

# BUSSWARBLE #85

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## MAD

IN a recent letter, Chester Cuthbert expressed regret at my hatred (my word, not his) of the present world and advised me to try to find something good about it. I couldn't, or at least wouldn't, but I must own that this world is not all bad; it is a little better than the world I once knew in some ways, but only by default, that is, in a negative way: that some evils are no longer with us. I grieve for the good things we've lost, but I wouldn't want the cold war back. The world today makes a bit more sense now with the Soviet Union and nuclear terror gone, and I prefer to be able to talk about St Petersburg, Russia, instead of Leningrad in the Soviet Union.

Although the present world strikes me as stark raving mad, now that the balance of power has gone with the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaving the world with only one superpower with all the resulting insanity of globalisation, privatisation, corporatization and economic rationalism, is it really madder than the world of nuclear terror, when we lived in fear of global nuclear annihilation? It distresses me that the insane mindset of that world still lingers when we look back on it.

At Kings Cross during the *Nexus*-conference of 2002, I bought a book titled *Humanity* by Jonathan Glover (not at the conference itself but at an open stall near to the El Alamein fountain). It covers the most shocking examples of mans inhumanity to man through the bloody twentieth century, ranging from the atrocities in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia through the terror under the regimes of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot to Nazism. It includes also bombing, Hiroshima and a parallel between the outbreak of the First World War and the Cuban missile crisis but fails to deal with the ultimate obscene horror that never happened: global nuclear war.

The chapter on bombing deals with just the allied bombing of Germany during World War 2, a subject close to my heart. It divides that bombing into three phases, some justified, but others, especially the last, that after the Normandy-invasion as definitely unjustified, indeed as an "indefensible atrocity".

Yes, I know, the Germans started it, and it's depressing and scary to look back on what Glover calls moral decay or moral death. In 1899, there was a peace conference, where it was agreed that such deeds as the torpedoing of ships by those newfangled submarines and the bombing of civilians from the air were just not on. The First World War got rid of that nonsense. The Germans took to torpedoing merchant ships without warning and bombing England from airships. The latter killed about 500 civilians, while the former killed far more, including 1200 on the *Lusitania* alone. It is to the great credit of the moral climate at the time that the British accused Germany of "wilful and wholesale murder", even if that condemnation was a bit unfair, since, as I pointed out in my last letter

to *The Mentor* (which I have so far not seen published), that the shocking loss of life was due to bad luck rather than German bestiality.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* and other merchant ships was part of the German blockade, which was retaliation for the British blockade, which apparently caused an appalling 800,000 deaths in Germany. I find it utterly horrifying to learn that the British used that as a precedent to justify the holocaust bombing of German cities in the following world war. That is, the logic ran: "Since we killed 800,000 people in Germany in the First World War with the blockade, that makes it okay to burn that number of people to death in firestorms created by area bombing in this war."

The real story is more complex than that – as early as 1935 or so Churchill expected the Germans to begin the next war with an air raid on London of nuclear proportions, killing about 100,000 people on the first day, and the Americans claim to have invented so-called strategic bombing as early as the late twenties – but let's keep the tale as simple as we can now. Many of us feel appalled at the firebombing of Dresden and other cities, and it's good to see at least some Germans today calling for an apology from Britain.

The massive firebombing of Germany set the precedent for the firebombing by the Americans of Japanese cities and ultimately to the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Yes, the Allies developed the atomic bomb in response to a threat that the Germans might develop one, and the unsuccessful German effort is a most curious and puzzling story. Glover tells us that Werner Heisenberg used heavy water from Norway for experiments on the possibility of a nuclear chain reaction. Some of you may be aware that he travelled to Copenhagen in occupied Denmark for a meeting with his friend, Niels Bohr, to discuss the matter. What really transpired between the two physicists is rather a mystery, as the two men told different stories. Curiously, Heisenberg, famous for his uncertainty principle, showed the same twofaced uncertainty in his attitude towards the German nuclear project. Apparently, he and other physicists lied to Hitler about the critical mass of uranium, reckoning it to be in the order of tons instead of mere kilograms, thus making the bomb impossible, but I don't know how true that tale is.

But it's the story of the heavy water that really puzzles me. Why were the Germans dependent on this lone plant out in the wilds of Norway for it? Whatever else you may say about Nazi Germany, stupid it was not. No, unlike Australia, it was a truly clever country, probably the most scientifically and technologically advanced in the world at the time. So why did the tiny nation of Norway build a heavy-water-plant, and why couldn't the Germans do likewise? What did the Norwegians want to do with heavy water? So dependent were the Germans on that plant, that the Allies thought it easy to stop the formers atomic program by simply knocking the plant out. They made a few attempts at it: landing saboteurs by submarine, dropping them from the air, whence they had a long trek over wild rugged country, and bombing it from the air.

There has been at least one major film made about one such effort, *Heroes of Telemark* starring Kirk Douglas. I tuned into it on television late one night but soon turned it off in disgust. Douglas and another man were arguing about the nature of heavy water, one of them claiming, like Tony Hancock telling one of his bullshit-stories in *The Lift*, that it was nasty dangerous stuff that would go off at a moments notice, bullshit of course, but they disgusted me by wending violent over it, typical of Hollywood films of that era. But Glover tells an almost equally unbelievable story. Apparently, the air raid on the plant was successful, causing so much damage that the Germans decided to dismantle it and ship it and the heavy water to Germany. So they put it on a train that was "hard to blow up", but the train had to cross a lake on a ferry. Well, I don't know that part of Norway (Telemark lies just west of Oslo and south of the road I took thence to Bergen and back), so there could be such a lake, but then they would surely have had to put the train or at least the stuff on a ferry to cross the

Skaggerak to Denmark. Whatever, the local commando decided to blow the ferry up on this lake, which he did, killing many innocent passengers and sending the heavy water to the bottom, whence it was apparently never recovered. I'm doubtful that this alone could have thwarted the German project.

It's history that the Germans failed to develop a bomb and surrendered before the Americans had developed theirs, so the latter used it on Japan to end the war, or so they claim. Glover tells us how President Truman agonized, if that's the word, over his decision to drop those bombs. Truman expressed reluctance about "killing all those kids" before ordering the dropping of the first bomb according to Glover, but another source claimed that he made that statement after that and before ordering the other bomb on Nagasaki. There is much discussion in that very long chapter about the moral debate over the use of the bombs as well as the tale of personal experiences of some of the victims of the horror, one of whom remarked: "What did [those scientists who invented the atomic bomb] think would happen if they dropped it?"

Glover doesn't think highly of Truman in examining the reasoning that led to that horrible decision. He is in good company there. I once heard someone else on the radio describing what happened to Hiroshima as "evil", and he used that word in its full meaning, not lightly or glibly as President Bush has done when talking about the Middle East. There was a rumour that the pilot of *Enola Gay* went mad after dropping the bomb, but it seems to be no more than just that. That bomber was housed in a museum in a special exhibition in Washington and there has been some moral controversy over that.

