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LARRIKIN 11, April 1987, is edited and published by Irwin Mirsh (2/416 Dandenong Rd, Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA) and Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA). Thanks go to Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels), Pam Wells (British agent), Shep Kirkbride (art, this page), and Craig Hilton (art, last page). All rights revert to contributors after publication. This fanzine is available for written and drawn contributions, letters of comment, and your fanzine in trade (one copy to each of us, please). If there is a 'X' on your mailing label you are in danger of not receiving this fanzine again. Be warned.

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INCIDENT IN A PUB 3

- Perry -

After I started full-time work at the beginning of 1980, I soon came to realise that if I was to have any chance of enjoying my weekend leisure time I would have to, as far as possible, leave my work trials and tribulations behind on the Friday. This realisation led fairly rapidly to the solution of having a few beers after work with a couple of workmates. Beyond the fact that I found this a rather enjoyable pastime I also found that I was able to discover more about the behind-the-scenes machinations of my workplace, as well as giving me the opportunity of releasing a lot of the built-up tensions and bitchiness with people who understood the situations I found myself in.

So it was that when I moved from Canberra to Melbourne I was looking for just such a Friday night drinking session. Luckily enough one of my Canberra acquaintances had moved to Melbourne only a month or so before my arrival and was able to introduce me to the wonders of Izzy's - a small pub in the centre of the city just around the corner from work.

Now Izzy's could, by no means, be considered the most salubrious of drinking establishments that a young lad could walk into, but it certainly has the feel of a working-class pub as well as that Holy Grail of the dedicated drinker - reasonably priced unwatered beer. Generally the place is crowded out but on a couple of occasions I have had the good fortune to find myself sitting in the prime spot - right up against the window of the main bar. It was here for example that I was sitting when the Russell Street Police Station bomb went off (about 500 metres down the road), shaking the windows right along the street and sending police and pedestrians scurrying all over the place.

The great virtue of having a large window in a pub lies in allowing the drinking patrons the opportunity of watching the passing parade of people and cars whenever conversation threatens to devolve into a series of longer and longer embarrassed silences. This was exactly the situation in which I found myself on a certain Friday afternoon a few months back. The

topic of conversation had been going round in circles for about half an hour or so and had finally settled on a subject about which I had little or no interest. There was really nothing left but to stare out the window at the Russell Street traffic.

Now Russell Street is one of those strange Melbourne city streets which firstly has no trams running down it, and secondly (probably as a means of apologising for all that unused space) which allows cars to park along its centre at right angles to the prevailing traffic flow. Most other cities in Australia would probably just put in a median strip and line the street with trees. But not Melbourne - a city which has a love/hate relationship between its trams and its cars; if it can't have one it can't survive without the other.

But to get back to the subject at hand, I was staring out the window of the hotel when I began to realise that I was starting to watch a piece of quite entertaining street theatre taking place in the middle of the street outside. It seemed that two cars (one from each direction) had attempted to pull into an empty parking space in the middle of the road and were parked nose to nose, half in the space and half blocking the through traffic trying to get past. Now, normally, one or other of the two drivers would have realised fairly quickly that they weren't going to make much headway in such a situation and would back off - normally the one who had least of his or her car in the space. But not on this occasion. Both just sat there staring at each other; waiting for the other to blink.

I pointed out this amusing occurrence to my fellow drinkers, who, to their ever increasing enjoyment, began to take sides in the conflict outside and started barracking for the driver of their choice. After some two or three minutes of this, the driver of the car facing us lit up a cigarette and casually leant back in his seat as if he felt he was going to be there for the rest of the evening. Meanwhile the engine was turned off in the other car and it became obvious that things were probably going to get out of hand once tempers became a little frayed around the edges.

Not wanting to be witness to anything more dangerous than a Mexican stand-off, I suggested to the rather jocular crowd that the intervention of a couple of boys in blue might serve to solve the problem, as well as putting the seal on the entertainment. Needless to say, my suggestion was treated with the spiteful disdain it deserved. It did however, lead the discussion towards finding a solution to the dilemma facing the two drivers who looked more and more like they would be there for the duration. Finally, after all manner of resolutions had been extolled, weighed and found wanting - something like two minutes after my suggestion of the police - one of the bigger blokes of the group decided that he had had enough and, coin in hand, started heading for the door, intending to act as impromptu umpire. Followed out by a couple of the more curious (and less thirsty) of us, he proceeded to explain his intention to the two drivers, toss the coin and declare a winner.

