

THE WISH

Well then! I now do plainly see
 This busy world and I shall ne'er agree.
 The very honey of all earthly joy
 Does of all meats the soonest cloy;
 And they, methinks, deserve my pity
 Who for it can endure the stings,
 The crowd and buzz and murmurings
 Of this great hive, the city.

Ah, yet, ere I descend to th' grave
 May I a small house and large garden have;
 And a few friends, and many books, both true,
 Both wise, and both delightful too!
 And since love ne'er will from me flee,
 A mistress moderately fair,
 And good as guardian angels are,
 Only beloved and loving me.

O fountains! when in you shall I
 Myself eased of unpeaceful thoughts espy?
 O fields! O woods! when, when shall I be made
 The happy tenant of your shade?
 Here's the spring-head of Pleasure's flood:
 Here's wealthy Nature's treasury,
 Where all the riches lie that she
 Has coined and stamped for good.

Pride and Ambition here
 Only in far-fetched metaphors appear;
 Here nought but winds can hurtful murmurs scatter,
 And nought but Echo flatter.
 The gods, when they descended, hither
 From heaven did always choose their way:
 And therefore we may boldly say
 That 'tis the way, too, thither.

How happy here should I
 And one dear She live, and embracing die!
 She who is all the world, and can exclude
 In deserts solitude.
 I should have then this only fear;
 Lest men, when they my pleasure see,
 Should hither throng to live like me,
 And make a city here.

- Abraham Cowley (1618-1687)

Cowley failed in metre as he failed in style through his weakness for too much of everything. What he actually accomplished was to make himself unreadable. (Concise Cambridge History of English Literature) ... he did not lose his interest in the wider world, and was directly responsible for the founding of the Royal Society. Even while I think it necessary to write about him, I can think of no pressing reason why anyone should read him. (Hopkins: English Poetry: a short history) The beauties of his poems are spoilt by false taste and affected wit. (Everyman's Encyclopædia) Who now reads Cowley? (Alexander Pope)

which I offer the Australian Public a brand-new national anthem. When I got to work I was told that my injudicious reference to the Minister for Health would probably constitute a breach of the Crimes Act, and that I should make the most of what would probably be my last day on the job.

Well, it hasn't turned out like that, so far. On Tuesday we finished our job on the Transport Advisory Council, and a little before mid-day were sent home, with instructions to stand by for emergencies and report for duty again next Monday. I was happy to comply. David and I had managed to stay up talking until about 4 am each morning while he was here, and I had some sleep to catch up. A little after 12 I was sound asleep. When I awoke about 9 there was another telegram under my door from the solicitor. It said I was to ring a local solicitor at 4 about the affidavit. Tough.

I rang him when I woke up today - about 2. He said he couldn't talk because he was running late for a funeral, but I was to be in his office at 3.15. Meantime I had received a further telegram, from Diane - instructing me to ring her (reverse charges). So I rang her after ringing the solicitor, and she said if that affidavit doesn't arrive before the case comes up you've had it chum - or words to that effect.

I saw the local solicitor, who is an awfully nice bloke with greying hair and all that - the kind of bloke you would instinctively trust - and he asked me to swear on the Bible that Diane's petition was correct in every detail, which I did, and then I signed the affidavit to that effect. I didn't feel like arguing that swearing on the Bible is un-Christian and, to non-Christians like myself, idiotic. Time was short.

I drove back to Kingston and went to buy a paper and some grog. In the newsagency I noticed Harry Harrison's BEST SF: 1971 and had a look at it. (I don't buy much of these days, and I didn't buy this book, but I can't help looking at the stuff.) In his introduction Harry mentions the book JOHN W. CAMPBELL: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE, which I found quite interesting since I haven't finished printing that book yet, despite anything you might have heard or read to the contrary.

Harry's selection was also interesting in another respect. The first volume - the 1967 selection - included a story by Bert Chandler from ASFR 10. I had just returned from swearing on the Bible that everything Diane said in her petition was true, and in that petition is a statement to the effect that around the time I published Bert's story my efforts in the writing and publishing line were "financially and artistically fruitless". I expect lightning to strike me at any moment.

