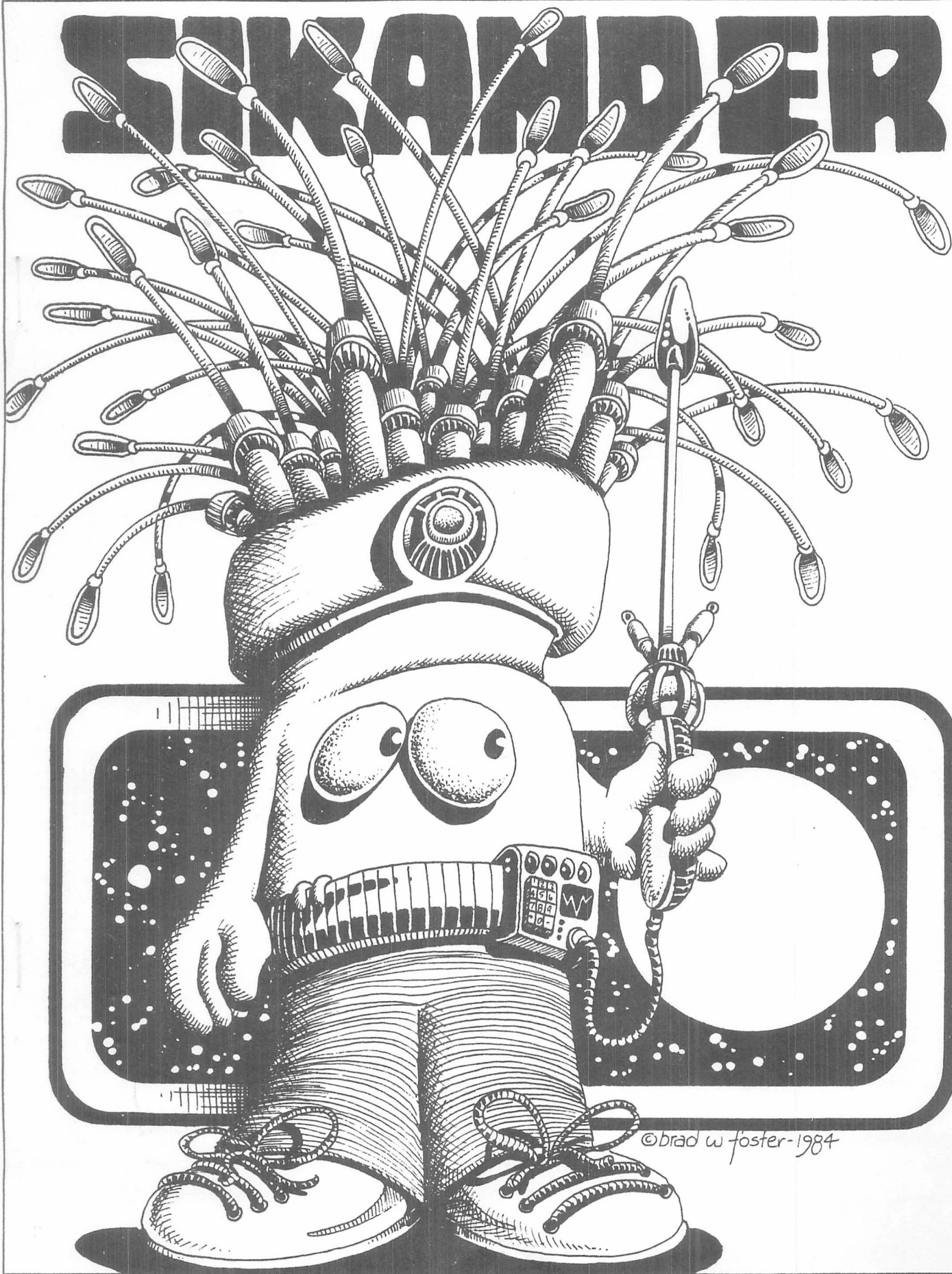
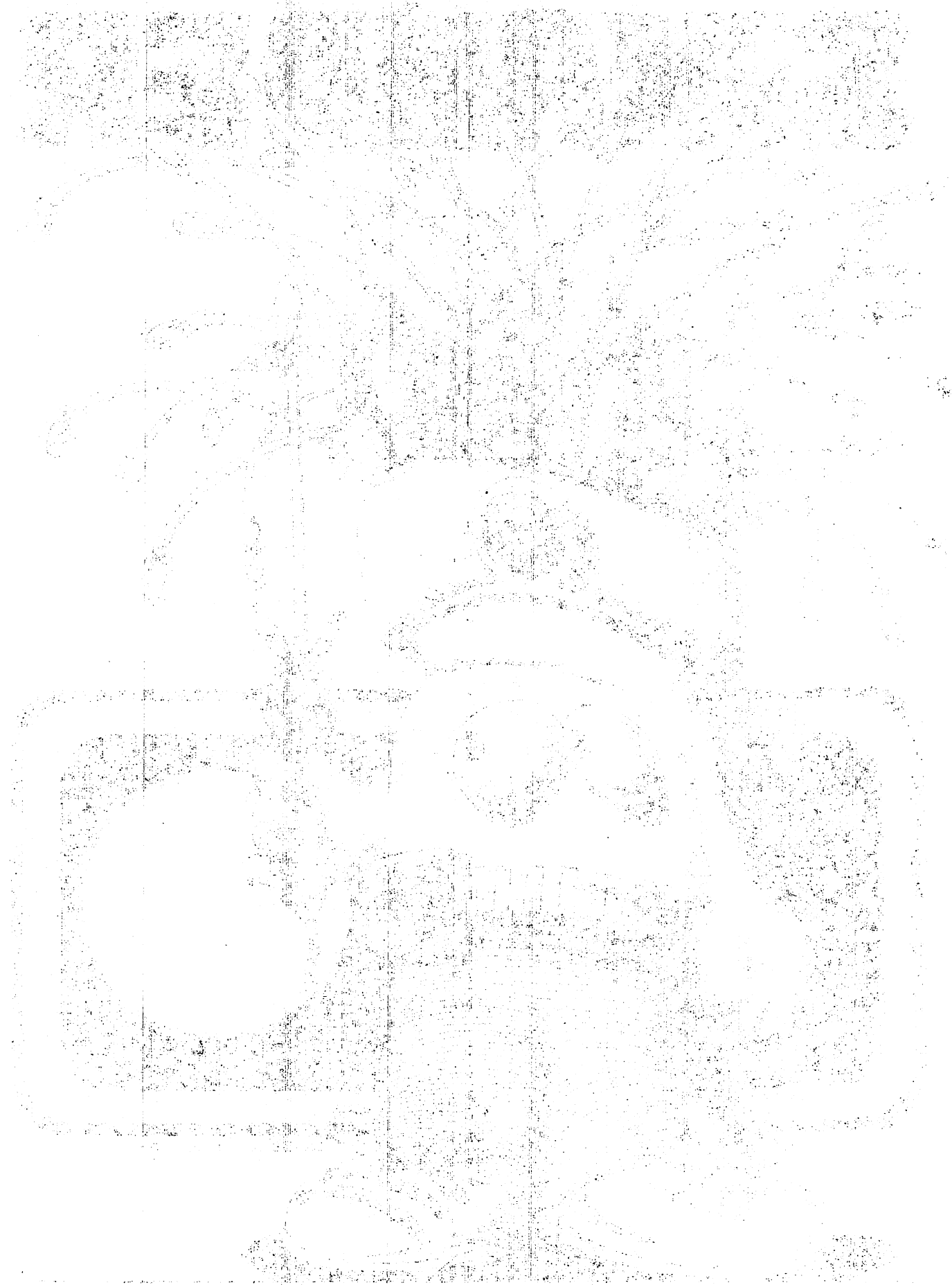


SAKANDER



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sikander

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SIKANDER 11, December 1985, is edited and published by Irwin Hirsh, at 2/416 Dandenong Rd, Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA. This fanzine is available for written and drawn contributions, a letter of comment, your fanzine in trade, Old Fanzines, or \$2. You are encouraged to support DUFF, FANZZ, GUFF, and TAFF. \$1 from the sale of every copy of this issue will be donated to these four fan funds. This fanzine supports Mark Loney and Michelle Muysert for DUFF, and the following bids for the World Science Fiction Convention: Sydney Cove in 88 (write-in), The Netherlands in 1990, and Perth in 1994. You are encouraged to do the same. Two issues in one year is Still Not Too Many. You betcha.
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CAPRICE

Irwin (Ed)

Sometime on the first day of Aussiecon Two I was walking into the registration area just as David Grigg, SIKANDER columnist and convention chairman, had come from the hucksters area. He was clutching a copy of "Urban Fantasies", a new anthology edited by David King and Russell Blackford, which had been launched earlier that day. "Look", cried the man who I had seen introducing guests of honour, special guests, and Victoria's Minister for the Arts to the assembled masses at the Opening Ceremony, "Look, a sf book with a story of mine in it! Wow!"

