

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

The 2025 Printers Row Lit Fest (the 40th annual) will be Sept. 6 and Sept. 7.

Biblio File

Mark Jacob was scheduled to speak about his latest book, *Globetrotter: How Abe Saperstein Shook Up the World of Sports*, on Feb. 23 at the Evanston [Illinois] Public Library. ... An AI-generated review of **Barbara Gregorich's** novel *Exit Velocity* popped up on her browser. Barbara reports AI appears to have gone through all the book's reviews and summarized them. ...

Helen Lambin co-wrote a Feb. 8 letter for the Chicago Tribune criticizing ageist jokes. ... **Jonathan Eig**, author of *King: A Life* (See Literary Latest, May/June 2023), spoke about King on a Jan. 3 episode of NPR's 'Book of the Day' podcast. Eig also talked about King with Michael Eric Dyson in November at the [Philadelphia] Citizen's seventh annual "Ideas We Should Steal Festival" presented by Comcast NBCUniversal. ... In the Feb. 8 New York Times, novelist Robyn Gigl included **Scott Turow's** *Presumed Innocent* in a list of "7 Great Legal Thrillers." Also, in the Feb. 6 Chicago Tribune, **Rick Kogan** writes of Scott's latest book, *Presumed Guilty* (See Literary Latest, February, 2025), "It is a fine book, one that displays all of Turow's finely-honed literary gifts, among them that he is as powerful a courtroom dramatist as there is." ...

Samrat Upadhyay, winner of the 2007 Midland Authors Adult Fiction Award, has a new book out, *Darkmotherland* (Soho Press). ... In February, **Dominic Pacyga** wrote "Chicago, always a sanctuary for the dispossessed" for the Chicago Sun-Times. ... **Dan Dinello** wrote a feature story that was published on the website Informed Comment titled "Demonic Duo Trump and Musk Detonate a Blast Wave at U.S. Foreign Aid, Harming

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Walter
Podrazik

Sylvia Frank
Rodrigue

Steve
Baron

Marlene
Targ Brill

Panelists cast light on inside of getting a book published

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

At the Midland Authors Feb. 11 program on "Demystifying Publishing," four panelists started out by discussing the pros and cons of big, indie, university and small publishers. Held virtually on Zoom, it was the second Midland Authors Demystifying Publishing program. The first was on Nov. 12.

Midland Authors Member **Marlene Targ Brill** said bragging rights are one of the advantages of publishing with one of the Big Five publishers – Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers and Simon & Schuster.

Other advantages are big publishers produce professional-looking books, have the reach to promote books and have the respect that helps get books reviewed, said Brill, an award-winning author of more than 70 books.

The drawback is their books go out of print faster, especially if there are not a large number of sales, she said.

"One book I had, they wanted to put it out of print, even though it had sold out and won awards," she said. "I was able to eke out another six months, but then they stopped publishing it."

There is a difference in how much marketing support authors can expect from middle-size publishers, Brill said. Educational publishers tend to keep books in print for a very long time, though advances are "a lot, lot, lower."

Smaller publishers provide a "more personal experience, with a lot of hand-holding on both sides," she said. But their print runs are smaller, she added.

Sylvia Frank Rodrigue advised authors to start their book proposals with "the comps," a description of how similar books have performed. If you need an agent, look in the acknowledgments lists for the names of agents, she said.

Authors can also check duotrope.com, which has up-to-date listings of publishers and agents, Rodrigue said.

Steve Baron, a lawyer who works with

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Millions.” ... **David Radavich** writes to say, “The annual Thomas Wolfe Society Conference will be held this year in Chicago on June 6-7. It may be of interest to some members of SMA. The focus will be on ‘Thomas Wolfe and the Rest of the Nation.’ Wolfe visited Chicago before his Western tour in 1938 and left with fond memories. Sadly, Chicago was also the city on his final train ride back to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. The conference will be at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Blvd., and the banquet will be held at the historic Berghoff restaurant. For more information about sessions and events, please visit thomaswolfe.org and the Facebook Thomas Wolfe Society page. I myself will be presenting a paper on Midwestern elements in Tennessee Williams and Thomas Wolfe.” ... In his newsletter, **Keir Graff** says, “On March 1, I’ll be joining **James Kennedy** to co-host the 90-Second Newbery Film Festival at the Treehouse Museum in Ogden, Utah. On March 9, we’ll bring the show back to Chicago at the Harold Washington Library Center. On March 19, Michael Moreci and I will introduce a 25th-anniversary screening of “Erin Brockovich” at the Lake Theater in Oak Park, Illinois.” ... Dan Bernstein, the top morning host at WSCR radio, posted about **Eldon Ham’s** Chicago Sun-Times op-eds, “Eldon Ham is always making us think.” ... In his Gordon Report, **Edward Gordon** writes, “Until American businesses shift from their current shareholder-priority focus of maximizing short-term profit to more balanced practices, U.S. skilled worker shortages will only continue to increase. America’s future labor economy is at stake.”

