

THE WASHINGTON LITERARY SOCIETY AND DEBATING UNION

Fall 2016 Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dearest Alumni,

Fall 2016 was a very successful semester for the Wash. Many exciting things happened this semester. We inducted 25 provisional members. We passed constitutional amendments. We won (and lost) some special debates.

Before the semester even started, we had a great Midsummers meeting. I would like to send special thanks to alumni Chris Harrill and Heather Medlin for debating members Reese Fulgenzi and Joe French in "Resolved: Drivers should be re-tested in person every five years." I was not expecting a humorous debate, but that is what I got.

Our recruitment meetings went well. The Chapel meeting was actually held in the Chapel for the first time since my provisional semester, Fall 2013. 32 provisional members signed the roll, and most of them made it through their requirements. Other exciting debate resolutions from meetings this semester are: "Resolved: Creating an artificial reality better than the real world would be harmful.", "Resolved: The German government should prohibit the publication of Mein Kampf.", and "Resolved: Old people are ruining the world."

We debated the Jefferson Society in the Harrison Cup Debate and the Ethics Debate. In the Harrison Cup Debate, "Resolved: You can't win them all," we were represented by Anne Menasche, Jesse Ginn, and Micah Jones. The Jefferson Society won this debate, mostly due to the fact that the judges could not handle the more crude aspects of our humor. The Ethics Debate, "Resolved: In the digital age, individuals have the right to be forgotten," was debated by Antonio Trani and Sean Rastatter. We won the Ethics Debate! Our final competition with the Jeff this semester was Field Day. Though we only won one event, it was the egg toss, which is the only "athletic" event that really matters to me.

In another piece of exciting news, we were invited to host a debate at Darden. Earlier in the semester, a faculty member at Darden made some remarks on Facebook that made many people uncomfortable. Given this, we were invited to debate First Amendment rights vs creating an inclusive and non-hostile work environment. Adam Kimelman and Reese Fulgenzi debated each other in this

event, which was widely attended by Darden students and faculty (I believe there were over 100 people there).

This semester we also held the Non-Original Literary Competition. Sasha Hoyt won for reading an excerpt from "The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil" by George Saunders. The runner-up was Sophia Naide for reading "A Quiz" from "This Angel on My Chest" by Leslie Pietrzyk.

Lastly, earlier this semester, we passed several constitutional amendments. Most of them were to fix grammatical errors and inconsistencies. However, a few substantive changes were passed. We changed the sections on the duties of the Treasurer, Secretary, and Historian to indicate that all three of these offices are responsible for submitting items to the Special Collections Library. Previously, the Constitution had made this the responsibility of the Treasurer and Secretary in one Article, and in a separate Article, it was also the responsibility of the Historian. The other major change we made regards the attendance requirement for provisional members. Previously, it had been set to 8 meetings, but recently we have found this bar to be too high because not all semesters have the same number of meetings. The new provie attendance requirement is a proportion between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ which is to be set by the Vice President with the approval of other elected officers.

We are looking forward to a great Spring 2017 semester. It has been an honor to serve as President for this semester, and I am proud to introduce you to the elected officers for Spring 2017.

President: Katie Wonders
Vice President: Antonio Trani
Treasurer: Maxwell Rowshandel
Secretary: Jake Mathews
Reporter: Chad Kamen
Sergeant-at-Arms: Elizabeth Harrington

See you at banquet!

QFDQMC,
Joshua Danoff
President, Fall 2016

SELF DESTRUCT, AN ORIGINAL LIT BY MAXWELL ROWSHANDEL

Power Points 5, Base Power 130, accuracy 100%

“The user explodes, damaging the enemy, then faints. Useless against Ghost-type”

The move actually halves the targets defense, effectively making it deal 260 base damage, one of the most lethal moves in Pokemon’s Generation 1.

Self-Destruct was the earlier learned and weaker version of Explosion. And as you can tell by the description, it was a trump card, an ace in the hole. The ultimate checkmate move that was almost guaranteed to one hit knock out any opponent.

