

Biblio File

Linda Nemeč Foster's new poetry collection, *The Blue Divide* (formerly titled *Pictures of the Floating World*), was recently selected for publication by New Issues Press. Receiving an Editor's Choice citation, the book will be published in spring of 2021. Linda writes to say, "By the way, the original title (under which the manuscript was a finalist or semi-finalist in 15 national poetry book competitions) was changed because it had been



previously used by Amy Lowell and Arthur Smith. The moral of this publishing tale: there's always something new to learn along the way."

... **Dan Dinello's** article "War Criminal in the White House" was published on the website Informed Comment. ... **Arnie Bernstein** writes to say, "I was interviewed for an upcoming American Master's documentary, giving my insights on Walter Winchell. The show will be broadcast sometime this fall." ... On Jan. 6, Chicago magazine quoted **Dominic Pacyga** in an article titled "Where Have All the Polish Poles Gone?" ... **Robert K. Elder** writes to say, "I'll be releasing book No. 12, *Hemingway in Comics*, this July, 2020. *Hemingway in Comics* celebrates the work of creators such as Charles Schulz, Garry Trudeau, Colleen Doran, Cliff Chiang, Paul Pope and dozens more. The book showcases more than 120 comics featuring Hemingway from 18 countries, from the USA and Europe, to the Netherlands and Latvia. *Hemingway in Comics* is an exploration of what it means to be a pop culture icon and how that image can change over time. Hemingway casts a long shadow in literature that also extends into comic books. Hemingway has appeared in comics alongside Superman, Mickey Mouse, and Captain

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Knock yourself out writing a memoir



Moderator and author David Berner (above, center) and authors Donna Urbikas (above, left), Richard Lindberg (above, right) and Margaret McMullan (below, right) discussed memoir writing at the Midland Authors' Jan. 14 program. (Above photo by Lynn Sloan)

BY GREG BORZO

Writing a memoir involves knocking yourself out with your own fist.

That's one of the many definitions of "memoir" that came out during the Midland Authors panel discussion, "How and Why to Write and Publish a Memoir," held Jan. 14 at the Harold Washington Library.

If that process doesn't sound like fun, it's not. The panelists agreed that memoir writing can be tough, soul-searching work that often reveals difficult-to-share personal information. **Rich Lindberg's** poignant *Whiskey Breakfast*:

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Literary Life
Richard Lindberg

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New Books

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Biblio File

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Marvel – he even fought fascists with Wolverine. Brian Azzarello, writer of Batman, Woman Woman and 100 Bullets, has written the foreword.” ... On Jan. 9, **Patrick Reardon** reviewed *Chicago's History and Her Story, The World of Juliette Kinzie: Chicago before the Fire* by **Ann Durkin Keating** for thirdcoastreview.com, saying “Keating provides a full-bodied, 360-degree portrait of Juliette and her household by mining a deep vein of the woman’s own words.” ... Adam Green, a distinguished African American history professor at the University of Chicago wrote a powerful review of **Flint Taylor’s** *The Torture Machine* in a civil rights legal publication published by Thomson Reuters. ... **Art Cullen** wrote, “I thought Bernie's Iowa numbers seemed unrealistically high. Then I saw his rallies” for the *The Guardian* on Jan. 28. ... **Barb Rosenstock’s** new book is *Leave It to Abigail*, a children’s book about Abigail Adams. ... **Claire Hartfield** is scheduled to speak April 7 at the North Shore (Illinois) Authors Showcase. ... On Jan. 21, **Eldon Ham** talked on Chicago’s The Score radio station about Major League Baseball’s sign-stealing scandal.

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■ Memoir Continued from Page 1

My Swedish Family, My American Life, for example, deals not only with an abusive father but also with being bullied in grammar school. **Donna Urbikas** compared writing her heartfelt memoir, *My Sister's Mother: A Memoir of War, Exile and Stalin's Siberia*, to "putting myself on a psychiatrist's couch."

