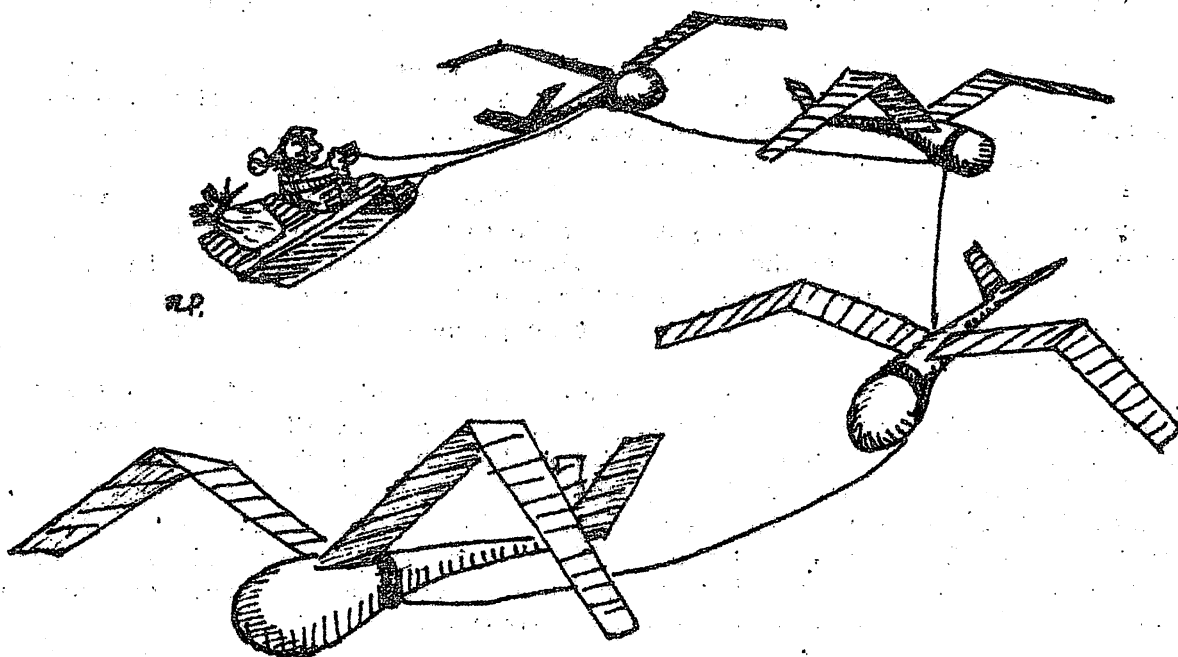


"All I want for Christmas is me two front teeth,
Me two front teeth, me two front teeth, and...

ORNITHOPTER NINE

No substitute for teeth, but still fairly useful, this fanzine is edited and published by Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square, Canberra, ACT 2608, Australia for the coming mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, the Spectator Amateur Press Society and some others by way of saying g'day!

Special Christmas Festivities Issue



Oh Ghod! It can't be Christmas time already!

If you were to ask me (if you should feel the need that is) I would tell you that Christmas isn't what it used to be. In the good old days Christmas was feeling as though you were going to be sick of to die from being overfed at the Christmas Dinner Table. These days it's different. It's not that I've grown bigger and the helpings seem to have shrunk, no, these days Christmas seems to be a series of that Morning-after when you think you're going to die as a result of all that you've drunk. Of course, if you've got that sort of drastic feeling at an event similar to the Mervyn Bims Christmas party you might also feel overfed as well.

"Must remember to lay off Merv's rough red next year" is the general muttering. But of course, if you're anything like me you'll forget that sort of promise in the following twelve months.

The big question about Christmas, I mean the really big question about Christmas, isn't where we are going to get the money to pay for it or whether we will get that authogrphed Ballard we've always wanted - no, the big question is "Why do we keep on doing it to ourselves?" The answer, I fear, is hidden deep in the subconscious rumblings of the human brain. If, by any chance, you happen to know the answer, well I don't think that I want to know it just yet. Try me out around next August or September.

To be honest for a moment (and just a moment) I suppose that I must admit that, living here in Canberra away from the evil influence of the likes

of Mervyn Binns, Bruce Gillespie and John Foyster, I live a much more wholesome lifestyle. It seems that I rarely get to bed after 10.30 in the evening and rarely overindulge in grog. Some people might wonder how it is possible to live in such a way but I assure you that after a lot of practise it is possible. Plays hell with the style at conventions though...

Those who remember me from my early days in fandom, when everybody said that I was sweet and innocent, will be pleased to learn that I am heading back in that direction again. I'm afraid that I haven't yet found a cure for the somewhat depraved look which became engraved on my features during the time that I was knocking around with Lee Harding, but perhaps if I hang around Canberra long enough something will turn up.

But as I was saying, about the Festival of Christmas that is, there's not that much that you can do to get away from it. There is no place that you can go and nothing you can do that will get you away from the advertising, the apparent good cheer and all the other trappings.

The other thing is, have you noticed the way the season seems to get a little bit longer every year. Why, it's getting to the stage now where, at my place of employment, I am able to plead off some of the earlier festive functions with the excuse that I have to study for exams - and they don't generally take place until the first or second week in November.

The other thing about Christmas which isn't much fun is this business of buying presents. I ask you... who can afford to buy presents for other people when they can't even afford to buy the latest copy of IASFM - not that I would want to admit to buying that and I suppose that you wouldn't either. No, if you've seen me in the newsagents looking at a copy it's only been that I've been looking for a present for an aged aunt. Not only are there all the relatives, there are the friends as well... now you know the real reason that we moved to Canberra and it's saved us a fortune.

Of course some people are really quite civilised about presents. Paul Stevens and I had a really useful system going for a few years there, we used to give each other plastic model aeroplane kits. One year I'd give him a model of the Fairey Battle and he'd give me a model of a Messerschmitt Bf-109. The next year I'd give him a Bf-109 kit and... you get the picture...

Well now, changing the subject a bit, I'm sure that you're all interested in knowing what has driven me to produce two issues of the one fanzine within such a short period of each other. Afterall, regularity in fanzine production is not something to be encouraged, is it? No, the point of this exercise isn't to do with regularity or anything like that, it's to give you something to read while you're wishing that you hadn't touched that rough red at Merv's party; or the punch at the Sydney SF Foundation do, or that flagoned stuff at the WASEFA party, or whatever it is that you consumed at whatever fannish Christmas party you went to. It is also guaranteed to be useful for filling in the boring hours during the forced visit to cousin Bertie or the long waiting in queues trying to buy an icecream at that fashionable holiday resort.

To help things along a bit - you don't want to read a fanzine written completely by me at a time like this do you - I've asked a couple of other people to help out a little. but first...

WHAT'S GOING DOWN UP DOWN UP DOWN UP DOWN UP AT THE FACTORY

Oh Ghod! It can't be Christmas time already! You've got no idea what looking at the latest Orrite Ornithopter Production Systems prototype on a test flight can do to a person after a hard night at the drawing office party followed by

the sales department chook and bubbly breakfast.

