

FIRST DRAFT

Number One : January 1975



6 bottles only, Kaiser Stuhl Special Reserve Bin 1426 claret 1966. A few bottles remain in Canberra for around \$8, or around \$12 in restaurants. These six, for delivery at the 1975 Worldcon in Melbourne - \$10 each.
(This line for sale, only \$1. Too late! Sorry.)

FIRST DRAFT

Number One : January 1975

A monthly miscellany published by John Bangund PO Box 357 Kingston ACT 2604 Australia for members of FAPA and ANZAPA, correspondents and a few friends and subscribers. A\$2.00 per year

26 December: Why (you may well ask) a new publication from me? Very simple (I reply): there are still some people who seem not to realize that most of my writing is first-draft, unconsidered stuff, done straight onto the stencil. I hope that the new title will make it unnecessary to explain this again.

DARWIN

was not the place to be on Xmas Day. Cyclone Tracy achieved what the Japanese failed to do in 1942 by virtually wiping out the city. Reports are still confused, but it seems that something like 90% of Darwin's buildings have been partly or wholly destroyed, 44 people killed and hundreds injured, and 25 000 people (out of a population of 40 000) homeless. One news broadcast this afternoon had it that 25 000 people are to be evacuated to Sydney. The cyclone is reported to be following roughly a circular route, which means it could strike what is left of the city again. Seven RAN ships are on their way, and are expected to arrive on 1 January. If Tracy decides to strike again next week we'll be short of one (1) Navy.

This morning's story in the Canberra Times, taking up two-thirds of the front page, is about the worst piece of journalism I have seen in years. Maybe there was only one cadet reporter on duty yesterday. 'The death toll is expected to rise even higher as rescue teams move in.' Why? Are they awfully clumsy? 'The few meagre reports received in the more populated southern States...' Relevance? Is the writer attempting to give a crash course in Australian geography? Darwin is the capital city of the Northern Territory, which is not a state. Queensland extends further north than the Northern Territory. The great bulk of Australia's population lives south of the 30th parallel, certainly, but half of Western Australia and most of Queensland occupy the same latitude as the Territory. So what is the writer trying to say?

The newspapers, radio and television keep on telling us that this is Australia's biggest natural disaster. Sometimes I wonder whether we can do anything, or suffer anything, and not claim it as some kind of record.

'The start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race will delay the departure of the first units of the Navy task force bound for the Darwin disaster area. Sailing time has been put back an hour to 1 pm to allow two hours for the yachts to clear the harbour.' We are not a nation which puts the needs of a few thousand public servants and their hangers-on before the sporting pleasures of the rich, no sir.

The bit that I don't understand is that the cyclone was known to be heading for Darwin on 22 December. I'm not sure exactly what I would do if I knew that a cyclone was three days away from Canberra, but I would expect to know about it, and I think I might be better prepared for it than the people of Darwin seem to have been.

'The new Australian boorishness is known as Ockerism, from a slob-like character called Ocker in a television series - the embodiment of oafish, blinkered, self-satisfaction. You will find the worst of Ocker in the Australian press, perhaps the most debased and uninformative in the world.'

— Peter Porter (The Listener, 12.9.74)

THE MEDIA IN AUSTRALIA

is a subject too big and too depressing for me to tackle in an off-the-cuff publication such as this, but from time to time I intend to write about certain aspects of it, if only to air my private grievances. I am an A grade journalist, and journalism of one kind or another is my life and first love, but being a journalist in Australia is not something to be particularly proud of. That's why I usually describe myself as an editor.

The whole aim of the Australian press at the moment seems to be to get the Labour government out at any price. The price is too high, even if you agree with the objective (which I need hardly say I don't), since it includes the sacrifice of truth, decency and dignity. I will attempt to illustrate this by referring to one issue of one periodical - The Bulletin, 21 December.

The Bulletin's influence on Australian literature, politics, art - on practically everything Australian - is something you can read about in any good history of the country. It was iconoclastic, it was creative, it was needed. Its ultimate monument, in literature at least, is The Great Australian Novel - Joseph Furphy's SUCH IS LIFE - which Furphy described in five words that sum up The Bulletin as well: 'temper, democratic; bias, offensively Australian'. That was three-quarters of a century ago. Today The Bulletin is just offensive. If Furphy were alive now he would be writing for Nation Review (and his name would be John Hepworth).

The cover of the issue for 21 December is very pretty, very colourful, with lots of traditional Xmas decorations surrounding two lit candles. The candles are roughly cast as cartoon heads of Gough Whitlam and Bill Snedden. This is deeply symbolic. It indicates that The Bulletin hopes both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition will burn out real soon now. There are many words on the cover, among them 'Merry Christmas from all our politicians', 'All the best holiday reading', 'Free contest: Win an original Norman Lindsay' and 'Part 1 of a major series - the world's great faiths and their followers'.

