



Literary License

December, 2006

AWARDS DEADLINE FEB. 15

Books published during 2006 may be entered in the annual SMA awards contest until Feb. 15, 2007.

Entries must be shipped directly to the judges in each category.

The list of judges and complete instructions will be posted soon on the SMA web site: www.midlandauthors.com and published in the next issue of *Literary License*.

Information is available from Carol Jean Carlson, awards chairman: 1420 W. Farragut Ave., Chicago, IL 60640. (D)773/275-3999 (N) 773/506-7578. E-mail: writercc@aol.com.

EXPERTS TELL HOW TO KEEP YOUR NEW BOOK FROM SINKING WITHOUT A RIPPLE

BY RICHARD FRISBIE

Most books are never reviewed anywhere and consequently “sink without a ripple.” That was a dismal report from

Newsweek surveying the publishing scene. What’s an author to do?

To answer that question SMA presented a panel of experts at the Nov. 14 meeting in the Chicago Athletic Association.

Tom Ciesielka, professional book publicist and columnist for *Literary License*, observed that newspaper literary editors get as many as 50 books a day.

Cheryl L. Reed, books editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, said she has only “seconds to decide” which books to assign for review. A brief handwritten note attached to the book and calling attention to a Chicago angle can help attract her attention.

Cassandra West, a *Chicago Tribune* editor who deals with books, said she finds huge press kits off-putting. She reads E-mail, but faxes are wasted. She never sees them.

Jessa Crispin, founder and editor of Bookslut.com, a respected online journal devoted to books, said her approach is “all

whim”—whatever her 45 reviewers happen to be interested in on a given day. She throws out all press releases. She does favor books from certain small publishers. She has responded to books with Post-It® tabs calling attention to pages of special interest. Good cover design can help.

None of the panelists wanted any phone calls. E-mails should explain in the first paragraph what’s different about your book. West considers such factors as the reputation of the author, the significance and timeliness of the subject. It’s OK to be persistent and keep trying, but self-published books from houses such as iUniverse and AuthorHouse have zero chance of being reviewed.

West pointed out that a review may not always be what you want. The reviewer may declare that your book should make Gutenberg wish he hadn’t invented printing.

Ciesielka said publicity for a book is easier to get than a review. Reed agreed.

THE BRADBURY CHRONICLES AND THE LIFE OF RAY BRADBURY

Sam Weller, whose biography of the noted science fiction writer won the SMA 2006 biography prize, will talk about his book and his subject.

Where: Chicago Athletic Assn., 12 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago

When: 6 p.m. social hour, 7 p.m. program, Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2007

Reservations NOT needed. Public invited. Reception and presentation \$5 for nonmembers. SMA members and teachers and students with ID free. Snacks and cash bar.

Other Coming Events

Feb. 13—“Young Adult Biography: The Back Door to History.” Judy Fradin will discuss how she and her husband, Dennis Fradin, collaborate. They are co-authors of more than two dozen non-fiction children’s and young adult books and winners of numerous awards.

March 13—“Researching and Writing Biographies of Dead Artists.” Speaker: Gerry Souter, president of the Midwest Writers Assn., and co-author with his

wife of 34 books, including adult biographies on artists including Frida Kahlo, Alexander Calder, Edward Hopper, Diego Rivera and Mark Rothko.

April 10—Poetry, details to come.

May 8—92th Annual Banquet and Awards Presentation.

Board Meetings

Usually on the third Wednesday of each month: September through June, except December.

Her paper likes to feature interviews with Chicago authors, complete with photos.

Fiction has to stand on the merit of the work itself, but many non-fiction books lend themselves to a variety of publicity possibilities.

Crispin won't touch "me toos,"—books on subjects already well-covered.

Books editors aren't "callous and horrible," Reed said. There's just so little time, so little space, so many books.

BOOK PUBLICIST REVEALS SECRETS OF THE TRADE

BY TOM CIESIELKA
TC PUBLIC RELATIONS

It's true that interacting with the media takes organization, skill and innovation. Training, research methods and pitching techniques also help. However, what you rarely hear from publicists is that at heart, PR is a lot simpler than you might think. It is basically the art of building relationships to spread ideas.

Although simple, these relational rules are key in connecting with the media and building the relationships to help you get the coverage you deserve.

