

Biblio File

Note: The Society is expecting to participate again this year in the Printers Row Lit Fest. We are awaiting information about this year's event from the organizers. ...



Leone Castell Anderson

... Leone Castell Anderson's poem "Slow Ripening" was displayed at the March 2 Opening Night of "Broad Ideas," an arts show dedicated to telling women's stories, at Galena Center for the Arts, 219 Summit, Galena,

Illinois. It features female artists and artwork, poets and poems, writers and stories, singers and songs, throughout the month of March, ending with a Spoken



Lynn Sloan

Word Closing Event on April 8. ... Lynn Sloan's story "Ollie's Back" was read at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles on March 24, as part of the Selected Shorts on Stage series broadcast on NPR. The

program, "A Feast of Fiction," included stories by Willa Cather, Annie Proulx, Donald Barthelme and Stephen Tobolowsky. "Ollie's Back," the opening

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To write an appealing memoir, avoid sugar coating, author says

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Never having written a memoir, or even having planned to do so, author, educator and former politician Dick Simpson learned the rules aren't the same as for the nonfiction he was used to.

"Memoir is a different kind of format for us, and what I found was until you found the form or the methods to write it, it just wouldn't come," Simpson said March 13 at the Society of Midland Authors' monthly program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. "You can't just sit down and say, well, I had Cheerios back in 1902, Wheaties in 1903. No one cares. There is no way in to the story, and there is no purpose for writing the memoir."

In writing *The Good Fight: Life Lessons from a Chicago Progressive* (Golden Alley Press, Oct. 23, 2017), Simpson settled on writing a series of vignettes.

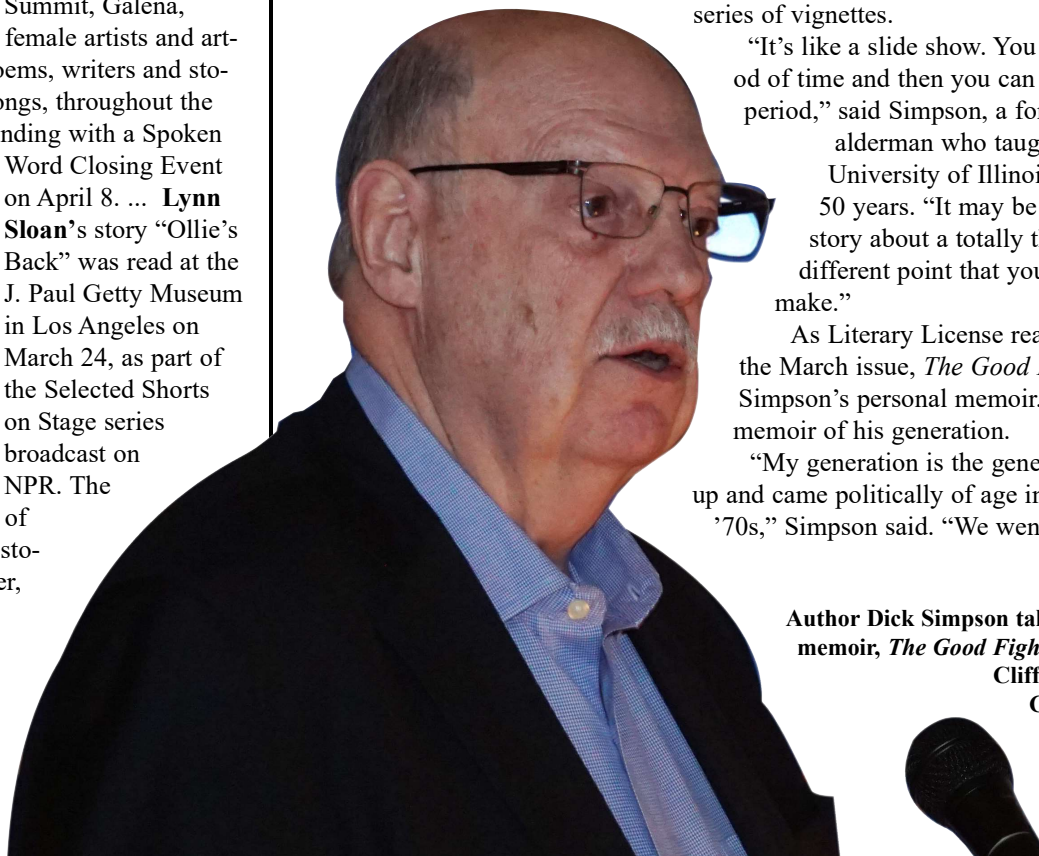
"It's like a slide show. You can see one period of time and then you can jump to the next period," said Simpson, a former Chicago alderman who taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago for 50 years. "It may be a totally different story about a totally thing and a totally different point that you are trying to make."

