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thyme 49

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New Theodore Sturgeon Novel

Godbody, the last completed novel by Theodore Sturgeon, will be published in America in April, under the 'Robert Silverberg SF' line of books.

According to Jayne Sturgeon, her spouse had been working on the novel on and off for the last eighteen years.

Godbody is the story of what happens when a Christ-like figure appears in the midst of a small town, and it's written in multiple first-person voices. Robert Silverberg has described the book as "a theological fantasy about the return of God to Earth." There is no date as yet for its publication in Britain, and hence Australia.

(SF Chronicle)

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Australians Nominated For Nebulas

Three Australian short stories have been recommended for a Nebula by members of the SFWA (Science Fiction Writers of America). All the stories are from the anthology Strange Attractors, published in Australia and released at Aussiecon II. They are:

Precious Bane - Gerald Murnane
Mr Lockwood's Narrative - Yvonne Rousseau
The Ballad of Hilo Hill - Cherry Wilder

They are listed below the 1985 Nebula nominations, with a note that they need U.S. publication before they are eligible to join the actual nominations list.

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Sturgeon Wins World Fantasy Award

At the 1985 World Fantasy Convention, author Theodore Sturgeon was posthumously given a 'Life Achievement Award' for his body of work.

In the same presentation, two British sf fans were winners in the fiction categories. In the 'Best Novel' category, Rob Holdstock's Hugo-nominated* Mythago Wood tied with Barry Hughart's Bridge of Birds; and in the Novella category Geoff Ryman won with The Unconquered Country*.

[* Both missed out on the final Hugo Ballot.]

IT'S OVER - SPACE AGE CLOSES

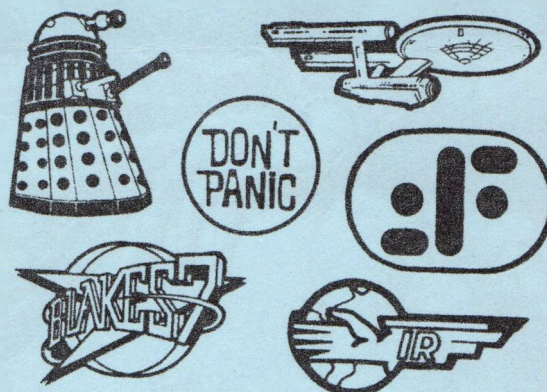
As Space Age Bookstore closed its doors for the last time, early in January, proprietor Mervyn Binns said that the Final Closing Sale had gone pretty much as expected. With stock in the store valued at approximately twenty thousand dollars, about ten to twelve thousand of this was snapped up by Christmas and New Year shoppers.

Merv estimates that creditors will be able to be paid off at 20-25 cents in the dollar, but a final settlement is a little way off, yet.

On a brighter note, Collins book depot has reportedly offered Merv a position, that of setting up & organising an sf section in their shop at 401 Swanston St., in the city; negotiations are now taking place on the matter. More news on this as it comes to hand.

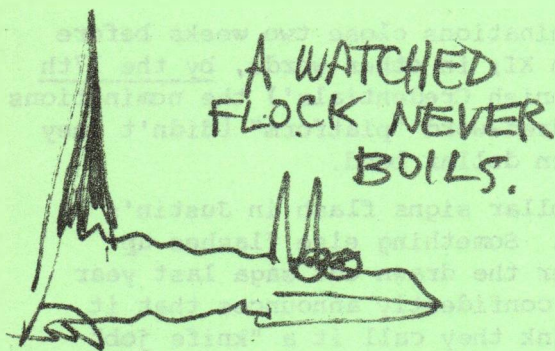
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IMAGEBOND S.F. BADGES



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Thyme [#49] - the newszine that doesn't know the meaning of the word *euphuism* - comes to ewe with some extra ramarks from Lewis Morley, Alexis Gilliland, Nick Stathopoulos & Marilyn Pride, those after-dinner doodlers who didn't know what they were letting themselves in for going out to dinner after Aussiecon with Artwork starved editors Roger Weddall and Peter Burns, of P.O.Box 273, Fitzroy 3065 ('Phone: (03) 347 5583)... and then drawing on serviettes and tablecloth. Thyme appears monthly and is available in return for news, reviews, artwork, new tablecloths & serviettes, interesting letters, or 'phone calls (highly prized).

We have also been known to accept money in the following amounts:

AUSTPALIA, NEW ZEALAND and NORTH AMERICA - ten issues for ten dollars.

EUROPE, BOTSWANA and most parts of the Danish West Indies, ten issues for £5, DM20, DKr100 or a letter indicating interest.

Agents: Europe: Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, SW1V 2ER, U.K.

New Zealand: Nigel Rowe, 24 Beulah Ave., Rothesay Bay, Auckland 10.

North America: Mike Glycer 5828 Woodman Ave. #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401, USA.

Remember: a big, colourful, silver X next to your name on the mailing label probably means that this will be your last issue unless you... DO SOMETHING!

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GUFF DUFF FFANZ STUFF

The various Fan Funds that exist to promote contact between the different fandoms of the world are all doing rather nicely, financially, thanks not least to the incentive "carrot" offered by the 1984 WorldCon, LA Con II, of US\$500 for the first two trip reports published by the winners of each of the funds in previous years. A trip report - explaining what the winner(s) did while over there - is a part of the duties of each winner, although the track record of people completing their reports is, to be candid, almost non-existent. Until the money was offered by LA Con II, Only two trip reports had ever fully seen the light of day, and since then two more have appeared, with the promise of others soon.

*** The most recent of the aforementioned trip reports is by Christine Ashby, DUFF winner of a decade ago. The Flight of the Kangaroo is only twenty pages long, but worth the A\$5.00 for a copy. The text has not dated and the whole thing is quite well presented & written - and as having published it raises US\$500 for the fund, Christine should be congratulated. If you wish to obtain a copy, send A\$5.00 to Jack Herman, current Australian DUFF Administrator, % Box 272, Wentworth Building, Sydney University 2006.

DUFF itself is doing quite well (as it should, with the voting deadline well in sight), and this year's winner(s) will be sent from Australia to the World SF Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A., this August. A ballot was enclosed in the last Issue of Thyme, although if you want to vote and you've lost yours then write us and we'll be pleased to send you another.

Voting fee for DUFF is a A\$2.00 minimum donation, and to vote you must have been active in fandom for the last... before 1st January, 1985. All votes must reach an Administrator (see Jack Herman, above) by no later than 28th February. At this point we could leak a rumour that "three candidates are better placed than the rest", but this would be irresponsible, and have no basis in definite fact - we just made it up.

