



LARRIKIN 22, ~~December/1988 January~~ February 1990, is edited and published by those SMOFish chaps Irwin Hirsh (26 Jessamine Ave, East Prahran, Victoria 3181, AUSTRALIA) and Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA); both members of The Stuff Merv-Hughes-Plastic-Moustaches, What We Want Are Dean-Jones-Plastic-White-Lower-Lips Society. Perry would like you to know that, till you hear of a CoA, you can still send mail to his PO Box, and we both would like you to know that we are still interested in fannish mail. Thanks go to Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels), Pam Wells (UK agent), Craig Hilton (first page art), ATom, Tom Cardy, Brad Foster, Jeanne Gomoll, Ian Gunn, and Phil Wlodarczyk (interior art), and Taral and ATom (last page art). We would like to thank the Aussie cricket team for making a joke out of our 19th issue colophon effort in which we predicted an Aussie ashes-losing cricket test series. But the biggest joke is on the South Afrikaan cricket authorities, who are paying big krugarands to a bunch of players who were rejects from an English cricket team which couldn't do a thing right. Pub your ish.

ARTHUR THOMSON

The details I have are rather sketchy, but despite the gaps the impact of the news is not nice. Arthur Thomson (ATom) is dead.

- Irwin -

I first met Arthur in 1980, through the pages of Ethal Lindsay's Scottishe. He was the fanzine's Staff Artist, and Ethal made sure that her readers got to see a lot of his talents. She left lots of white space as she typed the stencils, which would be sent to Arthur so that he could dazzle us with his on-stencil drawing skill. Pulling Scot down from my shelves I'm reminded that it wasn't a distinguished fanzine; Ethal seemed out of sync with the fandom of the time, which was very different to that she once knew. But flicking through its pages I am reminded of the reason I still keep those issues: ATom's art. Indeed, in the letter column of the 81st issue you can find a letter from an Irwin Hirsh praising the art of the previous issue.

In 1981 ATom became drawn back into fandom, as part of the Born Again Wave going on at the time. Suddenly you didn't have to look in the pages of just Scot to find an ATomillo, and in 1984 I found myself knocking on his drawing pad asking if he'd like to contribute to Sikander. I can't say that our correspondence was anything grand - we exchanged notes rather than letters, and the speed with which we wrote didn't exactly make our Post Offices rich - but as a contributor to fanzines he was the fanned's friend. He was a most enthusiastic contributor - one time writing me a letter just to thank me for the way I had presented his art. That he met requests in quick time was a delight but just as important was that he knew how to say 'No'. When writing the chapter of my GUFF trip report which appeared in Sikander 15 I sent him an early draft, wondering if he'd like to provide some illustrations to go along with my words. He hadn't been feeling the best and doubted he could meet my deadline. Other people would've ignored my letter in a less stressful situation but Arthur replied promptly in order to decline my invitation. In this way he set a standard we should all follow; all I know is that in the specific I failed, missing my own deadline for Sikander 15 by more than six months.

Arthur was one of my nominators when I stood for GUFF, so I was particularly looking forward to meeting him. Conspiracy was the most crowded and tiring convention I've attended, and our paths didn't cross as much as I would've liked. But when I did see him I enjoyed both his company and the contributions he made to the programme. To my mind he and Vinç Clarke made, in different ways, the greatest contribution to The Wheels and Hubcaps of If panel. When, on another panel, he said that he was having the most fun in fandom at the present he was probably displaying the healthiest attitude of anyone in the room.

The last time I saw Arthur was also the saddest. Kent TruFandom were gathered together in an upstairs room at Vinç Clarke's home. It was a cold December day and the emphysema which Arthur had and which eventually killed him was affecting him badly. The effort of just moving around the room was hard work for him. In a photo I took that day you can see some of the pain he was in. Far better is a photo I took at Conspiracy, possibly the best single photo I took in my four months away and in itself justification for the cost of the zoom lens I had just bought. When I showed that photo as part of my GUFF Trip Slide Report it was the one which elicited the biggest 'So that's what _____ looks like' reaction. I'm not the only Aussie who'd noticed and come to be impressed by ATom's fanac.

