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LARRIKIN 6, NOVEMBER 1986, is edited by Irwin Hirsh (2/416 Dandenong Rd., Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA) and Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA). This fanzine is available for written contributions - articles and letters of comments - artwork, and fanzines in trade (one copy to each of us please), and supports the New Zealand syndicate's bid to win the America's Cup, just as long as the cup is renamed the Rainbow Warrior's Cup. Thanks go to Lucy Huntzinger (art, this page), Arthur Thomson (art, last page), Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels), and Pam Wells (our British agent). Irwin Hirsh for GUFF

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LEGO On Wednesday, the 1st of October, 1986, Lego Australia Pty Ltd placed two Help Wanted ads in The Australian. They are - Irwin - looking for a couple of people to design and build the models for their large exhibitions held in the toy departments and shops around Australia. I never thought a job ad would bring a nostalgic gleam to my eye, but these two did the trick.

Lego was my favourite toy. Better than my Thunderbird One model, better than any board games. I could easily bury myself into my collection of Lego bricks for hours, building and re-building. And with each birthday and significant saving of pocket-money I would get more bricks to wallow in.

The Jewish New Year was always the Big Lego Day. In the morning we'd go to the synagogue, and when the service was over wander up to my grandparents' flat for lunch. For some reason my complete Lego collection was housed at my grandparents', and when we finished eating, my sisters and I would drag out the Lego blocks. All afternoon we'd toil away, and we never failed to use every block. One year we made a skyscraper, the next a street full of houses, shops, and factories.

It was nice to have those ads remind me of that part of my past, particularly when they appeared just three days before the 1986 Jewish New Year.

The last time I had such a nostalgic twinge was in April last year, when Wendy and I moved into our flat, the flat which was once my grandparents'. I took Wendy on a guided tour, recounting my past. In the spareroom I pointed to the area where we used to keep our toys and games. Then we trooped into the kitchen, and I recalled the goodies raids we'd go on. I opened one cupboard door. "There was always a cup full of Smarties in here." I opened another door. "And in here there was always a tin full of the best home-made biscuits."

As I expected it took a while for Wendy to think of the place as home. And as she started to feel comfortable here, she was able to differentiate between what she liked about the place and what she disliked.

I remember, for instance, her first complaint about the carpet, only about

a month after we'd moved in. "It's a dark brown, so it shows up every speck of dirt. And its design makes it hard to vacuum, and a hour after you've done that you may as well do it again because the colour shows up all the dirt..."

Ordinarily I would've agreed with her, but in the glorious nostalgia to my young days I took it as an attack on the way I used to play. Kneeling down, so that my forefinger could follow the pattern of the carpet, I explained, "But Wendy, you don't understand. When I was younger I played all the time on this carpet. I used to get out my little toy cars and push them along here. This pattern is just the right size as a road for a Matchbox car."

Wendy is kindergarten teacher to 25 four and five year olds, and thanks to her sister Sue we are aunt and uncle to a seven and a four year old. Watching the latter two and hearing stories about the former 25 I am consistently fascinated by childhood. To see their brains grapple with a new concept, whether it be Danielle read another, harder book, or Rodney begin to learn the letters of the alphabet, I can't help but be amazed. And to realise that they play in exactly the same way as me and thee, it is wonderous. It isn't hard to like a young child when you realise just how much of a mirror they are holding in front of you. And it doesn't really matter that Danielle and Rodney's favourite toys are not Lego...

During the recent school holidays Wendy invited Sue, Danielle, and Rodney over for a day. When I came home that evening there were two new drawings on our kitchen walls for me to look at, and some new stories to hear.

The three or four previous visits to our place had convinced Danielle and Rodney that they'd have to provide their own entertainment, so they came armed with a supply of their toys. Within minutes of walking in, out came the Cabbage Patch Doll and toy cars. Danielle immediately settled down with Amelia Adriana, but it took Rodney a while to find his play space. Looking down it came to him, "Hey this can be my road," he screamed out, to no-one but himself.

