

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

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- **Student Community After Tornado in Tennessee**
- **Louisiana Tech Shakespeare Garden Update**
- **Shakespearean Limericks: Test Your Will**

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# The Southern Gazette

SIGMA TAU DELTA HONOR SOCIETY

SPRING 2008

## Greetings from Your 2008-09 SR and ASR

### A Message from the SR, Sawyer Halbrook

Hello and greetings from Sawyer Halbrook, Student Representative (SR) for the Southern Region. Seeing that the conference was just recently passed, it is absolutely imperative that I expand on some of the totally awesome aspects of Louisville, and the experiences therein. I do, however, wish to bring a few things to light; especially considering the ever-so-fragile nature of that lovely machine, which exists only to spit forth stereotypes of the South. Now, I am a full-time student, working toward my first degree in English Literature and history; but, during the week I am a still life model for a southern art class. Now, I know what you are thinking—maybe—but there is absolutely no nudity involved. In fact, last week I was instructed to wear “my best cotton dress, no shoes, while holding a magnolia in one hand and a copy of Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar*



*Named Desire* in the other. I was sitting cross legged on a peeling white picket fence, and there was a jug of sweet tea behind me, and a plate of fried chicken beside me.

Louisville was wonderful. I would like to first mention that I have never ever ever seen snow...and it is BEAUTIFUL. I mean, I thought I had become quite accustomed to squinting into the sun, which apparently burns brighter and 40 billion times hotter in Louisiana, but stepping into that seemingly never ending sheet of white was a truly blinding experience. Oh, but I squinted with delight! I was uneducated in the method of building a snow man; and therefore,

my literary colleague and I attempted, what we have come to lovingly call, a snow face.

Now, moving away from my nostalgia for that frozen wet stuff from the sky, Naomi Shihab Nye was an inspiration, to say the very least. I was able to attend her writing workshop, and I was overwhelmed by her humble nature, her generosity, and her willingness to help interpret that beast of creativity that so often controls writers. She was able to take simple questions that one may ask oneself everyday such as: “What have you smelled, seen, missed today?” and use these to funnel that mass of thoughts and words into something understood and sublime. Did I mention that she was tiny?? I mean this little lady, no more that 5’2 was so full of life and this raw poetic energy that her presence filled the meeting rooms...it was invigorating!  
(Continued on Page 7)



## Virginia Woolf: The Life She Saves Might Be Your Own

By: Dorothy Dodge Robbins, Sigma Tau Delta Advisor, Louisiana Tech University

When Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori

Parks announced at the 2008 Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Louisville, Kentucky that “Virginia Woolf saved my life,” the crowd responded enthusiastically with applause. Notably missing was an element of surprise. Parks was preaching to the choir or, more aptly, to the book club. As majors, minors, teachers, and advocates of the English language, perhaps those in attendance had likewise experienced the salvation of literature.

As an undergraduate, Suzan-Lori Parks was waylaid on a path towards a career as a chemist when she read *To the Lighthouse* in a mandatory English course. She saw the light, Woolf’s beacon that illuminates the human experience through storytelling. Of Woolf’s novel, Parks mused, “It is what it is,” a story about a lighthouse and a family’s attempt to reach it. But *To the Lighthouse* resonated with Parks, necessitated her move from laboratory to library, caused her to set aside her beakers and pick up her pen. A subsequent lifeguard, writer James Baldwin, her instructor in a fiction seminar, guided Parks to a current of literature more suitable to her strokes: playwrighting. The rest is contemporary literary history.

No doubt, somewhere in an alternate universe, one where English

literature is not a requirement in the undergraduate curriculum, Suzan-Lori Parks is an accomplished chemist at a research facility by day. By night she is an insomniac, her sleep interrupted by scenes of a wave-tossed boat set adrift and a sense that there is a book she should have read in her youth, but didn’t.