Page 5. The letters aren't too bad, although they include an irrelevant bit of sarcasm about Bob Hawke's accent, a lengthy explanation of why it is unfair to say that Mr Bjelke-Petersen doesn't really win elections, and something about the Whitlam Ministry including some good blokes who should stop him making 'a complete mockery of government'. (Note for overseas readers: Bob Hawke is president of the Australian Labor Party and of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. He was educated at Oxford and has an Australian accent. Joh Bjelke-Petersen is Premier of Queensland. His National Party won 19% of the vote at the last state election, and the Liberal Party won 34%. The National Party has more seats in the Queensland Parliament than any other party. The Greeks had a word for it.)

Page 10. Editorial pars. 'Sydney Mail

Exchange, Redfern, centre of the traditional Yuletide mail strike's a two-way dig at the government for allowing twelve weeks leave to women having children, and the PMG for having a 9-month waiting list for mail-sorters. Amusing as told, but is there anything really wrong with allowing working mothers 12 weeks leave? And is it possible that mail-sorting jobs are hard to get because mail-sorters tend these days to stick with the job rather than be out of work entirely?

'The disc-jockeys are having fun with Gary Shearston's recording of the Cole Porter classic, I Get a Kick Out of You - because, they insist, the voice sounds startlingly like that of Gough Whitlam. As indeed it does, on the more unctuous notes. The words bear examination, too: "Flying too high with some bird in the sky / Is my idea of nothing to do..."'

Then a par headed 'Morosi moras'. The 'Morosi Affair' concerned the appointment of a very talented lady named Juni Morosi to the staff of the Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Calma, at a very handsome salary. The lady is a friend of the Attorney-General, Senator Murphy, and an experienced business-woman. She has been for some months on the staff of Al Grassby (former Minister for Immigration and now special adviser on community relations). Murphy apparently used his influence to get Miss Morosi a government flat, which is not a terribly unusual thing to happen in these parts. This news was leaked and the Opposition beat it up into a scandal of Christine Keeler proportions, with the gleeful assistance of the press. Illicit liaisons were hinted at, amongst other things. Before the affair got going Miss Morosi announced that she was staying with Al Grassby. A storm in a teacup, if ever there was one, but The Bulletin is still right in there, fearlessly crusading for something or other. 'Juni Morosi's appointment did not only cause problems for the politicians. It had a lot of public servants scampering around and getting mixed up too. And apparently the left arm of the public service did not know what the right arm was doing.' And so on, for a third of a page. The Bulletin and its readers like to think of the Public Service scampering around and getting mixed up, especially if this activity has something to do with real or supposed government misdemeanours.

Then there's a piece about 'a "corps of doctrinaire amateurs" who are insulating Whitlam and his colleagues from "the advice of men of practical competence"'.

Then there's a bit about Professor Downing, 'Prime Minister Whitlam's appointee to chairmanship of the ABC and a leading

"academic for Labor" says some quite harsh things about the government's social policies in a recently produced paper.' So you can't trust academics, Labor and people appointed to positions of responsibility by a Labor government - unless those people happen to say something critical about Labor, of course.

There are two cartoons, one satirizing Bill Snedden's visit overseas, one (rather more brutal) satirizing Gough Whitlam's visit overseas. There is a box headed 'Season's greetings': 'The Bulletin wishes its readers and advertisers a Happy Christmas and a prosperous (if that's possible) New Year.' Most readers and advertisers, I would imagine, will have no difficulty surviving the new year.

Then there are some quotes: Dr Cairns, Juni Morosi and two politicians, and Gore Vidal ('Watch out for the CIA here - you've got just the sort of government they'd like to bring down.').

So much for the light, snappy parts. Nothing happened anywhere in the world outside Australia this week, and all that happened in Australia was Gough's continued ruining of the country.

Page 12. A Guide to Gough Doubletalk. Two pages about how Whitlam changes his mind. One supposes it is not the done thing for a Prime Minister to have second thoughts. Perhaps this is because we are so used to Prime Ministers who don't even have first thoughts. Two unflattering photos accompany the article. Sample of Peter Samuel's prose: 'It is hard to believe that in such a world of "drift" and "anarchy" which Whitlam described at the UN, that Australia should feel unprecedentedly secure, as he told us back in April?' (Maybe the proofreaders were all drunk.)

Page 14. An interview with Juni Morosi's husband. (No, hang on, now she's Junie Morosi. I've seen it spelt both ways, but not in the same issue. I'll stick to Juni, just to be consistent.) Mr Ditchburn calls Senator Greenwood, former Attorney-General and well-known member of the Hartwell Church of Christ, 'a mental pipsquak', and Senator Murphy 'an intellectual giant'. A bit exaggerated both ways, but close enough.

Page 17. An article which reveals that shop staff steal five times as much stock from their employers as shoplifters steal. (What, you ask, happened to all that best holiday reading? Ah, any page now, folks.)

