

## Biblio File

It's that time of year. People dust off their bats and gloves for another season. And **James Finn Garner** and friends open up their baseball poetry website, Bardball.com, to contributions from fans. It's Bardball.com's sixth season of publishing poems, doggerel, songs and videos submitted by fans about all aspects of the national pastime. ... Just in time for National Poetry Month, **James Reiss** has been designated "Featured Illinois



James Reiss

Author" for 2012 in Willow Review, published by the College of Lake County. Seven new poems from his developing seventh poetry book, plus an interview and photo of Reiss, appear in the April 2012 issue. He was scheduled to give

a reading of his poems April 19, 7 p.m. at CLC's Grayslake campus. ... St. Martin's Press will publish **Mike Thomas'** already-in-progress biography of the late, great Saturday Night Live comic Phil Hartman. No pub date has been set yet, but the deal was announced in the last week of March. The working (and Mike hopes it's permanent) title is *You Might Remember Me: The Life and Times of Phil Hartman*. All that remains for Mike to do now is write it. Details, details. ... St. Olaf's English prof emeritus Steven Polansky has retired from Minnesota to Appleton, Wis., where he is trying to create a local version of Minneapolis' famed Loft literary center. ... Chicago magazine recently examined how the city of Chicago shaped the late SMA member **Kurt Vonnegut**, topic of a 2011 biography by former Midwest author Charles J. Shields (who now lives in Virginia). And **Ray Boomhower** tweeted this Vonnegut quote: "We are

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## Authors make an odyssey to see movie of The Iliad

BY ROBERT LOERZEL

Forced to move the April program because the Cliff Dwellers was expected to close, the Society of Midland Authors met at a Chicago theater to watch a film about "The Iliad."

The new film by **Mark Eleveld** and **Ronald Maruszak** shows that "The Iliad" is more than just an ancient text. Greek storyteller Homer's words come to life on the screen, embodied by poets including Robert Pinky, Edward Hirsch and **Marc Smith**.

The SMA screened "Poets and Profs: Looking at 'The Iliad'" on April 10 at Theater Wit in Chicago, followed by a lively question-and-answer session with Eleveld and Maruszak.

The hourlong film alternates between poets performing "The Iliad" and scholars explaining it.

The professors interviewed include Elizabeth Samet, Nick Rudall, James Redfield and Herman Sinaiko, a longtime University of Chicago scholar who died last year.

Eleveld and Maruszak said they hope to distribute "Poets and Profs" as a teaching tool to schools.

Eleveld, an SMA board member, is editor of the books *The Spoken Word Revolution* and *The Spoken Word Revolution Redux*. Maruszak is producer of "Slam the Radio: Poetry" on Xn/Sirius' Book Channel. Working together, they also co-founded EM Press ([www.em-press.com](http://www.em-press.com)).

Watch the WBEZ website for the "Chicago Amplified" audio recording of the discussion with Eleveld and Maruszak about their films. WBEZ recordings of SMA events can be found at: <http://www.wbez.org/users/society-midland-authors-0>



Mark Eleveld

## Sign up for the annual banquet

The Society of Midland Authors' annual awards banquet will be held May 8 in the LaSalle Room at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago.

The reception with a cash bar will start at 6 p.m.

Dinner will begin at 7 p.m.

Come meet authors whose books were finalists or winners in their categories:

Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, Biography, Children's Fiction, Children's Nonfiction and Poetry.

Copies of many of the finalist and winning books will be on the tables, available for attendees to take home.

**Jay Bonansinga** will be the emcee.

For more information, see SMA Board Member Jim Schwab's story on Page 5.

*Literary Lore*  
Richard Lindberg

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*Literary Landscape*  
Gail Lukasik

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*Literary Loudspeaker*  
Tom Ciesielka

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what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be.” ... **Mark Jacob** was in a Page One Chicago Tribune photo April 17 celebrating the Trib’s Pulitzer Prize. ... **Sam Weller** has three short stories slated for publication this year in books and one in a lit mag. One of four stories **Sam Weller** wrote for the **Ray Bradbury** tribute book, *Shadow Show*, is being published @Rosebud-Mag. ... **Kevin Coval** was scheduled to start a three-week solo show in the last week of March at Chicago’s Victory Gardens Theater. It’s based on his book *L-Vis Lives! Racemusic Poems* and was scheduled to run through April 14 ... **Sue Harrison** tweeted March 24 that she was just eight chapters from completing her work in progress. “I’m excited about this one.” ... The March 26 Must Read Mysteries blog listed *Mystery Short Stories Volume 1* by **Julie Hyzy**’s alter ego, **N.C. Hyzy**. ... Publishers Weekly reported March 30 that the late SMA member **Kurt Vonnegut** was back at the

