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MY LAURELS

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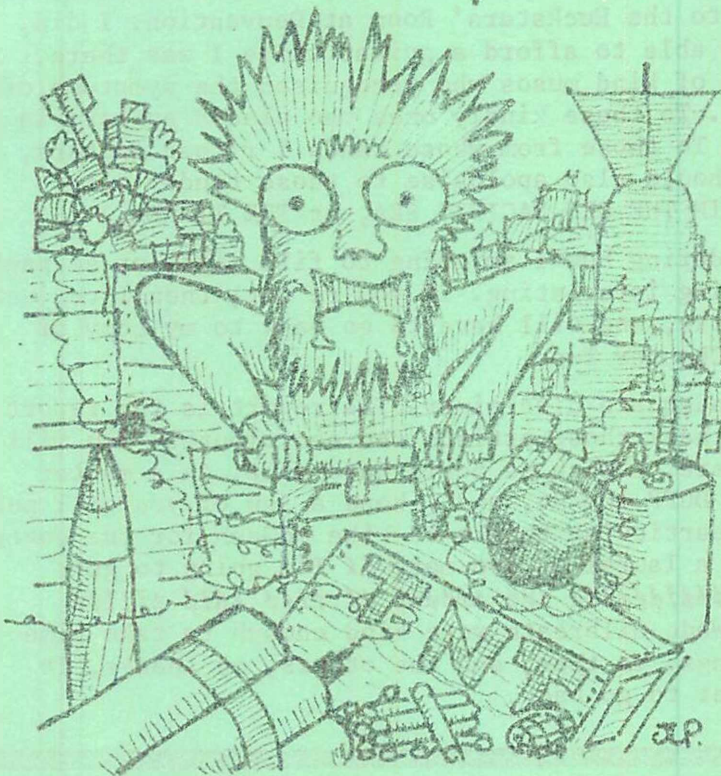
On The Dropping Of Names

This issue is particularly self indulgent, in that it is a report of a trip I made. It was some trip, and one that I'm not likely to forget in general terms. The specifics though have a tendency to slip away, and so this is an attempt to make the trip a little more permanent.

I also hope to introduce some rather beautiful people, both in Australia, and in North America. Above all, this trip is my opportunity to drop a few names. As I've had cause to mention on several occasions, where's the sense in spending that sort of money on a trip if you can't get a bit of name dropping out of it.

I guess, while I'm at it, I should apologise to all those people I met whose names for one reason or another don't get dropped in the report. Honest, I'm not being elitist or anything. Sometimes I was just too shy to ask for an introduction to the person with whom I'd been talking for the last hour or so.

The report also gives me the chance to drop the names of some really great cities. Those I can remember.



In particular though this report is dedicated to those who invited me into their homes and their lives, and who spent a terrible amount of time making me feel at home. Let's face it, it can't be easy to decide to take a total stranger into your home merely on the grounds that he is a fan. Terry Garey and Ctein, for instance, on finding that I'd be arriving in San Francisco before they were due, gave me the key to their house, chock full of photographic gear, and provided me with the names of their cats. I really can't find an adequate way of thanking any of the folk who provided me with bed, board, and transportation, along with introducing me to their respective fandoms and cities. All I can say is that I hope you find your way here sooner or later. Mind you, if you're all coming over for Melbourne in '85, I'm going to have to get a bigger flat.

I'm afraid that this report has a rather strong bias. If you're looking for panoramic descriptions of the Grand Canyon, or detailed information on Science Museums, forget it. There are those who find it strange that I didn't go to Disneyland/ Cape Canaveral/ Hollywood/.....(Fill in your favourite American tourist trap). However, I didn't go to the States to see scenery. Australia has more than enough scenery for my liking. It's that annoying stuff that gets between the cities, and makes air travel so bloody expensive. I went to America to meet people.

However, I'm going to disappoint more of you, in particular those of you who are taking out their Fan Guide To Famous American Science Fiction Authors. I didn't go over to meet Harlan Ellison, or Isaac Asimov, or (Fill in your favourite filthy pro). The fact that I did get to meet a few authors was good, and one or two of them impressed me as people I'd like to get to know. However, I came away from the trip with no autographed manuscripts. Indeed, I had planned to get Bob Shaw to autograph a copy of THE BEST OF BOB SHAW, but when the time came, he was too busy having his back rubbed by a pair of Southern Belles, and I didn't have the heart to interrupt.

I didn't even go over to obtain vast numbers of books, or rare artwork. If the truth be known, I didn't even get to the Hucksters' Room at Denvention. I did, at one time, have the idea that I'd be able to afford a guitar while I was there. That fell through, but there were lots of kind musos who recognised the symptoms of a guitar addict under-going withdrawal. To those kindly ones who placed guitars in my palsied fingers, my deepest thanks. To those from whose hands I ripped guitars, my deepest apologies. (I suppose I should also apologise to those tender ears bruised by my renditions of CHUNDERED IN THE OLD PACIFIC SEA, or THE TINKER.)

Still, by now you must be wondering how I am going to fill sixty or so pages when I never got around to doing anything interesting. If you're not, then I've just wasted umpteen tantalising interest hooks, and will have to go back to my copy of THE SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK and read Chapter Two.

This though should act as an adequate disclaimer. The report is the report is the report. I would though like to thank those artists who contributed. You will note a near fatal shortage of Packer here. I wish he could have gone. As a matter of fact, I'd like to see him stand for DUFF in '84, and I hope a few of you will put a bit of pressure on him to do so. My particular thanks to Mike McGann for the cover. I'm afraid I'm going to have to gather a laurel or two more if I'm going to get enough to stuff a pillow, ~~especially considering the amount of ass said pillow would have to support~~. Bill Brown and Wade Gilbreath were kind enough to take time out from dead dog partying to draw things. To them, and the others, my thanks. It was a wonderful experience. Sigh. I want to go back.

HANDY HINTS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS #1 Try to avoid using sentences starting "Well, in Australia we....."

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I travel over the sea and ride the rolling sky
For that's the way it is - that is my fortune
There are many ears to please many people's love to try
And every day's begun rising for the moon.

Sandy Denny

I am not noted for being adventurous. Indeed, given half a chance, the closest I'll get to adventure is braving the spider webs that hang around the garden gate in order to put out the garbage on a Sunday night, and even that is getting uncomfortably close to a situation from RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK. However, there comes a time in a man's life when he has to get up off his arse and do something, so as to have at least one or two memories with which to console himself when he sits by the fire with his pipe and his slippers at some ripe old age - say thirty five. So it was that I decided to go to America. It was either that or vacuum the carpet in the lounge.

Unfortunately going to America takes a lot more planning than does vacuuming the carpet in the lounge. It is also a lot more expensive. The exact details concerning my abysmal failure to save for the trip, and the subsequent grovelling at the feet of my credit union have been mentioned in passing elsewhere. I don't intend to go into any of the more pathetic detail here. Neither do I wish to discuss the sad lack of gumption I showed in getting my passport photo taken. Suffice it to say that somehow it all got done. Not that everything went according to plan mind you. The original scheme had involved my arriving in Sacramento in time for Westercon, and staying in the States until Denvention. Sad to say, certain socio-economic imperatives came between me and this goal. I chickened out. The logic, according to my diary, goes thusly:-

- (1) When you're in the States, you're going to have to stay with a wide variety of people.
- (2) You don't like staying with people.
- (3) You'd better get a little practice in Australia, where it's safe.

Thus it was that I planned an Australian leg to the trip. The timing hinged largely on Andrew Brown's 21st Birthday Tea, and the collation of Stipple-apa in Minneapolis. I arranged to be in Melbourne for the eleventh of July. Having thus arranged, I discovered that there was to be a party at Jean Weber's place in Canberra on the following weekend, so I planned to get to that also, via the Sydney Thursday night eating crowd. Once I had added Denvention, and the date I was due back at school, my parameters were set.

Melbourne

*The towns, the towns, the people and their faces
And their eyes always seem to be gleaming.
I can tell you the names. I can show you the places
But I never can tell you the meaning*

Wendy Waldman

I actually arrived in Melbourne on the Friday night, since Justin Ackroyd, the Secret Master Of Space Age, usually gathers a crowd of his henchpersons to torment the waitress in the Museo Bistro, an eaterie that suffers the misfortune of being two doors up from Space Age Books, on that evening. The waitress baiting was carried out with all the subtlety and grace which I have come to expect from science fiction fans, though the performance was seen to be lacking in that it missed the venomous barbs of Phil Ware who, since he wasn't speaking to the waitress that evening, conveyed all his food orders via Mandy Herriot.

Having suitably disported ourselves, and having provided the Museo staff with proof that any night bar Friday is sheer joy and unadulterated bliss, Mandy, Phil, Terry Stroud, Cathy Circosta and I went shopping. I did not intend to buy anything. After all, I needed all the money I had, and then some, for America. The fact that a kaleidoscope and a Firesign Theatre album I hadn't previously seen found their way into my bag that evening boded not well for my budget. Mind you, I did realise that carrying an album all around North America would not be fun, and so I planned to give it to Rob McGough in Sydney, in exchange for a tape of it.

I was staying with Mandy and Phil, and so got a lift out to their place where we sat and nattered a little prior to collapsing. Cathy offered to pick me up the next morning and to take me to Andrew's tea party. The fact that this worked according to plan had a strangely calming effect on my travel fears.

Andrew's party was the standard sort of mixed fan- non-fan type of event. It was as though Maxwell's Demon was standing in the doorway making sure that never the twain should meet. There was a certain amount of cross-chat between the computer programmers and the fans, especially when the conversations were on relatively neutral ground, such as the use of computers to keep mailing lists, or the sequence of Dr Who episodes, however, when the conversations slipped to the extremes, i.e. Worldcon bidding tactics, or reverse polarity semiconductor bipartisan saltvinegar chips, the groups drifted apart. I gave Andrew the kaleidoscope. He looked at it rather askance, but, having gotten over his surprise, thanked me. Honest Andrew, they don't bite, and can be quite fascinating when you're in the right state of mind, if you know what I mean.

Cathy and I had been talking to Bruce Gillespie, and, as the tea wound down, we discussed heading off for the evening's entertainment, the Space Age Books 10th Anniversary Party. The promise of more food held a particularly strong attraction for Bruce. Naturally all the usual people were there, along with the usual unusual people. Merv Binns had put on a nice spread, and I won't be caddish and mention the "Compliments of TAA" stickers on a couple of the bottles of bubbley. I enjoyed a fairly long natter with Irene Pagram, and smiled when Lee Harding took me aside to ascertain that my intentions towards Cathy were honourable. Sometimes I think he takes his role as Cathy's big brother a little seriously, though it was sweet of him. We toasted Space Age's ten years, and wished it another ten. By this time Andrew, who had finished tidying up his place, had turned up, and he too was toasted. Coffee at Andrew's rounded off a beautiful day.

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" In order to prove your manhood you must pick your passage."

Well, maybe out of context it loses something, but it was funny at the time.

I find this to be the worst part of staying with people. I always attempt to be as inconspicuous as possible, but always manage to do something I wish I hadn't. Unfortunately, to get from the room in which I was sleeping to the loo required passing through the lounge, and something in my metabolism seems to react to the knowledge that getting to the loo is an awkward procedure. Thus the more limited the access to the loo, the more often I find myself needing to go. Taubien was, on several occasions during the night, awoken by a scream of agony as my spectral and supposedly silent form collided with a piece of furniture in the dark. I swore off beer for the remainder of my stay.

Wednesday saw me getting practice in those two skills most needed by the overseas traveller - working out how to find and use unfamiliar laundromats, and killing time in a city while spending as little money as possible. The former was achieved with a reasonable amount of success. The latter involved spending a little money. I went to see GRENDEL GRENDEL GRENDEL, a locally produced feature length animated film. I'm afraid I wasn't that impressed. The script was an interesting enough adaptation of BEOWULF, but the animation was shoddy and, at best, second rate. I fear the day of good animation, on a commercial basis, is dead. I can see little hope for something on the level of the Fifties Warner Brothers cartoons, or Disney's FANTASIA until someone can work out a way to get a computer to do most of the work. (Having recently purchased a copy of THE WORLD OF ANIMATION, it seems that this is closer than I had anticipated.)

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Later Peter Toluzzi talked some of us into going and seeing THE STUNTMAN, yet another of the few films I enjoyed. I was though a little worried about my evening's crash space. Peter had kindly offered a little floor space, but warned me in advance that he and his housemate Bruce, who owned the house, had been having disagreements over people staying. Fortunately I didn't have to stay too long.

The place was certainly an experience. It was an old shop that Bruce was renovating, and, when Sally Beasley (Underwood) had been staying, there was no wall between the bathroom and the kitchen, leaving the toilet with a magnificently open view of the kitchen. By the time I arrived, that wall had been installed, but one had to be careful to avoid the wet paint, splintered floor boards etc.. Access to the place was through a door obstructed by carpet, which would only open about a foot. Through inattention to diet, my diameter is rather more than a foot, and there were times when I felt very much like Winnie the Pooh in the rabbit hole.

The next day I put my Canberra baggage together, and went back into Galaxy, where I pestered Shayne until Robin arrived with the car. I must admit to a slight nervous twinge when I discovered that Robin was the only car driver in our group, and that he was feeling rather tired. He assigned me with the task of talking to keep him awake. Believe me, I talked. Mind you, we had a good crowd for talking. The other inhabitants of the car were Judith, Maralyn Pride, and Karen Warnock, also known as Womble. The only thing that worried me was Robin's tendency to drive with the left hand wheels on the rumble strip - "That way I know where the road ends."

Canberra

And the beaches were concrete
And the stars paid a light bill
And the blossoms hung false
On a store window tree

Joni Mitchell

I was rather shocked by the condition of the road connecting Australia's largest city to the nation's capital. For the majority of the journey it was limited to one lane in each direction, and the lane itself was not particularly well maintained. Fortunately, once the endless stream of cars with skis on their roof-racks had turned off for the snow fields, the traffic became easier. (Anyone with any semse leaves Canberra on a Friday night, as the city has a tendency to close down for the weekend.) Eventually we arrived, and, through Judith and Womble's navigation, we were able to find the Australian National University, the site for the weekend's Speculative Fiction Conference. Womble had a room booked there, so we dumped her before moving on to Jean Weber's place.

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There was a one-shot being typed in the study, which promised to be the first ever Australian offset oneshot, though, since it was being typed onto direct masters, to be run off on a tabletop offset, I somehow feel that the term "offset" is probably an overstatement. At one point in the evening, Dave Ramsbottom fell asleep with a full glass of beer in his hand. Various attempts were made to wrest it from his grasp, but he clung to it as though his life depended on it, and, since the spilling of beer is a sacrilege in Australia, we figured it was probably safe. About fifteen minutes later, Dave woke up, and we mentioned his behaviour. He was so shocked that he fell asleep again, still holding onto his glass. I guess we'll never know what event in his dream caused him to raise his beer holding hand, but the beer fell, dousing Robyn, who was sitting just below him. All in all it was a masterful performance, and one we were sure had been calculated to get Robyn out of her jeans. It worked.

On the Saturday the bulk of the partiers arrived, and the house came close to splitting at the seams. Several fen arranged to bunk out in the ~~h~~ garage/workroom. The day was devoted to commestibles, and duels to the death over possession of the bathroom. Peter Toluzzi, Rob McGough, Jeff and Mark held informal musical critiques, and the typewriter and the guitar were in continuous use. For the technofreaks, there was a computer.

By about four a.m. sleeping space became of prime concern. The lounge was wall-to-wall bodies, and the closable rooms had clearly implied DO NOT DISTURB signs. I ended up as one of the three bodies stretched head to toe along the hall. The thought of being trampled by one of the many visitors to the loo was not appealing, but somehow I fell asleep anyway. It was rumoured that Blair Ramage slept propped up in a corner of the laundry.

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That day was otherwise rather subdued, despite the efforts of the more physically minded to involve the rest of us sluggards in such abominations as frisbee. I spent much of the day talking music, with occasional sessions playing guitar with Robyn. There was also the oneshot. I went out with Mark to attempt to get the offset working. It was not a particularly successful attempt. Mark and Jeff stripped down the machine, adjusted everything that could be adjusted, and muttered the obligatory printing type swear words, but the only time we managed to get any ink onto a sheet was when one sheet flew out of the top of the machine at vast speed.

That evening people gradually faded away into the sunset, leaving Rob McGough, who stayed for a leisurely viewing on a Kurasa movie. Unfortunately it was being shown on Sydney's ethnic station, and the reception out in Smithfield was little short of atrocious without the correct ariel. Thus I can't really comment on the movie's finer points. What I did see reminded me of a slightly more subtle version of the old Samuri television series. I guess I'm not quite ready for Japanese culture yet.

Monday saw me helping Lou clear away the top layer of party debris. I was then due to head off to Jane and Gregor's place at Wollstonecraft. This seemed to me to be an ideal fannish suburb. I'd decided that it would be unfair to dump one Sydney household with me for the whole two weeks. Besides, Jane and Gregor's place had the advantage of being closer to the city, and there were a lot of things I still had to do.

The walk to the Fairfield railway station assured me that I was keeping my baggage within reasonable limits. If there's one thing I hate it's being so loaded down with awkward baggage that one can't walk a mile or two should the need become apparent. Thus my baggage for the trip consisted of a rucksack, containing my clothes and sleeping bag; a carry bag, holding Greg Benford's Ditmar, assorted printed matter, and more clothing; and a shoulder bag with maps, passport, tickets, and lots of printed matter. I think next time I'll see if I can do without the carry bag, and there's no way I'm going to be carrying another of those solid marble Ditmars.

Before going out to Wollstonecraft though, I had to drop in and see Robin Johnson. Robin deserves the credit for the success of my trip. He planned the air tickets, and showed me easier ways to do what I wanted within my budget, at the same time reminding me of things I would have forgotten, such as insurance. I don't envy Robin his self appointed task of acting as travel agent for Australian fandom. We're basically a rather flighty bunch, and I made several alterations to my ticket before I got things finalised. Anyway, having graubed a couple of bottles of South Australian wine, I set off for Jane and Gregor's, actually catching the same train as Jane had, though I didn't realise this until we got off at the station.