Demystifying

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publishers, authors and others with intellectual property and publishing issues, said authors can also check publishers-marketplace.com.

Baron said it’s also important for authors to do their homework so they don’t waste their time or anyone else’s.

Authors should find out what they can about submissions rules and target submissions to the right publisher, Baron said.

Midland Authors Vice President **Walter Podrazik** said it’s important to understand what is expected of you once a publisher says it’s good idea to publish a book. University presses, for example, have boards of review and, “There are different layers that you have to rightfully go through.”

Rodrigue said in general each manu-

script submitted to a university press goes to two peer reviewers who are experts in the field and anonymous to the author,

“The goal is to have a peer review help the author make the manuscript as strong as possible before publication,” she said. “Are there sources that have been left out? Is there wording that feels out of date?”

Baron said what authors should be looking for in an agent is someone with connections in the literary community who can shop a book proposal around.

Brill said, “Even if you have an agent or a lawyer, you have to look over the contract yourself. ... One thing I always tell people is to ask for more.”

When available, a video of the program will be posted at midlandauthors.org under “Events.”

Literary Latest

‘A BLESSING AND A GIFT’

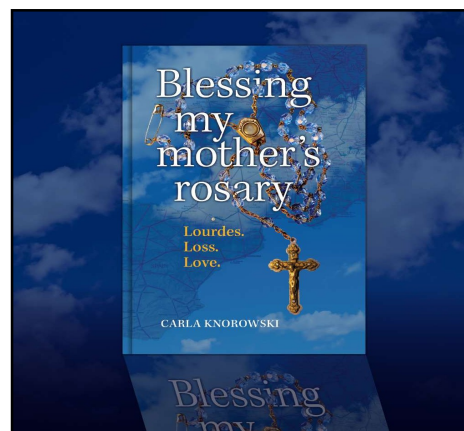
Carla Knorowski tells Literary Latest this about her latest book, *Blessing My Mother’s Rosary: Lourdes. Loss. Love.*

“The book has been marketed in the grief and travel areas, but it is also a memoir. It tells the story of my mother’s passing (and to some extent, her life) and my fulfilling her wish to have her favorite rosary blessed at the shrine in Lourdes, France. It chronicles my and my mother’s affinity with Lourdes and the almost 40-year quest to get the rosary blessed.

“Some reviewers think it almost para-



Carla Knorowski



ble-like. I was prompted to write the story after my mother’s death as I was grieving and felt a tremendous void with her loss. In time, the blessing of the rosary and the grief I felt turned out to be a blessing and a gift to me. The book similarly help those dealing with the loss of a loved one and working through their grief.

“Others who have read the book have told me that they also were living vicariously through my travels as documented in the book.

“I hope my mother’s story – her beautiful being and life and her struggles with mental health will help others as well.

“It was published by ACTA Publications at the end of 2024. It’s small, but mighty in its message, and people have called it inspirational and uplifting.”

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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 and click on the “Donate” button in the upper right corner.

Midland Authors Women's History Month Program

Jane Addams for All Ages

(Hear how Jane Addams, Hull House co-founder, served so many with her grit and bravery, and why authors of children's and adult books are drawn to her story.)

Panel Discussion: doors open 6:30; program 7-8 p.m. CST, **FREE**

University of Illinois library, 801 S. Morgan, Chicago

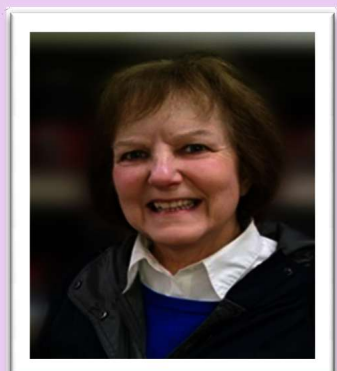
Tuesday, March 11, 2025



Carron Little Moderator Carron Little is the Executive Director of Chicago Women's History Center and works with the International Feminist Art Collective outofsite_chi, dedicated to public performance art practices. She is the convener of Chicago Women's History Conference working in partnership with Black Metropolis Research Consortium, Evanston History Center and the Women & Leadership Archives at Loyola University Chicago. The March conference theme is *Past & Present Strategies to Advance the Rights of Women*. Peace and justice is at the heart of Carron's research and writing as a feminist artist organizer.



Louise W. Knight, an Evanstonian, is a biographer and historian. The first of her two biographies of Jane Addams is *Citizen: Jane Addams and the struggle for Democracy* (U of C Press), which covers in depth her first ten years at Hull House. The second biography, *Jane Addams: Spirit in Action* (W.W.Norton) is the first full-life biography of Addams in forty years. See www.louisewknight.com.