Never again, no, not ever!

And the next time that the test pilot decides to do a loop at any time in the festive season it will be instant demotion to the lowest tank of the cleaning staff. Bucket and mop activities will be the order of the day.

I don't even

want to talk about it any more....

THE FIRST "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

I tell a lie, we won't print almost anything. We print only the choicest, the most fresh and succulent fanzine contributions. This first one is from the world famous Marc Ortlieb and was specially commissioned for this issue.

"Write something for our Christmas issue or we'll tell everybody all the details of what you did in New Orleans during your recent visit to North America," we said. "But I didn't go to New Orleans," he replied. "That's what you'd like us to think," we concluded, knowingly.

ROSCOE'S MOUSE

Marc Ortlieb

The children of Ghetto City knew that something was in the air. For weeks now the adults had spoken in nothing but conspiratorial whispers. Considering the continual feuding in Ghetto City this was not that uncommon, but when Gillespie was seen thus whispering to "Tiny", the City's resident magic lantern show afflictionardo, even a child could see that events beyond the usual were shaping up.

Then there was the matter of the packing case which had arrived with the annual Pestiferous Snail from Mundania. The kids had displayed their usual interest in the Snail's arrival, only to find it surrounded by a ring of Ghettoites that came close to the number that had turned out to welcome the previous month's Beam shipment. The Firsters and Wavers had combined to keep the kids out of sniffing distance of the shipment as it was transported from the Snail Depot to Miz Kitty's General Store, and, once there, a permanent guard was mounted on the store. The kids were not even permitted to buy their weekly ration of licorice imitation chewing tobacco.

Naturally, in the best Heinlein juvenile tradition, the kids set out to solve the mystery. Being too young to understand the intricacies of committee organisation, they chose a leader by the honoured tradition of determining whose father had the biggest mimeograph. Thus it was that little Jaquie Hermansson was elected to the chair.

"Listen guys," she said. "What we need is some grown-up who's a sucker for a little childish sweet talk."

"What about Uncle George?" asked Peta La Trequé.

"Don't be silly!" interrupted Clare Rampage. "None of us kids would be able to understand anything he said even if he did decide to tell us something."

"Wait!" said Jaquie, banging her father's gavel, which she'd snuck out of the house for this very contingency. "It's simple. All we have to do is butter up Deputy Rega. He's not much older than us, and if anyone's stupid enough to tell us what we want to know, it's him."

Murmurs of assent passed around the group.

"Now here's what we'll do," continued Jaquie. "First, Erica, I want you to sneak a bit of your daddy's Beam out of his liquor vat. Kev. You're to offer

to help the deputy mix a new batch of paste for his wanted posters. Janie. You can get that full colour portrait of your mother at last year's masquerade. Then we'll meet back here, and I'll explain the rest."

The next day saw the plan swing into action. Deputy Rega was hard at work pasting up posters featuring an ex-member of the Puddin Gang and his wife, captioned -

WANTED - FOR ACTS OF MALICIOUS SABOTAGE

and had been guided down a back alley behind the school house by Kev, his newly appointed pastepot carrier and brush washer. Just as he was about to suggest to Kev that folks of Ghetto City weren't likely to see posters there, his eye was caught by a full length portrait of Calamity Jane in the costume she'd worn at the last annual masquerade. As his eyes sprang back into their sockets he barely had time to muse that the term "worn" was very much a courtesy expression, before being rendered unconscious by the combined efforts of twenty small bodies.

When he came to he found himself securely tied into a comfy chair in an ill-lit basement. He was, he noted, surrounded by most of Ghetto City's sub-adult population.

"Good Morning Uncle Rega," they choroused. Rega winced as the voices triggered a headache the like of which he'd not experienced since the night after getting blotto on a foul concoction given to him by some passing sheep herder. Jaquie Hermansson pointed her Star Wars water pistol towards his mouth. "Open wide Deputy," she said, and as he did so she squirted a slug of Beam down his throat with unerring accuracy. "Little hair-of-the-dog should help you," she continued with a little smirk.

"Mighty kind of you Missy, but would you mind telling me how come I'm hog tied like this?"

"Why Deputy," Jaquie replied. "We just wanted a little talk with you."

As Rega's jaw dropped, a second slug of Beam spat up from the zap gun to splatter against his tonsils.

"Say," Rega commented, his voice starting to mellow under the influence of the liquor, "you're a pretty good shot with that thing. Mind you, I bet you couldn't do it again."

"I wouldn't put money on that Deputy," muttered Le Treque. "Her daddy done trained her to handle a rod since she was a tiny squirt."

As if to prove the statement, Hermansson placed three quick shots straight down Rega's gullet. The Deputy was not noted for his ability to hold liquor, and as these blasts hit his stomach lining, he felt a warmth begin to spread through his body, leaving a pleasant tingling in his tongue and other extremities. He found himself forgetting what he was doing tied up in a dimly lit basement, and when the cute little girl sitting at his feet asked him to tell them a story about the things that came with the Pestiferous Snail, he was all too happy to comply.

"You see kids," Rega started, "it's a long story, and, seeing as how I rarely see you younnuns at Old Tin World's Sunday School Classes, I guess I'd better start from the beginning.

"Far, far above the clouds, somewhere over the rainbow there lies the mythical land of Minneapolis, where all good trufans go when they die. Folks say its the sort of magic place where there's apa collations every day, and parties every night, and minac grows on trees. Trufans there can sit around all day playing filk songs, or just watching the zeppeling go by.

"I could sit here all day telling you of all the folks who live there, and even then I wouldn't get through anywhere near half of them, but it happens that Our Lhord Roscoe was one of the folks that had made Minneapolis his home, and it was there that he parked his rocket. Any of you kids know anything about that rocket?"

"Sure deputy," piped up little Kevie Dillon. "My pappy done told me that every July Fourth, Lhord Roscoe gets in his rocket ship, and blazes across the heavens as a sign to them of us what believes in him."

"Why that's right Kev. That's what he does alright. And I'm sure I don't have to tell you that Lhord Roscoe is a beaver with the biggest, flattest tail you ever done seen, but, what you may not know, is that Roscoe had a friend, a little mouse, called Roscoe's Mouse. A mouse if kindov like the gerbils we have infesting our houses, only smaller, and old Roscoe he was terribly fond of this mouse, seeing as how they was related through an offshoot of the family called Darwin.

"The mouse had hisself another friend, this friend being Saint Fanthony. You younguns may not have heard of him. He's what the olderfolks call a patron saint, and, seeing as how he was responsible for mimeographs, and small furry creatures, the mouse and him got on real fine. Indeed, it seemed that old Saint Fanthony liked that there mouse more'n he liked Roscoe hisself. As Saint Fanthony put it; 'Lhord Roscoe's tail is far too flat for my liking, mouse, but your tail comes quickly to the point.'

"Now, it came to pass that Lhord Roscoe got to hear of the friendship that had sprung up between Fanthony and the mouse, and he got terribly jealous. Why, even the Lhord Roscoe ain't perfect, though he comes a sight closer to it than do the sort of kids who'd kidnap a poor deputy in the course of his lawful duties."