Who was it that said the Golden Age of Science Fiction is thirteen?

"TENNIS ELBOW", a short film made by John Thomson, then a student at the Film and Television School at Swinburne College, is one of the funniest Australian films I have seen. The film isn't about anything, but uses a tennis match to present a series of visual gags and funny sketches, all in a pacey, fun style. I have seen the film five times, once when it was awarded the prize for the best Australian film at the 1983 Melbourne Film Festival.

The first time I saw it was at the 1983 Fringe Arts Festival. This festival was set up so that 'independent' filmmakers, playwrights, artists, etc can gain exposure via a festival which can gain more publicity than any number of individual events. A few of my friends were working on the film section of the festival and they made sure I was on the mailing list and asked me to enter my film "In Ghia". I had made this film in my second year at college, and it is something of which I am very proud. It is a five minute film which is not much more

than an one-line visual gag about a man who is running late for work. As I like having it screened I had no hesitation in putting it in the Fringe Arts Festival.

The program book was released a week prior to the start of the festival. Within moments of acquiring a copy my name lept up off the page and I noted that "In Ghia" was to be screened twice, on a program of comedy films. I wasted no time in telling my non-college friends that if they want to see "In Ghia" here was their chance.

Of the eleven films on the program there were five which I thought weren't funny, five good, funny films (of which I include "In Ghia"), and one exceptionly fine film - John Thomson's "Tennis Elbow". My film was the last film before the interval, and I have to admit I was a bit disappointed with the reaction. Sure, people laughed in the right spots but it was small in comparison with the 150 strong audience. The unfortunate fact of the matter was that my film was preceded by "Tennis Elbow" - a fate worse than death for any comedy film.

At Aussiecon Two I was in charge of the film program and I decided to put "In Ghia" and "Tennis Elbow" on the same program as "Ghostbusters", making sure that "In Ghia" was screened first. I would've liked to have sat in on those sessions but unfortunately this was not to be. I like to be able to get as much feedback to "In Ghia" as possible, and I've always enjoyed "Tennis Elbow".

Sometime during the banquet Sue Grigg came up to tell me how she had enjoyed my film, and informed me that the quite large audience responded very favourably to it. It was nice to receive such egoboo, and in the relaxed atmosphere of the banquet rather than in the rush that prevailed during the rest of the convention.

The following day when I next saw Sue I asked her about the reaction to "Tennis Elbow". "It didn't raise much laughs", Sue told me, "but then, it did follow your film."

"In Ghia" getting more laughs than "Tennis Elbow" - it could just be my highlight from Aussiecon Two.

AUSSIECON TWO: NOT A CON REPORT for the simple reason that I didn't take one note, jot down a quotable line, or summarize a single conversation. In such a situation how could I be expected to write a con report? I know that a lack of notes have never stopped others, but it has certainly stopped me. I was just too busy during the convention, running the film program, to remember to take down Notes Towards A Con Report.

I spent the first day and a half in a state of organising-rush. Except for when I stopped to have dinner I was forever on the run: making sure the ticketing was going okay, that there were ushers and security people

at the State Film Centre (our main venue for the film Program, two blocks from the Southern Cross Hotel), in the projection booth at the SFC making sure the projectionists had no problems, and worrying about finding projectionists for the late night screenings back at the Southern Cross. My main memory of that first day and a half is of seeing someone I wished to talk to, stopping for a minute, which would extend to five minutes, at which point I would say "I have to be at/see _____. Walk with me for a bit". And we'd walk and talk until I felt I'd taken whoever far enough out of their way, at which point I'd run off on my errand. I have a vague feeling that two times out of three the person I would do this to was Terry Hughes.

This state of rush stopped at about 2.30pm on the second day. I had been asked to do the introduction to Ted White's Fan Guest of Honour speech, and while I was quite honoured to have been asked to do this I was also in a state of worry, as by some clever piece of fate it was also to be the first time I have ever been on a convention program item. Ted and I had discussed the speech the night before, and that morning I stayed home to write my five minute introduction. It was at 2.30, an hour before Ted's speech, that I decided it was best to turn off from film program duties and relax.

Waiting in the foyer Ted asked me if I had everything prepared. I showed him a type written sheet - one side full of double spaced typing. Ted then showed me a small piece of note paper, with a few scribbled notes on it. From this he was to come up with a 40-45 minute speech. Talk about Macho Fanmanship.

Once inside the ballroom Ted and I took up seats in the front row, waiting for the audio-visual presentation. And we waited. All the events which made use of audio-visuals always started with an unfortunate delay. But it was critical that Ted's speech finished at

 "And the winner is....Placenta."

4.30, so that the room could be set up for the banquet and as I watched each minute tick by it only added to my anxiety. Ted wasn't worried as he could vary the length of his speech, but I was sitting there, looking at what I had written thinking things like "I don't really need to say that - that'll save a minute or so". Eventually when the delay reached ten minutes I said to Ted, "Perhaps I should just get up there and say, 'Ladies and Gentlemen - Ted White, our Fan Guest of Honour'". I was using the delay as my justification, but Uncle Ted told me to just say what I intended to say.

The audio-visual finally started and soon the slide "Ted White. Fan Guest of Honour" came up. As the lights came up I whispered to Ted, "It wasn't meant to happen like that", got up and walked to the stage. All the audio-visuals were supposed to have a common first few minutes, be followed by something appropriate to the particular item, and end on the

title slide. As we sat there watching the same presentation that had headed the opening ceremony, I expected to see at least the logos from my copies of "Pong", "Gambit", and "egoscan", and I was disappointed that the original idea with the audio-visuals didn't happen.

Walking across the stage to the lectern I made the quick decision that I shouldn't chicken out of my quest, that I was there to do a job and that my nerves should stand aside when someone has been given the highest honour fandom can bestow on him or her. I took my little speech out of my pocket, placed it on the lectern in front of me, looked up at the audience, took in a big breath, and it was all downhill from there. Running through Ted's fannish achievements I almost rewrote history by listing him as having been the co-chair of the 1976 Worldcon, but this didn't sound right and like Eric Blair had done in 1948 when looking for a book title I reversed the order of the last two digits, and got some truth and honesty into what I wanted to say.

I then went on to talk about how I had asked Ted to write what became "Lost in Oz", and how what was supposed to be a ten or twelve page article clocked up at 44 pages. While I forgot to mention that this article, alone, was bigger than any fanzine I'd ever previously published, I did note that Ted is, in terms of pages, the biggest contributor to my fanzine. And with the words "Here's Ted White", I walked across the stage and sat down, while Ted took up his position at the lectern, made a plug for the Britian in '87 Worldcon bid, and proceeded to make his speech, titled "The Community of Fandom", in which he talked about the perception of fandom from the various types of fans and the balkanisation of fandom. It was a month later when "Egoscan"s 10 and 11 arrived that I saw that Ted had prepared for this speech a bit more than from the impression he had given me.

Unfortunately I was called away when the bleeper I had been given went off, and for the first time during the convention. My first thought was to ignore it - I mean I couldn't walk out of a speech I had introduced - but I realised that I would continue to be paged until I acknowledged the call. I rushed out of the ballroom, resolved the query, and went back to the ballroom quickly but quietly taking up my seat.

After Ted had finished I went up to apologise for being called away, but Ted got in first, "You realise that there was one thing you forgot to mention in your introduction".

"What?" I said questionably, wondering what it could possibly have been. I had mentioned everything we had discussed the previous evening. Admittedly I didn't read out the full list of fanzines he has edited or co-edited, preferring to only mentioning those fanzines that I have received. I was all prepared to defend myself with "Anyone wanting more info. can refer to Avedon Carol's Convention Handbook article", when Ted replied with "You didn't mention who you are".

"I didn't! Did I?" I said as I realised that anyone wanting to know who

I was wouldn't find it by looking through the Pocket Program. Marc Ortlieb had asked me, some months before, if I would introduce Ted, but it was only a week prior to the con that I was able to give a definitive "okay" in response. Until then I wasn't sure if I would be required at 75 High St, Prahran at 3.30 on the Friday afternoon, performing my assistant editing duties. And as such my name doesn't appear in the Pocket Program.

