

RON'S THE ONE!

A brief note about Ron Clarke
from John Foyster, PO Box 3086, Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000.

Ron Clarke's standing for DUFF, and there's more to be said about Ron's candidature than appears on the ballot form. If you read Ron's platform you'll see that John Baxter and I are named as pre-historic culprits, and since Baxter is busy in Paris living off the proceeds of his Fellini book it falls to me to say a few words.

Ron's platform does modestly admit that he has been publishing his genzine *The Mentor* since 1964, but the fact that *The Mentor* is Australia's longest-running fanzine is omitted. And so is the "fact" that *The Mentor* has throughout those thirty years been consistently published for a particular type of fan: the person who has been reading (or watching, or listening to) science fiction and is seeking a place to express herself or himself. And *The Mentor*, because it publishes fiction and poetry and drawings has been such a place.

Over the past thirty years, as a result, many people have been encouraged into fandom through Ron's work. It can't have been all fun for Ron — fans go on to other interests, to publish their own fanzines, and indeed at times to look down on the kind of fanzine which once seemed fresh and wonderful to themselves. But Ron has stuck to the task and introduced fandom to many people and vice versa.

But it would be an appalling error to regard Ron as just a fanzine publisher. For a start Ron, like most fans of that vintage, never really made the kind of distinction which is now made between media fans, litfans (what *are* they meant to be called?), and no doubt many other fannish subgroups I've not heard of. Over the years, then, Ron has been quite active amongst the fans of STAR TREK, and for all I know he still is. Recently Ron has given many pages of *The Mentor* over to fans of horror — and no doubt this eclecticism will continue for years.

Ron has probably spent more printing just the covers of *The Mentor* than 99% of currently active Australian fanzine fans have spent on their entire print runs. Colour covers are not uncommon, but most contemporary fans will not remember the series of issues in the mid 1970s with Virgil Finlay covers! (In general, Ron has always supported new artists, of course.)

But then there are the aspects of Ron's fannish life which simply aren't mentioned in the DUFF platform. Ron doesn't mention that he was one of the founders, if not *the* founder, of ANZAPA in its initial guise as APA-A. In the late 1960s several fans talked about an Australian apa, but Ron was the one who did something about it.

Even when Ron's platform does refer to some of his achievements, the sentences compress history to the point of distortion. Sure, Ron "travelled overland to England with sf fans" — but this was the famous (or infamous) fannish bus trip which involved, amongst others, John Brosnan, and seems to have been an interesting set of disasters and near-disasters. I have a fading photograph of Bruce Gillespie standing at the side of the bus looking suitably awed. And

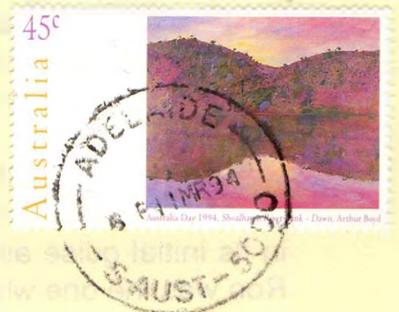
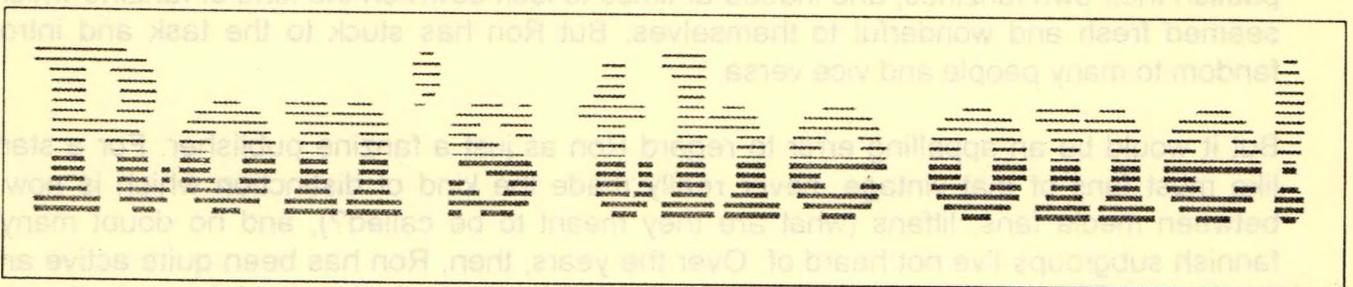
guess what? The bus trip was written up by Guess Who and published in Guess Which fanzine. No other Australian making a trip to Europe has yet published a trip report...

And certainly Ron has "been involved in starting the new series of Sydney convention", but that's rather an understatement. Ron's been involved in running sf conventions in Sydney for *decades*. Ron's modesty does get in the way sometimes; the platform could have mentioned, for example, that when a national convention was to be held in 1975, the year of AussieCon I, there weren't too many volunteers to put on a major convention which was nevertheless going to overshadowed by Australia's first Worldcon. Yep, Ron again, working to run one of the first conventions held on a university site (though not the first). And a very successful convention it was, as anyone who attended it will tell you.

Yes, Ron was "invited to represent Australian fandom in Volgograd in 1991", but this fails to convey the context: Ron's vast efforts over many years to build links between fandom in the Soviet Union and fandom in Australia. Naturally Ron wrote his trip up and published it!

So I could go on. But the point of presenting this list of Ron Clarke's achievements is not to urge you to vote for Ron for DUFF on the basis of his past activities. It is rather to remind voters of those achievements but essentially to point out that Ron is not resting on well-earned laurels: his activity continues, and that's what should influence your vote.

On top of all that, Ron knows nothing about the preparation of this leaflet, and I hope he's not too embarrassed by it. Just remember, when you vote for DUFF, that



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