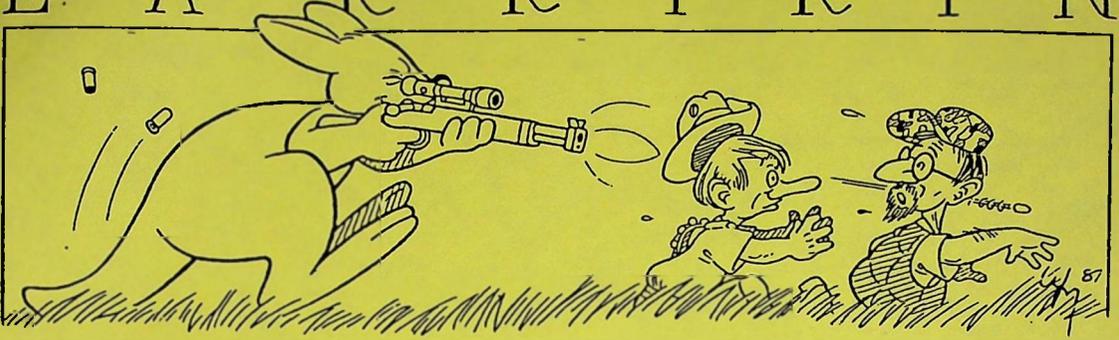


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LARRIKIN 16, JUNE 1988, is edited and published by Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA) and Irwin Hirsh (2/416 Dandenong Road, Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA). *The editorial staff of this fanzine cannot work out why anybody thinks that the birth of Australia as a nation took place when a foreign power usurped a small portion of the eastern coastline of this continent and turned it into a penal colony. Doesn't anyone remember Federation?* Without the help of contributors, Pam Wells as British agent (John Le Carre would be proud), Marc Ortlieb (mailing labeller extraordinaire) and Taral (this page) and Brad Foster (last page) for artwork, none of this would have happened. All rights revert to contributors after publication. This fanzine is available for written contributions - articles, letters of comment, pocsarcd etc. - fanzines in trade (one to each of us please) or artwork.

PERTH IN '94

- OK Irwin, we're gonna have to put out another issue of Larrikin pretty soon. I'm getting sick of all these people asking me when the next issue's coming out and I'm starting to run out of excuses.

Me too. Tell you what though, things are getting tough. At one stage Foyster used to ring me long distance to tell me we should be publishing again. Now he's graduated to the in-person approach. Last time he was in Melbourne for an ASFR collating session he made a special trip out to our place to find out what's happening. Face-to-face it was. Eyeball-to-eyeball. Knuckle-to-cheek, almost. The whole procedure made him miss the first two hours of the collation session.

- Two hours. Not bad. I'd think that that was enough justification for not getting back into the old routine. If nothing else we're helping good ole JF miss what can't be classed as one of Fandom's Greatest Moments.

No, he thrives on the ASFR collating sessions. As I understand it the stapler is only brought out after all the pages have been collated. Then John brings out a large electric fan and threatens to turn it on unless the rest follow his editorial directive.

- That certainly sounds like Foyster. He's never been backward about being forward. A real toe-cutter. OK, so we're going to get back into the old routine. It certainly looks like we don't have any choice. So what are we going to put in the first issue?

The usual stuff I guess.

- Talk about food, and throw in a few fanzine reviews? I'll go along with that. The tried and true method. And besides, it saves us having to think up anything new to do. Far be it for anyone to think we're progressive.

- By the way, what did you think about Ted White's comments about Larrikin?

What comments?

- Well, he said that there was too little difference between issues - always about food and laundromats.

I can't disagree with the food bit but I don't remember anything about laundromats. Hang on, I don't even recall any comments about Larrikin from Ted White.

- He said it on a panel at Conspiracy.

What panel?

- That first one, you know, with Greg Pickersgill.

Oh, that panel. Thanks, I didn't really want to be reminded of it.

- Sorry. Anyway I couldn't remember any laundromat stories either, so when I got home I checked it out. All I could find was two mentions, both made in passing.

Two mentions. Hmm, that seems a bit excessive.

