

Authentic

MUMBLINGS FROM MUNCHKINLAND



Nº22

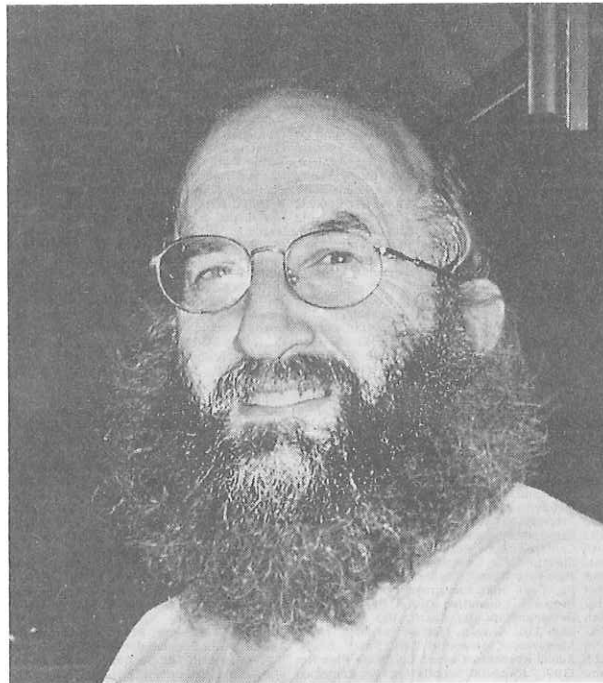
Joe Haldeman

Bert Castellari

K.U.F. Widdershins

Mumblings from Munchkinland -- the only West Australian fanzine published in Samoa -- bids it farewell!

John Foyster



1941 - 2003

FIRES OF EXPERIENCE

2003 started badly in a number of ways, including the bushfires in Canberra. Bert Castellari and his wife thankfully survived unscathed, but they had already endured a previous close encounter a year before ...

December 2001: Early on the afternoon of Christmas Eve Gloria was in the kitchen getting the turkey ready for the oven. She drew my attention to a column of smoke towards the northwest. A moderate wind was blowing from that direction. I knew the smoke was probably coming from a grass fire and we decided to keep it under observation. Over the afternoon it became a sky-high black column as it reached the pine forests. We had already begun hosing the house, trees and shrubs. Since we first came here 32 years ago I had always expected that a bushfire would come from there.

About 4:30 pm the smoke wall was upon us. The atmosphere had remained temperate and wind did not seem to carry much heat with the smoke. There were no visible crown fires. We could see no flames in the smoke, probably because they were sweeping at ground level across the paddocks on the other side of the road. Police in the streets were telling residents to get out, but on the radio they were saying, "Stay with your homes. Go inside until it passes."

We left for a short time and listened to radio reports, then returned to find the house untouched and the Christmas dinner not prematurely cooked. The fire had reached a point about 50 metres away but the bushfire fighters had stopped it just short of an old and long arboretum.

January 2003: We knew well beforehand what was happening, which gave us time to prepare. Remembering Xmas Eve 2001 I had checked the jet nozzles on the hoses, turned them on full to get an idea of the water pressure and aimed them across the house and up those big trees to see how to take advantage of the wind direction. I have two long hoses at the back so I stood with one in each hand and was able to pour water on our roof and gutters, on to the garage roof and even on to the house next door.

During the afternoon a staff cadet from Duntroon, Tim Robinson, came by to see if he could help -- I gave him one of the hoses and he poured water into the shrubs and trees along our back fence (most of them were on our neighbour's side). He soaked them thoroughly, which was crucial when the blaze reached us -- they did not burn. About 5 pm when the wind had died down and things appeared to be quietening I made a total misjudgement and told Tim I thought we'd be OK and he went off. (Later I learned he helped to save houses in the upper part of Curtin.)

Not long after the choppers started passing over us on their way to that area. If the fire had not been held up there Curtin would have been in danger of being wiped out. After 6:45 pm the fire suddenly came roaring up from those stands of trees bordering the horse paddock and Cotter Road (just as I'd been expecting for years). I still don't know who some of them were, but a whole lot of people helped us put it out. Two young blokes who had come down to see how things were took the hoses and fought the flames as they bore down on the shrubs and trees along the fence on the reserve side of the house. Others were using broken branches and towels (ours) to beat out flames along the fence and outside. Similarly next door where they had a bucket brigade of neighbours at work.

The water bombers began homing in on our area and just as well, especially the Erikson, which was making very fast trips to the dam and back. It was all tree-top flying and very dangerous but they saved us at this end. Except for spot fires and some other things we found later, the fire did not get beyond here. We now have a clear view to the range to the northwest, which we have not been able to see for years. There is nothing along the back fence and a big replacement job to be done elsewhere. Probably a year or so will improve things.

THE HALDEMAN DIARIES (PART 3)

Completing, at long last, Joe Haldeman's account of Samoan stopovers he and Gay made en route to sf conventions in New Zealand and Australia in (yikes) 2002. It's been worth the wait, folks -- where else could you get perceptive observations of an alien culture, by a professional observer of alien cultures? Apart from Joe's weblog, of course (<http://home.earthlink.net/~haldeman/diary.html>), to which you are heartily referred to learn of their more recent adventures. Now, though, return with us to the thrilling days of yesteryear, when hearts were light and children's laughter filled the air... (Occasional intrusions in Arial are by the editor.)

