

Round **the**
World

Introduction

Poor Waldemar Kuming was supposed to get a CHICON report from me: this is, I suppose, a little too late to serve his purposes.

We start on 12 August, 1982. I have a rather nifty round-the-world ticket which Robin Johnson has arranged, involving flights with Thai Airlines, Air Lanka, Sabena, American, and Air New Zealand. Jennifer is pregnant and will remain in Melbourne. *My* schedule is Eurocon, Silicon, and Chicon on successive weekends. I probably travelled further to get there than did any other attendee at Chicon. Please bear with me.

After Eurocon

Mönchen-gladbach-Goslar-Frankfurt-Kassel-Frankfurt-Freiburg-Basel (461+310+480+344 km) (With a little Rheinfelden on the side)

Jennifer and I had a few days of travelling before we moved on to England for Silicon. I wanted to show her Goslar and Kassel, and that is where we went, using Langen as a base.

We could catch a train direct from Mönchen-gladbach direct to Goslar (provided we started early in the morning), and this gave me an excellent opportunity, the night before, to practise my German on the manager and make clear that we would not be needing breakfast. We eventually understood one another.

The journey is only just over 300 kilometres but it takes five and a half hours, with the result that we arrived in Goslar early in the afternoon. We would have to leave at around 5.30 p.m. in order to reach Frankfurt by mid-evening. This was still much more relaxed than my time there about a week earlier!

Because I felt I knew my way around we were much more efficient, and made only one big mistake — wanting to see inside the Kaiserpfalz. There was an admission charge



which would have been bearable except that it entitled one to hear a long lecture on the glories of the German Empire; I at least hadn't come for that, but to look at the painted-wood ceiling.



We walked out partway through, feeling that we had had our money's worth, at least visually. Then, out behind the Kaiserpfalz, we found the sculpture which Henry Moore gave to the people of Goslar after the Second World War; there was enough light to photograph it, but then I dropped my camera, jamming a part of the mechanism



and preventing me from setting exposures for a while.

At least this meant plenty of opportunity to amble about, not doing anything but pick up ambiance; going to Goslar yourself is about the only way you can find out about that.

We reluctantly caught a train for the longish journey to Frankfurt and



Langen.

Next morning it was off to Kassel. The 200-kilometre journey takes just over two hours, so we would have plenty of time there.

You could buy a three-day pass to the *Documenta*, something which made a great deal

of sense once you realised that the art works were scattered throughout three large buildings and the spaces between them.

In our case, with so little time at hand, we chose to catch a glimpse at least of everything that was visible. This meant that there was no chance to look critically or extensively at anything, merely to form an impression. In some cases, of course, you were trapped by a particular piece. I was impressed once again with the Gerhard Richter paintings on show, and I felt just as I had in front of Paulus Potter's *The Bull* when we rounded a corner and directly in front of us were paintings by Stephen Mckenna and Carlo Maria Mariani. Mariani comments about his own work:

With my works I have proposed the rigorous re-reading and re-interpretation of a whole generation of artists, above all the German artists towards the end of the 18th century.

It was a pleasure to see paintings by some Australians which fully merited their place, and even, down in a basement, some of the props from Syberberg's *Parsifal*. We bought a catalogue, some prints, and two T-shirts

(artworks themselves, you understand, not mere items of clothing).

One of the buildings was not wholly occupied with *Documenta*, and we took a look in the other areas. Lo, a room full of paintings by Tischbeins! Not just the Tischbein we knew about, W., but also J., etc., etc. The whole family must have painted madly, and no wonder Mariani has plenty to work with.

We still had half an hour or so to spare, so looked quickly at the technical museum before catching the train back to Frankfurt; this gulp of Culture was going to have to last me for over a week.

We spent a day recovering with Cherry and Horst before setting off again, heading south for Basel. In early-afternoon we got off the train at

Freiburg where Jennifer hoped to



meet up with an oboist friend of hers; we didn't find him, but an assistant in a

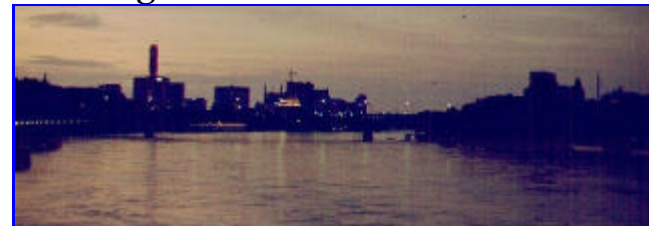


photographers' store fixed my camera and it has worked well ever since. We did spend two pleasant hours wandering around before catching the train on to Basel.



We had relatively little time in Basel, but as it turned out we did have one unanticipated adventure.

That night we stayed up fairly late talking with Jennifer's friend, because Jennifer would have to leave in the afternoon of the next day, catching a train to London. We



were both due to arrive in London in the morning to allow us to take a train up to Newcastle for Silicon.

But that left the whole of the morning free, and some of the afternoon. So we went on a journey up the Rhine.

Rheinfelden is only about 16 kilometres upstream from Basel — and only about 16 minutes by train. This meant we could take a somewhat leisurely cruise for an hour or so up the river, wander around in Rheinfelden for an hour or so, then catch an early afternoon train back to Basel, allowing Jennifer to leave for London later in the afternoon.

It was somewhat overcast as we walked down to catch the boat, so we were inclined to wonder whether it had been a good idea after all. Then there were our fellow boat-trippers, all standing in deadly-silent orderly queues waiting to go on board.

But there was no alternative, and we did want to see another part of Switzerland.

The trip could not have been better. As soon as the boat cast off the other passengers, released from the onerous duty of being Swiss, suddenly became a raucous singing, card-playing band of holidaymakers. That was something we hadn't expected.

The only interruption to the smooth journey was being lifted up through one lock,



an event which Jennifer thought ought to be preserved on about half a roll of film. On the northern, German, banks of the Rhine were the fields of grapes which we might have



anticipated had we thought about it,

amongst which were scattered occasional small villages.

