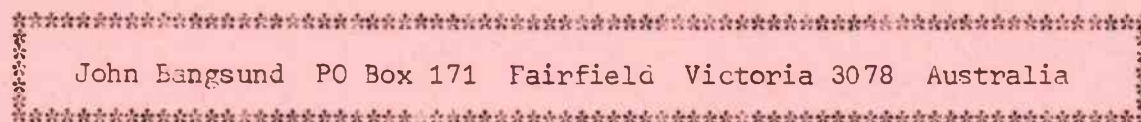


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*The Sun Shines Bright*, it says here in a book I have come to trust, is one of the best films John Ford ever made. So why am I here, typing this stencil instead of watching it? Maybe - no, it's not because I'm a Londoner - maybe it's because I've watched enough television for one night. In fact, you might very well put it down to that. I enjoyed Robert Hardy in the rather frothy comedy we saw earlier tonight, and I enjoyed Lee Van Cleef in the stupid Western I just turned off, and after that sort of exposure to the idiot box I reckon I need a break. It wouldn't matter much if Edgar Rice Burroughs himself appeared next in his own film of *The Jewels of Opar* - at this point I need a rest. And what better rest than composing a fanzine on stencil?

[illegible]

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

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25 April Anzac Day in these parts. Celebrating the, um, well marking the inglorious defeat of the combined Australian and New Zealand forces at Gallipoli in 1915. That day in 1915, we have been told in school, and since we left school, in the media, marked our country's initiation into nationhood. Rubbish. We are not yet a nation. But if we ever went close to becoming a nation it was on 11 November 1975. I say 'if' because I am not sure yet how that event will ultimately turn out. Equally, I don't know how future historians will treat it. But I think we went awfully close to becoming a nation on that day, however far we have drifted back to being colonies of the UK, the USA and Japan since.

There is a note towards the end of Percy Trezise's book about North Queensland (a book I haven't read yet: I just glanced at a few pages yesterday) that suggests that we modern Australians are rapidly going the same way as the Aboriginal Australians. One day, not too far in the future, we will look at this land we thought was ours and know we have lost it for ever. I only have to think of the trips I made twenty years ago, driving through the more remote parts of Victoria, full at heart, awe-struck at the sheer beauty and incomprehensible wonder and grandeur of this amazing country we've fetched up in, and then think how much such a journey would cost today, at today's petrol prices, to realize that for most of us our country is beyond our means.

Twenty years ago I used often to go motoring around Victoria. I had some adventures. I have vivid memories. At times I went beyond the state boundary, up into Queensland once, in 1963, at a time when I was discovering science fiction, too, and often over into South Australia.



I'm a bit too old these days, I think, to sleep on the back seat of a car. Maybe not: I just haven't tried it for a long time. There was a night at Swift's Creek, in Gippsland, south of Omeo, when I felt sure the wind would turn the car over, the way it was rocking, and yet I slept. There was a late afternoon near Port Campbell, when I drove off the road into the scrub and got bogged, and got out again by building a bridge across the sand: for some reason the place was littered with the tops of 44-gallon drums, and I built a bridge for the car with those tops, and got out. I had not then heard of John W. Campbell, but I think he would have been proud of me. And there were other windy nights at Peterborough, just west of Port Campbell, where I used to go as often as I could, and often parked the car on the headland, the great breakers from the Southern Ocean crashing at the base of the cliffs below me, and yet I slept. In 1966 (after meeting Brian Richards at Fremantle) I went out of my way to see Cape Leeuwin, at the bottom left of Western Australia. Doing that, I ran late to Albany, found my motel room let to someone else, and slept the night in a grotty waterside hotel. In 1963 my Uncle Arthur (who died a few weeks ago, and I hadn't seen him since then) invited me to come with him one Saturday morning to Kingaroy, from Jandowie, where I was staying with his daughter. The journey seemed endless. Mile upon mile of tall trees and winding unsurfaced roads. We pulled up outside a milk bar, had a milk-shake, walked round the block, and drove back to Jandowie. Just so I could say I'd been as far north as Kingaroy - I think that was Uncle Arthur's idea - certainly there was absolutely no other reason for going there. Kingaroy? Good heavens! In 1975 I flew to Townsville from Canberra. I don't have a map to hand, but I think Kingaroy is less than half-way from Canberra to Townsville. The thing is that I got to Kingaroy by car, and however boring I might have made it sound, the trip was just wonderful.

In 1958 I had a girlfriend in Berwick, which was then a country town and is now a sort of suburb of Dandenong. I was a theological student, at Glen Iris. I didn't drive a car in those days: I had a motorbike. I was rather proud of my bike. I'd started out, in 1957, with a 1932 BSA 350cc single-cylinder sloper (with tank-mounted hand gear-change), and advanced fairly quickly to a 1948 BSA 500cc twin-cylinder. Then in 1958 my mother and father bought me a gleaming new 600cc twin-cylinder Norton - the loveliest bike I ever rode (there were three or four after that, before I settled down and bought a car). Often, on the long cold trip from Berwick to Glen Iris, I fell asleep on the bike. My fellow motorcyclists, past and present, will confirm that this happens. I survived, somehow. The intersection at Springvale, now a trial in daylight for the motorist, was where I usually woke up. One night I rode cross-country from Berwick to Upwey, where I went to live after I'd left college, and I turned a bend in the road, and there was a long, low building, for what purpose built I'm still not sure, but its roof was gleaming silver in the moonlight, and I just had to stop and feast my eyes and mind on it. In my memory it's like yesterday, it's so clear. A long galvanized-iron roof, shining in the moonlight, and all around the dark shapes of hills and trees, and the sweet cold scent of the Australian bush at midnight.

There were other times, almost as impressive, over many years. Somehow I've lost touch with that Australia. It's an Australia you won't find in the tourist brochures, and I wonder whether it's still there.

7 May Rest in peace, Bobby Sands.

About twenty-four years ago, when I was young and silly (as distinct from what I am now: old and silly) and by way of embarking on a career as a minister of religion, I preached a sermon one Sunday night on a text from J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. I was a little ahead of my time, perhaps, to be taking a text from Salinger instead of the more conventional gospels in 1957, but I don't think I was ahead of my congregation: the Berwick Church of Christ had come to expect the unexpected from its young student ministers, and (I really believe, looking back) enjoyed it. One week contemporary American fiction, next week -- well, who knows? but it's bound to be interesting one way or another. There was always the chance even of striking a good harrowing night of old-fashioned fire and brimstone -- but not when I was preaching. (I use the term loosely. I rarely preached as such. Mostly I read out essays. I have always needed a script when speaking in public. There are some say I should have one at all times.)

I do not have a copy of Mr Salinger's impressive little book on my shelves these days, so I can't give you an exact quote, but my sermon went along the lines of 'Dying for a cause is nothing compared with living for a cause.' I believed that then, and believe it now. I did not stop then to argue whether Jesus had died for a cause, nor, if he had, whether that had any bearing on my argument in general.

I do stop now, to wonder about Bobby Sands, and about me, and about what it really takes to change things.

I can't recall what eventually happened to Holden Caulfield (I think that was his name -- the central character in Salinger's novel). Is it possible that in 1981 he would applaud the British Prime Minister's last word on the subject of Bobby Sands? Mrs Thatcher, referring to the demands of the IRA prisoners that they be treated as political prisoners, not common criminals, for which principle Sands died, said 'A crime is a crime is a crime.'

*There's a wonderful family named Stein:  
There's Gert and there's Ep and there's Ein.  
Gert's poems are bunk,  
Ep's statues are junk,  
And nobody understands Ein.*

And here is Mrs Thatcher paraphrasing Gert to prove that she never listened to a word that Ein ever said.

The Melbourne Age -- or to be exact, its editor, Michael Davie -- said yesterday that the ultimate answer to the question posed by Bobby Sands must be the reunification of Ireland. I have never before seen an Australian newspaper discuss the problems of Ireland in anything like an informed way. To see the Age doing just that, and coming to the only logical answer, took my breath away. Even the *Irish Times*, three years ago when I last read it regularly, tended to treat unification as a lost cause and a bit of a joke.

