

stranger in
stranger lands

John Foyster

GUFF 1979

Getting There Isn't Anything Like Half The Fun

The Introduction

The Get Up—and—over Fan Fund (GUFF) was the idea of Chris Priest and Leigh Edmonds, at least so far as I understood it. A lineal descendant of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF) and the Down Under Fan Fund (DUFF), GUFF must have been conceived during Chris Priest's visit to Australia in January 1977, or possibly soon thereafter. TAFF had by then been running for almost a quarter of a century, and although it had experienced occasional vicissitudes it has assisted the transatlantic passage of many science fiction fans in the Northern Hemisphere.

In the early days these fan—financed trips were written up extensively — partly because the winners felt an obligation of sorts, but rather more because the winners were, by nature, fan

writers. TAFF tended to be won by fan writers simply because most fans then were fan writers, one way or another, and nothing was more natural than for a winner to turn around and immediately document her/his travels.

Most of the trip reports are eminently readable today, if you can find them, but the greatest of trip reports, John Berry's *The Goon Goes West*, wasn't a consequence of Berry's winning TAFF at all, but rather of his losing. *The Goon Goes West* will be discussed again in several chapters' time.

In the early 1970s I was heavily involved in Australia's bid for the world science fiction convention in 1975. One of the notions we had then for spreading information about Australia was to establish a fan fund to transport fans across the Pacific on a regular basis (a couple of Japanese fans were helped across the Pacific to American worldcons in earlier decades). Like many of the developments of the 'seventies, this was a realisation of a notion from the 'sixties, for such a fan fund had been occasionally tossed around as an idea by fans in Melbourne and Sydney in 1961 and 1962. In a similar way

ANZAPA, which wasn't founded until October 1968, had forerunners in joint mailings of fanzines of John Baxter, Bob Smith, and myself, and in round-robin letters in which Bert Weaver was also involved.

DUFF was born when I found someone in the United States dedicated enough to help us out — Fred Patten, who has done so much for Australian science fiction and comic fandom both before and after his involvement in DUFF. By dint of Fred's hard work and my occasional assistance we managed to organise a fund which resulted in Lesleigh Luttrell coming to Australia for the 1972 SYNCON.

Lesleigh wasn't the first US fan visitor to Australia by any means — in recent years Hank Davis and Mike Horvat had both made contact with Australian fandom while on R&R from Vietnam, and by coincidence Bruce Townley was in Australia at the same time as SYNCON '72 — but Lesleigh was a genuine fanzine fan who, though not as rowdy as some later visitors, made a very great impression on the Australian fans she met. Afterwards she wrote a delightful trip report

— *Lesleigh's Adventures Down Under* — which helped keep the idea of DUFF alive.

In 1974 Leigh Edmonds won the reverse trip and his report — *Emus Over America* (published as an issue of *Boys' Own Fanzine*) — was of the same high quality. And DUFF was off and running.

DUFF has financed a transPacific trip almost every year since then, but the winners have not been trip-report writers, much to my own disappointment, and probably to the disappointment of some of those who voted for them.

Contact between Australian and English fans was less substantial. John Baxter and I had been members of OMPA (the Off-trail Magazine Publishers Association had better be identified as such right here) at one time or another during the 'sixties, and of course plenty of fanzines were traded. The most extended contact was probably the Bangsund-Lindsay-Porter Co-Prosperity Sphere, with each of the principals acting as agent for the others' (prominent) fanzines. But the strongest contact in the 1970s, partly due to

DUFF perhaps, was with fans in the United States.

In early 1977 Chris Priest was invited to take part in a writers' workshop in Melbourne, along with Vonda McIntyre and George Turner. This was a follow-up to the very successful writers' workshop held in conjunction with AUSSIECON, and was organized largely by one of the AUSSIECON workshop participants, Kitty Vigo. The workshop itself seems to have been a success, but a major side effect was the development of a strong bond of friendship between Priest, who managed to combine professional and fan writing uncommonly well, and a fair number of Australian fans. One of the by-products of that workshop was GUFF.

GUFF took me to SEACON in 1979, and this report is one product of that trip. I should say a few words here about the organisation of the report, since it does not follow the time-honoured pattern. The report differs from other in just one substantial way — it extends for three years, so cover the longer-term consequences.

