



PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

Number Twenty: April 1973

Published by John Bangsund: Parergon Books PO Box 357 Kingston ACT 2604 Australia for members of FAPA, ANZAPA and OMPA and a few others

4th March: A couple of weeks ago David Grigg was here for a few days. He brought with him the 27th ANZAPA mailing, with its motion for a special rule calling for a trial period of six months of monthly mailings - a motion which for some reason I don't quite understand I have supported. David and I spoke of many things during those few days, things fannish and mundane. I began dimly to comprehend what lasers are about; he came vividly to understand why I am halfway up the wall with boredom and loneliness in this sterile place, and hence why such things as extreme irritability and profound lethargy tend to characterize my fannish statements and activities these days. Anyway, we were sitting there late one evening, the roosters crowing outside and the last rays of sunlight fast disappearing from the flagon at our feet, and I said, "You know, David, Arnie Katz is just a paper tiger." "Unh-huh?" said David, and I repeated it because it sounded good at the time. We said a lot of things during those few days that sounded good at the time. "Leigh Edmonds is a Good Man," one of us said, and, "Yngvi is a louse." David wrote half of an article I want to publish in Scythrop. We devised a most ingenious and diabolical, yet harmless and good-natured, hoax; imagined the reactions of fandom at large, nearly killing ourselves laughing. (And killed the idea a week later. "I thought you would say that," David wrote in response to my frenzied letter telling him to forget the idea. But, Jeez, it was fantastic talking about it.) We collated a lot of stuff for FAPA and ANZAPA. and David stood guard over the flagon while I ran off the first few dozen pages of the Campbell book.

There was a time when wherever I lived seemed to be the fannish travellers' rest - even if the fan had travelled only a couple of miles. Night after night the gay throng would infest my house, drinking my grog, talking wise and witty fannish talk. I came to hate it. Not that I was the first to do that.

Before I came to tire of it, the lady to whom I was until ten days ago intimately related by law was heartily sick of the sport. In fact the subject looms large in her divorce petition, and I would love to know what the Supreme Court of Victoria made of that and other eccentric habits mentioned - all things which are part of the fannish life, but not readily understood by normal folk.

Anyway, I came to hate it. I even came to hate the regular midnight phone calls from my friend Robin. "John, I have this utterly stupid letter from..." "John, Robin. I'm absolutely furious with myself..." "John, it's suddenly occurred to me that we have to get this thing out by..." And so on. There was the night he went to the laundry and locked himself out of his flat; and not only were all his keys inside the flat, but the keys to my car, too, which made it just a little difficult for me to suggest anything - except certain aspects of his character of which he was already aware.

Ah, how I miss those days. So much so that lately I have taken to playing tapes of fannish conversations and even conventions, just to hear those dear voices again.

Of course, when I meet the bastards I'm rude as hell to them, but that's a different matter.

The main difference between Melbourne and Canberra fandom - apart from the fact that the local folk are untutored in the ways of trufandom and therefore spend a lot of time reading and talking about science fiction - is that all the fans here seem to be married. This places me at an immense disadvantage. It is so incredibly difficult to engage in wise and witty repartee of a fannish nature when there are little children crawling and squawling all over the place. I have a tape of our meeting last Friday, and some of my best lines are lost to posterity forever. It's sad, somehow.

Parliament reassembled last week, and a good time was had by many. "Three things in life are certain, " said someone I should know and haven't the energy to look up, "Death, taxes and the never-ending devaluation of the American dollar." The President of the Senate parried a question with an extremely obscure allusion to Shakespeare's "Tempest". I listened only to the Senate broadcast on Wednesday afternoon, and it was lovely to hear the Labor senators trying to answer the same damfool questions they used to throw at the Libs et al. when they were on the other side. The Attorney-General, Senator Lionel Murphy, is magnificent. The difference between his laconic drawl and bone-dry wit and the previous A-G's peeved/pompous tone and almost total lack of humour has always been deliciously notable, but now that Murphy is the Government there seems an added piquancy in what he has to say and how he says it. Keep up the great work, fellers, and I hope you argue for months about setting up new committees to replace the old. (While they argue, I get time off to type stencils.)

The year will be a hard one, I suspect, as far as work is concerned. Labor likes to have committees looking at things, and my job is exclusively concerned with committees and conferences and the like. (There has been some misunderstanding about this. I am not a Hansard reporter. I have no knowledge of shorthand. My only involvement with Parliament as such is working on the index to Hansard when the time for that comes and there's nothing else to do.) But there are two nice things to look forward to. In July there should be a new award for journalists, which with luck will take my salary up to within spitting distance of living within my income; and not long after there will be a Senate election, which just might mean some more time off.

But enough of this shop talk.

In December 1969 I published the first issue no.21 - of Scythrop (formerly Australian
Science Fiction Review). I have pretended
for a long time since that very few comments
were ever written on that issue, but in fact
there were comments written which I have
never published. (*blush*)

I shall, this moment, publish them.

Scythrop has a touch of Tolkien, of Van Vogt and of C. S. Lewis. William Burroughs fans should love it.

