
Scratch Pad 8

Based on the non-Mailing Comments section of **brg** No. 10, a magazine written and published by Bruce Gillespie, 59 Keele Street, Victoria 3066, Australia (phone (03) 9419-4797; email: gandc@mira.net) for the February 1994 ANZAPA (Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) mailing.

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THAT'S ALL I HAD TO SEE FOR ME TO SAY

ANZAPAcON II was the best convention I've been to since before Aussiecon I. It was not a true relaxacon in the American style (*no* program at all). Good. The program items came at the right time, and were entertaining. Perry, you were a fine MC.

Highlight of the convention was the appearance of Gary Mason, plus his slides. Gary's mellowed with the years, but the slides show that none of us has improved in appearance. (I admit that Lee Harding has changed little.) Irwin's slides were also entertaining. So was seeing for the first Antifan film for the first time in many years.

The ANZAPA collation and the roaring restaurant night and the endless natter and the appearance of people I hadn't seen for anything up to ten years gave an extra buzz to the event. Australia should bid for a Corflu or Ditto.

Alan Stewart was always there in the background providing backup. He has his reward: an ANZAPA waiting list. Welcome to all the new/old ANZAPAns.

Also congratulations to Kim Huett for tracking down former members; some of the Believed Lost have even rejoined.

Books Read since the Last Time I Listed 'Books Read'

(i.e. the last week of July 1993)

* = Recommended.

** = Highly recommended.

- ** *Missing Joseph* (Elizabeth George) 1993
- ** *Death Qualified* (Kate Wilhelm) 1991
- *Seven Kinds of Death* (Kate Wilhelm) 1992
- ** *Justice for Some* (Kate Wilhelm) 1993
- * *The Hills Are Dancing* (Kate Wilhelm and Richard Wilhelm) 1986
- ** *One Foot in Heaven* (Hartzell Spence) 1941
- * *Force and Fraud: A Tale of the Bush* (Ellen Davitt) 1865
- *Crosstown Traffic* (edited by Stuart Coupe, Julie Ogden and Robert Hood) 1993
- ** *The Ganges and its Tributaries* (Christopher Cyrill) 1993
- *The Golden* (Lucius Shepard) 1993
- * *Evolution Annie and Other Stories* (Rosaleen Love) 1993
- ** *The Invention of the World* (Jack Hodgins) 1977

- ** *Cruel and Unusual* (Patricia D. Cornwell) 1993
- ** *Fraud* (Anita Brookner) 1992
- ** *Up On All Fours* (Philip Hodgins) 1993
- * *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* (Harry Kemelman) 1964
- ** *The Hollowing* (Robert Holdstock) 1993
- ** *Deathdeal* (Garry Disher) 1993
- * *Selected Poems* (Elizabeth Riddell) 1992
- * *Terror Australis* (edited by Leigh Blackmore) 1993
- *Intimate Armageddons* (edited by Bill Congreve) 1992
- ** *The Age of Innocence* (Edith Wharton) 1920
- ** *The MD: A Horror Story* (Thomas M. Disch) 1991
- ** *Works of Edith Wharton* (incl. ** 'Ethan Frome' and
- ** *The House of Mirth* (1905)
- ** *Complicity* (Iain Banks) 1993
- ** *Murder at Home: Crimes for a Summer Christmas No. 4* (edited by Stephen Knight) 1993
- ** *Night of Light* (Philip José Farmer) 1957/1966
- * *The Ern Malley Affair* (Michael Heyward) 1993
- *Stand on Zanzibar* (John Brunner) 1969
- ** *Burn Marks* (Sara Paretsky) 1990
- ** *Dark Verses and Light* (Tom Disch) 1991
- ** *Mortal Fire* (edited by Terry Dowling and Van Ikin) 1993
- ** *The Shooting Party* (Isobel Colegate) 1980

I read far too many review copies in 1993: reviews for *The Melburnian* (recently renamed from *The Melbourne Report*) and *SF Commentary* (a mighty edifice of a column, although I had to leave it out of the most recent issue). Only when I turned to the great American writer Edith Wharton did I recover the joy of reading Great Novels. There are other highlights, but 1993 belongs to Edith Wharton. And to female writers in general: Patricia Cornwell just gets better, and Sara Paretsky is always fun to read. In the October mailing I published the result of all that reading of Kate Wilhelm. The article has still not been published elsewhere.

