

# SIKANDER

=====

The fanzine that is only  
now eligible for the  
fanzine Hugo.

=====

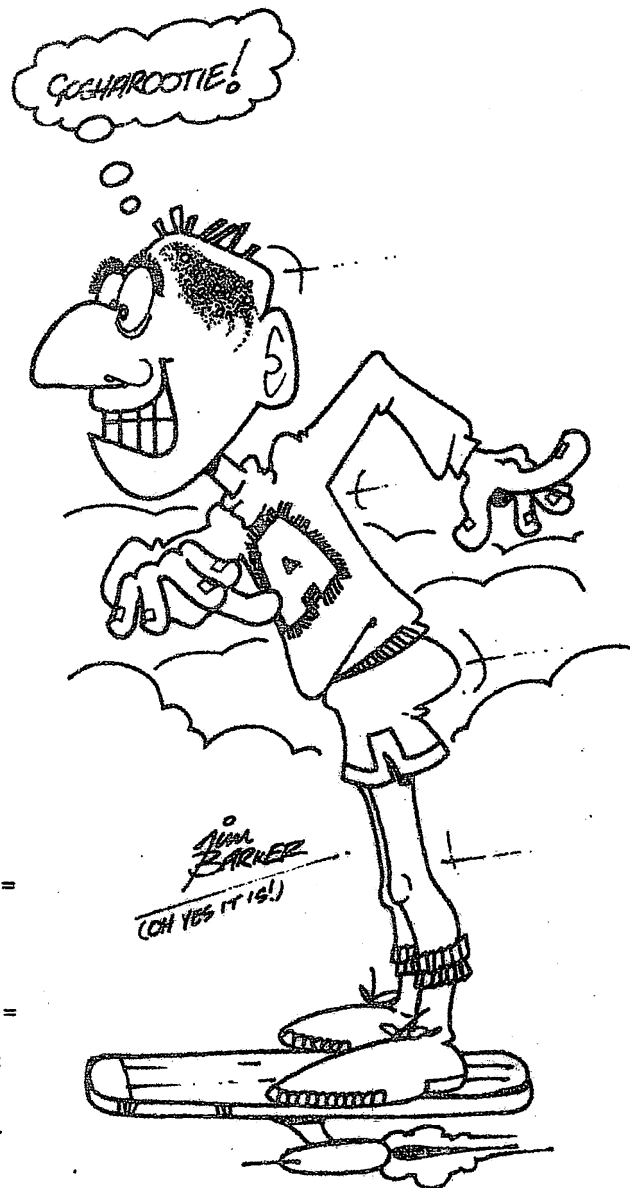
SIKANDER #5, June 1981, is  
edited and published by  
Irwin Hirsh, at 279 Domain  
Rd, South Yarra, Victoria  
3141, Australia. It is  
available for a letter of

comment, written and/or drawn contribution, your fanzine in  
trade, Old Fanzines or \$1.00. Columnists are David Grigg  
and Billy Wolfenbarger. Electrostencils by Noel Kerr.  
Last issues collation help provided by Simon Trumble.  
Entire contents COPYRIGHT (c) 1981 by Irwin Hirsh. All  
rights revert to the original writers and artists.  
Registered for posting as a publication - Category B.

=====

Keep tin closed when not in use.

=====



## SANDY LANDS

editorial column  
by Irwin Hirsh

I NEED FEAR NO EVIL—  
JOHN BANGSUND SAID  
MY FANZINE WAS NOT  
AS BAD AS IT MIGHT HAVE  
BEEN



## FAME

If the month of March is any guide 1981 is certainly not going to be the year in which Irwin Hirsh becomes famous. Back in early February there were quite a number of items on the agenda the overall effect being to plummet the name Irwin Hirsh bang smack in front of the Public Eye. But by the 13th of March it had become apparent that I would have to sit out 1981 as a student, fanzine publisher and not idle rich, as I ponder about what it is that Brooke Shields, Woody Allen, Sam Haskins and Henri Cartier-Bresson have got that I haven't got.

At one stage it looked like I'll be finding out what it is those people have: it looked like a film I made was going to get public screening at the Australian Film Institute's Longford Cinema and the Melbourne Film Festival, a photo of me was to appear in the trendy Rag Times, a number of my photos were to appear in a group exhibition, and (I was sure of this one) my sister, Mitta, and I were going to win the Summer Stars Competition, a rich competition being held by Kodak and Rupert Murdoch's Channell Ten.

That was in February, and my cosmic mind sure went wild day-dreaming about how by the end of the year, if not earlier, I was sure to be well on the way to being

proclaimed the leader in Australia's comedy film renaissance, have heaps of TV and film roles thrown my way, have many model agencies banging on my door asking me to do their photography jobs, and have a sell-out one-man photography exhibition under my belt. It was only because of my reading of Phil. K. Dick that I was even able to consider doing all these at the same time, and not have the obviously unenviable job of choosing between all these rich and famous ways.

As it happened only one of these events came through: the group exhibition of photographs. At the last minute the projectionist at the Longford decided that he didn't want to show my film as it would have meant setting up a third type of projector, and for various reasons I decided to not enter my film in this year's Melbourne Film Festival; the photo that appeared in Rag Times had me cropped out of it - some guy by the name of Erwin Hirsh was mentioned as having attended the "dinner party of the month" and I hope he enjoyed it as much as I did; and as the closing date of the competition passed, my photos - through the combined efforts of the air-traffic controllers strike and a go-slow at Hanimax - were still waiting to be developed.

So I was left with only being able to view two of my photographs on the walls of Brummels Photography Gallery, and a very serious intention of entering my film In Ghia in next year's Melbourne Film Festival. And the dream of making it in the film industry.

