally part-owned by Reuters, which was the forerunner of AAP Telecommunications and AAP Communications Services; the structuring of AAPT to accommodate the 24.5 per cent shareholdings of the MCI Communications Corporation of the US and New Zealand's Todd Corporation, and last year's restructure of AAPCS with the establishment of AAP Facilities as an operating company.

"I was fortunate to join at the start of the boom period for economic services in the mid-80s, which has helped to take AAPIS where we are today," Neil said.

"The financial markets had just been deregulated following the Campbell Report and new banks were literally bolting into Australia in search of lucrative new markets.



Neil Aveling with some of his tools of the trade at his Sussex Street office.

"We went through an astronomical growth period that took us from a small company attitude to a large corporate culture."

That growth period is soon to be overtaken, Neil says, by what he believes will be the most exciting period of growth in AAP's history.

"Our money up to now has come from the AAP Reuters Economic Services division, the financial powerhouse of the group. The future financial powerhouse will be our telecommunications company.

"By the end of 1994, AAPT will be as big at the rest of the AAP Group combined.

"We've come a reasonable way down the communications path in a short time, but we still have massive opportunities there and in several other areas," Neil said.

"With Vodafone, the new digital mobile phone company, we have the right to take up a shareholding by 1997.

"We have the opportunity to become the third carrier when the industry is further deregulated in that year, though we have not yet reached critical mass in the huge telecommunications market. We have to be able to survive a serious conflict with other major players in the market, and we must achieve that position by 1997.

"From the media point of view, we are stable with a solid base and that is where our lobbying and political power resides.

"With our financial markets services, we face new challenges which we are more than able to cope with.

"The vibes that are coming out of the new Asian Service are so positive that one must pursue it. Revenue already is running at greater than forecast levels, and we have an ability to be an Asian regional player."

Neil said that while the financial markets boom had brought in good revenue, AAP had been forced to keep open its options across several broad areas.

"We had our successes with communications and our setbacks in other areas," he said.

"But the overall result was positive. One additional benefit is that this time around, we have a range of people in senior positions who have been through that experience.

"Although the challenges will be different, we are far better prepared to take advantage of the opportunities.

"We have much better control mechanisms in place. They're in part a response to the tough times we have been through along with an awful lot of other Australian industries.

"We've learned how to tighten our belts and get things done in a leaner fashion."

Neil said that in the late '80s and early '90s cash management had become all important, and the pursuit of profits a lesser consideration.

"Without strict and very smart cash management processes, we may not have come through the recession as strongly as we have."

Despite that, he said, AAPIS had been generating profits since the 1983 restructure except for 1985, when the loss of some \$200,000 was due to setting up costs associated with its new businesses.

"Our owners put in \$7.4 million in 1983-84, most of it to fund the start up costs of Comco and the purchase of our technical centre at Glebe," he said.

"Everything else has been funded from internal cash flows.

"The company borrowed heavily to finance its expansion into telecommunications, but our gearing ratios are now approaching a very prudential level," he said. "Our external debt has been reduced from \$46 million to \$20 million."

"My big challenge in accounts was to develop staff systems to cope with our growth," Neil said. "When I arrived, we had an accounting machine to process all our billing and our data base for AAP RES customers consisted of card files.

"We had no ability to reconcile what was being billed with what was actually supplied. The team set up to design and implement the system, known as CASPAR, was our long time consultant Dick Kelly, who wrote the software, Gordon Hanson, now DP Manager for the AAP Group, Katie Smith, RES Sales Administration Manager and John Stevenson, the AAP Financial Controller.

"CASPAR is a first rate company system. It has its critics, but the faults are not software related but data and task related. This means that the required information is not going into the system," he said. "It is people who get things done, not computers.

"AAP now has very good control over its revenue and information flows and we still spend under half-a-per cent of our turnover on data processing, against an industry average of around three per cent."

Neil would like to see changes in the AAP corporate culture so that each person has ownership of their job, the power to do it and a greatly reduced ability to hide behind excuses and blame others for mistakes that have been made.

"This is the way it should work all the way down the line. But we have been so busy addressing the external challenges that the internal challenges have had to bide their time.

"Every problem and every solution, really, is related to people. There is no such thing as the amorphous 'they'," he said.

Neil makes no apologies for the growing role and influence of the Finance Department in AAP Group affairs.

"I know it's seen by some people as a bit of a grabber," he said. "I prefer to think that we get involved only if there is a vacuum. If it's not broken, we don't try to fix it."

