

Michael Mann

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The fanzine of sic-fi.

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Dedicated to Mark Cherny.

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ART CREDITS

Mike McGann (p 1,2), Ralph Silverton (p 4,22), Stu Shiffman (p 17,18), Bruce Townley (p 20) and Alexis Gilliland (p 30)

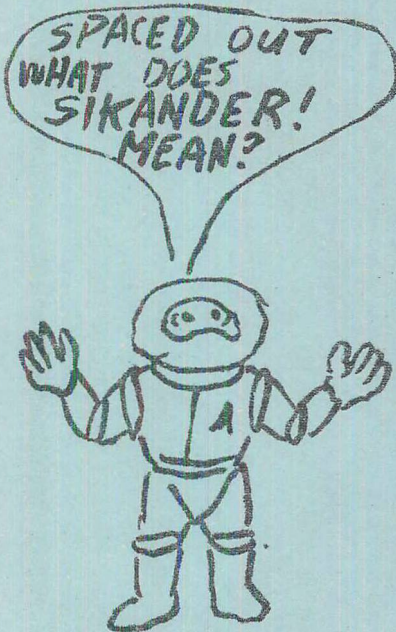
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Remember: check sound and vision.

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SANDY LANDS

editorial column by Irwin Hirsh



Three years ago, on the Australia Day weekend, Leigh Edmonds typed up a fanzine for the February mailing of ANZAPA and filled it with names like Willis, Darling, Wood, Hughes and Edmonds. When I performed the usual scanning for egoboo upon the arrival of the mailing I noted the names and assumed Leigh was referring to the contents table of an ideal Fanzine: Walt Willis, Peter and Elizabeth Darling, Susan Wood, Terry Hughes and himself. Upon the actual reading of the fanzine I very quickly realised that the use of these names were related to an item and individuals of far greater importance than fandom or the above mentioned fans.

Leigh was referring to Test Cricket and Test Cricketers.

Australia was playing England in Test Cricket over the Australia Day weekend of 1979, and Leigh was following the fortunes of the match on the TV. He was also

committing sacrilege by not devoting total attention to the game. As already mentioned, Leigh was allowing fanac to encroach onto time that is be devoted to cricket, and only cricket.

I mention all this because during this past summer I've often felt this little cringe while watching the cricket. The voices of commentators like Norman May and Tony Greig are cringe-forming as it is, but to hear them say something like "In comes Sikander to bowl to Chappell" ("... and he's got him first ball") got to be a bit too much.

Sikander in this case is Sikander Bahkt, a Pakistani cricketer, and during this past summer he was touring Australia as part of the Pakistan Test Team. I don't think that it is just a coincidence that his arrival in Australia as part of the Pakistan touring party was just prior to a high incidence of questions along the lines of "Where did you get the title of your fanzine?". It would appear that now is a good time to explain the meaning behind the title of this fanzine, because, to answer the implication behind those questions, no, I did not title this fanzine after a Pakistani cricketer.

I happen to know that the word Sikander has something to do with the Hindu religion, but I must confess that with this connection, I know very little else. Whether it is a person, a place, an adjective or,...

whatever I just don't know. Except in the sense that it has been used in fiction. In particular, The Man Who Would Be King, both in Rudyard Kipling's story, and, more specifically for my purposes, in John Huston's film. I first saw the film in January, 1976, and was immediately taken by it. That first opinion was conformed when I saw it again 18 months later.

I'll always have trouble trying to answer the question of what are my favourite five, ten, or even hundred films; catch me on one day and I know my answer will be different of that of the day before. But I do know that in the long run The Man Who Would Be King would show up very often in those lists. (I should point out that I find the practise of making up these sort of lists to be a futile exercise when compared to taking one item on that list and describing what it is about it that you like/don't like.) As a straight out adventure film it achieves its aim; there is barely a lax moment to be found. As a film with a deeper level it also works well with its story of the break-down of human nature by the too intimate contact between a strong race and the weak. Its script is always forward looking (as opposed to predictable), its sets majestic, its photography beautiful and its casting marvellous (Sean Connery and Michael Caine were excellent in a way that is not often seen in films).

But to get back to Sikander. It is out of my respect for this film that I titled this fanzine. In the film the temple that Connery and Caine reach as part of their quest is called Sikandergul. All I did was chop off the gul bit, and here we are with its seventh serving. All very simple, really.

In a way I wish I could have taken the even easier way out and just said that I got the name from a Pakistani cricketer. After all, he was also touring here at the same time that I was formulating plans for this fanzine. There is a definite relationship between its use in the story and its place in Hinduism, and I feel like I'm wasting something by not knowing more about this relationship. For all I know I could have a significant title - something that makes a definite statement - that is being interpreted as such by its readership and resulting in my fanzine being responded to in such a light.

Also, by saying that I got the name from a Pakistani cricketer, I am giving recognition to the worlds most weird game. I am not aware of a game that can go on for 5 days and then be declared an undecided draw. Nor am I aware of a game that has a set of rules that approaches the length of cricket's (47 rules, most with notes and sub-notes). I've often thought that cricket has to be the most ridiculous game in the world, and so it would be the fannish thing to name a fanzine after one of its participants.

The problem with that being that I would never name a fanzine after Sikander Bakht. He has never been more than the stock bowler in the Pakistan pace attack, and is hardly the type of player to be called upon to get his side out of trouble. And I wouldn't want this quality to be reflected in my fanzine, via choice of title.

So, effective next issue, this fanzine is to be called Bradman.

* * * * *

The previous issue of Sikander is the weakest issue I've put together.



I have to say this, particularly by way of explaining the increase in size of this fanzine. It's hard for me to really define what was wrong with the last issue, because there was actually very little about the last issue that was bad. With one exception (which I'll get to later) there was nothing wrong with any of the articles, and they are still articles that I would've wanted to publish. The same goes for the art. The letter-column is, perhaps, a strange one to look at as it involves the meshing of many components and here the fault lies with me as I know that when I was putting together the letter-column, my heart wasn't really in it.

Of course, ultimately, that was the major problem with the last issue. For the first time I felt that maybe I should have dumped the issue, rather than send it out. Sikander #6 is very much an issue that I worked on and sent out out of an obligation. In an attempt to maintain the quarterly schedule that I felt proud of I neglected to look at the structure of the issue, and didn't notice what was wrong. Even though I knew that something was wrong.

Basically the problem with the last issue was that all the articles were too short, and didn't fit in together to form a cohesive unit. A good fanzine should be greater than the sum of its parts, but for me the last issue was equal to the sum of its parts. I could have sent out each article separately and the effect would have been no different. I know now that what I should've done was waited till I recieved a 6 page article, worked out which of the shorter articles worked best with it, and then pubbed my ish while holding on to the 'rejects' for a later issue.

This issue, with its increased size and deliberate delay in publication is an attempt to get back on the track I was following before the publication of Sikander #6. The size is to make sure that I do have a balanced issue, because a 40 page fanzine full of 2-4 page articles would be even more stilted than a 20 page fanzine. And by deliberately blowing my deadline I was then able to sit down to getting things right without having to rush towards meeting a schedule. And as it is, the six month interval between the previous issue and this one is still pretty good by comparison with today's fanzines, and with the next issue I intend on getting back to the more frequent schedule.

This frequency of publication is something that I'm quite proud of, and is something that I feel is important to a fanzine. A frequency of publication sets up the situation where each issue is one part of

something bigger, rather than one in a series of one-shots published under the same title. Given a basic level of good editing, writing, artwork and production values, it is a frequent appearance of a fanzine that generates the enthusiasm to be self-sustaining. I think this works not only for the editor and contributors (in the oft-mentioned point that the writer would like to see publication of his/her article and response in pretty quick time), but also the reader; I've noticed that the frequent publication receives more response than the once-a-year-or-longer jobs, and I can't help but feel that this is because receiving a fanzine while the previous issue is relatively fresh in the mind plays a large part in determining whether the intention of writing a letter-of-comment is actually transformed into practice. From October, 1979 to September, 1981 I published 6 issues of this fanzine, the last 4 in a year, and I have no doubt that this is the reason why I receive a steady supply of response, a relatively comfortable outcome to my solicitations for material (even if they tend to arrive uncomfortably close to my deadline) and the occasional unsolicited article.

So for a while Sikander will be different from the previous issues: look towards seeing some 40 pagers in the future. It's going to increase the workload in publishing this fanzine, but I find this far more desirable than continuing with a fanzine the likes of Sikander #6.

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It would also appear that when I wasn't taking proper notice I was set up by one John Alderson. This is the one exception that I mentioned earlier.

The article of John's that I published last issue is something that I really should have rejected. While it had a few interesting points to make it bothered me in nearly all its assumptions and conclusions, and I can't really explain what it was that possessed me to publishing it. I've never been interested in fanzines that are interested in controversy for controversy's (and a large letter-column's) sake, and I've not wanted this fanzine to slot into that category. I can only suggest that the act of me publishing John's article was a prime example of the type of lazy attitude I had towards this fanzine last time around.

It's been interesting to observe the way the fanzine activity of John's has gone over the last year or so, as opposed to that from when I was first in fandom. It used to be that an article from John would be amusing or the type of article that sparked an interesting discussion (as distinct to raising some heated controversy). Now, all John appears to be interested in is getting people worked up. With every article the pattern is the same: all response to it will disagree, and some people will note that it is another example of John selecting his data to support his previously held "wrong" convictions. John will follow this with a letter-of-comment responding to nothing more than what his article generated - it would be a long time since I saw a John Alderson loc that wasn't devoted exclusively to a topic he had raised

in a previous issue. I have no doubt that this would've happened to me, except this little editorial comment has probably blown any chance I have of receiving a letter-of-comment from the direction of Havelock.

Or anything else for that matter. I'd like to think that if John was to go back to writing articles of the type that used to interest him he will think of me and my fanzine. For as it is now should he send me an article with the same sort of tone as "Personally Speaking" I'll reject it out of hand. I don't need to be party to helping John get his rather narrow minded thoughts to fandom.

