

GILBERT GROSVENOR, PUBLIC GEOGRAPHER



Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor.

THE MAN who, experts say, has done more than any one else in the country to popularize geography has just passed his 50th year of doing just that.

He is Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society, editor of the National Geographic Magazine and a man who has had named after him an Alaskan lake, an Antarctic mountain range, an island, a glacier, a trail, a fish, a sea shell, a lane, a mountain peak and a plant.

Last Thursday this mild-mannered, sprightly geographer was honored by his associates. He fittingly became the first to receive the new Gilbert Grosvenor Gold Medal, which will be awarded annually hereafter for outstanding service to geography.

"The chief," as he is known to his staff, thus rounded out a half-century of service to the National Geographic Society, which was founded here in 1888 to promote "the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge." The best evidence of his service in that cause was the growth through the years of the magazine's circulation—from a mere 1,000 in 1890, when he first became assistant editor, to the current monthly total of close to 2,000,000. He became editor-in-chief in 1903.

Appropriately enough, one of the sculptured devices on his medal is that of a nesting curlew, for it was in connection with that bird that he got what was probably his greatest thrill in a lifetime of association with flora and fauna. It was on the eve of the Republican convention last June that Dr. Grosvenor



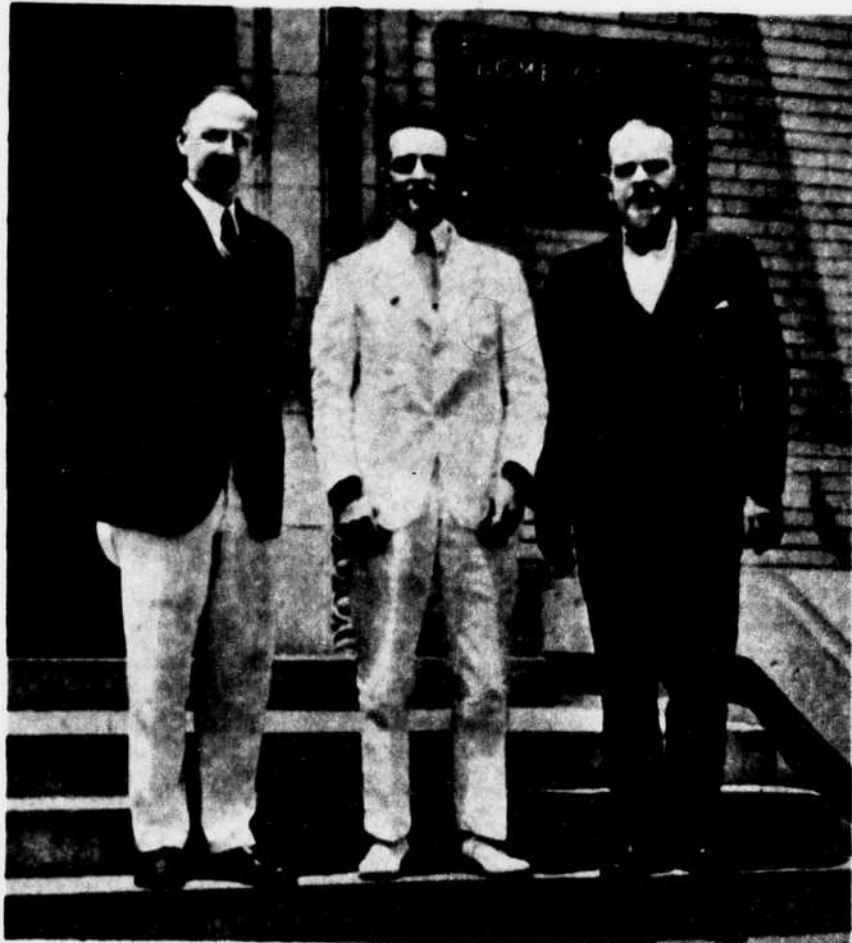
Leo W. Scott, Bureau of Standards; Dr. George Van Biesbroeck, Yerkes Observatory, Chicago, and Dr. Carl C. Kiess, Bureau of Standards, are "seen off" by Dr. Grosvenor. The expedition was to observe the solar eclipse in Brazil, May 20, 1947.

received a message which, for the moment at least, assumed greater significance than the naming of any political candidate. The message came from an expedition sent to Alaska to seek out the nesting habits of the curlew, the only North American bird whose breeding ground had not been located. The message read simply: "We have found the curlew's nest." This terse message represented the successful end of

a search that had been going on for 163 years. It naturally was a great moment for Dr. Grosvenor, himself an avid ornithologist who has been described as having "a passion for birds."

That expedition was but one of the many sponsored by the society to explore the world from pole to pole, from the ocean floor to the stratosphere.

Birds figured in another high light in the life of Dr.



Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd (center) with Dr. Grosvenor and Dr. John Oliver La Gorce, vice president of the Geographic Society, June 21, 1930, the day after Admiral Byrd received a medal from the organization.



At a luncheon for Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, December 12, 1945, The Star's cartoonist Clifford K. Berryman (front) sketched the honor guest, Dr. Lyman J. Briggs, chairman of the society's Research Committee, is at the right, and Dr. La Gorce at the left.



Amelia Earhart Putnam and Dr. Grosvenor at Constitution Hall, March 1, 1935, where Mrs. Putnam told a Geographic Society audience about her Pacific flights.