



SOCIETY
FOR THE
STUDY
OF

MIDWESTERN
LITERATURE

Newsletter
Volume One
Number Three
Fall, 1971

Reports on The First Annual Conference

The Morning Panel

Participants in the morning panel, "The Dimensions of the Midwest -- Geographical and Literary," were Alma J. Payne (Bowling Green State University), William A. Sutton (Ball State U.), William B. Thomas (Ohio State U.), and Vern Wagner (Wayne State). Devil's advocates always enliven discussion, and this panel had two, Professors Sutton and Wagner, the former maintaining that successful artists transcend locality and the latter that regional labels are divisive and are often carelessly applied, a point he illustrated with a "handout" listing fourteen "Michigan" writers of such diversity as to excite wonder over how they could all get on the same list -- among them Robert Frost (poet in residence, U of M, 1925-26, whose Ann Arbor house is now at Greenfield Village), Eddie Guest, Theodore Roethke, Will Carleton ("Over the Hill to the Poor House"), Ernest Hemingway, Bruce Catton, et al. After spirited discussion, at least one point in common emerged: no writer, even though he has chosen expatriation, can repudiate his origin.

Eugene Huddleston
Moderator

Election Results

During the business meeting elections were held and policies concerning the direction and organization of the Society were established. First, it was decided that the President, Vice-President, and Executive Secretary-Treasurer would hold one-year terms, except that this first set of officers would hold a two-year term to help the infant Society establish some basic operational procedures. Elected by acclamation were David D. Anderson, President; William A. Sutton, Vice-President; and William McCann, Executive Secretary-Treasurer.

It was also decided that an Executive Council be created. This Council would be made up of the President, Vice-President, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, and six other members who would be elected in pairs to serve three-year terms. It was decided that this first Executive Council be

appointed by the President, one pair to serve one year, one pair to serve two years, and one pair to serve three years, so that next year, and every year thereafter, one pair would go out of office and another pair would be elected to serve a three-year term. Council Members would be chosen with attention to a wide geographic representation. The Executive Council should give a much-needed sense of continuity to the Society and would serve in an advisory capacity to the Organization.

Paul J. Ferlazzo
Chairman, Nominating
Committee

Featured Speaker

Dr. Russel Nye, Distinguished Professor of English at Michigan State University, was the featured speaker at the Society's lunch. Focusing his attention on identifiable cultural elements in Midwestern life and literature, Professor Nye contributed a further dimension to the exercise in definition that marked the discussions of the conference.

The Afternoon Panel

"The Durability of Midwestern Literary Identities" was the topic to which the afternoon panel addressed itself. Panelists were James C. Austin (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville), Walter Brylowski (Eastern Michigan University), and the Society's President, David D. Anderson, substituting for John T. Flanagan, who was unable to attend. In the role of devil's advocate, Professor Brylowski wondered whether or not a Midwestern literary identity could be said to exist after World War II, and whether such factors as climate did not preclude a distinctively Midwestern setting or ambience in literature. Midwestern novels, he noted, seem to take place largely indoors; Faulkner's novels of the South take place largely outdoors. Professor Austin quoted and discussed a variety of authors on their conception of a Midwest literary identity. As one might expect, conclusions were few, though the panelists appeared to agree that authors as diverse as William Dean Howells and Sherwood Anderson, who left the Midwest, did return often to their Midwestern experience in imagination, if not in fact.

John H. Ferres: Moderator

The Popular Culture Center at Bowling Green

Why have so many people lately become alert to the significance of what is termed the popular culture? Why have those in the academic milieu, who are presumed to have only scorn for the low-level shenanigans of non-intellectuals, suddenly decided that such activities are worth investigating and recording, and their tangible relics worth preserving?

The answers seem relatively simple: literature is not a whole or wholly truthful index to a culture; the historian or anthropologist who limits his observations to the fine arts must arrive at a distorted view of a people's way of life. And a way of life (albeit Academe offers individual instances) is not expounding literary works in a classroom but getting (by means difficult, strenuous, or tiresome), and spending (lavishly, frugally, foolishly, or wisely), and laying waste or rationally distributing our powers.