Getting Organised

Trip reports, for fairly obvious reasons, are usually presented chronologically — almost in diary form. That's often the best way to do it, I suppose, but it doesn't suit me too well. If I am to write about my perceptions of and my reactions to that trip I need to organise my thought in a way which certainly acknowledges the usefulness of the diary format, but also diverges from that style substantially.

This opening chapter provides background — obviously. In the second chapter I'll deal with my initial reactions to England by describing the first two days of the visit. Thereafter matters will be less chronological. I'll write about SEACON — the convention and the people. And I'll write about the fanzines I was given or which I bought: as a fanzine fan I feel an obligation to do that. Since I read a few books (including some science fiction) and have occasionally written book reviews, I expect there may be some of that kind of stuff as well.

I'll also write about aspects of my trip other than fannish ones. Much of this might become

tedious for some, but I do hope that there are occasional patches of light for everyone.

The existence of DUFF was something which I was pleased about, but I didn't think it likely that I'd ever stand for DUFF or, were I ever to enter the race, win it.

It wasn't that I had no interest in meeting fans in the United States — over the years I had probably built up as extensive a network of acquaintances and friends in the United States as any Australian fan ever has, and only a fraction of them came over to AUSSIECON in 1975. But on the one hand, having been involved in the founding of DUFF I wasn't anxious to turn around and make use of it for my own benefit. And on the other hand my job and income were such as to give me a chance to go under my own steam — and indeed in 1976 I managed to wangle three weeks of work in the United States out of my employers which led — entirely by chance, you understand — to my being in Boston on the weekend of that year's BOSKONE. Unfortunately I couldn't manage to be there all weekend — just long enough to sneak out with Bill Bowers and Andy Porter for a hamburger and, on the way

back to the hotel, receive the offer of a good time from a most solicitous young lady in Boylston Street.

At any rate, I wasn't too interested in standing for DUFF because I didn't think I needed it. (The lie to my claim to being able to visit fans in the United States any time I liked is given by the fact that I had bought attending memberships in most recent Worldcons but had never managed to get to one of them.)

Another reason for not standing was that I doubted I'd have much chance of winning. I'm not one to go out of my way to curry favour, as will be noted from time to time below, and there's not much point in entering a race you're certain to lose.

And so when Leigh Edmonds announced in *Fanew Sletter* in early 1978 that he and Dave Langford were administrators of this GUFF thing which was going to take an Australian fan to England for SEACON I had little personal interest, other than trying to work out what the letters stood for. But there was someone I wanted to see nominated for GUFF.

By the time GUFF was thought of John Bangsund had been around fandom for fifteen years, although his fanzine publishing career had begun only in 1966. Like many of the most noted fan writers John achieved success because he was able to put so much of himself into his fanzine — to read him was to know him.

John was very popular with almost everyone, but although he had once stood for DUFF he had withdrawn rather late in the campaign. John's problem was simple — money. John shared Mr. Micawber's economic theories but not his optimism. More serious than this was the fact that John was self-employed, and holiday pay for self-employed people is rather too low — especially for someone with regular bills to meet. A fan fund might pay for travel and accommodation, but it couldn't handle his creditors.

By 1978 I felt that John might have been able to see his way clear to making such a trip, especially since it would be possible for him to make side trips to two countries which are important to him — Norway and Eire. So I suggested to John that he stand. He wasn't sure.

We would talk about it again. We did — for a couple of weeks. Eventually John came to the conclusion I feared he would.

No, he couldn't even consider it. The money just couldn't be found.

But, he said, why don't *you* stand?

I'm not sure now what my reaction was. I suspect it was along the lines of 'No, er, wait a minute'. The hesitation resulted from the simple fact that at that time I shared John's plight — self-employment and little money.

SEACON, the target for GUFF, was a convention I really wanted to go to, but there was no financial prospect of it. I said I would think about it, but not for long.

I didn't have much time, since nominations closed at Easter '78, and John's suggestion came only a few weeks before closing time.

Eventually I said yes, and asked John about nominators: specifically if he would agree to be one of my nominators. His answer was also affirmative, so we got down to talking about the other nominators.

John suggested Ethel Lindsay, and I had in mind a couple of others in the UK as well. We

agreed, given the little time available, to follow the maxim that there was safety in numbers and go for some kind of overkill. Even then people would only just have time to reply.

