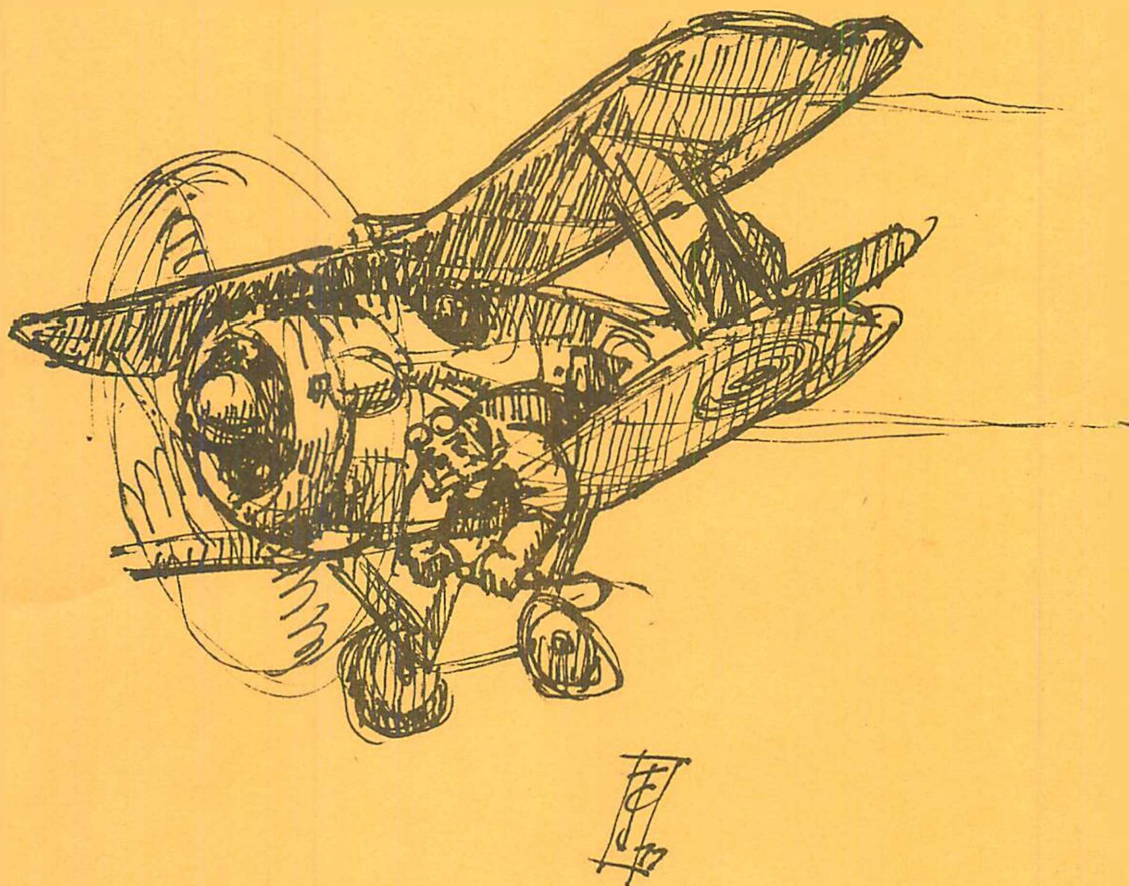


PRELUDE TO SPACE

IN 'UMBLE APPRECIATION OF
'EROIC CHAPS WHO LED THE WAY



Published by
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For Members of the
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND AMATEUR PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION,
and some Others.

P R E L U D E T O S P A C E

Lucky TAPAns who attended AUSSIECON might remember a shy young chap named Chris. Johnstone. You will remember his fantastic train drawings (.. eat your heart out, Andy Porter ..) displayed behind glass in the lower plaza of the Southern Cross Hotel.