Page 18. An article about Roger Woodward, the outstanding Australian pianist, who has had a haircut and doesn't wreck pianos any more, so he's okay. He thinks Toni Lamond is a wonderful performer. The writer describes Les Noces as 'Stravinsky's other piece of infamous barbaric ritual'. I looked back to see what Stravinsky's first piece of infamous barbaric ritual is, but that was the first time Stravinsky's name got into the article. I rather like Les Noces, and I had never thought of weddings as infamous or barbaric, but never mind. Toughness, says the writer, 'is a theme that recurs now and again in Woodward's conversation' - 'particularly the ocker sort of toughness which he reckons helps Australians succeed on the international circuit as well as they do'. Tomorrow I'm going to go out and get me hair cut, buy a Toni Lamond record and start developing an ocker sort of toughness. In no time I'll have them international circuits jumping, you just watch!

Page 20. TAA, the government-operated airline, and the Minister for Transport are up to no good.

Page 21. What Children Think of Money. Exclusive soppy interviews with kids at private schools which indicate that they know how Gough is wrecking the economy. 'Christopher, 9, Sydney Grammar: "Inflation's because of Mr Whitlam. I get about 20 cents and I usually spend it at the Edgecliff Centre and I don't get as much for it as I used to."'

Page 23. Opinion poll. Snedden Noses Whitlam Out. Whitlam's popularity as PM has fallen from 57% in May to 34%. The percentage of people who disapprove the way Snedden is doing his job has risen from 40 to 50. 35% think he's doing fine, so he's 1% better than Whitlam.

Page 24. Swinging Voters Under-estimated. By whom? By the people who did that poll on page 23, of course.

Page 25. More great stuff about politicians and such.

Page 26. Ah, David McNicoll's page. Great. He's the bloke who gave that fearless report on South Africa and Rhodesia not so long ago, fearlessly revealing that they are just great places and that all this rot about 'police states' and so on is a lot of rot. What goodies does he have for us this week? 'The Federal Government is very keen on the Women's Lib bit...' Yes yes; more more! '... When Our Leader returns from his right seeing tour he will have been out of Australia one week

in every five since he became Prime Minister.' Oh, right on, Mr McNicoll, sir! Then: 'Snedden, who seems accident-prone when it comes to speeches and off the cuff statements, made a foul-up in New York which, if his advisers are competent, I find inexcusable.' Oh, unfair, sir! They're probably only journalists like yourself. Give 'em a fair go! But Snedden could make a series of boo-boos and collectively they could not add up to the incredible error of judgment which Whitlam is displaying by going off on his luxury \$800,000 junket.'

As it happened, Mr Whitlam didn't get to enjoy his 'luxury junket'. In a fortnight or so he has earned Australia millions of dollars worth of good will, but today he is flying back to supervise the Darwin relief business. (The Special Minister of State, Mr Bowen, and other members of the official team, including Mr Whitlam, I gather, are carrying on the good work overseas.) I can't quite see what need there is for Mr Whitlam to return before completing his mission, but I know what The Bulletin and others would be saying if he didn't.

Mr McNicoll continues with a jolly piece about his friend, the retiring Premier of New South Wales, Sir Robert Askin. 'In his speeches he was the old Askin in top form - earthy, commonsense stuff. At the \$100 a plate Wentworth "do", he brought the house down with some of his stories of hilarious happenings in and out of parliament. But his biggest hand came when he recalled Churchill's brilliant description of socialism - "equal distribution of misery." Oh dear! - I nearly dropped me \$100 plate laughing at that one, sir.'

Another jolly piece about good old Sir Robert. Oh, he certainly is a one, that Askin. Remember when he told the cops at a student demonstration to 'run over the bastards'? We'll miss him, yes.

Then there's a bit about the proper dress for Australian diplomats. 'I think a more characteristic Australian uniform for the tropics might be a white safari jacket rather than the Mao-type uniform prepared by Alan Renouf.' What! - no kangaroo feathers!

(News Flash, 6 pm, 27.12: A strong possibility that the entire population of Darwin will have to be evacuated. 'For all practical purposes Darwin has been completely destroyed.' What can I say? If it had happened in Vietnam or Bangladesh or Delaware we would have said that

was pretty crook, especially at Xmas, and opened another can of Foster's. But it happened here, and it's too sad for words. I mean that. I can be as sarcastic and ironic as the next man, and I probably will be again before this page is finished, but I literally cannot find words to express my feelings about this incredible happening.)

McNicoll rounds off his column with a bit about his good friend, the late Sir Frank Packer, a bit about the 'Morosid business' (which he thinks should be put back into perspective: 'The questions asked by the Press were valid; and are still valid.'), and a bit about the government's irresponsibility in schools grants ('waste in schools, following Federal Government lavish handouts, is reaching scandal proportions - schools receiving TV sets they can't use, sports equipment they don't need, and so on').

Page 27. Write a caption to a Norman Lindsay cartoon and you might win the original drawing. The winning caption, I have no doubt, will have something to do with how Gough is ruining the country. I'll let you know.