- They were nothing really. One was in an article by McPharlin. He was telling us about a cake shop he'd discovered because it was next to his laundromat. The other was as slight.

Well, maybe we should get into laundromat stories. Ted's lit the way now.

- Well, don't look at me for any ideas. I've got a clothes washer so I never have to go to a laundromat.

Same goes for me. Can't see myself building up a refined collection of anecdotes based on the step I take from our bathroom to the laundry.

- Yeah. I thought you had a clothes washer. That's why I decided to check out Ted's comments.

I wonder what he's up to. I remember that Ted was rather surprised when I'd mentioned that we'd run fanzine reviews in Larrikin. He told me he simply wasn't aware that we'd published fanzine reviews.

- That's bloody weird. Each of those columns ran to about two pages and then he goes and picks up on something as miniscule as laundromats.

But where does that leave us, Larrikin-wise?

- Bugged if I know. But what the hell, let's chuck it out and see if anyone notices.

ENTREE AND DESSERT

Some have described Larrikin as the foodies' fanzine.

- Gerald Smith -

That's not very surprising when sometimes it seems that just reading an issue endangers the waistline. Often it appears that the sole preoccupation of contributors is food and the

means of getting fed.

However, Larrikin cannot genuinely be called the fanzine for foodies unless it includes something about that great Sydney institution - Thursday night at Galaxy.

Each Thursday night fans from all over Sydney descend on the caverns of Galaxy Bookshop. Some actually buy books. But most are there for the real purpose of the gathering - to chew the fat while deciding where to go in order to indulge in Sydney fandom's greatest diversion - eating.

Sometimes a visitor or two from "elsewhere" is drawn along with the locals on such an expedition. So it was, last year, when Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown popped in to renew acquaintances and found themselves in a smallish group at one of Sydney's fine Greek restaurants.

Diethnes had been discovered by the Galaxy crowd a few years earlier, after the closure of the justly famous Jenny's Wine Bar.

Ahh, Jenny's - a name that still brings wistful expressions when mentioned in the presence of veteran Thursday nighters. Jenny's, where the chef was crazy enough not only to tolerate the antics of a table or two of the Galaxy's crazies but to even become part of it himself. Jenny's, the home of THOSE desserts. Where you might find at meal's end that your dessert is, in fact, two rounded, wobbly jellies each surmounted with a bright red cherry; or a delicately carved banana with a line of cream leading from one end and two dollops of ice-cream strategically positioned either side at the other. I believe one word for them is erotic. Another is pornographic.

And, yet, the idea for the desserts began innocently enough. It was at Syncon 83. One night of the con, Dea O'Brien (as she then was), Robbie Matthews, Womble and myself, together with a third male whose exact identity has been forgotten, visited an unremarkable Chinese restaurant in nearby Lane Cove. There we supped on a quite reasonable meal and then ordered desserts. The ladies both ordered pineapple fritters, the gentlemen all ordered the banana fritters. I'm quite sure the management did not see the humour in the two pineapple rings, each with a neat round of ice-cream in the middle and a cherry on top. But surely even they must have seen the other side of the gently curving banana set off with two blobs of ice-cream. I wonder if at least they recall the gales of laughter that erupted from one particular table.

So, when Peter, the chef at Jenny's, heard of this he considered it a challenge not to be outdone by the merely fortuitous. His famous desserts were therefore contrived. But they were none the less for it. They also contributed greatly to the relaxed inhibitions at the restaurant - relaxed to the extent of allowing Gropecon 1, but that's another story.

As I said earlier, the Galaxy crowd had discovered Diethnes a few years ago. It was known to serve pleasant food in a laid-back if somewhat noisy atmosphere and to serve that food with a modest efficiency. There was, therefore, nothing to prepare us for that night.

Then again, what can prepare you for a Scottish waiter at a Greek restaurant. One is not certain which is worse - the shock of recognition or the nagging temptation to ask just what on earth a Scotsman is doing serving at a Greek restaurant. It is a temptation frustrated by an upbringing in manners that won't allow you to simply ask.