(On the other hand I was listed to be on a panel which I never intended to be on. At 2.00pm on the Saturday was Dune, the Panel, with Ed Bryant, and Elizabeth Ann Hull, with Frank Herbert having the right of reply. I can just imagine the moderator introducing me: "And on my left is Irwin Hirsh, who has only read the first book and that was ten years ago, hasn't seen the film, but is in charge of the film program of this convention". From the time I discovered that I was down for appearing on the panel I kept on telling the Programming Sub-Committee that I wasn't suitable. "We'll try to find someone else" they would say regularly for three months right up to the convention. Finally, a week before the convention, I was actually struck off the list as a panelist, with Roy Ferguson taking up my seat. For his trouble Roy appears in a photo or two in "Locus". The cad. That'll teach me for never reading the sequels to an interesting but overlong novel, and for not seeing a film which many people walked out of when screened at the convention.)

Introducing Ted was significant in a way other than being my first ever program appearance. It gave me the chance to start enjoying the convention. The decision to relax for that hour before going on, and having been paged made me realise that the film program was running smoothly and there was no need to worry to anything like the level I had been. The film program had been going for 24 hours by then, and nothing had gone wrong and was unlikely to veer too far off that course. From that point on I kept my eye on the film program, not my whole body, satisfied that with bleeper on my side I was no more than five minutes away from any possible problems.

So this is how the convention I thought I'd never be able to enjoy turned into quite an enjoyable event.

AND NOW that the convention is over it has been interesting seeing the con reports. Or rather, not seeing the reports. Back in the days before I was ever a member of a convention committee I often heard the line "being on a concon is a thankless task". Having worked on two cons (Funcon and Eurekacon) prior to Aussiecon Two I was well prepared for the underwhelming response to our efforts: I had seen a grand total of three reports on those two cons, two of which were published in a fanzine which I subscribe to. I can't help but feel that quite a few more reports were published but were only seen by the members of one apa or another. Given the relative size of the three cons I've worked on the response to Aussiecon Two that I've seen has been even worse than that to Funcon and Eurekacon.

And so, a simple request: if you made some comments on Aussiecon Two or your trip to Australia in some fanzine, how about sending a copy or two to the committee. I'm sure my fellow committee members would like to see some return for their efforts. And while you are at it, if you have seen someone else's report on the con, could you suggest to the author that they also send on a copy. Of course, while I wouldn't mind having the chance to read the reports that do the rounds of our committee, I would like to have my own copy. Any chance of sending me a copy? In return I promise to send you a copy of any report I do on any cons you work on.

- Irwin Hirsh

at least YOU can say you have read it **LETTERS OF COMMENT**

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SIKANDER 10 is probably the best Australian fannish fanzine to see the light of day this year, but all the same I was strangely disappointed with it. Perhaps this was because it is still so close to the convention and many of the things that went wrong there effect my thinking on other things. Or perhaps it is that I'm polarising myself with "The Notional" and look for my fannish fanzines to be a bit more fannish than yours has turned out to be. For example, the John Berry piece, and your long piece about trying to get work, were interesting and even well written, but they lacked the kind of written excitement that I would have liked and they lacked all but the slightest cross referencing to fandom.

The main item that I want to comment on is Terry Carr's letter of comment. His observations lead directly to the kinds of things that I would have liked to have said on the panel about Australian fanzines if I hadn't been working on the daily news-bloody-sheet. It also links in with a passing comment made by Jerry Kaufman in the most recent "File 770" about "Rataplan" having folded in order to make way for "The Notional".

So, taking it from the top, fanac in Australia this year has been fairly disappointing for me. Despite the amount of energy I've poured into "Rataplan" it had become clear to me that there was little point in continuing with it. Unlike your aims with SIKANDER which seem much more circumspect, I had hoped to be able to do something to improve the level and number of Australian fanzines. But instead of seeing any improvement I was watching further declines in the numbers of locally produced fanzines and the failure of any remaining ones to get better. I had also hoped to encourage more and better fan writing in Australia

but the trouble I was having in getting anybody to write something decent was extremely dispiriting. I was deliberately setting the highest standards that I could achieve, and nobody else was showing the slightest interest.

This policy, of deliberately encouraging local talent by publishing only the best of what was available, also worked against the development of the fanzine because I did not go out of my way to develop the kinds of links that you have with overseas artists and writers. Doing this might have ensured me of a much more dependable supply of material... but it would also have meant that I was not publishing an AUSTRALIAN fanzine. Having played a supporting role in the earlier golden age of Australian fanzines (1967-73) I would like to think that it is possible to repeat that again, and so my intention was to publish about the best fanzine in the world with as high an Australian content as possible in order to encourage others.

It is actually rather difficult to describe the disappointment as the mail coming into my letter-box (or rather the lack of it) made it clearer and clearer that nobody was really interested in what "Rataplan" was trying to do. As always, the best support came from overseas - and while letters from the likes of Joseph Nicholas, Terry Carr, and Ted White were great encouragement, they did not make up for the lack of local support. (As an aside, the low first preference vote that "Rataplan" achieved in the Hugos, in the only year when you might expect an Australian bias to the voting, only confirmed my failure to achieve my goal.)

But what all this is about is that I agree with Terry Carr about the "cringe" in Australian fanzine fandom. Perhaps the real problem with "Rataplan" was that it just tried too hard, and that chattering along on the level of "The Mentor" or "Weber-Moran's Wrevenge" is really what the locals want. When the word got around that "Rataplan" was folding people wanted to know why because they thought it was a very good fanzine, but they hadn't bothered to tell me that when I was still publishing. (There is also a lesson here for the people who are reading fanzines.) It had also occurred to me that, even though Terry says that it is possible to publish some of the best fanzines from Australia, life would be much easier if one did it out of a city like San Francisco. Fanzine editors need to be able to keep in touch with the people who are going to be contributing, they need to be able to achieve a rapid turn around in getting and responding to contributions, they need to be able to solicit and reject in person so that they can develop the talents of their contributors as well as having their own editing abilities improved. It may be immodest, but I'd like to think that if I had somehow managed to get to live in a place like San Francisco for a couple of years, I might just have produced a few issues to the standard of "Maroon" or "Lighthouse".

After the disappointment with "Rataplan" I doubt that I will ever be

silly enough to try that kind of thing again. If Australian fans want mediocre fanzines they are welcome to them... and more to the point they are easy to produce. "The Notional" may be many things to many people, but as far as I am concerned it is the kind of thing that can be produced in a few days. The newszine format is a very useful one for achieving a kind of popularity, but it doesn't require the same kind of dedication to the task of producing quality. On the other hand, something like "Fuck the Tories" achieves two things as far as I'm concerned; it makes sure that Joseph Nicholas and Terry Hughes produce a fanzine, and it gives me much more immediate access to overseas fanzine fandom - which is otherwise just too expensive for me to achieve. I look forward to seeing what will come of all this. But to some extent I suppose that I have found the limits of Australian fanzine fandom and if it were at all rational to do something like go overseas to produce better fanzines, then that is what I would be doing. But since nobody does that, I'm not about to start.

John Foyster

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Since Terry Carr (not so) obliquely criticizes me for not commenting on earlier SIKANDERS - and especially the Ted White article - I feel that I must drop something your way. Almost immediately you cast one back to the sixties

with your remarks about quotecards which were last circulated in Oz about twenty years ago. But this gentle old-timey flavour soon vanishes in the body of the issue with Terry Floyd's article and your second editorial - together with an odd remark or two in the letters - and their emphasis upon employment or lack of it. You seem to be clambering successfully up the media slopes as, I must admit, I have always felt you would. But it is plainly an almost deadly slow business, and I hope you get far enough, quickly enough, that the temptations of your father's business do not lead you astray.

There is a quite simple explanation for my failure to comment on Ted's article: there's little or nothing I could add. That Oz fanzines aren't what they were is clear - what isn't clear is why this is so. Consider SIKANDER which, with "The Notional", is just about the only fanzine which stands comparison with the past. You've had letters, articles, and artwork from many of the best workers around in the last few years, but SIKANDER doesn't manage too well at Ditmar time. I don't hold up the Ditmar as an arbiter of excellence, but as an illustration of where current Australian fan interest lies. That malaise extends through the publishers of semi-professional fiction - Cory and Collins/Omega at one end and "The Mentor" at the other (t'other fictive works are scarecely semi-anything...) - the articulation of ideas through words is no longer a favoured occupation - at least not in any fine sense of those words, and the people Terry refers to probably do care about so outdated a concern.

