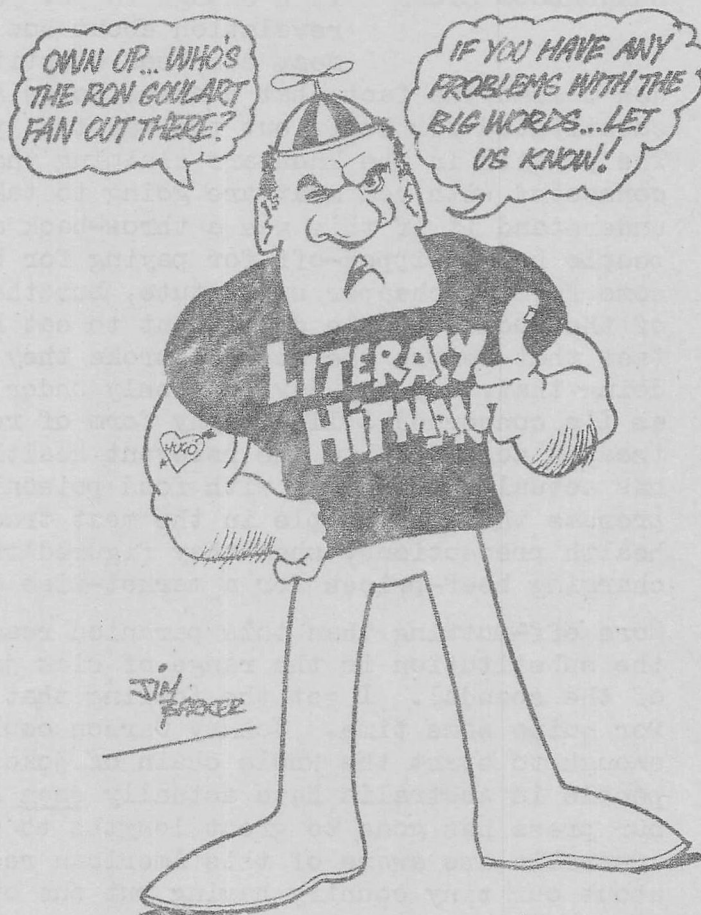


SIKANDER



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The fanzine of the hard sell.

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Dedicated to Liza Rybak.

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I can jump-cut puddles.

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SANDY LANDS

editorial column by Irwin Hirsh

SCANDALOUS STUFF It's enough to put you off, the recent revelation about how donkey, horse and kangaroo meat has been substituted for beef, it is. I don't mean the fact that donkey, horse and kangaroo meat has been substituted for beef, but the way that people have reacted to it. The pundits in the know are claiming that the sales of anything connected with red meat are going to take a big drop. I can understand it if this was a throw-back against the possibility of people being ripped-off for paying for beef and actually receiving some form of cheaper substitute, but that isn't the way it is. All of the sudden people don't want to eat horse meat, never mind the fact that before the scandal broke they may have actually been doing that, day in, day out, only under the guise of beef. As far as I'm concerned I'll eat any form of red meat, as long as it was treated according to the relevant health acts. And since no-one has actually come down with food poisoning it is reasonable to presume that the people in the meat trade were taking the proper health precautions, when they figured they could cheat us by charging beef-prices for a market-wise cheaper fare.

More off-putting than this paranoid reaction to the revelation of the substitution is the range of sick jokes that have popped up out of the scandal. I get the feeling that these jokes will be around for quite some time. Johnny Carson couldn't get onto TV fast enough to start the whole chain of jokes going; I don't think many people in Australia have actually seen Johnny tell these jokes, but our press has gone to great lengths to ensure that the whole of Australia are aware of this American reaction of how they feel about our tiny country having put one over their big country.

I must admit that for a while there, the Johnny Carson joke was the sum total of the jokes that I was aware of. But of course I was on my August college holiday at the time, and thus immune from hearing the typical physical education student's philosophy of brute-forciveness, strong sexual innuendo and repeatative yet bad jokes (ghod, what I have to put up with in order to get in a game of pinball).

It wasn't until Mt. Buller, 3 weeks and 250 kilometres away from when I was last in ear-shot of a Rusden phys. ed. student that I managed to hear a donkey/horse/kangaroo meat joke. There I was, standing in a queue for one of the ski lifts at Buller when I overheard something that gave me cause to bring up one of my dislikes of skiing. The brute-forciveness of the phys. ed. student

may have been given over to a more stylistic though just as physical show-offishness of the good skier, and a more subtle form of sexuality had taken place of the strong sexual innuendo, but the level of humour is still the same, repeatative sick stuff. It is a good thing that I can't remember the particular of that first joke (there-by avoiding the possibility of me grossing you out, or turning this fanzine into Holier than Thou), but unfortunately I remember the general and the bad taste it leaves behind. By the end of the weekend at Buller all I had to do to imagine I was back playing pinball was close my eyes and let the on-slope conversation go through me.

Also by the weekend's end I was wondering where my great skiing of the previous year had gone. In Sikander #2 I described my skiing at Aspen as making me feel "like I was Jean-Claude Killy skiing my way to three olympic gold medals, and a fortune in endorsements". This time around I just could not build up any sort of rhythm into my skiing and in no way did I approach the high level of skill I found during that week at Aspen; a level of skill that was strong enough to carry into and possibly be emulated six months later in the Down Under winter of 1980.

