



K A P P A T A U A L P H A NEWSLETTER

National Society Honoring Scholarship in Journalism and Mass Communication

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Rutgers, St. Michael's approved

Rutgers University and Saint Michael's College have been approved for Kappa Tau Alpha chapters. The chapters were approved overwhelmingly in balloting by members of the National Council

Rutgers is located in New Brunswick NJ and was one of the early leaders in journalism education, establishing a four-year degree program in 1926. The School of Journalism closed in 1970 but pressure from New Jersey journalists led to

its re-establishment, first as the Department of Journalism and Urban Communication in 1975 and then the Department of Journalism and Mass Media in the late 1970s.

Rutgers originally was granted a KTA chapter in 1937 and regularly initiated new members until 1969 when the department closed. Frederic M. Merwin served as chapter adviser for many of those years and was KTA president from 1952-54.

The Department of Journalism and Media Studies is now part of the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies. It has more than 500 undergraduate majors and participates in masters and doctoral level programs.

Dr. John Pavlik, department chair,

heads a distinguished faculty of 13 that includes heads of national professional organizations and editors of scholarly journals in addition to winners of university and national awards for research, teaching and service. Dr. Barbara Reed will serve as chapter adviser.

Saint Michael's College is celebrating its centennial this year, thus giving its first class of KTA initiates double-reason to be proud. Located five minutes from Burlington, Vermont in the town of Colchester, Saint Michael's has an undergraduate enrollment of about 1950 students and is ranked as one of the top regional universities in the northeast.

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Taking it to Toronto

AEJMC is "Taking it to Toronto."

Registration information is available at www.AEJMC.org. AEJMC normally sends out registration information to members in May.

Both the KTA Adviser's Breakfast/annual meeting of the National Council and the KTA/AEJMC Awards Luncheon will be on Aug. 5. The breakfast starts at 7 a.m. and the luncheon at 11:45. Each will be over before the next sessions begin.

Sign up for the sessions on the regular registration form. Breakfast is a real bargain at \$10, because we pick up more than half the actual cost. At breakfast, we want to encourage discussion about how chapters can improve acceptance rates.

We had an excellent turnout of advisers at the awards luncheon last year and hope to improve it this year. The session honors winners of division student paper competitions and major AEJMC awardees. Also to be honored are recipients of the William H. Taft Adviser of the Year Award and the Frank Luther Mott/Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award. KTA President Bill Click and AEJMC President Jannette Dates will preside.

Campbell, Hale win grants

Joseph Campbell (American) and Dennis Hale (Bowling Green) are this year's recipients of Chapter Adviser Research Grants.

Campbell will continue his research on "1897: American Journalism's Exceptional Year." His thesis is that the year was an exceptionally robust and significant one in American journalism, one distinguished by a remarkable coalescence of events and technological developments. The grant will help finance research trips to Ohio and upstate New York.

Campbell has been adviser of the American University chapter of KTA for five years.

Hale's proposal is part of a two-pronged effort on "New Research on Press Coverage of State Supreme Courts." He will interview Associated Press reporters and state supreme court members in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana

about the interaction between the courts and the news media.

Based on his interviewing results, he will develop a survey questionnaire for a national survey. Hale has been adviser of the Bowling Green chapter for nine years.

The grants are designed to recognize and reward KTA advisers for their good work and to support their academic endeavors. Up to three grants per year for up to \$1,000 each are awarded annually depending on budget availability. In most years it is expected that money will be budgeted for two grants.

Instructions/application forms for the grant program can be found on the KTA web site.

Applicants must have served at least two full years as advisers and they and the chapter must be in good standing with the Society. The deadline for applications is Oct. 1.

Psst...hey buddy:

Wanna belong to an honor society?

Don't have a college degree? No problem. Correct that deficiency in your otherwise sterling resume' quickly and easily. Send certified check for \$100 and provide exact spelling for your diploma. For only an additional \$50 you will receive a handsome certificate of membership in an honor society.

Sound ridiculous? Of course, but increasing numbers of people are following through and "earning" their degrees and honor society memberships by writing a check.

In recent years there have been numerous publicized cases involving lying about credentials on one's resume', ranging from football coaches to college professors to ranking government officials. Listing a degree from a diploma mill appears to be a natural escalation of dishonesty.