But if Oz fanzines are in a bad way, then it must be recognized that there's scarecely an international flowering either. Fanzine fandom, of

the best kind, has shrunk, or at best remained constant in size, while fandom has grown out of control. Which is why we have Corflu. And I use 'we' because I believe that in most senses I look for something at least similar to those aspects of fandom associated with the Corflu mafia

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I quite agree with Mike Glicksohn about Bill Rotsler's art, but at the same time I think I know where Joy Hibbert's coming from. The "fault", if I might call it that, lies in the utter "simplicity" of Rotsler's drawings - and the fact that, unless you force yourself to stop and really think about it, you might equate "simple" with "easy". Most people do. But try it. See if you can duplicate that supposedly "simple" squiggle and come up with a picture, as Bill always does, which is more than just the sum of its parts. When I tried it, I failed miserably - whereupon my respect for the man's art went up considerably. Some of fandom's best artists can "fake" a Rotsler - but I would point out that they can "fake" a Vaughan Bode or a George Harriman, too. Most of us can't. It hasn't been that long since John W. Thiel attempted to place batches of his own "fake" Rotsler art in fanzines. Surprise, surprise; virtually no one was fooled. And no wonder.

Yes, as Diane Fox (and Terry Carr, earlier) says, workplace anecdotes can be amusing. And/or embarrassing, depending. They can also be difficult to relate if they require any understanding of concepts which may be peculiar to the workplace. For example, I used to drive a cab in Virginia. A number of calls went off like clockwork each day which could be "sandbagged" - being outside Fairfax County, our radio dispatcher would call for cabs in an "area" rather than those sitting on a Fairfax cab stand. Thus, if I found myself returning from a run through neighboring Arlington County at or near noon, I knew I did not have to return to Fairfax empty. I could pull up at the Arlington Mental Health facility and wait for one of three calls between noon and 1.00pm to return patients to the Fairfax Hospital Mental Health Unit, where they lived, after they completed their "work therapy". These people had their problems, but I'm a fan and I've known fans almost as nutty, and besides the Hospital paid \$15 for a \$10 fare. A few of these people never said a word but most were friendly, and I don't think I ever treated them any differently than I treated any passenger; I was never particularly "on my guard" with them. Perhaps I should have been - at least a bit. One day, having done the same any number of times before, I was returning one of these lady passengers to the hospital when she asked, "What's it like, driving a cab?" Without thinking about it, I replied, "Some day's it's like living in a nut house". Then I cringed.

As Chair of Corflu III, I found Terry Floyd's article interesting - up to a point. I'd have found it even more interesting, though, if only he'd said more about how he felt about Corflu and why. But as I've also been a temporary office worker, I empathized with him about correcting

middle-management grammar, spelling &c. At one management consulting firm I worked for as a "temp", there were a number of writers - that was their title, "writers" - who were making \$50K or more a year but who couldn't write a simple declarative sentence. It was to weep. (I used to think there might be a need to start a management consulting firm of my own, specializing in translating management consulting reports into English. What I didn't realize was that most management studies are for units of the government - not because they want the studies particularly but because this is how they use funds they have at the end of their fiscal year. So actually what they want from a management consultant is a report written in managementconsultanese - because if it were written in English that would mean someone would actually have to read it.)

One of Terry's lines brought me up short: "Working in an office... does not allow one the privilege of dressing for 'comfort' - one must look 'nice'". This astounds me. I don't believe I've worn a necktie more than a dozen times in as many years - and at least two of those occasions were weddings. I despise neckties. So I've devised a prodedure which works for me and means I do not have to wear a tie for any extended period of time. I wear them on "job interviews" because that is when one must look "nice". But on my first day on the job, I loosen my tie around noon, take it off completely before the day is done, and the next day I show up without one. If I've established the value of my work, there is usually no complaint; if I haven't and there is, I quit. This got me through five years as an editor on Wall St. my short stint as a reporter for Reuters, a couple of years of "temp" office work (for which a number of former employers requested me by name) and the past five years as an editor/word processor for a conservative trade association here in stodgy old District of Columbia. And since the "value" of my work in most of these instances has largely been my ability to correct the grammar, spelling &c, of middle-management - which I daresay Terry shares - it croggles me all the more.

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I'm afraid I wasn't too impressed with the piece by John Berry. The substance of the account is moderately interesting but it seems to me that the writing itself is not well done. God forbid I should sound like Joseph Nicholas but John's use of words is often awkward if not simply incorrect. For example, "cavortations" (cavortings, surely), "many phenomenon" (phenomena) and expressions like "philosophical bravura" and "eliminate myself... from... realities" I find jarring. Then there's the unlikely image of an up-thrust mountain being "raped" by a cloud (shouldn't that be the other way about?) and looking down at "vantage points" - I thought a vantage point was where you looked from, not what you looked at. Etcetera, etaetera. Sorry and all that but definitely a case of 'Should try harder'.

On the other hand, I enjoyed Terry Floyd's bit though it sort of drifts from the office environment to Corflu and I think he'd have done better

to make two separate pieces of it - the office bit is interesting in itself and worth a longer treatment. The difference in style between John and Terry is very marked: John is going for verbal "special effects" and doesn't seem able to bring it off, whereas Terry Floyd writes in a much more straight forward and quietly effective way. I'm making due allowance for the fact that the two contributions are entirely different anyway - or at least I'm trying to. It's probably not fair to compare the two at all or to judge either writer on one small sample.

((You seem to me, with regard to Terry's article, to have missed a feature of his look at his job and at working on Corflu: his feelings to both declined in a similiar, parallel way.))

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UNITED KINGDOM

I think I have to say that this issue is Not Ideologocally Sound, and this in turn is a culmination of a trend that's been evident for the past two or three issues - a trend which can perhaps be summed up by the phrase "too many words to too little effect".

Take Terry Floyd's article, for example - although to be honest I think it doesn't really deserve to be called an article on the grounds that it has no central theme or unifying idea, no proper beginning, middle, or end, and seems to consist more of a series of lengthy anecdotes than anything else. Not what I would understand by the term "article", in other words; and as for its contents... well, what does all this introductory stuff about his office environment have to do with the organisation of Corflu 1? And did we really need all this immensely detailed stuff about how many Progress Report pages had been typed and how late he stayed up to get them typed? Never mind that if he wanted to finish with some speculation on the nature and future of conventions he should have planted some leads earlier in the piece in order to make the finish seem less like something tacked on as an after-thought.

Or, to phrase it in more theoretical terms: one of the skills needed by all writers is a knowledge of how to organise their material to best effect: to make the points they want to in the order that will most reinforce their effect. Another necessary skill is a knowledge of what to leave out: to concentrate solely on what is relevent to the points being made in order to make them as clearly as possible. Terry's article fails on both counts - in the latter instance because whatever points he is making are drowned in a jumble of irrelevancies, and in the first instance because the piece has no discernable structure to hold it together.

Which is where, of course, the editor ought to step in with a sharpened scalpel, to pare away all the excess, and perhaps also to send the piece back for a rewrite if it still isn't up to scratch. But instead you've got this immense letter column, ten pages of stuff from people saying

things akin to "liked A, hated B" only at greater and more tedious length... All right, all right: a ten page letter column is not immense as some other editor's (the Cantors' "Holier Than Thou", for example), and I'm probably unusual in finding the letter column always the duller part of any fanzine; but this letter column is nevertheless much too long for its own good, and contains little of any real substance. Paragraphs telling the editor how much his or her readers enjoyed the fanzine should be cut as a matter of course, for instance; and chunks of response devoted to offering up an anecdote similar to and inspired by something in the previous issue excised by instinct.

Compression is - or in your case should be - the order of the day, therefore. Cut away that excess, hone down what's left, publish no fanzine that is longer than twenty pages (and certainly publish no fanzine that contains page-filling fluff of the likes of John Berry's "Mountain Tension") - and you might find that you publish rather more frequently than hitherto as a result.

