

Biblio File

Steve Edwards, acting program director of WBEZ Chicago Public Radio and host of the station's "Eight Forty-Eight" program from 1999 to 2007, will be the emcee at the Society of Midland Authors' annual book awards banquet on May 11 at the InterContinental Chicago, 505 N. Michigan Ave. During his tenure, "Eight Forty-Eight" was named "Best Public Affairs Program" by Chicago Magazine. ... Biblio File was sorry to hear that Free Lunch: A Poetry Miscellany, has published its last issue. Free Lunch has been coming out twice a year since 1989, edited by the SMA's **Ron Offen**. Offen made it a point to try to send as many free subscriptions to real poets as he could (1,200



Steve Edwards

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Getting Involved

The Society of Midland Authors has worked on behalf of Midwest literature and authors for 95 years, all with strictly volunteer labor. To do that with volunteer labor requires volunteers, and we now need more. **Robert Remer** will continue to work on the Endowment Committee, but he no longer will serve as president. **Stella Pevsner** plans to remain involved, but will not serve another term as recording secretary. We hope some of our other members will step forward for one of those jobs, or for another position. If you are interested, contact our president, Robert Loerzel, at loerzel@comcast.net.

Booksellers explain their motto: Be true to your shelf

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Building up customer loyalty is the best way for bookstores to survive the onslaught of e-books, three independent bookstore representatives told members of the Society of Midland Authors at their regular monthly program Feb. 9 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The panel discussion featured **Augie Aleksy**, owner of Centuries & Sleuths Bookstore in Forest Park, **Allison Platt**, owner of the Bookie's Paperbacks & More on Chicago's Southwest Side and **Leslie McLean** of the Bookstall at Chestnut Court in Winnetka.

"We are not selling widgets, we are selling service, enthusiasm and clever people," Aleksy said. "If you missed [an author] signing, you have missed a bunch of enjoyment."

Platt agreed. "It's all about our customers," she said. "We have an incredibly loyal customer base, and we noticed in this last holiday season how much they supported us and how they really made the choice sometimes to come in and say I bought it here, not at



Augie Aleksy



Allison Platt



Leslie McLean

the big box store, because I want you to be here."

Bookstores also benefit publishers and writers, McLean said. That was evident, for example, when a little-noticed book titled *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett showed up early last year.

"It sort of came into the store, nobody paid too much attention to it, and then one by one we started to read it," McLean said. "We all loved it and we ended up selling over 600 copies from June on. We loved it so much. Everyone who came in was told, 'You must read this.'"

McLean said her bookstore, with a staff of about 20, also emphasizes service.

"We pride on ourselves on our customer service," she said "We love to play a game called stump the bookseller. ... You almost can't stump us. Even if they say, well, I think it is a red book, we will get to the bottom of it."

Platt said she has turned to new technology to help keep in touch with her customers.

"One of the things that keeps business coming in, not only keeping stock fresh and keeping up to date on what's hot, [but]

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Program

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also keeping the e-mail list," she said.

"I do Facebook and Twitter," she added. "Everyone is on Facebook and Twitter with their friends. I also try to do that with the store."

But the bookstore owners said the growing emphasis on e-book readers does pose a problem for them.

"[The Kindle price of \$9.99] is a killer for books published [in hardcover] at \$25," McLean said. "We can't sell it at \$9.99. We are not in the lost-leader business. It doesn't work for a store our size."

Aleksy also expressed concern.

"I am fearful that – like in the late 19th or early 20th century – only the wealthy will be able to buy books," he said. "With the Kindle, once you have it, it is cheaper to buy books on the Kindle. But I do have customers who have Kindles, but also who come in and get their hardbounds and paperbacks from me. It is kind of hard to sign a Kindle."

Last year was slow, but things have picked up, Aleksy said.

"In November, we were up 6 percent compared with 2008 and in December, we were up 20 percent, he said. "I think part of that is that people were making a special effort to come out."

Note: The Society of Midland Authors' 2009-2010 programs may be heard in their entirety at www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified.

