



SIGMA TAU DELTA

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY
Spring 2009

Storytellers: 2010 Sigma Tau Delta Convention

The Mexican people refer to them as cuentistas. In some parts of Japan, they are called kamishibai. Scéalai is the name given to them in Ireland. West Africans call them griots. What am I referring to? Storytellers . . . the theme for the International Sigma Tau Delta Convention to be held in St. Louis, Missouri, from March 17-20, 2010.

The state of Missouri, the Show Me State, has given us many fantastic authors: Mark Twain, Kate Chopin, Marianne Moore, Eugene Field, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou to name just a few. Just as these writers have contributed to the storytelling tradition, I encourage the members of our English Honor Society to contribute to the narrative thread of our existence, our experiences, our attempts to articulate into words the world around us. As Convention Chair, I invite all of you, and I challenge all of you, to spin a yarn and tell a tale for the 2010 Convention.

All of us are storytellers. We are connected through the power of story. The science fiction writer Ursula K. LeGuin once said, "The story—from 'Rumpelstiltskin' to *War and Peace*—is one of the basic tools invented by the human mind, for the purpose of gaining understanding. There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories." In other words, storytelling continues to be one of the oldest and most enduring ways to distribute knowledge.

Stories are unifying and thought provoking, and they remind us that we are far more similar than different.

In fact, it's been said that stories are similar to fairy gold. The more you give, the more you have, and the richer you are.

The economic and political upheaval we are currently experiencing will make the next few years difficult ones, and as the poet William Collins stated, "In unsettled times like these, when world cultures, countries, and religions are facing off in violent confrontations, we could benefit from the reminder that storytelling is common to all civilizations. Whether in the form of sprawling epic or a pointed ballad, the story is our most ancient method of making sense out of experience and of preserving the past." Stories are unifying and

thought provoking, and they remind us that we are far more similar than different.

St. Louis is the perfect location for our storytelling to take place. The city has been the home or the inspiration for many writers and works of literature, and its dynamic intellectual and literary tradition continues today. Furthermore, the 2010 Convention will be held at the newly renovated Hyatt Regency St. Louis Riverfront, situated in the central part of downtown St. Louis and adjacent to the Gateway Arch that stands at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. The view is spectacular.

The hotel is within walking distance of the Gateway Arch Riverboats (for sightseeing cruises) and the MetroLink, the region's light rail system, so that you can visit some of the city's points of interest including the Eugene Field House and Toy Museum, St. Louis Walk of Fame, City Museum, Science Center, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Old Courthouse, St. Louis Mercantile Library, and many other attractions. Like the famous 1944 musical, I hope you'll "meet me in St. Louis."

Carrie Fitzpatrick
Convention Chair
Alvernia University



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President's Corner

The Good Citizen

The news is not good, at least for those of us interested in pursuing careers in the humanities. The economic downturn has done a number on humanities departments.

The Modern Language Association (MLA), for instance, reported a 21% decline in job listings in the past year; the American History Association reported a 15% decline. According to Thomas H. Benton's recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Graduate School in the Humanities: Just Don't Go" (30 January 2009), those numbers may, in fact, be low. The actual decline, once cancelled searches are factored in, may be close to 40%. Full-time, tenure-track appointments continue to decline, and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has reported that part- and full-time faculty off the tenure track otherwise known as "contingent faculty" now make up 65% of all faculty across the board. In English departments, where first-year composition courses are regularly assigned to graduate assistants and adjunct faculty, we can imagine that the statistics are even higher. The current recession has led to hiring freezes and accelerated the erosion in the roles faculty play in institutional governance (see Robin Wilson, "Downturn Threatens the Faculty's Role in Running Colleges," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 6 February 2009).

No, the news is not good. I suspect that most of us who hold tenure-track positions would have little hope of being hired were we on the job market today. It's hard to know what to say to graduating seniors applying to graduate school. Their chances of landing a tenure-track appointment seven to ten years from now, when they finally manage to complete their degrees, seem slim at best.

Sigma Tau Delta has certainly not been immune to the deleterious effects of the economic downturn, at least in some regards. We have been, historically, recession-resistant, at least with regard to membership. We continue to attract new members, perhaps because of pressures in the job market, especially for humanities majors. Membership in an honor society confers distinction and may provide an advantage, open a door, distinguish you from the competition. Convention submissions soared this year, easily outpacing last year's record numbers, which broke the record from the previous year.

