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## Across The Brandywine

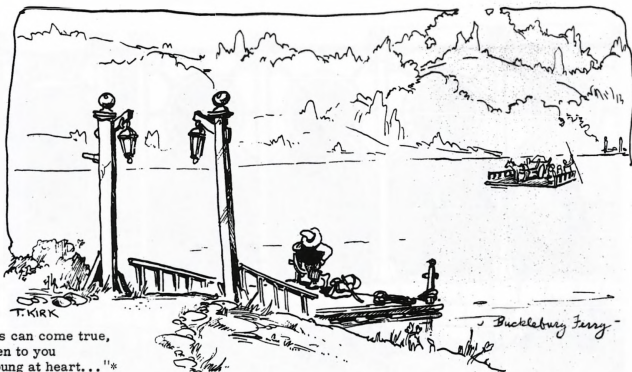
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# Across The Brandywine

by Bernie Zuber



"Fairy tales can come true,  
It can happen to you  
If you're young at heart..."

These are words from a song some of us remember. It was made famous by Frank Sinatra back in the fifties. It was Sinatra's voice that sang this song again on the morning of September 3, 1971 while a TV camera focused on my painting of Rivendell, the one I gave to Glen GoodKnight two years ago. To me this scene and song were a fitting finale for Glen's first TV interview on the "Ralph Story's A. M." show, ABC-TV. Parts of the interview had bordered on the ridiculous, especially some remarks from the temporary host, but Glen conducted himself with poise and fielded questions rather well. I don't know who chose that Sinatra song to play over Rivendell but I felt it was appropriate because Glen's "fairy tale" of the Mythopoetic Society has come true in an even greater sense than he had envisioned. That TV interview was followed by three and a half days of Mythcon II and Glen's wedding to Bonnie Bergstrom.

Later that Friday afternoon I arrived in Goleta, a suburb directly north of Santa Barbara. The Francisco Torres hotel where Mythcon II was held is near the Isla Vista section of Goleta where the Bank of America was burned during the 1970 demonstrations. But Isla Vista has had pleasanter moments. In July of 1970 Westcon XXIV, a science fiction convention, was held at the Torres and those of us from the Society who attended were sure that it would be a fine hotel for a Mythcon. We were right.

At the Torres I was greeted by our registration committee, Pat Rawlings and Paula Sigman who were so busy they billed themselves as The Martyr Twins. After locating my room and talking to various people I found myself joining a group headed by Glen who were on their way to a local restaurant. It was in this group that I first met our Guest of Honor, Mary McDermott Shideler. For those of you who don't already know it she is a leading authority on the works of Charles Williams, with such books to her credit as The Theology of Romantic Love. When you meet her you realize that you are in the presence not only of a fine writer but also a friendly human being. She fits my ideal definition of a fan... someone who, without pretense, thoroughly enjoys sharing common interests.

After dinner was the Get-Together Party and what is now my traditional slide show of Mythopoetic events. Each year I have to be more selective or otherwise we would have a non-stop slide show. Since 1959 I've accumulated over 4800 slides (most of them non-Mythopoetic) and I often wonder how long a slide show they would make.

Mythcon II officially opened on Saturday morning September 4th with a procession from the north lawn of the Torres, around the swimming pool and into the conference hall.

As we passed the pool I envisioned a future Mythcon when we would assemble at the deep end of the pool and then rise majestically from the waters.

I must say I take pride in the Society when I see how creative our members are. The costumes and banners for the procession were even better than last year's and came close to rivaling the pageantry of the Creative Anachronists. Those of you who are familiar with the neo-Medieval group know that this is not a light compliment. When all of us were seated in the conference hall Glen asked each branch to rise as its name was called. Not all branches were represented but those who were there showed imagination in their group spirit. I'm thinking in particular of the Hollywood-Willshire branch who not only came in Art Nouveau costumes but sang a song about it as well.

The program that followed on Saturday afternoon did not have my complete attention as I was busy talking to people and couldn't sit still. I did notice, however, that while the first Mythcon had an overabundance of scholarly papers the same Mythcon had fewer papers and the films scheduled at the same time took away a potential audience from the papers.