But Wendy, particularly, heard the line, and turned to watch. What she saw could just well have been her husband, 15-20 years ago. She ran up to her nephew, saying "Wait till I tell Irwin about this!".

I'd like to think that Rodney was as proud about me, as I was about him, but I guess this will only happen when he is an uncle.

RAIN

- Anthony Peacey -

For some years when I was new to Australia I thought of July as Black July, because of the short days and cold wet weather, I suppose. The name no longer strikes me as appropriate: July can be a lovely month. Acacias that I planted, now grown to 30-foot maturity, produce masses of yellow flowers beyond my window. They collect the July rains and hang in curtains to the ground. When the sun emerges, as it always does eventually, drops sparkle on every flower and frond.

Tired of staring at Livia's screen and tapping keys I went to the hills. Perth sits on swampy sand less than million years old - the coastal plain. The hills rise beyond a fault line, rocks far antedating the trilobites. Even the trees there will see several generations of us brief creatures.

It was still raining. As I approached the slope galahs shrieked and

wheeled, settling one by one on high dead branches where they became as still as fruit. Ravens flew in ones and twos. The whole afternoon I heard their calls. I climbed a track carved with deep trenches by the rain. Perhaps because it lacks vegetation large ants excavate metropolises beneath it, so that pausing for breath I found my feet and legs invaded. Busy, disputatious little city-dwellers. But this was a different world. I could continue for a thousand miles and still find ravens and galahs in possession, humanity rare.

In a high valley water was rushing among rocks, a lovely sound only three or four weeks old this year. Grey kangaroos bounced off into the bushes. I arrived at a pool that is usually the last to dry out around Christmas. I stood thinking of it as a sandy pit with tracks going down to its deep spot beneath the great rock whose top was now just visible above the surface. The vivid picture of summer aridity contrasted deliciously with rain running from my hood and down my cheeks. Unfailingly I find the rhythms of the natural world healing of irritation and petty obsession.

The way back lay along a ridge. The rain gradually eased, grey curtains blowing away across the valley. Trees and slopes appeared through mist. Even in the rain the songs of birds chasing through the branches with amorous intent had been loud and persistent. Wildlife surveyors quickly learn the trick of lip-squeaking. I employed it now and almost in an instant had a circus around my head. Most numerous were western spinebills, more than I had ever seen before, the red, white and black plumage of the males brilliant. There were also New Holland honeyeaters, black and yellow, brown honeyeaters singing loud and melodiously, electric blue splendid wrens, and a rufous whistler. They spun about, pursued each other and shrieked as if the world were new. I took delight in their attention. From an observer I had become a participant, a creature from whom others no longer fled, without whom this little whirlpool of excitement would not have risen.

Further on the track crossed the brow. From this point there is a marvellous view of Perth twenty miles away. It always stops me. The trees that abound in gardens bury the suburbs from sight. From the hills only the central towers appear, rising from a forest as unexpectedly and as welcome as any city in fantasy. For fantasy truly understands that wilderness is barren without humanity, and humanity diminished without wilderness. Within the grasp of sight dwelt two thirds of the population of a large continent's largest state. What delicious solitude enfolds us. A growing serenity of perspective became complete as I stood at the worn rim of the Precambrian shield, observing Perth on its recent sand.

I returned home rather wet, but warm from walking, and lay that night before a blazing fire of logs, content to be in Perth in July.

THAT FANZINE 2 Among the comments we have received on The Motional,
 the most interesting is from "Lucky" Larry Dunning, who
 - Irwin - I assume has gathered together the various opinions of
 Perth fandom and has set the following odds:

10-1 Marc and Cath Ortlieb
 30-1 Irwin Hirsh, Perry Middlemiss
 47-1 Jack Horman
 50-1 Eric Lindsay and Jean Weber
 100-1 Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown

I take it, Larry, that you'll also be making book for place bets, ie on those who didn't do the deed but know who did and are involved in the conspiracy of silence. And I'll take a couple of dollars, each way, on my esteemed co-editor, Mr "I'm neither confirming nor denying", and what odds can I get on a two dollar place bet on Justin Ackroyd?