My other Australian nominators would be Carey Handfield and Robin Johnson. I drafted a platform and waited for 'interesting mail' from the United Kingdom.

Easter '78 was also to be the time for a 'big' convention in Melbourne — UNICON IV — with Brian Aldiss and Roger Zelazny as Guests of Honour, so there were plenty of other things to think about. Nevertheless by Easter I had heard from Peter Nicholls and Chris Priest, both of them agreeing to be nominators. (Ethel Lindsay had been on holiday, and her letter didn't arrive until after the closing date.)

By Easter I had also done some calculations. I now saw with great clarity the extent of John Bangsund's predicament.

It isn't just that you can't earn while you are making the trip: you also lose income because you have to refuse work that would run into the holiday period and you aren't around to pick up jobs while you are away. The penalty is thus much

more than forgone income during the trip period, at least in my kind of business.

I tried to develop a strategy to cope with the financial needs. If I won I would have to be in England around Easter 1979 (thus we note with the benefit of hindsight that things were so rushed that I hadn't actually checked on the dates of SEACON) so probably that should be taken as a central date.

There seemed to be three possibilities. Since I preferred to work on contracts of around a year, if I were to get a one-year contract in April or May then I should be able to get through the job in time to travel in April 1979 — if I won.

Not only that: if I lost, I would know in time that I had lost, and the next job could be lined up smoothly.

On the other hand, if I couldn't get a year-long job in April–May 1978 then I would have to take a series of smaller jobs — usually a month or less — for a year. This would be annoying if I won (and maddening if I lost) because I would have to continue knocking back the long-term jobs I preferred in favour of short-term ones right through to the beginning of 1979.

The third possibility was to get a regular job.

All of these possibilities and difficulties were surging through my mind as the 1978 Australian convention drew near.

Other people had other problems. The 1978 convention had some publicity problems and Leigh Edmonds, as editor of *Fanew Sletter*, found himself either reporting these or having them reported to him. The growing animosity of the convention committee towards Leigh made him distinctly uncomfortable, and his friends came to share his feelings.

By the time Easter came many people were expecting a disaster. It's almost surprising to look back now and realise that so little actually did go wrong.

Nevertheless that Easter convention was the most amateurishly-organized Australian convention in years, and visitors such as Brian Thurogood and Deb Knapp from New Zealand were probably encouraged to think of Australian fandom in those terms rather than AUSSIECON terms.

[There were other consequences, the most painful of which was Leigh Edmonds's decision

not to continue publishing *Fanew Sletter*. Australian fandom had come to rely upon *Fanew Sletter* over the years, and a replacement, several people felt, would be necessary. When the dust settled I wound up as editor of a replacement newsletter.]

But back at the convention the GUFF race was beginning to sort itself out. There was a bit of a tug-of-war about who would stand and who would nominate but in the end the candidates were John Alderson, Eric Lindsay, and me. We were a very mixed bunch, but we were all fanzine fans. In some ways it seemed to me that either John or Eric would make a better choice than me. By comparison with them I am rather shy, and for a trip of this kind the ideal traveller is someone who makes new friends quickly.

On the other hand I had been around longer in fandom than either of them and had been able slowly to build up some friendships. Perhaps long-term performance might be desirable.

(I don't suggest that either John or Eric is flash-in-the-pan, by the way. That's obviously false.)

So by the end of the convention the race was on, there was no regular newszine in Australia and, er, perhaps I had better look around quickly at the job market.

This last took precedence, for the moment. I had been 'offered' a half-year job, to the extent of 'for Christ's sake don't take anything else. I'll just get the paperwork done and contact you by the end of the month', but more than a month had passed by. This wasn't encouraging.

Next on the list was a job running for about a year which looked as though it was in my line. The pay was a bit low, but I figured I could do the job in four days a week and use the spare time for other jobs. The interview went well and a discreet inquiry next day suggested that it was only a formality. I didn't ever hear from them again either.

Now the crunch came: I would seriously have to consider being an employee, after eighteen months of being my own boss. A worthwhile opportunity did come along, but the pay was about 15% below what I was used to. On the other side of the ledger lay paid holidays, the lack of which had always effectively prevented John

Bangsund from ever trying seriously to go overseas.

