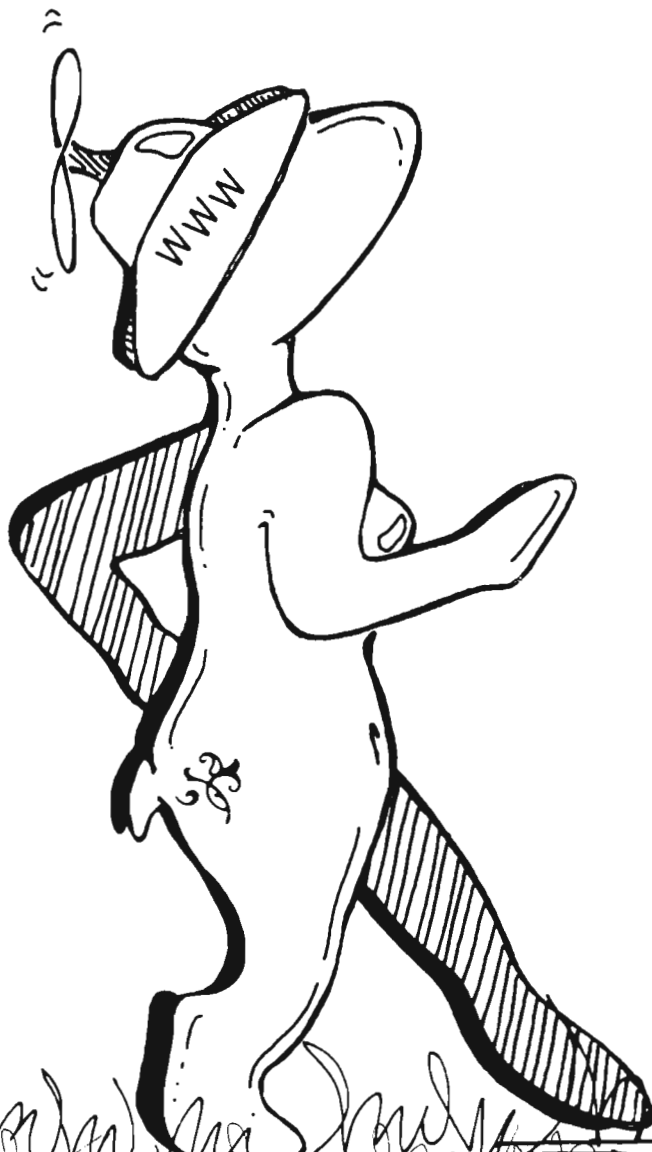


Weber Woman's Wrevenge



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This fanzine is available for contributions, letters of comment, artwork, interesting clippings, uncancelled postage stamps, arranged trades, editorial whim, or A\$2 or equivalent per issue (air mail extra). I prefer some sort of personal response.

The Rubbish Bin

As you'll see, if you didn't already know, I took a trip to North America in June and July this year. This time I didn't get past the west coast, but I did get to see quite a few old friends and new.

At work, I'm still at IBM, despite giving notice to quit before I went overseas. It was most ego-boosting to have several IBM staffers negotiate strenuously with me to return, even if only part-time. I requested several changes to my conditions of employment, all of which were agreed to, so I agreed to return. (Didn't have any better offers at the time, anyway.)

Things haven't quite worked out as agreed, due mainly to the economy, and the fact that IBM is cutting back on staff and contractors world-wide. This means that those who stay are needed to do more work than before. *sigh* Well, at least it's good for the bank account.

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Photo of Ted and Barbara Vincent on page 5 by Carolyn Weber.

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Trip to North America, 1991

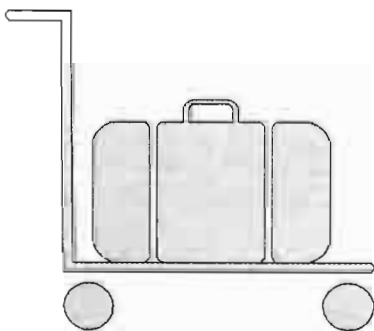
Jean Weber

Tuesday, 18 June 1991. Flew out of Sydney at about 2 pm, arriving in Los Angeles about 10 am, 4 hours before I left. Modern travel is good training for the future, with possibly rather more bizarre time paradoxes.

I think I prefer leaving on a long (13-hour) flight late at night, rather than mid-afternoon or earlier as I did this time. This trip I wasn't sleepy when a logical time in the trip came to sleep, and breakfast came at a time my body thought was 1 am. Consequently I was feeling fairly fuzz-brained going through immigration and customs in Los Angeles. Fortunately that was a quick and painless process, and I didn't have to sound very intelligent.

Upon seeing my parents' address on my form, the customs officer announced that he was from the same part of Washington State, and said cheerfully, 'you'll be there a few weeks too early for summer.'

Turns out I was a bit early for summer in Silicon Valley, California, too – but I jump ahead of my story. After leaving customs, I turned my luggage back in to United Airlines and went to find my flight to San Francisco. By the time I realised I had neglected to get any instructions, I was on the wrong side of a door that I couldn't get back through. I wandered around for awhile before I stumbled on the shuttle



bus to the domestic terminal and eventually got where I was going.

In the meantime I mused upon the fact that listening to airport and railway announcements in Australia, which are usually delivered in fractured English in a heavy ethnic accent

of some variety, was good training for interpreting announcements in Los Angeles airport. The accents were different, but the unintelligibility was similar.

At the security check-in, I discovered that laptop computers are apparently now almost as common as cameras, when I had to join a queue of people demonstrating their machines for the bored attendants.

Eventually I staggered off the plane at San Francisco airport, still over an hour before I left home, and failed to find my friend Robin who was supposed to meet me there. Clutching my computer and my daypack, and probably looking like a zombie, or at least someone stoned out of their mind, I found my way to the baggage collection area where I hung around the wrong carousel for about 15 minutes before I realised I was in the wrong place, wondering vaguely what I'd do if Robin didn't show up.

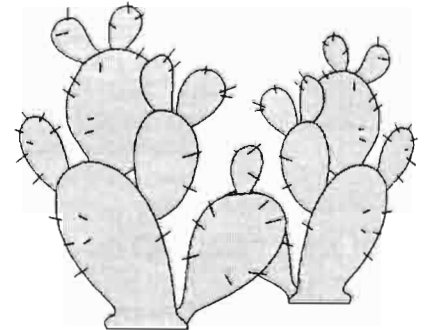
I concluded that I'd find a comfy piece of floor and fall asleep, just about the time I concluded I was in the wrong place. When I finally found the right place, there was Robin, looking vaguely panic-stricken, since she hadn't been able to find me. (She was late because she couldn't find a parking place.) We collected my luggage, drove to her house, gossiped for several hours, said hello to her husband, ate dinner, and I fell asleep for about 14 hours.

I may have managed to phone Laura Testa that evening and say hello (I know I did that sometime). We established that we had no mutually-available time during my brief visit. Pity; I would have liked to see her again.

Wednesday, 19 June. Robin and I went shopping for computer books, gadgets, and other California exotica, and I mailed a lot of fanzines. (The first draft of these notes said 'a suitcase full of zines', but since I didn't mail the suitcase, that phrase was a bit misleading.) Didn't save me much money, but they should get there a lot faster.

Driving around with Robin gave me an opportunity to see a few changes that had occurred in the area in the last few years. One striking feature was the sound barriers erected along some of the older freeways. Made of various materials, mainly timber or brick, they stretched for miles and looked very much like the last scene in the film *Brazil* – only without the advertising! (Newer freeways appear to have been constructed with vegetation-covered piles of dirt as sound barriers.)

In the evening I had dinner with my old friends Louis and Donna Bookbinder and their 9-year-old daughter Lyra. Louis filled me in on some recent financial scandals at Stanford University, where he works.



Louis and Donna also told me about the water restrictions resulting from the long drought, and showed off their drip irrigation system in the veggie garden and the front yard (the latter now features mainly gravel and cactus – quite attractive, actually).