How come the word palindrome isn't a palindrome - Wendy Hirsh

LETTERS FROM OUR MATES (issue 4) - compiled by Perry -

In rather a break with the tradition of these letter columns I thought we'd start with some words from Julian Warner, which begin with a topic we don't normally discuss (namely SF) and moves on to ones we do.

SF will continue to be written and even some of it will be high-quality, and thus there will continue to exist the reader-fans, but reading is intrinsically an anti-social pastime. The group of people who can meet and chat about their private obsessions whilst indulging others, I suppose must be small. Could you put up with, say, a one-eyed, dyed-in-the-wool, purist Ray Bradbury fan who possesses first editions of everything he ever wrote and who talks of nothing else? Difficult huh!? Fen have to be persons of divers obsessions to still be interesting - and be forgiving of others who don't agree with their viewpoints. These criteria quickly whittle down the population of any big city to the localized handfuls of people who comprise Fandom. And even then they still have feuds and personal vendettas. It really pisses me off to know two different people, both of whom I like greatly, but who will not talk to each other because of some ancient, real or imagined exchange of enmity. But then Fandom, as a microcosm of larger society, still retains that society's faults and we're all stupid or lazy enough occasionally to do things that are socially wrong. Then we really see how resilient or intransigent our friends are... Not that I'm suggesting anyone should test the friendship of fandom by slapping it in the face.

I suppose it would be safe to say that while John Foyster doesn't actually slap fandom in the face, he is not averse to a little niggle in the ribs every now and again.

I note the pathetic attempts by my colleagues to disparage my accurate reporting of the June Nova Mob. I admit that Lucy Sussex has never fallen over drunk at a fan party, but this has not been for want of trying. I merely thought it honourable to pay homage to her attempts. And as for the coy striptease about what happens at ASFR meets, all I can say is that I shall shortly be Revealing all in Another Place ((Thyme 56)), and accordingly readers should take Lucy's remarks with a grain of white powder.

Yvonne's notion that I thrash about in response to inconceivable stupidities at the Nova Mob is just not accurate. It is the stupidities that are not merely conceived but then are thrust out into an unwanting world which make me writhe. Of course, the Nova Mob is not the only source of such things, but it does lead me to wish that research into AS (Artificial Stupidity) would advance sufficiently quickly that there becomes a market need for an appropriately abortifacient 'Morning-After' pill so that one may easily flush away the dross of First Wednesdays. Any advice you can offer would be appreciated.

Not me mate, but Larry Dunning wrote of a rather amusing incident that might hold some promise for you.

Official faanish meetings can be odd too; as I recall. There was a particular instance back in the heyday of Perth fandom, when WASFA was still alive and met at the Marylands Town Hall. This particular night, the hall was double-booked with the mentally handicapped association. Many of their members drifted into the meeting to watch the films we were showing. The funny thing was, you couldn't see any difference between them and the fans. This is not to say that fans were mentally retarded, but there were no outward signs to indicate this. Later, I stood outside with Damien Brennan while we listened to a gentleman who described his moral dilemma over becoming either a religious minister or running a fast-food outlet (something to do with chickens) and how all this was a heavy decision. I still wonder which choice he made. I don't know if he would have been more suited dispensing heavenly wisdom or chicken nuggets. It is interesting to note that a short while after, WASFA broke up.

After some disparaging remarks about Bruce Doull and a note about the "topheavy financial structure" of American football which are very applicable to the "new national competition" in Aussie Rules, Harry Warner, Jr. went on:

Maybe the wooden fragments Mark Loney sees along the Perth freeways come from an alternative universe, in which the trees are attempting to help forests in this universe. If the portions of their bodies the trees are contributing to the cause should become bothersome enough to force an abandonment of the freeways, nature would presumably recover the ground it lost when the highways were constructed and trees would again grow where concrete or blacktop now exist.

