

Library's Annual Literary Award Presented to Lewis Gannett

D+C 5-11-62

Some pointed questions about Rochester were raised last night by a man who left the city five decades ago and returned yesterday to receive the Friends of the Rochester Public Library Sixth Annual Literary Award.

In reminiscing about his boyhood in Rochester for the approximately 300 persons who saw him accept the award, Lewis S. Gannett proudly said he has always felt he is a Rochesterian.

But, asked the author of four books, journalist and traveler, is the city that was the first in the nation to have a monument to a Negro keeping pace with racial progress? Can Negroes here, he asked, buy property where they like?

He called for progress around the banks of the Genesee River, asking why "there has been little" since he left the community. In the river and the gorge, he said, Rochester has a "heritage" and a "beautiful potential asset" that has no equal among other cities throughout the world.

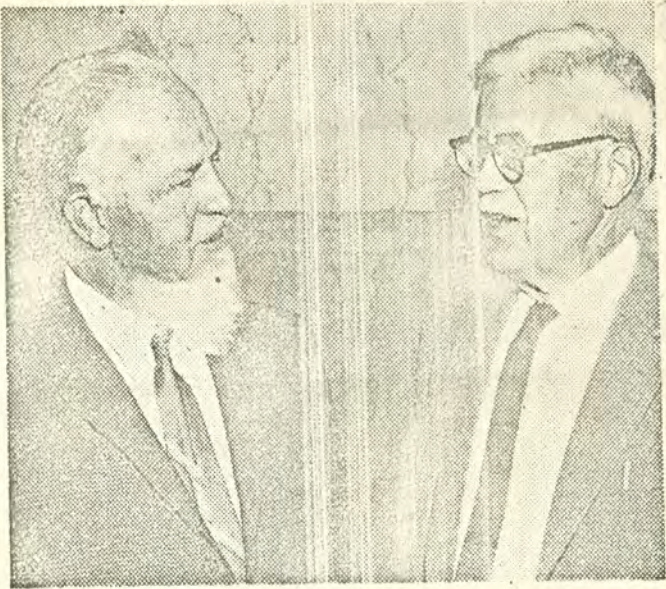
He cited the development of Midtown Plaza as a sign of progress, and praised the work of Karen Cilman, 14-year-old Brighton High School student who received the junior literary award during last night's ceremonies, as another.

While speaking about his boyhood here, Gannett described:

—Bobsledding behind trucks on East Avenue "way out to the country" in Brighton.

—Responding with all the other boys in his seventh grade class at "Shattegee College" (slang name for P.S. 23, which was in Park Avenue) to a plea for volunteers to help chase a cow out of the yard of a nearby home owner.

—Creeping from his bed



WRITERS CHAT—Rex Stout, left, author of Nero Wolfe stories, chats with friend, Lewis S. Gannett.

at night to listen to Susan B. Anthony talk with his mother and father about the women's suffrage movement in which she was a leader. Would such a person be looked upon as a crank today? he asked.

Gannett now is retired from the book-reviewing job with the New York Herald Tribune he held for 25 years. He also worked on the staff of The Nation magazine, as a reporter for the now defunct New York World and as a war and foreign correspondent. His books are "Young China," "Sweet Land," "Cream Hill" and "The Family Book of Verse."

Before addressing the audience at last night's ceremonies Gannett commented that he did not think "there's any sense in trying to suppress" Henry Miller's controversial book, "Tropic of Cancer."

More emphatic opposition to censorship was expressed by another speaker at last night's program, Rex Stout,

whose 50th Nero Wolfe detective book was published recently.

Wolfe said efforts to censor what people can read are "not justified in America."

Wolfe said he hated people who try to act as censors and described his long-time friend, Gannett, as a person incapable of hate who tries to stop such practices.

He said his long acquaintance with Gannett makes him look at the award recipient as a New Englander rather than a Rochesterian or Midwesterner. Gannett's outlook is a blend of interest in everything, doubt caused by reserve and experience, and a cheerful warmth.

This combination, Wolfe said, produces a "tenable and readable philosophy."

Wolfe expressed the hope that Gannett would produce a book a year for decades to come, and declared that as an author he agrees with other authors that the award recipient is "too good a writer to be a book reviewer."

Ban 'Just Calls Attention'

T-U 5-10-62

Lewis Gannett Recalls Censorship Didn't Work

By ANN SULLIVAN

When Lewis Stiles Gannett was a young boy in Rochester, he feasted on children's books.

But there was an adult fiction shelf available to him—with one exception.

His father, Rev. William Channing Gannett, Unitarian minister, advised him not to read Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

"Of course, it was the first one I read," Gannett said today. "It didn't make much sense to me."

Gannett, here to receive the annual literary award of the Friends of the Rochester Public Library at 8:15 tonight, made the point in connection with the controversy over Henry Miller's "Tropic of Cancer."

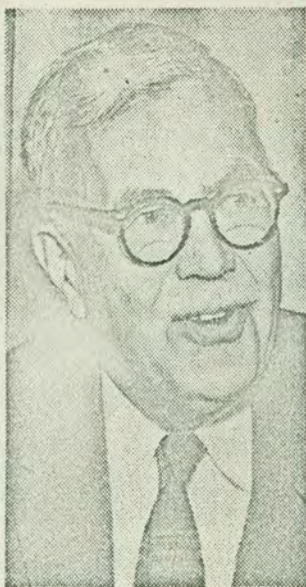
Censorship "just calls attention to something which otherwise might just slide by," said the retired book critic for the New York Herald Tribune.

He said that when he read Miller's book "a couple of years ago" he didn't think it would be published here. "I don't think it's a very good book," he said. "But I don't think there's any sense in trying to suppress it."

GANNETT, white-haired, white-mustached and bronze-skinned from his days on his Cream Hill farm in West Cornwall, Conn., (subject of his book "Cream Hill) belies his 70 years.

In retirement, he has been busy as a judge for book awards and as editor of the "Mainstream of America" series.

One of the authors he enjoys, and the only mystery writer he reads avidly, is Rex Stout, who will speak at the award ceremony at



LEWIS S. GANNETT

8:15 in Rundel Memorial Building.

He said Theodore White's Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Making of The President 1960" is "a wonderful book."

He feels that Katherine Anne Porter's "Ship of Fools" is a "pretty good book but I don't think it's worth all the furor."

ASKED about undeveloped fields in American literature, Gannett said, "I think in a very healthy way on the whole in the last 30 years, we have been re-exploring and re-discovering the American past."

He mentioned former literary award winners, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Carl Carmer, Bellamy Partridge and Dexter Perkins.

Maybe it's time to re-discover the present," he said. What we don't understand is the American present — we are bewildered by it. Perhaps we don't understand city life as well as we do country life."

He said reading is for pleasure and one of the "sins of reading" is to feel compelled to finish a book from which one is getting no nourishment.

Gannett, a graduate of East High and Harvard College, was Herald Tribune book reviewer from 1930 to 1956, when he retired. His wife, Ruth, who has illustrated many books, including "Cream Hill," is accompanying him.