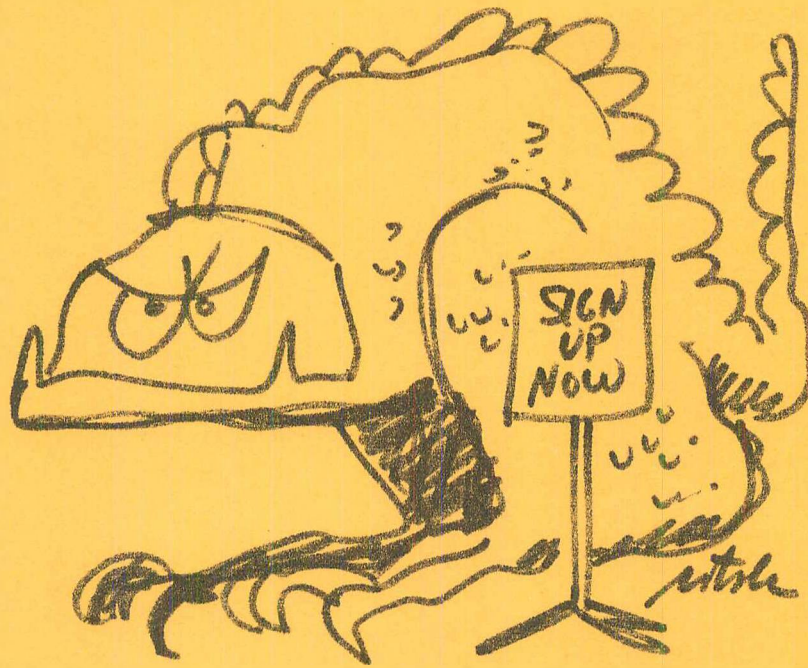


Phnom Penh in 2010!



PARERAGON PAPERS

are published every four weeks, except when there is an r in the four, by John Bangsund, PO Box 434, Norwood, SA 5067, Australia, mainly for members of ANZAPA and FAPA, and this is the second issue, commenced 3 August 1977

oo

It is my pleasant duty now to ask you to charge your glasses and...

Psst!

Charge your glasses and - I beg yours?

I said Psst!

That's what I thought you said. I'm not, you know; I always talk like this.

Yeah, sure. You always lean like that, too. But...

Why do you interrupt me, varlet?

Varlet! Whaddaya mean, varlet?

Sort of in between violet and scarlet, like your ragged costume. I thought we weren't having a masquerade.

We aren't. It's my best suit. Don't you like it?

Sure! It's really you.

Gee, thanks. Listen...

Hurry, there's all those people waiting...

That's what I'm trying to tell you. They've all gone. The banquet's over.

You... you mean, it's *too late for my speeches!*

Ah, yes.

But I've got twenty pages of jokes to go yet!

Never mind - no, don't cry, there's a good chap - can't stand soggy fanzines - there'll be other conventions.

There won't be another A-Con ?!

That's right. I knew you'd look on the bright side of it.

KEATS AND CHAPMAN attended a seminar in Adelaide on intergalactic frogs, and having nothing better to do when the auction of first-edition toads and cruddy tadzines came on, accepted an invitation to go for a drive through the hills with Rotsler and the Bangsunds. There was a lot of good-natured banter about the dullness of the seminar and the incompetence of its organizers, about waiting around for hours for the elevators (or lifts, as these Australians called them) and then finding that the hotel didn't even have any, about skinny-dipping in the pond with those luscious femfraugleins ('I don't know what you see in us,' said Sally, coyly, reminding the men that she was still there and had fantasies of her own), about the lecturer in applied amphibiology with no apparent sense of humour who seemed to speak only in webbed-footnotes - and about all the pleasant and mildly irritating things that go on at any such gathering.

It was a mild, slightly overcast sort of day, with the chance of snow or fog at Stirling, but there is always that chance at Stirling, even in high summer, and this day was in mid-winter, the seminar organizers having gone to some trouble to arrange this.

'If you look back,' said Bangsund, 'you can see the Mile End railway yards and other beauties of Adelaide.'

'You watch your bloody driving!' said Sally, then blushed, but Keats was pretending to be asleep and Chapman was apparently absorbed in the fine detail of the Renault's interior appointments, and Rotsler kindly assumed the look of a man who is used to bad language and heard everything.

'I never look back,' Rotsler said.

Assuming the look of a man who can easily concentrate on driving and talking at the same time, Bangsund said 'This little place up ahead is called Eagle On The Hill, and I've never been able to find out why.' He then lurched into a prepared speech, which Sally had heard before, about the possibility that it had something to do with the Latin word for church — ecclesia — ('Greek,' murmured Chapman), which was often corrupted in English place-names to 'eagles'.