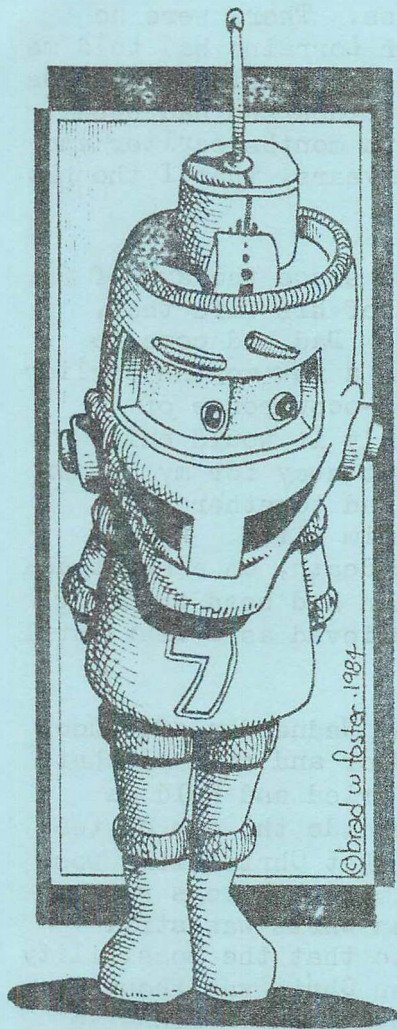
((It is strange how two people can come to a similar conclusion but from a different direction. I wasn't too pleased with the last issue as it didn't follow on from the good aspects of the two previous issues, while Joseph didn't like the last issue as he saw it continued a trend of the two previous issues. I agree with some of Joseph's points, disagree with others, but don't see any reason why I should make a list of these points. Though I can't help but wonder about the arbitrary choice of "twenty pages" as a page limit. Were I to use A4, rather than quarto, the pagecount would be reduced by about 15%, while use of a reduction photocopier and electrostencils would halve the number of pages used.))

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Rob Gregg (on #9), Brad Foster, Eric Lindsay, Jean Weber, and Adina Hamilton (of 1/317 Barkers Rd, Kew, VIC 3101) who has "been hovering around the edges of fanzine fandom.., reading (copies of) friend's fanzines" and now wishes to get copies of her own.

 "Da trouble with reading the phone book is that you always know
 how it's gonna come out in the end - Zybyski."
 - from the film "Somebody Up There Likes Me"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS I would like to thank the following people for helping me distribute the last issue: Eve and John Harvey, Malcolm Edwards, Cliff Wind, Ted White, Joyce Scrivner, Charlotte Procter, Robbie and Marty Cantor, and either Tim Jones or Nigel Rowe. Thanks should also go to Terry Hughes who offered to pass on copies for me. I wish I was a bit better organised I would've been able to take him up on his offer.

Thanks all.



The Muse, Rude Mechanicals and I

by

**MARK
LONEY**

It was in the last few months of 1982 that I wrote the first installment of this column. I got it back as part of a fanzine about eighteen months later - and that delay meant reading my article in SIKANDER 9 from a rather curious personal perspective. Michelle Muysert and I had been living together since the previous September, my course at the Western Australian Institute of Technology was going well as I commenced my second year of study there and savings from the days described in my first column were making life as a student quite comfortable. And from that vantage point it was rather unnerving to be confronted again with the stress and trauma and conflicts of the months in which I had turned 22, faced my own fears and desires, made important decisions about my future and had a tooth and nail conflict with my father. Particularly as the arrival of SIKANDER 9 coincided with the last of three events that only now, after the passage of another eighteen months, I can confront in the paper mirror of my typewriter.

On a Sunday in October 1983, Christopher Beckwith, my best friend, my friend from the uproarious and fun-filled days at Geraldton Senior High School, severely injured himself when he rolled his car in the Western Australian wheatbelt. He died the following Wednesday, never having regained consciousness after passing out in the wreckage of his Datsun while emergency workers struggled to free him. On the last Saturday of the year, itself the last day of 1983, and in the second day of his 49th year, a blood vessel burst in my father's right lung and he drowned in his own blood in the back of an ambulance that could never have got him to hospital in time. And three months later, on a Sunday in March, Lorraine, the wise and wonderful friend of my last column, died in her hospital bed from complications arising from cancer of the liver. Around her, her family watched in disbelief as she slipped away from them.

Lorraine's death was the only one of the three that I in any way expected or anticipated. When I read the notice of her death in the morning newspaper I didn't feel grief-stricken

or upset, rather I seemed to be acknowledging a loss. There were no tears, perhaps because the last time I had seen her Lorraine had told me how she looked forward to death as a surcease from the continual agonies of chemotherapy. And that was also the first time since she had been diagnosed as suffering from terminal cancer eighteen months earlier and told her life expectancy was, optimistically, five years, that I thought she looked ill.

My father had been suffering from Hodgkin's Disease since the age of 28, the year I was born. Being ill was so much a part of his life that, paradoxically, I never expected it to threaten him. Dad had come to Perth from his job in the north-west for a check-up a few months earlier and been told that there was a barely detectable re-occurrence of Hodgkin's Disease in his right lung. Caught so early it would only require a short course of chemotherapy. When I went away for my summer vacation job I had no idea that the dinner we had had together the previous night would be the last time I would see him alive. When I took the phonecall at work that let me know of his death, on a quiet and lazy Saturday afternoon where my main pre-occupation had been thinking about the New Years Eve party that night, I disbelieved as I wept until it was possible only to weep.

I had been about to make myself a cup of tea on the Wednesday afternoon when Anthony Kirke came quietly through my front door and told me that Chris had died that morning. He sat with me as I cried and held me until the first rush of grief was gone and then he made the cup of tea and we talked. None of us, at first, had thought that Chris' life was in danger. We all expected a long recuperation time, - his legs were shattered - but it wasn't until the second day when Chris was still unconscious and the doctors still unable to operate that the possibility of death became apparent. The last time I had seen Chris was about a month earlier when he had come to Perth for the Royal Show. Michelle and I had gone with him and Chris had paid for me - he had only finished his teaching degree the previous year and knew what it was like to be a student. I had promised to pay him back in kind when I was working again.

Those three deaths were the first that I had to confront in my life. Other family members had died when I was growing up but they were rarely seen grandparents. Their absences meant little to me. Chris, my father, and Lorraine were all people whose presence had meant a great deal. Their deaths necessitated adjusting to a world from which important elements had suddenly gone. And I found that those periods of adjustment, for me, were relatively fast and without complications. Perhaps it could be attributed to the resilience of youth but I think other factors were the major contributors.

To deal first with the period of adjustment, I see it as being comprised of three distinct responses. My first response was to cry my heart out. With Lorraine this came early as I knew what would happen the day I rang her only to be told that she was in hospital and unable to receive

visitors. After a while the tears would dry up and a period of numbness would begin. It could almost be described as protective shock, it was possible to function socially as necessary (and by socially I mean start talking to other people again, not going out and partying) and make appropriate arrangements. Feelings become, not remote, but in abeyance - rising to overwhelming importance less and less frequently. The turning point into the third phase was the funeral service. As rituals designed to deal with the emotions raised by the death of loved ones, I found that they were the times at which I could acknowledge to myself the death without being emotionally overwhelmed. After the funerals it became possible to reaffirm my own existence and slowly change from grieving over loss to rejoicing over memories. Typically the first phase would last for up to an hour from time of notification of death. The second phase would last the three or four days to the funeral, with the third phase starting during the service.

I think that my easy acceptance of death was based on two separate factors. The first of these was the emotional support from family and friends. Michelle and I had been living together for about two months when Chris died and she was spending a week over New Year with me in Teutonic Bore when my father died. Being able to cry with someone I loved was very important. The support from friends, particularly in Teutonic Bore where leave with pay and a fast car to drive to Perth in were arranged within two hours, made coping so much easier.

But I think that the second factor is at least as important and that factor is the worldview which structures my perception of the universe. I do not believe in the christian god; loving, just, and involved, rather I believe in a universe where human actions have consequences and where humans make mistakes. A universe that punishes as mindlessly as it rewards. And while some may say that such a belief reflects more on the state of my soul than the existence of their god, I found that I could accept Christopher Beckwith misjudging the turning capability of his car and dying as a result, my father bleeding to death from internal haemorrhage because the drugs he was on reduced the clotting capability of his blood, and Lorraine dying of lungs that collapsed and wouldn't reflate far more easily than they could rationalise the same events with their just, loving, and involved god. I say that not out of bitterness at being preached at, but from observing a good friend who is a committed christian who was involved with one of the deaths above. Unable to reconcile the fact of her son's death with the beliefs of her church, I saw a fine woman grapple for months with a conflict that struck at the basis of her understanding of the world. She had the same support from family and friends that I did, only our beliefs were different.

