



LARRIKIN 19, DECEMBER 1988, 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). *This fanzine mourns the recent loss of two great artists: Lloyd Rees (the Australian painter) and Roy Orbison (of the dark glasses and three-octave voice). Different and unique in their own ways, both will be greatly missed.* This fanzine is brought to you as a result of the efforts of contributors, Marc Ortlieb (for mailing labels), Craig Hilton (this page) and Bill Rotsler (last page) for artwork, and Pam Wells (as British agent). All rights revert to contributors after publication. This fanzine is available for the usual - written contributions (i.e. articles, letters of comment, postacrdcs etc.), fanzines in trade (one to each of us please) and artwork.

PERTH IN '94

VOTE FOR DUFF

"YOU GOTTA GO TO FINLAND"

- Irwin -

Travelling around the Continent Wendy and I would often meet people, English-speaking people, who were travelling by themselves. As George put it, "It is hard travelling by yourself in a country where English isn't the main language." George was a Canadian we met travelling from Amsterdam to Frankfurt, and I think he was relieved that he was sharing his last Eurail ride with people who spoke his language. It was the first time George had been to Europe, having made a last minute decision to spend his vacation there. He bought a fortnight Eurail ticket, had had a ball, but had also had enough and was leaving with four days still to run on his ticket. "Why?" I asked. "It is hard work, being by myself." Sounds fair to me, I thought.

We met Bob on the train from Turin to Lyon, about a month after arriving on Continental Europe. That morning we had been in Pisa, and we'd just experienced twelve days of meeting Italian culture. The train from Pisa to Turin had been 90 minutes late, so on our last day in Italy we finally acquainted ourselves with the great Italian tradition of "Timetable? What timetable?" Luckily we'd been forced to give ourselves a three hour changeover in Turin, so there was no worry about the possibility of not making our connection to Lyon.

Three hours into the trip I was out in the corridor, walking around and stretching my legs. Bob was in the next compartment along from us, and he and I got talking, comparing travel experiences and sharing travel tips. He was in his mid-thirties, stood just over 6 feet, spoke with a slow drawl and hailed from Boston. As Bob and I continued to chat Wendy was introduced into the conversation, at which point Bob was invited to come into our compartment and sit down.

Bob's travel experiences were quite different from those of George. This was the ninth time in ten years that Bob was spending his vacation on the Continent. He loved the freedom which was attached to a Eurail ticket and he enjoyed experiencing

and re-experiencing the different cultures of Western Europe. Then he told us he was the only person he knew who did this, "All my friends just holiday in other parts of the US or take package tours." At that point in the conversation I thought I was going to like this - an American with a healthy view of the world.

We told him about where we'd been so far in our travels. He nodded, "You've gone to some good places there." Then he stopped for a moment, his interest raised, "What made you go to Saarland? No one's ever heard of it, and it isn't really close to anywhere that people have heard of."

"It's right next to Luxembourg," Wendy reminded him.

"Oh yes, that's right," noted Bob.

It's not close to anything in Germany, I could sense him thinking. "And we went there," I said, "because we had someone to stay with."

Bob was satisfied with my answer, and went on to ask us about the rest of our trip. "Well, we'll be in Lyon for three or four days. Then it is off to Switzerland for a week..."

"Switzerland is expensive, you know," Bob interrupted.

"So we've been warned," I said and went on to detail the rest of our plans.

Bob pondered over the places we'd listed. "What about other countries? Spain? Or up in Scandinavia? You should go to Finland?"

"Why should we go to Finland?" Wendy asked.

"You could go up to the Arctic Circle. Eat yak meat. How many people do you know who've done that? That would be something to tell your friends about, saying you've eaten yak meat. You could get there by going on the overnight ferry, which is covered by your ticket."

"But we aren't going anywhere close to the ferry," I explained. "It would take a day of solid travelling just to catch the ferry, and that assumes all the connections don't require much waiting time. And once we got off the ferry we'd still have to travel for a day to get inside the Arctic Circle."

"And we'd have to do that all over again to continue with our trip, as we're flying to London out of Paris," Wendy said. "That's four days and two nights of travel. Why should we do that when in two hours we could be in Switzerland?"

"Switzerland's expensive."

"We know."

