

brg 79

A fanzine for the April 2013 mailing of ANZAPA (Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) and a few others.

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Happy Birthday Bruce



2013

Yes, a card for my 66th birthday (17 February). Thanks very much to Dick Jansen for this birthday card.

2013: two or three days I took off

Until the beginning of February I had no paying work, or any hint of future paying work. At the beginning of February I received an email from a client for whom I had done nothing for about four years. He asked me if I could finish a huge editing job by 22 March. I felt that technically I might not be able to do the job because I'm still working in Word 7. Indeed, working in Word 7 on Windows 98 led to the problems I faced. I did reply that a more realistic deadline would be 12 April, a week after Easter, but the client insisted on 22 March. A difficult task was attaching the Word styles to the documents. This is a designer's/typesetter's job, but publishers have been asking editors to do it for at least 15 years. For most of my clients, however, it has proved quicker and more economical to ask a junior editor in the office to style the manuscript before sending it out. When it took me 6 and a half hours to style the first chapter, but only 4 hours to edit it, the production editor gave in, and did the styling himself. From then on, the job was smooth sailing, except for editing the Permissions list. The client wanted this compiled in Excel, a blind spot of mine. This was a time-consuming and annoying job, which could be done only after I had edited the book, sent out the edited chapters to the authors for checking, and received back the chapters.

I took very few days off from the beginning of February until the end of March. I had finished compiling and sending out the February ANZAPA mailing before I started the new job.

Day 1 of time off

I spent one day undergoing my regular colonoscopy — or what should be my regular colonoscopy. Because my father died at the age of 69 from bowel cancer, I've been trying to be checked every five years since I turned 50. I was checked when I turned 55 (actually 56, since it took a full year from GP's appointment to the actual colonoscopy at St Vincent's Hospital). I moved to Greensborough, and when I turned 60 my new GP put in a request to Austin Hospital to arrange the procedure. Nothing happened. I reminded my GP of this a few years later. I've never been able to afford private health insurance. Eventually she found a private facility in Heidelberg that can do the procedure for a flat fee. On the day before, I stopped eating solids, swallowed sachets of gloop to clean out my system, and drank liquids all day. I did not feel hungry (I suspect that the gloop itself includes appetite suppressant). I was allowed to imbibe nothing but a few sips of water on the morning of the colonoscopy. Elaine's brother-in-law George drove me over there. I did not have to wait long. I did not actually meet the surgeon who had inter-

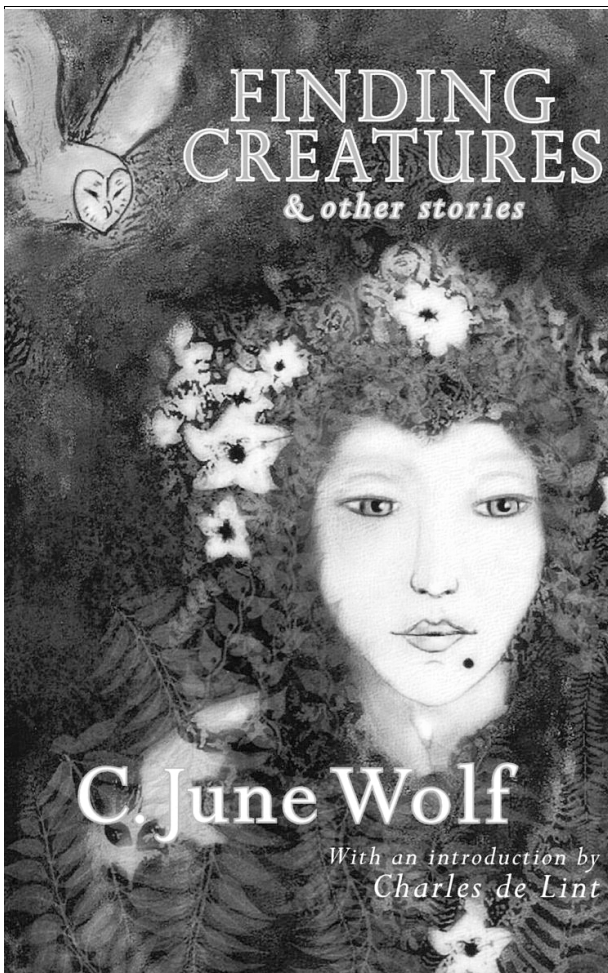
viewed me a week or so before. I met only the anaesthetist and his team. He injected me, put the little mask over my face, and I went out like a light. When I woke up, I was led into a nearby room, and sat there for about an hour until George picked me up. Then home — to a light meal. Result? No polyps.

Days 2 and 3 of time off

During March, Casey Wolf visited from Vancouver. Elaine and I had first met her just before Aussiecon 2 in 1985. Elaine was working with Esther, whose girlfriend was Carole, who asked Esther if she could introduce her sister Casey to science fiction people while visiting Melbourne. Elaine and I, Esther, Carole, and Casey enjoyed a great Thai meal at a restaurant near us in Collingwood. At that time it was one of the two Patee Thai restaurants in the inner suburbs. (The other one is still open in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy).

Casey attended Aussiecon 2, but she knew nobody except me and a friend of hers. I was always busy doing something, so occasionally I would find Casey and her friend wandering the corridors of the Southern Cross Hotel, looking lost. I thought she would be pissed off by the SF scene, and that we would never hear from her again. Instead, she got involved with the Vancouver fan group, began writing SF, and kept sending me letters of comment. In 2005, during the Bring Bruce Bayside trip, when I was visiting Alan and Janice Rosenthal in Seattle, Casey drove down from Vancouver, and spent an afternoon catching up. That afternoon was one of the highlights of the trip. Later, she sent me a copy of her fine book of short stories, *Finding Creatures and Other Stories*, published as by C. June Wolf (Wattle & Daub Books, Vancouver).

Every time Casey arranged a visit to Australia to visit her sister and friends, some major event stopped the trip. She has not been in good health recently, but finally in 2013 she was able to make the trip. She brought with her one of the longest extended bouts of hot weather we've ever had in the south-eastern states. It was hot and humid while she was visiting the tropical areas in far northern New South Wales; then the heat really set in when she arrived in Melbourne. We talked on the phone, but she was taken up country, then back to Melbourne. It was hot in beautiful downtown Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, on the Tuesday afternoon when I met Casey for afternoon tea and book touring, but that didn't stop us nattering all afternoon, moving from one bookshop or cafe to another. The next night she joined a small group of us — Elaine, me, Bill Wright, and Tim Train — at the Nyala Ethiopian restaurant in Brunswick



Street. Great food, great company.

Casey was taken off to Tasmania for a week in (or near) the wilderness — and reasonable temperatures, while the hot spell in Melbourne just went on and on. The following Tuesday, she braved the Melbourne suburban train system and the never-ending heat, and arrived at Greensborough for an enjoyable lunch at Allan House. This is the improbable name for a stylish Vietnamese/Chinese/Thai restaurant that opened on Main Street two years ago, but which Elaine and I hadn't tried until recently. After lunch, we walked back to 5 Howard Street to visit our House of Cats, lots more talk, then Casey set off home. I wonder if Elaine and I will ever see her again?

A loud night out

And then ... and then ... Frank Weissenborn astounded me by sending me by email a ticket to see Neil Young and Crazy Horse at the Plenary on 13 March. These days I cannot afford to attend concerts, but of the roll call of recent favourite visiting performers to Melbourne, Neil Young and Crazy Horse would be top of my list (apart from the Rolling Stones, last seen by me at Kooyong in 1973). Frank has been paying me in instalments to edit his recent works, so instead of handing me cash he rolled a few of these payments together, and bought the ticket for me.

The Plenary in the Melbourne Convention Centre is familiar to most ANZAPAns as the hall

where the main events of Aussiecon 4 took place. It's a long walk from Spencer Street. I would have thought it too small for a modern rock concert, but it has good line of sight from all seat, and a large standing-room area in front of the stage. The sound? I had forgotten to take my ear plugs, which meant that the very very loud sound was JUST TOO DISTORTED for my elder ears. Is this deliberate distortion peculiar to this concert by Neil Young and Crazy Horse? Probably not. Probably it's what everybody else in the audience expected. The most recent large rock concert I had attended had been Neil Young and Crazy Horse at Festival Hall in 1985 — the sound was just as loud, but quite clear. Ah well. My eardrums are shot, I suspect, but I didn't realise it until then. To enjoy future concerts, I will stick to watching them at home on DVD with the speakers turned up to 3.

