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# Scratch Pad 63

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A fanzine for efanazines.com based on a Christmas card substitute called *So That Was 2005!*, plus the non-mailing comments sections of *\*brg\*45*, a fanzine published for the April 2006 mailing of ANZAPA by Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard St, Greensborough VIC 3088. Phone: (03) 9435 7786. Email: gandc@mira.net. Member fwa.

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## Contents

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- 1 SO THAT WAS 2005!
- 3 PICTURES OF PARADISE

**Photos:** Helena Binns (p. 3); Yvonne Rousseau (pp. 3, 4).

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## So that was 2005!

### The letter you had to receive because we didn't send Christmas cards this year

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Bruce writes:

Elaine sent a few Christmas cards. I didn't send any. Nobody stole Christmas from us, but . . .

For me, 2005 started in the clouds, hurtled downwards for months, then took a hiccupy upward zoom during November and December. I went to America in February and March, came back to find little or no paying work, then worked nonstop during the last two and a half months of the year. Which is why I had no time to write Christmas cards, although lots of you sent them to us. Plus your Annual Newsy Letters, which we enjoyed reading.

Elaine had plenty of work throughout the year. However, she had to put up with morose pussy cats stalking her around the house during the month I was away ('Where is he? Where is he?'). She felt increasingly unwell during the first half of the year. One Saturday morning she found herself in severe pain at the doctor's after doing the shopping. She discovered she was suffering from two small hernias, one each side, which were making it difficult for her to do anything much. After a successful double operation in October, she regained much of her energy, but in the last month or so was struck down by severe hives! The only explanation anybody had come up with is that she has been reacting to the anaesthetic. Nobody can guess how long it might take for the anaesthetic to work its way out of her system. Cortisone has helped get rid of the symptoms for the time being, but Elaine still doesn't know how well she will be during 2006.

Despite this series of downers during the year, we did — finally — move into our new house in Greensborough. At the beginning of 2005, not a lot had been done. We were still waiting for vital plumbing to be finished (to

stop the waterfall in the garage each time it rained), although the inbuilt bookshelves were already being put together. With them up, we could unpack a huge number of the 220 boxes of stuff we had brought from Collingwood (in November 2004). About 60 boxes remained packed. Many of the plants that Elaine had brought from Collingwood were still in pots, but she formulated a grand plan for the garden.

Because we had not been able to check the house thoroughly before buying, we did not know that three of the five burners on the stove were not working, and the huge air conditioner on the roof had not worked for several years. We already knew the back fence needed replacing. Lots has been done, but the kitchen has still not been transformed.

During the last ten years or so, Elaine has been involved with the Eltham branch of the Australian Plants Society. After we moved to Greensborough, she became much more involved, becoming local secretary during 2005. During a visit to the garden of one of the society's members, Elaine discovered a method of constructing a native plants garden: put rubble in trenches between raised garden beds. Water flows down the rubble, and percolates upward through the soil. This is the same principle as can be found where seemingly dry creek beds are lined with trees.

Elaine was walking down a nearby street when she noticed local demolishers dumping terracotta roof tiles in a truck. Elaine offered payment for the broken tiles, but the demolishers brought them around for free — and dumped them all over the front lawn.

We began to barrow the tiles around to the back garden, but hadn't got far when a man from the council called. A neighbour had complained about the tiles on the front lawn. We had a month to get rid of them! At

about the same time, Harjinder, our wonderful renovator and supervisor, who had suffered two severe accidents during the year, was able to return to our house to build the final set of shelves and take care of lots of outstanding jobs. He brought Mika, his assistant, with him. Mika finished the rest of the tile carting in three working days. Meanwhile, he was also helping Harjinder put up the rest of the shelves. We could empty all the boxes, and for the first time in many years we could view all our books. Meanwhile, Elaine had ordered several large grey steel stationery cabinets, which hold the fanzines, magazines and the George Turner Collection quite nicely. That let us empty another thirty boxes.

The above tale is probably very tedious to anybody who has not moved house for awhile. We hadn't moved for 26 years. We hadn't realised it would take more than a year to finish the process.

During the year, an enormous number of people have visited, and have either helped us directly, or told us about somebody or other who could help us, or have taken away plants or dropped in plants, or just been very friendly. Special thanks to Harjinder, his partner Adrienne, and his team of assistants.

