

AUGUST DERLETH SOCIETY

This space will
contain the Society's
logo when it is
available

VOL. I NO. 1

NEWSLETTER

THE SOCIETY IS BORN

As support for the idea of forming an August Derleth Society grew, letters were sent to several of the late author's friends and associates. The following are excerpted from their responses.

Frank Belknap Long

"I feel, of course, that even in the absence of such a society August's position as a serious literary figure would remain for many years to come, all apart from the great number of friends and fellow-writers who will never fail to think of him with deep affection and hold him in the highest esteem. There are many critics of stature, and general fiction writers of no small renown who will not soon forget his great contribution, across the years, to the American regional novel and his importance as a guiding spirit in both the Lovecraftian and Baker Street realms (Arkham House is, in itself, a monument.)."

On the prospects of forming the Society, Mr. Long commented that he was "...entirely in accord with ...the importance of an August Derleth Society." And again, in a later letter: "I'm looking forward to the promised news concerning the project as it develops."

Among the writings of Mr. Long currently available are: The Early Long, published by Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y. The work includes the classic "The Hounds of Tindalos." A bonus feature of the book is that each story is preceded by the author's reminiscences, recalling the circumstances in which the tale was written - a thoroughly enjoyable addition, characteristic of the Doubleday Science Fiction Series. Also available is H. P. Lovecraft, Dreamer On The Nightside, Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, a very readable biography of Lovecraft by the friend who knew him so well.

Robert Bloch

"It would seem to me that the basic difficulty you may encounter with your proposed society lies in the diversity of Derleth's writing - and, consequently, in the diversified interests of his readership. The fantasy-fans aren't generally interested in the Sac Prairie Saga - the regional-novel devotees don't necessarily care for the Solar Pons series - the Solar Pons devotees may take a dim view of Judge Peck - the Peck fans aren't necessarily interested in Derleth's poetry - poetry lovers may not like the Journals and similar items (VILLAGE DAY BOOK, WALDEN WEST, etc.)

and those who esteem same aren't likely to enjoy critical essays. But I'm sure you take my meaning. How does one appeal to such a various readership? Solve that and you'll have a success...In any case I do wish you well."

Mr. Bloch has stated the challenge succinctly. If we join together to share our enthusiasm for Derleth's works - all of his works - we will succeed in creating a society that is a cohesive force, a force that should bring us all to a greater appreciation of the ubiquitous genius that characterized the works of August Derleth.

Among the friends and former associates of August Derleth who have responded, few have been more generous with their time than Basil Copper. In addition to providing several valuable leads, he has promised to contribute to a future Newsletter. It will be good news to Mr. Copper's fans to learn that his latest book, And Afterward, The Dark is now available from Arkham House.

Richard Davis

"I certainly feel that it is a good idea, and long overdue, to form a Derleth Appreciation Society."

Additional accolades go to:

Frank Utpatel who has graciously consented to design a membership card for the Society's use. It is hoped that these will be available for distribution soon after the first of the year.

James Turner who has corresponded frequently and at some length. His assistance has been invaluable in obtaining leads to others who have in turn expressed enthusiasm for the idea of forming our Society.

FROM THE EDITOR

It's a pleasure to welcome you to the August Derleth Society. As of this date our birth has been a quiet one, unheralded in the halls of princes and potentates. But better to build slowly and on a firm foundation, than to enter the arena to the sound of trumpets only to discover that you've forgotten your pants.

To his friends and admirers August Derleth needs no introduction. It is these people who now form the present nucleus of the Society and who will determine its future. Each of you who has expressed an interest in becoming a member of the Society is asked to do two things. First, contribute something to the Newsletter, a suggestion, a letter, a poem, a drawing or sketch, whatever you'd like. Let's reserve this section primarily for the amateur. It would be unfair to professional writers to ask them to give away that for which they should normally be paid. Secondly, interest a friend in the writings of August Derleth and invite that friend to join the Society. Your participation will insure our survival as a viable literary organization.

One other thought comes to mind - Form a local chapter of the Society. This should be fairly easy in places like Sauk City and Madison, Wisconsin. The Newsletter can then devote a section to Chapter news and announcements of Chapter meetings.

