

S F COMMENTARY 5 5 ½

or
THE WEDDING

or
WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING LATELY

or
SAVING MY ANZAPA MEMBERSHIP (THANKS, GARY!)

or
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SFCs 5 4 & 5 5?

A multi-titled magazine typed, printed, and published by Bruce Gillespie, on behalf of and with the help of Elaine Cochrane, both of GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia. Prepared in May. Officially dated JUNE 1979. To ANZAPA members and current subscribers to SFC. And our phone number is still (03) 419 4797.

The Wedding

It's become a bit of a tradition in ANZAPA and through Australian fandom that, if any two people among us are so foolish as to 'get knotted' (John Foyster's delicate phrase), they will describe the grisly details in a fanzine called 'The Wedding'. It's easy to see that Gary was expecting such a magazine from us in the last mailing, to judge from its cover.

We hate to destroy this great tradition, but Elaine and I can't think of very much to say about our wedding (except that it was one of a number of factors which held up the publication of this magazine—thanks, Gary Mason, for saving my ANZAPA membership, even by bending the rules a bit). The only people who knew about our wedding beforehand (except Sally and John Bangsund, for reasons described below) were the invited guests—a small band of astonished relatives who braved chilly weather and threatening skies on the morning of 3 March at the Wattle Park Chalet. Why 'astonished'? Well, I don't think Elaine's relatives expected her ever to get married, because she always said she wouldn't. In my case, nobody (including me) ever expected that I could persuade anybody to marry me.

What amazed us was that our wedding turned out much the way we wanted it in the first place. We had wanted 'no fuss'. Elaine's parents gave signs of wanting a 'big wedding'. Would we commit the deed at the Registry Office? The official celebrant at the William Street Office had seemed affable, so we did not consider that an unpleasant alternative. Or would bigness prevail, and the guest list balloon upwards?

Neither happened. About twenty close relatives joined us at 11 am outside the Wattle Park Chalet, which is a reception centre inside Wattle Park itself.

The staff had not finished setting up the tables, so we stood outside and shivered for awhile. Nearly everybody arrived. I had not met a few people on Elaine's side of the family, and her family had not met my relatives. But there the group was small enough that everybody sort of knew everybody else by the end of the reception. Mr Hodgekiss, the Church of Christ minister who had agreed to conduct what was obviously a non-churchy wedding, arrived. Doors opened. We all went inside.

People are supposed to get nervous just before a wedding, but I would think that we were the least concerned people in the place—until the ceremony itself started. Several months before, we had decided to get married; all the arrangements had been made; nothing had gone wrong (yet); no need for concern. The guests assembled in the small semi-circular garden outside the Chalet. Mr Hodgekiss led us outside. And then—at 11.15 am—the brief ceremony began.

I've had as much practice at expressing my feelings in print as anybody has. However, I cannot express the feeling that took over during the ceremony. Maybe it was just astonishment again— that, after a long trek, we had arrived; that, having decided to legalise what we considered as marriage, those solemn vows did mean a lot after all, that our world really had changed. By the end of the ceremony, our legs were shaking, and suddenly we were nervous, and everybody stood around being contragulatory, and we didn't know quite what to do.

The reception was very quiet and demure, which pleased just about everybody. (One of Elaine's brothers-in-law was, we believe, puzzled by the absence of alcohol, but we figured he'd be less annoyed by his thirst than my relatives would be by general inbibing.) We were still too shaky to be anything more than officially proper, anyway. The only drawback was that we had been placed top of the table, of course, and so we missed out on the interesting conversations on the rest of the table. Photographs were taken (although by relatives, not an official photographer, so we are still having trouble assembling an album for ourselves). Greetings were greeted and good-byes said, and presents received. Then everybody went home at 2.30 pm. Mr and Mrs Cochrane drove us back to Johnston Street, where we unwrapped presents, relaxed, and hugged cats. We had pizzas for tea—and agreed that the whole day had been rather like Christmas when we children: the sort of day you don't expect will ever come, and when it comes you don't believe it's here, and when it's disappeared you don't believe it's over.

