

November 2008 35c

# <sup>K</sup> Universe

MUMLINGS FROM MUNCHKINLAND

26

*Fales  
in Flight*  
James Blish



Mumblings from Munchkinland – the only West Australian fanzine ever published in Samoa!



#### VISIONS OF THE PACIFIC 4: THERE'S A CYCLONE COMING, EM



If chaos theory is correct, Tropical Cyclone 07P might have originated in the flap of a butterfly's wings in the Amazon jungle. It was first detected by the Fiji Meteorological Bureau around 350 nautical miles northwest of Suva on Boxing Day, 2003, moving slowly away to the northeast. It was not of sufficient concern for anyone to issue a warning about until New Year's Eve, when it was christened Cyclone Heta.

Cyclones are pretty common in the Pacific Islands and few island nations have been spared from their impact. In Samoa, we had become familiar with stories of the devastation caused by cyclones Ofa and Val a decade before our arrival, but we had experienced nothing more troublesome than heavy rainstorms in our two years in Apia.

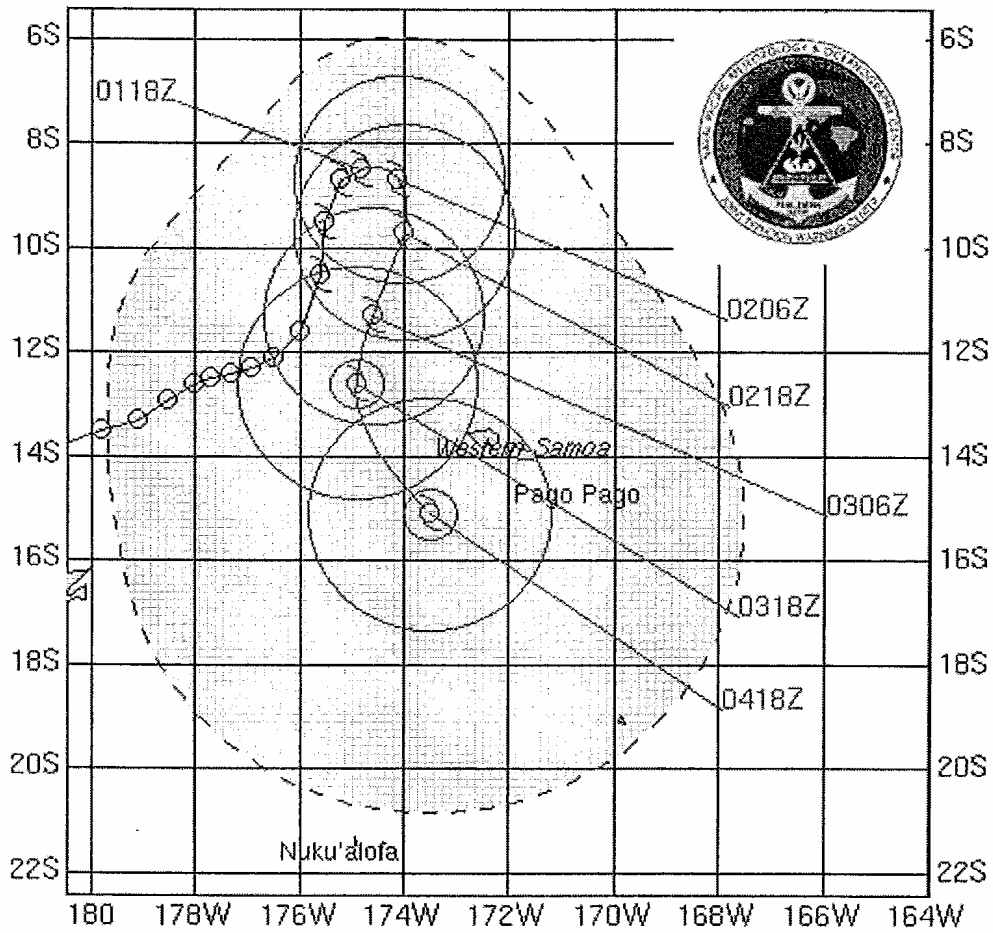
Still, I had visited the website of the Joint Typhoon Warning Center before. Operated by the US Naval Pacific Meteorology and Oceanography Center in Pearl Harbour, this facility keeps an eye on weather in the Pacific and issues warnings of storms and cyclones, primarily for the benefit of military ships and aircraft in the region. But its pages are open to the public as well and provide spectacular satellite imagery as well as authoritative warning advisories of tropical cyclones – most welcome when one happens to be headed in your direction. So when we first heard news of Heta I drove over to my office at USP to see what it had to say. (It was still early in 2004 and we were not yet back at work.) It was interesting, but not too alarming.

The advisories include a chart showing the cyclone's location, intensity and likely future path. They cannot predict the future path exactly, of course, so they shade a geographical area within which it could travel. In Heta's case, an abrupt about face was predicted but its intensity was not expected to rise much above 60 knots. I made a mental note to keep an eye on the site for updates, but wasn't able to do so regularly.

The next time I saw it, my interest was more visceral than academic. The cyclone's strength had grown rapidly and its predicted path now passed much closer to Samoa. The local news began reminding people of what to do in an emergency and warned that electricity and water supplies might fail in the event of a near pass by Heta. We, along with everyone else in Apia, stocked up on bottled water, canned food, candles and batteries. We expected to have storm shutters to place over all of our floor-to-ceiling windows, but instead were just told to keep them shut and stay away from them in high winds. (Like we hadn't thought of this!)

