

Midwestern Regional Newsletter for Fall 2008



SIGMA TAU DELTA
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

HIGHLIGHTS

The National Website has been updated with new graphics and some very user-friendly tools, which make it easier than ever to do chapter reports, member records, and other paperwork with the new Write Away!

Online submissions of presentations and papers are highly encouraged for this year's International Convention in Minneapolis.

NEWS FROM THE FALL BOARD MEETING

The Sigma Tau Delta Board of Directors and 2008 Student Representatives met at the Downtown Minneapolis Hyatt Regency Hotel, the exquisite and exciting site of this year's international convention.

There was a great deal of business discussed, including the address of several issues you, as a region, brought to my attention at the last convention:

- The average acceptance rate for convention submissions has dropped to approximately 70%, and it is anticipated to drop further this year. With the increasing number of excellent, quality, submissions there are a few tips to help you rise to the top.
 - Send submissions before the deadline.
 - Follow submission directions carefully.
 - Submit work in more than one genre.
 - See the convention website for elements of a winning critical essay.
- A new award has been created to recognize student leadership in the community.
- Write Away! is the new online interface for chapters to track membership, send reports, and update information online.
- The new seal and graphics for Sigma Tau Delta are now official and they look fantastic! Thank you for your time and attention when the board asked for your input. See the main website for the new graphic standards, especially if you intend to apply for a website award this year.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2

Positions are opening on both the Regional and National levels this year. Remember, you must send a student to the caucus in order to make your chapter's vote count!

6

What's cooking in the partnership arena for this year? We have highlights of the Chi Epsilon Chapter's pairing up with NEHS neighbors with some very positive results for everyone.

“But We Can’t Afford The International Convention.”

I have heard this statement from all over the United States and many of the small and mid-sized chapters in our region as well as others. I hear it from students and from advisors. I have to tell you my answer may seem unreasonable at first, but it is the honest truth.

You can’t afford not to attend the International Convention.

This is more than just an invaluable opportunity for students to present papers at an academic International Convention as an undergraduate. It also provides a sense of community and raises the bar of excellence. Students who attend the yearly Sigma Tau Delta International Convention have the rare opportunity to break the Student – Instructor – Student – Circular File habit that most papers make. They get to hear what other students in their field are doing, and network with professionals from a discipline many are claiming is overburdened in a glutted market.

The International Convention can be funded in a number of ways. Contact your Regional Student Representative or Regent for information and ideas. They will spend the time to help you find a way to join us.

- Ask student organizations and campus administration about funding.
- Each chapter that attends and votes at the business caucus is given money for travel reimbursement.
- New Advisors are also eligible for a separate travel award.
- The website has a page of fundraising ideas for travel expenses www.english.org.
- Presenting members get discounted conference rates.

What do Our Symbols Mean to You?



The reason for the question is far simpler than the answer:

Sigma Tau Delta decided almost unanimously to keep all three symbols in our new logo; the star, the torch, and the pen.

However, when we were asked by the design group what these images represented, neither the board nor the membership at large had a unified answer.

This is your opportunity to speak up once again about the future of Sigma Tau Delta. You can comment on the regional Facebook site, e-mail your Regional Rep at pljwc2@mizzou.edu, or even consider proposing a panel on the topic at the International Convention.

This year three Student positions will be open to Midwestern Regional Members.

- ❖ Student Representative
- ❖ Assistant Student Representative
- ❖ Student Advisor

Information about all three of these positions can be found on the Sigma Tau Delta International Website: WWW.ENGLISH.ORG

From the Regent's Desk

As the Midwestern Regent, one of my goals is to create more opportunities for students and to encourage participation in the opportunities that exist. This note is about four such opportunities:

