



LARRIKIN 10, MARCH 1987, is edited and published by Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA) and Irwin Hirsh (2/416 Dandenong Rd., Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA). Without the help of contributors, Pam Wells in Britain (as agent), Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels) and Dave Collins (page 1) and Brad Foster (page 8) for artwork, none of this would be possible. All rights revert to contributors after publication. This fanzine is available for written contributions - articles, letters of comment, postcards etc. - fanzines in trade (one to each of us please) or even artwork. We would like to congratulate newspaper cartoonist Ron Tanberg for the cartoon which appeared in "The Age" on Thursday the 26th of February: (Reagan to Reporters - "Can you remember making a decision that could cause wholesale destruction throughout the world?" "No." "I rest my case." Even though there is plenty of time left we would be mightily impressed if some other cartoon beats this one for The Cartoon of the Year.

FANNISH CUCKOO LAND

- Irwin -

The Dandenong Ranges, out to the east of Melbourne, has to be considered the cultural centre of the city. Three perfect lightning strikes, or bombs, knocking out the transmission towers for our commercial TV channels would certainly put a dent in most Melbournians' lives. It would have to be in homage to those iron structures that Melbourne's geographic centre is slowly moving out to the east. Or perhaps it's just the search for the elusive perfect television reception. I don't know what's going to happen when the outer suburbs come bang smack into the foot of the Dandenongs. I've always enjoyed a trip up there, with the small winding roads, the large overhanging trees, and its many national parks, and not only would I hate to see the place incorporated into our suburbia, I doubt the area could physically cope with the change.

Part of my liking for the area is because it was there that Wendy and I first met, at a 21st birthday party held at the Cuckoo Restaurant. It was two years before we discovered that there is more to the Cuckoo than a place to meet one's future spouse. We were on the Range with some friends when someone suggested we have a Devonshire Tea. "The Cuckoo", we roared out, as if there was anywhere else we could go. We were young and innocent then, and didn't know what we were getting ourselves into. All we wanted was a cup of tea and a couple of scones, but what we got was one of the great pigout sessions of all time. Before us lay an unlimited supply of open sandwiches, scones, pancakes, cakes and coffee; it was all you could scoff down in three hours and only \$7 a head. None of us had any need for dinner that night.

Since that afternoon whenever we get the urge to make pigs of ourselves, perhaps once every six months, Wendy and I ring up a few friends and off we go. And in inviting people we are always sure to warn them not to have any lunch and only a light breakfast. I figured that it would be nice if our next expedition was a fannish event, and I set about getting the wheels in motion. A list of invitees was drawn up and invited (which obviously included the self-confessed king of Pigouts, Justin Ackroyd), and the booking made at the restaurant. The scene was set.

We'd arranged to give Andrew Brown a lift to the Pigout, so at about 2 o'clock there I was at his front door waiting for him to answer my call. But he didn't come to the door. Yet somehow I could sense he hadn't gone out, so again I knocked on the door. Still no answer. I thought that perhaps Andrew was Otherwise Occupied and unable to come to the door, and I decided to try the door handle. As I did so, there came a "Who is it?" from the other side. Not expecting that I jumped back, just managing to let out "It's Irwin." It soon transpired that I'd woken young Andrew up, that he'd been working til very late the previous night, and that he'd forgotten about the afternoon up in the hills. After a bit of consideration Andrew decided that he wouldn't be able to get ready quickly enough and so Wendy and I went off without our passenger.

An hour later we struck the Cuckoo and turning into the car park I noticed that we'd just beaten Carey Handfield's car, which had come from the opposite direction. Carey had Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochrane as passengers, and after all the "G'day"s Bruce asked me how I had driven up. "Along Ferntree Gully Road and Burwood Highway into Mount Dandenong Tourist Road. A fairly direct route," I answered. "Oh," said Bruce, and indicating Carey added "He took us through all the back roads and dirt tracks." Bruce wasn't impressed. "Yes," said Carey, with that Handfiendish gloat, "you should have seen these two, sitting on the edge of their seats, terrified I wouldn't take a corner."

