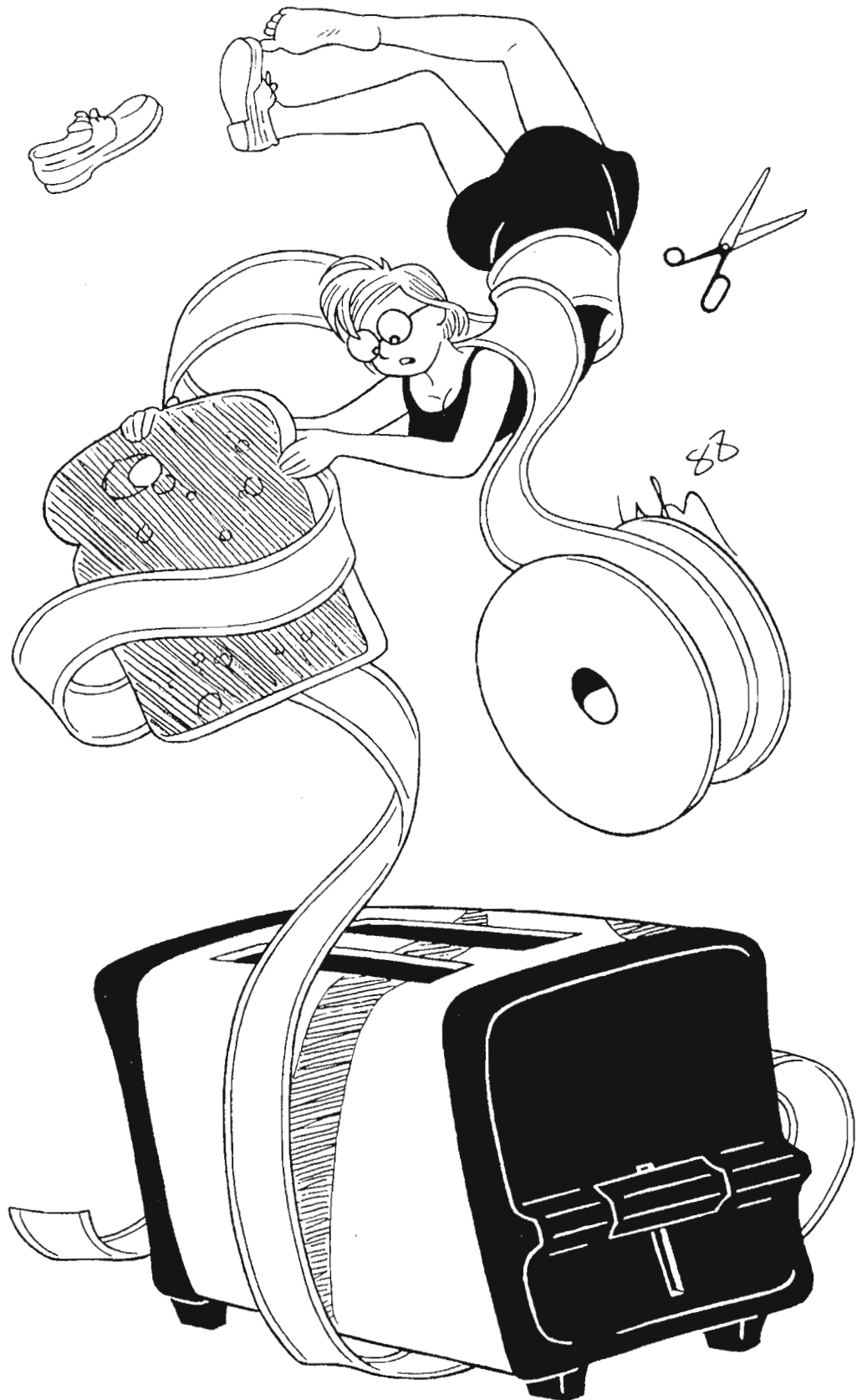


# Weberwoman's Wrevenge

Volume 6, Number 3 (Whole number 36)

August 1989



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I prefer some sort of personal response.

## The Rubbish Bin

This issue winds up the last of my trip report, though there may be bits in the next issue, with all the things I forgot when typing the main report. Little 'snapshots' of events and people keep popping into my mind at the least convenient moments – such as during meetings at work. I try to take notes to jog my memory later.

I'm still collecting comments on my question of several issues ago: What is reality? Michelle Hallett has written an article, and I have several letters on the subject. They really will appear in the next issue, due out in early October.

You can read about the latest (as at 12 August) events in my life on page 13. I am definitely keeping busy. Keep tuned for further developments.

## Contents

The trip continues: New York and Canada .....	3
California .....	4
Books .....	9
The Rabbit's Progress, Lyn McConchie .....	12
Big Blue wants you .....	13
Letters: Lyn McConchie and John Foyster .....	14

## Art Credits

Atom, 13

Craig Hilton, 14, 15

Terry Jeeves, 10 (*from jan finder's collection, some years old*)

Daryl Murdoch, 9 (*from jan finder's collection, some years old*)

Peggy Ranson, 6,7,8, 14

Taral, cover

Mel White, 11

Copyright-free Dover Clip Art, 'Sports Illustrations', 3

Arts & Letters electronic clip art, 4, 5

# The trip continues: New York and Canada

I'd never been to Montreal before, so I allowed myself to be lured to New York (state, not city) by that swift-talking rascal Jan Howard Finder when he suggested a trip to Canada. He also threw in the prospect of a pleasant drive, in a nice warm car, through scenic, snow-covered mountains. Sounded good, despite his enthusiasm for a ski trip one day during my stay. I don't ski (tried it years ago and decided it wasn't for me), but I do enjoy ski resorts, especially if I can sit on a sunny balcony, or inside by the fire, and sip something suitably alcoholic while watching all these crazy people falling in the snow or zipping gracefully down the slopes.

What neither of us had quite counted upon was the weather, which was unseasonably warm and produced a lot more rain than snow. Not quite as scenic as advertised. Oh well, I wasn't out there skiing in the rain, like some people.

But I get ahead of my story. It's Wednesday the 11th of January 1989, and I've survived the flight from Washington D.C. to Albany, New York. When Jan was in Australia last year, I'd teased him about the amount of luggage he was dragging around with him, and would have loved to turn up at his place with only an overnight pack, but couldn't quite figure out what to do with my suitcase. Still, I was gratified that when I showed up, pack on back, he asked 'Is that all your luggage?' as if he half believed it would be.

## Skiing in the rain

The next morning we were up at some ridiculously pre-dawn hour to catch the ski club's charter bus to the slopes of 'Magic Mountain' in New Hampshire. We arrived to drizzle and the day didn't improve. I read a book and kept semi-warm indoors. Most of the skiers appeared determined to get their

money's worth, despite the conditions, but returned at lunch and end-of-day fairly damp. The bearded men were conspicuous for the icicles dripping from their beards and mustaches. The thing—some people call fun!

In the late afternoon, as darkness fell, the dancing and serious drinking started. I would have enjoyed this a lot more if it hadn't been for the cigarette smoke. I stayed in the non-smoking section most of the time, and so missed some of the fun. But it was enjoyable nonetheless. There was a limbo contest that was fairly amusing, a twist contest, and several other silly events. Our bus left at 5 pm, to drive very slowly back to Albany through blowing snow on icy roads. I actually enjoyed the day, though I don't think Jan believed me at the time.

## Border games

The next day we set off in mid-afternoon to drive to Montreal, delayed by Jan's having to go to work in the morning. The weather was reasonable and we made good time. At the Canadian border the New York State police

were stopping all cars and questioning people, or at least the men. (I didn't get asked anything, so I assume they were looking for some man.)

