

Biblio File

The Midland Authors annual book awards will be held on May 12 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. ... **Marlene Targ Brill's** upcoming book *Judith Resnik: Unsung Astronaut* is a Junior Book Guild's selection. ... **Tom Patterson's** book *American Populist: Huey Long of Louisiana* was awarded by the Louisiana Endowment of Humanities as The Humanities Book of the Year, which honors a book that best exemplifies scholarship on Louisiana topics or by Louisiana writers. ... **S.L. Wisenberg's** essay, "Notes on Rowing," appeared in the fall 2025 issue of the Missouri Review. It was about her long tenure on a breast cancer rowing team. She found that rowing was more difficult than going through chemo. Her interview with Jerry Stahl about his book *Nein, Nein, Nein! One Man's Tale of Depression, Psychic Torment, and a Bus Tour of the Holocaust* appeared in the American Book Review spring 2025 issue. ... **John Kropf** recently had a book of poems accepted for publication by Finishing Line Press, *Dreams from the Midwest*. ... **Craig Sautter** writes to say, "My story 'Gratitude' was featured on the ValiantScribe website this month. Also, if you put my name in the search box at the top of the page, you can find my story 'Ventriloquist' from last year. And I also just received word that my poem 'These Are Not Van Gogh's Shoes' will be published in the April issue of Calliope. (Issue 192). I guess I'm on a roll." ... **Robert Marovich** writes to say, "I was given the 2026 Living Legacy Award from the Arnold Fields Community Endowment and Palmetto State Gospel Music Association at a March 7 ceremony in Varnville, South Carolina. The award was in recognition of my work on behalf of gospel music and the promotion of gospel quartet singing in particular. ... **David L. Harrison** has been appointed Poet Laureate for the National Route 66 Centennial Celebration that kicks off for

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Telling the story of authors during the COVID pandemic



FROM LEFT: Gerard Plecki, Rebecca Johns and Michele Weldon discuss memoir writing at the Midland Authors' March 3 program. (Photo by Mary Wisniewski)

BY WALTER PODRAZIK
AND THOMAS FRISBIE

The Midland Authors program "Memoir and Narrative Storytelling During COVID" was held at Sulzer Regional Library on March 3 in Chicago. About two dozen people filled the room.

Panelists **Rebecca Johns, Michele Weldon and Gerry Plecki** shared personal and practical observations on the challenges and inspirations of writing in and about COVID.

Plecki stepped forward for effective emphasis, as someone infected very early in the pandemic. For memoir writing, he stressed the importance of combing personal experience with further research, as he successfully sought out expert interviews and supporting documentation.

Plecki also suggested for such personal narratives of doing your own photography whenever possible, to help keep control of your own project.

Weldon talked about being directed to add elements of COVID to a project already in development. In advice for memoir writing, Weldon also stressed discipline. Writing from your head, she said, is just typing. Writing from your head and heart is much harder, but far more interesting.

Johns, who worked with her students during the pandemic to edit a collection of narratives from around Chicago, *By the City, Chicago 2020 and 2021*, similarly talked about adjusting an already planned project to incorporate the issues of COVID, being very careful when sending

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the three days of April 30-May 2. He will present five original poems to kick off each of the five major events. At one, he'll appear on a suspended screen to introduce an evening of entertainment hosted by John Goodman in a fieldhouse that seats 11,000, tickets priced from \$100 to \$500-plus. At another event his poem will open a formal, 1920s-style \$500-per-plate dinner in a facility that seats 4,000. Another poem will kick off a 700-car parade. On May 5, he'll host his own program in an auditorium that seats 500. The evening will celebrate Route 66 and the spirit of creative expression. There will be 21 acts during the two-hour event. One of them will be **Susan Croce Kelly**, featured on Page One of the February Literary License. Also, David has had two articles published. One, on the need for more stories, was in the California Reading Journal. The other, about using poetry in schools, is in The Robb Review (<https://shorturl.at/8M1hT>). ... **David Witter**, the co-chairperson of the Nelson Algren Society of Chicago, was scheduled to present **Robert Loerzel** with the Chicago Nelson Algren Award on March 29 at the Green Mill in Chicago. ... **Lori Andrews** wrote "People are turning to AI chatbots for companionship. Is

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Literary License

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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 and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

COVID

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her students out doing personal interviews and research, **Studs Terkel**-style. Johns stressed the importance of getting permissions for direct citation quotes, even if that might mean losing a favorite first pass quote.

