





Number 12, June 1972, is published by John Bangund, PO Box 357, Kingston, ACT 2804, Australia, for members of ANZAPA and FAPA, friends, relations and subscribers. Yes, folks, from this issue you can subscribe to Philosophical Gas! Five for \$1.00. Better still, you can get it in exchange for fanzines, letters, contributions, food parcels &c. As the Great Gillespie hath said: "Happiness is a full mailbox." Bruce, of course, lives in the wilds of East Preston, a whole twenty-five minutes tram ride from the Space Age Bookshop and other centres of civilization. I live almost plumb in the middle of the thriving metropolis of Canberra, where there's only one restaurant open on Sundays, and if you can find a place to park the place is full, and if it's not full I can't afford it anyway. (As I write, it is Sunday - 4th June to be exact - and I'm pleased to report that the toasted tuna sandwiches with Glenloch flagon burgundy served at the Cafe de Bangund this evening, and this morning, and all day yesterday, was superb if you like that kind of thing.)

I'm getting a bit ahead of myself there. Since it is some time since I have communicated with most of you, it might be as well to recapitulate some of the things that have happened in the last couple of months.

Unless you are very new to my mailing-list, you will know that I have moved to Canberra. Unless you have had a letter from me in the last few days, you will not know that I have moved out of the hostel and (by the time you read this) out of the garage in Kingston. I have rented - well, I'm not sure exactly what it is - sort of half a house, or a large flat, I can't decide which, at 46a Wentworth Avenue, Kingston. It's not much to look at but hell to live in. It's right opposite the Govt Printing Office, where I work, and its only other redeeming feature is that it allows me to get all my gear together again under one roof. (Which reminds me that I have to buy 32 Besser bricks tomorrow so I can build some book shelves. I have the books - whoooy, do I have the books - and I have the shelves, and I have walls, but having foolishly left in Melbourne my bricks and my complete run of "New Worlds" I have nothing on hand to support the shelves. Anyone want to buy an almost complete run of New Worlds, Science Fantasy and Impulse, incidentally? I am open to offers. The only condition is that my brother-in-law has kept them in readable shape, under the house at Ferntree Gully.)

Tonight the Lawley House Social Club is showing "Barbarella". Do you realize what deprivations I suffer in order to give you this rubbish to read? Only my intense sense of dedication and so on prevents me from leaving this typewriter to see Jane Fonda cavorting in the Far Future for the fourth time. That, and the fact that it costs 50 cents to get in, and I don't think I can spare that much right now.

ANDY PORTER, highly-esteemed editor of the highly-esteemed "Algol", has sent me a photocopy of an article by the highly-esteemed John D. Berry in the latest issue of "Amazing", in which John reviews Scythrop and Algol and says all kinds of nice things about yours truly. At least I think it's me he's writing about. "Bangund is a consummate editor as well as writer..." Aw, shucks. I'm really only consummate on Tuesdays. But this article gives rise to several speculations. Should I retire from science fiction fandom right now, going out in a blaze of glory with John's article? Will the transcript of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence: Reference - Japan be eligible for a Hugo next year? (That's the only editing I've done in the last few weeks, that and a few other Senate committee meetings. Someone asked me what I did for a living recently, and I said - this is very much an in-joke, I'm sorry, overseas readers - "Making Montaignes out of Mulvihills".)

I always thought that Hansard was more or less a verbatim transcript of the proceedings of Parliament and its committees. I really did. If it was, you would be astounded. Hansard employs god knows how many sub-editors. I am just one of three full-time Senate committee subs, and sometimes we have as many as eight casuals working with us. Regular sessions of Parliament - Representatives and Senate - are covered by a legion of reporters and sub-editors. Our job is to make use of the speakers' words as far as possible, but to make English out of them. Sometimes it is utterly impossible. In the last three months I have written some absolutely magnificent stuff - and you will never know which bits they were. We do about five minutes, sometimes ten minutes, at a time, and when the final proceedings are issued it is fascinating to see how the speakers' style changes every couple of pages. For example, when people are speaking they tend to contract words, particularly common expressions such as "isn't it?". Some of the subs alter that one to "is not it?", others "is it not?". So for a

couple of pages the senators will be saying "was it not?", "does it not?" and so on, and then they'll all change and start saying "was it not?", "does it not?" &c. Some of them are fond of saying "et cetera", which is officially rendered as etc.; I usually change it to "and so on", or drop it if it's not necessary. A frequent expression is, "But hasn't this got...?" I have seen this in the printed Hansard as, "But has not this got...?" Can you imagine anyone really saying that? (I would alter it to, "Does this not have...?" - or get out of it some other way, depending on the sentence.)

