



## \*BRG\*

AUGUST 2001

**Above: BRG at his desk, 1979.**  
Note: absence of computer on desk and umpteen boxes of books. Note: bottle of corflu on desk; duplicator in front of desk; and empty shelves behind BRG and on his right. BRG is editing on sheets of paper instead of computer screen.

**Right: BRG at his desk, 2001.**  
Note: Computer and printer fill most of the desk. Books once filled the shelves, but are now being replaced by CDs. Boxes of books fill the rest of the room. It is rumoured that BRG can still escape his room, but only with difficulty.

Photos: Elaine Cochrane.





No. 31. A fanzine for ANZAPA (August 2001 mailing) by Bruce Gillespie, 59 Keele Street, Collingwood, Victoria 3066.

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## ANZAPAScope

I've just spent two months reading a year's mailings of *Acnestis* (twelve mailings) and nearly a year's mailings of ANZAPA. Am I all apaed out? No. Reading a year's apa mailings is a *CinemaScope* experience — wide shot of a vast panoply of characters, followed by long tracking shots, panning in on each character, one after another, building a widescreen picture of the mighty torrent of human experience. ANZAPAScope!

It was an enjoyable reading experience, but I don't quite know what to say in reply. Almost everybody in ANZAPA has lost somebody important, person or animal, during the last year or so. I realise most of us are in the age group who can expect to lose parents and close relatives. I realise that dogs and cats, even long-lived creatures, die with monotonous regularity. But I don't know what to say when it happens to *you*.

I'm not even sure what to say about people's grief. Grief is an underground emotion, sometimes taking years to grow and make itself fully understood. The usual reaction to loss is numb disbelief, not any of the dramatic emotions. A part of me still does not believe that Susan Wood is dead, although she died in 1979. I still hope to find a letter from her in the incoming mail. I still don't believe that Ian Gunn or Roger Weddall are dead, because nobody has filled their places. I lead my life as if they are still alive, but currently not in contact. I would still like to talk to my father about music, although he died in 1989. Elaine and I would still like to be able to natter to Elaine's mother (who died in 1987) or seek advice from her father (who died in 1990). A part of our lives drags, sagging, useless, after each loss.

More striking have been much sharper losses and health problems among ANZAPA members. I'm wary about mentioning them, because I'm sure to leave out some names.

I felt quite hit, for instance, by David Cumber's tale of his abrupt dismissal by his partner — who cited religion as a reason, not anything as comprehensible as simply falling out of love! A reminder that I don't know how other people's minds work.

Linnette's sister, for instance. Some people have expressed the hope that she will be punished at some future time for her destructive behaviour. Anybody so completely at odds with the world must have so many personal difficulties that the punishment is inherent in the crime. Some people have suggested to Linnette that she talk about something else other than her twisted sister. But how can she? She must feel that some manic dark force of nature has attacked her. Wouldn't that concentrate her mind, to the exclusion of anything else? Linnette and her family somehow have to survive the experience, then start to think of

matters more mundane.

I can't help thinking about the pain of Leanne's current situation, as revealed in the latest *Frog*. I say to myself: what if this happened to me? I just couldn't stand it! Yet Leanne's still writing to us, and somehow keeps on going. The worst part of reading a year's ANZAPA is there are so many people I'd like to help, especially Leanne, and I feel helpless. I'm aware that Leanne was George Turner's brightest hope of all the people he taught in writers' workshops, and I can't help feeling that he would find the right thing to say and the correct way to give help, but I'm darned if I can. If Norstrilia Press still existed, we could do justice to Leanne's work by getting all the short stories back in print — but it doesn't, and the small presses of the 1990s seem to have turned up their toes.

I haven't yet mentioned Sally, who's had a very rough year. Fortunately, the hysterectomy has been successful, and the other health problems seem to be clearing up. But what happened to your feet, Sally? It was only when I went back to last October's mailing that I realised we didn't ever talk about the problem of heel spurs. I had the same problem in 1995. I had been walking a lot during the previous three years. I didn't lose much weight, but I did get fitter — and developed a heel spur on my right foot. The local GP prescribed an anti-inflammatory, a drug that would slowly destroy my innards without helping the condition itself. Fortunately, my medical masseur had seen quite a few people with heel spurs during the previous few years, so he offered his treatment. He carried out radical massage on my feet, about as close to torture as I ever want to feel. He sent me to the podiatrist who works in the same suite. She prescribed orthotics (specially shaped bits of plastic) that I should wear in my shoes at all times. The combination of both (rather expensive) treatments worked. I was given a very useful exercise — putting my toes over the top of a phone book and levering myself up using the front of the foot — and I stopped walking up hill and down. Now I walk on flat ground. Put these treatments together, and my heel pain disappeared, but the treatment took over a year, and I still wear orthotics.

But would I recommend all those bits of treatment to anyone else? Not unless they had some spare cash, which I did in 1995. At the time my foot first became sore, I heard a radio program in which people rang in about their foot problems. They were the same age as me, and had taken up walking for exercise. They all developed heel spurs or some form of foot pain. Most of them were about to give up walking for exercise. I don't blame them, but I'm pleased I can still go for a long walk when I feel like it.

## LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE: The Mailing Comments

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I'm not going to 'do a Gillespie' (Acnestis term) and write comments on a whole year's mailings. Instead I'll start with the Big One, No. 200:

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### MAILING No. 200, APRIL 2001

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#### Jack Herman: NECESSITY No. 39

My interest in sport hovers just above absolute zero, but I did notice your piece on Don Bradman. I keep hearing rumours that he was perhaps not a very pleasant person, but it might be a long time before anybody publishes a revisionist biography of him. One of the best Australian songs is Paul Kelly's 'Bradman', which is neither about the man nor his sports achievement, but about what his achievement meant to Australians during the Depression.

'Globalisation': the recolonisation of the world by today's equivalents of the British East India Company. Pity help any country that refuses to be colonised. The major Australian political parties need not so shamelessly bare their bums to the globalisers and yell 'rape me! rape me!'

'Sercon' was a severe fannish insult in the forties and early fifties. A 'sercon fan' was opposed to any sort of levity in fandom. These days, I'm proud to publish 'sercon fanzines', as opposed to the 'academic fanzines', which make even the most sercon fanzine read like *Punch*.

Jack Herman and Bruce Gillespie agree! Write that in the Little Book of Amazing Fannish Facts. *Dark City* is one of the few films I can look at over and over again, because of its enjoyment of architecture. The sight of all those lovely buildings zipping up and down and reshaping themselves! Visual ecstasy. The script and actors aren't too bad, either. I also love *The Truman Show*, *Groundhog Day*, *Being John Malkovich* and a host of other recent Philidickian films, such as *Fight Club* and *The Sixth Sense*. The nineties were a good decade for films, but I notice that, of the films reviewed in the latest *Sight and Sound* (June 2001), not one sounds interesting. Well, Nicole Kidman's on the front cover, so I suppose I should see *Moulin Rouge*, especially after the rave review that you've given it.

'Argumentative' is a very good way to describe you, Jack. And 'rhetorical'. I agree with your statement that 'This zine supports a treaty between the government and the Indigenous Peoples of Australia', but I'm not sure that powerful arguments will win the day. Perhaps it's simply a matter of enough people taking the treaty for granted, until suddenly its signing becomes inevitable. Perhaps I'm too optimistic. (Gillespie admits to being optimistic! Another item for the Little Book of Amazing Fannish Facts.)

It's a long time since Sydney has produced a personal fanzine, which means that none of us knows what is going on there. (On the principle that all knowledge is contained in fanzines; therefore no fanzines = no information.) Is the State Theatre in Sydney the equivalent of the Astor in Melbourne? Gigantic thirties-style lobby. Wide staircase stretching up to an art deco upstairs lobby that is twice as wide as the downstairs lobby? Huge thirties-style armchairs for patrons waiting to enter the cinema? A cinema cat? Inside the cinema, comfortable chairs, gigantic screen (nearly as large as an Imax screen), and Dolby sound system? 70 mm facilities? If the State has all that, it's the

equivalent of the Astor.

Robert B. Harris, the man who led the team for restoring such movies as *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Vertigo*, when interviewed by Paul Harris on 3RRR's 'Film Buffs' Forecast' (the world's best radio program), said there were only two cinemas left in Australia that could show 70 mm films, the Astor and (I presume) the State; only fifteen 70 mm-capable picture palaces left in America; and only one in London.

The Astor is the only Melbourne cinema still showing double bills in repertory. That's when it is not running week-long seasons of restored movies, such as the recent *Charade/North by Northwest* double.

Back to your film lists. (There is nothing like a list; no, nothing.) I got through 20 minutes of *American Beauty* before giving up. Fortunately, I was watching it on a borrowed DVD, so had not spent money to see it. I haven't seen *Billy Elliott*. I liked *High Fidelity* a lot, and *Three Kings* a real lot. The ending of *Frequency* was ludicrous; otherwise, the film coulda been a contender. I loved *Galaxy Quest* through gritted teeth. If *Star Trek* was a fraction as entertaining as *Galaxy Quest*, I might watch it. *The Green Mile* was wonderful, and *The Sixth Sense* ties with *Fight Club* for Best Movie of the Nineties. I haven't seen *Almost Famous* yet.

#### Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP

Cover: Bill and Dick auditioning for *A Bug's Life*? The photo on page 3: I refuse to speculate on the part for which Bill might be auditioning.

Thanks, Bill, for the Australian Interior and Tasmanian trip reports, plus photos. The photo of the *Spirit of Tasmania* has turned out particularly well in my copy of *IRS*. Likewise, the photo of Cradle Mountain — we want to visit there sometime, but have been told we cannot do so by public transport. (Because of its lack of trains, we might never visit Tasmania.) It's a pity you couldn't have found a way of including a map of your journey.

To judge from your second-last photo, I'm not sure if I would have recognised Michael O'Brien if I had met him in a Hobart street. Probably would no longer recognise me.

Thanks for the Lisa's 'Last Misadventure'. I had thought some of her writing was fairly ordinary — although it was fun hearing about a country I'm unlikely to visit — until I read her A to Z of living in Saigon.

Usually I enjoy Stefan's writing, and his 'Sojourn in Sydney' is particularly good. Sydney is obviously a weird and funny place to any Melbournite who spends more than a week there. Stefan's cooking for himself reminds me of the meals I tried preparing when I was batching during the seventies. When in mid 1973 I moved into my flat in Carlton Street, I gave up cooking after I had fed myself for a week on burnt chops and soggy vegies. Each night, I would sample a different cheap Carlton restaurant. For years, all I kept in my fridge was a small bottle of milk (for my cups of coffee), a bottle of Coke, and a pat of butter, to spread

on my sandwiches for lunch. I had one plate, and one each of a knife, fork and spoon. In 1976, inflation started to make it difficult to eat out in Carlton, so I bought a few more plates and utensils. I tried cooking a few more dishes. Some even succeeded. I even invited people to dinner. Some of them survived the experience.

