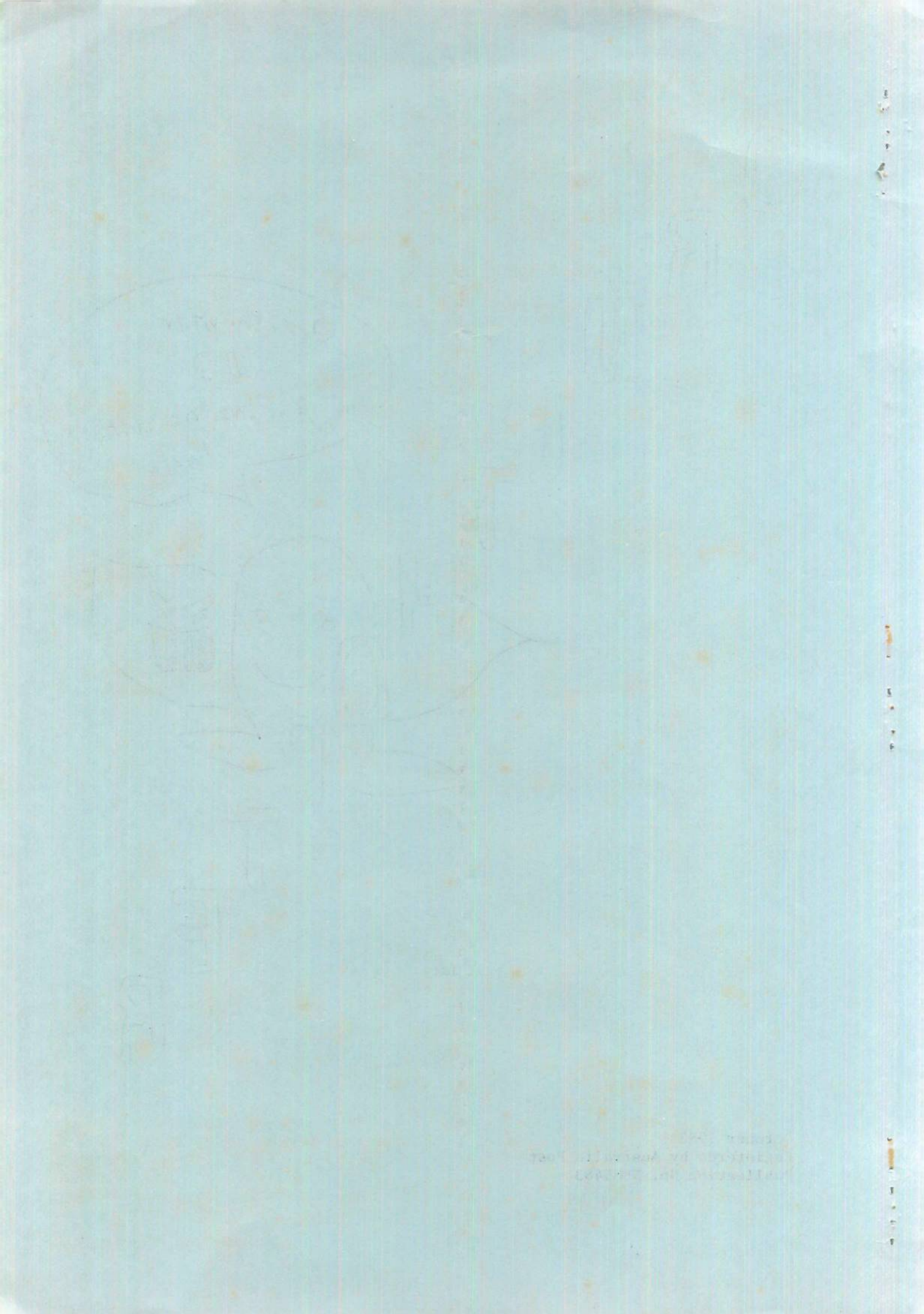


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The last man in the world sat in a room.
There was a knock at the door!
It was a wombat and an emu with a copy of
ORNITHOPTER TEN.

"This was edited and Published by Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square,
Canberra, ACT 2608, AUSTRALIA," said the emu.

"It was published for the Spectator Amateur Press Society and a few other
people by way of saying 'Hello'", said the wombat.

"People could even subscribe for \$1 per issue or \$2 for three issues," the
emu chipped in.

"MM.569, ISSN 0729-350X, NBH5483" concluded the wombat.

"Strewth!" said the man, a little amazed by all this.

The wombat turned to the emu, "You don't hear people say that anymore, do you?"

"Not anybody at all," replied the emu.

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

Getting fanzines started is a little like getting those early wire and canvas
aeroplanes started. Everything has to be just right before a fanzine is ready
to be published; the stencils, the corful, the contributions, the typer and,
most important of all, the editor's state of mind.

So it was with those old
biplanes. Everything had to be in order before the pilot would mount to the
cockpit to conduct his arcane rituals over the controls. Then he would yell
"Contact!" to some poor fool who was ordered to the unenviable job of hanging
on the propellor and giving it a good shove to get things going.

It has always
seemd to me that there are great similarities between "prop swinging" and
fighting lions in the arena. Basically it's not something you'd want to do, or
if you have to, a suit of good hefty armour would be the thing to wear. They
are both dangerous jobs, not to put too fine a point on the matter.

What all
this has to do with fanzines is a little far-fetched, but it does have more
than a little bit to do with ornithopters, as you should have guessed by now.
We at Orrite Ornithopter Production Systems have taken the worry out of
starting aeroplanes. No more prop swinging, no grazed knuckles or accidental
maincures. The great secret which solves all your problems is that ornithopters
such as those made at OOPS do not have propellers. Instead of having a fixed
wing and a moving propellor we simplify matters by just having a moving wing
which provides both the lift and the forward motion. If it's good enough for
the birds it's good enough for OOPS!

Almost nothing could be simpler than
starting up one of our ornithopters. After the pilot is in the cockpit and has
done whatever it is that he does to get ready, he yells "Contact!" and the men
at the wingtips start pushing them up and down. Somebody suggested that it was
more efficient to only have a man on one wingtip but this could lead to undue
stressing of that wing and it might later come off in flight (if wings are
going to come off it is best that both come off at the same time, which is why
they should both be equally stressed). We have discovered that sometimes one
man will try to move his wing up while the other moves his wing down; this can
be most uncomfortable for the pilot and also a self defeating exercise, so it
is best to have a person standing out in front of the ornithopter waving up and
down with his hands to give the other two men the beat (so to speak).

When the
wings have been worked up and down enough the engine generally gets the idea
and starts to work. When the engine fires the men moving the wingtips step
smartly back and the signaller gets out of the way quickly and your ornithopter
is ready to fly.

There are, of course, just a couple of safety procedures which
one must bear in mind when starting your ornithopter. The most important is to

make sure that you step clear of the wings after they have started flapping up and down. If you don't there are generally two sorts of things that can happen to you and these mainly depend on the sort of wing the ornithopter has. If it is a metal wing you are liable to find yourself several feet shorter or several feet into the ground, or both... If it is a fabric wing you are liable to find yourself suddenly standing with your head and shoulders protruding through the upper surface if you're lucky. If you're unlucky the engine won't stall and the wing will continue to go up and down, with you in it. This can be what you might call a shattering experience.

I'm sure you will realise that, although there is some slight danger, operating an ornithopter is much safer than your average conventional aeroplane. It is also a lot more exciting. I say this because I understand that these days some aeroplanes actually start themselves, and where is the fun in that. The pilot sits in the cockpit and presses a whole lot of buttons and later, when he looks up, the propellor is ticking over nicely.

And that's what seems to have happened to this fanzine, one minute I'm worrying about how to begin and the next thing we're part of the way down the second page, warmed up and ready to roll. It might not be fun... but it's not hard work either.

A LOOK AT THE EDITOR'S PRIVATE LIFE

For some reason which I don't quite grasp at the moment it has become customary for me to let you all know what I've been doing at about this place in this fanzine. I am given to understand that by doing this sort of thing I earn, for ORNITHOPTER, the label of "personalzine" (or "perzine" as people seem to want to call such things these days).

While I've never been terribly interested in producing a personalzine I have felt that it is a nice thing for an editor to tell his readers (some of who are also good friends) what is going on on the home front. Some of the better fan writers are blessed with the ability to make the most unexciting events items of great joy to read and there are, sad to say, those at the other end of the scale who can reduce events of great moment to yawning boredom.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I'm not quite in either of those classes and thus it takes events of some magnitude to stir me into writing about them but, on the other hand, I trust that I do not bore people unduly.

All the words I've so far written might be considered to be a lead up to the fact that this time around I've nothing to say about what I've been doing. The simple fact of the matter is that, since the previous issue of this fine fanzine, I've done nothing, been nowhere or thought anything which is worth writing about. I've missed conventions and not been to some great parties, I haven't been to London or Madison (Wisc.) and I haven't evolved a new theory of history or written a new symphony. Writing about not having done all that is fairly boring stuff.

It is true that I have had plenty done to me in the past six months; that might be worth a page or so but I don't feel inclined to relive it all just now.

The traumatic event has been having additions and renovations done to our house. The final result will be much better facilities in which to conduct fanac and a much nicer house to live in. The short term result has been that one half of the house has been almost uninhabitable for about three months and the other half has been jammed up with the stuff moved from the uninhabitable end. And to add to our troubles the builders haven't exactly had their act together which has meant a lot more worry and hassling than we would have liked. The outcome of all this is the sort of thing that I don't think too many people would want to read about because not only are things like renovations generally slow and dull and messy, they are something that you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy.

The only other small point which I'll make before getting on with this fanzine is that at work we recently got ourselves a micro-computer which we use for word processing. Since I'm the one who's been annoying people to get this machine for the last couple of years I've been the one who has had to figure out how it works and teach others to use it.

After a couple of weeks working on that machine exclusively I'm finding it a little difficult to get used to this Selectric II again.

When we first got this typer in 1974 we thought that it was the best thing invented since the flying machine. The only problem was that when we had to use the old manual for any reason we found it very hard to drive. You needed fingers like iron bars to thump the keys and there was no carriage return button - we'd sit dabbing away at one of the fraction keys wondering why nothing was happening. However those problems in making the transition from manual to electric were nothing compared to the troubles in coming back to a typewriter after using a word processor.

Here I sit at the end of a line wondering why the typer hasn't wrapped the last word around to start on the new line. No fumbling at the wrong button because on the word processor there isn't one. I spot a spelling error a couple of lines up but it takes me a moment or two to remember that I can't correct it as easily as I would like. Then I re-read a previous paragraph and find that there is a passage I'd like to reword - but on this machine it's too late for that.

Word processors are magic to use. The only trouble is that they cost money, and a lot of it too. Still, I think that I have the solution over what should be done with those old fan funds. There is a lot of argument about TAFF and DUFF which I don't intend to get involved in here. However some people have suggested that these funds are no longer worthwhile and I therefore suggest a fund which would replace them and still keep those fans who enjoy raising funds occupied. What I have in mind is the WPF (Word Processor Fanned Fund).

Let's collect together enough money every year so that we can buy a word processor for some well known, popular and deserving fanzine editor. The details of the fund organisation would be more or less the same as before except that the winner, instead of having to go overseas for their entertainment, would have a large cardboard box containing the machine delivered to their home. Using the machine would be entertaining for all of us who got to read the results.

THE FIRST "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

This issue it seems that we'll print almost anything that has to do with ADVENTION. For those of you with short memories, that convention was the 1981 national sf convention held in Adelaide over a year ago. A lot of fans didn't seem to think much of the convention but I thought that it was pretty good. The main adverse comment seemed to be that the programming was too heavy with very little humorous or fannish stuff in it. If this is a valid criticism (another argument I'm not going to get into at the moment) then it must be admitted that ADVENTION was light on with the only items which come to mind being a couple of sessions in which Joyce Scrivner and Joseph Nicholas said wicked things about people not there to defend themselves and the speech made by Denny Lien at the banquet. While I am not able (or willing) to print the former I am pleased to be able to present the latter which was one of the highlights of the convention.

ADVENTION '81 BANQUET SPEECH

Denny Lien

All the textbooks on how to give a speech suggest starting with a really hilarious and original joke. However, I watched THE TWO RONNIES last night and have thus decided to start with a boring old wheeze instead. So I can report that I feel like Moses in said boring wheeze, in which he is told by God:

"Moses, I am having some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is that I have decided to arrange things so that you and your people shall be able to go free from Egypt. This exodus will involve the creation of serpents; the slaughter of cattle; turning of rivers into blood; plagues of frogs, lice, flies and locusts; rashes of boils; rains of blood; hail, fire, thunder, twenty-four hours of darkness; and the sudden death of the firstborn of all families down the length and breadth of the land.

"And the bad news is that you are going to have to write the environmental impact statement."