Fortunately I know the cause of this drop in skill, and I'm still waiting for the scandal to break on how someone has been substituting snow for porridge.

I hope that one day the old League of Nations will
invent an International Year of the Dead. Then we
will come into our own. - Sandy Stone

FANAC This issue is late. But that doesn't necessary mean that I'm going to insert here a page or two of what I've been up to since the last issue. Mainly because this issue is only 3 or 4 weeks late, and not the usual year that goes hand-in-hand with such pieces.

Also, the title of this section is Fanac, not lack-of, and since the last issue I've indulged in quite a bit of that. I have joined forces with Andrew Brown to start publishing Thyme, a newszine of Australian fandom. So far we've published 4 issues and have had an enjoyable time putting them together, and we are almost at the stage where the physical work in producing each 4 page issue is at its most efficient.

Unlike a genzine a newszine does tend to rely heavily on copies being payed for. I mean this in the sense that there are not many people who publish or create fannish news often enough to justify getting copies by the trade/news category. So if the number of subs that have come in are any guide of the support that Australian fandom has for Thyme it can be considered to be good. There are

my manuscript and will read it soon as possible, and I should allow two months for response. At least I know it reached them. This is the third such TZ card I've recieved, though response to the others never took that long. They said some kind things about "Something Pale", and even kinder things about "The Attic". They weren't quite right for them. They've given me marvelous encouragement with their rejections. Anxious to hear what they feel about "Traveler's Tale". Lately I've been getting the most beautiful, hopeful and helpful rejects. I have managed to sell a story so far this year (accepted in June, written in one sitting; night), a very short one to a small press dragon anthology (Dragonbook), coming out sometime in Autumn - and is called "Beating of Wings". Now it is August, and the green beans are ripe and trucks deliver them for 3 work shifts. I have the first shift, 9 to 5 (am to pm); though the only thing I don't care for in those hours is not being able to check the mailbox. Sara & Loretta are home before I come trudging in from hitchhiking. Though so far I've written two very short stories & sent them off: "The Necromantic Dead" & "Lacatta". This cannery season I have to write in spurts. Most of the time it takes all our energies trying to be comfortable in this Hellish weather. This weekend I had off: Saturday morning, I did changes, corrections and smoothings on "Something Pale" for a new (2 issues out) horror magazine from England; and got the thing off in the mail.

Sunday we rode with Loretta into Eugene, Oregon early. One of Sara's friends (another Girl Scout) and Sara needed to go to the YMCA where buses would be waiting to take them & a multi-cast of others to Camp Kleaowoux on the Oregon Coast for eight days. We had a little time to spare (though Loretta didn't, she had to get to work at Sacred Heart Hospital); she let the rest of us off at Susie & Terry & Abria's house (Abria is 4.5), a few blocks from the YMCA, where we hung out until time to leave. Susie decided to drive them there. Mission accomplished, I lingered at their place to have a blintz brunch (though my lunch). Later I walked to downtown to a fantasy & sf store (103 degrees that afternoon) and purchased The City of the Singing Flame by Clark Ashton Smith, a collection edited and with beautiful introduction by Donald Sidney-Fryer, and a copy of Robert Bloch's Mysteries of the Worm, containing all his Cthulhu Mythos tales (his novel too long to include); thirteen tales; I'd read all but about three of them before. Then I went to hospital to wait for Loretta. After work at 3.30 we travelled to visit, by prearrangement, at their new house (moved in 2 weeks previously), John Varley & wife & youngest son. They, as well, had the problem staying comfortable in miserable weather. John (Herb, we call him) has been more productive than I - a new story called "Blue Champaign" very recently came out, with one in F&SF due for the October issue called "The Pusher". Deciding we were all hungry, Herb and I went out to collect groceries. Herb slipped a Manhattan Transfer tape

on. By the time Loretta and I got home it was time to squeeze her goat. The next day it was again HOT at work, and I never got to check the mail.

Sitting in the living room with light and fan going, shoes off, drinking a little wine, trying to comfort Irwin Hirsh with all of this, hope he can see the levels, stay with thoughts, don't wander off in the dark.