The Plenary event is now being touted as the best Neil Young and Crazy Horse concert for ten years. It featured eight of the ten songs on his latest double CD, *Psychedelic Pill*, including the mighty 'Walk Like a Giant'. This just shows that the songs on *Pill* are the best Neil has written for many years. Fortunately, the band gave the audience a relief break where Neil sang four songs just with guitar or piano. Those four songs were worth the price of the ticket (which I didn't pay, but you know what I mean). They included good old 'Heart of Gold' from 1972's album *Harvest*, just to rev up the crowd, and a delicious rendition of 'Ramada Inn', Neil's most moving song from the new CD. The first half of Neil's Loud Stuff finished with an apocalyptic light show. After the acoustic set, the second half began with *Live Rust* old favourites, such as 'Powderfinger' and 'Cortez the Killer'. Then Neil and the band went into hyper-phase. Neil was actually smiling! They pulled out a medley of songs about Neil Young's love of rock and roll. Everything went louder. The songs included obscurities like 'Barroom Blues' from the mid seventies. Then came the obligatory walk-off, then the encore — a 20-minute version of 'Like a Hurricane', Neil's best song.

We staggered into the night. I had wondered if the concert might have stretched a bit over the scheduled finish time of 10.30. I looked at my watch: 11.45 p.m.! Could I run back to Southern Cross Station in time to catch the last train? I looked around for Frank. His seat had been in a different section. We had nattered at interval, but this time I lost him in the crowd. Bigger it! I could ring him tomorrow. So off I went, and actually got to the platform 10 minutes before the last train left.

I doubt if I will ever go to a Big Concert again — unless I win Tattsлото or somebody offers me a ticket to Bruce Springsteen or the Melbourne concert of the just-announced Rolling Stones '50 Years Is Not Too Many' world tour. But, adding two earplugs that I forgot to take with me on the 13th, I would repeat the experience any time it

was offered.

One question remains. All the blokes on stage that night are older than me and most of the

audience. How do voluntarily subject their body systems to all that racket, night after night?

At last the AlanStewartColumn

Alan Stewart invented the **AlanStewartColumn**. He's been doing his thing for at least 20 years in ANZAPA. For a long time, he merely provided lists of his favourite books, films, and TV shows for the previous two months. In the early nineties I began to provide similar lists in my ANZAPazines. **Joseph Nicholas**, then a member, likes to annoy people. He challenged me to provide explanatory comments for my ratings. I started writing these, providing a column paragraph reviews of books in every issue of **brg**. Nobody wrote mailing comments about my comments, so eventually I stopped. Nobody noticed. Meanwhile, good old Alan Stewart sailed on, writing short comments about the items on his lists as well as the lists

themselves.

And then **Michael Green** began his AlanStewartColumn. He did it so well that he threw out a challenge to list-makers like me. **Diane Fox** has been effectively writing a AlanStewartColumn for years. **Jack Herman** has been writing a film review column that properly belongs in *The Sydney Morning Herald* or *The Australian*. A SuperAlanStewartColumn, if you like.

Why shouldn't I return to writing my own AlanStewartColumn?

Because it's hard work, and I expect that nobody will comment on it. But let's see what happens.

Books read since 1 January 2013

**** ***Charmed Life* by Diana Wynne Jones (1977; Puffin; 203 pp.)**

I'm way behind in reading my vast collection of Diana Wynne Jones books, so I picked one at random off the shelf and read it. It's the first of the Christopher Chant series. Lively, and highly entertaining, with lots of sparkling Diana Wynne Jones dialogue, and plotting so insanely intricate that I've forgotten it already.

*** ***Drood* by Dan Simmons**

(2009; Little Brown; 775 pp.)

This is a deeply peculiar book. Told by Wilkie Collins about his friend Charles Dickens, the tale assumes that both had their lives ruled for many years by a supernatural madman named Drood, whose name was immortalised by Dickens in the title of his last, unfinished novel *The Mysterty of Edwin Drood*. Dan Simmons love the ghastly underworld of places, especially (in this case) London of the mid nineteenth century. The trouble is that the most dazzling setpiece episode, set deep underground, takes place early in the novel, and nothing else matches it. It's hard to call this a good book; but somehow it kept me reading for 775 pages, and that's more than you can say for several later novels by Charles Dickens.

** ***Kleinzeit* by Russell Hoban (1974; Picador; 191 pp.)**

I've owned this since the Russell Hoban boom of the early 1970s. Elaine recommended it highly, so I read it, unfortunately. Not much I can say about it, because I cannot remember anything about it except that it sported a quirky, over-clever prose style. I would still highly recommend other Hoban books from the period, such as *The Mouse and His Child* and *Turtle Diary*.

*** ***A British Picture: An Autobiography* by Ken Russell (1989; Mandarin; 341 pp.)**

Thanks to Lee Harding for giving me this book. I thought it would be brilliant, but it isn't. Ken Russell proves to be just as disorganised a tale-teller as he often is as a filmmaker. Brilliant in lots of its anecdotes, this book loses much of its value because it covers only a period of Russell's life when his first marriage and career were falling apart, and he was embarking on the second of his five marriages. It says little about his great filmmaking years, which were a result of the success of *Women In Love*. The films mentioned here are mainly failures, including some I've never heard of. The tale of Russell's unfortunate adventures in trying to raise cash to make movies is all too familiar; for a much more coherent account of a similar passionate career in films, see

John Boorman's *A Suburban Boy*.

**** ***Old Filth* by Jane Gardam (2004; Chatto & Windus; 260 pp.)**

For some years I've considered Jane Gardam the best British writer of short stories, but have been baffled by the few novels of hers I've read. Gardam's sense of authentic voice in her novels is just as sure as in her short stories, but often they are badly structured. *Old Filth*, by comparison, is very sure-footed, and is Gardam's bestseller. In time-shuffled fragments, it tells the life story of Sir Edward Feathers, a highly successful lawyer, nicknamed 'Old Filth' because of the initials: Failed In London Try Hong Kong. Until 1997 Hong Kong was counted as almost an outer suburb of London. Feathers succeeds there in part because of his background as a Raj Orphan. These were the children, often from privileged backgrounds, who were sent back to England by parents in the Raj and all points east, often at a very early age, for their education. They felt like orphans, and much of their later experience was warped by feelings of abandonment. In the case of Feathers, his life seems a great success. He marries well, to Betty, another Raj Orphan, and after his successful career in Hong Kong he returns to a small house in the English countryside. However, his life is blighted by deep secrets. Gardam is brilliant at revealing these in an indirect and comical way.

*** ***The Man with the Wooden Hat* by Jane Gardam (2009; Chatto & Windus; 215 pp.)**

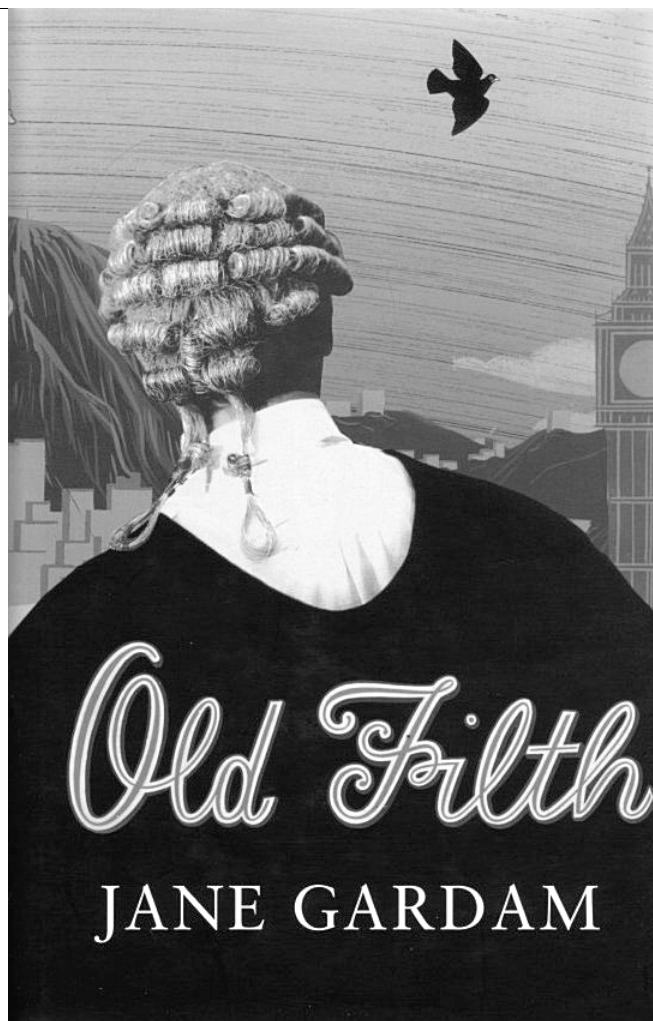
This is not a sequel to *Old Filth*, but a companion volume. It tells the parallel story of Feathers' wife Betty, most of whose aspirations and abilities were unnoticed by her husband during her lifetime. Some brilliant writing here as well, but one would need to read *Old Filth* first.

