

eFNAC 16

November 2001



Ron Clarke the younger (1971), above:
John Foyster the very much older (2001, with
Yvonne Rousseau, in front of the Elvis Presley
Memorial Thing, Botanical Gardens), right



November 2001

Done by John Foyster from foyster@senet.com.au, or if times are really tough, PO Box 3086, Rundle Mall, South Australia 5000.

Opening Ramblings

Well, there's scarcely any need for a contents page this time around. Juliette Woods continues her tales from Austin, I have a piece about what has been going on with me, and then there are a couple of letters (relating to the 14th issue).

The delay since the 14th issue are reasonably well explained, and I need to add that ongoing medical tests make a prediction of when the December issue will appear very ambitious; however. About half the contents have already appeared

I hope you will find the contents of these two issues sufficiently challenging, even though there's not much in here about skiffy – well

except for the final pages, whose earlier version has had a positive response. I intend to continue this, and in fact have already prepared appropriate pages for all of 2002. (For that matter I've already written my contribution for January 2002, but let's not get too far ahead.)

Some of what I regard as regular features have been missing recently – photos from Allan Bray's collection, book notes and fanzine reviews. I hope these will return next year.

Just in case another issue doesn't appear until 2002, I wish you compliments of the season: I refer of course to the end of Ramadan (don't worry, you'll pick up the reference later...)

Strange Tales from Austin

Juliette Woods

EVERYTHING'S BIGGER IN TEXAS

They sell postcards here of cowboys riding jackrabbits and four-wheel-drives being trounced by giant armadillo. All these cards bear the same caption: "everything's bigger in Texas".

I used to think this wasn't true. After all, as every Australian knows, there is a sheep station in Western Australia that's bigger than Texas all by itself. But you know, there aren't any sheep in

Texas. They threw them all out. So the only thing bigger than Texas is something Texans don't want and couldn't care less about. They worship the cow.

The cow is their only form of agriculture, as far as I am able to tell. On our trip down to San Antonio and back we saw only cows. Not a sheep, not a pig, not a plant. But cows! Barbecued cows, smoked cows, cowburgers, cowsteaks. Texans not only eat cows, they turn them into leather, they have them as football mascots and they ride them for fun. (But they don't milk them: all the cows around here are beef cattle and who drinks milk anyway?)

The Texan cattle of choice is the Longhorn. These are big beasts with - as one might suppose - long horns. Not being of an agricultural bent, I can't tell you if they are indeed bigger than, say, the average Highland Coo. But their image is ubiquitous in Austin.

In part, this is because of the University of Texas, which has the Longhorn as its emblem. Students, former students, and the UT football team are all called "Longhorns" without any hint of mockery. At my New Employee Orientation it

was explained in all seriousness---along with information on our health care plans and complaints procedures---that the football mascot was a cow named Bevo. It was explained that in an early match with UT's arch-enemies (the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University) the UT team won 3 to 0, a score which the nefarious Aggies branded on the hapless steer. The UT players then further tortured the beast by branding a further "E" and "V" to make BEVO, the name of an alcohol-free beer.

The longhorn as mascot has lead to an appropriately huge fashion accident. UT students, being very proud of their institution, enjoy wearing their school colours. The UT student Co-op provides them with an enormous array of UT-specific gear. There are t-shirts, crop tops, waistcoats, shorts, trousers, boxer shorts, sports bras, umbrellas and a dozen kinds of UT coats. Almost all of these items are in a reddish-brown colour resembling the hide of a longhorn, which only suits people of a very dark complexion. According to present stats on UT's student population, this means that only 3% of

the student body has any hope of looking anything but hideous while wearing them.

But there are other things besides fashion horrors that are bigger in Texas. Just try going for lunch. Texans are generous and they seem to think you need fattening up. Or buy a regular-sized soft drink and see if you've bought less than a litre. And you should see the coffees. Coffees are huge. I could pour three or four Australian flat whites into a single regular cup of coffee here, or maybe sixteen espressos.

And UT itself is pretty damn big. As of this year, UT Austin is the biggest campus in the country. There are fifty thousand students and fifteen thousand staff, which makes UT Austin's population the same as Hobart or Guilford. It has its own power plant, its own bus system, its own police force, five museums, six gym complexes, entire buildings (vast and rumbling) that do nothing but cool its air-conditioning fluids. The sports stadium seats ninety thousand people. Ninety thousand! I cannot properly describe the feeling of vertigo I get standing next to it, its concrete curve reminiscent of a radio telescope built out carpark.

