

Mumblings from
Munchkinland 1



Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'
Let us go and make our visit.

**The Secret Origins of
MUMBLINGS FROM MUNCHKINLAND**

Where should I begin? (As the bishop said to the - no, no, never mind).

The beginning is usually a good place to start.

Anyone who knows me will understand why "Mumblings" is fairly apt for this zine; the rest of you will catch on quick enough if you keep reading. To complete the title, I merely took an alliterative leap back to the Oz books of L. Frank Baum. Purists will object that Baum wrote of Munchkin Country, not Munchkinland, but I can always claim artistic licence. Or poor memory.

In truth, I haven't read any of the Oz books for a long time. They still provide me with happy (if imperfect) memories, though, since my dad read most of them to us kids when we were all a bit younger. He gave us an excellent grounding in fantasy literature - not to mention a love of reading for ourselves - by reading us *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, as well, among others.

The first books I read for myself were probably the Dr Seuss books - again, great imaginative works. Far more interesting than the Dick and Jane stuff that supposedly taught us how to read at school. On the other hand, I do remember finding a book of Aesop's fables in the school library, something which may have inspired an interest in logic. Ancient history, too, when I discovered how long ago his words had first been written.

For the record, I believe the first sf book I read was also through the primary school - indirectly. Scholastic Books used to have mini-book fairs at the schools and it was in one of those that Mom let me buy *The Blue Man* by Kin Platt. Platt is better known these days for other works, though I confess I've not read any of them. None are sf as far as I know, and *The Blue Man* was not either, technically, since it has a mundane resolution.

The story follows a young man as he chases a strange blue-skinned man across several US states, believing that the stranger has killed his uncle. It was fast-paced and with just enough humour and weird mystery about it to hold an 8-year old reader's attention to the sad finish, when the blue man's diary reveals that self-delusion, exacerbated by drugs, has been the cause of his actions.

I still have my original copy and found another years later, when Mary Martin's had a store in Aherns in Perth. I reread it at the time and found that it still held up pretty well.

[Continued on p.14]

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SF READERS IN AUSTRALIA
& NEW ZEALAND IN THE 1950s

Murdoch University Library in Western Australia has, through the efforts of Grant Stone and the kind generosity of fans throughout Australia, one of the finest collections of science fiction and fantasy material available for public research in the Southern hemisphere.

It deserves more use than it gets.

I decided to use it to browse through some of the pro magazines that were being published in the 1950s, after reading Vol Molesworth's *History of Australian Fandom*. I wanted to see how frequently Australian and New Zealand readers' names appeared in the letter columns of the overseas magazines (then, as now, there was hardly anything of Australian origin being published).

Restrictions on the amount of time I could spend on this exercise meant that I was limited to only two titles, but the results were rather interesting despite this. The two titles surveyed were *Authentic Science Fiction*, issues 25-84 (1952-1957) and *Nebula Science Fiction*, issues 1-41 (1952-1959).

I found many more Australian and New Zealand letter writers than I had expected to, based on the size of the fan community at the time as estimated by Molesworth. The full list of names appears on the following pages. These may represent a good proportion of the total number of letters received from Australian and New Zealand writers to each magazine. This is only a guess, though, based on the assumption that overseas letters may have been considered more exotic or impressive to local (UK) readers, leading editors to run as many as possible.

Some of these people are still well-known fans and will be familiar to most of you, such as Don Tuck, Graham Stone and Merv Binns. Others, like R.D. Nicholson, Bruce Burn, Roger Horrocks and Ian Crozier, are recognizable to anyone with a knowledge of the fanzines produced at the time. (The listing of fanzines in volume 1 of Nigel Rowe's *Timeless Sands: a history of science fiction fandom in New Zealand*, published in 1983, is a superb source of information for that country.)

