

# *Weber Woman's Wrevenge*

February 2000

Volume 9, Number 3 (Whole number 54)



**Eric and our new motorhome**



**Jean and Eric in Airlie Beach**

---

# 1999 was a good year

by Jean Weber

When last I published this fanzine (February 1999), Eric and I had celebrated our first Christmas in our new home, I'd bought a new car, my main computer needed parts, I'd been diagnosed as developing cataracts, and I'd set up a website for my professional and fannish interests.

Since then I've been having a great time working on things like writing a book (finished in September) and starting another, starting an e-mailed newsletter for technical editors, developing my editor's web site, setting up a web-based business with Eric (an e-mailed newsletter about travel in Australia, with an associated web site), and doing a bit of travelling. Meanwhile I've been neglecting my fannish activities.

The big news is that Eric and I have bought the motorhome for our trip around Australia (see page 6).

Although I had a fair amount of paid writing and editing work during the first six months of the year, work dribbled off to very little, and all my other activities were taking up too much time, so at the end of November I decided to officially retire from the workforce.

I don't expect this to make any practical difference in my life, except that I can now draw on my super-annuation (personal retirement fund). I'll still be doing odd jobs, writing books, running my websites, traveling, and generally overextending myself as usual.

## Selling a house (and burning bridges)

In February Eric and I drove my new car to Sydney and finished cleaning out his house in preparation for selling it. The tenants expressed strong interest in buying it, but never quite got organised to do so. Eric finally told the real estate agent to

advertise the house, eventually got an offer and the sale was finalised in mid-Nov.

That was our (mainly Eric's) last tie to the Sydney region. Breaking it is an important part of our escape from the city. (And visiting the city again, despite some successful shopping and the enjoyment of seeing various friends, wasn't one of the high points of our year. We're really glad to be gone.)

## February-March trip to Sydney

We had decided to drive to Sydney in February (rather than flying) partly so we could bring back another carload of stuff, and partly to do some sight-seeing along the coast of Queensland and New South Wales. Heavy rain along most of the coast foiled that part of the plan. The first day or two driving south was fine, and then the storms arrived. We heard one day that a town (Gympie) in southern Queensland that we'd passed through the day before was now flooded. (As we'd crossed the bridge over the river, I'd remarked how high the water level looked.)

We visited friends who'd moved last year from Sydney to the Byron Bay-Ballina area and they showed us around. The rain was only spitting a bit at that point, but the wind was strong. We watched hang-gliders jumping off the famous cliff at the Byron Bay lighthouse and hanging around in the strong (but not gusty) updraft. If the people doing tandem flights for tourists hadn't been booked out that afternoon, I would have gone for a flight too. (I've never tried it.) At one point a large seabird came by and inspected the gliders, presumably decided they weren't rivals on his territory, and went away again.

We looked at a few towns and beaches along the NSW coast, but the blustery wet weather didn't encourage us to linger.

In Sydney we got quite a bit done and saw some friends. The weather was mostly good while we were there, but on our way back, the rains came again. We did stop at the interesting museum at New Italy, about 50 km south of Ballina, but didn't stay in the Ballina area.

We'd intended to look around the Gold Coast and Brisbane area a bit (and I was going to talk with some technical writing recruiters), but the rain—a heavy downpour—really put us off. After a quick visit to the Beenleigh Rum Distillery south of Brisbane, and lunch at a Sizzler's, we fled north, skipping even a visit to Bundaberg.

Near Rockhampton, about 6 hours' drive from home, the weather started to lift, and around Mackay (2 hours away) the sun came out! It was like a "welcome home" sign! Airlie Beach was hot and humid, but the air conditioning in our apartment worked and the view was wonderful (the clouds were decorative, not menacing). The Rainbow Lorikeets all flew in to demand food.

(A few days later, now the middle of March, we got torrents of rain in Airlie Beach, but I was working indoors anyway, so it didn't matter.)

## June: Townsville and north

In June Eric and I drove to Townsville (about 3-1/2 hours north of Airlie Beach) for the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's annual rally. The weather was fine for that part of the trip and the day afterwards, and we managed not to get sunburnt despite spending hours wandering about the rally looking at rigs and talking to people. Around 800

rigs showed up. Sizes ranged from converted VW kombi vans to converted Greyhound buses, and included lots of commercially-built things (like Winnebagos) as well as privately done jobs. We came away with far too many ideas, most of them incompatible with each other.

After the rally, we looked around Townsville for a day, got the car's airconditioning fixed (faulty seal), then drove up the coast to Cairns. Rain started again, and Eric had some sort of flu, so we gave up after a couple of days and went home. The wet season lasted several months longer than is considered normal, at least along the coast.

**July: Cairns, Cooktown, Atherton Tablelands**

In July, encouraged by beautiful weather and no rain expected for a week or more, we set off again to Cairns. Our excuse was to visit all the big rental companies for motorhomes and campervans, thinking that we might buy an ex-rental vehicle. When we arrived in Cairns (on a Wednesday afternoon), we learned that the Cairns Show was on Thursday and Friday, so there was no accommodation after Wed night (we'd intended to stay for at least 2 nights). We did manage to visit the major campervan rental companies (all of them located within a block of each other); that gave us plenty to think about and discuss for the rest of trip.

We drove up the coast to Mossman (on the edge of Daintree country), where we learned that the Mossman Show was on the weekend, and everything was booked from Friday night on. So instead of staying there for 2 nights, we decided to press on to Cooktown (where Eric has never been). Arrived there on Friday afternoon to discover that the Cooktown Races were on the weekend, so no rooms were available on Saturday. Meanwhile the weather continued beautiful.

We decided not to see how far we could get up the Cape York Development Road in a non-4WD vehicle, and headed back to the Atherton Tableland. In Mareeba, we finally found room at the inn (their show had been the week before) and stayed for 2 nights, doing some bushwalking on Sunday. Monday morning we decided we'd had enough (and clouds were gathering), so we drove on home.

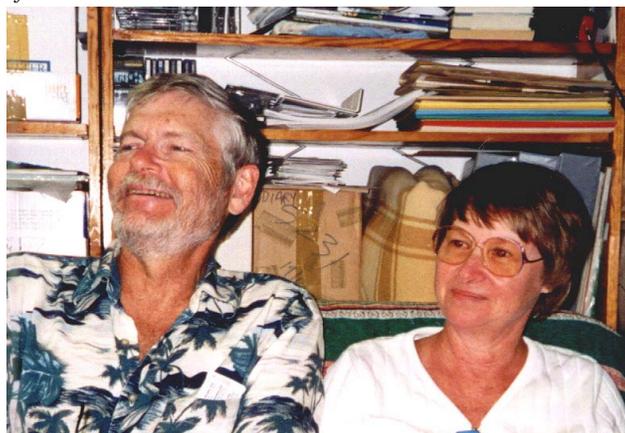
You can read more about this trip, and see a few photographs, here: <http://www.avalook.com.au/northqld/cairns99/index.htm>

That was the trip which really convinced us that we needed our own motorhome. We could have just parked in a roadside camping area (along with many other people doing the same thing) and not worried. Also, looking wistfully at the road up to Cape York, we said to each other, "We really must get a 4-wheel-drive." Thus was our fate sealed (read on...).