There were times we thought the wedding would be stopped by immovable obstacles. We could not find a celebrant for a long time. We had asked Sally Bangsund, but she no longer had her authorisation to conduct weddings. We were reluctant to ask a minister of the church, since we wanted a plain, unchurchy event. (We didn't want a trendy ceremony of quotations from Kahlil Gibran, either.) Finally I got in touch with Mr Hodgekiss, who had been minister at Sunshine Church of Christ when we had been there fifteen years before. I phoned him up, and explained the situation, and he agreed to see us. On a ghastly hot afternoon in late January, we trekked out to his place in

Mount Waverley-- and found that neither he nor his wife had changed much in the long time since I had last seen them. I suppose there was much that we did not say to each other, a bit of awkwardness, but by the day itself we had sorted out a suitable arrangement. I suppose I should have had a long discussion about why I no longer attend a congregation of the Church of Christ, or of any other church, but since neither of us brought up the subject, we let matters of theology rest, and concentrated on Getting Married.

Further Astonishment. Thanks, Sally and John!

When the wedding was all over, we mopped our brows and breathed a sigh of relief that things had gone according to plan. Unexpected things happened only *after* the wedding. Consider what happened when our friends heard what we'd done.

We rang Sally and John and told them the news. John rang us later, and sounded very happy about everything. 'We must have a party,' he said. And we did. And what a party it was. The best part about it was that we did not have to organise it. Sally and John concocted a great feast and booze-up at their place, and invited umpteem people, many of whom we thought we'd never see again. (I had not met John Julian for eight years, for example. And I had not talked to Tibor and Barbara Selvay at a social occasion since . . . 1972 or 1973, I suppose.)

But, but--and we are still embarrassed by your great kindness--it was Sally and John's party for us and not strictly a wedding party, and you did not need to bring presents, but you did anyway! Gee, we didn't tell people about the wedding until afterwards so we wouldn't put anybody under obligation. But you placed yourself under obligation anyway. Thank you. We are finding most of the presents very useful, and the non-useful ones (so to speak) are being saved for the right occasion for uncorking.

Apart from the people at the party, there were so many others who sent cards or presents, or who rang up sounding genuinely delighted. All very amazing. Now we hope everybody will come to our Housewarming (although it will be over before anybody receives a copy of this magazine).

A Failed Marriage Already?

Has our marriage failed already? Are we adrift and on the rocks--before we've had time for a honeymoon? Most importantly, *are we still in love?*

It seems not. It's been proved by Facts. We read the 'Cue Quiz' (*The Sun*, 17 April, 1979) which showed conclusively that either 'Your Relationship Needs a Kick in the Pants' or 'You Care a Lot for Your Partner, But Clearly Don't Have Much Time to Show It'. The probing questions which demonstrated this conclusion included the following:

1. What was he/she most frightened of as a child?
 2. What was his/her favourite toy?
 3. What was his/her favourite subject at school?
- At the end of the scale, when the questioning gets really tough:
23. What was the last item of clothing he/she bought you?
 24. What was the last birthday present he/she bought you?
 25. Does he/she carry a picture of you in his wallet/her purse?

You can see that such a test really sorts out the lovers from the love-'em-'n'-leave-'em types. Elaine scores only a little over 10 on a score of 25, and I suspect that the test reveals me as exactly the sort of insensitive oaf that Elaine's parents probably warned her against. Washed up already. *Sigh* If only I could name the TV personality Elaine hates the most. If only Elaine knew how often I go to the hairdresser. And until now, we thought we were so happy.

Yet Another Moving Day

Getting married seems a trivial occupation when compared with the really serious event that took up most of March—moving house. March was quite a month. It began with a wedding and ended with a move (28 March). Meanwhile I had a huge typesetting job to finish and was supposed to finish another job by the second week in April. And moving house took up so much time and effort and money because we kept thinking of extra items to be added to the house before we moved in. Travelling around Melbourne looking at carpets is not my idea of fun, especially as the carpet we chose eventually was the type we looked at first, and the shop was in Smith Street, Collingwood, less than a hundred yards from our place.

