

Australian Science Fiction Review

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but slepith!

19 Gladstone Avenue, Northcote, N.16, Melbourne, Australia





the hat goes home

BEFORE THE BEGINNING I suppose it all goes back to a day more than three years ago when Susan and I sat in our Maynard Street apartment and stared in stunned disbelief at a letter from Bruce Gillespie on behalf of the Aussiecon committee asking us to be co-Fan-Guests-of-Honour. I doubt that either of us has ever received a more unexpected piece of mail but although we could readily think of many other fans more deserving of possibly the highest honour fandom can bestow, we happily accepted. I even celebrated with a drink from my bottle of Royal Salute which has only been opened five times in the last five years.

At Torcon, Susan and I took a few minutes off from our con-related duties and spent one of the few times at the con we actually had together in the back of the hall as the "Australia in 75" bid was overwhelmingly voted in, and our Guest of Honourship was announced from the podium. It was a much-appreciated mellow moment in the middle of a sea of confusion.

Susan and I separated after Torcon but we continued to correspond with the Aussiecon committee and soon received a *second* piece of highly unexpected information, this not quite as pleasant as the first one. Such were the financial straits of the Australian worldcon they didn't think they'd be able to help us out in the traditional way. Whoops. For a while it looked as if fandom was about to see its first non-appearing Fan GoHs!

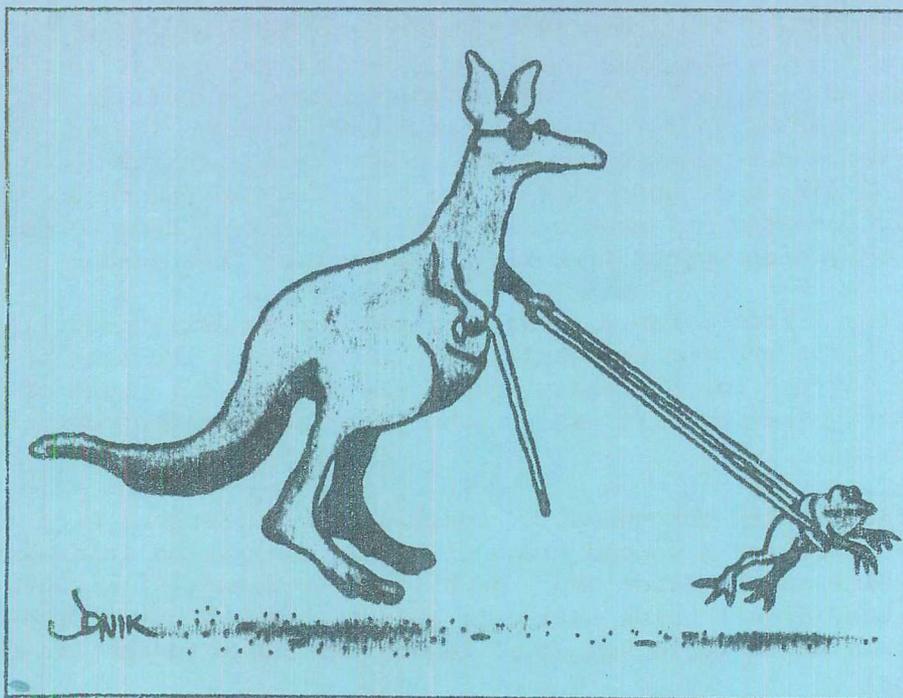
However, it wasn't as bad as we'd feared. Under the practiced hand of Don and Grace Lundry a reasonably-priced group flight gradually took shape and after a little mix-up in communications between us, the Lundrys and the committee, some financial aid was indeed provided. So some two months before the departure date, at the poolside at Midwestcon, with a trembling hand I wrote Grace a check for over eleven hundred dollars and a two year dream was on the way to becoming a reality.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING The group flight left from Los Angeles, which meant tacking on a transcontinental flight to the already considerable expense so it seemed reasonable to at least spend an extra day or so in Los Angeles, renewing contacts with fannish friends there before actual-taking off for Australia. LASFS had arranged a party for the sixty people on the flight for the Friday night before our Saturday evening departure; Thursday I took a morning flight from Toronto with vague plans for meeting up with Bob Tucker and Rusty Hevelin whose train was supposed to have arrived there by then from Chicago.

My phonecalls from the airport failed to unearth either of these worthies but I was not complaining. I located instead Walt Liebscher, one of the kindest most loving



Notice the Glicksohn family resemblance...?



men I know and he was delighted to give me directions on getting from the airport to a bus terminal where he'd pick me up. I hadn't seen Walt in two years and not since his stroke: it was great to meet him again and find him able to get around once more, with the aid of a cane and a special modification for his car.

When I went to LACon in 72, Walt took me to a Thai restaurant and I'd raved about it to Susan for months afterwards. Since Susan and Walt happen to think that the other is one of the best damn people around, it seemed like a good idea to set up an expedition to make amends for Susan not having been along on the first trip. As a fan, of course, I have broad mental horizons so it didn't take long to find out that Susan was staying with Alicia Austin and it only took five or six frantic phonecalls to make the necessary arrangements. Alicia would love to go too, so she'd bring in Susan and also John Berry who was travelling with us to Australia. Oh, and Will Straw. WILL STRAW!!! What was he doing in Los Angeles? Well, it seems he hitchhiked in from the North West Territories for this party tomorrow night...

It was good to meet old friends again and the restaurant lived up to its reputation and Susan finally got to enjoy fresh coconut icecream so the scales were rebalanced after being out of synch for three years. Afterwards we gazed in awe at Walt's collection of original art and his first editions and sat around drinking beer and talking fan stuff. "Are you in Minneapa?" asked Alicia. "No," said Will Straw, "I got out about a year ago." "You make it sound like Leavenworth," said Alicia, and the beginning of the beginning had begun.

The next day, Friday, the day of the LASFS party, we rendezvoused with Tucker and Rusty and the four of us shared the patio at Mary Beth Colvin's house, sipping strong drinks and awaiting the arrival home from work of that legendary lady. It was a very quiet, peaceful time: three old farts talking about the fandom of thirty years ago and one young fart loving every second of it. As the calm before the storm it stays in my mind as one of the most mellow times of the whole trip.

Tucker killed half a bottle of Beam and I magically made half a bottle of tequila disappear and then Mary Beth arrived. And she was everything her many friends had told me she would be: a warm, friendly, attractive silver-haired pixie with the face of a cherub, a constant smile and a twinkle of mischief ever in her eyes. If there

exists such a thing as a generation gap no-one has ever told Mary Beth about it, as her adopted "granddaughters" in Iowa will readily attest to.

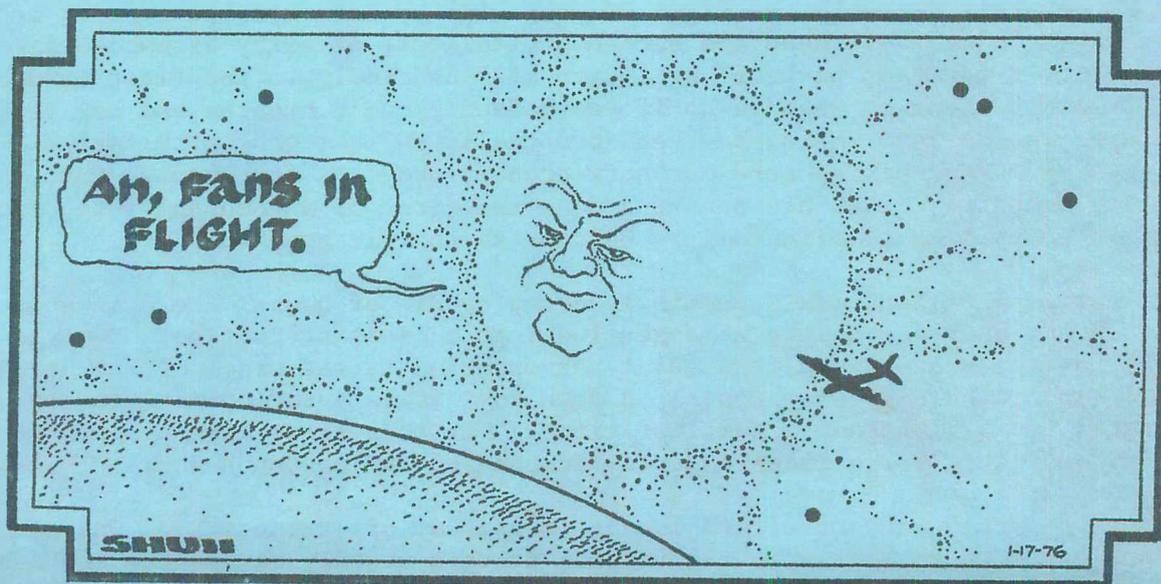
After dinner and a bottle of wine later to take the blame for The Highly Embarrassing Top Secret Bob Tucker Story, we headed off to the airport hotel, site of the LASFS party and also home for that evening for the sixty of us on the group flight. If anyone was expecting to be treated as a little odd ("You're going where for a what?") he or she was destined to be disappointed. After the world record underwater Monopoly team safely ensconced on the bottom of the hotel pool we must have seemed very ordinary indeed.

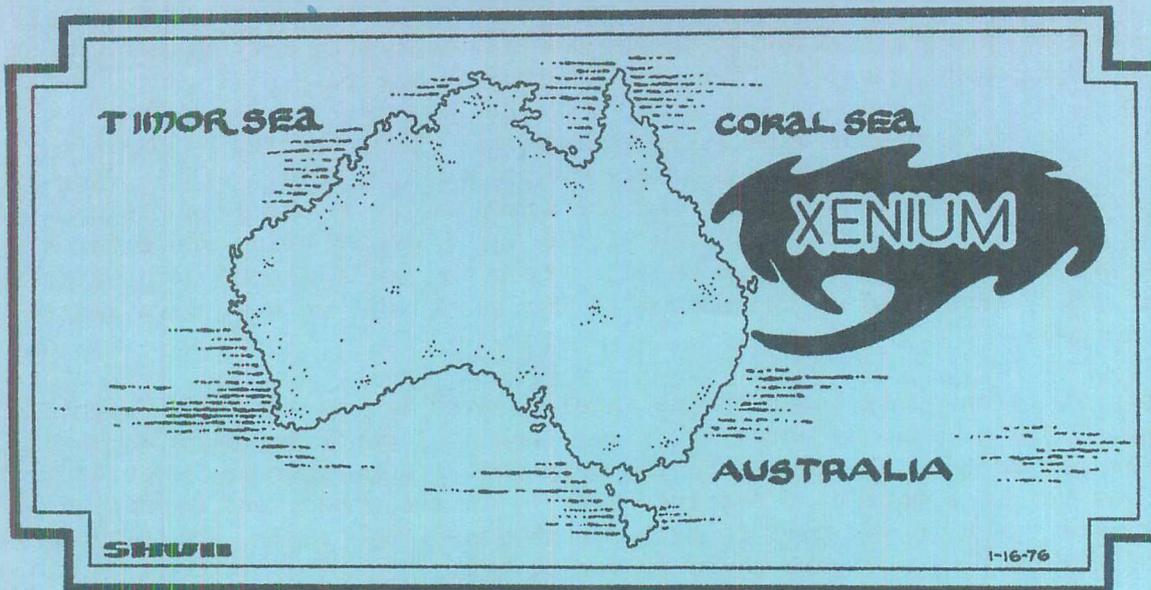
A fan party is a fan party, even in Los Angeles, even on the eve of a flight to Australia, and I don't have any notes about this one so I can't say much about it. As I'd already met most of the people on the trip that I'd be spending most of my time with, it was mainly a matter of peering covertly at the others and wondering who the hell they were. But it was good to meet Don Thompson once again, and Cathy Hill and several of the LA fans who were there to see us off.

Undoubtedly, though, the low point of the evening was finally meeting Dave Locke, editor of AWRY and one of the top humourists in fandom. When Dave was introduced to me I refused to believe he was actually who he claimed to be; surely this rotund short little fellow couldn't be the legendary giant of LA fandom? I'd been expecting a figure of heroic proportion, a man whose physical stature would match his creative abilities. Not a smiling chubby dwarf. But local fen I knew and trusted substantiated his claim, and so Dave and I finally met and the encounter has graced the lettercolumn of several fanzines since then. We shared a drink or several, as I recall, and talked of fanzines as faneds are wont to do occasionally. Dave told me of asking Ed Cagle, his co-editor on SHAMBLES, "Is there any particular reason you wanted Bruce Townley on the mailing list?" to which Ed replied, "Yes! He promised he wouldn't send us any art!" Ah, where is Brad Parks when you really need him?

And the beginning of the beginning frittered slowly down to its end.

THE BEGINNING began rather slowly. We sat around the poolside, occasionally stroking over to the pool bar for the novelty of ordering a drink while treading water, peering over the shoulders of the submerged would-be tycoons, watching Chairman Don making up nifty metal buttons with the names of people we still wouldn't know when we got back three weeks later. We gathered in little rooms





filled with luggage and dozens of identical green Air New Zealand flight bags and the weaker among us passed out as Jan Howard Finder uncapped his aftershave lotion. The rest of us discussed Australia and read from assorted tourist literature, including the bit about the ten foot earthworms who keep local residents awake at night with the noise of their "moaning, groaning and sucking." "At least those people will be prepared for fan parties," I remarked, before leaving for some fresh air.

I picked up Sheryl Birkhead at the airport as she and I were travelling together and eventually we all assembled in the appropriate departure lounge. I'd talked Rusty into buying me some duty-free scotch, and Bruce Pelz had likewise offered his services. With the bottles Sheryl and I bought that weighed me down with four quarts of scotch but it was a burden I happily accepted. If nothing else it would serve to identify me easily to the fans meeting us in Sydney.

After the traditional delays, we board our Air New Zealand jet. Tucker has never flown before and has mentioned on numerous occasions a certain trepidation about the whole thing. Considering his experiences with trains, I'm not surprised airplanes make him nervous! However, as I climbed the stairs behind Bob I was pleased to see that he didn't hesitate at all, merely stopping momentarily at the top to take in the full grandeur of the scene.

On board we are treated to the first of what will be interminable cups of indeterminate fruit juice. Not even the combined intellects of sixty assembled fans can deduce what it is meant to be so we listen half-heartedly to the first of dozens of sets of instructions on what to do if you suddenly can't breathe and how to act when the plane crashes into the ocean. And eventually we take off, with dozens of worried eyes on Tucker making sure our patriarch is okay. A few seconds into the air he smiles broadly, raises his hand and does the first of a thousand "Smooooooth"s and the whole cabin laughs delightedly. Welcome to the jet age, Bob.

We are served excellent meals seemingly every couple of hours, the drinks are ridiculously cheap, and soon things have settled into a pleasant routine. Cameras abound, one shot stencils are typed, and quiet conversation is the order of the day. Just before we land in Hawaii, stewards march down the aisles spraying disinfectant into the air. This too will become a familiar ritual, but this first time prompts me to cry out, "My god, it's worse than Finder's aftershave!" as we touch down in Honolulu.

An almost deserted airport offers little in the way of attractions. One of Hawaii's few fans has come to meet some old friends at this ungodly early hour and a traffic sign is all that Bob Tucker finds of interest. Soon we are back on board to play

"Name That Juice" once again and settle in for the long flight across the Pacific to Auckland, New Zealand our slumber disturbed only by several additional meals.

In New Zealand my shorts and tie-dyed t-shirt caused a few startled glances and the radiant heaters spread throughout the cold wooden walkways were a reminder that we had crossed the equator and Here There Be Winter! While fans with odd priorities descended on the souvenir and postcard shops and on the post office, I took Tucker and Rusty and Sheryl to the bar where we celebrated being in a foreign country in an appropriately fannish manner.

On the way back to the plane, Bob played Good Samaritan to a rather unhappy Filipino student being sent out of the country. Big Hearted Bob picked up her heavy bag and marched it straight past the customs booth waving his transit card as he went. I later pointed out to him that he'd probably smuggled three pounds of heroin out of the country which was something that hadn't occurred to him at the time.

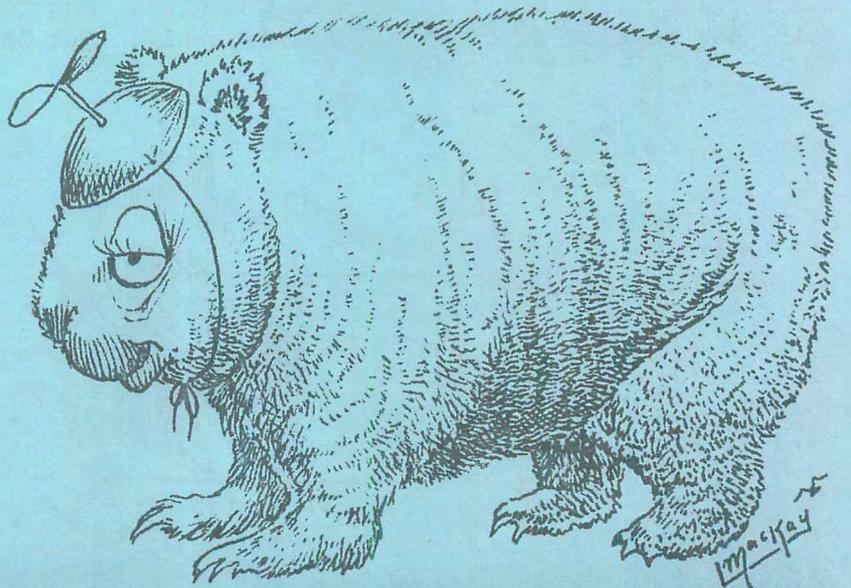
The safety lecture on this leg of the trip is on tape, without even a pretty stewardess to demonstrate, but the inevitable juice is still there. With every meal there comes an orchid, but botanists among us are disappointed when regulations forbid us taking them into Australia. And this leg of the trip is enhanced by a purser with a sense of humour and a stewardess nicknamed "Masher" who delights us all and is amused in return by several of our stranger members. Someone prompts her to ask for one of Tucker's cards (the ones that read "By appointment, Wilson Tucker, natural seminations") but unfortunately Bob is out of them and none of the young ladies who've received them from him will give one up. Bob seems much more disappointed by this turn of events than Masher herself.