We were shown to our table and thought we had better wait for the others to arrive before getting into the food. After a few minutes no-one had arrived, so Bruce decided to see if they were elsewhere in the building. We had arrived a few minutes late and it could've just been that the other eight arrived before us and were shown to a different table. Bruce came back with a couldn't-see-them shrug of the shoulders and sat down. We continued peering towards the entrance with ever increasing glances towards the food. After a few minutes we realised that with a smorgasboard time means money, and to stuff being polite - we're hungry. No more than a minute after tucking into the food in walked the Eight. We were curious about how they all arrived as one, and Mark Loney said, "Oh, Michelle and I arrived when the lunch session was still going. So for the last 15 or 20 minutes we've all been sitting over there." I looked in the direction Mark indicated, but all I could see were the beautiful rolling valleys that Bruce was terrified of plummeting into.

Before we knew it everyone was into a fine mass of eating and we got down to the serious business of The Chat. Bruce mentioned that he was going to write a letter of comment on the then current issue of Larrikin but he wasn't sure that he could bear putting out 36¢ for the stamp. He later added that if he was going to do any fannish writing it may as well be for his own fanzine, and he definitely hadn't the money to publish the next issue. Overall a rather sad state of affairs where the constraints of time and money get in the way of any creativity.

Quite a few of us were comparing notes about our trips to England later this year. Two days previously Wendy and I had added some dates and flights to our intended schedule, and we were ever so happy to tell all to those who were interested. Hell, we were even telling our plans to those who weren't interested, who tended to resemble those who wouldn't be going to England. Robyn Mills was all excited because Justin Ackroyd had just promised to meet her when she arrives at Heathrow, and quite depressed when Justin went on to demonstrate how easy it would be to pickpocket the contents out of her handbag. And at the end of the table Carey was sitting there saying things like, "I'm going for about a month, but I'm damned if I know how I'm going to pay for it."

One contrast to the conversation was the lousy music we were supplied with. It wasn't so much that the music was simply lousy but that it was also loud, and it was annoying to think that the two people on the stage were being paid for it out of our money. One song intrigued me for a bit and I asked Wendy if the language they were singing in was Yiddish. Wendy listened for a while and with a cheeky one-up-man type grin said, "La-la-la sounds the same in any language, Irwin." I slunk down into my chair vowing to make no more comments about the music.

Our table was actually two tables with only a half metre gap between them. When everyone was settled down someone suggested that we join the two tables together. I was about to get up and help move our table when Elaine pointed out that it was inappropriate at a smorgasboard where people were constantly getting up and sitting down. Elaine was one of six people sitting on a bench and if we were to move the tables together four people would cause a bother every time they wanted to get more food. Keeping the tables apart meant that only two people were being hemmed in. One of these two was Wendy, sitting opposite me. She avoided causing bother by just telling me that she wanted more food, at which point I would get up and get it. When this happened for the fifth time I noticed someone giving the type of look which indicated they thought Wendy had me nicely under her thumb. This didn't really bother me, because every time I got some food for Wendy I always brought some back for myself. I may have given the impression that I was a doting husband, but it was Wendy who showed herself as being a guts.

While there was an unlimited amount of food, the supply of drinks was dependant on being able to catch a waitress. I'm sure there is a Law of Conservation that states that one person will always miss out on getting some coffee out of the pot. It took us a while to get used to this Law, but once we came to understand it no-one was game to pick up the coffee pot when a waitress brought another one to the table. As much as we wanted the coffee, politeness dictated that that you offer to pour a cup for everyone else before pouring one for yourself.

When the musicians took what we thought were well-earned but inadequately short breaks the conversation continued. Wendy and Jenny Chudecki got into a chicken and egg situation regarding Eastercon. Both were saying "I'll go if you go, okay." In the end I think I settled it by telling Wendy that I'd pay for her membership. Later Marc Ortlieb, Michelle Muijsert, Carey and I had an impromptu Eastercon committee meeting in which we discussed the apparently contentious issue of scheduling the Natcon Bidding Parties in the con suit. I couldn't understand the politics involved and tuned out of the discussion. I trust my lack of interest doesn't cause one of the bids to gain an unbeatable advantage.

