

Transcendental Basenji Sermons and Enlightenment

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The Sydney Futurian meeting of
Friday February 21, 2003

Topic – 'The Trickster in
SF&F Stories' and a Quest for the
secret of Eternal Life!

Present were;

Garry P Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox,
Fiona Lawson-Baker, Ross Mitchell,
Ted Scribner, Brian Walls & apologies
received and noted from Ian Woolf.

General meeting introduction and Pre-Topic discussion

Given the foul weather (I spent 5 to 7 pm sitting
on a bus getting into town) seven people for the
first Sydney Futurian meeting of the year wasn't
too bad. Anticipations of the arrival of Fiona
Lawson-Baker (from the Australian Film
Institute) and her quest for the secret of Eternal
Life twisted the meeting off topic on several
occasions with side trips to biology (including
speculation on the consequences of getting an
infinite number of identical women pregnant!).
Fiona was delayed but fortuitously turned up just
as discussion of the Trickster topic was
exhausted.

I look forward to adding Fiona's research notes
and commentary to the Sydney Futurian
transcripts.

Local Convention Noise

As the details of the following conventions are
widely available elsewhere I will just identify
them as having been discussed.

-The (ANU) Frankenstein's Science symposium
April 22 to 24, between Swancon & Anzac day
-A complete absence of any information about a
2003 Canberra SF con leads us to expect that
there won't be one, i.e. it seems unlikely that the
same group of people would be capable of
running both a CSF con and a Natcon within
twelve months.

-Garry Dalrymple's preliminary announcements
about a low cost 'Sydney SF Weekend' at the

Museum on June 21 & 22, promotion will be by bookmark, Libraries, Bookshops (and word of mouth). All Writers and the members of previous Museum Freecons are most welcome.

-Melbourne's 'regional SF con', Continuum, will be July 11 to 13 and has several NSW GOHs

-A Swancon progress report was passed around and discussed.

-Ted Scribner announced some details for the 'Magic Casements' Speculative Fiction event, September 13&14 (widely reported elsewhere).

Discussion of The Trickster in SF Stories

There are not as many tricksters out there in SF stories as you would expect once you discount SF stories that involve Fraud, Crime and the sort of evil trickery, sadism and torment dished out by 'Dr. No / Blofeld' Bond type protagonists. There was general agreement that Tricksterism usually occurs in SF as comic relief or as a way of showing the development of a main characters and only rarely as the 'main event' of the story.

Central to 'Tricksterism' is that you need a Trickster and a consenting 'trickee', consequently identification of 'Tricksterism' is to a degree subjective i.e. we may see as a someone as a 'Trickster' who considers themselves to be operating in a straight forward manner, i.e. the experience of Captain Cook at Hawaii, where the natives initially convinced themselves that the Cook was a God returned, but later were motivated to kill him for his 'trickery'. Unintentional mutual delusion of both parties is also a feature of 'Galaxy Quest'.

Intentional Tricksters are found in Harry Harrison's 'Stainless Steel Rat' books, Star Trek's Harry Mudd', both career shysters and 'Q' a character with god like powers who may appear to be a trickster to the Enterprise crew only because his race is so alien to humans.

The meeting considered that the trickster may be - Playful, Unthinking, Deluded, Nasty / Criminal (and consider trickery to be the 'Art' of his activity, i.e. Dr Who's 'The Master'). Also mentioned were - the Clown that exposes the truth (a Jungian insight?) - No trickster in Tolkien or Larry Niven's body of work (per Ted Scribner)

'Trickster' SF stories that we were able to identify and discussed included

- Eric Frank Russell's 'Next of Kin' (AKA 'The Space Willies'), where a POW convinces his alien captors that all earthmen are born with an unseen, unrestrainable and wrathful companion, leading the aliens to believe that Earth is too dangerous a planet to make war against.
- 'Battlefield Earth', where main character plays 'dumb human' and uses their greed to convince the alien rulers of Earth the Johnny
- Thor Vs Captain America, through human sacrifice and necromancy the Nazis have brought back to life the Norse Gods. Loki appears to side with the Allies for a suicidal assault against the Nazi centre of power (by David Brin?).
- The Postman, post apocalypse survivor setting out to scam food and lodging pretends to be a US postman and unintentionally revives (US) civilisation.
- Death by Extasy (didn't catch writer or plot details)
- Galaxy Quest where actors are unwittingly dragged into a 'Space Hero' role by aliens without a concept for entertainment. The delusion is mutual, as actors and aliens each operate under false assumptions for most of the movie.
- In the Wizard of OZ, the Wizard intentionally a trickster by attempting to play a 'god gambit' until Dorothy pulled back the curtain to reveal the old man at his machinery

