

ASFM

Australian Science Fiction Monthly

NUMBER TWO : JANUARY 1971

Edited by John Bangsund and published by Parergon Books, GPO Box 4946, Melbourne 3001, for the Australian Science Fiction Communications Organization ("Comorg"). Subscriptions: Free to members of Comorg; others A\$6.00, US\$6.00, UK£2.00 per year. Comorg membership fees: Australia - \$4.00; Overseas - local equivalent of US\$4.50. Rates for clubs, groups, conventions and other organizations are listed in the next issue. This is the first of three austerity issues.

FIFTY CENTS



"Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest, some..."
Oh, pardon me - just waxing melancholy a bit. Gives it a nice shine, you know.

The cover of this issue marks, shall we say, not to put too fine a point on it, a change of direction for ASFM. Backwards? Forwards? Who knows? But, with all the supercargo jettisoned, you can be sure that wherever we're headed now we'll be moving more comfortably.

I wanted to explain in this editorial exactly why ASFM has changed direction, why the Yearbook, Directory and other things have been abandoned, and why I can't really get excited about Ron Graham's new venture; but it's such a nice, mellow early-autumn kind of day today, and I've already written half a dozen unsatisfactory drafts and don't feel like trying again. However I go about the subject, what I write seems to come out sounding bitter and twisted, and I'm not bitter. Twisted, yes, but that's congenital.

So let's talk about the convention instead.

About ninety people attended the Tenth Australian SF Convention at the University of Melbourne on 1st and 2nd January. Under the direction of John Foyster, Leigh Edmonds and Lee Harding, the convention was something of a departure from others of recent years.

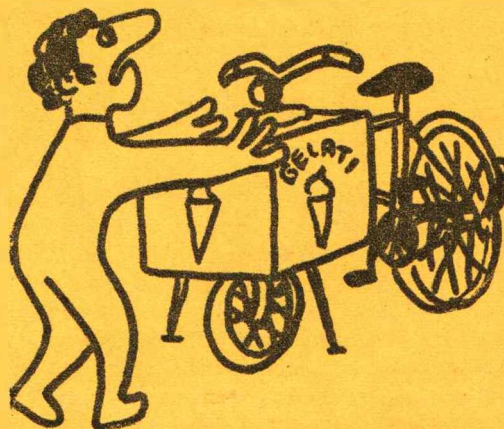
The programme relied on short, concentrated segments and long free periods, and this approach seems to have paid off. There were no films, apart from some 8mm movies of Ron Clarke's travels. (Unfortunately Ron ran short of money while overseas, with the result that he has an extensive documentary on the reconstruction and fitting-out of the double-decker bus in Sydney, but only about forty seconds of Heicon. I recall doing something similar when I was about sixteen; on the second day of my fortnight holiday in Sydney I took 96 photos of animals at Taronga Park Zoo, then discovered I couldn't afford any more film. If anyone is interested in those snaps, by the way, I still have them, and if there's a spare hour or so during the next convention I could... I couldn't? Oh.) Since every Australian convention of recent years has relied on films for a large part of its programme (and a large part of its membership), this was rather a gamble; but the committee was convinced that we could entertain ourselves, and we did.

To cater for the film fans, the Melbourne Fantasy Film Group put on an excellent programme at the Capri Theatre, Murrumbidgee, on January 3rd. It included LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD, WORK IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD, MOON ZERO TWO and a superb, reported to be complete, version of METROPOLIS.

At the business session, the Australia in 75 Committee was formally instructed to bid for the 1975 World Convention.

Conventions are for people, and the organizers are to be congratulated on never losing sight of this. The programming was excellent, and the committee was quite prepared to scrap segments when it felt people were tired or just wanted to sit around and talk. The emphasis on self-entertainment was fully justified: no film could be quite as entertaining, for example, as Carla Harding, Elizabeth Foyster and an invisible Martian (played brilliantly by Kevin Dillon, who was in Sydney at the time) discussing what it's like being married to science fiction.

The Paul Stevens Show, which is becoming something of an institution at Melbourne conventions, was actually scripted this year - though, regrettably, not rehearsed. (Or is it regrettable? Paul's shows tend to give pretty much the same impression as his fanzines - haphazard productions, ragged at the edges, yet interesting enough to persevere with and occasionally showing sustained glimpses of inspired comedy. Would a little more thought and planning ruin this? I am fairly confident we will never know.) Paul interviewed Superman (played, somewhat unconvincingly, by Peter House, who is lean and red-bearded and had considerable difficulty in seeing his notes without his glasses); John Foyster interviewed Olaf Bangsund, publisher of Parallel Books (in which role Lee Harding gave a most impressive characterization of myself, L. Ron Hubbard and Doctor Strangelove, more or less simultaneously); and I vaguely recall making an appearance as Professor Humphrey Tape of the University of Ard-Knox, delivering an address on the neglected science of ektrachiasology. (I can remember wishing very sincerely that I could have invented a word easier to pronounce than that one. At the time I was in a rather relaxed state, and every time the audience responded particularly enthusiastically I wondered whether it was laughing at my very erudite puns or my slight difficulty in delivering them. I have subsequently heard John Foyster's tape of this programme, and I seem to detect a certain note of hysteria in my performance. Whether this constitutes an argument for or against rehearsing the Paul Stevens Show, I'm not sure.)



Press coverage of the convention was the heaviest yet experienced here. The New Year break is a dull patch for the Press, and it was made even worse than usual this year when unseasonal rain washed out the Test Cricket. I suppose ninety people talking about sf is ultimately as worthwhile and significant as several thousand people watching a few men in white knocking a little ball around a paddock, but that's not the way the Great Public sees things.

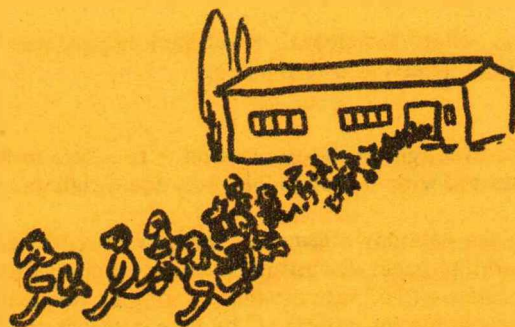
Dick Jenssen, the Melbourne fan who shares a body with Dr Ditmar Jenssen, a lecturer in meteorology at the University of Melbourne, was interviewed by TV, radio and newspaper reporters, and his comments led to the Great Public being fed the "news" that science fiction is dead and fans are mostly drug addicts. What Dick had to say was, in fact, perfectly reasonable, but the Press chose to distort it. To say that some fans are on drugs is about as significant as saying that some fans are homosexual or drive dangerously or take part in anti-war demonstrations or play the stock market. The more serious matter - about science fiction being dead - is very much open to debate. It seems to me it has never been more alive than it is now.

(There will be a brief interlude here, while I adopt my Serious Constructive Attitude. Since this entails meditating for some time before a leather-bound copy of *EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE*, you might just as well pop out for a beer or a coffee or whatever you normally pop out for - and don't worry too much if you're not back before I start again: I won't say anything witty for at least nine paragraphs.)

The argument that sf has been outmoded by the actuality of moon flights is pretty stupid. The space programme has stimulated interest in science fiction, particularly amongst younger people, and rightly so. Man has ventured into space, for better or worse. He doesn't know what he will find there. The people who write and read sf don't know either, but by exploring possibilities in fiction, by imagining the as-yet-unknown, perhaps these people are better prepared for what eventually does happen. Meantime, the mass of sf which is outmoded factually by science and technology retains some value as entertainment. A lot of it can still be read with pleasure - as Dick Jenssen pointed out in his address to the convention.

But science fiction is not only entertainment, not only an imaginative rehearsal of the future. It is also - if you will pardon the expression - literature.

As literature, most sf is pretty bad. In this magazine James Blish and George Turner are talking about which sf novels stand up with the best of "mainstream" fiction, and there are very few. In forty-five years as a separate genre, sf has produced only a handful of novels approaching classic stature. Even competent, well-written novels are uncommon: it's just so hard, apparently, to integrate the requirements of scientific extrapolation with the art of novel-writing. It is



interesting that many of the writers who succeed at this are "outsiders" - people like Ursula Le Guin and David Compton who have not come up through "the eight stages of fandom". Consequently - and both Dr Jenssen and American author Norman Spinrad have recently deplored this - the regular fans tend to ignore some of the best writing in the field. (Dick said that the fans reject some writers because they write well, but I can't believe this. Fandom is an in-group which distrusts outsiders, no matter how well they write.)