I strongly suspect that just about everyone has thought of being, in some way, famous. Especially at the time that I am now: entering my 3rd decade of life, studying full-time and all that. Over the past decade I've entertained many ideas of how I'd like to be famous, from the idealistic winning the Gold in the Olympic 1500 metres running, scoring a century in my first Cricket Test, or captaining an English F.A. Cup winning team, to the essentially more realistic one of having a major role in any number - up to a lifetimes worth - of feature films.

I want to be a film director, or screenwriter, or editor, or any combination there-of.

And to this end I am currently a Media Studies student at Rusden State College. This course takes in subjects like film, TV, photography and sound with a leaning to the practical rather than theoretical side of things. And at the end of 1983 I will graduate with a Bachelor of Education with a major in Media Studies. That is if I don't get accepted into the Sydney-based Australian Film and Television School beforehand.

For somewhat more than the past year I've been worried that maybe I'll come out of Rusden without the expertise, whether actual or qualification-wise, to get far into the film industry. So I've decided to apply to enter the Australian Film and Television

School's fulltime 3 year diploma course; a very intensive (40+ hours a week, 48 weeks a year) course which must be the most highly regarded film course in Australia. I don't know what my chances are, but I'm sort-of feeling quietly confident of being one of the 20-25 people selected. Last year I put in an application when I didn't really have much of a real chance - I had very little to show them - but I wanted to see just how far I would go with the application. This year I'm going to be putting together a far better application, if only because its centre will be In Ghia, of which I am very proud.

I think that, for me, I'm taking the right route. Partly because I think the change of city will do me as much good as the actual course, and I like the idea of spending three years in a town like Sydney.

My only regret about the possibility of going to Sydney next year is that I'll miss seeing In Ghia at the Melbourne Film Festival. I've been attending the Festival for more years than I'm allowed to mention, and I always get quite a high from the average 35 films I see over each 2 week festival. So it would be quite special to me to see In Ghia up there on the festival screen. But being forced to miss it in this way is, I guess, just one of those fortunes of Fame.

#### HARD-TOP REDUX

So far every letter of comment recieved on the last issue has included some sort of mention on my editorial. In general people agree with me, but because I suspect this issue has limited appeal I will not be devoting any letter-column space to it. However, both Marc Ortlieb and Robert Runte have made a point which I feel does need highlighting. Both of them (especially Robert) discussed some of the reasons why one might not want to pass on unpublished comments to contributors. I was very much aware of these points when I wrote last issues editorial, but because of the above-mentioned suspicion of limited appeal I deliberately decided to leave them out. Though I now realise that there is one point that I should've mention. In the words of Marc Ortlieb: "If some fuckwit sends a LoC ripping an article to pieces merely for the sake of ripping the article to pieces, then I'm certainly not going to print that letter, nor am I going to pass it on." A very good point, but I think that Marc is working on the assumption that all I say should happen if for the editor to just pass on those unpublished comments and leave it at that. Handling controversy like that is obviously a very delicate matter for an editor to have to handle, and Marc and Robert are probably very correct in saying it shouldn't be passed on to the contributor. And unfortunately this is something I haven't done in the past, and I really am kicking myself for it. I promise to try and be better. Cross my heart.

'JB' SPEAKING

If you have  
already looked  
at the table

of contents for this issue and  
are inclined to notice such  
things, you should be aware that  
the intial grouping of JB makes  
up the largest group of  
contributors. This time around  
this is not another in a long  
series of happy coincidences but  
is here to commemorate the  
recent visit to Australia by  
Diane and John (Irish) Berry.

John, as some of you may know,  
was one of the most active  
fanzine fans from 1954 till  
gafia in 1965, and has recently  
started to come back into  
fanzine cirollation. It was  
only by being in the right place  
at the right time that I was  
able to be the first Australian  
fan to learn of Diane and John's  
plans to spend a month in  
Australia. I also became one of  
the small number of fans to know  
about the visit when John  
expressed to me the desire to  
keep his visit low-keyed as he  
was coming down-under primary to  
see his son, Colin, and family  
who now live out here. In general, the people who got to know of  
John's visit were those people who John would have known from his  
previous stint in fandom.

While he was out here the one time I met the Berrys was when they  
came here for dinner. Other guests on the night were John Foyster  
and Jenny Bryce, and John and Sally Bangsund. (Unfortunately the  
Bangsund's had to pull out at the last minute.) By all accounts  
the evening was a success (and I'm looking forward to the 10,000  
words John promised to get out of the night). I think it is only  
till you meet him that you are able to comprehend just how John  
had the energy to be so active in fanzines - he still bubbles in  
it. And as a collector of accents, I was more than happy with  
John's and Diane's.

- Irwin Hirsh

=====

Does Sheena Easton make you think of Gary Numan in drag?

=====



\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

## PILOT TERROR

John Berry

\*\*\*\*\*

Although I love flying, and my log book shows over 130 flights since 1942, I always prefer the company of a large number of passengers around me, and the experience of an airline of repute, the pilot preferably having several thousand hours flying experience behind him.

I have always been wary of flying in small aeroplanes with amateur pilots ...in Northern Ireland I made several flights in a Cherokee with a friend of mine who claimed he was a pilot. He had the disconcerting habit of reading the instruction manual whilst flying up-side-down, and just prior to landing, announcing in a husky voice "I've never quite got the hang of this." It was no surprise to me that shortly after the last flight I had with him, during which he said he needed a drink and took a slug from a flask with the hide covering worn off it, he was incarcerated in a mental hospital as a voluntary patient.

So at a convention I attended in Blackpool a couple of years ago, one of the delegates from Glasgow announced he was a pilot, and if three people paid for an hour's hire of an aeroplane, he would fly it. Other delegates were chary of this announcement, and in order to provoke enthusiasm he stated that he had made 800 flights as a pilot, and made 796 successful landings.