Literary License

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Page One SMA program images of Allison Platt and Leslie McLean from photos by Robert Loerzel

www.midlandauthors.com



Edgar Lee
Masters



Elmer
Gertz



Kurt
Vonnegut Jr.



William
Braden



Mike
Royko

More literary nuggets from the SMA historical archives

Starting with the November/December Literary License, former SMA President Craig Sautter has been recounting some of the SMA lore he ran across while cataloging additions to the Richard Frisbie Collection of the SMA Archive at the UIC Richard J. Daley Library's Special Collection. This is a continuation of his report:

A Nov. 12, 1969, Sun-Times article noted an SMA luncheon at Stouffer's Restaurant, 26 W. Madison. The next day, the Sun-Times added that the meeting would mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of **Edgar Lee Masters**. His son, **Hardin Wallace**, and daughter **Marcia**, addressed the gathering. **Dan Walker**, president of the Chicago Crime Commission, won the society's Distinguished Service Award for his "Rights in Conflict" report on the Chicago riots surrounding the 1968 Democratic Convention, according to the April 30, 1969, Chicago Daily News. **Elmer Gertz** was honored for his work against censorship. The May 18, 1969, Chicago Sun-Times added that SMA had 225 members in 12 Midwest states.

The April 30, 1970, Chicago Daily News noted the 55th annual dinner would be held in the Chicago Press Club. Among the winners were **Kurt Vonnegut Jr.** for *Slaughterhouse Five*, and **Martin E. Marty** for *The Search for a Usable Future*, and **Sidney Lens** for *Poverty*,

America's Enduring Paradox.

The April 26, 1970, Daily News observed that the Society handed out nine cash awards and two distinguished service citations at its 55th annual dinner.

The 56th annual dinner meeting was held at the Chicago Press Club, according to the April 15, 1971, Sun-Times, with one award going to its nature writer **William Braden**.

The May 12, 1972, Sun-Times said the 57th annual dinner at the Press Club gave a new Peggy McPhaul Award of \$250 in recognition of a first book, to **James Park Sloan** of Oak Park for *War Games*, a novel on Southeast Asia.

Peggy McPhaul had served several years as a SMA secretary and worked with her husband on his books. **Mike Royko** won the Chicago Publisher's Award for *Boss*.

The 1990 dinner, the 75th annual, was held at

the Drake Hotel. In attendance, according to SMA president **Dempsey Travis'** script found in the Richard Frisbie Collection, were actors playing the roles of charter members (Pulitzer Prize winner) **Edna Ferber**, Poet **Vachel Lindsay**, and SMA's fifth President **John M. Stahl**, who was editor of *Illinois Farmer and Farmers' Call* and president of the Drama League of America, among other groups. Next month, I'll have a report on the moments of SMA history those actors portrayed.

More material from the SMA archives will appear in the March Literary License. Craig Sautter is a past SMA president.

Literary
Lore
Craig
Sautter



Poetry or novels? 'It's all language'

Angela Jackson, author of the new novel *Where I Must Go*, will be the speaker at the March 9 Society of Midland Authors program.

Jackson's earlier books have been poetry collections. The Chicago Sun-Times selected her poetry collection *Dark Legs and Silk Kisses: The Beatitudes of the Spinners* as one of the top four 1993 Chicago books. Her collection of poetry *And All These Roads Be Luminous: Poems Selected and New* (TriQuarterly) was published in 1998.

Literary License: *Your previous books have been poetry collections. Now you have written a novel. Why did you decide to do that?*

Angela Jackson: I have been learning to write fiction almost as long as I've been writing poetry. I had a brief desire to write a novel when I was

a young girl during a trip to Mississippi. But my interest in fiction was awakened by being a member of OBAC (The Organization of Black American Culture) Writers Workshop and becoming devoted to its mission to create literature to, for, about, and from Black people.