I phoned Berni Phillips and chatted for awhile (she's also not going to be available anytime I am), finding out Alyson Abramowitz's current phone number in the process. Couldn't reach Alyson; her line was busy.

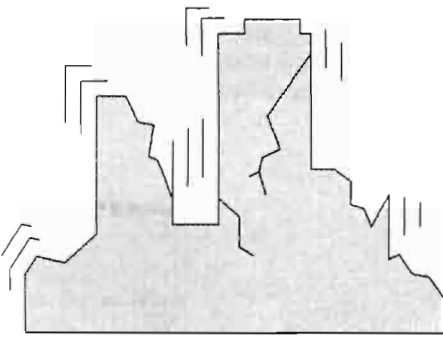
Thursday, 20 June. Robin and I went shopping again, and met her hilarious friend Lil for lunch at an extremely popular salad bar near Stanford. We gossiped for several hours while we pigged out on salad, pasta, muffins, and fruit. Among her many interests, Lil is a ham radio operator, and I learned that Robin recently got her technician's license, so I am further

inspired to study for mine when I return to Australia. (Right after finishing my Russian course, ha ha, my cynical side mutters.)

That afternoon I finally managed to reach Alyson, who had never received my letter saying I was coming to visit. 'What are you doing Saturday?' I asked. 'I had been hoping you could organise a fannish gathering for me, but I guess it's a bit late now.'

'I'm moving that day,' she replied, chuckling. 'There are 13 fans helping me. You're welcome to join us, if you wish.'

What the hell, I thought. It's not exactly what I had in mind, but I haven't got anything better to do. So I agreed.



Friday, 21 June. Robin and I drove to Santa Cruz, partly to look at earthquake damage and partly to try to find her favourite pants manufacturer (Chi), whose shop had perished in the quake but was rumoured to still exist. It was a pleasant day for a drive, and we saw lots of fallen houses in the countryside, some of which were being repaired.

To someone unfamiliar with Santa Cruz, like me, it was hard to tell how much damage the town had suffered in the quake, because the rubble had mostly been cleared away. There were a few clues, however: the most striking was the indoor tiles forming the surface of the parking lot where we parked the car – apparently this had been the ground floor of a building that had collapsed. (The inflatable buildings holding many of the small businesses that had been in the destroyed buildings were another clue.)

We did find the pants shop, which was having a going-out-of-business sale. Not a lot of selection in my size,

but I did get two pairs of very comfortable jeans.

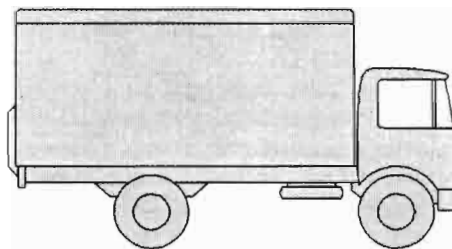
While walking around the damaged part of town, we saw some women collecting signatures and went over to investigate. One woman said, 'Do you want to sign a petition against the recent threats to women's right to choose?' and both Robin and I said 'Yes! You bet!' The woman said, 'It's nice to be met with enthusiasm,' and outlined the latest happenings for us. I said, 'I get very grouchy when I think we did all this 20 years ago and now we're having to do it again, and again, and again.' Robin had been more of a visible activist on this issue than I had, but I'd done my time as well.

We ate lunch on the breakwater by a surfing beach. It's a very pleasant town

In the evening I went to dinner at a very nice seafood restaurant (Pacific Fresh, in Sunnyvale) with my old friends Doug and Verna Graham. Verna and I had met in college, and Doug had been on a committee with Robin and me some years later. It's always a pleasure to see them again.

Saturday, 22 June. Dragged myself out a bit early (still not quite adjusted to the time change), ate breakfast, and Robin drove me to Alyson's, where I met the rest of the moving team, none of whom I knew.

It was a long and tiring day, but somehow I managed to survive without wrecking my back.



Alyson now works for Novell, and so does one of the other women helping her move. I mentioned, in general terms, Eric's opinion of their documentation. Alyson said she agreed, and had remarked upon the problem to some appropriate person at Novell. She had been told that the people who installed the software understood the books. I made negative remarks about accuracy and organisation, and Alyson urged me to urge Eric

to write to Novell with details.

The other woman made several suggestions about ways to get help, most of which seemed to me not very practical as solutions to Eric's problems, given the high cost of international telephone calls from Australia. I hope her suggestions didn't reflect Novell's policy, because telling customers to call a hotline rather misses the point: a product shouldn't ship with lousy documentation. A good hotline is far better than nothing, or a bad hotline, of course. And it's certainly useful as a supplement to good documentation – just not a substitute for it.

Sunday, 23 June. Visited my sister Barbara and her husband Ted Vincent in Walnut Creek. Just before I left Australia I had received a letter from our mother saying that Barb and Ted had sold their house and bought another one, and would be moving the weekend after my visit. They'd bought their current home only a few weeks after my last visit, 2-1/2 years ago, so I'd never seen it. When I phoned Ted earlier in the week to confirm my visit on Sunday, however, he said that they were not moving, and they'd tell me the whole story when they saw me.

The story wasn't terribly dramatic: the people buying Barb and Ted's house had cancelled the purchase when the people buying their house had cancelled, so Barb and Ted had to cancel their plans. Everybody involved is still interested, so if the first domino in the chain can find a buyer, all the deals might still go through, but not right now. Meanwhile most of Barb and Ted's possessions are packed, and they're undecided whether to unpack them. I suggested that if they completely unpacked, that ought to improve their chances of selling the house again. (The gods love to getcha that way.)

At least most of the furniture was still in place, so the house looked very nice, and I got to appreciate it. It's a beautiful place and a good location, and they love it, but they've decided it's too small for them. (They really need a four-bedroom house: one bedroom for them, two large offices, and a guest room.) We also inspected the hot tub, and I got some useful advice on the

subject. They have a fancy, expensive model. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to try it out.

When I showed them some of my photos of my house, and the work I've been doing on it, we got into a long conversation about renovating houses, and Ted showed photos of some of the work they've done. They have now renovated 11 houses in 14 years of marriage. Not all were houses they lived in: many were investment properties. The last house they did, they completely gutted the interior and replaced it, and did some exterior work, in 4 weeks – in their spare time while working full time jobs! (Barb's a partner in an accounting firm, and Ted's an engineer.) Talking to them, I was reminded why I don't like double-brick houses: it's just so much easier to renovate wooden-frame houses.

Their house was open for inspection that afternoon, so we went to a country club called Boundary Oak for brunch, and pigged out on seafood, salad, and chocolate cake, washed down with champagne. (There were a lot of other choices, too: crepes; eggs cooked in various ways; sausages, bacon, and other meats; sweet rolls, bread, muffins; and so on and on.) We laughed about the fact that champagne and fruit juices were included in the price of the all-you-can-eat buffet, but coffee cost extra!

Seeing Barb again was quite a surprise. She's always looked much younger than her age, and not very much like me or our mother. This time she looked exactly like pictures of our

Below: Ted and (my sister) Barbara Vincent. Right: Milton and Carolyn Weber, my parents.



mother when mom was Barb's age (early 40's) or a bit younger. (I remarked on this to my parents when I saw them later, and they said they had noticed this too – Dad, in particular, had remarked on the change in Barb.)

It was a most pleasant day. On my way back to Robin's on the BART, I thought about the contrast with the gloomy stories I'd been hearing from various other people about themselves and people they know. Robin, who's a pretty cheerful person herself, and doing well, has had to deal with a lot of family members and friends whose problems make me grind my teeth in irritation) The petty ways people have of picking on each other, and of punishing themselves, are depressing to think about.