"No, the prices are ridiculous. A steak costs \$25. I don't know how they can dare to charge so much."

"It isn't a matter of them charging so much. The Swiss franc is just a strong currency."

Bob didn't even appear to have heard what I said. "You wanna know how I visit Switzerland?" he asked us. "I arrive in a city in the morning and walk around for the day. That night I get on another train, and within a couple of hours I'm out of the country. For a whole week I do that, going in and out." There was a pause and then he added, "And when I'm there I don't buy a thing. Not a thing."

"Not even a snack or a drink?"

"No!" he shook his head firmly. "There is no way I'm going to pay those prices. I just refuse." The way he spoke he made it seem a conspiracy had been constructed to get him.

"Apart from the high prices, what is Switzerland like?" we asked. Bob's response was as positive as anyone else's, which is that the country has a lot to offer - great scenery, elegant cities, and a nice attention to detail. Bob added some acute personal observations, suggesting that the different languages don't necessarily divide the country as he'd imagined would be the case. "The French Swiss have an affinity with the French, but the Germans don't seem to understand the Swiss Germans."

As the conversation continued it, well, didn't continue. For just a brief moment we'd managed to divert Bob from his main intent, and we went on to hear more praise for yak meat and the cost of same in Switzerland. I began to tune out of the conversation and listened to Bob's tone of voice, which had slowed down and become firm in its commitment. Gone was the initial gentle exchange of travel experiences and in its place was a man telling us what we should do. The same phrases were used over and over, and in my mind I began to mimic Bob's accent. "You gotta go to Finland" and "I just refuse" I could hear myself saying.

Somewhere in there Bob told us that Finland is an expensive country. Almost as expensive as Switzerland.

"But you've been telling us not to go to Switzerland because it is expensive."

"Yes, but, er, you should go to Finland. Just to see what it's like."

"I agree," Wendy said. "But we haven't been to Switzerland either. It's not that we don't want to visit Finland, we just don't have the time."

That put him off for a bit, but he returned to the line about being able to tell our friends that we'd been to the Arctic Circle and eaten yak. The cycle began again and for all intents and purposes we may as well have not been there. "You should be listening to me, I've got ten years experience" he seemed to be saying. I looked over to Wendy, who was looking at me with a long blank face. "You gotta go to Finland" I mouthed, and Wendy smiled.

Bob eventually gave up on Finland, and gave us a bit of familiar advice on eating in France, "The French like their meat very rare, so be careful."

"So we've been told," I said. "But it doesn't matter to me as I prefer my steak very rare."

"You do?" He looked at me in amazement. He just couldn't believe it. "You like rare steak?!"

"Yes."

"How could you?!?"

As I was about to respond it occurred to me that as far as Bob was concerned I wasn't allowed to like rare meat. It was simply beyond his comprehension that someone from outside France would like such food. In the same way it was beyond his level of understanding that we didn't instantly want to go to Finland. While he seemed to have a healthy appreciation of different cultures - 'culture', I suspect, being defined by language - he just couldn't appreciate that people who spoke his language could be different. "I just do," I said, giving a slight shrug of the shoulder. There didn't seem to be any reason for discussing the matter.

By this time we were almost in Lyon, so Wendy and I excused ourselves to get ready for arrival at the station. The last we saw of Bob was when he assisted Wendy

as she climbed down to the platform. But it wasn't the last of Bob for our trip. "Bloody Americans", Wendy said as we walked down the platform. Years of meeting American tourists has left Wendy with no desire to go to their country. It is a pity that after meeting a lot of nice Americans at Conspiracy the last American we would meet on this GUFF trip would be atypical of The American Tourist.

The two hours we'd spent with Bob had left an indelible mark on us, and we were forever adopting his accent to repeat any one of his key phrases. "You gotta go to Finland."

A FAN FUND A DAY

- Irwin -

Going out with this issue, postal weights willing, are DUFF and TAFF ballots. We hope you will put these to good use, and the best use that we can think of is filling out the forms and sending them to the respective administrators with the requisite

voting fee.