Page 28 - and this is where the best holiday reading really starts! 'The first of a great new series about the major faiths of the world. This week the Christians - by Colin Cross. Next issue the Jews.' Oh wow. 'Christianity is the broadest of world religions...' I didn't read any further, I'm sorry. Photo of Pope Paul in Australia; caption: '... once the forms of Christianity tried to destroy each other but the three centuries of bitterness has now ended.' Ah! I knew all along that that business in Ireland had nothing to do with religion! Anyway, there's seven pages of all you ever wanted to know about Christianity - and you're welcome to it.

Page 35. 1974: a Year to Forget. Three pages for people who have short memories. Kissinger is the year's good guy, Brezhnev and the Shah of Iran the bad guys. Henry Jackson is tipped not to become president of the USA because 'he patently lacks political sex appeal'.

Page 38 - and this is where the best holiday reading really starts! The Optimists: Five writers show the way out of the gloom. What gloom? Oh, that gloom! Ron Saw sums it all up: '... It was impossible to be anything but an optimist because Gough and that Crean had made things so frightful that things could only get better.' Robert Morley and Hugh Cudlipp write well, but their stuff I suspect is taken from Punch, so it doesn't count. Batman (Keith Dunstan) is as good as ever, which isn't very.

Page 42. A film review (of 'Barry McKenzie Holds His Own'), and a moment of truth: 'No country I can think of produces anything as brutal about itself as these films are about Australia. The Prime Minister's appearance in a film which treats with total derision that already stale abstraction the new nationalism, is about all he needs at the moment.' Barry Humphries follows with an article which commences 'One of the more illustrious socialists of modern times, Benito Mussolini....' (Sieg heil, Gough!)

Page 46. David McNicoll writes about travel. 'I'll mark a race book and send it up to you before the first,' George Moore told me. 'No, not that George Moore, twit! He means the famous one. 'In Hong Kong during the racing season, this is an offer for which many members of the community would sacrifice an arm.' Yep, I can just imagine millions of them Hong Kong Chinese rushing out of their hovels, demanding to have their arms removed so they can have a peep at David's race book. 'When I mentioned it casually to the other guests in our box, their interest in me, which had been muted, took on a sustained warmth.' This snobbish drivel goes on for a page and a half, concluding with the sentence 'On the new Cathay-Pacific non-stop run, Hong Kong is only nine hours from Sydney - a great temptation for anyone wanting a great weekend's racing.'

So, if you are a sporting businessman, you can jet off to Hong Kong for the weekend any old time you like - charging your expenses against taxation, of course (which is another way of saying at the taxpayers' expense) - and you'll be one of David McNicoll's good guys. But if you are the Prime Minister, and you want to look at an art gallery or an archaeological site, that's a luxury junket and utterly deplorable.

Page 48. Some good stuff about smoking, heart disease and so on.

Page 50. The best thing in the issue - a short story by Frank Moorhouse. Two good book reviews.

Page 53. Useful short parts on current films, plays &c.

Page 54. If you are the kind of person who buys The Bulletin, this is probably where the best holiday reading really starts, because it's 'business & investment' from here on. All about investing in silver. Stuff about Xmas cards. 'Australians spend more than \$70 million a year on greeting cards - and that's before the post office rip-off on mailing charges which today could add as much as another \$30 million to the bill.'

Think about that. If the ratio of card to postage is 7:3, that means you are paying an average of 23.3 cents for each card and 10 cents for postage. The first is business, the second a rip-off.

Some stuff about the turkey business. Stuff about fruit imports. Page 60. The 'Wildcat' column; very perfunctory compared with what I remember from 25 years ago when I first started reading The Bulletin. 'A partner in a Sydney stockbroking firm went to his doctor the other day for something to overcome what he felt was increasing nervous tension and insomnia. The doctor prescribed: "A change of government - but meanwhile here's a script for some Valium." Valium? Yes. Two dollars for 100, courtesy of the socialistic national health service. (On the other hand, I am a client these days of a really nasty socialistic institution, a free medical clinic. I see the same doctor every time I go there, and he has done more for me in three weeks than all the private doctors have done in ten years. And he won't let me have Valium. That's the sort of thing that happens when you vote Labour.) Peter Samuel again. 'Business in Real Trouble.' Clyde Cameron, Minister for Labor and Immigration 'should have his title corrected as a Christmas present, Minister for Unemployment'. Why? Because he is 'the silent man most responsible for all of this'. Not the firms that sack thousands of workers, no. Business is business, and Clyde's to blame.

Page 61. Speculator's Diary. 'In the dying days of this distressing year...' Poor ol' Speculator. 'I'm off to find a cushy, retrenchment-free, perk-laden job in the Federal public service.' Best of luck, mate. And if you find one, let me know if there are any others. Or maybe you would consider my job to be perk-laden &c? Let's swap: your portfolio and bank account for my cushy, retrenchment-free job.

