

Biblio File

Joan Kufrin writes to say, “I miss Chicago, but I keep working on screenplays, on which I am happy to say there is some interest. My screenplay of “The Trial of Jean Gump” received this from the Chicago Script Awards (in California, of all places): “2022/23 Feature Scripts (nominated for awards Best Feature Film on Golden Art Film Academy,” which gave



Joan Kufrin

me a shot in the arm. Anyway, back to rewrite land, which is in most writers’ work days, I think.” ... **June Sawyers** reviewed **Dave Hoekstra’s** book *Beacons of Hope* (See Literary Latest, May-August 2022) on Dec. 15 for the Third Coast Review. June wrote: “Dave Hoekstra has done journalists everywhere a public service. *Beacons in the Darkness* offers hope and inspiration to an industry in dire need of good news.” ... **Cyndee Schaffer** has



Cyndee Schaffer

been selected to join the Illinois Humanities Road Scholars roster for the 2023-2024 season with her presentation titled “The Journey to Mollie’s War: WACS and World War II.” Cyndee continues across the state to tell her mother’s story of her service as a WAC (Women’s Army Corps) stationed in Europe during World War II. She has many presentations scheduled for March, which is Women’s History Month. Some of her presentation locations include the Illinois National Guard Equal Opportunity Office in Springfield and the Illiana VA Health Care System office in Danville, Illinois, as part of their Federal Women’s Program. ... **John Hallwas** writes to say:

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Clockwise from top left: Michelle Cox, Lori Rader-Day, Tracy Clark and Mia P. Manansala at the Midland Authors Jan. 10 program at the Harold Washington Library Center.

(Photos by John Bychowski)

Series or stand-alone novels? For 4 authors, it’s no mystery

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Four mystery authors offered clues at the Midland Authors’ Jan. 10 program about whether to write mysteries as a series or as stand-alone works.

The regular monthly program took place at the Harold Washington Library Center in Chicago.

Michelle Cox, author of the Henrietta and Inspector Howard series, said she didn’t set out to write a series.

“The first book, *A Girl Like You*, was

supposed to be a one-off to try to get my foot in the door,” Cox said. “And halfway through, I just started to really fall in love with the characters, and I didn’t want the book to end, this world that I had created to end. So I thought, OK, I will turn it into a series.

“There are a lot of benefits to that because you have already built the world, you have already built these characters, so each time you come up with a different

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■ Mysteries

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plot, a different mystery, but for me that is extremely satisfying, and I love going back each time to start a new book because I have my standard characters. I am always bringing in guest actors, as I call them, and they sort of mingle with the old cast.”

Tracy Clark, author of the Cass Raines Chicago Mystery series, also said she didn't plan to start out writing her mysteries as a series.

“I sort of started my series inadvertently,” said Clark, whose new police procedural is *HIDE*. “The first one got rejected so many times that I just sort of kept writing. I knew these characters, I had written the first book, so I just kept on writing about these characters. So by the time the first one sold, I had two other ones in that same vein. So there was my series, but it didn't start out that way.”

Lori Rader-Day, who also acted as the moderator of the program, said, “I write stand-alones because when I was writing my first two books, I was working a full-time job, a pretty harsh one, and I needed to work during my lunch hour. That was my one hour a day when I could work, so I needed something that was interesting enough to me to get me to the page every day at work. Say no to lunch with friends – real friends, real people – to go hang out with fake friends, fake people. It had to be interesting. So when I finished the draft of my first book ... I wanted something exciting. So I actually started a new story instead of Book Two. And that's how I became a stand-alone writer.

“I don't have a series. It's a shame,” joked Rader-Day, author of *Death at Greenway*, *The Lucky One*, *Under a Dark Sky* and other novels. “I hang my head in shame in the mystery community.”

However, Rader-Day she might write a series. She said she has been requested to do so by mystery writer Ann Cleaves, who lives in northern England.

Mia P. Manansala, author of the multi-award-winning Tita Rosie's Kitchen Mystery series, said, “I write in a subgenre called cozy mysteries – light,



Lori Rader-Day, Michelle Cox, Mia P. Manansala and Tracy Clark discuss mystery writing (photo at left) and sign books (top photo) at the Jan. 10 Midland Authors program at the Harold Washington Library Center in Chicago. (Photos by John Bychowski)

humorous books in which you know there is always going to be a happy ending.