As we approach Sydney a glorious sunrise fills the sky with colour and soon we are all peering through the windows trying to find the famous Sydney Opera House. It isn't until later we discover that we've flown over Botany Bay, not Sydney Harbour, so our search is doomed to failure. This does not stop the Opera House from being positively identified at least a half a dozen times, of course.

And finally we are in Australia! A cheer goes up upon touchdown, possibly for the smoothness of its execution, possibly to release the excitement of having arrived. But the usual airport formalities must first be done away with, of course. By some quirk of fate I am the first to clear customs and encounter the strange Australian entrance procedures. My backpack is completely ignored, but the souls of my running shoes are carefully inspected because I've been on a farm in the last six weeks. Aussies, it seems, don't care if you bring in all sorts of good shit with you, as long as you don't bring in any real shit.

But they decide I'm clean and allow me through the doors to be greeted by a large delegation of Australian fans. The first North American to burst upon them is a short, hairy chap in a funny hat, shorts and a coloured t-shirt: I wonder if they had a glimpse of Things To Come?

Soon the whole room is a mob scene as old friends greet each other and acquaintances on paper become friendships



in person. It is good to see such globe-trotting Australian friends as Eric Lindsay, Shayne McCormack and Robin Johnson once again, and to finally meet Ron and Sue Clarke and many other famous names in Australian fandom.

There is a bus to take us to the hotel in the heart of Sydney (just where in the heart of Sydney we don't discover until later that night when the local working force comes out to ply its trade on the streets) but Sheryl and I opt for a drive with Eric and Shayne. I pity the people on the bus: they probably never *did* get a tour of the local oil refineries like the one Shayne inadvertently gave us.

The Sydney Hyatt hotel is a very modern, very expensive essentially American hotel in the Kings Cross area of Sydney. Much to the delight of Don Thompson this turns out to be the red-light district, with porno shops abounding, hookers in the windows and movie theatres all around. The hotel itself has minor antipodean refinements: there is a coffee pot and a small fridge in each room, for example, the tv is black and white, and even on the top floors there are no screens on the open windows. The building itself is in two towers connected only at ground level: sort of a Chase Park Plaza with class.

Everything is going with typical group tour efficiency. I check into my room to find it occupied by two other travellers, who eventually are sent off by the desk... to a room already occupied by two people. Since I now have my room I lose interest in the bumping procedure at this point. Don Lundry calls a meeting in the lobby to tell us that he has nothing to tell us. And so it goes.

Eventually our first expedition gets planned and underway, a ferry through the harbour across to Manley Point. Various locals point out the sights to a variety of foreigners and the Opera House instantly becomes the most photographed place in Australia for most of us. As a cool wind whips in off the Pacific to wreck havoc with our hair, we start to understand that, yes, by god, this is Australia!! And if there could be any doubt the native snacks that Eric treats John and Susan and Rusty and Shayne and Sheryl and I to quickly dispel it. A cheko roll by any other name is *only* Australian!

After a hydrofoil ride back and a double decker bus ride to the hotel (another indication that this isn't Kansas, Toto) for dinner -- where Bob encounters the first of numerous indications that "Tucker is recommended" throughout Australia and John Berry proves he can finish everyone's leftovers just as well Down Under as he can at home -- there is a quiet party on the 31st floor. We admire the view of Kings Cross and the harbour, collect some empty beer cans to mail back to Donn Brazier for his son's collection, and meet Bertram Chandler. But fatigue if not jet lag takes its toll, and most of us crash out fairly early. But in Australia, by god!!!



HE SAYS HE'S NOT LEAVING UNTIL
WHATEVER IT IS FINISHES HATCHING...

(Aside: after leaving LA I started to keep incredibly detailed notes of each day's activities, in case I did a trip report. I could tell you who I ate with, and what they had, and the small, humorous and human things that distinguish one trip from another, but of course I won't. If only to save myself the work of running off a hundred and fifty page trip report. For those interested in such details, however, amusing anecdotes, snappy dialog and personal minutia

are available in copious quantities at ridiculously low prices from the editor of this journal. Bob Tucker trivia slightly higher in price. Offer void where prohibited by law or a sense of common decency. End of aside.)

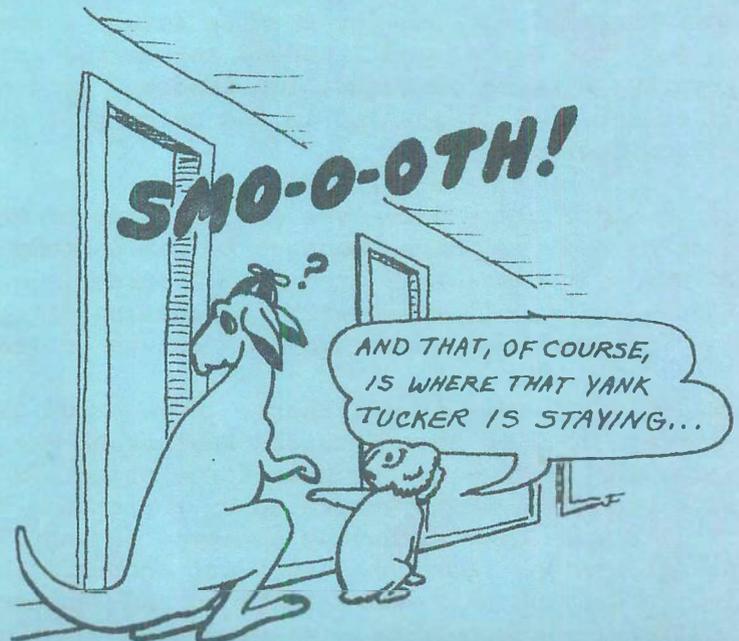
The observant among you will have already noted that Bob Tucker features prominently in this journal. This is because Bob Tucker was a prominent feature of the trip through Australia, just as he was a dominant personality at Aussiecon itself. By choice and a strong sense of self preservation, Sheryl and I and Rusty and Bob spent quite a bit of time together, a circumstance which greatly enhanced at least my enjoyment of the trip. Most of the people reading this will already know a few of the continuing schticks that Bob carried through Australia with him: they will know, for instance, that on the train to LA Bob started calling Rusty "Dad" thus developing a routine that was picked up and enhanced by most of us travelling with them. They may have heard of the highly (?) successful rumour started by Bob on the plane to Honolulu about the nine inches of snow in Sydney. Or his explanation to the travelling non-fans on the plane with us that "Smoooooth" was an Australian custom they had better learn if they didn't want to look like tourists, an explanation sufficiently convincing that several of them were joining in the group Smoooooth that followed the inevitable glasses of juice after take-off. Keep your eyes on this man and his world of make believe. He may appear again...

Because we had crossed the International Dateline between Hawaii and New Zealand (as well as the equator, of course, to the accompaniment of printed certificates from the airline) our first day in Sydney was Monday. Our Tuesday night accomodation was *not* included in the package and at A\$27 for a double the Hyatt Kingsgate was a mite steep so Sheryl and I were up early to check out a cheaper hotel across the street. Returning for our bags we spotted Bob and Rusty sharing breakfast with John and Susan in the fancy hotel coffee shop, so naturally we mugged at them through the window, miming our indigence and hunger. Bob broke up two nearby tables of Japanese tourists by turning to Rusty and saying, "If that's what this city is like, Dad, we'd better get out of here!"

Sheryl and I spend the day with Rusty and Bob, wandering through the cold wet Sydney streets, looking at opals and souvenirs as Tucker ogles the girls in the offices we pass. In a coffee bar we stop at to warm up after a damp but enthusiastic school concert in the park, Tucker uses the headband I am wearing to convince a group of Australian businessmen that I'm a visiting Apache indian. I am suitably impassive and as we leave they are talking excitedly about Indians. The silver tongued devil has struck again!

The next morning, after the seemingly mandatory milling around in mass confusion, a bus gathers us up and takes us to the airport for the flight to Melbourne. Apart from those who've already taken the night train, of course. Something is burning gloriously on another runway as we head for the plane. It's a good thing Bob is among those already headed for Melbourne via the safer ground route!

But everything goes smoothly and a bus has been laid on for the long ride from the airport to the Southern Cross Hotel. As we drive through the suburbs of Melbourne we are treated to our first sights





of the beautiful ornate ironwork that typifies the distinctive architecture of this city.

At the hotel itself, the lobby fills up with excited fans who are greeted by the ubiquitous Robin Johnson and Eric Lindsay. And here too, a shaggier, mellower Bruce Gillespie whom I haven't seen for almost two years, who will surprise us all in a few days by getting tipsy at a room party.

The start of a con must be the same all over the world. The hasty settling into the room, the eagerness to register and meet people, the new friends, the old friends, some unexpected. I briefly meet Ken Ford and Christine McGowan amidst the pandemonium of registration and naturally they don't know what a Fan Guest of Honour looks like. Sic gloria, et al. The Bovas arrive and we all seem happy to encounter a familiar face, and Don Fitch shows up completely unexpectedly, having made his own separate arrangements to get there.

THE CONVENTION has begun!

Soon an expedition to Degraives is announced, and naturally I'm eager to go. There are a couple of fannish dreams I've had since getting involved with fanzines from other fandoms. I long faunched to attend a meeting of the London fans at their famous pub 'The Globe' and I wanted to see the infamous Degraives that featured so prominently in tales of Australian fandom. London fandom moved to 'The One Tun' but I got to see both places and in the company of fans too when I was there two years ago. And now Degraives!

Sheryl and I place ourselves in the hands of Eric and Shayne and with an amazing sense of *deja vu* Shayne manages to get us temporarily lost. But the delay is minor and we don't care: this area of Melbourne is a veritable honeycomb of lanes, arcades and alleyways, all lined with fascinating little specialty shops promising hours of happy browsing to come. And soon Shayne guides us to the right lane and to Degraives.

You'd have to know it was there. One narrow doorway at street level, with a narrow staircase leading down into the restaurant which is filled with long cafeteria style tables pushed together to seat forty or more as a group. The ceiling is low, and it traps the noise being generated by two tables filled with primarily Australian fans. I feel a warm glow at having achieved another fannish ambition as we are swept into the activities. Someone points out John Alderson, a short solidly built man with flowing grayish hair and the strong and weathered features of someone who has spent a difficult life outdoors: we wave at each other across the room. John Foyster

comes up to introduce himself, a shy shaggy bear of a man with an immense flowing beard, and then he too is off to the other end of the table. I'm sure I'm sitting there grinning like an idiot at the fannishness of it all.

Degraves is hardly your typical North American restaurant. You order from a menu, but line up to tell the cooks what you want and to pick up your plonk, or local cheap wine. You get a ticket, and you pay, and then you sit and enjoy the plonk and the conversation. A few minutes later an amazing stentorian voice bellows out an incomprehensible string of syllables from behind the counter and the locals tell you what has just been served up. If it matches your order and no-one else takes it before you get there, you get to eat. Otherwise...well, there's lots of plonk.

In the middle of the plonk and the conversation Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown arrive with a large contingent of American (and a Canadian) fans. Valma is a vivacious, auburn-headed attractive and freckled young lady with a highly distinctive laugh and even more distinctive driving habits while Leigh is very tall, rather quiet, with a permanent grin, more-than-shoulder-length straight brown hair and a famous knitted cap that has been surgically grafted to the top of his head. Both came over to say hello before taking a table across the room, and I was struck by the irony behind the fact that in that brief exchange I probably said more to both of them that I did all through Discon the year before when they were over on Leigh's DUFF trip. That's the way it sometimes goes at Worldcons.

The plonk flows, Tucker smoothes, and some of the best known fans on two continents start to get to know each other. I've somehow or other gotten invited to a closed pro cocktail party and fannish though I may be I'll take free cocktails over even cheap plonk anyday and I know the fans will all be around for many days, so I prepare to leave rather early. And as I head for the door, Susan jumps up from her table, grabs my arm and introduces me to John Bangsund! JOHN BANGSUND!!! A legend, a fan with a reputation of almost mythic proportions; perhaps the one Australian I was most eager and also most nervous about meeting. So this short, rotund little man with the flushed cheeks, the little beard and hair struggling to be long, and the rather deepset, dark twinkling eyes looks up at me and says "You can't be Mike Glicksohn, you're too tall" and I bow at his feet and suddenly we are friends. And at the table a slightly tipsy John Berry sits with an enormous grin and radiates fannish bonhomie at the mere idea of sitting in Degraves drinking rough red with John Bangsund. And now you know that Aussiecon has begun!



I feel a little out of place at the suit-and-tie party with liveried waiters passing out *hors d'oeuvres* and drinks but I help myself and think that Gardner Dubious would be expected to be a little eccentric. And Tucker is there to talk to and the Silverbergs and Bobbie seems as lost as I am so we talk very pleasantly to each other for quite some time.

Eventually it opens up into a regular con party and the Degraeves crowd returns and a fine con party develops. Much later I remember sitting on the floor drinking beer with Denny Lien and talking with John Alderson and Valma Brown and apart from the people who are there to fill me with a sense of wonder it could be any good party at any good con anywhere. It fills you with a warm glow about fans and fandom; and it isn't just the plonk either.

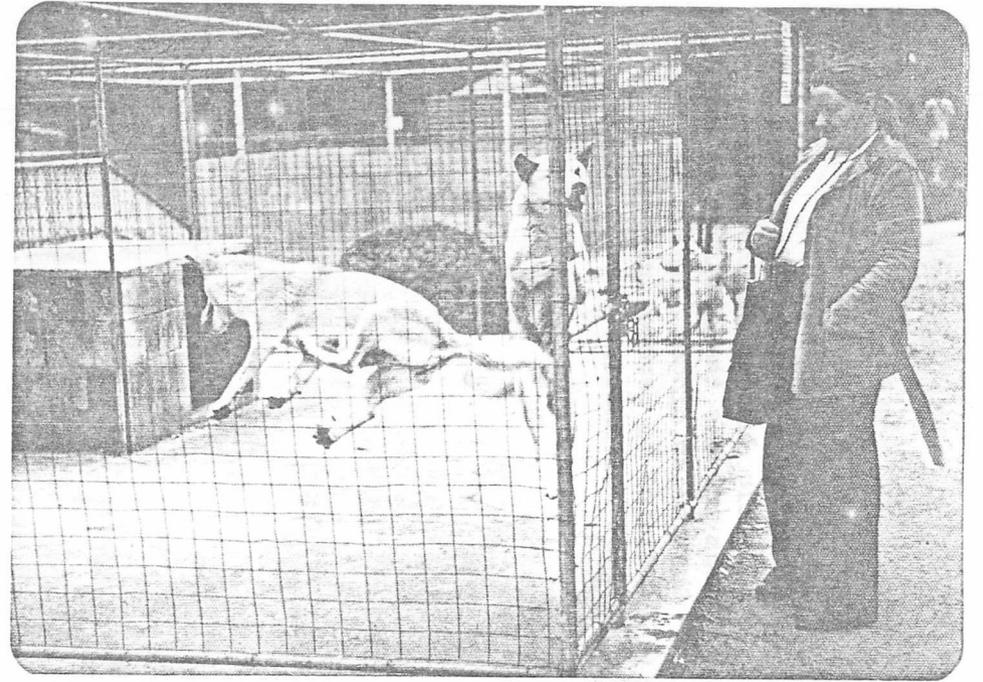
The next day is Thursday, the official start of the con, but not until the early afternoon. In the morning we all discover the nearby Pancake Kitchen which will rapidly become a favorite eating place for the North American contingent, and wander a bit through Melbourne. And the differences that tell you this isn't North America become readily apparent. Australians drive on the left, of course, and hence their traffic patterns are different from ours. Most tourists invariably look the wrong way when crossing complicated intersections and on many occasions I found a car bearing down on me from a direction I wouldn't have dreamed possible. When you add in the fact that Melbourne drivers seem to pay not the slightest attention to lanes, it becomes decidedly hazardous to be a pedestrian and a tourist. You could easily find yourself permanently down under!

Chairman Robin has arranged a Meet-the Press party to which Susan and I are spirited away in our official capacities and it is here that I finally get to meet the incredible Ursula LeGuin. I've never seen one woman captivate a continent before but this small, vital elfin lady with the short dark silver touched hair and the warm and friendly grin did just that, radiating charm wherever she went and giving as much or more of herself than any Guest of Honour I've ever seen. Her joy and enthusiasm for what was, to her, a brand new experience -- fandom -- was obviously real and spread to those who were sharing the experiences with her. As I've said in print elsewhere Ursula LeGuin is a Great Lady and meeting her was one of the highlights of the con.