June 16 (returning from Savai'i)

Uneventful landing at Apia, where a man from the travel agency was waiting with a van and an air of impatience. And a wife and baby evidently along for the ride. Stopped outside the airport to fuel the driver with chocolate, and we picked up a paper.

Wild ride across the island, the fastest we'd traveled in a long time, the driver honking merrily at every person and animal trying to share the narrow road. No seat belt where I was sitting, so I read the paper with some concentration. (I didn't get to the local news, though, which would later prove of interest.)

After about 40 minutes we wound up at Maninoa Village, where we'd reserved a room at the Coconuts Beach Club, a relatively upscale and totally out of the way place. Our cottage is a sturdy native-made fala crossed with various modern conveniences, like teakettle and refrigerator and a ceiling fan. There's even an air conditioner, but we haven't needed to turn it on; the ocean breeze is nicer. A huge tub, the first we've seen in a long time. Large bedroom/sitting room and a veranda with palm-frond eaves and an inviting string hammock as well as normal patio furniture.



The ocean is beautiful, light blue shallows going out about 200 meters to where the waves break on the reefs. The grounds are landscaped with native trees -- banyan, various palms, bamboo, hibiscus -- and liberally planted with flowers.

We hustled down to the restaurant, since it was 2:00 and we were famished. We signed up for the meal plan, which is three meals a day for \$US40, including unlimited house wine and beer. The menu is mixed native, European, and American. Gay got gazpacho, which she pronounced excellent, and I polished off a large and good Salade Nicoise, made with fresh albacore tuna, washed down with about a quart of decent California chablis. Odd that they don't do New Zealand house wines, but they may be catering to rich and homesick Americans. (Not that you have to be rich to stay here; you couldn't rent a walk-in closet in New York for what we're paying.)

After lunch we ran down to the water, even though the tide looked low. Once again, it was too shallow for snorkeling. We floundered around anyhow (sometimes literally, belly on the bottom) and then took a splash in the gecko-shaped pool. Good exercise for the bad arm. Since I don't have to support the weight of it, I can move it farther out, in a kind of a dog-paddle.

It started to rain and we went back to the cottage, where we sat on the veranda to read the paper, and found a full-page article about SAMOA SETTING FOR SCI-FI NOVEL, with yours truly and Gay sitting on the Sails balcony eating lobster like a couple of rich Americans. It's pretty accurately done, considering it was cobbled together out of a 10-minute interview and a couple of web sites. (He found someone who called me "the Shakespeare of Science Fiction." Well, I write sonnets.)

I'd rung the Samoa Observer to tip off one of their reporters that a famous American novelist was in town. It wasn't clear whether or not they would take any notice, so the article was a pleasant surprise. It was written up in Samoan as well.

(Bruce Gillespie. take note!)

Almost equally interesting was a lead story slugged "DISMANTLE YOUR HOME", about Sago Silivelio, who, with her husband, seven children, and nine other families, had been banished from the village of Falealupo "for refusing to worship in one of the village's mainstream religions". A messenger from the village came to her yesterday and said she had two weeks to dismantle their expensive home, or it would be burned down.

There's obviously a backstory of some interest. Silivelio was running a Bible Study Group that obviously went against the grain. Their \$200,000 school building was burned down earlier this year, and they were forcibly evicted -- "Children and women were pulled from their homes and carried onto waiting pickups. We tried to fight them but we were quickly overpowered," she said. Before that, they were threatened that if they didn't leave the village they would be burned to death. Scary stuff. Quiet, friendly Christian people who haven't eaten their enemies for several generations.



Saturday night dinner was accompanied by a *fiafia* like the one we'd seen in Apia. This one might have been a little more authentic, done by local villagers relatively untainted by the Big City. The musicians were good, one of the guitarists in particular, who fingerpicked in a fast blur like a banjo frail. A different wrinkle on the fire dance was that they had children do it -- first a boy of only six, then a slightly older girl, and then a cute teenager. Then all kinds of guys were throwing the flaming batons around, the kerosene smoke getting rather dense. Before and after, flawless singing and graceful dancing.

It's a measure of how central music and dance are to Samoan life that a population of a few hundred could come up with such a pool of talent.

Part of the *fiafia* this time was a kava ceremony, the beverage being offered in small coconut cups to all of the males in the audience. I'd had it before, and knew what effect the alkaloid had on me, sort of like a hit from weak marijuana or a strong Camel. It was a pleasant high, though, combined with the protein rush from the raw fish in the oka and the wine buzz. So I went to bed quite mellow, as the song says.

I got up at 3 and checked the southern sky, but it was clouded in. The rest of the sky was brilliant, though. I walked down to the beach and enjoyed looking around with binoculars until coming back to start work.

17 June

We decided to take it easy on Sunday. We walked all around the resort, checking out flowers and trees and jungle. By eleven the tide was up and we went out to snorkel. There was a lot of chop, though, and currents that made me nervous. (Admittedly, it doesn't take much to make me nervous in the water.) I stayed pretty close to the seawall, but as it turned out, that was where most of the fish were, anyhow. Lots of black-and-white striped ones that ought to be called convict fish and some brightly colored angelfish; one clownfish. No great white sharks or killer whales. Gay saw a bright blue starfish.

We went from the sea straight into the pool, and found that the pool bar was open; you swim up and perch on an underwater stool. I looked through the list of weird drinks and settled on a Mai Tai, which seemed about the least sweet, and claimed to be the best in the Pacific. As far as I could tell, that was true. Gay had a coconut, her favorite tropical drink by far.