“Cozies are almost always [written as a] series, which I knew going in, and cozy series are always released fairly quickly, because cozy, like romance readers, tend to be very voracious,” Manansala said. “And so my books have come out eight to nine months apart.

“My first book came out last year,” she said. “I'm a relatively new author. I debuted last May, [and] my third book came out this past October. ... I have a lot of sci-fi fantasy writer friends who are like, ‘I would die on the that schedule,’ and I am very close. That is what the pub-

lishing process is like.”

Cox also said, “It is definitely easier to market when you write a series because if people like your first book, then they will pick up your second book, so it is kind of an easy sell. ... You are building up a following, you are building up fans who are looking for your next book, and that is not always the case with a stand alone writer.”

The program chairs for the program were **Claire Hartfield** and **Kate Hannigan**.

For more about the four mystery authors, see the November 2022-January 2023 issue of Literary License.

Watch the full program at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_kpaUvS3BY

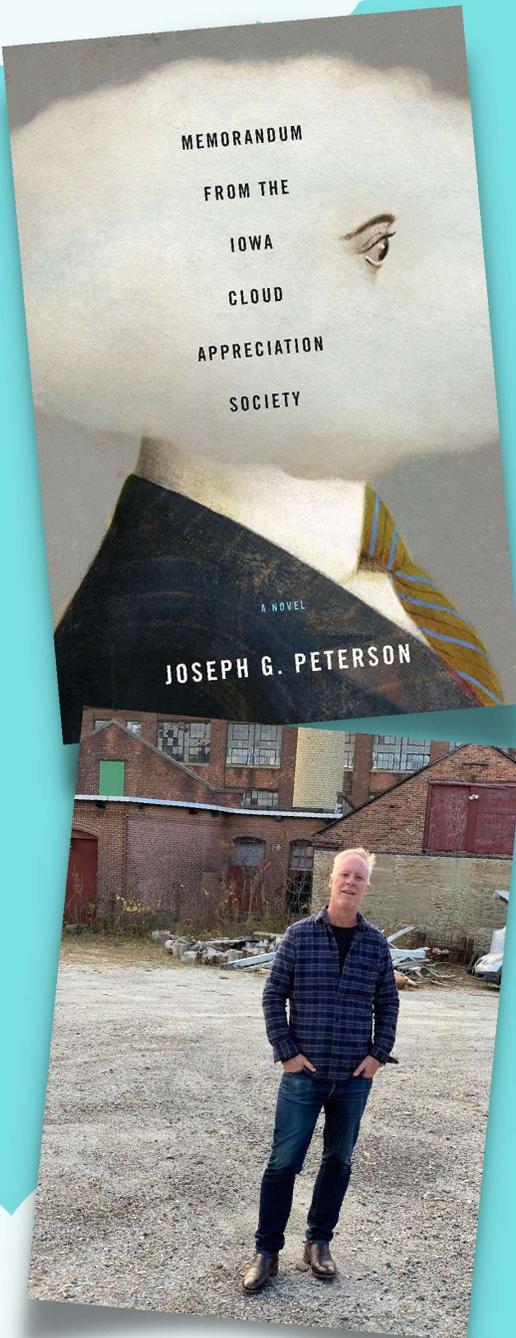
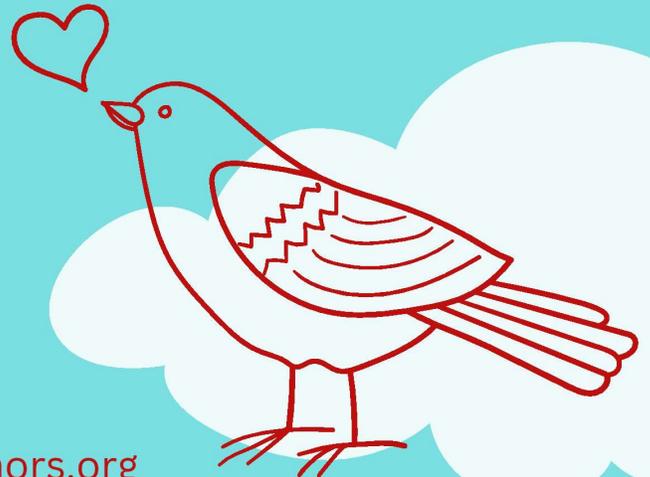
VALENTINE'S DAY WITH MIDLAND AUTHORS