Favourite Films:

- 1 *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra)
- 2 *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson)
- 3 *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock)
- 4 *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick)

- 5 *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti)
- 6 *A Canterbury Tale* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger)
- 7 *Mon Oncle* (Jacques Tati)
- 8 *Singing in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly)
- 9 *The Trial* (Orson Welles)
- 10 *Wings of Desire* (Wim Wenders)

Since February 1989, when I last made an attempt at a Top Ten, two films have entered: *A Canterbury Tale* and *Wings of Desire*. The two that dropped out were Orson Welles' *Othello*

and Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Since 1989 I've become a fanatical admirer of the films of the Archers (Powell and Pressburger), so No. 11 would now probably be *I Know Where I'm Going*, with *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* not far behind. (Yes, I like *The Red Shoes* a lot, but not enough to pick it in my Top Ten.)

Jan Epstein, a Melbourne critic, called *Wings of Desire* the best film of the last twenty years. My list does not dispute that claim. It has two films from the 1940s, two films from the 1950s, five from the 1960s (although I sneer at sixties films), none from the 1970s, and *Wings of Desire* from the 1980s.

NO AUTOGRAPHS AFTER MIDNIGHT: Advention I, New Year 1972

[Few current members of ANZAPA will have read the following article, which appeared first in *SF Commentary* No. 26, April 1972. When I wrote it I was twenty-five years old, but emotionally about eighteen. Bits of this article now seem embarrassing. Other bits are much better than anything I could write now.]

The engines sounded like the outlet pipes of a factory. Their long snort came to a crescendo, they began to whistle, then abruptly the tense roar faded away, and the Boeing 727 was in the air.

It was the first time that I had travelled in the air since I was four years old, and I wasn't nervous. Not much. I was too far away from the window to see anything intelligible below. Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport lies well out from the suburban area, so there wasn't a lot to see. After the retracting wheels thudded into place, I didn't have much to do except lower the little table that is attached to the seat in front and attend to the elaborate morning-tea ritual that takes most of the journey between Melbourne and Adelaide. When I could look through the window, I could only see clouds below. Twenty thousand feet below, since we were travelling at thirty thousand feet by the time that we passed over Bordertown and lost a half an hour. By the time that we had all drunk tea or coffee, and I had read about half a page of a magazine, we began to circle over Adelaide. Adelaide looks very different from Melbourne, for Adelaide has trees along most of its suburban streets. Adelaide looked as dry as Melbourne does during January, but Adelaide had a grid of green.

I might not have gone to Adelaide at New Year for Advention if only they had not made me Guest of Honour. I hate travelling by car, and the train journey to Sydney during New Year 1970 had been intolerable. So I decided to take a chance on our airlines, the world's safest (as the publicity leaflets say). I arrived in Adelaide only half an hour (officially) after I had left Melbourne. Alan Sandercock, one of Adelaide's convention committee members, and Robin Johnson were there to meet me. We waited for a few minutes to see whether Michael O'Brien had flown in from Hobart, but he hadn't, so we left for Alan's place.

All day we did little but meet people from Melbourne. Soon after we arrived at Alan's place, John Bangsund, his car, David Grigg and Carey Handfield limped in. They had been travelling overnight, although they all stopped in one motel room for a few hours. The road had been flat and the

landscape empty. John had found a book shop in Warrnambool that stocked first editions of old hardbacks at their original prices, and he had already spent a good part of his Convention finances, which he did not really have to spend anyway. This was one Convention when nearly everybody was tired *before* it started.