All of which is fun, but Idd's stuff. What do you do with "downward sloping people with higher property values"? People really say things like that. "But what about where a domicile takes up residence in one of these tax havens?" What indeed?

We work exclusively with tape recorders - Tandberg 6000s (very nice). The master tape is dubbed onto shorter tapes - usually about five minutes to a tape, as I mentioned - which are then transcribed by a team of typists. We then take these short tapes and transcripts, compare them to see whether what is on the page matches what was said on the tape, and then attempt to turn the whole mess into English. The result is often a printer's nightmare.

The typists do an excellent job. Many of them are so good that they automatically sub-edit the material as they type. Some are pretty hopeless, too. But good or not, they hear some funny things on their tapes sometimes. One lady, obviously a Melbourne football fan, had the Chairman referring to "the Australian Rules sector". Another heard the Chairman saying, "There has been far too much abuse". And the day we worked on the enquiry into radio and TV we wasted a lot of ink correcting references to "banned television" and so on. The latter invariably had to do with bandwidths; the earlier reference was to the Australian rural sector, and the other statement turned out to be, "These then are your views".

I didn't really want to get going on my job, but since I've written this much I might as well mention two of my favourite authentic on-the-record passages. (I could quote some much more interesting passages from in camera sessions, but I need the job.) During the hearing on radio and TV mentioned above, one well-known anti-communist crusader asked the witness if anyone had ever tried to jam radio broadcasts for political reasons. The witness said yes, and the senator became really excited. It turned out that the witness knew of only one instance, and that was when the Post Office tried to jam the illicit radio station set up by some students at the University of Melbourne. The senator had no further questions.

In another enquiry a very interesting witness - an academic - had been describing in fascinating detail the methods used by Okinawan fishermen to catch some kind of tuna off the north coast of Australia. Their technique involves releasing anchovies and getting them to swim around the boat; the tuna get awfully excited and chase them, and the fishermen just hoist the tuna aboard with long poles. At this point the Chairman gently suggested that the meeting return to the main subject of discussion, and one of the senators said: "Does this mean, Mr Chairman, that I am to go through life never knowing how to train anchovies to swim in circles?"

It's not all high romance and intrigue here in the corridors of power. Often it's plain bloody boring. But sometimes it can be fun, and the mechanics of the job I usually find quite challenging - simply, as I think I've explained before, because I'm the kind of person who gets some satisfaction from correcting other people's mistakes. (I forget what Freud said about that kind of person.)

IT HAS BEEN Monday, 5th June for some hours now. Bitterly cold when I got up at 6 ("But wait until winter sets in," my friends at work tell me), but now the sun is up and it looks like being a nice day out there. As part of my new regime I will leave here about 8.30, walk up to the shops, call in at the post office to see whether you have written to me, then walk back to work. I don't know how long the new regime will last. It depends a bit on how cold it is out there this morning.

Lots more I could write about in this issue - such as being fined for failure to lodge a sales tax return, my reviving of that sleeping monster Paragon Books, and the invasion of Robin Johnson and Bill Wright last weekend - but the ANZAPA deadline approaches and I want to write a few pages of short answers to letters.

DURING the past few weeks, although there has been much activity there has been nothing much to show for it, and my pile of unanswered letters at last count amounted to something like fifty. My excuse is Scythrop 26, which was finished nearly a month ago and is slowly being collated, visits from Eric Lindsay, some rock-climbing bush-walking friends of Alison from Sydney, my mother, sister, niece and nephew, Myf and Tony Thomas, and Robin and Bill, and my move from the hostel. And a few other diversions we needn't go into at this point. I think I should do something about those unanswered letters - for a start, some brief answers to go on with. This doesn't mean you won't get a real live letter from me in time, but for the moment this will have to do.