- Irwin Hirsch

THE HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE HEART

a column by Billy Wolfenbarger

4.

Three days from now we depart Oregon for Illinois and Missouri in the midwest for two weeks, over Christmas and New Years; and I'll be soaking up ghosts from my childhood and early youth in Missouri. I will let them enter. I met my best friend, John McNabb, in Neosho, where we both lived. John McNabb is a few years younger than I am, and I was 21 when we got together in the summer of 1965. He turned me on to what Bob Dylan was really all about. Though actually, to really tell you about this crazyman properly would take something of book length. Even the essence of John McNabb is so cosmic I can't find the few words or lines it would otherwise require. McNabb is a man of many lives. I'll always remember John and his guitar. No, not silver stringed, as the man Wellman knows, but acoustic nonetheless. Mostly a kind of folk blues singer, lyric poet put sound to song and make it come out real. I love to hear him play. His self-written songs are about nearly anything you might care naming. I'd love to have a tape of his stuff. I've got a Christmas present for John when we see him and his lady in Columbia, Missouri on New Year's Eve, and I can go ahead and tell you: (he'll get it before he reads this); I saved the paperback edition of Ramsey Campbell's horror novel The Parasite. Most of the fantasy John has read I believe has been in the Tolkien vein, but I really feel he'll get gripped by this one. John and I don't get together much these days, living in different directions of the country as we do, though we do stay in touch: a letter, a phone call, something. A year ago May he was able to fly out and spend a busy weekend with wife Loretta, daughter Sara and I. He wants to come back this coming summer and bring his lady Lori - and a very fine lady she is - and I wish he could find work out here, but that's pretty rare, even for the natives. Oregon has been an economically depressed area for years already.

John and I got to see one another this past June, when I returned to Neosho for my 20-year high school reunion. (That's another tale in

itself: quite spacey, in fact; seeing these kid faces grown up and doing their various occupations, habits; quite time-traveling, quite high, like a flashback). Seeing John again is always a dear flashback and a dear few moments in the present whenever it occurs. So John, Lori and I drove around the old haunts, visited other friends grown older. We got to see Aaron Wright (otherwise known as the Horney Devil), whom I hadn't seen in something like nine or ten years.

And it seems John and I are something of underground historical figures in that town of Neosho, Missouri for integrating that place in the mid-60s. And they said it couldn't be done. It was manifold: in many overt ways (and in most ways) it was more spontaneous a thing than anything else. It wasn't a "political movement"; as far as I'm concerned politics had nothing to do with it. I'm apolitical. I've said that before in other places and it remains as true then and before as it does now and tomorrow, and all the others that may be blessed to come. It was (& is) just more like people getting together, opening up, getting high, getting open minded with open hearts. It was partying. It was being lonely together & coming to realize more & more you're only making yourself lonely in your own little headtrip ways. I was beatnik-inspired and returned from California with reams of poetry trying to get out of my head onto paper: most of it didn't make it out; wish I could fish it up. This Neosho integration thing: it was more "... a revolution under the ribs" as Lawrence Lipton used to call it, so much more than anything else. And the straights couldn't believe it. The squares didn't think we could blow their minds. It was heavy, it was frustrating, and it was very beautiful...mellow. And they said it couldn't be done. It was manifold. When Aaron told me this, I was reminded I'd forgotten about that whole aspect. And his dark face laughed.

It's so easy and tempting to let the memories run through this head and heart through the hands, but you're not ready for 86,000 words of Wolfenbarger's memory lane. And John has always been tripping in my memory. For instance: back in the old days John McNabb was always something of a legend; a kind of crazy revolutionary; why, the people down at the North End of town (where all the black folks live), generally gave him the name of Robin Hood. This is mostly because he could get day-old bread early mornings to see these North-Enders could get something to eat.

John was in a car accident many years gone once where he went through the windshield of a VW and lost an eye. He had a black patch over it (that hole, gaping) while they were fixing him up a glass one; during this eye-patch time he'd play pirate to the little kids waiting in line with their mothers and fathers in super markets.

Three days from now we'll board that ole Amtrak in Eugene and go to Seattle, where we change trains and zip through winter to Chicago, where the beginning visits with Loretta's relatives keep our eyes open and the ghosts stir; and may this be manifold. Christmas at Loretta's folks on the farm, then probably rent a car for the long drive to Neosho, spend a couple of days with my mother; and let the childhood modes and other ghosts ramble. Then drive to Columbia, see John and

hi tech was utilized to pump out schmaltzy renditions of various Billy Joel and Barry Manilow tunes, songs not exactly noted for their low sucrose content.

But old Aunt Dawn really liked the pizza at this place and so she was really looking forward to it and so was I even though I'd never had any there and even though they only had Schlitz beer to drink (Gh!). We got one with the works, even anchovies. My mouth watered which helped to wash out the taste of the Schlitz from my mouth. Finally our number, the number that was assigned to our order of food, flashed onto the tote board that displayed such things. I'd just thought that the thing was part of that damned organ. Turned out not to be because one of my cousins zoomed over to the counter and sure enough came back with our pizza. "I like the crust best," sez Dawn, "It's crunchy!". It sure was. What it was, was something that had just been schlepped out of the freezer and somonto our plate, just after being dosed with microwaves to give it a life-like appearance, steamy. The crust was so crunchy it was like a big matzoh and just as tasty. Bleh. Made me pine for the good old days of a few weeks before when I'd been on the first leg of my journey, visiting with Gil Gaier in Los Angeles. Gil said to me over another steamy hunk of pizza, "I don't eat pizza very much but I really like the way they make it here!". Well that he should, it was some of the best pizza I'd ever had (this comes from a pizza vet yet) with a freshly baked crust that was delightfully topped with garden-fresh ingredients. It was light-years away from that circular object that I was subjected to in Denver.

Thing was, that wasn't the best bread that I broke with my pal Gil. The most memorable meal that we shared was in this little place just off Hollywood Blvd. It served Indian food all the way from the sub-continent of. Of India, natch. It was called "The Bengal Tiger" for the ample reason that there were about 20 pix of the critters leering out from every vertical surface, such as walls. Moments before we'd just toddled out of a semi-Japanese place that served sushi burgers or tuna dogs and like that and since we were looking for food as such it just was the place for us.

Ah, but "The Bengal Tiger", on the outside it looked to be even slimier a place than the one we'd just tottered out of. On the inside, it was impossible to tell just what was going on, for it was real dark. So dark I could just barely see my beer.

What we got was curry and rice and two kinds of bread. "Big deal," you might say, "I've seen BREAD before! I've even eaten some! Ha!" Well, you'd be wrong. One kind of bread came as a sort of puffy lump, a sort miniature fried football, only better tasting. The other was a kind of pancake affair, but foreign, like a flapjack from the moon. Both were deliciously different from each other and anything I'd ever eaten before. They had complex flavors, both sweet like syrup and spicy like fried onions. They were both nearly a meal by themselves.

Of course there was the curry itself too. It was lamb c.rry and also quite good. Certainly more edible than a tuna dog or anything else I had in LA.

I'd have to say that that place, as good as the food was, was as dark as the inside of an Iguanodon. Of course I've never been on the inside of an Iguanodon but, but I've read about some guys who have. See, at that great Victorian exhibition, the Crystal Palace of 1853, there were several models constructed of concrete by Richard Owen of dinosaurs - all life-sized. Since they were (they have since fallen into complete obscurity, they're not even there anymore) life-sized that also means they were fairly large sized. Large enough, it turns out for Richard Owen and about 12 of his friends to sit down and have a sit-down dinner party in one of em to sort of inaugurate em. Even though Owen got the general shape of Iguanodon all wrong (he pictured it as an immense iguana, lizard-like, when it seems to have actually strode about on its hind legs) he certainly knew how to show em a good time.

The flight from LAX to San Francisco was pretty much faultless, no thanks to the air-traffic controllers' strike. It was a little late, about 20 minutes, which was just as well because there was this great huge line at the check-in counter. Most of the folks there were foreigners for some reason, from Mars or points west, judging from their accents. Those accents sounded like they'd been borrowed from Casablanca. I'd have drawn the line right there (points, vigorously) if I'd had to leave LA in a Ford Tri-Motor just like all the refugees did in that movie.

Took me longer to get it all together, including my luggage, from the airport to downtown SF, than it took to fucking fly there. I had been instructed by none other than Rich Coad to await Gary Mattingly once I got downtown. It appears that Gary Mattingly has nothing better to do all day at work than to wait for phonecalls from callow out-of-towners and get paid for it too! Well, anyway, I finally got ahold of him on the phone after he'd come out from hiding behind the office water cooler or wherever he was. The Japanese lady next to me in the line of phone-booths had had enough time to call somebody's answering service in Oregon. I hung up the phone after a brief chat with Gary and then remembered I didn't really know what Gary looked like. As I stood there, tapping my boot, it occurred to me just how poignant my situation was. I was waiting for some guy I'd never met and only knew through that most tenuous of sci-fi fandom contacts, the apazine. Stood there just about 3,000 miles away from a neighborhood I really knew well. At least it didn't look like rain.

Just then, Buddy Wilson walks right by me. Really looked like old Buddy Wilson, a buddy of mine from college (along with Buddy Webster) who now works as an accountant for the Virginia Electric & Power Company Headquarters in Richmond, VA and looks like it 'cept of course when he's bowling or watching wrestling. One fatal night he absolutely obliterated one of the doors to a showerstall in the dorm bathroom by means of the deadly "Claw" hold, a sorta combination Brain-Buster and Sleeper hold that works just as well on everyday household objects as it does on ravenous wrestlers.

The only thing that looked wrong about Buddy was that he was dressed like Lou Reed (black T-shirt, black pegged jeans, black sneakers, and,

later -- when it got cool, black leather jacket) which is why I didn't immediately demand an explanation as to why he wasn't in fucking Richmond, taking care of business. What goes on? He walked by me and everybody else still at the bus stop, glancing at each of us in turn. When he started this routine all over again I took a chance and asked him if he was Gary. Sure enough he was and had been all the time. Good thing too -- I wasn't too wild about the thought that Buddy Wilson had gotten himself cloned.

