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BILBO AND FRODO'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1968
by Bernie Zuber

At the first Bilbo and Frodo's Birthday Party held in Los Angeles in 1967 the formation of The Mythopoeic Society was announced. Since then, during 1968, the Society sponsored two more outdoor events. On April 7th it was the celebration of the destruction of the Ring and the Elvish New Year. On September 22nd it was again Bilbo and Frodo's Birthday Party.

The Birthday Party picnic was held at Sycamore Grove Park, one of the Arroyo Seco parks near the Pasadena Freeway. The setting for the Elvish New Year had been a sylvan glade in San Marino, quite appropriate for Hobbit folk, but Sycamore Grove had the advantage of having an outdoor stage which was needed for the program of events. This program had been stressed in the publicity we sent to local magazines and newspapers and also in the elaborate flier we distributed to many people during August and September.

By 1 p.m., a good number of people had arrived; most of them in costume and bringing food. The first item on stage was the Maypole Dance -- that is if you could call it a dance. As had been the case at the Elvish New Year picnic, it ended in good-natured chaos with everyone tangled in the strands, especially the one holding the maypole itself.

Bob Wadey then introduced a demonstration of Medieval sword fighting. The combatants used wooded swords and shields and, in the tradition of the Society for Creative Anachronisms, they wore football helmets. The audience found the demonstration both highly interesting and educational.

The next event was the Costume parade and judging. Glen had previously asked me to be a judge, and I chose two more. I asked Ruth Berman because she is a long standing Tolkien fan, and I felt sure she would be quite knowledgeable about Tolkien characters. My other choice was Robert Harris, who teaches sculpture at Long Beach State College. I knew of his interest in fantasy and had told him about the picnic. When he arrived I enlisted him on the spot.

The costumes which paraded before us on the stage were, for the most part, quite good. For awhile we were concerned that we had only three awards to give but Glen came up with two more honorable mention awards, which allowed us to be fairer and more generous in our judging. The Most Authentic award went to Tim Kirk for his Orc costume and mask (based on his Orc drawings). This popular costume had already won him an award at the Fun-Con Masquerade in July. Before settling on the Most Beautiful award, we asked to see a couple of Galadriels and an Arwen again, as finalists. The winner was Christine Pape whom we dubbed the White Galadriel. She wore a long white robe, resembling a Greek chiton, and had a crown of leaves and silver stars in her hair. She was accompanied by two little girls, as Elvish attendants, who were similarly dressed. Another prize was given to Terry McClenahan

for his Faramir costume. His leather jerkin and white leggings were simple in design but very striking. One of the Honorary Mention awards was given to Doris Robin who came as Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, a li'l old hobbit lady, complete with umbrella. The other went to a participant whose name I can't recall. He came as Gollum. Although I personally thought his fake eyebrows and nose, scraggly beard and cloak looked more like Shylock, I must admit he acted like Gollum.

Around 5 p.m. Glen announced that people should bring their mathoms to the stage for the gift exchange. Soon just about every body was singing "Happy Birthday, dear Bilbo and Frodo, Happy Birthday to you!"? It's uncanny. (I wonder what the Hobbits would have sung.) In addition to the mathoms, there were birthday cakes, mostly without candles. I recall one in particular, baked by Pat Rawlings, which had multicolored mushrooms on top of it. I referred to it as "the cast from Fantasia" (remember the dancing mushrooms in the Nutcraker Suite?). There was quite a lot of food around, even toward the end of the afternoon. One table was filled with huge watermelons, nuts, berries, etc. It reminded me of a Bacchanalian festival.

The closing event on the program was a performance of the songs in the Tolkien song book, The Road Goes Ever On, and two other songs composed by Dale Ziegler. They were sung by Dale and Terry McClenahan with piano accompaniment. I must admit, I was busy running to and fro trying to get some photos with my 35mm camera before the afternoon light dimmed. I now have some good slides as souvenirs: Tim Kirk in his Orc costume, with Sauron's red Eye in the center of his shield; fighting scenes between Tim, two Nazguls and Barry Gold (as Merry Brandybuck believe); Pat Rawlings in her bright green Goldberry costume; and Patrick Porter wrapped in a purple robe, looking very much like Nero in sneakers.

After 6 p.m. most people had left the picnic area and another enjoyable afternoon was coming to a close. At least 187 people had signed the guest book (called the Red Book of Westmarch), so it is reasonable to assume that well over 200 had attended. These outdoor events, and the publicity which precedes them have succeeded in attracting new members to the Mythopoeic Society. I couldn't think of a nicer way to do it.

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MYTHOLOGICAL

"We Wish To Thank..." Department

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MLI