

Race of his life as

by Fiona Hamilton

TERRIFIED 18-year-old Stephen Carroll splashed through sewage, crashed through scrub and ran for his life up a Phuket mountain for more than two hours on Sunday as a tsunami wreaked devastation down below.

As water gushed around his bare feet and the streets around him were thrown into chaos, there was just one thing on the Gold Coast teen's mind: get to higher ground.

"I knew I had to get as high as possible, I just ran as hard as I could," said the TSS graduate.

"I was just so scared, I thought the wave was going to break right on top of me.

"I ran up the mountain for so long, but I didn't think it was high enough, so I just kept on running... I just feel so lucky to be alive."

Yesterday, from a hotel room high in the mountains above Phuket, Stephen relayed his terrifying tale to *The Bulletin*.

Separated from his friends for almost nine hours, Stephen was frantic with worry, with no idea whether they were still alive.

He had travelled to Thailand with his good mates from school, Trent Moore and Daniel Quinlivan, both 17, and their Gold Coast families. "We all got separated as we ran for the hills," said Stephen.

"I could see the water getting higher and higher so I just kept on running.

"I ran straight through a whole heap of sewage and I was covered in it.

"Everyone else ran around it and that's when I lost them."

After more than two hours, Stephen reached safe ground, making contact with a Dutch group who could not speak English. "I ended up in a little hut and the Thai people fed us - they killed a chicken in front of us and cooked it for us.

"I just couldn't believe that it was happening. It was terrible because no one knew what was going on, and I didn't know what had happened to my friends."

Stephen waited on the mountain for several hours and finally reached his friends about 6pm after he borrowed a mobile phone from another tourist.

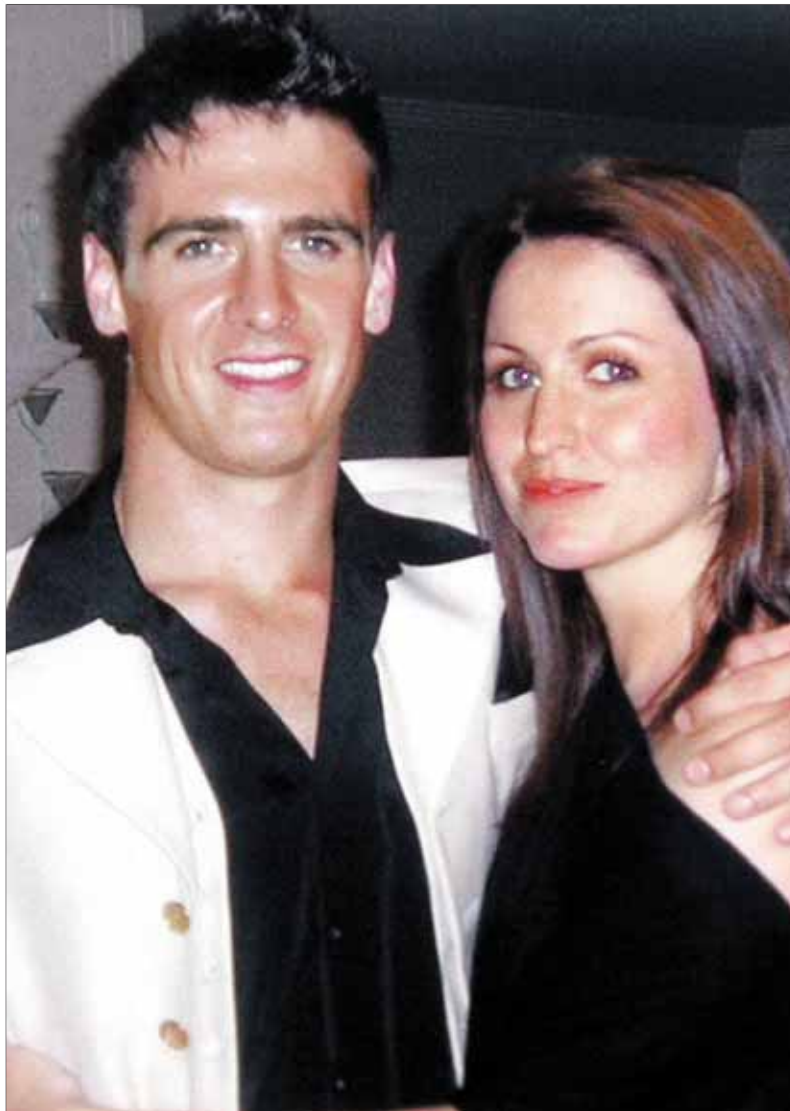
"It was a big relief, I had been so worried... but everyone is OK," he said.