We flopped into his car right after he'd driven it around and went barreling off to his apt. I noticed right off that he didn't talk too much which fit right in with what I'd read about him in fnz and also with what Rich Coad had warned me about him. As we drove along I noticed that he seemed to be talking even less. Gee, I thought, what a shy guy. I was a trifle concerned as he seemed determined to fill in the gaps of his lapsing loquaciousness with hand and upper body gestures of increasing bluster, mostly involving his driving arm when he was negotiating a complex turn. Gary turned out to be afflicted with some kind of creeping laryngitis that gradually turned a normally quiet boy into a hulk that was only somewhat more inarticulate than usual. As I have an abnormal amount of wax in my ears my chronic problem after I've flown any distance is that my ears seem to acquire an extra part from somewhere up in the clouds. This part consists of a show box filled nearly to the brim with luke-warm Silly Putty that slops around irregularly causing a sound effect to transpire in my middle ear not unlike an improperly recorded tape on a tape recorder that's real cheap on a similarly cheap tape so the sounds fade in and out only part of the time.

So there we sat. He couldn't talk so good and I couldn't hear so good. It became a joke for that week when I was there to shout startingly at Gary, when he tried to rasp out something, a line like this: "HUM!? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY!? SPEAK UP!?". A real scream. More on this later.

The plan was that I was to be dropped off at Gary and Patty (Peters) apt. and wait for them to get off work. In the meantime I managed to puruse a stack of slipsheets for the next Skug, get really hungry (like here it was 5pm and all I'd had to eat all day was some goofy sandwich on the plane), and nearly sabotage Gary's extremely complicated and expensive stereo system just before he walked through the door.

"Uh, I didn't touch it!" I stammered as I drew my hands away from the Philips head screwdriver I'd just gouged into the innards of that same stereo. "I was just trying to get this Residents LP to sound right!" I nervously expostulated. Gary expostulated right back with some nerve: "Um, it's sposed, ah, to, um, sound that way! Uh. Um. Good to see you again Bruce. Ah. Um. Patty should be here soon. Then we can, um, go around and, uh, do things. Um."

Sure enough, um, Patty did indeed show up real soon we sure did go out and do things. First on the menu was some food, much to my relief. And, boy, what great food!

We drove in Gary's quirky Rabbit from their apt. in downtown to a Mex

restaurant, somewhere else downtown. This place is called the Roosevelt Tamale Parlour (Real south-of-the-border name, huh?) which has been in the same location since 1922 or so it sez right here on this matchbook I've still got which rode around in the hind pocket of my jeans for an undetermined amount of time and space. What we had was burritos that had been deep-fried and then smothered in sour cream and guacamole, deeeeee-lish! We finished our second Dos Equis and then hopped into Gary's Rabbit what's got some personality problems. Then we proceeded to drive around for about four hours, seeing the sights. Or, at least, attempting to. See, I'd always thought that the fog coming in off the bay in SF was some sort of bogus publicity stunt, perhaps set up by the postcard manufacturers. So when we drove by the Pacific Ocean and thence the Golden Gate Bridge, about 20 minutes after the fog had rolled in there was nothing to see aside from a sort of a visual white noise. We scooted by these visual non-events and Gary waves his arm at this conceptual sight and croaks with glee, "And there's the Golden Gate Bridge!" I replied in a rather surly tone, "Oh yeah!?"

We had reached a summit of sorts. There's this big hill astride the major portion of town, the rest of it, that's all downhill. We'd parked and gotten out to look around for that was the thing to do. There was a wide spot in the road just for that. It was right beneath this towering structure that looked like a Martian tripod if Yves Tanguy had done the special effects, all hard angles set in Jell-o. Pretty surreal stuff. They said it was a TV tower, so folks could get better reception in the valley. Looked to me as though if it really was a tripod like I'd hoped it would be, the most strategic spot for it to be sited was just where it was so it could reap havoc. Just then Patty turned to me and commented that if an earthquake of the scale of the one in '06 transpired today all those pretty skyscrapers down there would be fodder of razor edged debris. The whole of the downtown district would be carpeted in broken glass 30 feet deep. I'd been feeling a chill and now I know why! Woooooosh!

Wanted my black leather motorcycle jacket that I'd bought at Wards in Springfield Mall back in July for \$128 to take the nip off my back but that was some thousand or so miles away. Gary got his out of the car and put it on instead.

Zoomed back to the apt. and gave Bill Breiding a ring. Seems that he lives but a few blocks away. And sure enough he did for we trundled over to his place and there he was. He and I got on famously. I soon showed my true nature and started rubbing him unflaggingly and even naggingly about some niggling little error he'd made. To prove just what a swell guy he was he waited till we were both outside before he gave me a vicious curb-stomping. I mean, that's where the curb was.

It was decided that we should go out and acquire some Anchor Steam Beer. Great stuff! And that's from Patty Peters' lips. Who was I to argue. Who indeed. We actually had to walk to get the beer. And walk we did; to several corner markets that were germinated at the vertex of every block of buildings around. Never did find Anchor Steam even though Patty was convinced there was some, just around the corner. Did

bump into a derelict who was confused by a ticket just issued to him by some handy cops and also by God only knows what combination of chemicals. The guy rebounded off Gary with a wet, sucking sound and then slobbered into his ear a query about the meaning of it all and specifically the ticket. Gary told him: It's probably the best thing for you. Gary was quite rightfully proud of this put-off, for it completely short-circuited this guy. Couldn't find an Anchor Steam so we had to settle for Olympia, Clint Eastwood's fave brand of beer.

Eventually it was time to slide on over to Rich's. Rich had called while Patty and I were sucking down beers, telling each other how much we hated our bosses (I didn't even know she knew my boss), finding out that she knew where Jackson, Mich. was ("Yeah, that's where the State Penitentiary used to be." just like everybody else who knows sez), while Gary was in the other room slipsheeting and pumping out Skuf with many grim gestures. Rich had called from work and tried to wheedle a ride home from Gary but no dice. So we hopped over to Rich's apt. where I was really supposed to be staying and got to meet the lovely Stacey while I was in a somewhat sodden state we chatted about animals (she was making a list of em when I walked in, did I make the list?).

Sure enough Rich showed up a bit after 11pm. Something flopped out of my mouth that sounded a little like: "Aha! The Coad of the West!" but not enough like it to get me into any trouble. Of course we went out to eat then. Lotta good places to eat in SF! I ordered some kind of salad on bread which I thought would end up looking an' handling like a sandwich but which acted more like a vegetarian gored ox so I concentrated on the pitcher of Bass Ale Rich had so thoughtfully ordered. Some time later we went back through more of that damn fog and I flopped onto that mattress that was my bed right on the floor, next to Rich's amp.

The next day we went out and had a fine breakfast of chicken burritos and Dos Equis! Can't fault it! Too soon Rich had to catch a bus to work that was trying desperately to imitate a trolley car.

Later Loren MacGregor showed up at Rich's place and even though it took me some 45 minutes to get him to say his name, what a shy guy!, Loren's a fine fellow, prepared to address any subject with the right zip coad or code even.

Even later, like on that Saturday or Sunday even (I'd gotten into town on a Tuesday) it was time for the band, Rich's band, to practice. The band consists of Jill Breiding, Lynn Kuehl, and Rich and some other guys who never showed up like the singer or the drum player, a pretty stripped down sound. They were trying to get some Carl Perkins tune down which evolved into an involved task as not all of the band was there and even Bill who appeared to be not all there either because they had to go over this one break in the song over and over again, solely for his benifit. Which of course Bill deserved the hard time which I gave him for. For?

Somewhat even later Patty and Gary showed up with some knnd of Mexican food on a flat tortilla with meat and cheese and lettuce and guacamole which I think are called chabupas. Whatever it was there are no

complaints from this corner. It was also a swell treat to meet Cheryl Cline in person. She was suitably impressed with my Doctor X T-shirt that I wore in her honor (Doc X is a masked wrestler who I've never seen on TV but he must be pretty good to have his own T-shirt and everything). We went over to a friend of her's apt. that was nearby. We collected Cheryl's friend and visited most of the bookstores that line Haight St while the boys stayed at Rich's place, to goof around with their guitars. I expressed only desultory interest in these fine shops as I'd already visited 'em two hours before with Rich, Rich's sister, Bill and Stacey. There's also this superb toy store at the foot of Haight where it goes into Golden Gate Park, which we had to go into. They musta had about forty different kinds of wind-up toys in that place, half of which I scooped up and even paid for. What they also had which fascinated both Bill and I were these little cans that you tip over and a bladder on the inside is squashed by its own weight. A sound comes out that is a little bit like what a barnyard critter would make. Bill bought a cow and I bought a lamb ("Lamb-Baah" or so it says). In concert and with the same exact unspoken thought we hid 'em behind our backs and amused ourselves with partially suppressed giggles by activating 'em as unwary Californians schlepped by. But that wasn't the funniest part. The funniest part practically prostrated (good thing he was already sitting down) Lynn Kuehl when he noticed what was printed on the side of the thing. "It likes to live in a POCKET!!!" crackled Lynn, delightfully.

Jay and Dixie Kinney showed up later and we all sat down to chow down and drink a fair quantity of Anchor Steam Beer along with some New Albion Stout. I had to go down and open the front door and the gate for old Jay and he came in and warned me that: "I can't hear too well because I've still got Epsom Salt in my ears. Hope I'm not talking too loud." He wasn't, much. Epsom Salt in the ears is a common enough condition when you've just spent the afternoon floating in an isolation tank ala Altered States. Loren MacGregor also showed up later.