It's big, alright.

Science is big in Texas too. Partly this is because it is generally big in the rest of the United States. I went to a talk last month given by the head of the National Science Foundation's head of mathematics. He showed us lots of graphs. Strange, peculiar graphs, graphs of a kind I'd never seen before. They were plots of mathematics research money and the number of positions available for research mathematicians. And their trend was upwards! Upwards---can you believe it? I left an Australia that had lost up to a third of its best mathematicians in the last decade. You know where they went? They came here. You can tell because the graph of "US non-citizens working in US mathematics" has an upward slope too. I am on the other side of the brain drain.

In Adelaide (a city I love - don't get me wrong here) the mathematics postgrad students have been waiting years for a colour printer. I have one on my desk, near a computer screen the size of Quebec. I have it because the postgrads here thought their printer should duplex as well as produce high-DPI full-colour output. So they

bought themselves a new one with a bit of departmental money. This place has resources.

And I have to say that three months after I got here I'm still having ``sense of wonder" moments about science and engineering at UT. Last week I went to look at the Nonlinear Dynamics Lab. A woman named Erin showed me a few of their experiments, switched them on, toyed with the controls. It was like being twelve again at a science fair. Electronic widgets! Bouncing bronze balls! Glass bead games of fluidized particles!

And then there's the whole space race thing. When I was little I was really keen on astrophysics and planetary science and I read a lot of science fiction (and still do). I fantasised about working for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. And now I find I'm working for an aerospace engineer in a department where people talk casually about going to work for NASA when they finish their degrees. Departmental talks are on things like "Modeling Low Density Sulfur Dioxide Jets: Application to Volcanoes on Jupiter's Moon Io".

There seems to be an understanding here than science and technology are vital to the local economy. UT didn't just happen---the state made a conscious decision to pump money into it. So did local Texans and alumni (a recent fund-raising drive raised US\$1 billion's worth of donations). Even with people moaning and groaning over the dot-com bust, the unemployment rate is still less than five percent. Today's local newspaper---I kid you not---had as one of its above-the-title headlines “making money out of distributed computing”, as if the average Austinite would know what that meant. The weird thing is, maybe the average Austinite does - or wouldn't mind knowing.

So I'm glad that science is bigger in Texas. I suppose that's why I'm here.

EVENING WITH MICROCHIROPTERA

It's a couple of days after Halloween and we're going to see the bats. There's four of us, sitting together on a crowded bus going downtown. None of us is an American. Apple's from Thailand, Larissa's from Russia, Damien's Australian and I'm Scots-Aussie. So it's a J-Visa outing to see the Austin sights.

But we didn't realise how bad the traffic would be on a Friday afternoon and now our bus is running late. Larissa - pale and pensive - is constantly checking her watch. We left the lab at 5:15 and the bats emerge at six. It's not a long journey, but we're really crawling along. Apple keeps leaning to one side so she can see out the bus's front window. We wonder if we should get out and walk.

Our lab's on Twenty-Fourth Street and the bats are at what you could consider to be Zeroth Street, which is the Colorado River. We caught the bus on Guadalupe, where it's lined with stores catering to student needs: there's a Gap, a Starbucks, a Barnes and Noble, and numerous

independent shops and eateries. From there our bus took us past the Texas Capitol, an enormous domed building of gleaming white stone which is (of course) bigger than the Capitol in DC. Now we're crawling south along Congress, past deserted bank buildings and scattered restaurants, towards the river. The Colorado must be a bit of an embarrassment in this everything's-bigger-state, as Austin's river is not the mighty Colorado of US myth and fame, but another, much more docile waterway, a bit bigger than the Torrens and a bit smaller than the Yarra.

The sky is rapidly darkening. We know the bats emerge at dusk and that dusk is at six o'clock. We know this because this afternoon I rang a special "bat hotline" to make sure. I got much amusement out of ringing a "bat hotline". The only other person in the lab who found this immensely funny was Carl, who was supposed to be coming with us. Carl kept saying "Same bat time, same bat channel" in his English nit-wit voice. (Carl is neither English nor a nit-wit, but a vivacious Swede. He has unaccountably stood us

up in order to legally drive drunk as part of a police demonstration.)