I picked up my painting stuff and went down to the beach; I'd decided to paint an improbably tall palm tree. (I couldn't see any survival value in that height -- seems as if it would be more easily blown over in a storm. Warren said there wasn't any value in it; they just kept growing until they did get blown over and die.) The coconut palms grow curving into the wind, as a reproductive strategy. When the coconuts ripen and fall off, they fall into the ocean and float away, rather than sprouting at the base of the tree and competing with the parent.

I just had drawn a few lines and started to wash in the sky colors, when the bit of sky overhead opened up on me. I ducked out of the rain and carried my gear over to the bar, from which I could at least see the top half of my tree. I spent a couple of hours on the painting. The Samoan bar and restaurant staff stood around behind me ooh-ing and ah-ing, and some of the guests came by to compliment me. Nice to have an uncritical audience.

Gay was typing on the *Sea Change* manuscript while I was painting. I met her on the way back to our cottage; she was going off to get another coconut. I napped on the porch for a while and then wandered down to the beach, where Gay suggested an early dinner. Service is very slow, every dish hand-prepared by Samoan cooks under the supervision of Mika, a wild-eyed restaurateur who ditched a couple of French restaurants in Hawaii to come down to Paradise.

One justification for an early dinner was to give me time to take advantage of the huge tub, floating and reading. That's an activity that usually takes up an hour or more of my day, and I hadn't done it in a month. Heavenly.

18 June

A good morning's writing but alas no sky. Our balcony looks due south, but for two days there has been a bank of clouds stubbornly obscuring that direction, night and day, so I didn't get to see the Magellanic Clouds. Well, I've seen them from the Galapagos and Ayers Rock, got the teeshirt.

Our eleven o'clock pickup was delayed until 12: 15, so I got a ridiculous coconut drink, actually very tasty, full of fruit juices and ground-up coconut and pineapple. Didn't taste any alcohol, but felt it when I stood up. Our driver was the same guy who was our guide to the cave. We took the scenic route back, stopping at a breath-taking mountain overlook that showed the whole extent of the town.

We asked him as tactfully as possible about the church-burning episode, and he said that most Samoans were upset about it. Their constitution does guarantee freedom of religious expression, but there's a loophole through which local custom can override it. The township had made a ruling that only three religions could be practiced within their town limits: Catholicism, Methodism, and the mainstream Congregationalists. It was interesting to learn that the apostates were not something weird, like Holy Rollers or Scientologists, but just another brand of Protestantism. What they were being punished for, in essence, was defying the tribal elders -- with perhaps a small element of "let's show the uppity bitch," which of course never happens in our advanced society. The edict was not "change your beliefs or die," but rather "do whatever you want to do, but outside the town limits." That's a stronger exile than it would be with western cultures, though, because Samoans tend to stay put, generation after generation; they bury their dead in the front yard, and leaving those loved ones behind is unthinkable.

And boy, does it give me an interesting subplot for the novel.

The tide was 'way high when we got back to Apia, so we assembled snorkel gear and went up to the Palolo Deep Marine Preserve. The wind was strong, so there was a lot of chop, and my snorkel kept sucking spray. I was reluctant to go out farther than where I could touch the bottom, but there were plenty of marvels within that depth --fishes and coral and strange sea cucumber-type things. I glimpsed a long red thing like a barracuda with eyestalks, which I think may have been the doctor fish or surgeon fish I saw once in Hawaii, but it got away before I could take its picture.

The main thing was the field of giant clams I'd seen the first day, when I came to grief with coral cuts. They were in about five feet of water now, maybe 200 yards offshore. I searched all over, but was 'way south; Gay found them and led me back. It was a lot bigger than I'd thought; hundreds upon hundreds of the strange creatures only a foot or so apart. It really looked literally unearthly, like the surface of another planet.



They ranged from about eight inches in diameter to a couple of feet, and we found dozens of cages of immature ones, each cage holding a crowd of maybe fifty that were three or four inches long. So they were being bred and raised. (Later that night we stopped at Aggie Grey's and there was a report about giant clam production in Samoa. Coming to a grocery store near you soon!)

We swam until we were pretty well exhausted. I was hungry enough to pose a danger to the giant clams, so across from our fala (from the stand that loaned me a first aid kit weeks ago) I got a beer and an odd thing I call fried air. It's a cylinder of some gossamer substance fried up like the lightweight Japanese appetizers. Held me long enough to shower and change and grab a cab into town.

We each had a meat pie at the cybercafe while waiting for one of the machines to free up, but when nobody showed signs of tiring, decided to go shopping down at the flea market a couple of blocks away. We got a few Christmas presents and a Samoan shirt for me, but had to be careful about volume, since our suitcases are packed to the limit. When we came back, a machine was free, and I sat down to zap hundreds of junk messages and answer a few that were real. After an hour, Gay took over. I went down to get a beer at Bad Billy's, just in the spirit of research (it's a dive but not a dump). I also found a bottle of Stevenson's Coconut Cream Liqueur, which Gay wanted to take home. I might like a dram of it myself -- coffee with rum, vanilla, and coconut milk.

After two and a half hours we wandered off to a midscale restaurant, the Harbourside, which was air-conditioned (!) and gave me one of the best pieces of fish I've ever tasted, fresh mahi-mahi charcoal grilled with a little lemon. Also a new vegetable, "choco," which I couldn't identify and asked the waiter about. He brought one out, a strange organism halfway between a green pepper and a chayote.