As Literary License readers know from the March issue, *The Good Fight* is not just Simpson's personal memoir. It's also the memoir of his generation.

"My generation is the generation that grew up and came politically of age in the '60s and '70s," Simpson said. "We went to college in the

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Author Dick Simpson talks about his new memoir, *The Good Fight*, March 13 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.



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story in Lynn's recently published collection *This Far Isn't Far Enough* (See March 2018 Literary License), was read



John Wasik

by Nate Corrdry, who starred in *The Circle*, *Ghostbusters* (2016), and many TV shows. ..

John Wasik was invited to talk with Tony Sarabia on the Chicago's WBEZ Morning Shift program March 6 on "Innovation in

Illinois." He was named an Illinois Humanities Road Scholar last year and is touring the state for the state's bicentennial. As part of that tour, he spoke at Lake Forest College (last night) in front of entrepreneurship students. He also will speak at Common Ground Chicago (Chicago Temple) on April 5 and the Warren Township Library about his Tesla book *Lightning Strikes* on April 10. ...

Jim Schwab co-wrote "Building green infrastructure and urban landscapes" for the most recent issue of *unaslyva*, an

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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 and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

■ Memoir Continued from Page 1

'60s or at the very latest the end of the '60s, and so I wanted to tell something about [us] as a group. Not everyone obviously, but a small segment of the '60s generation – what we did and why we did it and how we thought about things."

One vignette, for example, is titled "Hardball Politics." It describes the unsuccessful campaign to elect Eugene McCarthy president.

"It wasn't only me – thousands of us who joined the McCarthy campaign were young political neophytes," Simpson writes in the memoir. "That's why we were nicknamed 'the children's crusade.' ... It was there that I learned to weather losses, to be both a politician and a political scientist. I learned that [Finley Peter Dunne's] Mr. Dooley was right. 'Politics ain't bean-bag' – it is much more serious and has much greater consequences than any game."

As for the personal part of his memoir, "First of all you have to decide you are going to tell the truth and you are going to have to tell some things that haven't been public before," Simpson said. "Things like divorces and when you haven't been as good a partner as you should have been. ... If you don't tell those things, it is not really a memoir.

There is nothing to be learned from sugar-coating one's life and experiences. There are deep lessons in the failures as well as the successes."

In *The Good Fight* (See November

2017 Literary License), Simpson, who also ran unsuccessfully for Congress, writes, "Campaigning is a huge stress on marriages. The higher the office, the more there is at stake. That is why it is crucial for both husband and wife to be completely committed to the endeavor, though neither one can fully anticipate what they are about to encounter."

When Simpson started writing the vignettes, he realized that he had learned lessons from the experiences that he was describing, lessons that were worth passing along.

“If you don't tell those things, it is not really a memoir. There is nothing to be learned from sugar-coating one's life and experiences.”



"[But] you can't write a diatribe," he said. "... That doesn't work in a memoir, and it doesn't work in most things. ... It doesn't mean you have to take the lesson; it is what I learned from the experience. That began to shape a different type of book."

For example, when he wrote about spending time in Africa, it was no longer just a story about his time in Africa.

Instead, it became an explanation of what he learned from his stay in Africa.

"You learn from different perspectives," Simpson said. "What I try to do – whatever different perspective I

had – is I try to share what I learned from that experience and maybe help you think about your life and what you learned.

