

WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE



Weberwoman's Wrevenge 39

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I prefer some sort of personal response.

The Rubbish Bin

Entirely too much time has passed since I published the last issue of this fanzine, as evidenced by the mountain of letters that has accumulated for this one – and by the full folder (well hidden under other work) that I unearthed just as I thought I'd finished typing up everything.

I've been *busy*. You can read a very brief summary in my diary notes. Not mentioned there is the fact that my office is now usable (the carpet's been laid and furniture moved in), although some work still needs to be done (mainly hooking up all the power points – electrical outlets – to the power, installing the ceiling fan, and finishing painting the trim around the door and windows).

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Life, don't talk to me about life

Excerpts from Jean Weber's diary

Fun and games at IBM

As usual, things have changed since my comments in *Wrevenge* #38. The roller-coaster of my workload at IBM shifted suddenly into excessively-busy mode again in mid-May.

The manager of the writing team for the one large active project sacked one of the writers and asked me to step in and finish the book. Not realizing the amount of work involved (due mainly to an appalling lack of available information and hence a large requirement for research), I agreed. I thought the information was there, and just had to be massaged into a readable, logical form.

I explained that I was departing in two weeks' time for a short holiday with my parents, but would do as much as I could in the meantime; as that was obviously more than anyone else could do, that was fine with the manager. I had visions of ripping through the work, producing the draft, and dashing off in a blaze of glory. Dream on.

(Fortunately, no one even suggested that I postpone the holiday, as that wasn't, as far as I was concerned, one of the options, since I had the sort of air ticket that can't be changed without a large financial penalty – not to mention the special nature of the trip, with my parents.)

You may guess that I soon discovered that I was well in over my depth. Within a day or two it became glaringly obvious that although I might have time to come to grips with the system I was supposed to be writing about, I certainly wasn't going to have time to actually write about it before I went away. Still, I did what I could, and the manager seemed happy with that.

When I got back from my trip, I was asked to work on the next draft of the book, and eventually took it to completion. Turned out everybody was so happy with my work that they asked

me to tidy up several of the other books in the series, and then I was asked to stay on as a writer in phase 2 of the project. (By that time, budget cuts had removed any provision for an editor, so part of the motivation was to sneak in some editing by the ploy of calling me a writer; I'll be doing as much of both as I have time for.)

Renovations & other jobs

Meanwhile, I'd taken on a couple of other jobs (since I had all that free time) just before this crisis occurred, and was desperately trying to finish them in my 'spare' time.

And, also meanwhile, there was the bathroom. I may have described it before. Aesthetically it was pretty awful, but I can live with that. Functionally, it wasn't great either. There was no handbasin, and no shower except an inadequate hand-held one. I could have done something makeshift about the shower, but I really did want a handbasin (I hate brushing my teeth in the kitchen sink) and I figured as long as I was getting a plumber in to put in those pipes, I might as well get the shower installed at the same time.

But if I'm going to do that, I'd better rip out the old wallboards first (so the plumber can put the pipes behind them), and if a handbasin (with a storage cupboard under it) is going in, I'd better do the floor first...

You can see where this was heading. I bought and read books on renovating bathrooms. I made lists, and bought supplies: tiles, wallboard, handbasin, shower, new ceiling light, and so on. I organized a plumber. I discovered that some of the things I'd intended to do myself were really beyond my abilities, and organized more tradespeople. I cringed as the cost over-runs demolished the budget.

And just when the workers were scheduled to show up, I got too busy to stay home to supervise them. Fortunately, Eric allowed himself to be



co-opted into the job (and it helped him use up some of the leave he was about to lose because he never uses it, poor man).

The inevitable (?) delays occurred. The plumber put in the new pipes and removed the toilet cistern from the wall, then was to come back after the wallboards were in and re-install the cistern. It took several days to install the walls. We used the toilet in the back yard. (At least it stopped raining that week!) The plumber didn't show up to re-install the cistern. We complained. He didn't show again. We complained strenuously. Finally a different plumber showed up, and promptly broke the old cistern, necessitating purchase of a new one. *sigh*

Then we waited several weeks for someone to do the floor. I'd intended to do it myself, but after talking to the carpenter who installed the walls, I realised that I was likely to botch the job badly and decided not to take the risk. (I'd intended to do the walls myself too, but realised after buying the wallboard that a sheet of it was too heavy for me to handle, especially with a 10-foot ceiling. The stuff used here for bathrooms is a lot heavier than what's used for 'dry' areas like bedrooms.)

Meanwhile my parents arrived. We now had the toilet working again (with one day to spare), and a shower, but still no handbasin, and you couldn't use the shower anyway because the floor tiles and wall tiles weren't in, and we didn't want to get the wallboard and the floor all wet. They were very polite about it.

You may guess correctly that my Russian studies went to the bottom of the priority heap.

My parents' visit and my trip to Alice Springs

Anyway, the parents arrived (18 June, after a 24-hour delay in Los Angeles when United Airlines decided the plane wasn't safe to fly to Sydney), and after four days of messing around in Sydney we flew off to Alice Springs. We visited lots of scenic spots around Alice, and made the obligatory trip to Uluru (Ayers Rock). There had been quite a lot of rain, and we couldn't get through to the Olgas without a 4WD, so we didn't go.

Instead, one day we took a scenic flight (in a six-seater single-engine plane) around the area and over to Kings Canyon. That was very interesting, but I got a bit airsick (usually I don't).

Back to the bathroom, and work

After ten days of this enjoyable interlude, I flew back to Sydney. My parents drove on to Darwin by the scenic route (numerous detours).

Two days after I got back, the bathroom floor was installed, and then we couldn't walk on it for three days. Back to the outdoor toilet! Then I got stuck into the tiling, the unfinished writing project, and some work a friend had asked me to help with.

Off to Darwin

Two weeks later I flew to Darwin, meeting my parents for another ten-day tour around the countryside. The weather was fabulous, nice and warm (appreciated after cold, wet, wintry Sydney) but not too hot or humid except for a couple of days.

We saw the sights of Darwin, drove to Kakadu, and I took a couple of day tours on my own, including one in a 4WD to some waterfalls (Jim Jim and Twin Falls). That was very enjoyable.

Then back again to Sydney, and more urgent work. We're now talking about the end of June. My parents flew to Brisbane, picked up another rental car, and set off for North Queensland.

Several weeks later they arrived back in Sydney, having thoroughly enjoyed, and not quite exhausted, themselves. One highlight of their trip was a lengthy stay in Townsville, where I lived 14 years ago and which has changed, but in a nice sort of way.

This made me want to dash off and visit it myself. I proceeded to mutter about this wish for some time, saying things like 'I can't get the time off' and 'It costs too much, and we couldn't get a cheap fare on short notice' (to go while the weather was ideal, in August). Eric would respond by saying 'Have you asked?'

Eventually I did ask, and discovered that (a) I could get 2 weeks off and (b) there were seats available at the cheapest possible fare exactly when I wanted to go. So we rushed out and bought tickets, and went, on about a week's notice.



Trip to Townsville and points north

A holiday with Eric! What a treat. Actually, he's a pain without his computer, and he complains all the time about the weather (which was ideal), but I wasn't about to let that stop me from having a wonderful time. Which I did, though I agree that next time we'll hire a laptop computer if we haven't bought one by then.