The proliferation of diploma mills, and more recently honor society mills, is a major threat to academic institutions and, indeed, to honor societies.

How does this affect Kappa Tau Alpha?

It affects us directly because it erodes standards and devalues honest achievement. It undermines our credibility, and, as any journalism/mass communication student should know, without credibility we have very little.

Honor society credibility was a major topic at February's annual conference of the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS). Douglas Lane of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) noted that certification is central to maintenance of standards. Accreditation-- by the

appropriate regional agency for colleges and universities and by national associations for academic disciplines—is the gold standard. ACHS sets standards for honor societies and the ACHS member honor societies in turn certify that students have met high achievement standards.

Unless there are high standards rigorously enforced honor society membership is as meaningless as a diploma from a bogus institution.

"Induction into an honor society is recognition of personal effort and achievement. No matter how blase' we think we are about such matters, we still care that somebody, somewhere recognizes the work we've done. It matters to us, whether we admit it or not. Such recognition is also affirmation that work, not just the simple luck of family lineage, still matters in American life. Without that belief in hard work and merit, the American democratic ethos loses much of its potency and, indeed, its legitimacy." (Christopher J. Bosso, Northeastern University, President Elect for Pi Sigma Alpha [political science] in its fall 2003 newsletter).

What can we do to protect the integrity of honor societies and KTA?

First, we need to help students determine whether an invitation to join an honor society comes from a reputable organization.

On its web site ACHS has a comprehensive list of criteria on "How to Judge the Credibility of an Honor Society." Go to www.achsnatl.org and click on the Standards Alert button. Of course, membership in ACHS is in itself a certification that a society has met high standards

and is legitimate. One should be wary of any honor society not a member of ACHS, with the exception of Phi Beta Kappa.

The second thing we can do is keep our own house in order. KTA's upper 10%GPA ranking is the highest standard for membership among all honor societies, a distinction it shares with four others. The median among the 67 honor societies is upper 35% for discipline-specific members (e.g., psychology, political science, journalism/mass communication).

One of the hallmarks of bogus societies is "flexible" qualification standards. It is, therefore, essential that we are in compliance with are own rules.

Accordingly, we are going to undertake a compliance review this fall based on data from the 2003-2004 academic year. In particular, we will be looking to see how well the 10% rule is being adhered to. Preliminary efforts indicate that there may be some problems with interpretation that have resulted in more students being initiated than were qualified.

For instance, the 10% rule is two-pronged: not only must a student rank in the upper 10% of her/his junior or senior class, but also not more than 10% of the total junior/senior group may hold membership at the same time. In other words, those outstanding juniors you initiated last year have a way of becoming outstanding seniors a year later. Those KTA members must count against both of the 10% prongs.

We will be studying compliance forms from other honor societies, most of which require the chapter adviser to sign indicating that requirements have been met.

We expect that if instances of non-compliance are found it most probably will be the result of misinterpretations of the rules and those chapters will be given an opportunity to correct the problem. If chapters are found to have been systematically and purposefully initiating more students than permitted under the Constitution, the penalties could lead to probation, censure or revocation of the charter.

By making sure we are in compliance with our own rules we will be taking a major step toward protecting the value of membership in Kappa Tau Alpha.

Rutgers, St. Michael's approved

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The journalism department has gained recognition for curricular development, including early recognition of the effects of the internet and other new media. The number of journalism majors has increased to more than 150, largest in history.

The full-time faculty of five has been active in AEJMC. Three have been

heads of divisions. One has won the Under-40 Award and another the Freedom Forum's Professor of the Year.

The department reports to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. David Mindich is chair, and he will serve as chapter adviser.

The two new chapters brings to 116 the number of chapter charters granted. There are 93 active chapters.