Monday, 24 June. Robin drove me to the airport, where the plane was late arriving from LA and hence late leaving for Seattle. Mom and Dad met me at Sea-Tac and we drove to their place in Lacey. They now live in a retirement community called Panorama City, which is quite nice. Much of the area consists of pre-existing houses which the community is buying up, so there is more variety than in some places I've seen. There's also the nursing home and some apartments as well as the houses, and an administration complex with some shops and a restaurant. About a mile away, easily accessible by bus and car, is a large shopping complex.

I was given a full tour of the house before dinner, including the new room that's being added. (What is it about

our family? We're all always either moving or modifying our homes.) Later I passed out my presents: a desktop-published version of their book (about a relative of my mother's who joined the Army in 1898 or so, fought in the Spanish-American war in the Philippines, then fought in China in the Boxer Rebellion, returned to the Philippines, and eventually married a Filipina and never returned to the State), a copy of my fanzine containing their report on their trip to the Soviet Union, and some photos of my house.

Tuesday, 25 June. Went shopping with my mother, but didn't buy much. The days here are overcast and cool, but it's not raining. In the evening Dad showed slides of their most recent trip, a cruise from Vancouver to Alaska, first up the inland waterway to Scagway and Glacier Bay, then across open water to Valdez and back. The ship, the Universe, is a floating university during most of the year and is converted for tourist use during the northern summer. It's therefore much less luxurious than most cruise ships, which suits my parents better.

Wednesday, 26 June. Shopping again. This time I located a store with slacks I like in my size, and bought lots of clothing. Then we went to a seafood restaurant at Percival Landing in Olympia, where we had a delicious meal.

Thursday, 27 June. Sunshine! Dad dropped me off at the shopping center and I walked back to their place. In the evening he showed slides of their cruise



through the Panama Canal, earlier this year. They had a very nice cabin, in a better location than they had paid for, because so many people cancelled their trips during the Gulf War. This cruise was after the war ended, but I suppose at that point the cancellers had made other plans.

Friday, 28 June. Dinner at another seafood restaurant in Olympia. We reached this one by driving an involved route around a large area where huge piles of logs were stored, awaiting shipment to somewhere. I'm sure it would have put a true save-the-trees person off their dinner.

Saturday, 29 June. Mother and I took a leisurely stroll around Panorama City, checking out all the features. In the early evening I caught the shuttle bus to Sea-Tac Airport. I was the only passenger going to the airport, so had a long chat with the driver. I had a few moments of confusion (threatening to become panic) at the airport when the flight number Janice had given me for Lyn's flight wasn't on the board. Fortunately the United counter staff were very helpful and tracked her down. Janice and Shelley Dutton-Berry were also there to welcome Lyn, but they were glad to have me help spot her – I was the only person who knew what she looked like!

Janice dropped me off at Marilyn Holt and Cliff Wind's house, where I chatted to them for a couple hours before falling asleep.

Sunday, 30 June. Breakfast was a feast of blueberry pancakes, fresh fruit (rockmelon, strawberries and watermelon), and sausages. Yum!

While food shopping with Marilyn, Cliff, and their housemate Cory, I was struck by the vast quantities of fake food – seemed like there was considerably more of that than 'real' food. By 'fake' I mean artificially sweetened, or with substances intended to look and/or taste like other substances, even if made from 'natural' ingredients (soy burgers, for example). So many spreads, and desserts, and drinks, and

things. Fortunately, my hosts' dislike of such things seemed similar to my reaction, so I didn't have to worry about what I ate at their house.

(I think I remarked about this phenomenon in my last trip, but I forget. It's not that Australia doesn't have fake food, also, but it doesn't appear to be such a high proportion of what's available.)

On the positive side, I continue to be impressed by the supermarket salad bars, where you can fill a container with self-selected fresh cut-up ingredients and pay for it by weight. That's a feature I wish Australian food stores would adopt!

In the afternoon we went to a barbecue at Bob Doyle's house. Met Jerry Kaufman, Suzle, Vonda McIntyre, Stu Shiffman, Anni Shechter (sp?), John Berry, Elaine Gunn, Carol Severence (a writer from Hawaii), Lyn, Janice, Chris Bates, and various other people. A small but amusing gathering. We ended up with far more food than we needed, but no one had brought dessert. Apparently this is a most unusual situation in this group.

Monday, 1 July. Eleanor Busby collected Lyn and me around noon and took us to the Seattle Aquarium and the Pike Street Market. I am interested in all the different ways aquariums are designed. This one had a large outdoor area where visitors could wander around the top of the seal, otter and fish tanks, as well as indoor areas to view the same animals from underwater.

Later we visited the Busby house and met Buz, who videotaped us and gave Lyn two of his books, as well as selling her some copies for resale for a fan fund. I enjoyed meeting him.

Dinner with Marilyn, Cliff and Cory was another yummy feast: barbecued chicken, corn on the cob, a couscous-capsicum-and-black bean salad, and strawberry-rhubarb pie (rhubarb from the garden).

It's a pleasantly warm day, about 26°C, with low humidity.

Cliff is complaining about the heat. He's as bad as Eric.

Tuesday, 2 July. Marilyn and I went to the University Bookshop to buy books, then spent several hours discussing technical writing, desktop publishing, and related things.

It's warmer today, about 28°C, but still not humid. I think it's very pleasant, but Cliff, Marilyn, and Cory think it's too hot.

It's after sunset now, and some of the neighbours are practicing their fireworks techniques for the 4th. I'm finding it difficult to adjust to sunset at 9:30 pm and sunrise at 4:30 am. The last time I was in Seattle, it was December, and sunrise was about 8:30 am, with sunset about 4:30 pm – just the opposite.

Wednesday, 3 July. Cliff, Marilyn and I set off about 11 am for Vancouver, making a few detours along the way. We stopped at the US customs in Blaine to get forms for the two laptop computers, just in case of questions on our return.

Eleanor and F.M. 'Buz' Busby.



At Canadian customs, as expected, I was sent to the immigration counter to get my passport stamped, and my car companions had to come in too. There were no other delays, however, nor were we asked a single question about things we might be bringing with us.

We arrived at the Gage Residences at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver about 3 pm, and checked in quickly. The residence staff appeared confused about my room (they couldn't seem to relate it to the others in the group booking Janice Murray had made). Eventually they assured me they'd sorted it out, but I knew I wouldn't believe it until the right people showed up the next day.

The Gage towers feature four 'quads' on a floor. Each quad has six student rooms, a common kitchen/lounge area, and a common bathroom (with only one shower and one toilet). I dumped my bags in my room and set off to forage some food. There was a small deli in the residence lobby, but it was closed; I later discovered that I could have bought everything I wanted there for about the same price I paid at the grocery store I found nearby.

After shopping, I slouched around the residence lobby for awhile, hoping to see a familiar face or two, then went back to the Student Union Building (known as the SUB) for dinner. I arrived just as they were closing at 7 pm, but managed to get a fairly edible hamburger and salad.

I discovered, to my delight, that the entire UBC campus is officially non-smoking indoors, though there appear to be some (unofficial?) smoking areas, judging by local collections of filled ashtrays in the SUB.

More slouching around the lobby was eventually rewarded by the arrival of the pre-registration materials about 9 pm. I helped move boxes of registration packets from a truck to the rego area, picked up my materials, and read the program book while waiting for something else to happen.

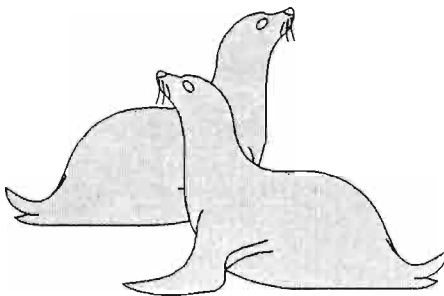
Lea Day and Jan Finder (aka Wombat) turned up about 10 pm. I had considered going with them from Seattle to Vancouver by way of Victoria, but decided the car would be too crowded and I would get grouchy. Considering the length of their day (getting up before dawn to catch the ferry), I'm

glad I decided not to go with them. It was good to finally meet Lea.

And so to bed, before 11 pm.