A week after moving into my flat, I gave up ironing shirts. I buy drip-dry shirts, and hope never to wield an iron again.

Elaine says she's seen a copy of the 'Cat Miracle Diet' before, probably on the Net.

In response to your ANZAPA-FAPA proposal: I welcome it provided I'm still alive to take part. In June 2026 I will be (or not be) seventy-nine. You will be eighty-eight. I don't think we're going to enjoy the occasion, or even remember we've taken part.

The stories I keep hearing indicate that the Federal Government is keeping the Social Services bill as low as possible by making it almost impossible for a person to claim unemployment benefit. There are evil people at the top these days, but they don't take much trouble to keep their evil secret.

'You are invited to consider the superior merits of a tax deductible watch canary.' One of the better lines in recent ANZAPA mailings.

The main trouble with attending concerts is surviving the other people who are attending — the bangle-janglers, the coughers, the snorers, the perfume self-smotherers, and the program-page-turners. Such people forced Elaine and me to stop attending Musica Viva concerts.

When we were robbed in 1997, my immediate concern was for the CD collection. None was taken that time, but many probably would have been if the thieves had returned. That's why we installed a good burglar alarm system. It's not true that *some* CDs in private collections are irreplaceable. *All* the CDs I've collected are irreplaceable. Insurance money, even if it matched the nominal value of the CDs stolen, would do little to restore the collection.

The Davidson talk wasn't written for *Steam Engine Time*, but for Lawrence Person's *Nova Express*. He sent me the review copy of *The Avram Davidson Treasury* that converted me into a Davidson enthusiast. However, Lawrence says he might want changes (but hasn't sent me a list yet), and perhaps can get for me a review copy of the very latest Davidson posthumous publication.

'Fandom is a broad church where even the worst writing has its readership'. I believe you. As long as you don't expect me to read the bad writing.

*Fugue for a Darkening Island* should stay in print, because it continues to deal with the present, rather than the future. What nobody expected in the early seventies is that (a) if refugees took to their boats, they might head towards Australia, not Europe; and (b) if they wanted to go to Europe, they could easily sneak over the borders, without the need to travel by sea. Europe's dealing with refugees seems to have been more subtle than Australia's, but nobody seems to have thought out what would happen if an entire continent's population (Africa's, as in *Fugue*) suddenly went on the move. After all, the USA has not been able to stop millions of Mexicans and South Americans crossing the southern border, but it has been able to absorb them into the economy by exploiting their vulnerability.

#### **Michael Green: REALITY MODULE No. 21**

I agree that, no matter how powerful computers become, none of those available is one's ideal computer. Each of them has a vast number of features that one does not want.

Fundamental features continue to be missing. Microsoft still does not provide a simple way of gaining access to any Mac disk or file. It's ludicrous that it's still difficult to transfer files between platforms. Microsoft also has never added on a simple file for printing Windows Explorer layouts, or a file for tweaking fonts, either to change the font itself, or change its weight or usage. The expensive DTP packages include this ability, but I suspect it would be easy to write such a program for Windows itself. Windows' 'Find' mechanism is also primitive.

#### **Sue and David Grigg: 80 DAYS AROUND THE WORLD Ep. 5**

My images of Venice are from movies, ranging from *Death in Venice* to *Don't Look Now*. Therefore I was pleased when Our Man in Venice, Gian Paolo Cossato, sent me a whole lot of touristy material about Venezia. This included a map that gave me some idea of the importance of the Grand Canal to finding your way around the place. Unfortunately, he sent the useful material after you had finished your trip. (Gian Paolo first made contact with me when he was living in London in 1969. When *New Worlds* was banned from entering Australia, because it published the serial version of Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron*, Gian Paolo sent me copies in plain brown paper wrappers. Later, he returned to Venice, opened a book shop, and married Agnes. In the eighties, Agnes died, but I'm fairly sure Gian Paolo has remarried. A recent letter from him lies buried on my desk. He still runs a book shop.)

Thanks for the traveller's-eye view of the city, a bit less glamorous and atmospheric than the usual tales people tell of the city. Also thanks for the tips about avoiding glass factories and finding reasonable meals.

#### **Sally Yeoland: LES CHATS PARTIS No. 52**

I was tempted to repeat an old cliché: 'You really manage to land in some crappy job situations'. Then I thought: 'Are any of Sally's jobs worse than anybody else's these days?' Your job situation sounds much the same as Jeanne's, Glen's or Gerald's, and very like Eric's before he took a heart-attack-led retirement. Most people in Acnestis, my other (British) apa, seem to be suffering from acute stress in well-paid but over-demanding jobs. I feel lucky that I'm a freelance, since my closest contact to any of my 'employers' is by email, phone and courier. But if I don't annoy publishers, they're likely to forget me, which is the constant danger of freelancing.

Recreational reading? What's that? The people in Acnestis not only read their mailings but find time to read books as well! I'm lucky to find time to sit down to read before 11 p.m. I keep reading until I fall asleep in my chair. When I decided to catch up on the current batch of ANZAPA and Acnestis mailings, it stopped me reading books for more than two months. (I realise that the one advantage of having an office job is that one can read while commuting. The last time I read a lot of books per month was in 1973, when I was commuting from East Preston to Melbourne.)

#### **John Newman: PING!**

The power companies have just made it plain that power failures will become, during the next year or so, their chief weapon in forcing up electricity prices in Victoria. Their spokesperson more or less said: Give us the bread or we'll cut off the juice. Thanks, Mr Kennett, for yet another long-term curse laid on the late great State of Victoria.

Glad to see you've discovered Iain Banks. You did read

Race Mathews' and my articles about Banks in a recent issue of *Metaphysical Review*? My favourite Banks non-SF novel is *The Crow Road*, followed closely by *Whit* and *Espedair Street*. British fans have been known to conduct knockdown arguments about *The Wasp Factory*. I never worked it out, but it lingers in the memory. Banks' own favourite is *The Bridge*, which is also haunting. *Canal Dreams* and *Complicity* are brilliant. (*Complicity* has been made into a movie in Britain, but there's no sign of a release here.) Banks is one of that small number of writers whose works I'm tempted to reread. Whenever.

Microsoft has altered its way of doing business. For years, it's enticed people into installing Windows or Office software, from whatever source, on the basis that we'll buy the upgrade. Now that people have stopped buying upgrades, Microsoft has decided to carve its slice from whoever installs the software. You need a new installation code each time you install their recent software, which is a bugger if your system goes down regularly. Here's a chance for some completely new operating system to take over the market. Perhaps Linux, if enough software producers write for it.

Seven stone? Don't brag. The last time I was seven stone was when I was nine or ten. These days I would have to lose three stone to get anywhere near the recommended weight for men of my height.

**Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 72**

Thanks very much for your tribute to your father. It sounds as if he led a useful and interesting life, offered much to many, and was much loved. That's the best tribute anybody can hope for.

**Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND  
JUNE 2002 FOR SF CONVENTIONS**

I can't agree that 'being totally out of it all is very relaxing really'. Sue Grigg told me that she and David had stopped buying newspapers. My jaw dropped (as much as it can while speaking into the phone). 'But how do you know what's going on?' I asked. My major objection to dying is that it will stop me knowing what happens next — to me; to my friends; to the human race. Ignorance might be relaxing for you, but I get tense when deprived of information.

I'm on email record as saying I would do my best to attend an Airlie Beach convention, especially if were also a Corflu (or even an unofficial Australian Corflu). But in your fanzine about your American trip, Eric, you made it sound difficult to reach Airlie Beach from Brisbane by plane and bus. Add to that the trip from Melbourne to Brisbane, and I begin to quiver with dread. I don't like the physical act of travelling, much as I would like to attend the Barrier Reef Relaxacon.

**Glen Crawford: KOBWEBS ON THE KEYBOARD 2001, No. 7**

Hi, Glen. You rejoined while my attention was elsewhere. You seem somehow different from the Glen Crawford who was in ANZAPA a few years ago. Thinner, anyway.

Have you any idea how you've managed to upset all we tubbies? Any idea how many diets we've tried, watching the pounds drop off, only to see them return inexorably until we become heavier than ever? Of course you have; it's probably happened to you. So if I'm insanely jealous of the success you've had with your diet, I'm not tempted to follow it, because I know I won't keep to it. Or I might keep to it for a month or two. Then, after a lapse of concentration, I will return to snacking, and all the weight will return.

Snacking is the major enemy of the freelancer, because most of the books I edit are dead boring. Snacks and coffee breaks are the only way to keep going. Elaine and I already eat much the diet you recommend — at meals. Intermeal snacks do the damage.

At various times, I have tried dieting by substituting 'healthier' items for 'less healthy' items. In the early eighties I gave up Vegemite sandwiches. Instead I started eating peanut butter and honey sandwiches. Healthier, see? Once a day at first. Then I became addicted to them. I put on at least 30 pounds. I went on a diet in 1993. I lost 30 pounds. I substituted plain bread for sandwiches. But then Elaine and I started buying cakes and coffee, once a week, at a new cafe near us. The proprietor started offering muffins instead of cakes. We found ourselves buying muffins every day. These are the best muffins in the world. They are totally addictive. I put back on at least half of the weight I lost in 1993.

As I mentioned to Sally, you're not alone in being crushed by a very stressful job. 'You want a job? Join the firm. We'll crush you for your trouble.' But when you feel isolated in a particular situation, it doesn't help to know that you're not alone.

I can't offer any suggestions for your marriage problem. When two people start irritating each other beyond toleration, they need a rest break from each other or some other way of interrupting the irritation cycle. Best wishes from all of us.

The *Cane Toads* film of the 1980s predicted exactly what is happening across the top of Australia.

**LynC: FROM THE LAIR OF THE LYNX No. 10**

My sister Jeanette is the music teacher at Camberwell South Primary School. Every second year she spends six months of extra time producing a school play/musical production designed to involve every child in Grades 5 and 6. Last night (27 July), Elaine and I went to see this year's production, an adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. I'd never read the book. Elaine had, and doesn't like it. (In the early 1990s she wrote about the 'Narnia' books for *The Metaphysical Review*.) She said of the play itself that it's a good summary of the book, but C. S. Lewis's ideas don't make any more sense in the play than they did in the book. To judge from the musical play version, Lewis plonked the Christian motifs like Christmas pudding sixpences into his narrative. Much of the story, however, is based on the traditional Good-versus-Evil structure that is now the basis of every boring fantasy novel. Not that the goodies are better than the baddies, but one side has to be labelled Good and the other side Evil. Ho hum. There aren't many funny lines in C. S. Lewis — at least, not many in the play version.