The more observant of you will note that I have nominated John D Berry (of John D Berry for DUFF fame), and I heartily recommend that you give him your vote. John is a fine fellow, a fine fanwriter and has published his fair share of good fanzines. In addition, John has displayed a keen interest in Australian fandom: he has appeared in our fanzines and graced the membership roster of ANZAPA. John has got what it takes to be a worthy fan fund winner, which must be why three past fan fund winners are among his nominators.

As it happens this is one of those fan fund races where there is more than one candidate who I like. If I haven't been able to convince you to vote for John, may I suggest you vote for Taral. A Hugo nominated fanartist Taral is also the publisher of some tour-de-force fanzines, including his current title New Toy. In addition Taral has been a particularly welcome contributor to Larrikin, with four great pieces of art having appeared in these pages.

So, the story is, vote for John Berry or Taral. And in TAFF we recommend you vote for Robert Litchman.

HOLD THE PRESSES

Congratulations to Roelof Goudriaan who has won the 1988-9 GUFF race, 50 votes to Linda Pickersgill's 42 votes. Roelof will be in Australia to attend the National Science Fiction Convention being held in Perth next Easter. More details in the next issue of the GUFF newsletter GUFFAWE.

BEST MAN BLUES

- Robyn Mills -

House-cleaning is something I've never enjoyed - I hate it. I'm forced to take up the duster once again only when I get discrete messages left on the furniture like "Perry woz here - May 1988" - it now being November. On one such occasion, after a stiff gin, I undertook the re-stacking of a section of my library - 2 cartons in a corner of my bedroom with washing (mixed) on top.

Lo and behold, after the removal of a few items (such as last year's Christmas shopping list and an out-of-date catalogue from Myers) I came across a folder of collector's items, namely a full set of old Larrikin issues. I had almost forgotten Larrikin. It is nearly out of print after all; in comparison to last year, that is.

This gave me the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. I could a) scrub the house-cleaning (it could wait for the Christmas holidays when I would be in better frame of mind for it) and b) reminisce.

Naturally not being conceited in any way I thumbed through the issues quickly before getting to the juicy bits - my own excellent, even if I do say so myself, contributions. On a quick glance and then thorough re-reading I noticed I had alluded to Perry's ever-increasing conservatism and urge to dress up. At this point the cobwebs of memory seemed to fade and I flashed back to Florence (Italy not Aunt) where a certain young lad purchased not only silk ties but a designer leather jacket as well. If this wasn't enough, recent history and store dockets record Perry's purchase of Country Road trousers (for non-Aussies that is Yuppieville) and European leather shoes.

As I pondered this thought my eyes resetd upon an article which referred to Perry's approaching duties as Best Man at a wedding. That event has now been and gone and I believe it should now be preserved in history as the ultimate in Perry's decline.

Perry was initially a little reticent about his obligations as Best Man. Didn't this mean organising a buck's night? Making speeches? Organising a bridesmaid's present? (Which, speaking as the bridesmaid in question, has yet to materialise.) Giving moral support to the groom? And actually wearing a suit? He asked all these questions of himself and found deep-seated objections to all of them. But he decided to press on reagrdless. In fact some of the tasks were found to be decidedly easy. The buck's night for instance practically organised itself; Perry picked a nightspot with dinner and comedy act and then proceeded to steer the participants in the general direction of his flat, stopping off for refreshments at the numerous public houses along the way. The last buck poured himself home at 3.30am. Moral support for the groom was dead easy too, the poor lad was so besotted he could hardly wait for the event and actually looked forward to it with pleasure. The other items Perry found a little more difficult - the Speech and the Suit.

First things first. The Speech. The main difficulty here was that Perry had to remain sober. Speaking as one who listened to it only mildly inebriated (it's just not the done thing to have a bridesmaid, to turn a phrase, as pissed as a fart) the speech was excellent. Not only did the lad show signs of his literary bent by utilising his new "Oxford Dictionary of Quotations" he also spoke coherently, only once embarrassing the bride by calling her Naughty instead of Naalti (her correct name). Then ticking off the groom's mother for her lack of ability to be original in naming her son; his name being Jon Johnson, or, as his mother insists, John Johnson. But, most importantly, he made a crowd of 80 stand rivetted for ten minutes, listening in silence. At the end the bride's mother thanked Perry for the words of wisdom, but to this day I do not know if she thanked him because it was over and she could now sigh with relief or because she actually enjoyed it.