- Billy Wolfenbarger

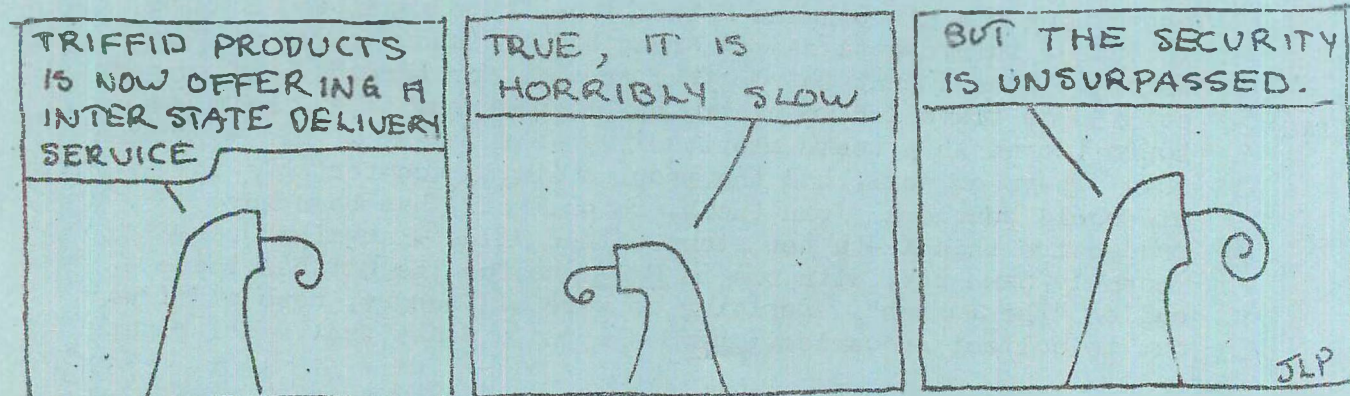
A MATTER OF CONSENSUS

Eric Lindsay

When the census form arrived I treated it in the manner of all important mail, and put it in the Real Soon Now pile, to be attended to prior to 1986, if possible. Well, actually, if convenient, rather than "if possible". Thus, I was naturally incensed to find, a mere week later, a reminder in my letter box. To accuse me of deliberately avoiding filling in the thing, after only a week, was both unkind, and untrue. It was merely a matter of mental languish, although I have to admit that I never put off until tomorrow what I can put off indefinitely.

Besides, some of those questions are damn personal. I mean, I don't mind them asking if you smoke pot, but why do they want to know the brand name...and whether they are filter tips? And they wanted to know whether you, or any of your household were alive, or not. With most people, that is a matter of opinion.

They say it is to assist Government planning. And I must admit that some of the things the Government have planned have actually worked. Fraser said he would shorten the dole queues. And he did - he asked people to stand closer together. And he has a new plan to ensure that we don't suddenly become poor when we go on the old



age pension - he's going to raise taxes so we become poor before we leave school. Come to think of it, the Government's performance is the sort of thing that gives failure a bad name.

Another week passed, while I followed the path of least persistence. The census collector left another note. A more aggressive note. I started recalling bits of heroic dialog from movies, ready for when the cops came to drag me away for failure to fill in a census form.

"You'll never take me, you dirty rats," I'd say, while I kicked the door shut in their faces, let fly with the shotgun through the door panel, and leap up the stairs so I could toss a few grenades over the balcony at them. Then out with the bazooka to blow up the police car, and a few Molotov cocktails through the front window of the nearest office of the census, and then a quick flight to Brazil, to reminisce about the good old days with Ronald Biggs. Ah, I had it all planned.

After all, what have I to lose? Well, there is the job. But they want to pay me what I am worth...and I won't work that cheap. And there is the writing business, which I must admit is looking up. But you can't look any direction but up, when you are flat on your back.

Then came the knock at the door. I wrapped my knuckles round a roll of coins - I'd seen that in a Humphrey Bogart movie - and practiced snarling while I walked to the door.

"I'm here to collect the census form", said the little old lady.

"Sorry, I'm a conscientious objector."

- Eric Lindsay

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** DAY TRIPPER **
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** John Berry **
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Yesterday, as I was putting adhesive dressings on the abrasions on my knees, I suddenly thought about an incident which happened twenty five years ago. I was visiting London to see Arthur Thomson (ATOM), and Chuck Harnis. Whilst travelling on the underground, I.. . wait...I'll reprint the pertinent passage from my article "London Fried", published in Veritas in 1956:

"...eventually we came to a long descending escalator. I was carrying Kathleen at the time, and couldn't see very well. She wanted Arthur or Chuck to carry her, but the way they were dabbing at their clothing, I felt I had to share the chore. And, as I said, being unused to the moving staircase, I couldn't see very well, and in fact,

was rather unsteady on my feet. I felt myself swaying forward with the movement, so I instinctively jerked backwards, and by some slight mishap of overbalancing, sat on the stairway. Immediately, the raucous Harris voice informed me and the rest of the travellers within three hundred yards range, "You're not supposed to sit on the escalator, stupid".

I ask you. I knew that, honestly I did. I wasn't really sitting on the escalator stair...I just tripped. Honest.

From then on, throughout my subsequent underground trips, I was labelled 'The Man Who Sat On The Escalator'. If some of the travellers forgot, or hadn't heard about it, Chuck went out of his way to inform them.

That's my story, and I'm sticking to it...."

* * *

One week ago I was in London with my wife - she likes to visit the stores in London, especially in Oxford Street, to spend my money on fine clothing, vying with the Arabs to purchase silk lingerie and frilly unmentionables, although she was only buying single items, not whole racks.

I do not like walking round shops and stores with my wife, because she will persist in spending our time looking at jumpers and skirts and dresses. I find it all so terribly boring, and it was in this semi-somnambulistic state that I started to walk down the ascending escalator in D.H.Evans.

At first I became really embarrassed, and hoping that no one was looking, I started to move my feet forward at a rapid pace, attempting to negotiate the moving staircases. It took all my endeavours merely to maintain my position, and of course all the time I had a fixed grin on my face.

My wife walked along the partition until our heads were level, although I was sweating with the effort to maintain my status quo. With tremendous discernment she shouted, "You're not supposed to walk down an ascending staircase".

"Christ, I know that," I seethed.

