



JOHNSTON 70 ©

## TIP-TOE THROUGH THE APAS

Marc Ortlieb

In a recent ANZAPA mailing, number 70, Leigh Edmonds quotes Daryl Mannell's views on the various apas that have proliferated in Australia of late. Daryl seems to find APPLESAUCE variable in quality but having its share of 'prudes' and 'snobs'; APES a dry apa lacking in humour, and trying to imitate APPLESAUCE; and ANZAPA with too limited a membership. I'm not sure I agree. If I were to point to any major problem with these three apas, it would be people's tendency to run the same material through each. Admittedly this fault does self-correct, given enough time, as those people who do recycle material tend to get ignored, or find comments like 'See my comments to you in the last APPLESAUCE mailing'. (This can be particularly effective if the comment in the last APPLESAUCE mailing says 'See my comments to you in the last APES mailing'.)

The problem would be alleviated if each of the apas had a stronger personality. ZAPA, for instance, I gather has a very strong personality. From what I've seen, it's not for squeamish people like me. I was going to say that I couldn't see people running ZAPA material in ANZAPA, but I notice that Leigh Edmonds has done just this. However, in Leigh's case I'll accept this, as the material is genuinely relevant to ANZAPANS. What is, of course, needed is some method of delineating material for different apas. One crossover you'd never find is between MORNINGSTAR and ANZAPA, because the material for each is quite different in content.

What I'd like to see are a few apas set up for specific interest groups. Thus I could found an apa devoted to Lewis Carroll fandom, and John Foyster could found an apa devoted to arguing at business sessions, and Eric Lindsay could found an apa in which everyone uses all the various spelling reforms. That way the curse of material being recycled could be done away with forever. True, it might result in smaller mailings, but to be quite honest I enjoyed the recent 28 page mailings of SPINOFF far more than I did the 300+ pages of a recent APPLESAUCE. I'm fast coming to the conclusion that big apas are not a good idea. They tend to fragment to the point where you have three or more different apas working under the aegis of one. I know that this is the case with FAPA, and I have a feeling that APPLESAUCE could be going the same way. ANZAPA, due to its small numbers, is not likely to do this. The slow feed of new members tends to allow individuals time to be integrated by the apa. Of course, this means that not everyone who wants to be a member of ANZAPA can be at any one time, but I don't feel this is 'elitist'. It would be elitist if someone said words to the effect that ANZAPA members must all be Hugo nominees. As it is, the only qualification necessary for ANZAPA membership is patience.

But on to recent mailings.

APPLESAUCE 18 O.E. Andrew Taubman, PO Box 538, Neutral Bay

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I couldn't hear the conversation very well because of the din caused by the giant overhead fan so, being anything but tactful, I interrupted them and asked for the details.

Shayne showed me the latest ASF NEWS, which listed the little info available on the proposed con. By odd coincidence, I had already booked my holidays for October, and had planned to spend the last week loafing around the house, trying to make further inroads into the over 4000 unread SF books I had accumulated whilst my husband, who was allowed only two weeks leave, returned to work.

Fatefully, this last week exactly coincided with the dates of WELLCON, and when I mentioned this to my Darling that evening he was all for my going. I protested that I couldn't leave him to his own cooking for so long; we had not been separated since our wedding, and it didn't seem fair that I should go gallivanting around the world while he slaved away earning money to support his wife's book-collecting mania.

Despite my professed unwillingness to leave my hubby alone, I booked the tickets the very next day, before he might change his mind, and then feigned reluctance until the day of my departure.

At SYNCON I had volunteered to help spread the word about A IN 83 in NZ, and Carey Handfield loaded me down with a pile of 100 BULLETINS to flog over there. A lot of other material was also promised but didn't eventuate.

I arrived in NZ on the Tuesday before the con, and caught a cab to the ST GEORGE Hotel. (Carey had informed me of the changed venue two days before I left Oz.) There I learnt that the hotel was booked out until Thursday. A kind clerk at the Abel Tasman up the road (which was also booked out) arranged alternative accommodation for me at the Melksham Towers. This proved to be a block of quite palatial apartments, which I later discovered to be much cheaper and nicer than the rooms at the ST GEORGE.

There is a strange hotel situation over there. As Wellington is the National Capital its hotels are full of business executives on expense accounts during the working week, and almost empty on weekends and during public holidays, causing the odd situation of weekend rates being lower than those during the week.

Finally settled in, I tried to 'phone Mervyn Barrett, the con organizer, but he was out so I settled down to finish THE OMEN, which I had started reading on the flight from Sydney.

Eventually I managed to contact Mervyn at 6.00 pm, and he invited me to come over for a chat after tea, but I became so engrossed in THE OMEN that it was after 10 before I finished it and remembered Mervyn. A little apprehensive of the poor impression he was going to get of me, I grabbed a pizza and caught a cab to his place. The entrance was booby-trapped and camouflaged, but after ten minutes wandering around the house I finally managed to find the correct door.

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Mervyn was a little surprised that I had bothered to come at all but; being a gentleman, made me welcome anyway. I asked his permission to flog memberships in DENVENTION II and A IN 83, and he complied. When I offered to help with collating and other jobs he said everything was under control, no help was needed, and invited me to a small pre-con party he was giving on Thursday evening.

He told me a little of the history of the origins of WELLCON. Both MB and Brian Thurogood had attended and enjoyed AUSSIECON in Melbourne, and had been toying with the idea of organizing a KIWIICON ever since. Merv Binns and several other Melbourne fans had been trying to promote an NZ con by long-distance plugging from Oz, and the idea was brüited about in Brian's widely-read fanzine Noumenon, but it was not until a new SF club, the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SCIENCE FICTION (NASF) stated one of its aims as organizing an NZ con that MB and BAT were galvanised into some effective action. None of the NASF members had ever attended an SF con; both BAT and MB had been to several cons in the UK, USA, and Oz (Noumenon readers may remember BAT's scathing con report on UNICON IV). They reluctantly decided that they had better do the first NZ con, rather than allow some upstarts to bugger the whole thing up, so in February 1979 they started the ball rolling.