We're still only on Eighth, so we chat to Apple about Halloween, which she spent at the party on Sixth Street. Halloween on Sixth Street is usually an enormous event, one hundred thousand people dressed up in costume or turning up just to watch others. It was the second time Apple had been. This time it was quieter, she said. People were worried about terrorism. There was more security and attendees were banned from carrying any powders in case someone mistook sugar for anthrax and started a stampede.

Damien and I had stayed at home that night awaiting trick-or-treaters with some chocolate-chip cookies because we'd forgotten to buy any sweets. But nobody came. We had no way to tell if that was because kids were being more cautious this year or whether they just don't visit apartments. I remembered seeing scores of kids out on Halloween nights when I lived in Florida, but I suppose that had been in suburban kid central. Our part of Austin isn't

really suburbia, but a dichotomous mixture of student apartments and mansions for rich folks.

“I think we should walk”, Larissa says. It is six o'clock.

Then, just as we finally decide to leap out at the next stop, the pace picks up. The bus actually starts moving. We have already gone past both Sixth Street and the Mexico-Arte Museum on Fourth. There was a crowd outside the Museum, people with their faces painted white for the Mexican Day of the Dead. Now that we've passed this traffic bottle-neck we are at last speeding over Congress Bridge.

The Bridge is why the bats are here. The bats love the bridge. One and a half million bats love Congress Bridge. They didn't used to, but in the early Eighties the bridge was upgraded and - whatever it was that was done to it - the bats liked it. For a while people wondered how to get rid of them, considering them a nuisance, but then it became a tourist draw, people gathering in front of the offices of the Austin-American Statesman to see the bats leaving their roosts to feed.

The bats are small and migratory. They leave Austin in early November to go to Mexico, so we really have left this trip to the very last moment. Next week the bats will be gone. As we scramble out of the bus and across the road, we worry that we've missed them already.

But you know what? A million and a half is a big, big number. Not even speedy little Mexican free-tailed bats can all manage to leave the bridge in fifteen minutes.

At first I can't even see them, although the bridge is lined with people staring over the edge. I can't see them because I'm looking for big, flapping, fruit-bat type things, like the ones you get in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. But these suckers don't eat still life, they eat flying insects. We're talking about twelve gram mammals that are fast and maneuverable enough to eat mosquitoes in flight. At sixty miles an hour. For five hours at a stretch. At altitudes of more than 3km. These bats are a cloud.

You know how vampires are supposed to turn into bats? And that they're also supposed to turn into mist? These bats are mist. They fly out from the bridge in such numbers and at such

a speed that you can barely see them in the twilight at all. They're just long grey streaks in the air below you, diving and swirling. Only when someone uses a flash camera do you really see them, picked out by an instant of light, their wings momentarily frozen and individual in the glare.

Larissa, Apple, Damien and I stare down in wonder at these things until it is too dark for us to see. Then, like the bats, we go and get something to eat.

with how one of our new hand-forks performed in a range of soil types, and began to tell her about it.

Terrorist Chulpex Raped My Brain!

John Foyster

The world changed on September 11 2001. For me, it changed again on September 28, 2001. I entered a strange new world from which, as I write, I have not yet fully returned.

I did some early morning, post-breakfast gardening, for only a few minutes, more an inspection tour than serious gardening, and came back to report to Yvonne, who was still having her breakfast. I was particularly pleased

I. INTO THE ABYSS

But partway through a sentence I began speaking in nonsense syllables (I remember 'pim' and 'civ' as being the first two) and it was at this point that life became interesting. I knew immediately that I was exhibiting the signs of a stroke. I also learned something about the organisation of my consciousness, because a part of my brain was still functioning in English – conveying the message that I was having a stroke, for instance – while the body I inhabit was no longer capable of translating my thoughts into spoken language. The strategy I adopted (fairly quickly, I can tell you!) was to go on speaking (nonsense) for as long as possible to make sure that Yvonne understood that I was having a stroke. As I turned to leave the room my brain censor cut in and I entered a different world (World II) very different from your World (and now mine) that I will call World I.