ERIC LINDSAY: Yes, sure you can stay in the bungalow about 27th April. Come to think of it, you did. Thanks for the chemical information; I shall stop right here and put in an

ERRATA For "Diazepam hath charms to soothe the savage stomach" read: "7-chloro-1, 3-dihydro-1-methyl-5-phenyl-2H-1, 4-benzodiazepin-2-one hath charms to soothe the savage gut". No further correspondence will be entered into.

JILL: Gove? Gove! You're nuts. You don't really have to go that far to get away from it all. Kingston ACT is far enough, believe me.

CAROLYN: Look forward to seeing you. BYO (Joke).

DIANE BANGSUND: Diane Bangsund? Hey, yeah! - how are you? Doggone, how're you keeping? Uhuh. Uhuh. Uhuh. Okay, so you've moved out Box Hill way and I can only get in touch with you through your parents. Fair enough. Yes, sweetheart, Once & Future King is a very lovely book, and I'm glad you enjoyed it. When you've exhausted its emotional charge, try Rosemary Sutcliffe's *Sword at Sunset*. It's just as romantic and fantastic, but the approach is "realistic", and I think you might find it even more moving than O&FK. And you liked the biography of Countess Markievicz. That's why I sent it to you: I liked it, and thought you would, too. Goddam, why don't we get together sometime? Uhuh. Uhuh. Uhuh. But... Uhuh. Uhuh. Yeah, but on the other hand... Uhuh. You don't feel like collating Scythrop 26. You think I'm a no-good bum. Uhuh. True, true. Uhuh. Still love you, but. Keep the old chin up, you sexy thing you.

JOHN LITCHEN: Thanks for Carpenter; glad you enjoyed him. Your article should have been in Scythrop 26, but (along with a lot of other things) it hasn't surfaced yet. Hope to get a copy to you in the next couple of weeks. Yr. information about my mythical film script is offbeam. I wrote a brief outline of a treatment, and a few bits of inspired dialogue. At this stage it's not worth thinking about - even if I could find it. Robin and I discussed this last weekend, but I'm still not sure what he wants to do, nor whether I could do it. The only concrete thing I have is the tape of a long talk Robin and I had one night months ago, when most of our ideas were at least mentioned.

BRUCE GILLESPIE: Dammitall, that long and delightful letter makes me want to drop everything and publish another Scythrop so everyone else can read it. Then again, perhaps we've had enough of the modest mutual admiration stuff for a while. The reflections on a Churches of Christ boyhood really set me thinking; it's not so much that We Are Different - just about any religious body could throw up equivalents of you, me, John Alderson, Ivor Greenwood, Tom the Cheap, Doug Nicholls, LBJ, Garfield Todd and Jane Russell &c &c (have I mentioned before that Helen and Leigh Hyde are CoFC people, too?) - in fact, in my case, any religious body would probably throw up at the very thought of having me as a member. But I can't help wondering whether the basically very democratic structure of the Churches of Christ tends to produce a kind of person who, when he is different, is different in a different way. Do you know what I mean? I don't. I'm utterly confused. Maybe it's time I had something to eat; this thinking on an empty stomach is liable to lead you just about anywhere.

DIGRESSION Can't help it, since Bruce has got me going on the subject of Churches of Christ. Would you believe that when Robin and Bill came up to see me we all went to church? (Didn't think you would.) Bill played the organ for a while, then I took over, my cigarette burning away by itself in an ashtray to my right, my glass of burgundy standing within reach to my left, and I played all the old hymn tunes I could remember. Ah, church was never like that, folks. Then Bill started playing again - Bach, Gilbert & Sullivan (pedant! - I know Gilbert didn't write music, but do they?), Mozart - and Robin, Helen, Leigh and I went into the study, in an adjoining part of the building, and talked to the minister. Nice bloke, forgotten his name already, and he didn't seem to mind my dropping ash on his study floor. Probably used to it. The amenities at Lyons Church of Christ are just great, and I'm very tempted to go back some Sunday and see what the religion is like; but I think I'd prefer to just leave well alone and pretend I imagined the whole episode.

DAVID GORMAN: Will see what I can find, and let you know. I discarded several short tons of ASFRS, ASFMS and things before I left Melbourne, but despite this, some seem to have followed me up here. I wish you would revive SF Waves: it was a Good Thing.