It was decided to keep the first con small and exclusive, partly to save themselves excessive work, and because the main idea was to provide an example for anyone else who was interested in running a later con. To keep attendance down to manageable proportions the con was placed on the 43rd anniversary of the First SF Con of 22 October 1936, thus putting it smack in the middle of University exams. Publicity was deliberately kept low key, and restricted mainly to Noumenon, though a few other 'zines soon got into the act, and spread the word farther than was really desirable. MB thought 70-80 attendees was a nice figure to aim for, and started to panic a bit as the date approached, and memberships still kept arriving. As a last-minute strategy of deception he changed the venue from the GRAND Hotel to the ST. G. This wasn't a sufficiently effective deterrent, so a little arson was organized at the ST. G. (MB denies responsibility for the fire, but I'm sure he must have been the main instigator - some people will go to any lengths to get out of a little work.) By the time I arrived MB had resigned himself to the inevitable, and decided to make the best of the situation.

I spent the intervening time doing the rounds of Wellington's bookshops. SF is so popular there that very little stays in the secondhand shops for long, but I managed to get lucky a few times, and it helped that Keith Curtis wasn't in the country.

Thursday I moved into the ST. G. I got a pokey little room with a narrow single bed - AND there was no fridge, which was a terrible blow as I had planned to stock up on food and drinks, and treat NZers to a you-beaut room party. I decided to leave the shopping to the latest possible time on Friday, and went for a wander to find other con attendees. The reception personnel weren't very helpful; the SF people had been dispersed

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among the mundanes throughout the hotel, and in NZ fen generally look like ordinary humans, so my hunt wasn't very successful.

Later I met an interesting young oriental fellow in the lift, who proved to be Harvey Kong Tin, a well-known NZ fan artist. He showed me his scrapbooks of ST photos taken from the TV shows, and explained some of the special techniques used in photographing a picture on the TV, then I saw his scrapbook of newspaper clippings of strange events unexplainable by science, and other such weird things. There was also a folio of Harvey's drawings of movie actresses and stars of ST, SW, and SUPERMAN, as well as some spaceships and such. I gave him MB's 'phone number, and made a hurried escape, but half an hour later he came to my room and notified me that MB had invited him to that evening's party, and had suggested we go together. How very thoughtful of Mervyn.

Harvey and I were the first guests to arrive at MB's, but Robyn and Bruce Ferguson, the president of NASF, weren't much later. Bruce was the direct opposite of Harvey, in that it was difficult to get more than three consecutive words out of the latter, while Bruce hardly ever stopped talking. I was slightly overwhelmed by this loquacity, so concentrated on Robyn, who was a much better listener.

MB seemed a little put out that a roomful of purported SF fen weren't interested in getting at least slightly sozzled, and could prefer coffee to the hard stuff, so to appease him we nursed a drink apiece while he regaled us with some rather ghastly films he was vetting for suitability for showing at the con. He managed to find a film projector fitted to accept an extra oversize reel which could take the usual three reels of a movie, thus obviating the usual delays caused in changing reels and rewinding. This proved a definite asset later at the con.

The three guys left us for a while to go and pick up Tom Cardy from the airport, and during their absence MB played a dastardly trick on Robyn and me. He showed us a revolting German animated film, which was obviously inspired by the Nazi atrocities of WWII. Robyn and I were sickened by blood, vivisection, freaks, blood dripping all over the screen, severed limbs and mangled bodies hanging on meat-hooks, and more blood. There was supposedly a message hidden in this gore, but we were both too busy keeping down nausea to hunt for any pretended significance.

After the guys returned with Tom, we sat around talking for a while, and resisting MB's efforts to get us drunk, then the Fergusons drove us to the hotel, and I went to bed with a book.

7.00 am, after two hours' sleep, I was violently awakened by a clamorous clanging, and instinctively lept out of bed and headed for the window and the fire escape outside, thinking that MB was up to his old tricks again. Then I hesitated, and dashed back to save my box of books, and in doing so discovered that the uproar was only the ringing of the 'phone. (Just wait until you hear your first NZ telephone ring - you'll

understand my terror.)

It was only MB ringing to ask if I would come over and 'write out a few receipts' for him that afternoon.

So I trotted over to lend a helping hand, and found that after the mound of cheques to be receipted and entered in the con register, there was a stack of ID tags to be cut apart, punched, and safety-pinned. BAT and his girlfriend Kath Alber turned up while I was still up to my ears, and each of them took turns helping me while the other unpacked. BAT had sent the con booklets and programme leaflets with a friend who was supposed to have delivered them that morning, but of course they still hadn't arrived. They eventually turned up, and we began an assembly line, endorsing and stuffing the envelopes, while MB left us to get things started at the hotel.

Finally we finished, packed everything into boxes, and started on the mile-long walk over the Wellington hills to the hotel. Halfway there I suddenly realized that I had left behind the member register, and had to return for it. This time I caught a cab, and arrived at the ST G to find that half the attendees had registered on the back of a programme already - and the receipt book couldn't be found because MB was keeping it safe in his back pocket! After we had partially sorted out the resultant mess, I raced upstairs to change into my vulgar Mike McGann 'Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind' teeshirt.

This only took a few minutes, but was long enough for me to miss both the introductory speeches and the opening titles of the evening movie, H G Wells' THINGS TO COME.

After the movie, Tom Cardy and a few others came over to admire my teeshirt. Tom had a button on the same theme, but of more explicit and coarser design. Apparently NZers don't wear braless teeshirts, so my A IN 83 spiel didn't receive the proper attention from the fellows.

Only a few of the out-of-town con attendees were actually staying in the hotel, and I was appalled to see the hundred-strong throng emerging after the film and wandering straight out the door into the cold night. What a waste of potential customers! Somebody had blundered badly in not providing refreshments to give these people an excuse to linger and start getting acquainted.

MB saddled me with the moneys and memberships records, which I took to my room for safekeeping and later straightening out. When I returned downstairs, the Fergusons, Tom Cardy and his mates, and a few other diehards were still milling around in the auditorium, trying to organize a room party, and they pounded on me as the answer to their prayers. Unfortunately I had been so occupied helping MB that I hadn't bought any supplies, the sum total of provisions on hand being a bottle of duty-free Johnny Walker, one glass and one cup. No mixers or other soft drinks.

We went looking for a bar, but the only one in the ST G that was open had a very noisy and crowded disco, and was completely

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unsuitable. Wellington is a city without much night life, and there was nowhere else we could go, so we all resolved to plan better for the next day, and sadly departed to our respective domiciles.