The cold war that followed with its nuclear terror is utterly astonishing, given the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No, no lesson was learnt from those atrocities; rather precedent ruled once more. Firstly, the Americans threatened to destroy cities in the Soviet Union if the Russians invaded Western Europe, a policy known as Massive Retaliation, but when the Soviets got the bomb, that policy evolved into MAD, Mutual Assured Destruction. We all remember the terror of those days, the fear of a war that would not only kill millions but also turn the Earth into a radioactive wasteland, as expressed in the book and film *On the Beach*.

Understandably, many people took to going on marches and demonstrating against nuclear weapons, calling to "ban the bomb". This much was fine and admirable, but they missed an important point, the moral point, being motivated by fear rather than anger and moral outrage, as they should have been. We didn't think very deeply about it, and note that I include myself here. Let's take a few examples here of when the world lurched dangerously close to deliberate nuclear catastrophe.

Apparently, this nearly happened during the Suez-crisis of 1956, though I heard of this only the other day. The Russians rattled their nuclear sabres and threatened to clobber Britain and France with missiles unless they withdrew from Egypt, although I understand that it took the neutral Americans to put pressure on the French and the British to do so. It strikes me anyway as bloody hypocritical of the Russians to make such a threat then, when they were in the middle of killing about 50,000 Hungarians.

One little point I may make about that episode is that recent documentaries on it seem to overlook one nasty little detail: the bombing of Egypt by the British, although it was openly reported at the time. I remember seeing a snapshot in one of our popular magazines of a whole block of houses reduced to rubble by bombs. It may not have been the holocaust inflicted by the British on Germany, but it seemed pretty nasty and brutal. I know it certainly influenced me: being still just a kid, I ran around playing war games dropping bombs on sandcastles and other such structures as well as shaking them down in earthquakes, which were also in the news that disastrous year.

Then six years later, we had the Cuban missile crisis. Where should I start with this? Okay, I'll tell the tale here from three viewpoints: Bob Ellis's through his character Elkin in his film, *The Nostradamus Kid*, my own and that of my late brother Terry.

As I've already told elsewhere, in the film, which seems to be an autobiographical tale of Ellis's youth, Elkin gets into a mighty panic and persuades his girlfriend, who is the daughter of some newspaper magnate like Packer, to flee Sydney and drives her over the Blue Mountains to Lithgow, where they arrive early in the morning and glean that the crisis is over, so he drives her back to Sydney, where he has to face some very nasty music for running off with her.

By then I was living at the safe distance of Armidale, 350 miles north of Sydney, but I exchanged letters with my then best friend in Sydney about it. According to Glover, the crisis began on 14 October, but it was a couple of days before President Kennedy learnt of it, and some more days before the public was apprised of the news.

Ellis-Elkin must have begun his flight to Lithgow on the evening of Sunday, 28 October, the day the crisis reached its climax. I remember that day well, or at least what I did: that weekend I visited my kinsfolk down in Niangala, and on the Sunday, before going back to Armidale, I bought an old bicycle at an auction in their big smoke of Walcha, forty miles south of Armidale. The bike was a real bomb, which I ended up smashing up by running into a car because the brake failed. But I remember neither talking nor even thinking about the missile crisis that weekend. Indeed, unlike Ellis-Elkin, I don't remember even seriously believing that Sydney might be destroyed because of this, although I did think of our global civilization ending up so, a thought that did not greatly trouble me for a reason I'll deal with later.

Ellis must have been just about alone amongst Sydney's two millions to be really spooked by the crisis into a compulsion to flee the city. My late uncle expressed this scepticism in Terry's home at the gathering after his funeral, comparing the fear of nuclear destruction with the panic of some dwellers of the eastern suburbs back in 1942 following a couple of Japanese attacks: both were ridiculous in his view. I must own though to having worried about this a couple of years before the Cuban missile crisis when still living at home, saying that I would get the hell out of Sydney if there were any likelihood of nuclear war. For some odd reason my father got a bit irate at that remark, retorting: "No! You'll stay here!"

Twenty years after the crisis I was most astonished to learn in a conversation with Terry that he remembered nothing of it, putting it as "a bit before my time". This was truly astounding. Hell, he was no baby in 1962; he had by then started high school. Indeed he was the same age that year that I was in that thoroughly disastrous year I still clearly remember for such happenings as the British nuclear tests in South Australia, the sinking of the *Andrea Doria* and *Birchgrove Park*, earthquakes in Greece (especially on Thera), the Suez-crisis and the Hungarian bloodbath.

Fairly recently I raised this puzzle with my mother, who offered a most depressing answer: unlike me in 1956 and that horrible southern spring of 1962, Terry had a life and so was unaware of world affairs. Terry was having lots of fun with his mates; indeed, they had befriended an old bloke named Ernie who had a cabin cruiser and took them for rides around the harbour. One day shortly after that Christmas, when I was down in Sydney just two months after the crisis, I took my other little brother on the round trip to Manly, but instead of travelling by ferry; we got a lift in Ernie's boat when we ran into him and Terry at Mosman wharf. I have a snapshot of Terry sitting on the stern with two of his mates on either side of the boat. To my knowledge, there is no snapshot of me at that age (thirteen).<sup>\*</sup> Ernie spoke like the mythical Captain Bligh to the boys, but this seemed not to bother them.

Ellis-Elkin also had a life in 1962, but that didn't stop him from being aware of the Cuban missile crisis, but of course, he and I were so much older than Terry (both nineteen), so that's hardly a

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<sup>\*</sup> Well, what do you know? Two years after writing this, I have (or rather my mother has) found such a picture of me at that age. See page seven.

fair comparison. Oddly enough Ellis's film jumps back and forth between those two years, 1956 and 1962, and is a bit awkward with the same twenty-four-year old Noah Taylor playing both the thirteen-year-old and the nineteen-year old Elkin. I'm not sure what Nostradamus had to do with the kid other than perhaps the threat of nuclear war in both the Suez- and the Cuban missile crises.

But I had no life in that wretched spring. No girlfriend for me to run off with and end up in jail over (oddly enough earlier in the film Elkin ends up in jail for an earlier escapade with her and needs a friend to come all the way down from Armidale to bail him out). No, instead I got the ednewed message that I was not entitled to a normal social life that other youths enjoyed, a bitter experience that still rankles to this day. So I didn't much care if the world got blown up.

Kennedy and Khrushchev have been condemned as evil for being willing to destroy the world in a nuclear holocaust, but I think that's rather unfair, they just happened to be the leaders at the time of the superpowers, and it was the system that was evil. What point would there have been in killing hundreds of millions across the globe over a disagreement about missiles in Cuba or whatever? But more on that anon.