I'll describe World II later, but Yvonne tells me that in World I I continued to function in a way close to normal, occasionally using real words while Yvonne rang our doctor, then another (advice was to take me to Emergency at Adelaide's biggest hospital), rang for a taxi. I continued to do rational things (like locking up the house before going out to the taxi). And it was in the taxi that things became interesting because I had my first seizure, one consequence of which was I stiffened completely, making me slightly longer than can conveniently be gotten out of the back of a taxi. In short order another seizure followed, a bit of aspiration into the lungs, some kidney failure and a number of other minor problems.

I have not enquired too much about what happened in World I during this period – indeed readers of the bulletins put out by Elaine Cochrane and Bruce Gillespie know much more about this than I do. I did then spend 12 days in the Intensive Care Unit where a number of other things went wrong (but, for example, little problems like tachycardia were quickly solved by briefly turning off my heart – and then turning it

on again, I should add) and where the doctors were, shall we say, not entirely optimistic. After the spell in ICU I had a day or so in a ward where I could be watched closely, and then I was transferred to the general ward I lived in four to five weeks.

So much for World I. I have no recollection of having tubes down nose and throat, or anything conscious about World I while I was in the World II state except for a couple of minor matters I'll come to shortly. But World II was pretty interesting.

When I became "conscious" in World II there were three main elements. First, I was in a hospital in Murray Bridge (about an hour's drive from Adelaide). I don't even know whether there is a hospital in Murray Bridge, but one benefit was that it was a pleasant walk through a park from the motel where my sister was staying. This latter element introduces the second element in my trio, because several members of my immediate family came over from Victoria to help, and I knew they were there in World I because I could hear their voices in World II. But I was worried about them because I thought they

were in danger from the infection because of their proximity to me – which introduces the third element. From the conversations that went on between the doctors I picked up the information that it was now believed that I had not had a stroke, but rather an infection on the brain. This notion of an infection dominated my life in World II.

This world was a complex but incoherent one, with a number of elements.

First, there was the question of the infection. As I have subliminally indicated, I did receive substantial auditory information from World I (though never enough, and generally vague); by comparison I received almost no visual information from World I – so I had to make most of that up.

Second, there was my fable about the collapse of western civilization. In this fable, the infection being talked about was one I had brought back from the northern hemisphere. This infection had killed a large proportion of the human population in (say) the USA - over half – but the entertainment industry went on almost as though there had been no catastrophic

change. Not only did an episode of THE WEST WING show how President Jed coped with it all, but a US TV crew working on a documentary about how Australia was stricken actually came through the ward; I couldn't see why, when the world was collapsing, there was time for such frivolity.

Third, there was the question of personal survival. Even in World II I knew that I was not managing very well in World I. Because in World II I died (at least twice). (This was a point I made immediately on returning to World I.)

On the first occasion one of the nurses (male) asked me whether I could cope: I said no, and that I wanted to rest. He said that he understood, and he would give me something to take away all the pain. In a short time after the injection it would be all over; I definitely understood him to mean that I would die.

So I asked for the injection and lay back to wait for the end. I got the injection but the end never came. Curiously enough, in World II this made me very angry, and I began searching for alternative ways to die. I noticed that there were a number of Muslim nurses around, and this

looked like a good way out: I would convert to Islam, so that when the (by-now-inevitable) end came I would at least be well looked after in the afterlife. In addition, it would be one more soul lined up in the war against the Great Satan.

So I did convert to Islam, and settled back to wait for the end (again). I was asked a series of questions that at first I answered, but as time went on I began to ignore them and felt myself drifting. Then another question penetrated the mist, and I answered it.

“Bugger!” said a voice, “he’s still alive!”

After that I gave up for a while on trying to die; it seemed to be altogether too difficult. An additional problem that worried me down in World II was my status as a Muslim – was my conversion “real” or were there extenuating circumstances that would allow me to leave the faith without being branded an apostate – something taken rather more seriously in Islam than in Xianity? I never really resolved this but I felt that Muslim theologians would probably let me off the hook.

Around the same time things got pretty serious between me and God. I discovered that

God was sending me messages that were coded on the hairs of my right forearm. By rotating my forearm to the correct position I would be able to decipher these important messages as they appeared on the “horizon”. But some force prevented me from getting my arm into the correct position for long enough, leaving me with only frustrating glimpses of these important messages. (This was something that translated into World I, where the movement of my arm made it look as though I was trying to remove my tubes, and people pushed my arm back down.)