No sooner over that shock and it was time to order. I'm sure that neither Leigh nor Valma really have anything against Scottish/Greek waiters. It's just that neither was feeling all that hungry and, well, there isn't any rule against varying the order of courses - though, by the time they were finished this was probably one waiter who wished there was.

"I'll have this entree as entree", says Valma, "and this one as dessert."

"As main course," replies our man.

"Oh no main course."

"No main course?", the guy begins to get ruffled. "Two entrees, should I bring them together?"

"No. One is for entree. The other is for dessert."

"For dessert?"

"Yes, you bring it when you bring the desserts."

"But I'm not taking orders for desserts now. This is entrees and main meals."

"Right. And this is an entree which I want as a dessert."

"So you want to order two entrees now and a dessert later?"

"No. One of the entrees is a dessert."

"I see." He clearly didn't. "And you sir?", turning to Leigh.

"Could I see the dessert menu please. I'd like to order one as an entree."

If you should have cause to visit Diethnes on a visit to Sydney and you see this tartaned, pathetic gibbering figure in the corner, be gentle. Life's been tough.

BACK HOME Wendy and I arrived back home from my GUFF trip on Friday morning, the 18th of December, and using that quiet efficiency for which he is known Carey Handfield had us booked for a Xmas dinner at his and Jo Masters's place within 24 hours of our arrival. Also within that first 24 hours we'd created one hell of a mess throughout our dining and lounge rooms. Two of the bags we had been living out of belonged to my parents and they were leaving for Bali in two days. Plonk! and suddenly all the contents were everywhere. Three of the boxes we'd sent home had arrived, and their contents were also on the floor. I did my calculations. "Wendy, we sent home 51 kilos of books, and what you see there is only 14 kilos of it," I said. "Gulp!" was about the response.

"We've got to do something about this mess Irwin" Wendy said, a short while later, and I, with my usual prioritising competency, stacked the four months' worth of mail into neat piles and incorporated our Duty-Free-bought-in-Hong-Kong-Compact-Disc-Player into our sound system. I stood back and surveyed the scene. It was no neater. The spot where we had placed our duty-free buys was now a mountain of packing materials. Defeated by my attempts, I put on a CD and sat down at the stacks of mail to do four months' of catching up.

"I wanna go back!" cried Wendy as she lay on our bed. "Why did we have to come home?" "I don't know," I murmured as I lay down next to her. Soaking up the familiarity of the mattress beneath me I added "But at least we're back in our own bed."

Suddenly I sat up. "Dudley's dead."

"How do you know?"

"Well twice Dad asked me if we could look after their place while there were away. And each time he said 'Water the plants and feed the pet.' He said 'pet' not 'pets'. I wouldn't have noticed if he asked me only once." And after a bit added, "Why couldn't they tell us?"

Before we'd left my parents had been talking about putting down our version of Man's Best Friend. "He's growing old, he's sick and he's really starting to suffer." But the bottom line really got to us. "And we can't go away because of him." As late as the day before we left they were repeating that line. "'A pet is for life.'" we car-sticker sloganed, "Not for death."

Our first postcard home was addressed to Dudley. Referring to the photo of the corgi sitting on the Queen's lap it began "Here is a photo of a dog which is treated almost as well as you are," and ended with an under-lined "See you when we get back." With all this in mind Wendy went on the offence the next day. With all the efficiency of the kindergarten teacher that she is, she put her hands on her hips, loudly tapped her right foot, and with a steely stare popped the question. "Okay, what happened to Dudley?"

Fortunately that bottom line never became an issue. Fourteen and a half years had taken its toll. He was going deaf and blind, he'd lost control of his bowels, he seemed to be in total agony and he couldn't negotiate any stairs. My sister thought she'd found the solution to, at least, the problem of living in a two-storey house, and being left alone when my parents went away; Dudley could live out his days at her place. But the vet saw problems with that proposal. Dudley's bowel problems demanded that he be left outside - unfair on a dog that was always allowed to sleep inside - and that at his age it was unfair to make him get used to a new home. Standing there in the surgery my mother gritted her teeth and made the decision, quickly, before making the decision was agony. It was two weeks before we got back, but not even my father or sisters got a chance to give the old boy a farewell hug.