Chris was at one of John Foyster's parties a couple of months ago, and we talked about Progress, and how everybody is getting soured on the so-called benefits of technology. ((You know the sort of thing that happens when people have a few drinks and start regurgitating opinions they read in the newspapers two days beforehand)) . Chris said that it was a pity that the Age of the Technological Pioneer is over, and expressed his admiration for World War One fighter pilots -- who, he said, "are the true heroes of the Space Age."

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The Cover -- Illustration by Chris Johnstone

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I hope fellow F.F.s don't mind being included amongst the "some Others" referred to on the cover; but, in our splendid antipodean isolation, we Aussies do not permit anything to upstage ANZAP.

Back to Chris Johnstone, and WW1

He maintains that fighter-pilots who flew those rotary-engine biplanes were not only heroic but positively suicidal. It wasn't, he said, a case of taking off and gliding and flapping around until it was time for dinner. Oh no, those things were driven! Bolted to a bamboo and paper frame was a thing called a rotary engine -- so called because the propellor was bolted to the engine and the whole combination was made to rotate at high speed. The effect was of a gyroscope of enormous momentum. Once the 'plane was diving towards the ground with the speed building up, the engine would take control of the whole outfit and, regardless of the designs of the pilot, the 'plane would maintain a steady course until it hit something -- usually, of course, the ground.

Technology was in its infancy in those days. Take, for example, the gasoline supply to the engine of a Sopwith Camel. This was regulated by a little tap on the gasoline supply pipe having three positions -- "some," "some more," and "a lot." This arrangement was eminently satisfactory for flying; but not, unfortunately, for landing. The only way the pilot could control the 'plane while landing was by switching the ignition on and off, so that the contraption came in to land in a series of noisy little leaps sounding for all the world like short bursts of machine gun fire. These bursts of power could be most upsetting. If the pilot was unwary, the reaction could turn the 'plane quickly on to its back and have it land upside down. Pilots who survived the initial prang under these conditions had only a 50% chance of being scheduled for the next mission. The others would forget themselves when everything stopped and undo their harnesses. They would then fall straight down on to the top of their heads and break their necks.

Such bravery! Such heroism! Such folly! Also, such a mess (please turn the page)

PRELUDE TO SPACE

The ultimate challenge of the rotary engine was its lubrication system. It was the epitome of simplicity. Oil ran into the center of the engine and centrifugal force fed it everywhere. Remember that synthetic lubricants had not been invented by WW1, and so the boffins had recourse to Nature's sovereign remedy for just about everything -- Castor Oil. It did the job fine when the engine was cold; but, with build-up of speed, friction produced lots of heat. The castor oil expanded and lost its viscosity -- and there was Far Too Much Of It. It had to go somewhere, and it was bled out of the tops of the cylinders and surrounded the engine with a mist of very hot castor oil vapor. The slipstream would blow this back over the aeroplane and, of course, the pilot.

Devotees of Snoopy and the Red Barron will have noticed the long silk scarf worn by the intrepid hero of the skyways. This is not, as you might have thought, merely a touching reminder of the folks back home, but a protection from scalding clouds of castor oil. Always within reach, it could be grabbed at any time to wipe face and goggles.

Inevitably, some of the oil was inhaled by the pilot. He would also ingest quite a bit by licking his lips. As soon as enough of it had got into his system to make up the dose prescribed for the relief of constipation, our brave pilot was in trouble. He had to land, and quickly!

Perhaps you have seen war movies in which the pilot's face is a frozen mask of horror. This might not mean that Jerry is on his tail. It is more likely to be the influence of the castor oil operating in the region of his tail.

— Unless, of course, the 'plane had just passed through a rain storm. The insulating materials available at the time were not robust enough to stand up to the strains of life on a rotary engine, and the wires that carried the spark to the plug were necessarily bare. A light shower of rain would short out the lot, and the engine would stop at once. This usually meant that a forced landing had to be made. If the pilot forgot to switch off, the engine might dry out and start again in the middle of the landing approach. The 'plane would turn smartly over and bore straight into the nearest tree.