Similarly, I have received the good news of being able to come back to Australia, for the first time since 1975, and the bad news of being expected therefore to give some kind of speech.

When I was trying to talk Joyce Scrivner into standing for DUFF some months ago, one of her stipulations was that if she won, I would make an effort to come over with her. After she had in fact run and won, I was therefore forced to make drastic economies: I cut down on beer, started carrying my lunch to work, and quit buying new Lin Carter novels. (The saving on this last item alone supplied me with enough cash to get most of the way to Hawaii; it also cleared up my peptic ulcer and a rather nasty persistent migraineheadache).

And so a few months after the above promise I find myself in Australia, where the money that I'd saved by not buying beer at home is now being spent on Foster's; the money saved by not buying fast food at home is now being spent on meat pies with sauce; and the money saved by not buying new sf is being spent on buying second-hand Volstead Gridban novels from Merv Binns. In any case, I am delighted to be back in Australia and to get up here tonight, bathed in cold sweat and trying desperately to think of something clever to say.

This is, of course, assuming that I really am here. I bring up this question not solely to confuse you into thinking I am a profound philosopher (though of course that's part of it), but also because a couple of weeks ago I had a somewhat strange experience. I picked up an old copy of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, an alleged fanzine which wins for its editor, Dick Geis, more Hugos than he can be bothered to collect; and in thumbing through an interview therein with Philip K. Dick, as conducted by Charles Platt, I ran across the following exchange:

During our conversation I mentioned a whimsical notion I enjoy, that if I'm far from somewhere, and can't see or touch it, it doesn't really exist,

"Oh, sure," he said, "they only build as much of the world as they need to, to convince you it's real. You see, it's kind of a low-budget operation: those countries you read about, like Japan, or Australia, they don't really exist. There's nothing out there. Unless of course you decide to go there, in which case they have to put it all together, all the scenery, the buildings, and the people, in time for you to see it. They have to work real fast." - SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #36

Let me say first of all that I do appreciate the effort you all went through and that the mock-up is really quite convincing. I hope that my rather late decision to make the trip didn't cause any special logistics problems. As far as I can see there were no slip-ups: that is to say that I haven't yet come across Ayres Rock in the middle of a downtown Adelaide street because somebody misread the blueprint or anything of that sort.

Still, though I have no real problem with fooling myself into believing in the existence of Australia either when I'm here or when I'm away, Philip Dick's suggestion did start me thinking along pleasantly psychotic lines. I don't really believe that the entire universe is all a great hoax - a bad joke maybe, but not a hoax - but a bit of paranoia can go a long way to explain the existence of the single most important feature of that universe. I refer, of

course, to fandom.

Organised science fiction fandom is a very, very, improbable sort of phenomenon.

This has been remarked often - especially by mundane relatives or co-workers when you try to explain to them just what it is that you're going to travel a thousand miles and spend all your vacation time to attend. Fandom comprises a number of otherwise intelligent and (by and large) sane individuals spread out around much of the world who, for the sake of displaying a sense of community and fraternity, do the most appallingly silly things. Things like reading FUTURISTIC TALES, or like spending hours hunched over some printing apparatus to produce impeccably reproed expensive sixty-page fanzines for the post office to lose, or like sitting at a banquet listening to some paranoid bloke with an American accent droning on and overusing "like" when you could be in the bar instead.

Surely the existence of so strange a cult as science fiction fandom cannot be explained by normal sociological standards. However, there are some real-world analogies. Like the Freemasons, for instance, we have certain identifying signs and rituals; in our case these consist of propellor beanies, pointed ears, ink-stained fingers and persistent GOON SHOW references. Like various religious groups, we maintain certain sacred alters which we propitiate with cash offerings; in our case, these are called Space Invaders games. And there exist in the real world Richard III fan clubs who have banded together to debate whether or not their hero was really such a monster as he is usually painted to be. Similarly, we have panels on Harlan Ellison. In our room parties, we recall the rites of the original worshippers of Dionysius or Bacchus; while in our business meetings and site selection politicking, we often display at least a superficial resemblance to certain of the less savory practices of, say, the Cult of Thuggee.

However, these analogies are relatively superficial. The only reasonable way to explain the phenomenon of science fiction fandom seems to me to be to assume that it is all a gigantic hoax. I'd like each of us here tonight to pause for a moment and ask yourselves if you're quite sure that you are not the only real human being present and that the rest of us are not alien fifth columnists of some sort pretending to be human but actually here to watch and influence and manipulate you? (Of course, I'm not seriously suggesting that one of you really is the real human and nonmonster in this room, because I realise that I am. But for my own ill-defined reasons, largely having to do with simplifying my problems with grammar and syntax, I shall continue to use the second person. For something or other.)

Once you accept the possibility that the rest of us are nonhumans, much becomes clear. Why we mostly tend to look so scroungy and in many cases hairy - alien standards of beauty differ. Why you never seem to get everyone in the area to show up for the same convention or party - somebody has to stay back at the mothership and monitor the viewscreens. Why so much of the science fiction movies and television you are offered is such absolute rubbish - it's a sort of psychological test to see if you can be conditioned to watch it, and if so what you'll make of it. And, of course, why you get only one letter of comment on your latest issue - we have a group mind, and more than one opinion would have been redundant.

We may, then, take it as given that fandom is actually a gigantic plot run by nonhuman beings who spend all of their time manipulating you and recording your every action. (So watch yourself at the parties tonight.) This is the only possible explanation for a phenomenon which is otherwise, as we have seen, highly improbable, and whenever one has eliminated the impossible whatever explanation remains, no matter how improbable, must be correct. (You may take this as a home truth.)

So, accepting this as given, one last question remains; now that you (or I) know better, what should I (or you) be doing to overthrow this conspiracy and

destroy the nefarious plans of these alien thingees?

Well, I don't know about you, but I'm not planning to do anything. If I'm a laboratory white mouse, I'm very happy running this fannish maze. This way you get to see such exotic cul-de-sacs and drink steins of the most surprising fermented foodproducts and, mostly, get a chance to meet and talk with what appears to be such fascinating and likable other white mice. So even though I might have difficulty believing in you all, I'm going to go right on pretending that I do so. After all, if you realise that I've seen through the experiment you might make me something much duller in the next reincarnation, like a chartered accountant or a national political leader, and instead I'm having the time of my life - if this is, in fact, my life - as a fan. Or a mouse.

Thank you, improbable multi-tentacled many-headed bug-eyed aliens, for thinking up fandom. I love you all. Squeak.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE INDIFFERENT

Well, you've got to call a fanzine review column something. It's not really a bad title for such a column since it nicely breaks the pile of fanzines that most fans get down into three easily identifiable piles. And Australian fanzines are not different from the overseas variety when it comes to this simple categorisation.

There is a difference because, right at the moment anyhow, there are no great Australian fanzines being published while there are one or two being published overseas which could just be called outstanding. They are the ones that rarely end up in piles of fanzines because you put them somewhere else to make sure that you get around to writing that copious letter of comment in the next day or two. (I have a pile of fanzines here that I've browsed through in thinking about this column but the one I really thought I wanted to write about - the most recent issue of WARHOON - isn't there, I've probably put it in with the pile of bills and lecture notes as being something important to be done very soon.)

I guess that most people in Australia would agree that Q36 is the best Australian published fanzine at the moment and, apart from the fact that I have a certain interest in ORNITHOPTER, I could easily agree too. But I'm not going to write about that fanzine here, except to note that Marc seems to have trouble in making each issue better than the last and that in this society where everything must keep on getting better to stay in the same place this is a great problem. Fortunately most of us are spared from this slight worry.

While Marc is cranking out his fanzine in Adelaide Jack Herman is doing a fine job of his own fanzine WAHF-FULL from the vicinity of Bondi in the smelly and noisy metropolis of Sydney. The most recent issue that I can lay my hands on is number 7 (I'm sure I've seen another since then but I can't seem to find it just now - and, no Jack, I'm fairly sure it's not in with the bills and like) which is fairly representative of what Jack is about in his publishing.

The odd thing to note is that both Jack and Marc are teachers, but that's not the sort of thing that you'd pick up from reading their fanzines. Jack often gives you the impression that he likes to make sure that you understand things properly while Marc would rather make sure that you've gone away with a smile on your face. I wonder if this would be reflected in their attitudes to and their methods in teaching.

Idle speculation aside, I should point out that fanzines like WAHF-FULL are not my favourite style. Still this is not to say that some of them are not done well and I have to agree that this one does it very well. The sort of material that WAHF-FULL contains is interesting and informative comment on various topics, most of them sfnal. For example, this issue has three main topics - comments on sf rock music, the permanent settlement of space, and sf films. There are also the usual

letters and fanzine reviews.

The main requirement for a person writing an article on some matter of importance or information is that they are able to organise their thoughts in some sort of logical fashion. This is mainly so that the people reading these articles can follow the drift of the discussion or the important aspects of the argument which is being put forward. Jack has a good grasp of this sort of thing and it shows clearly in the sorts of things that he publishes. Peter Toluzzi comes at a difficult subject in trying to make some sense out of the jumble that is rock music disguising itself as sf, and he does so through a series of categorisations and comments on those categories. He even goes to the trouble of drawing some sort of conclusion from his prior discussion and, all in all, it makes up into a fine little package of tidy thoughts. I have personal reservations about the worth of the sort of music that Peter has chosen to write about but that is really neither here nor there in making comments on fanzines rather than music. I was also confused by the series of headings which Peter chose to put his various points - we have a "Prelude", "Variations on a theme", "Recitativo", Adagio", "Allegro" and so on which, suggest that Peter is not sure of the meanings of some of these terms in their original "classical" setting and that Peter is trying to give his arguments some sort of up-market style with such terms (surely he should have headed his arguments under the more contemporary - "track 1", "track 2" and so on).

Getting away from this little side-stream I must get back to what I was trying to highlight, which is the form of this fanzine rather than the detailed content of its various articles. With some editors this may be an important consideration but, as I've already mentioned, Jack is careful about the quality of what he prints.

I have the sneaking suspicion that John Newman, in his article on space colonisation is preaching to the converted. I am assuming that most (if not all) take it for granted that there are uncountable benefits in mankind moving into space on a permanent basis. If there are some who oppose this view I doubt that reading what John has written will change their minds. On the other hand, I have no doubts that the rest of us can do with having the case restated clearly from time to time, which is what we have here. My only complaint is just that there really is nothing new and exciting in what John has written, it's almost as though this article was destined for some other readership or, more likely, that John had not more clearly worked out in his mind the sorts of people who would be reading his article and had written for that audience.

Jack Herman is always the star of his own fanzines. It may be no accident that he has set himself third in the order of things so that by the time we get to his article we are well set up for a bit of careful and sometimes thought provoking writing. Fortunately Jack also enlivens his writing with the occasional witty line; one of which I simply cannot resist reprinting here. In talking about the Rank film, THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, Jack concluded that "the characters remain far too unidimensional, especially the stolid Howard Keel, who looks desperate for a song break every ten minutes or so".

So that I can get on with the other fanzines I want to mention I'm going to have to pass over the rest of this issue to get to the general points I feel should be made about the major problem that confronts Jack Herman and his WAHF-FULL. Until Jack overcomes this problem he will probably be stuck with a fanzine which is no more than good and interesting; it is that Jack does not seem to be aiming at a sufficiently high intellectual standard. He needs contributors of the standard of John Foyster, Rob Gerrand and George Turner, not the lesser forces he is currently using. Of course I may be wrong and Jack is aiming to do no more than be intellectually diverting, in which case he is succeeding admirably.

However, if Jack is only aiming at being diverting then he is falling into the same pit of vipers which some people suggest that

Marc Ortlieb occupies; not being serious about what they are doing. I think that Marc is generally quite serious about trying to be entertaining and humorous but I'm not sure that Jack is equally serious about being intelligent and informative. Certainly Jack does tell us useful bits of information, but not often does his fanzine contain those insights that serve to bring a fire of enjoyment to the intellect - when it is confronted by some new puzzle or by some old concept dressed up in intriguing and thought provoking new clothes.

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One final thought. If Jack is not aiming high enough this may be because his audience is incapable of responding appropriately. If this is the case then it is a great pity for Australian fandom that we are unable to support a higher level of intellectual activity.

Moving from the "Good" we come to the "Bad".

These terms are, of course, relative but I hasten to point out that in the case I'm about to discuss there is relatively little in common with the fanzine I have just discussed.

At the beginning the year I had the mixed pleasure of describing RHUBARB as "one of the most remarkably uninteresting fanzines ever to be published for general circulation in Australia." I say that it was a mixed pleasure because I must admit to a little sadistic pleasure but, on the other hand, it is not really much of a pleasure to have to say things which will denigrate the work of people who presumably put a fair amount of effort into what they do.

It is difficult to put the finger on aspects of RHUBARB which make it such a bad fanzine that one is actually forced to the point of saying as much - after all there are dozens of crudzines published throughout the year which are just ignored.