Towards the end of the afternoon it was I who killed off the Party. Sensing that we were about to be shuffled out of the room to make way for the dinner session, I distributed copies of the previous issue of Larrikin. They were all hot off the presses, having been duplicated only that morning. As I proudly looked down the table, with everyone reading, I felt this gentle tug at my side. It was Perry. "Hey Irwin, it wouldn't be possible for me to have a look at one of those would it? After all I am the co-editor and would like to see what's caused some of fandom's biggest mouths to shut-up." I sighed and gave the lad a copy.

From there it was a matter of paying the bill and walking out the door. And as we were standing outside, about to say our farewells, there came a moment's silence. "Okay, where are we going for dinner?" asked Wendy. Not even Justin could bear the thought of more food.

NEWSBREAK 1 Pam Wells wrote to mention "the London Fannish meeting that started life as the White Horse, then the Globe, then the One Tun, is now held on the first Thursday every month at the Wellington Tavern, Waterloo. (Just opposite the Old Vic exit of Waterloo Station - you can't miss it!) Open to all comers, this will be THE place for visiting out-of-towners to meet London fans (and each other!). We're trying to spread the word as far as possible, so that by Worldcon time everyone knows Where It's At. The first meeting was very promising, and it's important to see the continuity of this unique meeting maintained."

RENTAL REALITY Living singly, as opposed to in a relationship, presents numerous practical problems. Having kept my bachelorhood intact these many years I was ill-prepared for the problems I have now had to grapple with. John left to live in Canberra, Mike bought his unit and almost all the people I know are living either in stable relationships, have a load of kids or possess a free room in their otherwise full house. So the problems began.

- Paul Stokes -

Gullibly perhaps, I believed that there really was a housing shortage and that I would have a huge queue of people fighting to share my house. I put my little notice up in the Institute of Technology, where I was then studying, and at the University and waited, and waited. A distant ringing, scarcely believable, reached my ears and I scurried for the phone. The male was interested and would like to view the house that afternoon. I could hardly control my poor beating heart. I should have.

The tall suntanned gentleman was unimpressed. It seemed two rooms in the house, this house, were not quite up to his standard. Shaking my head in disbelief I watched him leave, promising to phone by Friday should he choose to take the place.

Friday came and went. Sunday dawned and again the phone rang. A young lady this time. Could she come out and look. I agreed. She arrived, said great, gave me two weeks' rent and moved in a little over a week later. Financially things were fine. So what if we didn't eat the same type of foods. There were the consolations of someone intelligent to talk to, friends to meet, people to go places with. All the important socializing influences. We got on really well.

Months passed before the day I dreaded came. She had a new job with the National Trust. Great? It was a live-in job and she was moving out. Panic struck again. Was I going to have to do all that searching once more? Suddenly cut back and find double the rent and all the expenses? No. A friend of hers, who had been living in an enclosed verandah would move in. I was saved. Wasn't I?

I suppose I'd forgotten how difficult it is to immediately get on with people, or maybe I'd forgotten how difficult it is for me to get on with people. This is a polite way of leading the reader to realise things would not go smoothly. They did not.

I have this cat, 'Filthy Scumbag', who is of a rather delicate constitution and does a remarkable line of 'amazed' looks. Life is a continual adventure. Anyway, said person enquired how I would feel if there was another cat in the house. I told her it would not be a good idea and even, in a display of reasonableness not seen since Torquemada confined thousands during the Spanish Inquisition, gave her the background on why this was the case.

Two weeks later there she was with a singularly sick chocolate point Alamex. The Cold War had begun. To accelerate things she rarely fed it and seemed to believe that in gratitude for her saving it the rotten cat should learn to exist on fresh air. As a special treat she gave it an unshelled prawn. Things grew worse and eventually the \$45 was too much for her and she moved into a crappy half-house over the road for which she paid some \$36 a week. (Funnily enough, the 'stranger' she moved in with shot through and she was stuck paying \$72 for a month or so. Ha ha.)

I decided I could manage without another co-tenant, so after the "Landlord" repaired the house once more I actually painted large portions of it and had a minimalist Japanese lounge to enjoy. This satisfaction in solitude lasted about three months. When the next set of bills arrived I was in a panic. So this was what it was like. Merde du Brick. I did not like it.

