

Taste Not The Pierian Spring #1

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These Boots Are Made For Walking

Early last year I was looking for new things to do. When I remembered someone I knew in Sydney telling me of her participation in the SES (State Emergency Service), I decided to give it a shot. My timing was impeccable—intake was to commence in a couple of weeks' time, and I was to go in for an interview. They obviously decided I was not too deranged (or perhaps sufficiently deranged?) to join, so I began training.

The training really didn't do too much in training us for what we were really going to do—knots, sitting around talking, sitting around waiting, and being led on wild goose chases. I guess all they can really do is prepare and have longer-standing SES members tell you all about the wonderful times they had that time they stumbled on a dead body and couldn't get the smell out of their nose for about a week. Real charming.

Although they really push the storm damage aspect of the SES because of the drought we've been mostly doing everything but. My very first call-out, in fact, was to look for a 'missing person'. Although the people in charge of the search kept telling us it was a missing-person search they kept slipping up and telling us that this person was going to be very dead. It wasn't exactly an easy area, where we searched. I got very muddy. Luckily I *wasn't* one of those in the group who found him—the man had hanged himself, as he'd threatened.

I went on another search earlier this year for another missing guy, but this time no dead fellow was found—the police told us, after we'd spent a good part of the day looking all over Eagleby's park and the Albert River, that they'd only made us look to be 100% sure he wasn't dead. They thought he'd really hied over to Ipswich. To say that our higher-ups weren't impressed would be an understatement.

The second call-out was down to the Gold Coast on Schoolie's Week. Now that was quite different; I'd never had occasion to go down back when I'd left high school, and the experience left me wondering how on earth parents ever let their kids go down there. We were specifically told that we were to keep an eye out for girls alone or girls who were drunk to make sure that they were okay and get them home, because otherwise chances are they would get raped. Unfortunately we met too many drunk, alone girls, but luckily a number were claimed by friends when we appeared.

I was disgusted to find out when I was there that although the media had mentioned a couple of knifings, the total number far exceeded that which was mentioned. The paramedics say that every year there are a lot of things like that, but it's often ignored so things will go on and more people come. There was a knifing on one of the nights I was there, and the police didn't want to know.

The boy who was hurt turned up to Triage only because of the SES. He did get aid, but things went wrong because of a stupid paramedic and his homophobic comments.

A couple of days later the news mentioned that there'd been more violence and knifing, but the police were saying 'it's not Schoolies-related, because Schoolies is over'. The day after Schoolies 'officially' ended. Who did they think they were fooling? Certainly not me. It probably takes a week for all the outsider younglings to leave the area, and anything which goes on in that time will definitely be Schoolies-related.

I have gone out on storm-related damage; there was a big storm here in November last year, and in fact the very first place I had to go was on my own street. Two houses lost their roofs entirely; one on my street, the occupants of which myself and another guy went to talk to. They were rather hysterical, but there wasn't anything we could do but offer tarps and tell them to move everything into the centre of the room and cover. The occupants moved out shortly afterwards and the place is still vacant, although the roof has been replaced in the past month. The other house which lost its roof had been vacant when it happened, but the roof flew across an entire street and ended up a twisted piece of metal in someone else's front garden. If that had hit anyone ... it wouldn't have been pretty.

Mostly things involved fixing things up; trees which fell onto people's roofs, cutting the trees down or propping them up depending upon how damaged they were. Tarping roofs, as well, to minimise any water damage inside. There's not much to be done, and often people can fix stuff just as well themselves, as a few times we rocked up to see. A couple of times they tarped their roofs so well that our leader would come back saying they'd done a better job we could do! It's good that people are self-sufficient that way. Everyone should have a large tarp in their house, is all I'm saying. That, or when the SES comes by to tarp your roof, take it back afterwards. Too many people keep them and the SES has a finite budget.