A LIST OF AUGUST DERLETH'S WORKS IN PRINT

The following are available from Stanton & Lee Publishers, Inc., Sauk City, Wisc. 53583

Adult books

Title	Price
Bright Journey	7.50
Collected Poems	7.50
Countryman's Journal	6.95
Evening in Spring	4.95
The Hills Stand Watch	6.95
The House Above Cuzco	7.95
The House of Moonlight	7.95
The House on the Mound	6.95
New Poetry of Wisconsin, Derleth Ed.	7.50
One Hundred Books by August Derleth	3.00*
Restless is the River	6.95
Return to Walden West	7.95
Sac Prairie People	4.95
The Shadow in the Glass	8.50
The Shield of the Valiant	5.95
Sweet Land of Michigan	4.95
Village Daybook	5.95
Walden West	7.95
West of Morning	4.50
The Wind Leans West	6.95
Wisconsin	7.95
Wisconsin Country	5.95
A Wisconsin Harvest, Derleth, Ed.	6.95
Wisconsin In Their Bones	6.50

Juvenile books

Bill's Diary	3.95
A Boy's Way	3.95
It's A Boys World	3.95

Captive Island	4.95
The Irregulars Strike Again	4.95
Oliver, The Wayward Owl	3.95
The Pinkertons Ride Again	4.95
The Prince Goes West	4.95
The Tent Show Summer	4.95
The Three Straw Men	4.95
The Watcher On The Heights	4.95
Wilbur, The Trusting Whippoorwill	3.95
*Paperbound	

And of course, from Arkham House,
Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583

Dwellers in Darkness	6.50
Harrigans File	6.50
The Watcher Out Of Time & Others (with H.P. Lovecraft)	8.50
Dark Things, Derleth, Ed.	7.50*
The Chronicles of Solar Pons	6.00
Mr. Fairlies Final Journey	5.00*
Wisconsin Murders	5.00*
Mr. George & Other Odd Persons by "Stephen Grendon"	5.00

*Soon to go out of print

The Solar Pons Omnibus is delayed again.
Publication is now scheduled for some
time in 1978.

THE PRAED STREET IRREGULARS

Our society is not the first to be organized in honor of August Derleth. Luther Norris of Culver City, California is publisher of the Pontine Dossier an annual publication "...started for Solar Pons and Sherlock Holmes, the Pontine Dossier also carries fact and fiction on all crime subjects." Mr. Norris is interested in receiving material and suggestions for the Dossier. The Dossier is the publications organ for "The Praed Street Irregulars," an organization of Solar Pons fans. The "Irregulars" presently boast more than one thousand members according to Mr. Norris. An annual dinner meeting is held each fall at the Greater L.A. Press Club in Los Angeles.

Persons interested in becoming members of the Praed Street Irregulars should contact Mr. Norris. His address:
Luther Norris
P.O. Box 261
Culver City, Ca. 90230

The next issue of the "Dossier" will carry an article announcing the August Derleth Society, thanks to Mr. Norris.

"WHISPERS" HONORS DERLETH

Stuart David Schiff, editor and publisher of "Whispers" has announced a mini-Derleth issue. Whispers #10, now available, contains a tribute to August Derleth and H.P. Lovecraft, as well as a fine series of drawings by Frank Utpatel. A must for every Derleth fan, Whispers #10 is available at \$2.00 the copy from:

Whispers/Whispers Press
Box 1492-W Azalea Street
Browns Mills, N.J. 08015

Mr. Schiff has also agreed to announce the formation of the Derleth Society in his publication.

THE SOCIETY'S CHARTER MEMBERS

James M. Angerine	Mark E. Lefebvre *
Betty Binns	Frank B. Long *
Robert Bloch *	Brian Lumley *
Emmarie T. Blum	Luther Norris *
Mrs. Helen E. Buenzli	Cyril Owen
Ramsey Campbell *	Cecil Ryder
Lloyd W. Cohen	George J. Marx
Basil Copper*	Stuart Schiff *
Barbara Davis	James Turner *
Richard Fawcett	Roger L. Wentz
Blanche S. Fitzsimmons	Frank Utpatel *
R.A. Gavol	Dirk W. Mosig
Dominic B. Guazzo	Larry Baker
Arnold Hagen	Masaki Abe
Dr. Josephine L. Harper *	
Bill Hartwig	
June Jevnisek	
The (Madison, Wisc.) Capital Times *	
Madison (Wisc.) Public Library	

*Enrolled as members by the editor as an expression of appreciation for their many kindnesses in helping with the formation of the August Derleth Society.