But even when a memoir isn't about a war, dealing with a dysfunctional family or climbing Mt. Everest, "being personal is a very important part of the process of researching and writing," said panel moderator **David Berner**, author of five memoirs, including the reflective *The Consequence of Stars: A Memoir of Home*. "For a memoir to work, the writer has to be a character in the story, even if it's only in the background."

This realization does not always come quickly. Two of the four panelists began their memoir as a novel and only gradually added themselves to the story. While researching her secretive mother's life at the Holocaust Museum in Israel for a novel that she was working on, **Margaret McMullan**, author of powerful *Where the Angels Lived: One Family's Story of Exile, Loss and Return*, discovered a long-lost family relative. She then won a Fulbright to teach in Hungary, where she was able to dig into that relative's past. But when Viktor Orbán became prime minister of Hungary and McMullan started to see swastikas everywhere around the city in which she was living, "[the book I was researching] became more personal, and I became part of the story," McMullan said.

Likewise, Urbikas said that her mother, "who never stopped talking about World War II," provided the impetus for a novel. "To start with, it was a war story, and I was not interested in writing anything about myself. I had to be told many times – I had to be brought along kicking and screaming – to put myself in the story."

When writing a memoir, never be afraid to take risks, Berner advised. "Go deep and authentic because the reader will be able to tell whether you do or not...even if your memoir covers only a weekend, as one of mine does."

The panelists were full of how-to advice. Lindberg suggested starting with a scene, using dialogue, and making sure that the dialogue was believable and natural sounding. "Without good dialogue, you've got bricks without mortar," is how he put it.

McMullan agreed that such fiction-writing techniques are essential to good memoir writing, not only to make the book more readable but also "to help the author figure out the shape of the story."

Meanwhile, Urbikas noted that it was very important for her to clarify, in her mind, exactly who the memoir was about – herself, her mother or her half-sister, or all of the above. And Berner suggested that the author of a memoir should ask the subjects who are dealt with in the story to read the manuscript before it's submitted for publication "to make sure you've got the story right."

Several members of the well-attended event at the library asked about getting a memoir published. Alas, that can be as difficult as writing one, the panelists said. Lindberg took 22 years to find a publisher, finally landing with the University of Minnesota Press. Because many Scandinavians live in Minnesota, that publisher was glad to get a rare manuscript about the personal life of a Swedish immigrant to the United States, Lindberg said. "You need to research the needs of specific, individual publishers, sometimes even the smaller ones," he said.

We started this article with a definition of a memoir, so here's another, this one offered by Berner, who clarified that a memoir is not an autobiography but rather the story of a portion, even a sliver of a life. "A memoir is a universal thread that connects us to the rest of humanity," he said, citing Ralph Waldo Emerson. "It turns our individual sorrows and tragedies – our triumphs and longings – into art."

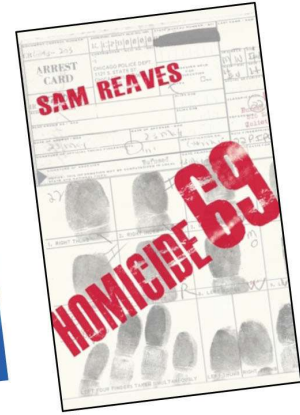
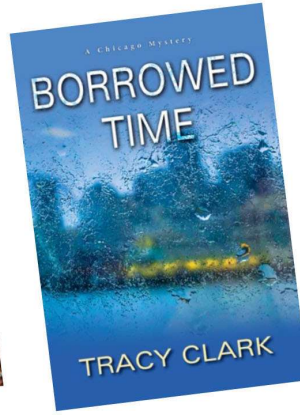
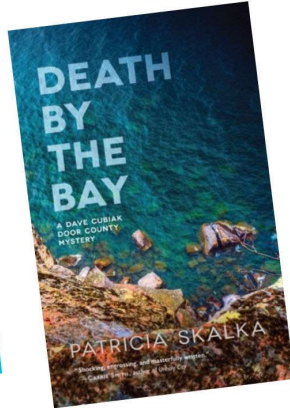
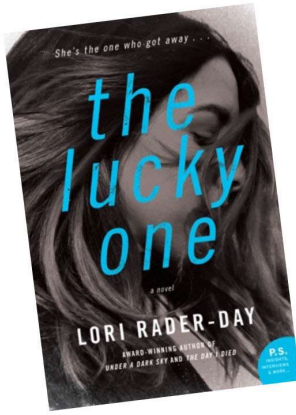
The Midland Authors next month's monthly event will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at the Cliff Dwellers. Four authors will discuss the mystery behind mystery writing at this free event, which is open to the public.

