

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

I suppose it is obvious by now that the Mafiaettes didn't get ANVIL 37 out while I was gone. They tried, but... That and other little disappointments when I got home kept me from doing anything productive for nearly two weeks. Finally, last night, I re-read my copy of The Enchanted Duplicator, in order to gain insight into my Leth R G, and to find where I had gone wrong that my path had led me into, if not the Glades of Gafia then certainly, the Mountains of Inertia.

This particular edition of The Enchanted Duplicator was published, I found, by my new friend, Eve Harvey. Eve was one of those unexpected delights in Australia. This year's TAFF winner, I had heard of her, and counted it among my blessings that I met her and John, and that we got on so well. Already I am motivated. I must publish ANVIL and send it to Eve!

But the Truth was found in Chapter Ten. In a rather uncomplimentary description of fanclubs (and not at all like BSFC - well, not much..) I found where I had erred. And the truth is this:

"... the journey to Trufandom is one which must be accomplished by a Fan's unaided efforts."

I should never have expected other fans to take up the banner with my ~~fanatical zeal~~ singleminded determination. It is really up to me to publish ANVIL, and I'm ready now.

ANVILs 37 and 38 are being bound separately, but mailed simultaneously, a sort of double-issue. I had these two covers, see, and wanted to use them both! This Not-A-Trip-Report is in bits and pieces, and not intended to be a standard trip report, with an itemized account of everything I saw and everyone I met and everywhere I went. I didn't make enough notes, and it all runs together.

I also took hundreds of pictures on the theory that if you take enough, some of them will turn out good. They did. I also have a slide show of my trip, which I will show at the drop of a hat. I noticed that Joyce Scrivner had a photo album of her previous trip, and that is nice, but with a slide show you have a captive audience, and can bore them to death for hours... "and this is a picture of me at Bondi Beach..." The only escape is to fall asleep! Of course, you can fall asleep while reading this, too. I'm not sure it's all that interesting to accomplished world travellers and sophisticated people. But nevertheless, I do have impressions, and opinions, and pictures to show and stories to tell, and these are mostly aimed towards the Birmingham club members, my friends and relations, but I hope you will enjoy this little not-a-trip-report.

This issue is either the 7th or 8th annish. Wade, can you figure it out? Just because this time last year I printed the 6th annish doesn't enter into it. I think I lost a year somewhere... or maybe not. It all depends on whether the first issue was printed in November of '77 or November of '78. I can't remember.

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NOT-A-TRIP-REPORT

I went to Aussicon Two, 1985, and visited in Australia for a month, but as I am not a fan-fund winner, I am under no obligation to write a blow-by-blow account of my trip, and aren't you glad? Actually, Jim (Gilpatrick) and I only (nearly) came to blows a couple of times, and I guess the quality of our friendship was proven when we survived the trip still friends. (You are still speaking to me, aren't you, Jim?) Details later.

There will be no attempt made to put things in chronological order, but for those of you with neat and orderly minds, I'll give you my itinerary and you can piece it together for yourselves: Jim and I flew to Melbourne and checked into the hotel the 20th of August, two days before the con began... the con lasted from Thursday the 22nd through Monday the 26th. On Tuesday the 27th, I (and a bunch of other people) checked into the Ortlieb's fan motel. Jim rejoined me on the 6th of September. On the 8th we rented a car and drove to Canberra, and then on to the coast road via Batesman's Bay and up to Sydney. On the 15th of September, I got on a big silver bird and flew home.

It goes without saying, I guess, that I had a great time, meeting old friends and new, partying all night, going to the convention when there was nothing else to do... and it showed. Even in the best of times, I have allergic black eyes, and there is a certain amount of makeup I must wear before going out in public. One morning at the Ortlieb's, when I stumbled into the kitchen for my first cup of coffee I hears: "Somebody,"... a voice from the breakfast table intoned... "Somebody... has a hangover..."

"No," I had to admit.... "I look like this every morning...."

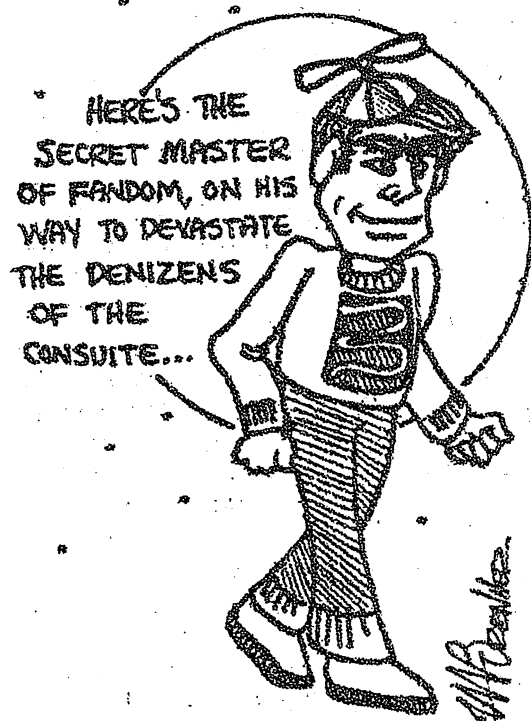
And it was good to get home. I was suffering from iced tea deprivation.

AUSSIECON TWO

Everyone I talked with enjoyed Aussiecon Two, and even though I don't usually attend programming, I felt it my duty to attend a certain few program items and report back to you. I went to: Opening Ceremonies; my three panels; the Hugo Awards; the Banquet; the Masquerade (back-stage); and Closing Ceremonies. I looked in on two or three other panels, but was too antsy to sit still for much.