The second of the two major problems was the Suit. As I mentioned earlier Perry has been showing some alarming characteristics of late. When first told he would need to wear a suit he never batted an eyelid. When Judith, his wicked step-mother, suggested he buy a suit rather than hire one he dismissed the idea with absolutely no show of anguish. Not even when it came to the crunch did he flinch when informed that he would be wearing that Rolls Royce of suits, tails.

Yes folks, Perry wore tails, and a sight to behold it was too. Tails, dinner shirt, bow-tie, flower in the button hole, the works. My only regret is that this mag doesn't publish photographs. I will admit that he doesn't scrub up too badly and I was quite proud to be seen with him, in my dressy purple backless bridesmaid's get-up, complete with flowers in the hair and bouquet.

Perry carried off his new-found glamour with panache and I understand he was so happy with his appearance he plans to rent himself out for gala occasions such as Regal Tours, circuses and fannish weddings.

It appears that this dangerous trend is to continue with Justin Ackroyd being so overwhelmed by Perry's recent press coverage that he has decided to give Perry another go at proving himself as Best Man material, and I am led to believe that

the Speech, the Suit and all will undergo fandom's critical appraisal next April 1st. I can't think of a better day.

Me, I'm still hitching the backless purple bridesmaid's number around to any takers who want a used bridesmaid.

"The other travellers on the balcony, mostly Malays, made way for them, and the Indians stood, the turbulence blowing the wrinkles out of their suit jackets, chatting softly in their own language. The stations raced by: Bidor, Trolak, Tapah, and Klang - names like science fiction planets ... "

From THE GREAT RAILWAY BAZAAR - Paul Theroux

LETTERS FROM OUR MATES (issue 17) - compiled by Irwin -

I think we'll start this lettercolumn with a comment based on the colophon of the 17th issue. HARRY BOND says he is...

...interested to know, how you decide issues on the toss of a coin, \$2 or otherwise...

"OK, Perry, heads."

"Rats! It is heads! That means I get to duplicate it."

"Your call."

"Tails!"

"Sorry, mate, heads it is. You get to collate."

"Gordon Bennett! Try tails again."

"Nope! Heads, Perry. You get to pay postage."

"Here, let's see that coin of yours Irwin..."

...I should think that your issues would be best decided on the time-honoured Strict Rotation Method.

MIKE GLICKSOHN expressed some similar concerns:

You guys do have fascinatingly arcane colophons! Is there really a new two-headed two dollar coin in Australia? Does it really have different colours or does one side have the Queen and the other an aborigine? I am ready to believe anything ever since I read that your Liberal Party published its policy statement "The Way Ahead" with the first page printed upside down.

Fanzines are filled with small moments of serendipity. Just last night one of the four other people with whom I'm working to put on a fanzine fans' convention called me up to ask me what piece I might like to have reprinted in the fanthology we're doing for the con. After I thought about it I realized that one of my favourite pieces is a bit I did on laundromats for the revival issue of Energumen. And the very next day here's Marc's eloquent analysis of the role of the laundromat in modern science fiction fandom. Or something like that. There's some sort of cosmic significance to all this but I'm not sure what it is.

The second serendipitous thing about Marc's article is that my actual answer to the chap who wanted to know what of mine he might reprint (since the laundromat piece was too long) was that he should seek out a piece I wrote back in 1973 after baking bread. And yet here is Marc writing about baking bread just after discussing laundromats. It's almost as if he's re-creating my fannish career right before my eyes! If he wins the Hugo at the worldcon this year I'm going to demand a rewrite!

With all the co-edited fanzines I can currently think of one of the pair has always seemed to be the dominant force. Mainstream has always seemed to me to be more Jerry Kaufman than Suzle. Granfalloon was definitely Linda Bushyager's, not Ron's. Pong came close but Ted White always seemed more prominent than Dan Steffan. And so it has gone down the line. In that sense, perhaps, Larrikin is a success because it doesn't seem to be dominated by either of you.

Irwin's comments on Pulp go right to the heart of why I've never really had a co-editor. (I have to phrase it that way because Energumen was listed as being co-edited by Susan Wood and myself but in fact that wasn't the case.) When I do a fanzine I have to be able to say, "This isn't what I want to publish so it's not going to be published." I admire those who can subjugate their own tastes to those of others in this regard but I'm not one of them.

