





This issue of Scythrop wasn't really meant to have two covers, and I didn't intend to have some pages on lemon-coloured paper and some on old gold. But, as old Willy Wagadagger was fond of saying, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends rough - hew them how we will". In Canberra there must be a very special divinity shaping things. I ran off Bill Rotsler's cover some weeks back, forgetting that in cold weather the ink in the Roneo tends to coagulate, and it's pretty cold in Canberra, and my bathroom (where the Roneo lives: where do you keep yours?) has a sort of semi-anæsthetized window - not exactly paneless, but a couple of slats missing, if you get my drift. Tonight (14th September, Your Worship) I ran off the back cover, with that splendid little cartoon by Terry Jeeves, and was somewhat surprised to find it so much darker than the front cover. This happened partly because I had taken the drum out of the duplicator and put it in front of a radiator for half an hour. I decided instantly that the back cover could not possibly be allowed to look better than the front cover, so I scratched around and found an illustration by Gerald Carr (creator of AUSSIEFAN!) which I had meant to use long ago. So that's why you have illustrations by three of the best fan artists in the business in this issue, folks. The paper? Well, I ordered lemon from Roneo, to match the cover and page 13, but they delivered old gold. So it goes. Hey! I just said a famous thing then! Rolls off the tongue beautifully, doesn't it: So it goes. Lovely. Lovely also is Miss Valerie Perrine, who has been selected to play the part of Montana Wildhack in the film of SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5, and who features very prettily in the May "Playboy" - the latest issue to reach these benighted shores. Valerie Perrine for DUFF! (\*sigh\*)







At the moment of writing I have not posted Scythrop 25 to overseas readers, and only about thirty people have seen no.26. About thirty people have also seen issues 12 and 13 of Philosophical Gas - and I have received more comments on those two slim publications than anything I have put out in the last couple of years. The message would seem plain. If I get more reaction (and that's the name of the game) to small free-wheeling fanzines than to large or largish carefully-groomed fanzines, then I will not waste time, energy and money doing the latter. (Or will I? We'll see.)

Last issue I really enjoyed myself imitating Bruce's "I Must Be Talking To My Friends". and I rather feel that it won't be the last time I do it. It's an excellent idea, and it gives you a nice cosy feeling to be sitting at the typer interweaving other people's thoughts and comments with your own, instead of putting yourself up front in an Editorial and Them back there in a letter column. Right now I should honour my promise in Philosophical Gas to reprint Bruce's letter about Scythrop 26 here, but on second thoughts I don't think I will: Everyone in FAPA and ANZAPA has seen PhilGas 13 and I think I have enough copies to send to people outside those organizations who are really interested. If you are interested, and haven't seen a copy, I know you will write and ask for one. If more people write than I have copies to send, I will be very flattered and more than pleased to reprint the letter. But since the many reviews I have seen of Scythrop 26 in overseas fanzines have so far produced only four letters asking Where's my copy dammit? I rather suspect that a reprint will not be necessary.

One letter commenting on PhilGas 13 came from Carolyn Addison - and the moment I find it I will put it on stencil. (I know you'll find it hard to believe, but I'm still just a little disorganized in this new place.) Carolyn is somewhat amazed at Bruce's knowledge of himself and his willingness to put his self-knowledge in print. I must show her a copy of Richard E.Geis sometime and blow her mind. Speaking of whom...

DICK GEIS  
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Your SF Commentary 26 was a good idea, and I am a knave for saying that I liked your SFC better than Bruce's gargantuan effort, which seemed too much a monument for his own good. I am still - yet - permeated with fannishness and the dictum that too

big and too perfect is bad for a fanzine's soul. It also withers faneds.

But enough of Bruce. ((Speak for yourself! I know you didn't mean it that way, Dick, but as far as I am concerned there can never be enough of Bruce.))

You have the style of writing I love to read, the skill... the talent. It can be nothing else but talent; ((I prefer to think of it as genius, but carry on.)) the choice of words and phrases, the angle of thought, the peculiar intelligence (highly specialized) that permits one man to write so engagingly and interestingly, while another, perhaps more generally intelligent, with a command of even more words, cannot write a paragraph that will not topple over and kill the reader every time.

We happy and miserable few, eh, John? ((Yep, they broke the mould after us, Dick.))

You, too, have been soul searching and baring in your zines. Maybe it's a disease... a strange gas that Earth is passing through in space that affects only faneds. Do more of it, please. I like reading a kindred soul. (( "blush! " Am I kin to the Mad Hermit late of Santa Monica now removed to Portland? Portland's premier pernicious pornography purveyor? Answer: I am. But I am not as willing to share my private life with all my friends as you are, Dick. As I more or less said to you, I will let out little bits of my private life in print, my doubts and fears and hangups, but I gild them with a sort of look-at-stupid-me humour. Maybe this is because my life is more closely intertwined with the lives of my immediate friends than yours, and I cannot write openly about my life without betraying the confidences of people who are very precious to me. I don't know. Are you completely open in REG, or are there things you don't mention there because they are too precious to you? Because you are such an excellent editor, Dick, I suspect that you are holding a lot back. And I honour you for doing so.))



Re Bruce's letter in Gas 13: It was I who didn't use Lem's material and sent it back. As I remember. Lem writes in English like the Frankenstein monster walks, and I usually will not read it or impose it in large chunks on others. I'm a clod.

Keep on recording your life experiences. You make a simple, everyday event entertaining, and that's a rare ability. I hope I have a bit of that skill/talent, too. (You must have something, Dick, and I don't think you got that Fan Writer Hugo for poetry or profound critical articles.) I hope my undisciplined, don't give a damn writing and approach in REG perhaps will help Bruce to loosen up and be able to offend without terminal cringe, and especially so in SFC. There are people like me who aren't struck by lightning for insulting and mocking others. It's aggression and compensation, of course, but fun. Rarely any harm done. I don't have to tell you this, of course.

No, you don't have to tell me that now, Dick, but there was a time when I had what you call terminal cringe, when I felt certain I would be struck by lightning if I dared say the rude things I felt like saying. Maybe Bruce is a bit that way, but I prefer to think it is simply because he is a gentleman. In person (whatever he might write) he is without doubt a gentle man. Insult and mockery is not his style.

Speaking of being struck by lightning... I don't remember who it was, but someone at Syncon claimed he always wears a bullet next to his heart; on many occasions it has saved his life when Bibles have been flung at him. So he said, anyway.

Syncon 72: only a week ago, and already fading into happy memories, the calamities of premises and programme (very few of the latter) already something to laugh about, the conflicts of interests and personalities already in understandable perspective. My happiest memory is the joyful privilege of handing Bruce Gillespie his Ditmar Award for Best Australian Fanzine. I can report (and Bob Smith will support me, since we were the two closest to him at the time) that Bruce was almost in tears when he took that trophy from my hands and made his little speech of acceptance. I can also report (since I was closest to myself at the time) that I was close to tears, too - and am at this moment, thinking about it - for at long last Bruce's immense contribution to Australian and world fandom had been recognized. I am keeping my fingers crossed for his Hugo. If ever anyone deserved one, he does.

I don't feel like saying anything else about Syncon right now (maybe I will later on, maybe never) except that we loved our Guest of Honour, Lesleigh. She is a very lovely lady indeed, and how she managed to survive three days surrounded by uncouth Australian fans I don't know. It was all I could do to honour my promise to Hank and forcibly restrain a certain John Alderson who shall be nameless from abducting her. Thank you, all you people who subscribed to the Down Under Fan Fund, for allowing us to meet Lesleigh Luttrell. A lot of you, I know, voted for my friend, agent and nominee, Andy Porter, and I am certain he would have been (and with any luck, one day will be) as good an ambassador for world fandom as Lesleigh - but in a slightly different way. I mean, I wouldn't have felt impelled at all to restrain any local lady fan from abducting Andy.