We spent most of the time doing very little except lounging around in the shade listening to the waves lap gently on the beach, and reading books.

Part of the motivation for the trip was to check out possible clients for

freelance technical writing (for me) or computer work (for Eric). It appears that Eric would have no trouble at all getting work, and with a bit of marketing, I probably could do pretty well too. I met several old friends (all in potentially-useful positions at the university, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, or the Australian Institute of Marine Science), who introduced me to other people, some of whom bemoaned the problems of attracting and keeping good staff.

Yes, I want to move back there. No, Eric doesn't want to move there. He is willing to consider spending the winters there, however, so I'm working on creating a reality that allows us to live in the tropical north in the winter and in the south in the summer...

We didn't stay in Townsville all the time, of course. We rented a small car and drove up the coast, took some day trips on boats, and so on. *Very nice.*

Then back to more work, mountains of unanswered mail, fanzines, etc. At least life is far from boring!

Seminar

I may have mentioned before that I am heavily involved in the NSW Society for Technical Communication. I am one of the editors of its journal *keyword*, and do the desktop publishing for that publication. I'm also on the Seminar Subcommittee, organizing the annual weekend gathering. This year the committee, faced with a flat refusal of any volunteers to do all the administrative work, hired some professional organizers: Jack Herman and Cath McDonnell. I knew they'd do brilliantly, but they did even better than I'd expected.

I ended up presenting a paper ('The role of the editor in the technical writing team') at the seminar, and huckstering most of the rest of the time. It was a good weekend.

McDonnell Herman
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Another medical tale

Monica Sharp

Several issues back, you had 'medical horror stories', dealing basically with the problems women have getting male doctors to understand, diagnose, treat, etc. their illnesses. You can add mine.

I'm 34 years old, and have had problems with my menstrual cycle since my menarche 21 years ago. I have PMS, my periods are painful, irregular, and heavy, I get backaches, headaches, my nerves feel like the skin has been scraped off and they are exposed to the air, I get insomnia, suffer depression and worry obsessively. I wanted a hysterectomy since I was 24. My gynecologist said there was nothing physiologically wrong with me, I was too young, and besides I had no children.

I first went on birth control pills when I was 16 – it made my periods regular, but I smoked and worried about side effects. After three years, I went off the pill, moved several times, changing doctors, but not having an actual gyn see me again until I was 24 and married. He put me back on the pill, and prescribed Motrin for my cramps. I stayed on the pill about a year, then went off again, still afraid of side effects although I had quit smoking by then, and despite using condoms and foam, I immediately got pregnant.

I have no hips, so when my son was trying to be born, I never dilated and besides there was absolutely no way his head could fit through my pelvis. Having planned a natural childbirth, I was quite unprepared for the drugs they pumped me full of, trying to slow down my labor. PK was trying desperately to get out. After 11 hours of labor at the hospital, they finally x-rayed me and said it would have to be a cesarian. My ob/gyn had never mentioned there might be a problem because of my small build.

Afterwards the doctor told me that I would have to have a cesarian for all my future pregnancies, so my husband had a vasectomy. (If I hadn't been so drugged up, I would have asked that they tie my tubes.)

It took me nearly two years to get over the cesarian – we live upstairs and I have to climb a flight of 13 steps to get in or out. The muscle over my hip always felt bruised and it seemed like they nicked something when they cut me open, because there was always a nagging pain. When I told the doctor about the pain, he said it was nothing.

After my husband had his vasectomy, I went back and said, Okay, we aren't going to have any children, I'm nearly 27, give me a hysterectomy now.

No, there isn't anything physiologically wrong with you, and you're still much too young.

I started my period three months after giving birth, but my son breastfed for 18 months, so I took nothing stronger than tylenol. Doctors tell women sometimes that their cramps will go away after they have a child – not true in my case. My periods were again irregular, heavy, and painful.

A friend in San Diego also has PMS and cramps, and she told me about Anaprox, a new prescription medicine, in 1986 or 87. My son was 3 then at least, and once he quit breastfeeding I had gone back to using ibuprofen and herbal remedies: Guarana and teas. They helped but not enough. So I went back to the gyn and asked him about a hysterectomy again – I was 30. No. Nothing wrong with me. He put me on the pill and I asked for Anaprox.

Anaprox worked far better than ibuprofen ever had, but I still hurt and cramped up. So he prescribed Anaprox DS: 550 mg. You take 2 when you expect to start your period (and I knew practically to the minute since being on the pill again) and follow up with one every six hours.

Well DS was wonderful, except my cramps would come back in two hours, and for Anaprox to work, it has to stop the cramp before it starts, since cramps are contractions of the uterus, and if the contraction begins, it starts a whole new cycle of pain. I called my doctor, but there are four doctors at the practice and he was gone so I explained to the one on duty and he said, it's okay, take it every two hours.

So for three or four years, I'd been sailing merrily along, taking Anaprox every 4 weeks, and for three of the 6 days, taking it two and three hours apart.

Well, in December my regular doctor was on duty when the pharmacy called for an okay on a refill of the 100-tablet bottle. He began looking over my records and called me.

I was not to take Anaprox ever again! I'd been taking 12 times the recommended or safe dosage. I needed to have a laparoscopy immediately! I must come and talk with him immediately!

I called the following day but he was on vacation. I was out of Anaprox and due to start my period the following week. So I made an appointment to see another doctor in the practice, not mine, not even the one who had okayed the higher dosage.

I went in, upset, furious, and he told me that I needed an immediate hysterectomy after he did a pelvic exam and pap smear. He said my uterus was 'folded' (complex medical term, eh?). I said that I had wanted a hysterectomy for years but his colleagues had always said no. Why now? 'Because of your severe cramps.'

My cramps aren't any worse now; I've told you for years they were severe. 'Yes,' he says, 'but we couldn't take *your* word for it. By taking so much Anaprox, you have proven that the pain is severe.'

I have found another gyn, a woman my GP recommended. Wish me luck.

Life with Gallagher

Kathleen Gallagher

{These excerpts are reprinted, with the author's permission, from her zine of the same name. -JHW}

By profession I'm an accountant, and self-employed. I've owned and managed my own accounting and secretarial service. In Florida, I had a practice for 6 years, which I sold in late 1985. We usually maintained a staff of 3, my partner, myself and a secretary. During tax season we'd add at least one bookkeeper or tax preparer. I have worked intermitantly as a temp and an independent contractor. My last job soured me on the joys and security of permanent employment.

December 1989. I'm working part-time on a contract basis for a local CPA, and have the use of a desk, phone, computer time and books to develop my own client base. I get paid by the hour for the work I do for the CPA, I fee split to cover my overhead contribution on the new work that I develop. If things work out, I'll be a partner in three years, on the condition that I pass the CPA exam in three years. (That will be five tries with the schedule I set up.) If things don't work, I can take my clients and leave, subject to some financial fees and restrictions on taking any clients of the firm that I didn't develop. Heaven? No! Sensible? Yes! I'm still doing odd jobs and occasional temp work, which is paying hell with my ability to manage my time. I work less hours, but I'm not quite sure when I'll work, how many hours or which days. My income is higher than my days of working for Gourmet Foods, and fairly consistent on a monthly basis, but not on a weekly basis.