- Artemus Haddock

... a touch of Ballard, of Kafka and of CATCH 22. Nick Bockwinkel fans should love it.

- Howland Mennisom

... a touch of the sun. A pity it is not big enough to wrap anything in.

- Kirk Volleyball Jr

Der Spiegel must look to its laurels, and Der Goldwyn to its hardies.

- Waldemar Cohen

How courageous of Scythrop to introduce us to the work of Montmorency Jones! He is the Sartre of the Saltbush, the Anouilh of the Never-Never! ... But I felt that Peter Roberts's proposed underwater Worldcon in Paris was insane, frankly.

- Daisy Hollander Buckett

The chewiest fanzine in years.

- Fort Mudge Clarion

I must say I approve Mr Brunner's advising readers to "go pop".

- Jeremy Weasel

XVIIIth Century English Empiricist Philosopher, noting asfragistic resurgence in southern colonies, suggests Mr Wilson send a gunboat.

- Times Lit. Supp. (personal advt)

The last comment sort of dates the issue a bit, doesn't it. At about the time I wrote all that stuff (oh no, you didn't believe them for a minute, surely?) the "XVIIIth Century English Empiricist Philosopher" used to advertise in just about every issue of the TLS. I have often wondered, not that it matters, just what he was up to and what kind of bloke he must have been. I think I might have liked to meet him. I have an affinity for eccentrics. We seem to have things in common. (Hullo dere!)

One of the odd things about composing on stencil is that you never know where you will finish up. You bung the stencil in the typer and in a large round hand type "Philosophical Gas number something", do a bit of fancy stuff and there you are. This issue started out as mailing comments, believe it or not.

Mailing comments, yes, hm. (Oh hell.) Right now I seem to have within reaching distance (I use the word deliberately) one mailing of ANZAPA, two mailings of OMPA (one of which I shall ignore if possible) and one mailing of FAPA. A total of (mumble mumble 181 + 138 + 523 dot and carry one) 842 pages. Maybe I'll write something else after all. No. I'll never score any gold stars in the mailing-comment section of the egoboo polls if I don't write any, so I must. (Must.' - d'ya hear me.') Ook ook flork - as Ed Cagle is given to saying.

OMPA 67:

Just great, people, great. Loved that fantastic essay by me on "Is Australia Funny?" even if I didn't quite understand it. Keep up the good work.

OMPA 68:

I see you kept up the good work, damn you. Six members contributed 138 pages, which is pretty good for six members, pretty awful for a quarterly apa. I can say that without guilt feelings since I would have had 28 pages in there myself if the post office had been kind. The other thirteen members would probably say the same if pressed.

OFF TRAILS 68: Look, fellers and ladies, I don't care much what you do with the Constitution. It's your show, and I'm just tagging along. But, really, twenty pages a year is a lot; it really is. I can hit that by sending you things that go through ANZAPA and FAPA - and I note that most of the big. regular OMPAzines have a separate circulation, so I'm not too distressed about this. But the suggestion that "each member shall be required to contribute a minimum of 5 quarto pages of mailing comments" each year is just too much. Admitted that mailing comments are pretty close to being the raison d'etre for belonging to an apa: but some people just can't write them. Not only that, but my quarto page contains close to a thousand words, whereas someone else can use a pica typer, bung in some fancy decoration and finish up putting as many words on five quarto pages as I put on one. I don't like the idea of a sliding-scale fee, calculated according to the number of pages one contributes; and I don't like the idea of making voting in a quarterly (quarterly: my god.) egoboo poll compulsory. But you do what you want to. Apart from writing

occasionally to Ethel Lindsay, Dave Piper, John Brosnan and Terry Jeeves, OMPA is my only contact with British fandom. I like being in it for that reason. If you make membership requirements just too impossible then you lose me for good and I'll just trade stuff with the people I seem to have something in common with. I am just one member among twenty - but I am also one of the seven overseas members you have, and if each of us felt the same way you might find it hard to carry on an apa with only thirteen members, right? I approve your ambition to build up the apa, but maybe you are going about it the wrong way.

HELL 7: This is nicely produced, Brian and Paul, and I appreciate Paul's being the only Omperson to like my "Is Australia Funny?" piece for any reason at all, and I enjoyed reading the issue - but I don't have a thing to say except that I liked it. That's sad. In ANZAPA you would get loads of egoboo, I'm sure, and maybe get a slightly more international flavour into the magazine. Do you think you could run to 30 extra copies? ANZAPA is a bit short of overseas members just now, and I'm sure you would be more than welcome.