On the way out of the newsagent's I noticed the latest issue of Cleo - which is a kind of liberated ladies' magazine - and in this issue is a delightful and well thought out article by Anne Woodham (under the pseudonym "Stephanie Smith") about science fiction, in which she mentions Gillespie, Chandler, Binns, myself and other great and famous names in the field. I bought a copy, went into the supermarket for a flagon of rough red, and decided it was time I had another haircut. I mean, someone might want to interview me or something after all this great stuff I've had published lately in The Australian Author, The Canberra Times, Chunder's, Something Else and Girls' Own Fanzine, and after being mentioned in Cleo and the Supreme Court of Victoria and all, and one of my new-year resolutions was to try to look tidy. So I went round the corner to the barber's shop.

The barber, a young bloke of maybe 25 with very long hair, was relaxing in one of the chairs. "How would you like it, Sir?" I said as I walked up to him, and he grinned. Then he asked me how I would like it, and I said, well, I dunno, just pretend it was your hair and do what you think best, but I think it needs about two inches off at the back. He got started and I asked him if he would mind if I read this magazine while he was working on me, and he said not at all, and he asked what it was and I said Cleo, and he said it was a great magazine, and somehow the subject of science fiction came up and he asked me if I had read THE DAY OF THE TRIFIDS. I admitted I hadn't, and he started telling me what it was about. I interrupted him and completed his

plot summary, and then I had to explain how come I knew what the book was about without having read it, and one thing led to another... and another... and another.

Some years ago there were reports of odd patches of scorched earth, such as might be made by a flying saucer landing, about sixty miles or so from Canberra. My barber and a few of his mates who are interested in this kind of thing went out to look at them. Since then they have compiled between them a thick dossier of every UFO sighting, every suggestion of paraphenomena and every hint about these unknown things they have found in all the world's literature. They check out the sightings, they contact the people with ESP and so on, they note what they have found in their reading, and they get together every so often to discuss all this. One of his friends, the barber said, was in the Navy, and he had a tape of an incredible transmission he had picked up on a ship's wireless. The ship had established that the transmission did not come from anywhere in the horizontal vicinity - it came from straight up. And it sounded like a number of unearthly beings, all speaking distinguishably the same language. His friend had been transferred to another posting interstate, and his tape was utterly illegal. The implication of this was that the Navy was worried about the whole affair and had dispersed the personnel present at the time.

I am sure you have read umpteen stories like that before, and so have I. I have even heard a couple from what you might call eye-witnesses. But it was rather croggling to come straight from that anti-ASFR petition, that reference in BEST SF '71 and that article in Cleo, into a discussion of that nature. I went home and hoped there would be no more coincidences or anything else out of the ordinary today.

I opened the Canberra Times and the flagon, and commenced reading the former and emptying the latter. On page 13 of today's Times, among the legal notices, is a report that one Robert Picton Greenish, 61, businessman, is involved in a hearing of 42 charges alleging fraud and stealing, to the tune of "about \$168,608". (I love that cautious "about".) Mr Greenish is a former ASFR subscriber. He is also the stockbroker mentioned by Cordwainer Smith in his Prologue to SPACE LORDS.

I didn't read any more of today's paper, just in case. I went to the Lucky Chinese Restaurant (celebrated in these pages on numerous occasions), and after I had been there for a few minutes the boss-man put a record on that I hadn't heard in that place before. I thought I had heard his complete collection, many times over, but I hadn't heard this record. It was Zorba's Dance and other Greek pop favourites, and there's nothing especially odd about that except that my favourite eating-place in Melbourne - the Cha Cha at Prahran - used to play this particular record over and over again. I have listened to it while dining with just about everyone in Melbourne fandom, with Diane, with Carolyn, with the un-named lady of recent Scythrops, with just about everyone I know in Melbourne.