A bit of contract bridge, a crossword puzzle, and that's yer lot for this issue. See yez in a fortnight.

I turn now to this morning's (28.12) Melbourne Sun. Headline 'Whitlam jets in'. Also on the front page a telegram from Laurie Oakes, fearless reporter accompanying that 'luxury junket': 'If it really was urgent for Mr Whitlam to return home, he should have used his chartered Qantas plane, taken the whole party back, and called the tour off officially. Mr Whitlam is trying to have his cake and eat it too.' The Canberra Times agrees. So far no one has suggested that Gough caused the Darwin cyclone, but give it time, give it time.

1 January 1975: And a happy new year to you, too. What a morale-boosting thing a 'new year' is, allowing us to pretend that in some way we have finished forever with a chunk of the past, and that from here on everything is going to be better. If the calendar did not exist, we should have to invent it!

My one new year's resolution is to stop talking about money, especially in print, except when absolutely necessary. This will be applauded, I am sure, by many readers - including

BUCK COULSON 22.12
Route 3
Hartford City Indiana 47348 USA

You Australians have strange ideas of finance. I would be more sympathetic to your pleas of poverty on page 19 of PG 28 if you hadn't been exulting over your new IBM typewriter on page 4 of the same issue. It is terribly reminiscent of Bruce Gillespie's comments on rich American fans while he was preparing to make a trans-oceanic trip that not one in a hundred American fans could afford. I think it's probably the fault of your location; standing upside down like that all the blood rushes to your head. The comments on your new telly on page 3 didn't help much, either. I suppose the aforementioned items might be the cause of your abject poverty, but it seems unlikely.

On the other hand, I think Buck is being just a little unfair there. Bruce can speak for himself (indeed I've seen him do it), but my 'pleas of poverty' concerned my inability to start a new, offset-printed magazine. The price quoted was \$356 for printing, \$75 for postage and \$15 for envelopes - per issue. Since then, printing costs have almost doubled, envelopes cost a bit more and postage on 500 copies would come to \$120. The IBM is second-hand, and costs me \$20 per month. Sally is paying off the TV set. I would tell you my net income and how much I pay for rent, car, Roneo, the other IBM, the personal loan I got to buy a houseful of cheap furniture and all the rest, but I've made this resolution, you see, and I don't wanna be Vice-President anyway!

BILL BOWERS,
abetted by Mike Gorra, is organizing another of his big mail surveys - this time of the habits, predilections and deep throats of fanzine editors. One can only applaud



such ingenuity and industry, and urge readers to support the project. Any fanzine editors in the audience who have not been approached by Bill and Mike should write urgently to Mike Gorra, 199 Great Neck Road, Waterford, Connecticut 06385 USA, for a copy of the questionnaire, since the closing date is 15 February. The questionnaires will be bound into a volume and auctioned, with proceeds going to DUFF or TAFF. The survey will be published in Bill's Outworlds/Grafaneditica.

In my reply to Mike I think I said that I enjoy the physical activity of duplicating. Ha! Today I have run off The New Millennium Harbinger 14 and the first five pages of First Draft 1, and only the recto pages went through the machine without difficulty. Between us, the Roneo and I made such a mess of the verso pages that I am confident every copy will have at least one dirty or mutilated page. I don't know whether I am getting old and careless, or whether the machine or the paper is to blame. Then again, it might be just the humidity: it's pretty torrid out in the garage when the temperature gets to about 33, as it did today. Tomorrow it could hit 40, we're told. That's about 104°F, and not much fun. Somewhat north of these parts people are having different problems:

PATRICK MCGUIRE 18.12
c/- Cultural Affairs Section
American Embassy
19/21 Chaikovskaya Ulitsa Moscow USSR

Here I sit in the dead of winter in Moscow, on a day when I have moved my desk to the other end of the room (and moved the bed into the empty space) so as to escape the cold seeping in through the double, taped-up windows, wearing long underwear (shirt and pants), normal attire, and over that a jean jacket my parents sent me for Christmas after I got an import license from the university Foreign Department and checked with the International Post Office to find out what they could send (no more than one of anything, no film, no cameras,

etc. ad inf.) ... Here I sit, as I say, reading PG about events of last July (which, come to think of it, was your winter, but not a very cold one by Moscow or even Northern U.S. standards). Curious, when one thinks of it.

Assuming you mean by 'shazlik' what is hereabouts called 'shashlik' (ie, meat roasted on a spit, but without vegetables, which would make it 'shish-kebab') it is spelled, says the Oxford Rus-Eng dict., as noted above. (The Russians have picked it up from the Central Asians, and it's probably the most common sort of 'ethnic' food hereabouts.)

MIG in Russian is written (transliterated) just 'mig', says the OR-ED; I can't find the word in any of the Rus-published dictionaries I have on hand to check that opinion. Thus there wouldn't seem to be reason for great hassle in English, besides capitalizing it. 'Mig' also happens to mean 'instant, moment', so there might be some play on words there, with reference to the creature's speed.