However, one of the most interesting features of this list is the number of names which are completely unrecorded in the history of Australian fandom. Many most have been "transient" readers of sf, either unaware of, or uninterested in joining, organized fandom. Since all of the early Australian sf cons were advertised in these same magazines, I suspect the latter. I daresay this has always been true of readers of sf magazines.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Magazine</i>
Adey, Anthony	Mt. Eden, NZ	Auth #55
Anderson, J., Miss	King's Cross, NSW	Auth #62
Andrew, R.K.	Lower Hutt, NZ	Neb #23
Bennett, G.R.	Turner, ACT	Neb #5
Binns, Mervyn R.	Preston, Vic	Auth #53
Birkett, John L.	Auckland, NZ	Auth #58
Blair, J.	Hurstville, NSW	Auth #49
Bohman, S.M.	Burwood, NSW	Auth #44
Bos, Michael A.	Sydney	Auth #35,39,46
Burgess, R.J.	Brisbane	Auth #48
Burn, Bruce	Wellington	Auth #68
Cairns, G.C.	Hamilton, NZ	Auth #36
Cameron, James	Trentham Camp, NZ	Auth #45
Carrier, R.	Sydney	Auth #74 (These two are probably
Carvier, R.	Crow's Nest, NSW	Auth #53,56 one and the same)
Chester, Adam	Christchurch	Auth #43
Cohen, Dave	Sydney	Auth #43
Coker, R.	East Belmont, WA	Auth #33
Connors, J.	Hurstville, NSW	Auth #38
Cook, Roger S.	Ryde, NSW	Auth #49
Cottrel, Phil	Carnegie, "S.E.9"	Auth #68
Creed, J.D., Lt.	Melbourne	Neb #12
Crozier, Ian J.	Caulfield, Vic	Auth #45,70
Crynes, N.	Nunawading, Vic	Auth #49
Damarell, Arthur J.	Gorresville, SA	Auth #47
Dard, Roger	Perth	Auth #45,52, Neb #2
Edser, Galvin L.	Wellington	Auth #46
Edwards, R.J.S.	Uralla, NSW	Auth #59
Elder, J.R.	Manly, NSW	Auth #41
English, James	Sydney	Neb #11
George, R. L.	Wellington	Neb #17,26
Gerard, George	Christchurch	Auth #34
Gregor, John	Brisbane	Auth #54
Gregory, Alf	Bishop, NZ	Neb #10
Haddon, A.W.	Sydney	Neb #3 [Incorrect. CN 25/8/10]
Harding, Leo J.	Carlton, Vic	Auth #46
Heron, Bruce F.	Preston, Vic	Auth #41
Hitch, R.E.	East Lindfield, NSW	Auth #75
Hollis, W.K.	Mt. Eden, NZ	Auth #47
Horrocks, R.J.	Mt. Albert, NZ	Auth #70
Itzstein, Barry	Perth	Auth #60,63

Jackson, Nigel	Melbourne	Neb #10,17,22,27,32,36,41
Jefferson, D.R.	Longueville, NSW	Auth #41,53
Jefferson, Peter	Sydney	Neb #12
Johnson, J.R.	North Adelaide, SA	Auth #25
L., Mrs	(withheld)	Auth #64
Law, K.C.	Punchbowl, NSW	Auth #34,35
Longmuir, Freda	Sydney	Neb #18
Macmillan, Ian	Collie, WA	Auth #51
McConnell, Eve	Sydney	Neb #9
McEwen, W.A.	Kensington Gardens, SA	Auth #34
Menzel, Herwig H.	Bassendean, WA	Auth #58
Milson, J.S.	East Sydney	Auth #43
Morgan, E.F.	Ohakume, NZ	Auth #75
Moston, Allan	Ashburton, Vic	Auth #47
Nicholson, R.D.	Ballarat, Vic	Auth #29,37
Norton-Baker, J., Miss	North Adelaide, SA	Auth #47
Oilhooley, Tom	Narrogin, WA	Auth #38
Paris, Richard	Wellington	Auth #57
Parker, Fred	Hammondville, NSW	Auth #58
Pate, R.E.	Thebarton, SA	Auth #25
Paull, L.W.	Goulburn, NSW	Neb #20
Pettingill, M.G.	Mt. Gambier, SA	Auth #50
Pinson, E., Sgt.	Woomera, SA	Auth #54
Plimmer, H.	Levin, NZ	Neb #41
Potts, Ken	Melbourne	Auth #48, Neb #7
Poull, M.	Perth	Auth #25
Roper, E.L.	Canberra	Auth #32, Neb #4
Sarchett, G.W.	Hillsborough, NZ	Auth #53,54,61
Saunders, Denis	Iakapuna, NZ	Auth #46,53,59
Smith, Harry	Sydney	Auth #60
Smith, Pat	Sydney	Auth #55
Smith, Robert F.	Puckapunyal, Vic	Neb #37
Spork, Barbara	Perth	Neb #20
Stacey, J.B.	Wellington	Auth #29
Stone, Graham B.	Sydney	Auth #41,45,52
Stuart, D.	Roma, Qld	Auth #56
Summers, Alf	Marrickville, NSW	Auth #48
Tuck, Donald H.	North Hobart, Tas	Auth #48
Wheelahan, Kevin	Preston, Vic	Auth #45
Whitefield, Bruce	Rose Bay, NSW	Auth #46
Ziegler, John	Norwood, SA	Auth #47

