



AN EDITORIAL

Great moments like this, you realise, don't come too often. The kind of great moment this is, to imitate the phraseology of Mervyn Barrett, is when you finally get around to working on your fanzine again.

Since the previous issue of Chunder!, the magazine of cardiac arrest, I have managed to move house. This would not have been especially dreadful, but the typewriter managed to get buried at the bottom of a fairly high pile of paper and indeed these are the first words typed on the old beast since early January, and it is now March 11, which means that if I were to call this the February issue it could be claimed that I was late. So we'll call it the February-March issue, and with luck I'll be on time.

The new address, details of which are to be found on the contents page, is just around the corner from where we used to live, and is about the same size. The main disadvantage is that the table-tennis table has to be put in a room which is 12' 6" long. Think about that, TCarr!

Along with not typing stencils, I've managed to make a good fist of not mailing out completed fanzines, just like John Bangsund. This has brought cries of distress from all over the Commonwealth, and I hope that I can avoid such unpleasantness in the future. It's all a matter of getting organized, and that I've only just managed to start to do.

The December issue, to go back a bit, did, when it was finally distributed, draw a letter of comment from my most faithful letter-of-commenter, and someone who I now regard as a friend even if he still does address me as 'Mr Foyster', Richard Faulder (new address: Yanco Agricultural Research Station, Yanco, NSW 2703). There are a couple of paragraphs from the letter I'd like to quote here, rather than in the letter column, because I want to comment on them at rather greater length.

'My, you were feeling nasty last December. Probably the most vitriolic issue I have yet seen. You were at least reasonably sympathetic about the fanzines you reviewed. Then again, you obviously only reviewed the fanzines you liked.

'It does raise my curiosity as to why you ignored the Victorian Science Fiction Foundation from its conception and birth. Your recognition, even critical, could well have been its salvation. One can only assume that you intended its non-survival, since it would have injected at least a semblance of cohesion into the Victorian sf fanscene. To an outsider such as myself it appears that said scene has so little cohesion that it is not possible to talk about splits simply because no group ever gets big enough to split. Is this why you never talk about Melbourne club activities?'

The specific points Richard raises give rise to more general matters, and I suppose I can afford to be mildly discursive on the subject.

It probably is true that I chose to review only fanzines that I liked - although not, by any means, all the fanzines that I like. Obviously, given the press of space, that wasn't an unreasonable strategy. But naturally, though perhaps sometimes unfortunately, this sort of thing will happen anyway. There's always a rush of some kind, and my sweet nature makes it so much harder for me to be unpleasant about someone's work than otherwise.....

Even if that tendency isn't terribly strong, the kind of selectivity an editor (or a columnist for that matter) exerts results in a biased reproduction of reality (if there is anything real about fandom), and it is this which has made me publicly worry several times in the past about the role the editor of a newszine can/should be playing, and, of course, about whether I want to be publishing a newszine at all. The method I've used in the past, and will continue to use, is to bring in outsiders to write columns/articles, as much to vary the perception as because of any intrinsic qualities. The fanzines reviews from Irwin Hirsh, to start RSN, are one example.

The Victorian Science Fiction Foundation is another matter. I don't think I've actually omitted any other news, forwarded my way, deliberately, and even in the case of the VSFF my recollection is that I received only an invitation to attend a meeting, rather too late to advertise it in Chunder! But in any case I would have thought about the matter twice.

The VSFF was to be an organisation to organise organisations. I am not exactly a fan of organisations. Those who've recently joined fandom and observed me arguing about the constitution of the ASFS (hi, Marc) will not be quite so aware of my motives as those who have seen me fighting, time and again, against the establishment of one organisation or another. You win some, you lose some, so now we have the ASFS and the ASFF - both pretty useless even in their own terms.

So the VSFF didn't turn me on. After all, why should anyone want to organise organisations, other than to play silly little power games? No one came to their party, so far as I can make out, so that was the end of it.

I wonder whether there should be a semblance of cohesion in Victorian fandom? I suspect that there is, actually, and it is tied up with Space Age Books - most Melbourne fans, no matter who they spend their fannish time, probably have some connexion with SAB. Other than that I suspect we are a fairly largely, mildly squabbling bunch who get together whenever we feel like it. And their certainly are splits - the Melbourne apa, ZAPA, if it has not actually suffered a split, has certainly gone through some very fast changes in the most recent months.

The reason, however, for my not writing about Melbourne club activities is that I don't know anything about them. Well, more or less. I'm not a Member of any Melbourne clubs, and the only group to send me regular news is AUSTREK, and theirs is highly specialised and buried deep in pale ditto. Monash University sends me occasional notes, and these I try to print fairly quickly. I can't print what I don't know, and that's the end of it.

And now a letter from Gary Mason.

SOME NOTES ON SYNCON '79

Gary Mason:

'I promised to write something for you about the Syncon moneys for publication in Chunder!

'Since then, Jack Herman has printed the letters I sent him, and I don't really have anything much more to say on the subject.

'I still fell, of course, that the SSFF has broken both the spirit and the letter of the ASFS constitution, but I don't see that much can be done about it. In one of my letters published in Forerunner,

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I made the point that large numbers of fans outside Sydney (not including myself, however) feel that Sydney fans are a bunch of crooks - I can't put it much more strongly than that. If the SSFF doesn't care about its reputation, what can anyone else do?

'There probably isn't much to be achieved in airing this matter much further. But you can certainly print this if you like.'

For most readers of this editorial much of the above will be news - I expect. A brief, and I think unbiased, summary follows.

For one reason or another last year's Australian National Con made a substantial profit. When the financial report was published it included, erroneously in my view, funds raised at an SSFF weekend to offset possible convention losses. Setting this money aside, however, as legitimate SSFF funds, still left a large profit which was split between SWANCON (this year's National convention), AUSTRALIA IN '83 (a Sydney-based Worldcon bid) and the SSFF, with the good old Sydney Science Fiction Foundation getting the lion's share at around \$500 and the other two making about ,100 each. Nothing for DUFF, despite the fact that, in response to arguments and requests from the SYNCON '79 folks, the DUFF administrators had reversed an earlier decision not to have a race in '79 (but we provided free accommodation for the DUFF winners, muttered the Sydney folks....), and nothing for GUFF.