Jaquie Hermansson raised her zap gun. "Hey deputy, stick to the point, huh, or I'll load this with Brandy."

Rega blanched. "Sure sissy. Anything you say. So anyways, the Lhord Roscoe got to brooding a lot, and it come to pass that one of his broody days was the Fourth of July, when he was supposed to fly his firey spaceship across the heavens. Stead of doing that, he just sat in his dam, sipping blog. Well, the folks tried to get him to come out, but he just wouldn't listen. He'd gotten himself too damn cantankerous that he wouldn't even pay no heed to his little mouse.

"Well, the mouse didn't know what to do. He knew that all trufans who'd never gotten to Minneapolis would be sorely vexed if Roscoe's spaceship wasn't seen in the sky that night, so that there mouse went down to the pad, strapped himself into the rocket, and took off, trailing great streams of firey glory the like of which had never been seen before. Course, being a mouse, he never done thought of things like G forces, and when the rocket done landed on autopilot, the ground crew went inside, and found the poor little fella squashed flatter'n a pancake. They had to use an egg lifter to get him out of the seat.

"Now old Roscoe, he was kindov cut up by the news. It brought him out of his brooding right well good. Course, he blamed himself, and rightly so at that. If'n he hadn't been so ghod damned selfish, his little mouse friend would have still been with him. Still, he was determined that his friend's sacrifice wouldn't be totally in vain, and he looked for a way that he could commemorate his buddy's actions.

"As it happened, it was Saint Fanthony who actually came up with the idea.

Fanthony had tried to get mad at Roscoe, but somehow he couldn't bring himself to do it, what with seeing Roscoe so miserable and all. So he went up to Lhord Roscoe and said, 'Hey, I got an idea. See, the mouse he was a little critter and he died trying to maintain folks faith in fandom. What say we have ourselves an annual special day, just to remember him, and at the same time, to remind us of why he died we could give little folks all over the world printing sets so as to keep the spirit of trufandom alive in their hearts. We could hold it on the mouse's birthday. When was the little critter born?'

"Well, old Roscoe picked his teeth, and said, 'I can't rightly say. He was a Christmas present.'

"Then that's it!" replied Fanthony. "We'll hold the celebrations on December Twenty-fifth, only, instead of Christmas, we'll call it Roscoe's Mouse.'

"And that's how it happened. Roscoe was so pleased that he gave Saint Fanthony a special mail truck, pulled by twelve tiny ornithopters, so as how he could get to the house of every good little fannish child in the world on the same night, and leave a little printing set for every good little fannish boy and girl, and a hektograph kit for every bad little fannish boy and girl. Well, Roscoe figured that the carrot and stick technique was worth promoting.

"Roscoe, he was going to go himself, but then he realised that this would be just hogging the egoboo, and that's why he gave the truck to Saint Fanthony. Now Roscoe spends every Christmas in his lodge, as do all his wild cousins.

"Mind you, it didn't work out quite as might have been, seeing as how Real Soon Now is one of the laws of nature. So it was that Fanthony only got around to making the trip every five years or so. Still, it happens that this very night you'll hear the swishing of little wings and, long as you've been good fans, and so long as you don't open your eyes, why, the very next morning, you'll see them little printing sets all gleaming at the foot of your beds."

The deputy stopped, and looked hopefully in the direction of the Beam filled water pistol. His throat had gotten mighty dry with all that unaccustomed talking. From the kids there was only a deathly silence. Each of the Ghetto City children looked at themselves, and then at him, wondering if by kidnapping him they had not doomed themselves to an eternity of purple hands. It was Clare who broke the silence.

"Bullshit!" she said. "You don't really think that Ghetto kids'd be niave enough to be taken in by that sort of crud, do you. There ain't no such person as Saint Fanthony. Any kid'd tell you that it's just fathers dressed up in wigs and false beards."

"Don't forget the pollow stuffed under the jacket," Kev interjected.

"Hell, my old man don't need one of them," continued Clare. "He done got himself a spare tyre that does fine. But anyways, I figure I know what's in that there packing case now. If'n I'm not mistaken, that's jam packed with rubber stamp sets."

Jaquie banged the gavel to calm the resultant chaos. "You're right Clare. Still, we don't want to let the old folks know that we know what's going on. Might spoil the whole thing for them. Tell you what, we'll just slip old Rega here a sip of ditto fluid, 'n he won't remember a thing that happened here. Then we'll just hang up our Lord Of The Rings tights by the fireplace, like our folks'll tell us to do, and then ack kinda surprised like when we find the printing sets in the morning."

And, sure enough, the very next morning, the children found they had a stocking filled with little rubber letters, and they settled down to the traditional

Roscoe's Mouse Dinner of bouncing potatoes and lime jellow while their parents poured a glass of the traditional Roscoe's Mouse Spirit, and allowed it to slid smoothly down their gullets, happy to know that they'd engineered Saint Fanthony's visit without the kids suspecting a thing.

And high up in the stratosphere, there was the swishing of what might have been ornithopter wings, and a deep jovial chuckle.

WHAT WE DID FOR OUR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

Well, it's a bit difficult to report of a holiday you haven't taken yet so Valma and I specially went and invented a Christmas holiday just so that I could write about it here. I mean to say, what sort of Christmas entertainment fanzine would this be if it didn't contain a bit of a trip report?

As most people will know, there are always problems in picking that holiday destination unless, of course, one happens to be within striking distance of a WorldCon each year. But Valma and I thought about it for a while and finally decided that it was about time that we took the opportunity to do some investigating on behalf of fans around the world. We thought that we would attempt to uncover one of the greatest mysteries of the fannish world and so we resolved to go and visit Eric Lindsay in his lair, to study him in his native environment. We felt that there was the possibility of finding out why it is that the mild mannered Eric Lindsay we know and love in Australia contrasts with the stories we hear of the alleged hard-drinking, hard-fanning, womanising fan-of-the-world we hear about from overseas. We hoped that, by going to see the subject at home we would get some answers.

One of the most enjoyable things about going anywhere is the actual experience of getting there. For this reason Valma and I allowed ourselves a day to travel the three hundred kilometers from Canberra to Faulconbridge.

The first stage of the trip took us on the raod from Canberra to Goulburn past the magnificent Lake George, which was unfortunately fairly empty. We didn't stop to look at the lake although there are plenty of opportunities to do so because the area is where brown snake collectors go to collect their specimins.

The first stop was at the tiny hamlet of Collector which has but one claim to fame. In about 1865 the bush-ranger John Dunn leaned out of the window of the Collector pub one morning and shot dead a police constable. There is a monument on the spot where the constable fell to mark the unfortunate event and the pub, which is still there, is of course called the Bushranger Hotel. However we didn't stop at the pub, we stopped at the service station where we noticed that you can now buy tea towels commemorating the event. The odd thing is that there was a picture of Ned Kelly in his famous helmet on the towel, not exactly the right sort of thing as Ned didn't wear it until 1880 and I don't believe that anybody else had thought of it before that. Still, I bet that such a fine point doesn't stop too many people from buying the things.