Twenty years later people started going around very despondent after the discovery of the nuclear winter. Although I didn't understand this at the time, I can see that the fear of nuclear war would have resurfaced with the election of Ronny Raygun to the White House. (Indeed, we can blame both him and Margaret Thatcher, elected in Britain a year earlier, for the disgusting world of today.) But the nuclear winter takes the cake. I saw a television-documentary on it explaining how the smoke and ash from firestorms of bombed cities would cast a pall over the northern hemisphere, blotting the sun out and causing temperatures to fall below freezing. One especially astonishing statement made in that documentary was that a nuclear winter was inevitable in such a war, because the general idea was to inflict the maximum damage on the enemy. Whence did that idea come? I have a clue. Yesterday, as I write this, was the sixtieth anniversary of the firebombing of Dresden, and apparently that came about as part of a policy the British and Americans actually had of trying to kill as many Germans as possible (although the Americans publicly denied this, getting sneers from the British).

The idea behind both the blitz on Britain and the firebombing of Germany and Japan was to demoralize and terrorize the population and thus weaken the enemy into surrender. Okay, but what earthly point could there possibly be in just annihilating such populations in a nuclear holocaust?

The sheer insanity of the nuclear terror has been shown up in such films as *Doctor Strangelove* and *Failsafe* and Tom Disch's novel *Echo round his Bones*. The two films are about something that was apparently true for at least a few years: the Americans kept bombers carrying tens of megatons of nuclear bombs constantly in the air ready to attack the Soviet Union at a moments notice. That is to say, the Americans at least were on a constant hair-trigger-alert. This was of course extremely dangerous, since it meant that a nuclear war, instead of being formally declared by Congress or the Kremlin, could start by accident, which is what those films are about. So that period was definitely a cold *war*; it is insulting to refer to it as peacetime.

In the book, the American military gets an order to unleash its nucleare arsenal on the enemy six weeks hence. Up on Mars, Nathan Hansard, who is heavily involved in pressing the button, thinks about his estranged wife and son in Washington, musing that they will be among the first to die, as the destruction of the Soviet Union of course will bring about the destruction of America and the world as a whole. Yeah, this is fiction, but how far is it from the real thinking of those days?

I'm sure that little of the above is new to you; anybody with half a brain could see how utterly insane it was. But a bit over twenty years ago I came to see how atrocious the deliberate killing of civilians was – indeed before the second world war Neville Chamberlain condemned it as agenst international law – whether in the conventional bombing of cities in that war or in what is called in

that ghastly euphemism a “nuclear exchange”. I pointed out that nuclear weapons were about the most useless things ever invented, since all they could be used for was the destruction of whole cities. It was most horrifying only a couple of years ago to see India and Pakistan once more squared off at each other for another of their wars, but this war would have been different from those in the past, because it would have been nuclear, and they were talking about those weapons being used – what for? Nothing but being dropped on each other’s cities!

I made myself very unpopular for pointing this view out back in the early eighties; I was hated and copped real badmouthing of the *Matalan Rave* in some bloody fanzines. I had begun to look at the nuclear issue from a decidedly politically incorrect angle. How dared I get *angry, disgusted* about it instead of just decently, and timidly quaking in fear? Bloody hell. People yode around depressed and worried about the nuclear winter. Never mind the sheer horror of the firestorms creating it and the deaths and suffering of hundreds of millions of civilians.

We’re supposed to be worried about terrorism nowadays. We’re appalled by the destruction of the twin towers and three thousand deaths, and we’re worried that some ratbag could bring a dirty nuclear bomb into Times Square or wherever and let it off. The bombs on Bali and two hundred deaths horrified us Australians, but these are nothing to the terror the superpowers kept us in. What are a few thousand deaths beside the hundred millions on each side in a nuclear “war”? I used to say that such a happening wouldn’t be a real war, but just the shooting of missiles across the planet, and I think the most profound line in *Doctor Strangelove* is that of the president of the United States to General Turgisson: “You’re talking about mass murder, General, not war.” We should have been absolutely hopping mad that the superpowers’ military could hold us in such terror.

Even worse was the sheer fiendish design of some of those weapons. For example, the accident to the trawler *Fukuryu Maru* caught in the radioactive outfall of the Castle Bravo test on Bikini in March 1954 led to the revelation that that bomb was designed to do more than just blow up and burn things and people; it was also made to blow radioactive debris far and wide. During the fifties, the media took great delight in describing the destruction wrought by such a bomb dropped on the centre of Sydney, but twenty-five years later, we learnt of worse than just that. It may have been the aforesaid doco on the nuclear winter that pointed out that a missile aimed at London wouldn’t deploy a single warhead on the city-centre, but rather half a dozen warheads in a circle around the centre to ensure more efficient destruction. I ask you: What kind of sick perverted minds could devise such weapons? But there is an even greater mystery: What kind of minds have supposedly ordinary folk who get really hopping mad at me for expressing anger at such things?

Still, the geopolitical reality of that era aside, life was still pretty good back then beside the miserable world of today with its lack of imagination, justice, beauty or colour and its sheer ugliness and new Puritanism. Even The early sixties and – God help us – the fifties were a bloody sight better than today. If I had a rotten time in the spring of 1962, it was due to bad luck and getting mixed up with the wrong people rather than a reflection on society and the world at the time. The nuclear threat, in spite of such pop songs as Barry Maguire’s “Eve of Destruction” and “If God is on our Side”, didn’t stop us from having fun and enjoying life, unlike globalisation, which is crushing us – or at least has ruined Australia and the world for me.

### STOP PRESS

**A couple of** programs I’ve recently seen on the National Geographic channel answer some of the questions raised in the foregoing. For a start, the so called “heavy-water-plant” in Norway is

misnamed. The heavy water was only a byproduct of production of hydrogen for the manufacture of ammonia for fertilizer. There recently was a dive to the bottom of Lake Tin to the sunken ferry *Hydro*, and one barrel containing heavy water was raised. It was found to contain bugger all heavy-water, only one percent, only about 100 times the natural concentration. The Germans wanted it for a nuclear reactor they were trying to build in a secret cave near some obscure town in Germany. They were not trying to build an atomic bomb, so the destruction of the ferry and fourteen lives on board was a tragic waste.

Also, it seems that Heisenberg and co did not lie to Hitler about the critical mass of uranium; rather they honestly believed it to be in the order of tons rather than mere kilograms.



Yours truly aged probably about 13½ with my parents and little brothers. Terry is standing in front of me. But I'm amazed, that, although I'm of no more than average height, I was already as tall as my father (indeed slightly taller owing to the hair I had and he lacked).

According to my late aunt's 1962 *Readers Digest* atlas, the average the Australian 13⅔-year old boy stood 61in. high in 1954, a great improvement on 1914. I was that age only can two years after the later year( in 1956), the statistics could have hardly change significantly, yet I was already 5ft.2 in or 5ft. three by then.

