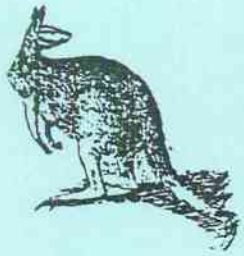
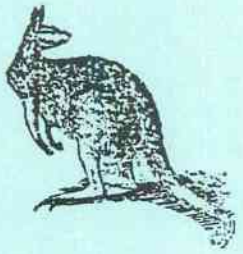
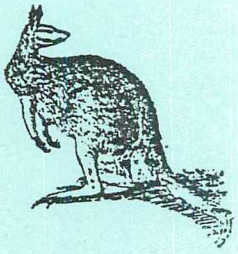
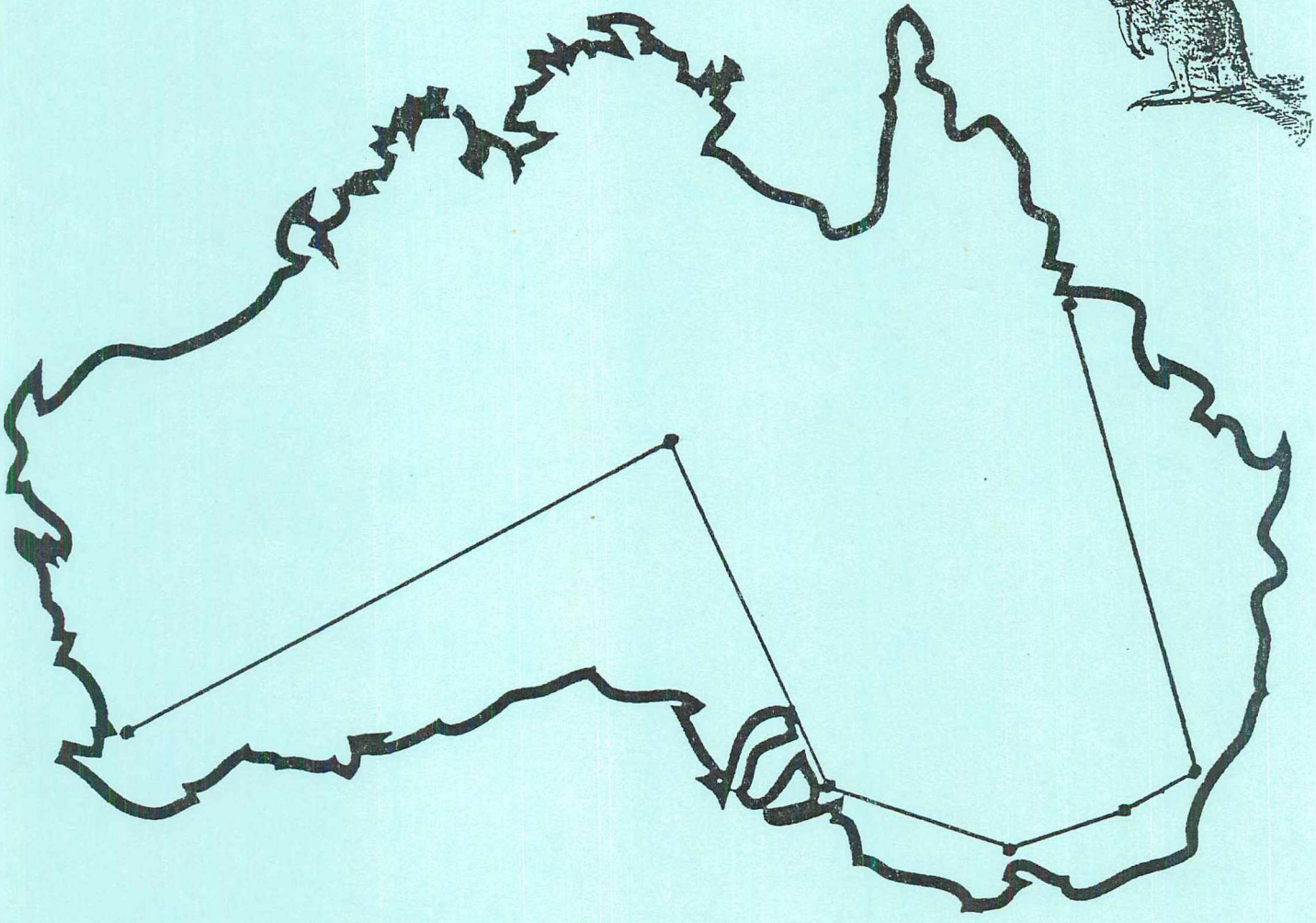
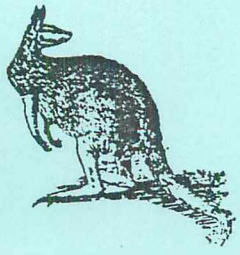


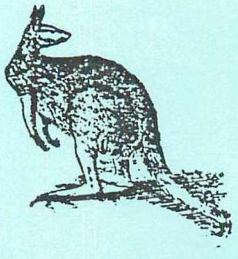


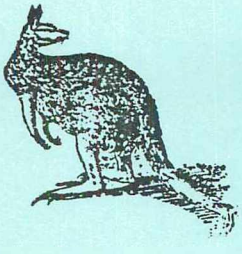
Kaufman Coast to Coast











Kaufman Coast to Coast

This publication is an account of Jerry Kaufman's 1983 Down Under Fan Fund trip to Australia. It is available from him for $5 in person or from the finer Fan Rooms at conventions everywhere. Or send him $6 postpaid at Serconia Press, P.O. Box 1786, Seattle, WA 98111. All profits will be donated to DUFF. This is Pacific Fantod Press Publication #9, August 1988.

This has been a long time coming, hasn't it? I'm relieved: I've finally finished all my obligations as DUFF winner. I'm slightly appalled: as I proofread and ran stencils, I found entirely too many places where the text could have been polished and improved. I'm jubilant: this is the longest single piece of writing I've ever done, and despite its flaws, it is one of the best. What follows are a few of the things I'd like you to know about it.

First of all, there have been a lot of changes in Australian fandom and in my life in the last five years. Although a few parenthetical remarks slipped in, by and large I avoided giving updates on every person I mentioned or met, or on every plan or promise I made or received. The only one I'll comment on here is that, no, I have not yet attempted to write fiction.

My memory being a faulty thing, I took careful notes during the trip almost every day, and more often during the convention itself. I even tried to record what people said to me. Even looking at the notes, though, sometimes my memory says, "But that can't be what _really_ happened." So I hope you'll forgive me my inaccuracies, especially on quoted material.

I did three drafts. The first two took two years each, and the third (onto mimeo stencil) took about eight months. I did the first two drafts in third person (two chapters were published in Brian Earl Brown's _Sticky Quarters_ this way), and changed to first person for the final version. I was trying to do several things: distancing myself from the events in order to be more honest about them; treating myself as a character to give the flavor of fiction (I thought it would be more fun to read and more challenging to write); adding spice to my usual style by adding bits of William Gibson and several others. I switched back to first for the not very coherent reason that "it seems to work better." I think I maintained some of the quality of honesty about myself I was trying to acheive.

Several Australians who stayed with us in 1983-85 read portions of the first draft and made corrections therein (Sally Beasley and Jack Herman among them) for which my thanks. Suzle read and commented on the second draft, and corrected stencils.

The cover is a collaboration between Carl Juarez and myself, of which Carl did the major share of work. The rubber stamps are mainly from commercial stamp companies. The koala, however, was hand-carved by Donna Nascar at my request, and I love it madly. Thanks.

Thanks, too, go to the many people who helped my journey or gave me a meal or a place to sleep--and their good company. I hope seeing their names in print will convey my thanks. They all appear somewhere in the next 49 pages.

Finally, out of all those people I have selected two who must be acknowleged with more than the usual notice, for they are the two who started the whole adventure, who made everything happen, and to them I dedicate this report:

Andrew Brown and Irwin Hirsh

--jak, August 14, 1988

Chapter One

I was never sure just how it had come about. Why had I agreed to stand for the Down Under Fan Fund? Had Irwin Hirsh and Andrew Brown really been so persuasive when they first wrote to me? I was calm and peaceful one moment; the next I was full of dire worries about Australians and jellybeans and speeches.

I had no time to worry on the way to the airport, with Suzle driving and offering sage advice, Anna Vargo stroking my arm, and Gary Farber creating Worldcon bids. The flight from Seattle to San Francisco, where I would board the QANTAS flight to Sydney, was too short for me to worry about anything but finding the people who were to meet me for a small party.

That was a good worry, that one. I didn't find anyone to greet at the gate, so I ambled down the corridor to the lobby, where I finally found a good seat with a view in all directions. Overconfident that no one could get past me, I began to read from Alan Garner's The Guizer, a collection of stories about fools and tricksters, an obvious way to prepare for a science fiction convention anywhere in the world. I looked up frequently to see punks, middle-aged travellers, huge Filipino families--but no familiar faces.

The next thing I knew, I was being paged. I answered the call: it was Lucy Huntzinger, ebullient, impatient, in aqua pants. "Where were you?" she said. "Never mind, let's find a bar near the gate. That's where everyone is supposed to meet us." There were no bars near the gate, but there were two equally far from it. We picked one, ordered beers, and began to gossip about Seattle and Bay Area fans. Soon we heard Lucy's name on the p.a.

The new pager was Denise Rehse, who could be as giddy as Lucy and even more intense, and who always had a powerful and unsettling effect on me, which I cultivated. She was fresh from work, in short skirt and fishnet stockings; she slid into the seat opposite me, and started to detail the horrors of working for the Heart Association. Before she could get far, all three of us were paged.

The new arrivals were Allan Baum, Donya White, Bryan Barrett, Doug Faunt, Dawn Plaskon, Gary Mattingly and Patty Peters. (I dutifully jotted down all their names and promised to mention them.) This was far too large a crowd for the hip-pocket bar, so we moved to the coffee shop, where we ordered food and drink. Donya told her customs story. (Guard: "Do you have any contraband?" Donya (looking innocent): "'Contraband'? What's 'contraband'?") Since Donya is about the most innocent-looking person I have ever seen, I laughed. Then I got on the plane. For all I knew, the Bay Area fans stayed for hours after QANTAS Flight #4 flew away from San Francisco, the United States and land.

It was night. It stayed night for what seemed like days. In reality the flight was probably about eighteen hours long. (I didn't time it; I just kept changing my watch, a gift from Joan Baker, at every announced time zine change. The watch still works, in late 1987.) What made it so long? I had no one sitting near me, and my usual shyness prevented me from striking up conversations with people in other rows. The empty seat next to me should have made me more comfortable, and it did, but not enough to sleep. I tried to coax myself into

a fetal position, but I couldn't curl up tightly enough to rest my feet on the seat, and they dangled like dead meat. (Besides, I kept pressing the "call" button by accident.) The first movie they showed was The Sting II, which I decided wasn't worth the effort to watch. (It appeared to be very broad farce, but the bad sound and postcard-sized screen made it hard to be sure.) Moments after it started, the projector decided it wasn't worth projecting, and broke down.

Instead, I began to read about Gary Gilmore in The Executioner's Song. Another Trickster! And one entering a foreign country! Gilmore lived most of his life in stir, emerging to try to make it in Utah as a free man. And here I was, heading into Australia, another world. It wasn't quite the same as Utah, but I felt a comradeship, and hoped I would adjust better than Gilmore had. (One difference: Gilmore was a heavy drinker in an abstemious world; I was a light drinker flying into a country noted for its floods of suds.)

The stopover in Hawaii gave me a chance to stretch my legs. Afterwards I somehow slept for two hours and woke in time to see the second movie, Lovesick. "Why is Dudley Moore suddenly a sex star? Is it because he isn't very funny anymore?" I mused, squinting at the postcard with bits of light on it. "They don't want him to be funny. It's not considered sexy, maybe." It was 4 am in somebody's morning when the movie ended, which explained the musings. At 5:30 the Townsville lights moved up to surprise the plane, and the naked outline of Castle Rock, a jagged mountain in the middle of this Queensland city, appeared as a negative space against the bright city.

The QANTAS attendants came down the aisle, spray cans in each hand, and sprayed us down for bugs. Then the plane gently touched down. It was Australia.

I filled out all the cards they gave me, which asked questions about what I was bringing into the country, where I would be staying and how long, who to contact in case of emergency, and so forth. I realized that I had no idea where in Sydney the convention was being held. I only knew that someone would pick me up and take me there. I had a vision of trying to explain my faith in fandom's smooth operation, but the government person I spoke to had evidently heard it all before, and simply gave me an envelope and asked that I mail in the card as soon as I had the needed names. I reboarded the plane for the last leg of the flight, glancing back at the bins decorated with notices requesting that all fruit and vegetables be deposited therein. (Every airport had them; along with the spraying, they represented the Australian fear of contamination by stray insects, molds, fungi, etc. Nobody had insisted that all rabbits be dumped into quarantine bins all those years ago, and Australia had learned its lesson well.)

I saw the trip, at first, as a series of obstacles to overcome. Getting to Australia was the first, and I'd overcome easily. The second was getting through customs. I thought it might be tougher. Townsville had been all right, since no one asked if I were carrying things to sell, or food. I asked about the jellybeans (two-and-a-half pounds of assorted gourmet flavors for the DUFF auction); the attendant said there'd be no problem. But what about the books and fanzines I was also carrying, all to sell for DUFF or the Susan Wood Memorial Scholarship Fund? I said "no" to all the questions on the declarations card, deciding that I could consider them all gifts and certainly under $200 in value, but what if some ambitious or bored customs official wanted a capsule history of science fiction fandom to explain all that stuff in the suitcases?

I emerged from the plane in Sydney, collected my bags, got in a line, got in another line, had my card stamped by an affable man in a booth, then faced, tensely, a large room full of people in casual uniforms pawing through other people's luggage. I staggered down the center aisle, waved my stamped form, and was waved at in return.

To my surprise and relief I was being waved through the room to the double doors leading to the main terminal. Over the doors a clock showed 9:30 am. It was June 10, 1983, and I was in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia to attend the Australian National Convention, the Syncon.

Chapter Two

I burst through the double doors and found Cliff Wind and another man waiting for me. Cliff was an old friend and fellow Seattlite: tall, diffident, typically dressed in beige and pale brown, he was an old Aussie hand who'd lived in Western Australia a few years before. He introduced me to Andrew Taubman. Andrew, in deerstalker cap, led us into the parking lot, a sea of Japanese cars. His was a Toyota with the driver's seat on the right, like all Aussie (and British) cars. Andrew explained local driving habits, and pointed out the sights; I was so entertained that we were two-thirds of the way to the hotel before I remembered my trip to Ayers Rock.

Long before, in Seattle, I'd booked a tour to Ayers Rock, the gigantic mystery rock of the Australian Outback. I'd been forcefed statistics and wonder by the veterans of the 1975 Worldcon, especially Gene DiModica, and had wanted to see the Big Red One ever since. I was supposed to appear at the Tourist Information Counter in the Sydney Airport before leaving the premises to collect a voucher from the bus company running the tour, Ansett Pioneer.

Realization hit me about the time we crossed the great hemispherical bridge over Sydney Harbor. Below us was the Opera House with its great white helmet-like peaks. I panick easily, but Cliff pointed out that it was pointless to turn back now, and Andrew pointed out more sights. I calmed down and enjoyed the ride. I particularly noted the neighborhood hotels that seemed to be on every corner, with large wraparound marquees advertising beer. Andrew explained that in Australia "hotel" meant "bar" or "pub."

The simple mystery of the convention hotel was solved: it was called the Shore Inn, a four-story motel set a hundred feet from the road down a slight slope. Andrew and Cliff escorted me to the registration desk and then up to my room, waiting patiently while I changed and called the Tourist Information Counter. I was relieved when the TIC insisted on sending the voucher by messenger, and so was Andrew, who'd reluctantly volunteered to drive me back if necessary. (The voucher appeared at the registration desk in a handsome canvas ticket-holder later that day.)

We returned to the small, mirror-lined lobby, where other con attendees were beginning to gather. I was pleased to find Marc Ortlieb there. Stocky and bearded, full of bad jokes and good humor, Marc had visited Seattle years before and had endeared himself. Furthermore, he was the DUFF administrator, and if I needed any money, he was the person to ask.

He introduced me to two of the five New Zealanders at the con. Greg Hills proved to be a quiet, intelligent, adventurous man in his mid-twenties; Michelle Muysert (as she then spelled it; now she's "Muijsert") was an exotic with reddish hair, brightly-colored jumpsuit, and an exaggerated sense of her own wickedness. Both were at Syncon as prelude to moving to Melbourne, where they hoped to find work.

Behind me I heard a familiar voice. Turning, I saw the familiar flash haircut and aviator frames of the Guest of Honor, Harlan Ellison. Harlan's mouth dropped open.

"What! What are you doing here?"

I told him, reminded him of our other meetings (though Harlan recognized me from many conventions, he didn't know me by name), and started to relax. I had a particular nervousness about Harlan, composed of equal parts of awe, admiration, and apprehension. My speech for the banquet recounted our first meeting, one of small importance for him but great significance for me.

I turned again, this time to greet Lee Smoire, exuberant American Travelling Jiant. She'd come all the way from Baltimore on $250, by winning a travel agents' contest and adding professional discounts to achieve the bargain of a lifetime. With her was Carey Handfield; though he looked a little sloppy, and mumbled, I knew he was one of the sparkplugs of Australian fandom and one of the partners of Norstrilia Press, a dynamic sf specialty publisher. We began to plan a tour of Sydney Harbour and our post-con drive from Sydney to Melbourne via Canberra, when Marc grabbed my sleeve.

"If we're to get money for you, we've got to do it today before the banks close. Monday is a bank holiday." So we stepped around a corner to discuss finance.

We returned to the lobby, Marc disappeared to his bank, and I joined Lee and Cliff on their expedition to downtown Sydney. Andrew Taubman drove us in, and did some bravura driving as he threaded his little car through the most tangled city traffic I had ever seen. (Adding piquancy was the fact that Aussies, like the British, drive on the left, which is why the driver's seat is on the right.) My co-passengers were serene, as though they always drove in cities of three million, of whom two million seemed to want to drive to the same place and get there first. We said goodby to Andrew at the QANTAS Centre, and I began to breath again.

Sydney is a world-class city, and has not only the traffic but the bustling shopping areas and oppresively large skyscrapers one would expect. We three explorers made our way through this top-heavy splendor to the oldest section, the Rocks, built in the 1790s by convict labor and preserved for its historic charms. Old two-story houses and warehouses turned into trendy shops and touristy restaurants were the rule, as in Seattle's Pioneer Square. Our first stop was a teashop serving lunch. We sat in a paved garden in back, reading the menu from a blackboard, watching little birds hop on and off the fence. I decided to be very Australian, and ordered meat pie.