So there you are, Bobby, your living and dying a subject of serious concern in at least one Australian newspaper this week. And today your death the subject of a notice in that same newspaper signed by most Labor members of the Victorian Parliament. And I've just written a page about you. And still I wonder.



And life, for lack of a better word, goes on. But where? — that's the question. Or (closer to the question) how? One answer I reject is: in the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, by any means possible. That castrated institution has been much in the news in recent weeks by virtue of its being the theatre in which our unlovely Prime Minister has strutted his most recent despicable hour. Among other things, he plans to do away with 17000 public servants. Well, why not? There are quite probably that many who don't actually do anything in particular for a living.

There are at least two reasons why not. For a start, most of those 17000 would probably prefer to be doing something worthwhile with their lives. But quite apart from that, the Government's brilliant strategy is not to fill positions as they fall vacant, no matter how important those positions may be, or for that matter unimportant. The Australian Government Publishing Service, for example (an example of only middling importance, and therefore fairly typical), has work enough to keep five editors fully occupied, and it has one editor — the others have left and not been replaced. But, hell, who needs editors? Who needs government publications? Who needs to know what government is doing? Let's get out there in the market and sell and make this country great! That's what it's all about, isn't it? Like Milton Friedman said, seen him on the telly only the other night, it's what it's all about. The only thing is, no-one actually asked him whether 17000 public servants are a market.

I admired Milton Friedman's candour (and loathed his principles even more) when he said that his was the ideal position to be in: an elderly tenured academic subsidized by government. If he argues against himself like that, what on earth are we to think of his general argument?

Or to put it in rather more direct terms: If Bobby Sands felt it necessary to die for his cause, and Milton Friedman quite happily takes advantage of all he renounces to further his cause, where does that leave you and me?

Up shit creek, that's where. Old Australian saying, pardon me. No wonder Salinger hasn't written anything for years now. Not that I'm concerned all that much about Salinger. I just wonder how Holden Caulfield is making out.

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Rudeness and cruelty are always connected, I feel. Don't expect anything good from a rude man. It doesn't matter in what field the boor is, politics or art. No matter where, he always tries to become a dictator, a tyrant. He tries to oppress everyone. And the result, as a rule, is very bad. What galls me is that these sadists always have fans and followers — and sincere ones at that.

*Dmitri Shostakovich: Memoirs*

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I'm not sure what to make of these Memoirs of Shostakovich. My limited knowledge of Russian literature and politics urges me to say Yes, yes, this is how it was. My love for Shostakovich's music urges me equally to say No, he couldn't have been like that — just a man! At Aussiecon in 1975 Leigh Edmonds and I (on-stage) toasted the memory of Shostakovich, who had just died. The music lives, gloriously. The man lives, too, but he'll take a little getting used to. So far I like him.

23 June One of the things I didn't quite have time to get used to when

I lived in Canberra was that you never know who you are likely to run into in that town. There was the memorable night, for example, at the Canberra Airport when I realized (too late, alas, to say anything even modestly nasty to him) that I had just walked past Doug Anthony - then second or third most senior member of the Opposition (whether second or third was a matter of some rancour between him and the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party at the time) - now, of course, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia - and I wondered afterwards what I would have said to him if I had noticed him. He struck me as being a smallish kind of man, not much more than my height, but I have since seen him on TV, and he is not small at all. Even, I guess, the second or third most important member of the Opposition must slump a bit when he's dog-tired and dying to get out of Canberra for a long weekend.

And there was a Saturday afternoon at the Wello - immediate translation for foreigners, i.e. everyone reading this, with the possible exception of Leigh and Valma, the Hotel Wellington at Manuka - when Sally and I were having drinks with a friend of a friend from Melbourne, who had just popped off to the toilet or something, and I was looking idly about, and I said to Sally, nodding towards a littlish-oldish man by himself on a stool at the bar, 'You could swear almost that that bloke was John Gorton, couldn't you?' Sally looked at him, looked at me, looked at her drink, and said 'That's John Gorton.'

Very sophisticated, my wife. Never turned a hair. Me, I was just lost in the wonder of being in the same pub as the last-Prime-Minister-but-one, and he all by himself with his Saturday-afternoon drink. Please don't mistake me: I believe that Sir John Gorton is as straightforward and down-to-earth as any Australian ever was. And I do appreciate that some of his policies and actions in government were quite enlightened. But he was Prime Minister. He did keep us in Viet Nam.

Why - I don't think the thought articulated itself like this at the time, but it was there - why isn't he at home, surrounded by security men, working on his memoirs? What is a very recent Prime Minister of Australia doing, sipping a quiet beer by himself on a Saturday afternoon at the Wello?

Partly, I think, the reason is that John Gorton was and is a pretty ordinary, rather special, old-fashioned kind of Australian, who just does that kind of thing. I wish I had gone over to John Gorton that day and said 'Sir, I would like to shake your hand and buy you a drink and ask you why you chose not to be a member of the Labor Party.'

During the 1975 election campaign, Gorton stood as an independent candidate for the Senate. He had no hope in Canberra. There would be one Liberal Senator and one Labor, everyone knew that, but he stood, independent, and he said that every true Australian, who believed that the Australian Constitution meant that the party elected to govern should govern, would vote Labor, and maybe he was right. Labor just ran short of true Australians at that election. And 'Jolly John', as he was known to some ('Bungles' to others), was out of the Parliament. He got his knighthood soon after, and, I guess, has gone on quietly drinking at the Wello since. Today I heard he'd had a heart attack, and I was moved, as if I knew him. As if I'd once shaken his hand.



*Close enough to 1 July* This issue isn't working out. It's not the jolly, light-hearted yet thoughtful sort of thing that I like to publish. Even the words I've chosen to use in places are wrong, I noticed, re-reading the stencils the other day. It's probably just a reflection of the way I feel, that nothing much is working out at the moment.

When I finished the last stencil I went on and scribbled some more stuff about politicians and people I'd met and so on, and what I wrote doesn't seem terribly coherent now, but I'll type it up in a while, mainly because there's some autobiographical stuff I might be interested in thinking about some other time, partly because I would have done it on stencil that night anyway if my eyes hadn't got tired. (I still haven't been able to get my typewriter into a position where I can use it comfortably day or night — not that I've been using it much at all lately. Poor old thing needs a service, too, or more likely a thorough overhaul, like most of the machinery in this house, and the car, and me.)

One thing that did go right — no, I shouldn't put it like that, because a lot of things have been going right and working out lately, and I shouldn't exaggerate — so let's make that one of the many things that have been most pleasant and rewarding lately, okay? — was meeting Joyce Scrivner and Denny Lien. Another was meeting Frank Herbert, but he'll keep. (And Mrs Herbert, whose name I've forgotten already, dammit! A most interesting, lovely lady. Hold on — Beverley, was it? I'll ask Mervyn Binns some time. He saw most of them in Melbourne.)

Denny I met in 1975, I swear it. The only thing is he's grown since then, and is now at least a foot taller and some degrees more reserved than he was then. Maybe I didn't meet him close enough in 1975. He and Joyce came here for dinner on 4 June, and I had a great time. Joyce came back the next afternoon, so either she's awfully dedicated (she came back to get some of my old fanzines from me) or she had a passable time too. She was supposed to be here shortly after lunch, but when I rang she said she had a pretty bad headache, and I said it probably came from the same bottle as mine. A '76 Penfolds Koonunga Hill claret, as I recall, and every drop worth getting a headache for. So was the conversation, if that was the cause. We did talk on, and it was great. On Friday night I delivered Joyce to the Handfield-Ashby-Mangiamele household, just down the road in Northcote's Aboriginal quarter (yes, do ask me about that some time), and she gave me a great big sisterly hug and kiss that I shall treasure in memory. Or was it a great big fannish hug and kiss? I guess it was that, too, but reserved chaps like Denny and me aren't all that demonstrative. With each other, I mean: even reserved, contemplative, introspective, quiet, peace-loving, gentle-going blokes like Denny and me have been known to become pretty demonstrative with ladies like Joyce, bless her.