*** GUFF - the fan fund to send candidates, alternately, from the U.K. to Australia, and vice versa, is now underway, the next race being to send an Australian fannish representative to Britain when next they have a WorldCon, in 1987. Australian GUFF Administrator Justin Ackroyd - GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne 3001 -

is calling for nominations for people to stand; nominations close two weeks before the 1986 Australian National SF Convention, Swancon XI; in other words, by the 17th of March. To stand, you need (apart from your 'Fannish Credentials') the nominations of two European and three Australasian fans, a hundred-word "platform" [didn't they used to be made of wood once upon a time?] and a ten dollar bond.

GUFF is currently rolling in it, and dollar signs flash in Justin's eyes every time the words "fan fund" are mentioned. Something else flashes up when you say the words "trip report", however. After the drawn out saga last year of when his trip report would be ready, Justin now confidently announces that it will be ready "next year". (Yes, next year.) [I think they call it a "knife job" nowadays, Justin... ah, what are friends for?] But to put this all in context, neither of the two winners previous to JPA show the slightest signs in public of doing better neither of the two winners previous to JPA have made significant moves in the direction of doing their trip reports, either.

Rumours of those interested in standing, to date, for a free trip to the 1987 WorldCon Conspiracy are... Jean Weber; the team of Kim Lambert & Mark Denbow (best known for their Transfinite Audiovisuals work); Kiwis Tim Jones, and last year's FFANZ winner Nigel Rowe caught the travel bug, Nige? ; Valma Brown, Leigh Edmonds' wife; and last but not least Roman Orszanski; oh yeas, also a certain "John" with a DNQ surname (we stretcha the rules, butta we no break).

*** FFANZ - the Fan Fund of Australia & New Zealand - is in a less certain state, for while there is a sum of money waiting to be used to ferry an Australian over to the next New Zed NatCon, no-one has yet volunteered themselves as a candidate. Nominations close at the end of January, and if no-one is nominated by enough or any people, this year's competition will lapse, and no-one will be sent. Current Australian FFANZ Administrator is John Newman, PO Box 4, Thornbury 3071, and it is to him that nomination forms (you need to be nominated by one Aussie, one kiwi) should be sent.

*** When LA Con II announced the donation of US\$500 to the three major fan funds (DUFF, GUFF and TAFF - more of which later) upon the publication of the first two trip reports by winners of each fund, they really started something - at least as far as DUFF winners are concerned; now that DUFF has been given its money, for the reports of Aussies Jack Herman and Christine Ashby, it remains to be seen whether other previous DUFF winners, supposedly stirring themselves to action, will carry on with their work as well. People such as Peter Toluzzi, Paul Stevens, Jerry Kaufman & Joyce Scrivner have been mentioned, among others, as possible trip report completers. As mentioned, all is quiet, until proven otherwise, on the GUFF front, and although TAFF winners such as Dave Langford may come up with the goods, nothing has happened yet.

Meanwhile, however, the cause of international fandom has been championed by LA Con in their decision to also offer US\$500 to the first two SEFF trip report producers. SEFF sends someone from Scandinavia to "the rest of Europe" - last year's winner being Jim Barker from Britain, attending Swecon in Stockholm, for example. The burning question, to our editorial minds, is: will or could FFANZ be accorded the same status? Doubtless, more on this, anon.

*** TAFF (the Trans Atlantic Fan Fund, the oldest of all the funds) is this year engaged in sending a Brit (or, as we shall see, a British resident) to this year's WorldCon in Atlanta. ^{from this end} Normally something that concerns Australians only distantly and attracts few voters, this year one of the candidates is an (ex?) Aussie, Judith Hanna. A worthy candidate, Judith may help complete an Aussie scoop of this year's pool of Fan Funds. Onyer, Judith!

RAMOTE CONTROL



On Being Fans

compiled & arranged by Peter Burns

"I have a question, a serious question to ask you. What on earth are we doing here?

"Well, I think we have come here to celebrate. This is a celebration; this is what the word means - the coming together of many people, from all kinds of weird places, away from their customary lives and ways, often at some trouble and expense, maybe not knowing very precisely why they come, but moved to come, to meet together, in one place, to celebrate.

"And a celebration needs no cerebation, no excuses or rationalization. A celebration is its own reason for being, as you find out once you get there. The heart has its reasons which reason doesn't know, and a celebration such as this has its own reasons, its own strange laws and lifespan; it is a real thing, an event, an entity, and we here, long after, in our separate ways and places, will look back and recall it as a whole. And if there were bad moments in it, if some of us got drunk and some of us got angry, and some of us had to make speeches, and others of us got horribly bored by the speeches - still I think the chances are that we'll look back on it with some contentment, because the essential element of a celebration is praise; and praise rises out of joy."

This was how Ursula K. Le Guin opened her Guest of Honour speech at Aussiecon I in 1975. At Aussiecon II, there were millions of words spoken by tens of hundreds of people. A small number of these words were recorded for posterity [such as Judith Hanna's by-now-famous: "Joseph Nicholas! Stop biting your nails!", which is another story completely but which falls chronologically in the middle of some of what follows]. For me, the spirit of Aussiecon II was very much bound up in where all the 2000 people there had come from and why - fans talking about themselves. So, here are some of those fans talking about... themselves.

[excerpts are from Ted White's Guest of Honour Speech, Race Matthews' Convention-
[Opening Speech, Bob Shaw's After Dinner Speech and Bob's Fan Natter session,]
[all intermingled.]

Ted White:

I want to talk to you about the community of fandom, and I think it's safe to say that everybody in this room is a member of that community (whether or not you ever thought of it that way) - but let's talk a little bit about the context of the community of fandom. We look back over the somewhat more than 50 years history of science fiction fandom, and we can see something that started pretty much in the manner of a small pioneer town, a cross-roads town, almost in the middle of nowhere in particular, with its one small store; with perhaps 25 - 50 people living in two dozen homes. In those days, the very fact that you were there meant that you supported your neighbours; you particularly cared about your neighbours whether or not you liked them; you knew them well. It was very much a small-town existence.

RAMBO



In fact, of course, there were somewhere in the neighbourhood of one to two hundred fans around when things really got started, and although they were in constant touch with each other by mail, in many cases they did not meet for any number of years, being as they were scattered across no less than three continents. But they were a small town and they had a commonality that created a community which was extremely scattered but cohesive.