Fiona Lawson-Baker (and her quest for the secret of immortality!)

Fiona is studying at the Australian Film Institute (AFI) and as a research project she was given the task of trying to find someone with plans to live forever. After exhausting all other leads, and being unable to find anyone willing to talk about planning to live forever, she eventually stumbled

On Ian Woolf's web page with an account of a Sydney Futurians meeting where immortality was the topic.

Naturally when all other sources failed, she turned to the assembled wisdom of the 'Secret Masters of All Knowledge Past, Present and Future' i.e. a meeting of SF Fans. I have not reviewed the meeting account, but I presume that it was mostly about the stories that explored the personal and society wide effects of all or some people being immortal such as the consequences of having immortal and 'transient' populations sharing a society, which was not really what Fiona was looking for.

The thing about any real Secret of Immortality is that if you have it, you would only share it with some one that you would really enjoy spending 'forever' with.

However you can achieve forms of immortality by

- Being born of a race or family that is naturally very long lived
- Use a machine, magic, technology or mystical powers that prevent your body parts from ever wearing out or dying
- Create a reputation to outlive your body or create a reputation to the effect that you never really died, like King Arthur
- Remove yourself from the effects of time, i.e. ascend like Elijah, take a time machine to the future, a time dilating spaceflight, step into a 'time insulating box' or even by avoiding the 'end of the universe' etc.
- Have an immortal spirit that passes from body to body over time etc. A sub-class of this would be to 'download' yourself to some form of computer or robot

Lots of groups and philosophies have ideas on how to live longer through diet and spiritual practice. The following groups were raised as having an interest in forms of immortality

Breatherians - You are what you breath, immortality by passing beyond the need for the contamination of physical sustenance.

Cryogenics companies - Die, freeze, cure and revive your wealthy corpse and hope that the world is grateful.

Mormonism Spiritual marriage leads to the creation of new universes where you and your wife occupy the role of 'god' and your 'spiritual children' play the role of Adam and eve. In effect a cosmic pyramid scheme.

Raelians - Clone your body and live forever, just like 'god' did.

Scientology - Immortal souls imprisoned on Earth millions of years ago, bodily re-incarnation in our time, hence their Billion year contract offer and a need to clear those engrams.

Theosophy - A set of Hindu like beliefs involving cycles of re-birth and the perfection of your soul.

Notes on the November meeting of the NSW Branch of the BAA.

A night with Bob Evans, a 'Super star' among observing Amateur Astronomers

We had just over twenty people present for the Branch's November public meeting, including one visitor from an Astronomical society of Northern Italy. This was more than I would usually expect for our last ordinary meeting for the year. Clearly our Guest Speaker for the evening, Bob Evans, Australia's foremost discoverer of new Supernovae, has considerable drawing power.

It's usual for members of the clergy to talk about 'heaven' but Bob, a retired Uniting Church minister (an Australian fusion of Methodist, /Presbyterian, and Baptist churches) has over many years actually gone out there and done

Something about it. During his postings to suburban and country parishes, Bob has scanned the sky for new Super Novae. To date his tally is 35, more than anyone alive.

Bob is currently Astronomer in residence at the Linden Observatory. This observatory was built by the late Ken Beames (a BAA member) in the Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney and is maintained with the assistance of the University of Western Sydney.

Supernovae are now known to be extremely energetic events and their brightness at great distance has helped to. As an observational topic they are a prime example of how the persistence and volume of Amateur Astronomer's observations can be of use to Academic Astronomers.