Opening Ceremonies: I was impressed. Favorably. There was an audio-visual presentation, with slides of SF book covers through the ages, interspersed with SF film clips, lovely up-beat music, and "AUSSIECON TWO OPENING CEREMONIES" flashing on-screen through and coming on solid at the end. Breath-taking. Following that, the con chair welcomed everyone and introduced the special guests. The speaker was Race Matthews, Minister of Culture for the State of Victoria. He was great, if a bit overlong in the middle, but he is a politician. He was a fan 30 years or so ago, and was one of the founders of Melbourne fandom.

He had stories to tell of long ago fans and fandom, as well as reading parts of letters from 17-year-old fans back then who are still known in Aussie fandom today. One such letter demanded the exclusion of women from fan clubs, because they always "cause trouble". He ended by proclaiming with a flourish that Aussiecon Two was declared Open!



Criticism from the Aussies: the ones who had done the audio-visuals did not use book-covers of Australian SF authors, or film clips from Aussie SF movies. Criticism from smofs: the chair did not recognize or introduce the other pros in the audience who had traveled there at great expense. The chair informed the audience that there would be autograph sessions, and not to "bother" the pros, as they were there to have a good time. Nonsense! For the most part, pros like to be "bothered" by someone telling them how great and wonderful they are; how much one's books are admired; and "could I please have your autograph?" I, for one, have always found the accessibility of the people whose work I admire to be one of the most positive features of science fiction conventioning.

Panels: The only ones I can comment on are the ones I was one, and the two or three I saw during the con, but inasmuch as these were pretty well distributed between the Southern Cross (the main con hotel) and the Fan Lounge in the Victoria, where the art show was also (that is, the art show was also at the Victoria, not in the Fan Lounge) (I never made it to the Sheraton where there was also programming), I'll try to give my impressions. It was pretty scary to be on the first panel of the convention, right there in the main programming room, immediately following Opening Ceremonies. Eve Harvey whom I had already met and liked so much, was on the panel, as was Justin Ackroyd, who once slept on my couch, and Art Widner, so I wasn't totally among strangers. The panel was on how to enjoy this convention... and I don't remember what I said. All those people out there... it was better when I looked in on other, professional, panels. Gene Wolf, Fred Pohl, Bob Shaw, etc... they knew what they were doing and big crowds don't scare them.

Meanwhile, over at the Victoria, the Fan Lounge, once you had found it, was a fine place to hang out. The panels there were informal, and all fannishly oriented - there was a panel with members from the U.S., Britain, Japan, Australia, etc. - there was a panel with each member from a different state of Australia - there was an informal hour with

Bob Shaw - Larry Niven was in there too, but I just caught the tail end of that. In any event, these panels were diverse, and interesting.

The panel I liked best: "The States of Australian Fandom", which I moderated. This was near the end of the convention, in the Fan Lounge. Now, we moderators had been given tickets to the pancake house, to feed our panelists and get to know them beforehand, if we wished, but I opted to meet with my group in the Victoria Bar. I convinced them I was a Rich American, and to order something, and we got acquainted. From there we proceeded, drinks in hand, to the Fan Lounge, where I introduced them in turn, and asked each to tell about his/her fandoms. Jack Herman, on duty in the Fan Lounge, sort of co-moderated, asking pertinent questions and encouraging feedback for the audience. A few minutes after my last panelist had joined the discussion, I excused myself, as they seemed to be doing fine without me at this point, and didn't need me anymore (and you people in Birmingham know how I like to put in my two-cent's worth from the audience), and I took a seat in the back. Before long, they began telling stories on their favourite fans... and lo, and behold, I had a story to tell too -- my Greg Turkich story (The Very Large Policeman from Perth)... and they loved it. That was my favorite panel, but when I read Jack Herman's con report, I found he had interpreted my leaving the panel as being "upset" with the audience participation. I straightened him out.

Criticism: Through inexperience, I suppose, programming/panels were scheduled opposite the GOM speech. This is a no-no. Because of understaffing (the programming department was only three people, and I didn't see gophers at all) and inexperience, there was no convention person present to introduce, or begin, the panels, nor to end them and thank the panelists. Ted White pointed out the gross error of not having a convention member taking orders and furnishing drinks to panelists.

Masquerade: By Friday afternoon, I was well aware that the ratio of Aussie fans who were willing to work a convention was not enough... so when Marc asked if I would help, I said "Sure." He wanted me to work the masquerade, which I had never done, but there is a first time for everything. (I had heard tales...) Marc and Cath were in charge, and Robbie Cantor was there, keeping everyone in line, as was Joyce Scrivner. I was a den mother to five entries. One entry was a pair of cats who had 18 years experience in this sort of thing. I thanked them and left them alone. Another was a young girl who was crying. Fortunately, her mother was also in my little group and she soon showed up to comfort her daughter. Another was a calm young woman... no problem. There was a jittery femfan, and I promised to look after her things for her. That left a highly nervous young man, with an emotional age of about 12. But there is nothing I can do better than calm down jittery young men. Of course, they all kept wandering off. But when it was time to get in one line to be interviewed, or in another to be photographed, and especially in the final line to go on-stage, they all behaved beautifully: no hysterics, no one fell off the stage, and most importantly to me, none had such an elaborate costume as to be a problem. There were only a handful of what I would call "worldcon-class" costumes - my cats, and the three Aussies who wow the audience every year.

Criticism: The masquerade was an hour late starting. I think this was because of technical difficulties. The many, many American costumers did not bother to show up. There were 35 entries. I was backstage until my group went out, and then I joined them in their seats up front. Later I was told that viewing was not good from anywhere near the center or back of the room, and we are not talking about that big of a room. The runway was shorter than it should have been for good audience viewing. This may have been the technical difficulty.

