

Megatheriums for Breakfast

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'Oh, don't go!', they all cried; 'tell us more about it when it was Megatheriums for breakfast! Was the world like this then?'

It stopped digging.

'Not a bit,' it said; 'it was nearly all sand where I lived, and coal grew on trees, and the periwinkles were as big as tea-trays - you find them now; they're turned to stone. We sand-fairies used to live on the seashore, and the children used to come with their little flint-spades and flint-pails and make castles for us to live in. That's thousands of years ago, but I hear that children still build castles on the sand. It's difficult to break yourself of a habit.'

A fanzine published for ANZAPA and others by none other than...

David R Grigg, 1556 Main Road,
Research, Victoria 3095, Australia.

ALAS! ALACK!

Yes, time has passed me by this month. This is a genuine, A1, premium quality minac contribution just so that I can say I hit the mailing.

I have no real excuses, just that I kept on saying to myself "I must start doing something for Anzapa", and of course time rolled on and here it is the end of July, and no contribution even started. Well, I guess it is started *now*, but you know what I mean.

Things have been happening, however. My father was placed on the "urgent" waiting list for heart surgery, and went into hospital about three weeks ago, where he underwent a *five-way* heart bypass. His angiogram had shown that all of his coronary arteries were between 95 and 98% blocked.

However, he seems to have come through surgery very well, though he lost a lot of weight (over a stone) while he was in hospital for his 12-day stay, and he is still having trouble with his leg healing up (for coronary bypass surgery, they strip a vein out of your leg to use to bypass the blocked arteries feeding the heart). But apart from that, he seems remarkably well, and is now able to do short walks. Prior to the operation, he was suffering heart pain just getting out of bed and walking to the toilet.

My father, I should say, has a very positive attitude to life, which I suppose helped when he was being assessed for surgery. He's also very dogmatic (perhaps I should say stubborn), and is now determined to go on a long driving holiday to the Blue Mountains within the next two months. Needless to say, we are trying to gently suggest that this might be better delayed somewhat. This has to be done very cautiously: telling Dad that he can't do something is tantamount to waving a red flag in front of a bull!

Suprisingly, he has agreed to consider moving house in about a year's time, so that he and my mother are closer to us (and to my brother and his family, who live in Craigieburn). Retired people always seem to want to move a long way from where they used to live, but it makes it hard when their health starts to deteriorate.

On other fronts: both Sue and I are still employed. In her case, that's no real surprise. In my case somewhat more so. But things seem to have settled down since Conrad Black bought us out. There have been some (voluntary) redundancies, mainly in the printing area, and to journalistic areas in Sydney, but no one yet seems to have put my division under the microscope.

In the meantime, I and the rest of the office are busier than ever before. I'm not sure if I mentioned last time that we had completed several interactive games for the new science museum ("Scienceworks") at Spotswood. I was able to visit the open museum recently, and was rather chuffed to see that apart from the games we put together, the museum is also using my software extensively in other areas to present videodisc images and control touch-screens.

We're currently working on a major project for the Bureau of Meteorology to provide an interactive exhibit for their small museum/education area at

their Melbourne headquarters. And we've just won a tender to set up three interactive information systems at the State Library of Victoria.

In fact, I've just spent most of this afternoon tramping around the State Library building, talking to various curators and administrators. This is a wonderful old building, particularly the magnificent domed reading room, and Queen's Hall, which now houses the Art and Music collections.

But the whole library is woefully under-funded and under-resourced. It's now also very badly cramped for space, both for storage of the collection and for staff. This should improve when the Museum of Victoria eventually moves out and the rest of the building can be taken over for Library purposes. But it's appalling that the Government finds it so easy to find money to fund new sporting venues, but cannot find enough to even keep a major cultural asset like the Library operating properly.

RECENT READING

Gawd, I've lost track.... This is just what I can remember:

<i>Theories of Everything</i>	John D. Barrow
<i>Moving Pictures</i>	Terry Pratchett
<i>The Confession of Brother Haluin</i>	Ellis Peters

Criley, aren't I boring! Same authors nearly every month. But the truth is I get into mental "ruts", and tend to read exclusively one kind of book, even one author, for three or four months at a run. At times, I don't read anything for weeks at a time.

