

GIANT WOMBO 1

INTRODUCTIONS

by Leigh Edmonds

Some people are going to ask, "What is a Giant Wombo?" A properly trained theologian will reply, "What isn't a Giant Wombo?" but we expect that most people will not be put off by such erudite pronouncements. Most readers of this sort of fanzine are sf fans and consequently may have looked at copies of ANALOG from time to time and grown a fondness for "nuts & bolts" types of answers. Well, if this fanzine were in any business it would certainly not be the business of supplying simplified answers to unjustified questions - that's like asking Bruce Gillespie when the next issue of SF COMMENTARY will be out and expecting him to reply with nothing more than a date.

But just for you, this afternoon, because I'm feeling extraordinarily generous and communicative... Nobody has ever seen a Giant Wombo and only a very few blessed souls have seen the ordinary Wombo. However, in a certain part of Central Victoria at a location I am not free to divulge there are examples of Giant Wombo Holes left by these heroic and ghodlike creatures as they bored their way through the earth. These Giant Wombo Holes have a certain mystic meaning... but I can say no more at this time...

BRILLIANT NEW INSIGHTS INTO SF CORNER:

One of the main trials that Jim the Spider faces in life is the fact that he is a mere spider and spiders are blessed with a lack of brains - perhaps not in relationship to other spiders but in comparison to humans. When anybody taunts Jim about this he threatens to bite them (an effective threat these days) or points out that most humans are similarly lucky. Jim also used to tell his accusers that his brains are of the highest quality and if they had brains like his they would be lucky - but since he tried that one on John Foyster he has had to allocate thirty minutes a day to working out what the reply he got back means and so he's cured of that sort of oneupspidership.

The trouble with having a limited though high quality brain capacity is that you have to be careful in what you are going to think about, and how much you are going to think about it. I'm reminded of this every once in a while and most recently it was when Jim set his mind to solving one of science fictions greatest dilemmas. After a little while he became so absorbed in the problem that he forgot to restrain his thinking and before you could say Autonomic Nervous System the brain space he normally uses to keep the body functions going was taken over and he stopped breathing. I had to give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation - just about swallowed the little fellow whole.

Anyhow, the problem that Jim was considering was the old classic of sf awards, not the simple problem of how to get the voting done properly and by readers who have not only read some of the stories but actually understood them, but the more interesting problem of categories. You might think that the categories for awards are the least of the problem but Jim says that one of the main reasons the voting is all fouled up is because the categories are all wrong. If you can't understand why this is, Jim says it's easy to comprehend if you're a master of lateral thinking - and as a web-spinner with a black belt and fifteen dans to his credit he should know more about that sort of thing than most people.

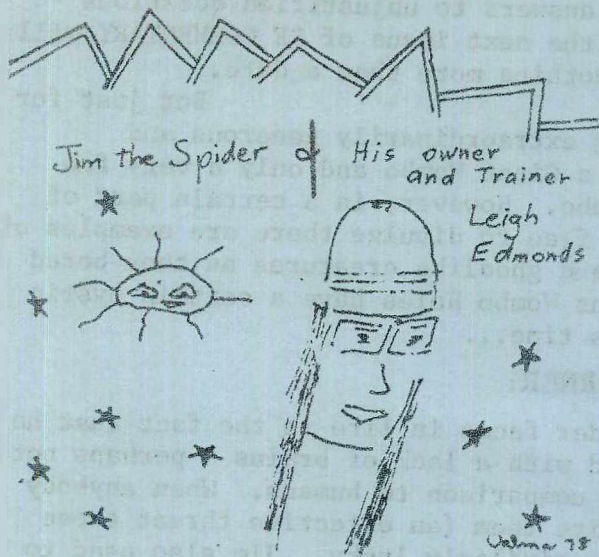
Jim says, "Science Fiction is supposed to be a fiction of ideas so we should give awards for the ideas and give the fiction a rest!" "Hear! Hear!" says I.

But really, when you have it pointed out to you, there is nothing more ridiculous than separating works of fiction into categories whose only value is that they tell you which stories take longest to read. The new system of categorisation makes a lot more sense and because of that

the readers are going to be able to make better judgements when they vote.

Just

to go on with here are some of the suggestions for category titles Jim has thought up. He recognises that there is a small amount of room for improvement and that even if there weren't people would change them anyhow, that being the nature of people with only two legs:



"Best Time Travel Story", "Best Space Travel Story", "Best Extrapolation of Current Trends Story", "Best Social/Moral Conflict Story", "Best Alien Invasion Story", "Best 'There Are Some Things Man Is Not Meant to Know' Story" and perhaps a category for new writers something like "Best New Twist on an Old Theme Story".

Since Jim wants to cut further argument to a minimum he has also decided on a name for these new awards, a name so obvious it's already in popular use. It was simple really, all he did was to go back to the first sf story of any worth

written on these themes and they are such greats as "The Time Machine", "The War of The Worlds", "The Shape of Things To Come" and so on, all by the same author. And everybody knows that the "H" in H.G. Wells stands for "Hugo".

WHAT A FUSS OVER ALMOST NOTHING CORNER:

My word, what a lot of fuss and commotion about conventions we're having these days. It's all Roger Weddalls fault; he was the boss of UNICON IV and it didn't go so well so now everybody is up in arms trying to find solutions to problems which aren't really problems at all.

One proposed problem is the scheduling of future regional and national conventions. I don't actually see any problem for if you figure that in these days of active convention fandom we will see a convention in each of the fan centres once a year that really is only Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, add a UniCon and a National convention and you have a staggering total of six conventions in Australia each year. A few years ago six conventions in three years was considered good going and even in 1974 there was only one convention in Australia. It seems we are in the middle of a boom period.

Even so, there is no reason why any of the conventions held in the fan centres cannot be combined with one of the floating conventions and of course there will be cases like UNICON IV which was a university convention, a National convention and the only sizable convention to be held in Melbourne this year. There was a small convention in Melbourne over Australia Day, one in Adelaide on Queens Birthday, the now regular SwanCon in Perth (must get to that one of these days) and the August convnetion in Sydney - that's a grand total of five this year - so what's all the fuss about scheduling. There are, afterall, fifty-two weekends in the year and you don't need a long weekend to hold a convention - in fact a convention in August is a nice excuse to have a long weekend if you can work it.

Obviously people will organise conventions to happen when they feel like holding them and it is folly to try to organise human whim, especially when the people doing the organising aren't the same people having the whims a couple of years later. For many years Melbourne fandom held its convention at Easter - this was discontinued in 1974 under pressure of planning for AUSSIECON - but there were conventions held in Melbourne over Easter in 1975, 1977 and 1978 even though they were not organised by regular Melbourne fandom who are getting back into it next Easter. All this does not say that Melbourne fandom has a "right" to Easter, just that it might be polite of other groups to ask around before leaping in - the same applies to Sydney fandom and August and Adelaide fandom and Queens Birthday.

