

Biblio File

A bronze statue of longtime Society member **Gwendolyn Brooks** and a memorial were installed June 7 at Chicago's North Kenwood Park. ... **Scott Turow's** latest novel, *Testimony*, has been



Gwendolyn Brooks statue

nominated for the 2018 Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction, which is given by the American Bar Association and the University of Alabama Law School. ... **David L. Harrison's** latest book, *Crawly School for Bugs*, is going off

to Washington, D.C., in September to represent Missouri at the National Book Fair. His book was nominated by the Missouri Center for the Book. ... In June, **Jonathan Eig's** biography of Muhammad Ali won the Times of London's Biography of the Year award and the

Turn to Page 2



Patricia Skalka sells books at the Society's tent at the 2018 Printers Row Lit Fest in June. For more coverage of the event, see Page 13.

Midwestern authors honored as lights in dark, scary times

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

It's a "strange and important time to be a writer because we have such a need for truth-telling right now," author **Mary Wisniewski** said at the Society of Midland Authors' May 8 book awards banquet.

"All good writers are truth-tellers, whether they are writing nonfiction, biography, fiction, poetry or children's fiction, because we are all trying to get to the heart of the human experience," said Wisniewski, a 2017 SMA book award winner who emceed this year's event at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. "We are all making this tremendous effort to do it. ... In dark and scary times, some bright lights always come out. I think we are in a Midwest renaissance for literature. There are so many wonderful books coming out now it is reminiscent of the exciting times we had at the beginning of the last century."

As the awards began with the Adult Fiction category, judge **Anne Calcagno** said of the winner, *Once, in Lourdes* (Spiegel & Grau), "The judges found [**Sharon**] **Solwitz's** characters richly moving. ... We much admired her muscular style. ... Lourdes is a small Michigan town whose teenagers are coming of age during the Vietnam era. In Solwitz's hands, their lives take on an increasingly Shakespearean heft, larger than the sum

of any one of their travails. We heartily commend Solwitz for the ambitious sweep of this powerful novel."

Taking the podium, Solwitz said, "Writing is a hard thing. When I was a child, I loved to read almost as much as I liked to play with my friends. ... It seems a great honor to be able to write something that people read, because I know what the pleasure of reading is and what it gives you."



Sharon Solwitz

Turn to Page 2



Society of Midland Authors President Thomas Frisbie with a poster showing the 2018 winners at the May 8 banquet. Vice President Marlene Targ Brill was this year's awards chair. (Richard Frisbie photo)

Biblio File

Continued from Page 1

Sports Book of the Year, which is selected by a public vote. Now, he is researching a biography about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. ... In May, **Greg Borzo, Richard Lindberg, Arthur Melville Pearson and Graham A. Peck** won Illinois State Historical Society awards for their books. Arthur won for *Force of Nature: George Fell, Founder of the Natural Areas Movement*; Richard won for *Northeastern Illinois University: The First 150 Years*, Greg won for *Chicago's Fabulous Fountains* and Graham won the Russell P. Strange Memorial Book Award for *Making an Antislavery Nation: Lincoln, Douglas, and the Battle Over Freedom*. Greg writes to say, "The setting was very elegant and historic: the chamber of the House of Representatives at the Old Capitol in Springfield. At Rich Lindberg's suggestion, I celebrated by going across the street right after the ceremony to buy one book at the Prairie Archives (used) Bookstore. But I was unable to control myself and went home with six books!" Also, on April 18, the Independent Publisher Book Awards announced

Turn to Page 3

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Anne
Calcagno



Lesley Nneka
Arimah



Curtis
Dawkins



Ben
Greenman



Bonnie
Rochman

Awards

Continued from Page 1

The honoree titles in Adult Fiction were: the story collection *What It Means When a Man Falls From the Sky* (Riverhead Books) by **Lesley Nneka Arimah**; the story collection *The Graybar Hotel* (Scribner) by **Curtis Dawkins**, and *Don Quixotic* (Antibookclub) by **Ben Greenman**.

Explaining she was speaking collectively for all the judges, Calcagno said Arimah's "stories have an admirable global reach, set in Biafra, Lagos, Atlanta and multiple futuristic terrains. This debut collection's external conflicts and inner demons were impressive and lyrical with show-stopper sentences."

Greenman, Calcagno said, "has a take on [Donald] Trump with deadpan humor and psychological ventriloquism."

As for the third honoree, Calcagno said, "The stories in the eponymous *Graybar Hotel* are a portrait of life in prison, written by an inmate who has received a life sentence without parole. He writes with dark humor, deep irony, brutal starkness and evocative detail."

The other judges for Adult Fiction were **Eckhard Gerdes** and **Amy Hassinger**.

In the Adult Nonfiction category, the winner was **Doug Stanton** for *The Odyssey of Echo Company: The 1968 Tet Offensive and the Epic Battle to Survive the Vietnam War* (Scribner).

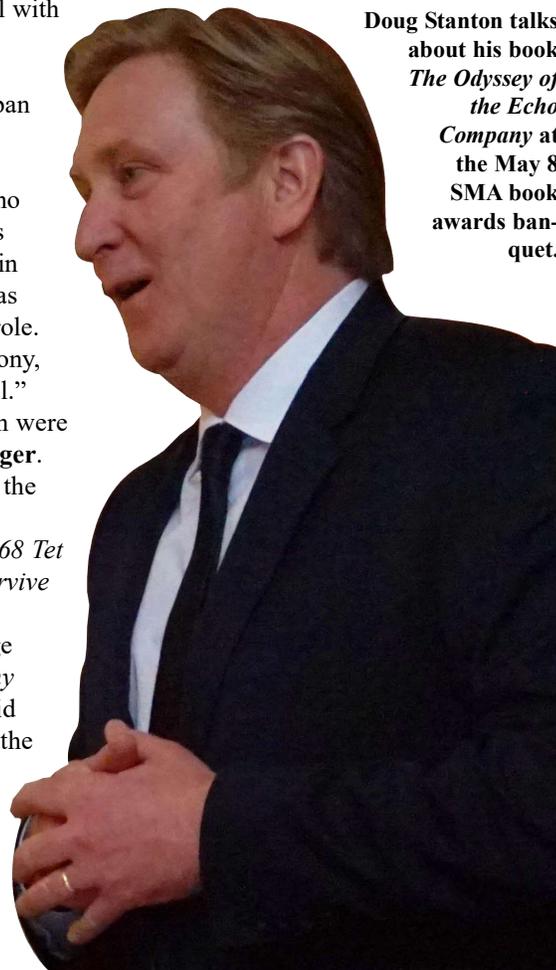
Judge **Jim Schwab** read a passage from *The Odyssey of Echo Company* before introducing Stanton, who said his intention was to take readers to the experience of the war, "which is a chilling one and prescient one in American culture right now. I'm glad to see Vietnam popping up more often in our vernacular right now. Therefore, I want to thank you for acknowledging this story,

which percolates in the substrate of American consciousness right now, in the way that World War II did in 1990 when that generation of veterans was reaching 70, which is how old now many Vietnam veterans are."

Stanton also noted that **Hamlin Garland**, one of the founders of Society of Midland Authors, "was one of my first favorite authors and his novel *A Son of the Middle Border*, which seemed to divine for me the very quandary we have

Turn to Page 3

Doug Stanton talks about his book *The Odyssey of the Echo Company* at the May 8 SMA book awards banquet.





