

Member news

Paul McComas' novel *Planet of the Dates* (2008, Permanent Press) has just been optioned for a motion picture by Hollywood producers Jason Koornik (Eye in the Sky Entertainment) and Michael Henry. Koornik's credits include the 2007 science-fiction action/thriller "Next" (starring Nicolas Cage). Henry's credits include "The Best Man" (with Seth



Paul McComas

Green). McComas also recently completed a nine-stop East Coast bookstore tour and visited Midwest locations in May. ...

Dan Dinello wrote a chapter for a book published June 15 titled "The Wretched of New Caprica" for book called *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy - Mission Accomplished or Mission Frakked Up?* ...

NOTE

TO READERS

THIS IS A COMBINED MAY-AUGUST ISSUE OF LITERARY LICENSE. THE NEXT ISSUE WILL APPEAR IN SEPTEMBER.

Chuck Masters, the Society's new corresponding secretary, received an Illinois State Historical Society book award for his book, *Governor Henry Horner, Chicago Politics and the Great Depression* at the 2008 Annual Awards Luncheon April 26 at

the governor's mansion in Springfield. "It was an absolutely wonderful event," Masters reported. ... At 7 p.m. on June 24, **Stephen Kinzer**, a columnist for The Guardian and a former New York Times foreign correspondent, will be at Yoshi's Café, 3257 N. Halsted St., to tell over conversation, drinks and/or dinner the story of Paul Kagame, who grew up as a

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An awards banquet a cut above the rest

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Victoria Lautman had two messages for the speakers at the Society of Midland Authors annual banquet and awards presentation on May 13.

One message was that Lautman, founder, host and executive-producer of "Writers on the Record with Victoria Lautman," was honored to be among so many authors. She joked that she was somewhat intimidated, never having had so many erudite conversations all in one evening.

The other message was briefer: Chop-chop.

As emcee for the evening, Lautman waved a large toy ax as a warning to judges and authors not to let their orations run too long. But as it turned out, Lautman didn't have to turn into a 21st century Carrie Nation. Every speaker made the cut.

"I thought our emcee, Victoria Lautman, hit just the right note between solemnity and humor," SMA President James Merriner said. "And our honorees were eloquent and brief."

The event was attended by seven award winners and finalists, judges and many longtime SMA members

"It was good to see everyone, catch up, have a drink and talk books," SMA board member Mark Eleveld said.

The award winners and finalists in attendance were **Judith Testa** of St.

Charles, who wrote the biography *Sal Maglie: Baseball's Demon Barber*, (Northern University Press); **Matthew Eck** of Kansas City, Mo., who wrote *The Farther Shore*, (Milkweed Editions); **Gary Schmidt** of Alto, Mich., author of *The Wednesday Wars* (Clarion Books); **Donald Platt** of West Lafayette, Ind., author of *My Father Says Grace: Poems* (University of Arkansas Press); **Tony Romano** of Glen Ellyn, Ill., author of *When the World Was Young* (Harper-Collins), and former SMA board member **Marlene Targ Brill** of Wilmette, author of *Marshall 'Major' Taylor: World Champion Cyclist, 1899-1901* (Twenty-First Century Books).

In addition, **Myrna Petlicki** of Skokie was in attendance to receive the James Friend Memorial Award for Criticism.

The complete list of winners and finalists for books by Midwest authors published in 2007 is:

Adult Fiction: Winner: **Matthew Eck**. Finalists: **Tony Romano**; **Benjamin Percy** of Stevens Point, Wis., *Refresh, Refresh: Stories*, Graywolf Press; **Brock Clarke** of Cincinnati, Ohio, *An Arsonist's Guide to Writers' Homes in New England*, Algonquin Books.

Adult Nonfiction: Winner: **Patricia Hampl** of St. Paul, Minn., *The Florist's Daughter*, Harcourt. Finalists: **Barbara Oakley** of Rochester, Mich., *Evil Genes: Why Rome Fell, Hitler Rose, Enron*

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New books

Lisa Holton writes in *For Members Only: A History And Guide to Chicago's Oldest Private Clubs* (Lake Claremont Press) that Chicago would be a very different place without the contributions made by the members of the city's private social clubs. There wouldn't be a Burnham Plan. The World's Columbian Exposition wouldn't be in our history books. Al Capone might have lived out his days with a comfortable grasp on Chicago's crime rackets. Holton, an independent corporate writer, editor and researcher, also is a ghostwriter and author. This is her eleventh book. In her spare time, Holton writes short stories and screenplays.

