

ITS NOT HARD TO
SET FIRE TO
YOUR EGGNOG
IF YOU SPIKE IT
WITH ETHER.



SIKANDER

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The fanzine that furfills its quota of creative typos.

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CONTENTS

Words by Irwin Hirsh (p 2), Billy Wolfenbarger (p 4), John J. Alderson (p 7), and David Grigg (p 10).

Pictures by Alexis Gilliland (p 1,12), John Packer (p 8,9), and Bruce Townley (p 20).

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An interlineation a zine, hits serconists for a zing.

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SEMINAL SQUARES
Irwin Hirsh

SEMINAL SQUARES
Irwin Hirsh

HARD-TOP EDITORIAL

-TOP EDITORIAL

"I've been trying to figure out what my difficulty is in writing locs to faneds. The facts are these: my major interest is in people who speak for themselves in their own medium as in personal zines and apas; my preference is to then speak directly back at them. In fact my occasional letter has gone to the writing fans whose articles I'd read in genzines, trying to respond directly to them - avioding the editor. (Blasphemy but I hope forgiveable.) I've this hunger to cut out the middleman and speak with the writer/essayist/reviewer. When you loc a zine, the faned knows what you think but the contributing writer may only learn of it if there's room in the next issue."

- Gil Gaier, from a letter in Marty Cantor's Holier Than Thou #8.

The question arises, after reading this quote, about who should get the comments a reader might have upon reading an article in a genzine. And it is a pretty important question in view of the fact that in the field of fanzines comments recieved are (along with the creative self-satisfaction) essentially the only reward an editor or contributor recieves. It is certainly my belief that the egoboo gained from comments is what keeps most people interested in a continueing involvement with fanzines.

I think Gil Gaier is incredibly wrong in his attitude of skipping the editor and sending his comments directly to the contributor. If only because if it wasn't for the editor having Gil on her/his mailing list, Gil would never have seen the article. In having this attitude Gil is totally neglecting to show any appreciation for the time, effort and money the editor puts into publishing their fanzine. Gil neglects the fact that the contributor wanted her/his article to appear in that fanzine - I've always felt that there is an unspoken understanding between the contributor and the fanzine editor that the faned gets to see the comments first. Gil ignores that editing a letter-column is, for most people, a highly enjoyable aspect of fanzine production, and that it is hard to edit a letter-column if everyone by-passes the editor and writes the contributor. And Gil ignores the control the editor has over their fanzine; I look at the 12 articles I've published in these 4 issues of Sikander and I tend to feel that if it wasn't for me asking these writers for contributions, 6 of the articles would not have been published, and of the other 6, 3 would've most probably only seen publication in a small circulation apazine (while one of the

remaining 3 was a re-print in Sikander).

In the last line of the above quote Gil does explain one of the reasons he acts this way: he would like to make sure the contributor gets to see his (gil's) comments. This is admirable to the extent that the contributor also deserves credit for her/his involvement in the publication of the fanzine, but I don't see why Gil doesn't make a copy of his letter and sends one to the editor and the other to the contributor. But even then, I want to know why Gil sees it as his job to make sure the contributor sees the unpublished comments.

In the short time that I've been editing this magazine I have always passed the unpublished comments on to the relevant contributor. Just because a faned likes to edit her/his letter-column one way it does not mean that the writer should not see all the comments made about her/his words. A comment like "Enjoyed Joe Phan's article, but it doesn't elicit any particular comments" is not the stuff of which great letter-columns are built, but it is an acknowledgement that was meant for the author as well as the editor. It appears that Gil has never thought of this procedure as something that should happen, and in his comment on the above quote Marty Cantor seems to indicate that this is a practise that he does not carry out. And I wonder about how wide this sort of lack of concern for contributors is, among today's fanzine editors. I'm scared that it is pretty wide, and I can't help but feel that it is one reason why so many fanzines appear so infrequently: faneds don't get enough material to publish more often and yet, if they treated their past contributors with a bit more care, those people would have been in a better frame of mind for wanting to contribute again, and again, and again. The relationship between an editor and the contributor is, quite easily, the most important aspect in setting up whether a fanzine is a success or not, and this lack of concern about passing on unpublished comments can hardly be a foundation for that sort of healthy relationship.

So, if you publish a fanzine let me ask you a question. What do you do with the comments that don't make it onto your letter-column? Do you file them away somewhere never to be seen again, or do you distribute them to your contributors. If the former, let me state with no compassion for you but a lot for your past contributors, that you don't deserve to get any more articles or artwork for publication in your fanzine. And I hope you are going to turn around and do something so that if ever I, or anyone else, makes that last statement again it doesn't apply to you.

And as for Gil Gaier's attitude of writing directly to the contributor and forgetting the editor, I'll let him worry about that when he starts to get dropped off faneds' mailing lists for lack of response.

- Irwin Hirsh

 **
 ** THE HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE HEART **
 ** a column by Billy Wolfenbarger **

2.