All three panelists talked about the importance of capturing, though a personal lens, that moment in history whose reverberations are still being felt.

Plecki said, "It's hard enough, I think, to write anything. When you throw in a potentially lethal disease into the mix, it's a little bit more difficult. ... I would recommend you try to see what's out there in terms of technology to help you with your research. That being said, of course, we have the inherent distrust of AI, and you have to watch what you're reading and what you're adopting as true."

Weldon said, "All the essays [in my latest book] were written in that frame of 2020 to 2024 and include a lot of different elements of life. And this is really in my wheelhouse because I'm an essayist and columnist and op-ed writer, and I write about gender and culture and media and news events."

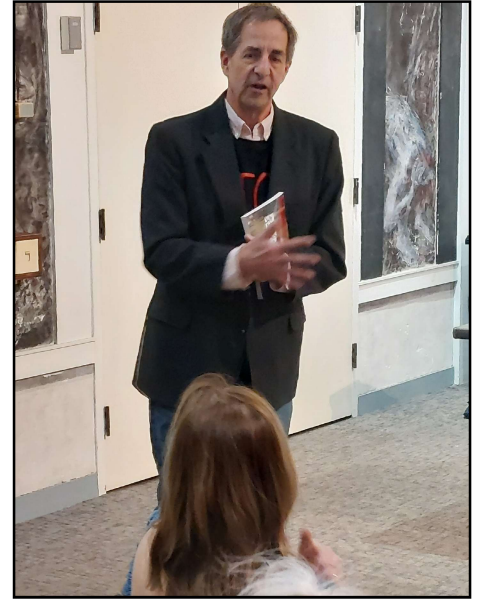
Everything – partnerships, family relationships, work life – was different during the pandemic, Weldon said.

"I ended up with a book that I'm really proud of," Weldon said. "It is an umbrella in that time frame, although it's not all about the disease, of course. It's about what happened to me personally and to the larger culture during that time frame."

Johns said, "It was a harrowing time to be sending my students out into the city to look for ideas, to connect with people, to gather their personal stories. So they're all narratives. It's a very Studs Terkel-style of storytelling, gathering these interviews, hearing from people directly."

In one interview, a woman whose son was using her computer because his classes had gone online during the pandemic found an important report she had written for work had disappeared.

"[That] interview was my favorite because it was so raw, because it was so honest, because it was so personal," Johns said. "Why are these kids not in school? Like, she was really letting it all out. And then at the moment that we were about ready to go, she [pulled] it. ... In asking



TOP: Former Midland Authors President Gerard Plecki addresses the audience at the March 3 Midland Authors program. ABOVE: Midland Authors Board Member Marlene Brill (left) is among the attendees talking to the panelists, including Rebecca Johns (right). (Photos by Walter Podrajik)

for other people to give me their stories, that requires a certain level of trust. And so as a journalist, I'm sure you know this, when people are willing to talk to you, you have to honor that, especially when it's something personal. These are not politicians that we're interviewing. They're not public. So I did end up culling the interview, and I'm still mourning it."

The Unfinished Revolution
A Program to Commemorate the 250th Anniversary
of American Independence
and the Declaration of Independence

April 15, University of Illinois Richard J. Daley Library, Room I-470

6 p.m. A tour of the University of Illinois Chicago's special collections of historical documents.

6:30 p.m. A reception.

7 p.m. The program.

This event will be held virtually and in-person. The virtual program link is <https://tinyurl.com/4v78x45p>. Registration for the in-person event is required by email to Debbie Matthews: debmatt18@gmail.com

Chaired by UIC Professor Emeritus **Dick Simpson**

Panelists:

Milton Nieuwsma, an Emmy Award-winning documentary writer and producer, on "Inventing America: Conversations with the Founders."

