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The Myth-Adventures at the Pleasure Faire

THE MYTH-ADVENTURES AT THE PLEASURE FAIRE by Irving X. Hoggman

Prologue: The Building of "Ye Boothe"

On the bright, sunny morning of April 26, we were to build, or rather assemble the booth for the Renaissance Pleasure Faire held yearly in Agoura, California, in the month of May. Hurrying so we wouldn't be late, Bonnie and I arrived an hour and a half before anyone else showed up. When they (Glen, Doris, Simone, Karen, Bernie, Helen, Pat, Andy, and Mrs. Onan, brave soul) finally did, we began. Tim Kirk had sketched a beautiful design for the booth, the practical execution of which turned out to be somewhat less than practical. The booth was a large wooden box. Four metal poles at each of the corners supported a sky-blue canopy. From each of the poles was to hang a banner--but what to hang them with? That was the question. After much debate, we finally decided to braid ropes out of the yarn which was originally intended to mark off our area. While Glen, Bonnie, Doris and Karen were braiding, Bernie began to paint the signs that were to further adorn our booth. The larger sign read: "The Mythopoeic Society presents a Middel Erthe Ring Joust based upon the werks of J. R. R. Tolkien." Pat and I then began to discuss the laying out of the "lists." Cut-out figures of Frodo and Gollum by Kirk-Bergstrom dangled rings (replicas of the One) from their outstretched hands. Contestants were to mount Hobbit-horses (or wargs for the children) and gallop towards the rings, which they were to attempt to spear with their lances. Prizes were, of course, rings of power. While trying to find something to serve as guide posts, Andy mentioned that there were some stakes in the truck. It being nearly lunch time, I suggested that we fry them. The punishment had begun. And it went on, and on, . . . and on, . . . and on, . . . and on, . . . and on, . . . and on, . . .

The Faire Opens

What a difference! Last week it was a bunch of half-built huts--this week a scene right out of the Renaissance. Glen and Pat and Larj and Paula and Bonnie and Bernie and Helen and whoever else was there the first day arrived before the Faire opened to get things set up. The booth looked magnificent adorned with the Eye of Mordor, the White Tree, the Swan of Dol Amroth, and the Horse of Rohan. Simone did a wonderful job on the banners. The booth was ready--we were Open for Business. . . . OPEN FOR BUSINESS! . . . nothing We must be doing something wrong Hawkers. That's what we need. Hawkers! . . . Paula served as chief hawker for over two hours, relieved sporadically by various others. "Come to Middle-earth!" . . . nothing . . . "Impale Ye the Ring" . . . nothing . . . "Win a Ring and Control the World!!!" . . . Paula's "perfected spiel" was: "Come to Middle Earth! Try thy hand at the Ring of Power! Hobnob with Hobbits! Rub elbows with Elves!" . . . Helen had a bell which we rang attempting to attract people. It had a pleasant sound: the Ring of Power (it had begun again). Elrond was there with his pointed ears. He kept stoically getting upset when the illiterati came by and said, "Spock!"

Week the Second

The booth was scheduled to open around two on Sunday, May 11, as no one was available to work earlier. I arrived early anyway. After hanging the banners and laying out the information sheets on the Society, I looked around, wondering what was missing. The rings!! I searched frantically for them, but in vain. Having nothing better to do, I wandered about the Faire examining the wares of the craftsmen. Bumping into David Ring, I explained the situation with the rings and elicited a note (ring?--ow!) of sympathy from him. Just then, the Town Crier announced that the daily procession was forming.

In a stroke of genius, I excitedly suggested that we tie some of the banners to the bamboo poles that supported the canopy and carry them in the procession. We did, and it was quite effective--the White Tree and the Eye of Mordor. I was surprised at and delighted with the number of people who recognized them.

Later, when Ann, Linda, Dawn, Helen, and Bernie arrived, we, having no prizes to offer, allowed people to play the game for nothing. Although we made no money that day, we did make some interesting contacts. Lots of people were interested in the Society and took information sheets.

People kept coming over and asking us where various things were. So many in fact, that we decided we were the "official" information booth.

Week the Last

The last weekend, fortunately, went much better than the previous two. On the last day Tim and Bonnie took turns wearing Tim's fantastic orc mask and begging alms. This really was a dramatic sight; a horribly green orc sitting in front of the booth begging alms with groans and palsied hand. People kept doing double takes and taking pictures. Christine Smith and Ruth Haber did a fantastic job as Hawks, practically grabbing the people, while they stood in disbelief viewing the orc. Bonnie really was carried away in her orc role. She was a constant stream of talk in a screechy orc voice: "The orcs have repented . . . Mercy!" . . . "Send an orc to college!" . . . "Mercy on a poor retired orc!" . . . "Give your money to found an orcanage!" That last day should have been recorded on sound film. It was priceless.

Over all the Faire made very little money for the Society, but we did meet a lot of interested Tolkien fans. The main purpose was to make contact with such folk. It is still too soon to judge how many of them will become involved with the Society, but in spite of all the hard work and hours organizing the whole thing, it was a memorable and funny time.

The Elvish Dictionary being serialized in Mythlore did not appear in this issue because of so much material to be included. It will continue in the next issue.

In October 1969 The Mythopoeic Society will be two years old. The San Gabriel Valley Branch was founded then. The San Fernando Valley Branch was founded in October 1968. The Upland-Pomona Valley Branch was founded May 1969. The West Los Angeles Branch was founded July 1969. The time has gone quickly; two years! it is hard to believe. It is fairly safe to say the Tolkien craze is passed, we can expect a more calm and still deeper analysis of Tolkien to come.