Bob commenced his talk by explained the power of Supernovae events by the use of analogy. Supernovae are energetic events indeed: trainloads of TNT needed to match a single atomic bomb and trainloads (and Trillions) of atomic bombs stretching across the solar system would be needed to match the energy routinely released when a Supernovae goes off.

Bob's talk about the history of our understanding of Supernovae revealed an interesting example of how the development of an observational science was held back for many years by the lack of theoretical framework needing observational data to confirm or disprove.

The systematic investigation of Supernovae was delayed until there could be a true appreciation of the power involved and an explanation for sources of such power. Although Supernovae have been recorded since antiquity, their systematic study only started after 1924.

The implications of Edwin Hubble's insight that our own milky way Galaxy was only one of many in a much larger Universe lead to the conclusion that for Supernovae to be visible in distant galaxies they must be extraordinarily powerful events and deserving of greater study.

Hubble's work provided the question, the 'What?' but it had to wait until the 1930s and 40s for the implications of Atomic theory to provide explanations of how Supernovae could be powered.

During the 1930s Zwicky began to use the Mt Wilson telescope to collect Supernovae Spectra. By the 1940s, the development of two classes of Supernovae, based on Spectral hydrogen lines, allowed their great intensity to be put to use, as indicators of interstellar distances, beyond that possible with Cepheid variables.

In the 1960s more spectral classes of Supernovae were available for study and by 1983 amateurs were spotting several Supernovae each year by optical means. Shortly after this, technological innovations, such as the use of CCDs and photographic plate surveys opened the field to professional and well-equipped amateurs and the numbers discovered each year rose from 15 to 20 to the current 200 to 300 per year.

About 30% of Supernovae are still found by amateurs, access to the latest equipment helps, but discoveries are still being made by the old methods, patient observers watching a familiar piece of sky.

Supernovae work is still useful, surveys of Supernovae occurrence in dim and distant Galaxies has recently shown that the expansion of the Universe is continuing to accelerate.

Most of Bob's Supernovae discoveries have been made with large (40 to 60 cm) amateur instruments although he has had opportunity to use professional equipment and currently uses the big telescope at Linden Observatory.

Bob Evans invites you to consider a day trip to the Blue Mountains and visit him at the Linden Observatory, Website – <http://welcome.to/linden>

From notes of the November 20 public meeting by Garry P Dalrymple – © GPD Dec 2002

Strange days & nights in the shadow of war, March 18-21, 2003

On Tuesday night, the evening after the (local) midday broadcast of George Bush's 'Saddam, get out of town by next sundown' address I walked home at sunset, which is usually about an 80 to 90 minute trip. I do this occasionally to try to lose weight/improve muscle tone etc. to avoid back pain. On Wednesday afternoon it was windy, resulting in Mystique being more sociable and 'clingy' than most nights, as she can hear and is unsettled by the infrasound associated with stuff being blown about by the wind. I was still tired, 24 hours after the big walk (muscle bulk adjusting post walk) so after work I just ate, watched half an hour of TV then crashed out until 1 am. I spent till 2.30 am sorting the papers that you can carry about for weeks, meaning to find 'just a few minutes at work' to deal with. In my case, invoices, correspondence and statements relating to aspects of my life including Australian Democrats, the Glebe market stall, the 2003 SSFW convention, Shares and bank accounts.

Back in bed, at bit past 3 am I was woken from light sleep by a few of those very loud drops of rain that you notice just before it pours down. Still half asleep I initially thought it was someone clumping round the house in hobnail boots. It didn't rain further as it had been the arrival of a dust storm; the dust front had met the cooler and moister night air, nucleating a few drops of rain as the front passed through.

I went back to sleep and had a colourful dream of having to fight large carnivorous caterpillars whose young burrow into your skin and make it itch. Woke up at 7 am with dry, gunked-up eyes but didn't think much of it as it was not Sydney's hay fever (from grass pollens) season

and the morning was bright and clear.

As the mailman (on a 125 cc motor bike) delivered the day's mail at 8 am, which included the Autumn 2003 issue of The (Australian) Skeptic, I didn't notice the daily paper's cover and lead story until I took a break for lunch at 1.30 pm. Many people at work in the morning had coughs, itches and irritated noses from the unseen dust.