It's an indication of how the night with Denny and Joyce went that they told us fairly early that Ed Cagle had died, and there was so much else said that I forgot entirely until I got a postcard from Dave Locke and Jackie Causgrove. Luckily, the postcard was held up by a postal strike here until after Denny and Joyce and Frank and Beverley and Joseph had gone. There was time then to grieve, which I did. I'm sort of glad I never met Ed. The grief is just as deep as if I had a face and voice to concentrate it on, but less complicated, a pure sense of loss.





local native home cooking and so on was the best thing he'd experienced on this trip. The fact that Bob has a daughter named Sally had nothing to do with it. I can tell you that he was all but overcome by that afternoon here.

And there, if you'll pardon my saying so, lies a message for us all. We are so keen to do the best by our overseas visitors that we sometimes do the wrong thing entirely. We get them out here and imprison them in the best hotel we can find, and that's all wrong. Sure, give these people privacy, somewhere (however aseptic) they can call their own, but *do* show them how we live in these parts, because that's the only special thing we have to offer them. As a mere interstate visitor, I can say that I will treasure the memory of Lyn and Bob Smith's couch, and Peter Darling's sister's bed, long after I have forgotten the convention hotels I have stayed in in Sydney. I would even bet that Ursula LeGuin, Bill Rotsler and Vonda McIntyre, to name just the first three distinguished guests that spring to mind, will never forget the lumpy beds and good times they experienced at our place. Not because it was our place, but because they came here to meet Australian fans and they met us and shared our lives, right down to who gets to use the bathroom next and who gets cranky first early in the morning and late at night, and that's what it's all about.

Michael, in his quietly percipient sort of way, goes on to say nice things about Sally, 'but John seemed a little under the weather. I wasn't sure whether this was due to the flu, over indulgence the night before or just his usual melancholia.' And to that I say that we must watch this O'Brien chap: to you and me he might appear to be just the old friend Mike, bar-tender extraordinaire, hotelier-in-training and unobservant, kindly TasFan, invariably sociable, who pops up every so often at conventions in an unobtrusive, polite kind of way, and smiles and makes you feel good, and so he is, but he is obviously more than that. For a start, he's got me tabbed. I guess he's used to people under the weather, over-indulgers-the-night-before and so on. Up to a point that describes me on that day. I had the flu, too, but I wasn't sure whether my misery that day was entirely the flu's fault. But what's this about my 'usual melancholia'? I thought I'd kept that a fairly close secret, but here's young O'Brien, fresh up from the Antarctic, and he picks it!

Actually, I'm not sure exactly what my 'usual melancholia' is, but I know I come down with it badly every winter, and in recent years winter has come earlier and gone later than ever. Maybe it's just to do with getting old. Even Foyster has been looking melancholy now and then lately, and he's younger than me, so that's probably it. The old black bile gets to all of us sooner or later — even those of us who don't smoke.

Sally and I have had a particularly blackbilious kind of winter this year, and it started about Easter, when even in Melbourne the sun was still shining regularly, the birds chirping and so on, and no sign of fog on the Renault's windscreen, only in our heads. We spent a fair bit of time deciding whether we wanted to go on living with each other, and what else we wanted to do with our lives, that kind of thing, and on the whole we weren't much fun to be with. We had endless bouts of flu and ran up horrendous bills for medical and paramedical services, to the point where we couldn't pay our ANZAPA dues on time even. Spring, touch wood, is in sight, and all will be better than ever. And if that's not what Spring is for, I don't know why anyone bothers with it.

29 August. Still some way to Spring. Shall I tell you, indeed, how I nearly froze to death in a snow storm in St Kilda Road only two nights ago? I shall not. It was only hail, which is so much less interesting than snow that you would laugh at me instead of shuddering at my ordeal. But having mentioned it, it does illustrate my thoughts on Spring, doesn't it, and this happened after a couple of delightfully sunny days, making it all the more miserable.

*On Life Considered as a Rubik's Cube* I was, as it happens, on an errand of mercy when the bilzzard struck.

Sally was to meet me at the office I am temporarily infesting in St Kilda Road, and I stupidly suggested to her on the phone that, since it looked a little like rain outside, I should walk the few blocks to the car park and bring the car round. 'No, darling, I don't mind a little drizzle, and the walk will do us both good' is not what she said; it was more along the lines of 'You'd bloody better!' So to save my wife a little drizzle I, Oates-like, plunged my plucky frame into the bilzzard. Mumbling 'This is a far far better thing I do than ever I have done,' I — I beg your pardon? Yes, bilzzard. You only get blizzards with snow. I told you this was hail — a regular bilzzard of the stuff. I also told you, quite distinctly, that I'd lost the corflu.

Now see what you've made me gone and did: lost the thread, too!

Mumbling something about going to a better place, which wouldn't be hard, ask Foyster, I stood at the lights in Queens Road and shivered profoundly. My left eye seemed to have gone. I couldn't see with it, wasn't sure whether it was just gummed shut by the cold or whether the merciless bombardment of hailstones had untimely ripped it from its socket, and all I achieved when I tried to restore it with a vigorous knuckling was a frostbitten hand and a pocketful of water. For what seemed like a maternity I stood there in Queens Road, the toxic wastes from a myriad motors funnelling into my chilled lungs. Idly I wondered what would get me first, pneumonia or sniffing lead. At last, for what seemed like a spilt second, the lights favoured pedestrians, and I half stumbled, half slithered, half swam across the road. I really had a time and a half of it, I tell you.

Did I get to the car park? Did I find the Renault sunk to its wheel arches in mud? Did I make it back to St Kilda Road? Did several more myriad motors go hurtling by as I tried to make a right turn out of Queens Road, their noxious fumes further befouling my innards and leaving nasty streaks on the upholstery? Did I think unkind thoughts, if only for a fleeting moment, about my wife as I sat there? Did it occur to me at all to wonder whether going to dinner at Rob and Maggie's place was worth all this travail?

Yes.

When, after a few more adventures of a similarly laughable yet depressing sort, Sally and I at last reached the warmth and safety of the Gerrands' living room, there was Elaine Cochrane with the biggest Rubik's Cube I had ever seen. In fact it was the first I had ever seen, so it was also the smallest. There were other people present, too, and I recall speaking to them from time to time, but the flashing colours of this *thing* in Elaine's hands fascinated and numbed what was left of my unthawed brain. I caught myself drinking red wine, which the world knows I have given up for ever. After a couple of hours I caught myself not smoking. I realized that I was most certainly ill. We excused ourselves and left early.



(The big question, I guess, is whether Mr Rubik and his infernal Cube can be cited effectively in a divorce case. Must ask Gillespie about this. Herself, a moment ago, had eight whites up, and I said 'Give us a look. Dead easy,' and lost three of them in seconds. Rubik's Cube, I have decided, is infinitely more dangerous to marital happiness, indeed individual contentment, than cryptic crosswords, televised Test Matches and fanzine production.)

I considered it an honour to be invited to Rob and Maggie's place for dinner. Man and boy, I have known Rob Gerrard now for something like fifteen years. In that time, I am fairly sure, he has been a guest in my house more than once, but I have never been to his place, until last Thursday. Rob tends to keep himself to himself, just one of his characteristics I wish I could find in myself. He married the lovely Maggie — when? two years ago? I'm not sure. And it's not that I'm uninterested, just that he's like that. They have a lovely little daughter. I saw her one night at Damien and Di's place, briefly, and Maggie proudly (very rightly proudly) showed me her photo on Thursday. Up to a point I have nothing but admiration for Rob and Maggie.

Sadly, I passed that point on Thursday. Fortunately, from now on all we can do is get to know each other better, and I look forward to that. It'll be a challenge for the four of us, but what is life without challenge?

Maggie and I went wrong that night, she her way, me mine. (I mine, pedant!) At first we warmed to each other, literally. We stood by the gas fire and chatted. I had never talked to Maggie before, and I thought she was lovely — younger, perhaps, than I had thought of her before, but every bit as *natural* (a word my grandmother used to use of females she approved of — come to think of it, her strongest praise) as I could have hoped for. I have long since learnt that non-fannish wives of fans find fans a bit hard to cope with. They're on the defensive, me against them, and I didn't marry this silly bugger because he was a fan anyway, sort of thing. So mostly when I've met Maggie I haven't had much to say to her, or she to I (me! dammit, me!), and Sally knows this feeling intimately, but there's the need to protect one's spouse and one's self, and it can lead to no end of misunderstanding. I was aware of this feeling as I stood there enjoying Maggie's company and attention. I knew also that fandom came between us, that without it we would probably get on even better, but despite all that we were getting through to each other fairly well, and I was very happy about that.

