

Andre Norton: Still Spirited at 76



C.N. Brown

ANDRE NORTON has now won both the Nebula Grandmaster Award and the World Fantasy Special Award. Although she is 76, an age at which most people are content just to rest, she is still excited about her writing projects and can communicate her enthusiasms to others. She is enjoying conventions and is looking forward to being Guest of Honor at the world convention in 1989. All this, thanks to what once seemed a serious misfortune....

In the early fifties, Norton gave up her twenty-year career as a children's librarian because of ill health. She spent the next 30 years practically housebound, working as a full-time writer. Recent changes in medication have improved her health, and she's able to get to more conventions. When she was presented with the Special World Fantasy Award at

Continued on page 74

Andre Norton

Continued from page 1

Nashville, she said, "I feel like I've come home and found a world with the people I've always known must exist."

Her background as a librarian is the secret of her success. She enjoys research. "There are only 10 basic plots, so research is very important. The 'Witch World' series started out as a crusader historical series, and I've used all the material I researched for it. The 'Witch World' books cover 200 years of history." They follow her belief that all civilizations rise to a certain point, and then collapse.

Others of her stories were influenced by post-World War II camps for displaced persons. She transferred this concept out into the galaxy, providing a way for her protagonists to escape and build a new life. She prefers to deal with loners who start out alienated from their society but usually find their place in the universe as they develop their abilities. Norton wrote works with minority lead characters and other untraditional figures long before it was trendy. Her heroes have included American Indians, handicapped persons, and animals.

She much prefers fantasy over science fiction for both reading and writing, even though most of her early success was in science fiction. She feels out of place in hard sf -- all her manuscripts are done on a typewriter, not a word processor, and she is still, after more than 50 years of writing, a three-finger typist.

The writers who have influenced her most are the adventure writers: A. Merritt, Talbot Mundy, H. Rider Haggard, and Ganpat.

Norton's next projects include a number of collaborations -- with Robert Bloch (a dark fantasy), Susan Schwartz (an oriental fantasy), and A.C. Crispin (the third "Gryphon" book). All three are currently on hold, awaiting work by her collaborators. She is also involved in **The Chronicles of Lormt**, a two-volume set of tales from the history of Witch World. Each

volume will contain two complete novels plus an introduction. Andre Norton will write the first novel and the introductions. The others will be written by Pauline Griffin, Patricia Malheus, and Mary Schaub. As for solo projects, Norton is working on a sequel to **Flight**

in Yiktor for Tor. And she also plans to put a Navajo singer/sand painter into the Witch World and "see what happens." Another fantasy will focus on jewels of power, expressing her lifelong fascination with crystals and gemology.