'Actually,' said Rotsler, 'it really does have something to do with an eagle on a hill. Back in 1843 when Tom (later Sir Thomas) Fitch was opening up this area, laying the foundations for his ruthless rise to power as absolute dictator of the timber trade — and eventually, as you well know, Premier of South Australia five times, but that was after he had got into shipping and banking, of course, and thereby become respectable in the eyes of the *Buffalo* crowd (who had only arrived here three years before him — but, my! they were the First Settlers, and they really thought they were something special!) — one day, probably a day much like this, since it was about this time of year and there was fog and snow just over the hill, Fitch was out blazing a bit of a track with his friend Jack Norton (actually the Honourable John Eardley-Norton, though Fitch did not know that at the time, later Lord Thornbury), and suddenly Fitch caught sight of something, and he stopped what he was doing, and he said "Damn my eyes, Jack! if that's not an eagle over there on that hill!" Norton suggested that it might be nothing more than a trick of the light — perhaps a bird-shaped rock or something like that — but Fitch was insistent. "It's an eagle, dammit!" he said. By a pretty natural process that place became known as "Fitch's Eagle On The Hill", and that's all there is to it!'

For a moment there was silence, except for the well-mannered ticking of the Renault's clock, then Bangsund said 'You just made that up, Bill.' 'Why, sure I did!' said Rotsler, and chuckled. The three passengers in the back seat joined in the laughter, and from that moment on all five set about constructing an alternate ('Alternative,' murmured Keats) history of South Australia, largely based on the exploits and dirty deals of Fitch, Norton and a shadowy figure named Lord Garth. When they reached Hahndorf, they all adopted German accents and told anecdotes of the much revered and entirely fictitious Pastor Nitshke, who by faith alone almost succeeded in having South Australia annexed as a colony by Prussia. At Marble Hill, surveying the ruins of the old Governors' summer residence, their imagination soared as they vied with each other in explaining the origin of this strange and beautiful place.

'It's just too much!' said Bangsund, chuckling despite his urgent need for a gentlemen's toilet as the party headed back down the freeway. 'I never thought this seminar — what's it called again? — ' 'A-Con,' said Sally. 'would turn out to be such fun!' 'Your turn, I think,' said Keats to Chapman, and Chapman said 'From little A-Cons great hoaxes grow!' and wet his pants laughing, again.

FEAR AND LOATHING IN JETTY ROAD

Bray knew they meant to murder him before he had been in Glenelg three hours. With his inky fingers and his bitten nails, his manner cynical and nervous, anybody could tell he didn't belong - belong to the late winter sun, the cool Lamma wind off the sea, the holiday crowd. They came in by train from Victoria every five minutes, rocked down Jetty Road standing on the tops of the little local trams, stepped off in bewildered multitudes into fresh and glittering air...

Really now, where did the 16th Australian National Science Fiction Convention go wrong? Who is to blame? Allan Bray's name has been mentioned, and Leigh Edmonds' and Paul Stevens', even mine. But I think it was all the hotel's fault. Management kept on smiling at us, which was most disconcerting: had we lapsed into normality? They smiled at us, served up the most delectable food at the banquet, and invited us to come again. The ignominy of it! 'Ah, we love to see young people enjoying themselves,' said Mrs LeCornu, a director of the hotel. 'Madam,' I felt like saying, but didn't, 'we are not young people, but fans, and if you persist in smiling at us we shall be for ever humiliated in the eyes of world fandom. Don't you feel even the slightest urge to throw Kevin Dillon out, or to chide Lee Harding for making so much noise?' But Dillon had had a haircut, and Harding wasn't there. It was a strange convention altogether.

How are you enjoying this convention?

- Aw, so so.

What for you has been the high point of the convention so far?

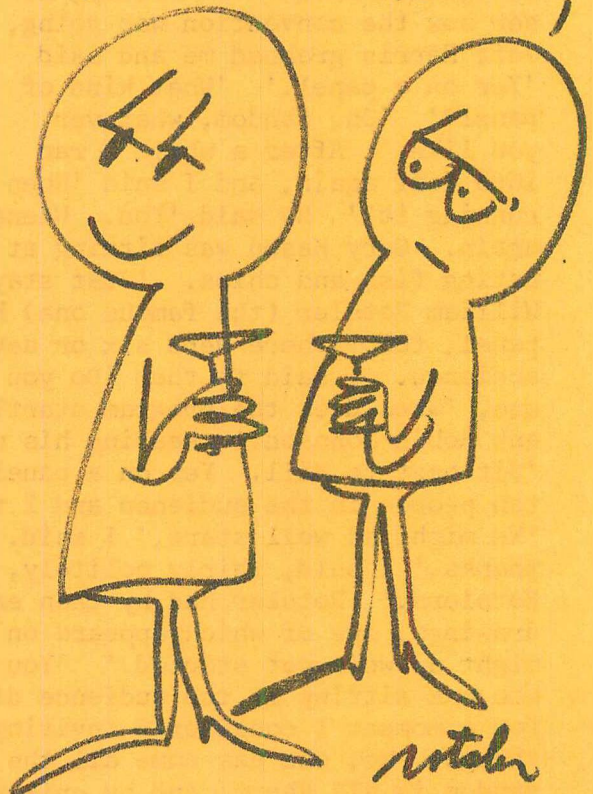
- The people, I guess. When does the program start?