**August: visitors before Aussiecon**

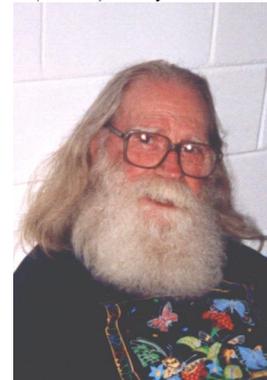
At the end of August and beginning of September, the big event was, of course, Aussiecon, preceded and followed by visits from various overseas friends. On August 16 our first visitors, Greg Benford and his companion Elisabeth Malartre, arrived. Gay and Joe Haldeman, with Rusty Hevelin in tow, arrived two days later.

*Greg Benford and Elisabeth Malartre*



*(Above) Joe and Gay Haldeman.*

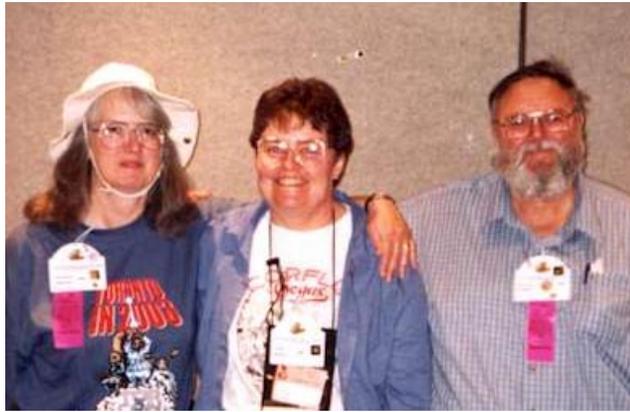
*(Below) Rusty Hevelin*



Greg is interesting, but after the Haldemans arrived, he went into lecture mode rather often, which got boring real fast. Fortunately Joe, Gay, Rusty and Elisabeth were all delightful, so I enjoyed everyone's visit. We did various touristy things, including a boat trip to some of the

islands, and ate out at some of the restaurants that Eric and I hadn't been to before (all very nice).

Elisabeth's credentials are: land use consultant and science writer with a PhD in biology. Not only was she very pleasant and interesting to talk



↑ Chris Callahan, Jean, Dick Roepke ↑

to, but she was as good as having a natural history guide visiting—she identified our "eagle" as an osprey, after it conveniently flew by (fish dinner clutched in talons) one evening, and told us interesting things about all sorts of animals, birds and insects that we encountered.

I was in the last stages of writing my book at that point, so I didn't participate in many of the daytime activities of the group, but one advantage of being visited by a collection of writers is that they understand the situation and are not offended. In fact, we celebrated Joe's completion of a book that same week, and both Joe and Greg were emailing stories and other writing to various editors.

Other celebrations that week were for Gay and Joe's wedding anniversary and Eric's and my new web-based business, Avalook.

Meanwhile we enjoyed the winter sailing season here in Airlie Beach, when the weather is extremely pleasant and hoards of southerners start fleeing the cold. We don't sail (though Eric keeps talking about joining a group); instead we watch the yacht races from our balcony.

Many winter visitors arrive in boats, but one Friday night a collection of weird cars rolled into town. They were the Variety Club's fun race, one of several annual Australian charity events involving old cars, fixed up in odd ways, travelling mostly along the back roads.

### September: Aussiecon and visitors after

We enjoyed the con and managed to avoid doing any real work on it, except for organising one party. I saw lots of old friends and many people I've corresponded with for years but never met. It was a thoroughly enjoyable week, except for getting the Melbourne flu.

After the con, we had two sets of visitors. The first were Tom Whitmore and Marci Malinowicz. Eric took them sailing and sightseeing while I worked



(Above) Eric, Jean, Jack Heneghan, Elaine Normandy

on my book and attempted to recover from the flu I'd picked up in Melbourne. One highlight of their visit was an evening at the brand-new (and only) sushi bar in Airlie Beach. We sat at the bar in front of the sushi chef (instead of at one of the tables), shared our sake with him, and maintained a running commentary about sushi. I had a great time and learned a lot, in addition to enjoying some yummy food.

A few days after Tom and Marci left, Elaine Normandy and Jack Heneghan arrived. Eric and I had a pleasant 3-day visit on a catamaran to the islands and the outer Great Barrier Reef in their company, but my



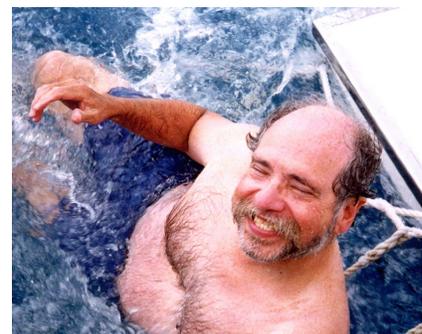
Tom Whitmore and Marci Malinowicz

throat virus had turned into an ear infection, so I wasn't feeling very chipper (I thought it was seasickness at first, despite very calm seas). I very much enjoyed the opportunity to visit with both Elaine and Jack, and I hadn't had much chance to talk with Jack before—he was away on business most of the time I was visiting Elaine a couple of years ago.

The last of our expected overseas visitors (jan howard finder) showed up in early October. I was busy finishing my book, so Eric took jan

off to show him the town and do athletic things like paddling outrigger canoes at 6 AM.

(Below) jan howard "wombat" finder



## October: My first book is launched

I managed to finish the book and get it off to the printer in Sydney on time, so I was off to Sydney again (by air this time) in late October for the annual 2-day conference of the Australian Society for Technical Communication (NSW). This year the highlight for me was launching my book at the cocktail party on the first night. I sold more copies than I'd expected to, but not as many as I'd hoped.

The bad news was that the printer did a lousy job. Fortunately I discovered this in time to have some of it fixed before the launch, but I was extremely annoyed, not least because I had not accepted the lowest quote. It's a long story; no need to go into the gory details here.

The book is titled *Electronic Editing*—to go with e(lectronic) mail and e(lectronic) commerce. It's for editors who receive and send files over the internet, edit files on their computers (instead of, or in addition to, printing them out and marking on paper), and sometimes have to work in a word processing or desktop publishing program they are not very familiar with, because that's what the client wants. So it's got some general stuff (that applies no matter what software you're using) plus several chapters on specific software, mainly gleaned from my notes from when I had to become an overnight expert on a program.

I'm marketing it through my editors' website, newsletter and internet discussion lists. The plan is to sell mainly the downloaded version (print it yourself), which is less hassle for me.

