

Biblio File

Rita Emmett was interviewed March 20 on ABC-TV's "Chicagoing" by Bill Campbell about her most recent book, *Manage Your Time to Reduce Your Stress: A Handbook for the Overworked,*



Rita Emmett

Overscheduled and Overwhelmed. Bill devoted the whole half hour to Rita's book, which, she says, made her life very "UN-stressful." On June 23, Rita, who is a "recovered pack rat" was interviewed on ABC-TV Chicago News

about *The Clutter-Busting Handbook*. The interview was conducted by anchorman Hosea Sanders, who claimed to be buried in paper clutter. In one of those odd twists that makes book publicists consider career changes, Emmett reports that the three-minute June 23 show sold more books than the half-hour program in March. ... On June 30, the Edison/Norwood Times Review ran a profile of **Richard Lindberg**, noting that his *The Gambler King of Clark Street* won the Society's 2010 Biography Award. The newspaper said, "Ironically, Lindberg suspects his reputation as an authority on Chicago's underbelly may have tagged him forever as a good 'regional' writer at a time when he'd like to go beyond that and start building a national reputation. He acknowledges that may never happen, precisely because of his passion for all things Chicago." ... The June 29 Minneapolis Star-Tribune said **Scott Turow's** new book, *Innocent*, "is by far his best." ... **Jacquelyn Mitchard's** agent "just told me she LOVED my new novel," Mitchard tweeted on Aug. 2. "She's paid to say this but she usually does not." ... Looking for the right adjective for journalists to use when describing you? The Washington Post's E.J. Dionne

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Upcoming program season will feature high-level talks

BY ROBERT LOERZEL, PRESIDENT

No matter how many times you've seen the Chicago skyline, it's still breathtaking to gaze out at the city and Lake Michigan when you're perched up at the Cliff Dwellers Club, located on the 22nd floor at 200 S. Michigan Ave.

You don't have to be a member of this exclusive club to stop in whenever the Society of Midland Authors hosts a public event at the Cliff Dwellers. It happens six times a year — on the second Tuesday of the month during October, November, January, February, March and April. (We take the summer off, and we also skip December because of the holidays.)

Each year we invite noteworthy authors to talk about their books.

Anyone can show up. We used to charge a small admission fee to people other than Society members, but last year we decided to make it voluntary. We started asking for donations — and we actually ended up collecting more cash to help defray the cost of these events.

The authors begin speaking at 7 p.m. But if you're coming, we suggest showing up early.

A social hour begins at 6 p.m., with a cash bar and free appetizers.

Although the Cliff Dwellers Club is a pretty classy joint, our programs are fairly

casual. These aren't just lectures. There's always some interesting give-and-take when audience members ask questions or chat with the authors.

Last year, Chicago Public Radio began recording our programs at the Cliff Dwellers (as well as our annual awards banquet in May), posting audio a few weeks later at www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified.

We're still working out a few details for our programs in January and April, but here's what we have lined up so far.



Robert Loerzel

Oct. 12: Stephen Asma (see Q & A on Page 3) discusses his book *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*. Just in time for Halloween, Asma will talk about the monsters that have terrified people from ancient times up through today.

A professor of philosophy and interdisciplinary humanities at Columbia College Chicago, Asma is the author of many books, including *Why I Am a Buddhist, Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums* and *The Gods Drink Whiskey*. He is also a jazz and blues guitarist, performing in the acoustic swing quartet Doctor Swing.

Nov. 9: Jonathan Eig, author of *Get*

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Q&A
with Stephen Asma

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New
Books

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Literary Loudspeaker:
Tom Ciesielka

PAGE 2

President's Report

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Capone. The acclaimed journalist and best-selling author tells the story of Chicago's most famous gangster, using never-before-seen government documents and newly discovered letters written by Capone himself.

Eig's previous books are "*Luckiest Man: The Life and Death of Lou Gehrig*" and "*Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinon's First Season.*"

Jan. 11: Panel discussion on electronic books. (Tentative; details to be announced.)

Feb. 8: **John Hagedorn**, author of *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*. An associate professor of criminal justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Hagedorn will discuss the gangs plaguing Chicago and other cities.

March 8: **Audrey Niffenegger**, author of the best-selling novels *Her Fearful Symmetry* and "*The Time Traveler's Wife.*"

Niffenegger is also a visual artist, and she teaches classes at Columbia College that explore the relationship between text and images.

Her latest book is the graphic novel *The Night Bookmobile*.

