

The RUBBISH BIN NS

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A Personal Zine Produced by Merv & Helena Binns
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Dear Friends

First up, a few words of explanation. People in the science fiction fan world will be quite familiar with the idea of their compatriots getting behind a typer, or word processor and telling friends what they have been up to, or commenting on various things, but for others this missive may come as a surprise. Quite simply, I wish to keep in touch with people and I find this a good and rewarding way of doing it. I personally have friends around the country who I will see very occasionally, if ever in the future, and even a few friends overseas who may turn up at the Worlds SF Convention in Melbourne next year, and then maybe not. I am not expecting letters of comment, as most fanzine producers do, but I naturally would be very pleased to hear from you.

Most people reading this will know at least to some degree, what I have done with my life, especially in the sf world, but quite a few people have requested that I write more about the early days of the Melbourne SF Club. I will be doing that, and talking about my sf connections with my shop Space Age Books, conventions and such, in a nostalgia column, with photos, in future issues of AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS. RUBBISH BIN(N)S however will deal with recent events, and comments and observations of many things.

The best thing I have ever done was teaming up with my old friend Helena Roberts. We got married in March this year in the front garden of our home. About forty friends and relatives attended. We would have liked to invite more, but limitations of space forced us to keep the invitations to a manageable number. Some close relatives could not make it due to illness and other engagements, which was very disappointing, but it was great to see a few old friends. And have we got friends! Tanya Kemp made and decorated a beautiful cake, Irene Kerr and Tanya handled all the catering, Bruno Kautzner provided the champagne and most other guests brought so much food all round, we were still eating food from the freezer two weeks or more later. The generosity of our friends with the great presents we received was enormous, both guests and people in the country and interstate. Helena's sister Barbara was her matron of honor and she made me a fabulous waistcoat and matching bow tie, in a brocade design material. We could not tie the bow tie, but our wonderfully enthusiastic celebrant Tricia Juster-Schofield came to my rescue. She helped us plan



a beautiful ceremony, with all the right words, and we forgave her for taking the marriage certificate home with her.

My late father was one of the founder members of the National Dahlia Society of Australia. A few years ago a new member, Chris Michaelopoulos, called in at our home and made himself known. He asked if he could use our back yard to grow his dahlias. We agreed and he got going, chopping out my wonderful little cumquat tree that had provided some wonderful marmalade in the process, I might add. Later on, I took on a garden job where a large cumquat tree was growing and I am now able to share this marvellous concoction with friends. But I deviate! Chris helped care for my ailing father, being at number one when I had to go out and helping me in many ways, not the least with 1

advice. So the choice for best man was inevitable. I even borrowed a white shirt and a coat from him so that we had matching outfits during the ceremony. Although I say it myself I was a picture of sartorial splendour in dark trousers, light coloured coat and Barbara's waistcoat and bow tie.

We have a nice little front garden with an orange coloured hibiscus in full flower at the time, and a bed of dahlias, provided by Chris of course. Other things like hanging baskets, monsterias, and pots of impatiens and begonias in flower all added to the scene. I had put a lot of time into getting the plants to their best at the time and I was very pleased to see it all come together for the wedding ceremony, and certainly came out well in the wedding photographs.

You may be wondering how a crusty old bachelor like me managed to team up with a lovely lady like my wife Helena. Well we go back a long way, right back to the early days of the Melbourne SF Club in the 1950s. Helena or Margaret Duce was her name then, did not come to many meetings of the MSFC, but we were very pleased to see somebody of her gender taking an interest in our activities. She attended the second sf convention we held at the Richmond Town Hall in 1958 and although others of my acquaintance became friends of hers, I did not meet her again until she turned up at the old club rooms above McGill's store with her husband Kelvin Roberts.

