

LARRIKIN

LARRIKIN 13, JUNE 1987, is edited and published by Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA) and Irwin Hirsh (2/416 Dandenong Rd., Caulfield North, Victoria 3161 AUSTRALIA). This fanzine wishes to congratulate Amnesty International on 25 years of inestimable service, and the New Zealand Rugby Union team for taking out the inaugural World Cup. Without the help of contributors, Pam Wells in Britain (as agent), Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels) and ATom (page 1) and Craig Hilton (page 8) for artwork, none of this would have been possible. All rights revert to contributors after publication. This fanzine is available for written contributions - articles, letters of comment, postcards etc. - fanzines in trade (one to each of us please) or artwork.

ONE PIZZA TO GO

- Marc Ortlieb -

One can't help but get the feeling that LARRIKIN should be subtitled "The fanzine for tapeworms". The zine devotes vast amounts of space to food yet neither editor has the rotundity that is usually associated with such devoted attention to the products of the culinary art. What you need is an expert in the field - vis one with the appropriate width of knowledge, one with a gut feeling for the subject - in short, I offer my particular perspective on the topic.

I will grant that I was not always the suave Orson Welles-style bon vivant that I am now. My earlier experiences of foreign eateries were not the sort of thing that get one invited to posh restaurants like Stephanies. I first encountered Indian food while a callow youth with very little tolerance for alcohol. This was unfortunate, as I'd decided that beer was just the stuff to burn away that nasty hot curry taste. The very smell of curry today brings up the most unpleasant of associations. I discovered that curry burns on the way up as well as on the way down.

My other major faux pas had to do with Italian food. When I was a young lad living in Adelaide I was not fond of pizza. It always seemed too salty and was covered with dry encrustations of a dubious nature. Besides, it tasted lousy when sprinkled with vinegar and then doused with tomato sauce - my standard treatment of take-away food. Thus I knew little about pizza.

This was not normally a problem. However, one afternoon I was visiting Chris - a delightfully mad, blind, electric guitarist. Chris's place was the sort of flat where all manner of people would meet for natter, music and certain substances. I had a Honda 450 motorcycle at the time and so wasn't as dependant on public transport as I am now. Chris and I nattered a bit, with the others who'd passed through that day - a few members of Chris's band, a

couple of other musos and a gentleman who had provided a pleasant blend of Irish tobacco. It was the sort of afternoon that didn't seem to end until it did, and I had to get home to feed the cat.

As I was leaving, Chris asked me if I'd mind grabbing him something to eat. Having bloated myself on potato chips and chocolate-covered peanuts in the course of the afternoon, I had decided not to join Chris for dinner, but I was quite happy to collect the food for him. He directed me to the local pizzeria and gave me full directions for his pizza. I got the bike started and buzzed around. Watching the pizza-making process was fascinating - so many colours, so many smells and the way the bloke spun the pizza dough. I got quite caught up in the entire thing. Finally there was the large square pizza box and therein lay the problem. When my mind had registered the task I had been given, I'd made the connection "Take-away food equals fish'n'chips or hamburgers"; they all came in small easily stowed packages. Here I was now with a floppy box the size of a stack of record albums. I took it out to the bike, placed in on the pillion, and started to stretch an octopus clip over it to hold it in place. The box sagged alarmingly and the elastic strap dug deep into the cardboard.

The idea of carrying it the way I sometimes carried briefcase - wedged between my stomach and the filler cap on the fuel tank - didn't seem to offer a reasonable solution either. The lack of rigidity of the box was a problem and I had visions of the lid flying off and smacking me in the face. The problem still existed. What was needed was the sort of cognitive leap that Colin Kapp heroes always make in Unorthodox Engineer stories. The pizza box was the same size as a pile of record albums. record albums fitted neatly into my shoulder bag. I took the box and slid it vertically into my shoulder bag, jumped on the bike and, after the customary three attempts, the engine kicked into life and I shot back to Chris's place.