Churlish, perhaps, one might say, but also sneakily close to being contrary to the constitution under which the convention was run, and over which the Sydney fans pawed so laboriously and boringly at the previous national convention. For that constitution not only specifies that surplus funds shall be disposed of for the benefit of the convention as a whole, but through a technical reading, that the power to hand out the surplus lies with the SWANCON committee, not the SYNCON '79 committee. That technicality aside, it remains the case that pouring money into one's own club's pockets, no matter what rationalisations are bandied about, inclines people to suspect that one might be just slightly bent, if not entirely crooked. Whence Gary's remarks. But it is Gary's last shaft, it seems to me, which sinks home hardest - 'If the SSFF doesn't care about its reputation, what can anyone else do?' Hearing Jack Herman declaring himself perfectly satisfied with the financial report, fondly reminiscent as it might be of Richard Milhous Nixon, nevertheless does make one wonder whether the SSFF and its members do really care much about their image.

Of course they do. They are, after all, behind (or in front of?) the Australia in '83 bid. But the defence for their actions remains, it would seem, limited to the assertion that other fans don't really think that their old friends are dishonest. No, Jack, but how often can that stance be presented effectively?

Australian fans don't have a lot of time to think about the answer to that question; the bid for an Australian Worldcon in 1983, which has been around for quite a while, reaches a climax in the next 18 months or so, and major support is needed for the bidding committee right now. How enthusiastic is support for Australia in '83 in Australia?

Well, there's a fair amount of enthusiasm, largely from people
(ctd on page 16)

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BUT MY PRETTY . . . WHAT?

by George Turner

Some time ago, John Foyster handed me a copy of an American periodical 'mainstream' anthology, Triquarterly 46, of which I had not previously heard. The loss is mine. He suggested that I should read some of the 19 stories in it and think about them in relation to my reading of short SF stories.

He did not say 'Compare them', but left me to do what I might. One genre cannot be compared with another, as melodrama cannot be compared with a song-and-dance act (except in inessentials), or blue with orange. So - what was expected of me? Ruminatation?

Not knowing, I read all of the 19 stories - and have never before encountered an anthology of original work maintaining such a high standard of technical, psychological and emotional competence. I have read finer stories than any in this volume but never such an astonishing collection.

Not that there were no failures. There was a piece of imitation Hemingway which only drove home the truism that a writer must be himself because he can't be someone else; no one else can be Hemingway. (The iconoclast in me asks, 'Who'd want to?') There were a couple whose themes seemed thin or which demanded a more solid resolution. And there were a few which, at first breathless reading, seemed so close to perfection that looking for the hair-line cracks smelt of vandalism. But there is no point in itemising stories which few readers of this will ever see. I can only indicate what I found:

- a sense of style to make nearly all writers of current SF seem bumbling amateurs. Only Aldiss and Disch - perhaps Wolfe, Le Guin and Compton on a good day - could live in this company. The verbal gymnastics of Ellison, Russ, Vonnegut, Dick and all the others offer nothing of the impact unleashed by these artists in simple affirmation of reality.

- a concern with humanity on its own level of confusion, frustration and striving, a concern almost totally denied SF by its preoccupation with the bizarre.

- an emotional straightforwardness carrying subtleties of observation below the surface, such as can rarely exist in a genre whose interest lies in vast conflicts where human beings are fused into representative entities with little true individuality.

- a sense, communicated but never overtly expressed, of minds acting and reacting within the ambience of a greater, uncomprehended awareness. This feeling arose from the collection as a whole, more strongly and convincingly than from all the millions of words of expressionist transcendentalism of Herbert, Watson, and the 'modernist' prose manglers (in or out of the genre).

Since much of this effect is denied SF by its own thematic concerns and by the stylistic techniques which have of necessity been developed to give them expression, one may reasonably ask, 'What does SF give in place of what has been lost?'

I think it has much to give, and . . .

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First, let me look at another volume of short stories.

This is SUMMER ENDS NOW, by John Emery. It is published by the University of Queensland Press, in cloth at \$8.95, in pb at \$4.95. John Emery is Australian, 33, a part-time lecturer in media-sociology and literature, a man who has knocked around the out-back and Niugini and has published a little here and there over the past decade. He is interested in SF; in fact, he is almost the archetype of the intelligent, literate, manual-work-experienced youngish man with one foot in Academia and an interest in SF. Also he can (but does not always) write excellent prose. None of the stories in this volume is SF.

What I find here is precisely what I found in Triquarterly 46, but in lesser degree, fainter impression. The reasons for this smaller effect are, I think, technical. Emery is an excellent pin-pointer of the passing impression - a place or a person rises up, immediately recognisable, and you salute a fine talent. But -

- but the moment is over and the effect of a passing realism is all that remains. You wonder at the transience and realise, as one short piece follows another, that all you have is glimpses, that nothing develops, that these are sketches only - verbal photographs.

Here and there in the collection you find a real story, with a plotline and an ending. And here the story is right but the people and the places are shadowy. As though you can't have one thing without sacrificing another. Good physics but unsatisfactory art . . . as seems the case with SF, where apparently you can't have more than superficial characterisation where universes and symbols are your backdrop; you can have only actors.

This will not remain true of John Emery; time and practice will fuse the poles of talent. His next book of stories, perhaps . . .

Yet his book reminds me of the stories submitted at SF workshops. Emery's talent is greater than any seen there (saving that of Pip Maddern, who may eventually overmatch him) but he seems to suffer from the same unwillingness to make a mayor attack as one sees in the workshops - as one sees, indeed, in so much Australian short fiction. Only James McQueen and Peter Carey seems game to set their teeth and risk the occasional failure. A writer's reach must always exceed his grasp.