The way we do these things is reflected in the kind of periodical publication that quickly vanishes because it is quickly out of date. To preserve such evidences of timely activities and changing tastes (in entertainment, in dress, in mores, in behavior, in domestic surroundings and practices) is the interest of the historian and the aim of the student of the popular culture. And if you don't believe the evidence goes out of existence, just try to recover some of it: a 20-year-old Sears Roebuck catalog, an early issue of Esquire or Playboy, a copy of Life (the one-time joke magazine), or any issue --any--of Captain Billy's Whiz Bang.

Two universities, Bowling Green and Michigan State, have led in what will surely be an increasing effort to serve all who have legitimate interest in such material. Bowling Green's collection is anything but catholic, in a sense anything but predictable. But the last statement requires correction, inasmuch as practically anything that throws light on human tastes and activities is potentially a part of it. Popular culture, say Ray Browne, Director, and William L. Schurk, Librarian, is social ecology.

A great part of that is literature -- or subliterate, if you are prone to categorize and imply value judgment. Fiction,, of course, is basic. Authors sought are those typically ignored by academics: Harold Bell Wright, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Zane Grey, P.G. Wodehouse, and, nearer our own time, Mickey Spillane, Harold Robbins, Agatha Christie, Erle Stanley Gardner. Of juvenile fiction, Horatio Alger Jr., G.A. Henty, Martha Finley, and the host of writers of more recent boys' and girls' series.

Recordings, both cylinder and disc, form a considerable part of BGU's collection. These materials are not Caruso and Galli-Curci and Schumann-Heink but instead are represented by Gallagher and Shean, Moran and Mack (the Two Black Crows), Bob Dylan, and Bill Monroe. Recorded radio programs are exemplified not by Invitation to Learning but by Amos 'nd Andy. Old sheet music: Smiles and Beautiful Ohio, and Till We Meet Again. Those, and it's a Long Way to Tipperary and After the Ball Is Over and Swing Me in a Grapevine Swing.

Runs of magazines are desiderata. Not only middle-brow Harper's and The Atlantic (every library has them), but Reader's Digest, Photography, Popular Mechanics, Sports Illustrated, Esquire, Playboy. Old movie magazines--especially those from the early days of film-making--are sought. Juvenile periodicals are of course wanted: The Youth's Companion, The American Boy, The Boy's Magazine, Lone Scout (BGU has what may be the most extensive run of Lone Scout in an institutional library). Comic books, Haldeman-Julius "Little Blue Books", postcards, greeting cards, baseball cards, decorative calendars, photo albums, and scrapbooks are "artifacts" of 19th and 20th-century culture, as are manufacturers' and dealers' catalogs. The BGU Library has the entire run of Sears Roebuck catalogs on microfilm, as well as various issues of the Sears catalog and Montgomery Ward's. Other holdings are Spalding, Goldsmith (sporting goods), Stoeger and Folsom (firearms), Keuffel and Esser (drafting equipment), Francis Bannerman Sons (military supplies). A Probably unique specimen is the catalog of the J.L. Mott Iron Works, a manufacturer of lawn chairs and statues, dated 1870.

Newspapers carrying accounts of memorable events, old city and telephone directories, old schoolbooks theater programs, broad-side advertisements all provide commentary on the way people lived and what they thought and did. It is good to know that these things, vital to the cultural historian, are being preserved, and to know, moreover, that such preservation is not prompted by mere nostalgia or done for the fun of it altogether. How, for instance, could that hypothetical historian of the future more clearly perceive the change in our attitude toward sex and sex relationships than by scanning the editorial content of McCall's Magazine from 1920--or 1930 or 1940-- through 1971? Or more strikingly demonstrate progress toward absolute freedom of publication (whatever that may prove to be) than by setting a time when Esquire's Petty girl was thought risqué against that when Playboy offers evidence that beautiful women have pubic hair?

Those of us whose concern is the study of literature must have learned from it to refrain from moral judgment. The record of human activity is its own justification. Let it be as nearly complete as it can be made--and preserved in Libraries of Popular Culture.

