

LARRIKIN

LARRIKIN 2, JULY 1986, "a light, fluffy, frequent fanzine nattering on about nothing in particular" - Judith Hanna, 1986, is edited and published by Irwin Hirsh (2/416 Dandenong Rd, Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA) and Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708A, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA). This fanzine is available for written contributions - articles and letters of comment - and your fanzine in trade (one copy to each of us please). Thanks go to Carey Handfield (distribution help, last issue), Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels), and Pam Wells (our British agent).
IRWIN HIRSH FOR GUTP

RESTAURANT WARS

- Perry -

I guess that just about everyone has a favourite restaurant story - either their's or someone else's. You know the stories I mean: old standards like the waiter who continually puts his thumb in your soup while leaning over backwards to look down the front of your companion's dress, to the newer variety concerning the incompetent wine steward who corks your last bottle of 1982 Passing Clouds and then proceeds to fish the bits out with his fingers when you point them out to him. If you eat out as much as I do, you come to realise that it's not so much a matter of these little incidents happening so often as that they happen so seldom.

Some restaurateurs, to give them their due, can literally create an enjoyable evening. A friend told me of one such occasion which involved the football team he is associated with. It appears that they had all decided to have a team dinner after the grand final of their competition. Being one of the teams in that final, but by no means favourite, everyone naturally considered that the dinner would be more of a wake than anything else and so came stocked with copious quantities of red wine. As it turned out they didn't win the match and the meal started slowly until the wine began flowing freely.

The Bring-Your-Own supplies ran out at about eleven and the restaurant manager was called over to offer some advice regarding the purchase of further alcoholic supplies. This bloke must have been impressed with the alacrity displayed by the team members in disposing of bottle after bottle, and, of course, the large quantities of food, so began by producing a case of Chianti that he kept behind the counter for such occasions and joined in with its consumption.

Anyway, this case was disposed of and a second started when, looking at his watch, my friend noticed that it was getting close to four in the morning. He turned to the manager and asked him what time he would like the team to leave. Checking his own watch, the manager calmly stated that lunch started at noon so they would have to be gone by eleven. I'm not sure how many of the team made it through though I have a feeling that both my friend and the manager were still going at stumps. You cultivate friendships like that.

It has been said, with some justification, that the ways and means of the Public Service passeth all understanding. The same truism applies to restaurateurs who seem intent on having you, the customer, spend the least amount of money possible. Making a reservation at a restaurant

recently I noticed that there was no mention of a BYO licence in their advertisement. I pointed this out to the person taking the booking and was told that while they weren't a BYO restaurant they did indeed have a quite reasonable wine list. Fair enough, I thought, if the worst came to the worst I could always order a carafe of the house wine and get something that was at least drinkable. As it turned out I would have been better off saving the money spent on the phone call and trying my luck somewhere else.

The wine list duly arrived soon after I was shown to my table. Although short the list had a few entries that I thought I might be able to enjoy. I made my choice from amongst the reds and requested a bottle.

"We're out of stock of that one I'm sorry sir."

"Oh, well, how about this one?"

"No, I'm sorry sir."

"This one?"

"No sir."

"Tell me, do you have any reds in stock at all?"

"Ah, no sir."

A moment's pause.

"Okay, what about the whites?"

"Yes sir. We have some of those in stock."

"Right. What about this one?"

"No sir. Not that one."

"This one?"

"No sir."

"All right then, you tell me what you have."

"We've got a nice bottle of Ben Ean Moselle sir."

Stunned silence.

"I think I'll stick with the orange juice."

That story, however, doesn't quite match up to one of my favourites that the redoubtable Len Evans tells. During one of his many country trips some years ago, Len had occasion to spend a night in a small country town in a very small country pub. Being something of an imbiber of alcoholic fluids, Len decided that he would like a bottle of wine to help wash down the large counter meal with which he had been served, and asked for the wine list. "No need of that", was the reply, "we only have two types." "I see. Red and white I suppose." "No sir, sparkling and flat."