"I wanted people to understand what we went through and hope that might be of some guide in the times ahead where we probably need some guides to get our way through."

In his book, Simpson writes democracy is a work in progress.

"We ask you to do your part," he writes. "Keep the faith. Fight the good fight."

'Now, YA is big business'

Marlene Targ Brill is the author of 72 books for readers of all ages. She is one of three authors participating in SMA's April 10 panel discussion about writing for young adult reader. She will be joined by authors James Kennedy and James Swanson. Here's what she tells Literary License:

Literary License: How are the challenges different in writing for young adults?

MTB: I find challenges and benefits of writing for every age reader. With young adults, I can say what I mean without worrying about grade level and sentence length. I just need to be clear and honest about what I write.

Since my young adult books are nonfiction, I need to confirm whatever facts I use in the book. I try to find at least three sources for each fact because we all know that some research changes over time, some sources fib, and/or people view them differently.

I still need to self-censor some of what I write depending upon the topic with this age group. And I need to explain information, giving more background than I would for adult readers. I never assume what the reader knows, as readers come from different backgrounds with different educational experiences. I want to be clear and truthful.

LL: What's your advice to someone trying to publish their first Young Adult book?

MTB: The best advice for writing for any age readers is to read, read, read. Know the competition, not to copy but to get a feel for what young adult readers might be interested in. With nonfiction, I want to know what's already been written about the topic and how I can add to the conversation and find a new angle that's interesting to teens.

One thing I did when I started was to look at nonfiction series a publisher had and suggest another title for that series. It's not going to get you famous or rich, but at least you have a product to sell and some creds for the book you really want to write.

April 10, 2018, program

Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor

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

Free - donations accepted

LL: Has there been an evolution in books for young adults over the years?

MTB: Wow, there sure has been. When I started writing I heard about the death of young adult literature. I'd hear scary warnings, like publishers won't buy young adult, especially novels. Teens won't read

either. Then realistic fiction took hold. I remember trying to read Newbery winners when I started writing. When I hit the 70s, the age of realism was strong. Every winning books had death, divorce or some other

serious problem for the main character and family members. Very depressing, but readers could see themselves in these stories. Then sci-fi and fantasy hit, and YA books took off. Harry Potter sealed the deal for intermediate and high school kids reading. Now, YA is big business. Every successful adult author is asked to write their book for YA. Many adults read YA because the writing is clearer and without the clutter that some adult authors think they need to insert. I know I prefer kid's books for learning about a topic.

LL: Which Midwestern Young Adult authors do you most admire?

MTB: Oh, there are too many to name, and I don't want to get into trouble. But I know when I pick up a book by **Ann Bausum** or **Andrea Warren**, it is going to be well-researched and a good read.

LL: What's your next book?

MTB: I have two books coming out in June. One is historical fiction for middle-graders called *Picture Girl*, and the other is a middle-grade/YA biography of Dolores Huerta titled *Dolores Huerta Stand Strong: The Woman Who Demanded Justice*.

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Landscape
Marlene
Targ Brill



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international journal of forestry and forest industries. Also, he will speak on three different panels at the American Planning Association's 2018 National Planning



Michael Craft

Conference in New Orleans (April 20-23). The sessions will deal with community resilience, coastal hazards, and planning for wildfires. As its new chair-elect, Jim will also be busy helping organize the business meeting and reception for APA's Hazard

Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Planning Division. ... **Michael Craft** has donated his papers and professional archive to the University of California Riverside Library's Special Collections and University Archives department. Craft has published 14 novels, including the Mark Manning mystery series, three of which were honored as finalists for Lambda Literary Awards. The university's head librarian, Steven Mandeville-Gamble, recently discovered Craft's works, enjoyed them all, and donated a complete set to the library. The director of special collections then approached Craft about the possibility of housing his archives. Craft recalls, "It was an easy answer: an instant yes. I'm truly honored." ... **Stan "Tex" Banash** reports his Letter to the Editor in the January-February 2018 issue of *Illinois Heritage* clarified the major difference between Chicago's two oldest houses. It was in response to a September-October 2017 article that appeared in the *Illinois State Historical Society's* publication of the same name. ... "Best in Snow" by **April Pulley Sayre** was the selection for the Jan. 11 Nature Storytime at the Pringle Nature Center in Bristol, Wisconsin. ... The Jan. 18 *New York Times* cited the work of **Kathryn Edin** and **H. Luke Shaefer**. ... *Action Jackson*, co-authored by **Jan Greenberg**, was listed as one of "10 inspiring children's books for budding little artists." by mymodernmet.com.
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Literary Latest