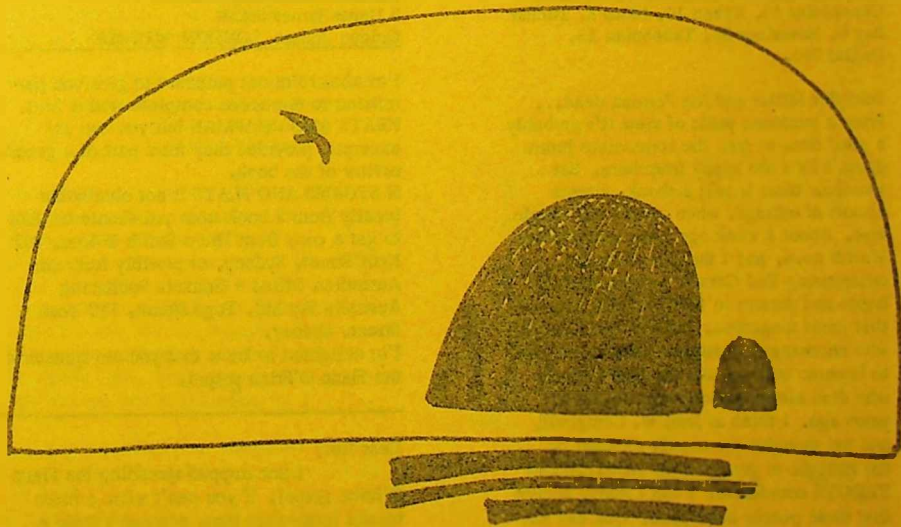
Leigh brings up a point which I have noticed about Australian fanzines in general, though not yours or Foyster's or Gillespie's (I know: that's at least half the field) -- the others seem to display a level of disregard for grammar and orthography which is only occasionally met with in American fanzines.

Ghod knows that vast quantities of Americans can neither spell particularly well nor write in conformity with the syntax of standard American English, but them as can't usually don't put out fanzines. Have I just been seeing a biased sample of Am and/or Aus zines, or is there a difference?

Briefly, Patrick, I think you have been seeing a biased sample of American and Australian fanzines. (And John Foyster, Bruce Gillespie and I do not produce half of Australia's fanzines: you must be thinking of Leigh Edmonds.)

18 January: The first time I typed this page

I carried on endlessly about Australian and American fanzines, trying to prove my statement to Patrick. Sally and I have just returned from a fortnight's holiday in Melbourne, Milltown and other outposts of civilization, and what I wrote nearly three weeks ago on this page seems utterly futile and worthless. So I have preserved the part of Patrick's letter which I had typed (there was more, but I've momentarily mislaid it - along with a lot of other things), hauled in Bill Rotzler's beautiful drawing below ('Bird by the Sea'), and done some tricky work with stencil adhesive to make the page look as though it was designed this way. I hadn't intended First Draft to include artwork, but I don't suppose that too many people will complain.



Anyway, last night we drove into Canberra about 8pm and headed straight for Lucky's Chinese Restaurant (proprietor Themistocles Bobolas, Tom to his friends, a gent of very ancient Chinese extraction - and his joint is up for sale, if you're interested), which is conveniently almost opposite Kingston Post Office, and I sat outside Lucky's while Sally did some shopping and read a bit of my fortnight's mail.

A letter from George Turner, which he'd told us about in Melbourne. Just forty-eight hours ago we dined with George at The Vineyard in St Kilda, but already it seems like months ago.

A circular inviting me to buy a ticket in a lottery for a Mercedes-Benz - only \$25. Right now I would much rather have \$25, thanks all the same.

A bill from Space Age Books. Now there's an outfit that doesn't give up easily! Mervyn Binns said - when? only two days ago? hell! - that he would be calling in to see us next weekend, and he's an awfully nice bloke, so I guess I'll pay my bill real soon now.

Bill from Roneo.

Bill from Mary Martin Bookshop.

Bill from the dentist.

Bill from - oh, bugger the bills!

Letters from Sydney J. Bounds, Bill Wright, Jill Withers, Dave Piper, John Carl, Perry Chapdelaine.

An Albanian new-year card from Peter Roberts (signed 'from Enver and me'). And fanzines: The Australian Journalist, Checkpoint 57, Kyben 10, Mota 8, Tucker Bag 6, Haverings 58, Tabebuian 16, Degler 250.