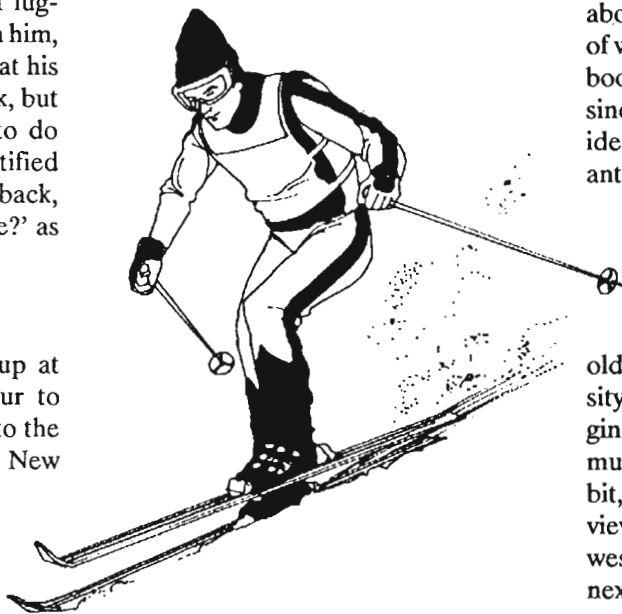
The Canadians woke up a bit when they discovered that I wasn't American, and I had to go into the immigration office and fill out a form. I was all prepared to try out my extremely rusty French at this point (we were crossing into Quebec, the French-speaking province), but the immigration official spoke English to me. Everyone was very polite, but seemed delighted to have someone to process.

## Montreal

We reached Montreal without further incident, found our hotel (the Delta Montreal) after getting misled only once or twice, and wandered off down the street to a Russian restaurant called Troika where we were meeting author Donald Kingsbury for dinner. Kingsbury wrote *Courtship Rite* and *The Moon Goddess and the Son*, two novels which rank high on my 'favorite books' list, so I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet their author. Among other topics, we talked about his ideas on government, some of which he plans to work into his next book, and all of which fascinated me, since I'd been much impressed with his ideas in *Moon Goddess*. A very pleasant evening, despite the smoke-filled air in the restaurant.

The next day (Saturday), Jan and I walked around Montreal playing tourist, despite the wind and cold. We saw some of the old town and a bit of McGill University, but my feet gave out only marginally before the cold became too much for me. Then we drove around a bit, including up to Mount Royal for a view over the city, before setting off west to the town of Cornwall, in the next province. While in Quebec, I had

*Continued on page 4*



# California

Getting to California from Albany, New York on Northwest Airlines involves making a stop in Detroit, thus giving winter weather a second chance to delay me. Happily, this didn't happen. Nor did much of anything else of interest happen, judging from my non-existent notes and a totally blank memory about the flight.

It was, of course, a non-smoking flight (as are all of Northwest's flights within the 48 states), so I know I took the opportunity to fill out yet another of their passenger comment forms, telling them how wonderful I thought this was. Someone (in an apa?) mentioned recently that s/he found it difficult to choose between the good food on one airline and Northwest's smoke-free flights; to me, it's no contest. I can go without food for five hours, if necessary, but I can't avoid the itchy, puffy eyes, sore throat, and breathing difficulties caused by smoky air.

But I digress. The next thing I remember was arriving at San Francis-

co International Airport, and being met by my old friend Robin (Daniels) de Negri. I was struck by how much older she looked (gosh, don't we all?) than the last time I'd seen her, eight years ago, but after a few days she looked just the same as always to me. Probably it was a combination of the harsh lighting in the airport, combined with a memory of her fifteen years ago, not eight.

Robin isn't a fan. We'd met through Zero Population Growth in 1970 or '71, when a group of members got together to work out a structure for a State organization to coordinate the various autonomous groups scattered around California. We both ended up on the coordinating committee, which drafted a constitution, raised lots of money, hired a coordinator (who later became the state lobbyist), and managed the incorporation. It was an exciting time, and the committee members generally enjoyed each other's company (except for the inevitable

feuds). Several of us are still good friends; others I've lost contact with.

In the nearly 20 years I've known Robin, her life has gone through rather more traumatic upheavals than mine has, so I was happy to see how well she is, and is doing, these days – like so many of my friends!

## How to impress your friends

Anyway, it's Monday, 16 January. Robin drove me from the airport to her house in Sunnyvale, where I met her husband, Al, whom I hadn't met before. Al's a bit older than we are, though he doesn't look it, and I enjoyed talking with him, despite his tendency to ask questions about Australia, regarding things I'd never thought about before, like what some categories of workers are paid.

Al and Robin had bought a small Macintosh computer a few months previously, and were taking a class in



*continued from page 3*

plenty of chance to practice my French pronunciation and correct *jan's*, which was appalling (his foreign language is German), but I had no real necessity to speak any French.

In Cornwall we stayed with some friends of *jan's*, Guy and Sharon Frechette. Guy is an artist, and their flat was full of his works: paintings, sculptures, airbrushed metal things, etchings – fabulous stuff. *jan's* car has a beautiful etched wombat, done by Guy, on a side window.

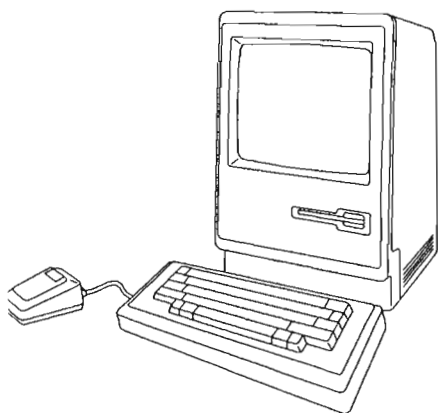
Unfortunately Guy was very busy working on something and only visited for a few minutes, but Sharon and a visiting friend named Linda (from Ottawa) were fascinating to talk to. Linda is involved in Wicca, having begun training at the age of 6 (she's now about 24), and is another expatriate American. She was very interesting. After backrubs all around, I collapsed early, leaving the others to natter on.

On Sunday we drove back to Albany through the Adirondacks, which were not nearly as snowy as advertised, but I'm not complaining. In the eve-

ning, in the interests of culinary research, we ate at a Pizza Hut. I am pleased to report that Pizza Hut in the USA, on the evidence of this place, is just as good as Pizza Hut in Australia. (This is not veiled snideness; I am, in fact, a Pizza Hut pizza fan. Yes, I know – there's no accounting for taste.)

On Monday, which turned out to be a holiday that was invented since I left the States (Martin Luther King's birthday), I flew out to California. The weather did not conspire to delay the flight from Albany. ■

how to use it. They didn't have any manuals for the software and were trying to figure it out by themselves, without any background in computers at all. I asked if I could have a look, and impressed them by finding my way around most of the functions within about 5 minutes, even though I'd never used a Mac before in my life (they did not believe me). It certainly was easy, if you already knew what a computer can do, and had a general idea of how – but without that, they were really confused until the course covered a topic, then they picked it up very quickly. A day or so later, when I had a chance, I bought them a book which covered most of their software in terms I thought they'd understand.



(As an aside, I was interested that Al always referred to the Mac as 'the Apple'. To me an 'Apple' computer is one of the pre-Mac ones, the Apple IIe, for example, while the Mac is... a Mac, which is what everybody in Australia calls them. I wondered if this was just Al, or if it's in that area of California (near the Apple headquarters) that Macs are called Apples, or what. Can anyone enlighten me?)

On Monday Robin drove me to Monterey to visit the Aquarium, as I mentioned in a previous issue. It was great, and the drive through the California countryside and around the town of Carmel was delightful too. It was a beautiful sunny day.