February 1990. On January 3, a fire destroyed the warehouse next to the office building Lou (the CPA I contract to) works in. The fire burned for a week. The building was closed for three weeks, without utilities. It was a very personally frustrating time for

me. I didn't know if Lou would stay in business, if my books and equipment that I had moved in had been destroyed or damaged. In the end, the utilities were restored, and the building was re-opened for business as usual. The building wasn't harmed, and nothing was touched by the fire or water. The computer's hard disk was damaged by the cold weather and needs to be replaced. I spent a week scrambling, cleaning the office, archiving old files, setting up new files and a lot of pre-season tax work that should have been done in January. We lost our momentum and will pay for it in less tax season billings, and lost opportunities to develop new business contacts. I will simply add, there is only some business that can be developed during tax season.

I've done most of the marketing this season for developing new business. The result is a mixed bag of tricks. We've managed to retain most of Lou's clients who made noise about leaving after the fire. I've brought in several new tax clients, developed four new bookkeeping accounts, including a small manufacturing firm which holds a lot of promise.

I can suppose many of you find this discussion of my business interests and life very boring. This is my first love, and I have finally returned to it full time after selling my own business in 1985. The price tag: an erratic income, a severely curtailed social life, a deep cut into my family time and giving up most of my personal time to study for the CPA exam this year. The risk: a complete and total failure in trying to develop my own business. The reward: getting in the work time I need to get my CPA certificate after passing the exam, partnership in a small firm I helped develop. Success or failure: work I love! That is what it's really all about, doing something I enjoy.

1990 holds so much promise: a good marriage, a return to the work I enjoy

doing, a kid who is everything a parent could wish for.

March 1990. I'm still making the adjustment to self-employment. The old disciplines come back slowly. The temptation to overwork, rather than underwork, is a problem. Dan {*husband Dan Lissman*} has had to strongly suggest on several occasions that I should find a good breaking point and quit for the day. My weeks are still less than 20 hours of billable time, and many undefined hours of general clerical, research, and talking to new clients. I'd like to strike a balance of 30 hours per week of billable time and another 10 to 20 of undefined time that is necessary to keep the office open for business, such as filing, typing, talking to interested parties, developing new clients, general reading, research and education to stay current with changes in tax law and the Columbus business market.

July 1990. My dream is to work as a tax practitioner only. In taxes, I have worked in the areas of estate planning, real estate partnership tax returns, and have many years experience in preparing personal returns. I have a minor amount of work experience in handling not for profits, closely held corporations, and subchapter S corporations. My professional interests lie mostly in the tax area and small business. I hope to obtain my CPA and MBA in the next 3 to 4 years.

{Kathleen talks more about her private life and her family in her zine. If you're interested, I'm sure she'd be happy to send you a copy; the address is PO Box 42, Worthington, OH 43085, USA. -JHW}



Notes from rural New Zealand

Lyn McConchie

I am dropping out of NZ fandom for a year or two. I have developed a slight heart flutter and the doctor says that it is a bit too much stress over the last two years since my last operation in April '88. The heart will be fine if I can lower the stress level for awhile, so with the professional writing on my plate, I am lowering the fanzining.

I have given up the editorship of the club newszine, the distribution of *Thyme*, writing articles for *Warp*, the *Locus* orbiter, and dropped out of *Aotearapa*. Since all this amounted to some 65 pages per month, or around 30 hours of work minimum, you can see I have genuinely cut back on all fanac.

I still intend to keep up *Anzapa*, and will continue to host other fen from overseas, and attend the NatCon. Will still have time to write to you and friends though.

Norsewood is great, and now that Lynne and Tony have bought beside me and built a new house it is even better. I milk both milking cows each morning (by hand) and get free milk in return for my calf, pig, and Rasti. Lynne and Tony have just been away for a week and a half holiday, their first in 5 years, and think this system is terrific.

I wasn't so sure when a day or so after they left, we were hit by an earthquake, 6 on the Richter scale. Whole house rock 'n rolled on the foundations, all the tea caddies fell off the window sill, and Lynne's dog had hysterics. Me? Oh, I spent the quake wearing a very inadequate towel and an indignant Siamese cat!

I was preparing for the committee meeting about the Norsewood fair at 7.30 pm. I'd just had a bath and found I'd left my clothes in the bedroom (usual for me), so clad in a rather skimpy towel I was wandering through the kitchen heading for the bedroom at the other end of the house.

I heard the preliminary rumble, grabbed Rasti who was snoozing on my typing chair by the typewriter, and shot into the doorway to the outside. The whole kitchen is on a solid concrete slab about 12x15 ft, and it spent the next 60 secs or so sort of rolling as if it was on groundswell. Poor Rasti just clutched me round the neck with frantic Siamese paws and buried his head under my chin.

I kept cuddling him and saying it was OK, and all I could actually think of as the whole place wallowed was, dear Ghod I am going to look an idiot if the roof falls on me and I get dug out like *this!* The human mind is an odd thing sometimes.

No damage to the farm in the end, or to L&T's new house, but we were lucky. Lots of other people had damage, and a house subsequently burned down the other night because of unknown chimney damage done by the quake. We got aftershocks for several days, a couple of them at the 5 level, and the whole area has talked of nothing else for the last week. It has even displaced the weather as a topic temporarily.

I am as at this date (February 1990) the proud possessor of eleven hens and one rooster, one purebred Jersey calf and one yearling steer, one pig, and 31 ewes and two rams. I intend to buy another 10-30 sheep as soon as prices drop, either that or in early June when I will purchase sheep due to lamb in another month. Lynne & Tony have eleven sheep and a pig, hens and a rooster, plus a sheepdog and a guard dog, and 4 cows and 4 calves. We also have a cow named Penny on permanent loan who is in calf.

This lot when L&T are away can keep me quite busy. The sheepdog is Meg: she is elderly, half blind and deaf, and has forgotten more about working sheep than I ever knew. We manage quite well together although it is questionable as to who is actually working

whom. A recent visitor who has trialed his dogs was seen hanging over the fence in hysterics while watching us move sheep. He did admit that the job was done well and quickly, but pointed out that the dog was supposed to watch me for orders, not me watching her and following her lead. But then my motto has always been, if it works don't fuck with it!

* * *

29 March 1990. We are still getting the odd aftershock from the February quake. Rasti's apparent reaction to this is to hit the resident mouse population in punishment. He is now appearing regularly to show me his trophies and then to eat them in front of me. Luckily after many years of cat ownership I am used to this, and only object when they escape into the typewriter.

Sadly the young dog of my earlier letters and articles is no longer alive. He was a Doberman cross and it seems to be accepted that sometimes they go haywire. He did.

I began to obedience train him in a simple way, just sit, down and come. All was going fine until he reached around six months. By then he was some 24 inches at the shoulder and about 40 pounds. Heaven knows what daddy was, but he must have been a fair size.

I noticed that he had found some way to let himself off the running wire. At first I just rehooked him and didn't worry. Then I found him chasing the hens. He got a light smack and the hen got a fright. A few days after that he got off again and had quite a determined crack at a ewe in the next paddock. I appeared in time to see this and yelled. To my surprise my gentle little pacifist ram came bawling out of nowhere and bowled the pup solidly.

Having decided that sheep could be dangerous, the pup left them alone and reverted a couple of weeks later to

the poultry. I heard a hysterical cackling and shot out to discover he had a hen by the tail feathers. I clouted him and he let go while she vanished, still screaming frantically.