I figured it would probably be worth the risk, but to cover myself I started working towards another one- year contract. By coincidence the two interviews were held on the same day, and I almost walked out on one to get to the other. The regular job came through with the first offer, and I was stuck with a regular job, paid holidays, and a private assurance that my drop in pay would be 'looked after'. (It never was.)

That solved one problem. Oh, there was still the minor problem of winning the GUFF race.

And the death of *Fanew Sletter*.

Back in 1970 Leigh and I had started *Norstrilian News* as the first fortnightly Australian newszine in years. Later on it passed through the hands of David Grigg, Bruce Gillespie, and Robin Johnson, before finally dying quietly.

Fanew Sletter was Leigh's replacement.

Fanew Sletter had a most distinguished career over five years due to Leigh's hard work and could not readily be copied by anyone. But in 1972–3 I had published half a dozen issues of *Chunder!*, a

news magazine rather than a newszine, and a revival of that might be possible.

Chunder!, had not been a sweetness—and–light magazine like *Fanew Sletter*. But I didn't have to imitate Leigh, and *Chunder!*, I reckoned, was about what I could publish. So on Anzac Day 1978, volume 2 number 0 of *Chunder!* appeared.

So far as GUFF was concerned this would produce pluses and minuses. I was likely to offend quite a few people, if my previous track record was any guide, which might lose votes. But publicity is never bad, and at least people would spell my name correctly.

In the end publishing *Chunder!* was more important to me than winning or losing a GUFF race. One interesting side effect of the first few months of publishing *Chunder!* was that I got a quite undeserved reputation as a knocker of Sydney fandom.

It was certainly the case that my criticism of fannish doings, whether in *Chunder!* or elsewhere, wasn't exactly inhibited, but neither was it directed towards any one geographical region. I wonder whether the Sydney fans have yet realised that the reason they were rubbished

so often in *Chunder!* was that they were the only fan group in Australia doing anything of much interest at all?

As it turned out the rest of 1978 was devoted to publishing *Chunder!* (there were 12 issues of *Chunder!* totalling 68 foolscap pages in that time) and getting used to working nine-to-five again. GUFF wasn't thought about too often, except for one glorious moment when the ballot appeared and, on reading it, I discovered that SEACON was in August, not at Easter.

My fannish interests definitely lay with *Chunder!*, which came out every two or three weeks, published an occasional interesting item, and won a Ditmar as best Australian fanzine of that year.

More important than this, for me, was the fact that it got me interested in reporting on SF conventions, and I wrote quite a few convention reports over the next twelve months. (SEACON defeated me at the time, putting a definite end to my run of successes.)

In many ways the most interesting of these conventions to report on was the first — a STAR TREK convention in Melbourne. I was keen to

report on it, but I was also invited to speak there. I am probably the only person in the universe who has ever addressed a gathering of STAR TREK fans on the political thought of George Allan England.

I enjoyed producing *Chunder!* during 1978 and 1979. But by the end of 1979 the greatest interest in *Chunder!* was shown outside Australia, although *Chunder!* was supposedly produced for Australian fans. Somewhere I had gotten off the track, or Australian fandom had changed.] Producing a fortnightly or even monthly fanzine on one's own is rather time-consuming, and I didn't find myself thinking much about GUFF at all, except when Leigh produced a flyer, and that was annoying because it meant I had to re-calculate the pages or else go into a higher postage bracket.

The real impact came when Leigh telephoned me one night a couple of days after voting closed. 'How would you like the money?' is about the way he put it. (The way I put it, on the cover of *Chunder!*, was a rubber-stamped DEPORTED.)

Now I'd done it! The problems and the planning, once theoretical, now became matters of real urgency.

There were of course minor problems like getting away from work, but also what to do about the trip — who, where, and what to see. And there was the house problem.

Well, getting away from work wasn't difficult at all. I arranged to take all the paid leave I had, plus a couple of days of unpaid leave, giving a total of just six weeks. Robin Johnson agreed to make all the travel arrangements, but there would be some minor matters to deal with.

House problem.

Jennifer Bryce and I lived in a flat overlooking the sea, in an area in which one simply can't leave a place empty for long. She was going to be able to travel with me. That meant leaving the flat empty — was there someone who could flat-sit?

Lee Harding and Irene Pagram were interested in flat-minding, so that one was solved.

