

## Biblio File

Save the date: The 2025 Midland Authors book awards banquet will be held on May 13 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. Page 4.

Two years ago, **Arnie Bernstein** was interviewed for the documentary “The American Führer: Hitler’s Deputy in America.” Originally broadcast in Germany on its equivalent of PBS, as well as in England, “The American Führer” is now available on YouTube at <https://shorturl.at/2Dqwh>. ... Thanks to **Joseph Gustaitis** for his excellent years serving on the Midland Authors Board of Directors. Since he joined the board at the start of the 2014-15 year, Joe has not only been a stalwart board member, but has also in some years acted as a judge in the Adult Nonfiction and History categories of the Midland Authors book awards. (He is a History judge in the current book awards.) In recent years, he also has coordinated the Midland Authors tent at the Printers Row Lit Fest, which he has offered to continue to do. He joins other officers and board luminaries who have recently moved on to their next chapters, including **Carol Fisher Saller**,



Jim Schwab celebrates his 75th birthday with his wife, Jean.

**Patrick McBriarty**, **Kate Hannigan**, **Claire Hartfield**, **Lynn Sloan** and **Dick Simpson** (who, as a past president, remains an ex officio board member). ... **Keir Graff’s** fifth Linda Keir novel, titled *I Did Not Kill My Husband*, will be out in 2026. ...

On Dec. 20, Former Midland Authors President **Jim Schwab** retired from teaching a graduate-level course at the University of Iowa’s School of Planning and Public Affairs on how critical good planning can be to the outcome of disasters. He is now working on “writing a

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## An inside look at tempestuous term of a Chicago mayor

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

In his book, *The City Is Up for Grabs: How Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot Led and Lost a City in Crisis* (Chicago Review Press, 2024), **Gregory Royal Pratt** wrote that some of Chicago’s recent problems were “the result of [former Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s] poor leadership at City Hall.”

In a discussion with interlocutor **Mary Wisniewski**, the Midland Authors program chair, at the Midland Authors’ Jan. 16 program at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Richard J. Daley Library, Pratt

talked about Lightfoot’s term, including both the high and low points.

After Pratt started the program by reading a passage from his book, Wisniewski said, “This is a terrific book. It is concise, it is punchy, it is well-written, it is humorous.”

Pratt covered every day of Lightfoot’s term and was deeply sourced in City Hall, as well as in the other offices of local, state and national politics that shaped the mayor’s administration, Wisniewski said. A Chicago native, Pratt has won several national awards for his political reporting and he is a regular commentator about the city on local and national media, including appearances on CNN and NPR, she said.

Pratt said Lightfoot is “a very, very smart woman. She understands situations very well. ... She is very funny. Sometimes she can have a mean sense of humor. I like that, personally.”

But, Pratt said, the primary reason Lightfoot did not succeed was her personality.

“You have to be able to

**Gregory Royal Pratt** with his book *The City Is Up for Grabs* at the Midland Authors’ Jan 16 program. (Photo by Thomas Frisbie)



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*Literary Landscape*  
Upcoming program on  
Demystifying Publishing  
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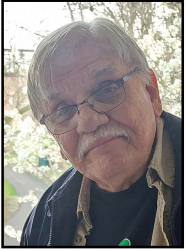
*Literary Latest*  
New Books

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## Biblio File

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book I promised to a literary agent with whom I worked years ago, a mashup of a professional memoir and planning history,” among other projects. Jim writes, “[The projects] are not the end of the



Dominic Pacyga

road, just the newest way of looking ahead. Ideally, they will also leave time for reading more books, traveling with my wife, meeting with friends and helping family for at least couple of more decades.” ... **Dominic**

**Pacyga** published a chapter, “Chicago, Public History, and Historical Discourse,” in *History in Public Space* (New York and London, Routledge, 2024) by Joanna Wojdon and Dorota Wisniewska. He served on a panel titled “Chronicling Polish America: A Panel Discussion of Three Recent Publications” during the Polish American Historical Association’s annual meeting in New York City, on Jan.