John Bangsund brought a plentiful supply of wine, which he proceeded to sip while other people dashed in and out of the house. I helped to type a bit of the auction list, and helped to collate the Convention booklet, bits of which John had brought from Melbourne. Joy Window, one of the Adelaide concommittee members, arrived. Alan went to collect piles of food and other supplies. John Bangsund decided to do his laundry. (The not-entirely-unbelievable story was that the laundry basket had piled high for four weeks. John had been headed for a laundromat a few days before, just before a contingent of fans invaded Bundalohn Court.) We went to look for an Adelaide laundromat, and soon found one. John put the first lot into the tub while David and I talked to Joy, one of the more noticeable assets of the Adelaide convention committee. Whether she wanted to hear them or not, she soon heard the complete history of Melbourne fandom, Australian fandom, overseas fandom, and *ASFR*. (Marvellous how the conversation runs when you are waiting in a hot Adelaide laundromat while young harassed housewives look at you oddly and nearly order you to give them seats.) Our most appreciative audience came from a young boy who immediately noticed that we were out-of-towners and definitely not good guys. His ear-splitting cry of 'Wheeee-eeee-eeee' quickly turned into 'Bang! Bang!' After David Grigg had melodramatically died a couple of times, and John had returned some answering fire, the kid became really warlike and tried to cut us down with some choice epithets that only children in comic strips don't know. After we had ignored being shot at for half an hour, the kid gave up. Them dang furriners.

We spent most of the day (Friday, 31 December 1971) at the still centre of a hurricane. The cars of John Hewitt and Alan Sandercock provided the active outer edge of the hurricane. After they had filled the house with supplies for the weekend, including over a hundred dollars' worth of meat, we filled the cars with the perishables and us. Under Adelaide skies, we set off for the hills and Melville House. I asked Alan whether Melville House was as terrible as it sounded — dormitories, bunks, and cook-your-own? 'Well — er — yes,' he said. It didn't worry him any. We picked up

Monica Adlington, another member of the committee, wound through the Adelaide Hills (which are ten miles nearer Adelaide than the Dandenong Ranges are to Melbourne), and finally drove down a bush track and stopped in the 'car park' of Melville House.

The Melbourne fans maintained a stunned silence for fully one minute. I felt very comforted that I had brought enough money to stay at a motel if the need arose. The house, surrounded by trees, and halfway down a valley, looked ordinary enough. By its side stood two brick buildings that looked like old stables. When we looked inside we found that they had been old stables; they were now 'dormitories'. Ironwork bunks decorated the insides of the dormitories. 'It's just like Camp Waterman,' said John Bangsund faintly. (Camp Waterman is the boy-scout-cum-torture-camp so favoured by parents from the Churches of Christ. I managed to avoid going to camp at Waterman during my entire childhood.) We unpacked our gear, and I picked a bunk that looked a little bit secure. I didn't expect to get any sleep for the rest of the Convention, so the choice didn't matter much.

Melville House is one of a number of guest houses in the hills. They are owned by some association of university groups, which hire them out to university associations for conferences such as ours. We only had to pay 50 cents per night for accommodation, and the committee charged a separate fee of \$2 per day for food. Joy and Monica, plus various male friends and indefatigable helpers, prepared the meals during the entire four days of the Convention, and did not complain once or get annoyed with the Convention attendees. Somehow the dishes were done, the place kept clean, and the food always arrived. One of those Adelaide-managed miracles that made this the best Australian convention yet.

Eh? Yes, I said that this was the best Australian convention yet, despite all the opposite indications. Australians thrive on discomfort, perhaps.

On Friday night, people found their own food, although Monica and Joy managed to provide some soup for people who had nothing. People I hadn't seen for nearly a year made their appearances: Robert Bowden, who had arrived at 3 a.m. the previous morning, and suitably dishevelled and hirsute, had grabbed one of the few bedrooms inside the house; Ron Clarke and Shayne McCormack from Sydney, the fabulous co-publishers of *Wombat*; Barry Danes and Sabina Heggie, also from Sydney; Blair Ramage, about whom more will be said; and, nearly unrecognisable, Stephen Campbell, the wild artist from Nelson in southern Victoria. We 'saw the New Year in', and I talked for an hour or so to Kevin Dillon, without whom no Australian convention is complete. At 1 a.m. one of the committee members arrived at the Convention with his (then-current) girlfriend. His girlfriend wanted very much to meet John Bangsund, about whom she had heard a great deal. John Bangsund had made his 'bed' as comfortably as possible, had sprinkled 'Grigg repellent' all over the nearby bunks, and had retired at about 10 p.m. The lady wanted to meet him anyway. Some people decided to wake up John. After debating the matter for awhile, they tramped across to the dormitory and put on the light. Several people ducked under the covers when they saw that — gasp! — a lady was present. John Bangsund slept on. 'Wake him,' said one person. 'Turn off the light!' moaned Barry Danes, or one of those tired Sydneysiders who had come 800 miles. Somebody tried to shake John awake. When everybody had nearly give up, John put his head out of the blankets, said 'I keep telling you fellows: no autographs after