From then on we met from time to time at the Degraeves Street Tavern for instance, where fans used to meet each week, leading up to AUSSIECON, the first World SF Convention to be held in Australia. Helena took photos of me throwing paper aeroplanes around the room, when we were waiting for service during the banquet. We shared tables with other friends then and I believe at the second World SF Con in Melbourne in '85. Meanwhile she and Kelvin became close friends of mine, attending my parties on New Year Eve each year and other occasions. We met in London on our trip to the World SF Con in Brighton in 1979 and enjoyed a sightseeing tour around the old city to The Tower, Westminster Abbey, Madame Tussauds and such. Regrettably Kelvin died in 1991. I helped Helena move some of her things from a house in South Caulfield to a flat the other side of that town. She usually came to my parties with our friends Wynne Whiteford and Gwayne Naug and we started going to conventions and movies together. When my father died in July 1996, I asked Helena if she would like to share my house, though quite truthfully I did not see our relationship as anything but platonic. She was by the way living in very cramped conditions in her flat, but she correctly pointed out that #1 Glen Eira Road, Ripponlea was a damp and musty old dump and that she preferred to stay in her flat.



L to R
Barbara
Tricia
Helena
Merv
&
Chris



Mr & Mrs Binns
with
Bruce & Elaine
Gillespie
Wynne Whiteford
and
Helena's old flat
neighbour Sophia

We discussed sharing a house elsewhere but I could not convince her until one night, StValentine's day would you believe, after attending a movie show at the old Astor Theatre in StKilda and the day my little furry mate, my cat Susie died and I was still very upset, Helena suddenly discovered that I was not the cold fish that she had thought I was. We knew then that we needed each other and we wanted to live together. We found a nice little house with features we were looking for, despite some things lacking and we finally decided to get married. Helena made a beautiful bride as I am sure you will agree with me on that if you see the photographs herein. My old dad was not around to do the flowers, as he had done for many of our relatives when he had the florist shop and nursery in the old days, so I did them myself. It was a bit of a rush job at the last moment but they were not bad and we were pleased with Helena's hair wreath.

What more can I say. Married life is very agreeable and although our home is still somewhat chaotic, we are slowly getting things sorted out and getting rid of the junk. I have hundreds of books to read, but we seem to spend a lot of time watching TV and movies. Gardening to do, shelves to build, I like cooking but we share that and I have all my publishing projects to attend to. All I need is a word processor/computer in operation. Friends have been trying to fix me up with one, but problems keep developing. Money is our major problem and we need to pick up a cheap, but reasonably good printer that will provide a variety of type faces. Modems and getting on the net may come later, but we do really want to do that eventually. Meanwhile I will keep pummeling my trusty old IBM and endeavour to carry on the plans I have for the NEWS and RUBBISH BIN(NS). Thanks again to all our friends who have sent their congratulations to us and we hope to hear from you all frequently in the future and eventually catch up with many at SF conventions at least, in Melbourne.

MERV'S MEANDERINGS.....

Since closing my book shop SPACE AGE BOOKS in 1985 I have lost contact with some friends who I would just like to tell that I am still around. I sold the house that my father and I were buying in 1974 and moved into #1 Glen Eira Road, hoping to pay rent there for only a short term, until Space Age got on its feet, but alas that never happened. When Space Age went bust in 1985 I was left with no assets and no income and my old Dad's health was deteriorating gradually, so we stuck it out at #1 and I started a mail order bookselling business from home. The old man took me out gardening and we struggled along, but the book selling business became a liability and I finished up further in debt after borrowing on my credit cards and from friends.

When Dad died at the age of 90 in 1996 I decided to give the book selling away as a business but I still kept doing a few garden jobs to supplement a mature age pension that I had been granted. Friends who I had been getting books for were upset that I could not continue to get the books they wanted and I decided to start a club as a non-profit concern and get the books through the club. However that also proved to be costly to keep going and I have eventually decided to give that away also, only getting a few books for people that still have credit and I have been selling second hand books to provide cash to cover what I owed the club. I have had to cut down on things but Helena and I are managing to get to a few movies and such and when we did receive some cash last year above the normal, we paid our memberships for the World SF Convention to be held here in Melbourne next year.