Now things started getting serious in World II. I was back in the main fable/scenario, except that things had got worse. Now humanity’s last stand against the infection was centred around Murray Bridge (and surrounding areas).

This was a hippie haven, with ‘Sixties types preparing a gold CD to record for posterity (what posterity?) the music of Joan Baez and Mimi Farina. But now things were really confused, because in this scenario I had uncovered a plot to kill all the seriously-ill patients and after

significant protests the senior staff were replaced by a new team that was headed by a senior public servant with whom I had worked before: that he was one of the biggest jerks I have ever met didn't give me much confidence.

Absolutely typically, he dealt himself into the CD recording referred to above. I never quite worked out what his role was, other than supposed "manager".

By now I was emerging from World II back into World I. The next clear recollection was of staff urging me to donate blood (and DNA) to start the rebirth of the Brave New World after the rest of humanity had perished: this science fiction stuff really does rot your mind.

But now things were on the move: I was being moved to a new ward, though from my gurney it looked as though the bloke next to me was going straight to the morgue...

I was now emerging into World I, but I still had a long way to go.

There are other minor points from this hidden part of my life. I do remember seeing Yvonne feeding me with ice – and asking for Diet Pepsi. I do remember what my response was

when I was asked questions which I thought I had answered but which clearly were not interpretable: I thought (and this seems to have been logical) that if the part of my brain that responded in English was not functioning then perhaps a language I had acquired some time later in life might work, so I tried French and German – goddamn doctors still didn't understand (although later in World I they thought it an excellent strategy).

And I did remember being an obstreperous and cursing and swearing patient...

II. INTER FAECES ET URINAM NASCIMUR

I don't recall anything of my first week back in World I. Yvonne tells me that I tried to feed myself, but couldn't manage. I was actually back to a baby-like state.

The first thing *I* remember from my return to World I was two nurses saying to me in frustration, "But John, you must know whether you are moving your bowels or urinating". To which I replied, with almost equal frustration,

“but I can’t, I just can’t”. (Footnote: I am now toilet-trained).

As time went by more and more of what happened during the day became clear. After a week or so in World I the rules by which the world worked became more rational. I had a third MRI scan, and the results were promising. From this point on aspects of my progress are recorded photographically in the supplement to this issue (which should go down as one of the most immodest fanzines of all time).

In these early days the main issues remained input and output. For a week the hospital kitchen staff went on strike, so management prepared sandwiches. Yvonne and others brought in some outside food, which was no doubt fabulous, but for which I had no appetite.

One Saturday morning, after finally finishing my own breakfast, I noticed that I was not sated. Then I noticed that some of the other patients had muscular arms, and I wondered whether any of them would be too weak to fight back if I started chewing on them; at last I knew what it meant to get your appetite back, and I

switched to a standard four-course breakfast (two eggs, porridge, toast and fruit) which pattern I have followed ever since (with minor variations).

At the other end of this tube of flesh there was also some action. I do distinctly recall the nurse giving my first attempt at arse-wiping “say 8 out of 10” – though just what standards she was using I am not sure. But here was another reason not to stay converted to Islam: in one of the seizures I had before being admitted to hospital I had some traumatic damage to my left shoulder, severely limiting the range of action of my left hand. What does a good Muslim do in such a case? I am sure it is possible to get around the problem.

As well as that little adventure, the fact that I had a catheter attached to that most sensitive of male organs allowed me to discover what happens when you forget that you have left the collection bag hung on a rail at one side of the bathroom while you stride purposefully to the other side of the bathroom to pick up your glasses. A description should be unnecessary.

III. REHAB

The ward in which I lived for five weeks had 6 beds; a private ward would have driven me stir crazy I am sure. Most patients only stayed a week or two, so pretty soon I was by far the senior citizen. I have lived in this environment before (when I had polio in 1956), so adjusting was no problem.

However, although this was a ward for patients with multiple (or unclear) conditions, it was pretty clear that I didn't fit (as I write, three weeks after leaving hospital, the hunt for the cause of my problems is narrowing, but we are not there yet!). My condition changed little from day to day, and I would have freed up a bed had I moved out to a rehabilitation home. But there was one problem: I was on a regime of 8 intravenous drips a day (each taking around an hour), something a rehab home would not be ready for.

