

## Biblio File

The North Carolina Press Foundation is sharing four of **Artie Knapp's** serial stories targeted for kindergarten through fourth grade readers with Newspapers in Education newspapers across the United States. This year's theme for summer is "Dig into Reading." The foundation is also sharing these works with libraries and other newspapers throughout the country. ... **Catherine Browder's** one-act play "Requiem" was presented by Potluck Productions' First Friday Play Reading Series at the Uptown Arts Bar in Kansas City. The two-person play ponders the impact of the World Trade Center disaster on two very different characters, a month later, as they observe the hole in the landscape from a roof deck in Brooklyn. Catherine also has had two stories in recent anthologies: *Kansas City Noir* (Akashic Books) and *The Whirlybird Anthology of Kansas City Writers* (Whirlybird Press). ... Choice Magazine cited *Sports in America: From Colonial Times to the Twenty-First Century*, edited by **Steven A. Riess**, as an "Outstanding Academic Book for 2012." Also, the International Journal of Sport History, in a 2012 retrospective, cited Steven's "Sport and the Redefinition of American Middle-Class Masculinity," as the "Best Article of the Year (1991)." Steven also has a new book out (See New Books, Page 4). ... **Joan Kufrin** writes to say: " 'Filly Brown,' on which our son, Ben, was the director of photog-



**Catherine Browder**

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**Steven A. Riess**

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## Get your tickets now for SMA's 2013 book awards

Once a year, the Society of Midland Authors holds a special event to honor the best books by the region's authors. The prestigious literary prize has been a tradition since 1957, honoring authors from **Saul Bellow** and **Gwendolyn Brooks** to **Jane Smiley** and **Roger Ebert**.

The Society recently announced our judges' choices for the best 2012 books by Midwest authors. You can see the full list on our blog at [www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com) (or check the March 2012 Literary License).

This year's banquet will be on Tuesday, May 14, at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans St., Chicago, in the LaSalle Room, which features a lovely view of the city.

A reception with cash bar begins at 6 p.m. followed by the dinner and awards ceremony at 7 p.m.

The master of ceremonies will be **Steve Bertrand**, morning anchor of WGN-AM radio and host of the video podcast "Steve Bertrand on Books," which features his interviews with leading writers.

Many of the award-winning authors and finalists are attending, giving short acceptance speeches.

The banquet offers a great opportunity to meet members of the Society of Midland Authors and the distinguished writers we're honoring this year. And

**May 14, 2013**

**Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza  
350 N. Orleans St.,  
Chicago**

**6 p.m. - Social Hour  
7 p.m. - Dinner**

**Tickets \$75. Parking \$10**

that's not all — free copies of all the award-winning and finalist books will be available for banquet attendees to take home.

The cost to attend the banquet is \$75. Reservations can be made online with a PayPal payment at: [http://midlandauthors.com/online\\_banquet\\_form.html](http://midlandauthors.com/online_banquet_form.html) (plus a \$1 fee to help defray PayPal's processing costs).

You may also print out the reservation form at: [http://midlandauthors.com/dinner\\_reservation\\_form.html](http://midlandauthors.com/dinner_reservation_form.html) — or use the reservation form that was mailed recently to all of the Society's members.

Mail a completed form with a check to us at: Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610

Attendees who drive will receive a special parking rate of \$10 from the Holiday Inn with a validated ticket.

We hope you can join us.



**Roger Ebert**

Authors Guild,  
SMA's linked history

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Edward Hirsch reads,  
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raphy, debuted nationally on April 19, (Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Detroit, Phoenix, etc. etc.). It was also opening in Chicagoland suburbs. 'Filly Brown' is an inspiring and gritty portrait of a young artist striving to find her voice and seize her dreams without compromise." ... **Ed Gordon's** next book, *Future Jobs: Solving the Employment and Skills Crisis* (Praeger), comes out on Labor Day. ... SMA Recording Secretary **Anastasia Royal** will play the principal role in a play at Next Theater called "Men Around The World" by Judy Veramendi, a Full-bright scholar and playwright. The cast will do a one-night reading May 8 they hope will lead to a longer run. ... **Blue Balliett** spoke to an audience of at least 2,000 planners at the closing plenary of the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference at Chicago's downtown Hyatt Regency on April 17. As an author of mysteries for young adults, she made a remarkable impression in talking about her latest book, *Hold Fast*, which features children in a homeless family. ... **Linda Neme Foster** was interviewed on

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Society of Midland Authors members can now pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal (there is a \$1 fee to help cover PayPal's fee). To make a donation, visit our home page at [www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com) and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

# Society of Midland Authors, Authors Guild share a past

BY RICHARD FRISBIE

Although the late J. F. Powers, satirist and National Book Award winner, once said, "a writer's worst enemy is another writer," history seems to show that authors do like to get together to pursue common interests.