Only a sf fan could come up with an explanation like that. Sally Beasley, on the other hand, gives a much more down-to-earth explanation which should appeal to my father, if not my step-mother.

Mark Loney's musing on wood and the freeways were interesting because, in 1979, some of that great toll of wood was my treasured mahogany dining table. It hadn't been properly tied to the trailer, when moving house from north to south of the river, and blew off just after the Marrows Bridge. Mahogany is a lot lighter than the jarrah it resembles! Nowadays, I can afford to have stuff moved professionally, of course, and we have a jarrah dining table. We are unlikely to move again, anyway, since Dave threatens to pour boiling oil in my left ear if I so much as suggest it.

Don't let it be said that LARRIKIN doesn't have a social conscience; Brian Earl Brown wrote with a good idea for cutting our energy bills.

The interstate highways around here have wide margins between lanes and on either side, maybe 40 metres in all, which is planted in grass, allowed to go to weeds and mowed three or four times a year. If all the land was planted in clover or alfalfa the highway department could raise several dozen tons of hay per mile, which could be fed into a methane digester to provide enough fuel for all the department's needs, and then some. At last our nation's highways would be making a profit.

But, in typical style, Walt Willis saw the wider implications of Mark Loney's piece with it...

... reminding me of a theory once advanced by Bob Shaw that having a cow in your living room would be the equivalent of a half-kilowatt electric fire. Of course in Australia it would have to be a sheep, I suppose; in fact two sheep to be calorifically equivalent to a cow. They would keep the carpet cropped too and I expect there are already firms in Australia marketing pairs of sheep for this purpose. I have however heard bad reports of the sales techniques of some of these double grazing salesmen.

WAHF Stewart Jackson who obviously knows nothing about the Great Game of Cricket and probably wants to keep it that way. Fascal Thomas; Dave Collins; Christine Ashby; Diane Fox; Marilyn Pride just back from her DUFF trip. Terry Frost who, when donating blood, likes to see how fast he can fill the bag by pumping the hand-grip, and Mike Glicksohn who is one of the world's slowest bleeders. Richard Faulder; Ian Bambro who, with Harry Bell, was holidaying in Greece, the lucky buggers. Michelle Hallett who wrote while the whole of the Australian navy (4 ships and a few lifeboats), as well as bits of the US, British and French Navies, passed her flat - a sight she didn't like. Sue Thomason who sent a very detailed and interesting description of what is going on in Taral's title/illo; Roger Weddall; Brad Foster; and Craig Hilton who complained that we hadn't used his artwork just when we were about to. Sometimes you just can't win.

The saddest notes came from Mrs. Linda Harris, Pam Wells and Dave Collins, who wrote to advise us of the death of Rob Gregg, Mrs. Harris's brother. He had been sick for some time and passed away on the 29th of September. Anyone wishing to send a card to Rob's family can write to Mrs. Harris at 9 Pentine Close, Upminster, Essex, RM14 1GJ. Of Rob, Pam writes, "I never knew him personally - very few fans had met him -but he was an active and keen fan on paper."

And why don't we spell phonetic phonetically - Wendy Hirsh

INCIDENT IN A PUB 2 At the end of 1980 I had finished my first year of full-time employment after more years than I care to remember acquiring my piece of paper from Adelaide University. Needing to get away from both work and the city I took the opportunity of the Christmas break to visit my parents in the country and catch up with a few old friends.

It was on one of those visits to my mates on a hot Saturday afternoon that it became obvious that the lack of any cold amber fluid was going to be a great obstacle to having a convivial chewing of the fat. Being the visitor, and the only one fully employed, I decided to do the right thing and drop around the corner to the local to pick up a half dozen or so of the South Australian Brewery's finest.

Country pubs on summer Saturday afternoons have a tendency to be rather quiet places - what with most of their clientele out playing sport or getting the wheat harvest in - and this one was no exception. There were only three other patrons in the place when I bellied up to the bar and waited to be served - two farmers I didn't know and the local Postmaster, a good friend of my father's.