William B. Thomas

Announcements

The Newberry Library Bulletin VI, No. 8 (July, 1971), edited by James M. Wells, is a special Sherwood Anderson number. Included are articles by John H. Ferres, Walter B. Rideout, David D. Anderson, Welford D. Taylor, the record of the Sherwood Anderson exhibition at the Newberry by Richard Colles Johnson, a checklist by Roy Lewis White, and a codicil by the late Floyd Dell. Copies may be obtained from the Newberry Library.

For many years John T. Flanagan has offered two courses which fit the spirit of the Society and might be considered as models for courses at other Midwestern institutions. The 1966-7 University of Illinois catalog describes the courses thus:

353. Studies in Middle Western Literature, I. A survey of Middle Western literature of the nineteenth century, with special emphasis on the development of realism in poetry and fiction. 3/4 unit. Offered in 1966-1967 and in alternate years. Prerequisite: One course in American history or one of the following: English 113, 114, 255, or 256. Flanagan.

354. Studies in Middle Western Literature, II. A survey of Middle Western literature from 1900 to the present, with special emphasis on the development of realism in poetry and fiction. 3/4 unit. Offered in 1966-1967 and in alternate years. Prerequisite: One course in American history or one of the following: English 113, 114, 255, or 256. Flanagan.

Robert E. Fleming

I am writing an historical/critical/literary study of The Midland, an early regional magazine edited from 1915-33 by John T. Frederick. I would appreciate any relevant material on The Midland--letters, records, reviews, personal observations. Please contact me in care of the department of English at the University of Iowa, Iowa City 52240.

Milton M. Reigelman

August Derleth, prolific author of some 150 books about life in Wisconsin, died on July 4. His work focused primarily on Souk City and Prairie Du Lac and on life along the Wisconsin River.

The Sherwood Anderson centennial year of 1976 is approaching, and Mrs. Sherwood Anderson has given her permission for the Society to plan a suitable observance. Interested members who are willing to work on an observance are asked to contact David Anderson.

William Sutton and Mildred Erickson are conducting a survey of the specific interests of members of the Society. The last page of this issue contains a questionnaire which they ask each member to return as soon as possible.

Richard Eberhart: The Progress of an American Poet, by Joel Roache, Oxford Univ. Press, 1971. 300 pp., \$8.50.

Joel Roache's Richard Eberhart, subtitled The Progress of an American Poet, prints fresh biographical information on this Minnesota-born writer and, though its aim is not literary criticism per se, gives excellent insight on individual poems. Linking events in Eberhart's life with developments in his poetry, it presents Eberhart as the typical midcentury American poet, the well educated middle class artist who makes his living in the classroom.

What Roache gives is very much the young man's view: Eberhart began as a man at odds with society but moved to his present position, described as membership in the establishment, by "compromise" and "capitulation." A reader old enough to prefer such a term as "maturity" will nevertheless find that Roache confirms the impression that Eberhart remains a poet out of fashion. He was half a generation too young to belong with the Eliot-Pound-Moore-Williams-Stevens pentarchy, and he took no part in their scrupulous reexamination of the major bases for a humane culture. And Eberhart was half a generation too old to belong with the ego-struck Beat and confessional poets (though it was his favorable 1956 New York Times book review that brought the Beats to the attention of the national media). Roache does not attempt to pigeonhole him, recognizing that he remains singular, a poet who talks of such old fashioned qualities as "inspiration" and "equilibrium" and "vision," who persists in believing that death is not merely a chemical transformation, that it is an experience of esthetic significance.

Clearly written and organized, giving intriguing information on such matters as publication arrangements, Roache's book is the first full length study of this major American poet. It is sure to be the standard work for years, perhaps decades, to come.

Bernard F. Engel

The Inland Ground: An Evocation of the American Middle West, by Richard Rhodes, Atheneum, 1970. 352 pp., \$7.95

Richard Rhodes writes well and feels deeply in this collection of essays that demonstrate the durability of the human spirit and the curious kinship between geography and human character. Organically a whole made up of many parts just as is the region out of which it comes, the book is unified by two essays in definition, the first a personal definition of Rhodes' own Middle West, the environs of western Missouri and eastern Kansas, and the second, a definition of the philosophical foundations of the region.