Any sadness here was balanced by the joy we felt after we'd visited our grandmothers in their old peoples' home. First we saw Wendy's grandmother. We weren't sure what to expect as while we were away she'd suddenly had to undergo a repeat of the operation which a year before had made her decide that at 87 she couldn't live by herself anymore. There was no need for any worry on our part, the strength that had always made us say she'd live to 120 had come to the fore. She was bouncing around, excited at seeing us, asking us questions about our trip and all. We asked about her operation. "Oh that" she shrugged it off with a wave of her hand. The only bad point was when she again introduced us to her friend, the same person she seems to always be sitting with. "I know them," her friend said with a tone of voice which was saying "you tell me that every time."

Then we wandered around to the wing where my grandmother lives. In three or four years she has never been better. For the first time in that long the conversation didn't consist of us hearing about how sick she is and how many treatments a day she has and what time of day those treatments happen and...and...and... For the first time in years our conversation had some variety, and with each turn we got more excited about the change that was happening in this old lady. In the past she'd always been unwilling to go out of the building with a list of excuses which indicated a basic insecurity with the world outside, with one fear building upon another. Ask her to go out for a walk or come with you to visit one of her new-born great-grandchildren and you'd get a great long spiel about how there is not enough time between, say, her asthma treatment at 11 and lunch at 12 for such things. Now here she was telling us how she and a friend would regularly go out for walks. "We don't have much time in the morning because I have treatment at eleven o'clock and lunch is twelve o'clock. So we don't go far, just down the street a little. But in the afternoon we go for longer walks."

The next day the phone just ran hot. Debbie and Steve tried ringing for 45 minutes but just kept on getting an engaged signal and decided they'd be better off speaking to us direct and came around for a visit. The phone would have been going for hours but at five o'clock we went out, locking the door behind us. First we went to Simon and Bronwyn's for Xmas drinks. Simon is one of my oldest friends, one of the two people I still see from our college days. He

and Bronwyn introduced us to all the people in the room, who all oohed and aahed at the list of places we'd visited and who asked us impossible-to-answer questions like "What was the highlight?" Being tired and coming down with a cold I wasn't in the mood for meeting new people so I escaped to the kitchen to reacquaint myself with Tony. We started by working out that, yes, the last time we saw each other was at a party on the last day of college, and from there we we condensed two lots of four years of life into an hour's chat.

We would've gone on for a while more but Wendy and I had to excuse ourselves and zip off to the Stalactites Cafe to join a dinner crowd organised by Justin Ackroyd. We arrived half an hour late, in part because we still thought of eight o'clock as being three hours after sunset not an hour before, and just as the waiter finished taking orders. We sat down at one end of the table where it was easy to have conversations with Cath Ortlieb, Nick Stathopoulos, Jenny Chudeki and Justin, when the latter two announced to us that they were now living together.

"We know," I said.

"In fact we were the first to know," Wendy said. "When we saw Perry and Robyn in Rome they told us you were living together and all we could say was 'We know'."

"We probably knew that you two were living together even before you realised it," I continued. "It was toward the end of September that Wendy told me that 'Justin looking after Perry's place meant that he went there twice a week just to make sure everything was okay.'"

The looks of response to our prophetic skills were as expected.

Soon Nick and I were discussing some fan fundery politics. Our chat was broken by attempts by Wendy and I to get a menu. The waiter was reluctant to allow us to be so privileged as to add to his bosses' profit margin. "It's too late," was the way he put it.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"It's too late."

"But you're open 24 hours. How can it be too late?"

"It just is."

"But how can that be?"

"I've already taken the order for this table."

I pointed to the many empty tables around us, "You mean to say that if we were sitting there you'd take our order? That's ridiculous!" I made a move to get up at which the waiter relented.