Not exactly reading, but Sue and I did enjoy the television version of Dickens' *Bleak House* which was shown on the ABC recently as part of the Sunday afternoon arts program. It's so long since I read the book that the series was a continual surprise to me, and I kept exclaiming "That didn't happen in the book!". Sure enough, it did. An excellent production, especially Diana Rigg as Lady Dedlock.

RECENT COMPUTING

See, Leanne, the reason I do these nice big headings is so that people like you know which bits to avoid... ("positively incomprehensible" am I? Hahh).

I've spent most time over the last couple of months re-discovering the Adventure Game Toolkit, which lets you create your own text adventures along the lines of the commercial Infocom games such as Zork.

For someone like me, who has (had!) pretensions to being a writer, and at the same time is a compulsive programmer, writing computer adventure games is a perfect meld of skills.

A couple of years ago, I started an adventure game called "The Tempest", based on Shakespeare's play (oh, I forgot to mention an Interest in classical literature...), but lost interest after a while. I can't now recall why I re-kindled my interest, but I've

spent a fair bit of time over the last two months in extending and completing the game. I've uploaded the game to Compuserve as free software ("freeware"), and at least one person has written to say they like it. I could be pompous and claim I was writing "interactive fiction", but to me it's just a game. But it was a lot of fun to write.

Any readers of this who would like a copy are welcome, just let me know what size floppy disk your computer takes. (You need an IBM-compatible. I should say).

RECENT LISTENING

Sue, Katie and I had a wonderful time recently when we went to a "music party" hosted by some friends who are involved in the "Parents for Music" organisation.

Everyone brought a contribution of food, so that there was a repast of various dishes for everyone to share. A choral group came along and sang wonderful four-part harmony of early English and Latin songs, someone played the recorder in an impromptu collaboration with two others playing violin and someone using the piano to play the cello part. We sang rounds and canons, drank wine and had a positively wonderful time.

Oh, and I learned to juggle. (Three balls at once, honest!). The husband of the host is a school teacher who is interested in juggling and (I think this is right) teaches his pupils to do it as a confidence-builder. Or maybe he just likes to juggle. But he was demonstrating, and showing people how to get the rhythm right by using three silk handkerchiefs.

I managed the three-handkerchief trick all right that night, but no more. Over the next few days I then became obsessed with trying to do it with three balls. It took me a long while, but eventually I got the knack and started to practice in earnest so that I could juggle the balls for more than five seconds at a time. Many nights over the last month Sue or Katie has wondered at the odd sounds coming from the lounge room when they are out of the room. "One, two, damn!" Thud Thud Thud. "One, two, three, four... oh drat!" Thud Thud Smash.

It's still not much better than that, but every so often when I get things rolling I get up to the count of twenty before the inevitable expletive and the sound of balls thudding everywhere. Great fun.

No mailing comments this time, sorry. Out of time.

This was *Megatheriums for Breakfast*!

I've spent 272 minutes working on this issue, it comprises 20144 characters and 3530 words, I started work on it on 02/08/92 and printed it out on 03/08/92.

From David R Grigg, 1556 Main Road, Research, Victoria 3095, Australia.

OH, ALL RIGHT, THE MAILING COMMENTS SHOW, THEN...!

Brief, this time, really brief. Sorry to those of you who miss out. Everyone's contribution was enjoyed.

GNEL #68

Marc Ortlieb

Great to see you back. This really is becoming a Boring Old Farts club, isn't it? ANZAPA may not be the place it used to be, but I'm still very glad to be back here.

Of all of us, Bruce must be the most antediluvian ANZAPA member, I guess. I'm not sure if Bruce was a member of ANZAPA with the first mailing (in fact, I'm almost sure he wasn't), but I think he joined in the second or third mailing. He can, of course, speak for himself.

What we need to do now is to entice Leigh Edmonds back here again. After all, he did start this whole exercise.

Much enjoyed your piece on the meter winder. I've given up regularly waiting for public transport early in morning (thank Ghod and David Syme), but occasionally I have to catch a train. Interestingly, the last two times I've done this, from two quite different stations, the station staff have had a little table offering free tea and coffee (and at Frankston, hot sausages!) to the patrons. Is this a devious ploy on the part of the Labour Party to get re-elected, I wonder cynically.