Norman Spinrad developed this point extensively in an article in *Rogue* (recently reprinted in *Science Fiction Review*). He blames the sad state of sf - sad in its quality and in its lack of acceptance by the general reading public - on the fans. I think most of what he has to say is probably justified - and monumentally unimportant. If only the fans bought sf it would be laughably uneconomic ever to publish it; whoever is buying it isn't dissatisfied, obviously.

In another article in the same issue of SFR, Ted White inadvertently supports Spinrad's views with his remarks about "non-sf people who have lucked into positions in our field" - a sentiment as typical as the phrase is ungrammatical.

Over the last few years I have, as Ted puts it, "lucked" into the fields of engineering, materials handling, high-fidelity, the caravan trade, the building industry and others I've mercifully forgotten. In each field I have met people who resented me as a "non" person - non-engineering, non-hi-fi and so on. In each field I have also met "journalists" who knew their specialty intimately, and most of them were close to illiterate. The exceptions were people who had "lucked" into these fields - people who were journalists first, experts later.

If I were a journalist and I had to work with an "sf person" who knew all about sf and nothing about journalism (except what he had picked up in publishing fan-zines), I would resent him as much as Ted resents "non-sf persons". In fact I have been in that situation, and I did. But that's another story.

"Now that's what I call bitter and twisted."

L... what? Interloper! - get back to your own fan-zine! (Geis, you're leaking.)

The highlight of the convention - to return to the story I started with - was undoubtedly the Gelati Incident.

On the Saturday afternoon, during a not particularly sparkling panel discussion on science fiction films, Lee Harding walked into the hall, eating an icecream. "Excuse me interrupting," he is reported to have said, "but there's a little man on a bike out here selling gelati, if anyone is...." The hall emptied. Lee narrowly escaped being trodden underfoot by the panel members.

I didn't actually see the Incident. I was at home, writing that scholarly address on ektrachiasology. So someone else, Bruce Gillespie probably, got the exclusive interview with the Gelati Man. Scooped again...



The following article by Tex Cooper was written in a hurry for the Yearbook. The first part of it was set by Kerry Walker, one of the IBM girls at Peter Isaacson's, where I am working at present, as a test run for a complete issue of ASFM done in this style.

I am very sorry that ASFM will not appear looking like this; it would have been rather nice, I feel; but in any case I thought you might like to see what ASFM might have looked like (allowing for the fact that this column has been reproduced on an electronic stencil-maker, which doesn't quite do the same job as an offset plate).

It is also an ingenious way of saving myself a half-page of typing.

To conclude this rambling editorial, I would like to commend to you - and congratulate the publishers of - three recent fanzines. David Grigg's FANARCHIST is a very promising publication, with loads of humour and character. No.3 details David's recent discovery of Sydney fandom (he rode from Melbourne on a tiny Yamaha), and this piece is one of the finest examples of fannish writing I've seen in some time. John Alderson's CHAO is developing nicely, too; and Ron Clarke has revived his THE MENTOR. Addresses elsewhere in this issue.

TEX COOPER

SF in South Africa

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY

TEST SETTING

TAKE IN TEX COOPER

TAKE IN Science Fiction in South Africa

THIS article is a very general attempt to cover the sf scene in South Africa. It must not on any account be taken as a comprehensive report of all sf activities as I have been labouring under a handicap; namely that I was given about two weeks or so to complete the assignment. I would have liked more time to gather material; but as that was impossible, I hope that this slight attempt to give the sf scene in South Africa will suffice.

On the Professional Side

AS there is a lack of professional media for authors to sell their work to, South Africa seems sadly lacking in professional sf authors. The media that exist in South Africa will be dealt with under separate headings.

FILMS

MOST sf films that are produced do get released in South Africa. In most cases, these are released here about the same time as they are released in other countries. Unfortunately, however, the cinemas suffer from a surfeit of cheap Japanese films, e.g. those horror films like The Black Scorpion, Godzilla and those types. This has had a detrimental effect on the population in that if a film is advertised as sf, quite a few people refuse to even consider seeing it. With the Moonwalk however, people are slowly changing their attitude to sf.

But, in order to tempt people to see films, the cinema owners have changed their tactics. Instead of advertising a film as sf they now advertise it as drama. This happened in the case of Charly and also The Mind Of Mr Soames. Thus people, who would never have dreamed of going to see a sf film saw, and enjoyed, these films. Maybe this is a good thing as it encourages people to see and enjoy sf, but it does nothing to combat the bad name that sf has in most people's opinion.

However, in the past year, South Africa has had its share of good and bad sf films. For example: 2001; Beneath The Planet Of The Apes; Marooned; Charly; The Mind of Mr Soames; They Came From Beyond Space; The Body Stealers; Journey To The Far Side Of The Sun. I'll leave it to you to decide which were good. These are only a few examples of the films released here just to give you an idea of the film scene in South Africa and to indicate that we are pretty well up to date on the sf films that are released.

ends test setting, not story****

TELEVISION:

As far as television programmes are concerned, we are, unfortunately, a bit out of date here. None of the American programmes, such as Star Trek, or the British ones, such as The Prisoner, have been shown in South Africa. This is mainly owing to the fact that we in South Africa do not happen to have television as yet.

RADIO:

Radio programmes have been a source of some good sf and also quite a few science-fact talks and discussions. There is a regular programme on the commercial service of the South Africa Broadcasting Commission. This is at 7.30 every Monday night and it lasts half an hour (with ads). This programme is called "The Challenge of Space" and it seems as though it is locally produced and written. On Sunday evenings on the same service, at 8.30 there is a series called "Suspense". This is also locally produced and the producer seems to have a decided preference for sf. Quite a few of the stories have been sf, and the latest was a short story by Ray Bradbury. One locally written and produced serial was "The Ultimate Odyssey", which was written for the English service of the SABC by a South African author.

There are, of course, the usual soap opera serials that beset any commercial radio station. One of these started out as quite a good serial. This was based on E. F. Russell's book, THREE TO CONQUER. This became so popular that when the serial came to an end there was a public outcry and the serial continued with local writers continuing the hero's adventures. Eventually about six different writers had a go at continuing the series. Unfortunately, after starting well, it soon degenerated to pure soap opera. On the official English service of the SABC sf also seems quite popular. Quite a few of John Wyndham's short stories have been produced, for example "Chocky" and "Survival". These were broadcast on the programme "Saturday Theatre". There was also a broadcast of the BBC version of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, serialized on Sunday nights.

The science-fact programmes have also proven very popular. One series was given by the British astronomer Patrick Moore when he was in South Africa on a visit. This was broadcast under the title "Our Starlit Sky".

BOOKS:

As far as new sf books are concerned, South Africa is pretty much up to date, unless the Censor takes a dislike to a book, in which case we don't see it at all. A case in point is THE FLESHPOTS OF SANSARTO. This was banned - not because of the contents, but because of the cover of the paperback edition. Quite a few books are banned for this reason; the covers are objectionable. The publishers, of course, are not going to alter the covers just to get their books released here.** It's

** Some do. (JB)

easier not to release the book, to the detriment of the fans.

However, the censorship system seems haywire. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND was banned. On this score one would expect BUG JACK BARRON to be banned as well. Yet it isn't. On the same track, STAND ON ZANZIBAR is banned. It's confusing.

MAGAZINES:

Until recently, most American sf magazines were freely available in South Africa. At the moment there seem to be distribution problems as we do not seem to be getting them regularly. Their appearance is very irregular. This can be most frustrating, especially if you are following a serial; suddenly you miss an issue through no fault of your own. But this doesn't seem to be something we can do anything about.

Vision of Tomorrow arrived as regularly as the dock strikes allowed and was beginning to sell well. It's a pity that it has gone out of circulation. It seemed destined for a bright future. Locally, there is one magazine that publishes sf occasionally. This is a bi-monthly magazine, Scope, which seems to favour sf and science-fact articles. They published a series called "The Seven Wonders of the Future World", and they have also published articles by Asimov. At present they are publishing a series from the book by Erich Von Daniken on astronauts from outer space being Man's ancestor on Earth. This is a follow-up to the series, THE CHARIOT OF THE GODS, which was published some time ago.

Well, I'm afraid that this short summary will have to round up the professional sf scene in South Africa.

On The Fandom Side

Organized fandom in South Africa started on April 13, 1969. A letter appeared in the letter column of the Sunday Times, South Africa's largest Sunday newspaper. The contents were as follows:

"CALLING SF FANS. Judging by the number of science fiction books sold in South Africa I am sure that there must be many science fiction fans around. I am the only South African member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F) with headquarters in the United States and wish to start a South African branch. If those interested will write to me at the above address, I will be pleased to let them have more information."

The next couple of weeks were hectic as my letter-box was filled with enquiries. These all received a personal reply and one fact emerged from the correspondence. There was definitely a need for a South African sf club. A meeting was organized for June 6, 1969, and at this meeting the South African Science Fiction Club was officially formed.