Not in time for the Two Alarm Chili however. Rich had coaxed me into fixing some with and some without. With and without beans that is. Before I'd left for the West Coast I'd bought several packages of this authentic Texas delicacy that has everything except some meat (you can use anything from rattlesnake to moose though I prefer beef or pork), some water and some tomato sauce. I bought them so I could pass them on as gifts to my hosts. It's nearly as hot as a nuclear melt-down (the packet of red chilies alone is about the size of your hand and the whole melange demands something to coat your tummy, corn bread or rice at the very least).

Earlier, Rich and I had gone out to a local organic veggie market (the only kind in San Francisco, natch) and bought some Pinto beans just so's we'd have some trouble with our gas tanks later. I didn't know much about beans and didn't want any in my chili so I had to make two pots full. I just tossed the dried beans right in, during cooking. Turns out that you're supposed to soak the beans for some time before cooking 'em, preferably all night long. Both pots turned out pretty much ok though. Just lucky I guess.

After we'd had our chilli I ended up on the couch between Cheryl, Gary and Jay. I couldn't hear so well still. Cheryl couldn't hear so well because she just couldn't help it, she's naturally hard-of-hearing. Jay still had all that Epsom Salt in his ears. Who knows how well the normally only semi-loquacious Gary could hear because that demon laryngitis had him completely under its spell, he was even more speechless than ever. It was a chorus of "Huh?", "What?" and the very air itself swishing from Gary's frenetic hand gestures. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Before everybody left that night we ended up passing around this book that Rich Coad's sister had dug up. What it was was a list of sexual myths and fallacies and the true fax about 'em. By the time we had started reading choice bits from the book aloud to each other I'd lost track of which were the fallacies and which weren't. Somebody had happened upon a particularly juicy bit about how if you're a guy and you like to have your nipples stimulated during intercourse then of course you're queer! While I was still trying to puzzle out if this was supposed to be a hit or a myth Gary squeaked out with unlooked for vibrancy, loud enough so that it penetrated into every corner of the room and even into my ears: "Well, I like to have my nipples stimulated!!". Rich Coad decided to get to the bottom of all this and with scientific pluck quizzed Patty Peters if she'd noticed if Gary really did like to have his nips tongued. Patty allowed as she really didn't remember, she was busy at the time. So, only in the interests of pure research mind you, all the guys in the room started to chase Gary around the apt. to perform the experiment. As this involved restraining him while somebody else got down to stimulating his nipples this got rather, um, involved. It never was concluded to anybody's satisfaction, least of all Gary's.

But, like I said before, I wouldn't have missed any of it for the world.

- Bruce Townley

YE ED'S NOTE This has been the third installment of "Burgers From Mars". The first installment appeared in Bruce's own Phiz. The second installment appeared in Rich Coad's Space Junk 5. Look towards a fanzine near you for the forth installment.

As a result of having been in Israel I always push and shove when getting onto a bus. Even when I'm the only one getting on.

- Yvonne Shafir

I played a little pinball at Cross-Eyed Moose, did OK, then played "Star Trek" and just couldn't lose. First I got 4 games for 25¢, then a match, then a replay, then another match, a special, another replay, another replay, another match ... it pays to be an ex-trekkie.

- Diane Drutowski, 16 Feb 1980, in a letter to the editor.

The last time I was disconcerted was due to my cries of "Boring!" during a Dire Straits concert, or maybe a Sky concert. I don't remember. - Marc Ortlieb, 18 Oct 1981, in a letter to the editor.

WITH A CAST OF THOUSANDS (AND DOMOVAN THE WONDER DANG)

Stu Shiffman

I should have thought of it before ...sure, reading about the old Unicorn Productions' Wrai Ballard, the Musquite Kid and Terry Carr practicing his line: "I'm F.M. Busby, and this is my child bride Elinor". Or even when catching Robert Preston in The Music Man and hearing the lines of The Mimeo Man instead...

While still reeling from what I felt was Rocky Mountain Hubris at Denvention II, I decided to investigate the "Fandom in the Seventies" panel. The whole concept of the panel struck me as bizarre, as the 1970's seemed to have been spent wondering where the sixties had gone. However, it seemed typical of the Denvention programming that we meet to dissect a non-existent decade.

Besides, I'd get a chance to heckle my friends ...and they might mention me.

The panel, (an assemblage of Tom Digby, Jon Singer, James Maxwell Young, Mike Glicksohn and Moshe Feder that was not at all moderated by Gil Gaier) was discussing the prevalence of the non-reading media SF fan at conventions and the sheer impossibility of socializing these people in fannish mores and traditions. The usual methods, small group contact and fanzine communication, are negated by the size of convention populations and the visual media orientation of those people who swell "our" cons.

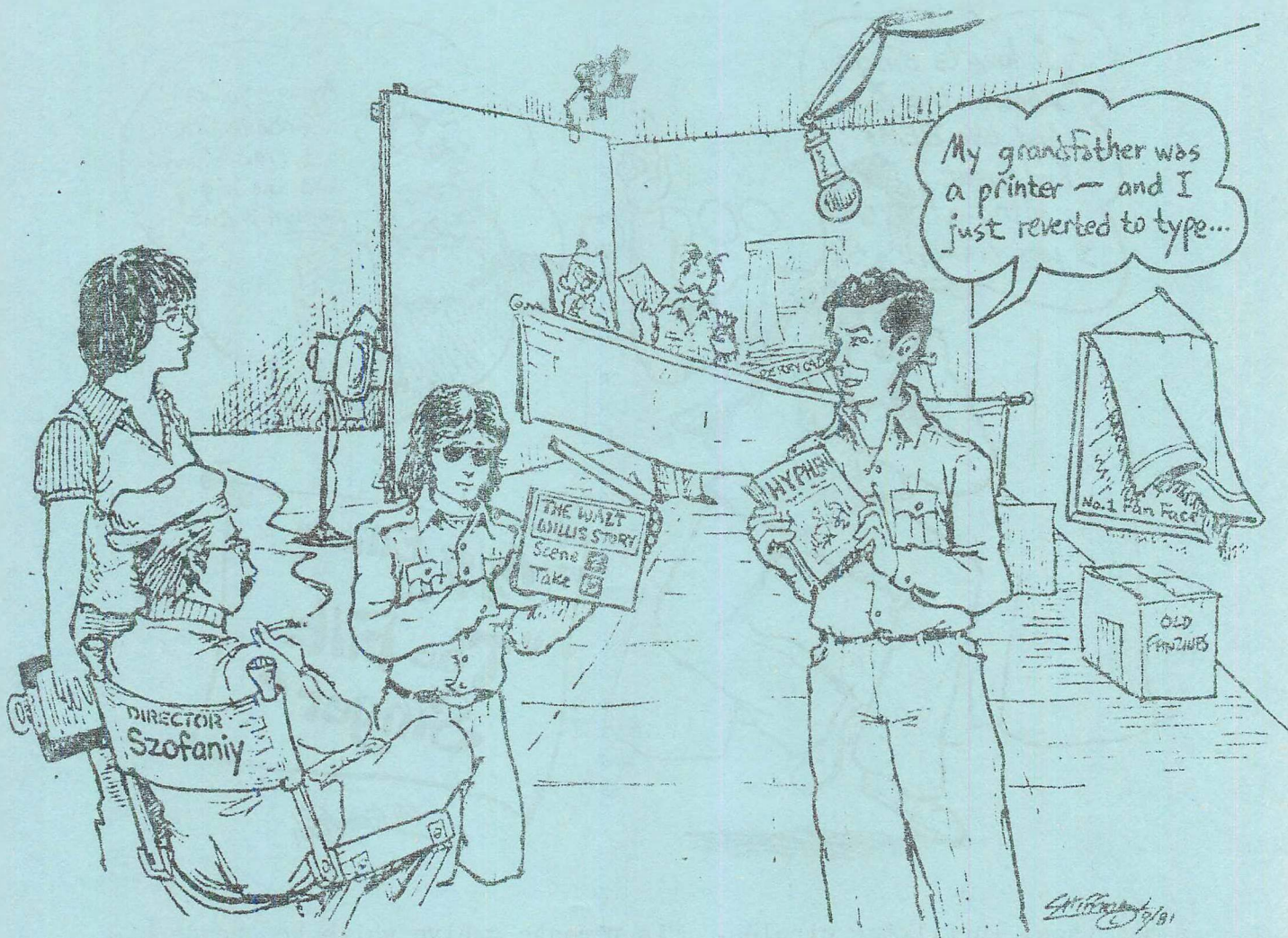
Someone - perhaps the Illuminated Singer - came up with the notion of making films to teach the throngs ...and then it came to me (naturally, as if in a vision).

The Walt Willis Story! With Technicolour, Breath-taking Cinemascope and STEREOPHONIC SOUND. Yes, I could envision it and a whole series of block-buster movies embodying the fannish ideal.

The more I thought about it, the better it sounded.

We'd open with a slow pan over the verdant Irish countryside (Larry Carmody can be in charge of our location team) up to a picturesque old cottage. Sure and begorrah, comes a high feminine voice with the lilt of the Emerald Isle, what are ye doing with that filthy machine, Walter A. Willis. Bejabbers, comes a reply, why darlin' Madelaine, I am of a mind to become a scientifiction fan and be publishing a magazine with a new slant on the genre.