Mailing Comments from a Cold Climate

Jenny Glover

We too have a quince tree, and the quinces are just as tart. Geoff Slattery urges us to try a slice of raw quince, extolling its taste, but the few times I've tried it I spent half an hour trying to get the taste out of my mouth. However, quince jam, or better, quince cheese, is absolutely wonderful. Make it in the microwave, you can't go wrong. Here's the recipe, with my microwave suggestions in italics:

Quince Cheese

3lb quinces
1 orange
Sugar

Do not peel or core the quinces, but cut them up roughly. Chop the orange. Put into a pan with water just to cover. Simmer until soft. [5-7 minutes in the microwave on high]. Put through a sieve and weigh the pulp. Allow 1lb of sugar to each lb of pulp. Stir sugar until dissolved and boil gently until almost solid, stirring often. [Do it in the microwave for 10mins at a time, stirring after each bout]. Pour into hot jars and cover.

— *Mary Norwak's Book of Jams, Marmalades and Sweet Preserves.*

Listening to Katie learn violin hasn't been all that painful (apart from a few bouts of tears). The Suzuki method means that you get to listen (endlessly!) to a tape of all the pieces the child learns; and most of it is beautiful music (several minuets by Bach, for example). Very few scales. And even the first scraping attempts by the child are not too unpleasant. Though it is good that Katie has now graduated to Book 2, so we get to listen to a different set of pieces on the tape.

Talking about painful listening reminds me of driving a 7-year old child (who shall be nameless) home in the car (a 45-minute drive), with the child singing at the top of its voice. Unfortunately, the child was totally, totally tone deaf and unable to carry a tune remotely like the correct one. Vagon poetry would have been a relief.

Thanks for the recommended reading list. I'll pass it on to Katie (not that she needs any encouragement).

Module #95

Michael O'Brien

I reckon you're right. A computer equivalent of the RACV would make a mint. Should Conrad Black decide to dispense with my services, I might just try to set one up.

brg

Bruce Gillespie

Dogs can be a problem on a bike, that's for sure. It's interesting these days how many young women you see walking along bike paths etc, accompanied by *wolves* or their close relations. I mean, I understand why, but..

However, I'm very rarely chased by these beasts. When it happens, I think the best strategy (on a bike, definitely *not* on foot) is to try to outrun the beast. If you pedal your fastest, the dog soon runs out of puff.

You are welcome to reprint my cycling piece. I don't think it's all that brilliant myself. I'd certainly want to polish it considerably before offering it for professional publication.

Your "Recent Reading" list awes me. You read all this stuff I've never even heard of.

You might be surprised to hear this, but I, too, think that a computer is "merely a tool for carrying out real human activities". I just happen to include programming as a real human activity, which happens to require considerable creativity.

You reckon you have 120 un-played CDs...! That's about twice as many CDs as I have in my entire collection.

And yes, you're right about my university career. It was my second year at Uni which was blighted by fandom (plus the appalling discovery that I had chosen the wrong course, plus... well, I'll write about all that in the next Fit of the story, maybe next ANZAPA).

Slaydomania

Leanne Frahm

Welcome! Really glad to have you back. I've only been back here for less than a year, but it is a bit like coming home.

I imagine the "empty nest syndrome" could be a real downer. As we only have one child (and that's all we'll ever have - I had a little operation earlier this year to make sure), then I guess we'll get hit all at once. But I imagine we've got at least another 8 years to go...

Land of 10,000 Loons

Jeanne Mealy

"Who tipped off Sprint"? Probably your international telephone calls are logged by your local AT&T or whoever, and a hit list generated and sold on the open market. I saw a brilliant piece on TV recently about the whole targeted marketing industry, and the amazing way mailing lists are generated and traded between companies.

Your recreation of your first date sounds like it was fun. Sue and I (or maybe just me) didn't really get motivated to do anything similar even for our 10th wedding anniversary. We were married on the sixth anniversary of our first date. Which means, by crikey, that next year is the 20th anniversary of that date. Perhaps

I could hire a video of "O Lucky Man!" for the occasion (that being the film we went to see in 1973, Sue being greatly enamoured of Alan Price).

"What are you living in that didn't have a roof and did have tram windows... in 1965?" Well, a house, of course. A weatherboard (wooden cladding) house with a corrugated tin (galvanised steel) roof. Can't get much more Australian than that.