The instant respect, trust, that the bright orange outfit generates is quite amazing. I have no more idea of what I'm doing, really, than the person asking me for aid most of the time—not that I'd admit it to them. It's quite heady. I'm glad to be doing this; I'm getting to know some of the stuff nobody really gets told unless they're directly involved, like how the police are really quite pathetic when it comes to searches and stingy with the information when it comes to directing the SES. It's quite the boys' club, the SES, but there are some women.

I wouldn't call it *fun*, but it is something to do and also educational. For a couple of nights a month and a few call-outs a year, I'd suggest it to anyone who's fit enough to take part. You'll at least get a pair of good boots out of it.

What's The Deal With This Pop Life

Last year some point I suddenly fell into liking pop music with a passion. Normally my state of liking for music's been mild, sometimes a like for a particular artist (and normally *not* pop) before fading a little but still liking them. Not so with this. It began with *NSYNC.

It's funny that I began to like about the same time that they went on hiatus. I was a sight to behold—I went online to seek out other fans, and soon enough began swapping stuff. Upon becoming a fan of anything (this usually happens every six months or so) I run around trying to get everything I can without having to pay for it. Fear me with a bank account. I should likely become quite poor indeed. It's just as well that fans online have digitised a lot of content, for I spent a lot of time downloading. MTV decided to have a lot of *NSYNC days too, so I had fun taping as well.

What got me, really, instead of their music, was the dancing. I'm a sucker for dancing. One of the first things I got was their Madison Square Garden concert. Up to that point I'd been more interested than usual, but from that I was gone. I made myself a copy (thank you library loans!) and proceeded to reacquaint myself with it on a regular basis—while drinking. It's really quite amusing to be drunk and watching concerts in full stereo surround (my brother and his toys) and on a large screen.

Why stop at one boyband, though? I moved onto the Backstreet Boys, and guess what happened next? They went on hiatus. Fear not; I doubt there is any cause-and-effect going on here, so should I begin to like some other group, they will likely not splinter off and begin their own solo careers.

The thing about the Backstreet Boys, though, is that they don't nearly seem to be quite so popular with MTV any longer and as such I never did get all that much footage. They don't dance as much (and not nearly so well) so they remained a side interest, part of a boyband mélange.

Both of those groups were formed by the same guy, and as such I have learned a lot—a lot!—of history about them both. My brother spent a lot of time needling me about it.

The great thing about my family is that they don't appear to care much what I listen or watch. They didn't come in to kill me when all I played, all day long, was either of these groups. Damien even sat down and humoured me when I wanted to show him some new footage I'd gotten that day, appropriately pointing things out as I wanted him to participate. Admittedly some of the time he fell off asleep, but I took no offence since he falls asleep in my presence all the time anyway. I'd say I have a soporific effect on him except for I suspect it's the couch. I fall asleep on it often too.

Unfortunately the effect of having found other fans in Brisbane to swap stuff with (and they didn't nearly seem to have as much as my pedantic self) was that their strong opinions rather overwhelmed my own, to the point that I lost most of my interest in boybands. I did manage to sic one other person who lives nearby onto Backstreet Boys, entirely unwittingly; she now owns all the DVDs, a bunch

of their albums, and album of the guy who went solo. It's funny how I can't be around fans of things I'm into at the same time, for their enthusiasm (or lack of it) seems to drain my own right out of me.

So I moved on, right on to Christina Aguilera. I never did like much of her first album, but this *Stripped* of hers not only do I like, but herself and the way of dressing which most people don't like of her is what I favour. Not because I am a perv—most would disagree with me here, but never mind—but because of the way she carries it off. It sounds odd, but for some reason the way she chooses to wear skimpy outfits ... there was an all-day MTV marathon of her with lots of interviews and whatnot, and I noticed that she was comfortable. She wore her clothes like they were every-day, just slouching away in everything, and that she's comfortable doing it had me impressed.