While speaking of names, I stayed up until 1:30 a.m. reading a book that once belonged to my father, Wylie Wolfenbarger. It's an old one, a hardcover from Triangle Books, of New York, dated June 1942, although the copyright is from 1938. I read up to page 203 (out of 277 pages) of the late Erle Stanley Gardner's The D. A. Holds a Candle. I'm enjoying this novel, which reads rapidly, not necessarily simply because I enjoy a good mystery, which it is, but also because it once belonged to my father, who died when I was less than two years old during World War 2, in Germany. It's one of the only ways I have to get to know my father, a man I hardly "knew" at all, by reading what he read. Wylie Wolfenbarger was a great reader, who graduated from high school when he was fifteen-and-a-half. His son was never that smart. I had to go through 4 laborious years of Neosho High School in Missouri. I can still remember that evening, back in June of 1961, when graduation was newly over; it was a great, wide feeling of freedom, one of the happiest evenings in my life. I was happy to get all that over with. I knew my dad read philosophy, mystery, Jack London, war books, etc., before a sniper's bullet took him out of this world when he was 26. I still miss him. One of the 768 million reasons I wish my father was still alive is that I wish he could read some of the things I write & have written.

This installment in Sikander is going to be sporadic (there used to be a fanzine called Sporadic, from Billy Joe Plott in the mid-'60s) — delving into whatever kick in the cortex emerges. All I have to do is get it from pages to readers' eyes. My life has been pretty crazy lately. (That's new?) Going through the Changes. I'm 37 years old, making a major Change by writing fiction I hope will sell someplace; and for 20 years I've been writing poetry that may or may not sell; that's not the point of my poetry-writing. Work out here in the great American Northwest is hard to come by. Usually I do the seasonal jobs, with long lonely gaps in-between. I'm poor. I've dropped out of APA-50; no time, no time. When I went to a get-together in Eugene last month over at John Varley's place, Paul Novitski was there (hadn't seen him in a long time — not since he'd moved from Eugene to Seattle) — said he hadn't written any fiction in two years.

Told him I'd met Jessica Amanda Salmonson up in Portland in November at OryCon II — he said he'd read her latest novel and it was good. Mentioned to Paul I'd been reading a lot of stories by Ramsey Campbell, that fellow from Liverpool — Paul had heard the

name, said he'd try him out. The place was crowded. Nodded briefly to people I'd seen before, but I didn't really know them. Paul didn't stay around long; he had one of those 24-hour virus things, & he had to leave next day for Seattle. I left not long after that, went over to Geoff's house and spent the night, visiting & watching idiot television.

In the lettercol, Marilyn Pride mentions Sikander arriving in the mail "at just the right moment". I know that feeling. Lately I've been in the please-please-somebody-please-send-me-some-mail-blues. Last week Sutton Brieding sent me a great letter, but the rush waned over the long, dreary weekend. Yesterday (Monday) I walked out to that lonely mailbox next to Coburg Road and looked inside. What? A standard-size manilla envelope, nothing else in there to keep it company. I dutifully pulled it out, looked at it anyway. A fanzine! Yeahhiehh! Somebody thought of me. It was that real strange one, the zine from the folks at the Minnesota Science Fiction Society, Inc. it says. Well, well . . . I told myself . . . so the 61st issue of Rune has arrived. I brought it inside to the dining room, broke open the envelope, and scanned the thing. There was no one else in the house. (Well, maybe a cat or two.) I had my mail all to myself, and I could shout with joy or grumble heartily, and no one would bother me. And quickly I discovered this one is the last issue to be under Carol Kennedy and Lee Pelton's editorship - sad news, yes. I kinda hate to see them go. When they took over the editorship they started sending me every issue they put getether. The new editors are John Bartelt, Garth Danielson and David Stever-Schnoes. Well, hopefully, I thought, they won't mind Carol sending in reviews of the horror anthologies, which had always been one of the high spots in Rune for me. I flipped through more pages and entered the lettercol, a weird land of blue, and found they had published one of my letters. I remember I smiled and said, "Thank you, thank you". One soon discovers when one (me) is spending a lot of time trying to sell stories, that you don't send them to fanzines, and that you get pressed for time, money, eternity, and space so that before long you (almost) begin to feel you're damned lucky to get a rejection this week. (I can't believe I really, really said that.) Ah, it's rough - saving postage to mail your stories instead of writing letters to friends, all that sort of thing. Thank you, Rune, thank you.

And last night I finished reading the mystery novel, where several people go into nearby Los Angeles for more professional cop aid & advice, and on their way back through the night streets of Los Angeles nearly run into a streetcar. Well, that was back in 1938, remember. The D. A. Holds a Candle was a lot of fun, but it might be a while before I'm ready for more Erle Stanley Gardner novels. I have another one of his, in paperback, The Case of the Rolling Bones, from 1939, and is one of those Perry Mason adventures.