Oh, too Sam Goldwyn? OK, then to the attic of 170 Upper Newtownards Road in Belfast, the Gem of Ulster in those happier times. A furious and madcap ghoddmitten game is going on between two actors made up to be John Berry and Walt Willis. They both collapse after the eleventh hour use of the Ultimate Weapon (the Marilyn Monroe poster). James White and Bob Shaw come up the stairs and ask when they'll be starting

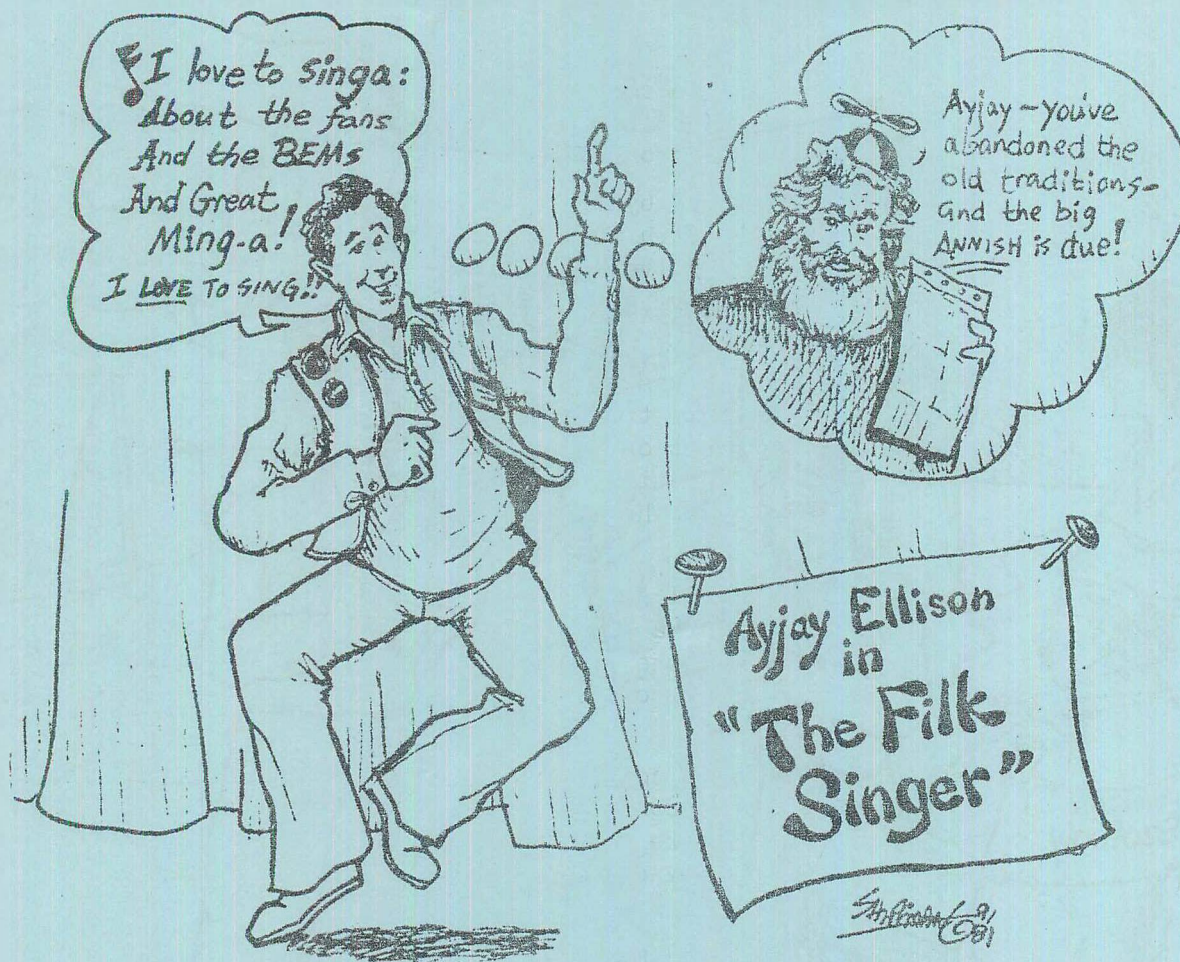


the new issue of Wyphen. The actor portraying Shaw asks Willis where he gets all his publishing fever from.

"Well," he replies, "my grandfather was a printer and I've just reverted to type."

Right - I see big headlines in Science Fiction Chronicle: WILLIS FLICK BOFFO HIT - Metro-Shiffman-Meyer unveils new projects! I've got a whole range of fillum ideas: Rocky Mountain Horror Show about Denvention II, the big movie musical of The Mimeo Man with David Emerson repeating his stage performances, Raiders of the Enchanted Duplicator for the adventure and Dungeon & Dragon freaks, a film adaptation of the 1950's Liverpool Group tapera The March of Slime as Somewhere in Slime with Christopher Reeve as Eric Bentcliffe, and The Filk Singer.

The Filk Singer - what a concept! Obviously derived from The Jazz Singer, the story that Al Jolson brought to the screen and Neil Diamond butchered. A second generation fan named, let us say, Ayjay Ellison, has abandoned the fanzine fan traditions of his parents and has become



a big wheel in filking circles. His parents greive while he spends his time singing songs about bouncing potatoes and dead Dorsai like Jacques Chretien. And then the Annish times comes around, Ayjay's dad is ill, his mother calls him back to the Old Ways - Ayjay must choose between his tinsel filksinger milieu and the meaningful fan responsibilities.

Plenty of pathos and plenty of music and yocks.

Write soon for reserved seats for the premieres at a theatre near you.

- Stu Shiffman

 LEIGH EDMONDS'J', Untitled extract from "Backa Bourke Bulletin 15"
 ENTROPY REPRINT published by Willi Parkes

It's been a fair while since the latest issue of CSRC and I've been trying to catch up by setting some of the type while I'm on the track. The other night I was camped at one of my favourite spots, on the Harrego twenty or so miles west of Bourke, with the lamp hung from the branch of a tree, setting type when this old bloke just about scared

the living daylights out of me.

You know how it is, when you're concentrating so intensely that you wouldn't notice if the good lord himself arrived. Hugo didn't hear him either, but he's that old I reckon he can hardly hear himself bark.

"Good evening" this bloke, said by way of announcing himself. His manner was refined - as you often find in the bush - but I was so surprised I just about knocked over the camp table. Just as well that I didn't because lead would have gone everywhere and I'd still be cursing him.

Anyhow, it turned out that he was an old bloke, about sixty I'd have said. Even though I was crook at him it's not the style to be too rough with most people you meet on the track so I invited him to join me for a bit of tea out of the billy. I was hoping that he wasn't going to hang around but I had the feeling it was going to be one of those nights.

The evening was a bit cool so I jabbed at the fire a bit to liven it up and we sat looking into it for a while, just listening to the crickets and rustling of the reeds and the leaves in the trees. After a while we got to talking in a general sort of way, as strangers who meet on the track are wont to do.

Then he asked me what I'd been doing when he'd come up, which is a reasonable question since you don't often see fans setting type out in the middle of the bush. All the same, it wasn't something I wanted to get talking about, you know how difficult it can be trying to explain fandom to the uninitiated.

"I was setting type for a small magazine I publish," I offered, sort of offhand.

His eyes lit up instantly "Really! I used to do something like that once." As he said this his eyes turned down and a sudden sadness seemed to come over him, as though he'd remembered something best left forgotten. After a moment his eyes lifted again. "What sort of magazine?"

Here we go, I thought to myself, as I replied, "Oh, nothing much, just a little magazine dedicated to the discussion of Scientific Romances."

I expected the usual sarcastic reaction. But instead this old bloke just looked very surprised, amazed perhaps. For a moment it looked as though he was going to say something but he kept his mouth shut. Looking back now I get the real impression that the overwhelming emotion the old bloke had was what you'd have to call hope.

What followed was a most extraordinary conversation in which I did most of the talking and he kept on pumping me for more, his old frame becoming more agitated as we talked.

I had to begin by explaining about the Colonial Scientific Romance Commentary (which made him chuckle) expecting him to be puzzled. But on the contrary, he seemed to be ahead of me, knowing the answers to his questions before I'd half got them out.



In about half an hour I'd explained all about the fannish network in the bush and the clubs in the colonial capitals. He didn't act surprised, just very excited.

I don't mind saying that after a while I began to get suspicious. I was beginning to think that I was being hoaxed, that this old bloke was a fan I'd not met before who was just having me on, even though I've met just about everyone here in the Australian colonies.

But just when I was about to ask some questions of my own he suddenly jumped up and started unrolling his swag. At the centre was a roll of paper and an odd sort of square glass bottle. He came back to the fire and held the bottle out for me to see.

"Beam's Choice!" he proclaimed proudly. "I've had this now for over, oh, thirty years. Always wanted to open it, but never had a good enough reason. But tonight mate!" he said in a voice cracked with excitement, "Tonight is the best

reason I've had in all these years. A celebration!"

He took the top off in an unusual manner I've not seen before and thrust the bottle at me to drink first. Well, I know good grog when I smell it, and this was good. A mouth full went down very nicely and I handed the bottle back to him. He took a swig and, making an odd swooping gesture with his hand, muttered "Smooth".

The grog, which was a sort of burbon whiskey, I seem to recall, was powerful. It went down very easily and affected the brain mightily. The rest of the evening became one excited blur which I now wish to ghod I could remember clearly.

By the time we'd drunk half the bottle I'd agreed that he could come with me to some of the stations I was going to visit on my trip. After we'd emptied two thirds of the bottle the conversation had become very animated and, I now realise, confused. I had the impression that we'd begun to swap plot summaries, but now I'm not so sure. Or maybe he was just spinning me a yarn.

I mean, he was telling me about how him and two mates had been at the Eureka Stockade back in '53. How the other two had been killed on the second day during the attack on the camp at Black Hill and he'd lost all their stores and equipment. Being, as you all know, a bit interested in the event I wanted him to tell me what it was like. But instead he just said how surprised they'd been, expecting to see just some little early morning skirmish and then going home. At least .. that's the gist of what he might have meant. Next thing, he was

talking about alternate dimensions and we got all serious about an idea I'd read, time travel and trans dimensional travel being the same thing.

The next thing I remember is trying to explain to him how lino type printing works and he, in return, trying to explain about a thing he called a "Rodeo". He said that's what he'd used. But when I tried to press him for details he became maudlin. He muttered about some people he'd known a long time ago and who had apparently all died. Well most people on the track get a bit like that at times but this bloke was really starting to get me down as well, and I didn't even know what he was muttering about.

I saw that his bottle was almost empty so I went and got a half full bottle of scotch whiskey from my pack and tried to get him interested in filk songs. He didn't like my grog - said it was only fit for Glicksons (?) - but the words of "The Coonabarabran Convention" had him laughing again, and then he wanted me to teach him the words.