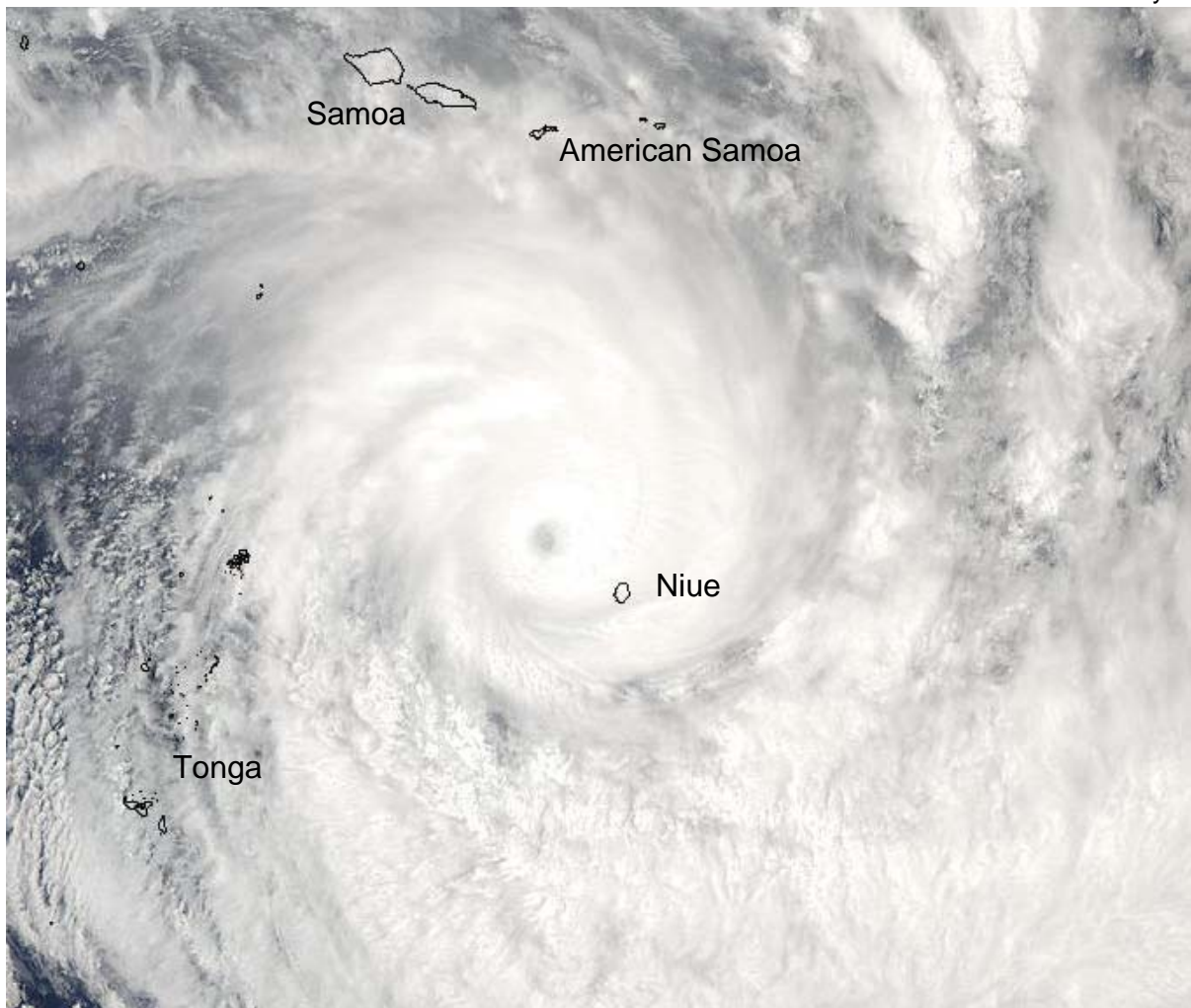
I don't recall getting a chance to see another JTWC chart of Heta's passage. Over time, we could watch it change direction by looking straight up at the sky and noting the orientation of the bands of cloud. We learned later that it passed to the west of Savaii and curled under Upolu, travelling at only around 6-8 knots, but producing winds of more than 140 knots at its closest approach. For us this occurred in the middle of the night. The electricity did fail, but ours was a gas stove so we had a nervous candlelit dinner that night and were able to keep up with news on a battery radio. We tried to sleep together in the bathroom, figuring that this was the strongest room in the house. Although we were on the lee side of Mt. Vaea from the storm, the wind gusts and creaking house frame kept us from getting very much sleep and we did not venture out to explore the cause of two large bangs until the next day. These proved to have been caused by several trees crashing down in the yard, both just missing the house.

[continued on page 14]



Left:  
The JTWC  
chart for  
1800 UTC,  
January 1,  
2004.

Below:  
Heta  
approaches  
Niue,  
around  
January 5.



## ROSEMARY SIMMONS AND THE FEMME FAN GROUP

The admittance of women into the Futurian Society of Sydney was a significant event, but Vol Molesworth's account of it in his *History of Australian Fandom* is curious, for a number of reasons. Here's what Vol wrote:

"The 169<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was held on the Monday night [March 24, 1952] following the [first Australian Science Fiction] Convention as an "open" meeting and no less than fourteen guests attended, including five women...

"An unexpected storm broke at the "open" meeting, when a motion came forward that a women's auxiliary be formed. Rosemary Simmons asked whether women were eligible for ordinary membership, and if so, a women's auxiliary was unnecessary. It soon became evident that the present members – all male – were divided on the issue. [Graham] Stone and [Lex] Banning spoke strongly against sex discrimination, Banning uttering his now famous: "*Mr Chairman, I'm shocked! Are we Futurians or are we Victorians?*" Molesworth warned the Society that the admission of women had caused trouble in the prewar days of the club. After heated debate, a motion to admit Miss Simmons was defeated by six votes to three.

"But the matter was not allowed to rest at this point. Banning and Stone exercised their right under the Constitution to demand a special meeting, which was held on April 7. Applications for membership from Doug Nicholson, Bruce Purdy and Len Roth were carried unanimously, then a fresh application from Miss Simmons was read out. The voting resulted five in favour, five against. Director Molesworth then gave his casting vote against the motion. Banning moved that "this Society makes it clear...it does not discriminate on the grounds of race, creed, party or sex in considering the eligibility of members". This was seconded by [Mike] McGuinness and carried.

"Later in the meeting, Stone objected to the negative vote cast by the Director and moved that the earlier decision be rescinded. This was seconded by McGuinness and carried, 5-3. Stone then moved, again seconded McGuinness, that Miss Simmons be admitted to membership. The motion was carried 6-4. This test-case having been established, an application for membership by Norma Hemming at the next meeting was carried unanimously...

"The fight for admission by the women did not discourage them as fans – on the contrary, it gave new stimulus to their activity. Banding together, they published in April the first issue of *Vertical Horizons*, a duplicated 8 pp. folded foolscap fanzine, under the general editorship of Rosemary Simmons, Laura Molesworth and Norma Hemming. Another new fan – Norma Williams – assisted with the second issue which appeared in May. The third issue – November, 1953 [1952, actually] – was a one-woman effort produced by Rosemary Simmons."