On the down side, however, the value of our investments has fallen approximately 40%. The slide was slowed by the efforts of our financial managers, but the fall was inevitable. We seem

The opportunities the chapter has provided our members to enter into the intellectual life of the discipline, to engage in meaningful public service, to take leadership roles in the department—to be good citizens, not just successful students but active, engaged members of the community—represent the real value of Society membership.

somewhat better positioned to handle the downturn this time around than in past years, but I can't help but worry.

While career paths and employment possibilities, especially in higher education, seem more uncertain than ever, an undergraduate degree, especially in the humanities, seems more critically important now than ever before. The economic pressures and expenses of tuition have for a long time focused attention on credentialing and vocational education. The majority of students majoring in English in my department are English education and professional writing majors; English literature majors represent the smallest of our four concentrations. Certification, not education, seems the primary goal in most cases.

What we need to remember, however, is the larger civic function of education, that we are producing citizens, not "certificated personnel," as the holders of teaching certificates are referred to in some school districts. James Loewen, for instance, has argued that the study of history provides the essential tools of citizenship

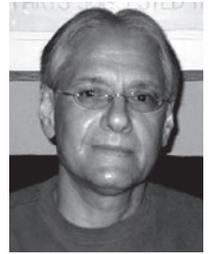
in a democratic society: "Moreover, learning how to do (not just read) history involves researching, interviewing, critical reading, winnowing fact from opinion, and coming to conclusions based on evidence.

This is precisely what citizens must do in order to determine what America should do next. History is not just analogous to our job as Americans. It is homologous. The skills are the same" ("Patriotism, Nationalism, and Our Jobs as Americans," in Joel Westheimer, ed., *Pledging Allegiance: the Politics of Patriotism in America's Public Schools*, p. 62). These are the same skills that study in English emphasizes.

I initially became an advisor of our Sigma Tau Delta chapter because I could see the potential role the chapter might play as an agent for positive change in our department and in the lives of our students. Conferring distinction seems the least important part of Society membership. The opportunities the chapter has provided our members to enter into the intellectual life of the discipline, to engage in meaningful public service, to take leadership roles in the department—to be good citizens, not just successful students but active, engaged members of the community—represent the real value of Society membership. I would hope that we are always about more than passing out pins. Citizenship, not certification, seems the key point.

Bob Crafton
President

Slippery Rock University, PA



Submit Your Work—Call for Submissions: Sigma Tau Delta Journals

See our new submissions process! See our new look!

Sigma Tau Delta publications is accepting submissions until Friday, May 8, 2009. Our submissions process is now fully online at: <http://www.english.org/sigmatd/publications/>

Who can apply? All currently-enrolled undergraduate and graduate members of active Sigma Tau Delta chapters are invited to submit their work to *The Sigma Tau Delta Review* and *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*. Chapter sponsors, faculty members, alumni (including members of the Alumni Epsilon chapter), and honorary members are not eligible to submit. Contributors who win overall awards will also receive a monetary prize as well as publication.



Do You Have a Mellon Appetite?

A Lifetime of Scholarship with Sigma Tau Delta and the Andrew Mellon Foundation

Christiana Pinkston Betts
Alpha Beta Zeta Chapter Advisor
Hampton University



Have you a desire to feast on possibilities beyond the esteemed Sigma Tau Delta organization? Do you hunger for the chance to chew on ripe opportunities that might very well lead to sweet success?

If you find yourself salivating for that special *something* to satisfy your taste for high academic achievement, grab a slice of the Andrew Mellon Foundation. It offers grants in six particular areas: higher education and scholarship, scholarly communications, research in information technology, museums and art conservation, performing arts, and conservation and the environment. One of these programs just might offer that juicy opening for which you have so yearned and be a delicious complement to your Sigma Tau Delta interests as well.

Thirty-four colleges and universities, in addition to United Negro College Fund (UNCF) institutions, participate in the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) Program of the Andrew Mellon Foundation (www.usc.edu/student-affairs/MMUF). MMUF encourages and develops the skills of effective teaching and sound research of “under-represented” minority students—Native Americans, African-Americans, and Latinos/Latinas—from California to Cape Town, South Africa, in an effort to “increase the number of minority students and others with a demonstrated commitment to eradicating racial disparities, who will pursue Ph.D.s in core fields in the arts and sciences” (www.mmuf.org).