ANOTHER DIGRESSION (and only 43 letters to go): Good books are dangerous; they make you think. (Fanzines aren't dangerous; whether reading or publishing them, they involve more labour than thought.) Just before I left Melbourne for a business trip to Tasmania in 1966, I said (or wrote: I forget which) to Diane that I was taking with me Hesse's *MAGISTER LUDI*, "a book which looks as though it could change my life". Diane was terrified, and rightly so. That she was saying within a few months of our wedding that I was no longer the man she married was partly caused by that book. Only partly: *MAGISTER LUDI* demands more than one reading, and I'm a little scared to discover what it might do to me the next time round. Since I have been in Canberra I have read very little. Two novels by Bob Tucker - *THE TIME MASTERS* and *THE LONG, LOUD SILENCE*; the autobiography of Frank Green, until 1955 Clerk of the Australian Parliament; and bits and pieces of other books. (Most of *UNIVERSE #2* - and there are some beautiful stories there, particularly Bill Rotsler's and Grania Davidson's; a bit more of *A PECULIAR PEOPLE*, the history of the Australian utopian colony in Paraguay; a little of Madariaga's biography of Bolivar; Lolah Burford's *VICE AVENGED*, a pseudo-Georgette-Heyerdahl novel recommended by George Turner, which was fun; and maybe two or three other things.) But the book which I have been reading, slowly, since I arrived here is Andre Maurois's *PROMETHEUS* - his biography of Balzac. I am an incredibly slow reader. Three months, and I'm only up to page 115 in this book. The trouble is that the author and his subject are so brilliant and thought-provoking that I can't take more than about thirty pages at a time. I keep on being held up by single sentences. I don't care what happens next: that can wait - it won't change. Since the last page I have spent an hour or so with a steak sandwich, a bottle of '66 Wynn's Owens Valley Shiraz (which I wouldn't have opened, only I can't afford a flagon of rough red) and Maurois. Here's the sentence I got stuck on this time: "Madame de Berny... brought him the memories and shrewd wisdom of a woman of experience who viewed the world of men and affairs without illusions but also without malice."

John Berry, Bruce Gillespie and others can say what they like about me, but I would trade the highest honours fandom has to bestow for the wisdom and technique to write a sentence like that. Since I'm as short on wisdom as I am on technique, you will have to put up with me for some time yet.

PORRY ACKERMAN, MERVYN BUNNS & others interested: The Campbell book is coming along slowly. With luck it will be ready by the end of August. I recently re-read the entire typescript, and I'm dying to see the thing published. Quite honestly, one of my major reasons for moving into this place is to give me the time I need to get this book finished. No doubt some enterprising American - at least one, probably more - will write or compile a book about John Campbell in time. But only people outside America could produce a book about John Campbell from the outsiders' viewpoint, by definition. And that is the book I have smouldering in my files at this moment. All I can say about its publication at this stage is that I hope to have it finished by the end of August, that until then the price stays at A\$2.00/US\$2.50 (possibly more than that after publication), and that it looks like running to something between 160 and 200 pages. The print-run will be about 400, of which about 250 will be for sale. Unless you contributed to it, or had a subscription to Scythrop at 1st January 1972, you had better place an order with Mervyn quickly. (GPO Box 1267L, Melbourne 3001) I have the feeling the book will disappear much more quickly than it is taking to produce, and will rapidly become a collectors item.

HOWARD SILLERY: Thanks for your kind offer of the two half-full tubes of ink and about nine stencils gathering dust in SUSFA's lockers, but I think I'll pass this time. Maybe you could give them to Kevin Dillon. Good luck with the group; I hope I'll meet hordes of your people at Syncon.

KEN BARHAM: You've lost track of Scythrop subscriptions? Me too, but I'm working on it sporadically. Your address is correct on my file.

JOHN ALDERSON: A. Porter of Canberra is not A. Porter of New York, no. You request anecdotes of my experiences with Bet Bet/Dunolly Churches of Christ. Would like to oblige, but no time at the moment. Maybe we could tape something at Syncon, if you are coming. You mention in the latest CHAO, for which thanks, that 20 people plus yourself have read the article of mine you reprinted there. That's not quite what I meant, whatever I might have said. Only members of ANZAPA and FAPA in Australia will see the article outside CHAO. Even that's not quite true. Dr A. D. Hope OBE seems to have liked it; he even offered to take out a subscription to Bundalohn Quarterly. I am sufficiently unfannish to appreciate Dr Hope's comments more than yours.