A PROPHET IS NEVER SAFE IN HIS OWN LAND CORNER:

The following is quoted more or less verbatim from the latest mailing of ANZAPA:

"I see Sydney fandom has put its great fat foot into its collective mouth once more over Heinlein and the 1979 National convention.

"I saw a letter from Virginia Heinlein and she stated that a formal invitation had NOT been received from Sydney and that even if one had they would not have accepted because Robert Heinlein was about to undergo surgery and they did not know if it would have been a success. (Ofcourse it has been and Robert Heinlein is well on the road to recovery.) So who blew it?

"Sydney was at fault in announcing Heinlein as Guest of Honour without a definite letter of acceptance in their hot little hands. They blew it right royally and I hope that they can benefit from this and not run around screaming that it was everyone elses fault except thiers, JUST LIKE A CERTAIN RECENT UNICON COMMITTEE DID. There is already some evidence that they are 'upset' at the report of their mistake in AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS and are going to write nasty letters to that publication complaining about it!

"And this brings me to my second point: If a committee set themselves up to offer a convention, and if they take money from fandom for memberships in that convention, then they are accepting a certain responsibility to fandom and if they screw up then they can not expect that any fan news reporting group should not report their screw up. By accepting money they have placed themselves within the public scrutiny and can no longer expect to be treated as private individuals.

"If the Sydney fans who get upset over the AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS report on their Heinlein blunder can't accept that then I will be right in the forefront of an ADELAIDE IN '83 campaign, and so will a lot of other fans."

The author of the above prophetic and no-nonsense words was none other than Paul J Stevens who is, even as I write this, halfway across the Pacific, fleeing to safety.

Before a hoard of Sydney fans write howling letters to me for printing the above I should perhaps make the standard disclaimer that "the opinions of the writers are not necessarily those of the editors and publishers". Okay? The main reason the above has seen print is to bring up another issue, an answer to the question "Why shouldn't one announce the name of ones Guest of Honour before one has won the bid?" The answer is - "To save a lot of embarrassment all round." As things now stand Sydney fans are embarrassed at their blunder and Heinlein is perhaps also embarrassed by being associated with it. Fortunately nobody has thought badly enough of Sydney fandom to suggest that somebody may have actually known that they were hoaxing the people voting on the 1979 site. I don't think this was the case but if somebody else did then there might be more than embarrassment to cope with. So it pays to really careful about such things, and Sydney fans weren't.

UP THE BUSH

by David Grigg

Limbs trembling, I climbed down out of the Land Rover and waited for my pack to be handed out. It had been a rough trip up, bouncing over rough unmade roads for the last part of it, being swung around hairpin corners at breakneck speeds at the start. The bloke who had driven us up made a living carrying crazy bushwalkers from the coast to the National Park, but if his driving was any test, he was a first-class lunatic himself.

My pack was passed out to me. It was heavier each time I had to lift it, and I suspected it was going to get heavier still.

On the horizon, like the edge of a rusty axe that someone had used for breaking bricks, was Cradle Mountain. A flat, probably marshy plain led up to the steep hills which obscured the base of the mountain. Tomorrow I was going to set off walking towards that with four other people, and keep on walking for eight days, carrying a forty-five pound pack on my back.

I never wanted to go bushwalking in the first place.

It was all Carey Handfield's fault, as usual. It was Carey who was the cause of me being dragged along on my first walk, up the aptly-named Mount Terrible, and it was Carey who announced one night at the Oxford, where Melbourne fandom was eating on Wednesday nights, that he was going to walk across the overland track in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park in Tasmania. Stephen Solomon said he was interested, as did our intrepid Canadian, Henry Gasko. And before I could stop her, Sue said: "We'll go too." Before I knew it, it was all agreed.

Months later, after spending hundreds of dollars on new equipment, after arguing endlessly about how much food we should carry, after traumatic pack-filling episodes, an aircraft trip and a nerve-wracking drive, there we were. And the truth was, I was beginning to be terrified by the thought.

The national Park is one of the few remaining really remote areas of Australia. If you fly over it in a private aircraft, you have to carry survival equipment and a long-distance radio. The only way to get into or out of the centre of the park is by walking or by helicopter. Every year dozens of people are trapped by blizzards up there: it can snow at any time of the year. People die of exposure almost as a matter of course.

And here I was, someone who holds his survival very dear to heart, about to set off across this wilderness. I felt totally unprepared. I was carrying all the woolen underwear I was supposed to, I had waterproof and windproof clothing, I was carrying plenty of food, and I was walking with experienced companions, just like all the books say you should. But none of it, somehow, seemed enough.

We dumped our packs in a rough and dirty hut at Waldheim, which is the last outpost of civilisation at the northern end of the park. We claimed spots on the floor to sleep on, and went out to play with the wallabies.

The first thing Carey discovered on unpacking his pack was that his plan to eat fresh eggs on the trip had been doomed to failure. The rest of us had hard-boiled our eggs, but Carey had been certain he could carry his raw if he packed them carefully in his billy. What he hadn't counted on was the rough handling given to baggage by the airlines. With great reluctance, Carey poured scrambled eggs out of his billy.

That night we talked to three men who had just come up from the south, taking only three days to do so, which is quite fast. The standard time for the

journey, of about sixty miles, is five days. We were planning to take our time, visit some of the side walks, climb some mountains, and take eight days. These three emphasised the unpredictability of the weather: "The first day we were walking in our T-shirt, the next day it was full gear in the snow..." The snow was what worried me. If you got caught out in the middle of nowhere between huts, things could be pretty grim.

The thought of that distance was daunting. Neither Sue or I had been on a really long walk before. And this time we were carrying far more weight than ever before. The five of us were carrying a total of a hundred pounds of food, which we were certain was too much, but we couldn't agree to leave out any of it, and we were spending eight days out.

We woke at about seven and set about breakfast. Last night, just on sunset, dark and threatening clouds had closed in on the mountains, but this morning they seemed to be lifting. Mist still hid Cradle Mountain, but the sun seemed to be moving it.

Things got packed up, straps adjusted. Henry said goodbye to the wallaby that had adopted him, and then we were setting off, down onto the plain. My pack seemed to weigh about a ton.

By the time we were starting up into the hills, a distance of about a mile from the hut, my legs felt like lead. My God! I thought, I'm tired already! But there really wasn't time to think about that, and once we started to climb, I was getting into stride. Once your legs have recovered from the shock of being used, they seemed to become resigned to the work, and you forget about the effort.