So with newly painted and furnished half available I put my notices up once more. Neither Institute nor University notices brought much joy. I should have realised this from the number of notices already up on the boards but my optimistic self paid them no heed. Foolish, foolish. After several weeks I reverted to the desperate step of placing advertisements in "The Advertiser". I got results.

Apart from those who had a "genuine" reason for not taking this gilt-edged opportunity; they didn't like cats, smokers or couldn't have dogs, most who refused the first offer were people who seemed to want a room with everything supplied. Meals, lots of company and witty conversation. Now I train four nights a week, go to woodwork once a week and like to get out on the weekends. It was soon obvious that this did not suit them. One guy was actually most reluctant to even come inside. I was worried.

Offer two was a room for \$35. To this I had more callers but they seemed put off by the fact that I was the only other person there or that the room wasn't out of the latest "Vogue Living" for twenty a week. People came and people went all giving the same answer. No. I cleaned, I scrubbed, I pruned, I potted. All to no avail. No-one was interested. I was shattered.

So what does one do? I remembered all the old problems I had when looking for places to live but it all paled before the trouble

involved in finding someone willing to move in with me. Perhaps most of them clung to the idea of one room in a house full of others. My offer gave more room but less of the warm fruity comradeship they sought. One guy told me that was what he wanted, and that his brother got a room in a house where the woman did all the cooking and cleaning. My reply is not repeatable, though probably guessable. All I had for my trouble was a bill for eighty dollars from "The Advertiser" to add to the existing problems I had sought to cure.

Well that's the most philosophically demanding question of recent times. With as expansive appetite as mine for clothes, comics, books, cars and such, there is not a lot left over for the necessities. Yet if you try to live on the necessities alone, shunning the new book Justin offers, or those new records, or the "Spank You Very Much" concert, life drives you crazy. Especially in Adelaide. Work is no substitute for the hedonistic pleasures of life.

NEWSBREAK 2 Dave Collins wrote to announce that he and Terry Broome are putting together a collection to be donated to Animal Aid in memory of the late Rob Gregg. The deadline for donations is the 30th of April, and you can send money to Dave at 21 Exleigh Close, Bitterne, Southampton SO2 5FB, UK.

WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER HOLIDAYS

- Perry -

My idea of a perfect holiday consists of sitting around, eating a lot and talking with friends almost constantly while keeping the tonsils well-lubricated with copious quantities of alcoholic fluids. Now a lot of my friends might tell you that such a picture is a pretty good description of what I tend to do in my spare time anyway. While this may well be true, it doesn't take into account the two major differences: (1) I don't have to worry about rushing for the following morning's 9 o'clock tram when on holidays and so have a better chance to sleep off the headaches, and (2) I usually holiday interstate where there is a whole different bunch of people to eat and drink with.

So it was with my summer vacation this year - the usual two weeks off (from just before Christmas to just after New Year) spent in and around Adelaide where my father and step-mother live. The move to Melbourne about 16 months ago has made the drive back to Adelaide much more appealing than driving from Canberra, so there was really only one travel option. Anyway, the car needed the run.

The first week went along as expected, with my only worries being to ensure that I had enough Panadol for the hangovers and that the waistline didn't explode over the belt. Robyn flew in from Melbourne and the rounds started all over again. But all things must pass, and the week around New Year's Day went quicker than was really decent.

I had originally intended to drive back to Melbourne on the Friday after New Year's Day after Robyn and I had had the chance to check out a few of the local wineries in McLaren Vale. There were a couple of reasons for this with the main ones being that travelling on a weekday gave us a better chance of getting car repairs if they were required, and to get me out of the local wine district before my credit cards gave up the ghost. As it turned out we finally

decided on leaving Adelaide on the Saturday, giving us another day of lazing around the place and generally having a good time.

Not wanting to miss any opportunity, I took Robyn for a short tour around the local area on the Friday and it was there that our troubles began. Just before finishing up for the day and heading back home, my car started producing a noise reminiscent of an over-active Keith Moon hitting a steel can. A quick hitch-hike to the local service station, a short tow, one hour and \$25 later, we were back on the road with the news that nothing more important than a loose rocker arm had been the cause of the trouble. "Nothing to worry about," said the bloke doing the repairs, "it should run fine now." Looking back I wish now that I had taken more notice of what he was doing, but I'm not the type to stand peering over someone's shoulder so I didn't worry about it.