Linda Nemeč Foster writes to say her new book with co-author Anne-Marie Oomen, *The Lake Michigan Mermaid: A Tale in Poems* (Wayne State University Press, March, 2018), was “a project 10



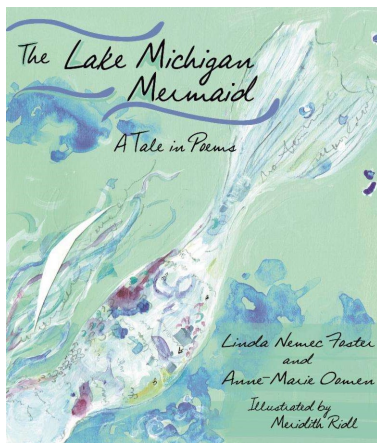
Linda Nemeč Foster

years in the making, and [we] are thrilled that the book has garnered so much interest.”

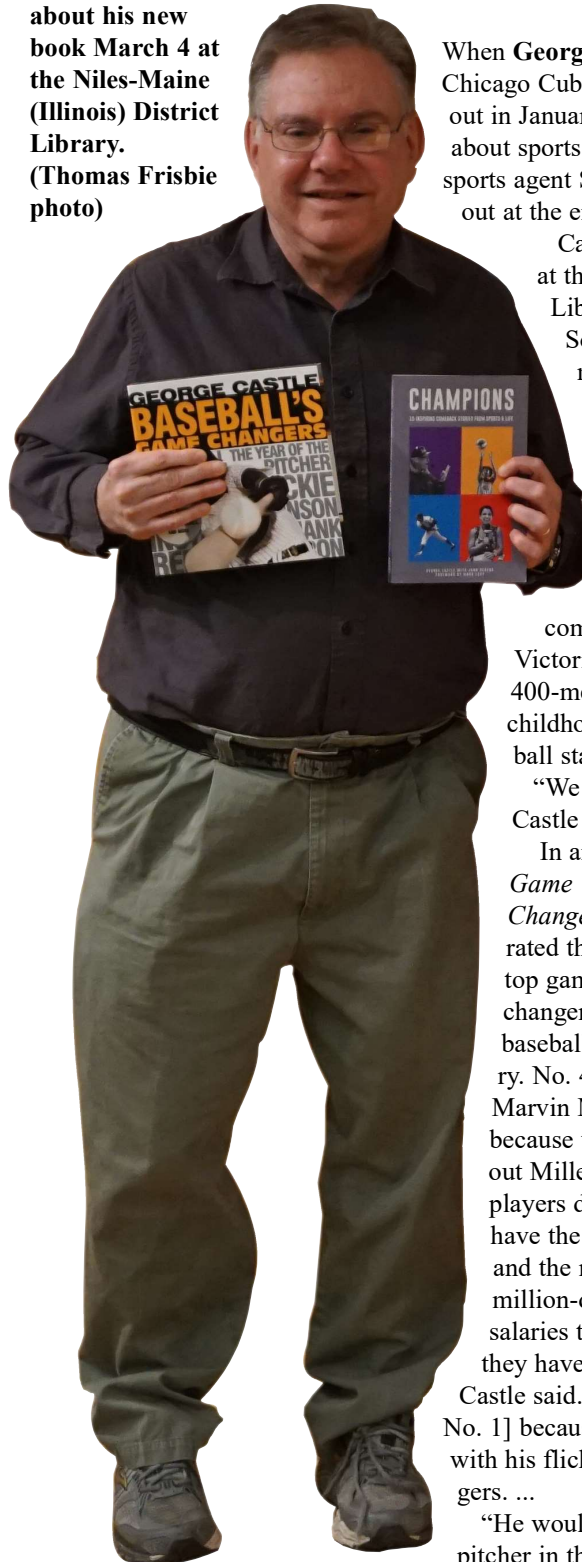
From the publisher: *The Lake Michigan Mermaid* is a new tale that feels familiar. The breeze off the lake, the sand underfoot, the supreme sadness of being young

and not in control – these sensations come rushing back page by page, bringing to life an ancient myth of coming of age in a troubled world. ... [T]he Lake Michigan mermaid serves as a voice of reason for when we’re caught in the riptide.