We usually go um and ah when we try to explain how we are managing to buy our own house (and renovate and add to it) when we have no money for anything else. Believe me, we're as astonished as you are. This time last year, we gave ourselves no hope of ever owning our own house or moving from Johnston Street unless we won Tattsлото. However, Elaine is the optimistic member of the household. On a fateful day in November 1978—Cup Day, to be precise—Elaine was off-colour and we both felt like a walk. We headed off on one of our usual trails (northward through the streets of Clifton Hill, passing the famous Hilton Street), and happened to look at a house with a For Sale notice in front of it. We looked at the noticeboard (3 brms, lge, kitch, etc) and at the shape of the verandah awning (since the verandah next door showed a downward bow in the middle, but this one didn't). To our completely non-expert eyes, all looked structurally sound. Elaine uttered the fateful words: 'This looks just right for us. I wonder how much my father would be willing to lend us...?'

As it happened, Elaine's father was enthusiastic about helping us buy a house. He enjoys looking at houses and figuring out ways to fix them up. If the house we were looking at had been in perfect shape, he might not have been so interested. It is difficult to get a bank loan at the moment, but somehow Mr Cochrane has enough clout at the local branch of his bank that the loan

application went through in no time. Elaine's father particularly enjoyed beating down the price of the house a few thousand dollars. Because he did, we've been able to use a fair bit of the loan money for necessary renovations and 'improvements' to the house.

From the outside, 59 Keele Street, Collingwood is nothing spectacular. It is a double-fronted weatherboard house (of the type which real estate blokes usually call a 'cottage' but which an Englishman would call a 'bungalow'). It shares a wall with the house next door. On the other side is 57 Keele Street, an address which will be recognised by anybody in educational circles as the headquarters of the Technical Teachers Association of Victoria. The TTAV has a large building on the west side of our house, so we hope their shadow will protect from the summer sun. (One of the great disadvantages of Johnston Street has been the way the top half heated up on hot days.) The back yard looked very small when we first examined the house, but we've had a car port pulled down. The back yard was paved in bricks—but, fortunately, not in concrete, like the back yard of the house next door. We've pulled up most of the bricks, and Elaine has already made three or four quite different plans for a new garden. What Elaine would really like is an area the size of the Botanical Gardens, but I suspect she will have fun with what we've got.

I'm not sure what the concept of renovations and improvements means to other house-buyers. From the start, we were not interested in building (a) a barbeque in the back yard, (b) a patio or sunroom adjoining the living room, (c) a swimming pool, or (d) an underground garage for the fifth Jag. We crave, but cannot afford (a) a house with moat and drawbridge and acres of rolling parkland at the front and back, (b) champagne on tap in every room, (c) a vast cellar and secret passages, (d) a music room for playing instruments, (e) a music room for listening to stereo, (f) a *basement, heated* swimming pool (Elaine's specific request), (g) fully equipped printing/typing/duplicating room, (h) robot equipment to make sure the house is self-cleaning, etc. You know—the things in life which add that little something.

When it came to actual improvements, the luxury we considered necessary was the addition of adequate shelving for books. Elaine measured how many feet of shelving of books we already had in both our libraries. To house the books we had already, we needed three walls covered with ceiling-to-floor shelves. (Many of our books were still on shelves owned by Frank Payne, until he retrieved them when he came back from Tasmania.) We can't guess what will happen after we visit some more book sales.

Who could fulfil such an order, and do the job properly? We took a punt, I guess, but it succeeded. Since Roger Weddall is a friend of ours, and his father is a builder and, like all builders these days, needed the work, we figured he would probably do a good job. He didn't do a good job—he did an amazing job. Have a look at the bookshelves, for a start, when you visit us. Not to mention the new boards that had to be put on the outside of the house, and the new roof, and the insulation, etc, etc—all jobs which so many builders might have done sloppily, but which Mr Weddall did perfectly. His address is 12 Midvale Avenue, North Balwyn 3104, and his phone number is 857 9985, if you need a house built or renovated, or you want great bookshelves installed.