April 12: Poetry. Details to be announced.

Literary License

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Two tools that can help you get Internet book promotion

Delicious. Plain and simple, what is it? A Web-based service that enables you to save and share the websites you "bookmark," as well as see what other people across the Internet are bookmarking and sharing.

People use Delicious to keep track of information online, organize their favorite sites and access those sites from any computer. This site simplifies the process of organizing, without the use of multiple folders. Instead, Delicious utilizes "tags," or categories, to create a collection of your favorite online findings. Delicious users can share these bookmarks with friends and colleagues on the site and also through Twitter, Facebook, email and more. Delicious makes it easy for users to see what the most popular bookmarks are for any tag.

How can you use it for promoting books?

By using Delicious, you can provide your readers with relevant resources that will establish you as an expert and as a "go-to" source for information. Delicious

also has public relations benefits – you can bookmark your press releases and related blog articles and use consistent tags that relate to your book and expertise in order to tie together recurring themes and topics.

Use an aptly named tag for your book announcements, blog posts, and even the "In the News" section of your website. You can also encourage current and potential readers to bookmark your own website and/or blog by adding the Delicious "badge."

Explore the tags they add and see if it matches with your own. If the tags and terms match up, you know you're serving up good content!



What acts like a Google Alert but is designed for Twitter?

No, this is not a social media riddle.

“With targeted information delivered directly to your inbox, you'll be sure to never miss a beat.”

The answer is TweetBeep!

TweetBeep emails you when your selected key words or phrases are mentioned on Twitter.

How do people use it?

This Web-based application enables users to set up a search for any keyword or phrase on Twitter, and receive hourly updates via e-mail when any tweets include that

keyword, phrase or hashtag.

TweetBeep is an easy tool for tracking talk on Twitter about your book, website, events or products and services. By monitoring the conversation about your book, you can make sure you are managing your reputation and engaging with people who are interested in you – people who can become potential readers. You can also use TweetBeep as an application to measure the impact and engagement level of various campaigns, or track the reactions to your book announcements or events. It can also be a valuable tool for industry research if you monitor readership or even a competing book. With targeted information delivered directly to your inbox, you'll be sure to never miss a beat – or a tweet!

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

Literary
Loudspeaker
Tom
Ciesielka



A program about our fears? Monstrous

Stephen Asma, who will present the Society of Midland Authors' Oct. 12 program, is author of six books, most recently *Why I Am a Buddhist: No-Nonsense Buddhism with Red Meat and Whiskey* (March, 2010) and *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (October, 2009). He is a professor of philosophy and interdisciplinary humanities at Columbia College Chicago and also is a jazz musician.

Literary License: The Washington Post wrote that in *On Monsters* you never give a definitive definition of monsters. Why is that?

Stephen Asma: "Monster" is a very nebulous term. It's used by different eras and different regions to refer to diverse subjects. In the ancient West, monsters were thought of as omens or warnings (from the Latin, *monere*), and in the Medieval period they were divine punishments, and in the Darwinian era they were natural history curiosities, and in our own day, our newspaper headlines frequently call heinous criminals "monsters."

If I offered some constraining dictionary definition of monster, then I'd quickly miss a lot of this wonderful diversity. And we often forget that the real meaning of language comes from how we use it (not from a dictionary), so I've written a book that tries to track how we "use" the label of monster.

It turns out that there are some common ingredients in many of our uses – common links, for example, between Alexander the Great's letters to Aristotle about monsters, and P.T. Barnum's freaks, and even the latest vampire and zombie crazes. But you'll have to read the book to find out!

Literary License: Where do mon-

October 12, 2010, program

Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor

6 p.m. - Social Hour

7 p.m. - Program

Free - donations accepted

sters come from (not counting literary agents or publishers)?

Stephen Asma: Well, let's not forget editors, too! The origins of monsters are idiosyncratic to each culture, of course, but some big trends can be identified. Aristotle thought they were just different exotic species – natural rather than supernatural – and they lived somewhere in mysterious India and deep Africa. This included humanoid

creatures with no heads, whose eyes and mouths grew in their chests. Medieval Christians on the other hand, thought monsters were either supernatural demons from another realm, or they were odious descendents of bad boy Cain (from the Cain and Abel Biblical story). After Freud, we often envision monsters as aggressive inner-creatures that explode out of our normal psyches, like Mr. Hyde from inside Dr. Jekyll.

Literary License: You say it's time to "take the California out of Buddhism." What do you mean by that?