Lindsey Fitzharris



Donna Seaman



Rich Cohen



Jonathan Eig



David A. Nichols

Biblio File

Continued from Page 2

Greg's *Fabulous Fountains* won a Silver Award for Nonfiction Books in the Great Lakes Region. ... Kirkus Reviews listed *The Complete Diaries of Young Arthur Conan Doyle* by **John Raffensperger** and Richard Krevolin among the "Indie Best Books of the Month [for] April." ... In the May 13 New York Times Book Review, author Samantha Irby said the SMA award-winning *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by **Erika L. Sánchez** "would be such a great movie." ... **Margery Frisbie** wrote a letter headlined "Intellectually fierce, gracious nun was early leader in women's rights," for the June 7 Chicago Sun-Times. ... The first chapter of **Frank Joseph's** novel *To Do Justice*, which won the First Chapter award from the Chicago Writers Association, has been published in Write City Magazine, the CWA publication. *To Do Justice*, which is the final installment of his "Chicago Trilogy," also won the Scintillating Starts contest and placed as a semi-finalist for the Orison Books Novel Prize. The CWA prize came with a week at a writer's retreat near West Bend, Wisconsin. ... **Dan Dinello** just published his latest chapter, "The Wretched of Westworld: Scientific Totalitarianism and Revolutionary Violence," in the new book *Westworld and Philosophy* (Blackwell). ... **David Spadafora**, who gave the keynote speech at the Society's 2006 book awards, is retiring as president and librarian from Chicago's Newberry Library. ... A reading from the anthology *Nasty Women Poets: An Unapologetic Anthology of Subversive Verse*, co-edited by **Grace Bauer** (with former Louisiana Poet Laureate Julie Kane), was featured as a special event at the Tennessee Williams' Festival in New Orleans in March. While in New Orleans, Grace was also a visiting writer for two days at Xavier University, reading from her most recent collection of poems, *Mean/Time*



Grace Bauer

Awards Continued from Page 2

in the Middle West of where do we live and what do we do with that sense of dislocation we may have as artists."

The Adult Nonfiction honorees were **Bonnie Rochman** for *The Gene Machine: How Genetic Technologies Are Changing the Way We Have Kids – and the Kids We Have* (Scientific American/Farrar, Straus & Giroux); **Lindsey Fitzharris**, *The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine* (Scientific American/Farrar, Straus & Giroux), and **Rich Cohen** for *The Chicago Cubs: Story of a Curse* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

Schwab said *The Butchering Art* "renders some bone-chilling descriptions of what surgery was like 200 years ago. ... It's thoroughly compelling."

The Gene Machine "takes us into the future ... with intricate and sometimes heart-wrenching moral and ethical considerations involved in genetic science," he said.

As for *The Chicago Cubs*, "Rich Cohen takes us through a whole century to get to [the story of the Cubs 2016 World Series victory], and it is also a fantastic book," Schwab said.

The other judges for Adult Nonfiction were **Mervin Block** and **Joyce Burns Zeiss**.

Jonathan Eig was the winner of the newly named Bernard J. Brommel Biography & Memoir award for *Ali: A Life* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).

Judge **Robert Remer** said Eig "took on an incredible challenge ... and, to use a sports metaphor, he knocked it out of the park.

"Jonathan Eig did incredible research and lots and lots of interviews, and he came up with this marvelously huge book you will want to read entirely to the end."

Accepting the award for Eig, **Robert K.**

Elder read a statement from the author that said in part, "I have always felt a special love for the Society because of my former professor and friend **Leon Forrest**, who was the [Society's] president and because the organization carries on in this age of inattentiveness with the same passion and intelligence that it did in Leon's day."

Of **David A. Nichols' Ike and McCarthy: Dwight Eisenhower's Secret Campaign Against Joseph McCarthy** (Simon & Schuster), an honoree book, Remer said, "What's interesting is the behind-the-scenes stuff between Ike and McCarthy and how he tried hard to keep McCarthy at bay."

In a letter Remer read to the audience, Nichols wrote about the award, "Your recognition will hopefully encourage more Americans to learn about this remarkable president."

Also an honoree in the category was **Donna Seaman's Identity Unknown: Rediscovering Seven American Women Artists** (Bloomsbury).

Remer said, "Donna Seaman is one of the best writers I have known. If you read her work, every single word has a purpose."

Accepting the award, Seaman said, "People were very puzzled about why I wrote about artists because they think I am a literary person. ... I grew up with an artist. The first woman artist in my life was my mother ... and I actually went to art school. These are stories I really wanted to tell."

Of *Oliver P. Morton and the Politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Kent State University Press) by **A. James Fuller**, Remer said, "What makes it interesting is it is a story about a governor you might never have heard of who was the

Turn to Page 4

Turn to Page 4

Biblio File

Continued from Page 3

(University of New Mexico Press). She also read from *Mean/Time* at Frenchy's Gallery as part of the Maple Leaf reading series. Earlier in March, Grace co-hosted an off-site reading for the *Nasty Women Poets* anthology in Tampa, Florida, during the national AWP Conference. An interview with Grace and her co-editor is featured on the Vida: Women in Literary Arts website. Also, Grace was recently awarded an Individual Artist's Fellowship from the Nebraska Arts Council. ... **John Wasik** was a guest on "The Download" with Justin Kaufmann which aired in May on Chicago's WGN Radio. John talked about Innovation in Illinois as part of his Road Scholar Bicentennial tour. ... The Midwest Independent Publishing



Jon K. Lauck

Association awarded its top book prize for the writing of history to **Jon K. Lauck** for *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920-1965*, his recent book

on the history of the American Midwest. ... **Merv Block** was inducted on May 17 into the Medill Hall of Achievement. The hall honors "Medill alumni whose distinctive careers have had positive impacts on their fields." ... **Linda Neme Foster**, one of the judges for the 2018 SMA Poetry Award, says her new book co-authored with **Anne-Marie Oomen**, *The Lake Michigan Mermaid*, debuted in Tampa in early March at the AWP Conference and sold out at the WSU Press booth. In other news, Linda recently received two Pushcart Prize nominations for her poetry from the editors of *The MacGuffin* and *Streetlight Magazine*. New poems have been published or are forthcoming in the *Paterson Literary Review*, *i-70 Review*, *KYSO Flash*, *Earth's Daughters*, and *New Millennium Writings* (where her sequence, "The Artist's Notebook," was a finalist for the journal's annual award). ... **Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi's** *Ugly Prey: An Innocent*

Turn to Page 5



A. James Fuller



Aaron Reynolds



Helen Frost



Erika Sánchez



Mary Losure

Awards

Continued from Page 3

governor of Indiana, yet he had to deal with the kind of [Civil War-era] issues and local politics that were facing the nation. ... It is a fascinating story."

The other judges for Biography & Memoir were **Taylor Pensoneau** and **James Plath**.

Introducing the Children's Fiction winner and honorees were judges **Brian E. Wilson** and **Shari Frost**, who each introduced two of the award-winners.

"The illustrations in this book are amazing," Wilson said of **Aaron Reynolds's** *Creepy Pair of Underwear* (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers). "Aaron's words, they zip, they zing, they pop, they're exciting, they're vivid and vibrant. ... This book was an example of great picture book writing."

Natasha Tarpley's *The Harlem Charade* (Scholastic) "is an exciting page-turner," Wilson said.

Tarpley said, "One of the things that I like to do in my work, and it drives my work, is writing books where kids also get to see themselves and experience things in new ways. I

am particularly interested in writing about kids of color because some of the narratives that we have around kids of color, particularly African-American kids, are filled with so much heaviness and all kinds of things that should not be part of childhood. In my books I try to bring a spirit of joy, a spirit of curiosity and a spirit of adventure."

Shari Frost said **Helen Frost's** *When My Sister Started Kissing* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) "is a cream of the crop. ... It's because Helen is a poet that she could

take this compelling story and tell it in verse."

