



# Sigma Tau Delta

Eastern Region: Fall 2006 Newsletter

## Contents:

### Page 2:

*Continued:*

Fall Greetings from the Regent

Eastern Region Book Corner

### Page 3:

Greetings from the ASR

2007 Sigma Tau Delta Convention: Pittsburgh, PA

### Page 4:

Conference Recap: Snapshots of Portland

### Page 5:

Guest Speaker – Sharon Olds

### Page 6:

Guest Speaker – David Rakoff

Quick Reminder: Big Money!

### Page 7:

Dodge Poetry Festival

### Page 8:

Award Winners

## Fall Greetings from the Regent



Hello, from Rindge, NH where the hills have turned to a combination of colors, just past the peak of foliage season, that Donald Hall called “tweed.” As I look out on Pearly Pond and towards Mount Monadnock, I’m reminded of how quickly time moves along—and as the new Eastern Regent, I’m finding out how quickly deadlines for conference paper submissions, Regents’ awards and such sneak up on me!

I do hope you are all considering submitting papers and original works for the upcoming convention in Pittsburgh. Chapter sponsors, we’d love to have you attend and chair a session or two! Since this year’s event is in our own region, I’m hopeful that it will be easier, both financially and logistically, for more chapters to attend. If your chapter hasn’t yet had the pleasure of attending a convention, I encourage you to give it a go this year. Even if only one person is able to attend, he or she will be a wonderful representative of your institution and chapter—my experience has been that once a single member or a group of members from a

chapter attend, they are likely to come back—as they say, “once is not enough”!

If you have questions about the convention or the logistics of bringing a chapter, please don’t hesitate to contact me; I can also offer some help with ideas for fundraising to defer the cost of the trip.

And don’t forget about the Regents’ Common Reader Award for up to four chapters in the Eastern Region. Details are at [http://www.english.org/pdf/awards/awd\\_com mRdr.pdf](http://www.english.org/pdf/awards/awd_com mRdr.pdf).

For those of you whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I’m Dr. Sarah Dangelantonio, a Professor of English at Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, NH. I’ve been here at FPC since 1990, and I’m presently serving as Humanities Division Chair. I’ve been involved with ΣΤΔ since I was inducted as an undergraduate in 1983;   
**(Continued on page 2)**

## Fall Student Representative Report

Good day, Eastern members of Sigma Tau Delta! This is an exciting year for the society. With the assets of Sigma Tau Delta growing every year and the board members in good standing, the society should be going through some significant growth in the next few years, including a new website with merchandise ordering capabilities, and the high school-based National English Honor Society (NEHS) gaining a significant number of members. Many other wonderful ideas are being realized by new members of the board.

As for regional excitement, Dr. Sarah Dangelantonio has filled the role for Eastern Region Regent and has great plans. One thing we are working on together is a regional caucus. This will be a type of miniature conference where members of Sigma Tau Delta in the Eastern Region can meet and share their work in a nice informal setting.

great literary sights as Mark Twain’s house; however, the location is only tentative. This year also makes the little hairs on my neck stand to attention for another reason—the annual international convention held in Eastern Region’s own city, Pittsburgh, PA. The program is star-studded with such literary giants as poet Sharon Olds and essayist David Rakoff (look further in the newsletter for more on them). Moreover, there are many events set up for members such as the Bad Poetry and Dry T-shirt Contests which are sure to bring the laughs. Looking forward to seeing you come spring,



-Keith Leonard, Eastern Student Rep.  
[kleonard1075@hotmail.com](mailto:kleonard1075@hotmail.com)

Right now we are looking into Hartford, CT as it is central to the Region and has such



# Eastern Region

## Quotable Quotes:

**“When I am... completely myself... or during the night when I cannot sleep, it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. When and how these come I know not, nor can I force them.”**

**-Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

**“Poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom.”**

**-Robert Frost**

**“The one thing that does not abide by majority’s rule is a person’s conscience.”**

**-Harper Lee**

(Continued from page 1: Fall Greetings from the Regent)

I’ve been a chapter sponsor since 1992; and now I am delighted to serve as your Regent for the next 3 years.