The production itself was even more 'professional' than any of the other Jeanette Gillespie productions we've seen. It's obvious that, with each production, more and more parents and other friends of the school donate more and more goodies and time to the effort. The costumes and sound system this year were more elaborate than any I've seen before. Many of the performers were impressive, with some obviously headed towards careers in theatre or television. The rest showed great energy and concentration. This is the first time Jeanette has been able to obtain for us tickets for the last night of the four-night season (two nights with Team A and two nights with Team B). That's when everything comes together; kids who couldn't remember their lines suddenly can; dance numbers that weren't working suddenly do work. A great night at the theatre, but it didn't

tempt me to read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Makes me proud of my sister, though. She just sits there at the front, directing every word, calm while everybody hurtles around her, then at the end accepts general acclamation as if it were all in a day's work. (Jeanette wasn't too well at the end of last term, and we were a bit worried about her getting to the end of ordeal without needing time off. I hope she can relax a bit over the next few weeks.)

I thought we pronounced Australia as 'Uh-stri-lya' and talked 'strine'. Or is that 'Norstrilian'?

The two-speed CD-ROM players was the last vestige of the original Rod Irving Electronics computer bought six years ago. All the other bits had been upgraded during the three years before Elaine and I bought a new Gateway 866 in October last year. The trouble with the two-speed CD-ROM player was that it wouldn't look at most of the CD-ROMs that came attached to the covers of computer magazines, and would not load some software.

I went cold turkey on Vegemite in the mid 1980s, and have rarely eaten it since then. As a result, occasionally I need to take Vitamin B tablets, because I'm no longer ingesting vast globs of Vitamin B (and salt) from Vegemite.

I suspect we would find it hard to sell our house. Not only would most buyers be frightened off by the vast numbers of books, they would not want to take over a house furnished with wall-after-wall bookcases. We would probably sell the house only if some fans wanted to buy it. Not that I want to leave our house; I would rather win Tattsлото, buy the vast office building next door, and build bookcases along all its many walls. One day I will get the whole collection on shelves instead of boxes. Perhaps.

To non-Americans, all Americans are Yanks. To Americans who lives south of Dixie, all northerners are Yanks. To northerners, everybody from the New England states is a Yank. New Englanders have probably never heard of the word. ('Yank' is a contraction of 'English', so I assume it was applied originally to the areas settled by the English in the 1600s.)

#### **Alan Stewart: YTTERBIUM No. 59**

If you want to reach Bill Wright during the weekend, you ring him at work. Don't try home. He's hardly ever there, and he doesn't return messages left on his answer phone. He takes a long time to answer emails. Dick and I have no idea how we will get in touch with him after he retires. We hope that, like ET, he phones home occasionally.

I've never seen the 20-biscuit pack of Tim Tams. Be still, my rumbling tum! Packets of 13 were the norm for Tim Tams when first I discovered them in the late seventies, but somewhere along the line the packets became smaller. I've tried one of the other varieties, but I can't remember which one, and didn't like it anyway. Elaine and I help to keep Tim Tams in business.

Of your 'Recent Reading', I've read none of the books. Of your Films list, I've seen *High Fidelity* and *Pay It Forwards*, and liked both. Most people won't like the ending of *Pay It Forwards*, but I thought Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt and Joel Hayley Osment were superb in it, and the central part of the script, focused on the character played by Helen Hunt, was impressive. I'll watch any film featuring Kevin Spacey, since he completely fits himself to the role at hand.

I haven't seen *Hannibal*. Much better than *Silence of the Lambs* was its prequel, *Manhunter*, which might be available on video.

#### **David Grigg: MEGATHERIUMS FOR BREAKFAST No. 26**

The Shelby Foote book about the Civil War comes in three volumes, of over 2000 pages. I haven't started it, and if I start it, I suspect I won't finish it. I did hear the story of the making of it. Shelby Foote was a friend of famous Southern writer Walker Percy. Percy was famous, but Foote had written little that people had noticed. Foote began writing for Percy a hundred-page essay/booklet to explain his ideas about the Civil War. A few thousand pages later, he finished his essay. Race Mathews gave me a copy of the three-volume history of the Civil War by Bruce Catton. They are much shorter volumes, so I'll read them first. More important to me is finding all of Allan Nevins' multivolume history of the coming of the Civil War. Civil wars have limited interest; I'm much more interested in the social process by which a nation becomes unravelled. The Nevins books cannot be found by the usual Web search engines.

The complete *Chicken Run* DVD is available in Australia. Buy it at JB Hi Fi and you should be able to buy it for under \$30.

Fortunately, Elaine likes Tavener and Pärt as much as I do. Gorecki is another composer you would enjoy, and Kancheli. Also Australia's Ross Edwards and Graeme Koehne. The world of new music really came back to life during the 1980s and 1990s.

I hate to say the obvious (but will say it anyway) — surely you and your partner could pay yourselves most of your salary as 'expenses', especially as much of what you spend are legitimate business expenses? Ask your tax adviser.

Fortunately for ANZAPA, Carey has over the years disposed of all the back stock of Norstrilia Press. I have only one or two file copies of all of our books except *In the Heart or in the Head*. Quite a few years ago, George gave me a box of them. \$19.95 a copy; postage included.

Postage rates: why not change the constitution so that we can operate the same way Maureen runs Acnestis? Each person deposits, say \$10 or \$20, and pays in more money when his or her deposit has been used up. I realise that prevents cross-subsidisation of overseas members. We don't want to do without them, so we might have to work out a viable way of paying apa expenses as well as cross-subsidising.

#### **Dan McCarthy: FANOPTICON No. 6**

Hi, Dan. You've joined ANZAPA during the time I wasn't reading the apa as carefully as I should have been. I confess that I'm still confused about who are the various members of your family, but I like your fanzine personality. I receive almost no news from New Zealand these days, except what turns up in ANZAPA, so I'm grateful for your contribution.

You might like Christopher Priest's *The Prestige*. Tesla is a minor character in that novel. I have a biography of Tesla somewhere in the house. I don't know where the book is, so I don't know whether or not it's the one you mention.

Thanks for 'There and Back', but I need to consult a map while reading it. I thought I knew a bit about NZ geography, but I don't. Thanks for some good clear writing.

No current teacher will agree with you that education has been 'dumbed down', but I suspect some subjects I learnt at school are no longer taught, or no longer as well taught as they were. For my sense of the basic structure of the English language I still rely for intensive grammar training I received at primary school, which was reinforced by learning French grammar in secondary school. The problem for any teacher is how to organise classes that include kids of widely differing abilities. My problem at

school was avoiding boredom, because everything was taught too slowly. I suspect plenty of young students could soak up as many intellectual procedures and as much information and as can be thrown at them. After all, they can learn to run the computer much more easily than we can.

I'd heard about the ferocious winters in Invercargill, but wasn't quite sure what kind of weather you had in Dunedin. Even though you are eight degrees south of Melbourne, it sounds as if your weather is similar.

Thanks for the description of your family. If you keep reminding us of who's who, we'll know them all by this time next year.

**Lucy Schmeidler: OZ SF FAN No. 16**

I realise you repeat it every issue, but I still like: 'Blessed are they who force hot air in circles, for they shall be known as fans'.

Remind me: what's SFAKGH stand for? I take it that it is New York's answer to the Nova Mob. I agree that people soon get sick of 'open discussions'. Much better to have some central talk or interview, no matter how short, to attract attendees and begin discussion. I suggest, based on Nova Mob experience, that every meeting should be at the same person's place. It might be difficult to make this arrangement — but Nova Mob kept failing every few years until we agreed to hold every meeting at the same house every month. Since then, the site has shifted every five years or so. Lucy Sussex and Julian Warner still seem keen to see us once every month.

The worst perpetrators of the 'each person . . . they' fallacy are academics. It's the mistake I correct most frequently when I'm editing books written by academics. Usually such writers use the singular noun only as a bit of pretension. Still, 'he or she' is awkward, and a word such as 'se' (which, I think, is Ursula Le Guin's suggestion) is needed.

'DIYing', as other ANZAPAns have explained, is 'do-it-yourselfing'. I'm not sure if this is different from doing it for yourself. In any case, Elaine and I are not DIYers. We call the plumber or electrician, who usually turns up next day. This makes them unique among the plumbers and electricians in the Western world.

'Intellectual snobs', to me, are people who believe that pasting a big degree on the top of one's forehead covers a multitude of intellectual sins.

**Erika Maria Lacey: . . . AND SILVER FOUNTAINS MUD No. 3**

Welcome. You're another person joined while my attention has been elsewhere. I hope you've been enjoying our company as much as we enjoy yours. I admit, though, that I'm a bit taken aback by your many accomplishments, which you mention casually here and in *Sardine Tin Gods*. My life has been dominated by the things I *can't* do, whereas you seem to have difficulty deciding from among the many things you can do. Choose music. (I say that because musical ability is what I would most like to have. I play the CD player well.) Or writing, as you're so good at it.

Are you going to write an account of your sea adventures? You keep mentioning tantalising little pieces of whole story, but you haven't yet said who your parents are (you say somewhere that your father is a writer) or how they gained the ability to travel the seas for eleven years. Your story doesn't hang together yet.

You live in a world in which people can change relationships every six months or so. My experience was quite different. I didn't feel any girl would ever like me. This



Leanne Frahm at Aussiecon 3, with Michael and Natalie Ortlieb. (Photo: Cath Ortlieb.)

prophecy was justified until I was twenty-five, and even then I had what can only be described as a sparse love life until Elaine and I got together. The world of 'relationships' was one I missed out on.

Windows 3.1 was a wonder in its day (1992), but most programs running on it fell over when their memory limits were pushed. Mac users say they don't have such problems, but I've heard of plenty of Macs with frozen screens, very slow access, etc.

I'm pleased I put you onto David Grigg's *Islands* collection, but I realise I still haven't read it right through again as one volume. Soon, soon.

All of Chris Priest's novels were supposed to be available in the two recent omnibus volumes, but I've already seen one of the omnibuses remaindered. No publicity was given to them in Australia. Most of Chris's novels turn up from time to time in secondhand book shops.

**David Charles Cummer:  
EVERYDAY PRACTICAL DESPERATION**

Thanks for mentioning that Leanne keeps cheering up people. She sent me a cheque for the Turner Issue of *SF Commentary*, although she, more than almost anyone else, deserved a free copy. Besides, she already had a subscription. (That reminds me. Did anybody else in ANZAPA get their copies of the Turner Issue? Everybody in Acnestis who received a copy made a point of thanking me, but Australian fans seem to take George Turner for granted.)

