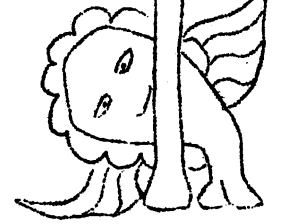
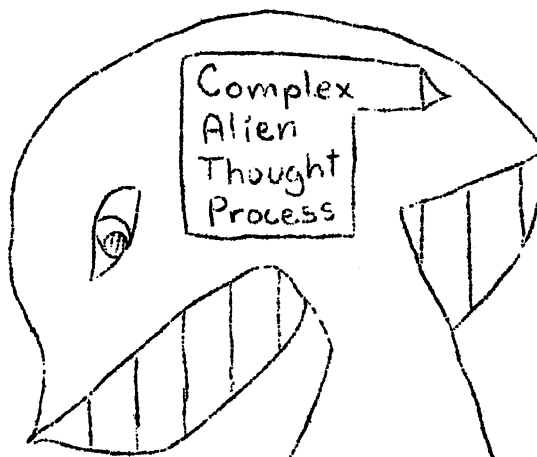


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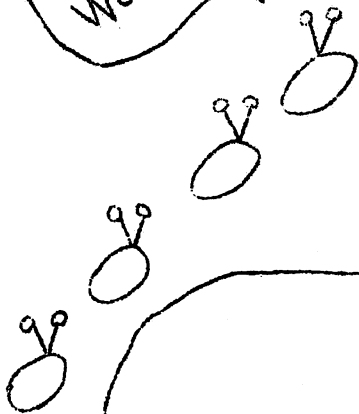


WOMBO

Calling all
Wombos.....
Repeat..... Calling
all Wombos.....
Woo... Woo...



LEUNCH



Salma 80

INTRODUCTIONS

By Leigh

WHAT'S NEW WITH WOMBOS

I know that some of you gentle readers don't believe that there is such a beast as the mythic Giant Wombo. You tell yourselves that it's all just some kind of demented publicity stunt to gather publicity for this fanzine. Ha! As if a fanzine of this quality ever needed cheap publicity...

To prove that Giant Wombos are a fact of nature we recently toured to the far corners of central Victoria to conduct onsite investigations into the very basis of proof of the existence of the Giant Wombo. We were taken by two native guides (Denis & Liz Thurgood) to a secret place in the depths of an ancient forest and, deep in those primeval, gloomy, places they showed us things that very few whitemen have ever seen. "Look!", they said, pointing in awe at vast gaping chasms dug straight and deep into the bowls of the earth, full of murky, stagnant water and seemingly bottomless.

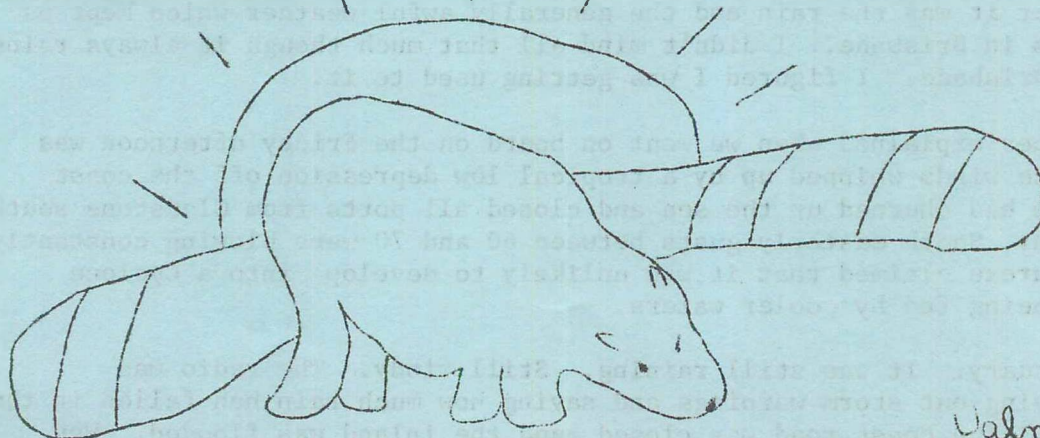
They told us of aboriginal dream-time stories of gigantic beasts digging these holes as they came from the earth to join with their ancestors and become stars like them. We, being good sceptical scientific folks, did not believe a word of this at first; but later we came to believe these ancient tales.

We had with us devices for measuring every sort of radiation known to man, the most sophisticated devices for measuring distances, areas, elevations and whatever else. We had cameras that take photos in infra-red and ultra-violet ranges of the spectrum and numerous other gadgets, all of which we had with us for the sole purpose of writing up in these pages to prove to everybody that Giant Wombos are a scientific fact beyond doubt. This issue was to be full of that proof. And yet, as you flick through the pages you will notice that we have the usual highly interesting and readable material... but not a word of proof about the existence of Giant Wombos. Where is this proof, you ask!

There is a conspiracy! Somewhere somebody or something sits at the centre of a web and manipulates us mere mortals for its own ends. Its single aim is to continue the curtain of mystery that shrouds the existence of the Giant Wombo. Why this should be so we do not know. What could it profit anybody or thing to hide the fact of the existence of such noble beasts as those we are trying to study.

The photographs we took at the site have been lost by the photographic lab. Notebooks have been lost in mysterious circumstances or impounded by the Authorities. Samples of soil have been taken by the Department of Agriculture. Tape recordings and other video tape recordings are mysteriously blank.

So what is the secret behind the coverup of the Giant Wombos? What is the world not meant to know?



Valma 80

A CYCLONE AT MIDDLETON REEF

(Extracts from a diary - Vol. 2)

by John Litchen

1. The Decision to Go.

It was one of those spur of the moment decisions. A diving friend said that Coralita was looking for some people to go on a shake-down cruise, and knowing how good a dive boat she is I decided immediately to go on that cruise. I rang my brother-in-law and another mate, and found that they were also interested, so we got all the gear, cameras, etc, that we would need, loaded my campervan, and headed north to Brisbane.