Accepting the award, Frost said, "I think it is really important ... to give a model for how you can go into that world of kissing and relationships ... so that you are bringing your whole self to it and people are respecting each other."

Erika L. Sánchez's Children's Fiction winner *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* "addresses so much more than sibling relationships, although sibling relationships are at the core," Shari Frost



Natasha Tarpley with judges Brian E. Wilson and Shari Frost on May 8 at the 2018 book awards.

said. "It also addresses grief, and mental health and, of course, a culture. ... Erika is such a refreshing, diverse voice."

The other Children's Fiction judge was **Debbie Chocolate**.

In the Children's Nonfiction category, the winner was **Mary Losure** for *Isaac the Alchemist: Secrets of Isaac Newton, Reveal'd* (Candlewick Press).

Judge **Patrick McBriarty** said, "She does a wonderful job of mixing in mystery, dark arts, history early science and

Turn to Page 5



Patrick
McBriarty



Jan
Greenberg



Sandra
Jordan



Marcus
Wicker



Jim
Daniels

Biblio File

Continued from Page 4

Woman and the Death Sentence That Scandalized Jazz Age Chicago and **Richard Lindberg's Heartland Serial Killers: Belle Gunness, Johann Hoch, and Murder for Profit in Gaslight Era Chicago were listed among the "Top Ten Chicago True Crime Stories" in the June Illinois Library Association Reporter. ... On May 30, Western Michigan University's WLUK-FM said *The Lake Michigan Mermaid* by **Linda Nemeć Foster** and **Anne-Marie Oomen** "weaves a haunting tale." ... **Barbara Shoup** will be among the faculty at the two-day writers' "Super Mini-conference" geared to fiction and nonfiction authors at all experience levels July 27-28 at Ball State University. ... **Christopher Z. Mooney** spoke June 17 on Chicago's WGN-AM about the upcoming Illinois gubernatorial election. ... **James Klise's The Art of Secrets**, **Claire Hartfield's A Few Red Drops** and **Erika L. Sánchez's I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter** were included in June on Book Riot on Kell Jensen's list of "YA Books Set in Chicago." ... 2011 SMA Adult Nonfiction winner **Deborah Blum's** new book is *The Poison Squad: One Chemist's Single-Minded Crusade for Food Safety at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Penguin Press, Sept. 25). ... **Blue Balliett** tweeted to say, "When asked what age my books are written for, I always explain they are for those of all ages who love to question, think critically and look – at the world around them, at art, at coincidence, ghosts, the layered meanings of family and home." ... Author **Hendrik Meijer** (See Literary Life, Page 8) emailed to Literary License "a further Vandenberg connection to Chicago writers. Hazel Vandenberg, as Hazel Whitaker before her marriage, worked for the Tribune for a couple of years before World War I. She was an assistant to Antoinette Donnelly, who wrote what I think was something of a pioneering column with advice to the lovelorn. Hazel would help with the correspondence and I believe occasionally filled in for Antoinette." ... On June 26, **Donna Seaman** wrote to say, "I'm just back from the American Library Association's summer conference in New**

Turn to Page 6

Awards

Continued from Page 4

an understanding of a loner and explorer of a scientist that Isaac is and gives you a real intimacy and closeness that is woven throughout."

Accepting the award, Losure said, "I am thrilled to see this recognition for the field of children's nonfiction. I think it is a growing and exciting field where people are doing things they never did before. If we can get kids reading true stories about real people, that is something we can and should do. Adults read nonfiction for pleasure all the time."

The honorees were **Michael Bornstein** and **Debbie Bornstein Holinstat** for *Survivors Club: The True Story of a Very Young Prisoner of Auschwitz* (Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers) and **Jan Greenberg** and **Sandra Jordan** for *Meet Cindy Sherman: Artist, Photographer, Chameleon* (Roaring Brook Press).

McBriarty said *Survivors Club* is "a well-researched story that begins with the Nazi invasion of Zarki, Poland. [It has a] fascinating perspective to share with kids of what that might have been like."

Of *Meet Cindy Sherman*, she said, "It's an interesting book in that visually it is very stunning."

The other judges for Children's Nonfiction were **Marlene Targ Brill** and **Lisa Holton**.

In the Poetry category, the winner was **Marcus Wicker** for *Silencer* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), and the honorees were **Jim Daniels** for *Rowing*



Michael
Bornstein



Deborah
Bornstein
Holinstat



Erin
Adair-Hodges



Adam
Morgan

Inland (Wayne State University Press) and **Erin Adair-Hodges** for *Let's All Die Happy* (University of Pittsburgh Press).

Before discussing the winning books, Judge **Linda Nemeć Foster** said, "I want to give a special shout-out to Marlene Brill, the contest co-ordinator who shaped all of us into shape."

Of Wicker, she said, "His collection is powerful, dazzling and wise. In this era of fake news with so many lies, what a truthful book this is."

"*Let's All Die Happy* is noteworthy for its stunning language that introduces us to a voice that is unexpected, surprising and insightful," Foster said. "Her poems navigate the complexities of families and American anxieties."

Rowing Inland, she said, "is an unflinching testament to metro Detroit and its marginalized working class. In this exceptional collection of poems that is so autobiographical and yet ultimately universal, Daniels writes with precision and honesty about the lives and dreams of his family, his neighborhood and his community."

The other judges for Poetry were **Robert Sutherland** and **Bill Yarrow**.

The winner of the 2018 James Friend Memorial Award for Literary and Dramatic Criticism was **Adam Morgan**, editor-in-chief of the *Chicago Review of*

Books, a contributing writer at *Chicago* magazine and a book critic for the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*.



Dr. Bernard J. Brommel speaks in April at Northeastern Illinois University, where he was honored for his accomplishments in the field of family communication. (NEIU photo)

Biography & Memoir Award named for former president

The Society of Midland Authors' board of directors has voted to name the Society's annual award for biography and memoir after former SMA President **Bernard J. Brommel, Ph.D.**

Brommel won the Society's Biography Award in 1979 for *Eugene Debs: Spokesman for Labor and Socialism*. The award was renamed the Biography & Memoir Award in 2014.

Brommel also won the Society's

Lifetime of Literary Achievement Award in 2006 and is a past biography judge for the Society's annual book awards. He is a longtime member of – and contributor to – the Society. He co-authored *Family Communication: Cohesion and Change* in the field of family communication, which was his discipline. Bernard J. Brommel Hall at Northeastern Illinois University, for which he has been the greatest benefactor, is named for him.

Biblio File

Continued from Page 5

Orleans, where I interviewed Sally Field about her first book, a very powerful and literary memoir, *In Pieces* (Grand Central Publishing), and I moderated the "Engaging Book Clubs in Your Community" panel. ... **Carol Ascher's** exhibit "A Chance for Land and Fresh Air: Russian Jewish Immigrants in Sharon and Amenia, 1907-1940" was expanded into a book by the same name published last July; this May, the exhibit won an Award of Merit from the Connecticut Society of History Organizations. ... **Christine Sneed** reviewed Chelsey Johnson's debut novel *Stray City* for the April 11 New York Times Book Review. ... The London Times Review of Books said **Christoph Irmscher's** biography *Max Eastman: A Life* "gives us an opportunity to reconsider the hopes and failures of radical politics in the 20th century, and their possibilities in the 21st." ... The Los Angeles Times Review of Books interviewed **Ben Greenman** about Donald Trump on April 19. ... **Cynthia Clampitt** will speak at 10:10 a.m. on July 31 for the "Flavors of Ag" conference in Joliet, Illinois, and at 10 a.m. on Aug. 4 at an Illinois Bicentennial celebration at the "O" Kitchen and Tap in Orion, Illinois. Her next book, due out this fall, is titled *Pigs, Pork, and Heartland Hogs: From Wild Boar to Baconfest*. ... **John Hall** was received the Illinois State Historical Society's Lifetime Achievement Award on May 5 for his "contributions, over several decades, to the understanding and



Scott Turow (center) with mother Rita and father Dr. David Turow.