In one of my recent talking books the hero describes his missing sun aged "four and a bit" as two foot six high. This seems unlikely, since you can see my other little brother at that age fully a meter or 3 foot four high

# I WANT TO LIE ON THE GRASS

## 7: Reunion ç (4/2/1 of Matala)

I alighted from the bus at the station, both relieved at not having to travel beyond Tymbaki and strangely excited at seeing Tom again. I headed straight back along the main road towards Mires and caught sight of him near the outskirts of the village. Seven years of bitter experience and largely subhuman existence had brought about in me the tendency to suppress any warm feelings I might have towards other people, as I did on this occasion, but I had to admit that I was pleased to see him---really bloody glad to see him again.

When I was within about fifty yards of him, now stationed on the village-outskirts, I called out to him. His reaction on seeing me showed that he was no less enthusiastic about our sudden unexpected reunion.

He told me that he was heading back towards Iraklion. This surprised me on two counts: firstly, that he had told me on the day we left thence that he didn't want to go back to Iraklion, and secondly, I had taken it as a matter of course that he would visit Matala before leaving this part of the island. However, he told me of his experiences since our separating.

Despite my speculation, he had headed west, not south as I had supposed. He spent that night at the youth hostel at Chania where he met a seventeen-year-old girl planning to travel to Borneo. When he had asked her what she would do for money, she replied that she would get by playing her flute. Next day he got lost in Rethymnon trying to find the road to Agia Galini, and on asking directions, he came up against typical Greek stupidity. A man he asked insisted on telling him only where he could catch a bus, while Tom repeatedly tried to tell him that he wanted to hitchhike. When he told the man "*Nicht* drachmas," the latter replied in a typical gesture of Mediterranean helplessness: "*Nicht* drachmas, nicht Agia Galini."

That evening up in the mountains he somehow strayed off the main road and wandered into the little mountain-village of Akoumia, but it was there that he had one of the most wonderful experiences one could have on the road. He told me that I would have loved it myself, so completely simple and primitive it was, the dream of any romantically inclined person. There he was put up for the night and given lots of strange food to eat, while the whole village watched him. He spent the night in a room in company of goats and sheep that wandered freely through the houses, and then he was awakened at 5:30 next morning by his host who called him "Mr. Tom". Surely, a Messiah could not have received better hospitality in that isolated mountain-village, and Tom left that morning promising the locals that some day he would wend back. Iiii

On arriving in Agia Galini, he had immediately set about asking everybody there whether they had seen an Australian with a red beard but of course without success. So he settled down to wait a few days for me to show up. It was a beautiful place, he told me, and there were even caves there, despite my speculation to the contrary. He had slept in an old German wartime-bunker. There were a few other young wanderers their too, the most noteworthy being a sophisticated polyglot Swiss and a rather bohemian North American. However, after Tom had spent three days there, these others had all left, leaving him alone and bored. However the north-American bohemian had told him that Baghdad was a shit-hot place worth visiting, so Tom, thinking that he would never see me again, decided to take the others advice and so was on his way thither now.

I took his talk of Baghdad only half-seriously and asked him whether he cared first to come with me to Matala, as all my things were there. Matala, I told him, was all right after all---a nice place---and he ought to see it at least. After some discussion, he finally agreed to that.



We were standing outside an army-camp, opposite which was one of those “ΖΗΤΩ Ο ΣΤΡΑΤΟΣ” signs which I felt but resisted a devilish temptation to deface. Inside the army-camp right near us, the men were being kept employed digging a fishpond for the general. Seeing us watching their highly top-secret activity, they motioned us to move on down the road. We condescended to move a little down the road but later walked back to the main gate to ask for some water. There, after they had grudgingly complied with our request, we managed to have a conversation in English with one of the soldiers who told us that he came from the north of Greece and, while he found Crete very beautiful, he found the climate here very hot.

Eventually we got a lift to the Phaestos offturn and thence started walking up the road. When we were about halfway to Phaestos, a car stopped for us and the driver called out to us in American:

"Are you Americans?"

We admitted that we weren't and climbed in notwithstanding. The Americans took us up to Phaestos, and during the short ride they told us that they came from Kentucky, although Tom remarked to me after getting out that they didn't speak with a Kentuckian accent.

There we met three fellows from Matala: two Frenchmen and an Italian who had been noteworthy there in having absolutely no money. Evidently, he had managed to scrounge at least his fare back to the mainland, for they were leaving for good.

We ended up sitting by the road below Phaestos about a kilometre before the village where the cafe-proprietor had given me the Greek lesson on that fruitless day. Remembering that, I cast serious doubts on our reaching Matala that evening, while Tom told me how difficult it was to hitchhike out of Agia Galini, so little traffic there was.

After a while, a truck came along and stopped for us. In it were some young people, obviously very stupid, for when I asked them “Matala?” They replied ““Οχι Matala!” and drove off before we could say anything more.

In the meantime, Tom told me more about Agia Galini. There was a man there with a trawler that did occasional trips across to Africa, and this thought appealed to me for a while as a means of a short way to Egypt or Libya, but of course, I was forgetting the hassle over immigration and legal or illegal entry.

We reached Matala late that afternoon and joined Max & co at Leon's cafe for dinner. There we watched the sun go down at seven o'clock. Tom later insisted that the sun actually set on the sea-horizon, but actually, it set behind a distant headland obscured by the haze. During our conversation there, Max taught us one Greek swearword: *ghamizo*, meaning apparently “fuck”. We also asked him about certain words in a record that Leon often played and which often echoed across the bay in the evenings. Max translated the words *μεγαλα Ξαμαρου\** as meaning “big lies”, although that would be *μεγαλα ψεματα*, and Max must have heard it wrongly. However, because of that mistake Tom and I were to refer affectionately to the song as “The Big Lie”. It was one of those Greek songs with a strongly Turkish flavour.

That evening George the Sydneysider joined Tom and me in the cave for a talk. As he wasn't very bright, it didn't come off too well. He was all hung up, because his girl was going away. One subject we broached was the climates of our home-cities. George remarked that Sydney could get pretty chilly at times with the temperature actually having dropped as low as 35 degrees (in fact, my family had actually recorded such a temperature on the back-veranda at Seaforth only last July with a heavy white frost on the back-lawn) but this was hardly likely to impress a person from Winnipeg, where temperatures in winter plunge to forty or fifty degrees below

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\* Της συνγς τιτλε ωασ Η Νηση Ξαμαρου (“The Island of Xamarou”).

zero and it can feel warm after weeks of subzero weather, when the temperature actually rises as high as ten degrees above.