A NOTE TO JOHN LAIZELS

- Irwin -

I've heard this story about a guy who works for a large company which has a policy of allowing the employees to take off religious holidays with pay and without losing any of their annual holiday entitlements. This guy is jewish and took off the two days for the Jewish New Year. Now the thing is that this guy isn't greatly jewish, whether in the religious or cultural sense. Most people who know him wouldn't know he is jewish, and it is obvious he just wanted a couple of days away from work. In fact, this lack of jewishness caused him to carelessly take off the wrong two days. John, you wouldn't happen to know what happened once his boss discovered this mistake?

NOVA MOB NIGHTS

- John Foyster -

Asked to write about The Nova Mob for Larrikin, the journal of creative ockerism! What greater honour could be offered to an

old fan and tired? Would I be capable of bringing down to the ordinary masses any hints of the intellectual empyrean which forgathers in Port Melbourne on the first Wednesday of the month? The challenge was great, but I would do it, because it was there!

My enthusiasm, and my sense of rightness, could thus scarcely have been greater as my chauffeur-driven limousine pulled up at the Rose and Crown Hotel (which I misguidedly from time to time think of as the Guildenstern). There seemed to be a reception committee of some kind awaiting my arrival, but it was unclear, from the warmth and distance of the vehicle, whether its purpose was attractive or repulsive.

Suitably braced against a June night in Melbourne I emerged to discover that the fans were in fact inspecting a sign which read 'Closed For Renovations', hardly a good omen given that He Who Must Be Obeyed had indicated that my report had to cover all events from the gathering at the hotel.

There appeared to be some small scribbles on the notice, which someone deciphered as indicating that the Mob was converging on the Prince Alfred, a local bloodhouse a stroll of a mere hundred or two metres away.

There we found ten or so fans already defending a table against the denizens one of whom, later in the evening, proved so insistent that James Styles had to raise his voice to him to make him go away; this must have been practice, for Styles didn't attend the Nova Mob meeting, instead going off to raise his voice on behalf of either the Socialist Left or Centre Unity, two fan groups that my informants seemed a little unclear about.

Anyway, the Prince Alfred eventually proved to be the sort of place which does serve food - if you are patient enough - and I, to wile away the hours, seated myself opposite a colour television set which was surrounded by flashing lights, something I had not seen before. After only half an hour I began to suspect that I was not watching a television program at all, and voiced my doubts.

"It's a jukebox you old person, you!" said Lucy Sussex witheringly. I began making notes on the possibility of her becoming falling down drunk yet again, but the Prince Alfred proved so inhospitable that we left before this normal component of Melbourne fan events occurred.

Russell Blackford provided me with helpful comments about the rock videos I was watching, letting me know what was up-to-date and what was not. I was often confused in this matter; at one point there appeared to be a break for a 20s silent film, but the associated noise indicated that it was a Sting video. This gave me an idea for improving rock videos generally.

Generally people talked about absent friends, as usual; when Sean McMullen wasn't talking about Australian science fiction so obscure and ephemeral it would have to stand up twice to cast a shadow he was reporting his adventures in Sydney, including a visit to Graham Stone, a fannish character who appears in the performances of Barry Humphries, mildly disguised as 'Sandy' Stone.

Someone circulated copies of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club fanzine Ethel the Hardvark, a quick perusal of which provided incredible glimpses of active fandom of the 80s at its wildest. There were minutes of

committee and general meetings, something which nearly induced cardiac arrest in a 60s member like me, while the report of the M&FC Camping Trip looked promising - but this turned out to be a kind of camping quite distinct from that popular at the M&FC so many years ago.

As soon as Bruce Gillespie was safely in the 'loo the rest of us sneaked off in search of Blackford's; Russell ran a slight distraction by heading off in the wrong direction, and his mid-course correction led to a collision between the two intellectual heavyweights of the Mob, Cathy Kerrigan and your reporter. The chicken kiev had obviously done its work well, for she bounced off like a decaying unstable isotope.

Because we arrived early, long before the official ball-bouncing, there was some idle discussion before the evening officially began. Fuhrer Kerrigan reported that the year's Dance Card was almost full, but that for August she had only 'talk by academic lady'. I helpfully suggested that if 'lady' could be deleted 'Janeen Webb' could be inserted, a remark which didn't evoke quite the enthusiasm it deserved, especially from Janeen Webb.