Martin and Jenny, who had never flown before, accepted the offer, and due to my previous utterances about once being a parachutist, I had no alternative but to smilingly agree to make up the trio, trying not to put any significance in the fact that the pilot wore spectacles with lens like the bottoms of beer bottles.

We drove in the pilot's car to Squiresgate aerodrome, a few miles from Blackpool. Charles ran over a dog en route, and a deep scrape along the near-side of his car received from another car whilst overtaking it at a blind corner prompted the philosophical comment "I consider a car as a mundane for transport and not a work of art."

The wooden pillar holding the gate at the entrance to the aerodrome had previously been damaged anyway, but Charles merely removed it from the bonnet by suddenly jamming on the brakes.

He swaggered into the flying club after collecting the money from us, and we stood in a little group, pondering over the unfortunate decision we had taken, and how we would lose face at the conference if we reneged.

As I've stated, the other two had never flown before, and expressed

alarm at the diminutive size of the Cessna 172, which I likened to a locust with spats.

Jenny and I sat in the back seats ... she was an attractive girl, and I considered it to be well worth the cash just to be in such close proximity to her, because most of the other sex-mad delegates fancied her like mad, but she was extremely aloof.

I sat behind Charles, and Martin sat on his left. Chas had a laconic discussion with the control tower, taxied to the end of the concrete runway and hit maximum revs.

I liked the almost vertical take-off, and the sudden swing to the left towards Blackpool, where the tower dominated the scene. I peered out of the window on my right, and as we levelled out and flew past the tower I was so fascinated by the rust on the nuts and bolts at the top of the tower that I did not join in the conversation in the cabin.

What can I say about the next hour? It was only my belief in the pilot's assertion that he had flown 800 times which made me retain my sanity. I guessed he was showing off to try and impress Jenny. I swear our wheels scooped up sand on one of his runs, but it would be a forensic impossibility to prove this, because on one of his swoops over the sea he was careful to wash the wheels clean with spray. The only consolation was the sudden attraction towards me by Jenny. She grabbed my arm quite early on, and during a vertical reconnaissance of a graveyard she grasped my hands in hers ...her fingers and palms were damp with perspiration, and I was particularly delighted when she buried her face in my shoulders and started to sob. I explained to her in a sensual voice that to an aviator of my experience it was admittedly adventurous flying, but it was quite safe, and we only had twenty minutes to go.

The swoop landing eased my constipation problems, and when we got out I had to prise Jenny from me ...the strong aroma of body odour wasn't all mine.

As I staggered away from the Cessna, I heard the pilot talking to Martin.

"I cannot believe you've never piloted a plane before, Martin" he said.

"Christ. I've never even flown before," said Martin, "next time I'll really try and master those aileron controls."

"You mean you let Martin pilot the plane?" I breathed.

"Oh yes," said Charles, "soon after take-off I got something in my eye and couldn't see."

When I came round I'm sorry to state that it wasn't Jenny giving me the kiss of life.

- John Berry

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\* KILOMETRE DEVALUATION SHOCK REPORT \*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

John Bangsund

\*\*\*\*\*  
In a surprise move last weekend that caught even Treasury pundits and Reserve Bank prognosticators off guard, the Prune Minister announced that the Australian kilometre had been devalued by 10 per cent, effective immediately, and that in future it would be allowed to float against a mixed airline-bag of international distances. This is in line with the government's ongoing overall strategy to stimulate the economy, tighten liquidity and confuse motorists.

However, the Prune Minister warned, this meaningful and purposeful move could only accomplish its objective with the full co-operation of all sectors of the community, including minority groups, whose views he well understood, such as trade unionists and taxi drivers. Questioned as to the nature of this objective, the Prune Minister said that he had nothing further to add to his statement at that present point of time, but that full amplification would be given to the matter, and adequate opportunity for discussion, in the proper place and at an appropriate time.

The Leader of the Opposition said nothing surprised him any more. The move, as he understood it, implied that the kilometre would be tied in future to a mixed basket of international units of linear measurement. "If I may explain the absurdity of this," he said, "it means that this week we may have parity with the Dutch kilometre and next week with the pre-revolutionary Russian verst or, for all I know, the Tongan pa'anga. Now clearly this will be very confusing to the average Australian motorist. It would not be true to say that he won't know whether he's coming or going, because Labor's policy of universal free rear-vision mirrors did away with all that, and try as it might, the present government will find it pretty hard to dismantle that bit of legislation. But it will still be confusing for the average outer-suburban commuter, whichever way he is going, and it is clearly a retrograde step, in my view."

Interviewed, the Minister for Lateral Mobility said that the move had been under discussion for some time in the Cabinet, or possibly in the Members' Bar or the swimming pool at the Lodge, but wherever it had been, he was of course aware of its full implications, and although some concern had been forcefully expressed as to its possible adverse effects on the primary producer generally, the Prune Minister enjoyed his full confidence and no doubt would amplify the full ramifications of the devaluation at some suitable juncture. Questioned, the Minister said that he understtod from his colleague the Minister for Technicalities and Obfuscation that



a 10 per cent devaluation of the kilometre amounted only to 0.06 of the imperial mile, or something like that, which was really only a drop in the bucket.

The Minister then caused a sensation by going on to say that he had never been in favour of fully abandoning the imperial mile for the kilometre, and indeed regarded this as one of the worst excesses of a totally irresponsible regime, but entirely typical of their attitude to the Empire, or Commonwealth as it was now called, and all that full-blooded Australians hold dear.