After being interviewed and photographed destroying Klingons at the Star Trek computer game console and after availing myself of three glasses of the Remy Martin provided by the committee for the press and dignitaries (Robin certainly has excellent taste!), it was time to enjoy yet another delightful committee innovation, the pre-panel luncheon at a nearby restaurant of our choice. (Torcon provided an in-hotel snack for panelists but Aussiecon spared no expense to try and ensure that program items would be a little better prepared than has been the case at many cons.) As moderator, Leigh gathered John Bangsund and Rusty and I and took us to a nearby Italian restaurant, and introduced me to an Australian practice that demonstrably proves their greater degree of culture and sophistication! He took a favorite bottle of good red wine with him for us to enjoy with the meal. For a small corkage charge most restaurants will allow you to Bring Your Own Bottle, which is certainly a civilized way of indulging the palate without ruining the pocketbook. We could learn a lot from these people.

Much has been written about the convention itself and so I shall be brief, perhaps trying to touch on things that haven't received that much publicity. The breathtaking multi-media sound and light show that started off the opening proceedings literally left us all speechless. A variation of the presentation was used to start each major section of the con, and it never failed to be impressive, but that first time will always stay in my mind as one of the most effective and dramatic moments I've witnessed at a convention.

As we sat rather over-awed by the introduction of the con, the introductions of the



Australian and North American fans meet for the first time at the infamous Degraives in Melbourne. From left to right, after a goodly amount of rough red (aka red plonk) are an unknown fan, Bruce Gillespie, a tipsily beaming John Bangsund, a fannishly fulfilled John Berry and a happy Susan Wood.

At Sydney's Featherdale Farm a slightly dubious Shayne McCormack arouses the interest of two Australian dingos, busily in training to become Australia's first astronauts.

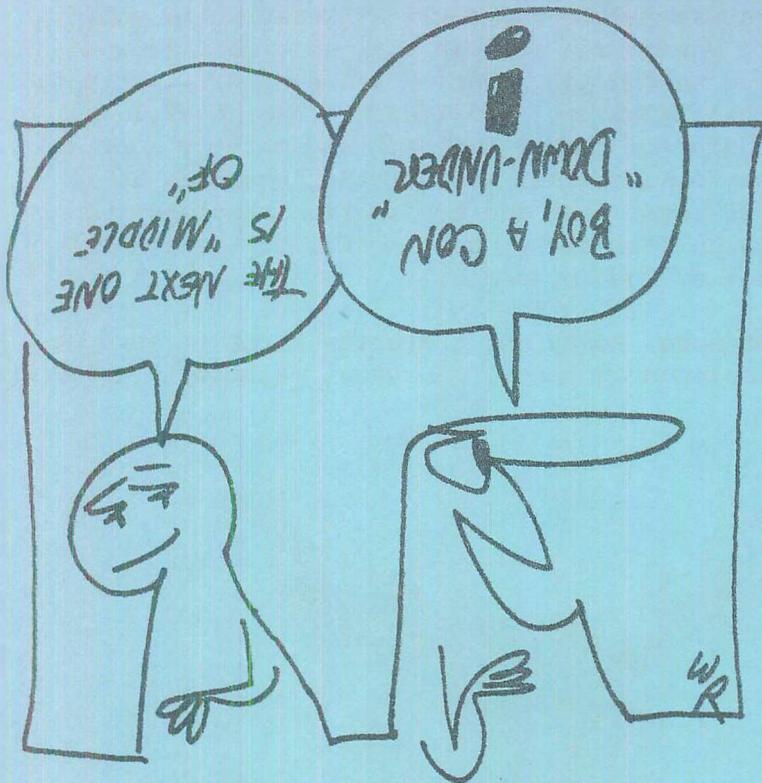
The incredible Ursula Le Guin at the start of her serious and brilliant Guest of Honour speech proves that her selection as Aussiecon GoH was a perfect choice as she reacts with typical enthusiasm to her introduction to fannish ways.

For the first time in fannish history all contestants in a fan fund end up making the trip. At LA International just prior to departure sit, from left to right, John "Hitchhike" Berry, travelling jiant, Rusty "Huckster" Hevelin, contented DUFF winner, and Jan Howard "What the hell are you doing here?" Finder, fandom's military man-about-globe. John and Jan were unsuccessful DUFF candidates who nevertheless enjoyed a trip to Aussiecon. Moments after this picture was taken they tragically mistook Rusty for a wishbone.

notables on the dais was glibly and flatteringly handled by Race Matthews, a founder of the Melbourne sf group who lost his way and is currently languishing in some important Australian political post. It was fairly obvious that he didn't know a thing about the people he was introducing but neither did most of the audience, so it went over moderately well. We all gave little speeches, and I said a few hopefully light things about why I might have been chosen (my famous hat combined with my hair and beard made me the closest overseas fan to Aussiefan, hero of the Australia in 75 bidding films) thus ending two years of total fear and trepidation about having to speak at the con. If for no other reason I'll always be grateful to the committee for not having scheduled me for a Guest of Honour speech!!

As the first Aussiecon panel, John Bangsund, Rusty and I are the first to encounter the difficulties of addressing the Aussiecon audience, the great majority of whom are





attending their first convention. It isn't so much that they are unresponsive, they just don't know *how* to respond. At one point during the opening ceremonies, for example, a group consisting of most of the guests and 'notables' interrupted the opening speech by politician Matthews by rising to their feet and singing the first verse of a delightfully irreverent Australian national anthem written by John Bangsund.

Chairman Robin Johnson, who has a strong sense of formality and protocol, almost had apoplexy, knowledgeable fans in the audience thought it hilarious and most of the audience stared in bewilderment, probably wondering to themselves *What has this got to do with Science Fiction?*

So that first panel was faced with a bank of blinding videotape lights, an audience almost totally shrouded in darkness and an audience that really didn't *understand* what we tried to tell them about How To Really Enjoy Yourselves At This Convention. They listened politely, though and did their best. At one point I remarked that one of the best ways to enjoy the con was to repeat a very famous and honoured fannish expression, namely "Hi, you're the Fan Guest of Honour: let me buy you a drink" and after the panel was done quite a few people did just that. But the in-jokes, the fannish references, the by-play all went over their heads and communication was difficult. Other panelists the first day would remark on how difficult it was to talk to an audience you couldn't see that didn't really understand how it was supposed to react, and it wasn't until Susan and Tucker explained a lot of fannish history to them and the noisy American and Canadian fans made it evident that at a worldcon you *don't* sit on your hands and clap politely at the end that things started to pick up.

Undoubtedly the programming highlight of the entire convention occurred that first evening with a superb speech by Guest of Honour Ursula Le Guin who read an exceptional prepared text extremely well. That speech, about science fiction and the walls that have existed around it and around the people interested in it, has just been printed in the SunCon Progress Report and I urge everyone to read it. In the daily news sheet the next day, Leigh Edmonds called it "the best piece ever heard at an Australian convention...it will be a long time before anything of a similar standard will be heard again in this country." And he's probably right.

At a party that night I became involved, as fans sometimes will, in a bet with Valma Brown as to who had the dirtiest nametag. Now anyone who has ever seen the superb erotic nametags that Alicia Austin once did for me will realize that there was just no way I could lose such a bet, and I told Valma that. But she was adamant and insisted that we go to our respective rooms and fetch the nametags in question. And to make it worthwhile she put up Leigh Edmonds' virginity as her side of the wager. (Which I suppose was an unconscious indication of her lack of faith in her badge!) Well, the badges were brought, and Valma took one look at Alicia's miniature masterpiece and conceded with a look of awed disbelief. "That's just great," I remarked, standing in the bathroom doorway of a party suite. "I've just won Leigh Edmonds'

virginity. What the hell am I going to do with Leigh Edmonds' virginity?" And without even breaking stride Barbara Silverberg, who happened to be passing at the time, said "Send it to Jerry Jacks!" and walked on, leaving me helpless with laughter amid the puzzled stares of my Australian friends. All the traditional aspects of a worldcon were present at Aussiecon -- the art show, the auction, the panels and speeches, the parties, the banquet, the masquerade, etc -- but it's the little personal incidents that make it memorable. Like the bet with Valma.

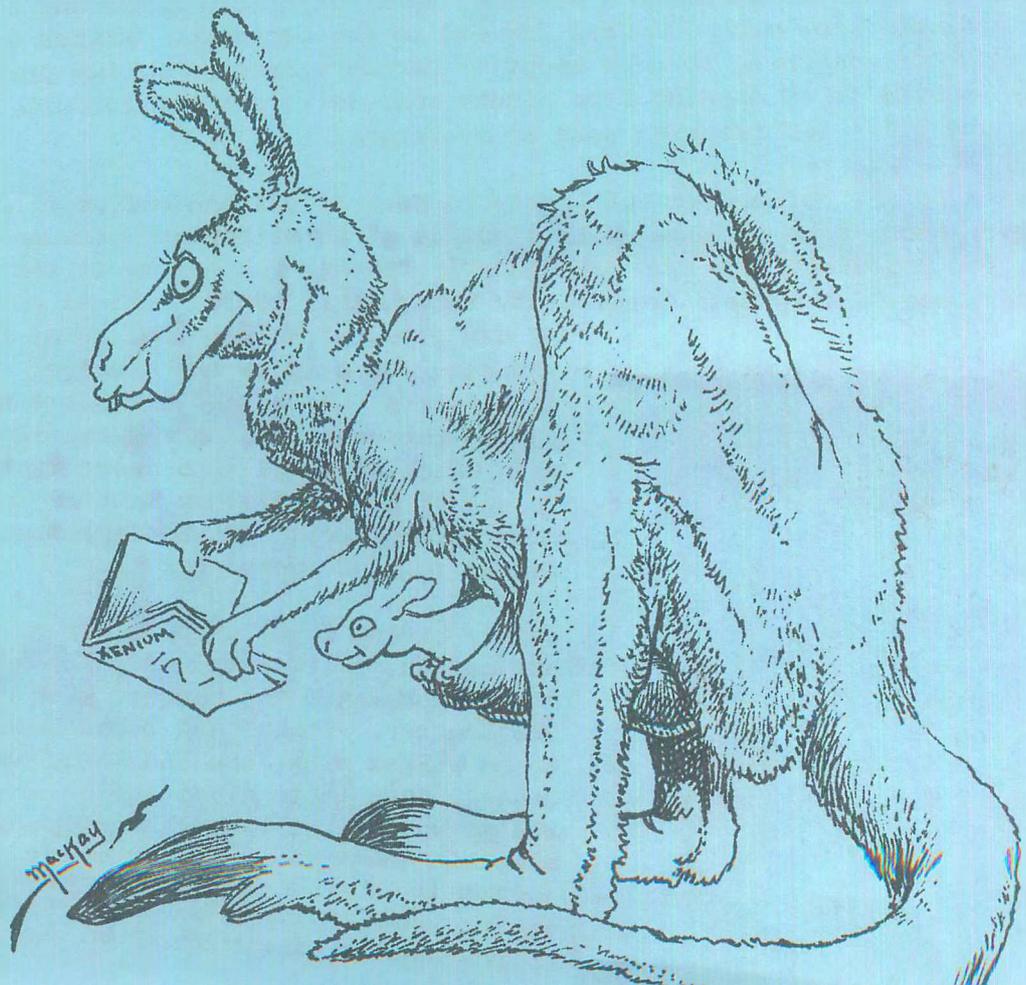
Or like getting a preview of the auction items donated by Ron Graham and actually having the chance to hold and look through *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* and *THE SHIP THAT SAILED TO MARS* which will later sell for incredible prices at the auction to a library somewhere in Australia.

Or like watching admiringly as Ben Bova holds court at a party, seeing Shayne give him her Sydney address and after I tell Ben of Shayne's driving habits watching him hastily return the address to her.

Or, best of all, standing talking to Bob Silverberg when a young fan holding a Program Book comes up and hangs around us for several minutes. Finally Bob takes the book and asks, "Would you like me to sign this?" and the boy takes it back, hands it to me and says, "Please autograph my book?"

Of hundreds of such moments was my Aussiecon composed.

Of course there was much conversation, many enjoyable meals in the company of new-found old friends, and about five solid days of almost non-stop continuous scotch drinking interrupted only by brief periods of ~~passing/out~~ sleep. But that is true of just about every con so I'll refrain from writing it up in any detail. Back to the highlights.



The masquerade was certainly one of the highlights of the con, for a variety of reasons. Prime among those was being fortunate enough to be chosen one of the judges and have the opportunity to talk quietly with Ursula Le Guin for an hour. As a fan with remarkably little knowledge of science fiction or literature, I'd felt in awe of our professional Guest of Honour and had exchanged only a few words of polite greeting with her up until that point. During the more than an hour that it took us to prejudge the costumes in some obscure part of the hotel kitchens far removed from the actual action of the masquerade, however, I got a chance to talk to her on a one-to-one basis and found her totally charming. She has that rare ability to put me at my ease and make me feel that my lack of stfnal expertise is no barrier to communication. It was that delightful hour that made Ursula Le Guin a real person for me and I'm unstinting in my admiration for this marvellous woman.

The masquerade itself had its unusual features, including some really terrific trans-vestite costumes, one of which won Best of Show. Quite a few people who failed to understand the selection were apparently unaware that the contestant was a man!

The other feature of the presentation we missed by being judges and being ensconced amid the pots and pans for the pre-judging. A local group called The Vikings, along the lines of the SCA, provided entertainment between costumes with some realistic rough-and-tumble. Very realistic! One of the lead Vikings, a squat, vaguely-simean hairy little man who had already astounded most of the convention by racing around doing an ape act, got his head split wide open and gave Chairman Robin more than a few worried moments. But he recovered, and we toiled on in the kitchen unaware of the near disaster in the convention hall.

That was Friday night. The Hugo banquet was set for Saturday and luckily someone warned me that I'd be expected to say a few words when I was re-introduced along with Susan and Ursula. Not being the world's best extemporaneous speaker, I much appreciated the warning, although a Saturday spent with cold hands and a very nervous stomach indicated how much I looked forward to the prospect. Rather desperately I cast around for something to talk about -- having exhausted my two year collection of witty remarks in my opening five minute address -- and miraculously Australian courtesy and Miles Laboratories came to my rescue.

In addition to the coffee pot and little packets of tea and coffee provided by the hotel, every room came equipped with a couple of complimentary packages of Alka-Seltzer, for those who have not yet properly trained themselves in the manly art of over-indulgence, I suppose. Unnecessary though this pharmaceutical panacea was to

my own physical well-being, in my fidgety nervousness I opened up the package. And found my inspiration! So at the banquet I simply complimented the committee on the amazing thoroughness with which they had gone about making their Fan Guests of Honour feel at home and congratulated them on conceiving of and implementing an astonishing jolt of egoboo for me.

Merely having found a topic for my remarks was not enough to allay my nerves, though, so I still approached the banquet with considerable trepidation. Sheryl and I had been lucky enough to be seated with John and Sally Bangsund, among others, at a table directly in front of the podium so we were well set to enjoy John's toast-mastering once the meal was over. I sipped some Scotch to calm my nerves and John tried to drown his in some good red wine he'd bought for the occasion and it wasn't until we were nearly through

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that Robin Johnson wandered by and casually informed two of fandom's foremost imbibers that the committee was picking up the wine tab at that table if we cared to order! A nice man, Robin, but no head for the important organizational details. Then followed a positive farce as we tried to convince the waiter that the nice bald man would pay for our wine and he patiently followed Robin from table to table trying to confirm this and eventually gave up and returned to tell us the nice bald man had denied any such thing which we knew to be a lie since we'd watched in near hysterics his patient tracking of Robin around the banquet floor. We eventually got our wine, I'm happy to say, so John and I could fortify ourselves for the ordeal to come.

John did a fine job, despite his nervousness, and despite the much-regretted absence of Ursula Le Guin who'd been taken ill and had to leave the banquet. The only noteworthy incident occurred after all the preliminary remarks and presentations of souvenir medallions to the guests had been made. John said something like "And now we come to the Hugos themselves" and on cue at least fifteen of us scattered throughout the hall rose to our feet with whistles, noise-makers, balloons, paper streamers, bags of confetti and other party favours and made as much confusion as we could while singing a verse of "Waltzing Matilda". Eric Lindsay had dreamt up the idea as a way to liven up what can be a pretty stuffy affair and since it had the enthusiastic support of Susan and I and Tucker and John Berry there wasn't much poor Robin could do except watch the dignity of the evening fly happily out the window.

Once the Hugo banquet is over you know, deep down, that the con is starting to wind down. There'll be a few more parties, a couple more surprises, some enjoyable conversations, but the climax has been reached and you're on the downhill glide. So it was at Aussiecon, although the glide was a long, busy and happy one.

The next day the incredible John Alderson, a rough and brilliant man I've come to admire and like very much, gives me a bottle of his famous homemade wine and I sit in the front row with Tucker, and John and Susan, and England's Peter Nicholls and we pass the bottle back and forth and drain it as Robin attempts in a haphazard, meandering fashion to wind down the con. Rather unexpectedly, Susan and I are called to the stage once more to receive what Robin calls The Kitsch Award, a glass kangaroo on a globular base filled with opal chips, and we both utter a few obviously unprepared words. John Bangsund and a recovered Ursula do what they would have done the night before had she been well, and Tucker and Rusty and Ron Graham say a few of their unprepared words. No-one is sure what is happening or what to do so eventually, in a familiar role, Tucker leads the entire audience in a symbolic Smoooooth and after a little prompting Robin officially declares it to be all over. With a big sigh of relief I hunt up John Alderson for more wine to prepare for the evening's parties. (It would be remiss of me not to mention John's car: held together with string and tape and crammed full of wine and books it is as legendary in Australian fandom as the man who drives it. Anyone who has met John even once could walk into a parking lot of ten thousand cars and match up man and machine: incredible, both of them.)