An iMac, scanner and printer would cost at least \$3000 in Australia. The current lowly state of the Australian dollar has an uneven effect on Australian prices. Gateway and Dell equipment is probably, in real terms, cheaper in Australia than overseas, but the Australian prices of major programs, such as Quark XPress and the Adobe products, have hurtled upwards during the last year or so. The prices of scanners, printers and monitors continue to fall.

I don't know where this term 'servo' came from. I hadn't heard it until I recommenced reading ANZAPA mailings. The first time I saw it printed in a newspaper was a week ago. It must be short for 'service station' ('gas station' in America).

In my dream of a night ago, Roger Weddall turned up at a huge fannish gathering. We all knew he was dead, and that he would disappear again at the end of the party. But we yarned about old times, and Roger caught up with all the gossip, so much so that we didn't get a chance to ask him what he had been up to. At the end he walked out the door. Although we knew we wouldn't see him again for awhile, the mood of the party was jolly, like any party Roger attended.

One of Elaine's friends had her life ripped apart when her husband decided, after many years of very close marriage, that he was gay, and left her. Elaine hasn't seen her friend for quite some time; we hope things improved.

You're right about Ang Lee. *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* are not overwhelmingly great movies, yet they stay in the mind as real favourites, because they are about people, not gimmicks. I hope they turn up on SBS again soon. Ang Lee's version of *Sense and Sensibility* is the best of the nineties' Jane Austen adaptations.

#### **Jeanne Mealy: LAND OF 10,000 LOONS**

I think of Gordy Dickson as having been a good friend of Australia and Australians, but I hadn't set eyes on him since one of the conventions I attended in America in 1973. Gordy got to Sydney once or twice, and was a great friend of Eric and Jean. If he reached Melbourne, I missed out on seeing him. In 1973, he was a vigorous, still young man, at the top of his popularity as a writer. Difficult to think of him as being mortal.

The centres of American cities had already changed in 1973, when I was touring around. It was very odd to be walking around the centre of St Louis at midday, to find very few people visible. It was similar in the centre of Baltimore, Houston and some other places. (Not New York, though; people crowd the footpaths of New York at any time of the day or night.) In 1973, American shoppers had already moved to the malls on the edges of cities. The process was just beginning in Australia. For awhile I thought Melbourne would be deserted in the same way, but it's never happened. Melbourne is still filled with pedestrians up to 11 p.m. It's empty after that, because our public transport doesn't run between half past midnight and 5 a.m. If you want life in Melbourne around midnight, you have to go some of the inner suburban streets, such as Brunswick Street or Chapel Street.

#### **Gerald Smith & Womble: RAMBLING COMMENTS**

In 1977, when I moved from Carlton to Collingwood, I moved electorates. I told one electoral office that I was moving, but it didn't tell my new electorate. When I rolled up to vote against Fraser in 1977, I couldn't vote. I was back on the roll by the time of the next election, but Fraser won again. Not that it matters in my House of Reps seat, which has always voted Labor, but 1977 was the election when the minor parties started to gain ground in the Senate.

It's hard to measure blood pressure. On my first visit to the doctor late in 1997, my blood pressure had reached as high as 150 on 100. But it had been a hard year, and I had been rushing to get to the doctor's in time. Next visit, I had had time to relax (the usual hour's wait), so it went back to 130 on 90. This seems to be my average blood pressure these days. For thirty years, it stayed on 120 on 80, so I paid little attention to it. Now I need to have my life signs measured each year.

Flight-trip horror stories keep accumulating in ANZAPA. I used to think that flying was the only way to go.



Gordon Dickson and Lee Harding, 1980? 1981? (Photo: George Turner Collection).

Now I know I should never travel anywhere at all.

#### **Steve Swartz: YIKES!**

One of the best self-introductions we've ever had in ANZAPA. Thanks for eight pages of enjoyable writing, Steve. I've never heard of an *maximum* eight-page rule for a first contribution. I hope you can print that map and all those photos next issue.

Thanks, in particular, for the trip report. Is this the same country that Kate Wilhelm describes so well in her novel *Juniper Time*? Kate prepared a collaborative book about the same territory (text by Kate Wilhelm and photographs by Richard Wilhelm, *The Hills Are Dancing*, Corroboree Press, 1986, 97 pp., which includes this line: 'Everything is different from everywhere else; that is the great beauty of the earth, and we fit in, we belong, we are part of it.')

At school, one of my favourite subjects was physical geography. Thanks for bringing to life the huge changes that occurred to your part of your world during the end of the most recent era of glaciation. In Australia, Tasmania was covered by glaciers during the Ice Age, but there seems no evidence that they covered the mainland. I didn't get to the West Coast of America during my 1973 trip, so I want to see your part of the world sometime.

#### **Maureen Kincaid Speller: SUN, RIVER & THUNDER**

Elaine suspects that your cats are even more spoiled than ours. (I told her the story of Chia's takeover of your study.) Violet's territory is the front part of our house, where she has to stay because Polly would persecute her if she went into the garden.

We do not allow the cats in the front part of the house at night. The only time that Elaine did so, during the first few days we moved into this house, the whole tribe became a set of Fabulous Trampolining Cats. Apple Blossom ended up stuck between the venetian blind and the window, yelling. Cats have plenty of comfortable sleeping space in the living room, so that's where they stay.

Thanks for the end of the story of Socks, which you began in Acnestis. If I were in enough apas, I would gain some idea of the endless unfolding drama of the Speller-Kincaid household. Your stories of Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, make life at Keele Street, Collingwood, seem very placid.

Elaine says that the cats kick up a fuss if I go out for even a few hours: the humans are not staying well regulated.

School-caused traffic also gums up the streets of Melbourne. Wellington Street is a major commuter artery two doors away. Mornings and evenings, it is much busier during school terms than during school holidays. Compare this



with the 1950s, when I was at primary school. Any kid who did not ride a bike walked to school. If it rained heavily, many parents would drive their kids to and from school, but no parent drove kids to school because of worries about safety. I had few friends at school, but after school and at weekends I felt free to visit them until about 5 o'clock at night. I knew that my parents would be worried if I stayed out later than 5. (Besides, I wouldn't risk missing out on dinner.) My sisters and I would walk across the railway shunting yards near us, and sometimes I would stand quite close to the line while the main Gippsland express roared past. The only way we could hurt ourselves was by falling over or cutting our feet. (During the summer holidays, I rarely wore shoes, except to go to church on Sundays.)

English archaeology programs do well here. *Meet the Ancestors* was one I saw. (A good name for a fanzine about fannish history.)

I discovered Alan Rickman from watching *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, and he did a wonderful job in *Die Hard* and *Galaxy Quest*. We're unlikely to see him in Australia in a theatre production.

I would commission you to buy some CDs that local shops cannot import (because the relevant company has no agent in Australia), but I'm not sure how many of the hundreds of CDs reviewed and advertised in *The Gramophone* each month actually reach the shelves of the major British classical CD shops.

You've never seen *2001: A Space Odyssey* before on the big, big screen? That's deprivation. Fortunately, the Astor, one of the few cinemas in the world that can still show 70 mm prints, recently had a fortnight's season of the remastered print. Elaine enjoyed it as much as I did.

I take away a new perspective from *2001* each time I see it. This time I thought: this is the only film that gives any notion of the emptiness of space. All the other outer space SF films are incredibly busy, with a meteor shower here, a stray black hole there, and millions of nasty fighter space ships whizzing past. If the monolith ain't out there, says

Kubrick, *nothing* is out there. Even SF books rarely show that out there anything and everything can kill you. That's one of the many things I liked so much about Stephen Baxter's *Titan* (which would make a great film): Baxter shows just how dangerous it would be to go to Titan, let alone to the nearest star.

#### **Leanne Frahm: FROG OF FROG HALL IS NOT WELL**

At the beginning of this fanzine I've already made some sort of reply to your really bad news.

This is the first time the OBP of ABZAPA has been asked to *décourager les autres*.

SBS was established in 1977 after the Fraser Government was caught with its pants down. It closed down ZZZ because, although it broadcast through ABC facilities, it was run by a committee comprised of the ethnic groups who broadcast on the station. ZZZ was considered to be run by left-wing groups, and not answerable to any overall authority. Closing down ZZZ in Melbourne (police surrounded the headquarters and moved in) was seen as an attack on all non-English-speaking groups within Australia. With an election looming, Fraser pulled out of a hat the Special Broadcasting Authority, which would run radio stations and a television service. SBS, I'm sure, was meant to be a very pale shadow of ZZZ, but it quickly developed its own momentum and style. Its TV service makes ABC television look boring and old hat.

You were a Lifeline person, too? Roger Weddall worked for Lifeline during the last years of his life. He did an instruction videotape for Lifeline. If it still exists, it would be the only remaining record of him (apart from still photos).

Both my sisters were in *Trial by Jury* when it was staged at Bacchus Marsh High School. They knew every line by the time it was staged, and probably could still recall bits of it if pushed. I could never remember lines, so I never volunteered for theatrical productions.

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## **MAILING No. 201, JUNE 2001**

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### **David Grigg: A NEW CONSTITUTION?**

I support each of your amendments.

### **Leanne Frahm: A NOTE FROM FROG HALL**

I replied to this contribution at the beginning of this issue of *\*brg\**. Now I return to it, I feel helpless all over again. We are all hoping and wishing like mad that everything will come out okay, Leanne.

### **Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 73**

It sounds as if Michael and Natalie are a whole lot more sports competent than I ever was. At the bowling alley, all I could ever do was guide the ball unerringly to the groove at the side.

*Buena Vista Social Club* the film has lots of magic moments that are not really the result of the music. Much as I admire Ry Cooder, I admit that Cuban music is not a taste I share with him. The CD is pretty dull, in fact. The film isn't, because the performers enjoy themselves so much, in the studio and on stage.

The fake memo in the school pigeonhole is the funniest

document in any of the mailings I've read recently: I like the idea of a school staff room full of folding frames, adjustable four-wheelers and three-in-one commodes.

### **David Charles Cummer: EVERYDAY PRACTICAL DESPERATION**

Thanks for the photo of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. Monuments such as the Giant Banana, Giant Pineapples and Giant Cow can be found throughout Queensland.

Always remember that the local press and TV tell only about the 'strange and loopy' things that happen in the USA. The truth is, as I found in 1973, is that most Americans are quiet suburbanites whose way of life is very close to that of most Australians. I felt right at home in Canada and the USA, but somewhat alien when I visited Britain.

Fish and chip shops in America didn't seem much like those in Melbourne. London fish and chip shops looked like the real thing, but I never knew what to ask for. Nobody had heard of 'flake and chips' in London. 'Flake' (gummy shark) was the staple here, but it's become so scarce and expensive that it's almost disappeared. I don't even know

what people are offered now in Melbourne when they ask for fish and chips. These days I can no longer tolerate the fatty oil they're cooked in.