## Open space

As we were returning, Robin remarked about one of the little ironies of life. The area she lives in, part of the town of Sunnyvale, had been open space in the early '70s, and she was one of the authors of a detailed study of why it should *not* be turned into a residential area.

If I remember correctly, the study showed (among other things) that, economically, the least expensive option for the various levels of government was to *not* develop the region. The costs of services (water, sewerage, roads, and everything else) would be more than the revenues from taxes. Somebody might make a lot of money out of the development, but it *wasn't* going to benefit the taxpayers of the area. Anyway, that part of Sunnyvale got built, and Robin now lives there.

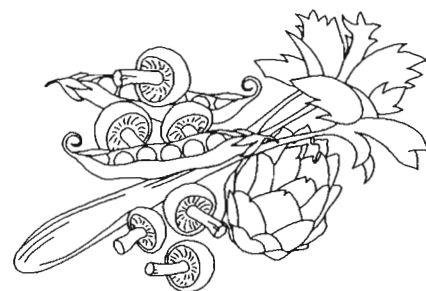
Some nearby areas did get saved from development. There is a huge park in the Foothills (to the west of 'Silicon Valley') which was purchased from the owners, and set aside as open space for recreation. It's a beautiful area, and a fine idea, but its acquisition was certainly 'unfair' to the owners, some of whose families had held the land for generations (as I understand it, the owners can live there until they die, but their children cannot inherit the properties). They were compensated, but of course the owners felt – probably correctly – that the payment wasn't true market value, and that the money wasn't the entire issue. I heard quite a bit about this while I was there, and don't hope to give a detailed account of both sides of the story. It must be quite a shock for a family to live for generations in an area that suddenly grows from a few small towns to a major metropolis, and then have these new folks take your land away from you. I know how I'd feel – but I also know I'd much rather have my land taken away for a park than a freeway!

Robin and I went walking in this park one morning, and she set a pace that nearly collapsed me. 'Just a short, easy stroll,' she said. I should have known – she does exercise classes,

goes jogging, and all that every day, and is disgustingly fit. We visited a working experimental farm, where all the animals are female, except for the occasional visiting male for reproductive purposes. Some of the animals are taken away for breeding; I don't recall whether any are artificially bred. Robin pointed out the lack of 'barnyard stink' and said it's because there were no male animals: it's the males which have the scent in their urine, that becomes offensive stink to humans. Gosh, the things you learn!

Other days we went shopping. I bought more computer books. I bought some software (the Arts & Letters package I use for some of the graphics in *Wrevenge*). I saw electronics stores that would make Eric weep – or maybe not; they might have been vast, but they didn't necessarily have the things he wants. I bought a year or two's supply of Tyvek envelopes, and got some addresses from which I might be able to track down an Australian distributor. (There must be one; I do see the occasional Tyvek envelope from Australian companies. Perhaps the next time I get one, I should phone the company's purchasing people and find out where they got them.)

## Salad bars – wow!



I ate in salad bars. Wow! Was I impressed with California salad bars. I'd been struck in other cities with the salad bars in supermarkets and some eateries, but hadn't seen a whole restaurant devoted to salad (they usually also had soup and a range of breads and cheeses; some had a grill for meat). What I liked about these places, and what distinguished them from Australian salad bars, was two

and the fact that most of them were not in mixed salads with dressings. Each vegetable was available separately, so you could choose exactly what you wanted, and add dressing (or not) at the end. There were usually a few mixed salads as well. For someone like me, who must be very careful of things she can't eat, this is fabulous. I pigged out on vegies. (I liked the supermarket salad bars for the same reason, although the range of vegetables was usually a bit less than in the restaurants. For me to buy all these vegies means that half of them go bad before I get a chance to eat them, or that I can have only a few at a time. Wish I could find a convenient place in Sydney that does this.)

One night I visited Cheryl Pape, a friend from my California Academy of Sciences days. She emigrated to New Zealand some years after I went to Australia, but stayed only a few years before returning to California. I failed to visit her in N.Z., thinking each year that I'd do it the next year... Cheryl is an artist and scientific illustrator; her animal drawings and painting are superb. You don't get rich doing science illustrations, unfortunately, no matter how good you are, so she does other things as well. One of the them is 'pet portraits': paintings of your favorite pet. She prefers to meet the animal, but works from photographs as well.

Another night I ate with Doug and Verna Graham. Verna and I knew each other at the University of Maryland as students, and I met Doug through Zero Population Growth about the same time that I met Robin. They both have high-powered jobs as well as two adopted children, so we didn't see as much of each other as I would have liked.

Several nights I ate with the de Negris, and one evening Robin and I basked in their hot tub. I want one! Why can't I find a proper California hot tub in Australia? Lots of (overpriced or undersized) 'spas', but no hot

big around. I don't need one that seats six people, thank you; but I do want it deep enough to sit up, rather than lie down, in.

## San Francisco – trams, lasers, Lucy Huntzinger and other fans

I even visited some fans. On Saturday the 21st of January, I rode the CalTrain from Sunnyvale to San Francisco, intending to do a bit of sightseeing and then have dinner with Lucy Huntzinger and friends, and attend a fannish gathering that evening. I even managed to do all that, although I got a bit delayed in reaching Lucy's.

I was tempted to look in on the MacWorld show when I walked past the venue on my way from the train station to Market Street (I decided to walk, rather than take the bus; this turned out to be a mistake because I ended up doing entirely too much walking that day and got thoroughly exhausted). But I gave the Macs a miss because I didn't really have the time, I didn't feel like paying the entry fee, and I'm not a Mac user (nor intend to be) anyway. So I caught the tram that goes out through my old neighborhood (the edge of the Haight-Ashbury district), and got off and wandered around the Haight a bit before walking

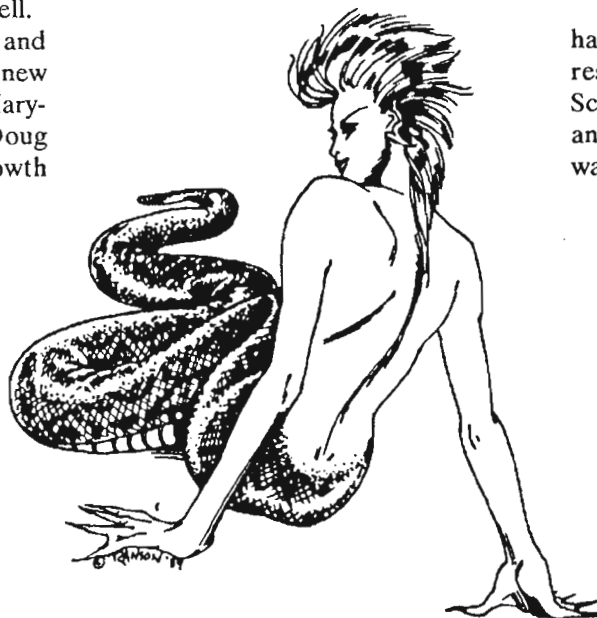
Science in Golden Gate Park.

I was interested to note the arrangements for wheelchairs on the tram. In the downtown area, the trams are underground, and the floor of the car is level with the boarding platforms. In other areas, where the trams are above ground, a portion of the car is lowered to make steps and people board from the street level. A woman in a wheelchair boarded in the underground area, and told the driver she wanted to get off at such-and-such a place. When we got there (now above ground), there was a wheelchair ramp beside the road! The driver raised the steps, the woman wheeled off, and he lowered the steps again before going on to the regular stop for ambulatory passengers. I was most impressed, and wondered how many wheelchair ramps there are around the city, and how do wheelchair passengers get off at the stops where there are no ramps?