The above list of names is given without addresses out of respect for the privacy of the membership. If members wish to have their names and addresses printed in a directory to encourage correspondence between members only, please contact the editor.

Materials and suggestions are needed for future Newsletters. How do you feel about some of these suggestions?
Book reviews,
Announcements by authors of works in progress - books in print,
A poetry prize competition(modest prize)-judging by members,
A short story competition for persons not previously published-judging by members

D'ERLETTE

by Brian Lumley

A August by name, in lettered lore august,
U Unforgotten though Death hath struck
thee down,
G Giant, now fallen, though thy flesh be
dust,
U Undead thy works, thy spirit yet unflown.
S Sage of the Saga, literary Lord,
T Thy Works are legion - we can but applaud.

Our thanks to Brian Lumley who provided
this original work for inclusion in our
first newsletter.

The response of Ramsey Campbell has been
typical of that of our English friends.
They have expressed unqualified support
for the Society and have been most
generous with their expressions of that
support.

The following is excerpted from Mr.
Campbell's article, "Derleth as I Knew
Him," a compilation of letters exchanged
by the two authors between August 19,
1961 and May 24, 1971.

DERLETH AS I KNEW HIM *
by Ramsey Campbell

19.8.61 "Dear Mr. Campbell:

All thanks for your letter of the
16th. I should say at the outset that
we had better see your pastiches of
Lovecraft Mythos stories because a)
the Lovecraft material is copyrighted
and so protected and b) the approval of
Arkham House is necessary before any
copyrighted material can be released
for publication. This is a necessary
provision, of course, because if we did
not enforce it scores of cheap imitations
would flood the market, reflecting unfav-
orably on Lovecraft and his work."

That was how it began. I was fifteen and
eager as a puppy. I was also more than
a little terrified of having written to
a genuine professional writer, and one

*Dark Horizons #8, Journal of the British
Fantasy Society, April 1974. Huntingdon,
England. pp. 3-7. Copyright Ramsey
Campbell. Reprinted with permission of
the author.

who had contributed to the legendary
Weird Tales at that. These attitudes
combined to make me shower Derleth with
questions on every possible subject in
the weird fiction field and wait panting
for the answers. I don't know how he put
up with me. That he did so is a consider-
able tribute to him.

26.8.61 "No, of course I don't have the
time to tell you the contents of our pro-
jected books." Let's go on before his
patience wears thin. Here he is, giving
the game away about the genesis of the
Severn Valley setting of some of my
stories:

6.10.61 "What I suggest you do is estab-
lish a setting in a costal area of Eng-
land and create your own British milieu.
This would not appreciably change your
stories, but it would give them a much
needed new setting and would not, in the
reader's mind, invite a direct comparison
with Lovecraft; for in such a comparison
they would not show up as well as if you
had your own setting and place-names for
the tales."

And here he is putting the boot in THE
TOMB-HERD (later to become THE CHURCH IN
THE HIGH STREET:

18.10.61 "On p. 15 here, I think the
telegram very bad, almost amusingly bad.
Certainly it doesn't strike the note
you want. It is much too definite, for
one thing, and Lovecraft by and large
avoided being too definite in descrip-
tions of his malignant entities. Redo
this - and bear in mind that nobody wd.
write 'what is this thing that flops
unspeakably down the passage' etc.
Nonsense! This only makes the story
ridiculous. If a man is composing a
wire and hears something come, he might
scrawl, 'Oh, God - it's coming!' or
something of that sort, but hardly the
silly lines you put down here, which,
instead of inspiring with horror, only
fill with jeering laughter."

Well, that's the sort of approach that
can make or break a writer. It made me,
and at Derleth's death a good deal of
forthrightness went out of editing of
weird fiction. I suppose he had a spe-
cial relationship with the young me - pat-
ernal, if you like. Soon he began to
take me by the hand without my asking.
Thus, for example:

25.10.61 "Don't be trapped - I mean, don't depend on writing alone to make you a living. I did, and while I managed to fare well by leaning on my parents for ten years, I don't recommend it; when you're out of school get yourself a decent, not too harrowing job, and write as much as possible."