I still have a lot of books on my shelves, despite the fact that I had to sell a lot to try and pay some of my debts. Helena's non-sf collection takes up one room and my modest sf shelves are in my bedroom and I am only getting a few sf book club volumes from a friend in the USA. We moved in together here in Carnegie in April '97 and I had all my mail redirected for about six months, though eventually I had to think of the cost and let that drop. Consequently some old friends may have tried to contact me at the old address but hopefully I will catch up with you now.

Way back in the 1950s friends Lee Harding at first and then soon after Ian Crozier, produced a fanzine for the Melbourne SF Club called ETHERLINE. I did all the duplicating and we shared posting them out to people. The zine was mainly concerned with reviewing books, listing new releases and reporting meetings and the few conventions we had in those early days. When Ian Crozier dropped out in the 1960s I had to let ETHERLINE drop, but I tried to produce a very badly typed MSFC Newsletter, which I thought was the only thing around that was in any way endeavouring to keep people aware that there was an sf fandom in existence. However things were beginning to develop. Leigh Edmunds did a few issues of an ETHERLINE, other people such as John Foyster were busy unbeknown to me and then John Bangsund came on the scene with AUSTRALIAN SF REVIEW, while many other people were producing fanzines and writing to one another in Australia and overseas, such as Bruce Gillespie and Eric Lindsay to mention a couple. So while I was trying to fly the flag for the MSFC and the old club was starting to come alive at least to some degree, with film shows and such, sf fandom was rapidly growing. Noel Kerr was producing the club zine SOMERSET GAZETTE, which was so named because the clubroom was on the top floor of McGill's Newsagency store, which was situated in Somerset Place. I think the Amateur Fantasy Press Association of Australia and New Zealand was also starting about then, in the mid or late 60s.

Conventions were starting up again in the 60s and we were dreaming of running the World SF convention in Australia. I was dreaming of having my own bookshop, which did eventuate by 1970. Ah! The seventies, the golden age of Australian sf fandom. Even sf fandom in good old Sydney was coming alive. Space Age Books opened, the bid for the World SF Convention was in full swing and I started AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS. My aim producing the NEWS was to help publicise the World Con bid and sf in general. I had a good association with a nearby printer and with people helping me put it together like Space Age staff such as Beverly MacDonald, now writing books in the fantasy genre, Justin Ackroyd and George Turner proofing it for me and providing information and constructive criticism. When Space Age was on the skids in 1985 I was encouraged by the late Alan Bray to attend the National Convention in Adelaide. I had still been producing the NEWS all through the 70s and 80s and even spasmodically after that, but 85 was the year I finally did receive some recognition for my efforts. I was awarded the "Ditmar" for Australian SF News, and I saw that as not just an award for the fanzine, but perhaps fandom did appreciate my efforts to some degree at least, with the MSFC, the NEWS and SPACE AGE. I always felt that I was being taken for granted and somewhat deserted when Space Age collapsed and receiving the award was only a small compensation for the end of my dream.

ALL MY YESTERDAYS.....

A number of friends have told me that I should do something about recording the history of the Melbourne SF Club and my involvement in it. The problem is, I can remember people and certain incidents, conventions and such, but putting it all in context is something else again. At any rate, this will be a start, and it will be more memories of people mainly I have known in SF fandom, not just in Melbourne, but all over and the things I have been involved in. First up I must mention a couple of old friends who have passed away recently.

JACK KEATING became a member of the MSFC in the early 1950s, soon after the club started. He was an avid reader and loved to talk about sf and things in general. He owned a little Austin car and was a member of the light car club. In I think 1954 he squeezed another club member, Don Latimer, who was a professional book binder and I into his Austin and took us up to a meeting we had with fans from Sydney, Albury and probably other places, in Canberra. This was a prelude I believe to our bid for the first con to be held in Melbourne, OLYMPICON in 1956. Sydney pro Vol Molesworth was there and Graham Stone and others who I do not remember. Jack became involved with ballroom dancing and later lawn bowls. He was still an avid reader and members of his bowls club told me that he sometimes had his head in a book when he was supposed to be umpiring a game. He bought books off me for years and I often spoke to him on the phone, but the last time the MSFC saw him was the 40th Anniversary party. Jack died on March 6th this year at the age of 80.