Dempsey Travis (from left), incoming president; Richard Frisbie, president; Bob Adelsperger, secretary.

Presumed engaging: Turow illuminates authors' night

Text by Leigh Behrens

Photos by David Banks

The appointed hour had arrived, yet one detail remained. A covey of members from the Society of Midland Authors was bent over a pile of programs last week, forming a last-minute assembly line to insert canary and baby-blue page addendums.

"Someone's got to do it," said Vesle Fenstermaker, not unaware of the peril of proceeding amid a small forest of stemware. The result ensured that the 100 or so members and guests had the complete roster of the evening's annual awards presentation. Excellence in writing in seven categories was to be recognized by the society, founded in 1915 by a band of heartland literary luminaries, including Hamlin Garland and James Whitcomb Riley.

Four winners were absent. But Frederick Blue of Youngstown, Ohio, was there to accept the biography award for his work, "Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics," about the New England antislavery leader. Chicagoan John Conroy,

recipient of the nonfiction award for his chronicle of turbulence in Northern Ireland, "Belfast Diary," dined on chicken breast and baked Alaska with the group. And Violet Olson of Evanston, Ill., stepped up to the podium to thank judges for deeming her "View from a Pighthouse Roof," a recollection of Iowa farm life, the best children's fiction effort.

"This is a wonderful recognition of Midwest writers," observed one society member, mentioning that Larry Heinemann garnered society recognition for "Paco's Story," the fictive result of his tour in Vietnam. "And that was before the National Book Award," which the work won later in 1987, he added.

The highlight for many at this year's convocation last week in the Drake Hotel was the chance to rub elbows with their most famous contemporary; prosecutor-turned-best-selling-author Scott Turow, the night's guest speaker.

How did the Midland Society lure the much-in-demand author of "Presumed Innocent?" "Well, we were reasonably sure he'd come because his mother's on our board [of directors]," said the society's outgoing president, Richard Frisbie. (The chief executive retires were turned over at night's end to real estate captain and au-



Stella Pevsner (left), Marion Markham of Midland Authors Society.

thor Dempsey Travis.)

By virtue of a 1977 book "Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore," a look at contemporary divorce, short stories and poetry, Rita Turow was admitted to the society and has been among its leaders for a decade. "But, boy, did he leave me behind," Rita Turow said of her son's success.

Emptying a bottle of Beck's beer into a glass, Scott Turow, however, acknowledged some lingering maternal influence. "My mother does call to remind me to pay my [Midland Society] dues," he said.

Following the awards, Turow spoke on the author's quest for an

audience. But beforehand, he informally addressed the topic most crucial to the curious: Has megasuccess—the paperback of "Presumed" is No. 1 on the New York Times best-seller list, and a movie is in the works—changed Scott Turow?

Nay, said Turow, who is finishing a follow-up tome. "People would be surprised to know that I still drive the same rusted-out gray Datsun station wagon."

His father, Dr. David Turow, saw one change. "He used to wear polyester and cotton shirts," the elder Turow said. "Now he wears 100 percent cotton."

From the SMA Archives: A Chicago Tribune report on the 1988 Society book awards banquets that included mentions of Stella Pevsner and Scott and Rita Turow, as well as former SMA presidents Richard Frisbie, Jim Bowman and Dempsey Travis.

appreciation of [Illinois] history." ... **Barbara Gregorich** reports she has finished the fifth draft of her first YA novel. ... The new John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation effort to boost inclusive journalism in Chicago is named for the late SMA member **Jack Fuller**. ... **Rebecca Makkai**, a 2016 SMA Adult Fiction finalist, has a new book out: *The Great Believers: A Novel* (Viking, June 19). ... **Cheryl Reed** reported in June she was staying at the Writers Residency in Tbilisi. ... **Dan Gerber** appeared June 9 at a monthly poetry reading at CORE Winery in California. ... The May 24 Bloomington (Illinois) Pantagraph cited **Fred Egloff's** book *Origin of the Checker*

Flag: A Search for Racing's Holy Grail. ... **James Swanson's** book *Manhunt* (See Literary Landscape, Page 7) is being made into an eight-part Hulu TV mini-series. ... The (Niles, Ohio) Morning Mysteries Book Club was scheduled to discuss **Julie Hyzy's** *State of the Onion* on June 7. ... "Another "voracious reader," **Carol Fisher Saller** tweets to ask. "Is there no other kind?" ... On June 21, the Association of State Floodplain Managers gave **Jim Schwab** the Goddard-White Award for national impact to floodplain management. ... **Robert Loerzel** wrote: "Love Song: Once – a story of art and life – makes its Midwest premiere at Aurora's Paramount Theatre" for the May issue of *ChicagoPlays*.

'Teens want something that feels new'

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Young Adult literature will thrive because each new wave of readers wants something that speaks to their generation, a panel of three YA authors said April 10 at the Society of Midland Authors' monthly meeting at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

"People, especially teens, want something that feels new, something that their generation can grab onto and say: 'This is ours,'" panelist **James Kennedy** said. "So the field is always open."

Kennedy, author of the 2008

Literary Landscape

Manhunt. And HarperCollins said, that's a terrible idea. It will never work as a YA book. Which is one important lesson I learned early on: Never believe anything any publisher ever tells you."

Later, Scholastic Press published *Chasing Lincoln's Killer*, and it has sold almost 1.5 million copies.

"Thank God I did not listen to Harper Collins," Swanson said. "... If you want to write books, never accept rejection,

book in half. We got Random House to publish it eventually. ... There is always room for a good story well told."

To tell the story well, though, means writing first and editing later, he said.

"I have come to accept that 90 percent of what I write is garbage. ... For me the writing process is turning off the editor for certain parts and turning on the editor for certain parts. My problem was I was afraid of being a bad writer. Be a bad writer. ... Give yourself permission to be a bad person and a bad writer and don't be a genius all the time. I still maniacally edit myself, and that is why I have only one book."

Brill said she makes an outline for books that are "really long."

"Some things I start, and I am not really sure where I am going till I get there," she said. "If I have trouble with the beginning, I might start in the middle or the end."

Swanson said he usually writes the last page first.

"I know exactly where I want this to go. I know how it must end. ... I'm not one of those guys who gets up and writes eight hours a day. I might write nothing in two weeks. But I have also written 9,000 words in a week. ... I go through spurts."

Swanson said he starts out by imagining how the scenes in a book will look.

"Before I start a book I have 50, 60, 70, scenes on a story board. I need to see it. I see it as pictures. Then I try to write in words what I think those pictures should be."

Kennedy said the young adult field is a "marketing category. It is not a literary category."

Swanson said, "People who are teenagers want to read about teenagers. Rare is the teenager who wants to read about a 90-year-old person. ... They kind of read aspirationally. They want to read two or three years about where they are.

"I think there is kind of a marketing vise that we are in right now. If you are marketing to a 14-year-old kid, you have to have a 16-year-old protagonist.

"Think about all the popular adult thrillers, how short the chapters are. I know people who write those books and they tell me they do it on purpose because people want to get a sense of satisfaction by finishing another chapter."



James Kennedy



Marlene Targ Brill



James Swanson

Smithsonian Notable Book *The Order of Odd-Fish*, was joined on the panel by **Marlene Targ Brill**, the author of more than 72 books for pre-schoolers through adults, and **James Swanson**, author of the New York Times best-selling books *Manhunt* and *Bloody Crimes* and most recently *Chasing King's Killer*.