Yesterday. It says so right here in the program book.

On Friday, just before 2, Bob Hotchkiss rang me at home. It was good talking to Bob again. I don't think Bob has spoken to me since the night, eighteen months ago, when he tried to make a date with Sally, not knowing she was married. Bob said 'Do you know where George Turner is? He's supposed to be on a panel in a few minutes.' I said 'No, he's not here. In fact, I haven't seen him since

ALLAN IS
A GREAT
WORRIER

IT'S A DIRTY
JOB BUT
SOMEONE HAS
TO DO IT



last August. Has he arrived?'
'Yes, someone saw him at the station this morning.'
'Well, if I know George, unless he's been run over or fallen off the tram, he'll be there in time for the panel,' I said, 'unless he hasn't been told he's on the panel.'

He had not been told. Kitty Vigo said later that she had enjoyed pretending to be George Turner on that panel, and felt she had fooled everyone, until she fluffed 'existentialism'. 'I know what it means, I think, but I can't pronounce it.' I don't think Kitty fooled anyone at all. She doesn't look one bit like George Turner, not even from a distance.

Someone said earlier today that there is a God, but that he is actually a Committee. That is true. God made the camel, did he not?

When I wandered down to the Hotel St Vincent about 4 on Friday, to see how the convention was going, Jeff Harris grabbed me and said 'Yer on a panel.' 'What kind of panel?' 'Oh, fandom, whatever you like.' After a while I ran into Jeff again, and I said 'When does this panel start? Who is running it?' He said 'You. Whenever you like,' and disappeared again. Gary Mason was sitting at what passed for the main table, eating fish and chips. 'Just stay there,' I said, 'Yer on a panel.' William Rotsler (the famous one) happened by, so I put him on the panel, too. There were six or seven people in what passed for the audience. I said to them 'Do you have any questions?' 'Yes,' said one, 'When does the program start?' 'I don't know,' I said, 'I'll ask Robin Johnson.' Hearing his name, Robin came over, and I said 'Sit next to Bill. Yer on a panel.' Before long there were nine or ten people in the audience and I thought we might as well start. 'We might as well start,' I said. 'Have a chip?' said Gary. 'No, thanks,' I said, fairly politely, 'I'll get grease all over me Rotslers.' Rotsler had by then executed thirty-four amusing little drawings, one of which appears on this page. 'Well,' I said, 'we might as well get started.' 'You already said that!' said Kay Bott, who was sitting in the audience directly in front of me, and giggled. For a moment I considered inviting Kay to join the panel, but then I thought, No, she has come all the way from Hobart to find out what fandom is all about, and by crikey, it is our *duty* to tell her!

WHO ELSE
IS ON
THIS
PANEL?

rotsler



'Okay,' I said, 'The chap on my right, who is Robert Silverberg in drag, is going to get this panel rolling by telling us a funny story about Robin Johnson, who in turn will tell a funny story about Gary Mason, and by then we should have an audience.'

'I don't have a funny story about Robin,' said Rotsler, 'but he is just now going to find out that he commissioned a kangaroo in a spacesuit from Don Simpson, and I saw it, and Don only had to put the helmet on, and I guess he couldn't find a helmet to fit. He was supposed to get it to me in time for me to bring it down here for Robin. But he's done the most beautiful kangaroo in a spacesuit I've ever seen. It's just lovely. So you've got that coming just as soon as he gets the helmet on it, Robin.'

And Bill went on to talk about the work Don Simpson does, and about a whole lot of other fascinating things, and suddenly we had a panel and an audience and a program and a convention.

Here comes a likely-looking gentleman. Where do you come from, sir?

- I'm the Star Trek Fan Club president...

Take that cigarette out of your mouth while you're talking to me!