Saturday evening's big event was the Masquerade. Again I was a costume judge as I have been at our picnics and at science fiction conventions. I enjoy it. It isn't too hard to make decisions because certain costumes invariably stand out from the others and become winners. Sometimes there are conflicts within a category and sometimes a new category has to be created to fit an obvious winner. I won't list the winners here. They were listed in my report in the October issue of Mythprint, our monthly bulletin.

There was also a music program that evening. I was particularly impressed by a traditional ballad called "Robin Hood and the Bishop of Hereford" which was expertly done by Galen Peoples as Robin Hood, Dale Ziegler as the Bishop and Paula Sigman singing the narration.

At the first Mythcon I braved the chill and dampness of the predawn hour to participate in a ceremony called Dawn Fandom. Before sunrise on Sunday Glen read passages from The Wind in the Willows to a chilly but attentive audience. Remembering the thrill of being part of this almost religious event I would have attended it again but unfortunately I did not wake in time. I understand that it was foggy anyway. There were others who were up in the wee hours of Sunday, not for Dawn Fandom but for a rehearsal of the Performing Arts Workshop. At 4 A.M. they were rehearsing a masque based on Charles Williams The Greater Trumps to be presented that evening. At brunch they were obviously tired and non-communicative.

I'm happy to say that I've had at least one good conversation with each of our guests of honor. At Mythcon II it was with C. S. Kilby at lunch and at Mythcon III it was over coffee with Mary McDermott Shideler. Our first two guests have been friendly and informal enough for casual conversations and I hope this will be the case with our future guests.

Mrs. Shideler and I began by talking about witchcraft, a popular subject these days. She said that a friend of hers had gone into it seriously but had quit when she found it disgusting and boring. We discussed the technical differences between witches, sorcerers, wizards and magicians but I can't recall the details. She then told us (we had been joined by Loraine Franklyn and Teny Rule) that in Japan your future can be told in a temple where a trained sparrow picks up a slip of paper similar to those in fortune cookies. The conversation then went on about the Shideler's new home in Boulder, Colorado. I'd like to see it and perhaps some day I will.

Sunday afternoon I caught up with the program. Paula Marmor, in her long medieval robe and Pre-Raphaelite hairdo, read some of her own poems. I don't like to read poetry but I do enjoy hearing it when it's done by someone who knows how to read it. Paula knows how.

The Art Show turned out better than I had expected. At Mythcon I we had panels to hang the paintings but this time we had to prop them up against the walls or easels. Some of the better artists who had entered art at Mythcon I were lured away by the more profitable World Science Fiction convention's art show (in Boston that same weekend). Nevertheless I was pleasantly surprised to see quite a few good paintings in our show, some by new talented artists. I was particularly impressed by the ink drawings of John Allen, from the Sacramento branch. Mark Rogers from New Jersey also sent in some good ink work. Among the work of our better known artists there was an airbrush portrait of Tolkien by Tim Kirk and a representation of Aragorn as a figure from a projected Tolkien Tarot by Paula Marmor. I was so intrigued by the colorful psychedelic paintings of Ans Brinsley that I actually bought one. Sunday afternoon Dave Hulan conducted a voice bidding on the paintings. As in the science fiction art shows bid sheets are placed near the art so that potential buyers can outbid each other as at an auction. Casting all modesty aside I enjoyed seeing Glen and Tatiana Szeftel bid against each other for my painting of Aragorn and Arwen. Tasha won, with a little help from her friends. I also enjoyed watching our lady auctioneer, Lois New-

man, who is also the Society's treasurer. She auctioned art work, books, magazines and fanzines with great gusto. Featured items were a dagger from India, some popular Tim Kirk illustrations and the idiot cards from Glen's TV interview. She would've auctioned the floor if it could have been moved.

Sunday evening Mary McDermott Shideler gave a talk entitled "Are These Myths True?" Since I jotted notes rather hurriedly I'll give you just a few highlights of her speech. She began by introducing herself as a middle-aged, middle-class and middle-west housewife and then proceeded to deal with such topics as Middle Earth. She remarked that play/myth/fantasy have a definite place in our lives and fulfill a need within us. Such things as our Mythopoetic activities function as a bridge between our conscious and our subconscious. The mythopoetic game is worth playing for its own sake. According to Lewis a myth is a story functioning as an image and to Williams myths were divine. The mythical world is really that other deeper life. It may even be a solid foundation upon which our daily activities fall as rain. Tolkien's Middle-earth and Lewis' Narnia are imaginary worlds used to illuminate our real world while Williams uses the real world to elevate us to another. I could go on but I think it would be best to read the whole speech in The Mythcon II Proceedings soon to be published at \$1.50. Order it from the Society's address.