"Well, stop showing off, then," she snapped.

I looked downwards. Half a dozen women were rapidly approaching on the staircase, their eyes wide, mouths open, tongues spasmodically popping in and out as they noted my presence. I knew then that I'd have to give up and return to the top of the staircase. I don't like surrendering, which is alien to my philosophy, but I had no alternative. As I turned round, I tripped. It was horrible to see the stairs narrowing, and the prongs and meshes coinciding...I noticed this effect so clearly because my nose was half an inch

away. I scrambled to my feet with alacrity, and at this juncture one of the women screamed. It definitely wasn't my wife...I'd recognise her laugh anywhere. I crawled to firm ground, and the ascending women stepped over me, giving the impression they were oblivious of my presence.

I pondered on the ease by which I was able to detect the various nationalities of the ladies in the immediate area of my debacle.

Englishwomen walked past or over me as if I wasn't there, taking great pains to look in every other direction. French women were sniggering behind their handkerchiefs...German fraus chortled quite blatantly at my embarrassment. It was rather more difficult to assess my performance on the Arab women...yashmaks were rampant, but they gathered round me in a huddle, and most of them seemed to be unsteady on their scandals.

My wife, admirably controlling her diaphragm, and with tears of pleasure ducting from her eyes, helped me to my feet. My trousers were like Tibetan prayer flags.

I had to have a cup of coffee in the restaurant to soothe my nerves, and the cup rattled in the saucer as I took it to our table...

- John Berry

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SPEAKING PERSONALLY
John J. Alderson

Perhaps I am altogether wrong about it, but I do consider myself somewhat of a prose stylist. At all events I do my best to use the word which is the only one that approximates what I want to say. In other words I am also aware of the idea that a word is used with a different meaning every time it is used. So be it. But writing is communication just as speech is, and the man would be a strange one indeed who jumped on a tram with "Brighton" on the destination panel when he wanted to go to Doncaster. Nor does one usually ask for a ticket to Sydney when they wish to go to Adelaide. Such misuse of terminology would certainly get one astray.

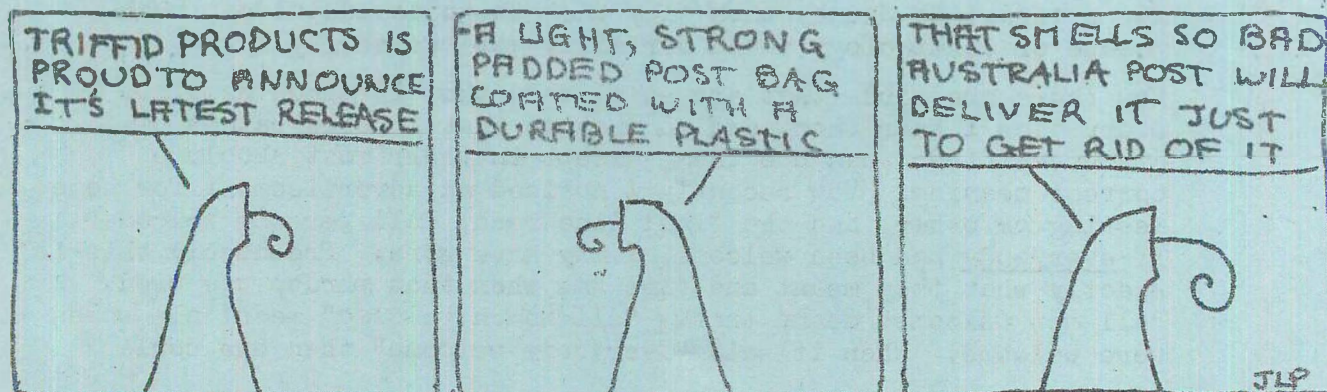
Now there are words that are so misused that it makes me wince every time I hear them, and so much so that I would rather circumvent them than use them, except in their most absolute correct meaning. Now recently I noticed an advertisement for some meeting or other, and the final line read, "All persons welcome". If everybody had been welcome, I may have gone. Presumably this is exactly what they meant and time was when that phrase was used. "All men welcome" meant that. "All women welcome" meant all women were welcome. When it said "Everybody welcome" then one could

attend knowing happily that he hadn't made a mistake. And, whilst I may have liked to attend a meeting where the "All single girls welcome" line was employed, discretion (some may call it cowardice) suggested I not attend. The fact is, that there is this lingering doubt as to what the word "person" means.

Chambers gives the derivation from the French personne and Latin persona, those words being compounded of per meaning through, and sono to sound, that is, somebody who speaks through the actor's mask. Thus it gets two meanings, first, the actor or the body apparent; secondly the identity or the spirit behind the body, that is, that which is loosely referred to as the soul. In other words, it has two contrary meanings. The meaning becomes clearer in compounds. To impersonate somebody is to pretend to be them, not in an acting or dramatic role where the part is played and no-one is deceived. Uther Pendragon impersonated Gorgois and begat Arthur on Igera, wife of Gorgois. On the other hand Thomas Cook and Son personally conducted tours, and both being dead these many years the tours are conducted by employees of the firm, that is, a stand-in. But, these are not the long and the short of my doubts of the word, or my thorough dislike of it.