I haven't managed to find a way to get copies printed and distributed in North America. Shipping them from here costs too much, and I don't want to deal with sending out stuff any more than I have to. I'd rather pay someone to take care of that end, while I write another book.

If you're interested, visit <http://www.wrevenge.com.au/bookshop/e-edit.htm>

On 17 October I celebrated living in Australia for 25 years. Emigrating was definitely one of the best decisions I ever made.

I'm now working on a book with the working title of *Editing Online Help*. My original intention was to have it done before I left for my trip to the USA in February, but for several reasons it's dropped down the priority list and getting badly behind schedule.

## Avalook at Australia

Eric's and my new venture is a travel website named Avalook. We've been incubating this idea for some time, but finally (on that trip in July) we thought of a name that was short, memorable, and not taken. I hastily filed the forms for business name registration, and as soon as that arrived (several weeks later) I applied for the domain name. That came in quickly. Meanwhile I'd cobbled together a page for the site, so I could upload that immediately, and printed some flyers and business cards.

We've developed the site since then, but it's still rudimentary. We have a lot of material, but little time in which to organise it.

My main interest is in our e-mailed newsletter which I send out every two weeks. My original idea was for a newsletter with an associated web site, but the website is very seductive.

Real Soon Now I'll get the business plan written, especially the part about how we're going to make this venture pay for itself. We have lots of notes.

## We bought a motorhome

The big news is that Eric and I have bought the motorhome to use for our trip around Australia. The purchase followed months of discussions and searching, and weekly complete changes in the specifications we wanted. The problem was easy but the solution wasn't: we needed a small vehicle (preferably 4-wheel-drive)

with the internal dimensions of a Greyhound bus. Obviously this was impossible (Tardises not being commercially available), so we looked at compromises: large, small, expanding.... Finally, the right vehicle presented itself, so we bought it.

It's custom-built (by its previous owner) on a 4WD truck body and is approx. 27 feet long and weighs 11.5 tonnes. You can see the photo in color at <http://www.avalook.com.au/motorhom.htm>

The previous owner delivered it to us, and it's parked at a storage place nearby. Before we could legally drive it, we had to get truck drivers' licenses. It's certainly a different experience from driving my car! Other vehicles (mostly smaller) now give way to us, instead of trying to run us off the road.

## USA trip in 2000

Eric and I are attending Corflu and Potlatch in Seattle in February–March (you may have picked up this fanzine there), visiting my parents before the cons and spending a few days in Las Vegas afterwards.

## UK trip in 2001??

Eric and I are standing for GUFF, the fan fund that operates between Australia-New Zealand and Europe (mainly the UK). It typically funds a trip every two years instead of every year like DUFF and TAFF do.

## Health news

We're both fine, though the cataract in my right eye has been giving me double-vision problems. I'm booked to have the operation in March, a week after we get back from the USA. This will delay our travel plans because I'm not allowed to go into dusty conditions for at least six weeks after the operation—that eliminates most of outback Australia!

---

## Books

Notes by Jean Weber



---

### Stephen Baxter, *Voyage*, 1997

An alternative history of US space exploration. What if President Kennedy had lived? The US could have sent a human mission to Mars in the 1980s. This book examines that scenario, focussing on several individuals, including Ralph Gershon (a black Vietnam fighter pilot), Natalie York (a female geologist/astronaut), and others. The actions of various NASA and US federal government bureaucrats are examined, making clear to anyone who doesn't already know, that decisions are often made for political reasons, not technical ones. Natalie learns firsthand about that; although she outperforms many of the men in the astronaut testing program, she's not seriously considered for the Mars mission because she's female. (In real life, most of the women who were tested outperformed the men on several tests, but were passed over -- the times were not yet right for accepting women in certain roles.)

The characters were so well developed that I got sucked right into the story, not that I needed much encouragement, given my enthusiasm for space projects. But I could certainly get involved with the teeth-grinding frustration of those who were ready to go, but were stymied by politics, funding cuts, and bureaucracy.

---

### Stephen Baxter, *Titan*, HarperCollins, 1997, ISBN 0006498116

A "future history" of US space exploration, focused on the people and politics of a human mission to Titan, after NASA's Cassini probe finds evidence of interesting things (possibly including life) there in 2004. Much of the book takes place on the trip to Titan, or on the moon itself, but the chapters are interspersed with flashbacks to the participants, their families, and various political figures, NASA bureaucrats, Chinese and other cosmonauts as well as Americans.

As in *Voyage*, the mix of political and technical issues is clear. This book points out how much can be done with current technology, reusing bits of leftover equipment, and so on, thus cutting costs dramatically; and how much stress is put on people by the process of bidding for a US government contract, then fulfilling the contract, particularly when a lot of powerful people want the program to fail.

---

### Gregory Benford, *Foundation's Fear*, HarperPrism, 1997, ISBN 0061056383 and Greg Bear, *Foundation and Chaos*, HarperPrism, 1998, ISBN 0061052426

Two novels written in Isaac Asimov's Foundation universe and more-or-less in Asimov's style. They're quite enjoyable even if you haven't read the originals.

---

### Ben Bova, *Moonrise*, Avon, 1996, ISBN 0380786974, and *Moonwar*, Avon, 1998, ISBN 0380786982

Moonbase is built by a corporation, not by a government; it's the dream of Paul Stavenger and his wife, Joanna Masterson, to establish a viable business in space. Moonbase cannot exist without nanotechnology, but important forces on Earth adamantly oppose any use of nanotech. As nation after nation signs the treaty banning nanotech, Moonbase is left with a very fragile legal existence.

Greg Masterson, Joanna's first son, is a psychotic young man who hates his stepfather, is opposed to Moonbase, and is distressed by the birth of Paul and Joanna's son Doug, whom he sees as a rival. Greg plots for years to destroy his stepfather's dream, while Doug is enthusiastic about frontiers, the Moon, nanotech, and other visionary ideas. By the end of the first book, *Moonbase* (under Doug's leadership) has declared its independence, thus setting the stage for armed intervention by the United Nations.

The second book takes us through the attempted UN takeover, foiled by some quite clever tricks on the part of the mostly unarmed Moonbase colonists—not all of whom are delighted with being cut off from any possibility of returning to Earth.

I enjoyed both of these books immensely, not least because I am an enthusiast for private capital developing moon- and space-based business ventures.

---

### Lois McMaster Bujold, *Komarr, Baen*, 1998, ISBN 0671578081

Subtitled "A Miles Vorkosigan Adventure", this book really ought to be called a romance. Bujold fans will be familiar with the life of Miles, and the fact that he's loved several women, all of whom have left him for various good reasons of their own (often connected to their reluctance to be sucked into the Vor system on Miles' home planet Barrayar). In this book, while investigating problems on the planet Komarr (in his role as Imperial Auditor), Miles meets an intelligent, educated Vor woman from Barrayar and further complicates his already complicated life. The usual suspects are trying to kill him, he's trying to unravel the plot (who is doing the bad deeds, and why?), and he's falling in love at the same time. All told in Bujold's usual well-worded and ironic style. Most enjoyable reading!