My own undergraduate experience with Virginia Woolf involved an act of omission: my professor’s. Circa 1978, that weighty tome that has always been *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* contained within its vast pages a single entry by a female author. I don’t recall the title specifically; “The Mark on the Wall” or “Professions for Women” will do. The author, of course, was Woolf. Patiently I read through weeks of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Blake, Tennyson, and Dickens, page by page advancing closer to the Moderns and to the lone woman writer in our textbook. Then, short of time, perhaps he had professed a bit too extensively on Dickens, the professor announced we would have to excise a portion of the remaining material. James Joyce survived the cut, as did D. H. Lawrence. Virginia Woolf drew the short straw.

At nineteen, I sought Virginia Woolf on my own, first the entry housed in the *Norton*, then the available novels from the campus library: *To the Lighthouse*, *Flush*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *Between the Acts*, and *Jacob’s Room*. Admittedly, with the exception of *Flush*,

Woolf’s easily digested fictional biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s cocker spaniel, some to much of what I read confused me at the time. A guide, perhaps even an English professor, might have enhanced my initial reading experience of Woolf, but something in her storytelling beckoned me, perhaps that beacon illuminating the human experience.

A decade later, Virginia Woolf was a much greater presence in my graduate coursework, even meriting her own seminar, which I relished. Since my undergraduate days, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* has enlarged its Woolf entries and added works by other significant women writers. In the twenty-first century, critical analyses and biographies of Woolf continue to be published and are a testament to Woolf’s formidable presence in English studies. As a professor, I now have the opportunity to include Woolf’s essays and novels in courses I instruct. When I add her name to the syllabus, I never know whose life she might be saving.



# Student Community After Tornado in Tennessee



## A Message from Southern Regent Roger Stanley

While a longer version of my school's confrontation with the deadly tornado of February 5, 2008, was published by outgoing editor John Pennington in Sigma Tau Delta's full-color spring newsletter, I feel compelled to offer a few thoughts here for our regional, online publication. What strikes me first and foremost is the amazing resiliency of Union students in the disaster's aftermath along with the generous support our campus has received far and wide, including from chapters and schools in the South.

Whether it has been the Tulane University Graduate Council arranging for space in New Orleans's House of Blues to raise money for our school via musical performance, or the almost immediate correspondence from representatives of Blue Mountain College across the border in Mississippi, the thoughts and prayers of many groups and individuals can never be fully acknowledged. I mention these two examples among many because (1) I visited New Orleans within months of Katrina and was taken around certain neighborhoods by a volunteer 'gutter' of damaged homes; and (2) I spoke at Blue Mountain's recent Sigma Tau Delta induction and could still feel the support, fiscal and otherwise, while inside the banquet room. Thanks to all.

I have been amazed at how sensitively certain folks in our 'language and literature' world have targeted their responses to what we are about here at Union as readers and writers. A Vanderbilt full professor whom I met in Georgia last July at a Flannery O'Connor symposium was quick to worry about faculty book-shelf damage, i.e., he offered to collect volumes from his fellow English profs in Nashville and ship them to Jackson to cover any losses (fortunately our academic buildings were not hit like our dorms, sadly, were). Though several schools mailed us gift cards redeemable at retail franchises, at least one university outside the Southern

region responded by shipping some four dozen blank journals of various sizes and shapes directly to our English department for immediate distribution. Each journal contained a personal note, and many of our students were heartened to start writing informally again, even if their own log or diary had been lost among their possessions.

I mention the names of Amy Anderson, Erin Brassart, Bryan Emerson, Nellene Benhardus, Andrew Gray, and Renee Emerson in my other account. These are just six among the hundreds of Union students who were displaced (in varying senses of the word) by the events of February 5. I myself drove near campus the following morning, somewhat surreptitiously parking a half mile away and hiking toward the Chi Omega sorority lodge, which had been converted into a kind of headquarters and featured a banner reading 'Command Center' across its entranceway. I think this image says it all for the short term. Weeks later, our senior English majors are still on course for their one-hour thesis projects, and graduation remains fixed on the same date, May 17. Two weeks of classes were lost, two Union students remain hospitalized or in daily rehab regimens, but no fatalities occurred on our campus.



For those who were good enough to approach me or outgoing SR Nellene Benhardus in Louisville to offer words of comfort, I am grateful. Even as I lay abed this very morn and felt the effects in Tennessee of an earthquake whose epicenter was in southern Illinois, I cannot gainsay the things which are out of our control, meteorologically or otherwise. The term 'Regent' bespeaks a level of autonomy I don't always have in life or in the art of literary study. Still, I greet you under that rubric and hope for fine months ahead for our organization.

## Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrated In Renovated Garden

**"Mr. Merchant immediately captured the attention of his audience when he entered the garden wearing Star Trek garb."**

**BEAMING UP THE BARD: SHAKESPEARE AND STAR TREK  
BY: SARAH LOUISE SMITH, GRADUATE STUDENT OF ENGLISH**

On Wednesday, April 23, 2008, the Rho Gamma Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta celebrated the Second Annual Shakespeare Festival. The celebration was held in the courtyard of George T. Madison Hall on the campus of Louisiana Tech University, which was officially dedicated as the Shakespeare Garden. Twelve events took place throughout the day, and many faculty members from numerous departments participated in the tribute to William Shakespeare and all his extraordinary contributions to the literary world. All of the Sigma members who volunteered to help make this project a wonderful success appreciate every speaker who put together a worth-while presentation honoring the Bard and his career.



Professor David Merchant speaks. Photo courtesy of Lauren Coleman, esquire.

One of the most creative and entertaining speeches that was given

during the festival was presented by Mr. David Merchant, instructor of English. The title of this enlightening event was Shakespeare and Star Trek, and Mr. Merchant immediately captured the attention of his audience when he entered the garden wearing Star Trek garb.

Within his demonstration, he discussed some of the most interesting connections that exist between Shakespeare and the popular intergalactic television and movie series. Mr. Merchant brought the series to life, so magnificently, in fact, that the characters and references to Star Trek even became tangible and fascinating to those audience members who either had only heard its title or watched a few episodes. He even mentioned that the language of Klingon was touched by Shakespeare because scenes from the Bard's plays and lines of his sonnets had been translated so that it could be understood and learned by Captain Kirk and his crew. Therefore, Mr. Merchant brilliantly illustrated the ways in which Shakespeare's legacy still continues to live on and influences contemporary audiences and future generations.

**BACK IN THE DAY: SHAKESPEARE'S GNARLY LONDON  
J. RYAN MOORE, SENIOR UNDERGRADUATE OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Dr. Jeffrey Hankins' lecture, "Shakespeare's Gnarly London," left me with a different view of London than I had before the lecture. I had always thought of London as the land of milk and honey with streets of gold. Medieval London definitely did not live up to my expectations. People came to London hopeful to find



jobs. People pinned their hopes on finding a job in London to make a better life for themselves, and many times those dreams suffered and died on the muddy streets of London and the in unbelievably dirty water of the Thames River, which was used as the depository for all sorts of things.

Dr. Hankins emphasized that above average workers that showed earnest in the performance of their jobs-- especially jobs that involved working with water-- could potentially find themselves impressed into Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

Due to the roughness of London, the theater of the day, located in the Southwark district away from the bustle and filth of commercial London, was a form of escapism for Londoners who needed a little time to not think about their present less than enviable situation. I went to the lecture because I was interested in the topic and wanted to see the sort of lecture that had "gnarly" in the title. I was surprised by the conditions of London and learned that London was not an easy place in which to live and delivered cruel reality to many hoping to make a new start and a better life. London was indeed a gnarly place.

# Shakespeare Cont'd

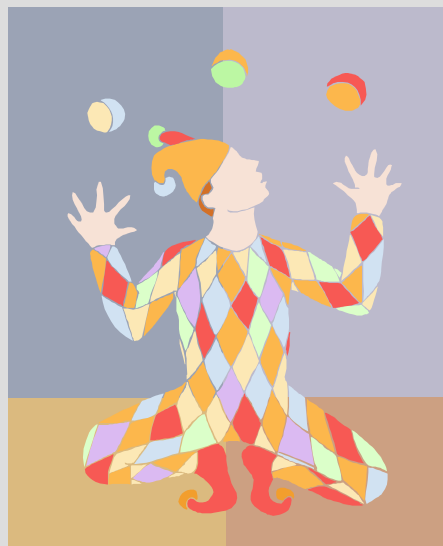
**"NAME THAT PLAY"  
STUDENTS COMPETE IN  
MOCK GAME SHOW  
APRIL HONAKER, GRADUATE  
STUDENT OF ENGLISH**

After lunch, just as the marathoners of the audience were beginning to grow weary and ripen like tomatoes in the sweltering sun, Tech theater professor, Paul Crook, mounted the steps of the terrace platform. Looking strangely out of place amidst an audience of students in shorts and t-shirts, he commanded attention in his crisp navy suit and tie. With the strong, charismatic voice of a seasoned actor, he easily played the role of witty game-show host, raising the wilting heads of the audience and inspiring renewed interest. Calling forth Laura Beeman and Matthew Bass, two eager volunteers, from the audience, Professor Crook announced the premier of Name that Play. After he had presented the rules of the game, an epic battle commenced as the two contestants competed to claim recognition as the "star" of Shakespearian knowledge. The competition was neck and neck at first as both contestants struggled to connect the right plays to the limericks. Each weighing their own instincts against the pleas of the audience, but ultimately, a trick question determined the winner, who was then free to gloat in victory.

## Limerick Game: Test Thy Will

Thinkest *thou* art literary? Truly literary? Give the following limericks a try. Check thy answers on page 6, but no cheating, thou woolly-livered canker-blossom!

- ◆ There once was a Roman who died ... when he didn't beware of an ide ... But his treacherous mates ... suffered much deserved fates ... when Dante had the pair of them fried.
- ◆ A Merchant's ships sailed the Atlantic ... but at home his position was frantic ... he was sued on a debt ... but there was no need to fret ... for his lawyer was really pedantic.
- ◆ There was an impetuous Moor ... whose wife was incredibly pure ... but the good lady he slew ... and he killed himself too ... so the Moor was no Moor any more.
- ◆ There once was a woman called Kate ... who made all her suitors irate ... but then one of the guys ... cut her right down to size ... feminism came centuries too late.
- ◆ There once was a crazy old fool ... whose daughters were terribly cruel ... and due to his pride ... the whole lot of them died ... but that's a victory for the gene pool.



## 2007-2008 Sigma Tau Delta Southern Region Scholarship and Award Winners

### Julie Milo

Elva Bell McLin Senior Scholarship  
(\$3000)  
*Flagler College*  
*Alpha Epsilon Omega*

### Elif Guler

Henry Regnery Endowed Scholarship  
(\$2000)  
*Old Dominion University*  
*Nu Upsilon*

### Laura Fipps

Runner Up for Elva Bell McLin (\$1500)  
*Southern Wesleyan*  
*Alpha Xi Lambda*

### Chelsea Feustel

Runner Up for E. Nelson James, Junior

Scholarship (\$1500)

*Furman University*  
*Alpha Eta Eta*

### Vincent Price

Regent Scholarship (\$1000)  
*University of Southern Mississippi,*  
*Hattiesburg*  
*Alpha Nu Gamma*

### Sarah Priem

Eleanor B. North Poetry Award (\$300)  
*University of Florida*  
*Mu Epsilon*

### David Pfost

Scholarship Application Essay Award (\$100)  
*Furman University*  
*Alpha Eta Eta*

*Northern Kentucky University*

*Pi Omega*  
Outstanding Literary Arts Journal, Second  
Place

### Jennifer Veilleux

Runner Up for Edwin L. Stockton, Jr.  
Graduate  
*Western Carolina University*  
*Theta Sigma*

### Ruth Weeks Johnson

Sigma Tau Delta Runner-Up  
*Univeristy of Alabama, Huntsville*  
*Upsilon Mu*

## Regional — Staying in Touch

In order to facilitate better inter-chapter communication, the regions began Facebook group sites. These groups are unofficial gathering places for members to share and express information and ideas.

The Southern Region has its own group on Facebook. You can find it by logging in to

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and in keeping this site actively searching groups for updated, please contact the SR Sigmataudelta Southern Region. and ASR as soon as possible. Once you have joined, please **Sawyer Halbrook:** feel free to actively post within [seh026@latech.edu](mailto:seh026@latech.edu) the community and voice your **Lauren Coleman:** concerns and ideas. The [lrc004@latech.edu](mailto:lrc004@latech.edu) Southern Region relies on you, its members, to keep it alive. **Get Involved. Stay Involved.** If you would like to participate **Experience Lasts a Lifetime.**

“[The Sigma  
Tau Delta]  
groups are  
unofficial  
gathering  
places for  
[information  
sharing].”

## Limericks Solved?

**Answer Key: Julius Caesar,  
The Merchant of Venice,  
Othello, The Taming of the  
Shrew, King Lear.**

*How didst thou do?*

### Correct answers:

5— Perfect Score?--Get a life thou  
shameless swag bellied pumpion!

4— Almost but not quite--Thou  
beggary dismal-dreaming joithead.  
Polish thy Will.

3-2— Hide thy face in shame!

Thou perfidious slow-witted  
odiferous stench!

1-0) Thou goatish beslubbering  
clay-brained vile worm! Thou  
ill-bred dewberry!

# Greetings from SR and ASR Cont'd

(Cont'd from Page 1)

Now, as “the candle burns at both ends” ASR Lauren Coleman and I will be working towards next year’s conference. Please, if there are any ideas, any hints of ideas, any poetry, short stories, papers that you must absolutely and positively do some thing with, or you’ll just die, contact us-- or, for the less dramatic and more aloof individual just contact us, or whatever.

## A Message from the ASR, Lauren Coleman

How do I love thee, Sigma Tau Delta? The answer is: too much to leave you, and enough to worry about the future of ‘us’ as my time in graduate studies dwindles. As I enter my second term as your ASR, I am completing my first year as a graduate student of English. For those of you who plan to continue your studies, I have great respect for you. I could elaborate on the merits of networking within your field; the necessity of daily planners and post-it notes (or, in the event that you run out, a ragged Target envelope that you were using as a bookmark); the precise ratio of a curtailed sleep schedule to an influx of strong-enough-to-be-used-alternately-as-turpentine coffee; and the likeliness that yes, the gray hair that only used to occupy the underside of your head has now graciously migrated



to the visible north, but I do not wish to rob you of the joy of discovery.

Us. My heart leapt while we were in Louisville to see you seated in the conference room, to see you shamelessly diving into the powdery snow, to encounter your name tag stickered with an S. I paused to share conversation and coffee with you in the early morning hours of a conference day, and I wondered, “Why can’t we do this more often?” This year, I invite you to share a cup of coffee, tea, or time with me so that we can grasp what so often evades us—simply, us.

As always, should you have any questions or concerns, contact either Sawyer or me. We’re here to represent you, the lifeblood of this organization! Of course, if you’d just like to say ‘howdy,’ please do.

-Lauren Coleman, ASR

## ATTENTION SOUTHERN REGION:

**Submit your:**  
**Poetry**  
**Short Stories**  
**Literary Articles**  
**Written Experiences**  
**Book Reviews**  
**...Or Anything You Imagine**

**No later than OCTOBER 1, 2008. Longer submissions should be between 500 and 700 words, and should be mailed to Sawyer Halbrook (seh026@latech.edu) or Lauren Coleman (ltc004@latech.edu).**



# SIGMA TAU DELTA

*The International English Honor Society*