Geographic analysis of the list does not present many surprises. As we might expect, the vast majority of letter writers lived in Sydney and Melbourne, though all states are represented. Kiwis account for about a quarter of the total.

If we consider only the Aussie writers for a moment, almost half were in Sydney or its near suburbs. Sandgropers and croweaters are both represented by 8 names. I suspect that this represents an above-average number for WA, at least, considering the relative populations of all of the states. The opposite seems true of the banana benders (3). Tassie made up in quality what it lacked in quantity - their sole representative was Don Tuck.

Breakdowns by either age or sex are not really possible since few writers gave their age and more than a third of the letters appeared with no first names. I would wager that a fairly large proportion were males in their teens or early 20s; only 6 females can be identified for certain. One of the ladies, Mrs. L., wrote that she was "an old woman approaching the end of the road" and lamented that too many of the sf stories were about "robot worlds without birdsongs". Another, Barbara Spork of Perth, criticized the male domination of sf.

Although there are quite a few repeat writers, including the prolific Nigel Jackson (who also had a story in *Nebula* #40), it's curious how so few people had letters in both magazines. Perhaps both titles had very devoted readerships.

THE FOLLOW-UP

Having compiled this list, curiosity naturally got the better of me. A quick check of the phone book revealed likely numbers for five of the eight West Australian names I had found. I began dialing.

The only Spork listed had no connection with Mrs Barbara Spork, nor any knowledge of her. The West's claim to an early feminist critic of sf remains lost.

Of two "R. Coker"s listed, one was too young to have been an *Authentic* reader and the other I have never succeeded in contacting.

In the case of Herwig Menzel, I had some success, being able to chat briefly with his son. Originally from Austria, the elder Menzel's interest in sf went back many, many years, but he had never learned of fandom. He had always been more interested in astronomy than sf as such and no longer read sf.

With another call, I hit the jackpot..

A WEALTH OF WEST AUSTRALIAN FABLE:

Some fannish recollections of Mr Roger Dard

"How do you do," I said. "My name is Chris Nelson. I was wondering if you could possibly be the Mr Dard who used to write letters to sf magazines in the 1950s..."

There was a stunned silence on the other end of the phone.

"Why, yes," said Roger at last, and I hurried to explain why this strange voice was enquiring into his past. We talked about *Startling Stories*, *Planet Stories* and *Weird Tales* for a while, as well as fandom, then and now. In a later letter, I asked if I could meet Roger in person; he invited me over for a chat by return post. Notes from that meeting and later letters have allowed me to write this article.

Roger Dard was undoubtedly the most active fan in Western Australia in the Fifties. He knew something about most of the other fans in Perth at that time and on trips to the Eastern States he had also met with Graham Stone and others in Sydney and Melbourne. (Graham recognized Roger's name in a letter I wrote to him in early 1988 and encouraged me to write my follow-up letter to Roger at that time. Graham's namesake at Murdoch University, Grant Stone, also knew of Roger already, having heard of him from Cefn Ridout, a comics fan who had visited him some time before I did. So much for my scoop!)