---

**Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower, Warner, 1993, ISBN 0446601977**

I had put off rereading this book for years, because I mostly don't read novels set in a dying American social structure. They're usually too preachy or depressing or stereotyped. If the characters improve the situation, it's contrived; if they don't, it's not upbeat enough for my taste.

Octavia Butler has managed to write a book that avoids all these pitfalls. It starts out showing the good and bad points of a collapsing social structure, and how various people react to that situation. The main character, a girl named Lauren Olamina, develops a vision of survival and becomes a leader of a not-quite-cult, yet she never seems "too good to be true" or overly contrived.

I could relate to the characters in this book much more than I could relate to those in Butler's earlier books. I look forward to reading the later books in this series.

---

**Charles de Lint, Trader, Tor, 1997, ISBN 0812551575**

Two men wake up in each other's body. One (Max Trader) is a talented musician and guitar-maker, the other (Johnny Devlin) a charming scoundrel and loser. Johnny immediately takes advantage of his improved situation, while Max is left to attempt to pick up some pieces of his life. Max's friends and Johnny's ex-girlfriend know something's wrong, even if no one else will believe them. Fortunately for Max, Jilly comes into the story. Jilly is a character from previous de Lint tales, a person with contacts in the otherworld, a person included to believe the most outrageous things are possible, because she's seen some unbelievable things herself. Other troubled people move through the story, interacting with Max, Johnny or Jilly; all are people who need to overcome their fears, accept their pasts, and -- most importantly -- move on. Several of them succeed in their

efforts; their stories touch the reader, as do most stories told by de Lint.

---

**William Gibson, Idoru, Berkley, 1996, ISBN 0425158640**

Another novel exploring the meeting of reality and virtuality, set in 21st century Tokyo. Rei Toei is the idoru, a beautiful, entirely virtual media star. Rez is a human singer who intends to marry Rei. Chia is a 14-year-old fan of Rez; she's heard he might be in trouble and wants to help. Colin Laney is a talented searcher for obscure patterns of information. They all come together in a somewhat complicated story which I quite enjoyed.

---

**George R.R. Martin, A Clash of Kings, HarperCollins, 1998, TPB, ISBN 0002256681**

George Martin's writing has the rare ability to suck me completely into a story that I otherwise would have no interest in. His characterisations are excellent, and all the details of the settings very interesting, yet the action moves right along and holds my interest thoroughly.

The characters are what makes the book for me. So many fantasy novels have stereotyped characters that bore me within a few pages; George's characters are so varied, and so *real*, that I want to know what happens to them. I also know that the good guys won't necessarily live, or the bad guys die, so I keep turning the pages with total fascination.

---

**Anne McCaffrey, Freedom's Challenge, Corgi, 1998, ISBN 0552146277**

The third (and last?) in the Catteni series, after Freedom's Landing and Freedom's Choice, this book is lightweight but enjoyable -- the sort of book I like to read on an otherwise boring plane flight. Just enough action and characterisation to make it interesting, but not a whole lot to think about. (And possibly it's not a good

idea to think about it too much, lest you notice the flaws.)

You can read this book without having read the others, as the first few pages neatly sum up the situation. A bunch of bad guys had dropped several shiploads of people (both human and several species of extraterrestrials) on a planet, to survive or die by their own actions. The castaways (who call their planet Botany) have done very well for themselves and have also discovered that the planet had been colonised in the long-ago past by some other spacefarers, whom they call the "Farmers".

By this book the Botany inhabitants are fighting back against the bad guys, with a little help from the Farmers. Of course, not all the Botanists agree on what to do, or who should do it, so there's a bit of infighting going on as well as the bigger campaign against the bad guys.

---

**Anne McCaffrey, The MasterHarper of Pern, 1998**

Pern fans will be delighted to read the story of MasterHarper Robinton, an important character in many of the original books in the series. His past and its sorrows were mentioned in passing in other books, just enough for fans to want to know the full story. In keeping with the series, Robinton's story is both sad and uplifting, and the main characters are ones most readers can empathise with. Here's a child with a talent that surpasses his father's, a father who is too busy and preoccupied to pay attention to his son. Others in the Harper Hall take over Robinton's education and musical training, and he progresses unusually swiftly. During his postings at various holds, he meets or becomes aware of a variety of characters that occupied center stage in other books. You don't need to know any of the other stories to enjoy and appreciate this one, but if you've read them all, you'll keep recognising names, places and events.

---

**Elizabeth Moon, Phases, Baen, 1997, ISBN 0671878557**

Short story collection from this excellent writer, who handles both science fiction and fantasy with great skill. This collection includes stories originally published from 1986 to 1995. Most of them have quite clever twists in the end of the tale, some are serious, and some are hilarious. Just a minor warning: some of the stories were also included in the previous collection titled *Lunar Activity*; I commend the publisher for mentioning this on the back cover of the book.

---

**Linda Nagata, The Bohr Maker, Bantam, 1995, ISBN 0553569252**

The Maker is banned technology; it allows users to control and change others' moods and emotions and to reprogram their own genetic structure. Now it's been stolen, by a man with only weeks to live, and has fallen into the hands of a young woman in the slums, who soon becomes known as a miracle worker. The authorities, of course, want to kill them and all their associates. Others want to use the Maker to save and extend lives, improve the world, and live on other planets (some already live in space stations).

I found this book full of fascinating ideas, some of them quite distasteful, but the story never quite came together for me. Perhaps it will for you.

---

**Rebecca Ore, Slow Funeral, Tor, 1994, ISBN 0812516044**

Maude Fuller is a modern hippie dropout in Berkeley, California, living off welfare (she pretends to be insane, rather than facing the fact that she's really a witch), when she gets a mental "call" to return to her home in Virginia, where her grandmother is dying. Back in Virginia, she tries (but fails) to not get caught up in the politics of the area's witches. Her grandmother is one of the matriarchs, and Maude's parents are dead, so it's Maude's destiny to inherit her

grandmother's place in the local feuds. She, of course, resists (as well as she can) getting sucked into the feuds, but she feels obligated to take care of her grandmother, rather than allow her enemies to defeat her. Maude's magical powers are strong, but untrained, so she has mixed success.

A Berkeley engineer boyfriend later joins her in Virginia. Technology is useful against magic, but he's easily sucked in by the glamour of witchcraft and doesn't believe he's in any danger. Maude feels she must protect him, even when he's being a macho fool and resisting protection.

The book's an enjoyable read as well as a serious study of one woman's coming to terms with herself, her abilities, her background, her family, and her responsibilities -- what they are and what they are not -- with a bit of the bigger questions of good vs. evil tossed in for seasoning.

