

Biblio File

NOTE: An unexpected hard drive meltdown delayed this issue. Fortunately, new hardware is in place:

Glennette Tilley Turner's latest book, *Fort Mose and the Story of the Man Who Built the First Free Black Settlement in Colonial America* is the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators 2011 Golden Kite Nonfiction Honor Book for Excellence in Children's Book



Glennette
Tilley Turner

Writing, a Booklist Editors Choice, one of their Top 10 Black History Books for Youth:2011, and listed on Book Links Top 15 Nonfiction Multicultural Books.

... We're sorry to report former Society of Midland Authors board member **Rita Turow** passed away in February. Colleagues remember Rita never missed the book awards dinner until she became ill. ...



Rita Turow

Frank Joseph's poem "Beauty and the Beast Visit Elizabeth Arden" has been published in *Life in Me Like Grass on Fire*, the first-ever poetry anthology published by the Maryland Writers Association (\$12.95 from MWA).



Craig Sautter

... Congratulations to **Craig Sautter**, now in his 30th year of teaching philosophy, history, politics, literature and creative writing at DePaul University's School for New Learning. ... **Paul**

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Deborah
Blum



Benjamin
Percy



Gene
Schlickman



Bill
Barnhart



Billy
Lombardo

Midwest authors honored at 55th annual book awards

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Fifteen authors were named winners for finalists May 10 in the 2011 Society of Midland Authors Awards for books published in 2010.

The awards dinner was held at the Chicago Bar Association in Chicago's South Loop. The master of ceremonies was journalist and author **Sam Weller**, who is best known for his 2005 book *The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury*. (Sam tweeted July 10 that he's hoping Ray Bradbury finishes up his next collection soon" *Nightmares and Daydreams*.)

"Sam Weller was an excellent master of ceremonies," said former SMA President **Craig Sautter**. "He kept an intelligent audience rapt with his stories about SMA 1958 runner-up Ray Bradbury and gave judges plenty of room to introduce the winners, who all gave insightful and inspirational speeches. I had a great time

catching up with fellow members and new guests."

SMA Recording Secretary **Anastasia Royal** said, "It was great to get together and honor good writing."

It was the 55th annual book awards ceremony for the Society. Awards were given out earlier than that back to the Society's founding in 1915, but they were not on an annual basis.

Here are this year's winners and finalists:

Adult Fiction

Winner: **Benjamin Percy** of Ames, Iowa, for *The Wilding: A Novel* (Graywolf Press). Percy also was an Adult Fiction finalist in 2008 for books published in 2007.

Finalists: **Keir Graff** of Chicago for *The Price of Liberty* (Severn House Publishers).

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Midland Authors
Poetry Program

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New
Books

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Literary Loudspeaker:
Tom Ciesielka

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McComas (see New Books, Page 5) did a whirlwind of free Chicago area performance/Q&A/signing events in May for *Unforgettable: Harrowing Futures, Horrors, & (Dark) Humor* (2011, Walkabout Publishing): Three were done in tandem with Tim W. Brown (Second Acts). He also did a May 24 solo event for *Unforgettable* at the Bourgeois Pig in Chicago. McComas reports he did a "great recent interview," which is archived at Milwaukee Public Radio. ... In conjunction with his book *Bath Massacre: America's First School Bombing* **Arnie Bernstein** spoke at the annual Bath School Reunion, then did a presentation-/signing at Everybody Reads Bookstore in Lansing, Mich. The weekend marked the 84th memorial of the Bath School bombing, the deadliest act of school violence in American history. The book was also featured in on the Huffington Post Book section that week. As for what's next: St. Martin's Press will publish Arnie's new book *Swastika Nation: Führers, Politicians, Mobsters & the Rise and Fall of the German-American Bund* in fall of 2013. ... **Keir Graff** was scheduled to appear appear May 3 at the Newberry Library, where he was to be interviewed live by the award-winning author **Bryan Gruley**. "I haven't seen the list of questions he's planning to ask, but I will refuse to answer any that pertain to my alleged stay in a Pakistani village and any promises I may or may not have

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Rebecca
Barnhouse



Jehanne
Dubrow



Keir
Graff



Kevin
Stein



Don
Mitchell

BOOK AWARDS

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Billy Lombardo of Forest Park, Ill., for *The Man with Two Arms: A Novel* (The Overlook Press).