Kerry Moore, Trent's father, spent much of the day petrified that his son Brooke, 11, and Stephen had both drowned.

"The last time I saw Stephen, he had bolted off towards the hills, then looked back at me and said, 'Tell me I'm not going to die,'" said Mr Moore. "I yelled at him to run, and he was gone - we didn't see him again until that night.

"It's all been pretty traumatic, it's the scariest thing that's ever happened to me."

Moments after Stephen disappeared, Mr Moore lost sight of Brooke.



Coast teen and Phuket survivor Stephen Carroll, with sister Juliette

"We lost him for about six hours, we were so, so worried," he said.

"His mother was just frantic... we thought he and Stephen may have been sucked out by the wave.

"I later found out someone scooped Brooke up and took him up the mountain on a motorbike. We found him later and he was in a hell of a state."

The rest of the group ran for their lives and were picked up by a truck and taken up the hills to safety.

"Thank God we had the brains to run right away, because the water was chasing us - another four or five

minutes and there could have been major dramas," said Mr Moore.

"We're very fortunate that everyone's OK and we're all together - we're just glad to be alive."

Thousands of kilometres away, Stephen's family sat in their Benowa Waters home, glued to their television set.

"It was pretty scary but Stephen's got good survival instinct, I knew he'd be OK," said his father Brian. "He called as he was running up the mountain and I thought he was joking at first.

"Then the phone went dead.

"We didn't hear from him for hours but then we got a text saying he was OK and that was a relief.

"We were sitting here feeling sorry for him but now I find out he was enjoying a nice meal of chicken," he laughed.

The group, anxious to get back to the Gold Coast, will fly into Singapore today and connect to Brisbane on Wednesday.

Just a few days earlier, Stephen had an idyllic holiday in mind when he travelled to the popular beachside resort with the Moores - Kerry and wife Vanessa, along with their sons Trent, Brooke and Lane, 15.



Dave Schloss



Tom Connell

GOLD Coast mates Tom Connell and Dave Schloss had only been holidaying in Phuket for one day when the tsunami struck.

"When we arrived the place was so beautiful and to see it in such a state is just awful," said Mr Schloss, who was in Thailand celebrating a big win on the poker machines at Nobby Beach Surf Life Saving Club.

"When we walked out of our hotel we thought it must have been a terrorist attack. One woman had her arm hanging off and there were a few dead bodies in the drain.

"We're both in a lot of shock but the people here have just gone out of their way to help other people.

"It is incredible."



● More survivors' stories on Pages 4 and 5

Cricket team safe

THE Australian women's cricket team is safe in India and was not affected by the tsunami, Cricket Australia said yesterday.

The 18-member touring party - comprising 13 players and five support staff - arrived in Chennai, on the eastern coast of India, on Sunday and was safe in the team hotel in Aruna, a city suburb.

How a tsunami happens

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What The Bulletin thinks

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The Bulletin

... catch up!

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It's Tuesday

Weather:

Fine
Min 21C Max 30C

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LOOKING HOT THIS SUMMER

plus Bloke... for the party animal within

INSIDE



MEET HI-5

and see them live in concert

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FOR KIDS EYES ONLY

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wave of terror hits



Kerry and Trent Moore . . . instinct took over



Vanessa Moore . . . frantic when she couldn't find son Brooke (right)



"Everyone was panicking and I knew that was no good," he said. "I told the family to start running—I could see the hills and told them to go in that direction. "The boys (Stephen and Trent) were still in bed so I ran upstairs, got them out, and just yelled at them to run." The group ran out of the hotel with just the clothes on their back and no shoes. When the chaos and water had subsided, they returned that evening to pick up their tickets and passports. They spent the last two nights in a hotel in the mountains.