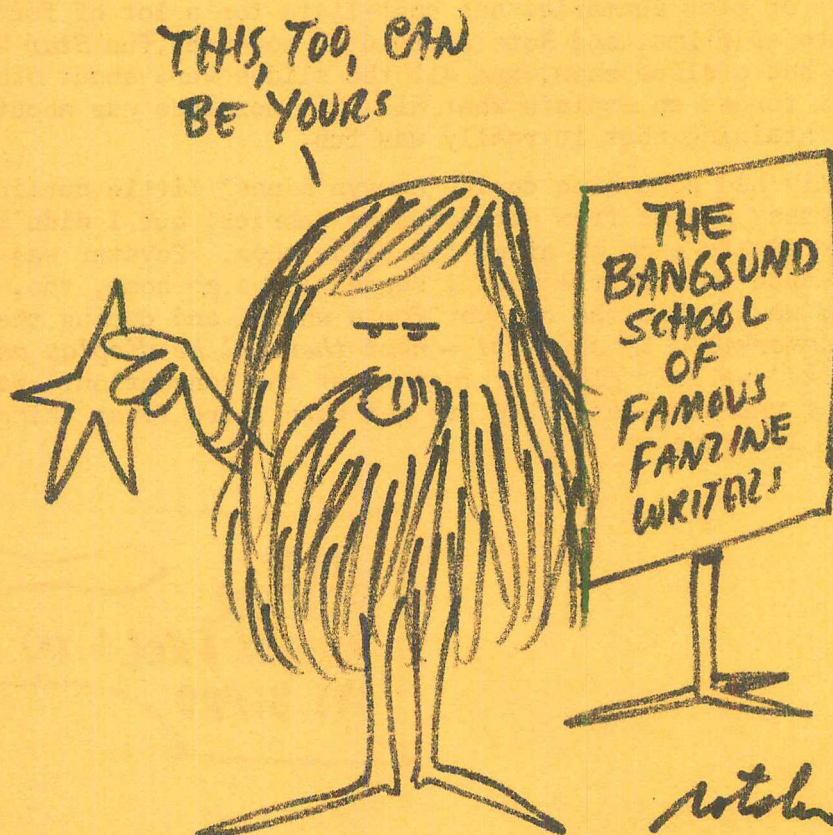
Where from, sir?

- Adelaide.

All the way from Adelaide! Fantastic! How are you enjoying this convention?

- It's okay.

But it wasn't okay. I can sit and listen to Bill Rotsler and watch him draw flattering pictures of me until the cows come home, but I didn't think we should use up our Guest of Honour entirely in one session, so I wound up the panel after an hour or so - and nothing more happened!



Foyster flew in about 6 from Cleve. ('You would know Cleve, of course.' 'Of course. The National Trust has a branch there. It meets in an old cartmill factory.' John doesn't like stfnal puns, I remembered too late.) He was very cheerful, and led a bunch of us off for dinner at the local Yugoslav charcoal grill joint. 'No reservation, sir?' 'Ah, no.' 'How many in the party, sir?' 'Ten.' So they pushed two tables together, and somehow the ten of us crammed in to room-for-six. The cevapcici was okay. Rotsler, Turner and Sally seemed to be having a fine conversation, but Foyster got stuck between me and Handfield at the other end of the tables, so he didn't have much fun.

The Official Opening and Introduction of the Guest of Honour was scheduled for 7, so we hurried back, more or less. Nothing was happening — just people standing round talking. At 7.30 there was supposed to be a film panel, but at 7.30 we were all upstairs watching television. The crew from *This Day Tonight* had been to the hotel earlier in the day, interviewing fans and toy frogs, shooting close-ups of earnest young beards and kinky old pulp covers, and doing all the special-effects stuff they only get a chance to try out when UFO nuts or SF freaks appear in their program. It was pretty awful.

While it was going on, I thought This is crazy! Here we are, watching Rotsler on telly when we could be talking to him in person — holding up the convention while we watch some free publicity for what we're not actually doing right now! I made a mental note to ask Marshall McLuhan or Daniel Boorstin about this some time.

Eventually we reassembled downstairs, where Paul Stevens read out a lot of plot summaries and cast-lists for a lot of forthcoming tenth-rate sf films, and Rotsler told us how much fun *Star Wars* was. Then we had a slide show, and all the slides were about *Star Wars*, so Bill was forced to explain what all this nonsense was about, while manfully maintaining that it really was fun.

Sally had gone home during Mervyn Binns' little outline history of fantasy movies from Herodotus to Kubrick, but I didn't know that until the lights came on after the slide show. Foyster was drooping, but he cheered up a little when I suggested we go home, too. Back at Mile End we watched the cricket for a while, and during the commercials (*commercials in cricket! — next there'll be display ads in the prayer book!*) we said gloomy things about the convention. We decided, somewhat unenthusiastically, to get down there first thing in the morning and liberate it.



AUSTRALIA IS A NICE
PLACE BUT THEY HAVE
STRANGE HABITS



FANDOM'S DUFF LIONISED AT A-CON 7

— *The Advertiser*, Saturday 30 July, page 3 headline

There didn't seem to be anything to liberate when we got there. 'Everyone's upstairs playing Dungeons and Dragons,' someone said. 'But they were doing that all day yesterday!' I said. 'Yair, but there's more of 'em now.' *Drag on, O dung eons!* I muttered to myself.