Tonight, I just know it, I will have nightmares about a little green man in a judge's wig pointing at a stack of ASFRs and Scythrops and things and saying, "Did you or did you not publish this artistically and financially fruitless rubbish?" and in the background there will be Zorba's Dance and the sounds of extraterrestrial voices, and I will wake up screaming "Don't smite me, Lord! - I'll gafiate, I promise."

Had a nice letter from George Turner today, too.

And a bill from Roneo.

Life goes on.

22nd February: Well, I didn't dream about Martians in legal drag after all; in fact, I slept pretty well. But when I got up I was sort of fidgety. I moped around all day, doing nothing of importance. Listened to Chopin's etudes, opus 10 and opus 25, and his concertos, and then some Gilbert & Sullivan and Frescobaldi and Elgar's cello concerto; opened the can of sausages and veg David left behind and indulged in the unaccustomed luxury of breakfast (well, I guess it's breakfast, even if it happens to be 2 pm); re-read the junk I wrote last night, realized I had spelt "affidavit" incorrectly throughout but couldn't be bothered changing it; read some poetry - Abraham Cowley (great stuff: must look out for some more), Dryden (None but the brave/None but the brave/None but the brave deserves the fair! Often wondered where that came from,) and Henry Vaughan (I saw Eternity the other night...); went up to the post office - no mail except a copy of "Teaching SF" from Jack Williamson, and a note from him expressing continued enthusiasm for Australia in 75 and asking if the Campbell book was ever published; bought a copy of the Melbourne Sun to look at the law notices (Divorce: Undefended, 15th Court, Mr Justice Norris, 10.30: Watson (mention); Shelton; Katsiouras; Bangsund; Thompson... and eleven others: lotsa people seem to be getting divorces these days: whatever happened to our once proud Christian nation? Labour gets into office and first thing we know people are watching dirty movies and getting divorced all over the place - just like bloody rabbits! Sad. Henry Vaughan, thou shouldst be living at this hour.); listened to some more music, tried to read a book but couldn't, tried to find the will to do some more work on JWC but couldn't, so sat about and chain-smoked.

The telegram arrived about 4.30:

YOU ARE NOW A NUMBER AND A FREE MAN

D

Even now she puzzles me. If that message was spontaneous, maybe something did rub off on her after all. Maybe she has been composing it for months. I won't insult her by asking, since it was rather neat however achieved. I felt like sending back a telegram asking Yes, but who is Number One? but decided to save a few cents and put them towards the bill when it comes.

In the last FAPA Dick Geis expressed interest in the details of my "ill-fated marriage", and in reply I expressed a lack of interest in supplying them. As some kind of compensation, Dick, there's the story of my divorce.

Now, what will I write about to fill this page and conclude this um issue? Ah yes... Also in the last FAPA was Terry Carr's latest volume of "Fanzines I Have Published" - which looked pretty impressive but hardly worth reading. So I will now do a list of things I have published (not all: just the main things) and it won't look anywhere near as impressive but you don't have to read it and I'll see you all next time round.

Australian Science Fiction Review nos. 1-20 (June 1966 - June 1969)
 Scythrop nos. 21-27 (December 1969 to date: no.28 in preparation)
 The Cosmic Dustbug nos. 1-7 (dates uncertain: I have none on file)
 The New Millennial Harbinger nos. 1-7 (October 1968 - July 1969)
 Crog: or: The Chrononhotonthological Review nos. 1-10 (August 1969 - June 1971)
 Lodbrog nos. 1-6 (April 1970 - October 1972)
 Philosophical Gas nos. 1-19 (September 1970 to date)
 Australian Science Fiction Monthly nos. 1-4 (December 1970 - March 1971)
 Bundalohn Quarterly nos. 1-4 (May 1972 - October 1972)
 Convention programme books: 9th Australian, Melbourne Easter 1970; 10th Australian, Melbourne January 1971; Advention I, Adelaide January 1972; 11th Australian, Sydney August 1972
 Australia in 75: The Facts (September 1971)
 John W. Campbell: an Australian Tribute (dated October 1972 and nearly completed)
 Syncon 72: A Cosmic Melodrama (in preparation)
 Plumbers Of The Cosmos: Essays & Reviews by George Turner (In preparation)
 ...and maybe thirty or forty other odd things - but the next is the one to watch for!