The Greater Trumps masque/play was fairly well done as far as acting was concerned but it suffered from technical problems involving lights, projections and sound. The Golden Tarot dancers who performed inside a circular scrim curtain behind the main actors were particularly affected by those problems.

Monday, Labor Day, the last day of the convention I finally sat down long enough to hear a panel discussion and participate in a group discussion. The panel consisted of Mrs. Shideler, Simone Wilson, Galen Peoples and Glen GoodKnight discussing Charles Williams' unfinished novel, The Noises That Weren't There. Simone remarked that there is a possibility that instead of this being Williams' last novel it could've been written and abandoned before All Hallow's Eve. Certain similar elements in both novels seem to suggest this. Glen read the final scene of the unfinished novel, a rather harrowing description of the malformed cadocemon. The group discussion moderated by Lois Newman concerned itself with the relationship between Epic Fantasy, Heroic



Fantasy and Sword and Sorcery. We all agreed that there were similarities between these types of fantasies and it is sometimes hard to determine which stories fit which definition.

The Mythopoeic Society has finally decided to present Fantasy awards, something that was long overdue. Science fiction stories have been awarded Hugos since 1953 and sometimes a science fiction story that borders on fantasy will win a Hugo, but there hasn't been a separate award for fantasy till now (to the best of my knowledge anyway). Our award is a statuette of a lion, somewhat reminiscent of Aslan in the Narnia stories. At the convention's closing session Glen announced that the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Best Fantasy of 1970 would go to Mary Stewart for her novel *The Crystal Cave*, a tale of Merlin's early life before Arthur. Two awards for Mythopoeic Scholarship were also presented. One retroactively to C.S. Kilby, last year's Guest of Honor, and the other to Mary McDermott Shideler, the only one to receive her award in person.

The convention was then officially over but the day's biggest event was yet to come. Sunday night after the masque Glen had made the surprise announcement that he and Bonnie were to be wed the next afternoon and all were welcome to attend. We waited in the conference hall while Bonnie was being fitted into her wedding gown and Glen, in his new Elrond robe, sat upon his "throne" on the speaker's platform. When Bonnie did arrive we all followed the couple to the north lawn, most all of us in costume and with banners

flying. The Rev. Mr. Hartung, vicar of the Episcopal Church in Isla Vista, performed the ceremony while our colorful group watched attentively. About halfway through the ceremony Gracia Fay Ellwood and myself were called to be witnesses. I almost tripped in my eagerness to get there. After the ceremony Glen and Bonnie led the way to the reception surrounded by soap bubbles instead of rice. I've been to quite a few conventions but none of them ever ended in such a grand manner.

Thanks should certainly go to those whose time and efforts contributed to making Mythcon II even better than Mythcon I in certain respects. I'm thinking in particular of those who volunteered to do last minute work for the masque in the wee hours of Sunday morning. And, of course, we shouldn't forget Miss Hardcastle and her NICE security team who posted up the name tag requirements all over the hotel.

As Glen and Bonnie drove off to their honeymoon and the rest of us went home the air had a certain sharpness that cleared the coastal landscape, there was a rainbow over Ventura and the setting sun colored the western clouds. An epilogue as fitting as the Rivendell-TV prologue.



## Monolog of a Certain Hobbit



I'm decent and respectable,  
I know my worth.  
I can gaze haughtily over my spectacles,  
I know I'm better bred than any Took,  
Brandybuck or Baggins on earth!

I'm a decent hobbit-lady, I am!

You can talk of your silly dragons  
And (humph) troll hoard.  
(If there were such ghastly things, I'd fix their wagons)  
But I do know that that impostor's silver spoons  
should be at my board.

I'm a decent hobbit-lady, I am!

There may be strange doings  
In the Outside,  
But these newfangled Shire-shirriffs soon will be ruing  
Their outlandish behavior for I've still got  
my umbrella — and I have got my pride!

I'm a decent hobbit-lady, I am!

L. S-B.