





## EDITORIAL

'Ullio! The October Chunder! is just a trifle late - just how late I'm not sure, at this stage (I've been away, y'know) - and to try to make up for this lateness I'm going to produce a short, cheap and nasty edition; none of that fancy layout you've all become accustomed to - I'm even cutting down on the chuckles (but we still have a few chucks left in us, I think). Well, there's no point hanging around here in the editorial when we could all be grooving on Ken Ozanne's report on SYNCON '79.

### A CONVENTION REPORT OF SORTS

(or what I can remember of events at SYNCON 79)

by

KEN OZANNE (who was there - or so he claims)

SYNCON '79 was a good con. It must have been. Or else I would remember more about it.

In the beginning was Friday. Friday 10th August 1979, to get the record straight at the start. Don't worry, it will be well and truly tangled by the end, I promise you.

I had assured Eric Lindsay and Bob Riep that I would be going by train. So I inveigled Bob into carrying my party goodies down for me in his van. Naturally, having thus ensured that I would not need my car, I then drove down. It was probably Marea's fault - she always prefers to drive wherever we go. Anyway, she, Alex and I arrived a little after noon and registered with the hotel. No problems, except that they could not give us three keys to our room. I think that small difficulty was the only one I know of with the hotel - from my point of view, hotel liaison worked as well as at any convention I have ever attended. Congratulations, Shayne, on a difficult job well handled.

Having dumped one load of cases in our room, we wandered down to con registration and found same quickly and smoothly handled. Blair Ramage had been the first fan we met, while still in the hotel carpark - now we fell gently into conversation with some of the friendly faces around the registration area and drifted almost imperceptibly into the main convention room an hour or so later for the official opening.

Robin and Peter waffled gently about various important matters that I immediately forgot for a few minutes to lead into the real opening - a ten minute set-piece playlet performed by Jack Herman, Andrew and Jane Taubman and Gregor Whiley. Jack played a BNF, Andrew an experienced fan and Gregor a neofan. Jane acted as chorus and handled an overhead projector showing definitions of all the strange fanspeak for the real neos in the audience. This showed all the signs of having been rehearsed and was very well done indeed. I'd rate it among the most effective con-openings I have seen. And also an item that might well be repeated at future neo-introductions.

That was enough program for the time being, and I wandered off to chat with some of the many friends who had now appeared. I have no recollection of lunching with anyone, so I fancy I missed lunch that day. I know I talked to Leigh and Rosalie Hyde and to Jeff Harris. It was about this time that I met up with Gordy and visited his room for a drink with one or two other congenial spirits. Eric Lindsay was there, for one.

Parts of the afternoon had to be given over to collecting supplies - a little food and a lot of drink. I already had all the ingredients for blog (or almost all) but I needed beer and coke and some drinking vodka. Somehow Eric and I had to make a couple of trips apiece to gather supplies, in spite of the fact that we had each left a mound of stuff with Bob Riep for delivery to the hotel. It all paid off in the end - neither of us starved to death (or ran out of alcoholic beverages) all weekend long.

When the stores closed, it was time for dinner. Alex had already gone out to eat, but this was to be one of the times that Marea and I met during the con. The two of us, with Gordy and Eric and possibly one or two others ate at an Italian restaurant just a hundred metres or so from the New Crest. Quite reasonably priced, good food, but the portions were small. Most of us wanted to hear the fandom panel, so there was no time to order extra dishes. In retrospect, I think I would have enjoyed a more leisurely dinner in good company to being on time for the panel.

Kouichi Yamamoto was our Japanese fan GoH, and he undoubtedly was the hit of the night. He had a speech prepared which was thoroughly enjoyed by all - the phrase 'Japan sinks' came to be a cliché for the rest of the con. Kouichi was always a pleasant guest, but his limited English was a handicap in interactive situations. Where he had time to prepare, he came over as an entertaining and very witty speaker. He has started what I hope can become a tradition of Japanese guests at Australian conventions. (And vice versa.) All thanks to the Japan-Australia Foundation for generous help with Kouichi's expenses.