From left to right, are Ebone McFarland, Noelle Gipson, Christiana Pinkston Betts, and Shekesia Joyner.

Furthermore, the program provides stipends to Mellon fellows to do literature-based research, purchase books, and travel to summer programs and conferences in the United States and abroad.

Four members of the Alpha Beta Zeta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia, are Mellon fellows, and each has a specific interest of study with MMUF. Junior English major Christiana Pinkston Betts is exploring elements of Taoism in Chinese and Chinese-American literature. Senior English major and vice president of the Alpha Beta Zeta

Chapter Noelle Gipson is examining how adolescents use language in adolescent literature. Senior English major Shekesia Joyner explores the supernatural in Toni Morrison’s works, and Senior English major and activities chair of the Alpha Beta Zeta Chapter Ebone McFarland is tracing the “mammy” figure in American literature.

You might ask, “How do Sigma Tau Delta and MMUF relate?” Christiana Pinkston Betts shares, “While Sigma Tau Delta focuses on campus and community service, Mellon focuses on professional development through teaching and research.” Adds Shekesia Joyner, “Both organizations concern themselves with the community and require a great deal of dedication and commitment.” Noelle Gipson affirms that each is “a dedicated body of scholars who are passionate about reading and writing.”

Sigma Tau Delta and Mellon programs require high academic achievement, encourage and support students to pursue their interests in English and other liberal arts, and emphasize the need for students to publish their works at the undergraduate level. Ebone McFarland agrees, “Like UNCF Mellon, Sigma Tau Delta prepares and enables undergraduate students to pursue their career goals by providing scholarships, publication opportunities, and conferences that mold undergraduates for graduate study and beyond.”

These women credit their eminent Hampton University English professor, Dr. Ameer Carmine, for introducing them to MMUF. “Students commit to a lifetime of scholarship with Sigma Tau Delta and with the Mellon program,” asserts Carmine. Additionally, she states, “The Mellon reinforces the scholarship potential of Sigma Tau Delta members and encourages long-term research and Ph.D. study. Students develop life-long friendships while networking and researching with other Mellon fellows/peers as well as mentors. There is much support, fellowship, and exchanging of ideas.”

Benjamin E. Mays, noted educator, prominent social activist, esteemed scholar, former long-time president of Morehouse College, and distinguished African-American minister, for whom the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program was named, makes clear, “It is not what you keep, but what you give that makes you happy. We make our living by what we get. We make our life by what we give. Whatever you do, strive to do it so well that no one living and no one dead, and no one yet to be born can do it any better. As we face the unpredictable future, have faith that humans and God will assist us all the way.”

Pinkston Betts, Gipson, Joyner, and McFarland elect to absorb Mays’ wisdom and satisfy their Mellon appetite. Like these young scholars, will you nourish your mind and feed your heart’s desire(s) by grasping the delectable opportunities that await you? Partake in a banquet of hot sources. The time to “dig in” is now!

Sorcerer's Apprentices: How Writers Really Work

If you've had the chance to read any work by Andre Dubus, you would probably agree that he writes beautifully. When talking about his process, though, Dubus frustrates the hell out of me. It's not that I have a problem with his method. He tends to work languidly, taking his time. This would never work for me, but there are plenty of good ways to write fiction. What bothers me is the way he talks about his process. He talks in "The Habit of Writing" about "becoming the word," about how when his stories don't move forward well, they are telling him to stop. It seems to me that Dubus, like many writers, has bought into a belief that there is something mystical and unexplainable about writing.

Ideas like this are pretty prevalent. If you've seen *Stranger than Fiction*, you probably remember Emma Thompson's character getting writer's block and being unable to finish her novel—that is until one day it just comes to her, and in her words, "like anything worth writing, it came inexplicably and without method." The character seems to be suggesting that writers don't really have any control. Like the Muses of the Greeks, we are at the whim of unexplainable forces when we write, and ideas will come "from wherever they come," as Dubus says.

This mysticization of the craft seems pretty harmless, but it's been a source of frustration for me when I sit in classrooms and hear educated men and women say things like "all writers must be crazy. How else do they come up with their ideas?" or "Can creative writing really be taught? Aren't people just born that way?"