The Banquet: Oh, boy, do these Aussies know how to put on a banquet! There is a lot of British influence in the Australian culture, which shows up in knowing when to put on the dog, and how, as opposed to we more informal and casual Americans. I've already said how impressed I was with Opening Ceremonies, well, let me tell you about that banquet! To begin with, a lot of people went to the banquet; more per capita than at American cons. Everyone dressed for the occasion. Next up, and are you ready for this? There were before dinner drinks.. a large room with tables of fruit, cheese, crackers, canapes, and roving waiters bearing trays of sherry and wine. Now that was fun... to stand around and drink and talk with your friends in a civilized atmosphere for an hour before dinner. It's more formal, ceremonial if you will, and you really feel like you are going to a Banquet.

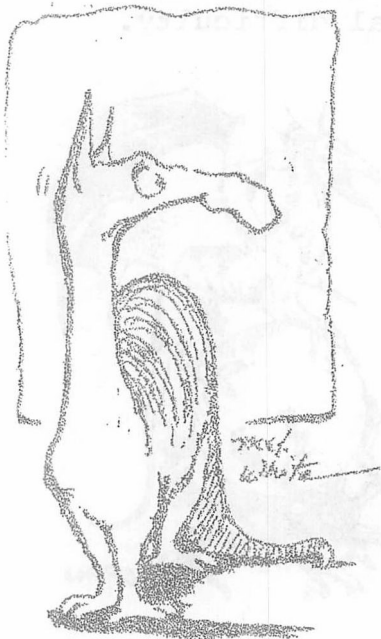


(Now let me put in this aside - a cultural phenonemen. Service jobs are not menial in Australia. They aren't meant to be her in the US, but still yet there is that feeling. While not a totally classless society, one is very much aware that service jobs are not being performed by people who can't find anything better. They are paid good money for services rendered, and take pride in themselves and their jobs. No tipping. I detected self-respect in everyone I met in Australia, and feel this is important enough to include here. Back to the Banquet.)

The appointed time arrived and we went in to dinner. Eve and John Harvey were seated with the other VIPs, fan fund winners, guests, etc. Jim and I sat with J.R. "Mad Dog" Madden and his wife (from Baton Rouge), and four Aussies. Right away, the waitress came over and took my napkin out of my glass, flipped it open, and put it in my lap. I was shocked. Does she think I don't know what to do with my napkin? Fortunately, she did the same for the other lady, and then the gentlemen at the table.

Wine and beer were furnished on each table... if you really wanted it, you could get juice. The food was well-prepared, beautifully served, and enough. Dessert was spectacular. Never have I been to a Science Fiction Convention Banquet where hotel food and service were so extraordinarily good. I was impressed.

After dessert, the con chair made a few announcements. Marc Ortlieb presented the Golden Caterpillar award to Justin Ackroyd for all he has done to (and for) Aussie fandom this year. Marc then introduced the after-dinner speaker -- Bob Shaw. Marc mentioned where he first met Bob, you B'hamsters might be interested to know: right here in Birmingham, Alabama, at DSC, B'hamaCon II, 1981.



Bob gave his usual entertaining talk... a string of stories, this time with a theme. I don't remember what it was, something about fannish history, I think, but it really doesn't matter. The funny thing was that I realized that while Bob, John and Eve, Jim and I had been sitting in the bar occasionally the past few days, and Bob had been telling stories, he had been practicing on us! I had heard it before, but that did not take away from the enjoyment one whit.

Immediately following the after-dinner speech, coffee was served. (I thought they had forgotten about it.) The Americans thought it was over when the speech ended and they got up and left. The Brits and the Aussies, however, stayed around their tables and drank coffee and socialized. I table-hopped for awhile and then left. Don't know how long they stayed.

Criticism: None.

The Hugos. Earlier in the con, a committee member had stopped me in the hall to say that he needed me for something... to accept someone's Hugo. I puffed up with pride while he went through his sheaf of notes. No, it wasn't that, he said finally, do you have so-and-so's address? I wilted. (Yes, I had the address - back in Alabama.) Well, I told this story to Cath Ortlieb, thinking it was high time someone cut me down to size, and let's all laugh at Charlotte's swelled head. No, no, Cath said, we really do need someone to accept for, let's see, this person, and that one too, will you do it? Of course I would.

By the time Hugo evening rolled around, I had about decided not to attend, as awards ceremonies are so incredibly boring, but I remembered I had to be there, so I went and sat with Rosemary Wolfe, a delightful lady and wife of Gene. As time went by, and the ceremonies were an hour late starting, Gene got a little ticked off and went away for something. You've got to realize the whole audience had been sitting there for an hour, fans and pros alike. So I hid myself up to Marc and said How Long? He said "Five minutes, with or without bells...", so I took it upon myself to inform the Important People, lest they be thinking they would be sitting there for another hour before starting.

The lights went down, Marc assumed the podium in his tux, looking very professorial, and it began. After a long day, a heavy meal, running from the Victoria to the Southern Cross, the warm, dark room was conducive to slumber.

But not for long! Audio-visuals again! As Marc read the nominees, the book/magazine covers appeared on screen, along with the names... The winner was announced and came forward to receive the prize. Mike Glycer, seated behind me, took his second Hugo for File 770, thanked the fans and withdrew File 770 from further consideration. I think that was a fine thing to do. He also let me fondle his Hugo. Then I began to get worried. What if one of my people wins? I'll have to go up there and say something. Good Grief, what have I done? But surely the committee wouldn't so casually pick acceptors for those who had won? Oh, agony... In any event, it did not come to pass. Jim, however, noticed me up there in front and fought his way through the crowd when it was over to find out why I was sitting up front (I grinned wickedly), and who I was accepting for!