 Their flat is within spitting distance of the Sydney North Shore line, something for which I was grateful, until I was woken by a train hooter at six a.m. one morning, but then, we intercontinental travellers have to get used to noise.

Jane threatened dire consequences were Gregor and I to sit listening to Joni Mitchell records all night, so we refrained. The two bottles of South Australian wine proved stronger than I had anticipated. The household corkscrew disintegrated attempting to open the first bottle. Still, being cosmic minded fens, we were up to the

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Before leaving Smithfield, I'd arranged to go and see FLASH GORDON with Jeff, Mark, Kim and Rob McGough. That was scheduled for the next evening. Most of that day has faded into obscurity, but I do recall going up to the American consulate to obtain my entry visa. This took a little longer than anticipated, as the fact that I, a resident of Adelaide, was applying for my visa in Sydney, seemed to worry them. The fact that I was travelling on a British passport can't have helped either. I imagined computer scans of my files in the fifty minutes before my visa was issued.

The movie was, once again, very enjoyable. For me it captured the feel of Thirties serials far better than did RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, despite the camp humour and sixties music. We had coffee at a little place that seemed most bemused by our rather loud conversations. I guess they don't get many fans ~~and considering their prices it's no wonder~~. I then caught a late train out to Wollstonecraft, reliving my least favourite mugging in railway underpasses nightmares. Again the idea that I'd rather not be mugged by amateur Australians crossed my mind. Still, I guess, with my size and harriness, I'm probably not a mugger's first choice victim.

Wednesday could well have been the day I got my traveller's cheques. As I mentioned, the days did not register at all clearly. It was though the day of the royal nuptials, when Chuck and Di got hitched. That noted reactionary monarchist Jack Herman had arranged an official gathering to celebrate the event - black tie was compulsory attire.

I discovered the disadvantages of my minimal luggage. In my haste to discard all bar the most necessary clothing, I'd neglected to pack my dinner suit. The only tie I had with me was a red one. However, once more fannish ingenuity came to my aid. Using nothing but the back of my Spec Fic Conference name tag, and the beautiful pen that Cathy had given me, I produced a card proclaiming that my tie had been declared black by the Amalgamated Tie Wearers' Union. I can't say I blamed them either. My red tie is not exactly tasteful. Still, it got me in.

It was a pleasant evening, marred only by the wedding itself. The household put on a nice nosh, and I got to meet Stephen Hart, a member of APPLESAUCE I hadn't previously seen. (The fact that he'd spent a certain amount of time in the Middle East on archaeological digs might have something to do with this.) A fine fannish time was had by all, and, once again, I found myself taking one of the last trains out to Jane and Gregor's place.

Thursday night was again the Galaxy eating crowd. ~~We ate five galaxies!~~ I'd missed one while I was staying out at Smithfield, but figured on getting to another before leaving. The usual series of disagreements about places to eat ensued, and the group broke up. I joined the expedition that set off for the wilds of suburbia in search of an Italian restaurant which, Meron informed us, served excellent seafood. To be quite frank, seeing food was just about all I was up to, having converted most of my remaining cash into American travellers' cheques. Thus I limited myself to fairly simple food. The conversations were though excellent, which is, after all, the reason one goes eating with fans. The group included Jack and Cathy, Jane and Gregor, Andrew and Amanda, Greg and Meron, and Shayne. I have a feeling that Shayne was also suffering from emaciation of the wallet. She was one of the other Australians heading for Denvention.

Toronto

The drone of flying engines
Is a song so wild and blue

It scrambles time and seasons if it gets through to you.
Joni Mitchell

I finally arrived in Toronto at 4-10 p.m.. It was still Sunday. I had the standard pile of forms to fill in, but was rather amazed to discover that my bags weren't checked by Customs. It was a pity really, as I'd been looking forward to attempting to explain Greg Benford's Ditmar. I imagine that the fanzines would have taken a little explaining too.

Then came me second encounter with Canadian fandom. Mike Wallis, O.E. of TAPA, the Toronto based apa, and a fellow member of Spinoff, and Susan Madison were at the airport to meet me. Finding each other wasn't particularly difficult, as I was wearing my A in '83 t-shirt, and they were carrying a sign with the same legend. After a brief stop to allow me to change a travellers' cheque at the ridiculous rates offered at the airport, we climbed into a battered van they'd borrowed from a friend, and I got my first view of Canada. Despite the strange numberplates, and the unfamiliar street signs, it didn't seem much different from Australia. The similarity was compounded by the temperature, which stayed in the mid-twenties and thirties for most of my stay. It was a great deal more humid than I consider comfortable, but I was able to put up with that.

It wasn't until we reached their apartment that I was overwhelmed by a sense of the foreign. I guess I'm just not used to ten storey blocks of flats where you need a key to get into the building, and a key to get into the flat itself. The idea of having to get to the apartment via a lift that would have made any science fiction convention hotel proud was also novel. (By the way, my apologies for the use of both the terms flat and apartment. I find "flat" far more attractive, but Sue kept correcting me every time I used it, so I've sprinkled in the occasional "apartment" to make her happy. I'll also tend to give temperatures in Celcius.)

Strangely enough, despite the lack of sleep, I wasn't feeling particularly tired, and so was happy to accompany Mike and Susan on a trip into the city to see the James Bond movie FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. My fears of mugging were slightly soothed by being with two natives of the city. Still, I did tend to feel a little nervous when passed by cruising cars. I found the city far more cosmopolitan than any I'd encountered previously, and I did find the racial mixture strange. Adelaide is almost universally Caucasian. Toronto was magnificently mixed. I will admit to having difficulties in abandoning all the stereotypes I'd carried with me, and I did tend

to feel a little nervous, and a little curious when encountering such a concentration of different peoples. Unfortunately most of the fans I met were Caucasians, and so I never really got a chance to natter to many negroes, other than having a brief talk at Denvention with one guy who wanted to know how he'd find travelling in Australia. I advised him to avoid Queensland.

Anyway, the film introduced me to a couple of North American traditions, one being the omni-presence of pop-corn in American theatres, the other being the lack of featurettes. I was rocked to learn that the Gillam and Cleese shorts had not been shown with LIFE OF BRIAN when it did the circuit in the U.S. and Canada. What I can't recall is much about the film we saw. The trip must have hit me a little harder than I'd thought at the time.

Sue and Mike were wonderful hosts. They not only provided comfortable sleeping quarters, but also typewriter, guitar and stereo. Their place got a definite five stars for fannish accomodation. As chance would have it, the Monday was a public holiday, and there was a bar-b-que planned at Doris's place at which Mike Glicksohn would be present. I was feeling nervous about meeting Mike. I mean, he had been half of the fan guest of honour at a Worldcon which had been my very first convention. He was a REALLY BIG NAME FAN.

The first thing to strike me though was culture shock. True, the weather did look a little threatening, but the idea of a bar-b-que on a fire escape was somewhat mind-boggling. The discovery that the bar-b-que was to be barbequed frankfurts and barbequed cobs of corn also came as a shock to one for whom the mention of bar-b-ques conjures up images of snags, lamb-chops, onion, and great dollops of tomato sauce. Mind you, had I checked out the price of lamb chops before going, the shock would not have been anywhere near as great. Besides, Mike Glicksohn does a great barbequed cob of corn. (This has been a political announcement on behalf of the Glicksohn for DUFF executive)

I found meeting Toronto fandom for the first time a little difficult. It was strange in that, while they were obviously fans, and while the discussions were clearly fannish, all the references were wrong. I don't recall Peter Toluzzi or Kevin Dillon being mentioned once. It comes down to the fact that, although I'd learnt of some Toronto fans through fanzines, Mike, Mike, Faral and Victoria springing to mind, the rest were total cyphers to me, though obviously important people in Toronto fandom. Thus I spent perhaps too much time listening instead of talking. Not that I meant to be rude or uncommunicative, but I really needed to find out what was happening. I also fear that too much of my conversation input was - " Well, that's not how we do it in Australia" or " You know, he sounds just like this guy in Australia....." I talked to Mike Glicksohn for a while, but it was rather strange in that I don't have that much contact with the Australian fans he knows well, and Australian fandom has changed a lot since he was last over.

Naturally one of the key topics for discussion was the Canadian Postal Strike, which, at the time, was in its umpteenth week. I was fascinated by the mobility of Canadian fans. It seemed that half of Toronto fandom was either visiting the States, just back from visiting the States, or considering visiting the States in the near future. It must be nice to have other large fan centres within a four hour drive. This though did help Mike Wallis to keep TAPA going during the strike. He was using a Rochester fan's place as a mail drop, and was finding Toronto fans to ferry the zines back and forward.

The gathering broke up fairly early, with the majority of the folk heading off to play various video-games. I wasn't that interested in showing off my total inability at such things, and considered myself fortunate when Mike and Sue decided to go home instead. We had a quiet evening, and Mike and Sue enabled me to work out where I was, and how to get to the sorts of places I wanted to visit. I think my apathy was probably a symptom of jet lag, because I collapsed fairly quickly.

The next morning saw my first solo expedition into downtown Toronto. I was most impressed by the streetcar (Melbourne residents read "tram") system. Robin Johnson had told me in advance that Toronto had one of the best public transport systems in North America, and, from what I saw, I am quite inclined to agree with him. In addition to the streetcars, there were buses, trolley buses, and the subway. One's ticket could be used on a combination of these. I got to try all bar the trolleys during my visit.

While shopping I discovered that the new Pat Benatar album had been released, and so found myself a record shop. Since I didn't really want to lug an album all over the States with me, I purchased a cassette tape. The price looked very reasonable, far less than I would have paid in Australia. I walked over to the counter, and placed the tape there, along with the requisite amount of funny Canadian money. The guy behind the counter looked at me and said "Excuse me sir, but that'll be another fifty cents." "Huh?" I said. He then explained the sales tax system to me, at the same time pin-pointing my origins and country of birth from my accent. I guess there must be a few Australianisms creeping into my vocabulary. I wasn't at all impressed by the way sales tax was handled there. I'd far rather see the tax included in the price tag. It'd make things far less confusing, especially considering the fact that sales tax regulations varied quite a bit from place to place. In Toronto, I gathered, tax wasn't charged on books or food. However, meals above a certain price in restaurants had sales tax added.

There was one particularly huge shopping complex, the Eaton Centre, so big in fact that it had a subway station at each end. I spent a pleasant few hours wandering around looking at all the things I couldn't afford, and buying a couple of music magazines to find out what my chances would be of catching a concert or two during the trip. I also tried one of the very confusing American style cafeterias. There are times when one can be faced by too many choices. The Eaton Centre has a cafeteria complex featuring a number of different stalls. I ended up trying some Chinese food, and regretted it. The stuff sat like a lead weight in my stomach.

That evening Sue cooked up a lovely teriyaki beef, and then we went to visit a friend of Mike's who lived in an apartment just down the street. He was an ex-patriate Englishman, called Phil Wright. He and Mike had telephone answering devices, and had fun recording silly messages on them. I promised to do one in my best imitation ocker for Mike, but somehow never got around to it. We discussed the stupid driving laws and driving habits in our respective countries. Another topic was working conditions, and Mike and Phil were rather amazed to hear about long-service leave, a concept unknown in North America I gather. The fact that I could take a three month paid holiday for merely staying with the same company for ten years seemed to stagger most Americans I mentioned it to. I'm coming to the conclusion that Australian workers really don't know how good they've got it. Most Americans seemed to consider three weeks paid vacation a year to be good, whereas I'm fairly sure that four weeks is standard in Australia.

Wednesday saw me seeking out Bakka Books, Toronto's specialist sf bookstore. I'd sworn not to buy any books while in Canada. I didn't break my promise by much. I did though decide to acquaint myself with a bit of Canadian sf, and so picked up a couple of Canadian sf magazines, which seemed to be on a par with Crux or Futuristic Tales here in Australia. I also picked up a couple of Canadian printings of James White novels I hadn't been able to get at home.

Mike had managed to score a couple of free passes to RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK via another Toronto fan, and he gave me one, so I decided to while away the afternoon watching that. I wish I hadn't. I'm afraid that I'm basically squeemish, and I have an intense dislike for movies designed to shock me. RoTLA was definitely a movie in that category. It used the "jack-in-the-box" effect far too often for my nerves or my liking, and seemed an uneasy marriage of thirties serial and eighties special effects. It wasn't realistic as such, but some of the effects were far too real for my liking. I really don't go in for impaled bodies, propellers chopping people up, or

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The Japanese food was interesting, and I think, on the whole I enjoyed it. I didn't though do too good a job with my chop icks. Mike and Sue were polite, and didn't make too many rude comments. I started to experiment with Canadian beers, finding Labatt's Blue Lable to be the closest to my idea of a real lager, though Molson's wasn't too far off. This led rather naturally to further studies into the nature of North American plumbing. The urinals were the things that really fascinated me. I remember seeing one similar arrangement in England when I was a kid. At the time I'd been most unsure about the thing, since it was so far off the ground that I felt that it must be a new style of wash basin, and I certainly hadn't felt like displaying my childish ignorance by pissing in a wash basin. (Someone once defined a gentleman as someone who takes the dishes out of the sink before pissing in it.) This time around I knew what they were, but it still made me feel sorry for small children and midgets. The other plumbing fixtures were similar to those with which I was familiar, but contained so much water that they seemed to be an attempt to duplicate Lake Ontario in minature.

Thursday was another touristy day. I had intended to go to the top of the CN Tower, but I discovered that there were about eight hundred other tourists with the same idea in front of me. Besides, they charged money to go up there, and, having already been scared out of my wits in Toronto, by RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, I had no intention of paying good money to be petrified again.

By now I was starting to get the hang of Toronto, and started to notice the small things that tend to be overwhelmed by the initial impact of a strange city. I mean, noticing that people drive on the wrong side of the road is easy, but have you ever noticed that the same rule applies on footpaths? I got cursed on several occasions for walking against the flow of traffic.

Something else that struck me was how clean Toronto was. Seeing real street sweepers was strange. In Australia one might see the occasional street sweeping machine, but that's it, other than the ragged folk with garbage bags who tend to pick up only aluminium cans, which have deposits on them.

I killed quite a bit of time sitting reading in the Town Hall Square, which was rather pretty, but I had trouble believing Mike and Sue when they told me that people skated on the fountain in winter. There was a Canadian Policeman, complete with horse, whose main duty appeared to be to look scenic, and to pose for the tourists. The other thing that fascinated me was the car park ventilator outlet. My attention was first drawn to it when I noticed a couple of adolescent girls standing on the grid and squealing, while at the same time attempting to hold their skirts down, with varying degrees of success. There must have been a force five gale coming up out of that shaft. It gave a whole new dimension of meaning to the term "blow job".

Anyway, the girls, having exhausted the possibilities of this new form of entertainment, left, and were replaced by a group of adolescent boys, who were more interested in the aerodynamic potential of the system. They started by improvising hot-air balloons, using shirts tied at the cuffs and necks. Some of these must have reached a height of fifty feet before fluttering down into the street to be run over

by passing cars. That the kids themselves were not run over while retrieving the shirts was another of those miracles that modern science cannot even attempt to explain. The fun though seemed quashed by having to spend fifteen minutes getting a shirt out of a tree that really didn't want to part with it. I have a feeling that it was a mutated form of Charlie Brown's famous kite-eating tree. One kid though did discover that the up-draft was sufficient to levitate an empty soft drink can, and amused himself by juggling that along the vent.

That afternoon I was due to meet Mike and Sue at a place called the World's Biggest Bookshop. My study of Toronto had been rather less thorough than it should have been, because I spent an hour standing outside the wrong shop, and, when I finally realised this, I rushed to the correct shop, but, in my hurry, rushed right past it. It was a tribute to my tourism enmuscled legs that I got there only three quarters of an hour late, and a tribute to Mike's organisational skills that his plans had allowed for me being an hour late.

Mike's firm had organised a cruise on one of the Lake Ontario paddle boats, the Mariposa Belle, and, though it was the sort of thing that I would not, in a hundred years, have dreamt of doing in Adelaide, somehow the fact that this was a foreign city made all the difference. The boat itself was your standard mock river boat. It did not though take me long to run afoul of the local liquor laws.

Now, if you were to attempt to pass legislation to the effect that one could not drink alcoholic beverages in public parks in Australia, your government would be out on its arse in five seconds flat. However, in Toronto this was the case. Sale of alcoholic beverages was very strictly controlled, and, I think, was a government monopoly. (I could have that part wrong.) Anyway, it resulted in the weird situation where, on the boat, one could not go to the bar, on the second floor, to buy a drink. One had to go down to the first level, buy the requisite number of drink tickets, and then go back up to the bar and exchange the tickets for drinks.

However, once I had recovered from my ocker indignation, and from the mosquitoes who were obviously keen for a taste of fine imported blood, I relaxed and started to enjoy the cruise. The Toronto skyline was beautiful, and, every now and then, a yacht would glide silently past us. Under normal circumstances I would probably have objected to the raucous disco music that the boat's P.A. was blasting out across the otherwise mirror calm water, but, having continued my comparative study of Canadian beer, I was just inebriated enough to get out on the dance floor. Sigh. That I should see the day when I'd be dancing to the Village People and enjoying it. Just goes to show the strange effects that foreign travel can have on a person.

To make up the foursome, Mike had invited a very beautiful lady called Brenda, and I got the feeling that she was regretting the impulse to blind date. Let's face it, John ~~Revoltin'~~ Travolta I'm not, and, though I may have my virtues, I feel ~~h~~ that they are of a kind that only a fannish female can appreciate. Still, she put up with my attempts at dancing. Mind you, I got exhausted just watching Sue dance. I've seldom seen someone move that much on a dance floor. Finally though the boat drifted back into the dock. It was a beautiful way to spend an evening.

For reasons I still can't fathom, I felt fine the next day, though I don't recall being in any real hurry to get out of bed. When I finally did emerge it was merely to experiment with yet another in a long line of laundromats. I found it far cheaper than the Australian equivalent, especially considering the value of the Canadian dollar in comparison to the Australian dollar. In general I found North American laundromats to be far better equipped than their Australian cousins. They also tended to have a lot of vending machines.