Apart from petrol stops we also stopped in several places to eat sand crabs, prawns, and when finally in Brisbane, mud crabs. I don't mind those things on occasions but Fred and Ken (the brother-in-law and his mate) couldn't get enough of them. By the time we had arrived at Wright's shipyard where the Coralita was undergoing her annual survey, they had eaten between them some one hundred sand crabs, maybe ten kilos of prawns, and a dozen mud crabs. I ate only one mud crab.

2. The Coralita

She is without question the finest dive boat in Australia. Vital statistics are: Length 79 feet, Beam 20 feet, draught 7 feet, power is from two caterpillar diesel engines, auxiliary power is from a caterpillar diesel generator of 50kv which puts out 240 volts at 50 hz. There is also a desalinator for unlimited fresh water. She cruises at eleven knots and has a range of two thousand nautical miles.

She carries twelve passengers in air conditioned cabins, has a lounge, a well stocked bar and cellar, serves gourmet food three times a day, and for divers there are two 4cfm air compressors charging up to 3000 psi. She carries 22 scuba tanks with weights, masks, flippers, etc. There is sonar, radar, ship to shore telephone, and anything else you can think of. All a diver has to do is bring his regulator (which connects to the scuba tanks), his camera (if he wants to take pictures), and his money (if he is going to pay for it all).

3. Lousy weather

It was raining when we got to Brisbane, and it rained for the two days we were there. In fact it was the rain and the generally awful weather which kept us those two days in Brisbane. I didn't mind all that much though it always rains when I go to Brisbane. I figured I was getting used to it.

What the skipper explained when we went on board on the Friday afternoon was that gale force winds whipped up by a tropical low depression off the coast near Gladstone had churned up the sea and closed all ports from Gladstone south to Coolangatta. South easterly gusts between 60 and 70 were blowing constantly. The weather bureau claimed that it was unlikely to develop into a Cyclone since it was being fed by cooler waters.

Sunday 23 February: It was still raining. Still windy. The radio was constantly giving out storm warnings and saying how much rain had fallen in the past 24 hours. The coast road was closed, and the inland was flooded. Why

does anybody live up here?

I had left the van at my uncle's place and we stayed on board the *Coralita*.

Monday 24 February: When I came up at 8am for breakfast the sun was shining. I couldn't believe it! It was hot and muggy and the sky was patchy... but the sun was shining.

It was 10am when we sailed, and cruising down the river was simply beautiful.

Wally, the skipper, told us we were going through the south passage which is between Moreton Island to the north and Stradbroke Island to the south. By going over the bar between these two islands we could save at least six hours cruising. So when we got near Stradbroke Island we stopped for lunch and waited for high tide before crossing the bar.

Going over the bar the waves were enormous. Wally would let the *Coralita* slide over the crest and down into the trough. When we were down in the trough he would surge forward with full power, cutting into the next oncoming wave at an angle. The bow would dig in and spray would fly over the whole boat. She would slip a little sideways, then as she reached the top of the wave he would cut power and we would again slide over the crest and down into the next trough. It was an exhilarating experience but it was over in one minute. We crossed the bar and headed out for several miles before turning south to follow the coast down to Coffs Harbour.

The wind was still strong, the waves were all three metres or more in height, and they hit us side on. The *Coralita* rolled and pitched heavily.

"Do you want a sea sick pill?" Fred asked me.

"I'll be right," I said. "No worries."

"I took one," Fred commented as he staggered across the lounge to look for something to read, "just in case."

Constant rolling gets to you after a while. The up and down motion isn't too bad, it is when it is combined with a sideways twist that it is bad. The waves seemed to be getting bigger and the wind stronger. I felt drowsy, so I thought I would lie down a while. I couldn't sleep, I kept rolling about on the bunk, but I felt no sensation of nausea at all. When Wally came down and called us for dinner I jumped up quickly enough, but then suddenly I broke out in a cold sweat. I felt dizzy, and as I staggered out into the passage my stomach gave a lurch and whatever lunch I had started coming up. I just made it to the toilet where the most violent retching didn't seem to be of any help at all. As I staggered back to my cabin Fred appeared in the passageway.

"Coming up for dinner?" he asked cheerfully.

I couldn't utter a word. I just went into the cabin and laid on my bunk. After a few moments I felt better, but every time I tried to get up my head would start spinning, I would begin to sweat, and my stomach would begin its nauseous activity. Eventually I fell asleep and woke up early to discover that we were not moving at all.

Feeling washed out and exhausted, but no longer sick, I went up on deck to discover that we had arrived during the night at Coffs Harbour.

4. Departure from Coffs Harbour

Tuesday 25 February: Water and fuel tanks were topped up in preparation for the long haul out to Middleton Reef. A lot of people wandering about the wharf came and stared enviously at us on board the *Coralita*, and we pretended they weren't there, not because we were stuck up or anything like that but simply because we were all too tired to be bothered talking to them.

After a while we were joined by two elderly gentlemen from Gunnedah (further inland from Coffs Harbour). Apart from their fishing gear, they brought on board with them two cartons of whiskey (26 oz bottles). Just in case, they explained later, there wasn't enough on board. They didn't want to run short.

Two other divers came on board also. Underwater film maker John Harding and his girl friend Jocelyn.

We left Coffs Harbour about 1 pm and as soon as we had passed Mutton Bird Island (a bird sanctuary) Wally turned the *Coralita* and headed due east. Middleton Reef is 320 nautical miles east of Coffs Harbour and it would take us approximately thirty-two hours cruising to get there.

The sky was overcast, the seas were heavy, and the *Coralita* rolled continuously. It was hard standing up let alone trying to do anything else. This time I took a sea-sick tablet. I had learned my lesson.

One of the old blokes from Gunnedah was a bit off colour and stayed on deck for the first few hours. He wouldn't admit he was ill and preferred fresh air. Jocelyn was sick and didn't appear for any meals the first day. John Harding wasn't the best either. Fred, Ken and myself were fine. We had gotten our sea legs the day before. Everyone else said it was the roughest trip they had been on for a long time.