Even then we had those we preferred to keep in the attic when visitors came calling but they were our family and we took care of them. Now, over the years, development has come to our community, and what was once such a small town that you knew everyone in it, has now become a rather large, diffuse city with suburban communities scattered around it. Quite often, it appears that people who are very active in one segment, one neighbourhood, never quite get beyond that neighbourhood to go on to some of the other areas of the city and find out what's going on there as well. As is the natural and inevitable trend in large cities in real life, there is a fragmentation that we have seen happen in fandom in the last twenty years, as the original few hundred have grown to the crowd of many thousands.

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Race Matthews:

By definition, there are as many accounts of first encounters with science fiction as there are readers of science fiction. Kingsley Amis has written about how, at the age of "twelve or so", he discovered science fiction while rummaging through a display bin in the neighbourhood Woolworths. The bin was labelled YANK MAGAZINES: Interesting Reading. Frederick Pohl has described coming across his first copy of Science Wonder Stories Quarterly when he was nine. Predictably, a scaly green monster dominated its cover. As Pohl recalls, "I opened it up. The irremediable virus entered my veins."

There is a common thread which links these episodes and the pre-war science fiction experience generally. Science fiction, once discovered, was abundant and readily accessible. As Pohl has pointed out: "Magazines were a depression business. If you were unable to afford fifty cents to take the family to the movies, you could probably scrape up a dime or twenty cents to buy a magazine, and then pass the magazine back and forth to multiply the investment." For Amis, in Britain, the price would have been even lower. The Yank Magazines from his Woolworths bin would almost certainly have been unsold copies returned to the publishers from news-stands across America. "Returns" were shipped out of the country by weight, and ultimately sold through English and Australian department stores for something marginally more than the scrap value of the paper.

A further common thread exists in the relative ease with which pre-war science fiction readers were able to make contact with one another. Pohl belonged in quick succession to the Brooklyn Science Fiction League, the East New York Science Fiction League, the Independent League, the International Cosmos Science Club and The Futurians. To quote him for the last time: "We changed clubs the way Detroit changes tailfins; every year had a new one and last year's was junk." In the unlikely event of Kingsley Amis having wanted to join a fan club, the choice open to him in pre-war Britain would have included various chapters of Hugo Gernsback's Science Fiction Association and the British Interplanetary Society. Pre-war Australians had a Futurian Society of Melbourne and a Futurian Society of Sydney.

Matters were otherwise in wartime and immediately postwar Melbourne. There is a passage in Arthur C. Clarke's short story *The Sentinel* which, even today, those of us who were growing up at the time cannot read without emotion.

Clarke wrote:

'Nearly a hundred thousand million stars are turning in the circle of the Milky Way, and long ago races in the worlds of other suns must have scaled and passed the heights that we have reached. Think of such civilisations, far back in time against the fading afterglow of Creation, masters of a Universe so young that life as yet had come only to a handful of worlds. Theirs would have been a loneliness we cannot imagine, the loneliness of gods looking out across infinity and finding none to share their thoughts.'

Science fiction seemed to us to be truly '... a Universe so young that life as yet had come only to a few worlds'. Being a science fiction reader was still mostly a solitary pursuit, involving something truly akin to '... the loneliness of gods looking out across infinity and finding none to share their thoughts'. Books and magazines were few and far between. Those which were turned up through painstaking searching and scrounging had to be savoured, eked out and repeatedly re-read. Often a point was reached where a favourite story was known virtually by heart. We had reason to understand better than most the much-quoted paraphrase of a famous 1949 Astounding punch-line, "It is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan."

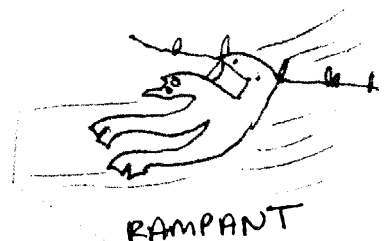
It was my good luck to be born into a household where both reading generally and science fiction were as much a part of life as drawing breath. As a baby, I was walked up and down in my father's arms while he recited Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome and Tennyson's Idylls of the King from memory, over and over again. Books from the shelves in the Melbourne Public Lending Library were read to me for hours on end, until I learned to read for myself when I was five or six. In addition, I brought home copies of Oakey-Doakes, Alley-Oop, Flash Gordon and other imaginative comics in the Famous Funnies series, which Coles and Woolworths used to remainder until the war choked off their supplies in 1940 and '41. Most of the material my father chose for me reflected his own liking for imaginative writing. He had once owned a collection of early issues of Amazing Stories which, unhappily for me, had to be sold to meet mid-Depression household expenses before I was born.

J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit reached Melbourne in the early forties. My brothers and I loved it so much that we may have worn out the library's copy single-handed. When I was eleven or twelve, we wrote to Tolkien asking the sort of questions about Moria, Gondolin and the Necromancer which Humphrey Carpenter's two books - J.R.R. Tolkien, A Biography and The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien - have shown were addressed to him by hundreds of readers. There was no reply, but the effort did not go unrewarded. Years later, in 1953, Allen & Unwin sent me their prospectus for a new story about hobbits. As a result, I was able to savour the exquisite suspense of waiting months after The Fellowship of the Ring reached me for The Two Towers to be published, and months again for The Return of the King.

The books I owned myself were mostly acquired as Christmas and birthday presents. These were usually wartime "austerity editions" of well-known children's writers, such as Edith Nesbitt, Richmal Crompton and Captain W.E. Johns. Crompton and Johns were the creators respectively of "Williams" and "Biggles".

All this was prelude. The circumstances of my first real encounter with science fiction were much the same as for Amis and Pohl. The was 1944. I, too, was nine. Travelling to school involved a change of trams at the junction in St. Kilda. Close by, second hand comics and magazines were sold by a down-at-heel shop with a verandah which carried in faded letters the word 'Saddler', alongside a lifesize, wooden horsehead. Accordingly, it was as 'Saddler' that the equally down-at-heel proprietor figured in my mind.

At first, the daily wait for my change of trams was passed simply staring at the exotic American comics such as Captain Marvel and Torch and Torro which dominated Saddler's window. American comics, unlike their poor, local relations, were printed in full colour. Their content similarly was believed to be superior. Their



schoolyard status value was immense. The combination of these qualities enabled Saddler to price any item of American origin at 2/6. British and Australian comics cost no more than a penny, twopence or threepence. 2/6 in my terms was pocket money for an entire week.