19 June



Around 8 we walked down to the Palolo Deep Marine Preserve, and had the best snorkeling yet. The tide was about a foot lower. Still a lot of chop, but perhaps not as bad as yesterday. After paying a visit to the giant clam farm, we went out another couple of hundred meters to a huge continuous forest of live coral. The sun was bright, coming through only a couple of feet of water, and the colors were spectacular. Neon-bright coral fish darted in and out, and large angelfish and clownfish, the size of dinner plates, came up unafraid to give you the eye. We stayed more than an hour, until fighting the current wore us out.

[continued on p.10]



local news

Haldeman reads 'Four short novels'

By Cherelle Jackson

"Eventually it came to pass that no one ever had to die, unless they ran out of money," Joe Haldeman reads from one of "Four short novels," a book consisting of four short stories.

"This is based on French writing, they are four related stories and each one starts with the same line," he said.

Joe Haldeman is a novelist and a science fiction writer born in Oklahoma, USA, but was raised in Puerto Rico, New Orleans, Washington and Alaska.

He holds a BSc in Astronomy from the University of Maryland and is currently an Adjunct Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

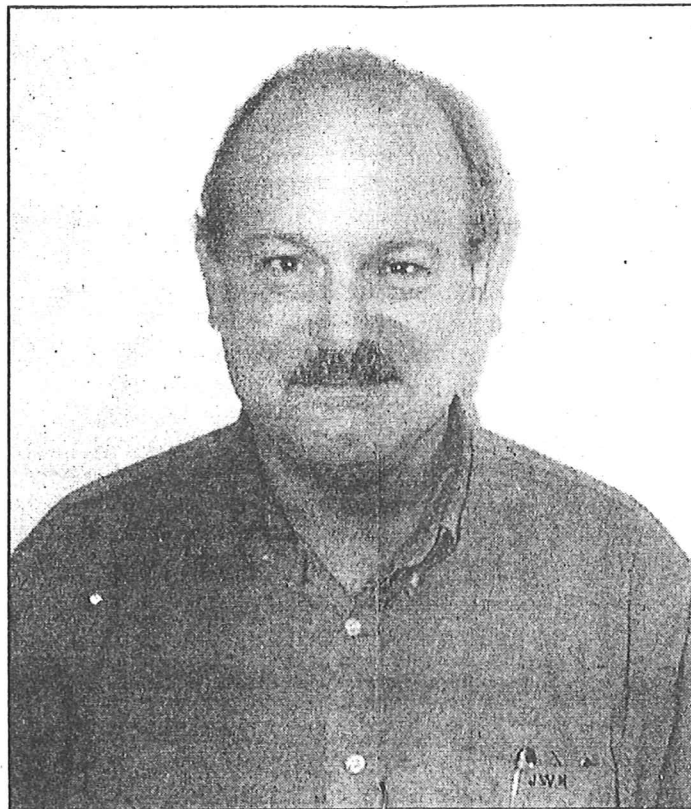
Yesterday he gave a public reading at the conference room of the University of the South Pacific Campus at Alafua.

Mostly students and teachers of USP attended and afterwards it turned out to be an open discussion of Mr Haldeman's work.

The first story he read was: 'Remembrance of things past.' This was a short science fiction work about immortality and ways in which humans try to cheat death.

"When you started to feel the little aches and twinges that meant your body was running down, you just got in line at Immortality Incorporated, and handed them your credit card," he read.

In the end of that story everyone on earth was



Joe Haldeman

immortal. The next story 'Crime and Punishment' continued the fiction with the same beginning.

In 'Crime and punishment,' the consequences of immortality were told through the use of one character, 'Bad Billy Beerbreath,' a menace to the immortal society.

"They were a powerful force, a hundred thousand hardened criminals united in their contempt for people like you and me, and in their loyalty to Bad Billy Beerbreath."

Mr Haldeman later said: "I found out that there was a place called Bad Billy here and so I went in just to see what it was like and sure enough it was appropriately named."

His next story was 'War and Peace,' in which the immortals were convinced to fight in a war and die, using not the usual 'Be all you can be' slogan, but "being the thing not worth being."

'The way of all flesh' was the last story, where the character of Custer Tralia is introduced.

"But every now and then you find a specimen who is so unlovable that he can't even get a hungry dog to take a biscuit from his hand," he read.

"The most extreme specimen was Custer Tralia."

Afterward, Mr Haldeman answered a few questions from the audience about his career as a novelist.

Asked when he knew he wanted to be a writer he said: "There was never a point in my life where I didn't think I would be a writer."

Home to rest and snack, and then off to give a reading and talk at the university where Chris Nelson is the librarian. We met his mother and dad there, Americans long transplanted to Australia. His father, Bob, is an old-time science fiction fan. He knows all the old stuff, but stopped reading in the sixties and seventies -- his last subscription issue of *Analog* was the last one John W. Campbell edited.

The audience was about twenty people, extremely various. A lot of them were obviously there on orders, to fill out the conference room, but many of the others hung on to every word. In retrospect, I should have chosen a simpler story. "Four Short Novels" is kind of literary, and has a lot of unusual words. The conservative Nigerian pro vice chancellor winced at the sexual references, but the young people giggled in the right places.