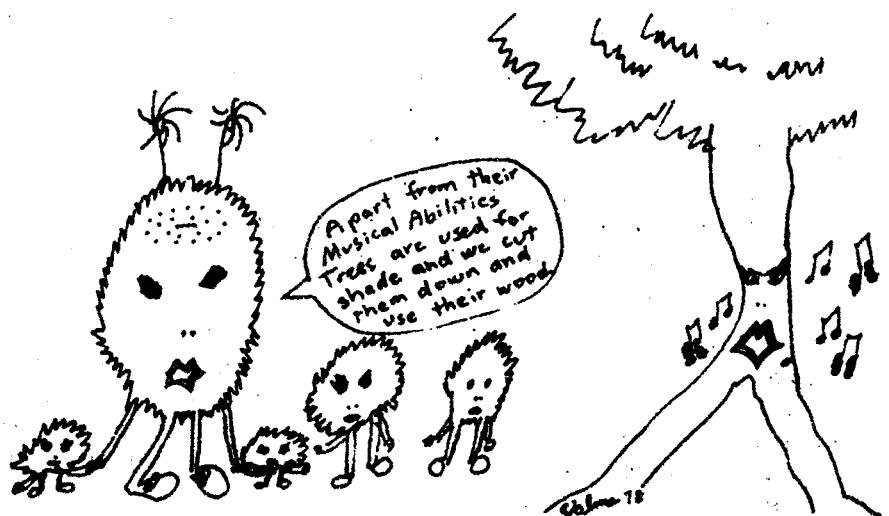
We climbed up a ridge between two lakes. The sun was shining, the sky was blue, the air was cool. It was superb. I began to entertain a tiny suspicion that I might even enjoy this.

We stopped for a breather at the top of the ridge. Carey pointed onwards, at what seemed to be a sheer cliff face. "See those dots of yellow? That's where the trail goes." I looked, and he was right. You could see the yellow markers one above the other in a vertical line. It took us quite a while to get up that slope. In a couple of spots it was hand-over-hand. Sue, who dislikes heights, was not impressed.

At the top, the view was fantastic. We could see the base of Cradle Mountain, and the threadlike trail which led up its side. Carey, Stephen and Henry were going to

climb it. Sue and I had agreed that the only way we would make the whole trip alive was to be sensible and avoid climbing mountains unless we had to.

Between the lookout and the hut at the base of Cradle Mountain, the land turned to mush. It was fairly flat, and there was water oozing all



over it. The path was muddy, and there were dangerously deep holes. We didn't know it then, but we were going to become very used to mud.

We reached the hut, and the three intrepid climbers took off their packs and set off up the mountain. It looked even more jagged from close up than it had at a distance. Mainland Australia doesn't have any sharp mountains. Tasmania certainly does.

Sue and I sat outside the hut, watching the ant-like figures moving very slowly up the side of the mountain. Each time we looked up, we agreed we were doing the most sensible thing. It was hot, and we kept in the shade. It didn't look much as though it was going to snow.

It took the climbers a couple of hours to return. We went on a little further and had lunch by the side of a swiftly-flowing creek. We busily spread vegemite or jam or peanut butter or all three on bits of dry biscuit, waiting for the water to boil on one of the little portable gas stoves. I made the glorious discovery that the little aluminium tin of Milo I had been carrying in my pack had come unscrewed, and there was now sticky brown stuff over everything. The others seemed more concerned that half our supply of Milo had gone.

On we went through spectacular scenery, along the side of a gorge, the mountain to our left, then along the edge of a circular cliff top. To our right was another massive, monolithic mountain called Barn Bluff. If you were a masochist, you could climb that, too. Our party started to spread out: Carey has a tendency to go marching off at great speed, then sit down and wait for the rest of us to catch up to him. This ensures that he gets plenty of sitting-down time.

There was mud all along the trail, churned up by numerous boots. But the weather was still fine and warm, and we hoped that it might get a chance to dry out before it rained again. Certainly, my fears of being trapped in a blizzard now seemed foolish. But all the books say snow can whip up in moments, so I was taking nothing for granted.

At about four in the afternoon, we stopped by a creek. We had been intending to go on to Windemere Hut, which was reputed to be about two and a half hours from here. I was tired, and Sue was complaining of some stiffness in her knees. Only a few minutes away was Waterfall Hut, and about half an hour further on was Cirque Hut, but eventually we decided to try for Windemere, the reason being that the next day there would be little choice but making Pelion Huts, which were a good day's walk from Windemere. So the longer we went that night, the less we would have to walk the next day.

The huts are fairly rough and ready, but they are far more comfortable than sleeping in the tents we carried with us. Our trip was planned around staying in huts each night, if we could.

So we went on. But after only a short distance, we were slowing down a lot, and we found that when we caught up with Stephen and Carey, they had stopped at the path leading off to Cirque Hut. Happy to see it, we dumped our equipment there.

That night we cooked rather green-looking steak which had been out of the freezer for two days, together with instant mashed potato and dehydrated peas. It sounds vile, it tasted great. It's amazing how your standards change. For most of the rest of the trip we were going to be forced to eat 'Vesta' dinners, the most easily available dehydrated food you can get. That steak was a luxury.

The sun went down in a spectacular manner behind Barn Bluff, and the clouds started rolling across like a curtain. I lay awake for a long time that

night, even though I was tired. I had suddenly realised that we were committed to this crazy trek. In an emergency, Sue and I could walk back from this hut to Waldheim, but it isn't really safe for just two people to walk alone. No, we were going to have to go on. Finally, I slept, dreaming of ploughing through snow up to my waist.

Suprisingly, when I woke I found that my muscles were nowhere as stiff as I expected. Perhaps the preparation I had done for the trip had helped. It was 7 am, and I got up to start the fires going and fetch some water from the nearby creek. Outside, it was freezing, but the clouds were beginning to clear.

Breakfast consisted of coffee and wallpaper paste, called by the makers 'Instant Porridge'. It is a tribute to the extremes of the walk that by the end I was squabbling with Carey over the last packet of this vile stuff, which we had run out of. Henry consumed none of the porridge, but ate an enormous quantity of museli.

We started out again. Now we were on a large plateau, almost flat. The trail was pure mud for most of the time. Soon after we started, Carey stopped and pointed off into the distance. "See that mountain?" "Yes." "And the one behind it, with two peaks?" I squinted and saw the landmark Carey was indicating blue with distance. It looked about a hundred miles away. "We'll have to reach the huts at the foot of that tonight." My pack suddenly seemed six times heavier.

On we went over the moors. By midmorning, after marching for two and a bit hours, we reached Windemere Hut. I was thankful we had not pressed on the previous day. On the other hand, now we were starting a full day's walk after we had already walked a long way. We had a short break, then set off again.

One thing that bushwalking teaches you is the value of water. For a start, water is very heavy, so you can't carry much with you, just a pint-sized bottle at most. Yet as soon as you start walking, you seem to develop a relentless thirst. It pays to fill up your bottle whenever you get the chance. I began to think of each creek we came to as a life-giving resource, a thing to be treasured. In the city, a creek is something to dump rubbish in and concrete over. It wasn't the first change of attitude I had on the walk.

