



of the Australian Science Fiction Foundation

Vol 5. No 2, January 1994

P.O. Box 4024, University of Melbourne, Vic, 3052

CHANDLER AWARD:

WINNER:

MERV BINNS
MERV BINNS
MERV BINNS

The Chandler Award recognises significant contributions to the appreciation of Science Fiction in Australia, via professional and/or fannish endeavours, carried out over a sustained period of time.

The inaugural Chandler Award was presented in April at Syncon '92 to Van Ikin in recognition of his continuing publication of the magazine Science Fiction; his editing of two collections of Australian Science fiction - one aptly named Australian Science Fiction, the other Glass Reptile Breakout and Other Australian Speculative Stories; and his contributions to fannish publishing both in Sydney and Perth.

The second Chandler Award was awarded to Merv Binns in recognition of his many years of service to the Melbourne Fannish community, before, during, and after Space Age Books. It was presented by Leigh Edmonds on behalf of the Foundation in April, 1993, at the Natcon in Perth - Swancon 18

The Chandler award will continue to be presented at irregular intervals, possibly in conjunction with a National SF Convention, should a deserving candidate be brought forward during a particular year.

Nominations for the next Chandler Award are NOW OPEN, and should be forwarded to:

Australian Science Fiction Foundation
P.O. Box 4024
University of Melbourne,
Victoria, Australia. 3052

And now a few words about the Chandler award winner:

MERV BINNS

(notes for an appreciation by Robin Johnson)

I moved to this country in early 1969, but had known Merv for about two years by that time. Before I left the UK permanently, I had developed an interest in SF and Fanzines, and was going to Conventions. At this time I was working for BOAC, (now British Airways) and travel was very easy for me. Coming to Melbourne in 1967 or 198\68, I found McGills Newsagency in Elizabeth Street. Checking the magazines in there one day, I got talking to Merv. I bought an early copy of John Bangsund's ASFR, and was shown over the Melbourne SF Club's meeting rooms around the back of the shop in Somerset Place; a property belonging to McGills and leased out as a result of Merv's initiative (and partly because no-one else would take it on). I was very impressed, I admit partly because of the old hydraulic lift in the building, but also with the fact that the club had all that space in the middle of the city. Unfortunately I wasn't able to get to a meeting, as I was leaving for Sydney the next day. Merv told me about the Sydney SF Foundation, which had recently started, and gave me Ron Clarke's name and address to contact. As a result of going to an SSFF meeting, when I moved to Sydney some time later, I had contacts with fandom right away.

My first Australian Con was at the building Dame Edna referred to as Carnegie Hall - the 1989 Murrumbidgee Eastercon, famous for being the first Australian Con with a reasonable gender ratio - mainly due to the influence of Start Trek and Mr Spock. Merv was almost as omnipresent as John Bangsund. As an interstate visitor I was pretty impressed with the Con, and with the amount of energy that seemed to be around. Nearly everyone seemed to be involved with Merv in at least one of his several activities - Merv's father, Ernie, was running a dahlia nursery, and was the only person who had difficulty getting him to do things.

After I got back to Sydney, several Sydney fans decided to get busy and run a Con there. I'm not sure whether Merv made the trip North to that first Syncon - held the New Year Weekend in the Epping Scout Hall - but I remember meeting Ron Graham for the first time. It must have been soon after this that Ron went into partnership with Merv to enable him to leave McGills and set up his own business. Also about this time it became difficult for Merv to be at the same time McGills employee and their tenant at Somerset Place. There were objections by the Town Hall and the Melbourne Fire Brigade to the showing of 16mm films, which used highly combustible nitrate stock, in an upstairs location of a very combustible building. [Merv was also responsible for acquiring and showing some early SF movies that never officially made it to Australia - Ed]

Space Age Books Pty Ltd operated initially upstairs in the Beehive building in Elizabeth St. Wherever Space Age Books was - the Beehive or the two subsequent shop premises in Swanston St - this was (with the weekly meal at Degraives St Tavern) the centre of Melbourne Fandom. I moved to Melbourne in 1971, and by this time, the big project was the 1975 Worldcon bid. Merv and his shop figured prominently in John Litchen's first Aussiefan film, made in 1972, which was probably the largest single factor in the winning of the bid. Much of the work of planning and scripting was done on his premises, and frequently by people on his payroll and on his time. No-one could say he never complained, but he was one of those who was able to see from the start that a WorldCon in Australia would not only generate foreign interest in Australia, but also involve a large number of new fans here.

Meanwhile Merv's Melbourne Fantasy Film Group was showing films at the Wesleyan Hall. Some of these films were horror films only newly permitted to be screened here after Don Chipp relaxed the censorship regulations.

Over the lead-up to 1975, he was one of the Australian fans who was making trips to the world conventions and helping make Australia better known among overseas fans through this period. By 1975, Space Age was set up in the Carr Camera Building, and seemed to be employing half the fans in Melbourne, as well as hosting the MSFC and its library, (though not the film projectors) on its top floor.