I sorted through the con accounts, made a list of discrepancies, and went looking for MB, to inform him that the cash wouldn't balance, and it appeared that three people had registered without paying. MB expressed very little interest in these matters, so I returned to my room and started a letter to my husband. I'd gotten as far as the date when there was a knock on the door - Tom Cardy with two mates for moral support. They had been searching unsuccessfully for a party, and as a last resort had come to me, using Tom's desire to join A IN 83 as an excuse. He was my first customer, and after giving him his receipt, we sat around for several hours discussing SF and the fan scene in NZ. Tom is a fanzine editor, and there appears to be a large number of young fans from age 14 onwards involved in these publications.

There had been some heavy panning of their 'zines in NOUMENON, which they felt may have been partly justified on the grounds of quality, but it should have been tempered with a little encouragement. After all, everyone except the great genius has to start at the bottom. I felt a little out of my depth here, as my knowledge of amateur fan publications is almost nil. I offered to ask a few Aussies who are involved in the field to provide advice and swaps - so if any of you out there are interested, please see the list of NZ fanzines attached. If you have any specific queries that I could help with, I'll gladly try to get the answers.

Eventually the boys left, and again I went to bed very late.

Saturday morning I was wakened by the Fergusons and some others, loaded with bottles and spare glasses for the evening's festivities. They were also trying to find the con registration material, which I willingly handed over.

Got dressed and went downstairs to find people milling around everywhere, mixing happily and exuberantly. There were enthusiastic greetings from fans who had previously only known each other as names in the pages of NOUMENON. I found the people who I thought hadn't paid, and it turned out there was no dishonesty involved - they had sent cheques which were still in the mail. I was pleased and relieved at this. I found NZers uniformly courteous, friendly, open, and straightforward in all their dealings.

I finally met Greg Hills, the NZ agent for A IN 83, who was very eager for more info on the bid, which unfortunately I was unable to supply. I told him the little that I did know, and promised to find out more later. Greg is a real prize for us - he is the most active fan in NZ, and it would be greatly appreciated if Aussies, besides those in Sydney, would write to me and let me know what you are doing to help publicise the bid, so I can tell Greg that he isn't the only person outside Sydney working on this project. And of course the chairman of A IN 83, Carey Handfield, would be more than



grateful to hear from people willing to help. This is a national bid, not just egoboo for Sydney, and every Aussie fan should be trying to help.

Greg had with him one copy each of TANJENTS 8 and 10, which I promptly purchased. I had no idea at that time how much effort these had cost him in collating, or I would certainly have waited for later copies. He later distributed another untitled flier pushing A IN 83, which greatly helped my recruiting.

I signed up a few more people before the programme started, and I was left behind in the stampede for seats. The first item of the day was a lecture on Farmer's RIVERWORLD, which was rather boring by Aussie standards, but was much appreciated by the neophyte NZers. There was an enthusiastic audience discussion session afterwards, with a noticeable absence of the silly wisecracks and 'smart' remarks which mar these items at Aussie cons. The NZers take their SF very seriously.

A few more people signed up during the short coffee break, then back to the programme for another lecture by Roy Shuker, on H. G. Wells. This was accompanied by a duplicated pamphlet, listing Wells' major works as 'Scientific Romance' and 'Futurist Utopia', plus a list of other authors' books derivative of Wells, and a bibliography of critical references of Wells and his work. The talk was extremely well-prepared, and though tending to over-erudition, had some interesting info about Wells' complicated love-life. Again well received by the audience.

A break for lunch. Robyn and Bruce Ferguson took me under their wing, and we ate a fair meal in the hotel grill room with several other local fans.

After lunch MB regaled us with a slide-cum-talk show, titled A TIME OF WONDERS. This had only vague connections with SF, and was really an expression of MB's nostalgia for the American scene from the 1920s to the 1950s. We saw slides on the US prohibition, very old US comic strips, and heard reedy-voiced tapes of ancient US pop songs with utterly silly lyrics. Somehow this managed to be a lot of fun, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

This was followed by BAT's talk on HUMANISTIC SF, during which I got restless and lost concentration. Instead of listening, I passed the time observing the audience, who showed a uniformity of eager interest and happiness. None of them had ever experienced anything like this before, and they were avidly devouring every item offered. Their joy was highly infectious, and there was an air of exhilarated expectation of further delights. Afterwards we all split up into small discussion groups, supposedly to discuss humanistic, as opposed to realistic, SF. I managed to use this period to propagandise on the advantages of joining A IN 83 and DENVENTION, and signed up some more customers before the next lecture.

This was the NASF president, Bruce Ferguson, talking on time travel. Bruce is an inexperienced speaker, with a tendency to gallop, and most of his speech was too learned for the

audience. Discussion afterwards was only desultory, and this was the only programmed item which went under the allotted time.

Just as well - it gave us three hours for the most delightful dinner that I've ever enjoyed. The Fergusons, Bruce Clement, BAT and Kath Alber, MB and his lady friend, and another guy we picked up on the way, dined at a nearby Italian restaurant, where we enjoyed a magnificent repast, lovely wines, brilliant conversation, and convivial company, from which we were loathe to return to the hotel for that evening's film, the very funny SLEEPER, starring the inimitable Woody Allen.

During the long dinner break there was also scheduled a special programme at the Planetarium for interested con attendees, but I never met anyone who actually got to this item, so I've no idea what it was about.

Immediately the lights were turned on after the movie there was a rush upstairs, and NZ's first ever con room party was under way. "e made history that night. We talked and drank and enjoyed ourselves; we discussed the con so far, SF in general, and in NZ in particular, we became thoroughly acquainted, and started several new friendships. People wandered in and out all night, and were all made welcome. There was one hilarious incident when Dave Bimler was helping me open a warm bottle of Coke, which exploded, and achieved astonishing coverage, drenching Dave and me, the ten-foot ceiling, floor, four walls, and all the bathroom fittings (the canopener was affixed to the inside of the bathroom door). The party was an enormous success, but is extraordinarily difficult to describe now. Suffice to say that we had a great time, and began a tradition that will continue as long as NZ has cons.

