

SF COMMENTARY 78

February 2003

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JENNY BLACKFORD
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RICK KENNETT
DITMAR (DICK JENSSEN)
DAVID LANGFORD
STEVE JEFFERY
BRUCE GILLESPIE
and many others



The cover: 'At Purgatory's Gates'

Almost always, whenever I sit in front of the computer and begin to generate a graphic, it's without any idea of what will eventually appear on the screen. It is doodling. Sometimes, though, there is an evanescent sense of purpose — to explore some facet of Bryce, or to try out a new model, or to see what strange combination of sky and cloud I can create — but this soon evaporates as a picture begins to emerge. Sometimes, after half an hour of so, if I'm lucky, and what bubbles forth from my automatic writing is not too ugly, I will start to *think* about what I'm doing, and to worry about colour and composition. If I'm very lucky, after some hours a graphic is in front of me with which I'm not too displeased.

I was happy with this issue's cover graphic, but, since I always wonder if others will like my doodles, I tend to show them to people I trust. And one such person is an old colleague of mine from the University, and who is most often brutally frank in his views of my pictures. So, when I had lunch with Dr Martyn (of the English Department) some days ago, I showed him *Purgatory* over coffee. Now Jim fancies himself as some sort of amateur psychologist, but I wasn't quite prepared for his opening words.

'Well, Dick — I didn't know that you were in analysis.'

'But I'm not'.

'There's no shame in it — many of my best friends are — but I didn't think that you'd be seeing a Jungian.'

I protested again, but Jim was inexorable. 'Look', he said, 'at the basic elements. You have earth, water, air and fire. But they are not totally separated — the fire associated with the lightning is burning on . . . is that water or ice . . . ice, and connects the celestial with the chthonic, while the floating island enjoys the same concatenation, but in the opposite sense. Then there's the eagle descending from the heavens to the ground, while the mist rises from the terrestrial to the sky. Clearly, the statement being made is that apparently antinomic elements are being reconciled, integrated — the rational and the non-rational, logical and non-logical, animus and anima. So don't tell me that your analyst isn't Jungian, and that this graphic doesn't stem from a dream.'

'Now look here . . .', but James was in full flight and unstoppable.

Then again, there is the symbolic aspect to the objects in the picture. *Earth* and *Water* are — and I'm only going to use Jung's interpretation, which after all, seems to be especially relevant here — passive, while *Fire* and *Air* are active, so that the first two are feminine, receptive and submissive (it's Jung here, and before political correctness), while the latter pair are masculine and creative. Their interpenetration in the graphic mirrors — and no offence here, Dick — your attempts to reconcile the features of your inner being which are in conflict, and to integrate your personality . . . the ultimate goal of Jungian analysis.

The *eagle* is a symbol of the spirit as sun (which, significantly, in the image is dulled and moribund), and of the spiritual principle in general. Since it is identified with the sun and the idea of male activity which fertilises female nature, it's also associated with the father. (But we'll not explore *that*).

The *mist* is, of course, symbolic of things indeterminate (your integration is quite incomplete), but does fuse together air and water.

'*Lightning*, naturally, represents spiritual illumination, revelation, Truth cutting across time and space, and the fact,

that in the picture it sets fire to the iced ocean, indicates purification and transformation of the gross waters of the earth (*ice* is rigidity, frigidity, brittleness, impermanence, while *water*, the melting of the ice, is the source of all potentialities in existence, and so you symbolically desire a metamorphosis of your cold nature into something which will be more accepting of that which is around you, and will be more acceptable *by* that which is around you).

The *angel* represents invisible forces, powers ascending and descending between Source-of-Life and the world of phenomena (and so ties in with the lightning/ice aspects of the image). They are intermediaries between Heaven and this World, and have, as a chief concomitant, a flaming sword — here your dream (or subconscious) has that sword as lightning. But the fact that the angel seems to have bat-wings is curious.

'*Bats*, as an alchemic double nature of bird and mouse, can represent the androgyne, or, more traditionally, it can represent darkened understanding. In China it is emblematic of happiness and long life, but in the Christian west has an infernal attribute. So the *Bat-Angel*, once again, represents your internal struggle to unite the contraries of your nature.

The *floating terrains* imply raising the Earthly to the Spiritual — your longing to partake of higher moral values than are at present in your life. *Flight* is related to space and light; psychologically it is a symbol of thought and imagination. Which also applies to the *BatAngel*.

The *tree* on one of the terrains is a complex symbol. In a Christian sense, it is the vertical arm of the Cross and hence may be seen to be the 'World-axis' connecting successive planes of existence or spirituality. In its most general sense it denotes growth, generative and regenerative processes, and so is particularly apt here'.

At this stage, I had enough, and was becoming a trifle restive, if not irritated.

'Jim', I said, 'I made *no* attempt to incorporate such a plethora of symbols into my picture. Frankly, as far as I'm concerned, they simply are just *not* there, and you are reading them into what is, after all, just an illustration.'

'Exactly, Dick — an *illustration!* But what I see *is* there, because it illustrates *your* present psychic condition. You tell me that the picture arose as a consequence of your 'doodling', and so is essentially an expression of your subconscious desiring to communicate with your conscious self — to make you aware of the stage of your journey towards integration. And it's refreshing to see you willing to disclose that condition so publicly . . . I approve your temerity.'

'For goodness' sake, Jim. All I'm really interested in is your opinion of the picture as picture, and not as symbolic of whatever you think it's symbolic of. Do you like it?'

James seemed quite bemused.

'Look Dick, when a graphic is so stuffed with meaning, and esoteric symbolism at that, any aesthetic qualities it may have are entirely superfluous and irrelevant.'

I could hold back no longer, and said, somewhat sharply, 'I must admit, 'Jim, you are the one who sees what is just not there'.

'Nevertheless . . .' said Jim smugly, thereby closing the discussion in his usual manner, with the last word.