Eventually the boat pulled in at the wharf at Rheinfelden which we discovered was a town which spreads across the Rhine and therefore across two countries. We stuck with the Swiss side, walking through a tiny town square surrounded by buildings which



easily 500 years old and before we knew it we had emerged from the other side



of

Rheinfelden into the neighbouring countryside; we beat a retreat to the edge of the town, pausing in a park to eat lunch (purchased from a nearby supermarket



which did seem very much out of place). It had been a relaxing time for both of us, and



just what we needed.

From there it was only a short brisk walk to the local railway station, and in no time we were back in Basel. As Jennifer had already packed she had no trouble catching her train for London via Paris.

I stayed on overnight in Basel, travelling across next morning to Zurich by train to pick up my baggage and catch my 'plane (remember that booking I had done in Zurich just under two weeks before?) to Heathrow and thence to Kings Cross station in time to meet Jennifer and catch an early-afternoon train up to the north.

Silicon

Miraculously all the timing worked out and we all met up with Chris Priest at Kings Cross. Jennifer had a rail pass, so her fare wasn't huge, but I had to pay something like £30-40 for a second-class return ticket. We arrived in the late afternoon and there was no room in the inn — I mean that my letters to the organisers booking a room hadn't reached them, for some reason. But there was space at a nearby hotel, and we stayed there.

Silicon is the kind of convention it is easier to enjoy than to describe (and this is what most fans ought to do anyway). It's very much a participatory sort of thing, with few if any items which exclude those attending.

The only problem for me was that so many of the program (?) items were linked to science fiction; you were expected to remember plots of old sf stories, for example or, even worse, the plots of recent sf stories. This was pretty foreign stuff to me, but I could bumblingly answer some of the quiz questions.

Silicon is also the kind of convention where you find a high density of BNFs



enjoying themselves and NOT sniping at one another. It all worked very well.

One of the best-worked-out features of the convention was the banquet (?) on the Saturday night, which had been arranged at a local Pakistani restaurant where the management had contracted, for a fixed price, to bring food out until everyone could eat no more. I was impressed by some of the mighty eaters there that night.



On the Saturday morning we took advantage of the convention's slumbrousness to do a bit of sightseeing. This was not particularly spectacular, and when Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna heard about it they poo-pooed our feeble local efforts and said that we would have to see Hadrian's Wall. We had no objections, so that was set for the Sunday morning when, it was assumed, the convention would be slumbering again.

We took a train to Hexham, and from there were meant to catch a 'bus to the wall



and to a ruined Roman camp. When the 'bus didn't appear we all four reflected on the fact that it was Sunday. Then we reflected on the fact that it looked like rain. We reflected separately and we reflected together. Eventually all this stuff must have had some effect because a 'bus did come, and we spent a pleasant time at the Roman camp, and a pleasant but windswept (if you know what I mean) time tottering along a section of the Wall.

Joseph pointed out how the terrain made it hard for the Picts and others to even reach



the base of the Wall; I thought about the similar problems offered by the train.

Overall we were somewhat delayed by this stuff, and so only had a couple of hours before we had to catch a train back to London. Silicon itself I had enjoyed as much as Seacon. But some of the surrounding elements made it even more pleasant. This was about the last pleasure I was to have in England.

Jennifer was going to stay on in London with our friend Virginia (then writing for *The Observer*), returning to Australia a little after me, and flying via Alaska. I was to fly to Chicago on the Wednesday.

Via Brussels.

Robin Johnson had impressed on me the necessity of rechecking my flight with Sabena, so that was a priority task for the Monday. I also wanted to ring Dick Smith, who was going to meet me at Chicago.

These two tasks occupied almost the whole of the next two days, leaving me in a less than happy mood; Jennifer remembers it more as a continuous rage.

The problems were few in number, but insusceptible to easy solution. The first was that the suburban train network was running a little off-schedule, making it difficult to plan travel around London. The second was that the proportion of public telephones which worked was even lower than I had expected. I admit that I was probably spoiled by having just come from Germany. For example, at Kassel with Jennifer we had a few moments to spare before the train left, so I telephoned David Grigg in Australia from the railway platform to talk about how things were going.

This problem with London telephones made it very difficult to check up with people we were supposed to be meeting, much less ring Dick Smith in Chicago! By the end of the first day I had

at last found a Sabena office interested in my ticket, but I hadn't made any progress at all on the telephone calls. We had dinner with Chris and Virginia, and I steeled myself for the next day of terror.

We wanted to do some mildly touristy things, so once again set off for central London, where we had the usual problems. In mid-afternoon I was finally able to speak to Dick Smith. I even managed to squeeze in a bonus call to Malcolm Edwards, but then he was in London.

It was thus in a somewhat steamed-up frame of mind that I left England in 1982 — not at all what I ought to have felt after the pleasures of 1979. Perhaps one day it will be possible to change those feelings.

To Chicago, and what I did there

[Note: this section was mainly prepared in 1996, and reflects a change in technology and a change in audience — most of the section was initially given orally at a meeting of the Adelaide fan group, Critical Mass. The initial transcription was done by Yvonne Rousseau.]

Flying to Chicago was a breeze. Robin Johnson had explained that Sabena had a great system in Brussels which meant that I would get an easy seat allocation — and it worked. As you left the inward flight you passed a small desk at which they allocated the seats for onward travel; then you were directed to the correct flight lounge where you sat comfortably waiting to board, thinking about the fact that those around you were almost all waiting for their seats to be allocated.

I don't mind at all little hops like the trans-Atlantic one, so I felt quite fresh when I arrived at O'Hare Airport. If Dick Smith and I had our signals right, he would be meeting me here.

The problem with arriving in Chicago for me was that I was arriving on the Wednesday and I was due to depart on the Monday morning, to

come back to Australia, which meant things were going to be awfully rushed. Another problem was that I'd arranged to stay with Dick Smith, who's an American now prominent with the bid for 1999. Dick and I had exchanged some letters, but I'd never seen him and he'd never seen me, and O'Hare airport is one of the larger airports in the world. And so one of the things that Dick and I were puzzling about was how either of us would recognize the other in this vast sea of people that arrives on jumbos at O'Hare every hour.