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

# Join us inside the SMA tent at Lit Fest, aka Printers Row

South Dearborn Street has meant many things to generations of Chicagoans over the years. If you lived in the “windy burg” after the Civil War up through the dawn of the 20th century, you knew it as the city’s “badlands,” the infamous Custom House Levee where all sorts of illegalities and criminal misbehavior flourished for nearly 40 years. To the immediate west, after the Civil War, Pacific Avenue (today, La Salle Street), was called “Little Cheyenne” for its many houses of ill-repute and infamy, until the residents of Cheyenne, Wyo., took note and named their vice district “Little Chicago.”

By 1903, the Custom House Place Levee was closed by edict, and the old sin strip with its remaining buckets of blood were all demolished, leaving only the Dearborn Street train station and a new and emerging business district in its wake – Printer’s Row, where the Lakeside Press, various other publishers, and the once famous commercial printing concerns hung out their shingles.

And thus, for a time, a Chicago literary renaissance flourished south of Madison Street. The Fine Arts Building, the Cliff Dwellers nearby established Chicago as a town of poets, playwrights and authors. But that too passed into history and by the 1970s, the Printer’s Row district fell into a state of shabby decay. The Transportation Building, the Manhattan Building and the Donohue Building were boarded-up relics by 1979. It remained that way until urban renewal and gentrification came calling, and the old places of publishing glory were reborn as condos and hotels with a collection of storefront businesses – with bookstores.

The new Printer’s Row had evolved to become an homage to a storied past, and what better way to celebrate it than with the largest outdoor book festival and street fair in the Midwest occurring the first weekend in June each year. In 2000, Carol Carlson and I persuaded the SMA

“In addition to making money from their book sales, our members have had the opportunity to network with their readers, other authors and the public at large.”

Board to become an involved participant by renting tent space on the street as a means of showcasing and promoting the aims of the Society and the fine work of our author members for a nominal fee – far less than what individuals might otherwise pay were they to reserve a table on

their own.

From the beginning our sponsorship was a success. In most years we have sold out all the table space for the two days. In addition to making money from their book sales, our members have had the opportunity to

network with their readers, other authors and the public at large. We have had very few complaints about the arrangements – apart from the usual thunder storm that seems to descend upon us, usually around 3 on Saturday afternoon. But the rain (plastic sheets are provided and we are always under the roof of the tent) is a minor inconvenience. The main thing of course is to partake in a wonderful event in a historic Chicago backdrop – and perhaps commune with the spirits of our literary forebears who would surely be there if they could – Ferber, Dreiser, Sandburg, Garland, the Andersons (Sherwood and Margaret), Motley and the rest of the stellar ensemble cast. Lit Fest – (the name takes some getting used to, doesn’t it?) – is after all, fun.

Be there, won’t you?

Literary  
Lore

Richard  
Lindberg



# Illinois' little-known link to Cherokee Trail of Tears

BY GAIL LUKASIK

Illinois' connection to the Trail of Tears is one of the little known or forgotten historical events explored in my latest mystery *The Lost Artist*. In researching this dark chapter of American history, I discovered a horrific tale of loss and suffering.

Though little history remains of Illinois' involvement, certain facts are indisputable. Between December 1838 and January 1839 an estimated 9,000 Cherokee became trapped in Illinois between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during one of the coldest, most miserable winters on record. With only the clothes on their backs, the Cherokee waited for the Mississippi River to thaw, so they could continue their forced march to Oklahoma. Of the 13 detachments that took the northern route, nine came through Illinois.

How many Cherokee died in Illinois is anybody's guess.

Estimates vary from 400 to 4,000. Just as uncertain is where they were buried. When I traveled to southern Illinois, I visited the Camp Ground Cemetery, which is thought to be the site of the unmarked Cherokee graves. Sandra Boaz, a longtime member of the Camp Ground Church and Trail of Tears Association board member, told me that the church is the only place on the trail that still has bona fide graveyards. "All along the way they died," she said, "but this is the only actual graveyard."