— Dick Jensen

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- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 2 | Cover story: 'At Purgatory's Gates'
Ditmar (Dick Jenssen) | Greg Benford
Terry Jeeves
Dave Lake
E. D. Webber
Gerald Murnane
Skel
Joseph Nicholas
Alan Sandercock
John Brosnan
Patrick McGuire
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Patrick O'Leary
Steve Jeffery
Frank Weissenborn
Ray Wood
Steve Sneyd
Lloyd and Yvonne Penney
Dave Langford
Teddy Harvia
Sue Thomason
Robert Mapson
John Berry
Martin Morse Wooster
Tom Whalen
Andy Sawyer
Ralph Ashbrook
Frank C. Bertrand
Stephen Thompson
IAHF |
| 4 | I must be talking to my friends
The Editor
Dave Piper
Erik Arthur | |
| 19 | The gothic of Thomas M. Disch
John Crowley | |
| 19 | The maker alive in the made
John Romeril | |
| 22 | Posthuman futures
Russell Blackford | |
| 24 | Egan's new universe
Elaine Cochrane | |
| 25 | Unreliable memoirs
Jenny Blackford | |
| 28 | How best can we live?
Roslyn Kopel Gross | |
| 31 | Finding Carnacki the Ghost-finder
Rick Kennett | |
| 35 | The approach to Abraham Merritt:
A personal journey on <i>The Ship of Ishtar</i>
Dick Jenssen | |
| 38 | Generic or not?
Roslyn Kopel Gross | |
| 41 | The genial Mr White
David Langford | |
| 44 | Worlds shifted sideways
Steve Jeffery | |
| 48 | Pinlighters
Editor
Christopher Priest
Franz Rottensteiner | |

I must be talking to my friends

I don't know a lot about death.

I scored the jackpot by being born in the luckiest country to exist on earth (Australia since World War II) at the most fortunate time in its history (1947, so that I was in the first, and last, generation to be guaranteed a good job when I left school). Apart from the fact that nobody has ever given me a vast wad of money in order to produce fanzines full time, everything's pretty much gone my way.

Yet in the next moment a plane might drop from the sky, or a stroke could finish me off, or that lurking asteroid could plop into Port Phillip Bay. Or I could visit the doctor, and leave there with a death sentence. Or, like Frank Lloyd Wright (an endlessly entertaining man, as I discovered when reading Brendan Gill's biography), my career might actually recommence, or even commence, when I hit 70. As John Updike writes: 'The reason people don't make too much of their minds is that they see how totally at the mercy of the material world the mind is — a brick drops on your head, your mind is extinguished no matter how indeterminate are the motions of the individual atoms composing the clay in the brick. Life, thought — these are no match for the planets, the tides, the physical laws. Every minute of every day, all the prayers and ardent wishing in the world can't budge a little blob of cancer, or the AIDS virus, or the bars of a prison, or the latch of a refrigerator a child accidentally locked himself into . . . there is no way around matter. It's implacable. It doesn't give a damn about us one way or another' (*Roger's Version*, pp. 169–70).

Whatever; it doesn't matter when I'm dead. Nothing will matter then. Not only do I go, but as Gore Vidal once said of himself, the whole universe winks out when I go. What scares me about dying is of *not being*, effectively *having never been*. (Philip Larkin expressed it best in his poem 'Aubade'.) Does nothing we do have value? I would think so, were it not for what I feel about some recently lost friends:

Dave Piper, 1939–2002

DAVE PIPER

7 Cranley Drive, Ruislip, Middlesex HA4 6BZ, UK

Sorry to be the bearer of crap news this morning . . . they say that things come in threes, but *this* is ridiculous!

After a very brief diagnostic period (a few weeks), on 24 May we were advised that I have lung cancer, secondary bone cancer and a large aneurysm in my aorta. (All I need is a case of dandruff and I've got the full 'ouse.)

For reasons too boring to relate, no surgery is possible and they are terminal and thus the prognosis is not good.

I suggested to my specialist that perhaps my life-long intention to read the complete works of Piers Anthony was now a dream turned to dust, to which she replied, with a slightly puzzled expression ('What's this loony on about?') . . . 'Possibly'.

I hope you will all forgive the nature of this round-robin-type-note but I just don't have the heart to do separate letters, and there is, really, very little else to say.

It's been great 'knowing' you all these years and I'm sorry, again, that this is not the usual DCP letter to grace



Dave Piper (thanks to Irwin and Wendy Hirsh for this photo, taken at the 1987 World Convention, Britain).

your breakfast tables . . .

Very best wishes for the future, look after yourselves and keep healthy.

(5 July 2002)

On 3 August 2002, David C. Piper — our Dave Piper — died. In the few weeks between the letter above and his death, I wrote to him suggesting that if he wanted a good home for his fanzines, he might try **Mark Plummer** and **Claire Brialey** (who live a lot nearer to the Pipers than does Greg Pickersgill, Britain's most famous fanzine collector). Dave and his wife Cath rang Mark, but before Dave could send back a letter to me, he returned to hospital for the last time.

Mark had mentioned my name to **Erik Arthur**. I had never heard of Erik, Dave Piper's favourite bookseller, who arranged to place a wreath on behalf of Dave's Australian friends. Erik emailed me:

ERIK ARTHUR

Fantasy Centre, 157 Holloway Road,
London N7 8LX, UK

I duly went along to the cremation, which was so well attended that there was standing room only in the Parlour, or whatever it is called. I would say chapel, but . . . I was delighted, but not surprised, to learn that Dave was a committed atheist, and thus had a nice humanist lady doing the celebration of his life bit . . . in which she mentioned much about his extended family, consisting of two good and lifelong mates and their families (which probably accounts for the aforementioned full house).

Although he was said to be well and widely read, there was (surprise?) no mention of SF — are we condemned to the ghetto even unto death? — but a fair bit about jazz, his other abiding passion beyond his family, which would account for the coolest music I have ever heard in such surroundings: Nat King Cole singing 'Unforgettable', an instrumental of 'April in Paris' . . .

There was hardly a dry eye in the house at the end . . . a truly moving tribute to a great guy . . . and all I knew him for was acerbic comments about those SF authors he didn't like. Great discussions, we had here in the shop.

I said a brief word to Cathy afterward, but, given the large numbers of personal and work friends, most of whom seemed to be really well known to Cathy, I passed on the tea and buns, knowing I would be going over in due time to collect the fanzines and so on.