The recently published centennial edition of the national Authors Guild Bulletin reported that among the founders of the Authors Guild in 1913 were several writers who went on to create the Society of Midland Authors in Chicago only two years later.

Among the original members of what was originally called the Authors' League of America were the following SMA founders: **George Ade, Charles G. Blanden, Katharine Holland Brown, Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, Edna Ferber, Zona Gale, Hamlin Garland, Emerson Hough, Randall Parrish and Will Payne.**

To this day, many SMA members also belong to the Authors Guild, headquartered in New York City. SMA member **Scott Turow** is currently president of the Authors Guild. Apart from the obvious geographical distinction there has always been a somewhat different focus on objectives.

The 1913 "General Purpose of the Authors' League" highlighted "the mutual protection ... of authors in their dealings with publishers." The SMA founders had a broader vision, detailed in SMA by-laws: "(1) creation of a closer association among writers of the Midwest, (2) stimulation of creative literary effort, and

“Among the founders of the Authors Guild in 1913 were several writers who went on to create the Society of Midland Authors in Chicago only two years later.”

encouragement of an interest in reading and literature by cooperation with other educational and cultural agencies.”

According to the Authors Guild Bulletin, the League founders were particularly aggrieved by the experience of Arthur C. Train, who learned in 1911 that McClure's Magazine had sold British reprint rights to one of his short stories for \$600 without paying him anything.

(That would be about \$14,000 in today's money, the Bulletin calculated.)

A lawyer as well as a successful writer of legal thrillers, Train extracted payment from McClure's by threatening to sue,

then went on to launch a campaign to improve copyright protections for all writers.

All these years later, Scott Turow, also a lawyer and author of legal best-sellers, recently turned to the subject of defending authors' copyrights with an op-ed piece in the New York Times. The threat now is from new technology.

Literary  
Landscape  
Richard  
Frisbie



## 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 since the last newsletter:

**Theresa Amato, Richard Bales, Richard Frisbie, Timothy Gilfoyle, Charles Masters, Steve Monroe and Robert Starks.**

# How ‘terrible sonnet’ inspired poet’s career

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

One of the moments that lured **Edward Hirsch** into a life of writing poetry was when he read a sonnet by the English Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins.

“Emily Dickenson said when you read a great poem you feel the top of your head has been taken off,” Hirsch told an audience of about 100 at the Society of Midland Authors annual poetry program April 16 at the Cliff Dwellers club in Chicago. Hirsch said that’s how he felt when he read one of Hopkins’ “terrible sonnets,” so called because they captured the melancholy of Hopkins’ later life.

“There was some desolation in myself that I could never name. And Gerard Manley Hopkins named it for me,” Hirsch said. “Later I realized, here is a poet born in Wales ... in the late 19th century in exile in Ireland as he thought of himself, and he writes a poem that a Jewish kid from Chicago reads in his dorm room in Iowa and thinks this poem speaks to him more deeply than anything anyone says around him.

“And I realized that poetry has way of connecting beyond the social chitchat, the manners we have, the kind of discussions we have even with people close to you. The poetry connected something inside of me that I couldn’t name.”

Hirsch, who was born in Chicago and who has written eight books of poetry, read some of his work to the audience of about 100.

In introducing Hirsch, SMA member **Donna Seaman** said, “The first time I read a poem by Edward Hirsch, I knew I had found my guiding light. ... When you read Edward’s poems you feel the force of his love for language and his command of language.”

Answering a question about the selection of poems he read, Hirsch said “there are a lot of farewells” and “there is sort of an elegiac feel,” but they weren’t meant to suggest he will stop writing.

“I am not about to hang up my spikes,” he said.

Two other themes in the poems he read were cafes and the seashore.

Hirsch said when he was young and lived in Europe, he liked to write in cafes, although he had to switch to fast food

“*I don’t think poems have messages, exactly. They are experiences. And they dramatize experience.*”

restaurants when he came back to America.

“I have always liked to work in these spaces where you don’t know people but you feel a part of something,” he said.

As for the seashore, it has a long history as a theme in American poetry, he said.

“The seashore lyric gives you the space where you are at the end of the eternal,” he said.

Hirsch said he started writing when he was in high school. At the time, he called his work poetry, but in retrospect he thinks it really wasn’t.