This is a gripping tale in poems of a young girl’s desperate search for guidance in a world turned upside down by family and economic upheaval. Raised in a ramshackle cottage on the shores of Lake Michigan, Lykretia takes refuge in her beloved lake in the face of her grandmother’s illness and her mother’s eager attempts to sell their home following her recent divorce.



George Castle talks about his new book March 4 at the Niles-Maine (Illinois) District Library. (Thomas Frisbie photo)



COMEBACK STORIES

When George Castle’s book with former Chicago Cubs pitcher Ferguson Jenkins comes out in January, it will be Castle’s 17th book about sports. Another book, co-authored with sports agent Steve Zucker is scheduled to come out at the end of August.

Castle talked about his books March 4 at the Niles-Maine (Illinois) District Library for a special Cubs vs. White Sox baseball exhibit, including his most recent title, written with John Schenk, *Champions: 15 Inspiring Comeback Stories from Sports & Life* (Signature Strength, Feb, 22, 2018).

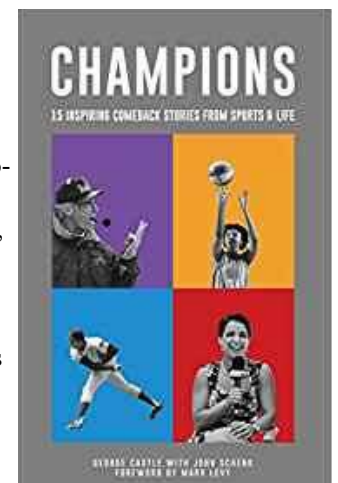
Champions tells the stories of top competitors who overcame huge challenges in life. After coming out of a coma, teenager Victoria Arlen set a world record in the 400-meter freestyle. Bob Love overcame childhood poverty to become a pro basketball star.

“We have some wonderful stories,” Castle said.

In another recent book, *Baseball’s Game Changers*, “I rated the 50 top game changers in baseball history. No. 4 is Marvin Miller, because without Miller, the players don’t have the rights and the multi-million-dollar salaries that they have,”

Castle said. “I gave Babe Ruth the edge [for No. 1] because he changed the style of the game, with his flick of the bat or the snap of his fingers. ...

“He would have been the greatest left-handed pitcher in the history of baseball.”



'It is our duty to illuminate life'

This is Part 25 of the history of the Society.

'Confessions of a Biographer' was the topic when Harry Barnard – author of *Eagle Forgotten*, a biography of Illinois Gov. John Peter Altgeld – spoke at an SMA luncheon in September 1955.

"Too often a biography is a lengthened obituary," Barnard said, according to the Tribune. "Most of it is pretty dull. It ought to be more than mere obituary or a sketch