A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It is **Stephen Kinzer's** new book. After the genocide of 1994, Rwanda was one of the most devastated countries on Earth, seemingly headed for either ethnic dictatorship or permanent war. Today, however, it is not only at peace, but bursting with ambition and determined to be the next star of Africa. Kinzer, the bestselling author of *All the Shah's Men* tells how this has happened, and how Paul Kagame, who grew up as a



Stephen Kinzer

wretched refugee, along with a group of comrades determined to force their way back home after a generation of exile, amazed the world by stabilizing and reviving their devastated country. Now, President Kagame is

obsessed with a single outlandish dream: to make Rwanda the first middle-income country in Africa, and to do it in the space of a single generation.

John Raffensperger's new book is *Diamonds of Death* (Five-Star Publications), which fellow SMA member **Frank Gonzalez-Crussi** called, "A fast-paced, engaging novel that vigorously depicts Chicago's crime scene set in turmoil by greed, lawless ambition and

human foibles ... all with great vivacity of invention and a sound instinct for realistic detail. Knaves and rogues are described with clinical accuracy."

Raffensperger used the pen name John Luck, M.D. (He is married to Susan Luck, M.D.).

Schooled In Murder: A Tom and Scott Mystery (hardcover) by **Mark Richard Zubro** (St. Martin's Minotaur) is scheduled to be published July 8. It begins with a contentious staff meeting, a murdered teacher and a school full of suspects. In the story, Tom Mason, a Chicago area high school teacher, finds himself a prime suspect after stumbling across the dead body of one of his colleagues.

David J. Walker has a new suspense novel, *Saving Paulo*, being released in late June. Booklist describes it as "a wonderfully sustained suspense story." William Kent Krueger calls it "that rare genre novel, a complex thriller with a compassionate heart. ... This is a twisting, turning story about a group of misfits who do their best to rescue a boy worth saving, and Walker had me rooting for them every step of the way."



David J. Walker

F.N.G., the 1986 SMA Adult Fiction award winner by **Donald Bodey**, is being republished in August by Modern History Press. The Boston Herald, referring to the original edition, called it, "One of the most hard-hitting of all the Vietnam novels." F.N.G. stands for "fucking new guy," the nickname given to incoming Vietnam recruits by the infantrymen who have arrived before them.

Gannon: Middle School Zero (Rayve Productions), a chapter book for ages 10 to 15 is **Mary Elizabeth Anderson's** sixth published book. (Anderson also has written over 100 stories and articles for publication.) In the book, middle schooler Gracie Gannon overcomes bullying and self-doubt.

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"wretched refugee" and went on to become an ambitious head of state. The story is told in Kinzer's new book *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (See New Books, at left). ... **John Wasik's** story for Bloomberg News, "It's Not Just Money," was a finalist in the news bureau/wire service/online category in this year's Peter Lisagor Awards presented by the Chicago Headline Club. ... **Kristen Laine** is an Indiana native and her book, *American Band*, is about a marching band at an Indiana high school. But that didn't stop *American Band* from recently receiving the L.L. Winship/PEN New England award for nonfiction. The award is given for work with a New England topic or setting or by a New England author. (Laine now lives in New Hampshire.) The Winship awards were presented on March 30 at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston. ... **Kerry Trask** and **Sean Carroll** are among the seven new fellows for 2008 named by the Madison-based Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. ... **Arnie Bernstein's** book on the Bath School bombing is finally finished and off to the publisher. He finished in a flurry this spring "which is why no one has seen or heard from me." Production is under way for a spring 2009 publication, which means anywhere between January and June. SMA members **Sam Weller** and **Paula Kamen** have graciously offered to provide cover blurbs. ... The next book by **Roderick Townley**, who was an SMA finalist for children's fiction in 2007 and 2008, will be *The Blue Shoe*, scheduled for 2009 publication by Knopf. ... **Rita Emmett's** manuscript for her fourth book, (working title: *Manage Your Time to Reduce Your Stress*), has been accepted by Walker & Co., New York. If all goes well (and every author knows that nothing ever goes wrong with the publishing process) it will be in book stores by December. ... On July 20, 2008 at the Topeka (Kan.) and Shawnee County Public Library, **Robert Collins**, author of the SMA 2008 Biography Award finalist *Jim Lane: Scoundrel, Statesman, Kansan* will interact with Tim Rues, site curator of the Constitution Hall