Join us for February's event
featuring books + wine:

Come out and mark the holiday with Chicago author Joseph G. Peterson and his latest novel, *Memorandum from the Iowa Cloud Appreciation Society*, an exploration of love. Enjoy a glass of wine + a reading

WHAT: SMA ventures into Lincoln Square, to one of the best neighborhood bookstores in the city
WHERE: Book Cellar, 4736 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago
WHEN: 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, February 14, 2023

ABOUT: When his girlfriend, Rosemary, asks about his life, Jim Moore, a successful salesman whose territory covers the entire continental United States and parts of Canada, doesn't think there is anything to say and so he tells her "nothing happened," or maybe he doesn't know how to put it all into words or maybe he doesn't want to.



COST: Free & open to the public
For more information, MidlandAuthors.org

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“I have written a series of articles titled ‘Forgotten Voices from Illinois History,’ for Illinois Heritage magazine. The series deals with writers from our state from the frontier period to more recent years who have produced some good works and often had a real impact but who are now little known. Every issue since 2016 has carried an article in that series. The November-December 2022 issue, for example, carries my article titled ‘Insights into the Human Condition: Journalist Sydney J. Harris.’ Harris was an inspiring Chicago newspaper columnist and book author, whose syndicated column appeared in some 200 newspapers until his death in 1986. He was not a commentator on current matters, but rather ‘a kind of philosophical essayist who focused on the human condition,’ and he himself was impacted by countless other authors, from Socrates, Dante and Shakespeare to Americans such as Whitman and Twain. My article emphasizes a noted writer’s unique vision and style, the impact of other authors on him, and the fact that journalists, too, can pro-

duce significant literary works. Many of the Midland Authors members will surely recall the writings of Sydney Harris. And by the way, because my series has been so popular, the Illinois State Historical Society will publish in 2023 a collection



Michael Craft

of more than 40 of my ‘Forgotten Voices from Illinois History’ articles.” ... **Michael Craft’s** 2022 novel, *Desert Getaway* has been honored by Mystery Writers of America as a 2023 Edgar nominee for the Lilian Jackson Braun Memorial Award. The prize will be awarded for last year’s best full-length contemporary cozy. Michael’s novel is one of five nominees chosen from more than 70 works considered. ... Former Midland Authors President **Dick Simpson** is promoting an effort to send 110,000 books to Sierra Leone to replenish that nation’s libraries and school libraries destroyed by the civil war. Dick writes, “I am heading up this project for Books for Africa. When I have mentioned it to authors and others there has been spontaneous enthusiasm to participate in this massive and important effort. If any of you are interested individually, I am forming a small Chicago group to help fund and collect books. Already supporters of Sierra Leone in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and former American Peace Corps workers in Sierra Leone have agreed to be a part of the campaign. I will also be assembling a group of sponsors including other churches, foundations and individuals from Chicago to join the campaign. ... I hope to see this project through to completion when we send 110,000 books in May or June. I am happy to answer any questions by phone or Zoom. (And yes, Books for Africa is a 501c charity if any individuals want to contribute to the campaign. If any of you can promote this to your own networks, publishers, or others, I would be grateful.” ... **Linda Nemeč Foster** has had recent work (poems and flash fiction)