The committee had decided to wind down Aussiecon in a distinctively Australian manner, one of the few aspects of the con that was peculiar to the country it was held in. Ever since reading Lesleigh Luttrell's DUFF report I'd been looking forward to experiencing the singularly unusual example of native cuisine known as "pie and sauce." Lesleigh had written of this...er..."delicacy" with a notable lack of enthusiasm but with my English heritage I felt sure it would appeal to me. And since the committee had purchased 33 dozen pies for the dead dog party I had ample chance to test that hypothesis.

Pie and sauce is simply what its name implies: a meat pie with "sauce", which generally turned out to be Australian for ketchup. Most store or restaurant ordered pies were round, pastry-covered, with meat and gravy inside; the sauce came in a plastic squeeze bottle and was actually injected into the interior of the pie in hypodermic fashion. In addition to this standard example of indigenous culinary art, though, the last night party also provided a Cornish pasty type of pie with potatoes as well as meat to be inundated with squirted sauce. As expected, I thoroughly enjoyed the several pies I ate...almost as much as I enjoyed the looks on the faces of my effete American travelling companions when their refined palates encountered this delightfully plebeian concoction. Bob Tucker, for example, managed one bite of his pie, turned slightly green, then autographed the remainder and donated it to an auction being held to raise funds for DUFF. (To be fair to Bob, though, it later turned out to be mass-produced pies he was somewhat less than thrilled by; the pies made in the small bakery in Eric Lindsay's native Faulconbridge were declared to be of superior quality and eminently consumable.)

There was an air of pleasant melancholy in the hotel that last night, a quiet awareness that even as the last parties were in full swing and the last quarts of Fosters and bottles of wine were being downed something very special was ending, something that we'd always be rather proud to have been a part of. Happily drunk fans raised a considerable amount of money for DUFF by purchasing such essentially worthless items as a New York subway token, John Berry's library card, a banana autographed by Bob Tucker and an hour of Mike Glicksohn's time. That was the sort of night it was. And when we all gathered in the con suite to see Bob Tucker awarded the coveted

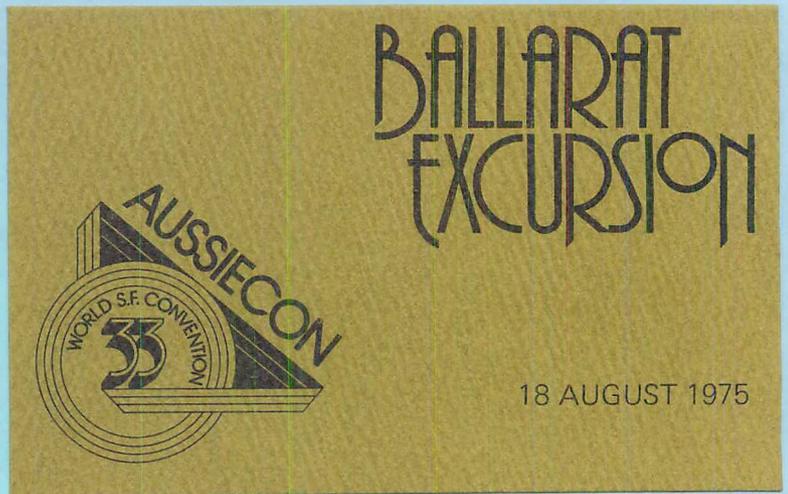
Golden Boob Award for sexism in science fiction fandom, well, it seemed like an appropriate place to quit, leaving Bob roaming through the halls of the Southern Cross desperately seeking the young lady from whose torso the definitely outstanding trophy had been cast.

Most of the visiting North Americans had purchased tickets for Monday's excursion to Ballarat, a former gold-mining center turned tourist attraction a short train ride from Melbourne. After yet another quick breakfast at the Pancake Parlour, Rusty, Bob, Sheryl and I caught a tram of wondrously Victorian antiquity and headed for the main train station, meeting other fans along the way. It didn't take long to exhaust the scenic possibilities of the station but some difficulty further down the track resulted in an hour and a half delay, as tired fans huddled around trying to keep each other awake. It was then that Daffodil Fandom was reborn.

Susan Wood entered fandom some seven



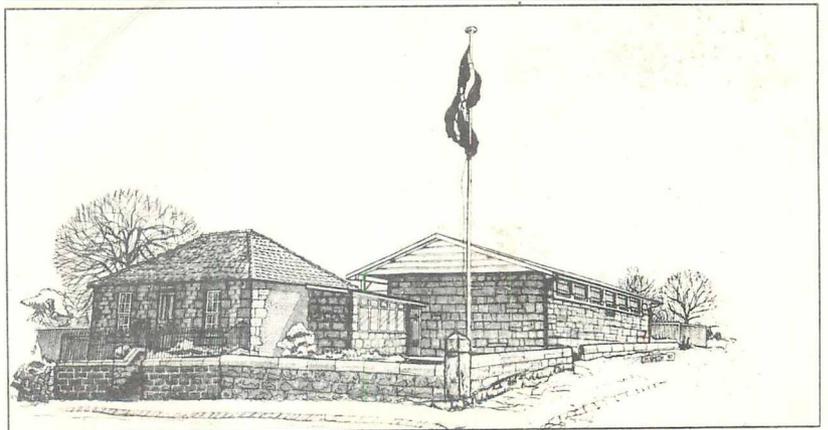
years ago along a trail of daffodils so when she noticed a flower shop in the station it seemed appropriate to continue that tradition. Soon most of the early arrivals were sporting the ~~yo~~official Ballarat Excursion Namebadge, a bright yellow daffodil behind the ear, in the teeth, or in a hat. So Susan went back for more and told the bewildered manager of the store "Don't wrap them, we'll eat them here." And Robin Johnson added to the mythos by wandering into the store and telling the manager "These daffodils are excellent; my compliments to the chef." When Susan went back for the third bunch of flowers -- or it might possibly have been the fourth batch -- and told the man not to trim the stems, he fannishly inquired if they were for bigger people with larger appetites, and finally breathed a sigh of relief as perhaps eighty odd people did a daisy chain up the ramp towards the long-awaited Ballarat Express, each one firmly clutching one of his daffodils.



The train to Ballarat has already been immortalized by Bob Tucker in his own excellent Aussiecon report and this is only proper and fitting. Only someone as old as Bob could possibly do justice to a train that ancient! Of definitely at least Victorian vintage the entire train radiated an air of tired elegance and somewhat faded glory that seemed perfect for our mental states and offered a refreshing change from the hectic, future-oriented pace of the previous four days. In quiet comfort we bounced slowly through the Australian countryside interrupted occasionally by a travelling one-shot, or a Smoooooth, or a lecture from John Alderson on the geography, history or biology of the region being passed through. When he wasn't busy molesting local femmefans, of course.

At Ballarat we boarded a busto go to Sovereign Hill, the reconstructed gold-mining camp. Despite the cold wind, gray skies and occasional brief shower, it was very interesting and most of us ended up with pictures of people taking pictures of people taking pictures of the actual diggings. Plus some souvenirs from the bookshop which featured an excellent range of Australian books. (There is, by the way, no truth to a tale being spread by one Bob Tucker that it finally snowed while we were at Sovereign Hill thereby justifying the rumours he'd been spreading ever since we left LA. A little sawdust from the mill may have temporarily deluded his cold-numbered brain. However, it is true that the building reserved for married miners bore the legend FAUCHERY, prompting one hairy visitor to remark "De Fauchery is for debauchery" and almost resulting in one less traveler on the return trip.)

Apart from the actual camp, the tourism of the area centers around a short but nasty civil war between the gold miners and the army and the



MONTROSE COTTAGE CLASSIFIED "A" BY NATIONAL TRUST

Montrose Cottage & Eureka Military Museum

somewhat hurried bus tour of the town that followed the visit to Sovereign Hill included a stop at the Eureka Military Museum which commemorates the affair. At one point Sheryl suggested that I buy enough of the reproductions of old newspaper pages from the time to include with my report in XENIUM but I explained that the little extra things that go into XENIUM are never *bought* for that purpose but are more or less *found*, if you will. And a few minutes later our bus guide, Ray Pearson, came over and presented me with a package of souvenir cards from the cottage and museum we were visiting. It was a very thoughtful gesture, and it was probably at that moment that I definitely decided I'd do a trip report, even if it ended up a year late.

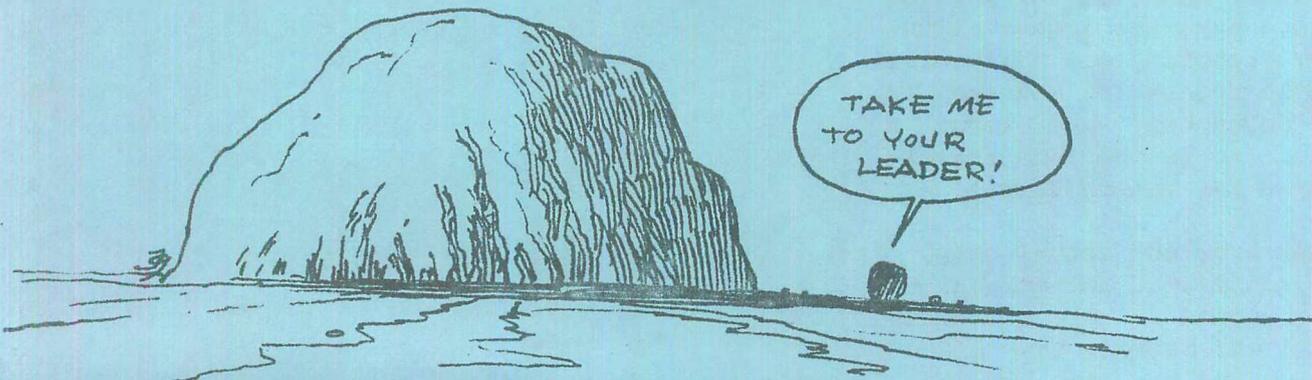
(Ray was an amusing guide and added to the tour with a refreshing approach to the usual tourist patter. Unfortunately he had to spend much of his time explaining why we didn't have the time to stop and see the wonders he was pointing out to us. My own favorite of his descriptive bits went something like "As we turn this corner you'll see a gold monument to this event...you can't miss it, it's right in front of the public toilet.")

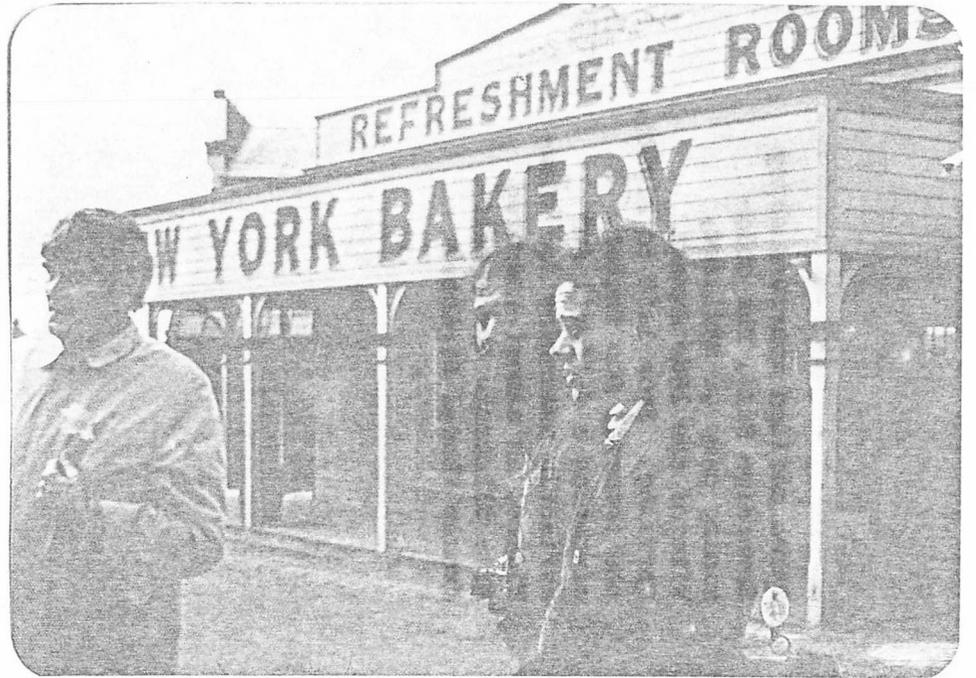
By the time we returned to the station to catch the train back to Melbourne, most of us were pretty thoroughly chilled by the afternoon of cold dampness. Luckily some of the train compartments had central heating... In the centre of the floor was an oval-shaped metal cylinder about two feet long and ten inches wide filled with hot water! All the way to Melbourne we feebly fought for footspace, as we huddled together for warmth and occasionally Smooooothed from Eric Lindsay's scotch. But silently so as not to have to share the meager resources with the people in adjoining compartments! (Somebody, it may have been Denny Lien, was more generous though. As I wandered past one car I was beckoned to and offered a slug from some local distillation which bore the description "hospital strength brandy." After one sip I understood their largesse: I believe over here it's called "Janitor In A Drum"!!)

Back in Melbourne many North Americans are already taking off on trips to other parts of Australia so we get to wave goodbye to tourists off to Ayers Rock and Tasmania and other such exotic places. But the main reason I wanted to go to Australia was to meet the fans there, so Melbourne remains quite attractive to me.

That last last night of Aussiecon was definitely a rather sad and tired time. We all knew it was *really* over and the dead dog party was dead indeed. The only real excitement came early in the evening when Tucker opened the window of the room he was sharing with Rusty and watched in horror as the entire window fell gracefully out to shatter on a roof five stories below. When Rusty phoned the desk to report the incident their main concern seemed to be whether or not the Aged Gentleman had held on as the window committed suicide! I suppose it was a fine symbolic end to the con.

By Tuesday morning I had finally realized that the empty Alka Seltzer package that had bailed me out at the banquet would make a fine paste-in for my report so after getting everything carefully wrapped in protective packaging (Susan's glass kangaroo separated from its base as she walked from the podium to her front row seat: wrapped





Australia's greatest tourist attraction in a typical pose. The energy level of a koala is only slightly higher than that of Bill Bowers. They also publish about as many fanzines.

Three chilled tourists enjoy Sovereign Hill, the gold-mining camp at Ballarat, site of the 1854 Eureka Uprising. From left to right, the immortal Bob Tucker, clutching a daffodil and defiantly searching for snowflakes, an almost-obscured Mike Glicksohn and a near-frozen Sheryl Birkhead.

*Slower than an aging FAPAN!
More stupid than a horde of Trekkies!
Unable to leap cracks in the concrete without tripping!
It's a WOMBAT!!! (Barely.)
Fighting a never-ending battle for food, slumber and the Australian way.*

A pixie-ish Ursula Le Guin signs books for two young Australian fans as a regal Captain A. Bertram Chandler looks on. The generosity and friendliness of these two Ghodd People was joyous to see.

in tissue in the middle of an empty can of Fosters mine survived another thirteen thousand or so miles. Ah, the joys of drinking!) I started trying to collect the necessary 165 specimens. Sheryl and Rusty lent a hand, wandering the halls in search of maids' carts from which to steal the Alka Seltzer. But after a floor or two of such petty larceny the futility of it all became apparent. Putting my broad mental horizons to the problem it was a matter of moments to track down the main supply center, liberate an entire box of Alka Seltzer and deposit it in my room before hurriedly searching the upper floors for my



partners in crime. Then it was simple to count out the appropriate number of packages in the peace and quiet of the room before returning the rest, along with the Alka Seltzer tablets themselves, to the supply depot. I didn't want fans to get a bad reputation, after all...

At most conventions I am reluctant to leave the hotel because that's where the people are and that's why I'm there. So during Aussiecon itself my only excursions out of the Southern Cross had been for meals. It wasn't until the Tuesday after the con was over that I even managed to get to Melbourne's legendary Space Age Bookstore, site of much of the action in the Australia in 75 bidding film. Eric Lindsay took Sheryl and I over, after we'd liberated several nice glasses and a bottle of brandy from an empty function room. (That bottle proceeded to leak several ounces of fair brandy all over Eric's overnight bag, proving, I suppose, that crime doesn't pay for innocent bystanders.)

Space Age is an amazing store with as large and varied stock as I've ever seen. I found numerous limited edition books and magazines and small-press materials that I thought were long out of print. And I finally got to talk to Paul Stevens, the dark and saturnine smaller version of Denny Lien notorious for his portrayal of Anti-fan. As is typical with even a small con such as Aussiecon, I had missed Paul throughout the con itself and appreciated the chance to make up for that afterwards.