midnight', and fell back asleep. The committee member's girlfriend got her interview.

When I came back to the dormitory at 2 a.m., the lights were out, and most people had begun the long night's struggle to get some sleep. I decided that I might get thrown out if I put on the light to change into pyjamas, so I slid into my sleeping-bag and hoped that my clothes wouldn't get too bedraggled. The bunks creaked. An hour passed. The muttered jokes subsided. Some people moved into the house. I fell asleep, unbelievably. Next morning, I felt completely refreshed, and I didn't have a bad night's sleep during the Convention. Maybe I would have enjoyed Camp Waterman after all. (I've since worked out that I felt so well during the Convention because I didn't have to use my brain for a whole four days.)

Next morning, the strange pattern of convention meals began. A few early-risers assembled in the kitchen by 8 a.m. As more people joined them, some people put on eggs and toast. A few more brought out some plates. Joy and Monica woke up and began to cook. Everybody finished breakfast by 10 a.m. Lunch and tea, much better organised, occurred at similar strange hours. Who cared? Nobody cared about anything much for a whole four days. Such luxury!

Advention became an Unconvention, the convention-without-a-program. However, the program unravelled very slowly, and on New Year's Day the committee made a valiant and largely unsuccessful attempt to keep to the program. Everybody registered, the committee introduced itself and other people, and the first panel started. Paul Anderson, Bill Wright, Robert Bowden, Alan Sandercock and I began to debate the merits of various magazine, anthology and book editors. At this point Lee Harding walked in, fresh from his journey, and began to ask curly questions from the audience. Robin Johnson (also in the audience) began to answer the questions, and Blair Ramage (another member of the audience) had his say. The panel sat at the front of the room and looked politely interested. We didn't need to say much at all. We should have been warned, and cancelled the rest of the program.

Alan tried to continue John Foyster's idea (from Gelatikon, the 1971 New Year's Convention) of programming concurrent panels. However, nobody wanted to hear my panel on the relative merits of the writing of Bob Silverberg, Philip Dick, Brian Aldiss and others. Quite rightly they wanted to hear Adelaide committee member Jeff Harris's panel on 'Pseudo-Science in Science Fiction'. This was the most interesting 'serious' event of the convention, as Jeff deftly demolished most of the pseudo-scientific ideas upon which sf stories are based. The program remained steady for most of the day, but the rot had already set in. Most people watched Richard Fleischer's *Fantastic Voyage*. Tea was (not too) late. Most people were outside enjoying the last of daylight-saving-provided sunshine, but I began my Guest of Honour speech anyway. At the end of this exciting event, myriads of fannish fans invaded the room, all wearing plastic propeller-capped beanies. Arnie Katz would have loved them. The infinite beanie, live from Adelaide. Well, fifteen beanies. The first part of the auction, conducted by Monica Adlington, followed in a very jovial way. However, the interstate travellers were becoming more and more tired. *Five Million Years to Earth (Quatermass and the Pit)*, even more horrifying at my third viewing than at the first, sent people (literally) shivering to bed, and I don't think anybody bothered to start a midnight hike.