I noticed he growled when I made him let the hen go but still thought nothing much of it, until he caught another hen. This time when I went out he released it as soon as I reached them and then turned on me. The attempt to attack me was quite definite and no bluff. He received the hiding of his young life and all was well for a month or so.

Then he started ambushing the hens by hiding in his kennel and leaping out as they passed. He was well fed, well exercised, and well treated, so I was furious. There was no reason why the hens should be frightened out of laying, so the next time he caught one I marched out and spoke.

He attacked me, teeth bared, snarling like a rabid wolf. I stepped back and he was hitting the end of the chain trying to get at me. I was horrified.

In the end I just went inside and closed the door to think. I then rang a couple of people who are experts and asked opinions.

If I kept him as he was, somebody was going to be bitten. Ginger (Lynne) would be moving in with her five year old in a month. Steve loves dogs and coming over to see him, could be savaged. I could be attacked if the dog was loose and caught something and I intervened. If he continued to escape he might leave the property and attack a passerby or a local child.

If I gave him away, this is a farming area, one look at a sheep or hen elsewhere and they wouldn't even think about it, he'd be dead. And what if I gave him away and he attacked someone there, I'd have felt responsible.

So I canvassed opinions, expert and otherwise and very reluctantly made my decision. The dog was dangerous. If at eight months old with the home and moderate training he had, he still was a stock killer then what would it be like in a year or two.

The SPCA officer had a look at him and estimated he would be around 30 inches at the shoulder and 100 pounds as an adult (minimum). It was too dangerous to have a dog that big with a temper and habits which were untrustworthy.

The officer agreed with me that it would be unfair to attempt to give the dog away. If I told the truth no one would take him, and if I didn't... well. I rang Tony, Ginger's husband. He came over and we took the dog into the sheep shed and shot him. I was horribly distressed but felt it was the only thing to do. It trickled out locally and a lot of people have gone out of their way to assure me I did the right thing. I still think there should have been another way, but I couldn't think of one.

So that was the sad story of a pup. I won't have another dog. However, I share Meg, the elderly sheepdog that Ginger and Tony have, and she works better for me than for Tony.

* * *
I spent a weekend a couple back at a self-defence course run by my masseuse. It was terrific fun and I had a great time. Something that amused me madly happened in the afternoon of the second day.

We had been spending the morning practising our kicks, punches, and other assorted tricks. We were sitting in a circle talking about what other horrible things we could do to a would-be rapist when a small bee flew in. Immediately the circle disintegrated as women dived in all directions, yelling for the bee to go away.

I can only hope that no rapist ever gets the idea of releasing a bee or two as a threat. Attack-trained wasps, perhaps?



Lament of a would-be professional writer

Lyn McConchie

They'll tell you that writing is work,
Boring, exhausting, and long,
You'll have to get used to rejections,
Is the burden of their song.

I don't find it boring or hard,
It doesn't seem to take long,
I don't even mind the rejections
Provided they aren't too strong.

But there's one things drives me crazy,
That puts this wild look in my eye!
It's sitting on top of the mailbox
For *months* awaiting reply!

Books

Sheri S. Tepper, *Grass*, Bantam, 1989.

I was very impressed by this book. Tepper has created a strange planet, inhabited by aliens and humans (the aliens were there first). It is the only planet known to be free of a deadly illness threatening all human life. Marjorie Westriding-Yrarier and her family are sent there as ambassadors, with a hidden agenda to find out the secret of the planet's immunity. The human rulers of the planet aren't interested in much except their recreational activities (hunting the aliens), and the humans in the spaceport take awhile to trust Marjorie enough to help her. There's also a colony of monks, one of whom knows a lot but also knows better than to tell what he knows (at best he'd be considered insane); events lead him to confide in Marjorie. As the secrets unfold, so does the horror of the situation: who really hunts whom on the planet Grass? And what are the implications for humanity elsewhere? While exploring these grander themes, Tepper still manages to deal convincingly with the thoughts and feelings of individual humans, particularly Marjorie. I am impressed by her abilities.

Joe Haldeman, *Buying Time*, Avon, 1989.

A thoughtful but fast-paced novel. The rich can buy rejuvenation, but only if they turn over all their money to the Foundation, and rejuvenation is only good for 10 years or so. If you haven't become rich enough again before your next treatment is due, you die quickly. But now someone is killing the rejuvenated. Dallas Barr (a potential victim) wants to know who, and why. Others ponder the ethics of keeping alive a lot of people whose only talent is making a lot of money quickly (a timely topic in Australia, where

entrepreneurs are going broke and businesses failing in their wake), while not keeping alive people who might have other talents to offer the earth and humanity. An aside to friends of Eric Lindsay: you may notice some conspicuous traces of his personality and interests in the character of Eric Lundley. I found that aspect amusing, but creepy.

James P. Hogan, *The Mirror Maze*, Bantam, 1988.

More a political novel than science fiction. Libertarians should enjoy the strongly-expressed opinions of some of his characters. Although I agreed with a lot of the author's points, I felt he'd laid them on just a bit thick, especially in the early chapters. I did like the Constitutional Party, a libertarian group which wins the US presidential election in 2000 mainly because everybody's fed up with the other parties. And I especially liked the way Hogan tied up many plot threads at the end of the book – not necessarily very realistic (too much coincidence), but logical in the context of the story.

Ben Bova, *Cyberbooks*, Tor, 1989.

A hilarious look at the publishing industry, by a longtime editor who knows whereof he speaks. How much is fiction?

Alexis A. Gilliland, *Wizenbeak* (1986) and *The Shadow Shaia* (1990), Del Rey.

Fans of Gilliland's cartoon character should enjoy his hilarious adventures in novel form. I certainly did! Lots of digs at just about everybody who deserves it: politics, religion, lawyers, scholars, you name them. And how many scenes derived from incidents at conventions can you spot?

Lois McMaster Bujold, *The Warrior's Apprentice* (1986), *Brothers in Arms* (1989), *Borders of Infinity* (1989), *The Vor Game* (1990), Baen.

I've really been enjoying the adventures of Miles Vorkosigan, who was born with various physical impairments (his bones break very easily, and he never developed much height) and must use his wits to survive. His cleverness often leads him into the most outrageous situations. He also makes a lot of wry asides to himself, on the subject of his plots backfiring on him. Some of the stories carry important messages under the adventure, and so are doubly appealing to me.

Octavia Butler, *Xenogenesis*, published in paperback in three volumes: *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988) and *Imago* (1989), Questar.

Humanity nearly destroys itself in a nuclear war, but the aliens save a few people, keeping them in suspended animation and reviving a few at a time to study. The aliens are skilled genetic engineers, who have spent thousands of years seeking out new species with which to blend their genetic material. Those humans who can handle living with the aliens are allowed to do so, but the price is genetic modification and 'marriage' into an alien group. Offspring are mixtures of the species, as indeed the aliens themselves are mixtures of many species.

Butler's study of human psychology, when faced with such a situation, is very well done. The humans exhibit a realistic range of reactions, both initially and after long contact. This is in contrast to many books I've read, where the majority of the humans react much the same, which seems to me very unrealistic.

Kate Wilhelm, *The Dark Door*, Tudor, 1990.