That night there was a party at the Magic Pudding Club, the Melbourne slanshack named after a very famous (and totally charming) children's story written and illustrated by an Australian named Norman Lindsay. It was there that I really got to meet many of the Melbourne fans for the first time, both residents and visitors. Judy Colman, tall, dark-haired, slim and attractive who would later present me with a hand-charred "parchment" scroll making me an official member of the Magic Pudding Club. Ken Ford, blond, brash, boisterous undisputed holder of the Golden Boob before they gave it to Tucker, and beneath the manic surface a serious and intelligent fan. Pedr Gurteen, a huge and hairy gentle giant with a passionate love of his native poetry and culture who will read us one of his favorite poems a little later, providing a moving moment of tranquility surrounded by a sea of frenetic confusion. The Mad Viking was there, he of the gibbering chimp imitation and the split skull, this time with full green, silver and black face make-up and a fright wig. I learned his name is Gordon Pearce, he's a gentle and delightful man who also belongs to a volunteer citizens



rescue organization and makes tapes for prisoners; proving yet again how wrong it is to go by outward appearances and behaviour. And many others: Don and Derek Ashby, and the very devilish John Ham and many more whose names are now sadly forgotten. Plus, of course, old friends and new among the Australian and North American contingents.

The Magic Pudding Club is a typical commune: mattresses scattered at random in the midst of

a bewildering disarray of books, magazines, fanzines, cats, posters and people. It brought back many old memories of my days at college, and the party released many more such memories. There was much loud drunken talk, singing of dirty songs, rendering of Monty Python and Cheech and Chong routines. I loved it all! (But less you think it was all boisterous merry-making I hasten to add that when Bill Wright brought in what the Australians laughingly refer to as a pizza he generated a long and highly intellectual discussion of pizzas in general and the varying quality and composition of Melbourne pizzas in particular. No mental lightweights in my fannish circles!) (Actually, when I found out that Ken Ford is training to be a teacher we did discuss teaching in Australia: I'd wanted to check out something Robin Johnson had told me a couple of years earlier when he said, with reference to a comparison between teachers in America and Australia, "Our salaries are as good as the big square states but not as good as the small lumpy ones.")

Sheryl and I had moved to the flat shared by Robin Johnson and Peter Darling and it was from there we set out in the next morning's pouring rain to drive with Peter down to Rosebud, a small ocean resort an hour south of Melbourne. We were to meet up with Rusty and Tucker and Leigh and Valma for the first Rosebudcon: and if the name doesn't mean anything to you, then you probably aren't reading this anyway. We drove through the Melbourne suburbs and I noticed that while Melbourne itself had struck me as very English, especially in the actual construction of the little shops and store fronts, the suburbs were distinctly more Americanized. We even passed a Southern Fried Carolina Chicken store, with appropriate groans of course.

On the way down, driving past a lovely Melbourne Bay, Peter gave us a little of the background of the area. I was particularly delighted to find out that many of the native place names had been provided to the white settlers when they first entered the region and asked the natives what it was called. According to Peter there are quite a few Australian towns which later turned out to be called "White man get knotted."

The three blocks of Rosebud didn't take long to explore but the arrival of our fellow conventioners soon allowed the mythos of Rosebudcon to develop. Coasters at the Rosebud Hotel were signed by all present and became membership badges; the banquet was tasty and inexpensive (although Leigh Edmonds, whose culinary characteristics are notorious throughout Australian fandom, looked at the menu and suggested ordering "fish and chips, hold the fish") and the panel on The Role of the Prawn in Science Fiction went over well. Rusty photographed the Art Show painting, and later

on, after postcards embossed with the word "ROSEBUD" in gold had been sent to the appropriate people, we wandered along the beach and Peter Darling closed the con by reaching down his hand and passing on the official gravel. There was even a con party to wrap things up... back at Degraives in Melbourne.

Until very recently Melbourne fandom met at Degraives every Wednesday night and the only difference this particular Wednesday was the presence of most of the North Americans who were still in the city. And most of them were already there when Sheryl and I arrived with Peter, having taken a train in from his apartment. In a moment of weakness that undoubtedly lowered the reputation of our entire group, I stood with one foot on the stairs and the other on the floor of the restaurant and called to Bob Tucker, "Bob, this trip is starting to take its toll; I've already got one foot in Degraives." A flair for the obvious has always been one of my weaknesses. (I'd mention that I had lamb kebob and a large and a small caraffe of plonk but do you care what I had for dinner on August 20th?)

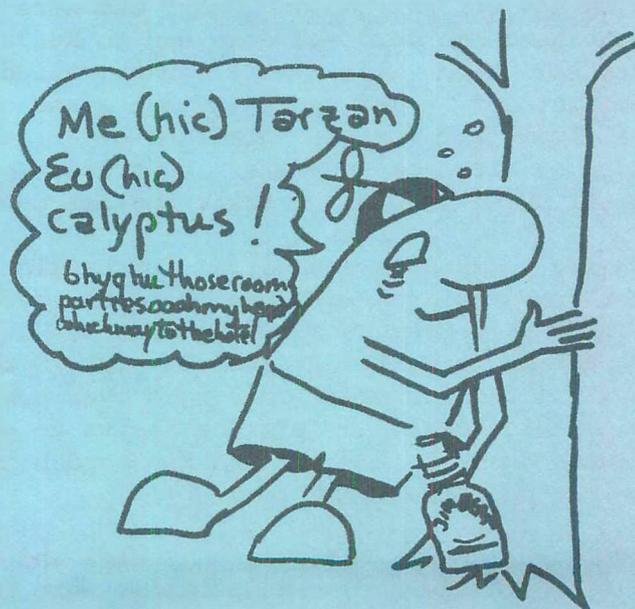
Susan's birthday being in a couple of days there was a party at Leigh and Val's so later that evening found us all in Elizabeth Foyster's car, yours truly clutching a glass of plonk, headed for the Foyster residence to pick up John who is the antithesis of his outgoing and vivacious wife. Because John's shyness and lack of interest in socializing are well known in Melbourne, I was especially pleased that he was going to the party. Why, we even had a chance to talk briefly about education!

And we talked about the sort of things fans talk about no matter what country they happen to be in, and consumed plonk and Jim Beam. It might have been Cincinnati if it hadn't been for all those funny accents. Later, Susan was given a cake from the Rosebud Bakery and a hardcover edition of "The Magic Pudding" signed by us all and a warm feeling of friendship filled the evening.

Arrangements had been made for a dinner party at Leigh and Val's favorite restaurant for the next evening, so Sheryl and I had the afternoon to browse around the neighbourhood that Peter and Robin live in. It was amazing how much one Jewish neighbourhood looks like another, and really only the presence of milk bars, as the small walk-in Australian restaurant-deli-milk stores are called, distinguished the area from a North American city. Not wishing to appear parochial, of course, we stopped at one for pie and sauce for lunch!

In a little junk shop called The Apple Tree Boutique I stumbled over a cache of old books and found one of the most fascinating souvenirs I've got of any trip I've ever made. In the summer of 1912 a young girl named Sissie took a cruise through Germany and collected postcards, photographs and clippings from travel books to augment the diary she kept. She later typed up a trip report -- double spaced, on top quality parchment-like paper, one side only -- and pasted in all the photographs and postcards in the proper places. The whole thing was bound in leather and given as a Christmas gift to her two travelling companions. Sixty three years later, for a dollar and a half, it became a momento of my trip to a country half way around the world.

At dinner that night I showed it to Leigh and Val and several others, and everyone wanted it. But I couldn't part with it and they had to settle for a brief perusal.





Leigh read through the descriptions and reviews of several operas Sissie had seen in Bayreuth in August, 1912 and proclaimed them intelligent and insightful. And later I would read lines like "Whenever we passed a castle, all the Americans opened their Kodaks with a snap and rushed pell mell to the side, uttering strange sounds of admiration." and "It was good to draw away from the sordid manufacturing country - our day through Belgium was vastly unbeautiful, except perhaps for the windmills and the stately march of poplars on the high road, two and two like soldiers of an endless giant army."

It was odd to know so much of the thoughts and feelings and activities of someone who is very likely dead by now and to see a Germany still two years away from World War One through her eyes. Although I don't even know her name, I think I would have liked Sissie, and it's too bad she lived her youth so long ago. I think she'd have been a good fan... and she'd surely have written one hell of a DUFF report!

Another example of superior Australian civilization is the popularity of party sized casks of plonk. These are plastic containers of various sizes, the gallon seeming to be ideal, encased in a cubical cardboard box and provided with a push-button spigot that can be pulled out through a hole in the box. Bring one to a party, pop out the spigot, and everyone can draw his or her own glass of wine for hours. This is a device that we need on this continent and I'm amazed it has taken so long for it to make the crossing.

I mention this delightful invention at this point not only because I forgot to when talking about the party at the Magic Pudding Club but also because it happens to be germane to the narrative. That night eleven of us had dinner at the Black Rose, a small and first rate German restaurant around the corner from Leigh and Val. We had six bottles of plonk with us, plus a bottle of Jim Beam for a certain Elderly Gentleman in the party, but as we sat down the waiter recognized Leigh, which is not hard to do, and astonished us all by bringing out a half-filled wine cask that Leigh and Val had left there the last time they'd had a party in the restaurant. As an example of courtesy and thoughtfulness it was most impressive.

After convoying down to the train station in a happily tipsy fashion and cramming twelve fans into a teeny tiny twinette for one last Smooooooth and a resounding fan-nish sendoff for Bob and Rusty who were taking the train up north, Sheryl and I accompanied Ken Ford and John Ham to Ken's local pub for my first real experience with Australian pub life. In a lounge called The Grizzley Bare I was introduced to the delights of Black Apple (Guinness and cider), Dragon's Blood (Burgundy and cider) and Applejack (orange juice and cider) and rather shortly thereafter was pleased to note that the men's rooms in Australian pubs have the same sort of room-length sheet steel urine troughs as their English counterparts.

Having tremendous enthusiasm for English pub life, I thoroughly enjoyed the visit and the conversations with Ken and John. John, he of the satanic image, has recovered from a very serious accident that has left him with a slight limp and the necessity of talking slowly and carefully but there is certainly nothing wrong with his thinking and the conversation ranged over pubs, teaching, politics and fandom in a most enjoyable fashion. It's the desire to get to know people like John Ham and Gordon Pearce and Pedr Gurteen and Ken Ford better that keeps my interest in a return trip to Australia bubbling away.

The next day was Friday, and Sheryl and I had plane reservations for Canberra and a visit with the Bangsunds but they were late in the afternoon, so we had some time to see a little of Melbourne with Leigh and Val, all of whose houseguests had already headed north. First we visited the Melbourne Jail, the old one, long since converted

THE MAGIC PUDDIN' CLUB.,
 259 DRUMMOND ST.,
 CARLTON,
 VIC 3054.,
 AUSTRALIA

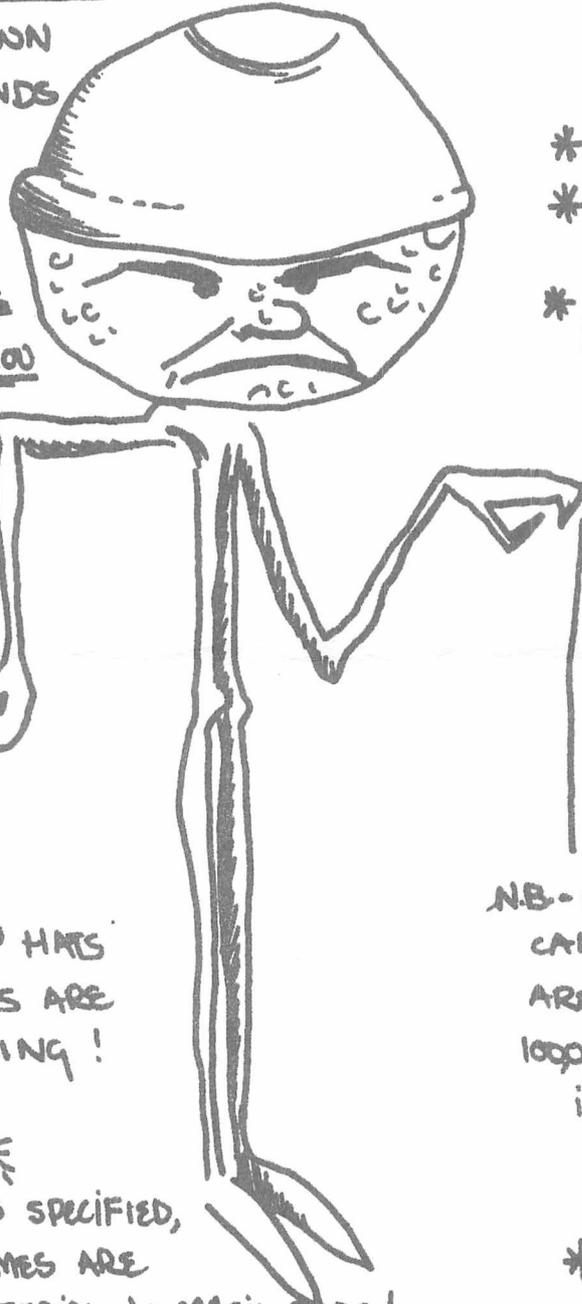
SOON TO BE MEMBERS

VALMA BROWN
 LEIGH EDMONDS
 CHERYL
 NEIL

OTHER MEMBERS

UNKNOWN TO YOU

* CHRIS GREGORY
 * LINDA DAVIS



MEMBERS:

* DON ASHBY
 * DEREK ASHBY
 KEN FORD
 * JUDY COLMAN
 GORDON PEARCE
 JOHN HAM.

OFFICIAL BLOODY MEMBERS.

WILSON TUCKER
 RUSTY HEVELIN
 MIKE GLICKSON
 FERRY ACKERMAN
 SUSAN WOOD.

NB-AS MAGIC PUDS
 CAN'T SPELL THERE
 ARE MOST LIKELY
 10000000 MISTAKES...
 IGNORE 'EM MATE!

* STARS INDICATE
 ORIGINAL BLOODY
 FOUNDERS.

≡N.B.≡
 UNLESS SPECIFIED,
 SURNAMES ARE
 IMMATERIAL TO MAGIC PUDS!

PSS...RM! FOR PUDDING CONS!!!

THE MAGIC PUDDIN'
 SALUTES
 YOU

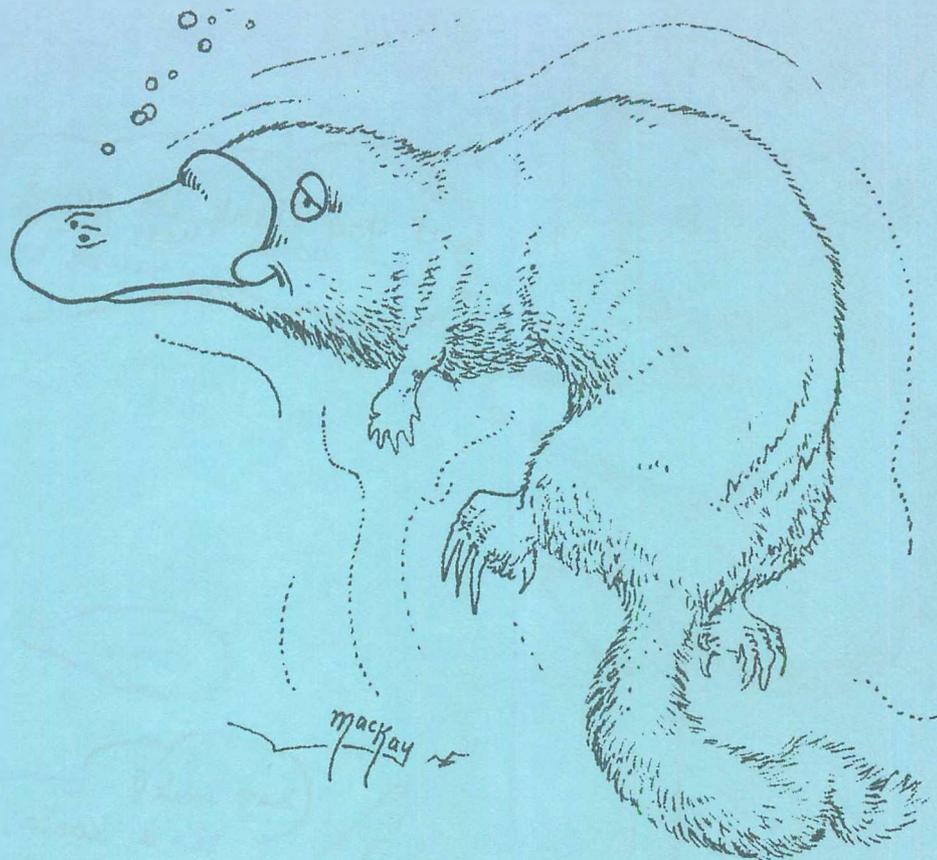
MIKE & CHERYL

" LESS TALKIN'
 &
 MORE PUDDIN' EATIN'."

OUR BIBLE
 THE MAGIC PUDDING
 by
 NORMAN LINDSEY

↑
 get it! read it

YE OLDE
 ORIGINAL
 LINED STUDENTS'
 FOOLSCAP
 PARCHMENT



into a tourist attraction, where we viewed the cell they kept the notorious Australian bandit Ned Kelly in, and the gallows they hung him from, and the death mask they made of him, complete with hairs, eyelashes and eyebrows that came away when they took off the mold. After viewing several entire rooms filled with such gruesome mementos of famous Australian murderers, it seemed only right and proper to slip across to the nearest milk bar for a pie and sauce for lunch.

