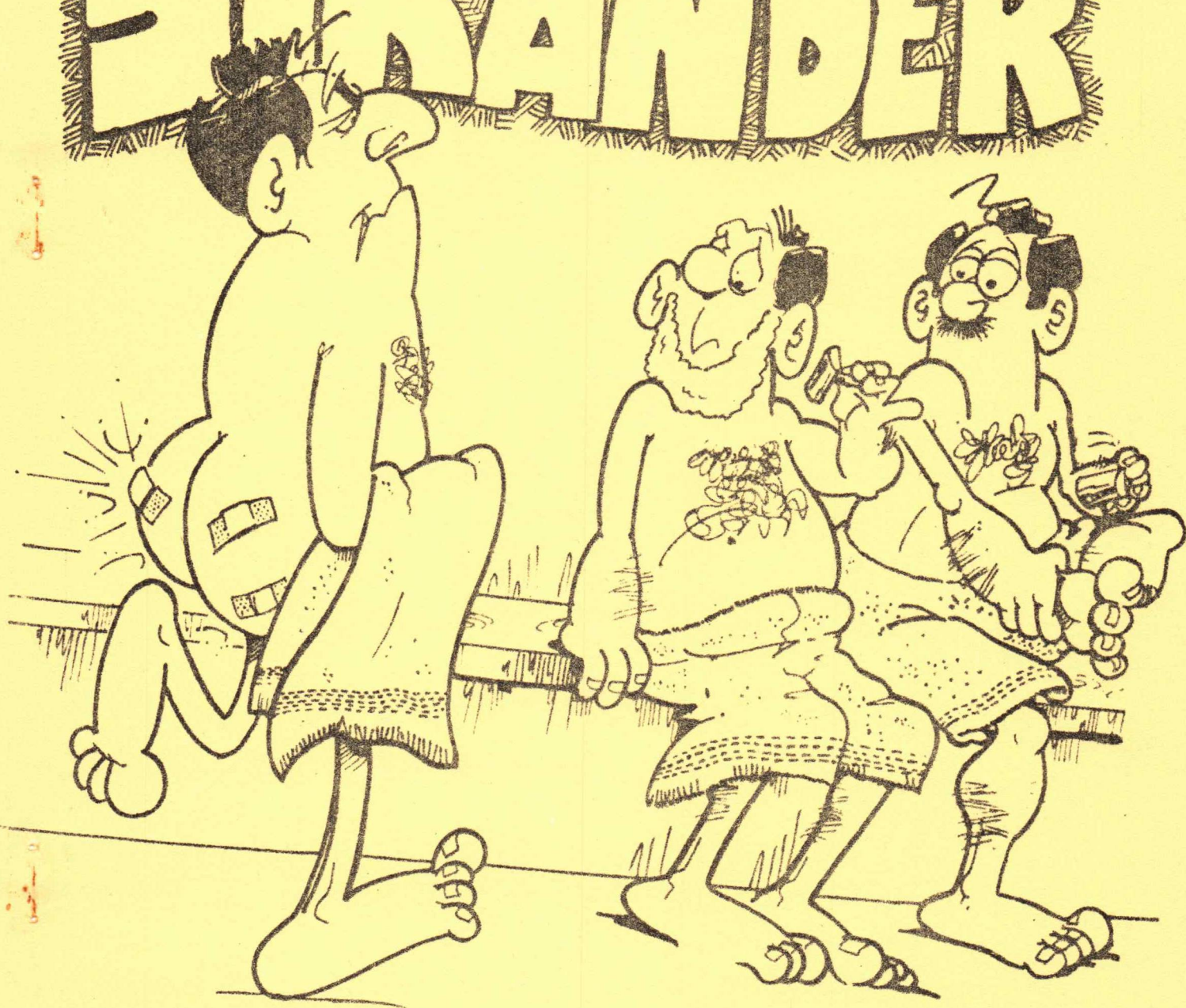


SIKANDER



•MORE SLICES OF LIFE, DOWN UNDER....

sikander

.....
SIKANDER 15, March 1989, is edited and published by Irwin Hirsh, at 26 Jessamine Avenue, East Prahran, Victoria 3181, AUSTRALIA. This fanzine is available for written and drawn contributions, a letter of comment, your fanzine in trade, Old Fanzines or \$3. \$2 from the sale of every copy of this fanzine will be donated to GUFF. Cover artist, Jim Barker, would like it known that the drawing was originally done for an ICI complex who were having problems with employees leaving razor blades lying around in the sauna. Perth in 94
.....

CAPRICE

Irwin (Ed)

When I met Wendy, six years ago, her three year old niece Danielle had fallen in with the wrong crowd at kindergarten - those who had cousins. So when it came to telling our families that Wendy is pregnant we started out by doing so through Danielle. We were at Wendy's parents place for the usual Friday night family dinner. There was a lull in the conversation, so Wendy turned to Danielle and asked, "Would you be able to baby-sit your cousin?"

Danielle didn't quite hear the question and asked Wendy to repeat what had been asked. As Wendy repeated the question a hum formed around the table and Gwen, Wendy's mother, looked at us; "You're not, are you?" With big smiles we nodded in the affirmative. Within moments Wendy and I were being smothered with hugs and kisses of congratulation, and it was a while before Danielle was able to get in her response to our question, "When I'm twelve."

Only then did Sam, Wendy's father, look up from his entree, wondering what the noise was all about.

"Wendy's pregnant!" said Gwen, dumbfounded, and Sam just looked around the table, wondering how he could've missed the news.

The next day we told my family. My parents began talking about the shopping they could do for "our grandchild" when overseas. One of my sisters, Anouk, a godmother to a friend's child, became extremely excited at becoming an aunt. My other sister, Mitta, took it all in with a slight shrug of the shoulder, not unexpected given the cool pose Mitta likes to adopt. And besides, I secretly suspect Mitta will be the best aunt our child will have.

So, Wendy and I are pregnant. The expected date of arrival is the 18th of May, which is just a week after my birthday and five days before Wendy's birthday. It is quite likely that for the second time in three years Wendy will be spending her birthday in hospital, albeit under much more pleasant circumstances. Wendy is coping well with the pregnancy, while her neurologist is on the sidelines, keeping check of Wendy's progress.

While nine months is an awfully long time to await for the arrival of a person, it is also a nice healthy time in which to get used to the concept of becoming parents. We knew for sure six weeks into the pregnancy, and it was another two weeks before we told our families. At

that stage there was meant to be a bit of a delay before telling our friends. This idea was lost one Saturday morning when Carey Handfield rang. He and I were chatting about the Smofish type stuff Carey is often involved in, when he asked to speak to Wendy.

"She's still asleep. Do you want me to pass on a message?"

"No, I'd rather tell her myself. When she wakes up can you ask her to ring me."

"What would Carey want to tell me that he wouldn't tell you?" Wendy said a couple of hours later.

"Don't ask me. He didn't give any clue about what it could be."

"I bet Jo's pregnant!"

"Jo's pregnant," Carey told Wendy, over the phone.

Wendy put her hand over the telephone receiver, "Shall I tell him?"

"How could you not tell him."

"Er, Carey, so am I."

Wendy and Carey chatted for a bit comparing notes and dates. At the end of the conversation Wendy filled me in on all the news, noting "It is a good thing you said to tell him because Jo's due in early June!"

Two weeks later I was at Zencon II chatting toth Marc Ortlieb. Discussing the future of Australian fanzine publishing, we were, particularly concerned with that which sprang from our two addresses.

"I don't think I'll be putting out any fanzines for a while." Marc said, "Next year Cath and I will be having some additional expenses."

THIS SPACE
DESERVES
THE BEST
CARTOON!
AVAILABLE!

THIS
ISN'T IT
Gilliland
WAS
LATE

"Additional expenses?" I said quizzically. The phrase struck me as being odd.

"Yes, Cath's pregnant."

"Hey wow. That's great." I said, impressed. I pondered for a while before telling Marc my news, "Well Marc, while we're trading info...."

For a couple of minutes we just stood there marvelling at the pleasant changes which would be made in our lives. We compared dates (Cath is due in April) and experiences - morning sickness, hospitals booked into, etc. We mentioned Carey and Jo, and I noted that what is happening in our fannish social scene is a mirror image of my non-fannish social scene. I told Marc about those two telephone conversations with Carey, "He rang up to tell us of his news, only to find he'd been beaten to the punch." Marc just chuckled and told me how Carey and Jo had dropped around to the Ortlieb residence to tell the Ortliebs of their news. "Cath and I looked at each other, said 'Oh yea,' and told them of our news."

At about this stage I started to think that I should invite the Handfields around for an evening of poker. This concept was strengthened a few weeks later. For some months Carey and Jo had been looking to buy a house. Over the same period Wendy and I had also been looking at houses, but with none of the determination displayed by the Handfields. We were in no desperate need to buy a home, and any looking we were doing was for information purposes only - just trying to assess what we like and don't like for the time when we want to buy. Where the Handfields would look through twenty houses each Saturday, we may look through only one or two houses a month.

One day Wendy and I saw a house which just grabbed us. The right size, in a nice position, close to public transport, a beaut example of its period and it didn't require any work. We thought about it, discussed it with the relevant people, went to the auction and put in the highest bid. Wendy and I just looked at each other, wondering how it could've happened so fast.

Two days after the auction Carey rang. Wendy picked up the receiver, "Oh hi Carey. You haven't rung to tell us you've bought a house, have you?"

"Bastards," was the reply.

A few weeks later Carey is talking to me. More Smoffish stuff. Then, as an aside, he asks me when we are moving.

"The weekend after the 15th of February."

"Oh, good. You wouldn't want to get in some moving practise a couple of weeks beforehand?"

That makes the score 3 - 1 in our favour, doesn't it Carey?

SO, WE'VE MOVED Please note our new address, which you'll find at the head of this issue, on page 3. I have the feeling I'll have the need to mention this change of address for some time. Four years after I left there, some fannish mail still gets sent to my old South Yarra address. So take note of my change of address now, please.

IN THIS ISSUE is a chapter of John Foyster's GUFF trip report Stranger in Stranger Lands. Also in this issue is a chapter of my GUFF trip report (working title The GUFF Conspiracy Coincidence.) This is not the first chapter of my report to be published - two chapters have already appeared in Larrikin, the fanzine I publish with Perry Middlemiss - but it is the first chapter of the report. It wouldn't take too much of the ol' grey matter to realise that it is my intention to serialise my trip report prior to getting it out in the one volume format. Any faneds wishing to publish a chapter are encouraged to contact me expressing such a desire, and I'll keep you in mind as I continue throughout the writing of the report.