**** ***Showing the Flag* by Jane Gardam (1989; Abacus; 162 pp.)**

Reading Jane Gardam is an addictive pleasure. While looking through the unread Gardam novels on the shelf, I realised that I still had an unread book of her short stories! I finished *Showing the Flag* quite soon after that. Nearly all the stories are brilliant, and none is less than highly entertaining.

**** ***Bilgewater* by Jane Gardam (1976; Abacus; 200 pp.)**

I was talking to the people at Title in Melbourne (which was Discurio until last year) where the woman behind the counter said that she was a Jane Gardam fan. She particularly recommended an early novel called *Bilgewater* — which I had had long on my shelf but had not read yet. This is Gardam at her most brilliant. The novel was first published as in the Young Adult category, but that must have been at a time of fairly



racy YA novels. The main character, treated like mud by her school friends during her youth and nicknamed Bilgewater, becomes the centre of a small group of kids who are playing games rather outside her league. She is, of course, made of much better stuff than them, and finds her own way in life. Her misadventures are very funny as well as sometimes heartwrenching.

*** ***A Universal History of Infamy* by Jorge Luis Borges, transl. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (1954/1972; Allen Lane; 146 pp.)**

I read this as part of an as-yet-unfinished project to read the complete fiction of Jorge Luis Borges. Simultaneously I've been reading various stories in a volume of *Collected Fiction*, newly translated, but I find the 1960s and 1970s translations of Borges' fiction more satisfactory. I've been returning to the component volumes of Borges' fiction, which I bought in the early 1970s. *A Universal History of Infamy* is a very slight book of early stories, mainly from the 1930s and 1940s. It includes only one story, 'Street-corner Man', that has any of the strengths of the later stories. Most of the best of these first appeared in English in the collection *Labyrinths*.

*** ***The Tooth Fairy* by Graham Joyce (1996; Signet; 342 pp.)**

This the first book that is part of my reading project, which is a result of me being stupid enough to volunteer at the February meeting of the Nova Mob to deliver a talk (with Tony Thomas) about the works of Graham Joyce for the June meeting. I will say little about the individual volumes until the talk. Like all the early Graham Joyce novels, *The Tooth Fairy* has many brilliant bits that don't quite hang together. Now I have to work out why they don't hang together.

*** ***Partial Eclipse and Other Stories* by Graham Joyce (2003; Subterranean Press; 226 pp.)**

A short fiction collection that shows too many of Joyce's weaknesses as well as his strengths, but also includes his one masterpiece, the novella 'Leningrad Nights' (1999), a tale that combines undisguised gritty realism (the siege of Leningrad by the Germans during World War II) with ambitious fantasy in a way that not even Graham Joyce will probably achieve again.

**** ***Requiem* by Graham Joyce (1995; Tor; 286 pp.)**

A rocky emotional experience, as happens usually in Graham Joyce novels, with some very effective horror elements, and a gimcrack religious theme. The detailed yet fantastical exploration of a tourist's view of the city of Jerusalem is its strongest feature.

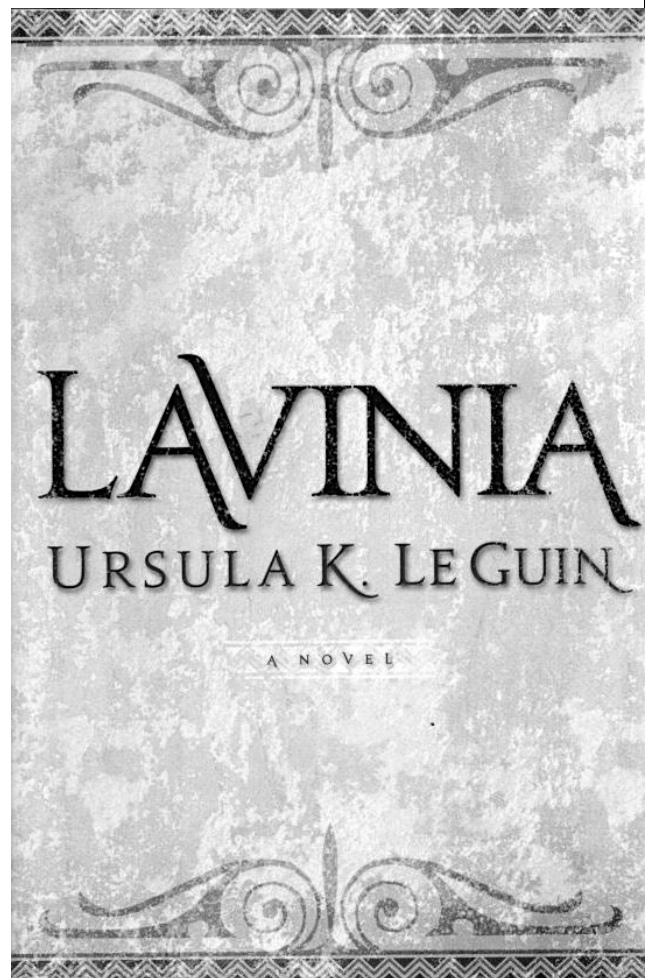
**** ***House of Lost Dreams* by Graham Joyce (1993; Headline Feature; 402 pp.)**

This very strong early novel must have put Graham Joyce on the map as much as his World Fantasy Award-winning *Dark Sister*, from the same period. (Does anybody have a lending copy of *Dark Sister*?) Again, the landscape is the central strength of a Joyce novel: in this case, a sundrenched Greek island that might or might not have been the site of the original temple of Artemis. The echoes of ancient legends saturate the island, and take over the lives of a fairly ordinary British couple who rent a house in order to escape rat-race boredom for a few months. The final scenes are very vivid.

**** ***Lavinia* by Ursula K. Le Guin (2008; Harcourt; 279 pp.)**

I'm a few years behind in reading Ursula Le Guin's most successful recent novel. I needed time off from the fevered imagination of Graham Joyce. I happened to notice *Lavinia* in a lower bookshelf while vaccing the room, and picked it out at last. It doesn't fit expectations. It's not a science fiction novel, although it won various awards for science fiction. It's not a fantasy, although it includes what we would now consider fantasy elements. To the people who lived in the early days of what would become Rome, this

is a completely realistic novel, in which people regularly obey omens, live their lives guided by the gods, and see future and past shadowy figures who give them guidance. Lavinia is a voiceless character mentioned in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the story of the founding of Rome by Aeneas and his wandering troops from Troy. Le Guin set out to give her a voice, and in the process brings to life a bustling rural state, mainly fields and forest, plus 'cities' that are really guarded hamlets: a civilisation at its very beginning. One of the many things that I enjoy when reading Le Guin's novels is that often I can see how a particular novel evolved from earlier works. Le Guin's lifelong dialogue with herself goes on. In *Always Coming Home*, her breakthrough novel of the 1980s, she attempted to delineate the way a rural utopia in a future post-apocalyptic California might work. That novel failed to account for how such a utopia could defend itself. By taking the scenario back to 200 BCE, Le Guin allows her characters to take part in realistic battles that become necessary during the founding of an integrated country by fairly rough people. At the same time, Lavinia, who marries Aeneas than loses him, keeps trying to work out ways to save her land from future endless battles, so that her people can live in peace. The novel contains



many other themes, and is very moving. I doubt if I will read anything better this year. Ursula Le Guin, now in her eighties, has said recently in an interview that she will

probably not write another novel.

— Bruce Gillespie, 3 April 2012

Mailing comments

Mailing No 271, February 2013

Claire Brialey

Thanks very much for *Land of a Thousand Rainbows* — and its cover photo.

The first column of your contribution has gained extra significance in view of your post-trip problems. It seems to me that the barriers, seemingly medical, making it difficult for you to keep working and living since the trip were in place before the trip. You had hoped that the trip would clear the barriers, and give you back some of the energy that you had already lost. It sounds as if you need to change careers urgently, no matter what the immediate financial difficulties.

