

## Biblio File

On Oct. 18 and Oct. 19 during Open House Chicago 2025, Midland Authors Treasurer **Greg Borzo** gave four PowerPoint presentations to packed crowds at Hawksmoor Steakhouse at La Salle and Illinois Streets in Chicago. The building housing the steakhouse was erected in 1887 by transit titan Charles Tyson Yerkes as a cable car powerhouse. It drove the cables that ran underneath Chicago streets to pull cable car trains – until 1906. After that, the building was abandoned but miraculously saved, despite not receiving Chicago Landmark status until 2001. Recently, it has housed a series of restaurants, most notably Michael Jordan’s Steakhouse. Between 40 and 110 people attended each of the four sessions, which featured highlights from Borzo’s popular book, *Chicago Cable Cars*. In its renovations last year, Hawksmoor did a beautiful job emphasizing the building’s rich cable car history. ... In a post, **Rita Woods** writes, “One of the things I am so proud of is serving on my local library board. Libraries have always felt like such a magical space but



Rita Woods

in this era of book banning and ever more malignant censorship, libraries stand at the front lines serving as repositories of truth and sanctuaries for free ideas.” ... The Deems Taylor/Virgil

Thomson Award for an article in the pop music field – announced on Oct. 30 – goes to **Robert Marovich** for his article on the prolific Black songwriter Ted Jarrett, “The Black Songwriter Who Took Nashville by Storm,” published by Zocalo Public Square. ... **Craig Sautter** writes to say, “People still want books. The Rogers Park [Chicago] building where we lived for 45 years was sold and is being gutted

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# Storied histories

## Authors discuss their books about two Chicago edifices

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

It was the tale of two city buildings. **Keir Graff** and **Steven Dahlman** talked at the Midland Authors’ Nov. 4 program about the historic Chicago structures that are the topics of their new books.

Graff is the author of *Chicago’s Fine Arts Building: Music, Magic, and Murder* (Trope Publishing Co. June 3, 2025), his first nonfiction book. The foreword was written by **Gillian Flynn**, who presented the Midland Authors’ February 2013 program. Fittingly, the program was held at the Fine Arts Building.

Dahlman is the author of *Marina City: The Definitive History of a Chicago*

*Landmark* (Trope Publishing Co., March 17, 2026).

“One of the questions I like to to answer,” Graff said, “is certainly: What is the Fine Arts Building? Is it a vertical arts colony as is alleged by song, is it an office building for eccentrics, is it the violin mall of America, as I have heard it described?”

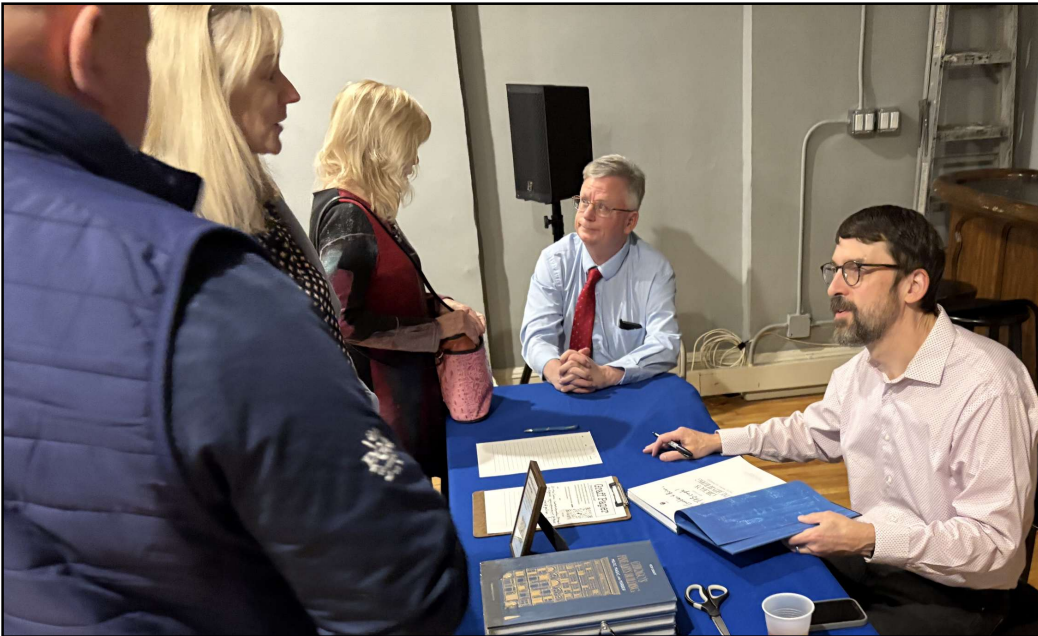
“It’s kind of all of these things, but it is also a place of business. It is not a place where artists just sit around, lounging around, waiting for inspiration to strike.