The getting of the pizza had taken me longer than I'd anticipated. I left the engine running, rushed up to Chris's flat, thumped on the door and, as he opened it, I thrust the pizza into his hands and said "Here you are. I've got to be going."

I was just dropping the bike into first when I heard an almighty scream and turned towards the flat. The door burst open and Chris came rushing out screaming "Ortlieb, you fucking idiot!" There, in his hands was the pizza box, with a disgusting mess of pizza crust, shrimps, anchovies, mushrooms and cheese all slumped down in one corner. I looked at it. He looked at it. We looked at each other and then broke into hysterical laughter.

I suppose you could call that a genuine learning experience. I have never carried a pizza on a motorcycle since. Indeed I didn't develop a taste for pizza until after giving up riding bikes. I'm far more sophisticated now. I get Cath to go out for pizza. Since her parents are Italian she knows about that sort of thing.

LETTERS FROM OUR MATES (issue 11) - compiled by Irwin -

We rather expected Harry Warner, Jr would respond to John Foyster's column in LARRIKIN 11. We weren't disappointed...

I'm glad John Foyster escaped the attack by his books. A while back, there was a newspaper story about an elderly man who was critically injured in California. He lived in a hotel room which he had jammed with piles of books teetering almost to the ceiling in every empty space, and when a mild earthquake jolted the hotel, the books stopped teetering and started toppling over him. The last I heard, he was recovering but it was touch and go for a while. And the once famous pianist-composer Alkan died when a bookcase toppled over onto him while he was pulling a large volume from it. In one way, I'm lucky because I'm such a clumsy fellow that my piles of books always start to fall over before they are high enough to hurt anything but my feet; if I could stack them up efficiently, I might be in danger myself. But I do worry about the danger that I'll someday be unable to enter one of the spare bedrooms where I stuff so much kipple because a bookfall has caused the door which opens inward to be blocked.

Would you believe that telephone answering machines are making some people other than their manufacturers and sellers prosperous? I saw an advertisement on television the other evening for a cassette which contains seven allegedly funny recordings which you can dub onto your answering machine for the entertainment of people who call you. One is voices singing the start of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, another is a takeoff on the introduction to each episode of The Twilight Zone, and the others seem equally irrelevant. The cassette costs \$13.95, if I remember correctly, and I assume it contains only the few minutes of material that would fit seven messages onto answering machines.

Falling stacks of paper is not something I'll have to worry about. Some years ago I helped out a friend who was setting up a second-hand bookshop, and cleared out a number of books. And since I won GUFF I've been going through my book and fanzine collections trying to work out what I really don't need and can be donated to the fan fund.

Linnette Horne wrote in defence of...

... telephone answering machines. They are just poor helpless pieces of office equipment who are just trying to do what they have been programmed to do. After all how would you like to be in their position, having to listen to some idiot babbling at them, then trying to adequately and clearly repeat their mumbles so that their owner can understand the message. An answering machine should be helped by being spoken to clearly and concisely for it to be used to its maximum efficiently. While some callers find the machines a nuisance they are of great use to the self-employed who do not have office staff. But this will only be so if they are used properly.

I'm sure I use the machines correctly Linnette, but that still doesn't mean I have to like them. I pay my taxes according to the law, but that doesn't mean I like doing it. On a lighter note Angus Caffrey wrote with further details regarding his recent lack of written communication.

I haven't written to you because my el spiffo IBM golfball has gone on the fritz, ok? The first thing it did was drop the "E" from its repertoire, a fact I noticed only after typing out a videocassette label: "AN INTRVIW WITH SIMON D BAUVOIR". I bt Jan-Paul Sartr would hav bn right pissd off at that.

The problem is my IBM now doesn't work at all. I'd never had any problems with it (except for the tab; when you pushed it the little golfball doova went sprzzzzzzzzzt and shot straight over to the other side of the carriage) until the "E" bailed out. I decided to fix the bastard myself. Not a good idea.