This fanzine doesn't look totally unattractive, it just looks as though it will be difficult to read. The editors, John & Diane Fox, use an odd typeface which is all capitals, only bigger where you'd normally expect an upper-case letter in normal text. The layout is also all over the place, double column on some page and single on others; and what it really lacks is a sense of style and uniformity. This is a fanzine which really gives the impression (whether it is correct or not) that its editors have not really considered what their fanzine is going to look like when it is printed and put together. If, however, they have done this, then their sense of aesthetics is alien to mine.

All this aside, the main thing which I really find bad about RHUBARB is the thinking which should have, but which apparently has not, gone on behind the written content. Take the editorial for example. In it we find some comments on their new address and the cut back in circulation with future issues, a paragraph on Christmas dinner, a paragraph on drink-driving, another paragraph on other forms of intoxication while driving, two paragraphs on the Sydney-Hobart yacht race and one on changes to format.

This is all over the place, it doesn't give the reader a chance to get to know or understand the slightest thing about the editors, apart from the apparent fact that they cannot co-ordinate one thought to last a full page. If somebody really wants to write about all those topics it seems better to me that they do so over sufficient space that they can involve their readers in what they have to say, to engage them in some sort of mental exercise over what thoughts and motivations the editors have. Instead the firm impression left after reading this page is that the editors had left themselves a page to fill and, by God, they were going to fill it.

The fanzine reviews are no more than a list of what John & Diane have received in the mail, it does no more than confirm to the editor who sent them something that they did receive it. Other faneds do this sort of thing too so I cannot criticise John and Diane alone in saying that this is a patent waste of time; it does nobody any good (except as a sort of proof of fannish virility/fertility, "My mail's bigger than your mail!") and it wastes space which could be better used. Oddly enough John and Diane recognise the

waste of space and give this as the reason for cutting out comments on fanzines and just listing the obvious details which anybody who has received the issue can see for themselves.

There are two pieces of fiction in this issue which are almost too dreadful to mention. "A.D. 2002" works over the theme of what (I seem to recall) sociologists would call "labelling"... which means that if you call somebody something long enough or with sufficient authority, it will become a fact. In this story there are machines which test for latent criminal tendencies. People who come up positive are then called criminals and treated accordingly. The idea itself might make a decent story in experienced hands, but here it is no more than a list of things which can happen to a person who is called a "criminal". "A Roo'd Awakening" is the conclusion of a serial written by Diane. It is not terribly well written and could do with some editing. Let's see if you can work your way through the following sentence/paragraph.

"Unopposed by the tolerant Galactics, who did not realise its true nature, considered it to be purely of earthly origin, and who were averse to tampering with local customs; unopposed by any local powers, who didn't have the slightest idea how to deal with any apparently legal organisation; using Earthlings as stooges and front-men; thus did the company thrive, weltering in backstabbing and excelling in doublecrossing."

I'm only too well aware that my syntax sometimes gets itself confused, but I hope that I never reach the level of complexity of that selection. I should also hope that if I were second drafting material I would pick up this sort of nonsense. While I am not keen on fiction in fanzines I am even less pleased by reading material which gives every indication of being first draft onto stencil.

There are a couple of book reviews which I found interesting, not because they are so good in themselves but because they tell me what the books are about and since I am unlikely to read them I have gained a little more knowledge from the reviews. There is a third review, of Jan Finder's "Guide to Australterrestrials". The only thing that the review doesn't tell me about the book is what the reviewer thought of it. Mind you, I would not like to have to commit myself either, but if you are going to review something then you really do have to commit yourself.

The contents of the letter column are not terribly interesting. If the editors have edited away the less relevant parts of the letters then I would not like to see the sorts of letters that they are getting. The trouble is also that the comments which the editors make on letters are all just so pedestrian, with not the slightest hint of excitement. If a letter column is the place in a fanzine where the readers respond and interact with the editors it would be just as well for this interaction to take on some of the semblance of real life interaction.

Looking at RHUBARB 1981/4 overall I am unable to draw a really useful conclusion. I would like to think that some of the things I've said would be useful to John and Diane but, of course, one of the points of this sort of review is not so much to be useful to the editors concerned but to be useful to other sorts of fanzine editors as well.

Sitting here in my little room I am all too well aware of the sorts of impressions I'm liable to give some people reading this set of comments. I trust that I'm not coming across as though I'm pontificating on the subject of fanzines and that I hold the firm view that what I say is some form of divine truth. The more simple explanation is that in writing this sort of thing I am, in fact, working towards a definition of what a perfect fanzine might or could be like. Only by examining the fanzines which exist can we get an idea of what better fanzines might be like. (It may be that one of the reasons I'm unable to draw a conclusion about RHUBARB is because I can see no way in which it could get better. Perhaps John and Diane should fold up tent for a while, rethink what they are doing, and come back

in a year or so with a new title.)

If somebody asks me why we should try to produce better fanzines I will probably answer that since we spend a fair amount of time doing this sort of thing we should also take the time to think about what we are doing and to do it to the best of our ability.

Which brings me to the third of my categories, to the "indifferent" one. This is the most difficult because it brings me to the problem of exactly what should be in fanzines and what approach an editor should take in putting one together. I've already said that Jack Herman doesn't publish my ideal fanzine although he publishes a fairly good one by objective standards. So it is that WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE is not my ideal of a perfect fanzine and I add to my troubles by often wondering if it is a very good one.

In the July 1982 issue Jean Weber does all those things which often annoy me so perhaps if I look at them I might be able to express the disappointment I often have with this fanzine. Before I go on with that I might add that an "indifferent" fanzine is one which, when I find it in my letter box, I look again to see if anything more interesting came along with it.

Jean has two pages of editorial in which she writes mainly about the events in her recent life. For those of us who know Jean reasonably well this is useful because it keeps us up to date with what she's doing. However I wonder what those who don't know Jean make of this because, unfortunately, although this lists the things in her life it does not really give us much feeling for what they mean to Jean or, more interestingly, what it's like to be Jean. While she would be among the first to tell me that she really doesn't have the outstanding ability to write in the manner I'd like I wish that she would have a go. Perhaps it's a matter of taking more time and space over what we get in the editorials or of actually writing more about less topics.

The main feature of this issue is an essay and comments from various other people on the subject of rape. This perhaps the most IMPORTANT thing which has been published in an Australian fanzine in a long time; it certainly affects more people more drastically than all the science fiction, fanzines and conventions that you normally read about in fanzines. Jean also argues her case fairly well and I have no argument with it. My disappointment is with what follows her essay; a series or reprinted responses to the essay which she originally published in the two Australian apas, ANZAPA and APPLESAUCE. I have two worries about this segment: firstly because it takes up so much space which could have been used to give the fanzine more variety, secondly because it is not co-ordinated and goes off like a shrapnel bomb, little bits of argument in all directions. It is like reading a letter column which is all on one subject and not half so entertaining as most letter columns either. Of course it is easy to claim that rape is not an entertaining subject... which is fair enough but in a fanzine, as with most forms of human intercourse, if you want to get your message across you have to keep your audience's attention fully. (I also hope that Jean went to the trouble of asking the permission of those people whose mailing comments she has reprinted. I reckon most people wouldn't mind suddenly finding comments they dashed off for a limited apa membership to read published in an edition of several hundred copies but, on the other hand, there may be some who wish they'd taken a little more care with their expression and grammar for the larger audience.)

Another disappointment in this issue is the four pages which Jean has dedicated to a piece of her fiction. The trouble with this is that it is really nothing more than an excuse for a series of arguments on the troubles which a male dominated society present. I could not argue with Jean that many of the points she made were not good and valid ones, what I would argue is that because of the format, the story was deadly dull. A story can have many faults but boring the reader is the most fatal. If Jean wants to present the sorts of arguments she has she might have found a better way to express them. The thing which comes to mind though is that, as with John Newman

mentioned earlier, Jean is preaching to an audience which is already largely converted.

The letter column is also deficient, this is partly Jean's fault and partly the fault of the contributors. Jean is to blame when she cuts out bits of letters which might carry an interesting argument and the writers are to blame when they do not carry the logice of their arguments very far. This is most probably because most people who write are really more interested in expressing their gratitude at receiving the previous issue rather than in saying something of any great import. I wonder if anybody has ever come up with a way of encouraging fanzine readers to respond in decent depth to the issues which are raised. I imagine that the only way it can be done is in carefully culling all the less impressive thought out of a letter column or spending a lot of time and effort in commenting on the letters which are received and published.

And that's about all there is. This issue seems a lot shorter than it actually is, possibly because of the lack of variety of the contents, perhaps because of the lack of an individual editorial presence. While I think that Jean may have tapped into an interesting area of fandom with her emphasis on human relations and feminism, I'm not sure that she's using the rich vein that exists in the most innovative fashion. Of course she may not really want to do so... that's more my problem.

In closing I have one general comment on almost all Australian fanzines that I receive these days - they are almost invariably just on the decent side of boring. Fanzine production seems to have become something that is done out of habit, not out of any great joy for the medium. I don't think that my response comes from being old and tired, I think it comes more from the current state of Australian fandom. In the past fanzines were a vital part of the communication between Australian fans, this is no longer the case. They were also the primary method of self expression for fans who felt that fandom was more than just an excuse for a social club of some sort. If there is one thing which seperates fandom from other sorts of social groupings it is fanzines. Perhaps this is now not so much the case.

Just in case you don't have the addresses for the fanzines I've mentioned, you could try writing to Jack Herman at Box 272, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, N.S.W. 2006; John & Diane Fox at PO Box 129, Lakemba, N.S.W. 2195; and Jean Weber, 13 Myall Street, O'Connor, A.C.T. 2601.

WE DO TOO GET LETTERS, SOMETIMES

This is the letter column. It threatens to be very short since the response to the previous issue was stunningly slight - you could count the decent letters of comment on the fingers of one hand, if you cut off all but one finger. Still, what's the "we also heard from" list for.

The people we did hear from were: Marc Ortlieb, Diane Fox, Tim Dawson, "Honest Joe" Playford, Irwin Hirsh, Greg Hills, Harry Andruschak, Richard Faulder, Jean Weber, Mervyn Barrett, Joseph Nicholas, Roelof Gouriaan, Kevin Dillon, and the National Library of Australia. And then there was also...

Judith Hanna, 22Denbigh St.m Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, U.K.

I was most impressed by the prospectus for your OOPS-AD venture, and should I ever find myself in a position to launch my own aerospace programme, you may be sure that I'll give it a go. Doubtless, with your expansion into this highly competitive and exceedingly risky field, your financial johnnies have been urging on you the necessity for appropriate insurance against mishap.

OOPSADAISY has been designed just for you. This "Aerospace Division Accident Insurance Scheme, Yep" will cover your test and commercial vehicles against damage ensuing from collisions with meteors, satellites (manned and unmanned), skylabs, space shuttles, whales, bowls of petunias and falling pink elephants. Other contingencies may be written in.

An interesting proposal Judith, one which I have passed on to the people who are supposed to know about such things. I am, however, most disappointed to note your lack of faith in the great future of the ornithopter in the exploration of space. Nobody here at OOPS thinks that ornithopters are "exceedingly risky" though we have often wondered why there is, contrary to your suggestion, no competition. It seems that nobody else is interested in seriously flying ornithopters in the air, let alone out in space. Can it be that only OOPS is far sighted enough to foresee this new wave of space exploration.

What particularly struck me about Adelaide University, apart from the resemblance to a rabbit warren which you mention, is that though the Barr Library sits jostling the Lamb Building, none of the locals, not even Roman Orszanski, seemed to have made the obvious connection - nobody had even thought of dubbing it the Barr-Lamb Complex.

But I'm surprised that you compare Adelaide to Sydney rather than to Perth. Adelaide and Sydney are vastly different - in size, in pace and in climate - whereas in all these respects Perth and Adelaide are just about identical. The main differences between Perth and Adelaide seem to me to be that Adelaide has deciduous European trees in the streets and gardens, and has older houses mostly painted white, while in Perth native trees predominate and the houses tend to be new, ranch style and built of salmon pink brick. Adelaide and Sydney are both arts-oriented, it is true, but as a visitor the level of excitement about such events in Adelaide has never struck me as being greater than in Perth.