Eventually, however, George Turner arrived, and we could all begin to listen to Marc Ortlieb talking about 'The Role of Chocolate Mousse in Science Fiction'. Since Marc had insultingly suggested, earlier in the evening, that I might want to rejoin ANZAPA I didn't pay to his description of humorous science fiction in culinary terms the attention it deserved. I remember that partway through he changed the notion from what science fiction writers ate to what they wrote, so that there was hamburger science fiction, Kentucky-fried science fiction, and pizza science fiction, all of which met with Marc's approval, to the extent that it is possible to approve of fast food.

But eventually he reached the chocolate mousse of science fiction - the humorous stuff. This he divided into more factions than the ALP in 1955, including parody of various strains, whimsy, and satire. These were illustrated by readings of one kind or another which were highly successful and appreciated by all present (except for Bruce Barnes, whose presence rendered meaningful the pub debate we had had concerning the differences in meaning between 'mentally handicapped', 'mentally disabled', and 'mentally disadvantaged', each of which appeared to Russell Blackford and me to be social worker shorthand for 'thick as two planks').

Marc's extended examples were eventually, as always seems to be the case, interrupted by members of the audience bringing forth their own little ideas of what was funny in SF. Most of these were usefully amplificatory, except for my stumbling efforts to advance the works of Jack Vance and Kendall Foster Crossen (which I managed to confuse). Eventually there was a list of funny SF much longer than any of us had imagined possible, even though the famous phrase from William Tenn's 'Liberation of Earth' (Future Science Fiction, May 1953) which had so much meaning in the earlier incarnation of Australian Science Fiction Review. 'Suck air, grab clusters' was misquoted as 'suck air, grab weed'. Mark pointed to the dearth of deliberately funny Australian SF (and had a few pieces drawn to his attention, especially works of Jack Wodhams and Bert Chandler) and of funny SF by women (which didn't meet with acclamation or agreement at all).

In many ways it was an unusual evening; the Mouth from the South (Yvonne Rousseau) who usually doesn't appear at Nova Mob meetings at all, stayed

for about an hour and said very little.

At suppertime Bruce Gillespie managed to ask the perennial Gillespie question ("where's the coffee?"). He was only momentarily satisfied with the answer, there being very little coffee in the house. Later, offered tea, Bruce said "who drinks tea?" underlying his plebian upbringing. Wynne Whiteford had sold another novel and so brought some cream cakes to celebrate.

George and Wynne got into a discussion of the number of components of Capella and their separation and I offered to think about it. Russell asked whether this was a general offer, and I indicated some limits; I didn't want to think about whether helicopters could fly on Mars again - and straightaway Wynne was off on that subject. At least this was enough to get the mortals moving on their way.

Lucy Sussex managed to bring the meeting to a close in her usual conversation-stopping way: 'I overheard two middle-aged ladies talking, when they were sure I wasn't eavesdropping, and one said to the other "only twice this year - I'm sure he's getting over it"'.

That was quite enough for the June meeting: I'm sure there will be a July meeting at 198 Nott Street, but I don't for the life of me know who is speaking or what it is all about. But that's how the June meeting was, anyway.

CON WIND-UP As a way of winding up Kinkon 2 on a pleasant note Roger
 - Irwin - Weddall and I arranged to have a meal at the Danube
 restaurant down in St. Kilda. Among the people we
 invited along only Andrew Brown, John Newman, and Jan
 Whose-surname-noone-seems-to-know didn't already have something on.

"See you ay 6.30", I nodded as I left the convention hotel for the last time, and went home to pick up Wendy.

The Danube is a good place for a meal. Tasty food, of the East European variety, and reasonably priced. The service is fun, seeing as the place is staffed by kindly Jewish Mother types. When Wendy ordered a soup and a main course they told her that she'll have a small serve of the later. Told not suggested. Wendy, eating at the Danube for the first time, didn't know what was going on here, and had a facial expression to match. So the waitress explained that their main courses are rather large, and tactfully suggested that a soup and small serve would be plenty. In fact, the Danube is one of those places where even the small serve can be too much.