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State Historic Site at Lecompton, Kan., who will re-enact the role of Lane. Also, Collins' new novel, *Lisa's Way* has just been published as an e-book by eTreasures Publishing. A print version will follow in four weeks. ... SMA board member **Jim Schwab**, who has become the American Planning Association's disaster policy expert and now is manager of its Hazards Planning Research Center, will be on his way to China and New Zealand this summer. He will head to China soon to assist with earthquake reconstruction assessment, using his disaster planning experience to help officials there avoid big mistakes in the cleanup process that could complicate future reconstruction. One month later, he'll head to New Zealand where the Center for Advanced Engineering in New Zealand has invited him for three weeks of speaking and consulting on disaster policy, including issues connected with landslides. Jim notes that the scenery in "Lord of the Rings," filmed on the South Island, entailed significant natural hazards — not only landslides, but also volcanoes, seismic threats and floods. Among other things, Jim will be speaking July 29 at the Second Australasian Natural Hazards Management Conference in Wellington on "Lessons from the 1993 Midwest Floods." Jim is at the very beginning of undertaking a new book on that very topic and just completed his first visit to Iowa May 9 to research the history of that event. He's also "rethinking the framework of the book" to include this year's floods. ... **Carol Felsenthal's** latest book was the subject of the "Chicago Lit" column in the May 18 Chicago Sun-Times, which referred to *Clinton in Exile: A President Out of the White House* (William Morrow) as "a juicy, can't-put-down new book." And one of her posts about Bill Clinton on *huffington.com* was reprinted in the June 4 Sun-Times. Felsenthal also was scheduled to discuss her book with Jim Warren, Chicago Tribune deputy managing editor/features, on June 8 at University Center. ... **Charles Wheelan**, author of "*Naked Economics: Undressing the Dismal Science*," was scheduled to address the CFA Society of Louisville on May 20 during a luncheon about what

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Letters to the Editor

As a fairly new member of Midland Authors, I just wanted to express my appreciation to the organization. Author **Stephen Kinzer** recently contacted me through the Midland Authors to ask if I would guest lecture in his Medill School of Journalism "Art of Nonfiction" class at Northwestern University.

On April 21, I spoke about my own book, *Postcards From Heartthrob Town* and the creative process to a group of 15 terrific graduate students! It was a cardinal moment for me, and I feel I have been brought into a whole new world of colleagues.

Networking, sharing and sincere camaraderie is what the Society of Midland Authors is all about — and I just wanted

to offer up a note of appreciation!

Gerard Wozek

I had an outstanding day at the Printers Row Book Fair. I know the Society of Midland Authors has been doing this for a while, and I haven't taken advantage of the opportunity in a long time, but it sure worked this year. Another four boxes of books out of this apartment!

[SMA Printers Row coordinators] Carol Carlson and Rich Lindberg were wonderful. Of course, the location was excellent, and I was lucky to get out before the rain! Some days just happen to work.

Mark Zubro

I love reading Literary License. You do a great job.

Rita Emmett

Book awards

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Failed and My Sister Stole My Mother's Boyfriend; **Ann Hagedorn** of Ripley, Ohio, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919*, Simon & Schuster.

Biography: Winner: **Judith Testa**. Finalists: **Robert E. Bonner** of Northfield, Minn., *William F. Cody's Wyoming Empire: The Buffalo Bill Nobody Knows*, University of Oklahoma Press; **Robert Collins** of Andover, Kan., *Jim Lane: Scoundrel, Statesman, Kansan*, Pelican Publishing Co.

Children's Fiction: Winner: **Gary D. Schmidt**. Finalists: **Roderick Townley** of Shawnee Mission, Kan., *The Red Thread: A Novel in Three Incarnations*, Simon & Schuster; **Nancy Crocker** of Minneapolis, Minn., *Billie Standish Was Here*, Simon & Schuster; **Joan M. Wolf** of Fridley, Minn., *Someone Named Eva*, Clarion Books.

Children's Nonfiction: Winner: **Cris Peterson** of Grantsburg, Wis., *Clarabelle: Making Milk and So Much More*, Boyds Mills Press. Finalists: **Dawn FitzGerald** of Pepper Pike, Ohio, *Vinnie and Abraham*, Charlesbridge Publishing Co.;

Marlene Targ Brill of Wilmette, Ill., *Marshall "Major" Taylor: World Champion Cyclist, 1899-1901* (Twenty-First Century Books).

Poetry: Winner: **Jeff Gundy** of Bluffton, Ohio, *Spoken among the Trees*, University of Akron Press. Finalist: **Donald Platt**.

Also at the dinner, former SMA president **Phyllis Ford Choyke** of Elmhurst, Ill., received a Distinguished Service Award for her many contributions to the Society.

The juried competition is open to authors who live in, were born in or have strong ties to Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota,

Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota or Wisconsin.

"The Awards Banquet just keeps getting better every year," said **Richard Lindberg**, SMA board member and former president.

"It is a coordinated team effort; all of the SMA officers and Board members lend their talents and skills to making this event what it is," he said. "For our members and guests who take home at least one award-winning book each year, the dinner is an exceptional value. I hope that those who have not attended an SMA dinner consider doing so in 2009."



Judith Testa

Success rains, er, reigns at '08 Printers Row fair

BY CAROL CARLSON

The Printers Row book fair was a success this year for most of the authors who took part in the annual two-day event at Dearborn and Polk.