Is that where SF falls short of its potential? Is there a lack of courage in its writers to attempt human as well as stylistic and narrative values? I don't know the answer. I do know that the sheerly technical problems to be surmounted in raising SF to the heights of the better 'mainstream' writing are formidable, as I have been discovering through gritted teeth during the past five or six years.

So - what has SF to offer that justifies its shortcomings?

The vaunted 'sense of wonder'? Is that all? That existed before SF. SF has done its damndest to turn it into a sense of mind-blowing poppycock.

And yet -

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Does this array of telepaths, psychokineticists, alien avatars, alternative timelines, galactic entities, super geniuses, sub- and hyper-spaces and all the other 'conventional' ideas of SF amount to no more than just another dreary helping of 'the mixture as before'?

Mostly, yes. The great bulk of SF is mindless action-opera, cannibalising the original ideas of the past without ever thinking of them as more than excuses for melodrama. (And melodrama is, for the greater part, far more effectively handled by the writers of crime thrillers, who try to know something of their subjects.)

In any case, the sense of wonder is only a gimmick; if you need SF to jab yours into awareness, you can never have looked properly at the sky or the ocean or the wing of a butterfly.

Might the real attraction, the true gift, be escapism? But any entertainment offers that. If you have too many sorrows, you look for comedy; if you are hyper-energetic, you seek the vicarious release of John Wayne or James Bond; if you are emotionally repressed, you may favour the three-handkerchief weepie; if you have no need of the grosser forms of escapism, you may choose the arts and an intellectual approach to the unattainable satisfaction.

But so much SF represents escape from the whole damned caboodle! To hell with reality! Who needs escape on that scale? Only someone who is mentally blind or has never taken the trouble to look at the reality he fancies he needs to escape from.

I stopped running many years ago and have been enjoying life ever since. One of the symptoms of contentment is that space opera bores me to tears, save on the one-in-a-thousand occasion of its having a striking idea to offer.

What does SF offer besides noise and glitter?

Well, right on the top level it can offer some very considerable intellectual pleasure. And, when you observe SF products, you observe at once that the top level is filled by writers with intellectual interests for sale. They are the happy few who have seen that the universe is not just a playground for blood and fantasy, but a vast enigma which must be continually questioned if ever we are to rise above squirming in the cultural mud.

Philip K. Dick (when his pyrotechnics are pushed aside) questions the whole nature of reality; he has no answers, but the questions are provocative. Lem, when he can refrain from playing word games, has useful things to say about the limits of knowledge and imagination. Ballard, emerging from years of angry sulking, returns to berating us for being blindworms by preference. Le Guin tries to tell us (with more determination than hope of hearing) that racial and cultural problems need not be the sources of automatic brutality. The late James Blish punched holes in our satisfaction with the status quo; even John Campbell, in his erratic fashion, tried to open our eyes to the grosser errors of conventional logic.

These and a few others have used SF to promulgate ideas - and the Chunder! February-May 1980 page 7

promulgation of exotic but not totally illogical ideas may be the great service SF offers to literature. The people mentioned above, along with Aldiss, Disch, Clarke and a handful of others are the SF entities known and respected by the literary Mainstream so complained of by the ghetto-dwellers.

No doubt SF offers other values. It has, in the past, been credited with turning some readers to the study of science, and in each new generation of readers it probably shocks a few into a heightened awareness of the universe (but so may any but the most mundane fiction).

These are plus values, but against them the great cold-bloodedness of SF leans like ice.

Where are the characters, the people? Well, you can't do much characterization of symbols as individuals; you can't have it both ways. (I only hope some author is somewhere at work on the story that will prove me wrong.)

The remaining problem, allowing the insolubility of that one, is the dreadful emptiness of so much SF, the lack of content, the recycling of the same tired ideas in story after story.

Where are the writers who, handling the same old material, can shape something new and arresting from it (that is one of the functions of creative art) and convince us that there is value in what we read? Why do they never question their material, and so reclaim and remake it?

I named nine questioners a few paragraphs back (two are dead) and, out of all the hundreds writing, another half dozen would probably complete the list. (Regretfully I must discard a few willing questioners whose fiction reads like cold porridge. Literary competence counts as much as content.)

What stops SF writers doing what those unimaginative, word-heavy, reality-bound mainstream writers do so successfully - question the commonplace?

If ever they do, SF may produce anthologies to rank with Triquarterly 46.

A question remains. How did Triquarterly, published on a three-issues-a-year basis, achieve such an outstanding collection of over 100 000 words? By Commissioning stories from the top flight writers of America?

Commissioned they may have been, but -

- only one internationally-known name appears in the contents list. This one issue is the work of a whole writing fraternity which observes the highest standards as an achievable norm. We may wait a long time for anything comparable in the SF can of fan-conscious, unturning worms.

GEORGE TURNER

(TRIQUARTERLY is available from 1735 Benson Avenue, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 60201, USA. \$12 a year, \$20 for two years, \$30 for three. Add a dollar a year for subscriptions outside the USA)

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UNICON VI: A PANEGYRIC

by Derrick Ashby

UNICON VI, held over Easter 1980 at the Victoria Hotel, Little Collins Street, Melbourne, was a most enjoyable convention. I could even go so far as to say that I enjoyed it more than last year's Eastercon, which I co-chaired. That doesn't mean to say that it was better organised than Eastercon 7 of course, because it wasn't. It wasn't even halfway as well organised. Nor does the statement mean that I enjoyed the programme at UNICON VI, because I didn't. (It was awful.) When I say that the Victoria Hotel is one of the worst convention venues I've attended in quite some time you might begin to wonder what I found to enjoy in the convention.

Are you? First off, I like the people - well, some of them. No, seriously folks, one of the chief reasons an old fan and tired like me goes to a convention is to renew acquaintanceships, not to say friendships, formed at other cons and through the mails. Most other inconveniences can be put up with if the company is good. At UNICON the company was very good. My second plus for UNICON was the atmosphere. This is partly created by the attendees, of course, but a big part of the responsibility for a convention's ambiance (French, you know) belongs to the committee. There was no trouble that I saw with the hotel staff, no bickering between fans and fans, committee and fans, committee and committee. The committee had made the major decision that they were there to help Joe Fan have a good time.