Ann Lousin, UIC law professor, on "Thomas Paine."

Dorene Wiese, Illinois America 250 Commission commissioner, on "Broken Treaties With Illinois Tribes Over 150 Years."

Marlene Targ Brill, author, on "Jane Addams' Contributions to Continuing the American Revolution."

*The program is sponsored by the Midland Authors
and the UIC Chapter of the State University Annuitants Association.*



Dick
Simpson



Ann
Lousin



Milton
Nieuwsma



Dorene
Wiese



Marlene Targ
Brill



Ruth Spiro



Greg Borzo



Sharon Woodhouse



Walter Podrazik

‘We’re here to encourage writing, books’

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

The Midland Authors’ online Feb. 10 program was one of a series of “how-to” programs the organization has held. This one was titled: “After the First Book Contract.”

During the program, panelist **Greg Borzo** described the value of **Sharon Woodhouse’s** book *The Profitable Author* for writers trying to make the publishing process work for them.

Midland Authors **President Walter Podrazik** stepped in to say, “What Greg just did is an illustration of what happens with author camaraderie. ... We’re not in competition. We’re all on the same mission. The same mission is to use this medium effectively, and if we could boost someone along the way, we will do it, and we will appreciate it if someone does the same for us.

“That’s why we have a Midland Authors society. We’re here to encourage writing, encourage reading, encourage books.”

Earlier, in his introduction to the program, Podrazik said, “We’ve been around for more than 115 years. ... What we do is promote authors. We celebrate reading. We celebrate writing. And for all those reasons we look for ways of helping aspiring authors, helping established authors and discovering new authors and helping them connect on their journey to being published.”

The panelists were:

Ruth Spiro, who has authored more than 30 children’s books, with over a mil-

lion copies sold worldwide. Her best-selling “Baby Loves Science” board books are groundbreaking, introducing big ideas to the littlest listeners.

Borzo, who is an award-winning journalist who has worked as a business editor, science writer and news officer. He is now working on his ninth book, *Uncovering the South Loop*.

Woodhouse, who owns Conspire Creative, a book business agency offering coaching and consulting for authors and indie publishers. Woodhouse also is the founder of the award-winning Lake Claremont Press.

Podrazik, who moderated the program, is an educator, consultant and curator at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago. He is also co-author with Harry Castleman of eight books on popular culture.

Borzo said, “You’ve all heard the old advice, ‘Write what you know.’ If you’re a firefighter, write about that. ... I’ve always taken a different approach. I write what I don’t know anything about, but what I want to know about.”

For example, years of riding Chicago’s L trains raised lots of questions about the system in Borzo’s mind, but he couldn’t find a book published more recently than 1932 about it. So he began researching the topic and wrote a new Chicago L book.

“Most of my books have been about things I knew nothing about going in,” Borzo said.

Borzo also said authors should have fun

writing their books.

“Writing books and promoting them is a hoot. ... You’re on the L and someone else a couple of rows down is reading your book. That’s pretty heady.”

Woodhouse also has a Substack with about 400 articles on the topic, many of which are not behind a paywall.

“My favorite thing is to encourage authors to be entrepreneurs. ... I really think that an entrepreneurial approach is how most authors get the things they want out of publishing a book,” Woodhouse said.

Spiro said, “My advice is to not think of it as book promotion, but to think of it as building relationships. I have found the most effective way to sell books is to not make it look like I am trying to sell books. ... That means even before you have your first book contract, go into your local bookstores, your independent bookstores. Barnes & Noble stores are getting more locally oriented now. But whatever bookstore you have near you, go there. Get to know the booksellers. Talk to them. [Ask] what’s selling. What are people asking for? They are always having events with authors. Some of the best things I have learned have been going to bookstores and listening to others talk about their work. ... Go to conferences to learn, not to wave your book in front of people all the time.”