Which is not to say that my adjustment to life without my father and my friends was without sadness. Shortly after Lorraine died I dreamt about my father. He stood at the end of the bed and told me that it had all been a mistake, that he wasn't dead after all and that we had confused someone else for him. To prove it he took me to the undertakers to view

the body, oblivious of the fact that the crematorium ashes had been interred months before. When we got to the open casket with the body in it I looked in and recognised Dad. I turned around; I was the only person in the room. I woke up then. I was in bed. Michelle slept beside me. I thought for a while about the defences of the mind before abandoning them and crying myself to sleep.

- Mark Loney

Some Notes on an Economic Universal Field Theory of
Fandom: Egoboo, Negoboo, and the Federal Reserve

- rich brown -

I don't often agree with Isaac Asimov. But a while back the good doctor said that, while science generally was a passion with him, there nonetheless was one science which bored him to tears: Economics. As a former Wall Street editor and financial reporter, I have to give that one my nod.

I was an editor for the trade paper of the tax-exempt bond market, The Daily Bond Buyer, before moving to Washington, DC, to cover the US Treasury for Reuters. I could show you the Press Room I shared with Dow Jones, AP, and UPI on the picture of the Treasury which appears on the US\$10 bill: the window right over that old automobile is the one from which, had the engraver waited a while before commencing his work, you might have seen me waving with my beanie prop blowing gently in the breeze. Dow Jones had the window to my left; AP and UPI, on the other side of the room, had no window from which to wave at friends or passing engravers. Which made a screwy kind of sense - AP and UPI sometimes got their facts wrong, while Dow Jones and I were usually Right On The Money...

I bring this up not to make bad puns but to show I'm no stranger to stocks and bonds, M1 and M2, bull and bear markets, basis points and spreads, puts and calls. And yet, although I wrote on economic topics for professionals, I know little economic theory - which ultimately kept me from arguing with Dick Geis as to whether the Treasury or the Federal Reserve is responsible for the amount of money in circulation. Well, that and the fact that economics is boring.

I recall only one amusing anecdote - and that requires a not-exactly-brief explanation: the various governments in the US "borrow" - issue

notes or bonds - by pledging to repay what they borrow with income tax or property tax revenues (for "general obligation" bonds) or specific revenues, eg, a Tollway Authority would pledge tolls they collect for use of bridges/highways (for "revenue" bonds). The US Constitution holds that the power to tax is the power to destroy, and the power to tax another government is considered particularly offensive, so one government may not tax another; this means the interest on state or local bonds (referred to under the broad term of "municipal bonds") need not be listed as income on tax returns.

This tax-exempt feature lets local governments borrow at a lower rate than large corporations or even the US government - since high-tax-bracket investors get more return from a 6% tax-exempt bond than they would on a 10% bond on which they had to pay tax. (While the Constitutional principle says one government may not tax another, it does not keep them from taxing their own bonds; local governments do not do so, but the federal government does. Thus, interest on a US bond is exempt from state and local taxes, but interest on a municipal bond is exempt from local, state, and federal taxes.)

As these borrowings are for millions of dollars, banks and investment firms form syndicates to "bid" for complete issues. The syndicate which bids the lowest net interest cost to the municipality wins the entire bond issue; they mark them up in price and, with luck, sell them to investors at a profit. (The additional cost can sometimes be another inducement to the investor. If they purchase a 6% \$1 000 bond for \$1 050, they can write off the extra \$50 as a loss on their income tax returns and still collect \$60 - the 6% interest - on their bond without paying taxes on it.) What the syndicate cannot sell, they split up among their bank members at cost for their own investment portfolios.

Got it? Good. Now onward with my "amusing anecdote". A \$250 million New York State issue had \$100 million unsold in syndicate at the end of its first week on the market when Albany, NY, sold \$96 million in bonds to another group at a higher rate. Since Albany had a better credit rating than NY State, this meant the Albany syndicate was able to offer "better" bonds for a lower price, which in turn forced the other group to absorb their unsold balance. (If you imagine Ford selling new cars one week for \$7 000 and Rolls Royce offering theirs the \$5 000 the next, you can perhaps better picture what was going on.) Our front-page headline was supposed to read, "\$96 Million Albany Sell at 7.36%; New York State Syndicate Splits Up". I caught a typo in that headline and marked it. But as a column in that edition had type out of order, I concentrated on making certain it was corrected. I saw new type inserted on the front page, read it - upside down and backwards, since it had been placed in the forms - and went about other duties. But the next morning I found that the "correction" contained a worse typo, even though it conveyed the meaning better than the original: "\$96 Million Albany Sell at 7.36%; New York State Syndicate Spits Up".

That (too long) anecdote aside, the rest was boring.

I took the job with Reuters for a number of reasons but partly because what was offered was the most "exciting" financial beat in the US. But Asimov was right - even it was boring; economics is boring. I saw people getting worked up over fluctuations in the Consumer Price Index, housing starts, wholesale prices, unable to talk about anything except the world of finance - for whom, if you will, finance was a way of life. When I detected this creeping FLAWOLism in myself, I decided to chuck it all before I became a boring old fart. Or the wrong kind of BOF, by my own lights, at any rate.

If I've knocked you over with all this and convinced you of my financial expertise, it's not because I want to advise you on how to invest your money but in the hope I might go unchallenged when I assert that fanzine fans get paid for their efforts. You might, at first, look at me askance - until I explained that this payment has been going on since fanzines began and the currency is one with which fans are well acquainted. You've no doubt guessed I'm not talking about cash-paying semi-professional fanzines or even making a Great Revelation - since the coin of our realm, the currency that oils the machinery of the fanation, is egoboo.

Even those with only a so-so understanding of economics can tell you wealth is more than currency - quite a number of things are traded in the marketplace which have value. Attempts have been made to give egoboo, our currency, such a form. Way back in fantiquity, Forry Ackerman started giving out "Egobucks", but they never really caught on, partly because fanzine fandom (for all that it can at times be quite radical) is a conservative group which has never gone off the gold standard. Another outstanding example is the fan Hugos. But circumstances alter the value of anything - be it diamonds, gold, pieces of paper, or model rocketships on small bases. Fan Hugos are not all of the same value because of the circumstances of their issue. Only some of those Hugos are like highly-rated bonds or preferred stock...some were won by people who deserved them, many by people who didn't. No big deal - Hypnen, Innuendo, Void, Boonfark, Mota, Egoboo, Pong, Stop Breaking Down, and other fanzines which either never won or were never nominated for a Hugo hold more respected places in fanzine fans' collections than do, for example, Locus, Fantasy Times, Yandro, and Erbdom - fanzines which have. Similar comparisons could be made of Hugos for fan writing/art but as most fans reading this could cite their own examples, I won't bother.

** ** *

The first time I said the words "fan" and "fandom" have multiple meanings, I used the analogy of New York, New York. New York is a city and a state, the smaller contained in the larger. Since both are "New York", if someone says, "I was in New York recently", they might mean the city (which would include the state) but could mean elsewhere in the state. I have also used Zelazny's "Megapei" from Isle of the Dead - Megapei, Megapei, Megapei being the city of Megapei on the continent of

Megapei on the world of Megapei. This provides three things of the same name with the smaller thing(s) contained in the larger.

But in applying this concept to fandom, I think at least four such classifications may be needed, perhaps stipulating that this "fourth" Megapei represents the star system. As we are all coming to realize, in the very largest sense "fan" (and "fandom") can include those who've absorbed their sf from mass media - people who've been converted to the Way through exposure to Star Trek or Star Wars, without having actually read that crazy Buck Rogers stuff. And anyone who claims to be a fan is a fan - it would be a presumption for anyone else to claim they're not.

A "fan" is sometimes someone who reads and enjoys sf; sometimes someone who goes to cons, attends clubs or subscribes to fanzines such as Locus. And in a more restricted definition, it refers to those of us involved in writing/drawing for and/or editing/publishing fanzines. Thus, by expanding on this analogy from a well-known sf book, we can come up with a definition of "fan" and/or "fandom" which everyone can understand. Well, with the possible exception of the media freaks (who've never read sf, much less Zelazny), anyway.

These definitions are still less than perfect - the map is not the territory. There was a time when fanzine fandom was the bullseye at the center of a series of increasingly smaller circles; now some of those circles barely overlap. Yet we need these definitions, despite their imperfections, because "our" fandom has been coopted, most obviously at conventions, by people in these sometimes overlapping, sometimes merely "larger" circles. We're just a city on a continent on a world in a star system.