I've just read your quotation from Dante ('Without hope, they live in desire'). I remember clearly how much it reflects my attitude to life before I left the only five-day-a-week, eight-hours-a-day job I've ever had, editor-journalist at the Publications Branch, Education Department. I left that job in the first week of July 1973. Because the job itself was a seconded teacher, it was well paid. It was the last period of life when I was really well paid. I still remember clearly my reluctance to get up in the morning, particularly on Monday morning, after an ordinary two-day weekend. I would spend the Saturday being very tired and useless, and the Sunday being less tired and only slightly useful. The only good weeks were those with a Monday public holiday. That would be the one day in which I would feel well, happy, and useful. However, as a seconded teacher and not a public servant, I received a teacher's holidays: six weeks in December-January, and two weeks in each of May and September. That's when I had the time and energy to produce issues of *SF Commentary*. I've rarely been paid much since I went freelance in 1974, but I've rarely suffered from the reluctance to get up in the morning that I suffered until July 1973.

Grant Watson has lived in Melbourne for some years, but I've met him once. As far as I know, he does not take part in any Melbourne fannish events except those involving other ex-WA fans, such as Sue Ann and Trevor.

Elaine and I have also never been invited to a meal at the Wang.

It's wonderful when you and Mark and Yvonne make your trips out to Greensborough, but we are also willing to show you parts of Melbourne and Victoria we appreciate. It's just that we can't drive you there in a car, which I suppose why you have seen a lot more of outdoors South Australia and ACT than you have of Victoria. If we had a car we take you up around the Dandenongs, or down to Cape Schanck, or up the high country east of Wangaratta, or all around the northern Victorian wineries (home of huge reds, muscats, and tokays), or up to the area around Castlemaine where my sister and her partner live.

Your experience of today's convention programs echoes mine. Very few program items 'match my experience of SF or SF fandom', and the few items I'm interested in usually clash on the timetable. Which is why I enjoyed the opportunities offered by 2012's Continuum to meet and greet people. At Continuum in 2012 it was difficult to buy drinks and food at the bar, but the bar was a great area for catching up with people. The upstairs room provided another area where people could gather, sit down, and talk. Since these facilities are nonexistent or hard to find at the Ether Centre, to which Continuum returns this year, I won't be attending.

Thanks for remembering that there was actually an enjoyable panel last year about the origins of the Melbourne SF Club, and that many of the stories were different from those told during similar events at Aussiecon 3, Convergence 1, and Aussiecon 4. And yes, I must have missed riding the water lift at Somerset Place by only a few months, because it was on the blink by Easter 1968, when I attended my first convention there.

Sorry that you suffered that cold during the convention; Melbourne does seem to blight you with ill health every time you visit.

What are you like when you go into madwoman phase?

Thanks for the words-and-photos tour of Kangaroo Island, which I doubt I will ever visit. Nice rocks. I thought the picture of Mark being Remarkable could have made as fine a cover as the one you chose.

Lucky you — I've only ever seen one platypus

in the wild (under the road bridge over Cement Creek, near Warburton in the Dandenong Ranges), and perhaps one other at the Zoo or the Healesville Sanctuary. Many years ago.

Quoz 31: As you know, I'm a coffee addict, but not a wine addict. I was becoming one by the end of the eighties, when really good wine was still affordable. It isn't now. And I have few people to drink wine with. Lee will usually buy one glass of wine at the Rosstown during our gatherings in Carnegie, but Dick and I stick to one beer each. And Elaine drinks water, since she cannot stand the taste of wine these days. If Bill comes along, he offers to buy a bottle of wine. He's not supposed to drink any of it (because of the diabetes), but would probably drink the rest if Lee and I had a glass each. So we tell Bill to save his money. Almost nobody drinks wine at Fourth Wednesday nights, because people need to drive home afterward. How unlike Melbourne Fandom 1970s.

We've just had the hottest summer on record: two bouts each of nine days over 35C, separated by a couple of days of cooler weather. It seems as if autumn has finally arrived (on the last day of March), but it's still very warm outside.

The trouble with your reports of your tiredness is that they sound just like the way I felt before I was diagnosed with diabetes 2. But you've already told me by email that tests did not reveal this as a diagnosis.

Thanks for your book lists; I trust you were interested in mine, which were part of my multi-lists in **brg** 78. I doubt if I read 50 books last year, let alone 100.

Of your main book list, I've read none of them except *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*, read when it first appeared in the seventies. It's one of the few Kate Wilhelm books I really disliked. It won lots of awards. A year later she published her best novel, *Juniper Time*.

Not that I would ever read a book using a Kindle or any other kind of e-reader. More and more I'm reading books only in the hardback edition, unless there is no hardback edition available (as with *Among Others* by the time I tried buying a copy).

I do confess to watching some episodes of some TV series on DVD. Ten years after everybody else I've discovered *New Tricks*. The first series features some of the cleverest writing and plotting I've seen on any BBC series. And it helps to have four eccentric main characters instead of only two (as with most crime series). I hope that it doesn't lapse into formula writing, as do most series.

January in Britain was bad enough the year I was there (1974), but it seems that it has become much colder and longer during recent years. In 1974 the top temperature each day was about 10 (compared with a daily top of 14 in winter in Melbourne) and it rained every day except one, but there was no hint of snow and ice in 1974.

So it's now The Year of the Fish Budgie —

which sounds much better than The Year of the Labor Party Annihilation, which is what 2013 will probably be known as. If Tony Abbott gets in, The Year of the Pirate Fascist Fish Budgie it will be.

I think I agree with your comments about genzines, but maintain my right to run general articles.

Internet comment about the finding of Richard III's remains: 'Why were they so rude as to bury him under a carpark in the first place?'

Garry Dalrymple

I've heard Martin Rees being interviewed by Robyn Williams on ABC Radio National's *Science Show*. I would have enjoyed hearing him speak at that public meeting you attended.

There's nothing I can say about your work situation, except that state governments throughout Australia seem bent on doing similar ghastly things to throngs of people who are quite willing to sit there and do a good job. The best solution would be to get another job unconnected with the old job, but I don't know how to offer you such a miracle.

Ursula Le Guin's *Lavinia* is based on Virgil's *Aeneid*. Virgil lived in the first century AD, long after Homer.

We chaps who went through years of girlfriendlessness often noticed that nice girls often went for bad boys. I just had to wait long enough for Elaine to recognise my sterling qualities, sparse though they might be.

Thanks for your story of the Jamaican bloke in the wheelchair. Some years ago, Melbourne broadcaster John Faine spent a morning in a wheelchair trying to get around the streets of Melbourne — and found it a really scary, difficult process. And Faine is a very articulate man, who would have no hesitation in asking people to get out of the way or help him across streets. As you say, you have to wonder how the Jamaican bloke with a stroke could ever travel from anywhere to anywhere.

Thanks for the story of the peculiar meeting with Graham Stone. The only time I met him, I found him easy quite affable, although his voice is so quiet it was difficult to hear him. Your story of being snubbed is more in keeping with tales of Graham Stone from the old days. I haven't received his little magazine for awhile. Does anybody know whether he is unwell or not.

Diane and John Fox

Diane's bit:

Nothing I've heard, not even your favourable review, has made me want to watch *The Hobbit*, part 1. Lee Harding hated it for its lack of characterisation and plot progression, but then, he was forced to see it with his grandchildren in Perth. It might be more interesting on Blu-ray.

I was a bit underwhelmed by the new version of *Les Misérables*, but was because I didn't like much of the music, except for the big numbers. Also, I hate the grimy blues and browns of the colour palette of modern cinematographers. I thought the female actors-singers did better than the blokes. My favourite *Les Mis* is the 1930s version with Charles Laughton as Javert — a version with no bloody songs.

With *Life of Pi*, the experience of watching it in 3D is so overwhelming that it's hard to judge it as a film in its own right. It will be interesting to observe my own reaction to watching it in 2D when it appears on Blu-ray. In *Life of Pi*, Ang Lee has returned to the wonderful stylishness of his earlier films, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. *Brokeback Mountain*, by comparison, was an artistic mess.

I like your comment that the plots of Shakespeare's comedies often are not very different from those of his tragedies. This effect is most obvious in *Much Ado About Nothing*, where the whole direction of action seem set to develop into tragedy until quite near the end. (I saw Kenneth Branagh's film a few years ago.)

