

FROM SUNDAY TO SATURDAY

Published by the usual Don Fitch, of 3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722 U.S.A., in a rather unusual way; the various Segments of this Australian Trip & AussieCon Report will be included in the Mailings of several different Amateur Press Associations, with each of them eventually getting the whole thing, if I manage to hold out that long. This first Section (at least 8 pp.) is designed for the 153rd quarterly Mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, November, 1975.

Sunday, 2 Nov. '75:

It has become Obvious that there will never be time to write up this summer's Australian Trip and AussieCon as thoroughly and carefully as I'd like to, but I am Determined to set down on paper (or stencil) as much as possible before memories fade and the few jotted notes become entirely incomprehensible.

It was two years ago, at Toronto, that the Australian fans won their bid for the 1975 World Science Fiction Convention. Their winning was no great surprize -- the WorldCon has been held so often in North America that any bid from elsewhere will certainly receive very careful consideration, even though most of the people voting for it know they will not be able to afford to attend.

Australian Fandom had something else going for it as well. Down Under fandom has a Reputation, gained mostly through the extraordinary Activity of a dozen or so of its members who publish fanzines, belong to U.S. amateur publishing associations, write letters of comment, and make Heroid Efforts to attend North American Conventions. The picture of Australian fandom which we had built up was highly favourable--well-written & legibly-reproduced fanzines, some with Serious Constructive (but rarely overly-solemn) Discussion of Science Fiction, some more Personal, again written with intelligence, wit, and humor. Through all these Contacts came a general feeling that all these people must be thoroughly delightful. Of course they won their bid for the WorldCon.

During the two years after this, I gradually acquired some Hope of attending, saved up vacation time (and money) in '74, cut corners (bought fewer books, ate less expensive foods -- cutting meat down to twice per week), and finally began to believe that it might be just barely possible after all. Not until about two weeks before it would be time to leave was I really sure that I'd have enough money and would be able to get off work for a whole month, and by that time it was too late to join the Group Tour arranged by the Lundrys. That may have been just as well -- the idea of saving several hundred dollars and much Hassle making Reservations & cet. is attractive, but more attractive was the prospect of spending almost a week longer there than the Tour Group did, and of being able to change Plans at a moment's notice. Besides, I did not want to be distracted from Australia by the companionship of a bunch of American fans.

Air New Zealand was the AussieCon's Official Overseas Airline, and no more expensive than the others, so I plunked down slightly over \$1,000 for a 28-day Excursion Fare ticket (any longer stay would've cost an extra \$500), got \$1,000 worth of Traveller's Cheques, passport, smallpox vaccination, AustRail Pass (ca.\$70.00 for unlimited Railroad usage for 14 days), arranged with a friend to water & harvest my vegetable garden and check on my elderly mother every few days, and started Making Plans.

They were Grandiose Plans, of course, and most were scotched when Australia turned out to be even larger than Imagination had pictured it, with some additional Complications which were discovered on the scene. (No-one goes to Queensland during the mid-August school vacation -- it's too Crowded then, for example, and Darwin has not nearly recovered from the tornado damage.) Nor did I end up seeing many of the Tourist Sights; there were too many other sights & places which were completely interesting, even though "ordinary."

My first Encounter with Air New Zealand was not Promising -- the young lady at the check-in counter decided that my new suitcase, purchased as "carry-on" size, was too large and would have to be checked through, so I bought a little canvas bag and transferred a few things (books, maps, notebook, and a bit of food for Emergency sustenance, should I become hungry on the plane (HA!) into it, bidding farewell to the idea of walking straight from the plane to Customs. That was the last Problem ANZ gave. Service throughout the flight was impeccable, and the food both abundant and delicious. Airplane meals cannot be gourmet cookery -- at best they must be only glorified frozen TV dinners, but these were the most glorious TV dinners I've ever encountered. And there were so many of them that we were kept stuffed through the entire flight. (As someone has written already "16 full meals and 245 cups of fruit juice later...")