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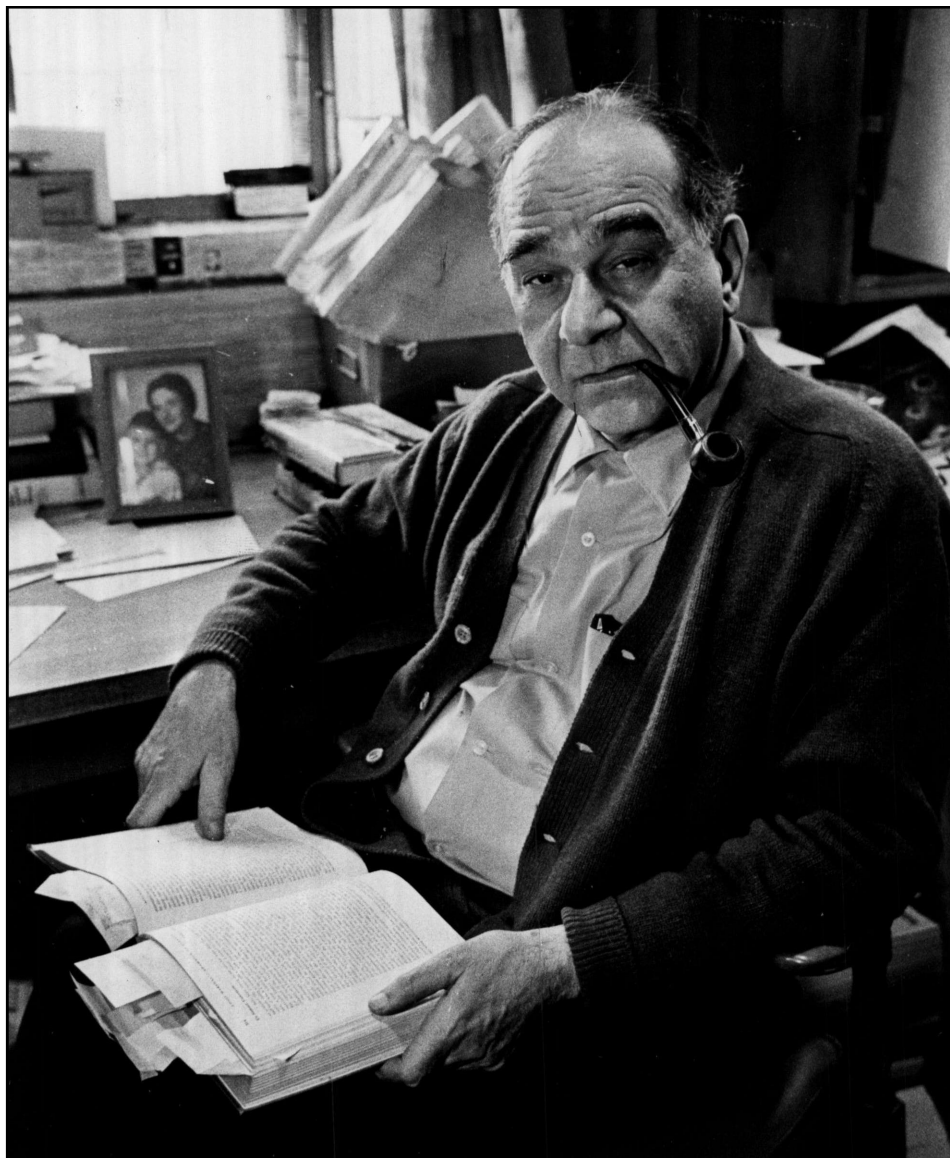


from *Who's Who in America*. ... it is not enough merely to record the facts in a man's or a woman's life; the book should be delightful to read, either because it is well written or because the character portrayed has had a highly interesting career. And it ought to have plenty of psychological interpretation." He continued: "It is our duty to illuminate life. ... Our first responsibility is to explain the meaning of life. We owe it to society to help readers learn something about their lives by gaining an insight in to the lives of others."

Movie star Jerry Lewis spoke at an SMA luncheon on November 16, 1956, in the Old Heidelberg restaurant, but it wasn't the sort of zany comic performance some had expected. "When he arrived, barricaded with five stalwarts—one of them a policeman in plain clothes, he confided—there was a smile in his eyes but no grin on his face," Butcher reported in the Tribune. Lewis was there to talk about the movie he was working on, *The Delicate Delinquent*, but he focused on the serious subject of juvenile delinquency, calling it a problem that was rooted in loneliness. "I know what I am talking



Jerry Lewis



Author Harry Barnard spoke at a Society of Midland Authors luncheon in 1955.

about, because, although I had the most wonderful father and mother in the world, they were in show business and I hardly ever was with them," Lewis said. "I was a lonely little boy and could have turned into a delinquent with no effort at all. I still hate to be alone. I wouldn't eat if I had to go into a restaurant alone."