Stephen Asma: OK, this sometimes gets me in trouble. I'm joking really, but it gets at an important point.

Beatniks and hippies have always been charmed by Buddhism, but Hollywood celebrities and San Francisco bobos (bourgeois bohemians) have added a

whole new dimension of New Age gullibility. Everything from psychic spoon-bending to lettuce-nibbling fad diets have been erroneously linked to Buddhism. I try to offer a corrective balance to all the hippie associations by suggesting a kind of blue-collar "Chicago-style" Buddhism – more down to earth and practical, and less magical. Believe it or not, it's this more practical version of Buddhism that I experienced daily when I was living in Cambodia, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and so on.

Literary License: Does any theme tie all your books together?

Stephen Asma: If there is, I haven't discovered it yet. Maybe when I'm in my seventies, I'll look back over all of it and see the connecting threads.

Literary License: What are you working on next?

Stephen Asma: I just signed a contract with the University of Chicago Press to write a very interesting book.

I'm tentatively calling it *Against Fairness: In Favor of Favoritism* and it's about the tension between our nepotistic tendencies and our egalitarian tendencies. It's a trade philosophy book that examines our American value system, specifically how our competing notions of good struggle for dominance.

“After Freud, we often envision monsters as aggressive inner-creatures that explode out of our normal psyches, like Mr. Hyde from inside Dr. Jekyll.”

“Undaunted by frequent encounters with road hazards, Joy continued to take motoring trips around Chicago in 1909, particularly around the western communities, often with the purpose of finding a good piece of land he might buy.” – *A Man of Salt and Trees*, James Ballowe

Biblio File

Continued from Page 1

on June 19 referred to **Kevin Mattson** as “the excellent Kevin Mattson.” ... The June 24 Washington Times, in a review of *Get Capone*, said “Mr. [Jonathan] Eig’s prose is often as colorful as the characters he’s describing.” (Of course, that could describe Biblio File’s prose, too). Also, Eig was quoted Aug. 22 in London’s Telegraph in a story about descendants of Al Capone. A short story, “Indoor Garden” by **Carol Madden Adorjan**, appeared in the July issue of St. Anthony Messenger. ... In one of its “Be Remarkable” profiles, the University of Iowa on June 27 detailed **Laura Caldwell’s** work defending Jovan Mosley, which eventually led to her directing Loyola University Chicago’s Life After Innocence project. In September a division of Simon & Schuster will publish a book about Caldwell’s experience with Jovan. (See New Books, May-June Literary License.). ... Longtime SMA members **Richard and Margery Frisbie** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary this summer. ... **Marcus Sakey’s** *The Amateurs* was nominated Aug. 1 for the 2010 Crimespree Award. The winner will be announced at the Oct. 14-17 Bouchercon in San Francisco. ... **Craig Sautter** had a lively discussion on Bruce Dumont’s “Beyond the Beltway” show on WLS (Chicago) radio for two hours on July 11, mostly on



Mark Jacob

the Arizona law, the Department of Justice challenge, illegal immigrants, gangs and drugs. He was on with former SMA member Ray Hanania and Dan Proft. In June, Craig also opined on Chicago gangs in the-
Washington Post blog site with Henry Louis Gates as editor-in-chief. ... **Matthew and Mark Jacob** held book signings for *What the Great Ate* Thursday, July 15 at the Billy Goat Tavern on Lower Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago (also featuring illus-

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New Books

ANNIE SHAPIRO AND THE CLOTHING WORKERS’ STRIKE

Marlene Targ Brill’s new children’s picture book *Annie Shapiro and the Clothing Workers’ Strike* (Lerner), with an accompanying Reader’s Theater script, tells the true story of the 17-year-old Russian immigrant who led the 1910 Hart, Schaffner & Marx strike that triggered walkouts of 40,000 employees and closing down of the men’s clothing industry in Chicago and Milwaukee.



Marlene Targ Brill

Annie spoke up to the foreman and bosses in efforts that could have devastated her family that needed her pay. A hundred years later, this historical fiction book celebrates Annie’s stand against unfair wage cuts, 10-hour workdays, and bullying bosses – a stand that resulted in better employee treatment and wages and formation of the future giant national union now called Workers United. The book is available via Kar-Ben, Lerner’s Jewish trade division and Lerner Publishing in paperback and library binding.