There must have been parties that night (else how come I didn't get to bed till 4 am?), but I can remember only a rosy glow of good friends, good drinks and good conversation. I do recollect that Alex was at a party that I missed till about 3 am and having to hunt for him for a little while. Come to think of it, this may have been the night that Eric and I threatened to abseil from a 12th floor window and got to the point of bringing a 300 foot rope up before allowing ourselves to be dissuaded from the adventure. Looking back on the plan, it does seem possible that it might not have helped relations with the hotel.

After just a few hours sleep, it was Saturday and breakfast led on to the preliminary business session. A model of decorum compared to last year, and well chaired by Jack Herman. I shall refrain from detailing the events - no doubt the Perth concon will be printing the constitution as amended, and there is no point in going through a blow-by-blow account of the

discussion that led to it. It is still amazing how few of goodwill sharing a common objective can disagree so radically on the means of achieving it.

I think I had lunch on Saturday.

Gordy's GoH speech was my panel item for the afternoon (Panel?). He spoke discursively, as is his wont, and answered a number of questions equally discursively afterwards. I, for one, enjoyed every minute of it. But I cannot be unbiased - Gordy is one of my favourite people and I could listen to him for hours. I shall be interested to hear opinions of others about this speech.

Ken Fletcher and Linda Lounsbury were our DUFF winners and fan GoHs. Both from Minneapolis (as is Gordy Dickson), they had disconcerted me a little by announcing that they would be holding a Minneapolis in '73 bidding party. Since I had also been planning to hold such a party, some urgent consultation became necessary. So I was constantly on the alert to catch up with Ken and Linda all Saturday.

Minneapolis in '73, for anyone who doesn't know, is Minneapolis fandom's bid to win the 1973 World Science Fiction Convention. Beaten out in this timeline, Minneapolis fans decided bidding parties were a lot of fun and have kept right on holding such parties ever since. Besides, who can say that we will not invent a time machine to take us back to 1973? Minneapolis is an overwhelming favourite to win any future 1973 worldcon bid!

In the end we agreed that there would be two Minneapolis in '73 parties, one Saturday and one Sunday. We were even able to rationalize our purchases of ingredients for blog. They provided me with a secret ingredient for mine, and I shared my vodka ~~and coffee~~ with them.

However, back to the afternoon: I took Gordy up to my room to unwind after his GoH speech, where we consumed a quiet drink with Peter ? (Sorry; I forgot your surname, Peter.) He had a signing session lined up and after a too short chat, we went to face the eager hordes. I stuck with Gordy and tried to make sure that everybody in the long queue had at least something signed. Some of those who had large numbers of books had to restrain themselves a little, but I don't believe anyone went away quite disappointed. Unless it was Allan Bray, who was heard to lament that he had been sufficiently confused to ask Gordy to sign his books to Margaret Arnott.

Once the autograph queue reached zero length I departed for the auction, where I found Keith Curtis in fine form in an auction that was as entertaining as any panel item. The one item I really wanted went for much more than I was prepared to pay, but Marea made up for my failure to waste money by buying two copies of the same book. And, when we got home, she found she already had a copy! She is bidding fair to have the finest collection of Robert Sheckley's THE TENTH VICTIM in NSW.

The highlight of the auction, and one of the highlights of the CHUNDER! October 1979 page 4



convention, came when Keith was presented with a Vegemite sandwich to auction for some fannish cause. Bidding for ownership of the sandwich was desultory, but bidding for Keith to eat it, combined with frantic bids from Keith (who hates Vegemite) to be allowed not to eat it, provided a lot of comedy. It was also highly diverting to watch him eat it, grimace by grimace, crumb by crumb.

I ate dinner with good fen and true, had conversation that sparkled, and ate of ambrosia and sipped the nectar of paradise. Which is to say that I remember nothing of dinner, nor of my companions at that meal.

Somewhere during Saturday, I started a oneshot, which will appear in due course somewhere or other. But I started it after the main flow of visitors to my room had ceased. C'est la vie.