It is impossible to imagine how immense the Pacific Ocean is until you try to cross it. Even to cross a small part of it makes you feel insignificant. After a few hours you begin to lose your sense of time and the minutes and hours stretch endlessly. The water was so dark that sometimes it looked black. Birds followed us, gliding with stiff wings down the crest of a wave. Sometimes a wingtip would just touch the water, then the bird would spin off in a different direction. It would flap its wings a few times to gain altitude then it would glide again for hundreds of yards. Though I watched these birds for hours I never once saw any of them catch fish, or stop and just sit on the water. Just that endless silent gliding above the waves. The day stretched on into night, and the next day was the same.

Thursday 27 February: We arrived at the reef sometime between 8 and 9 pm, and anchored in the lee. It was calm and everyone felt fantastic. A magnificent meal was served by the chef and we all got stuck into it with great enthusiasm. Though the radar showed quite clearly the positions of the wrecks above the waterline, and where the waves broke all around the reef, it was still too dangerous to go into the lagoon during the night. Our curiosity would have to wait until morning.

5. Middleton Reef

In 1788 some sorry ships captain discovered the reef by the simple method of running aground on it. Since then 126 known wrecks have been reported, and there are probably many more unreported wrecks because none of the people on

those ships survived to report what had happened.

Looking at Middleton Reef from the air you get the impression that it is a giant kidney sliced in half. It is approximately 5 nautical miles long and 2 across. At high tide it is completely underwater and as you approach only the seaward side can be seen because of the waves breaking there. If the sea was calm no one sailing by would even see the reef.

The most visible wreck on the reef is the *Runic*, a 14 000 ton cargo passenger ship. She was sailing calmly along at top speed one cloudless night some twenty years ago when the next moment she ground to a halt some hundred or so metres in from the easternmost edge of the reef. No one was harmed and everyone was safely rescued. The ship was abandoned. There was talk of turning her into a hotel for visiting fishermen, but someone salvaging brass and other valuable metals set fire to it and really turned her into a wreck. Storms and cyclones have since done further damage. The NSW Life Guard or Coast Guard maintains a small stock of supplies on board the *Runic* in case anyone is shipwrecked on the reef. They would have to scramble over the coral or wade through shallow water to get to her since none of the reef really stands above the waterline, but the *Runic* is a haven of sorts where nothing else exists.

Certainly Middleton Reef is only a tiny speck lost in the immensity of the Pacific, but at first light when we went up on deck to have a look, it seemed to stretch for miles on either side of us.

Far in the distance ahead of us we could barely see the tiny white line which marked the waves breaking on the seaward side of the reef. Between there and where we were anchored in the lee, the water in the lagoon showed every colour from dark blue to a dazzling pale green. To the right of us was the *Runic*, sharply etched against a grey overcast sky. If only the sun would come out the shades and colours of the reef would be magnificent.

6. The Japanese Trawler

After breakfast the *Coralita* proceeded cautiously into the shallow lagoon. We almost crossed to the other side and dropped anchor in a hole about forty feet deep. At the bottom of this hole, and completely intact, was a Japanese Trawler.

While the scuba tanks were being filled Fred and Ken went over (snorkling) to have a quick look at the trawler. I started loading movie film into the camera and sealed the underwater housing.

When they came back they were both excited.

"It's just like a movie set," Fred called up from the diving platform. "The whole thing is just sitting there. It's hardly even covered with coral."

"I've never seen so many fish," Ken said as he came up to get his camera.

The two old blokes from Gunnedah had already caught several large Trevally which had quickly been filleted by one of the crew.

"Grab some of those heads," I told Fred. "We'll take them over to the wreck with us."

So with a mesh bag full of fish remains, and a camera in his other hand, Fred

headed back to the trawler. This time he was using a scuba tank. I was right behind him with the movie camera. We were hoping to get some shots of a large black cod feeding on the scraps.

There were thousands of fish living in and on the wreck, including several large black cod. The water was not as clear as I would have liked, but then there is nothing you can do about that.

Arriving at the trawler Fred placed the mesh bag with the scraps on the deck and moved back to position himself to take some stills with his Nikons. The next second, something huge and dark came up from underneath him and shoved him out of the way.

"Christ it gave me a shock!" Fred said later.

It was a giant black cod. It must have been almost as big as Fred. It grabbed hold of his flash, and before Fred had realised what had happened it spat it out again. Obviously the flavour wasn't right. Then it grabbed the whole bag of fish scraps, but it couldn't swallow that either; it was too big. By this time I had the camera going and though it was dark down there where we were I was sure the sequence would come out. Fred had to keep pushing the damn fish away so he could get the scraps out of the bag. And as soon as he got a bit out of the bag the cod would snatch it and swallow it instantly.

That was the highlight of the morning's dive. Once the scraps had all gone the cod swam away and ignored us. We shot some film around the wreck and when we ran out of air we went back to the *Coralita* for a refill.

The afternoon was cloudy and not much good for underwater photography unless you had lights. We had none. So we went outside the reef and did some trawling for pelagics. Several yellowtail and one large bonito were caught. Some of those we had for dinner that night along with an excellent late picked Reisling that Wally had in his cellar.

7. The Runic

1 March: The weather was still heavily overcast and the wind had freshened overnight. The skipper said if we wanted to look at the *Runic* we should do it today because the way the weather was going it would be too rough tomorrow.

By the time we had anchored next to the *Runic* it was raining and a heavy swell prevented us from taking the *Coralita* in too close. We would have to swim across to the *Runic*. Once we were alongside we discovered it was too rough to climb on board the wreck, so we contented ourselves by swimming along beneath the edge where she was stuck on the reef. It was difficult swimming as a strong current kept dragging us away towards the edge of the reef, and for some reason there was not much in the way of fish life close to the wreck. Fred and Ken picked up a couple of bits of brass and we all swam back to the *Coralita*..