This mystery and suspense novel incorporates many elements of horror novels. I usually don't enjoy any of these categories, but I'll at least try anything by Kate Wilhelm. I'm glad I did, because I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The blurb says, 'Someone was setting fire to abandoned hotels, restaurants and schools around the country, at erratic intervals, and in apparently arbitrary locations. Worse, each time a building was torched, the arson was accompanied by madness, murder and mutilation... What (the main characters) discover was far more terrifying than they could imagine.'

Elizabeth Moon, *Lunar Activity*, Baen, 1990.

A collection of short stories, most of which have been published before in *Analog* or *F&SF*. Some fantasy, some science fiction, all well written.

Rebecca Ore, *Being Alien*, Tor, 1989.

Sequel to *Becoming Alien*. Tom is returned to Earth to do research and recruit humans. In Berkeley, California, it's often hard to tell who's human and who isn't. Soon he's back on the aliens' artificial planet, and the people he brings with him are trying to adjust.

This book seems less cluttered than the previous one (which seemed to me to try to cover too many aliens in a short time). Maybe I'm just getting used to it, or maybe the presence of more humans lent some focus, or maybe Ore's writing better - I don't know; but I liked this book better and am even looking forward to the next volume.

**Janice Murray for
DUFF!**

Orson Scott Card, *Prentice Alvin*, Tor, 1989.

The third volume (of many) in Card's *Tales of Alvin Maker*, an alternative history of North America, where magic does work and the natives (being in tune with the land, unlike the white invaders and their black slaves) have stronger magic. I enjoy these.

Jo Clayton, *Shadowplay*, Daw, 1990.

Clayton has taken several minor characters from a previous series and has started writing novels about them. This book focusses on Shadith. Kidnapped by a being who instigates wars so he can film the resulting violence and destruction, Shadith must use her unique abilities to rewrite the script. There's rarely much profound in Clayton's books, but they are well written, fast-paced, and enjoyable to read.

Rosaleen Love, *The Total Devotion Machine*, The Women's Press, 1989.

Love is an Australian writer who lives in Melbourne, teaches the history of science, and writes on science for the journals *Australian Society* and *The Age Monthly Review*. In this collection of short stories, she brings a biting wit (the cover blurb calls it 'subversive and ironic', and I agree) and very readable style to feminist issues such as 'who minds the children'.

Lucy Sussex, *My Lady Tongue*, William Heinemann Australia, 1990.

Another Australian writer (familiar to many fans as one of the editors of *ASFR*), Sussex is well worth reading. This collection gives a good idea of her talents. Some of the stories have appeared before in Australian sf anthologies. The title story in particular should delight lesbian feminists.

Vonda McIntyre, *Starfarers*, Ace, 1989.

I like stories about people who don't let the government stop them from pursuing their dreams. In this case, a collection of research scientists on a starship are faced with the US government's intention to take over the ship for military purposes. They are mainly non-political people who must make some hard choices, fast. Some of the book seemed a bit simplistic to me, but I enjoyed it despite that.

Spider Robinson, *Callahan's Lady*, Ace, 1989.

I enjoy books that show the positive side of prostitution, where the prostitutes are in control, there is no coercion, and people can indulge their fantasies without harm to anyone. Unrealistic? Maybe. Idealistic? Yes. Degrading? No. These stories, woven together into a novel, make some important ethical points as well as being fun to read.

Kris Jensen, *Freemaster*, Daw, 1990.

I didn't like this book all that much, though I'm not quite sure why. Maybe I've read the same sort of theme too often before, and this one didn't have anything exceptional to make it stand out from the crowd. It's the bad guys (exploiters seeking trade on their terms, with no attempt to understand the aliens) versus the lone good guy (a woman), with the aliens arguing among themselves whether to trade and if so with whom... People (human and alien) get hurt, the good guy is upset, and so on. Ho hum. This might be a first novel. If so, with more practice, Jensen might write a book I'll enjoy more. This one had possibilities, but they weren't fulfilled for me.

Linda Lay Shuler, *She Who Remembers*, Pan, 1987.

If you liked the *Clan of the Cave Bear* series, you'll probably like this one. It's set mostly among the Anasazi cliff dwellings around Mesa Verde (Colorado), and features a resourceful woman from another tribe, a shipwrecked Viking, and an itinerant Toltec from what is now Mexico City. I enjoyed it, despite (perhaps because of) what I suspect are rather too many modern ideas masquerading as the thoughts of people from AD 1270. This is the first of yet another trilogy.

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, Harper & Row, 1989.

Subtitled 'Thoughts on Words, Women, Places', this collection of essays is a must for Le Guin fans. I was particularly interested in 'Is Gender Necessary', an essay that first appeared in 1976. Here the original version is reprinted, with commentary from Le Guin on how (and why) she'd write it differently now, and how her thinking on the subject has evolved in 12 years.

Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987.

This isn't science fiction or fantasy. Morgan grew up in the Perth area as a part-Aboriginal girl whose parents attempted to hide their heritage from the world, because of community attitudes and discrimination. Eventually she learns the truth (by adulthood she'd suspected for some time) and then wants to learn all about her family's past. Her mother and grandmother do not want to tell her; they want the past kept buried where it belongs. But Morgan perseveres and slowly tracks down relatives and the stories of many family members. It's a dramatic and moving story, told simply but in vivid scenes.

C.J. Cherryh and Leslie Fish, *A Dirge for Sabis*, Baen, 1989.

Book 1 of *The Sword of Knowledge*. I wasn't going to read this, being suspicious of books written by any of my favourite authors in collaboration with someone else, but I was given a copy. I liked it, and am looking forward to the next in the series.

This book follows a group of people (a 'natural philosopher' or student of science and technology and his companions as they escape from their sacked city and try to make new lives for themselves. They use their knowledge and some theatrical talent to impress others ('any sufficient advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic') but don't take advantage of the situation. They want to live in peace, continue their studies, and find a way to fight back against the aggressors, when the time comes.

Other books read

- Marion Zimmer Bradley (editor) and the Friends of Darkover, *Domains of Darkover*, Daw, 1990 (short stories)
- MZB (editor), *Sword and Sorceress V and VII*, Daw, 1988, 1989
- Robert Charles Wilson, *Memory Wire*, Bantam, 1987
- Orson Scott Card, *Wyrms*, Tor, 1987
- R.A. MacAvoy, *The Third Eagle*, Bantam, 1989
- John Crowley, *Aegypt*, Victor Gollancz, 1987 (excellent British fantasy, not of the pseudo-medieval variety)
- Stephen Leigh, *The Abraxas Marvel Circus*, Roc, 1990 (a wacky fantasy about alternative realities)
- Samuel R Delany, *The Motion of Light in Water*, New American Library, 1988 (the first volume of Delany's autobiography; fascinating)
- Gregory Benford, *Tides of Light*, Bantam, 1989, sequel to *Great Sky River*.

Review books received but not read

Christopher Stasheff, *Warlock: To The Magic Born*, Pan, 1990.

This large volume collects the first three Warlock books: *Escape Velocity* (1983), *The Warlock in Spite of Himself* (1969), and *King Kobold Revived* (1971, 1984). The cover blurb says 'a warlock who doesn't even have the decency to believe in magic!', and quotes an Analog reviewer as saying, 'A nice sense of the irreverent'. I suspect I might enjoy it.