And of course everyone in fandom realises that spiritually Adelaide is just a far-flung suburb of Melbourne, a running dog of the cold-blooded puritan ethos which opposes the more relaxed and open style of Sydney and Perth. I am inclined to suspect the influence of climate in this matter. Totally disregarding the fact that I earlier said that the climates of Perth and Adelaide are the same - which, both being Mediterranean in nature, they are - I shall now claim that Adelaide and Melbourne, the southern cities, are alike in having a colder climate, while Sydney and Perth bask under sunnier skies, and that the difference in prevailing temperature is reflected in the prevailing temperature of the inhabitants. That, then is my climatic theory as a contribution to the comparative sociology of fandom. No doubt you can, as easily as I, think of examples to support it. And it is, of course, a statistical tendency, a normal distribution curve, with each centre having both more serious and more frivolous members within the fan community - Don Ashby, for instance might be regarded as a typically "Sydney" element within Melbourne, Keith Curtis as a "Melbourne" element in Sydney. There is also the complicating factor of the generation gap between the cities which has been remarked upon by other theorists. Whether the same pattern holds overseas would bear investigation: I believe Ortlieb and Beasley recently undertook research into the fan community in the U.S.A. - their conclusions are still in the press. The written evidence emanating from the U.K. does suggest that fans from that yet colder climate take life even more seriously than do our Melbourne group - and take nothing more seriously than their frivolity.

While doing "fan history" is all very well, without a basis in accurate synchronic descriptions, such a diachronic approach cannot hope to achieve validity. A sociology of fandom is a necessary first step in any effort to document this social phenomenon of our time. However, let's not get too organised about this, eh. That would, after all, be unAustralian, wouldn't it?

Your final paragraph contains a couple of interesting propositions. I think that I prefer your final suggestion above others but I should ask you to state your theoretical stance in suggesting that an accurate synchronic approach is necessary. I have the feeling that you are lobbying for a functionalist approach with some interactionist overtones. Perhaps your denial of a conflict theory approach is more rooted in an attempt to steer clear of a run in with

Ashby and Foyster. Not that I blame you.

As you probably know, by now university has made me into about half a sociologist - for this reason I understood about half the jargon that you used. You forgot to send a glossary with the rest.

Your theories about the climatic influences upon the temperaments of the inhabitants of our various fan centres was very interesting. If your theory also goes so far as to include the rest of the peoples living in those cities as well (which I think you might agree is a reasonable assumption) we find good evidence for a complete reversal in the polarity of weather in about the 1890's. Before that anybody who was anybody commented that people in Melbourne wereso open, friendly, warm and lively. They also commented that the people in Sydney were the opposite: closed, dull and puritanical. Thus, to explain the current state as you have we would have to find evidence for Melbourne being warmer than Sydney about a hundred years ago.

So much for sociology (he says, rubbing his hands in fiendish delight).

The main point of my observations about the similarity between Adelaide and Sydney was that when you come from a place like Canberra all bustling metropolises seem the same. No doubt there is something in what you say about the colour of houses and the sorts of trees, not to mention the climate... but when all the streets are narrow and full of traffic, the houses are all jamed together and the buildings in the city centre all seem to be thirty floors high, Canberra seems like a pleasant "sleepy hollow" place to live - with the occasional political crisis to liven things up a bit on cold winter nights.

Despite the obvious invalidity of sociology I trust that you have enjoyed your field work in the U.K. these past few months. Even though I may find many of your conclusions to be rubbish I nonetheless look forward to your paper on the subject.

John D Berry, 525 19th Avenue East, Seattle, W.A. 98112, USA

ORNITHOPTER flapped its way into my rainy mailbox today while I wasn't looking, and since I've just finished reading it and I'm working my way through a glass of smooth red (the last of the bottles we brought back from an expensive trip to my favourite California winery last fall), I thought I'd write at least a brief note. It's been a while since I acknowledged one of your fanzines - long enough that you're still using my last address, which I moved out of last July (though only a few blocks) - but I'm glad to note that there's no big red "A" marring my address label. There are a few interesting stamps that my mailman will like (it's easy to keep your mailman happy when he collects Australian stamps), though it's ironic and a bit depressing to see pictures of animals I've never encountered before with the label "Endangered Species" right under them.

Perhaps the post office is indulging in a bit of subliminal propaganda to preserve some of our endangered animals. They may, for all we know, have a little overprinting machine somewhere in their organisation ready to go over their sheets of stamps to change the wording to "Previously Endangeres Species". Let's hope they don't have a similar machine which simply blots out the "Endangered" and writes, instead, "Extinct Species".

You'll have to apologise to you're mailman for me if there aren't any stamps on this issue. For some reason which is a little beyond me, mail which goes out under a "Category B" does not seem to get stamps. Perhaps the post office is saving money in not putting them on mail which it gets in bulk, or perhaps it thinks that it is saving me from a tedious job which I actually enjoy (a little). I've always thought of stamps as pretty little pieces of advertising for the country and I'd prefer to continue using them if I could afford it. But when the post office wants so much just to post one fanzine even the old fannish habits have to give way to make new economies.

ORNITHOPTER is hardly something to read while wishing I hadn't touched the stuff at a Christmas party; given its date of arrival, it might be more appropriate to such rueing over an Easter party, except that there was no Easter party. There was no Christmas party, either, or nothing exceptional, but there was a most magnificent fannish party early in December, hosted by Bob Doyle and Clifford Wind, both of whom make a good living at their jobs and both of whom enjoy treating their friends to astonishing gourmet delights. This "party" was as well attended as a tiny regional convention, and without the programming or walk-in attendees, too. In addition to the many courses of elaborate foods, and the conversation of visitors from as far away as Minneapolis (David Emerson, who upstaged Jon Singer by visiting him in Denver and then accompanying him here for the party), there was an array of wines, starting with the local Washington wineries' best vintages and progressing to far-flung bottles (perhaps I should rephrase that), which kept everybody very happy through the evening. Now that was a party to think back on ruefully, but fully, and to read ORNITHOPTER after. (They say they're going to do it again next year. Care to break the record for distance covered by visitors?)

We'd love to. But we have this new bit on our house and dead washing-machine and refrigerator which have to be replaced... but if we come into a lot of money between now and December you can count on it.

Your mention of grand fannish parties, and of David Emerson and Minneapolis have made me feel just a tiny bit sad. I reckon I must feel the sort of way Bruce Gillespie feels all the time - especially if he feels how he looks (or used to look, not having had the chance to see him for the past year). It's getting on for eight years now since Valma and I visited the US and yet it seems almost yesterday that there was that party at the Proxima Puddle, or that party in East Providence, or the other one in Minneapolis or the one in Seattle. Lots of good people met then and a glorious time had. But it's only when you think back to them that you realise what distance does to relationships which would flower so easily if not thwarted by thousands of miles of water.

I mean, in the ten or so years that John Berry and I have known each other we've probably had only three chances to talk to each other. The first time we met him was at Ted White's place in Falls Church but I do not now recall if he was in New York after DisCon (when we were there). Then, in 1975 he came out for AUSSIECON - my strongest memory of that whole convention was talking to him on the night before it began and wondering to myself on the fact that it had actually come-to-pass... and then there was that couple of days at our place after the event. In other words we haven't had a chance to talk in seven years... and yet there is still the coals of a friendship smouldering away there somewhere.

But as John was saying...

"The Real Truth About Leigh Edmonds" leads me to wonder if we could get the company that makes Jim Beam to manufacture an ornithopter bottle, just the way they make those awful Elvis bottles (different ones for the various stages of his career, including the gold-lame one with the paunch) and foot-ball-shaped and Civil War cannon bottles and so forth. (John Lennon bottles have outclassed the Elvis bottles for tasteless packaging.) There's always a whole shelf full of those things at the state liquor store, and they're invariably marked down to a sale price.

I'm surprised at your remarks, Leigh, about the bush between Canberra and Sydney being so dense. I'm not sure that you didn't take some more roundabout route than Carey and Susan and I did in '75, but what I recall thinking somewhere along that highway (somewhere after the gum trees' bark had turned blue-gray and the soil bright red, in the hilly country) was that even the densest eucalyptus forest still let the light reach the ground. I've seen forests in North America where the ground is forever shrouded in shade, or at best gets light only at noon. To be sure, that's not the most common kind of

forest, especially in the warm parts of the Northeast where I grew up, where almost all the forest is second-growth deciduous trees that grow short and thick, crowding each other out, in the land between the highways and the industrial towns. But the Australian forest, though it looked thick from a distance, seemed thin and open to me. That doesn't, of course, mean that it would be easy to get through on foot; but what I saw was never on the same level as the heavy growth on the west coast of Vancouver Island, say, where the now-popular hiking trail that goes northwest from around Victoria was first cut to provide shipwrecked sailors their only chance to reach civilization.

Indeed, instead of taking a more roundabout route to Sydney we took the route which is, these days, the most direct. In the past year or so they have opened up a freeway from Mittagong to the outskirts of Sydney which takes a lot of time and distance off the trip. The older route, the one which you travelled along, is the ancient way which is how people have been moving out from Sydney for almost the past two centuries. In that time they have done their best to civilise most of the land within sight of the highway. The new road, the freeway, goes through areas which nobody wanted to graze in the time since white settlement and a lot of it is still what you might call "native bush". You are probably quite correct in saying that it is fairly thin by world-wide standards, and even in comparison with the rain-forests further north in Queensland. But it is fairly rugged stuff in comparison to what I am familiar with, from the Wimmera and the Mallee.

The awesomeness of a forest or bushland does not always depend on how thick it is, as I'm sure you will agree. One time Valma and I took our holidays by driving down the Murray Valley from Mildura to Echuca. On the way to Mildura we stopped at one of my uncles places at Beulah and then drove during the next day to Mildura. As we drove north the land became more and more desolate. By the time we had passed Ouyen the scenery by the road had become nothing but mallee bush, uniformly seven or so feet high, off to the horizon. We stopped the car, got out and wandered around in it for a bit. It would probably be quite easy country to walk through; if you could stand the uniformity of it, the lack of reference points, the drabness and the sandy dryness.

A similar landscape which we will never forget is the absolute flatness of the Nullarbor Plain with it's very low saltbush. The trouble was that they wouldn't let us off the train to wander around it in. They also don't want you to stop on the freeway from Mittagong into Sydney, it's as though whoever built the road didn't want the people who travel on it to have anything to do with the country through which they are moving. Not unusual these days.

You certainly avoided naming names, Leigh, but your remarks on fanzines were nonetheless to the point. I was disappointed that after that build up you didn't actually say much about KRATOPHANY, which deserved to be reviewed in depth. I'd like to see your write-up in THYME about Australian fanzines of 1981. I was urging Irwin Hirsh to get someone to do a good critical fanzine review column for SIKANDER; not only would it do his fanzine good, but it seems to me that it would do Australian fandom good, too. Most of the fanzines I've gotten from Australia in the past couple of years have been boring - quite a change from the Aussie fandom that I first encounteres.)

Right on!

THE SECOND "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

Joseph Nicholas won GUFF last year, as just about everybody will know. For Valma and I the highlight of ADVENTION was meeting him and getting to knock around together for a bit during that convention. He is one of the most charming, delightful and witty people ever to visit Australian fandom and we wish that we had been able to spend more time with him... but such is life.

One of the reasons why we at OOPS have chosen to publish Joseph's article is to point out that there are problems with the way that aeroplanes operate these days. Not that we would want to put anybody off flying, we'd just like you to remember though that if Joseph had been flying in an ornithopter very little of what he recounts would have happened.

FEAR OF FLYING

Joseph Nicholas

When you grow up as the son of a man who's spent his entire adult life working with airplanes in some way or another - an uncalled-up member of the RAF Reserve during the Second World War, instructor with the Empire Test Pilot School in the early fifties, section head at Boscombe Down Experimental Establishment, and so on - you can't help but develop sort of fascination for them yourself. It's a tremendous thing for an open-mouthed kid of nine or ten, for example, to see a Lightning pulling full afterburner as it comes off the end of the runway and going straight up into a clear summer sky like a rocket from a launch-pad, or to lie back on the grass at a Battle of Britain air display and watch the last few remaining Spitfires and Hurricanes snarling through a series of loops and rolls overhead, or even to wander around an air museum gazing in dumb awe at the fragile contraptions of canvas and string to which the early pioneers entrusted their lives, or - but I dare say that you get the general idea. And since there was little chance (later corrected to "no chance" when it was discovered that my eyesight wasn't good enough) of my being able to fly such aircraft for myself, I had instead to fly in my dreams, via a collection of plastic models: a hobby to which I devoted myself for a large part of my later childhood, all my adolescence and a considerable number of my teenage years. For some reason that never became entirely clear - although it probably had a great deal to do with what I then imagined (but certainly don't now) as the romance and excitement of aerial combat - I concentrated solely on piston-engined pre-1945 types (with a later excursion into helicopters, as those of you who've read Napalm in the Morning I will know), eventually amassing several shelves' worth of completed kits before other interests at last intervened.