ERG 41: I like your stuff, too, Terry, but really you do seem to go out of your way to make things hard for some members. You refer to "crudsheet activity", for example. The constitution, so far, doesn't include this nasty category; but does this mean that if I contribute two pages each in three mailings and then my required fourteen in the fourth, that you will deliberately ignore the first three? Please yourself - I mean, plenty of people never comment ever - but I would have valued your comments on my things in the last mailing. Your remarks about poetry seem just a little odd. There is nothing wrong with blank verse, as such (unless you think there is something wrong with Shakespeare and Milton - just to name two poets offhand who didn't think it necessary to write rhyming lines all the time), but I will concede that it's the easiest way to write stuff that looks like poetry, but isn't - just as cartoon figures are easier to draw than semblances of human figures. I draw cartoons and I write blank verse, for this very reason that so far I am incapable of poetry and art. If you think my rhyming stuff is good, I'll start having doubts about you. I said last page that mailing comments are pretty close to being the raison d'etre for belonging to an apa. But there is a danger in them. Some people (I can't name one offhand so this is hypothetical) could fill their activity requirements and become very popular in an apa (such is the nature of fannish vanity) by writing nothing but mailing comments. This might be just fine: Gosh wow. - here's another fantastic hundred words of egoboo from Fred Bloggs: But surely, if Fred Bloggs wrote nothing but 20 pages of comments each year for OMPA, 8 for FAPA and 12 for ANZAPA, he would be contributing to the apas even less than Fred Gnurk (and I could put plenty of real names to him) who never comments on anything?

It's really a mirror of fandom in general. I publish a genzine, say, and distribute 400 copies. I am lucky to get a dozen letters of comment, half of which are publishable. I also get a couple of dozen fanzines in trade. The letters might be worthless: not worth publishing or missing the point entirely of what I and my contributors have written: but I appreciate it that the writer has gone to the trouble of writing. The tradezines might never mention my name, their editors never write to me, but I appreciate it that they think it worth the trouble to send me a copy.

The same thing happens in apas. There are Joyce and Amie Katz, for example, in FAPA, with two of the most delightful fan publications I have seen in ages; I don't score a mention, but what the hell? - I am proud to have their things. And in OMPA only Paul Skelton speaks enthusiastically of my stuff in the last mailing: but he doesn't say why he liked it. If I had received his comment as a loc I would have been as pleased as I was to read it in HELL - but I wouldn't have published it.

All of which has mainly been reaction to your remarks. Terry

INTOLERANCE: I couldn't even read it, Keith. Sorry. Doesn't your typewriter work on spirit masters? It works quite prettily on SEPULCHRE 1: but this unfortunately is on the subject of "lough monsters", than which few things interest me less. Someone, I suppose, has to keep up with this kind of thing, but Nessie and his/her aquatic friends I will gladly leave to you and Ed Connor. Life is so full of important mysteries (Who am I and

what am I up to? - What the hell is Nixon up to? - Why does Amin carry on like that? -ZPG, the Bomb, Women's Lib, Aboriginal Rights: what can I do? - should I even care? -Why are Schubert and Dryden and fandom more important to me than any of these? -What is love? - will I know it again if I ever encounter it again, and if I do, will I know any better how to value it and keep it alive than I did last time?) that the possibility of there being something odd at the bottom of Loch Ness fails completely to excite me. If someone assured me there was something odd at the bottom of Lake Burley Griffin, which is only a few hundred yards from where I sit now, I would cheerfully encourage them to have fun figuring it out while I went on typing stencils and listening to Sibelius's 5th. No parcel bombs, as requested, and I look forward to future issues.

WHATSIT 24: Your outline, Ken, of apas seems to be a little brief, and it's odd that there is so little information about ANZAPA. The maximum membership is currently 30, but probably about to be reduced to 25. Fee is A\$3.00 per year (about £1.50 / US\$4.40); activity requirement 6 pages per 6 months. Mailings are bi-monthly, but from April we will be trying out a monthly mailing for six months if members agree. I disagree with your definition of "apas which are doing well" ("eg: have a waiting list"). ANZAPA is doing very nicely, without benefit of waiting list. The OBE is strong, nay merciless; the members have a strong feeling of community, it seems to me, but they welcome new people into that community readily. Since its formation ANZAPA has been the focal point of Australian fandom. From the viewpoints of involvement, literacy, interest, production standards and international fannish awareness, ANZAPA is superior to OMPA. It's still pretty ratshit, though.

(I think I just lost a few friends.)

A message to ANZAPA members: Listen, people, how would you feel about producing an extra 30 copies of your next contribution? Send the copies to me, and I will staple them together and send the lot to OMPA. Then OMPA can judge whether all this egoboo I'm giving you is justified. You might score a few interesting new members, too.

Three Ompazines to go. I grow weary.

5th March: A stencil a day keeps the gafia away (at least, so they say). It's 6.45 am and its cold. But the sun is poking up over the Printing Office, and it looks like being just the kind of day it was fifty-two weeks ago when I walked from Forrest Motor Lodge to Parliament House (a little hike of about two miles, though it didn't look like that on the map), sweating in my suit, wondering what this new job would be like and knowing that whatever it was like I would just have to endure it. I had burnt my bridges.

A year later I can say I am not sorry I took the plunge. It's not a great job, but it's endurable. Financially I am no better off now than I was then, but I have paid off most of the bills which were worrying hell out of me then, and I have acquired a good car, a good stereo set-up (something I've managed without for over two years) and a lot of music. At this rate I should be as comfortably situated by 1975 as I was in 1965. It's something to aim for, really. (Then I'll probably get married again, start buying a house and another car, and the whole cycle will start again...)