When I won GUFF and began thinking about how I'd like to go about getting my report written and published the serialised format struck me as having quite a few advantages. So I wasn't prepared for such a negative response as I began to tell people of my plans. "Don't!" was the first such reaction, "The problem with those sorts of reports is that they never get finished." This struck me as odd, seeing as how a lot of those non-serialised trip reports also never get finished. The form of first publication is not what dictates whether or not a trip report will be completed.

I know it sounds obvious but the way I see it a trip report can be either completed or not completed. It's great if the former occurs, but we all know that there is nothing to say that any particular report will be written. Or published, for that matter. Jerry Kaufman has just published his DUFF trip report and in it he describes conversations he had with Paul Stevens and Keith Curtis, who were the DUFF reps in 1978 and 1980: "Keith Curtis popped in at one point to explain that his DUFF report was really and truly completed" and "Paul showed me a thick manuscript of typed pages: Paul's DUFF report, all ready to be stenciled or mastered. Real soon now, he said." More than five years down the road that is still a real soon now. No-one gets anything out of this situation. Those people who are interested in reading about Paul and Keith's travel experiences don't have the opportunity, and the DUFF coffers miss out on the income which would have been generated by the sale of the reports.

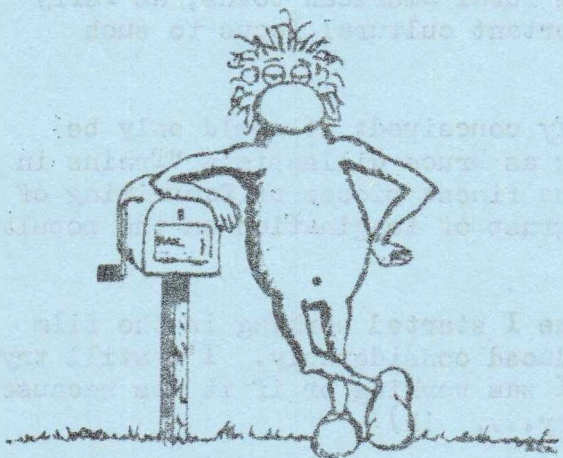
I'm using the installment method because it suits me. I can get a better handle on the progress of my writing, assessing each chapter as they are published and take note of any comments made by letter writers. My report will be the longest fanzine article I'll write, and I think I'm more likely to finish it if I give myself a series of small targets

to aim for rather than one big target. And some people have expressed interest in publishing a chapter or two, and believe me, that's helpful and important.

I'm making no promises about my trip report - I don't want any statements to come back and haunt me. I want to finish the report; I'd like to have a record of the four months which were my GUFF trip. All I will say is that I'll do my best to get the job done. It would be great if I could, but I know enough to say that I may not. And if I don't finish the report at least people will be able to read the chapters which have already been published. On a fan fund panel at Eastercon 87 someone expressed a problem they have with serialised reports, which is that you have to be on the mailing list of the various fanzines to ensure you read all the chapters. This reason, this person felt, was why I shouldn't try the installment approach, but it strikes me as being a specious reason at best. There is nothing to stop anyone borrowing the various fanzines from a friend or sending a couple of dollars to ensure that the various fanzines are received.

There have been about 30 fan fund trips in the past decade, and out of that we've seen five published trip reports. Of the rest some, perhaps ten, have had bits of their reports published. Even if another chapter of each of those reports are never written one chapter is still better than nothing, and it should be recognised as such. No-one can read the 'completed reports' of Paul Stevens and Keith Curtis but all you have to do is get hold of a copy of Hyphen 37 to read the single published chapter of Teresa and Patrick Nielsen Hayden's TAFF report. Anyone want to borrow my copy?

- Irwin Hirsh



At Least You Can Say
You Have Read It
:: letter column

((Sikander 14 appeared in August 1987, a mere nineteen months ago. This is the biggest gap between any two issues of this fanzine and I figure you might like a reminder of what was in that issue. It opened with me looking at Wendy's recent stay in hospital and ended with Bruce Gillespie looking at model train sets, childhood and Melbourne's Outer Circle Line. In between we had a review of a sf radio play, a look at a lifetime of watching film and a piece of faan-fiction based on a DUFF trip which never happened. Hope this helps as you read through the following. ih))

Richard Brandt
4740 N. Mesa #111
El Paso
TX 79912, USA

I hope you and Wendy are in good health and fine spirits, and enjoyed the hell out of your vacation. I spent two weeks this summer with some undefined malady that sent my temperature soaring and my gut quivering; fortunately, I

can't afford to miss work or see a doctor, so at least it didn't disrupt my routine. That was nothing serious, however. (I hope.) My own dad, now, two years ago he was in the shower when he suddenly blacked out and slid to the floor, bopping his head a good crack against the tiles. Nothing much came of it, except this summer the exact same thing happened again, and he gave his head a nasty split, necessitating a rush to the hospital and everything. Under the circumstances, the doctors thought they'd better run a full battery of tests; so he had the EEG, the EKG, the CAT Scan, the treadmill tests, a whole schmear of procedures, which turned up...nothing. His pulse rate was a little slow, they said, but as far as any trouble with the heart or the nervous system, nada. He's taken to wearing a monitoring device, but still no sign of what makes him pass out in the shower every eighteen months or so. In the meantime, he's taken his retirement and is playing golf twice a day, while my mother is going bonkers wishing they'd find some little thing wrong with him and fix it.

Perry Middlemiss strikes a responsive chord, to a fan who hoped to go to film school and be the next Coppola. Nowadays, I rarely get out to the movies; there hardly seem to be any movies these days that intrigue me enough to get me to the theater (one of the only three or four movies I saw this summer was a re-release of Help!). My fascination with movies continues to the extent that I still love to read about them; sometimes I think I'd rather read about movies than see one. (Especially a really bad movie, which rarely lives up to its reputation.) Perry's note about the disappearance of cinemas recalls Larry McMurtry's essay "The Last Picture Shows," reprinted in his book Film Flam, about the disappearance of drive-ins and small theaters from rural American towns; as Perry implies, those theaters gave an important cultural focus to such communities.

Cy Chauvin's pastiche was brilliantly conceived; it could only be upstaged by something as outstanding as Bruce Gillespie's "Trains in the Distance." This is surely one of the finest pieces of fanwriting of the year, wonderfully evocative of the grasp of imagination on the popular mind.

((I must admit that since the time I started working in the film industry my movie going has reduced considerably. I'm still trying to work out if it was because I was working or if it was because I was working in the film industry.... ih))

Terry Broome
101 Malham Drive
Lakeside Park
Lincoln
Lincs LN6 0XD, UK

What happened to Wendy was something. A few years ago I'd've thought this quite unusual, but hospital horror stories are so common (I've lived through and witnessed a few), that I shan't say any of those things I find annoy

me when people learn I'm going into hospital again. I know what it is like to be seriously ill, to have a major operation. I know how painful it is to see others suffer physically and emotionally and it is most distressing when they are so wonderfully human it is hard to believe things like this can happen to them. From reading Larrikin and this article I get the strong impression that if I met you both, I'd count you among these people. You both seem to be good fighters. I hope you enjoyed your holiday and found Conspiracy some sort of compensation for the hard times.

Unlike Perry I can remember experiences from before I went to school - so I must've been four. I would have remembered more had it not been for a case of depression and an unusually bad memory caused by amnesia. As it is, my memory is like being in a dark room where the light is flicked on for a split second every month or so. I think the fact that my accident gave me amnesia suggests I may also have remembered as far back as then (I was two-and-a-half), because I've gradually been able to conquer problems dating back from then.

((In some ways the worst thing, for me, about Wendy's last stay in hospital was that I missed her. It was easy to rationalise about the actual operation - she needed it and once it was over she made a fine recovery - so I could cope with that. But I missed sitting around our flat talking to her. I wonder what it'll be like when Wendy goes into hospital to have our baby. ih))

Bob Shaw
66 Knutsford Road
Grappenhall
Warrington
Cheshire WA4 2PB, UK

Your piece about your reactions to Wendy's illness struck a chord with me because only a few days ago my son - a hefty and supremely healthy 25 year old - was rushed into hospital. He had had a terrible cough for a couple of days, but it seemed nothing to worry about, then something happened to him. Air got out of a lung or a tube into his chest cavity and he swole up, as they say, before our very eyes. Within seconds his face and throat were three times their normal size, and he was almost unable to breathe, and we he was going to die on the spot. An ambulance got him to hospital quickly and he was given oxygen to keep him alive, but I had several hours of waiting there, wondering if the worst was going to happen. I have been in situations where I knew a loved one was dying, but this was much worse. Oddly enough, the doctors were unable to find out how the air had got out of the lung and into his tissues in spite of many X-rays and other kinds of tests. Over the next three days he shrank back to his normal appearance and now seems perfectly fine, but if any fans - who tend to know more than doctors - can offer an explanation I'd be glad to hear it.

Another chord was twanged by Bruce Gillespie's evocative piece about the train set and the dream it inspired. When I was about fifteen I discovered ice skating. I could only afford to go to the rink about once a fortnight, so I had a hunger for the pursuit and I used to dream that the streets of Belfast were made of frozen black ice in the winter, and that I was abroad on them on skates, speeding along through the

darkness in effortless silence, travelling the length of the city in minutes, not speaking to anybody - just revelling in the lonely purity of the experience.

About ten years ago I got a phone call from the Fokker aircraft company in Amsterdam asking me to hop on a plane, stay with them for a few days and write a brochure for an aircraft they were mounting a sales drive on. The money was good and I had never been to Amsterdam, so I gladly took the job on. It was in a bitterly cold period of winter and I was on my own in the evenings, so I used to wander about, and I found that the canals were frozen - just like the black ice streets of my Belfast childhood dream. The thing which really impressed me was that lots of people were out skating on the canals, but they weren't behaving the way Brits would have done in similar circumstances, ie shouting, swigging from hip flasks, pushing each other over, and so on. No! They were speeding along the canals in dark cloaks, not speaking, seemingly revelling in the lonely purity of the experience - just as in my dreams.

I used to watch them from one particular vantage point which I liked because adjoining the bridge where I stood was a nice looking restaurant, and in the corner seats by the window I could see groups of friends having dinner together, revelling in the congeniality and the roseate light and warmth. By turning my head one way or the other I could see two extremes of experience - the enjoyment of loneliness, and the enjoyment of company. As a teenager I would have chosen the canals, but as an adult I would have preferred to be in a party of good companions sitting up in that corner of the restaurant, thriving on the conversation and the human warmth.