Oddly enough, the correct car (i.e. the one with more claim to the parking space) won the toss and the other backed off. When our companions returned from the street to the rapturous applause from the assembled masses, I asked the leader of the intrepid band how the drivers had taken it all. "The guy who left was pretty good," he said. "But she," indicating the woman now getting out of the parked car, "probably would've stayed right where she was." I guess there's just no pleasing some people. Other than the drunken sods you happen to be drinking with, of course. And it doesn't take much in that case.

A LETTER FROM ADELAIDE Foyster Booked! You know how it is. The books have to be moved to a different room and you are never quite sure just how to ~~fill the room~~ use the space efficiently. I had to move a bookshelf from one side of the room to the other, a process which always involves taking all the books out of the shelves, moving the shelves, and then putting the books back. Easy enough, if a little time-consuming.

So I took out the books, and moved the shelves. I started to replace the books and then, looking across to another bookshelf where I had, in an experimental sort of way, arranged the books so that their spines formed straight lines instead of the jagged mess I am so used to, I wondered how much better this set would look if they were all brought together in straight lines at the front of the shelves. "Why haven't I ever thought of this before?" I muttered to myself.

I set about arranging the books in splendid order, with all their spines neatly matching at the front edge of the bookshelves. By the time I had finished the whole thing seemed a most imposing sight: two metres high, each book snuggling smoothly against its neighbours. It was so impressive that I decided to step over to the other side of the room for a better look.

As I reached the other side there was a murmuring, shifting sort of noise. I turned just in time to see two metres of books falling towards me. That's why I have never done it, I reflected as I dodged Remembrance of Things Past and Irwin Porges' biography of Edgar Rice Burroughs; the centre of gravity of the books being so far forward would tend to do that.

The books crashed to the floor, but I was sufficiently nimble, even at my advanced age, to avoid them all. As the noises echoed around the room I recalled the scene in the first Aussiefan film in which I was assassinated by falling pulp sf magazines - FOYSTER PULPED! was the intertitle - and was pleased to think that life does not always imitate art.

The Recent Adventures of Ron Smith. Australia's regular Hugo winner, Ron Smith, has recently not only been indulging in writing poetry; he's gone so far as to read it in pubs. The way Ron tells it, he was very successful as a reader in Melbourne, with fair amounts of applause and congratulation. In Sydney, however, while there was support from a small part of the audience, about three-quarters of them hated his stuff. Somewhat confused and surprised, Smith consulted one of his disapproving listeners who was sufficiently generous as to advise Ron that the reason his stuff was unpopular in Sydney was that it rhymed. Ron slunk away, a beaten man.

Anyway, Ron passed through Adelaide last week, on his way over to Perth for some more cancer treatment. He decided to drive across Australia, and prepared for this by having a few comatose days in a Sydney Hospital and a blood transfusion or two to cheer him up. He reached Adelaide having had to stop only once for major repairs to the car, had a few days rest here, then left for Perth. I'm not exactly sure where he is right now: my first letter from him reported that he had been lost twice to date - once leaving Adelaide and once leaving Port Augusta. However, since he wrote from Ceduna I assume that he has reached somewhere west of that by now. Fans Australia-wide, however, should be on the lookout for a short American in a purple suit.

A Melbourne Note. In 1985 The Notional published a short paragraph reporting on the existence of a fund to raise money for a mural in memory of James, my son with Jennifer Bryce. On Thursday 19 March the completed mural was temporarily installed at the new Queen Victoria Hospital in

Clayton for a visit by the Victorian Health Minister. It was then taken down for security reasons until the hospital is functioning fully. Steph Campbell, Rowena Cory, and Chris Johnston, aka GASPP (Graphic Art Suitable for Practical Purposes), who produced this very large piece of art, working up to the last minute to complete it and the transparencies (which is all I've seen at this stage) reveal it to be a beautiful piece of work in the typical GASPP style for children's books. We are very grateful to Steph, Rowena, and Chris for all their work, and to those whose donations made it possible. We hope that donors and others will take an early opportunity to look at the result after the hospital opens.