“This is a place where, you know, hard-working artists are often using the same means they would have made to create

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Steven Dahlman (left) and Keir Graff before the Midland Authors’ Nov. 4 program at the Fine Arts Building in Chicago. Dahlman’s book was not yet ready for sale. (Photo by Thomas Frisbie)



Steven Dahlman, seated at center, and Keir Graff, right, talk about their new books with attendees before the start of the Midland Authors Nov. 4 program at the Fine Arts Building in Chicago. (Photo by Thomas Frisbie)

their art 100 years ago, and they are still at it, but there is a profit motive. Most of the people here need to ... [like] pay their rent, so it is a hustle as it always was.

“The Fine Arts Building started out as the Studebaker Carriage Co. in 1885 – and this would be horseless carriages. It was a showroom/factory/assembly point for Studebaker carriages.”

Today, the roofline appears quite different, said Graff, who has published 15 books under three different names.

“It’s got these turrets – a really beautiful roofline,” he said.

The brothers who owned Studebaker opened a new building as they outgrew the one on Michigan Avenue. The Michigan Avenue building became a hub for the arts.

“It’s truly mind-boggling the speed with which they reimagined this building,” Graff said. “In less than a year, they completely retrofitted this building, added two stories, turned the first three floors into large, grand theater spaces, turned the upper floors into artists’ studios.

“The 10th floor had been designed as the kind of premier address of the building [with] artist studios with north-facing skylights and lofty ceilings. ... There were other halls and performance spaces and things throughout. And so it was rededicated in 1898 as the Fine Arts Building, with its squared-off roofline.

Marina City, which was designed to be a “city within a city,” was not the first choice for the name of Bertrand Goldberg’s architectural masterpiece on the Chicago River, Dahlman said.

“Goldberg wanted to call it River City. They eventually ended up building River City a little bit further down the river,” Dahlman said.

But because it had a marina, Marina City is the name that stuck, said Dahlman, who said he spent some 20 years writing his book.

Dahlman described many of the photos that appear in the book.

A photo of the groundbreaking for the development with its corncob-shaped towers includes many of the city’s political, real estate and government heavyweights, he said.

Another photo depicted Marina City’s design center.

“You couldn’t actually buy anything there, but you could go there, and if you had a home improvement project or you were building a home or had some contractor-level need for the latest designs, you’d go there, and you could see

exhibits. And they had this amazing spiral staircase,” said Dahlman, who is editor and publisher of Loop North News and a former radio news director, reporter, and anchor for more than a dozen stations, networks and news outlets.

On the sixth floor terrace, there are amazing curved structural columns, Dahlman said.

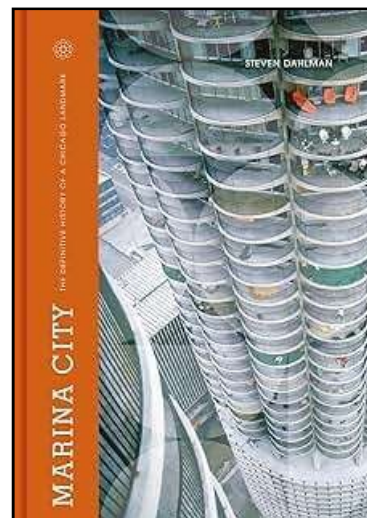
Residents could drive up to the forerunner of the ATM and put their money in a pneumatic tube.

Out of the hundreds of photos in the book, Dahlman said his favorite was of the Ice Follies at Marina City in 1966.

Dahlman said he also loved a photo of the WCFL radio studios.

“They had studios at what is now Hotel Chicago. It’s Larry Lujack [in the photo]. ... This would have been right after they switched to beautiful music, and Larry is graciously filling out his contract.”

Dahlman also showed photos of how movie productions prepared to film autos driving off the edge of one of Marina City’s towers and into the Chicago River.



# Using a road to chronicle America's past, present

**C**hristopher Clott is a former professor of international business and maritime logistics with a keen interest in how people live and work. After his long career in business and academia, *Unearthing Highway 41: An American Journey* is his first book. Here's what Clott tells *Literary License* about his new book.

**Literary License:** *Highway 41 runs for 2,000 miles through big cities, middle-sized cities, small towns, farms and forests. Was it a challenge to capture so much diverse history and culture in your book?*

**Christopher Clott:** Yes and no. The road itself was the thread that allowed me to make a narrative that could capture the sheer diversity of the country north to south. I like to think of Highway 41 as hiding in plain sight. Because it continues to be a vital highway for people and commerce, it does not engender the same appreciation as other American roads that have become mainly historical.

The past and present of America is all along Highway 41.

My challenge was to tell a story that is part travelogue, part history and part how the people and places along the road continue to impact our view of the country today.

**Literary License:** *Many volumes have been written about Route 66, but there are also many other historic roads in the United States. How did you choose Highway 41 to write about?*

**Christopher Clott:** I had been thinking about writing a book on Highway 41 for over 30 years. I grew up near the road and had traveled portions of it many times. I was convinced that there were many stories to share of people and places along its traverse.

I just needed the time to think about how I wanted to tell the story of the highway and of course be able to travel to the full extent of it.

**Jan. 28, 2026, program  
Harold Washington Library  
400 S. State St. Chicago  
Cindy Pritzker Auditorium  
6 p.m. - 7 p.m. Program  
Free**

**Literary License:** *How did you research this book?*

**Christopher Clott:** Over the years, I had collected information about the road from a variety of sources but was unsure about how to present it. A close friend of mine provided many good suggestions as to how to format all my research into a readable account. I then traveled the length of the highway during a three-year period to see it in its current iteration.