** **

Whenever I start making observations such as these, I can leave people with the impression I'm Viewing With Alarm - so I must say I'm not worked up about any of this. For one thing, fans attracted to the larger microcosm seemingly enjoy the grunt-work of putting on the major conventions; if I can shoulder my way through the people in chain mail to get to the fans I want to talk to and party with, this seems reasonable to me. And if, as I've suggested, they've coopted our awards too, I'm not overly concerned about that, either - we are, after all, seasoned traders, unlikely to confuse common stock with preferred.

As I've said often enough, Charlie Brown could line his bookshelves with fanzine Hugos - or could have, at least, before the rules were changed - and it still would not make Locus a better fanzine than Boonfark or Hyphen. It's perhaps unfortunate that members of the general public may be sold a revenue bond (one tied to a specific revenue) in the belief that it is a general obligation (one tied to income and/or property taxes) - but this happens more often because members of the general public do not educate themselves on the distinction than because some bond trader is trying to pull off a shady deal.

The only reason I make these points is the possibility I see that our "currency" may be devalued if we don't start taking these factors into consideration.

I was a financial writer when the US dollar was devalued. The reasons for the devaluation were complex and boring, but in simplistic terms it happened largely because we spent dollars abroad while limiting what those abroad could buy with them. We therefore devalued the dollar de facto from within; it was only a matter of time before the dollar was devalued de jure from without.

This parallel isn't exact because egoboo is the same throughout the English-speaking fanation (a "Well done!" from Ving Clarke, Mike Glicksohn, or John Bangsund ranks with one from Terry Carr). But just as the value of a municipal bond is determined by the taxes pledged and the credit-worthiness of the borrower - Albany doesn't have New York State's total population but its credit rating is higher - I suggest the value of egoboo often may be determined by much the same principle.

The last time I made a comparison between egoboo and currency (a brief aside in beardmutterings), I said those who were all sweetness and light were likely to find the value of the egoboo they dispensed discounted. That's true - but it's also a two-way street. Egoboo is in many respects like the interest and principal on a bond - it can't all be collected at one time but it's worth the investment to some people unless something happens in the economy (such as a devaluation) to undermine the value of the principal.

Relative value is determined by the difference between what one person is willing to sell a thing for and what another is willing to pay for it; in financial terms, the point between "bid" and "asked". If we were to say the sweetness and light people = bid, and critics = asked, then egoboo's true value lies in the area between. In practice, if someone who seldom has critical insight says your fanzine is "marvelous", you probably would not value this as highly as the same statement from someone who rarely used words of praise. On the other hand, you probably would not be overly shaken by mild criticism from the latter - but a stinging rebuke from the former might make you sit up and take notice.

So I'm not suggesting, to keep our currency strong, that fans who do not like or appreciate criticism should embark upon a campaign to flail quivering neos into submission, any more than I think those who are critically inclined should pour out their insights like sugar from a dispenser. But it does seem that fans who are critical by nature often get negoboo when they should receive egoboo. Fannish critics are the closest thing we have to the Federal Reserve - they put a brake on the supply of currency available by setting reserve requirements, so it doesn't matter how much the Treasury prints. It may seem a truism that there's never enough egoboo to go around (well, who ever thinks they've

gotten as much as they deserve?) - but this is a necessity if the currency is to be worth anything at all. Critics see this necessity - but often receive criticism, not on the quality of their criticism, but on the fact that they are critical.

The key word in critic-baiting is "intolerance" since "tolerant criticism" is an oxymoron. Criticism is, in fact, a flat refusal to be "tolerant". Otherwise, if you think Heinlein has been wordy and boring of late, you're just being intolerant of his attempts to do something different; if you think John Norman's worldview is distorted and sick, you're being intolerant of someone else's views of sexuality; if you think dull and plonking fanzines are dull and plonking, you're being intolerant of those who wish to publish dull and plonking fanzines. Et bloody cetera.

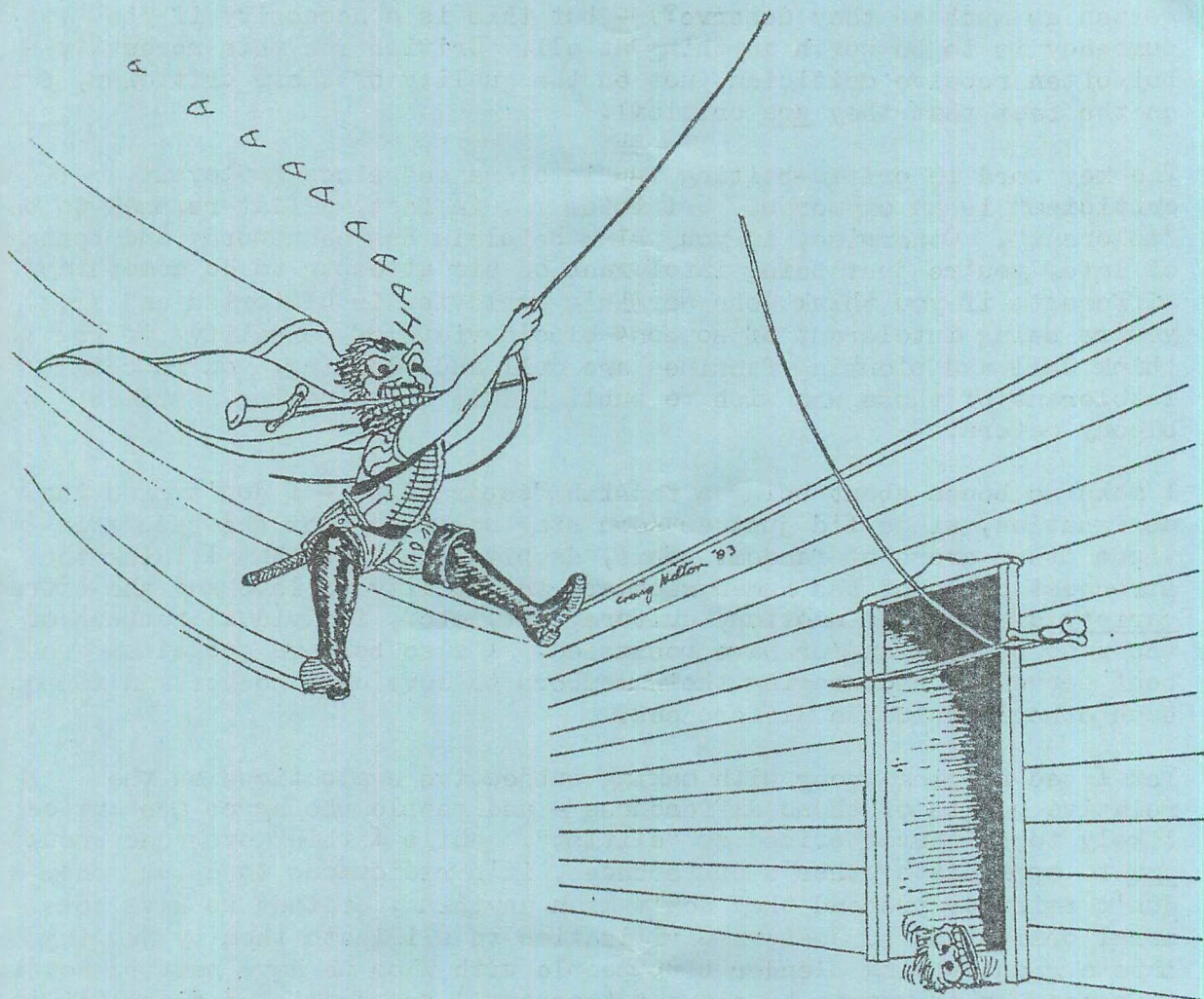
I make no bones about being a fannish "separatist" - I don't mind the designation, since I'd just as soon stay separate from the people in these other areas of fandom. This, despite the fact that I think the strongest suits of the human race are the ability to love and the extreme variety of thought, emotion, culture, art, etc., individual members of the race possess and/or have possessed. I also believe societies are best served by encouraging their members to love one another and respect each other's valuable differences.

Yet I see nothing wrong with making subjective evaluations on the relative merits of these differences - and people who agree are quite likely to be characterized as "elitist". While I think everyone should try to appreciate other's differences, it's ridiculous to assume they don't exist or pretend they don't mean anything, or that we have some moral obligation to Western Civilization to eliminate them by jumping into a giant Waring Blender with people with whom we have next to nothing in common so as not to be thought (horrors!) "separatists" or "elitists".