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That evening was a quiet one, with the exception of Sue's groans. She was suffering from her previous evenings excesses to the point that she could hardly walk. It was an early collapse for all.

That afternoon we set out for the Science Centre, with plans to visit Dave Pengelley's place on the way there. We never made it to the Science Centre. It was wet, and I'd made the mistake of wearing thongs, which get very slippery when wet. I almost bowled Sue over on the set of steps leading down to the subway. However, via streetcar, subway, and bus, we reached the apartment building in which Dave lives, a place known to Toronto fandom as Fan Central. It's a fairly huge block, and a lot more modern than Mike and Sue's building. There were seven or eight fan establishments there at the time.

We dined at Mother's Pizza Place, and, though I don't generally like pizza, I indulged. I discovered during the trip that there's very little I won't eat. I was though, rather horrified to find that the jug of orange we ordered turned out to be Fanta orange. Living in a citrus growing area can spoil one for any substitute. (I noticed that, where I would have orange juice, Mike and Sue had apple juice.)

It was one of those parties where I got to meet a huge number of people, some of them being folk I'd wanted to meet for a long time, but, as is always the case, I didn't get to talk to any of them for anywhere near long enough. Thus I only got to speak very briefly with Victoria Vayne. Mind you, this was partially my fault as

well, as I have a feeling that she may have been a touch offended by my t-shirt. I'd had it made up in Toronto, and it said, in very big letters, BORING AUSTRALIAN. It is reputed that Victoria, in deciding not to stand for DUFF, did so because she found Australians too boring. I must admit, I shouldn't have had the t-shirt made up, but what the hell. A fella's got to have a little fun sometimes. Victoria, by the way, explained that she had been misquoted.

While talking to Canadian author Phylis Gottlieb, I discovered that she had been in Australia during the previous October. Mumble. No one ever tells me anything. Mind you, when I mentioned this later to assorted Australian fan it turned out that they hadn't known either. It's no good. We're going to have to keep a closer eye on our visitors. Phylis was interesting to talk to, but I was rather hampered by not having read any of her books.

Tanya Huff, the other Toronto member of Spinoff was also there, and I got to natter a little to her, and to Bill Marks, one of the editors of Myriad, a semi-prozine with a strong media leaning. He passed me a couple of copies to send to Futuristic Tales and the Cygnus Chronicler. I almost got to talk to fan artist Barry McKay, but didn't realise that he was there, until Mike mentioned it after we left.

Once again the fact that I was in a foreign country was impressed on me. I'd never before seen such a strange assortment of party munchies, including cheese flavoured corn chips, oreo cookies, and a box of doughnuts. Over the next five weeks I was to become very fond of corn chips. As far as flavour goes, they leave most potato chips for dead. Mind you, it only took one salt and vinegar chip from Lee Smoire at Denvention to make me thoroughly homesick, but I draw ahead of myself.

I spent a bit of time discussing various aspects of fanzines and fanart with Taral, and he showed me some of his originals, including a comic strip which he intended at that time to send to Rune. I was most impressed, though I could see why he preferred to have his work reproduced on a good quality offset. The quality of the artwork really doesn't come across otherwise. I asked him if he had anything that he wouldn't mind me using, and he said he'd see. He and Victoria also explained the non-appearance of DMQ. If it ever does eventuate it should be a monster.

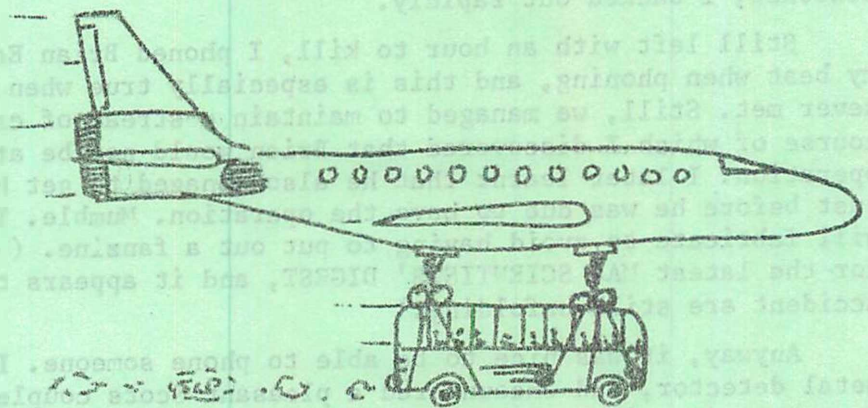
Sunday was reserved for picnicking. I met Howard Scrimgeour, another of Fan Central's inhabitants, and he drove us to the picnic grounds in High Park. Sue was still complaining of leg cramps, and I'm afraid I was far too smug about my ability to take physical exercise. I was though particularly looking forward to meeting a few more squirrells, as I'd been fascinated by those that I had met. Canada has lovely jet black squirrells with tails like exaggerated question marks. When the answer to the unvoiced question is, as mine tended to be, "Sorry. I haven't any peanuts." The squirrell's reply was a furry exclamation mark, as if to accuse me of a breach of diplomatic etiquette, in not arriving in the country properly prepared for squirrells.

Picnic attendees included some of the fans I'd met at the previous weekend's bar-b-que, along with Dave Pengelley, Marg Baskin, and yet another red-haired femme fan, Connie Otty, known surprisingly enough as Phoenix. (When I first heard her name, the language barrier rendered it as "Oddy", and I pondered on the possible connection between her and the Goodie of that name.) Connie cast avaricious glances at my Duck Dodgers t-shirt, and I offered to take it off if she'd do the same. My offer was treated with the scorn that it deserved.

To save face, I ended up playing frisbee, yet another sinful thing I would never consider doing in Australia. I can now understand why Eric Lindsay exhibits schitzophrenic behaviour while touring the States. Being overseas gives one the opportunity to do things that one would not consider doing at home, because one is freed by the knowledge that, since one is only there for a while, one is not likely to be forced to do it again. I mean, if I played frisbee in Australia, I'd be expected to continue to do so regularly. A brief fling in Canada can be written off as mere impulse.

Monday was nerve wracking. The U.S. air traffic controllers' strike was in full gear, and I phoned Republic on several occasions to find out what was happening about my flight to Minneapolis. All they could tell me was to go down to the airport and hope for the best. I caught the same street car as Mike was getting to work, and he pointed me in the right direction for the airport bus.

On arrival at the airport I discovered absolute chaos. The Canadian air traffic controllers had decided that U.S. air space was not safe, and were not allowing any flights to leave Canada for the U.S.. The people at the Republic counter were dithering about, not sure of what to do. My bags were taken, and I was told to wait for a while. I sat down, and took out my diary. I wrote a note, in large, unfriendly letters, which reads FUCKING PLANE STRIKE. At one point it looked as though my plane, which was actually to Detroit, was going to depart, and I was given my bags, and told to report to U.S. Customs to have my bags checked. I was just opening the first of them when the airline announced that my flight was definitely not going. I returned to the desk, by this time pissed off enough to push my way through to the front of the line in order to find out what was going on. The blokes behind the desk were doing their best, but after the second time they took a count to see how many passengers would be interested in getting a coach to Detroit, I was really annoyed. Fortunately someone with a bit of authority must have done something, because we were all issued with bus boarding passes, and, after a very flustered guy checked ten times to make sure that the coach was full, we set out for Detroit.



The company wasn't exactly scintillating either. I carefully avoided the elderly woman who had tried to tell me her life story while we were waiting to board the coach, and found myself seated next to a fairly attractive woman, whose only topic of conversation seemed to be the way Republic Airlines had taken her money for the last time. Sigh. So much for all my Penthouse letter column fantasies about women on long distance bus journeys.

After that it was a matter of a bit more scenery and a few car plants on the way to the Detroit Airport. It may have been my imagination, but the roads seemed more overgrown than they had in Canada. The greenery was certainly more dense. I gawped at railcars emblazoned with names I'd only previously seen on my Rail Baron board. I'd expected a Customs' check at the airport, but the bus dumped us at the Republic terminal, and left us to fend for ourselves. The airport was particularly crowded, and it took a while to get baggage checking formalities out of the way. I then went searching for somewhere to change a travellers' cheque.

They say that to truly appreciate the size of an airport, one must walk around it. I have all too vivid an impression of the Detroit terminal. It really is a big bastard. It did not though, as far as I was able to ascertain, have banking facilities open after six p.m.. I found a machine that would issue me with American Express Travellers' Checks, if I had an American Express Card. I didn't. Besides, what I needed was the cash. I already had American Express Travellers' Checks. Finally I hit upon the idea of going into one of the many souvenir stores that littered the area. There I purchased a spoon for my mother, and received change of my fifty dollar cheque. My mother, though making it clear that she didn't expect any expensive presents, did ask that I pick up a few souvenir spoons for her collection. I had already grabbed one in Toronto, and so added a Detroit sample to the set.

X This provided me with enough loose cash to get a beer. This was a mistake. RULE ONE :- Never drink in airport bars. They are always exorbitantly priced. This place had Exorbitant written all over it. I think it must have been the proprietor's name. No. I lie. It was actually called The Shamrock Inn, or something equally gross. The prices were enough to turn a leprechaune green. Having slowly sipped my \$1-75 schooner, I backed out rapidly.

Still left with an hour to kill, I phoned Brian Earl Brown. Now, I'm never at my best when phoning, and this is especially true when I'm phoning someone I've never met. Still, we managed to maintain a stream of casual nattering, during the course of which I discovered that Brian would not be at Denvention, due to an operation. I later learnt that he also managed to get himself injured in a car crash just before he was due to have the operation. Mumble. The excuses that some people will fabricate to avoid having to put out a fanzine. (Actually Brian wrote it up for the latest MAD SCIENTISTS' DIGEST, and it appears that the ramifications of the accident are still unfolding.)

Anyway, it was nice to be able to phone someone. I then went through yet another metal detector, and encountered a pleasant Scots couple who had been on the bus. We nattered until departure time.

The flight to Minneapolis was in a rather grotty D.C. 9, but, having checked the distances on my map, I was glad to be in an aeroplane of any description. I suppose, being a Labor voter, and a pale pink liberal, I should have been ranting about the injustices that Reagan had piled upon the poor underpaid traffic controllers. I should have been happy to sleep in airport lounges, knowing that I was doing that fascist bastard one in the eye. As it was, I was glad that he had taken a strong line on the strike, because it meant that I got everywhere that I had planned to get. I don't know how many times my life was endangered by incompetent air traffic control, but I did get places at roughly the times I had planned. Fuck the philosophy of the thing. I was being thoroughly pragmatic.

On board the plane, the spiel on emergency procedures was almost identical to that I'd become accustomed to on Australian flights, except that the accent was slightly different, and, rather than telling us about life jackets, we were informed that our seat cushions would act as flotation devices should the need arise. Once more I made the mistake of asking for white coffee. The reply I got was "With or without cream?" I guess Americans must assume that we Australians segregate coffee according to whether it is to be drunk by whites or by aboriginals.

A vertical line drawing of a stylized plant. At the bottom, there are three leaves. A long, thin stem rises from the leaves, curving slightly to the right. On the stem, there are two small, teardrop-shaped buds. The upper bud is open, showing a flower with five petals and a central stamen. The lower bud is also open, showing a flower with five petals and a central stamen. Above the upper flower, there is a circular object, possibly a moon or a sun, with a horizontal line passing through its center. The entire drawing is enclosed in a rectangular border. The signature 'E. B. Smith' is at the bottom right.

Arrival in Minneapolis was just like coming home. ~~The/airport/was/almost/empty/~~ There to meet me were Joyce Scrivner, Denny Lien, and Ken Fletcher. Since I'd seen Joyce and Denny barely two months earlier, it was almost like having never left them. We exchanged Australian gossip while waiting for the carousel to disgorge my luggage. Joyce had some pieces of Australian gossip that I hadn't heard. It was good to see Ken too. It'd been two years since his DUFF trip.

We then went out to Joyce's car. There were a few comments about catching a bus, but I was so wiped out by the trip, and by seeing them again that their attempts to pull a poor Australian's leg went by the boards. I discovered that Joyce drove a Pinto. This had much the same calming effect on me as had getting onto a D.C. 10. The fact that Joyce had chronicled the difficulties she'd had with the beast in various apas didn't re-assure me in the least. I kept looking out the back window to ensure that no cars were planning rear-end collisions in the immediate future. This also gave me the chance to catch a little night time Minneapolis scenery.

We dropped Ken off at his place, and then went to Joyce and Denny's, a house that I could easily grow to like, were it not for the landlord's optimistic estimate of its worth. It is an old two storey wooden structure, with a large basement, and would make a great setting for an H.P. Lovecraft story. There is even a brooding and hideous furnace in the basement, which Denny calls Chthulu. Fortunately, since it was summer, I didn't witness the thing being fueled. I cannot help though but suspect that the fueling might be less mundane than such procedures usually are. (" I can't understand it Joyce. We're only getting a thousand litres of hot water to the postman now-a-days.")

The rooms were a fair approximation of heaven, with bookshelves taking up most of the available wall space. I was given the choice of the two studies, but, being unused to high altitude

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The shower in the basement was more reminiscent of the sort of thing one sees in episodes of M.A.S.H., and I couldn't shake the feeling that, any moment, Alan Alda was going to rush down the stairs yelling "Incoming wounded!" Showering in what seems to be an ex-Army shower, overlooked by a furnace called Chthulu is one of the many experiences that somehow make overseas travel seem worthwhile.

I was also introduced to a fanzine collection which seemed a smidgeon larger than Taral's; two mimeos, both broken; plus a ditto machine, which was working. I found it a shame that such a fannish household should not have any operational duplicating equipment. I offered to have a look at the mimeos, but somehow never got around to it. They were very different to anything I'd ever used anyway.

The next morning Joyce gave me a lift over to Uncle Hugo's, the Minneapolis SF Bookstore, run by Don Ulyly. I croggled. Uncle Hugo's is exactly the sort of place a science fiction bookshop should be. The huge racks of new stock were impressive enough, but I've never before seen such a selection of secondhand stock. It was there that I bought most of the rest of the books that I'd had no intention of buying while I was in the States. I'd promised to pick up a book for Justin, which, as it happened had arrived at Hugo's that very morning, and hadn't even been uncrated. I also found a copy of THE WITCHES OF KARRES for Darryl, to prevent his having to continually borrow my copy. Not that I mind lending out books, but wiping the drool marks off the covers tends to become somewhat of a chore.

I also got introduced to someone in Uncle Edgar's, the mystery bookshop next door to Hugo's, and I remember talking to her briefly, since we shared an apa. I can't, unfortunately, remember who she was. (Typical Ortlieb memory at work again. I can remember the names of furnaces, but not the names of women.) In Hugo's I found a cute pewter dragon, and a number of nice cards. The dragon I had a customer for. Mandy Herriot's love for dragons is an immutable facet of Australian fandom, and I had promised to try to get her a dragon in exchange for the crash space that she and Phil had so kindly provided.

After that, I headed into downtown Minneapolis, only to be thoroughly confused. Minneapolis is a "closed" city. It seems that most of its shopping areas are inside, rather than presenting large open frontages to the public. I guess this is due to the weather. In Adelaide, the weather never really gets cold enough to make insulation a major consideration. In Minneapolis, I found that most of the shopping complexes were in enclosed arcades much as they had been in Toronto, except for the fact that they were more enclosed squares than they were arcades. This is all very well when you know a city, and know where to go, but, for a visitor, it is very difficult to determine which buildings contain the shopping complexes. I did find a post office, and the American Express and Republic offices though, so things weren't too bad. (Mind you, I never managed to re-find that particular post office.)

The main shopping mall suffered, even in comparison to Adelaide's major shopping district. It didn't seem to have any spirit at all. I was looking for a decent street directory to add to my collection, but American street directories seem very lacklustre compared to those in Australia. I settled for a map instead.

Though I never actually got to see much U.S. scenery from ground level while travelling between cities, I made up for this with the amount of shoe leather I left on the sidewalks of the cities I visited. In Minneapolis this was largely accidental. Denny had given me a rough bus map, but I wasn't too sure about my ability to use it. On the other hand, I am quite good at following street maps, so, having walked into the city from Uncle Hugo's, I walked back out to Joyce and Denny's place. It was a bloody hot walk, made worse by my inability to find anywhere to sit down and have a cool drink.

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That night Joyce had arranged a trip to the cinema with Eric Rome. It was one of those university area theatres that ran double features, in this case, OUTLAND and ZARDOZ. The omnipresent pop-corn machine was there. As for the films, well, OUTLAND didn't hit me as hard as RoTLA had, but I do feel that the special effects blokes had had a rather exaggerated idea of the effects of explosive decompression. The plot relied on some very silly things being done by the bad guys. I will grant the possibility of stupid gunmen on Earth in the future, but why anyone would go to the expense of shipping two clutzes like those sent to nail the Marshall on Ganymede or wherever is beyond me. As a remake of HIGH NOON, I guess it wasn't that bad, and Connery was its saving grace.

ZARDOZ is a movie for which I have a soft spot. Sure, the science in that isn't much better than the stuff I've been rubbishing in OUTLAND, but ZARDOZ does show some signs of plotting, and the alien future society of the dwellers in the vortex is most convincing. It's also the best thing I've seen John Alderton do. There's a little bloodshed, but it's tastefully executed, and doesn't leap out of the screen at one. Above all, the film is wonderfully whimsical.

The next day was a very laid back one. I discovered that I need a reasonable supply of these while travelling. I spent most of the day typing a contribution for Stipple-apa, and writing out postcards. I was looking forward to contributing to Stipple on the correct paper size. In the evening I met Gordon Miller, who is in both Stipple and Spinoff. He was moving to Minneapolis for a year's study, and had come down to search for an apartment. We had a quiet evening helping Denny demolish some of his beer stock.

All in all, spending a quiet Wednesday was a good idea, because Thursday was wonderfully hectic. Linda Lounsbury had taken the day off, and she and Joyce escorted me around the touristy areas of Minneapolis, starting with Fort Snelling, a local historical site to which Linda got us free admission through her historical society membership.