I noticed earlier this year that she was putting on weight as well, and well, colour me more interested. It's no secret that my preferences in women tend to the rounder; it wasn't that she'd gotten more filled, but also that she was apparently not stressing about it! Actually, there are a number of women in the US famous lists who are looking like they're in the healthier regions of weight these days, and I for one most prefer how they look. I can't look at a woman who's real thin and think she's at all attractive, really. I keep wanting to feed them.

So it's appearance and dancing (for she dances, and I like that) and her voice, which I like as well. Her current album's a lot more interesting than her previous; haven't bought it, so one might conjecture how I've heard it, but it's not a far-off thing. I do like that she wears hats. If only I were as rich as her and to have my own large hat collection! But it's not to be, and instead pictures of her decorate all the computers I can get my hands on.

Damien's been pestering me about my interests in Christina Aguilera, but he's an adorable boy—he doesn't at all mind this one, because he finds her attractive too. It was getting to be really amusing that he picked up by osmosis a lot of information about the two boybands I was into. I don't know how he did it, unless it was through MTV and paid attention because of my interest, for I didn't speak about them overly much (unless to point out what their names were when he asked).

It's all fun. Whenever I get an obsessive interest it consumes me like wildfire, sweeping me along in a tide of happy enjoyment, and I mean *happy*. Even though that's faded for the boybands (and just starting for Aguilera) it still makes me smile to hear one of their songs whenever it's unexpected. I know that the music's not deep and meaningful—that's not it for me, not why I enjoyed them. I don't care why, really; if something as simple as music or thinking about a group makes me smile, it's enough. It ought to be for everyone else, too, but isn't often the case. Alas for music snobs! So goes my interest in pop music. I would mention my exploits in Australian music as well, but that's for another time, and not at all poppy. Long live pop music!

Titles of each piece in this fanzine are taken from song lyrics (how utterly dreadful and cliché of me!), in order: Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made For Walking", *NSYNC's "Pop", and Creed's "What If".

What If Your Words Could Be Judged Like A Crime?

I was glad to read **Sally Yeoland**'s transcription of John Foyster's funeral; I didn't know him all too well beyond the few emails we exchanged and my reading of his fanzines, which is a real pity. Someone sent me the *festzine* when it came out (I still can't figure out who did, though I'd guess one of the editors) and I kept meaning to write to John about it. I did have half an email written up about it. Bit late now, unfortunately. I do believe this has inspired me to finish off that letter and send it to Yvonne instead.

It's sad when people die, all the more when someone hastens it on, like **Cath Ortlieb**'s workmate. When my mother attempted to kill herself earlier this year I thought about how I could have prevented it (luckily she only mangled herself and got herself hospitalised for a while), especially since I'd been the one she'd been following around apologising for being alive to. I'd gotten to the point Cath did, thinking she was a waste of time, and took off to stay with friends. Came back, and wham. I don't know what my reaction would have been if she'd actually killed herself, but my reaction as soon as I was over the shock was relief—now something could be done, where nobody had been willing to admit problems before. I sound like I excuse myself when I say that we're only human to turn away when others around us are hurting and there's nothing we can do. Probably am excusing myself, but it doesn't change that I think it is true. Everyone deals with things differently. My father was off gallivanting up north of Queensland for a couple of months, probably to get away from everything here local—and don't at all blame him. I was tempted by a jaunt off to Maryborough, where I was offered board and food in return for working on building a catamaran. One of the reasons I didn't was that I didn't think my mother would react well to being on her own with two family members gone.

People are generally quite resilient, if different. **Terry Morris**'s mention of humans and time put me onto something I read not long ago. I always thought humans had an internal clock more approaching 25 hours than 24, which I always did find rather curious—and then just recently read that this wasn't true. Apparently those who are morning people likely have 23-hour internal clocks, feeling tired at the end of the day (that's me; I start dozing off come 8:30pm) and those who have 25-hour internal clocks, feeling awake longer but taking ages to wake come morning, for their body wants them to sleep longer. Don't know if it's true, but I like the theory for why some people give me the evil eye if I wake them early.