Thursday, 4 July. Realized I'd made a major boo-boo when I left my black eyeshades at my parents' place. I normally only use them on airplanes, and hadn't thought about the early sunrise and its unwelcome relation to attempts to sleep late at a con. I'd also (accidentally) left my camera flash behind, thus killing any chances of photos of fans. *sigh*

After a leisurely breakfast alone in the quad, I wandered down to the lobby to discover that con registration wouldn't open for another half hour (assuming it opened on time) and no one seemed to know anything about volunteers. As it was a beautiful day, I decided to do some sightseeing. Took the bus to downtown Vancouver and checked out Canada Place, where the cruise ships come in. My parents had boarded their cruise to Alaska here in May. There were three large ships in today, and hoardes of people (mostly elderly) wandering around with carts of luggage.



Next stop was the Vancouver Aquarium, a goodly walk from the Stanley Park trolley stop. I liked the wide paths divided into footpaths and bicycle paths. The Aquarium was quite impressive, with a large outdoor area exhibiting Beluga whales, orcas, harbour seals, and sea otters, all of which could be viewed from underwater as well as above. It was attractive, but I felt sorry for the whales. There were also good indoor exhibits of B.C. fish (especially salmon) and tropical fish.

By now I was starving, but the only food available appeared to be junk food. I settled on some freshly-popped popcorn, which was quite nice. Even-

tually I discovered the cafeteria, but I didn't want to spend much or eat indoors, so I passed it by.

Returning to the UBC campus, I fixed a sandwich and dropped by the volunteers' desk, getting immediately placed on the rego table to spell the morning workers. This enabled me to meet several acquaintances, although others eluded me because panellists and con guests were getting their materials in the Green Room.

One memorable moment was when Kris Demien registered. I misheard her name and was looking in the wrong place in the list. When she corrected me, I suddenly made the connection.

'Kris!' I shrieked, waving my badge at her. 'It's Jean, from Australia!' I leaped up, raced around the table, and hugged her. Her male companion seemed very amused by all this.

I also failed to recognise Fran Skene and Marci Malinowitz, who made themselves known to me, but got a chance to say hello to Frank Denton, Mike Glycer, and no doubt some others whom I've now forgotten.

Fran turned up just as my shift was about to end, so we collected her current friend, Fran's daughter Sylvia, and Sylvia's husband (I don't recall the names of either of the men) and rushed off to the SUB for dinner, collecting Wombat along the way. Once again we arrived just as they were closing, took forever to get through the one open cashier (who was out of change), and were soon kicked out, just barely managing to finish eating. Wombat was grouchy about the lack of organisation, but the rest of us ignored it.

A quick swing through the huckster's area revealed Scott and Jane Dennis, so I took the opportunity to discuss with them what to do with the two boxes of t-shirts they'd left there after Aussiecon II.

Back to the Gage for opening ceremonies. True to the worst of con 'organisation', people weren't even allowed in to the room until half an hour after things were supposed to start, and then we sat around for another half an hour while the technical crew attempted to get things working. The room was hot, and much too small. Many people were standing; many others left. Fortunately I don't expect much from these events.

The only other thing that evening that I was interested in was the ice cream social, but one look at the queue convinced me that I'd try again later, or give it a miss. (I did try later, and got some nice blueberry-ripple.)

Returning to our quad, I discovered that all the people who were supposed to be there, were there: the hotel had got it right after all (or if not, Janice had sorted it out). Janice's sign on the door read:

Contents

Janice Murray
Chris Bates
Lyn McConchie
Jean Weber
Alan Rosenthal
Catherine Crockett
Jeanne Mealy
John Stanley

Some contents may have settled during shipment.
But don't bet on it!

Weller (another ANZAPAn), Amy Thomson, Art Widner, and several other people I've failed to record, dropped in during the evening. Amy was trying to induce Lyn and me into joining BWA (a women's apa), but I

reminded her that I'm still in AWA, and current rules don't allow one to be a member of both.

About this point, in answer to someone's question, Weller remarked that she usually keeps her hearing aid in her bra. Whn she's wearing a t-shirt, it makes a lump. The following remarks were made, by various women:

'Is that your hearing aid, or are you just glad to see me?'

'This one's my hearing aid, this one's glad to see you.'

'My hearing aid went *spung*.'

Possibly you had to be there.

The women's contingent migrated to my room after awhile, and the men appeared to congregate on the balcony, because both Art and Chris smoke. At midnight I kicked the others out and collapsed in bed.

Friday, 5 July. Today I helped out in hospitality for awhile, chopping vegetables and carrying trays of food to the ravening hoardes. (Yes, Eric, you'd expect me to work in the food section, wouldn't you?)

The man in charge wasn't too good at delegating; I'd identify a need (more coffee cups, for example) and he'd say 'I'll take care of it as soon as I can,' rather than telling me where the cups were and letting me take care of it. As

I learned where things were, I simply did stuff rather tha asking.

The food was more varied than I've seen at many cons: bread, cheese, sliced meat, vegetables, condiments – not just 'junk food'. (Lots of people remarked favourably on the food.) Later there was more ice cream (the left-overs from last night). I helped serve and thus scored a taste of more flavours.

In the midst of all this Eric Scott spotted me and said, 'Oh, you're Jean Weber! I've been looking for you! Does the name Eric Lindsay mean anything to you?'

Gosh, what a straight line. Rejecting various responses, I simply said, 'Yes, quite a lot, actually.'

'He sent me an e-mail message a couple of weeks ago, saying you were coming to Westercon, and that we should be nice to you,' he continued, handing me an @! (pronounced 'at bang') badge with my name on it. The e-mail address given is Eric's, with my name substituted for his.

Later I chatted with Carol Severence about her forthcoming book, and saw various other people I wanted to talk to. Lyn McConchie was hanging out mostly in the VIP suite (as a guest of the con, she could get in; I couldn't). Now and then she'd emerge, clutching more signed books for

The crew, left to right: Catherine Crockett, Chris Bates, Jean Weber, Janice Murray, Alan Rosenthal, Jeanne Mealy, John Stanley. (Lyn McConchie was missing.)



FFANZ, and looking rightly pleased with herself.

I grabbed a hotdog at the con barbecue, caught up with the other residents of my quad, took a brief nap, and headed off to the @! invitational party, where I listened to a bunch of programmers talking in obscure dialects. I think I understood most of it, but my favourite phrase was: 'object-oriented Fortran', a subject that caused a good deal of creative silliness.

At 10 pm I headed back to our quad, where we were having a non-party for invited friends. Here I brought out the laptop and we started a one-shot for ANZAPA. Unfortunately some of the key players weren't in, so I hope I can catch them tomorrow.

Saturday, 6 July. Worked hospitality again. The people in charge today were much better at delegating, so I was able to be more helpful. Cleaning up after the ravaging hordes wasn't fun. Spills I can understand, but leaving all

your empty cups and plates on the tables, when rubbish bins are close at hand, is not acceptable behaviour in my book. On the other hand, the con had done the right thing and provided recycling bins for paper, glass, cans, and plastic, and lots of people used them.

I finally managed to catch up with Garth Spencer, with whom I've been trading zines and exchanging correspondence for many years, and had a brief chat.

After a couple of hours tending bar in the VIP suite (the big name authors didn't appear; presumably some, if not all, of them were officiating at the masquerade, which started very late), I returned to our quad and set up the laptop again. Soon afterwards the dinner parties returned and I commanded people to type on the one-shot. Hence a subset of our non-party ended up in my room. Lots of nice people dropped by.

Sunday, 7 July. Checked out of the residence in time to attend the AWA breakfast at the SUB. About a dozen past and present AWA, BWA, and other women were there.

Weller and I then set off to catch the 1 o'clock ferry to Vancouver Island. We only missed one turn, but were still in plenty of time. I spent most of the trip on deck, looking at the scenery.

The entire ship (except for the outside deck areas) is a non-smoking zone. My understanding is that all enclosed public areas in B.C., except for some designated smoking areas, are now non-smoking. How civilized!

