

## Biblio File

(Note: *Literary License* has run low on capital M's and N's in its California job case typesetting box, so we have changed the name of this column from *Member News* to *Biblio File*.)

On Oct. 16, **Stephen Bloom** will receive the Iowa Author of the Year Award. Also, he and co-author Peter Feldstein of *The Oxford Project* (See New Books) on Sept. 16 will speak at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Next, launch events for the book will be held on Sept. 28 in the town of Oxford, Iowa. And 10 international exhibitions of the art



Robert McClory

are scheduled for Italy and China. ... **Robert McClory's** book, *As It Was in the Beginning: The Coming Democratization of the Catholic Church* (Crossroad Publishing), won first prize in the history category in the 2008 awards by the Catho-

lic Press Association in late May. Also, he was inducted in April into the Medill Hall of Achievement, which honors alumni of the Medill School at Northwestern University for professional accomplishments. Other SMA members in the Medill Hall include **Jack Fuller** and **Richard C. Longworth**. ... **Margaret McMullan's** young adult novel *When I Crossed No-Bob* (Houghton Mifflin) was named Indiana's Best Young Adult Book of 2008 at an award ceremony at the Indiana State Library in Indianapolis Aug. 16. The Indiana Best Book award program was started in 2005 by the Indiana Center for the Book to strengthen interest in Indiana's strong literary heritage. *When I Crossed No-Bob* also received a 2008 Parents' Choice Silver Honor and was named a 2008 finalist for the Willie Morris Prize for Southern Fiction. The

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## Political analysis launches 2008-09 program schedule

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

**Jim Merriner**, president of the Society of Midland Authors, will provide an expert's insights into Illinois politics at the first program of the Society's 2008-2009 season on Oct. 14.

Merriner (see Q&A on Page 2) is author of *The Man Who Emptied Death Row: Governor George Ryan and the Politics of Crime* (Southern Illinois University Press). He also is author of other political books, including *Grafters and Goo Goos: Corruption and Reform in Chicago* and *Mr. Chairman: Power in Dan Rostenkowski's America*.

The November program will feature tips from **Tom Ciesielka**, president of TC Public Relations, on how to get Internet publicity for your books. Tom's program will give authors a quick lesson in the business of blogging, with several specific items authors can implement to help accomplish the overall goal of generating buzz about a new book in the blogosphere.

On Jan. 13, **Lisa Holton** will speak about her new book, *For Members Only: A History and Guide to Chicago's Oldest Private Clubs*. The city's private clubs

have been around almost as long as Chicago and have served as much more than playgrounds for the rich. Their members have plotted against Al Capone, grilled the world's most powerful leaders, and generally worked to make Chicago the city it is today. This is the first book to describe the fascinating history of all the major private clubs in the Windy City with a convenient guidebook detailing

activities, facilities and costs. The SMA's current venue is in fact one of those clubs – the Cliff Dwellers – so this will be an interesting topic.

Lisa Holton is a former Chicago Sun-Times business editor and reporter.

Since 1998, she has run The Lisa Company, a writing, editing and research firm for corporate, education and nonprofit clients. She has written 11 books under her name and for ghostwriting clients across the country.

This year's program lineup was assembled by **Jim Schwab**, who is resigning as program chairman because of an increased workload at his non-SMA job, the American Planning Association, which keeps sending him for several weeks at a time to places such as New Zealand and China. Jim also is a past president of the Society.

### October 14, 2008, program

**Cliff Dwellers**  
200 S. Michigan Avenue  
22nd floor

6 p.m. - Social Hour  
7:00 p.m. - Program

Free - members, teachers, students  
\$5.00 - general public

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Parents' Choice Awards is the nation's oldest nonprofit program created to recognize and honor the best material for children. The Willie Morris Award for Fiction is an annual award honoring the author of the best book of fiction set in the Southern United States. *When I Crossed No-Bob* is the sequel to McMullan's novel *How I Found the Strong*, which won the 2005 Indiana Best Young Adult Book award. ...

**Rita Emmett's** literary agent, Danielle Egan-Miller, has sold the audio rights to McMillan Publishing for her upcoming book, *Manage Your Time to Reduce Your Stress: A Handbook for the Overworked, Overscheduled and Overwhelmed*. McMillan hopes to release the audio set the same day Walker & Co. publishes the book. ... **Stephen Kinzer** (see Writers on Writing, Page 3) now has a Web site:

<http://www.stephenkinzer.com>. A "Chicago Lit" feature about him and his books written by **Thomas Frisbie** was scheduled to run this month in the Chicago Sun-Times. ... **Ed Gordon** has sent off the manuscript of his latest book, *Winning the Global Talent Showdown: How Businesses and Communities are Partnering to Rebuild the Jobs Pipeline*, to his publisher, Barrett-Koehler. The book is scheduled for publication next April. ...