The last thing I remember of the night was that, for some reason, we'd staggered over to the bank of the river. In a fit of emotion I was telling him how we'd go together to the convention in Melbourne next year and knock down a cheque there. He looked at me in what could only be amazement, and then a huge smile came over his face. "Melbourne in '85" he said. Then he drained the last of his bottle and threw it out into the middle of the river. "I'll be the only fan to go twice," he shouted to the stars. He began to laugh and went on for a long time, roaring almost hysterically, as much as his poor frail body could stand.

After that he seemed drained of energy and I helped him back to the camps where we settled down in our blankets for the rest of the night.

In the morning he had expired. I reckon that drinking the best part of a bottle of strong drink and his excitement had done him in.

There's nothing quite as sobering as having to dig the grave of a new mate. And then I realised that I didn't even know his name.

When he was buried I went through his swag, to see if there was anything personal to give me an idea if there was anybody who should have been told. But it was as I'd expected, there was nothing personal at all, everything was terribly ordinary except for the roll of papers I'd seen the night before.

There were copies of the first half dozen issues of the Bulletin which he'd collected for some reason and a very old and tattered magazine. The paper is very poor quality, it's stained and worn for most of its remaining pages. The print is an odd sort I haven't seen before, not actually printed as this fanzine will be so that you can feel the impression of the letters - perhaps it was produced with the typer and rodeo the old bloke had mentioned. Either way, and despite its age, I'm sure that this is some sort of fanzine.

From the way that he'd kept it, I think that the old man must have treasured this very highly. But, as I said, it's in very poor

condition and not much is legible. However I can make out enough to guess that it is the first issue of something called "Australian Science Fiction (something)" and that it was probably published in 1866. A lot of the contents don't make much sense, when they are legible, but there's a couple of pages of books I don't know reviewed in the middle pages and they have survived quite well.

As you can imagine, I was quite upset by this event and it's a mystery which I'd like to get sorted out. If any of you have any ideas or know anything I'd like to hear from you. And if any of you know K.U.F. Widdershins, I'd like to get in touch with him to get him doing reviews for CSRC.

Leigh Edmonds



AT
LEAST
YOU
CAN
SAY
YOU
HAVE
READ
IT

the
readers

Norman Hollyn
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New York
NY 10012, USA

Bloody hell. An Australian fanzine! Never thought I'd see another one of them. I've been real bad over the last several years, reading all of these interesting zines from Leigh Edmonds and the rest of the 'Strine

fan crowd, and (and pay attention to this, because this is the key) never once, not once, writing back to them! Unbelievable but true. And, then, even more unbelievable, one Irwin Hirsh sends me his fanzine! In-fucking-credible!

Well, the least I can do is respond now, no?

Sikander #6 arrived in healthy shape, Australia Post publication number intact. Tales of donkey, horse and kangaroo meat intact. I'll tell you, the world has gotten into a sad shape when we have to get our news from Johnny Carson. Contrary to what others think, not every American watches the silly Tonight Show. Some of us sleep instead (or sleep during). Some of us are out seeing movies or listening to music or bowling. Some of us are doing unmentionables. A few of us (a very few of us) are even reading. So, let me say that it was quite a shock to read that Australia had become an infamous celebrity on the Carson

show. I usually only watch the show when I'm off on location and that hasn't happened in a year and a half, except for a week or two at the beginning of December. And I guess your continent wasn't famous in that week. Doesn't the Australian government have a publicity agent? You know, he or she could make sure that you get at least one mention a week on the Carson show, in Daily Variety, a few tidbits in gossip columns and maybe even (if luck was on your side) a notice around our White House or so. Youse guys just don't understand show business.

Billy Wolfenbarger's stuff either grows on you or it doesn't. I've been reading his stuff for years now, either in Bill Bowers' various fanzines or (if I remember correctly) Ed Conner's. I never really liked it very much and I can't say that this latest installment is bound to change my mind. I've never really felt that I understood his point of view. As a result it is difficult to sympathize overmuch with his biographical tales in this issue. No, I didn't see the levels, or stay with the thoughts. My loss maybe.

Eric Lindsay, though. He I can sympathize with. I don't know if you've ever seen the United States census forms. If you're lucky and get the short form you only find yourself trying to figure out how many bathrooms you have and whether they are plunger-design or ball-type. If you are the one in four who seem to have typical schuck-type luck (like going out in the middle of a rainstorm to dump the trash clad in your underwear only to realize that the keys to get back into your apartment are in your jacket up in your living room) then you get to sample the long form. In this demonstration of torture you get to decide how many of your loved ones you would part with in case of a national emergency, how much Irish or Japanese blood there is in your family, how much money you make and lose every year in the state lotteries and various other sort of important questions. As I understood the original conception of the census in the good ole U.S. of A., it was to assure that our representation in Congress truly was representative despite changing population. I guess that since most Americans have given up on the idea of true representation the Census Bureau has decided they can ask any sort of silly questions that they damn well want to. Under penalty of fine and possible imprisonment for failure to answer and answer truthfully. Puts you in a bind if you're really not sure just what the hell a plunger-type toilet is.

I like to use the word person. It would sound silly to say that John J. Alderson is a damned manable type instead of personable. And to retitle his piece "Speaking Manally" would only lead to some rather grotesque jokes about anatomy. If the English had not wanted their language to get badly mauled they should never have exported it to the Americas (or the New World, as we are fond of calling it).

At a Fanoclasts meeting or somesuch one time I was shown how to play Diplomacy which was anything but diplomatic. As far as I could follow it, the game seemed to be a test as to how long you could go on lying and cheating to perfectly good friends of yours before they stopped believing you and began attacking you from every direction on the

playing field. Hell, I did the same all the time at college to professors of mine and I never wanted to remember the lessons I learned there. But, no, I was assured that there was much more to the game than I realized. There was all sort of good things involving . . . conspiracies and competitions and misplaced alliances and temporary friendships. Sounded like the New York City subways to me, I thought and said no thanks rather rapidly when I was next invited to play.

Greg Hills
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New Zealand

Ah, census night. In NZ, like most places, they insist the form be filled out correctly and completely. On pain of fines. Like any other free citizen (and if ever there was a phrase with an in-built contradiction,

that's it), I filled out my form. I put down my name - why not, they had it already. My address - they knew where I lived. My birth date and a few other incidentalia - why not, they already had them if they cared to look. For religion, I put down 'none'. For 'ancestral origin' (my wording, to make the meaning clear) I put down "New Zealander" (I am 4th generation New Zealander; I am proud of my homeland; my ancestry is mixed before we arrived here; therefore this is a true statement. No matter that they really wanted a full ethnoracial breakdown of my, ham, 30 ancestors). And so on down the line - never leaving a blank (which would have brought DepCens people round like flies) but rarely giving a useful answer. When I reread it, I was quite pleased by how uninformative one can be while yet maintaining the strict letter of the questions.

It has been my experience that the census, while it produces some very interesting reading, is essentially an abrogation of human rights, just like the regulation which demands that every adult of voting age must register, even if they do not intend to vote. And that the details - names and addresses - of each registered voter be published in public rolls. On pain of a fine or imprisonment. And why does the enrolment card demand my phone-number? What if it is unlisted or confidential? The card insists the number will not be printed. Fine. But why ask for it, then? To check the details? Is it co-incidence that I was shortly afterwards rung up representatives of the local Labour Party candidate? Nothing peculiar there, except it didn't seem to be a random-dialling contact. I had just hopped across the border into a new electorate and informed the electoral people. So....

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Room 9
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Pimlico
London SW1Y 3QY, UK

(Don't I count as one of the Sydney Applesauce Hea ies? I shall ~~eat~~ ~~a~~ ~~lot~~ sulk.)

Is John Alderson seriously propounding some sort of Divine Creation theory of language; ignoring the fact that language is continually evolving, and that usage is the

only final yardstick of correctness? The fossils of etymology are of purely historical interest, but merely quoting a few random dictionary definitions misses out on even that virtue. Precisely what theory John

holds remains unclear, as does the whole line of his argument: he'd be much easier to argue with if he stuck to just one or two points.

Generally, I find the meaning of "person" quite clear - a person is a human individual of either sex; and the plural of "person" is "people". "Persons" is just an officialese abomination - had John made that point, I would have agreed with him. But he didn't. But I've never heard, in the country or the city, "What kind of person are you?" used as an insult, while the terms "bastard" and "character" are, in colloquial Australian, as often used to compliment as to insult. Nor have I ever heard "person" used as a verb or a pronoun - so I'm puzzled as to why John found it necessary to tell us all not to. And I'm even more puzzled by his de-sexing "man" when it's used as a verb - after all, there are a couple of inherently neuter verbs available for that purpose, namely, "crew" and "staff", which do not either imply or connote any masculine provenance. And "man" as part of the compound "seaman" is of course not a pronoun, nor can I see any reason why the female equivalent shouldn't call herself a "seawoman", except that female and male can equally be hailed "Hello, sailor!".

But I did find his legal definition of "person" of interest - it tempts me to call him a proper "personhead".

Having worked as a Census Collector earlier this year (1981), I say thank the Great Carrot that there's only one Eric B. Lindsay (does the "B" stand for Bastard?), and that he wasn't in my district. Mind you, without ol' "I'll give 'em hell" EBL, it was just a mite, um, uneventful: aching feet and closed doors were the dominant note. Most people were pretty co-operative: if they were out, they'd leave out their forms, or if they were in, hand them over nicely with a "Here you are, dear," often accompanied, mine being a district predominantly of comfortably retired geriatrics, with "You must be tired, would you like to sit down and have a cup of tea?" which friendliness tended to slow down progress.

The only real nuisance was a certain dear little old lady with a squeaky voice, active in community affairs, who insisting I come in and check that she'd filled the form in correctly, after offering the obligatory cuppa which I declined with the excuse that I was rather pushed for time, told me her opinion of communists, "Don't you agree?" (non-committal murmur) urged me to join her housewives association, and pushed their propaganda on me, then not only took me through all the life history which, ignoring the neat little boxes provided to tick, she'd scribbled all over the form, but also gave me a run-down on her noble genealogy; and after all this demanded a privacy envelope, the only purpose of which is the keep the nosy census collector (ie, me) from seeing her answers. Then she complimented me on my lovely manners as I stalked out fuming.