That little tete-a-tete was the cue for Cath to tell us some of her more amusing shopping stories: "I wanted to buy some Pecan nuts once, but I couldn't remember their name. So I was describing them to the shopkeeper, and she said I wanted walnuts. 'No,' I said. 'Walnuts do funny things to my ears.' And she came straight back with 'Well, don't put them in your ears then.'"

Talking with Marc Ortlieb, who was sitting just out of comfortable chat range, was hard work but I felt it my duty to bring Marc up-to-date with some of the more important bits of fannish news. "The biggest news is that Hyphen 37 is out. I saw a copy just before coming home."

"I've already got a copy."

"Already! Gee, that was quick."

"Yes, and Walt has asked if I can pass on a message to the Honourable Race Mathews." It's not every day that someone halfway across the world asks you to contact your state's Minister for Police.

And with that the conversation took a turn and I was finding out about some of the goings-on in State politics while I was away. It's odd how such things go.

I also learnt that Susan Renouf, Australia's favourite bit of plastic, had split up with her latest husband and that the press were having a field day reporting all the court antics and such. Somewhere in all that we heard Many Herriot mention that she sometimes picks up a copy of The Toorak Times.

"Why?" someone asked, more-or-less on behalf of all of us.

"I'm trying to work out why it exists."

Someone else offered the straight-forward suggestion that it exists to propagate the views of some of Melbourne's right wingers but I butted in: "Mandy, surely it only exists so you can pick it up."

Mandy seemed to like this reply, but Marc wasn't so sure: "Irwin, does that mean that if Mandy didn't read it the rag wouldn't exist?"

"Sure. I never see it, so as far as I'm concerned it doesn't exist. Do your best not to honour their views I reckon. What keeps those people going is an audience."

Other conversations ensued. Cath and I discussed bad airline experiences, Wendy and Justin gossiped about various British fans, and Marc and Mandy talked about the Good Ol' Days when they both lived in Adelaide. Down the table was Lucy Sussex and across the noise and space between us she managed to tell me that there was a neat photo of me in SF Chronicle. That short chat convinced me that there is no way I'm going to try to have a conversation with any of the others further down the way.

All this was punctuated by the waiter doing us a favour by bringing the food we'd ordered, and later complicating things by bringing the bill. The only thing which is worse than the loud noise and missed opportunities for easy conversation which is created by large dinner groups is the confusion generated as people try to work out exactly how much their dinner cost. At least that's the way it usually is; this time things went extra quick, though my viewpoint is coloured by the fact that someone's miscalculation meant that I ended up paying 80 cents less than I should've.

"Hey look at the pretty money," Wendy said as I handed in my twenty dollar bill. "How much is that worth in Australian currency?"

Walking out Wendy sarcastically thanked the waiter.

"That's all right," he said. "I didn't want to serve you at first."

"Really! I never would have guessed," Wendy replied, not having changed her tone.

Outside Lewis Morley and Marilyn Pride thanked us for the postcard we'd sent them, Andrew Brown mentioned that he'd moved house, Stephen Boucher was going on about the printer the editors of Thyme use, and Lucy Sussex told me how she wanted to be the first on her block to have a Conspiracy report published. "I asked Mark Loney and Michelle Muijsert if they wanted it and they said 'Yes, our deadline is Friday.' It was a Monday, but fortunately I was sick on the Thursday, so I wrote it then. Then it took them two months to publish it."

Monday we went out to Wendy's work to catch up on all the news and information she would need before the next kindergarten year begins. "The new Treasurer is really tight," we were told. "I asked him for a cheque so I could buy the sausages for the end of year barbeque and he wouldn't give it to me unless he knew what it was for, and the exact amount."

Wendy just sighed, "Sounds like it'll be a fun year."

"Well Wendy," I said, "all you have to do is tell him you want a cheque made out to So-and-So Travel Agency for \$2100. Give him the information he wants and we'll be able to finance a trip back to Europe."

Later on we were told that in the previous few weeks there had been a rumour that Wendy had been taken ill again, gone back into hospital and died. "We even got phone calls about it. Mothers from your kids of last year, and even the previous year had hear the rumour. Luckily we had just received your postcard from Paris, and with that in my hand I was able to convince everyone that nothing of the sort had happened."