From which you'll surmise that I no longer build plastic models, and that my fascination with airplanes has ebbed more than somewhat... but not totally, because I still read the occasional lightweight historical tome (full of anecdotes about and interviews with those who survived) about, say, the air war in the Pacific, or the activities of the CIA's secret air force, or the American daylight bombing raids on Europe. And, of course, I enjoy flying, even though the only flying I've ever done has been in civilian airliners: like an airborne coach, and just as exciting. What can you do, after all, but read your book or watch the movie or stare out of the window at the cloud formations? Slumped in your padded armchair at 35 000 feet, what is there to worry about but the problem of staving off boredom? There are no Focke-Wulfs and Bf 109s closing in for the kill as your defensive box of B-17s begins to fall apart, no panic stricken civilians trying to scramble aboard your overloaded Huey UH-1D as you lift off from the embassy compound during the last desperate hours of the fall of Saigon, no deadweight of the torpedo slung under the belly of your shell torn Marauder as you bore through the flack towards the Japanese carriers at Midway; it's all so safe and undemanding that you might as well be drugged to the eyeballs for all the difference it would make.

Except when something goes wrong.

Statistically, as probably know, flying is actually the safest form of transport known to man. Air crashes are certainly more spectacular than car crashes, and make bigger headlines; but, given the complications of the technology and the sheer distances covered every year, the number of accidents is really quite small (and fully half of them turn out to happen to

inadequately maintained private planes), Some airlines, in fact, have never had an accident in their entire operational history - and one of those airlines is the Australian national carrier, Qantas.

I flew Qantas both ways on my GUFF trip to Australia, said journey being the longest I've yet made (but then I can't imagine many that could be longer!). The flight out was quite uneventful, and receives some passing mention in my forthcoming trip report, Once Upon A Time In Australia; but the flight back...

It was a brave-seeming farewell at Sydney Airport, with those who'd come to see me off (Vera Lonergan and her husband Peter, with whom I'd been staying, and Judith Hanna, who'd spent the night there after my goodbye party the evening before) smiling warmly and wishing me a pleasant journey and such, and myself being engulfed by alternate waves of dizzying happiness (I was going home, like) and terrible despondency (I didn't want to go home at all), with the despondency prevailing. I kept telling myself that I would one day return, and for a longer period: indeed, I'd already set my sights on two months towards the end of 1983, but until then all I had to look forward to was the continuous dull routine of my boring civil service job, poot poot poot.

But eventually I wandered off out to the aircraft, to discover that despite having asked for a window seat aft of the wing on the port side, I had in fact been placed right next to the main emergency overwing exit (and, coincidentally, one of the toilets) - which meant that I had no view out at all, and was faced instead with a piece of pale beige plastic panelling decorated with the names of various outback towns. Shit, I thought, what am I supposed to do all the way home - read? (And sleep, and watch the movies, and replay the memories of my trip, and wish that it wasn't over...) I might, by way of compensation, have lots of legroom - on a 747, two rows of seats are omitted to allow maximum access to the emergency door - but it was pretty minor compensation. And the book I'd chosen wasn't much good, either: it was Alexei and Cory Panshin's SF In Dimension, a work of purported criticism whose naivete in equalled only by its superficiality and whose relentless single-mindedness is such as to make it of interest only to those already converted to its theme - that SF is a literature of metaphysical transcendence and should therefore eschew entirely the fears and frustrations of the real world in favour of optimistic preaching of the evolutionary awakening to come... but I digress.

Many hours later, therefore, after a brief stopover in Singapore and a refreshing sleep on the second leg of the journey from there to Bahrain, I was still wishing that I was back in Australia as we rolled onto the head of the runway preparatory to commencing the next stage of our journey, to Damascus. Two of the stewards strapped themselves into the folding seats in front of us, the engine note built up to a roar, the brakes were release and off we shot. I couldn't see the runway lights shooting past us, of course, but I could certainly feel what happened next: a terrible juddering from beneath my seat, followed by a thud, a second or two of normal wheel noises, then more juddering and another, louder thud that I swear I could feel through the soles of my feet. Then the pilot got the stick back and we lofted up into the sky - with me feeling not relief that whatever we'd hit had been safely overridden but a slow-burning fear that something had gone desperately wrong: that we had suffered major damage and would be unable to land again. "Rough runway," commented the chap in the seat next to me, sounding for all the world that what we'd just experienced was completely unexceptional; but I hardly heard him, because my eyes were fixed on the two stewards in front of me, one of whom was just grinning inanely back while the other was engaged in a whispered but frantic-seeming conversation with someone on the other end of the interphone... and damn me if I didn't hear him ask "Will we have to return to Bahrain?" Oh God... "Runway?" I said at last to the guy next to me, "I think we just blew a tyre." He shook his head. "No, the runway probably buckled in the heat. It happens often in hot countries - I felt it once in Rio. It's nothing to worry about."

A possible explanation, and one that came from someone obviously well-versed in such matters - but I wasn't convinced, and my suspicions were heightened when, returning from the toilet a few minutes later, I saw one of the stewards (the one who had given me the inane grin) checking the liferafts stored behind the panels in the cabin ceiling by the emergency overwing door. "What went wrong on take-off?" I asked him, striving to keep my voice as level as possible. "Nothing," he said, his grin growing larger and even more inane, "Nothing at all!" And, before I could press him further, he went rushing back to the galley to start serving the drinks. I resumed my seat, feeling strangely numb - it was bad, all right, because if they were checking the liferafts then it could only mean that we had suffered so much damage to the undercarriage that it was now worse than useless and we would have to ditch in the sea instead. And everyone knows that aircraft don't float, the reassuring pictures on the safety cards to the contrary - I'd get out, because I was sitting right next to an exit, but I'm a poor swimmer even at the best of times, and without a lifejacket (assuming that I could even grab one: in the economy class, there's only one for every three seats) I wouldn't survive for very long at all...

The (free) pre-dinner drinks were served, and as I laid into mine I kept my ears open for any announcement from the flight deck; but announcement there was not, which served only to increase my fears. Didn't these people know that by not making one they increased rather than decreased their passenger's anxiety? Perhaps - but the meal was served as though nothing was amiss, and I took the opportunity to score another drink from the cabin crew. Still no announcement. I felt vaguely surprised at myself for being able to eat under such circumstances - not that I was in any sense paralysed with fear, being too drained of feeling by the length of the flight to experience anything to any great extent, but my tongue had a tendency to stick to the roof of my mouth and my hands to shake slightly... And at last, almost two hours after take-off, at about the time when we should have been commencing our descent into Damascus, the captain came on to the PA and stated, in tones too laconic to credit, that those passengers who "might" have felt something "odd" on take-off should know that we had suffered some minor damage to the port undercarriage and would therefore be skipping Damascus in favour of flying straight on to London.

So at last we knew, and I began to breathe a little more easily - only to be brought up short as the implications of the captain's statement sank in. London might have better repair facilities than Damascus, for sure, but the reason for skipping the latter was clearly twofold: by the time we reached London the sun would have caught up with us and we would therefore make our landing in daylight; and we would also have used up a hell of a lot more fuel, thus making the eventual landing (however it was to be accomplished) considerably less dangerous. My God, I thought, they must be idiots if they think we're going to swallow that... "Interesting," said the chap next to me, "I wonder if we'll have to make a bellylanding?" Realising instinctively that he knew more than he was letting on, I asked him if he'd ever done it before, and if so, what I should expect. "Not in a civil airlines, no - but in Lancaster bombers during the war..." I suddenly lost interest again; this was hardly the time or the place for war stories, but I let him rattle on while pretending to pay attention - and while through my mind flickered images gleaned from my childhood fancies and the lightweight historical tomes I mentioned earlier, images of circling fighters and flaming bombers and prowling gunships, of extraordinary courage and self-sacrifice, and I was at last brought to full emotional realisation of what I had previously been aware of only in a distant intellectual fashion: that there was nothing noble about death, that all this apparent heroism and idealism was nothing more than a species of determined madness, organised around the principle that since you were going to die anyway you might as well keep going until you finally bought it. In a few brief seconds, the exploits of Chennault's Flying Tigers and the Battle of Britain's Few that I had so admired back in my uncomplicated youth were stripped of their

last remaining patches of glass, exposed as the fraudulent nonsense it always was; and I was left struggling to reconcile this imagined loss with the knowledge that I was now caught up in a situation similar to that I would once have relished: lone pilot doggedly guiding his crippled airplane through the unfriendly sky towards possible haven and probably nemesis... Well, not quite, because our pilot would have been suddenly burdened with the knowledge that not only was his ship no longer in the best of condition but also that he now had a vastly increased responsibility for our lives - although whether the helplessness and inability to control whatever happened next or the passengers was worse was a moot point, and one upon which I didn't care to speculate further.

I unstrapped myself from my seat and went back to the galley to con, as I put it, "a large and therapeutic scotch" (phrase copyright Dave Langford 1977) from the chief steward. Impressed by my grasp of the English language (he clearly had not read any Dave Langford fanzines), he unbent sufficiently to flesh out for me what the captain had just told us. Apparently a tyre had stripped on take-off, one chunk flying out into the darkness at about 200 knots and demolishing half a dozen of the runway lights and the other slamming up into the wheelwell to crack open the main hydraulic line for the port gear assembly; and the delay in making the announcement had not been for fear of unduly alarming the passengers but because the people at Bahrain had first to locate the bits of tyre before they could tell the pilot what had gone wrong, and then relay the news to the Qantas offices in Sydney and London so that they could run various optional flight plans through their computers to determine which was the best course of action for us to take. But it was all nothing to worry about, he said; it happened, on average, about once a year, and we could make a proper landing by virtue of the back-up hydraulic system, which would allow them to wind the gear down by hand - not to mention the fact that we'd lost only one wheel out of the fourteen on the port side and were pretty lightly loaded anyway, with only about 120 passengers and half a load of cargo. And by the time we reached London, he added, the fuel weight would have been reduced to a mere sixty tonnes... mention of which served to instantly confirm one of my earlier suspicions of the reasons for our flying straight to London. "Come and look out of the window," he said, leading me to a conveniently empty row of seats and pointing to the upper surface of the wing, "See those brown stains on the flap? That's the leaking hydraulic fluid." Hardly a reassuring sight, and certainly not when brought to my attention in so cheerful a manner, but now that I had the full story I was beginning to feel a little better - as would anyone, since only the fullest possible knowledge of your predicament can allow you to cope with it. "All you have to do is relax," he said, "We'll get you down safely. And if you want another drink, just call."

Who could refuse such an offer - and all around me, as we cruised on towards London and the first rays of sunrise began to percolate into the cabin, I noticed a great many other people similarly laying into the free booze. Drowning their latent fears, perhaps, and fears which the casual behaviour of the cabin crew (it might well be something they experienced as a matter of course, but it was a complete novelty to the rest of us) did little or nothing to allay; but it was one way of passing time. (Provided we didn't get so paralytic that, if something did go wrong on landing, we couldn't evacuate the aircraft fast enough.) I even managed another chapter or two of SF In Dimension: as ignorant of art, humanity and insight as it was, it was preferable to the movie, Robert Altman's Popeye, that they then screened.

And then it was time to begin our descent into London.

After the hours of seeming unconcern, the cabin crew became suddenly serious. "We'll have to move you from here," said the chief steward, "You're right above the wheelwell, and there's a small danger of fire..." "Where to?" asked the chap next to me, and was told that it didn't matter whether we moved forward or back, "but since we're landing into the wind I know where I'd rather be!" Too forced to be black, too silly to be funny; but forward we moved, and I at last

had a window to look out of. "On your right," said the pilot, "Is Buckingham Palace" - but I was still on the left, and could see only the Thames glittering gently in the hazy morning sunshine.

Around came the cabin crew again, sounding more serious than ever. "If you have to get out in a hurry," they said, "Forget your luggage." I felt as though I should have been again gripped by fear, but instead felt strangely at peace with myself and with the world: not so much a resolve to die with dignity (for death is not dignified) as calm acceptance of the fact that the next few minutes would decide matters one way or the other and there was nothing that I could do to influence the result. I continued to gaze out of the window, watching the ground coming gradually closer; and as we turned into our approach I could see the firetrucks and crashwagons lined up along the edges of the runway, already beginning to move to keep pace with us... then the runway markers slid beneath us and the concrete spread itself to welcome us and despite myself I swallowed hard; and then the wheels thumped gently down and as the engines roared into reverse thrust I realised that this was in fact the smoothest damn landing I'd ever experienced.

We stopped short of the terminal, out on some holding apron, and had to wait a few minutes while the fire marshal's car pulled in beneath the wing to enable him to check on the tyre. And as they disembarked us into the convoy of waiting buses, I looked back to where the Qantas mechanics were already at work on the object that had given us so much trouble, and it looked pretty damn awful: the tyre seemed no more than a deflated, shapeless ballon, hanging like a limp rag from the hub of a wheel whose rim was so bent out of shape that it was a miracle it hadn't scraped along the ground and started a fire on landing. But it was not until I was waiting in line at the immigration desks that the full implications of the whole thing sunk in, and made me grow cold at the thought: the tyre had been stripped, after all, just past our V1 point, the moment at which the pilot has to commit himself to a take-off because the weight of the airplane is beginning to come off the wheels onto the wings, and we therefore had enough airspeed to keep going regardless. If it had stripped any earlier, before the V1 point, with the weight of the airplane still solidly on the wheels, we would have gone careening off the runway to total destruction. Melodramatic as I know this sounds, I and everybody else aboard had, in other words, escaped certain death by mere seconds.