What remained? The dates of travel, I guess.

However this was an area in which there was relatively little freedom of choice, and in fact Robin Johnson very soon announced that we were leaving on Sunday, 19 August. There were no stopovers, but we didn't want any.

This left only the question of who, what, and where. It was obviously essential to make some accommodation to Jennifer's interests, but in the end I believe that there were only two things we deliberately chose to do because of her interests — visiting Europe, which she had done back in 1976 and was determined that I should at least briefly see (assisted by funds from my mother), and visiting some friends and relations in England, one part of which would prove to be necessary anyway.

Two other matters now began to influence the who-what-where question. In a letter Chris Priest noted that British fans were not, in general, outgoing. He reminded me that I shared this characteristic.

Since one of my major aims was to establish some long-term relationships with fans in the United Kingdom I resolved to spend as much time as possible at SEACON talking to people I didn't

already know. This might nevertheless not necessarily serve the intended purpose, since I would almost certainly be acquainted with many more Americans at SEACON than locals. And then there was the question of the Europeans. I was anxious to talk to some of them, and where would they fit into the picture? After the convention I would do the usual thing and try to visit as many people as possible.

Once again Chris Priest did some of my thinking for me. Generally speaking fans in England would not be able to offer vast accommodation. They might be able to put up one person, but two people would overstretch available resources. Then there was the fact that there would almost literally be hundreds of fans doing exactly what I was proposing to do. All of this had to be kept at the back of my mind, since *Chunder!* was now a 20-page monthly fanzine.

There was one other factor: my mother gave me a few hundred dollars to help with the trip. This made it possible to consider spending some time in Europe — to go to Munich to see Albrecht Altdorfer's *Battle of Issus*, for example.

What she gave me also covered the purchase of a fair amount of slide film.

So I put these two notions together. I felt that the best approach would be to go to Europe soon after SEACON — there was a convention in Germany the following weekend which I could get to by doing this — and return to Britain later.

Thus while most of the overseas visitors were traipsing around British fan residences I would be out of the way. I could then do my visiting after they had gone home. This would also mean that plans made at SEACON could be relatively far in advance.

That seemed to complete the preliminaries, but there was one more. Jennifer plays the oboe semi-professionally — for money but not for a living.

A couple of months before we left, her teacher pointed out to Jennifer that there was a Master Class at the Festival Theatre complex during the time we would be in England. She would undoubtedly benefit from playing in that, she was of the right standard, and he, the teacher, was sure that Neil Black would be pleased to accept her.

The negotiations which followed were tortuous, but are condensed here to the remark that there was a furious exchange of letters and a tape, and even considerable uncertainty about what piece was to be played at the Master Class.

But eventually all was settled; Jennifer would play in the Master Class three days after we arrived in England — the first day of SEACON! The problems of what to do when we got there were now all dealt with — at least so far as it was possible to do this in advance. All that remained was the trip itself. Both of us had been overseas before, so there was not likely to be anything dazzlingly new.

There was just one Major Problem: what would I read on the flight? When I had gone to the United States in 1976 the trip had been about 18 hours and although I had been alone, reading, watching movies and sleeping filled in the time quite well and even arrival at San Francisco late on a Sunday night wasn't too unpleasant. Maybe one novel would get me through — and there was even a last-minute opportunity to pick up something stfnal — the weekend before we

departed was the time for the 1979 Australian National convention in Sydney.

Just whether or not we should go to the Sydney convention was a subject for considerable debate.

Reasons for included the fact that I would be presenting a bid for the 1981 National convention in Melbourne.

Reasons against were the obvious one that we were about to travel (though in fact many people did go direct from SYNCON to SEACON). And then, at the last minute, I developed a severe cold.

On balance, however, it seemed important enough that I go.

I had a miserable time.

SYNCON '79

We had intended to spend only the Saturday and Sunday at the convention, Friday and Monday being working days but when, on the Friday morning I felt a queasy stomach coming on, I began to suspect that things would not be sharp and sweet. Slowly I felt worse and worse, with

first my eyesight and my head taking the brunt of whatever the malevolent spirit was, and then the rest of the body aching its eager response.

By Friday night I was no longer sure I could make it. At least not sleeping on the Friday night meant that I had had a preparation much the same as many of the convention attendees who, when we eventually did arrive, didn't seem to be in the finest condition either.