To watch the entire program as recorded by CAN TV go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAQ4MzsT8Dg>

MIDLAND AUTHORS

presents

Lori Rader-Day ❖ Patricia Skalka ❖ Tracy Clark ❖ Sam Reaves



The Mystery Behind Mystery Writing

Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2020

Cocktail hour: 6-7 pm; Panel discussion: 7-8 pm

Free, open to the public. ❖ Free appetizers, cash bar.

Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan Ave.

22nd floor penthouse — with a terrific view of Millennium Park!

Lori Rader-Day: *The Lucky One*

Lori Rader-Day has been leading a "life of crime" since age seven, when she wrote a piece of Beverly Cleary fan-fiction. Today she's co-chair of the mystery readers' conference Murder and Mayhem in Chicago and the national president of Sisters in Crime, a 4,000-member crime writers organization.

Patricia Skalka: *Death By the Bay*

Patricia Skalka is the award-winning author of the Dave Cubiak Door County Mysteries, which pit a former troubled Chicago cop against a roster of clever killers in northern Wisconsin. She's the immediate past president of the Chicagoland Chapter of Sisters in Crime.

Tracy Clark: *Borrowed Time*

Tracy Clark, a native Chicagoan, is author of the critically acclaimed Chicago Mystery series, which features Cassandra Raines, a former Chicago homicide cop turned intrepid private investigator. She's a member of the national board of Bouchercon, the annual world mystery convention.

Sam Reaves, moderator: *Homicide 69*

Sam Reaves has written crime novels including the Cooper MacLeish series, the Dooley series and the stand-alones *Mean Town Blues* and *Cold Black Earth*, as well as a true crime memoir *Mob Cop* with Fred Pascente. He's a polyglot who has traveled widely in Europe and the Middle East and has worked as a teacher and a translator. And Reaves is a board member of Midland Authors.

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For more information, contact event chair Greg Borzo at (312) 636-8968 or [gborzo@comcast.net](mailto:gborzo@comcast.net).

# The mystery of small presses

*This is the sixth part of a series reflecting on writing.*

I have always wondered why so many small independent publishers remain in the business.

It is a mystery. They will never pay their authors a decent advance to cover time and expenses. If they cannot afford the overhead and properly compensate authors, why do they keep at it year after year?

Securing adequate publicity for the book is a losing battle, and always, the cry of poverty goes up if you solicit assistance to help defray costs of a book party or some special event you have in mind involving liquid refreshments and food.

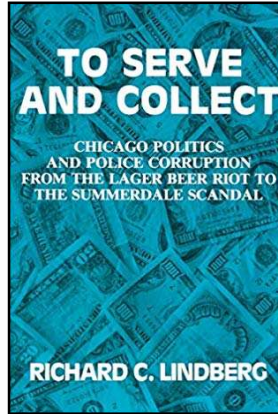
The small press director will likely inform you that you are responsible for promoting your title with the explanation that if they did any extra marketing over and above the usual and customary "it just wouldn't be fair to their other authors,"

etc. etc. This is the common retort when the author timidly inquires: "What is being done to help the sales of my book?"