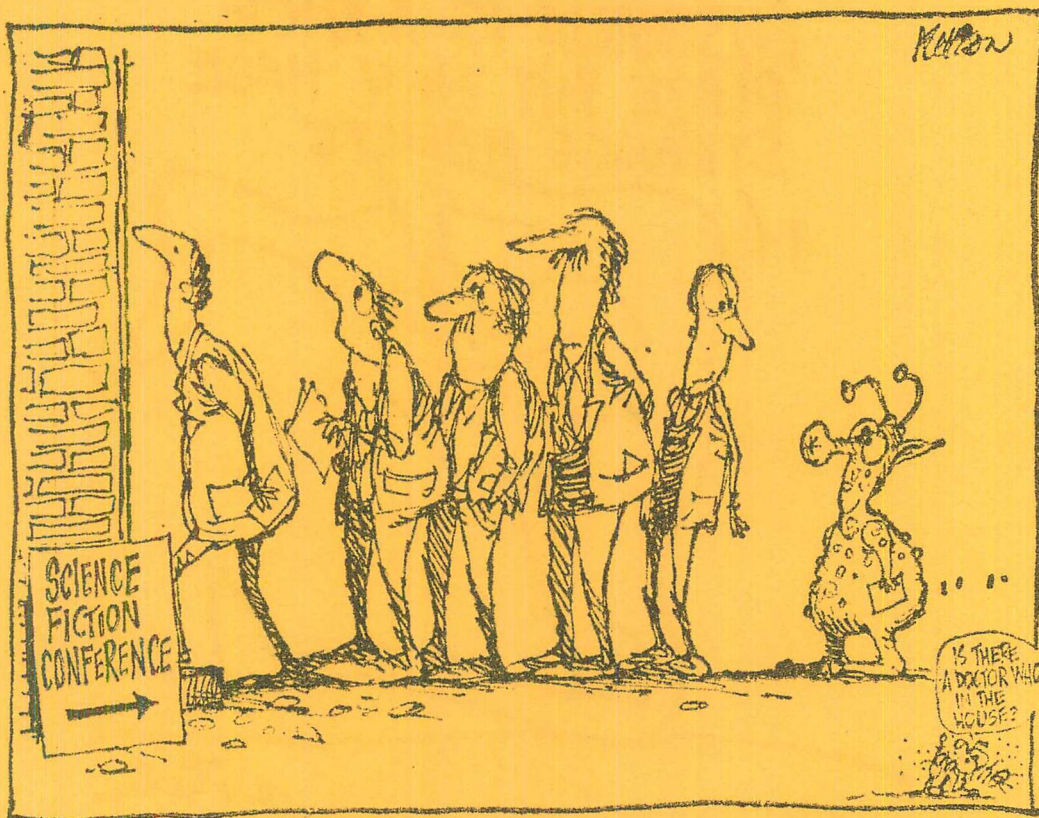
John and I walked out along the jetty. This is where Queen Elizabeth landed earlier this year, and roughly where Governor Hindmarsh stepped off the *Buffalo* back in 1836. (He didn't like the place much, and wanted to found Great Britain's newest colony across the peninsula near Victor Harbor, but he was outvoted. In those days it was sometimes possible to outvote a Governor in Australia.) I tried out my 'founding fathers didn't know whether they were coming or going, that's why they called it Glenelg' joke on John. He didn't like it.

We stood around in the sun for a while. I talked to James Styles and Roman Orszanski for a while. I yawned a bit, not being used to this early rising on Saturdays. Then I noticed that it was noon by the Town Hall clock (built 1875-7, Edmund Wright architect, tower and facia worthy of preservation), so I wandered in to the pub for breakfast. I got my cassette recorder out, and for the next hour or two interviewed people, just for the hell of it.

And here is the chairman, Mr Allan Bray. How are you enjoying this convention?

— I'm loving it! Would you like to ask me what the high point is for me so far?

I was about to ask you that, yes.



Above: Atchison's cartoon, p.5, *The Advertiser*, 30 July. Note (a) genial attitude to subject, (b) automatic assumption that women aren't involved.

SUNDAY (31st). 7 P.M.
THE UPRISE OF
ANTICHRIST
AND THE BATTLE OF
ARMAGEDDON
 at
CHRISTADELPHIAN HALL
521 GOODWOOD RD.,
COL. LIGHT GARDENS.

— The extremely large number of willing workers assisting the chairman in running the convention.

Oh, good. Where's it being held? Never mind. Did you know that the Christadelphians are trying to upstage us?

— No. How?

Have a look at their program for tomorrow night in this morning's paper: nice big show they've got. Hullo, here's Paul Day, screwing a box. Why are you screwing that box, Paul?