After a quick stop in Goulburn we drove on a few miles and pulled into a rest area which was set up with a water tank, some tables, a pleasant view and millions of flies. There isn't much you can do about the latter.

The bush in the region between Canberra - which is in the Southern Highlands - and Faulconbridge - which is in the Blue Mountains - is all fairly undulating land with many patches of undisturbed bush close to the road. You can see that the native bush is fairly dense and when you consider that only a couple of hundred years ago that bush covered everything, it is impossible not to respect the abilities and endurance of those earlier

settlers in forcing their way through it and for clearing it. Often we would come to the top of a rise in the road and suddenly be overlooking a vista of a bush covered plain in the harsh November sunlight and... well I may be becoming more attached to the country as I grow older, but I feel, when looking at something like that and smelling the air and feeling the heat from the sun, that I wouldn't want to live anywhere else...

The next stop was at another small town, this time a place called Berrima, which is also famous for its pub. This time though the fame is a bit more worthy of celebration because the place is the oldest continually licensed pub in Australia, having been open for business non-stop since 1833 or 1835 (my memory for dates isn't what it might be).

The Berima region is interesting because by about 1810, when the penal colony of New South Wales was twenty-two years old, the first organised expedition reached the area. The reason for having gone that far from the centre of the colony at Sydney was not to actually find anything but to prove, in a concrete fashion to the convicts who held this odd belief, that one could not walk to China by escaping south from the settled areas. Nobody knows how many convicts ran away to the south and thought they would get to China, but ending up dead alone in the bush which must have seemed terribly alien to them.

Next there was but a short drive to the town of Mittagong. The first place we stopped there was at the site where the first blast furnace in Australia had been set up in 1849. All that now remains is some rock which has been worked to serve as the foundation for the furnace and has been flattened off and cut into the side of a hill just outside the town. The furnace was not a success because the iron ore in the area wasn't that good and because in those days it was more expensive to transport the smelted iron the hundred or so miles to Sydney by land than it was to import it from Britain by sea. The difference between the two prices was something like two pence but in the days before protection (tariffs that is) the local works were simply doomed to failure.

The other interesting item at that site is the first sheet of stainless steel rolled in Australia. It is mounted in a frame and still looks almost as gleaming new as the day it was made.

We spent the next hour or so in Mittagong, just driving around and looking at the scenery and the houses. The town might not be a bad place to live.

There was one particularly magnificent house set close to a beautiful little lake which, we were later told by the woman at the tourist information centre, was perhaps the oldest house in the town. It wasn't really very big, but of classic colonial design, in stone with a corrugated iron roof and a verandah all the way along the front. It would have been workers cottages in the first place and the current owner had apparently spent a fortune restoring it. The result was a house that I would not hesitate to live in. There were a few other places which we would not hesitate over for too long either.

We arrived at Eric's place after a bit more travelling through the sprawling outskirts of Sydney. (And this is where the story really starts.) From the outside there is nothing which would indicate that a fan of great mystery lived within. There is, of course, some indication that the owner is a fan because the garden is a strictly *laissez-faire* affair. His house is nothing to draw breath either - but then he would tell you that he designed it to be functional, not to be an aesthetic wonder.

The house is on two levels, downstairs is where all the work happens, and upstairs is where all the rest of the work happens too. Eric seems to be one of those fans not given to worrying about

the look of things, if they work then they are just fine.

Eric also uses his house as a sort of two story random-access storage device. There are books and magazines and bits of paper everywhere. One is quick to notice that one of the main differences between Eric's place and most fannish residences is that whereas most fans allow their places to become overinhabited by stf books, magazines and fanzines, Eric has books and magazines about computers all over the place. This latest and most passionate of the Lindsay interests is reflected in the fact that Eric has a micro computer upstairs and yet another downstairs as well. Knowing Eric a little I would guess that he has come to this arrangement so that he can get to one of them quickly when he wants to. It may also allow him to have different things loaded into the different machines, a sort of time sharing arrangement which also helps to keep him fit. Eric would probably point out that the two machines are of different design, which, I suppose, makes sense if Eric is into collecting editions...

On the other hand, as our stay progressed I found that there are indeed uses in having two computers in a house. I played chess on the one downstairs and learned a bit of basic Basic on the upstairs one.

On the first day of our visit, which was Friday, Valma and I were left to our own devices as poor Eric had to go to work. We thought that it might be interesting to catch the train from Faulconbridge right into Sydney, but then we decided that a trip taking an hour and a half was a bit too much and resolved instead to have a look around Rose Hill which was an hour on the train and quite far enough thank you. These days Rose Hill goes under the more interesting name of Parramatta, and in a way this is fitting because the earlier name give you the impression that the place would be pleasant to visit. Nothing could be further from the truth and it would have to be one of the most unpleasant places I've visited (New York might be worse but when I was there I was all excited with the knowledge of being there, not caring too much about the smell, the noise and the grime). Parramatta is now an inner suburb of the Sydney metropoils and it is smelly, noisy and ugly.

After we got off the train we wandered into a vast shopping complex and after about five minutes were only interested in finding our way out again. For lunch we had almost inedible food in a little fast-food place crammed with people who did not seem to be happy about being there either. Then we wandered for a bit. Finally we found our way to the more interesting (and restful) part of the area, to the Old Government House which has been there since, I would guess, about 1815. In the good old days when this was the country seat of the Governors of the Colony, and before the roads had been properly built, they would have been rowed up the river from Sydney for their stays in the pretty two storey building.

The house is still set in parklands and from the city one gets to it through a Tudor looking gatehouse and past the monument which tells you that in 1847 (I seem to recall) the Governor's wife and his Aide-de-Camp were killed when they were thrown from a carriage against a nearby tree which is still there.

Valma and I spent an hour or so wandering around the House and looking at monuments which marked, among other things, the site of the first observatory established in the Colony (by Governor Darling who was probably as interested in astronomy as in governing), a bath-house which had been erected by another Governor, and a Boer War monument.

The best thing that I could find to say about the train trip back to Eric's place is that it was "interesting". The train had the advantage of being double-decker, of being air conditioned and being express part of the way. It had the disadvantage

of being hideously overcrowded. The train had come express from Sydney to Parramatta and was packed when we got on it. It did not stop for another half hour until it got to Penrith at the foot of the Blue Mountains. The train was quiet and comfortable (atleast I imagine that was the case for people with seats) so that I imagine that makes life livable for people who have to spend around three hours a day commuting. However, having to stand up in the aisle of the downstairs section for the best part of an hour with nothing to look at but the railway track outside and the people in the carriage was not what I would call great fun.

It was interesting to look at the regular passengers, some leaning back snoozing, others reading the paper and yet others gazing blankly out the window. Not one of them looked happy and I felt quite sorry for them since I can walk to work in just over half an hour, which is something like half the time it takes them for the train trip - I'm sure that spending three hours a day sitting in a tube full of other people who are more or less strangers can't be good for people. The other thing I learned from that trip was why the crossword puzzle in the Canberra Times is so small in comparison to the huge ones in the Sydney papers.