All during the process of moving (which really took five months), we kept waiting for major obstacles to appear, but they didn't. If they did, Mr Cochran took care of them before we heard about them. Even without snags, moving takes awhile. We had ownership by the end of January, but Mr Weddall could not start until the beginning of February. Even then, it was up to go looking at light fittings (again, the first place we looked at proved to be the best, but we looked at lots of others anyway), new beds, carpets—that sort of thing. Gives me a headache.

In *SFC 52*, I wrote about Moving Day, February 1977, and how various notables of Melbourne fandom were nearly killed in the process. That was my move from Carlton Street to Johnston Street, when a vast number of objects had to go up the steep stairs at Johnston Street. Moving Day '79 was not so difficult, perhaps because everything was going down the stairs. Still, I think Strack Brothers, the removalist firm, must have auditioned for Superman when they hired the three blokes who did the job. I have never before seen anyone fill a tea chest with records, then calmly pick it up and carry it down a flight of stairs. (We moved fifteen tea chests of records, apart from the forty or fifty boxes of books and papers.) Moving the piano took a lot longer, but the whole move was much shorter than we expected. At first we thought they would pick up our stuff on Wednesday afternoon, store it overnight, and deliver on Thursday morning. That meant we would have had to stay overnight in an empty house at Johnston Street. But the men arrived 9 am, and had everything packed by 12.30. Well, not quite. They brought with them their biggest van. When it was completely filled, four items of furniture still stood in the drive. No worries; they lashed the table, bed frame, and other pieces to the back of the truck, had lunch, then took the lot around to Keele Street (admittedly, less than a quarter of a mile from our place at Johnston Street). Meanwhile, a very hard-working bloke from the carpet shop had been laying the new section of carpet. He finished about 1 o'clock, not long before the furniture was moved in. And we were moved in time to get on a bus and go to the Paradiso for tea.

That was easy compared with moving in. Five days later, we were still putting books on shelves, tripping over unopened boxes, and desperately trying to find things we really needed. But I suppose everybody knows about those agonies of unpacking. It was only because of Elaine's organising ability that, even five days later, I was able to find the composer under all the junk and begin work again.

Why is this Magazine Called S F Commentary 55½?

I was wondering when you would ask that. Does anybody remember *S F Commentary 53*? Dated April 1978, it was put on stencil in August 1978, and finally released to a totally uninterested public in October 1978. It arrived in England in February 1979, USA in late February or early March, and in Argentina at the beginning of April.

That's clear . . . I hope. The same thing has happened to *SFC 54* so far. It is largely concerned with speakers and events at Unicon IV, Easter 1978. Was

on stencil by the last week of November 1978. Scheduled for release in mid-December. Is still sitting on stencil, and may yet appear sometime during 1979.

Um. *SFC 55*? Yep; same story all over again. It will be, as everybody knows, the Tenth Anniversary Edition. Remember April 1969, when an amazed world received copies of the January 1969 edition, *S F Commentary 1*? History repeats itself (the history of Tenth Anniversary Editions, that is; including that of *Speculation*, which never appeared, and that of *ASFR*, which became the Twelfth Anniversary Edition). I have all the material for a superbonzer TAE of not less than a thousand pages. Unfortunately, I can afford to publish only a 40-pager, which will have a lot of items about recent Australian science fiction . . . and there has been a lot of that.

I'm having you on. You don't really expect these magazines to appear, do you? Neither do I, sometimes. However, occasionally I can see the bare possibility that sometime, someday, I might have a whole five days free—five days in which I might have time to run off, collate, and mail *SFC 54*. Or, better still, have time to stencil all the vast number of brilliant contributions which are sitting in my files. Everybody has a secret hope. That's mine.