A thank-you letter was written to the Sunday Times. This was also published and drew response from a further 25 persons who had not seen the first letter.

A newsletter was published to keep the members informed. This was considered a necessity as the members were spread all over South Africa. Originally the idea was to publish the newsletter quarterly, but it has since developed into an octal publication - that is, it is published eight times a year. It has also become the official magazine of the club and is now called Probe.

The first object of the elected committee was the drawing up of application forms and a constitution to make the club official before collection of subscriptions. Next on the list was the opening of a lending library, which at present has branches in Johannesburg and Pretoria and contains some 400 books, mostly paperbacks, and all donated by members.

Meetings are held approximately every six weeks and future plans include the organizing of debates and getting guest speakers to make the meetings more interesting. Another plan is to organize social outings and film shows.

The students of the University of the Witwatersrand formed an sf society soon after SASFC was formed. This was mainly a book-swapping society and fees were R1.50 (about A\$2.00) or ten sf books. In September 1970 their committee decided that the competition from SASFC was too great for more than one club in South Africa, so they decided to disband and amalgamate with SASFC, increasing our membership by 12 and the library by about 100 books.

In Salisbury, Rhodesia, sf fans launched a club on November 14, 1969. Under the impression that they were the first in Africa, they called themselves SF Alpha. They comprise about 66 members who meet once a month. They hold discussions and have debates. They are also organizing a fancy-dress ball to celebrate their first anniversary. A second group was formed in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, called SF Beta. Not much is known about this group at present. SF Alpha has affiliated with SASFC.

SASFC is also negotiating for an exchange membership with the Washington SF Association, which will consist mainly of swapping official publications. We have also joined NSF and a couple of our members are also members of the British SF Association.

At the rate that SASFC is expanding in South Africa, the rest of the world of fandom had better watch out. We're going to be strong contenders for the 1975 World Convention.

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Note: In a recent letter, Tex has asked us to correct

an error in our report on South African fan activities last issue. We said there that the SASFC claims 250 members; in fact, the SASFC had (at 30th December) 70 members and two affiliated groups with 66 and 10 members respectively - a total of 146.

DIRECTORY

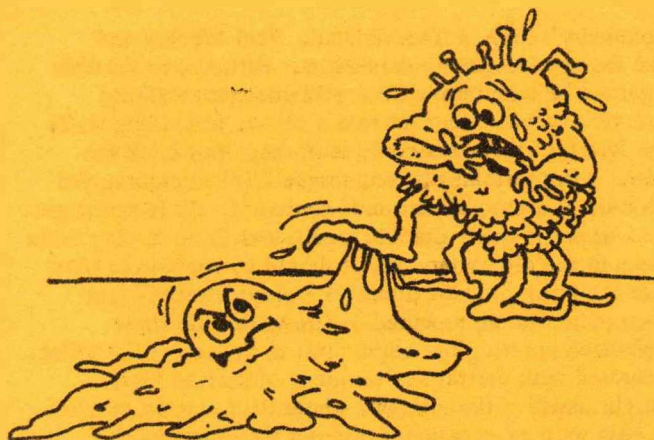
The Mentor (Ron Clarke 78 Redgrave Rd Normanhurst NSW 2076) Chao (John Alderson PO Box 72 Maryborough Vic 3465) The Fanarchist (David Grigg 1556 Main Rd Research Vic 3095) SF Commentary and Norstrilian News (Bruce Gillespie 600 Plenty Rd Preston Vic 3072) Australian Burroughs Courier (Allan Tompkins GPO Box 5465 Melbourne 3001; note - not available outside Australia) BOF (Leigh Edmonds & John Foyster 12 Glengariff Drive Mulgrave Vic 3170) Terran Times (Shayne McCormack 49 Orchard Rd Bass Hill NSW 2197) Somerset Gazette (Noel Kerr 85 Morgan St Carnegie Vic 3163) The New Forerunner (Gary Mason 8-14 Warili Rd French's Forest NSW 2086) Windus (Alex Robb 120 Herring Rd Eastwood NSW 2122) Thrusting Member (Leigh Edmonds 28 Ardmillan St Moonee Ponds Vic 3039) ASFM (John Bangsund GPO Box 4946 Melbourne 3001)

Comorg (GPO Box 4946 Melbourne 3001) Melbourne SF Club (GPO Box 1267L Melbourne 3001; meets 147 Toorak Rd South Yarra; sec. Mervyn Binns) The Nova Mob (John Foyster 12 Glengariff Dve Mulgrave 3170) Melbourne University SF Ass'n (c/- MU Union Parkville 3052; pres. Steve Gilbert 1a Blyth St Brunswick Vic 3056) Monash University SF Ass'n (c/- Monash Union Clayton 3168; sec. Alex Gas 75 Trevelyan St South Caulfield Vic 3162) Sydney SF Foundation (PO Box A215 Sydney South NSW 2000; sec. Gary Mason) Sydney Futurian Society (GPO Box 4440 Sydney 2001) Australian SF Ass'n (no current information) Brisbane Fantasy & SF Ass'n (GPO Box 2268 Brisbane 4001; sec. Dennis Stocks) DUSK (20 Tryon Ave Wollstonecraft NSW 2165; sec. Sabina Heggie) Australian Star Trek Fan Club (32 Bulleen Rd Nth Balwyn Vic 3104; sec. John Stepkowski) Australian Tolkien Society (158 Liverpool St Hobart Tasmania 7000; sec. Michael O'Brien) ANZAPA (GPO Box 2268 Brisbane Queensland 4001; official editor Dennis Stocks) Australia In '75 Committee (PO Box A215 Sydney Sth 2000; Gary Mason, sec.) Space Age Bookshop (GPO Box 1267L Melbourne 3001; Mervyn Binns, prop.) Pareragon Books (GPO Box 4946 Melbourne 3001; John Bangsund)

Overseas Fanzines: SF Review (John Foyster) Locus, Speculation (Bruce Gillespie) Carandath, Journal of Washington SF Ass'n (Michael O'Brien) Focal Point, Algol, Scottishe, Haverings (John Bangsund) Egg (David Grigg) Witzend (Noel Kerr) Luna Monthly (Peter Darling PO Box A215 Sydney Sth NSW 2000) Advent: Publishers Inc (Australian agent, Mervyn Binns) OTHER OVERSEAS PUBLICATIONS &c: Comorg GPO Box 4946 Melbourne 3001 Australia

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NUMBER THREE : FEBRUARY 1971

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FIFTY CENTS

NEWS

The following awards were made at the Tenth Australian Science Fiction Convention (University of Melbourne, January 1-2): "Ditmars":

Best Australian Fiction: A. BERTRAM CHANDLER: THE BITTER PILL

Best International Fiction: NO AWARD

Best Australian Fanzine: NOEL KERR: SOMERSET GAZETTE

Committee Awards: JOHN BAXTER (for SF IN THE CINEMA); RONALD E. GRAHAM (for VISION OF TOMORROW)

Patrick A.M. Terry Award for Humour in SF: JOHN SLADEK: THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Melbourne SF Club Award: BRUCE GILLESPIE
Paul Stevens Show Golden Caterpillar Awards:

FemmeFan of the Year: SHAYNE McCORMACK

Most Productive Fan: DAVID GRIGG

Best Fannish Beard: JOHN FOYSTER

Most Optimistic Fan: JOHN BANGSUND

The Brisbane Fantasy & Science Fiction Association will conduct a small convention at Easter - April 9-11. Guest of Honour is Frank Bryning, and the programme includes panel discussions, films, a barbecue, and (on the Sunday) a trip down the Gold Coast for a picnic and private view of Charlie Mustchin's fabled sf collection. The organizers are Dennis Stocks and John Ryan - GPO Box 2268, Brisbane 4001. Southerners interested in mounting an expedition to the steaming sin-city of the north might care to contact Comorg or Gary Mason (PO Box A215, Sydney South 2000).

The Nova Mob met at the Gastronomica, Carlton, on Friday, 5th February, for a gelati tasting. After sampling some of the dozens of the varieties available, and with some of the gelati-connoisseurs feeling just a lit-tul queasy, the Mob adjourned next door to the Naples Bay to pick listlessly at pizzas and listen to the Apollo 14 broadcast. Those with iron stomachs later went on to the Melbourne SF Club, where Donna Runic watched Star Trek and everyone else watched Donna.

Damien Broderick has moved to Sydney to take up his new appointment as editor of Man. We asked Damien - or "Hef", as he now prefers to be called - whether this meant Man would in future be publishing lots and lots of science fiction. "No," he said. "Ah, but you will be publishing full-colour centre-folds of naked robots?" "No." "Full-colour centre-folds of naked science fiction writers?" "I thought I just answered that."