— I'm not going to answer that, John.

It's a speaker box. You're taking it apart to see where all that sound comes from, aren't you?

And so on. It passed the time. Also I learnt a bit. I got talking to Ian Penhall from Canberra, a bloke I first met at the hostel when I moved there in 1972. He was at Aussiecon and Bofcon, and maybe other conventions, and I wondered why he

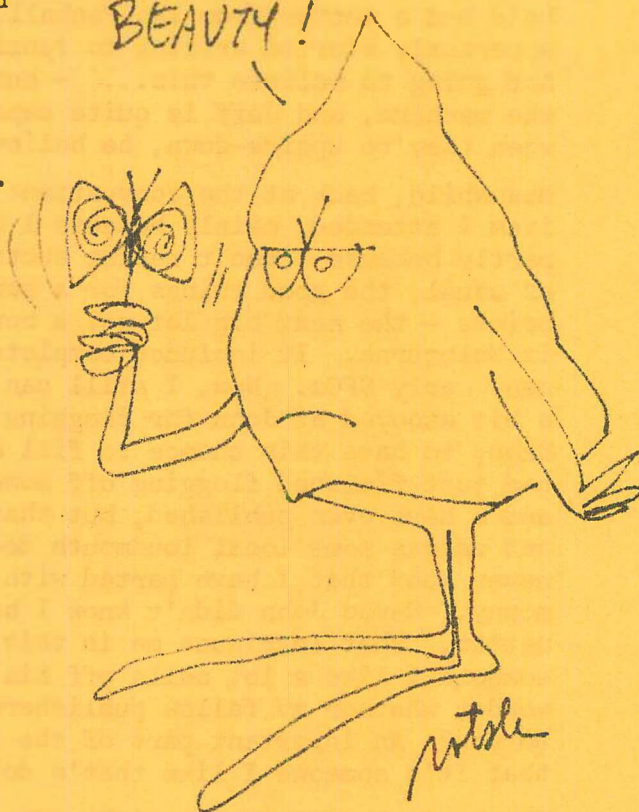
keeps on coming to them, because he is a quiet sort of bloke, a bit shy, like a lot of other people you see at conventions and never actually talk to, so I asked him. He said 'I come to conventions so I can listen to people talking about science fiction — especially George Turner.'

Well, it takes all kinds, I guess.

And having made that obligatory fannish-sarcosmic remark, I invite Australian convention organizers to bear Ian's answer in mind when they are thinking about programming. There really are people that come to conventions because they are interested in science fiction, and just because you and I and he and she have listened to all the panels we ever want to hear on where sf is at, where it's been and where it's heading, doesn't mean no-one is interested. Ian, for one, and I think he is pretty representative of a lot of folk at Australian conventions these days, is interested in precisely this kind of discussion. He wants to know what other people think of the writers he likes and the writers he dislikes. His background, he confessed (and I pretended that it was something I didn't envy at all), is scientific, not literary. He enjoys sf for its own sake, and for the ideas he sees being worked out in it, and he is interested to know how the people with a literary background approach and evaluate sf — perhaps to explain why he liked this book without quite understanding it, perhaps to help him enjoy that book that everyone seems to be making a fuss about that he has never been able to get in to.

Ian said that, despite what had been said the previous day, he still didn't understand what fanzines were about — and that really made me feel rotten. I said 'Look, the way I think about fanzines is this. Here we are, sitting over a carafe of passable white at a convention, talking about science fiction and fandom. I may not see you to talk to for a year or so after this is over. So I publish a fanzine and talk to you that way. Jack Speer once called fanzines "the continuing conversation", and that's more or less the way I think of them.' And we talked a bit more about fanzines, and I realized that Ian still didn't understand why I bothered. More importantly, I realized that he didn't understand why I published fanzines that don't actually say anything about science fiction. I tried to tell him that that was just me: that I'm interested in a lot more than sf, and that I like to keep up with other people who share my basic background in sf but

TELL ME THE
SECRET OF YOUR
BEAUTY!



who, like me, are interested in things other than science fiction. I didn't think I'd explained very well at all, but maybe I had: yesterday (27 August), just as I had finished the last page, Jeff Harris called in, and one of the things he had to tell me was that he'd had a letter from Ian Penhall, asking for my address. Ian has apparently started writing to fanzines. 'Jeff,' I said, 'you're not going to believe this...' - but since the stencil was still in the machine, and Jeff is quite capable of reading stencils, even when they're upside-down, he believed me.