“I was really writing out of emotional desperation,” he said. “And I was just writing down my feelings because I

couldn’t control them, and I didn’t know how to deal with them. And they were just overflowing. ... And I felt it helped me. I felt better. Also girls like it, so I that that was cool.”

Although “nobody could understand it at all,” Hirsch thought everything he wrote was great. But when Hirsch went off to Grinnell College, he learned differently when he started bringing his work to his humanities teacher.

“[She] did something wonderful for me. She basically said to me, ‘You could be a poet, you have a passion, you have imagination, you have the intelligence to be a poet, but what you are writing are not poems. They are just your feelings written down.’”

The reason it wasn’t poetry was “because I was just writing down my feelings. I wasn’t trying to make anything,” Hirsch said.

Turning to a poetry career had an upside.

“I felt I was drowning and I saw an oar going by. And that oar was poetry. And I tried to grab on and hold on. It was emotional. It wasn’t intellectual,” he said.

At the same time, it had a downside.

“It was extremely upsetting to my parents,” he said.

So why did he decide to become a poet?

“You could take the muck and mire of your own life. You could take the messy things in your own life, the difficult experiences that you didn’t understand and try to turn them into something. ... If you turned them into something that you thought was beautiful, that seemed noble to me. I aspired to that. And I thought this is a way to spend your life, to try to take your experiences and transform them into something that will stand apart from you. That will try to live alone when you are not there to explain it.”

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## New Members

**James Swanson** is author of *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln’s Killer* and other books.

Swanson works for Heritage Foundation in Washington, and previously lived in Chicago area for 30 years.

*Manhunt* won the Edgar Award for best

nonfiction crime book. In 2009 in Newsweek, Patricia Cornwell named *Manhunt* and *In Cold Blood* as the two best nonfiction crime books ever.

Swanson has degrees in history from the University of Chicago from the University of California, Los Angeles. He has held a number of government and think-tank posts in Washington, D.C.,

including at the United States Department of Justice.

He also serves on the advisory council of the Ford’s Theatre Society.

His other books include *Lincoln’s Assassins: Their Trial and Execution*, as well as *Chasing Lincoln’s Killer*, and adaptations of *Manhunt* and *Bloody Crimes* for young readers.

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Michigan Public Radio. Linda read her poems from *Ten Songs from Bulgaria*. The interview is archived at [www.michiganradio.org](http://www.michiganradio.org). ... Thanks to Hurricane Sandy and global warming, **Jim Schwab** is flitting about the landscape. The first week of April, he led a team of experts in workshops on recovery planning for communities hit by Hurricane Sandy. Jim also organized sessions at the APA National Planning Conference at the Hyatt Regency in Chicago, April 13-17, on the post-disaster project. In addition, Jim moderated a session called, "Drought: How Do You Plan for That?" And Jim was invited by the Italian Ministry of the Environment to speak at a European Union conference on "Cities and Climate Change" in Venice on May 23. On May 31, he will speak at a conference commemorating the fifth anniversary of the 2008 floods in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Jim also has launched a blog, "Home of the Brave," on [jimschwab.com](http://jimschwab.com).

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## New Books

### SPORTS IN INDUSTRIAL AMERICA, 1850-1920

**Steven A. Riess'** new book *Sports in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell), was published in January. It is part of the publisher's American History Series.

The book tells how American sport changed along with American society, evolving from a loosely organized local pastime to a national, heavily bureaucratic structure that drew a wide following.

The Journal of Sport History Games said, "Riess is at his best in describing the evolution of modern sport within the urban milieu. His explanation of the impact of the industrial radial city, an outgrowth of the antebellum commercial walking city, on the rise of sport is well crafted."

### FIT FOR A FRANKENSTEIN

**Paul McComas'** new novella, *Fit for a Frankenstein!*" (Walkabout Publishing), written with Greg Starrett, is, as the authors say, a pastiche of humor, Gothic horror, homage, parody and quasi-historical fiction.

A sample:

"Klaus gasped. For there, stepping stiffly into his own shop, its flat-topped, ceiling-high head illuminated by a fresh crackle of lighting, was ... a nudemare.

" 'Agh!' Ygor slapped a palm to the side of his own face. 'What happen to your big potato sack?'

"The Monster glanced down at its crotch.

" 'No, no – your, eh, burlap covering!'

The Monster shrugged."

For the rest, as they say, you have to buy the book, which also has a bonus short story.

McComas is the author of two novels and two short-story collections.

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