The road and all the places along the road are continually evolving.

My book is a snapshot of what Highway 41 is today.

**Literary License:** *What surprised you most as you learned more about Highway 41?*

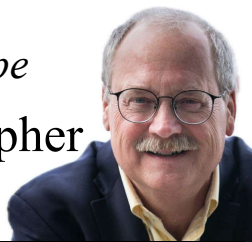
**Christopher Clott:** There were many surprises in my journey on Highway 41, but first and foremost was the Indigenous heritage of our country and the continued contributions by descendants of the original Americans of this land, something that I knew very little about. Too often, we think of our country as only beginning in 1776. A journey on Highway 41 illuminates the often-painful history and evolution of the country from long ago to the present.

**Literary License:** *What's your next book?*

**Christopher Clott:** Fiction! Based on notes made from my own long-ago first travel abroad, the next book will be a coming-of-age story about a 19-year-old learning about the larger world and his place within it.

## Literary Landscape

## Christopher Clott



## Biblio File

Continued from Page 1

so we had to move (around the corner). Our biggest problem was our library of 4,000 books. (Over the last decade, we'd already sold 1,000 books through



**This is a wall of 19th century to 21st century Chicago novels that was part of Craig Sautter's book collection before he had to leave his large apartment packed with books.**

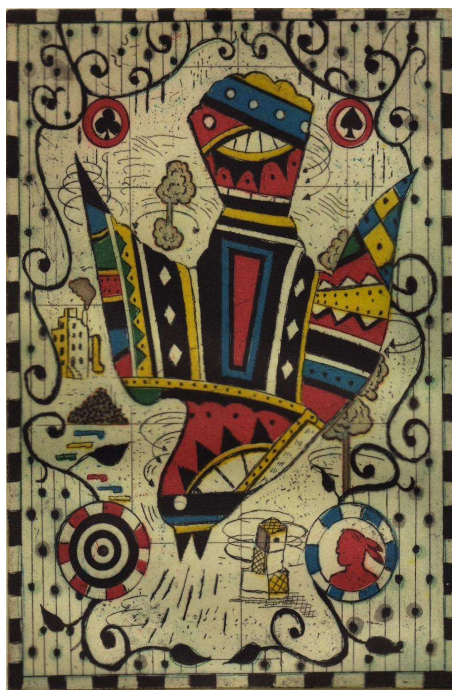
Amazon.) So, we put an ad, "Buy Your Family a Fabulous Library," on Facebook Marketplace. One woman bought our 500-plus philosophy books for a DePaul Ph.D. student from Guatemala whom she is sponsoring. A young couple with two children bought the remaining novels, art books, history, politics and so forth. Separately, we sold our 1,600 Small Press/Literary Magazine collection from 1940-2025. Altogether, they purchased 100 boxes of books! That ripped out my soul, but made our difficult move a little easier. And we found good homes and readers for our books." ... **Sharon Woodhouse's** *The Profitable Author* was named a Gold Medal winner in the Readers' Favorite book awards in the nonfiction: writing/publishing category. ... **Dan Dinello** wrote a feature story for University of Michigan Professor Juan Cole's website *Informed Comment* titled: "Trump's Siege of Chicago: 'War Within' and the City's Defiant Fight Against Tyranny." The story was illustrated by Chicago artist F.J. Zirbel. ... **Patrick McBriarty** has created his first post on Substack. ... **Robert K. Elder** had a busy year, notably moderating panels for the Nobel Peace Conference and Festival in Oslo, Norway, in August. As the presi-

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## Biblio File

Continued from Page 3

dent and CEO of Outrider Foundation, Robert led a panel titled “Renewing the Conversation and Strengthening the Pursuit of a World Without Nuclear Weapons.” The panel was part of a program that honored Nihon Hidankyo, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate organization that gathers the stories of those who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The 2024 Nobel Peace Prize was given to the organization “for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again.” Robert was also involved in the Nobel Laureate Assembly for the Prevention of Nuclear War at the University of Chicago in July, moderating a panel titled, “Communicating Nuclear Risk and Annihilation.” In September, Robert was the writer-in-residence at the Hemingway House, a residency program based in Ketchum, Idaho. He used the time to outline his next book about nuclear history. In October, Robert hosted fellow author and Oak Parker Alec Nevala-Lee as a speaker at the Outrider Nuclear Reporting Summit inside a former Titan II nuclear missile silo near Little Rock, Arkansas, and moderated two panels for the 2025 Nobel Peace Conferences. ... News from **Cynthia Clappitt**: “I have been selected again for the Illinois Humanities Road Scholars Speakers Bureau, offering programs based on my books, *Midwest Maize* and *Pigs, Pork and Heartland Hogs*. In addition, I am under contract with the University of Illinois Press to write what is essentially a sequel to my book *Destination Heartland*, which I hope will encourage readers to explore even more of the remarkable history of the Midwest. I’m loving the research. I have explored all 12 states of the Midwest – and there is SO MUCH HISTORY here that people don’t know about. I just returned from my final state, Ohio, last weekend. The first airplane, the first telescope in the United States, the birthplace of the weather service, half a dozen presidents, Annie Oakley and so much more. The Midwest is so underappreciated. ... Tony Fitzpatrick, an artist, poet and actor