I know little about art. Dick Jessen knows about Richard Dadd, and gave me the high-definition file that I used as the cover for the Davidson issue. Dick also told me the story of Dadd, who never could explain his paintings.

There was a time in the sixties when Avram Davidson was a very big name in American SF, but most of the stories he published in *F&SF* were snippety little pieces with neat stings in the tale. They gave little idea of his real talent, which emerges only when reading a great collection such as *The Avram Davidson Treasury*. Like M. John Harrison in Britain, Davidson often makes giant leaps outside the field, while still having a clear understanding of the fantasy, SF and mystery genres.

Thanks for a great line: 'I could never live in a house without a basement. I mean, what holds it down? Where do you go when there's a tornado?' I once said to Dick Jessen that Australia is a great place to live because we have no tornadoes. 'Don't we?' said he. Once I'd stayed with a few American families, I could not see how Australians survive without a basement. The Bushyagers' cats, never allowed out of the house, lived mainly in the basement. When the Franks and I visited Bob Tucker and stayed overnight, we bunked down in the basement. Many fans put all their books in the basement. A perennial problem of basements is burst water pipes during winter, a catastrophe that can quickly dispose of a fan's entire book collection. At 59 Keele Street, we have a severe storage problem because we have neither a basement nor a garage.

Your knock knock joke made me laugh. Be careful, David, or you'll overtake *IRS* as the comedy centre of ANZAPA.

#### **John Newman: PING!**

Rats in the ceiling! That sort of thing couldn't happen in Collingwood. Could it?

I don't think we're 'devoid of greatness' in Australia, only devoid of people who can appreciate greatness. All they do is laud idiot sportspersons and television stars, while the land is lousy with writers, musicians, artists, scientists and all manner of other people just waiting to be appreciated. Unless they've left for overseas.

#### **David and Sue Grigg:**

##### **80 DAYS AROUND THE WORLD, Eps. 7 and 8**

I feel pure envy that you've been able to visit the Swiss lakes. My sister Jeanette is a good photographer, but of all the photos she's taken, her slides of the Swiss mountains and lakes are the most spectacular.

Did you take photos; and are you are going to run some of them, perhaps as a supplement to the whole trip report?

France? I'd feel nervous running around France with the very small amount of French I can remember from school and university. I was never much good at the oral exam. Your experience of driving in France reminds me of my attempts to learn to drive back in 1968. No wonder I never kept going. John Foyster says the train service is great in France, so that's what I would need to use if ever I get there. I would like to try those French country restaurants.

(Superb travel writing. I trust you will collect it into one publication when you finish writing it.)

#### **LynC: FROM THE LAIR OF THE LYNX No. 11**

This Gateway 866 system is already a couple of thousand

dollars less than when we bought it, as I knew would happen. But I've also noticed from the Gateway advertisements that many of the extra features on my system are no longer available on the current Gateway 800 system. We didn't have any hardware troubles when we bought our system, but managed to crash the entire operating system on the first night. (It's very easy to do.) As you discovered, the people at the Gateway help desk are helpful beyond belief. The bloke we talked to spent nearly three hours on the phone talking us through a complete reinstallation. He had to give me an instruction on the phone, I had to shout it to Elaine, who was sitting at the computer, she had to tell me the result of carrying out the instruction, then I had to tell the serviceman whether it had worked or not.

Four computers for four people? At least our cats have never learned to operate a computer. Imagine five of them playing computer games all day.

I don't understand MP3, because I can't imagine how any system delivers music down the line at a tolerable speed. I don't download software because I can't stand waiting around.

If you'd asked, I would have burned you a copy of *The Traveling Wilburys*. But it wouldn't have had the cover art. Congratulations on finding a copy.

When the 'Self-test for Literature Abusers' appeared on *Eidolist*, most of us confessed to being hopeless literature junkies.

When you install MS Word, immediately turn off all the nanny features. They can drive you crazy — for instance, automatically converting '2nd' into '2<sup>nd</sup>', as in the paragraph in which you mention the 'Nanny things'.

I won't expose myself to ridicule and scorn by appearing at a gym. At home each night I do some basic exercises, which keep my back from becoming unusable, and my medical masseur digs into the muscles every three weeks or so. I try to walk as often and as far as possible. Aikido? That doesn't sound quite my style, but I'll keep it in mind.

It's illegal to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night in Victoria because it's illegal to ignite fireworks without a permit. That doesn't stop some of the local hoons occasionally letting off crackers in the middle of Budd Street.

My aunt gave my mother a near-complete set of the 'Billabong' books, minus dust jackets, and she gave them to me. I had hoped to sell them to a secondhand book dealer, but the bloke at Alice's Bookshop said there are not scarce. A few of the books, in good condition with dustjacket, are worth a few dollars. Are you still interested in reading them?

Even the Oxford University Press style sheet now specifies 'jail', not 'gaol'. At school we were taught to use the latter spelling, but now it has almost disappeared from the language.

You had a rough childhood. I was often subjected to bullying, but only in a ritualised way. Sometimes I even got on well with other kids.

In 1954, my mother and father took the three of us on a holiday to Adelaide. The overnight stop was a farm near Francis, near Bordertown. (We stayed with friends of friends of my parents.) All I can remember about staying at the farm is that it was not connected to the electricity grid, so we had to walk around at night carrying hurricane lamps; and we had to watch out for wrigglers (mosquito larvae) in the drinking water, which was supplied from overhead tanks. At first we were horrified at the thought of encountering a wriggler. We soon became used to them, because they were very small, and tank water tasted okay. When we reached Adelaide, we found we still had to look out for

wrigglers in the drinking water. Adelaide's water supply, such as it is, is based on upstream Murray River water, so nobody drank tap water. In 1954, every house had an overhead tank. I presume that's still the case, since Murray water has become increasingly contaminated and salinated since then. I've never encountered a wriggler since that trip. We had tank water when we lived at Melton in the mid 1960s, but the tank was covered by tin and we had no contamination problems. (During the drought of 1965–66, all our water had to be hauled from Deer Park, twenty miles away.)

**Sally Yeoland: LES CHATS PARTIS No. 53**

Thanks for the update on news of your operation. I suppose you had told most of these details to Elaine, but I had missed out on some of the story.

In 25 years of entering Tattsлото or the various offshoots, the most I've ever won is \$100.

Thanks for adding to the public record by reprinting 'Bangsund, Edited'. It's about time John received the Chandler Award. He should have been its first recipient. How can we inform everybody else about the critical importance of John Bangsund and *ASFR* to Australian fandom?

And the critical importance of John Foyster. Thanks for all the wonderful memories you and John B. have reprinted here and in the *Festzine*. To read the Foyster *Festzine* is to relive large sections of my own fannish existence. Your recollections are so sharp. I know John B. has published several times his story about meeting Henry and Gemma at Degraives Tavern after being away for a year or so, but that takes nothing away from the flavour of the memory. Ah! Degraives! The worst wine and food in the world, and the best company.

Several people have credited John Foyster with starting ANZAPA, but that's not how I heard about it. Leigh Edmonds was the person who introduced me to the idea of contributing to an apa (at the cinema night when we first viewed *Planet of the Apes*). He claimed his inspiration was APA-45, a very active American apa in 1968. However, Foyster was already in SAPS, and on the waiting list for FAPA, so I suppose he could have been an inspiration for Leigh Edmonds, who put all the hard work into the first year of APA-A (as it was known for its first four mailings).

**Jack Herman: NECESSITY No. 40**

There's still no sign of *The Rise and Rise of Michael Winner* being released on video or DVD. That's a movie that I could play over and over again. A restored print was shown in the early 1980s at the Valhalla in Melbourne (and presumably in Sydney), but has never reappeared. It hasn't been shown on television since I've had access to a TV set (1980).

To 'go he', as every kid who grew up in the 1950s will tell you, is to be the person who tries to find the other kids when they hide. When you tag the first person you find, that person 'goes he'. To 'go he' in politics is therefore to be the bunny who is left holding the baby. The fall guy, as Americans say.

Thanks for your review of *Moulin Rouge*, which made me think it would be worth seeing.

I agree with you about *Memento*. It really is as clever as the reviewers say it is.

I don't agree with your dismissal of *Magnolia*, which is not as sarcastic or funny as an Altman film, but has more emotional impact than *Short Cuts*.

I've just bought all the Joe Queenan books I could find, but don't know the name of John Lawton.

Re Avram Davidson in Israel. It's difficult to tell from the biographical material how long Davidson was there. In later years he told people that he travelled there after being demobbed (1946 or 1947), and he stayed throughout and after the 1947 war. *Everybody Has Somebody in Heaven* includes stories about being part of the Israeli Army, while other pieces are observations of the way people got on with their lives after partition.

**Michael Green: REALITY MODULE No. 22**

You were once rather put out because I asked if you were underemployed. Reading these paragraphs about your efforts to find employment reinforces my impression that you lead a financially shaky existence. I hope everything stabilises soon.

**Erika Maria Lacey: . . . AND SILVER FOUNTAINS MUD**

Thanks for printing your photo. I was introduced to you at Aussiecon 3. You said 'hello', and I said 'hello'. You were probably still in your overwhelmed half of the convention. I was rushing from somewhere to somewhere. It's a wonder I said more than 'hello' to anybody all week.

I had nothing to do with fandom until I had finished my degree. You're another person whose experience proves me correct. I hope you can survive fandom and finish the degree this year.

I've kept a journal occasionally during my life, but have always abandoned it because the events of my life are so boring that the journal quickly became boring. In *Acnestis*, Mark Plummer succeeded in writing a fanzine-journal that left out the events of his life, and included only odd things he'd heard or read, or funny thoughts he'd had on esoteric topics. It worked well, but I learnt little about his daily existence.

Radio has been boring since 1970, which is why I buy music on CDs. As I said to LynC, I don't understand how the MP3 retrieval system works. I expect to hang around the computer waiting hours for five or six songs to be downloaded.

How do you read so much? I keep asking this of various people in *Acnestis*, but they never answer. Four books a month is a good reading rate for me at the moment. I must be planning to live about 200 years.

Okay, who's your father, who writes 'huge novels'? I don't know of any Australian writers named Lacey.

Thanks for telling us about the software you use — but I've heard of very few of those programs. Does StarOffice work under Windows? Does it have any advantages over bloated MS Office? I have a copy of StarOffice on one of those disks from covers of computer magazines.

Avram Davidson wrote a very short story called 'The Golem', but I can't remember any book of that name. I suspect you've read a lousy book called *The Golem* by some other author.

Elaine has been able to buy tamarind at the local Vietnamese grocery for at least the last ten years. Wander around the Vietnamese area of Brisbane and you should be able to find any of the ingredients listed in an Asian cook book.

