The Pi Delta Phi Newsletter is published twice a year to inform each chapter about the activities and events of the organization. It is hoped that this information will inspire members to improve their roles as promoters of the French language and francophone cultures.

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“A Trip of a Lifetime to Avignon"

As the security officer told me “Welcome to France,” I stood there a couple of minutes, unable to believe that I was really in France. Those eight hours on the plane to Paris had been brutal for me. Once I had arrived, while walking through the airport I heard so many people speaking French and they spoke so fast I thought I would never be able to understand anyone. I just wanted to be in Avignon and meet my host family. Though there were a couple moments during my train ride to Avignon when I felt like returning home, the sight of the beautiful French countryside allowed me to forget my worries. I got off the train and I quickly began to look for the IAU sign. I took a couple of steps and then I saw a sign with my name. The woman holding the sign had the biggest and friendliest smile. I walked towards her and said “Bonjour. Je m’appelle Juana”. She embraced me in her arms and gave me a kiss on both cheeks. She introduced herself as Madame Duret. I felt an enormous sense of relief. Just by looking at her face I could tell that the Institute had placed me with the perfect family. When I met Monsieur Duret he gave me a hug and he helped my luggage into the car. The ride from the station to their house was a big whirlwind as they pointed out the Pont d’Avignon, the Palais des Papes and where I needed to wait for the bus. They explained a little bit of the history and the many different places that I could visit during my stay. When we finally arrived to their house I was exhausted and felt drained both physically and emotionally.

My first full day in Avignon I ended up sleeping past 12:00 in the afternoon, and Madame Duret had to wake me up to eat lunch. When I came down stairs I was shocked to see Madame and Monsieur Duret’s family waiting for me around the table. They all had gathered together to welcome me to Avignon. There were 10 people at the table and each one gave me the three standard kisses on the cheek. I felt so lucky to be a part of their family for the next six weeks, and I could not help but feel overjoyed by the warmth and love they showed me on my very first day in Avignon.
The first week was the hardest and most difficult of my whole stay in France as I missed my family terribly, suffered from jetlag, and learned to adjust to a new culture. What helped me get through that first week was my host family. On my first day in Avignon they introduced me to two other students from the Institute, Jamie and Shika, who lived nearby. Madame and Monsieur Duret took me on a tour of the city and always made sure to speak slowly so that I would be able to understand them. On my first day of school Madame Duret came with me on the bus and walked me to the Institute, and she made sure that I knew how to get back home. I was thrilled to have a host family who cared about me and who welcomed me with open arms into their lives.

Since Madame and Monsieur Duret were both retired, they were always there when I would come home and it really helped having them there when I came back. We would spend hours together talking about my day and this forced me to speak French. They always corrected my French and they always included me in their conversations. I felt at home with Madame and Monsieur Duret. They also introduced me to Provençal cuisine and French cheese, which I learned to love and looked forward to eating at every meal. Every night at dinner we would have an apéritif and talk about our day, or discuss current events. Then, we would set the table and would start dinner with a salad followed by the main course, and we always had fruit to eat afterwards. I learned to have an appreciation for eating dinner as a family and taking my time with dinner, which was never rushed and felt special and highly appreciated. We ate slowly and dinner usually lasted an hour or two hours.

During my first couple of weeks in Avignon I would always get lost. I would have to pull out my map and try to find my way back home or to school, yet eventually I learned how to navigate my way around the city. Everyday I felt so lucky to be in Avignon. Going to school I would walk slowly to class and linger in every store window I would read the signs on the streets, store windows, and street signs. I observed the people in cafes and my favorite thing to do on Saturdays was to go to the park and people watch; I loved seeing how French families interacted with one another. I also loved to walk around the Palais des Papes and to the Place de l’Horloge.

When I first arrived in Avignon the city was relatively calm, but as July approached the streets began to fill with tourists. Everyday I would hear English, French, Spanish, and Italian spoken in the streets. As the Theater Festival approached I became excited seeing the city transform before my eyes. Everyday I was approached by someone trying to convince me to come see his or her play. I collected over 100 posters and kept every single one to remind me of the festival and the people that I met. The city was alive and everyone I met was so passionate about the theatre and promoted it to anyone who would listen. Whenever I had to go somewhere it always took me twice as long after the festival began because I would always stop to watch the street performers or the dancers in the streets. There was always something that caught my eye and I always wanted to see what was going on. I did not want to miss anything.