We went back inside the lagoon and even there the water was a little choppy, yet I was surprised to find it was still quite clear when I went in again. We decided to take some more fish scraps down and try to see if we could get some film of sharks feeding. There were quite a few small black tipped whalers about but they seemed nervous and wouldn't let us approach too close.

We scattered the scraps about and although the sharks darted in amongst us none of them would take any of the scraps until we had moved back. Finally they started feeding, darting in and snatching at the scraps, violently shaking the head from side to side, arching their backs and shuddering. Trouble was they were still aware of us and as we moved closer to get some shots the whole bunch of them moved away, still ripping and tearing at the fish scraps. Finally we ran out of air and had to surface.

8. A Cannon

On a previous trip Wally had discovered some cannons lying in a gulley in about forty feet of water. Wally wanted to bring one up so we anchored where he thought they were, and sure enough they were there. A heavy swell made anchoring difficult over the sandy bottom and the *Coralita* kept dragging the anchor.

We went upcurrent, a diver went over and swam with the current along the reef until the gully with the cannons was spotted. He then dived down and marked the spot with a small buoy tied to one of the cannons. The *Coralita* was then brought around over the buoy and a heavy cable was connected to the cannon. It was winched up and hauled on board.

Both John Harding and myself were in the water with our movie cameras. The current was very strong and by the time I had taken my shots I discovered the current had dragged me a good twenty feet away from the stern of the *Coralita*. I tried to swim against it but it was too strong.

As I was swimming I slowly realised that the *Coralita* was drifting closer so I ceased to worry about making headway. I kept swimming to stay in one spot and after a few minutes I could grab the diving platform. I went on board quickly so I could film the cannon as it came out of the water.

We were all wondering what ship had left that cannon there. Was the ship still here somewhere on the reef? Or had the cannons been thrown overboard by a ship that was wrecked and needed to lighten itself in order to float free again? Until the cannon was preserved, cleaned up, etc, we would not know.

9. Cyclone Colin

2 March: The radio reported that the tropical low pressure which had originally delayed our departure from Brisbane had developed into a proper cyclone now called Colin. It was three hundred miles off the Queensland coast and moving south east at about twenty miles per hour. The skipper told us Colin was about five hundred miles north of us and that at that moment it was moving towards us.

The radio also reported that two hundred miles from the eye of the cyclone wind gusts of up to one hundred and twenty miles per hour had been recorded. The barometric reading was 955 millibars -- 2 millibars less than cyclone Tracy which had devastated Darwin.

Wally told us not to worry since if Colin maintained course it would pass between us and the coast. We were quite safe as long as we stayed where we were.

By the afternoon the sun had come out but the wind had increased. Huge waves were rolling up and smashing on the edge of the reef. A lot of cloud was coming up over the northern horizon, a huge storm front. High above, long streaks of cloud were torn apart and stretched for miles by the wind. The water in the lagoon was quite choppy. We measured the wind at fifty mph on the anemometer.

3 March: Wind was very strong. The tops of the waves in the lagoon were being ripped off and blown away. The spray was hard and stinging. One of the crew went overboard to make certain we were firmly anchored to a heavy mooring the skipper had established on a previous trip. He had to pull himself down along the anchor cable. There was too much current to free swim. When he was back on board Wally let out three cable lengths of chain (so there would be plenty of slack and spring), then remarked casually: "Nothing is going to shift us now. Not even a two hundred mile an hour wind."

We were all hoping he was right.

Through the rest of the day conditions got worse. Waves were breaking right over the top of the *Runic*. It had started raining but it was hard to tell which was rain and which was windblown spray. The wind speed had passed sixty miles per hour which was the highest our anemometer would register. The noise of the wind was absolutely frightening.

Our barometer was still dropping.

Wally got through to Brisbane on the radio and found out that Cyclone Colin had changed course and was heading slightly out to sea. The good news was that it would pass right over the top of Middleton Reef.

The loose gear was taken off deck. The awnings were taken down and packed away, and anything too big to shift was lashed securely. There was nothing else to do but wait.

By the evening meal the wind was truly screaming. With the rain and spray visibility outside would have been fifteen or twenty feet. No one was allowed outside without being tied to a rail which ran alongside the deck. Wally didn't want any of us blown overboard.

The engines were kept running on slow so that if the anchor cable broke we could maintain our position inside the reef without being pushed into the shallows by the wind. The only way we could tell if we were stable or not was by using the radar which gave us a fix in relation to the *Runic*, and the *Sospan fach* (another wreck on the other side of the reef from where the *Runic* stands).

Over some bottles of wine, while the *Coralita* shuddered and shivered, while the wind screamed, Wally delighted himself by reading passages from a US government publication for seamen. He read the ten stages of the development of cyclonic depressions, finishing with stage ten, the final words of which are: "Only the best ships survive, lesser boats do not."

When none of us commented, he chuckled and said: "I don't know about you but this bloke (himself) intends to survive."

10. Lord Howe Island

The worst of the cyclone hit us during the night while most of us, I suppose, were asleep. In the morning the wind was blowing from the opposite direction so we knew cyclone Colin had passed. It was heading for Lord Howe Island one hundred and twenty miles south of us. As it turned out we had been within forty miles of the eye of the cyclone and what the winds were we had no way of measuring.

Through the day the wind gradually abated and the water in the lagoon cleared up. By late afternoon underwater visibility was back to forty feet, which was phenomenal after such weather. A wind half as strong down in Port Phillip Bay would leave the water filthy for weeks after.

We stayed one day and another night so that the huge waves outside flattened down a little, and when we finally left they were still enormous. The *Coralita* laboriously climbed up the sides of the swells only to slide down the other side like a surfer riding a swell at Bell's beach. When one of those waves hit us side on as they did because we were travelling at a slight angle to them the *Coralita* would heel over as much as sixty degrees.

Three hours of that was enough to drive everyone mad. There was nothing you could do. You couldn't sit down without being thrown out of the chair. Moving about was almost impossible. All you could do was to hang on tight wherever you happened to be.