### Tony Fitzpatrick’s artwork for the Midland Authors’ 100-year anniversary in 2015.

who created an artwork to honor the Midland Authors 100-year anniversary in 2015, died on Oct. 11 at age 66. ... Midland Authors Board Member **David Witter** was scheduled to sign books on Nov. 21 at Barbara’s Books at Macy’s in Chicago. ... **Margaret McMullan** says in an Oct. 30 post, “I went to Amandola, Italy, to talk to school children and learned about how generations of Italians recovered from fascism – all of which I wrote about for damemagazine.com. This piece is about immigrants, the military in our streets, and how this all might end as it did for Mussolini. Most importantly, this piece is about how people can and should help, just as they did in the past.” Margaret’s piece also got picked up in the Nov. 3 issue of Lit Hub Daily. ... On Nov. 1, former Midland Authors President **Richard Lindberg** wrote, in part, “[There was] a book reception and signing for my latest title – the coffee table history of the Saddle & Cycle Club, along with a time-capsule-laying in the garden before 75 members. [The capsule is] to be opened in 130 years. This was a wonderful project for me to have worked on that began in April 2024. Outgoing club manager Elisha Cicerone championed the decision to have a club history written, and I was honored to have been selected to write it.”

Also, on Feb. 10 at the North Shore Senior Citizens Center, Richard will trace the history of gang wars culminating in the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in 1929. Richard writes, “I will reveal the names of the killers who lined up the Moran men against the wall of the Clark Street garage that cold day in 1929.” \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. ... **Michelle Cox** writes to say, “After 10 successful years with She Writes Press, I made the decision to reclaim my publishing rights for the seven-book



Michelle Cox

Henrietta and Inspector Howard historical mystery series. This wasn’t about dissatisfaction – She Writes Press gave my 1930s-era Chicago mysteries a wonderful launch – but more about seizing an opportunity for greater creative and strategic control at this stage of my career. As an author with 11 published books under my belt, I felt ready to take on the challenges and rewards of independent publishing, from cover design to marketing decisions. The republishing process has been both excit-

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## Literary License

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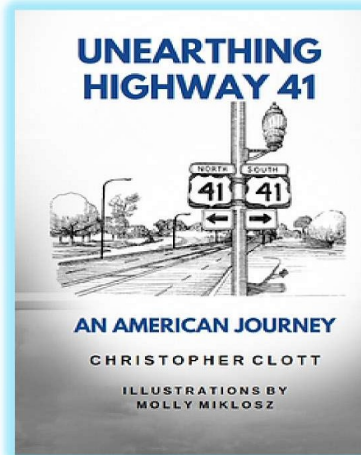
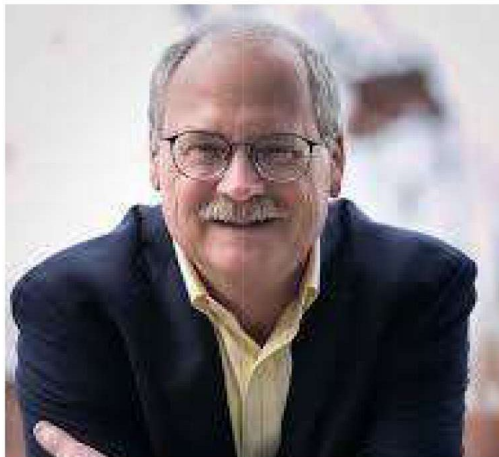
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Society of Midland Authors members can pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal (there is a \$1 fee to help cover PayPal’s fee). To make a donation, visit our home page at [www.midlandauthors.org](http://www.midlandauthors.org) and click on the “Donate” button in the upper right corner.

**Midland Authors presents**

# **Unearthing Highway 41**

**An American Journey**



**Chris Clott will launch his intriguing new book**

**Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026; 6-7p.m.**

**Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State St.**

**Cindy Pritzker Auditorium**

***Free, open to the public. No need to register.***

***Come along for a virtual ride through eight states, from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to the southern tip of Florida.***

***Visit huge cities and quiet hamlets; museums and roadside attractions; monuments and exciting new sites along America's most important, historical and colorful North-South highway.***

Christopher Clott is a former professor of international business and maritime logistics with a keen interest in how people live and work.

After a long career in business and academia, this is his first book.

When he is not on the road in search of fascinating places to see, he lives with his wife in Western Springs, Ill.

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For more information, contact Greg Borzo: (312) 636-8968; gregborzo54@gmail.com



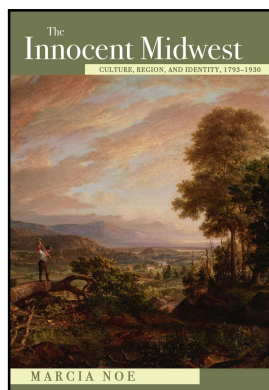
## Literary Latest

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bers, but I was personally between writing projects. I couldn't not participate! I was in charge! So the night before the challenge started, I made a list of all the things that were bringing me joy. The list was: Americana, country music, dogs, Chicago (I missed my city!), and ... cereal. (I was cutting out carbs at the time.)