For some reason, it worked — we must have had some aura, or sparkle in our eyes, and there was really no problem working out that that weird-looking fellow must be Dick Smith, and he worked out that that weird-looking fellow must be John Foyster. But Dick, unfortunately, wasn't just looking after me for a night; he was also somewhat involved with running the convention. That meant things were a little bit tight, as far as time was concerned.

Therefore, one of the first things we had to do was quickly go and do some stuff at the convention and, as it happened, that meant driving on that freeway that goes *through* a building in Chicago — I'm sure you've seen

movies of it. Anyway, it's pretty weird to be going -- well, it was for me in those days -- to be going along the freeway and suddenly go through a hole in a building and out the other side. (But Dick also took time out to make sure that I was driven through architecturally more interesting parts of Chicago, something which is pretty easy to do when you live in Frank Lloyd Wright-ridden Oak Park.)

That preliminary experience of the hotel, which was down by the Chicago river, was interesting because it was the first time I'd been in one of the big American hotels that have a sort of five- or six-storey atrium. This is in fact an area which is extremely suitable for science-fiction fans provided that there are sort of tiers up the six floors where fans -- science-fiction fans -- can stand and sort of look up and see, oh there's someone that you want to talk to. Now, if only they'll stay still while you get a lift and go up to the fourth floor, you'll be able to track them down...

This is because the key thing that we're not aware of in Australia is that the science fiction convention -- the world science fiction convention overseas, with many thousands of

persons -- can lead to a situation in which two people who know each other spend three or four days trying to meet up. That happened to me in 1979 in Brighton when I wanted to meet up with Ethel Lindsay. It wasn't until the Sunday afternoon that we actually located one another. And that was only about two to three thousand people -- it was quite a small convention.

The Los Angeles convention in 1996 will have more than five thousand people. Now the single most important thing in a large science fiction convention is, of course, being able to meet the people that you intended to meet.

One of the things that helps you to do that is the program. The program lists where all the famous science fiction writers are going to talk about particular activities, or they're going to autograph books, or they are going to sing silly songs, or whatever it is that they're going to do on the program. You then take your choice and hope that they are there.

Now quite often, of course, there are ten -- twelve -- twenty different items going on at the same time and for anyone, therefore, it's quite a problem to perhaps go to the two people whom you most want to hear -- two writers as alike as,

say, Lois McMaster Bujold and Bill Gibson. If they're on at the same time you have a real problem getting to hear both of them speak. And so one of the things that happens at a world science fiction convention is that you go to the program because you want to hear a particular speaker— a favourite writer, or perhaps the topic is interesting: how to make Martians out of single-cell entities, and so on.

Now I must confess that in terms of reporting to you about what happened at the 1982 world science fiction convention, I'm a most unreliable reporter. Quite apart from the fact that it was fourteen years ago, I really didn't go to very much of the program, but I suppose it would be only sporting to devote a little bit of time to telling you about the parts of the program that I did go to.

Yes, there was the business session — we'll talk about that later — but I did go to one item where I was meant to talk about Australian fandom and what a wonderful thing it was. And what we found there was that the slide projector that we asked to have wasn't there. Now when you've got your stack of slides you can't really

hold them up and



ask everyone take a quick dekho... Mind you, of course, there were in attendance only about the number of people presently in this room, because not too many people at that convention were terribly interested in Australian science

fiction fandom. And so that item might have sort of passed off into oblivion.

But there were evaluation sheets handed out to the audience by the committee at the convention at the end, which asked for ratings on the item and, later in the convention, we were given feedback about how good or how bad the item was. And I think we were advised that we should have been better prepared, but we had our own views about what the problem was there.

I also went to something that passed, I suppose, for something like the opening of the convention. But I was a long way down the back, and it was fairly boring, and not very much was happening, and so all I can recall was that there did seem to be applause for the opening of the convention at some stage. Most people, of course, at the convention weren't *at* the opening of the convention.

The room wasn't big enough, for a start. And indeed at most world science fiction



conventions now there would be very few of them at which there is actually a room that could hold all the attendees if all the attendees wanted to go. You just can't do that. And mostly, of course, people don't want to be all there together doing the same thing, because the interests that science fiction fans have are so diverse. So those were two particular items that I went to on the convention program and there were, I guess, two others.

I did go to the business meeting and it was just as well, because the Australian contender — I mean, all the contenders for 1985 — had been warned that they would be expected to make a presentation. And I think we were told we would

have ten or fifteen minutes to give a presentation. It was just a preliminary.

Now, of course, politically that's not the kind of time in which you're doing all the back-room stuff, so there's a sense in which it's important, but it is a lead-up to the actual presentation and is therefore mildly important. So I went to the business session, which is usually — and on this occasion certainly was — held fairly early in the morning.

And I really disgraced myself by sitting up the back of the room next to Mike Glycer, who's chairman of the 1996 world convention. And he and I made smart-arse remarks about how badly run the convention was so far — the kind of thing that everyone talks about anyway but we just joined in the fun. And we also tried to work out ways of subverting the rules running the convention.

One of the ones that we did pretty well on was a rule about the semi-professional fanzine award. There was to be some rule change about eligibility and one of the people who was obviously pretty anal, and was into rules in a big way, had come up with this complicated rule for which category you got into. So after the

description was given — it was, you know, you had to publish so many issues in the year, have so much circulation, blah blah blah blah — and, if all that happened, then you got into that category.

So, after the definition was given, and Glycer and I were making these rude remarks as usual, I pointed out to Mike that the daily newszine of the world convention, of which he was the editor that year, met the conditions for a semi-professional magazine because it had the circulation and it had the numbers and, what's more, if he wanted to win a Hugo, he was very well placed to encourage people to vote. But, of course, anyone who becomes chairman of a world science fiction convention is entirely honourable. So Michael didn't take advantage of this golden opportunity to add to his Hugo collection.

Anyway, the time came for the presentation of the 1985 contenders and we were sort of warned in private, and then told publicly, that strangely enough the business session was running a little late and because this wasn't, you know, the real bidding session, could we just cut it back to five minutes.

And so, because `A' for Australia comes first, I was invited to make the presentation on behalf of Australia — but could I keep it down to five minutes.

