

Raw Bits 9 is not for everybody; not sold in stores; available by invitation only. Written and published by Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia (phone: [03] 419 4797), for the August mailing of the Australia and New Zealand Amateur Press Association and a very few other people. This issue is not proofread by Elaine Cochrane, although last issue was.

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#### WRECKIN' BAWL

Even as I write, they might start wrecking the house next door. Two blokes were in its back yard on Sunday. 'We're from the demolishers', one of them told Elaine. 'Yes, we have the permit to wreck the place.' I must ring the city council to find out if this is true.

This morning the same two blokes were in the same back yard. They looked around for two minutes, said 'Aw shit', and went away. I hope this means that the job's impossible.

When I last wrote for ANZAPA (in April; shame!) I expected the house next door, 61 Keele Street, to have been demolished many months ago. But the house's owner, a Peter Lee from Hong Kong, didn't ever apply for a permit to demolish. I suspect he still hasn't, despite what he or the builders keep telling us. Meanwhile the house has been looking more and more derelict.

Why are we anxious about the possibility of losing the house next door? (a) Because we suspect our side wall will collapse when it's no longer supported by that house; (b) suddenly we will receive far more noise from nearby Wellington Street than we've had to endure so far; (c) unless the demolishers put up an adequate wire fence across the front of the property next door, suddenly the eastern side of our property will far more vulnerable to burglars than it is at the moment; (d) in summer the side wall will receive the hot morning sun and in winter the east side of the house will be much colder than it is at the moment.

Of course, if the demolition of the house means that we actually receive less noise than now, we might not be quite so upset.

Meanwhile there are burglars and squatters afoot in Collingwood (sixteen burglaries in our Neighbourhood Watch district in July, slightly down from twenty-four in May), and we have no one to watch our house. At the beginning of this year Sid and Lottie Jago, who have lived in Collingwood most of their lives, moved to retirement at Noosa Heads. They sold their house here, but it remained vacant. It is on the corner of Keele Street and Wellington Street, diagonally over Keele Street from our place.

Recently the Jagos' former residence went up for auction again. It, plus the two houses beside it in Wellington Street, were sold for \$419,000. At 2 p.m. on the day of the auction, I went to listen to the bids. At the same time I kept looking back at our place because I was expecting a packet to be delivered by courier. As I looked back, I saw Peter Lee, the owner of the big place on the other corner, next door to 61 Keele Street, pull up and inspect the large property. As I was looking back at my place, trying

to listen to the auction bids, I was astonished to see a bloke walk up to the door of 61 Keele Street and push his way in. On his head was a wicker basket, and on top of that was a rolled-up mattress. Peter Lee and Eddie, the builder, came out of the large place. 'I don't believe what I saw,' I said, 'but I just saw a squatter push his way into 61 Keele Street.' They went in there, and within five minutes the squatter had been sent on his way. At long last, Eddie put sheet iron across the front of the house next door. (A few days later, somebody ripped away the sheet iron from the front door, went through the house, and stole the gas heater from the back yard. Only then did the owner put a lock on the front door.)

Elaine suspected that a squatter had moved into Jagos' old place. A day or so after they left, the security door was missing. There was no other sign of life, except that the front gate was sometimes open and sometimes shut. The blinds did not shift, and there was no light inside. When we went over to have a look at the place on auction day, sure enough in the front room was a bed and a television set (but what power was it using, since the electricity had been turned off by the Jagos?). A few kitchen things were on the sink. Otherwise the house wasn't affected or damaged in any way. Now that the house has been sold a second time, I presume the squatter has left. Perhaps. Suddenly squatters in the area seem to have become highly organized, so that any property left vacant is immediately entered.

I'm in two minds about squatting. The practice has only become necessary since all the housing around universities and colleges has been bought and trendified. There is very little affordable rental accommodation left around Melbourne University, for instance. At the same time, houses are left empty for long periods of time while city councils consider applications for redevelopment. Although Collingwood Council says it wants to preserve housing in the area, it has already allowed several demolitions in our immediate area during recent years, and at least two of the blocks have been left empty. Even the small amount of cheap housing in Collingwood is disappearing.

Therefore if silent squatters move into a property long left empty, one can hardly object. At least, as Elaine says, they are preserving the property as housing. But I wouldn't much want a mini-commune on the doorstep -- which is what the group of squatters in 61 Keele Street seemed to be establishing just before they were thrown out.

The small neighbourhood around our house keeps emptying. It has become obvious that Jagos' place was bought merely for speculative purposes. Maybe that's what's happened again, since there is still no sign of life there. We keep trying to get guarantees about 61 Keele Street -- security, non-damage to our property, etc. -- but we suspect the owner will do his best to get away with cheapskate measures. He wanted to buy our property, freely admitting that he only wanted to pull it down for a carpark for the big place on the corner, but offered nothing that would compensate us for moving. (He did not mention a sum of money. He merely offered to swap a house he already owned for our house. We mentioned a figure of \$250,000, which sent him on his way. To buy the right sort of house, in our area -- at least two extra rooms -- the figure would now be at least \$300,000, and seems to rise by \$50,000 every six months.)

We've lost our other 'neighbour' as well. A few months ago, the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria auctioned its main building (57 Keele Street) for \$530,000, the 'barn' around the corner (42 Budd Street) for \$370,000, and the two vacant blocks that form the car park on Easey Street for \$150,000 each. Not bad money in just under three-quarters of an hour! The

TTUV moved out a few weeks ago (to join the other teacher unions at the old Exacto factory in Abbotsford). Renovations have started on the main building.