Someone at Syncon took me up on something I said in PhilGas 13 and insisted that he would like to see two pages of my poems. (It wasn't Bill Wright, no.) I wish I could oblige, but I don't think I've ever written two pages of poetry. A stack of verse, yes, but very little that could be called poetry. My last attempt at writing verse did not fill the few who saw it with enthusiasm, but because I'm an obliging kind of bloke I will publish it here anyway. Someone - Leigh Edmonds or Liz Kinnaid - said it read more like notes for a poem than a poem. So that's what I will call it.

The whatever-it-is doesn't need any introduction, but I have four lines to fill on this page, so I will just say that the lady concerned has previously been mentioned in Scythrop, but, as here too, not by name. She was the subject of part of my editorials in no. 22 and no. 23. And she didn't like the "poem" much either.



NOTES FOR A POEM (21.4.71)

You won your bet, lady.

My birthday...  
(Thirty-two, or some incredible goddam age)  
But a day, it seemed,  
More cast for endings than celebrating beginnings.

Those inexplicable tears...  
I know, I know, I had a story to cover them  
And it was mostly true  
And I almost convinced myself at one stage  
And it certainly allowed me to lie with conviction  
(With a forcefulness and indignation  
Which anyone who knew me a little better  
Would know immediately was unwonted,  
Out of character,  
And therefore some kind of lie)  
When they asked me, "Is it... that lady?"

The tears were real.  
The story, too, was real.  
The slight (but for all that, exhausting)  
Illness; the seemingly unresolvable tangle  
With the Roneo man (who wants his money)  
And the leasing man (who won't give it to him)  
Which, unexpected and unwelcome,  
Enmeshed me yesterday; the  
Sickening inanity and futility  
Of the moronic job they hire my body  
(Surely not my mind?)  
To do; and this day,  
This one day when I should be  
As free to be mildly happy and mildly melancholy  
At the passing of years as  
Her Majesty (on whose thirteenth anniversary  
I had the honour to be born),  
This day, which is and will be for as long as I live  
The very special day the Fates arranged for me  
To remember my father;  
These parts of the story are true, and real.  
(You are real, too,  
And part of the story for all that I denied it.  
Are you true?)

I wish I hadn't told you what the boss said.  
("Don't get involved with her, John" -  
The poor bastard. He means well, and  
As everyone says, has a heart of gold,  
But he's... how shall I put it? ...  
Not our kind of people.)  
I know my motive.  
I wanted to say, Poor old Alf  
Doesn't think I should get involved with you,  
But I like living dangerously and, anyway,  
I'm involved.  
You know - big man big deal thing -  
Everyone thinks you're dangerous.

But brave modest me I'll take the risk &c.  
An ignoble motive if ever I've detected one.  
But as it happened you chose rather  
To go straight to the heart of the matter  
And be indignant that any boss  
Should have the impertinence to offer advice like that,  
And you were right.  
You started talking about leaving the place,  
And that was right, too.  
And I... I just wished profoundly  
The earth would open and swallow me  
Because I'm damn sure if it doesn't  
One of these days I'll open my big mouth  
And swallow it.

So, despite the cafe proprietor's most generous  
And otherwise most appropriate gift  
Of burgundy with the roast lamb we hardly picked at,  
A pall hung over us  
Through the time-for-two-cigarettes  
We laughingly call a lunch-hour.  
Doing nothing to dispel it,  
I pressed you (again)  
For a word a sign an indication  
That you feel what I know but cannot believe you feel,  
And (mostly) you smiled sadly -  
That heart-acheing brain-firing gut-rending  
Smile you have, which... (But it would take  
One of Mahler's better slow movements  
To even begin to describe that smile)  
And you did not deny the feeling when you spoke.  
You simply said  
(And here Mahler leaves off  
And only the most searing passage from a  
Beethoven quartet could provide even  
The crudest analogy in sound)  
You must back away  
For fear of coming too close.

So we went back to work  
And I got that urge I get to smash things  
But I just paced up and down a bit  
And instead of smashing something  
Or resigning (as I desperately wanted to)  
I pushed the feeling down,  
Shoved it mercilessly back into  
The seething depths of that murky mudpool  
Which one day (nothing surer) will erupt  
And overflow into a poem or a symphony  
Or something smashed  
Or ulcers.  
And then I sat quietly and read this week's Time Magazine.

("Welcome warmly the U. S. ping-pong delegation:"  
It's hard to go on feeling like smashing things  
When Chou and Tricky Dick and the fellers,  
You know, the big guys with the really big hangups,  
Are getting down to being buddy-buddies,  
Giving each other big smiles and hugs  
And gold fountain-pens and trade concessions.)



So the rest of the afternoon passed,  
Far from pleasant but endurable,  
And when I talked to you for a moment before leaving  
You wished me a good time tonight  
And I said I anticipated an excellent evening  
Since I intended going to bed the moment I arrived home.  
You bet me I wouldn't do that.  
I said, How much? and you said, Twenty cents.

That's the bet you won, lady.

I drove home, having first left a message for you,  
A small red flower (did you see it?)  
Stolen from the City of Prahran  
In whose public reserve I found it growing,  
Under your windscreen-wiper;  
And driving home, intending still  
To sleep away the hours remaining  
Of this dismal birthday,  
I saw a man about my age  
Carrying a child, a small girl,  
And god knows I'd been thinking of nothing but you  
All the way down Punt Road and through the Junction,  
But that did it:  
I felt a poem coming on.

"To be a poet and not know the trade;  
To be a lover and repel all women:  
Twin ironies by which great saints are made -  
The agonizing pincer jaws of Heaven. "  
Patrick Kavanagh, I think,  
And I've remembered it since the days  
When I really felt it.  
The part about not knowing the trade  
I still feel. Surely, for example,  
Real poets don't write their stuff  
On IBM Executive electric typewriters  
(With proportional spacing)?  
I do. And I had sweated out fifty-odd lines  
On this pulsating monster  
(Drinking meanwhile what remained of  
That '61 Rosedale claret we thought  
Was bad the other night -  
And it probably was - I didn't notice)  
When the doorbell rang.

"Ah, some persons from Porlock."  
I said in greeting John and Sue  
(And later had the indecency to explain the reference),  
Two good friends (you would like them:  
Sue dark and petite and penetrating,  
John an artist who reads science fiction  
Keeps dolls' legs and things  
In his refrigerator but seems, otherwise,  
Just as normal as you and me,  
If you will both forgive my saying so),  
And they suggested we dine together,  
Not even knowing about this day's  
Chronological significance for me.  
I hesitated, since I had promised Val



I would eat with her, but shortly  
She arrived home and (slyly, it later emerged)  
Claiming a headache, excused herself.