The most challenging part of the trip was the two courses that I took—a Literature and a Phonetics course, however I loved the challenge these two classes presented. At first I was so intimidated to speak up in class I was afraid to raise my hand. As the days went by I began to gain confidence because both my professors created an atmosphere in the class where it did not matter if I made a mistake; they simply wanted me to try. Eventually, I even began to enjoy speaking French in class. My host family even began to see an improvement in my speaking skills, and they were amazed by my progress. In class we read works by Jean-Paul Sartre, Nathalie Sarraute, and Claire de Duras. At first I did not think that I was going to be able to understand or even finish the books by these authors, but the professor always took the time to go over difficult passages. Since another student from the Institute lived next door to me, we would always discuss the books we were reading together. The two classes I took did not have many more than nine students in them, so the professors were able to devote much attention to each of us. In each of the two classes I forced myself to come out of my shell and to learn as much as I possibly could from my professors and from my fellow students.

My six weeks in Avignon went by quickly. I learned so much about French culture and was not expecting to be treated so kindly by everyone I met. When I was lost all I had to do was ask and there was always someone to point me in the right direction. Even when I spoke to people and struggled to express myself in French, everyone was so patient with me; no one ever laughed. People always encouraged me and were glad that I was making an effort to speak French. I knew that leaving Avignon would be hard because I grew to love the city and the people; I began to feel as if it was a part of the city. When it was finally time for me to return to California, Madame and Monsieur Duret drove me to the TGV station and as I looked out the window of the car I was sad to leave Avignon behind. When my train arrived I said goodbye to Madame and Monsieur Duret and I waved to them from the train. During the train ride from Avignon to the airport I was able to realize how fortunate I was to have been able to come to Avignon. I made friends and met people that I will never forget, and I felt like I was leaving my family and a piece of myself in Avignon. This trip helped open a new world and culture and I was able to learn about myself. Everything I learned and experienced during this trip will stay with me for the rest of my life.
By the time the train finally pulled into the Avignon TGV station, I had heard the unfamiliar word murmured over and over as it made its way up and down the compartment: “le mistral.” I quickly found out what this meant: the moment I stepped out of the train, the powerful wind was everywhere, whipping around my hair and clothes as I walked through the station. My host, Jacqueline, met me with the three kisses typical of Provence and enough food to feed five people. For Jacqueline, food is something sacred: as she explained to me on the very first day, “someone who doesn’t like food just doesn’t like life.”

I came to Avignon to spend six weeks studying at the Institute for American Universities. The program was small, with around 20 students, and getting to know each other was easy. I took two classes—Architecture and Archeology in Provence and a history class on France after 1945. For Architecture, we took trips every Friday to visit the sites that we had talked about in class; in the end, we had visited many of the well-known places around Avignon, including Arles, Nîmes, Camargue, and Vaison-la-Romaine.

The In and Off theater festivals, which attract thousands of visitors to Avignon every year, began two weeks after we got to Avignon and lasted exactly until the end of our program. In a matter of days, the city went from relatively quiet to literally overrun with theater enthusiasts and actors. Every empty space in the city was papered over with fliers advertising theater productions. My friends and I were incredibly lucky to get tickets to Wajdi Mouawad’s Littoral, Incendies, Forêts, which ran overnight for an epic eleven hours in the Cour d’Honneur of the Papal Palace in Avignon. I was apprehensive about the idea of an 11-hour play: at first, I expected to either leave early or fall asleep half-way through the performance, but it turned out to be riveting, and the eleven hours almost flew by. At the end, we found ourselves in the middle of an unusual scene: the centuries-old courtyard of the Papal Palace ringing with the roar of several hundred spectators, wrapped up in jackets and blankets, giving a standing ovation for the exhausted cast, bowing on stage as the sun came up. It was a very powerful experience, and for me, one of the highlights of my trip.

I came to Avignon for a summer of studying abroad, but during my six weeks there, I ended up doing much more. I took two wonderful classes, but I also explored the winding streets of Avignon, visited Roman ruins, went swimming by the Pont du Gard, almost forgot English, and made great friends. This experience was all the more valuable because, though I have been learning French since middle school, I had never had the opportunity to study in France. This trip was a chance not only to study abroad, but to live with a host family; as a result, I had the opportunity to see the country and French culture from multiple angles: not just from the perspective of an American studying in France, but also from a French perspective. Although I was far from being a local, Avignon was my home for six weeks; the experiences and knowledge that I took away from my trip will stay with me long into the future, and I am very grateful for the scholarship that made my dream to study abroad a reality.

Sincerely,

Daria Anichkova

Pi Delta Phi Summer 2009 Scholarship winner Ms. Daria Anichkova studied in Avignon.

Humberto Salgado
Paris

Editor’s note: to date Humberto Salgado has sent no letter thanking Pi Delta Phi for having awarded him a Summer 2009 Scholarship, but we assume that he will send us one to be published in the Spring 2010 Newsletter.