1. Conventions: The Sigma Tau Delta annual international convention always offers so many opportunities for personal and professional development as we participate in sessions, hear speakers, and enjoy exchanging ideas with others who share our love of language and literature. Please consider submitting a paper or panel proposal for the 2009 Convention on March 26-28, 2009. I am especially excited about the 2009 convention because it is in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and because I am the 2009 Convention Chair. Please see my article on the *Reflections* theme elsewhere in this newsletter. Note that this year, for the first time, we encourage submissions and proposals by email. The deadline for convention submissions is November 21. You can also attend the convention without being on the program. This year's speakers are Alexandra Fuller on Thursday, Mike Perry on Friday, and Neil Gaiman on Saturday! See the Sigma Tau Delta convention website for details on speakers, workshops, submissions, registration, and more: <http://www.english.org/sigmatd/minneapolis/index.html>

2. Scholarships: Please consider applying for some of the numerous awards, grants, scholarships, and internships. Did you know that Sigma Tau Delta gives out more than \$65,000 annually in scholarships, awards, and grants, including a couple of scholarships worth \$2500 to \$4000 to the students who win them? The deadline for applications for most of the awards and scholarships is October 30th. See the website at www.english.org for application information.

3. Alumni Involvement: Are you nearing graduation and dread leaving Sigma Tau Delta behind? Don't be forlorn. You are a lifetime member of Sigma Tau Delta, and you can stay in direct contact by joining the Alumni Epsilon chapter. In addition, there are convention paper awards just for alumni. The Board of Directors continues to work to give alumni a greater voice in Sigma Tau Delta. At the convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2008, the alumni members elected Dan Hardy as the first Alumni Representative to the Board of Directors. Stay involved in Sigma Tau Delta even after you graduate. See www.english.org for details on joining Alumni Epsilon.

4. Regents' Common Reader Award: The common reader for the 2009 Sigma Tau Delta annual convention is Mike Perry's *Population 485: Getting to Know Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time*. Mike Perry draws us into the lives of the volunteer firefighters and emergency responders of the small town of New Auburn, Wisconsin, and into the lives and world they share with the people of western Wisconsin.

Population 485 is entertaining, thoughtful, and beautifully written. Mike Perry is also one of the speakers at the 2009 Sigma Tau Delta convention, and he will be offering two workshops at the convention. Because New Auburn is within two hours east of Minneapolis and only about forty miles from Eau Claire where I live and teach, I have had several opportunities to hear Mike Perry speak. I so thoroughly enjoy Mike Perry's writing and Mike Perry himself that when I was selected as 2009 Convention Chair, I knew I wanted Mike Perry and his writing to be featured at the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Minneapolis. I know you will enjoy him and his writing as much as I do.

Sigma Tau Delta offers \$150 for the best convention paper or presentation (in any genre) featuring the common reader. The Regents' Common Reader Award is a separate award category given by individual Regents to chapters and does

not require you attend the convention. The Regents' Common Reader Award is a chance for your chapter members to decide for yourselves what to think of this acclaimed memoir.

As the Midwestern Regent, I invite individual chapters to organize and host a local event or activity around this text before March 1, 2009, and to apply for award money AFTER your event. Up to four chapters from the Midwestern Region may receive awards of \$50.00. In order to apply, a chapter must submit the following three documents, postmarked or emailed on or before March 1, 2009:

- A cover letter, signed by the chapter sponsor (or sent from the sponsor's email address), 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.

This award is open to all active Midwestern Region chapters of Sigma Tau Delta. It is completely separate from convention submissions. Results will be announced simultaneously both at the convention and by e-mail. 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 are able to travel to Minneapolis. 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 language both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

**Gloria J. Hochstein, Midwestern
Regent and 2009 Convention
Chair,**
HOCHSTGJ@uwec.edu

Mailing Address:
English Department-Sigma Tau Delta
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
105 Garfield Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004

You are invited to bring your *REFLECTIONS* to the Sigma Tau Delta 2009 Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 26-28, 2009. The state of Minnesota takes its name from the name the native Dakota people gave to the Minnesota River: *minisota*, which means “water that reflects the sky.” Growing up in the farm country of southwestern Minnesota, I was surrounded natural wonders—clouds, lakes, trees, grasses, flowers, crops, birds, cattle, deer, and other animals—and also by the human-made wonders of architecture, machines, and books. Such a combination encourages us to reflect on both the natural and the human-made world and on our places in those worlds.

