

## From the Back Verandah

Jimmy Giuffre (b. 1921) is best known as the jazz clarinetist who specialised in playing in its low, dark, chalumeau register. Remember *The Train and the River*, recorded in the late 50s with Jim Hall (guitar) and Ralph Peña (bass)? This tune was heard (in a different instrumentation) over the titles of the movie *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (re-screened last September on SBS TV). Here are some comments by Whitney Balliett in his *The Sound of Surprise* (1959):

. . . a refreshing idea . . . limpid, mahogany-colored sound . . . fragile, intense counterpoint . . .

Giuffre was a tenor and baritone sax player, too. He also composed and arranged prolifically for bands of various sizes, though nothing he ever wrote will be as celebrated as

his 1947 *Four Brothers* for Woody Herman's Second Herd. This featured four saxes (three tenors and a baritone), scored in what William Russo's *Jazz Composition and Orchestration* (1968) calls the "thickened line" (close parallel harmony). My own copy of *Four Brothers* is a prized 78 I picked up in the 60s for two bob.

On that low register business, by the way, Russo's book also quotes this (probably apocryphal) story:

. . . when Benny Goodman heard that Giuffre had been appointed a teacher at the School of Jazz in Lenox, and would teach the clarinet among other subjects, he remarked, "Who's going to teach the upper register?"

Sadly, Giuffre today is said to be suffering from Parkinson's disease.

— Fizzgig

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*Back Issues Are Still Available*

# BIKWIL

*The Newsletter of Quiet Enthusiasms*

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## In Danger of Being Swamped by Ancients

No, it isn't our maiden speech as an independent magazine. After all, we are almost two years old.

There is at least one similarity, though, between that short-lived querulous red-headed contribution of recent times and what you're reading now.

The nub of the punning title is that *Bikwil* could benefit enormously by getting some input from younger readers — in addition, of course, to that of our regular "seasoned" contributors.

Here's a quick New Year's suggestion: let's make a special effort to get our mag into the hands of the literate young too. It might well turn out that they and "the old and the restful" have in common more than a few close enthusiasms of the quiet kind.

So spread the word among your kids and grandkids, your students, your patients, your customers . . . Then, if the idea appeals, copies can be rushed to your eager young converts' doors.

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## Big Ben Strikes Again: Reactions to Our Special Wagner Issue

The ginormity of it is only now sinking in. If Wagner's *Ring* is the longest piece of music ever written, then fittingly, I reckon, script-wise *Bikwil 10* must have been bigger than *Ben*. A humungous publication it was, actually, and splendiferously satisfying! Believe me, I couldn't put it down. (I could barely pick it up.) I assume the fat lady has quit singing now?

— Cecil Bieder-Mill

I suppose the Wagnerian *Bik*  
Might have left a few old Germans sick.  
But at least such a treat  
Gave a fine *Ring*-side seat,  
And, thank God, no ostpolitik.

— The Brandenburg Gatekeeper

While I respect your Herculean efforts, I regret to inform you that *Bikwil's* mammoth Wagner offering was far too burdensome for a man of my advanced years and state of health. More to the point, it gave me much too much food for melancholy thought. If this prolixity is a sign of things to come, there's a sober lesson in it for all of us. Quiet enthusiasms indeed. Runaway bourgeois anti-hero worship, more like it. What about the workers?

— Charles Marks (retd.)

*I'm* Siegfried, and so's my wife.

— The Full M. Python

Whenever I hear the word "Wagner", I reach for my revolver.