I was also taking creative writing at Northwestern with Elliott Anderson, and he saw little distinction between the writing of poetry and fiction. It was all language. I found artistic freedom to explore at OBAC and Northwestern. I began by calling my gathering of short fiction pieces which I kept in a folder, "A Long Black Story." I refused to call it a novel in progress. I didn't decide to call it a novel until the end of the 1970s. I began gathering fiction pieces for it in fall/winter, 1969, 1970.

Literary License: *The book is set in the late 1960s. Have you been working on this story over the years since then?*

Angela Jackson: Yes. I have. I finished

March 9, 2010, program

**Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor**

**6 p.m. - Social Hour
7 p.m. - Program**

Free - donations accepted

the first draft and sent it out in 1982. It got a nice response, but the editor was leaving editing – Toni Morrison. The book went through four or five rewrites and rejections or almost-sales. I finally sold it in 2006. I did another revision with the help of Reginald Gibbons. I tried to make as few changes as possible and his insights and guidance were so sure, I didn't have to do anything monumental.

Q&A

with

**Angela
Jackson**



Literary License: *Is it harder to get attention for serious books these days? What advice do you have for other authors trying to get noticed?*

Angela Jackson: It's always been hard for me, as you can see from my response to Question Two. I know, however, it is more difficult all around now. I would suggest following the old path of publishing in literary journals that you like, then seeking an agent.

At the same time be open to university presses or smaller presses. I understand that some people self-publish fiction. When I was a member of OBAC I founded our publishing wing OBAhouse. We published poetry broadsides and *NOMMO: A Literary Legacy of Black Chicago 1967-1987* as well as my initiating book *Solo in the Boxcar Third Floor E*. Being a member of writers' collective may be a part of publishing. People exchange information. Of course you know what magazines like *Poets and Writers* to scour.

Literary License: *As a teacher, do you find today's post-Internet students to spend as much time reading as in the past?*

Angela Jackson: That's conventional wisdom. I must say, however, I see my nieces reading books they get from Black Expressions Book Club. I'd like to break into that market.

I hope other young Black people (all young and older) find something engaging in it. But as a teacher my students swore to me that they loved to read. They did, after I made them. It's more real to them if it's on the Internet.

No. They don't spend as much time reading as we did. That's why we have to figure out how to be enticing and serious at the same time. I've found this to be true of all students, but when you compound the pressures of having to support themselves and go to school, it's hard. They have too little quiet time. And they are not used to it.

Literary License: *What book are you working on next?*

““ *My students swore to me that they loved to read. They did, after I made them. It's more real to them if it's on the Internet.*””

Angela Jackson: I'm revising a book of poetry now called *The Ones Who Really Love Me*. I keep taking notes for book two of the fiction trilogy, *Treemont Stone*. I'm enjoying the pace of poetry now. Revising *Treemont Stone* will be serious labor. Initially my novel *Where I Must Go* was called *Treemont Stone* and it was about 1,000 pages long. I had to break it in two. So I'm letting revisions contract a while before I deliver.

“Tom felt like the sun was pushing him into the sandy ground. My Lai is so small, he thought. He didn't know where the people would have had room to die.” – *Morning Dark*, **Daniel Buckman**

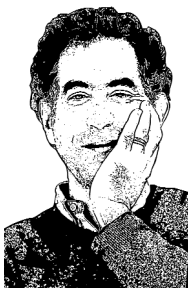
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at last count) and to respond and comment even on those poems he didn't have room to publish (as a poet himself, he knows the discouraging feeling of having a poem rejected without remark). Among the poets who have appeared in the pages of Free Lunch are **Stuart Dybek** and **David Hernandez**. Offen also took a special interest in the work of unpublished poets and created a "mentor series" in which a well-known poet introduced a new or relatively unknown poet's work. A setback to his health has made it impossible for Offen to continue to edit the publication. ... Society of Midland Authors Vice President **Gerry Souter** has signed a contract with Potomac Publishing of Herndon, Va., to publish his history/memoir, *An American Shooter – A Personal History of the American Gun Culture*. He is using his accumulated experience over 55 years to examine the history of American gun ownership, the origins of the NRA and anti-gun factions, seeking a common sense approach to a polarizing issue. The 80,000-word book is due out just before Christmas. ... On Jan. 25, Fox picked up the legal drama pilot "Pleading Guilty," based on **Scott Turow's** novel. It focuses on ex-cop-turned-attorney Mack Malloy, who is a partner at a powerful Chicago law firm. Turow also was a speaker Jan. 26 in a series presented by the Eastern Iowa Community College District in the Quad Cities. ... **Stephen Bloom's** *Tears of Mermaids, The Secret Story of Pearls* (see New Books, October, 2009, Literary License) has been getting some gemlike