They make the damn things out of cast iron, really; it weighs more than I do, and balances upside down about as well. I got the bottom off and found an array of comb shaped doohickeys that keep the keys in line; the "E" had deftly slipped its moorings and was flapping ineffectually in the bowels of the monster. I gingerly undid the squitty little screws that hold down said doohickey. (Who does them up in the first place? Must have titchy fingers, whoever it is.) Then...TWANG! The doohickeys are all spring-loaded, and are held in place by one another; when I released one, the one next to it shot across the room at half the bloody speed of sound, never to be seen again. I got the "E" back, but my handless fumbings had sent the "Y", "H" and "N" the way of all flesh. If you know anyone who wants an almost working el spiffo IBM for nothing send them around.

Our last letter is from Richard Brandt:

Well, it's like this: I get LARRIKIN 11 out of my mailbox, and the first thing that leaps out to my eye is this Latin valediction. A hell of a note. Particularly that the first news I heard of this had to cross the Pacific to reach me. And here I thought I was cognoscent.

I didn't really know Terry Carr at all, when you come right down to it. Oh, I did chat with him back in Atlanta on Labor Day weekend - but it was not to the point of our actually exchanging names or introductions. Mostly I recall the absolutely blind insensitivity of the nerd who was badgering an obviously tired, weary, worn-out, bleary, intransigent Terry, fresh from a night of partying, into signing the nerd's shopping-bag's-worth of books. Every one. After Terry had specified he'd sign a book. Then said nerd asked Terry if his picture was included in The Faces of Science Fiction (he obviously didn't have the common courtesy to know this before asking), and since it wasn't, asked Terry if he would contribute a self-caricature. William Gibson had done one, which was actually quite good, but the nerd kept asking Terry in spite of his plainly stated refusal. And so it goes. This is one reason my copies of Fandom Harvest and whatnot weren't autographed. Terry had the patience of the gods when it came to even the worst of his "fans", I suppose, but I wasn't going to try it.

I did send Terry all issues of my fanzine, and after the third or fourth, I got an envelope in the mail. From Terry Carr. Goshwow. It was a copy of some apazine he had done. Once I read it, I realized it was a few years' vintage. No written word accompanied this offering. But the message as I took it was this: I'm really swamped so I can't give you a direct response to the fanzine you sent me. But by all means keep sending them.

This was the kind of oblique contact with someone I admire greatly that makes my day. Or week. Or month. Or whatever. Terry's opinion was of course one I valued highly, and merely the knowledge that my mailings to him weren't disappearing into a void, but were being acknowledged in some way, gave me a surreptitious thrill.

I LOVE THE SMELL OF LARRIKIN
IN THE MORNING

- John Foyster -

Once I was the sort of person who rushed for the mail at the earliest opportunity; whether it was delivered at home or to a Post Office Box I could not put off my

assault on the various bits of paper which flowed in.

No longer! It's all part of the move to Adelaide, which has located where I live, where I work, and the Norwood Post Office in an arrangement by no means conducive to postal rapine. If I want to, I can collect mail at the box during my lunch hour, but that doesn't leave much time for anything else. Besides, I can fit in mail collection another way.

Having an hour to eat does produce other problems, and my attempt to offset those includes what I laughingly describe as jogging. In the mornings I labour up and down one section of Osmond Terrace, keeping my mind on the job of Getting Fit by staring at the ground (and thus avoiding seeing the grandfathers with walking-sticks who flash by me in their morning ambulations). After a little while I get rather tired and decide to stop. It has proved to be a good idea to do this near the Norwood Post Office, because that way I can collect the previous day's mail, which I will glance at as I walk back home, and after that over breakfast.

You will recall that I have mentioned getting tired: I also get hot from all this violent exercise, and as a consequence sweat just a little. A further consequence is that this stuff drips off me as I walk back home often, as you will by now have guessed, over the mail. The sopping wet bills and advertisements seem to me to have been treated about right, but even fanzines can benefit from this slight lubrication. A few drops of sweat sprinkled over LARRIKIN seem to - well, if not freshen it up, at least give it a bit of a tang. And so I arrive home, laden down with wet bills and smelly fanzines. It still makes a good start to the day - better than reading newspapers (another vile habit I've managed to shake off).

