

DINNER WITH A FISH

Trees towering tall and straight caress the sky
like long slender fingers.
The breeze is cool and clean curling about my neck.
And it's not Sunday, or Saturday, or any day in between;
it's Spring. And this Father's child is doing as he ought,
playing that timeless game of hook and line;
a worm entree and a snooze for dessert.

John Williams, a freshman in speech communications from Deer Park, was surprised to hear his poem, "Dinner with a Fish," had been accepted into the Sigma Tau Delta booklet of poetry contest winners. It had a very inauspicious beginning.

"I was just driving along and the idea came to me," he says.

"I didn't have anything to write it on, so I wrote it on the back of a brown paper bag that was in the back seat."

Williams says the poem is about the process of living, of which death is a part.

"It's like the hook snatches us from our mother's womb and the line drags us through life toward death," he says.

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Each board is composed of four or five people. Because such a variety of people see a piece of work, no one's opinion dominates, Boyer says.

All submissions are edited "blind," meaning that the writer's name is concealed until a piece has completed the selection process.

"It's all coded by numbers," Boyer says. "We feel that it's very important to the integrity of the magazine that there is blind editing."

An honor code prohibits editors from judging their own submissions or submissions whose author they can identify, Boyer says. In either case the editor asks to be excused by saying he knows the author, so the board has no way of knowing if the editor is the person who wrote the piece.

"You don't implicate yourself in any way," she says.

Litmus and the Literary Arts Committee are two years old, and some of their most ambitious plans are still ahead of them.

So far the publication has come out only once a year, but Boyer says the committee has hopes of publishing it twice as often, fleshing out the essay section and raising the criteria for becoming an editor.

Litmus is not the committee's only project. Earlier this year it held two writing workshops — one on poetry and one on short stories — which Boyer and Bowen says were very successful.

Success for them is an audience of roughly 30 people, enough to get the

committee thinking about expanding its speaker program.

Last year Litmus sold 500 copies. This year the committee is publishing 800, which includes free copies for everyone whose work was published and everyone who helped, Boyer says. She estimates the cost of the whole run at \$2,500.

Litmus broke even last year, she says, and probably will this year.

At \$3 a copy, most of the magazine's money comes from the College of Liberal Arts, the Liberal Arts Student Council and the University Honors Program. The group also gets money from the MSC, private donations and book sales.

Litmus editors are serious about putting out a good product. Boyer says the quality of printing gets as rigorous a review as the magazine's submissions. This year, she says, they went through three proofs before publishing.

Bowen says Litmus exists for the education of its editors as well as its writers.

"It's a learning process for us, too," she says.

Boyer and Bowen point to the fact that last year Litmus' student editors chose some of the same work that the professorial board of Sigma Tau Delta chose. (This year, however, they have prohibited dual submissions in order to keep the magazines from duplicating one another).

We had a blast (putting it together)," Bowen says. "It is a student magazine in every sense of the word. I have a lot of pride in that."

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