It remains my opinion that the Victoria is an unfortunate choice of venue for SF conventions. When the decision to hold UNICON VI there was made public I was one of several fans who made my opinions pretty plain. At the time the committee members were at great pains to defend their choice. I think they looked on us as members of a reactionary old guard bent on protecting ourselves from the rising tide of neofannish revolution. We, of course, had been to conventions at the Victoria before (in 1973 and 1974). Some of our criticisms proved justified, other didn't. There were reasons why the others didn't, which I will go into.

The location of the main convention facilities was massively inconvenient. Okay, I'm biased against archaic lifts, and flights of stairs in public places. The Victoria has a surfeit of both, and miles of corridors to boot. All the convention facilities were located inconveniently, and were scattered all over the hotel besides. Registration was on the mezzanine floor, and could be reached from the lifts without using stairs, but the way was blocked by portable screens. The alternative was to go down one flight of stairs and up another. A person confined to a wheelchair would have found it impossible to register, though I'm sure the committee would have made alternative arrangements. The bar was unreachable except by stair - the entrance was on a landing to which three flights of stairs led. To get to the banquet room most people descended a fairly long flight of stairs with one right-angled turn. Two of the lifts went to the basement, but opened onto a service area. It was possible to get to the banquet room from it, but that involved going down a service corridor and through a door that was normally kept locked. Luckily for us Maryl had arranged that it be left open for Christine's exclusive use. The coffee shop, where breakfast and reasonably-priced lunch and teas were served, was also unapproachable except by stairs. Heard enough? NO?

There were three other convention rooms of a major nature. The huxters' room was up half a dozen steps from the ground floor. We never got into it. The Waratah Room, the hospitality suite, was on the first floor, down the usual miles of corridors. The Jacaranda Room was on the second floor, ditto. I don't remember what was on in the Jacaranda. The computer room was on the 8th floor. The usual hotel lifts stopped at the 7th floor. There were two ways to the 8th. You could walk down miles of corridors to an ancient goods lift, go up to the 8th if you dared use it, and then walk miles to the computer room, or you could use the stairs, and walk further miles to the computer room. There was quite a colony of fans staying up on the 8th floor. Many haven't been seen since. (Especially those who went to Eric Lindsay's parties.)

Enough! Christine and I arrived fairly late on Friday (we arrived late every day, as a matter of fact) and when we found it the registration area was pretty much deserted. This was at around 12.00 I guess. The program was due to start at 1.00. Registration earlier on was rumoured to have gone well. We had no trouble. We hung around and chatted to anyone who would talk back. This was most people, since we chose to sit on the floor between the stairs and the rego tables. We ate the sandwiches we'd brought for lunch. It became obvious after a while what the major drawback with UNICON's registration was - they had no control over the route to the main con facilities. I don't know how many freeloaders they got, and I suppose it doesn't matter, since they appeared to be financially sound. I saw several people come into the hotel and look around vaguely before seeing someone they knew, or asking at the main hotel desk where the convention was. A few signposts would not have gone astray.

Unluckily for us, when we wanted to get down to the opening of the con it turned out that Daryl had made arrangements to have the service door to the banquet room left open with the manager in charge. He should, of course, have gone to each porter and told him individually. The porters would then all have gone to find the manager to see if it was all right. This might sound like a rather time-consuming approach to the problem, but it would at least have saved me the trouble of doing it. Anyway, we got there. It took a guerilla war lasting two days, but we finally got that door left open.

There are three schools of thought in regard to convention programming. A bold statement!

(1) Conventions are places to meet old friends and the program gets in the way of the room parties.

(2) People who come to SF cons expect to see a program of talks, panels, etc, on the subject of science fiction. Not all people, mind you, because some of them are fans. Some trouble ought to be taken with the program to encourage them to come back again. They may not be fans, but they do make the difference between the financial success and failure of a con.

(3) The program is an integral part in the enjoyment of a con for most people who attend, fans included. If a good program is provided it gives the fans something to talk about to each other, apart from character assassinations of absent friends.

I belong to the third school.

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The UNICON program had major faults in all respects of programming practice. To begin with, it was pretty poor in interesting items. Secondly, the items on the program were badly scheduled. Thirdly, the committee had no real idea of program management. Fourthly, the items themselves showed signs of being thrown together without sufficient preparation. Most convention programs fall down to some degree in some areas of organization; UNICON did a proper job. The one thing that can be said is that the program showed evidence that the committee had tried to put a program together. Success comes with experience.

There are very few new ideas. If you've been to several conventions over a period of years it's probably true that you've seen about everything. Occasionally something new will come along - feminism in SF, for example, or new wave versus old wave (what?). When something new does come along it's generally done to death for a few cons, and then let lie fallow. Bearing this in mind, a committee has to make some attempt in the direction of originality. Most of the UNICON committee have been to a few conventions, but they are only just leaving the stage the beginner goes through when he or she goes along to every item and says goshwow to them all. So they put together a program of items that they had seen at recent conventions and had said goshwow to. Of course there may have been the odd item that they hadn't seen, but generally that meant that most everybody else had seen it. The program of any convention has to have items that have been on before, but a careful balance has to be maintained. Maybe new angles can be found on older material.

Having decided what items you want, you then have to arrange them in a schedule. The UNICON program was badly unbalanced. On Friday and Saturday, for instance, far too much time was taken up by the auction (I can hear Justen and Keith from here). This left Sunday and Monday badly overprogrammed. There was no decent break between any pair of items.

It is important when running a program to schedule things carefully so that you hold people's interest around times when you want a decent attendance at the program. This is particularly important at a venue like the Victoria, because once having lost people there it's damned difficult to get them back. They scatter all over the hotel because the con facilities are so scattered. This happened a lot at UNICON. Another area of program management is the policing of any individual item. How much time an item gets should not have to depend on the force of personality of the moderator. Having scheduled an item, you should make sure it sticks to the time available.