Speaking of the Haight, it didn't seem to have changed much since my last visit in 1980. A lot of changes were made between the early '70s and 1980, as old buildings were fixed up, both as residences (on the side streets) and as shops (on Haight Street itself). But not much seems to have happened since then, at least not that's obvious. I was a bit disappointed; I thought by now Haight Street would be thriving again.

I mentioned my visit to the Steinhart Aquarium in an earlier issue. The rest of the California Academy of Sciences continues to be modernized, and I wandered through to see what was new since my last visit. I spent awhile in the Hall of Man displays, looking at videos and admiring pottery (some of it old, some contemporary). There was also a large, possibly temporary, display on gorillas which I enjoyed. I was delighted by an entire (small) room that was full of *The Far Side* cartoons, some of which were accompanied by scientific explanations of the phenomena parodied.

Then I discovered the Laserium. Laser shows are given





in the planetarium in the evenings. I realize that laser shows aren't that unusual for many people, but it's been years since I've had the opportunity to see one (are they any in Sydney? must check). And when I discovered that the early show – the only one feasible for me to attend – was called *The Rainbow Cadenza* (as in J Neil Shulman's book of the same name), how could I possibly resist? I loved it.

But this got me to Lucy's later than intended (I did call to warn her), so I didn't have as much time to talk as would have been nice. Another couple had joined her and John Bartelt for dinner, but I have managed to mislay their names. After dinner, we went to the fan gathering, where I met Robert Lichtman (the TAFF winner), Lenny Bailes, Art Widner, and a whole bunch of other people. Unfortunately, by this time my feet hurt too much to stand up (all that walking) and I was too tired generally to be very social. I managed to get a chair when someone foolishly got up, and talked at length with Loren MacGregor, whose writings I don't think I've ever read, though I recognised his name. I can't recall what we talked about, but it was interesting at the time.

## The East Bay – BART, my sister, houses, and the Super Bowl

Sunday morning I chatted for awhile with Lucy before setting off to visit my sister Barbara and her husband Ted in Walnut Creek, on the other side of the Bay. Lucy drove me to the BART (rapid transit) station, and Barb met me at her end. BART is a delight; pity it opened about the time I left the area.

I had a great visit with Barb and Ted. They drove me around to a rental property they owned, which the tenants had trashed when they tried to evict them for not paying the rent for months. By 'trashed' I mean they bashed holes in the interior walls, tore the cabinets off the walls, ripped up the carpet, and I think even destroyed

the toilet. They did leave the roof and external walls intact, at least. Ted had been working long hours to repair the place, so they could sell it. He told me how he tried to get someone to do the work, but couldn't find anyone reliable; he finally decided that if he had to supervise someone all the time, he might as well do the work himself (he knows how and is good at it).

Barb had been doing a lot too. They are no strangers to fixing up old houses, having done two (the one they live in and a previous one), but hadn't intended to do any more, and especially not at that time! (They have since sold the house.)

I also admired the house they live in, which was dramatically changed from its condition when they bought it about 10 years ago. Good thing I saw the results of all their work when I did, because they have since sold *that* house as well, and bought a new one to live in.



We talked about the usual family things, and I was happy to learn that they considered me a good excuse to not be working on the wrecked house that day (I'd felt I might be keeping them from their work). I was under strict instructions from Robin not to get back to the station for her to collect me until after the football game was over. It was SuperBowl weekend, and the San Francisco team was one of those playing. Barb, Ted and I weren't interested, but the rest of city apparently came to a halt to watch the game. We turned the TV on (sound off) towards the end of it, so we could tell when it was safe to leave for the train. Thus we got to see the Forty-Niners win in the last few seconds. Barb said, 'Well, at least the drunks on the train should be happy ones.'

They were. Just as well, since the trains were a big stuffed up. I was getting on at Lafayette station, which is 2 from the end of the Concord line, so I naively expected the train going toward the city to be reasonably on time. After a long wait, on a cold and windy outdoor platform (with the smokers grumbling, because smoking isn't allowed on the platforms, even the outdoor ones), the train finally came. We got on. The announcer apologized for its lateness, citing mechanical problems.

One or two stops later, we were put off at another station. The train still had problems and was being sent back. This platform was marginally warmer. I tried to read my book. When the train came, it was (no surprise) crowded. On to Oakland, where I had to change to another line. Another long wait (the trains don't run that often on Sundays, at the best of times).

It's now late afternoon, and soon to get dark. Being paranoid about being hassled on trains, I twitch. I'm going to the end of the line: how many people, other than drunken louts, will ride that far? I try to look cool. People get off at each stop; few get on. I'm over an hour later than I told Robin I'd be: will she wait? will she be annoyed? will she worry? I try to think positively (creating my own reality). All turned out okay. No one bothered me, and Robin was still waiting.

## Palo Alto: various friends and fans

The next day, I went to stay for a few days with other old friends, the Bookbinders. They've had a child since I saw them last, so I got acquainted with her too. Louis also met me through ZPG, and we had a brief but enthusiastic affair. I'm delighted to say we're still good friends, and that Donna, now his wife, never considered me a threat to their relationship. Louis was the first person I ever knew who built a kit computer for home use; he's worked in programming now for some years and went through a series of

uninspiring jobs before starting at Stanford University. I don't recall just what he said he's doing there; it sounded tedious to me, but he seems to enjoy it.

Donna wasn't employed at the time; I gather that her skills don't command much pay, and the costs of childminding make it uneconomic for her to have a job. Like so many women in her situation, she seems to feel a bit out of touch with the adult world, but otherwise enjoys the freedom. They don't have much money, though, so any recreation she chooses has to be cheap. (Quite a contrast with Robin, who isn't rich but doesn't have to count pennies either.) Louis had hoped to get a day or two off while I was visiting, but he didn't manage it, so Donna and I went walking and talked a lot. I liked that because I'd never known her as well as I knew Louis, and we had the chance to get a bit better acquainted.

On Tuesday I had lunch with fans Seth Goldberg and Michelle Armstrong on the Stanford campus where Michelle works. We didn't have much time to talk with Michelle because we were late getting there (Seth is not good at parking spaces – see box elsewhere in this zine) and she had to get back to work. Despite that, it was good to see her again (we'd met when she visited Australia a few years ago).

Seth and I then went to the Future Fantasy bookshop, where I bought some more books and met Chuq von Rospach, who had just got a job with Apple Computer and was carrying on about that. I said hello and mentioned that Eric and I were on the mailing list for his fanzine, but he didn't seem interested.

Next day, back at Robin's, I met her daughter Cicely, who is about 27. She and her mother had had a falling out about 12 years ago, and Cicely left to live with her father (the parents being divorced by this point); they hadn't seen each other since. I had deemed it tactful to absent myself from the house during this reunion (which is why I'd been staying with the Bookbinders), but I was glad to at least say hello to

Cicely, who also remembered me.

During the two weeks I was visiting Robin, various of her friends dropped in, and we had lunch with one of them, Lil, one day. All are in their mid or late 40's, mostly with adult children who've left home, some married, some widowed or divorced, all reasonably well off financially. (Presumably Robin also has employed friends, who aren't available during the day.) This collection of intelligent, capable women reminded me that I don't often mix with similar women in Sydney, and got me to wondering where they were hiding. Possibly in suburbs far from where I live?



### Alyson Abramowitz, fans, and AWAnS

On Saturday the 28th, Alyson Abramowitz took me to a fan gathering at which I failed to meet Ctein because no one thought to introduce us, and I wasn't wearing my badge or going around barging in on everyone's conversations announcing who I was. There was a loud political argument raging in the kitchen (this was a few days after President Bush's inauguration), and I really didn't feel like listening to – or getting involved in – that. I chatted with some people in another room, whose names I don't remember.

