

Sixty members convened in Boston for the Second Biennial John Updike Society Conference, hosted and co-sponsored by Suffolk University, and the word so far is that it was a rousing success. Suffolk was a perfect host, and members enjoyed being close to Boston Common and the start of the Freedom Trail.



Joyce Carol Oates kicked off the conference with a Tuesday night keynote talk in which she spoke of her long association with Updike.

That was followed by panels and a tour of Fenway Park on Wednesday, with Boston Globe sportswriter Bob Ryan—who was inducted into the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association in 2011 along with Bob Uecker and Brent Musburger—sharing his own Updike connection and talking about “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu.”



One of the conference highlights was the exhibit that Michael Updike curated for the conference, assembling objects mentioned in the fiction and giving attendees a handout with quotations and page numbers. The exhibit provided a nice backdrop for the academic sessions.



Wednesday was Cambridge day, starting with a talk outside Lampoon Castle by current Lampoon president Owen Bates, who also shared a few Updike artifacts. Afterwards, members assembled on the steps for a group photo.



At Lowell House, member Richard Androne talked about his own experience as a Lowell resident and pointed out things that would have been the same during Updike's time there as a sophomore and junior rooming with Christopher Lasch. Members got to see the inside of both rooms in which Updike lived.



Same with Hollis Hall, the pre-revolutionary dorm in which Updike lived as a freshman. No pictures were allowed at the Houghton Library, but picture attentive members listening to curator Leslie Morris talk about the new collection the university acquired.

People commented on the strength of the academic sessions, which continued on Friday, followed by a bus trip to Salem for free time and a tour of Ipswich, led by Michael Updike.



Another conference highlight was the tour of the Labor in Vain house in which Updike resided with his family in the early 1970s. Mary and Bob Weatherall were extremely gracious, and members were surprised by yet another exhibit—this time of family photographs—that Michael Updike assembled.



The conference concluded at Woodman's of Essex, with an "All American Clambake" on the Top Deck of the restaurant that Updike used to take his family to for clams.

