

## THE MEANING OF THE ÖRSI BÄRSI AWARD

Around May every year research in Theoretical Astrophysics bogs down slightly as people ponder the question: What is the meaning of the Örsi Bärzi award? Though no one actually has asked this question, it is important that it be answered and that the myth of Örsi Bärzi be set down.

Legend has it that many years ago in the place that we now call Caltech there lived a tribe called the Cohenim. The legend would have it that there dwelt with this tribe for some time a warrior who called himself Örsi Bärzi. The linguistic background of this name is clouded; it is certainly not from the language of the Cohenim. A strong case has been made that it originates in an isolated language group spoken by a very singular people. In this language, we are told, the name Örsi Bärzi means, as nearly as we can express it in English: fear of the covariant derivative .

According to the oral tradition passed down to us, young warriors would come in their late adolescence to dwell with the Cohenim, and to pass through a lengthy and painful rite, in order to attain the honor of being called Cheiftain, so that

they could go off into the world to gain honor, some even to become Chiefs and to collect tribute called 'grants' from the Council of the Tribes. This rite was to take four years, although many young warriors would dwell longer, some much longer.

During the ritual the young warrior would be guided by an older and, in some ways, wiser Chief of the Tribe who would protect him from all worldly concerns while the warrior honed his skills. Öcsi Bácsi himself in this manner became the charge of Kip Ess meaning 'face of the red hair' who was later known as Kenan, after the chair he sat in.

To become a chieftain the warrior would study the ways of the chief and help him with his hunts. The warrior would in this manner prepare himself. To complete the ritual he would need to make a kill on his own. Often the kill would require a few crucial arrows from the warrior's guiding chief, but it was traditional for the elders to turn their eyes from this.

The myth of Öcsi Bácsi tells us that his path was not an easy one. His hunt required many years and the preparation of many intricate traps<sup>§</sup>. With undiminished fervour Öcsi Bácsi pushed on. But the gods must have wanted to test Öcsi

Bácsi. When his hunt was well under way they sent to attack him the dreaded Buick which would smite him a mighty blow &.

Many months would pass before Öcsi Bácsi could again hunt. But hunt he did, and through the strength of his spirit became a Cheiftain, and later a medicine man in the land by the great river.

We are gather here today to remember the depth of his dedication and to celebrate the spirit which drives a young warrior to shun wordly pleasures, to accept a life of poverty and chastity in the perfection of his skills and in the puzuit of the hunt.

§ A fragment of the legend refers additionally to the dietary laws followed by Öcsi Bácsi, and in particular ~~the~~ abuse of paprika and steroids.

& One authoritative source relates that the gods sent an Oldsmobile instead of a Buick.