At the big publishing houses in New York there are "A-list books" written by best-selling, celebrity authors that go on national tours and reap the whirlwind.

Then there are the "mid-list" and "back-list" titles featuring the work of writers who are not celebrities and never will become celebrities. Their books receive scant attention because there are not enough publicists or publicity dollars to promote them. The publisher's hopeful intention is, that these mid-list titles will sell well enough on their own for the author to pay back his/her advance with a small profit to show.

Again, it is my belief that small regional presses mean well, but they count upon the ambition and occasional desperation of the writer to break into print as a way for them to generate product while keeping costs minimal. Only in the profession of book writing will you find people willing to work for nothing. I suppose that



that is the main reason so many frustrated authors turn to self-publishing these days as the last resort after so many marketing and monetary failures.

Self-publishing is not for me. I've always believed that at the very least, the truest reward of "traditional" publishing comes from the knowledge that your volume has been recognized as worthy and accepted by a creditable source within the

industry. Anyone with money and time can self-publish, no matter how bad the grammar, sentence construction or story flow may be.

*Literary Life* by

Richard Lindberg



After my earlier bad experiences, I set out to find an agent to

safe-guard my interests. I approached a famous literary woman, then Chicago's top agent (the few of them that call the city home), with my proposal to publish *To Serve and Collect*, the first history of the Chicago Police Department written since 1886. The agent advised me to forget about it – and offered up the suggestion of doing a biography of White Sox catcher Carlton Fisk. That she could sell, I was coolly informed. After all I was known as "that Sox guy."

I objected to the book idea and the label. I wanted to break away from baseball writing and publish my graduate thesis on Chicago police corruption. The reigning queen of Chicago agents finally agreed to take a look and test the waters for me. She asked me to write up a proposal package and a cover letter that she would agree to sign.

“The agent advised me to forget about it – and offered up the suggestion of doing a biography of White Sox catcher Carlton Fisk. That she could sell, I was coolly informed.”

Once done, she applied the postage and sent out the query to a collection of New York editors. But I will never know how much phone follow-up was done on my behalf if any, with New York, or if this was just a low priority stamp-and mail-project.

Several months passed. Then one day a box arrived at my doorstep with my proposals returned to me along with a note attached from her, tersely stating that she could not find anyone interested in my manuscript, and good luck with it.

Then I decided to break all the rules and do something that no author is ever supposed to attempt according to the rules of the game. I traveled to New York with a half dozen manuscripts under my arm to hand-deliver the book to acquisition editors at Macmillan, Oxford University Press, Praeger and others. I was making cold calls – turning up at the reception desk unannounced.

Oxford liked my book as it turned out, but had dropped their urban studies line. Macmillan said no but Praeger accepted it, although I did not take my own advice about being careful what you wish for. When my agent found out about the Praeger contract she indignantly scolded me for not cutting her in on it.