Sunday morning, while I slept, there was a display of STFnal posters, models, and wargaming, at the NASF room for the early risers. I was told later that this was very interesting, and highly enjoyed by those who were there. Sunday being the 'day of rest', the official programme did not commence until 1.30 pm, to allow those so inclined to attend church services. The first item scheduled for the afternoon was a very good print of METROPOLIS, followed by another talk-and-slide show from MB, which I thought disastrous. It was called THE CELLULOID TRANSFER, and was vaguely based on the difficulties of transferring a story into the film medium. It degenerated into a blow-by-blow description of Harry Bates' short story 'Farewell To The Master' and the resultant film THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. All this was in pitch darkness. Then MB used five minutes to show us some slides from the movie, and there was a further hour or so of lecturing, during which I fell asleep. The clapping at the end, and the lights coming on, woke me in time to hear BAT announce the next item as loud rock 'n' roll on a STFnal theme. That's when I hastily exited, and returned to my room for a shampoo and a leisurely soak in the tub.

I was drying my hair when the gang arrived, worried that I might be sick or something, as none of them would willingly, much less deliberately, have missed any scheduled item. After



a passable smorgasbord dinner, we returned for the evening films, 'SILENT RUNNING and an animated short, WHAT ON EARTH.

We lingered around after the movies, while I signed up some more people, then we gradually drifted upstairs to my room for another night of talk, fun, drinks, and good company. By this time we were all great friends, and this party was even cosier and more relaxed than that of the previous night. Brian Thurogood paid us a visit, and most of the fellows seemed a little in awe of him. Several of them had felt the bite of his typewriter in his reviews and comments in NOUMENON, and there were a few horrified gasps, and a lovely blush from BAT, when I succumbed to irresistible impulse and ran my fingers through his luxuriant, wavy, almost waist-length hair, and the equally soft and voluminous beard. My antics evaporated the slight tensions, and BAT happily stayed with us for hours.

There were several other parties this night. There was a wargaming party across the hall, and a rowdy gathering upstairs, and refugees from these wandered into the sanctuary of our island of sanity throughout the evening. At one stage we received a drunken 'phone call from the party above, accusing us of poaching, and demanding that we immediately return their members. It was almost impossible to persuade the belligerent voice on the other end that not only had we not stolen his guests, we did not even know where they were, as the guys in question had left us an hour previous.

Around 2 or 3 am the party began to slow and break up but, as this was the last night of the con, we were reluctant to end it, so half a dozen of us dragged on until it became so late that it was not worth bothering to attempt to get to bed. At 4 am we arranged an 'official' early-riser call to Duncan Lucas, and then someone came up with the brilliant idea of driving their Aussie guest to Mount Victoria to see the sunrise and the glorious view over Wellington. Nobody had noticed that it had commenced to rain and the six of us, Bruce and Robyn, Bruce Clement, Dave Bimler, Greg Hills, and me, piled into the little Datsun 120Y, with me sitting on BWF's lap, trying hard not to squash the poor chap. We received a scare when a police car followed us for a mile or so, but it eventually turned away, and we continued the trip unmolested.

Our destination didn't seem worth the effort of getting out of the car's shelter, but I couldn't disappoint the others. It was freezing, we weren't dressed for this weather, and the icy drizzle penetrated to the bone. There was a long flight of steps to the summit, but we all made the foolhardy ascent. Then we had to wait for the damned sun. After ten minutes or so, it became obvious that it would never show through the clouds, even if it did bother to 'rise', so we gladly raced back to the car. BWF's knees were still numb, so BC was saddled with my poundage on the return journey. We arrived at the hotel with more than our enthusiasm dampened, and lost Dave and Greg, who probably did the sensible thing and finally went to bed. It was too long a wait to breakfast, so we four remaining diehards drove to the Ferguson's home to feed their cat and have a bite ourselves.



We arrived back at the ST G again with plenty of time for me to check out and still be early for the business session.

This was even more anarchical than the Australian variety, as there was no constitution, no rules, and no proper procedure. People just stood up and had their say. As everybody had been waiting to see how this first con would turn out, no official bids had been prepared for the next one. Proceedings were temporarily disrupted when a very eager and extremely young Trekkie passionately announced a wild, unreasoned bid for Auckland, but he was eventually shouted down, and the Bruces Clement and Ferguson were gratefully and unanimously voted the rights for WELLCON B for the NZ Queen's Birthday weekend.

After this we all relaxed and settled down to watch the world premieres of two amateur films made by the Wellington fans. These were GROSS ENCOUNTERS OF THE WORST KIND and COLESLAWTER. They were both hilarious, and showed what can be accomplished with a little imagination and loads of enthusiasm.

GROSS ENCOUNTERS opened with a fellow mowing his lawn, with frequent stops for swallows out of the beer bottle he had cached in the letter box, while the lawnmower wandered around destroying his garden every time he turned his back. The machine appeared to have developed a mind of its own, and a nasty one at that. Then a couple of flying saucers flew overhead, and he decided it was all too much for him, turned off the infernal machine, and went inside to tell his wife his problems. They were both imbibing the amber when a space ship landed on the lawn. Lovely shot of them hiding under the kitchen table, with their heads under the couch, and their backsides sticking out, trembling with fear. Then the space-suited alien enters the house, ignores them completely, and proceeds to disconnect one end of the hose wrapped around his neck, and use it to suck up the contents of every beer bottle in sight. Then the alien exits the house, climbs into his space ship and takes off. The couple emerge from their hiding place, dig out some dragons, and recover their strength and courage with large drinks of plonk.

In COLESLAWTER an aged cabbage plant develops sentience and mobility, and goes on a murderous rampage, until wilted to death by our hero wearing a DR WHO scarf, and wielding a formidable ray gun.

Both films were fabulous, and very well loved by the audience. They were followed by DARK STAR, which was probably almost as good, but by this time we four stalwarts were having great difficulty keeping our eyes open.

We had a very dead dog lunch at the hotel, staring blearily at each other through blood-rimmed eyes, trying desperately to be gay and merry, and not succeeding at all; then I was driven to the airport, we had a few more drinks, and it was time to fly home.

WELLCON was one of the greatest experiences of my life. There was an atmosphere of wonder and goodnatured friendliness that is very rare, and probably couldn't be achieved outside fandom.



We learnt a lot about the human potential for achieving understanding, made a lot of friends, helped create a legend, and collected memories that will be treasured for the rest of our lives.