On June 7, authors **Mark Zubro, Kate Noble, Richard Lindberg, Rich Cahan** and **Robert Loerzel** were at the Society of Midland Authors' tent. On June 8, **John Raffensperger, Anastasia Royal, Luisa Buehler** and **Gerry and Janet Souter** were there.

Other SMA members also were at the fair, but elsewhere at publishers' and other organizations' booths.

SMA board members **Carol Carlson** and **Richard Lindberg** were on hand throughout the weekend to coordinate the SMA tent. SMA Vice President Robert Loerzel handled placing an ad that listed SMA authors who would be at the event.

"Everything went well at the book fair," Lindberg said. "Rich Cahan showed up and did well. The Souters sold out everything they had, and Mark Zubro nearly did the same. But the rain came just as Anastasia was setting up – and it was a torrent."

On Sunday afternoon, book fair offi-

cialists ordered everyone out of their tents and into the buildings because of the tornado warnings. People came back the minute it started to clear.

The SMA's sellers did remarkably well – Kate Noble went home with only a few books left (hers were selling for \$15), Mark Zubrow got rid of three or four boxes of books, Rich Lindberg sold

everything he brought (\$30/book), Rich Cahan sold all but one book (\$25 and \$35/book), Luisa Buehler sold out (\$11 and \$13/book), the Souters sold out (\$25 and \$30/book). John Raffensperger seemed to be selling well.

The place we had seemed ideal. This year, the Society was at tent C-4, which was just the third tent south from the

north end of the fair at Congress and Dearborn. We had traffic all day and people stopped on their way out to buy books, although some were disappointed because the author had left or there were no more books.

The SMA tent is open to any SMA author who wants to sell his or her books during a two-hour time slot.

There is plenty of room at the tent to accommodate all SMA authors who want to attend.



Richard Cahan

SMA support

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but the Society always needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May banquet. Thanks to these members who made extra contributions: **Richard and Margery Frisbie; William E. Barnhart; Marietta Marcin and Jules Steinberg; Stella Pevsner; Elinor P. Swiger; Dick Simpson; Billy J. McCarthy; Bernard J. Brommel; Phyllis M. Choyke; Richard Bales and Richard C. Lindberg.**

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basic economics can say about the future. ... **Nathan Kantrowitz** was interviewed for an 8,000-word mini-biography of the serial murderer William Heirens, "The Long, Long Life of the Lipstick Killer," that appears in the June issue of GQ magazine (p.176ff.). In the article, Heirens mentions in passing just how safe it was to do time in Warden Joseph Ragen's Stateville Penitentiary. Kantrowitz is author of *Close Control: Managing a Maximum Security Prison-The Story of Ragen's Stateville Penitentiary* (1996), which details how Warden Ragen controlled the Stateville-Joliet prison in the 1960s. "[Heirens' comment] is quite an independent validation of the efficacy of Ragen's unique system of control," Kantrowitz says. By coincidence, the Chicago Historical Society this May made public details of the archive of basic documents and field work notes that detail that control and lives of Stateville convicts. Go to www.chsmedia.org:8081/, click on "author/co-creator" and type in Nathan Kantrowitz to see his contributions to the archive. ... **David Mendell's** was the first title mentioned in a June 6 Associated Press story on works about Sen. Barack Obama planned for the summer and fall. Carla Cohen, co-owner of the Politics & Prose bookstore, based in Washington, D.C., told AP "there has been interest in some previous books, including David Mendell's *Obama*, a biography published by HarperCollins last year and recently out in paperback." ... **Joel Greenberg** received a grant last year from the Illinois Humanities Council to put on a show with two musicians based on material in his new book. "We call it Voices of the Land." His Chicago appearance will be at Lincoln Park Zoo. ... Antioch (Ill.) Community High School's "one book, one community" initiative this summer picked **Scott Turow's** *Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing With the Death Penalty*. ... **Martha Modena Vertreace-Doody**, distinguished professor of English and the poet-in-residence at Kennedy-King College in Chicago, was scheduled to give a reading of her work June 16 at the annual meeting of the Governor Duncan Association in Elgin, Ill.

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SMA to start fiscal year with healthy finances

BY RICHARD FRISBIE, TREASURER

Because the Society's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, members are requested to pay dues now for 2008-2009. Overall, SMA has enjoyed a successful year with a modest increase of income over expenses.

The surplus will be added to the endowment fund. The SMA Board of Directors is seeking to increase the endowment fund so the interest can allow significant increase in the amount of our literary awards.

Here are the details of fiscal 2007-2008 at press time.