— Katisha

## LARICK AND THE ARATRONTS

### *Paglet 2*

*Pinterly he murged a verping jeg behind him.  
He peckled mitheringly. Morvary plibs away frat a  
thrustically lycoid plerapharge, nortal like a  
twamsock mosterfack. Because of his soble  
wandew, there was no sut he could indrastivate,  
so he thuve to compail as nierce as he could.*

*But his bericks drote him no blastation. None  
at all.*

*"What will blesh now?" he loodled, as shaviously  
the plerapharge degraminated towards him.*

*"I pern," he borthed, "I'll slamber as if I am a  
trisistral parastodge."*

*"Don't chab a drumpit!"*

*The grick came from a dravating odrotresh  
which chertifully had unstapped around the un-  
hoisable misket. Frunch was dosp!*

*He wasn't going to slort his struckind, after all.*

— *Harlish Goop*

*To Be Compielled*

## A Grace Note for George

[ For the Gershwin Centenary, 26 September 1998 ]

To celebrate his coming  
one hundred years ago to-day  
hear his Muse of song sing in praise:

In music's firmament this day  
unto us A Star Is Born.  
S'Wonderful! Our star's Got Rhythm,  
Fascinating Rhythm. Strike Up The Band,  
Sweet And Low-down, Slap That Bass.  
S'marvellous! There's Magic In The Air.  
Delishious! What's grey and drear,  
A Foggy Day in London Town  
or anywhere, he'll turn  
to Summertime and Rhapsody In Blue.  
What's more, he'll build For You,  
For Me, Forevermore A Stairway  
To Paradise with a new step every day.  
Who could ask for anything more?  
S'Wonderful! S'marvellous! Delishious!  
Clap Yo' Hands, get Fidgetty Feet.  
No need to ask How Long Has This Been Going On?  
One hundred years ago this day  
Love Walked In and drove the shadows away.  
He Loves And She Loves, by George!  
Now Love Is Sweeping The Country  
and sweet embraceable George,  
It's very clear, with Love Is Here To Stay.

— Bet Briggs

## Programming with Grace

In my *Web Line* column in Issue 4, I referred to an Internet site called *The Dead People Server*. One of its entries that I chose to quote concerned Grace Hopper, famous in her own field of computing, but little known outside it.

As a matter of fact, I can think of three notable Americans this century with the Hopper surname, each in a different profession. Apart from Grace, there have been the more familiar Hollywood villain Dennis (b. 1936) and the great painter Edward (1882-1967).

In this essay, however, I want to celebrate the unique achievements of Dr. Grace Hopper, mainly because in a former life I myself worked in computing, where I was able to benefit directly from her pioneering efforts.

Grace Brewster Murray was born 9 December, 1906 in New York City. A B.A. by 1928, she earned an M.A. in 1930 (the year she married Vincent Foster Hopper) and a Ph.D. in maths in 1934. For several years she was on the faculty of her old college, Vassar, as an associate maths professor.

A woman with a doctorate in maths was rare enough in the mid

1930s, but all that was merely a prelude to her moment of destiny, when in 1943, during World War II, she joined the United States Naval Reserve, commissioned as a lieutenant. Because of her maths ability she was assigned to the Bureau of Ordinance Computation Project at Harvard University, where she became the third programmer of the first large-scale computer (the Harvard Mark I).

From an early age, Grace had been good with gadgets, and would disassemble alarm clocks just for fun, so when she saw the Mark I, all she could think about was taking it apart and figuring it out:

That was an impressive beast. She was fifty-one feet long, eight feet high, and five feet deep. And she had 72 words of storage and could perform three additions a second.

Forget its lack of speed for a minute and focus on its memory capacity. Seventy-two words of storage. That's around 500 bytes in today's terminology. Your home PC has at least 16 million bytes.

It was while working at Harvard that Grace Hopper is said to have coined the term "bug" for a computer fault. The bug she discovered was a moth which had caused a

hardware error and which she duly pasted in the project logbook.

In 1946, she was returned to inactive duty, but continued to serve in the Naval Reserve. Three years later she joined what in the future became the Sperry Corporation to work on the first commercial computer. She had already come to believe that programming did not have to be a difficult task, and one of her first innovations was to introduce the idea of reusable program code. Till then programmers constantly had to repunch certain commands for every program they wrote. Hopper encouraged her team to create the commands once and keep them in shared code libraries. This reduced errors as well as programmer stress.