Now although the business session of the world science fiction convention is, of course, an immensely important event, the number of people attending the business sessions is pretty small, and the room in which they're held is pretty small. So I didn't have to go down to a microphone or anything. I just stood up where I was and said, `Mr Chairman, in five minutes I couldn't even *begin* to tell you how wonderful a 1985 world science fiction convention would be in Melbourne' — and I sat down. At that, there was stormy applause because the business session had just picked up four and a half minutes.

This also made it hard for the following contenders to give long presentations. So the long and short of that was, Australia won the convention the following year and then ran it into the ground in 1985. But that's not the story I'm going to tell you.

And then I did go to one other program item, and if you add all of these items together, you'll find that it probably comes to about two — two

and a half — hours, tops, out of Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. But the item that I went to was an item about fan funds.

Now fan funds started forty years ago when money was collected to take British fans to American conventions and vice versa. And it's a tradition that's gone on ever since. Now if you're in this meeting, you've almost certainly been tapped to make a donation to DUFF or to GUFF.

DUFF was a con trick that we well-known Australian con men set up in the early 1970s, because in 1970 we began to plan to run the world science fiction convention in Australia in 1975. And one thing we needed to do was have more interpersonal exchanges between the two countries and so the logical thing for us was to set up a fan fund to exchange people between the United States and Australia. So the Down Under Fan Fund was born, and amongst the nominees for the first year were people like Andy Porter and Buck Coulson — both of whom are still active in fandom — and the ultimate winner, Lesleigh Luttrell. And Lesleigh came out to the science fiction convention in Sydney in 1972. So this panel about fan funds focused on the TransAtlantic fan fund, but also they were going

to spread more generally. And I was interested in this item because not only had I been the administrator — the initial administrator — of the Down Under Fan Fund but I'd also gone to Brighton in 1979 as the winner of the inaugural Getting Up-and-over Fan Fund which exchanges fans between Australia and Europe (and vice versa). And Mr Orszanski, here present, is another GUFF winner.

So I was quite interested in this discussion about fan funds — went along and sat down like Jacky down the front. You know how it is when you're interested in an item in the convention and you're not quite sure whether you want to be up the front so you can hear what's going on or up the back where you can make smart-arse remarks — and so I sat down the front, not knowing too much about what was going on behind me. And so there was a point during the panel when I was suddenly shocked out of that sort of semi-daze that you're in when you're



pretty interested in what's going on but (on the other hand) it's been a long day and it's not necessarily the most exciting stuff you've ever heard — to hear one of the people on the panel saying, 'And, of course, there have been other fan funds beside the transAtlantic fan fund and, for example, right in this room *now* you have the first winners, of GUFF — down the front, John Foyster — and Lesleigh Luttrell for DUFF coming down from the back of the room.' I looked around, and there was Lesleigh who I hadn't seen for six years, because I visited her in Madison in 1976.

So she came down and sat next to me down the front, and we talked to each other, and I

assume that the panel continued but I certainly don't know anything about it. And I'm assuming that most of the people in the room didn't think we were all that rude to be sitting right down the front, talking away to each other very noisily and ignoring the people speaking and ignoring the crowd behind us. So, you see, that is one advantage of a program item — sometimes you wind up meeting people that you want to meet but you didn't expect to actually be at that item. That's quite a plus.

Well, now I'm afraid I'll have to say that that completes my discussion of the program at the science fiction convention. I'm sure there were awards for Hugos, and I'm sure there was a masquerade ball and no doubt many famous science fiction writers gave important speeches (and much rubber chicken was eaten) but I did not hear any of that. I wasn't involved.

One of the reasons I wasn't involved was that a key activity for a bidding committee at a science fiction convention is running the bidding parties. Now, running bidding parties is a full-time occupation for several



people, and for this particular convention I had taken a suite, which actually consisted of three rooms, and we ran parties for three successive nights. When I say `we' I refer of course to myself and my rooming companion, a Mr Peter Toluzzi. In those days Mr Toluzzi was famed — and for all I know, still may be — for his interest in exotic chemical substances and young women. And some people were inclined to wonder how it would work out if he and I were room mates.

Well, I have to tell you that it worked pretty well, because we were rarely in the suite together. The schedule would normally call for me to be involved in running the room party through till

probably four o'clock in the morning — at which point I would go to sleep, and then wake up at nine or ten o'clock the next morning, to go out to forage for provisions for the next day's party. And around about that time, Peter would crawl back to the room. And he would then occupy it for the next few hours while I was out foraging for food. And then occasionally Peter would show up early in the party — perhaps ten, eleven, twelve at night — before more important things engaged his attention.

So therefore there are a couple of phases to this business of running a room party. And probably the actual party itself is the more pleasant of the two. But stocking up on provisions can be not too bad. The only problem is, of course, you're not quite sure how many people are going to come, what they're really going to be interested in, and so you tend to just go out and buy as much as can be crammed into the back of a small car — which is what you've usually got at your disposal.

I was lucky enough for a couple of days to have Lee Smoire — an American fan who's since moved to Australia — available to help, and Lee really did a huge amount of work driving around

some of the back streets of Chicago (a subject to which I shall later return), looking for cheap places to buy lots and lots of soft drink and nibbles and stuff of that kind, and also (from time to time) a drink that was not so soft. So that would usually occupy a couple of hours of the day and then — well, you'd actually start off with the hour or two that you would have to clean the room up to make it acceptable for the maid to clean it. Thereafter you would have the period of getting the stocks, and then you would lay it out and by then it would be time for your obligatory appearance at some program item — just turn up and see what was happening. So the cycle of the day was quite complex, and into that you squeezed your associations, whatever they might be, with other people at the convention.

Now, the parties themselves, as I say, would run from probably nine o'clock at night until four o'clock the next morning, and in that time you would hope to have a substantial turn-over of people. If they stayed for an hour or two to discuss things, that would be fine but, by and large, you wanted to have *through-put* to establish the good will and bonhomie of Australian science fiction fans and the great

goodness of the 1985 (as it was then) bid for the convention. Now, in that, we were substantially helped by our American friends. Dick Smith, for example, did a great deal for us. We had some videos of movies to show, and one of the three rooms of the suite was given over to showing boring movies of stuff about Australia and stuff on fandom, and Dick manned that room quite a lot of the time. It was really quite remarkable that he was willing to put so much effort in, and it doesn't surprise me therefore that he is willing to put in so much effort for this year's bid. But then in the other rooms you had the various guests of one kind or another.