Then I came to the point where life yields up the goodies. About five years ago I was guest of honour at a convention in Amsterdam. It wasn't winter but the weather suddenly turned abysmal - dark, cold, wet, depressing - just as the con was drawing to a close. Suddenly a committee member got a brilliant idea and led a bunch of us to one of his favourite restaurants, where we could have a few hours of gregarious relaxation and fun. Yes! It was the restaurant I had stood outside years earlier, and our party got the exact corner seats which I had once envied from my cold station on the bridge. There were no skaters on the canal, because it wasn't frozen, but I could see them there in my mind's eye. And I could also see myself standing on the bridge - but this time I was also here in the favoured position, with good friends and the good food and the good wine.

Harry Warner, Jr
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown
MD 21740, USA

My model train appeared only at Christmas time. My father set up a wooden platform on boxes that occupied nearly half a room and the model railroad went on that, complete with various accessories, toy houses, and cotton

landscapes. It stayed there for about a month, then went back into the boxes and lived in the cellar until the next yuletide. Once when I completed a series of harrowing dental sessions with bravery my parents offered to buy me something nice as a reward and I chose a small model

railroad so I could play with it throughout the rest of the year. But I no sooner had gotten it home, taken it out of its box, and set it up that I realized I didn't want it. I sensed that it would ruin the magic of the month each winter when the big train set was there and I returned it to the store.

Roger Weddall
PO Box 273
Fitzroy
Victoria 3065

I loved Cy Chauvin's imaginary trip report; one wonders if it wouldn't be better for it to be the responsibility of non fan fund winners to produce trip reports. Cy did very well to establish what he was writing about, in the minds of his readers, as if it had actually taken place. If he laboured the point occasionally ("the crusty old George Turner", "the red-bearded Eric Lindsay") he more than made up for this by offering up some wonderful dialogue that really could have happened. The scene in the supermarket where Eric was buying catfood rang so true of the way Eric would pass things off that I'm sure that Eric and Cy have met. Cy's insight into the role of Bruce Gillespie in Australian fandom is all the more delightful for it being exactly the role in which I first encountered his name - the man who must suffer for the benefit of Australian fandom - back in 1976/77.

Bruce's article following on from Cy's was a marvellous surprise. I've heard Bruce recount stories of the train set and his family's backyard but it is the mark of the quality of his writing that he can rework a story heard into something almost magically new. It is times like this when I look around Australian fandom and despair that there are so few people who can really do anything much with words except to mangle them. I guess I'm saying (he says, mangling his words) that I wanted Sikander to keep on going after Bruce's article and was pissed off when there wasn't any more.

((The idea of non fan fund winners writing reports sounds good, but then, hey, I've never lost a fan fund race. On the other hand, you have lost a fan fund race, haven't you Roger? When can we see your report.... I don't remember if I gave much thought to a report while the 1987 GUFF race was actually on, but I did dream about what the trip would be like. I imagine other candidates also dream and there has to be some fanzine articles in there somewhere. ih))

Cy Chauvin
14248 Wilfred
Detroit
MI 48213, USA

I hope you had a wonderful trip. I don't envy anyone trying to write a report about a four month trip. But at least you won't have to invent it!

I liked seeing my article translated and published in Australian. Bruce did write to me and picked apart certain historical inaccuracies, but his letter was kind nevertheless, ~~although certain bribes were offered to do a fake GUFF report based on the life of another well-known Australian fan.~~ I suppose if I had known all the egoboo I'd get from this article, I'd not have waited nine years until the threat of seeing you again made me feel guilty enough to complete it.

Bruce's article is good; in fact, I'm envious. The way it progresses from childhood reminisces to the present and then on into myth or metafiction is wonderful. I like the subject matter, too: Trains, train sets and childhood.

There is a certain romance in all of these. Since I don't take any daily commuter train to work, trains are always associated with special trips in my mind, and no matter what the end, beginning the trip is exciting. And in Michigan I find staring out the window rather like looking at a long, unraveling painting, vast stretches of which appears to have been painted before invention of the automobile. (Quite seriously, some virgin stretches of prairie land are found along the main Chicago-Detroit line.) I also enjoyed Bruce's history of the Outer Circle Line, and the odd bits and pieces left over, disguised in parkland or behind fences. And the notion that a railway creates a place to go to rather than connecting two previously existing places is also wonderfully mythic - I understand that Alice Springs was created this way. History is curious, isn't it?

((And what were the historical inaccuracies Bruce Gillespie found in Cy Chauvin's article? Here, with their permission, Sikander is proud to bring to you Other Peoples' Mail. ih))

Bruce Gillespie
GPO Box 5195AA
Melbourne
Victoria 3001

Dear Cy,

Sikander 14 came to us both as a big surprise, no doubt, although it was a surprise that rather pleased me. I don't mind jumping back into the fannish limelight, after being

left out of it from time to time. Your article has a number of inaccuracies and I'm curious to know whether you have issues of SF Commentary from 1973. If you have, then your research techniques are faulty. If you haven't, you've made some nice guesses.

I thought the cleverest thing about your article was choosing the one year since 1972 when there was no DUFF race. Also, we were both at Torcon, and then in America, although I didn't get to your area.

The material about cats you got completely wrong chronologically (that is, if you had shifted the year somewhat, you might have been correct). I didn't have a cat in 1973. I gained Flodnap in 1976 while I was still at 72 Carlton Street, but only became part of a five-cat household in 1977, when I moved in with Elaine and Frank. Frank disappeared from the scene in 1978, and Elaine and I have been part of a four- or five-cat household ever since. I suppose your portrait is psychologically true; if in 1973 or 1974, the years of my maximum feeling of loneliness, I had discovered the value of having cats surrounding me, my life might have been more enjoyable then.

Getting my place of residence wrong is (apart from literary license) unforgivable if you have a copy of SFC 35/36/37, which includes in its editorial a description of my upstairs flat at 72 Carlton Street, Carlton. You also get a good picture of it in the editorial for SFC

44/45. Maybe you didn't have those issues. Again the psychological truth is more accurate than the factual truth, since for a time I retreated upstairs away from humankind as securely as if I had locked myself away downstairs in a basement. (There are very few basement flats in Melbourne.)

Your article works quite well, except for the business at the end, which doesn't. I have the same trouble with 'fannish' stories, which is why I don't write them. If you use a fannish McGuffin, eventually it can dominate the story, rather than disappearing behind the fannish references. The only reason I raise the points above is that if Yvonne Rousseau had been writing it (which she wouldn't think of doing) she would have researched my fanzines so thoroughly that she would have described my life in 1973 more accurately than I can remember it now.

Cy Chauvin
14248 Wilfred
Detroit
MI 48213, USA

Dear Bruce,

To answer your question about how far back do I have issues of SFC - well, to #19, and the odd sample issue before that. So I did have copies for research. I must admit

that I am shocked and amazed that you did not have cats living with you in 1973 - it's not a matter I would have even thought to have researched, but simply a part of the *brg* mythos - and I do recall you writing to me in 1975 chastising me for saying you hated cats in my introductory blurb to your article in A Multitude of Visions. Such is life, never measuring up to fantasy.

As far as getting your residence wrong, that was quite deliberate. That idea was sort of derived from the Le Guin story, so you had to live in something like a dungeon, something totally awful, and be semi-imprisoned. Actually, I now realize that I have known a couple of fans who have lived in basements, and could have added bits about "dusty, snake-like ventilating ducts" but so it goes.

As far as the ending goes, I agree that it doesn't work very well. That's what kept me from completing it all these years. (I promised it to Irwin seven years ago.) I've not heard the expression "a fannish McGuffin" before, but assume you mean that if you base a faan story on an original story from elsewhere, it can take over. That makes sense - and when I think of it, of the four fan stories I've written, the two not based on other stories had more satisfying endings. My favorite is "The Man Who Killed Apa-50" but unfortunately it probably makes no sense to anyone outside the apa.

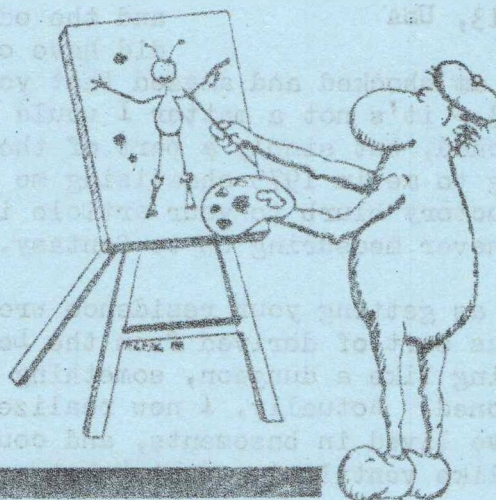
((I was also surprised that Bruce didn't have any cats in 1973, though I 'knew' that he had never lived in a basement. And I find myself with the vexed question as to whether these are important omissions. Here we have a piece of faanish fiction - with its hyperbole, its play on a mythic character and its time travel (Lucy Huntzinger gets a mention, and she wasn't a fan in 1973). Balancing the omissions against the fiction, I lean towards wishing that Cy had utilised Bruce's upstairs flat, looking for a

way to make it awful and a semi-prison. It would've been a challenge, which if met would've added texture to the article. But, then, hindsight is a wonderful thing. ih))

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Richard Faulder; Pavel Gregoric Jr; Jeanne Mealy, who correctly said that the first page layout was confusing; Pamela Boal; Allan Burrows; Yvonne Rousseau; Mike Glicksohn, who finds "Bruce's lack of interest in games and his attitude towards them as alien as he'd find my fascination with them. Once you know the rules of the game it means you can enjoy the game more, not less." He also mentions that he went to school with a Lionel Train. I couldn't work out why Mike was telling me this until Brian Earl Brown told me that Lionel Trains are America's best electric toy trains. Brian also thought that "Perry Middlemiss's long rumination on his movie-going habits struck as a lot of details going nowhere. Michelle Hallett's long letter paragraph about her short career in film was mouch more fun."; and Geogre Bondar. Thank you, one and all.

TEMPLE OF SOLITUDE

- mark
loney



I have grown to wonder if there is a flaw in my approach to reading fanzines. I have a perfectly normal habit of leaving books, magazines and fanzines wherever I was last reading them, so that the next time I am in that particular place I can read a bit more. Michelle objects quite strongly to this and insists on tidying up. This means that, rather than being scattered around the house in a distribution that is optimised for my reading characteristics, whatever I am reading at any one time has a tendency to end up on the bookshelf in the hallway. This leads to events like the discovery of The Urth of the New Sun several months after I got to chapter three. Now I have to start it all over again.