Just before we left, I learned that Eric Drexler, the author of *Engines of Creation*, the book on nanotechnology, was in another room, but I didn't have the ambition to seek out that discussion. Now I'm really sorry I didn't, because I've been reading the book (I'd read a lot about it previously) and would like to have at least met the

man, but at the time I was, as usual when it's late, falling asleep.

Sunday was Women's Apa day. Alyson had invited all the present, past, and waitlisted AWA members to her house. This was great, but the details (including the names of attendees) will be reported only in AWA. Several of us went out to dinner later.

Alyson's house is very interesting to someone with little experience with devices to assist the hearing-impaired. The doorbell is connected to several lights, which flash on and off. The first time this happened when I was in the bedroom, it really startled me, as I hadn't been warned. I forget what the telephone does, but it is also connected to a keyboard and display for exchanging typed messages. Alyson herself is not 'deaf', but she does have some hearing impairment (I forget exactly what). She does have quite a few friends with varying degrees of deafness, and has been learning American Sign Language for some years. One of her hearing-impaired friends came to the AWA gathering, so Alyson talked sign with her. The friend can hear with the help of a hearing aid, and she can lip read, but she has difficulty in noisy groups as all the sound gets jumbled up together.

The most amusing thing about all this was that signing slowed Alyson's rapid-fire speech down enough that I could keep up without being overwhelmed by a mass of information. Asking Alyson a question is an experience: you get the answer, but it's wrapped in several layers of fascinating, usually relevant, but not essential, information. Extracting the simple facts you wanted to know can be a real challenge, especially if you don't want to miss anything else she's saying.

The other fascinating thing about visiting Alyson was her fetish with what I consider 'artificial food'. Her solution to the calorie crisis is to try to find ways to eat what she wants, but not get any unnecessary caloric value out of it. Hence, lots of stuff sweetened with chemicals, and/or containing

*continued on page 9*



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## Books

{It's been awhile since I caught up on my book commentaries. The following list includes some of the books I have received for review. Many other review books aren't mentioned, because I found them unreadable. - JHW}

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### Judith Moffett, *Pennterra*, New English Library, 1987.

Quakers are good real-life examples of a working alternative way of organising society without hierarchies, and as such are ideal for speculative fiction about future societies.

A colony of Quakers has settled on a planet inhabited by a species they call the hrossa, who appear to have a very ecologically-balanced relationship with the planet. They appear to have a well developed 'religion' of sorts, and they do not appear to question much of anything. The hrossa claim that their planet is a thinking entity which communicates with them, and it is unthinkable to do anything not in harmony with the planet.

The colonists have adapted to the planet and accepted the restrictions



put on them by the hrossa (no machinery beyond the very basic, no settlement outside the valley they are in, and no increase in the human population). Although they don't quite understand *why* the restrictions are necessary, they do accept that they *are* necessary.

Now a second colony ship has arrived, and the people on it will not accept the rules, nor can they see why they should. The Quakers pass on the hrossa's warning that the planet will do something terrible to enforce the rules, but that concept is absurd to the newcomers. They learn the hard way.

A good study of the 'Gaia' (living planet) philosophy, but set on a different planet. The lessons to be learnt clearly apply to the Earth. Good reading even if you aren't interested in the message.

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### Joan Slonczewski, *Still Forms on Foxfield*, Avon, 1980 (reprinted 1988).

This book starts from a fairly similar beginning to Moffett's *Pennterra*, but from there the story is completely different.

In *Foxfield*, a group of Quaker colonists have settled on a planet inhabited by the plant-like Commensals, which have a group mind. The humans have managed to adapt to the harsh conditions, with the Commensals' help. For a century, there has been no word from Earth, so the colonists are resigned to the idea that there will be no spare parts or replacements for their ageing technology. Many people wish for some respite from the endless toil just to survive, leaving little time

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*continued from page 8*

other substitutes for 'real' food. My approach is totally different, mostly because I get allergic reactions to a lot of pre-packaged food, and therefore avoid such things unless the ingredients clearly list nothing that looks artificial to me. This isn't a concern about cancer or other possible effects, but a concern about the very real effects I've experienced in the past. Also, I hate the taste of artificial sweeteners and find that foods prepared with weird stuff taste bad. Therefore, her solution wouldn't work for me, as it in fact *wouldn't* let me eat what I like - as it lets her.

I'm not saying it was a problem for me staying with Alyson, because it

wasn't. But it *was* a most interesting study in contrasting habits.

And then it was Monday, 30th January, time to leave California and head back for Australia. My suitcase was bulging with last-minute purchases, my list of 'things I never got around to doing and people I didn't get to see, or see enough of' had grown, but I was also itching to get back to Eric, and my computer, and the chance to try out all the goodies I'd bought.

### Hawaii and home

I had a 12-hour wait in Hawaii between planes (using two airlines has these minor inconveniences), but it was during the day, so I wandered

around a bit, met Phyllis Eide again for dinner, and then tried to sleep until after midnight when we could board the plane. I slept through to New Zealand, where I failed to telephone Lyn McConchie and had lots of opportunity to be reminded just how awful an airport is when smoking isn't restricted to a few areas. Ghack!

Most people on the flight got off in N.Z., and not many got on, so I managed to grab three seats together and lie down for the last few hours into Sydney. Hence I was in remarkably good condition on arrival. Customs didn't take long, for a change, and then I was home. ■

for badly-needed and much-longed-for research, but they know this is unlikely to happen.

Then a ship arrives from Earth, offering technology and citizenship in the new interstellar society in exchange for – how many changes in the people's lives? Citizens wear bracelets that can be life-saving, but are also an invasion of privacy. The new regime is very hierarchically structured, in direct contrast to the Quakers' ways. What choices do the colonists have? The warship seems capable of destroying them all, if they are too uncooperative. And even the sympathetic members of its crew simply cannot understand the colonists' point of view. Why would anyone prefer not to have all the benefits of civilization, especially for some abstract reasons of 'privacy' or 'free choice'. And then there's the tourists...

Can the Commensals help the colonists? And if so, how? There are some very interesting concepts in this book.

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**Judith Tarr, *A Fall of Princes* (Volume 3 of *Avaryan Rising*), Pan, 1988.**

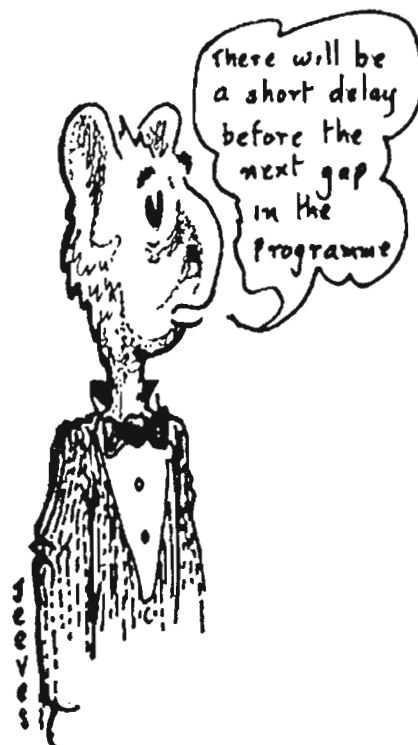
I would never have chosen this book to read, despite Judith Tarr's good reputation as a fantasy writer. But when a copy turned up for review, I read 10 pages or so to see if I thought it was worth continuing (most review books go on the give-away pile at this point). Some time later, upon finishing the book, I thought I'd try to find the first two volumes (*The Hall of the Mountain King* and *The Lady of Han-Gilen*) and read them as well.