As well as writing many letters to the UK and US prozines, Roger also produced the very first West Australian fanzine, entitled *Star Rover* (after Jack London's story of that name) in 1950. Yet another of his works was an index to *Fantastic Novels*, which was published with a foreword by August Derleth and a cover illustrated by Lawrence, in 1957. Both publications are now collector's items.

Also a collector, Roger once maintained a complete* set of *Weird Tales*, eventually parting with it around 1974 for more than 12 times what it had cost him to assemble. A love of the macabre is still evident in his latest effort, which I am happy to advise is included in these pages.

Roger recognized some of the other names I had collected from the letter columns and in one case may have saved me from causing some anguish. I had not yet attempted to contact any of the Itzsteins in the phone book, rather fortuitously. Roger advised me that Barry Itzstein, the fourteen-year-old who had last written to *Authentic* in 1955, died in tragic circumstances only five years later.

There were other names Roger knew which I had not encountered in the letter columns.

* Near-complete. Of 279 issues, Roger lacked only 6.

Ernest Dillon was a fan who had to make the ultimate sacrifice. Engaged to a woman who told him to get rid of his "lurid rubbish" - a collection of sf pulp magazines - or find someone else, Dillon chose her (!) Knowing Roger Dard's interest in the genre, Dillon offered the pulps to him at one pound each and Roger agreed. This was around 1939-40.

Not long after, Roger Dard was visited at his James Street address by a young man in uniform who introduced himself as John Park. He advised Roger that Ernest Dillon had promised to offer him his pulps if he ever needed to sell them. Away in a military camp, John Park had missed the boat. He asked if Roger would be prepared to sell the collection to him now. Roger, naturally, refused.

Despite this inauspicious start, Roger and John Park became friends, though never particularly close. John Park was essentially a reader and collector, and something of a loner - he rarely invited Roger around to his home and the pair's contact was mainly via letter or telephone. His pride and joy was a large collection of *Astoundings* and other pulps, the ultimate fate of which worried him towards the end of his life. He asked Roger to take care of the collection after his death.

This proved something of a task, given the size of the collection, its condition, and the fact that there were no parties in WA interested in taking it. Some were (sob!) silverfish-ridden and had to be discarded. The rest, Roger eventually shipped to Graham Stone in Sydney. It took several trips to the Kewdale rail depot to do so.

Ralph Harding (no relation to Lee or Eric) was another collector of the day. He lived in Maylands, not far away from Roger, and the two did visit and correspond. On one occasion, Roger had been trying to ring Ralph for several days without success. He visited Harding's home, found no-one at home, but left a note. At about the same time, Graham Stone received a reply to a letter he had sent Harding, from Ralph's niece. She advised that her uncle had died of cancer. So it was only through Graham Stone in Sydney - 3,000 miles away - that Roger learned of Ralph's untimely death.

S.M. Michelides began reading sf around 1933. When I contacted him in March 1988, he said that he still enjoyed reading sf and had been buying *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine* off the newsstand until it became too expensive. (He wasn't the only one - when the Aussie dollar fell so far that the cover price for US digests went over \$5, I stopped buying, too.) He was also pleased to be reading Isaac Asimov's continuation of the Foundation series.

Both Mssrs. Michelides and Dard recalled buying remaindered copies of American pulps in Woolworths for 2/- apiece. During (and for some time after) World War II, it was very hard for

(Continued on p.13)

BLUEBERRY PIE

by Roger Dard

When Lonnie saw the blueberry pie on the kitchen table, his heart sank.

It wasn't that Lonnie didn't like blueberry pie. It was his favourite, and in all the mountains nobody made a better blueberry pie than Ma. It was just that blueberry pie was only made for special occasions: birthdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Going Away.

It wasn't anybody's birthday. It certainly wasn't Thanksgiving or Christmas. That meant only one thing. It was Going Away time for Lonnie. The time when Lonnie would have to leave the mountains, go to the city, make his way in the strange new world and get ahead.

They were all in the kitchen watching him--Ma, Pa, kid sister Suellen and Lonnie's girlfriend Cindy Lou. Pa saw the look on Lonnie's face and came over to him. Kindly, but firmly, he said, "Look, son, this is the time. The time to go to the city, make your way, and get ahead. To make us proud of you."