In my time in fandom there has been the occasional death which has struck to the heart of many people who are involved in fanzines. Susan Wood and my paths had barely intersected prior to her death, so most of what I felt came through from reading others' tributes. I'd received locs and traded fanzines with Terry Carr but contact was still distant. Arthur Thomson was a significant contributor to my fanzines and I enjoyed his company. I'll miss him.

ALL THINGS MUST PASS

- Perry -

I have found this one of the hardest pieces I've ever had to write. I guess I've started it about five times over the past month and have struggled on each occasion to get more than a paragraph or so into the opening. Maybe it's because I've been trying to write something part-way serious, or maybe it's because I just don't want to write it.

It all has to do with the end of things - all of which are under my control and most of which I look forward to, but one that is rather sad. For, you see, this is the last LARRIKIN. Irwin, as he has explained elsewhere in this issue, doesn't feel he has the energy or commitment to put into a fanzine that he would like LARRIKIN to be, while I, on the other hand, will have the energy but not the opportunity. To get to the point, in the next couple of weeks Robyn Mills and I are getting married and then will be leaving Australia for an extended period working in Britain. Either of these two events on their own could be considered traumatic and to undertake both within a week seems downright foolhardy. By necessity a number of things in my life will have to change and not least of them is the end of the publishing of this fanzine.

Back in 1986 when Irwin and I started publishing LARRIKIN there was a distinct lack of a fun frequent fanzine on the Australian fannish scene. Other than the obvious reason of publishing it because it was the kind of fanzine I liked to read I also vaguely hoped that it might spawn a few other examples of its type. Unfortunately that doesn't seem to have happened. Which is rather a pity as while Australian fans can be a lot of fun their fanzines have a tendency to be too earnest too often. I'd like to see them loosen up a bit and actually start enjoying fanzines rather than see them as a mission in life.

A number of friends of mine would have you believe that my impending marriage was more a matter of "when" rather than "if". Looking back I can see that they were probably right, although I wasn't willing to admit it to myself at the time. I used to think my outlook on life would change markedly as the big day approached but all

it has done is become clearer. But that's enough. I don't think I could ask for anything more.

And finally the move overseas. This was brought about mainly by a desire to see more of the world and a deep feeling that I was bored to the back teeth with the type of work I had been doing for the past couple of years. I am quite willing to admit that the work may change purely by moving to London but the surroundings will be different and that will take some time to wear off. It just struck me as the right thing to do at the right time. I probably won't get this chance again for quite some time so it is best to take the most of it.

So, as I stated earlier, a number of things have come to an end. I'm sorry about the demise of LARRIKIN but it had served its purpose and its time. Thanks to you all for coming along for the ride.

NOTED AND QUOTED

"'Commendable is the article on Cordwainer Smith'? Puzzled was the reaction of David Langford. Inverted is the syntax of Jack Herman. Odd is the opening line of that letter."

- Dave Langford, in the letter-column of Lan's Lantern 27.

HABBERFIELD: GATEWAY TO THE WEST

- John McPharlin -

The main road out of Sydney is Parramatta Road and it marks the boundary between some of the earliest suburbs (eg. as you leave town, there is Ultimo on the right, Chippendale on the left, then Glebe on the right and Camperdown on the left, etc). Once Parramatta was a small farming community twenty-odd miles west of Sydney. In the last 200 years the city has spread so far to the west that Parramatta is now a suburb just east of the centre of Sydney. Most Sydney-siders consider that beyond Parramatta lies the 'deep west', suburbs like Blacktown, Doonside, Mt Druit, Penrith and the romantically named Rooty Hill. People out there are 'westies': tranquilised housewives and reved-up heavy metal freaks, slow to think, quick to anger and permanently unemployed. However, for me the character of Sydney changes to a westie flavour once you leave the inner city suburb of Leichhardt and let me hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with being a westie. I myself have been known to put on a blue check lumberjack shirt and get down to AC/DC from time to time.

