

Biblio File

Here's the SMA slate to be voted on at the next meeting: President, **Meg Tebo**; Vice President, **Robert Loerzel**; Treasurer, **Dick Bales**; Membership Secretary, **Thomas Frisbie**; Recording Secretary, **Richard Frisbie**; Corresponding Secretary, **Chuck Masters**; Directors: **Beverly Offen**, **Marlene Targ Brill** (to fill unexpired term), **Joseph Gustaitis** and **Joseph Peterson**. ... Two new **Stella Pevsner** books are on Amazon's Kindle: *That's When I Kissed the Tiger* and *Renting Out Dogs Is Rong*. They're both for middle grades and pre-teens. Stella also writes to say, "Guess what? My old books have become collectibles. Books that sold for around \$6 or \$7 are now being priced by Amazon for more than \$100. One book I wrote with a Chinese student when I was tutoring her at Literacy Chicago is now around \$100. I



Stella Pevsner

called her, told her about it and asked how many copies she had. 'Three boxes full,' she said. 'I'm going to be rich!' Not so fast, there, cowboy!" ... **Arthur Plotnik's** memoir of a haunting accident in Copenhagen will be published as "Wrong Turn" in *Creative Nonfiction*. In spring 2014 he was interviewed by the grammar-and-style *Grammarist.com* website; his long narrative poem, "Dermot's Question," was published in *Kindred Magazine*; and his essay, "Library: The Most Beautiful Word?" appeared in *American Libraries* magazine. ... **Mahmoud Saeed**, a frequent attendee at Society of Midland Authors programs, is leaving Chicago to go back to Iraq, the July 6 Chicago Tribune reported. "He's a writer," the Trib said. "He needs to see what's happening. He needs, at the age of 76, to write it, to make something good

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SMA announces fall events

BY ROBERT LOERZEL

Here is the lineup of the Society of Midland Authors' fall 2014 events. Admission is free to all of these programs, which are open to the public, and reservations are not required.

Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2014, 6 p.m., at Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State St., Chicago: **Cristina Henríquez** and **Rebecca Makkai**: "Two Chicago novelists in conversation."

Henríquez's new novel, *The Book of Unknown Americans*, was chosen by Amazon as the No. 1 novel from the first half of 2014, and it was a recent "Book of the Week" selection at Oprah Winfrey's O Magazine website. Henríquez's previous books are *The World In Half* and *Come Together, Fall Apart: A Novella and Stories*, which was a New York Times Editors' Choice selection.

Her stories have been published in *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*.

Makkai's second novel, *The Hundred-Year House*, is set on Chicago's North Shore. A Boston Globe critic called the book, which was published this summer, "an entertaining, ambitious saga."

Makkai's first novel, *The Borrower*, was a Booklist Top Ten Debut, an Indie Next pick, an O Magazine selection, and one of Chicago magazine's choices for best fiction of 2011.

Her short fiction was chosen for *The Best American Short Stories* for four consecutive years.

Tuesday, Oct. 14, at Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan Ave., 22nd floor, Chicago: **Scott Turow** discusses authors' rights in the digital age.

Turow is not only the author of best-sellers including *Presumed Innocent* and the recent *Identical* — he's also an outspoken advocate for the rights of authors in the digital age, when Amazon dominates book sales and Google pursues the scanning of copyrighted materials. Turow, a north suburban resident who recently served as president of the Authors Guild, wrote a New York Times op-ed under the headline "The Slow Death of the American Author."

The discussion will begin at 7 p.m. A social hour, with complimentary snacks and a cash bar, begins at 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 11, at Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan Ave., 22nd floor, Chicago: **Stuart Dybek**.

Dybek, one of Chicago's most acclaimed writers, has won the Society of Midland Authors' award for adult fiction two times — for his 2003 book *I Sailed With Magellan* and his 1990 book *Coast of Chicago*.

This spring, Farrar, Straus and Giroux published Dybek's first books in 11 years: *Ecstatic Cahoots*, a collection of short and very short stories, and *Paper Lantern*, a collection of love stories.