Sandra Hyde had shown up and was among those with who, I had frequent converse. And, on a couple of occasions, she showed herself more than equal to the task of lifting me up off my feet. She and Marea arranged a pilgrimage from Faulconbridge to the enchanted land of Canberra to take place some time in October, as I understand it.

In my usual fashion, I managed to miss the masquerade without really meaning to. (I haven't anything against masquerades; I even attended one once.) But I saw part of a film, entitled something like THE LABOURS OF ASTERIX. Just the thing to fit my ability to concentrate this far into the convention.

There was a party in Andrew and Jane Taubman's room, of which I learned from Blair when he asked me to invite Gordy to it. I did so and joined a small, select group for conversation and filksinging. Later, most of us moved on to Ken and Linda's Minneapolis in '73 party to join a large select group for filksinging, led by Gordy on Shayne's guitar. Memo to self: be sure to get permission to print the words to as many filksongs as possible and carry many copies of same to future conventions!

Sunday held more than its share of business sessions. Perth won the right to stage the 1980 national convention unopposed and Melbourne lost out to Adelaide for 1981. Frank Herbert was announced as GoH for Adelaide and Anne McCaffrey for Perth. Worthy choices both. I remember that a certain K.U.F. Widdershins was announced as fan GoH for Adelaide just after the same gentleman (with a false beard) had bid for Melbourne. It is rumoured that that award-winning mystery writer John Ossian will also be present.

Gordy talked about the Childe series after lunch, including the welcome news that the next volume, THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA, is well on the way to completion. The sweep of this series is such as to make it among the most ambitious works ever attempted in SF. (Indeed, six of the novels will not be SF at all, but historial and contemporary.)

My next recollections are of the auction (part two), where

Keith Curtis, assisted by Paul Stokes and John Snowden, laboured mightily at reducing the enormous mound of items they had for sale. Much was left unoffered, and it was announced that there would be a fanzine auction that night. I had to depart to organize a small Ranquet (alternative banquet). In accordance with tradition, the Ranquet was held in the worst venue possible - which is always a McDonalds unless none is available. I am in a position to report that the annual RANCID award was presented to Ken Colbert of Canberra for being the first person in Australia to pay over \$30 for a paperback ~~not worth fifty cents~~.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the DITMARS were awarded, followed by the GOLDEN CATERPILLARS. I saw little of these ceremonies, having found myself auctioneer for the fanzine auction.

The fanzine auction was held in Penthouse 2, one of the fifteenth-floor rooms used for a variety of convention purposes. My thanks go to Sandra Hyde and to Kevin Dillon for their assistance. This was a small and quiet auction compared with the razzamatazz of the main one, but we still turned over a hundred and fifty dollars in an hour or so. Chief buyers were John Foyster (who looked like Keith Curtis), Keith Curtis (who looked like John Foyster), Kevin and me.

While I was auctioning, my party was continuing in my absence. In fact I visited my party only sufficiently often to mix a second and then a third bucket of blog, and to replenish the munchies a time or three. Most people probably found that quite enough of my presence anyhow. The party did stagger along until I closed the room at around 3 am, but I hope somebody else will report on it.

Once my auction was over, the 'I remember Moira' party and associated parties took over in Penthouse 2. I did remember Moira, but by the time I had the auction stuff stowed away and this and that done, it was no longer possible to penetrate inside the door. As far as I could tell, the party was a roaring success. But I found myself in a quieter party - which may have been Jeff Harris's. At any rate I remember plotting to eject Harris, who threatened to lower the tone of the group. Possibly it was his claim that it was his room that saved him.

It was at this party that Lee Harding made a flying tackle on Helen Swift as she went to open the door. Somebody was greeted by a recumbent Helen, prostrated on the floor before him. It was at this party too that Helen and Leanne among others pontificated about who was couther than whom. Delightful nonsense.

Sunday did eventually end, well into Monday morning. This was the first convention I have attended at which I actually slept every night. It must be old age creeping up or something. On the other hand, I did get by with no more than ten hours' sleep in total over the convention as a whole. Maybe there is a little life in the old dog yet.