"I didn't finish the book then, or even the challenge. But I had written 50 fun pages. When I rediscovered them in 2022 – after a diagnosis of breast cancer and another rough year in treatment – those pages made me laugh. By creating just to create, I had stumbled on my truest voice. As Miles Davis said, sometimes it takes a long time to sound like yourself. I finished the book listening to a lot of country music.

"Now I'm a cancer survivor and can't wait to talk about *Wreck Your Heart* with readers."



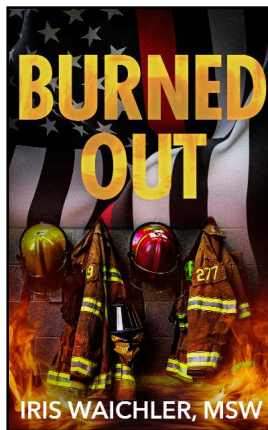
### PUZZLING PARADOX

Book news from **Marcia Noe**: "Early in my work on Midwestern literary studies, I was intrigued by a puzzling paradox: Why does the Midwest continue to be seen as a wholesome, virtuous, harmonious region despite much empirical evidence to the contrary? I began to explore this paradox through research that resulted in papers and essays for The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature's conferences and journals. My research revealed that the trope of the innocent Midwest recurs frequently in the region's popular and literary culture.

"The book that resulted from this

research, *The Innocent Midwest: Culture, Region, and Identity, 1793-1930*, traces the origin and development of this trope in a number of key texts by authors such as Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Booth Tarkington, Ole Rolvaag, Zona Gale, William Dean Howells and Mark Twain that have inscribed the notion of the innocent Midwest on the national consciousness. It also discusses work by lesser-known authors, such as Luther Standing Bear, Maria Susanna Cummins, David Graham Phillips and Oscar Micheaux.

"This book argues that the strong grounding of these works in democratic ideology informed by agrarianism, Christianity and commitment to education has been formative in the construction of the innocent Midwest in the American cultural imaginary and analyzes the persistence of this notion, identifying several factors that explain its resilience.



### UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

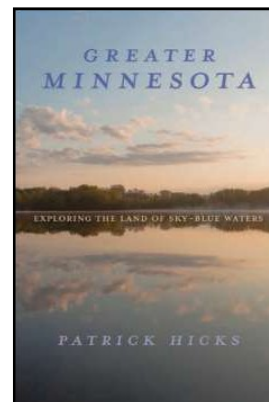
**Iris Waichler** has a new book coming out in January. She is working with Manhattan Book Group Publishing. The book is called *Burned Out*.

Waichler tells Literary Latest, "*Burned Out* came about after many discussions with a friend who is a fireman. We both thought it would be important for people to understand the repeated trauma that paramedics, emergency medical technicians and paramedics experience on the job. The trauma also touches the lives of family members and loved ones. I did interviews with first responders and family members from around the country. The book shares ways to cope and resources for everybody to tap into."

Recently, Waichler was interviewed on the Joey Pinz podcast. In this podcast, she discussed a lifetime of social work. The conversation includes ways to cope with burnout for people who experience infertility, people who are caregivers, have catastrophic medical conditions and those that suffer grief and loss."



Iris Waichler



### MOST FUN

**Patrick Hicks** writes to say, "My latest book, *Greater Minnesota* (Sept. 1), is easily the most fun I've had as a writer. Perhaps this isn't surprising because my three previous novels focused on the Holocaust. For over 15 years, I researched and wrote about that darkness, and, while I'm proud of the work I created, it was taking a toll on my mental health. I needed a change. Around this time, Indiana University Press approached me about writing a book about my home state. The invitation intrigued me because I never imagined myself as a travel writer. If I could write something that was part travelogue and part history book, maybe it would allow me to try something new? And so, I said yes.

"Writing *Greater Minnesota* allowed me to visit places I'd heard about all my life, but never visited. I traveled 6,500



Patrick Hicks

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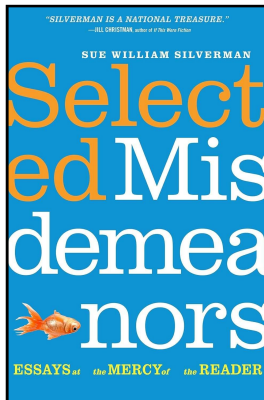
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## Literary Latest

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miles across the state and went to the North Shore, the Iron Range, the Southwest, and Up North in the dead of winter. As I drove the back roads of the state, I found myself visiting the Mayo Clinic, the SPAM Museum, ancient petroglyphs, the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame, a world-class aviation museum hidden on the prairie, a lost forest and the humble start of the Mississippi River. Now that I'm on book tour, it's been a delight to make audiences laugh and think about what it means to be a Minnesotan. And for me? Writing this book has been something of an antidote, a healing balm, a new beginning.