In the evening we went out to the Nelsons' for dinner. A lot of science fiction talk -- Chris's father obviously passed on a strong sf gene. I brought the telescope out so the girls could see the moon and such. With a bright gibbous moon, we couldn't look at anything subtle, but the double stars Alpha Centauri and Alpha Crucis were good.

Chris gave us a Samoan copy of my newspaper interview.

Home to pack for the 10,000-mile return trip.

20 June

Our last morning in Samoa we went to see the daily police parade. At 7:30 they stop the traffic and about forty police in lava-lavas come marching out of the fire station sporting brightly chromed instruments blaring vaguely British march music, marching about a half kilometer down Beach Road, rush hour traffic crawling along behind them. They were actually pretty good, which makes me wonder. Are there really 40 good band musicians in the small police force, or do ringers come in for their Wednesday-morning gig? Given how important music is to Samoans, it could be the former. [As far as I know, they're all genuine police officers.]

I wasn't feeling well. After a few hours' writing in the morning, the joints of my right hand ached. As usual, I just took a couple of sinus pills and a Pepsid and carried on. Felt worse as we packed, and the long cab ride to the airport didn't help much. Fortunately, we had help loading and unloading the suitcases. We only had to wait about an hour to check in, and then another half-hour to pay departure tax and go through agricultural clearance, and another half-hour for security. In the departure lounge I could relax with a cold white wine, and started feeling better.

Once aboard the plane, things got worse. A Samoan child sitting behind me started beating on the back of my seat as if it were a drum, singing. Our appeals to him and his mother brought on periods of silence lasting thirty to sixty seconds. When they closed the airplane door, though, I saw an empty seat ahead of us and fled to it.

Not the happiest of departures from the Samoan Islands, but Joe was feeling better by the time they reached Los Angeles. *Sea Change* was recently serialised in *Analog* after a change of title to *Camouflage*; his current work in progress is *Old Twentieth*. Joe & Gay's visits were among the highlights of our time here in Samoa. Tofa soifua!

Arranging Joe's talk was an experience. I assumed it would be welcome since there are few opportunities for extra-curricular events of any nature at Alafua. When I mentioned the idea to the Campus Secretary, he said I would have to present a proposal to the Executive Committee. Its members wanted to know what relevance the reading would have to agriculture students. The hydroponics tanks in Joe's *Worlds* trilogy came briefly to mind, but I decided to sidestep the issue by saying that the talk would appeal to the general public. Advertising it would bring a bit of publicity to the campus. In a bizarre twist, it was resolved to promote the reading but only on USP's internal network. So USP staff across the Pacific who could not possibly attend knew about it, but locals who might have had an interest largely didn't. Joe did mention it to the reporter who interviewed him, but in the end the only non-USP people who came to the reading were my parents.

Ella still talks about seeing the moon and stars through "that man's" telescope. Ruby and Lauren were probably still too young to remember it.

"Four Short Novels" was published in the November 2003 issue of the *Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

THE READER SQUEAKS

Bert Castellari, Curtin, ACT

18 July, 2003

Sorry to hear of Harry Warner Jr's death. Never, think of him without the "Jr". When he resurfaced in your correspondence with me I had always intended to try and resume contact with him and -- more in the nature of a vague hope -- would have liked to have met him in person. I knew little about him apart from the contents of those letters of 1939 to 1941. I am not impressed by the Lutheran Church's apparent disregard for Harry's wishes for his fanzine collection to go to UC-R. Who do we trust?

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Erika Maria Lacey Barrantes, Logan Central, Qld.

29 July, 2003

It was a pleasant surprise to find your fanzine waiting for me this afternoon. The cover is very nice indeed. Embossed red and gold Ganesh paper! The paper's US letter size, right, and the fanzine itself is printed on A4. Did you take your own stock over and are using that up, or is there some odd dual system of A4 and letter sized going on between Samoa and Fiji? Interesting. I never thought of these things before. I just go "letter size = US, A4= rest of the world" in my head.

[Samoa and Fiji both tend to follow Australia and NZ and use A4, but we do get stationery from American Samoa as well and there of course they follow US standards.]

It's funny, really, that the swastika has come to hold such negative connotation. A friend of mine very much into Asia came back from a holiday sporting a swastika around her neck, then told me that it was a symbol with much good historical meaning behind it. Personally I think she was asking for trouble wearing it around Brisbane, but hey, it's her neck. I always did find it interesting that she got involved with a Neo-Nazi crowd in her late teens, especially seeing that her family tree held Aborigines! Sad, though, how one group of people so thoroughly wiped away any history of such an ancient symbol.

Fijian names are so interesting to see. Never been to the western side of Viti Levu; as you say most people don't go, but instead we held at Suva. Our yacht nearly sank there, yet again, although instead of being due to a tropical storm (as happened in Bora Bora at the Marquesas) it was entirely due to pilot error. My father's eyesight needs a bit of a check-up before he heads off sailing again, I think.

"Happiness is getting an A in 'Conduct' on your report card", and you show the report card filled with Fs? I'm amused! Bit of a pipe dream; I don't think many teachers would give a child As for conduct and yet find that they've failed all of their subjects so spectacularly.

Treehouses were something I was really fond of making as a child. I had two -- one in Israel and one in Spain. The one in Israel ... I don't remember who made it, actually. It may have even been the handiwork of children before us, but a huge bunch of kids in the area played with it. The one in Spain was my father's handiwork; he made it to keep myself and my brother out of trouble. Well, I like to think so anyway. Of course we had others.