Criticism: Very late start. No run-through of audio-visuals... absolutely no rehearsal, the result being that names appeared in reverse order to what Marc was reading, and, horror of horrors, the winner was revealed before the nominees. Marc, who teaches teenagers and is immune to many horrors, saved the day. That man can think on his feet, say the right thing, and make it all come out right. But still yet, it should not have happened.

Closing Ceremonies: I guess by this time, everyone was tired, and to close something is not as exciting as to open it. The audio-visual was identical to opening, only with "Closing Ceremonies". The chairman called each special guest up and presented him/her with a token of their appreciation, and each person could say a few words if they wished. Everyone was brief. Instead of passing the gavel to the next worldcon committee, a blue stuffed wombat, named Wilberforce, was passed on to ConFederation, with Jim Gilpatrick accepting. I attempted to convince Jim that it would be more convenient for me to take Wilberforce to the ConFederation office in Atlanta. But try as I might, he wouldn't let me do it. "Oh, all right!" I whined, "Let the Wilberforce be with you!"

Criticism: Well, this is nit-picky, but couldn't they have had a different set of film? No, I really can't find fault with such a low-key ceremony. It was over, and that was that.

The Art Show and Huckster room: The art show was small, but it had some neat stuff in it. Aussie artists predominated. Bruce and Flayne Pelz were in charge. The auction was held in the same room as the show, with people sitting on floor and stairs. Jack Chalker and Justin Akroyd presided. Four bids were required for a piece to go to auction. Very informal.// The huckster room was three small rooms, with a large part of the merchandise being t-shirts, jewelry, posters, ST stuff... anything but books. The guests' books were available, though.

Aussiecon Two was more like a big regional in the States than a worldcon, but that's all right, I like big regionals. This was by far the biggest convention Australian fandom has seen - 1800 attending - and they worked themselves nearly to death, and others pitched in cheerfully to help. It was worth the trouble and expense for me to go, and I hope it was worth it to them, too.

LARRY NIVEN STORY

You know, I've seen Larry Niven at Chicon, and Chattacon, and some other places, but I have never gone up and talked to him. I don't like to do that unless I really have something to say... just shy, I guess. So one of the high points of this convention was to be able to talk with Larry Niven. This time I had something to say.

It all began when I went to the fan lounge and caught the tail end of a panel going on there. Larry was telling about how the Aussie-on-the-street seemed to connect "Science Fiction" with "Harlan Ellison". Harlan was GoH in 1983 at the Australian National, and must have made a big impression on the general populace. Larry told a story to illustrate his point.

Shortly after that, I went to the bar to get a pot of Carlton, and passed Larry in the hallway, smoking his pipe. "I'm going to get a beer, would you like one, too?" That's what I had to say, and a great ice-breaker it is, too.

As we talked I told him how, coincidentally to his Ellison story, not half an hour earlier, I had been stopped on a street corner waiting for traffic to clear, and a truck had been stopped there waiting to turn. The truck driver no doubt saw my badge and asked me if I were here for the convention. I said I was. He asked if I were having a good time, and again, I was. He then asked if Harlan were there!

Then, and this is the real Larry Niven story, Larry told me of his visit, before the con, to Sydney. He had been doing the tourist bit, he said, which included visiting a battleship in the harbour.

"I went on board," Larry told me, "and spoke to the captain. I then went into the lower holds of the ship. While I was looking around down there, I met an old, grizzled sailor. He couldn't have been any older than I, but his face was weathered from his years at sea, deeply tanned and lined. He asked me if I was a visitor to the country, and I said yes, and introduced myself. Well, the sailor grabbed me in a rib-crushing bear hug!" "Larry Niven!" he exclaimed... "Larry Niven!" But then he released me and said, "But you can't be the real Larry Niven, the one who writes..." "Yes," I told him, "I write science fiction books." Well, he was delighted. He told me he had been a fan of mine for years, and couldn't believe he was really meeting me. On the other hand, I couldn't believe that I would find, in the bowels of a ship in Sydney Harbour, a weathered and rough-looking seaman who was a fan of mine."

"Gee, Larry", I said, "That's a great story... it seems you still enjoy being recognized... it hasn't gotten old for you..."

"That's right," Larry told me seriously, "I made a promise to myself years ago, that I would never get blase about it."

"FOR SMOKERS"

That was the sign on rectangular metal open-top boxes on the floor -- "For Smokers". You saw them everywhere - in public places, even in bars where there were plenty of ash trays. It made me wonder, so they expect smokers to throw their butts on the floor, and just give them a place to aim for? Strange.

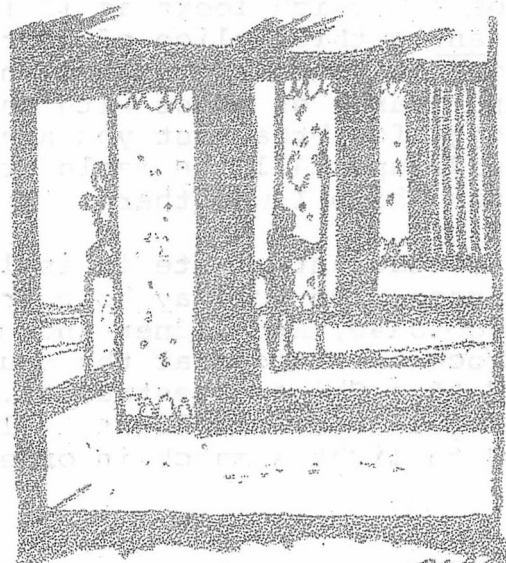
I was prepared to give up smoking while in Australian homes; I had heard such vehement anti-smoking campaigning from there. I had fully expected the Aussies to be rude about it. You know how you get certain impressions... well, the one about Aussies being rude is just not so. Forthrightness is different from rudeness, and it is good to know the rules, and I am quite prepared to obey the rules where I am a guest.