The word "person" has a definite, precise and concise meaning in Common Law. As a J.P. once explained it to me (I was working for him, not before him on the Bench). "If a man is taken short in public he may make water against the off-side wheel of his vehicle, providing he does not expose his person." The same meaning applies in indecent exposure, a man's person is his penis. So when you refer to man as a person, are you calling him a prick? Similiar usage apparently applies to women and the term used in more than a trifle obscene.

This lends some light on a series of insults used in Australia. They begin with one which carries little or no stigma; "What sort of a man/woman are you?" In this one's manliness or womanliness is not questioned. In the next one "What sort of character are you?" it has been questioned and denied. Then follows "What sort of



person are you?" in which even one's character has been denied. Then follows "What sort of a barstard are you?", then "What sort of an animal are you?" and finally, "What sort of a thing are you?", and this is usually as far as the series goes. Person like "character"; "barstard" (when "bastard" is used the insult is more pointed), "animal" and "thing" are a series of increasingly greater insults. The series of course is incomplete. But the point is, that in vernacular Australian, person is an insult and may very well be connected with the meaning given in the preceding paragraph.

So, I didn't go to that meeting.

The fact is that most people who use the word "person" haven't the faintest idea what they mean. Several years ago my boss said to me, just prior to morning tea-time, "How many persons are down the block?" What did he mean? I know what he was asking; he wanted to know how many cups to send down with the billy of tea. The correct term he should have used was "pickers", so, "How many pickers are down the block?" And, I shudder when I say this, he's a school teacher and he cannot even phrase a question correctly.

Just tonight I read in Palmer's Oral Folk-tales of Wessex this howler. "This custom has of course lead to grave-robbery, a crime looked upon as serious, not only because it disturbs the dead, but because the objects sought properly belong to the dead person..." Now I ask you, how can you have a dead person! The writer has been caught up in th current craze of using the word "person". What he should have written was "...the object sought properly belong to the dead." In so many cases the word "person" is added when it should not be.

The word "person" is a sort of abstraction. To say, "I am a musical person", is a weak statement. To say, "I am musical", is a definate statement, and very precise, but it may not be quite what is meant, and it does mean differently from "I am a musical man". And to say, "She is a beautiful person" is not the same as saying "She is a beautiful woman". The secret of getting one's message across is to use as concrete and as definate a noun as is possible and to have the adjective qualify it exactly.

The word "person" is a noun, and only a noun. It is not a pronoun. Consequently it cannot substitute in words where a pronoun and a noun are combined to make a compound noun such as for example, himself. It cannot be substituted for "one" or "man". The latter is most interesting. The crew man the ship. The officers do not of course. Consequently they are referred to as so many "officers and men", and if the ship gets lost at sea with all hands, then the officers and men would be added together as so many "souls". Naturally if the crew contained women, as is sometimes the case in odd parts of the world, they still man the ship. They couldn't possibly woman it as "woman" is not a verb. Admittedly dreary

civil servants who delight in dehumanising mankind and reducing them to numbers, may refer to the complete complement as "personal", but note just how little meaning that term has.

The verb "man" has thus no sex and it would be correct to refer to the complement as so many officers and men even though the "men" may be all females. So we get "seamen" but not "seawomen" because "woman" is not a pronoun and cannot make such a compound noun. When "woman" does form a compound noun the meaning is quite different. A "sea-woman" would be a mermaid (the masculine being merman) whilst a seal-woman is a woman changed into a seal by enchantment but allowed at times to revert to her proper form.

There are of course compounds which do not have the gender changed. One does not refer to a bulldog as a "bull-bitch" and certainly not as a "cow-bitch". There are, and cannot be therefore, any such words as "chairwoman" (unless the poor creature is part chair, part woman), "spokeswoman" or "axewoman" (unless perchance one is referring to an old battleaxe of a mother-in-law). And of course it follows too that one cannot have such monstrosities as "chairperson" or "spokesperson" or "axe-person". Those who use such non-words are ignorant of their own language. And being a gentleman as well as a scholar I would never refer to a woman who had spent many years aboard boat as an "old sea-bitch".

I can well imagine the horror with which a carpenter would view the use of his best wood chisels as screw-drivers. Words are my stock-in-trade, they are my tools. I dislike them misused. And I thoroughly disapprove of their replacement by cheap foreign imports. How many of you can speak for two minutes without using some cheap American word whose meaning you are only vaguely aware of, instead of a local word whose meaning is concrete and precise and which you should know? Like the impersonal word, person.

- John J. Alderson

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MUTTERINGS

a column by David Grigg

3.

BEAUTIFUL BALLOONS Standing idly browsing in the Space Age
Bookshop the other day, trying to decide
between "Perry Rhodan Meets The Bride of
Frankenstein" or "Magister Ludi", I was accosted by Paul Stevens.

It's never a pleasant experience, but after a hard morning at work writing about the recycling of steel coffins I was even less than usually disposed to greet with enthusiasm a Paul Stevens whose eyes

gleamed from under all that hair like those of a Rasputin suffering from malnutrition.

"What do you think about wargames?" he said in a conspiratorial stage-whisper. Lee Harding, standing nearby, gave us a look of condescending disgust.

"It's immoral" I said "they ought to bring all the troops home right away!"

"No, no. Wargames. You know, Diplomacy and all that."