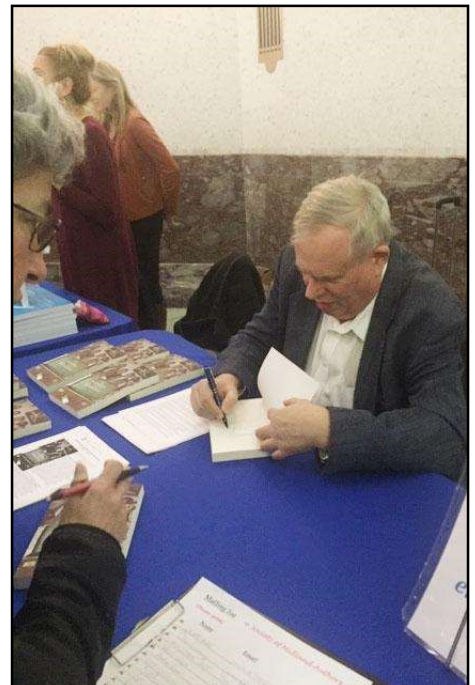
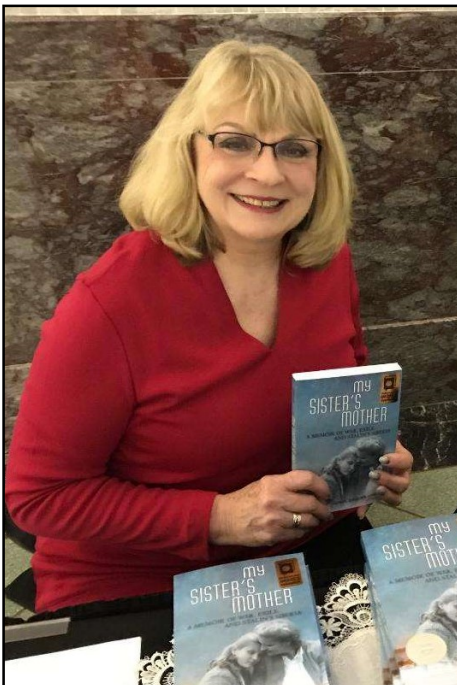
This coming after she had wished me luck and said she had given up on the project!

*Richard Lindberg's forthcoming books are a village history of suburban Addison, Illinois, and Tales of Forgotten Chicago, which relates stories roughly from the time of the Civil War to the 1960s and is due out with Southern Illinois University Press this year.*

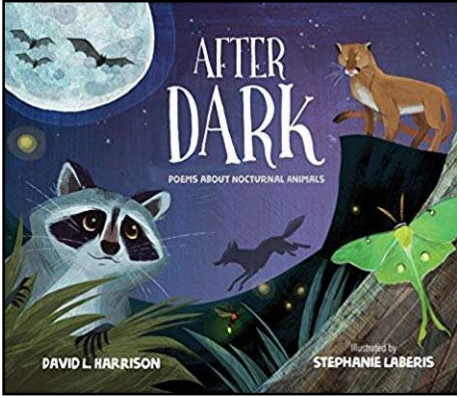
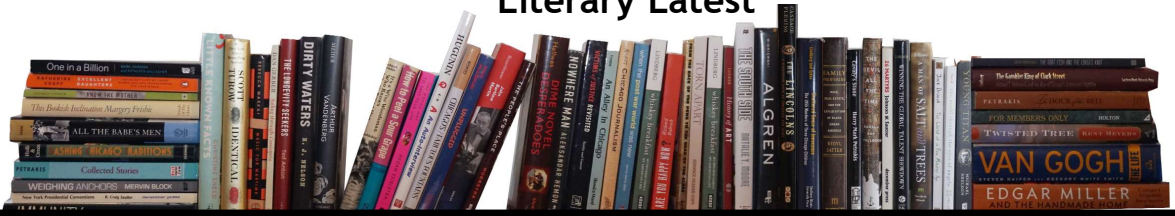


At Midland Authors programs in November and January, readers had a chance to meet with authors. Above left in November: Maury Collins and Desmond O'Neill wait for the program to begin. (Thomas Frisbie photo). Above right in January: David Berner chats with readers at the Harold Washington Library Center (Greg Borzo photo).

## Authors meet with readers



At the Jan. 14 program at the Harold Washington Library Center, authors Donna Urbikas, Margaret McMullan and Rich Lindberg sign books and talk with readers. (Photos provided by Greg Borzo and Rich Lindberg)



97TH BOOK

David L. Harrison writes to say, “My 97th book, *After Dark, Poems About Nocturnal Animals*, is a February release coming out to strong reviews.

“Kirkus calls it ‘A fine collection of poetical odes to a nicely diverse group of nighttime fauna.’

“Publishers Weekly calls it ‘An immersive volume of nocturnes for young animal enthusiasts.’

“Book store signings, library programs, school visits, magazine, journal, and newspaper interviews, and a 14-stop blog tour are set from Feb. 11 to March 3.”

