

WARM CHAMPAGNE # 9

is produced and bottled for you by Susan Wood, Dept. of English, U.B.C., Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1T6, Canada. Today is Nov. 20, 1977 on this side of the dateline. This is Lion's Gate Press Publication #25, for mailing 58 of ANZAPA, hoo-rah, with mimeo assistance by Eli Cohen. Happy New Year.

And here I am, Late as Usual, trying to save my Anzapa membership and wondering if my 35 copies will fly to John Bangsund in a week. I've spent a fair bit of time recently marking Formal Reports from my technical writing class, on such thrilling topics as "Proposed Modifications to the Chambermaid Training Programme at the Vancouver Hyatt Regency Hotel," "Proposed Modifications to Fish Sampling Methods, Department of Fisheries," and "Safety Conditions at the Kin Pool, Nanaimo." My favorite report, so far, has been one on the sorting procedures at the Vancouver main Post Office, compiled by a woman who worked for a year sorting incoming mail, at some ludicrous salary. Apparently, mail coming in from Vancouver is given priority-- then from B.C.-- then from Canada. "Foreign" arriving mail is given lowest priority, and it is, apparently, quite normal for bags of overseas mail destined for people like ME to sit around for 3 weeks or more, during "slack" seasons. Bloody foreigners, they don't have anything interesting to say anyway, mumblemumble...

I confess to feeling Guilty when the Anzapa bundles arrive, quite promptly, bearing outrageous amounts of postage. It seems ridiculous to me that Canada has a printed-matter rate to Australia, while the US doesn't; but that Australia only has a printed-matter airmail rate to the US. John, do you want to go back to sending my bundles to John Berry, or do you figure the treasury is healthy?

Alas, even with such speedy delivery, you behold WARM UNBUBBLY all commentless. THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY PAGES? Lord save us, that's a novel... or two, if you're writing for Ace or Dell. Yesterday, when I could have been typing stencils, I marked a set of second-year Canadian literature essays instead. The average grade was C-, or a bare pass, and at that I was being generous; you have seldom seen such a collection of disorganized and undigested facts, lack of logic, and poor grammar ~~except from Ted~~ ~~in~~ I got so disgusted that I simply couldn't write. Instead, I went for a hike down to the beach, after realizing that I hadn't been for a ramble in my neighbourhood since, oh, May I think. (Bruce, I have decided that The Wood Hotel is actually a boon; the last time I saw my surroundings was when Joan Baker was visiting. The sense of Hassle I seem to feel each fall has everything to do with school, and the Fall Bleccies which replace The Februaries in more temperate climes than Ottawa and Regina. At least when people visit me, I get away from school, essays and \$/*!&?? Administration, and look at the occasional tree and scenic wonder.)

Winter has arrived. I dug out my heavy wool coat, and a scarf, and my heavy boots. Not to mention my thick purple socks. Muffled up, I strode past bare trees, berry-covered bushes, late-blooming roses, and whitened grass touched by frost; it was late afternoon, and about 6°C *below* freezing. The air was very still; the sky, deep blue; the air, completely clear. You could almost see individual trees on the mountains north of English Bay. The nearer mountains were snow-dusted, with heavy white drifts in the valleys; already there's more snow than we had all last year, and the skiers are delighted. (Personally, I lived

for 21 years in a marvellous ski region, and never had the slightest urge to strap slippery wooden boards to my feet, don \$500 worth of fancy dress, and hurl myself down a wet, cold mountain. Mountains are very pretty to look at, and (in moderation) they are excellent things to walk up, admiring flora and fauna as you amble. But ski down one? Yer crazy.)

I looked at the Howe Sound mountains, up into the interior, all sharp-edged and white like a Japanese print; they were slowly turning pink, as the sun set. I watched the colours change, and slowly fade; watched the water ebb; watched the trees. My head cleared.

I think that's the most peaceful moment I've had since term began.

I froze my nose, and came home to mark tech. writing reports...