Walking to the car Wendy noted that we could go back to Europe. "It's not as if they'd miss me," she said.

"And with a bit of luck it's the new treasurer who started the rumour. Let's go for it."

A WEEKEND AWAY About this time last year Perry and I were dining somewhere
- Robyn Mills - with Jon and Naalti, a couple of old friends, generally
 minding our own business, when, out of the blue IT came: "Oh,
 by the way, I've booked us a weekend cabin at Wilson's Prom."
The slowly ticking mind thought "This is nice. They like that sort of thing".
Then it hit me like a blow to the back of the head - they meant us - Perry and I -
the VIDEO KIDS - a weekend in the country - all that fresh air and open space.
How were we going to get out of it?

In fact this country trip had been cavassed about twelve months before, when, by careful "umming" and "ahhing", it got postponed and then repostoned until (I at least) could sigh with relief about the whole idea having been dropped. This new development caught me, to coin a phrase, with my pants down and with no good or even plausible excuse in the offing. It also taught me two important lessons - never underestimate the enemy, and always have at least one all-purpose excuse up your sleeve.

To cut a long story short, after a long liquid business lunch I found myself at approximately 4.05 pm on the Friday seated in the front of Perry's car with the map on my lap directing us through Melbourne's peak hour traffic wondering all the time if I had programmed the video correctly to catch all the weekend's top TV highlights. Our destination was Wilson's Promontory, an area of National Park about three hours south of Melbourne. Wilson's Prom is the southernmost tip of Victoria (in fact of mainland Australia) and therefore the coldest part of the state. What a place for a TV-aholic to spend good viewing hours in the middle of winter. In reality, Wilson's Prom is protected bush land with splendid coastal scenery and real, unstuffed wild animals. The only accommodation takes the form of cabins and flats which can be rented for weekends or longer periods, depending on taste. Regardless of our taste, we ended up in a 1-bedroom, 4-bed flat as a result of heavy bookings.

In due course, Perry and I arrived to be greeted by a dinner of spicy sausages, bread and red wine. Like all naturalists, we stumbled to bed at the early hour of 2.00 am. The next day, being Saturday, we all staggered forth with clear heads, clear lungs and plenty of energy (probably attributable to copious quantities

of cheap sausages and even cheaper claret) to explore. And explore we did; three hours and twelve kilometres worth before lunch. Yes, we did the whole bit; hiking, rock exploring, drawing works of art on the beach, feeding the wild animals and generally having a good time. After a short lunch break (and more sausages) we were off again. This time to an area named Darbey Beach, the original settlement in the area, and the most beautiful piece of coastline I think I have ever seen. The beach was exactly 1.1 kilometres (carefully paced by yours truly) from the road and appeared to be protected by a large rock on the point shaped like a dog. Here we watched the sun set and carefully posed while Jon attempted to line us up for a delayed exposure photograph, and then home for more red wine and sausages (naturally).

On Sunday, after yet another early rise (10.00 am), we packed up and went to Squeakey Beach. This is a beach where the sand supposedly squeaks when you walk on it, and believe it or not, it actually does. After the requisite amount of exploring and photographs it was homeward bound with nothing to bother us on the trip except an errant Land Rover which tried to part our front grill with its bull-bar at about 100 kph.

The most amazing thing about our weekend was not that Perry and I actually undertook it but the Australian bush itself. It is always changing and full of different wild flowers and wildlife. In one weekend we managed to see more kangaroos, wallabies, rosellas and wombats in one place than I for one think I have ever seen before and it was wonderful to see that the natural inhabitants had not altered their lifestyles to any perceptible degree, nor were they interfered with by the non-natural inhabitants. In fact, on one occasion, a rather aggressive kangaroo attempted to headbutt Perry's car (after all it was in the middle of the road and moving to boot) and on another I spied upon a wombat digging a burrow (I think he was trying to get away from the rowdy bushwalkers without much luck).