And this morning (Wednesday) got to rumbling around in my room - my study - my office - and pulled out that famous apazine from Los Angeles, APA-L, the issue dated June 11, 1970, which is the 265th mailing (these zines are gathered each week at LASFS meetings), & this one is a special mailing to me, because I was living at my mother's house in Neosho, Missouri at the time, & sent my one ditto master in to be published. From the summers since 1965 I'd been in LA, & had contacted the people at LASFS, although I didn't actually contribute anything to APA-L until 1969. Anyway, in my short essay, "The Small Town in a Fan's Life", I explained that I'd shortly returned to Missouri from Dallas, Texas, where I'd gotten sick with the dreaded hepatitis, & was under a doctor's care, taking it easy. And from the late 1960s ('67-'69) I hadn't much involved with fandom & getting published (although I did attend my first con, Westercon XX, in Los Angeles in 1967, in July). My return to Neosho from Texas was a weary one. The 60s were over and I was a burned-out survivor. I wanted to get back into the veins of things fannish again, and it was a real day of joy to find this APA-L in the mail. The issue had a total of 136 pages, with many if not most of the contributors familiar to me. I was sandwiched between James Shull and Don Fitch. And upon the contents page was a name new to me, Alpajpuri. It wasn't until many years later I found his name was Paul Novitski. And in his zine therein, Djinn, he mentions he'll be returning to Eugene, Oregon. (He'd first lived there since 1958.) Even before I entered high school one of my dreams was either to build a cabin in the mountains of Colorado, or live somewhere in Oregon. The next month, in July of 1970, I moved to Bloomington, Illinois to live with Loretta. Somewhere in something or other, I found reviews of some fanzines, & I sent an essay to Outworlds (Bill Bowers had published some of my poetry & a couple of letters in Double:Bill in the mid-'60s), and I sent a short article to Ed Conner, who was publishing a zine called Moebius Trip (much later called SF Echo). Both essay & article got into print. (Conner was living in Peoria, and I thought it a kind gesture to have something published in the state I was living in at the time.) (No, not a mental state.) At all events, wife Loretta, daughter Sara, & I, moved to Oregon in May of 1973, and Paul Novitski came out to meet us the next year (he'd read me in Outworlds), and we got a bottle of wine, & had a great visit. And now the '70s are over, we're still in Oregon (& plan to stay) (at least in this lifetime), and the circle dances, singing its silent songs. And tomorrow, the 5th of February, 1981, is a special - very special - anniversary for me: on that date in the year 1960 my first writing to see print came out, a short poem about the end of the world.

- Billy Wolfenbarger

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** DREAMING OF FASTER THAN ~~LIGHT~~ BULLOCK+WAGON COMMUNICATIONS **
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John J. Alderson

Some time ago, about 110 years to be accurate, the Borough of Dunolly petitioned the Government for five mail deliveries per day! This would have meant about 28 deliveries per week. They now are reputed to get five per week. I say reputed because even stranger things seem to happen with mail posted in and for Dunolly than even Havelock. Of course Dunolly is even further outback than Havelock, seven miles to be precise, further north on a major railway which is supposed to have at least four passenger trains running northward per day. Three of them would be buses. Well a few years ago everybody lost all postal deliveries but the morning one, and several years before that, all Saturday services.

There was a time, just before I came along apparently, when one could telegraph to Melbourne for a spare part and have it put on the next train and arrive about five hours later, whilst the business, if done by post would have the article arrive the following day. Now, my nephew, when he wants a spare part urgently, drives to Melbourne and picks it up, and I know of men who actually drive from the South Australian border to Melbourne to get a spare part, despite the journey being a long day's driving.

Now what has prompted these remarks, and those which follow, is my present predicament. I live on a farm, with a high growth of dry clover which is nearly as explosive as gun-cotton all about me, and my firefighting plant is useless for want of a seal. It would only take some ass to throw a cigarette butt out of either the window of the train or of a car, and I would lose something like a quarter of a million's worth of property. Now I stressed the importance of this in my letter with the cheque and again when I phoned up to make sure they had the seal, of its price and to impress on them the urgency of it. That was five days ago and there is no sign of the seal, and there won't be until the weekend is over. I would have thought that anyone specializing in fire-fighting units as this firm does, would show a little more promptness. I would doubt afterall, that they are bogged down with Christmas sales, though perhaps fire-fighting plants are sometimes put in Christmas stockings. I concede my ignorance on that matter.

As it may be gathered from my preliminary remarks, this is not an isolated instance.

Now I ask you, why does it take longer to get a letter from Havelock to Melbourne (one hundred miles) than it does to get one from Melbourne to London (some 12,000 miles)? Ten years ago a letter posted locally was sorted, dropped in a Melbourne bag,

carted to the Railway station and put on the train at least three times per day. It was possible, by catching the ten o'clock posting to actually have the letter delivered late in the afternoon. Now, if one gets the letter posted before ten am, the letter is sent to Ballarat for sorting. And it is evening and morning of the first day. The following day the letter gets to Melbourne. It may be delivered in the City area or put into a box at the G.P.O.. Otherwise it goes to the suburban post office and is delivered the following day. Only by actually replying immediately and posting at the G.P.O. can an answer get back to Havelock inside a week. If on the other hand I am writing to Mildura (and remember I am on the Mildura line with about fifty trains per day going past), the letter goes to Ballarat for sorting, then to Bendigo for the local Mildura sorting, and then to Mildura where it is presumably sorted again. Time was when one could post a letter at the station and have it arrive in Mildura five hours later.

So, Australia Post is not perfect. Now you may say, if it had competition... But it has.

I buy books on order to selected customers, and I also import them from all over the world. So the other day I was in at Rigby's Melbourne office and I ordered some books and the question of delivery came up. I mentioned post and the man threw up his hands in horror and said that just about nobody uses post to deliver books nowadays. Well, that's all he knows, quite a number of firms do and they generally get their books to me cheaper and more promptly than those who use carriers. As there was a blunt refusal to use the post I had to settle for their use of a carrier. The minimum charge for postage is usually two dollars, for a carrier, five dollars! There and then we fixed up most of the pro-forma invoice, and when I left all they had to do was add up the figures, put it in an envelope, address it and post it. Sixteen days later this has still not arrived, and this from a firm which promised

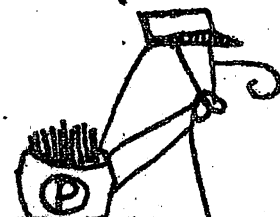
NOT BEING TOO FAST
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WITH THE POSTAL
COMMISSION.