There was the one we made out of bricks in Rhodes, Greece; that one was a bit small and the one time we spent huddled in it hiding from the rain, chilly too. It was abandoned before long. The one in Ecuador was made from scraps of timber and on the floor itself -- nearly burned down from our playing with fire one day. That time I found that throwing dirt on a fire works just as well to put it out as water did (since water was so far off we couldn't be bothered filling more than a couple of bucketfuls to dump on it).

That night was funny. I don't remember what my brother and I were doing -- poncing around, like. Probably pestering some poor fisherman trying to mend his nets before it got too dark to work even with the meagre streetlight. Soon enough we looked over ... and flames were springing from our cubbyhouse! Off we went to the rescue, recruiting the help of a local army fellow we used to harangue. The culprit was a tin can with a glass lid we'd left alone. The poor bean we'd cultivated to grow (it grew nearly 20cm long, too!) got rather scorched and never quite recovered. All in great fun. Too big to build cubbyhouses for, now; they'd have to be so big to let me in that they're almost not worth the bother. Making tents out of sheets and blankets, now, that's another thing entirely.

Just recently I was making an attempt to watch TV shows, and managed for all of four days before giving up out of boredom of having to remember times and then fight people for the telly. I was taping *The Outer Limits*, the most recent series (1995 onwards). That show is rather strange; I get the idea they're meant to be scary, disquieting, but mostly I just feel that they're showing the worst facet of humanity and are as such merely depressing.

[Yes, I've seen some of these and agree entirely. Far too much reliance on biter-bit endings, too.]

The Haldeman diaries are pretty damned interesting. Such social commentary! I'd an idea that Samoan families were pretty complex in their ties, but no idea to the extent. It makes me wonder if they bring that over here to Australia and have the same. This area's got a lot of Samoan folk, and we can see that they have a lot of social events. Walking by the laundrette when there happens to be Samoans using it shows that not just one person goes -- the entire neighbourhood appears to congregate in it! Whenever they hold a social event, lots of Samoans appear from all over, as when they have their church. There are a lot of Samoan churches around the place, all with "Samoan Uniting Church" or similar with "Samoan" tacked on the front. Listening to them sing when I go past ... very lovely.

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Robert Lichtman, Glen Ellen, Calif.

8 August, 2003

Two issues of MUNCHKINS have stacked up here and both got read in succession, which was a nice way of taking in both parts so far of Joe Haldeman's most interesting Samoa diary. I'm looking forward to its conclusion in your next issue.

Samoa is a part of the world about which I know little history, so it was particularly interesting to read your account in No. 20 of how devastating the 1918 flu epidemic was on the population there. Also to read Helen Clark's belated apology for the excesses and stupidities of New Zealand's administration of the territory. It's truly unfortunate that so much of the history of so-called "Western Civilization" is mirrored by the sort of things that went down in Samoa under colonial rule. It would be nice to think that this is now behind us and we're living in a more enlightened age, but one has only to look at my country's recent actions in Iraq to see that, sadly, in the words of Hugo Gernsback, "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose."

[Or as Cyril Kornbluth put it: "The only thing we learn... is that we never learn."]

The swastika on the cover of No. 21 has something of the same effect. While I know that the design is Ganesh traditional, as part of "Western Civilization" I have something of a gut reaction to its presence. I've made a study in recent years of Navajo Indian weavings, and the swastika figures in their early work as well, so I'm sort of used to it and can, pretty much, put my rote reaction aside. It is a gorgeous cover!

[Megan and I became used to seeing the swastika free of its Nazi context when we worked and travelled around Pakistan and India many years ago, but, yes, it does still give a jolt, doesn't it?]

I remember reading "Jerry Is/Was A Man" many years ago, and by a little searching around I find that it was collected in *Assignment in Eternity* as well as in *The SFWA Grand Masters Volume 1*, edited by Frederik Pohl (Tor, 1999). Since I never read it in TWS (never owned an issue of that zine) or the 1999 collection, I can only assume I either read it in the above collection or perhaps anthologized elsewhere. I do remember it making quite an impression on me at the time and, as you write, over fifty years down the line we are closer to having to make the sort of decisions about the "non-human hominids" that the court in Heinlein's story labored over.

While I generally agree with the aims of the Great Ape Project as you describe them here, I'd hope that such efforts would not detract from the pressing need to extend the protections of the International Bill of Human Rights -- the blanket term applied to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights -- to all humans. We still fall far short of doing so on a planetary basis.

I know I've seen that photo of Harry Warner Jr. on the inside front cover of No. 22 somewhere before, but I can't remember where. [I borrowed it from the Advent website.] For your delectation I've attached a JPG of a photo of Harry that appeared in the *Hagerstown Herald Mail* newspaper accompanying a lengthy article revealing his connection to SF and fandom that was published following his death. It's grainy because this is a scan of a faxed copy of the article sent to me by one of the reporters at the paper with whom I'm in contact. I asked her if it would be possible to get a copy of the original photo, either electronically or print, and she's asked the photographer, but he's failed to follow through so far (and it's been months, so I'm not optimistic). It was taken, I'm told, quite a long time ago on the occasion of Harry's receiving some sort of promotion.