From the publisher: “This collection of 22 poems explores the fascinating lives of North American nocturnal animals.

“When the sun goes down, many animals come out. Crickets chirp their cricketsy song hoping to attract a mate. Cougars bury their leftovers for later, leaving few clues for others to follow. Armadillos emerge from their dens to dig for worms, leaving holes in the lawns they disturb.

“This collection of poetry from acclaimed children’s author and poet David L. Harrison explores the lives of



David L. Harrison

animals who are awake after dark. “Stephanie Laberis’ beautifully atmospheric illustrations will draw in readers, and extensive back matter offers more information about each animal.”

NEW COLLECTION

Michael Fedo’s collection of humor/satire short stories titled *Art’s Place: Stories and Diversions* will be released in September by Black Rose Writing. Its previously published pieces have been written over the past 20 years, and 26 are included in the new collection.

The stories originally appeared in literary quarterlies such as *North American Review*, *December* and *Underground Voices*, as well as in consumer publications such as *American Way* and *American West Airlines Magazine*.

Fedo writes to say, “The pieces are varied, and includes one about a chance meeting of the James brothers – Frank and Jesse, William and Henry. During their conversation, we learn that the outlaws’ comments and observations provide titles for future William and Henry tomes.

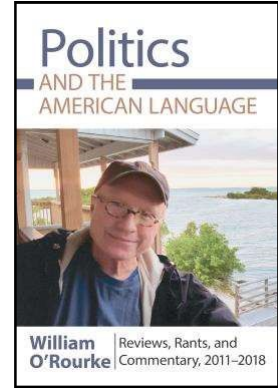


Michael Fedo

A symphony orchestra, facing declining attendance, rebounds after introducing a mosh pit at concerts.

Another story celebrates Hollywood’s first best boy to win an Oscar, while another features a contemporary nursing home whose residents demand punk rock music instead of the sedate treacly offerings that have been the go-to fall-back for decades. Some stories received Pushcart nominations, and two were finalists for *Maggies* – awarded for best fiction appearing in consumer magazines published west of the Mississippi River.

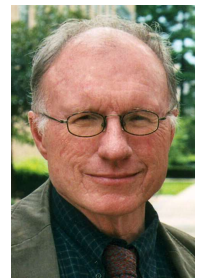
This will be my 11th published book, and my second work of fiction.”



MORE POLITICAL

From the publisher: “This new collection is William O’Rourke’s third volume of a diverse mixture of long and short articles and it extends his reputation as a brilliant social historian and curmudgeonly contrarian. More political than his previous two volumes (*Signs of the Literary Times*, 1993; *Confessions of a Guilty Freelancer*, 2012), it additionally serves as an illuminating memoir of his literary generation. These provocative pieces analyze the contemporary turbulent period, from the Obama years to the dawn of the Trump era.

“O’Rourke is an acclaimed novelist (*Idle Hands*) and non-fiction author (*The Harrisburg 7* and *The New Catholic Left*) and he has never been shy of tackling big subjects, which he manages with acuity and finesse. He turns his perceptive vision often toward literary subjects, the ongoing abuse of language, but always places the books he discusses in a broader cultural and political context. His depictions of both lettered and political figures, such as Kurt Vonnegut, Daniel Berrigan, Donald Trump, Ken Burns, Bernie Sanders and Flannery O’Connor are fresh and original.”