JLP

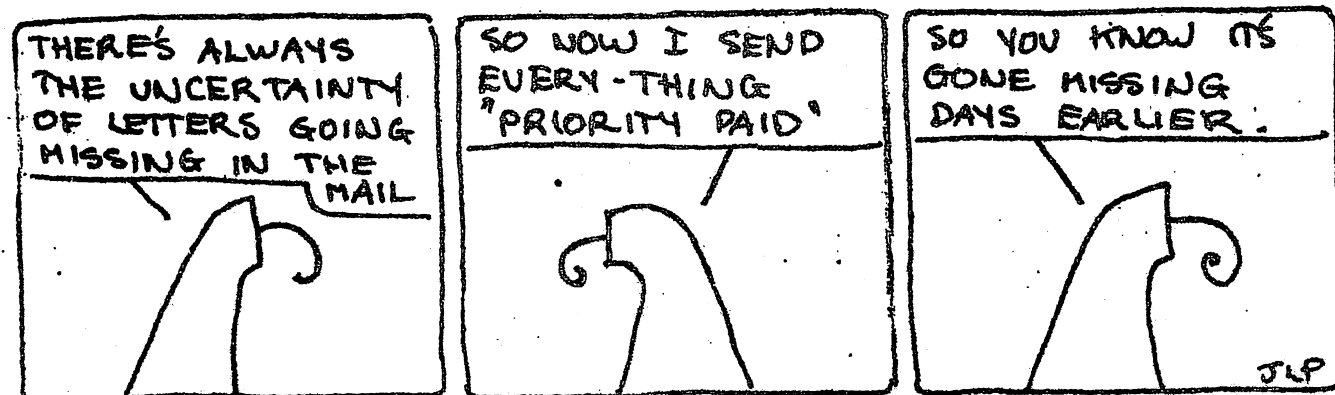
delivery in two days (from Adelaide) from the payment of the pro-forma invoice. Overseas firms can get them back quicker. Now that fault is not in Australia Post. Indeed Jim Lowden of Lowden Press swears by Australia Post for reliability and reasonable speed.

Earlier this year I placed an order with Penguin in Ringwood. I think it was two months later I got a proforms invoice for about two thirds of the order. No mention of the rest. Six weeks later I was still trying to track down the order which they had promised would be sent immediately, and they gave me the carrier's name and address of the depot. The street they gave doesn't exist and for all I know the transport company may not. I found the goods at a different depot entirely, and certainly not addressed as I had asked them to be addressed.

When I got the order and checked it over I listed the books not sent and wrote to Penguin asking if they were in stock (needless to say they were in a very recent issue of Penguin News from which I ordered). I recieved no answer. Last time I was in the City I phoned them and was told that about half the books were available. I asked for them to be sent up. A fortnight later I still haven't got them.

With Nelson a few months ago I got the books off the shelves myself, waited whilst they wrote out an invoice, paid the account and left them to post the books up. They sent them by carrier with no notification that they had not adhered to my instructions. After a month or so I wrote asking what had happened to the books. A couple of weeks later I happened to be in at one of the carrier's and they gave me the books, again not addressed as I had requested. Finally I got a letter and refund cheque back from Nelson saying their carrier could not find me. I returned the cheque with some blistering comments on their business methods.

What's wrong with the bloody country! doesn't anyone care how they



conduct their business.

I am too well aware of the criticism of our Governments, how they have too many bureaucrats and too much red tape...as if Governments alone were so afflicted. Some years ago the Board of the Maryborough Hospital decided they needed more space. The Government refused to allow them to build a new hospital or extend the present one, but they were given a grant to build a new wing... for offices! New factories in Maryborough built new premises, and each has the same feature...a solid block of offices fronting the entire width of the factory, and one of them previously managed with three girls in one little room! Now they have about thirty girls and last time I was in the factory (one should never go near the front offices if they can be avoided) I noticed a new set of offices built in the factory itself and there is another office complex halfway along. I would estimate that this factory has two office staff for every worker. As a point of interest, it's a printery. What do they all do? There is one thing for certain, they neither make for speed or efficiency. Indeed I would say that Australian industry has reached an all time low in efficiency. Unlike Government offices where they eventually get somewhere, private industry often never gets anywhere.

I am, somehow reminded of a Maryborough firm which bought out a similiar one in Dunolly, worked it half-heartedly for awhile from Maryborough, and then closed it down. A Melbourne firm has just done the same with the Maryborough Flour Mills. So many of these firms of which I complain are now foreign owned. They don't care a damn; they were bought to rub out a competitor. It may be of interest that the only publishers who behave in any way like a business are the few remaining small Australian publishers.

Have we sold our country and nobody gives a damn anymore?

- John J. Alderson

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MUTTERINGS

a column by David Grigg

1.

I had lunch with my literary agent the other day.

I don't mention this to give myself airs, or to make you think that I'm a super-succesful, big-time writer. Nothing, alas, could be further from the truth. But I have set typewriter to paper from time to time, and on rare occasions, I have even been paid for the result. It's amazing how little taste some people have.

But as I was saying, my sometime literary agent was in Melbourne

for a few weeks around Christmas, and accosted me at Mervyn Binns' New Year's Eve party, demanding to have a conference with me. This was fair enough, of course, but I found the situation a little embarrassing, since I hadn't written to the lady for at least a year, and I knew that the first question she would ask me was that dreadful, straight-to-the-heart query that all lazy authors like me hate: "What have you been writing recently?"