I've seen few of the films you mention:

- *Small Soldiers* some years ago. I can't remember much about it, except that it was an effective anti-war tract.
- *Ivan the Terrible*, Parts 1 and 2, are among the true masterpieces of cinema, watchable over and over. Part 2 is even better than Part 1.
- *Howl* was one of my favourite films of 2011, especially as it is not a simple biopic, and stays strictly with words known to have been written by Ginsberg.
- I missed *The Celluloid Closet* when it was shown at cinemas in Melbourne, because I assumed I would be able to buy it on DVD. I've never seen it on a shelf in DVD.
- I would love to see *Aliens of the Deep*. That might have been shown at the Imax cinema in Melbourne, which has stopped advertising its daily programs in the *Age*.
- Watch *The Social Network*. As a character study it's splendid, and much of its detail about the beginnings of social networking are fascinating. But it's David Fincher's special ability to fashion memorable visual setpieces that makes the film special. For instance, I discovered much later that his technicians had to build a unique, very light 5 pound camera to film the scenes in rowing skulls (during the annual Cambridge versus Oxford rowing competition) because a camera of the usual weight would have dipped the prows of the boat into the water, making it impossible to race the boats in the way shown.
- See *Juno*.

Yes, one way to put on weight fast is to eat at restaurants. Not only are the portions much

larger than those Elaine would serve at home, but the salt, sugar and fat elements of even the 'healthiest' restaurant foods are much higher than any she would serve in a home-cooked meal.

For years the New Wavers in Britain touted Paul Ableman as the kind of writer they could claim as SF, although he probably never read SF or meant to write it. I read *Twilight of the Vilp* many years ago, and found it very slight. I still have a copy *I Hear Voices*, which I also bought in the seventies. I have never summoned the energy to read it.

I think you're safe from attending Aussiecon 5 for at least another 12 years, especially if New Zealand goes for 2020. I enjoyed Aussiecons 1 and 3; but 2 and 4 not so much. Australia in 2025 could be a dazzler, provided I can ride an electric buggy. I will be 78 in 2025.

John's bit:

Thanks for the photo of the Magneto wall telephone. Doing your bit for the Steampunk movement again, I see. Crank the handle in order to send a 1930s email.

I haven't read those books.

Believe it or not, I cannot remember hearing Eric Bogle's 'Leaving Nancy', either sung by him or by anybody else. I wonder if there is a good Bogle CD anthology, containing all his major songs.

I agree that you should not bore the crowd with a Powerpoint presentation. A real silvertongue only has to speak the first sentence to entrance his or her audience. I just wish your Advanced Communicator Silver Level speakers were in Parliament delivering great speeches instead of the current cocky-rabble.

I'm very glad that the combination of chiropractic and walking has got rid of your pain.

I would love to be 96.4 kg. When my weight reduced to its lowest in late 1909, I made it to just under 97 kg for one day. Since then it has gradually crept up again. In the middle of 2009 I was 115 kg, so my current weight of 105 kg is still an improvement.

Michael Green

Very nice photo of the Melbourne Showgrounds — certainly much better than any photo I've ever seen in a newspaper.

Thanks also for Embers photo No 41.

There's not much I can say about your diary entries, so I don't know any of the people, except for Carole, and John Davies and Frank Weissenborn. I'm impressed by your talk about things PC. How much would you charge for an afternoon of your time to help us make the best use of Elaine's new computer and the old computer (XP) that she is handing over to me?

Glad to see you are doing the advanced copyediting course, and realise that the job of an editor involves 'so much to remember and to

apply'. The best way to remember it all is to edit as many raw manuscripts as you can put your hands on. Ask your friends for manuscripts of their rejected stories.

The news item about the death of Carole's sister Sue seems a bit abrupt. Surely she must have been very young?

Thanks for your AlanStewartColumn. I haven't read any of those books, but thanks to your review, I'll put *The Homeward Bounders* high on my list of to-be-reads.

I haven't seen any of those TV shows.

Wanting to create your own fiction may be a very good thing for your soul, but it's a pain for people like me who want to keep up with reading the good stuff. My feeling, many years after the golden years of writers' workshops, is that bright young SF writers should be discouraged from unleashing their products on the world. In this way only the people who are really determined to succeed will break through. I won't have time to read more than a tiny percentage of whatever they publish.

Best love song? Now there's a puzzle. We're looking for a song that conveys all the ambiguity of feelings that make up the actual concept of 'love', not just a soppy popular song. My top candidate is Richard Thompson's 'Beeswing'. It was never a hit single, but can be found on various Thompson compilations and even (I think) on some of his concert DVDs. My candidate for top sad-and-soppy love song would have been 'The Crowd', by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson (1962). Among the close contenders would be 'Dimming of the Day', also by Richard Thompson, or Paul Simon's 'Graceland'. Most of Paul Simon's songs and Bob Dylan's cover too much territory and are too ambiguous to be pinned down as 'love songs'.

Good to hear that your satisfactory blood sugar readings. I've been able to keep my readings to much the same range during the last few years, through diet control.

Thanks for mentioning the songs of Leonard Cohen. His songs of the last thirty years have been much more interesting than his more famous songs from the sixties. The lyrics of Joni Mitchell's songs have also always been of a very high standard.

Jack Herman

I can only agree with you about the perfidies of the Murdoch press, but since Julia is consistently outmanoeuvred by Murdoch, and appears to be have no team capable of stomping on Abbott and Murdoch, I can't see how the situation can change before September. Even the decision of Julia's to announce the election date six months ahead now seems very wrong-headed.

I can only agree with your analysis of the American situation.

Nice pics from the overseas trips, but a bit

small.

Thanks for the report on the Paris buskers. The few people who busk on Melbourne trains are terrible musicians. In America, any busker I heard was a high-standard musician.

I know little about Barcelona, so thanks for the description. Not perhaps a city I would have chosen from a travel guide. I rarely think about cities I might visit, because I know I'll never visit them. Now you remind me that Barcelona is a city of Gaudi buildings — yes, I would like to visit it very much.

Thanks for part 1 of the trip report. I'm looking forward to much more.

I had no idea that the song 'One Meat Ball' had any connection with (a) the Andrews Sisters, (b) Australia, or (c) Jack Herman's uncle. The only version I know well is Ry Cooder's, from his first album, *Ry Cooder* (1971).

If Garry printed out his fanzines the way I wish he would print them, the content of his 12 pages (say) would stretch to 24 pages. This is more satisfactory than the practice of a small number of people, trying to save their membership with 6 pages, who offer only five pages and half an extra page of a pic of some type. The appearance of Garry's magazines from now on will depend on his job situation. Will he continue to have access to adequate photocopying facilities? I've suggested to him that if he has to leave his job (and photocopier), he write mailing-comments-only issues of no more than 8 pages each, and send me a PDF to print from.

Thanks for pointing out the average IQ must, by definition, be 100. Also, there can never be an IQ over 200, despite the propensity of the crazier SF writers, such as A. E. Van Vogt, to give their characters an IQ of 1000 or more.

I'd forgotten that John and Cheryl Straede are probably as well known in Sydney fandom as they were in Melbourne fandom, because of moving to Sydney in 1972. I'm wondering which Sydney fans of the seventies still do not know of John's death. Since Australia no longer has a national newszine, there is no way to spread the word of such losses.

Thanks for your reading and music lists. I really should read *Wolf Hall*, but have picked it up several times in bookshops, looked at page 1, and have not been over-excited by the prose. (I put back a lot of books on the shelf after I read the first page.) I haven't heard any of the people on your music lists except Boy & Bear (I've bought two of their CDs), and Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings (not liked much, although Brian Wise on 3RRR promotes their music).

Thanks for the information about Coles and Woolworths. Since both behave like fully owned arms of international food companies, I had assumed they were wholly owned overseas.

Ask Claire and Mark what is the significance of the mighty fishlifter. Fishlifters were first mentioned in London fandom during the nineties.

The only reason why I knew about Little Pattie's major hit 'He's My Blonde Headed, Stompie Wompie, Real Gone Surfer Boy' is that I found a way of collecting Sydney Top 40s during the the early sixties, when she had that hit. It was played very seldom in Melbourne, and I cannot remember it being on the Top 40 here. Some of the Sydney surf hits did very well here, especially the Atlantics' 'Bombora' and various Delltones singles.

I'm glad you Know Things and can counter the ideology-generated rubbish that Eric Lindsay publishes as information in his fanzines. I wouldn't have a clue how to research all those wonderful statistics, Jack, perhaps because Google is accessible only from Elaine's computer, not from mine. All knowledge can be found in ANZAPA.