I remember the "Happiness Is" book fad with a certain degree of nausea, but liked your list. On specific items: I had a tree house when very young and living in Cleveland, Ohio, where at the end of the block on which I lived was the edge of the city at that time. The treehouse was a joint venture of me and some of my young friends (I was about 6-7 years old) and was torn down not long after completion by an evil neighbor living in the last house on the block, adjoining the woods, who had some imaginary sense of control over that area. We knew who'd done it and, as I recall, exacted some sort of revenge.

"Finding out things you didn't already know" was a constant part of childhood; indeed, it's still going on. "Having a stamp collection" was a thing I did in later childhood, roughly ages 10-12. After I showed some interest and began a small stamp album bought at the local 5&10 store, I received a large one as a birthday or Christmas present and got fairly serious about it for a while. Of course it was eventually set aside when the next obsession struck and I eventually sold it to get money to feed that next one. It lives on in a vestigial way in the form of a large manila envelope in which I stuff non-U.S. stamps received with fanzines. I've been doing this for over a decade and the envelope is very thick. If one of my grandchildren ever takes up stamp collecting (and so far I have only one, a girl, who shows no signs of it), there will be one helluva present awaiting him or her from their grandfather Robert.

[I was surprised by how many of my ten-year-old happiness goals were still true, to some degree or another. I still like climbing trees and can report that Ella and Lauren seem to also. But then I'd built them a treehouse in Launceston before we left. For the time being, perhaps, I've lost my enthusiasm for stamp collecting, but like you I still squirrel them away for passing on to someone in future. It was one of the things that got me interested in geography and travelling, so it was well worthwhile.]

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WAHF: Merv Binns, LynC, Leigh Edmonds, Arthur Haddon, the Haldemans, Kim Huett & Eric Lindsay

SYDCON II REPORT

BY Rex Meyer

Perth, Australia, 27 May, (CNS) - The Second Australia Science Fiction Convention (Sydcon II) was held in Sydney on May 1st, 2nd, & 3rd, 1953, with over eighty fans attending. Delegates came from all states of the Commonwealth and from many outlying country districts.

On Friday night over 50 fans attended a cocktail party at a city cabaret. This gave Sydney fans an opportunity to welcome interstate and country people and to discuss ways and means of encouraging the growing interstate fan cooperation.

Saturday morning was given over to a preliminary rally with informal discussion groups and fan chatter generally. Carefully arranged displays of amateur and professional science-fiction publications were particularly appreciated by newcomers to the fan world.

The afternoon session was on a more formal basis. Souvenir program booklets and copies of fan mags were issued to all delegates. Graham Stone and Doug Nicholson gave informal talks explaining various exhibits arranged in the hall.

The convention was formally opened by the chairman, Vol. Molesworth, and messages of congratulations read from Tom Cockcroft (N. Z.) and Aussie fans Eric Russell and Frank Bryning. Vol. Molesworth addressed the Convention on the subject of "Science Fiction as a Development In Modern Literature" discussing the need for speculation based on logical continuity of known data. Doug Nicholson spoke on the "Historical Development of Science-Fiction" and illustrated his discussion with a well selected series of slides showing early art work and especially the development of cover-styles.

"Bluey" Glik and Rex Meyer discussed the question of "The Place of Science In Science Fiction." Each took a diametrically opposite view and their talks stimulated general discussion

from the audience. Graham Stone gave a stimulating survey of the "Development of Science-Fiction Fandom" emphasizing Australian fan history and suggesting a program of future growth and expansion.

After the dinner recess Don Lawson introduced a film program of interest to s-f fans. The Check fantasy "Krakattit" was the feature film with a series of short scientific films balancing out the program.

Sunday morning featured an auction of magazines and books. It was a great success with over 200 items being sold.

During the Sunday afternoon a formal business session was held and Chairman Vol. Molesworth received reports from fan groups and fan editors.

Graham Stone, reporting on the "Australian Science - Fiction Society" mentioned an enrollment of 155, most in Sydney, but with many interstate and country names.

"The Futurian Society of Sydney", reporting to the Convention through the Chairman, stated that FSS had been active since 1939 and now has a membership of 19 active fans. Mike Bos, the active leader of the new "North Shore Futurian Society", a group of mainly younger fans, reported on his group and library activities.

Interstate delegates gave surveys of fan activities in their several states. Ian Crozier of Melbourne mentioned that 60 Victorian fans were known and that an average of 15 attended regular weekly meetings.

Only about 8 fans attended regular weekly meetings in Brisbane, reported Bill Vancy, but over 20 Queensland fans were known. Similarly Ian Moyes of Adelaide said that about 10 fans attended meetings there. Delegates from Western Australia and Tasmania said that fandom in these states was insufficiently organized to support regular meetings.

The chairman then accepted motions from the floor. A resolution "That Australian Fandom Shall Contribute A Collection of Australian Science-Fiction And Fantasy To The Next American Con-

END NOTES

yention" was carried. Many other resolutions were carried and it was decided that Sydney be the site of the Third Australian Convention in 1954.

Vol Holesworth in his concluding address stressed that the fundamental aim of the convention was to bring Australian fans together. "In this respect" he said, "The Convention has been an unqualified success and promised well for successful meeting in 1954".

This issue should have appeared last year. As virtually all of it was written by folk other than myself, I have no particularly good excuse for the delay except to say that 2003 was not the best of years. I may elaborate on this at a later date, but for now, apologies and thanks to all of my contributors: Bert Castellari, Joe Haldeman, Cherele Jackson and all loccers.

This issue is in memory of John Foyster.