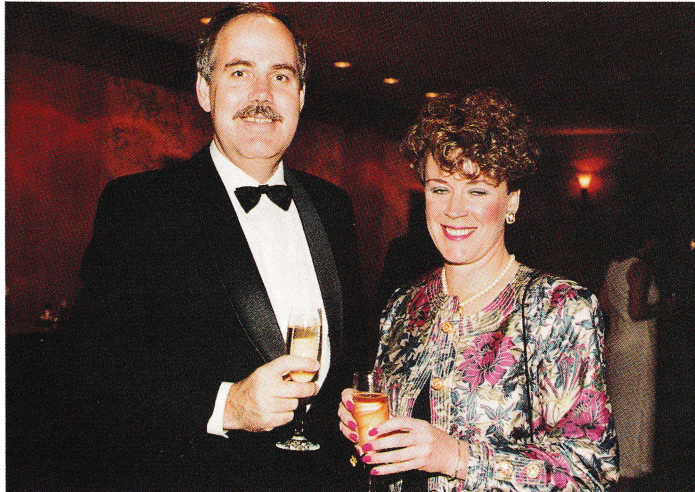
New areas of influence include purchasing, which comes under Neil's direct control through Purchasing Manager Jim Haasnoot, who is responsible for purchasing and supply company wide.

"Everyone loves buying things. It's a feel good process, and we're not trying to take that away from them. But what they have to accept is that someone else can do the actual purchasing much more efficiently and economically."

"The Finance Department now has a group function," he said. "It provides services to AAPCS and AAPFACS as well as AAPIS.

"It is now appropriate that 100 per cent subsidiaries of the group should be treated as part of the group, particularly so as changing circumstances mean that business opportunities need constant re-evaluation in the light of demand for corporate resources.

"While a measure of autonomy is appropriate, resources for individual departments have to be met from a finite pool.



Neil and Linda Aveling at the AAP Golf Day dinner.

"Management in various areas does tend at times to pursue its own desires and needs as an end in itself. But the Executive Committee plays a reasonable and useful role in refereeing these activities."

Neil said that Chief Executive Lee Casey had had the vision to take AAP from a position where it was a cooperative at the mercy of its members to a company that is now a major force in the economy.

"Our turnover when he arrived was less than that of a small clothing company," he said.

"Since then AAP has displayed political clout out of all proportion to its size. To a degree, we've been personality rather than product driven. We've developed through force of personality and our political connections and our understanding of how the system works.

"We've had people who could get hold of senior ministers at very short notice. Our influence over the telecommunications deregulation process is a prime example. That was the strength of the journalism background of many of our executives. They knew which were the hot buttons to press."

Neil said there were two kinds of employees - the ones who scored spectacular tries up the wing and looked good for a time - and others who continually made the hard yards up the middle.

"Both are needed but the latter are far the more valuable and should be rewarded. They are the real strength of the company."

Neil is described by his senior colleagues as an unlikely accountant - a lateral thinker and a very talented manager in the broadest sense, socially convivial and with a good sense of humour.

He does not fit the classic, though rather unkind, description of the typical accountant as "past middle age, spare, wrinkled, as calm as a concrete post, without bowels or passion or any sense of humour."

His early apprenticeship to his father, Frank, who established a successful business in the New Guinea highlands, may provide a clue to his makeup.

Neil was born in Madang, on the north coast of Papua New Guinea, in 1950, when his father worked for the Seventh-day Adventist mission building a leprosarium at Mount Hagen.

When that was completed, his father established his own timber business in the western highlands. "He was a builder, sawmill, mechanic, engineer and anything else he needed to be," Neil said. "He had

little formal education or training, but could turn his hand to almost anything."

Neil went to boarding school at the Lilydale Academy in Melbourne, pranged his HSC the first time around and worked in his father's business for two years before going back to school for a more serious attempt and a good pass.

"The Hagen mill was at 8,000 ft but our tree felling operations were up around 11,000 ft."

It's an era he looks back on with fondness.

"Pre-independence we were fairly paternalistic towards our native workers," he said. "It may sound funny to say so now, but it was not actually inappropriate for the times.

"They were moving from zero technology to learning how to use the machinery required to run a sawmill. They were watched and trained much more closely and carefully than an expatriate worker, and as a result we never had a serious accident at the mill.

"There was a small, very close knit Australian community, and no crime or fears of violence. No one bothered about locking their doors and there were no bars on the windows, and no guard dogs and high fences.

"The three powers in that part of the country were the government, the Catholic Church and the Lutherans."

Neil said that the industries set up then generated incomes for whole villages that previously had only a subsistence level existence, "and there was a genuine bond and respect between employer and employee."

His father's business contemporaries in those pioneering times were Danny and Mick Leahy, whose son Joe Leahy featured in the fine documentary films of business and tribal relationships in the PNG highlands - Black Gold and Bitter Harvest.

Neil left Mt Hagen in 1970 and his father retired in 1972.

He completed his accounting qualifications in Newcastle and worked first for A.C. Hatrick Chemicals and then for Geoff K. Gray, the auctioneers, with Estee Lauder as a cost accountant and then with Oakbridge Coal before joining AAP.

"I'd spent 12 years learning the ropes," is how he sums it up.