Heaven forbid that I should add sustenance to the mighty Herman ego — but I must say that your film reviews are better than any I read in the press (except those of David Stratton and Evan Williams in the *Weekend Australian Review*). So why not earn a bit of extra money by sending out your film reviews to a paying market?

In particular, your review of *Skyfall* sums up everything I would want to say about the film. This is the best example for a long time of the pop-film-as-artform. Most of the pop action films I see I forget within a week. They are based only on physical action, and physical action is usually boring. *Skyfall* has extra qualities, such as coherent story line, memorable photography and production design, and genuine dramatic strength. Those qualities are missing from most blockbuster films these days. I can't say how *Skyfall* rates as a Bond film, since I've seen few of them. It's certainly better than Daniel Craig's *Casino Royale*, which was enjoyable enough when I saw it, but incoherent and forgettable.

You are recommending *The Best Exotic Mari-gold Hotel* in comparison to *Quartet*, but I haven't seen either. Other critics have dismissed both films as trite, but like you, I find that good dialogue delivered by ageing British actors can make up for a lot.

David Stratton thought that Helen Mirren's characterisation was false to the real Alma Reville in *Hitchcock*, but that's hardly the point. Does the film work on its own terms? You seem to be suggesting that it doesn't. So do most of the newspaper and magazine critics, although for a wide variety of reasons. What a pity, especially as the other Hitchcock movie, the one about the making of *The Birds* and Hitchcock's obsession with Tippi Hedren, seems to have disappeared entirely. No sign of it in Australia, even on DVD.

I haven't seen the other films you mention. I'm looking forward to your discussion of *Lincoln*.

Knud Larn

You drop into the conversation (a) a daughter, about whom we have heard nothing so far — tell

us all about her! and (b) your paintings, which sell to galleries, and evidence of which we still have not glimpsed in *The Lyre Bird*. (What about a special Art Issue?) My mental image of you had been of a young feller with lots of enthusiasms, but obviously this image is incorrect.

Please get in touch if you travel to Melbourne. I'm sure we could put on an ANZAPA Meet and Greet dinner for you.

Thanks for your contribution to the genzines debate. The obvious question is: where can we find your genzine to read it? It's not on efanzines.com, where it should be.

In structure, the SF apas spring from the old ajays, and in the 1930s and 1940s probably operated just as you describe. Some fan invented mailing comments — I assume in FAPA — but that would have been after FAPA began.

Thanks very much for your insights drawn from your experience with the SFF. It never would have occurred to me to conduct an apa as a 'distribution channel', yet, as you describe the concept, it has logic on its side. As you say, eFanzines.com currently functions exactly as you describe.

Genzines have been seen as trespassers into apas during the 43 years I've been a member of one or another. The apas of which I have been a member — ANZAPA, APA-45, FAPA, and Acnestis — have been defined by the quality and quantity of the mailing comments, although FAPA had no bans against genzines and perszines.

The main reason why I'm not interested much in Verne is that there have never been good translations available in English. Current reprints reproduce atrocious translations dating back to the late nineteenth century. If ever any author deserved a complete new translation into English of all his works, it is Jules Verne. But who would pay the immense cost of such an enterprise?

When you write your Bellamy essay, please reprint it in *The Lyre Bird* or in your genzine.

Great to hear that Jean and Eric visited you in Copenhagen. I just wish I had the funds to do the same, but I haven't won the lottery yet.

My mother, who died in 2007, was an obsessive thrower-out of stuff, some of which my sisters and I wish she had not thrown out. Nevertheless it still took my sisters several weeks to clean her house so that it could be sold. I can see the problem of dealing with a whole house full of your father's beloved junk.

I know we are 'Friends' on Facebook, but I haven't seen anything from you yet. Probably because your conversations are in Danish.

Everything I do has been published on <http://efanzines.com> since Bill Burns began the site in the late nineties. Every *SF Commentary* published since the mid 1990s is there, as well as the final issues of *The Metaphysical Review*. All my apa contributions, from ANZAPA or Acnestis since 1991, are there, as issues of *Scratch Pad*.

And, of course, every issue of *Steam Engine Time* (No 13 was the last issue). It's a very time-consuming job to scan old fanzines, so I've done few of them. I can send them to you on CD-ROM, but they are much too large, in terms of megabytes, to place on efanzines.com.

How marvellous to know that you live on the site of *Beowulf*.

And thanks for the 'Verne & Wells' cartoon. More, please. And, please, more mailing comments. As you can perceive from the act of writing yours this time, they are what make an apa come alive.

Eric Lindsay

Yes, on ideological grounds alone, I should abandon eating Vitabrits (taken over by Nestlé) in favour of the main rival Weetbix (made by Sanitarium, which I suspect is now owned by an overseas company). But Weetbix contains more sugar than Vitabrits, which remains the healthiest breakfast cereal I can find. (Apart from rolled oats porridge, which I had to eat every morning until I was eighteen, so will never eat again.)

Thanks for your article about Woolworths and Coles, which complements comments made by Jack Herman. Both groups exploit the suppliers, and therefore are no better than other killer capitalists. That's why I assumed both groups were owned by overseas multinational companies. However, if companies like Coles and Woolworths no longer pay farmers the equivalent of a living wage, the farmers will have to leave the land, which would create major depression in most eastern states, especially Queensland.

Jean Weber

Thanks very much for the feast of photos from your 2012 European trip, especially as I will never see these places for myself. The photos of the memorials to the Berlin Wall are particularly interesting.

LynC

I suspect that not even the offer of free Gold Class tickets could get me to sit through *The Hobbit*. I've never been to a Gold Class session.

We can survive loss of email access for a whole day — but that's just for two of us. Not for longer than that, because both of us are usually constantly sending messages to and from authors of books we are working on.

I must admit I have no idea what you are talking about in the paragraph that begins, 'Getting hold of an Optus CSR ...' I have no idea what a CSR is. Now I know why your mother said, 'Speak English!'

Thanks for the reminder to never have anything to do with Optus. I'm told that Telstra is just

as bad to deal with.

Thanks for the reminder to read my most recent HBA1c test results. On the most recent test the percentage was 5.4 and the 'IFCC' (whatever that is) was 36. Somewhere in a folder I have my results from when I was diagnosed diabetic in September 2009, but I'm not sure where.

The main difference between our blood sugar results would be explained by the fact that I do not need to commute and do not need to work in a stressful office environment. But I also do not need to support a household of three adults. My income is probably a small percentage of yours, but so far it seems to be sufficient, because Elaine and I do not have kids, a car, or a mortgage.

Dan McCarthy

Thanks very much for the cover by Alice Peattie. Very good.

Thanks also for the photo of your own good self. You appear cheerful whenever we see you in photos.

I love the story of the unlikely meeting between the Leith Harriers old boys and Mongrel Mob. I'm surprised somebody didn't yell out, 'You're cheating', pull out a gun, and plug a few people.

Sounds as if your Christmas New Year period was quite enjoyable. Ours was so quiet that I cannot remember anything happening except for a few Christmas gatherings early in December. We visited nobody and nobody visited us on Christmas Day.

It's not clear why you listen to *Matinee Idol* if you so disagree with its song choices. There are no specific discussion programs for oldies left on AM radio, but I suspect some of the smaller community radio stations have golden oldies programs. I haven't discovered them. 'Magic' is the current name for the station once called 3MP. It features music from several decades stretching from the early fifties to the seventies, but I never hear it these days. It used to be between the two ABC stations, but was then bought by Fairfax Media, who also bought 3AW, the top commercial radio talkback station in Melbourne. It shifted Magic way down the dial and replaced it by 3AW. Not only did this improve technical reception for 3AW but it also made it much more competitive with the ABC's 774 (the old 3LO), which it sees as its main competition. I never listen to 3AW, because of the number of advertisements it runs, but I do know otherwise sane people who listen to 3AW and never to 774.

Best line of the mailing: 'Just reading about all the things you have been doing was enough to make me want to go and lie down for a bit.'

I'll still feel young while my circulatory system functions well. I've been trying to walk as much as possible as often as possible during the last three years. Walks that were a bit of a strain three years ago (as from here to Montmorency, the nearest suburb) now feel like a stroll. The main

limitation on the length of my walks is my bladder. As a coffee addict for 50 years, I need to know where the loos might be, or where there is a hidden bend on a valley walk where I can take a leak without offending anybody.