Compared to the epic process of *The Move*, it seems almost trivial to mention that at the end of February and beginning of March I visited the West Coast of America, despite having no money of my own to pay for such a trip. The trip was paid for by the science fiction fans of Australia, America and Britain, and organised by Arnie and Joyce Katz of Las Vegas (and, later, by Robert Lichtman of California), Bill Wright of St Kilda, and Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer of Croydon, England. Irwin Hirsh of Prahran edited *The Incomplete Bruce Gillespie*, an anthology of my writings put together to raise money for the trip, and Robert Lichtman conducted the email auction that raised lots of money for the Bring Bruce Bayside Fund. Ensuring the success of the fund were huge contributions from three wonderful friends who don't want to be named.

I stayed with Alan Rosenthal and Janice Murray in beautiful waterside Seattle, attended two conventions (Corflu and Potlatch, one each weekend) in San Francisco, was driven by Art Widner north to Gualala and by Billy Pettit to Glen Ellen in the Sonoma Valley, and later overland to Las Vegas. After not nearly enough time there catching up with Arnie and Joyce, Marty Cantor was my host for two days in Los Angeles, and Lee and Barry Gold showed me around during my last day in America.

At Corflu, I was awarded the Immediate Past Presidency of the Fan Writers of America, just about the highest award I've received within the science fiction fan community. I didn't campaign for the award and didn't know I was a candidate, but I appreciate being ranked up there with my favourite writers.

Many thanks to the Melbourne SF Club for making me one of the new Life Members of the Club; and to the members of this year's national SF convention (Thylacon, in Hobart), who gave me yet another Ditmar Award (for Best Fan Writer). The collection of Ditmars looks quite nice in the cabinet that Elaine bought for me for my birthday.

Several months ago I wrote the complete story of my American trip. I haven't yet dropped in the photos, finished the layout and taken it to the printer. Real Soon Now.

Because of an amazing offer from Janice and Alan, Elaine could have taken the trip as well, but she said she had to take care of Sophie, Polly, Violet, Flicker and

Harry. I managed to ring her a couple of times. During the second phone call she said: 'I didn't realise how much you do around here!' For that compliment alone I think the whole trip was worthwhile.

Thanks to my sister Jeanette, we've been able to keep in touch with my mother, who lives 100 km away in Rosebud. Now 87, she admitted for the first time that she was now feeling 'just a little bit old'. However, Mum visited us at Greensborough, and attended Jeanette's music production this year at Camberwell South Primary School (where Jeanette has been music teacher for 25 years); and Robin, my sister from Queensland, managed to visit both us and her. Both Jeanette and Robin, younger than I am, need hip replacements — probably because they have both spent much of their working lives in standing jobs. Robin and Grant are looking forward to the wedding of Philip (my nephew) and Leisha in Western Australia in early 2006, and Robin has given a lot of help to Colin (my other nephew), who spent 2006 becoming unmarried, surviving a six-month army stint in Iraq, and moving from Darwin back to Buddina, Queensland, and eventually to Sydney.

Elaine's sister Margaret has been, with her partner George, major supporters before, during and after the Big Move. Diane, her daughter, was married spectacularly to Ian during 2004, and we caught up with them a few times during the year. Elaine's other sister, Valerie, has with Fred been trying to keep up with daughter Carol (Elaine's niece), who with Scott and three energetic children has been living at Narre Warren, and with Linda (also Elaine's niece), who has settled in Brisbane with Steve.

We're not sure what 2006 will bring. Either the current spate of paying work will continue for me — or it won't. If it does, I might have some spare cash to resume publishing my magazines. If Elaine's health holds up, she has offers of paying work, but she would also like time to transform the garden, read books and pat cats.

We're very grateful for all the people who sent us cards, letters and messages at Christmas. Two Keele Street neighbours let us know how things were going back in Collingwood. Rick, my oldest friend, kept in touch from Tweed Heads. Brian Aldiss wrote from Britain, although I had forgotten to send him a card for his 80th birthday (which was in August). Good to hear from Annette Carter, from Sydney, who used to visit Melbourne every Christmas. Some people, such as Henry and Judy Gasko and family, have been having a rough trot, as has John Bangsund, news of whose cerebral haemorrhage greeted me as soon as I reached Seattle in February. Thanks to Sally Yeoland for solving many insoluble problems, and keeping us in touch with news of John's recovery. Fred Patten suffered a stroke a few days after I met him in Los Angeles. Other people — just a few of them — had a great 2005. For instance, Alex Skovron published his novella *The Poet*, Lucy Sussex, Charles Taylor, and several other friends were awarded PhDs, and Chris Nelson and family enjoyed the move to Fiji.