Three New Chapter Additions to Pi Delta Phi

XI LAMBDA was installed on April 25 by the North Central Vice President Dr. John J. Janc at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Faculty Moderator of Xi Lambda is Dr. Pary Pezechkian-Weinberg.

XI MU (#347) was installed on Monday, November 16 by the Northeast Vice President, Dr. Beverly J. Evans, at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island; the Moderator is Dr. Peter Thompson.

XI NU (#348) was installed by Pi Delta President, Dr. Scott Fish, on the afternoon of Friday, November 20 at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska; the Moderator is Dr. Lucille Roy-Hewitson.
Annual Executive Board Meeting of Pi Delta Phi Held in Atlanta, Georgia

Pi Delta Phi Executive Board Members held their Open Meeting in the Chastain room of the Marriott Renaissance Hotel in downtown Atlanta, Georgia from 8:30-11:45 A.M. on Saturday, November 7, 2009 in conjunction with the annual convention of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA).

Those present included the Executive Director, Dr. Pamela Park (Idaho State University in Pocatello, ID), the President and Webmaster, Dr. Scott Fish (Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota), the Newsletter Editor, Dr. Karen Renick (California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, CA), Dr. Paul Wood, Pi Delta Phi Past President (Professor Emeritus at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY) and the following Vice-Presidents: Dr. Carleen Leggett [Southeast Region] (from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland), and two new members—Dr. Beverly J. Evans [Northeast Region] (from the State University of New York at Geneseo) and Dr. John J. Janc [North Central Region] (from Minnesota State University in Mankato, MN.

Following luncheon, members reconvened for the annual Closed Business Meeting. After the customary welcome, introductions, announcements, and approval of last year’s minutes, the board (the President, the Regional Presidents, the Webmaster, the Newsletter Editor, and the executive Director) gave their individual reports. Old Business items included a Scholarship Report, a Certificate update, a discussion of composition of the Board and the Regional Vice Presidents, and an elections update. New Business comprised a review of several documents (i.e., the text for chapter installations, the text for student inductions, and the Constitution and Bylaws) as well as a discussion of the location of next year’s Board Meeting.

Caption: The Pi Delta Phi Executive Board convened in Atlanta, GA in conjunction with SAMLA on November 7, 2009. Pictured from left to right—Dr. Paul Wood, Beverly J. Evans, Scott Fish, Pamela Park, John J. Janc, and Carleen Leggett. Photo taken by Dr. Karen Renick.)

Grand’ Merci from the Newsletter Editor
Each year I again wholeheartedly thank each and every contributor to the PI DELTA PHI Newsletter, for without you there would be no news: the Summer Scholarship recipients whose unique personalized thank you letters recreate their unforgettable summers in francophone areas and encourage others to persevere in their studies of French; the individual chapters themselves, each constantly adding new members and lending their time and efforts to promoting French and francophone studies; the diligent and dedicated chapter moderators, some of whom have served the organization for over twenty years; the student chapter officers with their enthusiastic reports of field trips to films, concerts, and all things francophone; and those without whom you would not receive these pages: my departmental assistant Jessica Weaver, the layout staff in the university’s graphics services, the printers in their publications department; and the bulk mailers with whom final arrangements are made for labeling and mailing to each chapter moderator a set of more than three hundred newsletter copies. Ultimately, the PI DELTA PHI Newsletter that you receive is the result of the combined efforts of individuals like you. I personally am indebted to all contributors, and ask that you continue to send newsworthy material to us to make the Newsletter even better. Merci infiniment.

Karen Renick
Newsletter Editor
BETA SIGMA chapter at Georgetown College welcomed its largest class of new members (nine in total) in 18 years on April 26, 2009. Dr. Jana Brill, chapter moderator, hosted the initiation ceremony in her home. Each new member read an original or classic French poem before being received as a member of Pi Delta Phi. The ceremony was followed by a luncheon of steak, salad, quiche, fruit tart, and bread and cheese.

ZETA CHI chapter at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA along with the French Club hosted another successful Tournées French Film Festival for the third consecutive year. The department was graciously awarded another grant from the French American Cultural Exchange (FACE) in order to promote and screen the following five films: “Ne le dis à personne,” “Un Secret,” “La Graine et le mulet,” “Un Conte de Noël,” and “Azur et Asmar.”