The Minister said in a later interview that his remarks on the subject had been grossly misinterpreted by all sectors of the media. It was true, he frankly and freely admitted, that he had not been totally in favour of full metric conversion, and like many other ordinary Australians he still had a little difficulty recalling how many litres there were to a millibar and so on. Even his colleague the Minister for Passive Inculcation, he laughed, could occasionally slip up in this regard. This was taken by most commentators to refer to that Minister's recent ninefold increase in funds to western-suburbs school libraries, which most observers agree was probably meant to be a 10 per cent cut.

However, he continued, his reference to "the worst excesses of a totally irresponsible regime" had been quoted completely out of context. Any fool knew that metric conversion had been a major initiative introduced by a previous Liberal government, he said. His reference to the discredited previous Labor government had been made in respect of an altogether separate matter entirely, and it was typical of some elements in the media that this pernicious and wilful misrepresentation should be made. He intended early consultation with his colleague the Minister for Gas-Fired Telephony as to what could be done about this, especially in regard to the Australian Broadcasting Commission, whose staff of journalists, both of them, were notorious for their one-sided reporting, particularly with respect to Ministerial comment on and as to major issues of the day.

On a radio talk-back program in Sydney, a Liberal back-bencher and former Prune Minister said that during his time in office he had been terribly concerned with this grave matter of devaluing things, especially the kilometre, which he understood had only just been introduced and deserved a fair go from every fair-minded Australian, and that he viewed last weekend's move in this direction with considerable foreboding. The honourable member declined to comment





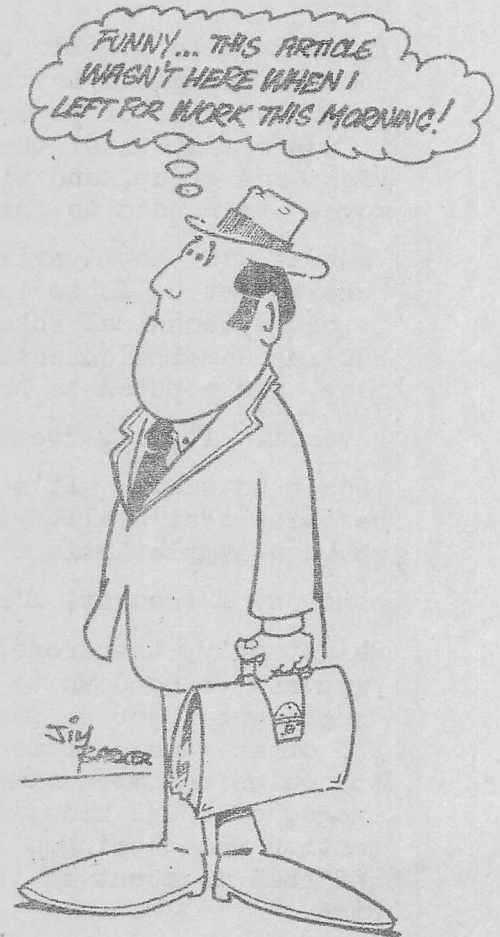
18 months has been visiting me at work. My beloved employer and payer of my bills, Telecom Australia, has been convinced that it ought to spend some profit on funding a series of educational materials which can be used in the classroom as part of a social studies course.

Mind you, when I blithely say 'Telecom Australia' like that, I don't mean all of its 88,000 staff, I really mean my boss, Laurie. He had the bright idea that instead of people like me sitting down and writing publications about Telecom's services or its history, which school children might read if they ran out of Spiderman comics, we ought to go to the Education department first and ask them what they wanted. It was a bright idea, but I think that what he originally had in mind was designing a few wall-charts or something like that.

What Averil and I, with my colleague Bill, have turned this modest idea into over the last year and a half is a kind of Frankenstein's monster which got utterly out of control. Telecom is now, because of us, committed to producing a series of three fully-fledged kits, containing a total of 83 separate bits and pieces of paper to be printed and packaged.

Naturally, all of this stuff needs to be tested, preferably by schoolchildren themselves. This turns out not to be easy as it sounds. Teachers have all sorts of demands on them: a full curriculum to teach, assignments to be marked, ~~strikes to plan~~, and so it is hard to fit a new set of teaching materials into a classroom situation at short notice. Another problem for us, of course, is that we can't go ahead and print copies of a particular item until after it has been tested - which means that the testing has to be carried out with photocopies of the artwork, or an artists rough dummy. Nevertheless, we've managed to be a reasonable amount of feedback.

Some of this feedback has been critical in a constructive way. In particular, in the first kit, which deals with the need for and the building of the Overland Telegraph



Line in 1872, there was one unit which proved too difficult for the students to do.

To give you the background, the Overland Telegraph was built by the colony of South Australia between Adelaide and Darwin to connect with a cable being brought ashore in Darwin from Java, and thus linking Australia telegraphically with Europe for the first time. The particular section that was causing trouble was that part of the kit in which we asked the students to consider the problems of building the northern part of the line, given some information on the terrain, climate, the problems of transporting stores, and so on. In the classroom, the kids just bogged down on this (and presumably variously went to sleep, stared out of the window, made paper aeroplanes, or carved their initials on the desk).

So to replace this bit, I invented a game. Simulation games are apparently all the rage these days in schools. You can get games which simulate mining exploration, pollution control, railroad building, race riots and nuclear holocausts ("Throw dice to determine number of megadeaths"). So why not an Overland Telegraph game?

It took quite a while to design, but eventually, after roping in some of the girls in the office to try out early versions using scribbled bits of paper, I had a game I thought did the trick. But it was really vital that the game be played by children of the right age group, and without me needing to coach them on every move. We needed to get into a classroom.