We talked for quite some time before going to sleep, after George had left us, about the sickness of the world and touched half-seriously on the Bible. Tom remarked that it was indeed a nuisance for us that Adam and Eve had to eat that "apple" (I don't use the word "fruit" here for a reason I may deal with later). I liked that remark, as it was very central to my own present mode of thinking, and particularly as it lay behind the choice of the title of the story, I was trying to write, *The accursed Fruit*. Even my sister and brother in law had guessed the meaning behind the title when I named it to them one day in Chester; they had asked me if it was "about an apple."

## THE BEST OF HARRY WARNER JR (Busswarble #8)

Harry Warner, Jr.

423 Summit Avenue  
Hagerstown, Maryland  
21740, U. S. A.  
January 23, 1993

Dear Michael:

Your new address continues once again the general decline of my intellect. When they held the worldcon in Heidelberg about a quarter-century ago, I could have sworn that the city was in Europe. It's a good thing I didn't write a history covering those years of fandom, because I would have made a terrible mistake with regard to that particular worldcon's location.

In the third Busswarble I must beg the right to remain silent about the continuing ozone hole dispute. I know nothing about the topic and I'm too peace-loving a person to try to make up some opinions and thus get drawn into the conflict.

And I suppose it would be safe to report that about fifteen years ago, when I needed bifocals, the optometrist advised me to get the kind that darkens on exposure to bright light, particularly sunlight. I didn't feel happy with them, because everything was so dim when I went from sunlight into a building without many windows, and when I needed new glasses a couple of years ago because of changing vision, I advised the person who did the examination that I'd prefer undarkening lenses and sunglasses for use in particularly brilliant illumination. Darned if he didn't talk me into the automatically darkening kind, on the grounds that they can prevent some types of vision deterioration and in fact when I had my eyes examined that time, I was free from glaucoma and cataracts, and I devoutly hope neither has begun to develop in the past two years during which my glasses have darkened and lightened many times.

Of course, I didn't know the Lindgrens. But your article about them touched me and I found myself wishing you would write more often about things you approve of and less about the things that upset you. When I read that Harry Lindgren spoke French fluently, I began to wonder if he ever had thoughts about reforming the spelling in that language. My mind boggled at the enormity of that task, although it would certainly make it easier to learn French.

I've wondered often on the matter you bring up in connection with Roger Weddall's untimely passing. An abnormal number of fans have been dying in their youth or in middle age. There doesn't seem to be any one common factor in their lives that could be linked to a premature end, unless it would be the fact that so many fans live rather turbulent lives complete with a lot of drinking and drugging. But I can think of three Washington area fans who died much too young, Bill Evans, Rob Pavlat, and Don Miller, who to the best of my knowledge led rather conventional lives aside from their interest in fandom. Conceivably, it could be something as simple as the failure of most fans to maintain regular sleeping hours. Sometimes I think I should try to do a scientific investigation into a possible relationship between con attendance and longevity. But if I purported to prove that each con attended takes one month off the probably lifespan of the individual, I would undoubtedly be stripped of everything I own by lawsuits from the nation's hotels and the largest conventions. However, the

two oldest active fans in the United States are Bill Danner, who has never attended a con in his life, and Mrs. G. M. Carr, who probably hasn't gone to more than four or five of the things. Both are in their eighties and still healthy at present.

I've been fascinated by the things I've read about Tesla. However there is one thing to think about, before one decides that his experiments really did point to a source of unlimited power but were negated by American vested interests. Certainly, Japan and Russia have had legations and spies and associated other agents in the United States for many decades. Surely one or more of them would have come across Tesla's theories and made an effort to put them to practical use in World War Two, if they had proven practical, because the nation that got Tesla's power to working would have become an absolute ruler of the world and would have won the war instantly.

*Heidelberg, Germany, gets a mention in the episode of I want to lie on the Grass published in the Matalan Rave #3, as the place where I got a profound insight from a couple of fellow hitchhikers. I wish I'd known about fandom in 1970, when the Heidelberg con (Heicon) was on. Ron Clarke made it thither, and I was in a good position to go myself, having only to come from Norway. The trouble is, I guess, being such a latecomer.*

*You were lucky insofar as you were about ten years older, when you needed bifocals, than I was when I did.*

*At the risk of sounding disrespectful, I couldn't help facetiously wondering, whether you mean, when you say those three fans you name led "conventional" lives, that they attended a lot of conventions. (Ducks for cover.) – MoM.*

## BACK TO THE GREENHOUSE

(Matalan Rave #20)

### THE COSMIC CONSPIRACY

#### THE GREENHOUSE AND I

One good thing about 1989 was that I found myself no longer alone in seeing both the greenhouse- and ozone scares as fraud. When I named the fear of global warming in the first conspiracy article written back in 1979, (though not published until some years later) I was adding one of my own ideas to Stan Deyo's conspiracy tale, though it had some basis in his assertion that many such problems as resource scarcity were made out to be much worse than they really were and the Club of Rome was an arm of the conspiracy. But Deyo did not think the greenhouse effect was part of the conspiracy; on the contrary, being into Armageddon, he was keen on any such affliction God could inflict upon us.

But at last in 1989 three books refuting the threat of global warming due to carbon dioxide and other gases building up in the atmosphere came out, all by Australians. (Hasn't anyone in Britain or North America dared to write and publish such a book?) The best of these is *The Greenhouse trap* by John Daly.

One greenhouser was recently quoted as telling critics of the greenhouse theory to shut up because they didn't know enough about the subject. Well, Daly and I have a few things in common. We're both the same age, laymen but deeply interested in climatology. He says he began to take an interest in the subject "over twenty years ago". I can claim my interest as going back thirty years. I have studied it on the side and thus know far more about it than most people, who have no interest in the subject, and that includes both scientists and greenies, [the latter of whom] just believe all the lies and half-truths about the greenhouse-effect fed to them by the media.

Furthermore, over all of these last thirty years I have been haunted by the spectre of global warming. Yes, how many of you knew that? While I notice a healthy level of awareness and scepticism in fandom, a lot of folk probably think that the threat of global warming wasn't invented until 1986 or 1988. Thirty years ago the difference lay in that there was no big propaganda about it and it wasn't foreseen as so disastrous. Instead of flooding coastlines, melting icecaps and turning the Earth into an inferno like Venus, it was forecast as going far enough to make grape-growing possible in the north of Scotland, as it was in the middle ages (around 1100, according to Daly). This was fine if one were lucky enough to dwell in Scotland, but, not if in a place like Sydney, where we were greeted with the cheerful news that we could look forward to ever hotter and more humid summers and even worse heatwaves than the record breaker that we endured just after I started work (see *Crux* and MR#2).