Now, the hotel, of course, was quite large and although (and you will have experienced this if you've been involved in Australian science fiction conventions) — although science fiction convention committees always say to hotels, 'Block-bookings — complete floors for science fiction fans — because we run parties late', no hotel ever believes you. So there are always people on the floor who are not part of the convention. And sometimes you create problems.

But let me say that we were very lucky in 1982. We were running quite late parties, but

there was only one occasion on which strangers came bowling up to the open doors and the people lying out in the corridors outside, and it was these two chaps who came along wanting to know what it was all about. And so I talked to them a bit, and it turned out that they were doctors, who were attending a medical conference — no doubt, a scientific tax-deductible conference, quite unlike a science fiction convention. And they were quite interested, and they stayed for two or three hours, and I seem to recall discussing with them the complexity of the American accent and how I was beginning to be able to distinguish a number of regional variations in the accent (not the dialect), and they were able to give me some fine detailed pointers on how to tell someone from Delaware as distinct from someone from, say, South Carolina.

So that was an interesting exercise, that people — total strangers, nothing to do with science fiction — could walk into a party like that and feel quite comfortable. And that made me feel that we must have been doing something right in the party, because it was open to all comers, as it were. One of the tricky parts, of course, was that there were certain all-comers

who were more important than other all-comers. In particular, the only real opportunity I had to approach the guests of honour — the proposed guests of honour for the 1985 convention — at any length was at those parties. I had, of course, invited them by letter beforehand. But what that meant was that during the course of the party there would be some furtive sidling up to one another, and I'd just have a little bit of a chat with Gene Wolfe about this or that, or a little chat with Ted White about this or that, and certain assurances would be exchanged about what would happen *in the event that...* And that was quite fine, but it meant that because those people knew that certain things had to be said, they would come to the party and hang about for a while, and this, of course, did attract other people to the party: 'Oh, Ted White's up at such and such — Gene Wolfe's in such and such a party', and lo and behold, you would get an increased party attendance.

And, of course, therefore you should be particularly grateful to your potential guests of honour, who are already doing you favours before anything is announced — a year before you have even won the bid.

And the other thing, of course, that happens is that, in situations like that, if the people know something about Australian fandom — know there's an Australian party — perhaps they even know *you* — they'll come along to the party and they'll talk to you about it, and you might wind up in that way meeting an old friend or a relatively new acquaintance or even someone that you haven't really had a lot to do with but that you've admired.

For example, in the case of the 1982 convention, there were a number of people who came along to the party — or the parties, because there were so many of them — and I was just overwhelmed, because I'd really *liked* what these people'd done in science fiction fandom, and here I was meeting them after all this time, and I think — just to give two examples — of Lee Hoffman, who was one of the great science-fiction fan editors, forty-odd years ago, and of Steve Stiles, who is one of the great cartoonists. And they just came along to the parties and they mixed in and talked with everyone about what was going on.

But, of course, there were occasional signs of debauchery — and not all associated with Peter Toluzzi — because we had a couple of youngish

women who were interested in giving back-rubs, especially to half-naked males. And I'm delighted to say that the prominent Melbourne science-fiction fan Merv Binns agreed to have one of these semi-naked back-rubs, and I have photos to prove it (which I unfortunately have not brought with me tonight!). But that did help the attendance a little. And then there were the people playing with balloons somewhere in the room, and I couldn't quite work out what that was all about. But those parties went on and on

for hours and eventually one had to



say, 'Well, thank heavens they've all gone,' and start, as I say, the two hours of scraping off the heavy dirt and leaving just a little residue for the maid to deal with.

So parties were obviously a key part not only of a bid for a convention but it's also a key part of the life of a science fiction convention. And you

will know this if you've been to science fiction conventions in Australia. The only difference in a world science fiction convention, I guess, is the parties are maybe a little bigger and maybe you'll obviously get a lot more people going through those parties.

Now, the other kind of thing that happens at a convention like that is that you do get to meet people, and do things with people, that are quite unplanned and which are quite interesting in themselves. I should imagine that there would be nothing more boring than a convention of that size in which you go into it, you look at the program, you plan everything out, and rigorously you then attend all of those items, you schedule yourself for a few parties and go to those parties... I have no doubt there are people who do that, but it's not something I've ever been able to really consider myself doing, and it certainly didn't happen on this occasion. I'll give two examples of the kind of thing that happened that was quite unexpected — one of them in some ways irrelevant and sad but important to me at the time, and the other one not irrelevant or sad at all.

In 1982 Kelly Freas's wife Polly was very, very ill and it was a time when she needed (in order to keep going) to drink large amounts of carrot juice, and the hotel didn't seem to be able to provide appropriate amounts of carrot juice. So Lee Smoire and I went together on a carrot-juice run, to buy stuff for Polly Freas. Now, whether the carrot juice did anything for Polly Freas, I don't know — but it certainly did something for me, because Kelly Freas, the artist, was one of the aspects of science fiction that really got me involved.

When I started reading science fiction, forty years ago, Kelly Freas was probably the premier illustrator of science fiction magazines. He had a marvellous artistic line — really, an advertising line, I guess — and his illustrations were everywhere. And to be able to do anything, in any way, to help Kelly Freas was just a wonderful thing — maybe unimportant to him, but for me it was a way of returning something to someone who'd given me so much pleasure over the years. And, of course, as you know, Kelly Freas is still working quite hard on science fiction illustrations.