If you can do so, though, it can work and for me Pulp is an example of a situation that works. While they might disagree on individual contributions to a given issue it's obvious that the co-editors share a common vision of what sort of fanzine each wishes to produce so there is continuity and context for each issue. And the times when the co-editors do have disagreements tend to just add spice to the issues and fire up the lettercolumns. Overall I'd rate Pulp as the most successful of the currently published co-edited fanzines. (Sorry, guys.)

No need to apologise Mike - it's not a competition. To answer your first paragraph questions: the new \$2 coin has a bust of an aborigine on the tail side. BRIAN EARL BROWN found a lot to discuss in my fanzine reviews.

Irwin writes a good article on co-edited fanzines. I've always compared Pulp to The Monthly Monthly, a Canadian rotating editor fanzine of a few years back. TMM had 6 editors and appeared monthly, so each editor published twice a year. After the first year it became The Bimonthly Monthly and soon petered out completely. I don't think it published 15 issues. Like Pulp it was small, averaging around 18 pages, and crammed with regular features so each editor had little room to play around in. And like Pulp the regular columns were only OK.

Irwin sees three different Pulps depending on who was editing. I always see one extremely bland fanzine (like TMM) and feel that the worst aspect of group editing is this tendency to do only things everybody can agree on, which means the least memorable stuff. It is true that fandom could use a regular and fairly frequent fanzine - two reasons Pulp was launched - it seems to me too closed-shop to exploit its frequency and regularity. For that one must reflect back to the Holier Than Thou of a couple of years ago. Nobody much admired Marty Cantor but in time everyone found that if they had an article that had to be printed, Marty was the fan to go to and so HTT was at times a pretty lively and influential fanzine. When the first principle of a jointly edited fanzine is "none of us can afford to publish a regular fanzine by ourselves", as was the case for Pulp and TMM then I don't think the fanzine is going to amount to much.

Irwin wonders why ASFR doesn't have an active lettercol. While a subscription-first policy may have something to do with that, I also think that not fostering a lettercol does a lot to discourage people from writing. Again a case in point is Marty Cantor. He'd publish 50-70 pages of locs, a lot of which weren't much good or interesting and in time got a lot of people writing to him and debating issues of his fanzine. ASFR 14 was run through FAPA and from what I saw the letter column is sort of an afterthought. Something attached to the end of the zine in order to fill out the pages. If they are desperate for locs then they should make the column look like a vital part of the zine and perhaps bribe a few people to write to them.

The second part of Perry's Conspiracy report was delightful, even if I don't know Justin Ackroyd. I hope that this doesn't represent the final and concluding chapter of his report. I want more.

There's a lot of points to discuss in this Brian, but I think I better be brief. I'd rate Pulp's columns as better than okay; each column has had at least one installment which was worthwhile reading. As I remember TMM, their columns weren't written for a fanzine audience and the fanzine suffered as a result. Bribing people to write letters-of-comment sounds interesting. Or maybe we're just getting into some semantic differences here, for a liberal availability policy could just be regarded as a bribe. I wonder what ASFR's US agent, CY CHAUVIN, thinks...

Your review of co-edited fanzines is interesting, and I think you're especially right about ASFR and its letter column. I keep thinking that perhaps they don't publish all the letters they receive (even in part), or perhaps that most fans aren't really interested in (good) discussion of sf. Perhaps the feeling is that people might subscribe and loc (I believe issues are added if you already subscribe). I also don't know how much more expensive it is to produce ASFR than say Larrikin.

I hope you get some more contributions to your series on what fans do on their day off, as Dave Langford's contribution is wonderful. I met him for the first time at Conspiracy and I was amazed at how closely his personal conversation resembled his writing, the unbroken stream of jokes and word play issuing from his lips, all seemingly quite connected with the conversation at hand. Quite impressive, until you realize his trick: that "hearing aid" he makes so much of is none other than a microwave link with a mainframe computer in his basement in Reading, recording all the conversations he hears, assembles the humor, etc. in a fraction of the "real time" any normal human being would require, then beams it back to Dave to repeat. How to test this theory? Notice how his mind wanders when you wave a magnet in front of his hearing aid.