We arrived in Nanaimo about 2:30 and set off to explore a bit of the countryside on our way to Victoria.

We had dinner at a pleasant, if unimpressive, salad bar on route, and finally reached Victoria after 8 pm. We drove around town a bit, then headed for our hotel in Sidney.

Monday, 8 July. Explored Victoria on foot, then caught the ferry from Swartz Bay to Tsawassan, Canada, just south of Vancouver. From several points on the road on Vancouver Island, and between Vancouver and Seattle, I could see a very impressive volcanic peak (when the clouds cleared enough), Mt Baker. Although I've seen some of these peaks before (Mt Rainier is one of the better known), they never fail to astound and impress me. They are so very much taller than the foreground hills and mountains, and they seem so ghostlike, because the clouds/ fog/ mist/ other atmospheric effects tend to obscure them so much of the time.

Stopped at the border to claim back the Canadian GST tax we'd paid on hotel rooms and other purchases. The U.S. border official was very pleasant and cheerful and waved us through after a quick look at my passport.

A few miles further down the road the traffic slowed down dramatically and crept along for several miles through a road resurfacing area. It was now 7 pm, and Weller commented that the workers were working awfully late in the evening. I suggested that they were probably on double shifts, taking advantage of the long hours of daylight. Later, Janice Murray and other locals said, 'There are two seasons in Washington State: winter and road construction'.

We finally reached Everett sometime after 8 pm, and found where we were going: the house of several fans whose names I failed to write down. Janice Murray and Lyn McConchie, who had returned to Seattle on Sunday, were there too.

Lyn was very excited. 'I've got an agent! She loves my book! She wants me to make some changes, but she thinks she can sell it!'

After making appropriate shrieks of delight at this news, I suggested that Lyn's trip was now even more a business trip, since she'd consulted with various editors and publishers at Westercon as well.

The ANZAPA group, clockwise from upper left: Janice Murray, W.A. Weller, Lyn McConchie, Jean Weber, Jeanne Mealy.



Dinner was at a good seafood restaurant. Afterwards, Weller wanted to stay and talk with her friends, so I transferred my bags into Janice's car and she drove me to Cliff and Marilyn's. On the way, Lyn and Janice got into a discussion about accident compensation for victims and appropriate punishment for offenders. I'd heard it all before, and didn't want to hear it again, so I was feeling very much like injecting a bunch of stirring remarks (guaranteed to escalate a difference of opinion into a full-scale argument), and in fact one escaped before I got myself under control. My control wasn't good enough to stop me from shouting at the both of them to change the subject. I don't think Janice appreciated this, though I suspect she would have appreciated the alternative even less.

We arrived after midnight, but fortunately they were still up.

Tuesday, 9 July. Talked techie with Marilyn in the morning. Janice and Lyn picked me up in the early afternoon and drove me to the airport,

where I caught the bus to Lacey. The bus was full of talkative people and a screaming baby, so I inserted my earplugs and read my book.

Wednesday, 10 July. Bought a new suitcase, then tried to pack everything into the old and new ones. There's enough space, but the results are extremely heavy.

Phoned Susan Crites to find out what's happening with AWA. We chatted a bit about this year's traumatic events in her family.

Thursday, 11 July. Mother, Dad and I went to one of their favourite seafood places for dinner, and I had fresh Alaskan salmon again. Yum!

On the way back, I saw Mt Rainier for the first and only time on the trip. It suddenly loomed up directly ahead of us, very pale and ghostly, and very, very tall. Very impressive. Must have been an amazing sight in the days before the large numbers of people and their pollution.

Friday, 12 July. Mother and Dad drove me to the Seattle airport, stopping on the way to do some shopping at a huge place specialising in things for travel trailers, camping, and so on. Eventually I got on the plane and started the long trip home.

The airline managed to sabotage my plans for a long nap, by showing *Dances With Wolves* after dinner (between about midnight and 3 am, west coast time). I had a good seat to watch the screen, and for once didn't have to try to stay awake. I was very impressed with the film, even on a small screen.

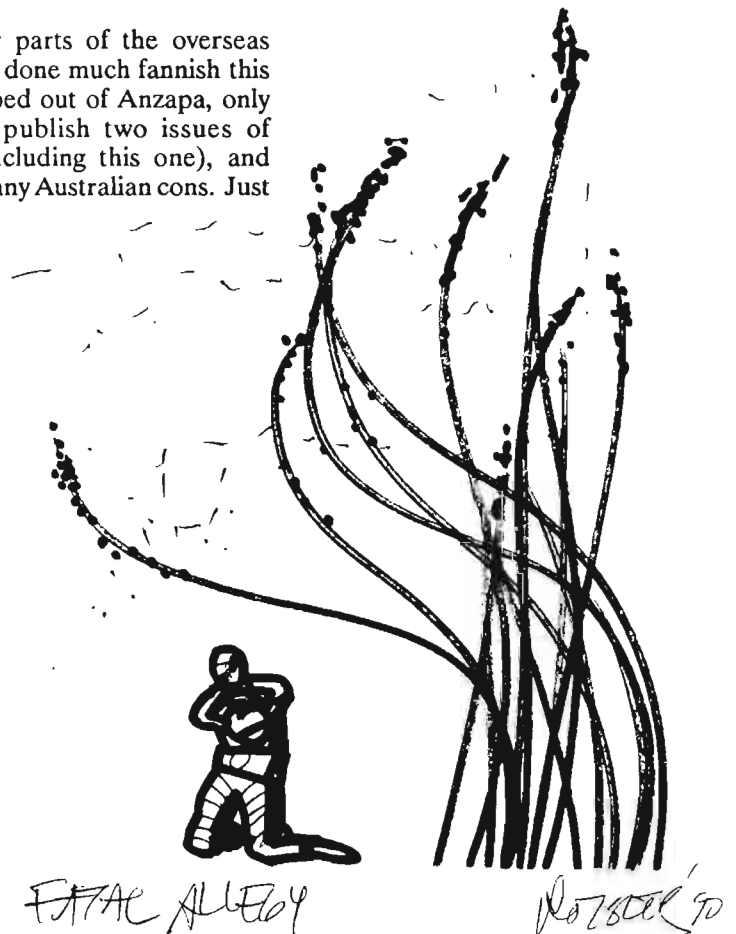
Sunday, 14 July. (Having skipped Saturday crossing the Pacific going west.) Arrived in Sydney before schedule (about 6 am), and got through immigration and customs unusually quickly, so I almost got out before Eric arrived. Went back to Ryde, where we talked for awhile before I collapsed.

Continued from page 2

As for the continuing saga of house renovations, I decided to spend the money and put in the new kitchen cabinets, sink and stove a bit earlier than planned, so that I could rip out the old kitchen and convert it into a photographic darkroom. I bought prefabricated cabinets and installed them myself, even the overhead ones. They look quite good.

In October was held the annual weekend seminar of the Australian Society for Technical Communication (NSW). This year I sold books, presented half of an editing workshop, and attended more sessions than I've done at the two previous seminars. The seminar-organising team of McDonnell-Herman (better known to fandom as Cath & Jack) did a fine job with the administrative side, and apparently suggested the society's committee hold some panel discussions rather than just have people give talks. The panels were very successful, as was the editing workshop. I suspect future such events will include a fair percentage of participatory sessions.

Except for parts of the overseas trip, I haven't done much fannish this year. I dropped out of Anzapa, only managed to publish two issues of *Wrevenge* (including this one), and didn't attend any Australian cons. Just too busy.



Notes from rural New Zealand

Lyn McConchie

Snow

August 20-21 provided us with problems down on the farm. Usually it snows here in winter, the lightest sprinkling a couple or three times a year around August-September or a bit earlier, in July. That's it then.

This August the weather made up its mind not to let us off so lightly. It began to snow in the early evening. It continued all night until we had around 8 inches of snow all over the farm. The main road to Dannevirke was closed.