I learned later that what they served me was not the typical Aussie meat pie; it was far too good. It was large, covered with chopped vegetables in a delicious tomato sauce. Inside were chunks of beef in tangy gravy. (Every other pie I had was a small thing in a paper wrapper, filled with ground meat and topped with the tiniest possible squirt of the Australian version of ketchup.)

After lunch we went out into the drizzly winter afternoon and acted like tourists: dodging traffic, visiting shops (I bought a boomerang, a carved snake, postcards, and novels by C.J. Koch, including The Year of Living Dangerously), stopping to listen to a street musician playing guitar, rhythm sticks and didgeridoo (a long hollow tube or stick which the musician blew into). We fondled stone walls and steps left from the labors of the convicts, and photographed each other standing before a three-sided monument depicting a convict, a farmer, and a soldier.

It was getting late, so we walked to the train station, stopping to sample fruit drinks and pastries. Just beyond the food stalls was Circular Quay where the ferries and tour boats picked up passengers, and alongside it the Opera House. Some people have described it as "nuns in the wind" or "white turtles mating." Lee led the way as we

climbed every set of steps and along every walkway; I stopped to take a close look at the small tiles which give the Opera House its seamless white look. Then we caught a train back to the Shore Inn, only missing our station by two stops, to return to a convention just waking to life.

Chapter 3

We found the motel lobby full of vast crowds apparently waiting for something to happen. Marc was standing to one side, and immediately handed me the promised money. By now I was beginning to notice the many differences between Australian, U.S., and Canadian currency. Like the U.S. and Canada, Australia has decimal cash. Like Canadian bills, every Aussie denomination is a different color, but, unlike withe Canadian or U.S. stuff, the Aussie comes in different sizes: the higher the value, the bigger the bill. I had to fold the fifties in fourths to fit them in my wallet, and even the twenties were slightly too large. I wondered how big thousand-dollar bills might be.

Marc introduced me to more than money: Leanne Frahm and Terry Frost were nearby, and Marc did the formalities. Leanne was one of Australia's up-and-coming new pros, with short stories in American anthologies. I thought her square bangs and broad smile charming. I remembered Terry from Q36 (Marc's fanzine) as the author of several sardonic pieces on Australian fandom and Melburnian habits. Terry put me in mind of a bear who'd eaten some bad berries, with his full dark beard and unsmiling demeanor. (Terry never smiled, never: wittily sarcastic remarks left his lips all weekend, but the rest of his face never acknowledged them.)

I found Andrew Brown on my own. Andrew was one of the heroes of the trip, because he and Irwin Hirsh first suggested that I stand for DUFF. I looked up to him, though Andrew is somewhat younger than I am, because Andrew is an admirable figure; I admired his taste in music (esoteric avantgarde rock), clothes (long coats, pastel scarves), and fanzines (fannish). I also looked up at him, because I'm 5'7", while Andrew is 6'10".

Andrew and I looked around for dinner company, but the crowd had evaporated; we decided to go off by ourselves, and as we walked up the long drive and turned right, Andrew began to outline my itinerary in Melbourne.

"I want to take you to see this great band that's going to play a hotel I know. You know we call pubs 'hotels,' don't you? And John Foyster's going to have a party Saturday night."

We found a Chinese restaurant only a few blocks farther on, and strolled in. Not surprisingly, a table full of fans blinked up at us. I met John McFarland, Derrick and Christine Ashby, Helen Swift, Perry Middlemiss (the latter two a couple at the time); Cliff and Leanne were there, too. The food was decent, and the conversation both amusing and instructive. Christine, a small birdlike woman, seemed to be in charge of most of it, and authoritatively explained that McFarland wouldn't be up to his usual legendary grossness, since a mate of his wasn't in attendance. This proved to be true, since McFarland made no further impression on me.

I think it was Christine who speculated on Merv Binns' probable plans for Harlan. It seemed that Merv (owner of Space Age Books in Melbourne, and publisher of Australian SF News) was a nice fellow but a bit staid. "When Larry Niven came to town, Merv's idea of showing him a good time was a drive over the Westgate Bridge." Since Merv was Melbourne fandom's (self-appointed) Greeter of Important Persons, he was going to have to come up with a more interesting idea of entertainment for Harlan. (I wondered if Niven had enjoyed the bridge.)

The walk back took only a few minutes. Christine, with Derrick pushing her wheelchair, led the way. I fell back, and complimented Helen on her fascinating article on Aboriginal petrol sniffing (the article appeared in Rataplan). Helen, a tall angular blonde, was pleased at the praise, and gave me more details about the problem. I wished out loud that I knew more about Native American problems in the same line; Helen, though, knew more than I did, and explained that they were as serious as the Australian ones. (The younger Aborigines do it for a cheap high. It's supposed to be an excellent way to destroy brain cells.)

When we got back to the Shore Inn, I followed the others around the hotel registration desk, past the restaurant/lounge and the dining hall, to the area in which people were waiting for the opening ceremonies to begin. On one side of this crossroads was the bar, closed at the moment, which would supply most of the conventioneers. On the other was the main programming hall. A mass of people were crowding into the hall just as we arrived.

Jack Herman, another bearded and bespectacled fan (the proportion of bearded to clean-shaved male fans is even higher in Australia than it is in the US), and the chair of the con, opened the proceedings with words of welcome. Behind him, Harlan kept busy by dunking Jack's water-resistant watch into a glass of water. Jack was the calmest convention chair I had ever seen. He didn't even flinch as he gazed at his watch, resting in the glass like a set of digital false teeth. Van Ikin, the Fan Guest of Honor, looked bemused. (It turned out that this was Van's usual look, and I learned to allow for it.)

I was introduced too, as was Tom Cardy, winner of the Fan Fund Australia-New Zealand (FFANZ). He had been brought over from New Zealand for the convention. He was touchingly young, and looked newly hatched: one side of his head was combed elegantly smooth; on the other side the hair stood on end. Tom's accent, like that of the other New Zealanders, seemed outlandish even compared to the Australians'. It seemed to take vowels and twist them 180° into something rich and strange. "Must have suffered what they call a 'sea change,'" I thought.

I slipped out to deliver my jelly beans, signed books, and other paraphernalia to Justin Ackroyd's room for the DUFF auction. Justin was in charge of all the auctions: DUFF, fanzine, collectors' (all carefully categorized; someone else must have handled the art auction, which I missed). His room was full of boxes of zines, books, and unidentifiable kipple. He stood in the middle of it like a large grinning blond teddy bear as he introduced me to the others sorting through the boxes.

A moment later Lee Smoire came in, carrying her treasures, including several inflatable crabs (a Baltimore souvenir). While Lee showed off to Phil Ware and Pauline Dickinson, I talked to Carey Handfield about our schedule after the convention.

"I have to thank you, Jerry," Carey semi-mumbled. "Until you wrote to me, I didn't know I was driving here." Lee had called me months earlier to tell me her plans: I took them as definite, but they were only possibilities. She was going to fly to Syncon from Baltimore, depending on travel agent discounts, and then drive with Carey to Melbourne. But until I wrote to Carey for his permission to tag along (assuming that, even if it were okay

with Lee, it might not be with him), he hadn't known any of this. Fortunately, he was pleasantly surprised.

I returned to the convention hall to find the first programme item in progress, a formal debate entitled, "Only Science Has the Solutions to Our Problems." "This they start at 8:30 pm?" I thought. "These Australians are serious." (I also boggled at the Programme Book listing, which showed the debate as starting at 2030. All times were shown on the 2400 system, and I kept spraining my mathematical faculties translating back into am and pm.) I wasn't interested in watching a debate, but there were plenty of others who agreed, and I had lots of company until the parties began.

Steve Roylance was the first of many who wanted to ask me for crash space after the Worldcon. The Aussies were planning to come to Baltimore in (relative) force, and many of them were charting their tours of the US by finding out which cities had willing fans. I assured Steve that he'd love Seattle, and that we indeed had an extra bed.

I turned away from Steve and his ever-present camera, worn like an amulet around his neck, to find Marc Ortlieb with his arm around a dark, laughing woman.

"This is Catherine Circosta," he said. "She lives in Melbourne. A good reason for moving from Adelaide to Melbourne, don't you think?"

I agreed, of course. Later acquaintance with Cath was to prove him right.

I turned again, and a large chunky blonde man introduced himself as Mark Kinneman. He was an expatriate American who had lived in Seattle for a few years, so we spent a few minutes over our Foster's (on Mark's shout, i.e., he paid) comparing notes on the Seattle skyline. I watched out of the corner of my eye as Tom Cardy got drunk on half a beer and assumed an interestingly oblique angle on his bar stool.

I joined Terry Frost and Andrew Brown, who talked about politics. Tony Power, in charge of the masquerade, wandered by tapping people on the shoulder and telling them to be at the Masquearade Judges' Meeting at 6 pm the next evening. I lost my train of thought when Tony tapped me, and Andrew took advantage of the lull to join Terry Dowling and Helen Swift, who were trying to explain to Art Widner why the Australians were fascinated by Ned Kelly.

It took me a moment to focus on the conversation. First I had to size up Terry Dowling. I'd seen his name before: he'd been nominated for the Ditmar in several different categories (fiction and fanwriting) and for the Atheling Award for criticism. Here he was, small, compact, with twinkling eyes and a handsome mustache. I knew Art already: yet another American, active in fandom in the forties but only lately "reborn" into actifandom; venerable-looking with a fringe of white hair and full white beard; a college English teacher with a trucker's cap that said, "H.G. Wells."

"Who is Ned Kelly, anyway?" asked Art. Everyone explained. Ned Kelly was the Australian Jesse James. Sort of. He was from a poor Irish family, back in Victorian times, when the poor Irish in Australia rarely got a fair break from the English ranchers, farmers or police. Kelly ended up leading a gang of robbers (which formed after Kelly was accused of being a gang-leader) and killed a few policemen in self-defense. Kelly made so many friends among the populace in his various flights and forays that he might have led a revolution if he hadn't been betrayed, trapped, tried and hung. Glenrowan, the site of his last stand (near Melbourne) was a national shrine; hundreds of books and articles had been written about him; one Australian painter, Sidney Nolan, had built an international reputation on his depictions of Ned's career. One of the most famous aspects of Ned's life was his recourse, in the end, to a suit of armor with a helmet that resembled a tank turret. Even

Americans would know about that if they followed the careers of the Rolling Stones, since Mick Jagger once played Kelly in an ill-fated movie, armor prominently displayed in the advertising.

I decided I would definitely have to stop at Glenrowan.

Again people whirled around me, and I realized that I was in the same condition as Tom Cardy. This probably explained why I accepted when Roger Weddall asked me to be the US agent for Thyme, the Australian newszine, since normally I hate taking on any responsibilities. It also explained my impression that Michelle Muysert was making near-obscene suggestions on how to end room shortage problems. But I was sure she was behaving oddly when she started to bite into coasters and snap at exposed toes.

The debate ended, and for the rest of the evening the topic of science and its ability to solve all problems kept popping up. I somehow became enmeshed in an endless conversation on the topic with a big leather-clad biker and his caped companion. I nodded sagely from time to time, but my eyes kept shifting to see if anyone I knew would wander by: I needed an urgent appointment, but I needed someone to have it with. Finally Michelle stopped chewing on toes, collected the other New Zealanders, and announced that everyone had to go up to her room. I was soon able to say goodnight to my new friends, and took the stairs two at a time to room 18.

I flung myself down on the bed nearest the door, and was soon talking to a small dark woman exotically named Guilia de Cesara. Guilia was from Tasmania. At last, I thought, I can get some explanation for that mysterious headline in The National Times (a weekly Aussie paper I'd seen on the plane): "Spy Planes Over Tasmania." She explained it as being part of a dispute between the Tasmanian government and environmentalists over the placement of a new dam. I wasn't too enlightened, but felt reassured anyway: it made sense to someone.

As we leaned back and watched Greg Hills sew up the seams in his pants, Guilia went on to explain an even more bizarre event: the mysterious disappearance of a baby at Ayers Rock. The distraught mother had blamed hungry dingoes (wild dogs). The government blamed her, and eventually convicted her of murder. The whole affair became a media circus. It led, inevitably in Australia, to books of dingo jokes and bad fanzines like Dingo Vomit.

Eventually I felt the need of sleep, and began convince myself to leave. I was sitting in a chair, pulling on my jacket, when a young woman, large-eyed, red-haired, approached me on her knees. She took my hand, looked winningly into my face, and asked me where in the US I was from. I told her. She leaned her elbows on my knees. Her face was only inches from mine.

Huskily, she said, "There's something else I want to ask." She licked her lips slightly. I held my breath, wondering if my pupils were dilating. Then she spoke. "Your address."

She was another travelling Australian planning her trip. Her name was Karen Janezic, and she too would be in the States after Worldcon. I gave her my address, and went off to bed, dazed and confused.

Thus ended my first day in Australia.

Chapter 4

I usually wake early, even at conventions; this worked out well at Syncon, because their little dining hall served breakfast only between 9 am and 11 am. I pulled on my Raffles teeshirt (showing the cover from issue #2) to give me something to talk about, and went through the huckster room to find some company. Jack Herman was there, busily organizing. In his white Borsalino, open-neck shirt, and bullet pendant, he looked like someone who spent his time between rabbinical classes dealing cocaine. He didn't want breakfast, so I went alone to the dining hall, which turned out to be the Raffles Room. My shirt amused the staff, but they made me pay the $4 anway for a simple breakfast of cereal, juice, toast, and tea.

I returned to the huckster room, where I found Justin arranging the materials for the fanzine auction and muttering about Keith Curtis. The former DUFF winner had promised vast quantities of fanzines, but hadn't shown up yet. To pass time until he appeared (I wanted to see what he was bringing) I spent an hour exploring the tables, buying books from Norstrilia Press and Cory & Collins, the two Australian independent publishers of science fiction.

The Norstrilia Press books were beautiful productions: good paper, well-designed wrappers, sewn signatures. When I eventually read them I found that the writing they contained was appropriate to the small-press presentation: well-written, even exquisitely written; largely surreal or metaphysical or "post-modern." Strong on content, weak on story (no, they are not the same thing), they impressed me as second-hand Borges or McGuane.

Cory & Collins, on the other hand, seemed to be trying for mass market appeal with eye-catching paperback covers, perfect binding, and, on most books, a logo-like dingbat and number. (Paul Collins' name was on every one as "series editor.") There were lots of anthologies (one had an introduction by Joe Haldeman, who admitted he hadn't read any of the stories) and novels by Jack Wodhams, David Lake, and other Australian "name" authors. I took two Wodhams, but could never finish them; their humor seemed too crude and forced. I decided I preferred Norstrilia Press: it had taste and ambition of a sort I liked.

Keith Curtis? I kept asking Justin, and at last he said, Yes. He introduced me to a skinny fellow with a goatish beard and saturnine features. I followed him to his car, and helped bring in box after box of books and magazines. The fanzines were particularly charming, winking at me from under stacks of old pulps.

Knowing that some of them must be meant for me, I relaxed. When Carey and Andrew Brown mentioned that they were going off to buy supplies for the Melbourne in '85 party, I invtied myself along.

I clambered into the backseat of their car, then leaned forward between the front seats and began asking questions. Where were we going? Could we have lunch? Why were they having a party, since they had the Worldcon in the bag?

We were going (they said) to a shopping center near the motel. We could get some dinner. (And in the evening I could have tea, not supper.) And nobody in Australia could quite believe they'd win, even if no one else was bidding. Not after assuming they'd win in 1983, and losing.

We drove on and on, passing through some very pretty countryside. I thought it might even be wild enough to be considered Outback (though not far enough out to be "back of beyond," "back of Bourne" or "beyond the Black Stump.") Carey and Andrew gave each other helpful hints ("I'm not sure; what do you think?") and finally we drove into a busy shopping district. Both sides of the street were lined with grocery stores, clothing stores, hotels, takeaways, and lots of shoppers. We parked down a shallow hill, about a block from the action, and walked up to the bottle shop attached to a corner hotel.

Every hotel has its own bottle shop, which sells takeaway beer, wine and liquor. This one had a good selection, and while Andrew and Carey plucked bottles from the shelves (and a box of wine, too: many of the cheaper sorts came in boxes, with little spigots), I sighed over the beers, finally picking out a sixpack of Castlemaine Bitter. We stowed the load in the car and returned to the busy street to look for food.

Just past the hotel was a takeaway, where I was introduced to delicacies like real Aussie meat pies and chiko rolls (like egg rolls, with unidentifiable vegetable filling and lethal levels of salt coating). I asked for french fries: the shopkeeper laughed. They were "chips," of course, even if they did look and taste like greasy fries.

The food eaten as quickly as it was cooked, we visitedthe local supermarket to get more party supplies. Carey wanted crisps (this being what Americans call chips), Andrew wanted Fruit Loops, and I wanted a greater awareness of the Aussie way of life. I was comforted to find many familiar brands, but at the same time disquieted. Nabisco in Australia? Some of the names were different (Sugar Crisps instead of Sugar Smacks, for instance), but most of the products were precisely the same. There were a few, though, like Weetabix, that have no close equivalent.

"They're like little bricks, just squares of pure fibre," explained Andrew. "Absolutely flavourless. You pour milk over them. Then they turn into soggy shapeless little globs of flavourless fibre."

"Sounds exciting," I said.

"Wait until you try some Vegemite."

I explained that I had tried Vegemite in Seattle, as we returned to the car. As we began the long drive back to the motel, I described what the deep brown salty substance reminded me of. Suddenly we were driving through a familiar intersection.

"Hey!" I said. "That place was only a few blocks from the Shore Inn. Why'd it take us so long to get there?"

"Er, um..." Carey hemmed. He paused. He considered. And as we drove up the Shore's driveway, he finally explained.

"We got lost," he said.

After we carried the supplies to Carey's room, leaving him to sort it out, Andrew and I went to the fanzine auction. Justin was busy marking down the bids, while Ken Ozanne, dark and rotund, did the auctioning. (I stood in for him when American fanzines were on the block.) The prize offerings were issues of Australian Science Fiction Review, the John Bangsund zine that marked the beginning of the Golden Age of Aussie fanzines (1970-1975, approximately) and were the model for good sercon fanzine writing all over the world. I gloated over the several copies I bought, as well as the program book for the third Aussie Natcon in 1953. (It featured handset type.)

When the auction ended, the room emptied. Of course! It was time for the fanzine panel! This was supposed to be one of my big moments, and I worried about it when I wasn't worrying about my banquet speech. I worried that I might offend someone, or everyone, if I were too candid about Australian fanzines, which were not the best I'd ever read. (My low opinion was based on late-70s and early-80s zines.) The others on the panel ran the gamut from Leigh Edmonds, who'd said in Rataplan that Aussie zines were not the best he'd read, to Marc Ortlieb, who thought Oz zines were just fine, thank you. In between was Tom Cardy (whose opinion I didn't know or mark down). Off to one side was Van Ikin, who said that his Science Fiction, a university-funded digest-sized magazine that printed a combination of fiction and criticism, was possibly not a fanzine anyway, so he wasn't really involved.