The goal should be to learn and make connections, Spiro said.

“The person sitting next to you may be ... a well-published author. It may be

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Q&A with ‘Unfinished Revolution’ panelist

Literary License: *What is the “unfinished revolution”?*

Milton Nieuwsma: For me, the “unfinished revolution” means that our democracy is still a work in progress, that we haven’t fully realized the ideals of liberty and equality spelled out in the Declaration of Independence.

John Adams famously said, “There never was a Democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” George Washington was no less pessimistic. After the Constitutional Convention in 1787, he predicted the new American republic wouldn’t last 20 years.

So here we are in 2026. If our Founding Fathers could come back, what would they think? In spite of all the problems we face in our country today, I think they’d be amazed we’re still one nation.

The late Chief Justice Earl Warren observed: “Our Constitution was not a grant of power from the government to the people, but a grant of power by the people to the government which they – the people – had created.” Until our

Founding Fathers found that out, monarchies were the rule, not the exception, and rule they did – by blood, in more ways than one.

In framing our Constitution, our Founders took into account the history of governments and determined a way to prevent injustice and repression that too often characterized them. The result was the fairest and most enduring agreement between government and the governed that the world has ever known.

Yet even our best effort at self-government has its problems. Human nature hasn’t changed. Greed, self-interest, corruption and petty hates are inherent in any

form of government. Recognizing that, our Founders devised a way in which human error in the operation of government would at least occur in the open. They disdained the “best man” theory of government that said, “Put the right people into office and government will take care of itself.” History was littered with the wreckage of governments headed by good people gone wrong.

In spite of Washington’s prediction, our republic is the oldest in the world; our Constitution is the most enduring and the model for many democracies around the world. That isn’t to say our Constitution is perfect. It didn’t produce heaven on Earth or solve all our problems. But it did provide a framework for working out our own version of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Literary License:

How does the unfinished revolution fit into today’s political environment?

Milton Nieuwsma:

In today’s political environment, the “unfinished revolution” refers to the ongoing struggle to fulfill the

foundational American ideals of liberty, equality and justice. More and more, our political discourse frames these principles not as historical endpoints, but as an ongoing process where people of our generation and the next can address unresolved issues from our checkered past.

Literary License: *Much of your writing has been about the humanitarian disaster of World War II. How did you get interested in the Revolutionary War period?*

Milton Nieuwsma: My primary focus has always been the Revolutionary War period. My interest in World War II, particularly the Holocaust, was an aberration, but my work in this field is ironically

what I am best known for. For each of these I can pinpoint how I got interested.

As for the Holocaust, it was a woman named Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who helped Jewish mothers and their children escape the Nazi takeover of Holland. She was the only person in her family who survived the camps. After the war, she visited at my home in California, and I remember sitting on her lap. I was five years old then, too young to comprehend what she had gone through. Only later, when she wrote a book called *The Hiding Place* did I find out, and that’s what inspired my interest in the Holocaust.

As for the Revolutionary War, what inspired my interest was the first visit I made to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s home in Virginia in 1968 and being fascinated by all the things he invented – the seven-day clock, the dumb waiter, the polygraph. It was Jefferson the inventor, not the Jefferson the human rights champion, that triggered my interest in the Revolution. The rest came later.

Literary License: *How did you do your research?*

Milton Nieuwsma: For the “Inventing America” PBS series and my book *Miracle on Chestnut Street*, I drew from Jefferson’s letters, journals, diaries and on-site research at Monticello; Colonial Williamsburg, where he spent his early political career, and Independence Park in Philadelphia. I also spent many hours in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia, which has a magnificent Jefferson collection.

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

Milton Nieuwsma: My next book will be an update (seventh edition) of *Surviving Auschwitz: Children of the Shoah*, which contains some startling revelations that recently came to light. I’m not certain of the publication date yet. I’m guessing late summer or early fall.

think people can read through it if it is not.”

Borzo agreed with that point, saying, “No particular opportunity request, event, phone call is too small for your attention. Go for it. Have set-aside energy, set-aside time to do a lot for your book, even if it is a small thing. You will be surprised how small things can add up.”