For National French Week, November 4-10, 2009, California Lutheran University hosted a series of events to promote French culture on campus. They began National French Week with a table set up in the center of campus to promote their events. They distributed candy with francophone facts attached, e.g., “128 million members of the Francophone community speak French (as a native or adopted language) fluently and use it on a regular basis,” and “Cinderella didn’t have glass slippers until Parisian Charles Perrault crafted his own version of an old Chinese tale,” etc. Quiche, crepes, and soups were served as representations of French cuisine in the school cafeteria. This was to show students that French food embodies more than the stereotypical escargot, and to let students embrace French food that they might have already tried but did not realize was actually French. They also advertised and promoted TV5, a French TV network, which is shown on the CLU campus every day of the week at select hours. They broadcast francophone movies, sitcoms, game shows, and a variety of other French programming.

The main event was a Cheese Tasting in Grace Hall lounge, where students brought French cheeses that they were able to buy at their local Whole Foods Market or Trader Joe’s. Approximately 20 students attended and those who brought cheese shared a bit of background history on their cheese with everyone. They also had Orangina, Perrier, baguettes for the cheese, and Petit Écolier cookies for everyone to enjoy.

La Semaine du Français at California Lutheran University was a great week for all to enjoy a little part of what the French culture has to offer.
THETA DELTA chapter at SUNY Oswego inducted five new members in April of 2009: Priya Ravindran, Samantha Decker, Andrew Wright, Tiffany Duquette, and Georgia Anderson. President Valentina Capone also attended. Also participating in the ceremony was chapter moderator Dr. Susan Bertonneau. Many members of Theta Delta, both new and old, took part that day in SUNY Oswego’s QUEST, an annual celebration of student research and creative activities. Dr. Lenuta Giukin (French coordinator) and Dr. Katia Viot-Southard organized presentations and a student performance of a scene from Hernani.

THETA PSI chapter at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland held its annual initiation ceremony on May 1, 2009. Two new members, Aaron-Mark Alleyne and Alycia K. Fields, were inducted. Others present included Chapter President Annimicha Blugh, Chapter Moderator Dr. Carleen S. Leggett, Chairperson of the Department of World Languages and International Studies at Morgan, Dr. M’bare N’gom, as well as other members, students, and faculty guests. During the 2008-2009 academic year, Theta Psi hosted and sponsored a variety of on-campus events, including: Festival de films de pays francophones, Programmes de jeux et de chansons, Soirée de théâtre, and Déjeuner annuel. In addition, the Theta Psi Chapter cooperated with the Global Studies Center at Morgan in celebrating International Education Week, and with the Maryland Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) in celebration of National French Week. Once again, Morgan was awarded a prize by the AATF-Maryland for its participatory activities.

KAPPA BETA chapter at the American University of Paris submitted the following report: Le vendredi 24 avril 2009 a eu l’initiation de trois nouveaux membres réguliers de notre chapitre Kappa Beta: Melinda Douangratdy, Paul McClain, Rachael Levy, et d’un membre honoraire: Kevin Fore. Kevin, un Américain vivant à Paris depuis plusieurs années, a dirigé le service culturel à The American University of Paris et en tant que Associate Manager of Student Affairs, continue à apporter son soutien à nos étudiants dans leur vie quotidienne à Paris et à l’Université. Lors de la cérémonie, Dominique Mougel et Maud Nicolas ont rappelé les droits et les obligations des membres de Pi Delta Phi. Maud Nicolas a lu, sur un fond sonore de musique baroque interprétée au clavecin, un passage des <Mémoires de la Marquise de la Tour du Pin>, une noble française, qui s’exila avec sa famille sur la côte Est des États-Unis pendant la Révolution de 1789 et qui libéra ses serviteurs noirs au moment de rentrer en France. Ces mémoires illustrent le lien qui existe entre l’Amérique et la France depuis plusieurs siècles. Notre celebration du 24 avril s’est terminée, comme traditionnellement dans notre chapitre, par un cocktail au champagne accompagné de délicieux fours salés.
Kappa Beta inducts four members on April 24, 2009 at the American University of Paris.

KAPPA PI chapter at Towson University was reactivated on May 7, 2009 after a long period of being dormant. Three new members were initiated during the ceremony, which was led by Dr. Carleen S. Leggett, Vice President for the Southeast Region. The Chapter Moderator is Dr. George McCool and the President is Ms. Christina Bailey.

Kappa Pi chapter at Towson University holds reinstallation and induction ceremony on May 7, 2009.

LAMBDA GAMMA chapter at the University of the Cumberlands inducted two new members in a ceremony in April 2009. Afterward, the chapter joined other language students at the University in the partaking of French desserts and other refreshments. Later that same month, chapter member Brandon Griffin received the AATF Outstanding Senior in French Award during the University’s annual Honor’s Day celebration.
To recognize outstanding scholarship in the French language and literature

To increase the knowledge and admiration of Americans for the contributions of France to world culture

To stimulate and encourage cultural activities which will lead to a deeper appreciation of francophone cultures and peoples

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