Leigh agreed with Van, and cited a near-lack of a lettercol as evidence. Fanzines are based on their interaction with their readership, he went on, who take a very active part in the zine through their letters. Without a lettercol, a zine gives an impression of distance, which isn't an attribute of a fanzine but of an academic journal. Van agreed that this was really what he was doing, but he said that changes were coming. Bruce Gillespie would be typesetting future issues, and with the savings in space SF would be able to start a full-fledged loccol...if anyone would write.

There was some interchange with the audience (which at last outnumbered the panelists) on the usual subjects: fiction in fanzines, where to find zines, and so forth. Greg Hills expressed a novel disappointment with Rataplan by complaining that its layouts were totally uninspired, and showed no change or improvement from issue to issue. The panelists defended Leigh's layouts as simple and comfortable, ones that he had developed over a long career of fanpublishing. After all, I said, in Rataplan what counted was the writing, which ranged over a wide variety of subject-matter, and which appeared to be selected with some thought to the balance and feel of each issue. This probably appeared to be the old guard defending its own, since the panel had just finished damning some other fanzine for dull layouts, and was having no luck explaining the distinction between "dull" and "simple" to Greg.

Having failed to offend anyone, I left the room when the panel ended, and flumped down into an overstuffed chair somewhere near the bar. I was instantly joined by Ann Poore and another woman, both from Adelaide. I asked them to tell me something interesting about John Packer, Q36 cartoonist and Adelaide resident, who had been unable to attend the con.

"He makes liqueur," said Ann. "Lots of different kinds," added her friend. "Like what?" I innocently asked. "Well..." they said. Then they took deep breaths, and rattled off: "Green tomato, marjoram, tarragon, grapefruit, mulberry, rosehip, rose petal, strawberry, cherry, apple, strawberry-apple, blackberry, pineapple...oh, and there's also the carroway port, lemon beer, and ginger beer."

So now I knew what Adelaide fans did for fun when they weren't producing or reading Q36. I couldn't decide whether to be regretful or relieved that I wouldn't get there.

Chapter 5

I wandered, cloudlike, and found myself back in the room the fanzine panel had been in. Now it held an autograph party for Harlan. I decided to wait for him to finish, so we could talk about Ayers Rock. Besides, Harlan was being an entertainer: he joked with people, showed them crystal-embedded bits of art, and frequently interrupted himself to charge

into the rare book auction in the next room, returning to crow over some treasure he'd bought.

I had heard that Harlan wanted to see Ayers Rock, and thought that we might be going there at the same time. (I imagined Harlan and myself joining thousands of tourists as they swarmed up its sides like ants on a dead tortoise. This image joined itself with one of Aleister Crowley and his wife performing acts of sex magic at dawn on top of Cheops' pyramid. I tried to ignore both images.)

Harlan, however, had never heard of Ayers Rock, he said. He wanted to see Hanging Rock. He had seen and been inspired by Peter Weir's beautiful and mysterious movies, Picnic at Hanging Rock, in which students disappear during an outing there. Hanging Rock was only a short drive from Melbourne. Ayers Rock was not. I explained it all to Harlan, who got very interested, until I got to the part about its distance from everything else. He planned to rent a Land Rover and drive into the Outback, but Ayers Rock, twenty-four hours from Adelaide by train, was too far Out.

At this moment I was tapped on the shoulder and ordered off to the masquerade judges' meeting. Michelle Muysert, Tom Cardy, Terry Frost and Lee Smoire were the other judges gathered in Michelle's room; the five of us hammered out some basic rules of judging, while Greg Hills hung about in the background, being depressed by personal matters back in New Zealand. After the meeting, I cajoled Greg into walking out to eat, and we stumbled into the same Chinese restaurant as the night before, where we joined some of the same diners.

After dinner we returned to the convention, walking into the main programming room. Nearly everyone was there, the whole five hundred of them. Some were in costume, some were dancing to taped music, and the rest were gawking. Since this was what Saturday nights were like at Northwest cons, I felt at home.

Then I noticed the Reno Night set-up, and things seemed different. Roulette, blackjack, craps--and Cliff Wind as croupier! I examined the games, but never got any of the funny money people placed bets with. I didn't want to spend time placing phoney bets, when I could be dancing.

I found Karin Janezic and her friend Jo Johnson, and danced with them through several numbers. Then I danced with the sensation of the evening. "Jonson's Silent Android Woman" was dressed in a golden bikini and a lot of gold body paint. She wore a metal mask and a fancifully upswept hairdo; at her hip was a box with different colored lights, and a small purse containing business cards and advertising booklets. She didn't speak a word all evening but she danced moderately well.

After I danced with her, Harlan did, while I danced with Michelle; we all yelled for better music. I wanted anything current and danceable, while Harlan demanded Michael Jackson. After the number ended, the "android" and Michelle both disappeared, and I realized I was dripping sweat. It was hot in that room, with hundreds of milling, betting, dancing fans. Harlan, of course, was dry and cool-looking.

"Why don't you sweat, Harlan?" I asked.

"If you sweat," he explained, "they know you're Jewish, and they come and take you away on the truck."

I didn't have time to ponder the truth of this: I was forced to sit around a table with the other judges while aliens and barbarians paraded past. There were less than fifty of them,

but the line seemed infinite, and I realized I was beginning to feel the effects of jet lag. The evening took on a timeless quality as my mind slowed and my body grew a layer of quivering amber. My sense of living in a parallel universe half a second out of sync with the "real" one blurred events for the next few hours.

We judges watched as Star Trek aliens, sword and sorcery groups, a shipwrecked spaceman with an extra head growing out of his chest, and a purple-skinned humorist in flight overalls and a leather aviator helmet all declaimed. (The extra head groaned.) Then we left the room, deliberated (assigning points in such categories as originality and craft), added up the points, and returned to announce our winners. Jonson's Silent Android Woman carried off top honors.

I was now in a state resembling catatonia. I sat through a Star Trek parody that used characters from The Goon Show (mostly Western Australian fans, with Andrew Taubman and Marc Ortlieb assisting, and the purple-skinned aviator causing problems with adlibs). That was followed by a "multi-media" show put on by Transfinite Visuals: a slide show with music and narration. I couldn't make out what it was about, and left.

Up I went, to the Melbourne in '85 party in Robin Johnson's room, where I found Robin, John Foyster, and a few others, watching cricket. Robin was always explaining something to someone, like how to get from Sydney to Melbourne cheap, or why the best restaurant in town was called the Black Stump. He started explaining cricket to me. I couldn't understand. Fortunately, the room started to fill with partiers, the television was blocked by bodies, Robin dropped the matter, and someone finally turned off the telly.

All I could remember of the rest of the party was eating Honey Smacks and whatever else Andrew had bought. When Michelle announced fireworks in her room, I must have teleported there.

When I regained awareness, I was leaning on Karin, who was leaning on someone else, and we were all craning our necks to see out of Michelle's window. On the gravel-covered roof some daring fan was trying to light some small bit of firework, probably a version of the Ground Bloom Flower. This should spin rapidly, shooting out fire: first green, then red, then white. On the gravel roof most of the Flowers weren't spining, only shooting out disappointingly small flames and puffs of smoke.

The small window made crawling onto the roof an obstacle course; the roof itself muted the more spectacular effects; the rain threatened; the fans got more thrills from crowding the couch and bed than from seeing the show. I smiled wanly at Michelle, mumbled, "Good night and Happy Queen's Birthday," and went to my own bed. It wasn't crowded at all, and I quickly fell asleep.

Chapter 6

I started off Sunday morning by meeting two of Australia's unique fans. Kevin Dillon seemed like some poor fellow off the streets who'd come in looking for somewhere warm: he was small, wizened, and dressed in old wrinkled clothing. But he attended many program items, made pertinent and impertinent comments, and bid constantly in the auctions. He asked me to add him to the Mainstream mailing list, and we made small talk. Later, I heard tales of his house, how it was filled to the ceilings with books, magazines, and papers, with only tun-

nels left to walk through.

Another was small, solid-looking Vera Lornergan, noted outspoken fan. "I always say just what's on my mind," she said, her voice ringing with truth. I wished I could witness a conversation between her and Christine Ashby.

However, I wasn't being either unique or memorable. I was too preoccupied with the smorgasbord and the speech I would have to make there. So I excused myself to take care of the DUFF auction, coming up just before. It was to be in the same room as the fan panels, right next to the dealers' room. I found that Justin had everything ready, the account books sitting open. I used the extra time to work in a little extra worrying.

I took turns auctioning with Marc Ortlieb. We sold bag after bag of jellybeans, interrupting the flow with fanzines and autographed books. A copy of Harlan's zine of the fifties, Science Fiction Bulletin, went for A$21. (I had avoided letting Harlan know about it, for fear he'd buy and destroy it.) When the bidding stopped, we'd raised A$600 for DUFF and smaller amounts for other fanfunds.

At last it was the hour of the smorgasbord. The con committee and guests were seated nearest the buffet table. Jack Herman sat across from me, with Van Ikin on my left and Shayne McCormick on my right. Harlan was at the head of the table, Shayne on his left and Tom Cardy on his right. Somebody decided that it would be more polite if we all waited until the rest of the convention went through the line, and so the honored few waited and watched hungrily as a hundred very slow convention members served themselves lunch. (I was both hungry and very nervous, unsure if I could eat much even if I could get near the food.)

A hotel staff member pointed out that there was another buffet table in the next room, considerably less crowded. This may have been true earlier, but by now it wasn't much less crowded and equally depleted. Van and I discreetly complained to each other about the selection and the wait, and returned to eat our pickles, garlic salami, and other bits of food. (We even got a little Jello.) I mechanically chewed while staring at Jack and trying to carry on a conversation with him. It was my only chance to talk to him during the entire weekend, but I could never remember what we'd said.

We finished. The tables were cleared. Ken Ozanne stopped interviewing Harlan. Jack introduced Tom Cardy. Tom read a speech he'd written during the previous night and that morning. It was mainly about not having a speech to give. Harlan heckled. My stomach curdled.

Tom sat down; I stood up. The speech: I had put together two anecdotes about my first convention, both showing how a young neo had been tolerated and accepted by two top sf personalities (Lee Hoffman and Harlan). They were stories that I'd told off and on over the years, felt secure about repeating, and thought were amusing. The one about Harlan I had always wanted to tell him, but had never had the nerve or opportunity before. It simply involved his "forcing" me to read "Repent, Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman" after I told Harlan about voting for a different story for the Hugo. The LeeH story was about my attempts to understand her Importance (as stressed by Andy Porter) and to get her "I Go Pogo" lapel button. I wove the two stories together, added amusing details about the Tricon, and tacked on an Oedipal joke that depended on the old saw about fandom being a big family.

Everything unraveled. The moment I started talking the intertwined stories separated into simple chronological anecdotes. The details disappeared. My voice shook, of course, and my timing was shaken. When I finished the Ellison anecdote, Harlan said, "That's it? No punchline?" No Harlan, I thought, no punchline. My life doesn't have punchlines. The Hoffman story got a few laughs. My Oedipal joke was that I didn't really think of Harlan as my fannish father or Lee as my fannish mother because that would imply that sometimes I wanted

to kill Harlan and...Harlan helpfully completed the sentence. "Screw Lee?' he said.

I finished by saying that instead I thought of Lee as my fannish father, and of Harlan as a big brother, and all the people at the con as first cousins once removed by an ocean. I sat down to polite applause from most of the audience and groans from Harlan. From within me came great sighs of relief, a peculiar sensation in my middle as my stomach jumped for joy, and a lightheadedness apparently caused by blood and brains deserting my skull.

Chapter 7

Someone must have taken my hand and led me back to the fan programming room for a panel on "International Fandom," because I had no memory of walking there. Even in my bewildered state I noticed that the panelists again outnumbered the audience.

The other panelists were a familiar group: Robin Johnson, Cliff Wind, Marc Ortlieb, Tom Cardy, Michelle Muysert, and Terry Frost. (Terry's only excuse for being on the panel seemed to be that he was engaged in an international romance with Michelle.) I didn't retain much of the discussion. Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown, in the audience, were more entertaining than the entire panel: they recounted some of their adventures in America as long-ago DUFF travelers, including the sadly hilarious inhospitality of one then-San Francisco fan (no name mentioned) who'd implored them to stay with him, then abandoned them.

Keith Curtis popped in at one point to explain that his DUFF report was really and truly completed; all he had to do was "expurgate" it. It seemed that he'd tape-recorded a good deal of his trip and simply transcribed the tapes along with the notes. Somehow this included a mysterious and personal interlude in Albuerquerque during which he'd left the recorder on by mistake. I couldn't decide if I'd misheard this explanation or misunderstood it; why would anyone transcribe what they didn't want known? Couldn't Keith tell the difference between travel notes and travel experience?

After the panel Robin drew me aside and began to speak of airplanes, trains, tours, and schedules. I only escaped by waving my plane and tourbus tickets at him. He examined them, released me, and went in search of Art Widner, to check his travel plans. I went the other way, to the main hall and Van Ikin's Guest of Honor speech.

Van started by quoting Damien Broderick: "Criticism is a kind of conversation among friends." Then he said that people naturally make discriminations. But Van didn't follow these observations with a talk on the place of criticism in life. What he really wanted to talk about was Science Fiction (his critical journal) and its place in fanzine fandom. He felt that SF marked a broadening of fandom and was, perhaps, another step in the evolution of fanzine publishing. I disagreed silently. SF was a zine that combined fiction and criticism in a small magazine format, with a little art and almost no lettercol. It reminded me of other academic magazines I'd seen, except for the lack of poetry, and more of an offshoot of fanzine publishing than the leading edge. (In fact, I thought, a tree--with lots of roots and branches--seemed a better metaphor for sf-related amateur publishing than evolution, knives, or waves.)

Van pointed out some of the publishing problems he'd faced (many of the usual sort: money, time, distribution) and answered questions from the audience. He then cleared the stage for one of the lamer program items of the con.

This was something that began as "Sale of the 21st Century," hosted by Gregor Whiley. It

was meant as a parody of "Sale of the Century," but wasn't funny. However, it only existed to introduce the "Create-a-Religion" panel, something imported by Cliff Wind, who'd run several installments at Norvescons in Seattle. The audience would be invited to supply a verb, a noun, and an adjective; the panelists would then creat a consistent religion from the words. Cliff had recruited me earlier; Marc Ortlieb and Andrew Taubman joined us on stage.

What made the thing so silly and ultimately dull was that Marc and Andrew only wanted to construct bizarrely complicated puns with the material supplied. I was tempted, too, but I struggled to come up with serious, even plausible, religions. The low point of the shambles was Andrew's attempt to work with "sticky," "fire engine," and "sodomize." Everyone could guess what he was trying to say, but the embarrassment factor was bigger than the pun payoff, and he just spluttered.

I left the scene of the disaster, mercifully cut short, and stopped at Justin's room to pick up some auction records. Cary Lenehan was there, making quite a contrast to Justin. Both were tall and blond, but Justin looked soft and cuddly and fuzzy, while Cary was hard and sharply-defined. This might be the difference, I thought, between working in a book-shop like Justin, or on a sheep ranch like Cary.

I joined a large company in the lobby who were off to the Black Stump for dinner. I took a seat at the restaurant across the table from Ron Smith, Australia's only resident Hugo winner, with whom I exchanged a few words about Inside, Ron's old fanzine. Robin Johnson sat next to me and instructed me in wines and water. (One has to request water in Aussie restaurants, since it's never brought automatically.)

There may have been something in the water, some sort of psychoactive agent that leads to bursts of lopsided creativity. It was immediately after returning from the Black Stump that Cliff and I decided to bid for the 1985 Australian National Convention. For Seattle.

Chapter 8

Cliff and I were wandering from bar to lobby and back again, when we asked some fans about the next day's bidding session. "Who's bidding?" I asked. "Oh, Adelaide, I guess," came the reply. "Nobody else?" "Nope, guess not."

It seemed like evidence of an entirely different approach to conventions. Only one bid and that one sounding so off-hand. I was amazed, and without thinking I wisecracked, "Maybe we should bid for Seattle."

The wisecrack turned into a wild surmise. "Anybody have a program book? Thanks, Cliff. Let's check the rules for a loophole." In the Constitution governing the convention we found, "3.02: Australian Science Fiction Conventions shall be held within the Commonwealth of Australia, except when the site selection meeting determines otherwise." The convention could be held anywhere.

We began to spread the word. Harlan gave us a bemused stare, but most of the Australians greeted the idea with glee. Leigh Edmonds, for instance, suggested that this meant we would have to take the Ditmars. "And then we'll make you keep them!" he chortled. Cliff and I blanched; we'd never considered that.

We dropped the subject long enough to hear Harlan's Guest of Honor speech. As usual, he was fascinating and maddening by turns. He was using a relatively new format: he would first give a short talk on something topical (this evening it was an exhortation to the fans to support their local publishers and writers). Then he would request that the audience repeat strange stories they'd heard about him, for his refutation or elaboration.

After Harlan had shot down a few of these unsavory tales (one of which Harlan had to tell himself, as no one in Australia had yet heard it), it was time for him to hand out the Ditmars. Jack Herman, Van Ikin, Tom Cardy and I joined him on stage. Harlan handed out the fiction awards (one of which went to Terry Dowling). I gave the fanzine and fanwriting awards (both to Marc Ortlieb, who announced that he would withdraw from eligibility in future), and made some joking reference to Ted White, who'd been less than appreciative of Marc's efforts. ("Ted White? How did that name get in here?" asked Harlan.) Van handed out the artist awards, followed by Tom with the editor award and the William Atheling Award for criticism (Van won Best Editor, Terry Dowling the Atheling).

Paul Stevens wasn't at the con, but his "dreaded" Golden Caterpillar Awards were. These annual awards for dubious achievement are mildly acid reprimands and jibes for deserving behavior in the previous year. They're generally accepted with rue and at least a show of good humor. For instance, Valma Brown and Leigh Edmonds accepted one for their incorporation into the middle-classes. (Valma is a teacher and Leigh works for a government department; they had been sinking most of their cash and time into rebuilding their bungalow.) Another went to an Aussie publisher for putting up an advertising poster at a 1982 convention--made with cardboard and crayon.

But the one that carried the big dramatic punch was "Best Word-of-Mouth Advertising" to Julie Vaux. The story was that at a 1982 con, during the DUFF auction, Julie stormed in and dressed down all present for wasting their money on fanzines, books, and whatever else Marc was auctioning, and not spending it in the Art Show next door where many deserving artists, including, I inferred, Julie Vaux, had their work hung.

Now Julie was unhappy again. She clutched the offending award certificate, and informed the audience that it was once more greatly at fault. There wasn't a single bid on anything in the art show! None whatsoever! Everyone looked at their shoes and mumbled about empty wallets and the poor showing in the show. Julie looked like she was considering walking into the audience and twisting arms, but the moment passed.