The Ortlieds provided a front porch, back steps, and a garage in inclement weather, for their smoking friends. As I wasn't the only one to smoke, I always had company, and it was amusing to note those who didn't smoke who joined us, because of the conversation. Once Jim came rushing out, all in a dither... It seems that the conversational topic inside was along the lines of "anyone over 30 has nothing to contribute to society..." As we were all over 30, we enjoyed being indignant for awhile! At Mandy and Phil's, also in Melbourne, the outside party got even larger than the inside party, even though it was freezing.

HOMELESS

Jim and I arrived in Melbourne, and checked into the Victoria Hotel, on Tuesday. Thence began non-stop partying, meeting people both at the Victoria and the Southern Cross (which was just a block and a half UP the hill) Wednesday saw registration, and dinner at an Indian restaurant with Jim, Rick Zellick, Maurene Garrett, Margie Eilers, Gail Kaplan, Joyce Scrivner, Mike Glycer, Elst Weinstein, Allen Kaufman and Gail Kaufman. Later the mezzanine lounge in the Victoria was the scene of a fannish gather, which lasted far into the night. Opening Ceremonies were on Thursday followed by the two panels I was on. Jet lag, which I had ignored, finally caught up with me and I went to bed early, real early, Thursday night. That was my undoing.

Early to bed, early to rise... Yes, I got up early. I bathed and dressed, made coffee and sat down to read the newspaper. Jim, who had not gotten in until 4 am (and this was only 6) **THREW ME OUT OF THE ROOM!!**



AUSSIE FOOD - FAST AND OTHERWISE

Melbourne, I am told, has over 500 restaurants. I can believe it. Everywhere you look, there are real restaurants, as well as many, many coffee lounges, milk bars and other fast-food shops. You can find a MacDonald's if you look hard enough. Specialty shops abound - storefronts are narrow, so they can cram 15 or 20 shops into each block. The MacDonald's we went to for the Black Hole and Hugu Awards Banquet (held each year at noon Saturday at the MacDonald's nearest the con hotel, Mike Glycer presiding) was four (4) stories high! We had the 4th floor.

But I digress, I am here to talk about Australian fast food and not about MacDonald's. Aussie fast food is different. It is mostly wrapped in pastry. It is everywhere. Take-away food is what they call it. It's like drive-in windows except it's on the street and you walk up, buy stuff and take it away, on foot. You see businessmen, shop girls, fans, walking along the street eating: meat pies; 'pasties' (pastry-wrapped veggie-stuff); sausage rolls; spring rolls and potatoe pancakes with veggies in them. I never figured out how you could walk, carry this stuff, eat, and consume a beverage at the same time. When do Aussies drink? They never drink water. I nearly dehydrated when I first got there, until I learned to order: "A glass of water, a glass of orange juice, a flat white coffee, and an order of toast, with jam. (You had to specify preserves or jam or something, else you'd get the dreaded Vegemite.)"

They may not drink water, but they eat a lot. The next thing I learned when ordering food at a fast food place (some had eat-in tables) was to ignore the "meals" and order from the "light snack" side of the menu. A "light snack" was served on a platter. Chips are french fries (no catsup) and a hamburger with "the lot" is unbelievable. The (huge) bun contains: thick ground beef pattie, a salad, melted cheese, a thin slice of ham which looks as if it had been dipped in beaten egg and fried, and a thick slice of beet! Other "light snacks" include scrambled eggs on toast with chips and salad, and beans (as in Campbell's pork and beans) on toast with the same. All big servings. When you order eggs for breakfast you aren't asked what kind, you are served sunny-side up. All the meals are filling... I never ate more than two a day while I was there.

"Real" restaurants I ate in included Greek, Mexican, Indian, Lebanese and Chinese. On our way home from Port Campbell (Marc and Cath had taken Bob Shaw, Art Widner and myself to see the Twelve Apostles and other rock formations at the Southern (Antartic) Ocean coastline), we stopped at a Chinese restaurant. It was... atmospheric, done all in red and yellow... red light, yellow tablecloth... red ink, yellow menu. Bob had to light a match in order to read it.

VEGGIES

Ah, Aussie veggies... I am here to tell you that Australians believe in vegetables. Everywhere you go, fast food, fine restaurants, homes, slant shacks, there is a profusion of fresh vegetables. I ate at Munro's the Victoria Hotel restaurant, and you ordered the meat dish you wanted. The menu didn't talk about vegetables, but the meal was served with a platter of beautiful, colorful, still-flavorful-because-they-hadn't-been-over-cooked, vegetables: carrots, peas, beets, brocolli, cauliflower, for example. Bell peppers were used in abundance; (Brussels) sprouts were common. Parsley was even used as a vegetable.

Marc prepared supper for a mob one night - grilled lamb chops, mashed potatoes, sprouts and peas. Sounds pretty ordinary, doesn't it? The thing was, the potatoes were cooked with pumpkin - about half and half, I guess - and were pretty, and were a new flavor combination for me. Lamb is so expensive here, it is a treat to me, but it seemed common there.

At Smithfield, the Canberra slantshack, Kim Lambert offered us "spaghetti" and I watched her prepare it. First of all, there was no long, string stuff involved. The pasta was seashell and spiral. Secondly, the "spaghetti sauce" had no sauce in it. It did have browned ground meat, to which was added and stir-fried, again not over-cooked, minced: onions, peppers, celery, tomatoes, sprouts, carrots, scallions and I don't know what else. It was tasty, filling and healthful.