John D. Berry
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John Alderson's care for the use of the English language (and particularly of the Australian language) is something I can wholeheartedly applaud, but his obstinate disdain for the social effects of the gender

assumptions in that language is something he deserves no praise for. The answers to the pronoun question and its offshoots are easy if you care intensely about grammar and correct usage and very little about feminism, or if you care passionately about feminism and effecting social change but very little about language; but for those to whom both are important it's not an open-and-shut question.

John is lumping too different problems together. "Person" as a general-purpose noun for "human being" may be an American introduction to Australian English, but it's a long-established use over here. It's also given in that meaning, among others, in dictionaries both British and American; in fact, The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives "Individual human being" as its first definition. The Concise Oxford pays a great deal of attention to etymology and the evolution of meaning. Skeat's etymological dictionary and the Concise Oxford both question the direct connection between "persona" and the verb "personare", since the "o" is long in one and short in the other - much more important in Latin than in English. But that's somewhat beside the point: whatever the implications of the masked origins of "person", the word has been used for a long time to fill a particular role that no other single word fills as well: an individual human being.

(I was delighted by John's information on the legal use of "person" in Australia to mean, or at least imply (legal euphemism?), a man's penis, but the Concise Oxford has only this to say under the subhead "Law": "human being (natural p.) or body corporate (artificial p.) with recognized rights and duties.")

The established use of the word "person" to mean a human being, without any implication as to gender, led directly to the contemporary use of "person" in compounds like "chairperson" and "City Councilperson". I'm of two minds when it comes to replacing "man" as a generic term with "person". The results are usually clunky, and only repetition, I suspect, has gotten me used to some of them; I only occasionally blanch at "chairperson". An alternative term that's used frequently is "chair", with no suffix at all; the image this conjures up isn't too far from the original meaning, since the idea of a "chairman" comes from the authority represented by a throne or raised seat, which is why the one who has the chair possesses the authority. (Did you know that the word "chair" comes, via Old French, from the Latin "cathedra"? Adds a certain panoply to that committee chair, doesn't it?) (In researching this digression, I discovered that the Concise Oxford recognizes "chair" as a synonym for "chairman" (as in "take the chair," begin the proceedings) and follows it with this example: "'chair! chair!', protest against disorder".) I'm inclined to use "chair" wherever it doesn't sound too odd, and avoid the question wherever possible in other words. (I tried to introduce "City Council member" to the pages of a local newspaper I was typesetting for, but they chose to go the other way, referring consistently to either Councilmen or Councilwomen.)

The use of "person" in place of "man" in all these forms does tend to draw attention to itself, which can harm the flow of the writing, but by doing so it draws attention to the assumptions behind the correct

usage. "Usage", after all, means what is used, what we are used to, and it's precisely in order to get people used to new forms and new ideas that some feminists have tried to change the language. John is absolutely right when he says that "the secret of getting one's message across is to use as concrete and as definite a noun as is possible and to have the adjective qualify it exactly". That's the dilemma run into all too frequently by those of us who stick at saying "he" for an ungendered human being. Throwing it into the plural avoids the necessity of choosing a pronoun, but it also makes what you're saying vaguer. Often this just sharpens your critical questioning and you end up asking yourself exactly what you did mean and whether it was vague to begin with; but sometimes what you want to say is precisely the specific, singular phrase but without the sexist implication. Then you're stuck.

"She is a beautiful person" is indeed not the same as "She is a beautiful woman"; leaving aside the question of whether the phrase "beautiful person" has been debased too much for one to want to use it, if you mean the first sentence then you should say it. "She is beautiful" is another thing altogether, and in the context of our society it's liable to be read as synonymous with "She is a beautiful woman". The fact that the distinction is being made so often is an indication that more and more people are questioning exactly these assumptions.

While I've used "person" as a verb - to person the registration table - as a joke and with a grin on my face, I'm with John when it comes to using it that way seriously. It's awkward and ugly and stupid. The verb "to man" embodies all the sexist implications of who does what and who doesn't, but it's all we've got; if you want to avoid using it, you've got to write your sentence in some entirely different way.

What I thought John was going to criticize when he first quoted his example ("All persons are welcome") was the sudden pervasiveness of "persons" as a plural for "person". Although William Strunk lobbied in his otherwise-excellent small book for this usage, I think he would have been horrified at the extent of his success. There may be only one person in a room; there are several people, not several persons. Unless you're calling attention to some specialized meaning of "person", you should refer to people like everybody else. The encroachment of persons on people's language is bureaucratic jargon, and though our government propagates this stuff liberally and disseminates it in every medium, good American, like good Australian, consists of "a local word whose meaning is concrete and precise and which you should know".

Two nits crying out to be picked: One, I've always consider "the dead" to be a collective but never a singular noun, so if the grave objects belong to a particular corpse rather than to the dead in general, it's correct to refer to "the dead person". Two, I assume it was a typo of either yours or John's to refer to the ship's "personal" when what he meant was "personnel". (This word comes from French complete with its collective meaning, so take the argument to your French dictionaries

rather than your English.)

((I've just checked John's manuscript and, just for the record, the typo is John's. ih))

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At first I hesitated to respond to John Alderson's "Speaking Personally" because, at the end of his essay on English prose style and gender-specific terminology, he brought in the subject of cheap American words (as distinguished, I figure, from the more expensive vocabularies available in the Commonwealth). That offers him a handy opportunity to disregard anything I say on the basis of my nationality, but, what the hell, I'll give it a try.

As more women and men have taken up occupations that, historically, have been largely the preserve of the other sex, many of us have noticed the incongruity of naming those professions as if they were performed wholly by women or men. The renaming of occupations in such a way as to exclude no one has been motivated by a desire for stylistic accuracy, an ideal I gather John shares with me.

Many of the attempts to rename have been clumsy. In particular I find the simplistic replacement of "person" for "man" in such words as "chairman" and "workman" to be inelegant and sometimes ludicrous. Presumably such neologisms have been coined by people of good and earnest intent but with little ear for the language. My own inclination has been to adopt briefer forms ("chair", "worker") that do not add generality but rather omit that specificity to a single gender. "Weatherperson"? Pshaw, I say, try "meteorologist". "Newsperson"? Try "journalist".

Obviously the individual who directs a meeting is not a piece of furniture. "Chairman" is no more meant to be taken literally than is "chairwoman", "chairperson" or "chair". In any form the term is a synecdoche. That my own beloved dictionary defines "chairman" as "the presiding officer..." with no gender stipulated does not sway me. A dictionary is an historical record. We use the past to embrace the present and future.

All language changes, or dies. Those of us who delight in using our language with style must offer some resistance to linguistic change, to preserve the value gained in the past, but not obsessively; not to the exclusion of evolution. John's reluctance to accept the awkward neologisms without offering elegant alternatives indicates to me an unwillingness to relinquish his gender's position at the center of our linguistic tradition. Galileo Galilei rolls in his grave.

Those occupations named in English as man's work (workman, seaman, lawman, chairman, cowboy) have never been wholly male professions. Both women and men have toiled at every enterprise, except I suppose those of stud and childbearer. (Now that's division of labor.) The history texts we read in school did not reveal the entirety of men's roles in prostitution and childrearing, nor women's roles in piracy, quarrying, farming and fighting. The material's there, but we have to

dig for it.

"Seaman" has never meant "one who goes to sea". It has specifically meant "men who go to sea", no mention of the women. In this language gifted of feminine, masculine, neuter and indefinite pronouns, the word "he" denotes boys and men. Its usage in place of the indefinite pronoun clearly excludes girls and women; its popular acceptance as such in the linguistic tradition clearly describes the cultures in which it's used.

Were I a girl child it might not immediately occur to me that I could become a fireman, chairman, seaman or congressman (other cultural influences aside) simply because girls become women and boys become men. What am I to make of a society in which the term specific for that other sex (until recently an uncrossable class line) is also generic for human beings? Freeing children to choose among all occupations and pursuits is, I believe, a healthy and necessary goal. John points out that we often witness "man" used as a transitive verb, never "woman", but he doesn't seem to wonder why, or what effect that usage might have on the women and men who use it.

Some argue that when they say "he" they really, truly mean both women and men; that when they say "chairman" they're of course not excluding women. My response is simply, Then why don't you say what you mean?

I urge John to try to use English to reflect the real world rather than to allow linguistic atavisms to govern his meaning, and the ultimate effect of his prose. We need careful, polyphonic stylists to help us in this transition, not merely to catcall the clumsy attempts of those who, if nothing else, are trying.

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Personally I think John Alderson's arguments are only valid if he can prove that it is wrong to change the English language. As it is I cannot see anything wrong with it changing. This way the language will always

reflect the society that uses it which is more important than observing rules that changes in society are making redundant. After all would the language of, say, Shakespeare's time work in the modern world. This is probably why slang is so common in our language, being most people's method of changing their language to fit their environment.

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Nice to meet a zine that isn't parochial, for a change - and to see how the different cultures mesh. It occurred to me, reading Eric Lindsay's piece, that there must surely be a formula to explain the time-differential in the spread of age jokes - is that 'dole queue' crack heading from depression-struck England to Australia, or vice versa?!

Anyway, I suspect cultural differences are why I didn't get much out of the David Grigg column. Pointless, I'd be inclined to classify it; and



yet there isn't a great deal more to "The House in the Middle Heart", which appealed to me immensely. I suppose the difference is that, while Billy Wolfenbarger isn't really going anywhere either, the journey is far more entertaining. It is better to travel hopefully, particularly if you're not actually going to arrive.