I also went hysterical with laughter at a scene towards the end of "Jesus Of Montreal", which I still think is extremely funny, but almost all of the rest of the entire audience were taking the scene very seriously, and I got some very odd looks.

My mother has to take pills and watch her diet carefully to manage her diabetes. As for how she got it, well, it's fairly common for diabetes to develop at a mature age, when the pancreas just begins to give up a little.

Cycling: helmet wearing is compulsory here. We live (in the State of Victoria, anyway) in what I would call a "Nanny State" - the State knows what is good for you, so you'll be punished if you don't do it. Nevertheless, it is a good idea, just like wearing seatbelts in cars.

You really know you're home when you find a wombat under your bed
Cath Ortlieb

Well, congratulations on being pregnant again, and sorry to hear that you were so sick.

Several things conspired so that we didn't have a second child. The first was probably the fact that Sue had to have a Caesarian the first time, and she says coping with a new baby and a severe wound at the same time is very difficult. She would almost certainly have had to have a Caesarian for another child. And we lost an awful lot of sleep when Katie was a baby, so we kept putting it off, and after a while you get to a point where going back to sleepless nights and nappies is all too hard.

An Island of Dubious Sanity...etc
Terry Frost

Your cover was, well, interesting but...

The ins and outs of hitching and unhitching sound all too complicated. I've heard some real horror stories about fights in the Family Court.

Fanatic 28
Lyn McConchie

Thanks for the story about Patty's birth, and your evocation of the joys of sheep drenching. You're right, compared to that, writing (or intellectual activity of any sort) must seem positively cushy. Mental effort wears you out in a different way, though, and I'm sure I'd be a lot healthier and less stressed at least, if I went in for sheep drenching rather than computer programming or writing.

LynX
LynC

Your correspondence about various hereditary diseases was fascinating, particularly as Sue is a coeliac (intolerant of gluten to those who didn't read LynC's contribution), who was diagnosed only a couple of years ago after she started having major bowel problems and losing a lot of weight.

Although she's not very strict about it, she now avoids bread and other gluten-containing foods and has a whole lot more energy and enthusiasm for things than she had while she was suffering the effects of coeliac disease. She's also regained all the weight she lost and more - now she is getting the full nutrition out of the food she used to eat.

Alas, this means she can't eat my home-made bread. Unfortunately, it is the gluten in bread that gives it the texture of bread, and gluten-free bread mix ends up as a sort of sugarless cake. However, I do a great gluten-free chocolate cake, and rice and soy flour together make a very good substitute for wheat flour in most things, including the steamed pudding recipe I gave last mailing.

I thought your speculations about the Irish were very interesting, but I suspect rather hard to prove.

Bury My Soul at Exit #63
Weller

Sorry to hear about your back problems. You are right about longing to have time to yourself to do things and then when the time comes, finding that for whatever reason you can't actually get on with them.

Thanks for the reprints from *The Binary Bible*: some were very amusing, but a lot were rather forced, I thought.

I liked *Hail Memory* in particular, though.

Ytterblum 20
Alan Stewart

Thanks for your organising of the mailing.

The Doug Anthony All-Stars are often funny, but too often go completely over the top for my taste. I enjoyed them a lot on *The Big Gig*, but *DAAS Capital* falls into the latter category as far as I am concerned.

I suppose at the age of 41 or more many people reflect on what life would have been like if they'd done things differently. I don't know what my life would have been like if I'd persevered with Metallurgy, or even if I'd just continued with Pure Science (rather than Applied Science), which I should have seen as a possibility. But I reckon I was starting to hit the wall with mathematics at 2nd Year university level, and so going on with Physics would probably have been a bit hard anyway. Maybe I would have ended up as a teacher. Whole generations of students don't know how lucky they are...

Well, that's going to have to be it. Apologies again to those who missed out. These mailing comments come to you courtesy of the fact that I discovered I had one more weekend than I had thought before the ANZAPA deadline.

Part of the problem is that I can only print this at work currently, and so I have to fit that into an already very busy day, and then find time to photocopy it all when the boss isn't around! But I've just ordered a Hewlett-Packard DeskJet 500 printer (my Logitec dot matrix printer has now completely packed it in after 8 years of sterling work), which should mean that I can at least print this out at home when I want to. The new printer, I am hoping desperately, will be paid for entirely by my tax return.

Ciao!