About 100-125 fans attended the opening, the major feature of which was an 'Introduction' to fandom. This was written and presented by one Angus Caffrey. If I had been a neofan he would have turned me off fandom for life, and if I were somebody who had come along to find out about science fiction I might well have gone away and not come back. Either way I would have been totally mystified. Apart from the occasional foray into humour, Angus' 'play' consisted of the usual crap about fan feuds and neo-baiting. He managed to insult just about everybody, but most particularly several trekfen, while at the same time exhorting us to pull together and save Australian science fiction, which was apparently teetering on the brink of civil war.

The opening highlighted various other problems with the venue that

I have so far not mentioned. The lighting was bad. This was 'improved' later by the use of imported spotlights, used when the videocameras were in operation. The banquet room had been packed with seating for about 250; unfortunately the seats were facing the wrong way! Well, to be honest, the organizers weren't to know that. In 1973, when the first convention was held at the Victoria, they had the front at the same end, and it was discovered to suffer several disadvantages vis-a-vis having the front at the back. The dais was situated in front of a mirror wall, causing serious trouble for the audience if they happened to want to watch a panel as well as listen to it. Later the committee hung a sheet in front of the mirrors, which shows that they were more or less on the ball. The one major defect of the room was that the committee could do nothing about the large useless area off to the left of the main auditorium where people were wont to gather and chatter. In 1973 and 1974 this area was used for the registration desk, and in 1974 the dais was placed at the other end of the room, as far away from the chatterers as possible. That worked quite well. As I recall the back of the room (or the front, depending) was used for the art show that year. There were probably seats for 150.

After Angus's efforts we spent a while pacifying the trekfen. We should have let them take it out on his hide, I suppose, but Angus had convinced us that fans don't like the sight of blood. We didn't stay for John Breden's comics panel. Apart from having heard John on the subject several times before (and I wasn't even interested in comics before the first time) I was beginning to get a headache due to the bad ventilation. I never could stay in the banquet room for more than a couple of hours at a stretch all weekend. God, what a whinger!

We came back to listen to George Turner's GoH speech, after quite a tussle with the management to get That Door open again. I was surprised to discover so much information in the speech that I had previously missed. Pleasantly surprised. We left again before the auction. Having already lost about \$20 on the gee-gees that day, I could hardly afford to stay.

By dinner I was another \$18 down the drain. We ate at the coffee shop.

I have to apologise for the fan panel. Since I was on it part of the blame must rest with me - but only part, thank god. It suffered from two faults. (1) It was organized by someone who was not participating in the panel, hence no one on the panel was quite sure what it was supposed to be about, and there was no moderator, either! (2) It was heavily biased towards Melbourne (and ex-Melbourne) fans. This might not have mattered if the direction the discussion took had been different. The title of the panel, changed without warning as it was, didn't do much towards establishing a direction. Clearly nobody, including me, knew what we were going to say. Poor Gay was lundered with the moderation (she was the middle person of the five). We ended up talking about the similarities and differences between various regional fandoms (apart from myself and Gay there was Leigh Edmonds, Paul Stevens, and Merv Binns). As you might expect the Melbourne-Sydney thing came up in spades, and we tried to put straight the more ridiculous things Angus had said in the first item. Gay was unhappy about the constant references to feuds and hatreds and so on, and claimed to have never heard anything like it.

About the most enjoyable item not on the program was the discussion that took place up on the mezzanine after the fandom panel just mentioned. The main topic of conversation was the nature of fanzines in general and apas in particular. Participants were Jack Herman, Christine, Richard Faulder, Marc Ortlieb and myself. It was only partly spoiled by the crowd that gathered around to make inane comments. Jack's contention seemed to be that (a) apas failed in their purpose if they did not generate ganzines, and that (b) fanzines are useless if they do not contain material of Redeeming Social Importance. (I later overheard Jack promising a certain faned who will remain nameless an article on cricket on the condition that he could discuss politics in it as well.) Jack criticized Marc for the contents of his various publications (Marc has rejected material before on the grounds that it wasn't frivolous enough). Jack compared debating with fanzines, saying that you were permitted to be frivolous in debating, whereas fanzines were too serious. Later Jack shifted his ground rather neatly and pretended to be saying that only his fanzines had to have social merit. We wouldn't let him get away with that.

We got to the con in time for Joe Haldeman's speech on Saturday, primarily because the item was on slightly late. Joe spoke from flash cards prepared by Gay, and was great fun. I am prepared to admit that it is worth while bringing overseas guests of honour to Australia if they can be equitably paid for. The Australia Council, after all, cannot be expected to waste their money forever, particularly if we are going to see a lengthy period without writers' workshops, as seems likely to be the case. It would be fairly safe to say that the greatest value we get from overseas guests is in the social side of the thing. Not many people are worth \$1000 or so just for things they have to say about science fiction, whereas friendships could be said to be priceless. These reflections led me to my Great Idea for the weekend - the GOOFF, of Guest Of 'Onour Fan Fund.

The GOOFF would be a one-off fund like the special purpose funds set up in the past for individuals - Bob Tucker and Mae Strelkov being two examples. One problem with it is that I doubt that we could expect much finance from the other end - the States or Britain - since they wouldn't be getting much out of it. This means that the Fund would have to be financed almost solely from Australian sources, which in turn suggests that it would not be able to bring someone out each year. Another problem with GOOFF lies in the fact that almost all fan funds are raising money to benefit definite candidates. I am aware that the WA fans are running what amounts to a fan fund to bring Anne McCaffrey out for Swancon, but I have my doubts as to whether it is really possible to raise enough money to bring an overseas GoH to Australia within the life-span of an average convention committee - without working bloody hard. So that GOOFF would not be tied to a particular GoH, or even a particular convention. The problem here is that fans like to have some idea as to who is going to be the final beneficiary when they put some money into a fund - quite naturally. Admittedly vote-money is only a small percentage of the total money raised - at least in DUFF - but the fact that there are two or three candidates is quite important even at an auction.