I've been interested in military history for quite some time now, having visited a couple of English castles while I was a kid. Thus the opportunity to wander around a genuine frontier fort was not to be missed. From the outset I was impressed by the American way of doing things. The fort had been reconstructed a la 1827, complete with a large group of students who played the roles of the forts inhabitants. A young guy in uniform conducted a guided tour, for the benefit of the visitors. As visitors, we were thrust into the role of rich folk who'd come up from New Orleans on vacation. I found the guide's habit of chewing tobacco and spitting on the floor to be carrying authenticity and lack of hygiene a little far, but I do appreciate the fact that most American actors are still fairly closely tied to the method school.

The actual construction of the fort seemed to have a lot in common with some of the smaller English castles. I was a little disappointed to find that the fort never actually saw action, but, having later discussed the place's design faults with Dave Arneson, maybe it was all for the best. It was fun talking to some of the staff there, and watching the muskett drill. Having Linda as a native guide was also useful. She knew which hairy questions to ask the guide, and also acted as a "plant" in the tour group, in order to unleash several of the guide's prepared routines.

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I tried lunching in a Woolworths cafeteria, and regretted it. One of the worst things about not knowing a city is being unable to find good cheap food. Still, one can't have everything. One thing I didn't have was a supply of clean clothes, and, for some reason, my delicate artistic soul rebelled against the idea of hanging clothes to dry in Joyce and Denny's basement. Thus I needed a few pairs of clean underwear to tide me over until I got the chance to continue my study of foreign laundromats. I bought some, and was pleasantly surprised by the price of clothing. Mind you, the fly structure of the underpants was of the type that leads to stories in which the hero meets a famous author while pissing on his shoes in a convention hotel urinal. Still I had to establish Australians as a nation of clean underwear users.

In order to keep a high profile at the party, I was wearing a bush hat, that had been lent to me. Herman Schouten though pointed out that this was really unnecessary, as my open mouth was quite sufficient to give me away at fifty paces. I will admit to opening my mouth quite a lot. That party managed to introduce me to a whole swag of people with whom I'd shared apa and/or correspondence for several years. I shouldn't really attempt to mention names, as I'm bound to miss some. However, I was particularly pleased to meet Dave and Caryl Wixon, Gerri Balter, Garth Danielson, Judy Cilcain, and Michael Parker Smith. Dave had sent several LoCs; Gerri I'd had some interesting apa conversations with, and I was interested in meeting someone who could break a man's wrist; ~~h~~ Garth also interested me, as I wanted to meet the sort of person who could put out BooWatt; Judy had been responsible for some of the best zines run through Stipple; and Michael Parker Smith I was counting on for some information about the Minneapolis new wave scene. As it was, I never got around to seeing any of the Minneapolis bands, but it was fun talking to Mike. He'd managed to find some Hardy's Cabernet Savignon, and I didn't have the heart to tell him that I wasn't really into red wine. (Oops. That'll get me thrown out of the Bangsund school of fine fan writing for sure.)

The party was fairly typical, as far as fannish parties go. There were all sorts of discussions on music, other fans, beer, other fans, life, the universe, and other fans. I got to go through the photographs that Joyce had from her Australian trip, maligning the people captured there, and correcting some of Joyce's lables. I also got to meet Linda Ann Moss, and Dave Romm and Nate Bucklin. Dave had a lot to do with the Shockwave radio programme. Karen Johnson was hurrying around with a ditto master, trying to get enough material together to save her membership in Stipple-apa. Stipple's Official Koolaider, Matthew Tepper, was also there, along with his faithful duck caller Mike Wood.

In addition, my note book mentions the names John Bartelt, Barney Neufeld, David Cargo, Dean Gahlon, Blue Petal, Joyce Odum, Will Shetterly, Emma Bull, Carol Kennedy, Jonathan Adams, and Sharon Kahn, along with several folk I'd already met, like Linda Lounsbury, Mark Digre, Gordon Miller and Eric Rowe. No doubt there were others, but it was extremely confusing. Eventually I did get to spend more time with a few of the people mentioned here, and got to know them a little better, but, even considering

The first re-convening of the party was the Stipple-apa collation at Blas Mazzeo's place the next day. Denny drove, and we picked up O.K. Matthew Tepper from his apartment. Matthew attempted to correct my highly biased opinions on Richard Strauss, but without that much success, as I wasn't particularly strong in those convictions anyway, considering his music to be basically boring.

Part of the afternoon's entertainment was watching Blas feed live mice to his corn snake. He informed us that there was another snake, a black racer, which had escaped into the ventilation system. We didn't get to see that one. The previous Stipple mailing had mentioned that official uniform, i.e. uirthday suits, would be worn during the collation. Fortunately this proved to be false. I do not feel comfortable without clothing, and probablt never will unless I get my body looking a little less rotund.

I also got to spend a little more time nattering to Gerri Balter and Herman. Gerri had her foot in a cast, following their trip to Alaska. The fact that she'd broken it coming down some steps though was a bit of a letdown. I mean, she could have done it escaping from a bear or something. As it was, their only bear story was of the one that was rooting around in some garbage bins, thus keeping Gerri from the ladies' room.

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Later in the proceedings, I got to try some Minneapolis style Irish tobacco. For some reason this was indulged in in the bathroom, despite the fact that Blas himself was among the smokers. I guess Minneapolis fans have their own customs in this regard. Non-smokers must have bloody strong bladders too. The substance itself was pleasant, though not much stronger than South Australian variants I've tried.

There was also the distribution of the Holy Stipples. It was nice to be able to collect my copy in person rather than awaiting the post office snail. Matthew had gone out and duplicated the official organ while the rest of us were eating.

But the evening still wasn't over. I continued on to Linda Ann's place, where I was introduced to Nate's beautiful old nylon string guitar, and Linda Ann's cats. I can't remember whether or not I was introduced to Dave Romm's plumbers' kit, which means that I probably was. Linda then drove me back to Denny and Joyce's place.

The fact that I slept through the next morning will probably come as no real surprise. The afternoon was spent in quiet reading of Greg Benford's *TIMESCAPE*. I'd bought a copy in Uncle Hugo's, figuring that, if I had to present him with a Ditmar for the book, it probably would be best to have read the book myself. Unfortunately my short-term memory was shot, and I still can't remember anything of what I read.

That evening Denny and I went to Linda Ann's for poker. Players were Denny, Linda Ann, Dave, Dean Gahlon, Mike Wood, Don Elyly, Kara Dalkey and me. Kara, another member of the Albany Free Traders, was one of the Stipple members I hadn't gotten around to meeting. She impressed me, though I must admit that she was a lot shorter than I'd imagined her to be. Together this fine group of Minnesota card sharps managed to fleace me of \$2-50. So much for my plans to recoup most of my travel expenses through my poker playing skills. Fortunately I'd already been introduced to many of the strange fannish poker variants by Lee Smoire during her Australian trip. Thus games such as Anaconda and Fiery Cross came as no real surprise. Due to our large gathering, the number of cards that could be drawn was reduced, and seven card stud was cut down to six card stud. (Gee, cutting a stud. The unkindest cut of all...) There was also a variant called Garter Snake, which was Anaconda without the passing. I won't go into all the rules here. If you want to know more, write to Mike Wood. He seems to keep track of an inordinate number of poker variants.

After the game had been broken up by various protestations of work the next day, I got to spend some more time nattering to Linda Ann, DavE, Dean and Nate, who had, by this time, returned. We tested out DavE's magnificent plumbing system, and though it didn't quite come up to the standards of the legendary Ramsbottom device, the mass of brass fittings was pretty.

I played the Adventure version of Rob McGough's Dune Show, but I fear that the accents were a little much for the assembled listners. DavE, however, borrowed the tape to play on the Shockwave Radio Show the next week. I said I'd try to get along to the studio, but never made it. Linda Ann drove me home again. She was one of many people who went literally out of their way to help me, and I'd like to re-express my gratitude here.

Yet another morning was allowed to pass unnoticed. The afternoon was reserved for laundromatting. Joyce and Denny gave me clear directions, but neglected to take into consideration my lack of basic observation skills. I must have walked right past the place without seeing it. The fact that the street was full of grotty little X rated movie places had nothing to do with it... Nonest...

It was a lovely afternoon for a long walk. It gave me a reasonable idea of what the inner suburbs of Minneapolis were like, and I eventually found myself at The Little Tin Soldier, which, as its name suggests, is an outlet for figurines. I'd promised Nanette that I'd try to get her a female cleric figure, and was lucky enough to find a packet of four, thus giving her a choice. Otherwise the place was a little disappointing. Their stocks were particularly low, and I had no luck in finding a wyvern for my brother Chris.

I continued along, but soon got the feeling that if I didn't find a laundromat soon, I'd end up in one or other of the Dakotas. I took the next street heading downtown, and found a laundromat. It was not quite the model of sanitation that I might have hoped, but I wasn't really willing to bet on my chances of finding another, so I lowered my standards. The place had a soft drink dispenser, so I took the opportunity to try a root beer. I'd wanted to try the stuff because I wasn't quite sure what it was, my two guesses being ginger beer or sarsaparilla. I found, much to my distaste, that it was a variant on the latter. Considering the Australian slang usage of the term "root", I cannot think of a more inspired name for a drink. It gave me something with which to compare the taste of vegemite i.e. Vegemite tastes as bad as root beer.

On the long haul back, I picked up a cassette of the Deborah Harry album KOO KOO. It was extremely disappointing, sounding very much like the sections from Blondie's AUTOAMERICAN, of which I had not been that fond. I don't find Harry's voice to be strong enough to carry the material she's been trying of late. She should have stuck to basic punk. Mind you, the Giger cover was nice.

That evening Joyce, Denny and I queued for rush seats for a production of THE TEMPEST at the local theatre centre. Unfortunately we picked the wrong night. The show was sold out, so we went around to a local health food restaurant, The Mud Pie, to indulge in some desserts. It just so happened that the restaurant was next to a second-hand record shop, and so I broke my vow relating to buying records in the States. It was an understandable transgression though. I'd only found one Birtha album in Australia. The shop had a copy of another. There were also two Firesign Theatre Albums, but I could only afford one. After a little nosh, we returned to Denny and Joyce's for a well needed early night.

Tuesday was the day that Ken Fletcher had arranged to take me around the Como Zoo, home of the late unsuccessful presidential candidate Wombat the Wombat. Ken's father is the Zoo Director, and this got us a lot of places that we wouldn't otherwise have seen. I'm not sure though that this was an altogether good idea. I hadn't reckoned with John Fletcher's carefully developed zoo keeper type sense of humour. The first thing he showed us was the new cat house, which is, incidentally named after John, but he didn't mention that. It's a beautiful building, and gives plenty of space to the tigers, and the other big cats there. John decided that we should see the guts of the building, and led us through the service corridors, past a set of heavy wire mesh gates. Just as he replaced the hefty looking padlock, locking us in, he muttered "If any of the tigers are out of place just tell me," or words to that effect. The effect it had on me was to induce instant paranoia. I did tjough loosten up enough to admire the adolescent tiger and puma, but even so I was continually looking over my shoulder to make sure that my acquaintance with the cat family didn't become too intimate.

After that we wandered around, and took in the rest of the zoo. It's a fairly small one, but is undergoing extensive renovations, the first since it was built in the thirties, and is going to be a very pleasant place within a year or two. I got to meet the famed Woscar the Wombar, and found him upholding the great traditions of the

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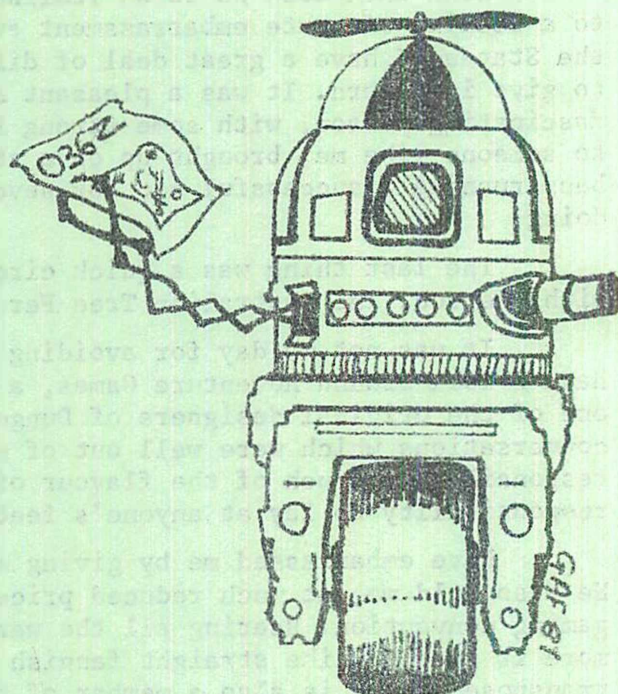
¶ I took another crack at the Minneapolis bus system the very next day. I can now understand why Minn-stf supports zeppelins. It must be highly frustrating to live in a city so poorly serviced by public transport. (Mind you, considering John Steinbeck's comments on service stations in THE GRAPES OF WRATH, maybe "serviced by public transport" does cover the situation.) This time it did, though, work, and I got dropped off within reasonable walking distance of the University. I intended to go and annoy Denny in the Library before going and nattering to Gerri Balter in the department of Indian Studies.

X Denny showed me his cute little data retrieval systems, and once more confirmed my opinion that, one of these days, these computer thingies might be useful for something other than providing their worshippers with jargon to sprout at parties. However, considering the number of students who came in asking for help, I figured that Denny was busy, and so went up to Gerri's office. She was having lunch, so had time for a brief natter before getting back to work. I was once more far too smug about not having to work.

I considered getting the bus back to Joyce and Denny's, but gave that idea up when I realised that I didn't know how to do this. I could, however, see the downtown Minneapolis skyline quite clearly, and I knew how to get the bus from there, and so I walked into the city. I have a feeling that I might have passed through a bit of the less savoury part of Minneapolis in the process, but I came to no harm. I did encounter a rather strange pedestrian who gave me instructions on how to avoid the tangled knot of freeway that stood between me and the city, but otherwise the walk was uneventful.

I found a quite friendly deli, and had a huge turkey sandwich for a surprisingly low price. The bloke at the counter was rather taken aback when I returned my pickle, but the idea of polluting perfectly good turkey with a piece of gherkin was not one that appealed to my culinary better sense. Having grabbed a few more postcards, I made my way back to the Huddling Place to fill them in. The list of people to whom I had determined to send cards was slowly diminishing.

That evening was another quiet and restful one, with the exception of returning a ten foot ladder to Lalli's place. Carrying a ten foot ladder in a Pinto is not easy. We had about six feet of it protruding from the back hatch, with an off-white rug tied to the end to warn people. The trouble was that the added weight of the rug overballanced the ladder, and so I had to complete the trip leaning down onto the ladder and feeling more than a little like a character in a Keystone Cops' movie. Denny, who was driving, took as many side streets as possible, and had nightmare visions of back-end collisions driving the legs of the ladder into our backs.



[illegible]

Having posted some of my excess books home, I felt a weight off my shoulder, and was thus in fine spirits when Dave and Caryl Wixon and Joyce took me for a riverboat cruise on the Mississippi. The trip went from St Paul up to just beyond Fort Snelling and then back again, thus I got to see the river's eye view of the fort. It was a commanding presence. I also got to view a wonderful example of the free enterprise system in action. One of the railway companies once built a swinging bridge over the river, only to find that, when the bridge was open, it hung over someone else's land. Said someone else had no intention of allowing the railroad to park their bridge over his land, thus the company had to cut a bit off the swing end of the bridge, and build the other end further out into the river. Now, had this happened in Australia, the land would have been compulsorily purchased, and the land owner would probably have been right royally screwed on the price too. To be quite honest, I'm not sure which of the systems works better.

We spent a lot of time in assorted fannish natter and beer drinking, which, I'm sure, annoyed the rest of the tourists, since we'd snagged the best viewing spot on the boat only to sit talking about cons, apas, zines and Australia, in the process drowning out the canned announcements. I did though pick up a couple of pieces of information, and I got to watch a grain barge being loaded.

On arriving back, we hit one of the St Paul second-hand book shops, which was just across the street from the Civic Centre. I made a careful note of that because it was the venue for the Benatar concert. I restricted myself to a copy of ALICE IN WONDERLAND, and THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY. The conversation then turned to food, and I mentioned in passing that I hadn't sampled any of the giant desserts that Leigh Edmonds had mentioned in his trip report. Thus a detour was made to a place called BRIDGE-MANS, which specialised in icecream.

The choice was devastating, but one item caught my attention. It was called a Lala Palooza, and one recieved a medal if one finished it. Dave then told me that only Carey Handfield and Denny Lien had ever been seen to finish one. I know when I'm out of my league. I set my sights lower, and ordered a Lala Palooza junior. I now understand why I saw so many chuuby American kids. If American kids can finish one of those things, it's no wonder that the blimp plays such an important role in Minnstf mythology. The thing was served in an outsized brandy balloon, and had layer upon layer of icecream, nuts, whipped cream, and assorted syrups and toffees. I'm afraid Denny seemed a little disappointed when I got back and I explained that I had no real appetite for dinner, but when I told him of my giant icecream encounter, he seemed a little more forgiving.

Friday was spent in preparation for the rigours of the weekend. I hit the laundromat. This time though I got to the correct one. It was fascinating. I didn't attempt to calculate the number of machines there, but there must have been well over a hundred once the washers, driers, soap dispensers, chance machines, Space Invaders Games, and drink and munchie dispensers were taken into account. The whole place was a civic centre in miniature, and whole families seemed to be having a wonderful time. I know the kids were. They were using the trolleys as vehicles when the attendants weren't looking, and I had to discourage a couple of the little dears from using me as a stepping stone in order to get to the table they were playing on.

The afternoon was spent sampling the very limited joys of American daytime television. I gave in after an hour, and wrote a letter to my parents instead.