After the foregoing it might come as some surprise to learn that both Perry and I are country kids, both growing up in small towns within the smell of the eucalypts and wheat fields. However, as with most country people, we found our way to the city and eventually settled down in front of the TV. From then on the only country trip was a weekend home with mum (especially enjoyable for Perry who psyches himself up by buying new earplugs and leaving scratch marks on the door as he is dragged away). Anyway, on our way home we vowed to go at least once every six weeks for a weekend away in the country, and To Get The Video Serviced!

Leaving the best to last, our friends Naalti and Jon, carried away by the euphoria of the weekend, the red wine, and the chemical imbalance caused by eating too many sausages, announced that they were to be married some time in 1988 and wanted Perry as bestman and me as bridesmaid. If last year's trauma of Perry in a tie at the football was hard to take I shudder to think what seeing him in a suit will do to my presence of mind. In any event, it will probably give me a good topic for a future issue of Larrikin.

VISIONS OF AN INNOCENT ABROAD

- Perry Middlemiss -

hardly surprising - there is probably more than one Perry Middlemiss extant and even, heaven forbid, two John Foysters. But these two Eric Lindays were rather different, for not only did they both live in Sydney, they both inhabited the same body.

Eric had become renown back in the days between the Aussiecons for taking a yearly pilgrimage to the fannish fleshspots of the United States. At home Eric was a picture of fannish purity - pouring out fanzines and letters by the score and attending a modicum of local conventions. The very picture of a mild-mannered

fan. Yet stories kept turning up of a completely different Eric Lindsay - one given to all-night convention carousing and general fannish debauchery. It was indeed difficult for me to reconcile these two characters. I had seen Eric at a number of conventions over the years and he had always appeared if not perpetually sober then at least in control of most of his senses. He tried to prove this to me on a couple of occasions; firstly extolling the virtues of drinking Tequila by providing a demonstration of the time-honoured technique of getting all the required liquid into the mouth without letting fall a grain of salt nor a drop of lemon juice. Later proving that he really could complete a half-dozen or so one-handed push-ups in the confines of a room party. I was, however, less than impressed as I had previously taken to heart his earlier example and was steadily working my way through a six-pack at the time.

In a similar vein, Justin Ackroyd's trip to Europe and North America during 1984 as the Australian GUFF winner began to take on legendary status shortly after his return. If even half the stories about Justin on that trip are true then he must have spent a fortune on bribes or an even greater amount on vitamins. While not having the same pristine reputation back home as Eric, Justin was certainly not of the choirboy persuasion - being an honorary member of the Adelaide Rat Pack saw to that - nor was he one of the Wanton Wretches - being from Melbourne saw to that. Justin just plowed on regardless, neither confirming nor denying the rumours being spread about him, and yet being enough of an enigma to make one wonder.

So it was that, when plans were being made by various Melbourne fans for a European excursion to coincide with the British world convention in 1987, I wrangled my way into accompanying Justin to Holland a week or so before the main event. I just had to see for myself whether there was any foundation to the stories.

Justin had arranged for the two of us to stay in Den Haag with Roelof Goudriaan and Lynne Ann Morse for, as he put it, a bit of a rest before all the convention party-going. Right from the start I was impressed by his self-effacing oneupmanship.

Our week's stay in Holland had been planned around the normal tourist destinations of museums and art galleries but with a couple of extracurricular activities thrown in to get us in the convention-going mood; the obligatory stroll through Amsterdam's red-light district and the almost compulsory visit to Heineken brewery.

Prior to leaving Australia I had been reliably informed that a visit to the Heineken brewery in Amsterdam was an event not to be missed; especially if you could make it on your birthday. I was told they gave you presents along with free beer. As my birthday fell during the week we were in Holland this sounded like a bloody good idea to me. Justin didn't seem to be terribly put off by the thought either.

So we found ourselves (Justin, Roelof and I) parting with a guilder for charity to be allowed on the tour and to taste a bit of the local product afterwards. I had never really considered Justin a beer drinker before; I think he felt that it took up volume that could be better filled with something like Irish Mist. Yet, here he was, putting them back as fast as the rest of us.

The beer hall we were sitting in seemed to be almost completely full with about 200 beer-swilling tourists and I began to get cold feet. There was no way I was going to stand up in front of that crowd, even with a few beers inside me.