You may correctly conclude from this that I liked the book. I especially liked the tone: the subject matter is serious yet the characters are bantering or mocking at times. The story focuses upon Hirel and Saravadin, the heirs to two empires that are at war. Their relationship is complex, and their personal development is realistic. Once they reach the realisation that continued war between their fathers is un-

acceptable, their efforts to stop that war are most interesting – and of course they must contend with the unknown powers who are attempting to manipulate everybody involved.

I didn't even mind the fact that the few women in the book had walk-on parts, because I liked their parts. Elian, Saravadin's mother, evidently had a large part in *The Lady of Han-Gilen*, when she declined to marry the man who later became Hirel's father. She continues to be a strong woman who takes her responsibilities seriously and fulfills them admirably. Although she doesn't appear in this volume much, her actions offstage continue to be important.

This was not a stock formula fantasy, although its premises and resolutions weren't all that wildly original, either. But it was well written, had plenty of action, excellent character development, and some strong philosophical points to make. To me, good fantasy must have all of those elements; much formula fantasy that I've seen has action but not much else, and is conspicuously lacking in philosophical underpinnings. This one is recommended.



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**Jonathan Wylie, *Dreams of Stone* (Book 1 of *The Unbalanced Earth*), Corgi, 1989.**

Here's another book saved from the throw-away pile by an intriguing first few pages. The amusement factor is higher in this book, providing an effective counterfoil to the seriousness of whatever's happening (about which neither the reader nor the characters have much of a clue), yet not overshadowing that seriousness. I enjoy characters who can maintain a sort of manic sense of humour in the face of impending disaster, as long as they are essentially believable – which, for me, these characters are.

Gemma comes from a world of magic, and appears to have some powers in the place she's in now – which didn't exist in her world until a few years previously, yet has communities that have been there for generations. She nearly dies in the desert, but is rescued by Arden, who doesn't believe in magic and thinks she's insane when she insists on the things she knows and has participated in.

Meanwhile, weird things are happening to other people in Arden's world. Fishermen speak of islands that appear and disappear; rivers do much the same. It seems apparently to me that some sort of meeting, mixing, and parting of alternate worlds is going on. But whatever's happening, clearly if it continues, then a great deal of destruction will occur. Can Gemma and Arden stop the destruction? Presumably the next two volumes will tell all.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, although it was a bit lighter weight in tone than *A Fall of Princes*. The problem Gemma and Arden (and everybody else) is facing is less personal and more potentially dangerous than the problem Saravadin and Hirel faced, but the story involves questions of right and wrong and personal responsibility. I recommend this one as well.

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**Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, *The Will of the Wanderer, Volume 1 of Rose of the Prophet*, Bantam Spectra, 1988.**

Weis & Hickman tell an amusing tale, but one which I found too repetitious about halfway through this 450-page book, and it's only the first of a trilogy. The gods, you see, are having an argument. The immortals, who take various forms depending on the culture of the human group which worships their particular god, get involved with manipulating human groups in ways to enhance their god's standing. This volume focuses mainly on several groups of humans in an Arabian-like desert setting, and uses all the cliches of Arabian fantasy. The humans show the usual stereotyped cultural attributes of desert Arabian groups, as well as being prone to all the misunderstandings familiar to soap-opera lovers.

Because I'm being a bit sarcastic about the plot doesn't mean I didn't enjoy reading this book. I did enjoy it (though, as I noted before, I found it too repetitious), and thought the authors did a fine job of story-telling. Cliches can, indeed, be fun if well handled. I just get bored with stories, no matter how well written, based mainly upon silly misunderstandings.

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**Shirley Maclaine, *Going Within: A Guide for Inner Transformation*, Bantam, 1989.**

This book isn't intended as fantasy, though some readers might consider it such. I've read Maclaine's previous books on her own journey towards enlightenment with great interest, largely because of the similarities in some of my own personal development experiences. You're probably aware of Maclaine's contributions to the understand-yourself movement. She is a well-known proponent of the concepts

of creating your own reality, and accepting responsibility for everything you do and that happens to you.

Where Maclaine's experience and mine part company is in her interest in past lives, communicating with spirits, and so on. I can't quite accept any of this, but I find it interesting to read about a person who seems otherwise intelligent and sensible to me, and who shares many of my beliefs, yet does things I consider totally weird.



This book is less a chronicle of her personal development and experiences than what its title says: a guide for inner transformation. She talks about meditation and the chakras (the energy centres of the body), using crystals in healing, and all the other techniques used by the know-yourself movement. Since I've had training (albeit superficial) in most of this, and know what works for me even when I don't believe a word of anybody's explanation for why it works, I found the book fascinating and enjoyable. It's also more readable than many, since she mixes her explanations with personal insights (for example, how silly she felt when she first tried a technique, or how she didn't accept a technique until something happened, and she tells about that experience).

Even if you reject all the concepts involved, and especially if you haven't read much if anything else written by 'New Age' proponents, but have only read about them, this book makes an interesting and enjoyable introduction to the subject.

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**L Ron Hubbard, *Dianetics (New Edition)*, New Era Publications, U.K., 1988 (first published in 1950).**

Ever since I've been involved in the know-yourself movement, I've wondered why so many fans sneer at the very mention of Dianetics and Scientology, and become incensed at things like New Era's sponsorship of events at the WorldCon in Britain. But I'd never read any of Hubbard's books, or participated in any of the courses, and remain sceptical of the know-yourself industry (as opposed to its concepts), so I was pleased when I received a review copy of this reprint.

My reactions to it were mixed. Hubbard's explanations of mental phenomena are somewhat different from the explanations I received in the courses I've taken, but they seem to me to be slightly different interpretations of the same basic phenomena. And since I don't really accept the explanations I was given, yet I know the therapy works, I am unwilling to reject Dianetics therapy simply because I don't accept the explanations it gives. And I certainly did find the explanations fascinating, if not convincing.

One of the more interesting aspects of the book, to me, was the clear indications of Hubbard's own prejudices and obsessions, at least at the time in which this book was researched and written. Three that (unsurprisingly) struck me the most were (1) his attitude toward women, about which one could most charitably say that it's 'idealistic and old-fashioned' or, less charitably, that it's 'bloody paternalistic'; (2) his attitude toward homosexuality, again very paternalistic (the 'it's a disease, and not their fault, but we

must help to cure them' theory); and (3) his obsession with domestic violence and abortion, or attempted abortion, and their effect on the fetus. A disproportionate number of his examples involve these two scenarios.

If you haven't read any of the published Dianetics books, and base your opinions on what other people have said about the theory and its proponents, I suggest you read a copy of this book and form your own opinion.

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**Kate Wilhelm, Huysman's Pets, Ace, 1986.**

Wilhelm's stories are generally so gripping that I can hardly put the book down without finishing it – and this one's no exception. It involves a group of children (some of them young adults now) who were the results of genetic experiments. Most live in a 'hospital', isolated from the outside world, but some had disappeared when still young children from the

experimenter's control. These young adults now feel irresistably drawn to the 'hospital', but why? What will happen to all of them now that their creator, Huysman, is dead? What is the secret of their differences from other people?

Wilhelm's biology is always good, and she deftly mixes in elements of mystery, psychology and politics into the action. Recommended reading.

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**Kate Wilhelm, Crazy Time, St Martin's Press, 1988.**

This amusing volume is billed as 'a technological ghost story' and it combines some very bizarre elements into a very enjoyable and intriguing book. The jacket blurb sums it up: 'It begins when she sees the strange, red-haired man named Corky vanish in a flash of blue light. It continues when his fragments begin following her – and speaking to her. It gets much worse when

government spies start trailing her everywhere. But when Lauren finds herself falling in love with Corky, that's when she knows she's crazy!