So all I could do was carry out some rehab until my intravenous course (5 weeks) was finished. I pretty quickly passed through the walking frame stage, although this was not without incident: when I had the lesson on how

to get up and down a step using a walking frame I found this sufficiently difficult that I was pretty resolved not to ever use a walking frame!

I did find it difficult to do much reading (holding a book with one hand) until one day a friend gave me a copy of the illustrated version of LONGITUDE which got me going immediately, and after that I was able to do a reasonable amount of reading.

I also received immense numbers of cards and emails, which cheered me up beyond my expectations (let me note that there were some occasions when I was in considerable pain). I hadn't previously really realized how important such things can be.

Many visitors poured in, some of them people I hadn't seen for five years or more. Compared to most ward residents I had huge numbers of visitors. But not compared to the Greek and Italian families. The paterfamilias in such families was almost invariably surrounded by children and grandchildren, emphasizing very firmly suspected cultural differences.

Some of my visitors were unlucky; one husband and wife, on separate visits, managed to

catch me having a bad spell (involving the distribution of precious bodily fluids over a circle about a metre in diameter). They were shocked.

One special surprise was when one of my oldest friends here in South Australia visited with her baby and husband. Only a few days earlier she had been a Page 3 Girl in the local Murdoch paper, having just been delivered of her first child at age 41: I don't suppose the fact that she is very photogenic was a hindrance. She stayed longer than the baby really wanted – but this was better than the telephone calls we made to one another from our respective hospital beds a week or so earlier!

Of course the most frequent visitors were Yvonne, who was more or less always trying to help me, and the Victorian family visitors who took time off from work: my daughter Miranda, my sister Jill Thomas, and my ex-wife Jennifer Bryce. Their almost constant presence made life close to bearable.

Lying there for seven weeks, as many as five of them conscious, made one ponder curious questions. For example I was surprised when I was easily able to identify the two greatest

musical performances of the 20th century: Charlie Parker's *Koko* (1945) and Kathleen Ferrier's early '50s rendition of Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*.

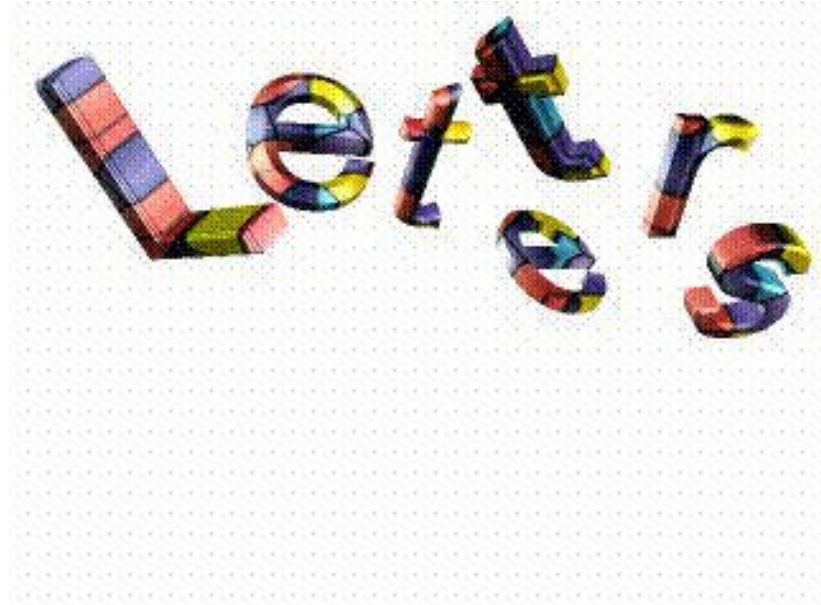
Although I listened (on the 12-band portable I bought in Kuala Lumpur on my last visit, having lusted after it for a couple of years) to a lot of music while I was in hospital, I didn't hear either of these, alas.

Australia's partly socialized medicine system ensures that a public ward such as the one I was in tends to be populated by the working classes (or people like me who have strong views about how health resources should be distributed amongst the citizens, or people who actually want the best of treatment), so there were a few farmers in the ward from time to time. Sometimes these guys, in their middle '70s, would shake your hand as they left, something I tended to fear, given the likelihood that they would crush your hand to a pulp: I'm glad I didn't meet them when they were much younger.