There is of course nothing that anyone can say to mitigate this, and the thought of it still leaves me cold from time to time, much though I might have poked fun at myself in the body of this piece and much though I might wish to laugh about it now (because humor, after all, has always been the best way of denying, or at least downgrading, a potential threat to oneself). But at the same time I have to admit that the memory is fading, albeit gradually, and I daresay that in a year or two I'll view the whole experience in a perfectly equable light, as nothing more than a mildly diverting "adventure" that, by the law of averages, is unlikely to be repeated. (Or so I'll maintain, because don't we always strive to convince ourselves that it can never happen to us?) And the real truth is that it has had very little affect on my attitudes to flying: I will continue to travel by air in the future, and I daresay that - the loss of the last remnants of my boyhood adulation notwithstanding - I will continue to read lightweight historical tomes about the air war in the Pacific and the activities of the CIA's secret air force and the American daylight raids on Europe. Old habits die hard, after all, and although I no longer build plastic models or revel in the sight of warplanes being put through their paces, and am now more aware than ever before of the risks attendant upon flying, I am still in some sense fascinated by its "mystique", by its perhaps inexpressible and sometimes perversely life-enhancing thrills.

THE THIRD "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

For various reasons this issue seems to be turning into something of a post-ADVENTION issue; which is odd because it's now well over a year since that

event. Perhaps it has something to do with the lateness of this issue, which indicates that I have a bad habit that stays with me no matter how hard I work on making myself a fannishly punctual person.

Anyhow, the next item is a column which I wrote for CHUNDER soon after ADVENTION, but that fanzine seems to have disappeared down the great sink which takes all the best fanzines in Roscoe's own time. I suppose that you could call this a reprint of an item which didn't get printed in the first place.

The column was about, naturally enough, Joseph Nicholas - who is an optimist. In the second last paragraph of his article he wrote about how close he'd come to getting killed; that if the airplane had not reached V1 the weight of the craft would have caused it to go off the runway and that would have been it. Well, my understanding of aeronautical matters (and I must admit to not having a pilot for a father) is that there are three main phases in a large aircraft taking off, V1, Vr and V2. V1 is not, as Joseph suggests, the speed at which the airplane has to take off because the weight is being taken up by the wings, it is the speed and the distance along the runway at which the pilot must attempt to take off because there isn't enough runway left in which to stop safely. Vr is the speed at which the pilot lifts the nose to get more air under the wings and provide enough lift to take off at the relatively low speed the aircraft is going; and V2 is the speed at which the aircraft has enough speed to fly. What this means is that when the tyre blew Joseph's aircraft did not have enough speed to fly but that it also didn't have enough runway left to come to a stop if the pilot could have controlled it. The pilot just had to hang on and wait until there was sufficient air speed to rotate the nose up to get lift under the wings and then wait a little more until there was sufficient lift to fly. The pilot was probably running a little closer to the aircraft safety margins than is usual to get it into the air.

So, you can go and pour yourself another of those Dave Langford "therapeutic scotchs", Joseph, while the rest of us go on with this fanzine. You can catch up later if you like!

"Nobody had better steal these fucking shoes," muttered Joseph Nicholas. By way of explanation he added, "they cost me a fucking fortune." He didn't seem particularly pleased to be in a Japanese restaurant just then, perhaps he'd never been in one before which was okay because it was my first time too.

Valma, Joseph and I had followed a bunch of convention organisers up to a restaurant which turned out to be Japanese and after we had taken off our shoes we were shown to our own little table separate from the busy throng. Right off Joseph established his British priorities and ordered a triple martini (or something like that) and then he and I started on our first bottle of Mr Hardy's rose.

It seems that Japanese food is to Chinese food as Japanese poetry is to Chinese poetry - if you get my meaning. Quite refined in the presentation might be another way of putting it. I recall that my custard soup had a prawn floating in it, and apart from the fact that I loath prawns it was all rather classy - including a lid for the bowl so that I could cover it up and pretend that the prawn wasn't there. Unfortunately I can't tell you much about the rest of the meal as Mr Hardy produces a nice drop which goes down fairly easily. This also affected the entrancing conversation although I seem to recall that we started off with the current state of fandom, worked our way through the drinking habits of various nationalities, drinking and mating habits of our different fan communities and gradually devised a plan for domination of the fannish world, among other hobbies. Golly, being a British fan must be real fun... but I wish that I could remember the finer details of what we talked about and forget the morning after when the Japanese food turned out to have a shorter half-life than is usual and Mr Hardy began punishing me for my excesses.

One way or another we saw quite a lot of Joseph over the three days of the convention. There was a fannish panel on which Joyce, Joseph and I consumed a couple of bottles of the hotel bubbly... there was the relocated Minneapolis in '73 party... the committee dead dog party at which Justin Ackroyd had a bottle of Beams Choice... and so on. Joseph seemed to be quite keen on his grog and, towards the end of the convention, was to be seen wandering around with a wine glass in one hand, a box of white plonk in the other and grin on his face. He seemed to be enjoying himself. (There was no other party where Joseph did considerable damage to his reputation by drinking nothing but orange juice. However I should probably not mention that, and anyhow it was early in the convention when he was still afraid of text-a-pen attack.)

I don't know what sort of person I expected Joseph Nicholas to be. It is always difficult to get an idea of what somebody is like in person from reading about them. Living on the other side of the world from Britain, that hotbed of limp-wristism, my only ideas were based on what Joseph had written and what others had written about him. It seemed possible, but not completely likely, that he was a big brute who enjoyed eating editors of imperfect fanzines for breakfast and dealt with fans who refused to do less than their best by pulling their arms off. Reading his "K is for Knife" fanzine review column in Ian & Janice Maule's fanzine NABU gave the same thrill the Romans must have got from the lions and Christians routine a few years back.

However, having arrived in Australia with such an enviable (or unenviable) reputation, Joseph turned out to be very pleasant in person, at least I thought so. Perhaps I'm just partial to British fans, the couple of examples we've seen so far have been quite impressive.

A couple of the many things I enjoyed about Joseph were the way in which he seemed to be so positive (or negative) about everything, and the infectious smile that came with most of his conversation. He seemed to be delighted to be able to say that something was excellent and lost no opportunity to tell all and sundry that "Chris Priest's The Affirmation is the best fucking novel published in years." On the other hand his smile, and the glint in his eyes expressed no less delight at being able to announce that "The Number of the Beast is a fucking cretinous book."

Everybody knows that Australians, with the possible exception of Paul Stokes or John McPharlin (who would tell you that some writers are so incompetent that "they couldn't get a blow job in a brothel") are generally temperate in their speech. Joseph was thrust into this miasma of pleasant chatter and the juxtaposition of styles and attitudes which sometimes came about was a delight to see. If some people were put off by this that was unfortunate for them and perhaps they should avoid British fandom.

I'm afraid that if you are interested in the mere physical details of what Joseph looks like, you've come to the wrong person. However I can tell you that he around Herman Height and looks quite unlike most Australian fans - certainly he would be difficult to confuse with John Foyster, John Packer or Justin Ackroyd. On the other hand, if you were having real trouble with your senses - five in the morning after the "Melbourne in '82" party type trouble with your senses - you might mistake him for a sort of modified Rob McGough.

I've been a fan of British fandom for a long time. I've read their fanzines with great pleasure and was delighted to meet Chris Priest (a fine fannish fellow) when he visited Australia in 1977. Meeting Joseph this year was very enjoyable and exciting and I look forward to the visit of the next British GUFF winner. What I want to know is why we can't have another British fan visit next year?

BACK TO THE REAL WORLD

I put that heading just up there, not so much because you could call this fanzine anything remotely resembling the "real world" but because it's about

time that we dealt with the problems of the latter half of 1982. But if you're one of those who likes to read what some might term ancient history hang on for the next issue. You'll remember that back in 1978 or 1979 there was a WorldCon in Britain... well we've got a report of a trip to Britain and Europe from around that time.

I have a pressing problem which brings us right up to the present minute. The trouble is that this format that I'm using (and have been using for ages) really doesn't let me highlight things. There is the advantage that I never have to worry about filling out pages and things like that when the writer hasn't foreseen just how many words I need to fill up a page, but that's not always an advantage when I'm more often than not the writer and I want to mark where somebody or something different starts.

For a while I've been musing on the state of Australian fanzines and as you will recall, if you've read the earlier pages of this issue, that I'm not overly impressed. However I'm not really sure what is missing and there seems no point in going to great lengths to analyse the matter in a few short pages - perhaps the problem will resolve itself... On the other hand, something that has been missing from the pages of my fanzines for as long as I can remember (which is back to about 1970) has been anything about science fiction. True, the subject may have somehow crept into my fanzines from time to time; but that was more through ignorance than through any policy of deliberate exclusion. And besides, when people like Bruce Gillespie and Van Ikin are publishing regularly nobody in their right mind would chance their arm at that sort of thing. Where is Bruce Gillespie these days? And I haven't seen anything from Van Ikin either, which may only mean that I'm not mixing in the right company.

The upshot of all this is that "now" seems like the time to dabble in a little commentary about science fiction in Australia. Reading an issue of Merv Bunns fanzine will give you the idea that there is a lot happening in sf in this country - although it might not be a lot by North American or British standards it is fairly mind boggling compared to the way that things used to be a few years ago when FANEW SLETTER was being published. But there is fairly little decent comment on what is going on, no considered analysis of the trends that are becomg apparent.

I'm not going to provide such comment. I'm not silly and you won't find me putting my head on any sort of block, metaphorical or otherwise. The problem is that other people might not be interested in doing it either... and not that I could blame them because, for some reason, when some people get to discussing sf they tend to forget that it is just one small part of a whole area of human activity known as literature. Publishing sf in Australia is only a tiny part of the publishing industry here, and the troubles which sf has are only a small part of the over-all troubles of the industry.

There is one thing though, which interests me about an emerging Australian sf, and that is the role which it may play in defining a national character for those in this country who read it. That is a problem that I'd like others to address themselves to... since I have only a limited interest in writing on sf myself I will have to rely on others to do it for me.

Fortunately for me, and for everybody else I think, I've been able to con one of the better fan writers in Australia (but one who rarely gets an airing because he hids his light under a bushel) to write a column in which he will provide "some meandering using sf as a spring board".

This is the first time that I've consciously used a columnist in my fanzines and it should be interesting. Columns seem to be all the go in overseas fanzines these days and so far as I know they have not been around in Australia for a while. They are very good if the writer can regularly turn out something that is thoughtful and well written, which may be the reason that they are not current here - we lack more than a small handful of decent and consistent fannish writers.

A VIEW FROM THE EDGE

Rob Gerrand

What do tax evasion, medifraud, Nugan Hand, heroin, Vietnam, gangsters and the CIA have in common with Australian science fiction?

In many ways this is a touchstone of a question, for it gives us a useful critical tool with which to probe why sf is relevant/irrelevant/no longer relevant. Not to mention the difference between sf and fantasy (which we won't mention again, at least not in those terms, in this column).

There used to be a sort of pronouncement on the social value of sf. (I'm going back to the late 50's, I suppose, following Damon Knight's and James Blish's stalwart pioneering criticism.) The pronouncement, which was perhaps engendered in inverse proportion to a feeling of need to defend sf against its BEM reputation for mind-softening nerd, was made in solemn tones (serious was solemn then) to the effect that good sf was satire and socially relevant, and therefore okay to read. Nay, mandatory to read, as the only source of satire in McCarthy's US of A.

The theory was that all those green Venusians were being exploited by purple Throgs so that the author could make a point about earthly racism. Other stories mocked advertising, bureaucratic obfuscation (that usually perverted the development of psi or nuclear technology, or some scientist's work) and a range of other perceived social ills often righted by a one man led revolution which delivered a traditional (and therefore corrupt) society into a liberal democratic nirvana.

The other side of the coin looked at sf in what some preferred to call artistic terms. Here, rather than look at surface usefulness, the importance of sf was attributed to its dreamlike qualities, with a harking to the implication (or direct statement of the fact) that Jungian archetypes were revealed. It was confidently asserted that the power and magic of good sf stories, which because of their mythic qualities penetrated to an otherwise inaccessible level of reality, were unequalled in any other field of literature.

Indeed, it was claimed, the very pillars of all classical literature were of the fantastic; numerous and varied works and authors were cited in support, including Homer, the Upanishads, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Dante, Hu Wah's Book of Dreams, the Bible (and Koran) and the Book of the Dead. It was only when "modern" fiction attempted realism that the quality dropped off.