Two small childhood events remain among my most vivid memories, and I find that reflecting on these events leads me down divergent paths. When I was nine, our family took a vacation to northern Minnesota. In Bemidji, I saw the huge statues of Paul Bunyan and Babe, his Blue Ox. Mom told me that Lake Superior and the other Great Lakes were formed from Babe’s hoof prints. Even then I knew that the Great Lakes were not really Babe’s hoof prints and that no giant lumberjack logged the forests. Looking back, I see that these stories started me on a life-long interest in learning more about how and

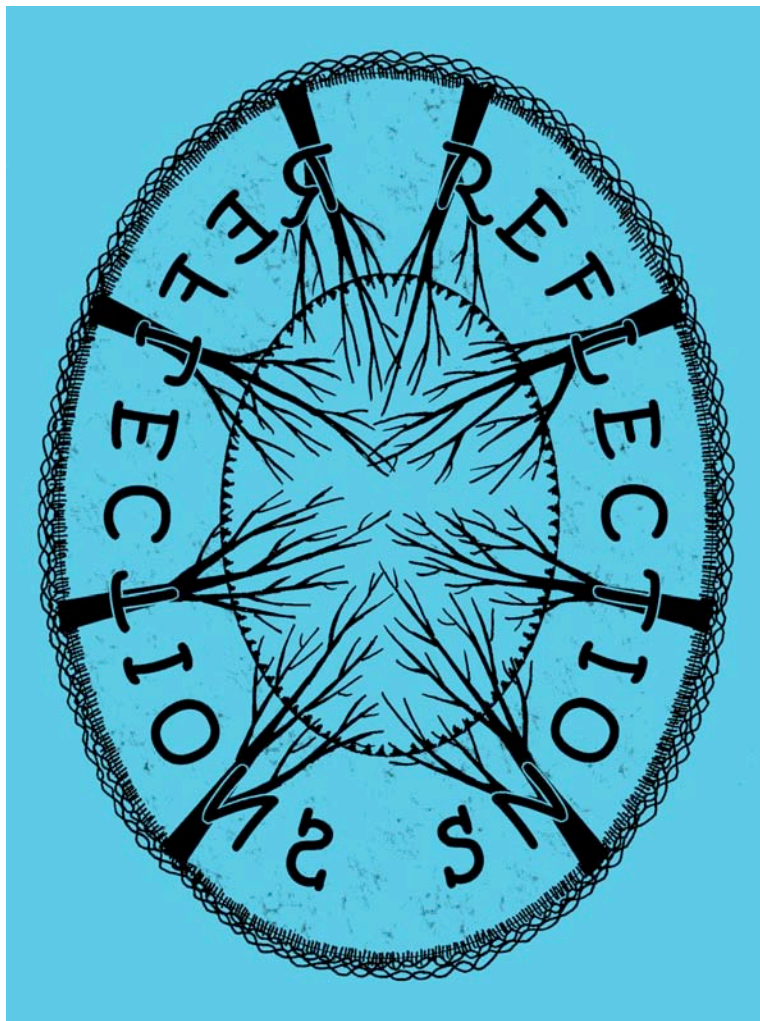
REFLECTIONS

THE SIGMA TAU DELTA CONVENTION

Minneapolis, MN March 26-28, 2009

Original convention art drawn by

Melissa Miller
Theta Zeta Chapter
University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire



why humans create mythological creatures and stories to explain natural phenomena and human behavior. I eventually came to understand that it is much more poetic to attribute the logging of the great forests to a giant being than it is to accept the more mundane explanation that a growing nation needed the lumber for its building and expansion, most evident to us in the Twin Cities.