It is not surprising, then, that the average operational life of a WW1 pilot was only four hours.

[illegible]

" A daring pilot in extremity ;

Pleas'd with the danger, when the waves went high

He sought the storms, but for a calm unfit,

"Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit."

John Dryden -- 1631 - 1700

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Today's amateur publishers with their rotary duplicators are in the same boat as WW1 pilots in their rotary-engine bi-planes. The risk of disaster is always just around the corner (except that I haven't yet heard of an ink with a castor oil base). Perhaps I had better finish the quote from Dryden ..

" Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

COMBATTING CIA INFLUENCE IN THE UNIONS

or What Bill Wright Has Been Up To In The Past Few Months

[illegible]

For the last forty or so years, a few dedicated people in the Australian Insurance Industry have been building a Union. We now have about 80% of all workers in the industry as members of the Union. Our Award is recognized as one of the best in the land, drawing into the industry men and women of high calibre who provide loyal and efficient service to their employers and the public. The Union has set up a staff of paid Organizers who co-operate enthusiastically with a vast network of "Office Representatives" (i.e. shop stewards) on the office floor. Both paid Organizers and Office Reps are responsible to an elected Committee of Management in each State.

In the April 1976 elections, an Organization known as the National Civic Council tried to gain control of our Union. It was partially successful, having scooped the pool of elective positions in Western Australia, and gaining strong representation in the other States. The National Civic Council is an ultra right wing body which has sacrificed more reputations on the altar of anti-Communism than Senator Joe McCarthy.

The N.C.C. then proceeded to engage in a deliberate and systematic campaign to wreck our Union. Our paid Officials were harrassed at every turn, and it was all they could do just to keep in touch with the Office Reps, let alone resolve the myriad issues which arise in offices and need Union muscle to resolve. It got to be so bad in Victoria that a majority decision of the Victorian Committee of Management on the "MediBank Tax" strike was flatly contradicted by the N.C.C. president for the State in the daily Press.

At the time of the 1966 elections, we were staggered by the amount of money the N.C.C. had to spend on postage and publicity. It was inexplicable at the time, but certain revelations made recently in a Californian treason trial indicate that the C.I.A. was very active in Australian Union affairs during 1975/1976. Those of us who wanted to return our Union into the control of the membership set up a Rank And File Fund to finance a blitzkrieg election campaign in 1977 -- which was, mercifully, successful. The N.C.C. were routed by a ratio of about four to one. (25% is about the national average for rabid anti-Communists).

Now that the struggle has died down for a while, I might have time to look after my other interests in fandom. Members of this elderly and most respected apa may take solace from the fact that it took the C.I.A. to distract me from fanatic and involve me in mundane affairs.

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OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

My brother's Weimaraner bitch gave birth to puppies yesterday, and his eight year old daughter was an interested spectator.

Noting how the animal was puffing and straining to produce each puppy, George remarked, "That's what you'll be like, Jacqui, when you're having a baby."

"No I won't," was the reply. "Why not?" asked George.

"Because I haven't been mated yet," said Jacqui triumphantly.

MAILING COMMENTS

on the February 1977 TAPA Distribution -- No. 158

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The mailing arrived on 3rd. May, and I discovered that I had to get 8 pages to Charles Burbee by 14th May to retain my membership. Then, to paraphrase the Master, "from all my stratagems my mind shook free, and the magnitude of my own folly was revealed to me in a blinding flash." For I have put at risk that which is more Precious than Time itself (the waiting list being Four Years Long). I hope that this contribution reaches Charles in time. Otherwise, it's back to waiting at the door again.

Coat Tails -- Socorro Burbee (who is 8 years older than I, and writes younger)

I think that beards look best on old men who whuffle them out at young ladies on the train.

I read Bill Morris' poems with interest. No comment, except that such insights always launch me into "spirals of meditation", and this paragraph has taken half an hour to type.