People streamed out of the hall to find parties or to go home and miss the best part of the convention: Sunday night of a four night con. I've always found this the night that people truly relax and let themselves sprawl, especially at a Worldcon after the Hugos have been handed out. All the tensions and expectations are gone, and people find their own rhythms, rise or sink to their natural levels. I stayed at a party in Tom Cardy's room until 4 am, testing the truth of my theory.

I cuddled up to Christine Ashby on a deep comfortable couch, big enough for three if they were friendly. Since Merv Binns sat at Christine's other side, I guess we were feeling so. Christine kept up a running commentary on Australian fandom as more of it showed up in the room.

She changed the subject slightly by suggesting that I marry an Australian and stay in the country. She suggested all sorts of unlikely candidates, Merv and other people added to the list, and somehow I found myself proposing marriage to Andrew Brown, who then referred to himself as my wife for the rest of the con.

Before the room filled, I appointed all present as committee members of the Seattle NatCon bid. I claimed that the salmon was the state bird of Washington because it flies upstream to spawn, and therefore the Seattle con would be Spawncon. I wrote down the names of the committee and promptly lost the list. Besides Andrew, the Ashbys, and Merv Binns, the only other committee member I could later remember was Sally Beasley.

The semi-serious smoffing gave way to beer and backrubbing. Two women and a man (they were the Three Musketeers in the masquerade) took choice spots on the floor and couch. One of them, Lyn James (plucked eyebrows and black nails) began rubbing my back. She continued for over an hour, only pausing to rub Andrew's back.

Her sister-in-law Leslie, lanky with a puckish look, was in a playful mood as she told me how cute I was and fended off an increasingly amorous and drunk Andrew. Leslie's husband (Lyn's brother) happily snapped photos as the four of us and Cliff formed Laocoön patterns on the floor (mostly with the intention of giving him interesting poses). Other people on the bed must have had the same thing in mind as they laughed, writhed in coils, and tickled one another. I finally disengaged myself, rose, and found my way to my own room, wondering if I would ever get to see those pictures. (I did, about three years later.)

Chapter 9

Monday morning I efficiently packed my bags and headed down to the hotel registration desk. Checkout was simple: I handed in my key. Then I found the Raffles Room again, for the simple $4 breakfast.

I joined the Ashbys and John McDouall, the Perth-based heart-throb of Australian fandom (or so people told me). They were talking about Kenny Everett, a radio comic and personality, a combination of Stan Freberg and Don Imus, with a Pythonesque twist. John and the Ashbys tried to reproduce his routines for me, but failed miserably. (I remembered how Mike Glicksohn used to try convince US fans that the Pythons were funny; nothing worked until we saw the shows ourselves.)

As we rose to leave, Christine asked, "How is the bid going?"

"I'd sort of hoped people would forget about that," I answered.

They hadn't. I was stopped several more times before I reached the business meeting and took a seat several rows back. I wrote postcards as the meeting rolled on, deciding such matters as the number of Ditmars to be awarded and the precise material from which they should be made. Cliff arrived late, and took a seat across the aisle from me. We grinned nervously at each other while our boosters roamed the convention, rounding up voters.

Jack announced the opening of the bidding session, and Jeff Harris stood up to speak for Adelaide. I spoke for Seattle. Many people asked questions, most of them aimed at our bid. Robin Johnson helpfully began to read off airfares from a travel guide. This was getting serious. Adelaide wasn't sure when it would hold the con or at what hotel. Seattle was suggesting that it would combine the NatCon with Norwescon, which would make us fairly certain the con's time and place were fixed.

This certitude, combined with the twisted sense of humor of the Australians (was it some-

thing Kenny Everett would have liked?), was too much to beat, and when Jack took the vote (by a show of hands), the count was Seattle: 21, Adelaide: 18. (I heard several different counts later.) Several of those votes came from people who never even knew what they were voting about; they'd been maneuvered into the room at the crucial moment by Terry Frost and Michelle Muysert.

I motioned to Cliff and Jeff Harris (Jeff's partner, Gary Mason disappeared and I never met him). We formed a huddle in the corner, and decided that Adelaide should go ahead with its convention plans. It would hold the business session and award the Ditmars. Seattle would have some programming and "all the good parties." I announced this plan, using a complex series of hand gestures to mirror the complex dealings; there was a great deal of laughter.

The room emptied as reporters rushed to phones, each to report a different version of events to newszines around the world. I stayed behind to do something I'd never done before: enter a trivia contest. It was run differently from contests at US conventions. Instead of teams, they had four qualifying sessions, using written quizzes. Each session covered a different category: science fiction, fantasy, fandom, and media. The winner of each would then compete publicly against the others. I managed to edge out Marc Ortlieb and Roger Weddall in the fannish category.

Feeling elated, I walk out to the patio, looking for lunch company. I found Glen Crawford, attending his first convention. Glen was in his thirties, prematurely gray, manager of a large retail store, married with kids. Fandom was a liberating place for him: people here didn't think he was daft for reading sf and trying to become a writer.

We added Michelle and Terry, unrepentant, and John Newman (Aussie fandom's ambassador to New Zealand) to our company, squeezed into Glen's little car, and tooled off to the shopping center, where we went into the same takeaway I'd visited with Andrew and Carey. While we waited for our burgers, Helen Swift, Cath Circosta and Leanne Frahm came in; I joined in the general gestures of welcome by dropping a can of soda nearly on Leanne's foot. (Instead of Coke or Pepsi, I usually got mineral water with fruit juice added--something I didn't see in the US until 1987.)

We got our food and returned to the car, but before we got in we noticed that a hardware store was having a clearance sale on fireworks. "Leanne's kids have never seen fireworks," said Terry. "They're banned in Queensland." So we dodged in and bought three big sacks of assorted boomers, bangers, color splashers, etc. (I can never remember all the proper names.) We rushed back to the takeaway and handed one bag to Leanne, who had tears in her eyes at the thought of our generosity. I kept one bag for possible future use. The third went unrecorded.

Back at the Shore Inn's patio we munched our burgers and chips, and ruminated on the need to recruit new fans or absorb media fans into the sacred body of fandom. Michelle, Terry and I took our end of the conversation down a half-flight of stairs to the pool, full of water even in winter (though the winter weather the Aussies complained of so bitterly ran temperatures from 50° to 65° in daytime). We took off our shoes and dangled our feet in the chilly water, which was fun for about a half-minute. I decided my feet were more important than maintaining an air of giddy devil-may-care, so I dried them, put them back into socks and shoes, and rose on them in search of sercon.

Chapter 10

I found it at a panel discussion of criticism and science fiction, an old topic, but one of my favorites. Jack Herman, Van Ikin, Terry Dowling, and Carey Handfield were the participants, and Jack got things off to a good start by saying that he didn't see any difference between a reviewer and a critic. Terry said that sf criticism in Australia was too inbred: all the critics were either friends of the writers or writers themselves. He also felt there was too much sf with Australian settings, which were being used inappropriately when other settings might be better. (He allowed that using Ayers Rock or Hanging Rock were legitimate, if overdone, attempts to mythologize the Australian landscape.)

I was bursting with comments and reactions and disagreements, but so were most of the audience. I never got a chance to talk. I had especially cogent things to say to Terry, who disappeared promptly at the end of the hour. Somehow I was sure I'd never see him again.

Jack didn't disappear; instead he walked up to me and solved one of my problems: he'd found me a place to stay, with Shayne McCormack. I made a mental note to find her and stick close, since she lived in a distant suburb, Basshill. If I lost her at the con, I'd have to stay the night at the Shore Inn.

"Before you run off looking for her," Jack said, "you have to compete in the Trivia Contest finals." The four winners had to sit in front of an audience and attempt to answer a new set of questions, three from each category of the qualifying rounds. In order to exhibit our ignorance and bad handwriting, we had to write our answers on large pads of paper. The grand winner, with six correct answers, was the media semi-finalist. The rest of us had four right each. I was a bit red-faced, since I didn't even get all three fannish questions right.

I was now free to find Shayne. I checked the huckster room first, where I found a subdued and possibly hung-over Andrew Brown, who joked weakly about our impending wedding, and suggested I check the next room for Shayne.

She was there, surrounded by boxes of fanzines and three fanzine fans. The boxes held stacks of fanzines bundled into batches of ten or so, and Marc, Leigh and Perry were about to play fanzine poker with them. "Deal me in," I said.

Fanzine poker was like any other sort of poker, with one difference. Instead of betting with money, chips, or Oreos, the players used fanzines. They simply had to agree on the values of the fanzines. Was one Rataplan worth three issues of Crux? Were two fattish copies of Enigma equal to one thin Philosophical Gas? The fun was in trying to make such critical guesses while keeping a poker face. The horror was in winning vast numbers of awful fanzines, and realizing that the other players might be deliberately losing. Once I asked Marc if he would trade one zine in his pile for anything in mine. No, he said, but he would give me what I wanted if I would take all the rest. (Shayne and Syncon, as the bank, were the real winners, since the players gave them a buck for each bundle of zines.)

In the end we each got a few zines we wanted, and Kevin Dillon got the rest. I tried to explain fandom to a radio interviewer from a college station who'd wandered into the room. I felt I wasn't getting through; he couldn't understand my reasons for traveling thousands of miles to this convention to play poker or even to be there.

I experienced the next hour or two through a haze of hunger and fatigue. At some point, I dimly recalled, Andrew stood up to greet Harlan, who leapt back, saying, "They've unfurled a tree at me!" I remember asking Harlan about his travel plans. He started to tell me

about renting a Land Rover and driving to Melbourne and Adelaide, when the radio interviewer showed up again. He had a few questions for Harlan, like, "Don't you feel you're wasting your time doing readings when you could be autographing books?"

I left, fast, found Shayne in the bar, and brought my luggage from storage to her little car. She helped me load it, and we returned to the lobby. I put my resolve into action: no matter what, I wasn't going to leave Shayne's vicinity. When Harlan appeared and began to discuss dinner plans with her, I didn't politely move away. Harlan turned to me and barked, "What are you doing?"

"Starving," I said.

"Okay, well...I guess we can squeeze in one more," he said, and my dinner was arranged. But Art Widner came over and asked to join, too. It was a scenario from Fannish Ethics 101 and I was about to make the ethically wrong choice. I'd been talking to Art earlier about forming a group; I should have tried to convince Harlan to include Art, too, or I should have deserted Harlan (and Shayne) for Art. Instead I kept my mouth shut while Harlan explained that we couldn't stretch our reservations further (notice how those reservations insidiously became "ours"). I plead hunger and the desire for security. It's a small moment, and not one of my favorites.

Harlan and I rode with Shayne; a second car held Terry Dowling, Van Ikin, Kerrie Hanlon (an artist who'd been nominated for the Ditmar), and Sarah Woods, who maintained a meaningful and Madonna-like silent smile through the evening.

The restaurant was French Provincial, with whitewashed walls and beams, lots of plants, and waitresses in peasant blouses. Unfortunately, it also had a sound system playing an obnoxious Top 40 radio station. One of the speakers was directly over our table. Harlan stopped the first waitress to pass by, and asked her to have the music turned off, or at least down. She refused, and rudely. The group was stunned.

Shayne, however saved the moment. She stopped a different waitress, who pleasantly informed us that she was about to put a tape on. Furthermore, she was our waitress; could she get us anything? We settled down, and a moment later the panpipe music of Georghie Zamphir filled the restuarant.

"That music!" Harlan said. "Isn't that like the music in Picnic at Hanging Rock?" Yes, someone said, it's the same composer and performer on the same instrument. The waitress brought the cassette box so Harlan could copy the name and catalog number. "I'm going to run out tomorrow and buy all the tapes by this guy I can find."

We passed dinner with mild chitchat about Harlan's travel plans (Terry, Kerrie, and Sarah were going with him), the convention, and so forth. (I wasn't sitting next to Terry, so I didn't bring up the criticism panel.) At one point Harlan began describing the fans of different writers.

"An overweight young woman with glasses and a cape: Anne McCaffrey. A teenage boy with no chest and pimples: Robert E. Howard. A weird little guy with shifty eyes who edges around rooms next to the wall: guess. Go ahead and guess."

"I guessed: "Barry Malzberg? Jerry Pournelle?"

"No, me. That's my fans."

"How about me, Harlan? Look at me and tell me who I'm a fan of."

"Joanna Russ," he said after a moment's thought. Well, I thought, he's certainly got the stereotypes down pat.

Back at the Shore, Shayne unloaded Harlan and picked up two friends of hers who were also going to stay the night with her. (Shayne's family were off on holiday somewhere, leaving lots of room at their house.)

The friends were Mary G.T. Webster and Narrelle Harris, both very active in media fandom, both new to "mainstream" sf fandom. (It was Narrelle's first convention.) They were electrified by the con, and everyone spent the drive mulling the wonders of Harlan.

When we got to Shayne's, she assigned us rooms and made us all tea. The house was a small bungalow with the toilet in an outhouse ten feet from the back door, an arrangement I later found out was typical.

We settled into the living room, turned the heater up full, and watched bits of videotapes of British tv shows. I was introduced to Blake's 7 (grim space opera) and The Professionals (Starsky and Hutch with Brit accents). I drowsed through the latter, but woke up enough to talk with Mary and Narrelle about the media-fan practice of writing new stories around established media characters. Mary felt that it was a good exercise in discipline to accept certain givens from the shows and keep the new stories consistent with them. Narrelle, inspired by Harlan, was now dissatisfied with using someone else's characters, and was determined to create her own. After that we all went to our beds and to sleep.

Chapter 11

Tuesday morning was cold and overcast, I noticed as I walked out to the toilet. Back in the house, I helped make tea and Shayne showed old photographs of Australian conventions, parties, and fans, including one of John Bangsund without a beard. Soon after, we left the house, heading for the train and downtown Sydney.

The plan was to leave Shayne at work (Galaxy Books) and see a bit of Sydney. Then Mary would leave for home, and Narrelle and I would meet Carey Handfield and Lee Smoire at Circular Quay for the harbor tour. At Galaxy we stood around listening to people discuss the NatCon, and I politely conversed with people I didn't remember. Robin Johnson made a surprise appearance and led us to Angus & Robertson, major Aussie bookstore chain (and publisher). Set in a district of bright plastic-and-neon signs and chic shopping arcades, A&R was a large store resembling a B. Dalton's. The major reason for visiting it was to see Keith Curtis, a longtime employee (was he a manager? I can't recall).

I asked Keith, Mary, and Narrelle for book suggestions. Keith recommended David Ireland (surrealist) and Peter Corliss (hard-boiled detective). The women suggested Colin Thiele (juvenile). I bought them all, and Narrelle and I said goodbye to Mary and Keith.

We were only a few blocks from the Quay, so we quick-marched over the train tracks straight to a snack-bar. We ate standing in the thin sunlight that finally broke through the clouds, leaning against a stone railing overlooking the bay. Carey and Lee appeared, I made introductions, and Lee disappeared to find the tour's ticket office.

She reappeared in a moment to tell us the ticket prices, very pleased with herself: with her travel agent connections, she'd gotten us substantial discounts. We paid, walked down the pier, and boarded the City of Sydney. I found a shady table on the rear deck from which we could see quite well, though Narrelle and I kept bounding up to the rail to get a better view of some special house or rock formation. I grimaced at the blonde-pony-tailed tour guide from time to time, but she never noticed; she was too busy going through her spiel and making sure her implanted smile wasn't coming loose.

Sydney Harbor is a twisty thing, with lots of islands, rocks, channels, and reefs (including the Sow and Pigs). It's lined with parks, ship docks, extremely expensive homes (up to $6,000,000) and Sights of Note. I especially liked the striated cliffs that form the Gap, the entrance to the harbor; Luna Park with its huge clown-headed gate; the Opera House; Mrs. McQuarrie's Chair (where the wife of the first governor used to sit mid-way through her morning constituional); the imitation Venetian palazzos where the rich folk live; and Seal's Point, a rock formation with a marked resemblance to a seal. I also liked the hydrofoil that skimmed past the tour boat, and was disappointed that I never got to ride it.

The tour guide was primed with many tidbits, including the fact that the Sydney Opera House was paid for by state lotteries in five years, while the bridge that crossed over our heads had not been paid for after 50 years. I wondered why New South Wales hadn't simply run more lotteries.

When we docked, Narrelle realized that she'd have to retrieve her luggage from Galaxy Books and catch the train back to Canberra, so we all went off to the store. On our way, Lee and Carey invited me to join them and a friend for dinner. I accepted, and while Narrelle collected her things, I told Shayne of my plans, and took a photo of her behind the counter looking like some well-satisfied noble overlooking her small fiefdom.

After seeing Narrelle to the train station, we spent an hour in Carey's aunt and uncle's apartment. I never met them, but the apartment showed evidence of belonging to several active and interesting people: original art, interesting books, tasteful artifacts. Carey comes from an interesting family. His parents own restaurants and an art gallery; his sibs include researchers, writers, photographers.

When dinnertime arrived, and we felt rested and refreshed, we drove off to Sheridan's flat. A charming woman in her twenties, hair fashinably short, Sheridan was the friend Carey had mentioned. She lived in a neighborhood that reminded me of Soho in New York: warehouses, small businesses, lots of brick, lots of chic-artistic shops. Sheridan's flat was brick inside as well as out, littered with art books, novels, and gallery posters. We were going to pick up another last-minute addition to the group, so we took Sheridan's car, me riding shotgun, with Lee and Carey following.

Sheridan and I had a delightful conversation. First we talked about the fifth diner: Terry Dowling! Sheridan was a good friend of his, and had called him earlier. Then I explained DUFF as best I could, and Sheridan told me about her job as editor at Penguin Books (not, she quickly pointed out, in science fiction). Then we discussed the architecture we passed, with me comparing them to Seattle's so-so buildings. Then we arrived at Terry's parents' house, and, moments later, at the restaurant, a Greek one this time.

My god, I thought, this was my chance at last to tell Terry all the things I'd wanted to say at the criticism panel. For once "the spirit of the backstairs" had knocked at the front door and begged permission to enter. So I systematically made all my points (for instance, that sf reviewing in the US was just as incestuous as in Australia), refreshing my throat with frequent sips of Roditis. Terry asked me, at one point, why I wasn't

writing, and I couldn't come up with an answer. Maybe I couldn't? I resolved that I would try--as soon as I published my DUFF report.

The name "Harlan Ellison" came into the conversation so frequently that Sheridan asked, "Why is Harlan Ellison the sixth person at this table?" We tried to explain, and Terry described his relationship with Harlan throughout the weekend, "I felt like the period on his sentence." I didn't think she really understood; after all, she had never met Harlan.

I ordered a chocolate mousse that turned out to be soaked with rum, and as my brain softened, I listened to Carey describe how friends of his had dramatized three stories from Dreamworks (a short story collection that Carey's Norstrilia Press had published) in a planetarium. The friends were experienced in stagecraft, and were able to blend mime, costuming, staging, and the special lighting effects possible ina planetarium to suggest the surreality of the Dreamworks stories very effectively.