In the latter, in brief essays on Thomas Jefferson, Josiah Gregg, Henry Chatillon, William Hornaday, and "Mollie" Rhodes marks out the direction of the rest of the book as he explores, in low-key essays, the peculiar values, political and personal, that the people of the region have given to the nation. Particularly good in this sense are the essays on Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, each of which defines ramifications of these great Midwesterners almost invariably overlooked or ignored by their Eastern critics, biographers, and historians.

The book is not about geography but about people, and in many respects it is close to some of the great works of Midwestern fiction in its depth and intensity. It deserves reading and a place on the shelf beside E.W. Howe's Story of a Country Town and Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg Ohio.

David D. Anderson

The Buck Fever Papers, by Sherwood Anderson. Edited with an Introduction and notes, by Welford Dunaway Taylor. Charlottesville, Virginia, The University of Virginia Press, 1971. Illustrations, bibliography, index. 250 pp. \$12.50

On November 17, 1927, two months after he had become owner, publisher, and editor of the Marion (Virginia) Democrat and Smyth County News, Sherwood Anderson created Buck Fever, a mythical reporter whose by-line was to appear in the papers until mid-October, 1931. During those years Anderson

used Buck Fever: as his alter ego, to comment on the life of the town, and in the process Buck Fever emerged, much like Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby, as a character in his own right.

When Anderson gave editorship of the papers to his son Robert, Buck Fever disappeared from their pages, to be largely forgotten in the ensuing forty years, except by a handful of Anderson scholars. Now, however, in Professor Taylor's collection of those items ostensibly written by Buck Fever, he takes on the dimensions of life again.

In his introduction Taylor defines Buck Fever's role in the papers and in the development of Anderson's writing career. In both cases he was primarily a humorist, a rare occurrence in Anderson's otherwise invariably serious career. The attempt to define Buck Fever's role in a long journalistic line extending back to Addison and Steele is perhaps a bit sketchy but interesting. Of most importance for scholars is the meticulous use of footnotes to identify, describe, and define those elements in the items needing expansion. Taylor provides factual information that gives the papers a dimension of reality that often eludes contemporary readers. At the same time he answers a good number of scholarly questions.

But his major service is bringing the papers together, providing the opportunity for Anderson to comment again on the life of a town in a way much different from the more familiar comments in the other works ranging from Windy McPerson's Son to Home Town. The result is as enjoyable as it is useful.

David D. Anderson

The Newsletter continues to solicit short reviews (200 words), announcements of work in progress or contemplated, annotated checklist items, descriptions of pertinent journals, specialized checklists, features on special collections and resources, questions and answers, letters, and other items of interest to the membership. All items should be signed.

This issue concludes the publication schedule of the Society for 1971. The next issue of the Newsletter will appear in March, 1972. Thus, 1971 memberships expire with the current issue, and a form for renewing membership appears in the back of this issue. Please renew your membership and include suggestions and news items at the same time.

A six-inch disc containing the only known recording of F. Scott Fitzgerald's voice is bound in this year's Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and C.E. Frazer Clark, Jr., and published by NCR/Microcard Editions.

On the record, which is available only with the Annual, Fitzgerald recites Masfield's "On Growing Old", Keat's "Ode to the Nightingale", and Othello's address to the Venetian senators. The original was found among the Fitzgerald materials at the Princeton University Library. Why and when Fitzgerald made the recording is not known.

The 1971 Annual also includes Fitzgerald's ledger in which he listed his sales and income each year, a previously unpublished introduction to This Side of Paradise, and a memoir by Anthony Powell.

Also the 1971 Annual contains a previously lost Hemingway drama review, an unrecorded Hemingway article from the Toronto Star, and Hemingway's Letters to Soviet writers along with writer Donald Ogden Stewart's recollections of Fitzgerald and Hemingway.