"I picked up most of my financial skills with Oakbridge, where I'd also done the first year of an MBA."

Neil completed his MBA at the University of Technology in Sydney and has encouraged staff in his department to pursue a similar course or complete other degrees.

"Both Karen Lee and Silas Suen have completed Masters Degrees, Garry Thomas had an MBA when he joined us, and Dick Kelly has both an MBA and a Commerce Masters," he said.

"They're not an end in themselves, but a tool to help develop a person. Once anyone has passed their first lot of marks, I'm prepared to pick up their full fees for the course."

Others who have gained their accounting qualifications and other degrees include Iain Atkins, Jennie Sparke, Jill Triggell and Kate Doolan.

Neil is married with one daughter, Chantelle, aged 13. His wife Linda has her own career as nursing unit manager at the Sydney Adventist Hospital at Wahroonga in Sydney's northern suburbs.

In his spare time of late, he is putting some of the other skills learned from his father to good use.

"We purchased an early '70s project home in Turramurra in March last year. It had been neglected and we're about half way through a five-year redevelopment plan," he said.

"We've virtually gutted the entire house and that takes up every spare minute of my weekends, most of it painting and landscaping."

Bowled Over in Beijing; Snooried in South Africa

Being a foreign correspondent is a hazardous occupation, not least, as two of our far flung scribes report, because you never know from where the danger may appear.

Beijing Bureau Chief Michael Osborne gives a scars and all account of playing cricket in China:

It wasn't Lords. It wasn't the SCG. It wasn't even a patch on the antbed backyard strip I played on as a kid.

It was hell. A dried out, pock-marked flat that looked more like a Karachi cow paddock than a cricket ground.

The ball didn't move off the coir mat pitch. It either reared off like a rocket or fell as flat as a Trevor Chappell underarm.

But it was Beijing's sole cricket ground and the scene of my dramatic downfall after answering the call to defend Honour and Country by playing for the Australian Embassy in the Peking Cricket Club competition against the ball-tamperers from Pakistan.

Naturally the Australians were the defending champions in the competition, which consisted of a series of fiercely-fought matches between the embassies of the cricket playing nations.

Pakistan was the main danger and the only other undefeated side this year. Aided by the appalling playing conditions, we removed them for a moderate 83 and victory seemed a mere formality.

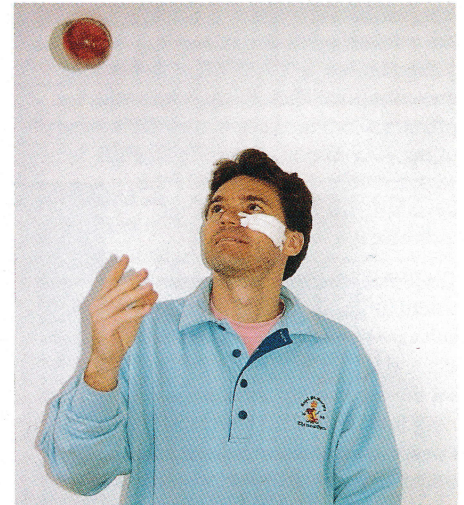
But when we went in to bat, the wickets tumbled just as quickly and before I knew, it was my turn to tread the treacherous pitch. After scoring a steady eight, to help Australia to 4-45, the boys on the concrete logs that serve as a pavilion started opening the celebratory beers.

But the Pakistanis had other ideas.

Just a few balls before tea, I remember playing a forward defensive shot to a good length ball which reared up at almost 60 degrees straight into my head.

I took a direct hit and the sound of ball on cheek bone halted the premature Australian celebrations.

My creams turned red, my face blew up like a six-stitcher and consciousness almost floated away.



A battle-scarred Michael Osborne.

I was raced off to a Chinese hospital where a plastic surgeon, nervous about treating a litigious westerner, added 12 stitches to the damage. The chip taken out of my back tooth had to wait until the next day before being filled.

Bandaged, bloodied and still reeling, I staggered back to the game to find we'd lost by 20 runs, with my contribution of eight, retired hurt, the top score.

Two weeks later I returned, scarred and a little scared, and with helmet in hand to face Bangladesh.

The locals said I didn't need it, because anyone who was stupid enough to play cricket on a Beijing battleground without wearing a full metal jacket obviously had "mei you naozi" - no brains.

Meanwhile, in the heat of the South African elections, correspondent Kevin Ricketts was also having a torrid time.

He reports:

In tsotsi (robbers') slang in Johannesburg, they're called "snoories" - foreign tourists draped in cameras and bags, an easy and lucrative target for the majitas (the grab-and-run street thieves).

Reporting on the South African elections, I was about to become one as I strolled down Commissioner Street, mulling over the possible leads to that day's story.

continued next page

Janelle Works From The Waist Up

After interviewing naked two metre rugby union players, the World Gymnastics Championships in April came as a welcome change for vertically challenged Brisbane journalist Janelle Miles.