**Sel Yackley**, who was born in Istanbul, was scheduled to escort a tour group to Turkey, including stops in Cappadocia, Istanbul and Ephesus from Aug. 29 to Sept. 14. ... Here's what Booklist wrote on Feb. 1 about **Michael Allen Dymmo**'s ninth novel, *M.I.A.*, a story of violent men and violent passions, of missing friends, of loss and discovery (See New Books, Literary License, February, 2008),

"Tautly crafted, Dymmo's bittersweet journey of discovery glimmers with subtle tension." ... **Margery Frisbie**, author of *An Alley in Chicago: The Ministry of a City Priest* (1991), wrote in the Sept. 9



Michael Allen Dymmo

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# Making an honest living writing about corruption

**Jim Merriner**, political historian and former political editor of the Chicago Sun-Times, will discuss his new book about former governor George Ryan at the Society of Midland Authors' Oct. 14 program. Literary License caught up with him over the summer for an interview:

**Literary License:** *Why did you choose to write about a disgraced governor?*

**Jim Merriner:** My publisher asked me to write a book about the Chicago public schools, and without thinking I said, "No, that's not the story. George Ryan is the story." Actually, I had hardly thought about Ryan for years. If he were just another crooked politician, he wouldn't be worth a book. But he was a crooked politician who single-handedly overturned

the death penalty in Illinois. That was a truly radical act, especially for a conservative Republican. So why did he do it?

**Literary License:** *You also wrote about a disgraced powerful House Ways and Means chairman. Were there parallels here?*

**Jim Merriner:** One big parallel is that both Dan Rostenkowski and George Ryan to this day believe they are innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted. Rosty told me that he might have violated some House rules but he never committed felonies. Years later I asked Ryan, did there come a moment when you knew you were going to be indicted? They're indicting all your friends left and right, you must have thought, they're coming after me? He said, no, he never believed he would be indicted until his defense attorney actually called him with the news.

At first I thought, well, he's just maintaining a posture of innocence because his case is still on appeal. But the more I studied the man and his career, the more it seemed clear that he never understood that fixing all those contracts and scamming all that money amounted to crimes. I guess that's what they mean by a "cul-

ture of corruption."

**Literary License:** *Are Chicago and Illinois really the capitals of corruption, or are the reporters and writers here just better at finding it?*

**Jim Merriner:** As much as I love reporters and writers, let's not give them too much credit. Most of the credit goes to the U.S. attorneys here and especially the incumbent, Patrick Fitzgerald. And, yes, Chicago and Illinois really are capitals of corruption. In my books I've tried to explore what exactly constitutes public corruption and why Chicago and Illinois have so much of it. "Culture of corruption" is just a slogan, not an explanation. If there is such a culture, why does Illinois have it and not, say, Wisconsin?

In the Ryan book I reached some conclusions about all this. But if you want to know the conclusions, you have to buy the book!

**Literary License:** *What makes readers interested in political corruption?*

**Jim Merriner:** In my experience, they're not that interested. Besides trying to define corruption, I've also been interested in what makes up a scandal. The public's "scandal fatigue" seems to increase with every election cycle. There's this general overlay of disgust and cynicism, the attitude that all politics is dirty. I think that attitude is more dangerous to a free republic than all the nickels and dimes stolen by the likes of Rosty and Ryan.

Maybe some kind of critical mass of corruption has been reached so that people will demand clean government, but I doubt it.

**Literary License:** *What's your next book?*

**Jim Merriner:** People always ask me, am I writing about Gov. Blagojevich now? I say, no, that would be redundant. Is this my existential task in life, I have to write about every crooked politician in Illinois? Actually, I am hoping to retire next year.

## Q&A with Jim Merriner



# Secret of writing nonfiction book: Pretend you're not

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Stephen Kinzer, who teaches a course at Medill at Northwestern University on how to write a non-fiction book, sat down this month with Literary License at the Border's bookstore on State Street in Chicago and talked about what he teaches students.

"I share a lot of my techniques and observations about how to write books," Kinzer said over the whine of the cappuccino and espresso machines. "One of the biggest challenges that separates writing a book from writing an article is that you have to write so much. It is just so overwhelming."

Kinzer, a former New York Times bureau chief in Guatemala, Germany and Turkey, has written five books and co-authored a sixth. On March 11, 2003, he presented an SMA program on the then-soon-to-be-published *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (2003, Wiley). His most

recent book is *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (2008, Wiley). An updated version of Kinzer's 2001 book *Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds* is being published in paperback this month.