Monday morning saw us hurrying to pack our goods and check out. Then it was time for some social chatter before lunch. I think it was this morning that I exchanged a few words with John Alderson and (later) with Mike McGann.

I attended the Future War panel on Monday afternoon and was even (briefly) on the AUSTRALIA IN 83 panel that followed. But there were insufficient seats and I vacated mine in favour of Roy Ferguson. My voice was plenty loud enough to speak from the floor.

All too soon Robin and Peter were there again making convention-closing type remarks. Marea, Alex and I went off to eat ~~together~~, with no other company. It was odd to be alone together. Our funds had held out well and we treated ourselves to a slightly more pretentious class of meal - Vienna Schnitzel all round. (We were not so flush as to be able to enjoy Wiener schnitzel.)

Back at the hotel, we met Kevin, also in search of a dead-dog party. We separated and joined together in Jeff Harris's room once more. I remember Damien Broderick being there (or maybe that was the previous time?) but mostly it seemed to be the same people again. On the other hand, Keith showed up having had to work during the day and then he and I and Eric went to their room to try to balance auction books. Actually Keith and Eric, helped part of the time by Helen, worked on the accounts and I did my best to distract them.

That leaves the events that didn't fit into any day. Such as the group including Kouichi, Bert Cahndler, Warren and Margaret Nicholls and Peter Bismore that formed in Gordy's room to listen to Gordy quiz Bert about matters nautical. And the time I caught Robin Johnson and Jeanne Frahm eating in McDonalds. Then there were a couple of times that I talked to Ken and Linda in their room. And a lot of conver conversations here, there, and everywhere. A lift party. A corridor party. A bathroom party. A haze of good vibes. A convention that lives on in memory.

#### KEN OZANNE

Since we seem to be rehashing old conventions, let's see what Leigh Edmonds can do with PULPCON.

#### THE I-BEAM COLUMN

#### LEIGH EDMONDS

Someone (CHUNDER!, the fanzine that names names!) is bound to accuse me of damning with faint praise if I write this column in my usual frivolous fashion. So I won't. Instead I'll get the damning done first.

Take a convention that begins ninety minutes late and suffers from continual programme slippage so that finally one item just disappears and lunches are absorbed to make up time.



Add a pitiful attendance caused by an amazing lack of local publicity and top it off with major flaws in almost all areas of organization and you have PULPCON.

The convention, which was held by the Melbourne SF Club at facilities at the YWCA over the first weekend in September, must take the award as the most disorganized one ever held in Australia. If the members of the MSFC haven't got red faces, their bank account at least must have that colour; just over thirty members couldn't have been anywhere near enough to pay for the facilities.

Okay, so much for the bad points - now the good ones.

There are some conventions which have come to be regarded as classics by the people who were at them. Some become that way because they were milestones, others because they were great fun, and others because they had an indefinible something that sprang up for the duration of the convention. Everybody would have their own list...

PULPCON may not actually have made it to the 'classic' level, but most people who were there will remember it as a great little convention. There were three main reasons - firstly the presence of David Lake and his wife, secondly the enthusiasm of the MSFC members, and thirdly the determination of the rest of the convention membership to triumph over adversity. I enjoyed PULPCON because it was a convention at which I knew very few people and had a real chance to talk to some of those who I would never have managed to speak to at a larger event.

A recurring accusation levelled against established fans is that they are elitist snobs because they don't talk to neofans at conventions, and this is partly true. At large conventions with many interstate members there are always people that you haven't seen in six months or six years and who you just have to talk to. There are also all those 'smoke-filled-room' SMOFing exercises and when you have to consider also the more interesting of the programme items there's no time left to talk to people you don't already know. (This is a regrettable state of affairs and the person who can come up with a solution is bound to win a prize.\*) This situation did not exist at PULPCON and perhaps the limited membership was what made it possible - maybe if there had been an extra twenty or so members to help save the convention financially there would also have been a less sociable atmosphere and the organizational faults would have been even more obvious and annoying.