Meanwhile, back at the convention: The auction was the next program item I attended, mainly because I had a vested interest in this one, partly because I can't resist auctions. After my stuff had gone - as usual, the good things for a song, the rubbish for absurdly high prices - the next big lot was a box of old fanzines from John Julian in Melbourne. It included complete runs of ASFR and Scythrop, and many early SFCs. Now, I still can't quite explain this, but I was a bit annoyed at John for flogging off my old fanzines (though I was happy to have this chance to fill some gaps in my files). I know I had just finished flogging off some of the finest fanzines Fans X, Y and Z have ever published, but that's different: they live overseas, and unless some local loudmouth does the dirty on me, they should never know that I have parted with their love-children for mere money. Maybe John didn't know I had moved to Adelaide. It doesn't matter. What intrigues me is this feeling of annoyance I get when someone I like a lot sells off his copies of my fanzines, and I wonder whether my fellow publishers out there get the same feeling. Do you? An important part of the feeling seems to come from knowing that it's someone I like that's doing the selling.

The banquet on Saturday night was splendid, as I've already said. Sally had some delightful Americans sitting next to her, a couple from Canberra; I had a delightful young lady named Jenny sitting next to me, from Melbourne, who apparently had never encountered fandom before, but she had seen the convention advertised somewhere and had decided to come, for the hell of it. Opposite us was a bloke who looked like Paul Hogan. (And I'm not about to explain to overseas readers who Paul Hogan is, because I'm not in the mood just now to write five thousand words about The Ocker Phenomenon In Contemporary Australian Culture. For the moment, let's just say that Hogan appears in cigarette commercials, and for a few years now has compered variety shows on television, usually dressed in football shorts.) This character who looked like Paul Hogan was dressed in black tie and tails, and football shorts. In the second-last mailing of ANZAPA I referred to this bloke as 'one of our more enthusiastic young waitlisters', and in a letter he objected a bit to this description. I don't blame him, now. Mark Lawrence is young, but not as young as the schoolboy I imagined him to be, not at all. He was making indecent proposals to Jenny all night, as far as I could make out, and Jenny was treating him like an equal, rather than a pubescent clod. Maybe Mark is a prototype of the New Fan, but I doubt it. I think the first qualification for male fans, after a cosmic intellect, of course (that will never change), will continue to be vast introspection, characterized notably by an absolute dread of female ladies. Maybe, deep down, Mark aspires to this condition, but for the moment he's not like that at all. 'Dishy', I think was

my wife's rather vulgar description of him. I've only ever heard her use that word about a fan once before, and he's in Melbourne, too, unless he decided to stay in China. (Dunno what she sees in either of them, actually, apart from a cosmic mind.)

After the banquet I got up and handed out a few awards for things, my third time round as toastperson, and again I forgot to give my Speech. I guess I just get carried away by the excitement of it all, and the sheer honour of being toastperson, and I forget entirely to present my off-the-cuff considered remarks about the State Of Fandom and Certain Things that have Come to my Attention lately that Bode No Good for the Future Of Science Fiction And All It Stands For. (But this time, I am happy to say, Lee Harding was able to present my speech, at considerable length, in Melbourne the following weekend.)

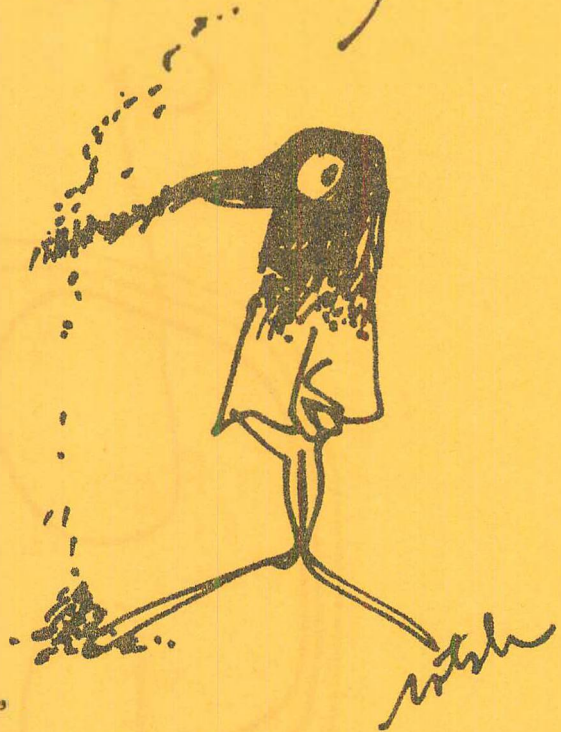
One of the awards went to Philippa Maddern (or maybe that should be Phillipa, but everyone calls her Pip), a special committee award for her story 'The Ins and Outs of the Hadhya City State'. Phillapa (that's how Leigh Edmonds spells it, and he has met her) wasn't at the convention, so Kitty Vigo came up to the table to collect the award on her behalf, and in a simple but moving expression of gratitude and all the usual sentiments bandied about on such occasions, Kitty said 'Pip is delighted.' *And Barkis is willin'!* said someone, loudly, from the table (listening again to the tape, it sounds like me), an irrelevant comment that sparked off considerable applause. I had forgotten that Adelaide is a veritable hotbed of Dickens fandom.