"Well," I said guardedly, "I can take it or leave it, I guess."

"This Sunday, at my place." And he walked off. "Oh" he said over his shoulder "it's also an Australia in 75 Committee meeting, combined."

"That figures."

So on Sunday I turned up to the attic that serves as Paul and John's dwelling place, climbed over the dustbins and walked into the living room. And there were Paul and Leigh and all those other people and Robin Johnson and Bill Wright, who were trying to untangle the microphone cords of their two tape-recorders, which had got unaccountably mixed.

So Paul picked up a large multi-coloured box with lurid pictures of biplanes being shot to pieces on it, titled Luftwaffe. He took out the board, unfolded it over the table, took out the pieces and dumped them in a huge pile over the board, and pulled out the instructions ...and pulled out the instructions ...and pulled out the instructions....

Leigh gave Paul a strange look, and said "Okay, Paul, you explain to me how we play."

Paul subsided into his sideburns.

Meanwhile, Robin Johnson was trying to get the meeting of the Australia in 75 Committee started, and he was wandering around wondering whether to start without Christine McGowan or not, and Bill Wright was draping tape-recorder microphones over the TV set and the book shelves. I sat and had a Coke.

"All right" said Paul, "I'll be Germany, and you be America. Let's see - we'll only play the basic game first. First you have to deploy six squadrons along the Baltic Sea, and I have to place my fighters around the towns with aircraft factories and..."

Robin turned on all the tape-recorders and announced that the meeting was open. Bill Wright interrupted him to describe how nice a person Astrid Anderson was, and how she and Jerry Jacks had almost convinced him to join the other side. Robin ruled him out of order.

"Paul" said Leigh, "What do I do with my fifteen bomber squadrons

circling the Black Sea when they run out of fuel on the sixth move?"

Robin discussed the advertising plans for American regional conventions, and where the Australia in '75 Film was going to be shown next, but Bill went off about how he'd commiserated with Harry Warner on the number of fanzines he hadn't LOCed by telling him to ignore them all.

"Well, I still say that when I make my first attack the B-17s should be able to take out Dresden with incendiaries" said Leigh.

"How about if I have a sile of ICBMs over here?" I asked.

"You win" said Paul.

Robin, having discussed the fund-raising problems and whether the next issue of the Bulletin should go to Mao Tsetung as well as Gough Whitlam, just in case, stomped on Bill Wright who was telling us about Roger Zelazny's Dali, and declared the meeting closed.

"Okay!" said Paul. "Now we can start the first move ... what was that, Robin?"

- David Grigg, reprinted from John Foyster's Chunder!, numbers 1 and 2, 28.10.1972 and 11.11.1972



AT
LEAST
YOU
CAN
SAY
YOU
HAVE
READ
IT

the
readers

Buck Coulson
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I can sympathise with John Alderson's complaints about slipshod service. Part of the problem is people not giving a damn, of course. (And why should the workers give a damn, now that they've finally waked up to

the fact that management never gave a damn about them? They don't have to worry about customer's complaints, so why worry about anything?) Part of it is sheer shortsightedness, I work for a door company which has 9 factories scattered about the country (to simplify shipping) plus parts factories, etc. Middle-sized operation, though each factory is small as such things go, employing 150 to 400 or so people, depending on sales. A couple of dozen people in the office, of which I am one. One of the things I notice most is that nobody gets a breaking-in period, or not an adequate one. I got adequate instruction on my major job, largely because I didn't need a lot, but I've been handed two other jobs when people went on vacation with no instruction at all. (I used to be in the drafting department, so I'm assumed to know something about all phases of the door business. I do know something; just not very much in some respects.) Also, paperwork increases as the square of the number of employees, and the more paper, the more apt some of it is to get lost. Department heads don't care about errors except to prove they were someone else's fault; everyone protects his ass and the hell with anyone else. (I've seen customers get wrong parts just because nobody was going to stick his neck out far enough to question an obviously wrong order; as long as they followed the routine, it wasn't going to be their fault. I didn't stick mine out, either, especially as the paperwork didn't officially go past me.) There is usually an effort to question distributors when their paperwork doesn't seem to make sense, but eventually someone gets some at repeated errors and sends out exactly what was requested, right or not. A typo can be elevated to a major problem.

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John Alderson does handle the postal problem cheekily. I was highly amused by his complaint. (Not the least of which might have been a vivid mental image of a circus seal (complete with beach ball) being posted to him as an integral part of his firefighting equipment.) When I was in the Army and stationed in Germany, my mother used to complain that it took a letter less time to travel the 6,000 miles from me to her than it did for one to travel the relatively few miles across the city of Cleveland.

The loccol seems full of a discussion of the joys of license plate watching. I do still occasionally indulge in that sport (over here, a common form is collecting the number of different states' plates you can see on a trip, discounting of course the plates of the state you happen to be driving through), but I gave that up years ago in favour of more elevated pursuits, like shoulders, chests and hair-styles.

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I must not speak ill of the living. - Sandy Stone

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Carol Day Buchanan
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I enjoyed all the columns, but John J. Alderson's struck a particular chord with me, as I'm sure it did with many of us. How did the same people design the postal sorting system in both our countries?