Dick Simpson

published in MSU Library-Short Editions, North of Oxford, Paterson Literary Review, Dunes Review, Presence, Vox Populi, Coal Hill Review, MacQueen’s Quinterly, Fish Anthology, and Best Small Fictions 2022. She also has work forthcoming in *Invisible City*, *Reformed Journal*, *Cervena Barva Press Women’s Anthology* and the *International Poetry Anthology for Ukraine*. Linda was a featured presenter for the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature at MSU (in June), the Scriptoria Conference in Grand Rapids (in June) and the West Cork Literary Festival in Ireland (in July). Other readings in 2022 included programs in Michigan including Detroit, Grand Rapids, Traverse City, Saginaw (at the Roethke House), Alpena and Lowell. Linda was also interviewed by several radio and online venues: Shelley Irwin’s Morning Show on WGUV-FM (NPR affiliate in Grand Rapids, Michigan); The Rattlecast (sponsored by Rattle Magazine in Los Angeles), and *Cervena Barva Press’ YouTube channel* (sponsored by *Cervena Barva Press* in Boston). The latter interview was conducted by Diane DeCillis. ... **Craig Sautter** writes to say: “One of my (now 117) short stories, ‘Big Trouble,’ appeared this month in a lit magazine, *Deep Overstock*, #20, and also is featured in one of its fiction podcasts, available at www.deepoverstock.com. ... **David Radavich** participated in a poetry reading in Jan. 29 from Fairfield, Connecticut, featuring Jane VanVooren Rogers and David, followed by discussion. David writes to say, “It went beautifully. I was featured along with Jane VanVooren Rogers, who lives in the Quad Cities, and we followed up with a wonderful informal discussion of our writing process and preoccupations. A richly satisfying event.” ... Past Midland Awards book award honoree **Rebecca Makkai** is “circling the world by reading 84 books in translation.”

Correction: An editor’s note in the November 2022-January 2023 *Literary License* should have said the well-respected *Chicago Books in Review* was published from 1995 to 1998.

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Society of Midland Authors members can pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal. To make a donation, visit our home page at www.midlandauthors.org and click on the “Donate” button in the upper right corner.

Note from the SMA Board of Directors: *Members of the Society of Midland Authors are encouraged to nominate authors from our 12-state region who have published with a recognized publisher. The nominations will be considered by the SMA board at its next meeting. The 12 states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin. The nomination form is below. Send it to Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610. You can also email it as a PDF to Membership Secretary Thomas Frisbie at tomfrisbie@aol.com.*

For the use of members only.

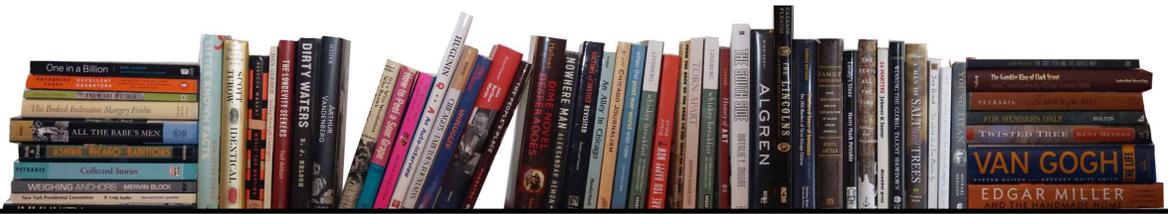


NOMINATION FORM

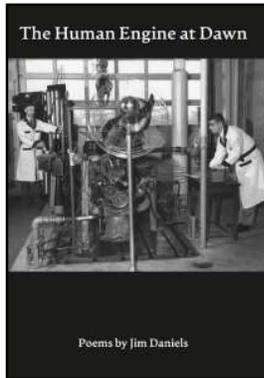
Author Member: Author Members must be an "author or co-author of a book demonstrating literary style and published by a recognized publisher, or of a published or professionally produced play."

Associate Member: Associate members (without voting rights) may be "persons having some connection with literature, such as librarians, teachers, publishers, and editors."

<p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Qualifying residence or place of birth:</p> <p>Biography:</p>	<p>Phone number(s):</p> <p>E-mail address:</p> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Name of proposer:</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> </div>
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Literary Latest



DEEP DIVES

Of *The Human Engine at Dawn* by **Jim Daniels** (Wolfson Press, Dec. 8, 2022), Midland Authors member **George Bilgere** wrote: “Jim Daniels. Singer of the broken city. Ishmael of lost families and foundered dreams. Virgil of what he calls ‘our poorly wired world.’ These poems are deep dives into Daniels’ past, and a past Detroit. The portraits of his mother and father are unforgettable, both for their blunt, unsentimental honesty and their tenderness. Again and again Daniels manages to unearth bright shards of beauty

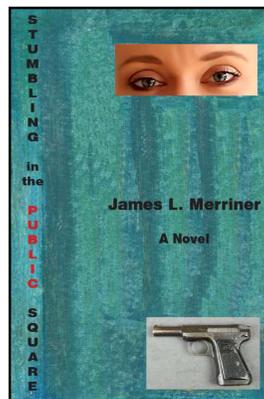


Jim Daniels

in the bleak alleyways and poverty-haunted streets of the city. And there’s an ode here to his father’s bowling ball that will knock you down, that will roll you right back to the smoky, beer-soaked heart of the last century. *The Human Engine at Dawn*, in its dark and lyrical urgency, reminds me of why I came to poetry in the first place.”