Johnson's letters proved lively and informative. Among his many correspondents were Howard Odum, with whom he collaborated on *The Wasted Land*; Adlai Stevenson, whom he assisted during the presidential campaigns on 1952 and 1956; and H. L. Mencken, the controversial Baltimore who had by long odds the greatest personal influence on Johnson's career. Unlike a number of other writers, Johnson was not superstitious about discussing a work-in-progress, and he used these letters to set forth his intent and his methodology. One of the first tasks that I faced in writing this first biography was constructing a chronology, and the correspondence helped immensely here. Where did he live; when and why did he move from one domicile to another, from one job to another; whom did he meet personally and professionally; what other writers did he read, and what did he think of them; why did he choose to leave his career in daily journalism in 1943 and concentrate on book and magazine writing? The answers lay in his correspondence, so carefully preserved and accessible. I have wondered more than once about the fate of future biographers who will deal with subjects using e-mail rather than conventional correspondence.

The research entailed more than thirty interviews, and Johnson's family could not have proven more helpful or cooperative. I also met with Johnson's friends, his fellow writers, and one of his editors. No one refused a request for an

interview, and the sessions all proved amiable and informative. Interviewing proves an acquired skill, and I have learned over the decades that the tape recorder is not necessarily superior to the notepad, that interviews can go in very different directions than what the interviewer had intended, that silence can serve as one of the interviewer's most valuable tools, and that sessions can prove rewarding in ways that the interviewer cannot foresee. For example, when I was interviewing Harold A. Williams, the distinguished historian of

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the Baltimore *Sunpapers*, he suggested an avenue of research that had entirely escaped me, an avenue which provided salient information that I could not have acquired elsewhere.

The life of Gerald White Johnson was a remarkable journey--a journey that took him from his native North Carolina to the red fields of France, back to North Carolina and then up the road to Baltimore for the final fifty-four years of his life. One

of his cousins had ridden with Confederate General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry; Johnson lived to see a man walk on the moon. As a regional writer, he played a significant part in the Southern Literary Renaissance, engaged in a long literary combat with the Southern Agrarians, lambasted those Southerners who themselves attacked the New Deal, and excoriated the Dixiecrats in 1948. As a commentator on the national scene, he lionized FDR, scoffed at Eisenhower and Nixon, and became one of the earliest and most vocal critics of the war in Vietnam. He was a bold man, a voyager to the end of his days, who learned by going where he had to go, and his career proves an important part of the American record during the twentieth century.

Vincent Fitzpatrick is curator of the Mencken Collection at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. Gerald W.

Johnson: From Southern Liberal to National Conscience was published by Louisiana State University Press.

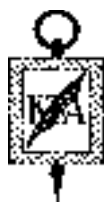
Annually since 1944, the Frank Luther Mott-Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award has honored the best book about journalism/mass communication based on original research. For information about the contest, go to the Kappa Tau Alpha web site (www.missouri.edu/~ktahq) and click on Mott Award.

The deadline for books published with a 2004 copyright is Dec. 7, 2004.

Record number of new advisers

Thirteen chapters have new advisers for academic year 2003-2004, apparently the most ever in one year.

Please welcome: Tamyra Pierce (Cal State-Fresno), Nicole Smith (LSU), Carol McNall (St. Bonaventure), Beverly Horvit (Texas Christian), Shirley Staples Carter (South Carolina), Ivana Segvic (Texas-Arlington), Patty Noland (Kansas), Joe Hayden (Memphis), Stephanie Craft (Missouri), Michael Goff (Nebraska), Jean Trumbo (Nevada-Reno) and Rocky Dailey (Virginia Commonwealth).



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Inactive chapters face charter revocations

Chapters must induct new members at least once in any two consecutive academic years or face loss of their charters and with it membership in KTA.

Five chapter charters have been revoked in the last few years.

The two-year requirement is a Constitutional one (Article II, Sec. 6). Chapters that fail to meet the requirement are placed on the inactive list. Inactive chapters are not eligible to initiate new members and lose all voting rights. Once declared inactive, the process to revoke the charter begins.

Former chapters must wait a minimum of five years before reapplying and must go through the complete application process.

The art & research of biography

Vincent Fitzpatrick won the Frank Luther Mott/Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for the best research book on journalism and mass communication published in 2002. His essay below describes how he researched and wrote Gerald W. Johnson: From Southern Liberal to National Conscience.

In 1997, on a steamy July afternoon in southeastern North Carolina, an afternoon redolent with memories and mosquitoes, my family and I wandered among the dead and searched for the marker of Gerald Johnson. A number of our vacations have gone like this--searching for Gerald Johnson among his ancestors, his family and his friends, and his papers.