Jack Herman was our Sydney chef. One night he prepared breaded lamb chops, mashed yams, brocolli, sprouts and sauteed mushrooms. (I went to the grocery store with Marce once and he picked up a sweet potatoe and said to me "We call these yams". "That's what we call them, too, Marc", I replied.) Another night Jack prepared fondue: fish cubes and assorted veggies were dipped in batter and deep fat fried. Excellent.

This whole trip has given me an inferiority complex about my cooking. Not only could all these people cook better than I, but you know how every one complains about airline food? Well, I thought it was good, but then I have been eating my own cooking since I was 14. Maybe this explains why, when I got tired of cooking, and quit doing it about a year ago, my family didn't complain.

(At no time in Australia, did I see gravy. Is this a particularly American, or Southern, accompaniment to meat and potatoes?)

TRAFFIC

It's a wonder I survived my first few days in Australia. I was forever looking the wrong way when I crossed the streets, and having someone jerk me back out of the way of on-coming traffic. Actually, I would look, and there would be no cars coming... the fact that they were going away from me didn't register.

I finally began to watch the natives, and copy their methods. Terry Frost's attitude toward cars summed it up nicely: "If you show fear, they will attack."

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AUSSIE TOILETS

My self-imposed research assignment for this trip was Australian toilets (See: Marc Ortlieb's article on same in ANVIL 32.) The first thing I noted was that in all public restrooms (bars, etc.) the toilet paper was little sheets in boxes (see attached sample) which are smooth, and suitable only for fine finishing of wood. Private homes and more expensive hotels had regular roll tissue. Secondly, each Aussie toilet was equipped with a button, rather than a handle, to flush it. One could pretend to be in a submarine, launching torpedos.. Fire One! Whooosh.... Fire Two!

My researches took me in many and varied Australian toilets, both public and private, and I was never denied access. At a coffee lounge I was directed behind the counter, through the kitchen and out the back door. Though I hung back, the friendly natives urged me on... "Yes, that's it... go on..." It was an outdoor dunney with a blue door that said neither "toilet" or "Ladies" or "Gents". I went in. The floor was covered with water. There was a stepladder in there with me. Thank goodness for the stepladder. It gave me a place to put my purse and jacket.

My friends knew I was conducting research and looked at me expectantly whenever I returned to the table. Once I reported: "Well, I went through that door, see... and inside, there is a spiral staircase..." They were hanging on every word... "and right next to it was a door marked "Ladies."

Later in my trip, I was at an Indian restaurant in Sydney. I had never been to an Indian restaurant before and was rather indignant at being served after the men, rather than before. I was getting belligerent, and realized that the wine and spirits were getting to me and I needed to take a little walk. This seemed to be a good time to continue my research. I excused myself and asked the waitress for the "Ladies". She directed me out the little door and down some metal stairs with a metal hand-rail, "and it's on the right". I'm sure she said to the right. When I reached the bottom of the stairs I was in a service corridor with doors all along one side of it and I wasn't sure which way was to the right. There was nothing to do but read the doors. One said "12". Another said "13". I went back the other way... found a door that said "11". Retraced my steps and found unmarked doors. In the distance I could see light at the end of the tunnel. Finally saw, through an open door, porcelain fixtures! This must be it! Went in, did a double-take, read the door. It said "Men". But I must be getting warm, right? Sure enough, the next door was the proper one. Don't have anything out of the ordinary to report about its furnishings... getting there was half the fun.

Mission accomplished, and feeling much better now, and over my wooziness I climbed the metal staircase. There were two doors at the top. Now I didn't notice that when I went down the stairs and had no way of knowing which opened into the Indian restaurant, and which into who-know-where. This threw me into a fit of "Lady or the Tiger" giggles. But one does what one must, so I tried the door on the left. It was locked.

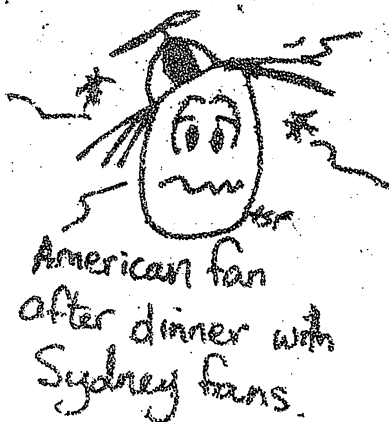
Thank goodness. I opened the door on the right.... no, I didn't. It was locked, too. What to do now? I still didn't know which was the correct door, and if I was going to have to knock on the door which must have been accidentally closed, what would happen if I knocked on the wrong door? Who would answer? Would it be an Indian, or a Chinese, or Lebanese, and would they speak English? Or call the police? Another dilemma, but there was nothing to do but knock. So I screwed up my courage and knocked on the door on the left. Nothing. Well, good. If it's not that one, it must be the other. This was ceasing to be funny. I knocked on the other door. Nothing. I knocked louder on first one door and then the other. Nothing.

Obviously, I am locked out. My friends are waiting at the table, wondering if I am sick, and what is taking so long. And I am locked out of the Indian restaurant. In the basement of a building. In Sydney, Australia. Wait a minute! There was light at the end of the tunnel! If I go down the stairs, and down the corridor, and out the opening I saw, it would probably dump me in an alley behind the building, and all I would have to do would be to go around the building, or the block it is on, and go in the front door of the Indian restaurant and take my place at the table as if nothing had happened. And maybe no one would notice I had come in the front door. Or maybe they would, and it would be embarrassing. But that would be infinitely better than being locked in a corridor, shivering on cold metal chairs all night. (I am sobering up fast, folks. Fear will do that to you.)