**Derrick and Christine Ashby:**

**TOUGH AS GOATS' KNEES No. 1**

Welcome back, Christine and Derrick! Thanks for telling us your work history, Derrick, even if it's had a recent bad patch. There are three themes that dominate my two apas: the death or illness of close relatives, the death or illness of

favourite animals, and acute stress at work or painful loss of a job. The worst of the latter is waiting around for the end. Thundering rumours rumble for months; best friends suddenly disappear from the office; offers are made then withdrawn; then the snickersnee.

Something similar happened to me between 1996 and 1998, but because my 'contract' with Macmillan was merely verbal, and had lasted many years longer than I expected, I found it a bit easier to come to terms with the inevitable farewell than if I had been a genuine employee. I did expect that we were about to become a one-income household, until the flow of other freelance work picked up.

As a member of the local Neighbourhood Watch group, whose main activity is producing the bimonthly Newsletter, I'm never quite sure what to do about boxes marked 'No Junk Mail'. Our collective policy is to put the Newsletter in each letter box, because the Newsletter is a community service, not an advertisement. We don't ask for money, anyway. One of our distributors says she does not put a Newsletter into a box labelled 'Addressed Mail Only'. That might work.

Oakleigh High School, where I did four of my years of secondary school, was already scheduled for closure by the Kirner Government even before the Kennett cuts. It had 1100 students when I was there in 1962, but when it closed, the school population had fallen to less than 200.

Don seemed to be in a good mood when he rolled in from Mallacoota (eight hours' drive) for Carey's fiftieth birthday. There are few people more enjoyable to yarn to than Don, so we had a great time.

To Christine: we're finding that more and more people are suffering from thyroid problems. A few years ago, Elaine was wondering where her mind and energy were disappearing to. Eventually she was diagnosed as having hypothyroidism (not enough thyroid activity), and now must take two tablets every day for the rest of her life. Otherwise, her body would slowly shut itself down. Our cat Oscar has hyperthyroidism (luckily it's easy to give him his tablets each day), a condition that's also affected several other friends of ours. Me? I have little energy and am overweight, but even the most elaborate batteries of tests show very little wrong with me.

#### **John and Diane Fox: NEW IMPROVED RHUBARB No. 4**

Hi, John and Diane. You also snuck back into ANZAPA while my attention was elsewhere.

Your experience of being made redundant sounds very different from that of Derrick. It is possible for managers to manage these things properly — telling employees which are likely to be chopped, and when, and giving plenty of time and opportunity for job hunting. I say to myself that I could never get a real job again, because I'm over fifty, but I've heard of some fans who've been able to shift jobs, even in their late fifties, and step into a position that suits them fine.

The last time I experienced 'post-micturation syndrome' was when I was about twenty-two, when my blood pressure was 110/70.

In 1977, when I first moved to Collingwood, I was lying in bed one night. Damn! I thought. Apple Blossom has got into my room and jumped onto my bed. I got up, and looked around. The door was closed, and Apple Blossom was downstairs in the kitchen. Next morning I found out I had felt a Melbourne-style earth tremor.

#### **Glen Crawford: KOBWEBS ON THE KEYBOARD 2001, No. 8**

Always good to greet another Rolling Stones fan — even if being a Rolling Stones fan in 2001 is rather like being some ancient disciple of the Lord, still waiting His Return in AD 70. The Stones' last excellent LP was in 1974! How long must we thirst until Mick and Keef write good songs again? If there's nothing more recent than 'Brown Sugar' on *Thirty Greatest Hits*, you're not missing out on many hits — 'Angie' from *Goat's Head Soup*, 'Tumbling Dice' from *Exile on Main Street*, 'It's Only Rock 'n' Roll' from *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll* and 'Miss You' from *Some Girls*. That takes you up to 1976. 'Start Me Up' (1980) is the only hit song since then.

If you have a CD player, buy the four-CD Rolling Stones boxed set *Singles Collection: The London Years*. All the singles are remastered, most in punchy mono, and sound the way they did when we first heard them. (That would be one of my Desert Island boxed sets. The other, of course, would be *The Legendary Roy Orbison* (4 CDs).)

My agent in America is trying to sell the George Turner SF novels to an e-books publisher — but I can't help wondering whether or not I could set up my own site. I'd need a domain. I'd need to learn how to write Web sites, then buy the software needed to set up the site. Not impossible. The only trouble, I've heard, can be gaining permission to offer credit card facilities. Hmmm. I'm full of big ideas these days, but do little about them.

#### **Lyn McConchie: FAN'ATIC 81**

The only Australian fiction magazine that seems likely to be released this year is the latest *Orb*. This is what Sarah told somebody, who told us, so it must be true. I've heard faint rumours of an upcoming *Wine Dark Sea*. The only SF and fantasy action at the moment seems to be from the major publishers, and I'm told they only look at manuscripts sent by agents.

Thanks for the report on this year's national convention in NZ. It's amazing how little we hear of events or people in New Zealand these days. I don't even know who are the main fannish personalities, and I don't know of any SF or fantasy publishing. When and if you ever have time, could you do a brief rundown on the NZ scene? Or could Dan?

#### **Dan McCarthy: PANOPTICON No. 7**

Dan, please note my question to Lyn. What's happening Over There in New Zealand — in fandom and in publishing? There doesn't seem to be any focal point fanzines coming out of New Zealand. If there are, no copies are crossing the Tasman.

You say you're OE of Aotearapa. Tell us more about it. Who are the more interesting writers in the apa? Is it worth getting in touch with them? Is it worth joining? (I'm not asking on my own behalf. Being a member of two apas takes up far too much time.)

When a few years ago I met my Grade 6 classmates after 35 years, one of the things they remembered about me was that I could *draw*. I wonder where the ability went? I could never draw as well as I wanted to, so I gave up eventually. I suspect now that if someone had given me in Grade 5 one of those books that shows the elements of cartooning, I might have kept going. Best wishes for your own drawing classes; you seem to be doing well.

Thanks for your report on the Auckland Easter convention. You give a slightly different viewpoint from Lyn's, although you still don't tell us much about the individual people you met.

'Voting [for the New Zealand Fan Awards] is still largely a matter of what group one is loyal to.' As in New Zealand,



Gerald Smith and Womble at Aussiecon 3. (Photo: Cath Ortlieb.)

so in Australia. We haven't heard of any of your award winners, and New Zealanders probably haven't heard of most of this year's Ditmar winners.

I'm pleased to see somebody else admitting 'a low tolerance for authors of the Victorian period'. The period between 1840 and 1890 seems the ultimate low point in English prose, especially when compared with French writing of the period (Balzac, Hugo, Flaubert and Zola).

By the time I discovered SF, I took note of the names of the authors I was reading as well as the names of the stories. The authors in SF magazines had such interesting names: Fritz Leiber, Vance Aandahl, Kris Neville, Cordwainer Smith, Fred Saberhagen, Frederik Pohl without a 'c', and Kris Neville with a 'k'. They sounded exotic, and they wrote amazing (and fantastic) stories.

Avram Davidson was more than just another author. When I discovered the SF magazines, he was the crazy editor of *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. He would start the magazine with a three-page editorial, write the 'Books' column, and contribute story introductions that were funny, meandering and prolix, some even longer than the stories they introduced. When Davidson left the *F&SF* editorship, so did editing as a performing art.

Elaine contracted shingles a year or so ago, but fortunately she was given the anti-shingles injection (actually an anti-chicken pox injection) before it was too late. Her condition cleared up within a fortnight.

#### **Gerald Smith and Womble: RAMBLINGS No. 17**

Womble, it's a bit late, but please accept my sympathy for the loss of your sister. We get used to the idea that our parents don't go on forever, but we always think our sisters and brothers will outlive us. Then, for your sister to die suddenly! Very hard to come to terms with. What news is there of her husband and small children?

Gerald, you mention Blair Ramage. I had wondered whether he was still living in Sydney. How's he going? Come to think of it, how's Kevin Dillon going? He must be on a low income, or nothing could have kept him away from Aussiecon in 1999.

Lots of excitement on the Eastcoast list about the next Freecon, but nobody's described the travel or accommodation arrangements. The proposed program doesn't seem to

have any fannish element to it. If some large cheque popped through the mailbox, it would be good to revisit Sydney for the first time since the beginning of 1975.

Chris Priest would be cheered if you let him know that *The Book on the Edge of Forever* still has pertinence to somebody reading it for the first time. I'll try to remember to send him your comments.

I agree that the first half of *The Centurion's Empire* is a great deal better than the second half. Not only is Sean much better at historical drama than gee-whiz future adventure, but he writes the historical sections in well-developed long dramatic scenes. The last half of the book descends into slapstick.

Of your Television and Video list, I've seen as many episodes of *Dalziel and Pascoe* as possible; and *Small Soldiers* and *The Truman Show*, both greatly enjoyed. *Toy Story 2* is better than *Small Soldiers*, which is in turn better than any other recent feature-length cartoons.

Thanks to the efforts of Grania Davis, Avram Davidson's ex-wife, more of Davidson's best work is available at the moment than was available during his lifetime. That's if you can afford/obtain the *Treasury*, *Everybody Has Somebody in Heaven* and *The Adventures of Doctor Eszterhazy*. Still needed is a collection of the Jack Limekiller stories.

#### **Lucy Schmeidler: OZ SF FAN No. 17**

So 'Abba' is Hebrew for 'Mother'. Hence the musical about Swedish pop group Abba is called *Mama Mia*. (All knowledge is contained in fanzines.)

In your essay you describe the features of 'generic fantasy' that make it so repellent to me. The kind of fantasy I like is 'urban fantasy', which has its beginnings in everyday life and only slowly reveals its transforming qualities. My favourite fantasy is, by its nature, subversive. I have no idea why people are fascinated in ancient class structures. Not only are they reactionary, but they are simplistic and boring. If you see a king, cut off his head, say I. I prefer a type of fantasy in which things familiar may change in an instant into things wonderful or terrifying or both. I wish I knew how to write the kind of fantasy I like to read.

I once read a good short story collection by Tillie Olsen, but have never come across a novel called *Silences*. Thanks for the recommendation.

The smell of issues of *Galaxy* in its great days! Ah, nostalgia! Until late 1962, it was printed on much better paper than any of the other magazines, and was one of the first American magazines printed offset. As a result, the quality of the interior artwork was much better than in the other magazines, reaching its zenith with Virgil Finlay's illustrations for several Cordwainer Smith stories, especially 'A Planet Named Shayol'. After Fred Pohl took control from H. L. Gold, the quality of printing and illustrations fell sharply.

#### **Roger and Pat Sims: THE SIMS ATTEND A WEDDING**

Not much I can say about the Wedding Trip Report, except that you seem to enjoy travelling much more than I do, and that Singapore does seem worth taking a look at.