Since last issue the Melbourne Science Fiction Club has been forced to abandon its clubrooms in Somerset Place. A member (ex-member, rather) of the club told the Melbourne City Council Health Department that the club was screening 35mm films in the clubrooms, and the council's reaction was (considering the dilapidated and somewhat unhygienic nature of the clubrooms) swift and predictable. We have this report from Our Man at the MSFC:

"The club is now cosily ensconced in commodious premises in Darling Street, South Yarra, above an

apothecary's shop in Toorak Road. Paul Stevens and John Breden are live-in caretakers. Entrance to the club is gained by hammering your gold-mounted walking stick on a wooden door set into a blank, forbidding wall. The faithful caretakers come down and draw back the bolts. After climbing a picturesque brick staircase, you come up to a magnificent roof courtyard. (It is envisaged that, where it was a fine old traditional thing to play table tennis in the old clubrooms, it should be possible to play lawn tennis on the new premises - provided sufficient green paint can be procured.) The visitor has three choices on entering the clubrooms: to the left is the toilet, decorated with portraits of eminent Australian fans; straight ahead is the kitchen, where Paul is wont to take his ease with an occasional pilsener while watching a small television receiver atop the refrigerator; to the right, you fall down stairs. For no reason at all, there are then half a dozen steps down and half a dozen steps up again, which, while affording some aesthetic pleasure of a symmetrical nature, are somewhat hazardous if you have spent some time with Paul and his pilsener. You then enter a hallway, containing the club duplicator, a sink, a tap above the sink, shelving above the tap, and a gas jet somewhere in amongst the shelves. But tarry not upon the way these wonders to behold, for beyond lie realms of mystery such as not even Haroun al-Raschid dreamt of - the pad of Paul and John. The Club Library is partly situated in the hallway, separated by a flimsy partition from the duplicator and the gas jet, partly in the front chamber overlooking the busy thoroughfare of Toorak Road. The club is considering installing a high-resolution telescope, set into the casements of this chamber. This would enable club members, for a small fee, to observe the night life of Melbourne from a distance, so to speak, with no danger to their persons."

In ASFM 1 we reported on the publication of a cheap British edition of John Baxter's SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA. If we had been on the ball we would have also mentioned his THE AUSTRALIAN CINEMA (Pacific Books, \$1.80), which appeared during January. Since several overseas fanzines have talked about the earlier book and wondered "if this is the same John Baxter who ...", we are pleased to advise that it certainly is. John, who was for a long time in the early sixties about the only Australian fan everyone knew overseas, edited The Pacific Book Of Australian SF in 1968, and there have been rumours of a Son-of-Pacific-Book-of-Australian-SF ever since. A story by Frank Roberts which appeared in the collection - "It Could Be You" - has been translated by Franz Rottensteiner and will appear in X Magazine, a German popular science journal.

John McGeever advises that he has decided not to continue training for the priesthood. John, who was studying at Whitefriars, Donvale (Vic), has returned to Adelaide and hopes to get into communications or computers. Brother Guy Nelligen, Our Other Man at Whitefriars, and Father Ken Sinclair, Our Man at St Francis', continue to spread the good sf word in the cloisters.

Parergon Books have abandoned publication of Australian

Science Fiction Yearbook and Australian Science Fiction Directory. The books seemed a good idea at the time, but by the middle of February only 32 orders had been received, and much of the material essential to the books had not been supplied. The Magnificent Thirty-Two are invited by John Bangsund to pop into his flat some time if they would care to read the manuscripts; there's a spare bed for John-Henri Holmberg if he wants to stay overnight, since he has the farthest to come, but John Bush, Phil Harbottle, Dave Piper and the half-dozen Americans will have to make do with the couch and a couple of lilos if they wish to stay. Subscribers may have their money returned or converted into ASFM subscriptions. It is intended that material supplied for the Yearbook will be gradually published in ASFM. Anyone interested in taking over the Directory is welcome to all the material on hand and any assistance Parergon Books is able to offer. The future of Australian SF Monthly is rather hazy. At the moment of writing it would seem that the magazine will be able to continue only on a small-run-fanzine basis. Since issues 2 to 4 are being typed in reverse order, ASFM 2 will probably contain more up-to-date information.

Newsweek for 28th December had a long article on nostalgia - which wasn't as good, of course, as this sort of article used to be. Several people well known in the sf field were mentioned, but in general sf didn't get much coverage, despite the heavily nostalgic motivation of so many sf collectors and readers. The American edition contained a half-page colour photo of Forry Ackerman surrounded by some of his incredible collection, but this was absent from the local edition. Time for 18th January ran an essay on Utopias which dismissed sf in one sentence: "Those once myriad visions of ideal societies have all but disappeared, or have been transmogrified into the demonic dreams of science-fiction." Why "visions of ideal societies" should turn into merely "demonic dreams" when published in pulp magazines and paperbacks is somewhat beyond our understanding.

J. G. Ballard has recently remarked of Vision of Tomorrow: "The editor can feel a certain pride in knowing that he produced, for a brief while, the worst science fiction magazine in history." This is, of course, unlikely to alter anyone's feelings about J. G. Ballard. James Goddard (1 Sharvells Road, Milford-on-Sea, Lymington, Hants, SO4 0PE, England) has produced a bibliography of Ballard's works to date. Ballard is reported to be working on a novel "about sex and the automobile".

American newszine Locus has announced a competition: "Now that the first tower of the World Trade Center has reached its full height, Locus hereby announces a contest with a free lifetime subscription to the first gorilla to climb it. This offer expires when the Chicago Towers reach their full height." Rival newszine Focal Point has announced the results of a rather different project: the fund started to bring Irish sf author and fan, Bob Shaw, to the 1971

World Convention in Boston has accumulated over \$1000. The TAFF campaign will now begin in earnest - just as soon as the British mail strike is over and the final candidates are known. It is known that Pete Weston, Terry Jeeves and Per Insulander will be candidates; in order to see if any others are standing, the closing date for nominations has been declared "ten days after the end of the strike".

The 1971 World SF Convention is to be held in Boston. The "Noreascon" had a membership of 662 at the beginning of February, including five from Australia. The Hugo nomination form has been published, and is available from Comorg. Nominating is restricted to members of the 1970 and 1971 worldcons, voting to Noreascon members. Membership fee is \$4.00 (non-attending). Gary Mason is rumoured to be Australian agent, but you can join through Comorg if you wish. Your editor intends to join simply so he can nominate CHRONOCULES as best novel of 1970. The 1972 World Convention will be held in Los Angeles, and John Foyster (12 Glengariff Drive, Mulgrave, Vic 3170) is agent. Fee \$4.50. So far Australia has about a dozen members. The 1973 Worldcon will be held either in Toronto or Dallas, and at that convention Australia must present its bid for the 1975 Worldcon. (Do you want to see a world convention here? Get in touch with the Australia in 75 Committee, PO Box A215, Sydney South 2000, and ask what you can do to help.)

Jack Williamson has published a preliminary survey of sf courses offered at colleges and universities in the USA. The survey includes details of reading lists. Copies cost 50c and are available from the author, Box 761, Portales, New Mexico 88130, USA. Gordon Dickson, president of SFWA, was reported in the Melbourne Herald (4.12.70) as saying: "This year some 150 college courses across the nation are devoted to teaching the writing of science fiction." We are not aware of any such course at present in Australia.

UNESCO's Index Translationem reveals that Jules Verne's books have now been translated into 133 languages, making him the third most translated author, after Lenin (221) and Shakespeare. Isaac Asimov (24) has now overtaken Edgar Rice Burroughs and is chasing Edgar Allen Poe (27). A 90-page bibliography of the works of Isaac Asimov has been published recently by Matthew Pepper, 535 Ocean Avenue, Santa Monica, California 90402, USA. Price US\$0.75.

A ballet version of George Orwell's 1984 is being prepared by choreographer Kenneth Macmillan for the London's Festival Ballet. And an opera with an sf theme - CYBERIADA, by K. Meyer - won first prize at a music contest in Monaco. The opera, based on a story by Stanislaw Lem, will be performed in Monaco early in 1972.

At the 1970 World SF Convention in Heidelberg it was

decided to launch a series of European continental conventions, with their own awards and so on. The first Eurocon will be held in Trieste from July 12th to 16th, 1972, in conjunction with the Science Fiction Film Festival. Membership fee includes free entry to the films. For information, write: Gian Paolo Cossato, Cannaregio 3825, Calle Fontana, 30121 Venezia, Italy - or Australian agent, Bruce Gillespie (care of Comorg). Non-attending membership fee is \$4.00. Eurocon 2 will be held in Brussels in 1974. This seems to leave the way open for Stockholm in 1976, which could be very interesting if the Swedes are successful in their bid for the World Convention that year.