Actually I now regret never hearing Hazel speak. I wonder if she sounds exactly like the sort of conversation he records here. "Fool...."

Publishing Larrikin is expensive enough but the cost is covered by what we get in return. But surely the relative production costs are not the issue? For the editors of ASFR a letter of comment is worth just \$2.50, while we'd rather not put a price on a letter of comment. Which reminds me of the long-lost Irwin Hirsh test for deciding when a publication is a fanzine: Can I, when reasonably fanzine-active, get the magazine for the 'usual'? If the answer is "Yes" it is a fanzine. If "No" it is not a fanzine. Obviously I'm in the minority in applying this test - ASFR got a nomination for the Best Fanzine Ditmar. So be it. Here's JEAN WEBER:

Most of the co-edited fanzines I've seen have at least as 'continuous' or 'coherent' an editorial presence or 'personality' as most of the single-editor zines I've seen. This probably says more about the chaotic state of many single-editor zines, than about the strengths of co-edited zines. Certainly the well-done minority of single-editor zines have a stronger, more consistent editorial presence, but they are definitely the exception. I will agree with your comments about ASFR giving a sense of a one-way conversation, and you may be right about people who've paid for a subscription being less motivated to write a loc, but for myself this is not true. I don't often write to ASFR because I'm less inspired to comment on relatively academic articles (though I enjoy and appreciate them), than I am on more personal topics. I do write to other zines to which I also subscribe, probably at least as often as I write to anybody - which isn't very often.

Kathleen Hodgkin's views on getting away from it all intrigued me. At those times when getting in the car, a plane, or just being at home represents a wish to get out of touch, I'd certainly agree with her. But many times being in those situations is a necessity, and I don't wish to be out of touch. Not that I'd want to use a phone when I'm actually driving the car - I think that's far too dangerous. Funny how being a freelance can change one's perspectives on whether

one wishes people to be able to get in contact! When that phone call means money (sometimes largish amounts of it), being disturbed by the phone takes on a whole new meaning. I guess the main thing is who makes the choice to wear the beeper or answer the phone - you or your employer (or your parents). And Dave Langford's tale of his "days off" meant a lot more to me now than it probably would have before I also began working freelance.

I think it would be best to leave the last word in the fanzine discussion to one of Pulp's editors. JOHN HARVEY:

In general I have to agree with most of your comments on Pulp, especially on no. 7 but maybe I'm slightly biased. More seriously, I am aware of "the three fanzines" problem with Pulp but feel it isn't easily overcome, not having seen ASFR I cannot comment on their success or otherwise. Pulp's policy of having the same editor for the letters each issue should be a step towards unification (if I hadn't thought that this was so I doubt I'd have been too pleased at losing my turn on the locs). Also the idea of using regular columnists should generate a sense of continuity, although at the moment there is only the Langford item appearing without fail.

As a point of information I have contributed to editions of Pulp that I didn't edit, although technically you are correct as I wasn't on the editorial board at the time. The general point about a lack of cross-contribution between editors is also something I am conscious of and intend to do something about.

Perry's trip report was worth reading apart from one major flaw - there were no mentions of us in it! We want egoboo in fanzines, give us more!!!! (That's what Eve said anyway!)

Meanwhile SUE THOMASON is here to trade stories with Sue Trowbridge:

As a child, I used to love fresh peas, and so I used to ask for the job of podding them, so I could eat some raw. One day my mother, wondering why it always took me so long to shell peas, came out to find me talking earnestly to one particular podfull - apparently I'd given them all names, and knew how they were related, and what their interests were and so on...

And our last letter is from WALT WILLIS:

I'm sorry I didn't comment on the previous issue; put it down to the shock of realising that Perry was at Brighton and I didn't meet him. After me coming such a vast distance to see him, all of 200 miles, one would think he would have made himself known to me. Sniff sniff. But then I have since realised that some people actually attended part of the official programme. Oh well, de gustibus non est disputandum, meaning you can't argue in a charabanc.