I first read Vol's *History* when Ron Clarke reprinted it in *The Mentor* in 1994-95, with added footnotes by Graham Stone. The above passage seemed odd to me for several reasons. The first was Vol's argument that the admission of female members before the war had caused trouble within the Society. He hadn't mentioned this earlier and Graham disputed it:

*"Very few women had anything to do with the early club and I wasn't aware of any trouble. For the record, the first who wasn't someone's wife or sister, and the first of all active, was Jean Roberts, who was Treasurer in 1943..."*

Graham expanded on this in response to questions I sent him with an early draft of this piece:

*“In 1939-41 I have doubtless said only two women had anything to do with the group. Dave Evans’ wife, Enid – she certainly didn’t cause any trouble, she made us welcome at their place. She was keen on Lovecraft and Weird Tales. Bert Castellari’s sister, Roma – I met her once briefly at their place; she came to one or two meetings. But I now recall hearing that Ralph Smith had a sister who was at one meeting, probably held at his home.*

*“Jean Roberts. It is odd that Vol didn’t mention her. She wasn’t, I believe, interested in SF at all. She was brought along by Jack Heming, as well as his wife under the name ‘Ellaline Thea’ and one or two others. And there was another girl whom I didn’t realise then was a cousin of Jean. I think to Jean it was just a social group. I remember she interpreted the job of Treasurer as including fund raising ideas, like raffles. She was a dancing teacher; I don’t know if she had another job. Vol tried to get into her pants as with any female he met and found that she was divorced and had a child, which she hadn’t mentioned. But I don’t think there was any drama, surely nothing serious enough to make him ignore her in writing many years later.*

(letter, 8 July 2008)

There is a picture of Jean Roberts included in the version of Vol’s history reprinted by Ron Clarke but it was provided by Graham Stone. Molesworth makes no mention of her at all in his text. Was this a deliberate omission? His attention to excruciating detail for most of his history makes it hard to believe otherwise.

A partial answer may lie in a technicality. The Futurian Society of Sydney was dissolved in November 1942 in favour of the Southern Cross Futurian Association, under the direction of Colin Roden. Jean Roberts was Treasurer of the SCFA for a time, but possibly never even a member of the Futurian Society. This doesn’t let Vol entirely off the hook – his history was ostensibly of Australian fandom, not just of the Futurian Society, so it is reasonable to have expected him to record the first female office bearer of any Aussie sf organisation. Perhaps his selective memory was out of disdain for the SCFA. He joined it along with other FSS members but resigned soon afterwards and in 1944 revived the FSS for a brief period.

Vol and others revived the FSS again after the war. It is only at this point that his history first names a woman -- his wife, Laura. She was one of three people who joined the Society at its first post-war meeting in August 1947, which (he wrote) “brought the membership to five”. This is another curiosity. If there was already a female member of the FSS in 1947, why did Rosemary Simmons have to ask if women were eligible for membership five years later?

Recall that Rosemary asked if women were eligible for *ordinary* membership. It is never made explicit by Vol that there were different types of membership, but Rosemary’s question and the controversy that ensued make little sense if this was not the case. Graham again shed some light on this point:

*“Yes, associate members were provided for. There were two ideas: people outside the metropolitan area and those enrolled as library borrowers only. The latter was extended in practice to anyone coming to Thursday night meetings and the explicit status was largely superseded by ASFS, or later ASFA, membership. Vol should have said something to clarify this.”*

(letter, 8 July 2008)

Was Laura Molesworth enrolled only as a library borrower? If so, she was extraordinarily generous with her time and energy. With no hint of irony, Vol mentions in passing that Laura ran the Society's library for more than a year after joining. She was a professional librarian, so this may not have struck her as too burdensome, but if it did not gain her recognition as a member of equal standing with the male Futurians, why not?

Arthur Haddon, a long-standing member of the Society and Secretary of the FSS at the time of Rosemary's application, implied one reason when I first contacted him about this: "*Laura Molesworth tolerated us more than being a fan and Diana Wilkes was even less a fan*" (letter, 13 December 2001). This suggests that Laura (and some other women) did not have a strong interest in sf and came along to meetings only because their husbands or partners were fans. If so, this may have reinforced an assumption among the males that no woman would want to join the FSS as a full member, which would help to explain the proposal made at the March 1952 meeting that a women's auxiliary be created. In another footnote to the version of Vol's *History* published in *The Mentor*, Graham Stone explains that he moved this motion, "*to do something for members' wives and relatives who weren't interested in sf.*"

Rosemary Simmon's application challenged this status quo. She had a serious interest in sf and the FSS, as her letter of application shows (opposite). Banning, Stone and McGuinness all recognized this and supported her, but a majority of the males maintained conservative ideas on gender roles, at least initially. Post-war Australian society was changing, but only with some reluctance, as Arthur Haddon points out:

*"There were no SNAGs in those days. If there had been they would have been discreet about it or risk ridicule from their macho friends. Depending upon your age at the time you would have equated your concept of females to either your mother and/or your grandmother. The men worked, women stayed home and slaved in the home cooking, washing and caring for or having children. We all thought that this was the correct nature of things. The war changed that, it changed the way a lot of younger women thought, but it did not change the male attitude...what we feared I think is that they [would] not enjoy going back to the way male/female relationships had been. We definitely did not understand women then, they did not understand themselves..."*

(letter, 21 July 2008)

The male attitude Arthur mentions here is amply demonstrated in the reasoning they invoked to reject female (and specifically, Rosemary's) applications for membership:

*"I was Secretary of the FSS at the time and my memory of the meetings around then was that membership for Roe was discussed on a number of occasions and always rejected on the grounds that we did not need female members and the distraction that they might cause."*

(letter, 12 August 1999)

Unlike Laura Molesworth, Rosemary Simmons was single and may thus have been perceived as more likely to cause "distraction" within the club. However, she was already active within the Thursday Night group, a less formal regular meeting of fans in Sydney and this group was flourishing at this time, attracting significant numbers of people and raising money from both attendance fees and auctions. This may also have put Rosemary offside with influential FSS members. Vol rather awkwardly notes the record attendance at one of the Thursday Night meetings in January of 1952 as "including five of the female sex" and Simmons is among those he names as being the group's "guardians" and their assistants.

270 Forest Road,  
BEXLEY, N.S.W.

4. iv. 52.

The Secretary,  
Futurian Society of Sydney,  
4 Douglas Street,  
WATERLOO, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

I wish to apply for membership of the Futurian Society of Sydney.