It did not rain for the duration, but as I was driving back the skies opened again (Bruce, we are getting almost Darwinian rain here these summer days) so there is some justice after all.

The wreath was as I arranged, that is, in Australian yellow and green, and quite tasteful, if your reporter may make so bold.

In due course I shall pick up Dave's fanzines and, in conjunction with Mark Plummer, arrange whatever in terms of disposal. I will, however, make sure that I read some of the Oz ones, for Dave's early texts.

Dave was only 63, and died of lung cancer, with other related complications. He first knew back in the springtime, so had little time to prepare himself as the news got worse. I don't think Cath was ready for it, such that when he went into hospital for what turned out to be the last time, she seemed sure he would be out again after a few more 'checks'. He died on Saturday, 3 August.

Dave was famous for his informality at work. Apparently he had some twenty people working for him at the New Zealand Department of Defence (or something like that) in an open plan office. It was common for him, having travelled to work in jeans and shirt, to be saying good morning to his staff as they arrived while he was in his underpants, putting on what was widely presumed to be his only suit.

(11 August 2002)

It's right that Dave should receive a send-off from his Australian friends (and, no doubt, from his American and Canadian friends), because he seemed to have little contact with British fandom. It's one of those contradictions in Dave's attitudes that I could never work out. His original link with Australia was with **John Bangsund's** *Australian Science Fiction Review*. In early 1969, John gave me a copy of his mailing list as the basis for posting the copies of *SF Commentary* I. Dave, one of John Bangsund's greatest admirers, was one of the very first people to respond to *SFC* I.

He wrote in Dave Piperish: a combination of north London accent, self-deprecating jokes, news of doings of the Piper family, and explosions of wrath about the silly opinions of other *SFC* correspondents. Here are some portions of his first letter of comment to *SFC*:

DAVID C. PIPER

Thanks very much for *SFC* Number 1. I'm not at all sure why you sent me a copy . . . of one thing I've never been accused and that's of being a literate member of the SF reading fraternity, and I can't see myself ever being much of an asset to a fan-ed's sub. list.

Be that as it may, some extremely random comments:

(a) Repro is lousy . . . at least on my copy. I'm getting on a bit now and my eyesight ain't as good as it once was. Seems to be a lack of ink . . . the repro I mean, not my eyes . . . or badly cut stencils. No doubt it'll improve.

(b) Don't use illos inside the thing but I suggest you have a simple and uncluttered plate made for the cover. This cover is awful.

(c) Talking of first issues . . . I got this copy on Saturday and assume you sent it sometime in January. Ridiculous! You've probably published another couple already so I'd better keep mentioning the number. Numero One . . .

(e) I'm sick of reading about *2001*. I loved it. Wonderful film. Just not interested in reading any more about it, is all.

(f) I enjoyed your exhaustive Part I on Dick very much. Until I reached your 'Apology' on page 51, though, I was a leetle surprised at your conclusions on *High Castle*. It's one of the lamentably few cases where I reckon I got the point of a book without being told. I enjoy all Dick's books. Probably a masochistic streak . . . I enjoy being slightly baffled and intrigued and made to work hard at a book. Sometimes. My three favourites are *High Castle*, *Palmer Eldritch*, and *Martian Time-Slip*. That last one is, I think, a tremendous work. Brilliant . . .

(h) *New Worlds* . . . I sometimes buy it. I don't usually read it all. I enjoyed *Camp Concentration*. Only item I can remember enjoying recently is Delany's fragment a couple of months ago. I don't have strong feelings about the magazine now. It's there. Probably better to be there than not. It's very uneven. Good presentation. Too pretentious by half. Some of Ballard's bits of late have been in such bad taste that I find their publication incredible. Apart from Disch I don't reckon *any* of its New Writers are gonna amount to anything. Your comment, page 6, about Moorcock's 'New Writers' . . . surely Colvin *is* Moorcock, isn't he?

(i) Foyster's piece is crap. Quantity ain't Quality. Page 28: he loads his argument by mentioning MacApp and Saberhagen. Jeez . . . there's probably a million such from his supposed 'Golden Age'. It was always better years ago, wasn't it! Toffee apples just ain't the same as they were, are they?! Rubbish! Against his list I'd stack Delany, Zelazny, and Disch. It gets better all the time . . .

(k) Enough . . . enough. I enjoyed the thing very much. In the absence of Aussie cash herewith 10/- . . . hope that'll cover me for a couple. Assuming, of course, you'll accept fealthy money!

(21 April 1969)

The essence of Piper (and the state of science fiction in 1969), all in one letter! 10 shillings equalled one Australian dollar, which bought Dave three and a half issues of *SFC*. Subscriptions were 3 dollars. That's nostalgia for you.

My favourite Dave Piper letter, about ten years ago, was written late on a Saturday afternoon after a long drinking session. It was incoherent, very funny, a meditation on being drunk, and unreproducible without using a scanner.

Instead, here is his last letter of comment:

DAVE PIPER

7 Cranley Drive, Ruislip HA4 6BZ, UK

Great to see one of those dogvomitella envelopes alight on the mat and even better to see your (excellent) printing of the front.

As usual, letters and editorial most interesting . . . reviews somewhat less so, at least, for this clapped-out old SF reader! I've just had a (very) rough count, and during the past year my book-buying/reading count seems to run at circa 10 to 1, non-fiction to fiction, and the fiction side of the equation includes many non-SF titles anyway. The last SF item I can recall, immediately, getting was an old Chad Oliver novel (*Unearthly Neighbours*) that I had forgotten about.

Be honest, I dunno where this year's gone . . . I note it's been just about that long since *SFC* turned up and yet I

recall numero 76 arriving as if it were only yesterday!

Cath and I went to Bruges early on in the year . . . for a short stay and loved it. It's a very picturesque medieval town with lots of bridges and canals, and is very easy and quick to get around. There are remains of the old walls, and the really crap industrial parts are outside the main part of the town, leaving the interior relatively unspoilt and attractive. It was the first time we've travelled on Eurostar (the passenger train through the Tunnel), and for comfort (even taking into account the pathetic speed this side of the Channel) it beats bloody flying any day of the week. I've come to really hate flying these past few years . . . even given my not particularly massive height (5 ft 8 in . . . stretched!), the leg room and space in commercial flights is bleedin' disgraceful, I reckon. In future, if we can manage it, we're going to travel by train.

