



Midwestern Region Fall 2006 Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- Sponsor and Website Award applications are due November 30th.
- The 2007 International Annual Convention is in Pittsburgh; check out page 5 for an article.

Inside this issue:

- 2006 Midwestern Regional Conference Report 1
- Conference Report continued 2
- Call for Articles
- Message from the Regent 3
- Message from the Student Representative 4
- 2007 International Convention Highlights 5

Midwestern Regional Conference-2006

Just over a week ago the Theta Zeta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire hosted the 2006 Midwestern Regional Conference. The idea for having a regional conference at Eau Claire was originally suggested at the international convention in Kansas City in 2005 by the immediate past Regent, Todd Martin, and the former Midwestern Student Representative, Traci Thomas-Card. As the baton of leadership passed at the convention in Portland, UW-Eau Claire received it. (The Midwestern Regent, the Student Representative, and the Assistant Student Representative are all at UW-Eau Claire right now.) So the dedication to having UWEC host the 2006 Midwestern Regional Conference increased, especially with Eau Claire's Theta Zeta chapter celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Planning began in the spring of 2005 with a commitment from the University of Wisconsin's English department for rooms and materials, a commitment from the Midwestern Regent Todd Martin for funds, and encouragement from the

Sigma Tau Delta Board. By the time of the spring 2006 national convention in Portland, the call-for-papers was ready to distribute. Thus began a long six-month process to make all the arrangements and plans for the convention.

We made arrangements with a local hotel for a conference rate, reserved rooms for the meetings, selected a menu for the dinner and reserved a room for that. We set up a conference website and posted conference information and links from the national Sigma Tau Delta website. Then we found email and mail addresses for all Sigma Tau Delta chapters in the Midwestern Region, and for all English departments in the Midwestern Region without an active Sigma Tau Delta

chapter (YET). Then we added registration information to the call for papers, and mailed and emailed everyone on our lists. All in all, the planning and preparations paid off.

The conference was a great success. There were 31 presenters representing 17 schools and seven states. Nine Sigma Tau Delta chapters were represented but there many students from schools lacking a chapter. Students presented on topics ranging from Mario Party to the role of women in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to the representation of men in advertisements to the popularity of "bodice rippers" in romance literature.

Continued on next page



Midwestern Regional Conference Continued

“Popular Culture” took on many different faces, whether it was someone reading a poem, a short story, or a paper on photography. The papers were all wonderful and each person brought a unique idea to the conference, and many were very entertaining as well. Everyone in attendance was impressed by the variety of topics and by the quality of the research and the creativity of the poems and stories and readings.

On Friday night we hosted a buffet of southwestern flavors followed by story telling by Professor Emeritus August Rubrecht. He entertained the crowd with tales of the exploits of the Widow Fleet, a character drawn from his experiences growing up in rural Arkansas. The student newspaper took many photos to accompany the article that appeared in the next issue on

the following Monday.

All seven sessions of the conference were well attended and well presented. The biggest crowd attended on Saturday for the poetry and pizza session which was most tasty, from both literary and digestive points of view. We had breaks between sessions for snacks and coffee and other beverages, and everyone greatly appreciated these chances to network, share chapter ideas, exchange emails, and make plans to meet in Pittsburgh. At our final break, Saturday afternoon, we had coffee and a lovely (and huge) cake to celebrate the conference and the 50th anniversary of the Theta Zeta chapter.

We think we can humbly say that the conference was a complete success. We would like to thank everyone who came to the conference, both the presenters and the listeners.

Much of the information about the conference, including a PDF of the program, is still available on the Theta Zeta’s website: <http://www.uwec.edu/sigtaude/index.html>. Here you can download your own copy in case you lost one or were unable to attend. Each attendee received a conference button with an original design by Dan Hardy. We have some extra buttons and we are not sure what exactly what we’re going to do with them, but you might see them at the international convention in Pittsburgh!

Dan Hardy, Midwestern SR,
and Gloria Hochstein, Midwestern Regent



*Thanks to everyone
for a great
conference.
Be sure to apply
early to the 2007
International
Convention in
Pittsburgh.
Papers are due
November 30th.*

Highlight Your Chapter, Activities, and Articles

We’re looking to expand the newsletter! To do this we need your help. We are seeking people who would like to write articles for the newsletter. Perhaps you’ve recently read a good book that you want to share with others, or maybe you want to recognize someone within your chapter who has done some excellent work. There are a lot of possibilities for articles.