Adult Nonfiction

Winner: **Deborah Blum** of Madison, Wis., for *The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York* (Penguin Press).

Finalists: **Harry Castleman**, a graduate of Northwestern University now living in Maryland, and **Walter J. Podrazik** of Chicago for *Watching TV: Six Decades of American Television, 2nd Expanded Edition* (Syracuse University Press).

Kevin Stein of Dunlap, Ill., for *Poetry's Afterlife: Verse in the Digital Age* (The University of Michigan Press and the University of Michigan Library). Kevin Stein also was the Poetry winner in 2006 for books published in 2005.

Biography

Winners: **Bill Barnhart** of Chicago and **Gene Schlickman** of Beverly Shores, Ind., for *John Paul Stevens: An Independent Life* (Northern Illinois University Press).

Finalists: **Bruce L. Mouser** of La Crosse, Wis., for *Labor, Race, and Liberty: George Edwin Taylor, His Historic Run for the White House, and the Making of Independent Black Politics*

(The University of Wisconsin Press).

Children's Fiction

Winner: **Rebecca Barnhouse** of Youngstown Ohio, for *The Coming of the Dragon* (Random House Books for Young Readers).

Finalists: **Stephanie Hemphill** of Chicago for *Wicked Girls: A Novel of the Salem Witch Trials* (Balzer and Bray).

Clare Vanderpool of Wichita, Kan., for *Moon Over Manifest* (Delacorte Books for Young Readers).

Children's Nonfiction

Winner: **Don Mitchell**, a former resident of Iowa, Illinois and Ohio who now lives in Virginia, for *Driven: A Photobiography of Henry Ford* (National Geographic Children's Books).

Poetry

Winner: **Jehanne Dubrow**, a former resident of Lincoln, Neb., for *Stateside* (TriQuarterly).

James Friend Memorial Award for Literary and Dramatic Criticism
Winner: **John Barron** of Oak Park, Ill., and publisher of the Chicago Sun-Times, "for his love of books and his many fine book reviews."

The Society of Midland Authors' 2010-11 programs may be heard in their entirety at www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified.



Walter
Podrazik



Clare
Vanderpool



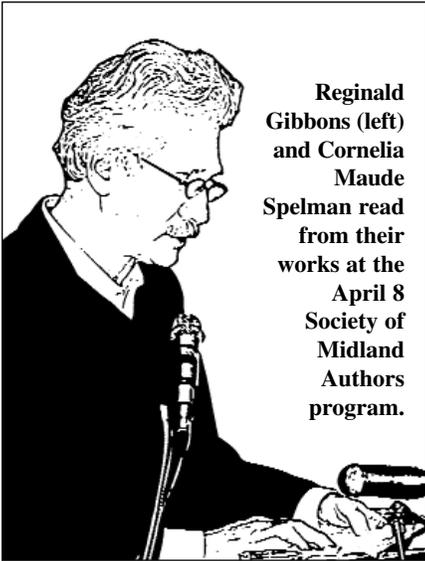
Stephanie
Hemphill



Bruce
Mouser



John
Barron



Reginald Gibbons (left) and Cornelia Maude Spelman read from their works at the April 8 Society of Midland Authors program.



Images from photos by Gerry Souter

‘Writing is something you have to do for yourself’

This year’s annual Society of Midland Authors poetry program featured the husband-and-wife team of **Reginald Gibbons** and **Cornelia Maude Spelman**.

Gibbons read some of his poetry and Spelman read from her new memoir *Missing: A Memoir*.

Spelman’s memoir is based partly on yellowing letters “so I can have direct quotes.”

“I had to make it not just what was in my memory but put it together as a whole story,” she said.

Spelman acknowledged she had learned some things about writing from Gibbons and his “his sensitivity to language” but said each writer has to find his or her own voice.