We had planned to do a fair bit of sight seeing on Saturday and indeed we spent a pleasant Saturday morning wandering around the local shops (at Springwood) where I managed to pick up an Aoshima kit of the Bell P-63A Kingcobra which, I gather, has been out of print for some time.

Just after lunch I was sitting downstairs playing the Sargon chess program on the second level and, for a change, beating it. Suddenly there was a clash of thunder and all the electricity went off. When it came back on again a second or so later the game had gone. These computers will go to any lengths to retain their supremacy.

The thunder also heralded a fairly miserable weekend as far as the weather was concerned and we spent a lot of time just lounging around the house, chattering and playing with the computers. We did get out to see some of the natural sights of the Blue Mountains and potted a bit in some antique shops where we could have spent considerable sums of money if we had been blessed with more riches than we unfortunately possess.

One of the growing problems in the mountains is that people from Sydney are moving there to live in ever growing numbers. I'm not sure that they are that keen on living there in the scenic delights but just find it the only place where they can afford to buy a house. Most of the houses which are begun put up do little to blend in with the surroundings and little thought seems to have been given to any real planning of the urban development of the area. It may be that most people would not notice, but if we compared the planned development of Canberra with the sprawl of the new developments the chaos was all too obvious.

About the most notable thing we saw on the weekend (apart from Eric Lindsay) was a plantation of trees, each one planted by one of the Prime Ministers from the beginning of the Commonwealth in 1901. The first tree was planted by Alfred Deakin and the most recent was planted by Malcolm Fraser. Fraser's tree, a small and puny young sapling, had been used by somebody as a vehicle of political expression and was therefore protected by a large steel mesh cage - which seemed to be a political comment in itself. I took a photo of Valma and Eric pointing at Fraser's tree and laughing. Valma took a photo of Eric and I standing under Chifley's tree and looking suitably impressed by it.

Just down the road from the plantation is the grave of Sir Henry Parkes, often Premier of the Colony of New South Wales and also often dubbed "The Father of Federation." The proximity of these two memorials seemed apt. I

doubt, however, if either of them are very well known.

After an enjoyable and interesting weekend Valma and I set out to drive home with our major objective not accomplished. We had not managed to break through the Lindsay enigma. Try as we might, we could find nothing to give any indication of the alter-ego which we had heard about from overseas (perhaps he buys it at the duty-free shop as he leaves the country). Apart from him occasionally saying that he was annoyed at the ineptitude of the people running the computer programming course he is doing, he was always happy and chatty and interesting to listen to; in sum the usual mild mannered Eric Lindsay we've always known and loved here in Australia.

We look forward to visiting him again one of these days.



THE SECOND "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

Bob Smith is one of my favourite gafiates, even before he gafiated.

The first time I met him was at the first Sydney convention in many years, that SynCon '70 which was held at the Epping Girl Guides Hall (and modern SynCons reckon they are kinky!). After that event John Bangsund and Lee Harding loaded me into their car and took me down to where Bob was then living, somewhere near one of the beaches of Botany Bay. The most memorable event of the night was discovering Bob's great collection of material about Japan and the second was being talked into drinking some wine for the first time (which seems to refer me back to Page 1).

I seem to have only met Bob a couple of times since then but his mellow attitude to fandom has always attracted me and, if I've got it right, this is the first time that I've ever published an article that he has written. It just goes to show you that for all my good points (I do believe that I have some) there is a certain lack which I shall have to overcome. I think that it is an important part of fandom that we sometimes try to look back to our roots and, in Australia, Bob lived through some of the formative years. So I hope this isn't the last article of his I publish...

CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR,
BUT FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE.....

Bob Smith

Actually, this is quite embarrassing. I have been wracking my tired, fevered brain for all of ten minutes, trying to remember some well established link between Christmas and Fandom (which Leigh asked me to write about) that might have me sobbing into my evening Milo and dripping dreary nostalgia all over the place in this fanzine. But I bloody can't.

Like I said, it's embarrassing. Ghod, Smudger, I thot, there must have been moments in the past when you joined with your fellow faans in an orgy of beanie-twirling, blog-drenching (and possibly femme-fanne decorated) Christmas Jollities... No...?

Bloody no. A large, dark, hooded combination of Tucker, Bloch, Weber, Berry, Willis, Harding, Foyster, and dear ol' Bert Weaver of the railroad tracks at Beerburrun, plus various other shapes from the past, seem to be looming over me and whispering "Shame, Smith..." I could almost see Evil Ol' Ted White sharpening up his ~~scalpel~~ typewriter, preparing to drum me out of fandom via some convenient fanzine. The only way I found to shake off these frightening spectres was to settle down with some soothing Bach and a re-read of my old Sapszine mailing comments from nineteen years earlier. This had a similar effect to a hefty slug of valium, and I spent the next few hours falling over our cats or hanging tearfully round the neck of our male Afghan who bore it all with a fannish fortitude I should have emulated.

Now, you mustn't get me wrong. I have had some great times with individual faans and groups of faans down through the years and a few memorable parties along the way, but nothing that would classify as Christmas Festivities. (Now, a Mervyn Barrett shindig left a pleasant taste in the memory, and not a few surprises... but we won't go into that...) I guess it all depends on what is meant by "Christmas Festivities" and whether one is inclined towards the religious festival or those that tend to wipe one out. A few years of exposure to Canberra has obviously turned Leigh Edmonds into a shifty character, and one isn't sure, y' see...

What I finally had to do was start at the first fannish contact and examine the Christmases, year by year, jotting down those events surrounding a Christmas that I remembered. All sorts of 'moments' that I'd like to share with you, but I had to reluctantly admit that nothing outstandingly fannish came to mind.

Well... not strictly true, is it? The individual who becomes involved in Fandom to any degree is an altered individual, and Christmas and Christmas time must appear just a trifle different. In my case, however, it has been military service that has influenced my attitudes towards Christmas Festivities, not Fandom; twenty years of overexposure to Sergeants Mess Christmas "parties" tended to make me treasure a bit of privacy and peace at Christmas time. And so work, the military and fandom all kinda got shoved firmly into the background whilst I, Smudger Smith, endeavoured for a few days at least to rediscover the pleasant, simple Christmas atmosphere. Not an easy task, I'm sure you will all agree. Probably my wicked fannish sense of humor helped here, plus the knowledge that hundreds of fans all over the world were no doubt suffering the same sort of mundane (that word!!) Christmas.

Well... we may be slans, but after all we are human, ain't we?

SHOCKING ANNOUNCEMENT! - THE RETURN OF THE BIG RED *A*

Once upon a time, when I was publishing a fortnightly newszine, I found it sort of useful to drop people off my mailing list. Now I don't know about most other fans, but my mailing list tends to be a sticky one and once you're on it I find it difficult to get around to dropping you. The horrible truth of the matter is that if it were not for the postage costs these days I would probably still be sending copies of ORNITHOPTER to people who got ETHERLINE II back in 1968, even if I hadn't heard from them in all these years.

So, you see, there is something good to be said for these higher postal charges after all. As far as some readers of this fanzine are concerned the cost of postage means that I will no longer be bothering them. As much as I would like to continue to fill their letter boxes with my fanzine there comes a time when one pay cheque isn't enough to pay the postman and one can't afford to give him two of them... not that they go so far anyhow.