The other thing that happened that was quite accidental was that after Lesleigh Luttrell and I met at the panel item, we decided we were going to stick around together for quite a while, and one of the things that we did (because she knew Chicago quite well, living over at Madison) — was wander down late one afternoon, down towards Lake Michigan and around the fountain that's there near the James C. Petrillo Music Shell. But one other important thing about going down near the James C. Petrillo Music Shell was that the Chicago Jazz Festival was on, and it was a free festival. The Mayor Jane Byrne was promoting this as being very important, and it was important because she was up for re-election against Richard Daley's son, and I think she lost, but so it was very important for this kind of event to be on. And so Lesleigh and I walked around and looked at fountains and boats and she told me about where this this bit fitted and where that bit fitted. And then we wandered over to listen to jazz for a while, and we stayed there for a couple of hours, listening to minor jazz artists, like Alberta Hunter and Miles Davis — for nothing, in Chicago. And, as I say, absolutely none of it

planned — it was just one of those things that happened.

Now, of course, if you get four thousand people — five thousand people — who are sort of like-minded, then adventures like that can happen quite easily. And so if you do find yourself in a world science fiction convention, whether in Australia or elsewhere, almost certainly something of this kind will happen to you. You will have the chance to go out and do something wild and mad and unplanned, and I've given you one example of that. Another example (but not necessarily terribly wild — and not terribly mad either, though but it wound up with some interesting consequences) was that, because of people I knew before the convention, having met them in '79 or elsewhere, there were opportunities to go out for meals together.

And I remember particularly a meal I went out to with some of the West Coast people, who were all of them older than I was but all people that I admired for their long, long contributions to fandom. So — Terry Carr, Robert Silverberg, Bill Rotsler, and another guy that is perhaps less well known in science fiction fandom and perhaps is in many ways more interesting, Sid

Coleman. We went off to a restaurant, and I remember walking with Silverberg, and Silverberg saying, 'I'm always worried when I go out with these guys because they *know* that I don't like spicy food and I'm absolutely certain, you know, they're going to find some place which has really spicy food.' Well, when we got to the Mongolian restaurant — it certainly looked from the menu as though there was going to be some spicy food. And there was.

But, of course, there's also (big city like Chicago) plenty of room for variety, and you can choose what you want, so one of the dishes that we had was Frogs' Legs Mongolian-style. (Are there really frogs in Mongolia, I wonder? It's an interesting concept.) But, so Frogs' Legs Mongolian-style was one of the things that was available, I remember, from that menu. And by and large I have to say that, yes, the food was a bit spicy. But it was one of those occasions when lots of stories are told about other people.

One of the worrying things about, I think it's Alta Vista, amongst the search engines on the WorldWide Web, is their little tag line in which they're suggesting how to use it. They say, 'For good food, use "deep-dish pizza" + Chicago.' This

is obviously a computer nerd's dream of good food. I did not have any deep-dish pizza in Chicago but, apart from the Mongolian-style frogs' legs — well, my first meal in Chicago was actually at a sushi bar, which is where we went on the Wednesday night. And I must say — having flown from London to Brussels to Chicago, and then raced around Chicago quite a lot that day with a guy named Jim Rittenhouse, who needed to do certain fannish things, as well as going initially to the convention site — I was pretty tired. So when at, sort of, eight or nine o'clock we went out to eat, and we went to a sushi bar, and sat down in the sushi bar and looked at all this raw fish, and I was thinking: 'Haven't slept for a lot of hours' — I was not all that enthusiastic about having sushi.

I also discovered very quickly that even in 1982 there were techo-nerds around and the group that I was with were techos, and they liked talking about little bits of silicon that did things, and so I had this stuff pouring at me from the outside and I had raw fish getting at me from the inside, and I really didn't know which was more distressing. However, the fact that I was in America at a science fiction convention (or

potentially at a science fiction convention) soon let me cease worrying about those things and I was able to enjoy the experience as much as possible under the circumstances.

The other good food I had was pastrami on rye. And pastrami on rye in Chicago I would have to recommend. I got that because I said to Leigh, 'Well, one of the things I've got to have is pastrami on rye' — and so she took me to a place she knew in downtown Chicago where I could get pastrami on rye. And it was just fine, and I must say that I have been addicted to pastrami ever since.

So here is the moral of this tale, if you like: 'beware of conventions that lead to addictions' — because sometimes a really highly peppered pastrami can give you a bit of indigestion. So you must be aware of the dangers of enjoying yourselves and learning new things of that kind. This then was one aspect of Chicago that I hadn't really expected — the food side. As for Chicago itself, you see, I hardly saw it, apart from looking out from my hotel window. Wandering around I didn't see too many deadbeats in the street, and the cops had used all their loathing of young

people almost completely up in the 1968 riots in Chicago, so it was a quite pleasant place in 1982.

And one of the other things I did — and I recommend this to be done when you're associated with a science fiction convention — is I went and bought some books. I actually went into a bookstore. Of course, at a science fiction convention you have the hucksters selling all their wares all over the place, and so you can buy any amount of science fiction and that, therefore, led me to say, 'Well, maybe I'd better look for something else' — which I did. I went to a downtown store in Chicago. I thought, 'This is pretty nice — and, gosh, aren't the books cheap!' — because, of course, this is one thing that I think our English-speaking friends in other countries don't quite understand: that the premium that we have to pay gouging, mean, malicious booksellers in this country is quite alarming.

In any case, I walked into this bookshop and thought, 'Well, there are so *many* things that I could buy here that I *want* to buy right now, it's ludicrous. I can't possibly contemplate buying all that I want to. What should I buy, just to prove to myself that I have been into an American bookstore and bought American books?' And I'm

afraid the answer wound up being four J. D. Salinger paperbacks in a uniform edition. So that's quite a nice little set of books that sits there, but they weren't expensive. But they're very nice editions to have.

And there was one other thing about the convention that I guess I have to mention and this is something which people in this room don't know much about. The thing that has long tied me to American science fiction fandom has been the regular exchange of our fanzines through amateur press associations. The earliest of these was the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, established in 1937 by Donald Wollheim and some of his friends. And I've been a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, on and off, since the middle 1960s. So in 1982 one of the things that I was able to do was to go to a little informal party — a gathering of members of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association — most of whom, of course, are much older than I am. Some of them have actually been around, and active in the organization, since 1937. Some of them, of course, have died since.