“Writing really is something that you have to do for yourself – you have to, or I had to, really find my own way of saying things because we are very different kinds of writers,” she said. “And it would have been easy for me, since he was more experienced and a professor, to give in to his judgment on things, which I had to resist doing. I had to be confident in my view of how I wanted something to sound.”

The memoir is the first book for adults from Spelman, a former social worker and therapist, who also has written a series of 10 picture books for young chil-

dren with such titles as: *When I Feel Angry, When I Feel Sad, When I Feel Scared, When I Feel Jealous* and *When I Feel Good About Myself*.

“I value emotion tremendously, and I have tried to help children and help their parents to feel and to recognize and to manage their feelings,” Spelman said. Gibbons said writers learn not just from what people tell them about writing but also learn “how to perceive certain things, how to feel certain things.”

Gibbons also talked about his experiences as an editor for “16 or 17” years.

“Criticism really helps when, because of it, you see something that you didn’t see before about the possibilities of your own work,” he said. “That’s the most valuable criticism. ... If I can say something another writer can use to open their work up, to bring more into it, to have more to work with, then that is good criticism.”

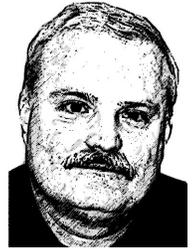
As for picking a subject, “your subjects choose you,” Gibbons said.

Spelman offered this advice for writers: “Write every morning without ever thinking about anyone ever seeing it,” she said. “And just put it aside, and go back and look at it – even the next day you will be astonished at what you wrote because in the morning you are very close to your unconscious, and you will start to see your themes and your preoccupations.”

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made to its residents in regard to the construction of educational facilities,” Graff wrote on his blog. “Everything else is on the table.”... **Joanne Koch**, playwright and director of the National Louis University graduate writing program, as well as past SMA president, had her award-winning play “Stardust” in the June 6 benefit launching of the Chicago Writers’ Bloc 2011 Play Festival at Theater Wit in Chicago. Joanne also reports that her adaptation of Saul Bellow’s story “A Silver Dish” was among works published recently by Purdue University Press in a special tribute to Dr. Cohen edition of *Studies in American Jewish Literature*. ... **Shane Gericke’s** novel *Torn Apart* has been nominated for a national Thriller Award for Best Novel of 2010 (Paperback). ... After 20 years as editor of Chicago magazine, **Richard Babcock** is stepping down. ... **Linda Nemeč Foster** has had a busy spring and summer. She has given readings, lectures, and workshops throughout Michigan at such places as the Roethke House in Saginaw and Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids. Also, she was selected to be part of a book tour of writers and poets traveling in July throughout the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Three of her poems were chosen by the Grand Rapids Art Museum to be displayed for a special program highlighting National Poetry Month in April. Foster was a finalist for the 2010 New Letters’ Poetry Prize. This academic year (2011-2012) marks the 15th anniversary for the Contemporary Writers Series at Aquinas College, a program that Foster established with her husband, Dr. Anthony Foster. ... **J. Patrick Lewis**, finalist in the 2006 Society of Midland Authors Book awards, has been named the nation’s third Children’s Poet Laureate: Consultant in Children’s Poetry to the Poetry Foundation for a two-year



Shane Gericke

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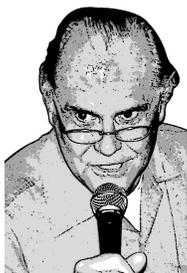
tenure. The award, which includes a \$25,000 prize, aims to raise awareness that children have a natural receptivity to poetry and are its most appreciative audience, especially when poems are written specifically for them.

... **Greg Borzo**, author of *Where to Bike in Chicago*, spoke June 11 at the Chicago Cultural Center as part of the Bike to Work week activities. ... On Saturday, July 30 at Metro Theater, 3730 N. Clark, two SMA

writers will help slam poetry celebrate its birth in Chicago 25 years ago: **Marc Smith** (founder of the slam poetry movement) and **David Hernandez**, award-winning poet and 2011 NEA fellow.