The Walker Watchword (quarterly news-sheet published by Walker & Co, 720 Fifth Avenue, NY 10019) for Fall 1970 reprints an article from Soviet News (published by the Soviet Embassy in London) which reports (are you following all this?) on an article in Pravda by Vladimir Dmitrevsky on the role of science fiction in modern society. Dmitrevsky seems to believe that the purpose of sf is to prepare us for our communist future. Apart from that, a lot of what he has to say is very apt, and if enough readers indicate interest we will publish the article in ASFM.

OBITUARY

Virgil Finlay, perhaps the most famous and most popular of fantasy artists in his time, died of cirrhosis of the liver on 18th January, at the age of 56. Locus reports: "Don Grant is planning to publish an illustrated book about Finlay which should prove a better memorial than any written one. He is survived by his wife, daughter, mother, sister and thousands of admirers, including us."

Steele Savage died of a heart attack on 5th December. His artwork, particularly on paperback covers such as the Lancer fantasies and Ace Heinlein reprints, is highly regarded. Savage was in his sixties.

C.C. MacApp - real name Carroll M. Capps - died on 15th January, in his mid-fifties. Capps started writing in 1961 and later sold almost exclusively to Galaxy and If. A novel, SUBB, was scheduled to be published by Paperback Library in February, and another, BUMSIDES, by Lancer later this year.

Keith Laumer suffered a cerebral occlusion on 2nd February and is partially paralysed.

Harry Warner Jr went into hospital on 25th January.

Lester del Rey and Judy-Lynn Benjamin have announced their engagement. Evelyn del Rey was killed in a car accident early last year.

Australian fans John Foyster and Bruce Gillespie have been mentioned as possible contenders for the 1971 Best-Fan-Writer Hugo. And about time, too.

Robin Johnson and Leigh Edmonds have moved to 28 Ardmillan Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039. The house was once occupied by Barrington McKenzie.

COMORG ACTIVITIES & SERVICES

It is relatively simple to set up an organization. To progress to the stage of actually doing anything with it is another matter. The initial function of Comorg was to exist, and this it does. Quietly, it has been doing things, planning things; but because these things have been done quietly there has been a certain amount of good-natured wit, shall we say, expended on what some seem to regard as a grandiose folly. And some not so good-natured - but let that pass. An American fanzine referred to Comorg as "Bangsund's organization", and we wish to make it plain that whatever else it might be it is not that. John Bangsund called a meeting to discuss the formation of a "Victorian SF Association"; the meeting went beyond that limited concept and, largely inspired by David Boutland and Damien Broderick, decided that an organization with communication and service as its aims was desirable - and, necessarily, a national organization rather than a state. Damien must bear the honour of thinking up the contraction "Comorg". The name and purpose of Comorg were debated at length at a subsequent meeting, but there was no doubt that the majority of people present at that meeting favoured what had been decided earlier.

The office-bearers and Constitution of Comorg are set out in ASFM1. The committee has now drawn up the following outline of activities, structure and financial arrangements:

PUBLICATIONS

Australian Science Fiction Monthly, and such other publications (especially press releases, and circulars to members and the sf community in general) as are thought desirable from time to time.

SERVICES

1. Circulation of material supplied by groups and amateur publishers to enquirers. (This is already being done. Clubs and other organizations, and fanzine publishers, may supply circulars about their activities, so that the Secretary can answer queries quickly, or they may elect to have the Secretary simply pass on names and addresses of enquirers.)

2. News-gathering: local, group and individual news, including routine matters such as changes of address, and press clippings of interest, will in time be processed by councillors and state representatives. News gained from private correspondence is best communicated directly to the Secretary, in which case it should be clearly indicated whether the news is for general circulation or for the committee's information only.

3. News-dissemination: primarily through ASFM, but also, when considered desirable, by means of

circulars and press releases. There will be liaison with local newszine publishers while anyone is doing this kind of thing.

4. Re-addressing service, via Box 4946 (and later via state representatives).

5. Accommodation and travel assistance for interstate and overseas visitors.

6. Organization of public meetings and media coverage for visiting celebrities.

7. Assistance (when invited) in organizing conventions and so on, mainly by means of advice and publicity, but also with finance if possible and desirable.

8. Advice to new groups on organization, activities and so on, mainly by means of a booklet which is at present in the early stages of preparation. (Yes, we could certainly do with some help on this.)

9. Maintenance of a central information library: addresses, fanzines, sf reference works, all kinds of directories and guides. If this grows it might soon become necessary to appoint a librarian.

10. Comorg will act, as required, as Australian agent for overseas conventions and publications. This will be done on a commission basis: 10% to members, 20% to non-members.

11. Liaison, as far as possible, with all sf groups and organizations throughout the world. Members and others are invited to "adopt" groups, to ensure regular and personal contact through correspondence.

12. Comorg will press for the establishment of courses in science fiction in educational institutions - especially at adult education level - and will attempt to interest these and other institutions in organizing or subsidizing lecture tours by eminent people in the field.

COUNCIL & REPRESENTATIVES

Groups are invited to appoint one member each to the National Council, which will meet annually during the Australian SF Convention, and which may be asked at any time to vote on proposed activities or policies. One person in each state, not necessarily a councillor, will be invited to act as State Representative by the committee.

FEES

Individual - \$4.00. Group - \$4.00 or 20 cents per member, whichever is greater. Overseas - local equivalent of US\$4.50. Convention - by exchange: one year's membership in return for Comorg membership of the convention. Honorary - at the committee's discretion or by vote of the council.

LETTERS

JAMES BLISH

Treetops Woodlands Rd Harpsden
Henley Oxfordshire England

Boy, when you ungafiate you mean business - corporate business. I'm glad to see you back, and not only because your disappearance was about to become a minor embarrassment (see MORE ISSUES AT HAND).

Many thanks to George Turner for assorted pats. I am happy to report that a somewhat revised edition of DOCTOR MIRABILIS is finally to see US publication (from Dodd, Mead in February).

Why were Silverberg and Zelazny selected as contributors to THREE FOR TOMORROW? I don't know any whys, but Bob engineered and edited the whole project, among other things warning me and Roger (misleadingly, as it turned out) to stay away from mass hypnosis because he was going to do that bit. I was never even tempted, because I already had the story in the form of a dream of my wife's, to which I merely added a few tons of assorted waste.

Through this story I learned something fascinating about tuckerism. You are the first person in the rather large cast to identify himself; all the other people I caricatured recognized others readily, but not themselves! Which just goes to show that any resemblances in the story to any real person are accidental and fictitious after all.

Seriously, I propose that Turner's remark about "the occasional money-spinner tailored for the market" contains the explanation for the situation he deplores in "Earthman Come Home" (a curiously familiar title). The market is now the largest in its history; it is voracious; and it has enabled a great many writers, including me, to realize the once-impossible dream of living by writing alone.

But this means that you must write, and you must sell what you write. In fact, you must do more of both than is probably good for you, or for the genre. You are buying time to produce something, some day, that you might think is quite good; but you daren't attempt such a thing on speculation - even for that you must have the contract nailed down.

Last year I rewrote, for the umpteenth time, a mainstream novel that has been kicking around for about five years. Nobody wants it in any country in the world, it would appear. The closest I got to a nibble was from a minor publisher who wanted me to turn it into a mystery novel. This is, of course, simply a normal hazard of the trade. On the other side, I have a contract now to do four Star Trek books a year, with an advance in five figures and royalties (this last is unusual in deals of this kind). That too is a hazard of the trade,

but it's not normal. Back when I had a salary, I could afford to take four years to write a DOCTOR MIRABILIS, and though I was miffed that nobody in the States wanted it (and in fact the publisher I thought I was writing it for dropped an option in his haste to get away from the finished product), I wasn't also impoverished. The same investment/return ratio now would be folly. Ask any other full-time writer who isn't a best-seller and you'll hear the same tune.

In fact, the only thing that keeps me trying, occasionally between Star Treks, to turn out the kind of product George Turner likes is a reason he hasn't touched upon in his discussion of why people write science fiction (or fantasy): thirty years of book-keeping on my stuff shows that it is my experimental work that sells best over the very long run, is best remembered, most anthologized, gets prize nominations (and once even won one) and so on, while the standard, well-made commercial article is good for one cheque and that's that. Yet certain restrictions apply even there: I experiment only when I have a direct commission for the job and the editor in question is more or less stuck with whatever I choose to give him. "We All Die Naked" is a good example, since Turner likes it: if I had written it on spec, the two major magazine editors of the period (1968) would have insisted that I "solve" the problem, and/or tried to convince me that it could never arise in the form I showed it. (For example, it's possible that the water vapour jets generate will cancel out the greenhouse effect and we'll get colder instead of warmer; nobody can predict which this early.) In the end I'd have had a smooth commercial story, but not the one I started to tell. SilverBob said he wanted me to contribute a "hard science" story and placed no other restriction at all on it.