We also want to provide an outlet to share information about the different chapters. In the next newsletter we’d like to in-

clude at least one chapter highlight (to learn all about a particular chapter) and one sponsor highlight (to learn all about a sponsor). To include these we need your writing skills!

If you are interesting in writing an article, please submit to hardydp@uwec.edu before April 1st, 2007.

Dan Hardy,
Midwestern SR

Sigma Tau Delta
The International English Honor Society

Gloria Hochstein, Midwest Regent

Much of my focus for September and October went into the October 20–21st regional conference, which was a great success. Special thanks to the efforts of the Theta Zeta chapter, and especially president of the chapter, Dan Hardy, who is also, not coincidentally, the Student Representative for the Midwestern Region. The October 30th deadline for the scholarship and award applications also has passed (and, no, late applications are not considered).

Now it is time to focus on getting those papers and creative works sent in for the convention in Pittsburgh on March 28–31. The **theme for this year's convention is confluence**. On the Sigma Tau Delta website (www.english.org), confluence is defined as follows: “*n* 1: a coming or flowing together, meeting, or gathering at one point 2: a flowing together of two or more streams 3: the combined stream formed by conjunction, e.g. the Ohio river formed by the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers; ‘The lost generation’ formed by American expatriates and post World War I Europe; the Bloomsbury group; Andy Warhol's Factory; the 2007 International Convention formed by the members of Sigma Tau Delta and the city of Pittsburgh.” Our theme asks you to consider how varying traditions, influences, or figures come together to produce something that is new, unique, or different. **Please note the November 30th postmark deadline** for papers, panels,

creative works.

I also want to call your attention to a new award that is still open for applications, **the Regents' Common Reader Award**. Each year the organization picks a common reader for the annual convention. This year the common reader is a book of poetry by Sharon Olds, one of the convention speakers: *Strike Sparks, Selected Poems 1980-2002* (Knopf 2004). Michael Ondaatje has described Sharon Olds's poetry as “pure fire in the hands” (hardcover dust jacket). The 117 poems, drawn from seven previous collections, cover many subjects—motherhood, family relationships, sexuality, among others. You can read more about the collection on the convention pages at www.english.org.

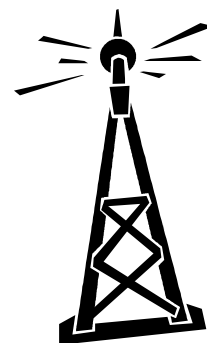
Apart from panels and individual presentations on Sharon Olds or *Strike Sparks* at the 2007 convention in Pittsburgh, the Regents invite individual chapters to organize and host a local event or activity around this text. Up to four chapters from each region are eligible to win an award of \$50.00. We Regents developed this new award to encourage chapters to organize events around the common reader regardless of a chapter's participation in the national convention. The Regents' Common Reader Award is a chance for your chapter to decide for yourselves what to think of this acclaimed contemporary poetry. The Regents hope that this award will be a way for

chapters in each region to share a convention-related experience even though not all of us are able to travel to Pittsburgh. We hope it will encourage creative, text-based activities and events. And, last, we hope that it will give many of us space to reflect on the power of poetry both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

This award is open to all active chapters of ΣΤΔ. It is completely separate from convention submissions. Results will be announced simultaneously both at the convention and by email. **You do not need to attend the convention to be eligible for this award**. In order to apply, a chapter must **submit electronically the following three documents, posted on or before February 15**, to me, the Midwestern Regent.

- a cover letter from the chapter sponsor, confirming that the activity or event took place,
- a narrative, not to exceed 500 words, describing the activity or event, and
- a list of all participating persons or groups.

Gloria J. Hochstein, Midwestern Regent



The Sigma Tau Delta Bulletin Board is a great place to keep in touch with others in the Region. It's located in the 'News' section on the main page of the national website, www.english.org. Use it to stay updated on the most recent regional news.



A Message From Your Student Representative

Hi, everyone. I've been having the busiest semester of my life. Between the duties of hosting the Regional Conference and my job as a graduate assistant at my University, I've been trying to get homework done for two classes. For some reason I thought life was supposed to get easier, maybe that's next semester? The highlight of the semester has to be the Regional Conference. I had a great time and it went smoothly.

I don't have a whole lot to say at this time, except that I look forward to seeing a lot of you at the international convention. Sadly, this will be my last convention for a while as I expect to be graduating in the spring. This also means that there will be an

opening for the Student Representative (SR) position and an opening in the Associate Student Representative (ASR). Why am I telling you this? Because it's a very rewarding experience, and I hope a few of you will apply for the position.