The upshot is, gentle reader, that if you happen to find that I have plastered a big red *A* somewhere near your address, chances are that I won't be sending you anything again for a fair while, unless you happen to decide that you would like to see future issues, in which case you can let me know in one of the approved ways.

End of disturbing announcement and commentary on the dull facts of editorial life. Next issue - a plea from the heart for book review of all Piers Anthony's masterpieces...

LAYING IN WAIT FOR THE PERFECT FANZINE

Well, folks, I had it all planned out. Right here I was going to write in depth about Australian fanzines in 1981. In one article I was going to analyse the highs and the lows of the Australian fan publishing scene in the past twelve months, naming names, laying blame where it is due... and so on. As it has turned out, there will be none of that in this issue.

The fault lies with cub-journalists Brown and Hirsh. They wrote to me telling of their vast plans for an issue of their little blue newszine, THYME, which would review the past year in Australian fandom. "You," they said, "would be the ideal person to write about Australian fanzines." They went on to shower me with flattery, which always works, and with bribery - a tape of some new-wave rock music which Andrew knows I'm quite partial to.

So that's where this issue's column went. Ofcourse, with THYME being the family newszine that it is, I had to dilute my acid criticisms and play down the towering critical acclaim. Where I had named names with a pen dipped in acid and made Joseph Nicholas seem to be the school boy reviewer that he is, I was forced to take the sting out of my words and emasculate my trenchant criticism. The result is that the article appearing in THYME is a lilly-livered, pathetic little piece which wouldn't light the merest flicker of controversy. Still, that's what the public wants so that's what I'm forced to produce... what a pity that I'm so keen on flattery and bribery.

Thus, instead of the article which I mentioned above, you will have to read through a little review which is going to be all sweetness and light, a review of my favourite fanzine of 1981.

Sad to say, my favourite fanzine of this year was not produced in Australia. It is a sad fact of life that while I find the run-of-the-mill Australian fanzine more interesting than it's North American counterpart (British fanzines are still better), there are more and better top level fanzines being published in North America than here. In saying this I am suggesting that the weighting in favour of North

American fanzines would suggest that there should be more better fanzines from that part of the world than from Australia, but does not explain why there is a much greater ratio. I do have a sort of an explanation which has to do with the much greater number of faanish fans there are over there being enough to make up some sort of critical-mass which in turn generates the momentum to publish faanish fanzines... but that may not be the reason at all.
@

The sorts of things that I believe make up a top level faanish fanzine are actually the same sorts of things that you will find in other fanzines. The real difference is that in your best fanzines the material is all of the highest quality.

For example, it is not uncommon for a fanzine to have a report of a trip that a fan has made. This format gives the writer an excellent opportunity to describe the sights and sounds of a place which is new to them and they will, hopefully, try to express some of the newness which they felt about that experience to the reader. There are, of course, the people who do no more than give a chronological description of where they went, who they talked to and what they saw; the worst of this sort are generally excruciatingly boring. The factor which makes this sort of writing successful is the personality of the writer and a person who has a feel for the unusual and the ability to express experiences in immediately interesting prose starts way ahead...

There is another sort of faanish writing which is quite popular in Australia, the production of faan fiction (fiction about faans). This issue contains two examples by two of Australia's best fan writers.

Within this general genre there are also a couple of divisions, those stories about real faans and those stories about imaginary ones. In either of these forms the key to success is characterisation and the sort of imagination which places fans in the sorts of situations in which the faanish nature is manifest and becomes central to the story. It is an unfortunate fact that there really aren't enough fan writers working in this field, though this may be because this sort of writing is not as easy as it seems... and it is not that easy to write fiction about your friends without sometimes annoying them with the way you have described them.

Aside from contributions written by others, there are two major parts of any fanzine which come directly within the control of the editor and which, more or less, give any fanzine its character. These are the editorial and the letter column.

In many fanzines a very common fault is that the editor exercises absolutely no self-control. They will not hesitate to tell you all the complex details of how they went about buying the stencils for the issue and their plans for the coming issues, in boring detail, with the proviso "that it is up to the reader to support them in their efforts by sending in those letters and contributions". And, of course, the other area where they run out of control is in the letter column where they will print the slightest hint of egoboo and other uninteresting chatter which has been sent to them. There is nothing wrong with egoboo and there is nothing wrong with printing almost anything in a letter of comment - the only criteria should be that it is well written or that it is interesting, not only to the editor but also to the presumed reader.

I have, I must admit, no overpowering need to publish art-work in my fanzines. However I have noted that there are other faneds who feel differently. Some of them even publish artwork which is of good quality and, more importantly, which fits in with the character of the fanzine.

I am a little more concerned about general deportment of a fanzine, the

reproduction, layout and general visual appeal. In this area I lack much critical awareness so that all I can say is that some fanzines have it and others don't. It may have something to do with a clean and tidy look...

And all this brings me around to my little review of my favourite fanzine for 1981 which, as I said, comes from North America. It is KRATOPHANY 13, published by Eli Cohen, 86-04 Grand Ave., Apt. 4D, Elmhurst, N.Y. 11373, U.S.A. and you can get it for "the usual" or \$1.50 per copy.

At first sight it is a very attractive but fairly unassuming looking fanzine. It's contents are fairly similar with a well written but undemanding editorial and a very crisply edited and entertaining letter column in which Eli has almost as much to say as his contributors. The highlights of the issue are a reprinted Susan Wood article of her trip to New York (a classic example of how to hang a trip report on a thematic peg) which is extremely well written; and a highly amusing item from Stu Shiffman. This is the script for a film featuring the two famish personalities Bbob Hoop and Hoy Ping Crosby and titled "Road to Flawol". Not quite a laugh-a-line, but close.

This fanzine gets my highly recommended stamp.

ANOTHER ANNOUNCEMENT!

Discerning readers might have noticed, in earlier pages of this fanzine, the subliminal hints that I had hoped to get this fanzine in the mail before Christmas. Any fan with a calendar will be able to figure out that this has not actually happened. So much for good intentions.

I have excuses, of course. The best one is the mail strike which gripped the Australian postal system just before Christmas and had people running around in a frenzy of worry about whether their christmas card to Aunt Freda would get there in time. Oh, that one should have such a trivial matter to worry about. Everybody knows that it is much more nerve wracking to be waiting on those electronic stencils that Noel Kerr has cut because, until they arrive, nothing can happen. I can also add that it does the famish ego no good at all to go to the letter box over ten times in a row over the period of two weeks and find it bare every time.

Anyhow... My apologies to my contributors who were all so good in meeting the deadline I set them. I hope to do better my self next year - if there is a next year.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

Life - as we say in the ornithopter business - has its ups and downs. This is no less so when it comes to trying to get one of our designs into production. The game over the page reflects some of the frustrations and rewards of being in the aerospace business, manufacturing a unique produce. We invite you to share our experiences and play the game.