The conversation started off as a post-mortem of Kinkon 2, particularly in providing character assassinations of local fans who weren't at the con. This was a matter which had been going on all day. Carey Handfield was safe seeing as he was up at Syncon, but there were an awfully large number of locals who just stayed home. Where, for instance, was Bruce Gillespie, who, as Perry had noted, usually makes it for at least one day of a con.

When we weren't summing up Kinkon Andrew was moaning about the perils of being awake for more than 30 hours, FFANZ was discussed, and Roger was wondering if there was any need to continue Thyme, "now that Jack Herman

has called it irrelevant". Wendy asked Roger how he came to end up editing a fanzine which Andrew and I had started. Roger started to answer but I butted in to relate an incident which occurred back in them thar days. After publishing issue 17 of Thyme, Andrew and I had each independently decided not to go on with our part of the fanzine. But we hadn't seen each other in that time and didn't know of each other's intentions. In the mean time Andrew had discussed his intentions with Roger, who offered to just takeover Andrew's position as co-editor. I then spoke to Roger and told him that I didn't want to continue, and he, in turn, didn't want to put out a newszine by himself. I then published the last issue, announcing it as such. About a fortnight later, at about the same time that Roger decided he could do Thyme by himself, I received a letter from Joyce Scrivner in which she said "What happened, I thought it had been decided that Roger was going to do the fanzine with you?"

"I got the impression that she knew all this before me", I told my dinner companions, and we all pondered this highly communative world we live in.

Once we had finished through our dinner I suggested we go around the corner to the abode of John Royster and Jenny Bryce. John and Jan had to go home, but Roger and Andrew figured we could probably get a coffee out of John and Jenny, so what-the-hell.

John hadn't attended the con, so the con had come to him. Earlier, Lewis Morley and Marilyn Pride had been there to discuss their DUFF travel plans. I was confused about this and soon learnt that while Robin Johnson was away Jenny was looking after his travel agency. She was virtually learning the ropes as it was happening and wondered if there was much money to be made out of being a travel agent. I said that it seems to me that Robin just enjoys the thrill of helping people get from A to B in the cheapest way possible, and to hell with a profit. "Oh yes", said Roger, "when I went away he uncovered some little known travel regulations." From there Jenny recounted some of her experiences from travelling in Europe on tickets Robin had written.

I listened attentively, and anticipating a GUFF win I noted that I can't get too surprised should I travel through Robin's travel agency. I'm all prepared to be told that the cheapest way to travel to London is with changeovers in Montevideo, Bahrain, and Istanbul. Have no fear.

With six people in the room the conversations chopped and changed and separated and all that. For John's benefit we continued the postmortem of the con, and Andrew moaned about having been up for the last 30 hours, and Roger wondered if there was any need to continue with Thyme, "now that Jack Herman has called it irrelevant", and, and, and...

We started wondering about the make-up of Melbourne fandom, counting off the groupings and all that. "Well, there's the Nova Mob, and the Dandenong group, and the ex-members of MUSEFA, and the other Dandenong group..." In a fit of enthusiasm Andrew said that he would put out a sheet detailing all the groups and their activities; not so much to unite all of Melbourne's fandom, just to inform. Being up for 30 hours does that sort of thing to you.

The need to relieve myself of the waste products from the Danube came upon me, so I retired to the relevant room. Once there I was reminded of something had said when we were assassinating John's character, "It's about time that edition of Wisden was replaced". I mentioned this to John, who provided the feeble excuse of the cost of a new Wisden. Jenny

displayed an obvious lack of interest in one of the finer things in life in wondering if any of their visitors would've had the chance to read all 10 182 pages of the 1976 edition of cricket's yearbook. So we explained that only about 200 pages of any edition is of any real interest since the rest is about the various domestic competitions, and, to put it bluntly, what is so interesting about English school cricket?!