I hope some of you will email and introduce yourselves and let me know how I can be of help to you and your chapter. Keep me posted about upcoming induction ceremonies and the like—who knows, I might be able to come and participate! Email me at [dangelst@fpc.edu](mailto:dangelst@fpc.edu); let me know about your chapter’s activities—if you want to write up an article for inclusion in the next regional newsletter, we’d be pleased to include it. Enjoy the remaining days of autumn weather—rumor has it that a nor’easter may be approaching this weekend—makes me shiver just thinking about it. Cheers to you all.

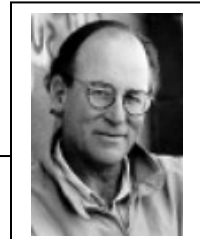
*Sarah Dangelantonio*

*“Did you know that it is possible if you read a poem enough times, if you read it over and over without stopping, that you can make the author begin to spin gently, even affectionately, in his grave?”*

-from Billy Collins, “The Norton Anthology of English Literature”



## Eastern Region Book Corner: Tracy Kidder’s *Home Town*



*The Student Advisors to Sigma Tau Delta have asked the regional student representatives to include a section for regional authors in the newsletter. This issue’s selection is Tracy Kidder’s Home Town for its vivid portrayal of small town New England.*

In *Home Town* (1999), Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy Kidder digs beneath small town of Northampton through the lives of a tycoon, a criminal, a college professor, a judge, and at the center a home town police officer, to uncover the quintessential New England landscape. Northampton itself is a scene of considerable literary interest. It holds a rich history dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is home to Mount Holyoke, which was climbed

by such literary greats as Dickens and Henry James, and boasts Sylvia Plath’s alma mater, Smith College. Kidder says of the town, “It’s one of the few civilized parts of America. I like the way it looks, the sense that history surrounds you in a constructed landscape. It’s picturesque, authentic. It’s where people grew up or wish they had grown up.”

Tracy Kidder has also won a number of other awards other than the Pulitzer Prize including the National Book Award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Award, among others. He is also the author of *The Soul of a New Machine*, *House*, *Among Schoolchildren*, *Old Friends*, and most recently *Mountain Beyond Mountains*. Kidder lives in Massachusetts and Maine.



# Eastern Region

## Quotable Quotes:

**“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.”  
Chinese Proverb**

**“My best thoughts always come a little too late.”  
Nathaniel Hawthorne**

**“Keep away from the people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, are great.”  
-Mark Twain**

## Greetings from the ASR

Greetings, Eastern Region! As I write this, warming my chilled bones with cappuccino from the café, I look around my room and notice my fish, Heraclitus, whom I have forgotten to feed for the past two days, stacks of books begging for my attention and stacks of notebooks awaiting my careful study of them. I hope everyone else is suffering less from the procrastination syndrome than I am in the middle of this highly chaotic part of the semester. I can’t believe Halloween is almost here. I hope everyone enjoys the tricks and treats of the day. I look forward to seeing everyone in Pittsburgh in the spring. Hopefully, my fish will be well fed and my work will be completed by then.

Cheers!



-Janine Surmick

Eastern Region, ASR

## 2007 Convention: Pittsburgh, PA

This year the convention will be in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and it will be held at the Hilton Hotel. The theme will be “confluence.” My dictionary tells me that means “a meeting or gathering of two or more things.” Seems fitting for the city of bridges, (English people are so clever aren’t they?). And don’t think that just because you’re from the same region you’ve seen all there is to see. Pittsburgh holds many interesting sights for the intellectual mind including the Heinz History Museum, Henry Clay Frick Art & Historical Center, Carnegie Museum of Natural History and Art, and Heinz Hall (home of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra). If one has a taste for a bit of modern on their palate, they can check out the Andy Warhol Museum.

I imagine by the time anyone may read this the beginning of October will have passed. That means the November deadline is approaching for submissions. So let’s all get to sending in our submissions (check on the website for details) and be “confluent” (sorry, I had to) at Pittsburgh.

The following articles were written with the intension to make your mouth water a bit and encourage you to join us at the convention this spring.

*(Here is a nice little picture of what will greet you when you get there.)*





# Eastern Region

## Convention Recap: Snapshots of Portland

By Julie Oliver

As Sigma Tau Delta members know, the last week of March isn't just the harbinger of spring in Massachusetts, it's the time of our annual pilgrimage to the Annual International Convention. Whether they boarded a plane or helped drive the van, past attendees have participated in a tradition that has spanned our chapter's eight year history. This year eight students—Keith Leonard, Steve Bruso, Colleen Wimberly, Julie Oliver, Jessi Ulmer, Brian O'Connor, Jolene Wagner, and James Wilcox—along with chapter sponsors Professors Glen Brewster and Elizabeth Starr, made the long journey across the United States to attend the 2006 Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society Convention in Portland, Oregon. After six hours of plane travel (and an unplanned but exciting layover in Las Vegas for Brian and Julie), we found ourselves in the lovely green spring of the Northwest. The light rain showers were frequent and unpredictable (though you could count on rain when you left your umbrella at the hotel), and the city was full of blooming tulips and mossy trees. It was completely appropriate, then, that this year's convention theme was "green," a word which, as described in the convention's call for papers, "is a cultural construct, a linguistic entity, a political predisposition, just as the other colors are, a form of creative nonfiction, the prose of perception disguising an even more fundamental poetry, a symbolic expression."

Westfield State College was well represented, with students presenting original poetry as well as papers on pedagogy and literary criticism. Making us particularly proud was Brian O'Connor, whose essay "Unbearable Circles: Vicious Returns" won the third place Critical Essay Convention Writing Award. As a group, we enjoyed hearing each other's work, asking and answering questions at student panels, and meeting other English majors from colleges and universities all over the country.

There was much to do and see, both at the convention and in the city itself. Between panel readings, keynote speakers and sight

seeing, our time in Portland passed quickly. Our first night there, we had dinner at a Chinese restaurant downtown, and then made our way back to the convention hotel to hear Mark Salzman, author of *True Notebooks*, talk about his work leading a creative writing workshop for young men in prison for violent offenses. Salzman was an animated speaker, telling stories about his experiences with his students as well as his frustrated attempts to become a Zen master and a professional cellist before becoming a writer. That evening, while some of us heeded the call of jet-lag, an adventurous group navigated the neighborhoods of Portland and ended up at Le Bistro Montage, a local hot spot.

Another highlight of the convention was hearing Ted Kooser, then-U.S. Poet Laureate, talk about and read from his work. Some students also had the opportunity to attend a smaller session with Kooser the next day where they were able to ask questions about his writing process. Apart from hearing our peers present papers, our free time was spent visiting the famous Powell's Bookstore, heading out of town to get a glimpse of the surrounding mountains and fir trees, shopping at cool stores, and having tea in the city's Chinese gardens.

All in all, we had a great time in Portland and at the convention itself; the best part, as usual, was having the opportunity to spend time with each other. We are grateful for all of the support we received from the English department and the Westfield State College community, which helped cover much of the cost of students' convention fees and travel.

We're all looking forward to this spring's convention in Pittsburgh, the home of Andy Warhol and legendary composer, Henry Mancini. Famed African-American playwright August Wilson is a native of the city, as well as Fred Rogers (better known as Mr. Rogers) and "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood." Also, don't forget to visit Carnegie Hall, the setting of Willa Cather's famous short story, "Paul's Case."

See you in Pittsburgh!

### Quotable Quotes:

**"It is always with the best intentions that the worst work is done."**

**-Oscar Wilde**

**"Don't use words too big for the subject. Don't say 'infinitely' when you mean 'very'; otherwise you'll have no word left when you want to talk about something really infinite."**

**-C.S. Lewis**

**"If the English language made any sense, a catastrophe would be an apostrophe with fur."**

**-Doug Larson**



# Eastern Region

## Quotable Quotes:

**“A man thinks that by mouthing hard words he understands hard things.”  
Herman Melville**

**“Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself.”  
-Chinese Proverb**

**“Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theater.”  
-Gail Godwin**

**“There are no great things, only small things with great love. Happy are those.”  
-Mother Theresa**

## Let’s Get Physical: On Pittsburgh Keynote Speaker, Poet Sharon Olds

By Keith Leonard, Eastern SR

As I read through this year’s common reader, *Strike Sparks* by poet Sharon Olds, it continually strikes me that the head guys and girls on the Sigma Tau Delta board are nothing less than brave. Really they seem to be saying, “Don’t let the Greek lettering fool you, we’re one serious group of badassess,” for it takes a certain amount of courage to invite Sharon Olds to read her poetry at your conference. And here is why.

There seems to be a lack of middle ground for Olds’ critics—they either praise her gut-wrenching honesty and blunt physicality, or (like her fiercest critic Helen Vendler) claim her poetry to be self-indulgent and pornographic. And maybe both sides have their point. Holding her doctoral degree and standing on the steps of Columbia, Olds asked herself some of wonderful, vital poetic questions to begin her career:

“Is there anything that shouldn’t or can’t be written about in a poem?” and more generally, “What has never been written about in a poem?”

Sharon Olds found the resulting concoction in candid language and in-your-face imagery, shocking readers with the publication of her first book, *Satan Says* (1980). She then continued to produce collections through the following decades including *The Dead and the Living* (1983), *The Gold Cell*, (1987) *The Father*, (1992), *The Wellspring*, (1996), *Blood, Tin, Straw* (1999), *The Upswept Room* (2002), and finally a collection of all these in *Strike Sparks* (2006).

Thus, as our common reader this year we have the summation of one of today’s most daring poet’s prolific career.

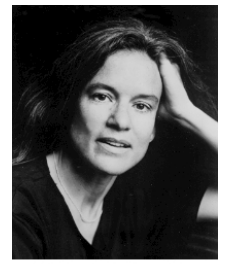


Photo by David Bartolomi

*from The Upswept Room*

### Diaphragm Aria

It’s curious and sweet to slip it out and look inside, to see what’s there, like a treasure hunt, dimestore toys and dolls tucked into the root-floor of the woods, or tilt up a stone in the yard and find, in the groove of her path, the flame-brown newt. Now I read the shallow cup of dregs, shreds like clothes torn away in eagerness, cloth of the bodies, which rips to a cloud of threads. Here our daughter never picked her finicky way, here our son never somersaulted, here only our not-children advanced, and dropped, and surged forward and were cut down, there a coil of tail, here a ladyfinger, a curl, a bone of the twin. When I have reached into myself and glistened out the dome, I search its planetarium sky for its weather, ivory nimbus, reach of summer showers—these are the heavens under which the grateful bodies went to earth, dense with contentment, moving, together, for those hour-long moments, in a matterly paradise, I gaze into the cumulus of spermicide, I bless the lollers who stay in that other sphere as we come like surf on the shore of it.

Sharon Olds



Strike Sparks  
Selected Poems, 1980-2002



# Eastern Region

## Quotable Quotes:

**“It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour.”**  
-Charles Dickens

**“If Art relates itself to an Object, it becomes descriptive, divisionist, literary.”**  
-Robert Delaunay

## Winning Wit: David Rakoff takes on the World

By Janine Surmick, Eastern ASR

To become a talented or renowned author, an individual must demonstrate a sense of flair or personality in voice to stand out in the word-playing game of writing. Described as, “Possessing a wicked wit and a sharp, elegant writing style, [David Rakoff] has become known as one of the country’s most potent humorists,” by the *Oakland Tribune*, David Rakoff’s humor and sense of wit distinguish him among other essayists, journalists, actors, and radio personalities. Likewise, these qualities will lead Rakoff to the 2007 Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Pittsburgh, where he will join us as one of the keynote speakers in March.