Those of you who have never played a game called "Snakes and Ladders" are going to have some trouble with this game, but if you've played that game you will find that this one makes sense almost immediately. All the same I suppose that I should explain the ground rules, which are:

- the game may be played by up to a sensible number of people, each having an individual token which they move along the path from START in the lower left-hand corner to START PRODUCTION in the upper right-hand corner. The first person to reach the START PRODUCTION square is the winner.

- players take it in turn to toss a single dice which indicates the number of spaces the player must move his/her token. Players must obey the instructions on the squares they land on and move along the arrows leading from squares they land on.
- no quitting.

I hope that you have hours of fun with your new Christmas time game.

THE THIRD "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

Leanne Frahm is pretty much of a mystery woman to most Australian fans. The reason for this is obvious enough, she lives near Mackay which is hundreds of miles from absolutely anywhere. I'm told that Mackay is in the middle of the Queensland coast so by living there Leanne disproves the Stevens Thoery that no fans live further north than Brisbane because it gets so hot that the wax in their stencils melts. (Perhaps Leanne types her stencils in the fridge.)

@

Apart from being a well known and popular fan, Leanne also writes science fiction and sells it! However nobody mentions that in polite company so we won't hold it against her. All the same, I suppose that her experience in that field has been good training for her writing in fandom so it hasn't been a complete waste. And since I was talking about Leanne writing fiction...

"T'WAS THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND...

Leanne Frahm

The scorching heat of an Outback Christmas Eve receded into the sunset over the small town of Winton, Queensland. Long shadows drew across the red dust around the Flying Doctor's Base Office, as the doctor on duty poured over last-minute reports.

He looked up with a start as a deeper shadow darkened the door. Squinting against the outside light, he saw a small dumpy figure in a sweat-stained red suit several times too big for him. A huge sack was slung across his shoulder, reaching almost to the weathered floorboards of the verandah.

The doctor swallowed. "What..." he began, when the wizened creature dropped the bag and limped up to the desk, tripping over a cuff. It waved a dog-eared and grubby business-card under his nose.

"Santa Claus Despatch Agency--
Antipodean Division.
Licensed Carrier--
J. Fish."

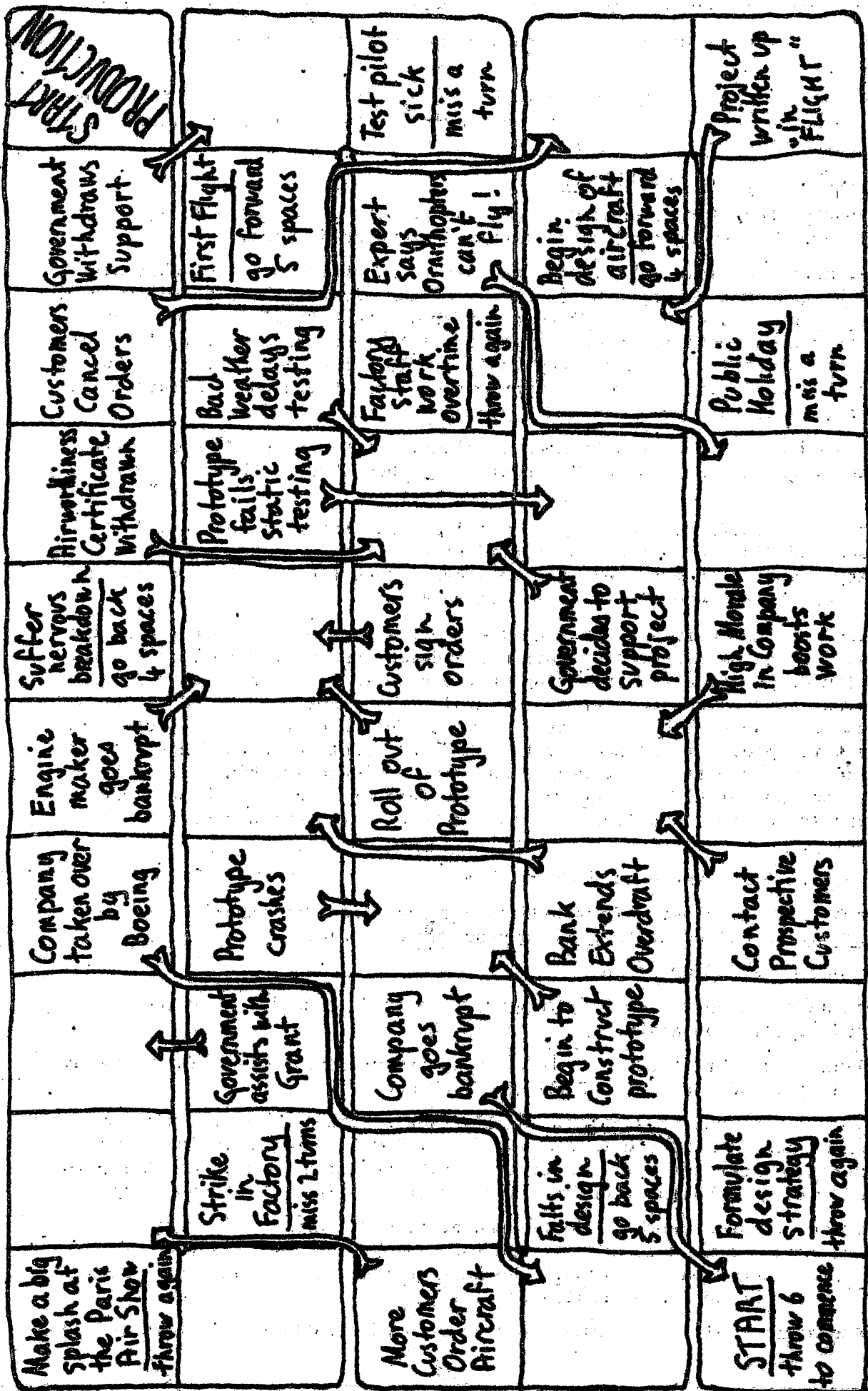
The doctor glanced up sharply as J. Fish wiped ineffectually at the sweat trickling into his yellow-white collar and said, "Me reindeer's got the strangles."

With an explosive sigh of relief the doctor leaned back in his chair. "You want the vet then, mate," he said. "We only treat people."

Fish's mournful visage twitched. "Too late for that, doc. It was that last run over Arfura what finished 'im. No, what I wanted was a, well, I thought maybe your mob'd lend a bloke a 'plane."

The doctor dropped his lower jaw. "What the hell for?" he managed at last.

"Well, I gotta deliver all these toys," said Fish with an aggrieved whine. "Gotta get around somehow. Bad enough when the gnomes go on strike if a fellow tries to load his own sleigh, an' the deers he gives us are only fit for



American hamburger mince - but I signed a contract with a no-delivery clause... I could end up broke, doc."

"And you want a plane," the doctor said. "Look, I've got a hernia in Hughendon, croup in Coorabulka and dengue fever in Dajarra. And you want a plane! What do you think this is - Christmas?"

"Ah... yes," said Fish diffidently.

The Doctor's stony face softened fractionally. He was, after all, a grandfather. The thought of those little disappointed faces...