Although it was raining most of the day, no-one wanted to call off a proposed visit to the Melbourne Zoo which was on the way to the airport, so after picking up Judy Colman at the Magic Pudding Club we once again placed ourselves in the capable hands of Valma Brown and her (almost) trained antique Australian automobile Agatha. While Valma may not be the most sophisticated driver I've known, she handled some very difficult driving conditions and traffic conditions very well, and didn't actually hit anything until she was parking in the nearly-empty zoo parking lot. It was on that trip that I first began to suspect that Leigh's omnipresent cap actually contains some complex electronic circuitry to blank out all sensory input!

The zoo was a delight, despite the rain, and several sudden downpours that soaked us all. I've always been a zoo freak, and despite renovations and some rather dilapidated cages the Melbourne zoo has bear, great cat and reptile enclosures and, of course, splendid examples of native fauna, which are as good as any I've seen. But the definite high point of a rather soggy visit was finally tracking down the koala cage and getting our first sight of Australia's greatest tourist attraction. The quintessential cuteness of the koala is hard to resist and even though they just sit there and could almost be replaced by stuffed toys, we oohed and aahed and took pictures just like typical tourists.

After waiting out another torrential downpour and watching a band of capering tapirs who seemed to be the only zoo inhabitants to really enjoy the weather, we drove out to the airport and sadly said goodbye to Leigh and Valma. I regretted more than ever that I didn't get to know them while they were touring North America, for they are truly two of the very good people in this world.



Canberra is the Australian capital, situated about midway between Sydney and Melbourne, and is very much a planned city. The approach from Melbourne by air is very beautiful as you fly in over a wide low plain with mountains on either side. This natural grandeur is in sharp contrast to the Dinky Toy airport that serves the capital, the only airport I've encountered with an outdoor baggage pickup into which a segmented cart drives and everyone grabs whatever strikes their fancy.

Communication with the Bangsunds having been haphazard at best, it was a real relief to spot the friendly face of Carey Handfield waiting for us and soon we were on our way to the Bangsunds, enjoying the rather sterile attractiveness of Canberra as we drove through it. As a thoroughly planned city Canberra has wide attractive streets with much grass and many trees and all the buildings are new and neat and clean but the city lacks any real character. Esthetically pleasing to the eye though Canberra may be, I'd take the clutter and jumble and energy of Melbourne any day.

Our welcome at the Bangsund residence was as warm as their house was cold! Without any central heating, the Bangsund house demands sweaters of its occupants but the warmth and hospitality of John and Sally Bangsund is unequalled in my experience. I have already mentioned a certain initial trepidation about meeting John, in my opinion one of the most intelligent, witty and gifted writers and thinkers in fandom, and how that feeling was instantly banished by his open friendliness. Sally is equally honest and friendly, and although basically unfamiliar with fans and fandom she opened up her house and her heart to a host of unknown foreigners and I hope, and think, that we won her over as thoroughly as she did us.

Among the legends that surround John Bangsund is the one that deals with his knowledge of and fondness for good wines and during our stay we certainly had ample opportunity to see the basis of this legend. (It has been said that John Berry made the trip to Australia just to share a certain special bottle of Kaiser Stuhl with John Bangsund: the exaggeration in that tale is probably only slight.) John must have practically decimated his cellar for us over the next two days and the two Johns and

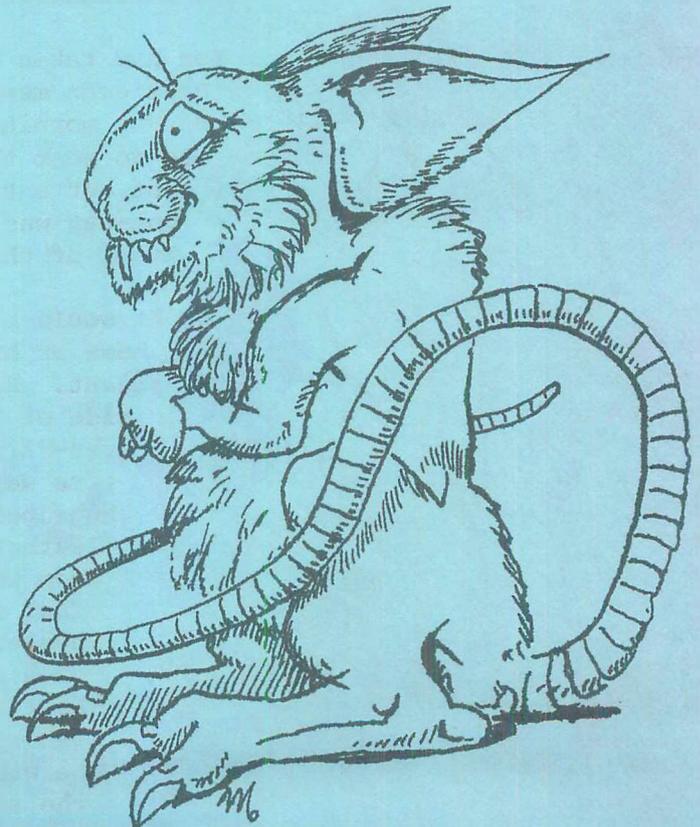
I were rarely without a glass of wine (and little if any of it was rough red!) One of the reasons I was disappointed when John later declined to run again for DUFF was losing the opportunity to return John's generosity with a few bottles of my own favorite wines. Some other time, John and Sally, some other time.

That Friday night the seven of us (are you following this? It needs a minimal amount of interpolation to fill in all the names and this is left as an exercise for the reader) went out to a Yugoslavian restaurant carrying four bottles of John's best wines with us. The entire meal was a trufan's dream: sharing fine food, splendid conversation and superb wine with the Bangsunds, John and Susan and Carey in a restaurant in Australia. Most definitely an evening to remember. (And as an unexpected but delightful bonus we returned to find we'd missed a visit from a bunch of fans none of us wanted to see all that much. Ghu protects the good people, at times.)

There was a party the next night, after a day spent playing or playing at ping-pong and collecting almost a complete run of the rare and difficult-to-get-because-he-doesn't-bother-to-mail-them-out Bangsund fanzines which were my siren call to Canberra (all the time keeping a wary eye open for the Black Widow spiders little old arachnaphobic me had been told infested the garage) and visiting the private wine club John belongs to and watching in awe as he amassed twenty nine bottles of various sorts. It was a good party, and the wine flowed copiously throughout it. Robin Johnson, Fred Patten and Don Fitch had arrived that afternoon (and the way Sally handled the unexpected extra dinner guests was a joy to behold) and some friends of the Bangsunds dropped by and to me the essence of the party was summed up at one point when Sally returned with the second volume of the Oxford Dictionary and said to no-one in particular, "I just remembered Q comes after M." A fine party, especially the part where John and Sheryl and I escaped from a developing post-mortem on Aussiecon into the kitchen to talk quietly about writing and people and fandom over two special bottles of John's wine. (And Sheryl doesn't drink...)

Sunday morning we all wandered around in a somewhat catatonic state although the two glasses of white wine I had for breakfast perked me up somewhat. When Robin Johnson showed up from wherever he'd stayed the night and asked John Bangsund "May I recommend a good motel to you?", John's "No thanks, I like it here" seemed to set the tone of the day. (John was later to tell Robin "If you misplace this key and the place is all locked up, don't worry...there are lots of keys inside the house." I loved it!)

The worst part about trips such as the one I took is that they seem filled with sad goodbyes. Two days earlier, Sheryl and I had sat in a bar at the Melbourne airport sharing one last drink with Leigh and Valma. Now we sat in a bar in Canberra for one final glass of wine with John and Sally. Australian fandom is filled with damn good people but perhaps because I'd looked forward to meeting John so much, and because both he and Sally exceeded my wildest expectations, the Bangsunds are probably the two people I enjoyed meeting the most in Australia. To share a quiet conversation and a bottle of good wine with John Bangsund is a privilege and a pleasure indeed.



Flying into Sydney this time we *did* pass over the Opera House and felt almost like natives as we recognized the landmarks. But the happiest recognition was seeing Shayne McCormack waiting for us in the baggage area. After her two visits to the US Shayne is a familiar figure to many North American fans: she is short, a little on the plump side, with short light-coloured hair and an open happy face that positively beams in the presence of fans. Of all the Australian fans I suspect Shayne was the happiest when the North Americans were there and the saddest to see us go, taking the feeling of belonging to a warm international family with us.

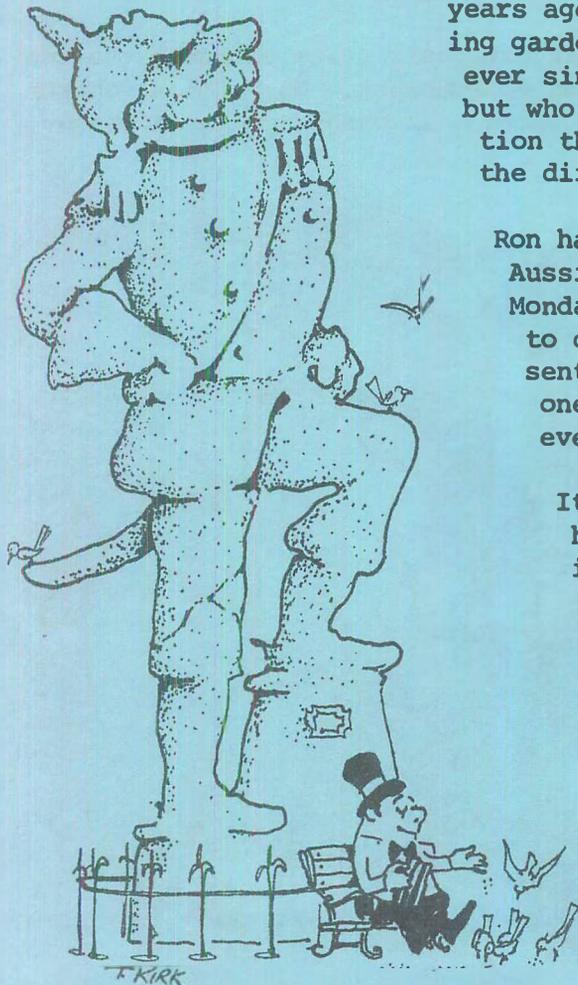
That night was a quiet one. Meeting Shayne's family and sharing an excellent meal with them, and relaxing to recuperate strength and enthusiasm. I've heard many travellers say they need slow quiet times every now and then in order to survive a trip but I usually prefer to be on the go, doing things, meeting people, going places and having new experiences. Still, I must admit the relaxation was most enjoyable! Maybe I'm human after all. (Shayne also lives in an unheated house, and one has to wonder how these Australians *survive* let alone accomplish anything. The temperature in the kitchen was a bracing 49° and in the trailer Sheryl and I slept in it couldn't have been as much as 40°. Sleeping with a sheep isn't a perversion in Australia, it's a *necessity*!)

I never did see Ayers Rock or Alice Springs or Tasmania or a herd of wild kangaroos or any of the other thousand sights a tourist might be expected to remember of Australia but I saw something that impressed me more than just about anything I've ever seen in all my years of travelling. I saw Ron Graham's house and sf collection. And believe me, it's an awe-inspiring sight.

I've known Ron for several years and have known of his reputation as the Grand Old Man of Australian science fiction, publisher of VISION OF TOMORROW, a self-made millionaire who discovered science fiction more than fifty years ago by hooking onto a pulp magazine in a neighbouring garden with a fishing pole and has been collecting it ever since. A quiet gentle man whose health is failing but who retains a love and enthusiasm for science fiction that belies his grey hair and face lined deeply by the difficulties he's known.

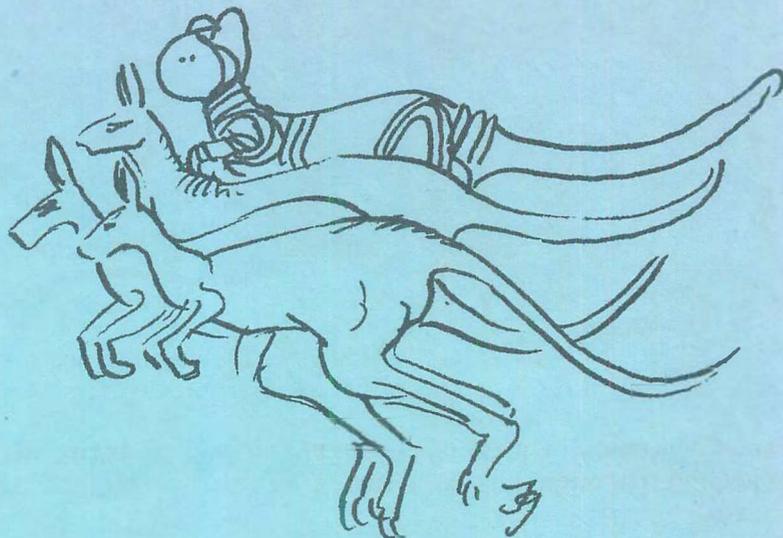
Ron had taken out an ad in the program book inviting Aussiecon members to visit his collection so on the Monday morning Sheryl, Shayne and I made arrangements to do just that. Ron guards his privacy well, so he sent out a taxi for us, and the fifteen dollar fare one-way was just the first rather mind-boggling event of the day.

It would be hard to do justice to either Ron's home or his collection. Both are simply magnificent. His beautiful modern home sits on the side of a rocky cliff overlooking an enormous tree-filled canyon and the view through one entire wall of glass is breath-taking. Inside, a huge pooltable surrounded by enormous black leather chairs takes up part of a recreation room whose walls are simply covered with original sf paintings. As complete a bar as it has ever been my pleasure to see sits on top of a real wine cellar, again as well stocked as I ever expect to encounter. And Ron's generosity was as exceptional as his house as he wined and dined us preparatory to climbing the stairs to the new quarter of a million



dollar addition that houses his collection.

His collection!! How can one adequately describe what is probably the greatest single collection of science fiction in the world? Forry may have a larger accumulation of sf memorabilia but even he was left breathless when he visited Ron's library. Practically every pulp, book, magazine known to sf fans is there, many of the rare old ones being represented not once but several times. Bound sets of all the pulps, two copies of FANCY I, over 700 original Virgil Finlay drawings,

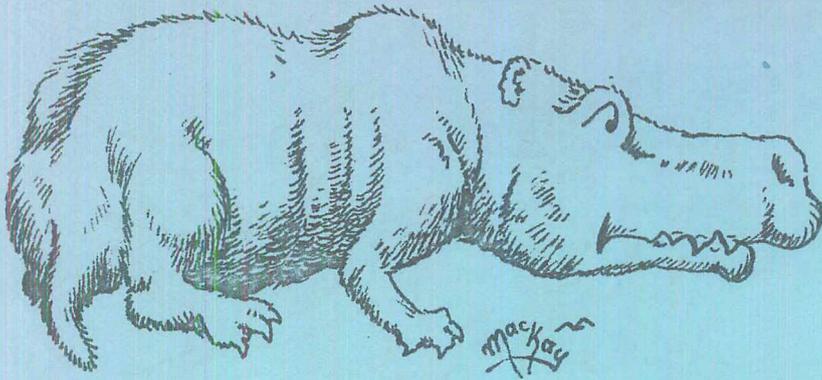


many of them in large piles scattered on a desk top. More old fanzines than one fan could ever read, including the entire Don Wollheim collection he sold to help start DAW books. (And what a surprise to run across several copies of STORMY PETREL, an obscure and short-lived fanzine I did for CANADAPA a few years back!) Every hard and soft cover book I've ever heard of, and a great many I'd never seen and may never see again. And how odd to find them shelved not by author, not by subject, not by age, but by height! (And almost all cross-indexed, too.) A fabulous treasure trove that even the most hardened I've-no-time-nowadays-for-sf fan would find reviving his sense of wonder. We spent just a couple of hours wandering through this fabulous place and saw but a fraction of it, but concern for Ron, who was recovering from a recent heart attack, took precedence over selfish desires to browse for days, and reluctantly we took a cab back to Shayne's.

In a trip filled with memorable experiences that visit stands out as one of the most amazing of them all. And the entire collection is uninsured because the rates are too high! Take care of yourself, Ron: I'd like a return trip in '88!

Before setting off for Faulconbridge and the home of Eric Lindsay that evening, we made a detour to an Australian wildlife sanctuary called Featherdale Farm. I mention this for only one reason. Amidst the koalas and the kangaroos and the wallabies and the myriad native birds and the monkey that grabbed me and the shaggy wallaby that bit Sheryl and the dingos that jumped for ~~for~~ Shayne and the ornery ostrich that tried to bite all of us, in the midst of all this excitement there were wombats!! The wombat is the world's most delightful, endearing, charming and utterly stupid inhabitant. It would probably take at least three of them to be equivalent to a Trekkie. They stand around in placid bewilderment radiating an air of stolid acceptance and I loved each and every one of them.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "wombat", assuming you know absolutely nothing about the creature? I'd pictured something rather soft, about the size of a large hamster, perhaps as energetic as a groundhog. WRONG! A typical wombat is the size of a medium dog, covered with thick coarse hair, and built like a small Sherman tank. And dumb! Totally captivated by my first sight of one of these creatures in a small open enclosure surrounded by a three-foot high brick wall, I was keen to touch it and find out what it felt like. But I was also cautious: it looked quite capable of biting off my hand if it chose to do so, and I had no idea how fast it could move. So I had Sheryl sort of wave at its head to distract it and very quickly reached over to touch its back. That's when I discovered how coarse the fur was and how damn solid the thing was built. Buoyed up by the total lack of reaction to my touch, I leaned over again and patted the beast. It didn't even blink. Fully confident at this point, I leaned in again and affectionately thumped the broad mus-



cular back. It must have been a full minute later that the wombat slowly raised its head and peered towards its hindquarters. With a reaction time like that a wombat makes even Bill Bowers look energetic! (Now if they could only be taught to col-late and slipsheet...)