Other poets will appear as well. Tickets are \$25 (for standing room) and up. General seating is \$45. 847-556-8679. ... Curious about what really happens in rebuilding a community after a disaster?

At <http://blogs.planning.org/postdisaster/?p=94>, **Jim Schwab** moderates a series of podcast interviews as manager of the American Planning Association's Hazards Planning Research Center, which is conducting a three-year, FEMA-funded effort to recraft a 13-year-old guidance manual, *Planning for Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction*. ... **Marcus Sakey** (See New Books, right) explains why it helps to order writers' books in advance: "Enough people ordering in advance can make a big difference to the success of the book as a whole. Preorders impact marketing decisions, how many copies bookstores order, and can even lead to additional printings." Remember that next time you catch yourself procrastinating. ... **Anya Achtenberg** is again be teaching two 10-week classes online for writers.com/writers on the net, beginning July. Anya also works one-on-one with writers, and two of current and recent clients have just found publishers for their books: Christine Stark for her novel, *Nickels*, and Shanti Bannwart for her memoir, *Dancing On One Foot: Growing Up In Nazi Germany*.



Marc Smith

New Books

THE TWO DEATHS OF DANIEL HAYES

Of *The Two Deaths of Daniel Hayes* (Dutton, June 9), **Marcus Sakey** says: "As the father, I recognize that I'm biased, but I'm really in love with this one. Others seem to feel the same."

Author Michael Connelly wrote, "[The book] confirms Marcus Sakey's place as one of our best storytellers. A



Marcus Sakey

terrific read." Author Gillian Flynn wrote, "Part dazzling California noir, part dark American road trip, part psychological thriller – and entirely ingenious." Former TV director Lee Child wrote, "Sakey writes like a dream, creates characters exactly like people you know, and above all keeps you turning pages."

For Chicago Magazine's "Books We Like" column, Geoffrey Johnson wrote on June 9, "I'd like to tell you more specifics about Sakey's book, but its intricate storyline – with its shifting perspectives, multiple identities, unexpected twists, and violent mayhem – is so ingeniously concocted that to discuss just one aspect of the novel risks revealing all its secrets."

Sakey himself tweeted: "*Two Deaths of Daniel Hayes* getting great reviews. Don't believe them. EVEN BETTER than they say."

WHISKEY BREAKFAST: MY SWEDISH FAMILY, MY AMERICAN LIFE

Richard Lindberg has been working on the *Whiskey Breakfast* (University of Minnesota Press, Sept. 28), since 1989, three years after his father Oscar Lindberg died at age 89. The book, which Lindberg considers his magnum opus, is the story of his exploration into

his father's past; discovering two children he had sired out of wedlock in the 1920s before immigrating to the U.S. in 1924. He learned identify of those children when he had a box of old letters translated by several cousins in Sweden whom he had never met. He made two trips back to Sweden in 1987 and 2001 to unravel the mystery, but both of the children had died tragically before the age five; one abandoned in a poor house and dying of tuberculosis and the other killed on

a construction site while playing. It turned out his father had fled Sweden because two women were pressing claims. (He had claimed he left for political reasons: his opposition to the Swedish draft, the "corrupt" monarchy and other left-wing causes.) The book also is about the Swedish immigration to Chicago; the Andersonville community as it took shape in the 1920s, his mother's family, and his parents' failed marriage, which was arranged by her Depression-era parents who wrongly figured my father was a pretty "good catch" for their 35-year-old unmarried daughter.

The title refers to Lindberg's father's habit of beginning each day with a brandy Manhattan. Lindberg came up with the title in 1989, and worried that someone else would take it and use it for their own book, but that never happened.

MY RUBY SLIPPERS: THE ROAD TO KANSAS

When she's diagnosed with cancer and her lover leaves her for someone else, **Tracy Seeley's** life in San Francisco no longer feels so charmed. With her fear and grief in tow — and the addresses of her 13 childhood homes in hand — she heads east, a woman with an impassioned but vague sense of mission: find home.