For Gen 1 players, the first opportunity to learn this insanely powerful move was with a level 21 Geodude, a Rock and Ground-type pokemon that was very prevalent and very useful, capable of both taking hits and dishing out some respectable damage. Geodude can then evolve into Graveler and then Golem, given training and time.

So, how does a trainer tell their pokemon to use this move.

“Wow Geodude! You landed three rock throws in a row! Excellent Job! I knew I could count on you! Ok, now Lt. Surge only has one pokemon left, while I still have Charmeleon and you! What I want you to do is to knock out his final pokemon, by exploding and passing out, and then we win the Thunder badge! Can you do that for me buddy?”

How does a creature agree to do that? Through training? How do you teach that?

Does Geodude know that you’re gonna bring it back to the pokemon center after the battle?

What if it doesn’t know, what if, as it’s body starts to glow white hot like a magnesium strip, it fears that, in the darkness that follows (marked by the vicious pop of air being forced away from it’s body, forming a vacuum around it’s rugged exterior) that you’ll abandon him.

That when he wakes up, he’ll still be on the floor of a dusty gym he only vaguely remembers, with not a soul around to heal his wounds, to tell him that he did well and hold his hardened body close to theirs. To let him hear the heartbeats that are so foreign to him, and the warmth that even the nerve endings under his crust-like skin can feel.

And what about charmeleon? He just watched you kamikaze your friend for 500 Pokedollars and a fancy button? You really think he’s gonna stick his head in a Victreebel for you in the next gym? Fat chance.

As for me, I’d sooner eat a slowpoke tail then sacrifice someone’s trust for a victory, whether it was the Pewter Gym or the Elite Four.

If I was you, I’d take a lesson from Paul, Ash’s rival in the Diamond and Pearl anime.

Paul is a cruel trainer who only cares about his pokemon’s skill in battle. He feels that bonding with his pokemon and building a relationship with them would turn them into slackers. Throughout the series he harshly trains his pokemon, and scolds them viciously when they fail to meet his expectations. One such pokemon is his Chimchar a fire type like your charmeleon, which continually fails him to the point where Paul releases him after a battle without healing its wounds. Alone and scared, Chimchar starts to cry. Without help, this creature was doomed. When it looked to Paul for comfort and respect, it found nothing but neglect and hostility. Chimchar would have disappeared like a Cubone’s mother if it hadn’t been for Ash, the main protagonist of the Pokemon Anime. Yes, there is a lot of things that we can fault Ash for, such as never managing to beat a pokemon league regardless of how all the odds were in his favor. But, one thing we can’t fault him for is his compassion, and his superhuman strength for a 10 year old boy.

Ash finds Chimchar and gains its trust, showing that it was worthy of love and that it would be treated with respect and patience. Ash trains Chimchar, teaching it how to vent its frustration and become more emotional sturdy, effectively grounding him in a positive trainer pokemon relationship. After a few more episodes, Ash challenges Paul to a battle in which Ash’s Chimchar fights Pauls Ursaring. Now if you know nothing about pokemon, let me tell you how ludicrously one-sided this battle should be on paper. Ursaring are bipedal adult bears, weighing up to 300 lbs and can be as tall as 5 feet 11 inches. Chimchar is a tiny monkey that is about 13 lbs and stands 1 foot tall. This should be an easy victory for Paul, but it wasn’t, Chimchar pulled through, due to Ash’s compassion and training, and took down the Ursaring.

Now, let's say you keep telling your Geodude to self-destruct, and eventually, as happens with most trainers, you decide to part ways with your Geodude because you found stronger pokémon down the road. So you release it.