Well, there was one other flaw with the ANZ people -- the in-flight Movie was The Great Waldo Pepper -- a story of early barnstorming days, with many plane-crashes...clearly a miscalculation on someone's part, since some of the passengers were rather distressed by it. First stop was Honolulu, about midnight their time, or something like 2 am subjective time (jet lag, time zones, and International Date Line seem to bother a lot of people, but I kinda go by the sun and seem to be quite unaffected (even though Confused).) We weren't allowed outside the Terminal building in Hawaii, but someone had thoughtfully left one pair of doors open to the outside, and I stood there savoring the warm, moisture-laden breezes and dreaming of Hawaii, Tahiti, Bora-bora, The South Pacific, the Tropical Paradise, a free & easy life like unto that of the American Indians or the Gypsies, but with added sensual overtones of Exotic Tropical fruits & flowers and people and gleaming beaches in the sun & moonlight, and warm tropical nights. *Sigh*

It would be quite within my means to spend a few weeks in Hawaii next year (and if there were SF Fans there, a WorldCon in Honolulu would not be impossible), and maybe I'll consider the idea, even though friends tell me that Hawaii is not at all the place it was a few years ago, or the Paradise of a few decades ago. It's not that everything is Expensive (though that's true enough), but rather that most of the people are now out, primarily, to Exploit the tourists, and that makes for a Bad Atmosphere. (Even Tahiti is reportedly becoming almost as bad.) Visiting a place like that is a Game which might be fun to play for a while, just as some people enjoy visiting Las Vegas, but it's rarely to my liking, and certainly not what I'm looking for.

More Long Flight, sometime during which we crossed the International Date Line into day-after-tomorrow, ensuring that this would be one of those Good Vacations when one is never quite certain of the date or day-of-the-week. The plane was less full after Hawaii (a large group of British tourists disembarked there), and my seat-mate, a young chap en route from London to New Zealand (not very communicative, he explained, because he'd been unable to sleep since leaving London) latched onto a couple of vacant seats in the center section, where an arm-rest could be put up to leave a space almost long enough to stretch out on, and flaked out. As usual in planes at night, the air conditioning was turned down, and as I rummaged in the above-aisle storage chest for a blanket/afghan I noticed that he seemed to be cold, so spread a blanket over him and speculated as one does about sleeping people --

one terminus of his life in Britain and one in New Zealand -- what hopes and fears and dreams, what Visions and Feelings and Understandings has he had and will he have? What has he done, what will he do and what will he Be? And the stodgy-looking paunchy old gentleman dozing across the aisle -- could he ever have been young and adventurous and filled with dreams -- does he, perhaps, still Dream? I slept (and perhaps was looked at and Wondered about by someone else), for it had been many, many hours since it was late afternoon in Los Angeles.

Suddenly, it was Early Morning, the lights and intercom came on, announcing our approach to Oakland (the quaint colonial pronunciation of Auckland), and with this the first clear realization of Foreignness -- "The ground temperature is 8 degrees Celsius." Doubly foreign, really, because I'd long ago learned to think of the temperature scale running from 0 at the freezing point of water to 100 at the boiling point as being "Centigrade". I had, of course, forgotten the precise conversion formula, but it seemed that 8 degrees would be Pretty Cold, and indeed it was chilly at Auckland, with people bundled up in jackets and coats, and our breath condensing in clouds as we climbed down from the plane in the pre-sunrise moments and walked over the the Terminal building. It's a big, pre-fabricated-type structure, barn-like and nowhere near as Fancy & Pretentious as most major airports, but (as I think of The New Zealand Style) perfectly adequate for its function. Well, perhaps the few radiant heaters tacked high on the walls were only marginally adequate for heating, by U.S. standards. (Throughout most of Australia the traditional British aversion to Central Heating prevailed, and this came to seem quite Sensible, after a while. If it's cold enough to wear a sweater and jacket outdoors, you might just as well leave them on inside. Actually, I kinda prefer conditions in which one doesn't have to wear any clothes, but given a chilly environment, the British/N.Z./Aust. approach seems to work quite well.)