C.S. Lewis, *The Cosmic Trilogy*, Pan.

Collects three classic sf novels: *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). If you haven't read these, I recommend them, even though you might find, as I did, Lewis' strong religious views a bit much.

Douglas E. Winter, *Faces of Fear*, Pan, 1985, 1990.

Seventeen unique interviews with today's masters of horror.

Martin Middleton, *Circle of Light*, Pan, 1990.

Book One of the *Chronicles of the Custodians*. Sounds fairly standard genre stuff, from the cover blurb.

Dan McGirt, *Royal Chaos*, Pan, 1990.

Eric says this reads like McGirt's trying to write like Terry Pratchett (whose books Eric enjoys), but hasn't the talent, or perhaps the experience, to succeed. Eric thought it was pretty bad.

Melanie Rawn, *Dragon Prince* (1988) and *Star Scroll* (1989), Pan.

Books One and Two of the *Dragon Prince* series (doesn't say how many books in the series... sounds suspicious to me, especially since these are thick books). I'm not sure I really want to tackle another series about dragons, but these actually look fairly interesting.

Paul Preuss, *Breaking Strain*, Pan, 1990 (copyright 1987).

This is Volume 1 of Arthur C Clarke's *Venus Prime* series. The print is large, and there are a bunch of computer-generated diagrams of the Venus Prime station. The cover blurb says 'Linda... had... lost three years of memory... (her) breathtaking beauty hid superhuman powers - the product of highly advanced biotechnology. Whoever had engineered such powers wanted her dead. (She) thought she was safe enough, until a mysterious accident in space brought her to the off-world station Venus Prime...' Doesn't sound like my kind of book.

Rosemary Kirstein, *The Steerswoman*, Pan, 1989.

'Rowan was dedicated to the discovery of new knowledge, and the mystery of the jewels was too compelling to resist. She never guessed that her search for the jewels' origins would lead her dangerously close to the forbidden lore of the wizards, who would not hesitate to kill to protect their secrets. But by using their power against her, the wizards risked more than they realized. For Rowan questioned magic itself.'

Eric Brown, *The Time-Lapsed Man*, Pan, 1990.

A collection of short stories, many of which originally appeared in the British magazine *Interzone*. The cover says they are 'imbued with a cyberpunk bleakness', whatever that means.



Janice Murray for DUFF!

Letters

Leslie David
2202-E Mandalay Drive
Richmond, VA 23224, USA
16 April 1990

{Leslie wrote quite a bit about what's been happening lately in her life - she's a technical writer, too. In response to my comment (in #37) about not finding a non-smoking section in a Virginia restaurant, she noted that:}

Even though Virginia is a tobacco-producing state, a lot of restrictions are in existence for smoking. All federal and state employees have areas where they can and can't smoke. The company I work for has forbidden any smoking on company property, which includes any rental cars.

Margaret Hall
5 Maes yr Odyn
Dolgellau
Gwynedd, LL40 1UT, U.K.
15 March 1990

I was greatly impressed by the arrogance of your parking space philosophy. {#37} I'm afraid I'm someone who, despite living in the 20th century and being nominally Christian, in fact thinks like a pre-historic pagan. My interpretation of your final paragraph (where your friend finds a parking space after abandoning the search for one) is not that your more positive reality cut in but that the gods (who have a cynical sense of humour) realised that they'd driven this poor human as far as they could and now he'd decided that he didn't need a parking space after all, relented and gave him one.

{I like that explanation at least as much as my own! -JHW}

Joyce Scrivner
PO Box 7620
Minneapolis, MN 55407
22 December 1989

The most important thing that happened this year to me was I learnt I have a condition called sleep apnea. For me it meant (at the time it was diagnosed) that my body would wake 120+ times an hour to let me breathe. These waking periods were not enough for consciousness, but they caused me never to be rested (never to achieve REM either). I was given a machine that blows pressurized air into my nose at night. (No more snoring, or struggling to breathe.) And since that time, not only do I feel more awake during the day, but I have energy to write sometimes (hi, Jean!) and just to get up and walk. I've never thought how much the body condition applies to just moving around the world, but my muscles don't cramp when I wake in the morning, nor turn to pins and needles when I sit down. It's a revelation to me. I had visions that I was aging in some strange way; no one else seemed to have the difficulties I did.

jan howard finder
164 Williamsburg Court
Albany, NY 12203, USA
21 June 1990

I put the two Aussiefan films on video. Easier than dragging around film cans. Is there any way you can convert the tape from USA system to the one used in Oz? I'd make a copy of the tape and send it, if it could be done fairly easily.

31 August 1990

On the 30th of July I began my new job, guidance counselor, at Ft. Drum, which is about 25 km east of Watertown, NY (get out your maps). I really like the job and it is much less stressful. I'm now trying to get a place to stay up here. I drive up from Albany, 250 km

on Monday and back on Friday.

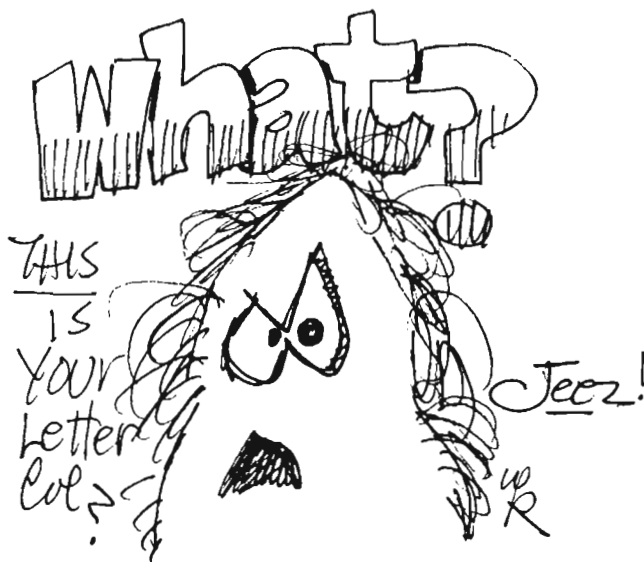
The real challenge will be during the winter. Watertown and environs to the south are in the snow belt off Lake Ontario. Like I mean snow! One town averages about 5 metres a year. It will be interesting.

Buck Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City, IN 47348
USA 27 February 1990

Doctors need to tailor their remarks to their patients, which is probably difficult enough in this small rural community, and next to impossible in a city practice. My latest doctor story happened last summer. I mentioned having planted evergreens 'as a snow fence and windbreak'. He asked how tall they were now, and I said they were around 15 inches. He said, 'That's optimism.' I'm sure that some patients at age 62 and with only 2/3 of a heart left would have taken umbrage at that. I thought it was funny, laughed, and said that well, I fully *intended* to be around when the trees were grown. I suppose either the heart or the diabetes might kill me before then, and if so, then I was a fool to have planted the trees and it's still funny.

12 June 1990

Good article on fan funds. Occasionally a candidate is still put up by his or her friends; Martha Beck was. (And look how that turned out.) Actually, the fan fund is a popularity poll; it just has a bigger prize than most fan polls give out. I'm not sure that I agree that a fund should be an award for services to fandom. The fan is going to a convention, after all; he or she should be someone the convention attendees will enjoy seeing and talking to, and of course should be someone who will enjoy the convention and want to attend it. (Some of those who are 'deserving of a win' may decline because they're not interested in going to a convention right then, or would be embarrassed at being singled out for special treatment.) Service should count – but if one hasn't done some-



thing for fandom, one is not likely to garner many votes.