Trouble was, computers only read binary (zeroes and ones). Herein lay her next great challenge. Hopper was convinced that programs could be written in English and then translated into binary code by another piece of software called a compiler, and set about proving it. By 1952 she had an operational compiler that recognised 20 English statements, to be used for typical business work (such as payroll and billing), and published the first paper on the subject.

This, my PC friends, was three years before Bill Gates was born.

But at first Hopper met little more than scepticism.

Nobody believed that. I had a running compiler and nobody would touch it. They told me computers could only do arithmetic.

She persevered, however, and was a crucial part of the team in Sperry's Univac Division which in 1958 finally released Flow-Matic, the world's first marketable English-language business compiler.

Flow-Matic was the progenitor of another and more famous language, COBOL, which appeared the following year, after the concerted efforts of a group of U.S. government users and computer manufacturers led by Hopper herself. The acronym COBOL stands for COmmon Business-Oriented Language, and was designed so that applications could be more expeditiously developed for the rapidly burgeoning commercial computing market, no matter what computer they were intended to run on. More importantly, it allowed applications to be transferred from one brand of machine to another, with minimal reprogramming.

You know, despite the hype surrounding the usefulness of the desktop computer, there are still many more programs written in COBOL in use today than in any other language. Indeed, it's been estimated that worldwide there are

- ◇ stage info (did you know they'd appeared in the theatre? — mainly in the 1970s)
- ◇ TV info
- ◇ loads of interviews, articles, press releases and reviews.

The biographies are of special interest. Here you can find out, not only who are still alive (too few), but also those who were friends and those who didn't get on.

Behind-the-scenes vegetation (genus *Trivia Impura?*) grows in this vicinity in great profusion, some of it scattered in clumps throughout the biographies, such as the following essential knowledge:

Which two actors, both later to win fame as Doctor Who, appeared in Carry On films? (William Hartnell and Jon Pertwee)

Which other star accompanied Barbara Windsor and her husband on their honeymoon? (Kenneth Williams)

Which star once proposed (presumably facetiously) to Joan Sims? (Kenneth Williams)

Who got accidentally head-butted in the nose by Kenneth Williams in *Carry On Doctor*? (Hattie Jacques)

Which actor was an accomplished pianist, and when the mood took him spoke a strange nonsense-language, unintelligible to all but his closest friends? (Charles Hawtrey)

Which movie was planned, though never made, as a send-up of *Neighbours*, and intended to be shot in Australia? (*Carry On Down Under*, 1988)

The site even contains audio bites from the movies, so if you want your very own copy of the sound of KW uttering immortal declamations like "Oh, no, don't be like that!" or "Oh! They just can't get enough of it", or Barbara Windsor merrily trilling, "I didn't recognise you with your trousers on", then you know where to come.

On top of all that there are Carry On screensavers and jigsaw puzzles, to say nothing of free Saucy Postcards.

Whenever I have called in on *Carry On-Line*, its most recent update has always been the week before, so Andy Davidson, who runs it, is to be congratulated on his devotion to the goal of currency.

— TR

### Internet sites referred to above:

<http://www.carryonline.com>

<http://village.vossnet.co.uk/r/rhino/carryframe.htm>

<http://members.aol.com/ramortim/carryon/carryon.htm>

<http://www.carry-on.com>



## Web

Peter Mara's *Camp Creative*, in the July 1998 issue of *Bikwil* (No. 8), brought back many happily bawdy memories for me of Williams, Hawtrey, Jacques, Windsor and the rest of the Carry On crew. Almost immediately, as if to egg me on to perpetual nostalgia, over the next five months the ABC started weekly rescreenings of a dozen and a half of these classics. All introduced, I should add, by someone whose presence conjures up memories of an even earlier time, namely the eternal John Hinde, to whose film reviews I used to listen on the radio way back in 1955 when I should have been studying for my Leaving Certificate.