The son of a friend of ours got married in mid year in Ireland, to an Irish colleen of fair visage (!), and we went over for the wedding. We had a great time, and I stayed on in Ireland for a couple of weeks travelling around all the southern areas with the father of the bridegroom. Great time. The local people seem so nice and friendly and laid back, which surprised us a little, given the history we read in the couple of rough guides we had. You probably won't believe this (?), but neither of us, when at school, was taught *anything* relating to the 'troubles' and relations between England and Ireland. Disgraceful, really. Frinstance, I didn't even know that Oliver Cromwell had gone over and beat the shit out of the locals . . . and, worse still, I had no idea that during the famine the English were still taking produce from the local people and sending it to England.

Sara's at home again. She was living with a coupla gay mates but it all went sour . . . so we've lost the guest room again (!) Ceramics are still going well, and in fact I'm getting a bit good at it (he said modestly), Clare moved into a bigger house with her bloke and seems to be getting on OK and happy, Cath's looking forward to early 2003 and retirement, and I'm not at all sure that the fight against 'international terrorism' is winnable.

But, then, I'm not sure of anything these days . . .

(17 November 2001)

Dave rang me several times from Ruislip (his late-night Friday, my early-morning Saturday); and I spent a wonderful day with him and the family near the end of my trip to England in early 1974. (**Chris Priest**, with whom I was staying, had never heard of Dave Piper, and neither had the other British fans I met at that time. Dave was my British secret correspondent.) **Irwin** and **Wendy Hirsh** met him at the 1987 British world convention, and Dave and Cath visited many of their friends in America in the early nineties.

As I wrote to Dave in the letter I hoped would reach him in time, his letters always cheered me up greatly during the seventies, when I was more down than up. His opinions about most things were often more sensible than mine. He was really enjoying his retirement — then was struck down.

Both **Cathy Piper** and their daughter **Clare** have sent me wonderful notes, and Cathy also sent me a copy of the funeral eulogy for Dave. As long as any of us is alive, Dave remains alive. If these pages outlast us all, he's still alive.

Linda Gillespie, 1909–2002

My Auntie Linda was born in 1909, but I always had the feeling that she would outlast me. She was already in her forties when I was small, so she seemed to stay the same age

throughout most of my life. Her own mother had lived to a great age, and she and my Uncle Fred had taken care of her Aunt Lizzie until the age of 99. Finally, a few months ago, my aunt's body just gave out from under her.

My Auntie Linda was one of my favourite aunts, and something like a second mother to me and all her nephews and nieces. My sisters and I began visiting her Murrumbeena house at weekends when we were still at primary school — Auntie Linda and Uncle Fred had a television set, and we didn't. They were far more indulgent with us than our parents ever could afford to be. We watched lots of TV, ate too much, and got to know the local kids, who were friends of my aunt's. One weekend, the Hardhams (who lived next door) invited us next door while they set up a home puppet theatre. For months after, we made papier mâché puppets in the way the Hardhams had shown us.

During my early secondary school years, I stayed at Murrumbeena regularly. Each year, Auntie Linda put on a huge Christmas tea for the Gillespie side of her family. She was very fond of both my parents, and still talked to my mother by phone once a week until a couple of months ago.

In 1962, my family moved to Melton, then a small country town 50 km west of Melbourne, where my father was to manage the first bank branch in the town. (Melton is now a commuter suburb of 40,000 people.) I wanted to finish Form 4 (Year 10) at Oakleigh High School, so Auntie Linda and Uncle Fred offered to put me up for Term 3 of that year. During my second year of university (1966), my American History lectures were at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, finishing too late to catch the last train to Bacchus Marsh (the town near Melton to which we had moved). Auntie Linda offered to put me up on those nights each week, and during the university vacations. For that reason, I was able to watch nearly all the episodes of the first Emma Peel series of *The Avengers*, plus most of the second series. No wonder it remains one of my few favourite TV programs. (My aunt and uncle always said that Honor Blackman was much better than Diana Rigg, but I still haven't seen any Honor Blackman episodes of *The Avengers*.)

Another clear memory of 1966: walking into McGill's, buying my first copy of *Australian Science Fiction Review*, and reading it, astonished, intoxicated with intellectual hooch, on the suburban train out to my aunt's place.

In early 1978, my Uncle Fred died, just a few weeks before Elaine and I got together, and my aunt's living space gradually became more constrained. When Elaine and I became a couple, Elaine became as fond of my aunt as I was. Since both were keen gardeners, Elaine could hold up her side of a conversation with Auntie Linda better than I could. Auntie Linda sold the house at Murrumbeena, including its large garden of roses tended by my uncle for many years, and moved into a unit just a few doors from the old house that had been her parents', nearly opposite the Churches of Christ's old people's home where she was to spend the last six years of her life. She tried to keep up the annual Christmas gatherings, but eventually she had to give up being a good host, as her back was beginning to cause her serious trouble. She maintained basic good health, despite a long period of recuperation in hospital after a bad fall in the 1980s and another hospital stay in the mid 1990s. She was always cheery, except if someone questioned her memory of an event during her life or yours. (It was best not to catch her out.)

In the end, I must have been a bit of a disappointment to her, as I did not keep up a connection with the Churches

of Christ. My Auntie Linda devoted much energy (and probably a fair bit of money) to the Oakleigh Church of Christ, although its numbers dwindled after the 1960s. Ever cheerful and benevolent, she was as much an advertisement for her beliefs as any person I've met.

My Auntie Linda died on 30 September. Her funeral service was at Oakleigh, where I met some of the people I knew from Oakleigh Church during the fifties and sixties, my aunt's niece (and her husband and son) on her side of the family, my mother (the last person left from her generation of the Gillespie side of the family), my sister Jeanette, and my cousins, who were also my aunt's nephews and nieces. Not a large crowd, as my aunt had outlived many of her closest friends. But, like most Churches of Christ funerals, it was a celebratory occasion, a send-off to the next life, rather than a miserable one.