Brill said she likes writing for young adults, compared with writing for younger readers, "because you don't have to worry about word choice, you don't have to worry about sentence length. You can be who you want to be as an author. ... I only write about things that I am interested in."

Swanson said he got into writing for young adults after his book *Manhunt* made the New York Times best-seller list.

"I wanted to do a YA book because these are the kinds of books that were never around when I was a kid that I wish I could have read," Swanson said. "So I went to the publisher, HarperCollins, and said we want to do a YA book on

“ “If you want to write books, never accept rejection.” ”

never believe what others tell you, never believe that it is a terrible idea”

The major difference between writing YA books and writing for adults is that “you can't assume pre-existing knowledge with a YA book,” Swanson said. “You have to tell them what the Klan was, you have to tell them what the Civil War was, you have to tell them who Jefferson Davis was.

“Kids know when you write down to them. I knew it when I was a kid. ... I'm obsessed with key moments of American history where everything changes overnight.”

Kennedy said *The Order of Odd-Fish* “got rejected by 100 agents. Finally I got an agent, and got a deal from HarperCollins. They wanted to cut the

SMA VP was writer, lyricist, poet, pol

Hendrik Meijer's fascinating and timely new biography, Arthur Vandenberg: The Man in the Middle of the American Century, tells the story of a U.S. senator who, besides being the Society's vice president for Michigan, set an example of statesmanship that is all too rare in today's politics. Here's what Meijer tells *Literary License*.

Literary License: When Fanny Butcher of the *Chicago Tribune* recruited Sen. Arthur Vandenberg to join the Society of Midland Authors, Vandenberg was said to have been "delighted and honored." How much did he view himself as a writer and author, rather than just a politician?

Hendrik Meijer: As a young editor in Grand Rapids, Arthur Vandenberg was a prolific writer of short stories. Several appeared in national magazines. He also

wrote song lyrics in collaboration with his best friend, a physician, and published a short poem in *Collier's* magazine, then one of the great mass-circulation periodicals.

The stories were a blend of O. Henry and Horatio Alger. Young man on the rise. They drew on his passion for politics and his practical experience as a reporter. He wished to be taken seriously as an author, and establish himself as a political thinker as well as future politician.

Literary License: In your biography, you write that Vandenberg thought Gertrude Atherton's fictionalized life of Hamilton was Vandenberg's idea of the great American novel. How much of a role did reading, especially fiction, play in his life?

Literary Life with Hendrik Meijer



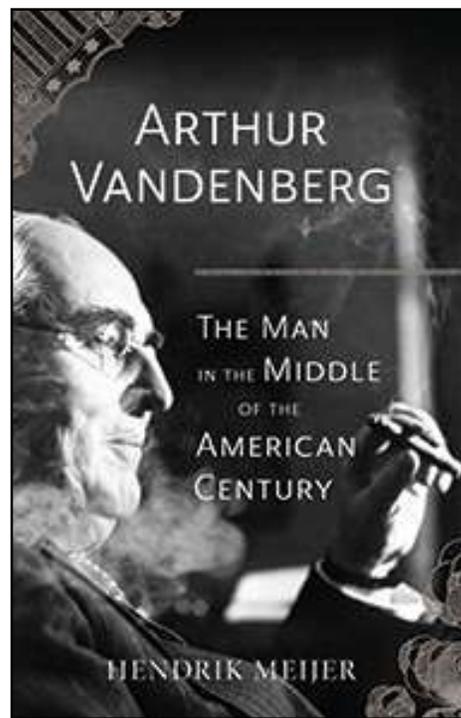
Hendrik Meijer: He read fiction all his life, but it would be hard to say how influential that was. He was certainly moved when his latter-day friend Sinclair Lewis published *It Can't Happen Here*. That 1935 novel mentions Vandenberg on the very first page as an unsuccessful presidential candidate in 1936, and then imagines a populist president becoming a fascist dictator.

Literary License: Because of the new Broadway play, *Alexander Hamilton* has become a better known historical figure. How widely are Vandenberg's 1921 book *Greatest American: Alexander Hamilton* and 1923 book *If Hamilton Were Here Today; American Fundamentals Applied to Modern Problems* remembered today?

Hendrik Meijer: Vandenberg's books tied to Hamilton are largely forgotten today. In one sense he was ahead of his time in recognizing Hamilton as the visionary architect of the modern United States. But the books were also a pretext to set out his own thinking on current issues of the 1920s. And they may have been a reaction to the uninspiring contemporary political scene. Vandenberg would vastly prefer to identify with the brilliant Hamilton than with the president at that time, Warren Harding. (Although Van wrote Harding's most important foreign policy address.)

Above all, Vandenberg was an unabashed hero worshipper and Hamilton was his idol. Ultimately, though, his purple prose would have gained from a tough editor.

Literary License: You write that



Sinclair Lewis' character *Babbit* was a troubling figure for Vandenberg. How much influence did the literature of the time have on him?

Hendrik Meijer: As a Midwestern conservative, Vandenberg bristled at the caricatures that Lewis and others created. He tried not to be cynical and held nobler notions of civic duty. He also felt slighted by what today we might call the coastal elite.

Literary License: Are you planning to write another book?

Hendrik Meijer: Absolutely, but I've yet to commit to a subject. I realize in retrospect how lucky I was to write the untold story of a local character of global consequence – and of an icon of bipartisanship when our politics are increasing polarized.

Literary Largess

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but the Society always needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May book awards banquet.

Thanks to **Edward Gordon, Cathleen**

Maza, Robert Marovich, Mervin Block, Michael Ebner, Katherine McCaughan, Lin Enger, Darwin McBeth Walton, Charles Masters, Robert Starks, Timothy Gilfoyle, Liane Clorfene Casten, Carol Adorjan, David Radavich, Jack Driscoll, Bernard Sieracki, Janet Hickman, Robert K.

Elder, Charles Billington, Eldon Ham, Robin Strachan, Steve Bogira and Christine Rice who made recent contributions.

Correction: **Chuck Masters** should have been listed as a sponsor in the 2018 SMA book awards dinner program.

SMA membership in the '40s and '50s

This is Part 26 of the history of the Society.

Authors who joined the SMA in the 1940s and '50s include:

Era Bell Thompson (1905-1986), who'd grown up in Iowa and North Dakota, was an editor of *Ebony* magazine. Her books included *Africa, Land of My Fathers*, an account of her travels through 18 countries in Africa. Her autobiography *American Daughter* won the SMA's Patron Saints Award in 1969.

Rosamond Du Jardin (1902-63) was one of the 1950s' most popular authors of series of books aimed at girl readers, including teen romance novels about the characters Tobey Heydon and Pam and Penny Howard. The Illinoisan wrote humorous verse and short stories for newspaper syndicates and magazine, as well as five novels for adults, before her first novel for teenagers, *Practically Seventeen*, was published in 1949.

Jack Conroy (1899-1990), a Missouri native who lived in Chicago, was known for his "proletarian literature" about the lives of American workers. During the Depression, he worked on the Illinois Writers' Project, documenting folktales, industrial folklore, and African-American history, and he joined the SMA in the 1940s. *Anyplace But Here*, a book he co-authored with Arna Bontemps, won the SMA's James L. Dow Award in 1967, and in 1986, Conroy won the Friends of the Midland Authors Award for his life's work.

S.I. Hayakawa (1906-1992) was the author of *Language in Action*, a Book of the Month Club selection in 1941. Hayakawa, a Canadian-born academic of Japanese ancestry who lectured at the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Chicago, called the book "a response to the dangers of propaganda, especially as exemplified in Adolf Hitler's

success in persuading millions to share his maniacal and destructive views." He later moved to California, which he represented as a Republican in the U.S. Senate from 1977 to 1983.