The Canadian-born humorist has written for *New York Times Magazine*, *GQ*, *Outside*, and *Vogue*, to name a few, has frequently been a voice on the radio program, *This American Life*, and has held roles in *Strangers with Candy*, *One Woman Shoe*, and *Capote*, among other theatrical productions and movies.

Additionally, David Rakoff publishes

*Get Too Comfortable: The Indignities of Coach Class*, *The Torments of Low Thread Count*, *The Never-ending Quest for Artisanal Olive Oil*, *Other First World Problems*, and *Fraud*.

In addition to his insatiable wit, Rakoff’s stories emphasize the genuine quality of being human. Rakoff is unique in that his works are both meant to be read as written works and spoken over the radio. Dave Weich, from *Powells.com*, says, “Whether investigating elf populations in Iceland, impersonating Freud in a Manhattan department store window display, attending a New Age retreat hosted by movie star Steven Seagal, playing a two-day guest part on a popular soap opera, or tracking down three long-forgotten straws of his prechemotherapized sperm (at the age of twenty-two, Rakoff was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s disease), he brings to his satire a rare, compulsive blend of humor and compassion.”

David Rakoff’s words of wit and wisdom are greatly looked-forward to, expected, and anticipated in Pittsburgh for Sigma Tau Delta’s convention in March.

## Quick Reminder: Big Money!

Here’s a quick, little riddle for all those English majors out there: What doesn’t grow on trees, can’t be found while leafing through a book, and most college students need? Please tell me you’re not stumped. The answer is money!!! And guess what? Sigma Tau Delta loves giving it away. This year they have given out more than ever and are looking to top that next year. So here’s a tip: go to the Sigma Tau Delta website ([www.english.org](http://www.english.org)) and get yourself some scholarships or awards. If you click on either the “Forms” or “Opportunities” buttons on the side of the page you’ll be surprised to find a number of nice little forms just begging to be turned into a nice fat check looking for a home in your pocket. So do yourself a favor and take five minutes out of your busy lives and check it out. It might be worth a couple grand.

Here are a few examples of the awards you can win:

- Eleanor B. North Poetry Award
- Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award
- Herbert L. Hughes Short Story Award
- Judson Q. Own Best Writing of any Genre Award
- Elizabeth Holtze Best Personal or Informal Essay Award

And that’s just from the  $\Sigma\Delta$  journal, *The Rectangle*. There are many more involving anything from best website to best chapter. So let’s make some money!!!

(P.S. The editors have included a list of the 2006 award recipients from the Eastern Region on the last page of this newsletter).



# Eastern Region

## Quotable Quotes:

**“I don't want my books to exclude anyone, but if they have to, then I would rather they excluded the people who feel they are too smart for them!”  
-Nick Hornby**

**“An ordinary man can surround himself with two thousand books and thenceforward have at least one place in the world in which it is possible to be happy.”  
-Augustine Birrell**

## Wordstock 2006: The Dodge Poetry Festival

*Though the lull of putting more convention-praising articles in this newsletter is enticing, Sigma Tau Delta is about more than our annual meeting. One of those things is the promotion of English excellence. Assistant Student Representative Janine Surmick found that at this year's Dodge Poetry Festival in New Jersey.*

On September 28–October 1, 2006 on the grounds of the national historic Waterloo Village in Stanhope, New Jersey, a collection of poets, musicians, and storytellers came together to celebrate what the New York Times quips as “Wordstock,” by celebrating the voice and tradition of poetry at the 11<sup>th</sup> biennial, Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival.

The four-day long festival of the largest poetry event that takes place in North America, hosted a variety of poets, from local areas to those from overseas, as well as workshops for high school and college students and educators. A highlight of the festival occurred on Friday afternoon during the Poetry Sampler. The tent was packed with eager audience members awaiting featured poets to read their works. Among the featured poets were Taha Muhamid Ali, Billy Collins, Lucille Clifton, Mark Doty, Jorie Graham, and Brian Turner.

In addition to poets such as Andrew Motion, England's Poet Laureate, regional poets like Lois Marie Harrod, Diane Lockward, Peter Murphy, and Len Roberts also spoke as the Festival Poets on Friday afternoon.