With a stopover of only about an hour and a half, there was little point in going through customs -- when you've seen one ~~redwood~~ airport, you've seen them all -- so I stretched my legs by walking in the waiting-room, looked out the windows at the plane-refueling activity, and examined the cases of mounted fish along the walls. These specimens were donated by someone whose name I neglected to note down, but who has cleverly managed to get all that bulky stuff out of his house (to his wife's extreme Joy, one supposes) and at the same time achieve a sort of Fame. Most of the trout were in the 18 to 20-lb. range, and I get the feeling that a 10-lb. Rainbow, which would be a source of Great Exultation in the U.S. might not be considered a keeper in New Zealand.

The coffee and candy machines and telephones in the waiting room accept only N.Z. coins, of course, and there was no easy way of changing U.S. money. I suppose that The Wise Traveller takes with him an assortment of change suitable for use at any airport through which he might pass; next time I'll probably ask for N.Z. change when I get a drink on the plane, just in case. Unused coins make neat souvenirs, and New Zealand coinage is distinctly attractive, so any left-overs would not be entirely wasted, especially since some of them are reported to contain a fair amount of real Silver, still.

The flight on to Sydney was short -- just long enough for another heavy meal or two (two, I reckon -- a breakfast involving grilled sausages, lamb chop, and steak, along with cereal & fruit, and somewhat later a more substantial lunch. There was also enough time in here to borrow the electric razor from the steward and shave in the marvelously-compact rest room -- and to Wonder about the numerous "No Smoking in the Toilet" signs -- or rather, about the receptical clearly marked "Ash Tray" in the midst of all the fixtures. The air conditioning was Powerful enough that there would be no stale-smoke odor to annoy future users, there was enough alcohol sold at the bar that they could hardly be worried about people getting high by smoking

something more Potent than tobacco, and I finally concluded that they must have had Problems with fire in the container holding used paper towels.

The Sydney Airport is very Modern and very Big, with a postal sub-station (from which I mailed half of the postcards (4) sent during the entire trip) and a most civilized convenience -- a 24-hour bank/money-changing service. Changing U.S. money for the first time was an Experience; not only did I get but A\$7 for US\$100, but it was in Funny Money, not unlike that used in Monopoly. Well, not really, but the designs are somewhat Modern (with a bit of the Ancient -- aboriginal motifs on the \$1 bill) and rather bright (to someone accustomed to the U.S. black & green), since they're color-coded according to denomination -- and also size-coded, growing slightly larger from \$1 through 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50\$. Very Practical and Sensible. So, too, with the coins; 1¢, a larger 2¢ in copper, then silvery (but no longer with Ag content) 5¢, 10¢ (causing some confusion to Americans, since these are reverse the sizes of ours), 20¢ and delightfully 12-sided 50¢ pieces. ((there are those who say that the Record for stacking these up on edge is something like eighteen high, but others call this a Myth and that five or six is more like it. I brought back only three, and cannot settle the question.)

Immigration and Customs were mere Formalities, and I managed to smuggle through the various illicit foodstuffs (packets of sugar, marmalade, crackers, etc) acquired en route. (The Published Regulations are quite Strict, but apparently the authorities are (quite properly and reasonably) concerned mostly with meat & animal products capable of introducing diseases which would harm Australia's important agricultural industries.) I had decided against attempting to take in any plant material, even though Begonia growers in Australia are continually crying about the lack of species and new cultivars. Australia is a somewhat isolated island-continent, free from many of the pests and diseases which afflict much of the rest of the world, and I have no desire to get my name down on the same page as the chap who brought in those cute li'l bunny-rabbits. I'd been dubious about getting my down-filled sleeping-bag through (the young lady at the Consulate here was uncertain, but suggested that it might be better not to try) (It's getting so that I need a 2 or 2 1/2 lb. down bag in even moderately chilly weather, and that's in the ca. eighty-dollar range.), so I didn't bring along any camping gear, which was just as well, since there would have been little opportunity to use it this time. Next time, I'll take the old pack and tent, and enough money to buy a sleeping-bag there.