Gerry Souter



Stephen Bloom

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Death Row defense lawyer makes a case for her clients

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Andrea D. Lyon, whose first book just came out – *Angel of Death Row: My Life as a Death Penalty Defense Lawyer* – knew it would be hard to squeeze writing into her busy schedule.

"I have a case load and classes to teach and papers to grade, and I also am the associate dean for clinical programs, so I have a lot of administrative things I have to do as well," Lyon said recently when Literary License came to visit her in her office at the DePaul University College of Law, where she is a clinical professor of law.

Her answer?

"I just put myself on a schedule, and I also did a very smart thing: I worked with an editor all the way through," Lyon said. "I hired someone who was willing to take a gamble to work with me, and to read and to critique and say, 'OK, Andrea what on Earth is an SOJ.'"

(An SOJ, by the way, is legal shorthand for substitution of judge.)

As for progressing on the manuscript, Lyon said being familiar with the deadlines in the legal world was helpful. She is used to knowing, for

example, that if she has a brief due on a particular court date she had better meet her own earlier deadline for the draft.

"I am sort of used to doing that anyway, so that part of the thing wasn't as difficult for me as maybe other people who don't sort of live their lives under deadlines," she said.

The book is organized around Lyon's career, much of which she spent as a Cook County, Ill., public defender. During that time, she represented 19 clients facing the death penalty. (All 19 received lesser sentences.)

"I learned as the first woman ever to be lead counsel in a death penalty case and the only woman in the [public defender] homicide division for many years, so the book talks about some of those issues and some of my personal struggles as an attorney as I develop my own style," she said.

"But it really is much more about my clients and their lives and the meaning their lives have for me and I hope for other people."

Although the dozen or so cases she writes about are real, Lyon changed the names of the defendants, the prosecutors and judges. Her family members, friends and some colleagues got to see their real names in print.

"I took some liberties," Lyon said. "I would put a conversation with a guard in to help further the story in a particular chapter when that conversation may have happened in a different case altogether. But it helps tell the story of what I was facing, or what my client was facing so there are some liberties I took and of course some of it is affected by the vagaries of memory."

Is she planning another book?

"I don't know," she said. "I just have to think about whether I want to do it, whether the clients would be comfortable about it. I don't want clients to feel they have to do something because I did something for them for my usual fee of zero dollars and zero cents."

Lyon is a fan of poets e.e. cummings and Wanda Coleman, science fiction writers Ursula Le Guin, John Kilian Houston Brunner and Neil Gaiman, and Dostoyevsky.

"A good writer is a good story teller, which of course is a stupid thing to say, but it is true," Lyon said.

But besides writing a good story, Lyon also hoped to give people a new understanding of her clients.

"I wanted to tell my own story but I also wanted to tell, even more important, my clients' stories, so people could see that they are human beings whether they are innocent or guilty or somewhere in the middle," she said. "That was the motivation for writing it."

"You can't write it for money," she added. "Some authors do make a lot of money, but not many."

Literary
Life:

Andrea
D. Lyon



Love may not be all you need, but it can help in a lot of ways

Valentine's Day is this month, and I'm going to take a page from Oprah's playbook and give every one of my friends a car! You get a car, and you get a car! What's that, friends? You all already have a car? Well, how about a fruit basket? Perfect!