What could I answer? For the truth of the matter was that I had completed not a thing for about two years, though I had certainly STARTED plenty of pieces of writing.

But the last thing an agent wants to hear is excuses. What she wants to hear is that you've written a best-seller to outdo Harold Robbins.

Nevertheless, excuses and all, my agent said she wanted to see me and talk for a while. Reluctantly, I agreed, and we fixed a date for lunch in the city. She said she would bring her husband along. Maybe I don't look trustworthy.

So the days passed, and finally it was the day when we were to have lunch. The lady had agreed to meet me at my office (I work for a living, you see), and I reckoned there were two choices. Either I could take her and her husband up to the office canteen, where the food is inedible but the decor depressing, or wander up a block to the nearest pub, which serves a bistro-style meal. The latter, of course, was the more expensive option, but it seemed the best bet. Off we went, with me making desperate small talk, hoping that my agent wouldn't get to asking me about my writing too soon.

The food at the pub was pleasant enough, but as we sat there drinking beer and eating steaks (after all, I had a duty to show my guests some traditional Australian cooking), I finally ran out of small-talk.

"Okay," said my agent, "what are you writing right now?"

"Well," I said. "Um." I contrived an interruption by stuffing some food into my mouth. But it didn't last long. I drew a deep breath.

"Well, you see, I'm doing this correspondence course right now. And of course I got married a year ago, and we're renovating this house. And what do you think about Ronald Reagan as President?"

Brushing aside my attempted ploy, she insisted, "Come on, how about the writing?" Trapped.

"Well," I said reluctantly, "I'm part of the way through this science fiction novel. It's a lot better than the first one, of course." It would have to be: my first novel travelled through more editor's slush piles than I knew existed.

Then I saw a possible way out. All that I had ever sent my agent

was science fiction, and I knew that she specialised in that.

"Of course," I continued smoothly, "I'm really going off sf. Can't be bothered reading it any more. What I've really got in mind is an autobiographical novel, set around the year I spent working for a public relations firm in 1972. It was one of those watershed years for me, a lot happened during that year."

"Oh yes?" said my agent. "It sounds good. But you know, you have to make sure that you write a lot of sex into it. Sleazy sex novels are big at the moment."

"Sleazy sex novels?" I asked weakly, thinking back on 1972, when I was still a virgin, and innocent with it.

"Yeah," she said. "This office where you worked, in the novel, make sure that the boss is having it off with his secretary, and work in a few inter-office romances. Could be a good seller in the States."

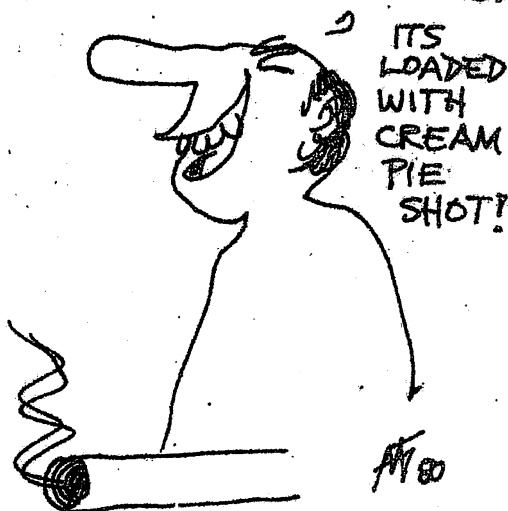
"Ah," I said, and gazed into the distance while I chewed on a piece of steak. The trouble with writing pornography, I thought idly, is that you have to be able to type one-handed.

"Actually, if you want my advice," my agent said, "you should get into writing epics."

"Epics? You mean Barf the Barbarian and all that?"

"No, no! I mean family epics, series novels, you know. Rich Man, Poor Man, The Forsyte Saga, that kind of thing. Series are in at the moment. I just sold a six volume family epic by a new writer to a big publisher in New York, with an option for three more volumes."

HAR HAR HAR



My mind boggled at the thought of writing the three-quarters of a million words which that would represent. I have trouble writing five thousand words, and attempting the eighty thousand of novel-length always feels like Herculean labour.

"The other thing," she said, "is that you Australian writers so rarely make use of your exotic background. Americans find Australia fascinating. I think you could write an Australian

family epic, you know, start with one of the convicts at Botany Bay, and carry on from there. Should be good for six or seven novels in the series."

I was bemused by all this, not to mention the thought of all the thousands of dollars of advances my agent mentioned (I could see her calculating ten percent of all that as her fee) that I found myself paying for lunch. I parted with my agent and her husband back at my office, after promising to let her have some drafts of stories I had done some years before.

I wandered back into my office, and bumped into John Bangsund, who works at the same place as me at present. "I just had lunch with my agent," I said, "and she wants me to write an Australian family epic of sleazy sex novels." John's eyebrows raised, but he didn't make much comment.

I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to think up titles for such an epic. "Seven dirty little Australians"? "Orgy at Hanging Rock"? "on our erection"? "The Mayhems of Richard Fortune"? It was no good, I just couldn't keep it up.

I reckon my agent is going to be disappointed with me. I just don't think I have the talent to write a sleazy sex novel, not to mention an Australian family epic. She'll have to make her fortune through another writer, and good luck to her, too, seeing as over the years her total agent's fee for selling my work has added up to exactly \$4.

But all this reminded me of the time some years ago when pseudo-science books were in, big, the trendy thing. I reckoned there had to be some way I could make money out of writing something at least as entertaining and far more amusing than The Secret Life of Plants or The Bermuda Triangle.

