



Australia



Melbourne 1956

BOX LUNCHES



As I recall, being only 23 years of age at the time, providing food to the liking of athletes from 67 nations was a challenge that the Australian authorities had never faced before. Since European settlement in the 18th century, Australia's population had become predominantly Anglo-Saxon with only very small enclaves of Greek, Italian and German residents. Unlike the multi-cultural society the athletes of Sydney 2000 will experience.

To cater for the tastes of athletes from Asia, Africa, parts of South America and indeed regions of Western and Eastern Europe was to be a new experience. It was therefore decided to have several kitchens serving groups of similar eating habits. and a kitchen for 600 people was adopted as being the most economical unit. This kitchen served two dining rooms - one on either side - each seating 300. Thus 10 main kitchens were required for athletes, one was disposed to staff and one to the International Restaurant.

The Olympic Village restaurant.



by Kevan Gosper



Before the Games Village opened, lists of dishes and drinks were sent to most of the nations likely to attend. Of the few replies received some were most helpful. and some teams changed their requirements on arrival.

Compared however with a war-weary Europe undergoing reconstruction. and Asia yet to emerge with its "global tiger economies". Australia produced an abundance of fresh, raw, easily harvested fruit, vegetables. meat and fish. I well remember looking at the faces of some of my Soviet competitors after they surveyed

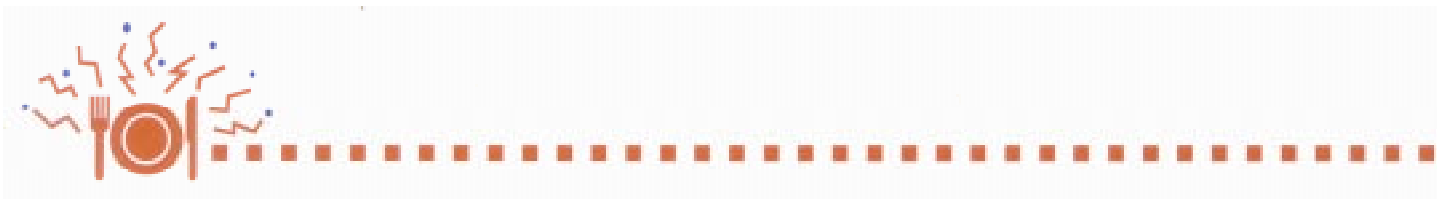
the food available in the Heidelberg (AUS) Village, compared with what was on offer at home.

On a personal level the availability of the "box lunch" was a great boon to many of us who had to leave the Village and travel some distance for our pre-Olympic training. Inside the cardboard box was a selection of cold chicken and ham, lettuce, tomato, carrots, potato salad and bread rolls together with a carton of milk or lemonade; there was no such thing as bottled water on the continent, water from the tap could be trusted.

Those were the days when the focus on food for Australian track and field athletes like myself was consistency in timing, quality and variety. High-protein foods were more in fashion than carbohydrates. We felt the important thing was to have a good, underdone 8-ounce piece of beef steak together with salad or cooked vegetables at least four hours before competition or training. Some athletes were beginning to realize the benefits of carbohydrates. such as rice. I re-

...and its cooks.





member thinking it was unusual that my fellow country-woman Betty Cuthbert ate large plates of rice and honey on the day of competition. She went on to win three gold medals in the 100m, the 200m and the 4x100m. Too much milk was to be avoided because of concern for lactic acid, slices of orange sweetened with glucose (a sugar concentrate) were considered an energy booster, avoidance of dehydration through a consistent intake of water was important.

Back in 1956 there was very little alcohol intake by athletes. Drugs weren't talked about because to our knowledge, they weren't used by athletes and doping control processes hadn't been invented - "those were the days".



Athletes on parade.

Australian Ronald Clarke lights the flames.