Fortunately we stopped at another reef, a lot smaller than Middleton Reef but just as dangerous to shipping. Elizabeth Reef also has its share of shipwrecks. We couldn't go into the lagoon since it was shallower than Middleton but we dropped anchor in a channel and spent a few hours there. There were a lot of surgeon fish and a hell of a lot of large whaler sharks which were a nuisance as they kept swimming at us and snapping. Needless to say no one stayed for any length of time in the water.

After dinner we left and arrived, after sailing all night, at Lord Howe Island just as the sun was coming up.

The cyclone had long passed and the weather turned out beautifully. The sun was shining, the water sparkled. We hired bikes and rode all over the island. Had a big barbeque, went to the movies in the evening, and finished up with a small party on board the *Coralita*. The next day we shifted some moorings for the harbormaster, and cruised around the island. There appeared to be little damage to the island. I guess the people living there are used to the odd cyclone or two. The only damage was that all the avocado trees had lost their fruit.

11. Homeward Bound

We had a tail wind and a current behind us so we made tremendous time getting back to Coff's Harbour. The sun and weather turned on their best for us and it was a very pleasant cruise.

We waited a day at Coff's Harbour while Wally fixed a minor problem with the desalinator. There was also a bit of excitement when the skipper discovered that one of the crew had filled the fuel tank with water by mistake. He just laughed it off though. "I did something worse than that last year," he

said. "I filled the water tank with diesel fuel. You should have heard the skipper then."

The trip back to Brisbane was hard, punching into the current that runs down the coast and with waves hitting us side on all the way, yet the bar was a breeze.

Back in Brisbane it was raining, so we got into my campervan and immediately headed south.

The weather was good all the way back to Melbourne.

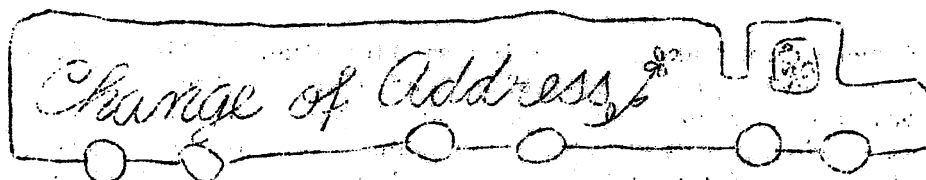
In retrospect the trip was good, though disappointing as far as the weather was concerned and the small amount of diving and fishing we did, but I learned something: I'll never complain about Melbourne's weather again. That's for sure.

EDITORIAL

by Valma

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Somewhere, on the road ahead of us is a huge great big semi-trailer with all we own in the world on it.



The fact that our Sternbach prints are now on the wall and I am using the typewriter is proof that we arrived. In fact, we have been here for two months already. For those of you who have just panicked, instant reassurance. We have a change of address operating until some time in April so we have received or will receive your mail. Being professionally moved was an interesting experience. One of the highlights was when the truck driver walked through the front door with the I.B.M. in one hand and the Sternbach Prints (which had just been framed and which we had been handling with the utmost delicacy) in the other hand and said "Where do you want these". That rather freaked us out a bit.

For the first week it seems that all we did was shuffle furniture. We are the only people I know of who have moved recently who have moved from a larger house to a smaller one. This had very interesting consequences, since we had no garage and were unable to get a tin shed because it was so near to Christmas and the manufacturers were closing down over the break. So, the result was rooms crammed full of stuff and odd bits and pieces of furniture sitting outside.

The first night we spent in a motel for once we had got all of our furniture and our boxes (69 book boxes and 36 ordinary boxes) into the house there was very little room left for us. Well, it is now nearly the end of February and we have been enjoying Canberra. There are things that we miss though like good chinese food and our friends. The thing I really missed was not being able to have a party for my birthday last weekend. No mystery parcel saying things like "To a person who reads Science Fiction". Can't have everything.

WAYCON '79 REPORT

by Bob Ogden

I always have a hard time remembering details of conventions I have attended as due to lack of sleep combined with large amounts of activity (particularly heady stuff) tends to send my memory on a holiday. But I suppose I should start at the beginning.

It all began in a small suburban hospital in Melbourne at 1.30 am on the 16th April 1955... hmmm, maybe that's going back a little far. How about October 1975 at 31 Kieghtly Road in Perth where I walked in on a bunch of wierdos who liked sf and called themselves mumble, later to be known as the W.A.S.F.A... No?

Well I suppose WAYCON really started about two weeks after SwanCon III, after a brief gaffiation I found myself wandering around raving something about needing something to do. I immediately got involved in the organisation of WAYCON; you think I'd learn! After the usual mish mash of things that go into organising a con the awaited event drew nigh, our GoH Leigh arrived at some incredibly early time in the morning, and after a week of last minute arrangements the con finally got off the ground.

Friday.

As anyone who has organised a convention knows, setting up at the venue is a hair tearing event that can send anyone up the wall; WAYCON was no different. Chaos reigned. I turned up early in the afternoon with a load of stuff then to spend the rest of the day worrying about things that wouldn't go right - buzzes and pops from the sound system, where are those extra chairs and tables, where's the damned projectors - on and on until finally it was time for the registration desk to open and the hoards of people to rush in to entertained by us, and (hopefully) to learn something.

Well things didn't go as I had hoped as there weren't three hundred people there. There were those minor hitches that will always plague conventions but then the con wasn't a disaster. The eastern states fen who showed up seemed to enjoy themselves - and continuously had to assure me that they were - so in all I was pleased with the results and I suppose I'm looking forward to our next convention - Perth in '80.

As the evening progressed and events unfolded the time appointed for my first appearance in the "lime light" approached. This was the debate "SF prepares people for the future". I was to be arguing the anti side of this point of view but due to the non-arrival of one of the speakers hasty rearrangements had to be made so that "the show could go on". I ended up on the pro side, therefore my responses were off the top of my head and tended to be a bit weird. I did strike one interesting point "that if one had read about the possibility of a meteorite destroying this building in an SF novel and the event then happened you would not be as surprised as someone who did not know of this possibility. You would be just as dead but not surprised." Just as I made the point a large block-mounted poster crashed to the floor, adding to my argument immensely as nobody was surprised... or so I then postulated. This was a crushing blow to the opposition and one from which they did not recover.