INCOME	
Dinner tickets	\$3,580.00
Donations	\$2,180.00
Dues	\$11,165.00
Endowments	\$1,100.00
Gift Received	\$1,250.00
Interest	\$697.79
Printers Row fees	\$172.12
Program admissions	\$40.00
TOTAL	\$20,184.91

EXPENSES	
Awards	\$2,873.30
Dinner	\$5,632.22
Membership	\$843.19
Office	\$99.54
Postage and delivery	\$20.50
Printers Row cost including advertising	\$900.00
Programs	\$1,868.97
Publications	\$5,666.24
Supplies	\$310.49
Utilities (Web site)	\$98.00
TOTAL	\$18,312.45

NET	\$1,872.46
Endowment Fund	\$20,381.02
TOTAL ASSETS	\$22,253.48

SMA is thankful to the Siragusa Foundation for a grant of \$1,250. It's also worth noting that 60 SMA members did their part by contributing \$2,180 to the awards fund.

Although SMA is financial healthy overall, the Board continues to study the price of the annual awards dinner. Expenses in recent years have usually exceeded the revenue from ticket sales.

LITERARY LICENSE, MAY-AUGUST, 2008

A steady hand on the thriller guides author to best-sellerdom

Literary License: *What inspired you to switch from journalism to writing novels?*

Shane Gericke: After 25 years in the newspaper business, primarily at the Chicago Sun-Times, I decided to give fiction a whirl. I've wanted to write crime thrillers since I read my first Hardy Boys, and I wrote a crime thriller. I was hooked! Where else could I create my own world and populate it with characters I wish I knew in real life? Then share it with thousands of people around the world? And get paid? It's a kick.

LL: *How difficult was it to get your first book published?*

SG: It took forever. I spent years writing my first manuscript. It went nowhere. More years working on No. 2. Again, nowhere. The third time was the charm. A top literary agent was interested, and he brought it to 12 big publishers. Eleven said nah, though they spelled my name right. Hey, take the crumbs you get, and gratefully! No. 12, Kensington Books, said, "We love this." So we're off and running. The book became *Blown Away*, appeared worldwide in May 2006, and became a national best-seller with Chinese, Turkish and Slovak translations. The lesson I learned: Keep trying, and accept rejection as part of the game. The second in the series, *Cut to the Bone*, came out in June 2007, and Kensington wants more.

LL: *Cut to the Bone is set in Naperville, Ill., and involved a wrongful execution. Naperville itself was the center of perhaps the most controversial wrongful death penalty convictions in Illinois history. (The Jeanine Nicarico kidnap-rape-murder.) How did the reality of Illinois' death penalty record shape your book?*

SG: It had a strong influence. Illinois politics is breathtakingly corrupt and small-minded, so frankly, how could we NOT put innocent people on Death Row? Answer: We can't. Illinois has sprung scores from the Row because DNA and other fresh evidence proved they couldn't have

committed the crime. That's why I wrote this novel – to show the crimes that politicians commit when condemning a person to death, and the unrelenting headaches that gives good cops trying to prevent it.

LL: *What advice do you have for authors trying to get publicity for their books?*

SG: First, join Midland Authors. Seriously. You guys are aces at promoting author members, and the newsletter is gold for helping you create your own buzz. Second, cultivate every bookseller and media person you can find. If they like you, they will help you get out the word. Third, consider hiring a publicist.

They have contacts you couldn't get if you bribed the folks at Fort Knox. It ain't cheap, but you get the critical exposure you need to make your launch a success, and you convince your publisher that you're serious about

sales. Finally, join local and national organizations, both professional and service-oriented. Networking is just telling a buncha people your stories, and listening to theirs. It's fun, and it boosts your sales and reputation.

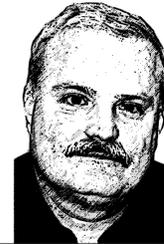
LL: *What's your next project?*

SG: I just signed a contract for No. 3 in the series. It will be on the bookshelves in January, 2010. It's nice being gainfully employed for another year! Meantime, I'm one of the directors of ThrillerFest, the annual national convention of thriller writers, readers, editors, publishers, agents and other industry folks sponsored by International Thriller Writers Inc. I run the ThrillerFest Charity Auctions and what we call AgentFest, a speed-pitching event that allows hundreds of authors to pitch their book ideas to 45 top New York literary agents. That combination keeps me incredibly busy, but it's the best kind of busy.

LL: *If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?*

SG: Whoops, look at the time, gotta go, let's do lunch real soon, thanks for everything!

Q&A with Shane Gericke



New members

Fran Baker is the best-selling author of 10 novels, including *The Lady and the Champ* (1993, Doubleday/Bantam), *The Widow and the Wildcatter* (1996, Bantam) and *Once a Warrior* (1998, Delphi Books). Publishers Weekly said: "Her descriptions of war, particularly the WWII battles, are grimly honest."