Daniels tells Literary Latest: “The poems in *The Human Engine at Dawn* focus mainly on family, particularly on my mother’s last years, leading to her death on Leap Day, 2020, right before the COVID epidemic kicked in and we went

into lockdown. Like in many of my other poetry collections, Detroit is the setting for most of the poems. In fact, the cover features a photo of my grandfather working on an engine at the Packard Motor Car Co. in Detroit, where he worked most of his life until the company went bankrupt. I have a number of poem pairs in here – I was very interested in using juxtaposition between similar situations: two poems about Greyhound trips, two about bowling balls, two about early kisses. And one poem about Aretha, because there will only ever be one Aretha.”



‘REAL’ STORIES

Here’s what Literary Latest hears from **James L. Merriner** about his new book, *Stumbling in the Public Square* (Auctus Publishers, January 2023):

“Having authored five books about politics and history, I thought I was strictly a nonfiction writer, but then the pandemic came and for fun I wrote a novel. In the research, I found that the America of 100 years ago was much like ours today – scandals, foreign wars, illegal wiretaps, a “war on drugs” – that is, alcohol. Also, my protagonist, Roxy

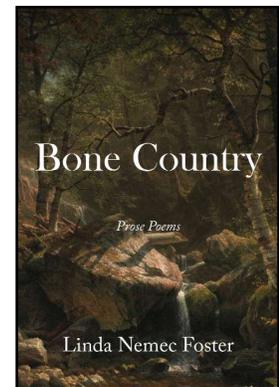


James L Merriner

Stinson (a real person) and First Lady Florence Harding were competing profeminists.

“As a political reporter, I often felt that the real stories got lost behind the headlines. A famous novelist once told me that he threw away a nonfiction manuscript and wrote a novel instead because people believe fiction more than nonfiction. So I wanted to tell the ‘real’ stories of how people caught up in public corruption think, feel and act. The title, by the way, is lifted from Isaiah 59:14.”

Harry Ringel, author of *The Phantom of Skid Row* wrote, “Merriner blends investigative journalism and historical fiction into a page-turner. ... It is the presences lurking in the shadows of [President Warren G. Harding’s] administration that make this novel so compelling.”



FULL-LENGTH BOOK OF PROSE POEMS

Linda Nemece Foster's new book, *Bone Country*, will be published in March by Cornerstone Press (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point).

After 12 collections of poetry, this will be her first full-length book of prose poems.

The manuscript was previously honored as a finalist for the Off the Grid Prize and a semi-finalist for the Tomaz Salamun Prize.

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Several pieces from the book have won awards from the Allen Ginsberg Contest and the Fish Anthology's Flash Fiction Competition.



Linda Nemeć Foster

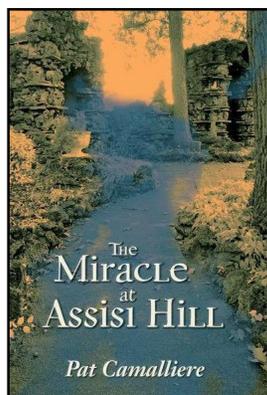
The publisher describes the book as "... a reflection of the world before COVID. All the pieces are inspired by other parts of the world – Istanbul, Rome, Krakow, Prague, Vienna, Seville – not the familiar landscape of the United States. But, the narrator is not a native of these countries; they are 'the other,' 'the foreigner,' the American with a distinct Midwest sensibility who is trying to make sense of a world on the brink of an unforeseen catastrophe. The world as we used to know it."