The guy behind the bar must have been out the back trying to bottle the beer himself because it took an inordinate amount of time for him to show himself - I'm just glad I wasn't dying of thirst. Still, everything moves slower in the country, the bar was cooler than the shade outside and it

did give me the chance to have a few words with the bloke I knew.

Leaning against the bar I could see that one of the other two seemed to be staring at me even more than usual; long hair and beards had a tendency to draw quite a number of long looks, even in 1980. This didn't bother me terribly much but I thought that if I stared back at him it might either give me an indication as to who he was or, better still, stop him looking at me. It did neither, and his curiosity got the better of him.

"You're Brian Middlemiss's son aren't you?"

"Yeah, that's right. But I don't think I know you."

He muttered some name, which meant something to me, and came back with: "Haven't seen you around much lately. What're you doing these days?"

"Not much. I'm working down in Adelaide."

"Uhh. Right. What sort of work are you doing?"

"Just shuffling papers around. You know." Knowing that, as a farmer, he would probably draw his own conclusions from that and leave it alone.

No such luck. He just didn't know when to stop. "Yeah, but who for?"

I was now starting to get the drift of this conversation and didn't particularly like where it was headed. There wasn't all that much I could do though, without appearing rude, except wait for the barman to turn up.

Luckily the barman appeared and took my order. I was left hoping that he would be a little quicker than he had been up to then. "For the Public Service." I noticed that what a very strange thing was going on there in that bar: this farmer and I were trading very terse questions and answers while two others stood around watching it all and saying nothing. Added to that the Postmaster had started to get a big grin all over his face like he too knew what was going to happen - as I recall he did know where I worked - and the farmer's mate was just looking backwards and forwards cradling his beer.

"What department?" Smarter than I thought.

"Treasury." Thinking that would stop him. By now the Postmaster could hardly control his giggling and had turned back to the bar to give his beer the attention it had been lacking over the past few minutes.

"Yeah, but what part of Treasury." I was sunk. There was nowhere left to go.

"Tax." The timing here was something to behold: the farmer's jaw dropped open, my mate burst into laughter and the barman handed me back my change all in the same instant.

Taxation officers are hated more than just about anyone else by people in the country - I might just as well have told him that I had shot his sister - and as I left the bar to the noise of laughter and a very loud "Hook, Line and Sinker!", this farmer looked about as happy as a bastard on Father's Day.

Going out with this issue is a DUFF ballot, which we trust you'll put to good use. The LARRIKIN editors are rather divided on who to support: you'll note that Perry is one of Tom Whitmore's nominators, while Irwin supports our cover artist, Lucy Huntzinger. But, of course, you know who you are going to vote for, so we just say "Go for it".

SOAPIES

This article is going to mention TV daytime soapiers. But it isn't going to have the usual prefatory remarks about how the TV is only a black-and-white and we didn't want it but friends gave it to us rather than throw it out and we hardly ever watch it and only caught a rubbishy show by mistake... Well, the simple fact is that we are all allowed to have our particular lowbrow interests, and we shouldn't feel obliged to hide them behind a great weight of justification. And besides, Days of Our Lives isn't my vice but Wendy's.

She is an occasional viewer of the show, and I must admit I tend to enjoy it when she tells me about the ridiculous story-lines, the pathetic acting, and all that. I've long known about how the soapiers make sure that those who miss an episode or four don't miss out on any of the, ahem, plot developments, but I wasn't aware of the mechanics of the whole process. Now I know what I want to be when I grow up: a daytime soapie writer. It would have to be the easiest job in the world. Apparently, out of every TV hour, up to 15 minutes is straight flash-backs to past episodes. Imagine being the writer: at the end of your working day you haven't reached your required number of pages. You don't feel like doing some overtime, so you pick up one of the scripts from the previous week, find a nice four minute scene, and simply have one of the characters recall that scene.

Wendy tells me they get great use out of their flashbacks. One time she was most amused that a scene they'd used as a flashback she had seen the previous week, also as a flashback. I think the only reason she watched the show the following week was just to see that flashback a third time.

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