Somehow that comment won John over and he suggested that we discuss this matter in the pages of Larrikin, particularly the question of what edition to buy. Since then John has jumped the gun and announced that he has bought the 1985 edition. I was going to suggest that he buy the 1982 edition as it covered the 1981 Test Series. This would've been an appropriate edition given that Australia still hasn't been able to get out of the trough that was dug in July and August, 1981. But it is nice to know that a new edition is there; it will certainly make me feel more comfortable next time I pay the Foyster-Bryce's a visit.

For me the most significant aspect of the evening came about when John asked me what I was working on. At that stage I'd been out of work for three weeks and was unlikely to get any more assistant editing work till, at least, a month into the new financial year. I had reluctantly resigned myself to doing some emergency teaching to tide me over. I asked John if his school had much need for emergency teachers. Expecting a negative response, I was surprised when John let out a "We do, actually. We need someone to fill in for the four weeks between when one teacher leaves and another starts."

The next morning John rang me. He'd spoken to the school's head and she was interested in having me work that four week gap. I'm half-way through this job and I'm enjoying myself far more than the last time I worked as an emergency teacher. I'm only working three days a week, so that I have two days to look for more film week. And last week I hit the jackpot, lining up a job which starts in early August. But all this is another story.

INCIDENT IN A PUB

- Perry -

I was lounging around the bottle shop of the local pub the other day perusing the rather inconsequential wine list when this silver-grey Porsche pulled up, rather noisily, outside. Being a bit of a nosy bugger I moved closer to the windowed door to get a better view while trying to give the increasingly annoyed barman behind me the impression that I was in severe mental turmoil trying to choose between the Mitchelton Wood-Matured Marsanne and Wolf Blass' latest white concoction - I don't think I was doing very well. Actually, the unhealthy state of my wallet was forcing my eyes to focus on a leanly priced Chablis when this woman gets out of the silver shark outside and starts heading towards the door.

Obviously there is nothing terribly unusual in this - I mean women get out of cars all the time - but this woman was clearly different. She looked like a cross between Bo Derek and an East German swimmer in designer jeans. Not wanting to be clobbered by the door, which looked likely to disintegrate under the impending shot-put palm thrust, I stepped back towards the glass-encased reds while trying not to catch the barman's eye.

Sure enough, the door hinges got a good working over as she barrelled in

towards the counter. At this the barman stopped shooting daggers at the back of my head and was moving rapidly into a state of typical Australian male idiocy - complete with slack jaw and dilated pupils.

Catching all this out of the corner of my eye, and in the reflective glass covering the reds, I couldn't help wondering what the poor bloke was going to say when she asked for something he had never heard of, let alone had in stock.

The woman obviously spent a lot of time on her appearance to give the impression that she was "up there" with the upwardly-mobile inner-city trendoids of Richmond and Carlton and so would doubtless know what she was talking about when it came to alcoholic beverages. At least that was the impression she was successfully conveying to the barman. So, when she asked, in a shrill nasal voice for "a cask of Coolabeh Fruity Lexia" the spell was broken and he moved faster in the next twenty seconds than I had seen him move for months.

The woman left in a similar manner to her arrival, the barman and I staring after her and then at each other when the door had stabilised. I could tell that saying anything would have been a waste of time - the poor bastard's dreams had been shattered - so I grabbed the Mitchelton, threw down ten bucks, accepted the few coins in change and left as fast as I could.

There is a moral in there somewhere though whether it deals with style in general or wine-drinking in particular is hard to say. I like to think that it just goes to prove that today's yuppies don't know the difference between botrytis and botulism. And that makes me feel a helluva lot better because I do.

GETTING BACK A friend of mine, Toby, works as a pastry cook for Melbourne's Hilton Hotel. The last time I saw him he told me that he will be lining up in the annual football match between the staff of the Hilton and the Southern Cross Hotel. I wished his team the best and that he kicks a swag of goals. Sometime later in our conversation I realised the significance of this match, and back-pedalled a bit. "Actually, Toby", I added, "I hope you thrash the pants off the guys, and whenever you kick a goal turn to your nearest opponent and tell him 'That's for all the party-goers at Aussiecon Two!'" I must find out how the match went.

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