At lunch I saw that the morning paper's wrap around picture and story was the dust storms on the Iraq-Kuwait border, just as the same phenomena was occurring a pane of glass away. This was during the time that ABC TV was reporting 'unconfirmed reports' of surrenders, initial strikes on Baghdad and US/UK Special forces contact with Iraqi units.

By lunch time the wind and the heat of the day had lifted the 'fines' dust particles from where they had settled in the early morning to become a thick dark grey 30 degree high band across the sky and visibility could be seen to be dropping from over a kilometre to less than 500 metres by early afternoon.

It seems my itchy dreams had been stimulated by the grit from Sydney's 3 am dusting.

During Wednesday and Thursday I agreed to stand at Clemton Park public school during most of Saturday and hand out 'How to Vote' cards for 'Save our Suburbs' (lower house, local candidate) and the Australian Democrats (Upper house, no local candidate). The aim is to support 'third party' candidates and prevent the Labor candidate winning 50 plus % of the vote, i.e. to make Canterbury a marginal seat rather than a 'Safe' Labor one and so make local issues matter to the government/opposition parties.

On Thursday night I again walked, hoping to build on the earlier effort, stopping off at Campsie to do some shopping on the way home. I set off just before 7 pm and sunset. Looking to the West as I crossed an elevated railway bridge near my work place I could see a yellow and slightly greenish Sun, still a diameter above

the horizon. It was 'cool' enough through the dust that it did not leave after an after image.

In a couple of years of Sun watching and even during the Christmas fires I have never seen such a colour or a 'cool' Sun. During the worst of the smoke haze from the fires, it had been a bright metallic red that left an after image on the

Eye's retina. Sunset to Midnight, Jupiter was also visible, but high enough above the horizon not to be greatly affected by the dust. It was a little dimmer but much the same colour as usual. No doubt there is a technical explanation that takes into account the different concentrations and particle sizes of dust and smoke cloud particles, but the effect was remarkable and outstanding. From my reading of Science and SF, I expect much the same effect will greet expeditioners to Mars,

On getting home, I rested briefly before taking Mystique for a 30 minute walk around the block, as with the State election this weekend, 2003 SSFW matters, the Market stall and work, I may not be able to give her much attention in coming days. Standing at the (high) Bexley Road end of Eulabah Avenue, as I returned home with Mystique just after 9 pm and with the moon (two days off full) about 30 degrees from the horizon I had a good view of the Moon, it was obscured by an uneven crepe of dusty cloud. Later that night when the moon was closer to zenith it was dim and it's light seemed to be tinted blue-green.

On Friday morning I was a bit more alert than usual, so I asked mum, where's Mysti? As she wasn't to be seen in the house or sitting in one of her favourite spots where the low morning sun passing through irregular gaps in the neighbour's fences, trees and bushes reaches the ground.

After searching the hidden corners of the back yard, we found where she had been and what she had been doing. Between the garages and the back shed she had been digging a burrow in the moist earth. I can't say whether she was on a maternal hormonal jag, preparing a 'den' or whether she had taken in recent news and was

preparing her own bunker, but it was a big hole and tunnelled under the pavement!

That's how the war started for me. GPD 21-3-03

Election day Report by Garry P Dalrymple at Clemton Park public school, Saturday March 22, 2003

I spent from 8 am to 2 pm & 4.30 to 6 pm giving out 'How To Vote' cards for the Australian Democrats (NSW upper house candidates, no Canterbury candidates) and 'Save Our Suburbs' (Canterbury and NSW upper house candidates).

At noon, a Labor booth captain asked, seeing that I had been handing out how to votes since 8 am and that it was noon, asked, 'Why do you bother to stand all day in the sun to support the Australian Democrats when it is obvious that the Greens will out poll you?'

It wasn't a good day for the Australian Democrats, we did not have candidates in every seat, we were still tainted with the GST, the Greens were promoted as THE anti-gulf war vote even though they were saying exactly the same things as the Democrats, their 'talking head', Senator Bob Brown got all the media coverage, the party had just suffered a leadership change and schism. Ironically, the individual senators most 'to blame' for the GST attachment were those who left the party!