There was a Minn-stf meeting on the Saturday, though I feel that the title "meeting" was a little misleading. I certainly didn't notice any business being brought to

A pencil sketch of a unicorn's head in profile, facing left. The unicorn has a single, spiraling horn and a flowing mane. The drawing is signed 'Jane Taubman' and the number '81' in the bottom right corner.

Jane
Taubman 81

Since the assault had failed, Joyce and Linda decided that there was no point in keeping together, and so we went our separate ways. I spent most of my time with Linda Ann, checking out interesting eats, and looking at some of the jewelry. The wine stalls were no help in my search for reisling, though they did have a nice mead. I also tried a turkey drumstick, but found it too course and gristle filled for my liking. One stall sold a delicious deep fried vegetable mix. We also went down to the archery stall, and I bought myself a few arrows in the hope that my archery skills were still reasonable. They weren't. I remembered how to hold the arrow, and how to release it without losing too much skin from my arm, but that was about it. While there, Linda introduced me to Cathy Marschall, who, in full Robin Hood gear, was drumming up custom for the archery.

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usually have for creepy crawlies, and the fact that he was extremely "hairy" made him seem almost cute. I did not though accept the invitation to stroke the beast. Later we got to sit in on a show put on by the zoo which featured a particularly stage struck raven. The way that the bird managed to upstage its keepers would have made Gabor proud. It disappeared into the trees, and had to be coaxed down before it would deign to perform, picking quarters out of people's hands.

The jugglers there were also something. There was one guy who juggled torches while lying on a tightrope. He still managed to keep an amusing banter going while doing this. Unfortunately the Karamazovs had stopped coming to the Festival, so I never got to see them.

One stall was selling a selection of the most beautiful Heath Robinson devices I've ever seen. They were constructed from brass, and had elaborate geer trains and the like, so that the dragon's wings flapped as you wheeled it along, and the whale's mouth opened and shut, allowing the little brass Jonah to stand and look out. The prices on these were, unfortunately, well out of my range, and I doubt very much that they would have survived the trip back to Australia.

The real low point of the Festival was the duel between two fencers known as Snot and Puke. Having watched their performance I have some insight as to where old jokes go when they die. It was the silliest duel I have ever seen, somehow combining elements of Wayne and Schuster, The Three Stooges and Lenny Bruce. It was grand farce of the basest kind, and I was disgusted to find that I was laughing as much as anyone else there. I kept having to remind myself that my taste in humour was much more refined than that.

And, while on the topic of farces, that pretty much described any attempt to find anyone at the Fest. Linda and I eventually ran into Eric and Joyce, who had to leave early, and thus put the return of Denny into our hands. After wandering around for about twenty minutes, during which time we did little but get hot, Linda and I decided that the easiest way to find Denny was to sit down and wait for him to come to us. Strangely enough it worked particularly well, in that we not only snared Denny, but we also caught Cathy the same way. The only people for whom it did not work were Emma Bull and Will Shetterley who were also there that afternoon. We saw ~~h~~ neither hide nor hair of them.

Finally, weary of foot, and, in my case, deshevelled of clothing, we decided it was time to head back to Minneapolis for the Minneapa collation at Judy Cilcain's place. A flower seller and a story teller had set up at the exit, and I bought Linda a rose while we listened to the story. The rose was a little wilted, but then so were we.

The trip back was fun. We were directed to a rear exit, obviously to avoid the traffic congestion that would have resulted had we all attempted to leave the way we'd come. As we wended our way down the track I noted some plants that looked strangely familiar. On asking Linda, she replied that I had indeed seen what I thought I'd seen, but that there was no real point in going back for a closer look unless I was interested in rope making. The plants grow in Minnesota, a legacy of the hemp plantations of an earlier era. However, the esteem in which they are held can be gauged from their nickname - Minnesota Giggle.

After a flying visit to Joyce and Denny's which enabled me to grab a fresh shirt, we went out to the Minneapa collation. I croggled at the size of the mailing. Since it is a monthly apa, there is no way I could afford to have it airmailed, so I abandonned any idears of joining the waiting list. I spent a bit of time watching the bridge players, got entived into a late Risk game with Linda, and John, whose second name I never did discover. I also got to natter a little to Nate, DavE and Linda, before Judy threw us out, having to work the next morning. This was a good thing as I still had to pack for the next morning's flight to Seattle. Linda Ann drove me back. I realised that I was going to miss Minneapolis.

Seattle

The end of the journey must soon be in sight
Birth is the start of the swansong.

Sandy Denny

The Monday morning saw the weather absolutely miserable, and me feeling very similar. Joyce drove me out to the airport, but it was a real effort to get out of the car. You may notice a rather strong Minneapolis emphasis in this report. I don't think I've ever found a group of people with whom I've felt so comfortable in so short a time. However, I'd already stretched my travel plans too far, and couldn't justify taking even more time in Minneapolis, though the fact that my flight from Seattle to Birmingham stopped in Minneapolis meant that I could have cut the Seattle leg altogether, and I was tempted.

I guess I must have felt like talking, and ended up giving an impromptu lesson in Australian geography to the middle-aged woman in the seat next to me. As chance had it, I had a couple of Australian stamps in my bag, and I gave her those. It was a good way to recover from my post-Minneapolis blues.

Seattle airport was almost identical to the others I'd encountered. Having collected my bags from yet another set of baggage carousels, I phoned Cliff Wind who'd offered me floor space for my first two nights in Seattle. He, however, was booked onto a flight to Albuquerque on the Wednesday, and so had lined up other crash space for me for the other two nights. Cliff works night shift for the dread Post Awful, and so was able to pick me up from the airport. I had met him in Sydney, and so was able to recognise him without any difficulty. The reverse was not the case, as I'd been clean shaven when we'd met. We drove out to his place via several art deco buildings. Cliff's three passions in life, after fandom, seem to be desserts, jazz and art deco, though I'm probably mistaken in putting fandom on top of the list. It was an interesting contrast. Having seen Minneapolis from a historical point of view, I got to see Seattle from an architectural point of view.

That afternoon, Cliff showed me the Capitol Hill area in which he lives. I encountered, for the first time, the term "fern bar", which clearly described the trendy sort of place in which I would not want to be seen dead. Cliff also made mention of several bookstores, to which I attempted to turn a deaf ear. I had over-spent as badly in Minneapolis as I had in Toronto, and my meagre stock of travellers' cheques was starting to look rather sick.

When I announced that I was suffering from a bad case of lamb withdrawal, Cliff agreed to a visit to one of the local Greek restaurants. I'm afraid my incipient poverty acted as a brake on the proceedings. I'm sure that Cliff would have liked to have hit somewhere a little more classy. I was wearing my Australia in '83 t-shirt, and the waitress asked if I'd been to Australia. It seemed that she'd taught in a Sydney primary school, which was stretching coincidence a little far, as Cliff had taught in a high school in Western Australia. I tried yet another American beer, and have suppressed the memory of its name. It was referred to as a "dark beer". I would have called it a stout, though, to be honest, ale was probably the best term for it. I'm afraid I've never gotten used to that particular burnt caramel taste. Thus I didn't come to terms with that most famous of Mexican uers, Dos Equis. The lager, Tres Equis was, on the other hand, quite good, and compared favourably with Labatts.

That evening, a short notice gathering was arranged at the Jerry Kaufman/Suzle Tompkins household, where I was to spend my other two Seattle nights. I was accused

of having a bad effect on Seattle fandom, as only Minneapolis fans get lots of people turning up at parties at an afternoon's notice. I accepted the compliment.

In Seattle I was disadvantaged by having had very little contact with the local fans. I'd traded with Jerry and Suzle, and with the Nielson-Haydens, and had been in apas with Cliff and with John D Berry, but otherwise few of the names meant much to me. I had met Vonda McIntyre at Monaclave and in Adelaide, but I don't feel very comfortable around professionals, and had not spoken to her much anyway. Thus the party was rather strange. I met all sorts of people, including Denys Howard, editor of South of the Moon; Steven Bieler, who gave me a baseball gum card of the Mariners; Alan Bostick; Anna Vargo; and Cy Chauvin, who was visiting at the time.

I also got to meet Joanna Russ, and suffered from tongue-tiedness when trying to talk to her. I guess we in Australia don't really have enough professionals to practise on, and it wasn't until I had downed quite a few beers that I got up the courage to talk to her at all. As it was, the circumstances were unusual. Joanna has a lot of trouble with her back, and was having foot problems as well, and so she conducted most of her party conversations lying on the floor with the other parties to the conversation sitting or reclining next to her. Joanna impressed me a lot, and was far easier to talk to than I'd imagined she'd be.

I had bought a can or two of Fosters Lager, but have the feeling that it was a somewhat watered down version of the stuff I know, and I don't even rate that very high on my list of good beer. Cliff had to work that evening, and so John Berry gave me a lift back to Cliff's place. We got to talk a little about Australian fandom as he had known it, and the conversation was very similar to that I'd had with Mike Glicksohn in Toronto. Australian fandom has changed a lot, both in personell and in character since Aussiecon. Also there was the fact that the people whom John knows well are fans with whom I still don't feel as comfortable as I might. I've gotten to the point where I feel quite comfortable around Leigh Edmonds, but I must admit to finding Foyster and Bangsund more than a little daunting. Finding Cliff's place was not easy, since I hadn't actually seen it from the front, but, after a bit of scouting we found it, and I settled in.

I'd decided to devote Tuesday to seeing the Seattle Market. I've always been a sucker for interesting nooks and crannies, and the Seattle Market has those in abundance. If ever I was looking for a place to film part of a dungeon expedition, the market would be high on my list of choices. I gather it's been there for a long time, and has grown in an organic manner rather than being planned. To further complicate matters, it's built on the side of a cliff, and so has a multitude of levels and sub-levels. One of the folk who live in the same house as the Nielson-Hayden's, Kay Howes, had a stained glass stall, which I found while she was still setting up. She showed me a beautiful gryphon, and a photograph of her stained glass window which features Saint Roscoe.

The overwhelming atmosphere of the market was due to the fish stalls, which had huge piles of freshly caught seafood covered in layers of ice. I started to reflect further on my appalling poverty as I considered the delicacies spread out before me. There was salmon - real salmon, not the sea-perch which goes under the misnomer of Australian salmon - crabs, and an obscene looking mollusc which, I was assured, goes under the name of Gooley Duck. In addition there were bakeries, delicatessens, craft shops, liquor stores, clothing shops, coin shops, and even a little place selling Australian opal.

I paused in my rounds for an early morning coffee and doughnut, and, while I can't recall having seen a wider selection of doughnuts, I also can't recall eating in a grimmer establishment. The coffee cups were chipped, and the benches looked much like my kitchen table just prior to its fortnightly sluicing. There were two characters behind the counter, an aged woman, and a ruggedly built bloke, who looked quite capable of committing assorted acts of grievous bodily harm. When he started exchanging obscenities with two young customers who were taking excessive time over

their coffee, I figured that it was time to make a prudent withdrawal. I later mentioned the place to Cliff, and he explained that it was a well known depot for stolen goods, and expressed surprise that the gent I'd described was out of prison. The things a visiting Australian can wander in to...

After this rather strange breakfast, I headed for the waterfront. Cliff had mentioned the aquarium, and I was hoping to be able to see some of America's more interesting sea life, a grampus being at the top of my list. For a start though I walked around the fishing wharf. The price of entry to the aquarium seemed a little high. I filled in a few postcards, and, sure enough, my curiosity overcame my Scots' blood, and I made my way back to the aquarium, disregarding the box office suggestion that I buy a ticket for the film as well. Films I can see at home.

The decision to go in was probably one of my better decisions for the trip. In the first part of the building there were numerous small aquariums, stocked with some of the most beautiful sealife I've ever seen. I've long had a soft spot for starfish and octopi, and there was an incredible selection of other invertebrates, some of which I only recognised from books.

The real find was though the sea otter enclosure. If there is an animal which surpasses the cat for sheer beauty and intelligence, it has to be the otter, and though sea otters aren't the most beautiful representatives of the group, being more stockily built, they are certainly the most intelligent. I'd seen film of the little beasts paddling along on their backs, cracking oysters with stones, and eating them off their stomachs, but a film showing nothing but that for an hour would no doubt be considered boring by some. I enjoyed watching them for an hour though, and even fancied that I was beginning to pick out individual personalities. Visitors had the choice of watching them from below, through a glass window at the bottom of the pool, or from above, at surface level. They were being fed on crab, and so didn't get to do their rock trick. They did though use their stomachs as dining tables, while dismembering the crabs with a great deal more skill than Bob Shaw was later to do in a seafood restaurant in Birmingham, but I draw ahead of myself.

I spent a little time watching the seals and sea lions, but their performance was lack-lustre when compared to the otters. The underwater dome was most effective. Once in it, one was surrounded by water, and could watch the fish gliding overhead. While I was disappointed by the lack of cetaceans, on the whole, the place was really excellent. I regret to say that the post awful wasn't. I posted one of the cards I got at the aquarium to Cathy, airmail. It arrived in Australia in early November.

Lunch in an olde English Sandwich bar was followed by a brisk walk back to Cliff's place. He lives within easy strolling distance of the city proper. That afternoon he drove me around various bits of Seattle, and I got to see the upper-class area from which reports of a wild puma had been coming. The reports turned out to be true. I'm glad we didn't encounter the creature though. I don't know how I would have explained being mugged by a puma in Seattle.

We'd arranged to meet Patrick, Teresa, Jerry and Suzle for dinner at a Mexican restaurant, and the food was excellent. It was here that I got to reject Dos Equis for its lighter cousin Tres Equis. The natter was fannish in the extreme, and much smoffing was indulged in. However, my brain cells were obviously thoroughly laundered by the Sectet Masters before I left Seattle, and I remember nothing. It's either that or the Mexican beer, but I don't recall drinking that much. The evening was completed by a brief introduction to Jumping Jesus Bar and Grill, the place shared by Patrick, Teresa, Kay, and assorted others. The next morning Cliff was due to head for Bubonicon, so Teresa offered me a lift to Jerry and Suzle's place.

Wednesday provided a much needed rest day. I did as little as possible, other than reading, watching teev, and listening to some of Cliff's records. Once more I was singularly unimpressed by the standard of American daytime television, though I did manage to find a station that was showing re-runs of BATMAN and THE WILD WILD WEST.

I also got to pick up the photographs I'd taken in Toronto and in Minneapolis. I'm not a particularly keen photographer, and while there are them as arrive back from trips with twenty or thirty reels of film, I only managed twenty photos all up. There were a few from Toronto, a few from Minneapolis, none from Seattle, other than a shot of some Air Alaska 727s for my brother Chris, five from Birmingham, and four from Denver. Anyway, I picked up half of my miserable total in Seattle, and discovered that I should indeed have poked my camera closer to the bars when getting the shot of Woscar the Wombat.

Teresa picked me up at five thirty that evening, after I had managed to work out the intricacies of the intercom system and the front door release catch. We had to hurry because she had illegally parked. While buzzing down to Jerry and Suzle's we indulged in further fannish natter, with Teresa making passing reference to Jean Weber's taste in liquor. Further visitors to the U.S. please take note. Bundaberg Rum is a definite no-no.

Suzle cooked up some food, and I got to spend time discussing sf with Bob Doyle, the other house member. Jerry introduced me to the music of a few Seattle new wave bands, and passed on assorted music gossip, including the fact that Patti Smith had married Fred Smith, thus ensuring continuity of monogramme on the silverware, and had settled down in Detroit, thus explaining the paucity of Patti Smith Group albums of late. Assorted further fannish natterings were introduced before I consigned myself to Jerry's basement study for further sleep. There's something strangely comforting about sleeping in a room-ful of fanzines.

Another Thursday, and another laundromat. This one was super-grotty, but was livened up by the selection of posters advertising the services offered by the laundromat. I can't remember the exact wording, but there was a beauty of Santa Claus and Mrs Claus the morning after the night before, and a line about getting sheets clean after those eventful nights. Once again I ~~x~~ was impressed by the vending machines and the cute little packets of detergent which were too big for one wash load, but not big enough for two. That must take quite some planning.

The afternoon was reserved for a trip through the Underground City of Seattle with Gary Farber and Cy Chauvin. We had to detour via a printing place so Gary could make some arrangements for the Worldcon, and, as a result, arrived a little late and very much out of breath. It was a pity that we didn't manage to arrive later, and that the tour guide wasn't suffering from our shortage of breath. Having discovered in Minneapolis where old jokes go when they die, I discovered in Seattle what happens to old comedians when they die. They become tour guides. This particular joker had a thing against Southern Californians. Now, I'll enjoy an ethnic joke along with the worst of them, but he was laying it on with a trowel. The descriptions of early Seattle were though very interesting.

The tour itself was nowhere near what I'd pictured. For the most part it felt like walking through a particularly pongy storm-water drain. Occasionally you'd see a bricked up area that the guide would ensure one was once a thriving shop front, but just about nothing had been done in the way of restoration. This is the main problem encountered when private companies administer historical sites. The group running the tour were obviously doing so on a shoe-string budget, and only one shop had been re-constructed. It was a stationery shop, featuring a mimeograph machine, a Rotary Neostyle 8-F. I feel that it was an anachronism, but it was nice to see it there. At the end of the tour we were encouraged to buy all sorts of cruddy merchandise. I couldn't help feel that an excellent opportunity to develop something of real historical value was being wasted.

Gary was cooking dinner that night, and so we headed for the market to purchase commestibles. I went into the wine store, and got some white wine, while trying to convince the store owners that they should obtain a few Australian whites. (Again there was no reisling) They did have a Kidman Coonawarra claret, from near where I used to teach. In fact I taught one of the Kidman kids, so that made me feel

A black and white line drawing of a stylized, spotted creature. The creature has a large, rounded head with two long, thin antennae extending from the top. Its eyes are large and filled with a pattern of small circles. The body is covered in a pattern of large, oval spots. It has a wide, toothy mouth and is standing on four legs. The drawing is signed "Bo" and "Mike McAnn." in the bottom right corner.