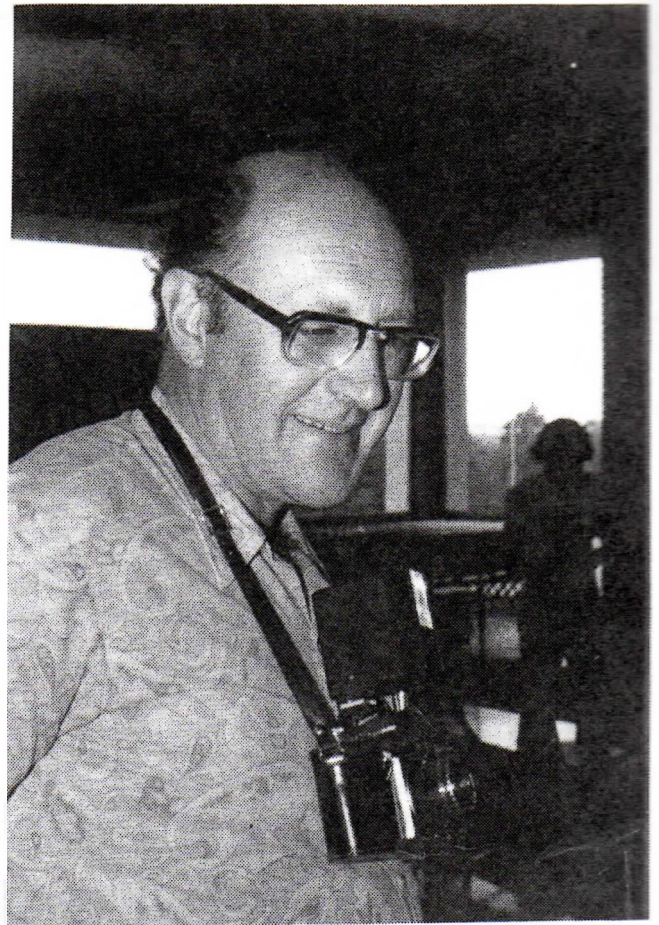
DON LATIMER I have not heard from for years. I hope he is still around and many of the books he bound for old club members and library books are still to be found.



JACK KEATING Don Latimer

Finally, I do not want you to think that this column will only talk about friends that I have lost. Far from it, and more photos will help me remind you of many fans still with us, the way we were and the fun we had.

M.B.



ALAN BRAY

ALAN BRAY I first met around 1955 when I was in Adelaide on holiday. A lady named Joyce Joyce had written to me about the meetings she was hosting for Adelaide sf fans, so I went to visit her. I had completely forgotten but Alan told me later that I first met him there, so in my 47 years in fandom Alan was one of my oldest friends. He became interested in fandom again leading up to the World SF Convention, AUSSIECON in 1975, following which he took a very active part in fandom, helping organise conventions and more. In 1985 when I was at a low ebb, with Space Age on the rocks, Alan insisted I attend the National Convention being held in Adelaide that year. I could not really afford it but I went, and Alan put me up at his home. A sprawling mansion, filled with lots of books and all sorts of things including computers. He had a large freezer filled with meat and he used to throw a great chunk out to his dog to gnaw on in the back yard. There was a dilapidated launch rotting away in the front garden. At any rate I was glad I went to the con, as they Awarded me the Ditmar for Best Fanzine, ASFNEWS.

We met often at conventions including SEACON at Brighton, England in 1979. He was always sending me his fanzines and one I was very happy to receive was the issue announcing his wedding to Lesley. It gave me some hope. If an old eccentric like Alan could find a wife, there was hope for me yet. When we met at ANZAPACON in 1993 and I dragged my friend Helena along, he was quick to ask me how serious our relationship was and encouraged me to "develop it". He was very pleased to hear much later that we were getting married.

I have had a lot of friends in fandom over the years and some are a bit more than casual friends. Alan was one of those. He passed away on April 24th this year. I will miss the cheery greetings whenever we met at conventions and such in the past very much.