I'm rude like that. Not **Gerald Smith**'s kind, though—there already exists one word for Talking Loudly on Mobile Phones in Public Places, and that is it. I think it's some sort of way for people to show everyone that they're real popular—listen to me on my phone! I'm biased against telephones, really, and the good thing about moving and changing a telephone number is that I won't have the three annoying people who phone me ever do so again. They won't be getting my number, that's for sure. (Besides which, likely it'll be used by dialup all of the time anyway.)

A lot of what **Jack R. Herman** says about Howard I hadn't realised, although when I speak to most of those I

know, I wonder how he ever got voted into power. Those in my acquaintance think he's an idiot, and they voted any which way except for him—that is, if they at all admit it. Even though I've been voting for years, can you believe I don't remember who I voted for? I know that locally I keep voting Green or Independent, but state or federally? No idea. I do know that I won't be voting Liberal for a long, long time after this.

On Hollingworth—I met him at the *Poverty—Some More Than Others!* conference in Melbourne in 1996. I had a long conversation with the guy about ... oh, whatever 16-year-olds have with older people. Something about poverty, anyway, despite my affected indifference. (I was a truly horrid teenager. I wonder I wasn't killed.) I now wish that affectedness of mine had awoken into affected something else and that I'd dumped a bowl of cereal on his head at one of the breakfasts I shared with him! (I was one of the group who hung around him a lot. Beats me why. All of the adults at the conference hung at my table, spoke to 'my' group.)

Gerald Smith puts me into mind how I always find it ironic that although Howard and the current Australian government is so keen on upping Australian numbers, they are so against people entering. Merely go get a family member to *visit* Australia had so much stuffing paperwork we gave up in the end. So they're tossing out people who want to immigrate, and yet harp up and down on how Australian ('white', I assume) women are not having enough children to maintain population numbers. I see this problem is easy enough to fix—accept more people into the country. But no, of course this can't be done, because we don't have enough resources to support immigrants! Enough for more Australian babies, though. It smacks of immense stupidity to me. As if a few hundred people are truly going to make a huge impact on Australian numbers.

I'm glad to hear from **Eric Lindsay** that food is at least still cheap in Australia, but I don't see why meat should be cheap even in the midst of a drought. Seeing that ruminants take up huge supplies of water because of a) their food and b) their drinking, one would think that the prices would go considerably higher! Plant-based foods shouldn't go up all too much, because the buck stops there—water goes into them, and they're not fed to anything else. Other than humans. Not that I pay attention to what meat costs, really; I know it's more expensive, and that's about it.

When it comes to calculating what goes into the shopping basket, one can merely take along a pocket calculator, a piece of paper, and a pencil. Make a column, put in what one's bought, how much it cost, add it all up. Not much brain calculation going on, but better than a kick up the arse, surely? Admittedly I do feel rather stupid when someone much older than myself can do calculations almost instantaneously while I take a bit of time to do things in my head. I'm much more comfortable with doing my mathematics on paper than in my head.

Kim Huett says that he's not after a career, just enough money to pay for his needs. I tell that to people often enough and it's all 'but you need job satisfaction!' I don't see why I should be satisfied by a job; as long as I am doing

something physical I tend to be satisfied. When working at the bookstore last year I found myself bored—I mean, I liked it, but when there wasn't anything to do since it was a real quiet store, I found myself curled up in a chair dozing. I'd rather have been heaving bales of mail around or stuffing envelopes or doing anything a bit more active. (Of course, I could have read, except for that there were no comfortable chairs in which to adopt a seated position, only lying-down positions.)

Money's a small resource with me, so I try not to buy what I can do without. As such I haven't eaten much chocolate in a while, and haven't at all missed it. **Terry Morris** for one would boggle at me! The last batch of chocolate I ate was a bar of soy chocolate and it wasn't worth the dollar-something I spent. I kept wondering about those books I could have gotten with it. I'm getting some odd looks at turning down Tim Tams, though; they're a favourite amongst my friends. I do believe they think I've gone quite mad. That's all right; my current weakness is peanut butter sandwiches. Probably just as unhealthy in the long run.