It's difficult to think of her not being alive, because she had always kept every fact of our lives in her head!

Wynne N. Whiteford, 1915–2002

Wynne Whiteford had already lived a full life before I heard of him. In 1960, in Ted Carnell's *New Worlds*, one of the first SF magazines I bought, I read an author bio about this Australian author whose works I had never heard of (see box). So Australia had its own SF writers! Sure it did. The novella version of J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (*Science Fiction Adventures*, No. 24, 1962) was accompanied by a novella by Wynne Whiteford ('Bliss') and a short story by **Lee Harding** ('Pressure'). Wynne, who had published his first story in 1934, at the age of nineteen, was being published regularly by Carnell in Britain during the late fifties and early sixties, but fell silent after Carnell sold *New Worlds* to Mike Moorcock and co.

When I saw Wynne on a panel at my first convention, the Melbourne SF Conference, Easter 1968, I realised I was gazing at a legend. Wynne stood out in the crowd: not only because of his youthful way of carrying himself, although he was entering middle age, but because of the careful way he chose his words, his refusal to enter into the smart-arse banter that was then (and still is) the dialect of writers and fans on panels at conventions. Modest and good-humoured: that's how Wynne seemed, then and now.

I must have spoken to Wynne occasionally during the early seventies, but the first time I became aware of him as a friend was during the first day of Monoclave, the convention held at Monash University when Chris Priest and Vonda McIntyre were in town for the 1977 Writers Workshop. Wynne drew me aside and told me, almost apologising for having to tell me sad news, that his wife **Laurel** had just died. He was obviously in distress, and I did not know what to say. I had never met Laurel.

Wynne began attending Nova Mob regularly when John Foyster started it again in the late seventies. At what I remember as the first of the new series of Nova Mob meetings, a gala party in South Yarra, Wynne introduced us to his friend **Gwayne Naug**. We did not know what to make of her, and she did not know what to make of us. We found out only later that Wynne had met her at the Eastern Writers Group, an enthusiastic group of writers in the outer north-eastern suburbs. Gwayne herself was an enthusiastic writer, and gradually Elaine and I became her friend as well as Wynne's.

Wynne also became close friends with **Paul Collins** and **Rowena Cory**, who ran Cory & Collins, the small press that began in the same year as Norstrilia Press. Encouraged by



Wynne Whiteford, 1979. (Photo: George Turner.)

Paul and Rowena, Wynne returned to writing, and produced his first novel, *Breathing Space Only*, at the age of sixty-five. I typeset it, and Elaine pasted it up on the kitchen table. It appeared in 1980, and was followed by several more novels for Cory & Collins. **Cherry Weiner**, an Australian literary agent who had long since settled in New Jersey, made a flying trip to Australia in the late seventies. She signed up Wynne, George Turner, Keith Taylor, and quite a few other Australian writers. She sold Wynne's first few novels to Ace, which published them, plus two more. Altogether, Wynne published six novels during the eighties, but no publisher has yet collected his short fiction.

Wynne couldn't help being compared with **George Turner**, as both were the senior Australian writers of the late twentieth century. **Frank Bryning**, who died recently in his nineties, seemed a full writing generation older than both of them. Wynne was quiet and modest, and George at his worst could be a prima donna. Both were fond of the company and good talk provided by the Nova Mob. Both won the A. Bertram Chandler Award for lifetime contributions to Australian SF. George suddenly became old in the early nineties, and moved to Ballarat. When he died in 1997, we suddenly realised that not only was Wynne a year older than George, but at the age of eighty he could still seem startlingly young. **Terry Frost** tells of Wynne knocking around with fans a quarter his age at both the 1994 and 1995 national SF conventions. When Wynne was eighty, I saw him enter the room at the Nova Mob, notice that the only empty chair was a small stool, and sit straight down on it without any complaint. It was only in very recent years, after a series of falls, that he started to feel his age and look frail. Gwayne had to refit their house in Eltham so that Wynne could move around safely. Nevertheless, he and Gwayne attended a series of social events late last year, including the Nova Mob end-of-year gathering at Eastern Inn, a joint birthday party

NEW WORLDS

— PROFILES —

Wynne

N.

Whiteford

**Melbourne,
Australia**



Born in Melbourne, Australia, Wynne Whiteford became interested in writing while in his teens, and had a few short stories and articles published. He then began to take writing seriously, produced some "literary" stories which failed to sell, then set the idea of a writing career aside to concentrate on engineering. For a few years he operated a display business.

He did not begin writing consistently until after his marriage in 1950, producing some suspense stories and short s-f which appeared in Australian magazines. At this time he was studying Commerce at the University of Melbourne, but he shelved it to concentrate more fully on writing. It's still on the shelf.

Through the mid nineteen-fifties he was Technical Editor of an Australian motoring magazine, specialising in road-testing of cars and covering motor-racing events.

He began writing novelette-length science fiction while living in Washington, D.C., in 1957. He arrived in New York the day Sputnik I was placed in orbit (pure coincidence!) and lived in Manhattan until the middle of the following year, writing sports-car articles and SF of various lengths which appeared in *Amazing*, *Fantastic Universe*, *If*, *Super Science Fiction*, and other magazines.

Since 1958 he has lived in London, using it as a base for exploring in various directions, but by the time this appears in print will be back in Australia again. He feels equally at home in Australia, America, and England, in Paris or in Honolulu.

His interests are travel, people, fast cars, chess, science fiction (!). He has been accused of reading anything from *War and Peace* to the labels on jam jars.

with **Helena Binns**, and the New Year's Eve party held at the home of **Paul Collins** and **Meredith Costain** in Clifton Hill.