The hall at the YWCA can probably hold a couple of hundred people in relative comfort, though for conventions the real problem is the stage which separates the audience from the speakers too effectively. Sometimes this may be a handy safety device, but more generally it alienates the one party from the other, which is not a good thing. At PULPCON it also seemed rather ridiculous to have one person in such a pompous position for so few others. The arrangement of the seats also didn't help much. The seats were stackable, five at a time, and these bunches of seats had been arranged three across



and eight or so deep, in theatre style, although for all practical purposes the front two rows would have seated almost the whole convention membership.

Normally the arrangement of seats at conventions is not thought about much but at PULPCON it was obvious that people were not comfortable with it.

During discussion in the first item of the second day David Lake nonchalantly dragged the end of the front row of seats around so that he could talk to the people sitting on the next seats in that row more easily. A little later Valma dragged the end of the other end of that row around and suddenly the convention was changed from a rather alienating experience of being lectured from on high to a much more cozy and friendly discussion group. During the rest of the day the other rows of seats became rearranged so that by the end there was room for everyone to feel comfortable and involved.

There were quite a few highlights in the convention but I'll just mention three, in chronological order.

The presence of David Lake at PULPCON gave it an air of reality it may otherwise have lacked. If he had not been there and the fans organizing the con had not had to make sure that they put on a good show for his benefit I'm sure the organization would have been even worse.

I had mixed feelings about David Lake, having enjoyed his novels but having been put off by the somewhat pompous nature of his contribution to AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS some time ago. In the flesh he turned out to be a good mixture of these attributes, a lively speaker and conversationalist but with a broad academic background which was undoubtedly beyond the experience of everybody else there and which he very skilfully managed to disguise. His speech was very entertaining and enlightening and I think that everyone there felt it had been a little wasted on such a small audience. His definition of literature is "a story you can read three times". I'd like to agree with him except that I don't think too many people would really want to call GALACTIC PATROL literature and I've read it three times. Not in the last ten years, though...

On the second day Jan McDonell gave a talk on STAR TREK which turned out to be a real discussion provoker. Jan had prepared her talk on the basis of her previous experience with fandom and had taken the best line of defending her interest by attacking the biases that people (and fans) have against it. Much to her amazement, and the amazement of other STAR TREK fans there, the ordinary fans agreed with her on the good points of the show and the bad points. Later there was a lot of discussion about the different aspects of fandom as seen by the STAR TREK fans and the SF/fannish fans. I think that both groups felt they had achieved a real breakthrough in understanding each other.

In the afternoon of the second day an extremely bad film was being shown in the main room so about ten or so of us found our way to another room the convention had hired on the second floor. Some of the people sat and watched and chatted while

the more energetic formed teams and played charades. Fortunately my pocket calculator/timepiece has a stop watch function and so I didn't have to take part - I was the impartial timekeeper. The way in which you can make ninety seconds go so quickly just by counting off every ten seconds is very interesting, and the manner in which one can cause the person attempting the charade to panic, just by calling off every five seconds towards the end of their time, is even more interesting.

The most frustrating part of that whole event was watching Jan McDonnell trying to get the other members of her team to realise that she was acting out Otis Adelbert Kline and having to wait the full ninety seconds to show my erudition. Not that I've actually read any of his stories - but who could forget a name like that once having heard it.

And so much for the champagne of life - next issue it's back to the business of revealing pseudonyms and mis-stating the facts.

#### LEIGH EDMONDS

Since we seem to be rehashing old conventions, let's see what Gerald Smith can do with SYNCON '79

SYNCON '79

GERALD SMITH

It is said that there are good cons, there are bad cons, and there are great cons. But to me calling SYNCON '79 a great con is to give it a most inadequate description. SYNCON '79 was more than just a great con, it was superb. SYNCON '79 had everything - a committee that did everything that had to be done but without being conspicuous in doing it, well-run and, in the main, very interesting panels, a helpful and understanding hotel management, and ideally-situated con site, but above all the friendliest, most cordial atmosphere I have yet experienced at a convention.

Of course even the greatest conventions are not perfect. How could they be when you consider they are run by essentially part-time organizers? But further to the credit of the SYNCON organizers was that their troubles were little ones which were easily outshone by the ease with which the convention progressed. If faults were to be found - and let me tell you they were difficult to find - they would be the tardiness of the lifts in arriving at the floor you were on, the unfortunate placing of the Ditmar Awards presentation and Paul Stevens Show in the restaurant following the banquet (this unfortunately meant that those who came to see the presentation were left to stand around the walls with a poor view - and thenoise at night from the goings-on in Kings Cross. As can be seen, only one of these faults can be directly laid at the door of the concomm.

On the plus side there were many highlights to the convention. So many, so good, that a report of this size cannot hope to do



justice to the effort involved.

The first point that caught my eye when I arrived at the convention area was the registration section. Big comfortable chairs arranged together presented an excellent opportunity for fans to congregate in comfort for that most important of all con activities - renewing old friendships with people not seen since the last con, and making new friends. Being situated between the main convention room and the hucksters' room, it was ideally situation and a stroke of genius on the part of the hotel.

In fact the locations of the main room and hucksters' room and the main room made it very simple for convention attendees to keep in touch with all the things going on at the convention.

The concomm also had the great foresight to set aside a hospitality suite which worked wonderfully. It gave con attendees a perfect opportunity to get away from the main convention activities and relax in comfort for a chat with others. Or alternatively relax and view videotapes, play fanzine poker or otherwise while away the time.

Of the program items (which I do like to see) there were many highlights. The first was a well-presented dramatic presentation as neofan introduction. Totally original and done with a minimum of fuss the whole thing came over very well indeed and was enjoyed by all - neofan and not-so-neofan alike.

Then there was a talk on fandom chaired by the inimitable Paul J. Stevens himself. It was absolutely fascinating to hear how fandom operates in Japan direct from a participant - Koichi Yamamoto - formal convention, 600 fans in one fan club, and so on. And hearing about famed Minneapolis fandom first hand from Ken and Linda was also a unique experience worth going miles to see.

Seeing Bruce Petty's award-winning LEISURE capped off a marvellous first day of program activities. This man has to be Australia's foremost cartoonist and in this film he shows this beyond a shadow of doubt.

Saturday's formal program items had three great highlights. First was Gordy Dickson's Guest of Honour speech. My Dickson's habit of becoming sidetracked from the main thrust of his talk led the audience into a bewildering array of highly amusing anecdotes and gave us all a unique insight into an amazing man.

The auction with Keith Curtis was the usual brilliantly witty and entertaining performance. Reaching its zenith, I suppose, when the hapless auctioneer was cajoled into eating a vegemite sandwich for the sake of AUSTRALIA IN '83.

Each convention the masquerade gets better as the costumes become more ornate and bizarre, and the presentation continually improves. Accordingly the masquerade at SYNCON was the best I have yet seen, with some amazingly complex costumes.

Sunday's biggest highlight, for me, was hearing the announcement of Frank Herbert as GoH for Advention '81. It is amazing to think that in the next two years Australia will be graced by the visits of Joe Haldeman, Anne McCaffrey and Frank Herbert. Phew!

After lunch came the interview with Gordy on the Child series. I must admit I had second thoughts about seeing this, not having read any of the series. I'm glad I did, though. The well-handled interview that quickly turned into a monologue by Mr Dickson proved to be so good that it had me anxious to remedy this oversight on my part.

Oh, and then we had the great interstate challenge with the air becoming thick with ping-pong pollution. Is this what they call ping pong diplomacy? Judging by this there doesn't seem to be much hope of fannich detente. Australia-US relations will just never be the same again.

Fanzine Poker? I had no idea what I was letting myself in for. But since when has that stopped me. This game is recommended to all future concons. It represents a terrific opportunity for fans to really get to know each other so much better - by learning of their grasping nature. Besides, it's a great feeling to walk away feeling like a poor man's Kevin Dillon.

Room parties exceeded themselves this time. The best night was Saturday night as fans alternated between the Minneapolis in '73 party, the Vegemite fandom party and the inevitable lift party. Between hearing Gordy singing filk songs, becoming an accredited member of the Minneapolis in '73 bid, seeing highlights of WAYCON, and eating my fill of Vegemite sandwiches, I was left totally breathless.