The Forum "Chicago and the Arts", Forum VI at the forthcoming Modern Language Association meeting in Chicago, Dec. 27 - 30, will not be held at 8:30 AM on December 29 but at 8:30 p m in the Grand and State Ballroom of the Palmer House. Chairman is Bernard Duffey, and participants are James T. Farrell, Daryl Hine, and David D. Anderson

AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF AFRO-AMERICAN
NOVELS SET IN CHICAGO

Chicago has been the scene of a considerable body of fiction by Afro-American novelists, whose works provide a penetrating and critical analysis of the city. The list which follows notes only works which I have personally examined for a forthcoming article. I would appreciate any additions to the checklist.

Beck, Robert. (pen name, Iceberg Slim) Pimp: The Story of My Life. Los Angeles: Holloway House, 1967. A popular novel purporting to be the autobiography of a successful South Side pimp.

----- Trick Baby. Los Angeles: Holloway House, 1967. Iceberg Slim's "biography" of a former cellmate, a master con man.

Bland, Alden. Behold a Cry. New York: Scribner's, 1947. Historical novel of the last years of the Great Migration. Good presentation of the lives of black packing house workers and their families; also treats 1919 race riots.

Brooks, Gwendolyn. Maud Martha. New York: Harper & Row, 1953. Everyday middle class life of a young black woman.

Brown, Frank London. Trumbull Park. Chicago: Regnery, 1959. Traces violence which marks the attempt of black families to move into a white housing project.

Caldwell, Lewis A. H. The Policy King. Chicago: New Vistas, 1945. Fictionalized propaganda tract attacking the numbers racket.

Fair, Ronald L. Hog Butcher. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966. Naturalistic novel dealing with corruption in courts and police department, especially in dealings with black people.

----- World of Nothing: Two Novellas. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Contains "Jerome," a fantasy about a black Christ born in the ghetto, and "World of Nothing," a basically humorous series of sketches of South Side characters.

Greenlee, Sam. The Spook Who Sat by the Door. London: Allison & Busby, 1969. A black CIA agent engineers armed rebellion among Chicago's teenage gangs.

Kennedy, Mark. The Pecking Order. New York: Appleton, 1953. Naturalistic novel of one day in the life of a young black boy on the South Side. Rather sensational treatment of juvenile crime.

Motley, Willard. Knock on Any Door. New York: Appleton, 1947. Sociological novel examining the making of a young criminal. Notable because of Motley's use of white (Italian) rather than black protagonist.

----- We Fished All Night. New York: Appleton, 1951. Also a sociological naturalistic novel, but concentrating on corruption in politics. Only limited use of black characters, while other ethnic groups and their special problems are dealt with in depth.

----- Let No Man Write My Epitaph. New York: Random House, 1958. Here Motley makes greater use of black minor characters and gives them greater depth than ever before. However, he returns to the Italians for his principal characters.

Turpin, Waters E. O Canaan! New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939. Deals primarily with the black middle class whose members were successful in opening small businesses, but there are glimpses of the violent side of Chicago life -- crime, including the numbers racket, poverty, and the 1919 race riots.

Wright, Richard. Lawd Today. New York: Walker, 1963. Although published posthumously, this novel probably was composed before Native Son. Experimental in technique; obviously not revised for publication. A glimpse into the life of a black postal employee.

Continued -- Checklist

----- Native Son. New York: Harper & Row, 1940. The Afro-American naturalistic novel against which all others must be measured.

----- The Outsider. New York: Harper & Row, 1953. Only Book 1: "Dread" takes place in Chicago. Like Lawd Today features a protagonist who works for the Post Office.

Robert E. Fleming

THE MIDWEST IN PAPERBACK: A CONTINUING CHECKLIST

Ade, George, Introduction by E.F. Blieler, Fables In Slang; More Fables In Slang, (Dover. \$1.50)

Anderson, David D. The Literary Works Of Abraham Lincoln (Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc. \$3.95)

Anderson, David D. Sherwood Anderson: An Introduction and Interpretation, (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. \$1.95)

Anderson, David D. Louis Bromfield (College & University Press. \$2.45)

Anderson, Sherwood Windy McPerson's Son, Introduction by Wright Morris (University of Chicago Press. \$2.45)