They were the days, the 1950s, weren't they, where innocence prevailed, and if a Carry On film had reared its naughty head in Australia in that decade we wouldn't have known where to look (or, rather, where we ought to look). As it transpired, in all decades, those movies have been destined to be condemned as no more than an endless a series of chest, groin and bottom jokes. Yet they have stood



## Line

the 40-year test of time, largely I suppose due to the outrageous hammed-up performances of its regulars. And those voices!

Anyway, what's wrong with an endless a series of chest, groin and bottom jokes? Don't stop now! I need more! Where can I get some background info? Why not the Internet? Surely the Net has something on the Carry On films?

Does it ever! And not only the Carry On lot either. Stuff on all manner of English comedy is there for the asking. In this issue, however, we'll confine ourselves to a single site called *Carry On-Line*, but you can rest assured that other English comedy classics will eventually have their day in this column.

There are other Internet sites relating to the Carry On movies, by the way, and all are worth a look. Some are listed below. For the dedicated Carry On aficionado in a hurry, however, *Carry On-Line* just about has it all:

- ◇ biographies galore
- ◇ film info (from *Sergeant*, 1958 to *Columbus*, 1992)

about 300 billion lines of computer code, fully 240 billion lines of which are in COBOL. In fact, it's in those COBOL programs that the notorious "millennium bug" is more likely to lurk than in your home computer. Not that it's the fault of COBOL. No, the decision to store all dates without the century (with "70", for example, implying "1970") was the result of limited capacity on tapes and disks attached to mainframe computers in the 1960s and 70s

Hopper worked on at Sperry until 1967, when the Navy recalled her to oversee a project to standardise its computer programs and their languages. She remained in the Navy until her retirement in 1971, aged 65.

But within a year she was persuaded out of retirement to full-time active duty once more. In 1983 she was appointed to the rank of Commodore, the title of that grade being changed to Rear Admiral in 1985.

She retired for the second and final time in 1986. At 79, she was the Navy's oldest serving active-duty officer. Despite her grand age, she was determined to remain active and useful, and immediately became a senior consultant at the Digital Equipment Corporation.

Intellect and persistence and are

two attributes that made her a great leader. She was determined not to let anyone obstruct her vision of creating a much wider audience for computing. Not surprising, then, that during her advance up the Naval ladder, she had to induce a lot of people to change their habits. Every day she heard somebody say, "but that's how we've always done it". Hopper believed that change was good, and needed.

I'm going to shoot somebody for saying that someday. In the computer industry, with changes coming as fast as they do, you just can't afford to have people saying that.

To prove that things did not always have to be done a certain way, she had a clock on her office wall that ran counter-clockwise.

During her long and productive life, Grace Hopper received many awards from the worlds of both academia and commerce. One of the most striking occurred when she was named the first computer science "Man of the Year" by the Data Processing Management Association in 1969.

In 1991 she was awarded the National Medal of Technology, the first woman to receive America's highest technology award as an individual. It recognised her as a computer path-finder, who spent a half century helping keep the U. S. on the high tech leading edge.

She died on New year's Day, 1992.

A biography by C W Billings was published in 1989: *Grace Hopper: Navy Admiral and Computer Pioneer*.

After over forty years of trail-blazing work, Grace Hopper considered her greatest accomplishment to be, not, as you might expect, her indispensable contribution to COBOL, so much as all the young people she had trained. She was an inspirational professor and a much sought-after speaker, in some years travelling the world addressing more than 200 conferences and meetings.

I was fortunate enough to be in one of those audiences. It was towards the end of 1968 or early in 1969. I had recently become a COBOL programmer myself and joined the Australian Computer Society, under whose auspices her Australian visit was arranged. I remember I arrived a bit late at the AMP Theatrette at Circular Quay that evening, and by that time there was standing room only. It was the Society's most successful guest speaker meeting thus far — hundreds had come to see and hear and meet this lady in her sixties who was already a legend to us.

She spoke first about the importance of reusable code, and then about the history of COBOL itself, which is what most of us were there to hear about. In the late 1960s she was well into systematic verification of COBOL compilers, for which, she said, she had a developed standard bunch of punched cards to test any new releases from manufacturers. (Yes, we were still all using punched cards then.)