Fanzines are an even more difficult case. Back in Perth, on the grounds that there was no point in hiding fanzine fandom under a bushel as other fans were wont to do ("Yes, I've got the latest Ansible, but, no, I'm not going to let you look at it"), we got into the habit of leaving a pile of fanzines in the toilet for all and sundry to peruse. And please; no jokes about what we did with the crudzines.

Here in Marvelous Melbourne, Michelle has intensified her efforts to keep the house neat and tidy and no sooner does a fanzine reach the kitchen table from the Post Office Box, than it disappears into the box in the toilet with all the other non-book reading material she can lay her hands on (American Film, New Internationalist, Australian Left Review, Landscape, Multi-Racial Love #4 (a Christmas Present for yours truly from James Styles), Cheap Eats in Melbourne, Sarah Foster Tate in Bondage, ALP Green Network newsletters and other less easily described pieces of paper. This concentration of reading material in one place, a place that, the older I get, the less time I seem to spend in it (must be all that muesli for breakfast), has had deleterious effects on my fanzine reading habits. After sitting down and making myself comfortable, I riffle through the box and discover that three month old American Film with the article on Steve Martin that I have as yet, in the course of three or four visits, failed to finish reading. Now articles about Steve Martin in American Film can be read over a week or two in several three or four minute periods, but this sort of reading pattern does play havoc with any attempt to appreciate a good fanzine article, or even a good fanzine.

I know that the obvious way of dealing with this difficulty would be to take the fanzine with me when I leave. But you've forgotten that I have just rediscovered The Urth of the New Sun several months after getting to chapter three and that it's what I was reading in the lounge room before adjoining for a few minutes. And then there is the fact that any fanzine Michelle finds in the lounge room has a marked tendency to disappear back into the box in the toilet....

The arrival of Sticky Quarters 18, a 38 page fanzine from Brian Earl Brown of Detroit, Michigan, was the first fanzine to triumph over Michelle's tendency towards tidiness and my tendency to be reading up to a dozen books and magazines at any given point in time. Not that it triumphed immediately. I may have thought that John Berry's "Army Daze" reminisces were a solidly crafted look at the silliness that boys with toys can get up to and thus worth a few extra minutes to finish them, but the transcript of Gene Wolfe's convention talk "Brighton Beach Memoirs" failed to hold my attention (including the slides that went with the talk would certainly have helped) and Terry Jeeves two page ramble through the history of hand weapons, though interesting, wasn't enough to glue me to my seat.

The return of good fannish reading habits was a direct result of Brian Earl Brown's article "Not a Pretty Picture". In an introduction on page 21 we are told that "NAPP" started life as a short review of And the Band Played On by Randy Shiltz. An afterword eventually draws to a close on page 35. And the Band Played On is a book about AIDS. I have no intention of covering any of the ground that Brian covers in "NAPP". I do wish to say that "NAPP" is a fine piece of writing and one of the few book reviews I have ever read in a fanzine that has sold me on a book. In fact it has probably sold me on a hardback copy of the book.

Which is not to say that "NAPP" or SQ18 are without flaws. The biggest

problem that Brian has with SQL8 is his appalling (and I do not use that word lightly) layout practices. When I was a young man and bought magazines like Analog, Penthouse and Omni, I grew to loath that peculiarly New York magazine editing practice of always putting the last paragraph or half page of an article or story about 100 pages away from the rest of it. I hate seeing "Continued on page ..." at the bottom of a page.

To be fair to Brian, he doesn't have 100 pages between different paragraphs of the same piece of writing, he tops out at about 28, but reading "NAPP" is made difficult by the way he has broken up the main article with separate digressional 'boxes'. Having read "NAPP" over two nights, I went back and read it again after realising that I had confused a large 'box' with the continuation of the main article. In the clear light of the day the mistake was obvious, but late at night it read like a missing line or half paragraph.

Fortunately for my overall impression of SQL8, the power of the writing reduces the negative impact of the technical flaws in layout. The reproduction is good and, as an aside, the fact that SQL8 is printed on both Canary Yellow and Old Gold duplicator paper seems to put paid to all those consistent rumours about no more coloured duplicator paper in the states. The front and back covers are good and his editorializing about Worldcon profits seemed to be on the right track (but that could just be because Michelle came up with the same idea, no memberships at the door, while planning a Melbourne con that was to have had a very popular guest of honour - but that's another story). I recommend Brian Earl Brown's Sticky Quarters to you. Brian will take trades, contributions of art or articles or cash (\$2.50) but prefers letters of comment.

Another fanzine that I have read from cover to cover in recent days is War Pigs of Galaxia 7, brought to the world by the opinionated Stewart M. Jackson of Kalamunda, Western Australia. I started my fannish career off in Kalamunda too. Back in 1975 I was reading my way through the Kalamunda Public Library collection of Doubleday science fiction when I saw a poster advertising Aussiecon. As I couldn't convince my father to let me travel alone across Australia to Melbourne at the tender age of thirteen I had to wait until Swancon II a couple of years later.

But all fans leave Kalamunda it seems, and Stewart is going too. Though I must admit that he is going much further than I. More than a decade after leaving Kalamunda I have finally made it to Melbourne, but Stewart is intent on taking a bigger bite of the travelling pie and is heading off to Europe for an indeterminately long time. Thus War Pigs is being laid to rest with no guarantee that it will reappear in its present form on his return.

Michelle would probably say that this is a good thing. She has refused to read War Pigs ever since Stewart let us share his feelings on the topic of rape and sexual assaults. Given that Stewart was actually trying to express his feelings after a close female friend was subjected

to a particularly unpleasant experience and he still completely infuriated Michelle with his pronouncements, I think it is fair to say that Stewart is an unreconstructed reactionary who would be right at home with the conservative politician you love to hate.

This was well illustrated in War Pigs of Galaxia 6 when Stewart tackled some Australian political issues like Aboriginal Land Rights, Education and Asian Immigration in an article that will forever stand between him and membership of a party that lays claim to anything remotely approaching 'progressive' policies. Stewart's true colours were most succinctly revealed in War Pigs 7 when, in response to a loc from Marc Ortlieb, he spoke of how Aborigines "must take a hand in the development of their nation (it is already too late for them to say they don't want any development - they have been presented with a fait accompli in this respect)".

This is the perfect lead in to a story one of my lecturers used to tell about journalists and their use of language to present implicit rather than explicit values and judgements, but I will restrain myself and talk about Stewart instead. The word "development" is the obvious giveaway. Aborigines all across Australia would probably fail to see how the situation they are in now compared to pre-European settlement can be equated with the word "development". Yes, they are faced with a situation that they can't change, but, no, they probably don't see that it is related to development in any way. The use of the phrase "their nation" is also worth considering. It wasn't until 1967 that Aborigines were legally accepted as citizens of the Australian nation with the same rights (like voting) as the rest of us. So that's also a bit of a furphy.

Which is not to say that War Pigs 6 and 7 are completely made up of direct steals from Mein Kampf. Stewart spends at least as much space on music reviews (Blue Oyster Cult, Motorhead, Hawkwind) and an Animation Film Festival. Artwork is minimal but the photocopier reproduction is good. The letter column is best described as sparse but hopefully a year or so in Europe will see Stewart M. Jackson develop a slightly more sophisticated understanding of the world. This would bode well for his next fanzine.

While Australia may be sending Stewart M. Jackson to Europe, Europe, or at least the United Kingdom, still seems quite happy to send fanzines to us. In fact I hope the current burst of activity isn't the storm before the calm. The fanzine to my immediate left is Nutz 7 from Pam Wells of Bowes Park, London. Pam certainly knows how to use a Gestetner (now she'll probably write and say that it was a Roneo) and only positive things can be said about layout, artwork, legibility and so forth.

Nutz includes articles from Lucy Huntzinger, Tony Berry and Mike Christie whose "Nobody Gets Out Of Here Awake" is an intelligent overview of the art of bad conversation. I was reminded of Swancon 5, with GoH Anne McCaffrey, where a very intent loony dressed in long hair and an orange robe insisted on telling me how every detail of the Pern

ecology checked out in every conceivable way; scientifically, mathematically, astronomically and geologically. Perhaps the inclusion of "Nobody Gets Out Of Here Awake" should be made mandatory in all convention handbooks.

Another point of interest is that Pam visited Iceland last August and thinks it's a wonderful place. She should get together with Michelle who has the idea of organising a minicon in Iceland before Holland in 1990. Why does Michelle want to do this? Because she thinks Iceland is a wonderful place too. She just hasn't been there yet.

I liked Nutz 7 but feel a bit constrained about discussing it in detail. This is because of Blatant 17 (subtitled The Aggrocultural Review) from Avedon Carol of East Ham, London and The Stale Tinned Milk of Human Kindness by Owen Whiteoak of Highbury, also of London. I have a feeling that these three fanzines form a little triptych of British fandom at the end of 1988 and that to do justice to any of them would take a lot more time than I have at the moment.

Nutz 7, the first of the three received, spends a page or so asking questions about TAFF. I won't go into the details here but suffice it to say that there is more than a hint of potential controversy. Blatant 17 includes a fairly strong piece served initially at Taral Wayne (for a letter in The Caprician 3) and which broadens its field of attack to include Steve Green. As The Caprician is put out by the current British TAFF administrators (Christina Lake and Lillian Edwards) we can see that TAFF features in this discussion as well.

The Stale Tinned Milk of Human Kindness, another brilliant piece of writing by Owen Whiteoak, doesn't muck around with any of this fan fund stuff but, instead, goes straight for Michael Ashley's jugular. A fascinating piece that could be used to demonstrate advanced writing skills in English classes everywhere, I think that it may result in a lot of people not talking to one another. Then again, if Owen is right, they weren't enjoying talking to one another in the first place. Never having received Lip from Hazel Ashworth and being unable to recall reading anything by Michael Ashley, I find it difficult to respond to Human Kindness with any value judgement about Owen's proposition (fandom would be a better place if Michael Ashley was ignored by all and sundry until he learns to behave himself) despite the fact that Owen argues very convincingly in support of this. I would like to agree with Owen, but can't bring myself to do so until I see the smoking gun; or in this case, the smoking pen.

What I am prepared to say about these three British fanzines is that they are definitely worth getting. Owen describes his distribution as "whimsical" and welcomes letters of comment, while The Caprician and Blatant appear to be available for 'the usual'. Don't worry if you have to wait for a while, that's just the way British mail, and British fandom, seem to work.