Peter De Vries (1910-93), a Chicago native known for his satiric wit, edited *Poetry* magazine from 1938 to 1944. He wrote 23 novels, including *The Tunnel of Love*, which became a movie and a Broadway play. Recruited by James Thurber, he joined the staff of *The New Yorker* in 1944 and worked there until 1987.

John G. Neihardt (1881-1973), a Poet Laureate of Nebraska, was most famous for his 1932 book *Black Elk Speaks*, based on interviews with a Lakota medi-

David Appel (c. 1910-84) was the Chicago Daily News literary editor in the 1940s, before working as an editor at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* from 1946 to 1970. He wrote children's books including *Comanche*, which became a Disney movie.

Frederic Babcock (1896-1979), a Nebraska native who was literary editor at the Chicago Tribune, made national headlines when he proclaimed that Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* "is pornography and we do not plan to review it." Babcock wrote the novels *Blood of the Lamb* and *Hang Up the Fiddle*.

Paul M. Angle (1900-75) was the director of the Chicago Historical Society for 20 years. His books include *Mary Lincoln, Wife and Widow*; *Here I Have Lived: A History of Lincoln's Springfield*; *The Living Lincoln*, and *Prairie State, Impressions of Illinois, 1673-1967, by Travelers and Other Observers*.

Fritz Leiber Jr. (1910-1992), a leading author of fantasy, horror, and science fiction, was an SMA member in the 1950s. The Chicago resident is regarded as one of the fathers of sword-and-sorcery fantasy, and his 1964 book *The Wanderer* won the Hugo Award for best science-fiction novel.

Louis Zara (1910-2001) wrote fictional accounts of the lives of historical greats, including Stephen Crane, Herman Melville and Philip II of Spain. His novels included *This Land Is Ours*. He was also an executive at Ziff-Davis Publishing in Chicago and an editor at Follett Publishing.

Saul Alinsky (1909-72), the Chicagoan known as the founder of modern community organizing, wrote *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*.

Robert R. McCormick (1880-1955), the famously conservative publisher of the Chicago Tribune, wrote the book *Ulysses S. Grant: The Great Soldier of America*,

Marshall Field III (1893-1956), department store heir and publisher of the Chicago Sun, which became the Sun-Times. He wrote the book *Freedom Is More Than a Word*.

Literary
Lore

Robert
Loerzel



Era Bell
Thompson



S.I.
Hayakawa



Paul
M. Angle



Robert R.
McCormick

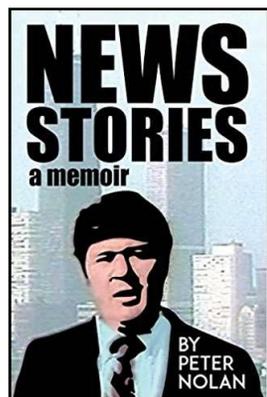


Marshall
Field III

cine man. Neihardt, an Illinois native who also lived in Kansas and Missouri, also wrote *A Cycle of the West*, an epic poem covering the westward movement across America from 1820 to 1890.

Literary Latest

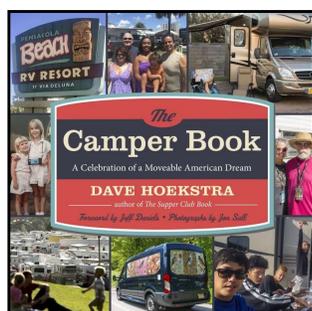
Continued from Page 10



Author Bob Boone, founder of Young Chicago Authors, wrote, “Peter has picked his stories for a reason. Some exhibit quiet heroism. Some show

Chicago at its most typical. Other stories are utterly surprising. He writes in a clear, simple, caring way. He's there next to you sharing something important.”

REPORT FROM THE ROAD



Dave Hoekstra's new book, *The Camper Book* (Chicago Review Press, June 1, 2018), reports how he hit the road in his own custom camper van, named Bluebird, to explore the history, culture, subcultures, and future of camper life.

Hoekstra tells Literary License: “I've spent the last quarter-century traveling in and out of America's backroads. We rented RVs for the [Chicago] Sun-Times (tailgating in Green Bay, Graceland in Memphis, Bears Super Bowl in Miami), and that's where I began to learn about the culture. I also learned it's just not for retirees. I really saw that in doing the book.

“I began the book just after I lost my parents and left the newspaper. Perhaps I needed a compass. Now that I'm looking back at the book, I'm beginning to understand the places I visited and the people I met reinforced sense of community. Everyone needs that these days. You don't have to be a front line camper to appreciate these contemporary

American stories in the book: traveling home nurses, gay campground in Eureka Springs, Joe Maddon, the first African-American Superintendent at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, John Prine and more. The ability to collaborate with the great photographer Jon Sall made this project even more rewarding.”

'SUPERBLY ENTERTAINING'

Kirkus Reviews wrote **Crystal Chan's** new book, *All That I Can Fix* (Simon Pulse, June 12, 2018), in which a teen boy's world gets turned upside-down when a zoo of exotic animals takes over his small town, is a “superbly entertaining read that weaves issues of mental health and gun control with adolescent angst.”

Chan tells Literary License: “Initially, I wrote the book because a friend of mine had purchased a gun, and I am vehemently against guns. In my mind, I started demonizing him – and then I realized I was part of the problem: I didn't want to see his perspective. I started the book because I wanted to write a story that was gun-neutral, a story that would prompt readers to engage in meaningful conversation. As I continued writing, I realized that the book really wasn't about guns: It was about our

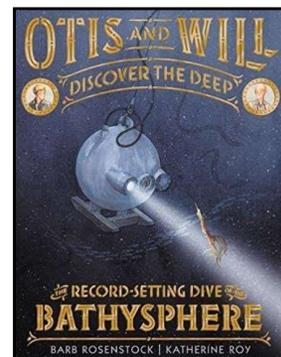


country's inability to solve its problems – any of them – and how we so willingly hand these problems onto our next generation. The question kept gnawing at me: What would it be like to come of age in a time like this? How would I view adulthood? Humility? Reconciliation? In our world of absurdity, I have written a book that depicts the world as precisely that: Absurd. Readers will fall in love with the very contemporary issues the book brings up (e.g. adults acting like children, children acting like adults), with the main character's dark humor in a dark world, and with the life-affirming message: That the heart has the strength and courage to heal, connect, and even be transformed.”

THE STORY OF A DREAM COME TRUE

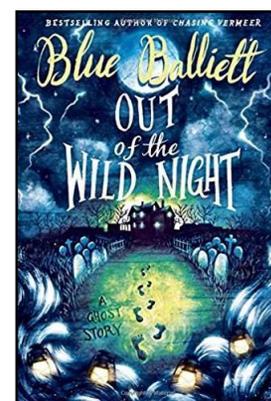
Otis and Will Discover the Deep: The Record-Setting Dive of the Bathysphere (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, June 5, 2018) by **Barb Rosenstock** tells how engineer Otis Barton and explorer Will Beebe on June 6, 1930, dove into the ocean inside a hollow metal ball of their own invention called the Bathysphere.

Rosenstock writes to say, “*Otis & Will Discover the Deep* came about when I ran across a photo of the bathysphere while researching inventions for the backmatter of another book. When I learned that this tiny suspended steel ball was among the first crafts that humans used to explore the deep ocean, I had to find out how it was built. The result turned into a children's book about how two very different young boys, Otis Barton and Will Beebe, had the same dream about discovering the deep ocean, and used their talents and expertise to make that dream come true. *Otis & Will Discover the Deep* is a tale of science, persistence and wonder. It's perfect for children who like adventure stories, invention or ocean creatures.”