Went to a post election party, plenty of gallows humour, as no Democrat candidate got enough votes to get their deposit back! Some hope though in that the Greens have peaked at ~ 8% state wide and that their 'growth' from a single member status will inevitably expose them to the same sorts of parliamentary differences of opinion on policy that the Democrats have been dealing with for years, particularly the Red/Green divide between 'Conservationists' of different degrees and the 'End Capitalism Now' major constituencies within the greens.

Garry's pointers on picking up Old Ladies and Dogs

Tuesday April 22

Decided to burn some accumulated recreation leave (I accumulate twenty days a year and have a current balance of about by forty to fifty days) taking off the three days between the public holidays for Easter and Anzac day.

I went into town during the morning to visit the Australian Museum, venue for the 2003 Sydney Science Fiction Weekend (June 21 and 22) and to drop off SSFW application forms to most of Sydney's CBD SF&F bookshops and libraries. A secondary objective was to gather data with a view to adding 'SF in Sydney Libraries' to the 'SF in Sydney Shops' currently to be seen on Danny Yee's excellent website ([Website Here](#)).

A major discovery was that the NSW Mechanics Institute of Arts has not just a 'lovely' library with a good SF&F section, but also a suite of three meeting rooms and a 180 seat Auditorium. I believe that you could run a multi room and multi program stream con in this space, with Main, second stream, Video room/third stream and dealers room, in effect a 200 person SF con. The only fly in the ointment is that the rooms are only available evenings and to 1 pm on Saturdays. Membership of the NSW MIA library costs \$6.60 per year; cheap enough to contemplate all sorts of exercises in applied democracy?

Got home after lunchtime having scored about half a dozen 'hits' on the SSFW publicity front. After noon snooze was disrupted by an urgent summons from my mother. On Tuesdays she collects the neighbour's rubbish and puts it in our bin. Our across the street neighbour is a frail, 97 year old Theosophist. This 'New Age' religion dates from the late 1800s and has beliefs that include soul reincarnation. My mother found that Gladys had collapsed in the backyard near the hills hoist and unable to get up

off the ground. I was needed to pick her up off the grass (my mother has a hip replacement and my father is too unsteady on his feet) and help her back into the house. The Ambulance was called in (arriving in about 15 minutes) and phone calls made to her friends and carers etc. It seems that she had gone out to put some washing out to dry, stumbled and spent an hour or two lying on the grass in the (slight) rain.

The ambulance men cleared her to stay at on at home. The event ran from about 4 pm to 6 pm, and I found the whole thing very unsettling because of the toll that this takes on my mother, but reassuring that I could be of some help.

Gladys probably does not eat enough, although she is determined to die at home rather than in a nursing home and has a circle of friends and carers to help her. Much after the event it occurs to me that if you had any choice in where you were going to fall over, doing it in the back yard and onto soft grass is the better than a tiled bathroom floor.

Wednesday April 23

Decided to take the dog for a short walk to the local cake shop for some bread rolls and a bet at the local TAB agency. Halfway there I notice, across four lanes of traffic that there is a loose Bull Terrier/Staffordshire Terrier cross (the sort with the child swallowing wide mouth) on the opposite corner. It then runs through the traffic dragging a loose chain and starts to mouth my dog.

These things occur faster than you can describe them and usually you either freeze or react first without conscious thought and an understanding of what is happening seeps in backwards. So I reach for the beast's throat, grab its collar and lift with one hand. (If you get a dog's back-legs off the ground it tends to pacify most dogs).

So there I stand, doing a 'Statue of Liberty' with 13 kilos of retreating Basenji on a lead in my left hand and holding in my right hand 25 kilos of menace by the throat at an eye ball to eye ball level.

I bystander held Mysti's lead while I tied the beast up with its chain to a nearby steel sign post. Thinking back, I am not at all convinced that the beasts' intentions were necessarily hostile, it may have just been intending 'rough play', but as both it and Mysti were female, I could not take the risk. The beast showed signs of having had pups in the last six months or so; I guess someone was breeding from her. I wasn't happy chaining it up and leaving it without water to be eventually collected by absentee owners, but at the time I couldn't do much else.