That there are people anywhere willing to eat anything with the name of 'floater' which **Sally Yeoland** mentions ... well. I am turned to thinking about the kind of floater which sits in porcelain bowls, places where people would not normally put their face anywhere near unless doing that cleaning chore needed every so often.

John Newman's mention of teas—finding that I can't handle cold finds me drinking more teas. I find that coffee with splashes of rice milk tastes quite good. I can't handle black, unfortunately. It's done wonders for finding out all of those herbal infusions (I am all too used to calling them 'herbal teas') and that they taste quite lovely. Except for one I tried the other day: peach and something. Tasted like the insides of old boots. Green teas are good, as well—they don't nearly taste too strong, especially since most people I know who brew black teas steep them until they're good enough to act as paint remover. No wonder they then drown the taste with milk!

I found some document—the FAQ of a newsgroup—which gave excellent information on tea and how to prepare them nicely; although my sense of taste is rather ... lacking, shall we say ... I do notice when something's bitter. I don't understand my sense of taste, truly; it's good enough, but at the same time rather botched.

Lucy Schmeidler mentions a difference between tomato sauce and ketchup. I hadn't realised there was a difference in the States; as far as I know around here it's all tomato sauce, although there's special 'spaghetti sauce' with all kinds of additional flavouring added to it as well. Otherwise it's tomato sauce.

Back onto the topic of money; buying one piece of technology suddenly becomes a mass of buying, as **John Newman** found out. Not long ago my mother decided to buy a laptop, and that became two; I am currently using the spiffier of the two to sit on the verandah to type up this fanzine. A marvellous warm day, listening to music ... just a little while ago I thought I was going to have to freeze my backside off inside on my desktop PC! It's funny how my house appears to be reverse-engineered; in winter it's colder inside than out, and in summer it's hotter inside than out. There's something wrong about all this. Thank goodness, however, for the gas heating we use.

My brother's the one for audio equipment in this family, and so works for the spiffy stuff. He bought himself a CD player with according decent speakers years ago now, but blew one of them up when plugging into the wrong cords. I inherited it and then he moved onto bigger, fancier, more expensive stuff. All of downstairs (where he currently inhabits) is wired up with speakers in a surround-sound system. I don't even want to *think* about how much he's spent on it all.

I agree with **Kim Huett** in that animals are entertaining sometimes. The wonderful thing about sitting on the verandah with a laptop (with tinny music playing) is being able to see a bird screeching at my cat, coming right up, and my cat just sitting there miaowing. I rather fancy my cat's scared. Little pitiful miaows; we get bigger ones when she's hungry! Poor excuse for a cat. Damn but it's funny, though; the other day I saw her sitting on a railing, miaowing, and wondered why; upon investigation I saw she was objecting to the presence of magpies in our backyard. Silly little cat. I keep meaning to check out whether the Daisy Hill Koala Centre's got a volunteer system; quite likely, for I noticed a section in the local rag advising of free community walks through the park. That sort of thing doesn't go on often with paid folk.

Mention of **Jeanne Mealy's** cat, Pixel, and her health problems makes me wonder about health insurance for pets. One particular friend of mine keeps telling me that I should get private health insurance just in case anything happens, so I don't get stuck with huge bills or have to depend upon Australia's increasingly worsening public health system ... and as far as I am aware, people can and so get stuck with enormous veterinarian bills. Insuring a pet would be great, especially if one of those special breeds prone to tremendous health problems. A friend of mine has a chihuahua (a runt) and it's always being dragged off to the vet for some problem or another. Our cat, I swear, has the lives of all cats everywhere—she's been to the vet once, to get fixed. No other problem with her.