Thus it was that Averil managed to convince a teacher friend of hers to let us loose in her kids. That was when she told me that it was a technical school near Frankston in the middle of a vast Housing Commission estate with a staggering youth unemployment rate, and reputed to be the toughest technical school in Victoria.

"Averil," I said, "we want to try out the game, not get mugged!"

"Don't be silly. It's just a matter of showing them who's going to be boss, that's all. Besides, it's better if we try out the game on an unsympathetic bunch of kids. More like the real thing."

Somehow, I thought, I'm glad I never became a teacher.

Reluctantly, therefore, I ordered a Commonwealth car and we prepared to go down to Frankston. My graphic design department had done a great job on preparing a rough board, pieces, chance cards and other game equipment. I had also spent a few hours rewriting the rules one more time. All was ready. Except that I still had images of tough kids, flick-knives and leather jackets, not to mention remembering a little horror story that Elizabeth Darling had told me about an incident at the rather less grim Brunswick High.

We picked up Averil at her house in Balaclava and set off along the

Nepean Highway. By now I was starting to get really nervous. What if the kids hated the game, were bored with it? And took out their frustration on its creator - me? Besides, I'd just been reading about how secondary schools these days were hotbeds of sex, violence and drugs. It wasn't like that when I was in school, no sir, even if we did try to bore a hole through the wall of the girls' changing shed.

Averil entertained me on the way down by complaining about how her supervisor at Monash University had rejected the first draft of her Master's thesis on the grounds that her writing style was hopeless. This had incensed Averil no end. I had to keep severely quiet during this, since during our aquaintance I had grown familiar with Averil's misuse of English.

Eventually, we drew near the school. Actually, it didn't look as bad as I had expected. At least, there were no teachers being robbed at knifepoint by students that I could see, nor did there seem to be any weasel-eyed drug pushers loitering outside the gates with large bags of heroin. Maybe it would be all right. But I noticed that the driver locked the car door again after we got out.

Averil marched up to the front entrance of the school. I let her lead (so I'm a coward, so what?). Outside the headmaster's office were two fairly tame-looking boys. I wondered idly if they were there for mugging the janitor, or something more serious. Averil made enquiries and we were directed to the room where her friend was teaching. She was still in class. I looked in at the sea of faces and became distinctly more nervous. I hadn't even set foot in a school since Matriculation, and I was remembering how much I had hated it.

We waited in the staff room until recess. I was amazed at how small the room was, considering about twenty teachers had to use it. Averil's friend had a patch of desk about two feet square, sandwiched between two filing cabinets, on which to do all of her class preparation.

Finally, the bell went for recess. Actually, it wasn't a bell, but more like a second-hand police siren - singularly appropriate, I thought. Students spilled noisily out of the classrooms, and after a while Averil's friend turned up. Apparently she had left her whip and knuckledusters behind in the classroom.

I started to relax, however, as soon as the teacher told us that we wouldn't be taking over her entire class, just five children, all about 16 years old.

"I haven't picked out the five brightest one for you. More like the real thing if some of them are a bit dim, I thought. And I've picked one kid especially because he's a bit immature, causes a lot of disturbance."

"Oh..." I said faintly. "Gee, thanks."

The police siren went off again, and Averil and I set ourselves up in a spare reading room and waited for the kids to turn up. I wiped the sweat from the palms of my hands. The first two to turn up were girls, who looked entirely harmless. Then a boy, followed a little later by Paul, the disturbing one. He seemed very brash, making jokes, swaggering. But he didn't have a flick-knife.

We waited a little longer for the last girl to arrive. Instead, one of the other students tried to gatecrash. This one I could imagine having a knife concealed in his old army jacket - there was no school uniform of course. I thought for a while that I would be called on to evict him, and there would be no way I could have avoided it, as the senior male there. But after being insulted and pointedly commanded to leave by everyone there (the students were even better at this than Averil), he wandered off, and our final victim turned up. I locked the door.

To my surprise, once we had started, the game went very well, and the students quickly became involved. They loved the chance cards that I'd worked out: "Crocodiles attack bullocks - you lose all your stores and miss a turn"; "Termites eat wooden poles - go back three squares to get iron replacements"; "Stuck in mud - drivers broach casks of rum and get very drunk - miss a turn". And they quickly appreciated the real problems of the construction team that we were trying to simulate.

"Gee, I'm stuck here without any stores. Pull yer finger out, Paul!"

"I can't go any faster, it's raining too hard. It's the wet season."

"I'm back at Darwin. Gimme some more stores, quick!"

"You need to throw a six to reach me, Jean. Hurry up, we're gonna miss the deadline!"

All in all, it went very well. None of them were bored. They seemed to actually enjoy it.

But secretly I was disappointed. They didn't really look tough at all. None of them even swore! Even Paul, the disturbing influence, fell into the swing of the game and forgot to be immature.

We drove back to Melbourne feeling very pleased with ourselves.

There was only one problem, I realised somewhat later. We were going to include a number of sets of the game in each kit so that the whole class could play the game simultaneously in a number of groups or teams.

I wonder what my Accounts department will say when I put in my request for a tender on twelve thousand pairs of dice.

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

Bob Silberberg  
5 Marathon Mews  
Double Bay  
NSW 2028

"Silberberg": in German it means a mountain of silver. In "the old country", Poland, it was spelt "Zylberberg" but my father germanised the spelling so as to avoid being the last in alahabetical lists.

During the 18th century, jews in the Austrian Empire were compelled to take non-hebrew surnames, and those who did not do so voluntarily were given derogatory names, e.g. Silberberg, a reference to the vast piles of money my ancestors were meant to have hoarded away, as typical jews. Why they didn't just call them "Goldberg"s is beyond me. Actually it is a real pain having a second name which is a sort of practical joke. When I need to reserve tickets or something I turn "Silberberg" into "Silver". Ironically despite its crazy origins, my friends in Israel were delighted I had such a jewish surname, not that its really so jewish.