I have since learnt that the enchanted feeling of happy co-operation we generated at WELLCON only seems to occur at seminal conventions, such as the early ones in the USA, and the first SWANCON in WA, where most attendees are completely new to fandom, and everyone makes the most of each opportunity. Later comes more sophistication, hierarchies of BNF and self-important officious types develop, neofans get left out in the cold, and the early feeling is so much more difficult to achieve. If this theory is correct, and it appears logical, then I am doubly honoured to have experienced the wonders of WELLCON. My only regrets are that more Aussies didn't attend and share the joy, and that the first Aussie NZers met was so inexperienced in fandom.

My enthusiasm for NZ and its people hasn't faded since WELLCON. I've had myself appointed NZ liaison officer for A IN 83, and I'm also the Australian agent for WELLCON B. This will be held from 30 May to 2 June (NZ celebrates Queen's Birthday at a different time from us). Attending membership is A\$14.00, and A\$6.00 supporting, with the threat of a rise later. Cheques to be made out to WELLCON B, and sent to me please. I still don't have room rates, so please indicate if single or double rooms are required, and I'll answer requests when the rates are available.

It is a good idea to try to arrive at least one day before the con, as Wellington airport is occasionally closed during winter, and if flights are diverted to Auckland, you'll need to allow sufficient time for the coach ride to Wellington. If this does eventuate we could have a precon party on the bus - an event to make fannish history.

With the 'plane fare to NZ being a third of that from Sydney to Perth (which is 402 kilometres closer), and the favourable currency exchange, not to forget duty-free grog, I expect Aussie fans to eagerly add future NZ cons to their planned schedules. See you all over there in June.

#### NEW ZEALAND FANZINES AND ADDRESSES

VISIONS editor - Laurens C Van Der Lingen, PO Box 29100  
Fendalton, Christchurch 1

TANJENT .. editor - Greg Hills, PO Box 770, Wanganui

SFFCEMENT as above

TYRANT editor - Tom Cardy and friends, Paul Leck, 115 Mooray Ave, Christchurch 5, or William Simon, 22 Maple St, Christchurch

KIPPLE editor - Duncan Lucas, 12 Beattys Rd, Pukehohe, S. Auckland

WORLDS BEYOND editor - Tom Cardy, 137 Richardson St, Dunedin

PARSEC as above

BEYOND THE HYADES PO Box 264, Papakura

VERA LONERGAN

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## GLIMPSES OF THE GREAT

George Turner

Nobody tells the truth about himself. For one thing, nobody knows the truth of himself; for another, when he fancies he does, he'd usually rather you didn't. (Militant feminists please note my arrogant use of the distributive pronoun to cover both sexes; I won't put up with your cumbersome rearrangements.)

Returning to the opening sentence: This is why it is a waste of time rushing your favourite author at conventions and book-signings; the only ~~thing you will learn of him is that he is~~ quite different from your preconception. The more successful he is and the more subject to public exposure, the blander will be the skin drawn over his personality. ~~He~~ loves your adulation but loathes your probing and after three days of a fan-bash like SEACON he is more apt to run for cover than paste on the public grin for the thousandth time.

The public persona is all you will meet. Only his friends know him in any worthwhile sense. You won't meet them because he'll make damned sure you don't; he needs his privacy. You wouldn't bother with them anyway; they aren't other famous writers but tradesmen and bank clerks and counterhands and so on, like yourself.

So I can't say I really met any of the famous at SEACON, but I saw a lot of them. Two I sought out deliberately in order to confirm or dispel prior impressions; one and one only I sought because we had something to say to each other; the rest I encountered by chance.

I had barely wandered into the lobby on the opening morning when someone screamed my name ('Somebody actually knows me!') and Cherry Wilder came battleshipping through the throng in one of those comfortable kaftans that make small girls look formidable and big girls Amazonian. We swapped compliments on BRIN'S FIVE and BELOVED SON. You do that automatically, getting it out of the way so that conversation can begin, but in this case conversation was aborted as behind us a lift door opened and a glittering stream of the great decanted itself into the lobby.

Brian Aldiss paused for greetings and Mrs Aldiss unexpectedly remembered me from a ten-minute meeting in 1976. Bob Silverberg fixed me with an eye somewhere between tolerant and frosty and said 'Hello, George'. Malcolm Edwards was introduced together with a couple I can't remember - faces begin to run into each other as the con progresses - and Chris Priest passed almost unrecognised until I realised who it was under the almost-short-backandsides. Instead of something intelligent, I said, 'You've had your hair cut', while thinking along the lines of it changes one's impression of your personality completely. Which it does. He said, 'Yes', meaning Oh, Christ, again! and like a stammering yokel (I suspect we all get these bumbling fits as times) I carried on with, 'It suits you', to which he replied, looking down from his towering eight-feet-three, 'It doesn't make a subject for conversation!'



and passed on. I didn't see him again.

First Australian wicket down for nil - Caught and Bowled, Self.

I saw few of the SF lions more than once and then usually by accident, but Cherry was always somewhere around when needed. She introduced me to her husband, Horst Grimm, who turned out to be the single most charming new acquaintance I made there; we talked quite a bit about Australia and Germany when he wasn't shepherding two small daughters with insatiable appetites for horror films.

Cherry's fictional interest in the drama has its practical aspects also. When we were dressing for the Masquerade I decided, having glanced at the stage lighting, that no makeup was necessary, but Cherry took one look at my face and said, 'A thin line of 5 to outline the lips, dear', so I tried it. She was right, of course; it gave a focus to the tight contouring of the hood. We should have talked theatre but somehow didn't. We didn't talk writer's shop either.

The only person with whom I talked shop to any extent was Tom Disch. I really wanted to meet him, since he had written a very appreciative letter to SF COMMENTARY on my review of his '334', which is one of the most shamefully neglected novels in the SF canon.

I went to the apartment of my Pocket Books publisher, David Hartwell, whom I wished to see on business, and the first person I saw was Tom Disch, standing very removed and alone in a corner of a roomful of delirious drunks (it was about 11.30 pm). I was with Peter Nicholls and demanded an introduction.

Disch remembered me from the review and was very warm and welcoming until he had a rush of suspicion to the head and complained, 'But you don't have Australian accents, either of you!' Peter has almost lost his, but I calmed him with a burst of home-grown Fitzroy-Port Melbourne. (Actually, he shuddered.) He probably didn't understand a word but accepted it as proof of provenance.

