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Mythcon 50

Looking Back, Moving Forward

San Diego, California

August 2-5, 2019

Cavalier Treatment: The Years in Broceliande

Cavalier Treatment

a column

The Years in Broceliande

Lee Speth

A personal column this time, a digression from the rigorous objectivity that usually governs these contributions. But I recently chanced on the Mythprint from January, 1972, and found an item of retrospective interest in the Branch Activity Calendar. The announcement, pretty much like a thousand Mythprint runs and has run over the years, says only:

THE HOLLYWOOD-WILSHIRE BRANCH

Mydgard
January 15th

Topic: THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH by C.S. Lewis

Location: The home of Julia Mendoza,
2719 Hollyridge Dr., Los Angeles.
Ph. (213) 464-0646.

For me these are words of evocation, for that was my first meeting and they signify that I have been in the Mythopoeic Society now for ten years.

I regard this improbable statistic with affectionate good humor. I say improbable, because there is, superficially, no particular reason why this Society, among all others, should have gripped me so adhesively. I remain a devotee of the three authors, but they aren't the three authors in my life. I have been blessed with numerous friends outside of the Society. Yet here I am.

I went, in that long ago winter of '72, to keep a friend company and to try something new. In the classical and approved manner of those who little suspect, I little suspected that I was to be initiated that evening into a series of enmeshments that would make me moderator of the group I was visiting, give me an actual, regular magazine column, and make me, most recently, Chairman of the Board of the whole shebang.

I came to Mydgard as most people, I suspect, come to our groups; a friend had a friend there and knew something of my reading. There are watchers at the gates of the Perilous Realms and I still remember that a pretty blonde lady with a cross about her neck showed before us like an apparition and said, "Hello, my name is Gracia Fay Ellwood." It was some months before I connected that lady with a book about Tolkien that I'd seen in the stores.

An energetic gentleman, Bernie Zuber, showed slides of something called Mythcon and someone called Glen. But I knew who Glen was, for this identical Glen GoodKnight and I hailed from the same school and I had seen, with interest and some degree of envy, his hoard of Tolkien, Lewis and Williams displayed in the college library, recipient of a top collections prize in 1967. We were eventually to meet at the '72 Mythcon.

Discussion leader was our hostess's brother, the friend of a friend mentioned above, nowadays simply a friend. Mr. Dale Ziegler, a founding member of the Society, led the discussion with intelligence and a clear, theatrically-trained voice. It is ironic that I am moderator now, for he struck me as irreplaceable.

The last decade, so far as the Society is concerned, is a largely enjoyable festival of people and books in my memory, of meetings and Mythcons, magazines and mailing sessions. Archaic and picturesque costumes pass through hotel lobbies in my

recollections; fantasy art by Tim Kirk, Bonnie GoodKnight and other certifiable masters bejewel the convention showrooms. And the talk goes on forever - which is as it should be, for I don't want it to stop. Talk about books and talk about the thinking and dreaming behind books and talk, when we feel like it, about anything that comes to mind. For ten years I have communed (and genially sparred) with Mydgard and find myself incomparably the richer.

I'm not sure that most of the things said of the Society would apply in my case. It has not, for instance, brought me into contact with much new reading; it's a rare occurrence for a discussion topic to be picked that I haven't already read. An article or review in Mythlore and Mythprint may rouse up my interest in some subject or train of thought, sometimes they stir me to contention, but on the whole they bring little specifically new into my life. This is not because I am a miracle of self-sufficiency or compendium of all thought, but because I came to the Society as a veteran fantasy reader and must needs find myself covering a lot of old ground. No objections though; I like old ground.

Over the years, the Society has been something of a Proteus, constantly realigning and changing shape. At present, everything in the Society goes by threes and I like that. There are three authors, the Society itself has three aspects (publications, the discussion groups, Mythcon), we have three periodicals, and the officers serve three-year terms.

Logging orders and sending checks into the Treasurer - a job that came my way in '79 - I have a sort of abstract overview of the growth and geographical breadth of the Society. But no abstractions are worth the trouble I take. I like the people.

Of the two friends who went with me to that Mydgard meeting ten years since, one has passed away in a pathetic crisis and the other, nowadays, has found more significant pursuits than hanging around with a mere Speth. But in exchange (if one may speak here of exchange) I can salute so many who have shared Mythpoeia with me - Dale and Gracia Fay and Bernie who were at that first meeting, Julie gone up north and Helen Bautista and Dave Hulan wherever you are. A toast to my fellow Stewards: Lisa Cowan, that cheerful, energetic, indispensable factotum; the earnest and long-enduring Glen, giving himself unstintingly to his ideals since before my time; the many-faceted David Bratman and that miracle of judiciousness George Colvin; reliable Gail and ever-stimulating Veida; and Christine Lowentrot, whose judgment and sheer human goodness I have only begun to appreciate.

I impose upon our readers to salute also my fellow Mydguarders: Ginny and Gary and Steve and Carol and Carol and Rob and Margaret. And a hullo to all Society acquaintances and correspondents, both those whom I here name - Judy and Fred Williams, Bob Cowan, Lisa Harrigan, Doris Robin, Dave Lenander, Mary Morman, the tribe from Grey Havens whom I met this summer, Mary Stolzenbach, Laura Ruskin and Barbara Tennison - and those for whom there's no room here.

And a special salaam to Dolores, who has shared the fantasy with me for so many years - to her especially, love, mirth and social joy.

Here's to the next ten!