Saturday April 26

Did not go to Markets due to expectation of rain an arm that is beginning to hurt like hell (it is the same arm that split a muscle casing while taking the brunt of my walking leap/trip onto the concrete footpath a few years ago) after Wednesday and the dog-raising event. As it is a public holiday weekend (bad for Market selling), I'm still in bed when mother calls me, with greater urgency than on Tuesday.

Gladys has had another fall and is lying on the carpet in the corridor space between the toilet, TV room and bedroom. She has probably spent the night on the floor as her 'nightcap' evening pink drink can still be seen untouched in the TV room beside her chair.

The back of her head and hands are bloodied and corners have chipped plaster where her hands have scabbled as she tried to get herself up from the floor. Unlike Tuesday, Gladys is not lucid suggesting dehydration or concussion.

Mother and I try to get her up without success, while we do this she complains that she is still falling even as she lies on the carpet.

The emergency call button on Gladys' pendant is pressed, causing a cascade of automated and operator phone calls that result in an ambulance being called. The Ambulance arrives within twenty minutes; Mother, Gladys and the three Ambos go off to emergency. Worryingly

Gladys is still off with the pixies even while under oxygen, suggesting de-hydration or concussion. In succession Gladys is at Canterbury hospital, where she spends a night in the emergency section of the hospital, as there were no beds available, then she is sent on to Concord hospital where she will stay for the best part of two weeks, receiving treatment and some re-habilitation services.

It is worth noting that Gladys has maximum Health insurance, but this has not been much help, she needed emergency admission services before she could access specialised health care, but due to cutbacks the public health infrastructure just wasn't there.

Unlike Tuesday I do not feel any sense of achievement, as I couldn't help on this occasion, just stand and watch. Interestingly Mystique our basenji was acting 'funny' on both Tuesday and Saturday, most likely she was upset by the traffic and movement of people between houses, but it could also have been that she was hearing Gladys' distress calls from across the street, as a previous basenji had been able to hear and react to a telephone conversation with her previous owner that was being held at the other end of the house!

Wednesday April 30

While looking to confirm the dates for the NSW University for their Annual second hand book sale I discovered that the web page of a Stanmore bookshop lists most of the charity second hand book sales. I posted this data to Eastcoast SF. Also I discussed with Ted Scribner the likely trajectory of the visiting DUFF couple and the re-emergence of Zara Baxter into 'con-support' mode after a period of Gafiation.

Thursday May 01

Attended the meeting at the (Parramatta) Infinitas bookshop with the intention of meeting the DUFF couple that were in Sydney at the time, staying with Nick Stathopoulos (SF Cover Artist). Six people resent, Charmaine, Henry Chatroop, Bill Congreve, Damien, Brian

Walls and a Burwood Gamer whose name escapes me. The DUFF couple not attending,

Possibly leaving Sydney a day or two earlier than originally planned. The night's topic was 'Monsters', but the meeting was dominated by discussion of the current X men movie. General verdict, thumbs up and considerable anticipation for future episodes. The meeting closed a little earlier than usual, Bill Congreve having to leave at 6 am the next day for a trip (to the 'Buffy Thing' weekend in Melbourne?)

The topic for the next Infinitas meeting on Thursday June 5 will be - 'Great Australian SF'.

Friday May 02

Left work at 6 pm, which is fairly early. Caught the number 400 bus for the 80 Minute bus ride to NSW University via Sydney Airport for the annual second hand book sale. Could only find a few books worth buying among the SF section and a few magazines (Stern and Omni). A 40 Minute ride home on the bus. Spent \$8.20 on books and magazines and \$38 for the weekly bus ticket to get there. In previous year I had come home with a heaped boxes and backpacks full of stuff.

Saturday May 03

Attended Glebe Market to sell Astronomy posters and 'weird stuff' on what turned out to be a rather disappointing day. Not a single Astronomy poster sold this weekend, some 'stuff', which is par for the course! Apart from SARS concerns, there was also a 'Mind, Body and Soul' festival at Darling Harbour that weekend, seriously competing for the 'Herbal /Strange Dollar'. Between not selling things I handed out several SSFW application forms to likely looking candidates. The attitudes to Science Fiction displayed by acceptors and refusers are frequently interesting. Also I had some fun between customers by reminding passers by to observe international Star Wars day tomorrow i.e. that they should make a point of greeting their nearest and dearest on Sunday with - '*May the Fourth be with you*'.