#### CAT PEOPLE

I've written about the death of Elaine's mother in The Metaphysical Review 11/12/13. Hitting us just as hard has been the very recent death of our favourite cat, Solomon. He was 15 years old, but it did seem as if he would live forever. Solomon had seemed very frail and elderly last year, until we found that he had diabetes. Daily insulin shots gave him new vigour. However, he faded again recently, and became very thin. We took him to the vet in the morning of Tuesday, 10 May; it was found he had a large tumour in his belly, and he was given only a few months to live. That night he died, probably from a heart attack. A great loss, especially as the other cats can only be described as very ordinary moggies compared to Solomon. (We still have Apple Blossom, who's 13 years old; TC, who is 9 years old; and the two fluffies, Oscar, who is four-and-a-half years old and Theodore, who, at two-and-a-half years old, is the kitten, but thinks he's the new boss.)

Recently Theodore, our youngest, most beautiful cat, disappeared for 24 hours. In the end we were going to tour the cat hospitals, letterbox the district, etc., but when I went out to the toilet about 1 a.m., just before going to bed, Theodore sauntered through the back gate. He was very hungry, but undamaged. He must have been shut in somewhere, but that doesn't explain why we couldn't hear him yelling. Oscar, who has spent all day anxiously looking out the back gate for his Theodore, was overjoyed. Since then Oscar has hardly let Theodore out of his sight. Neither have we.

#### FILM BUFFS RETURN

Last issue I wrote about the vile shenanigans at 3RRR-FM, which forced the end of Film Buffs' Forecast, my favourite radio program. I'm happy to report that truth, light and justice prevail. Sometimes. Three weeks ago, the Age Green Guide announced that John Flaus and Paul Harris would return to their old midday-to-2 p.m. Saturday time slot on 3RRR. The same item mentioned that the program manager and assistant manager had resigned. (These two had also forced Derek Holmes's The Yorick Club off the air; pure justice will not prevail until Derek is reinstated.) A few months away from regular broadcasting have improved Flaus and Harris. The jokes are brightened up. They aren't snarling at each other the way they were during the last few months of the old show. Very funny, informative stuff.

And just to prove how much of an influence Flaus and Harris can have on an impressionable watcher of movies on television, here is a list of my favourite movies seen for the first time during 1987. The average year of production was 1949 (down from 1953 the year before):

1. I Know Where I'm Going: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1946)
2. The Last Laugh: F. R. Murnau (1924)
3. The Sweet Smell of Success: Alexander Mackendrick (1957)
4. Pete Kelly's Blues: Jack Webb (1955)
5. The Big Heat: Fritz Lang (1953)
6. The Man With the Golden Arm: Otto Preminger (1955)
7. The Young Savages: John Frankenheimer (1961)
8. T-Men: Anthony Mann (1947)
9. How Green Was My Valley: John Ford (1941)
10. Sabrina: Billy Wilder (1954)

11. On Dangerous Ground: Nicholas Ray (1950)
12. The Night of the Hunter: Charles Laughton (1955)
13. Colonel Blimp: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1943)
14. Sorry Wrong Number: Anatole Litvak (1948)
15. Fanny By Gaslight: Anthony Asquith (1944)
16. Black Narcissus: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1946)
17. Here Comes Mr Jordan: Alexander Hall (1941)
18. Sinful Davy: John Huston (1969)
19. I Remember Mama: George Stevens (1948)
20. Lady on a Train: Charles David (1945)
21. All About Eve: Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1950)
22. Sitting Pretty: Walter Lang (1948)
23. I Was a Male War Bride: Howard Hawks (1949)
24. The Mind Benders: Basil Dearden (1963)
25. Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?: Ted Kotcheff (1978).

Nos. 11 to-25 are pretty much equal in <sup>my</sup> mind, which might explain the sometimes bizarre rank order. I saw three movies at cinemas during the entire year, and only one (the disappointing No Way Out) was made in 1987.

#### OTHER STUFF

- \* Most of the last six months have been spent trying to work out ways of (a) paying for the printing, etc., of TMR 11/12/13; and (b) posting it. The total bill was about \$2500. It's been done by racking up debts all over the place; debts that perhaps I can never repay. No. 14 is already on diskette, but I have no idea when I will have the money to print it or post it. No. 11/12/13 was, officially, seven months late, but actually about a year and a half late.

Just to show that Bruce Gillespie really is a bit insane -- I'm thinking of reviving SF Commentary -- not as a vast money-sucker, like TMR, but as a slim volume of reviews of Books Received. It will go only to contributors, publishers who send books, and subscribers. That should keep the copy numbers down, and also give me space for reviewing review copies. Besides, I have to get SF Commentary going again by January 1989, its twentieth birthday.

- \* Carey Handfield and Joanna Masters got married. Really. It's unlikely that you've been able to escape without hearing a blow-by-blow description of the event, so I won't write another one. Carey's father delivered a brilliant speech showing how difficult it is to extract information from Carey on any subject, let alone marriage. Attendees at the recent Syncon, suffering a similar problem -- extracting a speech from the Fan Guest of Honour -- solved it by firing questions at him from the audience. Perhaps we should have tried this as the wedding. Thanks to John and Esta Handfield, and many others, for the feasting and jollity.

Joanna Masters comes from Western Australia, and she and Carey met at an sf convention. Carey and Joanna are renting a handsome apartment in Hawthorn, but expect to buy a house next year. Carey has had to mend his ways. We were clearing away Norstrilia Press stuff when Joanna delivered the great line: 'I only married him for his junk.'

Farewell, all. Farewell also to Stephen Murray-Smith, who died 31 July 1988. Was Stephen Murray-Smith the Terry Carr of Australian literature? He leaves just as great a gap. 2 August 1988