Peering back through the looking glass, British fandom also seems to

have a small interest in the way Australian fandom works. Why have Australian fanzines turned "strident yellow"? we are asked on a strident yellow page of The Caprician 3. I'm prepared to take all responsibility for this as people have been buying yellow paper off me since I stocked up on it in a big way in early 1988. I've liked Canary Yellow since the early days of The Space Mastrel in 1979 but you can have too much of a good thing. I think that it's time for a change.

One thing that I have changed is the way I read fanzines. Finding it impossible to read a complex and dense fifteen page article in a succession of three or four minute periods, I changed tactics and started reading in bed... and discovered that fanzines are perfect for reading in those minutes between getting into bed and deciding that, yes, it is time to turn out the light. I used to read books in bed but found that long chapters were a problem; reading to their end quite often meant fighting off the sandman. Fanzine articles are normally a much more appropriate length. And having discovered an appropriate way to read fanzines, I am now considering an appropriate response to all this interesting reading. With The Space Mastrel in abeyance for the last year and probably for the next (work and study commitments) some letters of comment or maybe even a career as a fanzine reviewer would seem to be in order. But can I get the word processor into bed with me? Stay tuned for the next exciting episode!

- Mark Loney

ADDRESSES: Sticky Quarters, Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA.

War Pigs of Galaxia, Stewart M. Jackson, PO Box 257, Kalamunda, WA 6076, Australia.

Nutz, Pam Wells, 24A Beech Rd, Bowes Park, London N11 2DA, UK.

Blatant, Avedon Carol, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, UK.

The Stale Tinned Milk of Human Kindness, Owen Whiteoak, Top Flat, 11 Hosell Road, Highbury, London, N5 1XL, UK.

The Caprician, Lilian Edwards, 1 Braehead, Throtonhall, Glasgow G74 5AQ, UK and Christina Lake, 47 Wessex Avenue, Horfeld, Bristol BS7 0DE, UK. and The Space Mastrel, PO Box 428, Richmond, Victoria 3121, Australia.

I had a party last weekend and I had a great time. The guests seemed to enjoy it too, and the food went down well. The thing that puzzled me was on the monday, when all the stayer-overs had surfaced - one lot were watching a bad movie in colour in the front room, and the others were watching the same movie in the back room, on the black and white set! Do I really have two televisions for this? The mind boggles!

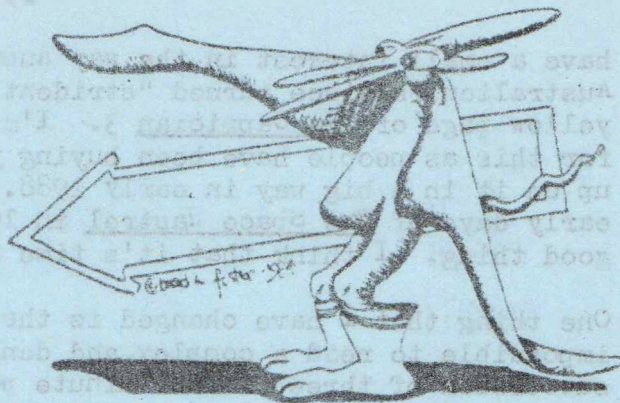
- Pam Wells, from a letter, May 1988



TRAVELLIN' FAN

by

John Foyster



INTRODUCTION What happens on a fan fund trip is certainly important.

For me, what happens after that trip is almost certainly more important, for it is here that the effect of the experience on the traveller is revealed. I don't think previous fan fund reports have taken a longer and more reflective view of what happened - largely because the report appears so soon after the experience. In my case, where external circumstances have produced a delay of almost a decade, I'm able to report those long term effects.

I propose to do this in two ways in this section, and so to describe how GUFF changed my life, and thus directly or indirectly say something about what fan funds do. (With the uncertainties of the late 1980s, this is probably a very useful thing to do.) The two aspects of the post-GUFF experience I shall write about are my developed interest in travel and in fandom on an international scale (and thus my return in the early 1980s to worldcon politics). What appears here is the first part of this section.

POSTGUFF We start on the 12th of August, 1982. I have a rather nifty round-the-world ticket which Robin Johnson has arranged, involving flights with Thai Airlines, Air Lanka, Sabena, American and New Zealand. Jennifer is pregnant and will remain in Melbourne. My schedule is Eurocon, Silicon, and Chicon on successive weekends. Go!

Travelling the Thai leg was from Melbourne to Singapore, on flight TG984, which seems to be the fag end of flight TG983 from Bangkok. In Sydney we dropped off the ex-Bangkok passengers and took on a reasonable supply of outward-bound ones. Originally, when I had booked the ticket, it made a lot of sense to take a stopover in Switzerland. The Eurocon was to have been held in La-Chaux-des-Bonds, quite handy to Zurich or Basel, but then it was switched to Northwest Germany, near the Dutch border. Unfortunately my air ticket could not then be changed. On my first night in Europe I was going to be sleeping in Hamburg, while Copenhagen or Frankfurt, stopping points for flight TG984, are each much closer to Hamburg than is Zurich. But it was all too late - rather like the departure from Melbourne. We left Sydney on time at 1240.

The flight to Singapore lasted just over seven hours. It was pleasant enough, and the fact that it was in daylight meant that I could get a

look at some of the islands I had failed to see on the 1979 flight. By now Singapore had a large and flashy air terminal which is mighty big. In walking the kinds of distance you do in such a place I found myself talking to a grandmother from Stuttgart who, like me, was changing to Air Lanka; she wanted to change her plans to include a stopover in Colombo. She had had a run-around from the airline people in Sydney when she had tried to make the change there, and half-expected the same sorts of problems again. We eventually found the right queue, after trying several very long and very wrong ones. At the head of it she was assured that they would do their best, but that things were still a little uncertain as to detail. However, we both got the seats on the Air Lanka Tristar we wanted.

I'd not been on a Tristar before, but Robin Johnson had assured me that they were pretty ace planes. That they may be, but the one from Singapore to Colombo that night didn't look too wonderful. I thought the food was good and the soft drinks more difficult to obtain than I could ever remember on any airlines (except for the various commuter airlines in Australia which operate without attendants).

Colombo Airport had a fairly small waiting lounge. Its size was about that of the lounges at Canberra, Australia, or Madison, Wisconsin. And there, just after midnight, Air Lanka rendezvoused its three Tristars. The idea was, I gather, that this scheduling would minimise disorganization for passengers who would have easy onward connections. That might make sense provided the shuffling of passengers did not take too long, but it took a long time, and for someone who arrived on the first of the three and departed on the last... when there was only just standing room... for several hours....

I had always travelled with Jennifer previously, except for lightening business trips to New Zealand and the United States of America, and this was the first time I was able to discover for myself just how true it was that you meet many more people when you travel alone. After I had been lounging about for an hour or so, a Sri Lankan traveller began talking to me. He had been working for the International Labor Organization for about twenty years, and was now based in Geneva. He had worked in many countries, and was quite interested in telling me all about it. It quickly became clear that he regarded the supply of electrical power as of great (if not first) importance in developing countries. He had been in Egypt from 1967 to 1970, and was very much impressed by that country's potential. He also felt that Zambia would have an assured future when the power of Victoria Falls is harnessed. In Sri Lanka the damming of the major river would be completed by 1984 and then Sri Lanka's power needs will be met. He felt that in the near future the smaller countries would have to begin to invest in agriculture rather than industry, and in this way they could gain power over the larger, industrialized, countries. I mentioned the relative situations of New Zealand and Australia, and the fact that New Zealand was much closer to his ideal than Australia was. Although he had spent a fair amount of time in the Asian region he had never been to Australia or New Zealand.

The Sri Lankan warned me that we would be closely searched before boarding the plane, as a result of recent political disruption in Sri Lanka, and suggested that we wait until most people had boarded. It is slightly uncomfortable to be frisked by gentlemen wearing machine guns, but all went well for me until they came upon a packet of white objects in my pocket. "What these?" "Oh, Koolmints. Have one. No, please do. Come to Australia and get more if you like them." It worked.

The next stop was Dubai, that place of the over-ornate air terminal. Over-ornate from the outside, that is. I had expected something quite extraordinary from the many photographs I had seen, but that expectation evaporates once you are inside and confronted with the usual rows of airline seats, bars, bazaar-style shops - and plenty of security guards. Dubai does not need so elaborate an air terminal as this. The contrast with the surrounding landscape is strong, even at night when all one sees are the lights on the roads leading from the airport to, apparently, nothing.

This was the starting point for the continuation of the conversation with my Sri Lankan acquaintance. The question was what would happen to countries like Dubai when the oil runs out. I thought that some of these countries might become quite dangerous in the last years of their oil-richness. He agreed, and cited the specific case of Libya, which was formerly dependent on Egypt for food and would, in all probability, be in that situation again. Since Libya could have nuclear weapons any time it liked, the situation could become very dangerous. He believed, on the other hand, that various countries (including Libya) could recover enough land from the desert to become self-supporting in agriculture. (But it is important here to consider his own biases. He, with his family, owns a large chunk of land and will benefit significantly from the dam development in Sri Lanka. He is also a major support for his extended family, and has to believe some things.) The security check at Dubai was close, but by no means offensive. I slept for a few hours from Dubai. The ILO bloke had said that he would complain about the poor service on the flight so far, and things did pick up on the leg to Zurich.

I got talking to my neighbour and discovered that she was Gillian Klein, a South African who had been living in the United Kingdom for about twenty years. She was editor of a magazine called Multicultural Education, a subject of passing interest to me, so we talked quite a lot. As we were passing over Turkey she also suggested I look out the window. It was nearing dawn, and there was a thin orange line, rumpled by hills, and above a startlingly bright white Venus. I took a photograph, but don't need it for the memory; Venus from 30000 feet over near-desert is thoroughly unforgettable. We talked the rest of our way to Zurich.

Zurich. I managed to get through Customs in less than twenty minutes and tried to find an Air Lanka office to book my next flight but there isn't one. After carrying suitcases up and down stairs I decided not to worry and go straight to the city.

Zurich is one of those immensely civilized places which has a railway station at the airport. The train was quick and I got to the main station by 0900. I bought some Swiss francs and then organized some train tickets. I reserved a seat from Zurich to Moench-Gladbach for one week hence. I stored one of my two bags for a week and the second for a few hours. At a railway bar I bought a Coke, and then wandered off down the Bahnhofstrasse. As a concession towards duty I visited the Air Lanka office and did my forward booking from Zurich to London about two weeks hence. Then I continued my walk down the Bahnhofstrasse, as far as the lake. I sat for quite some time beside the lake (something I would happily do again - not for the contemplation of things to come, which I admit was an important part of my feelings on this fine morning, but for the sheer pleasure of it). But I wanted to do more than relax in Zurich, so it wasn't long before I was up and crossing one of the bridges across the Limmat via the Quai Bruecke, then climbing slowly along Roemistrasse to the Kunsthaus.