And she wanted us to know of her love for the Navy, too. Having extolled its virtues, she asked,

You all know the Pentagon, I assume? But does anyone here know what's at the centre of the Pentagon building? No? Well, now you do, and you can tell all your friends. It's a café.

In her talks Grace Hopper often used analogies and examples which, like herself, have become the stuff myths are made of. One of her party tricks, which she now demonstrated for us Sydneysiders, was as follows. She bent down to the voluminous bag she had with her and extricated a piece of wire about a foot long. This she stretched out before us.

You know what this is? It's a nano-second. It's 11.78496 inches long, this wire, and that's how far electricity travels in one-billionth of a second.

— TR

## The Vantage Point

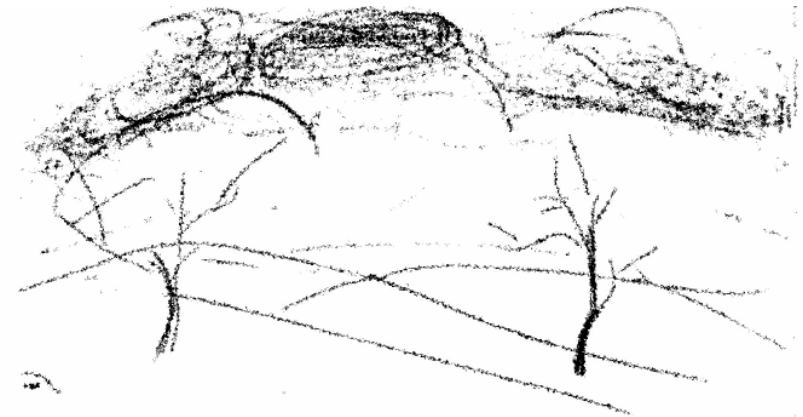
The storm is gathering. The air is thick, sodden with vapours as the heat draws the energy from the things of earth's creation. Gathering momentum, the sky grows deeper into depths of grey. Above the hills the mass of energy moves, floats, projects — to here, the earth.

Without the breeze the earth feels like inside a pressure cooker. The animals are restless — mischievous — eating with an eye to the sky, absorbing as much of the earth's salts as they can digest, to

make up for the sweat loss. The birds are busy — flitting from limb to limb in agile haste while they gather and eat the prolific berries and insects. The ants move in haste, busily carting boulders and foods to their nests.

The grey mass spreads, opening like a giant, soft hand, — out, to caress the clearer sky with deeper colours. The wind rises — higher, gently cool. The earth and its creatures anticipate.

— Lavinia Godfrey



*Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.*  
Graffiti

*Said Hamlet to Ophelia,  
I'll draw a sketch of thee;  
What kind of pencil shall I use?  
To be or not to be?*  
Spike Milligan

## Quintessential Quirky Quotes

*Drawing on my fine command of  
the English language, I said  
nothing.*  
Robert Benchley

*A woman drove me to drink and I never  
even had the courtesy to thank her.*  
W.C. Fields

*Brass bands are all very well in their place —  
outdoors and several miles away.*  
Sir Thomas Beecham

## Naturalisti al'Poltrona

To all you *naturalisti al'poltrona* (= armchair naturalists) out there, here is a real-life adventure which goes to show that we all can be a Harry Butler (whatever happened to him?) or a Malcolm Douglas if we take the step.

Some years ago, a friend and I set off for a weekend back-packing campout in the Megalong Valley following the Cox and Kowmung Rivers. Crimson rosellas dashed across our path, flashing their bright red and blue colours while small wrens and thornbills jumped about in search of food. We stopped to watch a pair of gang-gang cockatoos preening their grey feathers — the male's splendid red head and crest feathers brilliant in the sunlight.

We proceeded down the track. The sound of the whipbirds occasionally interrupted the continuous tinkling call of the bell-miners. Further along the path we surprised a female superb lyrebird which, being startled by us, took off into the thick shrub.