TALES OF GHOSTS

In *Blue Balliett's Out of the Wild Night* (Scholastic Press, March 27, 2018), “ghosts are alive on the island of Nantucket,” the publisher says, “You can hear them in the wind and in the creaks of the old homes. They want to be remembered. And, even more, they want to protect what was once theirs.”



Turn to Page 12

Write Across Chicago: Tell your story, inspire others

BY GREG BORZO

Write on!

Midland authors: Why do you write? How do you write? What has writing done for you?

Here's your chance to tell your story, to inspire others.

The Society of Midland Authors is partnering with the Illinois Writing Project in a program called Write Across Chicago aimed at encouraging people to write.

Write Across Chicago will be a month-long program (October 2018) to help Chicagoans of all ages and all walks of life to discover the pleasure of writing in a wide variety of settings and formats. Programs and events will discuss and encourage writing. And strategies outlined on a dedicated website will help guide individual or group writing and provide for online publication.

Midland Authors' participation will take

two forms. Our monthly public meeting in October at the Cliff Dwellers will be dedicated to a panel of writers who will discuss why they write, how they write and what writing has done for them. In addition, all SMA members will be invited to submit a 500-word piece on any (or all) of these questions. Every piece that the program accepts will run on the Write Across Chicago website, along with a headshot and an image of the cover of one book by that author.

The website isn't ready yet, but it should be running by mid-summer. However, you can write your piece now and submit it to Steve Zemelman, director of the Illinois Writing Project, at stv.zemelman@comcast.net. The sooner the better, because the website will not be able to accommodate an unlimited number of pieces.

Midland Authors will be in good com-

pany with this program. Other organizations partnering with the Illinois Writing Project on Write Across Chicago include the Field Museum, Poetry Foundation, Chicago Public Library, Chicago Bar Association, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Changing Worlds, and Chicago Area Writing Project at the University of Illinois at Chicago. (Many other organizations are still coming onboard.)

The mission of the Illinois Writing Project is to help teachers employ the best of what is known about writers and writing. Its transformative, professional development helps teachers guide students to write with thoughtfulness, skill and enjoyment.

For any questions regarding this program, contact Greg Borzo, Midland Authors Program Chair, at (312) 636-8968; gborzo@comcast.net.

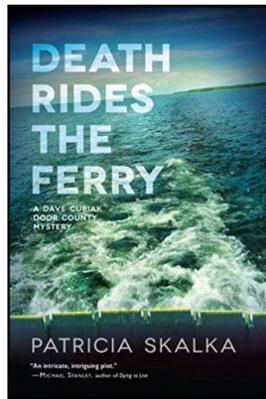
Literary Latest

Continued from Page 11

TWO IDEAS

Death Rides the Ferry (University of Wisconsin Press, May 8, 2018) by **Patricia Skalka** is the fourth book in her Dave Cubiak Door County mystery series.

Skalka tells Literary License: “[It] grew from two ideas, one old and one new. My daughter Julia provided the new idea. We were on the ferry crossing the Porte des Morts strait between



Washington Island and the Door County peninsula when she looked at me and said ‘How about a death on the ferry?’

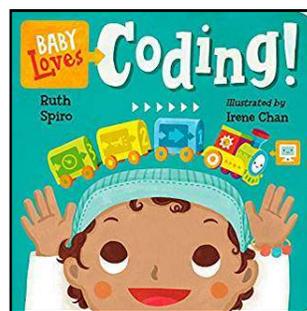
“Of course! I thought, as the boat plowed through the water. What a

great idea! But who dies, why are they on the ferry, who's the killer, what's the motive?

“As I tried to piece the story together, I remembered years ago listening to a friend talk about the viola da gamba, a stringed instrument popular in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Putting the two ideas together led to a plot with a body or two on the ferry, a viola da gamba festival, and a 40-year-old, unsolved crime.”

The New York Journal of Books called the book “a page-turning read.”

Midwest Review called it “a deftly-crafted gem.”



INTRODUCING IMPORTANT SKILLS

Ruth Spiro's new book is *Baby Loves Coding!* (Charlesbridge, June 5, 2018). From the publisher: “As a precursor to learning programming languages and syntax, *Baby Loves Coding!* presents the concepts of sequencing, problem solving,

cause and effect, and thinking step-by-step.”

Spiro tells Literary License, “The book is the sixth title in my ‘Baby Loves Science’ board book series, and I chose the topic because of increasing interest by both parents and educators in introducing coding to children. While it may seem premature to introduce this topic to the very young, in my research I discovered that the foundational skills one must learn to begin coding are also pre-reading and pre-math skills: Learning to read from left to right, recognizing patterns and sequences, and following step-by-step directions, to name a few. These are all important skills that can be introduced and practiced in early childhood, and the good news is they’re all screen-free.

“I’m also happy to report I have three new titles coming out in October – two more ‘Baby Loves Science’ books as well as the first in a series of three picture books to be published by Dial. This series, ‘Made by Maxine,’ sold in a four-house auction.”

The upcoming titles are *Made by Maxine*, illustrated by Holly Hatam (Oct. 9); *Baby Loves Structural Engineering!* (Oct. 16) and *Baby Loves Green Energy!* (Oct. 16).

Bookselling rains, er, reigns at Printers Row

Over the years, rain has been a frequent visitor to the annual Printers Row Lit Fest in June, and the weather lived up to its tradition this year.

“It was wet and rainy, but we love Printers Row,” **Rich Cahan** said. “It’s the one place writers can meet their ‘admir-ing public.’”

Robert J. Nelson emailed to say: “Of course, it rained for my entire time slot on Sunday noon to 2 p.m, but still I sold one book and talked with several who already had *Dirty Waters* and others with ties to the Harold Washington days. Very enjoyable.”

Sel Erder Yackley said, “I sold only one book, but had quite a few conver-sations with people who have had suicides in their family. ... and those who are suf-fering with bipolar disorder. So I thought my efforts were worthwhile.”

Other authors at the Printers Row SMA tent were **James Finn Garner**, **Joyce Burns Zeiss**, **Barbara Barnett**, **Iris Waichler**, **Genevieve Davis**, **Mary Barr**, **Patricia Skalka** and **Claude Walker**.



Joyce Burns Zeiss with her book *Out of the Dragon’s Mouth* at the Society of Midland Authors’ tent during a break in the rain.



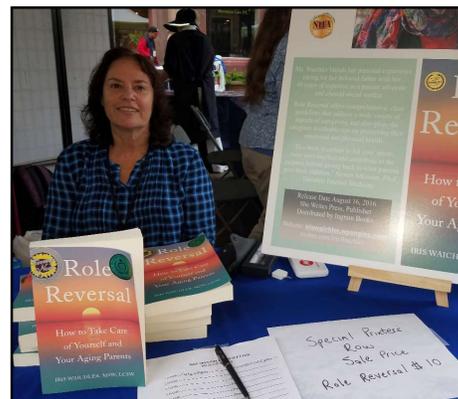
ABOVE: Rich Cahan and Michael Williams in their raincoats (Lynn Becker photo). **RIGHT:** Sel Erder Yackley gives a thumbs up to Printers Row. Note the widely acclaimed SMA table skirt.



Barbara Barnett displays her books at the SMA tent.



Mary Barr sold her books at Printers Row on Saturday afternoon.



Iris Waichler at Printers Row with her book *Role Reversal: How to Take Care of Yourself and Your Aging Parents*.

New Members

Michael Poore's short fiction has appeared in *Glimmer Train*, *Southern Review*, *Agni*, *Fiction* and *Asimov's*. He is the author of *Up Jumps the Devil* (Ecco, 2012) and *Reincarnation Blues: A Novel* (Del Rey, 2017).