Yes, SYNCON was a great con. The sort of con that leaves you with an empty feeling when it's all over and longing for the next convention. Many thanks to all those responsible.

#### GERALD SMITH

Since we seem to be rehashing old conventions, let's see what John Foyster can do with SEACON '79

SEEK ON! SEEK ON!

JOHN FOYSTER

What images evoke most accurately the spirit of SEACON, I wonder? Is it, as my title hints, drawing its inspiration from Philip Jose Farmer's tiny gem, best to imagine SEACON as a voyage to the edge of the Earth, to a point at which some travellers at least toppled over into the infinite depths of space and were lost forever? Perhaps, rather, it's more appropriate to think of the doggerel associated with that damned elusive Pimpernel? And then, having at last found the object of our search, we might beat swords against shields.



and, with Xenophon's troops, shout 'Thalassa! Thalassa!'

Since the last would probably get one thrown out of the average room party it probably isn't too satisfactory, but if I've managed to suggest to you that SEACON was a place at which it was pretty hard to find Fan X, then I've got across half the story. (The other half is that you were always running into, or trying to avoid, Fan Y.)

With 3200 fans running loose, some of them very loose indeed, and program items all over a vast complex of rooms and bars and theatres, it was obviously very difficult to find, at a given time, a given individual. That's if you were looking for a given individual; sometimes the wisest course was to lie back and enjoy it, which is what many (most?) people did. But I was, from time to time, interested in seeing particular people, so let me give a couple of examples. First, I was on the lookout for Ethel Lindsay from the start of the convention (Thursday afternoon); I finally found Ethel in the fan room (explanation to follow) on the Monday morning. Second, I was told early on the Friday morning that Annemarie Kindt, a fan from Holland, was looking out for me (to talk about this great and glorious publication you are reading, actually); we finally met up at a dead-dog party on the Monday night. Naturally, there were lots of folks there, both lookers and lookees, who never met (Hi, Frank Denton and a great string of others!)

Once one got used to this idea about the convention, it wasn't too hard to survive. A few simple rules sufficed: never say 'I'll see you later!' to anyone, if you spot someone you want to talk to, buttonhole her or him immediately, let it flow.

This boring background is necessary because some reports I've heard from others (both here in Australia and elsewhere) suggested that some attendees didn't like SEACON too well because they didn't meet all the people they want to, or missed out on some program items. This seems to me like disliking a particular science fiction magazine because you don't have a complete set: the point is not really to have 'em all, but to enjoy the ones you've got.

If I'm to proceed any decent way through a convention description, then I had better get down to it. And the first thing might be to mention what you won't find here. There won't be any news type items of the kind found in other newszines, full of statistics that no one is interested in. (On the other hand, did you know that the advertised gathering of gay fans drew just five fans? A very poor show. Why, the Melbourne SF Club on an average night in - but I digress.) Nor will there be stories about Terrible Incidents. (CHUNDER!, the fanzine that names names, might be prepared to run the odd risk, but some of these stories are so horrible, so unbelievable, that - well, words fail me.) No, this convention report will deal with average ordinary events, like the Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society, the cricket match, and John Foyster attending his first SF convention banquet since 1972.

Having mentioned the banquet, I suppose I could start by writing about it, following the old-fashioned style of telling a story ("Start at the middle. Go on until you reach the sides. Then stop." Sound advice to scientifiction writers of all ages).

I'm not a fan of banquets, suspect I never will be. But one of the punishments inflicted on people like GUFF winners is recognition at things like banquets. Thus I was offered a free meal (provided I sat at the top table) and, having paid £7.50 for fish and chips the night I went out with Nils Dalgaard, Ellen Pederson and Erik Swiatek, I accepted gratefully. After all, the alternative was to go out and enjoy myself, or perhaps attend the banquet as a paying member and sit at the Australian table with boring conversationalists like Bill Rotsler.