The talk will begin at 7 p.m.

A social hour, with complimentary snacks and a cash bar, begins at 6 p.m.



Robert Loerzel

New
Books

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Literary Landscape
John Raffensperger

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out of the awful.” ... **Richard Lindberg** published an article in the summer issue of Chicago History – the magazine of the Chicago History Museum – on the 100th anniversary of the 1913-1914 around-the-world baseball tour conceived by Charles Comiskey. He took the Sox and the New York Giants on a five-month goodwill tour spanning five continents. The article is titled: “White Sox World Travelers.” ...

June Sawyers will host a Springsteen birthday bash called “Dream of Life: A Bruce Springsteen 65th Birthday Bash Tribute” at Fitzgerald’s nightclub in Berwyn on Sept. 27. Singer-songwriter Bucky Halker and Friends will perform spirited interpretations of Springsteen songs. In addition, Bucky and June will be on **Rick Kogan’s** WGN “After Hours” radio program on Sept. 21. Also, June’s nonfiction piece “Workingman: The Faith-Based Politics of Bruce Springsteen” will be released in September as an e-single by Now and Then Reader, the digital publishing house founded by Chicago publisher **Ivan R.**

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Making the switch from medical writing to fiction

The transition from medical to fiction writing is challenging, not only from the standpoint of composing plots, dialogue and inventing characters but also the entire process of publishing and marketing.

I wrote articles for medical journals and textbooks of surgery while I was a surgeon at the Cook County and Children’s Memorial hospitals in Chicago.

After retirement, I published *The Old Lady on Harrison Street*, a history of the County Hospital, a collection of short stories, a sailing article for the magazine, *Ocean Navigator*, a piece on conjoined twins for the *Journal of Easter Island* and historical vignettes for the *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*.

Then came, *Children’s Surgery: A World Wide History* and a brief history of the Edinburgh School of Medicine to accompany two old short stories in *Two Scottish Tales of Medical Compassion*.

Recently, though, I made the transition to fiction. I finished three novels during the past six months, all published by Barringer Publishing of Naples, Fla.

The Eagle Tree is an environmental adventure story for children.

Capone’s Diamond, a tale of sex, surgery and violence, takes place at the Cook County Hospital when a young surgeon operates on a fat guy with a bullet in his gut who had swallowed a fortune in diamonds that belonged to the mob.

The Doctor’s Apprentice, taking place in an Illinois River town during the 1870s, tells how a teenage boy learns medicine from a new doctor who arrived by steamboat from New Orleans.

The doctor, who had put down his musket to carry stretchers during battle, tells the boy that the Civil War was a terrible waste and that Grant and Lincoln were killers. This attitude doesn’t set well with the locals, especially, the crooked banker. While learning medicine and falling in love, the boy and the doctor help break up

a plot by the local Klan and the sheriff to murder a family of ex-slaves to get their land. My contrarian attitude toward the Civil War, Grant and Lincoln might not be accepted by most Illinoisans.

Variety is certainly spice, especially during old age. This summer, three different journals published my essays.

“The Curse,” in the August issue of *Gray’s Sporting Journal*, tells how a ruffed grouse, shot on the ground with a .22 pistol, haunted me for 40 years. I missed shots on flying birds, my dog pointed skunks and porcupines and finally, one rainy day in the Maine woods, I stumbled against a log and gashed my leg. I heard wing beats of that ghostly grouse.

“Aspirin, Whiskey and a Purring Cat” in the summer issue of the *Senior Bulletin of the American Academy of Pediatrics* tells how I self-treated a suspected heart attack at home to avoid going to the hospital. It turned out

to be a pulmonary embolus, but the treatment worked.

The *Journal of the Indian Medical Association* published “Reminiscence of a Pediatric Surgeon,” which briefly reviews children’s surgery during the 20th century and discusses the role of environmental pollution in causing the increased incidence of childhood cancer and birth defects.