Michael Poore

His story "The Street of the House of the Sun" was selected for *The Year's Best Nonrequired Reading 2012*.

The Chicago Review of Books wrote, "Poore finds humor in the dark absurdities of life."

The New York Review of Books called *Up Jumps the Devil* "an elegiac masterpiece."

He was nominated by **Thomas Frisbie**.

Christopher Z. Mooney, a professor of political science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is author of *Monte Carlo Simulation* (SAGE 1997) and *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform* (Cengage Learning, 2008).



Christopher Z. Mooney

He is co-author of *Lobbying Illinois: How You Can Make a Difference in Public Policy* (Institute for Legislative Studies, 2003) and

Bootstrapping: A Nonparametric Approach to Statistical Inference (SAGE, 1993).

He is the founding editor of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, the premier academic journal in its field, and has published dozens of articles.

He was nominated by **Dick Simpson**.

Roger Biles, a professor emeritus of history at Illinois State University, is author of *Mayor Harold Washington, Champion of Race and Reform in Chicago* (University of Illinois Press,



Roger Biles

2018); *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1995); *The Fate of Cities: Urban America and the Federal Government, 1945-2000* (University Press of Kansas, 2011); *Illinois: A History of the Land and its People* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2005) and other books.

He was nominated by **Joseph Gustaitis**.

Michael Cicchini is the author of *Tried and Convicted: How Police, Prosecutors, and Judges Destroy Our Constitutional Rights* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012); *Convicting Avery: The Bizarre Laws and Broken System behind Making a Murderer* (Prometheus Books, 2017), and the forthcoming *Anatomy of a False Confession: The Interrogation and Conviction of Brendan Dassey* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

He is co-author of *But They Didn't Read Me My Rights! Myths, Oddities, and Lies about Our Legal System* (with Amy Kushner, Ph.D.).

Cicchini is a criminal defense attorney in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He is also a columnist at the Wisconsin Law Journal and a blogger at The Legal Watchdog, and has published articles in several law reviews.

He was nominated by **Jim Schwab**.

Robert H. Jordan Jr., the author of *Murder in the News* (Prometheus Books, 2017), is a retired Emmy Award-winning weekend anchor for WGN-TV's News at Five & Nine in Chicago. He also produced, wrote and reported stories for the weekday and weekend news as a reporter.

He has covered stories for the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite and also written articles for the Chicago Tribune. He is the founder and owner of a video production company, Video Family Biographies. He holds a Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy studies from



Michael Cicchini



Robert H. Jordan Jr.

Loyola University Chicago.

He was nominated by **James Schwab**.

Sandra M. Colbert is the author of *Chicago Bound* (McIver Publishing, 2015), *Damaged Souls* (Windy City Publishers, 2015) and *The Reason* (Windy City Publishers, 2016), which is the first book in the Kate Harrison detective series.

Colbert grew up in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood and is the past president of the In Print Professional Writers Association. She also is on the board of the Chicago Writers Association. She was nominated by **Dominic Pacyga**.



Sandra M. Colbert

Alton Miller, whose career in arts, politics and higher education and as a speechwriter includes being the former press secretary to the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, is author of *Harold Washington: The Mayor, The Man* (Bonus Books, 1989).

He is co-author of *William Warfield: My Music & My Life* (Sagamore, 1991) and contributed as a speechwriter to *Climbing a Great Mountain: Selected Speeches of Mayor Harold Washington* (Bonus Books, 1998).

He was associate dean of the School of Media Arts at Columbia College Chicago until 2012 and teaches public relations writing, PR history and political communications.

He was nominated by **Dominic Pacyga**.

Patrick Butler, author of *The Hidden History of Ravenswood and Lake View* (History Press, 2013), *Hidden History of Uptown & Edgewater* (History Press, 2013) and *Hidden History of Lincoln Park* (History Press, 2015) is a longtime local journalist for the Lerner newspapers and the chain's successor papers, as well as *Gazette Chicago* on the Near Southwest Side. He also is president of the Ravenswood Historical Society and Lake View Kiwanis club.

He was nominated by **Richard Lindberg** and **Craig Sautter**.

LITERARY LICENSE, MAY-JULY 2018

At the Cliff Dwellers, wrapping up 2017-18

The final two programs of the Society's 2017-2018 season were held at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. They were the April 10 panel discussion on writing for young adults and the May 8 book awards dinner.

Literary Lens

begin with a 6 p.m. Sept. 11 program on short story writing featuring authors **Lynn Sloan**, **Marius Stan** and **Maryse Meijer** at the Harold Washington Library Center in Chicago, 400 S. State.



Book judge and former SMA Board Treasurer Robert Remer (left) and former President Richard Lindberg at the May 8 book awards dinner.



SMA Board Member Dick Simpson (left) and new SMA member Alton Miller at the April 10 program.



ABOVE: From left: Emily Clark Victorson, James Kennedy and Marlene Targ Brill at the April 10 program. LEFT: SMA Treasurer and former President Jim Schwab (left) and SMA Archivist Walter Podrazik chat before the May 8 dinner.



Book enthusiasts Sam del Rosario (left) and Rajiv Mote attend the April 10 SMA program at the Cliff Dwellers. (Thomas Frisbie photos)



Mary and Gunter Nitsch at the April 10 program.



Edward "Ted" McClelland at the April 10 program.

Final chapters

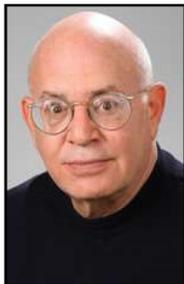
Stuart Meck, 1947-2018

Stuart Meck, a longtime member of the Society of Midland Authors and its membership secretary in the 1990s, died April 15 at the age of 70.

Mr. Meck was author of a series of books about planning, including *Planning for Wildfires* (APA Planning Advisory Service, 2015), which he co-authored with former Society President **James Schwab**; *Regional Approaches to Affordable Housing* (APA Planning Advisory Service, 2003), which he co-authored with **Rebecca Retzlaff**; *An Economic Development Toolbox: Strategies and Methods* (APA Planning Advisory Service, 2005); *Ohio Planning and Zoning Law* with Kenneth Pearlman, and other planning books.

Retzlaff wrote: "If this country ever gets decent growth management, it will be largely due to his *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook: Model Statutes for*

Planning and the Management of Change (Routledge, 2001), [for which he was principal investigator and general editor]. We worked on many projects throughout the years, and until recently much of my professional life centered on working with him. ... He could write like a journalist, a planner, and a lawyer – often all at once. He always put two spaces after a sentence because he had once written things on a typewriter."



Stuart Meck

Mr. Meck's final position was as associate research professor and director of the Center for Planning Practice in the Bloustein School at Rutgers.

"Stuart was a rare breed, an urban planner who also had earned a journalism degree," Schwab told *Literary License*.

"With an often witty style and wry humor, he used those skills to share his probing intellect with his diverse audience, which included not only planners but also public officials, attorneys, and other professionals who benefited from his wit, wisdom and insights in dissecting public policy. His dedication knew no

bounds. He started out in Oxford, Ohio; loved his years in Chicago with a passion, and ended his years dazzling Rutgers with his versatility."

Mr. Meck, an avid jazz musician, also was a senior research fellow at the American Planning Association and assistant city manager and planning director of the City of Oxford, Ohio.

He was American Planning Association president from 1989 to 1991. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism and a master's of city planning at Ohio State University and a master's in business administration from Wright State University.

He was a consultant for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Czech Republic, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Virgin Islands, Hillsborough County, Florida, and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"The Stuart Meck Memorial Lecture," established by his family at Rutgers, will highlight the work of experts, emerging scholars and professionals discussing land use and affordable housing.

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