While realizing that the informal atmosphere of the Thursday night A.S.F.S. meetings should be preserved and knowing that any move for the substitution of more formal gatherings would be unpopular with the majority of members, I am desirous of joining a group where the more serious aspects of science fiction and matters relevant to fandom in general may be discussed. F.S.S. would, I know, cater for this need.

Not being an aspiring politician, I shall not attempt to give a policy speech. All I want to say is this: to my mind, any society one considers to be worth joining is surely deserving of complete and active support.

Finally, I might add that I have been a member of A.S.F.S. for over four months and that recently I have been accepted as a borrower from A.F.F. library.

Yours faithfully,

*Rosemary G. Simmons*

(Rosemary G. Simmons)

*Dealt with Meeting 170.*

*Application refused.*

*Rescinded and application  
accepted at same meeting*

*170.*

*Arthur Hadden Sec*  
*3*

The “distraction” argument against women would have struck a chord with some members. In another footnote to Vol’s history, regarding the FSS meeting of March 1952, Graham Stone explained why:

*“It will be seen that some members had strong views at this meeting: one reason was that the custom of adultery had been introduced and there was some, shall we say, controversy behind the scenes.”*

But behind the scenes is largely where it remained. A tantalising passage regarding relations between Sydney sf clubs in the *Official Report of the Fourth Australian SF Convention, 1955*, records that Vol “blamed [Bill] Hubble and the North Shore Futurian Society for cuckoldry and misinterpretation of remarks” but Arthur regards this statement as allegorical rather than literal. Graham also suggests “cuckoldry” may have been a Freudian slip in this instance but does not shy away from the statement above. He notes that “there wasn’t a lot of adultery visible” but recalls one “notorious” liaison which led to a fight after one FSS meeting. On a happier note, at least one couple (Loralei Giles and Bluey Glick) met through members of the Society, attended meetings together and later married.

Arthur Haddon has also offered an explanation for Vol Molesworth’s personal objection to females becoming full members of the FSS, as well as his later change of heart:

*“My belief is that Vol did not want Laura, his wife, to become a member so women had to be barred. I do not remember if Laura actually wanted to be a member, but Rosemary did and to keep Laura out [Vol] made Rosemary unwelcome as well.*

*“Now Norma Hemming, with stories published in Thrills Incorporated and Science Fantasy and participating in the production of a fanzine, applied for membership 29/4/1952; at the same time more or less another woman [Christine Davison] applied who was well known for something that I can not recall, but she had a terminal illness as well. I feel sure that they had had meetings with Rosemary and when their interest became known to the members (before their formal application) the kudos of having, in Norma’s case, a published author as member was sufficient to have Vol, who was Chairman, change his attitude toward female members. Norma was accepted as a member at Meeting 171 and Rosemary, with an application already on file, was probably accepted at Meeting 170 as her letter of 14/4/1952 in response to mine of 8/4/1952 enclosed her half year subscription.”* (letter, 10 June 2003)

Arthur kept Rosemary Simmons’ letter of application for many years afterwards, as well as a handwritten note that she gave to Vol Molesworth with a copy of her application, asking him to pass the copy to Arthur in case the original was not received in time. Her note continued:

*“Of course, in asking this favour of you, I am approaching you as an individual and not in your capacity as Director. However, if you’d prefer not to involve yourself any more than absolutely necessary in this ‘turmoil’ I’ll quite understand. So have no qualms, please!”*

The two documents combined make it clear that Rosemary was very aware of the sensitivities her membership application had aroused, the solemnity with which Vol and others viewed the Futurian Society and the potential dilemma he might have had in delivering a membership application he was personally opposed to. As it turned out, she needn’t have worried.



With Rosemary's "test case" finally successful, a number of other women were soon admitted to the Society. As Vol notes, they were keen to establish their fannish credentials and did so by forming "the femme fan group" and publishing a fanzine. *Vertical Horizons* lasted only five issues, but this was above average for the fanzines of the day and it had a reasonable mix of news, reviews, biographical anecdotes and fiction. The final issue appeared in October 1953. Laura Molesworth introduced the femme fans in its first issue, dated April 1952:

First named, appropriately, was Rosemary Simmons: "*B.A., works with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. She was introduced to SF only a couple of months ago but is now a member of the Futurian Society of Sydney...*"

True to her word, Rosemary Simmons became the most active female member. Another professional librarian, she had worked at a Sydney newspaper before joining the CSIRO. She was a driving force behind *Vertical Horizons*, publishing all issues and writing around 40% of its total content -- more than twice as much as any other contributor. Rosemary also became the Publicity Officer for the 1953 national convention. She remained active in the Thursday Night Group and was elected Assistant Secretary of the FSS in July 1952. She held this office until February 1954, only losing it when one of the numerous disputes within the club led to a general spill of the executive committee.

Next was Norma K. Hemming, a published author proudly introduced as "*the only pro-author at present in Sydney fandom. (Of Thrills and New Worlds.) She had to come out here from England to join a fan club.*" Born in the UK, Hemming had migrated to Australia in 1949. She resigned from the FSS before the end of 1952, rejoined in 1955, and made contributions to *Vertical Horizons* and *Scansion*. The claim that she was the only professional author in Sydney fandom would have raised an eyebrow or two. Vol had published short works in pamphlet form almost a decade earlier and he and others had also placed short stories in Sydney papers during the war. And her credits contained a mistake -- she had had a story published in *Science Fantasy* by this time and a few in *Thrills, Inc.* but none in *New Worlds* until 1956. (A correction appeared in the following issue.) Still, the women would have enjoyed highlighting the fact that one of their group had published overseas when none of the male Futurians had.

Diana Wilkes was introduced as "*an artist's model and possessed of much artistic talent. We hope to see some of it in future issues.*" Alas, this did not happen. No illustrations of any kind ever appeared in *Vertical Horizons*.