Since the last war, Leichhardt has been taken over by mainly Italian migrants, who have turned the old stores into restaurants and cafes, giving the whole area a Mediterranean atmosphere. As you continue along Parramatta Road, Petersham on the left becomes Lewisham (still Leichhardt on the right) and then you pass under a railway bridge and are immediately in another world. On your right is Habberfield and the first of Parramatta Road's many used car yards, next to which is the Bailey & McBride furniture showroom (Sydney-siders will already be wincing at the thought of their television advertisements, which feature the owner's appalling young daughter). On the left is the inappropriately named Summer Hill, which starts with another furniture showroom, a campervan rental crowd and 'Garden Artistry', selling all manner of garden gnomes, elaborate bird baths and fountains and the world's largest collection of Venus de Milos (however would she have gone hitchhiking?).

At a rough guess, I would say that 40 percent of Sydney's used car sales yards are on Parramatta Road, together with a high proportion of new car showrooms, body works, mechanical and electrical repairers and spare parts sales outlets. While the names on the sign may (and do) change with the regularity of the seasons and usually under cover of darkness, the properties always remain automotive establishments: Honest Bob's Autos one evening, suddenly vacant the next morning and then Reliable Robert's Fair Deals a few days later. For the purposes of this article, I was

tempted to go through the telephone directory and count them all, so that I could give you the actual figures and the exact breakdowns. Fortunately common sense got the better of me - it would have been a lot of work and I know that LARRIKIN readers are not used to in depth journalism in their fanzines. Suffice it to say that Parramatta Road is the first division of automotive sales and service, the 'A' grade, the major league, in short: the big time.

Passing thought: now and then lists of the main players in the major industries are published in business magazines. One company is conspicuous in its absence from the lists of radio and electrical companies and car parts manufacturers. I am referring to the company which makes those cheap metal coat hangers for dry cleaners and laundry services. Despite having only a one product repertoire, it is probably responsible for more car radio aerials than any two other companies put together.

Some people have expressed surprised that, as an ex-Adelaidean, I take little interest in the Grand Prix. The reason is simple: there is a much more interesting grand prix down Parramatta Road every day. Unlike 'real' GP, where a bunch of superbly trained drivers at the peak of their ability steer perfectly engineered and purpose-designed racing cars around a race track *in the same direction*, Parramatta Road is a high speed improvers' handicap: a free-for-all with heart-stopping thrills and spills. See:

- Ralph, the incredibly hungover fitter and turner in the rebored and otherwise illegally modified Ford Escort van;
- Peter, the aging businessman fighting off the signs of male menopause in the family station wagon;
- the trainee foreign exchange dealer named Michelle, flat out in daddy's BMW and well aware that she'll be in the poo if she's late for work again;
- the half-crazed second generation Italian accounts clerk named Gino in the clapped out Fiat 125, exploring the limits of man and machine and using all three lanes, the median strip and most of the footpath to do it in;
- the fifth generation true blue Aussie plumber named Colin, who is going to get the brakes of the ute seen to real soon now;
- Branko, the strung-out taxi driver working his third consecutive shift without a break and proving that he can still manoeuvre his cab into the last place that any other driver would have expected; and finally, just for light relief
- Naomi the housewife, who doesn't normally like to be out on the road at this time of day and certainly wishes that she had come out with her driving glasses instead of her reading glasses.

Get the picture? As you can probably imagine, the carnage tends to be pretty severe. A total of 1038 people died on NSW roads during 1988. There were only very sketchy details in the summary in the paper, but luckily I had saved the 1987 closing scores and they should provide a reasonable indicator. Road deaths in 1987 came to 955, down 74 from 1986. Of these, 113 were interstate and overseas drivers who had come all that way just to splatter themselves across our roads. Only 177 pedestrians were cleaned up during 1987, the lowest score for 40 years and down 145 from 1986 (in 1947, 151 pedestrians bit the big one). The number of serious injuries (including death) was over 35,000.

Death and driving seem to have become inextricably linked, as witnessed by the fact that one major tyre company has chosen to promote its product as having "better grip than the Boston Strangler". However, the country town of Braxton, near Singleton, is doing its bit to keep down the road toll. Signs on the outskirts warn motorists "Drive carefully: we have two cemeteries, no hospital".