The reason for my slow movement was not so much the gradient of the hill (even though it was more than a gentle slope) as the multiplicity of secondhand bookshops on the northern side of the street. Travellers who are book collectors (or, as in my case, book readers) would do well to steer clear of areas with high book densities, since one cannot possibly do justice to these collections - at least in the way one would in one's own country. All that saved me from large expenditure was the fact that most of the books were in German.

By the time I got to the art gallery I was beginning to feel some pressure from the need to move along hurriedly - something I regret - and so paused only to take some photographs of the sculpture in the grounds (including a Rodin), rather than jog quickly around the interior, as had originally been my intention. I dawdled back to the Limmat via back streets which twisted and turned around churches and more bookshops until, reaching the river, I turned upstream, towards the railway station. The dawdling - destructive as it is to plans to do as much as possible as one can in a city - is something to which I seem to be inclined in those cities I most like.

I had been in Zurich for only a couple of hours, and already I was finding it difficult to contemplate leaving it, so that my actions oscillated between steps which hastened my departure (the rational me) and those which delayed it (the feeling me). Along the Limmat I peered longingly at buildings I might never see again (except as I see them now, parts of the crowded memories of a golden day), then crossed at the Muensterbruecke. Back on the western (and Bahnhof) side of the river I ambled back to the station, passing through many delightful squares and passing buildings deserving of so much more than my fleeting transient's flickering glance.

And after two hours in Zurich it was time for a second Coke. I was due to leave for Basel just before 1300, so I now had a bare two hours left in which to explore the Landesmuseum, which is just across the road to the north of the railway station. That visit, too, was rather rushed,

but I did manage to see many of the parts I most hoped to see. I was especially impressed by the large battle scene modelled in miniature at which one gazed through tiny telescopes mounted about the periphery of the exhibit. I was also impressed by the prehistoric exhibits, by the rooms preserved and/or recreated from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and by the display of historical scientific instruments.

By the time I was ready to leave there had been a change in the weather: through the windows of the museum I had noticed people in the surrounding gardens running for shelter and fondly hoped that it would all be over. But the thunder and lightning which now followed meant

that I was due to get at least a little wet. But the station was, after all, just across the road, so I didn't get very wet, and had enough time up my sleeve to check out the shopping mall adjacent to the station, Shopville. I bought a light lunch and took the train to Basel.

Sixty-three minutes later we arrived at Basel, a city I knew rather well. I telephoned Jennifer's friend's home; a surly male

voice answered and then the telephone was quickly hung up. Since I had no time for more than a quick chat on the telephone this was no disaster. At the station I bought a Pepsi and a bar of chocolate. Chocolate is so good and cheap in Europe that it is almost by itself enough justification for living there. When the train arrived I was delighted to discover that no one else had reservations for the entire car (24 seats) which was one of those open-plan arrangements. I began to look forward to the trip north.

Basel-Hamburg. The trip north from Basel by train along the Rhine is one I've taken several times. But on this occasion it was a matter of going all the way to Hamburg, a much larger undertaking. The first part of the journey - say as far as Freiburg - is very beautiful, and I tried once again to take photographs of the vineyards. By the time the train had reached Offenburg the clouds were returning, but they had departed by the time we reached Mannheim, 75 minutes out of Basel. From the railway station at Mannheim I could see plenty of trams (always exciting to me) which were similar in design to those of Zurich. Twice, between there and Hamburg, I nodded off, so losing the opportunity to look at the German countryside (which had been so much part of my planning for this trip!), but I was sufficiently alert to buy a bockwurst and a Pepsi along the way. Just why a bockwurst bought in this way should taste so much better than any hot dog I had ever had



anywhere isn't at all clear, but it was.

Hamburg. The train was ten minutes late when it pulled in to Hamburg's main rail station. The whole station was undergoing extensive renovations, making it very difficult for me to find a telephone. Fortunately for me my contact, Tom Look, had stayed at home a little longer to wait for my call, and he was ready to make arrangements to come to meet me. But because of the redevelopments which were going on, and partly because (I suspect) I was rather tired, we had some initial difficulties working out where to meet: "Can you see the big clock from where you are?" "From where I am I can't see anything but scaffolding." And so on. But eventually "There's a small concourse overlooking the platforms: be there!" So far as my bleary eyes could make out there were two concourses, and both looked pretty small. But by trollying to and fro between the two ends of the platform I finally made the connection with Tom, who presumably glowed with those special signs by which science fiction fans recognise one another.

We travelled by underground to Mundsburg and the pub at the British Centre where Elfie was waiting. This pub was also the base for the English Theatre of Hamburg, and naturally enough there was Dave the barman. The owner was named David, to make matters slightly confusing, and also there that night were a couple of actors from the next production (Tunnel of Love, due to start on 26 August), Di Wilson and Paul Creighton. There was some conversation, but not much, and we left at about 0045 to walk back to Tom and Elfie's apartment. It wasn't very far, and the company, the surroundings, and the weather were all fine. But I had travelled rather a long way that day, and was only interested in going to sleep. I dozed rather than slept and then 'woke' at about 1000.

Tom and I had a light breakfast and set off for the main city area by underground; I bought a day ticket for 5.50DM. We walked past the Amerikahaus where the Community Party was staging a rather militant demonstration, and through the university to Wrage, a bookshop at which Tom occasionally works. In there we checked over the stock, with Tom picking out things he thought I ought to consider buying. While most of the books were in German there was a small English-language section which didn't, unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), have anything much of interest to me. Of the books Tom picked out I bought none, since his advice was that I could get them more cheaply elsewhere - in particular, a week later at Eurocon. That decided, we had had enough of Wrage and walked out the door, turned around, and walked promptly back in and began to study the books much more closely; while we had been inside quite steady rain had set in. Around and around the shelves and tables we went until the rain had eased to a drizzle. Or enough of a drizzle to encourage us to take the chance that the heavy rain had ceased (which it had).

Tom guided me to the main shopping area via a traffic-free walkway which is slightly elevated and at times passed through buildings. Tom took great care to make sure that my short stay in Hamburg would enable

me to see as much as possible. The highlights were the following:

From the walkway, Tom pointed out to me - over to the right, as it were - a rather militaristic monument which had recently been trashed with red paint by the demonstrators we had seen near the Amerikahaus. Tom would rather that this decoration were done away with. It was balanced by a more admirable statue of Schiller over to the left.

Not much further along Tom took me into what seemed at first glance a fairly ordinary bookshop. Not so. This one specialised in music (specifically opera) and art. The collection on display was wonderful, and only the fact that anything I bought would have to be carried around the world prevented me from investing large sums (another factor, I guess, was the lack of large sums of money...). Amongst the cheaper and more attractive items was a poster - The Doors Of Hamburg - at about 20DM. And of other posters there were plenty.

In the middle of an old building I found myself in an ultra-modern (but McDonaldsy) shopping arcade. Tom knew the nooks and crannies of Hamburg, and made sure that I found out about at least some of them.

While dodging around a shop we didn't particularly want to visit Tom took me aside to direct my attention to an art shop which had some works he particularly admired. I don't recall the name of the artist Tom wanted me to take note of - it's all blotted out by my sight of a pile of the original editions of Gustav Klimt's fanzine, Ver Sacrum. The price-tag was around 900DM, which I could have afforded had I spent no more money anywhere on the trip - an unlikely event, but I still think I did the wrong thing in deciding not to buy it. But this got us talking about art, and led to Tom encouraging me strongly to do something I had half-intended - go to the Documenta in Kassel.

We just failed to get to the Rathaus in time for a guided tour. But because Tom is a closet member of old-buildings fandom he made sure that I saw as many as possible.

The highlight was the visit to the Kunsthaus, which got to me right from the start, with the magnificent stairway inside the front door. Amongst the painters I most remember were works by Runge, Makart, and Friedrich. And Tom drew my attention to some works by Otto Dix which had just recently been removed from safe storage, having been politically unsuitable during the 1930s and 1940s.

Part of this wandering was shared with Elfie, and by 1500 we were ready for a meal. Out towards Landersbruecke we stopped at a small place called Pappa Leo's where Tom had scampi, Elfie spaghetti and I scallopini. I thought of ringing Melbourne at about this time, but the nearby telephones would accept only 1DM pieces, which would have made phoning a tedious business. By the time we got back to Landersbruecke it was too late. Perhaps this was because we stopped for an icecream on the way.

We took a bus back to the Looocks' apartment. A mid-afternoon nap was definitely called for, but by early evening we were off back to the pub at the British Centre, where we were to meet much the same people, except that Vooker, a friend of Tom's who was going to Eurocon, was also there. My prowess at darts had not previously been recorded in science fiction fandom for the most obvious of reasons, but Tom and I as a team managed to split four games against Paul and either of David or Volker. I dropped out early in the next game, and had a longish talk with David about his life in Australia. Volker and I managed a conversation in broken English/mathematics (the latter being his field of work and mine a decade earlier).

Also present that night was Klaus the yodeller, who burst into song (or yodelling) more frequently than at the drop of a hat. Klaus had not been able to advance his singing career as much as he had hoped in Hamburg, and was now thinking of trying to change his luck by moving to Berlin. We walked back to the Looocks' at about 2330.

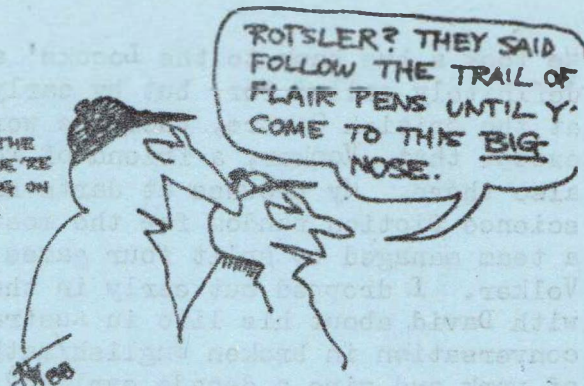
This was an excellent time to telephone Melbourne and find out how Jenny was and report on my adventures to date. At the home telephone number I got a redirection message. Now this was something we had planned. We had had a couple of nuisance calls in recent months, and the redirection was a notion we had to use either if there were any further calls or if Jennifer decided to visit her parents. So I tried her parents and Jim Bryce told me that, although it was nothing to worry about, Jennifer was in hospital. Since this was not much more than 48 hours after I had left Australia, and Jennifer then seemed quite well, I was rather surprised. The further detail was that although there was no risk, she was to have an operation the next day, and I could ring her at the hospital. Naturally I was upset, and I am afraid that this turnabout also upset the Looocks, kind souls who had, after all, met me for the first time only 24 hours earlier. It was a dreadful night for me, and I inadvertently made it uncomfortable for the Looocks. I hardly slept at all that night.