The writing of Gerald White Johnson (1890-1980) entranced me when I was a child. It has also informed and delighted me, and challenged my beliefs, as an adult. Back in 1960, when I was a 10-year-old boy in Baltimore, my parents gave me Johnson's *America is Born*, the first volume of his *History for Peter* trilogy. I read this riveting tale far into the night, long after my parents were convinced that I was asleep. It was far more interesting, I decided, than anything that my teachers made me read for school. I had no idea then, of course, that I would ever write professionally, or that I would have the good fortune to write the first biography of this remarkable man.

The process of researching and writing literary biography poses its own set of challenges. The biographer's subject becomes, for all intents and purposes, a member of the family--with a seat at the table for every meal, a place in the car for every trip, and an invitation to every party. (It helps immensely if the subject and the biographer can remain congenial.) Unfortunately, the more intently the biographer examines time past, the less attention is paid to time present. During one especially unfortunate week several years ago, I left my son stranded at basketball practice while I sat alone at the computer writing about the deceased, and I managed to put the milk jug into the freezer. My family has proven remarkably tolerant.

This book began during the summer of 1988, after I had completed the biography of H. L. Mencken that would appear the following year. Fred Hobson,

the distinguished biographer and literary critic, suggested that I consider writing a life of Johnson. I began the voluminous research then and continued with it through the publication of two other books. At times during this literary marathon, that proverbial finish line seemed far away indeed.

Johnson's productivity was staggering. This North Carolinian's career spanned seventy-five years, from 1905 until 1980. He wrote more than forty books, and his canon runs to over fifteen million words--the output of several lifetimes for ordinary writers. As a journalist, he saw his columns grace several newspapers, among them the Baltimore *Evening Sun* and the New York *Herald Tribune*. His

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articles and essays distinguished magazines as diverse as *Look* and the *American Scholar* and his books included biographies and histories, novels and two multi-volume series for children. In addition, he served as the first professor of journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and was an award-winning television commentator. In a graceful style accessible to the general reader, he spoke for those incapable of speaking for themselves. He feared no one. On a number of occasions when many of his fellow Americans crept away--during the tumultuous time of Senator Joseph McCarthy, for example--Johnson elected to stand and fight. Adlai Stevenson celebrated him as "the critic and conscience of our time."

Johnson generalized that "writers don't have interesting lives" and that "it is far more difficult to write an interesting biography of a man of ideas rather than a man of action." For the most part, Johnson was such a man of ideas. When he chose to dissent, it was from ideas rather than from decorum. There were no embarrassing public spectacles, no breakdowns, no problems with drugs or alcohol; he was

happily married for nearly fifty-eight years and left behind no skeletons to be rattled by posterity. He was fortunate, and he knew it.

Kathryn Hayward Johnson, Gerald's wife, was a very skillful keeper of his flame. She organized his papers and donated a sizable amount of material to Wake Forest University, from which Johnson had graduated in 1911 (the school was then Wake Forest College). This material includes, among other things, an extensive correspondence, newspaper and magazine clippings, manuscripts, books, and an impressive collection of photographs taken during various stages of Johnson's career. I spent several productive and enjoyable weeks at Wake Forest's Baptist Historical Collection with its very able curator, Mr. John Woodard. To my delight, I found that Johnson had kept a diary (some of it written retrospectively because of matters of military security) detailing his service in France during and right after World War I.

This diary proved invaluable; without it, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to trace Johnson's movements and write the chapter entitled "Over There." To my further delight, I found the manuscript on which he had been working for a book on America's bi-centennial in 1976, a manuscript never completed. I had the good fortune to edit it for publication in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* in 1992.

In addition to the Johnson papers at Wake Forest, I examined more than thirty other manuscript collections at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Virginia, the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Princeton University, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, New York. I also examined the archives of the newspapers for which Johnson had written. All of this material helped, in various ways, to determine the facts about Johnson's long and controversial career. Without fail, the curators of these collections were facilitators rather than obstructionists, and I am grateful to the numerous kind people who went out of their way to expedite my research.

(continued on page 3)