Robert: originally it was intended that I would be a "Bernard", after my maternal grandfather. My older sister, then six years old, objected, so they let her choose the name of her favourite filmstar, Robert Wagner. However, the name Bernard does survive more or less in my hebrew name, "Dov Ben Asher". "Dov" means in hebrew "bear"; so "Bernard" turns into "bear" turns into "Dov" in a sort of bilingual pun. I am fond of my hebrew first name, together with my german second name it sounds quite foreign and exotic.

Anne Laurie Logan  
116 Burcham  
East Lansing  
MI 48823, USA

My family shares any number of fannish characteristics, including unfortunately severe near-sightedness and dyslexia, so none of us ever had much luck on the freeways when we tried to read license (I

mean number) plates. We amused ourselves on long trips the same way we amused ourselves at home: trying to bully everyone else into reading the books each individual decided was Great Literature; a fresco character assassination (winner in each round to be decided by a vote of the non-combatant, extra points for reducing your opponent to violence or incoherency); the odd unprovoked assault (we always thought that "blood kin" referred to the people you'd managed to bloody); and criticizing my father's driving, which wasn't so bad when you consider that he needs one hand to illustrate his conversations, one hand to hang his cigarette out the window, and one hand to clip the combatants in the back seat with - leaving him with negative one hand for the steering wheel.



In New York State, where I grew up, they assign the first two letters on each plate according to the county you're licensed in (or so my father told me: I don't drive). We lived in the Bronx, one of the five boroughs of New York City, but when I was about twelve my father started the habit of registering every year out of my grandparents' home upstate in Dutchess County. When pressed, he said that he'd done it one year out of expediency (i.e., he forgot to register until the afternoon of the last legal date, at which point he was visiting the folks), and continued to do so because he'd noticed that his car wasn't ticketed for illegal parking nearly as often. He couldn't understand this, he claimed, until some cop pointed out that "DC" also stood for "Diplomatic Consulate". I can't imagine any NYC policeperson mistaking a battered Volkswagen for an embassy car, so I think somebody's leg was being pulled...

I can sympathize with anyone whose name is continually assaulted by the ignorant. My first name on my birth certificate is listed as Anne Laurie, two words, A-N-N-E L-A-U-R-I-E. (Yes, and my younger sister's name is Barbara Ellen.) Personal introductions always end up with the new acquaintance addressing me as either "Laurie" or "Annemarie". Continued correction usually leads them into freehand spelling attempts. I try to spell it out when a clerk or a polltaker is writing it down - spell it out slowly and completely - the last time I said, "Anne, with an 'e'," the functionary typed out Aenn! Left to themselves, strangers and acquaintances invariably opt for the line of least resistance - Anlori or Annlori.

I also have a great deal of difficulty convincing people that I do not answer to "Anne", since that is not my name. (I sometimes respond to such solicitations, but imprecations upon the sexual proclivities of one's ancestors will not lead to intelligent discussion.) I tried using "Annemarie" as a compromise for a while, but half the time the person who read it would assume that the middle "l" was an "i", which led to some truly weird attempts at pronunciation...

One does not even attempt to discuss the Abbott & Costello routines that result when one initials a memo "all". "Who left this?" "I did." "No, which group stopped by...?"

It is redundant to say that one enormously enjoyed John Berry's article. Of course.

Is there really a game called "cricket"? Never having met anyone who'll admit to having seen a "match", much less played in one, I have always assumed the literary mentions of that game to spring from the same inexplicable wellspring of WASP humor that gave us oxymorons like "Business Ethics" and said-to-be-highly-amusing jests about the Astral League.



D. West  
48 Norman St  
Bingley  
West Yorkshire  
BD16 4JT, U.K.

I don't know how Henry Bell has the nerve to suggest that I might be "up to" something, considering the way he's been masquerading under a false name all these years. A Civil Servant, too. You can hardly turn around without falling over another KGB man these days. I've a good

mind to write to the Russian Embassy and warn them that he's a security risk to their side. The way he stands there at conventions, little piggy eyes slowly vanishing altogether as the level of alcohol rises inexorably towards his ears... I ask you, would anyone trust this man with a State Secret, let alone an order for drinks?



An odd sentence in Joyce Scrivner's letter about the Seacon cricket match: "The match was declared an official lie and I enjoyed every bit of it." Obviously, you can tell some people anything. Or maybe it's your duplicating or my eyesight or some such. Anyway, I too remember being hit in the balls by Kevin Smith's ferocious boundary (a foul stroke if ever there was one) but I can't say I remember anything else. Don't really understand cricket anyway. It's not so much a game as some sort of nut-cult religious ceremony. The Aztecs or somebody used to have a similiar business, where all the priests stood in a circle and tossed a ball around, said ball representing the planets or the solar system or suchlike. First guy to muff a catch and drop the thing was promptly torn to pieces, being deemed

to have fucked up the Great Cosmic Plan and blighted the carrots or whatever. (On reflection, this seems quite reasonable compared to cricket, which is just totally pointless.)

Terry Floyd  
3101 Cedar St, #106  
Austin  
TX 78705, USA

Personalized license plates are most fun when subtle, but understandable, and least fun when too subtle, and thus incomprehensible. Many that I've seen have been just too in-jokish to be deciphered. Your IH 020 would, I fear, suffer from this; however, you might consider changing one letter of that plate to display information that just about anyone could understand: your intelligence quotient. Of course, I doubt that you'd impress too many people with plates reading IQ 020, but something like IQ 200 might do the trick.