This was largely an unplanned trip (arrive on a certain date, leave twenty-six days later, spending a certain week in the midst of that in Melbourne), as most of mine are. Yes, I feel most Comfortable with Routine and a knowledge of where I'm going to be sleeping tonight and what I'm going to be doing tomorrow, as a regular thing, but a Vacation is ... Something Different. One leaves many Responsibilities and Duties behind, and with these, Schedules and Obligations. It is not Good to have to pass up Discovering and Exploring what looks to be a Nice Place just because one has arbitrarily scheduled oneself to be somewhere else in a few hours. (To some extent that's inescapable, of course; it would be quite possible to spend twenty-six days in Sydney (or any number of other places) and not really exhaust it.)

My first introduction to Sydney, outside the Airport, was in the person of the fast-talking, wisecracking, hyper-efficient, helpful & friendly Jamaican (?) mini--bus driver, who called me "mate" (pronounced something like 'might', of course), and who would certainly have used my first name if he'd known it. That's Sydney in a nutshell, with a brash, 'if you don't like it you can lump it' attitude which can be most engaging. Definitely a Flashy city, with a sort of brazen panach which probably isn't to everyone's taste, and which might easily become trying after a time, but which I found easy to enjoy.

The driver was plainly somewhat startled when I asked him to drop me off at an intersection downtown, and was, at the same time, somewhat amused by my amusement at his evident shock at not being asked to take this tourist to a tourist-type hotel. I had a map, you see, and a most useful guide-book (of which more later), and figured on checking out three very inexpensive (cheap, actually) hotels within a two-block area. Eliminating the first two may have been a mistake -- I did not then know that a "Hotel" with a large pub on the corner and a saloon bar and bottle shop next to it might very well offer respectably good "accomodations" (sleeping rooms) upstairs -- but the one I did settle on (and in) was ok. In a Strange City, a YMCA hotel is often a reasonable bet -- usually in a down-at-the-heels neighborhood, close to the downtown area, shabby-looking but reasonably clean, and distinctly inexpensive. That's just what this one on Pitt St. turned out to be, with the bonus of friendly and helpful employees (that might almost go without saying for the entire Australian trip, but I'll probably say it again, at least several times). The room was small and dingy, and the toilet and bath were down the hall, but at \$6.50 (add ca. 25% to convert prices hereafter given into U.S. dollars) per night for room and breakfast (fruit juice, coffee, porridge or cereal, two eggs, sausage, toast & marmalade) it was quite satisfactory, and being within walking distance of all of downtown Sydney was a distinct Convenience.

One of these five or six evenings there was enough rain to keep most of us indoors, watching TV and Talking, and I got to know a few of the longer-term residents a little bit. There were a few sick old men (several of them alcoholics), a loquacious Limey printer who worked nearby and had some Outspoken Things to say about Australia (though he obviously loved it even more than he did London) and who waxed Profoundly Philosophical and (agnostically Religious the following Sunday morning when we shared listening to the bells of the near-by Cathedral (this was the first time I'd heard most of these Changes rung -- the sounding of the bells by mathematical permutation does not result in a traditional sort of Music, but can be obscurely Satisfying).