AT THE ZOO

- Irwin -

For some time now Marc and Cath Ortlieb have been members of Friends of the Zoo, a group designed to provide a touch more financial support for

Melbourne's zoo than normal admission provides. One

of the main advantages of the group is that its members are allotted special times when they are the only people allowed in the zoo. Someone once asked what was the advantage to that, seeing that special times are always very early in the morning, prior to the normal public opening times. "Well," replied Marc, "the more people there are, the more inhibited the animals get."

I'm not a member of FOTZ, but I can certainly appreciate Marc's point. Last Christmas Day Wendy and I organised a group of our Jewish friends to spend the day at the zoo. It was great. It was fantastic. It was empty. Except for a few like-minded people we were the only ones there. We didn't have to wait for someone to move on for us to get a good view of the exhibits. And subsequently we never felt any pressure to move on to allow others the chance for a better view.

This advantage was driven home just a few days after our visit. We were talking to Mark Loney and Michelle Muijsert who had just been.

"Wasn't the butterfly enclosure great?" we excitedly asked.

"Don't know. There was a big queue waiting to get in, and we didn't feel like joining it."

"Oh..." was all we could reply.

I tend to have mixed feelings towards zoos. Intellectually I know that when the day comes a zoo isn't going to hold off the extinction of any species; an oft-mentioned justification for their existence. Placing animals in restrictively small spaces, not allowing them the opportunity to use their wits to gain their food, is not what is needed, as shown by the lack of success in trying to mate animals held in captivity.

On the other hand I've never come away from a zoo with anything less than the feeling that my time there was well worth while. I enjoy watching animals from a close range. To just be there and be able to concentrate on each individual animal is a fascinating experience. And I know that I'm far more aware of the need to maintain this world's natural heritage because I have zoos to visit, and the textual opportunities they offer.

More recently Marc and Cath's involvement with FOTZ gave them the idea of getting together a group of Melbourne's fans to sponsor an animal, with our money going directly towards the maintenance of the particular animal of our choice. I like the idea and indicated to Marc and Cath that I wanted to be involved in the scheme.

That night I mentioned the idea to Wendy, and my sister Anouk, and my mother who were visiting. We all thought the idea had merit.

"How much does it cost?" asked Wendy.

"I don't know, but I guess it depends on what animal is being sponsored. A bird wouldn't require the same level of upkeep as a lion or tiger or bear."

"Oh my," Wendy added, naturally.

"Do they have any particular animal in mind?" my mother asked.

"I'm not sure," and from there we started tossing up ideas for which animal we'd like to sponsor. We each had our particular favourites.

"Hey," screamed Wendy, "we could sponsor a butterfly!"

"Yea, I can see us now. We walk into the enclosure, point to a certain butterfly and say 'That's ours.'"

"And given the lifespan of insects," pondered Anouk (a recently graduated Biological Scientist, so she Pondered with Authority), "two days after you send in your money, they'll have to send you a refund."

ADJUSTMENTS/ADJUST ME

- John McPharlin -

For non-Sydneyites, what follows are a few random observations on the differences between Sydney and some other places I have been.

If you are walking along any of the main streets of Canberra after dark and you encounter more than eight people, you know it must be late night shopping. Imagine then the shock to my system when I moved up to Sydney, just before Christmas 1984, after nearly two years in Canberra. On my first day in my new job (in the city centre), I decided to spend my lunch time doing a little window shopping. I soon learnt a few facts of life, specifically that the Sydney pre-Christmas crush is one of the most aggressive mobs in the world: consumerism with its gloves off. You stand on a street corner, waiting for the 'walk' light to go green. When it does, the crowd on the opposing corner comes across the street at you in a solid mass of flesh. No gaps are offered and no quarter is given. I quickly came to understand that assuming a defensive position (eg doubled up on the ground protecting my privates) is instantly recognised as a sign of weakness and pounced upon. Survival lies in remaining upright and then, when you are almost in contact, turning roughly side-on and dropping your leading shoulder: either they open up a gap for you or you bump 'em hard in the chest and knock 'em flat on their back (as they say on the Pink Floyd record: "good manners darnt cost nuffink, do they?").