The miles passed, and lunch became a pleasant prospect. But whenever the subject was raised, Carey would say "We'll have to try to get past Pine Forest Moor," or Stephen would say "Not far now. Just another mile or so."

We passed the Pine Forest, a hill covered with trees. Here the mud was the wettest and deepest and most ubiquitous we had yet encountered. It seemed impossible to avoid going in at least to the knees. Frustratingly, Stephen seemed never to have mud even on top of his boots. "I just don't walk in it," he would say. We ploughed on, going very slowly. Lunch seemed as though it was never going to happen. It was about 2 pm, and I was becoming very tired. "When we get to this creek marked on the map..." said Stephen. 'This creek' turned out to be a small trickle running through the bog, but eventually we settled down there.

I was getting apprehensive about how far we still had to go. Sue seemed to be getting into stride, and thought she could keep going all right. I tried to avoid thinking about another six days of this.

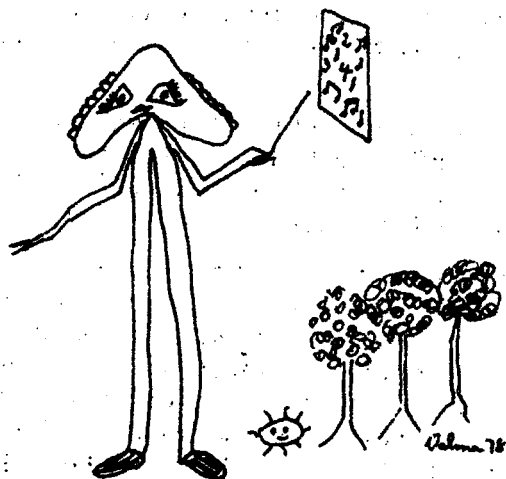
Lunch was not as relaxed as usual, and we started out again very soon. We would have to reach Pelion Huts before dark, or else camp out, which wasn't a very pleasant prospect.

Our path now lay to the foot of Mount Pelion West, then down into Frog Flats, across the headwaters of the Forth River, and up onto a small plateau between

Mounts Oakleigh and Pelion East. It took an awfully long time. There were leeches at Frog Flat, and lots and lots of mud, which made the going slow. The Main path would be knee-deep in mud, and several side tracks would have been made but were themselves now covered in mud. You just couldn't get away from it. Yet we later learned that the whole track was far drier than usual for that time of year!

By the time we passed the track to Old Pelion Hut, which was too small for us, I was stumbling along, exhausted. It was after 6 pm, and we had been walking since 8.30 in the morning. I was just managing to put one foot in front of the other. Finally, we came in sight of a large modern hut, and relief seemed in sight. Stephen reached it first, and called back "No! This is the Ranger's Hut!" I nearly collapsed. Fortunately, it turned out Stephen was wrong. We had walked over eighteen miles that day. I wouldn't like to have to do it again.

Now we were in a much better position. For one thing, we were down off the open plains where the weather can really hit you. and the next hut along was not so far away, just over the Pelion Gap, a saddle between Mount Ossa, Tasmania's tallest mountain, and Mount Pelion East. That was the Kia-Ora Hut, and it would take only half a day to reach it. Or we could walk on to Du Cane Hut, about three-quarters of an hour longer, or walk a full day to reach Windy Ridge Hut. Naturally, my inclinations were towards an easy day, and we decided to have a rest the following morning, and walk in the afternoon to Kia-Ora or perhaps Du Cane.



Jim and some baby trees
at their Music Lesson.

Dinner that night was soup, frankfurts, and an unsuccessful attempt at 'Instant Pudding'. It seems that you really do need a fridge for the latter. All of this was cooked in deepening darkness, since we

were so late arriving. I certainly slept well that night, even though we were now in a position where it would take two days to walk to get help should anything go wrong. I did wonder what would happen if I went down with appendicitus.

The next morning was bliss. We relaxed, washed thoroughly in the freezing water of a large creek, almost lazed around. But by mid-morning we were getting to the stage of wanting to move on, and we started on the walk again, deciding to have lunch on the saddle of Pelion Gap. The weather was still fine and sunny.

Climbing up to the Gap was not all that easy, but we finally reached the crest, though not without me managing to step into a patch of mud as deep as my waist, and having to be pulled out. At the crest, paths led off up to the mountains on either side. Carey had decided that he really didn't want to climb Mount Ossa, and Henry agreed with him. Stephen reluctantly gave up the idea. The gap was very windy, so we headed down the other side, looking for

a spot by a creek to have lunch.

Lunch that day was splendid. The weather was fantastically good, and we could see for miles, down into the valley where we would be walking from now on. We commented on our good luck with the weather. Even if it now turned sour, we were well past the real danger areas and into the region where we would be sheltered both by trees and by the mountains on either side. But the sky was still blue and sparkling.

We reached Kia-Ora by about 4 pm. Stephen wanted to walk to Du Cane, but the majority decision was to stay here. Du Cane is the oldest hut in the park, and according to reports, in very poor condition. Kia-Ora was modern and water-tight.

The rest of the afternoon was spent pleasantly in swimming, or at least wading, in the bitterly cold water of the creek, sun baking, and collecting wood for the fire. That night, we suffered the first of the 'Vesta' dinners - Chicken Curry and Rice. We were starting to forget what good food was like.

The next morning we passed Du Cane Hut, and were glad we had not slept there. It was indeed decrepit. There is evidently a resident possum who has learnt all the tricks to steal food. Apparently the only way to preserve supplies is to tie them up and suspend them on a rope from the rafters. The strange thing about Du Cane was that it was set in a clearing which looked almost like a landscaped garden. Very strange.

We had lunch on that day, the fourth day, down by a waterfall well off the main track. We seemed to have spent hours messing around looking at a whole series of waterfalls down in the valley, which admittedly were very spectacular, but climbing around them used up energy I didn't have to spare. Though this sounds as though I was hopelessly out of condition, I was really doing better than I had expected for someone who has a very sedantary job.

Whenever we went off on a side-trip like this, we just took off all our packs and left them by the track. At first I had the natural city-dweller's reservation about leaving any of my possessions unattended. But then, who would pick up something and carry it away? Especially if they would have to carry what they took for two days or more? The packs were safe.

That afternoon we climbed out of that valley, over a small saddle and down into another valley. When we reached Windy Ridge Hut at about 4.30 pm, we voted to stay there that night. Carey's plan included walking off the main overland track and making our way up into a valley which branched off. This was Pine Valley, and the hut there would be a full two hours walk away.

I cooked that night. The stove in the hut refused to stay alight, there was no axe, and little firewood. I ended up cooking on the gas stoves, and burnt the dinner. Burnt 'Vesta' Chow Mein is not to be recommended. Carey refused to eat another 'Vesta', even if it meant starving.