I was shortly to need it all. The two-and-sixpenny upmarket section of Saddler's stock had a display stand to itself. One Thursday, the comics there had been moved to make room for a thicker magazine, with untrimmed edges. The cover featured a couple of bulbous red bipeds, directing something like an old-fashioned movie camera at a man and woman dressed for tropical exploration and confined in a cage. It was the tenth anniversary issue of Thrilling Wonder Stories published five years earlier in 1939.

The effect on me was instantaneous. No glittering prize in later life has ever beckoned me quite so alluringly. I lived on tenterhooks for the next two days, hoping against hope that no other buyer would appear before my pocket money came due on Saturday morning.

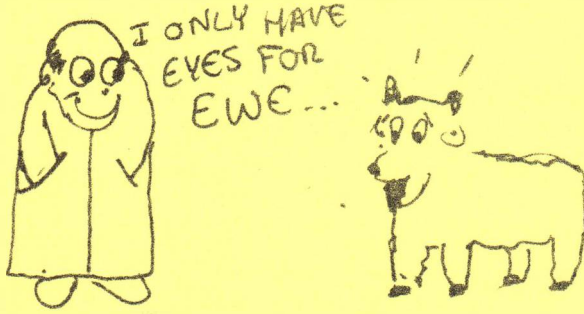


Bob Shaw:

This convention started off for me in a tremendous way with the opening talk by Race Matthews 'cause all the things he described in his talk about what he went through as a youth - I went through exactly the same thing myself except I was in Northern Ireland at the time and it was really a time binding experience for me to come here and find a Cabinet Minister who had done exactly the same things as I had done. I mean, my god, I wish we had politicians in Britain who'd produced fanzines. Though I don't know what Margaret Thatcher's would have been like (sort of a heavily censored version of the Financial Times, perhaps - and I hate to think what sort of conventions she'd have run as well). But there was... you know, I really couldn't get over it: I went through everything he said - in fact, he should be here tonight; then he could just say it all over again and I could be sitting down there - because I went through all that business: I discovered science fiction at a very early age - about 10 or 11. I was reading the boys' papers of the day - The Wizard, Rover, Adventure Champion, Skipper - they weren't comics in the sense that we'd use today. They were boys' papers or children's papers with lots of type and a little illustration every page. They were a tremendous introduction to literacy and I very soon realised that in every issue there was always a science fiction serial. I didn't know what science fiction was in those days but I certainly realised that these stories had nothing to do with the Wild West or with football teams or anything, but were special stories where people went out to other planets - that was the sort of story that I wanted to read about.

Even after a gap of forty years, I can still remember some of those stories better than most novels I read last week. I remember in particular one serial called Full Speed Ahead To the Worlds of Fear. There's more plot in that title than you sometimes get today in an entire trilogy - but even after forty years I can still remember that the Earth was being menaced by a giant comet (somebody else has written a story about that quite recently; it does happen quite a lot in science fiction) and this chap decides to get away from the Earth before it strikes, which is good thinking.

He'd just discovered this peculiar metal which was impervious to gravity but - not having read H.G.Wells - he didn't call it caverite, but he'd built himself this sort of spherical spaceship which worked by your pulling up little panels of the metal, and gravity would draw you off in the direction of the panel.



He neglected that the take off speed would have been something like one inch per century - but that was just a detail, and he got away before the comet struck, and he travelled all around the galaxy for about four years, having tremendous adventures on every planet he came to.

After four years or so, everybody on his ship got a little bit homesick and said, right, let's go back and see how things are on Earth after the destruction. They went back and, sure enough, the comet had struck the Earth but it had split it neatly down the centre - down the Atlantic and the Pacific - and the two halves floated about three miles apart; I think about five people had been injured.... So, they returned to Earth, and that was the end of the series.

Actually, all of those series lasted about four years because that was all the writer could take. Another one that really sticks in my mind was The Purple Planet Needs Air. Again, with more plot in the title than you get in a book nowadays, and in that series there was a purple planet (as the title suggests) which needed air (as the title also suggests) and it was in our solar system but it was never revealed which planet it was. Now most of the planets in the solar system are not purple but this one was and the people living there, realising they were running out of air, did a sneaky thing. They built themselves huge vacuum cleaners. And they pointed them at us. And they switched them on. And I'm almost certain there's a flaw in the science in this story - but they started stealing our air, drawing it across space.... This was discovered by a test pilot, flying at a very high altitude; he found he was having trouble getting back down, I guess. So he loaded up with baked beans and so on, and he went off to the purple planet for about four years and had great adventures there until the writer died... well, these stories satisfied me for a while and then I grew up to the age of about 12 or 13, when I discovered my first copy of Astounding Science - known these days as Analog - and there was a genuine turning point in my life.

The first issue I saw had an A.E.van Vogt story in it, called *The Storm*, part of a series called *The Mixed Men*. It's impossible, today, in a world where science fiction is so plentiful and commonplace; there's just more of it than you could ever read, for someone like me, living in Belfast: well, Belfast is never going to be the Fun Capital of the galaxy, and in those days it was... you just can't describe it; but this thing dropped into my hands - a copy of *Astounding Science Fiction* - with a story by A.E.van Vogt, dealing with the adventures of this particular space-ship commanded by a woman called Grand Captain Gloria Law.

She was out there hunting down this race of robots who had escaped from the Earth three thousand years earlier, and settled in one of the Lesser Magellanic Clouds, and she found them.

I still remember the opening sentence of that story - my first adult sf story - and although I can't remember exactly how it it went, it said something like: 'The warship from Imperial Earth came around the sun so quickly that the observer had no time to commit suicide.'

That was it. I was gone, then. It was worse than LSD, because although I've never had LSD I understand that it wears off after two or three days; this didn't. Forty years later I'm still[far gone], and I freely admit that my work has been influenced by van Vogt, because he was the one who realised that the science was important but that the imagination was more important.

He had this feeling for the future other people didn't seem to have. He used to throw away lines like... in one story he had a production line for space-ships - it was a rotten big story, but - and it was explained that it took four hundred years for the first ship to come off the production line but after that there

known as Mervyn Binns. Through Graham Stone, I got to know Dick Jenssen, a student of the school I had just left, and Lee Harding, an aspiring professional photographer who has since become a notable science fiction writer.