Anyway, in half an hour or so I shall put on that very suit - not as any kind of celebration but simply because that suit includes the only pair of wearable trousers I have - and walk over the road to work. I have the strong feeling there will be no time off this week, but... a man must do what a man must do; I am prepared; I stand ready to do my country's bidding; &c.

Shit. I don't feel like work.

On with the mailing comments - on, on, Stanley, on (charge, Chester, charge!) (quoth the brave Marmion). (No, I still don't like Walter Scott, but some things stick in the memory.)

LURK 4: Better say something nice about this or Sue Smith will never speak to me again. And it's an easy thing to say nice things about. Very neatly produced, with lots of good things to read. I liked James White's Novacon GoH speech, and agree entirely that "people are much more interesting and likeable if they are moderately good". Your personality, Pat and Mike, individually and in the amalgam, come over very well; your material is good and worth

reading, if not outstandingly brilliant; and, as I said, the production is neat. I can't think of more ingredients needed for a successful and satisfying fanzine, and I congratulate you on this one. That Pat cannot share my sense of humour merely shows that we can't all be perfect. (But I'm trying.)

OSTEEN UNIVERSITY REVIEW 7: Sam, I love your colophon. Like you, I am fascinated by names. If you are interested I'll send you a copy of the Australian postcode directory, which should provide you with hours of innocent pleasure (if that's the kind you go for). John Foyster published a massive list of star names a couple of years ago for FAPA: that would really turn you on. If you have any other friends at East Sale, let's know: Peter House and Liz George have recently moved down that way, and I'm sure they would love to meet some fans or even friends of fans. I take it that your comment on "Is Australia Funny?" (to quote in full: "Groan.") indicates a measure of disapproval. "The trouble with real life is that there are no instant replays." I like

(Time to go to work. Excuse I.)

4.58 pm: Sometimes I wonder how I stand the strain. I took a volume of Orwell's essays and a tape of some Mahler symphonies with me this morning, in case there wasn't much doing. There wasn't. I read a few essays, listened to the Second on the headphones, yawned a lot and slept a little. I went back from lunch with the ANZAPA and FAPA mailings, and managed to write some comments. Arthur and Alf were doing crossword puzzles, and every so often would ask me for a 19th century English author with three names, each of six letters, and the middle one was probably George, and I would look up from my apazines and mumble "Walter Savage Landor", and it was all pretty dreary. Bob picked up the Bible I keep on my desk and started reading Genesis. He kept on asking stupid questions, too. "Where did Cain's wife come from?" Stuff like that. Late this afternoon he asked me where Philadelphia was, and I looked up and realized he was reading Revelation. I hate people who read the ends of books first to see how they turn out, and told him so. Same routine tomorrow, apparently. Sigh.

6th March: Another day, another dolour. No sun peeping over the PO this morning; just a skyless cloud.

ARCANUM 2: When I took this, the last Ompazine to comment on, with me to work yesterday afternoon I had no idea that it would turn out to be the best thing in the mailing. Jim, you have enough good things in those eleven pages to keep me commenting all day, but I won't (mainly because there are 704 pages of FAPA and ANZAPA to write about after this, and I'm running awfully short of stencils). Your two main subjects are violence and (courtesy Cy Chauvin) fandom. Your logic in the first area is full of holes, as Terry will no doubt show you, but I'm right with you in sentiment. How can you be against violence and for the assassination of Hitler? I ask, since you unwittingly pose the problem, but I have no answer. You ask whether the use of violence has ever resulted in a true and lasting cessation to hostilities. That's easier. You could think about the fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines for a start. They haven't made much trouble lately. The poems you quoted are just great, even though they don't have rhymes. Your comment on them -"only the props have changed, the people haven't" - can be turned about and applied to Cy's subject, fandom: only the people have changed, the props haven't. I wish I'd had your remarks to crib from, Cy, when I was attempting to explain fandom to the Australian Society of Authors.

Speaking of which...

Three little things are snowballing, and I wonder where they will stop. The article in The Australian Author was reviewed in last Saturday's Sydney Morning Herald ("intriguing" was the key word); I keep on running into people who have read Anne Woodham's piece in Cleo and want to know first if I am the bloke who, and second if it's true I keep a duplicator in my bathroom; and my national anthem seems (Ghu preserve us) to be taking off. Today I received the March issue of Spelling Action, journal of the society that wants us to spell any & again "eny & agen" and so on (that's Spelling Reform 1: the whole reform is designed on Fabian lines and might take centuries to achieve fully), in which my letter to the Canberra Times is quoted in part and the anthem in full - in such a context as to suggest that I support

the Society's aims and principles, which I do not. I have written to the Secretary/Editor. Harry Lindgren (a man of mind-croggling erudition and great charm: when Eric Lindsay introduced me to him, he said, "Bangsund, hm?" and addressed me in Swedish - which is a pretty close guess), setting him straight on this. Under the circumstances (he said, scrounging about for any excuse) perhaps I had better reprint letter and anthem myself.