The wake/celebration/garden party in Wynne's memory was also held at the home of Paul and Meredith on 12 October. Many of the members of the Eastern Writers' Group were there, and one of them read out the last chapter of Wynne's *Breathing Space Only*. It was fascinating to listen to Wynne's prose so many years after typesetting it. People who didn't like Wynne's writing said it was 'oldfashioned'. Maybe. He provided a few too many explanations, but he did not use clichés or waste words. His descriptions of the interactions between people are quite subtle, and he knew how to throw in a joke when appropriate, such as in the superb last line of the novel. **Russell Blackford**, one of two people to write at length about Wynne's work, summed up his achievements for us. The sun shone; it was a perfect Melbourne spring day. We were glad to be alive. We felt glad that Wynne had been alive — and we felt again the need to remember him properly. Nobody can explain the necessity for death except a biologist. It's up to writers to keep alive the memory of a well-spent life.

Theodore (1985–2001) Oscar (1984–2002)

Given the above news, it seems almost perverse to say that no recent event has caused us more pain than the loss of a small ginger cat named **Theodore**. A cat of very little brain, Theodore, during his sixteen years of life, cost us more in vet's bills and anxiety than all the other cats put together. Until a few years ago, he was allowed to roam beyond the borders of our garden, and did. He enjoyed mousing and fighting, but usually lost his fights. In 1989, an assailant put a claw right across the centre of one of Theodore's eyes. Hauled off to a small-animal ophthalmologist half way across Melbourne, he spent the next week with the eye completely stitched shut and the pupil immobilised, and a plastic bucket over his head to stop him scratching at the stitches. Oscar, his best friend, was confused. One end of



Theodore embattled: fitted with a plastic radar dish with cardboard extensions, 1992. (Photo: Elaine Cochrane.)

Theodore smelt like Theodore, while the other end smelt of the vet's surgery.

In early 1992, Theodore crawled out from under the house after disappearing for near twenty-four hours. He was very very ill. It was a weekend. **Elaine** took Theodore to our vet, who in turn sent him to the only emergency veterinary hospital that was open. In the taxi, Theodore was convulsing, barely breathing, and growing cold. He was only a few minutes from death. At the hospital, he was put on life support, and survived. He returned to our vet, then came home. He was recovering, but was unable to pee. We took him back to our local vet, who discovered that at the



Extreme cuteness pose: Theodore (left) and his very good friend Oscar (right) when both were very young. (Photo: Elaine Cochrane.)

emergency hospital a faulty catheter had been inserted in Theodore's urethra. It had nicked the inside of the urethra, which as a result had become partially blocked. The vet put in another catheter and kept him there. When I visited, Theodore had not eaten for three days and looked completely miserable. I cried like a loon and asked what I could do. The vet told us about a company that hired out very large cages for convalescing pets. We hired one, put blankets in it, and brought Theodore home. For several weeks, he stayed mainly in the cage, with no control over his peeing, with a bucket over his head to stop him removing the catheter. (He succeeded several times.) General misery for all. The vet removed the catheter, and put Theodore on valium as a muscle relaxant, but his urethra was still partly blocked. The valium made Theodore into a very happy cat. Elaine was still working a regular job, so for several months I was taking care of Theodore and giving him all his pills. Therefore he was the only one of our cats who ever became attached to me rather than Elaine. After several months, we realised that the valium treatment was not working. Theodore still could not pee properly, so he was given a gender reassignment operation (his urethra was shortened, and other obstructing bits removed).

He still liked fighting and mousing, but his only other major adventure was becoming stuck in a factory nearly two blocks away. We knew he was there because he bellowed back to Elaine when she called through the window. He would not emerge during the day because the sound of the machines was deafening. Elaine asked the foreman if she could leave some food for Theodore. We called him at the end of each day, but he stayed hidden. After four days, we discovered where he was hiding. After the machines stopped, the last of the staff had two minutes to leave the building before the doors were locked. On the fourth day, during that two minutes, I reached as far as I could behind a stack of pallets, just managed to grasp Theodore by the scruff of the neck, dragged him out, and put him into the cat box.

Theodore was very glad to be home, but we knew that, given half a chance, he would do it all again. That's when Elaine worked out how to secure all the fences so that the cats could not go over or under them.

Over the years, Theodore failed so often at self-destruction that we thought he must be immortal. In August 2001, the vet pointed out that he was losing weight steadily, and almost certainly had cancer. When, on a Sunday morning, Theodore began bleeding from the mouth, we thought that his last day had come, so we took him to an emergency veterinary clinic to be 'put down'. That vet found that Theodore's remaining tooth had abscessed badly, so he was bleeding into the mouth. Tooth removed, and rehydration preparation pumped into him, Theodore seemed to have staged yet another miraculous resurrection. He still wouldn't eat. Our local vet changed his antibiotic, and for a few days Theodore ate normally. Then he stopped. He didn't look particularly miserable, but he couldn't eat. He was now so thin that our vet could feel a lump in his belly. During his last two days, he did look very miserable, and on his last morning he could not even drink. When we took him on his final ride to see the vet, Theodore did not even protest. After he had given the final injection, the vet had us feel a huge lump in Theodore's belly, a very fast-growing cancer that had been the basis of his health problems for the previous two months.

Theodore was a bit of a dill, even by cat standards, but he was beautiful and sweet, and the only one who was ever

my cat. But he was also a friend to Oscar and Polly. The house seems empty without him.

Oscar was found by **Sally Yeoland** under the Brunswick house she and **John Bangsund** lived in during the early eighties. When Sally phoned saying that she had found a tiny kitten, all fleasy and hungry, and they couldn't possibly keep him, we bowed to the inevitable. We even had a name for him. The week before, I had dreamt about a grey fluffy cat, a music critic named Oscar Leitmotiv. So Oscar had a name immediately. He had obviously been separated from his mother too early, so for the rest of his life showed some feline psychological peculiarities, the worst of which was extreme timidity. All we had to do was hold an implement or plate in the hand when walking out the door, and Oscar would scurry off in fright. He lost this timidity only late in life, when he became deaf. Oscar was very affectionate to the other cats, and always welcomed new cats, especially kittens. When Theodore arrived two years later, Oscar fell in love with him immediately. He jumped towards Theodore, trying to put his paws around him. Theodore jumped back six feet. They were soon lifelong friends. When Theodore died, Oscar, who already had kidney problems, gave up the battle for life. He soon became distressed, stayed mainly in the kitchen, and stopped eating regularly. On the day when he could no longer drink water, in February 2002, we took him for his last trip to the vet's.