Schuyler Miller and Joe Ferman dead... From a mundane point of view it's probably a good time to die: the immediate future doesn't look too happy from here. But somehow there is still a shock, a sense almost of outrage, when one of Our People dies. About a week ago I was reading New Worlds no.4, and I thought about the enterprising Ted Camell writing down his hopes and dreams in that first real issue of that great magazine, and the Ted Camell who encouraged Australian fans (even me) to become writers, and the Ted Camell who died almost unnoticed a couple of years ago. I think of John W. Campbell, and my thoughts are mostly clouded by the struggle to get JWC: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE completed. I can't really accept that these people have gone. One day Ray Bradbury will die, and on other days, Bob

Bloch and Bob Tucker and Harry Warner and Ted White and Charles Burbee and Bill Rotsler and Andy Porter and John Berry and John Foyster and Lee Harding - and everyone you can think of. You know it, and I know it, but we won't accept it. Science fiction will be officially fifty years old next year, and in fifty years a whole lot of people die, but we - dare I call us, you and me, the 5f generation? - are too young yet to accept death.

And there's a letter from Granada Publishing Limited. I wrote to Hart-Davis MacGibbon, at length, enclosing my Keats and Chapman story from PG 28 and requesting permission to reprint a couple of Brian O'Nolan's K&C anecdotes in a little book I had in mind to publish. My idea was to write an essay on O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien/Myles na Gopaleen, print a couple of the original K&C stories, reprint the best of the K&C stories which I have published over the last few years, and flog the resulting slim volume to raise some cash for DUFF and other deserving fannish causes. Luckily, I didn't announce this publication before writing to Hart-Davis MacGibbon, since the book will not now be published. In my letter I suggested that I might review the latest O'Nolan books (both posthumously published, of course), THE POOR MOUTH and STORIES AND PLAYS, for PG and the Canberra Times. For this purpose I requested a copy of the STORIES AND PLAYS, which I have not yet seen.

JIM REYNOLDS	31.12
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Dear Jim,

I just stopped spreading the Flann O'Brien gospel. If you can't write a more tactful letter than that, and can't spare a review copy, why should I do your PR for you?

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS 22.12
27 Borough Road
Kingston on Thames
SURREY KT2 6BD ENGLAND

I like your March of Mind column; not only do I learn about Australia, but now Tasmania. Even Bruce hasn't got around to this yet - at least not in the SPCs I've seen.

(It's like this, Syd. Bruce Gillespie, along with a lot of other Australians, has been to New York, London and other northern villages - around these parts we refer to such people as The Tiger Moth Set - but he hasn't seen much of Australia apart from Melbourne, Sydney, Bacchus Marsh and Ararat. He probably doesn't even realize that Tasmania is part of Australia - but you can't blame him for that, since no Tasmanian quite accepts that his apple isle is part of Australia. Frankly, if I lived in Tasmania, the most beautiful, un-hassled and uncluttered part of Australia, I would be agitating for separation from the federation. Nauru manages: why shouldn't Tasmania? Answer: because Tasmania gets more out of the mainland than the mainland ever got from Tasmania. But just wait until they find uranium and oil down there...)

George Turner is as interesting as ever. Have any of his books been published in England? (All of George's books have been published in England, by Cassell: YOUNG MAN OF TALENT, A STRANGER AND AFRAID, THE CUPBOARD UNDER THE STAIRS, A WASTE OF SHAME and THE LAME DOG MAN. The first book appeared also as a Consul paperback.)

Jack Chandler's column is interesting, only I can't get used to you calling him Bert. (And he won't tell me why his many friends overseas call him Jack!)

The cover of (PG) 27 is a masterpiece. Enid gets my vote every time (but who are the two characters on the back?). (Funny thing about that back cover. After I had it printed I realized that Australians would recognize Gough Whitlam and Bill Snedden, and fans the reference to Leon, Kansas - but not many people would recognize both. Bad planning that. Now ask me who Bill Snedden is.) . . .

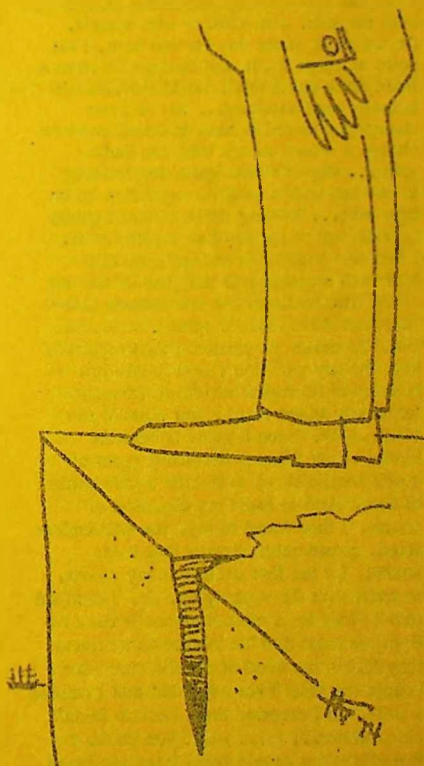
Congratulations on your marriage, and I hope the New Year will be a happy one for you both.
(Thanks, Syd. It's been just great so far.)