By the end of dinner I was silly, Terry was loud, and everyone else was ready to go home. Carey and Lee solicitously drove back to Basshill, and on the way I conceived the notion of presenting the dramatic versions of the Dreamworks stories at Norwescon, with Carey providing the scripts and copies of the book for me to sell, playing on the resulting publicity. (It turned out that the dramatization depended on thecostumes and effects too much for me to reproduce.)

Chapter 12

I spent Wednesday morning waiting. Lee and Carey were to pick me up about noon for our next bit of tourism and a lightning drive to Canberra. So I washed dishes, read, and watched Yojimbo on Shayne's VCR. I also made notes on a story idea, sparked by Terry's question of the night before, and by the idea of mythologizing the Australian terrain. I imagined an Australian painter obsessed with the New York School (Abstract Impressionists like de Kooning, Pollack, Kline) who decides to do an enormous Action Painting using the Central Australian desert as his canvas. I tried to work out the mechanics of plot, motive, and means, using a little Christo here, a little Vito Acconci there.

Lee and Carey appeared at 12:30. They packed me and my bags into the car and drove off to Featherstone Wildlife Preserve, stopping only a few yards from the entrance for a take-away lunch. Then we drove into the Preserve's carpark, and walked into the concrete block building that served as office and gift shop. Lee asked the gray-haired woman behind the counter about travel agent discounts and dropped the name of a mutual acquaintance; sure enough, we got a reduced entry rate. We felt like sophisticated travellers, but immediately gave ourselves away by wandering through the Preserve making loud happy noises and pointing at the wombats, golden eagles, hairy chickens, monitor lizards, etc., in their pits, cages, and chicken-wired enclosures. I was particularly impressed by the kookaburras laughing like maniacs in the trees. I also liked the joey I held in the kangaroo enclosure; it kicked me with powerful feet that ended in long toes and black nails. (The other kangaroos just lay in whatever shade they could find, and ignored me.)

In the children's zoo I watched a woman with a baby stroller trying to avoid the young goats, sheep, and deer that followed her relentlessly. They seemed to think she had food in the stroller or in her pockets. Or, I thought, they think her stroller or pockets are food.

Lee announced that it was feeding time for the koalas, which meant it was fondling time, too. "All I have to do is mention this guy I met," Lee explained, "and we can get into the compound." It was apparently very important to get to hold a koala. Lee's eagerness implied that holding a koala would make the trip real as nothing else could.

The keeper let us in with no fuss; he also let in a young Japanese couple who shyly admitted that they were on their honeymoon. The koalas were perched in tiny trees or on top of a wooden sign explaining their habits, but most of them climbed down to reach for the leafy branches the keeper waved at them. The Japanese woman tried to grab one of the little animals, but it scooted out of her reach, running on all fours with an ungainly yet somehow graceful roll.

"No," said the keeper, "don't try to pick them up. Only Beanie and Dottie are used to it." To illustrate, he produced a teddy bear in one hand and plucked a koala from a tree with the other. He pressed the teddy against the koala's side, and the koala against my side. It clutched me firmly, warm, surprisingly dense, as I curled my right arm around its back and under its hind paws.

I looked at the koala. It looked at the teddy. The honeymooners looked at me and the koala. Lee looked at her light meter. Carey and the keeper looked at each other. The next few minutes saw a frenzy of clicking shutters and passing of koalas from thrill-seeker to thrill-seeker. Finally we had all had our pictures taken with Dottie or Beanie or another tourist, and it was time to put down the little living toys with the square bottoms and coarse fur, and turn to the serious business of examining the stuffed koalas in the souvenir shop.

From there our next step was to head for the highway and the drive to Canberra. The gentle green slopes were decorated with randomly sprouting trees, short with wide, spreading boughs; the green was frequently covered with vast numbers of white sheep. To my inexperienced eyes there seemed to be only two types: woolly and sheared. One field held about two hundred of them, dressed in red jumpers; I presumed these were the sheared variety. (It was winter, after all.) The sheep landscape was relieved only by some cows and horses, though one stretch of road had white cockatoos in the trees, and another featured a few placid emus just the other side of the fence.

We had only one moment of excitement, in which we were caught in a speed trap and Carey was fined $100. Otherwise we passed the hours looking at the sky as the stars popped out, and elaborating our plans for stories and touring.

Once in Canberra we found Leigh Edmonds' and Valma Brown's house quickly. Leigh, tall, long-haired and mild-looking, was alone; Valma had to attend a Drama Department curriculum meeting. He gave us a quick tour of the house: I loved the blond wood kitchen, the old prints, the surreal science fiction paintings (including one by Rick Sternbach). Then we were off to a Chinese restaurant nosh.

We joined Kevin Colbert (Lee and Carey's host for the night), Perry Middlemiss (Helen Swift wasn't along, and Perry explained the meaning of "crook": "sick"), and Art Widner. Dinner talk explored the derivations of names. I found out that Leigh's given first name is one beginning with "A" but that his tee-totalling parents stopped calling him by it when they realized his initials spelled "ALE."

After dinner Leigh and I walked back to his house through the crisp night air. I filled Leigh in on Seattle fan gossip, the whereabouts of the Nielsen Haydens and so forth. When we reached the house, Leigh gave me another, slower tour. This time he explained which bits of the kitchen he and Valma had made themselves. He showed off his music collection,

his model-building magazines, his carefully filed fanzine collection. (They were all in folders, with the names of editor or club on the spine, all easily accessible.) He also showed me the sheet music for his own compositions.

Valma arrived, very late, from her meeting. Next to Leigh she looked quite small. We stayed up another hour talking, then unfolded the day bed in the living room, right next to the heater, and I folded myself into sleep.

Chapter 13

I was awake by 5:30, too excited to sleep longer; I made a few notes on my travels, and read a few more chapters of The Executioner's Song. I saw Leigh and Valma off to work, and brightly greeted Lee and Carey when they appeared for a day of sightseeing.

We drove past embassies and government buildings on our way to pick up Art Widner. Canberra is much like Washington. One is in the District of Columbia, the other in the Australian Capital Territory. The locations of both are the result of compromise between rival sections of the countries. The major business of each is government. I wondered if Canberra has major slums like Washington's, but I never found out.

Our path followed a great loop away from the city, so I saw hardly any of it. Instead, we saw the rural delights of the A.C.T., which involved a lot of science fictional attractions like Mt. Stromlo and its observatory.

Most sf fans have a love affair with astronomy at some time in their lives. Mine was over in my teens; Art was still carrying a torch for the stars. His excitement was catching, though, and we all felt a touch of it as we watched the main dome moving into a new position for the night's observations. Then we went inside to watch the 74-inch telescope moving to match the dome. Through thick glass I could see astronomers in white coats, made tiny by distance, taking notes and conferring beneath the all-white telescope and its massive counterweights.

We emerged into the harsh, thin sunlight, blinking at the rocky hillsides and thorny trees. We passed the smaller domes scattered over the site and found an office building with restrooms, bulletin boards, and a display of a few postcards for sale. Art grabbed a few nebulae. It was one way to have stars.

After we left Stromlo the sun grew stronger and the trees greener. We drove through huge sheep ranches scattered with large, irregular lumps of rock and stands of pine. In another hour we reached the next stopping point, Tinbinbilla Tracking Station. I began to love the names.

The station existed mainly to track NASA satellites, and the small museum there was full of the glories of American know-how. I got the idea that not only the satellites but also the planets were American to the people who built the place. But the displays were tacky and threadbare, no advertisement for American imagination. Outside again, we dutifully looked at the large radio telescope across a field, then drove off.

We meant to have lunch at Cuppacumbelong and look at the pottery shop there, but Lee demanded Devonshire Tea. Cuppacumbelong didn't have it, so we went a few miles and stopped at another place, one with so dull a name that I never wrote it down. The place itself wasn't dull: it was an old station house kept in beautiful condition, with the outbuildings

converted to tea shop, gift shop, etc. We stepped onto the covered porch and peered in the windows but didn't stay around for the afternoon tour. Instead, we went around back to the stoop-shouldered, white-washed tea shop, where I had my first Devonshire Tea: tea or coffee, hot crumbly scones, thick sweet cream and rich strawberry jam. I also wolfed a paté sandwich.

We spent a few minutes in the gift shop, of course, and a fewmore minutes walking through the denuded garden, gazing at a huge tree that the gardener told us was a cousin of Seattle's monkey puzzle tree. It had the same bundles of hard, flat needle-like leaves forming long, curving cylinders, but it was much, much taller.

From there we returned to Canberra to get Art's luggage for his flight to Melbourne. On the way I made a list of things to mention in my DUFF report. I thought I could work most of them into the narrative quite naturally, but how was I going to mention casually how odd I found the pushbutton toilets? Maybe I could do it when I talked about the outhouses?

We got the bags, Art checked his schedule, and Lee decided we'd have enough time to take a side-trip up Black Mountain to the Telecom Tower before Art's flight. To get there we had to drive across the lake that divides Canberra, past Captain Cook's Fountain, an odd memorial to the man who "discovered" Australia. It was a jet of water shooting 100 feet into the air, spurting out of the lake right next to the causeway.

Telecom Tower was a communications tower, used for broadcasting, and open to tourists. I didn't notice if the top, shaped something like a baby's rattle, had a rotating restaurant, but I wouldn't be surprised if it did. We went up, strolled around the observation deck. We looked down on the lake and fountain, pointed out the huge barren area being readied for a new government complex, and came down again.

We zipped Art to the Tourist Bureau, where he caught a bus to the airport. The ensmalled group pushed on to the National Gallery. I was beginning to feel symptoms of an oncoming cold, and was getting tired. But I pushed all that aside. For me, the Gallery was the most important stop of the day, and I didn't mean to let it get by.

The first thing I learned was that in Australia an institution that displays art is a "gallery," while a "museum" displays scientific, historical or other "non-art" objects. I kept confusing Aussies when I asked about art museums.

Armed with the right terms, I was ready for anything, even the large concrete building housing the Gallery, with its surprising angles, long ramps, and waffle ceilings. I struck out for the international collection first, leaving Carey and Lee to look at Chinese pottery. Among the things I found were a frighteningly intense Francis Bacon triptich, Jackson Pollack's Blues Poles (reproductions do not do it justice: the poles are pure blue, while prints show them as nearly black), and Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly series. (Why the Nolans were in the international and not the Australian collection I'm not sure; it may have been that this was the only place these large paintings could get an entire wall to themselves.)

After the barchat about Ned Kelly at Syncon, I wanted to know more about him and the Aussie fascination with him, so I studied Nolan's paintings for clues. They are big, crude works, with boxy figures and lots of energy. Ned is a great square head on a stick-like body in most of them, usually larger than the other figures (generally police) that share the canvas. He dominates the courtroom scene, for instance, looming larger than judge, jury, and accusers put together. The other major "character" of the paintings is the great flat empty Australian countryside, more suggestive of the wild outback than the domesticated Victorian hills. Nolan presents Ned as an iconic figure out of a child's view of the Australian past. This seems appropriate for a country that makes the US seem old.

Next I searched for the aboriginal collection, which I found huddling in a single cabinet. It didn't seem like much but maybe, I thought, the National defines such things as artifacts, not art. After that I found the Australian galleries (by which the National obviously meant European descendants), but I started at the modern end and burnt out before I got to the roots of the nineteenth century. I was most impressed by Albert Tucker and other painters of the 1940s. They painted a dark depressing Australia, hardly the "she'll be right" attitude Aussies are supposed to have. Tucker, for instance, painted monstrous men and women with bloated bodies and skinny heads, the faces cut in half by mouths like red boomerangs, evilly posed against dark backgrounds.

After we finished at the Gallery, Lee and Carey dropped me off at Leigh and Valma's. My throat was pretty sore by now, and I was losing my voice, so I called Narrelle Harris and begged off my planned visit, then quietly read the newest issue of Ansible (discovering months before the Worldcon vote that Ted White would be Fan Guest of Honor at Aussiecon II). When the happy homeowners arrived from work, I found out that Leigh was Ansible's Australian agent, so I offered to deliver the Melbourne and Perth copies. Not surprisingly, there were no Alice Springs copies.

Dinner consisted of meat pie and gravy, mashed potatoes, peas, and soothing things for my throat. The topics of conversation were Susan Wood (much missed), Australian fandom, the identity of the fan Leigh and Valma stayed with in San Francisco, and possible DUFF candidates. They also showed me photos, and I was amused to find not only shots of the same events that Shayne had showed me, but even a few of the same photos. We all turned in at midnight.

Chapter 14

Lee and Carey showed up bright and early Friday morning for the long haul to Melbourne. We spent hours rolling through more rolling countryside, with only the occasional flock of sheep or tourist attraction to break the monotony. Carey put on the radio (2CC in Canberra with the top 100 hits of Australia; station ids are all a digit followed by several letters), and when we lost stations between towns, he'd play tapes. Most notable was one by Redgum, a satirical folk group. Their big hit (in Australia, at least) was "I Was Only Nineteen," about an Aussie Viet vet affected by Agent Orange. The tape included several witty songs and monologs of extremely topical material, and lots of references to "this great big beautiful brown country of ours."

One of the tourist attractions we stopped at was a little statue of a dog sitting on a tucker box. This wonder, near the little town of Gundagai, commemorated a dog that faithfully waited for its master to come home, unaware that master was dead. The dog refused to eat until master came back, and so starved itself. Lee spoke of this statue the way a faithful Moslem would speak of the Ka'aba. When we arrived, she forced Carey and me to stand before it while she took our picture. We raised our eyebrows at one another in resignation. (Lee admitted disappointment; she'd remembered the statue as being monumental, not pint-sized.)

We also stopped at Glenrowan, the scene of Ned Kelly's last stand against the police. It featured giant plaster statues of Kelly and a policeman aiming guns at each other over the top of a general store. I took a few pictures and bought a biography of Ned, but didn't have time to figure out which ditch had hidden the police during their attack, or which door of the inn they nailed Ned's accomplices to.

We arrived in Melbourne about 5:30 and first tried to find Bruce Gillespie at home. He wasn't in, so we went on to Irwin Hirsh's house in South Yarra. I retained an impression of lots of narrow streets with row houses (brick walls, flat roofs, a few trees) in Bruce's older neighborhood. Irwin's was newer, neater, with more space between homes.

Irwin and his mother were both in, and they welcomed us, offered us tea, and gave us a quick tour of the house. It was one of the more amazing moments of my trip.

The house was somewhat hidden from the street. One entered the yard through a green gate, and found the house still hidden by luxuriant trees and deep shadows. Through the massive front door and into a large entryway, one faced an extensive collection of modern Australian art that grew in size and depth from room to room. Every wall was covered with canvases and prints, from gigantic color field paintings to small etchings, not to mention the painting that included a giant pair of lips clutching a cigar that thrust two feet into the room.

The furniture was either exuberant pop art or beautiful antique. The kitchen was all marble and stained glass. The dining table sat twenty people. The spiral staircase to the basement was surmounted by an Art Nouveau statue of a nude woman. I was impressed all to hell.

While we were looking at all this glory, I took stock of my hosts. Irwin hadn't been at Syncon, but I knew him from his visit to Seattle years before. Irwin was young, dark, intelligent, and supremely fannish. He published Sikander, the zine that was to carry Ted White's analysis of Aussie fan publishing. He was also a film and New Wave (I presumed that this included sf and rock) fan. Irwin's mother, Etta, was also dark and intelligent, young (in her forties, I guessed), gracious, and cultured.

After the tour, Etta brought out tea, which was chicken and bagels, with a little wine and tea. After we ate, Carey and Lee said their goodbyes, while I tried to figure out what was going on that evening.

Andrew Brown, Melbourne resident, had suggested we see a band that evening, one of his favorites, who were going to play at a hotel. Now Irwin revealed that, not only were the band not playing, but the hotel had been closed for a month. (I never did see an Australian band.) He had heard that a number of fans were gathering at a Turkish restaurant, and we decided to meet them for dessert. We only needed to pick up Wendy, Irwin's girlfriend, so we hopped into Irwin's Porsche, a slightly elderly but still spritely vehicle.

We got Wendy and found the restaurant with no trouble. Inside, the fans were sitting at a long table: Andrew, Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochrane, John Foyster and Jennie Bryce, John Bangsund, Damien Broderick, Art Widner, and Greg Hills. I bounced around saying hello, I've always wanted to meet you, and stopped by Damien to tell him that a joke he'd made in The Judas Mandala about "Rabbi Zimmerman" (a reference to Bob Dylan) was in danger of coming true. I also asked Bruce about the high cost ($40) of his reprint of the first year of SFCommentary. (It was the typesetting: he wanted to save time and paper. Mimeo costs so much in Australia that a mimeoed edition would have cost as much to do, and more to mail.)

We latecomers had already missed dessert, so we tagged along as the group left for John Bangsund's house, losing only a few diners along the way. The house was a pleasant bungalow agreeably stuffed with books and records. There were also a few bottles of wine about. I told John about the winning of the NatCon, and Greg told everyone about the layout faults of Rataplan. Everyone else repeated what they'd said at Syncon in defense of Leigh. The results were the same: no minds changed.

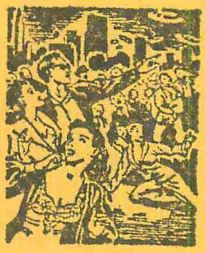
Sally Yeoland, John's wife, came home from wherever she'd been (working late, I think) and rescued the party from repeating fanzine polemics. She was introduced to all the New Zea-

land and American strangers in her living room; I seized the moment to suggest that I come back for a visit. I especially wanted to visit the garage with its boxes of old Bangsund fanzines, I said. John and Sally agreed, but warned me that there were obstacles to a search. This was when I learned that in Australia black widow spiders are called redbacks.

Irwin wanted to make an early start on Saturday, and John and Sally were looking tired. Everyone said their goodbyes, and drove off; I shared a back seat with Andrew, whom we were seeing home. He was renting a room from another fan, Terry Stroud, who lived in a hundred-year-old Victorian monster, with fifteen-foot ceilings and plaster relief sculptures holding light fixtures in the halls. Andrew's room was full of books, records, synthesizers, and scarves. I croaked my appreciation and realized that my voice was nearly gone. I wondered if anyone had been able to understand me all day. The common cold had taken over.

Wendy and Irwin bundled me back into the car, and Wendy snuggled close to keep me warm. (I secretly admired the way she pronounced my name "Jirry.") Once we were back at Irwin's, he showed me to my room. It was usually Irwin's sister's, but she was away at school. Long and narrow, it was filled with the paraphernalia of girlhood, and decorated with more Australian art, giving it a surreal air. The bed was in a loft about eight feet high, which I reached by climbing an antique and slightly shaky stair-closet (yes, both staircase and closet). I sank gratefully into bed, covered by a thick warm feather comforter. Then I sank more gratefully into sleep.

Chapter 15



I woke at 8:00 am as usual, and found Irwin already up, puttering in the kitchen. We sat at the gray stone table eating toast with Vegemite and marmelade, and drinking orange juice laced with powdered protein. Irwin talked about some of his film-making projects. "My next one's going to be about the footy. Australian Rules Football. Say, how would you like to go to a game? I've got season tickets, and there's a game on today."