So down the stairs I went and peered down the corridor at the streetlights in the darkness at the far end. Double-checking, I looked the other way, too. Much to my amazement, there were other metal staircases! Well, might as well try them, too. I ascended the one next to my abortive attempt at re-entry, and returned from the twilight zone as the rich smell of curry drifted down to me. Home again!

I returned to the table and took my seat. "Where have you been?" my tablemates asked. "We were getting worried about you."

"You won't believe this," I replied, "but....."



THE UGLY AMERICAN

Sunday night of the convention, I was in for a rude surprise. I was asked to join Eve and John and some friends for dinner. Eve and John sat at the other end of the table from me, and I was introduced to the rest. They included Joseph Nicholas, Judith Hanna, Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown. (Joe is a Brit, Judith an Aussie who married him, Leigh and Valma are Aussies.) I was the ONLY American at the table, and it was something of a shock. I've never been a minority before. The aforementioned four had little to say to me, leaving me to my thoughts. Could this be the same Joseph Nicholas noted in the pages of ANVIL 36 for "...bashing of bad standards, Americans and nuclear weapons."? If so, I had better keep my mouth shut. Leigh Edmonds was someone I had heard many good things about in Aussie fanzine fandom, but I had no chance to talk with him. I kept a low profile, and used the right fork.

Later I learned that all four of these otherwise nice people are rather anti-American. Leigh, however, redeemed himself by coming to the fan gathering at Smithfield, where he talked to me like I was any other fan. After the con, the group that stayed at Marc & Cath's included, besides myself, Joseph and Judith. He never did have much to say to me, but I put this down to his being a victim of the Australian flu. Later in the week, as Judith and I were doing the dishes, I remarked to her that I could hardly believe this was the real Joseph Nicholas... from what I had read in various zines, well..., I had thought perhaps he was a hoax. To which Judith replied, "Oh, yes, he's much more endearing in person than in print." And I just thought he was sick.

I was also taken aback to be held personally responsible for America's nuclear and defense policies. It was interesting to see, first hand, a foreigner's view of America, although I know this is only one view. Eve was vehemently anti-nuke and anti-war, and hang the consequences. I couldn't help but wonder, though, how the rest of the world would feel if America reverted to isolationism, pulled out all their troops, equipment, etc., and left them defenseless. It is also interesting to note that over the centuries, Europe has been embroiled in a war of some kind or another every 20 years or so, but coincidentally with the development of the bomb, there have been no European wars for 40 years.

Eve's argument that we have never been invaded and don't know what it is like doesn't hold water. Our civil war included invasion, devastation and occupation of a large part of our country, the effects of which are still felt. Perhaps this is why we want to make sure our enemies don't take over the rest of the world and be in a position to come after us. Some Australians still remember, for instance, MacArthur in New Guinea and Bull Halsey in the Coral Sea.

I don't blame the Brits for being nervous, but it was my understanding that we are trying to preserve peace, not start another war.

NAVIGATION

Men! Girls, femfen of the world, don't you get tired of know-it-all men? I really don't see what Jim was so upset about. It's all his fault, anyway, he was driving too fast. There we were, driving through Canberra (pronounced Can-bra, with the accent on the first syllable), looking for Kim Huett's neighborhood. I was navigating. "Well, I said, "you go past.... uh... this exit with the unpronounceable name, and then you take the, uh..." I looked up... "Oops, that was it!"

Jim got a little testy. "Let me look at that!" he said, pulling off the road and jerking the map out of my hand. It was only a 5 or 10 mile detour to get back to the exit we had overshoot. We actually found the shopping mall Kim had told me to call him from, though I had forgotten the name of it and couldn't find that scrap of paper.

Inside the mall, I rang the number Kim had given me. A recording answered. Oh, no! We're going to be stuck in this mall and I don't know the address of Kim's house and if there is no one there, it wouldn't do me any good anyway. I was worried, but stayed on the line until the little 'beep'. "Kim", I shouted hysterically, "This is Charlotte, and we are here, where are you?" No sooner had I gotten the words out of my mouth than Kim answered the phone. It seems they keep the answering machine on to weed out the calls they don't want, and people in the know just yell "It's me! Answer the phone!" Kim said he would come get us and I gave the phone to Jim to get and give explicit directions, as he seems to set great store by them.

We went out the door by which we had come in the mall and I sat on the steps. Jim was fuming: "We don't know what they look like and they don't know what we look like." Well, that's not my fault, he had the phone last, he could have taken care of that. "I'm going to find a bank and change some money so long as we are here," Jim said. Bob Shaw was with us, and keeping a low profile in this little spat, but suggested that if I still had my convention badge, I could put it on. I had, and did. Then he, too, decided he had an errand to run. Men. So there I was, all alone, when Kim would be looking for three people. Now, I had never met Kim, but I was sure he was a good-looking young man. So I sat there, with a pleasant and hopeful expression on my face, making eye contact with every good-looking young man who came by..... Finally, a good-looking young man (what else?) came out the mall door near me, saying to the young woman with him "... and we don't even know what they are wearing..."

"You don't even know what who is wearing?" I challenged, and thus we met, "cute", as they say.

But to get back to men, and navigating, we must now skip to Sydney. There we were 'doing' Sydney... first the opera house, then the ferry, and next, I was informed, we were going to Sydney Tower. "Where is it?" I innocently asked. "How will we find it?"