The Editor
The Canberra Times

Dear Sir.

I seen where youse want a new national anthem so enclose same herewith. Where do I collect me \$5 000?

My National Anthem is sung to the grand old tune of "The Internationale" by those with a leftward inclination, and "O, Tannenbaum" by those without. Something for everyone. Democratic, like.

Fourteen further stanzas, extolling the virtues, beauty &c of the States and Territories, foreign aid, motherhood, Aussie Rules, the spirit of Anzac and the Sydney Opera House, are available at the reduced rate of \$500 each.

The music is being scored for me by a mate up at Grabben Gullen who knows about this kind of stuff. He reckons wobbleboard, didjeridoo and gumleaf band should be okay, with electric banjo and musket volley for ceremonial occasions.

I should mention that my little effort has been partly inspired by our new Minista for Speling Reeform, Dr Evring'm, please make cheque payable cash.

ORSTRILIA:

Orstrilia: Orstrilia:

Ya know we'll never filia:

We'll fight fer ya and die fer ya
Whene'er yer foes assilia:

Our sunburnt land is green in spots;

There's gold in sand - and we've got lots.

We're big on Truth and Liberty:
Orstrilia is the place for we.

Yours &c

This version is authentic. The proofreaders at the Times must have had nightmares with it in any case, so I don't blame the paper for misspelling some of my misspellings. Dr Doug Everingham. I should explain to

overseas readers (and local readers who know exactly what was on the cover of the July '34 Amazing but aren't sure which political party is in office in this country), is Minister for Health in the Labor Government - and also trustee of the Spelling Action Society. (He had a rather incredible letter in this morning's Times about the beneficial effects of SR1 on the nation's health. I suspect, but wouldn't bet on it, that it was meant to be humorous.)

Now, let's see whether I can knock over 181 pages of ANZAPA on this page.

ANZAPA 27:

OFFICIAL ORGAN: Boggs and Luttrell out! What are you doing, Edmonds? (I think I can answer that. You are trying to force everyone out so you can fold the whole show, right? Sex and Shostakovich have twisted your mind.) I note without comment that of our present twenty-five members three are married, one de facto and one unknown (to me anyway).

SUGAR TOOTH 14: Yes, Leigh, at the 1966 convention there was that fantastic sense of community and history-making and so on, and one of the greatest moments was when Kevin Dillon walked down the aisle waving \$20 or some incredible amount and said that was a contribution to the 1967 convention in Sydney. There was no convention anywhere in Australia in 1967. I often wonder what happened to that money. ::: Nice stuff as usual, Leigh, and thanks for your remarks about me: I value them beyond anything anyone has ever said of me, with the possible exception of George's remarks in Scythrop.

It's probably just as well to say that now. I spoke to George today about the article I have asked him to write for Scythrop 28. and he insinuated that his remarks about me would not be entirely favourable. Since said article was conceived at the drunken orgy at Harding's place on 29th December, I fear the worst. (Oh no. He wouldn't mention my scandalous carryings-on with Miss Pagram, would he? No, not my friend George. I think.)

INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP v2n1: It's really fascinating, Bill. to go from Leigh's reprint of "The Unmusic Makers" (a great writer, Patrick Ryan, Leigh, and not unknown to we connoisseurs of the absurd) to your story about the first sounds in the Sydney Opera

House. I presume it was blanks fired at the ceiling and not bullets. You, sir, are at present without doubt the funniest writer in Australian fandom. (You will observe I do not say wittiest, nor most humorous. Robin Johnson or John Foyster is probably the former, and David Grigg probably the latter.) I will be delighted to see you, about a decade from now, in FAPA. You invite readers to submit further Revolting Habits, and without hesitation I do so: mounting moths; mislaying tortoises; "questioning rigorously" in cop shops; writing longer and much more interesting mailing comments than I do (of which you are more guilty than anyone in ANZAPA with the possible exception of Gillespie). Why dontcha tell us about Harry Warner, Bill? Is there some Ghastly Secret you are keeping from us? ::: I suppose you would know by now that Harry refers to you in Ed Cagle's Kwalhioqua 3. No? Allow me to quote: "Even if I didn't respond ... before the second issue arrived, you shouldn't have shaken me up so badly with that unchecked list of "becauses" on the last page of the new issue. There was a real, live Australian fan in the house not more than three months ago, and what if another happened to arrive and see an empty area before "You support AUSTRALIA IN 75?"" (It wasn't checked on my copy either, Harry. A cunning devil that same Cagle.)

TOUCHSTONE 2: With the possible exception of the above, this is the best item in the mailing. David. I'm not sure whether your cover photo of me qualifies my opinion of this issue and therefore my assessment of it. Certainly, as I explained to you here, you are quite wrong in capping the cover "John Bangsund misses a yorker at Kyneton". This masterpiece of the photographer's dubious art depicts me at the very instant of my delivering the Bangsund Special Grapevine Step-over Backhand to the ball, driving it (yes, with the back of the bat: no autographs after midnight, please) inexorably half a kilometre into the Foyster kitchen. ::: I forget who said it, but old fans never die they decompose on stencil.