According to local lore, George Hileman allowed about 3,000 Cherokee to camp, cut wood, and bury their dead on his land. Hileman's daughter and son who'd died in 1836 were buried in an adjacent field to the one where he let the Cherokee bury their dead. I can't help but believe he had great sympathy for the Cherokee, maybe due in part to the loss of his own children.

In 1850 Hileman dedicated a portion of his land as a permanent home for a church

that eventually became known as the Camp Ground Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Today a stone marker on the church grounds commemorates the site of the cemetery and its association with the Trail of Tears. I integrated Hileman's story of loss and subsequent generosity into *The Lost Artist*.

With so much suffering and death, the Cherokee showed amazing fortitude. According to Gary Hacker, Trail of Tears Association board member, the Cherokee sang Christian hymns as they walked. Known as one of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Cherokee had assimilated into American society, were educated, with their own written language and newspaper. Hacker stated that they were better educated than the townspeople who jeered them.



Literary  
Landscape  
Gail  
Lukasik

To save their children, some Cherokee made difficult choices. Hacker explained that there were accounts of some Cherokee who made arrangements

with local families to take one or two of their children rather than see them die on the trail. Other Cherokee offered their daughters in marriage.

Reverend Butrick who accompanied the Cherokee described the state of the nine detachments shedding light on why some Cherokee placed their children with local families. "[T]here are more . . . affected with sickness in almost every tent and yet all are houseless and homeless in a strange land and in a cold region exposed to weather almost unknown in their native country. But they are prisoners."

In *The Lost Artist*, the impact of this bleak page of Illinois history echoes into the 21st century with deathly consequences. It's a story that must not be forgotten.

*Gail Lukasik's debut stand-alone mystery/thriller The Lost Artist (Five Star/Cengage) will be released in June. Kirkus Reviews wrote: "Lukasik has crafted a highly intriguing tale loaded with suspense and historic interest."*

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top of the best-seller list, this time with an e-book, "Night Summons." ... Every author's nightmare? **Benjamin Percy** says, "I wake in the night with its diseased breath baking my face. The next novel is here – and it is hungry." ... **Craig Sautter** on March 26 wrote an article on "The Perils of Brokered Conventions" solicited by the History News Network at George Mason University. ... **Jonathan Eig** was interviewed on **Rick Kogan's** radio show April 1. Jonathan also was scheduled to be in Seattle April 20 to speak at a ALS Association luncheon. And then there's that small matter of his sports website going online this month. ... **Keir Graff** forwards an important tip: If you want to be an author living in a nice house, write thrillers. ... **Martha Miller** is a finalist in the Lambda Literary Awards for her 2011 mystery, *Retirement Plan: a Crime Novel*. On May 24, she will be reading with other Chicago area finalists at Gerber Hart Library and Archives at 7 p.m. ... **Carol Fisher Saller's**

*Eddie's War* has been named to the Bankstreet Best Children's Books of the Year for 2012 (Twelve to Fourteen category), and is starred for "Outstanding Merit."

... **Gerry Souter** will be signing his latest book, a history/memoir titled, *American Shooter – A personal History of Gun Culture in the United States* on May 8 at 7 p.m. at Barnes & Noble booksellers, The Annex of Arlington Shopping Center, 13 West Rand Road, 847-259-5304. Gerry writes: "This hardcover volume, presents a liberal gun owner's perspective from the outside peering into the heated debate over gun control." It includes an account of his memories growing up on Chicago's South Side. Always the kid who got picked last in games, Gerry says, at age 12 he found his lifetime skill in marksmanship and shooting sports. ... **Libby Fischer**



Martha Miller

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**Hellmann** has *A Bitter Veil* signings scheduled at: Centuries and Sleuths, Forest Park, May 5; Hidden Shamrock, Chicago, May 6; May 15Bartlett (Ill.) Public Library, writing workshop: "How to Build Suspense," 7 p.m.; June 9-10, Printers Row Lit Fest; June 23, Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Book Festival, Featured Author. Online, she was at Video Chat on April 17. Libby writes: "This is a brand-new service provided by Shindig Events



Libby Fisher Hellmann

that allows up to 500 people to interact together in real time. And it is so easy to use that even my 92-year-old mother will be there." *A Bitter Veil* officially came out on April 15. It tells the story of Anna and Nouri, both studying in Chicago, who fall in

love despite their very different backgrounds. Anna, who has never been close to her parents, is more than happy to return with Nouri to his native Iran, to be embraced by his wealthy family. Beginning their married life together in 1978, their world is abruptly turned upside down by the overthrow of the Shah, and the rise of the Islamic Republic. Under the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Republican Guard, life becomes increasingly restricted and Anna must learn to exist in a transformed world, where none of the familiar Western rules apply.