But I've already told that tale and don't want to repeat myself, so I'll skip ahead to the early seventies. The greenhousers would have had a field day, had they been around then. Indeed they were around then, only they weren't pushing the greenhouse-effect; instead they were pushing the global *cooling* and the oncoming ice age, although there was no evidence at all by then of such a cooling. Over the seven years from 1967 to 1973 there was a sudden warming trend throughout Australia, just as abrupt and steep as that forecast by the greenhousers in recent years, as much as ½°C here and as much as 2°C in the already torrid northwest. Indeed it was a very scary time; something seemed definitely wrong with the weather, not only in Australia but worldwide. Even our cautious

conservative weather-bureau, which was quite loath to own up to any climatic trend, let alone change, admitted that the weather in 1973-74 was the most extraordinary of the century. Many of the changes forecast by the greenhousers were then evident: sea temperatures around Australia were as much as 3°C above normal in both the Pacific and Indian oceans, and there were an unusual number of tropical cyclones, many coming further south than normal. One of these wiped out the wreck of the old showboat *Sydney Queen*, formerly *Kalang*, stranded at Trial Bay, New South Wales, and about the same time Brisbane suffered the worst flood of the century. Darwin was destroyed the following Christmas. Sydney was battered by freakish storms in the late autumn of that year, much of the damage due to another greenhouse syndrome: unusually high tides.

That was in 1974. The year before, 1973, was less dramatic but more frightening. Much of the summer was unbearable. Although it did not match the records set in 1896, 1939 and 1960, which brought extreme dry heat, the summer of 1972-73 was phenomenally tropical with intense humidity, not only in Sydney but also in such normally pleasant climes as Canberra and Goulburn, where dewpoints were up to 21° to 22°C. The whole year was marked by unusually warm nights. Whereas we suffered an unprecedented pattern in the early to mid-seventies of wet monsoonal summers followed by bone-dry winters with record low rainfall, in the winter of 1973 the high-pressure systems stayed so far south as to bring warm moist south easterlies off the Tasman instead of the seasonal westerlies, although this pattern also brought unusually cold weather to Melbourne. The winter was the equal warmest on record in Sydney along with 1969. The whole year was also the warmest on record, although, as a weather-bureau-spokesman pointed out to me, it was not much warmer than the previous warmest year, which, I later learnt, was 1922.

For a short time around then came out an offshoot of the now legendary *Nation Review* called *The Living Daylights*. Here is a quote from the issue of 19-25 March 1974:

*The biggest offender and the one we least like to think about is the excrement from the burning of fossil fuels. Since the start of the industrial revolution, the carbon dioxide content of our atmosphere has increased by fifteen percent. This is causing a substantial warming of our atmosphere. How? Carbon dioxide and other particles we put into the air act as little reflectors sending back to earth heat, which the biosphere has given off. It's an atmospheric phenomenon known as the greenhouse effect. By ignoring our industrial anal outpourings our greenhouse is turning into something of a sauna and the result is a change in the world's weather pattern, which may make the Brisbane floods an annual event.*

(From

*"The Ecology of Shit" by Veronica Perry.)*

Not very scientifically put, but I copied that out because it seemed so reasonable and true at the time. Yes, I believed in the greenhouse effect then and worried about it. So what has brought about the scepticism I keep expressing in these pages nowadays?

I began first to smell a rat in 1977, the year when the greenhouse effect came into vogue to oust the thitherto-fashionable ice age. It came first from my interest in the other planets. In my own lifetime, I have seen startling new discoveries, for example, that Venus is almost red-hot beneath a thick choking atmosphere a hundred times as dense as ours is. Seeing that Venus had about three hundred thousand times as much carbon dioxide as Earth, the hellish heat seemed not at all surprising

to me, but scientists were puzzled and tried to explain the heat as due to the clouds of sulphuric acid.<sup>†</sup> Worse, one scientist said that the surface of Venus should be cold like the bottom of Earth's oceans! What universe was he from? This is an example of the incredibly unscientific garbage spouted by scientists. How could such a scientist fail to know the difference between an incompressible liquid like the water of Earth's oceans and a compressible gas like the carbon dioxide of Venus's atmosphere? (Okay, the surface of Titan is very cold despite an expected greenhouse effect from the methane in the atmosphere; this seems due to absorption of sunlight by the smog in the upper atmosphere, so maybe the bloke had a point.)

(Come to think of it, the other planets seem hell bent on being as unfriendly to us as they can in one way or another.)

But in time, the scientists shut up about such puzzles and instead presented Venus as a Grim Warning about What Could Happen To Us. So I became puzzled about Mars, where the *Vikings* had landed in 1976 and sent back weather reports. I was astounded at how cold Mars went out to be, but the scientists were not. How could Mars with more than fifty times as much carbon dioxide as Earth have such a weak greenhouse effect? The answer lay in the broadening of the absorption lines by the much higher pressure of Earth's atmosphere, an explanation I accepted and still accept. But there was the great channels so clearly carved out by running water, impossible in the present freezing climate. So Mars must have been much warmer some time in the past. The atmosphere must have been much thicker, yet scientists were saying that even an atmosphere made up largely of carbon dioxide about as dense as Earth's would not be much warmer than now. So what the hell was going on?

Mind you, it is hard to account for a Martian climate warm enough for liquid water to exist near the equator, because temperatures there are now so far below freezing, but that's not the same as saying that the climate couldn't have been much warmer than now. But how cold is Mars? We know that the Earth's mean temperature is 15°C; what is Mars's? From the *Vikings'* observations, I have estimated it around -70°C, and indeed, I have read in one scientific paper that nowhere are mean temperatures higher than -60°C. Yet elsewhere I see ridiculous figures; even Daly gives an impossible figure of -23°C, which is the same figure he gives for the Earth, were there no greenhouse effect.

Note that the orthodox scientific view about both planets seemed that a lot more carbon dioxide than we have on Earth wouldn't raise temperatures all that much, and in the end, the scientists shut up about that puzzle about Mars as they had done with Venus, and so I looked to Earth and found contradictions here too. Much of these can be found in my outburst in the fourteenth rave touched off by Richard Faulders' comment in *WAHF-Full*, using the greenhouse effect to defend nuclear power. I won't repeat all that here, but a couple of points bear further elucidation.

For one thing, in the mention of the greenhouse-effect as part of the Conspiracy's scare campaign in my 1979-written article the contradiction should be obvious from the context, side by side as it is, with the global cooling and ice age. As Walt Willis so succinctly put it, the world cannot both drown from melting glaciers and freeze up in a new ice age at the same time. We'll come back to that.

Secondly, one of the contradictions raised in MR#14 was that deserts are not colder than moist climates in spite of their much dryer air (hence with lower greenhouse-effect) and higher albedo. Aha, but I forgot about clouds, which are conspicuous by their absence over deserts. Apparently, the Earth would be 26°C hotter if there were no clouds at all. Really?

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<sup>†</sup> 2007 note: what a whopping lie! Sulfuric acid has an *anti* greenhouse effect; that's how but the missions of sulfur dioxide cool the Earth: by forming sulfuric acid.