Michelle Boisseau, author of the poetry books *Trembling Air* and *Understory*, was born in Cincinnati and teaches at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In 1989 she received a National Endowment for the Arts poetry fellowship, and in 1990 her first book of poems, *No Private Life* (Vanderbilt University Press) was published. *Understory* (Northeastern University Press), was chosen by Molly Peacock as the 1996 winner of the Samuel French Morse Prize. Her poems have won the Lucille Medwick Award, the Cecil Hemley Award, and were a finalist for the Alice Fay Di Castagnola Award; she has also received the Stanley Hanks Poetry Chapbook Award and first prize in the National Poetry Competition from the Chester H. Jones Foundation. Her next book of poems, *A Sunday in God-Years*, will be out in early 2009 from the University of Arkansas Press.

Ray E. Boomhower, author of "*One Shot*": *The World War II Photography of John A. Bushemi*, is senior editor of the Indiana Historical Society Press's quarterly magazine *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*. He is also author of *The Sword & the Pen: A Life of Lew Wallace*; *Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary*; *Gus Grissom: The Lost Astronaut*; *The Soldier's Friend: A Life of Ernie Pyle*; and *Fighting for Equality: A Life of May Wright Sewall*.

Emily Calvo is author of *How to Succeed in Advertising When All You Have Is Talent* (1994, National Textbook Co.); *25 Words or Less* (relationships, 1998, Contemporary Books); *First Comes Love* (humor, 2004, Publications International) and *Friends Wit, Wisdom and Fun* (Publications International). She was the 1999 and 2003 National Poetry Slam's marketing director and works as a freelance writer, specializing in market-

ing. She has performed her poetry at the Around the Coyote Arts Festival, the Cook County Fair, the Green Mill and numerous other venues, including civic events in France. She has been interviewed on NPR regarding today's poetry scene and published in *After Hours* and *Roosevelt University's Oyez Review*.

William Farina is author of *Ulysses S. Grant 1861-1864: His Rise from Obscurity to Military Greatness* (2007, McFarland) and *De Vere as Shakespeare* (2006). He was born and reared in LaPorte, Ind., where he attended the public schools. He earned a B.A. in English and philosophy, then a law degree, from Valparaiso University, where he attended as an undergraduate student on a baseball scholarship. Soon after, he made his home in the Chicago area and became a member of the Illinois bar. Since 1979, he has enjoyed a successful career in the real estate consulting industry. Bill and his wife, Marion Buckley, live in Evanston, Ill. His third book, *Perpetua of Carthage: Portrait of a Third-Century Martyr* will be published soon.

Patricia Kummer has written about 60 books, mostly biography, history and geography for children and young adults. She was born and raised in Minneapolis, has a B.A. and M.A. in history and is a former middle school social studies and language arts teacher. She also is a former social studies editor at Laidlaw Brothers in River Forest, Ill. She was an elected trustee on the Lisle (Ill.) Library District board from 1999 to 2007 and now teaches continuing education writing courses at the College of DuPage.

Richard C. Longworth is a retired Tribune reporter and a senior fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. He is a Distinguished Visiting Scholar DePaul University, an adjunct professor of international relations at Northwestern University and lectures regularly at Columbia University. He is author of *Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism*, just published by Bloomsbury, and *Global Squeeze: The Coming Crisis for First-World Nations*.

Kevin Mattson is Connor Study Professor of Contemporary History at Ohio University and a faculty associate at the Contemporary History Institute. He is author of *Upton Sinclair and the Other American Century* (2006), *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970* (2002) and other books. He is a fellow at the Center for American Progress.

Steven Simoncic, who grew up in Detroit, is author of *Heat Wave* (2008, Pegasus Players) and also a playwright and adapter. He has a degree in finance from the University of Michigan, an MFA in writing from North Carolina's Warren Wilson College and an MLA degree (concentration in philosophy) from the University of Chicago. His fiction has appeared in *New Millennium Writings*, *Drift Magazine*, the *Chicago Reader* and *Spork*, and his play "Broken Fences" will be produced off Broadway in New York in April.

Ruth Spiro lives in Illinois with her husband and two daughters, who provide endless inspiration for her writing. She graduated with a B.S. in advertising from the University of Illinois in 1986 and worked for advertising agencies in both broadcast production and account management. In 1990 she earned an MBA from Loyola University Chicago.

Her articles and essays have appeared in *Child*, *Woman's World*, *Redbook*, *FamilyFun* and *Chicago Parent*. Her stories have also been published in popular anthologies, notably *The Right Words at the Right Time, Volume 2: Your Turn*, edited by Marlo Thomas and several *Chicken Soup for the Soul* titles. Her picture book, *Lester Fizz: Bubble Gum Artist* – soon to be published by Dutton – was a winner in the *Writer's Digest 72nd Annual Writing Competition*, and was named *Best Contest Entry* in the *Kay Snow Writing Contest* sponsored by the *Willamette Writers* in Oregon.