Say "Please" and "Thank You." Like most people, media contacts don't like rudeness. While it's important to be direct, take a friendly tone and make sure to let them know you appreciate their time and attention.

Ask First, Make Pitches Later. Show consideration by asking your contact what he or she is looking for at the time. Instead of just throwing your thoughts at the media, listen and offer your book or your ideas as a helpful resource.

Keep in Touch. Polite persistence is crucial in building a rewarding relationship with the media. Drop regular notes when you see information they might be interested in or to ask what they are working on. This keeps you "top of mind" when they need a comment on your area of expertise.

Success with the media hinges on your ability to connect and build relationships. Take these extra steps to help your media contact think of you as an ally, and to provide you with coverage that puts your name and ideas in front of your target audience.

Your Publicity Buffet

The press is a smorgasbord of potential placements if you are willing to think outside of the "book review box." Once you connect with your media contacts and open a dialogue, you multiply your chances if you know what your options are. Don't

let a contact get away without considering at least one idea that goes beyond book reviews.

Feature Story. Of course, you'd like this story to be all about you. However, in case your contact doesn't realize your greatness, try suggesting another topic and offer your expertise as a resource.

Contributed Article. A contributed article is a win-win for you and editors. They get a free article, which saves them money and time, and you get to display your expertise and mention your book in the byline.

Chapter Excerpt. This variation on the contributed article demands even less work from you. It also gives readers a great idea of what the actual book is like. Make sure you get permission from your publisher before using an excerpt.

Event Listing. Many people discover authors from book signings or speaking events. Let the local papers or magazines know when you will be out and about, and they can tell potential readers when and where to see you.

Sidebar. Editors love ready-to-go sidebars. Suggest a funny or unusual idea that you could write about, and put together some quick tips on the matter.

Book reviews are great, and you should pursue them whenever possible. However, keep your other opportunities in mind. Let your media contacts know that you can be a resource for them in many ways, and take advantage of a wide range of publicity options.

CAROL'S IN-BOX

BY CAROL JEAN CARLSON

Chicago Map Exhibit

Robert Remer and his wife Katie recently loaned the Edgewater Historical Society a collection of maps that was on exhibit at the society's museum from Oct. 13 to Dec. 16.

The map collection is the result of years and years of accumulation and grew out of the Remers' passion for collecting books on Chicago.

Remer points out that assembling the exhibit "taught [him] how important maps are in art, history and life."

The oldest map in the collection is from 1781. The exhibit also included a map of the "burnt district" following the Chicago Fire of 1871 and an original copy of Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago.

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Not to Be Missed

Bill Ott, editor of the ALA's *Booklist*, recently gave Robert Hellenga's *The Sixteen Pleasures* (paperback, Delta, 1995) a rave review in the Collection Development section of *American Libraries*.

It was among several books recommended for reading by anyone planning a trip to Italy. Hellenga's novel, his first, centers on a young American book restorer who travels to Florence after the 1966 flood. The story recounts her affair with a middle-aged man and her discovery of a 16th century volume of erotic engravings.

Ott contends that the book presents "an almost tactile sense of Florence," and advises "even if you have no interest in going to Florence, don't miss this book."

The Sixteen Pleasures won the SMA award for Adult Fiction in 1995 for books published in 1994.

A Foray Into the Judicial World

Scott Turow's latest, *Limitations* (Picador, 2006), focuses on Kindle County Appeals Court Judge George Mason, described by Turow as a "tall, trim, gray-haired...standard issue white guy." (Kindle County is a fictitious county in Illinois that bears a strong resemblance to Cook County.)

Turow introduced Kindle County and Mason in his earlier novel, *Personal Injuries*. More novella than novel, *Limitations* originally ran as a series in the *Sunday New York Times Magazine*.

In the telling, a case is resurrected involving four white high-school hockey players and the videotaping of their 1999

gang rape of a drugged, 15-year-old black girl at a party. The videotape came to light in 2003, and a conviction followed that is now under appeal.

The case is extremely upsetting to Mason, a successful appeals court judge for a decade who is being challenged in his upcoming bid for re-election. Add to the mix a psychotic who keeps threatening Mason and his wife plus the recent diagnosis of his wife's cancer, and you have a judge under more than a little stress. That and a look into the inner workings of the judicial world are a sure-fire combination for an entertaining and enlightening read.