Sure, some of the writer's craft comes from talent and an inborn love for words. But a great deal of it comes from work. Where Dubus describes writing as a type of zen archery, I have a friend who points out that he has dug ditches and written stories, and

Picturing English: Learning Through ESL

Have you ever tried to draw a picture of a preposition? Or illustrate a subjunctive mood? This summer, I ventured into an internship that presented these exact challenges, challenges I had never faced as an English major. I interned as a professional writing tutor at the State University of New York (SUNY), primarily working with English as a second language (ESL) students. Through this internship, what I realized was the extent to which English language concepts have become internalized, not only by me, but by most English scholars.

This internship rocked the foundation of my own language knowledge. Not only did I assist students of all levels with academic papers, but I was inspired to keep pace in my own learning as well. I researched ESL teaching methods and was challenged to think around concepts, rather than just deliver them. For example, I often explained the concept of prepositions, such as "about" and "of," to students whose native language does not have them. Many of the students I worked with were from the Dominican Republic, where Spanish is the native language. In their case, the word "en" serves both as "in" and "on." I had many students who repeatedly interchanged "in" and "on" in their writing. In fact, one student told me that it was hard to remember the two words ("in" and "on") because there was only one letter difference. The students placed emphasis on the sound and spelling of the words rather than their meanings.

For native speakers, it is hard to imagine English without prepositions. I found this concept especially challenging to teach. Of course, I reverted to my elementary English class



Micah Hicks
Student Advisor
Southern Arkansas University

doesn't see a lot of difference between the two. Not only does this not sound mystical, it doesn't sound particularly exciting, either. Ditch digging sounds hard, tedious, like something you don't always want to do but know needs to be done. Rather than it just happening given enough time, you are aware every moment of how much effort you're putting into it to make it work. There are other writers who use this digging metaphor. Stephen King advises beginning writers to keep working, even when they feel like they are only "shoveling shit."

I don't think any rational person who has written before would deny that writing is work, at least not when asked outright. But when we think of writing, we're a lot more likely to think of muses before we think of shovels. Maybe it's because of the feeling we get when we read something that really speaks to us, something that closes our throat and leaves our eyes hanging onto the last word. Or maybe it's the uncanny way that sometimes a really good idea seems to fall from somewhere and settle inside our heads. There are things we don't understand, but I believe writing has a lot more to do with moving dirt than with becoming words (whatever that means).

I wonder, though, if all the mysticism that we attribute to writing doesn't serve an important purpose. I think we use it to trick ourselves into making writing more fun. Because even though janitors and sorcerer's apprentices both push mops, one of them seems a lot more exciting.



Mia Starmer
Alpha Mu Kappa Chapter
Marist College

days. I first drew a picture of every place a mouse could go in order to explain the simple prepositions. But what about words like "about"? In the instance of "about," I tended to use the same tactic and found that it worked. I instructed the students to write a word on a small balloon. If the word, for example, was "Lunch," then I wrote on a piece of paper: "I am thinking about lunch." Then the students wrote down everything associated with lunch, to include lunch options, location, what they did and did not want to eat, whom they would be eating with, if they would prepare their own lunch, and so on. When the students finished the list, I explained that the ideas in their list were included in the word "about." Sometimes, the students were skeptical and would pick a more familiar sentence or starting word, but the explanation usually worked.

For native speakers of English, these concepts are internalized. We know them, but can we explain what we know so others will understand? As English majors, we consider ourselves to be experts of our own language. We write "A" papers, or brilliant poetry, and we even play around with meaning, structure, and syntax when exercising our poetic licenses. But I believe that breaking down our knowledge and reverting to the fundamental structure of our English language system may allow us to reach our full potential as scholars with a much stronger appreciation of our language.

“Revenge of the Banned”: Celebrating Literary Freedom

The Alpha Epsilon Pi chapter at the University of New Mexico (UNM) commemorated Banned Book Week with an afternoon of lectures, entitled “Revenge of the Banned: A Celebration of Literary Freedom.” This event featured four members of the UNM faculty whose teaching and scholarship address banned material. Students, faculty, and community members heard about how texts have been distorted, bowdlerized, and suppressed. They also learned about efforts to free texts from censorship.

Dr. Michael Thomas, who teaches courses on banned books for the University honors program, introduced the event. In place of a general history, Dr. Thomas offered a personal perspective on the field. Though an anthropologist by training, he became interested in censorship when he was required to bowdlerize a public radio adaptation of his first novel. Thomas explained that more recent censorship has focused on non-literary texts and institutions, including scientific research, education, media, public policy, and the military. He detects the emergence of “parallel universes”—one private or theological, the other public, secular or commercial—that are increasingly polarized and actively seeking another’s destruction.