2002 wasn't all gloomy . . .

. . . but there have been periods when every week or so brought the name of another dead SF writer or fan, not always of the Ancient and Revered Generation (**Damon Knight**, **Poul Anderson**, and many others). **George Alec Effinger** was my age. I could wake at 5 a.m. worrying about imminent mortality, but instead I get up in the morning, read the death notices in *The Age*, and give a sigh of relief that I'm not there yet.

Severe illness has struck some of our most valued friends during 2002. **John Foyster**, diagnosed with a brain tumour in the first week of January 2002, has lived his life as cheerfully as possible, and has even published quite a few issues of his Webzine *dFNAC*. **Peter McNamara**, diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour in early 2002, is still hanging on, working on a new anthology. He is a year younger than I am. Recently **Damien Warman**, also from Adelaide but currently living in Austin, Texas, was operated on for bowel cancer. Damien is very much younger than I am. All reports are that the operation was successful. **Leigh Edmonds** is still suffering from the effects of being hit over the head by thugs more than two years ago.

Having said that, I feel guilty when writing that for Elaine and me 2002 has been satisfactory, and often satisfying. You can tell that from reading my ConVergence Report (posted with most copies of this *SFC*) — the Cheery Segment of 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends'. Two Ditmar Awards (thank you, everybody!), lots of good company, and lots of people met through the Internet (see box). The **Nova Mob** continues successful — perhaps too successful, with 30 people trying to crowd into the **Sussex-Warner** living room on 2 November. The ultimate accolade was being invited (by **Ian Mond**, who cannot be refused) to a few recent fan events at which Elaine and I have been by far the oldest people.

Thanks to the ever-enthusiastic **Dick Jensen**, I've had a very good year of watching DVDs. Dick buys far more DVDs

ConVergence redux

These are some matters that were not cleared up when I published the ConVergence Report (**brg* 33/Great Cosmic Donut of Life 34*).

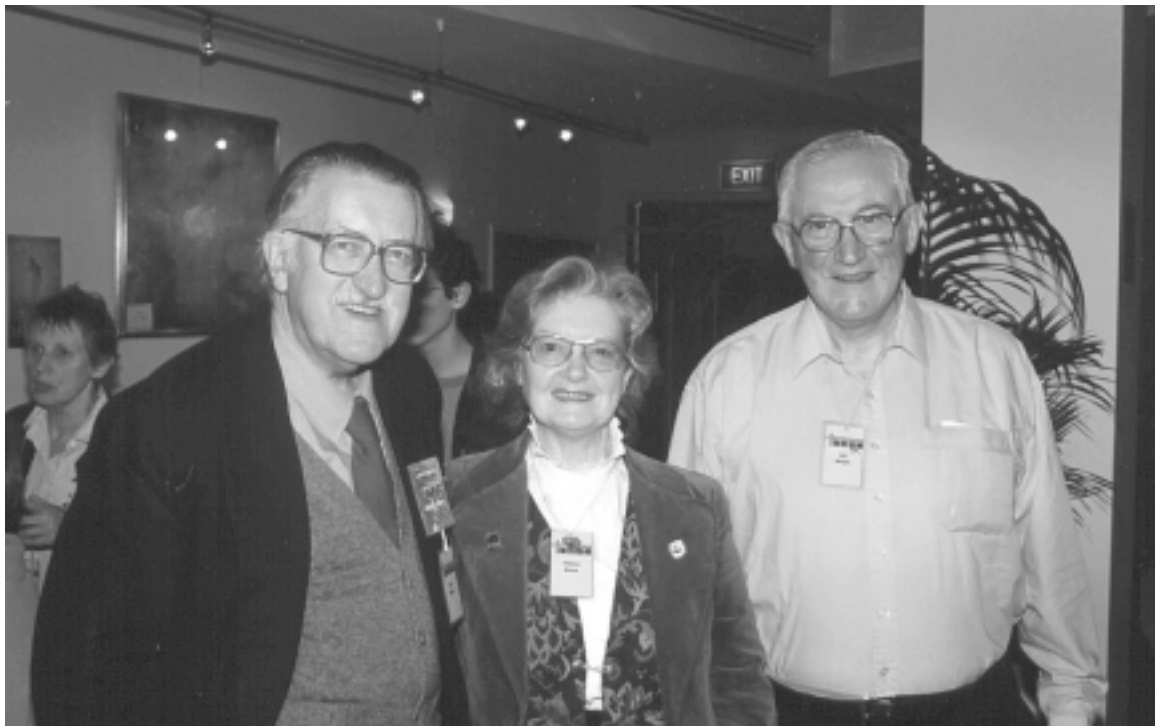
I was wrong, as usual

Dick Jenssen handed me a list of corrections to the Report. The item on p. 9 was one I picked up eventually.

- Page 3, line 3: 'she recovering' should be 'she was recovering'.
- Page 3, line 3: 'asn't' should be 'wasn't'.
- Page 6, line 5: 'Helen' should be 'Helena'.
- Page 8, line 8: 'Dimitrii' should be 'Dimitri'? (Maybe; I always spelt his name with four 'i's.)
- Page 9, line 36: 'Alan Dean Brown' should be 'Alan Dean Foster'.
- Page 15, line 13: 'Ditmar, and she gave' should be 'Ditmar, she gave'.
- 'Page 18' should be 'Page 16'. (**Jack Herman**, writing in ANZAPA, picked up that one.)
- The photos on the back page were made into a montage by **Dick Jenssen**, the photos themselves were taken by **Helena Binns**.

MSFC at Somerset Place: that elusive date

John Straede put his hand up during the ConVergence Panel on 'The Melbourne SF Club: The Lost Years', and reported on the dates in his life that pinned down the exact date when the Melbourne SF Club moved to its most famous quarters, 2 Somerset Place, Melbourne. I reported this conversation to **John Foyster**, whose place I took on the panel. A vigorous Internet exchange followed. John F. got in touch with John S., who wrote that I had reported him wrongly. Eventually John F. and John S. decided that they agreed on the date. Here's John Foyster's summary: 'John S. definitely remembers joining the club in 1960, rather than an earlier date, and I think my estimate for Somerset Place (previously given as 1961–62 — meaning late in '61/early '62) stands up (25 July 2002)'. Is that the last word, or does somebody out there own a copy of a publication that gives the exact date of moving from McKillop Street to Somerset Place?



