

PROSPECTUS 23

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PROSPECTUS is the irregularly published newsletter of the Fantasy and Science Fiction Society of Columbia University. It is available to dues-paying members of the Society (dues are \$1.00 for the academic year). Edited by Eli Cohen. The Society meets every Thursday at 8:30 in the Postcrypt (basement of St. Paul's Chapel). Except when it meets in my room. For information about the Society and its activities, contact:

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LUNACON will take place April 16-18 at the Commodore Hotel, Park Avenue at 42nd St. John W. Campbell is the Guest of Honor, and Isaac Asimov will be Toastmaster at the banquet. Things will probably start happening around 8 or 9 p.m. Friday evening. I don't know the program schedule, but it shouldn't start much before 1 p.m. on Saturday (it better not -- I'm planning on sleeping late to recover from Friday's debaucheries). According to Jon Singer, Alan Asherman swears the Star Trek blooper film will be shown at Lunacon.

The next reasonably close convention is DISCLAVE, May 28-31, in Washington, D.C.

FRED LERNER, founder of PSFSCU and Grand Marshal Emeritus, does not (contrary to popular rumor) have infectious hepatitis. He was hospitalized for said affliction, as previously reported, but it turns out that he really has mononucleosis, plus a mono-induced liver dysfunction. (Of course he might have picked up hepatitis during his sojourn in the infectious hepatitis ward....). In any case, he is now out of the hospital and convalescing at home. Best wishes for a speedy recovery.

REVIEW: "The Bear with the Knot in his Tail" by Stephen Tall,
Fantasy and Science Fiction, May 1971.
by David Emerson

Don't let the title fool you. This is not a story about a forest ranger and some cute little animals (or even big nasty animals) out in the woods. The bear referred to is Ursa Major, and the knot is Mizar. The problem: find the origin and meaning of a series of strange, periodic but irregular signals that Earth has been receiving from Somewhere Out There. The protagonists: a crew of scientists aboard a planetary exploration ship. Aha! you say, a nice hard-science story. Not so.

Stephen Tall is closer to Sturgeon than to Niven. What comes across in this story is mostly feeling, both an emotional feeling due to the story itself, and a sense-of-wonder feeling arising from the author's prose style. The former is a sadness, a tragic sense of loss; but Tall handles it well and never slips into melodrama or schmaltz. It remains a noble emotion throughout. The other feeling is akin to that sensation you experience when reading Cordwainer Smith--that hint of greater historical significance that is explicitly stated in the story, that sense of "you and I both know this story already but I'm retelling it anyway." Combined with this is a Sturgeon-

like warmth and compassion, exhibited in the narrator's affection for his wife, in the description of the aliens and their plight, and elsewhere. There's a bit of Bradbury in there, too, for in between the lines of description and narration, you can tell that the author is thinking, "Gee, isn't this neat!" And at the risk of making too many comparisons, one could notice that Tall's dialogue, like that of R. A. Lafferty, is a little stylized, sometimes not quite natural; but that doesn't impair its effectiveness. At least not too often. And anyway, the speech isn't always in words -- you've heard that music is a universal language? Well, now it's literally true. This last may be a little hard to swallow, but it fits in extremely well with the story's general tone.

I haven't seen or heard of any major works by this author, except for his "Allison, Carmichael and Tattersall," which Galaxy termed a "breakthrough novelette" and ran as a cover story. He deserves a lot more recognition, and if he keeps on writing like this he's bound to get it. In the meanwhile, keep your eyes peeled for more stories from Stephen Tall. He's a man to watch.

Armageddon
 had begun
On the third stone
 from the Sun.

Time stood still
 the world had died
Past the ebbing
 of the entropical tide.

-- Anthony Napoli

THE ADVENTURES OF GRAYSON GREENSWARD

"Ah! There you are, Grayson. Sit down, Chico, and tell Mr. Greensward your story."

The small Peruvian boy's eyes gazed into Greensward's for an endless moment, and then he began in a clear steady voice with only a trace of accent.

There is a valley near where I live, in Peru. No one is sure that this valley is in Peru; some think it is in Colombia, or perhaps between Peru and Colombia; or in Brazil, or perhaps somewhere else. In the other valleys, it is always very wet; but in this valley it rains only a little, only enough for the avocados to grow: but Señor, they are the most delicious avocados I have ever tasted.

The other valleys are low at each end, but for this one, the mountains are high all around. A man came to me, Señor Greensward, a Señor Rijn, and he offered me much money to take him into this valley. I was never there before, but I agreed. He had a sack with him. It was closed. He would not let me touch it first, but soon I had to carry it all the time. It was very heavy. It took us a week to get up the mountains, me pulling the sack. Never again, I said to myself. But when we got to the top and I saw the sun rise, I knew I would do it again, for that.

In the middle of the valley, there was another mountain, but not as high, with a flat top and straight sides. When the Señor Rijn saw this, he was very excited. He wanted to go down right away. It was very hard for me, with the sack.

We took many days to get to the mountain in the middle. There were many avocados in the way. I am very good with speaking, I soon could talk with the people in the valley. I did not think the Señor learned too, but he did. The people told me there was a ring on the top of the mountain. When God made the valley, they said, he filled it with water, but when he washed his hands in it, his ring came off. The people did not give it back, until he promised that he would not make it so wet. He said, I leave my finger in the middle of the valley. Keep the ring on it. If the ring is on, I will be awake and remember my promise, but if you take it off, I will sleep and forget. The Señor heard too, but I did not know he understood.

We had to go up the mountain, and I had to pull the sack. Ah, I hated the Señor! But when I saw the ring -- it was large, around a big pole, in the center of the mountain -- I knew I would do it again, to see that, with two sacks.

Then the Señor talked to the priests. He had many things in the sack; he gave them much money, gold coins. They never saw gold before. He had a chain of gold coins, very big ones, very shining, to put around the pole instead of the ring. I would not take ten sacks of gold coins for that ring; the priests did not want to either, first, but he was a fast talker, that Señor Rijn...

I did not believe what the people in the valley told me; but I was still too scared to take the ring off the pole. The Señor had to do it himself. He put the chain of gold coins on first, and then he took the ring off and put it in the sack.

It happened very quickly. The priests, they looked almost happy when it started; very scared, but almost happy. But the Señor Rijn -- it was too fast. He looked at me, very strange; he said, "It's raining! It's pouring!!"

A ghastly look spread across Greensward's face. "No, no --"
"What could I say?" said Chico. "I said to him, 'The hauled money's no ring.'"

(To be continued)

--- Yarik P. Thrip

(with thanks to Michael Weiss)

NEBULA WINNERS: Novel -- RINGWORLD, by Larry Niven; Novella -- "Ill Met in Lankhmar," by Fritz Leiber; Novelet -- "Slow Sculpture," by Theodore Sturgeon; Short Story -- No Award.

And as long as we're on the subject, here are a few HUGO nominees: Novel: RINGWORLD; STAR LIGHT by Hal Clement; TAU ZERO by Poul Anderson; TOWER OF GLASS by Robert Silverberg; YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN by Wilson Tucker. Novella: "Beastchild" by Dean Koontz; "Ill Met in Lankhmar"; "The Region Between" by Harlan Ellison; "The Thing in the Stone" by Clifford Simak; "The World Outside" by Robert Silverberg.

(More HUGO nominees next issue.)

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