Given those problems it should still be possible to work something out. One possibility is that the organizers run a poll to determine the most popular choice for an overseas guest, pro or

fan, among the fannish community. A fan would be able to vote once every three months for the three people he or she would most like to see as an overseas Guest of Honour, provided that a suitable donation was enclosed, and he fulfilled the usual eligibility criteria. Points would be allocated 3,2,1 in order of preference. It would be an ongoing poll, with the results being published at intervals. The three-monthly vote would allow for changes of mind, given the uncertain period between each winner of the race. Publishing the results would give an idea of who was most likely to receive the money.

At some stage it would obviously be necessary to contact people near the top of the poll to find out whether they would be willing to come to Australia, and when. Thus, if the eventual winner is unable or unwilling to be the victim then the runner-up would receive the loot. At about the same time it would also be necessary to line up the convention to which the lucky party would be GoH. It might be possible to make it the national con, but I would suggest that the GOOFF winner would have to be the GoH, and not an extra, so that the current Natcon committee might have already chosen their GoH, and he or she might not be willing to stand aside. It would be possible to line up the next National Convention at the bidding session, if the GOOFF winner found that convenient, or it ought to be possible to organize a special convention for the winner to be GoH at. It would be a matter of matching arrangements at both ends.*

After Joe's speech there was another three hours of auction, which we avoided in favour of a small gathering in Eric Lindsay's room. Eric was on the 8th floor, and seemed to know how to operate the goods lift. Having managed to kidnap Gay we discussed the Melbourne-Sydney thing again. Agreed that Sydney was to blame. (No! No! cries Gay. We didn't, either.) We wondered at the cultural differences between fan centres as expressed by their footwear. Perth fans seemed to be wearing Ughboots to a man - sorry, person - while Sydney fans seemed to favour bare feet. We couldn't come up with an acceptable explanation except that Sally Underwood had found a cheap supplier of Ughboots. We rejected that solution as being too mundane. Robin Johnson was said to have shared a room with Daryl Mannell on the Friday night. By halfway through Saturday he was taking cold tablets to stave off the effects of exhaustion. We suggested that he get some sleep, but Daryl was apparently typing stencils for the day before's daily newsletter, or the eating-out guide or something. We then suggested that Robin get a room of his own. He was last seen thinking about that.

The banquet on Saturday night was rumoured to have been good as convention banquets go. We, however, had made alternative arrangements on learning of its price (\$12), its limitation to 40 places, and on our experience of the quality of hotel convention banquets to that date. We went out to the banquet run by Andrew Brown in conjunction with the Hon Moon Restaurant. This being the place where he put on the Eastercon banquet in 1979 we had no hesitation in recommending it to selected persons, but this nearly came unstuck when Robin attempted to invite the Haldemans. He hadn't noticed that it was being run opposite the Official Banquet. The food was excellent by any standards, and we paid \$10 a head. At the other end of the table (which seated about 20) the Adelaide fans were having a dirty joke contest. We talked to Bruce and Elaine about house-buying and con programming.

We missed the masquerade, and the delayed showing of 2001. UNICON VI was the third Easter Convention in a row to have trouble with anamorphic lenses. In this case the suppliers had produced the wrong print of the film, which had been due for Friday night.

Sunday's program commenced with breakfast at the new Foyster mansion. We had been promised bagels from the Acland Street cake shops. When it was worked out that it was Passover as well as Easter we had to settle for croissants and breadrolls instead. The Adelaide fans previously alluded to were also present here, and we were thus able to have a selected re-run of the dirty joke contest. John offered to donate his collection of CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to the South Melbourne Library, a kind thought which I had to turn down, I'm afraid.

The convention program proper was of mixed quality, tightly packed and terminally late. Having picked up the laundry from the cleaners we arrived halfway through the dragon item run by Marc Ortlieb, and then survived the future war panel. Both were extremely well-run and presented, the latter by Jack Herman, and got good audience response. Jack was followed by the silly panel. This may have been an attempt to lighten the mood after hearing how we were all about to be gassed, diseased, or irradiated, but from all accounts it was a bit of a flop. It was an attempted re-run of an item at SYNCON 79, but lacked the planning, control, scripting and participants involved there. A good proportion of the attendees left before or during it, and couldn't be rounded up for the next item, which was the fan GoH interview with Mervyn Binns. The attendance wasn't much better for the feminism panel run by Christine, which was a pity because it was rather more successful than the similar affair put on at Astercon last year. The participants, more or less the same people, had managed to control their subject matter rather better, and had limited discussion to female characterization.

George Turner more or less kicked off with the statement that female characters were largely irrelevant to fast action stories (90 % of science fiction) because characterization as a whole was largely irrelevant to them. He went on to say that he could think of no great female characters in literature created by men, and no great male characters in fiction written by women, and that much of a person's character was in fact created by what sex they were. There was no major disagreement with the last statement, but most of the panel seemed to believe that sex-linked characteristics were in fact learned, and not biological. George was not so sure. David Grigg said that he found it difficult to create a convincing female protagonist, and that you couldn't sit down and say 'I'm going to write a story with a female protagonist'. Rather, the character and sex of the main characters grew out of the story idea.

The panel attempted to leave the question of nature or nurture alone, with mixed success. That question is surely the very centre of the debate. At least a major proportion of so-called feminist science fiction depends on the theory that sex-linked characteristics are not biological. The difficulty most of them face is that without those characteristics it is difficult to tell male and female apart. Jean Weber didn't object to this - she rather liked being kept guessing. George couldn't see the point of sex-differentiation in a story if it served no purpose.

After dinner in the coffee shop with David and Sue Grigg came the UNICON Awards. These were amongst the highlights of the con in that they were a good illustration of the prevailing atmosphere. They created a lot of good will for the committee. The organizing abilities of the committee were also well demonstrated. They had intended to give Life Memberships if MUSFA to several people (including themselves). They were going to give one for each year that MUSFA had been in existence. Unfortunately they hadn't got around to preparing the scrolls and such, and the MC didn't have a list of those who would have got them, and had forgotten half of them. The other awards were beercans stuck to suitably-engraved plaques. The cans were full, and went to such people as, er, ... mumble, mumble, Andrew Brown, Paul Stevens, John Foyster, and others.