Literary Landscape

Milton Nieuwsma



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a book that is written by someone you know or someone you like, take a picture of that and post it on social media or talk about it with other people.

“It has to be sincere,” Spiro added. “I

■ Encourage

someone who has really good contacts in the field.”

Spiro said authors should promote other authors, too.

“If you are in a bookstore and you see

Declaration of Authors' Rights and Freedom of the Press

Reflecting on these contentious times, the SMA Board of Directors released this statement in March reaffirming our commitment to authors, books and freedom of the press.

Marking the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, we as an organization of authors from 12 Midwestern states feel compelled at this time to restate the importance of the writings in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

As part of “We the People” we raise our voices to support, defend and celebrate the bedrock American freedoms of expression, opinion and an unfettered press. Simultaneously, we denounce encroachment on those rights. As authors, we know words matter.

Freedom of the press should not be subject to governmental whims or fears that such exercises would upset those in power. So says the Declaration of Independence from July 4, 1776.

We abhor governmental assaults on writing, journalism and the availability of what we hold sacred: books.

Yet increasingly we have seen books

banned from school libraries, public libraries, and archival sites. History has been rewritten in textbooks, websites, and public displays by those who are not historians. Civil servants have been dismissed defending literature, journalism and facts.

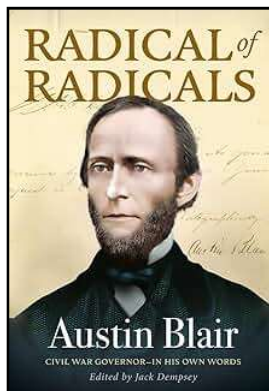
Books are part of the free press. A free press is promised to all Americans by our Constitution, as one of the cornerstone guarantees of the First Amendment, which states that “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.”

To those ends, we continue our ongoing commitment to writing and writers, back to our nation’s guiding documents. We believe in our Constitution. We vociferously remind every level of government of those principles, at this pivotal marker in our 250-year history.

*Declared by the Board of Directors of
The Society of Midland Authors.
March 2026*



Literary Latest



'Untold, interesting and relevant'

Jack Dempsey, is the editor of *Radical of Radicals: Austin Blair – Civil War Governor – In His Own Words* (Mission Point Press, Sept. 16, 2025).

Dempsey tells *Literary Latest*, “As a retired attorney who specialized in corporate law and regulatory affairs, I first became interested in Blair during my many visits to Lansing to testify before legislative committees.

“Blair’s statue is the only one honoring

an individual on the grounds of the Michigan Capitol. On the back are several quotations, including one identifying slavery as the cause of the Civil War, and it always intrigued me about his full story. The monument touts him as Michigan’s ‘War Governor’ – what did that really mean, I’ve long wondered.

“The Michigan Civil War Association, a nonprofit I co-founded in 2013, has as one of its purposes to teach history in a compelling way. This is the fourth book in an annual series, and a major characteristic is to tell untold, interesting and relevant stories.

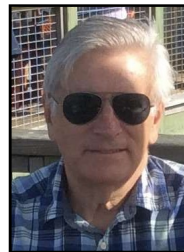
“The timing of the book’s release was no accident: it coincided with the Sept. 17, 1862, anniversary of the Battle of Antietam – and the second volume will follow at the same time this year – the Union victory that enabled emancipation to become an official war aim. Blair was

all in on liberating the enslaved.

“Two volumes primarily of Blair’s words in speeches and writings? When we started, we thought we’d be able to add a few more to the sparse contents of a series of governor speeches published by the Michigan Historical Commission in 1926. Blair’s totaled 70 pages.

“When we got to over 140,000 words, the decision was made to split the material into companion volumes. The first is 95,000 words. The volume now at the printer is well over 100,000. Blair was a bold and popular speaker, and releasing these books during the 2025-2026 election cycle gives readers an opportunity to study great leadership and use that as a yardstick while they make voting decisions.