I worked out all the angles, and I finally came up with a surefire best-seller. I didn't have an agent back then, which is probably why I never made my fortune. But I knew I was onto the right track with this title: "How to Calculate Your Pet Rock's Horoscope".

If I could only work out how to introduce sex into that book, I reckon it could make me rich.

- David Grigg

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"Speaking of my sf film book, I think I told you last letter I was going to call it "The Ultimate On Film". Well, the publishers thought that idea was a pile of Australian pooh-pooh, so then I came up with "From Melies To Star Wars", which everyone liked. Now some nerd had come out with a book called "From Jules Verne To Star Trek"... so the new title for my book is "Close Encounters In The Third Row". My publisher is not amused.

- John Brosnan, letter in John Bangsund's Pareragon Papers 5

 AT LEAST YOU CAN SAY YOU HAVE READ IT
 readers comments on previous issues

Bruce Townley
 2323 Sibley St
 Alexandria
 VA 22311, USA

Yeah, sure, Metro (the Washington DC transit system) is too expensive and complicated but ... but DC buses and trains are controlled by the same people, (I dunno about San Francisco but since I've lived in the DC area for about fifteen years I think I can speak on this matter with some authority if not pedantry) and what's more they always have been since the subways were stuck in the ground. The only reason why it's so expensive is that Metro is run by three different governments, that of Maryland, DC, and Virginia. So poot to you Irwin, and I won't even mention that you forgot to mention me in your paltry trip report you ungrateful wretch! See if I ever buy you Stroh's beer and Alka Seltzer again!

Oddly enough I had a lotta trouble with teachers in grade school about hand writing too. Always got bad grades in it and so had to spend endless hours making running o's at home till they finally took me to a doctor who told my parents that I'd never write any better because of my bad nerves (probably from having to do all those running o's). Almost as funny as the time my mother thought I'd only been out in the sun too long when I really had a ruptured appendix, wotta laugh!

Chas Jensen
 PO Box 434
 Norwood
 SA 5067

I guess the Sikander I've enjoyed the most was issue two, if only because the trip report interested me with its tale-like approach that i almost didn't notice the fade into the subject of cricket (an australian obsession that i don't share). Seems to me that travelling is very seductive in that you most often don't realise just how much time has actually passed while you've been enjoying yourself. I think that the reason i spent so little time in the North Island of New Zealand was that, i always wanted to stay one more day and explore the place a little better while i was in the South. Perhaps you would enjoy NZ quite a bit more than i did, being a skier; the variety of slopes in size and type of skiing offered impressed even a nonskier like myself. From what other travellers, mostly Europeans and Americans, told me the fields were some of the cheapest in the world. The obvious exception is Mt. Cook, but you require to be dropped by plane or helicopter on that snowfield; well, its not a snowfield really... its a Tasman Glacier. Like i said, lots of variety in the South Is. The North Is. can only offer the dormant... er, large dormant volcano of Mt. Ruapehu (both sides of it, but Oakhume is probably better).

I have to admit that I wanted to see as much of the islands as two months would allow, and also get to as many of the wilderness areas and features as possible in that time. For that reason i ended up hitchhiking my way around the South, and taking buses around the more populous North... my budget would not stretch any further... and got to see a lot of country that way. Met a lot of interesting people. My only regret is that i had occasion to meet just two Kiwi fans i knew, so there is no real fannish gossip to be spread.

One of the things that i used, as a child, to do on those trips in the car was to watch the scenery that passed by and imagine what the people i saw were doing, and would do after i had gone past. As expected this would become boring quickly and i would try and count telegraph poles to estimate speed without looking at the speedo until after, or try the same thing with the mile posts. (I was usually lousy).

It may have paid off, in the days after i left uni, and spent some time as a driver of taxis, trucks, buses, semis and most other forms of tranpost (except where you flew or needed water). I found that i could estimate my speed fairly closely and that long stretches behind the wheel did not always fag me out the way it sometimes did my friends/co-drivers. Mandy Herriot could tell you whether i retained those skills. I guess driving is the ultimate cure for boredom induced by long trips, though frenetic conversation that ranges all over the place helps too... it's hard to be bored if you're still laughing.

Marl Loney
PO Box 83
Kalamunda
WA 6076

Your article about number plate watching struck a responsive chord deep in my soul as it is a hobby of mine from way back in my dim, dark past. Western Australian registration plates however, offer far more

scope than those of other Australian States and Territories in the field of harmlessly passing a few hours.

This is because Western Australia, in addition to the rego plates you were talking about, three letter and three number combinations - what we call Metropolitan Registrations - offers a second series of rego plates, regional in nature, that are issued with respect to the boundaries of the (country) town council or shire council that you live in. For example, living in the Kalamunda Shire it is possible to register your own car/motorcycle/etc with KM plates. Thus the rego on my mini-moke is KM.3649.

This leads to the game of 'work out where that car came from' which can be played in almost any traffic situation. As WA has a large number of country shire and town councils, many of which use obscure letter groupings to denote their names, the game can last a long time (after over six years at it there are still a few I haven't been able to work out!).

I can still remember puzzling over CMT registrations for over a

year before finally giving in and asking my father (at that time, final authority in these matters, though I'm on my own now as I know more than he does these days) what shire or town it stood for. When he told me that it was a joint registration covering the three shires/towns of Cunderdin, Meckering and Tannin I was greatly relieved - surely I didn't expect myself to work out conundrums like that. Another puzzler was the registration VP. Wiser (I thought) after finally finding out what CMT stood for, I thought VP would be a snap, look for a combination of shires or towns that gave the combination...