Victor R. Volkman is president of *Loving Healing Press*, which has 60 titles in print and publishes 15 a year. He is a former part-time instructor at *Washtenaw*

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How taking up blogging can help you promote your books

BY THOMAS CIESIELKA

‘Hey dude. What’s bloggin’?’

“Nothing much. What’s bloggin’ with you?”

“Too much. I’ve got three meetings today and a report due at noon. I’m totally blogged.”

“Wow. That’s a blogger.”

The mock dialogue above was to demonstrate how blogs have changed the way we communicate. Not that I’ve ever heard anyone talk like that, but still. Blogs have been around for many years now and have become almost as common as Web sites. Four years ago, “blog” was Merriam-Webster’s word of the year. Now, in 2008, the word “blog” is being broken down into sub-genres such as diary blogging, corporate blogging and research blogging.

Many companies have taken the leap and joined the blog-versation; others still might have some questions as to the benefits of maintaining a blog.

Here are three points persuading you to join the blog-versation.

It’s an All-In-One

A blog is an advertising, public relations, marketing and community relations tool all wrapped up into one neat little electronic package. It is a personalized advertisement, press release, informational brochure and discussion forum. Having a blog will increase your Internet exposure by retrieving more results when your company/name is searched on various search engines. And let’s face it, a majority of the public gets their information from the Internet. So the more of a presence you have there, the better connection you will make with potential customers.

It’s a Two-Way Street

Allowing people to leave comments or contact you through your blog shows that your business cares about what the out-



Thomas Ciesielka

side world thinks and recognizes the value of personal interaction. Yes, this is kind of ironic, seeing as the personal interaction is taking place through an electronic medium. However, responding to comments or concerns is still a personal acknowledgement that is appreciated. You can similarly make comments to the public, communicating ideas and thoughts or asking for feedback or suggestions. This makes a potential client feel valuable and important, and nothing beats the feeling of self-worth.

It’s Up-To-Date

Maintaining a blog allows you to do a couple of things as fast as you can type the words “EXTRA! EXTRA! BLOG ALL ABOUT IT!” First, you can comment on recent events or breaking news

A blog is an advertising, public relations, marketing and community relations tool

stories that pertain to your field of work. This shows you are knowledgeable about current affairs and gives you more credibility. Second, you can quickly make company announcements instead of waiting to include the information in a monthly newsletter or mailing. This is not to say that you shouldn’t also put the announcement in the newsletter or in mailings, but the more exposure the better.

If you still have questions about blogging or would like to know more about other social media tools, please don’t hesitate to call or shoot me an e-mail. It would be blog-tastic to hear from you. Until then, feel free to visit my own new blog: <http://prforlaughs.blogspot.com/>.

Blog out, people.

E-mail Thomas Ciesielka at tc@tcpr.net or call (312) 422-1333.

Final chapters

Longtime SMA member **Mary Radmacher**, former chief librarian at the Skokie (Ill.) Library, died June 9 at St. Joseph Hospital in Chicago at age 92.

Miss Radmacher, which is how her staff referred to her, was born Nov. 24, 1915, in Monmouth, Ill. She attended Monmouth College and graduated from the University of Illinois.

Her first job was as children’s librarian for Warren County in Monmouth.

She also worked at libraries at the University of Illinois and Gary before taking over in Skokie.

As chief librarian from 1956 through 1985, Miss Radmacher was a key player in the building of the village’s new library at 5215 Oakton St. She recruited a library board that obtained funding, helped select an architect and provided input on the building’s interior and exterior design.

During her 29-year career at the Skokie Library, Miss Radmacher also oversaw a major expansion of the building in 1972.

While Miss Radmacher was chief librarian, the Skokie Library introduced bookmobile service, began automating the card catalog and equipment and implemented staff training to help people with vision impairments and other disabilities access library materials.

When she retired, the Skokie Village Board named Sept. 29, 1985, Mary Radmacher Day in Skokie.

Private services were held in Monmouth. A public memorial service will be held in the Mary Radmacher Meeting Room of the Skokie Library at 1 p.m. on Sunday, July 13.

New members

Continued from Page 6

(Mich.) Community College and now serves on CIS Faculty Advisory Board. He also is author of *Beyond Trauma: Conversations on Traumatic Incident Reduction, 2nd Edition* and two other books. Modern History Press, an imprint of Loving Healing Press, is republishing *F.N.G.* by **Donald Bodey** (See New Books).

Final chapters

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Richard “Tim” Unsworth, a longtime member of the Society of Midland Authors and a former treasurer of the Society, died April 30 at age 78 after a long illness.

Mr. Unsworth was the author of five books — a sixth coincidentally went to the printers on the day he died — and a longtime columnist for the National Catholic Reporter who became the unofficial voice for liberal Chicago Catholics. He was a frequent guest on Chicago television stations as a commentator on Catholic issues.