I'm no sports fan, but I had decided before the trip that I should see a game. I thought I ought to do what Aussies like to do, so I would learn more about them. Somehow football seemed more typically Australian than sf conventions. So I said yes.

We decided to spend the morning at book and record stores; Irwin called Andrew to invite him along to the stores, then some family friends to join us at the game. Then we hopped into the car (I was beginning to remember which side was which) and picked up Andrew.

The best of the stores we invaded were Murder Ink and Exposure Records. Murder Ink dealt entirely in mystery and crime fiction, as you'll have guessed. The owner was friendly and very willing to talk about his favorite subject. We traded names of favorite writers and local sf fans who were also mystery fans. I bought lots of Arthur Upton books, used, for a bookstore in Seattle, and some Peter Corliss books for myself. (Keith Curtis had recommended him back in Sydney.)

Exposure Records had a heavy emphasis on punk/New Wave groups. Andrew and Irwin made suggestions and cryptic comments while I bought singles by Australian groups (Pell Mell, Birthday Party, Go-Betweens). I talked to the owner, and we exchanged addresses, along with mutual vague promises of record exchanges.

We returned to Irwin's for lunch, and Mark and Ruth showed up to join us. Mark was a pleasant man in his fifties, Ruth his daughter: they were the family friends joining us for the game. Everyone explained the Rules: the teams playing were Carlton and Footscray. I had to cheer for Carlton, since Irwin, Mark, and Ruth belonged to the Carlton Social Club. I was surprised to find that the teams weren't owned by notorious millionaire playboys, as they were in the States, but by clubs composed of fans. In essense, the fans owned the teams; when they spoke of "their team," they meant it. (The game was so popular that there were about twenty teams in the Melbourne area.)

We said goodbye to Andrew, and continued to review the game during the drive to the stadium. Each team would defend a goal, and try to put a ball through the other team's goalposts. The players would have to kick the ball through the larger inner set of posts for six points. If the ball bounced off the posts, or passed between the inner and outer sets of posts, the team would score one point.

The ball could be kicked, punched, or carried around the field, though if a player carried it, he would have to bounce it every ten meters. If a player caught the ball after a kick (called "marking" the ball), he would get an uncontested kick. There were more rules and more terms, but I quickly lost track of them.

Before Irwin could give biographies of all the players, we arrived at the field and parked a quarter mile from the entrance. Once inside, through stone galleries and turnstiles, I began studying the field, the crowd, and the game. The field was oval, and the players ran pretty far to the sides, chasing the ball. It looked like an American football without the pointed ends. The audience was familiar with all the plays and players, of course, and pretty vocal in its analysis. It particularly liked player #14, supposedly an unusually strong kicker, and went "Whooo" (a huge collective exhalation) everytime he got the ball.

I thought the place was pretty full, with lots of people standing shoulder to shoulder, but the others said no, this was only about 25,000; on a good day it would be 40,000. Carlton hadn't been doing too well lately and Footscray was slated to win. Lots of people stayed home.

They made a mistake, then. Carlton won with 150 points to Footscray's 100. (Scores in Aussie Rules look more like basketball than US football.) I had a great time pretending to be a sports photographer, and wished I had a telephoto lens to capture the more spectacular kicks, catches, and fights. In the end the happy Carlton fans swarmed onto the field, and our group fled the other way, back to the cars.

John Foyster was holding a grand party that evening for the many travellers in town (US, New Zealand, Sydney, Adelaide), so Irwin, Wendy and I went out to dinner beforehand. We chewed on breadsticks in a nice, unexciting Italian restaurant while Wendy explained how she and Irwin had met at a Jewish Youth Conference in Adelaide. I explained the Down Under Fan Fund as I shlurped my spaghetti. Irwin described St. Kilda to me as we sipped our wine. Interesting-sounding neighborhood: it had Jewish tea-and-cake shops, Luna Park, and John Foyster and Jenny Bryce's house.

The house, it turned out, was down a dark and mysterious garden path, which we had some trouble finding. We finally had to use an old trick: following other people. Once inside the rambling old structure, we found a reasonably roaring party. Michelle Muysert and Karin Janazic were passing through the crowd, leaving huge red lip prints on all the male faces. Lee Smoire went by, carrying a big tray into the kitchen; the tray was filled with the makings for Chinese dumplings. One room off the entrance hall was filled with smoke and older fans, from which John Bangsund or George Turner would sometimes emerge. I mentioned Luna Park to Greg Hills and he began to recruit celebrants while I wandered into the kitchen,

where three or four people were trying to put goodies together. Damien Broderick was there, looking like Pete Townsend and dressed in a huge woolly sweater.

"I noticed that you dedicated The Judas Mandala to Joanna Russ," I mentioned. "She didn't even know about it until I told her."

"Oh, yes?" Damien said. "How did she react to that? You know, she criticized a story of mine as sexist, so I thought I'd try to write a really strong, liberated female character."

We talked a few more minutes. Damien asked me to compare US and Australian societies: which, he wanted to know, was more sexist? I didn't feel I had much to judge by, since the only Aussies I'd met were fans. This might not mean much, but the women were lawyers, writers, teachers, government workers, editors, and bookstore owners, and they seemed either very independent, or else equal partners. Fortunately, Greg appeared, asked, "Well, are you coming to Luna Park?", and rescued me from offering a foolish judgement.

I followed Greg and about fifteen other people to the Luna Park entrance only a few blocks away. The gate was a huge clown's head, and visitors walked through turnstiles that stood like teeth in its mouth. Since it was winter, the park was fairly empty, even though it felt like an early spring evening in Seattle. The group decided to head for the Dodge'ems (I've always called them bumper cars), those little electrically-driven one-person cars with thick rubber bumpers. The group was so big that we took over every car for two turns.

Everyone drove in circles, laughing and banging cars. The real terror was Cliff Wind: normally mild and quiet, he became a grinning maniac, smashing head-on into every other car or simply halting his car broadside in the middle of traffic. He got a lot of shouted comments about American drivers, but so did I.

Out of breath, laughing, we left the Hall of Car Crashes and explored the midway. We found the usual ball tosses, shooting galleries, even Skeeball. The prize game, though, was Smash-a-Shark. Stuffed toys resembling sharks' heads would pop at random from a board full of holes. Two competitors armed with soft mallets bashed at the heads; scoring appeared on an electronic toteboard. I competed against Justin Ackroyd, both of us keening through gritted teeth as we smashed away, replacing the oxygen in our blood with adrenalin.

I talked Cath Circosta into riding through the Tunnel of Terror with me, while the others went on the roller coaster or back to the party. The Tunnel was a disappointment, however: the little train car would abruptly turn a corner or pop through swinging doors in the perfect dark, and a flash of light would illuminate a painting of a horror clearly copied from old Frank Frazetta paperback covers, and badly. After that, we went back to the party, too.

The rest of the evening was a blur of moments. Harlan and Terry and friends showed up, and Harlan made awful faces and rude remarks when he saw me eat a cracker with Vegemite. I made plans to join an expedition to Hanging Rock the next day, and to John and Sally's on Tuesday I gave John Foyster an Ansible, and left him performing mental gymnastics trying to figure out how Dave Langford had gotten the Secret of the Fan Guest of Honor.

Irwin and Wendy left well before I was ready, so I had to find my own way back. Russell and Jenny Blackford came to my rescue, driving well out of their way to get me to South Yarra. They hadn't been to Syncon, so I tried to give them some idea of the proceedings, and to correct their mistaken impressions of Harlan.

Chapter 16

Sunday morning, 10:30 sharp, Cath Circosta rang the doorbell. Art Widner and Greg Hills were in the car. I rode off with them to Justin's house to assemble the multitudes. Justin gave me a quick tour of his house and reintroduced me to the other people coming along: Phil Ware, Mandy Herriott, Jan McDonald, LynC. Phil and Jan promised to try to teach the Americans cricket (Cliff and Lee were also in the party), and I amused everyone by trying to pronounce words with a "proper" Aussie accent.

Cath's passenger list was juggled slightly, and Justin replaced Art. Then Cath announced that she had to drive to the Hotel Australia and act as native guide for the Ellison group. We parked across the street from the hotel (actually a hotel and not just a bar, this time) and sent Justin in.

"He'll be down soon," he reported back. "I'll just wait in the lobby with Kerrie and Sarah."

Fifteen fidgety minutes later, Terry Dowling appeared, crossed the street, and got into the Ellison Rental Vehicle. I walked back to it, got into the passenger side, and thought, "This is not a Land Rover."

"What's taking him so long?" I asked.

"He's drying his hair.," Terry explained.

When Harlan finally emerged from the hotel and walked to his car, he saw me and shock flickered across his face. I restored calm by returning to Cath's car, and we began the hour-long drive to Hanging Rock.

We were the last to arrive. Parking the cars, we joined the others, who were stoking up the electric barbeque grill and setting out the sausages, lamb chops, onions, chips, and buns for the picnic. Parks in Australia don't have open grills for fires, I learned. In that dry climate there was too much chance of conflagration. (At some point I saw the burned-out areas near Melbourne from the previous summers' brush fires.) Instead they had electric barbies. By feeding the thing with twenty-cent pieces for a while, one built up a roaring fire of sorts, or at least got a grill hot enough to cook on.

The food was delicious, if greasy. As we cooked and chewed, we watched Harlan and Terry (armed with Walkman and Zamphir tapes) disappear up the hill into the trees. The Rocks themselves were invisible from this angle, masked by the eucalyptus trees and low clouds. We finished our food, cleared away the mess, and started up ourselves. I walked with Greg, following Kerrie and Sarah, followed in turn by Lee and Cath. We stopped close to the Rocks to try to see a koala in a tree. I couldn't see it, though Greg and Lee tried to point it out to me. Immediately past the koala tree we came to steps built into the steep hillside by the Parks Department, making the climb into the Rocks quite simple. In moments we penetrated to the heart of the mystery.

We were in a quiet wonderland. Rocks piled up or thrust out of the ground in all directions over our heads. There were tunnels, chimneys, potholes. Some of the rocks were hollow, with little "doors" and "windows." Through gaps we could see farms and roads hundreds of feet below, silent and mist-shrouded.

The group spent an hour or two climbing over, under, and through the rocks. We kept stumbling over one another, or one would look up and see another's grinning face peering down from some impossible vantage point. (Though none of us ever came across Harlan; he seemed to have found the mysterious space he sought.) Greg Hills was the boldest, dangling his legs over a hundred-foot drop or climbing the finger of stone that appeared to be the park's highest point. He'd look at the toughest perpendicular walls and say, "I could get up that if I had the right shoes."

Although I liked the Rocks immensely, it didn't have the sense of mystery I'd expected. Without a soundtrack and a distorting lens, the Rocks were an entirely natural wonder. I decided that I didn't have the bump of spirituality that a good fantasist needed. To console myself, I walked down to the park concessions building at the foot of the hill and had a Devonshire Tea.

The others returned, too, and Phil and Jan decided it was time to teach the Americans cricket. This park, like every other in Australia, had a cricket pitch: a length of concrete about ten yards long and a yard wide. The bowler (the pitcher) stood at one end, the batter at the other. Behind the batter stood two short sticks in the ground, the wicket. The bowler would try to knock the wicket over with the ball, while the batter protected it. The batter therefore would hold the flat-faced bat as though it were a golf club (sort of), and knock away the ball. If, in the process, the ball should happen to go off into left field or somewhere, the batter could run to the bowler's position and back to the wicket, scoring points. If not, not; the bowler could keep knocking balls away from the wicket all day. There was more, much more, but I decided I didn't need to know anything else to understand what I was doing.

Jan and Phil showed the Yanks how to stand, how to hold the bat, and how to swing properly. I was pretty awful; Jan kept yelling, "Get that bat on the ground." Art was pretty good, Lee was okay, but Cliff seemed like a pro: very smooth and casual about the whole thing, he easily hit the ball again and again.

For the return trip I was once again with Cath, Art, and Greg. Instead of heading directly back to the city, we went to the airport to take Art to his flight to Adelaide. Deja vu! I said goodbye again, not expecting to see him until Westercon. Then we headed into Melbourne and the only traffic jam I found in Australia. It was 6:00 pm by the time we made South Yarra.

Irwin was out, but Andrew called and invited me over for dinner. The train directions seemed very complicated, so Andrew volunteered to come over and act as guide. While I waited, Etta described her day of gallery openings, Art Nouveau rummage sales, and movies.

Irwin came home at last, and Andrew rang the doorbell moments later. So Irwin drove us back to Andrew's but didn't stay. We ate a simple dinner while Andrew outlined his plans for a new genzine, and pumped me for ideas for Aussiecon II's fannish programming, though he prefaced every question with, "If we win..." Afterward he pulled out a two-inch stack of Aussie singles and played disk jockey. I was most impressed with an energetic late-60s group called The Master's Apprentices. It was a relaxing and enjoyable evening.

Chapter 17

Monday morning I got up early, filled a sack with books, and walked to the tram stop. I was heading to Space Age Books, armed with simple directions and the need to mail the books back

to Seattle. The tram arrived, the conductor collected his $2 for an all-day pass, and we were off.

Space Age was in the heart of downtown Melbourne, with its tall buildings, bustling stores and wide streets. Some of the buildings looked quite Victorian, most of the shop signs were brightly colored translucent plastic, and British spelling prevailed. What really added a sense of being in another country was the abundance of streetcars, especially the uniquely decorated ones. I spotted a pure white car with columns at each end as though it were a Greek temple; another was covered in multi-colored studs; a third showed a surreal collection of distorted kitchen furniture and appliances in purples and blues. On one tram I spotted an announcement that any individual or group could decorate a streetcar, though the sign-up period was almost over. Just before I stepped into Space Age, one with a dragon clanked by.

Space Age was much like other sf bookstores I'd been in, down to the fannish types working there. Merv Binns was the owner, with Justin Ackroyd and Paul Stevens two of his employees. I was looking for Justin, since he'd offered to pack my books for seamail.

I soon found Justin, who led me to the back room, where I watched a virtuoso display of the packer's art, with lots of cardboard and newspaper and string and tape. "I don't trust seafreight," declared Justin as he laid on several more layers of strapping tape. We made a date to meet for lunch, and I hauled the package to the nearest Post Office. I followed this with the purchase of a cheap knapsack and a light snack.

To pass more time before lunch, I visited the Museum of Science, just a block from the bookstore. I somehow missed the famous Phar Lap, a much-loved racehorse, even though his stuffed carcase is the Museum's pride. Instead I studied informative displays of world coinage, methods of lighting, weaponry, old cars, and so forth, dodging hordes of schoolchildren as I wandered through the maze. I stopped to take a hearing test at one exhibit, which showed that either I'd lost the top of my hearing range, or that it was impossible to take a hearing test while surrounded by dozens of squealing ten-year-olds.

I met Justin as appointed, we ate a pleasant meal at a nearby cafe, and I dispensed well-meant advice. "If you're going to stand for GUFF, you ought to write to British fanzines, give them a chance to get to know you. Jean Weber's probably got lots of Brit support."

I walked Justin back to Space Age, where we found Merv Binns in the back room, trying to find a restaurant for a dinner party that evening. He was having a tough time. The restaurant had to meet Harlan's approval, be inexpensive, be at least slightly exotic, and, most difficult of all, be open on a Monday evening. I left him muttering his way through the Yellow Pages, and walked into Paul Stevens in the front of the store.

Paul, known to American fandom as Anti-Fan, star of the Aussiecon I bidding film, and still wearing a villanous mustache, invited me up to his office. We went up the back stairs to a complex of offices, decorated with posters and heaps of books. Paul showed me a thick manuscript of typed pages: Paul's DUFF report, all ready to be stenciled or mastered. All it needed, Paul said, was a selection of illustrations and the time to do it right. Real soon now, he said.

I left Space Age for the last time, found the right tram line, and without difficulty got off at the stop nearest Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochrane's house. Bruce, tall, dark and glowering, welcomed me in. He gave me a guided tour of the book and record shelves, and a detailed history of the cats. We also talked about fanzines, old friends, typesetting, Norstrilia Press, food, and so forth.

Bruce's glowering wasn't directed at me but at life in general, and took me as a potential allie. Bruce was like me, in fact: if things didn't go well, he complained; if they did, he worried. Bruce's chief complaints were about the high price of publishing in Australia, whether fan or professional. This was partly because of the high cost of marketing, partly because of the tiny market. Furthermore, Bruce added, the stencils were lousy.

Elaine came home while we were listening to a tape of the Norstrilia Press dramatic presentation Carey Handfield had described. She pulled out the family photo album, and once again I saw historic moments in Aussie fan history: beardless John Bangsund, beardless Leigh Edmonds, young Lee Harding, young Shayne McCormack. Then they walked me to the tram, and said they'd see me at the next evening's Chinese nosh.

I knew my luck with the trams couldn't hold. I got the right one, but in the early dark I missed my stop, and the conductor was abrupt when I asked her about it. A brisk walk of six or eight blocks put me back at the right street, and a few blocks along that put me at the little bungalow of Derrick and Christine Ashby.

They welcomed me in and introduced me to the other dinner guests. One was Chris Johnson, a friendly and mild man with a witty pen (I'd seen his cartoons in Aussie fanzines); the other was John Foyster, one of the Secret Masters of Australian fandom: con organizer, fanzine publisher, erudite and sometimes cranky book reviewer. Tea was to consist of soup, lamb roast, potatoes, pumpkin (served in chunks like squash), apple crisp, and Pavlova. (It was supposed to be a typically Australian meal.) Christine directed Derrick in the preparations, and apologized frequently for the "failed Pavlova" (a kind of custard dessert); made from a mix, it wasn't up to her usual. (I enjoyed it anyway.)

While we ate and analyzed all of eastern Australian fandom, John made phone calls to arrange the next evening's nosh. It was impossible to take notes as everyone talked at great speed and in great detail about the follies and flaws of those not present. It would also have been imprudent.

After dinner John took Chris home, while the Ashbys took me on an impromptu visit to Peter and Elizabeth Darling.

It was a very impromptu visit: the Darlings entertained us in their bedroom. They had retired early, and were in their pyjamas and robes, but were perfectly relaxed and charming. I believe that, like kings and queens of old, they found the bedroom the most congenial room in the house. Elizabeth recommended that I take in the Victorian National Gallery, especially the collection of Australian Impressionists. While Jillian, their sixteen-year-old daughter, served everyone tea, Elizabeth went on to recommend Storm Boy, a movie featuring David Gulpilil of The Last Wave fame.

Back at the Hirsh's, Etta gave me a tour of the breakfast supplies in the litchen in case I should wake before anyone else. I got myself a snack, then settled down in the dining room to read the manuscript of Ted White's lengthy analysis of Australian fanzines, and, as usual, found myself agreeing with most of Ted's points. I put myself to sleep with the soothing thought of my own perspicacity.