William O’Rourke

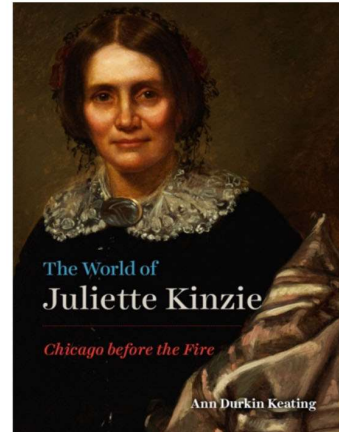
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❖ MIDLAND AUTHORS ❖

presents

eminent historian Ann Durkin Keating

in conversation with Greg Borzo, Midland Authors Event Chair



**The World of Juliette Kinzie:**

**Chicago Before the Fire**

**Tuesday, March 10, 2020**

Cocktail hour: 6-7 pm; Panel discussion: 7-8 pm

*Free, open to the public ❖ Free appetizers, cash bar*

**Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan Ave.**

22<sup>nd</sup> floor penthouse—with a terrific view of Millennium Park!

Juliette Kinzie is one of Chicago's forgotten founders. She arrived in Chicago in 1831 and not only witnessed the city's transition from Indian country to industrial center, but was also instrumental in its development. *The World of Juliette Kinzie* offers a new perspective on Chicago's early history and is a fitting tribute to a remarkable woman who was an astute observer of early Chicago, an influential contributor to the city, and even one of the first women historians in the United States. This book brings Kinzie to life.

Ann Durkin Keating, who teaches history at North Central College, is one of the foremost experts on 19<sup>th</sup> century Chicago. She has volunteered extensively with the Chicago History Museum, Illinois State Historical Society and Naper Settlement.

*The World of Juliette Kinzie* was published by the University of Chicago Press (2019), as were Keating's previous books, including her very well reviewed *Rising Up from Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago*.

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For more information, contact event chair Greg Borzo at (312) 636-8968 or gborzo@comcast.net.

Final chapters

Whenever new authors joined the Midland Authors, they were sure to get a welcoming note from Charles J. Masters.

Mr. Masters, the Midland Authors' corresponding secretary for more than 10 years, died at age 70 on Jan. 25 of cancer.

He was an award-winning author who wrote *Gliders of Neptune: The American D-Day Glider Attack* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), a featured selection in both the Military Book Club and the Aviators' Guild Book Club. He also wrote *Governor Henry Horner, Chicago Politics and the Great Depression* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), which won an award in 2008 from the Illinois State Historical Society.

He also appeared on the History Channel's World War II program "Silent Wing Warriors," which was based on his D-Day book.

James Merriner, the Midland Authors treasurer and the author of five books on history and politics, said, "I worked with

Chuck on his biography of Gov. Henry Horner. He was a real gentleman, a word not in vogue these days."

Former Illinois Gov. James R. Thompson wrote in a blurb for the Horner book, "An exciting and intimate portrayal of one of the great governors of Illinois."

Mr. Masters, who also was a lawyer, was a regular attendee at the Midland Authors annual book awards, and he was a longtime donor to the organization.

"I always enjoyed speaking with him," said former Midland Authors President **Craig Sautter**. "I sat with him two years at the banquet. I read his fine book on Horner. And he was a good lawyer."

Mr. Masters was born and reared in Chicago and graduated from James H. Bowen High School in 1967. He received his B.A. from the University of Illinois Chicago and J.D. from IIT-Chicago Kent College of Law. He provided pro bono representation for over 10 years for the Menomonee Club for Boys and Girls, which provides services to a diverse group of children from over 100 schools.

"He was a voracious reader," his son, Benjamin Masters, said. "He loved and read Marcus Aurelius' *Mediations* dozens of times, I have seen his copy. It was marked up every which way."

Mr. Masters didn't share drafts of his books until he was entirely satisfied with them, his son said.

"It was important to him that the book was up to his standards before he would let anyone else see it," Benjamin Masters said. "He was his own worst critic."

Mr. Masters' World War II book was partly inspired by his father, who flew a glider in the war, Benjamin Masters said. Mr. Masters also was a distant relative of Henry Horner and learned previously unpublished details about the former Illinois governor's career from family stories, Benjamin Masters said.

Mr. Masters also wrote numerous articles on commercial real estate matters. He was quoted in the press and appeared on national television for CNBC's Nightly Business Report.



Charles Masters

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