### COLLECTION OF FLASH ESSAYS

**Sue William Silverman** tells Literary Latest, “My new book, *Selected Misdemeanors: Essays at the Mercy of the Reader* (University of Nebraska Press, Sept. 1, 2025), is a collection of flash essays. As a writer, I needed a new challenge.

“Previously, I’d only written long-form narratives. Here, I wanted to utilize a small external structure that would, nevertheless, through metaphor, reveal vast worlds within.

“While we frequently tend to write about big events in our lives such as marriage, divorce, illness, death of a loved one, scary childhoods – events best



**Sue William Silverman**

served by memoir or personal essay – most of our time is lived between these momentous occasions.

“In *Selected Misdemeanors*, I focus on these smaller moments of time, brief episodes that comprise so much of our lives. After all, we gain insight and wisdom in these contained moments. I wanted to explore shimmering epiphanies, my own brief emotional misdemeanors, transgressions, miscalculations of love and betrayal.

“And not to worry: None of my misdemeanors are crimes in the legal sense. None resulted in jail time!”

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## New Members

**Lynn Fitzgerald** is the author of *Closer to the Earth*, a book of poems, selected for a Chicago Area Artists Program award and published by Moon Journal Press.

Her poem, “The Stendhal Syndrome” received a Jane Hirschfield award, and the poem, “Houseplant,” received an award from the Tallgrass Writers poetry contest.

She has served as poet-in-residence for the Chicago Public Library, where she developed and taught creative writing classes, as a writer and researcher for River Oaks Arts magazine, and she has read and presented for the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Her poems have been published in literary journals and have been selected for inclusion in exhibits. She has been a featured reader and has been invited to read at the University of Bordeaux, the American University of Paris and the American University of Beirut.

She was nominated by **Westley Heine**.

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## Literary Largesse

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but the Society always needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May book awards banquet. Thanks to **Lori Andrews**, **Lucia Cordell Getsi** and **Stanley M. Totten**, who made recent contributions.

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## Biblio File

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ing and exhausting. At the beginning of this process, I was tempted to rewrite the books completely, but upon reflection decided to preserve the stories as originally written. Instead, I went through and lightly edited, looking for overused words and typos, and I reworked some of the dialogue to make it more regionally authentic. I’ve also added some new features, such as a cast of characters, more detailed author notes about inspiration and research, series recap, and book club questions, to name a few. The biggest change was probably the covers and the stylized interiors, which I hope better capture the series’ old-fashioned flavor and romantic suspense. The goal isn’t just to reissue the same books with new ISBNs, but also to present the best possible version of Henrietta and Clive’s story while preserving the 1,600-plus reader reviews that have built this series’ community. For authors considering a similar path, I’d say this: It is a lot of work, but for me, having complete creative control and better marketing flexibility has been worth it! I hope to have some actual new releases in 2026.” ... **Richard Babcock’s** novel *A Small Disturbance on the Far Horizon* (See Literary Latest, November, 2025) is now available as an audiobook. ... On Jan. 14, **John Holden**, author and president of Chicago’s Edgewater Historical Society & Museum, will provide a visual tour at the North Shore Senior Citizens Center of many of the elegant heritage buildings on Broadway in Edgewater that are at risk because of the city’s recent upzoning. Many of these buildings are among the unsung heroes of Chicago’s City Beautiful Movement. \$15 for members, \$20 for nonmembers. The program can be attended either in person or online. ... **Christoph Irmscher** was named the winner of the 2025 Kukula Award for Excellence in Nonfiction Book Reviewing in the smaller publications category. ... **John Kropf’s** “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, Perch Sandwiches, Baby Steps, and Other Memories of Growing Up on the Great Lakes,” appeared in the Great Lakes Review on Oct. 30.

# Awards Entry Form

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: January 31, 2026** | Print four copies of this form and send one copy with your payment. One copy should also go with each of the books that go to the three judges in your entry's category. Please type or print clearly. Note: We need author contact information to communicate with winner: providing only editor's contact information will disqualify the book.

Name of book: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_

Publication date: (if publication date differs from copyright date, please explain in "Comments" section below.)

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Author's address: (must be author's info) \_\_\_\_\_

Author's email address: (must be author's actual email address) \_\_\_\_\_

**Category of entry (check one). Entries improperly categorized will be disqualified:**

ADULT FICTION

BIOGRAPHY and MEMOIR: (Adult)

ADULT NONFICTION

CHILDREN'S FICTION

POETRY (Adult)

CHILDREN'S NONFICTION

HISTORY

***I nominate the above work for a Society of Midland Authors Award.***  
(Authors or publishers may nominate works)

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Company and Business title: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone and email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If the author is not currently a resident of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota or Wisconsin, please explain the author's connection to this region: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**CHECK MIDLANDAUTHORS.ORG FOR FULL LIST OF CONTEST JUDGES**

# Rules for the 2026 book awards

The Midland Authors is now accepting submissions for its annual literary awards, which will honor books by Midwestern authors published in 2025.

Please read the following rules carefully before submitting. These rules are posted on our website at [midlandauthors.org/how-to-submit/](http://midlandauthors.org/how-to-submit/)

(Please note that we are using a new domain, [midlandauthors.org](http://midlandauthors.org), at this time rather than our previous .com website.)