There was a young, almost delicate-looking chap, precise & eloquent in warm-accented speech more easily understood than strine, with whom I chatted several times in the laundry-room. (His clothes were Mod and always immaculately clean & pressed, but I think he owned only two outfits.) He'd come to the City to work for a few months and get enough money to buy the materials for a better house, a washing-machine for his wife, and school clothes for their two children. "The job situation in Paupa/New Guinea," he confided, "isn't very good. It's an Australian Territory, and most of the Government employees are from over here -- there simply isn't much work to be found, and I've had enough education that I want to try to combine the best of our old culture with some of the conveniences of the new. I'm trying to put the two together, so I'm not goint to turn my whole life to Making Money, like so many of these people here in Sydney do -- it's also Very Important to be with my wife and children and relatives and friends." His grandfathers, I suppose (it didn't seem proper to enquire) took human heads, yet it seems to me that he may be working out a better life style than a good many people I know who are the product of many generations of the "superior" Western European cultural systems.

There was also a rather closed group of 5 or 6 college-age guys (some students, some working for a semester or so) -- friendly enough, but not about to let an older-generation outsider into their ranks. We encountered & chatted several times while watching Yogi Bear (it was Crusader Rabbit when I was in Berkeley) on TV, they just off work/school, I back from Exploring but not yet ready to go out for the evening. They didn't open their ranks, but it might have been possible to get into the group as Interpreter for the the Japanese college-student tourist they'd adopted. On my last day there one of them asked me what, as an American, I thought of the CIA (a U.S. Political Scandal then much in the news). He was from a Liberal/Anachistic

family background, yet I'm afraid he was almost Shocked to discover an American who didn't fit his preconceptions -- some of my statements, during our long conversation, were rather conservative, and many were rather to the left of his attitudes. Had that talk been on the first day, I might well have been shown some aspects of Sydney which I didn't discover on my own. There are drawbacks to being an introvert.

Sydney is a Big, Modern City, and someone who is definitely not a city person might be expected to dislike it, but there is something about this place... the Atmosphere is reminiscent of San Francisco, with the hills, the omnipresent bay, the clear air and sea breezes, the downtown area small enough to be walked across in a single day, and a lively Vitality about the people which is absorbed by the City itself. Not that I'd want to live there permanently, any more than in any City, but it would be a fine place to spend several months, and there are areas a few hours away by train where I could easily spend the rest of my life. (No, don't expect a Change Of Address.)

It's a bustling modern city, growing (mostly upwards -- the skyline is a forest of cranes atop skyscrapers-in-construction), and filled with active people who all seem to walk faster than my (fairly rapid) five miles per hour. And in the event of a slight accidental pedestrian collision (all too frequent until one learns to keep to the left side of the sidewalk) people say, "Sorry." -- a civility one rarely encounters in the U.S.).

Three or four days (and evenings) were spent just walking the streets of Sydney, enjoying the novelty of being in a City and in a foreign (but not too foreign) country, noting Trivia -- the little things which are Different: Walking (as well as driving) on the left-hand side, pavement-marking paint which is slippery in the rain, rather than having sand/abrasive mixed with it, as in California, doors of shops and public buildings opening inward (traditional in homes, perhaps as an indication of hospitality, but here prohibited by fire laws in public places), so many take-out food stands and so few restaurants (as far as I could discern) (presumably the Australian Tradition does not involve much Dining Out). And the pubs -- which I'm still much Confused about -- the difference between Hotel and Public House, the hours (most seem to be open eight hours per day, often from noon until two, then from four until ten (obligatory Closing Time, Gentlemen)), the meaning of the sign "Mixed Drinking" (that's usually in the Saloon Bar; the 'Public' bar is often for men only, and frequently has no seating whatsoever -- if you can't stand up, you shouldn't be drinking (and Aussies are great standers and leaners)). The pubs fill instantly at noon and just after working hours -- apparently almost all men stop in at a near-by pub to have a few beers with their fellow-workers, or near their home to have a few with their neighbors (or both). That Australians drink a whole lot of beer is understandable, since the ten or twelve brands I tasted there were all better than any American beers with which I'm familiar, but there was almost none of what I would call actual/extreme/obvious Drunkenness; the beer is Potent, and drunk apparently, but the people hold it well, and at the most start talking a bit loudly -- which is understandable, since the pubs are usually very crowded and have a bit of that fan-party atmosphere of everyone-is-talking-and-noone-is-listening.