So began an incredible evening  
I won't attempt to describe.  
The schnitzel at the German place,  
The cigars, the enormous cake I bought;  
John's shiny new Toyota; their marvellous gift  
Of my favourite among John's prints;  
Visiting Liz (and Mike and David and Diana).  
With John's finger bleeding  
(For several hours the painful centre  
Of his universe) where he'd crushed it  
In the door of his shiny new Toyota;  
John seeing the doctor behind whose surgery  
Destiny had ordained aeons ago Liz should live  
Just for this convenience, and me  
Waiting for him in the waiting-room  
And talking to the wistful, rather pretty  
Girl from Brisbane who came in and was cold;  
Then back to the flat, where Val  
Had arranged I should be surprised to find  
(And was) a host of friends,  
Who stayed chatting and drinking until all hours.  
George and Bill, both pleasantly pissed,  
Liz (and Mike and David and Diana),  
John and Elizabeth and Jillian Miranda  
And Leigh (who came, but left before I arrived:  
Can't I even get to my own surprise party on time?),  
Colin, Judy and Joan,  
Peter, Paul and Mervyn - and of course John and Sue,  
And someone thought Frederic Chopin  
Would go well with this lot, and he did.  
I drove the last of them home after midnight  
And came back to finish a poem I had started  
In a different world and time  
Some hours previously.  
(I think you might like my worlds,  
My people - if you'll pardon  
My sounding like some Lord Of The Galaxy  
For a moment. And they would love you,  
As I love you, because you are...)

So, dear lady, you won your bet;  
I believe I owe you twenty cents.  
But... No, I don't begrudge it:  
I hope my thirty-two years  
Have taught me to lose with some grace.  
But... what I wanted to say was  
There's a lot more to be won from me  
And I'm still interested (are you?)  
In another bet we have going  
For higher stakes.

She wasn't. Interested in that other bet, I mean. Maybe the poem scared her away.  
I saw her occasionally over the next two months or so (one of those occasions I tried to  
describe in Scythrop 23), then she moved from Melbourne. We wrote, less and less as  
the months went by. Her second-last letter I didn't answer. The last came in June:



it read, simply, "You owe me a letter!" I had offered her everything I am and have, everything I might be and might have, and she had moved to the other end of the continent. All she wanted from me was witty entertaining letters. I decided I owe her nothing. Now that might just possibly be the stupidest decision I ever made, but I think I would rather live in peaceful ignorance of my stupidity than have old heart-wounds reopened every few weeks. Martyr I might be in some ways, but I shall choose my own martyrdom if I have a choice, and sitting alone bleeding over the IBM dutifully writing witty entertaining letters is not it. (God knows I spend more than enough hours alone with this IBM as it is, but I have some sadistic compensation in knowing that you are suffering along with me.)

Yes, well. I think we will call this the Special Self-Indulgent Issue of Scythrop. And while I'm self-indulging and thinking, despite myself, of the above-mentioned lady, I will now publish a letter I wrote to another lady thirteen months ago. This lady is Hilary Richards, one of Brian Richards's daughters, and this is the only letter I have ever written to her. It is dated 25th July 1971. You may skip it if you like; I don't mind at all; but read in conjunction with the editorial in Scythrop 23 it brings back rather vividly to me where I was at just over a year ago.

Dear Hilary,

That bearded, brachycephalic bard of The Basin and budding bookseller, Harding, L. hung on to your letter, the swine, until yesterday, so I had no idea until then that you had written to me. And how nice to hear from you! - it must be all of a hundred years, as you say, since. Well, over four years, anyway: I think it was about April '67 when I last visited pulchritudinous Perth, pulsating purlieu of the perimeter.

And aren't you glad I don't write like that all the time? I am.

Pardon, I seem to have a cat in my typewriter. That's better: now I can see what I'm writing. There are four flats in this block, and each flat is owned by a cat, and all four of them (cats, that is) have this habit of congregating in my place. No, Virginia, congregating is not a euphemism for something pleasant for the participants but not referred to in genteel conversation. Just now, Grushenka is curled up in a place she has only lately discovered - on a bookshelf about three feet off the floor, between Donnegan's Lexicon and the Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth (Robin Johnson saw her there yesterday and asked whether she shouldn't really be filed under C - and I had to point out to him again that Grushenka is not one of your amphibious class of cats at all); Sam, from upstairs, is fast asleep on my bed; the anonymous Persian, lovely animal, is Lurking - possibly under the bed or in the wardrobe; and Ning, the youngest and smallest, I have just some lines back retrieved from the interior of this IBM.

From your letter I gather certain information about the recent history of the Richards tribe, but your references are tantalizingly brief. I would know more. (If you care to tell me, that is: your father doesn't write to me either.) (And I haven't written to him for some time, come to that.) You have moved from Shenton Road, and presumably Aelwyn is with you. Justin and Quentin? You have graduated? You are working for the government: ah, which one? - and in what capacity? The Richardses Senior are both now at Port Hedland? (Fogues: what a lovely word. I hope it's a lovely condition, too, since I see new evidences daily that I am fast approaching it.)

You must either get yourself a regular gentleman who has lots of books (that is obviously not a difficult feat) or earn lots and lots of overtime money and spend it wisely in the Red Cross shop. Or move to Melbourne and live somewhere within walking distance of my place, since, as you know, I have the World's Second Most Comprehensive Library.

Have? Had. Things have not been going too well for me lately, and I have been forced to sell some of the books to keep myself in steak and claret.

(Another interruption. The lady I alluded to in Scythrop 22, and write about again in 23, has just telephoned after a silence of three weeks, and tells me she has decided to



move to Darwin. I have the feeling she is trying to tell me something about our relationship.)

The bookshop is fantastic, in more ways than two. Crammed with stock - far too much. Usually crammed with people, too, which is good. Mervyn is gradually adjusting to the concept that running a business is not quite the same thing as running a science fiction club, and Lee is gradually adjusting to the sad truth that standing behind a counter five and a half days a week is no life for a grown man of his ability and vitality but that he is needed and that sixty bucks is sixty bucks, whatever you have to do to earn it.

Nostalgia and Neurotica are the two middle-aged Ukrainian ladies who run the little coffee shop next door to the Space Age. I would not be game enough to tick their categories, particularly not in broad daylight, but no doubt Harding has done this, and more, by now. And I don't blame you at all for feeling neurotic more often than not: how you can endure working for the govt, learning that infernally complex lingo, and being completely surrounded by no books, is beyond my understanding. I mean, I feel neurotic more often than not even without those disadvantages.

Nostalgic, too. Your letter (like it or not, lady) really plunged me into a great and mostly pleasurable sea of nostalgia. By crikey, eh?, I kept muttering to myself as all sorts of things came back to mind. I wallowed, I really did. Ah, they don't make life like they used to. (A singularly uninformed statement, when viewed from the biological, clinical or technical point of view - but nostalgia has no time for facts and suchlike unromantic nonsense.)

Let me tell you a tale.

Nearly six years ago I started work for Cassell & Co Ltd, publishers. A few weeks after taking up that position, in October '65, I met the young lady I became engaged to a month or so later and married the following March. In April I attended my first sf convention and undertook to publish a magazine, ASFR, the first issue of which appeared in June. Some time after that - I'm not sure when, now - I went to Perth. It might have been about July or August: I'm not too clear about that at all. But I happened to discover a little secondhand bookshop - a rather crummy little secondhand bookshop - in Fremantle, and I asked the proprietor if many of his customers read science fiction. He said yes. I asked if he knew any of them by name, or where I could get in touch with them. He summoned a little boy, mumbled something to him, and told me to go with him. Away we went. The boy had absolutely nothing to say to me, would not answer my civil questions (such as: Ah, er, where are we going?), and we seemed to be making a fast trek in the direction of Albany or Madagascar or somewhere, and I was beginning to get just a little alarmed - not to mention lost (and the car was somewhere Back There on a parking meter). At last he led me into a little shop which appeared to be there for the benefit of people requiring artificial aids to sight (which I did not then and still do not require), and disappeared. A large man emerged from a back room, and somehow we established that I was a person who for some obscure reason wished to meet people who read science fiction and that he was Mr Richards, a person of the sf-reading class. I got the feeling that he thought I was some kinda nut (and possibly still does), but That's Where It All Started.