Lonnie nodded miserably. "I know, Pa, but I--"

"I know you'd rather stay here, but you can't spend all your life huntin' and fishin' and kissin' Cindy Lou. Mind you," Pa chuckled, "can't say I blame you for kissin' Cindy Lou. She's the prettiest gal in these here mountains!"

Cindy Lou coloured prettily and Pa went on. "But Lonnie, it's been a tradition of the Tollivers, soon as they were old enough, to go to the city to get ahead. It's been a tradition since--", he groped for the right words, "--why, ever since the first Tolliver set foot in these mountains, I guess! Now you wouldn't want to be the first to break with tradition, would you?" Pa looked at Lonnie pleadingly.

Lonnie didn't want to leave Ma and Pa, Suellen and (most of all) Cindy Lou, just to get ahead in the city. He liked huntin' and fishin'. He loved rollin' in the bluegrass with Cindy Lou. Sometimes he'd go too far and Cindy Lou would slap his hand (but more playful than hard) and say in a mock-severe voice, "Now Lonnie Tolliver, none of that! You wait 'til we're decently wed!"

So Lonnie would hang his head and mumble "Sorry", and Cindy Lou, with a soft light in her eyes, would put her mouth up to his. She had a mouth liked crushed strawberries and kisses that tasted like honey. Lonnie sighed. He didn't want to leave all that, but he knew he couldn't let the folks down.

He swallowed hard and squared his shoulders.

Pa was repeating, "You wouldn't break the Tolliver tradition, would you, son?" and Lonnie said bravely, "Course not, Pa. I'll go to the city and I promise I'll work hard to get ahead!"

They all cheered. Pa gripped his hand. Ma was misty-eyed. Suellen and Cindy Lou fell on him with warm kisses. Cindy Lou's kisses were the nicest.

Later, after they had eaten the blueberry pie and were waiting for Old Man Johnson to come and pick up Lonnie and drive him to the railway depot, Pa said consolingly, "Anyway, son, it won't be for long. Before you know it, you'll have made your way in the city. You're bright, Lonnie, and I'm predictin' that you'll get ahead in no time. Then you'll be back here in the mountains with us all and you and Cindy Lou can be wed."

The thought of this heartened Lonnie so much that by the time Old Man Johnson's ancient Ford pulled up at the door, Lonnie was in a cheerful mood. Old Man Johnson was given a piece of blueberry pie Ma had set aside for him and they watched as the old man devoured it to the last crumb. (Ask anybody in the mountains and they will tell you, Ma Tolliver makes the best blueberry pie.)

Then it was time to go. Clutching his old battered suitcase, Lonnie climbed into the car. Until the car had turned the bend in the road, his face was a wistful white blur against the back window.

Lonnie never was much for writin' letters. He sent only a few and they didn't say how he was gettin' on in the big city, nor whether or not he was gettin' ahead. One letter said that you couldn't get blueberry pie in the city as good as Ma's, to which Ma snorted and snapped, "Course not!" In his next letter Lonnie said that no city girls were as pretty as Cindy Lou. Cindy Lou stamped her foot in exasperation and said, "We all knew that already!" Modesty was not one of Cindy Lou's virtues.

Time passed. It began to look as though Lonnie was never coming back. Sometimes Cindy Lou would cry and Ma would put her arm around her, saying, "There, there, honey. Don't take it so. Lonnie will be back before you know it."

Ma was right. One day the great news came that Lonnie was returning. Pa painted the house and then the barn. Suellen prettied herself up so much you'd have sworn she was entered in a beauty contest. Most importantly, Ma began preparing the crust for a blueberry pie. Blueberry pie wasn't just for Going Away. It was for Coming Back, too.

They thought Old Man Johnson's Ford would never make it up the steep mountain road, but somehow it did. With a cheery wave of his hand the old man drove away and there was Lonnie with his battered suitcase, coming through the door, wearing the same boyish grin they all loved.

Lonnie stood in the doorway and there was Ma crying and slapping his shoulder and Suellen, all freckles and pigtailed, smothering his face with kisses and...