While Mr Moore said the group was shaken over their ordeal, he said they were counting their blessings that they were able to survive the disaster. "I think I'd better buy a lottery ticket . . . we're very, very lucky," he said. "When you go on a holiday like this, you always want to stay on the beach, but not any more. "I'm not sure any of us will be back here in a hurry." Their minds will be forever filled with the horror they saw. The families headed back down to the beach yesterday afternoon

and could not believe the devastation caused by the tsunami. "The place is just ruined, there's nothing left but wreckage, and it's so chaotic because no one knows what's going on," said Mr Moore. "We just saw bodies being taken out of an underground supermarket—there were 150 people in there when the tidal wave hit, and they all drowned. That's very upsetting, and so scary." He said he had spoken to other tourists who watched the whole harbour being sucked out of Patong beach, before coming back as a wave. "It's just incredible."

Well known for his heroics Thai king's grandson killed

DANIEL Quinlivan, who travelled to Phuket with his family and his TSS mates Stephen Carroll and Trent Moore (and Trent's family), is well known on the Gold Coast for his heroics. The former school house vice-captain was nominated for a Gold Coast Honours Award earlier this year, in the courage category, for a brave act that potentially saved a young woman's life. The young man went to the aid of the woman who was being attacked by a would-be rapist near the Chevron Island bridge. He yelled out and scared the attacker off before helping the young woman to safety.

THE Thai-American grandson of Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej died after devastating waves hit the island of Phuket. The body of Poom Jensen, 21, accompanied by his mother, Princess Ubolratana, was flown to Bangkok aboard a private aeroplane. The princess and her son were vacationing when tidal waves struck the beaches of the internationally popular resort. Officials earlier indicated that Jensen was jet-skiing when the huge waves surged towards the island. As many as 700 people might have died in areas of southern Thailand from the waves and flood.

Emergency phone numbers
for Australians concerned about relatives or friends
1800 002 214
for Australians in need of consular assistance
+61 1300 55 135

Australian toll two but fears for missing five

TWO Australians, including a baby, are dead and five others missing in tsunami-devastated South-East Asia.

A Cairns woman on a backpacking holiday is missing, presumed dead, after she and her husband were swept away by the raging waters.

Trinity Bay high school teacher Kim Walsh, 39, who was holidaying in Phuket with her husband, Ian, 40, disappeared when the massive tidal wave swept through their luxury resort.

Mr Walsh, who works for Queensland Health in the dengue action response team, managed to escape the raging torrent before finding shelter on a roof of a nearby hospital.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade knows of at least 5500 Australians in the affected areas, with 12 people confirmed injured in overseas hospitals.

Department officials are bracing for more casualty figures, as communications improve and more consular staff reach affected areas.

DFAT confirmed a six-month-old baby girl was killed.

Melina Heppell of Western Australia was swept from her father's arms

on Patong Beach, in Phuket, Thailand, when the tsunami wave hit.

"They were walking along Patong beach . . . he thought he had the baby in his hands, but all he had was clothes.

"So the baby's gone," said her uncle, Simon Illingworth.

A 52-year-old Queensland man was also dead, according to DFAT, but there were no details immediately available.



Kim Walsh

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the deaths were tragic and the loss of the baby especially sad. He said with deaths now being reported in East Africa, the death toll would certainly swell.

"Thirteen thousand could be well short of the number of people who have been killed."

A hotline for family and friends trying to find loved ones, has been inundated with more than 20,000 calls.

Australia will donate \$10 million in financial aid, and yesterday sent two Hercules aircraft laden with bottled water and emergency shelter.

Prime Minister John Howard said the nation was hoping good news would come for the families of the five Australians missing.

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