Marlene Targ Brill, SMA board member, is an award-winning author of more than seventy books for readers of all ages. She's been a huge fan of Jane Addams since childhood, and when she started writing. Her recently published book is *Jane Addams: The Most Dangerous Woman in America* for middle graders and up. marlenetargbrill.com

To learn more, contact Marlene Targ Brill, marlenetbrill@comcast.net

Final Chapters

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Mahmoud Saeed, a powerful writer known throughout the Arab world who immigrated to Chicago in 1999, authored novels reflecting the harsh realities many people lived through, mixed with poignant and heartfelt insights into their struggles, their hopes and their daily lives.

Mr. Saeed, who joined the Midland Authors in 2010, passed away on Jan. 27 at Illinois Masonic Hospital in Chicago after a long illness. He was 89.

Born in 1935 in Mosul, Iraq, Mr. Saeed produced more than 20 novels and many short stories.

His 1956 short story “The Ominous Gun” was his literary debut, published in the Al-Fata newspaper in Iraq. He published his first novel in 1963. He won several literary awards in Iraq and Egypt.

“Mahmoud Saeed was an Iraqi writer of great gifts, who persevered in testifying to the truth despite the daunting and sometimes cruel circumstances of his own life,” said Kay Heikkinen, a now-retired University of Chicago lecturer in Arabic who translated Saeed’s early novel *Ben Barka Lane* (*Rue Ben Barka*).

“He was a prolific writer who was unfailingly generous with his translators, a gifted calligrapher and a keen observer of human nature and of politics – something that was already evident in his *Ben Barka Lane*, which is an absorbing account of the struggles of ordinary people in Morocco in the late 1960s, seen through the eyes of an exiled Iraqi who has come to Morocco as a teacher,” Heikkinen said. “His was a unique voice that will be sorely missed.”

Mr. Saeed left Iraq in 1985, immigrating to the United Arab Emirates, after being arrested and imprisoned six times. From 1963 to 2008, Iraqi authorities banned the publication of his novels.

Following the 1991 Gulf War, Mr. Saeed returned to Iraq only to flee again to Dubai.

After coming to Chicago’s Lake View neighborhood, he became an American citizen. In 2008, Syracuse University Press published two of his short stories, “Bitter Morning” and “A Figure in Repose.” In 2010, he was one of several writers profiled in a *New Yorker* article about the contemporary Arab novel.



Allen Salter (left) chats with author Mahmoud Saeed before the start of the Midland Authors’ Feb. 12, 2019, program at the Cliff Dwellers club in Chicago. Salter translated Saeed’s novel *The World Through the Eyes of Angels*. (Photo by Thomas Frisbie)

Mr. Saeed was an Arabic-language instructor and an author-in-residence at DePaul University, and he was a regular attendee at the Midland Authors’ monthly programs.

In 2014, the Guild Literary Complex named him one of “25 [Chicago] Writers to Watch.”

In 2016, he wrote a haunting op-ed in the *New York Times* about the destruction of historic Mosul at the hands of the Islamic State.

Besides *Ben Barka Lane* (Simon & Schuster), at least three of his other novels have been translated into English and published: *Saddam City*, *The World Through the Eyes of Angels* and *Two Lost Souls*.

The World Through the Eyes of Angels, set in Mosul, won the 2010 King Fahd Center Translation of Arabic Literature Award – an award for both the novel and the translation – and was published by Syracuse University Press in 2011. The novel was translated by Midland Authors member **Allen Salter** in collaboration with Zahra Jishi and Rafah Abuinnab.

Saddam City, Mr. Saeed’s best-known and semi-autobiographical novel, was published by London-based Saqi Books in

2004. It tells a story during the terrorizing reign of Saddam Hussain of a Baghdad teacher who is arrested as he reaches his school. For 15 months, he witnesses scenes of torture and is brutally interrogated, shuffled from one prison to another and barred from getting in touch with his family.

Former Midland Authors President **Robert Loerzel** said, “Mahmoud’s novels *Saddam City* and *The World Through the Eyes of Angels* helped to open my eyes to the perspective of Iraq’s people and how they heroically survived the huge upheavals in their homeland.

“Mahmoud often attended Midland Authors programs, chatting amiably with Allen Salter, who’d translated some of his fiction. I sensed that Mahmoud was eager to find a literary community in his new city. He often talked about how challenging it was for Arabic authors to get their work published – in the original language as well as in translation. Reading his books makes you wonder how much other worthwhile fiction remains untranslated into English, still waiting to be discovered by a wider audience.”

Mr. Saeed is survived by a son in Norway and a daughter in Dubai.

Services have been held.