I enjoyed Kathleen Hodgkin's disquisition on the feeling of safety in aeroplanes which may be induced by reflecting that no one can get at you now. Another way of insulating oneself from the worries of flight is to have made a career in some problem-solving type of administrative work. In that sort of job you come to realise that all the problems of the world fall into one of two categories. There are problems which are your responsibility, which you should worry about; and there are problems which are the responsibility of other people, which you don't need to even think about. Anything wrong with the aeroplane is obviously the responsibility of the pilot or ground staff, and as it hurtles downwards I can reflect with some quiet satisfaction that, well here's one disaster that nobody can possibly blame on me.

Maria Trowbridge seems an endearing child, but I wonder if her attempts at communication with beetles and earthworms are more significant than anyone has yet realised. Evolutionary processes seem to have a way of preparing humanity for future contingencies, and I wonder if we are seeing now the emergence of a group of

people specially gifted for humanity's next great task, namely communication with extra-terrestrials. It would be no surprise if this facility manifested itself first in fandom. Why, my gifted wife Madeleine remembers childhood experiments in communication with the family dog by getting it to bark once for no and twice for yes; and anyone who can understand some contemporary fanzines is obviously well on the way towards the ability to comprehend the most alien of thought processes.

The best thing in the issue was Langford's diary. I would love this to become a permanent feature. Even if it weren't so well done, it would still have all the spontaneous and unexpected interest of a suicide note.

WAHF: Hazel Ashworth: "Perry's "Visions of an Innocent Abroad" was fun but far too short! We just get the bare bones and tantalising glimpses of juicy bits before he falls asleep.", Pamela Boal, Kennedy Gammage, Linda Gowing, Joy Hibbert, Arthur Thomson, Lucy Huntzinger, and Harry Warner, Jr: "Has Norman Hollyn ever considered the possibility that he was allergic to needles? And did Sue Trowbridge study carefully her flour bin and sugar supply to make sure that one of those substances didn't create temporarily an albino roach?"

BOOKKEEPING Just over two years ago Marc Ortlieb did a very stupid thing. He offered to help us maintain control of our mailing list. What
- Irwin - this means is that once a month Marc gets to fire up his computer just for the lazy sods who are the editors of this fanzine.
Recently Marc made a change to the design of our mailing labels and, if the letters we've been getting are anything to go by, it's caused one hell of a jolt in you lot.

As Jerry Kaufman noted, "The number 0257 is weird and wonderful, all right. It appears on my mailing label. I believe it was my membership number at the first con I ever attended, though how Marc Ortlieb knew is beyond me."

It was beyond me too, Jerry. So I figured I better find out what it all means. The next time I was talking to Marc I asked him what the numbers on the mailing labels mean.

"What do the numbers on the mailing labels mean?" was the way I put it.

Marc's reply was something to behold. At least, I think it was something to behold. All I know is that the number has something to do with your inside leg measurement, the IQ of your worst enemy and the age of your first grade teacher. Or it had to do with the inside leg measurement of your IQ and the age of your worst enemy in first grade, I can't be sure.

Unfortunately The Mailing Label Number has had a particularly profound affect on one of our readers. Recently we received a letter of comment from someone who signed off by calling himself "0204". All I could do was look at the signature and ponder upon the question of just who it was who had written us this particularly fine letter.

As it happened the letter's typeface looked familiar, so I dug out some letters on past issues of Larrikin. I worked deep into the night, comparing typefaces. After many hours I had narrowed it down to one possibility. Just to make sure, though, I sent everything off to a forensic scientist and a chap who has a Ph.D. in linguistics. Their reports came in, confirming my suspicion.

What all this means is that Harry Warner, Jr, a man to admire, has finally cracked. What fifty years of receiving crudzines couldn't do, Marc's labels has finally achieved. Poor Harry, now but a number.

A TRAVELLER'S JOY BEGUILES

- Perry -

It began, as these things are wont to do, over a cold beer in a small pub. Angus Caffrey and I had reached our respective endurance limits with the beer being served in the fan room at Conspiracy. The air conditioning seemed to have been completely forgotten, the enclosed room was filled to overflowing with hot sweaty fans, and the beer was rapidly approaching the temperature at which I like to shower. I could take no more and was willing to see anyone in order to give my stomach some relief. In hindsight this was a poor decision, but I tender the streakers' defence: it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Angus lead me through a series of narrow Brighton streets to what seemed like the back entrance of the Metropole Hotel. There was a small pub in the street with a large sign out front proclaiming: "Chilled Lager on Tap". Later I was to wonder at the state of the world when an ordinary everyday event should be lauded in such a fashion. But at the time I was in no mind to quibble and entered gladly.