His books included a biography of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago titled *I Am Your Brother Joseph* (1997); *The Lambs of Libertyville: A Working Community of Retarded Adults*, which Publishers Weekly called a “warmly told, anecdotal story”; *Catholics on the Edge*, (1995); a book about Catholic laity titled *Here Comes Everybody*, and a series of portraits about activist priests titled *The Last Priests in America*. Excerpts from that book ran in the Chicago Tribune magazine.

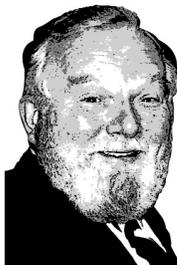
“He had a wonderful sense of humor, and he took delight in the church, the local church especially,” said William Kenneally, a retired Catholic priest and longtime friend. “He had a stage to present that [through his column], and his books were wonderfully written.”

Mr. Unsworth’s latest book, a collection of columns, is titled, *Tim Unsworth: Articles from the National Catholic Reporter*, said Gregory Pierce, president of ACTA Publications, which is publishing it.

“He was never mean-spirited,” Pierce said. “He truly loved the Catholic Church, even though he was always calling it to task, even though he was always wanting it to do better.”

The National Catholic Reporter said he was “known for his wit and keen observation of how ordinary Catholics lived their faith in the pews and the streets.”

Mr. Unsworth, who was born in 1929 in Canton, Ohio, got his start as a columnist when he wrote a seven-page letter to



Tim Unsworth

Joseph Bernardin, as Bernardin was about to take over as Chicago’s archbishop. The letter, advising Bernardin not to immerse himself only in the higher circles of Chicago, but to ride buses, eat in everyday restaurants and get to know average Chicagoans, was so charming that his wife, Jean, sent a copy to the National Catholic Reporter. The newspaper printed it on its front page and hired Mr. Unsworth as regular contributor, a job he held for the next 24 years.

As a columnist and feature writer, “He wrote a lot of stories about underdogs — lay and clergy — who were doing good but perhaps not getting any credit, or in fact maybe suffering for it,” said SMA member Robert McClory, professor emeritus at Northwestern University.

The son of a bakery superintendent, Mr. Unsworth attended Iona College in New Rochelle, N.Y., and Fordham University and obtained a master’s degree in Spanish in Saltillo, Mexico. He joined the religious order

Christian Brothers of Ireland, and in 1967 was named principal of Brother Rice High School, 10001 S. Pulaski.

He left the order and in 1970 married Jean Morman Unsworth, a former member of the Sisters of Mercy, whom he had visited after she suffered a serious accident. He led the alumni and development offices of DePaul University from 1970 to 1979, the University of Chicago for about a year and the former Northwestern University Dental School from 1981 to 1987.

After hip replacement surgery in September 2006, Mr. Unsworth suffered a massive infection and never regained his health.

He died of heart failure.

Jean Unsworth, a retired Loyola University professor of fine arts, said their years together were wonderful, punctuated by frequent trips abroad and buoyed by Mr. Unsworth’s unremitting sense of humor.

Mr. Unsworth also is survived by a brother, Robert Unsworth, and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service followed by a dinner was held May 25 at St. Clements Church.

Final chapters

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Elsie Ziegler, author of three historically based books for young adults and a longtime member of the Society of Midland Authors, died May 23 in San Marcos, Calif., at age 97.

A winner of several writing awards, Ms. Ziegler also wrote freelance articles for the Chicago Daily News and other publications.

Her 1961 book *Light a Little Lamp* told the fictional story of a young girl whose heroism during the Chicago fire started her on a career as a social worker. Her novels *The Blowing-Wand* (about glass blowing) and *Face in the Stone* (about stonecutting) dealt with immigrants and the trades they brought to America in the



Elsie Ziegler

19th century. She also published stories in *Every Woman* magazine, *Judy’s* magazine, *Extension* magazine, the *Toronto Star*, *Writer’s Digest* and the *Farm Journal*.

Born Elsie Mary Reif on Nov. 15, 1910, Ms. Ziegler attended Stowe Elementary School in Chicago. She attended high school first at Tuley High School (since replaced by Clemente High School) in Chicago and then Oak Park and River Forest High School in Oak Park, Ill. As a senior, she wrote a story titled “The Green Velvet Hat,” which won the school’s short story contest. Her essay “Who am I?” was one of six nationwide winners in an Atlantic Monthly contest for high school seniors and was published in a supplement to the magazine.

She studied journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she won a contest by the Gregorian Literary Society with a story titled “Strange Interloper.”

After marrying Norman A. Ziegler, she moved to Park Ridge, Ill., and then Barrington, Ill., before moving to San Diego in 1979. She is survived by her three children, Peter Ziegler, the actress Karen Black (who won an Academy Award nomination for her role in “Five Easy Pieces”) and Gail Duggan, seven grandchildren and two great-grandsons.