And again, when I told him I was planning to attend a science-fiction convention:

20.11.61 "Fans, I find, are the biggest time-wasters in the business, however gratifying some of their adulation may be for the time being; you are apt to find sycophants and adulation something for which you pay a high price in time, and the most valuable thing you have to use is time, not money."

I attended it anyway, of course. My father wasn't going to choose my friends for me. He didn't want me to give my work to fanzines, either, in case it fell by accident into the public domain.

4.12.61 "If you want that to happen, son, you are just simply not very bright."

Indeed (to step out of chronology for a moment) he went further:

21.5.62 "Seriously now, if you have any serious intentions of becoming a writer, it is high time you stopped playing around with fanzines. Fanzine contributions are made up chiefly of two classes - authors not good enough to get into professional print, and authors of some reputations who have been suckered into contributing gratis. Very few fanzine authors have ever subsequently appeared between hard covers. I can't tell you not to appear in fanzines, but to tell the truth, I will give a long hard look at your book ms. if its contents have been made available to the fans free of charge. The book editor's point of view is simply this: why shd. I pay for the privilege of publishing this if the author can give it away to a fanzine? This is bound to be my own attitude also."

Whether this related to some unpleasant experience of his own I don't know. I muttered and grumbled over the letter, but most of the good sense came through. After all, I had to give him credit for experience, which placed our relationship above the reality (and for that matter, the psychology) of much blood paternalism. Besides, by then he had displayed a professional's objectivity about his own work:

15.1.62 "And in these books (a list of some of his non-fantasy work) you have the best of my work, I think, beyond question. Not quite 10% of my total output - but then, as writing goes, that is a good enough average."

By this time "Dear Mr. Campbell" had become "Dear JRC". I worried about giving offence, then wrote, "Dear AWD" (if he didn't mind, I hurriedly added). I was still in awe of him. My awe turned to ire when he replied to my manuscript of THE CHURCH IN HIGH STREET, partly as follows:

7.2.62 "I have now read THE TOMB-HERD, and while I am not altogether satisfied with it, I believe I can use the story... subject to certain conditions: 1) that the title be altered to THE CHURCH IN THE HIGH STREET; 2) that I be given a free editorial hand to alter and delete as I see fit. For instance, the initial paragraph should go. Following the quotation from Alhazred, the story should begin with: 'If I had not been the victim of circumstances, I know that I would never have gone to ancient Temphill.' - 'rotting, ancient' is a bit too much at this juncture. I want, in short, to make the story more direct, in some places less clear, in some places more, and I want to guard against overwriting, of which there is a bit in this ms."

What! My carefully revised second draft, not satisfactory? After I'd even drawn a sketch-map of Temphill, in imitation of Lovecraft? But what good sense temporarily failed to achieve, a \$50.00 carrot managed. Yes, I wrote back, I accept, clawing soles with nails as I did so. The original manuscript isn't handy, and so I can't inflict that first blue-pencilled paragraph on you to demonstrate how right he was.

Later in the month he was (more gently) right again:

A generous man, willing to give unselfishly of his own time to a beginning writer; not a man to mince words - direct and to the point - advise that might not have gone down easily, but honest words from a man who knew his business. Certainly Ramsey Campbell did not suffer from the exchange. We, the readers, have been the beneficiaries of August Derleth's foresight.

Future editions of the Newsletter will contain additional excerpts from Mr. Campbell's article, which has been reproduced here only in part.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PREPARING

DERLETH PAPERS

Dr. Josephine L. Harper, reference archivist for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, reports that personal papers of August Derleth are currently undergoing archival study, arrangement and a detailed inventory. They are not presently open for research and may require "two years or so to complete as it is only one of several large processing projects in progress."

In any event, Derleth fans can be cheered by the fact that his papers are in good hands and receiving the proper care and attention that they deserve.

Dr. Harper asks that persons interested in the Derleth papers refrain from visiting the State Historical Society for the purpose of examining these papers until the collection is reopened. We will be in touch with Dr. Harper periodically and will keep our Society members appraised of the progress of this important project.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

AUGUST DERLETH SOCIETY

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Membership fee \$1.00 (Covers cost of Newsletter for one year)

mail to

RICHARD H. FAWCETT
61 Teeecomwas Drive
Uncasville, CT. 06382

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by
BILL HARTWIG