Then we nattered until Malcolm Edwards rolled by, together with a malevolent-looking lass (Wife? Girl friend? I don't know.) who was plainly fed up with the grog-and-noise scene. And I don't blame her.

Malcolm swayed like a reed in the thick air and announced that he was not drunk. With my usual tact I said, 'Malcolm, you are', and caught from the lass a glance of the power that withers dragons. Then he invited me to participate in a panel on Day 3. There seemed to be already a platoon of Big names on it, so I assumed it was a grab-bag session designed to use up all who might be insulted if passed over, but I said 'Yes', and he swayed off into the screaming hell of writers, fans, and publisher's agents.

I ploughed off in search of David Hartwell, who said, 'Hullo'

and 'We must have a talk', and vanished under a flood of suppliants scrambling for his editorial ear. Don't let anybody tell you your dignified writer-heroes are above that sort of toadying; they fight for position like starving wolves in an abattoir. We never did have the talk, or even see each other again. That seems about par for a convention course.

I think it was on Day 2 that I had a particularly unsettling experience. It was, I suppose, nothing much, and perhaps you need to be a writer to catch the impact of it.

John Brunner was speaking in the main hall and I dropped in to listen because I have always found his non-fiction commentaries more relevant and down to earth than his fiction. When I entered he was complaining that science fiction had fallen into the hands of literary barbarians.

I was approving of this sentiment - with the rider that he is one of the more pretentious barbarians - when he flourished a copy of FOUNDATION 17 and read, with relish and gusto, an extract concerning writers 'lacking in the understanding of politics, economics, scientific activity and depth. . .'

As he spoke the words, he turned at the lectern and looked directly into my eyes. It was an accident, of course; we have never met and he wouldn't have known me from Adam. But - the quotation was from Couze Venn's review of BELOVED SON. It left a sour taste.

Well, after a quarter of a century on the battlefield, I don't let reviewers get under my skin (three good screaming fits and it's all over) and that particular review - an irritatingly condescending job by an Oxford don, containing a number of factual errors - had not bothered me overmuch until it was arrowed straight at my head in such fashion.

To this day I have not been able to make up my mind whether or not the criticism was just.

Another Oxford don on the programme was Tom Shippey, held up to me by Brian Aldiss during a panel at UNICON IV as a critic to be admired. It so happened that I didn't admire him then and don't now - as a critic. But if Aldiss, who is no slouch as separating wheat from chaff, recommends a man it would be foolish to pass him over.

So I listened to a faultless dissertation, entertainingly delivered, which succeeded in irritating me profoundly by doing something it didn't intend as well as what it did. What Shippey spoke of was the attitudes of science fiction writers towards technology, an important and useful theme, but -

- the samples he chose to illustrate his thesis were three totally forgettable and unimportant novels by Poul Anderson, Larry Niven, and Bob Shaw. (I recall that the Anderson book was SHIELD, a potboiler of the 'sixties.) The general effect, one I am sure Shippey did not recognise, was to suggest that these samples of adventure-opera were consciously intended



by their authors as serious attacks on a philosophic problem, when indeed they are only twice-told tales using the standard SF outcomes of standard SF formulations.

This effect, however unintentional, of assuring listeners that certain junk-SF is really the repository of deep and serious philosophic questioning, is one of the critical falsehoods which inclines really high-powered literary criticism to give the field a wide berth. Love your space-opera, by all means, but don't treat it as though it were something more intellectual than simple escapist fare.

To one who followed Shippey's argument with an eye deliberately closed to the shoddiness of his examples, something useful was being said about SF writers. It was to a writing seminar that it needed saying.

Still, Shippey on his own ground is good, even if he didn't care for BELOVED SON. (He didn't.)

There was a panel during which Norman Spinrad (who still manages quite irrationally to look 25) made bitter complaint against the main hall sound system. We in the audience couldn't make out what was wrong, but I was shortly to find out for myself.

The panel for which Malcolm Edwards had shanghaied me was about - well what? I had forgotten. Just another dissipated wreck, you see.

Tom Shippey had just finished speaking and was still shuffling his notes at the lectern when I asked Malcolm what the hell we were supposed to talk about. It seemed to be something concerning the uses of imagination in SF, and I said, 'Good God!' which sent Shippey into a spasm of immoderate amusement while I had a spasm of acute intellectual indigestion.

However, there is a reasonably safe *modus operandi* when you haven't an idea in your head: Listen to the other speakers, then either argue with or elaborate on their statements. It will stagger you through when all else fails.

In this case the first speaker was Tom Disch, seated next to me. He said almost exactly what I might have said in a more collected moment, said it better and said it completely. Nothing for me there. Fortunately, the moderator switched to the other end of the table where a feminist redoubt of Vonda McIntyre, Marion Zimmer Bradley and (I think) Chelsea Quinn Yarbro grabbed the ball and ran with it for fifteen minutes - and I couldn't hear a word.

That had been Spinrad's complaint. The sound in the audience sector was perfect, but over the stage there brooded an appalling triple echo, with the result that though we each had a microphone we couldn't make sense of any but the person right next to us.

When my turn came I simply hadn't heard ninety percent of the argument. I don't recall much of what I said, beyond



stating a preference for controlled rather than capriciously fantastic imagining; for all I knew I might have been simply hacking at ideas already used by the other speakers. But nobody booed or left the hall, and Mervyn Binns said afterwards that I was the only one who said anything he could understand.

Make what you like of that, but a big moment was at hand.

While we stood at the foot of the stage steps, re-fighting the battle, a stocky, no-nonsense type in a business suit shouldered his way through the pack, grabbed my hand and announced himself pleased to make my acquaintance.

Arthur C. Clarke, no less, seeking me out instead of the other way about. Perhaps he liked what I had said on the panel. I never found out. We got bogged down in trying to make sense of a literary contact he couldn't remember, and so a another exchange of immortal wisdom never eventuated.

Perhaps he thought I was somebody else.

So, as that man kept saying every time he bumped off another character, it goes.

I ran into Terry Carr somewhere or other; I think it was in a cafe. He said, 'You know, you speak exactly the way you write - all Germanic roots and very few Latinisms'.