Next morning (Sunday, and gloomy) we set off for the Fischmarkt. It is very much the sort of place one should be enthusiastic about - full of life and action, crowded with people determined to enjoy themselves and to make others happy. The variety of stalls was much greater than the name would suggest, and there was always the Elbe to look at. But I was definitely mooching rather than enjoying myself. By underground we went to the Reeperbahn but while this was more lively, even on a Sunday morning, than many a similar street, it didn't really compare to Amsterdam. We walked around, and then went back to the Looocks'. Here we slept for a while, only to be awakened by a telephone call from Jennifer. She had had a miscarriage, but was now well.

Our overall plan for this period had been that, should anything happen, Jennifer was to take whatever steps she could to join me in Europe, then stay in England while I went on to the United States and Chicon. She talked enthusiastically about this. We worked out that to allow enough planning time she should next contact me on the Thursday (Australian

time), in Paris. She would have all the flight details, and I would have obtained train timetables so that I could work out where we would meet up on the Friday (European time).

LIKE THE
NOSE WE'RE
WALKING ON
?

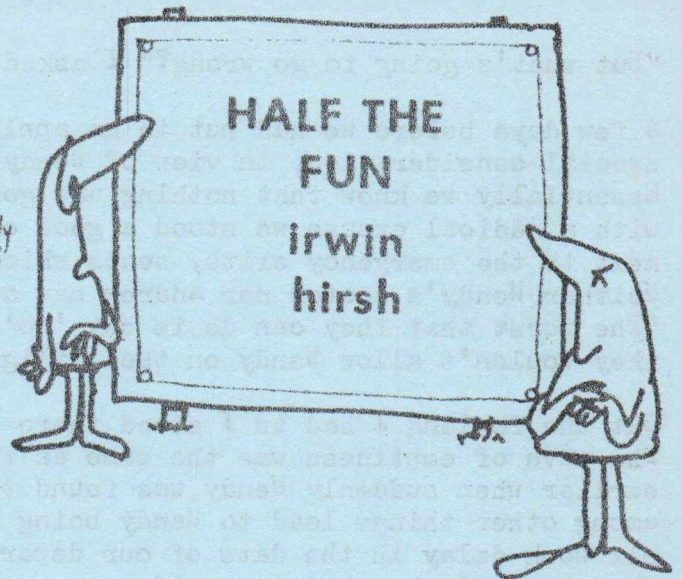


Things in Hamburg looked a little better now, even though the weather was becoming cloudy. Tom took me for an extended walk around the houses near the Alster, then along the Alster itself. We also stopped off for an American-style icecream sundae. Now I felt at home and at ease. The worries which had been hanging over me ever since I had left Australia, though now resolved in an unfortunate way, were at least behind me. I had a very short-term Eurail pass, and I was determined to get maximum value from it so Tom and I worked on the best way for me to fit in my next and very busy day. After three nights of the easy life, sleeping in a bed, I would be ready for the real life again. By leaving early next morning I would be able to visit Kassel, Goslar, and Hanover that day (Monday), arriving in Munich on Tuesday morning.

- John Foyster

EDITOR'S NOTE This tale doesn't conclude here and descriptions of John's time in Munich, Paris and at the Eurocon, Silicon, and Chicon should be appearing in Some Other Place or Places. Previous chapters of John's GUFF trip report appeared in a number of John's FAPazines, his fanzine Chunder!, Sikander 12 and the January, 1988 issue of the Australian Science Fiction Review (2nd series). Sikander 12 is available from me for \$2 (plus \$1 for postage) with all proceeds going to GUFF. ASFR is available for \$2 or £2 from Ebony Books, GPO Box 1294L, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, or from their agents Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St, Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER, UK, or Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred, Detroit, MI 48213, USA. Chunder! and John's FAPazines are unavailable, but have no fear, those particular chapters will be reprinted when John publishes his full one volume Trip Report.

Do it again



It is 2 o'clock on the afternoon of Thursday, the 21st of August, 1987. The next day Wendy and I are leaving on my GUFF trip and I'm making one more check through the stacks of clothes, books, and other travel paraphernalia. Just as I decide that we don't need most of the maps and travel brochures the telephone rings. Wendy is sitting by the telephone and picks up the receiver. As I listen to Wendy's half of the conversation I ascertain that she is talking to Andrew, our travel agent. Soon I'm brought into the conversation, "Irwin, what's the Harvey's address and phone number? Cathay Pacific and British Airways need it."

The Harveys, I think to myself, I saw our address book just a few minutes ago. And with that I started retracing my steps of the last few minutes, flicking through this stack of papers, under that stack of clothes. I found the book, turned to the 'H' page and handed the book to Wendy.

After the address had been relayed to Andrew, the telephone conversation took a turn for the worse. From Wendy's mouth I heard such phrases as "Really!", "why?", "so what happens now?" and any number of "Oh my god!"s. I stopped what I was doing and walked to the doorway between the dining room and the den, and leaned against the wooden frame separating the two rooms. Listening carefully I tried to work out what it was that was prompting Wendy's short responses. A strike in the airline industry? The flight has been overbooked and we're the ones to get bumped? It was definately something along those lines.

The conversation finished and Wendy replaced the receiver, slowly, and just looked at it for a bit. Her facial expression the complete antithesis to that with which she answered the phone. "Both airlines are talking about not letting me on their flights," she said, her eyes fixed firmly on the telephone. "They don't want to be held responsible if something goes wrong."

"But what's going to go wrong?" I asked rhetorically.

A few days before we had put in an application asking the airlines for special consideration, in view of Wendy's recent medical problems. Essentially we knew that nothing was going to go wrong, but we knew that with a medical excuse we stood a good chance of reserving seats right next to the emergency exits, seats which have a lot of leg-room. Neither Wendy's doctor nor Andrew saw anything wrong with the idea. "The worst that they can do is say 'No'" said Andrew. The concept that they wouldn't allow Wendy on their flights was an entirely alien one.

But the feeling I had as I stood there looking at Wendy was not alien. The wave of emptiness was the same as the feeling I had a few months earlier when suddenly Wendy was found to require an operation, which among other things lead to Wendy being off work for four months and a six week delay in the date of our departure. Someone out there is out to get us, I thought to myself.

"Anyway, it is not as if they would know anything was wrong," I added, sort of answering my own question. Wendy accepted the double meaning. On one hand we had volunteered the information that Wendy is an epileptic. But at the same time only a trained person would be able to spot when she is having a fit. I know that blank expression for what it is, which is the worst Wendy had been for as long as I've known her and which hadn't happened since the operation, but most people would just read the expression as something which happens on 20+ hour flights.

I felt pathetic and Wendy looked worse. Empty. As I walked over to console her she started to cry. A few minutes later we'd recovered from the initial shock and we started to get some perspective on the situation. "So what did Andrew say is to happen now?"

"We just have to wait till they decide one way or the other."

With only one day till departure I didn't like the idea of just sitting back. Should they make the decision to not allow Wendy on the flight there may not be enough time to convince them to reverse their decision. I picked up the phone and rang Andrew to put this to him but he was out to lunch. I wondered if his co-workers knew anything about what we could do. Even the hour of Andrew's lunch could count against us so I asked the person at the other end of the line if she would be able to help. Her response was a qualified decline: she was totally unaware that this was happening and didn't feel she could just step in like this. That's odd, I thought, it wouldn't be too often that a travel agent has a client who the airlines aren't prepared to carry. I would've thought that such news would quickly spread throughout the agency.

The next ten minutes Wendy and I spent just looking at the phone, waiting for it to ring. "How can he have such a long lunch when he should be helping us?" I screamed in frustration. We decided to ring our parents so that they knew what was happening and out of that came

the suggestion that Wendy's surgeon may be able to alleviate any fears the airlines may have.

"I'll get you on your flight, don't worry," Dr Wallace told Wendy, "When do you leave?"

"Tomorrow."

"That soon, huh."

Ten minutes later his receptionist rang back asking us to get the name of the person who'll ultimately be making the decision on Wendy. So another phone call to Andrew was in order. He was still at lunch, so I outlined the situation to the voice at the other end of the line. It was a different voice to that who I spoke to before.

She was just amazed at what I told her. "I'll find out who your doctor needs to speak to, but in the meantime you should get him to give you a letter about Wendy's condition. When you are travelling around Europe you may need it." And there and then she dictated the letter to me and suddenly I knew who I was talking to. My mother had recommended this travel agency to us, in particular Robert. When Robert moved north my mother had hoped that Claire would take over our file and suggested we speak to her when we next contact the agency. But it was Andrew who took over from Robert. Now I was talking to Claire and I knew why my mother had suggested her - she is willing to fight for her clients.

The doctor's receptionist said the letter would be ready in half an hour and I went out to pick it up. My idea was to go from the doctor's surgery on to the travel agency; I felt useless sitting at home waiting for more news and the conversations on the telephone weren't satisfying my sense of unease. Being forced away from the telephone things began to fall into place, for when I arrived at the surgery the receptionist was pleased to tell me that Wendy was half-way onto the flight. As a result of Dr Wallace's phone calls to them, the Melbourne office of British Airways had agreed that the tension they were placing on Wendy was more likely to cause an epileptic fit than would travelling at a high altitude or the airline's quality of service. All that would be needed was the okay from Head Office in London, and given the time difference we wouldn't know of their decision till the next morning.

The rest of the afternoon and evening was dominated by quite a dull sensation. We packed our bags, wondering if it was necessary. The visits and telephone calls from friends seemed, too, to have a futility about them. Were we on the flight or would we be stopped at the departure lounge? It was a good thing the day's activities were so draining as it was the only reason I got a good night's sleep.

I woke up the next morning just on 9 o'clock and nervously rang British Airways.

"Yes, Mr Hirsh, London has okayed your wife for the flight."

So, we were on our way. And for all our trouble, all the tension of the previous day, the seats we planted our bums into weren't the seats we'd requested. As far as I can tell the check-in clerk took a dislike to us, and decided that the best he can offer is seats in the row behind those we wanted. When we pointed out that we'd requested particular seats we were told that that is all we'd done: put in a request. When we pointed out that we were the first in the queue, the clerk told us that the flight was originating in Sydney, implying that that was why the seats weren't available. When we went upstairs to the Top Deck restaurant for lunch we saw a British Airways 747 on the tarmac, at the same gate from which our flight would be departing. There were three hours till departure, so our flight should've still been in Sydney but there were no earlier flights listed to be departing from that gate.