As you can see, I am typing these stencils with an IBM Electronic Composer. IBM told me that it wasn't supposed to be used for stencils, and I can see why. The stencil tends to slip in the carriage, and only the 8 pt and 10 pt fonts show up clearly (unless you're printing with a Roneo duplicator, which I'm not). But I can fit a lot more words on an *SFC* page, and—hell, I love using this machine. Greatest toy I ever came across, and the most expensive (about \$7 a day rent).

But I was the one who persuaded Norstrilia Press (that is, my other two partners, Rob Gerrand and Carey Handfield) to rent the composer for a trial period. We could afford to do so only if I typeset the latest Norstrilia Press book and we gained extra work. This has happened. *Moon in the Ground* was set some months ago. We don't have the money to print it yet, but everything else has been done. Paul Collins commissioned us to set his latest anthology. *Alien Worlds* proved to have a lot of interesting stories, and at least one brilliant item, a new Jack Wodhams story. That was an enjoyable, but very long (120,000 words) job. With the help of John Bangsund and Lee Harding, we made contact with Ann Godden and Alan Knight of Hyland House, and so far have set two books for them, with others to follow. So you can see that I have been rather busy. I've had the usual lot of editing work as well, and some projects on which I've had to work 7 days a week. Even taking off five days to move house nearly cost me a job or two.

This is the sort of work I love doing. Since I need to earn money some way or another, this is the best possible way to do it (except by writing, but nobody ever pays decent money for writing). The only disadvantage of working this way is that it has practically stopped publication of all my fannish projects—*S F Commentary*, *Wordy-Gurdy*, and *Supersonic Snail*. The precise reasons for this situation are detailed in the editorial for *SFC 54*. It's enough to say that *SFC* will become large and regular again—if my workload decreases,

which is not likely for the next few months; or if we win Tattslotto; or if someone rich donated some money towards its upkeep. Until any of these things happen—well, keep hoping. My main regret is that I'm not doing my bit to keep the fannish presses turning; my admiration for the work of Foyster, Edmonds, Middlemiss, Swift, Lindsay, Bangsund, Angove, and many others grows, even as the quantity and quality of my own contributions diminishes.

My 1978

I've created my own tradition—of writing about the previous year somewhere about the middle of the following year. This year? I'll save it for a real *SFC*, I think. Not very sporting of me, I agree. I wrote a lot of stuff about years, like 1976, which were real disasters. And now I won't even bother to write about the best year of my life!

But 1978 was the best year because of one reason—Elaine. And what can I say about a lady who's sitting right over there doing her embroidery and up-braiding cats for their misdemeanours (while patting them at the same time) and . . . aw shucks . . . just enjoying being here with me. And I'm enjoying being here with her and—you know what it's like. (Also, she might peek over my shoulder and read this.) 1978 is filled with so many marvellous memories: most vividly, the moment when she said she would like to live with me; the first time we went to Two Up Restaurant, just near here, where we have spent so many happy and finely fed evenings; our walks to the Fitzroy Gardens, and to Studley Park and through Clifton Hill and North Fitzroy; Shakespeare readings and drunken nights and great celebrations with Charlie and Roger; many other visitors, visitings, parties, quiet nights at home reading, just enjoying being with each other. There were many times in my life when I doubted whether I would ever have a completely satisfactory year, but at least one has been granted to me and Elaine (although Elaine would have liked a good job as well). I hope there are plenty more.

At the end of the year, usually I write about the Best Books, Short Stories, Films, etc. All in good time. I'm saving that for *SFC* as well.

I'm Running Out of Steam . . .

. . . and already I am wondering whether I will have time to print this issue in time to get copies to Gary Mason to save my ANZAPA membership. Great clouds of busy-ness are building up. While I have space I should apologise for (yet again) failing to write any mailing comments on previous mailings. I Just Do Not Have Time. Sorry. Special thanks to Helen for the personalised cover of that recent mailing. Thanks again to Gary for saving my membership. I hope *Wordy-Gurdy* returns soon. Also apologies to all the *SFC* supporters whose letters have not been answered. That's nearly everybody. I will answer them sometime. I hope this modest production is an adequate letter substitute. See you soon.

Last stencil typed 13 May 1979.