Ginger, who'd been with friends in Waikanae, was very lucky to get back the night before, as there had been landslips all through the Manawatu gorge. The worst happened only a couple of hours after she went through, and completely closed that road as well.

Morning dawned leaden skyed and freezing. The hens complained loudly, and my investigation revealed that their water pans were solid ice. I provided warm water, and watching them savour the warmth was extremely funny. The geese were also furious about the snow. Their feet were cold and they couldn't get to the grass. I gave them hen pellets and listened to the scolding. Lulu, our milk cow, shivered in the bail. We handed out her favourite treat, Weenamom (a type of bran with additives, including molasses), and made comforting sounds to her.

All the other stock were shocked at the snow. The sheep huddled under trees and the cows all arrived at the nearest fence to their humans and bawled. We stacked my four-wheeled farm bike with hay, and Tony hauled this to everyone. They fell on it with the avidity of Vikings discovering a new settlement to sack, while we beamed at the chomping. At least we had plenty of hay.

I returned inside to a Siamese cat, apoplectic with rage. I'd left him! He hadn't had breakfast yet! The fire wasn't lit! What kind of human was I?? Molto Voce!



I spun like a top in the kitchen for several minutes until his howls were smothered in cat food. While he ate, I hastily lit the fire and stoked it vigorously until it blazed. Full of beef heart with liver, he retired to his armchair and surveyed the place. Hummmm! Things were back to normal and he was once again the Most Important Cat in the house.

I peered out the window watching the hens trying to negotiate a snowy lawn without standing in the snow. Rasti glanced up at my giggles, but so long as I wasn't snickering at him, he didn't care. I gave up the window and settled down to write. It was the best of times – it was the worst of times – but at least I had my writing. A day later the snow melted and everything was mud.

Weaponry

Living in a small town on a farm provides one with endless amusing things, if you find small events amusing.

For a long time I have owned a rather nice Indian army cavalry sabre. I use it for masquerades and thistles on the farm. Around a year and a half ago, I purchased a long bow and a set of arrows to hang on the wall. Sometimes I wander outside and pot at targets with them.

Then the other week, I noticed in our local paper that there was to be a clearing sale. In the listing there was a crossbow. Hummm! Wonder what that would sell for? So I ambled along to find out. It was one that had been confiscated by the Police, no reserve – and no one seemed to want it either. I offered five dollars. Someone at the

back offered ten (in a very 'and that's my only bid' kind of voice). I went to fifteen and it was mine.

I paid happily for it and with it in one hand strolled the length of the main street. I reached the road where the taxis live and when one appeared, hailed it with a wave. The taxi halted, I got in and was driven home. Note that no one in Dannevirke blinked an eye at me wandering around with a crossbow, nor did the taxi driver hesitate to pick me up. That's rural NZ for you!

Ram antics

A day later it was the farm's turn. Ginger and I were discussing moving the sheep around and who was due to lamb next. (She's my nextdoor neighbour and unofficial farm partner.) We glanced out the window as we talked and observed that one of the sheep was acting oddly. He was lying down and thrashing about, then standing up and squirming, then lying down again to wave his feet in the air.

We assumed he'd come down the colic. That's the sort of behaviour that usually signals it. Puzzled as there was nothing in his paddock to account for colic, we ended up trotting over to inspect the stricken one.

At this point, as sheep do, he decided that he felt fine, thank you, and didn't need any medical inspection. Since I can only walk, we had trouble cornering him and after awhile decided that if he could run that fast, there couldn't be too much wrong.

However, as soon as we were out of the paddock, there he was again, squirming and twitching in real distress. Cursing, we got out our sheepdog, brought the whole lot in, and collared him. Over his prone body we found the problem and got the giggles in a big way.

The chap on the other side has put a bunch of hogget ewes out. All beautiful sexy creatures, at least to a young ram.

Excited by them, Lambo had developed an erection. When he ran out of excitement and it crawled back where it came from, it had caught up

some of his long fleece and pulled that inside too. There, halfway back things had jammed. Ooouch! We fixed things, clipped his tummy to prevent it occurring again, and went inside to laugh in peace. Poor old Lambo!

More earthquakes

There has to be something about my friends taking a holiday and leaving me to look after everything. They were due back on the Monday. I noticed on Saturday afternoon that most of the animals were unusually restless. The next morning I have out a little extra hay which produced a longer quiet and then back to the fuss. In the report I always do, I noted it down with '(Quake coming?)' at the end of Sunday's record. I was right!

Coming up to 2 a.m., a black Siamese nose inserted itself into my left ear. 'Someone' then bellowed. I rose vertically in the bed and still half asleep glared at my small friend.

'Wassa matta?'

'Wahahaha!'

I was about to continue with this line of questioning when I heard the earthsound. It's a case of once heard, never forgotten, and I'd heard it twice only last year. I stopped not for anything but leapt from the bed, snatched Sir from his pose, and dived for the doorway.

I arrived there just as the quake did. The house jolted, jolted again, and settled to a gentle rocking. Raste, who doesn't like quakes (probably because I stink of fear when they occur), bawled miserably in my arms. I make soothing noises, but I wasn't too sure I believed myself.

The rocking stopped and I ventured carefully from the frame. Out in the paddock, cows asked each other at the top of their voices, what had that been? From the henhouse came questioning clucks. While from the back the pig announced she knew and she didn't like it either!

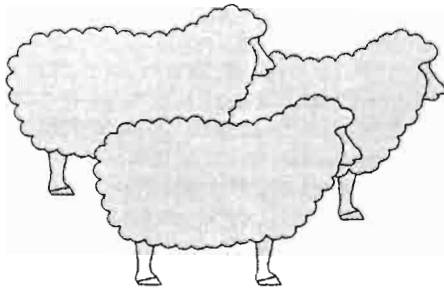
Nothing was broken. Making a hasty tour (in my nightie) of the farm and waving my torch, I checked that everyone was OK out there too. They were. Whew!

The reports came in on Monday morning. A 6.5, but luckily 90 km deep so it hadn't been nearly as bad as it could have been. The quake hadn't

really hit our area, but Wanganui right across the island. However, it had been felt solidly over a length of island of around 1,000 miles.

By the time the afternoon paper appeared, they were able to announce that the Earthquake and War damage claims department had already received 150 claims. It does appear that no one was hurt directly. But there's going to be a line-up of fallen chimneys a mile long, particularly in Wanganui.

In NZ there's a joke about English summers – they do have summer in England, they had it on a Wednesday this year. To that (if this keeps up) we will have to add that we have summer here too – it's between the earthquakes and the Otago floods each year!



Shearing season

Shearing time this year has been total and utter confusion so far. The weather has been very odd owing to this El Nino thing, and consequently, instead of the normal month of rain (September), month of wind (October), more rain in November and then fine for awhile, we keep getting a series of showers.

This means that when shearing fell due, the sheep always seemed to be damp. We thought we'd cracked it finally, when a Sunday was fine with a light breeze. The ewes had all dried off very nicely and we all spent half the day sorting them into the nearest paddock so as to be ready for Trev who'd said he'd be there Monday just after lunch.

Monday morning we were in the cow bails. Tony had left, Ginger was milking, and I was hen feeding. From nowhere a dark cloud appeared above the farm. We looked up. The hens and cow were abruptly deserted as we raced for the nearest paddock, where half the flock were.

The sheep have never come under cover so fast, however it was too late for

the others. By the time we had that half in, it had been raining solidly for ten minutes and the other half were dripping. We then studied the half we had. They were dry(ish), but quite a few of the lambs, moved with their mums onto better feed two days earlier, needed a roll of toilet paper very badly.

Now you can't leave them in with the ewes under cover like that. They rub against each other and in no time everyone has filthy fleeces and you get next to nothing for the wool. This meant we now had to sort fifteen ewes and a wether from 24 lambs. None of them thought a lot of this idea.