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## New Members

**William Anderson**, author of *Pioneer Girl: The Story of Laura Ingalls Wilder* and *The World of the Trapp Family*, is a director of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association in Mansfield, Mo.

He lives and works as a teacher in Michigan and has received the Western History Association's Billington Award, the Robinson award of the South Dakota State Historical Society, National

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# Has your blog become a slog? Here's how to rejuvenate it

If you've been writing a blog and have found it difficult to come up with content, don't quit. Here are a few tips that will help you when you feel burnt out:

**Interview someone.** Look at the books you've read and the interesting people you know. If you ask experts if they want to be interviewed, they will often say yes. Make a schedule to interview someone once a month, and you will find that it not only helps you relax, but will help their own reputation, for which they'll be appreciative. You might also notice that your readership is increasing because the person you're interviewing will post your link on their website and social media sites, too.

**Create a quiz.** It doesn't have to be long or complicated; ask 5 or 10 questions, and keep the options simple. If it's about a topic that people are interested in, your blog could get thousands of hits for years to come.

**Have a guest blogger.** If you know someone who you think can provide quality content to your blog, ask him or her to submit a few posts that you can spread out over a few months. You can also rotate guests once a month or every other month. Not only will it relieve the pressure on you, but it will also help you to not feel alone in your writing pursuits.



If you don't want to worry about maintaining a posting schedule on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, or other social media, all you have to do is load a bunch of posts in Buffer, set the times that you want them posted, and you will be able to communicate with your audience consistently.

The free version lets you schedule up to 10 posts that can go to one Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn account. The

paid versions let you post to several more accounts.

Also, when you see something online that you want to share, all you do is click the Buffer button, and the link will go into your buffer list to be sent out whenever you want.

It works on Web browsers, iPhones, and Androids, so you can schedule posts from wherever you are.

It's a great way to organize your Tweets...enjoy!



Get organized! Create a calendar to remind yourself to regularly do things for your own promotional and marketing plan. Here are some quick tips to get you started:

Choose to update a few outlets, such as your blog, newsletter, and LinkedIn.

Decide how often you will post something in those places, commit to the dates, and be sure to meet those deadlines.

If you're too busy to keep up with the schedule, assign someone in your office the task of making sure that the content will be created on the dates that you have chosen.

Think about all the activities you're doing. If you're writing articles, or simply want to post pictures or videos of presentations that you've done, put that on the calendar, too.

Basically, anything you create should go on that calendar. It's a discipline that should not be ignored, and once you establish it, you will see your reputation and business grow.

This is advice that I have to follow as well, because sometimes I get so busy, I forget to stick to my publicity schedule. Let me know if this works for you!

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



Literary  
Loudspeaker  
Tom  
Ciesielka

# *Society of Midland Authors*

## *Annual Dinner Registration Form*

The Society of Midland Authors annual awards banquet will be held May 8 in the LaSalle Room at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago.

The reception with a cash bar will start at 6 p.m. Dinner will begin at 7 p.m.

**Jay Bonansinga** is the emcee.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Chicken Vesuvio dinners at \$75 each. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of vegetarian (risotto with grilled asparagus) dinners at \$75 each. \_\_\_\_\_

Donation. \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip above form and mail to: Dinner Reservation, Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610  
 You may also download a similar form at our website, [www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com) or pay via PayPal.

# More than just rubber chicken ...

BY JIM SCHWAB

What's what you're asking yourself, isn't it? Why go to another rubber chicken banquet? Well, heck, I was going to title this piece, "Duck! Here Comes the Entrée."

But let's not get into a food fight over this. The point is, isn't it, that the meal always seems to be fowl. And why not? What other idea for the banquet entrée is going to fly? Certainly not pigs in a blanket.