Grumbly Cowboy -- Peter Roberts

The standards of British journalism must surely be falling if Chris Priest found a genuinely lewd clue in the Guardian crossword. This must be due to the influence of an Australian named Rupert Murdoch who seems to be taking over the Press of the Western World like a secret master of mundania. He was partly responsible for the fall of Mr. Whitlam's government, and is a Bad Man.

Cognate -- Rosemary Hickey

Your Great American Penny is really such a little thing. The once mighty U.S. dollar has depreciated so much that I doubt that it is worth going to any trouble to preserve its smallest subdivision. Indeed, the continued existence of the penny as a unit of currency is an anacronism. When I visited the United States in 1972, it struck me that only Las Vegas had the right idea about what to do with pennies. Beside every parking meter there is a penny slot machine. These slot machines soak up all the useless pennies accumulated by citizens, and they don't seem to put any of them back in circulation.

Horizons -- Harry Warner Jr.

I have to remember that Hagerstown is the world center of the C.I.A.

It was good to read that the restoration work at Pen Mar Park is nearing completion. At least there are some communities in this world which value their past. To many people, the most sacred site in Australia is Bakery Hill at Ballarat, where the gold miners raised the Eureka flag. Your McDonalds fast food chain has purchased the site and is putting up a restaurant. On the day that restaurant opens, I predict that hundreds of people will converge on Bakery Hill and tear that building apart, brick by brick.

After reading the February Horizons, all I can say is that Harry Warner is in good hands -- his own. About the only thing you don't worry about is the sky falling on your head.

MAILING COMMENTS

Big Mac 100 -- Norman Hollyn

Apart from the name of your fanzine, Norman, I enjoyed reading you. (I have an aversion to American fast food chains which won't employ Union labor, harass Union organizers, and desecrate national monuments.

I think that you were in FAPA about a year ago when I complained that Redd Boggs wasn't keeping up the Calkins standard in the production of THE FANTASY AMATEUR. It would appear that we must now look back on the Calkins era as a Golden Age for FAPA.

You have a lot to learn about John Foyster. He is the Secret Master of Everything.

The Speed of Dark — Mike Glycer

Ah yes. The man who gave us Prehensile and the fannish version of American Pie.
And now, a review of The Noreascon Proceedings -- which makes me sorry I didn't go.

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Break for a HIP REDUCING EXERCISE

Stand erect with the hands on top of the head, and slowly raise the left leg to the level of the shoulders. Keep it there for five or ten minutes, then gently lower to the ground. Do this ten times with the left leg and ten times with the right leg. Then do it with both legs at once. You will actually feel a difference in your hips almost immediately.

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Bobolings -- Bob Pavlat

What a Tyrant you must be that your four year old son must needs wait until you are out of town before writing his first short story. Don't you think that this is carrying professional jealousy a little too far?

Learning bookbinding: So, it happens in America, too. Nobody runs courses in bookbinding. Some years ago, I did what you have just done -- telephoned the technical colleges and the Council for Adult Education -- all to no avail. You would think that I was proposing something illegal, like trying to become a bootleg electrician. For a culture that prizes Literacy, ours has a funny way of penalizing those who love and care for Books.

Allelei -- Walter Breen

Thanks for the additional notes on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, etc.. In this day and age, the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson would be treated as a drug-crazed communist pederast, and shot on sight. Because he died before the turn of the century, we can view his predilection for the company of little girls with tolerant amusement.

Quantum Deficit — John Foyster

So "Science Fiction ... has become a kind of technological pornography." If that's true, then it's a Good Thing. However, we run the risk of being so distracted by the possibilities of the future that we fail to remedy the mistakes of the recent past. For example, survival of the Motor Car as the means of personal transport makes sense only in the context of a War every generation. We ought to be discussing the kind of future we are building now.

... End of Mailing Comments, but read on for two more pages .. Bill Wright