Chapter 18

The next morning, June 21st, I did a quick laundry and went off to see the National Gallery of Victoria. I took Elizabeth's advice, searching out the painters of what was called the

Heidelberg School, including Arthur Streeton and Charles Condon. Their work seemed to be a watered-down Impressionism, with lots of nature scenes in lots of light. I decided they must have been trying to paint nature in light rather than light in nature. I tried to find Norman Lindsay's work as well, which had been described to me as "delightfully wicked"; I didn't find any, but did blunder across some Van Goghs and Manets. I felt consoled.

After an hour's ramble, I left the building to meet Cliff Wind and Lee Smoire on the front steps. We passed the time until Carey Handfield's overdue appearance by studying the museum's imposing rectangular façade, pierced by a twenty-foot-high arched entrance and surrounded by a mock moat.

Carey finally drove up and took us to one of his parents' restaurants, a Chinese noodle shop called the Chinese Noodle Shop. It sold good, fast, cheap...noodle dishes. Having just opened, it was clean, new, shiny, and without much atmosphere. The food was fine, though, and Carey's parents friendly and helpful.

After the meal, Carey et al. took me to John Bangsund's house, and went off on some sightseeing rounds. I was left alone, with all my doubts and fears. I was going to spend the afternoon with the one fan Americans most wanted to meet, whose fanzines demonstrated an ease with language, a breadth of interest, and occasional depths of passion unequaled in Australian fanzines and seldom matched elsewhere. He was also, I had been told, the best freelance editor in Australia. I was a little in awe, and wondered what I would find to talk about.

I didn't have to worry, though; I simply followed my old rule: if you can't be interesting, be interested. John was naturally interesting, and very good at putting me at ease. He gave me a short tour of the house, and showed me some of his recent work. He'd just completed editing a collection of the art done during Captain James Cook's South Seas expeditions. The hardest part of the job had been keeping the captions matched to the plates, because the compiler kept inserting new ones without warning.

We talked about Australian slang, and looked up "crook" in some reference books, finding that it probably derived from the German (krank). We talked about collecting records, wines (with samples), and the incredible prices of Australian books. We even mentioned fandom once or twice.

Then John led me to the back yard, handed me a pair of rubber gloves, and pointed to the garage. The gloves were a protection against redbacks and other spiders, but I didn't see any except a dead one John fished gingerly from a clothespin cup. I wormed my way through masses of discarded kipple to the back of the garage. The boxes were against the rear wall, full of fanzines. I hauled eight or so into the thin afternoon light and emptied them. In the end I had assembled two sets of Bangsundiana, each several inches thick: Scythrop, Philosophical Gas, fugitive titles, all full of the life and thoughts of John Bangsund.

I leaned happily on my stack, trading funny stories with John until it was time for us to find Sally Yeoland at her office, and on the way John revealed that he hated city life. I was startled: John seemed to exemplify "urbane," and I thought that should mean "urban" too.

After we added Sally to the company we drove to the John Curtin Hotel, the first bar I visited on the trip (not counting the bar in the Shore Inn). Curtin had been, they told me, a Labourite Australian, a Prime Minister at one time; the bar was a Labour Party hangout, and John and Sally pointed out a few union leaders and Extremely Important People. In fact, John and Sally were once in government service themselves, back when Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister in 1975. When he was removed from office by the Governor-General (the Queen's representative), they left government and Canberra.

Sally also talked about the upcoming Worldcon and the perils of convention committees. She claimed not to be a fan, but talked a great deal like one. I wondered if I had too broad a notion of what makes a person a fan, or if some people had too narrow a one. (When David Emerson was asked once what was the most bizarre misconception he'd had about fandom, he answered, "That I wasn't a fan, since I was saying this while attending conventions, writing for fanzines, and living in a focal point slan shack.")

When we finished our beers, John and Sally drove me downtown, letting me out in the general vicinity of the Yuen Lum Low, the scene of Foyster's Chinese nosh. I was also in the vicinity of Greg Hills. We joined forces and warped time and space to find ourselves half-way down an alley called Waramtah Place, facing a door marked with the proper address and Chinese characters. Through the door, up a flight of stairs, into a spacious dining room we went, to find a large table and many people in the far corner: John Foyster and Jennie Bryce, Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochrane, Andrew Brown, Irwin, Lee Smoire, Carey, Peter Darling. There was already a great quantity of good food on the table. Peter used the opportunity to reserve space at the Kaufman-Tompkins-Doyle Basement Hotel.

John and Jennie made excuses and an early exit, but the rest of the party left the restaurant together, looking for dessert. Waramtah Place let out into a main road lined with Greek pastry shops, so we stopped at the second or third and ate cream puffs, baklavah, and other treats, washing them down with thick Greek coffee. Andrew and Irwin passed the time by flipping through the Bangsund zines, and I urged them to pay a call on the garage sometime. I said a last goodbye to the others, beginning to feel that I had to do it entirely too often, and returned to the Hirsh home with Andrew and Irwin. We spent our last hour together making grandiose plans for publishing projects that, if they were ever completed, would send world fandom into frenzies of flattering imitation.

Chapter 19

Etta drove me to the airport the next morning, and we hugged farewell. I boarded the TAA flight to Alice Springs about 10:00 am. The plane was small and cramped, but it was a short flight, so I didn't mind. After a stopover in Adelaide, the plane arrived in Alice at 1:00 pm. This gave me a lot of time to kill, since my tour left the next morning at 7:00 am. I took a bus into town to my motel, the Elkira. My room was small and simple: a narrow bed, a shower, a tv (there was only one station), a space heater. I walked a block or two to the main drag, explored the tourist shops, saw the district police headquarters and next to it the tiny gaol from 1910 (preserved as an historic structure). I saw groups of Aborigine women strolling barefoot down the street, a few pushing baby prams. (From the bus I had seen groups of men sitting around fires in dry gulleys.) I bought a magazine produced by and for the local tribe: informative and puzzling. Most of it was in English, but the comic strips all used the tribal language.

I returned to my room and read awhile, but I was too restless to stay put. I walked to the north end of town and climbed Anzac Hill, dedicated to Australian and New Zealand soldiers. The rocky outcrop was crowned with a cement platform and a railing, from which I could see for miles. Directly to the south was an enormous ridge that ran east-west with only a single gap. (It was through the gap that the road, railroad, and telegraph came.) Between the ridge and Anzac Hill lay the town: shops, hotels, government offices, bungalows and

shanties; two hawks circled over the main square, just over the town council building and the ajoining giant chess board with its three-foot-tall plastic playing pieces.

At last it was dinnertime. I returned to the Elkira and, following the dictates of the Maverick Guide to Australia, I put on a jacket and tie, and found a restaurant. It was a cafeteria-style bistro, and after paying for my lamb chops, I took my tray to an empty table. I was the only one in the place wearing a tie, I noticed, and I surreptitiously removed it, slipping it into the equally superfluous jacket's pocket. It was the only time that the Maverick Guide's advice proved bad.

I strolled back to the room, feeling lonely. For the first time on the trip I'd eaten by myself, and now faced an entire evening of my own company. I opened my bag and began to read some of the fanzines I'd gotten at Syncon and in Melbourne. I watched a bit of tv (a documentary on sheep shearing). I read more of The Executioner's Song and felt lonelier. Though 9:00 pm was early, I went to sleep anyway and dreamed about monopoly money.

I woke about 5:00 am, read some more fanzines, packed my backpack with just enough clothing for the overnight tour, took my suitcases to the front desk, read some more, found out from the friendly desk clerk that I could have ordered a breakfast tray compliments of the Elkira, and kicked at the walls with my heel.

The Ansett bus came a bit past 7, and took me to the downtown Ansett Centre, some four blocks away. There the tourists were assigned seats for the trip, and I studied the bus. It was a roomy, comfortable tour bus, with enormous windows that promised a fine view. As we drove out of Alice, past the government housing and through the gap, I struck up a conversation with a dark-haired young woman sitting nearby. Her name was Julie, she was from Adelaide, and she'd been traveling around Australia on her hols. Another woman, pert blond Pat from Brisbane (also on holiday), joined us. Julie was a teacher, I think, while Pat was a barmaid.

The flat desert with its enormous horizon was remarkably green. The driver, Ned (stocky, mustachioed, with the thickest Oz accent I'd yet heard), told us that there'd been three times the usual rain. The small ghost gums and acacias were well leaved, flowers grew by the roadside, and the usually dry washes had streams in them. Still, there was a lot of red and white dust. We stopped by one of the streams, where Ned told us that the acacias needed fire in order to seed. It seemed that the fires would normally be caused by lightening during storms. The fires would cause the seed pods to crack, and the accompanying rain would then germinate the seeds.

After several hours we made Ayers Rock, which loomed at us. It looked huge as we drove around to one blunt end to find the Ulara, our motel, and yet it was still a kilometre away. As we parked, Ned explained that the motel was just the other side of the bamboo forest ringing the parking lot. The tourists were to check into rooms, eat a barbeque lunch around the pool, and reboard the bus for an afternoon's expedition to Mt. Olga, about thirty kilometres away.

The Ulara consisted of spartan rooms, two to a cabin, scattered around a central building holding the bar and restaurant. I met my roommate, a German-speaking Swiss named Robert, a distinguished-looking businessman of about fifty. He didn't speak much English, and I didn't speak much German (even with my small stock of Yiddish included), so we conversed with nods and smiles. We also said "berg" a lot.

Lunch was delicious, much like the picnic at Hanging Rock. I chatted with Pat and Julie, and met a couple from Montana. Then we all got onto the bus.

We stopped twice. Once we all piled out to get our first good look at Ayers Rock. Even though we'd gotten so close before, we really hadn't seen it from an angle that would give us an idea of its size and shape. The Rock was rather like a half-buried potato in shape, about a mile and a half long, five miles in circumference and a thousand feet high. It was formed of a reddish sandstone and had deep furrows as though a chunk of glacier had gouged it.

The second stop gave us the chance to examine some purple-red flowers and melon-like fruit (related to cucumbers) that grew by the roadside. Ned said they'd been imported to feed the camels. (Australia, like Arizona, once imported camels on the theory that what worked in one desert would work in another.) From this stop we could see Mt. Olga (usually referred to as "the Olgas") up ahead. The Olgas were called by the Aborigines "Many Heads," and for good reason: they were half-a-dozen great rounded bulbs, the same red sandstone as Ayers Rock, though not as high.

We drove around and up the "back," into a gorge between two bulbs. Ned told us we had an hour to wander around. As I got a roll of film into my camera my eyes moved from the 700-foot cliffs dwarfing the tourists, down across the beautifully pitted slopes, and came to rest on a gleaming scalp just below the window where I sat. It was Art Widner!

I rushed out of the bus and grabbed him. He explained that he had gotten into Alice early in the morning and immediately found a small tour van to join. He was the only one on the van, and got the driver's undivided attention. Art and I started walking up the rough red incline, but he remembered he'd left his film behind, so I walked on alone.

On either side rose the red cliff walls, streaked with thick bands of black. Underfoot was the strangely pitted surface. Circular chunks of rock had worked loose, from an inch to six inches across, or had disappeared altogether. It was like the surface of another planet.

Distances were tricky in the gorge. What looked like a few yards was really hundreds of yards, as the figures of tiny tourists showed. I felt as though all those people were just there to demonstrate the scale of the place.

I found Julie and Pat, and together we found trails through the dwarf forest at the narrow end of the gorge. The ground rose as the two cliff faces came together. We almost reached the pass, but our hour was nearly up, so we turned and clumped back down what now appeared to be a pebbly stream bed, ducking under the scrub trees. I didn't see Art again until we reached Sunset Boulevard.

Sunset Boulevard was a sand dune held together by desert grasses, an ideal site for photographing Ayers Rock at sunset. Hundreds of people sorted themselves into ranks as the Rock grew redder and redder, and the moon (in just the right spot to pose) grew brighter. Art and I took pictures; when I'd had my fill, I walked back to our bus and counted thirteen others--and a Land Rover--waiting for passengers.

After dinner I stayed up for the Ulara's party. The partiers were mainly construction workers, truckers, government people, other locals. Many of them were wearing silly hats, since this was announced as a Silly Hat party. (It was also a birthday party for the barmaid.) An entire wall of the bar was filled with photos of other parties, and it seemed that a Silly Hat party was one of the tamer sorts.

Avoiding the guy dressed in toilet paper, I found the only people from my tour still awake: Julie, Pat, Jerry from California (big, blonde, and friendly), and Bill from Canada (dark, medium, and quiet). Everyone else had gone to bed to prepare for the dawn assault on the Rock. Art, in his H.G. Wells trucker's cap, soon joined us. We danced a bit, had a beer or

two. Art said he wanted a breath of air, so I stepped outside with him.

As I've said, Art is an astronomy buff, and like most sf fans, I had been one in high school. The sky was intensely clear. So Art got his binoculars, we walked a few hundred yards from the motel, and Art began to point out constellations and stars. He showed me the Southern Cross, the Magellenic Cloud. Through the binoculars, the latter resolved into a number of small bodies. Art said each one was a galaxy.

We returned to the party, danced, made rude remarks about the locals not dancing, drank more beer. I got tired of the noise and smoke again, and realized that I was a bit weary. I stepped into the cool night air, and had a sudden desire to walk to the Rock by myself. I began to follow a thin straight path clearly marked by moonlight. I walked a long way, but the Rock didn't seem to come any closer. Above my head were galaxies, around me red dust, strange trees, and maybe poisonous snakes. I felt as though I were on another planet. I thought I had an idea, in a small way, why so many Australians wrote sf about Ayers Rock. Turning around, I threaded the path back to the Ulara, glancing constantly from the sky to the motel lights to the ground before my feet. The bright clear moon guided my steps.

Chapter 20

Around 6 the next morning I woke to find Robert already up and using the minute bathroom. After he finished, I shaved and dressed. Then we waited. Robert told me, in his slight English, that his travelling companions were a 75-year-old mountain guide and his grandson. He also said that his home town had a sister city in Wisconsin, settled by Swiss. (I eventually find a reference to the towns, Glarus and New Glarus, in John McPhee's book on the Swiss Army.)

Soon we were on the bus, which drove us to the side of the Rock I'd thought of as "the rear." We watched the rising sun redden the Rock from a ridge that was even more packed than Sunset Boulevard. The bright red faded to a dull rust, and it was time to climb.

The relatively gentle slope set aside for climbers was about two miles away, around the narrow eastern end. The driver told us, once he pulled to a stop, that we'd have a nice climber's breakfast waiting for us, and he expected to be able to continue the drive in an hour. Then we started: men, women, children of all ages. First came fifty very gentle feet of frayed sandstone, then a knob called Chicken Rock, and finally the real climb, marked by heavy chain strung on two-foot-high metal posts.

I climbed steadily for awhile, not looking down, wondering what I was doing. I have a fear of heights that I can usually control only by staying away from unprotected edges and steep slopes. If I were behind glass or a stout fence, I could be cool and unconcerned. Ayers Rock wasn't going to be like that.

Soon the rock face steepened considerably, until I was climbing as much with my arms and shoulders (hauling myself along the chain) as with my legs. I was winded pretty fast, and stopped to rest frequently, letting other people climb over me. Holding the chain with one hand, I experimentally glanced behind me while I rested. The desert stretched away from the predictably tiny people and buses below me to the Olgas and beyond--as though it wanted to escape the Rock and me. I didn't think it would ever stop. I thought if I fell, it would be not to the ground but to the horizon, and I too would never stop.

I got beyond the worst of the climb entirely at the mercy of the chain. It pulled me as much

as I pulled it. I reached a little plateau at the top of the chain. At the side of this was another little bit of chain, going straight up a bitty six-foot climb. At the top of that was sky, only sky, clearly framing all the people coming after me; they all merrily climbed the last bit and strolled at right angles along a ridge that could have been twenty feet wide--or two. My nerve gave out completely, and I couldn't force myself to climb that last six feet to find out.

A group of jolly campers (who'd illegally climbed the Rock by moonlight the night before and slept on top) urged me to go all the way. I tried to steel myself, walking around the plateau several times, recovering my wind. But in the end I didn't go. In fact, it took me ten minutes to recover my self-control enough to go back down the Rock, and it was shame rather than courage that propelled me. I didn't want to call a helicopter. It would be too embarrassing and too expensive. And what if they put me in a sling like in rescue movies? That would be even more terrifying than climbing!

So I came down Ayers Rock on my ass, slinging myself hand under hand on that blessed chain. On the less steep stretches I rose to a crouch, moving in a gentle lope, still keeping a hand on my links to safety. People climbed over or around me from both directions. It took me over half an hour to climb up about 700 feet, and about half that to climb down. When I finally made the base, I turned in time to see the Swiss mountain guide's grandson running down the same path. He must have come close to a four-minute mile.

I ate my breakfast in silence, and indeed spent most of the rest of the day in silence. I decided that no one else would want to talk to me after my shameful performance, and I sulked. I never really knew if anyone else noticed either the performance or the sulking.

The rest of the tour zipped by: we were driven around the rest of the Rock and shown other interesting formations, like the Christmas Bell and the Brain. We walked up a box canyon at one end, and Ned showed us caves (just rock overhangs, really) with magic paintings in them: hunters and serpents and unidentifiable markings in faded red and black. He pointed out the crack in the Rock where one mythical brother speared another, and the fold from which the Rainbow Serpent would emerge in the rainy season. It all had a touch of magic, as much as it could in hot mid-day light with thirty Europeans standing around gawking.

After a quick lunch, we started the drive back to Alice Springs. I read an amusing novel about the Jewish community in Melbourne (Rapaport by Morris Lurie) and a poor novelization of The Last Wave, and gradually began to pay attention to my acquaintances of the tour, who were talking about going to the casino that night. At first I determined not to go, but that was self-pique. By the time I got back to my motel I knew I would go after I'd thoroughly wallowed in self-pity.

I had a solitary dinner in a decent, overly solemn Chinese restaurant, and thought some more about the casino. I'd never been to one, and imagined them as romantic and colorful places, like those in James Bond movies. As soon as I finished dinner, I walked into the Alice night and found a cab. I rode in the front seat with the cabby, as everyone does in Australia, and talked trivial tourist talk.

The Alice Springs Casino was part of a large, expensive-looking hotel about a mile out of town, and the lobby was full of large, expensive-looking people. The casino had eight or ten roulette tables, lots of blackjack, three chuck-a-luck tables, a large keno set-up, thirty poker machines (slot machines called pokies by the Aussies) and a two-up pit. The latter was probably the only thing unique to Australia. The pit floor was lined with green baize like a pool table, and on it stood a person who flipped two coins from a baize-covered paddle. The gamblers bet whether the coins would land heads, tails, or mixed. They leaned on the railing surrounding the pit, calling their bets.

Some of the people were certainly wealthy tourists, but most of them were local residents, dressed in what they hoped were killer outfits. Most of them were white, but ten or twelve Aborigine men and women mixed in the crowd, betting mainly at two-up and roulette.