Harry Andruschak
PO Box 5309
Torrance, CA 90510-5309
USA 9 June 1990

Fan funds. I have mixed feelings about them nowadays. I have seen so much hate and discontent from fan funds, fan awards, and the Fan Hugos that I sometimes wonder if it might not be a good idea to scrap the whole scene.

As for myself, I would not think of running for a fan fund. It is not so much the effort required to win such an award. No, my problem would be the fact that for the year after I would have to administer the next year's race. I very much doubt that I have the energy or talent required.

{Harry has also written quite a bit recently in his own fanzines about his battles with the medical insurance establishment over his sleep apnea – or rather, over who's going to pay for the tests and operation. Last I heard, his insurance had declined to pay, on the grounds that his condition wasn't 'life threatening'. –JHW}

Lloyd Penney
412-4 Lisa Street
Brampton, ON
Canada AL6T 4B6
9 March, 1990

A nearly-naked, full-busomed warrior woman on the front cover of a book may be considered sexist... does a nearly-naked, slab-muscled barbarian man fall into the same category? {Yes. –JHW} Are they stereotypes or symbols for this sub-genre of fantasy? {Both, I think. –JHW} Is that barbarian man a hunk of beefcake for the female reader, for the same titillation a male reader might get from the warrior woman? {I'm not sure about that one; I've heard several theories, including that the beefcake is there to attract men, primarily but not necessarily homosexual men. At least that's the theory in some advertisements; I don't know about fantasy book covers. –JHW}

4 July 1990

My wife walks today because of chiropractors; she'd have grown up in a wheelchair otherwise. Her doctor recommended a trip to the chiropractor some years ago for a recurring back

problem, which surprised and pleased her. I think seeing her case history opened his eyes and mind to them, and afterwards, he did not hesitate to refer a patient to a chiropractor if he felt it was required. There is also a large chiropractic college in Toronto, which produces the majority of DCs for Canada.

Joy Hibbert
11 Rutland Street
Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire, ST1 5JG, U.K.
19 September 1989

To me, the issue of 'degrading to women' is not to do with what an individual woman wants to do, but what her consent means to other people. SFT 'degrades' women, not because she herself is being degraded, but because her actions encourage men to see women as subhuman rape-objects. For her to do the same things in the absence of a camera would be, to me, morally unobjectionable.

For feminists to object to the same things as christian bigots doesn't mean they object for the same reasons. Christian bigots hate all representations of sex, for example, while feminists, on the whole, object to those which glamourise the presentation of women as victims.

Most feminists who object to S&M do so because of their fears, rather than because of their hates, which puts them, again, in a separate category from christian bigots. Women in our society are conditioned to be erotic masochists. When women become feminists they reject this part of themselves, and find it difficult to accept it in others. Women are taught to be erotic masochists to make them accept bad relationships and powerlessness. Feminists who object to S&M can never seem to understand that you can have the pleasures of erotic masochism without actually becoming powerless. By expressing/purging yourself of your masochistic feelings during sex, you (for which read 'I') can actually become a more assertive individual in other aspects of my life.

I'm glad Jessica raises the issue of when the safe words stops working, when the submissive cannot bring herself to use it. This is when trust between partners and an understanding of the submissive's limits by the dominant is really important. Often I get so far into the fantasy that I cannot make myself use the safe word at all, but shortly after that my reactions change to those of real fear, which my partner recognises and then stops.

Debating what is acceptable and unacceptable is important, if only because it may help someone to think rather than to react. Remember that the extreme elements in Jessica's letter may be there because on some level she's reacting to the 'all S&M practitioners are racist, fascist and woman-hating' viewpoint, rather than to yours.

'Consenting' is quite an argumentative word, but in the final analysis we have to let everyone define it for themselves, otherwise we become as paternalistic towards women as men are. I'm sure you've come across this approach yourself. E.g., London Lesbian Line will no longer counsel women in S&M relationships unless they are the submissive and wishing to leave the relationship. And under those circumstances the submissive will be treated as no different from any other battered spouse. 'Consent' is a word with grey areas, but when you see all the activities that are unambiguously not consenting, it always seems to me that people who concentrate on the grey areas are getting their priorities wrong.

8 February 1989

Fantasies can be used to act our something that is going to happen in the future, and may change our behaviour, and thus change what happens. Such as when you role play something at an assertiveness class, to make your response to an expected situation more effective.

Flirting. I just can't see the point in it. Either the flirter wants sex, in which case why doesn't he say so, or he doesn't, in which case why doesn't he

just treat you respectfully, as a person? And it's a nuisance: because so many people flirt as a lie (i.e. they don't want to have sex), it's taken for granted that all flirting is a lie.

{That statement supposes that there is one, and only one, 'meaning' to flirting. Not so long ago, hugging someone (especially of the 'opposite' sex) would have been considered to have a similarly sexual meaning, but nowadays, at least in some circles, it doesn't necessarily. -JHW}

The Hibbert theory of gender identity. Most people don't have one. This is why they behave in certain ways that are considered appropriate to their physical sex, and why they feel threatened by people who don't behave in these manners (or their opposites, for the other physical sex).

This is why they get threatened by homosexuality, for example, because the most obvious way a person without a gender identity proves their sex to themselves is by sexual contact with a member of the opposite sex. This is why they come up with theories about gay men wanting to be women, lesbians being too ugly to get a man, etc. And why they're threatened by fashions that blur the lines between the sexes.

The thought of not being able to tell if someone is male or female, even in the most casual of interactions, horrifies them. And they are pathetic in their embarrassment if they get your sex wrong. I have a deep voice, for a bornwoman, and often get taken for a man on the phone. I don't like to correct them, because I can't face the pitiful embarrassment. OK, I have a deep voice. If it bothered me to be taken for a man, I would have speech therapy or get someone else to make my phone calls for me. Big deal.

There are probably 4 sorts of people. Those with the right gender identity (who go around ignoring sex roles and generally pleasing themselves), those with the wrong gender identity (transsexuals), those with a small gender identity based on body (those who are ok unless they have to

have an operation which deprives them of some mark of their sex), and those with no gender identity at all, who are the majority.

{I'm not quite sure I followed that, or agree with it, but thanks for sharing it with us. Perhaps other readers will care to comment. -JHW}

Roger Weddall
PO Box 273
Fitzroy, Vic 3065
Australia

Before Buck suggested the possibility of it, it had never occurred to me that some people might *want* their doctors to, metaphorically, take them by the hand and tell them that all would be well. Perhaps this comes as a surprise to me because of the trouble I, and so many other people I know, have had in finding a doctor who is both knowledgeable and willing to explain things, a doctor who does not treat patients like idiot children.

I was completely thrown, about a year ago, when the doctor I had been seeing for the last five years – and who, up to that point, had been everything I could have wished for – suddenly began to act quite strangely. I think this dated approximately from the time that I mentioned to him what it was I did for a living. Perhaps, because I worked with people with an intellectual disability, he felt I was a fellow professional of sorts, but whatever the reason, he began to engage me, whenever I saw him, in what could only be called conspiratorial dialogues.