In order to finish on a lighter note, I'd like to share with you something from a recent article on the Herald, which listed the 10 best excuses from the owners of illegally parked cars, as compiled by the Chief Inspector of the NSW Police Traffic Branch. My favourite, which did not place first, was: "I couldn't park any closer to the kerb because there was a man asleep in the gutter".

LARRIKIN

THE LARRIKIN STAMP ALBUM

- Irwin and Perry -

We weren't great fans of Australia's Bicentennial but out of it all came one or two good things. One such good thing was a series of stamps depicting aspects of Australian life. What made the stamps most appealing was not the subject matter but that Australia Post enlisted a different cartoonist to provide the artwork for each stamp. The perspective each artist gave to their individual subject matter and the series is one of great delight. Here were stamps we were pleased to use on our mail.

Sometime soon after the stamps were released we came up with the idea of adapting this particular series of stamps to a fannish perspective and running the series as our last page/ mailing wrapper illo. We figured that if we could get some artists to start off the series momentum would bring in others. From our first group of letters we received much enthusiasm and encouragement - three "love the idea", two promises, and one 'stamp'. Some time later we sent some more letters and received more enthusiasm and encouragement, to the point where two people sent us more than we asked of them. It is unfortunate that only one such 'stamp' was received prior to the publication of LARRIKIN 21 because circumstances deem that we will not be able to bring these to you in the manner originally intended. But here for your enjoyment is The LARRIKIN Stamp Album. The Brad Foster drawing is reprinted from an earlier issue; not with permission were afraid, but we suspect with his approval.

And in presenting The Album we dedicate it to the memory of Arthur Thomson.





THE WAY OF IT This is the last issue of LARRIKIN.

- Irwin - On Sunday, the 7th of May, 1989, at about 6.00 am, my son Jarryd Phillip Hirsh was born. He died just three days later, a victim of something called Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome. The valves in the left side of his heart hadn't formed and as a result Jarryd had no way of sending blood from his heart to his lungs. Without that vital function being performed no oxygen was being sent to other parts of his body and Jarryd suffocated.

The thing about Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome is that, short of looking specially for it, babies tend not to start to 'suffer' from it till about two days old. As we were to learn babies don't fully use their heart *in utero*. Lying in the womb the heart certainly beats - his beating heart was the first thing I saw when Wendy had an ultrasound when about 4 months pregnant - but a lot of the heart's functions are performed by a blood vessel that goes around the heart with the blood's movement being helped out by the mother. At birth that blood vessel starts closing down, in a process that takes about two days.

Which means that for the first days of his life we saw nothing wrong with Jarryd. Wendy and I did great impersonations of proud parents, I'm sure, and everything was great. Except for Wendy's parents and brother, who were already grandparents and an uncle, Jarryd was a first to a lot of people in our families: grandchild, niece/nephew, and cousin. All, except one, seemed to know instinctively why they were dragged out of bed early on a Sunday morning to answer the telephone. And that one person soon expressed the thought of how stupid she was for Not Realising.

Early Tuesday morning Jarryd started showing the signs that something was wrong and the nursing staff sent him down to the neo-natal ward and called in the pediatrician. His diagnosis was that it was either an infection or something to do with the heart. By the time I arrived at the hospital an ambulance had been called to transfer Jarryd to the Royal Children's Hospital's Intensive Care Unit. The ambulance unit, having more experience with Hypoplastic Left Heart than the pediatrician, thought that the possibility was high and gave Jarryd a drug to open up that closed-down vessel. Six hours later, after many tests and x-rays at the ICU the doctors confirmed the ambulance personnel's suspicions. The next day Jarryd was taken off the life support system and just half an hour later died in our arms.

Jarryd's funeral was the next day and Wendy and I were amazed, shocked, thankful for the large number of people who were there. Jewish funerals nearly always happen very quickly after a death but with Jarryd's funeral we had thought that our friends and relatives hadn't been given enough warning to be there. It was at about 10 o'clock the previous night that Wendy's mother and brother asked us if there were any of our friends they could ring for us. We gave them the phone numbers of five or six people, suggesting that they would probably be willing to pass on the news. Carey Handfield was the one who was asked to do the depressing task of contacting our fannish friends; sorry Carey for throwing it your way but you were in the unfortunate position of also knowing that something was wrong with Jarryd.