"To think of writing even a long magazine article is quite intimidating," said Kinzer, who reported from more than 50 countries on five continents during his more than 25 years as a foreign correspondent. "When you sit down and you are thinking you are going to write a book and ask, 'Where do I start?' it's almost too intimidating to begin. It's like seeing every single dish in the sink, totally piled up."

Kinzer, who also is starting a one-year appointment at Dominican University in River Forest, Ill., said he when he starts writing a new nonfiction book, he tries to break it down into manageable chunks.

"One thing I like to tell myself is I am not writing a book," Kinzer said. "That is really hard. I say I am just writing nine

essays, nine stories that are sort of separately packaged as if they are magazine articles. And then, you put them together."

That way, Kinzer said, an author doesn't worry that there are 90,000 words to go.

"I have only 6,000 more words to do," he said. "It is at least doable. So, psychologically, I try to break down the work in order to avoid this overwhelming sense that a book is too high a mountain."

Having just returned from Turkey about which he is writing an article for the Smithsonian, Kinzer was full of reflections about that nation.

"Turkey is a totally fascinating country," said Kinzer, who also writes regularly for the Guardian in London and the New York Review of Books. "As the

years pass, it is certainly becoming a very important country, partly because of its identity as the leading secular Muslim country. The other country in that part of the world that I am really interested in is Iran."

Being an author has advantages over being a newspaper reporter, Kinzer said.

"What I don't miss [about reporting] is being the slave of events," he said. "I hated that. When some plane when down or some bridge fell, you had to go there. Now I only have to write about what I want to write about."

Kinzer also offered this tip for nonfiction writers: Have a strong narrative line.

"My books are all stories where you want to turn the page to find out what happens next," he said. "They are not just sort of thumb-sucking policy analyses."

Kinzer has a larger goal, too.

"It's frustrating to see how political interests can take advantage of Americans' ignorance," he said. "Trying to do something about that is one of the reasons that I am writing these books. You are always being given a narrative from Washington. It's usually the only narrative you are hearing. What I am trying to do is provide a counter-narrative."

## Writers on Writing Stephen Kinzer



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Chicago Sun-Times that writing about community organizers had give her the highest respect for them and that they deserve to be admired, not mocked. "Some failures don't gainsay the fact that community organizers are some of the heroes of our day," Frisbie wrote. The book recounts the works of the late Monsignor John Joseph Egan of Chicago. ... **Ray E. Boomhower** was scheduled to speak about his new book, *Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary*, on Aug. 25 at the Hancock County Public Library in Greenfield, Ind. Boomhower says he often is asked how the country might have been different had Kennedy survived and been elected president, and he says in an interview on the Indiana University Press blog that, "If Kennedy had won the nomination and beaten his GOP opponent, Richard Nixon, in the fall, a Kennedy administration probably would have removed American troops from Vietnam much sooner than did the Nixon administration. Without Nixon as president, of course, there would have been no Watergate scandal, and perhaps Americans' mistrust and suspicions of politicians in Washington, D.C., might have been allayed for a time." ... **Liesel Litzenburger's** *Now You Love Me* was chosen as one of five novels in the Schuler Books summer reading Mitt Lit program. ... **Sue William Silverman's** upcoming book now has a tentative title: *Fearless Confessions: A Writer's Guide to Memoir*. It's about the craft of writing as well as the emotional concerns writers face when telling family secrets. It is scheduled for publication in spring 2009 by the University of Georgia Press. ... **Paul McComas** headed off to Los Angeles in early August to do an author event at Book Soup in Hollywood and also to meet with Jason Koornick, the lead producer for the duo that's optioned his novel, *Planet of the Dates* (2008, Permanent Press) for a feature film. Paul soon will add the 20th city – Rapid City, S.D. – to the book's 30-stop, 12-state bookstore tour, an event that takes place the day after his Sept. 27 Badlands, S.D., wedding to fel-

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low Evanston fiction writer Heather Swartz. ... **Linda Neme Foster's** writing has been honored in several competitions recently. She received an honorable mention in contests sponsored by the journal *New Millennium Writings* and the Springfed Arts organization; and she received first prize (for her creative nonfiction) and second prize (for her poetry) from Detroit Working Writers in their annual competition. Her new chapbook (see New Books) was just published. ... **Alzina Stone Dale** is awaiting a publication date for her next book, *When the Postwar World Was New* (Tate Publishing, Oklahoma City). ... Former SMA president and U.S. presidential historian **R. Craig Sautter** has posted articles about historic national political conventions at [www.presidentialconventions.com](http://www.presidentialconventions.com). Visitors can read about how in Denver 100 years ago, the Democrats nominated for president a man whose national reputation had been made by a single electrifying speech in front of the 1896 National Democratic Convention. Or they can press the "Minneapolis 1892" button and read about how Republicans challenged a sitting president and how the party staked its electoral fortunes on the success of its "protectionism" of American-made products. ... Despite being chased into a Buffalo Grove motel while floor and wall people crash about in their residence, **Gerry and Janet Souter** this summer kept writing 1,000 to 2,000 words a day, using a wi-fi laptop and e-mails to keep in touch with overseas publishers and agents on the coasts. Gerry also recently received copies of his 40th book, a lavish oversize hardcover biography on the artist Kasimir Malevich from the Paris publisher Parkstone-Sirrocco. The book was laid out in Ho Ch Minh City, Vietnam, and printed in China. Carlton Publishing in London, which published Gerry and Janet's *Founding of the United States* (2006) and *The Vietnam War Experience* (2007), have requested a sequel titled *Our Founding Fathers – The Shaping of America*. (The authors get a break this time and don't have to locate – and pay for – all the

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## New Books

REBELS ALL! A SHORT HISTORY  
OF THE CONSERVATIVE MIND  
IN POSTWAR AMERICA

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS,  
JULY 30

Publishers Weekly wrote that **Kevin Mattson's** new book, *Rebels All!: A Short History of the Conservative Mind in Postwar America* is a "slim, scathing



Kevin Mattson

study of the right's trajectory [that] argues that conservatives co-opted the utopian radicalism of the left to brilliantly position themselves as political underdogs, while efficiently consolidating power. ... The author skillfully links the invasion of Iraq with the new conservative utopianism ("a new city on the hill in the Middle East") and identifies conservatism's ideological family tree, detecting the echoes of Bill Buckley in Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh."

The San Francisco Chronicle on Aug. 31 called the book "highly readable, concise yet meaty analysis of the conservative ascendancy."

TEN SONGS FROM BULGARIA

CERVENA BARVA PRESS,  
JUNE 12

**Linda Neme Foster**, the first poet laureate of Grand Rapids, Mich., 2003-2005, has just published *Ten Songs from Bulgaria* (June, Cervena Barva Press), her eighth collection of poetry. The collection, a top finalist in the press' national chapbook competition, opens with these lines:

I. *Two Vladimirs at the Window*



Linda Neme Foster

*Small lives, small lives,  
we are trapped inside  
small lives. Call this window  
a prison of rotten wood; the hinges  
a broken lock that still won't release us.  
Call us the curse of clouded mirrors,  
the blank faces of the soul  
stuck inside an old kaleidoscope.  
Small lives, small lives. We hum and  
chant  
to the silence outside the frame.*

**Jack Ridl**, the Society of Midland Authors' 2007 poetry co-winner, writes about the book: "In line after line, we encounter the depths and reach of those who live outside the zones of everyday safety. Foster makes herself vulnerable to a world 'as tangible as fog' with her own penetrating observations. She walks 'the long journey' and her poems reflect the haunting music of ode and elegy."

THE MAN WHO EMPTIED DEATH  
ROW: GOVERNOR GEORGE RYAN  
AND THE POLITICS OF CRIME

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
PRESS, SEPTEMBER 11

Here's what former Illinois Gov. Dan Walker has to say about **Jim Merriner's** new book, *The Man Who Emptied Death Row: Governor George Ryan and the Politics of Crime* (Southern Illinois University Press): "A gripping factual account of real life crime in government by now-convicted and sentenced Gov. George Ryan. Merriner tells in graphic and readable detail why Illinois is No. 1 in the nation in bipartisan corruption aka pay to play government. All the way from Paul Powell's grossly simple \$800,000 shoebox to today's much more sophisticated stealing from taxpayers' pockets. Read it and weep for good government gone."

THE OXFORD PROJECT

WELCOME BOOKS, SEPT. 16

For *The Oxford Project* (September; Welcome Books) co-author **Stephen Bloom** conducted interviews with the 676

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## New Books

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residents of Oxford, Ohio, who were photographed first in 1984 and then in 2004 by Peter Feldstein, creating a book that documentary filmmaker Ken Burns called, "a marvelous way to get at 'who we are' as a people. This powerful confessional book draws its strength from the truth that so-called ordinary people, not those with bold-faced names, are actually the heroes of our American drama."

Photographs for the book first appeared in 2004 in the New York Times and Smithsonian Magazine and on ABC News.

SCORSESE BY EBERT

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS,  
OCT. 1

*Scorsese by Ebert* (University of Chicago Press) is **Roger Ebert's** new book. It includes his reviews of every Martin Scorsese film (Ebert wrote the first film review that Scorsese ever received – for 1967's "I Call First.") "Of special interest," Publishers Weekly

wrote in its July 21 edition, "are interviews with Scorsese over a 25-year period in which the director candidly discusses his body of work." Library Journal wrote: "This unique book is an invaluable study in the canon of both film and criticism."



Roger Ebert

THE SHAKER VILLAGE

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF KENTUCKY,  
MAY 12

Author and photographer **Raymond Bial**, who has published more than 80 books of photographs, has a new book: *The Shaker Village*.

The School Library Journal wrote: "Mirroring the simplicity and elegance of a Shaker chair, this book captures the

spirit of a very special people."

Bial shows how the Shakers have lived, worked, worshipped and evolved. His text and photographs feature Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Ky.

Booklist wrote: "This handsome volume introduces the traditional Shaker way of life in a thoughtful text and well-composed, full-color photographs."

THE FIRST VICE LORD:  
BIG JIM COLOSIMO AND  
THE LADIES OF THE LEVEE

CUMBERLAND HOUSE, MAY 1

*The First Vice Lord: Big Jim Colosimo and the Ladies of the Levee* by **Arthur Bilek** tells the story of Chicago's infamous red-light district, the Levee, from the Columbian Exposition to the Roaring Twenties. Bilek has been chief of the Cook County Sheriff's Police, a member of the Chicago Crime Commission and a professor at Loyola University Chicago. Bilek wrote a previous book in 2004 with William J Helmer titled *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* in hard and soft cover, also by Cumberland.



Arthur Bilek

SOVEREIGNTY: GOD,  
STATE, AND SELF

BASIC BOOKS, JUNE 9

*Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*, **Jean Bethke Elshtain's** Gifford Lectures, examines the origins and meanings of "sovereignty" as it relates to all the ways we attempt to explain our world. Elshtain argues that political theories of state sovereignty fuel contemporary understandings of sovereignty of the self.



Jean Bethke  
Elshtain

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graphics.) Gerry also is writing *The Earnhardts/History of NASCAR* for Greenwood Press in Connecticut, due in December. ... SMA President **Jim Merriner** will speak about his new book, *The Man Who Emptied Death Row* (See New Books), at a City Club of Chicago luncheon at noon Oct. 6, at Maggiano's, 111 W. Grand Ave. Jim also was on Tom Roeser's talk show "Political Shootout" Aug. 17 on WLS-AM 890. ... **Luisa Buehler** will be at Centuries & Sleuths in Forest Park, Ill., at 2 p.m. on Nov 23 with several other authors talking about the short stories they penned for the anthology *Missing*. She will be at the Vernon Hills (Ill.) Library at 1 p.m. on Oct 30. ... **David Hernandez** on June 28 performed Latin, blues, poetry and "all that jazz" with his group Street Sounds at 2418 W. Bloomingdale Ave. ... **Steven Burgauer's** first of his seven science fiction books, *The Fornax Drive* (May, iUniverse), is back in print, in paperback. It's about the inventor of light-speed travel, Fornax Nehrengel, who is caught up in an adventure that zooms from the moon to Mars and back. ... **Maurice Possley**, a 2008 Pulitzer Prize winner, announced July 21 he was resigning after nearly two years with the Chicago Tribune because, he wrote in a memo to colleagues, of the "stunning . . . dismantling of our newspaper in such a short time." ... **Lisa Holton** was on Chicago Tonight on Channel 11 Aug. 20 to talk about her book *For*

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*Members Only: A History and Guide to Chicago's Oldest Private Clubs.* ... A new Web TV pilot "Interview with a Broken Heart," hosted by Chicago author **Anastasia Royal**, was scheduled to be taped at 7 p.m. Sept. 12 in the Wilmette (Ill.) Theatre. Royal, author *Undoing I Do*, (2008, St. Martin's Press) planned to interview guests about their most heart-wrenching and hilarious break-ups, with a panel of Chicago comedians, filmmakers and authors providing color commentary. ... Writers for "Dream Chicago," which was scheduled to be presented Sept. 8 at Millennium Park, included **Stuart Dybek** and **Billy Lombardo**. ... Religion scholar **Martin Marty** lamented on the Dallas Morning News religion blog the shrinking of print journalism and the reduction of the number of print journalists, including those who cover religion. "At 4:44 each morning four newspapers bounce against our door for our reading," Marty wrote. "The bounce is now lighter, week by week." ... **Ted McClelland** wrote in Slate on Aug. 17 about Usain Bolt, the 21-year-old Jamaican who set a world record in winning the Olympic 100-meter dash. ... Writing in DVDTOWN.com on Sept. 8, **James Path** cited a quote useful for any author: "When Irish poet Tony Curtis was asked what he did to avoid writer's block, he quipped, 'I just lower my standards.'" ... Don't be afraid to employ recently coined words or even create perfectly good new ones, **Eric McKean** advises in the Aug. 3 Boston Globe. "In short, if it seems wordish, use it," she wrote. "No apologies necessary." (Literary License has attempted at times in the past to coin a few new words, but our copy editors recognized them as typos – not wordish at all – and unerrorized them.) ... *Cage of Stars* by **Jacqueline Mitchard** is the title for September for the Readers Forum at the Clyde (Ohio) Public Library. ... On Aug. 22, Belief.net mentioned **Marcia Z. Nelson's** 2005 book, *The Gospel According to Oprah*. ... In the Aug. 14 (suburban Chicago) Pioneer Press, 2008 James Friend Award winner **Myrna Petlicki**

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# Prepare to deal with bad news, and help the good news get out

**W**hen you promote a book, you should prepare for the worst of times well as the best.

Pretending that nothing could go wrong is wrong. Being prepared can help you handle crises they arise. Think about the way military trains even when not engaged in war. They are planning and practicing for specific situations so that they will be victorious. Proper preparation involves identifying and analyzing trends, and creating a strategy and an action plan for implementation and evaluating the effectiveness this plan.

### Keep your cool

When a major problem comes up, the worst thing to do is break down. Breaking down has the potential to create a waterfall effect with others. Be honest about everything you say, provide information that is accurate and be readily accessible to the public and the media.

### Decide to comment or not to comment

Sometimes people are wary of making comments on an unfortunate situation due to the fear that something will be said to make the situation worse. It is true there are times when you should postpone making a comment. For example, if reporters contact you, it is perfectly appropriate to say you will get back to them as soon as you learn more and get your facts straight. However, most of the time, not saying anything at all can actually be worse than saying something. Take responsibility for the situation and be prepared to explain how it will be resolved.

It's never too late to prepare for something that hasn't happened yet. Take the time to think about potential problems and crises and create a plan of action so that you are ready to handle them with ease. Remember that you can still be a happy, positive person while accepting the fact that troubles will come. Perhaps now you'll be prepared to pack a good punch and send those troubles in the other

direction.

Many authors, though, are more worried about no publicity than dealing with problems that might come up. Here are three ways to get your book out of its unintended hiding spot.

### Make a speech

Speaking engagements are multifold in terms of the benefits you receive. First, when you are a speaker at an event or conference, you are revered as the expert. People will look to you as the most knowledgeable on whatever it is you're talking about. You will also have the opportunity to directly interact with potential readers. Being friendly and responsive to questions and comments

will demonstrate that you care and have a pleasant personality which never fails to resonate with people.

### Participate in the community

Think all the benefits that come with speaking engagements, plus the

fact that you are truly connecting with members of the community. Nowadays, the world wants to know how you are doing good for the environment or helping those in need.

### Put your face (and voice) on the Web

I've said it once, I'll say it again and I'll probably still say it again after that, the Internet is an incredible tool. Creating a video to embed on your Web site or blog will allow visitors to directly hear your message. Sometimes people are more responsive to audio and video than reading text. This is an opportunity to show your creativity or simply make a quick personal welcome and introduction. I recommend if you decide to include a video on your Web site, do not have the video play as soon the page is opened. Rather, give viewers the option of clicking on it.

Folks out there are interested in what you have to say and would like to see more of you. Now is not the time to hide.

E-mail Thomas Ciesielka at [tc@tcpr.net](mailto:tc@tcpr.net), or call (312) 422-1333.

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PR Tips  
from  
Tom  
Ciesielka



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## New Members

**Elsa Marston** is the author of many works of fiction and nonfiction, mostly for young adults. She is author of *Santa*



**Elsa Marston**

(2005, George Braziller) and other books. She got her B.A. in American civilization

*Claus in Baghdad and Other Stories About Teens in the Arab World* (2008, Indiana University Press), *Women in the Middle East: Tradition and Change* (2003, 1996, Watts), *Songs of Ancient Journeys: Animals in Rock Art*

at the University of Iowa, an M.A. in international affairs at Harvard University, studied Middle Eastern history at the American University of Beirut, and got another master's degree in art education at Indiana University.

*Women in the Middle East* was on the New York Public Library list of Books for the Teen Age for three years. Her 1996 book, *The Fox Maiden*, (Simon & Schuster) was selected for the 1997 Bank Street College Best Children's Books list and was runner-up for the 1997 Friends of American Writers award for juvenile fiction.

She also received the International Reading Association's short story award in 1994 for "The Olive Tree."

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## 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 contributions along with their renewals: **Frank Gonzalez-Crussi, Harriette Gillem Robinet, Anne J. Barry, Beverly Offen, Bill Barnhart, Carol B. Gartner, Matthew A. Eck, Michael Argetsinger, Carol Madden Adorjan, Charles J. Masters, Eldon Ham, Elinor P. Swiger, James H.**

**Mallon, James P. Barry, Janet Hickman, John F. Wasik, Marianne Forrest, Pat Rahmann, Robert J.R. Follett, Ron Offen, Scott Turow, Stella Pevsner, Thomas Frisbie, Timothy Gilfoyle, Donna Boonstra, S. Dow Mossman, Nathan Kantrowitz, Joseph Epstein, John Callaway, Sue Harrison, Christopher Leland, Shirley Christian, Fern Brown, Alzina Stone Dale, Cranston Knight, Ted Anton, Marcia Nelson, Carol Felsenthal, Robert Hinshaw, Mark Pulsifer, Elizabeth Fama, James Schwab, Rebecca Johns, Milton Nieuwsma and Dick Simpson.**

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## Letters to the Editor

Thank you so much for writing the obit about my mother [Elsie Ziegler, May-June, 2008 Literary License]. You put together a wonderful article, and my sisters and I really appreciated your doing that for mother.

I am sure that she would be very pleased to know that your article about

her was published, especially from someone who cared from the Society of Midland Authors.

**Pete Ziegler**

Thanks for the nice write-up on my film deal. Who knew I'd one day be an LL "cover boy" -?!? ;-)

**Paul McComas**

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## SMA Endowment Fund

While the rest of us have enjoyed the summer, SMA's Endowment Fund Chairman Robert Remer has been working relentlessly to boost the Society's endowment fund so that we can increase LITERARY LICENSE, SEPTEMBER, 2008

the size of the cash awards we give winners of the Society's annual book competition. Please consider making a direct donation or remembering the Society in your will. It's too late to save Remer's summer, but we can make his autumn easier. Contact him at [chibooks@aol.com](mailto:chibooks@aol.com).

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## Biblio File

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profiled **Ruth Spiro**. Petlicki wrote: "A remark by her young gum-loving daughter Sarah inspired Ruth Spiro of Deerfield to write her first children's book. 'She was blowing bubbles and she said, 'Mom, wouldn't it be cool if I could blow a bubble like that guy at the birthday party who made animals out of balloons,'" ' Spiro recounted. *Lester Fizz, Bubble-Gum Artist*, the story of a young boy with that talent, is being released this month [August] by Dutton Children's Books." ... **Nikos**

**Kokonis**, who traveled to Tripoli, Arcadia, in Greece's Peloponessos last Easter for a lengthy stay, is working on a sequel to *Arcadia, My Arcadia*, which is now in Greek translation with the title *Ellada Mou, Patri-da Mou*. Kokonis told the Greek News, a Greek-American newspaper, that writing the sequel has proved to be "an enormous undertaking." *Arcadia, My Arcadia*, which also is under movie option consideration, drew favorable comments from SMA members **S. L. Wisenberg** and **Harry Mark Petrakis**. ... On Nov. 16, the Monroe County (Ind.) Public Library, will show a film made from **Elsa Marston's** story, "Santa Claus in Baghdad," at which the filmmaker (from Boston) and Marston will speak. The showing is part of a new project called "Voices and Visions: Islam and Muslims in World Contexts," run by the Center for the Study of Global Change at Indiana University with a Social Science Research Council grant.

Marston has agreed to serve on project's the advisory council and to make a related podcast. ... Author **Neal Samors**, wearing a different hat this time, has published through his Chicago Books Press *Rock and Roll Radio: The Fun Years: 1955-1975*. The book is written by Clark Weber, Chicago disc jockey and program director at WLS-AM and other stations in the '50s, '60s and '70s. Samors, who has written and published several books about Chicago, interviewed Weber for the 2006 book *Chicago in the Sixties*, and Samors told Weber he should write a book, **Robert Loerzel** reported in the (suburban Chicago) Pioneer Press on Sept. 4. ...

**Rick Kogan** and **James Finn Garner**

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## Biblio File

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were scheduled to be featured guests Sept. 8 at El Jardin Restaurant in Chicago. They will meet with a group of local writers, musicians, filmmakers and others who review the highs and lows of the Chicago Cubs. ... **Gerry and Janet Souter** recalled in the Aug. 20 (suburban Chicago) Daily Herald driving on the fringes of the 1968 Democratic National Convention melee. On their way home from watching a movie in Old Town, the couple "saw the flashing lights and all the people, the cop cars and the paddy wagon," recalled Souter, who then was a freelance photo-journalist. "Suddenly, this great cloud of gas rolled over the car." Janet cranked up the windows, and as Gerry slammed the sunroof shut the metal handle broke and cut his hand. ... On Aug. 18 the Manitowoc (Wis.) City Council appointed **Kerry Trask** to the Board of Ethics. ... Historian **Ann Durkin Keating** was quoted in the Aug. 26 Daily Herald about 1968, the year of the Prague Spring, the Vietnam War and the assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy. ... **Kate Klise** was scheduled to hold a Sept. 8 writer's workshop at the Library Center in Springfield, Mo. ... **Scott Turow** will announce the 20 finalists for the National Book Awards Oct. 15 at the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago.

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## Cliff Dwellers Invitation

Larry Lund, president of the Cliff Dwellers, recently wrote to SMA President Jim Merriner that the Cliff Dwellers is offering SMA members a membership in Cliff Dwellers with the \$300 initiation fee waived. Dues are \$115 per month, less for those under 38.

"In the Midwest tradition, The Club is not pretentious, we do not have a dress code, and at lunchtime, we feature a members' table with complimentary wine to accompany great discussions. The Club is also available for members to reserve either the Kiva or the Sullivan Room for special events such as book signing or presentations," Lund wrote. His number is (312) 751-1250.

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## Final Chapters

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### Mark Perlberg, 1929-2008

**Mark Perlberg** of Chicago, a longtime member of the Society of Midland Authors and a co-founder of the Poetry Center of Chicago, died 23 June in Midwest Palliative and Hospice Care Center in Skokie. He was 79.

Mr. Perlberg was author of four poetry books: *The Burning Field* (1970), *The Feel of the Sun* (1980), *The Impossible Toystore* (2000) and *Waiting for the Alchemist*, which is to be published next spring. *The Burning Field* received the Robert L. Ferguson Memorial Award from the Friends of Literature in 1970.

Mr. Perlberg, a frequent contributor to the Society of Midland Authors' annual awards fund, taught a poetry workshop at the Newberry Library for 20 years and for 13 years was president of the Poetry Center, now based at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

"Mark had the demeanor of a gentle, soft-spoken man. But beneath that exterior was a core of passion for poetry, social justice and life," said SMA member **Ron Offen**, editor of *Free Lunch: A Poetry Miscellany*. "Up until the last weeks of his life, he was working on a poem about the illness that would eventually overcome him.

"For me, Mark's poetry is a mix of poignancy, humor and insightfulness, achieved through keen observation and a mastery of language. As an editor, I feel honored to have published his work."



Mark Perlberg

Mr. Perlberg was born Feb. 19, 1929, in New Jersey. He attended Hobart College in Geneva, N.Y., and then Columbia University, where he took graduate classes in English literature. There, he met his wife, Anna Nessay Perlberg. He was drafted into the Korean War in 1952, serving two years, and after he was discharged, he was hired by Time magazine in 1956. He covered the arts for the magazine while based in Chicago. Among his subjects were former Chicago Symphony Orchestra conductor Fritz Reiner and Italian opera soprano Renata Tebaldi. "He had a gift for weaving poems out of life experiences," Anna Perlberg told the Chicago Sun-Times. "He would take something that had happened and really, it would become a remarkable poem."

Mr. Perlberg also was an editor for World Book Encyclopedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica and Prism, a journal on medicine's socio-economics.

"He was a very fine and very serious poet," Lisel Mueller, another co-founder of the Poetry Center, told the Chicago Tribune.

Besides Anna, Mr. Perlberg is survived by two daughters, Katherine Friedberg of Wilmette and Julie Farwell of Denver, and four grandsons. A memorial service was scheduled for Sept. 10 in the ballroom of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 112 S. Michigan Ave.

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### G.E. Murray, 1945-2008

**G.E. Murray**, a former SMA member and author of eight collections of poetry, died June 23 at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. He had a liver transplant three years ago and suffered from diabetes. He was 62.

His most recent book was *Arts of a Cold Sun* (2003, University of Illinois Press). Mr. Murray also co-edited, with Illinois poet laureate and SMA member and award-winner



G.E. Murray

**Kevin Stein**, *Illinois Voices: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Poetry* (2001).

Mr. Murray, a native of Buffalo, got a bachelor's degree in 1968 from Canisius College in western New York. He earned his master's degree in English from Northeastern University.

*Visions and Voices*, his recollection of people and places in Buffalo, is scheduled to be published this year.