Much exploration of Sydney was done on foot (by far the Best Way, allowing one to savor things or pause for more thorough Investigation) -- zig-zagging up from the Central R.R. Station to Circular Quay (this Main Business District is about six blocks wide and three km. (two miles) long), strolling across the park called The Domain, striding through Woolloomooloo to Pott's Point and Elizabeth Bay, resting a bit at Rushcutters' Bay park, then back to King's Cross -- a good afternoon's walk, and early evening is the proper time to arrive at The Cross, since this area is just beginning to come alive then -- and, indeed, it's the only part of the City which is alive after ten p.m/.

2/XI/75:3

After walking, the next best way to see a City is by Public Transit; Sydney has an abundance of busses (many are double-deckers) and trams, as well as a number of commuter/inter-urban railroad lines. I rode around for the better part of two days, sampling the nearer suburbs which stretch for miles and miles (I've just decided to abandon the Pretentiousness of Going Metric) along the many-fingered bay. From my vantage point these "communities" (there were many names on the map, though I was lost most of the time) had little or no Individuality. Great stretches of tile-roofed brick five-room houses (a bit of a Shock at first -- in So. Calif. those materials are definitely Upper Class; here...most eucalypts do not produce good lumber, and there are Ferocious Termites), each with a bit of lawn and garden, and all looking very much the same, mile after mile.

If this random sampling was accurate, these suburbs said something about Australian society. There were a few patches verging on "depressed area" status, but no extensive slums or apparent ghettos, nor were there many areas of mansions or palatial homes or even what appeared to be Exclusive suburbs (there may have been such, farther out or away from the Public transportation lines); the Impression given was one of an extraordinarily large Middle Class, with very little extreme poverty or wealth. (That impression continued throughout the trip, with the possible exception of Alice Springs, where many of the Aborigines were indeed Poor in material things -- but this may well have been through Choice), and with the modification that "Middle-Class" here does not imply quite such Affluence here as it does in the U.S. -- two-car families are somewhere between uncommon and rare.)

Sydney (including the engulfed and engulfing suburbs) has the largest population of any city in Australia, and probably the largest area as well. It is also one of the most beautifully-situated cities in the world -- quite as fortunate in this respect as San Francisco, though rather less hilly, built around a long, narrow, much-branched bay which gives it an openness, a multiplicity of spacious views, and a mild, coastal climate (not quite as cold as Los Angeles in the winter, judging by the presence of trees which are a trifle too tropical to do well in L.A., and probably not much warmer than San Francisco or Santa Monica during the summer.

The first two days after my arrival featured an unseasonable (but apparently not especially unusual) Hot Spell; shirtleaves & shorts and zori (called 'thongs') weather, but things soon returned to the Winter normal -- cool enough for a sweater during the day and a jacket over that in the evening, occasional brisk rainshowers, clearing immediately to bright sunshine and moderate winds, with clear blue skys and invigorating air entirely free of any hint of Smog. A striking change from California's midsummer weather, but not at all unpleasant, and certainly better than our Winter, with its long weeks of dull, gloomy overcast & drizzles.

Figuring that there must be stores in Australia which sell clothes, I'd only partly filled my small suitcase; once in Sydney I decided to add a few things (enough to warrant spending 20¢ at a laundromat, rather than wash things out by hand and hope they'd dry overnight) and Went Shopping. A warm, quilted nylon jacket (\$10), a Genuine Wool sweater (\$5) (no, that was at Alice Springs), 5 pair of heavy socks (all the same, of course, since one of a solitary pair of socks always seems to wear out long before the other) and underwear (T shirts are sized by some sort of Esoteric Code based on chest size in centimeters). In general, prices at first seemed a trifle high, but on closer examination the better Quality of the goods evened this out. Poking around in Disposal Shops (which we'd call Surplus stores) was great fun, looking at tools and camping gear, hunting for an Aussie Bush Hat (most were cheap & shoddy, the few good ones were Expensive and not my size) and for a rucksack to be added to my baggage (or to serve as a substitute for part of it). Finally settled on one of fairly sturdy nylon, Japanese-made (as is most inexpensive camping equipment nowadays),