---

**S.M. Stirling, Island in the Sea of Time, Roc, 1998, ISBN 0451456750 and Against the Tide of Years, 1999, ISBN 0451457439**

The island of Nantucket (off the coast of Massachusetts) is suddenly transported from 1998 into the past (around 1250 BC). How will the residents survive? The author has chosen a semi-isolated place with a high proportion of well-educated people, many of whom are very knowledgeable about things that turn out to have high survival value (at more than subsistence level). In addition to food, clothing and shelter, the residents must cope with the inhabitants of the rest of the world, who have a decidedly different view of human social relationships from most of us today. Of course there's a certain proportion of people who can't cope with the situation, or think they have an answer to a problem without any knowledge of the real problem, or are entirely too quick to take advantage of a situation rather than helping with the survival of the wider community.

The people of 1250 are quite varied, ranging from the civilisations of the Mediterranean, the islands of Ireland and England, and the American continents. Stirling's done a great job with the characters: the reader can get a good idea of the way people lived and interacted, and appreciate that many people could quickly grasp the principles behind technology only a bit advanced from their own; once they realised something could be done, they could learn how to do it.

I really enjoyed these books, each of which could stand on its own as a novel. I'm looking forward to more books in this series.

---

**Sheri S. Tepper, Six Moon Dance, Avon EOS, 1998, ISBN 0380791986**

Another of Tepper's books featuring unusual social arrangements related to an imbalance in the numbers of males and females in a society; mysterious environmental happenings (earthquakes, volcanoes awakening, etc), possibly related to the alignment of the six moons around the planet of Newholme; a cyborg Questioner from the Council of Worlds who comes to investigate rumours of improper conduct in the human society and possibly native sentients; some very odd creatures (people?) in the outback; the natives themselves, which most humans don't see; and various other goings-on.

I've enjoyed all of Tepper's ecological and sociological tales, despite (and sometimes because of) her habit of making the bad guys (usually men) really awful and engaged in deep, dark conspiracies against other people (usually women), and despite the occasional really sadistic person who enjoys hurting other people. This book is a bit different in terms of who some of the conspirators and the sadists are, and who are victims of whom, but the aliens fill a similar role of "the other" against which humankind needs to compare itself. The book definitely held my interest, but those who

haven't liked Tepper's other recent novels probably won't like this one.

---

**Joan D. Vinge, *Dreamfall*, Warner, 1996, ISBN 0446604011**

Following on from earlier novels *Psion* and *Catspaw*, this book finds Cat studying the cloud-whales of the planet Refuge. To complicate his life thoroughly, the "natives" of Refuge are Hydrans, and Cat is half Hydran, half Terran. So he can't stop getting caught up in the planet's politics. Worse, at the end of *Catspaw*, Cat chose to lose his psi powers, so he's sneered at by both sides. Can he regain his psi ability? Does he want to, or is the fear still too strong? If he can't bring himself to try to help the Hydrans, what about the cloud-whales, which are threatened by human activities on the planet?

---

**Tess Williams, *Map of Power*, Random House, 1996, ISBN 0091833280**

This book is set approximately 300 years in the future, after nuclear and environmental catastrophe in the 21st century. It focuses on a tribe in Antarctica, more people in southwestern Western Australia, and a group on a space station (wheel) in Moon orbit. The latter tend a gene

bank of Earth organisms and are having a lot of suicides and other mental-illness symptoms. Kass's story is hard to follow (she isn't very coherent), but she's been having telepathic experiences.

Cheela and Morgan are each different from the other members of their groups. She's better characterised than he is, though the motivations of each seem clear; especially Morgan, who likes gadgets. His ability to get old technology working seems unrealistic to me and his thoughts about women (near the end of the book) had no precursors in the story.

Are other groups alive on Earth? There are hints of them and hints of all sorts of things. The Antarctic group are very set in their ways (and believe in a "Spirit" that causes all good and bad events). The Western Australian group are religious Luddites, with other groups (or their leaders) in the area more eager to rediscover (and misuse) technology.

The three groups are drawn together in a complex, yet stereotyped, story. Kass's situation reminded me of Trish Sullivan's *Lethe*. This post-disaster story's only original element is its setting. It wasn't deep, complex or gripping (at least not to me), although

it's better than some first novels. Many bits of the story could have been developed into something compelling, but were left too simple and superficial. This is probably the result of trying to tell three stories; one done in more depth would have made a better novel, though of course not telling the story Williams wanted to tell.

---

**Connie Willis, *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, Bantam, 1998, ISBN 0553575384**

The 1999 Hugo winner, this book demonstrates Willis' usual madcap wit and style. It's a time travel story, intertwining the fools and manipulators in modern academic (and similar) bureaucracies, the competent but confused time travellers, and a collection of people in the 1940's, some of whose activities bear an odd resemblance to Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book, but I suspect I would have found at least one extra level of action and meaning if I were more familiar with *Three Men in a Boat*. Even without that, it was a great romp and well written as are all of Willis' works.

---

## Book reviews

by Ellie Miller



---

**Greg Bear, *Darwin's Radio*, Ballantine, 1999, ISBN 034542333X**

Ray Bradbury once defined Science Fiction as a "logical extension of reality." In *Darwin's Radio*, Hugo and Nebula Award winner Greg Bear has chosen to explore the possibility of extending our biological parameters one step beyond where we are now in order to consider a logically plausible what-if? in the evolutionary process. That he was able to make his extraordinary concept believably acceptable to this ordinary layperson is a tribute to his brilliance both as a writer and as a scientist.

One of the problems that I've always had with so-called "hard core" science fiction is trying to comprehend the amount of highly technical

information which an author needs to incorporate into his text in order to justify his fictional premises. I can't honestly say that *Darwin's Radio* is an easy read, but it is most certainly a fascinating one. One of Mr. Bear's gifts as a writer, I believe, is his ability to create characters and situations which are so utterly realistic that they make his readers want to understand...want to become involved...because what he has to say about them swiftly becomes immediately and personally meaningful to us. By the time I was only a few chapters into *Darwin's Radio*, I was experiencing this kind of involvement. Once I had

done so, I literally could not put the book down.

What if? there were a kind of eons-old trigger implanted in our genetic structure that might be activated involuntarily if/when the world humankind has shaped for itself becomes too stressful and difficult to endure? A trigger which might possibly initiate a more evolved form of the species that could? Three highly diverse discoveries... Neanderthal corpses with a "difference," perfectly preserved in the ice of the Austrian Alps, discovered by failed archeologist Mitch Rafelson; the corpses of murdered, pregnant women, buried in a mass grave in Georgia, examined by virologist Kaye Lang; a weird strain of flu affecting pregnant females and causing them to miscarry, tracked down by disease hunter Christopher Dicken... put together, add up to this frighteningly logical conclusion, and once the connection has been made, this gripping novel concerns itself with its terrifying consequences.