That was mildly paralysing for a bit of Cafe Society chit-chat, and not unlike being told you have a bricklayer's hands when you have always secretly admired their slender grace.

I muttered something mock-cheerful about never writing another word without checking its etymology, and he assured me with the evil gaiety of a brat who has just kicked over an ant's nest that 'That's the sort of thing you get told at conventions'.

Yes, isn't it?

I still think he's a nice bloke.

There was a person infesting the lounges with a sort of wind-powered hand-piano (not quite an accordion) and a sign round his neck reading: 'Filthy Pierre'. One inclined to believe it.

I was sitting contemplating him - as a zoo specimen - while he played and sang, interminably, 'The Red Flag' to a dull-eyed audience of non-revolutionaries, when a young man shoved an autograph book under my nose and demanded in an uncompromising Glasgow accent that I sign it.

Since I had discovered early in the piece that British fans had never heard of me (Americans mysteriously had) I suggested that he took me for somebody else. It turned out that he just thought that 'I looked like a writer' and didn't



want to miss out if I was. (What do writers look like?)

So I signed his book and he hid his disappointment manfully but gave me the address of the meeting-place of his Glasgow fan club, because I was bound for Scotland after the convention.

The club is called The Friends Of Kilgore Trout. I feared the worst.

Alfred Bester has in the past appealed to me with the high-flying, bright purple, logicless onrush of his mile-a-second thrillers and because his occasional essays reveal him as one of those who were never fooled by the Campbell mystique. (Curious how the Campbell legend is beginning to decay now that his writers no longer fear ostracism from the pages of ANALOG if they tell the truth.) So, when a Bester session appeared on the main hall listings, I went along, curious to observe the man underneath the adulation.

He began his hour by insisting that all the microphones be shut off. I wondered did he have an authentic parade-ground voice or did he intend simply to scream at the fans.

His voice doesn't carry at all. He screamed. Ineffectually.

He rampaged up and down the centre aisle, demanding questions. 'Ask me anything, anything at all! Not goddam silly things - sensible questions! Whatever you want to know, I can tell you!'

It was as shameless a piece of cult-of-self selling as I have seen in many a year, but it didn't come off in the voice-killing reaches of the main hall under its forty-foot high ceiling. The fans couldn't hear his demands and he couldn't hear their questions.

I stood three minutes of it and left, for once disappointed in a man I would have preferred to admire.

Very different were the performances of the two Guests of Honour in their speeches.

Aldiss was completely professional. He gave what was essentially the same speech we heard in Melbourne at UNICON IV, with a different barrage of jokes at the beginning. I liked the one about the Irish surgical team who performed the world's first haemorrhoid transplant. The story of his search for his old house in Sumatra (I think it was Sumatra) had been polished and pointed in the mean time and now came over more meaningfully.

Men like Aldiss, who are called on to produce a routine too often for comfort must, in sheer self-defence, develop some such all-purpose address for general consumption, and this one is nicely calculated to preserve the literary image while adding to it a fistful of personal touches which hook the fans without compromising the auctorial aura. A model of its kind. I'd like to think I could do it as well but know that I couldn't.

Another fully professional, practised address was that of the amusing but shallow Frederik Pohl. On the other hand the quiet



Harry Stubbs (Hal Clement), speaking off the cuff, was endearing in his attempt to be both honest and informative, and spoke far more interestingly than you might expect from his ponderous writing style.

Fritz Leiber, the Overseas GoH, was a peculiar case, different from all the others.

He is an extremely tall man, very spare and lean, with quite beautiful silver hair and the benign expression of somebody's favourite uncle, not at all the picture of exotic evil you might conjure as the creator of the Grey Mouser and his enemies. He has also the largest pair of feet I have seen on a human being; I couldn't tear my eyes from those gigantic shoes.

Age is catching up with Fritz and his health is less than stable.

He has always been an uneven writer, capable of occasional beauties, sly subtleties and arresting ideas (remember 'A Pail Of Air' and 'Coming Attraction'?) as well as the crass ineptitude of the 'heroic verse' trimeters of THE BIG TIME. His speech seemed to echo all of this.

He spoke of his family stage history (Shakespearian), of his early days in science fiction and fantasy and then of his personal philosophy, which seemed gentle and wispy and redolent of an earlier time.

He has the charm that seemed so lacking in most of the other professionals, though not in all - Norman Spinrad exhibited a lively goodwill and Jack Williamson roamed about in an aura of quiet pleasantness.

I told Jack I remembered reading his first story, 'The Metal Man', in AMAZING back in our salad days. To which he responded, 'For heaven's sake, how old are you?'

In his seventies now, he was a teenager when he wrote the story, as were many of the well-known names of the day. He is a gentle, nice bloke to talk to.

On the whole, the American writers seemed to me more relaxed and approachable than their English counterparts. I recall that Brian Stableford offered a frosty 'How do you do?' when I was introduced to him and at once retired from the conversation. Is it possible that he remembered some of my published comments on his work?

Maybe, maybe not.

In any case, it's no good getting aggrieved over another's opinion; if it were, John Foyster's victims would have seen him hanged, poisoned, disembowelled, impaled, drawn and quartered years ago, while many a Lupoff or Thurogood would not have lived through his teens.

Sprague De Camp is an impressive man and a good speaker. He

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gave a talk on 'Conan' Howard, a literary nonentity of whom he has researched a comprehensive biography. (Yet people who matter are dismissed with a brief newspaper notice.)

A questioner in the audience asked was Howard homosexual. I thought it a reasonable question because, in a brief encounter with a couple of Conan stories I had been disturbed by a sexual quality in the writer's loving attention to muscle and virility symbols. De Camp answered that he had no reason to think so, but that there was evidence of mother-domination and sexual repression. A fair response.

For the rest of the session I ruminated quietly on the sexual writhings of the teenagers - and the not-so-teenaged - who dote on these virility fantasies and their imitators and, worse still, on the anatomically hilarious muscle-monsters depicted in what is offered as 'fantasy art'. That is much more worth discussing than the emotionally stunted Howard. But the fans would have hated it.

Nobody wants truth at a science fiction convention.

The fans get a psychological fix.

Science fiction gets nothing.

Do you wonder the press laughs?

After days of bobbing like a cork on a stream of several thousand fans and never seeing or hearing anything or anybody properly, I broke for the railway station and woke next morning in homely old Glasgow, thinking that I have now survived two World SF Conventions and won't feel my life wasted if I never attend another.