They scoffed. They laughed. "Why, it's the tallest thing in Sydney, you can see it from all over. You just see it and walk towards it. You can't miss it. We don't need to find it on the map, ~~it's right in front of you~~." Those last unspoken words hung in the air. But I am nothing if not determined. "Are you sure? Shouldn't we at least know what street it is on?" "No, no", they insisted, "Trust us." So we looked up, and up, and up. We were surrounded by skyscrapers. No tower was to be seen. "Well, I think it is that way", Jim said. "In plain sight, huh? Can't miss it?" I asked.

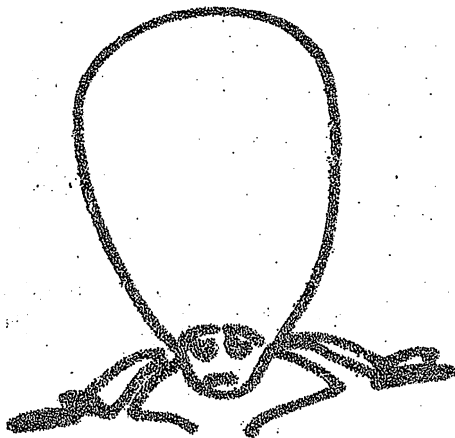
We walked for blocks and blocks. "I'm sure it will be visible when we get to the corner and can see between those two buildings," Bob announced. Arriving at the corner in question, the blue skies between the two buildings revealed.... blue skies. "Tallest thing in Sydney?" I snarled... "Just follow it there, huh?"

More walking followed, the the two Americans and one Irishman stopping at every street corner to gawk and rubber-neck like a trio of tourists. At long last, after traversing (or triangulating, as Jim likes to say) the city, we looked up, and up, and up, and there, looming overhead, was the tower. We had found it, accidentally, I am sure, though Jim took the credit. Pure dumb luck, I think.

PINK FLANNEL

I stayed at the Victoria, rather than at the Southern Cross. I wanted to feel I was in Australia, rather than waking up in a room that could have been in Anywhere, USA. Well, I got it. Utilitarian, with fridge. No frills, with a wall heater. Electric kettle, with milk from the porter. Big, soft, fluffy towels, with no washcloth. How do Aussies wash their faces, I wonder? How am I going to wash my face? Ah, ha! Corner of big, fluffy towel will do. And it did, until I ran across washclothes in, of all places, the gift shop. They came in assorted colors with assorted Australian animals printed thereon. I chose a pink one, with Koala.

Tuesday after the con, seven of us invaded the Ortlieb's domicile. The hospitality was unbeatable. We were furnished with various and assorted fold-out beds, mattresses on the floor, a couch, a cot, ~~and~~ ~~a pillow and a towel~~. Upon each appointed sleeping place was a stack of bed-lin, blankets, a pillow, and a towel, no washcloth. But I was prepared. My pink washcloth (with koala) became a permanent fixture in the bathroom. As guests began to leave, Marc would ask each: "Is that your pink flannel?" and he would say "No." When I packed and left, Marc did not ask me about a pink flannel, and as I had my washcloth with me, I think I just learned another Aussie word.



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16

HOSTS AND HOSTESSES

My last night in Australia, I heard it observed that since all the Americans were gone (but me), the continent must be several megatons lighter. Those megatons of visiting Americans (and Brits, and New Zealanders, etc.) had to stay somewhere, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those Aussies who opened their home to us.

Marc and Cath Ortlieb, immediately after helping run the biggest con Australia has ever had, opened the Ortlieb Fan Hotel, complete with limosine service. They picked up and delivered people at all hours of the day and night, drove hundreds of miles to show us the sights, took us to the wildlife sanctuary and zoo, the museum and jail, department stores, bookstores, fan gatherings, and cooked our meals. I don't know when they found time to sleep. They went the extra mile.

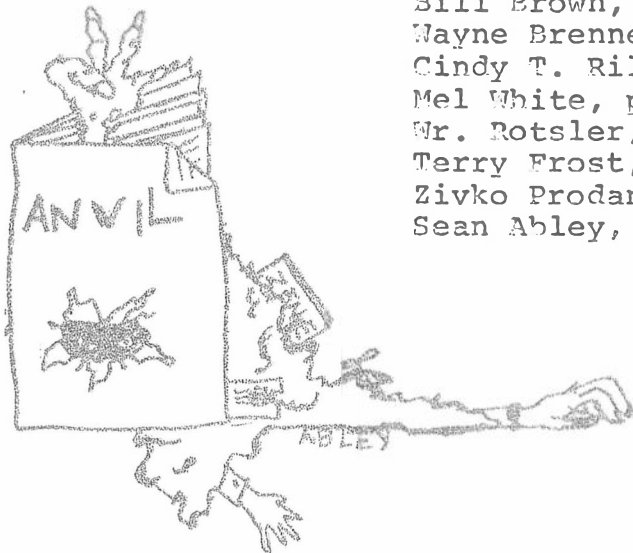
In Canberra, Smithfield (Kim Lambert, Mark Denbow, Kim Huett, Larry Larkin) took us in, gave us a tour of the city, fed us, and invited hundreds of people over for a party! And all on a weeknight.

In Sydney, Jack Herman, Cath McDonnell and house-mate William, though they were out busily earning a living in the daytime, left the keys out for us, gave us explicit instructions for use of public transit, fed us, and took us to a fannish gathering... weeks after the convention was over.

I think that I have more than made up for four Aussies sleeping in my living room... Now it's your turn again. Whenever you're in Birmingham, just give me a call!

Art Credits:

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Wayne Brenner, p.3
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Sean Abley, p.17



[illegible]

They went to the club where they found him in a room. They went to the club where they found him in a room. They went to the club where they found him in a room.

[illegible]

...and the
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I think that I have now said all you need know about me. I am glad to hear that you are well. I hope you will write soon. I am always yours truly,
Billie Mae Smith

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JAN 19 1960
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