Anyone who has ever picked up, out of curiosity, a National Enquirer or True Detective Stories will be familiar with Andrew Brown's evaluation of Official UFO. My mother once purchased me a few copies of Fate, a digest-sized occult quarterly, because she "knew I'd be interested" in it. Sure enough, I found it interesting, albeit total horseshit; filled with the sort of ads . . . and articles Andrew describes, though pyramids possessed no outstanding properties than other than the singular ability to contain a preserved body, which any pine box or garbage bag could do just as well without any unnecessary expense or ostentation. If memory serves, it seems that astral projection was the big trend then, along with the venerable courses in controlling one's superiors, getting any girl through hypnotism, and using the Spirit World to help you cheat on your income taxes.

I just took a look at the classified sections in two issues of Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine and one F&SF to corroborate Andrew's last paragraph. While I normally skip these sections, I was utterly amazed at how entertaining they turned out to be - easily as good as (or in some cases, better than) the magazines' featured stories. Still, occult ads were far outdistanced by moneymaking opportunities in envelope stuffing at home, dating services for introverts, and matrimonial offers from agencies touting the virtues of Oriental and Hispanic women.

And as a "real drunk Texan", a group known for being extremely good natured, I took no offense at Billy Ray Cheeseburger's WAHF comment about how offensive our collective accents can be, relative to Bill Breiding's cool drone of West Virginia. I think I'd offend him more when sober than when drunk, but fortunately, I am rarely in that condition, so we'd probably get along just fine together.

Jim Meadows III  
PO Box 1227  
Pekin  
IL 61554, USA

Andrew Brown's enlightening perusals through the pages of Official UFO reminds me of an article a similiar magazine - perhaps the same magazine - ran in the mid '70s about how UFOs

filled with alien creatures terrorized the small town of Chester, Illinois. I was a student in Carbondale, Illinois at the time, and the papers were filled with lightly sarcastic stories about this magazine which had published this amazing piece. Carbondale, you see, is not far from the very real flesh and blood town of Chester, Illinois, and none of the inhabitants of the town remembered the horrible night when the saucers appeared. And Carbondale's television station didn't remember a thing about being knocked off the air that fateful night. The whole thing would have blown over in a week, except that a writer from the magazine actually came out to Chester, talked to local reporters and all, saying he was doing field research to find out why the good people of Chester had had the horrible memories of the UFO flyby suppressed in their collective subconsciouses. So, it ended up taking a week and a half to blow over.

I must thank you for your printing Bruce Townley's "Why zen never made it on the radio"; as a radio announcer, I can say that it's all too true.

<p>Rex Winn 1816 Walnut Avenue Manhattan Beach CA 90266, USA</p>	<p>I can sympathize with Billy Wolfenbarger. People I've known for years spell my name wrong; Wynne, Wynn, Winn, Wymn, and a few variations thereon. Sometimes I get Rick Schwinn - which I know comes from saying Rex Winn together, but what can I do besides spell it? Then there's the corney joke, like I got yesterday, "Oh, add e-r and you've got winner." None of these is so bad as the one my brother Kent gets, "Oh, Can't Win!" (Sick laughter.)</p>
--	---

About Andrew's contribution: our education system in America is degenerating at an alarming rate. I grew up in the sticks of Utah. Because there were only 500 students in the school, 110 in the graduating class, we didn't get a choice in what subjects we could take and often there weren't two teachers that taught the same subject. So when we moved to California I expected to see a great educational system. I was stunned to find it worse than what I grew up with. Somewhere back along the way we lost the good old basics of writing, logic, rhetoric, and math; in short, we did away with the very subjects that taught children to think. One of the reasons we are falling behind in complicated skills, like computer design and programming, is because we haven't taught children how to solve complex problems. That is why it appears we get so many "grotty little publications emanating from either the most brain damaged or the most cynical (or possibly both) American publishing firms." We are losing the ability to analyze. Our testing system is filled with: Choose one; A, B, C. Even computer programmers, as they go through school, are given one problem to solve at a time. When they leave school they find themselves working in an industry that must solve many problems, combine many different ideas, and come up with an integrated and complex solution, but

they've never had any practice at it. I don't know if all this sounds as a response to Andrew, but I believe it is our poor educational system and lack of concern from the parents that is producing a generation which doesn't know how to think and, therefore, doesn't know how to write. Therefore, we get printed material that is shockingly lacking in thought!

Richard Faulder  
Yanco Agricultural  
Research Centre  
Yanco  
NSW 2703

Since I also live in the country of Australia (although with a better mail service than John Alderson) I sympathise with his problems of trying to carry out operations by remote control. Yet one is almost forced to rely on the mails out here, for local businesses in country towns tend to make the complacent assumption that they have a captive market, and accordingly treat their customers with contempt. They then wonder why those same customers take to shopping further away at the regional 'cities'. Actually, I was rather pleased to see the point that John Alderson then led onto. It has become very popular, among conservative political circles especially, to decry government and bureaucracy which is seen in those circles as one and the same thing. They blithely ignore the fact that once any organisation becomes big enough it generates its own time-wasting bureaucracy. As John points out, "big enough" doesn't necessarily mean very big.

Bob Smith  
GPO Box 1019  
Sydney  
NSW 2001

John Alderson's article gives food for thought, and his almost gut-turning last line: "Have we sold our country and nobody gives a damn anymore?" is probably echoed by many a small Australian company these days. I currently work for an organisation that a few years ago became part of a large international combine; since that moment accounting and paper warfare chaos has existed within its accounting and policy-making departments, and a desperate race to meet the never-ending complex overseas deadlines and reports has turned its staff into nervous wrecks. A sense of humour is absolutely essential to survive.