The rest of the evening I devoted to room parties, of which I remember very little except that I was tending to upset people so I departed to my room for a long overdue rest.

Saturday.

"The War Game" was shown on Saturday and had a very big impact on the audience as at the time China and Vietnam were playing silly buggers and war was forcing itself upon the minds of the average nurk. Fortunately someone up there must like us as no-one has done anything dumb YET. This is probably due to films like "War Game" and although I find it stomach turning I recommend it to all and sundry especially those who glorify war.

Saturday evening was the banquet/fancy dress competition. The response to this was tremendous and some of the costumes had a lot of work put into them. One was a "2001" space suit which I know had a lot of time and money spent on it and there was nearly a mishap when the locking studs got jammed and the helmet (which had no ventilation, being primarily for carrying refuse) caused overheating and half asphyxiated the occupant. Fortunately it was removed in time with Warren (the occupant) almost keeling over. The helmet was not replaced.

Later in the evening Roy Ferguson and myself were presented with lifetime memberships of F.O.C. "in recognition for services to W.A. fandom". I am very proud of this and shall treasure it the rest of my life (as I am a cheap sod and if I can get it free I will definitely use it).

After the banquet broke up a small discussion group set up on the landing. This is where various plans for the direction of W.A. fandom and other good stuff were first discussed (Perth in '80) as well as an extended booze-up session which led to the inevitable puns, the bad ones being rewarded with a request to leap over the balcony railing. This was one of the most satisfying events of the convention.

Sunday.

By now my brain had taken about as much as it could digest so please forgive me for the lack of details. One event that does stand out is that during the weekend there was a heat wave in Perth, therefore I was going through T-shirt like they were going out of style. To counteract this I had washed one and hung it in the window to dry. Unfortunately it fell, not to the ground but to the roof of the public bar which my window overlooked. In a quandry as what to do about this I mentioned this fact to a passing friend and he immediately said, "I have my climbing gear in the car, we could use that" and was prepared to climb out and do a full scale rescue of my T-shirt (he being involved with the St. John ambulance rescue unit). Unfortunately I was able to retrieve it with a bent coathanger and a length of twine. That evening, due to a stuff up in the licensing, we were forced to move our films that were programmed upstairs. This proved much more friendly but less comfortable than the downstairs venue.

Monday.

Monday remains an almost total mystery to me, there being only brief flashes of events that I can now dredge up. Some include the McLaren film "The Eye Hears, The Ear Sees" which, to put it simply, was magnificent. The Silly Competitions also stand out, especially the ornithopter competition (won by Medium Bomber Bevan Casey) and the filming session held later, which must have got some strange looks as twenty or so people flopped around the oval next to the hotel (at rush hour at the intersection of two of the busiest roads in Perth).

Well, after the unjoy of having to stop, and then cleanup, a large group held a dead dog party at Sally Underwood's house from which some eastern fans left to go home and the local fen also went to their closer homes. A large group of very fine people.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE FICTION: NEW STEREOTYPES?

by Jean Weber

This article is dedicated to Leanne Frahm, who asked (in Pithy Paperth VI) a serious and intelligent question regarding stereotypes, and who deserves a serious (and hopefully intelligent) answer. It is also prompted by a remark overheard while leaving the theatre after seeing "Moonraker" recently (1), and by an editorial in the August 1979 issue of *ANALOG*, titled "Equal Rights for Dumb Blondes".

Leanne sums up the problem: "'Real Women', which is what the call is for, are a combination of an enormous number of characteristics, a conglomerate of good and bad, nice and not-so-nice, compassion and nose-picking. But feminists don't seem to want the bad, the not-so-nice, or the nose-picking, which makes me wonder if feminist readers aren't bent on creating their own stereotypes -- a sort of resurrection of the girl's school hockey captain who is always fair, kind, just and athletic?"

I think we're dealing with two distinct (but related) situations here: writers who intend to do decent characterisation in their sf, and those who may tell a darn good story but have essentially cardboard (stereotyped) characters. Although my tastes run mainly to the former, I often enjoy the latter as well (eg. "Moonraker"). Obviously there is space for both types of character (ugh! wouldn't it be boring if everything was serious?) and not necessarily appealing to mutually exclusive audiences.

I very much want to see better characterisation of both men and women in sf, so that the "conglomerate of good and bad" can be expressed. As we all know, characterisation is sadly lacking in most sf stories. In my book review of Marge Piercy's "Women at the Edge of Time" (*Chunder!*, August 1979), I said: "Connie is an excellent example of a 'good' female character... (her) development... from a fiesty but essentially beaten woman, surviving but losing out to 'the system', to a confident, assertive prisoner, is very well drawn..." I didn't say there, in so many words, that Connie was most definitely a mixture of the nice and not-so-nice.

It annoys me when people claim that they want their characters to be "realistic" and then make all the men heroes and all the women idiots (helpless at best). The stereotyped character can often be great fun, but let's not be hypocritical about what is "reality". When a writer creates characters, s/he cannot help but treat their interactions with value-judgements, or her/his perception of "reality". In sf, I firmly believe (as I said in my article on "Feminist SF" in *Giant Wombo Two*) that, in dealing with what might be, "If we're speculating about the future, or devising alternative worlds, a lot of possibilities are being overlooked" (by having no strong women characters). I hope I didn't say or imply that all writers need to write about strong women, though it's easy to sound that way when criticising characterisation by enumerating all the negative examples.