I went downstairs and asked a polite question about the origin of flight 10. As angry as I was made by the reply I was reluctant to make any waves. After all that went on the previous day I was glad to just be on the flight. Wendy felt much the same, and as we sat in the seats in row 29 we sneered at the people in row 28.

The flight to Sydney was extremely pleasant. We knew that beyond Sydney we would be part of a teeming mass of humanity, but for one hour we were able to stretch out and work our way up to the cattletruck beyond Sydney. I took to sampling the various channels of the audio entertainment, settling on the humour channel. The best and not so best of essentially British humour, hosted by Frank Muir. About twenty minutes into the tape I was told that I was about to hear "a particularly delightful sketch about kindergarten children". I tapped Wendy on the shoulder. "Listen to channel four. There is something you might enjoy."

The sketch by one Joyce Grenfell left a lot to be desired, and was only saved by Wendy's touch. When Ms Grenfell told her imaginary class to "put on our thinking caps", Wendy put on an imaginary cap. When the ever-so-delightful Grenfell lady asked her class to "put on (their) biggest smile" Wendy put on her biggest cheesy grin. As I proceeded to be bored by Grenfell's condescending view of her subject matter I found myself looking out the window, considering south-east New South Wales. After a bit of staring into all that space I turned to Wendy and found that she'd given up on the 'humour'. I followed her line and randomly turned to another channel, where I found a piece of music which sounded as if it was Mel and Kim but was probably some other plastic group.

The jet landed in Sydney and Wendy and I took the opportunity to stretch our legs in the direction of, first, the duty-free shop and then on to relieve ourselves. Back at the departure lounge Wendy pointed to a lady who was standing with her back to us. "She pushed in front of me in the toilet queue."

I looked up, following the line from Wendy's pointed finger. "She looks like Janeen Webb."

"Yeah," agreed Wendy, "same long legs."

"And very similar hairstyle."

The likeness was rather uncanny, so I waited for confirmation one way or the other. Eventually she turned side on. It wasn't Janeen.

Back on the jet I was a few steps ahead of Wendy as we walked down the aisle. Just as I reached our seats I heard Wendy let out a scream of laughter. I turned around and saw that she was standing talking to someone. I walked back to see who it was.

"Er, hi Janeen!" I said.

"There is someone on this flight who looks a lot like you." Wendy said.

"You realise that the Blackfords will probably be at the airport to meet us," I told Wendy when back at our seats, "They left about a fortnight ago."

"God! We go half-way across the world to be met by people we only occasionally see in Melbourne. Fan-bloody-tastic."

The rest of the flight, all 22 hours of it, was unremarkable. We had a Maggie Thatcher lookalike sitting behind us and in keeping with this the food was bland. The Janeen Webb lookalike was sitting just six rows back, an incredibly exciting piece of information we provided to Janeen when she came down to talk to us. Janeen and Wendy managed to pass whole minutes by gossiping about the good ol' days when Wendy was a mere college student and Janeen was her tutor.

It is probably a testament to the cattletruck that was this flight that the most fascinating thing to do was watch the queue for the toilets. In their infinite wisdom British Airways had decided that two toilets could adequately serve 200 people, when other airlines like the idea of having four toilets for those 200. In their attempt to squeeze in an extra four seats there were half hour toilet queues for most of the flight. The cubicles couldn't cope with the constant use and towards the end of the flight they were a stinking mess. A couple of hours out of Heathrow I decided to freshen up with a shave. I applied a soapy lather to my face but gave up after only one stroke of the razor. The stench was too much and I went back to my seat feeling worse than I did just two minutes earlier. And I had to wait half an hour for that privilege.

Throughout the flight we'd been debating whether we should use the wheelchair Dr Wallace had requested for Wendy. She felt self-conscious about the idea of being wheeled around, while I felt she should take advantage of it for the same reason the Doc had suggested: it would enable us to queue hop at the passport check. After a 23 hour flight I didn't feel like spending an hour or more in a queue and ultimately Wendy decided she didn't think much of the concept. A wheelchair it was.

The wheelchair attendant proved most deft at his craft, zipping Wendy down ramps and through corridors with great speed. I was left with the need to run to keep up. At emigration there was a queue of three or four hundred. While I stood there trying to work out how many plane loads the queue represented the wheelchair attendant found a nice little queue of one, just for us. A representative of Her Maj's Customs welcomed us to his country with the news that Walkabout was his favourite Australian film, an opinion motivated by the many revealing shots of Jenny Agutter.

We collected our luggage and went out into the arrivals hall. I scanned the area looking for Eve and John Harvey but they weren't to be seen. No sight of Russell and Jenny Blackford, for that matter. The wheelchair attendant suggested putting an announcement over the public address system for the Harveys. A minute later I'm hearing "Would Mr and Mrs Harvey meeting Mr and Mrs Hirsh please go to the Information Desk" coming out from the speakers. And I thought such announcements only happened in the movies.

The attendant suggested that I wait at the Information Desk, and just as I walked up to it along came Eve and John. Suddenly it occurred to me that I didn't really know Eve and John too well, not seeing much of them on Eve's GUPF trip in 1985. "Er, hi."

"Hello. How's the flight?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Er, fine."

"Where's Wendy?"

"Over there, in a wheelchair," I said, pointing.

And just then I realised what that last word meant. We hadn't warned the Harveys about any wheelchair. "I'll explain about the wheelchair later," I said and walked off in Wendy's direction.

Wendy was introduced to our hosts, the wheelchair attendant thanked, and on our way we went. As John negotiated his car through the carpark we explained about the wheelchair. "Phew," said a relieved Eve, "We knew you'd been sick but we didn't expect a wheelchair. My first thought was to wonder how you were going to get around our two storey house."

Once out of the confines of Heathrow Wendy and I sat back to get our first views of this foreign land. The problem was that it didn't seem foreign. I'd look this way and that, wanting to see something new, something different. From what I saw we may as well have been on the Tullamarine Freeway driving from Melbourne's airport. I turned to Wendy "We've just come halfway across the world, haven't we?" I asked her.

"I think so" she said.

"Don't worry," Eve said, "when we arrived in Australia it also felt like

we hadn't left home."

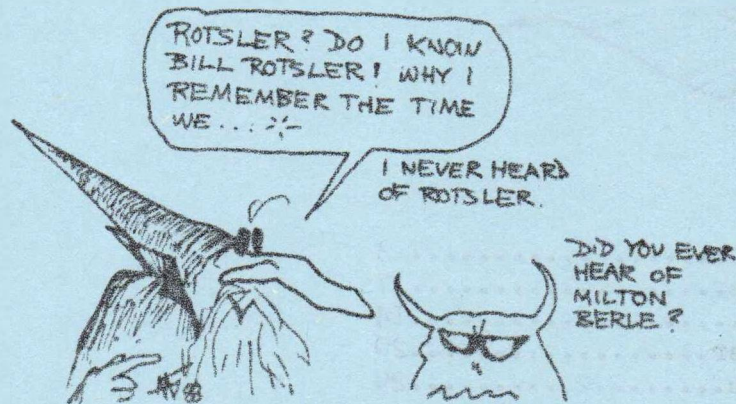
Then, perhaps half a minute later, Wendy noticed a sign indicating the distance to Sunbury. "Look" she said, pointing out the sign to me. I just laughed.

Eve turned around. "What's so funny?"

"The freeway sign that announces the exit to Melbourne's airport also tells you the distance to Sunbury. We haven't left home."

- Irwin Hirsh

EDITOR'S NOTE As mentioned some pages back, this is not the first chapter of my report to be published. Two chapters were published in the 16th and 19th issues of Larrikin, which is published by Perry Middlemiss and myself. Copies of Larrikin are for \$1 (plus 50¢ for postage) each, with all proceeds going to GUFF. The next chapter, detailing Wendy and my first days in London - will we feel like we've left Australia? - will be published somewhere, sometime. I'll keep you posted when it happens.



ADDRESSES OF CONTRIBUTORS

Jim Barker, 2 Manor St, Falkirk, Stirlingshire FK1 1NH, UK.
 Bred Foster, PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016, USA.
 John Foyster, PO Box 483, Norwood, South Australia 5067.
 Alexis Gilliland, 4030 8th St South, Arlington, VA 22204, USA.
 Pavel Gregoric Jr, Tuskanac 22, 41000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia.
 Mark Loney, PO Box 428, Richmond, Victoria 3121.
 Bill Rotsler, 17909 Lull St, Resenda, CA 91335, USA.
 Arthur Thomson, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London SW2 3RU, UK.

=====

SIKANDER FIFTEEN

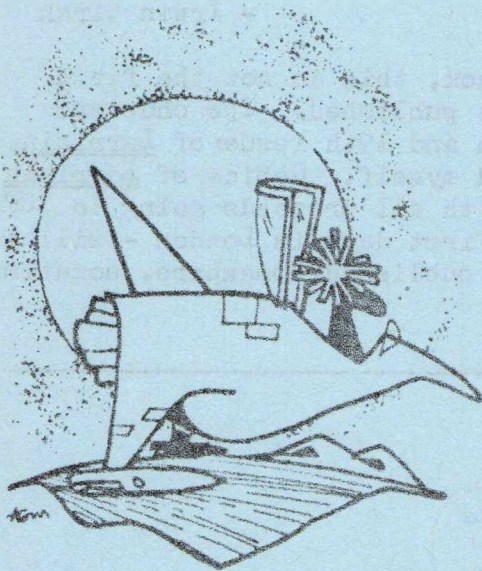
=====

March 1989

Edited and published by:

Irwin Hirsh
26 Jessamine Avenue
East Prahran
Victoria 3181
AUSTRALIA

=====



CONTENTS

Words by:

Irwin Hirsh.....	3
the readers.....	7
Mark Loney.....	14
John Foyster.....	20
Irwin Hirsh.....	29

Pictures by:

Jim Barker.....	cover
Bill Rotsler.....	4,19,24,29
Paval Gregoric Jr.....	7,14
Brad Foster.....	20
Alexis Gilliland.....	28,35
Arthur Thomson.....	36

Proofreading by Wendy Hirsh

Contents COPYRIGHT (c) 1989 by Irwin Hirsh. All rights revert back to the original writer or artist upon publication.

=====

PRINTED MATTER

If undeliverable please
return to:

Irwin Hirsh
26 Jessamine Ave
East Prahran
Victoria 3181
AUSTRALIA