Instead, in this book (University of Nebraska Press, March 1) she finds a



Rich Lindberg

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New Books

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Kansas she never knew, a place more far complex than its cultural myths convey:

In a Chinese restaurant in the High Plains town of Goodland, the Muzak plays “Amazing Grace”; at John Brown’s cabin she finds the man beneath the myth; and among the lingering ghosts at the site of a Pawnee village, she meets Sadie, another keeper of family stories.

On back roads and in her many back yards, she also finds unexpected forgiveness for her errant father, and learns what it means to live rooted in a sense of place.

And in the face of mortality, what it means to dwell deeply in the only life we have.



Tracy Seeley

THE LAST DANCE: FAMILY SECRETS AND THE CHICAGO MOB

Eldon Ham is co-author with James Jack (who died just before Christmas at age 82) of this book (February, XLibris) about Jack’s dealings with the mob. Jack, a detective, served with the Chicago police for 25 years

Ham is author of two earlier books: *The Playmasters: From Sellouts to Lockouts-An Unauthorized History of the NBA* (2000) and *Larceny And Old Leather: The Mischievous Legacy of the Major Leagues* (2005).

CLAIM OF INNOCENCE

Laura Cadwell's new novel, *Claim of Innocence*, will be out this September. The plot: Izzy has gotten herself into yet another situation that will require her wit, intelligence and sass to get through. The Chicago Sun-Times has called Izzy “the whole package: feminine and sexy, but also smart, tough and resourceful.”

UNFORGETTABLE: HARROWING FUTURES, HORRORS, & (DARK) HUMOR

“Relax,” a fairground vendor says with a wink in Paul McComas’ new book: *Unforgettable: Harrowing Futures, Horros, & (Dark) Humor*. “There will be plenty of surprises.”

The vendor could easily have been talking about McComas’ new volume, which includes what he considers his 50 best speculative-fiction, horror, and dark-comic works – most of them never before published. There’s “Nessie” and nuclear apocalypse; voodoo and vampires; androids and ax murderers; death curses and dystopias; cognizant and conniving corporations.

McComas is the author of three books and editor of two others. His most recent book before this one is the comedic coming-of-age novel *Planet of the Dates*, which is in development as a Hollywood feature.



Paul McComas

Paul performs his work live across the country, teaches in Chicago, and makes award-winning films in Evanston, Ill., where he lives with his wife, fellow fiction writer Heather McComas.

Printers Row

The Chicago Tribune Printers Row Lit Fest took place June 4-5, and the SMA was there. SMA members sold and signed copies of their books at the SMA table, while greeting the many inquisitive folks who came up to chat. As in just about every previous year, Printers Row was hit by some inclement weather — but this time, the downpour on Saturday afternoon came and went fairly quickly.

Several of the SMA who participated reported selling a good number of their books. This year’s table included a new feature: a large poster with pictures of the featured authors and their books, along with a schedule of when they would be at

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New Members

Historian **Timuel D. Black Jr.** is professor emeritus of City Colleges of Chicago and is the author of *Bridges of Memory*, a three volume complication of interviews with Chicago’s first generation of black migrants and their descendants.



Timuel D.
Black

Born in Birmingham, Ala., in 1918 and moving to Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood at 8 months,

Black is a scholar and political activist. He attended Burke Elementary School and DuSable High School in Chicago, where he was a classmate of former SMA president **Dempsey Travis**. (He later also was a close friend of former SMA member Studs Terkel.)

Black got his bachelor’s degree at Roosevelt University and a master’s degree from the University of Chicago.

After being drafted into the Army during World War II, Black returned to school and became a social worker.

He is considered one of the leading authorities on Chicago’s African-American community.

Bruce L. Mouser spent his first 18 years in Roann, Ind., (population of 499 persons) a town that, though small, claims two greats – Mary Jane Ward who authored *The Snake Pit* (1946) and Ross Lockridge, Jr., author of *Raintree County* (1948).

Mouser initially intended to become a chemist, but discovered that that required much too much math. Instead, he enlisted in the Army and found himself enrolled in an intensive 12-month Russian language course. Escaping from the Army after three years, he entered Indiana University which became his home for three degrees – an AB in history, a Masters in social studies, and a PhD in history.