“This brand of documentary history allows people from the past to speak to those in the present – and their words not be ‘spun,’ taken out of context, or paraphrased. Thus the first book’s cover, meant to bring Blair to life, and so, too, the contents.”



Jack Dempsey

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this robot love risky?” for the Jan. 16 Chicago Tribune. ... In January, **Jim Daniels** was named a Michigan Notable Author for *An Ignorance of Trees: A Memoir in Essays* (see *Literary License* July/August, 2025). ... **Linda Nemec Foster** will be teaching poetry workshops and classes as a featured writer in Scotland this summer. A writing consortium of West Michigan colleges, Scriptoria, has invited Linda to be part of their core faculty in Dundee, Scotland from July 29 to Aug. 3, 2026. She is thrilled to be part of their team. Closer to home, Linda read her Honorable Mention poem, “What You Want, Baby I Got It,” for the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award ceremony in Paterson, New Jersey, on Feb. 7 at The Poetry Center. From March 5-7, Linda gave several poetry readings in

Baltimore at the AWP Conference. During the festivities, Cornerstone Press debuted the inaugural winner of the Linda Nemec Foster First Book Award for Poetry. The prize (publication and a \$1,000 award) is a partnership between Cornerstone Press (imprint of the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point) and Linda to support and promote new poets. Kakie Pate is the 2026 winner. In 2026, three of Linda’s poetry books – *Bone Country*, *The Blue Divide* and *Talking Diamonds* – were reviewed on the popular website, Tweetspeak Poetry. An interview with Linda by **Anne-Marie Oomen** was featured in the 10th anniversary issue (2026) of *Presence*, a poetry journal published by Caldwell University in New Jersey. And, her most recent book, *The Lake Huron Mermaid* (a collaboration with Oomen and artist Meridith Ridl), has been honored as a finalist in two national competitions: the Chicago Writers Association’s Book Award in Poetry and the Feathered

Quill Book Award (in the categories of Book Cover Design and Teen Book in Poetry). ... **Keir Graff** says “On Saturday, March 28, I’ll be honoring the winners of a short story contest for kids at the Plainfield Area Public Library (15025 S. Illinois) in Plainfield, Illinois. On Wednesday, April 8, I’ll share ‘Music, Magic, and Murder: A Storytelling Tour of Chicago’s Most Fascinating Building’ at the Union League Club of Chicago (65 W. Jackson). Also on Wednesday, April 8, I’ll be in conversation with Music, Magic, and Murder photographer Tom Maday at the University Club of Chicago (76 E. Monroe). On Saturday, April 11, I’ll be on the ‘Young at Heart’ and ‘Thrills, Chills, & Kills’ panels at Midwest Mystery Conference (Roosevelt University, 430 S. Michigan) in Chicago. On Sunday, April 12, I’ll co-present with James Kennedy at the Chicago screening of the 90-Second Newbery Film Festival (Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State).

New Members

Raymond J. McKoski, a retired Lake County, Illinois, judge is the author of *David Davis: Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Judge* (University of Illinois Press, 2025) and *Judges in Street Clothes: Acting Ethically Off-the-Bench* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017). McKoski also is the author of 10 law review articles on judicial ethics, and his publications have been cited by courts and scholars in the United States, England, Canada and New Zealand. He has regularly lectured on issues facing judges in and out of the courtroom at local, state, national and international conferences and law school symposia. He now is an adjunct professor teaching trial advocacy at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law. He was nominated by **Thomas Frisbie**.

Barry Pearce is the author of *The Plan of Chicago: A City in Stories* (Cornerstone Press, 2025).

He graduated from Northwestern University with a degree from the Medill School of Journalism, and later earned an MFA in creative writing from New Mexico State University. He has won the Nelson Algren Award Grand Prize, a Chicago DCASE Independent Artists Program grant, an Illinois Arts Council Award, The Mercedes Delos Jacobs Book Prize, and the Keith Wilson/Joe Somoza Poetry Prize.