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

The Talk of the Town by Fran Baker is set in 1933 in a small fictional town outside Kansas City. It’s a romance, due out from Five Star Expressions in hardcover in September 2011, and is the first in a planned series using the names of popular songs of the year as titles. The next book is set in 1934 and will be titled *For All We Know*. To research weather, clothes, movies, songs, etc., Baker used her mother’s diaries, which she kept from 1933 on. Baker is planning a blog to be called “Daughters of the Great Depression” in January, also using the diaries as a springboard. *The Talk of the Town* will be her 11th published novel.

SHE’S ON FIRST: A NOVEL

A woman playing in the big leagues? That’s the theme of **Barbara Gregorich’s** new book, *She’s on First* (CreateSpace, Kindle).

Publishers Weekly said: “Unliberated baseball fans may well be won over by this appealing novel of the first woman in the big leagues; all baseball fans will appreciate Gregorich’s sure feel for the game. the baseball scenes are cracker-jack, and readers should end up wondering, “Why not?”

Gregorich tells the story of Linda Sunshine, who is scouted by Big Al Mowerinski, owner of the Chicago Eagles after he strikes it rich in the lawn mower business. The season is more than half gone by the time Linda and the rest of the team learn what Al’s motives were.

SNAKEWOMAN OF LITTLE EGYPT

The Snakewoman of Little Egypt by Robert Hellenga (Bloomsbury USA, Sept. 14) tells this story: On the morning of her release from prison, Sunny, who grew up in a snake handling church in the Little Egypt region of Southern Illinois, rents a garage apartment from Jackson. She’s been serving a five-year sentence for shooting, but not killing, her husband, the pastor of the Church of the Burning Bush with Signs Following, after he forced her at gunpoint to put her arm in a box of rattlesnakes.

Sunny and Jackson become lovers, but they’re pulled in different directions. Sunny, drawn to science and eager to put her snake handling past behind her, enrolls at the university. Jackson, however, takes a professional interest in the religious ecstasy exhibited by the snake handlers. Push comes to shove “in a novel packed with wit, substance, and emotional depth.”

Hellenga’s *The Sixteen Pleasures* won the 1995 Society of Midland Authors Adult Fiction Award.

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New Books

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RADICAL DISCIPLE: FATHER
PFLERGER, ST. SABINA
CHURCH AND THE FIGHT
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Robert McClory's book on Chicago's Rev. Michael Pflieger is scheduled to come out in October. It's *Radical Disciple: Father Pflieger, St. Sabina Church and the Fight for Social Justice*, published by Lawrence Hill Books, an imprint of the Chicago Review Press. McClory, a professor emeritus at Northwestern University, was a priest at the parish where Pflieger later became pastor.

Letters to the Editor

Another fine edition of Literary License! And special thanks to **Steve Huntley** for his contributions. What a terrific team of pros to have "on our side" as they say in the political commercials.

Craig Sautter



I appreciate the value I am getting out of "Seven Virtues for Your Author Website" [Mark and Matthew Jacob, May-June Literary License]. The newsletter itself has been appreciated steadily, of course, but this article came at a perfect time to meet my desperate need! The authors have responded to an e-mailed question, sharing even more info above and beyond the call of duty.

Thanks for all you do to keep this going for all Midwestern writers.

Carol DeChant



Thank you so much for all your wonderful work!

Jack Ridl



Thanks for all the great newsletters!

Jeffrey Zaslow

SMA Support

When **Ron Offen** (See Final Chapters, Page 8) could no longer publish Free Lunch, his poetry magazine, the Society of Midland Authors was one of six organizations to which he this year donated the magazine's remaining assets.

The organizations were those with the "philosophy and goals he felt were compatible with those of Free Lunch," wrote his wife, **Beverly Offen**, who also is a member of the Society.

The money will be added to the Society's Endowment Fund to help provide future awards for authors who win the society's book awards.

As former SMA President **Bernard J. Brommel** has pointed out, the Endowment Fund also would benefit if other SMA members would set aside a certain amount of money for it in their wills. Or, since few of us know how much money we will need in our lifetimes, a provision that is often used in wills is to set aside a certain percentage for a charity.