Whether it's a car, a fruit basket or a classic Hallmark card, use this month of love to give a token of appreciation to those involved with your career as an author.

People often get so wrapped up in running their lives that they forget about doing the little things that go a long way. Oprah wouldn't be as successful without her devoted viewers and neither would you without the following groups.

Show the love to...

Readers

What would you be without your readers? Well, probably not an author. You write so they can read and they read which allows you to write. It's a perfect circle. Remember to

keep in touch with your fans through your Facebook fan page, blog or Twitter.

Perhaps you could even message certain fans individually to further connect with them.

Try writing a few people each day and see what happens. Showing them love will encourage them to keep loving you and your writing.

Publishers

These are the people who took a chance on you and your writing talent. They deserve some love because they print, distribute and publicize your work – ultimately becoming the vehicle that drives your career forward. Maintain and strengthen this relationship by sending them a no-reason-at-all-thank-you-for-being-my-publisher gift or just a personalized, heartfelt note. I'd actually recommend Edible Arrangements – just be sure your publisher doesn't eat the basket.

“Having alliances in the world of authors is a valuable thing so support other authors.”

Other Authors

Having alliances in the world of authors is a valuable thing, so support other authors by connecting with them on the Web! Comment on their latest blog post

or Tweet praises about their newest book. Or you could write a review on Amazon.com for one of your favorite authors or books. These reviews are priceless and can very much affect whether or not customers purchase. So help a fellow author

out! Perhaps you'll experience good karma later.

Media

Another group that can fuel books sales are the media folk. It's a good idea to make note of your local book review reporters and some prominent national ones (especially those who have reviewed your work before) in case you want to send them updates or thank-you cards. Do you have a new book coming out? Sending select contacts a signed and personalized “sneak-peek” copy will really show you care.

It may seem like there are a lot of people to keep track of, which is why I've written this column to help you. Feel free to check off each group as you send out the cars ... I mean, the love.

E-mail Tom Ciesielka at tc@tcpr.net or call (312) 422-1333

Literary
Loudspeaker
Tom
Ciesielka



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reviews. New York Post: “A labor of love and obsession. Bloom was inspired by a necklace his mother would wear only on special occasions and wound up traveling 30,000 miles over four years in his quest.” Publishers Weekly: “Anyone who's ever dreamed about a string of black Tahitians [pearls] will be enchanted.” Library Journal: “Bloom's love of pearls – which are, after all, ‘essentially calcium-coated beads’ – allows him to draw back the curtain on the business of dealing in them without ruining his or the reader's pleasure in their charms.” Kirkus Reviews: “A satisfying mixture of history, science and popular culture.” Wall Street Journal: “One striking quality of pearls, Mr. Bloom tells us, is the aesthetic rapport they form with their wearers, absorbing body heat and seeming to glow and reflect luminescence onto the skin.”

... **Jeffery Renard Allen** was scheduled to give a reading at Feb. 1 in the Edith Garland Dupré Library at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. ... **Ingrid Wendt** read a William Stafford poem and one of her own Jan. 23 as part of a worldwide birthday celebration honoring the life and work of the late Stafford, one of Oregon's most famous poets. Also, she was “featured poet” in the Spring/Summer 2009 issue of the online journal Valparaiso Poetry Review, with three poems, an essay and an interview. ...

Carol Felsenthal has an article in the current Chicago magazine about the doling out of ambassadorships to top fund-raisers. ... **Robert Pruter**, author of *Doowop: The Chicago Scene (1996)* filled the room Jan. 27 at the Blackstone Branch Library of the Chicago Public Library as he discussed the doowop music genre and the people who made it part of Chicago lore. It was the inaugural presentation of the



Robert Pruter

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“Black flutter, Mamma flashed about the room, workbound, her shiny knee-length black leather boots working against the wood floor like powerful pistons.” – *Holding Pattern*, **Jeffery Renard Allen**

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Despres Family Memorial Lecture Series. ... A Chicago City Council committee is considering landmark status for the home



Gwendolyn Brooks

of longtime Society member **Gwendolyn Brooks** at 7428 S. Evans. ... **Jim and Lynda O'Connor** were scheduled to speak Feb. 12 at the San Francisco Writers Conference. Their topic was, "How to launch your book with powerful publicity."