"Listen, mate," he said. "This is the best I can offer you. See that old disused hangar over there, the other side of the airstrip?" Fish followed his pointing finger and nodded. "We rented that out to some kind of nut - nice people from down South for a convention or something. Harmless, really. Now they've got something in there they claim'll fly. I've never seen it, but there's this tall, long-haired, skinny sort of chap there who's always talking about it down at the pub. Why don't you go over and see him?"

Fish hoisted the sack over a sagging shoulder. With a brief "Thanks, mate," he began trudging pessimistically towards the shed through the rapidly falling dusk.

The First Science Fiction Outback Convention was warming up for the night. Attendees had discovered that the torrid heat of the day made movement almost impossible, and so they had elected to sleep during the day-light hours, and run the con through the night's relative coolness.

A sight of joyous confusion met the little man's eyes as he hesitated at the doorway. Crowds of people stood around, and everyone seemed to be talking at once, with noisy arguments exploding in the corners. Fish averted his gaze from a young woman in a costume of doubtful opacity busily engaged in massaging the back of a man on a couch, just in time to duck beneath the trajectory of an errant frisbee. At the back of the shed the lights were out, and deep in the gloom, wild cheers and jeers indicated an audience watching a film being screened on the corrugated iron wall, while further back... Fish swallowed hard, and looked around quickly for the man who fitted the doctor's description.

It was a difficult task - so many of them did.

At last he saw one whose hair seemed even longer than the other's, and in desperation, he walked up to the group surrounding him.

"Scuse me, mate," Fish began.

The long haired chap turned. "I'm sorry," he said absently, "but the masquerade's tomorrow night."

Fish blinked, and bristled. "This ain't no fancy-dress, mate. This's me work togs." He flashed his card for the group to see.

There were a few stifled giggles. "Well, that's certainly a club with an interesting name," said the tall man. "Look, I'm Edmonds, this is... well, just introduce yourself and join in the fun." He turned away. Another person muttered, "First hobbits, then trekkies, now this. What is sf coming to."

Fish refused to be deterred. He grasped at Edmond's arm. "I'm here on business, mate. I need transport, and the Flying Doc - he said you had a 'plane here I could maybe borrow." He held up the sack. "This lot's real urgent - gotta be delivered tonight."

Edmonds stared at him. He seemed to have stopped breathing, his face became

rigid. Fish looked anxiously around the group. They, too, were hushed.

Fish brought his attention back to Edmonds. Before his startled and horrified gaze, tears welled in Edmonds' eyes, and dewed his eyelashes.

"Look," said Fish uneasily, shuffling backwards, "maybe this wasn't the right time to ask. I'll just be off..."

Edmonds reached out and caught his shoulder in a grip of iron. "He wants to fly the ornithopter," he whispered. His voice rose. "The ornithopter... He wants to fly it!"

"No, I want a 'plane..."

Edmonds whirled round, dragging Fish and the sack with him. "Listen, everybody," Edmonds cried to the hall. "He wants to fly the ornithopter! At last, my ghod, somebody wants to fly my ornithopter!" He broke into huge, gulping sobs.

The crowd stood frozen for seconds, all eyes on the acutely-embarrassed Fish, who fidgeted with his draw-string. Then at once there was a pandemonium of cheers and whistles, leaping and hallooing. Several people ran to a large canvas-enclosed object in a darkened corner of the hangar and began ripping off the cover.

Edmonds still had Fish in a death-grip. "I take it everywhere," he babbled in Fish's ear. "Every meeting, every party, every con. Just in case someone wants to fly it. I even got a job in the Air Ministry so I could mention it casually to a few civil servants, but nobody listened. Nobody cared. Even those WA fans - oh yes, they said they wanted to learn, flap, flap, flap, up, down, up - but when it came to the crunch, even they wouldn't fly it. And now - you!" He hugged Fish, unable to speak further, and began pulling him to the doorway. Behind him, a group was pulling the huge ungainly device into the light.

Fish looked over his shoulder, and blanched. He dug his heels into the dirt. "Not in that," he gasped in a high cracked voice.

Edmonds laughed wildly, hollowly. "That's what they all say," he hissed. "But it's all right. Really it is."

Fish eyed the frail detumescant wings dragging on the ground, the fishing lines holding together the cardboard fuselage, the wheels stolen from a baby's stroller. "Maybe me reindeer's feeling better now," he said feebly.

"Nonsense!" cried Edmonds, flinging him up to the vinyl-covered shoe-box seat. He tossed the sack up after him. The undercarriage creaked and wobbled.

"Now - fly! Edmonds cried, arms outstretched to the stars shining in the sky.

"Fly! Fly!" cried the crowds around him.

"Oh, shit!" muttered Fish.

And did the ornithopter fly? Well, you did get your Chrissie presents, didn't you.

THE FOURTH "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

I'm not really the way that Leanne said I am. So I have asked the world's foremost Edmonds Watcher to tell you the truth.

THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT LEIGH EDMONDS

Valma Brown

This ornithopter business is getting out of hand. You lot out there only have

to read about them. I have to live with them - even our bed has wings these days.

Our neighbours have gnomes and an aboriginal in the back yard, I'll give you one guess as to what we have in ours. Right... Now, if Malcolm Fraser were to come around here and have a look at what's in amongst the vegies he could abolish the Department of Defence. And I don't have to ask Leigh what he wants for Christmas. Well, actually I peeked at his letter to Santa... Now, I ask you, what would any grown man want with an orange ornithopter with pink spots on it.

Once upon a time Leigh used to be satisfied with a cheese and pickle sandwich dipped in milo for his dinner. These days we have little ornithopter croutons floating around in our soup, hors-d'ornithops, Beef Thopecters and even little Ornithopter cakes. Traditionally the little cakes are called Butterfly cakes, but it pleases Leigh to think of them as Ornithopters. So the cats and I go along with it... anything to keep the peace. Poor old Bill and Spot. These days they know that if they see daddy running around with a butter/oops, ornithopter cake to run for cover.

I'm dreading making the Christmas cake. I really need an ornithopter mould. Butterful cakes are one thing, but a fruit cake the shape of an ornithopter is going to be quite a task. If anyone has any useful suggestions I would appreciate hearing from them.

Oh well, back to the grind. It's bacon and eggs tonight. You know, no matter how hard I try, my eggs still sort of look splat. At one stage I tried to tell Leigh that they were abstract ornithopters and all one needed was a little imagination. Needless to say, it didn't work...

THE END BIT

Well, I'm not really like that either. Everybody knows that I'm mild mannered and quite level headed. I don't know where these people get their ideas from. If I had some extra space I'd tell you about the time we flapped out to Copland College to see a performance of "Godspell" and they had ~~ornithopters~~ butterfly cakes during intermission. However, instead I have to tell you that this is the ninth issue of ORNITHOPTER which is, as I was about to say, published for members of FAPA and SAPS and more than a few others. You can even subscribe at \$1 per issue or four issues for \$3, if you must. The art in this issue was provided by John Packer and committed to electrostencil by Noel Kerr. Assistance in production has been rendered by Valma Brown, the notorious Vanilla Slice Fondler. And now, we just about have room left for the

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