Later in that vacation, as we stepped carefully on rocks that bridge a small stream flowing from Lake Itasca, my brother shoved me. Losing my balance, I stepped off the rocks into the water, my new saddle shoes making foot prints in the bed of the Mississippi. Standing in the little stream that is the north end of the

Mississippi River, with water trickling around my ankles, I marveled that this quiet, shallow stream was the beginning of the huge river that flowed through the Twin Cities only a few hours south. I also found myself awestruck that I was actually standing IN the great Mississippi, yet I was in no danger. I felt both small and powerful. Looking back, I see now that I was reflecting on the dynamic relationship between the natural and the human worlds.

When Minneapolis was selected as the site for the 2009 convention, I knew I wanted the theme of *Reflections*, a theme that invites us to see water reflecting the sky as a metaphor for an expanded vision, for a thoughtfulness

(Continued on page 5)

REFLECTIONS (Continued from page 4)

enhanced by the contemplation of natural wonders and by the contemplation of human endeavors and by the juxtaposition of the two. In the world of 2009, the waters of Minnesota reflect the sky and a great deal more. They also reflect buildings and bridges and machinery and skylines with much more than sky and clouds in them. In addition, the Mississippi River simultaneously reflects two different skylines, the skylines of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

On a literal level, *Reflections* identifies the relationships between the sky and the sky-blue water, and between the natural world and the human-made world. On a figurative level, *Reflections* suggests the contemplative meditations on the individual and on society often experienced in the presence of natural wonder. Furthermore, *Reflections* opens up the theme to seeing how human endeavor and creativity and even introspection are influenced by the natural world.

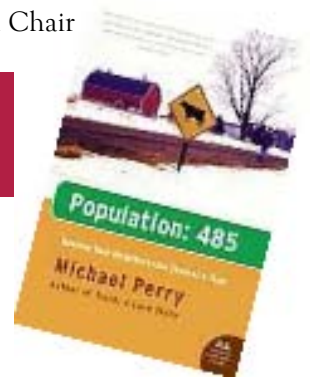
In 2009, we will be only blocks from the Mississippi River, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Minneapolis. For eleven blocks, wide sidewalks flow on the Nicollet Mall in front of shops and dining establishments, with only taxis and buses allowed down the middle of the street. This is a pedestrian's delight, on the street or in the miles of glass enclosed skyways. For only \$1.50 (\$2 during rush hours), the Hiawatha light-rail line and the Metro Transit buses connect the Nicollet Mall to all parts of the Twin Cities, including the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America. Even better, the buses cost only 50 cents in the Downtown Zone.

Certainly, a Sigma Tau Delta Convention is about *Reflections* of a literary nature and often of a personal and introspective nature as you share your creative and critical work. A convention is also about renewal and regeneration as you exchange ideas. It is about enlightenment and appreciation of our featured speakers and of each other. It is about recognition for your accomplishments. A convention is also about enjoyment and fellowship with others who love literature, language, and writing as much as you do.

By Gloria J. Hochstein, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Midwestern Regent, 2009 Convention Chair

2009 Common Reader

The Common Reader for the 2009 Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota is **Michael Perry's *Population 485: Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time.***



In this dryly humorous but also serious memoir, Perry writes about going home to reconnect with his roots after 12 years away. With a nursing degree and experience as a fireman, he is quickly added to the NAAFD—the New Auburn Area Fire Department. Through his experiences with the fire department, Perry tells the story of this small country town: New Auburn, Wisconsin, Population: 485. In a review of *Population 485*, *Hope Magazine* states, “[Perry] cuts through bullshit like a buzz saw, and he’s not gonna fret over the mess. Most surprising and wonderful is Perry’s occasional sentimentality ... he’s a master of tension and contradiction. When he’s done herding the words around the page, what you have left is a finely crafted, hardto come by honesty.” Perry, still an active firefighter and emergency medical responder in rural Wisconsin, will be one of the speakers at the 2009 International Convention. To learn more about Michael Perry, go to his website:

www.sneezingcow.com

Be sure to read this delightful memoir. Don’t forget to send in your essay about Perry’s 2009 Common Reader.