World-wide conspiracy? Gah. And, yet, with all the absurdities involved, it's more efficient than the other means of disbursing the written word. Oh for the day when technology catches up with ideas and I can conveniently (and cheaply) plug into a planetwide computer net and all I'll have to worry about is where and how to get the electricity and how to pay the bills. Sigh. It's coming, it's coming, but I wish it were here. Until then the Post Office is my link with the world. Doesn't mean I have to be satisfied with it.

I got a giggle from David Grigg's column. Will look for "How to Calculate Your Pet Rock's Horoscope" at my local bookseller's, tee hee. Oh, yes, David, a geologist friend tells me that the domesticated stones do breed. Where, praytell, do you think pet pebbles come from?

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John Alderson's article is incomplete. It should have been comprehensive enough to include me in its litany of the disgusting things which are wrong with today's world. This issue of Sikander

has been here a couple of months and only now is it receiving the love that it should have had long ago. Why should the slow postal service and lazy book distributors get all that publicity when I behave just as beastly and am not even mentioned by John?

Maybe he was confining himself to Australia. But much of what he wrote about is quite familiar to a North American. Not long ago I saw an old picture postcard which had been mailed from Hagerstown to a small nearby town about sixty years ago. Someone had scribbled in the message area the information that she would pay the addressee a visit this evening. She had mailed the card in the morning, it had been put in a mail sack and taken to the next passenger train heading out of Hagerstown in the direction of the addressee's town, sorted by a railway mail clerk en route, dropped off a half-hour or so later, taken at once to the post office, and was delivered the same afternoon. When I was a neo in fandom, I used to be disgusted at the fact that there was only one mail delivery on Saturdays, and therefore only one chance to receive fanzines or letters, compared to the twice daily deliveries Monday through Friday. The last two or three days before Christmas, you could expect mailmen three or four times daily so Christmas cards could be delivered as quickly as possible. The United States Postal Service is currently publicizing in radio commercials its modern type of next-day delivery. You're guaranteed delivery the following day after mailing over a fairly wide territory for a fee

just under \$10. When the postal cards were delivered the same day they were mailed, it cost one cent.

I lost my father 21 years ago, but I'm still learning things about him. Just the other day, I was leafing through a file of a little publication issued by the local chamber of commerce in the 1920s, soon after its formation, and I was startled to run across an item indicating that my father had edited what apparently was the chamber's first leaflet designed to attract tourists to Hagerstown. I hadn't known that he had been a chamber member and he had never mentioned preparing the brochure. Now I'm trying to keep an eye open at flea markets and antique shops in the hope of finding a copy. But my father was 70 when he died, I doubt very much if I'll live that long, and I imagine it must seem quite strange for Billy Wolfenbarger to be learning about a father who was so much younger than Billy when he was killed.

David Grigg's "Mutterings" is vastly amusing. Agents are, I suppose, the only modern equivalent of the Hollywood producer in the golden age of the movies, when an individual had powers which are relegated in the movie and television industry today to committees and boards.

Bob Smith was wondering about some of the old Cry crowd. Les Gerber is living in a small town in New York State, dealing in second-hand phonograph records and occasionally producing an LP dubbed from 78 rpm discs. Bob Lichtman has bobbed up in a fanzine or two recently, including Pong. I haven't heard anything about or from Dick Schultz in a long while. Busby seems to be writing a novel as often as he wrote a prozine review for Cry. Bob might also like to know that my auto license plates begin with the letters CAT even though I didn't order them special. I like cats but at the moment I don't own one or vice versa. Maryland begins all private auto tags with three letters and tries to avoid any combination which drivers might find offensive but somehow BAH plates got issued and I doubt very much if they were assigned only to confirmed pessimists or descendants of Ebenezer Scrooge.

Jim Meadows III
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I don't think anything from Billy Wolfenbarger ever stayed with me in the past. But with this issue's installment of his column, I started wondering, who is this guy anyway. If I had come into

APA-50 a little sooner, I might know. But as it is, I just get a glimpse in this column, which by rights should have been rather dull, as most columns are when they're concerned with nothing-in-particular. Hope to see more from Billy on a regular basis.

I've read stuff like John J. Alderson's piece before, but they were usually about how my country was going to hell in a handbasket. Nice to know other countries will be there when mine arrives. Really, this piece sort of collapsed into hysteria at the end.

I'm interested in reading about social issues, but I hope pieces on the subject would be a little more thought out. And please, no post office horror stories unless they're really good. Everybodys' postal system is horrible. Yours and mine are rather tame actually, compared to, say, Italy.

The punchline to David's column (well done, by the way) reminded me of an old joke my father relayed to me, which was probably just an update of an even older joke. At a time when all the bestselling books in my country were by doctors, or about dogs on Abraham Lincoln, someone suggested the title for a surefire bestseller: "Abraham Lincoln's Doctor's Dog". Well, I don't tell it as well as my father did, but you get the drift.

Bruce Townley's cartoon on the back page had a good line, but the wrong animal, I think. Dolphin, maybe?

Kim Huett
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Personally I lost all interest in cricket while still at primary school. Until then I played it as that was the game most played by the boys I went to school with. Well, one day I was fielding close

to the stumps when the batsman down the other end of the pitch hit the ball and began to run. Unfortunatly for me the ball was stopped and thrown at the wicket. At the same time the batter threw his bat at the wicket with the idea in mind, I found out later, that if it reached the wicket before the ball he wouldn't be out. Well, both players turned out to be lousy throwers though I can testify that they both put plenty of power behind their tosses as both objects hit me instead of the wicket. As I writhered on the ground it came to me that cricket hurt so I decided to give up while I was ahead.