About 300 attendees were expected, including about 40 literary agents and many high-powered industry professionals. On March 5, they will present the same topic at the Oxford Conference for the Book, a University of Mississippi book conference that attracts people from across the country. Lynda O'Connor describes Oxford as "a cute Southern town that has many book lovers." ... **Barbara Gregorich's** first novel, *She's on First* – out of print for about 20 years – is now available as a reprint: on Amazon as a soft-cover and on Kindle as an e-book. ... **Richard Lindberg** was on



Richard Lindberg

"City Room" on WBEZ Chicago Public Radio Feb. 10 talking about the slaying of Edward O'Hare, who was gunned down on Chicago's Southwest Side in 1939 in an alleged mob killing. Edward was the father of O'Hare Airport name-sake Butch O'Hare. Lindberg said, "If you strip away the unsavory kinds of aspects to O'Hare's life, he paid the ulti-

mate price so that his son would go on and become this world-famous hero of World War II." ... **Scott Turow** was among the authors contributing recipes to a celebrity cookbook titled *Writers Can Cook Too: Favorite Recipes From Favorite Authors* for the 20th Brandeis Book and Author event. ... **Stephen Kinzer** spoke on "Iran, Turkey and the U.S.: Power Triangle of the 21st Century" Jan. 26 on Chicago's WBEZ Public Radio. He discussed the new "power triangle" and explained how it could help calm crises from Palestine to Iraq to Afghanistan – if only the United States would break out from what he called "the prison of old policies, assumptions and alliances." ... **Lori Andrews** was quoted in the March/April Archeology, a publication of the Archaeological Institute of America, as saying, "I think there would be no question that if you cloned a Neanderthal, that individual would be recognized as having human rights under the Constitution and international treaties." ... **Jacquelyn Mitchard** wrote an article in the Feb. 14 Parade magazine titled "Why the World Needs Chocolate." She also was among the presenters at the Feb 11-14 Seventh Annual San Francisco Writers Conference... *Chasing Vermeer* by **Blue Balliett** was the February Superhero Reader book selection at the Leominster (Mass.) Public Library. ... On Feb. 21, the Chicago Sun-Times called **Deborah Blum's** new book, *The Poisoner's Handbook*, "engagingly written and extensively researched." ... Loving Healing Press of Ann Arbor, Mich., where the SMA's **Victor Volkman** is president, recently announced it had received digital certification from Lightning Source, Inc. This distinction is awarded to "high volume publishers" who meet the quality control specifications from LSI. Also, Loving Healing Press recently celebrated its 100th published title. ... **Ruth Spiro** on Feb. 5 visited a Naperville, Ill, school for the fifth



Lori Andrews

New Books

SHADOW TAG

Shadow Tag (Feb. 2, HarperCollins), is a new novel (her 13th) by **Louise Erdrich**, who won the Society of Midland Authors' 2009 Children's Fiction Award for *Porcupine Year*.

Shadow Tag, which got the cover review in the Feb. 7 New York Times Book Review, is a story of a troubled marriage and a family in disarray. The San Francisco Chronicle said, "Readers will shiver to recognize certain elements of relationship ('They argued sometimes for comfort') conveyed in some of the most shapely, beautiful sentences imaginable. But Erdrich's skill is such that we scarcely notice their beauty: only that they are clear, urgent, deep as a swift river."

LIBERATION NARRATIVES: NEW AND COLLECTED POEMS 1966-2009

Liberation Narratives: New and Collected Poems: 1966-2009 by **Haki R Madhubuti**, founder of Third World Press and director emeritus of the Gwendolyn Brooks Center for Black Literature and Creative Writing, includes poems from throughout Madhubuti's long career. The Chicago Sun-Times said, "Madhubuti's reflections on the election of America's first black president [are] among many thought-provoking new musings compiled with favorites of three decades." The book description states, "These poems helped define and sustain a movement that added music and brash street language to traditional poetics. ... As a whole the poems provide an overview of emerging black culture as they borrow language from black consciousness, hip-hop, political speeches, and motivational talks."