Months later I got it. VP was the registration grouping for the Shire of Victoria Plains - a Shire that was surveyed years before towns like New Norcia grew to importance.

Not all registrations are that difficult to work out though, BY for instance is the registration grouping for Bunbury, GN serves for Geraldton. Kalgoorlie has the registration plates KMC (for Kargoorlie Municipal Council) and Albany for some strange reason runs two sets of plates, A and AL - although the AL plates have only begun appearing in the last few years, so they may not be issuing the A plates any more.

Once past the initial delights of associating places to registration plates, comes the noting of finer details about regional number plates. The Town of Geraldton, for example, and the Shire of Gnowangerup both use the grouping GN for their rego plates. How are cars to be distinguished then?

Officialdom solves this problem by making country shire number plates slightly different to country town number plates, the rego on my Cortina is GNL3702 - a Geraldton plate - while a car registered in Gnowangerup would be GN.13702. Two different shires or towns can't use the same grouping though.

After investing so much energy in this hobby I can only feel disdain for people from country areas who register a car with a Metropolitan Plate and then attach a little dog-plate to the bottom that says something like 'Esperance', far superior is a rego plate like E.2009, a plate that a friend of mine wears like a badge of honour on his Datsun 1600 while studying at Uni in Perth.

Bob Smith
GPO Box 1019
Sydney
NSW 2001

The Bruce Townley cartoon sets the fannish mood quite suitably, especially if one appreciates the koan in the question. Cripes, I thot, Wolfenbarger and Berry inside. This Hirsh guy must get around a

bit... You see, I immediately associated Billy with dear old Cry, and even remembered Avram Davidson's wahf. (I lived in a place called Puckapunyal at the time, and you can imagine what fun the Cry of the Nameless editors and readers had with that!) My immediate reaction on seeing the name Berry was - which one? (This

in view of the mention of being a fan back in 1954) Getting back to thots of Cry made me wonder what ever happened to Les Gerber, Bob Lichtman, Dick Schultz, the Busbys, and so on...

My wife and I had ideas about getting vanity plates for the car, and since we breed persian cats it would have had to be the right combination of cattery prefix initial and persian breed numbers. Since my prefix is "Honmatsu" and Lyn's is "Witchways" and we breed, between us, around ten different breeds of the species Felinus Freeloadus, then you can see why it was better for our mental well being to just forget it... Hey, you gotta be kidding me: your mother didn't really have a plate like that? It's the fannish thing to do, of course. When I was a tad us kids in Pommyland had far more interesting items to count and identify than cars....

"Hey, Smudger, you sure that was a Spitfire wa just saw?"

"'Cors it was, yuh stoopid or summat? I knows me airypplanes."

"Then hocom it just blewed the top off the Corn Exchange...?"

Reading Keith Curtis on collecting reminded me of two old books still on my shelves that are evidence of the depths to which I sank Back Thar in them balmy days when I had nothing else on my mind. John Kendrick Bangs' A House-Boat on the Sytx and The Pursuit of the House-Boat, vintage 1900. Both very amusing and highly readable and I wouldn't part with them, but would you believe that back when I obtained them I was attempting to secure every sf and/or fantasy book in Don Tuck's Encyclopedia of SF & Fantasy!! (That is, his first one-volume effort, in case anyone considers me completely crackers.) Ah, them were the days...

Reading the lettercol in your fanzige and others recently recieved I am a little put out to see so many Smiths around now. Not good for the egoboo, you know. Well, there was one sport every trufan of the British species went in for: Ghoodminton!!

Jack R. Herman
1/67 Fletcher St
Bondi
NSW 2026

Your article on number plates was reminiscent of games we used to play on the way to everywhere when we were but pups - including number-plate poker or bus ticket cribbage, but then we also also card-playing

kids. I was reminded of the article, however, last Sunday, when Sydney fannish movers helped Warren and Margaret Nicholls relocate to Doonside a near Sydney suburb located 40 kilometres from the city centre. On the way out I spotted a number plate WHO 005, which was a specially bought one since the state has just got to L in the more normal area of licences. On the way home, I spotted a licence WHO 002 thus furfilling your game. I was impressed by the letter prefixes though and wonder if the Doctor's fans are buying advertsing to force the ABC to retain the series or whether it is a common surname.

I don't know why Billy complains - even with a name as simple as Jack R. Herman, I find that the bastards, especially computers,

take great pleasure in trying to find ways to misspell it.

Unlike Andrew Brown, I merely skim the crud at the newsagents to see what's there: I have better things upon which to waste my money.

Gary Deindorfer
447 Bellevue Ave, #9-B
Trenton
NJ 08618, USA

Your birth certificate name is a magnificent name. If you ever decide to become a great conductor of classical music I think the thundering syllables of your original name would be really impressive. Or, say, a chess grandmaster. For that Vladimir Herszkowicz would be so intimidating your opponents would probably concede their names to you without even making a move.

((From the age of about 7-9 I did take violin lessons, partly because my mother thought Herszkowicz was just right for a violinist. Still, Irwin Hirsh is very much the right name for a film-maker, which is the field I would like to go in. As for Herszkowicz being intimidating, my parents were once considering enrolling me in a school that had the ghastly process of calling their students by their surnames. I was going to be enrolled under Herszkowicz and not Hirsh in order to fix that procedure. ih))

Leanne Frahm
272 Slade Point Rd
Slade Point
Qld 4741

I don't follow car number plates myself, but I'm a pushover for house numbers. We used to live in a flat at 345 Shakespeare Street, which I always considered very auspicious. Now I regard 272 as a sort of talisman, and I'm always meaning to lay a bet on 2-7-2 for a treble, but never get round to it. I'll be really upset the day it wins.