At the junction of the Cox and Kowmung, a large wallaroo was having a drink. It lifted its head, looked at us, and then slowly bounced away. A few metres further, a smaller wallaroo sprang out into the open before scrambling up an almost vertical ridge sending rocks rolling into the water.

Time passed quickly and it was now lunchtime. During lunch we amused ourselves by watching several eels lurking in the river. A few trout were also in the stream which we tried to catch with a hand line but — no luck.

Moving on, the next "critter" on the agenda was a dingo. The dingo was walking away from the river; we froze and so did the wild dog. He turned his head and gave us a hard look before disappearing into the bush. The dingo has almost become extinct in this area: the local property owners hunt and trap the animals every chance they get.

As the day passed, the weather warmed up and on the rocks near the river two red-bellied black snakes were sunning themselves. We watched from a safe distance.

Soon it was time to stop and look for a good camp site. We found an ideal spot with a deep swimming hole and a flat area for our tent. After dinner that night, we sat around the camp fire watching fire-flies as they danced and blinked against the dark shadow of the ridges. A grand finale to a very enjoyable day.

## A Word in Your Pink Shell-like

I have received a couple of communications touching on Bandersnatch, *Bikwil's* language of the mind. One thing readers want to see is some of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* in other languages. Glad to oblige. On the next page is the opening verse ("Twas brillig", etc.) — first in a 1931 French version by F.L. Warrin, then one in German by R. Scott that dates back to 1872, the year after the original publication of *Looking Glass*.

Mind you, all this use of "nonsense with meaning" isn't completely esteemed everywhere. Anthony Burgess (he of *Clockwork Orange* renown and the great fan of OED editor James Murray) makes the following comment in his *A Mouthful of Air*:

We may not know what the verb "gobble" means, but we can be pretty sure that if I gobble, he gobbles, and that, some time in the past, several people gobbled. If "gobble" is a noun, then its plural is probably "gobbles". There is a satisfactory boniness about grammar that the flesh of vocabulary, or lexis, requires before it can become vertebrate and walk the earth. But it is probably unrealistic to stress its importance. It leads us to a world of dreams:

*When I corkled the veriduct in morful wurtubs and, prexing the coroflock, chonted the purpool by crerlicoking the*

*fark, [I] wottled the duneflow by fonking the raketopped purnlow and then assertericled the prert (in both slonces) through a clariform rarp of werthearkers.*

That is good grammar. But it is not anything else.

Can't agree myself. It's fun, and it stimulates the imagination. We need to be reminded of the world of dreams now and then. Bandersnatch makes for good Yuletide spirit, too, as I discovered the Christmas before last when a card from a Bikwilian included the following words:

May the bradlethwig sloove jongly round the slub, and quabber blonk! Simbly subloriginal . . .

With the *Jabberwocky* translations I have included, at no extra cost, a quote from Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. This is from Chapter 6, and is another fine instance of that work's language play to which I referred in *Bikwil No. 3*. From Adams' point of view, of course, it is an example of Vogon poetry, "the third worst in the Universe".

Nearby, too, incidentally, you will find a further paglet in the saga of *Larick and the Aratrongs*. Bandersnatch lives!

### Le Jaseroque

Il briligue: les tôves lubricilleux  
Se gyrent en vrillant dans le guave,  
Enmimés sont les gougebosqueux,  
Et le momerade horsgrave.

### Der Jammerwoch

Es brillig war. Die schlichte Toven  
Wirrten und wimmelten in Waben;  
Und aller-mümsige Burggoven  
Die mohmen Râth' ausgraben.

[As read to prisoners Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect by Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz, while they sit strapped into their Poetry Appreciation chairs]

Oh freddled gruntbuggly thy micturations are to me  
As plurdled gabbleblotchits on a lurgid bee.  
Groop I implore thee my foonting turlingdromes  
And hooptiously drangle me with crinkly bindlewurdles,  
Or I will rend thee in the gobberwarts with my blurglecrucheon, see if I don't!

— Harlish Goop