Three speakers addressed the court’s role in censorship. Dr. Mary Power, professor of Irish literature, talked about the “unmailability” of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. (The U.S. Postal Service refused to transport Joyce’s controversial novel.) In a landmark case, Judge John M. Woolsey of the Southern District of New York lifted this ban, arguing that *Ulysses* is not obscene but “a somewhat tragic and very powerful commentary on the inner lives of men and women.” Dr. Matthew Hofer,



Marissa Greenberg
Faculty Sponsor
The University of New Mexico

professor of British and American Modernism, discussed Langston Hughes’s trial before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Drawing on Hughes’s poetry and F.B.I. archives, Hofer argued that for both the right and the left—that is, the U.S. government and the Communist Party—Hughes’s value lay in his polemical power, not in any political position. Dr. David Richard Jones, professor of modern drama and Shakespeare, outlined key censorship cases from the 1950s and 1960s. These cases centered on books now widely considered among the twentieth century’s most important, including *Howl*, *The Tropic of Cancer*, and *Naked Lunch*. As Jones related, scholars, critics, and publishers were summoned as expert witnesses on the “literary merit” and “social value” of these books.

Each speaker noted that banning books invests them with new power, heightened appeal, and wider audiences—what Thomas dubbed “paradoxical framing.” It is perhaps not surprising that a book’s success is due to a particular mix of controversial content, aesthetic innovation, and intellectual rigor. Alpha Epsilon Pi intends to hold more events at UNM, like “Revenge of the Banned,” that offer this winning combination!

“Revenge of the Banned: A Celebration of Literary Freedom” was organized by the officers of Alpha Epsilon Pi: Rachael Geary, President; Elizabeth Cheatham and Rick Raab-Faber, Co-Vice Presidents; Amber Swanson, Secretary; and Jazmine Royall, Historian.

We encourage you to submit your work to a variety of journals. Here is a listing of journals focusing on undergraduate writing besides the Sigma Tau Delta journals.

Journals that Seek Undergraduate Student Critical and Creative Writing

Certainly many journals take excellent writing, but these journals look explicitly for undergraduate student writing. If you know of journals that should be on this list, please email: sigmataudeltajournals@snc.edu

The Albion Review: Albion College (MI) literary magazine. <http://www.albion.edu/review>

The Allegheny Review: Allegheny College (PA) creative journal. <http://merlin.allegheny.edu/dept/english/groups.html>

Analecta: University of Texas creative journal. <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Stadium/6514/analecta.html>

Blood Ink: University of Alberta (Canada) creative journal. <http://www.ualberta.ca/~jekerr/>

Collision Literary Magazine: University of Pittsburgh creative journal. <http://www.pitt.edu/~collide/index.htm>

Illuminations: Schreiner University (TX) online creative journal. <http://students.schreiner.edu/illuminations>

MOSAIC: University of California–Riverside An art and literary journal. <http://mosaic.ucr.edu/main/?q=node/7>

North Central Review: North Central College (IL) creative journal. <http://orgs.northcentralcollege.edu/review/>

The Oswald Review: University of South Carolina–Aiken critical journal. <http://www.usca.edu/english/pubs/oswald/oswald.html>

Young Scholars in Writing—Undergraduate Research in Writing and Rhetoric: Pennsylvania State University–Berks critical journal. <http://www.bk.psu.edu/Academics/Degrees/26830.htm>

Yahoo.fr, Anyone?: The Challenges of an International Service Project

How can I help my former African students gather current research materials in English? That was my question when I came home in 2006 from my Fulbright visiting professor position in Burkina Faso.

Although the dean of my college wanted to help, neither he nor I could solicit anything from my own colleagues. I decided I would have to find some other method to help the students who have nothing but Yahoo.fr as a research tool.

Enter Tau Theta, our small chapter affiliated with Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society. My students in Tau



Dr. Rebecca Belcher-Rankin at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Africa, December, 2005. These students were some of those that benefited from the research materials sent to them the following years.

Theta at Olivet Nazarene University needed a service project; my former African students needed research materials. For fourth year students at the University of Ougadougou, their memoir projects, which approximate senior honors projects for us, required enough materials to do a paper between 50 to 100 pages. Topics ranging from the impact of the Bush environmental policies on the U.S. economy, to the thematic and stylistic considerations of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, to Hip Hop as an exploration of Black identity, to Malcolm X's contribution to the civil rights movement meant that we needed to do extensive research.