Meanwhile, we would like to thank those Society members who recently made donations to the Society: **Judith Bloom Fradin, Dennis Fradin, Jean Bethke Elshain, Elizabeth Fama, Jamie Gilson, Darwin McBeth Walton, Michael Norman, Carol Felsenthal, Steve Monroe, Michael Ebner, Marcia Nelson, Timothy J. Gilfoyle, Janet Hickman, Kerry Trask, Stuart Meck, Carol DeChant, Mark E. Pulsifer, Scott Turow, Cranston Knight, Bruce Gans, Michael Argetsinger, Fran Baker, Bob Remer, Robert Sutherland, Dick Simpson, Wesley Adamczyk, Carol Madden Adorjan, Richard F. Bales, Bill Barnhart, Theodore Berland, Deborah Blum, Marlene Targ Brill, Phyllis Ford Choyke, Jonathan Eig, Robert J.R. Follett, Marianne Forrest, Margery Frisbie, Richard P. Frisbie, Thomas Frisbie, Shane Gericke, Dr. Frank Gonzalez-Crussi, Rick Kogan, Charles J. Masters, Robert McClory, Stella Pevsner, David Radavich and Harriette Gillem Robinet.**

Biblio File

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trator, Rick Tuma); July 17 at the Book Stall in Winnetka, Ill.; and Aug. 7 at the Borders in Baileys Crossroads, Va. ... **Robert Loerzel** tested the "I Write Like" website. It said his book was written in a style similar to Oscar Wilde, one of his stories was like Chuck Pahlaniuk, another story was like Stephen King and two were like David Foster Wallace. **Keir Graff** tweeted to say he writes like James Ellroy, who writes like David Foster Wallace. (Biblio File was told it writes like H.P. Lovecraft. Also, to get the definitive answer to who really wrote Shakespeare's plays, Biblio File typed in a bit of "Winter's Tale." Turns out it wasn't Christopher Marlowe after all. It was James Joyce.) ... At noon on Oct. 16, **Ann Durkin Keating** will discuss her book *Chicagoland: City and Suburbs in the Railroad Age*. at Museums of Lisle Station Park, 921 School St. ... You know you've made it as an author when the local newspaper feels free to drop your name without explanation into its columns. Here's what the Aug. 22 Naperville Sun said, "Let us hope the Millennium Carillon is made of sturdier material so it doesn't someday fall over on **Shane Gericke**. (A little Naperville mystery story joke there.)" ... **Leonard Zeskind** gave a July 11 presentation to the NAACP National Convention on the Tea Party. ... Don't try to fax **Bruce Guernsey** anymore; his machine was destroyed by lighting. ... As part of his summer relaxation program, **Jim Schwab** set up online information for a course at the University of Iowa. Do you want to sign up for a master-level class, "Special Topics: Disaster Plans"? Maybe he can clout you in. ... **Anya Achtenberg** is organizing trips to Cuba for groups of writers, artists, filmmakers



**Leonard
Zeskind**

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"Abbot's fingers were wrinkled blue. His good arm was spasming, and almost as numb as his legs. The clothesline attaching the dead girl to his waist sawed him raw. His head throbbed, and he was so cold he was ready to close his eyes and drift painlessly into death." – *Torn Apart*, **Shane Gericke**

Biblio File

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and others for February 2011 and April 2011, and possibly for December 2010. The trips are considered research delegations, and are fully licensed for writers, artists, filmmakers, educators, etc., doing research and/or investigating potential joint projects with Cuban counterparts. ... **Gerry and Janet Souter's** London publisher, the Carlton Publishing Group, is releasing a second edition to the "hugely successful" *Founding of the United States – 1763-1814* (2006) boxed hardcover book that sold over 50,000 copies. This new "K-format" edition joins *Founding..., the Vietnam War Experience* boxed hardcover (2007) and *Our Founding Fathers – the Shaping of America* (2009) another hardcover K-format book. The recently released *The Chicago Air and Water Show – A History of Wings Above the Waves* is now available at Barnes & Noble, Borders, the Book Cellar at Lincoln Square and other Chicago booksellers. ... **Ted McClelland** wrote on Aug. 18 that the widely read Capitol Fax blog had called him shallow for writing that former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich might not be convicted of selling the Senate seat because he never



Bernard Brommel

completed a deal. But that's what happened. ... **Jim Merriner** asks: "Why is installing a new computer and printer still an ordeal? Twenty-five years into the Internet revolution, shouldn't it be easy?" Jim will speak to the National Press Club in D.C. on Sept. 29, about his forthcoming book, *Ponzi-Dot-Gov*. ... The New Moon Book Club, whose members include **Ted McClelland** and **Robert Loerzel**, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. ... The Northeastern Illinois University Foundation helped former SMA President **Bernard Brommel** celebrate his 80th birthday with a special program. ... **Libby Fischer**

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Let readers judge your book by its Facebook cover

Inspired by another local author, this summer I decided to create Facebook pages for my second novel, *Lisa's Way*, and my short story collection, *The Sagas of Surgard*. I'm finding that these pages are good ways to promote my books. Let me tell you how you can do the same.