The accomodation in the huts is rough and ready. What you have at the most modern huts is a set of bunks composed of timber and hardboard, giving you a flat surface on which to lay your sleeping bag. In the older huts, you get a bumpy surface. Still, we all slept sound enough, though we seemed to wake up like clockwork at 7 am.

The morning of the fifth day we woke up and it was raining. Not hard, but steadily. Our run of good weather had finally broken. We donned waterproof gear and set out for Pine Valley Hut. It was a good deal colder now, and the jeans I was wearing were soon soaked. Carey and Henry had the right idea, and wore shorts; wet legs are better than wet clothes. Stephen wore waterproof trousers, and still somehow managed to avoid stepping in the mud.

To get to Pine Valley, we walked through dense forest, up and over felled trees. We reached Pine Valley Hut before lunch. Being off the main track, this hut was less comfortable and less up-to-date than many of the others. Still, it was dry, and once we had a fire blazing and our wet clothes hanging up to dry, very cheerful.

Stephen, Carey and Henry set off that afternoon to climb up to the Labyrinth, a maze of rocks and small lakes on top of the peak. I spent the afternoon chopping and gathering firewood and Sue employed herself by doing housewifely things around the hut.

Though I haven't mentioned it so far, we were never alone overnight in one of these huts. For the first three days we shared with the same group of walkers. The night at Pine Valley, we had two solitary walkers drop in. One was a Canadian who swapped patriotic talk with Henry, and the other a strange Queenslander.

Both of these people ate very sparingly, a simple meal of dehydrated soup. The Canadian in particular was astounded when he watched us cook and eat. I was duty cook again that night - I seemed to end up doing it by default - and this was the night we had decided, when planning, to have a break from the 'Vesta' dinners. Before the Canadian's eyes, we had:

Entree: Thick Vegetable Soup

Main Course: Tuna a la gratin, with rice and peas

Dessert: Stewed Apple and Custard

You don't think we'd go bushwalking without custard powder, do you? It was that night we figured that perhaps we had carried a little more food than we needed...

The next day we walked down to Narcissus Hut, on the upper shore of Lake St Clair. If we had wished, we could have boarded a jet boat here, and been taken down to Cynthia Bay, civilisation in the form of a tourist trap. We were made of sterner stuff. Or maybe we were crazy. We walked on, along the side of the lake, to Echo Point Hut.

This was a very small hut, and we were glad that we were the only people there that night. It was indescribably peaceful, looking out over the mist-swathed lake, and very pleasant.

One of the glories of bushwalking is the silence of it. Not utter silence, for there are the sounds of birds, of feet squelching in mud, and all the rest of it. But no cars, no factories, no aircraft, few people. Walking becomes almost mystical, and despite being with others, it makes you somewhat withdrawn, thoughtful, turned inward. Zen and the Art of Bushwalking? Well, perhaps.

The next day, we knew now, was our last. We were half a day ahead of our schedule. We could walk out to Cynthia Bay and spend the night. The day after that, we could catch the bus to Hobart.

We seemed to spend the next morning in singing as we walked. Perhaps it was because no one could hear us. We sang every song we could remember the words of, and a few more. A great feeling, foolish as it sounds here. It was a fairly hard walk, up and down and around logs and trees along the sloping shore of the lake, and by now we were all tired. My ankle, which I had twisted at some stage, was causing me more and more pain. Yet it still felt good to be walking. It was still raining, by now quite heavily, but it didn't seem to matter.

At last, at last, we limped, staggered or strode into Cynthia Bay. It was

very strange. There were cars. And houses. And people who weren't wearing packs. Odd, very odd. We walked up to the ranger's hut to sign ourselves out and to ask timidly: "Is there a cabin we can stay in tonight?" There was.

Luxuary is a funny thing. I don't know if I can convince you of how we suddenly became aware of what the real luxuries of life are, when we entered that simple cabin. There were mattresses on the bunks. Soft things to sleep on! And a light you could switch on when the sun went down. And look! This device that you turned the handle on, and water came running out, you didn't have to go and fetch it from the creek! A tap., And there was a nearby toilet block, with hot showers! Amazing how your standards are altered.

That night, while we slept in comfort and warmth, for the first time since we had entered the park, it snowed.



UNICON IV

by John Foyster

I am writing this article at Dunmore Lang College, Macquarie University, which was the site of the 1975 Australian SF Convention. Last night, at the end of an evening of serious discussion of educational issues (is teaching four students six hours a week too heavy a load for one person?) interrupted only occasionally by recourse to liquid refreshment, I explained to some of my fellow educationalists who Dunmore Lang was, for not one of them knew the name (John Bangsund: laugh in this space). I did not discuss the '75 SYNCON, interesting though it was; after all, not too many conventions have program items cancelled because the floor has to be swept a couple of hours before the convention is scheduled to finish. The '75 SYNCON was a university convention of the first kind.

Like the '71 Australian Convention in Melbourne, it was held in a University, but was organised by non-university SF fans. In 1973 in Adelaide we had a university convention of the second kind - it was held at a university (college) by an essentially university SF fan group.

UNICON IV was a university convention of the third kind: the aliens, a visual encyclopedia of science fiction and imported at great cost, made climactic appearances to a light show of applause. More particularly, it was organised outside a university by a group of university fans - like the earlier conventions it was to some extent a convention for non-university fans in that it was also the 1978 Australian SF Convention.

The Melbourne Town House, site of UNICON IV, will probably be remembered by SF fans for a long time; in two ways (an unsympathetic management, to put it kindly, and convention rooms rather further apart in time and space than is convenient) it set a nadir which later conventions will easily surpass. I did not stay in the hotel, so I can not comment on the quality of the room parties (though I gather from reading other reports that they were FAQ, harassment by the hotel management aside) but other aspects of the convention do in this case deserve attention.

It is not too difficult to find things about UNICON IV about which adverse remarks may be made, and at the drop of a hat I will do so. But there are also ways in which UNICON IV made a considerable contribution to science fiction fandom in Australia. Some of the things I write below have previously been said by others, but it does not hurt to say them again.

The most remarkable feat was getting together so many science fiction fans at a convention. AUSSIECON was bigger, but part of that greater size was a result of the large number of overseas visitors; by arranging for two guests of honour as prominent as Brian Aldiss and Roger Zelazny the convention committee ensured that not only would a large walk-in crowd be attracted, but that longtime fans, who sometimes bother and sometimes don't, would make special efforts to attend this convention. That strategy worked well, although there were some prominent absentees.

(I find chequebook fandom, as exemplified by UNICON IV and the Australian Science Fiction Foundation, about as attractive as chequebook journalism: the results are sometimes interesting but the methods unpleasant. Others don't feel that way, so good luck to them.)