But I always like meeting a new cross section of people, even if only briefly. One such

was a man in his mid-fifties, I guess, who challenged me to guess where his parents were from. Given that part of his name was Mohammed Hasheem I thought this was likely to be reasonably easy, but the answer turned out to be Denmark and England. He was wonderful in helping my walking rehabilitation. He always insisted on one last lap, where a lap meant quite a few corridors.

If I could do without the consequences, I would happily undergo this experience again. Nevertheless I don't recommend it.



Bob Smith

Dear John,

Many thanks for the floppies of **eFNAC #14** and **AFPA**. Although I enjoyed every page (screen), I only printed out the eighteen pages (screens) of your article, so I could settle down and read, inwardly digest, and perhaps leave the odd permanent eye-track here and there. Download

to a convenient floppy, and return to you, when I have recovered my wits sufficiently. (After reading your article, of course, I realise more acutely that floppy exchanging might be considered awfully crude in this day and and electronic age; and, probably inconvenient for you?)

Oh, I agree with everything you say, and I have no doubt that things will sort themselves out, probably almost one hundred percent in favour of electronic technology in the computer world. One could almost speculate on how long it takes for p-fanzines to vanish completely from the perhaps slightly maligned local postal system.

I acknowledge that sometime in the near future you may have to be a trifle more ruthless; unless the likes of Bob Smith get on the Web. I shrug my shoulders if that time arrives, for Lyn and I quite honestly have no interest in being "on line." On those few occasions when Lyn has used e-mail at work for personal reasons I have tried to make it brief and to the point.

On the business level, I have been fascinated by computers since I retired from the

army - particularly the mainframe - and I am still fascinated by their beginnings. Things change, and as you point out the final look of the electronic fanzine may be almost unrecognisable to older fans. Certainly the problems you fanzine producers have right now bear little relationship to the fanzine publishing of Lee Harding's "I Remember AFPA!"

The basic question that I would ask (and which no doubt shows just how ignorant I am of matters e-fanzine): if one is peering at the Adobe Acrobat text of your e-fanzine, how does one create comment hooks, and how does one get back (instantly) to one's letter-of-comment, without losing the train of thought...?

jf: An excellent point that I can't recall anyone having mentioned before. I guess you would only choose to make responses to "Big Issues".

Now I print out the Juliette Woods' pages (screens)...

A delightful piece by Juliette, and I'm sure she has more glimpses of Austin tucked up her sleeve. I remember reading, years ago, of an American city "completely air-conditioned" and

wondering just what the hell that meant. Forget what city, tho. That style of hat on a woman looks old-fashioned and charming, and of course out here the men wear an interesting variety of headgear since skin cancer received all that publicity. Of course, at the other end of the scale, I wonder if Juliette sees as many shaved-head males in Austin as we do in Australia...? Myself - as an ex-Pom - I am with Andrew Marvell: "To a green thought in a green shade."

I really did appreciate seeing those September 1951 covers; the colours were so sharp and clear, as if it were only yesterday...(For this kind of thing I certainly give e-fanzines top marks!)

On a bookish note, you may recall Lyn discovering your works in the archives whilst she was at TAFE? She is now doing contract archival "tidying-up" at an old Australian union, and finds you in dubious company: Foyster material (on competency training) is discovered snuggling up with Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory* (First edition: April, 1950) and Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (No date, but an early Mills & Boon Shilling Cloth Library edition, 1s.

eFNAC 16

plus 3d. postage). Probably required reading for early Australian communists, I imagine. Both books are in excellent condition.

*jf: that first edition of **Power Without Glory**, in good nick, must be worth a bit...*

When I arrived at Balcombe (February 1952) I already had a decent collection of George Shearing and some pre-war Toscanini, but can't recall what else. Bought some early Mozart LP's in Japan, and some Sarah Vaughan when I returned to Australia, but specific record-buying in Melbourne remains a blank, I'm afraid. When I began my projectionist apprenticeship in 1944 I quickly learnt that only certain mood-type music would do for the cinema (don't know how much of your audience remembers cinema music, or even the organ), and any kind of vocal was a no-no. When I started running my own army cinemas I could broaden the musical horizon quite a bit, but still in principal "mood" music. As you can imagine, between 1944 and my retirement from cinema life in 1972, records and record-playing technology changed quite a bit.

I see that, throughout *eFNAC 14* you tempt

page 21

us with little blue web sites. The Foyster cunning knows no bounds.