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## Literary License

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

## Inside look Continued from Page 1



Interlocutor Mary Wisniewski (left) chats with Gregory Royal Pratt about his new book, *The City Is Up for Grabs*, at the Midland Authors’ Jan. 16 program. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)



Midland Authors Board Members Jim Walker and David Witter and Midland Authors President Gerry Plecki at the Jan. 16 program at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Richard J. Daley Library. (Photo by Thomas Frisbie)

disagree and not take it personally,” he said. “... If she could have just toned that back a bit, she would still be mayor today.”

One of her losses was the creation by the state Legislature of a 21-member elected school board, the largest in the country, he said.

“A 21-member school board is a parliament. It’s not an elected school board anymore. ... The war between the Chicago Teachers Union and Lightfoot started out over philosophy, and then it got really, really personal,” he said.

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LITERARY LICENSE, FEBRUARY 2025

# Society of Midland Authors Program

## Demystifying Publishing 2

### Choosing and Negotiating with Publishers

(Insights: finding the right publisher and getting a fair deal)

Virtual Panel Discussion: 7-8 CST pm: *Free and open to all*

**Tuesday, February 11, 2025**

**To Join:** <https://uic.zoom.us/j/83294837491?pwd=oRpwosj6tEyZT0aZ1dSR17AOrYjPTz.1>

Or, for easier typing, use: <https://tinyurl.com/3ymdwztw>



**Wally Podrazik.** Moderator Walter Podrazik is Midland Authors vice president, teaches at the University of Illinois Chicago, and is co-author of 9 books. The latest is *Watching TV: American Television Season by Season*, just released from Syracuse University Press

**Sylvia Frank Rodrigue** acquires history and criminology books for SIU Press. Through her business Sylverlining she coaches authors and copy edits nonfiction and fiction manuscripts. She was editor-in-chief at LSU Press, associate editor at Stackpole Books, and coauthor of *Images of America: Baton Rouge*.

**Steve Baron** counsels businesses on intellectual property matters and helps clients resolve complex commercial disputes. His experience includes protecting and advising on trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets, defamation, privacy, right of publicity, advertising, and marketing. Steve represents media and entertainment clients' best interests in federal and state courts, administrative tribunals, arbitrations, and mediations. He works with publishers, authors, podcasters, advertising and marketing agencies, graphic artists, recording companies and recording artists, information technology businesses, and other businesses with intellectual property and publishing issues. [bhhlawfirm.com](http://bhhlawfirm.com) and Lawyers for the Creative Arts at [law-art.org](http://law-art.org)

**Marlene Targ Brill** is an award-winning author of more than 70 books for readers of all ages. She's had extensive experience with several different types of publishers. [marlenetargbrill.com](http://marlenetargbrill.com)

To learn more, contact moderators MarleneTarg Brill: [marlenetbrill@comcast.net](mailto:marlenetbrill@comcast.net) or Walter Podrazik: [wallypodrazik@live.com](mailto:wallypodrazik@live.com).

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3. His book, *Clout City: The Rise and Fall of Chicago's Political Machine* will be published by the University of Chicago Press in the fall of 2025. Also, he is working on a memoir recounting his early life in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood and working in the Union Stock Yards until they closed in 1971. ... On Jan. 15, **Michele Weldon** wrote "Bring Back Truth – March Against Lies, Fake News, and Disinformation." ...



**Amina Gautier**

**Eldon Ham** wrote, "When sports turn violent, it can lead to legal action" for the Dec. 1 Chicago Sun-Times. ... **Amina Gautier** spoke and shared her writing at the 2024 Hazel L. Jackson Lecture Series at Millersville University in Pennsylvania on Nov. 7. Also, she attended the Chicago Writers Association's Book of the Year Award ceremony on Jan. 18 at the Tip Top Tap, Warwick Allerton Hotel, in Chicago, where her short story collection *The Best That You Can Do* was awarded Honorable Mention in the Traditional Fiction category. **Frank Joseph** won an honorable mention in the Indie Fiction category for *To Do Justice* (Book Three of Frank's *Chicago Trilogy*), **Dipika Mukherjee** won an honorable mention in the Traditional Nonfiction category for *Writer's Postcards* and **Victoria Granacki** won an honorable mention in the Indie Nonfiction category for *An Artist Goes to War: Leon Granacki in the South Pacific WWII*. ...



