

in the final analysis

“Very bright was that sword when it was made whole again; the light of the sun shone redly in it, and the light of the moon shone cold. Its edge was hard and keen. And Aragorn gave it a new name and called it Andúril, Flame of the West.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

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As I write, the TMS 2015 Annual Meeting and Exhibition (TMS2015) is nigh upon us. This will be my 30th consecutive Annual Meeting, and each installment has been unique and exhilarating in its own way. Personally, I have experienced many, many memorable moments, such as the mangled pronunciations by a “professional” emcee at the awards ceremony in 2013 (San Antonio)—“non-furious” metallurgy (!); the TMS 50th anniversary celebration in 2007 (Disney World) with *JOM*’s Greatest Materials Moments revealed and the debut of the Materials Bowl; the somber special session on the World Trade Center collapse in 2002 (Seattle); the rare all-conference plenary on America’s Cup yacht racing materials in 1992 (San Diego) just weeks before San Diego hosted the America’s Cup finals; the Hall-Hérault centennial and debut of the exhibition in 1987 (Denver); and discovering a too-tasty drink called a “hurricane” in 1986 (New Orleans).

Of all of the meetings and all of the memories, I think that TMS2015 has the potential to be the most memorable yet and in all of the right ways.

For instance, TMS2015 will host an intriguing competition called Bladesmithing, where team entrants will present blades that they have fabricated and extensive detail on the fabrication techniques employed. Teams of students or artisans are eligible to compete for cash prizes. I knew that our volunteers behind the event had enthusiasm for blademaking, but I was unsure as to how many teams would enter. Five? That was my guess for a debut contest. Ten? That would be spectacular. Turns out that as I write, 27 teams have entered. Twenty seven. Remarkable! Why? Swords, for whatever reason, stimulate a lot of interest in the metallurgical community, being the classic heat-and-beat archetype that inescapably stirs our inner farrier and fires the imagination.

Materials from the imagination represent yet another reason why I am enthusiastic about TMS2015: The meeting will spotlight a new and wonderful *JOM* list designed to categorize that which has yet to be categorized and simultaneously fuel some friendly debate: The Greatest Materials Fiction Countdown. As you likely read in last month’s issue, the *JOM* team has been collaborating with volunteers to develop a list of fictional works that feature a strong materials component. Dozens upon dozens of submissions from readers were winnowed to a list of 25 top candidates, and voting is now underway to identify the top works of materials fiction. The voting closes on March 20th—right after the conclusion of TMS2015, where we will have displays to help attendees participate in voting. Would it surprise you to learn that about a third of the candidate volumes feature swords? Me neither. Just look to finalist *The Lord of the Rings* for an illustration. It is full of craftily named blades beyond the above-mentioned Andúril—Narsil, Glamdring, Sting, and others formed by elven smiths. The same goes for another nominee: *Song of Ice and Fire* (a.k.a. *A Game of Thrones*). Here you will find Ice, Needle, Oathkeeper, Longclaw, and more—many made from the Damascus-like Valyrian steel. I wonder how many of the Bladesmithing competitors will themselves bring named blades. That would be cool. Maybe we should come up with a special prize for ingenuity in this regard.

The 25 Greatest Materials Fiction finalists do represent a special prize of sorts as the publications will be the headliner of another new feature at TMS2015—a silent auction designed to benefit the TMS Foundation. The entire collection can be had in one swoop via a single bid. Yummy. I’m tempted, very tempted. And if the books don’t interest attendees, a suite of other special items, some thoughtfully donated by TMS members, will be available for bid. What a great way to benefit the good work of the TMS Foundation!

Blades . . . books . . . bidding . . . and the bounty that one normally expects from a TMS Annual Meeting and Exhibition. No wonder they call Walt Disney World “the happiest place on Earth.”



James J. Robinson
Executive Director

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