Jeanne Mealy

I like the concept of a 'weak tornado'. We rarely suffer from tornadoes in Victoria, but a week or so ago a tornado ripped through northern Victoria. The pattern of destruction was fairly complete. One house was flipped over on its roof, and many others were destroyed. Nobody said whether it was merely a 'weak tornado' by American standards.

Glad to hear that you have another job. Last I heard, John was still knocked about from being fired, as I would be if I were good at my job and I needed the money and couldn't find work. Job hunting must be very dispiriting, but also take lots of energy.

In Australia ordinary people don't have handguns and rifles. Criminals, police, and farmers are the only groups that own handguns and rifles. I cannot work out how you establish in America the concept of the illegitimacy of owning personal guns.

A bit puzzling. You say that 'the last train' left from the Union Depot in 1971, but that the refurbished station will cater for 'buses, trains, and next year, light rail trains'. So what train services are currently available to and from St Paul?

What's happening to St Paul had already happened in many American cities when I visited in 1974. Downtown St Louis, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, for instance, were nearly empty of people in the middle of the day. I'm told that lots of American cities have since revived their centres. Those of San Francisco and Seattle seemed lively enough when I visited in 2005. The liveliness of a city centre does seem to depend on the pattern of public transport. Perhaps the new light rail system will turn things around in St Paul.

'High of 13, low of zero' with nine or 10 inches of snow? Then it clicked: that's a range of about minus 15 to minus 6 in Celsius measurement. I would find it very hard to get around in such intense coldness.

Sorry that you missed the ANZAPA party at Aussiecon 4. Everybody assumed that everybody had told everybody else about it. It was late on the night of the Hugoes, in a nice room in another hotel, in Spencer Street.

Murray Moore

I hadn't heard of either Tom Thomson or the Group of Seven. Any chance of reprinting some of their best paintings in *Moz*?

I love *The Quiet Earth*, but hadn't heard of

Phantom Lady. I'll ask Dick Jenssen if he has a copy.

The definition of 'genzine' is 'general circulation fanzine', as opposed to restricted circulation fanzine (i.e. apazine). And no fanzine is more widely circulated than *Ansible*.

I had heard of Cavecon because it is the favourite convention of our friend Mark Linneman. (He rang us last night. He is very stressed at work, hopes to retire in August, and was Guest of Honour at the most recent Cavecon.) It sounds like my kind of convention.

Your thrashing about in the water while being taught to swim sounds much like my first swimming lessons when I was ten. As part of a lifelong attempt to improve my back, I was taken by my mother into the City Baths in Melbourne, a half-hour train trip from home. I flapped my feet around with the others, but didn't receive any useful instructions that enabled me to swim. The water was too deep for a ten-year-old. After a few lessons my mother saw that I was not learning anything, so we stopped attending. The next summer, the Oakleigh Swimming Pool opened. I spent the summer diving and bobbing and becoming about as proficient as swimming as I've ever become, which is not much. By the end of summer holidays spent in a public swimming pool, the pool chlorine was beginning to do dreadful things to the innards of my nose. At the end of summer we moved from Oakleigh to Syndal, which did not have a pool handy. I swam very little from then until 1982, when I began swimming at the Collingwood Swimming Pool. By 1992, the pool chlorine began to belt the innards of my nose again. I stopped swimming, and took up walking. Since 1992 I have swum once, in the sea in Queensland when I was visiting my sister Robin. If I lived near the sea, I would swim often, but I don't. I'm still walking, but that's another story.

John Newman

My sister Jeanette, who lives at Guildford, has the same feeling as you have about the sinister nature of summer. Each very hot day during summer she piles a selection of valuables into the back of the car, and is ready to drive off at a moment's notice. This is probably the only sensible strategy for any Australian who lives away from a major city. (And even the northern suburbs of Ballarat were threatened by a bushfire on Black Saturday.)

There was another dangerous grass fire at Boho during the last hot spell in March this year. No mention of Marraweeney this time.

Thanks for the great photo of the Maldon Hospital. So what is the Welsh connection with the building?

I will try to remember your Open Source analogy, if ever forced to argue about the merits or otherwise of religion and science. I usually avoid such debates by shuffling into the other room.

When I first met Elaine and Frank, before I was living in the same house as them, let alone living with Elaine, they were part of a small group who visited the Spiritualists' Union because of its great bookshop. In particular, it was the best place to buy an affordable copy of *I Ching*.

Thanks for the photo. Scary! Makes me wonder when we last met. A long time ago.

Roman Orszanski

No idea what to say about you being made redundant, except that it seems to be happening to a lot of people these days. I trust that you have a new job by now, but I haven't heard any news from you, good or bad.

I like the idea of crepes for New Year's morning. A good omen. Elaine makes crepes occasionally.

I don't know how Australian writers can be making a living from it. I doubt if they are paid much by the small press, and the above-ground press still publishes very little Australian SF or fantasy. Even if I could write SF, I wouldn't do it for the money; I'd do it purely for the pleasure of writing.

Yes, I was very much an honorary MUSAn. If I'd started the club while I was at Melbourne University (1965 to 1968), I probably would have failed my courses. David Grigg started MUSFA in 1969, the year after I left. And he failed at that time, and dropped out. By the time I discovered MUSFA in 1972, it was running smoothly, and it improved every year after that. People like Charlie, Roger, Alan, and Dennis welcomed me into the fold. This improved my social life greatly, because most Melbourne fans during the 1970s treated me like shit most of the time. Because of MUSFA — specifically, because of Charlie Taylor — I met Elaine, although she doesn't remember our first meeting.

I still haven't finished going through those tapes, have I? I really meant to publish Roger's DUFF Report on the twentieth anniversary of his death. Let's see what happens this year.

I'm very pleased to find other people who have discovered Luc Besson's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec*. That should have been the big adventure film of 2011. It should have been at least as successful as the same director's *Fifth Element*.

Thanks for all the information about 3D Radio. Robert Jan is the only local fan involved with 3RRR in Melbourne (his *Zero-G* show about SF, ignored every year by the Ditmar nominators). In the early days of 3RRR (when it was still 3RMIT), both Roger Weddall and Don Ashby hosted programs, and my sister Jeanette hosted a folk music program on 3CR for some years.

Cath Ortlieb

That's quite a recommendation for *Best Exotic*

Marigold Hotel — that Natalie enjoyed it.

I certainly wouldn't want to take up arms against Burwood possums. Ours seem to stick to the trees, when they are not committing suicide by flipping around the huge step-up generator on the power pole across the road from us. In the last year we've had five power interruptions: four because of suicidal possums, and because of a suicidal raven. All our neighbour could do was take the remains (still barely alive in two cases) off to the nearby vet's for disposal. In each case, it takes an hour or so for the bloke to turn up from the power company to fix the problem. He told us that it would be possible to possum-guard the generator, but the power company won't spend the money to do so.

Marc Ortlieb

Thanks very much for your update to the ANZAPA Index. If you didn't perform this task, it wouldn't get done.

I will enjoy reading your tales of your new school. My sister Jeanette was music teacher at South Camberwell Primary School for over 30 years. She didn't have to move schools; she simply retired.

It would be nice to have either a twelve-string guitar or a ukelele, although all I could do would be to look at it.

I thought nobody had seen Ken Ford since 1979, but Don Ashby told me he once climbed into a taxi and there was Ken driving it. Must have been in the eighties sometime. My old friend Bernie Slattery was teaching with Ken at the same time I was co-editing the VSTA's magazine with Bernie — 1977 and early 1978 — but when I once saw Bernie in Lygon Street, about ten years ago, I forgot to ask about Ken. I haven't seen Ken since 1979; my guess is that eventually he went back to the country, and stayed there.

I have a boxed set of the complete Tom Lehrer. It includes 'Werner von Braun'.

The Shadows provided the model for most British and Australian guitar groups who followed them. For instance, you would swear the Shadows were the backing band for the Beatles on their first album. (It was just the Beatles trying to sound like the Shadows.) The best proto-Shadows group in Melbourne was the Strangers, but all the Sydney surfie bands, such as the Atlantics, followed the Shadows model. I had long believed that the Shadows had little influence in America, but a tribute album of a few years ago dug up quite a few Americans and/or Canadians who wanted to show how much the Shadows meant to them. Most notable contributor to the tribute CD was Neil Young, whose beginner's guitar style was based on Hank Marvin's.

You remember Adrian Bedford from fanzines of the late seventies or early eighties? I had never heard of him before he began publishing novels, as A. J. Bedford, with Edge Publishing in Canada.