Sales exactly equalled the cost of being there (no provision for bus fares or cost of stock sold). Marketing can be an expensive way of finding time to sit in the sun and read.

Packed up and left the market earlier than usual (before 5 pm) as there was an opportunity to meet fellow ANZAPA member and Ex Sydney fan Eric Lindsay who had come down from Queensland for a computer fair. The 412 bus which got me home before 5.30, just enough time to change and have a cup of tea before leaving for the meeting with Eric at Hurstville RSL Club.

I had the opportunity to visit my PO box for the first time in a week, while waiting for the number 499 bus to Hurstville - Multiple European Space Agency junk mail, Swancon report, Telstra (National Telephone company) dividend advice and a completed 2003 SSFW application form. On the bus, passing through Hurstville I noticed that the municipal library is now in a new building, which warrants future investigation.

I was the last to arrive, present were: John August, myself, Eric Lindsay, Ted Scribner and Graham Stone. Over a few beers various topics were discussed, drawing on the particular skills and experiences of those present, including Computers, Eric's 'new' truck/mobile home, the dynamics of Airline fare pricing, Las Vegas hotels, Australian amateur rocketry, Worldcons, local SF cons, Sydney SF meetings and the actions of SF fandom personalities present and absent.

The bistro at the Hurstville RSL is a 'Chinese and Western meals' subcontractor operation, with much to be modest about. I ordered rather more than I could eat, having been issues with a main course sized 'Short Soup' rather than the 'starter' size that I thought I had ordered (Oink, oink).

I left at about 9.15 pm to find the 499 waiting. I was its sole passenger for the 30 Minute ride home, on the trip to Hurstville three hours earlier

the passengers had consisted of just me and three young Chinese people.

Significantly, at home that, night after a shower I weighed myself as a bit over 120 KG.

My weight has been excessive for some time, but I regard 'fitness' as being able to walk 15 minutes between home, bus stops and work place, walk home from work (10 Km in 90 minutes) and to take the dog for hour long walks a couple of nights a week.

And then it all fell into a screaming heap, I got real sick!

Took it to work and it developed into Bronchitis, ended up being out of commission and out of email for most of the month.

May 26

Mass 110.5 kg (i.e. a loss of about 10 kg in three weeks). For a first time in weeks, I made it to work without feeling really sick. This week, Post Bronchitis, after the best part of three weeks in bed, I have been so weak that I have been unable to reach the bus stop without having to a coughing fit.

May 31

I felt fit enough to try another market day, was not as completely recovered as I had hoped, a bit of a cough back again.

June 01

I spent most of the morning asleep, resting from yesterday. Had planned to take Mysti for a walk to the post office box, her first walk in four weeks. Rain at 9 pm thwarts this.

June 02

I take the bus home from work one stop beyond my 'home' stop (1km and a big hill) to the post office box. Effectively one months mail, which consists of; 9ea letters from the European Space Agency, 1 ea 2003 SSFW application form, a taxation letter, an invitation from the Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau, an

'Ethical Investor' newsletter and a flyer which is notification about a June 04 meeting to celebrate Australian Science Fiction (the first of what I hope may become a Sydney 'Nova Mob' type of meeting?).

Responses to mailing comments

Sorry guys, this is all a bit rushed, I will try to answer all your questions about my 'maiden' issue, but bear in mind that I am distracted by the need to manage the organisation of the 2003 Sydney Science Fiction Weekend, which takes place June 21&22, the Winter Solstice weekend.

Les Chattes Parties 64

Dear Sally, I am most vociferously not a cat person, but I note with interest your observations of the dynamics of settling in a new pet. I think that non-pet owners just do not realise the sensitivity training that having a closely observed pet equips you with. I have avoided going to the flicks to see 'Twin towers' and the next Potter fest, I only want to see movies during the 'Dry Seat Season' (post school holidays) and in any case I am in line to borrow my niece's copy when these come out on video. Yes. Basenjis is peculiar beasts, easier to experience than to fully explain.