It was my fate to be seated, at this joyous occasion, between Roy Kettle and Peter Roberts, two Brits whose conversation certainly took one's mind off the food. As it happens, we somehow got the idea of rating each course (on a 1 - 10 scale, for the benefit of Sydney Completists). This disease spread along the table to Bob Tucker who communicated it to the group table in front of him (a group of junior OMNI executives, I am led to believe). Overall we would have come up with some pretty fair ratings if it hadn't been for Peter Roberts who fouled things up by being a vegie and eating only strange grass-like courses which he nevertheless felt should be included in our ratings scheme.

He wasn't the only person eating grass-like substances at the banquet, as we discovered when, after waiting more than a few moments after us regular carnivores had been served, Peter discreetly enquired as to the arrangements for vegies. "Don't worry, sir. There are 43 similar gentlemen here tonight," the waiter whispered loudly, which produced odd chuckling sounds from those who were within hearing distance and began staring wildly around the room for the other 43 long-haired, orange-suited louts. But at least we were able to console Peter, during the rest of the evening as one culinary calamity after another was enacted before his very eyes, with the thought that 43 similar souls were undergoing similar torments. It didn't seem to help much.

Then there were speeches - none too long nor too bad - and in a manic moment Robin Johnson had organized the presentation of various Australian stfnal awards during/after the banquet and in his ever-generous way had dobed Alan Bray and yhos with the presentatory tasks. He survived, but I still don't think much of the idea.

The servants seems to like marching in an out, and even when a tray of plates was dropped there wasn't much of a reaction.

ACClarke and Christopher Reeve sat at the same table during the banquet. Clarke began a conversation to show that he knew/recognized Reeve, but since Reeve hadn't the vaguest idea who the deaf old coot was, Ego's efforts were rather wasted.



Though it seemed like eternity, the banquet didn't last forever, and in any case there were many more things at the convention - some of which I didn't get to at all. For example, I did not see a movie, or watch the videotapes, or attend the auction, or visit the art show, or go to the play. Others will have their own lists of missed glories.

I did manage to take part in some of the convention, though. I went to parties, for instance. Parties are not simple to describe, especially if, like me, your most vivid recollection is of being asleep.

At about three o'clock one morning Joyce Scrivner thoughtfully pointed out that I was asleep and this was hardly the way to enjoy the party. I took her advice and headed back in the direction of my hotel. Walking in the night sea air must have brightened me up a trifle, because I remember thinking to myself, at 3.30 am in another party, that Joyce's advice had been correct. Unfortunately I have no idea where the second party was.

The fan room, mentioned above, was a convenient meeting place, and as the convention wore on it was increasingly so used. I spent quite a lot of time there, partly because I wanted to meet people there, but also because the fan program (run by Peter Roberts and not really attended by a lot of conventioners) was there.

This brings me, I suppose, to the program proper, about which I ought to say at least something. Well, I didn't see much of the program proper - the speeches and panels with all the leading authors. I did manage to attend all of R Lionel Fanthorpe's talk on his writing career, though, and wished it had been longer. I gather that others wished it had been much shorter.

Naturally I attended the business sessions, which were pleasingly confusing. The rotation proposal, much debated here, was voted down without debate, those present feeling that it didn't merit debate.

SEACON seemed to me to excel in several ways. A tourist resort, I am now inclined to think, is an ideal site for the kind of science fiction convention we have nowadays, and Brighton managed to be generally satisfactory (a few all-night eating places would have been helpful). The organization, though not first-class, was very competent, and if things didn't run as planned (or hadn't been planned) they were patched up quickly.

Most important, however, was the international flavour of the convention. Britain is ideally situated to attract attendees from both Europe and the English-speaking world; any European country is likely to be less attractive to monolingual Anglos, and the US is too far from Europe. I would very much like to see the people who ran SEACON run another Worldcon in the very near future - and if their bid were to clash with the other overseas bids for 1983 I would find it very difficult to vote against the Brits. They seem to me to have the site and the expertise, a combination which is all too rare these days.

JOHN FOYSTER



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Cover - Chris Johnston