The literary argument about different satisfactions to be drawn from sf still continues, with some acknowledgement that anything created in this world, if only by virtue of that very fact, must be in some way about this world.

In the context of recent controversies about tax evasion, trans-national dealings, and other political upheavals with which I introduced this piece, one must ponder - on looking at recent Australian sf - where certain of our authors have been living, and ask what they have been doing.

For though we have exceptions - including George Turner and Keith Antill - many of our writers have been a little too content to dwell atop artistic pedestals built with a sense of wonder; generally they have not chosen plots which focus on or satirise the peculiarities of our social organisation.

This is not to say our writers are necessarily misguided. I feel the mythic or dreamlike (it used to be called poetic) qualities of our better writers to be of great fascination; it is an essential part of good writing. The point I am making, rather, is that with such a bubbling over of extraordinary rip-offs of society I am surprised that more stories haven't been written that concern themselves with this facet of the human condition.

An interesting comparison can be made with Australian film-making. For every "Mouth To Mouth" there seem to be dozens of "My Brilliant Careers" and "Men From Snowy River".

Except that a case can be made that some of our film-makers have been more adventurous: "Breaker Morant" has obviously contemporary parallels, and there have been films like "Don's Party" and "Puberty Blues". There have also been some very interesting Australian sf films, such as the "Mad Max" films and Peter Weir's "Cars That Ate Paris" and "The Last Wave". Incidentally, Weir's "Picnic At Hanging Rock" nicely combines the science fictional with the nostalgia so common in those other Australian films. Among our writers only Lee Harding, with Displaced Person, has done the same.

To end with a plug of sorts, Norstrilia Press is publishing a new novel, Lavington Pub, which is due out before Christmas. It is a book that could be described as a Don Quixote in the Sixties - and sixties Australia. It does show how good sf can do things that more convention-bound literature cannot.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE AUSSIECON

Over the past few issues I've been spending some of the space in this fanzine to talk about the history of science fiction and fandom in Australia. This is something that I hope to pick up a bit more seriously in future issues under the above heading.

The first thing to mention is that what the heading really signifies is that I'm interested in looking at the period from 1935 to 1975. The dates are chosen because they reflect the beginning of science fiction fandom in Australia in about 1935 and 1975 represents the ending of an era and the commencement of another.

The history of science fiction is an odd thing because it is perhaps more a literary than a historical study. Van Ikin has done a lot of research into the earliest sf written in this country and gave a very interesting lecture on the subject at a seminar held in Canberra last year. (If that lecture has been published anywhere I'd be interested in obtaining a copy.) But, as well as being a study of the writing it might also be useful to look at the development of sf from a historical perspective. I recall that during the lecture Van mentioned that one story set a future utopia in Melbourne on the banks of the Yarra. Most of the people in the audience seemed to find that fairly amusing but for a story written in the 1880s the assumption that Melbourne would continue to develop as the major city in the southern hemisphere was totally reasonable. Perhaps I'm just taking my history too seriously.

One of the reasons that I'm not likely to spend as much time on sf as on fandom is that the sf writers of the time probably didn't write much about what they were up to (and if they did I don't know about it) whereas the fans from 1935 have been fairly active in publishing fanzines, which are a most useful primary source for information about what was going on. Of course there are problems in using fanzines - which I won't deal with here.

A trend which is very popular in fandom is to reprint articles from old fanzines, and to call that history. It may be interesting but I don't think that it is history. History is the business of looking at the events of the past through contemporary eyes so that a straight reprint is of little use unless it is set in a context which demonstrates some point about the way our fannish ancestors lived. For this reason I am not terribly inclined to the business of reprinting interesting items from old fanzines, on the other hand I am interested in those items which were written with an eye to the past and set about to explain to the fans of the time what had gone before. This is useful because in some cases the fans who wrote these things did so with a moral of some sort in mind - looking for lessons from the past.

Another thing is that despite the vast written literature, fandom (and science fiction) has mainly an oral tradition. Fanzines are a lot like newspapers, they only carry some of the information and they assume that the contemporary reader has a lot of background knowledge which they will use to flesh out any description of any events.

Then there are conventions, not that I have anything against them except that at them people tend to do things and say things that often don't get written down even though they might have a large effect on what happens after the event. But, on the whole, I suppose that fans tend to leave better records of their activities than most people do, and therefore we may be able to trace the history of their activities better than most.

(For the purists in the ranks, all one or two, I should add a footnote telling you "where I'm coming from"; it is the fashionable thing to do these days. From a theoretical viewpoint my history of fandom is more or less a functionalist one - which means that if it works its good and if it doesn't well that's just the luck of the draw. A lot of people might say that this is conservative since it supports the status-quo; that's a fair comment since at various times there have been insurgent groups with a "them and us" description of how fandom works. I've no particular argument with that perspective but I could not support it on what I've seen around fandom in the last decade or so. As I said, it's where I'm coming from, others may care to come from somewhere else, which would be welcomed ...)

For the historical content of this issue I'm going to be lazy and reprint something. It saves me from having to do anything in the line of thinking, and after having put twenty-five pages on stencil this is a blessed relief. The odd thing about this piece is that it is old enough, in fannish terms anyhow, to be ancient history itself. Still, there is very little of any detail written about what fandom was like before the war so that any description would be a help. I am unsure when this article was written, but it appeared in the 46th issue of ETHERLINE which was published by Ian Crozier and Mervyn Bimms. Internal evidence suggests that publication was sometime in 1955, prior to the Sydney Convention in March that year - which means that the article is about twenty-seven years old.

PRE-WAR FANZINES IN AUSTRALIA

W.D. Veney

Every now and again you will read an article by one of the deep thinkers in our ranks on the subject of amateur publishing. One such writer will say fanzines are a fine thing and help fandom a lot. Immediately some equally deep thinker will jump to the nearest typewriter and say fanzines are a bad thing, they cause no end of trouble. I'm not going to buy in on that fight. I do know, however, that a large percentage of the Australian fan population read and enjoy fanzines. I also know that fanzine editors get a lot of enjoyment out of producing their brainchildren. I think you'll agree fandom would be a very dull place without them.

Perhaps the first Australian attempt to produce an amateur publication devoted to science fiction took place at Randwick School, Sydney in 1937. Several of the students were caught up in the first flush of discovering the US professional magazines. Two, Bert Castellari and I, had been on the staff of the regular class magazine and decided to try a private one of our own. It wasn't intended to be anything more than an outlet for our writing and illustrating efforts, but that didn't quite work out.

SPACEHOUNDS, as we called our magazine, was a handprinted weekly journal with a circulation of one. Bert Castellari was editor, and I was associate editor. It was intended to be handed around for general reading under the watchful eye of one or other of the editors. We didn't think more than a handful of other students would be interested.

Within a couple of weeks it had a following far beyond anything visualised by either of us. As soon as each issue appeared, it started on a round of readers that often took three or four days to complete before getting back into our anxious hands. By the seventh or eight issue, it received official recognition by going into the staff room. (The recognition, by the way, took the

form of congratulation to Bert for his energy, and severe criticism to me for my spelling.)

SPACEHOUNDS lasted ten weekly issues, and a 'quarterly' before falling victim to examinations. However, it had a profound effect on the thinking of the science fiction circle and made us realise quite a lot of people could be reached by medium of even a small periodical. We were agreed that this wasn't the end of our publishing efforts.

1938 was final examination year for the Randwick readers so there wasn't time for any more experimenting. There was much talk about magazines, particularly after Eric Russell and his brother, Ted, became known to us as fans. I had known both of them for many years, but only introduced them to science fiction about this time. It wasn't exactly my fault. Both contributed many good ideas and entered into the spirit of fandom. We laid plans for 1939 and letters sent to AMAZING so as to appear on the Australian market when we were over the examination hurdle.

In January 1939, we had our first contact with U.S. fandom. Harry Warner Jr., prominent fan at the time and editor of SPACEWAYS, noticed Bert's name in the reader's columns of one of the professional magazines and dropped him a letter. Shortly afterwards he sent a copy of SPACEWAYS. The impression it created when it arrived was terrific. We'd never imagined an amateur publication had such possibilities and our thoughts turned to how we could emulate it.

Our opportunity came when Frank Flaherty, a non-fan, offered to do our typing and duplicating. The three most active readers, Bert, Eric and I, were to do the collecting of material and general editorial work. For juniors on junior pay, it was a big job, but we went about it as efficiently as we could under the circumstances. We didn't have a clear idea what we wanted other than a name - AUSTRALIAN FAN NEWS.

Before we could get started, John Gregor of Adelaide brought out his SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. The first information we had about John was an announcement appearing in the Science Fiction League section of TWS. This also carried the information that John was the editor of Australia's first fan magazine. Eric Russell made contact with him and John later entered into a short but furious correspondence with several Sydney fans.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW eventually arrived in Sydney. It was a sixteen page octave effort done by hand and produced on a hektograph. It didn't impress us very much at all. We lost touch with John after this as he joined the Army. To add to the confusion and make locating him even more difficult, he had used the pen-name 'John Deverne'. Years later, when I was in Adelaide, I spent many fruitless hours going through the South Australian electoral roll looking for the name 'Deverne'. I thought that he probably had some relations who could help me.

After a lot of trouble AUSTRALIAN FAN NEWS finally appeared. The first issue was dated May, but it didn't get into the mails until August. It was to have been a twelve page foolscap bi-monthly. The problems involved made us realise we had attempted too much, so our further activities were to be much more limited. This didn't apply only to AFN. We were trying to organise a national club and a local club, as well as maintaining contact with America and bringing out the magazine. A mighty effort when you remember our oldest fan was only sixteen.

Even before AFN was posted, we decided on our next step. Eric, Ted and I, had a serious discussion on fandom generally. Eric wanted to try a small magazine that wouldn't cost too much or be too much trouble to produce. I wanted to get started on organising a local club. We weighed everything and agreed that the best thing to do would be to try one thing at a time. Eric had the clearest idea of what was wanted so we marshalled our efforts behind him.

Eric and Ted went to work and in October the first issue of ULTRA appeared. It was a carbon copies twelve page typed magazine featuring articles, fiction and general news. Circulation was about thirty. The whole thing was produced on a shoestring and looked like it. We were very proud of it, mainly because we had kept faith with our overseas friends. Also, the cheapness of production ensured that we - or rather the Russell brothers - could produce a second issue.

Vol Molesworth had become known to us in the early part of the year and gradually gravitated into our circle. He was a ball of energy and couldn't quite see the reason for our slowness in many matters. To his credit, he swung into line with the rest of us and helped with our various projects, particularly the very pressing problem of keeping contact with America. However, when ULTRA appeared and the local club had been established, he started making plans of his own.

His LUNA appeared in December. It was almost a second issue of AFN in many ways and had the same format. There were improvements in layout and a more fannish approach to the subject of science fiction. Also, Vol was able to display his natural journalistic ability giving LUNA a sense of continuity no other fan publication had achieved until that time.

December also saw the second issue of ULTRA. It appeared in much the same form as number one, but vastly improved in layout. Eric had already made plans for the third issue to be duplicated so this was the last of the carbon copied issues. He announced that a new fan, Ralph Smith, had joined the staff as art editor and we could expect illustrations as soon as duplicating details were finalised.

Bert Castellari had watched developments during this period without taking a leading part. He had helped Eric Russell with ULTRA, Vol Molesworth with LUNA and had been a tower of strength to me in getting the club going. Even before the end of 1939 he started making plans for his own. Without telling anybody what he had in mind, he studied the U.S. fan publishing field, and discussed the subject with several American fans. Late in December, he took me aside and outlined his plan for FUTURIAN OBSERVER. It was to be a single foolscap sheet duplicated on both sides and appearing every two weeks. Bert thought that the most important thing about a magazine of this type was that it appeared on time. Eric Russell was aiming for perfection with ULTRA and Bert would aim for regularity with OBS. I suggested to Bert that it would be almost impossible to keep up a regular fortnightly schedule because of non-fan matters, but he was determined to go ahead. After a great deal of discussion I agreed to join him as co-editor. We told Eric Russell and Vol Molesworth what we had in mind and both said they would help us all they could.

The first issue of FUTURIAN OBSERVER appeared during January 1940. From then on until February 1941, we never missed an issue. There was much criticism of bad duplicating, typing errors, grammatical errors, spelling errors and general untidiness, but it didn't worry either of us. We made regularity the watchword and if it was the difference between a deadline and a dictionary, the deadline always won. We brought out OBS for our own satisfaction and it was more by good luck than good management that other fans liked it. Eric and Vol stood by us in the teething stage, both with material and know-how.

So the first quarter saw the fan publishers of Sydney getting out on their respective tracks. LUNA went through some startling changes and numbers two and three appeared in a quarto format with only eight pages. ULTRA appeared in February in a nice new quarto format complete with illustrations. FUTURIAN OBSERVER, presenting its version of the news and preaching the cause of the local club, rounded off the picture. We were all justifiably proud with our mags.