...OF THE BEEP Everyone hates telephone answering machines. Certainly I've never heard a good word said about them. And not even their owners like them; I was recently met by an answering machine where I was apologised to for having encountered the thing. Then came a series of "umm" and "ahh"s throughout the instructions, which ended with "You can leave your message, umm, after the beep... I think."

- Irwin -

I'm always on the lookout for ways to get back. One idea takes advantage of the half minute we are usually given in which to place our message. Time your message so that your first twenty seconds is pleasant chit-chat, then say you are ringing to discuss something important, you aren't at home for the next week, but can be contacted at... at which point your message will stop being recorded.

But the best idea is to get the machine out of the way. What you do is record your message on tape, which you play over the phone on a cassette machine which is running on some near-flat batteries. The person at the other end of the line hears your slowed down message and sends the answering machine in for repair. I'm told that it will be six months before they discover that there was never anything wrong.

LETTERS FROM OUR MATES (issues 8 and 9) - compiled by Perry -

As just about everyone in the free world has probably realised by now, Irwin won GURF recently and will be travelling to England for Worldcon. Given that this fanzine is edited by the two of us we are struck with those problems of fanzine publishing mechanics that bedevil all fanzine editors from time to time. Brian Earl Brown obviously realises the problems we are getting ourselves into.

What will become of Larrikin with one of its editors galivanting all over a foreign continent? Will it be suspended while Irwin is away? Will Perry attempt to put out those three monthly issues all by himself? Or will Irwin continue to co-edit whilst trying to live out of a suitcase. This last would certainly make for a unique fanzine. We've had co-edited fanzines, bi-continental co-edited fanzines, and even tri-continental fanzines but never a bi-continental co-edited in transit fanzine before. 'twould be one for the records.

It certainly would but I have no intention of setting any records at the moment so I am left with the only option of going to England as well. The fact that Irwin and I will be out of the country at the same time poses some interesting problems but as we will only overlap overseas by about a month or so, I guess we will overcome. Whether the issues will continue to be monthly is another matter entirely.

The article that caused the most comment from the two issues under consideration here was my satirical piece on the shape of Australian fandom in 1986. John Foyster liked it, one correspondent from New Zealand didn't realise it was a joke and a couple of others said it was amusing even if they didn't get all the references. On the other hand several people wrote to say that they didn't enjoy it at all for various reasons. Michelle Hallett:

I thought your article in rather bad taste, the only redeeming factor being that you panned yourself along with everyone else. It was the fact that you included yourself that made me think you were trying for humour and which prompted this comment, I think maybe that if you are trying for humour you have to go a little lighter on the putdowns. Not that I'm an expert mind you but I'm just trying to help you think about how to do humour right. Contrary to Marc Ortlieb's comments in recent Tiggers I don't think humour is about laughing at others and have told him so as well. I think it's more about seeing the ridiculous in any situation and letting others see and enjoy it. You didn't succeed in doing this, there was too much a sense of "look at what a stuffup we all are, we'll never get it right" attitude in your article. It lacked any sense of pride or mitigating good humour.

Strong stuff, and obviously deeply felt. Unfortunately I don't agree with a lot of the statements you make. You seem to imply that the article was basically a series of putdowns and laughs at other people's expense. Nothing could be further from my original intention. Lucy Sussex and Richard Faulder mildly castigated me for using "not only mundane but incomprehensible" pseudonyms, with Lucy wanting monikers more in line of those displayed in The Motional (e.g. George Turnip and Damien Rubberduck). Again not the effect I was after. It is odd though that Lucy was the only person referred to in the article who wrote in requesting an explanation of her name. Maybe all the others have it all figured out.

Harry Warner, Jr. has probably read more fanzines than the rest of fandom combined but even he...

... had never heard or read anything anywhere about the party line facilities described by Larry Dunning. I'm surprised that the United States phone companies haven't borrowed Australia's idea, if it provides additional income for management. We are already subjected to all sorts of telephone tie-ins on television programs: register your opinion on this or that national issue by placing a call to one of two numbers, one of which means yes and the other no; or predict which team will win the big game that starts in an hour by dialling the number designated for the team of your choice; or otherwise making your telephone opinion heard, at a cost of usually 50¢ per call.

The most recent telephone poll of this sort here in Oz has been used to determine the public's response to a new nation-wide series of AIDS commercials. Before you know it we'll have to decide whether a television commentator looks better with or without a beard. Stupid waste of time as far as I'm concerned.