I dunno about driving being the ultimate cure for boredom, long trips or otherwise. I haven't really enjoyed driving for many years, but if I'm on a long trip I'd rather be driving than just sitting! Conversation, as long as it doesn't distract, and my favourite music or radio station, or maybe some idle thoughts that I'm really alone in space and getting all philosophical, and car and highway are light years away...

Robert Runte  
10957-88 Ave.  
Edmonton  
Alberta T6G 0Y9  
Canada

If the loc-writer wants desperately for the contributor to see his loc as written, let him send the photocopy to the artist or writer in question.

Of course, mailing a copy of this letter to

John Alderson doesn't sound practical for entirely different reasons. I quite enjoyed (if "enjoyed" is quite the right word for an article on the decline and fall of civilization) his piece on mail delivery. I am reminded of a recent meeting I had with a fanatical collector of Victorian postcards. He remarked that in the last century there were seven mail deliveries per day in central London, and it was not uncommon for people to conduct conversations one or two sentences at a time. One would typically begin the day by sending a card to one's aunt with some query of the sort, "Shall we have tea with Vicar this afternoon?" which, if mailed in time for the first delivery, would be answered in the second with "Yes, do. And bring that nice young lady of yours from Mrs. Pritchard's party last week." One would then reply, "Do you mean Isabel's sister, or the one who was staying with Mrs. Pritchard's neighbours?" in time for the third delivery. In the fourth one's aunt would have responded with, "I meant of course the one in the blue dress who was telling me about that dress maker in Kent. But do bring whomever you wish, dear." Thus having established the identity of the young lady one would send her an invitation in the fifth delivery and receive her reply in the sixth. The seventh delivery was of less use in this regard, being after tea, but it could always be utilized for a quick thank-you note. Of course, such multiple deliveries became somewhat redundant with the invention and widespread adoption of the telephone - much to the annoyance of my friend the picture postcard collector (and to historians who found a wealth of historical documentation in the postcards' photos).

Marilyn Pride  
74 Annangrove Rd  
Kenthurst  
NSW 2154

I can sympathise with John Alderson's troubles, although he is further out in the country than I was. I once received two letters from WA, posted the same day - one priority paid, the other not - and guess which one arrived two days before the other. We did however have a friendly mailwoman who would bring parcels of books in the gate, rather than let them languish at the post-office for collection. I say "did" as I have moved to wonderful urban Petersham. The strangeness of it after living in the country is very marked. At least I can appreciate something of both lifestyles now. We have an increasingly bizarre house going here (myself, Mike McGann and Lewis 'Alien' Morley, with Nick Stathopolous as an honorary member) and hope to put out a fanzine, probably only one, when we 'get organised'. We may not have a fridge but we do have dragonlets crawling all over the lounge-room walls and light fittings - what more does one need?

I Also Heard From: ANDY ANDRUSCHAK, with a list of license plates to be found around LA and LASFS, eg FIAWOL, BALROG, FAPA OE (Andy's), SMOF 2 (Bruce Pelz's), READ SF, MOTIE M (Larry Niven's) and FUZZY P (Fuzzy Pink Niven's); JOHN D. BERRY; JOHN BROSNAN; A. BERTRAM CHANDLER; GARY DEINDORFER,

"Andrew Brown has a funny article. He has also come up with a very good phrase which deserves wide usage: trash metaphysics."; JANETTE DODGE; GREG HILLS; KIM HUETT, "I suspect that OZ Post has a sadist squad who handles the mail of anybody who sends too much mail thus causing the postmen to work."; ERIC LINDSAY; MARC ORTLIEB; RAQUL) SALPETER; DANIELLE ROMANO; ROBERT SILBERBERG (again); GERALD SMITH; and BRUCE TOWNLEY, "I think there's enough space in the Elvis clone gap to allow any number of fnz articles."

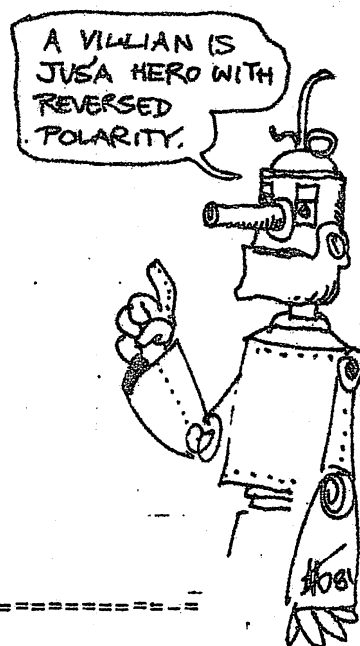
I also recieved many fanzines in trade, but since I'm not organised enough I can't present a list of the stuff recieved. Sorry.

# CONTENTS

Sandy Lands	
by Irwin Hirsh.....	2
Alot Terror	
by John Berry.....	6
Kilometre Devaluation Shock Report	
by John Bangsund.....	8
Mutterings (2)	
by David Grigg.....	10
At Least You Can Say You Have Read It	
by the readers.....	15

# ART CREDITS

Jim Barker.,.....	1,5,9,11,17
Alexis Gilliland.....	22
Bill Rotsler.....	2



# ADDRESSES OF CONTRIBUTORS

John Bangsund, PO Box 171, Fairfield, Victoria 3078  
 Jim Barker, 113 Windsor Rd, Falkirk, Central Scotland FK1 5DB, U.K.  
 John Berry, 119 Garden Ave, South Hatfield, Herts AL10 8LH, U.K.  
 Alexis Gilliland, 4030 8th St Sth, Arlington, VA 22204, USA  
 David Grigg, 1556 Main Rd, Research, Victoria 3095  
 Bill Rotsler, PO Box 3780, Los Angeles, CA 90028, USA

Thanks go to the editors of Telos for suppling me with a set of their mailing labels.

See ya'