I agree. We never stop missing our cats. Flodnap died in 1977, only a year and a half after he had become my cat. In the early eighties, Julius just disappeared. He was a stupid black panther, who was invited to migrate from Carlton to Collingwood because he was Flodnap's cat. Ishtar died, without apparent cause, from what we now suspect was feline AIDS (which wasn't discovered until human AIDS was recognised). Then Lulu, a small black cat, was too brave

(no cat can afford to be unafraid of cars). Solomon lived to be eighteen, was diabetic for his last two years, but finally died from cancer. He was the best of the lot, full of cunning, affection and humour, a leader of cats and humans. Muffin, a sturdy organising cat that Elaine inherited from her father, definitely died from feline AIDS (probably contracted after bleeding severely after a major cat fight). Apple Blossom died of old age (her legs gave out) only two weeks after the death of her favourite person, Roger Weddall. Monty, the merriest cat we ever had, died suddenly at the age of six from liver cancer. We miss him very much, since he kept inventing new ways of making fun of humans and other cats. TC died of old age (his legs also gave out), after being kept alive for two years longer than expected through the use of the electric cat mat Geoff Roderick lent us.

That's nine cats lost in twenty-four years. We still have five: Oscar, the sixteen-year-old fluffy kitten who is now top cat, although hardly anyone takes him seriously; Theodore, the ginger fluffy loon; Sophie, who believes all food is to be eaten, and all visitors have come to see her; Polly, the small elegant grey shark; and Violet, a large grey cat, persecuted by Polly, and not quite sure where she fits in. (She's the only cat we've had who can understand English.) The humans survive, somehow.

As I've said elsewhere in this issue, I'm proud to be called a 'sercon' fan since it's preferable to being called an 'academic' fan.

**Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP**

More Tasmanian journeys! Thanks, Bill.

Dick Jansen's article 'Mind That Brain!' is not so much a refutation of anything you said, Bill, but a brilliant refutation of most of what Damien Broderick and Greg Egan have been going on about during recent years. Both seem to think that developing AI will lead to transposing human minds into machines at some time in the future. Dick shows why this is intrinsically impossible. Artificial intelligence is not impossible, given that the brain is made of atoms and molecules and not some nebulous substance called 'mind', but it will have to evolve separately inside machines as a consequence of developments in the structures of machines. AI might turn out to be intelligent, but it might not be intelligence with which we can empathise or communicate.

I forgot to send Dick's article to Damien. A quick search has just found Dick's file, so now I must Do Something. (This prompts me immediately to Do Something Else, such as finish this apazine.)

On the list of the 'ten strangest mathematical titles ever published', the equal-tenth-place winners seem more interesting than Nos. 1 to 9, for example, 'Condoms and cosmology'.

Thanks for your review of *3 Wheels, 2 Continents, 1 People*.

I keep wondering why Stefan doesn't earn himself a fortune by turning his pieces into books. If Kaz Cooke can do it, so can he. Surely there's a book to be made out of his misadventures at university, seen from the view of a 'mature-age student'.

'ChAnsett'. I like it.

Um, er, Bill. In a desperate attempt to save my membership of both Acnestis and ANZAPA, I published the Avram Davidson paper in each apa, but with a different covers. I still get a much better reaction to a literary paper in Acnestis than I do in ANZAPA. Perhaps for ANZAPA I should write my long-postponed paper on 'The Evils of Sport'.

**Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND  
GEGENSCHNITT 90**

I've found the bit in your fanzine where you give a pretty good reason why I probably won't get to the Airlie Beach convention: 'Brisbane to Townsville, another two hours . . . taxi to the bus station . . . Bus to Airlie, which itself is almost a four-hour ride to cover the 300 kilometres.' Somehow I had hoped I could take a handy plane ride from Brisbane to Airlie Beach.

Thanks for your report on Orycon, Silicon Valley, etc. Also thanks for news of David and Andrea Evans, last seen at Aussiecon. Do you have a snail mail address for them?

Years ago, I calculated that books have by far the worst inflation rate of any goods that I buy. At the time I did the calculation, milk had just gone over \$1 a litre. It was 10 cents a pint in the middle 1970s. Over the same period, paperback books had gone from 95 cents each to \$15 each. Since then, the GST has pushed the cost of an ordinary paperback book over \$20! I can remember some years ago staggering out of Hill of Content bookshop at the top of Bourke Street and thinking, 'If hardback novels go over \$20, nobody will buy them anymore.' Now hardbacks have almost disappeared, and trade paperbacks are more than \$30 each.

In the world of music, the opposite has happened. LPs were 52/6 during the sixties, went to \$6 in the early seventies and stayed at that price for most of the decade, until they hurtled upward during the late seventies and early eighties. The cost of CDs started at \$25 each (1984), quickly went to \$30, went back to \$25 for awhile, and now have settled at \$30 (except for imports). If records had followed the average inflation curve, CDs would be \$55 each by now.

I just reached the back page of *Gegenschnein*. It's very hard to resist the lure of Airlie Beach Relaxacon. Maybe I could hire a helicopter at Brisbane Airport?

And that, as they say, is that. Now I have to do it all again for Acnestis. Then try to get back to *SFC* and *TMR*. And earn some money. Time flies when I'm having fun.

— Bruce Gillespie, 1 August 2001

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# My Life and Philip K. Dick

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## Frank Bertrand interviews Bruce Gillespie

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Frank Bertrand has been a subscriber to *SF Commentary* since the mid seventies. He wrote to me because of our mutual interest in the work of Philip K. Dick. I lost him a few years ago — his copy of *SFC* 76 returned, marked 'Address Unknown'. Recently, he reached me by email, thanks to Lucy Sussex. Frank's life has become a bit chaotic recently, and he's currently living in Alaska. He is contributing to the Web site philipkdick.com. He's already interviewed Lucy about her story 'Kay and Phil'. Here is his email interview with me. It's on the Web site.

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**FB:** When did you first read Philip K. Dick, and why?

**BRG:** When I began borrowing SF books from the library, at the age of twelve, the first SF book I picked was *World of Chance*, the title of the English (cut) version of Philip Dick's first novel, *Solar Lottery*. Although not quite the book to make me an SF addict (that honour goes to Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids*, which I read a month or so later), *World of Chance* left me with the feeling that I must read more of this writer.

When I first read and bought the SF magazines, in the early sixties, I had limited pocket money, so I bought the cheapest magazines available. In 1961 in Australia, the cheapest magazines were the English *New Worlds*, *Science Fiction Adventures* and *Science Fantasy*, edited by Ted Carnell and published by Nova Publications. Each cost 2s 6d (25 cents) per issue. The first issue of the first magazine I ever bought (*New Worlds*) contained the last episode of a serial, *Time out of Joint*, by Philip Dick. This was astonishing stuff, describing Ragle Gumm's tunnel-like ride from one era (1959, the year in which he thinks he lives) to another (1999, the year in which he has actually been living). This abrupt journey from a false reality to a real reality is the essential Phil Dick experience.

**FB:** At the time, were you already reading SF, or was PKD the first SF author you read?

**BRG:** I became an SF addict almost before I could read, although I did not know the term 'science fiction' at the time. In 1952 or 1953, the ABC, Australia's national broadcaster, played on its daily Children's Session a serial called *The Moon Flower*, by G. K. Saunders. Saunders, who is still alive, was commissioned by the ABC to write an SF serial for children that was not only good drama but scientifically sound. It was the scientific detail that excited me when I was five or six, as the serial dramatised the experience of weightlessness during the trip to the Moon, the landscape scientists at the time expected to find on the Moon, and all other aspects of space travel. I wanted to travel into space. I still do. Since I never will get into space, at least we have the films *2001* and *Space Cowboys* to give some vision of what it must be like to hang weightless in orbit around Earth.

I became aware only slowly that what I called 'space fiction' was labelled 'science fiction', and only when I was twelve did I start reading it. Encountering Phil Dick's work so early in my reading showed me that science fiction was much more than 'space fiction'. *Solar Lottery*, after all, is

about future politics. The story showed me that science fiction could reveal much more than I could find elsewhere in fiction was Cordwainer Smith's 'A Planet Named Shayol' in the first *Galaxy* magazine I ever bought. After that, there were no limits.

**FB:** After first reading PKD, how did your interest in him then develop?

**BRG:** Encountering Phil Dick in the magazines (including *All We Marsmen* in *Worlds of Tomorrow*, a serial that was published in book form as *Martian Time-Slip*) put me on the alert for his work. Merv Binns, organiser for many years of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, worked as the manager of McGill's Newsagency in Melbourne. In the early sixties he was just beginning to import Ace Books and some titles from Ballantine, Pyramid and the other American paperback publishers. Importing American books was a fraught business at the time, since legally Merv couldn't bring them in if a British edition was available, or even if British rights had been sold. At that time, no British publisher knew about Phil Dick, so the stream of novels that he published from 1960 to 1964 could be bought from McGill's front counter.

**FB:** What in particular was it in his stories and/or novels that interested you?

**BRG:** Phil Dick's work nearly passed me by, since many of his novels that appeared in the early sixties were ordinary, to put it kindly. As I found out much later, Phil Dick was writing very fast in order to eat (and keep up payments on several alimonies), and it was almost by accident that he produced great books during that period.

The breakthrough novels, as I remember, were *All We Marsmen* (Frederik Pohl's much better title for *Martian Time-Slip*), the comedy *Clans of the Alphan Moon* and the paranoid shocker *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. For several years I couldn't find *The Man in the High Castle*, although it had won the Hugo, because rights had been sold in Britain.

I loved *Palmer Eldritch* because it told a story of a roller coaster ride down and down, leaving behind ordinary reality and falling into a totally paranoid alternate reality. By the book's end, there is nothing trustworthy left in the world. All has been swallowed by Palmer Eldritch.

I was reading this at a time during which I was taking some rather elementary philosophy at university. Philoso-

phy subjects at Melbourne University at the time were dominated by the question, 'How do I know that anything exists?' Phil Dick covered the territory better than Descartes or Hume. And his books were unputdownable. I always felt guilty about how easy it was to read a Phil Dick novel or short story.

**FB:** *In what ways do you think Dick covered the question 'How do I know that anything exists?' better than Descartes and Hume? And why was this an important question to Philip Dick?*

**BRG:** The easy answer is that Philip Dick came after Descartes, Leibniz, Hume, Ayers and all that lot, and must have read them all. Descartes asked 'How do I know that anything exists?', as Plato had before him, and offered the proposition that 'Knowledge is true, legitimate belief'. He offered a tortuous argument in favour of the possibility of knowledge, concluding with the famous proposition, 'I think, therefore I exist.' As Sutin's biography shows, Philip Dick often doubted many aspects of existence, although he thought all the time. Some of the eeriest aspects of his novels were not based on a novelist's fantasy, but on his everyday experience. This was a personal knockdown fight between Philip Dick and reality, and the novels tell of the rounds of that fight. Not only did Dick have the ability to generalise from his own experience to the experience of the characters in his fiction, but he could render those generalisations in the melodrama of snappy popular fiction. Philosophy jumps out of tedious textbooks onto the streets of California.