**Jim Daniels**

George Bilgere's Oct. 20 "Poetry Town" featured **Jim Daniels'** poem "American Cheese." ... **Paul McComas** writes to say, "I've been in between book publications since 2014 but I've got a couple (including my first non-fiction, from McFarland) due in 2026. ... The third edition of *Edgar Miller and the Handmade Home: Chicago's Forgotten Renaissance Man* by **Richard Cahan** and **Michael Williams** had a launch event and program on Jan. 25 at the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago. Richard writes to say, "Amazingly, there is excitement over this edition. About 60 people came. The new edition adds 16 pages with 10 years of scholarship about Edgar Miller by Zach Bleicher, executive director of Edgar Miller Legacy." Regular sales of the book will begin on Jan. 31. ... **Correction from the last issue: John Romeiser** was born in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Winnetka, Illinois. He was not born in Winnetka.

## Save the date: March program on books about Jane Addams

**Louise W. Knight**, who authored *Jane Addams: Spirit in Action*, **Marlene Targ Brill**, author of *Jane Addams: The Most Dangerous Woman in America* and perhaps other authors will be panelists on a Jane Addams program to be hosted on March 11 by the Midland Authors. March is National Women's History Month. The location has yet to be announced.

The program will feature different perspectives about Addams by authors who have written about her for different age readers.

Knight of Evanston, Illinois, is a biographer and historian. The first of her two biographies of Jane Addams is *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy* (University of Chicago press, 2005). It covers Addams' life in depth through her 40th year, including

the lessons she gained during her first 10 years at Hull House. *Spirit in Action* (W.W. Norton, 2010), Knight's second biography is the first full-life biography of Addams in 40 years.



**Louise W. Knight**

Brill is the author of 74 award-winning books for readers of all ages and an SMA board member. For years, she had wanted to write about Jane Addams. She finally got the chance with her recent middle-grade/YA biography (Ohio University Press, 2024).

The program will either be at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Richard J. Daley Library or in Hull House, which is also on the UIC campus.

Full details will be in the March Literary License and, when available, will be posted at [midlandauthors.org](http://midlandauthors.org) and sent to members via email.

**Richard Cahan** and **Michael Williams** had a launch event and program on Jan. 25 at the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago. Richard writes to say, "Amazingly, there is excitement over this edition. About 60 people came. The new edition adds 16 pages with 10 years of scholarship about Edgar Miller by Zach Bleicher, executive director of Edgar Miller Legacy." Regular sales of the book will begin on Jan. 31. ... **Correction from the last issue: John Romeiser** was born in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Winnetka, Illinois. He was not born in Winnetka.



**Michael Williams (left) and Richard Cahan with the third edition of *Edgar Miller and the Handmade Home: Chicago's Forgotten Renaissance Man*.**



**Kurt Steib, Joe Peterson and Midland Authors Board Member Dominic Pacyga attend the Midland Authors Jan. 16 program at the University of Illinois at Chicago Library. (Photo by Thomas Frisbie)**

Politicians, like school children, will take a mile if you give them an inch, he added.

Lightfoot got the city through tough times, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Pratt said. But it was “in the most chaotic way possible ... [although] people generally liked the way she handled COVID,” he said.

But she failed in her selection of a police superintendent, he said.

One of the first things Lightfoot did when she became mayor was to start having meetings with about 15 of the top brass in the police department, he said. The previous mayors, Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emanuel, met with the superintendent and the top deputy, not 15 people.