(I did not attempt to pet four vicious looking Tasmanian Devils who tore fero-

ciously around their pit, snarling and tearing at each other as they munched on and crunched through chicken heads creating some of the most degenerate sounds I've ever heard.)

Eric Lindsay is another Australian whose short, slight, sandy haired figure is familiar to many North American fans from a previous visit Stateside. A quiet man who much prefers a peaceful conversation with one or two people, Eric nevertheless opened his house in Faulconbridge to the visiting North Americans and spent several days inundated with bodies, several of whom I'd never have allowed in my house. At no time, though, did his patience or his quiet wry humour desert him, and Eric was yet another exceptional host. (He is also one of the most intelligent and interesting fans I know and behind a Benny-like facade of meanness, one of the most generous. I hope a great many American fans will get the chance to know this man on a one-to-one basis during his latest trip to America, which by pure coincidence begins today. Knowing Eric is yet another of the nicer things about fandom.)

The drive up through the Blue Mountains to Faulconbridge was especially beautiful as a glorious sunset painted the hills with almost Maxfield Parrish lighting effects. At Eric's we met up with four other visiting Americans and after catching up with who was where and what had been happening, Sheryl, Shayne, Eric and I went out for food and a bottle of plonk. The expedition sticks in my mind for a rather atypical incident on the way home. Shayne was driving and was roundly cursing a tailgater when suddenly mild-mannered, quiet, peaceful Eric rolled down the window, stuck out his head and yelled "Move over, you rotten mongrel!" much to the delighted surprise of his fellow passengers.

Back at Eric's numerous other fans had arrived and, in fact, the population would be in a state of flux throughout the evening. Ron and Sue Clarke showed up, distributing their latest fanzine, and Rusty and Bob finally re-surfaced from wherever they had been over the last few days. Eventually, Eric drove Rusty and Bob and Sheryl and I around the corner to Ken and Marea Ozanne's house where we looked at globular clusters and binary stars through Ken's 40 linear power telescope. My sense of wonder at seeing various astronomical phenomena for the very first time exceeded even the sense of wonder I felt at surviving the car ride with Eric!

Since Tuesday was the day we were all supposed to meet back in Sydney to reform the group for the last few days in New Zealand, we packed next morning in preparation for

THE BEGINNING OF THE END which began with a quick trip to view part of the 7½ acres of tree-filled, rocky, waterfall-enhanced gully that make up the Ozanne back yard. A far-too-short walk through the massive sculptured boulders and intricate eroded rock forms of the Blue Mountain National Park and then Eric was driving Sheryl and I into Sydney. (Like John Alderson's monument to antiquity, Eric's vehicle depends more upon ingenuity than technology for its continued performance. Despite a minor breakdown, though, undoubtedly the oddest moment of

a trip that would have curled the fuzz on Kojak's head came as we approached Sydney itself and, with a sigh of resignation, Eric remarked, "From here on in the kamikaze school of driving takes over."

Somehow, though, after passing what must have been close to twenty miles of used car dealerships, we arrived back at the Hyatt Kingsgate in beautiful downtown Sydney. During the afternoon a variety of Australian and North American fans arrived for our last evening in Australia and there was a definite tinge of sadness in the air. Two Hugos I was supposed to take back to Los Angeles and the NASFIC were brought in by Carey Handfield and a veritable last-minute orgy of souvenir buying occupied most of us for most of the afternoon.

In the early evening Rusty gathered a few close friends for a quiet party in the room he was sharing with Bob Tucker before attempting the pandemonium of the "official" final night party. It wasn't until we'd enjoyed some peaceful conversation and were ready to brave the noisy revelry upstairs that we discovered the two professionally printed signs that someone had taped to the outside of the door. One read QUARANTINE: WILSON TUCKER - TWONK'S DISEASE and the other QUARANTINE: RUSTY HEVELIN - SCOPPY FEVER. Someone sure had a lot of patience, because I believe they came all the way from America.

A large amount of wine and beer got consumed at the party that night and that's the only explanation I can come up with for the fact that I went with Sheryl and John Berry and Susan with Eric and his car into the mass chaos of the airport. In a room filled with luggage, short-tempered travellers and bewildered airline officials I liberated a roll of Air New Zealand packing tape for one last souvenir and had to listen to Jan Finder yelling at the top of his voice "What happened to the roll of tape I had here?" for fifteen minutes where any trufan would simply have asked for another roll of tape. Excitable, these Italians... There are mixups with tickets (one of which completely catches me by surprise and reminds me that Susan is still travelling as a Glicksohn) and with seating arrangements and with just about every other aspect of air travel imaginable, but eventually, miraculously, the Lundrlys get things sorted out. (Grace's hair wasn't always gray, you know.)

Continuing the Daffodil Mythos, Shayne brought several bunches with her to the airport and handed them to her departing friends. It was a sad scene, as friends embraced each other and said farewell, aware that it might be many many years before they'd meet again. Cameras clicked all over the departure lounge, hugs and handshakes were exchanged, and slowly we made our way through customs and out of sight of our many Australian friends, carrying our daffodils and our memories with us.

The first few fans to board the plane got rather startled looks from the airline personnel who probably weren't used to seeing daffodils behind passengers' ears but as more and more of us appeared they stopped asking for boarding passes and accepted daffodils as a legitimate substitute.



The other passengers were probably a bit bewildered too by this sudden invasion of daffodil waving semi-maniacs who greeted the inevitable arrival of the unknown juice with a mass cry of Smoooooth and in general acted in a fannishly demented fashion.

It didn't take long to get to New Zealand, at least partially because the glasses of soda water served me miraculously became filled with scotch once the bar-cart had moved on, and we deplaned without problem. Every one of us a perjurer! For we had all answered "No" to a question on the New Zealand entrance form that read "Are you carrying any living or dead animals, reptiles, etc, etc, micro-organisms, etc, etc." After a round-robin discussion it was decided it would probably be best to leave them in their ignorance.

Without as much as a single piece of hand luggage being checked, we all cleared customs and boarded two busses to be taken to the Auckland TraveLodge, situated right across from the wharfs of Auckland harbour. The view of the cranes, docks, loading and unloading freighters and the occasional melancholy ship's whistle seemed to delight Bob Tucker, although some of that interest may have resulted from the fact that Rusty preferred Bob to do his smoking out the window and there was nothing else to look at.

Auckland being pretty well closed up at night, it wasn't until the next day that we had a chance to browse around a bit, checking out the stores, wandering in and out of malls, and constantly running into other fans doing the same thing. A few minor differences from Australia were readily apparent: food was much cheaper, for example, and Auckland has the type of traffic lights that stop all traffic periodically and allow pedestrians to cross in either direction or diagonally. But basically Auckland is yet another busy cosmopolitan city...although it did seem to be infested with Don Thompsons while we were there.

I've always thought that travelling with a bus tour would be about the least enjoyable way to take a vacation imaginable and even though there were a large number of people I really like in our group, the very nature of tour type arrangements precluded it being really totally enjoyable. We saw some interesting things, of course, but missed as many more because we couldn't stop, and the regimentation was chaffing. Still, in the company of people like Rusty and Bob and John Berry and Susan, even a bus tour can be acceptable, so we made the best of it and enjoyed our brief stay.



Auckland is built on some two hundred hills and we saw quite a few of them that afternoon on a bus tour of the city. Typical tourist stuff, interesting to the participants but to no-one else. Much more vivid in my memory is the hour or so Sheryl and I spent that evening in the hotel bar where a rookie bartender just in from Vancouver had to be told what Chivas Royal Salute was, and how to make a Brandy Alexander, while one of his co-workers kept forgetting what'd been ordered and muttering "shit" to himself in a loud voice. The third member of the Three Stooges casually informed Bob Tucker that the caves we were scheduled to visit the next day were quite worth seeing after a couple of joints. This same worthy later mentioned to us after we had all three succumbed to the lure of a most unusual (and totally unidentifiable) purple liqueur that it was a favorite among meths drinkers. We decided to spend the rest of the evening playing cards...

The next day we were to take a bus down to Rotorua, a well-known hot springs region and Maori center and surprisingly we left only eight minutes late and short only one person. Fans may not be slans but they're probably no worse than the Elks or the Shriners.

Despite the gray skies and the rain, it was easy to see why New Zealand is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Spring was approaching, and everything was lush and green and beautiful. We passed through rich agricultural valleys filled with prosperous looking herds of cattle and sheep, set off against rugged mountains in the background. And our guide, Bill, kept up a running monologue about various aspects of life in New Zealand. How many of you know, for example, that milk is 4 cents a pint in New Zealand, butter 32 cents a pound and bread has just risen to a whopping 16 cents for a two pound loaf? (You all do, now.) We also learned about New Zealand industry, housing, special government programs for children and, as we got closer to our destination, the Maori people and their culture. As tour guides go, I guess Bill was pretty good; he had a good sense of humor and didn't push too much at us, just enough to augment what we were seeing.

At Waitomo Lodge we were disappointed to discover that a flood of the local river which runs through the caves had rendered them unvisitable and we had to settle for a few postcards that indicated the tour would have been a fine one indeed had the caves been open. On the way to Rotorua, as the countryside became more and more rocky and mountainous and Bill talked about the cannibalistic history of the Maori, Tucker and I attempted to overcome our disappointment with a series of Smooooths. An added benefit of our hard work, which I hope our fellow passengers appreciated, was a definite lessening of the unpleasant effects of volcanic areas as the sulphur-laden air of Rotorua was repelled by the whisky-laden air of the bus.

Rotorua itself is both an area of geysers, hot springs and sulphurous bubbling mud puddles (which Bruce Pelz quite accurately described as Mordor) and a Maori village which gets its heat, water and cooking facilities from the boiling springs. Both aspects of the area are fascinating, and a great many rolls of film were shot in a visit that was far too short for my liking. Our guide was a middle-aged Maori woman who discussed the history and current situation of her people with great humour, insight and sensitivity. It was probably a prepared patter but I wanted to believe she was speaking from her heart.

At the Rotorua Hotel where we stayed that night I had my first experience with a hot spring swimming pool which was marvellous indeed! Despite the cool air temperature, the outdoor pool was a delight with a constant cascade of re-directed water from one of the local springs keeping the temperature well into the eighties. A large group of revitalized fans capered around in manic fashion as the ubiquitous bow-tied Ben Yalow captured the hijinks for posterity with his several Nikons.

The Maori concert held that night at the Maori cultural center in Rotorua was a most unusual and enjoyable example of native culture. The songs all tell aspects of Maori history in a frenetically energetic fashion. The men make hearty booming sounds as

they slap their thighs and chests with large flat wooden paddles, all the time rolling their eyes in fearful fashion, mugging like crazy with some of the funniest faces I've ever seen and sticking their tongues out an amazing distance at an astounding rate. The women sing a more subdued, possibly Polynesian style song and also perform intricate routines with balls on strings, swinging them around in highly stylized patterns. When the lights were turned off and the balls set alight, it was a truly beautiful climax to a fascinating performance.

Arrangements had been made the next morning for those more hearty souls who wanted to see a little more of the volcanic area to take a plane ride over the region. Not one to miss such an opportunity, I was up early and out to the local airport with Sheryl, Rusty, Ned Brooks and Jackie Simpson for a half hour ride in a six-seater Cessna 185. It was a stormy morning with a pretty low cloud cover and in order to see anything we kept pretty low as we flew over the lakes, mountains, forests and fields surrounding Rotorua. The combination of small plane, stormy weather, and the natural updrafts of the hilly and thermal area made for quite a rough ride, but I enjoyed every minute of it, happily snapping slides of each interesting feature that the pilot pointed out to Rusty, who shouted it back to me to be passed on to Sheryl and Jackie in the back seat. Most of us took the flights, including seventeen who rose even earlier to take an hour and a half tour, and undoubtedly got a better feel for the region because of it.

From the hotel where we picked up a few stragglers who'd declined the opportunity to take to the air, we bussed to a place called the Agrodome for, of all things, a sheep show! (These package tours sometimes leave a little to be desired...) A taped lecture explaining the features of nineteen different breeds of New Zealand sheep was accompanied by representatives of the breeds themselves, who politely trundled onto the stage into their respective places on the proper cue from the tape (and the handlers putting out the dishes of food that attracted them.) Afterwards, a local expert gave a talk on sheep-shearing followed by a demonstration on a young sheep, which he gashed twice and tried very hard to hide the blood from the audience. Interesting, I guess, in a very agrarian sort of way. (I most definitely could have done without the stuffed baby lambs in the gift shop, however; what sort of person could possibly keep such a gruesome souvenir in their home?)

When we reboarded the bus to head for Rainbow Springs, a trout farm and fern forest, I found a sheet of paper on my seat bearing the message "Shear The Foreign Sheep", a slogan I'm glad to say did not achieve any popular support. It didn't take too much imagination to guess that the perpetrator was a certain Elderly Gentleman with store-bought teeth, the same smoothie who would later leave the message shown below on my seat on a bus leaving Auckland.

By the time we reached the trout farm the drizzle had become a steady downpour and we wandered through a variety of fauna seeing thousands of trout in various stages of their development but it was hard to generate much enthusiasm under the circumstances. (As a matter of fact it was all highly reminiscent of an almost exactly similar tour of Homosassa Springs made earlier in the summer, also with Rusty and Sheryl, also in the pouring rain. There is something about trout God does not want me to observe too

THIS TOILET HAS BEEN SANITISED FOR YOUR PROTECTION
LOGAN PARK MOTOR HOTEL

Bob Tucker

AUG.
31,
1975



closely.) Despite the dampening effect of the weather, though, I enjoyed the tour and learned from it. I discovered, for example, that the female kiwi, the legendary bird of New Zealand, weighs five pounds and lays a one and a quarter pound egg. This is as close as nature comes to duplicating the creation of a fanzine by Bill Bowers. Kiwis also have one of the shortest beaks in the bird world, which was a surprise to me.

Back in Rotorua, Sheryl and I wandered through the rain checking out the numerous Maori souvenir shops for a one and a half by two inch teeny tiny book of proverbs I wanted to buy. At one point in our peregrinations I was pleasantly crogged when hailed from across the street by Alan Dean Foster, who was making his own tour of the South Pacific. The surprise was as much due to unexpectedly meeting someone I hadn't even known was in the area as it was to the fact that Alan remembered and recognized me from our one previous encounter at a con a couple of years earlier.

I eventually found my copy of REEDS LILLIPUT MAORI PROVERBS, five hundred and twenty six itty bitty pages crammed with such delightful information as the proverb *Ko te koura kei te upoko te tutae* which translates into the unarguable universal truth "The crayfish has excrement in its head." (What other Aussiecon report is this educational?) And after sending John Bangsund the third in a series of five postcards (mailed from Sydney, Auckland, Rotorua, Honolulu and Los Angeles) reminding him to do a cover for my trip report (which he did, the angel) and file for DUFF (which he did not, the swine) I felt fully satisfied with Rotorua and ready for the bus trip back to Auckland.

The trip back was wiled away by passing various souvenir cards back and forth for all to sign, and hastily passing a monumentally execrable jug of wine to the seat behind me every time it came by, seemingly remaining untouched by human lips since its last circuit. I read a New Zealand newspaper, coming across such delightful entries as a listing in the TV section which read "LOST IN SPACE. More fiction than science, and twice as long as it ought to be" and a personal that I forwarded down to Bruce Pelz for our mutual amusement that ran "This is to certify that Gerrard Noel Jersey Michael Keogh Peters is, and always will be, a far better card player than Mike Rose." It really doesn't take much to keep me amused.

Somehow or other Air New Zealand had fouled up the arrangements for the return home and slightly more than half the tour got another day in New Zealand. (ANZ officials were probably too busy filling little paper cups with whatever juice to schedule us properly.) The decision as to who wanted to go when having already been made during our bus tour, we trundled out to the airport for a group photo and to deposit those departing early. ANZ had fouled up again (probably too busy filling their aerosol disinfectants) and come up four seats short so the airport was a typical scene of upset, panic and tears. Eventually we were forced to leave Chairman Don quoting FAA regulations at the officials and were bussed to the Logan Park Hotel, a pleasant hotel in the middle of Auckland's suburbs with nary a store or restaurant for two miles around it. It didn't leave us much to do on our last night in the antipodes except contemplate the mysteries of life in foreign climes where the numbers on the telephones go backward and there are separate controls for the shower and bath. We ended up playing cards, sipping scotch and talking with Rusty and Jackie Simpson as Tucker snored in drunken contentment beside us. Not a bad way of passing an evening when you get down to it.