It didn't take long before my mood had changed to one of peace and harmony. All the more receptive to a good, or bad, idea.

Angus and I, as travellers tend to, started discussing future travel plans. After outlining my ideas of seeing Britain I then went on to explain my expectations of the European leg of my trip. "The Eurail pass is a good idea" said Angus. "But how are you going to get to France?"

That was certainly a good question and one to which I had no ready answer. "I don't know. Overnight on the ferry I guess. I haven't really thought about it."

"The ferry? NO, no. Waste of time, and boring as well. Why don't you try something a bit different? What about the Hovercraft?"

"So what about it?" The cold beer on the table in front of me interested me more than the prospect of crossing the Channel.

"Well at least you'd have to say it's different. And it's one of the things I came over here to do." Angus then went on to extol the virtues of the Hovercraft over another couple of beers and by the time we left the pub I had taken the idea to heart and almost considered it my own. My fate was sealed.

Some six weeks later Robyn and I waved goodbye to the denizens of the Harvey hotel and set off for Victoria Station. By train from Victoria to Dover and then to Boulogne. The advertisements proclaimed a blissful flight of 45 minutes - they even called them "flights".

The trip to Dover was totally uneventful and as we prepared ourselves to leave Britain the Channel looked smooth and the sky clear. Unfortunately we were to fall prey to every traveller's dread - bad weather. Only later did we come to realise that we had decided to cross one of the busiest stretches of water in the world the day before the worst storm in a century hit the south of England, causing massive damage and destroying hundreds of years of nature's handiwork. You can only put it down to bad luck.

Things started to go wrong as soon as we took our seats. I don't consider myself overly tall - a touch over six feet - but I had almost no leg room when sitting bolt upright. Robyn fared little better. Even at close to a foot shorter than me she was cramped. The air-conditioning seemed designed in a similar vein with the temperature guage boosted up to just short of cremate. The craft was obviously built for pre-teenage children from the tropics.

The next hour was the toughest Robyn and I faced in the whole three months we were travelling - losing Robyn's purse in Frankfurt, scaring off pickpockets in Rome and even having a knife pulled on us in Bordeaux were as nothing compared to this.

The nature of hovercraft is that they "fly" over the surface of the water rather than cut through it. With the swell outside reaching what seemed like mammoth proportions the hovercraft certainly flew - from crest to trough, straight down. Before long all the hostesses could do was pass out vomit bags with both hands and hope there wasn't too much to clean up afterwards.

If the smell wasn't bad enough the heat seemed to get worse and the spray blown up from the edges of the air bag covered the windows making it impossible to take our minds off things by staring out the windows at anything that happened to pass by. I have never been seasick in my life but that day I came as close as I ever hope to get. Robyn wasn't so lucky. At one point I actually had the insane thought that I might buy some duty-free film from one of the carts being wheeled around. Looking after Robyn's needs with one hand while holding a wet towel to her forehead with the other put paid to that idea. It didn't really matter I wasn't in the mood to haggle over price, ASA rating and the rest anyway. The attitude of my fellow passengers didn't help. I find nothing amusing in seeing a friend being in so much physical discomfort that they are compelled to throw up almost continuously. Many people around me didn't share that feeling.

The 45 minute trip stretched to 55 due to a vicious cross-wind blowing us off course. Landfall was a revelation and might even have caused a religious conversion if I had been so inclined. Even the French customs official at the gate seemed courteous, stamping our passposts and not demanding the landing papers. Maybe the sight of so many green Englishmen can soften the heart of the hardest French bureaucrat.

Most of the Hovercraft passengers seemed to be heading towards Paris as only about four or five of us caught the courtesy bus into town. I was glad I wasn't on the train with them. The prospect of a few hours more travel and vomit jokes was not in the least appealing.

Robyn and I found a cheap pensione in town and then hit the nearest French bottle shop. We both felt as though we needed a litre or so of cheap plonk and a solid meal to settle our stomachs. I had started this episode in a slight alcoholic daze, I couldn't think of a better way to end it.

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