ZYMURGY 1: "Brought to you by Michael Creaney, who was in turn brought to you by Mr & Mrs Creaney." Welcome, Michael! All readable, all read and appreciated, but that colophon was the best. (God! - another Australian fan humourist! Sheesh!)

Have you ever noticed how all your lights seem to fail about the same time? Tonight the globes in the kitchen and bathwom have both packed up. The former is something of a blessing: it's hell in there, folks. I must buy some more globes and do some dishes tomorrow. Tonight's menu offers (a) bacon and eggs a la Bangsund, (b) starvation. There's always some kind of choice. Life is full of variety and exciting experiences - and you may quote me.

O my soul, do not aspire to immortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible.

Pindar: Pythian Odes iii

I have yet to exhaust the limits of bacon and eggs... but there must be more to life.

7th March: There must have been something in those eggs. I spent the rest of last night drawing Renault 16s on stencil for Gina Clarke. Look to your laurels, Terry Jeeves, Atom and others. I'm beginning to enjoy drawing on stencil even more than composing on stencil, and if I ever learn to draw... watch out, youse guys. Students of the craft will notice that I am now into my sandpaper period: marvellous the effects you can get with that stuff.

ARCTURUS: Minac supreme, Carey, and without resorting a la Foyster to a lettering guide. A pome just for you:

Roger McGough

Doesn't turn me on.

V BOMBS AWAY / CAROL'S CANDLES: There are times when I worry about you, Paul. It is strange that you should refer to me as "the man behind the legend" when you are one of the legend's most rabid propagators. Why on earth would you want to tape me playing the piano while drunk? I can't even hit the right keys when I'm cold sober. I think you are a Bangsund fetishist, that's what I think. Tell you what: I have an old pair of underpants which I use to clean the Roneo, and I was probably wearing them when I typed ASFR 1. Wanna buy 'em, cheap? (Autographed?) Sorry if I always seem to sound rude to you, Paul. You're a nice guy - almost human at times - but your apparent concept of me as a golden BNF on a marble pedestal must be stomped on mercilessly. Stomp, stomp.

When you say you are bemused at the thought of Edmonds at an election campaign, do you mean you are "utterly muddled, as with drink" (Oxford)?

A CLASS OF SOLUTIONS OF EINSTEIN'S EQUATIONS WHICH ADMIT A 3-PARAMETER GROUP OF ISOMETRIES 4: Great stuff, John.

MY VERY FIRST ANZAPAZINE: Welcome to you, too, Ken, Nice writing, and I commend your note about Foyster to Paul's attention as an example of the correct attitude to one's fellow fans. But this church camp at Hall's Gap... You aren't another of these Church of Christ people, are you? Please tell me you aren't part of this dirty CofC fandom takeover plot, please, huh? ::: I go right along with you on the matter of city vs country - as you have probably already gathered from the last issue of PG. ::: You ask also for comments on your poem and hints on how to improve your apazine. The poem (in the unforgettable words of the Bulletin editor who rejected one of mine years ago) is more philosophical than poetical. The image of the instruments joining together to make great music is one that has been used countless times. A beautiful variation on it is a short poem by Rilke - "Love Song" - which concludes:

But all that touches us
Takes us together, thee and me, as does
A fiddle-bow one voice prolong
Out of two chords. Upon what instrument
Then are we stretched? What master's
face is o'er us bent?

O sweet song.

To improve your apazine. I can only suggest you borrow a better typer, use wider margins, and look carefully at some of the better things in ANZAPA - such as Leigh's. That's production advice. As far as content is concerned I think you don't need advising.

A FEW WORDS: Few, Christine, yes - but nice. Carry on viewing.

THE TRUMBLE SHOOTER: Of course Canberra has a soul. Even Jack the Ripper had a soul. Welcome to the madhouse, Helen. I'll welcome Leigh when he writes something. Rotten fanzine title you have there, but nice duplicating.

1973 &c: Not a caver, Kevin? I thought you were the original troglodyte. ::: Disapprove what you call "additional stuff".

THE BUTTERFLY MIND 13: At last, Robin, someone in a fanzine alludes to a film and not only do I catch the allusion but I remember the film with affection. BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER ITS NAME. (Sob) I refer of course to "Think pink". Goddam, I liked that film and can remember clearly the story and most of the actors. I'm absolutely furious with myself (if you'll pardon the expression). ::: "I find it hard enough to make all the subjunctive clauses come to the same end: I do sometimes think though that I may be the only person in fandom who knows how, and actually uses, colons." (And that's for Judge Speer. Have fun, Jack.)