History in a Box

On Nov. 7th, Gerry and Janet Souter were interviewed on WBEZ's 848 show about their interactive, audio-enhanced history of the American Revolution, *The Founding of the United States Experience: 1763-1815* (Presidio Press, 2006).

The book covers the period of American history from the French and Indian War through the War of 1812. The accompanying CD contains over 70 minutes of readings of contemporary letters, diaries and documents.

OTHER MEMBER NEWS

Musical Play Published

Jane Howard's children's play, *Maria's Loom*, for which she wrote book, music and lyrics, has been accepted for publication by Anchorage Press Plays of Louisville, Ky.

Originally produced by the Winnetka Children's Theatre, the play was adapted from a story of hers that appeared in *Highlights for Children*.

Race Driver Chronicler on Tour

Michael Argetsinger has been on the road to discuss his recently published biography of race driver Walter Hansgen, *Walt Hansgen: His Life and the History of Post War American Road Racing* (David Bull Publishing).

On Nov. 9 Argetsinger was in Saratoga Springs, N. Y., to address a special meeting of the Saratoga Automobile Museum. On Dec. 7 he spoke at the Society of Automotive Engineer's Motorsports Conference in Dearborn, Mich.

Psychology Book Wins Awards

Dan McAdams' recent book, *The*

Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live by (Oxford University Press, 2006), won the 2006 American Psychological Association's William James Award, as the best general-interest book in psychology, across all subfields. The book also won the American Psychological Association's Theodore Sarbin Award for its contribution to theoretical and philosophical psychology.

And, Valparaiso University's honors college has chosen *The Redemptive Self* for its all-campus, one-book reading for 2007.

McAdams is professor of human development and psychology and director, the Foley Center for the Study of Lives, at Northwestern University.

Frankenstein's Footsteps

As part of the Chicago Humanities Festival, Dan Dinello followed "Dr. Frankenstein's Footsteps," tracing the significance of the amoral mad scientist who often serves as a lightning rod for contemporary anxieties about irresponsible scientists, military-funded science and the abuses of modern technology.

Dinello is the author of *Technophobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*. He spoke at Loyola University on Nov. 4.

The Clinton Saga Continues

Janis Kearney, diarist to President Clinton, recently launched her third book, *Conversations: William Jefferson Clinton--from Hope to Harlem* at the Clinton Presidential Library in Arkansas.

A special guest was former President Clinton himself, who called the biography, "fascinating...the first of its kind."

Kearney, an Arkansas native, founded Writing Our World Press, a small Chicago-based publishing house, in 2004, and published her first book, *Cotton Field of Dreams: a Memoir*, in 2005.

Her former boss, William Jefferson Clinton, wrote the foreword to that book. WOW Press published *Quiet Guys Can Do Great Things Too: a Black Accountant's Success Story*, in June, 2006.

Conversations: William Jefferson Clinton, from Hope to Harlem introduces new voices to the dialogue concerning America's 42nd President.

"Black Americans – from Hope to Harlem—share their insights, memories and opinions of William Jefferson Clinton—the man, the leader, the enigma."

Bullying Exposed

Mary Elizabeth Anderson writes:

"*Gracie Gannon: Middle School Zero*, will be released in April from Cloonfad Press, of Jackson, N.J. In the novel Gracie faces extreme loneliness, a family crisis and discovers who she really is in the process. The book focuses on bullying. The information is right on target with what goes on in schools today.

"Hopefully, by (being published by) a secular publisher, this book will touch more readers by getting in through the 'back door,' and on the shelf in public schools. I have worked on this manuscript off and on for 12 years. It has a message I definitely believe in."

Return of the 1960s

Neal Samors' new book, *Chicago in the Sixties* came out in October, published by Chicago's Books, a subsidiary of Chicago's Neighborhoods, Inc. It includes more than 150 photos and the personal recollections of 80 1960s-era Chicagoans, including Shelley Berman, Dick Biondi, SMA member Richard Christiansen, Joel Daly, U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, Judge Richard Elrod, Jackie Grimshaw, Glenn Hall, Hugh Hefner, Walter Jacobsen, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Marilyn Katz, Johnny "Red" Kerr, Rick Kogan, Ramsey Lewis, Joe Mantegna, Newton and Jo Minow, Sandra Pesman, Harold Remis, Gayle Sayer, Gary Sines and Lois Wille.