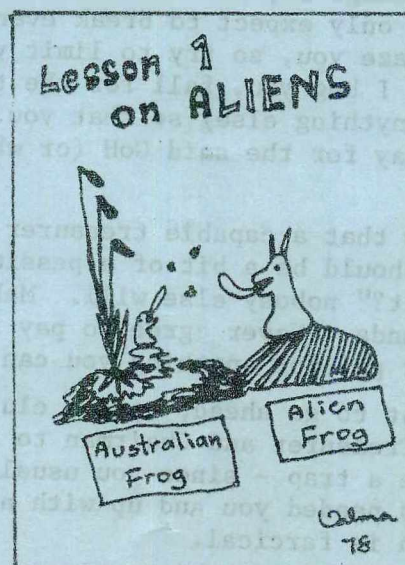
There are consequential benefits to science fiction fandom. Not everyone wants fandom to get bigger, but lots of people do, and these people will be pleased if some of many of the walk-ins become involved in later conventions, in clubs, or in publishing fanzines; one can't predict how effective UNICON IV will be in this area, but it would be surprising indeed if there were no spin-off of this kind at all. A second benefit, restricted to only a few

it isn't universally the case that fans want sf to have lots of publicity

people, is the large amount of publicity given to science fiction by gatherings of this kind: once again, it isn't universally the case that fans want sf to have lots of publicity, but some (usually those who benefit directly) think it is a good thing. These two bigger and better outcomes are fairly obvious, and would result from the importation of the Big Names, no matter what the convention was like. But there was a third benefit which may not have been quite so obvious.

Since AUSSIECON Melbourne fandom has been remarkably quiet; people involved in organising AUSSIECON have been taking a break from large-scale activities. UNICON IV has shown that Melbourne can still manage a big effort without--drawing upon the vetrans of '75; if nothing else, this may encourage the vetrans of '75 to get moving again, and indeed there are signs of that happening. Furthermore the UNICON IV organisers showed some of the skills essential to managing large conventions. Planning may not have been as complete as is desirable (and lots of attendees have remarked on this) and there were certainly some rough edges which were never smoothed over. But a couple of times when things were not going well those running the convention showed that they were able to devise solutions which at least helped - the shambles with registration, for example, was relieved a little by dealing with those who had not registered while they were still in the queue. In the past there have been convention committees who have been quite oblivious of the problems around them, and have gone on rowing the boat when a little bailing was more appropriate.

I didn't enjoy UNICON IV much myself, but then I'm picky. I don't really think one can make up a program out of a couple of overseas guests and a handful of rambling, disorganised, Australian speakers. I was annoyed that some of the bungling led to two people I like, Leigh Edmonds and Bruce Gillespie, being made distinctly uncomfortable in a way that was quite unnecessary. But I do know, on the basis of what has happened in the past, that for most attendees UNICON IV will have been an exciting experience. For that matter, it was pretty exciting for me too, when the projector fell from its tower of tables, just as I expected it to, and just as I walked into the convention rooms. I'll remember that for a long time.



FINANCING CONVENTIONS

by Christine Ashby

Money is like sex. Everybody is interested, everybody likes to think they know all about it, and in polite company it is only discussed in general terms. Nevertheless there are times when the subject has to be brought out into the open.

One of those times is when you are going to run a convention. Money is the major interface between fandom and the real world of bills, bankers and baliffs; all sorts of things can go wrong at a convention and people will forgive the committee, usually because they have had a good time anyway, but if you go spectacularly - or even modestly - broke the committees creditors won't be so understanding. Of course, you needn't have any financial trouble if you give the whole matter of money a little careful thought from the outset.

First get yourselves a Treasurer. It goes without saying that the treasurer should be honest - perhaps it is not always appreciated in fannish circles that he (or she) must also be reliable. The treasurer must be on the phone, handy to the post box (or willing to serve as the convention's address for postage) and not given to going away for weeks at a time. Think well before appointing someone - an eager volunteer is almost certainly going to be unsuitable. No experienced convention treasurer is ever eager, for the job is too much like hard work, and the responsibility a bit scary.

Even before you open a bank account, the next step is for the inner committee to work out a budget. Work out how much you expect to get in, and how much you know for certain will be expended. From this you will have a guideline as to what your membership rates should be. This budget should be revised every few months. At AUSSIECON I had the final budget (which proved that we couldn't go broke although the actual figures turned out to be wildly underestimated) written out on a scrap of paper and tucked into my wallet as a talisman!

It seems to me that in recent years Australian convention committees have been making a major budgeting error. (One convention at least has consequently been a financial Disaster.) People are attempting to make a profit - worse, they expect to do so. Here There Be Tygres. Take my word for it. A profit is a good thing if you can manage it, but the main thing is to break even. Budget to make a profit, but only expect to break even; the number of unexpected outgoings will amaze you, so try to limit your expected expenses as much as you can. Do not, I beg you, fall for the trap of having an expensive GoH (or venue or anything else) so that you will drag people in off the street so that you can pay for the said GoH (or whatever). What are sf conventions about anyway?

You may have gathered by now that a capable treasurer (and I flatter myself that I have been one such) should be a bit of a pessimist. If the Treasurer doesn't ask "Can we afford it?" nobody else will. Make committee members justify every request for funds. Never agree to pay for something until you are sure of the cost. Never pay for anything you can get for free.

Now that you're sure you want to go ahead, open a club cheque account. My personal preference is for Treasurer and Chairman to be registered, either to sign. Countersignatures are a trap - since you usually can't get hold of the other party when a cheque is needed you end up with a whole lot of blank countersigned cheques, which is farcical.

Get a receipt book. This and your cheque stubs form your basic record. All money must go through the Treasurer. If you've got cash for memberships and you need some stamps it is less confusing to write yourself a cheque for

If you've made a loss I can't really advise you

stamps than to use the membership money. If you keep clear records of all dealings you will have no trouble doing a statement if required.

At this point I suggest that you make sure that members pay for their hotel rooms direct, not through the convention. Since this money is 100% in and 100% out (if I may put it so crudely) it will only be an unnecessary headache dealing with it, especially if there is a dispute about the number of rooms/nights involved.

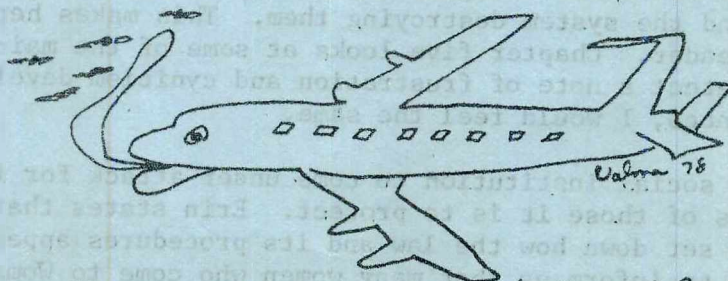
Comes the Big Day. Get a cash float of, say \$50 - in small denominations, and keep it in a proper cash box. Watch this box. Apart from the possibility of plain old theft, fannish muddleheadedness has in the past led to money walking without any dishonesty being involved. In order to relieve the tension somewhat, cashing cheques for members is a good idea - but use your loaf, and don't cash cheques for anyone you don't know and trust.