Sorting out some papers recently, I found some samples of Lee Harding's earliest work. In April, 1952, Lee sent me a letter introducing himself which read in part:

'I'm fifteen years of old age, a stf. fan for five and an intelligent one for two. Get what I mean? I know the difference between a Bradbury and a Kuttner. I know my pen names too.At the moment I'm just a newcomer to Fandom, but in three months I've (1) joined Ken Slater's "Operation Fantast", (2) subscribed to Stone's Stoppap, etc., (3) become a member of the Australian Science Fiction Society, (4) subscribed to Woomera, (5) have made arrangements to get all the good U.S. mags regularly, and all the British dittoes, axcept of course the four Spencer mags (ugh!), (7) (Am i boring you?) Stopped getting Thrills Inc. (again, ugh!), (8) made contact with booksellers Carnell and Chapman, (9) (Phew!) Begun my career of collecting rejection slips from stf. magazines, under the able guidance of Roger Dard.'

Lee and I became good friends. This did not mean that we were uncritical of one another. When I failed to answer his letters regularly enough or at acceptable length, he wrote:

'I've just about had it. If you don't want your books back, okay. If you don't want to correspond with me, okay again, but I still think it's a dirty show. There's plenty of *important* fans who don't think it's going out of their way to write to me regularly - Dard, Stone, Haddon, Solnsteff, Slater, Carnell and the rest. Tell me, how important are you?'

A week later, peace was restored. A further letter from Lee commenced:

'I'm a cad! I'm a bounder. I'm ungrateful. I'm a yank. I'm a no-hoper.Please, tear up or atomise that letter I wrote you. I've buried yours!'


Lee was not alone in bringing a certain frenzy to everything he did. All our activities were coloured by the frenetic quality which prompted Sam Moskowitz to title his history of early fandom *The Immortal Storm*.

The sheer frustration of dealing with fellow fans sometimes drove to distraction those who were at heart serious-minded organisers. In December 1951, Graham Stone poured out his feelings in a letter to me which read in part:


'There can be no doubt that many readers of science fiction are inadequate individuals - what used to be called "escapists", although the term is unsatisfactory. They make up for their defects in ordinary life by building themselves up in their own estimation. And you can't think of yourself as superman very effectively if you admit others as your equals.'

Graham continued:

'Many fans, while living more or less well-adjusted lives and not tending to paranoid superiority, are extreme intellectual snobs; ever critical of others, finding faults which might well be overlooked and so on... such fans, which will be reinforced by inspection of the escapists, who are painfully obvious second-raters.'

It may well be that these attitudes explain why the affairs of Sydney fans were conducted frequently in an atmosphere reminiscent of the War of the Roses. 

he Roses.



THE BOAT

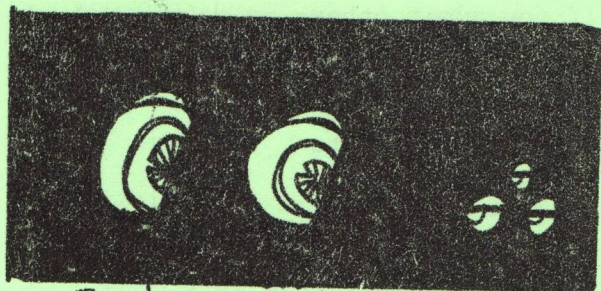
Melbourne tackled matters in a different spirit. The five of us - Bob McCubbin, Mervyn Binns, Dick Jenssen, Lee Harding and myself - made up the nucleus of the Melbourne Science Fiction Group. The Group met for the first time in 1952. I had just turned 17. Along with a further newcomer - Ian Crozier - we established a publishing firm of our own under the name Amateur Fantasy Publications of Australia. A.F.P.A. was located in the garage of Merv's home. The assets consisted of a secondhand Roneo 500 duplicator, together with our stocks of stencils, paper and ink. The publications were Lee Harding's Perhaps, Ian Crozier's Question Mark, my own Bacchanalia and the newszine, Etherline. Etherline established what may well be an all-time record by appearing regularly at fortnightly intervals for 100 issues, between 1953 and 1958. [Sob! ...eds.] In time, the Melbourne SF Group felt sufficiently assertive to take over from Sydney the role of organising most of Australia's science fiction conventions. Melbourne's first national science fiction convention - the Olympican - was held in 1956 to coincide with the Melbourne Olympic Games. Australia's first world science fiction convention - Aussiecon I - followed nineteen years later, in 1975.



Ted White:

The fanzine community, as such, is the one that I grew up in, back when I wandered into the original cross-roads of fandom. At that time, it didn't seem as though there were separate communities; we did all of the things that are now features of those different communities. We went to conventions; we put on conventions; we didn't think we were con fans *per se* because we also collected a lot of old magazines, and books as they came out - there weren't that many, and what we didn't have, we swapped amongst each other - but we weren't collector fans *per se*; we also put out fanzines, and joined apas & corresponded vigorously with each other but we didn't think we were fanzine fans: we just thought we were fans. We were sf fans.

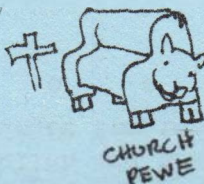
In those days, we differentiated between what we were, and all of the other people who also bought and read science fiction. We knew that there were a lot more of them than there were of us. We called them 'readers', because they seemed to remain almost totally passive in their interest; they didn't become active and involve themselves in the community in the way that we did and had. With us, it seemed almost inevitable that we would involve ourselves in the community - the first thing we wanted to do was to find somebody else to talk to. Firstly about science fiction and then about everything else in the world that we had ever thought about. In the 50's it was jazz and sports cars; in the 60's it became rock and drugs. I'm not sure what it became in the 70's - probably movies - but the whole thing that had developed was the sense that we had a self-awareness which set us aside from those who simply thought of themselves as being members of an audience - people who passively experienced what came their way, but who didn't go out of their way to acquire it or to generate it.



... As I was saying, I only arrived in town yesterday...

Now it was absolutely inevitable, given this background, that I would someday become a professional in the field. It was all peer group pressure; all of my friends were turning pro: what could I do... I had to do it too and it was so easy because when I went to a convention and socialised with other people, they were agents and editors and writers and it was so easy to get sucked into that world and become part of it. It wasn't like being somebody sitting out somewhere reading a copy of Writers' Digest or

We'd chat with editors and say 'Hey I had an idea about a story,' and they'd say 'Why don't you write it?' and said that they'd buy it: very quickly it became possible for a group of us young fans in New York in the early 60's to move almost en masse into the professional world as writers, editors and agents.