Jeanne Mealy goes on to remind me of the one time I was ever a sale volunteer—I was there the day before putting things out. At the same time I was going around with boxes and putting everything I wanted aside. I ended up with three boxes of books (over three hundred books), and since I knew that at the end of the day they sold boxes for \$1, I stored them in the office and returned an hour before closing on the day of the same. Over 300 books for \$4 (since I found a hardback I liked while mooching about later). Not too shabby, eh? Sure did bulk out my collection a lot, although most were pulpy old books. It was great fun cataloguing them all later.

On a different sort of volunteering, **Bill Wright** sure is collecting in a very different area than I do—maybe a different world. He forgets A5, the bunch of people who allow you to approach their door and knock (what is this fancy 'ring the bell' of which he speaks?), stare at you, demand to know who you're collecting from, ask you to wait a moment while they go off for half an hour and then come back with \$2 in spare change, the minimum they can donate and use as a tax deduction. That is, if you're not accosted by some old bastard who snatches the bag off you and looks at it, demands to see identification, say they don't trust door collectors because there are kids who go around collecting but really stealing for themselves, and

then give the bag back before getting a \$2 and giving it to you. Points go up if this guy happens to be a neighbour whose house you've been walking past and saying hello to for these past 10 years.

The most amusing house I ever went up to during one of my collection stints was years ago (I forget for which; I have collected for the Red Cross, Heart Foundation, Queensland Cancer Fund, and anything else which takes my fancy). I walked up stairs and then suddenly there was a flurry of activity and I saw a bare arse. They were all nude, all of the adults. (Bear in mind I was an impressionable teenager.) I couldn't for the life of me figure out what they were doing, although they did send me on my way with a tidy sum. Since then I've been a bit more careful about going up to houses ... dogs, now, those are another story.

Michael O'Brien's reading list with its rating scale is what I used to do when I was 13; I still have the list I printed out, although I no longer remember reading most of those on the list other than a very few. Most of which I deemed merely okay were non-genre stuff, although I was pretty discerning in science fiction anyway. These days I keep a list of what I've read but don't rate them; the list is just to keep me informed of what I've read, since I forget most of what I do. That, and let me know if there's a series I haven't finished yet so I can go track down the rest. (I like that particular function—otherwise I'd forget to finish a series. Not that I suppose I'd be too upset about such a thing.)

John Newman's comment to Lucy reminds me of when I read a book about the English language in Australia and New Zealand last year, and was absolutely fascinated by how some of the regional names of things had come up, how some words had been popular at one point in history and then got lost as something else took over. I was especially impressed by finding how Australia had been named, for later that day I was in a bookstore and as a part of an in-store competition they asked who did it and how. Wasn't fast enough to answer, but was chuffed I knew that much from then on.

Reading **Garry Dalrymple's** list of ways one can achieve forms of immortality immediately pops examples from different series/books to mind. The first, family longevity, is probably quite famously Heinlein, although I have done my best to repress ever having read his books. The other which I liked better was Julian May's long-lived family, spanning a couple of series of hers.

Things like creating schools of magic suggests that **Kim Huett** thinks about books a little too strongly. One would, if of a particularly suspicious bent, start thinking that perhaps he has a background in these things! Ah-hah! It's curious that often these things don't appear to have been thought about all too strongly. Who knows; since we are looking at things from children's perspective in things like Harry Potter, they may have been lain compulsions on. All spells would have counter-spells, right? Just think! The black market appeal of older students getting paid to remove spells on the younger ones! Where there's a need there's a supply.

This Eric Hebborn fellow and his working as an art forger **Dan McCarthy** mentions sounds mighty intriguing; I shall look for his work at the library. Yet another to be added to my ever-increasing reading list ... although it

comes to my attention right now that I read far less biographies and autobiographies than I perhaps should. Reading up on social history is a fascination of mine (just finished off reading a book about robots, which isn't what would consider social history except for that it was hypothesising very much on what life will be when people adopt them in the future).