Over the next eighteen months or so (it's really odd to realize now just how short a time it was), apart from getting letters from Brian Aldiss, visiting the Richardses was the nicest thing that happened to me - and is certainly my most pleasant memory from that time.

And, look at you, you've all gone off into the wilderness and graduated and grown up and got boyfriends and started learning Italian and god knows what else, and it's been four years since I've seen any of you.

Four years. Let's see now. That's twelve jobs back (not counting Cassell's), and I'm



desperately looking out for the (shiver) thirteenth. I seem to have published about sixty fanzines in that time, possibly seventy or eighty (four years ago I had just published ASFR 10, and I've just about reached the century now). I've moved from Northcote to Ferntree Gully to St Kilda to Elsternwick to Ferntree Gully to Clifton Hill to St Kilda (and they'll have to throw me out of this place: I'm not moving again, dammit). I've been separated from Diane for over a year. (And it isn't a coincidence that I haven't moved house in that time.) Of the four years I have spent no less than twelve months unemployed. I've seen a nerve specialist, a heart specialist and assorted GPs, undergone a barium meal (vile experience) and consulted a psychiatrist, and none of them could find a solitary thing wrong with me except that I smoke too much. Then Diane left, and I couldn't find anything wrong with me either (except that I smoke too much). The end result, after four years: unemployed, flat broke and never happier in my life.

Life is wonderful. If it didn't exist we would have to invent it. Come to think of it, maybe that's just what we do in the long run.

Hilary and I have what might be called a leisurely correspondence. I received her reply to the above on the morning of 30th December. I remember the date, because Carey Handfield, David Grigg and I were on our way to the Adelaide New Year convention, and Carey was just a trifle impatient when I went out of our way by a block or two to clear my GPO box. And I haven't answered her yet, and I think she has gone abroad. (Wherever you are, Hilary, thanks for your letter, and if you are in England don't talk to John Brosnan: he's an evial fellow. All fans are evial, but some are more evial than others.)

John Brosnan: now there's a name to conjure with. In an early ASFR Bob Smith, I think, asked if anyone had ever heard of an Australian fan of that name. Someone told Mervyn Binns that he had indeed heard of John Brosnan, and gave Mervyn his address. It took me a while to discover the informant - Allan Tompkins, well-known E. R. Burroughs fan (but at that time unknown to We Few Trufans) - and a little longer to meet John. But meet him I did, in Perth, and we talked of this and that, I admired his artwork (but wouldn't publish any), and all in all I thought him a pleasant fellow. Then he moved to Sydney and became corrupted. (I ask you, Jan and John Ryan: did Sydney corrupt young Brosnan, or did he bring his corruption with him?) For the last two years or so he has been corrupting London. We expect daily to receive word that he has been Transported - and look forward to the guilty pleasure of his perverted company again.

25th August: Two weeks (incredible!) since Syncon. Wonder how Lesleigh is making out. Has some evial Adelaide fan lured her into the Barossa Valley for some unspeakable purpose? One week to L.A. Con. If Lesleigh isn't there, Hank, it's probably Jeff Harris's fault; he has that unspeakable-purpose look about him, and knows far too much about science and stuff like that to be up to any good. Yesterday ANZAPA 24 arrived (and I'll probably have something to say about that before I'm through). But tonight - tonight, folks - the Nova Mob (Canberra Auxiliary) meets. Not that they think of themselves as that, of course, but I'm doing my best to deserconize Canberra fandom, and little meetings like tonight's at Helen and Leigh Hyde's place is part of this noble fannish effort. Mick Dwyer will be there, and Barbara and Arthur Davies, and a gentleman from the USofA named Pat Macdonnell. Graham Stone is not expected, but anything could happen. And since I am running late already, I will pause here, and as soon as I sober up afterwards bring you an instant report on the meeting.

Instant report: They played with trains (Leigh is a model railway nut, amongst other things) looked at fanzines and talked a lot. I think science fiction was mentioned once or twice, just in passing. Very pleasant. Canberra fandom is coming of age. Oh yes, and we decided not to go ahead with the conference we were planning for next June. We knew it would only work with the support of Australian fandom at large, and the business session at Syncon showed very clearly we wouldn't get it. Sure, we had many individual promises of support, but when people begin to realize that the national con in Adelaide is only eight weeks after the date we set for the conference... Well, it



seemed a good idea at the time - and still seems a good idea. But Canberra fandom is not big enough or stupid enough to go it alone, not yet, so we've called it off. What killed it, oddly enough, was what we thought was our best idea of all: the all-inclusive fee. \$100 is a lot of money, even in these inflationary times, and the strongest impression (in many cases, I suspect, the only impression) we made on Syncon members was that this conference would set you back \$100. No-one thought much about what that fee included - accommodation, all meals, banquet, sight-seeing tours (including a boat trip around Lake Burley Griffin), professionally-supervised creche, all publications, transport between conference venues &c. All anyone thought about was one hundred bucks. Maybe we were ahead of our time. Maybe next time we think about putting on a conference or convention or whatever, we'll take a different tack entirely and charge no fee whatever. That's right: no attending fee at all. Of course, if you want a programme book, food, somewhere to sleep, and so on and so forth, those little items will cost you money. How much? We don't know. How much did your last con cost you? Not counting the kinds of expenses our all-inclusive fee wouldn't have covered - liquor, private purchases, travelling and so on - Syncon cost me a little under \$100. It was worth every cent of that, too - but do you see what I'm getting at?

Sorry, I didn't mean to go on about that. I am very happy to be off the hook, not to have to spend the immense amount of time, energy and money that organizing a thing like this takes. There is just one other thing I should say, though. A few people have said that Robin Johnson and (especially) John Foyster killed the Canberra conference. They didn't. Robin asked, during the business session, "What exactly do we get for \$100?" - which was a reasonable sort of question. It was just a pity that he hadn't had time to read the 2000-odd words I had devoted to answering this question in our preliminary announcement, and that most other people there hadn't either. John's point was a good one, that the conference as envisaged was a great idea, but that it was not what fandom has come to regard as a national convention, in format and approach. He swung the vote decisively away from us - as a national convention. He was nevertheless right behind the conference, as such. So there are no villains, and no hard feelings. A little regret, yes. If we had known that Adelaide was bidding for a national convention in August we would have changed our tactics and fought rather harder, but we didn't know. So: Good luck to Adelaide, and congratulations on being the first city other than Melbourne and Sydney to hold an Australian national con!

(Now I have lots of letters to write, so let's have an illo here and I'll continue on the next page.)

28th August: No, the hell with it: why spoil a perfectly good unillustrated fanzine? (Or even this one, come to that.) I have just been reading ANZAPA 24 a little more closely (like, seeing who else is mentioned) and I feel like seeing what mailing comments I will come up with - especially since someone (you, I think, Bruce) made some slighting remark about a lack of such comments from me in recent months/years.

OFFICIAL BLOODY ORGAN (Edmonds): You really were fair dinkum, weren't you?