The greenhouse-modellers have wrestled with the problem of clouds, whose effect on the climate is rather complex. Clouds both cool the Earth by reflecting the incoming sunlight away and warm her by absorbing outgoing heat. The overall effect depends on which effect is stronger, and this depends on which type of cloud, of which there are three main kinds: low, medium and high. The last of these is different from the first two, in that high clouds are made up of ice crystals instead of water droplets and so are streaky and fuzzy and lacking the definite shape of water clouds. Now a couple of scientists on the Science show sed that the overall effect is for low clouds to cool the ground and for high clouds to warm it. More unscientific garbage! More greenhouse propaganda. That goes agenst the meteorology I learnt in England and borne out by my own experience, wherein I have noticed that a cover of high cloud (cirrus) on a still winters day in Sydney and Canberra will keep temperatures down during the day but not stop them from dropping at night, whereas we all know that low cloud will tend to keep nights warm. Whatever the relative reflective and absorbent properties of high and low cloud, there remains a very important difference in *temperature*: high clouds are much colder and so radiate much less heat back to earth. Arrgh, these fools. Or should I say liars?

Another question was about the apparent warming trend of the nineteen-eighties: On what observations is that "warming," based? Daly states quite boldly that many of them were indeed made in cities and at airports, which, it is well known, are hotter than the surrounding countryside and have warmed up in recent decades. What fraud! There's no other word for it. Indeed Hubert Lamb took this effect of urbanisation into account to put the beginning of the cooling trend back from 1940 to 1925, while Daly gives the date as 1922. Interesting. Wasn't that Sydney's warmest year? Yes, and 1973 was warmer only owing to warmer nights. When one considers urbanisation, 1973 looks little if at all warmer than 1922.

## **HOW COLD WAS THE ICEAGE?**

In the outburst that was my cave in the fourteenth fave, I called Dr John Gribbin a "pain in the arse"...

I used to admire Gribbin. He had lots of interesting ideas, liked science fiction and wrote on all kinds of subjects from climate to cosmology. Back in the early nineteen-eighties he along with others, who are pushing the global warming now, was pushing the ice age, even citing the freakish monsoonal rains across Australia in 1974 as evidence of the global cooling! He wrote a book with the ridiculous title, *Death of the Sun*, although some of the ideas he put forward then were good (more of this later). Along with Plagemann, he wrote *The Jupiter effect*, forecasting earthquakes and other such dire happenings when the planets supposedly lined up in 1982 (which they didn't).

Some years ago, probably in the very early eighties, he wrote an article published in *Analog* on the greenhouse effect. He sed that the theory had become political, caught up in the debate about nuclear power, and the forecast rise of 2° to 3°C in mean temperature wouldn't be all that bad, merely putting us back in the so-called "climatic optimum" of six thousand years ago, when the climate peaked at its warmest after the end of the last ice age and was nice and wet. But he also supplied graphs showing expected future energy consumption, saying that we needed to get that energy somewhence, "or our civilization has had it". Really? If our civilization can't survive without consuming such vast power, then it's not worth a pinch of shit, as far as I'm concerned.

But it wasn't that which brought on my contempt for Gribbin, but rather another article of his in *Analog* maybe a couple of years later. It was agen about the greenhouse effect and optimistic, but now there was a sinister change of history. He quoted some theory (also quoted by Daly) saying that the Earths temperature couldn't rise more than 4°C, however much carbon dioxide we poured into the atmosphere. What turned me off was the contention, quoted from self-styled experts in the United



States' Environmental Protection agency (I think), that, if the temperature rose a mere two degrees, that would make the Earth the hottest she had been for *millions* of years. I wrote a letter of comment to *Analog* about this and got an answer from Gribbin himself, who commented in a footnote that the "climatic optimum" was *not* 2°C warmer than now.

So what the hell was going on? What was all this changing of history about? Why was Gribbin lying?

I got the full new picture in 1989. Back in the seventies, I did a lot of research on climatic history and wrote an article thereon in *Crux*#2. Back then, when the ice age was the fad, there was a lot of interesting stuff published on past climate, but in the eighties with the greenhouse effect in the ascendancy all those interesting past changes were written out of history. Well, what else could one expect in 1984?

The greenhousers have gleefully forecast all kinds of ridiculous temperature rises, but the standard is about 5°C by the middle of next century. For further to sensationalize this, they have changed the former orthodox view of the Earths being about 10°C colder during the full ice age to a mere 4°C. And of course, Gribbin has jumped on that bandwagon too. As I sed in MR#17, he gave an interesting series of talks on climatic history on the Science show, the most interesting episode being that on the warm middle-ages, even warmer than our nineteen-eighties, and the following little ice age. Most interestingly, he talked of the climatic change in North America, not just Europe, and this showed up a glaring contradiction in the greenhousers' pet forecast. But no matter, he ploughed on and marred an otherwise intelligent and informative series with the last episode about the greenhouse effect with all the usual drivel about the Earths being expected to be as much as five degrees warmer next century. (This would make Melbourne as warm as Brisbane and Geraldton, W.A., now are.)

But Daly disappoints me too. He refutes the greenhouse theory quite effectively, but even he ses that the Earth was only 4°C colder during the full ice age and a mere 0.4°C colder during the little ice age, whereas I understood the figure to be 1°C. He also reckons that the climate was a whole 2°C warmer in the middle ages than a hundred years ago (it's ½°C warmer now and was indeed a whole degree colder during the little ice age according to a graph in his book, that is, 1½°C colder than now), about a degree higher than I thought.

Somebody pointed out to me that the 4°C figure is the *global average*. At least Daly explains himself by pointing out that the tropics were not much colder than now. This is no new idea invented by the conspirators but has been around for a long time. Christopher Priest used it in his 1962 book, *The World in Winter*, which I reviewed in *Crux* #2. If so, how does one explain such consistent figures as 9°-11°C below present in such far-flung places as west New Guinea (I refuse to call it "Irian Jaya" as the occupying Indonesian swine do), north Queensland, Lake George, the Snowy Mountains, western Victoria and Mount Gambier? This means snowlines 5000 feet (1500 meters) lower than now there, as they were also in the Middle East and central Africa. The latter and New Guinea are pretty equatorial, though the lower temperature and icesheet of the Carstensz Toppen could fit in with unchanged sea level temperatures if the temperature-lapse rate of the atmosphere were greater than now, as has been suggested. Indeed the laps rate would need to change from the present 6°C per kilometre to something less than the convective 10°C/km (the "dry adiabatic lapse rate") observed on Venus. But that doesn't explain the consistency of the climatic change elsewhere.

But then Tasmania throws a spanner in the works. Palaeontologists insist that the climate was only 5°C colder than now. Something is clearly wrong. Tasmania is not far from Victoria, and, if the former was only 5°C colder and the latter 10°C, then we would have the absurd situation of Melbourne with a mean temperature of about 5°C and Launceston with about 8°C, about as warm as Newcastle!