(To me, one of the more frightening aspects of the book is Mr. Bear's dystopic approach to our government's attempts to deal with the crisis. The kind of brutal cynicism and political maneuvering that he predicates cuts entirely to close to the bone given some of the realities to be found in today's headlines.)

And yet the ultimate results of such a transition do not leave us utterly devoid of hope. I don't think I could have handled it had they done so. Rather, as Mr. Bear concludes in his introduction: "We may be leaping into darkness...but the light at the end of that darkness could be very bright indeed!" I found it to be so...for Kaye and Mitch and Stella and, above all, for humankind.

---

**Diane Duane, *The Book of Night With Moon*, Warner, 1999, ISBN 0446606332 and *To Visit the Queen*, Warner, 1999, TPB, ISBN 0446673188**

Actually, it's been almost two years now since Diane Duane first published *The Book of Night With Moon*. Recently, I reread it preparatory to reading its sequel, *To Visit the Queen*, and once I'd gulped that down, I thought, damn! time and past time to spread the word!

By me, there are very few really well-done novels which are entirely focused around animal protagonists: Paul Gallico's *The Abandoned*, Richard Adams' *Watership Down* and Gabriel King's *The Wild Road* are the only ones that I can immediately bring to mind. However, Diane Duane's two intricately-conceived, superbly-readable cat fantasies are easily good enough to stand with any or all of those classics and, given half a chance, should enthrall even hardcore ailurophobes. Needless to say, I'd call them must reading for cat-lovers.

They are essentially premised around a mythos... a language... and enough cat-oriented sensitivity to nuances to make you want to move bag and baggage into the alternate New York City wherein Ms. Duane has placed her action. Here, wizardry is real and there are people and there are People: People, of course, being cats. Further, these cats are Wizards, charged under oath by the Powers of Light to stand against Darkness and the evil Lone One. The first novel introduces Rhiow, a pampered housecat; alley tom, Urruah; the neurotic tortoiseshell, Saash and the feral kitten, Arhu. They are the appointed Guardians of the World Gates... webs of magical threads... that exist just below Grand Central Station and permit instantaneous travel among the multiverse of worlds by those wizards having the Light's business in other times and places.

When *The Book of Night With Moon* opens, there has been a strange warpage in the fabric of these Gates (not unlike "a disturbance in the Force") which our cat friends eventually have to trace back to its subterranean source and contain before an ancient Evil can break

through into modern day New York, destroying everything in its path.

"To Visit the Queen" continues their adventures, this time taking them to present-day London where a deliberately-set, malfunctioning Gate has become a time slide, dragging innocent humans carrying potentially deadly technological knowledge into the past and thus threatening to unleash nuclear devastation upon the world of today. If our cats can't rewrite that history in time to stop the Lone One before his plan for world devastation is effected, there will be no this history to record.

Lots of real nail-biting suspense here and, again, Ms. Duane's sure hand with characterization makes this a powerful and equally engrossing follow-up to what I can only hope will be an extended series of adventures featuring Rhiow and Company.

---

**Suzy McKee Charnas, *The Kingdom of Kevin Malone*, Harcourt Brace, 1997, ISBN 0152011919**

I know that I'm probably in the minority, but, for some reason, I've always enjoyed and preferred Ms. Charnas' so-called YA novels to her darker, more dystopic, adult SF and vampire novels. *The Kingdom of Kevin Malone* seems deceptively simple on the surface... lots of standard what Kirkus Reviews calls "mole and troll fantasy" elements... but its real-life characters and their equally real concerns stayed with me long after I'd put the book down.

When the story begins, streetwise, New York-teenager Amy's life is in turmoil. Her work-obsessed father has accepted a new job which will mean relocating the family to California; her best friend Rachel seems to be pushing her away in favor of "creepy" Claudia, and her closest adult friend, her cousin Shelly, has just died from a simple hospital procedure gone tragically amiss. While the family is still sitting shiva, she slips out of that emotionally-charged atmosphere to go roller-skating with Rachel in Central

Park where she encounters Kevin Malone, a juvenile delinquent and bully from her childhood, who suddenly sticks a jeweled pin... a gift from her cousin that he had stolen from her years before... into her sleeve and takes off. Like Alice after the White Rabbit, she pursues him into one of the Park's pedestrian tunnels only to suddenly find herself in another world which exists parallel to and just below it. Out of his own anger and misery at his brutally-abusive father's mistreatment of him as a child, Kevin has created a magical kingdom there based on bits and pieces of fantasy novels that he's read and his own dark imaginings.

Now he is trapped by his own creation. A la *Forbidden Planet*, the "monsters of the id" have risen against him, and, by the rules of fantasy, he must now become a hero, cleanse his world of the evil which he has unwittingly created and restore order to Fayre Farre. But he needs Amy's help. This trip was his last opportunity to visit the real world, so she is now his only link to a seemingly trivial souvenir from his childhood... still hidden there... that will transform itself into a magical sword in this alternate universe. As the jacket blurb puts it: "Amy agrees to help Kevin save Fayre Farre (but) before she can save his world, she must first save Kevin - a person she doesn't even like".

Frankly, I'm a sucker for coming-of-age novels, and this one really worked for me. Amy and her friends...especially maladjusted, arrogant Kevin... are beautifully-conceived and thoroughly believable, and I found myself caring intensely about what happened to all of them. Ms. Charnas uses her fantasy world adroitly as a device to address real-life problems of loss, alienation and abuse, and becoming an active part of their successful resolution gave me a great deal of pleasure.

---

**Nicola Griffith, *The Blue Place*, Avon, 1999, TPB, ISBN 0380790882**

Beautifully-crafted with a fast-moving plot, erotically-evocative characters and a vivid sense of locale, Lambda Award-winning SF writer Nicola Griffith has temporarily abandoned SF for the thriller noir genre and written a real nail-biter of a suspense novel. In many ways, it reminds me of Peter Hoeg's international best-seller, *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, though, in some respects, I think that this a much stronger/better book. Ms. Griffith is in rare form here, and I got so involved with her characters and plot premise that I pretty much gulped this beautifully-crafted novel down in one sitting.

The "blue place" of its title refers to the arctic mindset that engulfs its heroine, Aud Torvingen... former police lieutenant, recently retired and taking occasional cases as a private investigator... whenever she's forced to kill. An intensely complex woman, child of a failed marriage between a Scandinavian diplomat and an American businessman, Aud is death-obsessed and trying to find some meaning in her life when the novel opens.

Although she's the product of a European childhood... Norway and the UK, her father's recent death has left her independently wealthy, and she has chosen Atlanta as her home. One stormy April night while she's out walking, she literally runs head-on into a beautiful woman at a street corner. After they have disentangled themselves and parted, a house behind Aud bursts into flames, and she sees the woman running frantically towards the source of the blaze. Immediately thereafter, she vanishes in the confusion of the fire only to reappear a day or so later seeking Aud's help in discovering the cause of the explosion which has destroyed a valuable painting and killed an old friend.