## 2026 Competition Rules (for Books Published in 2025)

The Midland Authors Awards recognize book writing excellence by Midwestern authors. Three judges on each committee will select one winner that is best in that category. Category winners receive \$750 and a recognition award. Judges may also deem up to three honorees as worthy of recognition. Each honoree will receive a commemorative award. All honors will be given out at the awards banquet on May 12. Follow the directions below to submit a book and pay the entry fee.

To enter this year's competition, fill out the online entry form for each nominated book. A printed entry form must also accompany each book sent to each of the three judges in its category. The entry form must also be mailed to Midland Authors Awards Chair **Gerry Plecki**, at the address listed for him in the judge's category.

Note: If your entry is in the Adult Nonfiction category, you will not need to send him an extra form – the entry form you mail him with your book will suffice. This totals four printed forms per title (one to each of the three judges, and one to Gerry Plecki, competition coordinator) in addition to the online form which you will submit electronically. A copy of your book (with the required entry form) must be sent to each judge in your category. Entry forms must specify payment information. Books unaccompanied by completed entry forms will not be considered. Each book entry must have a 2025 publication date that corresponds with its copyright date.

A book may be nominated by its author or publisher. The author must either reside in, be born in or have lived in one of the 12 Midland states the Midland

Authors represents: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

If the author lives outside these states, please indicate any connection to the Midwest on the "comments" section of the entry form.

Each submission requires an entry fee of \$35, \$30 for members. The online form allows payment by PayPal or credit card. To pay by a mail service, send a check and a printed copy of the entry form to Gerry Plecki, 33 King Henry Road SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065. If you pay by check or money order, be sure to write the author's name on the face of the check or money order so we can confirm the paid entry. A copy of the entry form should also accompany each book that you mail to each of the three judges in your category. A copy of the submission form is on Page 9. We do not accept e-books; only print editions will be judged. Books by deceased authors are eligible, providing that at least one of the authors meets the residency protocol and other requirements.

A book may be entered in only one category, not several categories. Submissions must be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2026. We urge early submissions. Send entries to the appropriate judges under your category of Contest Judges listed at right.

Make sure your book entry goes to judges in the proper category. (For example, all children's books go to children's categories, rather than Poetry or Biography and Memoir, which are for adult submissions only.) Books submitted to improper categories will be disqualified.

Any judge who has a conflict of interest with a submission will be recused from discussion of that entry. For comments or questions or to confirm an entry has reached the judges, contact Gerry Plecki at [plecki@travelbrokers.com](mailto:plecki@travelbrokers.com).

SEND ONE COPY OF THE BOOK  
AND ONE ENTRY FORM TO  
EACH OF THE THREE JUDGES IN  
THE BOOK'S CATEGORY AND  
ONE ENTRY FORM TO THE COM-  
PETITION COORDINATOR

## Contest Judges

*Children's Reading Round Table Award  
for Children's Nonfiction*

**Judith Schein Cohen**, 222 Main, Apt. 405, Evanston, IL 60202,

**Pat Kummer**, 2671 Normandy Place Lisle, IL 60532

**Michelle Houts**, P.O. Box 434, Rockford, OH 45882

### *Children's Fiction*

**Sandra Renner**, 420 Summit Ave., Suite 8, St. Paul, MN 55102

**Laura Hirshfield**, 3318 Noyes Street, Evanston, IL 60201

**Rick Telander**, 218 North Avenue, Highwood, IL 60040

### *History*

**Joseph Gustaitis**, 1824 West Erie St., Chicago, IL 60622

**Greg Borzo**, 520 S. State St., Apt. 1009, Chicago, IL 60605

**David Witter**, 4417 N. La Porte, Chicago IL 60630

### *Adult Nonfiction*

**Gerry Plecki**, 33 King Henry Rd. SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065

**Chris Lynch**, 6135 N. Campbell Ave, #1, Chicago, IL 60659

**Susan Croce Kelly**, 1214 S. Virginia Ave, Springfield, MO 65807

### *Bernard Brommel Award for Biography and Memoir*

**Bob Remer**, 6033 N. Sheridan 15A; Chicago, IL 60660

**Marlene Targ Brill**, 314 Lawndale, Wilmette, IL 60091

**Jean Iversen**, 3649 N. Kedvale Ave., Apt 2B, Chicago IL 60641

### *Poetry*

**Westley Heine**, 5423 N. Winthrop Ave., Apt. 510, Chicago, IL 60640

**Ae Hee Lee**, 1641 Wisconsin St., Unit 77, Sturtevant, WI 53177.

**John Kropf**, 1200 N. Illinois Street, Arlington, VA 22205

*Richard Frisbie Award for Adult Fiction*

**Patricia Skalka**, 2367 N. Wahl Ave., #3, Milwaukee, WI 53211

**Kathie Giorgio**, 234 Brook St., Unit 2, Waukesha, WI 53188

**Barbara Shoup**, 6012 Broadway St., Indianapolis, IN 46220

# 'Midland Authors were second to none'

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In the summer of 1917, **Ring Lardner** – the renowned sports writer who'd recently joined the SMA – made a joking reference to the group in his Chicago Tribune column, "In the Wake of the News."