After the awards Eric Lindsay interviewed Gay Aldeman - a pleasant way to end to day.

Monday was overprogrammed also. The committee had arranged to run items right through to five o'clock, which was a bit unfortunate for everybody who had to leave during the day to go back to Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, and other such far-flung places. I should think that many Melbourne people spent a good part of the day making their arrangements to quit the hotel and other such things. Quite a large percentage of the population, after all, doesn't get Tuesday after Easter as a holiday.

David Grigg's panel, largely a re-run of his talk at Eastercon '79, let to a lively debate, and was one of the most interesting items put on at the convention - certainly the most successful. Christine and I spent most of the afternoon in the bar, and only emerging for the Australia in '83 discussion. Running half an hour late as it was, we came in late for the last part of the film discussion, which appeared to be suffering from a superfluity of panelists. I didn't find the A in '83 item particularly enlightening or hopeful, I'm afraid. The participants seem to me to be far too preoccupied with winning the bid and not nearly enough interested in actually planning for the convention. After having discussed the new promotional film, and other advertising and vote-winning things, it was only a question from the audience that provided the information that the committee had actually decided on a hotel!

DERRICK ASHBY

(* I don't usually comment on an article in the issue in which it is published, but I cannot restrain myself from remarking that GOOFF is the most gormless idea I've heard since, say, the Victorian Science Fiction Foundation: JF)

EDITORIAL (continued from page 4)

haven't been involved either in bidding for or running a worldcon before, and haven't attended one either. That's fine - people need enthusiasm for this kind of job, and after the first time... But some of these folks somehow manage to sound as though they have been involved in worldcons before, and that's unfortunate.

Now in the con-report above Derrick Ashby finishes up by saying that there's too much preoccupation with winning the bid. Well, it may be desirable to do more than that, but not everyone believes that the bidders are putting enough effort into that side of their activities. At the discussion Derrick describes,

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Helen Swift outlined at some eloquent length the substantial doubts many Australian fans appear to have about the quantity and quality of effort being put into the bid. Those in the audience then heard spanking-new co-chairman Andrew Taubman admit that the committee hadn't been putting the effort into the bid which it should have, but that, he felt, in the last month the bid had begun to pull itself together. This response seemed to satisfy most of the audience, who were apparently hearing this story for the first time. Those who have heard it several times in the past couple of years were less impressed.

If the present level of activity is maintained, then Australia will win the right to stage the 1983 World Convention only if the other bids collapse or are unspeakably poorly run. The latter isn't likely, which leaves little option for those seriously concerned in advancing Australia's chances for '83.

Some development is occurring, however. Another black-and-white 16 mm movie is being made, using John Litchen and Paul Stevens as the guys behind the camera (and occasionally in front of it) and starring a few Melbourne fans and a lot of Sydney fans. I was present at a planning session for this film when the Sydney heavies 'worked on' the script. At least the final script doesn't look too much as though it was written around a long table by 16 people, which was at one point perilously close to the truth. Unbelievable!

Paul and John went up to Sydney to do the local shooting a weekend or two ago. So far as I can make out things went well, except for the (traditional?) Sydney hospitality, which seemed to involve crowding around in front of the camera, but not as far as offering a place to sleep to either of the visitors.

The Australia in '83 bid does have a few aces up the old sleeve, but whether the present committee knows where they are (or for that matter what a sleeve is) remains to be seen.

UNICON VI

Since Derrick has talked about this a lot I guess I won't say much, but I can't pass over the efforts of Tiny Taryl and the Punkettes in complete silence.

Even I, alas, have to admit to having enjoyed parts of the convention. The problems mentioned by Derrick were all there, that's true, but one couldn't help but admire the way the committee struggled manfully (and womanfully) with each impending disaster which loomed before them as a consequence of their own lack of experience. I tend to measure committees to some extent by the exhausted looks, the omnipresence, and the amount of sacrifice of personal pleasure for the good of the convention forgone, and by those lights the Monash folks came out well. (Thanks for the cheque, Taryl).

I spent most of the time nursing my cold. I've become attached to the notion of having a heavy cold each Easter, and I wasn't going to give up this opportunity for punishing myself just so that I could enjoy myself at a convention. By the end of the convention the cold had decided to take a powder anyway, so late Sunday and Monday I managed to build myself up to showing at least as much interest in a science fiction convention as Bruce Gillespie (who only appeared briefly) does. Whilst on the subject of those who don't turn up often, it is worth recording that John Bangsund and Bill Wright both showed up. But while Harry Rippon was there,

Harold and Arthur Eggleton weren't. (These historical notes are for the benefit of those who can't wait around for nostalgia.)

I spent more time sitting around talking to people than is my custom, but even that didn't amount to much. A couple of the parties were worth going to, and I managed to talk briefly to Marilyn Pride, who was showing a painting which took away the breath of most of those who saw it.

The program I found even less interesting than is usually the case for me. The auctions continue to be mismanaged, despite the endless 'promotion of Keith Curtis as an auctioneer. This time things were organised, with a printed catalogue and all the trimmings. I do hope that convention committees of the future, whether actual or potential, noticed the streaming-away from the hall as the auction progressed. This isn't because Keith isn't entertaining as an auctioneer, but, if you aren't buying, he isn't all that entertaining. The mismanagement arose, as it always does, over the preliminaries. As I've indicated above a catalogue was distributed in advance, and each item was numbered. Paul Stevens was doing a stunt for DUFF, but then the auction boys arrived and indicated they were ready to go. Paul was hauled off rather unceremoniously, and the auction boys began to set up. It took them twenty minutes (audience drifting away all the time) because after going to all the trouble of cataloging the items, some clown (or clowns) had then packed the items into half a dozen cardboard boxes in more or less random order. Since at one stage during the preparation of the catalogue they must have been in order, I'd very much like to know who disordered them. Paul Stevens may also be interested.