But the general rule still obtains: He who hath become a full-time free-lance hath given hostages to fortune, and no kidding.

ps/ I think CHILDHOOD'S END and MORE THAN HUMAN belong on Turner's list of true novels; at least they would make mine. So would S. Lem's SOLARIS.

BOB SMITH
1/64 Elouera Road
Cronulla NSW 2230

I find ASFM 1 a little below the Bangsund standard I expected after all those publicity sheets you have been putting out, but being a Bangsund project I'm sure it's going to improve fast. At this stage I am prepared to invest four dollars in Comorg and its journal, but not so sure I'd shell out three dollars just to receive twelve issues of what you have in mind for ASFM. But who knows how many young neofans will be created out of this new Bangsund Approach to SF Fandom?

For it seems to me that your style of writing in ASFM is mainly aimed at the younger fans, sf enthusiasts and

would-be converts, and I'm afraid I find it faintly irritating. I suppose I shouldn't complain yet, since ASFM 1 was a sample issue. There are even places where you remind me of Phil Harbottle and his soulless "editorials" in Vision. However, I am willing to bear with you until you get into your stride.

George Turner is his usual crusty readable self, although in a few places he seems to get carried away. Is he, also, aiming at the younger reader?

I feel that your brief summary of sf reference books is likely to be a bit frustrating to the newcomer expecting to find titles that are handy to him. And a trifle spotty, I thought. I suspect you didn't research your references too well, John, or that it was a rush job. LOST CONTINENTS was published by Gnome Press, and you could have mentioned their COMING ATTRACTIONS (since you went that far back); since you mentioned de Camp's 1953 SF HANDBOOK you could have included Bretnor's MODERN SCIENCE FICTION, also 1953; since you mentioned the Tuck that hasn't appeared yet, you might have suggested that it is profitable to track down the Tuck that has: the two-volume HANDBOOK, the AUTHOR STORY LISTINGS, ANTHOLOGY LISTINGS, and so on; the DAY INDEXES covering sf magazines from 1926 to 1950 and 1951 to 1960; and so on...

The money involved in participating in current fandom never fails to boggle my poor, tired brain. Here you are telling (presumably) the innocent neofans that they "need" all ten Advent books! I'd roar with laughter if I didn't think they'd believe you.

The news column had a few items that actually were news to me, and perhaps the one that really pleased me was the possibility of 1975 competition from South Africa. Some sort of opposition might just get all Australians off their lazy butts to unite for AUSTRALIA IN SEVENTY-FIVE!

SABINA HEGGIE
20 Tryon Avenue
Wollstonecraft NSW 2065

A word of thanks for the copy of ASFM. The George Turner article was very interesting, especially the comment on REPORT ON PROBABILITY A: "the book is too demanding for any but the intellectual reader". I would be interested in what an "intellectual" thought this book achieved, as I in my ignorance found it extremely tedious and disappointing.

LIBRARY COUNCIL OF VICTORIA
328 Swanston Street
Melbourne 3000

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the inspection copy of Australian Science Fiction Monthly. I feel sure that it will be of interest to public librarians for its subject and for its Australian slant.

COMMONWEALTH TAXATION OFFICE
350 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000

..... 7. The following goods do not qualify for exemption under item 51(1) and are taxable at the general rate of 15%:- Booklet entitled "Tenth Australian Science Fiction Convention" (a programme of an entertainment). Periodical entitled "Australian Science Fiction Monthly" (a periodical which advertises the business of the publisher, ie Parergon Books). Advertising leaflets.

COMMENTS

As well as the letters above there were quite a few enclosing subscriptions and offering congratulations, assistance in reviewing and so on, but as you can see, I've scraped the barrel for something to publish in this letter column after the letters from Jim, Bob and Sabina. Not a fantastic response to 800 copies, so perhaps a lot of people felt as Bob did - disappointed. A further 1200 copies are still sitting here, unposted, so I'll probably never discover whether all public librarians agree with the Library Council. The extract from the Taxation Office's three-foolscap-page letter should strike terror to the hearts of convention handbook publishers as well as anyone who imagined he could mention his other publications in his magazine with impunity. I wonder if mentioning that you have cancelled publications constitutes advertising? We'll know soon enough.

ASFM 1 was aimed at younger readers, Bob, and at people who haven't the grasp of sf lore that even the average fan has (let alone yours). Now that the ambitious plans have been abandoned, the approach will be different, too. But I was quite serious about people needing the Advent books. If you are interested enough in science fiction to want to read about it, then you can't ignore these volumes. My article didn't claim to be well-researched or exhaustive; I thought I made that reasonably clear in the opening paragraphs. I also said specifically that I had no space to list the volumes devoted to bibliography; this was literally true, but also I possess nothing in this line so I would have had little hope of providing more than a short list of titles.

I am amazed, Sabina, at the response of fandom in general to REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. No-one seems to like it at all. I enjoyed it when I read the Faber edition nearly three years ago, and I am fairly certain that Leigh Edmonds did, too. I wrote a parody-review of the book for my ANZAPazine, which Brian was kind enough to say he enjoyed ("jolly" was the word he used, I seem to recall), and I will reprint this in ASFM 5 if there is room.

And thank you, Jim, for your Xmas Eve letter. Greater love hath no fan than this.

ASFM

Australian Science Fiction Monthly



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FIFTY CENTS

DISMAL BUSINESS

George Turner

A couple of years ago I wrote, for the much-lamented ASFR, an article on reviewing. At that time I had ideas but precious little practical experience. Practice since then has not modified my basic ideas - I would change very little of what I wrote then - but it has taught me something of the practical difficulties of adhering to an ideal.

In those days I was thinking only in terms of fanzines and amateur reviewing. Now, with four "Age" columns under my belt (two sf and two mainstream) I have become aware of what is almost another form of reviewing, only loosely related to what I discussed in "On Writing About Science Fiction".

Readers who deplore the state of newspaper reviewing might find some interest in the problems involved and in my tentative solutions.

Mainstream novel reviewing is easier than the sf variety if only because of the vastly greater range and choice available. Science fiction in Australia, and in Britain also, I imagine, suffers from a frustrating disease of the publishing trade. Let me demonstrate:

The first batch of books handed to me (three or at most four to be dealt with at any one time) comprised: THE ICE PEOPLE (Rene Barjavel), UBIK (Philip K. Dick),

EARTHJACKET (Jon Hartridge), LET THE SPACEMAN BEWARE (Poul Anderson) and THE PEOPLE TRAP (Robert Sheckley).

There was room for dismay here, and I think the sf fan will spot the problem at once. In this batch only two were new titles. Of the others, UBIK had been available in an American paperback for about eighteen months, the Sheckley collection consisted mainly of stories well known to sf readers and LET THE SPACEMAN BEWARE was a reprint from an eight-year-old Ace Double.

The reason for this state of affairs is that in Australia we get only British hard-cover editions (American hard-covers are priced out of the market) and British sf publishers exist mainly on reprints of American successes. And often pretty old successes at that. To the fan the stuff is mostly defunct by the time it gets here in hard covers.

But was I writing for the fan or for a wider public? The answer, as I saw it, was - a bit of both. The sf fan would not be interested in old books. But the type of person who reads the "Age" Saturday Review would embrace a fair proportion of browsers who can take a bit of sf or leave it alone, and who don't keep up slavishly with the latest; they would be concerned only

with whether the review indicated an interesting book or not.

I decided, therefore, that the reasonably new must be reviewed unless it was too poor to bother with, and the older works should be represented according to the interesting material to be extracted from them.

This meant that I had to include THE ICE PEOPLE and EARTHJACKET, both unconscionably bad. It was poor stuff with which to start a new column. The next obvious choice was UBIK, which, though I found in it much to cavil at, could honestly be given a favourable review. The Sheckley collection and the Anderson novel I discarded on grounds of obsolescence, and also because the column needed at least one book of which I could heartily approve.

In desperation I rang the "Age" Literary Editor, Stuart Sayers, and suggested ringing in THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. He approved, and it later appeared that the paper had had a review copy but this had been mislaid. (Euphemism for "some enthusiast knocked it off".)

That left me with a useful line-up - one prize-winning novel which I could praise unreservedly, balanced by another prize-winner which I could as unreservedly pan; one good novel which could be used for a little discussion; and one stinker to represent the level of purely commercial sf.