Frahm, too, despite its simplicity, is not one of the easiest names to communicate, especially on the phone. The 'f' gets mixed up with 's'. Everyone writes 'Frahm'. Hardly anyone pronounces it with a long 'a' despite the 'h'. Usually I just end up agreeing that yes, Mrs. Brown is calling. I can't complain, though. My maiden name was Crawley.

Must take issue with you over your instructions on who should vote for DUFF, and I expect you would include GUFF, also. What do you mean 'really knowledgeable'? Do you mean only those who've actually met candidates should vote? That means that fandom would be leaving it to a very small minority to decide for it. I think fanzines, letters, apazines, etc., can give voters an indications of which candidate they'd like to see most, without needing a psychoanalyst's report on each person standing.

((I agree, and that was basically what I was trying to say. My ego hopes the above paragraph was a result of a mis-reading and not my bad writing. The point about leaving the voting

to the people who know, was directed to those people who, essentially, get to know the fan fund candidates as a direct result of those people being fan fund candidates. The people I think are qualified to vote are those who have made contact (thru, like you say, fanzines, letters, apazines, etc.) with one or more of the candidates prior to those people decided to stand for a fan fund. ih))

John Berry's story reminds me of a lucky ticket stall the Slade Point P. & C. Association used to run at the local shopping centre on Saturday mornings. All the usual junky prizes, very similiar to John's. The P. & C. used to buy the prizes in bulk from warehouses that specialised in such trading, but they became more selective after my son, then six, won a prize.

It was a cake of soap, with a fully clothed lady printed on it. With each successive wash, she would shed a layer of clothes until she pranced naked in all her bubbly beauty. He had her washed away to nothing in four days, but they were the cleanest four days in his life.

Marc Ortlieb
70 Hamblynn Rd
Elizabeth Downs
SA 5113

Pete Presford's letter confirms my opinion of the Post Awful. I sent an 8mm film off to Kodak for developing. It took three months to return, and, over the "Aust" in "S.Aust.", someone had written Australia. I wonder if there really is a Morphett Vale High School in Southern Austria.

Noting Marilyn Pride's letter, we can start an Irwin Hirsh Hit Fund. You see, it has been tacitly agreed among all the fans that really matter that one does not send fanzines to the really good artists who would use such things as an excuse for not painting. Think! You might have deprived the world of a Pride painting! Now, I understand the fact that you didn't mean to do it, but DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN!!!

I Also Heard From: PAUL ANDERSON; JOHN BERRY; JOHN BROSNAN; CY CHAUVIN; RICHARD FAULDER; ROELOF GOUDRIAAN; DAVID GRIGG; KIM HUETT; JIM MEADOWS III; JOHN PLAYFORD; MARILYN PRIDE; JOHN PACKER; GERALD SMITH; CHERRY WILDER, who will be coming back down under in 1983; and BILLY WOLFENBARGER.

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SOFT-TOP EDITORIAL

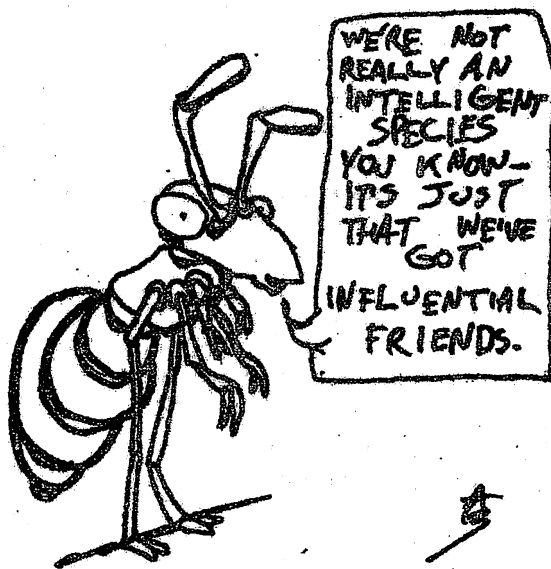
With this issue, I am happy to note, I am at last managing to bring out Sikander to some sort of regular schedule. This issue will be going into the mails just on three months after my last money-wheeling trip to the post office. Hopefully this is not an one-off occurrence, but we'll be finding out the answer to that one in May or June. No promises, but.

Some people may think that this regular schedule will play havoc with the lettercol, what with the non-Australian copies of one issue sailing the high seas to their destination while I am in production with the next issue. I don't think that this is a problem as the type of material being presented in this fanzine and the type of comments it generates is not the type of stuff that requires all points of view to be presented at the one time. As long as I feel it interesting and worth printing a comment on something, say, four issues back, will get into the lettercol.

I must say that editing this issue's lettercol has been somewhat annoying to me. It just so happened that by far the most and, for the purposes of printing in the lettercol, the best comments recieved on the last issue were about my article. And this has left me in the position of feeling that I'm not doing enough for my contributors - the people I rely upon to make Sikander a success. Logically I know this shouldn't be happening to me - I can't print comments I don't get - and I'm hopeful that the comments I receive from my non-Australian readers will balance out my conscious.

But we'll see about that next issue, and till then, see ya'

Amis



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