

This Issue's Membership Services Letter and Reply

Dear Ms. Silver,

Thank you so much for your recent letter. I understand how important your position is, and I thank you for taking your duties seriously.

Dear {member's name removed},

Thank you for appreciating why we have instituted this position: to answer letters just like the one you've written me.

Having said that, I must also say, that since my application for membership, I've been forced to reevaluate my continuing membership. I honestly hadn't realized that I was joining a 'service' organization, and nothing more than that.

I don't think I would characterize it as "nothing more than" a service organization. There are many activities centered around the writings of Robert Heinlein and our goal to pay his legacy forward.

I think as you find out more about them, you'll realize that a literary educational charity can do as many things as its membership wishes, limited only by the prohibitions generally applicable to a legally-defined non-profit charity.

If a mistake was made, I'm sure that it is entirely my fault, as I am rabidly a lifetime fan of Robert's work, and probably jumped at the chance to be a part of anything remotely attached to anything Heinlein. Unfortunately though, as a full-time care-giver for my parents, I have very little time to devote to extra-curricular activities - at least those that take me out of my home.

Many of our members are in similar situations. Some are retired, some are confined themselves, as Ginny Heinlein who founded the society was. Some very useful work is being done by us.

I was a little taken aback to come to the understanding that the Heinlein Society was 'solely' centered around organizing blood drives, facilitating a literary charity, and soliciting funds for the society. I believe my efforts in these areas would not be as productive as either the Society or myself could hope for.

Again, I wouldn't consider all the works that an educational charity can do to be limited. "Paying Forward" the legacy of Robert Heinlein can be done in as varied a manner as we can imagine. But we have to start with some fundamental activities, principally keyed toward membership advertising, otherwise we'd find ourselves dissipating into nothingness.

I was also more than a little disappointed to learn that there is not a structured forum, within the Society, where members can discuss the Heinlein's work.

Here is where I can give you some good news. Actually, among other activities that may interest you, there is a structured forum, supported and founded by the Society, where members do discuss Heinlein's work, and it is something that you can do within your home.

The Society has conducted for over five years the Robert Heinlein Reading Group on the Internet, on AIM chatroom software, usually meeting in live time four times monthly, and discusses selected topics from Mr. Heinlein's works. Recently, there has been a hiatus in meetings because of Mrs. Virginia Heinlein's death; but the meetings are announced on the newsgroup alt.fan.heinlein. I've attended the meetings and found them, myself, very good.

See, <http://home.alltel.net/dwightsr/heinlein.html>

Look under "Introduction" for a description of how the reading group functions, how to find the newsgroup where notices are posted, and how to obtain the freeware used to participate. E-mail Mr. Wright, whose address I've copied (dwrighsr@alltel.net) if you'd like to be added to his mailing list for announcements of meetings.

[Omitted additional question and reply]

As you said in your letter, the Society is not just a 'club' you can join, and so, if that is really true - and I find that I cannot contribute in furthering the traditions that Robert and Ginny espoused, then perhaps it's better that I withdraw my membership.

Additionally, I think you'll find a great many of the Society's activities, while devoted to charitable service, but not "merely" service, will afford you an opportunity to involve yourself.

[salutations and signatures omitted]

This letter was the exact sort of informative letter and reply I hope becomes a recurring feature in every issue. Have a question? Write or e-mail me, and I'll answer, or get the answer for you.

Committee Needs

I've asked each of our committee chairs to state for this article their most needed area of help. Here they are:

Blooddrives: Mike Sheffield needs to know of any local convention of 300 or more people where you think you could volunteer to help sponsor a blood-drive. E-mail: areopagan@earthlink.net.

Centennial: Peter Scott's urgent need is anyone willing to help recruit, organize, and coordinate volunteers for a grassroots, outreach campaign. E-mail: centennial@psdt.com.

Fundraising: Alan Milner needs people with money and lots of chutzpah. E-mail: sagemerlin@aol.com.

Education: Robert James needs teachers at any level and volunteers to serve as Heinlein panelists at conventions. E-mail: docjam00@aol.com.

Library: Anyone interested in helping reform the committee should contact David Silver. E-mail: ag.plusone@verizon.net.

Scholastic/Academic: Geo Rule needs help compiling a descriptive bibliography of every review, wherever published, of any Robert Heinlein work. E-mail: georule@civilwarstlouis.com.

Please let me and them know if you can help in any area.

Very truly yours,

Jane E. Silver

Membership Services