Well, after a few gyms and adventures you may forget about your Geodude. But believe me, as it happens in the anime time and time again, your Geodude won't forget you. And come the eighth gym where you fight Giovanni, you might find your Flying and Fire-type Charizard, the evolution of your charmeleon, matching up against a very

familiar looking Golem. Unlike your Geodude, however, this Golem has long forgotten Self-Destruct, instead knowing very powerful ground and rock type moves such as stone edge and Earthquake. It's at this point that I find it helpful to remember, that Rock type moves like stone edge are super effective against Flying and Fire type pokémon. So as your Charizard dukes it out with its former ally, you might notice that your dreams and aspirations of being the best that ever was just sorta... poof, Self-Destruct!

ALUMNI CHAIR'S ADDRESS

Dear Alumni,

As we close a great semester, I would like to thank all of you for your involvement this semester. Our Ghosts meeting and alumni weekend were a great success this year, in no small part thanks to you.

While there were concerns about member attendance at Ghosts meeting, the alumni did not let us down, as we had a wonderful set of presenters. We saw alumni Kelly Strauch, Micah Jones, and Alicia Penn, as well as current member Austin Root, debate the resolution, "You See Something, Resolved: Say Something," won by side opposition (Micah and Alicia). After the break, we saw Kindra Hill skype in from New Mexico to present an original poem. The scheduled literary presenters in the hall were alumni Mark Lundy, Don Badaczewski, Joe Cahoon, Lucas Beane, and Nick Shabaz. After some floor lits, current Secretary Reese Fulgenzi came up to give an informative presentation, with audience questions, on the subject of paleontology.

The other events of Ghosts weekend were a runaway success. We started with Bar Night at Michael's Bistro on the Corner, but due to the high attendance and high cost of fancy cocktails, we moved after a couple hours to St. Maarten (RIP). We followed that up with brunch at the South Street Brewery and the Board Meeting, details on which are below. While nursing a giant collective hangover from Ghosts Party, we went to Cafe Caturra for brunch.

This semester, we had a short and productive board meeting. We noted that the endowment was healthy, as everything spent in the last has been recouped. We discussed changes, mostly grammatical, made to the Constitution. The board noted that alumni should be kept more in the loop about changes made, and that an updated copy should be kept somewhere, maybe on the website. The Treasurer noted that the Society's finances are in a good state. The board approved of the Banquet venue but expressed mild concern over the 60-person attendance cap. There was further discussion on how to work the scheduling of Banquet and Ghosts events to allow more alumni to attend, including the possibility of moving Ghosts meeting to a Saturday. Finally, Chris Jones volunteered for the newly-created position of Webmaster.

2016 may have been a terrible year, but at least we've had a great time in the Wash. I wish you a happier new year, and hope to see all of you this April 1st for Banquet!

GISO,
Luke Waddell
Alumni Chair, Fall 2016



SAVE THE DATE FOR THE FINALS BANQUET



BLACKBERRY, AN ORIGINAL LIT BY REESE FULGENZI

When I went blackberrypicking in Oklahoma, I didn't wear gloves. Blackberry-picking was always special, a fight against the sun and timed just right, if you were too early you have bright red, firm, acrid berries ringing in your pail. You know that nobody wants to eat them and they're not ready yet, but it's less sad to come home with inedible berries shouting "Look! I tried! I'm worthwhile!", rolling about the pail as if to smile, than to come home with nothing.

If you were too late the berries would be in the bellies of the birds or the deer, and you would have to dig through the patch to come home with a few sad, bright red berries matching your scratches, some too deep to heal by the evening's shower. If you were just right you would be

greeted by violet polka dots over the shimmering green warmed by the midwestern sun, and you, too, were a polka dot, along with the cows and the trees and the blackberry patch on the endless rolling fields, and each plopping berry was matched by one snuck into your cheek, and they burst with just the slightest pressure to stain your hands reddish pink, a tattoo exclaiming "I did it this time!". And when you got home, the sugar would already be measured out, and the pie crust sitting and waiting for your contribution, and the smell of a freshly-baked blackberry pie can never be replicated.

But I didn't wear gloves to remind me, I could have been too early, or I could have been too late, and that nothing is granted or free and that, somehow, I deserve to be cut

and I deserve to have the sweet, ripe blackberry juice run through my layers of skin, and each individual briar should snag against me until my cheeks are streaked pink from wiping away the tears with my stained hand.