Somehow I managed to crawl onto a 7.45 a.m. flight from Melbourne and arrived at the New Crest Hotel at Kings Cross at around 9.30 a.m. There was to be a preliminary business session at 10 a.m. — if there was any preliminary business — and I was anxious to be there for it. Motions had to be in writing, and with the chair, Jack Herman, by the start of the meeting.

As I learned immediately, until I arrived there was no need for a meeting. I scribbled out a couple of motions for Jack while Jenny tried to check into our room. The technical matters taken care of, I was able to think about the site of the convention.

My initial impression was favourable, and this impression remained with me for the two

days. Kings Cross may have some disadvantages, but they were not apparent during the two days I was there.

Most important, I suppose, was the round-the-clock availability of food and drink (of a kind) outside the hotel. If one did want a decent meal, that too was not too hard to find (from that convention I could recommend Satay House, in particular, and the convention committee had extensive lists of other recommended eating places).

The convention facilities were adequate, though perhaps a little small, the lifts were no more annoying than those at any other multi-storey hotel, and the hotel staff didn't seem any more in the way than anywhere else, and at times were distinctly helpful.

The two major disadvantages were, so far as I could make out, slightly unsuitable facilities for showing movies (not that this worried me in the slightest), and a lighting system that was dark; most of the time the people speaking were less well illuminated than was the audience! I'm not quite sure what the point of this was, but as an

available–light photographer I found it extremely disappointing...

Overall, the convention committee must get high marks for its efforts in securing those facilities. And they are probably entitled to a reasonable assessment on their general organisation.

I did find it annoying that the program was always running late, because this usually meant that the following item was cut short to make sure that it ‘finished on time’.

It seemed as though the committee could handle the problem of getting people off–stage on time, but had much more trouble getting them on–stage. Thus an item would be closed on schedule (but abbreviated because of a late start) and the audience would sit around waiting for fifteen minutes while the next item got itself together (or else the audience wandered away).

The single item of this kind which annoyed me most was the auction.

For many fans — I'm no longer one of them, by the way — the auction is the high point of a convention, and I feel strongly that things

shouldn't be allowed to get out of hand from an organisational point of view. This time they did.

Three hours of auction were scheduled for the two days of the convention I was at. Two hours of auction were actually held. The first session started half an hour late, the second twenty minutes late. On neither occasion was there any obvious reason for this — for example, the previous item did not run over time in either case. The auctioneer (Keith Curtis, who is in fact a very good auctioneer) had an army of helpers who just didn't seem to be able to Do Their Thing.

Now, firstly, picky people like me began to get mad. If we are so short of time, I'd mutter to myself, why does Keith spend so much time (at most five minutes, a later, more rational Foyster inserts) carefully arranging the material for auction just so, in neatly ordered piles, when he conducts the auction by choosing stuff seemingly at random from the different piles? Why not just pile them on the table and take them as they come?

Secondly, my more mundane side notes that loss of time means loss of income — for the convention itself, for various fan charities and,

increasingly and much to my dislike of this use of convention time, for various individuals who use conventions to make money for themselves.

[There was a much more general difficulty with this auction, I thought. The selection of items to be auctioned can be very important. The way it is done can easily lead to dissatisfaction of some customers — like me, to take a non-random example.

I'm not trifficly excited by the prospect of buying a Darth Vader mask or a Robert A Heinlein paperback, but I could be interested in buying fanzines like *Habakkuk* or *A Bas* or *Innuendo* — all of which happened to be up for auction at SYNCON '79 but weren't auctioned publicly because the people in charge thought it more important to sell DR. WHO paperbacks and masks and similar stuff.

I don't claim the right to determine what should be chosen to auction when a choice must be made, but I suspect that too few realise what effect the choice of items for auction does have. If you sell only DR. WHO paperbacks then you encourage DR. WHO fans — perfectly acceptable

people in their own right — but actively discourage others.

Of course, the same argument applies to any identifiable subgroup (including fanzine collectors). Nevertheless science fiction conventions are public events which are selective with respect to the audiences they are capable of attracting: organisers choose and lose their memberships by the way they promote and run their conventions.]