If you have been insular and only know science fiction fans in your own city, or in your

own country, you never have that pleasure of meeting people that you've corresponded with for years and, in some cases, decades. One of the things I'll be looking forward to when I go to Los Angeles in 1996 is meeting someone who happens to be the secretary-treasurer of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association at the moment — a man named Robert Lichtman, with whom I first had contact in 1963. We've never met. But we'll be able to meet now. So you can see that I had contact with him before most of you were born.

Science fiction fandom is something that really cuts across age ranges. At a science fiction convention you will see seventy-year-olds talking to the seventeen-year-olds. And there is a spirit there that it is hard to imagine anywhere else. So that was, I guess, the last chance I had to see some of my acquaintances from the Fantasy Amateur Press Association.

Nowadays, of course, the world of the Internet is so marvellous that when things go wrong with your sending your fanzine to America, you simply e-mail a formatted attached version to your friendly neighbourhood friend (fannish friend) in America, and he runs off the copies for you. And

that's what happened to me in the last week. I saved my membership of FAPA by bundling up a formatted fanzine, attaching it to an e-mail, and sending it off to the official editor.

The science fiction convention is a unique invention, in the sense that it brings more people from more different backgrounds together than just about anything that I can imagine. It does so for non-commercial purposes. I made the point earlier that this is not a tax write-off — something that hotels find it hard to understand. The science fiction convention at the large scale is the opportunity — the best opportunity that you have in your life — to meet people with whom you have a great deal in common. So if you go to a science fiction convention in Australia, that's great — there'll be one, two, three, four hundred people there, and you'll find people who are of interest to you. If you go to a world science fiction convention, which nowadays doesn't cost very much, there'll be four or five thousand people there, and you will have interesting adventures and you might even acquire tastes that you didn't have before, but whatever happens, it will be worthwhile. So if there is a world science fiction

convention in 1999 in Melbourne, make sure you're there. Thank you.

AfterGuff: Three Unordinary Years, With Feetnotes

Footnote 1

My activities in science fiction fandom for the three years from August 1979 to September 1982 were dominated by the 1979 GUFF trip and its aftereffects on me. Its immediate effect — taking someone from Australia to a World SF Convention in England — was the traditional one, but as I have tried to show in the Post-GUFF section of this report, there were longer-term effects as well.

In particular I became once again interested in conventions as a way of expressing interest in science fiction, and I found that I loved travel and in particular travelling in Europe. But those things faded after 1982, and in this short chapter I'll write about the effects of GUFF on me after 1982. Later I'll reflect briefly on fan funds in general.

There are a couple of matters which need to be dealt with briefly first. GUFF has, over its seventeen-year history, been notably

unsuccessful in generating trip reports; unless something extraordinary happens this will be the first full report published, and that almost two decades after the event. If nothing else, this gives later GUFF winners a record which will be easy to eclipse.

This is somewhat surprising in that so many of the GUFF trippers have been quite prolific as fan writers. Joseph Nicholas was, in 1981, the first to venture south under the auspices of GUFF. It is hard to imagine anyone more likely to produce a voluminous report, but it hasn't happened. Joseph has mentioned technical difficulties at one time or another, but my simple mind grasps at the most elementary of explanations; GUFF directly affected Joseph's life in a long-term sense when Judith Hanna joined him in England, and his priorities changed.

In my own case a few short paragraphs may suffice to indicate why this report has been delayed. My involvement with the 1985 World SF Convention in Melbourne, to which I shall refer in more detail below, was a major source of delay. From the middle of 1981 to August 1984 I chaired the bidding committee and its successor, and anyone who has been involved in running such

things will know just how time-consuming that sort of activity is.

The other factor, ultimately tied up with the '85 convention itself, has been alluded to briefly earlier in this report.

Some readers may have felt that Jennifer Bryce and I shrugged off rather lightly the miscarriage which led to her joining me for the Eurocon in August 1982. We were, I'm afraid, rather too experienced in this area to set much store by it.

Our first son, Christopher, had been born and died on one day in January 1981, and our travel to Europe at the end of that year, whatever other reasons might have lain behind it, was part of our efforts to recover from that experience.

Angus, our second son, was born and died in March 1982, just after our return from Europe. The events of *August* 1982 consequently seemed quite minor to us.

Our third son, Colin James Henry, lived from October 1983 to February 1985, and his life had a far greater impact on us both than any of the experiences recounted here. I have written about that elsewhere, and don't intend to take the matter up here. But it did contribute to non-

report-writing, as you might guess. James's life also led indirectly to my severance from the 1985 convention.

All James's life was spent in hospital, which obviously placed great demands on the other aspects of one's life; but working towards the 1985 convention got rather hard for me for reasons which went well beyond the impact of James's life.

Just *why* was I working on a world science fiction convention at such a time? The context is given in this section from earlier in my report.

At SEACON in 1979 the group of Australian fans who were present made substantial efforts to boost the Sydney bid for the 1983 world SF convention (I ought to point out that Sydney fandom was not generally represented at SEACON, and most of the pushing was being done by fans based in Melbourne). No effort which involves getting both George Turner and John Foyster into fancy dress can be regarded as trivial. But Sydney fandom's efforts before and after SEACON were not enough to win against any competition at all, and this had become

obvious by early 1981, with voting to close late in August 1981.

As this became clear, I and a number of other Melbourne fans felt that a bid from Melbourne for 1985 had a chance of success. Whereas our bid for 1975 had been successful partly on the basis of the novelty of it all, any bid for 1985 (to be decided in 1983) would be on the basis of a track record. With a track record and the experience we had had boosting Sydney, we thought 1985 was a genuine opportunity, and accordingly we launched a bid for 1985 at the 1981 Worldcon. The immediate response was favourable, but we wanted to go further than getting merely a response.

With the experience we had behind us in running the 1975 convention, we could afford to devote a much larger proportion of our effort, in the early days of the bid at least, to drumming up support for the bid from quarters which had tended to be ignored by most previous bidders. In particular, those of us at SEACON had been taken by the interest of the European fans and, with Roelof Goudriaan working on creating links between European fandom and non-European fandom,

the time seemed right to work with the Europeans.