Midland Authors member **Stuart Dybek** calls the book "visionary." Matthew Gavin Frank describes it as offering "... such luscious and destabilizing portals through which the cities of our world are passed, emerging on the other side slick with luminescence – more amazing, more sad, holy, essential..." Critic and editor Clare MacQueen states, "... *Bone Country* shimmers with consummate artistry."

FOURTH BOOK IN SERIES

Pat Camalliere's new release, *The Miracle at Assisi Hill*, is the fourth book in her Cora Tozzi Historical Mystery Series.

"At first, I planned to tell the story of my personal history with tongue cancer through the eyes of my



historical mystery character.

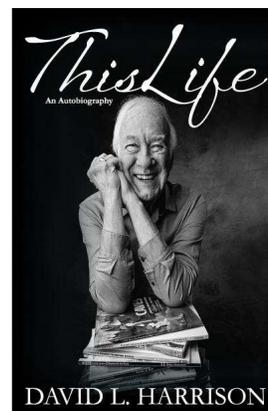
"I was also intrigued by the fact that an unusual number of unique and beautiful religious organizations have their base in Lemont, where I live. Using those concepts, I placed my main character in a convent to spend time dealing with a crisis of faith brought on by her cancer experience.

"While researching the religious institutions, I discovered that the real-life founder of the Chicago Franciscan Order, Venerable Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik, was a single step from being canonized. I felt compelled to make her the historical character in the novel. Soon her story, rather than the cancer experience, dominated the plot, when a new medical crisis forced the main character to turn to a heavenly visitor, solving a mystery from the life of the saintly woman in the process.

"The result, set in two time periods, is similar – but also different – from my other books and combines the elements of a historical mystery with domestic suspense and Christian literature, an unusual combination."



Pat Camalliere



AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS PUBLISHED

David L. Harrison writes to say, "I'm happy to say that my autobiography, *This Life*, has been published. The cover is by well-known photographer Randy Bacon. The book is my effort to trace the events in my life, from age three, that might have influenced how I eventually became an author of books for children. *This Life* was published by Missouri State University where many of my manuscripts are housed in the Meyer Library archives."

From the publisher: "David L. Harrison is a native of Springfield, Missouri, who has written over 100 children's books in poetry and prose.

"Now, in his new autobiography, the author takes us back in time to his childhood and traces the evolution of a scientist turned writer. From Missouri to Arizona to Kansas, all the way across the globe to Malaysia, and spanning from the World War II era through 9/11 and on to the present, *This Life* chronicles the fits and starts, professional rejections and redirections, the inevitable personal life conflicts and tragedies, as well as the breakthroughs and triumphs in a career that has spanned seven decades ... and is still going."

New Members

Gary D. Wilson is the author of *Sing, Ronnie Blue* (Rager Media, 2007), his first novel; *Getting Right* (John Hunt Publishing, 2015) and *For Those Who Favor Fire* (Adelaide Books, 2022).

His latest novel, *The Narrow Window*, is due out from John Hunt Publishers in the fall of 2023.

His short fiction collections have been finalists for the University of Pittsburgh Press Drue Heinz Literature Prize and the Iowa Short Fiction Award. He has also been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

He holds an MFA in fiction writing from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and has taught fiction writing and literature at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Chicago Graham School.

His work has also appeared in *Glimmer Train*, *Quarterly West*, *Witness*, *In Posse Review* and *The William and Mary Review*. He has had stories anthologized by Red Hen Press and W.W. Norton's *Flash Fiction Forward*.

A Kansas native, Wilson and his wife, Modena, joined the Peace Corps in 1963. They spent the next two years in Swaziland, where Wilson taught English.

They now live in Chicago.

Of *Sing, Ronnie Blue*, **Bayo Ojikutu** wrote: "Gary Wilson has written here a poignant tale of imperfection and frailty and the bloody root of living mortality: the madness of family and illness and regret and the muddle of life claiming victory, even over implacable death. His story traces the profound force of individual origin, how the conditions from which we hail transcend time and memory and linger beyond their own limits within us, authoring fate, making a mess of well-laid lives, and proving the willful a feckless lot."

Literary Largess

Dues cover mailings and other organi-

zational expenses, but the Society always needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May

book awards banquet.

Thanks to **Elizabeth Fama**, who made a recent contribution.

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