Haki R. Madhubuti

Letters to the Editor

My compliments on the outstanding newsletter, issue after issue.

Michael H. Ebner

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New Members

Gary A. Braunbeck is author of 19 books – mysteries, thrillers, science fiction, fantasy, horror. His fiction has been translated into Japanese, French, Italian, Russian, Polish, and German. Nearly 200 of his short stories have appeared in various publications. He was born in Newark, Ohio, which serves as the model for the fictitious Cedar Hill in many of his stories. His work has been awarded five Bram Stoker Awards, an International Horror Guild Award, and a World Fantasy Award nomination. Braunbeck also is an adjunct professor at Seton Hill University in Pennsylvania, where he teaches in an MFA degree program titled “Writing Popular Fiction.”



Gary A. Braunbeck

Since 2000, **Deirdre N. McCloskey** has been UIC distinguished professor of economics, history, English and communication at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has written or edited 21 books. Her latest books are *How to be Human**: **Though an Economist* (University of Michigan Press 2001), *Measurement and Meaning in Economics* (S. Ziliak, ed.; Edward Elgar 2001), *The Secret Sins of Economics (Prickly Paradigm Pamphlets, U. of Chicago Press, 2002)*, *The Cult of Statistical Significance: How the Standard Error Costs Us Jobs, Justice, and Lives* [with Stephen Ziliak; University of Michigan Press, 2008], and *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Capitalism* (U. of Chicago Press, 2006).

Christoph Irmscher, a professor of English at Indiana University, teaches and writes about 19th century American and Canadian literature and culture. His books include *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, edited with Alan Braddock (University of Alabama Press, 2009), *Public Poet*,

Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200 (University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), *Longfellow Redux* (University of Illinois Press, 2006) and *The Poetics of Natural History: From John Bartram to William James* (Rutgers University Press, 1999). He has also edited *John James Audubon's Writings and Drawings* for the Library of America and has just finished a biography of Louis Agassiz, *Mr. Agassiz's Puzzle-Box*, which will be published by the University of Virginia Press.



Christoph Irmscher

New York Times best-selling author **Rusty McClure** is co-author with David Stern and Michael A. Banks of *Crosley: Two Brothers and a Business Empire that Transformed the Nation*, is co-author with David Stern of the novel *Cincinnatus: The Secret Plot to Save America*, and is co-author with Jack Heffron of *Coral Castle: The Story of Ed Leedskalnin and his American Stonehenge*. McClure also teaches an entrepreneurial course at Ohio Wesleyan University, and he has served as a PGA scoring observer for 27 years. He previously served as president and CEO of the Brown Publishing Co., a regional newspaper holding company, and Famous Sportswear, a national distributor of college logo merchandise.

Mike Thomas, author of *The Second City Unscripted* and a staff writer for the Chicago Sun-Times, has interviewed numerous renowned comics and comedic actors – several of them Second City alums – including Jerry Seinfeld, Robin Williams, Carl Reiner, Bill Cosby, Tom and Dick Smothers, Chevy Chase, Sarah Silverman, Richard Lewis, Phyllis Diller, Bob Newhart, Rodney Dangerfield, and Jon Stewart.

Thomas' national magazine work has appeared in *Esquire*, *Smithsonian*, and *Playboy* and on *Salon.com*.

He lives in Chicago with his wife and

their two daughters.