One of my favourite photos from ConVergence (. to r.): Merv Binns, Helena Binns, and Bill Wright (taken by Dick Jenssen for Helena).



Above: **Justin Ackroyd** prepares to shave off the **Marc Ortlieb** beard for the sake of the DUFF, GUFF and FFANZ Funds. 'How much am I bid?' Only fifty dollars!

Right: Fifty dollars and a few minutes later: Marc Ortlieb as we've never seen him before (or since; he's already grown back the beard).

(Photos: **Cath Ortlieb.**)



I didn't have any clear photos of Janice, Claire or Mark from ConVergence. Fortunately, they called in on **John Foyster** and **Yvonne Rousseau** in Adelaide. Yvonne took the photos:

Left: **Janice Gelb** and **John Foyster.**

Below: **Mark Plummer, John Foyster,** and **Claire Briailey.**



than I do, and is willing to lend them. I've bought a few of my own DVDs. I've seen a few films at the cinema (*Gosford Park* and *Last Orders* at the local Westgarth, and *Enigma* at the Astor), but most films are now appearing on DVD shortly after they've been shown locally. (And often before; *Pollock* has just opened in cinemas here, but Dick showed it to me on DVD last summer.) When Dick bought himself a (gasp!) vast plasma screen, he let me have his (gasp!) 42 cm TV screen, which does almost everything with an image except throw it up in the air and twirl it around. Distribution of DVDs in Australia is still peculiar; some of the great musicals are still unavailable, but I found a Zone 1 copy of *The Pajama Game*, which has been unavailable on TV, cinema screen, tape or laser disk for more than 30 years. Carol Haney's performance is a revelation, as is the brilliance of Bob Fosse's choreography, even in 1957. Many of the great British and European films are still unreleased (especially films by Visconti), but Dick managed to buy John Frankenheimer's *The Gypsy Moths*, one of the greatest American films of all time. It's never been on tape or laser disk, and has not been shown on TV for more than 20 years. Not many Australian films have been released on DVD, but Nadia Tass's *Malcolm* has finally appeared. That's my favourite Australian film.

Books? I've read a few, but am way behind in writing about them. I'm in one of those periods when most writers of fiction seem boring, but poets (including Stephen Dunn, this year's Pulitzer Prize winner for Poetry) and essayists (I finally read Gore Vidal's gigantic *United States* collection) still have sparkle.

Music? I've bought too many CDs, as usual, and am very far behind in listening to them.

The year has been dominated by Paying Work and social events. After being effectively unemployed for nearly three months at the end of last year, I've been taking every bit of work offered to me. As relief from staring at a computer screen, Elaine and I take any opportunity to meet with congenial people. **Andrew Macrae** and **Ian Mond** invited us to their Tuesday night get-together in Fitzroy. Elaine and I have discovered two more restaurants in the area (**Suko Thai** in Johnston Street, Fitzroy, and **Beelzebub** in Smith Street, Fitzroy, both highly recommended). 'Dinner at Ciao' has become a Friday night institution for the fans who meet at the Australia Food Hall basement each Friday night. (**Ciao** is in Hardware Lane, Melbourne, and is open at night only on Fridays.) **Dick Jenssen** has organised some wonderful occasions throughout the year, including a few dinners with 'Carnegie fandom', the group of well-known retired Melbourne fans who suddenly find themselves living close to each other in the eastern suburb of Carnegie. **Race and Iola Mathews'** monthly Film Night has been enjoyable, a way of keeping up with people we might not otherwise meet. **Eva Windisch's** *Tirra Lirra* magazine launch events are always stimulating.

In August I shocked even my least shockable friends by travelling outside the state of Victoria. I had not left the state since 1981. Elaine and I

were invited to my sister Robin's second marriage in Maroochydore, Queensland, about 60 km north of Brisbane, but Elaine decided to stay home and take care of the cats. My other sister Jeanette and my mother had taken a flat for the week before the wedding, and I joined them on the Friday. Jeanette hired a car, so we looked at a fair bit of the local area. Jeanette drove us to a sheltered beach, where I swam in sea water for the first time in ten years! Jeanette said that the locals do not swim until the water temperature reached 30°C. At the beginning of July in Queensland, the water temperature was about the same as it reaches at Port Phillip Bay beaches at the end of summer. Later, Jeanette drove us to the Mooloolaba port, where we went up a sightseeing tower. We could see the entire port, where the river meets the sea. Below were the moored yachts. On one of the yachts we saw a cat prancing along the spar: a cat who owned a boat. I decided that southern Queensland in 'winter' provides a lifestyle I could get used to.

And the wedding? It went, as John Bangsund used to say, without a hitch. A group of about fifty of us gathered on the beach at midday, the celebrant united the happy couple, and we climbed into the limo that Robin and Grant had hired for the day. We went to a restaurant, where we ate and drank all afternoon instead of enjoying more of that fabulous Queensland sunshine. We spent most of the next day travelling home, but not before I actually got to sit down and talk to my sister Robin properly for the first time in many years. I didn't get a chance to talk at length to Grant, her new husband, but I did have a good yarn with John, to whom she was married for nearly thirty years, and who was at both the wedding and the reception. Also present were my Queensland cousin, Ian, and his wife Bev, who I hadn't seen for twenty years. It was an eye-opener to see my mother in action at a large social event. Whoever imagines one's own mother as the life of the party? Just shows where Robin and Jeanette got their pizzazz.

I decided that I must find a way of persuading Elaine to take a holiday with me in Maroochydore. It's warmer than I like, but a constant breeze blows off the sea, so nobody needs worry about the weather. This seems odd to a Melbourne, who can spend hours each day trying to calculate the next turn in the weather.



Mooloolaba beach:
The SF Commentary free advertisement for a Queensland
winter holiday
(photo by Jeanette Gillespie).