First you have to have a Facebook account and your own page. When you get the hang of things, go to the "Your Account" listing on the right and click "Help Center."

The third segment of the page is "Ads and Business Solutions." In that area click on "Pages For Business," then on the next page click "Creating and Administering Your Page," then on the next page click "How Can I Create A Page?" This will bring up a link that will take you to the page where you can create your book's own page.

You'll be faced with three choices: Local Business; Brand, Product or Organization; and Artist, Band or Public Figure. You can choose the latter, but only if you want separate personal and author Facebook pages.

For a book the best choice is "Brand." Clicking the dot next to that line brings up a list of products and services. I chose "Consumer Product" for my books.

Next you need to give the page a name. You'll be told if a name is taken. You also need to check the box that states you're the official representative. This will make you an administrator of the page and allow you to make changes.

You now have a page ready for your content. Use your cover as the page picture. Put in a full blurb for your information, and a short teaser in the left text box. You can use this page to post a trailer for your book, list book talks and other events, and let fans know about inter-

“Time will tell which methods will work and which won't.”

views and reviews.

To get fans, start by inviting your Facebook friends. As you get more friends keep sending out invitations. One way to motivate interest is giving away copies. Depending on how many friends you have, you can do giveaways at 25 fans, 50, 100, 200, and so on.

The best way I've found to do one is to invite fans to post a comment; the first to comment and then reply with their address wins.

One decision you'll have to make, if your page will be about a series of books, is whether you want each book to have a page, or you want one page for the whole series. The less established your series is the more likely it is you'll need a page for each book. On the other hand, you want to be careful

not to have more pages than you can manage.

Online book promotion is still in its early stages. Time will tell which methods will work and which won't. Because making Facebook pages for your books is free, you ought to give this option a try.

SMA member Robert Collins is author of Jim Lane: Scoundrel, Statesman, Kansan, a Biography finalist in the 2008 Society of Midland Authors book awards.

To see Collins' links, go to:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Surgard/137932209561547>
or:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/manage#!/pages/Lisas-Way/137346796287526>

Literary
Legwork:
Robert
Collins



"When Alex hung up, she wondered what the czar of Homeland Security was plotting. Small doses of potassium chloride were used in medical treatments for potassium deficiency or to replenish electrolytes when people were dehydrated. In large quantities, potassium chloride was used in lethal injections of prisoners on Death Row." – *Immunity*, **Lori Andrews**

Printers Row

BY RICH LINDBERG

Although the usual thunderstorms rolled in on Saturday, June 12, the 2010 Lit Fest (we will always think of it as the Printer's Row Book Fair), was another great success for the Society of Midland Authors, which presented 15 of its member-authors showcasing their books to the public.

Our table was again located on Dearborn, just south of Harrison on the west side of the street – a good location with a lot of foot traffic, although because of city restrictions Lit Fest tents were not allowed to be set up north of Harrison, so the number of participating vendors was less than in previous years. Former SMA Presidents Carol Carlson and Rich Lindberg battled the raindrops, hosted the SMA table and checked in the SMA authors, listed below:

SATURDAY, JUNE 12

Cheryl Reed, author of *Unveiled: The Hidden Lives of Nuns*.

Frances McNamara, author of *Death at the Fair* and *Death at Hull House*.

Kim Strickland, author of *Wish Club*.

George Levy, author of *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas 1862-65*.

Jon Litweiler, author of *Mojo Snake Minuet*.

Sel Erder Yackley, author of *Never Regret the Pain: Loving and Losing a Bipolar Spouse*.

Libby Fischer Hellmann, author of *Doubleback, Easy to Innocence* and other books.

SUNDAY, JUNE 13

Deborah Nodler Rosen, co-editor of *Where We Find Ourselves: Jewish Women Around the World Write About Home*.

Gerry and Janet Souter, authors of *Our Founding Fathers: The Shaping of America, American Realism and History of the Chicago Air and Water Show*.

Claude Walker, author of *Currents of Power* and *Seminole Smoke*.

Larry Lane, author of *The Wonder Years: A College Story*.

R. Craig Sautter, author of several books on presidential conventions.

Glennette Tilley Turner, author of *An Apple for Harriet Tubman, The Underground Railroad in Illinois* and other books.