We had had cool January weather (about 60°F), but on Sunday the sun came out. So did the bushflies. So did the

people — out of doors, I mean. So much material remained unauctioned that Lee Harding mustered some spirited bidding for piles of musty pulps and comics. The bidders sat on a grassy parapet in front of the house, shielded their faces from the flies and their wallets from the auctioneer. A motorbike mysteriously turned up. Some people went for a ride on it. Two of them came back bloodied . . . they had run into a gate. The glissando of the roar of a motorbike, the hum of the flies and the voice of Lee Harding gradually disengaged our brains. When Alan Sandercock tried to return to the program, he ran into some steady opposition. (We had already had a barbecue lunch. This didn't help anybody to stay serious.) Alan set up a panel on the outside porch of the house. The panel had the topic 'Robert Heinlein — the Man You Love to Hate'. I seem to remember that the people who sat on the panel were Alan Sandercock, John Hewitt, me . . . and Blair Ramage. (Blair had the most fun of anybody at that convention. He's the only person I know who has ever come to an sf convention and talked non-stop about science fiction, and about nothing but science fiction. He deserves a Most Devoted Fan of the Year award, or something.) Blair was the only person among the audience or the panel who wanted to talk about Heinlein. Harding, Bangsund and company did not want a panel at all. The rest of the panel members, in their sleepy and contented states, could not think of all those brilliant reasons why Heinlein isn't a very good writer. Blair told us why he was. Harding and Bangsund made jokes at the expense of Heinlein and Blair. The rest of the panel tried to pretend that they were miles away. John Hewitt took out his camera and began to photograph Ron Clarke who was taking photos of the panel members. The audience, especially Lee Harding, conducted the panel discussion among themselves.

Mild lunacy followed. I think Alan Sandercock probably shrugged his shoulders at the whole damn lot of us at that stage, but since Alan doesn't let anything annoy him, he kept going. John Bangsund, who had sipped a fair bit from his personal flagon during the day, began to play the piano. He slipped into his Victor Borge routine, as scraps of tunes turned into the 'Third Man Theme'. Some of us gathered around the piano to listen. Merv Binns began to whistle. We looked astonished. How many other hidden talents does Merv have? Merv began to sing along with the piano. Our jaws dropped lower. Lee Harding came in. While Merv

whistled and sang, Lee Harding began his Fred Astaire routine. The convention became a sing-along and mainly stayed that way. After the impromptu concert, we had dinner. Everybody received one meatball, so Harding spent most of the night making an attempt to get another meatball in his spaghetti. The committee-member's girlfriend arrived, so Lee Harding and John Bangsund promptly sat her between them. Toasts to Tolkien's birthday and Asimov's birthday followed. For a hushed audience Lee Harding played the first strains of the 'Eroica' Symphony on his teeth.

Afterwards, Alan tried to tell people about Australia in 75, but somehow it seemed neither the time nor the place. The only people who listened attentively were members of the Australia-In-75 committee. There followed a panel suitable to the occasion, when Dracula (Paul Stevens) interviewed a cretinous monster (Merv Binns), a lunatic film director (Lee Harding) and a drunken film critic 'who really doesn't know much about films but I know a lot about cookery' (John Bangsund). Some Adelaide fans decided to dispose of the Dracula menace for all time. They tied sticks across broom handles and charged Dracula. Unfortunately they didn't have any garlic as well. Dracula survived.

Those people who could still see watched Byron Haskins' very good sf thriller *The Power*, and most people retired at 2 a.m., which was when others began their 'midnight hike' that finished at about 5 a.m. Fortunately I had been asleep for several hours by the time they returned.

On Monday some of us got up fairly early (say, 9 a.m.) and had breakfast. 'What if', said John Bangsund, 'the whole world has been destroyed, and there is nothing left over the top of the hill?' 'That'd really test the ingenuity of sf fans,' said somebody else, not quite receiving John's message: that the Convention members had become so contented and self-sufficient that they couldn't possibly want to return to the mundane world. 'No,' said John. 'Do you really think that sf fans would build generators and buildings and start a new world? Of course not. They would sit down and talk about science fiction and watch movies and look at comics, just as usual.' Some weeks later John said that as he drove across the Little Desert, halfway between Adelaide and Melbourne, he felt that he wanted to turn around and drive right back to the valley.

— Bruce Gillespie, 8 May 1972