"It was great interviewing people who are shorter than I am. I felt like a giant," said the 150cm Janelle, who covered the championships in tandem with Queensland Sports Editor Wayne Heming.

And working behind the scenes was Sydney journalist Jane Nelson, who'd volunteered to be a media helper at the championships well before she scored a cadetship in Sydney.

With 300 hopefuls having to be whittled down to eight finalists in a dozen events, the competition was reduced to a high speed sausage machine for the first couple of days, making results compilation a nightmare for the



Jane Nelson, left, with Janelle Miles at the World Gymnastics Championships.

organisers and the 300 journalists accredited for the event.

Once the cream had risen to the top the reporters were able to settle down and enjoy the artistry and power of the gymnasts.

"It's incredible to see how such petite people can possess so much strength," said Janelle, frequently referred to by lanky Brisbane colleague Gil Breikreutz as "the world's shortest journalist."

"My favourite was American all-round champion Shannon Miller - and not just because she was shorter than I was!"

The championships also became a test outing for the new Associated Press digital camera, which allows pictures to be taken on computer discs and reproduced within seconds for printing or high speed digital transmission.

The camera was unveiled at the Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers' Association conference on the Gold Coast in April.

And getting back to those rugby players, is there an art to interviewing naked second row forwards from navel height?

"Hold your notebook at just the right angle," advised Janelle.

"It's a trick I learned from Margie McDonald after she covered a Wallaby tour."

continued from previous page

I was foreign, draped in cameras and bags and my mind was on this wondrous absence of violence as 46 years of apartheid fell away in the nation's first democratic elections.

I'd just got my African National Congress press accreditation at the ANC's election headquarters in the Carlton Hotel, which is equivalent to Sydney's Hilton.

I marvelled at the fact that I could freely take photos of South African Police and Defence Force soldiers, armed to the teeth, guarding the nearby Independent Electoral Commission - in 20 years in reporting in southern African politics, that was a first.

It was 4pm and I rounded a corner to head back to my hotel to file the story.

I was suddenly out of my reverie as a youngish black rammed me backwards by the shoulders. It was a mugging, but I believed I had the man's measure and wrenched free.

What I didn't know was that he had three accomplices closing in on me from behind and one slashed at me with a knife, luckily just slicing a nick in my wrist and finger. The 'main man' then had his knife at my throat.

I lost everything, although I was able to replace passport, traveller's cheques and air ticket within days.

When I ran around the corner to call in the security force members I had just photographed, a black policeman merely said, "Ah, baas, I am guarding the electoral office, I cannot leave my post."

Editor-in-Chief Peter Brown had cautioned me before I left Sydney: "Bring back that lap top computer, or don't come back!"

Thanks, Chief, I left it in my hotel room.



Two of AAP's most distinguished former editorial staff members Norman MacSwan and Bruce Hewitt recently visited the Sydney newsroom for lunch and to recall old times. Norman, now 77, joined AAP in 1950 and within a few months was assigned to cover the Korean War. He was Editor in the New York office from 1959 to 1964 and then Deputy News Editor and later Associate Editor until his retirement in 1980. Bruce, now 74, was the NZPA correspondent in Australia from 1956 to 1964 and then News Editor in Wellington before joining AAP's Sydney staff in 1971. He was Chief Correspondent in London for three years from 1978 and held management posts in Melbourne and Canberra from 1981 until his retirement in 1984. Bruce continued in a part time role as AAP's cadet counsellor until 1991 and still supports the training course as a visiting lecturer. Norman was also cadet counsellor from 1980 until 1984. Pictured left to right are National News Editor Col Burgess, Bruce, Norman, Deputy National News Editor John Coomber and Editorial Manager John Radovan.

A Winning Year For Racing Services

Racing Services has recently signed an agreement with Sky Channel to export its form guides to several countries which will soon receive live broadcasts of Australian race meetings.

Director Geoff Want says the deal has exciting potential for the division, which is having its most successful year - sponsoring more race meetings, selling more products and gaining greater public awareness than ever before.



Activity at the AAP Racing Services stand at Darling Harbour's Australian Racing Expo.

"Sky Channel is paying AAP to provide form to publishers in those countries which it is supplying with Australian racing. It will broadcast two Australian race meetings a day and we'll supply form on those meetings," Geoff said.

Countries to receive AAP form initially include the USA, Venezuela, Argentina, Tahiti, Nauru, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and the Philippines.

"Publishers in those countries will dial the AAP FastForm database and download direct to their computers, in a style compatible with their existing format. In the US for example, form is displayed differently - they use Imperial measurements rather than metric, so we've redesigned our format accordingly.

"We'll be supplying other racing information to those publishers and we're also talking to others, in Asia particularly."

Geoff said Racing Services now has the right mix of products and public recognition to fully exploit its potential.

"I've been at AAP for 19 years and there are not too many products I've seen in that time that enjoy the recognition that Racing Services' products have today."