Wendy and I were relieved by the funeral. I'm not a great fan of religion but Jewish ceremonies impress far more than their equivalents from other religions. (In the lead-up to our wedding I never even considered the thought of not getting married in a synagogue. But I can see why I would have entertained the thought of having a marriage celebrant rather than a church wedding.) And as we turned the corner into the row where Jarryd was buried I saw a sea of small plots, a revealing sight - I know people whose babies died at or soon after birth, but I'd never put those deaths together into one picture.

Later that day I realised that it was my birthday. I was 29.

Since then we've attempted to find out why Jarryd had Hypoplastic Left Heart. The possibility of an incompatible genetic make-up between Wendy and I has been ruled out as a cause. As has the drug Wendy takes to control her epilepsy. The medical records reveal that ours is the first link between her drug and the Syndrome, but because the sample size is a bit too small Wendy has changed drugs.

We've also made contact with a support group of parents who have lost children through miscarriage, still-birth or soon after birth. Here we have met the parents of the twins which are buried on Jarryd's left and the mother of the girl who is buried three to Jarryd's right. Feelings and situations come to the fore at the meetings. Such as: just how the medical system, in particular, and society, in general, treat the death of a baby as Not Real Deaths. Wendy and I are relatively lucky here. We have no complaint about the staff at either hospitals and no-one has said to us the oft mentioned "There, there, you are still young. You'll have another one", but there are scenarios with which we are familiar. We've also learnt about some of history's more famous babyhood deaths. I'm sure I knew that Vincent Willem van Gogh was named after an older 'brother' who was still-born. I think I also knew that the 'older' Vincent Willem was born and died exactly a year before the 'younger'. What I didn't know is that the 'older' Vincent was buried in the garden of his family home. Everytime the child whose paintings now command the

highest prices at art auctions played in his garden he saw a tombstone which was 'his'. I think I know why his paintings are intense in their simplicity, the introspection he lived with for the whole of his life is one I've had over the past few months.

Situations and events from our time in the Children's Hospital remain very clear in my mind. During the day Jarryd died I noticed some police walking around the ICU, and apart from vaguely wondering what they were doing there I thought nothing more of it. For two days I had been isolated from the world outside and didn't know that the previous day a man had entered a kindergarten with the aim of holding the staff and children hostage. Thinking quickly the teachers were able to rush the majority of children out of the building and to safety. Four children were left behind and the man forced them into a toilet cubicle, doused them with petrol and held them for about eight hours. The police were in the ward in relation to the hospitalisation of those four children. Any subsequent media mentions of that siege are most unpleasant.

What this all means to LARRIKIN has been telescoped by both the first line of this article, and other lines in this issue. The old joke about the inverse relationship between having a family and fanzine publishing doesn't hold for me, the lack of a drive for fanzine publishing is directly related to my not having a family. I haven't lost interest in fanzines - and have written quite a few letters-of-comment in the past couple of months - but the idea of editing and publishing a fanzine is just too tiring.

The significant thing about all this is for me is that Jarryd's death has only moved forward LARRIKIN's demise. Next month Perry and Robin Mills will be moving to London in an Aussie-style year-long working tour of Europe. LARRIKIN was not going to be seen beyond March, 1990, in any case. The pity about the way our fanzine has died is that we had made a deliberate attempt about moving into a more fannish phase - by which I mean more fanzine reviews and discussion of fannish issues. And the letters received on LARRIKIN 21 would've made for quite a lively discussion (though my viewpoint as to liveliness is probably coloured by my disagreeing with Perry on Owen Whiteoak's most infamous fanzine). We could print that letter-column here, but its contents required prompt printing in order to remain topical and that moment has passed. Similarly, lying in the files are many articles ready to be released upon the world, which we'll now be returning to their authors.

By the way, Wendy and I are pregnant again. Our parenthood is set to continue on the 12th of July.





PRINTED MATTER



LARRIKIN 22

If undelivered please return to:
26 JESSAMINE AVE, EAST PRAHRAN,
VICTORIA 3181, AUSTRALIA.