Ma caught Lonnie's anxious look around the cabin. "Now, son, don't you worry. Cindy Lou will be along shortly. She just don't know you're back yet."

"Yes she does," said Lonnie. "I saw her down the train station, holdin' hands with Hank Majors."

"Aw, now, that's too bad," said Pa and everybody nodded. "But you'll find somebody else, just like I found Ma." Everybody nodded again, and Suellen smiled. Finally Pa said in a hesitant voice, his voice quavering, "But tell us now, son. Did you...did you get ahead in the city?"

Lonnie looked down and shuffled his feet. "No, Pa, I didn't," he admitted.

Ma gasped. A tear crept into Suellen's eye. Pa had a look of disbelief on his face. "You mean you've failed us, Lonnie? Broken years of Tolliver tradition?"

Lonnie slowly looked up. Then he grinned. "Hell, no, Pa! I may not have got ahead in the city--but I got TWO right here!" And fairly dancing with delight, he flung open the battered suitcase to show them the pair of grisly, bloodstained human heads it contained.

They all crowded around, awed and admiring of Lonnie's exhibits. Suellen thought they were the best heads she had ever seen and Pa said huskily that Lonnie had done the family proud. No Tolliver had ever brought back two heads before!

"Why, it looks like Cindy Lou made it after all," said Ma with a giggle. "I hope she and her friend will stay for a piece of blueberry pie." Everybody laughed.

Later, after Ma had done all her work, Lonnie whispered something to Pa. Pa shook his head and said humbly, "No, Lonnie, that honour belongs to you. You should mount them all by yourself."

Chest out, head high, and stomach full, Lonnie proudly led the way to the Trophy Room.

**MOST SPECTACULAR TECHNOLOGICAL
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DECADE**

A sign of the times, this one goes to a robot. Voyager 2 met Neptune and Triton in August, after having visited all of the other gas giants in the Solar System. No doubt there were greater technological breakthroughs this decade, but I've always been a space fan and seeing images of all those planets has been fabulous.

**MOST SPECTACULAR TECHNOLOGICAL
FAILURE OF THE DECADE**

Nominations include: Bhopal, Chernobyl, Challenger, ...
Choose your own "winner" - they're all too depressing for me to want to mull over.

THE WAR LEAST LIKELY TO BE WON

Has to be the War on Drugs. Now that Reagan's big boogey man, the Evil Empire, has self-destructed, Bush looks like taking this one on to distract US attention away from their real problems. How the bastion of capitalism can believe it possible to ban some of the most popular commodities around is beyond me. The Cabinet and Congress may be getting too young to remember The Noble Experiment first-hand - but some of them must have read that it was a failure (or at least seen the movie!)

Kornbluth must have been right: the only thing we learn...is that we never learn.

-----ooOoo-----

(Continued from p.8)

Australian fans to keep up with their sf reading, as importations of overseas publications were not allowed.

When the bans were finally lifted, "Spike" Michelides decided to subscribe to *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. Having carefully made out his order and cheque to Standard Magazines, he was excited when he finally received his first issue - until he found it was *Thrilling Western Stories*! The Standard mob apologized and assured him that the error would be corrected immediately. Soon he was getting issues of *Railroad Stories*! At this point, he gave up.

And with that anecdote I, too, give up - for the time being.

(Continued from p.2)

I also read comic books, of course. I distinctly remember avoiding the Marvel super-hero titles, out of disgust at finding that each story continued in another issue. I much preferred the anthology-type sf titles like *Monsters on the Prowl* and *Creatures on the Loose* (or was it *Creatures on the Prowl* and...) The cover stories were almost always repetitious Frankenstein yarns, but the shorter features were fun to read.

All of this was in the States, by the way. The family lived in several places in Illinois until emigrating to Australia in 1972. We landed up in Cronulla, south of Sydney, for the first year and a half. The similarities between Aussie and American culture were (and still are) greater than the differences, but the surfie sub-culture of Cronulla was quite a shock to my system at the time. A local library provided some relief. I particularly recall reading Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* during a train trip we took up to Cairns one year.