LIZ: What beautiful letters you have written me, and I haven't answered one. I should take a couple of days off and attempt to answer in kind. I can't, and maybe this stuff will give you some idea why. If you can forgive me, please keep on writing.

OTHERS: Thank you, sincerely. I will try sometime to answer you. Keep in touch.

Maybe it's National Elf; I'm not sure. Anyway, you know the critter. Recently, the horns of Alfand softly blowing, I walked into my friendly neighbourhood pharmacy, proffered my prescription for govt-subsidized drugs (yep, that diazepam stuff), and the pretty little girl in the shop wanted to charge me six bucks for them. Arghhh: "I beg your pardon?" she said - very polite kid that. "Arghhhhh!" I repeated. "Oh," she said, sweetly, "Just a moment, please." And she went behind the glass bit at the back of the shop and came back with the chemist and he said G'day what's the trouble? and I nearly made a funny noise again but managed to stammer out something to the effect that my rotten pills had only ever cost me a dollar and I was nearly in tears. I really was. I didn't have six bucks, and I knew I'd be utterly unbearable without that valium. He said you can only get this stuff on National Alf if the doctor writes "SP" on the prescription, and pointed out to me the complete absence of these magic letters from the paper I'd given him. "Arghhhhh!" I said. He looked at me, strangely. "I beg your pardon?" he said. "Oh, ah, just wondering, um, what to do about it, sob." "Why don't you pop over to the doctor and get him to change it?" he said. "Her," I said. "?" "Her: I saw the lady doctor." "Oh." "A very nice lady." "Yes, well I suggest you just..." And I did. Zapped over the road to the surgery.

As I said, a very nice lady, my doctor. Had we but world enough and time... but we haven't, so I'll just say she is younger than me, a real swinger, dark, lovely long hair, deep dark eyes, long leather boots, a muede jacket draped over the back of her chair, and... and... You get the picture. Very nice lady. Must remember to be ill more often. Male readers in Canberra need not apply for details of the whereabouts of this surgery.

Anyway, I flashed over the road to the surgery and, damn, the lady wasn't around. One of the partners, Dr Something-Hyphen-Something, said I was only entitled to National Alf on this line if I had epilepsy. I looked at him with an earnest look. "If I have to pay six bucks for the stuff I'll become epileptic!" He didn't look convinced. Not even interested. Just then my lady doctor walked in and there was a bit of a discussion and I tried my hardest to look epileptic and she wrote "SP" on my passport. I tore back to the chemist, still trying to look as epileptic as possible, and he handed over the stuff for a dollar.

Jeez, the things you have to go through to have a nervous condition!

Epilepsy I mean, Alf, dinkum. No, true, really. Just joking - ha ha - about "nervous condition".

National Alf: If you were really epileptic you'd be writhing on the floor.

JB: Just watch. See! - writhing!

Alf: And turning green and choking and...

JB: Turning green and choking, you said.

Alf: Uh huh.

JB: If I could act like that I'd be earning a fortune and could afford six bucks.

Alf: Well, acting is very good for the character, not to mention physique, quite apart from paying well if you're good at it.

JB: Truly?

Alf: Truly. Incidentally, that bit of advice will set you back six... I beg your pardon?

JB: Arghhhhhhhhhhhhh!

The odd thing, of course, is that that lady doctor cheered me up so much that I didn't take any pills for two days after I talked to her. There's a message in there somewhere, I think.

(XX)

This slim publication has been PHILOSOPHICAL GAS no.12. What it will be next, no-one knows. (Not recommended for toilet paper, for sure.) Cover by Lindsay Cox. If you get this publication by honest means, this indicates my desire to hear from you. If you haven't time to write a letter, just send a cheque. I'll understand.

Cheers,

JB

STOP PRESS!

(Or, as we say in the trade: Push the button, Max!)

PARERGON BOOKS, late of Melbourne, is now alive and moderately well in the Australian Capital Territory.

The first page of this publication, therefore, should now read:

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS
Number Twelve : June 1972

Published by John Bangsund: Parergon Books
PO Box 357 Kingston ACT 2604 Australia