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Hellmann on Sept. 15 will be among the authors at the Schaumburg Public Library from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. for "The Body in the Library," celebrating Agatha Christie. Libby will discuss the writing process, especially as it relates to women who are raising families or holding down full-time jobs while writing. ... Keeping up with **Keir Graff** in September won't be easy: Sept. 5, Sunday Papers with Rick Kogan WGN Chicago (720 AM); Sept. 9 5:30-7:30 p.m. launch party, After-Words 23 E. Illinois, Chicago; Sept. 9 8:30-9 p.m. (Central time), radio interview, KUFM Missoula (89.1 FM); Sept. 15 7 p.m. Local Author Night (with **Bryan Gruley**, Kevin Guilfoile, and D. C. Brod), The Book Cellar 4736-38 N. Lincoln Ave. Chicago; Sept. 22 noon-1:30 p.m., "How I Kept My Day Job and Became a Published Author—and You Can, Too," Video Theater, Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State St., Chicago; Sept. 24, 7-8:30 p.m., Thomas Ford Memorial Library, 800 Chestnut Western Springs, Ill.; Sept. 29 7-8:30 p.m., Sulzer Regional Library 4455 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. ... **Bryan Gruley** was scheduled to discuss and sign copies of his new thriller *The Hanging Tree* Aug. 27 in the



Bryan Gruley

cafe at Barnes and Noble in Vernon Hills, Ill. On Aug. 22, the Chicago Tribune favorably reviewed the book, set in "Starvation Lake, the made-up Michigan town at the heart of Bryan Gruley's appealing new mystery franchise." The Trib said Gruley's second book is even better than his first, calling it "richer and deeper and more emotionally satisfying, and the town is described with a defter, more assured hand." The Bradenton (Fla.) Herald called it "an exceptionally well-written novel by an author who has mastered the conventions of his genre." ... Samrat Upadhyay, winner of the 2007 SMA Adult Fiction award, has a second novel out, *Buddha's Orphans*. Upadhyay said three years of

writing and research went into the book. ... **Ed Gordon** spoke July 28 to the Edward Economic Development Council in Chicago on whether an economic resurgence is coming. He also talked about what to do in Chicago to create jobs. He'll speak on the same topic Oct. 7 at Chicago's University Club, and has another speech scheduled Sept. 14 for the American Society for Training and Development Roosevelt University in Chicago. ... **Rosina Neginsky** will have a poetry reading at 1 p.m. Oct. 29 at the University of Chicago Bookstore, (773) 702-7712, 970 East 58th Street, Chicago. ... **Stephanie Kuehnert** reports that every Saturday and Sunday in September, "Centuries & Sleuths in Forest Park, Ill. will provide history and mystery lovers with a reason to hit Madison Street. In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the store, owner **Augie Aleksy** has put together 11 panels of authors and spread them out at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. each weekend in September. He hopes that the two-hour panels will function like a 'nineteenth century salon and talk show with authors having conversations about writing and their experiences, inducing writers to do what they do best, tell stories.'" ... In an Aug. 19 Q & A, Publishers Weekly wrote: "Like *Percy Jackson* author Rick Riordan, **Blue Balliett** has morphed from popular teacher to popular novelist. Daughter of the New Yorker's longtime jazz critic, she adored working with third- and fourth-graders at the University of Chicago Laboratory School. But she also loved spinning fictional tales based on intriguing historical figures. Six years ago, she started publishing best-selling mysteries: *Chasing Vermeer*, followed by *The Wright 3* and *The Calder Game*. Next month, she is publishing her fourth title, *The Danger Box*." ... **Carol Felsenthal** got a scoop in her Chicago magazine "Felsenthal Files" blog Aug. 4 in an interview with Illinois Senate candidate Mark Kirk's ex-wife, who offered some criticisms of the Kirk campaign.



Augie Aleksy

New Members

Catherine Browder is a Kansas City-based fiction writer and playwright. She is author of *The Clay That Breathes: A Novella and Stories* (Milkweed Editions, 1991); the short story collection *Secret Lives* (Southern Methodist University Press, 2003) and the short story collection *The Heart* (Helicon Nine Press). Her plays have been produced in Kansas City, and in New York at the hotINK play festival.

She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Missouri Arts Council and teaches fiction writing at University of Missouri-Kansas City. Her book reviews appear regularly in *New Letters*, where she serves as an advisory editor.

Cynthia Rademacher works in the adult fiction/AV department at the Niles Public Library District and coordinates related adult programming.