Reality Module 33

You may see a 'best' picture of my Basenji by looking up the NSW Basenji Club's website, she stars on a web page titled 'Our AI litter'. Before she was given to us (three litters and 13 pups), as she was the breeder chosen to carry a litter that would introduce US bloodlines into the Pukkanut stud and NSW Basenji gene pool. I hope you find the side-by-side review interesting.

Ytterbium 70

The list of book titles was made up from abbreviated listings from brief diary entries for each day, often reconstructed weeks after the event.

Megatheriums for Breakfast 32

Your front cover featuring Reindeer horn throwing sticks reminds me that a similar device, the Atlatl, was used by South American natives

to resist European conquest. Throwing a dart exactly three times the length of the throwing stick, they were easily able to pierce

Spanish steel armour. Personal use copying (and they were all for personal use!) is covered, you are paying a 'blank tape' royalty for each tape you buy and use, this money is then pooled and distributed to 'producers' and artists in labyrinthine ways. I will explain the 'R's issue in another mailing comment.

Land of 1,000 Loons April 2003

Another variation of my name is 'Dail A Chruim Pul' (Valley of the standing stones beside the bent lake) which when written down by English speakers leads to all sorts of grammatical mischief. Significantly it is possible that all 'true' Dalrymples may be able to trace descent to a single geographic region, probably a feudal holding of lord and peons rather than a single family. As for Race Matthews – Dunno! More Basenji tales will emerge in due course. Freecons are nearly a spent issue, an experiment intended as a stepping-stone and not the stepping on stone that they may have become. All sorts of free interpretation has been made of them (and my motivation in conducting them). The 'Nudist on the night shift' is a book of articles about the history and fauna and the excesses of Silicon Valley, well before the tech crash when billion dollar share offerings were still being rolled out of garages and office space funded by credit cards.

Old News And Nonsense#1

Insanity is not a word I would use as lightly as you do, although I have no personal experience of the consequences of mental ill health, if you know where to look, the streets of Sydney throng with the suffering of people who have fallen of the straight and narrow that we describe as sanity. I will own up to being obsessive, depressive and at times focussed to a degree that approaches the manic, but each of these I manage for what I hope are worthwhile ends. I.e. no sensible person would attempt what I have taken on with the Freecons and the 2003 SSFW but I saw a need to do something.

Kingdom of the Bland Undated

My niece has had an Easter Bilby from me each year for some time. I have even considered investing in some of the fenced sanctuary proposals. Interesting to compare your opinion of my Hugo proposal to that of (Jack Herman) other ANZAPAers. I am still sorely tempted to write up an 'improved' version of the two cigar story and serve it up anonymously to the local fringe magazines and then 'debunk' the crap out of it.

Books do so furnish a room 8

A 'Not in my name' protest had an unanticipated impact of local (Sydney) SF happenings. Ian (one M or none?) Banks did a dummy spit over your gallant war reader's (or Bush follower?) decision to take part in the 'Liberation' of Iraq. H publicly ripped up his passport making him unable to travel. Ian M Banks was the apparently the only SF writer invited to take part in the 2003 Sydney Writers Festival.

Panopticon 17

Your comment about a Basenji reference in Spike Milligan's war memoirs is most extraordinary, although the Basenji breed is ~ 10,000 years old they were only accepted as a breed in the UK ~ the 1930s. Surprising an officer would tell that to soldiers in the mid 1940s and expect to be understood. An instruction in the true sense of 'make like a Basenji' could be read as an invitation to consider your own personal advantage and ignore authorised instructions.

Necessity 51: Class

I was born with two Rs but have been subject to unending official conspiracies to render me half Rs ed. It goes something like this. Years ago I was a displaced officer within the Education Dept. i.e. I was an 'off the books' labour source and used to fill the gaps between the department's real world labour needs and the restructure wall charts. I went for a job interview for a job at OTEN and won it. OTEN told head office but head office neglected to tell me. An identity was created for me at