The master of ceremonies came out and started livening up the audience with a few jokes that fell a little flat and then proceeded to explain that he had this porcelain mug with Happy Birthday painted on it. "Now as it's not my birthday", he said, "I can't really keep it. So what I need to do", as his eyes started scanning the room, "is to find someone having a birthday today." I may be stupid but I'm not that stupid. I could see where all this was heading. Justin, however, had other ideas. He somehow managed to catch the bloke's eye and pointed vigorously at me. I surrendered to the inevitable. With Ackroyd around most of the rest of us have little choice.

I was then embarrassed no end by having 200 drunken hoons sing Happy Birthday to me. To top it off I then had to down the entire contents of the mug in less than 10 seconds. I made it, though more out of an attempt to achieve some relief than through any expertise.

"Well done", said Justin laughing his head off as I returned to my seat. "But I reckon I could have done it better."

It wasn't until some time later that I noticed he'd stopped drinking entirely - plying me with his share. At least he had the decency to carry me home afterwards.

The red-light area of Amsterdam seems very much out of place with the rest of the city. While being smack in the heart of town (only a couple of blocks away from the main railway station) it's a very grotty hectare or two. And I don't just mean the animal life. We were there on a warm late summer's day and the canals fairly reeked of algae and rubbish. I found all this a little hard to take in but Justin strolled on regardless leading me up and down streets and over canals that I didn't even want to know existed. His eyes were everywhere - staring into dirty book stores, egging on the ladies in the shop windows and checking out all the back alleys he could find.

"Bloody hell," he said.

"What?"

"I just got flashed."

"Where?"

"Over there." Pointing across the canal to a row of scantily clad figures staring out at us from tall narrow windows.

"I didn't see anything."

"That's because you keep looking at the ground all the time. What's the point in doing that? There's far more interesting things to look at around here."

"Well it's all this dogshit everywhere. I've got to be careful where I walk. I've got this thing about dogshit."

"Yeah? Is that right? Well, you've certainly come to the right place." Indicating, with a big smile, a small sign on the footpath proclaiming "Real Live Fucking On Stage". I tried to think of something witty in reply but by the time I looked up he was gone.

(To be continued...)

So, Perry, how's it feel to be back in the fanzine publishing business after a break of 10 months?

- Great. Except we aren't publishing a fanzine.

What was that?

- We aren't publishing a fanzine.

Run that past me one more time. I don't think I'm getting it all.

- Jeez, Irwin. Watch my lips. We aren't publishing a fanzine. At least not yet.

What gave you that idea.

- The Ditmar nomination ballot. Look, here under eligibility, it says that a fanzine is "a non-professional publication which had at least two issues which had at l

during the ... calendar year." It stands to reason that if your non-professional publication isn't eligible to get the Gong then it isn't a fanzine.

So what you're trying to say is that we have to go out and renew our fannish credentials every year. None of this being a fanzine because of the attitude we bring to it?

- Exactly. Got it in one.

I knew it was a stupid bloody definition but I hadn't thought of it that way.

- It's sort of off-putting to think that what we've just been through doesn't qualify for true-for-the-love-of-it fannishness. Whoever thought that one up should be taken out and shot.

But it's not so much that person's fault. The original idea may not have been fully thought through, but the thing still had to be approved at committee or business meeting level, surely?

- You may have a point there.

But the rule is self-defeating, even in its own terms. The Metaphysical Review got the Monolith a few years ago, but it wasn't eligible this year as Bruce 'only' published one issue in 1987.

- And TMR wasn't the only fanzine which had only one issue in '87. I wonder how many people thought about nominating their particular favourite, only to give up the idea when they realised that it didn't meet some minimum arbitrary standard.

Funny you should say that because Science Fiction made the final ballot, and I think Van put out only one issue last year...

- And what about Bruce? After his last mammoth effort all he's got to do now is publish his laundry list and he's got it made.

I like it. A Ditmar for Best Australian Laundry List. What was that you said earlier about laundromats?

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