Since I last did CHEAP CHAMPERS, I have: been back to Berkeley, where I delivered my paper, saw Ursula Le Guin, and had dinner with her, Lizzy Lynn and Terry Carr. Also got to see Dignified Ursula (sitting cross-legged in a Thai restaurant, all of us a little giddy after a day of Academic Serconity) using the skewer from her barbecued beef to flick grains of rice at Saintly Terry Carr. (You wondered what Pros do when they aren't signing autographs?) The nadir of the sercon-academic Stuff came when an earnest and rather dense Jungian critic, the young man (she said, patronizingly) who organized the seminar, tried to get Ursula to pin down the Meaningful Symbolism of her work. "Trees, you use a lot of trees. They seem to represent Good." "Well, yes," said Ursula, with her usual tact, "I do like trees, yes." "And rocks, now, Rocks are Bad." Ursula, straight-faced, "Why, no. I never met a pebble I didn't like." Academic, undeterred, asked her how she celebrated the Vernal Equinox; did she strip and dance on the lawn to the fertility goddesses, or what. Ursula, still deadpan, left a meaningful pause, then replied, sweetly: "That's none of your business."

I giggled, clutching Lizzy (an ex-Englishlit-M.A.), and we both pretended we'd never been near an Academic.

I spent a marvellous 10 days in Berkley, reading people's manuscripts, eating, and carousing... then came home, and Did Administration. Then I went to Portland, where Vonda was staying with the Le Guins, had more dinners and late-night conversations (punctuated by the invasion of the Le Guin garden by 4 raccoons-- think of smart wombats, with Teeth and Claws and Cute expressions hiding menace. What, you can't imagine a smart wombat? Oh, never mind.) I collected a pile of essay-manuscripts, for (fanfare of trumpets) the collection of Ursula's essays on sf, fantasy and children's lit I'm editing for Berkley Books (got the contract, got the money, no I haven't heard word one from David Hartwell, oh giants of Nortstrilia Press, how about you? Now, I got to get The Time.) Came home, put the mss. in the drawer, and there they have stayed since the end of August.

Registration was bloody awful, the first week of classes was worse, I've been laid up with flu, and now I have my usual case of Terminal Term-paper. The only book I've read for sheer fun all term is Cherry Wilder's THE LUCK OF BRIN'S FIVE. You should IMMEDIATELY contact Merv Binns, to see if he can order the Atheneum edition for the US. (Carey, your copy is in the mail, surface. Look for it NEXT Christmas. Airmail was \$8.) Marsupial people, lovely society; some loose ends, but she's at work on the sequel, she says. Meantime, I've heard directly that Ursula's working on a novel, indirectly that the first draft is done!

Having completed my ritual two pages of moaning about how busy I am (in summer, I'm travelling or writing; in winter, I mark papers and push paper as an administrator; this winter, I will also travel, to Ottawa at Christmas and Wisconsin to be half-a-GO with Vonda McIntyre at the Wiscon in February... I had better dig Woolf, my 23-year-old enveloping muskrat garment, out of storage) (this is a run-on sentence, frowned upon in English 100), I can now go on to something Completely Different. The following is a column from the Vancouver SUN, our evening excuse for an information source, Nov. 16 or 17. Mostly the columnists write cheery things about why anyone who opposes rape is obviously lesbian, and why UBC profs are overpaid and underworked... but Lisa Hobbs supplies the Human Interest. I clipped this column out to send to John the B., but decided to share it.

Alice Springs sits smack in the centre of Australia. It isn't much of a town to look at. You approach it by driving through an ochre-coloured rock pass and, when you arrive, it's just a few flat, broad streets with a lot of dust, a few trees and a broad, dry riverbed on which scores of Aborigines appear to be permanently and contentedly camped.

Alice Springs has been in the news because Prince Charles suffered food poisoning there last week. After 29 years of loving care, including surviving Gordonstoun, the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and his own family, Charles left Australia vomiting vigorously.

All this is beside the point, however. What is to the point is something the most casual newspaper reader must observe. That is the weird nature of almost all the news that comes from Australia. There's hardly a story that doesn't give the impression that the entire nation is either awash with lunatics or under siege from some freak of nature. If Godzilla is ever to meet King Kong, you can bet it's going to be on the beach at Bondi with the locals coolly taking bets.

The year's news from Australia started with a lengthy story about a "part-time" clairvoyant's prediction that Adelaide was going to be hit by a massive tidal wave and earthquake. The clairvoyant was a house-painter and he fled into the desert. The premier, Don Dunstan, who happens to be a published poet and accomplished pianist, felt it incumbent to knock off writing the cook book he was working on to go stand on a jetty and defy the sea. All this took place in January when it's incredibly hot, people drink a lot and hallucinatory states are not uncommon.