Cricket is not really a game but a form of commando training subtly given to boys at Public Schools during the days of the Old British Empire. The idea was to kill off all but the toughest who would be left with the basic training for subdueing natives.

Gerald Smith
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I wish you the best of luck in your ambition to become involved in Australia's burgeoning film industry. You are probably right in your suspicion that just about everyone has thought of

becoming in some way famous. I know that I shared with you the dream of making my first test century. So my wishes are, at least in part, selfish. It would give us who failed to become famous the opportunity to vicariously share the fame of another.

I went as a ghost - I won second prize, so I
must have been pretty lifelike. - Sandy Stone

Richard Faulder
Yanco Agricultural
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I long ago decided that I was unlikely ever to be famous. The best I can hope for is to become known within the scientific community within which I move. Actually, I doubt if I know what I'd do with fame. Although I like egoboo as

much as the next person, I'm basically too retiring to take advantage of fame. When one reads of people in the entertainment industry who hold the kinds of positions you aspire to (this is not a comment on you in any sense) and who claim to be shy, retiring and so on, I tend to take such claims with a large grain of salt.

((Michael Parkinson: So, how did this shy creature ever have an ambition to go on stage.

Ganny McDonald: (the man behind the Norman Gunstan mask) Oh... that is only with women... well, I thought I'll meet women... I thought I'd be In Like Flynn.

Shy people are shy because they often feel they don't have anything to offer others. Being famous gives those people an identity that helps in overcoming the shyness. ih))

Your interlinos were too obscure to be funny.

((Who sawed Courtney's boat? ih))

David Grigg should not assume that the picture he received of the modern school child is the correct one. A group of five kids is certainly much easier to handle than the other 25 or so which make up the rest of the class, especially if they don't think they are doing schoolwork. Games like that are very effective when used occasionally and judiciously. Used too often or inappropriately the kids will get sick of even games. The problem for the teacher is that they don't have the time to be making up new and stimulating material. While I still hold that most (notice the qualification) teachers are overpaid and underworked, the 30% or so who earn, and more than earn, their money find their time very short. There would be a lot to be said for each education department, and perhaps even each school, having a teaching aids section attached to it made up of imaginative teachers who for various reasons are unable to handle kids. This would have the advantage of both providing material to make the able teachers more effective and providing a place where the less able teachers, who have often become locked into teaching by virtue of their training or experience (or lack of it in alternative employment areas), can be efficiently utilised by the education system.

Rex Winn seems to imply that he accepts the popular notion (in this country at any rate) that schools are no longer teaching the basic subjects (although that was the first time I had seen logic and rhetoric referred to as basic subjects). My assessment would be that (admittedly based on my limited experience as a teacher in the high schools of this state) while this could be true of primary

school education (that is, those 6 or 7 years of education prior to high school) by the time kids enter high school the teachers are faced with the problem of trying to correct previous poor preparation while at the same time reducing the effect of anti-educational influences, notably TV, which are acting on the pupils externally to the school. If standards are dropping, it is because they are chasing the kids down as the teachers try to find a level at which they are able and willing to learn.

((You present some interesting thoughts on education, Richard, but I'm a bit put off by the attacking tone you seem to have adopted in your responses to David and Rex. David set up a situation and then asked if that is the way it is 'normally'. Rex noted a concern stemming from his observations and pondered about its effects. I don't see the need to go on the defensive when expanding on their thoughts.

One more thing: Rex referred to logic and rhetoric as "basics" not "basic subjects"; there is a difference. ih))

I Also Heard From: HARRY ANDRUSCHAK; DICK BERGERON (twice); VALMA BROWN; BUZ BUSBY, with a big run-down about what has happened to all those people Bob Smith asked about; WM GIBSON, "Just got a letter from a confused countryman of yours - it was addressed to Bob Guccione, actually - who thinks he wants to make a movie out of a short story of mine, but who doesn't know about options or custom of actually paying sums of money for same. O well. He'll learn..."; ROELOF GOUDRIAAN; LEE HARDING; ARTHUR D. HLAVATY; ERIC LINDSAY, "I'll wish you luck at a film giant, while observing that I don't know the name of anyone associated with films... although I do know the names of one or two actors. I might, perhaps, even recognise one or two actors, although whether I could actually get the face to match the correct name is more problematical."; ERIC MAYER, "I guess daughter Fleur will have some record of me, if only through the fanzines I've been writing. I wish I had some similar record of my parents and grandparents. People don't leave anything behind anymore. My grandfather at least left some furniture he'd made by hand. My grandmother left homemade rugs, quilts and the like. You can't leave behind a Mastercard. And, of course, no one writes letters. Our communication is all by phone now. Like everything else, overpriced and disposal."; CHUCK SPEAR; MAE STRELKOV and JEAN WEBER.

ART CREDITS: Jim Barker (p 1), John Packer (p 6,10) and Bruce Townley (p 14).

And that is it for this issue. Enjoy.

See ya'

Tim

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