At the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (1968-1996) Mouser taught Asian and African histories, and increasingly over the years became responsible for a senior-level course in methods and writing.

When he retired in 1996, Mouser had

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New Members

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three filing cabinets filled with research notes, some of which already had led to publications. He published five articles and one monograph on African and African American topics in 1998, and four articles and two monographs in the next two years. While the history of the African slave trade remains a writing interest, his primary focus is that period of African American history that connects the collapse of Reconstruction to the rise of independent black politics at the beginning of the 20th century. He is working on a biography of William Thomas Scott of Cairo, Ill., who was an influential state and national black Democrat at the turn of the last century. Mouser has studied at the American University in Cairo, the International Christian University in Tokyo and the University of Nigeria in Nsukka.

Printers Row

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the table.

Participating authors were: **June Skinner Sawyers**, author of *Bob Dylan: New York*; **John Presta**, author of *Mr. And Mrs. Grassroots: How Barack Obama, Two Bookstore Owners and 300 Volunteers Did It*; **Joseph G. Peterson**, author of *Beautiful Piece*; **George Levy**, author of *To Die in Chicago, Confederate Prisoners At Camp Douglas*; **Nancy Wikarski**, author of *The Fall Of White City and Shrouded In Thought*; **Gunter Nitsch**, author of *Weeds Like Us and Stretch: Coming of Age in Post-War Germany*; **Carol Fisher Saller**, author of *The Subversive Copy Editor and Eddie's War*; **Gail Lukasik**, author of *Death's Door*; **Gerry Souter**, author of *American Realism and The Earnhardts*; **Janet Souter**, Gerry's co-author on *Founding of the United States (Second Edition)*; and **Lynn Voedisch**, author of the forthcoming *The God's Wife*. SMA Board members **Richard C. Lindberg** and **Carol Jean Carlson** manned the table all weekend and sold some of their books, and SMA President **Robert Loerzel** was also present for much of the weekend.

The right way to spend your non-writing time

When was the last time you got involved in an activity that had nothing to do with writing a book?

Some people tend to think of writing as separate from their hobbies and interests, but you can actually help your reputation through the activities that you get involved in outside of writing.

If you know what you love to do and are active in organizations and groups, then you can benefit from participating in your community. It won't seem like you're working because you're enjoying what you're doing, but you could see some positive results in your own professional life.

Here are a few ways to follow your passion and help your reputation:

1) Speak. If you're part of an organization in your community, or are involved in your kids' schools and extra-curricular activities, offer to give a speech or an informal talk that will help people improve their own lives. By offering to speak to a group, you'll become a kind of community expert ready with helpful tips. And you never know who you'll meet: a potential reader or even someone from the media who wants to write about your book or books.

There are a number of freelance writers who are looking for experts and sources for their stories, and they could be one of the parents at the next soccer game that you go to.

2) Get involved. If you know what you're interested in, whether it's a sport, language, cultural topic, handicraft, music, or whatever, there's a group or class out there that you can join. It gets you away from the stress of work and other responsibilities, but it's also a great way to meet other people while you're pursuing what you're interested in. You never know whom you'll meet, and whom they know.

“ If you know what you love to do and are active in organizations and groups, then you can benefit from participating in your community. ”

3) Tell others. When you get involved in a fund-raising walk or a project that helps disadvantaged people, tell others about it in your blog, on Twitter,

Facebook, LinkedIn, or wherever you communicate with people online.

It's not about boasting, but about letting people know that you're excited about helping others. Such volunteer activities let your clients

and colleagues know that you're multi-dimensional, that you're not just about work. So helping others is not just good for the community, but for your reputation as well.

What's important to remember is to not be pushy or try to aggressively market yourself to others you meet outside of work.

Just enjoy yourself and be open to meeting others, and you'll make new contacts naturally.

And remember to have your business cards handy, just in case.

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

*Literary
Loudspeaker*
Tom
Ciesielka