Earlier this year I won a copy of Tony Shillitoe's *Passion* via the VoyagerOnline website competition (I always enter their competitions but that was the first time I won). Didn't read it, because I didn't have the first book, instead giving it to a friend. **Bill Wright** makes me want to go borrow them both off her; I didn't mind his earlier stuff at all and this reminds me to get into action.

When living on the yacht (all those ... oh my god, it really was years ago now, over a decade) there was a distinct lack of reading material. There were the paperbacks my father would get, and I'd read, and then there were the textbooks I grew to know by heart ... and there were dictionaries. My favourite was Chambers Compact Dictionary, one which my father had given my mother years ago. I used to go through it and highlight all of the words I thought were 'rich' or somehow sumptuous. I truly had no idea. I am these days amused to see things like 'sateen' and 'muslin' underlined. I used to get these words out of fairy tales and wonder what it would be like to dress in those things. I don't think I would like to dress in muslin anymore; I find wool too scratchy, and lace? I used to want lace! Not any longer, that's for sure! Lace is special torture, and they put it into lingerie in an attempt to tell women it's sexy but really it's to drive women crazy, then blame it on womb hysteria or some such nonsense.

IQ tests do amuse me, very much—while I am reasonably intelligent I am not overly so, but every so often I traipse to the Scientology centre to take one, just to see what I'll get this time around. They're supposed to administer the test in half an hour, I think; myself and a guy went in to do it since we had nothing to do. More than half an hour passed and nobody took the tests away. I no longer remember if I got 127 or 140—I think I got the 140 when I took it when I was 12. I'm getting dumber as I grow older! That's all right. I used to think I knew it all back then, even when I borrowed out a Mensa book of puzzles. I only managed to answer one and then forgot how I worked it out instantaneously and never managed to do it again. I have come to the conclusion that I am not nearly smart enough for Mensa puzzles. (On the other hand, I amused myself with psychological puzzles at university level, and since I repeated subjects often enough came off looking like a genius when I did puzzles straight away the second time around I did a subject. Bask in those looks of awe ...)

Garry Dalrymple says Scientology is says that people's souls were imprisoned on earth ... I thought it was just a way to bilk people of their money in 'bettering' themselves. I know I really ought to read *Dianetics* if only so I can laugh about it later on, or at least read up on their religion, considering the number of times I've been into their offices!

Lync doesn't appear to be having to do too much out of the ordinary with her house-fixing. I don't think I know anyone who owns a house who isn't constantly doing something to them—my parents' house itself needs a lot of work on it before it can be sold, and down the years

there's always been painting, roofing, flooring. Something. Money pouring into them! Not to mention time which could be spent on more leisurely activities—unless one enjoys home 'improvements'. Some of the improvements I see ... better off having locked people away from anything even resembling tools.

My mother was looking at a four-bedroom house going for \$105 000 recently, thinking about putting my name on it and letting me live in it along with whomever I wanted, though not 'forced group housing', as was commented upon **Michael F. Green's** 'zine. I thought it'd be a neat idea to cut back on expenses, except for the whole improvements thing. As is, I'll be in a two-bedroom unit sharing with another. Things won't be cut four ways, but two. It's better than nothing. I can always shift to a bigger place later on with more people ... hell, when one can live in a place for \$260 and cut that back four ways (along with the rest of expenses) I find myself a lot more amiable to the idea than living by myself and paying everything alone! Hah.

The good thing about being a daughter is getting furniture from family, much like **David Grigg's**. I bet he was happy to get rid of those things quite finally. The sad thing about this household is that my family has collected so much furniture the little unit I'll be occupying couldn't fit it all. A couple of the nicer chairs, my brother's television, the VCRs, and I think that's about all I'll be taking with me. I'm going to make them sell the rest of the furniture and buy a couple of foldable futons—one for me to sleep in and the other to install in the lounge for any visitors who come by. I believe in minimalism! (That way I can install more bookshelves and whatnot, but shh.)