At the same time, and speaking only for myself (other feminists may or may not agree), yes, I would like to see a "new Stereotype" along the lines mentioned by Leanne -- not a stereotype to replace the old ones, but in addition to them. My complaint is that virtually none of the female characters in sf, until the last decade, were really strong, competent individuals, even when allegedly the hero. Male characters, on the other hand, ran a gamut from the stupid and incompetent to the heroic, with a heavy emphasis on herioc in the main characters. I want equal time for heroic women! I do not want to see all

females as heroes; that would be ridiculous. But when I was growing up, there were no female sf characters with whom I could identify, as active, intelligent, competent people. Whereas there were mobs of (usually quite unrealistic) active, intelligent, super-competent males -- who were by no means "real people" but were great fun to read about.

I don't see these two desires of mine as contradictory, because they fill two different needs in my sf reading: for serious thought, and for entertainment. (Obviously there is much overlap as well.) Does this help clarify one feminist's demands for female characterisation?

(1) The remark concerned the female scientist-astronaut-CIA agent, Dr Goodhead: "She wasn't very realistic." True - but is James Bond realistic? You gotta be kidding!

* * * *

COOKERY CORNER

by Leigh Edmonds

When I say that I'm not a big cook that is not to say that I am small in stature, it means that I don't do much cooking. Of course that is not the exact truth but it should be taken to suggest that when it comes to cooking I have a limited vocabulary. My boiled eggs are allright, my scrambled eggs are a bit better and my chops/sausages and vegies are world famous. I am what you might call a specialist.

The following recipe is one of my specialities, it's taken from a book of recipes that Valma made up when she was still at school so this is the only place where it has ever appeared in print (I wonder how many people are now going to write and say that they have one just like it).

SHEPHERD'S PIE:

Ingredients: 1 lb of steak mince; 1 small onion, 1 tomato; 1 small carrot; a couple of ounces of cheese; 1 desert spoon of butter; 1 tablespoon of plain flower; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cold water; salt and pepper; chopped parsley and 4 fairly large potatoes.

Topping: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of milk; 1 tablespoon of butter.

- Method:
- 1/ Peel the potatoes, thinly cut them into evenly sized pieces and boil until tender in as little salty water as possible.
 - 2/ Place mince, grated onion, carrot, flour, water, salt and pepper in a saucepan and stir over a slow heat until brown. Pour into a greased pie dish, smoothing the top.
 - 3/ Mash potatoes with milk and butter until smooth and fluffy.
 - 4/ Place carefully on mince. Smooth then decorate with fork and with butter.
 - 5/ Bake till top is a pale golden brown. ((Then eat.))

Note: The tomato may go under or over the potato, the cheese is grated over the potato. You can garnish with parsley... I never bother.

FEED-BACK

Linda Frankel, 1261 Central Aveune, Apt 302, Far Rockaway, NY 11691, USA

A week ago I picked up the Australian SF novel, A WOMAN OF THE FUTURE by David Ireland. I understand that this is Mr Ireland's first American appearance and that he is highly acclaimed in your country. The response here seems to be favourable, but nowhere in any of the reviews do I see a reference to the book's feminist aspect.

This is scarcely surprising, since the majority of our critics wouldn't know feminism unless it's clearly labelled in huge block letters. Since Mr Ireland and his publisher have been subtle, it's unlikely that anyone here will notice except feminist readers who stumble across it.

I will go so far as to say that despite all the sf trappings, this is basically the story of a woman who becomes dissatisfied with sexist society and decides to free herself. The manner of her exit would be impossible in a mundane novel, of course, but that's just the icing on the cake. It needn't have taken place in a future Australia at all. As far as I'm concerned, the context could just as easily have been present day America or England for that matter.

This is not meant to be an attack on Mr Ireland, who is indeed a very good writer, but I would like to point out that a number of feminist sf books are only marginally sf. The obvious reason is that the authors are unable to make an important statement about contemporary society without removing it into the future or to some other universe. We ought to be glad that sf has become the refuge of the social commentator who wants to bring across a feminist perspective. Yet familiarity with the field would make these novels more convincing.

I personally think that growth of characters toward understanding the application of feminism in their own lives is a defining component of the very best feminist novels. Angry books that lambast patriarchy are easier to write, but are less constructive.

From this point of view I would like to recommend Marion Zimmer Bradley's THE RUINS OF ISIS (Donning, 1978). This novel has been condemned in fan reviews as a re-hashing of the conventional oppressive matriachy novel. Yet what is crucial about this book, that makes it different from all the others in that genre, is what the central character learns about herself and how this oppressive matriarchal society changes. There is a lesson for feminists in the progress of the planet Isis.

Here are some other examples of feminist sf that Jean Weber omitted:

- DEATHBEAST by David Gerrold - watch the typical macho man posture and watch his downfall. Crucial issues are resolved into the metaphor of the hunt.
- MOONSTAR ODYSSEY by David Gerrold - this I found unsatisfactory since it is more than a bit circuitous to attempt to prove that sex roles are arbitrary by making choice of gender important. The journey of children to the island of Option to decide their sex freights the whole question with a cargo of significance it should not have. Though Mr Gerrold didn't intend it, he is stating that anatomy is destiny.
- A VOICE OUT OF RAMAH by Lee Killough - here is role reversal within patriarchy - a truly startling concept that shows the essential sickness of a sexist situation. Can there be freedom for women within patriarchy? Read this book and find out whether such freedom is worth it.
- AT THE SEVENTH LEVEL by Suzette Haden Elgin - If condemnation of a male dominated society is what makes an sf book feminist then this is surely feminist.
- HERLAND by Charlotte Perkins Gilman - this is a recently uncovered utopian novel about a society of parthenogenic females. The exaltation of

motherhood might trouble some contemporary readers.

- THE DOOR INTO FIRE by Daine Duane - A fantasy universe in which a goddess is worshipped and there is a degree of sexual equality, yet too much is seen from a male point of view.

- CALL ME ISHTAR by Rhoda Lerman - a novel about the Goddess Ishtar's visit to the 20th century Earth and how she is mistreated.

I dispute the characterisation of Tiptree-Sheldon's UP THE WALLS OF THE WORLD as a feminist novel. The stampede of the female aliens into our conventional mother role seemed to me satiric and anti-feminist. The stereotyped female characters among the humans also didn't impress me.