Next problem: How to deal with them adequately in 800 words. This length is roughly the limit for an "Age" column, and it leaves you no room for the peripheral remark, the relaxed phrase, the unnecessary word. Every damned word has to be to the point and every phrase must be squeezed to do the work of two. And still the whole has to be easily readable and convey something of the personality of the writer, which last is essential in a by-lined column. This makes for disciplined writing with a vengeance. And good discipline, too. The discipline, of course, must not be obvious to the cursory reader.

Fortunately for the compression problem, the "Age" Saturday Review is orientated towards literate people with reasonably agile brains. One can make use of the associative expression, the truncated observation, even slightly impressionistic or surrealist prose, without risk of being generally misunderstood, and the use of such techniques allows tight packing of meaning and information.

Nevertheless one cannot say all one would like to in so small a space, and the introduction of generalized discussion is very difficult, though I made a fairly successful (I think) stab at it in the case of UBIK.

Having completed the column, I felt that some general framework for the necessities of such reviewing was forming in my mind:

1. Concentrate solely on the major characteristics of the work. Analysis is out.
2. Cut plot indication to the bare necessary minimum. Plot, even in outline, could take up the entire space on its own.
3. Aim at a perceptive public, and avoid words and phrases belonging peculiarly to fandom and the initiated.
4. Discuss aspects of sf wherever possible. Careful selection of books helps here and avoids the cumulative boredom of "method" reviewing.
5. Select books, as far as possible, to give over a period as broad a view of the sf scene as can be managed.
6. Deal with novels as novels, with no concessions to sf convention. "The Age" is not a fanzine, nor are its readers fans.

Feeling a little more confident by the time the second batch arrived, my heart sank when I saw them. Four I had previously read, and two of those I would not insult anyone's intelligence by reviewing in any terms but those of raucous laughter. Here is the list: HAVE SPACE SUIT - WILL TRAVEL (Robert Heinlein), WAR OF TWO WORLDS (Poul Anderson), A WILDERNESS OF STARS (ed William F. Nolan), DOUBLE ILLUSION (Philip E. High), THE CAVES OF KARST (Lee Hoffman) and CATASTROPHE PLANET (Keith Laumer).

Three of these titles are reasonably new, but one of them - THE CAVES OF KARST - is in the raucous laughter group. CATASTROPHE PLANET was out for the same reason, and also on grounds of age. The Heinlein was, of course, a must, by reason of the sheer eminence of its author, and by going cautiously round the bends it could be given a reasonably good review. DOUBLE ILLUSION, as a new British novel, would have to be included, bad as it turned out to be. That left A WILDERNESS OF STARS and WAR OF TWO WORLDS. Poul Anderson usually gives solid average sf and is well enough known not to be passed over lightly, but this one was below-par Anderson. So I went back to the previous batch, wherein he had a much better book, and used that instead. I am not keen on reviewing anthologies, but only A WILDERNESS OF STARS remained as having any quality at all. So, a mite heavy-hearted, I began: "Here we have two reasonably good novels, a so-so collection of stories and one very bad novel...."

Pity the poor reviewer and remember him in your prayers.

But let's not despair. There's some new stuff in the Autumn lists which I hope to get at fairly soon - a new Aldiss (cheers) and a new Zelazny (get ready to duck). And this leads to a point worth thinking over: A monthly column, involving reviews of about forty books a year, is a chancy business. Just how many worthwhile sf novels are published in a year? Fifteen? Twenty? I'll settle for about six, with another ten or so on the "good entertainment" list.

The rest ranges from merely competent to bloody awful. And far too many are bloody awful.

Harry Warner Jr discovered science fiction in 1933 and the zany world of sf fandom three years later. In the thirty-five years since, he has established himself as one of the all-time great fans. Bob Tucker remarks in his introduction to Warner's enormously entertaining ALL OUR YESTERDAYS: An Informal History Of Science Fiction Fandom In The Forties, "It isn't too much of an exaggeration to claim that Harry has appeared at least once in every fan magazine published from 1936 to date. He is an indefatigable writer of letters of comment, and the young fan editor who publishes two or three issues without receiving such a letter is apt to fold his presses and steal away in shame." Some mention of Australian fandom is made in ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, but not nearly enough to satisfy our thirst for knowledge of those far-off days, so we asked Harry for some further impressions - and here they are:

AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE

Scraps & Memories of Fandom in the Antipodes

Harry Warner Jr

As you grow older, you pile up a constantly escalating backlog of regrets over things you can't feel nostalgic for. Nostalgia is a bitter-sweet vice that some of us over-indulge in as a more or less legal substitute for the drugs that others prefer. Simultaneously, we feel unhappy because we've never experienced the raw material that would permit us to feel nostalgic for many other things.

So I'll never be able to think back longingly to the evening I saw Julie Andrews turn into a proper young lady under Rex Harrison's tutelage. I can never claim to have wonderful memories of the complete two-hour, 23-mile trip from Hagerstown to Frederick, Maryland, on the last inter-urban trolley system that survived east of Chicago. And I can't recall the faces and gestures of all the hundreds of people who emerged and submerged in Australian fandom over the past one-third of a century. I missed being there in person for all those things, and the best I can do is feel nostalgic over the memories I might have had.

But I'm supposed to write several thousand words about my impressions of Australian fandom. Thinking back, looking through many pages of notes taken for fan history purposes, glancing over a few old Australian fan publications, I find it possible to piece together a quite clear mental illusion about something which I've never experienced in any way more direct than the printed and occasionally the drawn page.

Maybe it's just as well that my personal contacts with fandom have been confined to North Americans and to the few European fans I've encountered at conventions. If the cast of fannish characters that actually has come before my eyes were expanded to include those from Australia, down-under fandom wouldn't have the special appeal that comes from a milieu which you've read about incessantly but have never experienced personally. Some people get their contact with this appeal by reading about Middle Earth: I find Australian fandom just as delicately balanced between the corporeal and the unreal, and there is the added advantage that it's not necessary to wait years and years for Professor Tolkien to write another volume for additional enjoyment. Besides, I have had a very small role in the creation of Aus-

tralia's fanzine fandom - even if it was purely accident that this walk-on part fell to me rather than to someone else who was publishing fanzines at the close of the 1930s.

Several pioneer Australian fans have credited a copy of my Spaceways with being the first revelation they had known of what could be done with a mimeograph, stencils and enthusiasm for science fiction. Someone else would have sent a sample copy of his fanzine if I hadn't, and I didn't follow up the accident with a planned campaign to encourage Australian fandom - as Julian Parr did when he created German fandom. But there's still a certain satisfaction in knowing what Spaceways meant in a fandom that had previously been confined to small local clubs and an occasional carbon-copied publication.

What are the things that come to mind most imperiously as I try to pick details out of the shapeless blob of memories and impressions from all these years of on-again, off-again, contacts with Australian fandom?

Curiously, the thing which impressed me most vividly of all may have been a fake. A long-forgotten Wellington fan named Toni Vondruska distributed in 1959 through an OMPA mailing a fanzine called The Last Splotch. He claimed that page 4 of this had been stencilled on November 29, 1958, the day of his marriage to Lynetta Burfield-Mills. Part of the stencil was cut before the ceremony, part immediately after it, if we may believe Toni. Did any other fan anywhere in the world, since the first real fanzine was published in 1930 up to the very October day on which I'm writing this, ever show equal devotion to his hobby? And did anyone ever interview Lynetta on her reactions to fandom?

I wish I'd known Toni. But he's just one of a multitude of colourful Australian* fans whom you'll never read anecdotes about in American fanzines because personal contacts between the two continents have been so rare. A much more celebrated Australian

* New Zealanders feel a bit strongly about this sort of thing, Harry. Let's say "Australasian". (JB)

fan, Vol Molesworth, holds in my imagination something of the heroic proportions of a Donald A. Wollheim or a Sam Moskowitz. I couldn't believe it when I read about his death some years ago. He had become such a legendary factor in my mental concept of Australian fandom that he seemed as unlikely to die as Don Juan or Till Eulenspiegel. I imagine Vol had his weaknesses; I know that he showed a distressing inclination to be a pro at the neglect of his fan activity - and we probably would have fought bitterly if we'd ever belonged to the same fannish organization or lived in the same city. But everything Vol did was at a great distance from me and he moved about the mental telly screen as a tiny, intense figure as constantly frustrated in his seeking for a moment he could desire to hold onto as Faust was.