Pauline Roth was noted only as "*a keen reader through her active fan husband Len.*"

Norma Williams had a longer pedigree: "*has been reading SF for 20 yrs. Is interested in science in general (starting off to be a pharmacist but gave it away) and at present has a leaning towards botany. She thinks the present sociological angle coming into SF is a good thing; it gives a wider field and attracts new types of fans...*"

And, finally, Laura Molesworth: "*the wife of veteran Sydney fan Vol Molesworth. She has been interested in fan doings and reading since they married in 1946 and she was enthralled by the records of the pre-war Futurian Society and fanzines. In 1947, when the group reformed, she was Librarian for a time (and she is that by profession and at present is Head Librarian of one of Sydney's daily newspapers). She feels that the Convention was a wonderful success if only because it brought other female fans here into contact.*"

Laura's comment on the 1952 convention was true. All of the femme fen named in *Vertical Horizons* appear on the list of attendees to the convention, as well as two other women, Beryl Chipper and Daphne Ireland (and possibly others hidden by first names given only as initials). Publicity surrounding the convention was almost certainly a factor in attracting more women to fandom. At three subsequent natcons, plays written by Norma Hemming were performed, two by a theatrical group founded by Christine Davison and led by Nicki Gore. These were "That's the Way it Goes" in 1954 and "Miss Denton's Dilemma", subtitled "Sex with Hex", in 1955. The third, "Balance of Power", was performed at Olympicon in Melbourne. (Sadly, Christine Davison died of her illness before any of these performances.) Other women who joined into fan activities in one way or another over this period included Lorelei Giles, Valerie Pauline, Joy Anderson, Pat Smith and Judy McGuinness.

By now, astute readers will have noticed the conspicuous absence of quotes from any of the women named above. Direct testimony on what appeal sf had for them, what attracted them to the Futurian Society and why Rosemary and others were willing to withstand 'turmoil' in order to join as ordinary members would be highly valuable. This is particularly true given that Vol's history of fandom has so many contradictions and omissions.

Efforts have been made to contact them. Of course, a number of the femme fans have passed away over the intervening years, but Graham Stone, Arthur Haddon and I have all attempted to elicit comment from some of the major figures. In 2002, Graham had been in recent contact with Laura when he spoke to Rosemary on the phone, but he found "*she was rather dismissive and claimed she didn't remember much. But either she wanted to get in touch with Laura Molesworth or vice versa. Maybe I can try again...*". (He did, but with no result.)

Similarly, Arthur wrote to Rosemary some years ago seeking comment on his recollections:

*"I have had no reply from Roe, not that that surprises me at all, so I assume that there was nothing in my suggestions that she found so far off key that a correction was considered essential...I doubt very much that we shall ever be able to tell what the situation was really. Those of us who were there and are still around have to rely on old memories of happenings that we did not give much importance to at the time. We were young, silly and full of our own importance."* (letter, 4 September 2003)

And that seems like a logical place to stop, but...

I can't resist adding one more passage. This also comes from the *Official Report of the Fourth Australian SF Convention, 1955*, the last of the early conventions held in Sydney. (By this time Sydney fandom was terminally ill; the 1956 and 1958 Melbourne conventions received no reports from any Sydney group.) The group report entitled 'Vertical Horizons' adds a wry postscript to the history of the femme fen of the '50s:

"The Secretary read a letter from Miss R. Simmons, in which she stated that to the best of her knowledge the femme fan group was no longer in existence and that publication of *Vertical Horizons* had ceased.

"V. Molesworth stated that this was incorrect although possibly accurate to the best of Simmons' knowledge.

"L. Molesworth stated that the femme fan group may be reformed as a Ladies Auxiliary to do the dirty work at functions."

# LETTERS

Eric Lindsay, Airlie Beach, Qld.

26 August, 2008

It was a great surprise to see you had scored original (albeit old) fiction from Donald H. Tuck. I recall having long ago put great effort into getting copies of his *Encyclopaedia*, a wonder to behold.

Those timelines you are doing are fascinating. I recall some, but not all the magazines. These days we seem to be down to a subscription to *Analog*; for some reason *Asimov's* seems to have disappeared from our subscription list. I think Ken Ozanne ended up with all my magazines. These days I am trying to avoid saving any paper - this climate rapidly destroys paper.

I was not surprised to learn that finding a rental home was difficult. In some areas (like here), prices of the very few homes available, and even apartments, far exceed the value you can extract from rental returns. This leaves very few rental sites at all. While we have lots of building, it is all of places for resort style life, and very upmarket. The builders and developers will take their money and leave.

Library Manager at Geoscience Australia sounds like a wonderful place to be. They used to have some great sat photos of Australia up on their web site. The library also sounds great. The massive bus commute sounds less welcome.

Jean will be in Canberra in October, attending Conflux. Perhaps you will be attending also?

*[I was intending to get along to Conflux, but the dates clashed with a family holiday we had already planned to Merimbula and the lure of whale-watching won. GA still markets satellite imagery, but its website is currently being re-developed.]*

A. Langley Searles, Bronxville, N.Y.

1 September, 2008

I think your latest timeline is as interesting and valuable as the earlier ones. It's certainly clever of you to compress as much essential information as you do in a small space and yet keep it clear and accessible. I've not put out a *Fantasy Commentator* since 57/58 but am enclosing the most recent *Annexes*, which I publish to keep up my apa memberships. You may find them interesting.

*[I certainly do, and look forward to the next Fantasy Commentator, too. The final installment of the timeline is proving tricky given all the changes in publishing in recent years.]*

=====  
Brad Foster, Irving, Tx. 4 September, 2008

Got in *Mumblings from Munchkinland* #25 last week just before heading out of town for an art festival, so took it along to read at night, nice to dip into before heading off to sleep.

Loved the kind of "flashback" design of the cover, with a few touches of color like getting an old mimeo zine with carefully added in second color runs. Nowadays it's either strictly black and white, or people doing full process color off their computer. Very nice.

I loved the round-about way you ended up working at the same location you had originally applied for. Of course, the process itself was probably not all that fun for you, but an interesting read for those of us just peeking in on your life through the zine. (Nice photo of your office. Are those giant penguins to correct scale with the pterodactyl?)

*[If so, I'd hate to meet a hungry one.]*

The foldout of your timeline of magazines was an interesting visual, but have to admit I wish you would have put the titles at the beginning of each line, rather than having to refer to a previous print, or dig through the text at the bottom. I'm not totally sure I got it right on some of them. For instance, seem to be three rows in purple without titles written, but the note at the bottom only mentions two names for the purple...without noting which row is which title. Still, one of those nifty diagrams that starts to take on a visual life all its own, and certainly represents a major amount of research work on your own part. (So, when do you start doing an equivalent chart for sf fanzines?)

*[Actually, the first timeline I published was of early Aussie fanzines and I'd like to add to that, too, but finding reliable data on fanzines is much harder than for prozines. I couldn't place titles at the start of each line as each section joins the next. ]*

Gotta go, have to get the paperwork done from the show this weekend, unpack everything, then repack for new display will be taking to another show coming up this NEXT weekend. It's a crazy way to make a living, but it's worked so far (knock on wood).