The military men are hilariously unsympathetic stereotypes of people who find Communists under every bed. Lauren's psychologist co-workers are equally unsympathetic stereotypes of mostly harmless quacks. And the whole mess is sparked off by the now-stereotyped 14-year-old boy playing with a computer game. The more one says about this book, the sillier it seems – yet it has good character development for the two main characters (Lauren and Corky) and is quite logical in its development, once you accept the bizarre premise behind what happens to Corky.

Recommended reading – just be prepared for some strange looks if you read it in public, because you're very likely to laugh aloud with delight on nearly every page. ■

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**The Rabbit's Progress**

by  
Lyn McConchie

{Editor's note: New Zealand's Prime Minister Lange resigned in early August. – JHW}

– Ze cabinet meeting is now in session, silence for m'sieur le Minister!  
 – Chers colleagues, we have just received a report from our efficient spies in ze country of New Zealand.  
 – Our spies say zat in zis country everyone say zat zere Prime Minister Lange is much influenced by ze 'Media'.  
 – M'sieur le Minister, what is zis 'media'?

– I 'ave no idea. Jacques, bring ze dictionary and read ze entry.  
 – MEDIA – ze plural of medium.  
 – What does it say about zat?  
 – a middle quality. . . ze mid term of a syllogism.  
 – And? Is zere no more? Is zat all?  
 – Non, m'sieur.  
 – Zen what?



– ... someone who can communicate with ze spirits of ze dead departed, M'sieur le Minister.  
 – Are you sure zat is says zis, Jacques?  
 – Oui, M'sieur le Minister!  
 – Zen Lange is influenced by ze group of mediocre, philosophical communicators with ghosts? Zis revelation explains so much about New Zealand's foreign policy. A month's leave on ze idyllic island of Hao to ze brave spies who 'ave uncovered zis momentous information.



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## Big Blue wants you

As I mentioned last issue, I'm now working with IBM Australia on a long-term contract. I've been there two months so far, and am rather enjoying it.

I was interviewed for a technical writing job, but when I started, they asked me to take over as technical editor instead – which suited me much better, for several reasons. I like editing better than writing (though sometimes there isn't a lot of difference between the two), and it gives me an opportunity to work on a range of products, rather than just one. Since one of my reasons for wanting to work for IBM was to learn as much as possible about their products, this is good.

The negative part is that the products we're dealing with are mainly mainframe-based, and so are of less interest to me personally than if they were for PCs or PS/2s. Also the only writing tools available to us at the moment are mainframe-based text editors, not proper word processors. One of these days the Information Development team will get PS/2s – about Christmas, if we're lucky. I sure am glad I'm not a writer – I can do most of my editing on paper and so avoid having to deal with the monster.

So far I've established a reputation for getting things done much faster than anyone expected, and more thoroughly – and they think I'm great. This has the useful side-effect that I can work at home quite a lot, despite

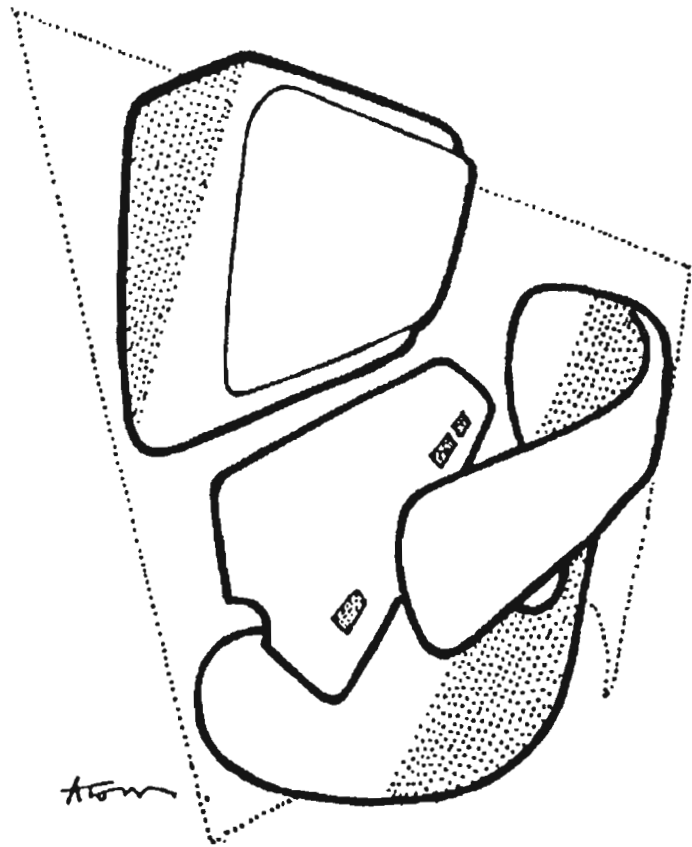
the official rules against it. The project managers I answer to take the sensible attitude that contractors, at least, can do whatever they please as long as they get the work done and turn up for meetings. It's also handy that there are two sites in the Sydney area, at some distance from each other, and I have to spend time at each site during the week. If asked, a manager can always claim that I'm at the other site, or travelling between the two, or something.

Meanwhile I found a small flat to rent not far from the main IBM site, and moved much of the furniture from Potts Point into this place. I also decided to take the opportunity to sell the Potts Point flat, which I wanted to do anyway (it's too small) but couldn't quite face hassling while I was living there. I've gone through several changes of mind on where I want to buy a new place, but it's all rather academic because the old place hasn't sold, and I haven't seen anything that I wanted, at a price I was willing to pay, in any area that I was willing to consider. Fortunately, despite my impatience to

Do Something, it's not a necessity, so I can just wait and see what happens. It's a bad time to sell in Sydney (last year's property boom came to a screeching halt a few months ago, and sale prices have been dropping), but it's a good time to buy, for the same reasons.

Meanwhile I spend 1 or 2 nights a week with Eric in Potts Point, 3 or 4 nights at the rented place in Castle Hill, weekends at Eric's house in Falconbridge, and nobody ever knows where I am. Often I'm not sure myself! (If I wake up with a cat on my face, it must be Minou, and I'm at Eric's.)

Because of all this confusion, and because there's a good chance that I'll move suddenly away from Potts Point, both Eric and I have changed our mailing address back to Falconbridge. But I'm keeping the PO Box until I know for sure what I'm doing, so things won't get lost even if I don't get them for a week or two. Sorry about all this, but if you think all this address-swapping is a nuisance, imagine what it's like from this end! ☐



## Letters

Lyn McConchie  
Farside Farm  
Ngamoko Road  
R.D. Norsewood  
New Zealand  
19 July 1989

Most of the readers of *Wrevenge* are going to assume from my articles on medical matters that I am a rabid doctor-hater. This isn't quite true.

I do hate doctors who assume that since I am female I am a hypochondriac, hysterical idiot who knows nothing at all about the workings of my own body.

I do hate doctors who assume that they can pump any medicine they like into me without explanation and without listening when I say I've had that one before and it was useless/dangerous/unpleasant.

I do hate doctors who deride me as a female by handling me as if I am a rubber dummy designed for teaching purposes and not a person.

I do hate doctors who assume that because I am in their hospital they can appear with 13 students and strip me of clothes and dignity as a demonstration model of whatever I am suffering from. This is not necessarily because I am female; men may get this sort of treatment too, but it is less likely and if the male patient in question complains, he is apologised to and the problem amended or the treatment complained of ceased.