That comes in large part from participation in dozens of racetrack promotions, bloodstock sales and industry exhibitions, which Geoff says are vital to "spread the gospel" about the form and breeding databases FastForm and InForm.

He estimates Racing Services will take part in more than 50 promotional days this year including the National Horse Expo at Flemington and the Australian Racing Expo at Darling Harbour, last March, and the Queensland Racing Expo in Brisbane in May.

"The Sydney Expo was extremely successful for us," Geoff said. "It drew a crowd of 25,000, mainly keen racing people, and we wrote a lot of business. On the Sunday it was mind boggling. People were six to 10 deep around the stand for hours. We had eight staff working and we were flat out all day.

"Our stand won much praise and was mentioned on 2KY as the most popular and best presented stand at the Expo.

"Racing Services helps get the AAP name out in the public arena and it's nice to see the public perception of us as important players in our business. I like seeing a positive reaction to our products."

Racing Services has also committed to some major sponsorships including the Victorian Spring Racing Carnival, the umbrella organisation for all that state's spring racing events, which will give Racing Services naming rights at several dozen race meetings around Victoria.

The AAP FastForm Eyeliner Stakes, at \$50,000, is the biggest race the company has yet sponsored. It will be held on Ipswich Cup Day at Bundamba race track on July 2.

Other 1994 sponsorships include the Trainer and Jockey Premierships on the Sunshine Coast in August. Racetrack promotions have been held this year at Randwick, Warwick Farm, Ipswich, Kilmore, Warrnambool, Warren and Hawkesbury with others planned for Bundamba, Grafton, Caloundra, Wyong, Newcastle, Moonee Valley, Flemington and several Victorian provincial tracks.

"This is far and away the biggest year we've had," Geoff said. "We've got great products in FastForm, InForm and Class Racehorses and our promotional campaigns are helping to raise our profile. It helps that sponsorships are now far more affordable than they were a few years ago."

He said while the Sky Channel deal is the first step in taking Racing Services' expertise off shore, the division's focus will remain on expanding its operations in Australia.

"It's exciting and there are good solid dollars to be made but we're keeping our feet firmly on the ground. We'll continue to work towards establishing our products in the competitive market place here, and on the expansion capability we have."

NewsTrack on Show at EIS

A Windows-based version of NewsTrack designed to be integrated into existing Executive Information Systems software was on display at the EIS exhibition at Sydney's ANA hotel in April.

"It's a system several of our clients, including Qantas and the NSW Health Department, have integrated into their EIS software and it's working wonderfully," said Jay Hannon, Business Manager, Electronic Products Group.

"EIS is a system aimed mainly at senior executives and the exhibition was attended by large corporations and government groups from around the country.



George Pardon (right) explains the NewsTrack system at the EIS exhibition.

"Ours was probably the best attended booth at the exhibition," Jay said. "We did good business and we're now arranging trial installations with a number of companies. We experienced a very positive response - the product was very well received."



Seven intrepid AAP staff - Dennis Riepon, Teresa Peni, Donna Laughton, Martin Finnis, Max Gerlach, Derek Hazell and Steve Goozee - took part in the 1994 RTA Big NSW Bike Ride. Dubbed 'The Mountains to the Sea', the eight day ride from Uralla to Trial Bay, took in Armidale, Ebor, Dorrigo, Bellingen, Macksville and Kempsey - in all, 402 km of hilly, challenging and picturesque countryside. The AAP team raised nearly \$2000 for the MS Society and by all accounts had a great time. Pictured above (left to right) are Teresa Peni, Donna Laughton, Martin Finnis, Steve Goozee, Dennis Riepon and Derek Hazel. Max Gerlach was a bit too quick for the photographer.

Record Sales For Voice Processing

It has been an extremely successful few months for sales of the Octel Voice Information Processing products with new revenue of more than a million dollars achieved so far this year.

Voice Information Processing Sales Representative Peder Kastengren said that the record figures represented sales to several new customers and an upgrading of services to existing clients.

New customers include Vodafone, the legal firm Baker & McKenzie and US management consultants Booz Allen Hamilton.

Significant upgrades have been provided for Westpac, the NRMA, National Australia Bank, MMI Insurance, Ernst and Young, Colgate-Palmolive and McKinsey and Company.

Peder said that the Colgate-Palmolive upgrades followed soon after the company installed the first Octel system in their Sydney city office last October.

New systems have been installed at their factories at Villawood in Sydney and at Labrador on the Gold Coast, with OctelNet networking software allowing all three facilities to work virtually as one.

The MMI upgrade includes VoiceForms, which allows the company to channel inquiries for CTP insurance to a menu format which seeks responses to a list of pre-recorded questions.

The National Australia Bank now has four Octel systems, with the Sydney unit installed last month networked to the three existing systems in Melbourne, where the bank has its head office.