=====

David Redd, Haverfordwest, Pembs.  
10 September, 2008

Doesn't this colour add something - to the interior photos, the centrefold, and especially the cover which has gained such old-time atmosphere thereby that I almost expected to feel twiltone under my fingers rather than modern copier paper.

Pity Don Tuck didn't offer his story outside Australia; I'm sure some UK sf publishers of the late 40's - early 50's were doing shorts like this and with that wry ending it should have found a home.

Your timeline was fascinating and definitely one to keep. One or two titles I'm still working out (lacking the previous section) but the *SF Encyclopedia* should nail them. (Liked the reminiscences, too -- Tim's and yours -- especially the GA job-application affair.)

*[Yes, I suspect Don could have placed his story in one of the UK or US mags if he had persevered, but his talents in bibliography certainly weren't wasted. I'll have to send both you and Brad earlier sections of the timeline so you can make better sense of it.]*

=====

Robert Lichtman, Oakland, Calif.  
16 October, 2008

If I'd been more on top of reading fanzines, I'd have noticed when *Mumblings* no. 25 first arrived that you warned on the last page, "Be quick with locs on this issue, #26 is almost ready already." Instead, after a quick look-through when it first arrived back on August 22nd I set it aside and it promptly got buried beneath newer fanzines.

Reading it night before last, though, I have to say it was worth the wait. Even before I saw your explanation that the creatures on the front cover were from *Tik-Tok of Oz*, they aroused a sort of ancestral memory in me. And when I read the art credits, I immediately ran to my bookcase, pulled out my copy of that book, and found them on the copyright page. As it happens, I have all my childhood Oz books—they were in the stuff I didn't take with me when I moved out of my parents' house in 1965 and which they kept safely for me to discover in 1995, when I had to go through their nearly sixty years of family kipple after they could no longer live independently and their long-time house in Los Angeles had to be cleared out. I have a dozen of the Baum titles and two of the Ruth Plumly Thompson, all but the original novel in the hardcover Reilly & Lee editions with full-color illustrations on the boards. I only have two of the Thompsons because even as a child (and precocious reader) I didn't care for the syrupy sweetness she brought to the harder-edged Baum universe.

*[My Dad likewise had a complete set of the Oz books, receiving one every year a new one was published for a birthday or Xmas, and he read them to us as children. Their continuing influence will be obvious from the title of this zine. He presented all of the grandchildren with facsimile sets, too.]*



In your editorial you wrote, “Many of you had warned us about rising house prices when we mentioned that we would be returning to Australia,” and I wondered if like here in the US those prices have receded dramatically in the last year or so. In other words, did you have your own homegrown subprime mortgage crisis and lots of foreclosures, all driving a downward spiral in prices? Your comment that you’re putting away money and are “hoping that prices will fall a little more” implies that something like that is happening there.

*[No, the lending market is better regulated here, but house prices did over-inflate.]*

I would hope that, if so, your opportunities are improved (and continuing to improve) to buy a house well-located in relation to your new job (about which, what a great set of circumstances leading to it!).

Beyond admiring the Hannes Bok frontispiece, my first reaction to Donald Tuck’s “Invasion from Ceres” was to groan—oh, no, amateur science-fiction. But then I saw your note that it was written in the ‘40s and went unpublished for sixty years despite the urgings of Roger Dard and others that he should try to sell it. So I read it and quite enjoyed it.

As I made my way through, increasingly it reminded me of Charles Burbee’s “Invasion from 1949,” which was first published in F. Towner Laney’s legendary fanzine, *The Acolyte*, in 1946, and which I reprinted (with a wonderful heading by Dan Steffan) in my own *Trap Door* 22 and it is available online at:

<http://efanzines.com/TrapDoor/TD22W.pdf> on pages 29 and 30. Hope you also see the resemblance—interesting that both were written in the ‘40s.

Very nice to have the latest in your series of timelines of American sf magazines! Even though there’s something displacing about such a timeline appearing in an Australian fanzine, it’s a welcome piece of scholarship. I do agree, though, that this one is a bit sad because of the preponderance of reprints in many of these short-lived titles.

In your brother’s travel account I particularly enjoyed his noting, “I have traveled on the roads of Fiji and determined that I want to be

awarded the ‘speed bump’ franchise for this country -- every village has at least 3 speed bumps...and there are *lots* of villages.” This tickled me because it brought up a memory of driving around the Pechanga Indian Reservation in Southern California back in the ‘90s before they opened their hugely successful casino. At that time it was a very third-worldly place. All the roads except for a short stretch leading off the highway into the center of the community were dirt and dusty, and homemade speed bumps were everywhere.

Tim’s comment about real estate agents – “Gawd! They’re everywhere!” -- made me think of the TV shows we’ve grown somewhat addicted to of late that can be best described as “real estate porn.” One of them has to do with people seeking to escape, for various reasons, their existing homes (and lives) by moving to some exotic clime—ideally both sunnier and with cheaper housing prices than where they are—and encountering the ubiquitous smiling real estate agents who are only too happy to show them local offerings. Each relocation seeker gets to see three houses in the format of the show and then chooses one, accompanied by breathless voice-over about each house and speculation about which one they’ll ultimately select. I know, it sounds like it would get old fast, but amazingly it doesn’t.

In the letter column Arthur Haddon writes, “I have said...that with fossil fuel having a finite life the use as petrol or diesel should be severely constricted as the use and need in the chemical industry is far more important.” I completely agree, and one of my pet peeves is that in light of this such debauchery as auto racing continues unabated.

You write, “Wouldn’t it be funny if the white stuff in the base of HPL’s bust was powdered ice cream?” You’ll have to explain that to me.

*[Lovecraft reputedly loved ice cream.]*

Although I moved in 2005, you put me in Glen Ellen atop my letter. Habit, I guess—I was there for 25 years, 20 of them in the same apartment (although since I had a post office box you would never know that).

*[Just laziness – I copied your address from a previous issue’s column.]*

[continued from page 2]

The road past our house was also impassable for a while due to felled trees. These and the ones in our yard were hacked apart by our neighbours using machetes. As forewarned, the electricity and water supplies remained cut for several days to most of Apia. We fared better than most as houses in the USP compound had their own water tank, but no electricity meant no ceiling fans at the hottest time of the year, so as soon as we could we escaped the humidity by heading to one of the nearest beaches. The storm surges and heavy rains had washed away much of the sand, collapsed many of the fales and stripped the trees of most of their leaves, but that didn't stop the girls and friend Umar from climbing in them between dips.