JOHN CARL 5.1
3750 Green Lane
Butte MONTANA 59701 USA

By George, it's always great to meet another John, that's what John Berry once told me. . . . In the few articles that I've read by you, you seem to be one of the more entertaining fanwriters that we have. . . .

(Sally agrees with you entirely. John, meet Sally. Now tell me who 'we' are.)

After ten years or so of being entertaining, I feel like being a bit provocative as well. All the best fan writers are provocative, even when they're not particularly entertaining. It will be a real effort for me to be provocative, but I intend to try. With a bit of luck they'll be calling me the Franz Rottensteiner of Kingston (ACT) before the year is out.



Now here's a bloke I regard as one of the most entertaining writers in fandom. Mind you, I'm a bit disappointed in him after this letter, since he promised faithfully that he would read Philosophical Gas 27 and 28 on Xmas Day and comment on them on Boxing Day. I mean, if I can start a new fanzine on Boxing Day - oh, never mind.

DAVE PIPER 3.1
7 Cranley Drive
Ruislip
Middlesex HA4 6BZ ENGLAND

Everything in these issues pales into (relative) insignificance alongside the GOOD news that the mystery decided to Take A Chance with you. Gad Sir, the girl's got pluck! Many congratulations, and I wish you both long life and much happiness. And if you can't get Long Life over there, then I guess a bottle of Fehrer Stipple '68 will do.

So, anyway, by dint of superhuman self-control I managed to refrain from reading the PGs until the Festive Season. Whenever I felt the urge coming on I either played with the kids, with Cath or with meself. On the morn of the day He was born, I sat down at about 10.30 and thought I'd have a little drink and a read. At 11.15 I hadn't actually read anything... but as I was changing a record (I have to kneel down to change a record on my V&A Era Radio-gram... why it's even got a dog looking in one end with a penrive expression on its ugly mug... looking for its dinner I guess) I, well, not to put too fine a point on it, I fell over backwards and spilt the last half-inch remaining in the glass of the last of the litre bottle of me Rheinhessen Liebfraumilch 1973 that I'd opened at 10.30. Um. To drown me sorrows I then repaired, with the guy next door, to a local, low hostelry of ill-repute which we frequent frequently where I had a few pints of the black muck. Upon legging it back for dinner I then found it necessary (goes off quick donchaknow) to imbibe a half bottle of Rose. Also to assist my digestion of course. I then found to my, you will understand, considerable distress that I was unable, for the first time in many moons, to assist with the washing up. Er. I slumped into a chair for a mere moment or two. At 6pm me mate and his brother came round, they felt in the need of a walk, and after a coupla whatcher'aves I decided that I needed a walk. So I escorted them back to Brian's place where... er... well, you know. I flitted home a coupla hours later and found that about all I could do was keep falling

asleep. So I went to bed. And that is why I never did read the PGs on Xmas day and why I therefore never wrote you Boxing day. Please forgive me. I just don't have the right faannish attitude I guess. I whimper. I'm ashamed. I'm a drunk.

So, anyway, I did read them, and enjoyed them, immensely, on Boxing Day. Thanks very much. Gawd Me Ol' Blue... I wish I wrote good like what you do.

You're all right, Dave. Just watch those deadlines, that's all.

No one has asked me yet what I got for Xmas. Dave will ask me, I know. I'll write it for you, Dave, seeing as how the deadline for this question is right this instant.

DP: 'I say, John ol' cobber, what, apart from the required traditional and only decent number of hangovers, didja get for Xmas?'

JB: 'I'm so glad you asked me that, David ol' chum. One Grange Hermitage '68 (not to be opened, so I am given to understand, before 1988, so a fat lot of good that was), one carton American Kent fags (when I finished that lot and went back to the local imitations I nearly coughed me lungs up; spoilt, Americans is), two copies FLASHMAN AT THE CHARGE, one foot-long East German ballpoint pen containing plastic model of UKW- und Fernsehurm Berlin, assorted items of sensible clothing, one elegantly hand-crafted Florentine wallet-thing for putting cigarettes in, 25 elegant matchbooks from Harrod's labelled John Bangund in gold, beaut books about Canada, Tasmania and Aborigines, one Guozzi Shudian calendar (not up to their usual high standard), one copy of THE DISPOSSESSED autographed by Keats, Chapman and Ursula, a magnificent tome on Asiatic mythology, a patented canvas thingummy for keeping the Renault's steering wheel and driver's seat cool - oh, and a whole lot of other pleasant and useful things.'

DP: 'But not...?'

JB: 'No. Another Xmas come and gone, and I still haven't got a wombat in a gum tree.'

For my own very special Xmas giftie to myself I splurged fifteen quid (I do hope Buck isn't reading this) on a subscription to The Listener. You'll be getting lots of quotes from that fanzine here in future, folks. Here's one: 'When you know what the solution is, you write an essay. When you don't know what the solution is, you write a play, because there's conflict there.' (George Wilson Knight, on his play THE LAST OF THE INCAS) That's food for thought, isn't it? Of course it is.