Then came endless wire stories about the women of Sydney throwing off their bikini tops as a heat wave struck and reduced the pavements to glue. A row broke out in Sydney council. There was no way to make hundreds of women put their bras back on but, the council ruled, the bottom half of the bikini had to be at least two inches broad. For weeks an argument raged as to how such a bylaw would be enforced and the wire services kept the world informed as to how it was going. To anyone looking for serious news from Australia, it seemed as if the entire nation had gone bonkers. A few days later there was another story: A young woman, asked by customs officials if she had anything to hide, leaped onto the counter and took everything off. Impression confirmed.

The next item from this exotic land of my birth was that a plague of giant flies was descending on Sydney. As big as bats, people said. Within days, this was followed by reports that an army of locusts as big as kittens was marching remorselessly from the north to the south. The government, in language reminiscent of the war years, announced it was maintaining a constant watch on the invaders but was powerless to stop them.

Was Sydney attacked by a plague of flies? Did the army of locusts ever reach the south? The curious aspect of these bizarre stories that flow unendingly from down under is that you never do find out. One exotic happening after another and none of them ever resolved. The plague stories, for instance, disappeared instantly when the government decided to take a national referendum on the national anthem. Did Australians want to hear God Save the Queen, Waltzing Matilda, or what before their football games? As a sizeable number of spectators is deep into the sauce before these games start, it was all rather irrelevant but for weeks the nation racked its collective brains over the question. The various merits of these old dirges were promulgated throughout the world. Not until half the continent was covered in an unseasonable flood did things get back to normal. The disaster was regarded by many as an act of God: Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser announced that God Save the Queen had won. Besides, Waltzing Matilda sounded too jolly for state funerals.

When I was in Australia recently, I complained to newspaper friends about the loony impression you get of that country if only the wire services are read. What loony impression, they asked. Well, I said, the plague of giant flies and the army of locusts as big as kittens, that sort of thing.

They agreed. The real problems of Australia never get told, they said. For instance, wild camels had so over-bred in the desert they had become a highway hazard. And, in the north, wild boars had taken over in herds of hundreds. And as for kangaroos, their numbers had increased so much since they were protected they had moved into rural rows in waves, mowing down all the wheat fields before them. All of which just happens to be true.

And now I read that the Australian government-- counselled by Inspector Clouseau's brother perhaps-- is inviting applications from would-be spies by inserting ads in local newspapers. Hopefuls have to have some work experience as well as a university degree "preferably in the social sciences." Don't laugh now. They might just one day catch the Pink Panther.

I await with eagerness reports that Carey Handfield has a new career-- or that Bill Wright is betting on the King Kong-vs-Wild Camels match...

Speaking of kittens, we acquired a sister for Harlequin, in the forlorn hope that two kittens would wear off their excess energy on each other instead of my philodendron. The philodendron is lying in shreds, at the moment. Samantha, the second kitty, is a beautiful black-and-white cat, resembling Dylan Bangsund in appearance though not (as I remember) in nature: no retiring miss, this. She's hyperactive, and rather dense (she keeps falling into the bathtub... when I'm in it), super-affectionate, and terribly Audacious. (Maybe this comes from being Dumb.) They were spayed last Thursday, and came home with a note from the vet that they were to be kept quiet and not allowed to jump on the furniture. Sure. Last night, Sam bounced from the bathtub rim to the windowsill via my head, and today, I found her trying to balance atop the bathroom door. Right now, they are playing touch football, or perhaps soccer, with my lap as one of the goals. Please excuse the typos; they are a tad distracting, the furry darlings (the kittens, not the typos. I've been reading too many term papers.)

And what else? We put out GENRE PLAT 2, the Bangsund-reprint issue: \$1 from Allyn Cadogan, 28 Atalaya Terr., San Francisco, CA 94117; thus endeth my interest in running off genzines. Eli got a JOB, computer-programming for Vancouver General Hospital. John Berry is to be a GOH, but he can tell you about that. And about the Book Review. And now, I'm going to bed.

Love, Susan