On the Thursday night I embarked on the Journey Perilous via Glasgow's bus system, whose secrets of route and timing are not adjusted to crude Ocker understanding, but eventually arrived at the Wintersgill Bar. I had already forgotten the name of my Glaswegian autograph hound but entered the bar, demanded a foreign brand of beer which I hoped wouldn't raise my scalp and cased the joint for anything that might be a group of science fiction fans.

Nothing.

I would have to ask.

Tell me: How would you feel about asking a strange barman in a strange bar in a strange land, 'Do you know the Friends Of Kilgore Trout?'

I girded my loins and asked.

Not only the barman but practically everyone within earshot clattered in with something on the lines of 'Och ay, but ye maun gang 'cross the passage tae the ither bar, laddie! It's there y'll find y' wee freends.'

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For Glasgow that's unusually comprehensible. What's more, everyone knew the FOKT and found nothing peculiar in their doings. Whatever another Scot does is by definition respectable, sensible, and to be approved; only foreigners are suspect and semi-demented.

So I found the FOKT, but my contact was not present and a pleasant young bloke introduced himself as 'Bob-Shaw-but-not-that-Bob-Shaw', which seems to be how he is referred to throughout British fandom. He is the FOKT secretary.

A gang of eight or ten was gathered about a large table, socking into the grog, and he introduced me round. Nobody seemed to find an invading Australian particularly menacing. (In London you sometimes feel there have been unobtrusive orders to fill the moat and raise the drawbridge.) They were more or less what you would find in any Australian fan group - mostly young, with a couple of older ones, mostly working types, with a couple of students and the inevitable big and jolly girl (what the Scots term a 'sonsy lass') of whom there is one surely in every fan group in the world.

We passed a couple of pleasant hours getting mildly pissed.

Bob seemed determined that I should return in 1980 for a convention he is planning and I carefully wrote everything down. But that was then and God knows where the notes are now. Still, if anyone is interested, or would simply like to make contact with an overseas group, I think this address would find him:

Mr Bob Shaw

The Friends Of Kilgore Trout

c/o The Wintersgill Bar

226 Great Western Road

Glasgow, Scotland.

It seems there is an opposition group, centered on Edinburgh, who are determined that FOKT shall not run this coveted convention. No blood has yet been spilt but I had the impression that the next pibroch might be a call to arms. I described the situation between Melbourne and Sydney and was understood at once; that was it, exactly!

If you are ever in Glasgow, look them up; they meet of a Thursday night, at 8.00 pm.

For the first time since SEACON began I felt at home and relaxed, enjoying a beer among real people.

George Turner

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## THE LAST PANEL

John Ryan, comic historian, writer, winner of the US Alley Award in 1964 and 1967, publisher of Australia's first comic fanzine (DOWN UNDER) in 1964, comic fan and friend and host to many SF and comic fans, is dead.

John, aged 48, passed away from a heart attack only a few weeks after the publication of his greatest effort, PANEL BY PANEL, which was the realization of a long-time ambition to publish a basic reference book on Australian comic strips.

His book is the first and quite likely the last to be published on this subject as very few people would have his enthusiasm, drive, knowledge, personal contact with most of the remaining artists and the research material that John had - but I'd love to be proved wrong.

My association and friendship with John began many years ago when I read about him and his comic collection in a Melbourne newspaper. Up until then I thought I was the only oddball in Australia that collected old comic books. I immediately put typewriter to paper with a thousand questions. Back came a reply with a thousand answers and an invitation to spend a weekend with him and his family in Sydney. That's the type of person he was. Just on the strength of one letter from a stranger in Melbourne he send an invitation to stay at his house and, I may add, receive a very warm welcome from both him and his wife Jan.

And that was not the only time. I recall a Sydney SF convention when John and Jan played host to myself, Dimitri Razuvaev, Paul Stevens and John Breden, not to mention John Brosnan who was already staying with them. On leaving we made a little presentation of an inscribed cup for being such a great host. In reply John thanked us and said he would treasure it for two reasons. Firstly because of the nice gesture and secondly because of the 'new' way of spelling 'Panelologist'. God, were our faces red! Of course, we blamed the engraver...

He was also a very generous person. On our first meeting he presented me with quite a few early American and Australian comics. On trade items he would always offer a better trade than he would ask for.

Face to face he would call most people 'Pal'. That's what most people were to him and he, to them.

All memories now, but nice ones.

REST IN PEACE, pal, you will not be forgotten.

Noel Kerr

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# CHUNDER!

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COVER - Chris Johnston

2 - Marc Ortlieb on APAS

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14 - George Turner on SEACON

23 - Noel Kerr on JOHN RYAN

24 - Editorial

No illustration on this page due to Haste. Ralph Silverton  
back at his usual spot next month.

\* \* \* \* \*

## MORE QUICK NOTES

CHUNDER! POLL: Please send your nominations (up to three in each  
category) under the following headings:

BEST GENERAL FANZINE (of 1979 - and the same goes for the rest)  
BEST APA FANZINE, BEST ARTIST, BEST CARTOONIST, BEST FAN WRITER,  
BEST LETTERHACK, BEST OTHER. This applies to Australian fanzines  
only (can't have them fellers across the Tasman stealing every-  
thing), and nominations should reach me by the end of February  
so the final ballot can go out with the March CHUNDER!. (John  
Foyster and CHUNDER! are not eligible in any category - and that  
goes double for 'BEST OTHER'.)

Lots of people got married or changed addresses lately, but  
with any luck I'll be able to record all those exciting goings-  
on in the February edition.

A couple of people commenting on CHUNDER! have suggested that  
there isn't enough by me in it. Well, I couldn't see myself  
wanting to leave out any of the contributions from this issue,  
and there are no fanzine reviews or letters. The simple fact  
is that I get too many good articles; if there were a few more  
regular fanzines being published in Australia they might siphon  
off some of this. It is equally true that I'm spending my  
spare time writing a GUFF report, which cuts things up a bit.

Fortunately I recently ran into my old friend Kelvin Widdershins,  
and Kel tells me he expects to be able to jot down a book review  
or two every now and then. He warned.

The February Chunder! will be a special issue designed to offend  
any readers who are not already sufficiently alienated.