Steven A. Riess is the author of *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (1980, rev. ed., 1999), *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (1989), and *Sport in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (1995), and has edited several books including *The Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Teams* (2006) and *Sports and the American Jew* (1998). Among the founding members of the North American Society for Sport History, he edited the *Journal of Sport History* from 1985 to 1992, and edits the series “Sports and Entertainment” for Syracuse University Press. Three of his books were cited by *Choice* as “Outstanding Academic Books.” Other awards include the Webb-Smith Prize and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Ethan E. Lewis, an associate professor of English at the University of Illinois-Springfield, specializes in Shakespeare and modernist poets. He teaches Shakespeare, 17th century literature and modern and contemporary poetry. He has written several books and now is working on a book on Shakespeare. He also is co-author with Robert Kuhn McGregor of *Conundrums for the Long Weekend: England, Lord Peter Wimsey, and Dorothy L. Sayers* (Kent, 2000), winner of the Edgar Award.

Allen Salter, who has published as **Sam Reaves**, was raised in small Midwestern towns but has lived in Chicago or its environs for most of his life.

He has also lived or made extended journeys in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East and speaks five foreign languages fluently. He has worked as a translator and a teacher. He was president of the Midwest Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America from 2001 to 2003. He has published 10 novels, most recently *Mean Town Blues*, six as Sam Reaves and three as Dominic Martell. He lives in Evanston, Ill., with his wife, son and daughter.

“One glaring subject that Obama avoided in the campaign and early days of his presidency was how to pay for infrastructure over time and how it will dovetail with an overall strategy to address climate change.” – *The Audacity of Help*, **John Wasik**

Biblio File

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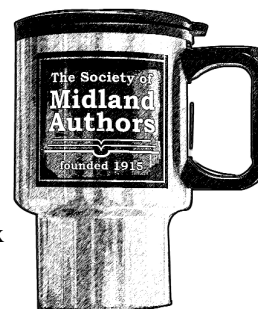
annual Bubble Gum Day, a holiday she created in 2006 to promote her book, *Lester Fizz, Bubble-Gum Artist*, and raised more than \$300 for Haiti relief. On Bubble Gum Day, kids who donate 50 cents or more get to chew gum at school that day, with the proceeds going to any charity the school chooses. She received emails from schools across the country – one raised over \$1,700; another had kids donate used books instead of money, and they gave the books to a local shelter. ... **Thirty Umrigar**, a finalist in the 2009 SMA book competition for *First Darling of the Morning: Selected Memories of an Indian Childhood*, has been signing her new book, *The Weight of Heaven: A Novel*. It tells how, in the years following the sudden death of their seven-year-old son, Benny, Michigan residents Frank and Ellie Benton have witnessed the steady

deterioration of their marriage. So when Frank's boss offers him a position overseeing a company factory in the rural Indian city of Girbaug, Ellie convinces her husband it's just the change they both need. ... **Marcus Sakey** will appear at the Arkansas Literature Festival April 8-11. ... **Rick Perlstein** appeared on The Takeaway Feb. 22, a daily national morning news radio program, talking about gridlock in the capital and the mood of the American electorate. ... **Taylor Pensoneau**, who is co-author of a biography of former Illinois Gov. Dan Walker, was quoted in the Jan. 28 Chicago Tribune on the subject of lame-duck governors. While running for a second term, Walker lost in the primary and became a "non-presence" in Springfield, Pensoneau said. ... **Dominick Pacyga** was quoted in the Feb. 16 Chicago Sun-Times about a city sign marking the sites of the Metropole and Lexington hotels, two Al Capone haunts on South Michigan near Cermak. Pacyga said he was surprised

because the city usually does not promote Capone's link to Chicago. ... **Achy Obejas** read and did a Q&A Feb. 23 "about an endangered species" – the book – in the distinguished writers series at Wellesley College. ... The Providence Journal on Feb. 8 called *George Washington for Kids* by **Brandon Marie Miller** "well-researched and very readable, with interesting photos and drawings."

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"Pushing himself to rise, he groaned at the dagger of pain that stabbed his right shoulder. ... Slumped on the edge of his bed, he gloomily echoed the lament of Euripides on how old age weighed on a man, heavier than the rock of Etna." – *The Shepherds of Shadows*, **Harry Mark Petrakis**

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