Meanwhile, back at SYNCON '79, the convention under discussion, there was actually a program, and the reader may recall a reference to a preliminary business session. This was actually held, and at it a couple of silly ideas — the notion that Australia needs to have bidding completed two years in advance, and the idea of Awards subcommittees — were knocked on the head.

The second revived itself on the very next day, but the first took a whole year to come round.

After lunch on the Saturday we had the Guest of Honour speech by Gordon R. Dickson. I listened to this for a while, but had to leave to arrange the next item with Marc Ortlieb and Rob McGough.



Gordon R Dickson

At the end of his speech, on his way to the bar, Gordon R. Dickson stood on my foot.

The panelists mentioned above formed a strange group to talk about Cordwainer Smith,

but that's what we did, and there were a few questions, at the end of which I felt decidedly woozy from the cold and went off to lie down for an hour; I was anxious, nevertheless, to return for the auction, where some pretty good fanzine items — but you've already read about this.

The fanzines weren't auctioned, but I did add one more to my collection of Marilyn Pride rocks. Someone else bought a set of *Chunder!* for 1978 for \$3. Their taste was admirable, but a subscription would have been cheaper.

I think now that I should have rested again at this point, but instead was tempted by (and fell for) the notion of eating oneself out of one's infirmity. Jennifer and Lee and Irene and I wandered off to the Satay House which I have mentioned above. I have to say that the company was better than the food.

We arrived back at the convention in time for me to take murky photographs of costumes and people inside them.

John Straede as a Hoka was very good, in my view, but so were the costumes of Marilyn Pride, Nick Stathopoulos, and Rob McGough.

I was actually supposed to be involved in this costume competition, because some Adelaide fans had asked me to help with their presentation. I went up to their room and was confronted with the horrific sight of Jeff Harris, Paul Stokes, John McPharlin, and Helen Swift togged out as Foyster clones.

They might have been very impressive if they hadn't been so overweight and had long hair. They nevertheless won a group prize. But after that I really needed to quit.

The day had been very long indeed. I got two hours of sleep.

Before going to the business session next morning I watched a couple of Betty Boop cartoons on TV, which set the scene appropriately.

There was some monkeying around with awards and stuff, as I've mentioned above, and then Perth got the '80 National Convention. And in the voting for the '81 National Convention Adelaide rolled Melbourne approximately 15 zillion to 3. I didn't appreciate this too much. After that there was an *Australia in '83* discussion whose banality we can ignore.



Stevens, Fletcher, Lounsbury

The DUFF item almost qualified for the same sort of dismissal, but the presence of Ken Fletcher and Linda Lounsbury as DUFFERS boosted it a little. (Koichi Yamamoto, by the way, didn't feature in any program items while I was there, but he was certainly present and busy.)

A funny (?) quiz was held after lunch, following a Gordon R. Dickson interview. People threw ping-pong balls at one another. Marilyn Pride painted hers before throwing it.

Then the second part of the auction: boring — no fanzines. Eventually I went out to dinner with Jennifer, Carey Handfield, Helen Swift, and Damien Broderick. We got back just in time for the awards (DITMARs): *Beloved Son*, *The White Dragon*, Marc Ortlieb, and *Chunder!* Susan Wood won the Atheling.



Helen Swift, Irene Pagram

Then it was time for the Paul Stevens Show — scripted this time, so it can't have been quite as bad as usual. One first was that Paul Stevens took

a swipe at Paul Stevens (he didn't check the script he was reading closely enough).

Partway through the show Jennifer and I had to leave. We grabbed our bags, then a taxi, and thus reached the airport in time to catch the last 'plane to Melbourne.

We arrived home by 1 a.m. That night I slept. Perhaps *this* would be a good preparation for SEACON.

But before that, a few days in Melbourne. One very good thing about SYNCON had been meeting Ken Fletcher and Linda Lounsbury, the DUFF winners. Like all DUFF winners to date they were wonderful guests.

They were coming to Melbourne this very week, and there was a slight change from their previous plan. In the previous plan they were to stay with Christine and Derrick Ashby somewhat later in their trip, and the Ashbys were taking the opportunity to get some plumbing overhauled — making it rather difficult to make comfortable their guests.

Jennifer and I offered to put up Ken and Linda for a few days, and we were very glad that they accepted, even though we couldn't take much

time off to escort them around Melbourne. Fortunately the Melbourne fans were able to look after that end of it.