There is no second "r" in the Lewis Carroll. Where is my copy of your 1943 masterpiece?

Lloyd Penney

Dear John:

Many thanks for issue 14 of *eFNAC*. (I must check your website again...was there a photo supplement that came out recently?) I'll try my best to make some good comments about the contents. Once again, I am juggling Word and Adobe Acrobat Reader, but I think I can get by...

jf: Hey, you and Bob Smith have the same problem...

About three weeks ago, I might have said that so many bare heads in Juliette Woods' Austin mean lots of fried brains, and that certainly explains George W.Bush...now that in many cases, irony is dead, I'm not sure I can. Bush has done a fairly reasonable job for a cowboy in handling the Word Trade Centre disaster, but I think he has been reined in by his cabinet and staff to stop sounding like John

Wayne calling in the cavalry.

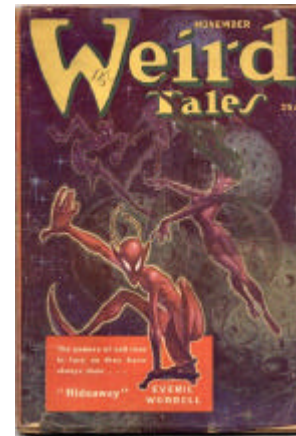
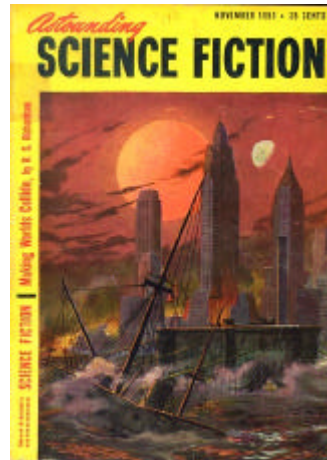
I think the fanzine will survive the Internet as more and more people eliminate (or are forced to diminish) the cost of paper copying and postage in order to get their word out. I think people see the value in less-than-instantaneous communication, as miscommunications seem to be more the norm than the exception. (Witness my miscue on the last name Condit in my loc in the local. I might be to blame on this one, but I think I'd seen either name online.) More and more people seem to be of the agreement that if you have to publish online, make the final product as much like a magazine as possible for printout or at least to cater to people's normal reading habits. And so, the .pdf file, coupled with a good colour printer, transfers the cost of publishing from the editor/publisher to the reader. To take part in modern fanzine fandom, I think that combination is a requirement, and as reticent as I was about this new technology, it's got to be embraced, and I do get a lot of zines that way now. I have the technology; might as well use it more. Jumping back and forth from a WP

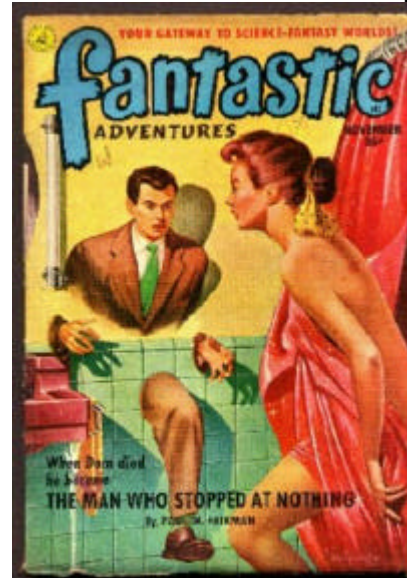
programme to Acrobat Reader (as I'm doing right now) isn't the easiest thing to do, but it's what I'm doing to respond. As do most people, I believe, I prefer a paper fanzine to read, and a computer to respond with. But, the main thing is to communicate, whatever tools you have at hand.

Don't know Bill Gass...he'll find fewer and fewer independent bookstores next time he comes to Toronto. For some years, I was in charge of distributing flyers to bookstores for our local literary con, and every year, there are fewer and fewer places to put them.

I must still get in touch with Chris Nelson about *Mumblings from Munchkinland*. A recommendation from Robert Lichtman might just get my backside in gear this time.

Lovely reprints of pulp covers grace the end of this zine. I wish I could have done a little better in the loc department here. I feel like I've done little here, so I will promise something better next time. Take care, and see you then.





*Fifty Years Ago
In Science
Fiction:
November 1951*