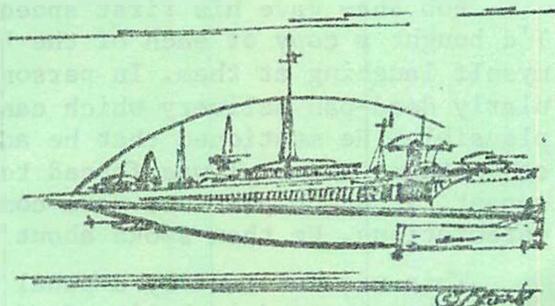
I really regretted not getting to spend more time in Seattle. The fans there, though different to Minneapolis fans, were really great people. I would also have liked to have taken the bus trip up to Vancouver, to see a few of the fans there, and to find out if my father's name was still remembered from his navy days. Ah well. Next time perhaps.

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The Deep South Con was a most confusing experience for me. I'd never before been at a convention where I knew no one. Even my first convention, Aussiecon, had seen me meeting people from the Adelaide University with whom I'd worked, and I'd gone with a friend. Here I knew no one. To make things worse, Deep South Con felt like an Australian National Convention. The size was comparable, i.e. about three hundred people, and there was a similar clannishness (No. Not klannishness) I even noticed traces of the cultural cringe so common at Australian conventions. Sure, there were distinct differences. I've yet to see a card-playing competition assume a major role at an Aussie convention, and most of the accents were strange, but otherwise it could have been any large Australian convention.

The first thing on my agenda was to establish me identity. I'd actually joined the convention from Joyce and Denny's place, and was listed as a Minneapolis fan. While I was certainly proud to adopt such a mantle, I felt it would be better for the cause if I were to fly my true colours, and so got my name tag changed to include the word AUSTRALIA in big letters, and I dumped some A in '83 propaganda on the desk.

I will admit to trading shamelessly on my nationality. It seemed a good way to break the ice. However, it was a slow process. I wandered about the convention rooms, checking out the hucksters' area and the video room. It was in the hucksters' room that I struck lucky. Ned Brooks, with whom I'd traded zines, had a table there, and I got nattering with him. This gave me a "home base" from which to work. I'd make brief forays into the convention, but when this got too much, I'd retreat back to Ned's table, and natter to him. He introduced me to a few folk too, including George Wells.

I noted on another table a copy of Colin Kapp's CHAOS WEAPON, but the table was unattended at the time. When I got back later the table was attended but the book was gone. Sigh.

The opening ceremony was interesting. I noted an English accent in the audience, and so introduced myself to a Cambridge fan, Colin Fine, who'd also decided to take in the Deep South Con on his way to Denvention. I must admit that the opening speeches meant little to me, as I'd heard of few of the fans mentioned, and none of the authors, other than the Guest of Honour, Bob Shaw. I guess an American visiting an Australian convention must encounter the same difficulties.

Bob Shaw gave his first speech, and I must admit to having been most impressed. I'd bought a copy of each of the Bob Shaw collections from Joyce, and had killed myself laughing at them. In person the speeches were even better. Bob has a particularly dead-pan delivery which can make even the most ridiculous statement sound plausible. He mentioned that he and Colin had travelled furthest to get to the convention, and so I was forced to contradict him in my loudest imitation Strine accent, at which point he made comments to the effect that some folk were vulgarly ostentatious. He then spoke about his first encounters with sf.

This was followed by a panel on Southern fandom, and its history. It made little sense, but sounded much like fandom anywhere. The fan Guest of Honour, Hank Reinhardt, had not arrived, and so much of the panel was taken up in various fans telling Hank Reinhardt stories. To be perfectly fair to the narrators, they didn't seem to show

any reticence in telling equally libelous stories when Hank did eventually arrive.

I spent some of the evening in the Con Suite, where I played and won a couple of games of Hearts, the official Southern Fandom card game. I made noises about having intended to enter the Hearts Tournament, but of having changed my mind when I realised that the trophy would have taken up too much space in my bag. I then took the sensible precaution of quitting while I was ahead.

The Con Suite is an admirable idea, but one which has not, so far, reached Australia. The beer and soft drink were free, so I managed to continue my comparative study of American beer at the convention's expense. I gather that American hotels tend to be generous in the rates they charge for convention spaces, provided that the convention books out a certain number of rooms. Thus what the con doesn't spend on function rooms it can spend on free grog. I was still having difficulty in finding an American beer that compared favourably to my favourite Australian brand, but I was becoming acclimatised to the American brew, something that was to have an evil effect on me later in the con.

There were rumours of folk singing, and I went in search of some, but all I could find was Filthy Pierre Straus and his mouth powered organ. Finally I settled in a stairway, talking to Jim Gilpatrick, the convention chairman. We found our politics to be very dissimilar, but that didn't alter the fact that it was a good conversation. I like the way that most fans can have rational discussions despite differing ideologies, though the fact that we were both a little inebriated, and that it was 3 a.m. no doubt added to the flavour of the conversation.

The next ~~morning~~ afternoon, I emerged to marvel at American shopping hours. It was a Saturday afternoon, yet the supermarkets were open. I checked out a Woolworths in search of comestibles, but discovered that it only sold artifacts. I did purchase a knife, a fork, and a can opener. I then located the food market, and scored some bread, margarine, peanut butter and strawberry jam. This was to become an important part of my diet for the next few days. I also made the mistake of finding a six-pack of Lowenbrau for the evening's room parties. I snuck the lot up to my room, feeling that the hotel would probably not approve.

That afternoon though, I had splurged on a banquet ticket, which I enjoyed. The tables were spacious, and there was plenty of food. The cost was, if I remember correctly, in the vicinity of \$10 U.S., for which we got soup, fried chicken, black-eyed peas, a large salad bowl, and dessert, plus a most amazing creation called a hush puppy. This consisted of all sorts of stuff in a corn batter deep fried. It was most tasty. Later Charlotte Proctor explained that the term had originated from the way farmers used to throw deep fried left-overs to their dogs to shut them up. As it happened, I could have gorged myself silly on salad, as the table at which I was sitting had only one other occupant. I started to question my wisdom in having left my deodourant in Australia.

Ron, the other guy, was experiencing his first convention. He was an ex-airforce pilot, who indulged in motorcycling and hang gliding when he wasn't reading. He was amazed by the friendliness of fans, having been invited along with a dining party which included Bob Shaw on the previous evening. He was a good bloke, and he even instructed me in the etiquette of eating Southern food. "Pick the chicken up! There's no point in eating fried chicken unless you can enjoy it!" We nattered throughout the meal, and didn't find the low population density at our table any real problem.

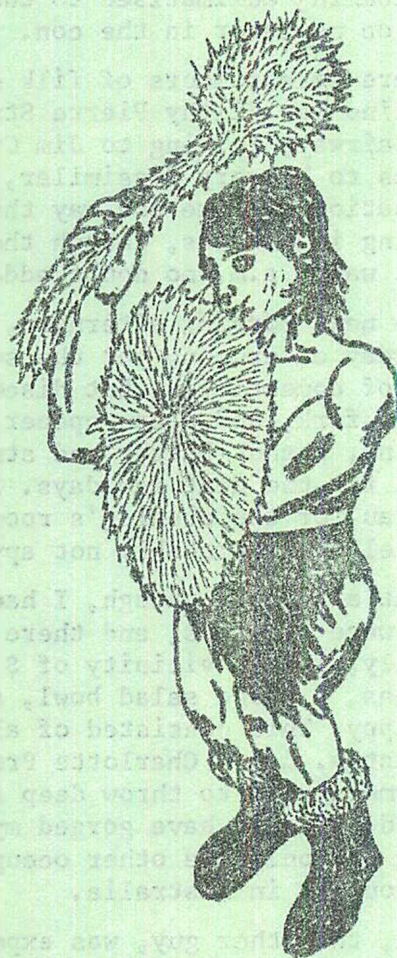
After dinner came the convention presentations, during which various folk got to plug their conventions or their convention bids. Had I known that this was going to take place, I would have put together a real u-beaut plug for Australia in '83, but as it was, I got to stutter out a little bit in Strine, promising that an Aussie Worldcon would be as far Down South as you could get without going to New Zealand. The plug for the Kubla Khan was superb. Those of you with Denvention programme books will note that Rusty Hevelin is wearing a Kubla Khan t-shirt in his official photo. The Khan presentation included a figure in a very hot Kubla Khandor outfit, who

flapped his way onto the stage, and squawked in the appropriate places.

There was also an official announcement of the fact that Atlanta was bidding for the 1986 World Convention. The bid hadn't exactly been a secret before that. Robin Johnson had mentioned it to me before I left Sydney. Still, everybody made the appropriate surprised type noises. Personally I think an Atlanta Worldcon would be an excellent idea. Southern fandom is a great bunch, and would put on a really superb convention. (Not that I'm saying that New York wouldn't. Indeed, I was impressed by the New York people I met, but a fellow's loyalty has to lie somewhere.) I'm not sure that I'd wish Worldcon vice-chairmanship on a nice guy like Jim Gilpatrick, but since he's volunteering, I think he ought to be given a go. So vote for ATLANTA IN '86. (And Melbourne in '85.)

The meal was rounded off by Duelling Egos, a debate between T.M. Jerry Page and Fan GoH Hank Reinhardt. The aim of the debate was not to be hit by the custard pie. Several foul and slanderous tricks were used by both debators, and rule of order was thrown to the four winds. The outcome of the debate was left to the audience, who came to the decision that both debators and the chairman Lon Atkins deserved pies. Justice was done, and the executions were carried out with the maximum of fuss.

In order to defend Australia's honour, and to prove that we're not all beer swilling drongoes, I'd signed up for the trivia quiz that followed the banquet. I'm afraid it was Gallipoli all over again. I retired bloody and defeated, but with head held high. There is some strange perversion that leads a person to design trivia questions. I should know. ~~XXX~~ I've designed them myself. Jim "Merlin" Odum had produced a set of questions that fitted the standard model to the letter. Half of them were too hard; half of them were too easy, and the other half were of the type that forces contestants to smite their foreheads and say "Shit! I should have known that!" The discovery that Merlin was a poet didn't surprise me in the least. Poetry and trivia quizzes do tend to go together. (Much as Sydney fandom suffers from a surplus of Peters, Southern fandom seems to be overendowed with Jims.)



The quiz was followed by another Shaw speech, which proved entertaining and thought provoking. Sigh. What else can one say about a Shaw speech without quoting it verbatim, and I didn't have a cassette recorder with me at the time. Then, while waiting for the masquerade, I got nattering to Robert Teague, a media fan. As a conversation, it conformed to the "Well, we disagree, but it's nice to be able to discuss our differing views without coming to blows" school of convention conversation. He gave me a copy of his fanzine, Panazine which included some of Michael Goodwin's Star Trek strips.

Initially I was disappointed by the masquerade, considering all that I'd heard about American masquerades, but then I put the thing into perspective by reminding myself that the DSC was, after all, the same size as an Australian national. Put in that light, the masquerade was equal to the best I've seen in Australia, though the

contestants tended to take things far more seriously than do their Australian counterparts. There were no really silly entries. There were though one or two costumes which would have done Lewis Morely and Nick Stathopolis proud.

After the masquerade I looked for the filk singing, again without what we in the business refer to as any success. I grabbed a few bottles of Lowenbrau from my room, and made my way back to the ballroom where a new wave band called the Mortals had set up. They won my heart immediately. Any group that mixes cover versions of songs by Pat Benatar, Jefferson Airplane and Graham Parker with some good original material can't be all bad, and they weren't bad at all. I then proceeded to get absolutely blotto on the Lowenbrau. As I mentioned earlier, I'd become acclimatised to the weaker American beer, and the real thing went straight to my head. The fact that I was feeling a touch on the lonely side didn't really improve my tolerance for the demon brew, and I eventually found myself slumped in a chair, grooving along peacefully.

Don't get me wrong. It wasn't the convention. I think it was just the cumulative effect of too long on the road; the absence of people I knew well; my financial situation; and the incipient cold which the airconditioning was doing nothing to alleviate. I imagine that most people who spend a lot of time away from home get hit by such feelings at some time or other. I finished my beer, waited until the band packed up, and then went and folded myself into bed.

I emerged the next day feeling very much the worse for wear. The cold had hit with full force, and that, combined with the minor hangover, did little to make me pleasant company. I drifted around the hotel a little, and talked to a few people as they packed prior to leaving, but I was feeling really down. I went uack to my room and crashed for a while, but then realised that it was silly to be there, when people I wouldn't see again were still downstairs.

I went back down, and ran into Ned Brooks, who was packing his table. We nattered for a while, and then I got invited to join a crowd who were going out to eat. At first I declined the invitation, as my finances did not really allow for expensive meals, but then I changed my mind, and decided to go along for the company. I'm glad I did. It was the best decision I made during the convention, and I must thank Charlotte Proctor for helping me to talk myself into going along.

I got a lift out to the restaurant, a seafood place set right in the middle of a huge forest, with Merlin and Julie Wall. We nattered about animals, and Merlin gave me a few pointers on Southern customs, language etc.. We missed the turn-off for the restaurant, not a wise move, as Paul Flores was following us, under the impression that Merlin knew where he was going.

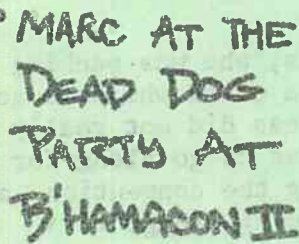
I lost track of exactly who was in our little tribe, but it was an incredible meal. First the waiters provided us with a common cause. The service was bloody terrible. Food was slow in arriving, or didn't arrive at all, and there was not even iced water provided - a cardinal sin in an American restaurant. There were mumbles of mutiny, and the ultimate step of not leaving a tip was considered. Even the superbly kitch decor couldn't make up for the behaviour of the waiters, who seemed to spend most of their time nattering in the kitchen.

The three foreigners, Bob Shaw, Colin Fine and I, discussed the vagarities of American customs, with Bob boggling over one restaurant to which he'd been taken earlier in his trip, while most of the others were performing the ritual post-mortem on the con. Paul Flores spent a bit of time trying to talk me into joining SFPA, having first assured me that I was acting like one of those uppity Fapans. The fact that I kept forgetting his name seemed proof of this.

Atlant^a in '86

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all convention, and suddenly, amidst lobster shells and cries for more iced water I'd arrived home. Perhaps the joy was exaggerated by my previous bout of depression, but I've seldom enjoyed a meal as much as I did that one, in a pseudo sailing ship in the middle of a forest in Alabama. As a token of our esteem, we left the ash-tray piled with the copper coins that we'd found in our pockets.



There was not much of that left, so Penny, who'd been phoning at fifteen minute intervals with financial statements, was encouraged to come over with the remains of her alcohol stocks. I left the boozing to those with stronger stomachs. Mine had not recovered from the beer blast of the previous night. Julie Wall was most adamant in keeping the promise she'd made to her mother. I can personally testify that she drank no beer whatsoever. Let's face it, beer would not have mixed with the Rebel Yell whiskey to which she was introduced that evening. Me, I was drinking the only soft drink left - diet Pepsi. I was in no doubt as to why it was left. It tasted ghod awful, but it was wet and cold. It must have worked too. I lost half a stone during the trip.

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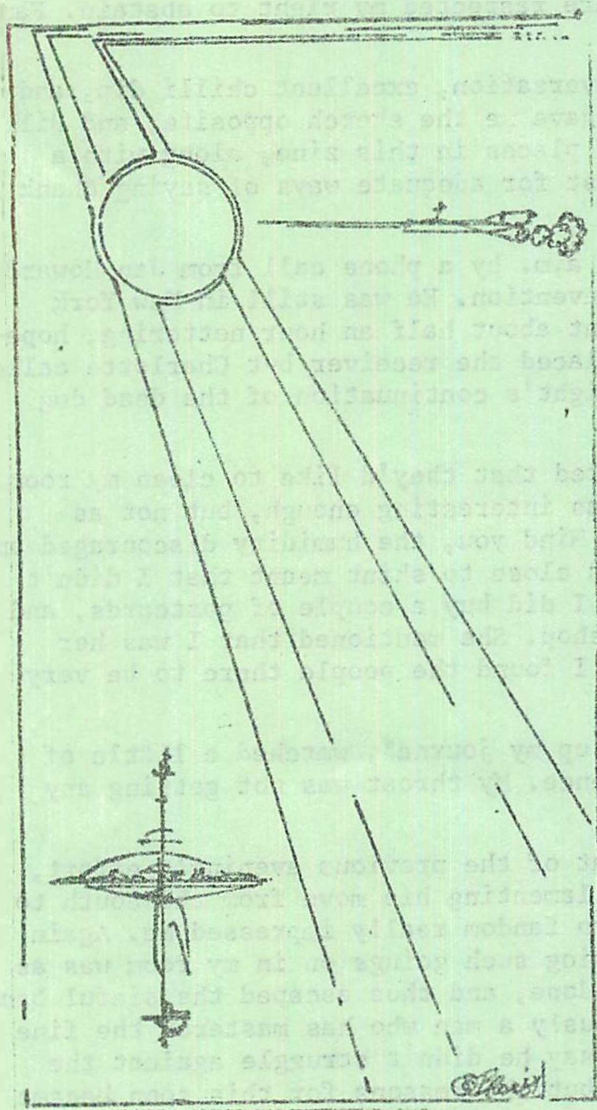
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I was woken at the ungodly hour of 10-30 a.m. by a phone call from Jan Howard Finder, who'd discovered that I was at the convention. He was still in New York State somewhere, on his way to Denver. We spent about half an hour nattering, hopefully not at his expence. No sooner had I replaced the receiver but Charlotte called, explaining that my offer of a room for that night's continuation of the dead dog party had been accepted.

The afternoon was collapse time. I wrote up my journal, watched a little of the dread daytime television, and played patience. My throat was not getting any better.

For a while Jim Cobb and Wade produced some lovely music using Jim's guitar, and I retaliated by playing CHURDERED IN THE OLD PACIFIC SEA. However, the strength of the drinks that Bob was mixing got to Wade, and he retired to a chair. The jokes became more wearing as the night wore on, but we had been limited to clean jokes. Every time a joke of a suggestive nature was started, Marcie threatened to scream and leave the room. I'm too much of a gentleman to speculate about how she knew that the joke was going to be suggestive. Finally the party died, but with the promise of part three at Bill and Nancy's place the next evening.