I suppose by now you are thinking that the outcome of this whole situation is becoming painfully obvious - the car is going to break down again in the most out-of-the-way place imaginable right? Right. That's a fair description of what happened the next day. Two hundred miles down the road from my father's the engine started to let out a noise which made the commotion of the night before sound tame in comparison. Nothing for it but to pull over and check the damage. It would be impossible to say that I have even the slightest amount of mechanical aptitude but after opening the bonnet even I could understand that if there was that much oil all over the inside of the engine compartment then there wouldn't be too much left inside the motor acting as a lubricant. I feared the worst.

Another hitch down the road (25 kilometres this time) brought me to the lovely (!) town of Keith - 1200 residents excluding the sheep, a town Robyn and I were to come to know very well over the next few days. After hearing numerous horror stories from one of the attendants at a service station regarding cracked heads, blown conrods and the like, the bloke from the RAA (the South Australian motorists' association) finally arrived and gave me a lift back to car where Robyn had spent the last couple of hours reading everything in the car except the registration sticker. After a quick inspection of the engine it was quite obvious that the culprit was a loose rocker cover, the very one that had not be tightened correctly the night before. I'd had the foresight to buy some oil in Keith before leaving and after filling up we were on our way again with a warning to go very slowly. We were under the impression that if we took it easily we would make it back to Melbourne but we were sadly mistaken. Only another two kilometres down the road the car decided to pack it in with an enormous bang which sounded nothing short of terminal.

Barry, the RAA bloke, caught up with us a few minutes later with a rather resigned look on his face and a shrug of the shoulders. "Bad luck", he said. "Looks like you'll be spending a night in Keith while I send away for the parts." This was not the tail-end of a holiday that Robyn or I had expected or hoped for but at least we hadn't wrapped the car around a tree - maybe it would have been better if we had.

The range of accomodation in Keith was anything but extensive - a caravan park, a seedy looking hotel or a relatively new motel; so the choice of the third option was more necessary than inspired. Even less inspired was the name of the restaurant attached to the motel: "The Jolly Jumbuck". While I realise that small country towns in Australia make little or no pretensions to even a modicum

of sophistication or good taste, I would have thought that such a name would have been given the flick within one or two nanoseconds of its suggestion. But that was not to be and eating at the establishment was nothing short of compulsory.

The two of us had made up our minds fairly early that driving on to Melbourne on the Saturday night, even if the required parts did by chance happen to arrive that afternoon, was not really on the cards and had resigned ourselves to leaving the next morning.

Unfortunately the next few days became somewhat repetitious with Barry arriving each morning to tell us the parts still hadn't arrived, one of the two of us going to the front office of the motel to extend our booking, and in the evening (joy of joys) yet another scrumptious meal at the old jumbuck. By the third day, Robyn and I were just about ready to blow up the motel and most of the town when the parts again hadn't put in an appearance. To top it all off, Barry told us that he couldn't really guarantee that the parts would arrive even by the end of the week. That sealed it for us, we had to get out or die trying. Which is what we just about did as Robyn, an hour or so later, got us a lift by leaping out in front of an on-coming bus - the same one that everyone in town had assured us didn't stop there.

So back in Melbourne and then, for me, back in Keith two weeks later to pick up the partially mended car, then back to Melbourne again at a snail's pace. Finally, after stuffing around for a while, spending another weekend interstate for a wedding and generally not wanting to think about the whole event very much, I had a new engine and a very large bill for parts and repairs. As you can imagine I was very much unimpressed by the whole affair. Unimpressed to the extent that I have now arranged for a solicitor to look into the details and see whether I can sue. At present that looks the likely course of event.

As they say in the classics, the show's not over till the fat lady sings. In this case she's not even fully on stage yet, just waiting in the wings for her chance to give it all a good blast. I just wish she'd get it all over and done with.

PRINTED MATTER



LARRIKIN 10

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