Our other strategy to beat the heat, once electricity had been restored to the centre of town, was to go to the flicks. Magik Cinema had only opened since our arrival in Apia and it had proven to be a lifeline given the limited range of things to do in the town. On this occasion, the main attraction was just the air conditioning, we didn't really care what film we saw. The title on the billboard was *Love Actually* and that sounded pretty safe, so we bundled the kids inside. The theatre had been flooded and still smelled humid, but it was *cool* humidity so we relaxed in the seats. When the simulated sex scenes occurred, Megan and I exchanged quick glances, but by this stage Lauren and Ruby had fallen asleep and Ella just seemed perplexed, so we didn't worry. We enjoyed the film, actually, and it has become a favourite.

While we were in the cinema, authorities were cleaning up the aftermath of Cyclone Heta. Storm surges and high winds caused significant damage in Savaii and coastal areas of Upolu, amounting to around \$150 million, but Samoa was lucky. Heta accelerated to the southeast and passed less than 50 nautical miles from Niue, obliterating most of the buildings in the capital, Alofi, and sending sea waves over the country's high limestone cliffs. A woman was killed in a building collapse, but her baby miraculously survived. Heta was eventually ranked as the strongest tropical cyclone of the 2003/04 South Pacific season.

We tend to record cyclones by their effects upon us, but over the next few weeks, another impact of Heta became apparent every evening at dusk. It became more and more common to see numerous bats winging across the sky from the direction of The Big Island, Savaii. It was eerie, rather unsettling. Perhaps the sight of wild animals fleeing in numbers still triggers some kind of subconscious alarm within us, I don't know. The migration lasted for more than a week and we eventually learned that the cyclone had disorientated the bats and destroyed a large swath of their breeding grounds. The environmental authorities issued notices calling on people not to shoot and eat any bats (a traditional delicacy), reminding them that they were now a protected species. Back at work, I overheard several conversations that caused me to wonder how effective these notices had been.

One final result of Heta, for me, came as a complete surprise. The Samoan PM declared just after its passage that residents in communities strongly affected by the cyclone would receive assistance to help clean up and repair buildings, roads and other structures. He didn't explain that the money would be automatically disbursed via superannuation accounts. As a USP employee, I had been required to open a local account. Upon closing it, I asked the clerk if I was really entitled to the "relief" amount. She just smiled and said that all Moamoa residents had received it, so I shrugged. It wasn't a huge sum but, looking back, it probably would have been better used for the rehabilitation of a bat habitat.



=====  
Although it has been only three months since *Mumblings 25*, this issue has been much longer than that in the making. I had spotted the Finlay illustration (on the back cover) before our departure for Samoa in 2001. It's from an issue of Ray Palmer's *Universe*, a short-lived clone of his *Other Worlds*. Like many Palmer efforts, it started promisingly and then faded away into mediocrity (not to say crud). Anyway, the multiplicity of phallic rockets combined with the man's pose and the original caption, reproduced here, made me laugh and wonder how Harry Harrison missed this for *Great Balls of Fire*. (That thought goes for the giant space tit I used on the cover of #22, too.)

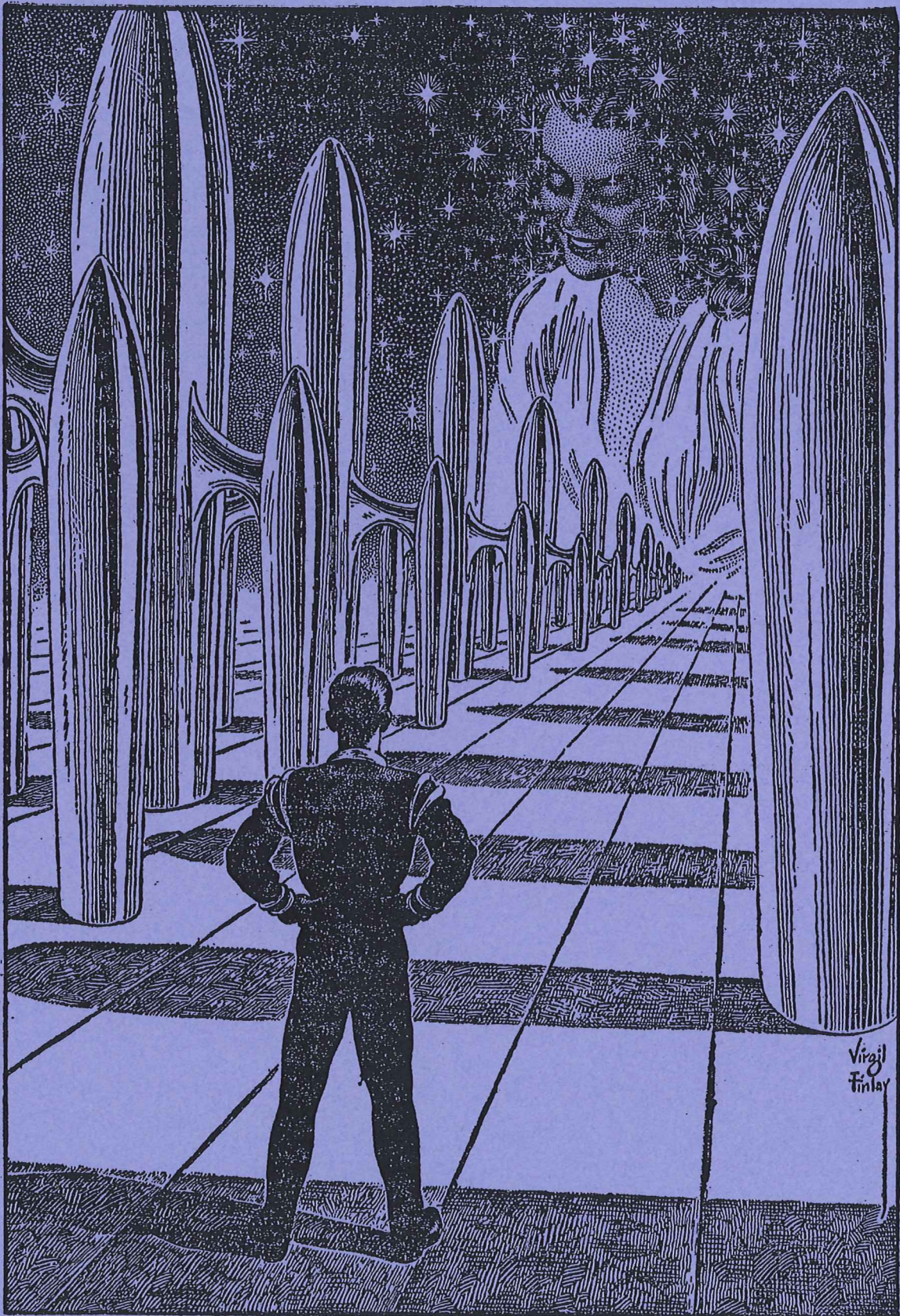
The front cover again utilises elements of clipart by Alapati Avealalo from the IRETA book I noted in issue 18. James Blish never published any stories in *Universe*, let alone any of his Okie series, but if we ever do develop the technology of Cities in Flight, I reckon there will be room for all of Earth's cultures in space.