My favourite picture palace is currently the Stanmore Cinema Centre. Years ago it may have been a big cinema, but by the time I got to Sydney it was a modern twin. Subsequently the bigger of the two auditoriums (auditoria?) was split into two, so there are now three and the previously smaller one is now the biggest. The S.C.C. is the only multiple screen complex I've ever been to where they schedule all three films to start at exactly the same time. I suspect that this is because the new walls are just a bit on the cheap and thin side and an early audience's enjoyment might be a tad diluted by the noise of a herd of hoons entering or leaving the theatrette next door.

My favourite night is Tuesday and my fave session is the last one (9:30). This is half-price night and the last session always seems to attract the biggest bunch of hoons, animals and candidates for retro-active abortion that I have ever seen. By 9:15 the foyer is shoulder to shoulder with a seething mass of humanity, all too few of whom have more than a nodding acquaintance with a bar of soap. They must realize that they will not be let upstairs until the patrons from the previous session have made their escape. However, in their keenness to get a good seat, they form a tight knot at the bottom of the stairs and, intentionally or otherwise, they do everything short of linking arms to slow down the egress of the crowd from the preceding session. Usually I've worked late, so I'm still on my way home (the bus stop is right outside the front door) and I have my genuine vinyl, junior executive briefcase with me. This provides me with a clear advantage, since not only does it act as a knee and groin protector, dextrous use also turns it into a battering ram of considerable "persuasion". My briefcase technique was honed by having to deal with the hordes which team out of Wynyard Station and up George Street during the 8:30 weekday morning rush. Twelve months of fighting my way down George Street against the tide and then fording the mouth of the mighty Wynyard river gave me better hand-to-hand combat training than a couple of years of C.M.F. and S.C.A. combined. "I'm so sorry", I would say as some

shithead in a three-piece suit tried to brush me out of his way and instead found himself carrying a limp that was going to last him the rest of the day.

Somehow, this leads me to the subject of cockroaches. The first time I saw a Sydney cockroach, I thought to myself "I don't remember buying that coffee table". Yes, they are every bit as big as you have heard and they are everywhere (even out on the main streets, where they are sometimes mistaken for a new generation of Japanese cars). Some people apparently get quite used to them, but I was brought up to believe that they are an indication of uncleanness and consequently I cannot abide them. I keep a can of insecticide in every room of the flat (Pea-Beu Rapid Action TriKill: none of this low irritant, leave 'em to stagger off and die rubbish for me, I go for the one that fucks 'em over straight away). No cockie lives longer than 15 seconds in my sight.

Hungry? Living in Sydney has introduced me to the overwhelming temptations of Pierre and Michele's French Patisserie and Gourmet Food Salon. I found this shop crouching and ready to pounce, half-way between my flat and the laundramat, which meant I had to run the gauntlet four times every weekend (there and back on the Saturday, when I dropped my threads off, and same again on Sunday when I picked them up). I held out for well over a month but then slipped gradually into degradation. You've probably heard this same sorry tale from other lips already: a few croissants, a bit of quiche, some pate and the next thing I knew I was into the hard stuff in a big way: sorbets, home-made chocolate ice-cream and gateaux of alarming variety and calorific content. After six months I moved to another flat, three or four miles away, but it was too late. I was hooked and ready to crawl naked over broken glass and hot coals (or just get into the car and drive there) for my weekend fix. Speaking of choses francaises (fings french), there was until tres recently a great piece of graffiti in Glebe - a billboard advertising french pantyhose had as its main slogan: "Feel French below the waist". "Wear flippers", someone had spray painted beneath it.

It come off
in me 'ands!
Honest!

PRINTED MATTER



LARRIKIN 13

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