I have had doctors in the past who have not needed to behave in this fashion. From 1965 to 1974 I went to a Wellington doctor. He was known as a man who did not put up with waffle or hypochondria. If you waffled he

showed you the door. He believed in a woman's rights to her own body, and had a habit of partying with the local University students.

I found him an ideal doctor. When I said something he *listened*. I didn't mind being chopped off if I drifted over the line into waffle, and I loved his assumption that I was intelligent enough to know when a treatment didn't suit me.

During the time I was his patient (and happily so), the other local doctors were horrified by him. There were numerous attempts to get him out of or off the medical register. He was unconventional, outspoken, appeared on TV and radio, and *partied!* I think it was the last which really had them hysterical.

None of the attempts worked and as of this letter, he is still doctoring in Wellington, as unconventional and outspoken as wever.

Since leaving Waikanae and buying a farm a hundred miles north, I have a new doctor. I don't like him a heap so far, personally, but he is an excellent doctor. He *listens*, and he *tells* me what he is prescribing. He takes nothing for granted, but gets tests done and refers me to specialists if necessary. A far cry from the prat in Waikanae who assumed that because I was female I was mentally retarded.

Julia says in her letter that 'If you don't know something about a problem, ask...' Well, naturally. But perhaps it is different in Australia. I have asked in NZ and been told that I 'didn't need to know/see that...'



Nurses in wards are caring, overworked, and wonderful, and what they sometimes have to put up with from the doctors is beyond belief. I can speak authoritatively after eight or so stays in hospital, all for operations.

The main problem with doctor/patient relationships has been defined by Craig in the same issue of *Wrevenge*. Most doctors *are* medically competent. *But*, when the doctor is incompetent in establishing an understanding with his patients, then some of this may spill over into medical areas.

I wish that medical schools would run courses regarded as just as important as medical ones, on empathy, understanding the patient's fears, communicating with patients, and patients' rights and dignity.

Mind you, perhaps there should be courses on the same for patients (communicating with your doctor, his rights and dignity...).

And after all this I hope if I do fall ill at a con, Craig and Julia are there, because I believe they are two health professionals who care for patients as people.





John Foyster  
P O Box 483  
Norwood, SA 5067  
Australia  
18 July 1989

Lyn McConchie's article is almost balanced, but I think she omits to take account of a public image forced on medicos by an eager public, an image which is quite unrealistic. Just as we don't demand that all lawyers are exclusively successful in actions, so we ought not to demand that medical doctors should always be successful in the treatments they prescribe; and while we might agree with that sentiment in abstract, we tend to disagree when it is *our* ailment which is being treated.

One reason for this, I think, is that while abstractly we might be able to manage a notion like 35% chance of survival, we don't manage as well the reverse notion (you're twice as likely to die as to live after this treatment), and we overlook the fact that you can't, as an individual, be 35% dead.

One consequence of this is that doctors – ones who are trying hard – seem to me to have a problem in describing chances and outcomes. It doesn't work to report to a patient (or at least, I can't imagine many cases of the contrary) generalized information about what is likely to happen to patients in more or less the same circumstances. What the patients wants to know is *what is going to happen to her or him*, just like a child, or just as though the doctor were God.

This is very much context, of course, but it should help in what follows.

One way of getting around the problems Lyn describes is the double-blind procedure which your letter-writer objects to. It may be tough to be on the receiving end of a placebo (provided the trial treatment works, and of course, if the trial treatment doesn't work you may have been better off with the placebo), but it does help to control the experimenter who cheats. And unfortunately we know all too well that you cannot tell the patients who is getting the treatment and who is not because (1) some of them will tell the experimenter, and (2) the Hawthorne Effect (the fact that people who believe they are getting special treatment tend to respond more positively) will interfere with interpretations unless it is held constant for *all* patients in the trial.

The truth is that without adequate testing, involving double-blind trials, 'bad' treatments pass into popular use. One really only has to give one one-word example to make the point: thalidomide. As it happens, one of the first people to identify the thalidomide problem was Dr William McBride, whom you erroneously and libellously associate with the Chelmsford 'deep sleep' treatment. Dr McBride's recent problems stem from his work with Foundation 41, where the evidence appears to be that his zeal to establish the dangers from some particular drugs led him to falsify evidence (i.e. to operate outside the accepted double-blind procedure).

*{The doctor associated with Chelmsford is Dr Harry Bailey. I did know that Dr McBride was the Founda-*

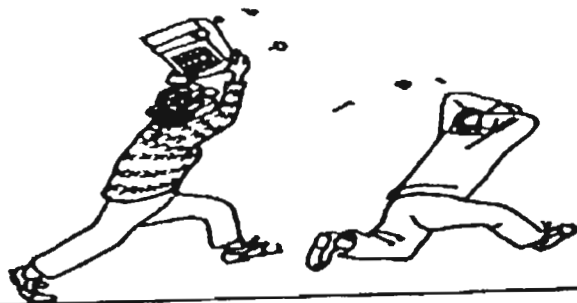
*tion 41 person, and not the Chelmsford chap, but I must have had his name in my mind when typing my comments on Lyn's article. My apologies to Dr McBride, who has quite enough troubles without being erroneously associated with an entirely different medical scandal.*

*I personally don't object to double-blind studies as such, because I know their value. In fact, I would probably agree to be part of one if I were given the facts. What I object to, and what I think most people object to, is the fact that many medical researchers don't even tell their experimental subjects that the treatment they are getting is experimental, much less that some of the patients won't get the treatment but are the 'controls'. I'll agree that some people would have difficulty understanding or coping emotionally with the concept, but I think a lot more people can understand these things than some doctors give them credit for – and even if they don't understand, it is every patient's right to be informed. For me personally, the problem lies far more in not knowing what the doctor is doing (or planning to do), than in not knowing for sure what effect the treatment will (or won't) have. Maybe I'm unusual, but I don't think so.*  
– JHW }

#### Change of Address

Please send mail to me at:  
6 Hillcrest Avenue  
Faulconbridge NSW 2776  
Australia

Mail to the PO Box is being forwarded (not by PO staff).



The typewriter is mightier than the pen....

Craig Hutton '89

## **Jean and Eric urge you to attend these two conventions (read on: you'll see why).**

Bring your swimsuits – we intend to host a spa party in our suite. It will be a non-smoking party, of course; bring-your-own-everything; and we will dis-invite anyone who behaves in a manner obnoxious (by our definition). (Also, Jean will no doubt close down the party relatively early by fannish standards.) Otherwise, believing it's the duty of a Mascot/Fan GoH to add to the friendly, relaxed ambience of a convention, we plan to do our best.

### **Circulation 4**

**Dates:** 29 September – 2 October 1989 (NSW-ACT long weekend).

**Venue:** Eagle Hawk Hill Motel, Federal Highway NSW-ACT border (on the way to Sydney).

**Rates:** \$30 attending (through Syncon weekend); \$40 at the door.

**Rooms:** \$60 single/double/twin.

**Mascot:** Jean Weber.

**Contact:** PO Box 47, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

Despite Jack Herman's comments in *S&L* #2, this isn't so far from a large shopping centre well equipped with restaurants, take-aways, and other shops, and there are eateries on site. It's actually *easier* to get fed 'well on the outskirts' of Canberra than in one of its so-called city centres, especially on holiday weekends, in my experience.

### **Danse Macabre**

(29th Australian Science Fiction Convention)

**Dates:** 13 – 16 April, 1990 (Easter).

**Venue:** Diplomat Motor Inn, St Kilda (Melbourne).

**Rates:** \$40 attending. Rooms \$54/\$59/\$80 single/double/triple.

**Overseas GoH:** George R R Martin.

**Australian GoH:** Eric Lindsay.

**Contact:** PO Box 273, Fitzroy, VIC 3065.

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