Someone in the SMA's crowd expressed surprise that Lewis was writing as well as acting and producing movies. Lewis replied, "I have written for 10 years, right along with my writers. A successful

“Too often, a biography is a lengthened obituary.”

comedian has to be a writer, too, or he won't last long in the business."

After talking earnestly for an hour, Lewis left the Midland Authors with a quip: "They have a policeman going around with me all the time, so I won't turn juvenile delinquent." When *The Delicate Delinquent* came out in June 1957, the SMA held a private screening for its members.



A spectacular view of Chicago's Grant Park frames Mahmoud Saeed at the SMA's March 13 program.

Good night for *The Good Fight*

Members of the Society of Midland Authors and the public gathered March 13 to hear SMA Board Member **Dick Simpson** talk about

his new book, *The Good Fight: Life Lessons from a Chicago Progressive* at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. The April 10 program, also at the Cliff

Dwellers will feature **James Swanson**, **Marlene Targ Brill** and **James Kennedy** in a program about writing Young Adult books.



FAR LEFT: Board Member **Dick Simpson**, **John Yackley** and **Sel Yackley**. **LEFT:** **Margaret England** and **Lynn Sloan**.

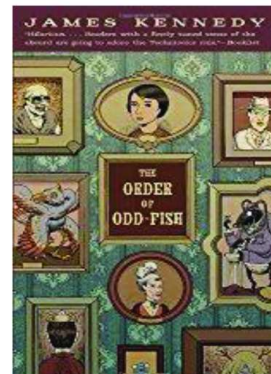
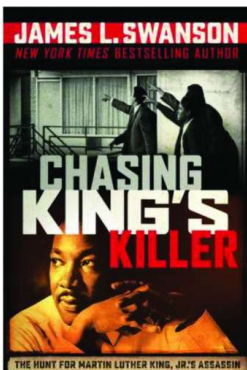
RIGHT: **Thomas J. Gradel**, Former SMA President **Jim Schwab** and Board Member **Allen Salter**. **FAR RIGHT:** Former SMA President **Richard Frisbie** and **Greg Borzo**.




~ ~ ~ ~ ~
You're invited *~ ~ ~*


What: Society of Midland Authors' monthly meeting
When: Tuesday, April 10, 2018. Reception at 6 pm; panel discussion at 7 pm
Where: Cliff Dwellers, 200 S. Michigan, 22nd floor penthouse ([terrace with a view!](#))


What it takes to be a young-adult author



Free, open to the public (cash bar, free appetizers)

 James Swanson is the Edgar Award-winning author of the New York Times best-sellers *Manhunt* and *Bloody Crimes*. His latest book, the bestselling young adult *Chasing King's Killer*, tells the gripping story of the hunt for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassin.

 Marlene Targ Brill is an award-winning author of books for preschoolers through adults. She's written more than 72 books, mostly nonfiction, covering everything from the Underground Railroad to Johnstown Flood and a series on the decades of the 20th century.

 James Kennedy wrote *The Order of Odd-Fish*, a 2008 Smithsonian Notable Book. *Time Out* called it "a work of mischievous imagination." James founded the 90-Second Newbery Film Festival, in which kids make movies that tell the story of a Newbery-winning book.

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For more information, contact Greg Borzo: (312) 636-8968; [greg@gregborzo.com](mailto:greg@gregborzo.com)

# *Society of Midland Authors*

## *Early Dinner Registration Form*

The Society of Midland Authors annual awards banquet will be held May 8 at the Cliff Dwellers Club, 22nd floor, 200 S. Michigan, Chicago.

The reception with a cash bar will start at 6 p.m. Dinner will begin at 7 p.m.

This year's emcee will be **Mary Wisniewski**.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of medallions of pork tenderloin dinners at \$75 each. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

Number of vegetarian (wild mushroom ravioli) dinners at \$75 each. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

Number of grilled filet of salmon dinners at \$75 each. \_\_\_\_\_

Donation. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

Total . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip above form and mail to: Dinner Reservation, Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610  
 You may also download a similar form at our website, [www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com) or pay via PayPal.

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