What does being an SR mean? Being an SR gives you a voice on the Board. While not a voting member, your opinion as an SR is both valued and needed. As a board member, you get to travel to the International Convention site for the fall and the spring Board meetings. You get to meet with all of the other Board members, and get to know your fellow SRs and SAs much better. You also plan the Leadership Workshop for the convention.

Part of your duties also involves creating a newsletter each semester, and keeping in contact with your Regent and ASR (which can easily be done over email). Most of all, being an SR puts you in a position to do something more for the organization. I've enjoyed my roles as ASR and SR, respectively, and have enjoyed meeting many interesting people through my duties. I hope that you will think about becoming either an SR or ASR; if you have any questions, you can of course email me at hardydp@uwec.edu.

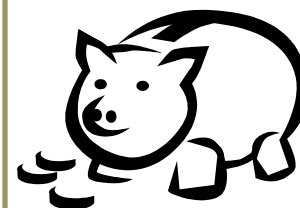
Have a great semester!

Dan Hardy
Midwestern SR



Check the national website (www.english.org) for scholarships, awards, and grant opportunities. Don't miss out on the opportunity!

*Don't forget to
apply for
Website and
Sponsor Awards;
both are due
November 30th!*



Midwestern Region Book Corner: Blue Light Special

The Student Advisors to Sigma Tau Delta have asked the Regional student representatives to include a section for Regional authors in the newsletter. In this issue we are highlighting Ken Szymanski's Blue Light Special.

Ken Szymanski first found his way to print as a rock journalist/music critic for the Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram*. Also a regular contender at the Running Water Poetry Slam, Szymanski holds the distinction of being a two-time Grand Slam Champion. He now serves as a senior editorial board writer for *Volume One* magazine and teaches English at Eau Claire South Middle School.

In *Blue Light Special*, Szymanski writes from the fringe. His tragically comedic tales are populated by retail janitors, ghost investigators, wedding DJs, frazzled teachers, amateur psychics, Santa Claus substitutes, and Little League right fielders. In both true stories and in fiction, Szymanski's quirky characters often stumble towards redemption, looking for something or someone to light the way through the darkness.

From Ken Szymanski: *Blue Light Special* came out in late 2005. It's a collection of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that also works as a loose story overall. Many of the

pieces were previously published in *NOTA, Volume One, The Leader-Telegram, and The Fascicle*. The idea behind it was to get many of my favorite published pieces together in one place, along with two other previously unpublished nonfiction pieces. Much of the writing was done as part of my master's degree work at UW-EC. I was getting married, and it seemed like a good milestone from which I could anthologize my work. I'm currently working on a nonfiction memoir based on my 10 years as a public school teacher, the last 8 of which I've spent at EC South Middle School.

2007 International Convention: A Confluence In Pittsburgh

In September the Student Representative, Student Advisors, Regents, and Executive Officers of Sigma Tau Delta met in Pittsburgh for the fall Board meeting. I had not been to Pittsburgh before, but we were all very impressed with the city. However, be happy that you won't be traveling through town during a Steelers game (it took us over an hour to get from the airport to the hotel; a trip that normally only takes 20 minutes)!

Pittsburgh offers many good places to eat, and most of them are within walking distance or a quick ride on the shuttle or the tram. If you're a fan of fresh seafood, which can be difficult to get in the Midwestern Region, you will be especially delighted. There are eateries for every taste. The other SRs and SAs and I made

our way through some rather interesting places to eat. Every night I had fish or seafood for dinner, a dream come true when the best fish I get is usually frozen.

There are also a lot of interesting museums around Pittsburgh. The Carnegie Museum and Andy Warhol Museum are both close to the Hilton in Pittsburgh. While there isn't a coffee shop on every corner like in Portland, there is a Starbucks within walking distance from the hotel.

Like any big city, Pittsburgh requires its visitors to practice city safety. There are quite a few bridges, and you don't want to be caught alone in the middle of one late at night. Use common sense, use public transport, don't go places by yourself and you should be fine.

Make sure to submit your papers for the convention! This year's theme of *confluence* as well as the Common Reader of *Strike Sparks* will lead to some interesting papers, I am sure. Make sure to get your papers, poems, and stories in by the deadline, November 30th.

I also want to urge everyone to reserve those hotel rooms early this year so you can stay at the conference hotel rather than stay at a hotel not as convenient or not as nice as the Hilton. If you know you will be going to the convention, get your room now. With the pace that the convention has been growing every year, we might have another record attendance (and the beds in the Hilton—they are like sleeping on clouds).

See you all in Pittsburgh!



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