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honest this aspect of the tale end of the trip didn't really concern me. I'd seen more than enough grotty laundromats. The Birmingham one was no exception, though it may have been here that I got to try grape flavoured soft drink. Proof of my mental degeneration was to be found in my afternoon's activities, more daytime television.

Dinner was probably at a sandwich outlet called Arby's, which produced filling sandwiches at a reasonable price. It made a change from the peanut butter and strawberry jam. (In order to salvage some portion of my reputation, I would like to make it quite clear that at no time did I consume a sandwich with both peanut butter and strawberry jam on it. Even an impoverished tourist has to maintain some standards.) The temperature of the room and the lack of a fridge wasn't doing much for the firmness of the margarine.

Wade picked me up for that evening's party at Bill and Nancy's. It was a fairly sedate sort of an affair, with much of the attention being centred on the large screen television projector which was being used for an assortment of video games. I didn't indulge, though I must admit that the games looked more effective on the large screen than they do in arcades, especially the one that seemed based on EARTH vs THE FLYING SAUCERS. This had the neat little touch that, when ground defence killed one of your saucers, you could control the dead saucer's descent so that it crushed the anti-aircraft battery.

The Mortals were playing at a local music club, and Wade, who was a friend of the band, had arranged to take me out to see them. This was one of the things that I'd wanted to do a little of, but, other than in Birmingham, I never got around to it. The club was very similar to those I'd seen in Australia, except that it was a separate venue rather than being part of a pub. It seated about a hundred, and was about three quarters full. The band was as enjoyable as it had been at the convention, and, being more sober and closer to the band I could pick out some of the lyrics to the original material. I also got to natter to a couple of the band members during a break. They're a good band, and Wade has promised me a copy of some material should they ever record.

After that it was back to Bill and Nancy's for a piece of "Farewell Bob Shaw" cake, and brief natters with those who were still there. Bill and Nancy had already crashed. I got to talk very briefly to Bob, confirming my opinion that he was an excellent GoH, and one that an Australian Con would do well to consider. Mind you, I would advise any such effort to stock up on booze well in advance. Yet again regret struck. I was going to miss the Birmingham fans. The city, its weather, and the cold I could do without, but the fans there are great.

[illegible]

Melanie Safka

I was booked onto a really early flight to Denver the next day, but, since the hotel courtesy bus wouldn't have got me to the airport in time, I changed to an early afternoon flight, thus causing problems for Jim Gilpatrick, who, unbeknownst to me had arranged to be on the same early morning flight. As it happened though, he got up too late to get the morning flight, and so we found ourselves on the same flight after all. This was a good thing, as it gave me someone to talk to during the two hour stop-over in Memphis. My cold, in the meantime, had developed into a nasty cough, and the blocked sinuses were not making flying at all easy. For an hour after landing it felt as though my ears were stuffed with cotton wool, an appropriate sensation while I was in the South, but not so crash hot for Denver.

We had a pleasant meal during the Memphis stop-over, and then headed further West, landing at Denver airport where we got to play a game of "Guess which people here are going to the Worldcon". In one case it was dead simple. As we were getting our bags from yet another baggage carousel, I spied Joyce Scrivner. There's nothing quite like finding someone you know and love in an airport umpteen miles from home. We shared a cab from the airport to the Marina Hotel, as Joyce and I both had rooms there. Jim was crashing with me that evening, as the people with whom he was sharing weren't due to arrive until the next day.

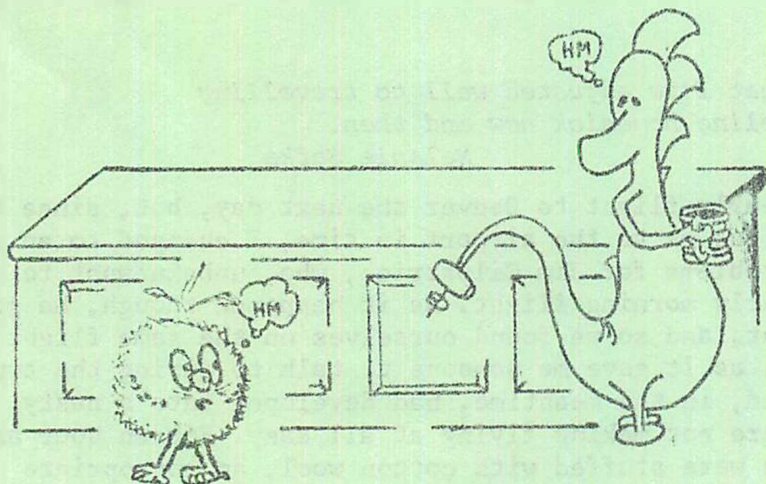
The Marina was little improvement on the Birmingham Hilton. Again there were two double beds in what had been uooked as a single room, but there was no fridge, and no radio. They did though have me down for the right room. In fact it was perfect, as Joyce's room was right next to mine, and Linda Lounsbury's was opposite. I later discovered that many of the fanzine fans I'd wanted to meet had rooms there.

Joyce was an absolute angel. We went over to the Hilton, which was serving as the main convention centre, where registration had opened a day early to allow for that evening's influx of fans. As I waited patiently on one of what appeared to be at least eight long lines, Joyce buzzed up and down finding folk for me to meet. The list becomes far too cumbersome to attempt here, but one of the people who I got to like during the convention was Marty Cantor. I spent a little time in his company during the con, and regretted the fact that Los Angeles had not been on my itinerary. Having registered, I found assorted Australian fans who'd already arrived. Damien Broderick was looking for a place to crash, and I initially offered him the spare bed in my room, much to the delight of Gil Gaier, who thought that we were chatting each other up, and who seemed most amused by my flustered attempts to explain that I was doing no such thing.

Unfortunately, at about this point, my convention memory swings into full force. I make no claims as to the accuracy of dates, times, or chronological order for any of the following material. You'll just have to take my word that all of this happened, and that it happened in a fashion somehow related to what is chronicled here.

What made things particularly confusing was the way in which the convention was spread over what seemed to be at least half of downtown Denver. In addition to the Hilton, there were fens in each of the four other "official" convention hotels, and in several more besides. Then there was the Currigan Convention Centre eight or so blocks from the Hilton, which housed the artshow and the hucksters' space, plus providing the venue for the masquerade and the Hugo presentation. If you're waiting for me to provide a balanced view of Denvention II, forget it. I only ever got to

bnf musings



two of the hotels, the Marina and the Hilton, where most of the action was. I didn't get to the Currian at all. I didn't have enough money to make a visit to the hucksters' room worthwhile; I wasn't really interested in the artshow; I was counting '83 site selection votes during the masquerade; and was suffering from an attack of the "what the hells" during the Hugo presentation. The film programme was located in the Cosmopolitan Hotel, but it didn't seem particularly inspiring, and I didn't get round to it, even though I would have liked to have seen the Nick Danger episodes that they were showing.

This then is a very personal Denvention report, and makes no real attempt to mention all the features and programming, on the grounds that I got to little of any of it.

Things started at the jelly bean party in Marty Cantor's room in the Marina. Being a loyal Californian, Marty had stocked up with lots of the President's favourite confection, and used these to attract the highly literate fanzine fans. I got to meet Arthur Hlavaty, the editor of Diagonal Relationship, and numerous apa titles. He seemed a lot more quiet in person. I also encountered Sharee Carton, a Vancouver fan, ex-Edmonton, ex-Melbourne, though she was not a fan in Melbourne. I croggled. It is unusual to find really beautiful people in fandom. Sharee is a definite exception. We nattered Australia and new wave rock, until I realised that I was well out of my depth in the rock discussion. I guess I'm just a b.o.f. at heart.

I have a feeling that I went back to Marty's party at least once during the evening, but initially I wasn't really settled there, and so I wandered over to the Hilton with Linda Lounsbury. I'd offered my services in escorting beautiful femmefans between the Hilton and the Marina at any hour of the night, largely because I figured that, while they were being attacked, I could make a run for safety. Let's face it, which mugger in his/her right mind would attack me rather than a beautiful femmefan? (Chivalry? What's that? I don't even own a horse.)

There was a foyer party going on in the Hilton, and I got to natter to various people who were there with Joyce, including Jay Kay Klein and George R.R. Martin. It could well have been here that I met Jaquie Marshall, whom I'd missed meeting in Minneapolis. There were also other luminaries such as Mike Glicksohn floating around the place, along with Shayne McCormack, John McDouall, and other Australians. The large armchairs were very comfortable, and encouraged long silly conversations.

I figured that it would be an idea to see other bits of the convention, and made a few trips to other floors, locating the con suites, thoughtfully divided into smoking and non-smoking sections at opposite ends of the hotel. I figure it would have been possible to have spent the whole convention in the con suite. Let's face it, there are those who can happily survive on corn chips and beer for five or six days. Me though, I prefer something a little more substantial, and it was probably this

[illegible]

That evening was a bit of a fiasco. I'm nervous about sleeping in the same room as someone else at the best of times, and this evening was not the best of times. My sore throat had matured into a fully fledged cough, and I was stricken by violent coughing bouts at least three times during the night, each necessitating a trip to the bathroom for a glass of water. The word "trip" was chosen for its descriptive quality. I must have bumped into something each time. Had I any sense, I would have kept a glass of water at my bedside, but my brain wasn't functioning that well. Also there was my basic shyness to take into account. For each of these trips to the bathroom, which involved covering ten feet or so of carpet, I'd slip into my jeans. Sure, silly, but one doesn't really think too clearly at 4 a.m. while in the middle of a coughing fit.

Then, after purchasing some extra-strength cough lollies, I went up to Carey's room to help with the A in '83 table. It may seem strange, but I spent much of the daytime sitting at the table. I wasn't that interested in the programme, and didn't see that much in Denver to interest me, so the table gave me a comfortable place to sit, and somewhere to meet assorted people. As at the Renaissance Festival, I discovered that, if you sit in one place for long enough, everyone you want to see will come to you.

FOR A MOMENT
I THOUGHT
I'D SEEN HIM
BEFORE, SOMEWHERE.
BUT HE DIDN'T
EVEN RECOGNIZE
ME...

[illegible]

All the Australians at the con helped man the table at one time or another, and also helped to man the site selection voting table on the mezzanine floor. I met Pauline Dickinson, a librarian, who administers Ron Graham's collection at the Fisher Library in Sydney. She proved most useful as there were times when hers was the only genuine Australian accent we had to hand. Sally Beasley, John McDouall and I all retain our British accents to an extent, and, though Cliff Wind and Linda Lounsbury did try to insinuate a Strine twang into their accents, they were not notably successful.

One of the silliest things that happened to me at the convention was that I met Ian Nicholls. Ian is a Perth fan, and, although we had corresponded, it wasn't until Denvention that we actually met. The table, though supposedly plugging the '83 bid spent just as much time acting as an unofficial sub-branch of the Australian Embassy. Several of the fen at Denvention were considering going to Australia, either permanently or temporarily. Thus we got to give out all sorts of advice. Cliff, having made the move once was particularly useful here.

I did, at one point, curse Shayne McCormack though. A woman whose husband had been posted to Woomera, wandered up, and nattered to me about the conditions there. I was guarded in my response, and, while I did disabuse her of the notion that it would be possible to commute from Alice Springs, I tried to paint as pleasant a picture of Woomera as I could. I mean, it's really not too bad. The Australian and British governments have spent a lot of money making the place comfortable. However, just as I was reaching the end of my pitch, Shayne turned up, and, when I mentioned that the woman was going to Woomera, she turned, looked at her, and said "You poor thing!" So much for Ortlieb as spreader of good will.

I also met Al Fitzpatrick. Now, Al was probably at Aussiecon. I didn't get to meet him there. He was definitely at Omegacon, my second ever convention, held in the Adelaide Hills. I didn't get to meet him there either. On the first evening, while I was in Adelaide running off some stencils for Robin Johnson, Al was getting drunk with my brother Skye, and, by the time I got back, Al had been carted off to hospital exhibiting several of the symptoms associated with alcoholic poisoning. I considered it only appropriate that we should meet in Denver. Mind you, I was deeply touched by the dedication of his wife. He had been married a week, and his wife, realising that they couldn't both go to the Worldcon, had allowed Al to go.

We kept the table going for the day, folding up at five thirty. We noted the absence of a Baltimore table with smiles. We noted the absence of a Scandanavian table without any real surprise. The only tables occupying the area were the committee table handing out tickets for hot tub sessions with authors, and a table promoting one of the Westercons.

That evening an intrepid band set out in search of cheap food. Unfortunately the cheap Chinese place we'd heard about was closed, so we found ourselves a slightly ritzy place that just fell within my five dollar per meal limit. I have a feeling that among our band were Gerri Balter, Herman, Linda, and a friend of Gerri's, but I would not swear to that. Gerri's foot had still not quite recovered from being broken in Alaska, and so we had plenty of time to talk on the way back. I considered going in to catch the opening ceremonies, but the ballroom was too crowded, and I couldn't get in.

We'd decided to run Australia in '83 parties on the Thursday and the Friday nights, and Snayne and Marty Massoglia had been out collecting party supplies which had to be snuck up to the Australia Suite disguised in book boxes. This was a tactic adopted by the Concom after the hotel complained about the amount of booze being consumed in relation to the amount that had been purchased from the hotel. The Concom were generous enough to provide free ice, and some free drinks for any open party held.

Players included Ian Nicholls, John McDouall, Mike Wood, Lee, Carey and I. Later we moved the game up to the Baltimore in '83 bidding party, where we watched the Baltimore bidding film - far inferior to ours - and changed our players a little, dealing in Fran Skene and some gent from Baltimore. It was the only time I got to talk to Fran during the con, which was a pity, as she was one of the people I'd specifically wanted to meet. A dollar or two down, I was forced to abandon the game, due to my comittment to get the projectors fixed up for that night's Australia in '83 party. That was my excuse anyway, and I stuck to it.

Carey had managed to find a sound Super 8 projector, and that was quite easy to work out. The 16mm projector though had decided that its sympathies lay with Baltimore, and did its bit for their bid by chewing up the Anti-fan movie when I tried to thread it. At first I was afraid that my clumsiness was to blame, but one of the early arrivals at the party, an audio-visual specialist from some library, confirmed my opinion of the bung projector, and took it down to the gopher room for me. Thus we had to make do with the 2001 parody - this time with sound. It went over very well, and there were several good things said about the costumes in particular.

In between showings I did the rounds of the other parties, dropping in on the Atlanta in '86 party, and the Baltimore party. Somehow though I couldn't settle down at any of them. I ended up in the Marina foyer, where Susan Crites and a few others were trying to work out what to do at the masquerade while the judges were considering their verdicts. A lot of silly ideas were thrown around. Somewhere along the line though I must have given up and gone to bed. That's where I found myself on Saturday morning.

I spent most of that morning on the table again, and discovered that Linda's raincoat had been ripped off. The previous day we'd arranged for it to be left at the table for her to pick up, but, in the excitement of convoying the illicit booze, it had been forgotten, the folk at the table assuming that she was coming back for it. I felt guilty, since I had suggested the plan in the first place. I determined to make amends.

That afternoon I'd volunteered to help with the Taff/Duff auction, and, of the three programme items that I attended, I think I enjoyed that one the most. Stu Shiffman was handling the Taff side of things rather admirably, while Joyce was doing the book keeping. Gary Farber, Linda, and Rusty were also helping. We had a strange selection of items, ranging from a rare set of fanzines that Joyce contributed to the map of the world mentioned earlier. I got to indulge in theatrical auctioning to my heart's delight, putting my all into selling a large jar of vegemite. (There are occasions when I will allow a crass concern for money to outweigh mere ethical concerns. People should be at liberty to buy and sell vegemite. If they want to actually eat the stuff they have only themselves to blame.)

We had a bottle of Jim Beam, signed by Bob Tucker, but Bob's signature must be undergoing several stages of devaluation, because, even getting Bou's old Dad, Rusty, to auction it did not help. We only just managed to get the reserve, from Tammy, the lady who'd driven Jerry and me to Seattle Airport a couple of weeks earlier. The problem, I feel, comes from Bob's artistic tendency to put his signature on every woman he's made. It means that there's a real glut on Tucker signatures.

What really amazed the dedicated fanzine collectors was one guy, who was bidding heavily on all the really good stuff. He bid in excess of \$150 on the fanzines that Joyce had contributed, and even outbid Gary Farber on a few items. Gary talked to him later, and discovered that he'd only just started collecting fanzines, and that he was guaging their value largely on what other bidders seemed willing to pay.

After the auction, a mob of us headed out to a cheap Mexican place an awfully long way from the hotel. Members of that particular eating expedition included Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenstein, Marc Schirmeister, Joe Sinclari and Edie, Anders and Rojer, and, I think, Jerry and Stu Shiffman. My notes from the convention are rather sketchy. The company though was excellent, and the food was just what was needed - cheap and filling.

I then had time to kill before reporting for vote counting duties. I killed most of it, and almost killed me, helping Denny lug several boxes of mimeo paper down to the Mimeo room in the sub-basement. For a change the paper boxes did actually contain paper. The elevators were not working, and we spent quite a while trying to find someone to turn them on. The idea of taking two handtrucks of paper down an escalator was not attractive. Finally Denny got one of the security men to turn on the elevator, though I think he suspected that we were ferrying party supplies.

The counting was disappointing because it was obvious from fairly early in the piece that Baltimore had it sewn up. However, there was room for the occasional quiet chuckle, like when I came upon a photocopied ballot sheet which, since it had been folded, had not had the name and address info cut off. It included a note from Marjorie Lenehan, explaining that she had joined as Marjorie McFleay, but had since married. Then there was the moment when George Fergus came up to me and asked if I could work out the write-in site on one particular ballot. I cursed Ian Nicholls as I registered the solitary vote for Rottneest Island in '83.