By the middle of 1981 I was ready for a decent holiday; both Jennifer and I had had a rough year and I was going to change jobs at the end of the year. We had been wanting to return to Europe as a result of our 1979 experience, and this was a good time to do it. At the same time I could try to meet with European fans and talk about the Australian bid. Through Roelof's and other contacts I had a list of people I wanted to see, and this to some extent dictated our itinerary.

One result of the bid was the two trips to Europe described earlier, the second of which led to me being at Chicon in 1982. When, in the following year, Melbourne's bid for the 1985 Worldcon was successful, we all changed into high gear.

This was a little trickier for me than for most committee members. Since late July 1983 Jennifer had been in hospital receiving medication which we hoped would allow her to carry this baby a little closer to term than 23 weeks! By the time the site-selection ballot results were announced we had a reasonable

routine in place, so the change in gears was fairly smooth.

Because the 1975 arrangements had been so smooth (except for the art show: see below) we were going with the tried and true combination which had been used then: the Southern Cross Hotel as a site and Air New Zealand as a carrier. As it turned out this was not as successful a move on our part as might have been hoped.

Some changes in management and staff at the Southern Cross meant that there wasn't much corporate memory on their part of the success of 1975. This meant going over again all the groundwork which we had hoped to avoid; no, this isn't a business convention, block-booking means block-booking, and so on. What was more difficult even than this was that the Southern Cross was planning some remodelling, and the new arrangements would be in place 'about' the time of the 1985 convention.

So what were we booking? On what could we plan? In general in late 1983 the answer was 'trust us', always at least fighting language, if not completely deceptive. We would have to be flexible. But on one point it seemed unwise to be flexible.

At the 1975 convention there had been a major security breach at the art show (I think this has been written about elsewhere; if not, read this as a warning). On the last morning of the convention the convention staffer coming on duty for the art show reported immediately that several paintings were missing, and had apparently disappeared overnight; hotel staff security, supposedly operating for 24 hours a day, did not report any incidents and the movements log showed no activity. The paintings were 'missing' for several hours until they were at last tracked down to a Melbourne fan without any formal responsibility in the area who had thought it would be a 'good idea' to look after these paintings (some of the most valuable in the show) and had no trouble persuading a hotel security man to let him take them out through a back door (apparently clouding the man's mind at the same time).

We were therefore already sufficiently worried about the security at the Southern Cross, with its multitude of access doors, and discovering that the physical layout was in fact indeterminate encouraged us to look to alternative forms of secure display.

In recent years we had been rather successful in running conventions at the Victoria Hotel, about a block from the Southern Cross, and its convention area was about the right size for an art show (perhaps with some other events as well). It could also be very well secured, with very good crowd control. Some initial plans were therefore made to use the Victoria as the overflow hotel and also as a site for the art show. Final decisions on this could be made in 1984.

Running the convention at two hotels was not, however, something to be taken lightly. Late in 1983 it seemed the best option. Otherwise things pattered along. But by then James had been born and life was a little tricky; but not unmanagably so — at the beginning of 1983 I had been able to take on another political hobby (working with Koori friends to wrestle control of a government-funded project away from white control, a project which was not completed until early 1985).

Some of the convention committee members may have had some apprehension of the stress under which I was operating, but others appeared either to not understand it or else to relish it. For my part I found it increasingly difficult to work

with friends who talked a lot but didn't get around to doing things; especially when, from time to time, that which had to be done actually had some urgency about it.

One area in which I began to have differences with some committee members was in relation to who did what; these committee members had the view that if anyone volunteered to do something for the convention then, if they happened to be a friend of yours, you gave them the job. I found this particularly annoying because from the beginning of our bid I had pushed the view that people should be given responsibility only for tasks in which they already had proven experience and not, for example, because they happened to be someone's friend.

(I ought to add that this policy wasn't popular with those who thought that the right way to do things was to work with your friends, no matter how often they screwed-up.)

Early in 1984 it was becoming obvious that things were going wrong; I returned from one of my periods away with the Koori community to discover that a meeting of the convention committee had been called and held without me

being told about it — a difficult situation for a chair!

By August 1984, when I was scheduled to leave for the Los Angeles world convention, and those negotiating with Air New Zealand apparently decided they were too busy to get around to telling me by (literally) the last day available for advance bookings that Air New Zealand would provide a free ticket (but, I note, the same people had plenty of time to tell other members of the convention committee about it...), the situation had clearly become unworkable from both sides and the Worldcon committee and I parted company. A year later I was recovering from a bout of pleurisy and was unable to attend the convention at all; on balance, in the light of reports I heard about the convention, this seems to have been a lucky thing to have done.

Footnote 2

Science fiction fans have been travelling the world for decades, meeting up with friends made by correspondence and making new friends. In earlier years a significant proportion of this travel was paid for by voluntary contributions through

funds such as GUFF. As the amount of international travel by science fiction fans has increased, the question has been raised (and continues to be raised) as to whether there is any longer a need for fan funds.

I have tried in this report, by putting the report of my fan fund travel into a larger context, to indicate at least by one instance that the impact of a fan fund can (and, I hope, often does) extend beyond the immediate goal of taking someone to a science fiction convention in another country.

To give only the most obvious example, it is highly unlikely that the world science fiction convention would have been held in Australia in 1985 if I had not travelled to Brighton for SEACON.

Other consequences were perhaps less direct, but were perhaps more far-reaching (at least from the inside!). many of the. of course, are simply the result of getting older.

I support the maintenance of the fan fund idea; there are times when the outcome is perhaps less than the organisers and donors expect, but overall I believe the benefit is there.

What seems to have been missing in recent years is the ‘special purpose’ fund, in which money is raised to help a nominated person; the Willis and Berry funds are old but glittering examples, and *The Goon Goes West* retains in my mind the status it had when I began writing this report: the archetype of a spontaneous response to fannish travel by one of fandom’s great enthusiasts and, for that reason, something we can never emulate but which establishes a standard for us all.

Science fiction fandom remains, I believe, a sociological mystery, despite occasional sorties from academia. We might not understand it, but it maintains a grip upon us which is hard to shake off. We take part in it because it’s there.