COMMAND MODULE 21: The company you keep, Mike. Anyone who can speak of "the joys of burying yourself beneath thousands of tons of rock and dirt" is pretty far gone. I admit that I have a little popular music about the place, a modest collection of Playboy and a volume or two of erotica, but one must keep a sense of proportion about these things. ::: You have one for Jack Speer, too: "I like the way (here comes what remains of my Eng. Lit. classes, folks.) it maintains its rhythmn..." And another: "n'est pas?" (Maybe I've been reading too much of Jack Speer. I'd better stop this nit-picking.)

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE BLAND THE ONE EYED FAN IS KING: "... this is typed direct on stencil" Do tell, Eric. Did you take all the mail you received during 1972 - and records of your outwards mail - with you to Brisbane; or do you have an incredibly good memory? Certainly you have an excellent filing system. ::: You've really given me something to think about there: I always thought sexuality was misdirected creativity. rather than the other way round. Gosh, eh? ::: Watch it, Lindsay: there are more than enough Australian fan humourists already, and you are going close to glutting the market further. "A hurried fumbling through the pages revealed that a 'calliope' is a steam organ. At last, I thought, John is finally kicking this literary junk and writing about interesting things like machines. The only part I don't understand is the rest of the poem."

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS 16-18: Someone -Terry Carr, I think - refers to running a duplicator at top speed: "100 per minute". These issues, and everything I'm doing at present (except electrostencils and so on). have to go through the Roneo at 150 - and even then come out too black for my liking. It's probably the humidity that causes this, since I remember distinctly last winter having to warm up the drum with a radiator. Funny things, duplicators.

A SECOND PHŒNIX / ENTROPION 7: One of the things I have been giving a lot of thought to lately is beautifully summed up in your comment on Scythrop 27, Nick, and I will quote it, not out of self-indulgence, but because I want to think some more about what general truth there is in it. "It seems so silly to say so little about the best thing in the mailing. But maybe that's what praise is all about." There seems a lot of truth in it. But what if one is looking for something other than praise? Further: Is one really looking for something other than praise? I ask myself those questions, and so far have reached no satisfactory conclusion. But I will have to work out some answer during the next few days, because there are things in FAPA about which I can only say, in effect, "I have nothing but praise for this". No, there are alternatives. Let's take your contributions as an example, Nick. To say I have nothing but praise for these two zines would be absurd. I enjoyed reading them, because they gave me an insight into you and your world (which, being in South Africa, is a particularly interesting world: one we don't get many unofficial glimpses of). But apart from this little disquisition, which any number of zines in the three apas might have sparked off, I have no comment at all to make on what you have written. How then do I express my very real appreciation of what you have given me? I can say, "I liked this very much. Nick" - but then what do I say to other people whose stuff I have enjoyed? This is why I have never been a conscientious commentator - and why I have deliberately set out this time to comment on every last thing in three apas. I would dearly love to know what Sam Moskowitz (for example) thinks of the stuff I provide for him to read; but he doesn't comment on anything - and therefore I am not overly offended. But the people who do write comments, and either leave me out or dismiss me with some piddling remark or question, annoy me. I should not be annoyed: I know that. I feel bad about being annoyed by this: but I can't deny the feeling. So, what to do? (You tell me.)

Perhaps I should ask someone like Harry Warner or John Foyster - someone who knows the lot - to expound a Compleat Philosophie of Mailing Comments. But I won't do that; not just yet anyway. Ken Ford asked readers specifically for comments on various matters, and I commented on them - perhaps not to his satisfaction, but I did what he asked, with pleasure. So I will ask everyone reading this one fiendishly simple question: What do you look for and/or what pleases you most in a comment on your apazine?

There are over a hundred of us in these three apas. Surely between us we should be able to form some consensus of opinion on what is after all one of the basic features or functions of an amateur publishing association.

And if everyone replies, "Jeez, John, I have nothing but praise for your initiative in raising this most important question, and I hope you receive many intelligent answers", I shall gafiate instantly.

Best of luck with AFRICAPA, Nick. I would be pleased to join if you don't mind getting basically the same material as FAPA, OMPA and ANZAPA. I'll send you an airmail copy of this issue of PG, and if you want to enroll me as a member - and if the apa has started up - this will be my first contribution.

THE COMING OF THE GUARDIAN: You can certainly draw, John, and I am not yet convinced that Blair can't write, but comics are not my flagon of red (nor cup of tea, for that matter, but I'm even more difficult to please in the way of tea than in the way of grog: it has to be Earl Grey, Darjeeling or Lapsang Souchong), so I have no comment other than best of luck with your project and much better luck with its reproduction.

KERNFORSCHUNGSZENTRUM 1: I guess this means something like "nuclear science centre", John, but I am open to elucidation. Your description of activities at 128 Hereford St, Glebe, while it does not tally with my own experiences at that address, carries a certain amount of credibility. I find it intriguing that as well as being an artist of no mean promise, as evidenced by the "Guardian" strip, you write in a kind of comic-strip style also. As a writer of faan-fiction you have a long way to go yet, but by crikey you've got off to a fine start. More, please.