not in the unobtrusive brown or dark green which I'd have preferred, nor in the Bright Orange which so often assaults the eye, but in blue, which could be thought of as The Proper Color, here. (Oh, the Perils of Writing -- should I leave it at that, or (for the benefit of readers less versed in such things) mention that the Traditional Aussie swagman/itinerant worker carried his possessions rolled in a blue blanket, and that a blanket-roll may still be called a bluey, regardless of its color?) The rucksack turned out to be highly useful -- I decided to send my suitcase ahead to Melbourne directly, and travel light up to the Alice. Thinking that there might be some sort of largish vehicle going from Sydney to the Con, I rang up Shane McCormack, but she was going with several people in a small car with much baggage. "Take it down to the railroad station, send it through to Melbourne, and tell them you'll pick it up in about a week," she suggested. The U.S. railroads' reputation had not led the thought of such a good & useful Service to enter my mind, and I expressed some hesitancy, but Shane was Confident, and Firm -- "Nonsense; they are Public Servants, and are there to do what you tell them to do," she said briskly. "Yes, Ma'm," I murmured, still somewhat doubtful. The Australian National Railways came through with flying colours, however (since I had no through ticket, the bag had to go by way of "outgoing Parcels," at a cost of ca. \$2), and the bag was there (and easily located) a week later. I suppose that (expecially until recently) railways have been one of the major means of communication and transportation in Australia, and that such Services are still required frequently.

Shopped also for a sleeping-bag, but prices for a good one (no longer a hot-blooded youth (sigh), I've come to need a 2 1/2 lb. down bag for comfort in only moderately cold weather) were about as high as in the States, and mental calculation of cost, divided by nights it might be used, led to the conclusion that staying in hotels would be cheaper, though probably less fun. I did, however, finally locate the Youth Hostel Association office and pay the ca. 10\$ membership fee, which at least paid for itself in the three nights at Canberra, and which gave an opportunity to meet a number of pleasant and interesting people. The YHA officials & Hostels tend to be a bit Stuffy and Straight-laced, but the (usually college-age) people who take advantage of these facilities (bunk & shower & kitchen, for ca. \$1 per night, limited to three nights at any particular hostel) on travelling-camping vacations are generally Neat People to associate with, considerably more relaxed and conversational than most people a tourist comes in contact with in a foriegn country.

The King's Cross area is also Relaxed and conversational, in a sense; it's a most curious little enclave on the edge of downtown Sydney, and apparently the city's only dependable Night Life. Brightly-lighted, garish, tawdry, brash, and somehow Fake. I kept getting the feeling that everyone there was a Tourist, even the shopkeepers and residents of the cheap apartments and rooms in the neighborhood; no-one seemed to really Belong there, the way some people Belong in Berkeley or San Francisco. Everyone, from the tout in front of the porno movie (yes, despite the reputed Censorship, they have these, and porno bookstores -- which display in their street-side windows items which, in California, even, are usually reserved for the inner recesses of Adults Only stores) through the tearing-around groups of highschool boys very High on uppers (second in popularity only to beer, I gather; I smelled pot only a few times around The Cross) through groups of middle-class type Aussie and foriegn tourists -- everyone seemed to be Playing The Game, and Puttin' On The Style. Quite fun for a few evenings, but not one of the more impressive aspects of the country.

((The FAPA Deadline approaches, and this Section will have to end here. Next time perhaps a bit more on Sydney (including the great Botanic Garden there), and then on to Alice Springs, up in The Center.))