Lardner told the story of a man who was searching all over the city for someone, checking in all of the "exclusive clubs" – including the Society of Midland Authors. Lardner (1885-1933) was one of the most famous sports journalists of the early 20th century,

writing for the Tribune, Examiner and Inter Ocean. His popular 1916 novel *You Know Me Al* was written as a series of letters from a bush-league baseball player to a friend back home. The

book won praise from no less than Virginia Woolf, who said that Lardner "writes the best prose to come our (Britain's) way" – although she noted that it often seemed to be "in a language which is not English."

In 1918, the Society had invited members to attend its annual meeting on Oct. 26 at the Congress Hotel. "More than ever we need friendship and the pleasures of the soul," the invitation said. "C'est la guerre." But four days before the event, another note went out, reporting that it had been indefinitely postponed "owing to the influenza epidemic."

The flu pandemic, which killed an estimated 50 million to 100 million people worldwide, took the life of the SMA's **Kenneth Sawyer Goodman**. His parents, William and Erna Goodman, gave \$250,000 to the Art Institute of Chicago to start a theater named after him, and the Goodman Theatre opened its doors at Monroe Street and Columbus Drive in 1925. The Goodman, which moved to 170 North Dearborn St. in 2000, has become one of the country's leading theatrical

venues.

Former Midland Authors President **Hobart Chatfield-Taylor's** wife, Rose, died in the flu epidemic as well. Afterward, he decided to make his home in California, and he donated many of his rare French and Italian books to Lake Forest College. Two years later, in January 1920, a fire engulfed Fairlawn, destroying what remained of the art and rare books inside. A new mansion was built on the site in 1922-23.

After the war ended on Nov. 11, 1918, Hough remarked that authors had done their "patriotic duty" by writing about the

conflict, "and I am very proud to express my belief that the Midland Authors were second to none in their devotion." Whatever rancor Hough might have felt over the issue of subversive "aliens," he noted that the

Society's authors had managed to smile during their wartime events. "I see no reason why anyone should predict for our Society anything but a long life, a useful one and a merry one," Hough wrote. "There is no profession on all the list equal to our own in possibilities of human usefulness and human contentedness. I wish my loved associates many, many years of happy labor and happy reunions."

On Jan. 25, 1919, a government intelligence official released a list of 62 Americans who were supposedly aiding subversion. An SMA member, **Jane Addams**, was at the top of the list. Secretary of War Newton Baker repudiated this "Who's Who," but another government agent released a similar list later in the year, naming Addams and SMA member **Clarence Darrow** as Americans who were sponsoring radical organizations.

In fact, Darrow had angered his pacifist friends by publicly supporting the war, explaining: "There can be no peace while Prussian militarism lives, and I want to see it destroyed." But a year after the

war's end, Darrow spoke out against the Red Scare. "A strong element of society, under the cry of a sort of super-patriotism, is today doing all that can be done to crush the liberties of the American people," Darrow warned in a speech in Chicago on Nov. 9, 1919. "They would leave it an offense to speak and to write and to print. ... they would seize those whom they believe to be against them, send them to jail, because they are violating the powers that be. ... Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty!" ... "No man can speak his convictions, no man can write them, and no man can print them with the fear of jail in his heart! He must speak them freely and unafraid. Even if he speaks extravagantly and wildly and foolishly, he must be left to do it freely."

The war and its aftermath dominated the Society's lectures. Ralph B. Dennis, a Northwestern University oratory professor who'd worked with the YMCA in Russia during the revolution there, told an SMA gathering about "the truth of conditions under proletariats dictatorship," recalled **Edwin Balmer** (1883-1959), who was the Society's president in 1918 and 1919. "And we all formed I believe saner estimates of the elements on trial in Europe," Balmer added. Two Society members who'd visited the battlefield in Europe – **Georgene Faulkner** and **James Taft Hatfield** – spoke about what they had seen. Another speaker at the SMA during the war was member **Edna Ferber**, who'd tried to go to France for the American Red Cross but was denied a passport. Balmer praised the "all-velvet and twenty-two-dollar-a-yard Americanism" of Ferber's speech.

Balmer wrote that 1918-19 was the year when the Midland Authors "were, confessedly, more serious than ever before – not because we wanted to be, but because, as writers, we could not otherwise face the responsibility for authorship here and now."

Balmer wrote mysteries and science-fiction novels, including *When Worlds Collide* (1933), co-authored with Philip Wylie, which became a 1951 movie. He would later return to the SMA presidency in 1924-25, becoming the Grover Cleveland of SMA presidents.

Literary  
Lore

Robert  
Loerzel



Clarence  
Darrow

**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> |              |
| <b>WORKS:</b>                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                      |              |
| <p>Title:</p> <p>1:</p> <p>2:</p> <p>3:</p> <p>4:</p> <p>5:</p> <p>6:</p> <p>7:</p> <p>8:</p> <p>9:</p> <p>10:</p> <p>11:</p> <p>12:</p> | <p>Publisher:</p>                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Year:</p> |