When I started off in fandom way back around 1950, everything was tremendously different to what it is now. When I went to my first convention, the total journey was about 300 miles and it took us two days to cover it because we had to cover the Irish Sea by ship, and that boat between Belfast was not quite the Love Boat or other liners you see on television. We were put up in a princely suite about the size of this room, with a brass plaque on the wall which said: 'This deck will hold 50 passengers or 12 cattle'; but I didn't really mind because I was going to my first convention. I'd had something published already and remember making a joke about it. I said to the people with me "I think the officers on this deck know that I'm a BNF because I just heard one of the chief persons tell one of the stewards to give me a wide berth."

I got the bus down from Liverpool to London. It took twelve hours and we arrived in London and were put up for the entire convention by two well-known English fans - Arthur Vincent Clarke and Ed Broomer. Ed Broomer's since become very well known as a writer.

Actually, 'The Epicentre' became very famous and was a fannish headquarters in its day. We were reliving those experiences a couple of years ago coming home from a convention in the North of England. There were four of us sharing a car with two non-fans - an old man and his wife who were listening to our crazy conversation but couldn't understand a word of it; there were words like "gafiate" and "fanac" and "con"... but somebody had realised where we were and said, "You know - going into London this way, you pass by the Epicentre! - we're going to see the Epicentre again after all these years." The old couple got all worked up as well, though they didn't know what the Epicentre was. We all turned around as we passed this awful, dirty, sleazy dump of houses and right in the middle - there was The Epicentre. "Arr! The Epicentre...." The old couple looked around but couldn't see anything which resembled what they thought might be an Epicentre. They probably told all their friends about the time they saw the Epicentre....

Race Matthews:

The Melbourne Science Fiction Group and Amateur Fantasy Publications of Australia exemplified the unfractionious face of Australian fandom. Meetings revolved around talk, letters, publishing, barter and chess. Puritanism, too, was pervasive. At an early date, our proceedings were removed from the living room at my home, in favour of a Swanston Street café called Val's. Shock and horror prevailed when Val's turned out also to be a meeting place for some of the courageous lesbians whose coming out from the closet was just getting underway. Bob McCubbin wrote boldly in Etherline that 'Extroverts and introverts we may be, but perverts never'. Given that our membership at that stage was exclusively male, such risks as the clientele of Val's may have presented were remote. Had an invitation been issued, it probably would not have been understood. Nevertheless, future meetings were held in the austere asexual surroundings of the Latrobe Street Manchester United Oddfellows Hall, in comforting proximity to the Russell Street Police headquarters.

The episode illustrated a further quirk of fandom. Women were not only mostly absent but mostly unsought. When Bob McCubbin's wife was asked how she felt about science fiction, she replied quite seriously that it kept Bob away from chasing other women. If Bob harboured any such inclination it was a well-kept secret. When Rosemary Simmons applied for membership of the Futurian Society of Sydney in 1952, her application was rejected on the grounds that, in Vol Molesworth's words, "the admission of women had caused trouble in teh pre-war days of the club". The poet Lex Banning intervened with the query "Are we Futurians or are we Victorians?", but the Society's all-male membership went ahead to vote down Ms Simmons by a two-thirds majority. My own practice of bringing my fiancée with me to meetings of the Melbourne Science Fiction Group was sufficiently unusual for her appearances to be reported regularly in the secretary's notes which appeared regularly in Etherline.

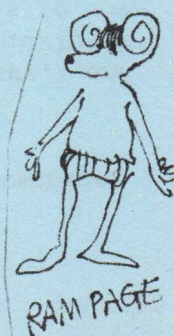
The unreported fact was that my courtship was being funded largely by selling off my science fiction collection, meeting by meeting, over the best part of two years. The school library and parliamentary society had already fanned my long-standing interest in politics, and the lecturers at Toorak Teachers' College were further developing my liking for music and theatre. My marriage in early 1955 marked the point where I had irrevocably moved from the world of science fiction to the preoccupations which have subsequently shaped my life. The ties which held together our little circle of friends were likewise loosening. Bob McCubbin died before his time, while Dick Jensen had his time taken up increasingly by work in the Science Faculty at Melbourne University. It remained for Lee Harding to become the author of a series of outstanding science fiction novels which includes Displaced Person and Future Sanctuary, and for Mervyn Binns to establish Melbourne's Space Age Bookshop. Along with millions like us, virtually in every country on earth, we are all indebted deeply to science fiction for the new pleasures to which it introduced us, the new friendships it has enabled us to establish and the additional edge which it has imparted to our curiosity, imagination and hunger for ideas.

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Ted White:

Nobody drives me out of fandom; nobody could any more than anyone could drive any one of you out of fandom. This is where our friends are; this is where our community is; this is what we feel most comfortable with: that's why we come together at conventions and parties - and all the rest of it. It's because we are fans, because we're primarily fans.

I was in London a couple of months ago at a wedding which I was very pleased to be there for, and while I was there I met a fan who I had always wanted to meet, a man named Greg Pickersgill, who wrote some of the most vigorous and fascinating and exciting fanwriting of the '70s. Greg is a fascinating chap who can argue, I guess, any side of a point -



community, city-state or the like, within which most of the finest art forms developed and flourished: a community of intensely interested people, a ready audience, ready to discuss and defend and attack and argue with each other and the artist, to the irritation and entertainment and benefit of all.

'When I say the ghetto walls are down and it behooves us to step over them and be free, I don't mean that the community of sf is breaking up, or should break up. I hope it doesn't; I think it won't; I don't see why it should. The essential lunacy that unites us will continue to unite us. The one that's changed is that we're no longer *forced* together in a mutually defensive posture - like a circle of muskoxen on the Arctic snow, attacked by wolves - by the contempt and arrogance of literary reactiojaries. If we meet now and in the future, we writers and readers of sf, to give each other prizes and see each other's faces and renew old feuds and discuss new books and hold our celebration, it will be in entire freedom - because we choose to do so - because, to put it simply, we like each other.'

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★★★ Ted White was Fan Guest of Honour at Aussiecon II. He lives in Falls Church, Virginia, from where he speaks with what Avedon Carol calls "a Great Big Voice" through fanzines such as Pong, Gambit and Crank. He won the Hugo for Best Fanwriter in 1968 and has been professionally employed as associate editor of Fantasy & Science Fiction, & editor of Heavy Metal, Amazing and Fantastic magazines. He also has a knack for being in the thick of things when fan feuds develop.