The last time I went to the blackberry patch, it was a shadow of the Mauna Kea of the prairie I knew growing up, instead of rising like some great mound there were a handful of skeletons strewn next to the wilting, shaking plants, with the unripe berries begging to be put out of their misery. I still took some, and they still rang in the barrel, singing to the cows that I can't do anything, not even this, and I pricked my forefinger against a thorn to see the blood well up one last time and drop into the earth, much-needed moisture. I wanted to give myself to the blackberry patch, I wanted to just lay down against the dry grass and dead briars and have blackberries spring from me, to bring back the rows I know will never come back.

I never knew the last time I saw the blackberry patch at its height would be the last time. I never got to appreciate it, I could have stayed for one more rich, plump berry, I could have stopped to say, I am alive, but there was always going to be a next time, and there was always going to be another steaming, oozing pie that I could take more credit than I deserved for, and there were even going to be more cuts wrapping their way around my hand.

And the patch of my childhood is gone, the lacerations of my childhood are gone, and I can no longer remember the last slice of blackberry pie I had, but there's nothing I can do to capture the contentment of life, nice, radiant white, with only the slightest encroachment of red from my gratuitously bandaged hands. Today--is a slurry of red, of brown and blue, of violet and emerald and black, but all combine to brown. The richness of life and the greatness of pain, the pleasure of saying "This hurts, this is what I deserve, this is something I can feel,"...they're muted. They are washed away and mixed in which each other, and

I look on them and I'm a stranger to myself, and I want to sit down and dissect the colors and savor the white, even if it's a little yellowed with age, or stained with dried blood-drops from an August day. I want to say "I still have those feelings, and these feelings, and they're mine and I can touch them and show them to you and wrap them around myself at night" and when I do all I see is the run-off from fingerpainting because that's all these emotions are, I...

I walked along the rusted fence that, at one point, separated the cows from wading in the catfish pond and ran my fingers along the wire, jumping over the intermittent barbs but without the requisite care. Today was too late for the blackberries, no, I was too late. For no reason other than prolonging the walk home to see an expectant smile and hold up my bloodied hands and declare "I failed", I cut across the pond where the cows mulled about by softly sneaking through one of the half-dozen holes to the bridge over the river.

My eyes racing my shoes, I saw a small frog--brown, but with a white underbelly and golden shimmering eyes richer than mine, more emotive than mine despite the brown, too far away from the pond nestled amongst the dried, late-summer grasses. To stay there would be to die, but dying on the prairie under the unfathomably infinite night sky, where every flickering speck held conversations with you and pleaded with you that you matter, isn't that bad of a death.

But the purity of suicide for this little frog could just as easily be being greedily grabbed by a raccoon or bird, and so I cupped him between two hands and retraced my path to the pond where the cows were now sleeping, every movement of his legs digging into my cuts from the blackberries, and I let him hop into the cool, murky water, as the polka-dot moved across the prairie for one of the last times.

PROVIE CLASS



Front row: Chad Kamen, Sabrina Peng, Nayiri Krzysztofowicz, Eileen Ying, Amalia Garcia, Maeve McGonagill
Second row: Aurora Bays-Muchmore, Courtney Hou, Daryl Brown, Courtney Busick, Matt Wallace, Subhan Poudel, Elizabeth Reid, Olivia Bousequette, Erin Plant, Mikhaal Ahmed, Michael Epperson
Third Row: TJ Chinnaswamy, Adi Sapre, Jackson Collins, Sam Lesemann, Jacob Bradshaw, Ian Smith
Back row: Toni Trani (Provie Chair), Maxwell Rowshandel (Treasurer), Reese Fulgenzi (Secretary), Joshua Danoff (President), Sophia Naide (Vice President), Abigail Green (Sergeant-at-Arms), Joseph French (Reporter), Maria Chavez (Provie Chair)
Not pictured: Bradley Katcher and Jasper Torres