Thanks to Dick Jenssen for kindnesses (and DVDs, and photos), and also to Yvonne Rousseau (for kindnesses and photos), our most frequent visitor, although she lives in Adelaide. Thanks to Murray and Natalie McLachlan for much help, and a stack of CDs. Thanks to Lucy and Julian for ensuring that the Nova Mob continues monthly meetings in its new home at the North Carlton Library. Thanks to Race (70 years young this year) and Lola Mathews, who have remained friendly

hosts to our monthly film group, even though they both lead very busy lives. Thanks to Carey, Charles and Nic, Justin and others who drove us home from various events during the year. Best wishes to the Tuesday night gang, although the institution itself nearly disappeared during the year. Thanks to all our worldwide friends who stay in touch constantly over the Internet and through the mail, especially members of ANZAPA.

Recently I learned of the death during the year of Uncle Bill, my mother's oldest brother. 2005 took quite a few valued people from us, including John Brosnan from Britain, Bill Bowers from Cincinnati, Karen Warnock and Kevin Dillon from Sydney, and, on New Year's Day, Noel Kerr from Carnegie. We celebrate their memories.

Best wishes for 2006!  
Bruce and Elaine, 4 January 2006.



Bruce Gillespie, Elaine Cochrane, and Bill Wright in contemplative mood at Noel Kerr's funeral. (Photo: Helena Binns.)

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## Pictures of paradise

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To see how things are shaping up in Greensborough, look no further than Bill Wright's *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop*, February 2006. Bill and Dick Jenssen have made any further comment from me (almost) superfluous. Dick saves me using two pages of *\*brg\** to show the same photos of Our New Home. Publishing those photos will save us the necessity of a Housewarming Party. Friends are welcome to call in; just ring first. But the thought of a huge party is a bit daunting. We had an excuse for

putting it off while we had a bung stove, but even the kitchen has now been transformed (new bench tops and gas stove).

Our move from Collingwood was done step by step, and took nearly a year and a half. Much of the unpacking and settling in was done in January 2005. However, more than 60 boxes were left unpacked. After a difficult year, our friend Harjinder returned in November. He and his assistant built the rest of the bookshelves. We could



The Hardback Room at our place. There is still space for more books on the top right shelf. (Photo: Yvonne Rousseau.)



Current state of Elaine's garden, looking out from the cat enclosure. Lots of plants have been planted; lots more are still in pots. The tiles now have their own hill. The latticework is the mesh of the cat enclosure. (Photo: Yvonne Rousseau.)

unpack 30 boxes. Elaine bought some more stationery cupboards. We unpacked the other 30 boxes, which included fanzines, other magazines, and lots of George Turneriana. Three major projects remained: furnishing the 'book room', making the kitchen useful, and deciding what to do with bloody great useless airconditioning unit on the roof. We went shopping for new furniture. What we bought is not particularly pretty, but people can sit on it. Harjinder assembled the kitchen, installing the gas stove, bench tops, and tiles. Three days of temperatures above 42C in January convinced us that, as People Who Work From Home, we couldn't work at home on hot days for fear of frying the computers. We raided various piggy banks we didn't know we had, and visited the Origin

shop in Greensborough. A week later, the bloke wrote down all the measurements of our ceiling. A couple of weeks later, four chaps arrived: an electrician, a plumber, and two airconditioning installation blokes. In one day, they ripped out all the old ducts, took the old unit off the roof, installed the new ducts and airconditioner, put the tiles back on the roof, and showed us how to run the outfit. We felt like we'd bought the *QE II*. It's an evaporative airconditioner: that's about all I know. We wish we'd had airconditioning at Keele Street, which was a much hotter house than this one.

What I really love about this house, though, is that all the books are unpacked and on shelves. This feels like the greatest miracle of all.