**FB:** *At what point, and why, did you decide to write about PKD?*

**BRG:** To Philip Dick I owe, directly or indirectly, almost everything good that has happened in my life since 1967.

In 1966, Merv Binns began to display copies of a magazine called *Australian Science Fiction Review* on the front counter at McGill's. It looked intriguing. I bought and read it regularly, then subscribed in late 1967. *ASFR* (as it was always called) featured brilliant essays and reviews about SF from such critics as John Foyster and George Turner. From 1965 to 1967 I was doing English Literature at university. I loved writing essays about literature, and found, through *ASFR*, that the same methods could be applied to science fiction authors. What better subject than Philip K. Dick?

In November 1967 I finished my last exam of my main degree, so immediately began work on the essays about Dick that would appear eventually in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd*. I sent the essays to John Bangsund, editor of *ASFR*. In December 1967, he invited me to travel sixty miles to his place to meet the 'ASFR crew', the group of Melbourne fans who had met each other because of the magazine. It was a heady weekend, as I met for the first time many of the people who have remained very important in my life, such as John Bangsund, George Turner, Lee Harding, John Foyster, Rob Gerrand (who later became one of my partners in Norstrilia Press), Damien Broderick, and Tony Thomas.

I began writing reviews for *ASFR* during 1968. I kept in touch with the 'ASFR crew', although I was living in a country town west of Melbourne. The only thing that didn't happen was publication of my Philip Dick essays. *ASFR* was faltering, affected by John Bangsund's financial woes and his growing conviction that he should publish a different type of fanzine.

When *ASFR* died in late 1968, I asked John Bangsund for the return of my essays. I expected to have a real income

in 1969, my first year of teaching, so I announced that I would be publishing a fanzine, *SF Commentary*. John not only gave me back the essays, but also his entire back stock of unpublished articles. In 1970, he began publishing *Scythrop*, a fanzine that included a wide range of subject matter, including science fiction.

I believed in the Phil Dick essays, and had a conviction that I could publish a good fanzine. After many misadventures, including No. 1, produced in perhaps the most unreadable typewriter face ever committed to stencil, and nearly ruining the lives of John, Lee and John by asking them to print the first two issues, I got *SF Commentary* rolling by the middle of 1969.

Among the first letters of comment on *SFC* 1 was a letter from Philip Dick himself. Life contains few finer moments. His letter was friendly, he arranged for Doubleday to send me his three most recent novels in hardback, and we struck up a friendship that ended only when Dick rejected all his friends in the middle seventies. I wrote another long essay at the end of 1969, and that appears on *SFC* 9. In turn, my interest produced a large amount of interesting correspondence and essays from *SFC* readers.

I said that my interest in Phil Dick parallels everything interesting developments in my life. In 1972, when I fell in love, deeply and totally, for the first time in my life, Phil was somebody I could write to about the experience. In turn, he had just fallen in love, deeply and totally, so he wrote me long letters about his experience. He fell in love rather often. Phil sent me a copy of the famous 'Vancouver Speech', 'The Android and the Human', which he had delivered during a crazy trip to Vancouver in 1972. I published it in No. 31, one of the best issues of *SF Commentary*.

In 1975, Carey Handfield and I (and later, Rob Gerrand) had the idea of starting a small press in Australia to publish critical works about science fiction. Our first book was *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd*, with an Introduction by Roger Zelazny. The book included almost everything that had appeared in *SFC* about Dick up to that time. Norstrilia Press rolled on until 1985, publishing mainly fiction rather than critical works. We printed 1000 copies of *Electric Shepherd*, which sold out by 1995.

As an enterprise, *SF Commentary* became a lot more than an organ of the really unofficial Philip K. Dick fan club of Australia, but of the many friends I've 'met' because of the magazine, most of the ones who've stuck longest and best are people who got in touch with me because of my interest in Dick's work. Unfortunately, in the seventies Phil decided that all his own old friends had become enemies. Fortunately, he did keep writing novels during that period. And then he was dead.

**FB:** *In looking back now on what you first wrote about PKD, how does it compare with what else you've written about him since?*

**BRG:** I feel a bit of a fraud here, because I haven't written much about Phil Dick since those first essays. For long periods I've felt that there was no need to, but that's quite wrong, of course. In writing about Dick's work, I must have been writing about myself, and in a sense bringing myself into existence. To go back to the novels could be a scary encounter with an earlier me.

In those early essays ('Mad, Mad Worlds' in *SFC*s 1 and 2, and 'Contradictions' in *SFC* 4, and 'The Real Thing' in *SFC* 9) I was the first person to bring up the main literary question worth asking about the work of Philip Dick: how can a writer of pulpy, even careless, prose and melodramatic



situations write books that also retain the power to move the reader, now matter how many times the works are reread? I was trying to work out how literary aesthetics break down when faced by the challenge of Dick's style. As my examples, I used a wide range of novels, mainly from the early sixties.

I didn't solve the problem way back then, but almost nobody except Stanislaw Lem, Kim Stanley Robinson and George Turner has looked at it since. In 1973, Lem mounted a comprehensive case in favour of Dick's work in his 'SF: A Hopeless Case: With Exceptions'. Lem's one exception to the general awfulness of English-language SF was Philip K. Dick. Lem argued that Dick did not succumb to 'trash' (by which I assume Lem meant the clichés of the genre) but instead used that 'trash', those clichés, in order to build an effective and structurally sound new sort of literature. George Turner, in his essay in *Electric Shepherd*, mounted a brilliant attack on Dick's talent and literary methods, an argument I would still need to face if I went back to writing about the main SF novels.

I provided an answer for myself only in 1990, when I read and wrote about Philip Dick's non-SF novels, the legendary manuscripts that had been rejected by publishers in the 1950s and remained in the Fullerton Library in California for years unread. Paul Williams published one of them, and Kim Stanley Robinson put forward a strong case against them in his otherwise wonderful book about Dick's works. Published only after Dick's death, these novels reveal an author of enormous literary range and delicacy, someone who gives so precise a picture of the changes in America in the fifties that his books were too much for publishers' readers. Why then, I asked, do the SF novels, which are often written much less competently, still have greater imaginative power than even the best of the non-SF books? My answer, of a sort, was to look at the SF books, such as *Time Out of Joint* and *Martian Time-Slip*, that were closely based on Dick's own experience at a time — books that can be regarded legitimately as both realist and SF.

**FB:** *How would you describe and evaluate the perception of and commentary on PKD, over time?*

**BRG:** Since I and a few other people, such as John Brunner and Brian Aldiss, discovered and championed Philip Dick's work before other people did, perhaps we haven't attended too much to what critics have been saying about him recently. My feeling is that once the academic critics jumped onto Dick's work, they squashed it under the vast weight of their earnest discussion. *Science-Fiction Studies* has devoted at least two complete issues on his work. The essays and books roll on. Some critics confuse Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* with Philip Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, so that the greatly superior book is almost forgotten.

Worse, there is a whole body of writers who seem not interested in Dick's work at all, but only in his strange eruptions of mysticism during his last years. These are the sort of people who find meaning in *Valis*, but are unfamiliar with *Solar Lottery* or *Martian Time-Slip*. I found *Valis* almost unreadable, but I did like the SF version of the same story, *Radio Free Albemuth*, which showed that even during his last years Phil Dick could still write an uncomplicated paranoid thriller about near-future politics.

The interest in the man himself has produced both hero worship and useful biographies and semi-biographical works. Lawrence Sutin's biography was very useful, and it's good that a small press was willing to take a chance on Anne Dick's memoir of her former husband. If only all this

interest could have taken place during Phil's life, so that he need not have suffered years of near poverty.

Dick has achieved his real triumph in the scripts of films that don't even mention his name. Many of David Cronenberg's films pay tribute to Dick, either directly (in *Existenz*) or indirectly. There is now a new genre of deliriously ambiguous films, such as *Fight Club* and *Sixth Sense* that, I believe, could never have been made without the influence of Philip Dick in current popular culture.

Not many Australian writers apart from me have written much about Philip Dick. Lucy Sussex has written a unique fictional critique, her story 'Kay and Phil', which keeps being reprinted. Among the critics, Damien Broderick uses Philip Dick as a major example of a 'transrealist' author in his recent book about Transrealism. Some people might still think of me as a writer about Dick, but I am not sure I would still agree with myself, even if I had the courage to reread my essays from the sixties. Peter Nicholls has written brilliantly about Dick's work. I have in the *SFC* files a long essay by Melbourne academic Chris Palmer about *A Scanner Darkly*, and a friend from Perth has sent me several essays on Dick's work. I haven't had time to publish them yet. As Gerald Murnane once said to me, reading Phil Dick is like plunging a syringe deep into the vein of an arm labelled California. Many Australians love reading Dick's work, but perhaps back away from exploring the implications of the work.

**FB:** *What is your favourite PKD story and/or novel, and why?*

**BRG:** I've already mentioned *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* — the most intense experience ever given me by a Philip Dick novel. It so savagely attacks every assumption held by the main characters or its readers that it almost becomes incoherent. (I admire Peter Nicholls because, in an essay published in 1978, not only did he work out that *Palmer Eldritch* actually has a coherent plot, but he worked out what it is.)

The only SF novel I've read five times, however, is *Martian Time-Slip*, which has my favourite set of characters in any Dick novel, especially Manfred Bohlen, the time-autistic boy, and his long-suffering parents Jack and Sylvia. The last few sentences of that book are Dick's finest.

For years, I could not come to grips with *The Man in the High Castle*, because its urbanity and careful detail mark it out as very different from the other novels Dick was publishing in the early sixties. Now that we have the non-SF novels to look at, we can see that *High Castle* is actually typical of Dick at his best. As with *Martian Time-Slip*, its characters remain with the reader, especially the wonderful Juliana Frink, the first character in an SF novel who begged to be played on screen by Sigourney Weaver.

Favourites, favourites; they go on forever. I love *Ubik*, which, in its desperate paranoia, its feeling of sitting on a footpath on the street that divides life from death, encapsulates perfectly my state of mind at the end of 1970 as I tried to crawl through the second and last year of my highly unsuccessful career as a school teacher. Phil Dick speaks to and for me in *Ubik*.

Philip K. Dick is the only SF writer, any of whose works I can pick up and know that I will have a totally pleasurable reading experience. Sometimes I don't know why I enjoy the experience of a particular book or story; sometimes I grump at the books after I've finished them; but there is no substitute for taking that roller coaster ride with Philip K. Dick.