Nor, after a hectic hour, did we. Finally we had the lambs incarcerated in one paddock and the ewes in another. At this point, a smart lamb discovered he could 'Irish bank' over the gate and before we could do anything, six more had followed. Round up that entire lot again and re-sort. Listening to the hysterical lamb sounds, a ewe hit the gate hard enough to spring the catch. By some very fast footwork indeed on our part, she was the only one to escape, but that was another lot to retrieve, sort her out and sling back in the field.

The shearing, apart from my three coloured rams, is now completed. I had an early night. I also, for the umpteenth time, contemplated ovidicide!

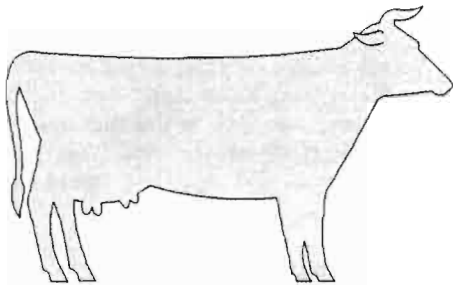
And then there's the cow

A wonderful evening tonight. One of our cows calved a week or two back, producing a gorgeous little sandy coloured three-quarter Limousin bull calf.

All was well for several days until while wandering through the paddock on my way to Ginger's, I spotted that he was scouring. There are various forms of this and fortunately the one he had, required only that he be put on an electrolyte mixture plus antibiotics for two days, then the mixture for several more, before being returned to the cow.

However, neither he nor the cow appreciated this. As far as the pair of them were concerned, we'd gratuitously separated them just for the hell of it.

Just to demonstrate disapproval, they stood as close as they could get and bawled. For two solid days! By



which time Bella's udder was going hard. A sign that we had to take some of the milk off before she developed mastitis.

We managed to sneak Harry, a bucket-fed calf, in between her back legs to empty the two rear teats. However, she wasn't letting him in where she could see him and it was a no-go area to the front. Ginger looked at me – I looked at Ginger.

With great care we manouvered Bella into the yard race and shut the gate on her. Hooking a rope about one hind leg, I took the strain on it while Ginger crawled partway in to milk. She's a trusting soul. If I'd let go of the rope at the wrong time, Bella would have booted her head in. I didn't, but it was close a couple of times.

Then we came to the other front teat. This one was so tight and sort that even us looking at it closely was enough to set a cow jumping. Once more the rope came into play. Rendered very nervous by now, our bovine friend demonstrated apprehension by producing a vast quantity of liquid manure all over the rear of the race. She then stood in it.

Ginger moved in to milk, I tightened my grip on the rope, and Bella began to kick – and kick – and kick! Liquid manure went everywhere, propelled by flying feet. I suddenly found I was looking at life through khaki-coloured spectacles, Ginger discovered that her blue pants had turned to brown (and her temper to a different colour entirely).

None of us would give in. We humans had no intention of having a good cow down with mastitis and her calf having no milk to come back to. One cow was determined not to surrender milk to those not her calf. Eventually it was the rope that quit.

The same performance is on for the morning and tomorrow night. I wonder about my sanity at these times. I wanted to be a farmer?

Letters

John Newman
PO Box 135E
Ballarat East, Vic 3350
Australia
August 1991

We were looking for a house, when we came to Buninyong. Preferably a Victorian house, in need of some renovation. There were plenty in Ballarat, but we wanted the country ambience of Buninyong. It became obvious we either had insufficient funds, or were 5–10 years too late, for all the suitable places were gone, or off the market for the duration of the recession.

So now we are the owners of two of the oldest shops in Buninyong. The theory is, now we have something old, we can get a new-ish (cheap) house. (!)

Over the last months we have been getting the shops set up (or one of them, at least) selling Jan's antiques, with an office installed at the rear for True Software P/L (me!). In Buninyong the idea of a software consultant behind an antique shop seems normal.

One of the shops, which is yet to be fully set up, is around 140 years old as near as we can determine. It is blues-

tone, and was originally a grocery shop part owned by the first mayor of Buninyong. There is some chance of a grant to help restore it.

The antique business goes reasonably well, but the software business is in the doldrums. I'm spending two or three days in Melbourne a week, which means doing around 1000 km a week. Not really what I had in mind for 'moving to the country'!

We work all the time, veg out in front of the TV when too tired, or look desultorily for a home. The first anniversary of our arrival in Buninyong passed with a small celebration of chocolate biscuits!

Still, it is a nice place to live. I don't know how I'll cope with summer, when I have to go back to putting milk in the fridge.

It's a strange thing, how one can be only 150 km from Melbourne, and yet in another time. The head of the Buninyong Festival Committee recently complained about the fuss over multiculturalism.

Claiming it was irrelevant to the Festival, she explained that we already were multicultural, having 'Scottish, English and Irish'.



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Brad Westervelt
1594 - 17th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94122
USA

3 August 1991

Does Gordon Lingard have a home or is he a professional vagabond?

{I'm not quite sure what sparked that comment, but my occasional references to Gordon staying at my place are because he lives in Armidale, some hundreds of kilometres north of Sydney, and needs a place to stay when he's in the 'big smoke'. He's also a student, and lives in rented accommodation (often sharing with other students), a situation that tends to necessitate moving a lot, so if you've had numerous COA's for Gordon, that's why. -JHW}

Buck Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City, IN 47348
USA

22 June 1991

Kay Anderson, a Californian no longer active in fandom, regaled us with several stories told her by a cop friend. One was about a police officer who was sent to break up a disturbance at a beach. He parked next to the

division between beach and rocks, did his duty, and came back to find a sea lion in the front seat of his car. Couldn't call for help because the sea lion objected to his reaching in to get at the radio. Tried shooing it out. Sea lion didn't shoo. Finally had to go to a phone to summon help. An animal control officer finally evicted the sea lion, but the car smelled of decayed seaweed and dead fish for months.

Mark Loney
PO Box 428
Richmond, Vic 3121
Australia
19 June 1991

As I read the Soviet trip report penned by your parents, their comments about Seroflot struck an appreciative chord. This was not because I have ever been anywhere near an Aeroflot plane, let alone on one, but because of the book *Uncovering Soviet Disasters* (Robert Hale, London, 1989), by James Oberg.

I bought *Disasters* in Oxford last year. Only twenty pages out of three hundred are devoted to Soviet air disasters (that is, Aeroflot disasters), but it was more than enough to make me

decide that I never, ever, wanted to go anywhere on an Aeroflot flight. {Mark included an example. -JHW} As your parents have safely returned from the Soviet Union, they might be interested in discovering more about Aeroflot in *Disasters* - as well as the sections on railway accidents, shipping tragedies, nuclear disasters, anthrax epidemics....

I also heard from:

Harry Andruschak, Pamela Boal, Peter Booth, Brian Earl Brown, Jan Howard Finder, Kathleen Gallagher, Judith Hanna, Teddy Harvia, Lynn Hickman (who sent a clipping from *The Blade*, a Toledo, Ohio, newspaper, describing the, er, features of travel on Aeroflot), Chris Nelson, Lloyd Penney, Victor Raymond, Sue Thomason, Julie Vaux, and I suspect a whole bunch of other people whose letters or zines have been mislaid or possibly even filed. (I tidied up recently and can't find a thing.)

Many people mentioned enjoying my parents' trip report, and apparently the copies sent to Europe arrived the same week as the attempted coup in the Soviet Union!



Books

Notes by Jean Weber

Apologies to those who prefer more depth of discussion (either of the events in the book, or of my reactions to it), because this lot is unusually brief, even for me. Some days I'm talkative, but today's I'm not.