I found Art Widner and the others from the tour. Pat and Julie stuck to the pokies. Art seemed to like keno, and explained it to me. The Californian played blackjack. I soon got bored with keno, didn't know enough about most of the other games, and couldn't convince myself that it was glamorous or fun to give the Casino my money while learning, so I was too soon bored with gambling, and settled down to watch women in short skirts and velveteen knickers. Soon that too palled, and I decided to back into town. Art shared a cab with me. When we got back "downtown," we found the Telford Alice Hotel still open, so we shared a final beer. Then I said goodbye for the second or third time that day, and went back to the Elkira and bed.

Chapter 21

The next day, Saturday, was subjectively my longest day in Australia. I woke as early as ever, read, packed, and checked out. Leaving my bags at the terminal six blocks away until I was ready to catch my late afternoon flight, I wandered down Todd Street to find the Aboriginal Art Centre. Of course I found Art Widner instead, coming out of his motel and looking his usual patriarchal self. We found the Art Centre, and examined every object with the care that only people with hours to burn could bring to bear. We looked at bark paintings, carvings of lizards with burnt-in stripes and faces, and postcards showing Aborigines in clay paint. We listened to tapes of tribal music. Then we wandered further along Todd, and back to Art's motel. His bus came, and we said goodbye yet again. It really was the last time I saw Art in Australia, but I knew we'd meet again--at Westercon a week later.

I was on my own again. I set out to walk to a tourist attraction I never found, a sort of model village. I stopped for a meat pie with sauce. Munching it, I walked out of town to the west. The mid-day heat began to press in, and I slowed down. Then the meat pie began to dribble down my shirt. I decided to give up the model village, cleaned myself, and turned back into town.

The only tourist spot I found was the Guth Diorama, a little museum and large 360° painting of the view from Alice Springs. I walked around the diorama, stopping at the depictions of Ayers Rock, Mt. Olga, and Mt. Cooper (a huge flat-topped outcrop that looked something like a mesa). In the museum I was startled to find a twin of the carved snake I'd bought in Sydney. It was identified as an object made strictly for tourists.

From the Diorama I moved to the shady side of a church to fling myself on the grass and read. From there I moved to a bench in front of a cake shop, where I bought my first lamington, a cube of white cake rolled in chocolate and cocoanut. I stayed there the rest of the long afternoon. Only an occasional knot of black women or white youths came past. All afternoon I could hear a rowdy crowd of drunks nearby, and a truck or motorcycle would rev its motor, but the revelers never appeared.

I read fanzines. I read for hours. I went through all the zines I'd gotten in Sydney, saving the Bangsund zines for last. I continued on the bus to the airport, and during the long wait while the airline tried to catch the cat that had gotten loose in the plane's baggage bay. (The woman in the seat next to me said yes, she <u>had</u> heard about the ocelot that once tied up the New York subway system.)

At last we touched down in Perth, an hour late. Sally Beasley and Dave Luckett were there to meet me: one flyaway blonde with a grin like a brownie out of Victorian children's books, and one bearded bear. They popped me into their car and were off to a nice relaxing party. I was a little dazed, and didn't say much as they started to sketch in Perth fandom.

Roy and Julia Ferguson, the hosts, were the godparents of Perth fandom. Roy, it seemed, was about to go off to Melbourne to live, with Julia planning to follow shortly thereafter. When I met them, Roy seemed a bit reserved and quiet for a godfather, but Julia kissed me on the cheek and acted like a duchess.

I started meeting people like the boyish and acerbic Seth Lockwood, the beautifully statuesque Barbara de la Hunty, and the well-travelled Ian Henderson and Susan Margaret who told me about going to Ayers Rock and seeing a satellite fall.

I told people about winning the Aussie NatCon, finding it hard to convince some of them of my veracity. I found a guy named Bevan, dressed all in black, who did sound and lighting for Perth punk bands; we exchanged views. I talked to Susan and Ian further, comparing Native Americans to Aborigines, and disagreeing about what defined a desert (they thought it was the amount of ground cover; I held out for the amount of rainfall).

Then it was time for the real reason for the party: someone named Warren was having a birthday. Dave Luckett rumbled a speech, everyone sang "Happy Birthday" to Warren and "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" to Roy. While the cake was being cut, Roy tried to explain the subtle difference between Perth fandom and the rest of Aussie fandom.

"They're different," he explained. "Perth has been so isolated that it's developed its own flavour." He went on to complain that the eastern states ignored Perth, and never took the trouble to steer visiting celebrities their way. Sally seconded the opinion.

I was still game but hardly awake when midnight came, so I put out my hand and was wheeled out to the car. Dave, Sally, and their housemate Mick Mannion drove us back to their bungalow, where I met their fourth housemate Bob Ogden, their cats, and the alcove that was to be my bedroom for the next few days. It was a walkway lined with books and roofed with tin, connecting Bob's room with the rest of the house. Dave & Sally unrolled a mattress and bedding, and I lay there listening to the rising wind and fresh new rain until I fell asleep.

Chapter 22

The wind never let up during the next four days, and the rain returned again and again. It was the only bad weather of my trip, but what it lacked in charm it made up in spectacle. On Monday limbs were ripped from trees and came smashing down on houses; cars tumbled boot over bonnet in downtown Fremantle, only a mile away. Sunday morning wasn't quite that bad, so Sally and Dave took me on a neighborhood tour. Fremantle was the original site of settlement in Western Australia, and boasted preserved ancient buildings and restored Victorian storefronts.

We walked down to the Indian Ocean, for starters, and I stared at the gray, rough waters; the breakers were large, five to ten feet high. Further out the water was green, then blue. I waited for some sense of awe to hit: I was thousands of miles from home, confronted with my third ocean. I should feel something grand at this westernmost point in my tour, after going from coast to coast. But nothing came, and I turned to follow the others.

Our next stop was the Round House, Western Australia's oldest building. It had been the settlement's gaol. It was a circular structure, really nothing more than a thick stone wall enclosing an empty space used as an exercise yard. Four tiny cells and an office were built along one side. As we stepped into the office to leave contributions for the maintenance fund, I noticed that the man collecting the money was listening to the National Public Radio adaptation of Star Wars.

From the Round House we strolled along High Street past all those Victorian façades. Most of the shops were closed, though, so I never investigated their modern interiors. We got as far as the town hall, then turned down another street to Papa Luigi's, a wonderful restaurant with lots of reasonably-priced food (sandwiches, beer, Scotch eggs) and a clientele of students, artists, and attractive young trendies. I especially liked the large mural showing the owners and workers about to be engulfed by the Last Wave of Peter Weir's movie, with bits of flotsam glued to the wall (vanilla wafers, for instance) to add 3-D credibility.

After a noon loungeabout at the bungalow, we set off to the Fremantle Museum, another old stone building refurbished as an art and historic museum. We oohed and aahed over wood sculptures and displays of trinkets, coins, and nails from the hulks which crowd the sea bottoms off Western Australia. The winds and rocks conspired to sink many sailing vessels and steamships over the years, and divers have had lots of fun finding and raiding them. I lost Sally and Dave for awhile, and sat in the courtyard watching children run back and forth in the bright cold sunlight until the others found me.

Sally needed to finish the soup and Christmas pudding she was making for dinner, so we cut our visit short and went home. Joining us for dinner were Ian and Susan, the Ayers Rock veterans. We talked a little more about the Rock, then moved to the American aircraft carrier that was due to dock in Perth in a few days. It would bring in 9,000 American sailors; it would also, people thought, make Perth a potential target for the Soviets. There were to be marchs and demonstrations to protest.

We also talked about Australian cooking. I said that when I told one person what another had fed me, I would get cries of amazement and a promise of real Australian cooking. Or I'd get fed something (generally delightful), only to be told that it wasn't quite right, but someone else could do it better. Christine Ashby had told me that Sally was the one to ask for real Pavlova. Sally was taken aback to hear this.

The next morning I decided to call QANTAS to confirm my flight on Thursday. Imagine my surprise when they informed me that they had no Thursday flight, and that I was booked for Wednesday. I would have to go to their office in downtown Perth to straighten the matter out.

While I was worrying over my dilemma and silently thanking Suzie for training me to check on such things, the house-painter came by. We talked a bit, and the talk came around to the American aircraft carrier. The painter thought that all those sailors would be good for business, and Perth should welcome them. He wasn't going to protest, no sir. The sky began to spit rain; he decided this wouldn't be a good day for painting, and left.

Sally and Dave had already left for their government jobs in, respectively, Family Counseling and Unemployment. Mick and Bob were just getting up. Mick was a recipient of the beneficence of Dave's department, and spent his time fixing the roof and drinking beer. I never did find out what Bob did, but he was around all the time, and generously drove me into Perth.

Before we left the house, Bob made us sandwiches of Vegemite, tomato, and green New Zealand cheese (a surprisingly delicious combination), and tried to explain "Bobo G'Den." Bobo was Bob's alter ego, created by typo and subsequently responsible for a series of silly awards and sillier ideas. Apparently he was one of the mainstays of Perth fandom, along with Ian

Nichols, who sounded imaginary but wasn't. Perth fandom had all the marks of a strong regional fandom isolated from others: a creative and recomplicated local mythology, a feeling that it was unjustly ignored or put down, and an intense interest in the personal lives of its members (most of whom had lived with or slept with everyone else).

The QANTAS office was in the small, throbbing heart of Perth, in a shopping arcade. (Most Perth office buildings had arcades running through them, with lots of restaurants and shops decorated in contempo-glitz.) I discovered that, though QANTAS was flying me out a day early, they hadn't bothered to change my connecting flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco. This meant I would have to spend a day in the L.A. Airport. I changed the flight so I would go directly to San Francisco. I also showed them the paperwork from my travel agent ans asked why, if the Thursday flight had been discontinued in February, had they confirmed it in April? They had no answer.

Bob and I spent the rest of the day wandering from arcade to arcade. The most striking was the English one, with its London-like architecture and its statues of Dick Whittington and Will Shakespeare. We stayed long enough to watch the clock strike the hour: jousting knights clashed once for each stroke.

The most interesting shop we visited was Black Plague books, specializing in humour. As we walked up the stairs to the second floor, we noticed that each step was emblazoned with lyrics from Monty Python's "Philosopher's Song," which explains that all the great philosophers were "permanently pissed." Inside, I pawed through all the collections of comics, verse, and humour, and was pleased to find a few by Seattle's own Lynda Barry. It made me a little homesick, in fact.

When we returned to the house, Bob dug out a tape of Robin Johnson's Guest of Honour speech from a recent Swancon (Perth's regional). It wasn't an ordinary speech: its central idea was that Robin was addressing a political convention in an alternate history in which the states of Australia had never formed a single country, but were now nine separate nations. Western Australia, for instance, was "Tasmania," a Dutch-speaking country. Tasmania was "Van Dieman's Land," the only English-speaking state, with Hobart, its capital, a huge metropolis of 8,000,000. (Robin had done all the research for the speech just before the convention, at the Fremantle Museum.)

We trekked out to dinner with Dave and Sally to the Koto, a very good Japanese restaurant, and I had my usual sashimi. When we returned to the bungalow, Sally and I began a one-shot for Applesauce, an Aussie apa. I was bemused by her new Olivetti Praxis electronic typer. I could see what I'd written on the one-line readout, but the typer didn't type the words until I'd completed a whole line. This was entirely new to me. I managed two or three paragraphs, alternating with Sally, before excusing myself and falling into bed.

I didn't get much rest. It was this night that the storm hit big, with winds up to 120 kilometres an hour. The rain rattled the roof, and the wind forced water through the edges of the skylight and window frames. Everyone came in and began to move some books and covering others. I felt like a fannish pioneer in a sort of bucket brigade. Soon the crisis was over but the storm wasn't, and I listened to it for most of the night.

Chapter 23

In the morning a bleary Dave Luckett decided to skip work and spend a restful day being fannish. By now Cliff Wind had arrived in Perth, so we decided to pick him up, wander around, and meet Van Ikin for lunch. I made a quick call to San Francisco: I had to reach Denise Rehse, who was supposed to meet me at the airport, and warn her about the change in arrival time. But of course I didn't have her phone number; that would have been too simple, too logical. I got a number for her brother Larry from information, and left my message with Larry's roommate. I spent the rest of the day with crossed fingers, hoping the message was relayed.

"Have you checked that address Cliff gave you?" asked Sally. "Oh, Sally, Cliff's staying there, and he works for the U.S. Post Office. He must have it right," said optimistic Dave. It was wrong. Fortunately, it was right across the street from the right house, and Cliff was standing vigil in the living room window.

After some uneventful wandering through the downtown arcades, we arrived at the spot agreed on for our rendevouz with Van. It was the corner of St. George's Terrace and Barrack Street. "Probably," shouted Dave, "the windiest corner in Perth."

We began our wait at 11:00 am. At 11:15 Susan Margaret blew past. Van appeared at 11:25. The storm had delayed him by blowing a tree limb onto his house and cutting the phone lines. He'd also found out that the Indian-Pacific train had cancelled, indefinitely, all service between Perth and Adelaide, stranding his visiting mother-in-law, who wouldn't fly or take buses or boats. Van seemed unnerved by the prospect of permanently playing host.

We ate at a nearby cafeteria, then made a short visit to Black Plague. I was amused to find that the shop was new to Van and Dave, and swelled slightly with unearned pride to think I could show these natives something new about their own city. I felt like an urbane world traveller.

Afterward we drove Van to his office at the University of Western Australia. Van had promised me a complete run of Science Fiction, his academic "fanzine." The drive was gorgeous, with a great view of Perth and its harbor, and I had trouble concentrating on the conversation, all about Syncon, criticism, fanzines and other topics inspired by Van's Guest of Honour speech.

We entered the university campus through a newer and (Van assured us) less impressive section. Van's office was in one of the newer buildings, the usual hive of small offices, bulletin boards, and lecture rooms. While Dave and Cliff browsed through Van's collection of sf and litcrit, Van gave me the promised run of SF, each thin issue impressively bound in stiff yellow cover stock. He promised to send extras so I could distribute them to interested Americans.

Since Van had to prepare for afternoon classes, we wet off to explore the older part of campus. After passing through a walkway over a closed quad and greeting the free-roaming peacocks and peahens, we found a beautiful set of buildings, all Spanish Romanesque architecture and long galleries surrounding a calm reflecting pool. It lived up to the promised glory.

Dave and I took Cliff back to his quarters, and returned to Fremantle to relax before dinner, which was to be a large group meeting at the Normandy Restuarant. Sally was already home. She and Dave began to declaim poetry to pass the time. Dave turned out to be an excellent reader and singer (even a songwriter). I got him to read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," with the usual results (my eyes misted at the last lines).

Dave followed this up with several humourous Australian poems by Banjo Patterson. Sally countered with Marge Piercy and others.

I finally got my nerve up, and joined in. I managed to find "Sailing to Byzantium" and some other short poems, meeting with approval and even surprise ("What was that?"), though I couldn't find any of my favorites like Plath's "Lady Lazarus." But I knew it didn't matter what I read: the mood was relaxed and receptive, and none of us could do wrong. Dave set the dominant note, Sally provided harmony, and I added the grace notes. It was my favorite moment in Perth.

Even so, it was only the prelude to dinner. We arrived at the Normandy to find it a family-run, down-home French restaurant with solid peasant cooking. It was apparently a hang-out for some of the Perth fans. Ian Nichols (in the flesh at last) joked with Mama and her school-aged daughter, and she seemed to know others as well.

I found myself a seat between John McDouall and Barbara de la Hunty. I counted fifteen others, including Cliff and the Fergusons. The dishes ranged from seafood pancakes to pheasant. I had five cans of beer in front of me; I'd brought enough to share, not knowing that everyone else would drink wine. I made a wild and unsuccessful attempt to drink every can.

Ian Nichols was sitting near me, and kept urging me to publicize and praise Swancon when I returned home. He seemed to think that I need only tell Americans that the Guest of Honour would be Harry Harrison, and they would come over by the hundred. Other people told me about Ian's pet project, Ratcon. This was to be a NatCon or even a Worldcon on Rottnest Island. The island had been named by a Dutch sea captain for the thousands of rat-like marsupials that nested on it. It now had a popular resort on it, and Ian had been organizing excursions to it for years. Someone else mentioned his one-time appearance as Lawrence of Rottnest. (He'd also been the publisher of Dingo Vomit, a fanzine that reached for classic bad taste.)

Here was a thoroughly mythologized fan in a very myth-conscious community. The elements of the myth were not very impressive by themselves, but they added up quickly, and Ian (in daily life a teacher and perhaps a very quiet one) added to the myth constantly. At Syncon he'd thrown the Goon Trek radio show into confusion by adlibbing constantly. Now he was getting drunker and wilder and louder, insisting that US fans by the thousand and million would gladly come to Perth to see Harry Harrison and Rottnest Island. Of course, by this time I was no judge of wildness, mythological or otherwise. Cliff and I were posing for photographs with our heads on the table, and I was regretting the beer I'd tried to drink.

Somehow I calmed down, and on the ride home everyone tried to fill me with more explanations of Perth fan history, with verbal charts showing who had lived with whom, slept with whom, feuded with whom. Most of it was fascinating, but little of it registered, and I realized I was looking forward to going home and being surrounded with American accents. I had developed a kind of fatigue from translating dialects into their close but not identical US counterparts. I'd had little trouble understanding anyone, but the effort involved was enough to accumulate in my mind like lactic acid in muscle. I needed a rest.

Chapter 24

The next morning, Wednesday, June 29, I said my farewells to Sally, Dave, and Mick. Bob drove me to the airport, waiting until my bags were checked and I was booked onto the plane. Then he, too, said goodbye.

I spent the long flight to Sydney observing the 120 members of the flight who were on their way to the Rajneeshian religious festival in Oregon, all of them dressed in colors from purple to pink (with orange predominating), all with necklaces of wooden beads and photos of the Rajneesh set in pendants. It was the first time I'd heard of the cult.

From Sydney, where I changed planes, to San Francisco, I sat next to a couple who had just spent over a year in Japan working on the audioanimatronics in the new Disneyland there.

We watched We of the Never Never and High Road to China, talked about their work ("We kept telling them, 'You're making the audio-animatronics look like robots,' and they kept saying, 'Yes, isn't it wonderful?'"), looked out the windows at miles of clouds. When we landed they gave me their card and invited me to the studio sometime. I said goodbye to them, too, and started through the exit and along the passageway, wondering if Denise had gotten my message.

The passageway emptied into a glass-walled room with a view of the waiting area. Denise was there, staring in through the glass. The only way out of the room was down a flight of stairs leading under the waiting area. I made frantic pointing motion towards what I hoped was Customs as I disappeared beneath her. I saw her face light up with understanding, and she turned and ran.

I knew Denise would find me eventually; I knew I would spend a few days in San Francisco before going to Westercon in San Jose; I knew that after Westercon I'd fly back to Seattle (arriving July 4th, evening, welcomed by a barrage of rockets and Roman candles), back to Suzle and home and work.

I also knew that all that was some other story, and I had come to the end of this one: full of new friends, new sights, new insights, new understandings of the shape and size of the world. The DUFF trip was over.

the end