There are dumb victims all over the place, much like **Kim Huett's** example; my parents' place got robbed twice within a couple of months, and despite my parents' own injunctions that the house must be locked at all times, they were the worst offenders in leaving things unlocked (and then placing the blame on myself and my brother). I recall being shouted out thousands of times at having left things unlocked, although did it rarely enough, and yet my mother was (and still is) especially bad about leaving the keys *in the lock*. I can't help but think someone could lift those keys, nick off, and then re-use them, since my parents are rather cheap about changing locks.

As **Dan McCarthy** says, people always talk about 'sense of belonging' to a bunch of places—that's odd, to me. As long as I have somewhere to park myself and an ability to do anything I want, that's home. I just need 'my' things, whatever those happen to be at that moment. Staying with friends for weeks on end that way makes things easy; take my paper journal along so I can write whatever I want, a library card so I can go visit any nearby, and I'm pretty much set. A friend invites me stay with him in Maryborough and what do I do to make sure I'll be happy up there? Check to see what the library's like and whether I could get a card (as it happens, no, not unless I was a resident of Maryborough for three months. Dang).

Who knows; the little boxes around Canberra **Kim Huett** mentions could be homes to some if at all accessible! What a wonderful place to duck into while it's raining, or

if you're utterly drunk and need somewhere to fold up in while waiting for daylight (and hopefully soberness) comes by. I'm amused that they'd put them in, although I have no idea of what they could look like other than public phone booths, the type that close up. Funnily enough, the phone booths around here don't appear to close anymore; they all seem to be free-standing with no door. Probably has something to do with how people jammed up the doors while they were around.

John Newman's comments on 'Kelly country' puts me into mind of when the Ned Kelly movie came out. There was Kelly fever amongst most of those I know—reading up on it, the like. I hadn't realised that the first ever full-length movie had been made about Ned Kelly, or that there had been a movie made previously; I enjoyed the current film, even if I did think that Heath Ledger wasn't the best for the role, not now; maybe in a few years when he's got a bit more experience under his belt. Entertaining enough, anyway. It was amusing to see the bits and pieces thrown into the film to show that it was really, truly Australia—here's a flash of kookaburra to prove it! And oh, we don't have enough Aboriginal people in the movie, let's throw in a random fellow walking by in the bush to confuse everyone watching the film.

I was interested to see who liked and who didn't like *X2: X-Men United*. I liked it quite a lot, as **Jack R. Herman** did, and as did the person I went to see it with; others of my acquaintance, however, hated it and rated it the worst movie they've ever seen. Not comic fans ... I still don't see why such a strong reaction against it. I disliked the *Matrix Reloaded* a hell of a lot more!

Roger Sims makes good work of spell-checkers and editing, for his spelling problems don't really show. My spelling feels like it is getting worse as time goes by; I constantly find myself double-checking to see if I've gotten it right. I usually do, but find that I've been vacillating between an Australian and an American spelling. One of the few times I remember spectacularly getting something wrong was in high school—someone asked me to spell comparison. I hadn't seen it as far as I could tell, and so spelled it for them as I saw fit. 'Comparescent'. I didn't live that down for a long while, but it didn't take away my moniker of 'walking dictionary'. My high school, shall we say, didn't cater to intellectuals.

I don't miss high school, but I do miss being a student, if only because of the concession card. **Eric Lindsay** mentions concession with Senior cards; my mother has recently found this out and gone to get one herself. If she can save money, my mother's all for it. Not that I blame her! I was futzing around for years with a full-time student card, even though I haven't been a full-time student since the 1990s. I was most despondent to finally have to do without as of early this year. All of those cheaper prices no longer mine to access!

On a final note, **Jean Weber's** website, taming-openoffice-org.com, suggests that she is giving lessons on how to tame the website. I know that she isn't, that Jean's writing that book on OpenOffice itself (and now that I am using a spiffy new computer may give it a go myself). Hope the books are selling all over.

"A little learning is a dang'rous thing; Drink deep, or **taste not the Pierian spring**; There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain; And drinking largely sobers us again." — Alexander Pope