Please add Feinzine, edited by Adrienne Fein, 26 Oakwood Ave., White Plains, NY 10605 to your list of feminist fanzines. It's irregular, but worth it.

Ray Faraday Nelson, 333 Ramanda Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530, USA.

"The Wombo Goes West"

The Giant Wombo filled the door, and glanced around the bar,
Upon his hip a staple gun, upon his vest a star,
A deadly silence fell upon the multitude within,
Each patron there had cause to fear that little star of tin.

"Is Edmonds here?" the Wombo growled, and that was all he said,
But from his tone the barflies knew that Leigh was good as dead.
Then Edmonds answered, "Here I am, I been expecting you,
But tell me how you found me out, pray tell me how you knew."

"I found your ballots on the floor," the Wombo said with hate,
"You tried to mail a fanzine that was grossly overweight,"
Then Edmonds jumped the Wombo and began the fateful brawl
That left him where he is today, still stapled to the wall.

Richard Faulder, PO Box 185, Coonamble, NSW 2829.

I was somewhat upset that you accused me of throwing up smokescreens about wife-bashing. Do you think me unaware of the problem? As a teacher in a second-rate country town I can assure that I am not. However I will repeat my assertion that books such as the one at issue do not help to solve the problem, because they look at only half of it. As support for this, I refer to an edition of the ABC's "Science Show" broadcast last year sometime which reported on a survey done in America (with, I think, corroborative comments coming from Australian experts). This survey found that the incidence of violence, both verbal and physical, was equal for both sexes. However, because men are stronger, they tended to do more damage, except when this advantage was cancelled out by the woman having a weapon - domestic murders using a deadly weapon had equal incidence for both sexes. The really basic problem is that most find (whether they recognise it or not) that their lives are aimless. This breeds frustration, and hence domestic violence. A solution will only come about if we can find some way of giving such people a purpose in life. An obvious starting place would be an education system giving a preparation for life, rather than for university/CAE and/or job, as is presently the case. The difficulty would be in convincing the conservatives and/or business community that such a thing would be desirable, let alone possible.

((L.E. This obviously needs more thought than we have space for at the moment. However, some quick thoughts... In her review Valma made the point that one of the reasons wife-bashing is bad is because it teaches the children how to be violent as well - this seems to be in conflict with your assertion that family

violence grows out of futility. Are we talking about different sides of the same coin? Can a person actually be educated out of futility? Further aspects of the wife-bashing issue will be mentioned below.))

Martin R Sharpe, USN, Public Affairs Officer, NCS - Harold E Holt, Exmouth, W.A. 6707.

Jean Weber's article was very well written, and her taste in sf is excellent, but I still wrinkle my nose every time I see an article about feminist sf. American fandom went through a feminism in sf stage about three years ago and for months it was in every zine and at every convention. Feminism isn't a bad thing, quite the opposite, but I have reached my saturation point. At least Ms Weber's article was better than the vast majority of similar articles.

One thing that troubles me, however, is that feminism by its definition must be sexist. True, most people interperate feminism as a woman's (or man's) acknowledgement of her equality with men. Many men consider themselves to be feminists. Wouldn't it be better, however, to consider one's self a humanist rather than a feminist or a chauvinist. "Feminism is the opposite of sexism" is Jean's definition, but not my own.

((L.E. We received quite a few letters which also complained that "Feminism is another form of sexism". All the complaints were from men who seem to feel that they are being discriminated against. Obviously it is not a very nice feeling!

I don't think that I am capable of commenting on this issue as I am biased by being male and this is basically a womens issue. Men are too used to having a say in everything and feeling that they have just as much (if not more) right to be heard and agreed with. I believe that at this time it is important for women to assert themselves and that even though this may demand overreaction it is necessary.

As I am not a woman I really find it extremely difficult to comprehend the sorts of oppressions (some of them very subtle) that even the most fortunate woman has had to undergo. I believe that the movement which will make all people equal will be for the foreseeable future led by women and will therefore be basically something in which they define all the terms.

Twisting a term used by Susan Wood - I have no objections to being considered an honorary-woman (perhaps even an honorary-feminist). At this stage of play it seems to me that the most useful part that men can play is to provide support in the mundane activities, when they are asked.))

Avedon Carol, 4409 Woodfield Road, Kensington, MD 20795, USA.

I was a bit startled to find Valma's review - I thought it was just us crazy American Wiminlibber bitches who published such things. Well, it was a good article, anyway, and particularly interesting to me, as a person who is constantly in a rage over this sort of thing. Few people understand how hard it is to simply turn and run off when being subjected to physical and emotional violence from someone one has loved. Of course, the law makes it more difficult when it comes to married women with children - if she leaves the children behind, she will lose them because she will be legally guilty of abandonment; but if she takes them with her, she is just as likely to lose them for being a child-snatcher. But even for women who aren't married and don't have kids, it is difficult to admit to one's self that one is being brutalized. Even the strongest woman can have trouble tearing herself away from a good manipulator.

GIANT WOMBO 3, edited and produced by Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown, PO Box 433, Civic Square, Canberra, ACT 2608, AUSTRALIA. Please note the change of address. Most issues of this fine fanzine are to be had for about 50¢ per copy if you are lazy, or for articles, decent letters of comment, artwork or trade. Asking nicely has also been known to work on the odd occasion. All the contents are copyrighted for the authors of the items. The editorial policy of this fanzine is to solicit contributions of art and writing, readers are to supply the response in the form of letters of comment and fanzines to read. This fanzine is supposed to be bi-monthly, but so far things haven't turned out that way.

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This fanzine supports the concept of Bob Ogden for DUFF. On the other hand this fanzine does not support the concept of "Australia in '63". We only do it to annoy Carey Handfile and to be different from everybody else. Another fine idea is - Dave Langford for TAFF. The way we're going here you'd think that this is a little political billboard. Right first time.

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