★★★ Bob Shaw was Toastmaster for Aussiecon II. His origins are Irish (Belfast) although nowadays he lives in Cheshire. He won his Hugo for Best Fanwriter in 1979 (the first time this award had been given to somebody not American), though classic fanwriting of his such as The Enchanted Duplicator predate this by several decades. He has also written several novels and is a regular 'after dinner speaker' [so to speak] & major attraction at British Eastercons.

★★★ Race Matthews has delivered the opening address for both Aussiecons I & II, the first time in his capacity as Federal Minister for the Arts, the second time as a Cabinet Minister in the Victorian State Government. Although he's never won a Hugo for his fanwriting, he has made his mark chasing other, more achievable (for an Australian) goals.

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PEACE by Gene Wolfe

(Chatto & Windus, London, 1985; hc\$26.95, pb\$8.95) reviewed by Yvonne Rousseau

Gene Wolfe's novel is called Peace - a word that is never used in the book itself. Slowly, if at all, the reader becomes aware that this 'peace' is the place referred to on tombstones: 'Rest In Peace'.

The narrator is dead. On his grave is planted an American native elm tree. Late in the book, he remembers a neighbour getting his permission to plant such a tree when he is dead; and the novel opens with the words: "The elm tree planted by Eleanor Bold, the judge's daughter, fell last night". Its fall brings an impression that 'the whole house was melting... going soft and running down into the lawn'.

The narrator thinks of the house as a building in which, having suffered from a stroke, he moves in questingly from room to room. However, elsewhere in his experience, a book of necromancy describes a moving spark behind a dead man's empty eye-sockets: the spark is 'the soul of the dead man, seeking now in all the chambers under the vault of the skull its old resting places'. The narrator also describes how crumbling walls can be bound together by the roots of living things. With the elm tree fallen, the walls of the skull begin to break apart.

There are hints about the mechanism of consciousness after death. One character speculates that 'all mankind, living and dead, has a common unconscious'. He also stresses that all entities are composed of 'the same electrical particles'. The narrator holds that 'whatever exists can be transformed but not destroyed' and that 'existence is not limited to bits of metal and rays of light': 'memories exist'. He sees no reason for his memories to be 'less actual, less real, than a physical entity now demolished and irrecoverable'.

The narrator doesn't wish to know that he is dead. But in the manner of a dream, giving cryptic messages, his awareness returns again and again to stories of unquiet graves and other Gothic horrors, such as men being turned into stone. He tells his story as if he were alive, in a house designed with 'museum' rooms - duplicating places from his past that he wants to keep remembering. He even reports going outside with his axe. But disbelief is unavoidable at some point. Readers are unlikely to believe his account of using a reconstruction of a doctor's surgery to intrude into the visit to a doctor that he made when he was four years old. In this episode, he consults the doctor about the stroke he has had when he is about sixty and the doctor has long been dead. The doctor in turn questions the four-year-old about the future.

The reader's problem is to decide where disbelief should begin - how far it should extend. Is the narrator's unconscious mind correct about him being dead? A similar problem is found in Wolfe's earlier work, The Fifth Head of Cerberus, which is about the shapeshifting aboriginals of another planet. A shapeshifter who takes on human shape will mimic a human personality so thoroughly that he misremembers - deceiving himself about his true origins. Peace contains a good deal about the deceptiveness of memory, and of evidence from the past: the evidence of origins. The forgery of ancient documents is elaborately defended. Inaccurate memories are praised, because they approach nearer to a 'fundamentally artistic' ideal. And this is more than frivolity or cynicism. In Wolfe's later work, The Book of the New Sun, the protagonist claims that 'of all good things in the world, the only ones humanity can claim for itself are stories and music'. A story, then, will reveal more of the essential truth about human beings than would a mere accurate record of events.

Exemplary myths about the past are one form of evidence about the human psyche. Peace is about a small American midwestern town, where the country's aboriginal myths are simply not known. Instead, the book's mythic stories originate mostly from an Irishwoman, Kate Boyne, who arrived in Boston as a child, at the time of the potato blight in Ireland. In one story, she tells of Saint Brandon reaching the Earthly Paradise, when his boat fetches up in Boston harbour. Oddly, the potato blight that made Kate's family emigrate is repeated in the American midwest.

Mixed farming on small properties has been replaced by the unhealthy monocropping of potatoes, to supply the drink company that the narrator controls. The American small farmer's way of life has become extinct, like the earlier, Amerindian way of life.



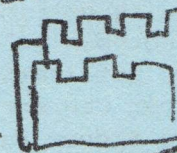
more happy note, Sally mentions that she will be in Melbourne at the end of Jan/start of Feb for a short visit - so things can't be too bad. □□□ Speaking of business, John Hall Friedman is about to open another shop, in central Perth. John is the manager/owner of the local specialty sf store 'Space Merchants', but the new store will be a general bookstore - he's hoping to make some money on this one, to help finance the sf store. □□□ Ian Nichols has lost his job at Christchurch and is now looking for work elsewhere in Perth. He has also applied to the Ed.Dept. for work, but this would probably mean work in the country, and so Ian is currently looking for another job with increasing desperation. □□□ Greg & Stephanie Turkich are as of last October (sigh, we get a little behind at times - sorry) became the proud parents of one Jonathon Turkich. □□□ And talking about celebrations, the Perth Christmas festivities were held at Dave Lockett & Sally Beasley's on Christmas day, and were followed up the next day with further merriment at Craig & Julia's place. □□□