For the last year or so of my time in Canberra I was involved with the running of the Australian National University Film Group - a non-profit film society showing five or six films a week on a large screen. One of the major problems we encountered over the years was that of rapidly dropping attendances. The response to my article about cinema audiences gave me some answers. Linnette Horne:

I agree with your comments on digital watch beeper alarms in cinemas. You

always know when the top of the hour comes around with a mass of beeping breaking out. Have you ever been watching a film with a mass of children in the cinema? There is the constant mumble of talk no matter what is happening on the screen. This situation is added to when you have the sounds of paper rustling, chippies being chomped and sweets rolling round the floor. With this sort of thing happening does it surprise you that people are buying videos and watching the same movies in comfort of their own homes?

Not in the least. I saw Ghostbusters a couple of years ago at a matinee session with (what seemed like) a thousand childish voices yelling "Who ya gonna call..". Richard Brandt remembered that...

... even my all-time favourite moviegoing experience - catching the opening night of The Exorcist II: The Heretic, before the studio yanked it out of theaters and made 172 cuts to try and take out the unintentional laughs - is indelibly colored in my memory by the lady a couple of seats away who appeared to be suffering from terminal post-nasal drip.

In keeping with his almost unblemished record of responding to each and every fanzine he receives Harry Warner, Jr. wrote regarding a subject that is close to his heart.

Jenny Blackford's nostalgia piece causes me to suspect that a full-length history liberally sprinkled with anecdotes should be devoted soon to the Nova Mob. I gave my eyebrows some exercise when I came to hear reference to Bruce Gillespie's reluctance to go more than a mile from his own home, however. I have the clear memory of Bruce paying me a visit in Hagerstown some years back. I know the world is growing smaller all the time, but even now Hagerstown is more than a mile from Collingwood.

WAHF: John Berry, Marilyn Fride, Jean Weber, Richard Brandt, and John Foyster who writing about his move to Adelaide notes that the city is generally uncomfortably hot. Why do you think I moved John? Glen Crawford, Richard Faulder, Eric Lindsay, Mervyn Barrett, Pamela Boal (suffering what sounds like post-Yuletide depression) and Geo Bondar who writes with the news that British Telecom now offers a service called "Talkabout" which sounds a lot like Larry Dunning's party-lines. Anything to make money I guess. John McPharlin trying to put a stop to all this Sunday nonsense (fat chance), Pam Wells and Mike Glicksohn hinting that he would like to be considered for the Australian cricket team at Brighton - something about having been on the previous team because he is Canadian. Sounds like a flimsy excuse to me. Stewart Jackson, Lucy Huntzinger, Gerald Smith, Craig Hilton, and Dave Collins (twice) who enjoyed Wendy's "Treasury Follies" but who can't understand that "if Lina worked in a bank why wasn't she lynched by the people who had an account there?" Not enough good taste probably. One of the most amusing of the lot, however, was from Angus Caffrey: "Dar Prry: Plas kp snding m Larrikin. I havn't writtn becaus my typwritr won't typ th ltr ." It'll only keep the big red "X" away once Angus.

A FANNISH STRIKE

- Irwin -

To enter a Ten-Pin Bowling Alley is to enter the sad, tacky side of nostalgia. Overweight people wearing ugly shirts, heaving fifteen pound balls down an alley at poor defenseless pins, in one of the few 50s fads to have never made it back into fashion. The Moorabin Ten-Pin Bowling Centre is particularly tacky, in that it can't even get its cute concepts right: they call their cafe the "29th Lane." Golf clubs often call their bar the "19th Hole," the implication being that it is the place

to be after a round of golf, and I would've thought a ten-pin bowling alley proprietor would be the first to know that a game of bowling consists of ten frames and not 28 lanes. I know about this tacky side of the Mooribin Bowl as I was recently there in the company of Wendy, Carey Handfield, Justin Ackroyd, and Jenny Chudecki.

The latter three arrived at our place on time, but Wendy and I hadn't finished washing up after lunch, so our bowling partners were privileged to watch us wash dishes. Sitting at our kitchen table Jenny was rather annoyed to find out that Wendy was going to Eastercon 87, as it meant that she too would have to attend. From there we started talking about who else will be at the con. A few names were listed, before Justin remembered our guest of honour. As soon as Justin had mentioned her first name Wendy butted in: "You mean Lucy 'We're just good friends' Huntzinger."