John Presta grew up in Chicago. He and his wife, Michelle, both community organizers and activists, opened Reading on Walden Bookstore in 1991 (it now operates as an online-only bookseller). He has worked as a typesetter, reporter, circulation manager and in ad sales at several newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune and Sun-Times. He is author of *Mr. and Mrs. Grassroots: How Barack Obama, Two Bookstore Owners and 300 Volunteers Did It*.

John Michael Green is a popular author of young adult fiction and a YouTube “vlogger.” His first novel *Looking for Alaska* (2005) won the 2006 Michael L. Printz Award presented by the American Library Association, and his second, *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006), was a Printz Award honor book. A movie based on *Looking for Alaska* is scheduled to be released in 2013.

His third novel, *Paper Towns*, won the 2009 Edgar Award for Best Young Adult Novel and the 2010 Corine Literature Prize.

He has twice been a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and his books have been published in more than a dozen languages.

Final Chapters

Ron Offen 1930-2010

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Longtime SMA member **Ronald “Ron” Offen** was so enthusiastic about poetry that he could make poets happy even when he rejected their work for his magazine, *Free Lunch: A Poetry Miscellany*.

“Ron would send back the poems, and even if he rejected them, they would have all sorts of little notes on them,” Chicago poet and journalist Judith Valente said of the Glenview writer and editor who died Aug. 10 after a long battle with cancer. He was 79.

“He would raise a question about a choice of words or explain where he didn’t understand an image,” Valente said. “You got this totally personal response. Even if you were rejected, you were happy.”

In fact, Valente recalled, after Mr. Offen rejected the first poems she sent to him, she incorporated his suggestions and eventually sold the poems to a bigger magazine.

“He had such a generosity of spirit,” she said.

Mr. Offen also was a book reviewer for the Sun-Times from 1970 to 1977, and held many other jobs – from taxi driver to insurance investigator to middle school library assistant. He was executive editor of Chicago Literary Times, poetry editor of December and Poetry Beat columnist for the old Chicago Daily News.

But the graduate of Austin High School, Wright College and the University of Chicago is remembered most for his work as a poet, author, playwright, critic, editor and theater producer. In 2007, ChicagoPoetry.com named him a “Top Dog of Chicago Poetry.”

James Reiss, professor emeritus of English at Miami University and founding editor of the Miami University Press, said, “Ron Offen represented what could be called a new Chicago School of Poetry. ... Offen’s poems reveled in the gritty reality of Chicago’s streets, its pot-holes and back alleys. ... He hung around the Windy City long enough to love its tough guys, its outdoor concerts in Millennium Park, its ‘wan sun [above] the

same gray river of traffic’ on the Edens Expressway.”

The fourth of his five books of poems, *God’s Haircut and Other Remembered Dreams*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Among his other books was *Dillinger: Dead or Alive*.

Mr. Offen, nicknamed by some friends as “The Poet Laureate of Rush Street,” started the twice-a-year *Free Lunch* in 1989 after an earlier bout with cancer led him to reflect on the need to support poets and poetry. All serious poets in the nation were eligible for a free subscription.

Among the many poets who had a forum in *Free Lunch*’s pages during its 21 years were Stuart Dybek, David Hernandez, Neal Bowers, Jared Carter, Billy Collins, Stephen Dunn, Dave Etter, Donald Hall, Lyn Lifshin, Eve Merriam, Robert Peters, David Ray, F.D. Reeve, Cathy Song and Barry Sparks.

In 2004, Mr. Offen helped form a group called the James T.

Farrell Centenary Committee that successfully pushed for city recognition of Farrell, including a plaque and an honorary street name on the block where the author lived from 1915 to 1917.

Mr. Offen suspended publication of *Free Lunch* late last year after a stroke affected his language abilities.

Friends recalled Mr. Offen as a friendly person who always had a smile on his face and a whistle on his lips, and who loved music and travel. One of his favorite songs was Peggy Lee’s “Is That All There Is?”

“He was not only an artist himself but helped others,” said Chicago playwright William Lederer. “His deepest work was toward the end, which every poet wishes.”

He is survived by his wife, Beverly Kahling Offen; a sister, Pam Veley; children, Eric Offen, Deirdre Junta, Michele Offen and Darren Offen; five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held from 2 to 4 on Sunday, Oct. 3, at the Lakeview Room at Park Center, 2400 Chestnut in Glenview. Enter at the east side of the building. Responses are appreciated: 847-729-3595 or bevoffen@oakton.edu.



Ron Offen