If the right editor gets “The Adventures of the Young Arthur Conan Doyle,” you will read how the medical student Conan Doyle and his professor, Dr. Joe Bell, the model for Sherlock Holmes, foiled an attempt by Confederates to blow up Lincoln’s tomb, assassinate the president, and take over the government.

John Raffensperger, a member of the Society of Midland Authors since 2004, now lives near the beach on an island with his wife, Susan, a speckled pup named Daisy, and Jack, a cat from Halsted Street.

Literary Landscape

John
Raffensperger

New Books

THE INVISIBLE BRIDGE: THE FALL OF NIXON AND THE RISE OF REAGAN

Rick Perlstein's new book (Aug. 5, Simon & Schuster) asks the question: What does it mean to believe in America? To wave a flag – or to reject the glibness of the flag wavers?

The New York Times Book Review called it “a book that is both enjoyable as kaleidoscopic popular history ... and telling about our own historical moment.”

The Boston Globe said “enthraling, entertaining ... oddly charming and ultimately irresistible.”

NPR.org called it “one of the most remarkable literary achievements of the year.”

The Wall Street Journal said, “Rick Perlstein has established himself as one of our foremost chroniclers of the rise of the modern conservative movement.”

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette said it is “a mixture of scholarly precision, outrage and wry humor.”

NOBODY'S CHILD

Libby Fischer Hellmann says her new crime thriller (Sept. 5, Red Herring) is “possibly the darkest novel I’ve written yet.”

Her 11th novel, it is the fourth installment in her Georgia Davis, PI series.

In the book, Davis reveals the shocking existence of a half-sister she never knew about. Her sister, Savannah, is pregnant and begging for Georgia’s help.

LOOKING FOR JACK KEROUAC

Barbara Shoup's new book (Aug. 26, Lacewing Books) tells the story of Paul Carpetti, who in 1964 questions the life he faces after high school. He meets a

charismatic Kerouac devotee determined to hit the road himself, and when the boys learn that Kerouac is living in St. Petersburg, Fla., they go looking for answers.

Publishers Weekly called it “a strong work of historical fiction set in the 1960s.”

SMA member **Margaret McMullan** wrote, “Shoup gifts thinking teens with a powerful journey towards self-discovery. This is the real thing.”

THE SOLDIER'S GENERAL: OMAR BRADLEY AND THE UNITED STATES MILITARY IN PEACE AND WAR

Janice A. Petterchak's full-life biography of Missouri native Omar Nelson Bradley (Aug. 14, Legacy Press) includes Bradley’s World War II service in North Africa, Sicily, and the European theater, where he achieved international acclaim as the “soldier’s general.”

After the war, Bradley headed the Veterans Administration, became Army Chief of Staff, the first chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and chairman of the Bulova Co. during the Vietnam conflict, leading the firm’s transformation from watch-making into one of the nation’s foremost defense contractors.

THE ART OF DARING: RISK, RESTLESSNESS, IMAGINATION

Carl Phillips's new book (Aug. 5, Graywolf Press) is the 10th volume in Graywolf’s “Art of” series.

In seven essays, Phillips meditates on the craft of poetry, its capacity for making a space for possibility and inquiry.

The Los Angeles Times called it a “writer’s (and a reader’s) manifesto, a testament to the importance of taking risks. . . . so many of [*The Art of Daring's*] points, its arguments, cross the blurry lines of genre to situate themselves at the center of why we read and write.”

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Dee. June also will teach “Beyond Llewyn Davis: The Folk Music Revival” course at the Newberry Library from Oct. 2 to Nov. 13 and she will give a talk on Oct. 19 for the Chicago chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society titled “Days and Nights on Iona: Celtic Contemplation, ‘Thin Places,’ and Thomas Merton” at the Immaculate Conception Church, 7211 W. Talcott, Chicago. ...

