



BUGA UP brigade . . . from left, Don Dunoon, Chesterfield-Evans, Chapman, Greg Starkey, Andrew Zdenkowski, Bolzan and Cohen. Photo: Rick Stevens

No ifs, no butts – these boys were tough

Valerie Lawson

They were the gypsies of the streets. Their weapons were spray paint and screwdrivers, their targets the billboards of Sydney.

Among their number were a printer and professor, an artist and doctor, and an Argentinian who gloried in the name Lord Bloody Wog Rolo.

Twenty years after they unscrewed display ads and painted joke slogans on cigarette billboards, members of BUGA UP, and their sister group, MOP UP, gathered yesterday in the home of one of their founding members. It was their first reunion since their defacing days.

The two movements, Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions, and Movement Opposed to the Promotion of Unhealthy

Products, spanned the years 1978 to 1994, before tobacco billboards were banned.

The BUGA UP brigade thought that MOP UP was a bit tame. They wanted paint on their hands, more direct action, more danger.

They formed their breakaway group after MOP UP's inaugural meeting at the city morgue, called by Simon Chapman. An anti-smoking activist now at the University of Sydney, Professor Chapman hosted yesterday's reunion where guests viewed their greatest billboard hits.

This week, BUGA UP founding member, Rick Bolzan, recalled the day he was arrested at the Art Gallery of NSW, "bundled into a paddy wagon and charged with malicious injury and causing serious alarm and affront".

He had chained himself to a Marlboro-sponsored racing car

parked in the foyer of the gallery. His supporters showered the car with cigarette butts. After half an hour, gallery staff realised this was not a show, but a protest against the sponsorship of an exhibition by Philip Morris.

Mr Bolzan, now a graphic artist with the NSW Heritage Office, defended himself and won, telling the magistrate that people went to art galleries to be alarmed and affronted.

Also charged over the incident was BUGA UP member, Lord Bloody Wog Rolo, now known as Rolo Mestman Tapiar. He became an activist after a run-in with Coles supermarkets which were trial marketing a shopping bag adorned with a cigarette ad.

His fellow Coles protester was printer Bill Snow, who still prints anti-smoking messages and places them in film canisters which he

hands to young women smokers.

Mr Snow says he was "a very serious serial BUGA UP-er" who spent weeks in Long Bay and Silverwater, refusing to pay fines.

Two of BUGA UP's busiest members are now members of the NSW upper house, former anti nuclear protester, Ian Cohen, and Arthur Chesterfield-Evans, who joined the movement in the early 1980s. His billboard handiwork took place at night, when he defaced ads on his way to and from night calls as an after-hours doctor. For Peter Vogel, co-inventor of the Fairlight synthesiser favoured by Paul McCartney, the motivation was personal. His father had suffered two heart attacks due to smoking.

Said Mr Vogel: "The campaign was to use humour to get our message across. I think that's why it was so successful."