Speaking as another would-be prose stylist (tho' you might not guess it from reading this) I beg to differ with John J Alderson on points both specific and general. Specifically: persona indeed had the original meaning of the player's mask, but in Late Latin had come to mean simply human being. "All persons welcome" is therefore admissable English, though the use of the collective noun "people" would perhaps be better. Mr Alderson's legal definition is novel, and gives a whole new meaning to, for example, the Christian phrase "the three persons of the Godhead". There are other specific points - say, that "person" is an insult; which it may sometimes be, but in that case what about "personable"? - but moving on to Mr Alderson's comments on the use of "man" and "woman" as noun and/or verb leads me to disagree with him on more general grounds.

There can be no such words as "chairwoman" or "spokeswoman" - thus the law according to Mr Alderson. And perhaps in a purely grammatical sense he is correct. Yet this assumes that a word means one thing and one thing only, has one function, and can never change it. Not the case, I'm afraid: language is organic, not mechanical. Meanings change - a few obvious examples: "villain", "gay", "nice" and "vulgar" have all altered radically over the last few hundred years. When the consensus view changes the meaning of a word, then it is changed; and the idea that language is a fixed thing is one that I shall manfully - er, womanfully - personfully resist.

Regarding your own column, this held my interest, tho' I do feel somewhat cheated that you don't actually relate the said donkey/horse/kangaroo meat joke. That hasn't got as far as Bournemouth yet - tho' local rumour has been linking the shortage of cats with the neighbourhood takeaway for quite some time.

P.S. I think Sandy Stone should be Explained - he is obviously a matter of grave concern.

((I can't explain the direction of aged jokes, but I think I know what it was with David Grigg's installment. It was a reprint (though the column is not a column of reprints) and was presented without any context, I imagine, for a lot of non-Aussies.

As for
Sandy Stone: see the next Barry Humphries show, and all should be Explained. ih.))

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Jim Barker's cartoon is well drawn and funny. Let all authors be grateful that there aren't such Literacy Hitmen around, because there'd be a lot of dead authors. If fan writers were disposed of as well as

pros, I would have been done in years ago.

I like Billy Wolfenbarger's writing. It is rich in moods and has a sense of emotional wisdom about it. Also, for me, it reminds me of older times in fandom when I used to read Billy's stuff. In the same mail I got your new Sikander came a letter from someone who mentioned that Twilight Zone magazine is having a story contest. I'll have to get its address from her so that I can, timorously, enter. I have three stories on hand now. Two have been rejected four times each (both by F&SF among others), the third has been rejected twice. Hell, maybe I'll get ambitious and write a story especially for this magazine I just heard of yesterday.

The story (not the collection title) "The City of the Singing Flame" is one of the strongest evocations of the alienness of alien beings that I have ever read. I read it when I was a teenager and it has stayed clear in my mind over the years when hosts of other stories and novels have faded from my memory.

I like Billy's writing - it has a lot of feeling to it, of a dreamy kind. It's not your usual fanzine fare either.

One thing about John Berry, he is not hesitant to tell stories about himself that present him in less than glorious circumstances. What most of us try to conceal about our lives, John writes up, not forgetting to stretch the truth a little along the way - or so it seems. Also, his writing is very visual. I can see John's peca-dilloes with those elevators as though movies are rambling through my mind.

Good point about shy people who are famous being able to use their fame as a prop. Famous people so frequently claim they are shy that it makes me wonder if there aren't at least a few famous people who aren't shy. Surely there must be. The thing is, it isn't hip for a famous person to say he or she is not shy.

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I suppose I've thought about being famous as much as the next guy (and I daydream/fantasize a lot but that's normal and healthy and it doesn't bother me as long as I can clearly distinguish between the dreams and normality) but every time I consider

what it takes to become famous I come up against one of two basic requirements: talent and hard work. This realization immediately brings home to me that I'll never be famous and I go happily back to loocking obscure Australian fanzines. (I think it's important to come to grips with the real world, don't you?)

Of course, "fame" is a relative thing. Within Fandom I have achieved a certain "fame". (I like to tell my friends "My name is a household word...in a very small number of households.") When I consider my life in comparison to that of some other people I know or have encountered, I'm quite happy with what I've done. I may never be written about in the papers or be interviewed on television or get into the history books or be recognized on the streets by the public but I can live with that. I've traded off a lack of fame for a life of not working too hard and enjoying myself when and how I feel like it. When the famous and I are both dead I doubt it will end up making very much difference anyway.

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The article by Berry is excellent. Just the right length. He milks the situation for all its worth, and a bit more than it ought to be worth, and then leaves off. I've always had a fear of escalators. I'd much

rather take an elevator. I guess I'm afraid I might get pulled down into the mechanism, where the stairs run down out of sight. I believe John had a name for that business. To me it always looks like teeth, waiting to open up just as you reach them. I'm always worried I've left a shoelace undone, or my pants cuff is dragging, something the beast can get hold of. Then to it takes a certain amount of co-ordination getting off without sprawling on one's face. Well, I'm not exactly athletic. It gets especially harrowing when some dolt decides to step off the escalator and stop cold, blocking the path to safety.

I'm not overly concerned with the importation of Kangaroo meat considering how seldom we can afford to buy anything but chicken. Actually I hadn't heard about it. Gee, thanks. I'll think of you when I eat my next hamburger....

I have a pile of the wargames David Grigg writes about. I haven't played many because, as he points out, the rules take longer to read than some of the wars took. (I'll bet no one can learn to play The Six Day War in less than seven days). However, for a while I bought them, because the idea of having, essentially, scale models of history at one's disposal was so appealing. I did attempt invade Japan once and was summarily driven back by swarms of robot-like militia, which shows how warlike I am.

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My grandmother got caught in an escalator once so I read John Berry's contribution with special interest. She wasn't hurt but she got enormous amounts of attention because the store where it happened imagined

lawsuits and screaming headlines resulting from the episode. I hope I won't follow in her and John's footsteps, because an accident years ago left one of my hips more susceptible than normal to being twisted out of place. My surgeon recommended avoiding any situation which might put undue strain on it so I've stayed away from escalators as much as possible. This can create problems in large stores which have no elevators for customers to use. Their stairways are always hidden back in an obscure corner and anyone who decides to use the stairway instead of the escalator looks like a candidate for shoplifting suspicion, because the stairway would be the best way to make a getaway with stolen goods.

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The technology that produces Big Macs seems to invite the kangaroo-meat scam. During the 70s, the US Army, noticing that soldiers preferred franchised junkfoods to cafeteria-style Army meals (and to an extent that was losing the Army a lot of money), developed a system that reduces cattle to plywood-like sheets of meat, complete with silkscreened "charcoal grill" markings. These sheets are then sliced into square patties. This process makes use of virtually every digestible gram of the carcass involved, and franchise-food technicians were said at the time to be showing great interest in it. What this new technology points to, I think, is the concept of generic meat. Australia, as Cordwainer Smith well knew, is simply ahead of its time.

Speaking of generic meat, I saw my first generic book yesterday, \$1.25 worth of ROMANCE, a No Frills book from Jove. "If you read one, you won't mind the rest." It said that inside the cover, swear to God.

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I have a few comments inspired by Eric Mayer's WAHP comment - which has struck quite a few responsive chords.

My father has a distinct aversion to writing letters - he far prefers a phone-call. As the single mens I am currently at doesn't have a phone to each room and I won't call home unless it's an emergency or urgent in some way it means that I don't hear much from him, (though he hears from me via Austrliaa Post).

It is a pity really - it's not as if dad is a semi-literate who can't express himself on paper. I shall never forget finding all his old English exercise books from Bunbury High School when we were moving house once. They showed a level of literacy and comprehension that I had never before attributed to dad - but it seems to be a facet of his character that he has ignored/suppressed/forgotten (?).

I had a grandfather on my father's side that I only ever met once - family politics made him persona non grata for many years before my birth. When he died dad and his half-sister came into possession of his belongings.

They did what I have always found incomprehensible and what Margaret

and Dad now regret - they threw the memorabilia of a lifetime onto the local rubbish tip.

It pained me when I found out about it - and even now, several years later it still pains me. As I said earlier, I only met my grandfather once, a few weeks before his death when I was still a shy boy.

So the only memories I have of my grandfather are of him presiding over a canoe race on the Canning River and a verbal description from dad of two of the photographs thrown away.

My grandfather had fought in World War I in the Signal Corps of the Australian Army. He was a runner and used to be sent out from the field headquarters with messages for the front-lines troops.

Like so many others in my family, grandfather was a keen photographer and two of the photographs he had clipped together were from those years of war.

The first was of a small group of men sitting around a campfire in a trench. On the back was a comment about how he had had to deliver them a message one morning.

The second was a photo of a churned up muddy desolation. The surface of the moon after heavy flooding. On the back of this was written "Returned in the afternoon to deliver them a second message. Found only this. The Germans laid down an artillery barrage over lunch."

I would have liked to have known my grandfather - I think that there was a lot he could have told me, a lot he could have taught me - for any man that could engender the respect and liking that he did in Kalamunda, a legacy that still stands my family in good stead, must have been something special.

I only hope that something of me is passed down to my children and grandchildren - not just because I'd like to be remembered, but because I feel that knowledge of your ancestors is knowledge of yourself.

((And so we finish with the letter that, perhaps, means the most to me, for I've recently come to realise something of the importance of personal history, too. Over the past few years I've started to hear a lot of stories from the period of time when my parents' families came to Australia from Poland. And I intend to make sure some of those memories remain - next year at college I will be taking a Sound Production unit, in which I will be interviewing my family about that period of time. ih))

I also heard from: Arnold Akien, John Alderson, Harry Andruschak (twice), John D Berry (again), David Bratman, John Brosnan, Brian Earl Brown, Avedon Carol, Gary Deindorfer (again), Al Fitzpatrick, Diane Fox, Joan Hanke-Woods (twice), Jim Meadows (twice), Jon Noble, Marc Ortlieb, Phil Palmer, Grant Stone and Jean Weber.

I should note that this page is being stenciled some months after the first few stencils. My apologies to my contributors for the delay in getting their work published. And I'd like to thank John D Berry for helping me get back to completing this issue. He knows what I mean.

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