Get a 13 column cash book, especially if your con is a sizeable affair (and aren't they all these days?) At least once a day transcribe your receipts into this book - you will then have a much clearer idea of what's going on, and be able to answer awkward questions with confidence, if not exact total accuracy.

After the con is over, everybody will put up their feet and congratulate themselves; everyone except the Treasurer. Bills can easily be ranked into an order of payment. First to be paid should be money from auctions, the art show, and funds raised for DUFF and the like. This is really trust money, and can only be used for the specific purposes concerned, even if you go broke afterwards. The convention is only minding such money for its rightful owners owners, if you like. The same applies to prize money, should you have been rash enough to offer any. Pay up immediately.

Next, the largest bill, is the hotel. Look closely at their final bill before settling - hotels have been known to be less than straightforward in their dealings. If in doubt, negotiate (politely but firmly). Actually, all bills should be scrutinised - films and printing can also present problems.

You ought to be sorted out within a month of the convention. If you aren't going to put out a statement, keep your records for a while anyway, just in case. If you've made a loss I can't really advise you (well you shouldn't have, should you?), other than to make a clean breast of it and hope to uncover a slush fund somewhere. If you've made more than about \$20 profit, everybody will advise you what to do with it!



If you look out the windows ladies and Gentlemen
you may catch a glimpse of your 707 having
it's lunch.

VIOLENCE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Book review by Valma Brown

SCREAM QUIETLY OR THE NEIGHBOURS WILL HEAR is a small Penguin paperback on the subject of battered wives. Though it deals specifically with British women, Erin Pizzey, the author, points out that the problem does not belong to Britain alone. Erin is one of the founders of Women's Aid and her book details how Women's Aid began, how wife battering showed itself when someone offered women a place to go and how the law and institutions within our society are of little or no help to a battered wife and her children.

Erin aims to show the public that wife battering does exist and that it is not only a working class phenomenon, it's right across the board. She shows how its victims are in a "Catch 22" situation. However, to admit that one is battered is not an admission of failure and by writing her book, Erin attempts to show women that they are not alone and that it is not their fault.

Her writing style is relaxed and easy to comprehend, it is not full of grand theories and tables. It is also personal. From a sociological point of view, this could create problems of involvement but I don't believe that it does. A detached study would never be able to show the reality of the situation the way Erin is able to. The information she puts forward for us to digest stems from observation, conversation and written material. She is involved and she is committed to her cause. The method of observation would require a sociologist to maintain a position in a group or community for a long period of time and Erin certainly qualifies for this. She is an accepted part of the community at Women's Aid, a participant, and has been there from its conception. This enables her to draw on a large amount of material for her book and it gives her a tremendous advantage compared to someone doing an outside study and relying on material submitted. Erin does depend on her informants honesty, however, this is a factor that all studies have to rely on.

The emphasis of Erin's book is on the group rather than the individual. She shows the common experience of the battered wife in relation to the law, the social worker, the police, social security, hospitals, doctors, mental hospitals and the children. She is concerned about violence behind the front door and she wants social change.

In chapter Five, "Problem — What Problem?" she says:

It would probably take a Charles Dickens to do full justice to the labyrinth of indifference, red tape, callousness and simple incompetence that exists between people in need and so many of the agencies that are meant to help them.

In previous chapters there are examples of women in desperate circumstances with nobody to turn to and the system destroying them. This makes her comment very meaningful to the reader. Chapter five looks at some of the main agencies and how they fail. I detect a note of frustration and cynicism developing but given the circumstances, I would feel the same.

The law is the next social institution to come under attack for its inadequacies in meeting the needs of those it is to protect. Erin states that she is not a lawyer but wants to set down how the law and its procedures appear to battered women. She goes on to inform us that many women who come to Women's Aid have been given incorrect or incomplete advice by their solicitors, backing up her claims with individual cases. She says:

Solicitors are always telling me that the law will protect battered wives if it is properly used and that there are many possible channels of action.

Erin examines these possible channels of action and in doing so shows the reader how useless they are to a woman who has been beaten by her husband, for they only aggravate his violence and they don't give her any form of protection. Erin is lucid in her explanations of how the law works and she is also forthright in her views as to what should be done. For example:

The law still assumes that any father has a right to have access to his children.

I feel that if a man beats his wife and children to such an extent that the court sees fit to grant the wife a divorce on the grounds of exceptional cruelty then he has forfeited all rights to his home and family unless and until he has taken treatment that makes it safe for the family to allow him back into their lives.

The action the author suggests would, I feel, seem harsh to many. However, I agree! She has shown us in the information she has collected how damaging the situation is to the child. Erin goes on to make other suggestions pertaining to the law, all of which I agree with. They are practical sensible solutions stemming from an understanding of real needs.

Erin has a tremendous capacity for understanding the way human beings operate and a degree of tolerance which is remarkable and this comes through very strongly in her writing. She has the ability to perceive needs and to try and cater for them. In relation to children she says:

Great understanding has to be shown to these children for they expect adults to show violence towards them, and if they don't get it, they will go to great lengths to provoke a violent reaction. In three years I have never raised my voice or my hand to any of the children that have come through, though I have been sorely tempted. That would have failed the child, for even though a cuff round the ear does not harm a child when he is used to a loving rebuke, any aggressive gesture towards one of our children has enormous significance.

Erin devotes much of her book to the effects on the children. She says that the day spent at school is temporary sanctuary, but as the afternoon comes to an end they get more tense in fear of what the evening will bring. I feel this would be an enlightening book for anyone to read in that it shows the background of some problem children and promotes sympathy and understanding. Often the children witness the attacks on the mother and Erin uses material in the book written by these children to illustrate how they feel. She tells us that one of the most horrifying aspects of violence is seeing the children coming in with bruised faces and terrible welts from beating. It is encouraging to see that the next big project to be undertaken by Women's Aid is a school. The school will take the children as they come in and keep them until such time as the staff think they will be able to cope on their own in ordinary schools in the area.

Erin's book is positive for she shows by example that something can be done even when the odds are against you. From the initial setting up of Chiswick Women's Aid in Belmont Terrace to plans for a school, she is in there fighting every inch of the way. She has opened up an issue which needs to be thought about.

Though her main concern is the plight of battered wives, she is sympathetic towards the husbands needs. She also realises the need for male contact with

... to rescue the present generation from learning violence.

the children of battered women to enable them to grow up trusting men. She is concerned about the cycle of violence she has observed and she states that children born and bred in violence will grow up to repeat that same pattern of violence or show other signs of deprivation. She does not evade the issue that women beat their children too, but she points out that few women let their resentment against their children turn them to battering unless they have themselves been repeatedly beaten in childhood. The solution lies with all of us, for as Erin says:

Unless we make provision now a new violent generation will grow up. All that is needed is to rescue the present generation from learning violence.