Lightfoot said the meetings were going to be “accountability Mondays,” and she was going to chew them out for what happened in the previous weekend.

“From the cops’ perspective, this was someone who had never put handcuffs on a person, so she doesn’t understand the job,” Pratt said. “She’s bragging about how she is going to kick their butt in the



**Listeners hear inside stories from author Gregory Royal Pratt about the term of former Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Richard J. Daley Library. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)**

press. ... The ultimate irony is when [she] had a police superintendent who is failing, [she] did not hold him accountable.”

“It is a window into why she failed. The politics of that and the substance of that.”

Wisniewski said one of her favorite bits in the book was during the riots Lightfoot

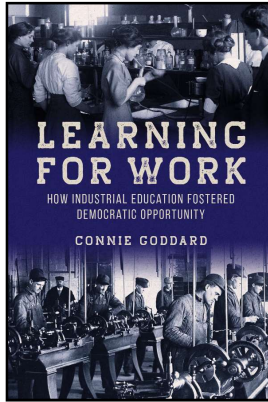
was looking at screens that showed the unrest, and she was saying, ‘That guy, go arrest that guy.’ She was trying to do the officers’ jobs for them.”

Pratt said that “was not helpful.”

At the end of the evening, Pratt sold out signed copies of his books, a pleasant way to end a program for any author.



## Literary Latest



### BUSY FALL

**Connie Goddard** writes from New Jersey about her new book, which is set largely in Chicago and. It was published in September: *Learning for Work: How Industrial Education Fostered Democratic Opportunity* (University of Illinois Press).

“It’s been a busy fall, one that brings to mind a comment from a fellow author who said, ‘When I write it and you read it, it’s art. In between it’s all business.’” Goddard wrote.



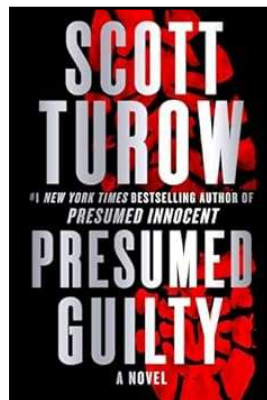
**Connie Goddard**

“The truth of that has really been coming home to me. In September, I attended Printers Row at the University of Illinois press booth, then enjoyed an author event sponsored by UIC’s College of Education, which is where I got my graduate degrees. In October, a local historical society hosted a book launch party; great fun selling books to one’s friends! In November, I was back in Chicago for the

Historians of Education gathering, where I gave a talk about the long and distinctive history of industrial ed in Chicago, which began in the 1880s, and was fostered by Jane Addams, John Dewey and Ella Flagg Young, along with a host of others. Then back to New Jersey and a talk at a local library; in between, I did some podcasts with fellow historians.

“A few other talks are scheduled for February – one of the schools I’ve written about was located here. And as I write, in mid-January, the first review just appeared, in Front Porch Republic. I was delighted. The reviewer is a plumbing instructor and theology student – a great background for dealing with the book’s topic.

“My next project is to get some op-eds out there. I’ve got to reach beyond the academic market if I want to sell books. More info about it is on my website.”



**‘ABSORBING AND ENTERTAINING READ’**

**Scott Turow’s** latest book is *Presumed Guilty* (Grand Central Publishing, Jan. 14, 2025). On Jan. 27, the front page of the New York Times said: “Turow brings

a Hero Back: The novelist has returned once again to a character who was at the center of the action in *Presumed Innocent*.”

From the publisher: “Rusty is a retired judge attempting a third act in life with a loving soon-to-be wife, Bea, with whom he shares both a restful home on an idyllic lake in the rural Midwest and a plaintive hope that this marriage will be his best, and his last.

“But the peace that’s taken Rusty so long to find evaporates when Bea’s young adult son, Aaron, living under their supervision while on probation for drug possession, disappears. If Aaron doesn’t return soon, he will be sent back to jail.