Ten members dropped, two added. I have not seen you make such a decisive stand since the time you told me what I could do with my Wagner libretti if I insisted on your paying for them. (Look after them, OBE; one day I might want them back.) But what is Paul J. ("Bat") Stevens doing on the membership list? I thought the constitution said something about publishing something in a mailing before you were admitted to membership. Maybe you left Paul's stuff out of my mailing. So we are now twenty-one: seventeen Australians, two Americans, one Sarf African and one Briton. Still no New Zealanders. What a nice feather-in-cap it would be for you, OBE, if you managed at last to get us a New Zealand member to justify our name. Especially considering you changed the name to ANZAPA in the first place. Are you sending some of the surplus nineteen copies to New Zealand? You got my message about the Anzapopoll all mixed up, but nevertheless made a point worth making. What I meant was that on my wording of the rules, some people might think they were entitled to 110 points in each category. Oh, never mind. The first two votes to reach me (yours and Foyster's) should be declared invalid, since you obviously



had been playing Battleships on your form, and John (who isn't eligible to vote in any case, I think) played a very complex game of Noughts & Crosses on his. I played Snakes & Ladders with mine, and first time round Miss Ethel Briggs of Waukegan, Ill., came out clear winner. This was somewhat surprising, so I tried again, using the rules of Ye Gayme & Playe of Chesse, and the equal winners were Bill Wright, Bruce Gillespie, and... Ethel Briggs. (I don't explain it, I just do it.)

ANALAGY (Bertrand Russell & others): A nice selection from what Blair Ramage has been reading lately, worth reading and not to be underestimated - but I would rather read Blair Ramage. I'm not sure whether I am being got at here, in the quote attributed to Bang Johnsund, mainly because I don't recall that passage occurring in "We All Die Naked" - but, whether or no, I should point out that I am not a political journalist. I will agree that I have had my share of hell, but I am a journalist employed by the Govt, and that is rather different from being a political journo. Bruce Gillespie also is a journalist employed by the Govt (even if the scab isn't a member of the AJA), but neither of us could be called a political journalist.

COMMAND MODULE (O'Brien): Mike, I think you've misunderstood me. The Oberon I referred to was not the hero of your inestimable fan-fiction, but the King of the Fairies (see, e.g., Shakespeare, W.: A Midsummer Night's Dream). And you are wrong about Argosy being the last of the non-specialist all-fiction magazines left. There's still Playboy, and Time, and The Bulletin, and Rataplan and... And since you speak of television, let me tell you a tale. Over four years ago, at a certain address in Redan Street, St Kilda, which shall be nameless, there lived four people - Leigh Edmonds, Paul Stevens, Diane Bangsund and your honourable servant - who for several weeks lived contentedly without benefit of TV. Then the lady of the house yearned greatly for a gogglebox, and the sound of her yearnings bestirred the gentleman of the house to purchase for her one (1) only very secondhand TV set for the princely sum of \$50. The lady watched The Munsters and F-Troop, and P. Stevens watched horror movies, and L. Edmonds watched Disneyland, and I went on reading Shakespeare, Sir Richard Burton, Brian Aldiss and other edifying authors. That TV set followed us to Elsternwick, to Femtree Gully, to Clifton Hill, to St Kilda, and finally departed from my life (or so I thought at the time) with the lady of the house. But, somewhere along the line, it refused to function on any channel except 0, so the lady requested that I remove it. I did, and sold it for \$5. Then a Miss Brown entered my life, and somehow another TV set was acquired. This also departed when Miss Brown took up residence with the Mr Edmonds afore-mentioned. You couldn't really call me a dedicated TV-watcher, not really. Now here I am in Canberra, and my friends the Hydes have a TV set, and I have been known to actually watch the thing. The other night, for example, I watched an episode of Homicide, which brought back all kinds of nostalgic memories of Melbourne (especially since the episode had been shot mainly around Middle Park and Port Melbourne), but not much else, and an episode of McCloud. I never thought Dennis Weaver could act, and I'm still not convinced entirely after watching this, but I enjoyed "Fifth Man in a String Quartet" very much. Possibly it was because this showed just how far Australian TV programmes are behind American. I don't know. At the moment of writing, the Hydes are on holiday and they have left me the keys to their house. This is partly so I can go and put their rubbish-tin out and keep an eye on the place now and then, but I can't help feeling they want me to get hooked on TV. I am resisting, I really am, but the thought that there is a piano there to be played and no-one to hear me is a great temptation. I'll let you know what programmes I've watched.

V-BOMBS AWAY (Anderson): Paul, that's a stupid title for a fanzine. Really, for a grown fan of your stature, perception and experience, it's a rotten title. (Does it mean anything?) Your notes on the relative conduct of the Adelaide University SF Assoriation and the Melbourne SF Club are interesting. Apart from the MSFC I have only attended meetings of the Brisbane group and the Canberra group, and it sounds as though the MSFC is quite unique. I mean, all that stuff about business sessions and so on: whoever heard of such things? The MSFC has survived sans constitution nor programme for twenty-odd years. That must mean something.



(And if that doesn't make sense, try singing it. It still won't make sense but should sound better. Try riding a bike while you're singing.)

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Published E\*X\*C\*L\*U\*S\*I\*V\*E\*L\*Y for members of the Off-trail Magazine Publishers Association (founded 1954) and just a few other people by John Bangsund PO Box 357 Kingston ACT 2604 Australia. This issue is called no.6 because I can't remember whether I ever published no.5 but I'm sure I haven't published no.6 yet. No.4 was handwritten on Fordigraph masters and printed by my good friend Dave Piper - and an excellent job he made of it, too. No.6 is dedicated with much affection to Pat Meara, who in Lurk no.2 commented: "I liked your writing style and your sense of humour, but why don't you borrow a typer and produce something really good?" Thank you, dear lady, for the compliment, and I assure you that one day I shall follow your advice - although what I have in mind to borrow (having already gone through nine typers that I can recall, and down to my last two) is an IBM Composer.

Ignoring machines which I have hired, borrowed or used at work, I have enjoyed the company of the following machines: 1. Olivetti portable - used for several issues of the Victorian Railways Institute Music Club's Programme Notes (a very rare fanzine indeed). 2. Royal office elite - possibly used for ASFR 1, but I'm not sure now. 3. IBM standard elite - possibly used for ASFR 1, certainly for nos.2-8. 4. Optima portable elite with long carriage - used for ASFR 9-15 - inherited by Leigh Edmonds and still in use. 5. Optima portable gothic - used for ASFR 16 - inherited by Paul Stevens and falling to pieces these days. 6. Remington microtype with long carriage - used for ASFR 17 - purchased in Adelaide for Paul, later exchanged with him for no.5 and other considerations which escape my memory. 7. Triumph Matura cubic elite with long carriage - used for ASFR 18-Scythrop 21 - inherited by Noel Kerr. 8. Triumph Gabriele - acquired from Noel in part payment for no.7, and eventually sold to Bruce Gillespie, who still types SF Commentary on it. 9. Hermes baby portable - purchased for some obscure reason - inherited by George Turner, who wrote a number of outstanding pieces on it before trading it on a Hermes Ambassador. 10. This IBM Executive - used for Scythrop 22-27 and just about everything I've published or written, including shopping lists, for the past two years. 11. Hermes Ambassador pica, with just about every foreign accent on its keyboard except a cedilla (which I stupidly overlooked). Now doesn't that really turn you on? End of lead article.

Welcome to OMPA, Michel Feron! Somewhere around this place I have my old address file, and it contains a card on which is the address you had while you were in the army or whatever it was you were in. That address I swear ran to about fifteen lines, and beneath it I wrote something like "Don't ever expect a telegram from me, Mike!" You certainly have been in a lot of apas, haven't you: at one time I think you intimated some small interest in ANZAPA, but with all that activity I'm not surprised you didn't join. What's all this about seeing my name in "almost every US novel you read"? As far as I



know I have only appeared in two stories - as Bang Jøhnsund in Jim Blish's "We All Die Naked", and as Edward Brogan in "The Changer" by Harold G. Nye (Vision of Tomorrow no. 9). I suspect that Philip Roth might have based a well-known character on me, but have no proof. Do you know something that I don't, Michel? (Don't tell me I'm in RINGWORLD, please, no. I'd die.)