"The increase in AAP's renewed focus and support for the Octel range has escalated our sales on a national basis," Peter Firth, National Sales and Marketing Manager, said.

"We are finding greater interest in using voice processing in the business community."

Mark Johnson, Sales Representative, Victoria, attributed sales growth in his state to the development of applications, support and an increase in technical skills in AAP. Companies such as Mobil, Arthur Andersen and McDonalds had all upgraded their existing Octel systems, he said.

AAP Teams To Enter Fun Runs

Sydney AAP staff and their families are welcome to join the AAP team in the annual City To Surf fun run on Sunday August 14

Entry forms will be sent to all Sydney staff shortly and need to be returned to Robin Williams in GCPA by July 1.

All team members will receive a T-shirt and cap, and will be rewarded with lunch (courtesy of AAP) in the Ocean View Restaurant at the Bondi Diggers. Interested runners should start training now!

Golf Day Funds Aid Child Health

The Financial Markets Foundation for Children has announced its first round of grants for research into health problems affecting Australian children, after reaching its target of establishing a \$2 million capital fund with a donation from the AAP Group.

Macquarie Bank Executive Director Paul Robertson said, "We reached our target with the \$250,000 we received from the AAP Group Financial Markets Len Evans Golf Day in February.

"We are very pleased at the number of grants we have been able to make and we will be in a position to give away even more in future years.

"We've decided that half the revenue we raise each year, plus interest from the \$2 million fund, will be distributed to children's health research. The remainder of the money raised



Paul Robertson.

will go to swell the fund.

"We had to choose from several hundred applications and Professor Kim Oates of Sydney University spent many hours sifting through them all." A total of \$146,547 has

been distributed to nine medical research groups in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

They include projects looking at the health problems of children in homeless families, the nutritional needs of children with cerebral palsy, the effects of maternal tobacco smoking and its relationship to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, childhood obesity, a child sexual behaviour checklist and the management of bronchiolitis.

The foundation's board of trustees is headed by Bernie Fraser, Governor of the Reserve Bank, and includes Don Argus from National Australia Bank, David Clarke and Paul Robertson from Macquarie Bank, Chris Stewart from the Bank of Melbourne, Bill Gurry of Potter Warburg, John Craig of Tullett and Tokyo, Bob Johnston of CEDA, Lee Casey of AAP and Professor Oates.

Mulvey's Marathon

Maybe it was the past athletic coaching of Ted Simmons on the Sydney sports desk, or the incurable ringing in his ears to bring back some "quotes" for Bill Allan, or just the fact he hadn't had a beer for four weeks.

Whatever the motive (or madness), former AAPer Paul Mulvey produced a heroic effort to break the three-hour barrier in cold, blustery conditions in the London Marathon on April 17.

In his first ever marathon, Paul was one of 1,966 runners to finish the prestigious London event in under three hours, officially clocking two hours 59 minutes 39 seconds in the 26 mile-385-yard race.



Paul with his marathon kit.

Paul, 28, says the last two miles were the hardest. "I kept the same pace all the way through and I was expecting to hit the wall, but didn't," he said.

"It was freezing but I didn't really notice the wind as I was surrounded by plenty of other people."

He had competed in two half-marathons before, finishing in 78 minutes at Nara in Japan in 1989 and 83 minutes at the Wimbledon event in London in September last year.

In the weeks leading up to the London Marathon, Paul went without beer for a month (despite a number of temptations when free drinks were on offer) and only admits to maybe "one glass of wine to be sociable" in that time.

"I just thought if I was going to do it I might as well do the best I could," he said.

"I normally run at least twice a week, but once I was accepted for the marathon, I'd run about four times a week.

"And living in Hammersmith near the Thames, there are a lot of good runs along the river."

After leaving AAP in Sydney last year, Paul headed for London where he has worked for the Press Association, done casual shifts for AAP (mostly so he can check the football scores), and is now doing a four-month stint of summer sport for Associated Press.

Paul went for his first post-marathon run nine days after the race and felt "absolutely stuffed".

But he wouldn't mind doing another marathon, and says Berlin and New York could be next on the list.

For now, his focus is on the Aussie Rules football season in London, where he plays for champions London Hawks in the 11-team competition.

Different Strokes

Port Moresby correspondent Lucy Palmer reports on some of the differences she's encountered between cultures.

It was 1987 and I and my two Papua New Guinean guests, Susannah Wamp and Josephine Yak, were driving through the Sussex countryside on our way back to London where they were performing in a Pacific dance festival.

We passed a hanging sign with a dog painted on it and a weathered board which read, 'Sunnyside Kennels.' "What is that place?" asked Susannah. I racked my brains to think of a way I might explain it to someone who had only left the highlands of PNG a few days before, on their first overseas trip. "Well," I began limply, "it's a sort of hotel for dogs for when people go on holiday." "Why?" they asked, incredulous. "I don't know," I said. "It's just what people do here."