“Aaron eventually turns up with a vague story about a camping trip with his troubled girlfriend, Mae, that ended in a fight and a long hitchhike home. Days later, when she still hasn’t returned, suspicion falls on Aaron, and when Mae is subsequently discovered dead, Aaron is arrested and set for trial on charges of first-degree murder.

“Faced with few choices and even fewer hopes, Bea begs Rusty to return to court one last time, to defend her son and to save their last best hope for happiness. For Rusty, the question is not whether to defend Aaron, or whether the boy is in fact innocent – it’s whether the system to which he has devoted his life can ever provide true justice for those who are presumed guilty.”

Publishers Weekly, in a starred review, wrote, “This easily ranks among Turow’s best.”



**Scott Turow**

## Literary Largesse

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 **Richard Bales** and **Charles Billington**, who made recent contributions.

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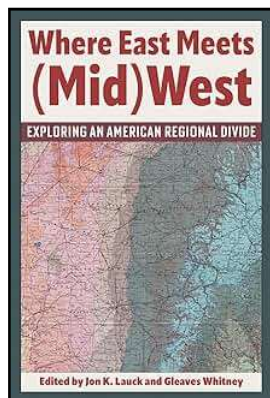
## Literary Latest

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### RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES

Midland Authors Board Member **Jon K. Lauck** is the co-editor of *Where East Meets (Mid)West: Exploring an American Regional Divide* (The Kent State University Press, March 28, 2025).

From the publisher: “Somewhere west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio



River, the Midwest begins. Just where exactly, and how, and why are the questions explored in *Where East Meets (Mid)West*. Bringing together a range of

perspectives, the volume argues that while cultural boundaries remain difficult to define, Ohio has been central to regional transitions throughout history. To Native Americans, Ohio was the meeting place of two major drainage basins: the Ohio River and the Great Lakes Basin, which resulted in large amounts of trade activity, cultural exchange, and conflict. During America’s westward expansion, Ohio was an essential pathway, the first of the new Northwest territories to gain statehood, and a battleground over the issue of enslavement.



**Jon K. Lauck**

“More recently, Ohio’s diverse makeup – a combination of rural agriculture, new industry, urbanism, and the Rust Belt – has made it challenging to categorize. Is it part of the Midwest? Does the Midwest even begin in Ohio, or does the transition start in western New York or along the western edge of Pennsylvania? The contributors to *Where East Meets (Mid)West* wrestle with these questions of cultural and regional identity, exploring from various angles what it means to be Midwestern.”

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**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. Send the nomination, including a mailing address for the nominee, 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](mailto:tomfrisbie@aol.com).*

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## Final chapters

BY RICHARD LINDBERG

It is with remorse and deep personal regret that I announce the passing of my longtime writing colleague and friend **Carol Jean Carlson**, past president of the Society of Midland Authors from 2001 to 2003, and book awards chair from 1998 to 2012. Carol died peacefully on Jan 22 in Minneapolis, following several debilitating strokes she had suffered over the past few months.

She was 81 and had lived a rich and rewarding life, dedicating much of her time and energy in later years toward the advancement of so many worthy causes, including Scrap Mettle Soul, a community theater ensemble performing musicales and light sketches inside the Margate Park Fieldhouse in Edgewater/Uptown, where she resided for many years before returning home to Minnesota in 2017.

Carol was born and raised in Minneapolis, earning her bachelor’s degree in chemistry and English literature at the University of Minnesota. During her first marriage, she relocated to the Windy City, earning a master’s degree in finance and international business at the University of Chicago. She founded a highly successful technical writing business with a focus on developing complex RFI patent language for medical firms and laboratories bringing new products to market with FDA governmental approval, but over time she became disillusioned with “big pharma” and its processes and practices.

In 2000, she abandoned this thriving career to answer her calling to become an Uptown community activist, which she pursued with vigor, intensity and deep commitment. She joined a coalition of architectural preservationists in an effort to raise the necessary funds to refurbish the shuttered Uptown Theater on Broadway, a project requiring millions of dollars of investment capital and strong City Hall support that sadly never materialized. Carol was deeply passionate about the plight of Uptown’s homeless population, and on many occasions she would open her Farragut Street apartment to indigent persons trying to escape from the brutal cold on fierce winter nights.