Melbourne: Ian Porter & Neil (just "Neil") have moved to 6/159 Curzon St., North Melbourne, 'phone: 328 1904. Emily & Henry Gasko & Judy Clarke's new 'phone no. is 531 9164. Doug, Steve, Cam, Kate & Neil are now in residence next door to the God Squad, at 51 Nicholson St., Carlton North - 'phone: 348 1714. Practically next door are Mandy Horbury-Smith & Roger Weddall, peacefully settled at 618 Drummond Street, North Carlton 3054 - 'phone: 347 5583. An older coa is Peter Maher, 872 Swanston St., also North Carlton 3054 - 'phone: 347 0363. Sensibly avoiding the WorldCon, Perry Middlemiss has waited until just recently to move to Melbourne. The government is currently paying for motel accommodation until he finds a place, and until then all mail should go, please, to GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne 3001. About the only way that anyone can think of getting back in touch with Anne & Bevan Casey is through the Student Records dept. of Latrobe University, Bundoora 3083; good luck? □□□ So much for people on the move. More relaxed was the Nova Mob Christmas Party, at Sean McMullen's place. Long-presumed missing-in-action worthies such as Paul Collins were to be seen there, and the range of conversation strayed from whether Lee Harding could have meant *tortillas* instead of *cojones*, to the likelihood of sf magazine *Far Out* surviving in the long run. □□□ New Year celebrations were reasonably low-key, with a small party at Phil & Mandy's place, among others - a reasonable time was had by all. But speaking of which - parties, that is - if you're reading this (and if you're not, what the hell are you doing) you are invited to a PARTY! ORφσ°♦||§☆ to celebrate ... Lots Of Things. People having Birthdays (a good time of year to be born, don't you think?); a Housewarming; a farewell for someone going overseas; a New Year Rage for those who have only just recovered from eating too much over Christmas - you name it, we're going to celebrate it *con amore* on the 18th of January, at 618 Drummond Street, North Carlton. Bring everyone you know. Tell everyone you meet. (You think we're joking?) You're all invited! Seeya! □□□

Canberra: Speaking of merriment, much was had at the wedding of Kim Lambert & Mark Denbow, on the 28th of December. People, fans and SCA members came from around Australia to celebrate the occasion, a full report of which will be appearing in the next issue of *Thyme*. Three days later, the traditional "Smithfield" New Year's Eve party (held in Smithfield, in Sydney, while Mark & Kim were living there, and it followed them to Canberra) was held at Hannam Place, with about sixty people in attendance. The apparently also-traditional stripping of Kim Huett took place as well. Our source reports: "It started when someone noticed that Kim was wearing different coloured socks, and then... well, you know what those parties are like...." □□□ Kim Huett and Charlie Dean have moved, by the way, to 58 Eggleston St, Chifley 2606.

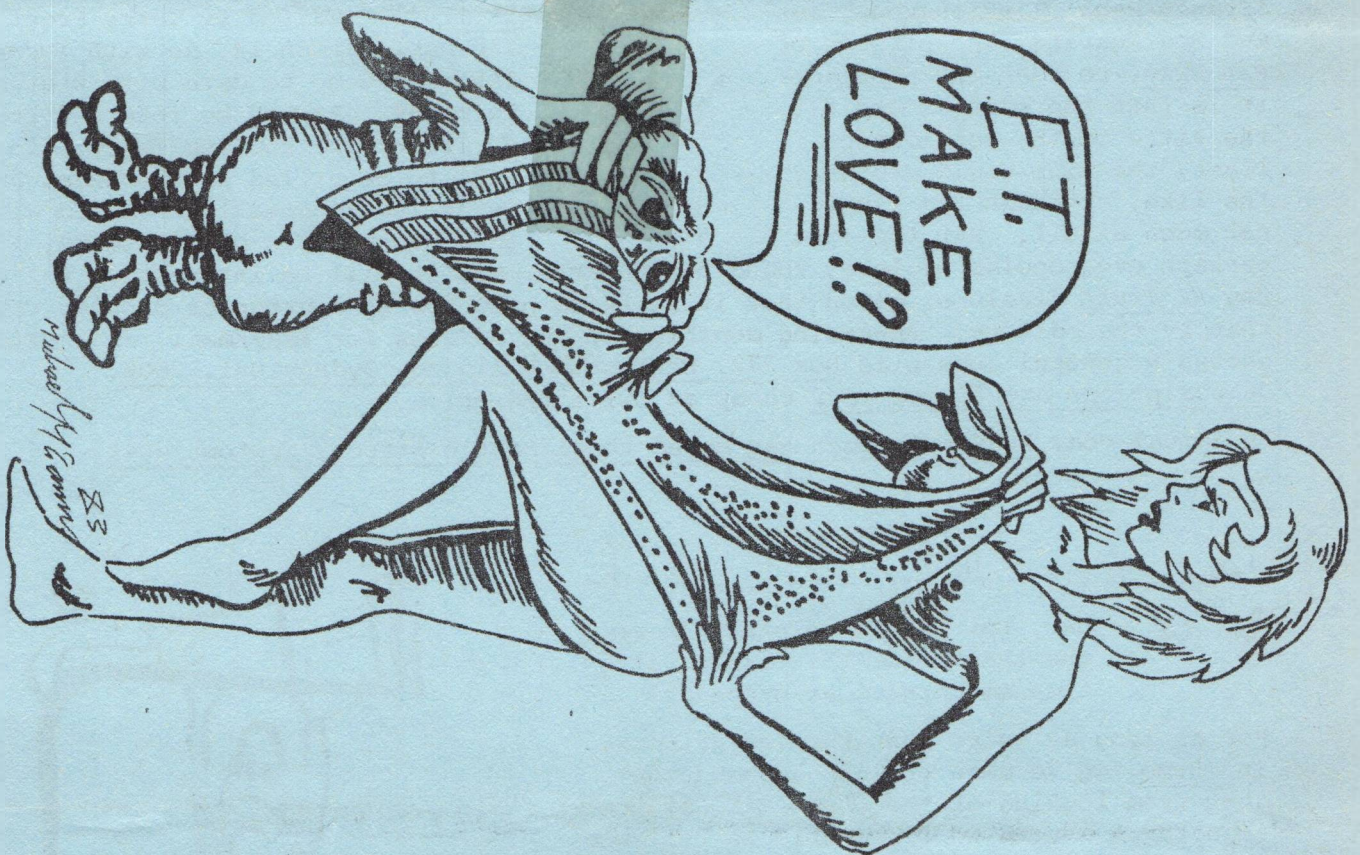
Rhys Howitt has moved to Canberra and, until finding a permanent place of his own, can be reached at Flat 28, Urambi Village, Crozier Circuit, Kambah 2602 ACT (ph; (062) 317463). Robyn Hodgekin is now at 47 Dugdale St., Cook 2614 (ph: (062) 51 4170). Near but not Canberra, the proper address for Kat Swansbra & Richard Lesze is 27 Crackenback Street, St. John's Hill, Thurgoona 2640, NSW (ph: (060) 43 1319), although their postal address is P.O.Box 57, Charnwood 2605, ACT. Victoria Fawke has moved to Sydney and although she has no permanent address she may be contacted at 127 Livingstone St., Marrickville 2204 (ph: (02) 560 4438). □□□

RAMIFICATIONS



ALL ROADS
LEAD TO
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