The lead up period and the convention itself, AUSSIECON, in 1975, must have been a drain on the resources of Merv and his business. I think no-one involved, and certainly not Merv, or the ailing Ron Graham, begrudged the effort, time, and money it cost. Melbourne and Australia made many worldwide friends then, and no-one knows it better than me.

I see Merv less often now that I live away from Melbourne. His life is SF and Fantasy films and books, and to his great credit, he is still making his living in the field he has known and loved since his teenage years. I'd like to finish by saying that I'm really pleased that the Foundation has seen fit to award Merv the Chandler Award for his services to Australian fandom. I'm sure the good Captain, as he looks back from the Rim, agrees with me that he deserves it.

Robin

[Robin, while he lives in Tasmania, can often be seen around the country, drumming up interest in the 1995 Natcon, which is to be held in Tasmania. We thank him greatly, for this contribution. - Ed]

#####

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- 23 January 1994 Annual Memorial Roger Weddall Picnic in the Park
Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne
Everyone welcome.
- 30 January 1994 ASFF Annual General Meeting
2:00pm, 137 Green St, Ivanhoe.
Ph: (03) 729 2327 (Donna)

#####

BOOK REVIEWS:

STAR WARS: VOLUME 2 - DARK FORCE RISING

Timothy Zahn

(Bantam Books, New York, 1992, Hard Cover)

The story takes place five years after the happenings in RETURN OF THE JEDI - Han and Leia are married and expecting Jedi Twins, Lando and Chewy are with them working for the Republic which is threatening to fall apart, suffering from petty squabbles. Luke is continuing in his quest to become a full Jedi. The Emperor is dead, but the Empire is managing to regroup in remote areas. Who is Grand Admiral Thrawn? What mysterious fleet is he searching for, and why is he so interested in Mara? Why does Mara bear such hatred for Luke? How true are the rumours of the existence of a dark Jedi? These are the various story threads that are dealt with, and which, I imagine, will be finalised in the final book of the 'cycle'.

I hadn't read the first book in the trilogy and wasn't expecting much from an idea that was such a success on the screen. Would this be able to capture and maintain the excitement of the films? I was pleasantly surprised. The established characters were developed further while remaining true to their 'known' characterisation in the STAR WARS films. The new characters were well developed and provided depth and interest to the story. Zahn's style is quite engrossing. I really enjoyed the book, immediately got hold of the first novel (Heir to the Empire) and am eagerly awaiting the final book. I recommend the novel, particularly to STAR WARS' fans.

Cath Orlieb

CRYSTAL LINE

Anne McCaffrey

(Bantam Press, London, 1992, Hard Cover)

Killashandra, the most experienced and gifted Crystal Singer, is sent to the distant planet, Opal, with her partner, Lars Dahl, to investigate a new 'Jewel Junk' that has proved to be deadly to those who come into contact with it. They survive the examination and leave some of Ballybran's crystals that had been absorbed into the mysterious jewel, not ant wiser about it purpose or uses. It's not until many years later that they realize just how important this jewel is to become to the fortunes of Ballybran.

Unfortunately this sequel to The Crystal Singer and Killashandra has gone the way of a number of McCaffrey's recent novels - too much 'soap'. At times I lost the plot of the story altogether, and wondered whether she had, as well. This novel is only worth having if you're a collector of McCaffrey's novels. If you didn't like Damia, don't bother. At any rate, wait for the paperback.

Cath Orlieb

ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN

Anne McCaffrey

(Bantam Press, London, 1992, Trade Paperback)

I was beginning to despair, because I loved McCaffrey's earlier novels and

have all of them. I was 'introduced' to McCaffrey via her Dragon books and was immediately hooked. I couldn't wait to read more; that is, until the last few years. As indicated in the above review, and a previous review of Damia, McCaffrey's recent novels have been disappointing - they read too much like the soaps on TV. But All the Weyrs of Pern recaptures the fascination of the earlier novels.

All the Weyrs of Pern follows the events of The Renegades of Pern - the discovery of Landing and AIVAS (Artificial Intelligence Voice Address System). Lessa, F'lar, Jaxom, Piemur, Robinton, and the others learn about the beginnings of the settlement of Pern, and some of the old crafts which had been lost over time. Not everyone welcomed the information - there was fear and jealousy, and some tried to prevent AIVAS from revealing more. Yet the greatest challenge to both riders and dragons was the plan to permanently remove the threat of Thread. Would the opponents to the use of AIVAS succeed in silencing it? Can the plan succeed? At what cost?

This is the best novel McCaffrey has written for a while. Those who love the earlier dragon books must read it. If McCaffrey can write novels like this, I can't wait for the next one. Recommended.

Cath Ortlieb

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION

MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name: _____

Address: _____

I, _____, desire to become a member/renew my membership of the Australian Science Fiction Foundation. In the event of my being accepted as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the Association for the time being in force.

(Signature of Applicant)

(Signature of Nominator)

Fees: Annual Membership \$5.00 / Joining Fee (extra) \$5.00 enclosed

Post completed form to: ASFF Memberships, P.O. Box 4024, University of Melbourne, Vic, Australia, 3052

(Victorian regulations for Incorporated societies require that memberships be approved. New members pay both annual & joining fees. i.e. \$10.00)