He has ghostwritten 18 nonfiction books, everything from memoir to titles on business and real estate investing. He was executive editor of *New Homes Magazine* for 10 years and before that edited *The Real Estate Profile*. His fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Cimarron Review*, the *Colorado Review*, *Other Voices*, *Puerto del Sol* and elsewhere. He lives in Chicago, where he works as a ghostwriter and occasional teacher.

He was nominated by **Janice Deal**.

Snežana Žabić is a Chicago-based transnational writer and author of the short story collection *U jednom životu* (KOS, Serbia, 1996) and the poetry collection *Po(jest)zija/Po(eat)ry* (SKC NS, Serbia, 2013), with Ivana Percl.



Raymond J. McKoski

She also is author of *Broken Records* (Punctum Books, 2016), *The Breath Capital* (New Meridian Arts, USA, 2016) and *Concrete Is More Beautiful* (*Disfigured and Stained*) (Match Factory Editions, 2025).

Her work is included in *Cat Painters: An Anthology of Contemporary Serbian Poetry*.

Žabić is an adjunct instructor the University of Illinois Chicago and is a co-founder of Match Factory Editions.

She was nominated by **Dick Simpson**.



Snežana Žabić

Michelle Houts is an

award-winning author, restorer of old things, and a collector of stories, many of which have rural settings. She writes from an 1894 one-room schoolhouse and travels the country encouraging young readers and writers at school and library events.

Houts serves as Series Editor for the *Biographies for Young Readers* series at Ohio University Press. She's the creator of the 52-Letter Challenge, her attempt to revive letter-writing one letter at a time.

She is the author of *Hopefully the Scarecrow* (Penguin Random House, Flamingo, 2023); *Barn At Night* (Feeding Minds Press, 2021);

Silent Swoop (Sourcebooks, 2019); *Count the Wings: The Life and Art of Charley Harper* (Ohio University Press, 2018); *Sea Glass Summer* (Candlewick Press, 2018); *Lucy's Lab Series, Books 1-3*

(Sky Pony Press 2017, 2018); *When Grandma Gatewood Took a Hike* (Ohio University Press, 2016); *Winterfrost* (Candlewick Press 2014); *Kammie on*



Barry Pearce



Michelle Houts



Steven Peterson

First: Dottie Kamenshek (Ohio University Press, 2014); *The Practical County Drama Queen* (Muse It Up Publishing, 2014); *The Beef Princess of Practical County* (Penguin Random House, Delecorte, 2009). She was nominated by **Marlene Targ Brill**.

Steven Peterson is a poet and playwright living in Chicago, with summers and early autumns spent in the north woods of Wisconsin. He is the author of the debut collection, *Walking Trees and Other Poems* (Finishing Line Press, 2025). His recent poems can be found online in such journals as *Alabama Literary Review*, *The Christian Century*, *First Things*, *New Verse Review*, and forthcoming in *The New Criterion*. From 2014 to 2022 he was a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists. Peterson's plays have been produced at theaters around the USA. Premiere productions of his full-length plays include *Paris Time* at Capital Repertory Theatre (Albany, New York), *The*

Actuary at Peninsula Players (Fish Creek, Wisconsin), *Affluence* at Theatre 40 (Los Angeles) and **The Invasion of Skokie** at Chicago Dramatists (with revivals by other theaters). His new plays in development have been presented at Cleveland Play House, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Capital Rep, Centre Stage (Greenville South Carolina), Theatre Ariel (Philadelphia), and elsewhere.

He was nominated by **Rich Lindberg**.

Thomas J. Thorson's first published book was a nonfiction piece on serendipitous events that changed history, *Serendipity: Seemingly Random Events, Insignificant Decisions, and Accidental Discoveries that Altered History*.

Thorson followed that with a five-novel mystery series: *Heirs Apparent* (2020); *The Connubial Corpse* (2021); *The Cosmic Killings* (2021); *Bad Fortune* (2022), and *Two Lists* (2023). He lives in the same neighborhood, Ukrainian Village in Chicago, as his protagonist.

He was nominated by **Gerard Plecki**, who called Thorson "a talented writer."