Now I'll bet you haven't read much of Harold G. Nye. I'll bet the name means hardly anything to you, right? Right. Now listen closely, because I am about to tell a little story which will rock the science fiction world on its (1st, 2nd, 3rd & subsequent) foundations. "Harold G. Nye" is a pseudonym. That much you might have suspected. But "Lee Harding" is a pseudonym, too! How about that? Aren't you utterly devastated? I find it really odd that the lees of Australian fandom - all three of them - do not use their real names. Mr L. J. Harding's first name is not Lee; Mr A. L. Edmonds and Mr G. L. Hyde are both known by their middle names. Why is it so? There's something strange there, but I don't know the answer. Anyway, if you scramble the letters in Harold G. Nye's name you might come up with leoHardyNG - which is probably just an incredible coincidence. But add to that the fact that the opening paragraphs of "The Changer" read remarkably like breakfast-time at the Bangsunds, when they were still together, and that Harding was a regular Saturday-morning visitor at one stage, and therefore qualified as no-one else would be to observe the Bangsunds at breakfast at that time, and that (I will vouch for it) the whole idea for this story sprang into existence at one such Saturday morning breakfast, when Diane was scowling at me over her toast as I read the "Melbourne Trading Post", and Harding walked in and started talking about my changing jobs and such - and what possible conclusion can you reach other than that DIANE BANGSUND IS "HAROLD G. NYE"??

No, let us not wrong a lovely lady who is still a dear friend and for a few months yet legally my wife. Lee got the idea from a brainstorming session we had once over breakfast at Ferntree Gully, and did some very clever things with it. The pseudonym I had invented some weeks or months previously for an earlier story by Lee which was published in "Vision". (The truth takes all the fun out of it, doesn't it.)

I haven't had time yet to read right through OMPA 66, mainly because I got it at 1 pm this afternoon, it is now 6.45, and in between I have put in about 3½ hours for Hansard, but I have whipped through it to see if my name is mentioned anywhere (the Ted White Syndrome - and what's wrong with it?) and it is, often, so here I am writing this instead of being out indulging in the sensuous pleasures of Canberra's well-known sensuous night-life. Ah, quelle dedicace! (Cal "Dead-eye" Cass is a well-known sensuous Canberra night-life person.) (A friend of Bill Wright's, actually, from his pool-room days.)

Someone in the mailing wants to know what "Lodbrog" means, and someone else - Sam Long - obviously knows. I'm sorry, Sam: my description of Robin Johnson couldn't possibly be perfect, though I appreciate the comment. Robin defies description - no matter which Robin Johnson you have in mind, and there are many of him. What with you addressing me as "J. Ragnar Bangsund" and Ursula Le Guin addressing me as "John Alexander Bangsund", I'm not sure exactly who I am - but that is not an unusual experience. Lodbrog, of course, means "hairy breeks", and Ragnar Lodbrog was one of my early ancestors who came over from Norrway to teach some of my other early ancestors in Angle-land how to be civilized. While civilizing Angle-land he is said to have remarked, "Non Angli sed Angeli", which translated from Old Norse means "Not Angles but Anglicans!" - and then went on carving people up and raping their wives and daughters and ripping off their cattle and all those sorts of things that civilizing peoples are wont to do.

Five lines left, and I wish to make it clear to Ompa Officialdom that I vote NO! to every proposal in that incredible list in Offtrails. ("All my fathers have been clergy/ For three hundred years or so/ And to every new proposal/ We have always voted NO!") I thought Australians were the world's champion fannish legalists, but after seeing this lot I think we've lost the palm forever. ::: Thanks for having me, Ompeople.



2nd September: And a happy spring/autumn to our readers. As I write, the 30th World SF Convention will be under way in Los Angeles, Bill Wright will be there somewhere playing the pokies, Robin Johnson will be telling someone how furious he is with the airline for losing his luggage (or himself for leaving his broly in Pago Pago, or something), Ron Graham will be asking one of his fellow First Fandom folk whatever happened to that young chap Doc Smith, Lesleigh will be confessing how good she feels to be back in a civilized country, and everyone will be asking these four to tell them all about Leigh Edmonds.

Still keeping my fingers crossed for Bruce Gillespie's Hugo. Even though he has almost broken a faithful promise not to publish "This Isn't Scythrop". SFC 28 is delightful, with Edmonds, Wright, Gillespie and Harry Warner Jr all talking about their 1971. And Speculation 30 lobbed in, with lots of good meaty stuff about science fiction in it and the longest editorial I think I've ever seen from Pete Weston. There's a slight atmosphere of antagonism towards Australia in this issue, and Pete gets a bit uptight at one stage about not sharing the dedication page of MORE ISSUES AT HAND, but never mind. Also during the week there was an Ashwing and an Afan and a Syndrome and a Scottishe and a couple of things I can't recall offhand. And a letter from someone asking me when the Campbell book is to be published (right after this Scythrop, sir, with luck) and a telegram from Bob Smith inviting me to do the Syncon Report, and a pocsard from Trieste with many unidentifiable autographs. Amongst other things. The highlight of the week, financially, was selling the collating machine; this got me out of a rather sticky hole, and I can stop worrying (with luck) until mid-October - but let's not talk about that. The real highlight of the week was listening to Elizabeth Foyster's father.

Elizabeth mentioned when I got this job that I would probably be listening to her father, and I very likely have done just that in recent months, but it was only this week that I realized it. Elizabeth's father is someone awfully important in the Public Works Department, and he appears before Parliamentary committees quite often. I won't go into any detail about this week's hearings, because I need the job, but the following exchange delighted me so much I nearly sent Elizabeth a telegram:

Committee Member: This sliding-roof business. Pollution is on everybody's lips these days, I suppose, but I'm just wondering about that sliding-roof there. Would that be productive of smoke in the area?

Elizabeth's Father: I am afraid it would, sir, in the event of fire.

And this week someone interviewed Lee Harding on telly, and David Frost interviewed Billy McMahon and Gough Whitlam. Billy revealed that he had never told a lie in his Parliamentary career, and that he was praying to win the coming election. No-one told me whether Gough admitted to praying, too, so I can only assume that the Liberals have God on Their Side. Billy will need that assistance. I think all public servants in these parts must have felt very ashamed when they saw (or, in my case, heard about) our Prime Minister admit to never telling a lie - especially since for some time now they have been in the habit of referring to a telephone as a "McMahon dagger". One day I must get myself a TV and see how the other 99% lives, but as Leigh and Helen will testify, if that day comes, fandom will never hear of me again. I am an addict. (Hell: McCloud was on again this week, and I missed it.)

Meanwhile, back at the mailing comments:

EASTERCON - THE LAST GASP! (Christine McGowan): No Journalist worthy of the name is not "two sheets i' the wind at 12 noon". I am not worthy of the name: I don't touch a drop before 5, as Bill Wright will confirm. Sounds like a good convention, the way you tell it, Christine. I can just imagine Valma as "an emissary from the planet RSL". If, as I suspect, a certain flag formed part of her costume, I might be tempted to write something one day about where it came from - although the story should be told by LEmonds, or better still the lady herself. Speaking of whom: For a non-fan, Val has been playing a very large part in the local scene lately, what with carrying most of the Paul Stevens Traumatic Hour at Syncon and now appearing on the cover of SF Commentary. There



are times when I wonder whether I really do appreciate the best things in life. I mean, I went to all the trouble of advertising for a flatmate and then initiating Valma into the joys of classical music and the higher pleasures of living with a Sensitive Fannish Soul - and my friend Leigh comes along and steals her from me. Oh well, that's the breaks I guess, and if I remember correctly, about the time Leigh came along we were at the stage of cordially detesting each other, weren't we, Val? Sorry, Christine, I seem to have digressed a bit there. Please keep on writing in ANZAPA; you are a rather wonderful person, and if I can't talk to you I would at least like to read you.