He doesn't admit any early connection with fandom.

I've never read those F. M. Busby novels or *Earthman's Burden*. I got very sick of Poul Anderson's stories by the seventies, and I have read only a few of his early stories.

Lucy Schmeidler

You have had a very bad five years for illness and accidents, Lucy. I hope that the fractured wrist has now healed. You're right about all those domestic jobs that can't be done without the use of two hands. When I injured my wrist in 1981 I was helpless in lots of ways. I was able to claim an injury pension for two weeks.

Thanks for producing this issue, no matter what!

In an email during the week, John Newman asked the same question: when are the ANZAPA rules made to be broken? When they promote the aim of the apa — to provide continual reciprocal communication between its members. Hence, I'm not encouraging Bill Wright to place something in ANZAPA each time he feels he has Something to Say. I've told him to rejoin, even if he feels he can no longer write mailing comments. His memorial to Michael Waite is a cut above anything else he has produced, and of great interest to some members of the apa, so I allowed it.

I was so totally confused by the ending of Adrian Bedford's *Time Machines Repaired While-U-Wait* that I did not order *Paradox Resolution*. In each of his novels, Adrian begins with an interesting situation and characters, then rushes his way through the last third of the book and throws away all its strengths. I don't see much evidence of editing from Brian Hades, head of Edge Books. (A Canadian friend is even ruder about Edge Books, saying there is no evidence of basic copyediting in the company's books.)

Spike

Of James Joyce's work I reserve most of my admiration for *Dubliners*, but *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* sounds irresistible. Probably I can order it from Slow Glass Books.

I'd enjoy the film version of *HMS Pinafore: The Next Generation* more I will probably enjoy the next *Star Trek* movie. Let's hope that the *Galaxy Quest* filmmakers hear about the Stanford Savoyards.

I'm puzzled to hear that Potlatch is waning, because it was really crackling the year I visited, 2005. I know about the fanzine *Foolscap*, but I hadn't heard about the convention. I trust the collaboration between *Foolscap* and Potlatch goes well. One major reason why I would like to get back to America, if ever I had the money, would be to attend Corflu and Potlatch. I would have enjoyed seeing Andy Hooper's play based on

Among Others.

I am a lucky man because I have a genius for a wife. And not just because Elaine can edit books filled with mathematical formulae that I cannot understand. She has a special ability to wrap cats around her and make them feel happy. Her greatest feat has been taming Sampson, who was in a very fragile psychological state when he arrived back in our house after five years living with other people. Every week he is more and more becoming a real pussycat! Elaine just worked on him, and radiated kindness at him, until he learned how to become a civilised animal again.

Thanks for the mini-tour of Oakland. I take it that Oakland is an entirely autonomous city, like Geelong in Victoria, and not in any way a suburb of San Francisco.

I like the sound of any winery tour. The greatest regret of my 2005 trip was not being able to go on that Napa Valley wine tour with you and other Corflu members, and not being able to visit you and Tom at home. But Art Widner had invited me up to his place (a two-day trip), Robert Lichtman had invited me to his home at Glen Ellen (where I was allowed to touch a copy of *Void Number 1*), and Charlie Brown had invited me to Locusville ... in Oakland. So I didn't see Mountain View, and I saw nothing of the area of San Francisco around City Lights bookshop. Ah well.

Thanks for the interesting comments about British detective series. Neil Dudgeon has been very effective as the new Inspector Barnaby in *Midsomer Murders*, but the scripts for the most recent series have been disappointing. British TV drama depends on the quality of the scripts. Most of the series of *Lewis* have been well scripted as well as superbly acted, but again, the scripts in the most recent series seem a bit tired.

Thanks for the reprint of the story of Stewie the Longest Cat. I had seen the story on the Internet, and one of the local newspapers ran the story, with a photo of Stewie.

Alan Stewart

I'd heard that Dick Smith was having trouble selling his Australian-sourced products to the two main chains, Coles and Woolworths. Just another reason for hating them, and admiring Smith for his efforts. We don't buy boxes of matches, because our stove has one of those automatic sparking devices in it. If we wanted buy Dickheads, I am not sure where we would go. Aldi has opened a store in the Greensborough Plaza, but I've never been in it. The nearest branch of IGA, the fourth supermarket chain, is about half a kilometre away, half way between Greensborough and Watsonia shopping centres. I'm fairly sure that is the major chain stocking Dick Smith products.

The name of the matches gave me quite a start. We Phil Dick fans have been calling ourselves Dickheads for more than twenty years. Is Dick Smith channelling Philip K. Dick? If so, will he

produce a new line of spray-can products brand-named Ubik?

Vale Metcards. Myki card are still a disaster for many people, but mine is operating correctly. For now.

Thanks for cutting the genzine debate down to two lines, Alan. Yes, if running your (seeming) genzine through ANZAPA costs us extra dollars, I'll send you the bill. (Talking of bills, Bill's contribution this mailing did not cost us extra.)

Thanks for pointing out that the Astor sound system has not kept up with its improvements in projection. Fortunately, I saw *Skyfall* at the Nova, and did not miss any of the dialogue.

Your problem with electricity bills matches ours. The simultaneous need to alter our bills to accommodate my new pension status and to allow for our new solar system drove Origin Energy's system into such a tizz that we did not receive a correct bill (giving us a credit) until almost exactly a year after the first, incorrect bill.

You could certainly run *Ansible* through ANZAPA. That would add only 4 pages (2 sheets of paper) to each mailing.

No 1 Ladies' Detective Agency was excellent, but there was only one series. The final episode was a cliffhanger, so I suppose I would have to track down the books if I wanted to follow up on the narrative of the TV series.

Kim Darby in the original version of *True Grit* is much more interesting than the girl who stars in the recent version, and the original also includes John Wayne in one of his best roles. The photography in the original is very much better than the grimy washed-out tones adopted for the remake.

I've read only one of the books you mention: *Cloud Atlas*. It was interesting enough that I want to see the film, but haven't yet found an opportunity to do so. I've seen all those *Poirot* episodes.

I've also seen *Milk* (excellent), *Toy Story 3* (also four stars), *The Social Network* (ditto), and both versions of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (the Swedish version is much more interesting).

I've commented on *Skyfall* to Jack.

Looper was entertaining, but the setup made no sense at all. The two music documentaries, *Searching for Sugarman* and *Paul Kelly: Stories of Me* were both excellent, as is *Life of Pi* in 3D.

Bill Wright and Dick Jenssen: VALE MICHAEL WAITE (1936–2013)

It's a bit useless writing mailing comments here, so I must remember to send a letter of comment

to Bill. This fanzine is an absorbing reading and viewing experience about somebody I did not meet, but at times I felt as if I had met him. Michael Waite's *Trial and Air* has been one of the great fanzines over the last decade, so meticulously produced that it must have cost Michael a high percentage of his income each year. The examples of Michael's work that Bill reproduces are magnificent, especially the examples of black-and-white photography. By running Dick's and Bill's accounts of life in Melbourne fandom, sumptuously photographed by Dick Jenssen and Helena Binns, Michael gave us all a place in FAPA (the heartland of American fanzine fandom) that we could never have achieved for ourselves.

Sally Yeoland

It's hard to know how to react to information about John's health, because he only posts on Facebook when he's feeling well and chirpy, and disappears from Facebook when he's hit by another hospital visit. As you say, it's reassuring to hear that he calls an ambulance when he's feeling unwell. It's also great to hear that he has finally had the elective surgery that has been delayed for so long.

Yes, temperatures in Tasmania were very much hotter than usual during the bushfire period. We had our own two long periods of heat, but it seemed very strange to hear of 35C in Hobart, and serious bushfires threatening huge areas.

We've had much worse years than 2012, but the whole year was dominated by the death of Archie in June. The collective cat-mind did not settle down until well into this year, particularly as Polly has not been well since July, and has had to be fed small amounts often since then. However, at the age of 18 she remains ferociously chirpy and demanding, determined to live for years yet. Sampson is gradually becoming accustomed to the other cats, and they are mainly accommodating to him. Flicker wants Sampson to be part of his gang, but Sampson is still wary of the idea that other cats might be friendly to him.

Thank you very much for the cat photos. We might meet both Marmalade and Mia next time we visit, instead of only one of them. Thanks also for the two splendid Leunig cartoons. 'The Origin and Meaning of Tennis' is one of his best.

— **Bruce Gillespie, 4 April 2013**