In the second quarter of 1940, there were some more startling changes. Vol dropped LUNA and brought out a new one, COSMOS. Now, in looking for copy, he stumbled on one of the periodic storms-in-a-teacup that have continuously dotted

fan progress and dressed it up into a full scale feud between Eric and me. He reported it as the event of the year. This was moonshine. We certainly had spat words at each other, but both regarded the whole thing as a private disagreement. Castellari was still on the best of terms with Eric, and I still managed to get along with Ted Rueesll. No word of disagreement appeared in either ULTRA or OBS. Both Eric and I wrote to Vol to deny the report.

The outcome of it all was that COSMOS started under a cloud. Vol had intended it to be a letter mag in the tradition of the American IMAGINATION but never manages to dispel the suspicion that he had some deeper motive. There was certainly a need for a magazine of this type to let Australian fans get to know each other better. Vol's slick journalism and good natured digs made Eric and I overlook the earlier mistake, but we never quite relaxed when writing for him.

COSMOS started out as a six page tri-weekly, reduced itself to a two page bi-weekly and finally blossomed out into a 'LUNA-ised' version with anything up to sixteen or so pages. It didn't stick to any sort of editorial policy (in fact it even changed editors for a couple of weeks!) despite periodic statements by Vol. COSMOS had a rather unique reputation amongst the Sydney fans. It was the only fan publication that successfully managed to tread on the toes of everybody.

It was about the middle of the year we saw AUSTRA FANTASY, the Melbourne fan magazine. Warwick Hockley, its editor, was unknown to any of us and we were very surprised when we first heard about it. The first issue, a small carbon copied one with an undisclosed circulation. Wog, as Warwick was then known to us, never did let us know how many he distributed. It had the usual fan fiction, articles and news. We were very enthusiastic, mainly because it opened up a new field of fan activity. The fact that it was sloppy in comparison with the Sydney publications was discretely overlooked. When the wheel turned and some Sydney mags were sloppy in comparison with his, Wog was equally discreet in overlooking our shortcomings. The enthusiasm in Wog's letters made us realise we had located a fan of the most active type. Being outside the centre of fan activity didn't affect AUSTRA FANTASY very much. Wog suffered the usual difficulty any fan editor in getting material at first, but gradually he managed to get a back log of both articles and fiction. Once he had this, he was in a position to demand a certain standard from his contributors. This in turn made his contributors spend more time in polishing their material and the whole magazine improved in quality.

AUSTRA FANTASY will always be remembered for its climb to the top of the fan popularity ladder. The second issue appeared in September. It was hecktographed. The third issue was dated December and was duplicated with the usual black on white. The fifth issue was a blaze of colour with four or five coloured inks being used in the duplicating process. Even the most conservative fan could find little fault in the Melbourne magazine.

In August 1940, six Sydney fans combined their talents to produce ZEUS! This was to be the 'balanced' magazine, giving equal prominence to both fan and professional activities. The first issue was a sixteen page one, and immediately threw out a strong challenge to the leading magazine of the day, Eric Russell's ULTRA. However, the fact that it had six very interested fans on the editorial committee proved a hindrance rather than a help. ZEUS! had the unusual experience of having no less than two second issues! Two of the editors brought out an issue which was duplicated and immediately dubbed 'official', and another two came out with their version, which was hecktographed, and dubbed 'pseudo'. This state of affairs existed until the fourth issue. The 'pseudo' folded up and its editors assisted with the official, although never actually coming on to the editorial staff.

The final publishing venture of the year was again from Melbourne when Wog produced his MELBOURNE BULLETIN. This was an 'all sorts' with no set policy or publishing date. When some fan in Sydney became frantic with worry over

the impending collapse of something or other, then he generally dashed a short article or letter off to Wog to see if anyone else was losing sleep.

ULTRA continued to appear on a bi-monthly basis all through 1940 and was recognised as being Australia's No. 1 fan publication. It was duplicated from February onwards. Many of the best known fans had their first published works in Eric's magazine. Chas. Mustchin wrote an article that ran for three issues, Colin Roden submitted the first of his dry, humorous stories, Bruce Sawyer, under his pen name of L. Vague De Damp, appeared as both artist and author, David Evans and Wog Hockley, and others also contributed. In addition to the better known fans such as Vol Molesworth and Ralph Smith developed their talents under the watchful eye of editor Russell and before the critical audience that constituted ULTRA's readers. The anniversary issue in October ran to thirty odd pages and presented material from just about every well known fan.

By the beginning of 1941, American and British fandom realised that Australian fan publications were here to stay. The encouraging but condescending reviews that appeared in overseas publications turned to unqualified praise as the tiny Australian fan community continued to expand and improve their magazines. The regular FUTURIAN OBSERVER showed we had stability, the controversial COSMOS showed we were much the same as fans in the rest of the world, whilst the bigger magazines, particularly ULTRA, but also AUSTRA FANTASY and ZEUS' showed we aspired to greater and higher things. MELBOURNE BULLETIN hadn't made any impression, but it was later to fill the gap between FUTURIAN OBSERVER and COSMOS.

Time out for an explanation. As I said before, I don't want to buy into any fights, but it has always been my contention that the reason fans produce these magazines was for the satisfaction of sitting on the editorial board (if such existed) and having some say in production. I do not believe that power was the prime motive. Rather I'd say the desire for recognition, an outlet for energy, but mainly a great big hunk of ego boo. It was the fun of being editor, rather than the lust for being dictator, that started these magazines going and the pride in the work turned out, that kept them going.

The first half of 1941 opened up very well. ULTRA developed a style that set the standard for the rest of Australia. ZEUS! came through its difficulties and under the capable editorship of Ron Levy and Bert Castellari started to concentrate on fan fiction. Noel Dwyer and David Evans contributed the outstanding items of a serious nature, whilst Bruce Sawyer, under his tag of L. Vague De Damp, gave us some good belly laughs besides keeping the egos of the would-be great in a suitably deflated condition. FUTURIAN OBSERVER had a change when Ron Levy replaced me on the staff and it became 'irregular' instead of bi-monthly. Vol Molesworth seemed to be in doubt and after attempting a new venture called TELEFAN, abandoned the publishing field altogether. In Melbourne Wog Hockley quietly but systematically improved AUSTRA FANTASY besides turning out MELBOURNE BULLETIN.

Don Tuck of Hobart had been known to us all for some time, and had contributed to both Sydney and Melbourne magazines. We all knew Don was an enthusiastic collector, but nobody ever thought he had plans for entering the publishing side. Therefore, it was with very great surprise that it was learnt in Sydney that Don, with the assistance of several of the Hobart readers, had plans for a magazine. Within a week of the news reaching Sydney, Don's magazine PROFAN had turned up. The speed and efficiency of the Tasmanians quite took our breath away even though we learnt that Wog Hockley had been helping in an advisory capacity. The first issue was favourably received everywhere.

PROFAN - meaning 'pro' and 'fan', not 'for fan' - lasted three issues and featured the usual articles and fiction. Coming into the field at the time of so many other fan magazines, Don had much difficulty in getting good material. He kept at the mainlanders however, till he received his share of the quality efforts being turned out at the time. Each issue was an improvement on the last, so it is difficult to see just where PROFAN would have ended up if it

hadn't been for the war cutting short its career. As it was, Don and his Hobart Helpers did a great deal under the circumstances.

The highwater mark of fan publishing in Australia occurred during the second half of 1941. The necessary 'firm base' had been provided by the comparative newcomer, Colin Roden, who taught us older fans a thing or two with his SCIENCE AND FANTASY FAN REPORTER which appeared as a regular weekly for thirty-four weeks - and never missed an issue! He presented news and views on both fan and professional matters in such a way that even the most touchy couldn't take offense. He 'scooped' all the other magazines in such a gentlemanly way that the other editors actually enjoyed seeing their news appear first in Colin's magazine.

The second anniversary issue of ULTRA appeared in October with fifty pages, including printed inserts. As with the first anniversary issue, just about every fan in Australia was represented but the improvement in quality of the material made this the show-piece of Australian fandom. Everyone expected the effort would exhaust the Russell brothers but the December issue appeared, although late, and showed the dependable team would still set the standard.

AUSTRA FANTASY appeared on an irregular schedule, but roughly quarterly. Wog, practically alone in Melbourne, was doing a tremendous job and every issue was a blaze of colour. His art work was undoubtedly the best in Australia. Artists Ralph Smith, Bruce Sawyer and Ted Russell all submitted their best work to Wog, and he certainly showed it to advantage. MELBOURNE BULLETIN was overshadowed by its bigger companion, but was still widely read and enjoyed.

ZEUS! aimed at the fan fiction market all through 1941. However, it did blot its copybook by printing the FSS minutes. Both editors had resigned from the FSS, and it was in particularly bad taste to dig into the muddled and murky past of that organisation to find copy. (An odd aspect of this incident was that active Futurian Vol Molesworth called for action against Ron Levy and Bert Castellari, yet continued to support them with material. Ex-Futurian foundation Director myself, refused to contribute any material to ZEUS!, but maintained the most cordial relations with both editors.) ZEUS! was at its best during the latter part of 1941.

FUTURIAN OBSERVER, after a long absence, came back to the fold. The editorial attitude also went through a dramatic change. Instead of being 'anti-fandom' in outlook, Ron Levy and Bert Castellari jumped on the band wagon of cooperation and supported the Third Sydney Science Fiction Conference which looked like being the best gathering ever attempted in the Southern Hemisphere. It was, however, still very anti-FSS. The Hobart magazine, PROFAN, was finding its feet and a place for itself in the scheme of things.

Then came Pearl Harbour. The entry of Japan into the war destroyed Australian fandom and with it, fan publishing. There was a sense of anti-climax in the manner in which one fan publication followed the other in closing down its activities. Within a couple of months, ULTRA, FUTURIAN OBSERVER, AUSTRA FANTASY, ZEUS!, MELBOURNE BULLETIN, SCIENCE AND FANTASY FAN REPORTER and PROFAN were nothing more than pleasant memories. It just didn't seem right.

In summing up, the effects of the fan publications had a tremendous effect on the expansion of Australian fandom. They made mistakes and a lot of them. However, they were brought out for personal enjoyment and the enthusiasm of all concerned should make even the most critical observers view them with tolerance. They contributed a vital part to that youthful period we now call pre-war fandom.

SOME FINAL COMMENTS

In reading through the above article the main thing that came to my mind was the question of whether any of the fanzines that are mentioned are still around. I suppose that Ron Graham may have had some of them and perhaps Don Tuck may also have some of them. It would be very doubtful if there would be a full

set of them anywhere, which is a real pity. They should present a very good picture of the fandom of the period which is, through two apparent dark ages, very much removed from the fandom of today.

The other question is, what has happened to all the fans who were involved in that early fandom. The memories that they have would be even more valuable in patching together a picture of what things were like in those days.

NOTES TO FILL IN BEFORE THE INDEX

Keen readers of this fanzine will have noticed one or two changes since the issue that was supposed to come out last December and made it earlier this year. What has happen, basically, is that I've cracked and gone (cap in hand) to the Post Office and sold my fannish soul for the cheaper postage rates that I'd heard you can get by registering your magazine. I'm not at all sure that I've done the right thing, but perhaps I'll get used to it in time.

The trouble is that when you get registered (what a terrible thing to do to a fanzine) you have to say how often your fanzine will come out. Due to some sort of aberration which I cannot understand now I said that I'd be publishing every two months. That means that the next issue of this fanzine will be out in December. Can you believe it? I can't, not quite. But, if the Post Office says that's what I've got to do then I'll give it a go. You might try holding your breath... if you're keen.

AT LAST - THE INDEX

This fanzine is designed to be read from the first page to the last with no particular concern to the order of the contents. But if you want to dip in at various places, the following list gives you some indication of what to expect:

A Look at the Editor's Private Life	2
(written by me, not terribly exciting, but it's news)	
ADVENTION '81 Banquet Speech	3
(by Denny Lien, who was possibly there in person to give it)	
The Good, the Bad and the Indifferent	6
(no holds barred fanzine reviews, by me, no friends either)	
We Do Too Get Letters, Sometimes	11
(too right, but only from John D Berry and Judith Hanna)	
Fear Of Flying	16
(by Joseph Nicholas, who almost didn't live to tell the tale)	
Some writing about Joseph Nicholas	21
(a little pen picture by me)	
A View From the Edge	24
(Rob Gerrand offers the first of his column about sf in Australia)	
Pre-War Fanzines in Australia	26
(Reprint of an interesting article by W.D. Veney)	

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

- "Leigh Edmonds being Leigh Edmonds"
(Shayne McCormack, FORERUNNER (I wonder what she means))
- "Recommended"
(Marc Ortlieb, Q36)
- "Gratefully acknowledged"
(National Library of Australia)
- "I wish I'd done that!"
(Art Rapp, SPACEWARP)