Arnie Bernstein was interviewed about *Swastika Nation* for a TV documentary series, “Codes and Conspiracies,” for a show on American Nazism. He was flown to Los Angeles for the interview, which will be broadcast in the spring. Also, *Swastika Nation* is being released in paperback by Picador on Sept. 9. ... **Gerry Souter's** biography, *Malevich*, earned him an invitation to contribute an essay on the Ukrainian artist for the international literary website, “The Fertile Fact,” to accompany a Malevich retrospective at London’s Tate Modern gallery running through September. The piece focuses on the artist’s struggles to establish the legitimacy of non-objective art in repressive revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union from 1915 to 1935. ... **Richard Babcock** wrote an Aug. 20 analysis for the Wall Street Journal on why the Cubs, while still losing, aren’t selling as many tickets. ...

Amy Timberlake's *One Came Home* will be discussed Sept. 15, from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Beloit (Wis.) Public Library. ... **Barbara Shoup** will be at The Book Stall at Chestnut Court in Winnetka, Ill., 1 to 2:30 p.m. Oct. 5 to discuss her eighth novel, *Looking for Jack Kerouac* (See New Books, left). ... **Blue Balliett's** *Chasing Vermeer* was one of three books for young readers chosen for The Big Read Wichita. ... **Mary Kay Shanley's** 11th book is on the way. ... **Christine Taylor-Butler** spoke Aug. 16 at the Ozarks Writers League near Branson, Mo. ... The Aug. 22 Austin Chronicle called **Rebecca Makkai's** new book, *The Hundred-Year House*, “a sly, funny, literary mystery, a meet-cute romantic comedy, and a metafictional meditation.” ...

Clare Vanderpool will take part Sept. 13 in the Kansas Book Festival at the Kansas

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State Capitol. ... at 11 a.m. Sept. 13 in Forest Park, Ill., **Libby Fischer Hellmann** will be at Centuries & Sleuths for a signing with William Kent Krueger. ... **Patricia Polacco** read from her book *Mr. Wayne's Masterpiece* Aug. 16 in Berkeley, Calif. ... **Ray Boomhower's** book *One Shot: The World War II Photography of John A. Bushemi* was quoted in the Aug. 24 (Gary, Ind.) Post-Tribune. ... **S.L. Wisenberg** wrote an article headlined "When We Marched Together in Selma: How Bloody Sunday Brought Together Jews and Blacks" for the Aug. 22 Jewish Daily Forward. Also,

her essay, "Jew in the Body," has just been published in the Canadian online magazine Arts Medica. ... The Aug. 31 Belleville News Democrat profiled **Taylor Pensoneau** and his new book, *Reporting on Life – and People Along the Way*. ... **Gladys Swan** was selected for this year's Columbia (Mo.) Art League exhibition for "both her capacity as a writer and as an artist." ... **Robert Starks** wrote an Aug. 4 Huffington Post essay headlined "Where was the Diversity at Bruce Rauner's Companies?" ... WDSU quoted **Beryl Satter** Aug. 14 on events at Ferguson, Mo. ... The School Library Journal said **Gloria Whelan's** latest book (May 6, Simon & Schuster), *Queen's Victoria's Bathing Machine*, "brings histo-

ry to life recounting an amusing anecdote of Queen Victoria and her bathing machine." ... Apologies from Literary License: Due to problems in the printing process, many copies of the May-June issue got out late. ... In some copies of the May-June issue of Literary License, the wrong year was given for publication of the book **Edward Gordon** is co-authoring on World War II. It will be out in 2019.

Letters to the Editor

Great job on recent Literary License and all other issues!

Bernard Brommel

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: **Theodore Berland, Greg Borzo, Marlene Targ Brill, Bernard Brommel, Steven Burgauer, Dennis Byrne, Carol DeChant, Judith Fradin, Beverly Friend, Thomas Frisbie, Jack Fuller, Frank Gonzalez-Crussi, Janet**

Hickman, Owen Hurd, Richard Lindberg, Elsa Marston, Charles J. Masters, Donna McCreary, Beverly Offen, Harry Mark Petrakis, Stella Pevsner, Carolyn Splear Pratt, John Raffensperger, James Reiss, Robert Remer, Dick Simpson and Scott Turow.

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