EXPERIMENTIAL MAN (Alan Sandercock): Page 2 was blank in my copy, Alan, but I sort of have the feeling I'm not missing much, if you'll pardon my saying so. You people in Adelaide seem to need some lessons in duplicating, apart from anything else. But what really concerns me is that you, and so many of the folk we have met in Adelaide, have interesting thoughts, unique experiences, and so much generally to say that is worth listening to - but you invariably seem to come up with crudzines. Why? Is your heart really somewhere else? Or are you just a bit overawed by the coruscating legends and personalities of Melbourne and Sydney fandom? Don't be: seven years ago Australian fandom was virtually dead, and you have enough resources in Adelaide to make the rest of us look pretty dull, if you want to. (Same goes for Brisbane. You reading this, Dennis?) Thanks for even mentioning the car drawings. One of them, if I remember correctly, was The Alvis. In Canto 1 I wrote at some length about the Adelaide Festival, and the title page to the article was a drawing of King William Street, with The Alvis (which I still owned at that stage) just disappearing down Rundle Street bottom right.

INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP (Bill Wright): So much to write about here, Bill, I don't know where to start. Certainly you have established without doubt your status as one of the great luminaries of Australian fandom - and you're so bloody modest about it! For a start, I didn't know there was such a concept as an interstellar ramjet, but it seems my fellow sub-editor, Bob Lehane, knows all about it and has written an article on the subject. (I should start reading New Scientist again, so I can keep up with youse blokes.) Your recipe for invisible ink is of interest, but can you tell me how it might be applied to typewriters? If Robin ever runs out of his rotten whisky-sour mix, would you let him know that I seem to have some here which he left behind? (It should cheer him up no end.) Loved the account of Peter House's flat-cooling party: are you sure that wasn't a Nova Mob meeting? Thanks for your comment on "Is Australia Funny?". I thought I made it pretty clear that I thought the answer was yes. Maybe you realized that, but read between the lines and decided I really meant no. I wouldn't put it past you. Bill, you deserve far more response than this, but since every second paragraph cries out for an essay in appreciation or repudiation, and I haven't the space, I can't say more. IRS was far and away the most enjoyable fanzine I've read in ages, and I hope your exposure to American fandom doesn't dim your ineffable talent, geniality and goodness.

MISCELLANEOUS INTELLIGENCE (Dennis Stocks): Dennis, I didn't understand a word of it. "The neat method of encapsulating a message in a single numerical equation" is a form of communication utterly alien to me, and I am ashamed. Innumerate, at my age! But it's true. "The world line C-(H-N)-D is the world line of a body or of a signal moving eventually with infinite velocity." If I felt I could regain some sense of superiority by going away and reading Propertius or St Anselm, I would, but knowing that John Foyster knows what you are talking about (and probably disagrees) and also has understood Propertius and St Anselm more than I am ever likely to, makes me feel very dim-witted and insecure.

NOTES OF A NAIF SON (Bruce Gillespie): Fourteen pages of mailing comments, just tossed off like that! Have you no soul, Bruce? Excellent stuff, and about as many things to take you up on as there are in Bill Wright's magazine, but I will resist. The only thing I will say, if you promise to keep it to yourself mind, is that A. D. Hope does read science fiction. How about that?



THE QUIP MODEST (David Grigg): I have the strange feeling that Australian fandom is full of comics, comedians and humourists. There's Bruce Gillespie, claiming to be a narrow-minded, inhibited, mirthless victim of a puritanical upbringing, and lately he's been publishing some of the most amusing stuff I've seen in Australian fanzines. Bill Wright has burst like a hilarious meteor on the scene in the last year. Edmonds, O'Brien, Foyster, McGowan, Dillon, Stevens and others are all making funnies, outrageously or quietly, in this mailing. Even Ron Graham has shown himself a humourist of the first order recently by taking out subs to A75 Bulletin for Billy Big-Ears and other national leaders. What is the place coming to? And here you are, Grigg:

"I was sat at my desk at work the other day, calmly minding my own business writing about funeral parlours, when Gabriel, who usually sits minding his own business writing about steel cans at the desk in front of mine, turned around and said: 'David, did you ever think about giving blood?'

'Um.' I said. 'What do you think of Carlton's chances for the premiership?'

And for three pages you don't let up.

I'm going to ask a question I've always wanted to ask: Where do you get these crazy ideas from?

You are absolutely correct in your comment on "Is Australia Funny?", David - at least in one sense. If you are to survive as a public relations bloke, you just have to go on believing in O'Dowd and not thinking about Hope. Gabriel has his job because I was not capable of doing that. (I admit there isn't a great deal of difference between writing about steel cans and editing transcripts of Parliamentary committees, apart from sixty bucks a week and an A grading, but there is some difference, and I think I can survive here. My short career in writing about steel cans was all rather sad, but maybe I learnt something from it.)

SPIROCHETE (Redd Boggs): What can I say? - apart from "Boggs for President." that is.

I have not read Tony Boucher, will not read H. P. Lovecraft, have never visited Berkeley, cannot pronounce or explain "floccinaucinihilipilification", disagree with you entirely about DOCTOR MIRABILIS (but only because I enjoyed reading it years ago), and have never read Agatha Christie. Nevertheless I enjoyed Spirochete very much.

SYNETZ (Kevin Dillon): Nice reprints, Kevin. But you're slipping: I could read most of this. Since you seem to like Lord Dunsany as a person, as well as writer, I wonder if you would be interested in Oliver St John Gogarty. His sort-of autobiography, AS I WAS GOING DOWN SACKVILLE STREET, is one of my favourite books. (And if you ever find anything else by him, I would love to have it. It is the only book by him I have ever seen.) I seem also to have Ulick O'Connor's biography of Gogarty, which fills in a lot missing from Gogarty's own book. (That set me back 50 cents, but it is in hardback and signed by O'Connor, so I can't really complain.) There is a dreamlike quality about AS I WAS GOING DOWN SACKVILLE STREET which is almost like your own writing, Kevin, only on a much grander scale (if you will forgive me). Oddly, since a lot of us have been talking about A. D. Hope lately, one of Dr Hope's lesser poems is based on an incident described in Gogarty's book: "At chums in Sligo/The wench hum:/Come butter, Come butter,/Come butter,/Come:/Every lump as/Big as my bum." The poem concludes: 'Out of such moments/Beauty is born.' Maybe it isn't a lesser poem.