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## Final chapters

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It was around this time that I met Carol through our common Swedish ancestry and shared interests in the land of our forebears.

Carol grew up in a Swedish culture in Minneapolis, and although she was several generations removed from the old country, she became deeply involved in the start-up of the Swedish-American Museum on Clark Street in the late 1970s.

Carol wrote articles for Swedish-American publications, and greatly assisted me with research and editing for my 2011 memoir *Whiskey Breakfast: My Swedish Family My American Life*. We commenced a rewarding writing partnership that, although sometimes stormy, endured for over a decade despite our occasional differences of opinion. In 2009 we co-authored *Chicago: Yesterday & Today*, a coffee table book.

I encouraged her to join the Society of Midland Authors in 1997 as an associate member. SMA welcomed her in, and, as was her custom, she was never passive or shy about taking on projects. A year later she volunteered to take over supervision of the SMA Book Awards judging and continued on in this role until 2012, which must surely rank as a longevity record for such a demanding yearly task.

Carol and I conceived the annual Printer's Row Lit Fest exhibiting opportunity for SMA members in 1999, and each year for the first few years, we checked in the authors and battled to keep our space and their books dry during the rainstorms pelting the festival with annoying, yearly regularity. She forged strong friendships with the late **Stella Pevsner** and **Shirley Haas**, delighting in Shirley's annual New Year's Eve gatherings along the lakefront. These ladies were truly the grande dames of the SMA, fortifying the Society back in the day.

Next, Carol engaged her very good friend and Uptown resident **Mary Claire Hersh** to oversee the development of the SMA website at a time when the Society was in desperate need of establishing a better web presence after several earlier attempts had failed. Working late into the nights Mary Claire designed and maintained the site as webmaster par excel-



**Carol Carlson was president of the Society of Midland Authors from 2001 to 2003, and book awards chair from 1998 to 2012.**

lence for many years to come.

How well I remember and cherish those many wonderful evenings following SMA board meetings and monthly membership meetings when Mary Claire, Carol, Mary Claire's husband, the late Bill Hersh and I would repair to the Calo Restaurant in Andersonville and while away the hours talking, laughing and drinking until the restaurant motioned our waiter to kick us out. We spoke of theater and books and politics and marriage and life and every other topic under the sun as we sipped martinis and devoured Italian fare. Mary Claire and Carol and I were dear friends. And Calo, you see, was the only Edgewater/Andersonville dining establishment open after 10 p.m.

Those memorable times faded away with the advancing years and the coming serious setbacks. Carol broke both of her hips after two falls on city streets and became wheelchair-bound following multiple surgeries. She never again walked any distance of consequence, and a family decision had to be made.

It was resolved that she would live out the remainder of her years with her younger brother in a Twin Cities residential neighborhood. It was very hard for her to leave behind the cultural whirl of

Chicago, by her later admission, and the many plays and musicals she so loved. Her daughter Christina works in Chicago theater, and the complimentary tickets she provided to Carol during those years were manna.

Theater was her passion.

Carol left the city rather suddenly and without explanation. Many of her old friends who were not made aware of her departure remained puzzled for the longest time as she began her new life up north enjoying the Guthrie Theater and the company of childhood friends before eventually renewing her Chicago contacts. In addition to Christina, she leaves behind a stepson, Aaron Carlson, and many nieces and nephews residing in Minneapolis.

Carol was a supportive and encouraging presence in my life, as she was for so many others who appreciated her grace, quiet dignity and brilliance of mind. She was conversant in so many fields of human endeavor and spoke with authority on far-flung subject matters that came up. I consider myself the recipient of good fortune to have crossed her path and known her for as long as I did.

It is almost impossible for me to believe she is gone.