After we had received the topics, but before we began our research, we encountered the problem of copyright. Our librarians reminded us that we would break the law by copying research materials for general consumption. We decided that, if each of our members paired with a particular student who would receive the set of materials, we could solve the problem of copyright infringement. Each of our students was acting as a proxy for a student who could not access databases.

On a cold, snowy night early in 2007, we opened the English computer lab, chose topics that satisfied our curiosity, sat down at the computers, and electronically assaulted our library databases. Our parameters were to find and copy, with correct MLA citation material, at least ten sources for each topic. To make sure that we didn't languish while doing the work, we ate pizza and cookies and drank many sodas. Three hours later we had most of the topics completed. A later research session finished the work.

Then came the tricky part: getting the materials to the students. The only way to ensure that the materials would arrive at the university for distribution was to send packages to the Fulbright professor. Several hours of weighing papers and several postage dollars later, ten packages were on their way. Two weeks later we heard that the Fulbright professor had distributed all the materials. Our work was complete—for that year.

This spring we are again researching, printing copies, and packing envelopes to send to current fourth year students. For the first time, I will not know the students' names. They will have begun university since I was there, but they will need our help to research topics that they can't get from Yahoo.fr sites.

Dr. Rebecca Belcher-Rankin, professor of American literature, is co-sponsor with Prof. David Johnson of the Tau Theta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at Olivet Nazarene University, located in Bourbonnais, IL. The chapter won the international service award at the 2008 convention for the research partnership with the University of Ouagadougou. The cash award went to the English department library at the university located in Burkina Faso.

Great Illustrations From Literature

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood (1883)
Author and Illustrator: Howard Pyle

We all know the myth of Robin Hood, the rogue who steals from the rich and gives to the poor. But what you might not know is how Robin Hood has been illustrated through the ages. The most successful of all the Robin Hood illustrations has been that of Howard Pyle. Howard Pyle's revival of Robin Hood in his *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883) placed Robin Hood in the foreground of children's adventure literature. Howard Pyle's career ranged from magazine commissions to famous works he both wrote and illustrated. If it weren't for Howard Pyle, the rough wandering rogue wouldn't be such an enthralling figure still today.



Putting on a Regional Conference: If You Build It, They Will Come (Or, Maybe I Have Watched Too Many Old Movies)

Although it is brisk outside, inside all of our coats and scarves and gloves had been shed. Only about two dozen people, spread out in small clusters of twos and threes, dot the seating in the conference hall that used to house the entire library of our college. It is a quarter after the hour we set to begin our conference. The din has subsided, and the blur of red and black has settled into a still array of distinct individuals. Claudia, our president, looks for my signal and steps from the sidelines to the front of the room. I begin to muse over the last nine months.

What made me think we could pull this off? Months ago, in a hotel room in Louisville, at the last national $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ conference, a hint of an idea, not yet fully formed, came to me. I was Mickey Rooney and the students were Judy Garland; “Hey, Gang! Let’s put on a conference!” We had the entire campus as our “back yard,” and Sigma Tau Delta, the National English Honor Society (NEHS) for high schools, and the Mount Mary College administration all pitched in to “back our production.” I’d seen several Rooney–Garland collaborations succeed; I was sure we’d be a hit. So, we were going to host a high school literary conference.



Chi Epsilon Chapter hosts a conference

What follows is a montage of us working, representing months of meetings and mailings and more meetings. We looked up the chairs of high school English departments. We photocopied Calls for Papers. And then the envelopes . . . we came, we stuffed, we licked. We followed up with phone calls and e-mails. We waited. What if we built it and nobody came, our members asked. Too many post-modern movies can have that effect on a student body. They should watch more musicals from the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. All of them have happy endings.

The first submissions arrived . . . a package of six! I was little Natalie Wood as Susan Walker when the first letters came in to

Wendy A. Weaver
Chi Epsilon Chapter
Mount Mary College



the courtroom addressed to Kris Kringle; this was our *Miracle on Menomonee River Parkway*. We were indeed going to host a high school conference. We needed at least 12 participants to call it a conference. We got three times that. Out of the 50 some-odd students who sent in submissions, 36 would be presenting at our conference, many bringing friends and family members to our campus.