Before he could think of a retort Justin's face went red, and Wendy received a congratulatory "Goodonya Wendy" from Jenny.

We all piled into Wendy's zippy little Toyota Corolla Hatch, talking about a meal after bowling, to replace the mountains of fat we would be burning off. From there we got onto the topic of Melbourne's Monthly Fannish Meals, and Wendy and I mentioned that it was about time Roger Meddall organised one. "Don't hold your breath waiting," was one response. "You'll never get Roger to do that," was another.

A little further down the road Justin mentioned that Carey "has something to tell you." With a nice, proud smile Carey told us the love in his life. Gee, it was nice to hear. And it put a lie to Lucy H. and Bryan Barrett's recent comment that Carey "is doomed to Smoffish bachelorhood." (See AbbatQir 1.)

Soon we were inside the Lanes, being told that we'll have a wait of a hour before getting a game - twenty of the lanes were being used by a League and they still had a few games to go. For the most part the members of the League presented the typical image of the Ten-Pin Bowler: competitive, overweight, solid chaps, who, if the place was licensed, would've taken a large swig of beer between frames. We sat down to be entertained by Gerry, one of the larger members of the League, who tossed the ball down the lane with a heap of power but no finesse. He certainly was good value, especially with the earth shattering jump of self-congratulation he would give off a moment before the ball hit the pins. Quite a contrast to my reaction to leaving a pin standing.

While watching Gerry, Justin proceeded to tell me a lot of the Smoffish secrets the likes of me aren't meant to know. You know the sort of thing: who is going to win a Hugo over the next three years, who is gonna win the next four GUFF races, who published The Motional, and which pin will be left standing the next time Gerry propels the ball down the cedar. I thought Justin was going to tell me which sci-fi author the Melbourne in 89 Natcon bid had invited as their guest of honour, but he stopped short of that.

A couple of hours later we were through with the bowling and it was time for dinner, so we adjourned to a Mexican restaurant for a fine mess of eating. During the meal Wendy and I noticed a curious piece of evolution on how Justin regarded the forthcoming DUFF tourist: it was now "Lucy 'We're extremely, close, intimate, (etc) friends' Huntzinger." And in the good camaraderie of the night I let our quite a few embarrassing statements. Fortunately my notebook fails to recall any of those quips.

It does, however, record the bowling scores, worse luck. After a good

first game in which I just failed to finish second things looked on the way up. Half way through the second game I was in the lead, but I bombed out to finish last. And I just magaged to make it to equal fourth/last in the final game, but only after I hit a strike - my only one for the day - in the last frame. Carey won the first two games with a rather consistent performance in which he was a pin or two better per frame than the rest. In the final game he scored 33 better than either of his first two games, but it wasn't good enough. Justin pulled out all stops, putting together a string of seven straight frames of just strikes and spares, to finish thirteen better than Carey. It was an onthralling battle in which Justin could never be sure he was safe from being overtaken. An equally onthralling contest occurred between Carey and Jenny, to see who could toss the ball the furthest down the lane. The thud of the ball landing provides quite a counterpoint to the sight of a bowling ball gliding through the air for twenty metres. But the extreme highlight came on Justin's last frame of the second game. Having scored 97 in the first game Justin was 91 with one frame to go. Desperate for a century he knocked over seven pins with the first ball. Carefully he lined up for the second ball, eyeing the three standing pins, all in a near line down the centre of the lane. His approach was fine and steady, with a nice clean follow-through upon the release of the ball. Expectantly we followed the ball's progress down the centre of the lane. The closer the ball got to the pins the more it looked as if Justin had his century. The ball hit the first pin, which speared over to the left. But instead of continueing in its straight line the ball was deflected to the right. Two pins standing Justin was a defeated man.

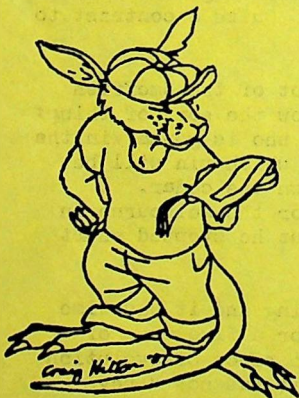
VALE

Terry Carr

He will be missed.

PRINTED MATTER

ALI KAYN



LARRIKIN 11

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