Erin is concerned with public attitudes and her book will hopefully produce a constructive awareness. It extended my awareness for although I realised that the problem of wife battering existed, I did not realise how bad it was nor did I realise the extent to which it is a "Catch 22" situation. I felt frustrated and angry when I read it and I feel Erin's writing produces an emotional response. However, it is an emotional subject and I believe she aims to make her reader feel for the situation these women are in. She also talks through some attitudes which are held by those who have never experienced being on the receiving end of violent behaviour. For example; dismissing the beatings as punishment justly deserved or wounds happily received or believing that people who stay in such terrible situations are spineless not to escape. These attitudes, I believe, are formed partially because of a lack of understanding of the real situation and Erin's book examines the real situation with a view towards understanding and change.

It is not only the uneducated who lack understanding as Erin points out:

Faced with a woman who has put up with years of battering, the psychiatrist is induced to blame her. He doesn't understand the social conditions that make it impossible for her to escape. I have often had psychiatrists say to me in puzzled tones, 'She must have liked it to have stayed for so many years'.

I hope that such professional people as psychiatrists, doctors, solicitors, teachers and others read this book. I believe they need to. I have read theories on violence and pondered over the nature of it but it has been a distant thing. This small paperback with its direct approach contributes so much to the understanding of violent men, their battered wives and their children that I would like to see it as reading matter for people entering these types of professions as well as being an informative book for the general reader.

I found this book so superbly written I could quote it from cover to cover. It is reassuring to know that there are some humanitarian people existing in this world. Erin Pizzy is certainly one of them.

I agree with what she has to say about the needs of battered women and the policy implications she suggests that arise from these needs. I can only hope that her book, by creating social awareness, will initiate social change.

(SCREAM QUIETLY OR THE NEIGHBOURS WILL HEAR - Erin Pizzey.

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143pp - \$1.25 recommended retail price)*

COOKERY CORNER

with Leigh and Valma

EPISODE ONE

We were going to begin with Leighs recipe for sponge cakes, but we decided that we needed something a bit lighter than that to begin. Therefore we're going right back to the basics, how to conduct yourself when you go about the act of cooking. These helpful notes are taken from SIMPLE COOKERY which was issued by the Department of Education in Queensland some years back. Recipe Book fans will know this book as a real collectors item.

NOTES

1. Cleanliness and Waste--

- (a) The kitchen must be kept clean.
- (b) Food cannot be properly prepared and cooked if utensils and kitchen are dirty.
- (c) The cook must be clean in person.
- (d) Food must not be touched with dirty hands.
- (e) The cook's clothing must be clean.
- (f) A clean apron must be worn while cooking.
- (g) Cooking utensils must not be allowed to accumulate on tables or dresser or in the sink; they must be cleaned and put into their places immediately after use.
- (h) Food must not be wasted.

2. The Cleaning of Boards, Tins, Sinks and Table Silver--

(a) Boards -

- (1) Scrape flour or scraps into a plate.
- (2) Wash the board over with a cloth.
- (3) Rub a little soap or sandsoap on the scrubbing brush.
- (4) Scrub well the way of the grain of the wood.
- (5) Scrub corners and edges.
- (6) Rinse and dry well.

(b) Tins -

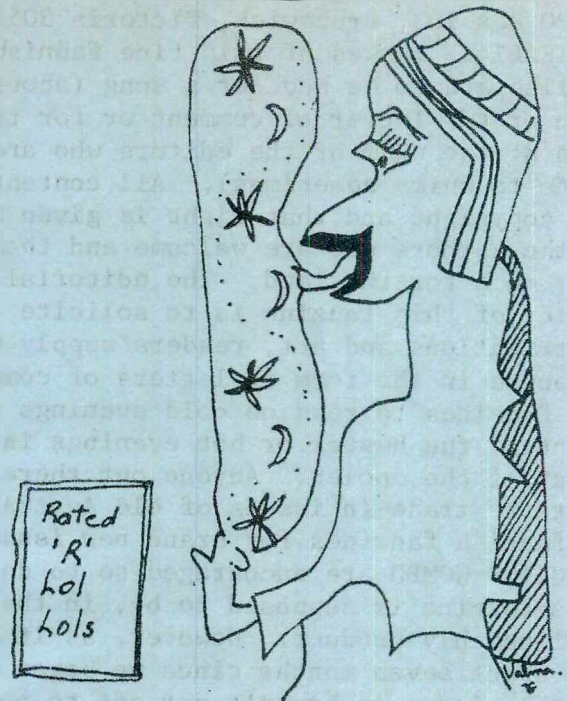
- (1) Spread thick paper on the table.
- (2) Scour the tins with any cleaning material.
- (3) Rinse with hot water, dry well.

(c) Sinks are easily cleaned by rubbing with a kerosene cloth. Boiling water with a lump of washing soda should be poured down the sink pipe daily.

(d) Table silver stained by eggs or other food may be boiled up in an aluminium pan with soapy water. Rinse in boiling water and dry quickly.

((We were going to conclude this page with a commentary on Sago Pudding, but fortunately we've run out of space...))

Venus
Candy Bars 9p



GIANT WOMBO 1, edited and produced and all nice stuff by Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown of PO Box 103, Brunswick, Victoria 3056, AUSTRALIA. Issues of this fine fannish fanzine are to be had for a song (about 50¢ each or for letter of comment or for trade, also at the whim of the editors who are prone to whims sometimes). All contents are copyright and that right is given back to the authors who are welcome and thanks very much for the lend. The editorial policy of this fanzine is to solicit contributions and art, readers supply the response in the form of letters of comment and fanzines to read on cold evenings in front of the heater or hot evenings in front of the cooler. Anyone out there who wants to trade-in issues of old Australian or fannish fanzines for brand new issues of GIANT WOMBO are encouraged so to do. This fanzine is supposed to be, in theory, a bi-monthly product. However, as it is now about seven months since we began work on this issue we haven't got off to a good start. You never know what might happen with the next issue which might come out tomorrow or in three years time - but the bi-monthly schedule is something we'll aim at. A U-Boat Publication.

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(All the art in this issue is by Valma and most of the typing is by Leigh - we don't think there will be many typos in the art.)

Apologies to everybody who contributed for the lateness of the issue. GIANT WOMBO exists to further the frontiers of fannish fun and goodwill. You can also help out by sending large amounts of money and ego boo to the above address. GIANT WOMBO SAYS: Ken & Linda for DUFF



Jackie Causgrove
3650 Newton St #15-
Torrance
CA 90505
USA

PRINTED MATTER

Senders
Leigh Edmonds & Valma Brown
PO Box 103
Brunswick
Victoria 3056
AUSTRALIA