Austin, J.C., Petroleum V. Nasby, (College & University Press. \$2.45)

Bromfield, Louis Malabar Farm (Ballantine. \$1.25)

Cather, Willa My Antonia, (Sentry Edition Houghton Mifflin. \$2.25)

Coyle, Leo George Ade, College & University Press \$2.45)

Daiches, David Willa Cather: A Critical Introduction, (Collier \$1.95)

Dreiser, Theodore Sister Carrie, (Bantam \$1.75)

Eggleston, Edward The Hoosier School-Master, (American Century Series. \$1.50)

Farrell, James T. Studs Lonigan, (Signet \$1.50)

Fuller, Henry B. With the Procession (University of Chicago Press, \$1.95)

Fuller, Iola Loon Feather (Harbrace Editions. \$.95)

Garland, Hamlin Boy Life On The Prairie, (University of Nebraska Press. \$2.25)

Garland, Hamlin Main-Travelled Roads, Afterword by Mark Schorer (Signet \$1.75)

Henson, Clyde Joseph Kirkland (College & University Press \$2.45)

Howe, E.W. The Story of a Country Town Afterword by John William Ward (Signet \$1.75)

Hutchinson, R., Mr. Dooley On Ivrything and Ivrybody, (Dover \$2.00)

Kirkland, Caroline, A New Home Who'll Follow. Introduction by W.S. Osborne (College & University Press, \$2.95)

Lewis, Sinclair Babbitt, (Signet. \$1.25)

Lewis, Sinclair Main Street, (Signet \$.95)

Morris, Wright World In The Attic, (Univ. of Nebraska Press. \$1.95)

Morsberger, Robert E. James Thurber, (Col. & Univ. Press. \$2.45)

Mulienburg, J. Prairie (Popular Lib. \$.75)

Roethke, Theodore Words For The Wind, Indiana University Press. \$1.75) ed.

Shepherd, Jean/ The America Of George Ade, (Capricorn \$1.35)

Sandburg, Carl Harvest Poems: Nineteen Ten To Nineteen Sixty, (Harbrace Ed. \$1.45)

Stuart, Jesse The Jesse Stuart Reader (Signet. \$.75)

Traver, Robert Hornstein's Boy (Dell \$.75)

Continued --Midwest checklist.

Twain, Mark The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn, Introduction by Newton Arvin Collier \$95.)

-----The Adventurers of Tom Sawyer
Afterword by G.P. Elliott (Signet .50)

-----Life On the Mississippi, American Century Series \$1.45)

Whitlock, Brand Turn Of The Balance
(University Press of Kentucky \$1.95)
William McCann

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1972

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1972

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1972

Featured in the next issue of the Newsletter will be a checklist of Midwestern literary magazines compiled by Paul Ferlazzo.

Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature Newsletter
Volume One, Number Three
Published at Michigan State University
with the support of the Department
of American Thought and Language
Editorial Office:
240 Ernst Bessey Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48823
Edited by David D. Anderson
Assisted by Paul J. Ferlazzo
and Herbert Bergman
Distributed to members of the
Society for the Study of Midwestern
Literature
Cover is by John Antico

Questionnaire on Interests
Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Return to

Dr. Mildred Erickson
175 Bessey Hall
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East Lansing, Michigan 48823

For our purposes we are including writers who lived in or dealt with all or parts of the following states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

1. I am especially interested in the following midwestern literary figure or figures:

a.

b.

c.

Others:

2. I am especially interested in the following periods, emphases, or groupings in midwestern literature:

a.

b.

c.

Others:

3. I am especially interested in the following genres of midwestern literature:
(Please check categories).

_____ a. Novel

_____ b. Short story

_____ c. Poetry

_____ c. Poetry

_____ d. Essay

_____ e. Drama

_____ f. Other (such as humor, language or usages):

4. Additional categories, factors, items, interests:

Name _____

Address _____

Enrollment Form

Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
240 Ernst Bessey Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Enclosed is \$1.00 in payment of 1972 dues in the Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature

Name _____

Address _____

Suggested theme for the 1972 Conference:

Suggested date for the 1972 Conference:

Suggested new members: