

Biblio File

Dan Dinello was recently appointed 2010 Columbia College Chicago Distinguished Faculty Scholar. Also, his chapter "Cyborg Goddess" was included in the just-published book *Anime and Philosophy* (Open Court Press). ... **Laurie Lawlor** (see New Books, Page 4) was



Dan Dinello

scheduled to be presented this month with the 2010 Illinois Prairie State Award for Excellence in Children's Literature by the Illinois Reading Council in Springfield. ... The Feb. 28 New York Times Book Review said **Deborah Blum's** new book, *The Poisoner's Handbook*, "is an inventive history that, like arsenic mixed into blackberry pie, goes down with ease." ... **Keir Graff** is excited to add "children's book author" to his writing resume. He recently signed a two-book deal with Roaring Brook Press, agented by Ken Wright of Writers House. The first book will be *The Other Felix*, in which 8-year-old Felix lives an ordinary, predictable life until he meets the "other" Felix, an all-too-real imaginary friend (and spitting image) who teaches Felix how to battle monsters and dragons and, ultimately, stand up for himself. ... **Linda Nemeec Foster's** new book of poems, *Talking Diamonds*, has been nominated for many book awards, including the Ohio Book Award in Poetry, the Michigan Notable Book Award, the William Carlos Williams Award (from the Poetry Society of America), Foreword Magazine's Book of the Year Award and the American Book Award. Three poems from the book have also been nominated for the 2011 Pushcart Prize Anthology. In January, Foster gave a reading in San Diego for the American Historical Association's annual conference; the subject of her presentation was "The Immigrant Experience in Poetry."

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Gifted young black people are the story in new novel

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

In her new novel, Angela Jackson set out to tell the story of a generation of young gifted black people.

"I wanted to press back against the stupid, one-dimensional stereotypes of black people," Jackson said at the monthly program of the Society of Midland Authors at the Cliff Dwellers club in Chicago. "I would sit in the movies and theaters and see these people that I didn't know."

Jackson is an award-winning author whose earlier books have been poetry collections. The Chicago Sun-Times selected her collection *Dark Legs and Silk Kisses: The Beatitudes of the Spinners* as one of the top four 1993 Chicago books. Her collection of poetry *And All These Roads Be Luminous: Poems Selected and New* was published in 1998.

Her new novel, her first, is titled *Where I Must Go*. Jackson read 10 stirring pages of it to the assembled writers at the program.

Although Jackson was born in Mississippi, her family moved to Chicago when she was a young child to a home at 55th and Wentworth where she lives today (although she has had other addresses in intervening years). The home now is next to the Dan Ryan Expy., but in those days it was part of a thriving neighborhood.

"Our house was peopled by books," Jackson said. "There were many more

books than people, and there were many people in that house. I had six sisters and two brothers, and most of us were readers.

"I think I was a reader more than the others," she added. "I would read by flashlight under the covers and by moonlight through the window – any way that I could read."

Much of the reading material came from a family friend named Susan, she added.

"I not only got Susan's underwear, which I hated wearing, but more importantly Susan gave me her books when she finished: Nancy Drew, the Bobbsey

Twins, the Hardy Boys. I devoured them."

Jackson said there are many parallels between writing poetry and fiction.

"I have been writing fiction almost as long as poetry," Jackson said. "I try to infuse my fiction with poetry because I think it makes it more alive. ... It makes it more vivid. It makes it more of a feeling experience.

"I have a hard time just telling the story and I have to go to great pains to write and rewrite and rewrite in order to get a story told. But even as I do that I always leave room for the images to come through and also to pay attention to how the sounds come together."

Referring to the 20 years it took to complete the book, she added wryly: "I guess that is why it took such a long time to write my first novel."



Angela Jackson reads from *Where I Must Go*

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Craig Sautter

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She will be doing a number of readings in libraries and bookstores throughout Michigan to celebrate National Poetry Month in April. ... Stephen Roxburgh's new company will publish the middle-grade novel *Eddie's War* by **Carol Fisher Saller** – who is possibly the only member of the Midland Authors to perform in a Gilbert and Sullivan production this year. The publishing model Roxburgh has developed, Saller says, "is exciting and a bit controversial (in my view only because people have not taken the time to understand it), but his stature as an editor and publisher of children's literary fiction is undisputed, and I'm delighted to be on board with this experiment." The book will appear first in several e-formats, followed by hard and soft cover versions. ...



Nicholas D.
Kokonis

Kathy Stevenson has a humor essay, "Writer in Residence," in the April issue of *The Writer* magazine and will also have an essay in the May issue of *Main Line Times* magazine. ... **Nicholas D. Kokonis'** Greek edition of *Arcadia, My Arcadia*, a fictional autobiography, won a Special Commendation from the Academy of Athens. Also, the Ministry of Education of Greece placed the book on the approved list for purchase by all school libraries of the country. He is working on the second draft of the sequel, tentatively titled *A Fortunate Pilgrim*. ... While others are focused on the Tea Party movement or its newer counterpart, the Coffee Party, **Lisa Holton** says she is considering founding the Espresso Party Movement because she really needs a little bitterness mixed in with her politics. ... **Cheryl Reed** has upcoming events to promote the new edition of her *Unveiled: The Hidden Lives of Nuns*: A WGN interview 11:35 a.m. March 25; a Barnes and Noble reading, 3 p.m., 1441 W. Webster Ave. Chicago, March 27; at 1 p.m. University of Chicago Bookstore appearance, 970 East 58th Street, April 14; the

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April program to feature poet Roger Bonair-Agard

The Society of Midland Authors' poetry program in April has become one of the pinnacle poetry events of the Midwest literary season.

Last year, the poetry program featured Illinois Poet Laureate **Kevin Stein** vs. Slam poetry founder **Marc Smith**. The poets switched off reading and performing their work thematically through the night. That program, "Poetry: Stage vs. Page," brought together two poets from different worlds, one of whom writes primarily for the page and another who writes primarily for the stage. **David Hernandez** also read some poems.

Two years ago, in celebration of poetry month, the program featured **Billy Lombardo**, author of *The Logic of a Rose*, and **Simone Muench**, author of *The Air Lost in Breathing*.

This year, the program will feature **Roger Bonair-Agard**. Bonair-Agard is the author of *Tarnish and Masquerade*. He is the co-author of *Burning Down the House*, and he is a Cave Canem fellow.

As the co-founder of the louderARTS Project, he launched a louderARTS reading series at Bar 13 in New York City. A veteran of the national poetry slam scene, he is a two-time National Slam Champion and has appeared on HBO's "Poetry Def Jam," "The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour" and "60 Minutes."

A native of Trinidad, he currently lives in Chicago. His second book is due out the fall.

April 13, 2010, program

Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor

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

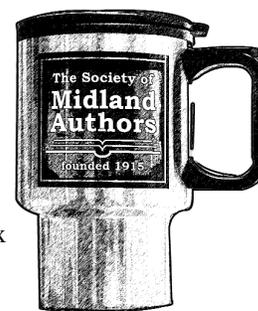
Free - donations accepted

Bonair-Agard studied political science at Hunter College, and was about to take the Law School Admission Test when he decided to concentrate on poetry rather than a law career.

Note: The Society of Midland Authors' 2009-2010 programs may be heard in their entirety at www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified.

SMA Liquid Assets

SMA mugs are available for purchase at Society events or for \$15 plus \$3 shipping from the Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610.



New Members

Author and photographer **Drake Hokanson** is professor of mass communication and founding director of the Center for Mississippi River Studies at Winona State University in Winona, Minn., where he teaches photography, nonfiction writing, journalism, American Studies and occasional aviation science courses. Hokanson looks to the broad American land, its places, people and stories as the most important subjects for his photographs, books, exhibits and essays.

He is author of *Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America* and *Reflecting a Prairie Town: A Year in Peterson*. He is also co-author of *Purebred and Homegrown: America's County Fairs*. He has contributed chapters and photographs to several other books as well.

Booklist called *Lincoln Highway* "a lovely, lovable book, a work of art." Library Journal said of *Reflecting a Prairie Town*: "Highly recommended for general readers interested in rural life and the American Midwest." He is currently at work on several book and exhibit projects.

It's that time of year again: Save date for awards dinner

Spring has sprung. Well, literally that may not be so. This is Chicago, where clumps of battle-gray snow may still linger (mostly around parking meters) and winds continue to whip through downtown towers, and daffodils bloom only in the floral aisle of supermarkets. But we still know it's spring. Why, you ask?

Because the Annual Awards Dinner of the Society of Midland Authors is about to happen. It's the traditional second Tuesday of the month, which this year falls on May 11. To us, this is spring in its finest manifestation.

Happily, we'll return to the magnificent InterContinental Hotel on the ... you guessed ... Magnificent Mile, 505 N. Michigan Avenue. The room will once again be ... trumpets sound ... the Camelot! Valet parking at the door or in their lot under the hotel.

Obviously, this being the awards dinner, the feature of the evening will be the presentation of winners in the categories of Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, Poetry, Biography, Children's Fiction and Children's Nonfiction.

The Society of Midland Authors hopes you'll be present to welcome these winners and hear what they have to say about the long, sometimes difficult, but ultimately rewarding trek to success.

We're pleased and proud that Steve Edwards of radio station WBEZ-Chicago

“It's great to great old ... and new ... friends at this once-a-year celebration. So please circle the date.”

Public Radio will be our emcee. Tickets will be \$75 each.

Your enthusiastic support is what makes this event a standout. It's great to great old ... and new ... friends at this once-a-year celebration. So please circle the date ... May 11 ... and reserve early. See you there!

Addendum: For those of you who are not familiar with fine poetry, the complete rhyme of the first line of this article is:

*Spring has sprung
The grass has ris.
I wonder where
the robins is.*

(Author unknown).

See you at the dinner!

Literary:

**Stella
Pevsner**



SMA Support

The Society of Midland Authors is trying to build up its Endowment Fund so we can increase the amount of the checks we give to authors in our annual book awards.

Thanks to **Eldon Ham, Darwin**

McBeth Walton, Charles J. Masters, Theodore Berland, Mervin Block, Charles N. Billington, Phyllis M. Choyke, Jean Bethke Elshtain, James A. McPherson, Stella Pevsner Jack R. Ridl, Harriette Gillem Robinet and Dick Simpson.

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Royal George Theater, 1641 N. Halsted St. before the 5 p.m. show of "Saints & Sinners" and the 8 p.m. show of **Vicki Quade's** "Late Nite Catechism" (50 percent off that performance with the purchase of a book) April 17. Also, Reed who went to Haiti, wrote on her blog, "I found people living in tents pitched on the street because there wasn't even room on their property to set up a tarp, and they are afraid of more tremors toppling what's left onto them." ... **Laura Caldwell** was on the "Dr. Phil" show March 11, a follow-up to a show she was involved with along with Life After Innocence clients Dean Cage and Ronald Kitchen. The initial episodes showed Dean meeting Loretta, the woman who had misidentified him as the man who assaulted her, sending him to prison for 14 years for a crime he didn't commit. ... **Dick Simpson** helped to lead a rally March 8 against big Illinois higher education budget cuts. ... **Patricia Dragisic** railed in a letter to the editor in the Chicago Sun-Times against the possible discontinuation of Saturday postal delivery. ... **Richard Cahan** and **Michael Williams** were scheduled to discuss Edgar Miller's architectural works of art March 3 at the Chicago Architecture Foundation. ... SMA Board Member **Rosina Neginsky** was scheduled to read from her poetry book *Juggler* March 8 at Barnes and Noble in Chicago's Loop. ... **Rich Lindberg** was interviewed by Beyond Productions of Sydney, Australia, for an episode of "Deadly Women" that will air on the Investigation Discovery Channel this fall. Lindberg talked about Chicago's Tillie Klimek, who fed arsenic to four husbands in the 1920s – only one survived. Tillie received the harshest sentence ever meted out to a convicted murderess in Cook County up to that time – life in prison. Rich's next book, due out with Northern Illinois University Press in the fall, covers two other serial killers who made liberal use of arsenic – Belle Gunness and Johann Hoch. ... **Scott Turow** has been nominated for a two-year term as president of the Authors Guild.

"This was [Lincoln's] great legal achievement, his greatest moral declaration, a constitutional solution that had evaded every President before him, a resolution that seemed to fulfill the nation's initially flawed request for freedom." – *26 Martyrs*, **Curt Johnson** and **R. Craig Sautter**

New Books

HAPPY NOW?

Katherine Shonk, whose story collection, *The Red Passport*, was a 2004 Society of Midland Authors Adult Fiction finalist, will have her first novel – *Happy Now?* – published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux on April 13.

After many lonely years and alarming Internet dates, 30-something artist and self-proclaimed homebody Claire Kessler believes she has found the perfect man.

Jay is earnest, romantic, and gainfully employed – until he kills himself less than two years into their marriage, on Valentine’s Day. The novel begins soon after Jay’s death and follows Claire



Katherine Shonk

through the chaotic and tragicomic early weeks of grief. Nomie, Claire’s concerned, pregnant younger sister, welcomes her into her coach house and abandons her own husband in solidarity.

Claire’s father turns into a concerned stalker, trailing her every movement.

Encounters with well-meaning therapists go horribly awry, and Jay’s abandoned cat goes on a hunger strike. All the while, Jay’s suicide note lurks on the coffee table, waiting for Claire to gather the courage to read it.

As she struggles to confront the truth about her marriage, Claire also struggles to negotiate life as a young widow – the well-intentioned remarks, the sympathy bouquets, and the terrifying prospect of dating (and loving) again.

Rachel Rosenblit in *Elle* magazine said, “Shonk’s incisive writing feels effortless, at times stealthy. She’s so economical in her descriptions – of a character’s mannerisms, clothes, psyche – that she can evoke a resonant image in the space of a sentence.”

Publishers Weekly wrote, “Both tear-jerking and laugh-out-loud funny, this will have readers rooting for its brave heroine and hoping that, indeed, she will one day be happy again.”

MUDDY AS A DUCK PUDDLE AND OTHER AMERICAN SIMILES

Laurie Lawlor’s newest book, *Muddy As a Duck Puddle and Other American Similes*, is a full-color illustrated picture book published Feb. 11 with Holiday House in New York.

The book presents wacky figures of speech from all over the United States with notes indicating their mysterious origins. Nathan Long is the illustrator.



Laurie Lawlor

Booklist wrote: “Sly and irreverent, the folk sayings collected here, one for each letter of the alphabet, stretch back over history and reflect Americans’ restlessness as they pushed away from being part of an English colony and relished being ‘independent as a hog on ice.’”

Lawlor was a panelist at the March 10, 2009, Society of Midland Authors program.

STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE

Josh Karp’s new book follows one man’s quest through the world of golf and spirituality as he attempts to answer these questions and others.

Straight Down the Middle: Shivas Irons, Bagger Vance, and How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Golf Swing (Chronicle Books, Feb. 17) documents Karp’s effort to get in touch with his inner self with the hope that it will somehow improve his golf game.

Golf Tips Magazine called it: “The perfect antidote for anyone who’s ever read *Golf in the Kingdom* or *Zen Golf* and wondered what really goes on in the shrouded world of mystical golf.”

In this memoir, journalist and former-18-handicap Karp tries it all – from quantum physics to Feldenkrais – in an attempt to transform his mind-set, lower his score, and tap into the mystical connection between golf and spirituality.

SOURCES OF LIGHT

Margaret McMullan’s new book (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, April 12) set in 1962 tells the story of Sam and her mother moving, along with their very liberal views, to Jackson, Miss., the conservative hometown of her father, who died a year before.

People like the McLemores fear that Sam, her mother, and her mother’s artist friend, Perry, are in the South to “agitate” and to shake up the dividing lines between black and white and blur it all to gray. As racial injustices ensue – sit-ins and run-ins with secret white supremacists – Sam learns to focus with her camera lens to bring forth the social injustice out of the darkness and into the light.

Kirkus Reviews said: “Though this fine volume easily stands by itself, McMullan links it with two previous works – *How I Found the Strong* (2004) and *When I Crossed No-Bob* (2007) – and readers who read the first installments will feel that they are in the midst of an excellent historical saga ... this offers a superb portrait of a place and time and a memorable character trying to make sense of a world both ugly and beautiful.”

Sources of Light along with *The Help* has been selected a 2010 One Book/One Community read-along for Evansville, Ind.



Margaret McMullan

Literary License

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Page One image of Angela Jackson
from photo by Gerry Souter

Communications overload?

Here's how to mind your Q's

The other day, I asked one of my clients how he felt about Twitter. He replied:

"There are so many applications and programs out there ... it gives me a very large, never-ending headache. I don't know what these things are, but everyone tells me that I should be using them."

Understandable. The way we communicate is changing at a breakneck pace – seemingly in the “real time” of new applications. Everyday we learn about new tools, new programs, new recommended applications ... and somehow we have to know what each one is, how to use it, which is best and where the value of each one lies. And as soon as we determine the nuts, bolts and value of a new tool, along comes an improved version and we're back to Square One.

I'm calling this the crisis of communications. A communications overload can make people feel, well, overloaded, and often causes a complete shutdown. With so many different programs to start conversations, send and receive news, and react and interact with brands and individuals, it sometimes seems easier to just keep quiet.

Consider our suggestions below to avoid shutting down and experiencing your own crisis of communications. Here are the Three Q's

Quantity

You're in a quantity crisis if you want to use every social media platform available to communicate with the rest of the world. The problem is that using too many will cause your message to get diluted or completely lost. Do you have the time and resources to manage each application? Sure, you've joined the current discussion on Twitter, but you haven't updated your blog since January. You've started a new Facebook fan page, but the “News” section of your Web site is out-of-date or completely bare. Choose a manageable number of avenues to com-

municate your message and give these your all. Streamline your process between them, like integrating Twitter updates with your LinkedIn profile, or uploading YouTube videos to share on a Facebook page.

Quality

You're in a quality crisis if you either find yourself taking a complete absence from the communications world or you start sending mundane updates and news about your favorite breakfast cereal or the color of your dog's new collar. Yes, the news is now delivered in “real” time, but the news itself must still be real.

Delivering quality information that matters to your target audience is still essential, regardless of the applications or programs you are using. What you can do is adjust the message to the medium – for example, tighten it up for Twitter, and make it interactive for a Facebook page.

Questions

Have you said to yourself, “I don't understand any of this, so I'm going to stick with what's always worked and not change my ways”?

Unfortunately, sending updates by “snail mail” isn't the way to deliver breaking news, even if it has worked in the past. If you're feeling overwhelmed, ask questions. Social networks make it easy to ask and answer inquiries – some without even needing to participate. Forums and community message boards are a great way to test the waters and get the answers you need before diving in. Know that you don't have to be the expert in every application and new program to be a success in the Communications 2.0. Align yourself with people and professionals who understand your message, know your desired end result, and have the resources to help you. And if all else fails, you can always tweet “HELPPP!!!!”

Hopefully the above has served as aspirin for your headache.

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

Literary
Loudspeaker:
Tom
Ciesielka



Final Chapters

Janice Metzger, author of *What Would Jane Say? City-Building Women and a Tale of Two Chicagos* died Feb. 22.

Her publisher, Lake Claremont Press, wrote: “Janice Metzger came to Lake Claremont Press about a year and a half ago with late-stage lung cancer, open about her likely terminal diagnosis, and one ambitious and compelling proposal for the book she intended to write while undergoing treatment: *What Would Jane Say?* She impressed us with her prolific hard work, commitment, fire, historic imagination, and quality of research and writing. In the end, we were mostly wowed at her accomplishment, more so because she delivered something so complete and beautiful that matched what she set out to do, and in such a short period of time, than because of the circumstances under which she did it.”



Janice Metzger

She is survived by her partner, John Paige; her sons Timothy, Christopher, and Andrew Metzger.

In her book, Metzger imagined that Daniel Burnham had asked the women behind the settlement house movement, including Jane Addams' Hull House, to participate in a planning process and had asked them to meet and comment on drafts of the Plan for Chicago.

“What difference would it have made if these women, these city-building women who were on a separate but a parallel path, had actually been involved in the Burnham Plan of Chicago?” Metzger asked as a panelist at a Society of Midland Authors program last fall. “I think that it would have made a huge difference.”

The illustrations in *Plan for Chicago* are “lovely,” but “emphasize this above-the-people point of view, this bird's-eye view where people are really small and insignificant,” Metzger said.

“The people who were promoting the Burnham plan were really looking for business investment at taxpayers' expense and they were looking for a ready labor pool that was only marginally healthy and well-fed,” she said.



Sinclair
Lewis



Sherwood
Anderson



James
Whitcomb Riley



Edna
Ferber



Harriet
Monroe



Ring
Lardner



Hobart
Chatfield-Taylor

A ‘most inspired contribution’

Since the November/December *Literary License*, former SMA President Craig Sautter has been recounting some of the SMA lore he saw while cataloging additions to the Richard Frisbie Collection of the SMA Archive at the UIC Richard J. Daley Library's Special Collection. This is a continuation of his report:

The 1990 dinner, the 75th annual, was held at the Drake Hotel. In attendance, according to then-SMA President Dempsey Travis' script found in the Richard Frisbie Collection, were actors playing the roles of charter members (and Pulitzer Prize winner) **Edna Ferber**, poet **Vachel Lindsay**, and SMA's fifth President **John M. Stahl**, who was editor of *Illinois Farmer and Farmers' Call* and president of the Drama League of America, among other groups.

Stahl addressed the group. "Of clubs, fraternities, and organizations that I've been a member of ... and believe me, I've belonged to quite a few ... none ever meant so much to me or was ever so dear to my heart as the Society of Midland Authors. But then the whole idea for this organization was mine in the first place. Yes, sir, I'm proud to say it was probably my most inspired contribution to our great city. And how did I come to this most fortuitous plan? It was not a bolt of lightning, I can tell you, but a gradual realization of a growing need in Chicago I realized during my many travels abroad.

"I saw plainly that Paris might have its Louvre, Rome her St. Peter's, Berlin her Unter der Linden, Ireland her Blarney

Castle, London her Tower and St. Paul's, and New York Wall Street, but you could set all those things down right here in one corner of the Stock Yards behind the Armour Plant and no one would know where they were. Oh, we had all they had and more. More energy, more guts, more raw materials and talent ... Much of it not yet recognized ... but talent a-plenty we most certainly did have.

"However, there was one advantage they all had that we did not. I clearly saw that their writers and artists all knew one another. They met and lunched and dined and talked. They had a community ... networking, I guess, is what you'd call it now, but that's not the same thing. Oh, we

had the Press Club, some say the first and I believe the best in the country, headed by the able Douglas Malloch, but our novelists and poets and artists did not know one another. I thought about this, pondered on it, and then like any Chicagoan

worth his ... or her ... mettle, I did something about it.

"I called on **Mason Warner** and **Douglas Malloch** and carefully placed before them some of the things I had been considering. I lunched with **Harriet Monroe**, and so on. It seemed to me that our organization should cover all of the vast Midland from the Alleghenies to the Rockies and as far south as the Ohio, if not the Gulf. I will spare you the details," (unfortunately for us in 2010), "but we were quick to put our ideas into motion. I felt that **Hobart Chatfield-Taylor**, a most genial host and fine toastmaster, should make the best president, and he was duly

“None ever meant so much to me or was ever so dear to my heart as the Society of Midland Authors.”

elected. Douglas Malloch was secretary, and I was treasurer. We included 12 states from the middle of the country and that's how we came by the name of Midlands. And we determined that Chicago should be its headquarters. We most assuredly had more than our share of material for such a society.

"Among the charter members were **James Whitcomb Riley**, **Hamlin Garland**, **Edna Ferber**, **Harriet Monroe**, **Vachel Lindsay**, **Clarence S. Darrow**, **Alice Gerstenberg**, **Zona Gale**, and dozens more.

"Soon others joined: **Jane Addams**, **Ring Lardner**, **Edgar Lee Masters**, **George McCutcheon**, **Gene Stratton Porter**, **William Allen White**, **Sinclair Lewis**, **Sherwood Anderson**, and so on."

Then the actress playing Edna Ferber joked around, read a monologue from her *The Royal Family*... and recited some **Edgar Lee Masters** poems from *Spoon River Anthology*. She was followed by **Vachel Lindsay**, perhaps America's first performance poet, who dramatized a few poems from his *Gospel of Beauty* and concluded with his famous "General William Booth Enters Into Heaven."

And "so it goes," as Vonnegut would say.

Craig Sautter is a former president of the Society of Midland authors.

*Literary
Lore:*

**Craig
Sautter**