Julia Lyons-Bennet is an international consultant and dealer in fine art, and the man who died in the

arson-generated destruction of his home was an art historian whom she had asked to authenticate the canvas which she had sold some years before as genuine but... on the eve of its resale...now believes to be a fraud. Aud reluctantly agrees to take the case, and, during the course of their investigation, the two women first become friends and then, eventually, lovers and soul-mates. Together they uncover a massive conspiracy of art fraud, drug smuggling and money laundering on an international level which puts them directly at risk from ruthless, professional killers as the stakes escalate in a terrifying game of cat and mouse that ultimately forces Aud back into her "blue place" from high atop a Norwegian glacier in a desperate race-against-time to save both of their lives. Great book! Great read... don't miss it!

You can read more of Ellie's book reviews at <http://www.wrevenge.com.au/bookshop/booksf.htm>



*A sulphur-crested cockatoo in the tree outside our apartment*

---

## Trip to Aussiecon

by Lyn McConchie

I fled the area [Norsewood, New Zealand] August 30th. Tiger [one of Lyn's cats] spotted my case in the kitchen and put two and two together. Then he sat by it and howled. I could translate that. "She's going AWWWAAAY. It isn't FAAAIIIRR." But Dianne arrived with her car and we left Tiger lamenting. Fast trip to the local airport. Quiet flight [to Auckland].

I collected my baggage, and caught a taxi for my sister's place. She'd been shopping and arrived back with Sarah, my adult niece about ten minutes before I did.

Tuesday was the busy day. I took a taxi to the TV studios, was dusted once over lightly with powder so I wouldn't glow, lipsticked with a neutral color to make my mouth stand out a little and then, to quote Chris, "had my fluffy bits fixed." My hair does tend to have a few tendrils fluffing out above my ears. After a quick dash of hairspray they didn't any more. After that various people shot in to talk to me quickly.

I'd been asked to arrive some 50 minutes before I'd be on but that was okay. I was enjoying watching events and several people drifted over to look at the books I had on the table and talk about them. Then the time came, I was hastily swept into the live studio, tucked into a corner, and the people before me were on. I waited. Commercial break. My turn.

In the end it was a breeze. The hostess of the show is a professional. I get nervous over some things but talking in front of strangers isn't one of them. We chatted, my books were displayed, then the commercial break was on and the hostess stayed to chat personally and off TV a few minutes. I don't know how many people watched/taped the show but judging by the phone calls once I got home and the comments from people I've met since, I'm left with the feeling that



half the country saw me. If that results in many book sales I don't mind a bit. And I was pleased to find that while they did lean a bit on how I'd survived a childhood of abuse from nine to sixteen, two accidents, and a failed marriage, to bounce back and become a professional writer with nine books and over a hundred stories sold. They didn't do too much of the brave little cripple angle—which was just as well. It was live TV and I could have said something they'd regret.

After that a day with two of my sisters, my adult niece, and a very early rising to reach the Auckland airport for the 7.30am flight to Melbourne and Worldcon. With my case safely on the conveyer I picked up a Dominion to read and discovered that it was as well I was travelling by United Air. Some unfortunate woman on an Air New Zealand flight the previous day had found a rat on her lap. The rodent was a stowaway escaping some other country, boarded illegally and evaded pursuit. They thought he'd left the plane again. The shriek from his unwilling seat-sharer

disabused the crew of that notion abruptly.

Once the plane landed the Agriculture boys had it off to one side being fumigated to a fare-thee-well. (A later paper indicated that the passenger suffering from shock, was being compensated by the airline. I should think so. Some of the people who share seats with you are bad enough but at least they bought a ticket.)

It was a quiet trip. Too quiet in the end. I staggered out into the airport to find that the airline had forgotten to meet me with a wheelchair. (I get stiff after plane trips. I'm ok arriving at the airport but prefer a wheelchair when I leave.) I waited briefly, started worrying about my luggage. And plodded off after the crowd. I never did see any sign of the wheelchair on the way to the gate as I headed down corridors and escalators. But I managed.

I dragged my case out into the main concourse and was stunned and really pleased to find Jean Weber, Wanda and Richard (the latter two being friends of Cherry's) waiting to whisk me to the hotel and with a car down in the carpark to do that. Considering that I didn't have the remotest idea of where I was heading, and that a friend who did make the trip on her own via shuttle-bus said it was *awful* and she had to drag her cases three blocks to the same hotel as mine from the nearest shuttle-bus stop, I was very lucky.

After that it was mostly fun all the way. Dump gear, head for the con hotel with friends, register. Grab programme and see what I wanted to attend. Which to be truthful tended to be 1–2 events a day. With the official stuff out of the way, I headed towards the hucksters/ dealers room. Like introducing an alcoholic to their own brewery. The only down side was the dealers' expectation that I'd pay for

everything I wanted to buy—which slowed me down a trifle.

I did manage to end up with a fair number of books though. Jean and Eric had earmarked some of their unwanted volumes for me. Sharman my friend from Korea had brought me several (some of mine back and a couple of others), and not all the dealers were charging full price. I headed for the Slow Glass section, having promised Cherry [Wilder] that the first thing I'd do would be repay Justin for a book he'd sent her. I made the mistake of standing in line and looking at the other books as I waited. Blenching at the current Oz prices, I still wound up with a couple of new books, paid Justin, left too slowly and added a third.

Then I had fun at the Arealis tables. One was an "everything half-price" table. I bought 2 books, found I could have a free copy of one of the Arealis magazine backlist from the full-price table, paused a bit too long and bought a couple of their full-price anthologies—which entitled me to another freebie. I snatched that and departed before I was seduced further.

After which I stopped to chat a moment with Paul Collins who gave me some good advice and sold me a book I found ideal expansion of the advice. A coincidence no doubt that he'd written it.

Now ballasted heavily to one side by a book-stuffed shoulder bag, I resolutely headed for the art-show. I'd have to dump cargo before taking on more. There's a limit as to what my dud leg will permit me to carry about too long. The art show was good. I always enjoy them anyhow since I can't draw anything recognisable at all—apart from a brontosaurus for some weird reason. Inside artists seemed to have drawn everything but. I admired pirates, mermen, indians, landscapes, painted stones (those were terrific but mostly a bit outside my price range) and jewellery. I fixated on one laser print though. It was by a new artist and quite stunning. I put in a bid hopefully. There were so many other

items for sale, maybe no one else would see in it what I did. Possibly because my opening bid was ten times the artist's minimum price, no one did, and wearing a very wide smile I collected it shortly before I flew home.