Throughout the festival, Yarina, a group of Ecuadorian musicians, strolled the grounds, presenting the music of the Andes. Additionally, there were performances by the Paul Winter Consort, Sekou Sundiata's Band, and Glen Valez and Lori Cotler.

On Thursday, teachers of any level and high school students were given priority seating at all events throughout the day, as the day was set aside for them. Friday, “Teacher Day,” was catered to those mostly interested in education from elementary school through college. Saturday and Sunday events were open to everyone. Over all four days approximately 20,000 people were estimated to have attended the festival.

The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival has been held biennially since 1986. The festival integrates poets and audiences in conversations and discussions emphasizing poetry. About ten stages are set up throughout the grounds, allowing for a variety of performances and discussions. In 2004, the festival attracted almost 19,000 people. During the first two days of the festival, over 4,500 students and 2,000 teachers attended readings and discussions designed with their interests in mind.

Poet Billy Collins, a frequent participant at the festival writes, “A poetry summit such as the Dodge dispels, at least temporarily, the notion that poetry is the most neglected of the arts, the poor little match girl of literature. The spectacle of crowds of people shouldering past one another in all directions, the long lines of book-buyers, the rapt attention to readers, the outbursts of applause, and even standing ovations are enough to convince you that poetry has somehow been restored to its ancient prominence and might even be a force to be reckoned with.”



# Eastern Region

## Quotable Quotes:

"The reading of all good books is like a conversation with all the finest men of past centuries."  
-Rene Descartes

"One of the ridiculous aspects of being a poet is the huge gulf between how seriously we take ourselves and how generally we are ignored by everybody else."  
-Billy Collins, "New York Times"

"Wear the old coat and buy the new book."  
-Austin Phelps

## Congratulations to the Eastern Region 2006 Award Winners!

### Junior Scholarship (\$2,500)

Lynsey Rae Pope, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Alpha Mu Omega

### Junior Scholarship Runner-up (\$500)

Andrew Erkkila, The College of New Jersey, Alpha Epsilon Alpha

### Senior Scholarship Runner-up (\$500)

S. Pearl Brilmyer, University of Scranton, Mu Omicron

### Regnery Scholarship (\$2,500)

Maya Stoilova, The American University of Paris, Kappa Sigma

### Regnery Scholarship Runner-up (\$500)

Judith Ann Hicks, University of Scranton, Mu Omicron

### Somerville Teaching Award (\$2,000)

John Zachary Monahan, University of Scranton, Mu Omicron

### Essay on Convention Theme (\$100)

Maya Stoilova, The American University of Paris, Kappa Sigma

### Regional Scholarship, Eastern (\$1,000)

Lynzie Biggs, Alvernia College, Kappa Pi

### Project Grant Winner

Slippery Rock University (\$300), Sponsor: Robert Crafton, Project: The Eta Delta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta will spend March 4–12 volunteering at 826 Valencia, a non-profit youth literacy project. 826 Valencia helps students ages 8–18 develop creative writing skills through workshops, tutoring, and publishing an annual compilation of student work. The Eta Delta Chapter will work closely with the students as they have for the past three spring breaks to help students revise project drafts, supervise layout, and promote Sigma Tau Delta's motto: Sincerity, Truth, Design.

### The Rectangle/Review Writing Awards

Elizabeth Holtze Creative Nonfiction Award (\$300), Mary Colleen Patterson, Slippery Rock University

Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award (\$300) Hannah Meyer, Messiah College

### The Convention Paper Awards

3rd Place, Critical Essay (\$75), Brian O'Connor, Westfield State College

3rd Place, Creative Nonfiction/Personal Essay (\$75), Jillian Bateman, Ithaca College

3rd Place, Original Drama (\$75) Melanie Martin, Slippery Rock University

### Outstanding Sponsor Award (\$500)

Alvernia College, Kappa Pi

### Chapter Web Site Award (\$200)

Old Dominion University, Nu Upsilon