I don't know why it was that I didn't light up a cigarette during the first hour. Yes I do. Even as I write that I know that it was because I was in a room full of non-smokers, and I felt like not making them uncomfortable. Even addicts can suffer for their friends, and here was a room full of friends. I sucked on a carrot, delicious, divinely prepared, but no filter, and made a joke of it. The joke caught on. I have no doubt that the joke did not amuse Maggie. My hands, meanwhile, had gone tingly, and not long after, my feet went funny. I held out until everyone had stopped eating, some time after my head had gone fuzzy and my blood ached for nicotine. In Rob's house I would long since have asked permission to smoke. In Rob and Maggie's house, I now asked Maggie's permission. She said (qualified) yes in a way that meant (if you weren't my husband's friend) no. My head span. I didn't know what to do. I mumbled something, Sally supported me, we left.

If it was only a matter of smoking or not smoking, life would be so simple.

The thing is, life is at least as complicated as Rubik's Cube. You get all the colours right on one plane, but they're still as fucked-up as ever on the other five. If you are lucky (I was, just once, and I still wish Sally hadn't bought the silly thing) you get the second plane out, and you really think you are getting somewhere, but you aren't, because there are four to go, and life, really, is so short, and four out of six is a lot left over, however smart you think you are.

When I wrote that title ( a lovely title, don't you think?) there on the last page, 'On Life Considered as a Rubik's Cube', I had some ideas in mind that I have now forgotten. But I do recall that I intended to introduce the piece by referring to a story that our minister at the Northcote Church of Christ used to tell us. It had to do with patchwork quilts. From underneath, it's pretty impossible to see any pattern in a patchwork quilt, but from above - you get the drift? I'm not sure why that story came to mind, but it's as good as any.

I didn't know that Sally had bought a cube. She didn't know how broke we were when she bought it. (I had no money from Telecom for a month, and when I got it - to be exact, when I went to collect it - it amounted to \$500 less than I had been told I should expect. The last fortnight has been excessively dismal because of this.) We came home from Rob and Maggie's and had a glass of port, because there was nothing else alcoholic left in the house, and Sally left the cube lying around, and I attacked it to get the latent anger and frustration and so on out of me, and I lost.

Elaine got the bloody thing worked out, right there in front of us all, at the Gerrands' place. Is Gillespie aware of the powerful intellect he has married? Then she span the cubes nonchalantly into their primeval disarray and sat back and looked as inscrutable as ever.

As I went to bed that morning, what was left of my unthawed-Rubik'd brain grappled with the thought that the ten people at Rob and Maggie's place more or less paralleled a Rubik's Cube. Tonight I'm trying to remember those parallels, and not doing too well, and I'm aware that the conceit won't work out - which, depending on how you look at it, means there's something here worth pursuing or there isn't, like how good you are at the cube, and whether nine out of ten is as important as eight out of nine, and so on.

What I had in mind, roughly, I think, was this. There were ten of us, and nine were non-smokers. Nine of us were drinkers. Nine of us fairly regularly read science fiction. Nine of us are not vegetarians. Nine of us have been to university. And so on - I've just forgotten the other odd-man-out things.

It wasn't enough to write an article about 'On Life Considered as a Rubik's Cube', but at the time I thought it went close. And I still think there's scope for an article of that title. If you want to write it, go for your life. You will find me very understanding when it comes to copyright - but just a little tetchy when it comes to how much you propose to pay me for it.

At the very least I need \$7.00 to retain my membership in ANZAPA, you understand. And \$3.90 for that silly cube. And this stencil will set you back a few cents, too, believe me.



30 August In Australia (dear overseas reader) we have some particularly nauseating expressions, and I am about to use one of them. One of the milder ones. Are the children locked away there? Good. Z (That wasn't it. Dunno how it crept in.) At this moment I am listening to Bruckner's First Symphony on the old FM, taping it for future reference of course, and it's 1.05am, and anything goes. Just now we're into the second movement, and it sounds like every Bruckner symphony I've ever heard, but by god I'm trying to fathom this man, and if it means listening to his first symphony more than once I'll do it.

It has been a shit-house week. It really has.

I left Telecom on the 12th. I spent some days trying to make a book out of a manuscript that an eminent historian sent me -- and because it was a good manuscript to start with, I think I succeeded. Then I went to work again at VISE, sorting out Year 12 course descriptions, and that's fine. No complaints at all. Not easy money, but a good feeling of doing something worth while. Also I have John Foyster to talk to, now and then. So that's okay.

Telecom didn't pay me for a fortnight. And when I got my cheque, it was (I think I've already mentioned this) for \$500 less than they'd led me to believe I would be getting. That was hard to stomach. Meanwhile my bank had been bouncing my cheques all over the place. One day this week I had to find \$87.51 in cash to pay my electricity bill. The bill was \$85.01, but the Council was charged \$2.50 by its bank for the bounced cheque, so I had to pay the extra. Before that, the cheque I'd written had been re-presented (\$4 debit) and referred to drawer (another \$4), so my electricity bill was exactly \$10.50 more than I'd allowed for, courtesy of Telecom. If you are a fan of the financial columns, you will instantly realize that this amounts to something like 150% interest (per annum), and we should all be so lucky.

My contretemps with Telecom and the Commonwealth Bank went on for a fortnight or so, and I am still overdrawn at the bank. In the mean time Derrick Ashby wrote to me and said that poverty was no excuse for not paying my ANZAPA dues, or something to that effect. Well, when it comes to fouling up my life, Derrick is the merest amateur, but he tries. I wrote to him and said that one way or another by 1 October I would have sorted things out, but if in the mean time he felt I had failed in my obligations as an ANZAPA member, then his duty was clear. He did not chuck me out in August, so I guess I still have a few weeks to sort things out.

I have not fared so well in FLAP. As far as I know, I am no longer a member of that organization. That's a pity, because I liked FLAP. I am still a member of FAPA, so long as I get 8 pages in by November. There have been times, often, but especially this week, when I have wondered why I try to keep up with the apas I belong to, my remaining links (apart from personal friends) with fandom. And all I have by way of an answer is that here are people I can talk to, whether they talk back or not, no matter, they are there, and I am not alone.

Is this, I wonder, why Bob Silverberg remains in FAPA? Surely not. So why does he stay? To entertain us (which he does, magnificently)? To keep his roots in that fruitful soil whence he sprang? Out of sentiment? Why? Never mind. If it's good enough for him, it's good enough for me. (Thanks for talking to me, Bob.)

So I paid Heidelberg City Council cash for the electricity it had given me, and after that there was no cash for the rest of the week. It's lucky I'm not still at Telecom, because I was paying \$3.50 a day for car parking while I was there, and on Tuesday Sally and I found we had a bit over \$8 between us. I was running out of cigarettes, and the car needed petrol. Somehow we managed. It's amazing, really, how you *can* manage, when there's no alternative.

We were flat broke on Thursday, when we went to Rob and Maggie's. We had planned to take a very special bottle of wine with us, but we couldn't afford any such thing, and there wasn't a drop of ordinary wine even in the house, so we took a couple of bottles of viciously alcoholic Tasmanian cider. (It isn't labelled 'alcoholic', Rob. Do be careful.) (I never could grow a beard before I started drinking Tasmanian cider.) (Sally shaves twice a day when she's hitting that stuff.)

On Wednesday we had three ladies to dinner, one of them the younger of my two sisters, the other two her very young daughters. I must confess that I enjoyed having two lissome blond nieces crawling over me, competing for my attention. The cats were absolutely livid about this, mind. Amanda and Juliet remembered the exercise bike, and I took them off to play with it, and they tired themselves out in no time: less than halfway through dinner they were both asleep on the couch. But before that we had the most shattering thunderstorm I have ever experienced. The power went off, and I quaked in my shoes for a moment, then manfully lit up a cigarette as though nothing had happened, and Sally got some candles out, and we went on with dinner. I don't know what the little girls thought of this, but I have a feeling they'll remember this visit.

My sister Ruth is a very intelligent lady, at least as sharp as I am, but you have to provoke her to get any hint of it. She has a kind of vapid serenity that I just can't fathom. It has something to do with being a mother, and something to do with being born a Bangsund, and a lot to do with being a religious nut.

Hell, I don't mind people going off out of sheer desperation with the world and its insoluble problems and becoming religious nuts. If you can handle it, it's not too bad a way out. Ruth and Barry are handling it. What gets me is that they are hard at work converting other people to their antediluvian worldview, and apparently getting hundreds of them. Is it something to do with the cold weather in Canberra, the economic climate or what, that they are building up the fastest-growing religious group in that bleak town right now? Ruth and Barry are living on practically nothing. They own almost nothing. A few years ago, when Barry was one of my best mates, a drinking, smoking, swearing, bearded, Labor-voting comrade, he would have described his present self as a bludger. And in fact it is by bludging that Ruth and Barry survive. They were here in January — I don't think I have written about their visit before — and I looked at Barry, gaunt, pallid, white-haired, pop-eyed, old before his time, and listened to him, raving, and knew I wanted nothing more to do with him, ever. For the first time in my life I realized that I was seeing in his eyes the cold inhuman glare of way-out fanaticism. Ruth doesn't look like that, but she talks the same nonsense when you get her going. I have a lot to thank the American people for, but I am constantly appalled at their particularly virulent evangelicism, and Ruth and Barry's religion is one-hundred-percent American, though they seem not to know it. If the Imam Ayatollah Khomeiny were Christian, he would deplore their excessive zeal. They frighten me more than he does, and that's saying something.



One day, when I was a child, my father cut his hand open. I wasn't there when he did it, but not long after I was, and he showed it to me. It was a neat triangular cut on the palm (whether of the left or right hand I cannot remember, but I do remember thinking it was a good thing he was ambidextrous — a born left-hander who had been trained to do just about everything with either hand). It was a Monday, because that was his day off, and on his day off he used to drive from Northcote to Murrumbeena — no, Oakleigh — Murrumbeena was later — to spend his day off working at the Churches of Christ Old People's Home. The Home must have been a grand house once, in extensive grounds. I vaguely recall the stables. I recall well the long drives, the lawns, the gardens, the trees, the endless corridors of the house itself, and most of all Matron. It was Matron who prescribed a cure for my father's baldness: 'All you need to do, Leif, is grow a beard and pull your head in!' And the tea-cups rattled as we all laughed, however often we'd heard it before, because when Matron laughed we all laughed. In the corridors there were large steel-grey prints of stags at bay and Scottish mountains wreathed in mist. The only place inside the Home that I liked was Matron's kitchen, where we had tea. Everywhere else there were old people and old things, and I didn't like that at all. Apart from the stables, which appealed to me in a way I have only lately come to understand, there was nothing much else outside for me. I sometimes wondered why my father went there. Of course he went there because he was a Christian and a good man and had to be doing things for others. All the time I knew him he was like that: he did things because they needed doing. And this day he cut his hand open, and he showed it to me, and I nearly fainted, because I had never seen inside a hand before.

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## EN HABIT DE CHEVAL

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10 September The day's work over, an hour or so ago I settled back to read Benito Perez Galdos's famous novel *The Spendthrifts*. Within moments, such is the amazing evocative power of this great novelist, I had laid the book aside and gone wandering off down the misty, autumn-toned yet spring-scented corridors of my own totally unimportant memories. I don't know why the image came of my father peeling back the triangular chunk of flesh that he had just cut in his hand to show me what lay beneath — and what lay beneath resembled nothing so much as the inside of a meat pie —, but that's what came, and the old-world aroma of long-neglected stables, and Matron's laugh.

I accidentally mentioned Murrumbeena. The Will H. Clay Nursing Home was at Murrumbeena, and my father worked there too. And so did I, at least once. I was 12 or 13 at the time. This was a much smaller, much more modern place than Oakleigh. On the day I remember, we were moving an old gazebo (if

that's the right name for it: it was a little rotunda, not much more than ten feet across, with six or eight sides, most of them trellised, and it couldn't have weighed much, and we didn't call it a gazebo — but I just forget what we did call it, unless it was a 'summer house'), and the men had got the thing up on steel rollers, and they were pushing it and tugging it, and I was inside it, and I could see that one of the rollers was off course, so I tried to move it back to the right direction. The whole thing rolled over my thumb, and it hurt. I yelled a fair bit, and I was carted off to a doctor. He said my thumbnail had come clean off, and I said something to the effect that I didn't believe it, and he gently placed a probe on the flesh that I thought was my nail, and I yelled again and passed out.

I mention these experiences, first because they just came to me, second because the overwhelming feeling that came from them at the time was not any sense of horror or lone suffering, but of fellowship. It's the only word I can find, after all these years, to describe it. Comradeship goes close to describing it, but not close enough. It was a feeling of being at one with these church people that my father mixed with — none of them, oddly, people from my local church. The feeling persisted, and very soon afterwards I joined the Northcote Church of Christ.

It was inevitable that I would one day 'go forward', as we used to say, and confess before the congregation that Jesus Christ was Lord and my personal Saviour, and the next Sunday be baptized by the minister before the same congregation, and the Sunday after that be received into fellowship of the church. I had seen others go through this, time and again, and I knew that one day I would do it — but in exactly the same way as any boy looks at the men around him and knows that one day he will marry and have children. In other words, I knew it would happen, but I had no idea how or when, and I had no intention of doing anything about it.

Not too many years later (though it seemed ages at the time), when I was 18 and 19 and a student-minister, I invited people to 'come forward', and sometimes, to my consternation, they did, and I found the right words to say — and at the Berwick Church of Christ one night in 1958 I found out what baptism was like from the viewpoint of the baptizer. It was most uncomfortable. For a moment of two I thought I'd drowned the poor man, but he was okay. I've long since forgotten his name, but if anyone ever deserved to go eventually to Heaven, he did — and if it turns out there is such a place, I hope he'll point to me, among those consigned elsewhere, and say 'Hey, Lord, don't send him away! He talked me into coming here and dunked me and everything, and things are crook if he can't come in!'

But forgive the fantasy. What that man did was exactly what I did. We both thought this was a good mob to belong to, good enough to go along with the absurd official joining ceremonies to be part of. And we were right, because fellowship (or whatever you care to call it) was there to be had, and fellowship is what life is all about.

Many years later I read what Ursula Le Guin said about this in one of her poems. She wasn't talking about becoming a member of the Churches of Christ or anything like that, but she was talking about what I did when I joined the church, and why the bloke I baptized joined, why I decided to become a minister, and a whole lot of other things I have done. 'Free', she wrote, 'is not to be, but to be part.' That's what I discovered the day I lost my thumbnail.



13 September I don't know why it is that Bruce Gillespie always gets such a fantastic response to the lists he publishes. All he has to do, it seems, is jot down his favourite sf stories of 1951 or best three days of 1980 or top rock groups of all time, and immediately his mailbox is flooded with contradictory or supplementary lists, complete with footnotes, from all corners of the known globe. Maybe there's some sociological value in this kind of exercise. Maybe it just shows his readers what a dill he is. But by crikey, it's an effective way of filling fanzine pages, and I'm not stupid, so I'm about to do a list of my top fifty composers.

The list (stop that sniggering, Edmonds), almost needless to say, is based entirely on my limited exposure to what is loosely called classical music. Mainly because I am older than Gillespie, I have spent more time listening to classical music than he has spent reading science fiction, but apart from that I can think of no reason why you should be any more interested in my little list than his.

The list is divided into six parts. The first five parts are an attempt to rank my 25 favourite composers; in the sixth part I give up and list the next 25 in alphabetical order. I have many doubts about the ranking, and about the inclusions and exclusions, of course. At the top end I find it almost impossible to separate the first two; at the bottom end, only the self-imposed limit of 50 excludes Rakhmaninov and Dutilleux — but ask me again next week and they might easily be there instead of, say, Roussel and Elgar. Martinu, Szymanowski, Byrd, Sculthorpe, Schuman, Mennin, Alkan, Frescobaldi and a few others are nudging away there just on the border of part 6, too, and if I don't watch it you'll soon have my top hundred.

- |   |            |              |             |            |           |                  |            |       |       |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------------|------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Beethoven  | Bach         |             |            |           |                  |            |       |       |
| 2 | Mozart     |              |             |            |           |                  |            |       |       |
| 3 | Stravinsky | Mahler       | Debussy     | Schoenberg |           |                  |            |       |       |
| 4 | Messiaen   | Shostakovich | Hindemith   | Schubert   | Bartok    |                  |            |       |       |
|   | Janacek    | Chopin       | Haydn       | Berlioz    |           |                  |            |       |       |
| 5 | Ravel      | Sibelius     | Britten     | Bruckner   | Nielsen   |                  |            |       |       |
|   | Satie      | Prokofiev    | Brahms      | Schumann   |           |                  |            |       |       |
| 6 | Bax        | Berg         | Berwald     | Dvorak     | Elgar     | Faure            | Finzi      | Gluck | Grieg |
|   | Honegger   | Hovhaness    | Ives        | Liszt      | Lully     | Monteverdi       | Palestrina |       |       |
|   | Penderecki | Roussel      | D.Scarlatti | Soler      | R.Strauss | Vaughan Williams |            |       |       |
|   | Vivaldi    | Wagner       | Weber       |            |           |                  |            |       |       |

Maybe you would be more interested to know which composers wouldn't even make my top hundred? Okay. Handel, Telemann, Rodrigo, Hummel, Cimarosa, Arnold, Copland, Adam, Kuhlau, Stockhausen (I've tried, I really have), Aram Khachaturian (but Karen Khachaturian might very well get in), Delibes, Arriaga, Kormgold, Kalkbrenner and George Dreyfus. Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov would probably be fighting out the hundredth place, and despite the former's present over-exposure and the latter's delightful quintet for piano and winds, Mussorgsky would probably get it for his songs.

I have no explanation for my failure to like Handel (apart from the Messiah, which is wonderful, and the organ concertos and violin sonatas). The others I've mentioned I can take in very small doses, except Hummel, who is the most boring composer I have struck, with the possible exception of Gyorgy Ligeti.

I have not yet heard anything by John Cage, Wallingford Riegger or Leigh Edmonds.

17 September When it's getting on rapidly for midnight, and there's no-one to talk to (not that you feel much in the mood to talk anyway) and it's a clear choice between going to bed, watching a 1957 western movie on television and typing another stencil, what do you do?

Yeah, I thought of reading a book. Then I remembered I'd read it. Life's like that, full of silly little frustrations. Besides, we sold our copy eighteen months ago, or thereabouts, last time we were desperate for money. We don't talk about money in this fanzine, because people think either that you're kidding about being desperate or you're to be pitied, and we're neither of those. If things were that bad we could always flog the IBM, right? Right. Start worrying when Philosophical Gas appears handwritten.

Today is the day I was due to finish work with Telecom. It's rather lucky I decided to leave five weeks ago. For one thing, I have earned more money in that time than I would have had from Telecom. For another, Sally and I would have been sold up by now if I hadn't. And for last, Sally was asked to resign her job a week ago. I thought we'd been through a fair bit together these last eight years or so, but the last seven days just have to rank as the most trying time we've ever known together.

I won't go into detail, because that's Sally's prerogative if she wants to, and because we've involved so many good friends already, and because we are sick of the whole business. For the moment it looks as though Sally has kept her job — not the one she has worked at for the last three years, but a similar job, on the same salary, with a different boss — and as far as I am concerned, the fact that she has won through this far proves beyond doubt that she is a champion public servant. And that's what it was all about, whether she was capable to do her job. The boss asked her to go, she more or less told him to get stuffed, because he was beyond his rights, and Sally is rather devoted to people's rights, and she proved her ability to do her job by preserving her own rights. I always knew I'd married a fighter. Watching her in action this week, I'm glad I'm on her side.

But it has been absolute hell for both of us.

I am very tempted to sell up, move to somewhere like Cairns (or Mackay: Mackay would be quite acceptable, Leanne, it's just that Foyster does go on about Cairns, you understand) and spend my remaining years under a palm tree, reading Spengler and listening to Schoenberg. The only trouble with that idea is that I haven't thought out what Sally would be doing. So for the time being we're stuck in Melbourne.

What do you sell when you sell up? That's another problem. The IBM could go, because there is a portable Optima. The Renault could go, except that we'd get about \$2000 for it, we owe \$3000, and we need a car anyway, and what kind of car do you get for \$2000? They get a Renault that could be resold for around \$3500; we would get a 1968 VW, maybe. So there's no point in that. So what price 3000-odd books? Well, to be fair, about \$1000, and we'd be left with the 2500-odd we'd rather sell. If we persisted, maybe another \$1000 for those. You go right on and believe the ads if you want to, but books are not an investment — not the kind of books that you and I can afford in the first place.

The idea of starting all over again at my age, 42, is not pleasant. If it comes to that, of course we'll do it, and salvage what we can. But that isn't even the main problem. Where do you start all over again? That, roughly, is what I'm working on right now.



18 September It will come as no great surprise to most of you that I have never yet published a fanzine issue that I am entirely happy with. Some want close. If you pester me about it, I might even break down and confess which issues I have been least unhappy with. The present opus, begun on 25 April this year and not a stencil yet printed, includes some of the worst stuff I've ever written, and here and there (I think) echoes of some of the best. Some stencils will be dumped or retyped, but this is not unusual for me. Page 636, for example, is one you definitely won't see, unless I can find time and inclination to revise it, and page 642 went close to being dumped. If you can't work out why, you don't know Sally.

The thing is, of course, that since October 1968, when I published the first issue of *The New Millennial Harbinger*, my first apazine, for the first mailing of ANZAPA, my fanzines have become less and less fanzines in the true sense, and more and more a kind of published diary. Whatever historical or therapeutic value diaries may have, they aren't much fun to read, least of all your own. Lately I've been reading Evelyn Waugh's diaries, and though I yield to no-one in my admiration for Waugh's novels, I find myself almost heretically bored by his private jottings. (There's still quite a few hundred pages to go, so don't be too upset if I go claiming to have enjoyed them before the year is out.)

There is perhaps a narrow line that separates a diary-on-stencil from the traditional fannish letter-substitute, and maybe what I am doing falls properly into the latter category and is okay. Then again, if what I am doing doesn't fall into a recognized category, maybe we need some more categories, and what the hell anyway.

*Herzgewächse* Maybe that's the category. The title of Schoenberg's opus 20 (I am fairly reliably informed) translates as 'foliage of the heart'. Let me transcribe for you what Malcolm MacDonald says of this little song - perhaps (he says) his most extraordinary song. 'Webern called this little Maeterlinck setting "the summit of music", and it is chiefly famous for its immense difficulty, containing as it does one of the highest notes (a sustained F *in alt.* pppp) in the vocal repertoire. The sense of strain which the approach to this peak tends to engender in performance seems to run counter to the emotional progression towards spiritual fulfilment - not dissimilar to the finale of the Second Quartet - which the piece describes. The poem speaks of "formless sorrows" sinking to rest and prayer finally rising; so the soloist begins in her lowest register, among fragmentary flutterings and murmurs from the accompanying instruments, and soars progressively higher and higher until the voice floats far above a glinting "foliage" of continually changing, merging and intertwining instrumental patterns. The final arching phrase, for all its difficulty, is when confidently sung a thing of breathtaking beauty.'

Okay. It's a beautiful song. June Barton (on the record I have) doesn't make it sound at all difficult. So just listening to it, without instruction, I simply liked it. Why? Hell, I don't know, I just did.

That's what my diary is about. It's about discovering things and feeling things and wondering about them. In a way, I feel deprived, because I can't talk about Schoenberg's music the way Malcolm MacDonald does, can't talk about Phil Dick's writing the way Bruce Gillespie does, can't talk about politics the way John Cain does, can't talk about anything the way John Foyster does. And in a way, I don't feel deprived at all. Some people

go through life without ever hearing Schoenberg's music, never reading MacDonald, Dick, Gillespie or Foyster, never even knowing who John Cain is or was. (John Cain, you may very well learn here for the first time, is the newly elected leader of the Australian Labor Party in the Victorian Parliament. His father, John Cain, was the last Labor Premier of Victoria; his government fell in 1955. The present John Cain stands an excellent chance of being Premier some time late this year or early next, and what confusion that will cause among future students and historians!) (But I digress.) (But that also is what this fanzine is all about.)

Is music — or literature — written for scholars and critics, or for people?

That, I submit, is not only a dumb question, but also a loaded question. I only asked it to remind you that artists need audiences. Someone will now tell me that artists in advance of their time go without audiences and pursue their art for its own sake. And I will say that those artists, if they are artists, eventually get through to their audiences — even if they are dead before the audiences are born. By definition, if there is no audience there is no art.

As I grow older I become more convinced that my function in the arts is to be an audience. Not only that, but that being an audience is not an unworthy thing. By the same token, my function in politics is to be a follower, and that is not unworthy either. Politicians without followers are not politicians: like artists without audiences, they are merely cranks — until someone takes enough notice of them to say so, and at that point they make the grade. Unsuccessful politicians and unsuccessful artists, whatever else may be said of them, are politicians and artists. If absolutely no-one, ever, takes any notice of them, they are just odd people.

While you are working that out, let me tell you how I discovered Arnold Schoenberg.

Last December, as I recall, I wrote a piece about all the hi-fi gear we had about the place, and how I'd counted all the buttons and knobs and connections and so on, and come up with some incredible number, and claimed to know what every last one of them was for. I don't have that piece to hand as I write, but I recall saying that if there was a button somewhere to push that provided instant comprehension of Schoenberg, I had yet to find it.

There was such a button, but it wasn't on the machinery, it was on me, and it was just dying to be pushed.

Stage 1: About this time last year ABC-FM presented a program entitled 'Schoenberg as Music', a BBC broadcast by Malcolm MacDonald. I didn't listen to it at the time, but I did tape it for future reference.

Stage 2: As I have previously recorded, I got involved in a music quiz competition around Xmas/New Year. Jenny Bryce's books on modern music got me interested in the subject, and I pursued it by listening to some of the music I'd read about, a lot of it (bless her!) lent to me by Jenny.

Stage 3: I had liked Stravinsky's music for many years. To a lesser extent I had liked Debussy's. Suddenly I realized that these two composers, along with Mahler (whom I had discovered long before — in 1959, to be exact, when I was 20 and not long past discovering Beethoven's 4th Piano Concerto), were the gateway to modern music. I listened more earnestly to them, found that much I had previously disliked was now very much to my taste — and there I was, through the gate.



Stage 4: I listened to Malcolm MacDonald's broadcast several times, and made notes on all the pieces by Schoenberg he used as illustrations, and said yes I like that, no I don't like that (but I'd like to hear the whole thing), and so on.

Stage 5: Operation Arnold. I started (\*gulp\*) buying records of his music, and taping the little that is broadcast, and got down to really serious listening. This stage continues. There is much that I have not yet come to terms with, and much that just came right through and moved me as much as I have ever been moved by music.

Not only that. Schoenberg opened my ears to a whole new world of music, not just music written in this century, but also a lot of music that I thought I knew from before his time, that I now hear differently and appreciate more. In particular, he has sent me back to Mahler and Bruckner (on one track) and to Ravel and Satie (on another). And he has sent me forward, too, most notably to Messiaen — and sideways, to Hindemith.

The stages in my musical appreciation are marked by various unforgettable experiences. Some I can date, most I can't. The big breakthrough was Beethoven's 7th Symphony, which (probably because of that) is still my favourite musical composition. That was in 1958. Beethoven and Mozart provided me with sheer joy from then on, for a while to the exclusion of all other composers. Then suddenly there was Mahler, in particular his 2nd Symphony. (My grandmother gave me five pounds for my 21st birthday. I said, Do you mind if I spend it on records? Of course she didn't. By then I was just about Grandma Holyoak's favourite grandchild, and anything I did was okay by her. I wish I could somehow have shared this subsequent joy with her. Then again, maybe I did.) And there was a day when I listened to Bach's St John Passion, and suddenly realized that choral music really was music, my kind of music, despite all those people singing. On a different tack, and I can't date this, there was a day when the ungraspable austerity of chamber music suddenly broke through to me, much as poetry had somehow become as important to me as prose, years earlier. Lee Harding introduced me to composers and works I'd never heard of, and that was another stage, around 1963-66. From then on it was more or less a process of listening, liking, discarding, building on what I already felt at home with. In Canberra (1972-75) I borrowed records every week from the Canberra Recorded Music Society, and broadened my appreciation to some extent (and my knowledge a lot). From those years Schubert, Chopin and Shostakovich emerged as favourites, with Bartok someone I was disposed to like but not quite at home with. His quartets I found particularly difficult. (And still do, but I love them.)

At some point I more or less decided that chamber music was the only music worth continued investigation. Certainly I did a fair bit of that in Adelaide. Then gradually solo piano music became very important. In Melbourne (since 1978), for the first time I started enjoying music for winds to the extent that I went looking for it. I can say, with some confidence in my memory, that three years ago I could not stand the sound of the clarinet, and thought Mozart's like for that instrument was an understandable aberration. Jenny Bryce, who plays woodwinds, came into my life at exactly the right moment, and quite by accident she nudged me into a whole new world of music that I was ready for but otherwise might never have found.

I can't finish this page without mentioning that Paul Anderson encouraged me to buy a set of Richard Strauss's orchestral works, dirt cheap, in Adelaide, and got me mildly interested in the music of Klaus Schulz (?sp).

I had thought of listing now my favourite sf stories of 1951, because that's the kind of thing that letter-writing fans really go for, but just off-hand I can't recall any, so instead I will now try to compile a list of all the string quartets I have in this room. (Unfannish? Don't be absurd! Someone in FAPA once did a list of all the pillar boxes, or whatever they are called in the USA, in his area, along with their closing times and all. String quartets in a fan's fanzine-production room must be fannish.)

SAMUEL BARBER	String Quartet, op.11
BELA BARTOK	String Quartets 1-6
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN	String Quartets 1-16 (+17)
ALBAN BERG	String Quartet, op.3
	Lyric Suite for String Quartet
FRANZ BERWALD	String Quartet in G minor
	String Quartet in A minor
ALEXANDER BORODIN	String Quartet no.2
BENJAMIN BRITTEN	String Quartet in D (1931)
ANTON BRUCKNER	Intermezzo for String Quartet
CLAUDE DEBUSSY	String Quartet in G minor
ERNO DOHNANYI	String Quartet in A
ANTONIN DVORAK	String Quartet no.9
	String Quartet no.12
EDWARD ELGAR	String Quartet, op.83
JOSEPH HAYDN	String Quartets, nos.38, 70, 78
ALFRED HILL	String Quartet no.2
LEOS JANACEK	String Quartets, nos. 1,2
KAREN KHACHATURIAN	String Quartet
ISTVAN LANG	String Quartet no.2
GYORGY LIGETI	String Quartet no.1
BOHUSLAV MARTINU	String Quartet no.7
RICHARD MEALE	String Quartet no.2
WOLFGANG &c MOZART	String Quartets 1-23
CARL NIELSEN	String Quartets 1-4
VITEZSLAV NOVAK	String Quartet op.22
SERGEI PROKOFIEV	String Quartet no.2
MAURICE RAVEL	String Quartet in F
GEORGE ROCHBERG	String Quartet no.3
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG	String Quartet (1897)
	String Quartets 1-4
FRANZ SCHUBERT	String Quartets 1-15
ROBERT SCHUMANN	String Quartets 1,2
PETER SCULTHORPE	String Quartet no.9
DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH	String Quartets 1-15
JEAN SIBELIUS	String Quartet in D minor
BEDRICH SMETANA	String Quartet no.1
IGOR STRAVINSKY	Double Canon for String Quartet
PETER TCHAIKOVSKY	String Quartet (1865)
	String Quartets 1-3
GIUSEPPE VERDI	String Quartet in E minor
JOHAN WIKMANSON	String Quartet op.1 no.2
GERHARDT WINKLER	String Quartet no.1
HUGO WOLF	Italian Serenade

One hundred and twenty-seven string quartets. I take the liberty of asking you, Mr Burbee: Is that too many?



23 September What I've been working up to write about, I think, these last few days/months/years is what happened on the 16th of April 1965. (Listing string quartets made me realize I was putting something off. If I'm not putting off Good Friday 1965, what else is there? No, I think that's what it is.)

The first few months of 1965 are still just about incredible. So much happened. In January all of my family were in New Zealand, as I recall (I'm not sure about my youngest sister, Ruth, but she was away somewhere). I had the house at Northcote to myself. I took advantage of this to lose my virginity, something I had been working on for some time. The lady who assisted me in this awesome venture I must call X, of course. We had some wonderful times, then and afterwards. I was 25, she was 20, and if you can't have wonderful times at that sort of age — well, you just have to wait. I was lucky. She'd decided I'd waited long enough.

There were absurd incidents. There always are. She locked herself out one afternoon (was it *the* afternoon?), and sat calmly out the back until I gained enough sense to come looking for her. She was clad in a sheet, as I recall. On another afternoon, friends from interstate came to visit, and there was a scurry and an unlikely story to explain why we'd kept them waiting at the front door.

I need hardly say I was madly in love with X. I am still fond of her, in a way. We see each other occasionally, and there's always a sense of something horrible in the past that we share, that we can't talk about, and that makes us something less than friends but more than acquaintances, that binds us and keeps us apart.

Easter 1965 was traumatic for both of us. After that we went our separate ways for a few years, then in 1971 shared another trauma, which doesn't come into this story. (Or does it? I might well have become a father that year. The chances are that I was responsible, but we will never know. The other man was quite sure he was responsible, because he didn't know about me. Maybe that all comes into this story.)

X moved interstate about March 1965, maybe February, I can't remember. I wrote almost every day. There were long, incredibly expensive phone calls. At some stage I got a friend of hers talking about her — a loyal friend, but she had been mortally insulted by X's latest boyfriend, so she talked. And about the same time her family opened up to me, told me things about her past that made her present heartbreakingly clear. I went interstate to see her. We had a rough and yet absurdly joyful time. (I learnt that she had slept with a man who had slept with the wife of a cousin of mine, but that was about the least important thing I learnt that weekend.) I returned to Melbourne, there were more talks with her family, and suddenly it was Easter and things were coming to a head.

I drove out to Essendon airport to meet her, that Thursday night. As usual at Easter, all the planes were late, but things were made worse by fog in Melbourne. About 11 I rang home to say there was no sign of her plane and not to worry if I was very late getting in. My father sounded a little short, a little distracted, as if I'd dragged him away from a favourite TV program or something he'd been working on, and that was the last time I ever talked to him.

There was an incredible bout of recrimination when we got from Essendon to her place. She had little idea of what she was in for. The family

gave her hell. They had contacted the wife of the man who planned to join her interstate — this is beginning to sound crazy, perhaps because I'm just giving the bald outline — and she was just about out of her mind at the very idea, and they arranged that we all should meet next morning, to sort things out. I wasn't looking forward to that meeting one bit, not least because sooner or later it must come out that I and X's friend had uncovered the whole business.

On Good Friday morning I walked down the passage of our house, nodded to my father, who had started work on painting my sister's room, and perhaps nodded again as I returned. I started dressing. I heard the slightest of cries from the next room, then my mother yelled at me to come quickly. I was in my singlet and underpants, and for a second I thought nothing could be urgent enough to make me run to the next room like that. My father was on the floor, my mother at his side, and he was trying to say something. I knelt to him too, and we held him in our arms. We had no idea what he was trying to say. In memory it seems he took a long time to die, but it was probably about 15 or 20 seconds.

For years afterwards I thought I might have saved him if I had been fast enough and bright enough to give him mouth-to-mouth treatment. I said as much to the doctor that morning, and he said I couldn't possibly have done anything, but I didn't believe him. Some time later I said it again, and he said I could not have saved him — it was a massive stroke — and if I had, he would never have regained enough sense to know who he was or anyone else. It took a few years to accept that. It took many more years to accept his dying, if in fact I have accepted it. (Writing this perhaps says that I have. I'm not sure. The memory of grief, so easily aroused, and the grief itself are different things, but I don't know at what point they stop overlapping.)

I helped the doctor — or possibly the undertaker, I forget (my father worked for him, he was an old friend of the family) — to move him from the floor to the bed. I learnt that dead men are unbelievably heavy, caught myself thinking that, almost cried, almost lost my grip.

The morning was crowded with people and phone calls: doctor, undertaker, police, neighbours, my sister Joy in New Zealand (but not Ruth, who was at a church camp at Flinders), Lee Harding (we used to ring each other often in those days), X's mother (who seemed quite put out that I was not coming) and I don't know who else. During the afternoon I had to go to the city morgue and identify him. Then I drove to X's place, I think, did not stay long, and went home. On Saturday, early, X and I drove down to Flinders, I told Ruth the awful news, and we brought her back to Northcote. We were greeted, as we came in the front door, by my sister Joy, who had somehow managed to get from Palmerston North, New Zealand, to Melbourne in less than 24 hours. She had her baby daughter Kelsey with her. Somehow Joy, who can rise bubbling to just about any occasion, and Kelsey, who could not help symbolizing new life to balance out death (and had to be made a fuss of anyway), cheered us up no end.

The funeral was on Wednesday, which just happened to be my birthday. X had returned interstate, thoroughly shaken by this and other events that I learnt about later. Some idiot relative had brought my grandfather to the crematorium, and he stood about in the waning autumn sunlight, smiling to himself, not knowing what was going on.

On the way to Flinders, in the Alvis TA21 that I had bought a few months earlier, X and I laughed and joked and sang bawdy songs. I have always felt guilty about that, too, until fairly recently.



25 September I have never been a very fast typist, and I must be one of the slowest composers-on-stencil in fandom, but five months still seems a long time to spend on 26 pages. Gillespie would do that much in one day, with justified margins.

FAPA mailing 175 turned up today. It was posted at airmail rate on 6 June. FAPA 176 came about a month ago. It was posted at the normal surface mail rate, and took about four days to get here. I don't know whether there is any cosmic significance about this.

I feel a bit out of touch with FAPA -- still can't quite get used to the presence of Graham Stone and all those Scandinavians -- but while so many people remain who were members when I joined just ten years ago I will not feel entirely out of touch. Little did I know in November 1971 and not much more now. Happy anniversary, me.

Also in the mail today a note from George Turner, responding to my first lot of critical observations on *Vaneglory*, and confirming my suspicion that the only copy of that novel in Australia is in this room. Normally I would stick my neck out and say that this is a better novel than *Beloved Son*, but in line with the latest school of sci-fi criticism in Australia I will say modestly that I won't know until I see it in print.

Also on television last night -- Good God! Is my life thus circumscribed, by what's in the mail and what's on television? A fair amount of the time, yes. John Foyster laughed when I said I found intellectual stimulation in the *Age Monthly Review*, then realized I was serious and looked concerned. George Turner was amazed when I told him last week that I'd never read Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. Anyway, Ravi Shankar and John Williams were on television last night, inspecting the new Arts Centre in Melbourne, and I suddenly exclaimed to Sally, 'Look! It's Rob Gerrand!' And it was. He was wearing a construction-worker's helmet. Since he manages the place, he obviously knows it better than Ravi Shankar and John Williams, who weren't even wearing hats. Rob looks good in a helmet anyway. Did you ask those blokes for their autographs, Rob? There are times when I think you don't tell us much about yourself in ANZAPA.

Also on television tonight was the first CHOG to arrive for CHOGM, Mr Kaunda of Zambia. CHOGM is the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which is organized every so often to disrupt the host city and provide opportunities for political coups, assassinations and full and frank talk about this and that. Australia's Head of Government will be present, of course, and it's always nice to see her. Her Majesty won't be staying at a pub with Maggie Thatcher and the nignogs: she had the forethought to send her yacht out for the occasion. Will she be safe there? one wonders. Will some amphibious terrorist try to nobble the Britannia and all aboard her? Will some swimming policeman drown in a vain attempt to nobble suspected nobblers? I can see the headline now, as I have seen it for years, FROGMAN CROAKS IN BAY DISASTER! Anyway, we'll know long before you see this.

Too many anyways this page, Jack. Anywho, just room to say

LEIGH EDMONDS FOR GOVERNOR-GENERAL!

NORM GALLAGHER FOR DUFF!

PHNOM PENH IN 2010!

and that's it.

Cheers, J.B.