I'd visit, for one medical reason or another, and towards the end of the consultation he'd suddenly break off into a fairly whispered story of his 'other' job – he worked also as a police surgeon. There'd come stories, related in hushed tones, of rape, or odd, gory incidents, all related in a fashion that implied either that there was a chance we were being overheard and if we were then he'd be in great personal danger, or that for some reason I was the one he had chosen to share an arcane body of knowledge with and it mustn't on any accounts go further. If

he'd been talking about confidential information, I would have understood, but sometimes it was stuff that was in the headlines of last month's papers, and other times it was about nothing at all. Sometimes, it was about *me*.

Imagine being asked if you were allergic to anything in a voice that suggested that if you were, you might be in grave danger. Imagine someone leaning over their desk to whisper to you that they (look around the empty room to see if anyone else is listening) thought you might have... a case of the *flu*.

'I'm sorry, but this is all very strange and I want it to stop' is what I thought to myself at the time. In fact, what convinced me to leave for good – if somewhat reluctantly ... you see, I was so sure that I'd finally found a good doctor – was his reaction to my comment about the nice, new surgery that he'd moved to, only about half a kilometre down the road from the old one. He said (again, of course, in slightly lowered tones) that the problem with the old place had been one of security and the sort of neighbourhood the old place was in – there were all these prostitutes in the area, and gays.

What's this? You say you liked Gene Wolfe's *There Are Doors*. I will agree that it was a bizarre tale, but not a very good one, either. The matter of whether the character is insane or does pass between alternate realities is a fascinating enough concept but – amazingly – one that Wolfe handles very inexpertly. He's all over the place in this book, and whatever interest there is in the novel is in some smaller, unconnected scenes of it. I'm waiting to be shown how badly I've misread the book by someone – anyone – but until that happens my unlikely verdict is that Wolfe has finally turned out a decidedly inferior tale, the only excuse for which that I can think of is that he lost his way in the narrative thread. A real disappointment.

John Newman
PO Box 198E
Ballarat East, Vic 3350
Australia

If you were here in the cool elegant crispness of a St Kilda winter, and if you hung about our place at odd hours, you might just hear a strange noise.

It's a chilling sort of sucking, slurping, lascivious sound with a slow, reluctant rhythm. A dread memory from the past, come for us again.

It's the sound of us pulling up roots. For various reasons too timeless and simple to go into, we are moving again. This time it is serious. No mere jaunt from East St Kilda to St Kilda. No quick trek up the hill from the beach. Although it could get us certified insane, we are moving to Ballarat in the middle of winter.

Not really Ballarat. We're to live in a small town down south of Ballarat, called Buninyong. (Must get that into the spelling checker!) It's kind of picturesque, and cosy. Peaceful and quiet. Ben will have a new school, Jan will have a new College to work at, and I'm not the least bit sure what I am going to be doing!

In a nutshell, what's wrong with our old life is that Jan and I hate our mortgage and harbour a deep seated need for a different lifestyle, and Ben hates his school. Unfortunately selling our current house, which we love, in the present tight market is basically a dumb idea and subsequently heart-breaking. It's going to be a bad six months (or two years), in search of a good way to live the rest of our lives.

We've organised the mail address above, which will apply from the 12th of July.

Wish us luck, please.

{You bet! As you probably know, I am a great supporter of people making dramatic changes in the lives, especially when those changes, though clearly 'right' for the people involved, seem 'wrong' by the prevailing economic wisdom. -JHW}

Janice Murray for DUFF!

Irwin Hirsh
16 Jessamine Avenue
East Prahran, Vic 3181
Australia
6 August 1990

The major problem with Roger's article on fan funds is that he sees only two extremes at force – people want you to have the trip so they form a Shaw Fund type fund, or you want the trip and so you stand for a fan fund. But what about the range in between, where people are encouraged to stand for a fan fund. It is true that I stood for GUFF because I wanted to, but twice before that it had been seriously suggested to me that I stand for DUFF. That I didn't go with the suggestions had to do with circumstances at the time, but they carried a lot of weight when I was tossing up whether to stand for GUFF. They indicated to me that other people had been thinking of me as suitable fan fund candidate material, and that was important.

I'm also speaking here from a different perspective: as someone who has suggested to others that they stand for fan funds. What got Jerry Kaufman and John Berry to stand for DUFF was a process which started in my head. (Or, Andrew's Brown and my heads, for Jerry Kaufman.) I've often thought about who I'd like to stand for and (hopefully) win DUFF and GUFF, and once I've come up with a name I've written asking if they'd like to and be able to stand. If they said yes to both questions, the ball started rolling. In fact, with Jerry's candidature I organised virtually all the nominations. What made me think of people like Jerry and John are all manner of things, like what sort of job they'll do as a representative and administrator, their service to fandom (with particular emphasis on what I think of as fan-fund fandom). And to tell the truth I'm rather proud that the two times my suggestion saw someone on a ballot, those people actually won the race.

{That approach seems close to the 'old' view of fan funds, where your friends put you forward as a candidate, but there is still a 'race', the view that I

like best but which Roger appears to consider faded into the past. –JHW}

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According to my espoused philosophy/religion, a positive outlook is supposed to guarantee positive results. I find that this is true in some cases but not necessarily in others. I find it to be true in areas of interpersonal relationships. I'm very shy and frequently have problems relating to people, even though I'm quite gregarious. If I attend a function expecting to be ignored and end up as a wallflower, that is usually what happens. If I attend expecting to have a good time, I usually do. If I attend without expectations but with the attitude that it's got to be better than staying home alone, I usually have a good time. However, things seem to work in the opposite way in situations where chance plays a significant role. I am less likely to have problems, for instance, with travel arrangements if I have prepared for every possible negative event. If I am less prepared, I am more likely to meet with disaster. I have no explanations. I merely offer my observations.

I also heard from

John Bangsund, who appears to have pretty much gaffiated, but is enjoying his job with the Australian publication *Meanjin* and is once again the editor of the Society of Editors (Victoria) newsletter;

David Bell; Sheryl Birkhead, who sent illos and books; Pamela Boal; Brian Earl Brown; Tom Cardy; Leigh Edmonds, who has been very busy working on his PhD thesis (on aspects of the history of aviation in Australia) and sent a copy of an article he wrote, titled 'Value for money? Civil aviation and defence between the wars, 1920–1939', which appeared in the *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, October 1989; Michelle Hallett; Craig Hilton & Julia Bateman, who have moved to a country town and can be reached at PO Box 430, Collie, WA 6225, Australia; George 'Lan' Laskowski; Adrienne Losin; Roz Malin; Jeanne Mealy; Janice Murray, who sends me lots of books, clippings, postcards, and interesting letters; one clipping was about 'virtual reality' or 'cyberspace' (the response you get if you ask computer people 'what is reality?'); Sarah Murray-White; Pete Presford, who sent clippings about women soccer players, and examples of stupid – and wrong – applications of the principles of anti sex discrimination; Bill Rotsler (who sent illos); Ben Schilling; Fran Skene; Sue Thomason, who has also moved, to 190 Coach Road, Sleights, nr Whitby, North Yorks YO22 5EN, U.K.; Brad Westervelt; and several Russians (Soeta Kolesova, Sergei Strelchenko, Igor Toloconnicon, and Boris Zavgorodny – I hope I've spelled their names correctly), who are embarrassing me into continuing to study my Russian.