30% BRAN (WITH RAISINS) (Peter Roberts): Good to see you again, Peter. Your piece on spelling reform is something like one I had in mind to write after seeing Eric Lindsay's remarks but decided not to after meeting Harry Lindgren. The gentleman is so incredibly learned that I didn't feel like pitting my prejudices against his erudition. Fortunately, my prejudices are backed by authorities of equal erudition, among them Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench, who wrote (in ON THE STUDY OF WORDS, 1851):

Convinced as I am of the immense advantage of following up words to their sources, of 'deriving' them, that is, of tracing each little rill to the river from whence it was first drawn, I can conceive no method of so effectually defacing



and barbarizing our English tongue, of practically emptying it of all the hoarded wit, wisdom, imagination, and history which it contains, of cutting the vital nerve which connects its present with the past, as the introduction of the scheme of phonetic spelling, which some have lately been zealously advocating among us. I need hardly tell you that the fundamental idea of this is that all words should be spelt as they are sounded, that the writing should, in every case, be subordinated to the speaking. This, namely that writing should in every case and at all costs be subordinated to speaking, which is everywhere tacitly assumed as not needing any proof, is the fallacy which runs through the whole scheme. There is, indeed, no necessity at all for this. Every word, on the contrary, has two existences, as a spoken word and a written; and you have no right to sacrifice one of these, or even to subordinate it wholly, to the other. A word exists as truly for the eye as for the ear; and in a highly advanced state of society, where reading is almost as universal as speaking, quite as much for the one as for the other. That in the written word moreover is the permanence and continuity of language and of learning, and that the connexion is most intimate of a true orthography with all this, is affirmed in our words, 'letters', 'literature', 'unlettered', as in other languages by words exactly corresponding to these. And speaking of 'unlettered', here is

SUGAR TOOTH (Leigh Edmonds): Nice stuff as usual, Leigh, although I couldn't make any sense out of it and I couldn't figure out where you left off and Barry Humphries started. Keep up the good work, Leigh.

Now I'm at the end of the mailing, except for the bits that were too big to be stapled in - and they've disappeared. I enjoyed Mike Horvat's bits, even if I became very miserable reading about all those people offering him cars for \$20. (I don't know what a 1961 Ford station wagon is worth in Australia, but I would be surprised if it was under \$400 - and they are Australian dollars I speak of.) John Foyster's A Class of Solutions of Einstein's Equations which admit a Three Perambulator Group for Isometrics (I am following Leigh's version on the contents page you understand, John) was pleasantly light-hearted after you got past the title. And Leigh and David's Waiting For Paul Stevens was a rather nostalgic revelation of days not so long gone, when Paul was just beginning to become the brilliantly funny writer he is today (when someone pushes him into it). I can report that Alan France, who published most of this stuff originally, is alive and well in Canberra, and is even thinking of starting another fanzine. I have not met him since I have been here, but I have spoken to him on the telephone.

One thing I meant to comment on, but didn't, was Bruce Gillespie's advice to Bill Wright: "If you do take up a course of good non-sf books, don't be tricked into reading non-fiction, either, or you'll soon be back to sf, and stay there." What kind of advice is that, Bruce? And what bitter experiences have you had with non-fiction, that you should advise Bill to steer clear of it? Without quibbling about definitions of fiction and non-fiction, I would say the latter makes up about 80% of my reading. This is exclusive of newspapers, magazines and fanzines, of course: I'm not sure in which category you would put those. I have read only one novel this year that has really turned me on - Alejo Carpentier's THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD. Of the novelists you recommend to Bill, I have read only Conrad and Joyce to any extent (and I rather query your description of the latter as a "major English writer"). Apart from Carpentier, the three books I have most enjoyed this year are Maurois's PROMETHEUS: THE LIFE OF BALZAC, Collingwood & Myres's ROMAN BRITAIN AND THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENTS (Oxford History of England, vol.1) and Frank Green's SERVANT OF THE HOUSE.

But I don't feel like giving anyone advice on what they should read, really. So often I have been wrong. Don Symons didn't like Gogarty; years ago Harding found nothing new or exciting in Camus's THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS; Bill Gross didn't like THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. On the other hand, people have gone over my shelves and picked out books which I have never read which have turned them on no end. Carolyn loved Brigid Brophy's BLACK SHIP TO HELL, for example. Read what you like, Bill.



Poctsards keep falling on my head... 4th September, and here's the fourth poctsard I've had in two weeks. (For the benefit of outlanders, poctsards are what fans send each other when they haven't time to write a letter. They are identical with what ordinary mortals call postcards, until fans write on them.) Bill Wright sent me a view of Sydney Harbour, which didn't do much for me - as a picture I mean. Then there was a picture of some papaya trees from Bruce Townley in Hawaii. Then the beautiful view of Trieste from some of the folk at Eurocon 1. And today a pretty Cornish scene from Peter Roberts. I don't know whether Peter is trying to tell me something, but he mentions not yet receiving Scythrops 25 and 26 - and the photo is of the Minack Theatre. I never suspected Peter of being a punster, but there's the proof. (Not only that: what a lovely title for a fanzine!) (It would have to be a two-pager, published triennially, to live up to its name.) These lovely photos are on my desk at work, and every few minutes I look at them and sigh. Ah, Hawaii, Cornwall, Trieste, Sydney (no, scrub Sydney), what am I doing here? I think the boss is asking the same question, so I'd better bring them home.

Looks like a heavy fortnight ahead. The Select Committee on Foreign Ownership and Control is sitting this week, which means working back every night. (I think this might be the week they start investigating the Mafia's activities in sinful Sydney.) Then next week very likely the Budget Estimates Committees will be meeting, which also means working back every night. We're keeping our fingers crossed that when Parliament resumes next week the Lord will have revealed to Willie McWingnut when he should hold the election, and that he will announce it, and that it will be imminent (just about everyone is tipping 28th October, because that's about three weeks after the PM's good lady is due to present him with another child, which should win him a few more voting mums); this of course will mean that honourable members and senators won't feel much like debating the estimates at any length, because they'll be anxious to scamper off to the hustings. And jolly good luck to them: we could do with a break.

Ah, who wants to be in Cornwall, Trieste or Hawaii (or even Sydney) when they're right here in the corridors of power with their finger, as it were, on the pulse of the nation? Me.

Anyway, it looks as though this has to be the last page of my editorial for this issue, and I don't seem to have left much space at all for the articles and letter column. Pity about that. Maybe next issue I'll make up for it by not saying a word. Then again, maybe I won't.

A word or several about the Campbell book: Apart from maybe a page or two of brief comments on FAPA #140 when it arrives, I definitely and absolutely will not be publishing anything more until JOHN W. CAMPBELL: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE is finished. The l-o-n-g delay has fortunately allowed me time to find a couple of pieces I thought I had lost, but apart from that nothing has been gained. The book will go gratis to people who were subscribers to Scythrop as of 1st January 1972, and a few others. (If there is a red "C" on the envelope in which this issue is posted, you will know that you come into this category, according to my records.) To anyone else, the book will cost A\$2.00/US\$2.50, which amount should be remitted rapidly to the Space Age Bookshop, GPO Box 1267L, Melbourne 3001. Print-run will be limited to 400 copies. Contributors include: Jack Williamson (introduction), A. Bertram Chandler, Christine McGowan, Robin Johnson, George Tumer, John Foyster, Wynne Whiteford, Henry Couchman, Redd Boggs (an honorary Australian of long standing), John Pinkney, Don Tuck, Jack Wodhams, Eric Harries-Harris, John Alderson, Leo Gunther, Jock McKenna, Paul Jackson and myself. The book will also include the transcript of the symposium on John Campbell at the University of Melbourne, a bibliography of John Campbell's works by Don Tuck and several letters from John Campbell to Australians. Members of ANZAPA and FAPA will have to work out for themselves whether they think they will receive a copy or not; and the majority will not, without payment. All contributors will receive a free copy of course. ::: A very small number of people will also find a red "S" on their envelopes. This means that they will continue to receive Scythrop after no.28. Everyone else is due to renew his subscription or trust in my continued generosity. ::: And that's all for this time, folks.



13th September: SF Commentary 29  
arrived today. It is excellent, as usual,  
and prompts this postscript to Bruce  
Gillespie: Some people have Hugos,  
most haven't. Some people have friends  
they can talk to, a lot haven't. You  
have plenty of friends. Keep right on  
talking to us, man.