There was a year when we had London broil. It beat mystery meat by a mile. But see, you have to come to the banquet in order to remember these precious tidbits. You can't win Midland Authors Jeopardy by staying home. "Literary history for a thousand, Alex." "This Midwestern writer offered poems for bread." "Who was Vachel Lindsay?"

Bing, bing, bing, bing . . .



**Jim Schwab**

See what you can learn from hanging out with the winners? That banquet: It's not just for the birds, anymore.

Actually, there is a lot to be said for hanging out with the best. Their bestness rubs off on all of us. Every year, I feel smarter after rubbing elbows with winning authors, hearing their explanations of the challenges they overcame to put together remarkable books that are a pleasure to read. And you get to take one home after it's all over. They're on the tables, they're your souvenirs, and if enough other people fail to show up for the banquet, there may be enough

left that you can take home more than one. Pick your category—what do you like to read? You won't be disappointed.

How do I know? For the last several years, I sweated through the biographies as a judge. Some of the entries may disappoint, but those books won't be there

(although the authors may). But the winners—those are the ones I could never put down, the ones that gave me a sense of their destiny, the ones I wanted to come home to, night after night, until I finished, even if the book was 500, even 800 pages long. Did you ever notice that a good 800-page book is a faster read than a poorly written 80-page book? Whatever the length, there will be a winner on your table in your favorite category that is well worth the price of that banquet ticket. And don't forget: You still get your chicken and that salad, too, not to mention the chocolate mousse for dessert. (Actually, I didn't check to find out what this year's dessert really is. It could be key lime pie, for all I know.)

So now you know why they serve poultry at these awards banquets. Just like the birds, your heart will soar after you start reading the winners. Order your banquet tickets today. Tell them Jim Schwab sent you.

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## New Members

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Endowment for the Humanities awards and recognition from the National Council of Social Studies.

In the September 2002, he was invited to the White House for the third of Laura Bush's American Authors Symposia.

**Amina Gautier**, Ph.D., is the author of the short story collection *At-Risk*, which won the Flannery O'Connor Award. Seventy-five of her stories have been published, appearing in *Glimmer Train*, *Iowa Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *North American Review*, and *Southern Review* among other places. Her stories have placed in the *Zoetrope* – All Story Fiction Contest, *Dana Awards*, *Narrative Contest*, and the *Glimmer Train Fiction Open* and have won the *Jack Dyer Prize*, *William Richey Award*, the *Danahy Prize*, the *Schlafly Microfiction Award*, and a *Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Award* as well as scholarships and fellowships from *Breadloaf*, *Ucross*, and *Sewanee Writer's*

*Conference*.

Gautier teaches at DePaul University.

**Daniel Kraus** is a Chicago-based writer, editor, and filmmaker. His debut novel, *The Monster Variations* (Random House, 2009), was selected to New York Public Library's "100 Best Stuff for Teens." Fangoria called his Bram Stoker-finalist, *Odyssey Award*-winning second novel, *Rotters* (Random House, 2011), "a new horror classic."

Upcoming novels include *Scowler* (Random House, 2013) and *Trollhunters* (Hyperion, 2013), co-written with Oscar-winning filmmaker Guillermo del Toro.

Kraus has written regularly for such magazines as *Cosmopolitan*, *Playboy*, *Maxim*, and *Salon.com*. He is the director of six feature films, including "Sheriff" (2006 season premiere of PBS's Emmy-winning "Independent Lens") and "Musician" (2007 *New York Times* Critics' Pick).

He was born in Midland, Mich., and is senior editor at *Booklist* magazine.

**Thomas J. Sugrue** is author of *The*

*Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996), *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (2008), and *Not Even Past: Barack Obama and the Burden of Race* (2010). He co-edited *W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City* (1998) and *The New Suburban History* (2005).

*Origins of the Urban Crisis* won the Bancroft Prize in History, the President's Book Award of the Social Science History Association, the Philip Taft Prize in Labor History, and the Urban History Association Prize for Best Book in North American Urban History, and Princeton University Press selected it as one of its 100 most influential books of the preceding century. *Sweet Land of Liberty* was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in History.

At the University of Pennsylvania, he is a professor of history and sociology, with a specialization in the 20th century United States.

He was born and raised in Detroit and now lives in Philadelphia.

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