Gets Series Name

Cynthia J. Olson writes, "On Oct. 17, my third book in the Foster Kids Series was released."

Elaine and Tangles is a story of how a young girl faces bereavement and change when security, happiness and her parents' love is taken from her as the Twin Towers collapse.

"I am very excited about this book and am pleased that I now have a series name:"

Helps Lead Writers' Group

Michelle True has been appointed to the steering committee of the Chicago Writers Association.

She runs Poetic License, a poetry-writing group, and publishes *Write-On!*, a monthly newsletter for writers.

She will speak to creative writing students at Niles North and Niles West High Schools in the spring.

In addition, she'll present a writing career workshop at Wheeling High School for their day of art, "Make Your Mark!" in April.

On April 21 True will host the Second

Annual WriterFest at Indian Trails Library in Wheeling, Ill., where local published authors from all genres provide valuable writing, publishing and book promotion tips to writers aspiring to get published.

Explains Politics on National Radio

R. Craig Sautter appeared for two hours on Bruce DuMont's *Beyond the Beltway* on Dec. 3, to talk about Presidential politics and Iraq.

The program airs on 60 stations coast to coast, and on Chicago TV.

Sautter is a consultant to political candidates as well as an author.

RECENT NEW MEMBERS

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Kevin Davis is an award-winning journalist, former newspaper reporter and magazine writer based in Chicago. He is the author of two nonfiction books on the criminal justice system, *The Wrong Man* and *Defending the Damned*.

In addition, Davis has authored eight non-fiction children's books. His writing has appeared in *USA Today*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago* magazine, *Utne Reader*, *In These Times*, *American Bar Association Journal*, *Readers Digest*, *USA Weekend*, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and many other publications.

He has worked as an editorial consultant for Northwestern Memorial Hospital and Loyola University Medical Center. He also

teaches a writing class for detainees at the Cook County Jail.

Lorna Collier is co-author of *Tilli's Story: My Thoughts Are Free*, the true story of an East German escapee's childhood under Hitler and Stalin.

Collier also is an award-winning freelance writer who has worked as a daily newspaper reporter, magazine editor and TV news producer.

Her feature articles about health, parenting, business and other topics have been printed by major newspapers, magazines and Web sites, including the *Chicago Tribune*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Miami Herald*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Smart Computing* and *Crain's Chicago Business*.

Sel Erder Yackley was born in Istanbul and reared in Ankara. She was educated in the United States and has lived in Arizona and Illinois most of her adult life.

She has worked as a reporter and editor, as a college instructor, as a public relations consultant, as a fund-raiser and as a travel agent. She is author of *Never Regret the Pain: Loving and Losing a Bipolar Spouse* (2006).

Cynthia Zigmund is Midwest regional agent for Literary Services, Inc of New Jersey. She began her career in 1980 as an editorial assistant for John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Next, she moved to Van Nostrand

Reinhold (VNR), a technical and reference publisher, where she developed books focused on the culinary arts, architecture, gemology, and began acquiring business titles. Next, she joined Irwin Professional Publishing (now McGraw-Hill) as senior editor where she focused on acquiring manuscripts in the manufacturing and management areas.

In 1996, Zigmund . departed McGraw-Hill to join Dearborn Trade Publishing (now Kaplan Publishing) as executive editor. Six months after joining Dearborn she was promoted to editorial director, and was named vice president and publisher in 2000. Zigmund . holds a business degree from Monmouth University, where she graduated summa cum laude.

FINAL CHAPTERS

Alice Judson Ryerson Hayes, poet and writer who founded the Ragsdale Foundation in Lake Forest, Ill., died Oct. 13 of complications from an auto accident. She was 84.

Owner of a historic mansion built by her grandfather, a noted architect, she turned the house into a refuge where artists in residence could focus on their work.

Over the years, many SMA members have taken advantage of the tranquil atmosphere at Ragsdale to finish significant books.

If your address label says “(Exp Jun 2006),” that means you have not paid your dues for 2006-2007 and this will be your last issue of *Literary License*.