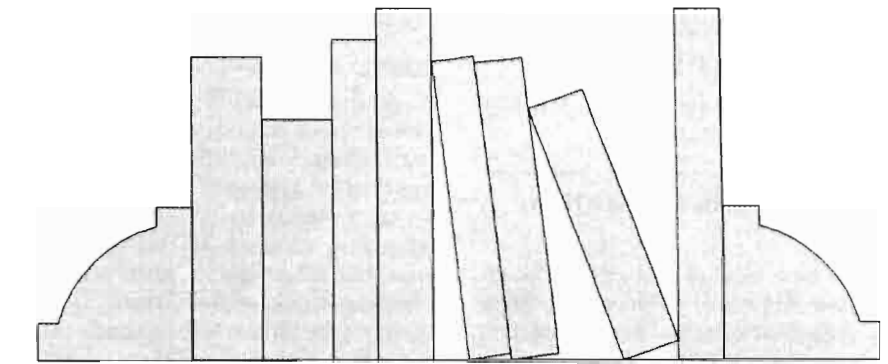
Someone asked me in a letter about the 'logic' of my selections (and the length of commentary) for this column. There really isn't much logic, although I do prefer to give more space to books that I think don't get a lot of coverage in other zines. That's one reason why sometimes you'll see a long blurb on a lightweight book, while a major work gets only a sentence or two.

Wormwood, Terry Dowling, 1991, Aphelion Publications, PO Box 619, North Adelaide, SA 5006.

Another collection of bizarre stories by this author. Cover by Nick Stathopolous. Takes place in Australia far in the future, after the aliens have taken over the earth. Not for those whose tastes don't stray beyond the fast-paced 'action' tale. These require a bit of thought, but reward the reader well. I also suspect that I missed numerous references to literature and myth.

The Women Who Walk Through Fire, (Women's Fantasy & Science Fiction, vol. 2), edited by Susanna J. Sturgis, 1990, The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA 95019.

I bought this book because I'd met one of the authors, Carol Severence, at Westercon, and found her very interesting. Then I discovered that another of the stories was Lucy Sussex's often-reprinted 'My Lady Tongue'. Carol's story is excellent, as are all the others in this collection.



Greenmantle, Charles de Lint, Pan Books, 1988.

A thought-provoking fantasy set mainly in Canada. Features a young woman, a retired Mafia hit-man, a wild girl, and the stag/horned man, among others. Excellent characterisation.

Moonheart, Charles de Lint, Pan Books, 1990.

Regular paperback edition of a book I've reviewed before. Also set in Canada, this one features a house that can move between realities, the odd collection of people who live in the house, some strange artefacts, a genuine warlock, and some folk who dabble in magic.

Pacific Edge, Kim Stanley Robinson, Tor, 1990.

A pleasant tale set in a post-industrial 'ecotopia' in Orange County, southern California, in 2065 AD. Inappropriate technology might have been banned, but politics and romance still complicate people's lives, and the technology lurks just around the corner. I quite enjoyed this glimpse at a future that embodies many of my favorite fantasies of 'how the world ought to be'.

On My Way to Paradise, Dave Wolverton, Bantam, 1989.

I'd read the first part of this book in *Writers of the Future*, Vol. 3, and was very impressed with it. (Takes place in Central America, following a drug-dealer, the drugs being those for healing, rejuvenation, and the like.)

The next part of the book, unfortunately, dragged on much too long and reminded me too much of the long

boring bits of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*. (Takes place on a ship headed for another solar system; the main character has been hijacked to fight in someone else's army, and is being trained on a simulator to use the weapons.)

Once past that bit, the book read well again, as some of the reluctant soldiers stage a mutiny and get heavily involved in the politics of their new planet.

The most interesting part of the book, for me, was the characterisation of the Japanese samurai-types whose cultural differences from their 'hired' soldiers cause considerable misunderstandings on both sides.

All the Weyrs of Pern, Anne McCaffrey, Bantam, 1991.

Delightful continuation of the Pern saga, though one must really suspend one's disbelief at several points. The AI (artificial intelligence) from the original colony ship has been discovered, and got working again. It claims to have a plan to stop the fall of Thread for ever, but it won't tell the locals what the plan is, until they bring their level of scientific and technical knowledge up several centuries' worth in a couple of years. Some folk fear this technology, not always without reason, and try to stop the project.

Rats and Gargoyles, Mary Gentle, Corgi, 1990.

Fascinating fantasy by one of my favorite writers. Features some of the same characters as in *Scholars and Soldiers*. I've failed to find an adequate way to describe it briefly, without giving a totally incorrect impression.

The Folk of the Fringe, Orson Scott Card, Tor, 1989.

Five excellent stories set in Utah after a nuclear devastation.

Earth, David Brin, Bantam, 1990.

I've run out of superlatives to describe this book. There are these two mini-black holes devouring the earth, and the scientists need to find out how to stop them, and what caused them.

I like hard sf books that show scientists realistically (by which I mean they remind me of real people I know who are engaged in science). Brin's books are always good that way. In this one, I particularly liked the Maori scientists who enjoy disconcerting outsiders by acting like superstitious tribal folk until the others make fools of themselves with their assumptions.

A World of Difference, Harry Turtledove, Del Rey, 1990.

There is life on Minerva, an alternative non-quite-Mars planet, and the tribes are at war. When humans arrive, they get caught up in the local politics. The result is amusing, but deadly serious, too.

Beyond the Fall of Night, Arthur C Clarke & Gregory Benford, Ace, 1990.

The first part of this book is Clarke's *Against the Fall of Night*, first published in 1948. The second part is Benford's sequel, which shows many similarities to his *Great Sky River*. The difference in writing style of the two men is dramatic, but the combination works well.

Barrow, John Deakins, Pan, 1990.

An enjoyable fantasy 'novel', actually a collection of longish short stories connected by an old man's narrative and some overlap of characters. The Old Man occasionally influences events in the town, but mostly he observes and teaches.

Twistor, John Cramer, NEL, 1989.

A first novel by this writer of science fact articles. Good hard sf with some very believable research students and older academics. Cramer needs to polish his skills in blending characterisation with the plot, but otherwise he turns out a fascinating book, full of scientific discovery (the twistor effect sends things between parallel universes) and industrial espionage.

Shadowkill, Jo Clayton, Daw, 1991.

Another enjoyable tale featuring Shadith, once one of the personalities trapped in the diadem.

Smart House, Kate Wilhelm, Leisure Books, 1989.

A 'Charlie & Constance' mystery, featuring a computerised house and the brilliant, if socially inept, people associated with it. When the designer dies during a birthday-party game of *Assassin*, did the house do it?

Tales of The Witch World 3, edited by Andre Norton, Tor, 1990.

Excellent collection of stories, including one by Carol Severence and many by better-known names. It's not necessary to be familiar with Norton's *Witch World* novels to enjoy this book.

Knight of Shadows, Roger Zelazny, Avon, 1989.

The third novel in the second series of *Amber* books. It's logical, but not always rational, and full of smart-ass comments on whatever's happening at the time. Thoroughly delightful.

Merovingen Nights #7, Endgame, edited by C.J. Cherryh, Daw, 1991.

Presumably the last in this 'shared world' series, which I've thoroughly enjoyed, despite the details being dragged out in far too much detail, and

too many fascinating side-issues not being developed.

Grass, Sheri Tepper

Paperback reprint of this excellent novel.

Wild Seed, Octavia Butler.

British reissue of the first volume of a superb series.

This is the Way the World Ends, James Morrow, Ace, 1986.

A surreal and bizarre indictment of the arms race.

Haunted Mesa, Louis L'Amour.

A Western writer who does a fine job with an alternative-dimensions explanation of the Anasazi mystery.

Flinx in Flux, Alan Dean Foster.

I assume from the tone of this book that it's one of a series, written for young adults. Flinx has these somewhat superhuman powers which he is learning to control. People try to kill or kidnap him. Other people need his help. An interesting and enjoyable read while waiting in airports.

Good News from Outer Space, John Kessel.

Could have been quite amusing (and many people will probably find it so), but I found it depressing. Religious fanatics are too real, and so is the harm they can do.

The Breakthrough, R. Hazen.

Not fiction. An account of part of the superconductor story. The excitement of discovery, the perils of publish-or-perish, and the politics of science and technology, especially when potentially big money and awards might be the result of a discovery.