By the Saturday morning we were rather reluctant to say goodbye to Ken and Linda but Christine Ashby, her eyes a-gleam with their usual steely glint, came to take them away to Healesville. We could then return to the serious business of packing for travelling on the next day — and the equally serious business of preparing for my mother's early and surprise 70th birthday party.

She would actually be 70 during SEACON, but the rest of the family had agreed upon this earlier celebration. Early in the afternoon my parents arrived — and so did the rest of the family.

It was the first time we had all been together for many years. Eventually we finished celebrating, threw them all out, and collapsed into bed, not exactly well-prepared to fly around the world.

We were due to depart from the airport at 1 p.m. There was the usual vast crowd to farewell us. It was a cloudy day, but the winds were

moderate for Melbourne and at least there was no rain. The 'plane glittered fairly impressively on the tarmac.

We wandered through the various checkpoints, with no one showing much interest in our baggage. We sat for a while in the transit lounge talking about what would become of us during the trip. We had never been away together before (discounting two conventions in Sydney, one of which you've just read about), and it was going to be a giant adventure.

The Australian Tourist Commission was conducting a survey of passengers returning from overseas, so we watched a couple of these interviews. Then at last it was sensible to get aboard the 'plane.

We took our seats on QF 1 — a 747 of course — and set off for Sydney. About an hour later we arrived in Sydney.

I had by now finished my planned in-flight reading material. This was a serious business. There was still an hour of sitting around in Sydney before we took off again — an hour in which to worry about how I was going to get

through the next 24 hours with virtually nothing to read.

The problem was that my reading speed is very variable, and apparently accelerates when bored on aeroplanes. The only possible solution was massive overkill.

My kind of reading matter, however, is rarely to be found at airport news-stands. I prowled up and down. I glanced at all sorts of insignificant and irrelevant books. I bought and read a Sunday newspaper. Finally I decided upon the only strategy which would minimise my discomfort — I bought the longest book in sight. I do not think I would have bought or read David Bergamini's *Imperial Japanese War Conspiracy* under any other circumstances, but its 1300+ pages had a certain appeal.

I took some photos partly for my own interest and partly in case Leigh Edmonds cared.

Finally, at 3.30 p.m., we left on the CITY OF ELIZABETH for London via Singapore and Bahrein. At 4.30 p.m., I noticed as we passed under a sign, a UTA flight was leaving for Paris via Jakarta, Bahrein, and Athens. Another time, I thought, that will be the one for me.

flight	destination	time	gate
JU 605	MEL.SIN.BEG.	2:15	1
QF 3	HNL.SFO.VAN.	2:30	2
QF 1	SIN.BAH.LON.	3:30	3
BA 12	SIN.MCT.LON.	4:00	1
UT 561	JKT.BAH.ATH.PAR	4:30	7
QF 7	MEL.PER.BOM.LON	6:30	6

When I travel by aeroplane I like to concentrate my energies on getting from A to B. So there is no worrying, for me, about getting window seats, no disembarking at refuelling stops (no matter how interesting).

I like to imagine myself to be in an oversized autobus or train, admittedly with movies and food and other amenities, but basically just a cylinder for travelling in.

Jennifer, however, is more daring. So when we arrived at Singapore in the middle of the night she got off with all the other passengers to look around. I gathered from Jennifer that it wasn't too interesting.

A couple of minutes after we took off for Bahrein Jennifer drew attention to herself by fainting.

I am not too good with people who faint. In this case there wasn't much to be done so I went looking for a stewardess.

By the time we got back Jennifer was coming around slowly. We never worked out what caused her to faint, but it was unnerving, since she had never done it before.

Otherwise the trip was uneventful. I read the Bergamini, and actually found parts of it interesting. There were aspects of it which, it seemed to me, could be incorporated in science fiction novels, so when we arrived in Britain I gave it to Chris Priest.

We watched the two movies, and that's how I came to see *Superman — The Movie* on the small screen. And the music programs included a

Mahler symphony which I listened to a couple of times.

But really it was all rather uneventful until we touched down at Heathrow. It was a grey, foggy day as we walked along the various concourses, avoiding the moving walkway (due to my dislike of Robert A. Heinlein), but eventually struggled up to the customs and immigration lines. As former colonials, we had to have our own line, of course.