"I remember everything about my visit to you," Susannah told me a few weeks ago at a hotel in Mount Hagen. "I came back here and I told everyone about those hotels for dogs. No-one would believe me."

There are plenty of gruesome stories about all the horrible, violent things that can happen to you in PNG. But what you don't hear about are the majority of people who have a level of hospitality and generosity that puts many of us to shame. A PNG family I met a few weeks ago invited me to their very humble house for a simple meal. By the door on a nail was a lovely woven bag. It was probably the nicest thing in the whole house. They insisted I took it.

After years of hoping I might eventually see them, I finally met up with Susannah and Josephine again recently when I was in Mount Hagen. The photograph below was taken as I stepped off the plane and saw a woman I thought I recognised, through all that thick make-up which they had worn when I first met them. It was Josephine's cousin.

Susannah's father is a famous old chief from the Wamp family in the highlands. He is famous because he has several wives and has lived long past the average life expectancy, which is about 50 in that area. "Why does he have several wives?" I asked her when she told me about her family life. She shrugged. "I don't know," she said. "It's just the way we do things here."

It seemed a simple enough task in my first week to call the cats for dinner. "Puss!! Puss!!" I shouted down the garden. Geri, AAP's housekeeper here for 12 years, suddenly appeared from behind his house, grimacing and shaking his head from side to side. "Yu no ken tok olsem," (You can't say that) he called across the lawn. "Bilong wanem (why)?" I asked. He looked at the ground. "Em dispela em i tok nogut," (that word is bad language) he said, not explaining further. I ran upstairs and looked in my pidjin dictionary for the offending word. "Puspup = to have sexual intercourse." I came sheepishly back down the stairs. "Cats!!" I called. "Dinner time!!!"



Port Moresby correspondent Lucy Palmer meeting old friends.

Getting On Top at the Media Masters

Editor-in-Chief Peter Brown made a successful 2,000 kilometre hit and run golf mission to Queensland in February to help AAP's northern bureau capture the fiercely contested Media Cup at the Kooralbyn Resort.

A record 19 teams, representing Brisbane's print, radio and television media, took to Kooralbyn's lush fairways inland from the Gold Coast in the annual challenge - also known as the Media Masters.

Completing the AAP team was Brisbane sports editor Wayne Heming (off 20), sports reporter Cole 'Diesel' Hitchcock (17) and lifetime casual stringer Mick Straughair, who plays a mean game off three.



Pictured left to right are Cole Hitchcock, Mick Straughair, Peter Brown and Wayne Heming.

The team combined magically to break the four-year-old tournament record with a nett 53 3/8ths (10-under off the stick) in the four-ball Ambrose event.

The winning margin of more than four shots - also a tournament record - was the source of some good-natured heckling from members of several badly beaten teams quickly into the amber fluid and telling anyone and everyone of their hard-luck stories.

But the jeers and taunts which greeted the announcement of AAP's stunning score, quickly turned to cheers following a stirring victory speech by its team captain.

Queensland Golfer reported that Heming was subjected to a barrage of good-natured (we think) boos and insults as he accepted the trophy from Kooralbyn's director of golf Brian Carrigan.

"Now I know how Wally Lewis felt when he ran on the Sydney Football Stadium," quipped Wayne.

The win was hard-earned, the victory sweet. Brown (off 25) got the team away to a great start when his

tricky five-metre, right to left snaking birdie putt slipped sweetly into the middle of the cup on the first hole.

One of the highlights was Kooralbyn's tough 17th, a par three across a lake which requires great accuracy.

The first three balls in the group were drowned trying to carry 150 metres of water before Straughair, the star of the day, hit his five iron inside one metre for one of AAP's eight birdies and a nearest-the-pin collect.

But the highlight of the day was undoubtedly Heming's perfectly struck (if somewhat fluky) 60 metre wedge up a two-tiered slope and into the cup for an eagle three, giving his team a flying four-under after four holes start.

"I knew we needed something special to get us hyped," said Wayne, leading the roars and initiating a series of high-fives which echoed around the picturesque course.

As Peter will testify, the event takes some winning. Close examination of official handicaps, their eligibility to play for various teams and cries of "burglar" ring out before a ball is struck in anger.

All the gamesmanship ensures the day takes on a State of Origin flavour once the combatants hit the fairways.

After being relegated to runner-up in 1992 and again in 1993 it was cause for great satisfaction to see AAP finally hold aloft the Media Cup trophy.

Peter and his deadly putter have already booked a spot in next year's team to defend the title.

Golf Gold In Tourism Games

Journalist Ian Jessup has won the gold medal for golf at the world tourism games in Austria.

Ian, a sports reporter in Sydney, won the gold medal from a field of 140 at the Porschach golf course.

Ian, a six marker at the Mollmook course on the NSW South Coast, fired a round of 75 for 39 Stableford points.



Ian Jessup.