I had already been researching the article on the femme Futurians for some years when we left Launceston – Arthur Haddon sent me Rosemary Simmons' letter over a decade ago – but this still doesn't reflect my original intention. Without input from more of the people who were there at the time, however, not much more than this seems possible. Many thanks to Arthur and Graham Stone for their comments on an early draft and to Graham again for allowing me to borrow the photo from the 1953 natcon used in the centrefold of this issue.

Our Heta experience almost made it into an earlier issue, too, but the resonance between the images of galaxy and cyclone make it appropriate here and add to the Samoan origins of this issue. Finally, thanks to all loc writers; your comments are again welcome, to:

Chris Nelson, 63 Ligertwood St., Evatt, ACT 2617 or [nelsonleeoz@hotmail.com](mailto:nelsonleeoz@hotmail.com)





*"... men will grasp at the stars when they have nothing nearer and dearer to hold."*



Photograph of the Business Session,

2<sup>nd</sup> Australian SF Convention

1953

a supplement to

*Mumblings from Munchkinland 26*

The photograph reproduced overleaf is not new. It first appeared in *SF News* #6 (June 1953) edited by Graham Stone, with the caption “near the end of the business session”. It has appeared in a number of fanzines since, but generally at a small scale or with poor reproduction quality, rendering the participants’ faces difficult to see.

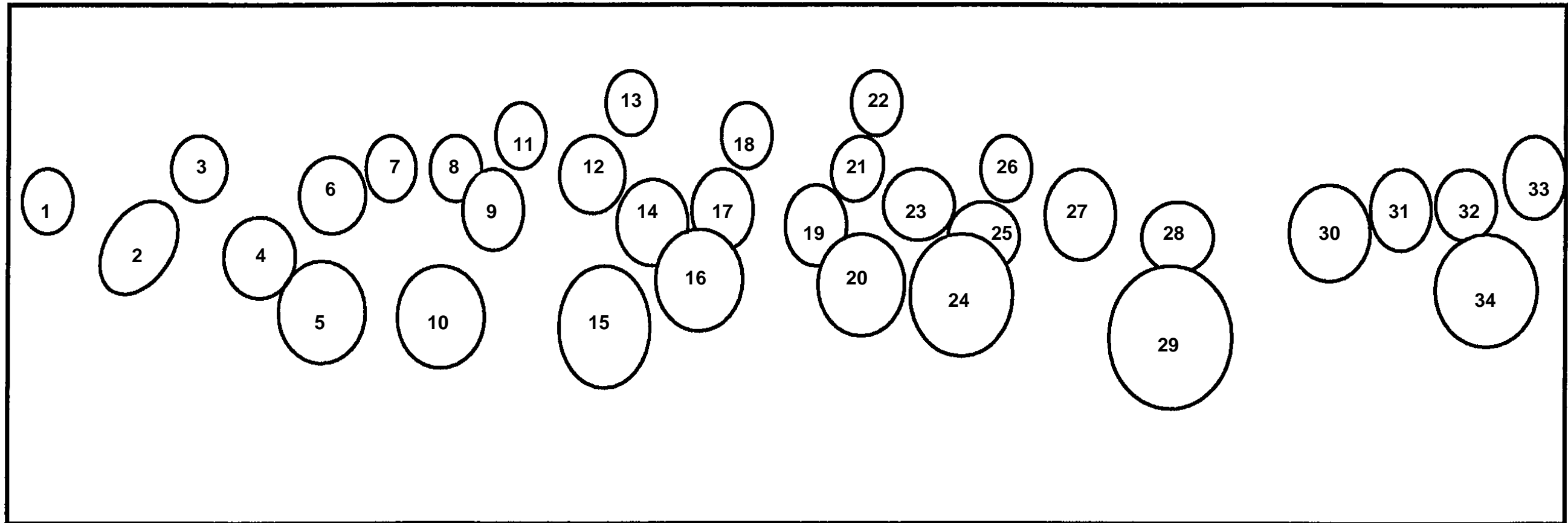
Using an original print provided by Graham the image has been scanned, digitally cleaned (thanks to a curious work colleague of mine), enlarged and cropped to focus on the faces. Identifications are also by Graham. He adds that this would have been only around half of the total attendance at the convention.







### Key to 1953 Convention photograph



- |                         |                        |                             |                            |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Phil Royce           | 10. Padraic McGuinness | 19. Graham Stone            | 28. Joyce Joyce (Adelaide) |
| 2. Ian Moyes (Adelaide) | 11. Christine Davison  | 20. John Earls              | 29. Brian Finch            |
| 3. Walter Judd          | 12. Harold Nicholson   | 21. Royce Williams          | 30. Ted Butt               |
| 4. Terry King           | 13. Dave Cohen         | 22. Kevin Smith             | 31. Sidney Dunk            |
| 5. Fred Fredrickson     | 14. William Veney      | 23. Laura Molesworth        | 32. Nicholas Solntseff     |
| 6. Rosemary Simmons     | 15. Don Lawson         | 24. Phineas Glick           | 33. Michael McGuinness     |
| 7. Alan South           | 16. Lloyd Fisher       | 25. Ian Crozier (Melbourne) | 34. Charles LaCoste        |
| 8. Des Conley           | 17. William Hubble     | 26. Patrick Burke           |                            |
| 9. Vol Molesworth       | 18. Rex Meyer          | 27. Lyell Crane             |                            |

*Photo:* probably Jack Leggett