I finally plucked up courage to ask a question at the now-traditional 'feminism in SF' panel; having been firmly stereotyped by both Christine Ashby and Vonda McIntyre as an MCP on the basis of no evidence whatsoever, I've been reluctant to say anything which might be interpreted in any way at all, since it could only go One Way. However, the focus of the panel on the question of the representation of other-sex characters did suggest a question to me, and I dragged up the courage to ask it. My question related to the representation of relations at once sexual but not consumable between human and alien, indicating that I was aware of stories by male writers which involved female humans, but not other combinations, and I asked the panel whether they knew of any other examples (it seemed to me that examples of this kind might illuminate something about other-sex characterisation by taking out one of the confusing factors). I don't know whether the panel didn't want to deal with the question, or whether they had become so inured to opinionating masquerading as questions that they weren't in the right frame of mind for dealing with a genuine question, but I didn't get an answer.

An okay convention, even enjoyable.

FAN FUNDS

Keith Curtis won DUFF (65 votes; Ogden 17, Herman 14) and will be our very own rep. at Boston. Keith is now also Australian Administrator.

The Deaf Welshman won TAFF by a reasonable margin over Jim Barker, who will nevertheless also be at Boston. The Big Win means that Langford is looking for someone to look after GUFF (see page 20 for further info) while he is traipsing about.

FROM BARRETT'S GARRETT'

(By Mervyn Barrett, of course)

Unless John feels it would be a kindness to rewrite and edit my desperate ravings* what follows for the next few paragraphs - a page maybe - is Barrett's fault; the typos, bad spelling, questionable punctuation. Everything.

This is being typed on John's typer at John's desk at Shakespeare Grove. I feel relaxed and intimidated all at once. Relaxed because this is a comfortable place to work in a house I feel at home in. Intimidated because I don't properly understand the typer and I can't figure out how the stops work and as well as that the shelf at the back of the desk is loaded with reference books. Dictionaries, almanacs, and books about literature. My reference library back in Wellington consists of 1 Fowler, 1 Roget, and 1 Oxford Dictionary. Inside the Oxford dictionary for no reason I can remember is a picture postcard of a pretty Japanese girl and when you tilt it she hasn't got any clothes on.

In the 'January Chunder! is a report on WELLCON by Vera Lonergan. Vera enjoyed it which pleased me as she invested more time and money getting to it than any of the others who attended. The people who attended sat through and enjoyed almost everything that was presented - even the less successful items. Their indulgence was not patronising or rooted in any ignorance of science fiction. Most of them had been readers for years. It was just a terrific kick for them to be amongst people who liked reading the stuff they liked reading, and to see and hear serious efforts at looking at it.

Certainly WELLCON was a small Con but the problems of programming are the same whether fifty attend or five hundred, so I find it hard to understand a lot of the garment rending and furniture chewing that seems to go on in convention committees. It was time-consuming but not difficult work. Maybe I was lucky or maybe it's just easier to put something like this together in Wellington. Everybody wanted to help and a couple loaned things - the screen and a tape recorder from a guy who'd been on the SF course I'd run, the slide projector from a friend, the prints of METROPOLIS and THINGS TO COME from the private library of a theatre manager, the projector at a nominal charge from the Wellington Film Society. I got help at the time of the con, and of course Brian Thurogood produced the program booklet - brilliantly. At the end of it all I came to the conclusion that I could organize the next one standing on my head - not that I had the least intention of offering to do it. Right way up or inverted.

Meanwhile back in Melbourne...

This page has been a penance done in atonement for a happy week and a half of freeloading at Maison Foyster.

MERVYN BARRETT

(* Well, I did just re-type it slightly, muttered the editor...)

CHUNDER!

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illustration this page by Ralph Silverdon

NEXT ISSUE In June, I hope. The change of address above explains most of the hiatus, but there have been a couple of other factors. One consequence of delays like this is that letters and contributions pile up, and I hope to make some inroads on those next month. My loyal columnists, praise be, recognised my difficulties and have not overwhelmed me with their works of art.

Other Changes of Address

John & Sally Bangsund, PO Box 171, Fairfield, Vic 3078.
Damien Broderick, 10 Mark Street, Brunswick, Vic 3125.
Lee Harding & Irene Pagram have moved to St Kilda, and will have a PO Box RSN.

GUFF

Nominations for GUFF II have been called. GUFF II will bring a fan from the UK to Australia for the 1981 National Convention in Adelaide. A candidate must be nominated by three fans from the UK and two from Australia, must provide a platform of not more than 100 words, and a bond of \$5 (£2.50). Nominations close August 25, 1980. Nominations should be sent to John Foyster at the above address, or to David Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7PW, United Kingdom.

FUNDRAISING FOR GUFF: Always important. Next issue will carry a mail auction catalogue (donations invited, by the way), and subs to Chunder! will go to GUFF for the rest of 1980. This reminds me that you should look closely at the bottom of the page.

SOME CHANGES: The eagle eye of George Turner has spotted some changes in Chunder! Be the first on your block to explain it all.....

STATUS: OK Better Do something

G U F F - A W E April 1980

Easter 1980: Dave Langford and John Foyster hereby call for nominations for GUFF II, the fan fun intended to bring a fan from the United Kingdom to Australia for the Australian convention in June 1981 in Adelaide.

CONDITIONS FOR NOMINATION: A candidate must be nominated by five fans - three from the United Kingdom, two from Australia (signatures required), must provide a platform of not more than 100 words, and must post a bond of \$5 or £2.50, all three to be lodged with one of the two administrators.

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS: Monday, August 25, 1980.

For further information contact eith administrator.

Dave Langford 22 Northumberland Avenue
Reading, Berkshire RG2 7PW
United Kingdom

John Foyster 21 Shakespeare Grove
St Kilda Victoria 3182
Australia

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Guffaw 1. A Quaker heard a strange noise in his house one night, got up, and discovered a burglar at work. This taking place in the country, he went and took his hunting gun, came back, and stood in the doorway.

'Friend,' he said, 'I would do thee no harm for the world, but thee standeth where I am about to shoot.'