The world tourism games were staged in Carinthia in southern Austria.

Marie Retires at 75

After 25 years working for AAP and 20 years before that working as a copy taker for Fairfax, Marie Haselhurst retired in March at the age of 75.

"Marie joined AAP in 1969 when the Sports Results Service started. She knew everybody," said Sports Editor Bill Allan.

In recent years Marie worked the 4pm to 8pm shift on Sunday nights, taking down the baseball results.

"She had a great rapport with people, especially the baseball people," Bill said. "Sunday nights will never be the same again."

Marie, a keen artist, has had to adjust her Sunday routine in retirement.

"Here I am one week on reversing my Sunday habits," she wrote to Bill

soon after her retirement. "Today, sandwiches for lunch instead of midday meal, and an evening meal at the proper time in lieu of sandwiches at AAP - difficult to accept the reversal after all these years."

Marie was given a rousing send off by colleagues and friends from both AAP and the NSW Baseball League.



Marie Haselhurst.

Big Al, Louie, Red and The Boys Enjoy a Mongrel Brand of Footy

We've heard of Americans in Paris and at the court of King Arthur, but what's an American doing playing touch football with Australia's most famous rugby league family?

To see Allan Palmer running round the paddock with the Mortimer brothers, Steve, Chris, Peter and Glen, is evidence that the tall Texan has happily made the transition from Washington DC to Aussie suburbia.

Allan, National Marketing Manager with AAP Telecommunications and here on a three-year secondment from its US partner, MCI Communications, is a regular with the Menai-Milperra Mongrels, an assortment of ex-Canterbury-Bankstown footballers and neighbourhood friends, who take to the streets in the early hours every Sunday morning.

They start out from the host's house with a 10 km jog around the southern Sydney suburb of Alford's Point, follow up with some sprints and exercises, then play the big match on the nearest available public oval.

The Mongrels was founded by Steve Mortimer, known to the group as Red, as soon as he retired from professional football five-and-a-half years ago.

"I decided to organise it because I missed the camaraderie of the football club and training and it's an enjoyable way to keep fit," he said.



Allan's on-field form.

And the nickname? "It's Red Rat actually, a family thing from when we lived in the bush," said Steve. "I had red hair and they reckoned I ran like a rat."

"Steve's nickname for me is that Big Ugly American Mother", said Allan, "but more generally I get Big Al."

Allan was invited to join the group by his next door neighbour Chris Mortimer. "His wife, Diane, is American, and my wife, Sonnetta, got to know her. Our kids are similar ages and we went from there," he said.



Allan Palmer enjoys a sporting breakfast with Steve and Glen Mortimer.

"It was a while before I could figure out the rules of rugby league, like when you were offside. It took a couple of months to really get the hang of it. But I had good teachers.

"They're just a bunch of fun loving guys and it's a lot of fun exercising with them. That's why I took it up."

"He's fitted in very well," says Steve.

Others Mongrels include NSW Sheffield Shield cricket coach Steve Small and former Sydney first grade rugby league players Mark, Ogilvie, Greg Sankey, Gary Sullivan and Bede Ritchie.

The age range is mid-20s to mid-40s though kids and an Irish Setter and an Alsatian, which are regarded as honorary members, occasionally also join in the game, prompting cries like, "Watch out. They're using the little kids," a tactic resorted to when one side falls behind on the scoreboard.

Rules are casual (there's no referee) and despite nicknames like Killer, Louie and the Fridge, it's played, in the main, at a gentle pace.

But old skills die hard and Steve frequently smothered up the ball in tackles, showing a preference for that form of defence rather than just the required touch.

And when he and Glen combined for a spectacular try, he shouted, "That'll put bums on seats."

The Mongrels have never actually played a match against anyone. "But the traditional rivalry between those of us from Menai and those from Milperra, which is on the other side of the Georges River, makes the Sunday morning showdowns interesting," said Allan.

"Then it's back to someone's house for breakfast and a couple of beers.

"We pay \$2 a week each whether we play or not and a schedule showing who will host the next run is put out four months ahead. The money's used for a Christmas party for the kids."

Members have to play a year with the Mongrels to qualify for one of their very smart striped jerseys with the club emblem featuring a beer can, boxing glove, running shoe and football.

Allan runs two or three times a week apart from Sundays, starting out about 6 a.m. and covering five or six kilometres.

"I ran a lot in my younger years.

Distance running is what I prefer rather than sprinting. I got back into it seriously here about a year-and-a-half ago when I needed to shed some kilograms. My only previous football was schoolboy gridiron and that was a long time ago," he said.

** Steve Mortimer's distinguished rugby league career included captaining the Canterbury Bulldogs to successive premierships in 1984 and '85, captaining NSW in its first state of origin series win over Queensland in 1985 and playing halfback in eight tests for Australia. Chris also represented Australia while Peter played for NSW.*



The Menai-Milperra Mongrels.