For the next six months we lived in Koondrook, Victoria. On the other side of the Murray River lay Barham, N.S.W., where my dad taught and my sister and I attended the high school. On the bridge between was a fruit inspector. His job was to protect N.S.W. from the ravages of the fruit fly - a bug supposedly too dumb to fly across less than 200 metres of muddy water. On our first day, he confiscated some bananas we tried to cross with; when we looked back, we could see the buggie eating them. He probably hadn't had to buy any fresh fruit for years. Despite this beginning, it was much friendlier there than in Sydney. I wouldn't have minded staying longer.

On a farm outside of the not-too-far-distant town of Wakool, Mom and Dad picked up two mongrel pups we named Merry and Pippin. Both crossed the Nullabor with us in 1974. (Route 1 was still a gravel road on the South Australian side of the border back then.) Merry now rests peacefully and permanently in the back garden. Pip is getting quite grey but is still as rambunctious as ever, between naps.

It was during the move from Cronulla to Koondrook, incidentally, that disaster struck my Dad's library. Having survived the 20,000 mile journey across the ocean intact, around a dozen early Oz books - including a first edition of *The Tin Woodman of Oz* - were lost by the moving company. Thanks to Del Rey Books, these have now all been replaced (but if you should ever happen upon an old Reilly & Lee Oz book with a number from 10 to 20 hand-lettered at the base of the spine, drop me a line).

I once spent some time idly speculating on the possibility that the Land of Oz might really exist somewhere in the heart of Australia. Don't laugh! Baum encouraged his young readers to accept Oz as a real place. (It was only in the 1939 MGM production that the old cliché about it "all being a dream" was used.) I collected further bits of evidence in what seemed like a reasonable manner.

At the time, my dad had been corresponding with a number of Aussie model railroaders to find out more about the country and I can recall at least one visiting our home. The similarity between the first syllable of "Australia" and "Oz" would have been noticeable to me, especially since "Oz" is quite commonly used as a contraction of "Australia".

Remember, too, that Oz is described as being surrounded by harsh deserts on all sides - the Deadly Desert, Great Sandy Waste, the Shifting Sands, and the Impassable Desert, to be precise - and any map of Australia I might have seen would certainly have made me aware of the deserts of Central Australia.

There's even some textual (if circumstantial) evidence from one of the Oz books that could have supported my thesis. *Ozma of Oz* begins with Dorothy accompanying Uncle Henry on a steamer trip to...Australia! When the storm strikes, she and Billina the hen are swept overboard and find themselves in the Land of Ev, a kingdom neighbouring Oz. After rescuing a family of royal hostages from the Nome King, Dorothy and party have only to ride a magic carpet across the desert to reach Oz.

If I ever seriously contemplated Oz as a real place, I was ignoring a lot of contrary evidence - it's hard to imagine a twister lasting long enough to travel all the way from Kansas to Australia, for instance. At some point I'd have learned that trying to identify a real location for Oz was missing the point anyway.

As you may have gathered by now, books and reading play an important part in my life. We have bookshelves in every room of our house and I've always taken the existence of these things very much for granted. I am also a librarian by profession.

Next year I'll be in North-West Pakistan, helping to set up a library and information centre in Peshawar, as an Australian Volunteer Abroad. If I find any spare time I'll be investigating Pakistani fandom (if such a beast exists) and reporting my findings in further issues. Anyone silly enough to want to write should cross their fingers. Letters will have to make it to:

Chris Nelson, c/- ACBAR, GPO Box 1084, University Town,
Peshawar, Pakistan

Typing for this issue began on the 1st of September, 1989. I figured that after half a century the world ought to be ready for another really big disaster.

Special thanks go to Roger Dard for all of his contributions. I wrote all the boring bits. The cover quote, for anyone still trying to place it, is from closet fan T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

CAN, 28/12/89.

A Note on this Issue

This issue has been entirely retyped for its online incarnation, as the original was printed on a dot matrix printer, rendering it barely legible. The content is completely the same, excepting that the opportunity to correct several typographical errors has been taken. Two errors of fact (on pages 4 and 7) have been retained, but notes added to set the record straight.

August 30, 2010