John was the inspiration for this issue's front (and back) covers. There's a story to this, of course. I've had little to say about either Harry Warner Jr. or John since they passed away within a few months of each other last year. This is not because I don't miss them or because I lack knowledge of their contributions to fandom; just the opposite. The three of us had a common bond in our shared fascination with fan history and both Harry and John were great supporters of *Mumblings from Munchkinland*. However, this was only a tiny fraction of their overall fanac and many people who knew them far better than myself have written eulogies. (The portrait of John on page 2 appeared with John Baxter's tribute to him in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of May 5.) Hence my decision to run only the simple photographic tributes to Harry and John in this and the previous issue. Both truly were authentic (and unique) fans.

That said, I can't resist foiling a prediction John once made and in this case, I don't think he'd mind. A few years ago he concluded a review of *Mumblings* 16 (which emulated *Astounding SF*, complete with an Audels ad on the back) by joking that one would never see "Joan the Wad" on the back of this rag. I hope he gets a chuckle out of this issue.

Authentic was a curious magazine. It began as a fortnightly series of novels -- forerunners of publisher Hamilton & Co.'s Panther Books -- and never ran terribly good fiction. It is best remembered for the long series of "realistic" space scenes by Davis which graced its covers (later issues also featured early work by Josh Kirby). The illustrations I've used on the cover and below are not from *Authentic*, but from a book that pre-dates the magazine by a year or so that I found languishing in the Nelson Memorial Public Library. They get cast-offs from public libraries all over the USA so browsing their shelves has always been rather fun and surprising. Details of the book in question I will leave as an exercise for the reader until the next issue, with one clue: 'twas in the juvenile fiction section.

Cherele Jackson, who reported on Joe's reading at USP, is one of the daughters of Moelagi Jackson, owner of the fale guesthouses on Savai'i where Joe and Gay stayed in 2002. Samoa is a small place!

The report opposite of the 2nd National Australian SF Convention, like that of the 1st natcon reprinted in *MfM* 20, was originally published in Jimmy Taurasi's *Fantasy-Times* -- in this case, #179 (June 1953).

*** Please note the imminent changes to our postal and electronic addresses. ***

A short time ago I was offered a position at the main campus of USP in Suva and we will shortly begin packing for the move. We'll be taking a break in Oz between contracts but have no street address in Fiji yet, so letters of comment, trade zines and blank cheques should all go to:

Chris Nelson, 36 St. Michael Tce., Mt. Pleasant, WA 6153 Australia
or nelsonleefiji@yahoo.com.au



"Two weeks ago I bought a 'Joan the Wad' and today I have won £232 10s. Please send two more." B.C., Tredegar, S. Wales.—Extract from "Everybody's Fortune Book, 1931."

JOAN THE WAD



GUARANTEED DIPPED IN WATER
FROM THE LUCKY SAINTS' WELL

is the LUCKY CORNISH PISKEY who Sees All, Hears All, Does All. JOAN THE WAD is Queen of the Lucky Cornish Piskeys. Thousands of persons all over the world claim that Joan the Wad has brought them Wonderful Luck in the way of Health, Wealth and Happiness. **HISTORY FREE FOR A STAMP**

If you will send me your name and address, a 1/- stamp and a stamped addressed envelope for reply, I will send you a history of the Cornish Piskey folk, and the marvellous miracles they accomplish. JOAN THE WAD is the Queen of the Lucky Cornish Piskeys and with whom good luck and good health always attend.

AS HEALER

One lady writes: "My sister suffered very badly for years, but since I gave her a 'Joan the Wad' to keep near her she is much easier. Do you think this is due to Joan or the Water from the Lucky Well?"

AS LUCK BRINGER

Another writes: "Since the War my wife and I have been dogged by persistent ill-luck, and we seemed to be sinking lower and lower. One day someone sent us a 'Joan the Wad.' We have never found out who it was, but coincidence if you like, within a week I got a much better job, and my wife had some money left her. Since then we never looked back, and needless to say, swear by 'Queen Joan'."

AS MATCHMAKER

A young girl wrote and informed me that she had had scores of boy friends, but it was not until she had visited Cornwall and taken Joan back with her that she met the boy of her dreams, and as they got better acquainted she discovered he also has "Joan the Wad."

AS PRIZEWINNER

A young man wrote us only last week: "For two years I entered competitions without luck, but since getting 'Joan the Wad' I have frequently been successful although I have not won a big prize, but I know that ——— who won £2,000 in a competition has one because I gave it to him. When he won his £2,000 he gave me £100 for myself, so you see I have cause to bless 'Queen Joan'."

AS SPECULATOR

A man writes: "I had some shares that for several years I couldn't give away. They were 1/- shares, and all of a sudden they went up in the market to 7/9. I happened to be staring at 'Joan the Wad'. Pure imagination, you may say, but I thought I saw her wink approvingly. I sold out, reinvested the money at greater profit and have prospered ever since."

JOAN THE WAD'S achievements are unique. Never before was such a record placed before the public. Ask yourself if you have ever heard before of anything so stupendous. You have not. Results are what count, and these few Extracts from actual letters are typical of the many hundreds that are received, and from which we shall publish selections from time to time. We unreservedly GUARANTEE that these letters were absolutely spontaneous, and the originals are open to inspection at JOAN'S COTTAGE. Send at once for full information about this PROVED Luck Bringer. You, too, may benefit in Health, Wealth and Happiness to an amazing extent.

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