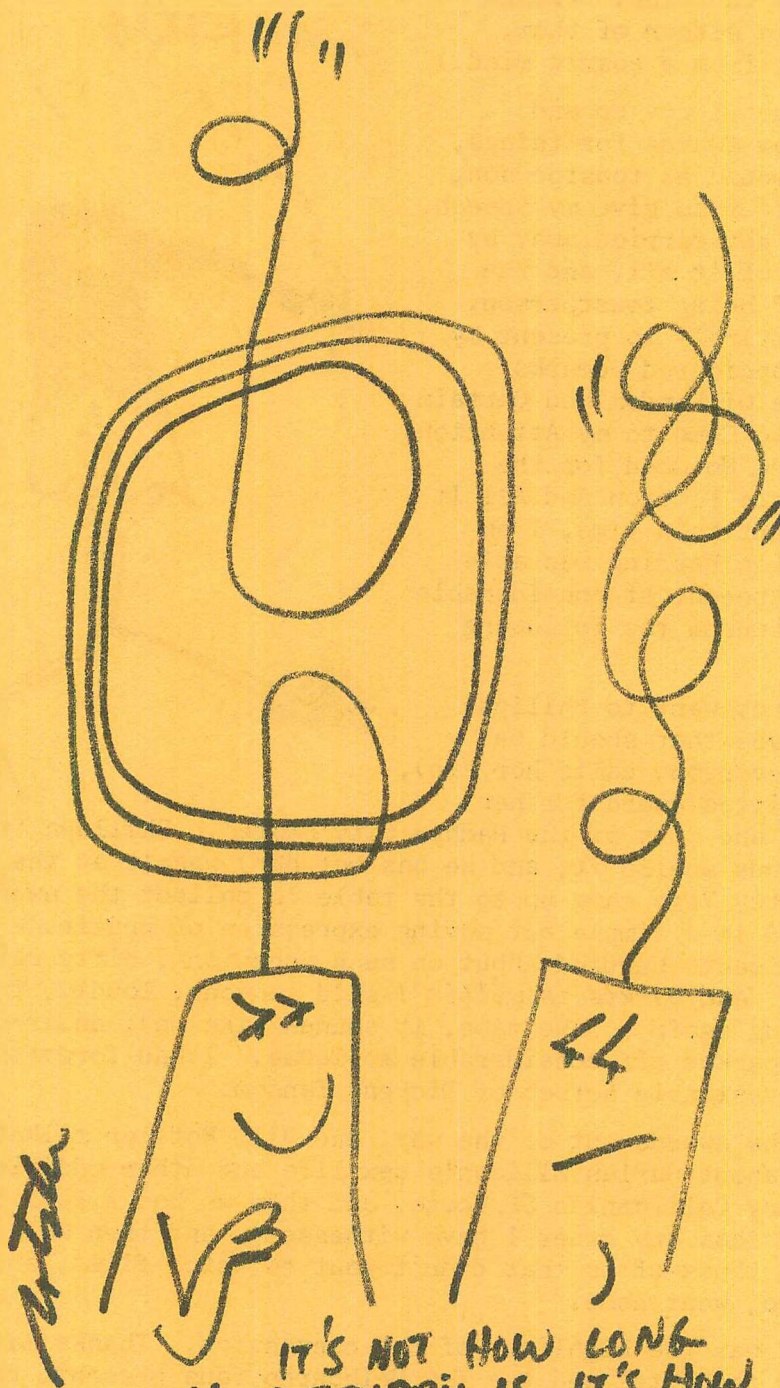
Well, we got the awards out of the way, and Bill Rotsler talked for about an hour about Harlan Ellison's sex life and other oddities of the Contemporary Californian SF Scene, and then we had a Paul Stevens Show (no worse than any other I have witnessed), and then we went home. I mean, those of us that didn't want to watch films, and had a home to go to, went home.

Saturday night was the highlight of the convention. Thanks mainly to Rotsler and the hotel and the few Melbourne fans present, this was when the convention came alive, for me anyway. Towards midnight I decided that this was one of the best conventions I'd ever attended, and so it remains in my memory.

The rest — Sunday's program, spending the best part of two days in Rotsler's inimitable company (during which, at Jimmy Deane's pub at Norwood, he drew the above cartoon on a beer mat for me), and so on — may rest in silence for now. The spirit of the occasion I have attempted to convey in the K&C story that started this issue.

I'VE GOT TO
GIVE UP
SMOKING





IT'S NOT HOW LONG
YOUR TENDRIL IS, IT'S HOW
YOU USE IT