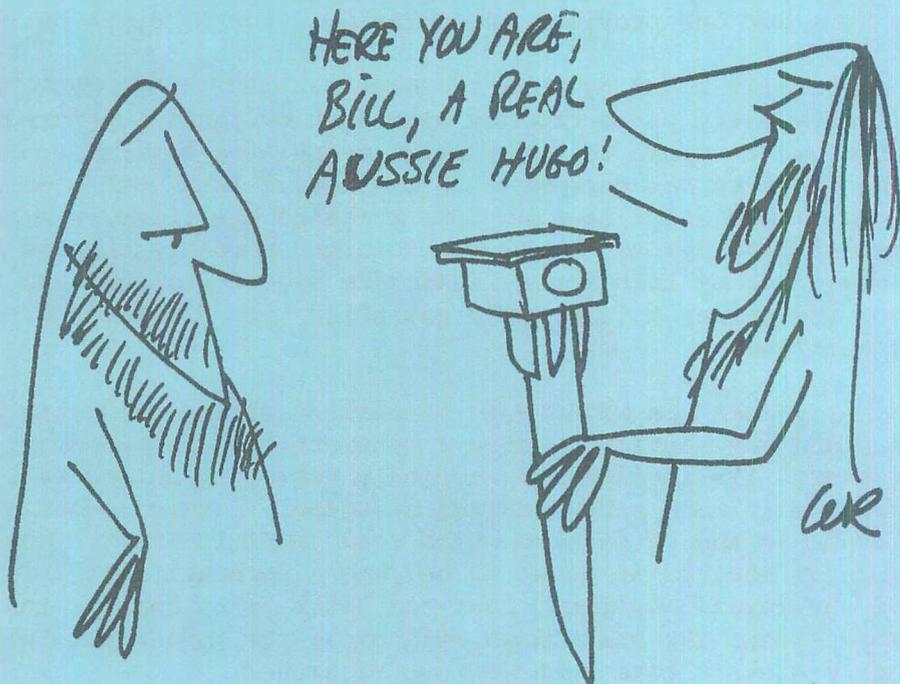
The next day was Sunday, August 31st and we were to leave Auckland that evening at 8 pm. After a farcical hassle with the hotel, several of us managed to catch a free courtesy bus to downtown Auckland which eventually deposited us almost back at our original Travelodge location. Unfortunately for us, only souvenir shops stay open in Auckland on Sunday, so Sheryl and I wandered around killing a few hours, stopping at the Duty Free store, and meeting the Sims and the Hickmans every time we turned a corner. My first trip Down Under wound down with a whimper, not a bang.

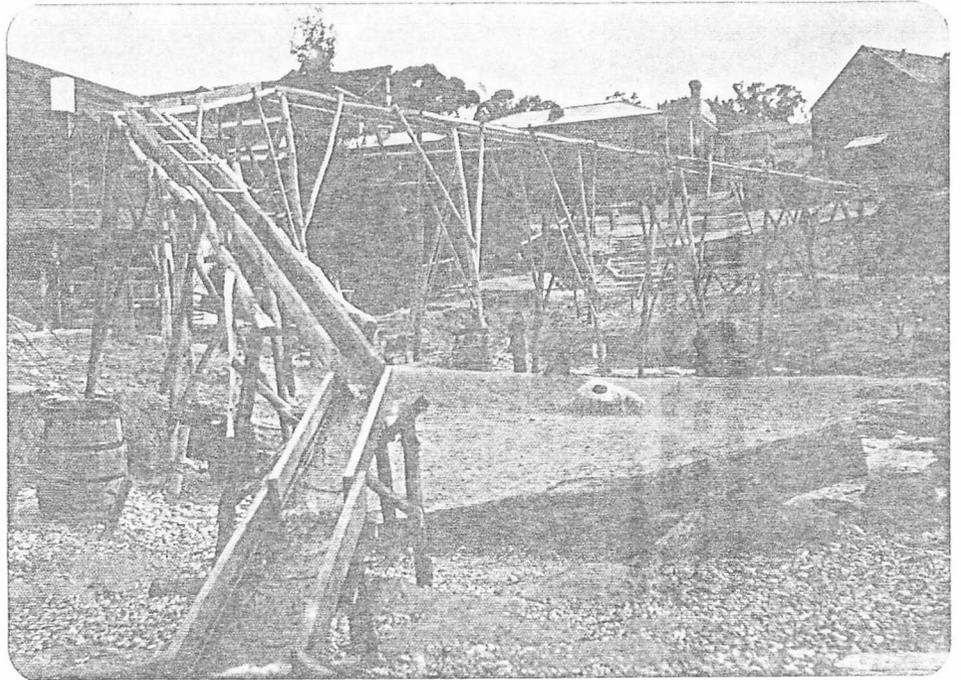
We actually made it to and through the airport and onto the plane with remarkably little confusion and a minimum of delay. But of course my two Hugos set off the metal detector.

The Hugo rockets had been shipped to Melbourne from Toronto, assembled onto the bases there and most of them - hell, all of them - then went back to the US. I'd volunteered to carry two with me, one for Harlan Ellison and the other for Bill Rotsler. (Sentimental though it may be, I considered it a unique honour to be the one to actually present Bill with his long-overdue award.) Naturally, the officials unwrapped each of them from the pillow cases I'd stolen from the Logan to protect the rockets on their transcontinental voyage, then unscrewed each rocket from its base and inspected them minutely.

Eventually satisfied they wouldn't explode and realizing I was too puny to use one as a bludgeon, they let me board the plane.

There was little about the flight back that we hadn't already experienced coming in. The same frequent juice, the spraying of the cabin, the wonderful cheap drinks, the fine meals, the beautiful four-colour embossed souvenir menus, the hot towels to revitalize us before each meal, the many Smooooths; all the paraphernalia of international travel.





At LA's NASFIC three famous fans get together for the first time. On the left, vivacious and attractive Rose Hogue. In the middle, obviously up to no good, a short, nefarious Dave Locke. On the right, an animated Sheryl Birkhead saying, "You don't have to stand on tiptoe, Dave, you're among friends."

Part of the actual reconstruction of the gold-mining facilities of Sovereign Hill, Ballarat.

An impressive array of hardware graces the table in front of the spot where Harlan Ellison gave his NASFIC GoH speech. Seven Hugos, a pair of Nebulas and an out-of-shot Edgar impress passersby.

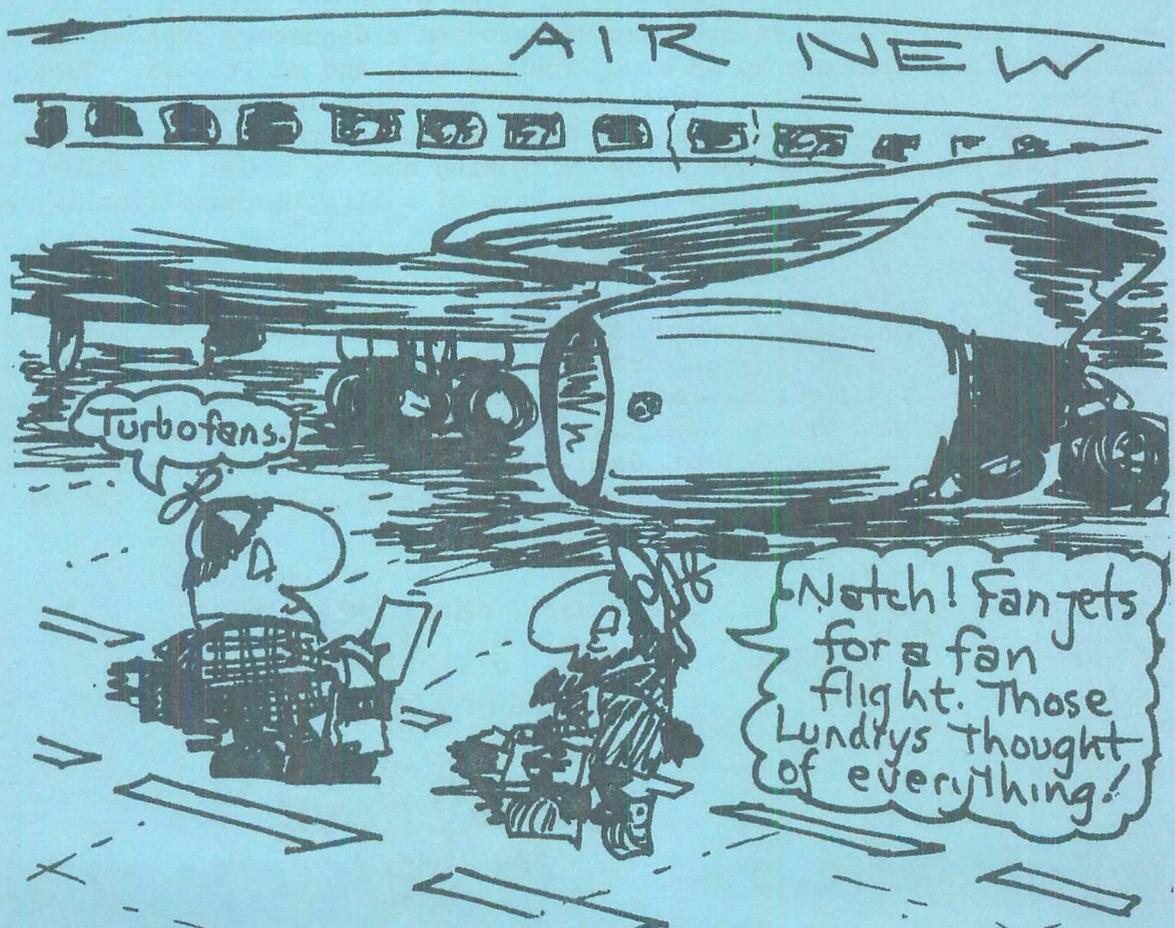
Table 6 at the 33rd World SF Convention in Melbourne, Australia, August 1975. On the left, a beautifully gowned Sheryl Birkhead. Next to her, George Turner, Australian sf critic considered by many to be the best serious writer in fandom but unknown to most North Americans (and likely to remain so after this picture) followed by Sally Bangsund, peering somewhat apprehensively towards the john and her John. Two bottles of Ballantine's IPA mark the place of the male half of the Fan GoH.

THE MIDDLE OF THE END took place at the NASFIC in Los Angeles. After deplaning in Honolulu to breeze through American customs (and watch a most magnificent sunrise as the blindingly bright sun rose over the mountains of Hawaii) we flew on to LA. (There is vast sign at the head of the runway of the Honolulu International Airport that advises **TURN RIGHT AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE AFTER TAKE-OFF**: I'll always wonder if there's a mate to it somewhere on the side of the mountain that looms over the runway reading **WE TOLD YOU!** for pilots foolish enough to ignore the suggestion.)

Finally back at the Marriott Hotel, groggy from fatigue and jet lag, hot and sweaty from impatiently waiting for luggage at LA International, we are tossed once more into the maelstrom of a convention. For me, at least, the resulting adrenalin rush carried me through the next twenty four hours. (We left Auckland at about 8:20 Sunday evening and thanks to the wonders of Canadian-created Standard Time we arrived in Los Angeles at 3:40 Sunday afternoon. I thought it decent of them to arrange it so we'd see just enough of NASFIC to enjoy it without getting bored, as those who'd been there for a couple of days already were.)

Stepping into the middle of a convention, especially on a coast you don't often get to, is a pretty frantic experience, and the first few minutes at NASFIC whirled by in a bewildering collage of friendly faces and excited greetings. But one memory towers above them all: I shall never forget the awesome figure of Mike Glycer striding through the convention floor, a chilled six-pack of Coors held high above his head, pretending not to see me as he boomed out "Beergram for Mike Glicksohn, beergram for Mike Glicksohn." Never was a parched and desperate world traveller so glad to see a faned he owed a column to!

NASFIC could easily provide enough material for an entire fanzine, but this report is going to end on the next page, so a little self-restraint is in order. One of the first people I met there was Bill Rotsler, and it was a delight to present him with



his Hugo. His obvious pleasure at receiving it made trundling it around with me all worthwhile. I still had Harlan's Hugo, but NASFIC Chairman Chuck Crayne suggested I present it at the banquet honouring Harlan that evening, so I spent the rest of the afternoon drinking and talking with my friends and avoiding Harlan to preserve the surprise.

Compressing an entire con into twelve hours makes for a remarkably dense series of experiences, and NASFIC to me is a series of snapshots, frozen moments of fanning. Re-meeting Dave Locke, who is *still* shorter than I; getting my fannish dictionary from Elst Weinstein and my erotic portfolio from Alicia Austin; David Gerrold telling me the Ben Bova script in my Joe Haldeman fanzine violates Paramount copyright; conversations with Rotsler and Silverberg about being a toastmaster because of a series of incidents I left out of this report; meeting Rose Hogue and introducing a talkative but shy young lady to some of her paper friends; final, sadly happy quiet moments with Mary Beth and Bob and Walt and Sheryl; and, eventually, fortified with a couple of martinis because I'm *still* a petrified public speaker, materializing out of the back of a crowded banquet hall to present a surprised and delighted Harlan Ellison with one, genuine, upside down Australian Hugo.

Harlan gave a fine, angry speech about writing, and writers, and ego, maturity and ambition and deserved the standing ovation he received. And the con party was a fine one, with much good drink, many fine people, and the chance to talk to Jack Williamson, and listen to George Clayton Johnson and hear Harlan and Roger Sims reminisce about the monstrous excesses of their fannish youth together. Much later I would wander from party to party saying goodbye to many dear friends, sadly aware that the end is very near indeed.

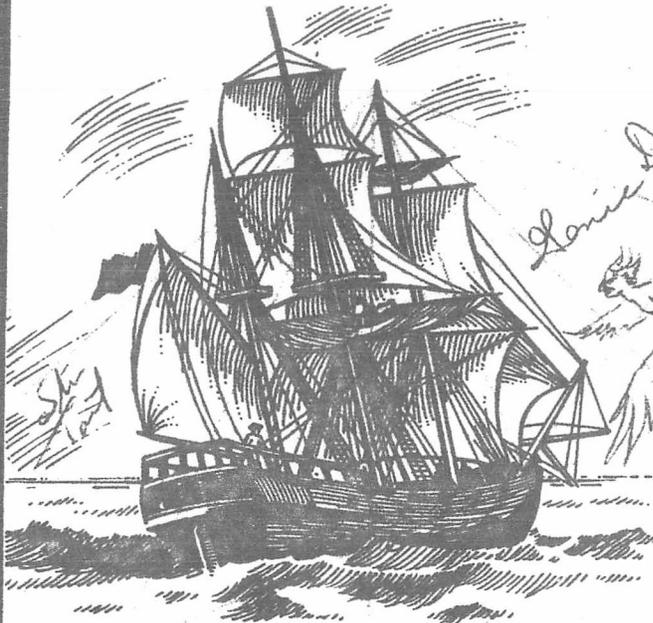
Of Labour Day there is little to say. An early morning wake-up call, a bus to the airport, the eerie sight of seven planes vanishing into the fog as they trundle down the runway ahead of us, then Los Angeles disappears into the smog as we get airborne and the six-year old boy across the aisle from me reassuringly pats the hand of his petrified mother. A five hour flight filled with sleep but interrupted by steak and lobster salad and, finally, an overcast Toronto and a desultory customs check by an official whose main interest is an empty Fosters can. And so it goes. Twenty six days and twenty thousand miles and untold memories after leaving home I arrive back at 141 High Park to find three paintings have fallen off the wall and the ceiling in the living room has collapsed and water is leaking onto my couch. The real world is once more in command and the dream and the trip of a lifetime have finally reached

THE END

This belated and inadequate report is dedicated to the people who made the trip a high point of my life; Sheryl Birkhead, Bob Tucker, Rusty Hevelin, Susan Wood, John Berry, John & Sally Bangsund, Leigh Edmonds & Valma Brown, Eric Lindsay, Shayne McCormack, Ron Graham, the Magic Pudding Club, John & Elizabeth Foyster, Ursula Le Guin, Mary Beth Colvin, John Alderson, Robin Johnson, Don Thompson and everybody else whose name appears in these pages. Thank you, one and all.



The boomerang beanie
means I'll return
to Australia...
some day.
SYDNEY COVE
IN '88!



This Certificate issued in Commemoration of an Historical Event, namely in that the Traveller of the Air, whose name is entered below

Louise D. Morrison

Gad Harton
MIKE GLICKSON

Denny Fin

Paul Kirk

Has Crossed

The Dateline

Chris Callahan

Dick Ropke

Don Rumbly
Tracey Rumbly

Captain James Cook;
Pacific Navigator

Don C. Thompson

IN the self-same spirit of Discovery that led to the voyages of Captain James Cook and his subsequent crossings of the Line in the course of his Pacific Explorations

On Friday August 25th 1768, Captain James Cook, with a complement of 94 men, sailed from England in the barque 'Endeavour' to observe the transit of Venus. This and his later voyages took him to Tahiti, New Zealand, the Cook Islands, the Antarctic, Easter Island, the Marquesas, the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island and Hawaii, where he died. The South Pacific voyages of discovery over 200 years ago paved the way for daily crossings of the equator and the international dateline by the specially designed DC-8 and DC-10 fleet of Air New Zealand, which capture the friendly spirit of the very islands you will discover for yourself, or will see from the comfort of your aircraft.

Susan Wilson
Don Rumbly

Dated this day AUGUST 10 in the year 1975

John Callahan

In flight between HONOLULU and AUCKLAND

Bruce Ellis

John Hartman
Wilson Tucker

Ned Berwick

James A. R. Kevelin

Flayne Pely

AIR NEW ZEALAND

Sheryl

John Howard Finlay
John Langan

Phinnis Mellore

Jack O'Connell

Debbie

Roy

1994 11 11

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