Another montage. Throughout the summer we met to read the submissions. Picture jury scenes from a dozen different movies. Heads together, transcripts on the table, students, faculty, and alum alike deliberate on the merits of the submissions, and merits there were. All of us were impressed with the quality of work submitted. But even more rewarding was our college students’ assessment of the high school students’ writing. We as faculty were impressed with how attentive our college students were to the minute and subtle details that recommend one paper over another. Undergraduate and graduate students alike would improve their writing through this process. I was Julie Andrews twirling atop a mountain. The Mount (as we call the hill our campus sits on) was alive with the sound of music . . . and rhetoric . . . and creativity.

A rustling jolts me out of my reverie. I am back outside the conference hall. All heads turn toward what becomes an outright clamor. It is the rest of our presenters. Two buses and a car-load of students had been held up in traffic. They are now rushing towards us, and we rapidly re-form our earlier welcoming gauntlet. We have extra presenters and need to find panels for them. What a problem to have. I am Ethel Merman belting out “There’s No Business Like Show Business.” It’s on with the show.

I’m not sure that all of the black and white movies I grew up with are out on hi-def, Blu-ray DVD yet, but I wish they were. Something of their optimism must have been deeply instilled in me as I sat, as a little girl, cross-legged in front of the television, so close I’d “burn my eyes out.” That’s what it takes to host a high school literary conference: pluck and optimism, grit and great expectations. And some encouragement, support, and perspective from above (in this case from Mount Mary College, the NEHS, and both the regional and national $\Sigma\tau\Delta$). Give it a try. After all, it’s a wonderful life.

Are you interested in writing a piece for *The Newsletter*?

Our newsletter informs our members about what’s exciting in the Society. Besides Society updates, regular features, and articles on the International Convention, *The Newsletter* includes:

- * interesting chapter activities,
- * noteworthy student and alumni accomplishments, and
- * compelling service projects –provocative issues related to majoring in English.

For full submission guidelines: <http://www.english.org/sigmatd/publications/newsletter.shtml>
Deadlines: August 15 for fall; February 15 for spring.

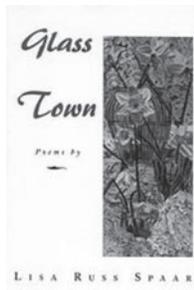
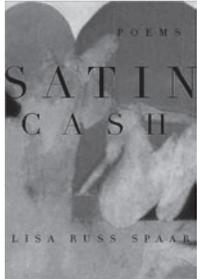




Lisa Russ Spaar, Poet,
Professor, and Judge,
Sigma Tau Delta
Journals, 2009.

Lisa Russ Spaar is
the author of *Satin
Cash* (Persea Books,
2008), *Blue Venus:
Poems* (Persea Books,

2004) and *Glass Town: Poems* (Red Hen
Press, 1999), among a number of other
publications. She is Professor of English
and Director of the area program in poetry
writing at the University of Virginia. Spaar
is the judge for the 2009 Sigma Tau Delta
journals and has generously allowed us to
publish this new poem.



Acattolica Cemetary, Rome

“Should he die the law will
demand him to be opened”

– Severn, of Keats

Feverish at dawn, he'd produced two cups,
fawn mucous streaked with blood

as Bernini's frozen Fontana ravished
with phantom, bacchanal fleams of bloodletting

his lawless head. The blue ink of her hand:
I come – I see, as thou standest there – ,

unopened letters sewn at last within.
Under cover of first light, by Roman law,

two bells opening the day's mouth,
life shouldered him over stairs, through streets,

to plotted daisies, violets, shades
in alien turf while police began their work

of scraping floors, walls, sills,
consuming his bed & door, but not before

they'd split – in Y-shaped flaps, from shoulders
to pubis, into unfathomed lesioned rags

of phthisic thorax, lungs & half-strung cave –
his vassal body, his corpus nightingale.



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Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award
Marion Quirici,
“‘Behind the Cotton Wool’: The Social
Unconscious in *Mrs. Dalloway*”

Eleanor B. North Poetry Award
Mary Bush,
“On the Comal (New Braunfels, Texas)”

Herbert Hughes Short Fiction Award
Stephen Janes,
“Earplugs”

Elizabeth Holtze Creative Nonfiction Award
Arshia Unk,
“Faded and Bronzed”

Judson Q. Owen Award for Best Piece Overall
Mary Bush,
“On the Comal (New Braunfels, Texas)”