The next media freak who shows up at a worldcon wearing Spock ears, a loincloth and waving a sword aloft could turn out to be, on the slightest examination, every bit as fine a human being as thee or me. Behind his/her mask could lurk a talent so huge it would make ours seem like that of a retarded six-year-old by comparison. But in saying this, I have to use my stfnal ability to strap on my disbelief suspenders: like time-travel, it's relatively easy to acknowledge this as possible so long as I don't have to deal with whether or not it's probable. Fortunately, that's not the purview of this article.

** ** *

I am never (never? well, hardly ever) disappointed when I fail to win a place on egoboo polls - or at least I've long since grown used to not doing well on them. I tend to ignore (as being beneath my contempt) the fact that quite a bit of real crud has appeared under my by-line and instead lay the blame on a multitude of extenuating outside factors - like, writing sentences in which I use phrases like "instead lay the



blame on a multitude of extenuating outside factors". Or such things as, when I was a member of FAPA, the fact that I had to have my minimum activity requirements in the same mailing which contained the egoboo poll results - meaning that whatever I contributed would have to be memorable enough to be recalled an entire year later to win me honors in the next poll.

This may seem like "sour grapes" thinking. In fact, it may well be sour grapes thinking. But it does get one through days, weeks, months, and even years of fanac.

Anyway, in saying I've "long since grown used to" not doing well in polls, I don't mean to imply that I am dissatisfied with my lot or even Long Suffering; I just want to say that, at least according to the Economic Universal Field Theory of Egoboo I'm working on, everyone gets the egoboo they deserve - eventually. The trick is in the last word...

I know some active fans, who've been involved in the microcosm for 10-15 years, who seem to feel the reason they get little egoboo is because there's a limited quantity to go around and a great deal of it has been heaped (undeservedly, it seems to be implied) on BOF's. The thing is, I sincerely believe egoboo is and must be somewhat limited - in part because of what I've said here and in part because it seems obvious that universal praise would be bland and meaningless. Egoboo, as a currency which is the source of energy that motivates most of fandom, should be used like a spice, similar to curry - and it should be remembered that curry has both an initial and a cumulative effect. And these fans, while they may not realize it, seem in their complaints only to be cognizant of the initial effect.

Let me illustrate. You may have heard of Nydall's Disease - severe annishnesia resulting in gafia. If you haven't - or even if you have - I will explain: In the '50s, a fan in his teens named Joe Nydall published Vega, a regular and somewhat popular fanzine. He got a fair amount of egoboo for his efforts up to his first anniversary issue, which was a 100pp effort - and while that may not be remarkable by today's standards, it astonished the fans in those days where all the snows have gone. While I never saw one, I understand the VEGAnnish was considerably better than the issues which had gone before. Yet it received little immediate comment and Nydall, exhausted and burnt out from the work and expense of the effort and undoubtedly feeling underappreciated, gafiated. Hit the road from fandom back to mundane, ne'er to be heard from again.

There's an easily understood (if not precisely "good") reason why the VEGAnnish did not get the prompt egoboo it deserved: fans of the period were used to writing one-, two-, or three-page letters of comment on fanzines which averaged between 20 and 40 pages, and doing so within a reasonable timeframe. Most fanzines were probably read upon receipt and commented upon within a few days - or at most a few weeks. So it's apparent that the VEGAnnish, unlike other fanzines of the time, could not be read at one sitting - and "the usual" LoC did not do it proper justice. So on its face, the "reason" it got little in the way of initial comment would seem to be because most fans who received it gave up on the task because it was too arduous.

But egoboo (at least according to my Universal Field Theory) is a currency which is transformed into a kind of energy. And, if you will but recall your basic thermodynamics, you will certainly realize that nothing can be created or destroyed - it just takes on another form. That, of course, is what happened to the egoboo for the VEGAnnish. It's been more than 30 years since Joe Nydall hit the road to total and apparently permanent gafia. But you will note people - even people like me, who never saw a copy - are still occasionally talking about his fanzine. And Nydall could now be basking in the warm glow of deserved egoboo beyond his wildest expectations-- had he not gafiated.

I think I'm starting to feel some of the cumulative effect of egoboo on

things I've done previously, which at the time seemed not to garner as much praise as I thought it deserved. It's not (I think) so all-pervasive that I could pass off bad work for good, but I think it may have the effect of making good work appear better. If you follow me.

Anyway, I was in 10th grade when I entered fandom - and, with justice, my first efforts were called "crudzines". I recall a four-page letter of criticism I got from Redd Boggs, not simply because it was so cutting it brought tears to my sensitive young fannish eyes but because, upon drying my tears I realized, for the first time in my life I was being given honest coin. You have no idea of the value of this coin until you show someone outside the microcosm your worst, ask them for their honest opinion and have them tell you how "good" it is - simply because they fear they might otherwise hurt your feelings.

The honest criticism I received in fandom made me strive to improve. Despite my sensitivity, I felt if I truly wanted unrestrained praise for my every effort, whether I deserved it or not, my best course of action would be to show it to my mother, since she liked everything I did. In fact, I didn't even have to show it to her - I could just tell her about it.

Our little microcosm - the one most like a city and least like a continent, world, or star system - places a value on the craft and effort we are willing, for whatever reason, to expend on it and even to "pay" us in the coin of the realm, egoboo. In our heart of hearts, we know the value of that coin too - because it's made wealthy the likes of Walt Willis, Bob Tucker, Terry Carr, John Bangsund, Charles Burbee, Dave Langford, Ted White, Bob Shaw, D. West, John Berry, Lee Hoffman, Robert Bloch, Leigh Edmonds, Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Malcolm Edwards, Bruce Gillespie, Francis T. Laney, James White, Terry Hughes, Calvin Demmon, Greg Pickersgill, and so on - yet hardly ever squandered on the likes of John W. Thiel, G.M. Carr, Filthy Pierre, Racy Higgs, George Wetzel, or those who show up at cons in Spock ears, loincloths, and waving their spears aloft.

I wonder why anyone would want our currency devalued to make it otherwise - and I think I know why I come by this feeling.

When I was in the Air Force stationed just outside of Panama City, Florida, Shelby and Suzy Vick got me into a writers group which I enjoyed more for the pleasure of their company than for the value of the "criticism" received. This was because the more "sensitive" members made it a rule, when workshopping stories, that if you felt you had to say something negative about someone's story, you had to also say something positive. As someone who wanted honest criticism - whether it was positive or negative - I could not understand why these "sensitive" members did not see that their "rule" implicitly devalued the praise they insisted on receiving.

Perhaps I'm just a boring old fart muttering in his beard about how a

nickel used to buy something in his day, but I would hate to see fandom's honest coin devalued. It seems to me, if expression of these values via egoboo and negoboo violate anyone's sense of what is democratic, and there are no significant distinctions to be made between the talents of the groups of fans I listed above, perhaps the next time they go to a convention they should put their principle/principal into practice - perhaps form a syndicate of free-spenders to praise the Dorsai, Star Warriors, and those who can give us real insight into the motivations of Captain Kirk, rather than those who maintain that egoboo, like any decent coin, must be earned.

Perhaps, if they did this, they would be an inspiration to us all - however-much I may think it more likely that this would just make our little syndicate spit up.

- rich brown

 "And remember punters, Andrew Peacock says, 'When you're going down to have a bet, make sure you get the numbers right.'"

- PUNTER TO PUNTER's preview of the 1985 Melbourne Cup, ABC-TV.

ISSUE END NOTES

- the editor -

I AM THE Australian agent for the Hugo-nominated newszine ANSIBLE, which is edited by that Hugo winning fanwriter Dave Langford. \$4 gets you a 5 issue subscription. Well worth your money; which can be sent to me, with all cheques payable to Irwin Hirsh. This sub. rate, by the way, has not changed since the setting up of the Australian Ansible Offices in February, 1985. The recent drop in the value of the A\$ may have caused the price of imported goods to rise, but not the cost of an ANSIBLE subscription...

BACK ISSUES of SIKANDER are available. Issues 4 - 10 can be had for \$2 each, with all money left over after postage is paid being passed on to one of the various fan funds. As I can always do with some US\$ and UK£ notes I don't mind being paid with some foreign currency. Alternately, I don't mind trading back issues of my fanzine for Old Fanzines, or back issues of your fanzine, particularly pre-1979 fanzines. 1979, as that is the year I started publishing SIKANDER.

 "Kevin Walsh isn't having a good game and Essendon supporters, being the good sports that they are, will probably rubbish him."

- from 3RRR's broadcast of the 1985 VFL Grand Final.

MORE FANZINES

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SIKANDER ELEVEN December 1985

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