Daly disappoints me also by trotting out the tired old Milankovich theory to explain the ice ages. Both this theory and Simpson's were put forward by northerners who knew and cared nothing about the southern hemisphere. Daly shows a clear relationship between solar activity and climate, pointing out that the so-called solar constant is not constant at all, yet states barefacedly that during the ice ages "the average solar energy reaching Earth was no different to what it is now"! How the hell does he know? What evidence is there for that statement? How does anyone know?

Both the Milankovich and Simpson theories are clearly wrong, because they fail to explain how the southern hemisphere cooled as well as the northern, how Antarctica built up even more ice than now. There is a good theory to explain both them and the channels on Mars, and it was popular for a while before they decided to brainwash us with the greenhouse effect and ozone doom.

The constant Sun Has been an article of faith amongst scientists for Yonks. Fred Hoyle would not have a bar of the changing sun back in 1957 and still won't (he had his own wacky theory to explain the ice ages, having had the good sense to reject Milankovich & co). But in the early seventies apparently apparatus was put down a deep mine in America to detect neutrinos—ghostly Particles spat out of the Sun by nuclear reactions according to theory. They are so ghostly that they shower at the rate of a billion per square centimetre second right through us, the Earth and even the sun itself. The trouble was that only a third of the predicted number of neutrinos was detected and this led to an interesting idea: that the Sun's nuclear reactions were "turned off" or "banked". This led to a lot of doom and gloom including Gribbins *Death of the Sun*. This is garbage; the sun is not dying just somewhat shut down. There is an incredible time lag between the core and photosphere for the electromagnetic radiation, (in contrast to the neutrinos, which shoot straight out of the Sun at the speed of light as if the Sun weren't there) – I've seen figures ranging from 20,000 to 30 *million* years! This is a clear indication of another ice age on the way, quite consistent with the past pattern of ice ages.

Furthermore, as I pointed out in *Crux #2*, the ice ages of the last million years or two are part of a great ice age, in which we are living in a brief warm spell. These ice ages last from ten to 20 million years and happen once every 250 million years, which oddly enough is about one orbit of the solar system around the galaxy. An interesting theory was put forward linking the state of the Sun's Core with dust lanes and clouds the Sun meets on its journey around the Milky Way. So in time, though we will not need to worry about it for millions of years yet, the sun will heat up again and the Earth will become less pleasant for us. But maybe then, rivers will flow again on Mars.

But we hear no more of that theory. Instead we get boring explanations like the neutrinos wavering between The three different modes ( the detector can detect only one kind), and it's just the greenhouse effect, four degrees Celsius colder 18,000 years ago and 5°C warmer 50 years hence ozone thinning and skin cancer. What a wonderful world we live in today. I have said enough about scaremongering to make the folk accept a world government but maybe we are meant to see through the fraud, so that everyone will breathe a sigh of relief that we don't have to worry about the greenhouse effect after all, and we can wend back to—what am I saying? What's changed? –go on with all out dirty polluting ways driving our cars and so on. It will discredit the greenies who are so hopelessly sucked in by all these hysteria which they are naïve enough to claim as their own but the scientists actually thought up, and so further take us down the path to technological hell where life has been overthrown. The eighth sphere?

## LETTERS

David Redd  
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SA61 2QN.

Dear Michael

Am testing the e-mail route; hope this works. But if not I'll revert to snail mail.

Actually I just wanted to share a little quote from an interesting book about a car journey in 1951 across "The Northern Pampas and the Andes" by Major W. T. Blake. I enjoyed reading it (full of local Colour, although to a modern reader it has a few late empire attitudes (albeit honest and fair minded and perhaps lacks a personal philosophy which you add to your travel writing at times. Here's the quote:-

"In addition to having a very nice hotel Salta is an extraordinarily nice place. But like Jujuy and Humahuaca it is very much a colonial town, and many of the old building still exist. The Cabildo, no longer used as government offices, has been turned into a very well organized museum for the province. A study of the weapons, uniforms, Indian implements, pictures, documents and vehicles, gives one a very good idea of the history and past habits of this part of one -time colonial Spain. I am told too, that there are more families in Salta and roundabout belonging to undiluted Spanish aristocracy than anywhere else in Argentina. Certainly, the people we saw walking in the streets and to whom we talked in the museum were of a courtesy and dignity but almost out of keeping with modern surroundings. [1951!] If I had to live in the Argentine I think I should choose somewhere in the country, between Jujuy and Salta, and enjoy the wonderful semi tropical climate, tempered by the altitude, glorious mountain scenery and the pleasantness of the people, but only varying peace for the rest of my life-perhaps!"

So, Mae Strelkov had the right idea...

Social conditions have changed somewhat since the Majors day, but it was still a pleasant surprise to suddenly come across this little glimpse of her country.

Hope all is well and your computer/printer problems (and anything else) are all sorted.

*They're not, you know-MfM*

CHESTER CUTHBERT  
1 104 MULVEY AVENUE

WINNIPEG MB R3M 1J5

April 14, 2,005

Dear Michael,

My delay in thanking you for Busswarbles 83 and 84 is due to my trying to hear it on my son's tape recorder without success. The rapid speech meant I, could not distinguish words; and John Thiel only thought he could hear his name. I told Ned Brooks of the problem and he replied in a letter dated March 30 that he had not even received the tape. And I noticed that it had cost you \$7.00 to mail it!

I'm blessed with good eyesight in spite of having reading my hobby all my life so I have great sympathy for your trouble. I spend most of my spare time reading.

Muriel may be able to self treat at home with dialysis, but must train for five days before going off the hospital machines. But Whitman takes up so much room that we have to get rid of the bed in our other bedroom, so we have donated it to our younger daughter.

My son has taken his tape recorder away with your tape but I do not think he will have success with it. I'm sorry.

I should have used white paper for this letter, but I suppose you have friends who can read it.

I miss rating what you convey in Busswarble, but assure you of my very best regards.

*The tape recording was a bad idea, a failed experiment and you were "right to point out the astronomical cost of sending those tapes. The trouble is but, my printer still does not work and I cannot get my website up and running.-MfM. But*

January 28, 2007

Dear Michael,

Although it was apparently mailed on December 17, I did not receive BUSSWARBLE number 83 until a few days ago. Noting news dated October 2004 I am wondering if you sent it to find out if I'm still in the land of the living. Have you published any more recent issues?

The enclosure will tell you that I need hobbies to take my mind off my loss. Fortunately, our children are nearby to share my loss.

*All I can say is, I'm sorry about your wife.-MfM.*

But my web site is now up and running at [www.busswarble.dragnet.com.au](http://www.busswarble.dragnet.com.au)