Carey and I wandered up to the Australia Suite, and poured ourselves drinks. It seemed the obvious thing to do. It was rather strange to think that the bid was, as Bill Shakespeare would have put it, won and lost. In dribs and drabs the masquerade attendees filtered back to the suite, and, in most cases, drab was the word. Joe and Gay Haldeman came up for a while and were really nice. Ian Nicholls started planning a grandious South Pacific Con at which he envisioned thousands of attendees. The atmosphere finally got to me, and I went out in search of happier and brighter parties. I may well have found a couple. I do recall getting to the L.A. in '84 Bruce Party, and The New York in '86 egg cream party. This may though have been on the Sunday night. There

THIS FANDOM
HAS OUTLIVED ITS
USEFULNESS!

FANDOM IS DEAD

LONG LIVE
EANDOA!

was also a Vancouver party at which I got to meet Kippy Poyser, but missed out on meeting Victoria Poyser. It all tends to blur into one long evening sometimes.

The next morning though was something else again. We were ready to strike. The Melbourne in '85 Committee had sent the masters for a flier to Joyce, who'd had them duplicated before coming to Denver. I had half of them in my room, and I spent an hour or so folding them before going down to the business session to find Mike Glicksohn, Moshe Feder, and a vast assortment of others arguing obscure points in the constitution. I sat on the floor behind the meeting with Mike, Moshe and Marty Cantor, and we folded more Melbourne propaganda, with Moshe stopping every now and then to stand up and make a point in the debate. He'd then sit down again and continue folding. Joyce had beaten me to it though, and had already handed fliers to most of the people at the business session.

Rather than mope around we set up the table again, this time as a Melbourne in '85 table. Ken Ozanne seemed very disappointed, but ended up helping anyway, which was, I thought, a good sign for the '85 bid. We kept hearing rumours about possible competitors but none seemed prepared for the shock of having the Melbourne fliers there so quickly.

One thing that came as a bit of a shock to us was the flier for Britain in '84 which appeared at the same time as the Melbourne flier. Jan Howard Finder had been asked to distribute it in the event of Australia losing '83. It seemed at the time to be a silly thing for Britain to do, as the L.A. bid was so entrenched as to make real opposition impossible, especially on such short notice. It now appears that the Brits have put their bid back to '87.

That afternoon Jan Finder and Lee Smoire arranged to get a slide projector and screen, and a few die-hard Australians and fellow travellers assembled to watch their Australian trip slides, and to natter about things Australian. I got to meet a few of the American fans who had been at Aussiecon, and Lee Smoire produced a small touch of home - a packet of salt and vinegar potato chips. There I was, in the middle of a WorldCon, surrounded by big-name fans, and I was feeling homesick.

That afternoon, after the slides, I went to the Fapa party. It provided a chance to meet a few of the members of the Elephant's Graveyard, and a less cultured person than myself might be tempted to suggest that the party finished early because some of the members didn't have the staying power of us young fans. The real reason for the early finish was though so that everyone could get to the Hugo presentations. I got the chance to sit at the feet of God, known to some as Elmer Perdue, and to natter to Jack Speer, Art Widner and Chuck Hansen. In the end though it was me who couldn't take the pace. I muttered my apologies, and went back to my room for a peanut butter and strawberry jam dinner. I didn't feel up to the crowds at the Hugo presentations.

After a while I roused myself from my stupor, and headed back to the Hilton in the hope of finding some filk-singing. I was suffering badly from guitar deprivation. The filking had suffered the typical fate of such things, and had been dumped in the sub-basement, well away from anyone. There was only a small group of people there, and, after a brief natter, and a little singing, we decided to rise to the occasion, and moved to the basement. This though was still not brilliant, and so we moved up to the ground floor, and annexed the area that had been occupied by the Australia in '83 table. At this point we came to the notice of a committee member who must have had a rather wearing day, because she got rather officious with us. This was not helped by the general mood of the filkers which was "We're filkers and we expect to be persecuted. Don't be such a fascist shit." Finally a compromise was worked out, and the singing went on.

I'm afraid I didn't enjoy it as much as I should have. The filk was very Star Trek and media orientated, so much so that when someone passing by mentioned that Star Trek The Motion Picture had won a Hugo most of the filkers seemed pleased. I was happy to note that Gordie Dickson had picked up a couple. Not that I'd read

any of the stuff that won, but Gordie is from Minneapolis, and he seems to get on well with fans, so that was a good thing.

That evening was yet another of those which melded into the general run of evenings. At some point I must have run into Lee Smoire, because I volunteered to sit on a Melbourne in '85 table with her the next morning. This could well have been the evening that Cliff organised a two a.m. trek across the city to a dessert place that he'd found. I tagged along for a block or two, and then realised that what I needed was sleep and not food. I muttered assorted apologies, and staggered back to the Marina to collapse.

The Monday programme didn't look any more promising than the previous days' programmes had, and so I took up Linda's offer of a drive up to the Rocky Mountains' National Park. I breakfasted on an ice cream cone, thus proving my sense of balance, though, as a diet it wasn't too balanced. The service in the ice cream parlour had deteriorated markedly. I then sat on the Melbourne table until it was time to leave for the mountains.

Once again I was glad of Linda's driving and navigational ability. She guided us through the tangle of Denver freeways, and out past Boulder towards the park. It was a great day for a drive, and I enjoyed the chance to natter to Linda. It was strange but, despite having acted as her host in Adelaide, and having had her do native guide impressions in Minneapolis, I'd not really had the chance to sit and talk. In the course of a two hour car ride, there's really not much else one can do.

I was impressed by the scenery. The vegetation was more luxuriant than any I'd seen in Australia, with the exception of some that I'd seen in the Blue Mountains rain forest, and the mountains were real mountains, not the worn out stubs that we tend to have in Australia. We stopped at a few parking bays, and got out to say hello to the ground squirrels which obviously relied heavily on tourists for their food supplies. We didn't have anything to feed them, but they'd come up to our hands just on the offchance that they were flesh coloured peanuts.

The really magic part of the trip though was the large pine forest halfway up the mountain road. We stopped, and walked deep into it. The stillness was amazing. All we could hear was the occasional bird call, and, once I'd overcome my fear of being mugged by a bear, I really got into the contrast between the forest and the noisy convention we'd just left. It was fucking quiet.

I did my botanical bit, discovering some lovely little ground cover plants. We also discovered that they and the forest floor held moisture very nicely thank you. By the time we got back to the car our shoes and socks were soaked.

We then continued up the mountain in the hope that there would be some snow for me to see. I hadn't seen snow since I was a kid in England. We got up to the permafrost level, which was as arid as the Australian bush, but cold. This though was as far as we could get. The cloud had come down, and was covering most of the top of the mountain. We tried driving through it, but couldn't see two feet in front of us. The idea of driving off the mountain side was not particularly attractive, so we turned back. It was quite an experience though, and far better than sitting around the hotel with post-convention blues.

Initially I'd planned to hold a dead-dog party in my room, but my finances weren't really up to providing the minimum of supplies to make such an enterprise worthwhile. Besides, by the time Linda and I got back from the park it was well past eight, so I closed up the room, leaving a note that I was down in the Bay Area party. It was a small but enjoyable gathering, and I finally got to talk to Terry Garey, at whose place I was to spend my last three days before leaving for Australia.

Linda was trying to get an expedition together to hit the hotel sauna, but I'm afraid to say I chickened out. As I've mentioned, I don't see my body as the sort of thing to which I am willing to expose others. Pity, as I found Linda's body most attractive, but, having survived an eight week trip, hitting such sinful places as

Sydney and Minneapolis with my membership in the league for fannish decency and TWAGA unscathed, it would have been rather silly to have compromised myself on the last night of the WorldCon.

I vaguely recall finding one or two other parties, including another in Moshe and Lise's room, which was a quiet and dignified end of the convention type party. I escorted Linda back to her room, and then went off in search of Joyce. Joyce had checked out of her room that morning, and was storing her luggage in my room while locating her crash space for the night.

The search was something else again, and, in essence, brought me full circle from my Wednesday night search for Jim Gilpatrick. This time though there were lots of very noisy parties going on. The hotel staff were starting to lose their senses of humour, and were forcing people to move out of the corridors and into the rooms. It was, for me, a process of saying goodbye to people I'd known for a very short time, but whom I'd grown to like in that time. The one clue that I had to Joyce's whereabouts was that she'd been seen following a sixty gallon vat of strawberry jello. Somehow the idea didn't strike me as at all silly. On the last day of a Worldcon, a sixty gallon vat of strawberry jello is perfectly sensible, especially when you take into account the fact that the perpetrators couldn't find enough lime.

I never did catch up with the jello though. I did see the chain of drunken fen and irate hotel detectives who were looking for it, but the jello itself evaded capture. I also found Joyce. She was sitting nattering outside the con suite. We went back to my room, nattered a little, and then Joyce loaded up her little luggage trolley and disappeared into the night. I collapsed, finding to my surprise that I had recovered from my cold. Talk about lousey timing.

Linda had kindly offered to drive me out to the airport on her way back to Minneapolis. When we got to the terminal I didn't want to get out of the car. I wanted to stay and become an illegal immigrant. I probably would have were it not for the fact that my brother Chris was the guarantor on the loan I'd taken out to pay for the trip.

This feeling was not helped a bit by the fact that Denny and Joyce were just ahead of me on the baggage check-in line. We talked a bit, and made our way up to the departure lounge. I noted, more with curiosity than with alarm, that the flight on which I was booked wasn't listed on the departure schedule. It wasn't until I got to the departure lounges themselves that I discovered that I might indeed become an illegal immigrant. The flight onto which I was booked did not exist. I kissed Joyce goodbye, and ran like hell back to the booking desk. There I was told off for not ringing to get confirmation, as the flight onto which I had been booked had been cancelled since the beginning of the air-controllers' strike. However, they were able to book me onto a later flight to Las Vegas which would connect with my flight to San Francisco. In the course of my panicked rush, I'd flustered past several bleary eyed conventioners, and I talked briefly with Steven Fahnstalk before getting uack to the departure lounge to say goodbye to Joyce and Denny in a less hurried manner. Their plane then left, and I headed back to a coffee bar to drown my sorrows in a giant cup of coffee. It wasn't very effective.

I was rather disappointed not to find any con attendees on the flight from Denver to San Francisco, but I soon worked out why. Republic must have one of the most convoluted routes between Denver and San Francisco that there is. First there was a two hour stop in Las Vegas, and believe me, I knew it was Las Vegas. As I came out of the aeroplane boarding tunnel I could hear the coins dropping into the accoustically designed metal bowls under the payout slots. I've never seen so many one-armed bandits. Having seven dollars fifty left to last me three days, I had no intention of trying one, but those beggars are cunning. After an hour of listening to coins rattling in the bowls, I got two dollars fifty worth of change, and took a try on the quarter machines. Needless to say, I won nothing. I only seem to win things when winning isn't really that important. I went back to re-reading the Rob Shaw collections to boost my spirits.

San Francisco

*I'm a long way from you
I'm a long way from home
And who cares for the feeling
Of being alone.*

Sandy Denny.

The flight finally boarded, following all the pre-take off routine " Please extinguish all smoking materials before boarding the plane." and I got to see the Palm Springs and Los Angeles airports in the course of the flight. I didn't though get to walk about, as it was a brief loading stop in each place. Palm Springs must have been small. It was the only airport I saw in the States without boarding ramps. The dry countryside also made me feel almost at home.

Arriving in San Francisco was not the end of my travel fun. Terry and Ctein were driving back from Denver, and so were not due to arrive back until the day after I arrived. They had given me a house key, a set of busing instructions, details on how to introduce myself to the cats and the budgie, and a note for their neighbour so that he wouldn't think I was ransacking the place.

Unfortunately my mental facilities were at their lowest ebu, and I spent twenty minutes standing at the wrong bus stop before I realised that I was at the wrong bus stop. Lugging my bags up to the correct stop was not at all easy. They seemed to have grown in weight in a manner totally disregarding the laws of conservation of mass. In addition I was carrying the two records I'd bought in Minneapolis. It is a sad fact that one cannot carry records in a rucksack. It may well have been this simple phenomenon that destroyed the Woodstock nation. Thus I was carrying them by hand. Now, had they been in an un-ecological non-recyclable plastic bag, I would have had no trouble, but they were in a fuzzy green paper bag, which was biodegrading under the influence of my sweaty hands.

Somehow though I got to Terry and Ctein's place with the records, rucksack, and my mind all in one piece, but frayed at the ends. I was greeted by the cats, Penny and Dudley. I did, at the time, work out which was which, but that vital datum seems to have slipped my mind right now. Suffice to say that one of them was friendly, while the other kept its distance despite the usually successful ploy of opening a can of cat food.

It was at Terry and Ctein's place that I committed one of my worst social gaffes for the trip. Indeed, I cannot look back on it without blushing. The cat tray was a little on the pongy side, and needed emptying. I couldn't though find the appropriate receptical for used kitty litter. I searched the house without any luck at all. Out in the garden though I found what I took to be a pile of weathered kitty litter. I emptied the tray next to that. It wasn't until the next morning, when my mind was a little freshed that I realised that what I'd taken for weathered kitty litter was actually plant food. I still couldn't find a bin, and so ended up leaving the pile there. Sorry about that Terry.

Terry and Ctein arrived later that afternoon, having had a rather harrowing trip, and one that hadn't been improved by the broken locking mechanism on their volkswagen door. It was a really and for true hippy style bus with California number plates, and it had been broken into in Denver. From the way that a couple of the interior panels had been levered open, Terry figured that the intruder had been searching for drugs. Whoever it was had been right out of luck, as Ctein doesn't and Terry is allergic. They'd taken Ctein's camera and Terry's jewelry as a consolation prize though.

I realise that there will be those who will find it difficult to believe that I spent three days in San Francisco without getting Grace Slick's autograph, but, by the time I got there I was physically, spiritually, emotionally and financially bankrupt. I collapsed at Terry and Ctein's place, and spent my time there just talking to them.

That in itself was quite an experience, as Ctein is on the verge of becoming a really successful professional photographer. He, Terry and another friend had covered the Space Shuttle launch and landing for Future magazine, and I got to see the press kits with which they'd been issued, along with one of the famous heat tiles. Terry is attempting to break into professional writing, and we got to talk a lot about Bay area fans and professionals, and about a tall guy called Andrew Brown through whom I'd gotten into Spinoff, the apa which Terry was editing at the time. (Andrew had lived in the Bay area for a time.)

The only time I left the house was when Jerry Kaufman dropped around. He was visiting Rich Coad on his way back to Seattle. We went for a walk along the beach, and scrambled among the cliffs looking for fossils. I found a small bit of what seems to be a trilobite. It was a nice way to kill a bit of time.

Terry drove me down to the airport, and offered to come in and wave goodbye, but I didn't feel that I could face that. I prefer to slip off silently into the night. Besides, I was feeling very incomplete, as though there was a lot that I'd missed in San Francisco. I resolved to spend more time there on my next trip.

The flight back was not a good thing. I was travelling Qantas, which is a good airline. The service and food were good, however, I suffered from that situation that can bring a look of horror to the face of the most experienced international traveller. I was seated next to two unescorted kids, aged about seven and ten. Now don't get me wrong. There have been times when I've quite liked kids. Some of me best friends..... However, kids on an overseas flight are absolute murder, and, towards the end of the flight, murder was very much on my mind. They got bored. They called the hostess over at least once an hour. At one point they started a food fight with their breakfast. I snapped at them once or twice, but was in no condition to establish the rapport that one should have before trying to deal with kids. Besides my teacher voice hadn't recovered from my cold. I put up with it, though next time I'll request a move.

The trip back was at least shorter than the trip over, and was broken in two places, in Honolulu and in Fiji. This time, since we were still officially in the U.S. we were allowed fairly free access to the facilities in Honolulu, and though we were kept in a holding lounge in Fiji, there it had a restaurant and lots of space. The hops were of six hours a piece, and though the movies weren't too good, there was some excellent material on the sound system. The comedy track had a Goon Show, THE CASE OF THE MISSING CD PLATES, and the rock track had the live version of STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN. My fevered brain came up with a filk, so I guess I can't have been feeling quite as cruddy as I thought I was. I did get a little more sleep than I had on the trip out, but this was a self defence measure. Being awake and next to the two horrors was more than I could take.

The worst part of the trip, other than the brats, was the wait in Sydney before being ferried down to Melbourne. I didn't have any Australian coins, and couldn't find anywhere to change my American dollar bill, and so couldn't phone anyone. However, that passed, and I was ferried down to Melbourne where I went through customs, again without my bags being checked.

Cathy met me just outside the terminal. I'd booked myself onto a late TAA flight back to Adelaide, and so was able to spend the afternoon with her. We visited Derrick and Christine Ashby, and Andrew Brown. I wasn't functioning too well, but it was nice to see them and catch them up on the events of Denvention. Cathy drove me back to the airport, and I slept through the flight to Adelaide.

My brother Chris and my parents met me at Adelaide Airport, which was a good thing. I didn't have enough money to get a bus home.

Epilogue

*I can tell a fair old story which I'm sure ain't no surprise
Of the places I have been, oh,
And they ain't no lies.*

Sandy Denny.

I won't go into the gorey details on how I reintegrated myself into Adelaide life. It certainly was hectic for the first few weeks, as I arrived back on a Saturday evening, and had to report for school on the Monday morning, to a re-arranged timetable, including a new class.

While I'd been away my brother Skye, who had been looking after my stereo, had gone back to Tasmania, but fortunately he'd left me instructions on how to re-claim the geer. I also had to pick up Mac, my cat, who had not taken well to the boarding home he'd been in.

Looking back on it, I'm only just starting to recover from the trip now, and there are certain parts of the trip from which I doubt that I'll ever recover. My bank balance is going to require another twelve months extensive treatment before it recovers. However, this report is my attempt to bring together all the things that the trip meant to me. I left my heart in San Francisco, and Toronto, and Seattle, and Birmingham, and Denver, but above all in Minneapolis. Even if I get back again, the second trip will never match the first, and, for some reason that pleases me.

ART CREDITS

Bill Brown pp 15, 25, 45, 52.
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John Packer pp 1 & 23
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Melbourne in '85