I didn't do many programme items but those I attended I really enjoyed. There were readings by Lucy Sussex, Elizabeth Moon, Jody Lynn Nye, the SF and Disability panel, Steve Baxter's reading, and a selection of others. In between that I ate lunches out at the food court five minutes' walk away with Jean, Weller, Sharman, and Linnette. After which I returned to prowl the art room—making sure my bid was still top for the print I wanted, and stalk the dealers' tables in search of more books I could afford. Affordability changed with finances too. I'd bought a number of my own books which Adrienne Losin was selling from her stall on commission. As they sold, I could afford to buy more of someone else's.

In between eating, book-buying, and checking the art show I ran into friends. Well, most of them. After four days I caught the plane home without ever having managed to find Maureen Speller or Karen Johnson, both of whom I'd wanted to see if only briefly. But that's how it is when your prey is busy and the con is large.

So what stands out? Personal things really. Linnette who'd won FFANZ (Fan Fund of Australia-New Zealand) and was already working hard for it, helping on the FFANZ stall, getting books signed to auction in NZ next year, and making me thankful that we'll have a really good administrator for NZ for once. Meeting Sharman only 2 months after her annual trip to Farside and having this vague feeling that time was out of sync. Lunching with Jean and Weller. Liking Wanda Pease with whom I was sharing a room and finding we had a lot in common.

And that last night when Sharman and I found the SFWA con-suite and dropped by to spend ten minutes on

the way to the ANZAPA party. We ended up in a circle of 7-8 people talking. You know—the kind of talk which ranges over everything under the sun. Comfortable, interesting, relaxed talk. And for once you know right at that moment you're having fun.

We wandered out several hours later, looked in at the party, felt weariness suddenly catch up and headed back to the hotel again after a few moments. Just that couple of hours at the con-suite made it one of the best cons for me. And there was no down side for my Worldcon. I enjoyed it all.

After which I slept in to about 6am, woke to bid Wanda goodbye, looked at the clock and got up as the door closed behind her. If I had everything already packed, I could have a leisurely hour over breakfast with Sharman, then be off by taxi to the airport. I packed quickly, fastened my case and went down to meet Sharman.

It had been a wonderful con but the trips to and fro seemed to be not so good. The hotel had made arrangements with a taxi for me the previous night when I returned. It was to arrive at 8.45. Nine am and no taxi. Sharman who was waiting to see me off rang the taxi firm who seemed surprised. According to the driver he'd been there at the hotel at 8.50. No sign of anyone and he'd left again. Since we'd been waiting very obviously with my big suitcase on a seat right in front of the main doors, *and* we'd been there since 8.40, that was strange.

The company sent another taxi, the driver of which spent the trip explaining to me the problems they had with foreign idiots who didn't spika da english so good, and couldn't tell north from south.

But owing to my pessimism over transport I'd left plenty of time and made the airport okay. I was approached as I settled into my seat. Was I the one with a wheelchair meeting me? I was. Good. It'd be there. The flight was enlivened by some sports team or another in red and

white who kept dingling the flight attendant bell, until the head attendant came along and spoke to them in a way which would probably have cowed the Hells Angels. It worked with the team too and we had peace the rest of the flight.

I crawled from the seat and slowed by the door. My wheelchair? No sign of it. I queried the person by the door. Oh, yes. Well, it was probably being held by the departure gate. I'd better walk down there. I plodded along the air bridge muttering. No wheelchair. Hell. I waited a few minutes, then worrying about my case again, headed for the carousel. Once again I hauled my luggage miles through the airport cursing airlines who don't live up to their promises.

This time I was annoyed enough to check my case into the link flight home, and then go in search of the airline administrator. We had a brief terse discussion on this. He groveled, promised to do better, and to send me a letter of apology and explanation as to how this had happened. That I'd believe when it arrived but I left anyway.

The flight back was also quiet. Dean shot into the airport to collect me just as I arrived at the door. Perfect timing. Not so perfect last leg though as his alternator in the car packed up and we did the final few miles with all the road illumination of a senile glow-worm. But we made it.

I flung the door open. Tiger hurled himself at me. I clutched him and discovered that in the 8 days of my absence he'd done nothing but eat. To one side the stack of waiting mail threatened an avalanche. I could deal with that okay but Tiger... Di later told me that he'd been so pitifully unhappy without me he'd kept demanding food to comfort himself. He'd asked so pathetically he'd received it. I estimate that in the 8 days I was away he'd eaten just on twice as much as an ordinary 8 days with me and put on at least a kilo. We spent the two weeks after I got back very busily. Me

catching up on the mail stack and Tiger dieting.

Dancer [the other indoor cat] looked up from the armchair when I returned. You could see what she thought. "Oh, right. she's back. So what." Tiger slept draped right across me all the first night home. It wasn't "so what" for him. He was making sure I didn't sneak away so easily next time.

(I did get a letter from the chap to whom I complained. Basically it appears that the idiot with the wheelchair did turn up. Just when I don't know but the impression is given that it was quite a long time after the plane landed. What use that would be to someone wanting to collect baggage, check it on a link flight, then travel over to the domestic terminal ten minutes away by a shuttle leaving every twenty minutes, when said person has 1 hour maximum to do everything, the overseas plane landed late, and they're supposed to clock in on the domestic flight half an hour beforehand, I have no idea. Quite apart from which in previous flights there's always been someone waiting right by the airplane door, chair at the ready.)

But Tiger is back to his own still rather solid but not over-weight. The mail stack has vanished. Dianne and Dean had a waterful time cleaning out the main house water tank while I was away so that's something else off the main list of work to complete. The weather has warmed up and the grass is starting to grow well. The geese stopped laying and started brooding. Curly [the gander] as I foretold had moved away from the main part of the lawn and was standing guard by the nest drums.

You can read some of Lyn's farming stories at <http://www.wrevenge.com.au/lynmc/index.htm>

## **Weberwoman's Wrevenge 54**

**(Volume 9, Number 3)**

February 2000

ISSN 0728-3792

© 2000 Jean Weber

All rights revert to contributors upon publication.

Publication dates: irregular.

Editing, design, and layout by

**Jean Weber,**

**P.O. Box 640**

**Airlie Beach, Qld 4802**

**Australia**

**phone +61-7-4948-0450**

**fax +61-7-4948-0435**

**e-mail [jean@wrevenge.com.au](mailto:jean@wrevenge.com.au)**

**Web version:**

**<http://www.wrevenge.com.au/wrevenge/index.htm>**

The printed version of this fanzine is available for contributions, uncanceled postage stamps, editorial whim, or A\$4 or equivalent per issue (air mail extra). Please read the Web version if you can—photocopying is difficult and expensive, now that we no longer live in a city.

## **Contents**

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| 1999 was a good year,      |    |
| Jean Weber                 | 2  |
| Book notes, Jean Weber     | 6  |
| Book reviews, Ellie Miller | 9  |
| Aussiecon report,          |    |
| Lyn McConchie              | 12 |

If you're interested in what Eric and I are doing, I encourage you to visit our Australia travel website: <http://www.avalook.com.au>

Over the next two or three years, you're more likely to catch up with us there than in a fanzine.