FAPA will be seeing Philosophical Gas nos. 14-19 in one slim volume, and since it seems a waste to use a completely blank sheet at the back (and vaguely unprofessional not to have a blank back cover), I will now speak briefly - possibly even briefly - of my new stereo outfit and record collection and such. As well as fulfilling the purpose mentioned, this will also be a kind of response to something Ted White published last year.

When I moved to Canberra I brought with me the Sony TC252 tape recorder, the Sony CF300 mono cassette recorder, about 35 records, about 40 tapes and a dozen cassettes. To this I have now added a Rotel RA210 amplifier (small and pretty gutless, but it serves), a pair of Soundwood Apollo speakers (Australian-made, and probably the best speakers you can buy for \$39 each), a locally-built JH turntable (belt-driven, 12-pole hysteresis motor, rumble immeasurably small, wow and flutter 0.03%), Sansui arm, Shure M55 magnetic cartridge with elliptical stylus - and, for a few days, a Sanyo cassette deck. The latter I returned to the retailer. Sure, it was great having a stereo deck with a switch for ordinary and chrome tapes and a quasi-Dolby noise-eliminator, but the bloody thing didn't sound anywhere near as good as the mono cassette recorder I already had. The next step up in cassette decks would have cost about \$200 more, and I don't have that kind of money, so I exchanged the Sanyo for records and tapes. After a little thought this seemed logical anyway, since I need music rather than pretty machines. I now have about 80 records, about 60 tapes and about two dozen cassettes. Nineteen of the tapes are 1800' EMI low-noise, and blank; when I have finished transferring the worth-keeping stuff from the cassettes to tape I will have more than twenty usable cassettes.

I don't think I ever had more than about 500 records. It's not really worth blowing about \$260 on good stereo gear when you only have about 80 records, but there is method in my madness. I have joined the Canberra Recorded Music Society, which has a library of around 2500 records, and the object of my relatively expensive exercise is to provide myself with lots of tape and the best possible (without being stupid about it) means of recording the stuff I borrow - without damaging it. The Sansui/Shure pickup tracks nicely at 1.5 g, which shouldn't hurt any records I borrow, and both of the Sonys, while not spectacular, reproduce what they have recorded in a very satisfactory way indeed.

While I was about it I bought a rechargeable nickel-cadmium battery for the cassette recorder. This is said to last about five years - around 300 cycles from dead to recharged - and even if it's only half as good as that it will be cheaper than using ordinary batteries. I use the cassette recorder quite a lot whenever I go to Sydney or Melbourne, both for playing and recording, and most of this is done on battery. At home I keep it connected to the power-point, and apart from the odd recording, I use it mainly on radio. It's a very versatile machine: even picks up TV stations on the FM radio. (When we get FM in a few years it will be useless for these broadcasts, since we will be using a VHF band not used overseas, but I don't care much about that at present.)

The records are 100% classical (if you include G&S in that category), the tapes about 95% classical. The only popular music I have is about three hours of the Beatles, two hours of Simon & Garfunkel, two albums of Emerson, Lake & Palmer, the soundtrack of Li'l Abner, and some pieces by Sammy Davis, Charlie Parker and (*blush*) Brigitte Bardot. There are a few Goon Shows, far too much stuff recorded at conventions and in private conversation with fans - and that's about it. It would take over three weeks, non-stop, to listen to the lot, so I guess it's not exactly a small collection after all. And in a few months those blank tapes and cassettes will be filled, so there's roughly another four days or so.

The record collection at present consists very largely of Schubert, Chopin and Mahler. I didn't plan it that way. Before I sold the bulk of my collection about this time last year there was more Bach than anything else, and a fair swag of Stravinsky and Shostakovich, with Berlioz and Beethoven not far behind. Taking the tapes into account I probably still have more Bach than anything else, with Beethoven, Mahler and Schubert close behind. I am sadly short of Mozart and Haydn. Ah well: ends page and issue.