I HAVE A DREAM OF ONE DAY HANGING FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER FROM A SOUR APPLE TREE: Hell! The only short fanzine title in this mailing is Zymurgy: just about everyone is opting for long and/or obscure titles in ANZAPA these days. Maybe I should revive Crog. (Hm. Come to think of it. Crog. was just an abbreviation for The Chrononhotonthological Review, so perhaps I'd better just shut up.) You gave me a copy of this at 128 Hereford St, Glebe, Alex, and I find no more to comment on now than then. You are confused, not without understandable reason, by the lees of Australian fandom. Lee Harding and Leigh Edmonds (Melbourne) and Leigh Hyde (Canberra) are all noticeably and unrepentantly male. There is another Lee or Leigh in Melbourne - a friend of Lee, naturally - who is a very interesting lady, but who has so far not been mentioned in any fanzine that I know of. If and when she is, we will all have real problems.

ART AND DOMESTICITY: Congratulations, Mike: ::: I am pleased that I have met someone else who has read Rufus Jones - he was my favourite theologian/preacher while I was in college - but (ain't it a crazy world?) isn't it sort of odd that the only other person I have met who has read Rufus Jones lives in Tangent, Oregon? ::: Have fun with your capitalist enterprise (I'm sure you will) - and I wish you the kind of luck Mr Binkin had. (You'll have to ask Jack Chalker about that.) If you still have swags of National Geographics I'm sure they could be sold at a decent profit in Australia. Playboys, too: especially in Queensland, where it is banned. Can I place an order with you? I have read only one book by A. J. Liebling, and I lust for more. I have read only two of Elliot Paul's mysteries, and ditto. I have never seen anything by Oliver St John Gogarty except AS I WAS GOING DOWN SACKVILLE STREET, and ditto.

NOTES OF A NAIF SON 6: "I have a terrible horror of being alone as I grow older.' That sums up what I've been saying recently, too." Listen, Gillespie (and Grigg for that matter), you are thinking Bad Thoughts. That's the kind of thing I was feeling when I was your age, and here I am - a decade, more or less, later - after seven years of "marriage", still thinking the same kind of thing. St Paul said, "It is better to marry than to burn" - but I say unto you: Burn, dammit; for as long as you can hold out. Marry when it's good for you. Despair not.

24th March: It has been a rather incredible week or so for Australia, what with Gough right there on the cover of Time Magazine, trying to look (in Clifton Pugh's portrait) like the whirlwind he is, my favourite senator, Murph the Lion (as Nation Review has taken to calling him), "visiting" ASIO, the visit to our nation's fair capital of Mr Bijedic, PM of Yugoslavia, and - just to remind us that the pre-December-1972 Australia lives on - the seizure by Melbourne police of posters depicting full-frontally an obscene statue of one David, sculpted by some filthy-minded wog named Michelangelo.

And rather an incredible week or so for me, too.

Amongst other things, which we needn't go into right now, I stencilled and printed Philosophical Gas no.21 - and after some soul-searching prompted by two people who read it and one who hasn't, I destroyed the issue. Yep, I just joined the Book-Burners Club (Patron: R. Meagher MP), but for rather different reasons than most paid-up members have for belonging to it.

PG 21 was a beautiful example of a nasty streak in my character which most people are too polite to say anything about. If I were to explain just which nasty streak I mean, I would be giving further evidence of it - so I won't. But what I will do is offer a quote from a recent letter marked DNQ (and protect the writer, though Ghu knows he doesn't need protecting, by not naming him):
"'The March of Mind' is a magnet of interest for me. It may be that you impart more of yourself in these sly ruminations than you would allow, were you aware of the machinations of your mind in composing them." Yes indeed. I've been playing a lot of chess during the last few weeks, and I really believe it has given me a little more insight into just those mental machinations. Anyway, I've been giving a lot of thought to priorities this last week, with the aim of becoming a Better Person. Wish me luck.

Thinking about priorities forces me to abandon the project of making this issue the first and probably only attempt at commenting on three apa mailings. My comments on FAPA 142 are drafted - in some cases written in full and at some length - but they will have to wait. I will say to FAPA members here that this mailing also played a part in my high ambition. For the first time I read a mailing right through, and came up with some important discoveries. Maybe they were only self-discoveries, but that's important enough. I might try to explain in PG21 (Mark II).

Happy Easter, folks.

This issue is dedicated, with much affection, to Lyn Smith, Margaret Oliver, Liz Cutler, Mrs Ivy Bangsund, Carolyn Addison and Ursula K. Le Guin

- who, between them, know more about me than ever existed;

Bruce Gillespie, Ed Cagle, George Tumer and Alf Blair - who are good guys; and lastest but not leastest Gina Clarke

- who is a very interesting and I have no doubt lovely lady, and whose inclusion of Renaults in the category quoted on the cover of this issue prompted me to waste a couple of (pleasant) hours attempting to sketch my bete blanc.

I don't normally dedicate issues of fanzines - it seems a rather pretentious and maybe even insulting thing to do, unless in good-humoured jest - and I don't intend to make a policy of doing so. But during the past few weeks these folk have, consciously or otherwise, helped me considerably in various ways, and I just want to say Thank You, more or less in public.