Sara Wright—MWASR

Chi Epsilon Chapter at Mount Mary College Pairing with long distance NEHS neighbors.



Jan Theoharris (Alumni Liaison), Susanna Redmer (Public Relations Officer), and Claudia Scholl (President) at one of our monthly planning meetings.

This year, our chapter has a two-fold mission. The first is for as many of our members as are able to attend the National Conference, “Reflections,” in Minneapolis this coming spring. The second is to foster an even greater sense of community among our neighboring Sigma Tau Delta and National English Honor Society members. Upon learning that our nearest, and only, NEHS neighbors were over 250 miles away, we decided to try to remedy that situation.

Our “remedy” is to invite high schools from the greater-Milwaukee area to a literary conference. Our chapter would gain the experience of having hosted a conference and all of the skills that calls for. The high school students will have an opportunity to share their analytical and creative works with a wider audience. We will be able to then fulfill two aspects of our Sigma Tau Delta mission, “to promote interest in literature in the English language” and to “promote . . . good fellowship among its members.”

On the heels of our October 18th conference, we will be hosting a November 8th discussion of the national common reader, Michael Perry’s *Population: 485*. As soon as we read about it in the Newsletter, we purchased several copies to serve as a sort of circulating library among us. (We did this last year as well). By broadening the discussion from just our chapter to other Milwaukee-area chapters, we hope to generate and encourage papers on this book by the November 21st deadline for the National Conference. See you there.

Susanna Redmer, Public Relations Officer
Wendy A. Weaver, Chapter Sponsor
Chi Epsilon Chapter, Mount Mary College

The Better World Book Drive!

For the past several years Sigma Tau Delta has promoted literacy by collecting books and donating them to a library or school in the region of the annual international conference. This year, however, Sigma Tau Delta is partnering with Better World Books, a for profit organization whose goal is to promote literacy around the world. They support programs in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States. Better World Books takes donated books, particularly recent college books (those used in the classroom within the last five years), and sells them online for a profit. This profit is used to benefit global literacy projects like Books for Africa, Room to Read, the World Education and Development Fund, and the National Center for Family Literacy. For Better World Books to be successful, they rely upon organizations, and their individual chapters, to help gather books. They provide the organization with all of the supplies needed for a book drive: flyers, collection bins, buttons, etc. In return, they ask the organization to actively promote the book drive. When the book drive is over, Better World Books provides boxes to ship the books to them and covers the shipping costs. The profits from these books are used to support the literacy organization of the chapter's choice. In addition to supporting the literacy organization, Better World Books may pay the supporting organization \$0.50 for each book sold for profit.

Sigma Tau Delta decided to change the format of the annual book drive to help ease the stress and financial coast for the chapters. With Better World Books there is no worry about how to get the books to the conference, no shipping costs, no airfare costs for the additional package upon the plane, etc. This provides less stress for the chapters, and possible financial support, while still allowing us to make an impact upon the illiterate. Watch for more information from the Central Office, in addition to an address about the program at the Leadership Conference at the International Convention.

To see books available for sale from Better World Books, please visit <http://www.BetterWorldBooks.com>

Sara Wright
Midwestern Associate Student Representative

Resources On The World Wide Web

Conferences

Here is a great resource for keeping up on those calls for papers: <http://calls.eserver.org/>

This site explains abstracts: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/abstracts.html>

A worldwide list of English conferences: <http://www.conferencealerts.com/english.htm>

Writing and Publishing

Poetry Publishers accepting online submissions: <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/pbonline.html>

A very large Freelance Writing resource: <http://www.fwointl.com/>

A New Launch From One of Our Own: Novelletum: <http://www.novelletum.com>