I wish he could have finished the OUTLINE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM which he started to publish in the early 1950s. As far as I know, only the first volume survives, a nicely-printed 26-page booklet bound in purplish-red covers, carrying the narrative only from 1935 to 1940. Sometimes it reads like a chapter from THE IMMORTAL STORM: "Evans, defeated on the question of Futurian Fantasy, took opportunity of the general feeling of discontent, and offered to "referee" discussions. Innocuous as the suggestion seemed at the time - little more than the appointment of a Chairman of Debates or a Speaker in the House - this marks the beginning of Evans' rise to power." But it has even more details than the Moskowitz volume, and it's a good thing it has, because Sam says nothing about Australian fandom in his book. He just plain forgot about Australia, I understand.

But then there's the Molesworth who had seven novellettes published professionally during World War Two in Australia, when the continent was starving for science fiction and prevented from importing it. And the Molesworth who actually created a Futurian Court of Inquiry as a formal instrument to administer justice in the silly spats involving the teenage youngsters who were Australia's fans during the early part of the war. (He apparently lost interest in the Court when he discovered there had been perjury and couldn't think what to do about it.) The Molesworth who a decade later had become a frequent speaker at Australian sf conventions, on topics like "the future of culture". The Molesworth who didn't let diabetes difficulties stop him from rocketry experiments in 1940, almost burning down Maroubra Cliffs in the process. (Australia seems to have had lots of fans who fiddled around with rockets at that early date. Ralph A. Smith is assured of a place in the rocketry hall of fame, for his fire. Everything burnt to a crisp, except the fuel.)

What about the things in Australian fandom which seem irretrievably lost? Somewhere on the continent does a hundred feet or so of tape survive as evidence that Heinlein isn't as hard to interest in fannish affairs as legend paints him? He provided a taped message for the 1954 Easter Convention in Sydney. For that matter,

exactly what did Arthur C. Clarke say during the 1955 convention? He was in Australia to prepare for research on the Great Barrier Reef, but his statements seem to be as irrevocably lost as the facts about what happened to Childe Harold after he came to the Dark Tower.

Did anyone in Australia ever obtain a government licence to publish a fanzine? Fanzine editors were asked to get them in 1943, and if anyone went through the required red tape, the document might be the only government sanction for a fanzine in the history of civilization.

Then there are the larger problems involving this distant view of Australian fandom. There is the paradox that it seems to have had an inordinately large proportion of fans with extreme energy and determination who achieved much more than the continent's limited supply of professional publications and its small-in-numbers fandom would seem to allow. In recent years, somewhere in Australia there has always been at least one fanzine appearing regularly and devoted to science fiction itself with a devotion and intelligence that North America hasn't matched. We've had similar fanzines over here but they've come and gone with big gaps between them.

There is the Donald H. Tuck phenomenon. Who would have guessed that the most elaborate reference work on professional science fiction would come from a lone researcher in far-off exotic Tasmania?

Until they've burst asunder from internal stress, Australia's local fan clubs seem to have been remarkably successful in the creation of club libraries. I realize that my image of Australian fandom is somewhat distorted because I don't hear much of the counter-balancing teenybopper fans who dart in and out and leave no more trace of their passage through fandom than the exacerbation induced on the nerves of older fans by their quantity and behaviour.

But I like to think that there really is a special tendency for Australian fandom to do difficult things. And I wonder if it isn't the result of the very handicaps that have always plagued fans down-under: importation and censorship troubles; long distances between most major fan centres; rarity of personal contact with fans elsewhere in the world; impossibly slow mail service to North America or Europe for anything too heavy to send airmail. Muscles grow harder and calluses form when people must fend for themselves in an unfriendly environment. If the body reacts this way to survival of the physical self under difficulty, isn't it possible that Australia's conservatism, isolation and other idiosyncrasies have done good things to the will-power and persistence of many fans?

Nothing is altogether a blessing in this greyish world. Australian fandom has given me some hard moments. Most of them weren't the faults of the fans there. If I'd come and gone in fandom as almost everyone else has, I wouldn't have been around long enough to feel

regrets over the way World War Two eventually tore Australian fandom apart, depriving me of a great many familiar names and publications. So it's partly my fault for hanging around too long. A few people returned from gaffiation, of course. Bill Veney, one of my first Australian contacts, bobbed up again after long absence in the early 1950s. But whatever happened to Bert Castellari, the Russell brothers, David Evans and the rest of the first fanzine fans? Is Marshall McLennan still alive? I used to receive a letter from him each winter, friendly and warm in its spidery handwriting, and I would respond after a couple of months. He would be incredibly old by now, if still alive. I can't even remember if it was he or I who failed to answer the other's last letter.

A more recent cause for personal misery involved Australian Science Fiction Review. Somehow I bogged down on the letter-of-comment procedure with this publication. Issues began to pile up and each was finer than the last, and correspondingly, my fury at myself for failing to respond raged more fiercely. It was inconceivable that I should not write about every issue of this superb fanzine at a period when I was commenting on almost every crudzine's first issue that reached me. But I conceived grandiose schemes for making up for all the missed letters by writing gigantic articles, in the preparation of which I would have to read all the prozines and most of the new books for a year or so, or by preparing a meticulously detailed cross-referenced index to the entire contents of the whole run of issues as a token of gratitude and penance. Of course, those schemes were so time-consuming that nothing ever came of them. Today, I still can't write a letter of comment on an Australian fanzine without feeling a guilty twinge and the half-conscious thought that I should instead be working on the unwritten LoCs for ASFR. And the whole Proustian situation had no real reason for starting in the first place: I just fell behind too far, felt too guilty about it, and can't even take refuge in turning to religion. How would I explain it all to a Salvation Army major or a priest?

Maybe someone will write a really exhaustive history of Australian fandom some day. It would be much more exciting and changeable than the chronicle of fandom in the United States or even the British Isles. For instance, as recently as 1963 John Baxter concluded some historical material he kindly compiled for me with these sentences: "There are still a few fans scattered around Australia, but most of them are content to be active on an international basis rather than indulge in local fanac. These fans include John Foyster, Bob Smith, Don Tuck (whose second 2-volume edition of the SF HANDBOOK came out in April 1959), ex-New Zealander Mervyn Barrett and myself. Most are active in one or two overseas apas, write for or subscribe to most fanzines, edit occasional genzines for trade purposes and travel almost continually between their respective cities in a convenient substitute for the more traditional forms of fan activity." Seven years haven't resulted in such radical changes in any

era of American fan history. ... What else do I remember from my long platonic relationship with Australian fandom? Scraps and pieces of memories, rather than complete ones...

Someone's article describing Robert Mitchum at work on a movie being filmed in Australia.*

My first meeting with Boyd Raeburn, whom I equate with Australian fandom, even though he is alleged to have come originally from New Guinea or New Zealand or some other new found land.

The fun I got out of the convention hoax staged in the early years of Australian fandom, long before a bunch of people here unknowingly imitated it with their InVention.

The photographs of Australian fans which have occasionally appeared in fanzines over the years, causing all of them to appear far more intellectual and mature than fans of similar ages anywhere else in the world.**

My amazement in 1948 when several Australian fans discovered the existence of an entirely separate fan group, previously unknown to general fandom, an offshoot of the Book Collectors' Society of Australia which had been holding weekly meetings for years in Sydney. The deadly disillusioned sensation the first time I received a communication from Australia bearing a stamp with its value in decimal numerals - awful evidence of the way the American dollar and cent were transforming previously fortunate parts of the world. The impact that Mike Hinge made on American fandom in 1958 when he became another New Zealander to move permanently to the other side of the Equator. My bafflement at Graham Stone's reasons for remaining in fandom, when in a single article he denounced US-type conventions, most fan publishing, any link between science fiction and fantasy, and ended with the statement that "fandom is doing more harm than good". Well, that was nine years ago, and maybe even Graham has changed in that span of time.***

And I hope that I change enough eventually to become a globetrotter and take a look at Australian fandom amid the billabongs and wombats.

* Article by Lee Harding in John Foyster's The Gryphon (February 1965).

** There is a very simple explanation for this.

*** In a changing world, some things yet remain unchanged. It might have something to do with the air in Canberra - a place which has yet to make a reputation for wildly progressive thought or action in just about any sphere. (JB)

JB: Damn - I meant to see COLOSSUS, and it's gone off. Robin Johnson: Well, it did that in its first four or five minutes, actually.



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Artwork: A number of people at the 10th Australian Science Fiction Convention commented on Lindsay Cox's drawings in the programme book. On this page is the full set of illustrations from ASFR 10 (except for the little lady on page 28). Other work by Lindsay appears on pages 31 and 37, and the illustrations on pages 25-27 are by the editor.

NEXT ISSUE:

We asked URSULA K. LeGUIN, "Why do you write science fiction?" - and here is her answer. Also present are Polish author STANISLAW LEM, our own A. BERTRAM CHANDLER, and the regular crew - George Turner, Paul Anderson, Eric Lindsay and others. Stay tuned - send money.

