



Literary License

May, 2006

SMA AWARDS DINNER FEATURES NEW CHIEF OF NEWBERRY LIBRARY

Following a tradition dating back half a century, SMA will honor the best Midland books published during the preceding year. Awards will be given at the annual banquet on May 9 in the Chicago Athletic Association.

(Cash bar 6 pm, dinner and program 7 pm. See enclosed invitation.)

The featured speaker will be a distinguished historian and author, David Spadafora, new president of the Newberry Library and former president of Lake Forest College.

He is the author of *The Idea of Progress in 18th Century Britain*, which has been honored as "outstanding" by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

Award winners tell how and why they write. Their stories are sometimes touching, sometimes hilarious.

If you wish to stay overnight after the dinner, the CAA will have rooms available for \$155, including tax. For reservations, call the CAA directly at 312-236-7500 and mention SMA.

Contributions Sought

The reason there's a line on the enclosed reservation card asking for a contribution is that SMA must work to raise the funds each year to pay for the awards.

Your dues cover only the printing, mailing and other ordinary expenses of the organization.

Data Needed on Past Awards

We're trying to complete our Web site listing of past winners of our annual book competition, which began on a regular basis in 1957. We have a complete set of awards for most years, but have incomplete records for some years, including 1983, 1981, 1976-77 and 1972-73, and are missing finalists for some other years.

If you have old dinner programs or other documents that would help us, please e-mail the info to SMA

President Thomas Frisbie at tomfrisbie@aol.com or send a copy to our P.O. Box at Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610.

SELL YOUR OWN BOOKS AT PRINTERS ROW BOOK FAIR

SMA will once again participate in the *Chicago Tribune* Printers Row Book Fair, billed as the largest free literary event in the Midwest. This year it's scheduled for Saturday, June 3, and Sunday, June 4. SMA authors will be able to showcase and sell their books.

SMA members can reserve space for \$25 to help defray the costs. The exact times and location will be forthcoming. But reservations are being accepted for space on a first-come, first-served basis. Authors will be responsible for bringing their own books, selling them, collecting the money and taking away any unsold copies afterwards. Participants must remain in the booth for the duration of their assigned times.

SMA will schedule times based on the number of responses received. Please fill out and mail the accompanying form with a \$25 check payable to the Society of Midland Authors to Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610.

Please register me to sell my books at the Fair. I enclose my

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Title(s) you wish to promote:

Preferred time slot on Saturday,
June 3 _____

Preferred time slot on Sunday,
June 4 _____

NEW SMA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS NAMED FOR COMING YEAR

The nominating committee has selected the following officers and directors to serve for 2006-2007:

President, Thomas Frisbie; Vice President, James L. Merriner; Corresponding Secretary, Phyllis Choyke; Recording Secretary, Marlene Targ Brill; Treasurer, Robert Remer.

Directors through 2009: David Hernandez, Robert Loerzel and Rosina Neginsky.

Through 2008: Mark Eleveld, Cheryl L. Reed, James C. Schwab.

Through 2007: Arnie Bernstein, Carol Jean Carlson, Richard C. Lindberg.

According to the bylaws, any 15 members can nominate an alternate slate (although this has never happened in living memory) and ballots will be issued.

RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES AREN'T NECESSARILY FUNDAMENTALISTS

BY RICHARD FRISBIE

When the University of Chicago Press decided to do a scholarly, multi-volume study of fundamentalism, they turned to the Rev. Martin E. Marty as the ideal editor to take charge and get it done. Marty, University of Chicago emeritus professor and holder of more than 70 honorary degrees, is considered "one of the nation's most prominent interpreters of religion

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and culture.”

At the March 15 SMA meeting in the Chicago Athletic Association, he described how as a result he had spent “six years among the fundamentalists.” Offsetting his black clerical garb with a disarming bow tie, he brought visual aids that included the whole five-volume stack of books on fundamentalism and a miniature football and coffee mug bearing the logo of the not-exactly liberal Bob Jones University.

“I don’t do Power Point,” he said.

To help with such an ambitious publishing program, he recruited a distinguished historian, R. Scott Appleby, his one-time student. With the aid of more than 100 other scholars they assembled their knee-high tower of books exploring every aspect of the subject.

For as much objectivity as possible, they relied on scholars from each of the ethnic or national groups where fundamentalism is an issue. He quoted the philosopher Spinoza on the project’s approach: “With regard to human affairs, not to laugh, not to cry, not to be come indignant, but to understand.” The word “terrorism” does not appear in any of the books.

Religious conservatives should not be confused with fundamentalists, he said. “We shouldn’t think that anyone to our right on religion is a fundamentalist...There are no machine guns at the Moody Bible Institute.” Marty has been a Lutheran pastor as well as a scholar.

Fundamentalists are people whose personal and social identities are “threatened to the core.” In

desperation, they fight back against the scientific worldview and other aspects of modernism that undermine their understanding of who they are.

For fundamentalists, sexuality is a particularly motivating concern. Also, fundamentalists can’t deal with ambiguity and paradox. They find reasons to exclude the “Other.” Most, but not all, aspire to a religious establishment that would run the state.

Marty said the U.S. government didn’t foresee the force of the revolution in Iran that deposed the Shah because no one was paying much attention to the influence of religion. You can be sure the State Department “has got religion now.”

A long-time SMA member, Marty has written more than 50 books. His long list of honors includes a National Book Award.

YOUR BOOK "BROKEN INTO A MILLION PIECES" BY NEGATIVE PUBLICITY?

BY TOM CIESIELKA
TC PUBLIC RELATIONS

Can you name your favorite ugly baby? No parent will admit giving life to an ugly child. However, there are times when an author's "baby" (a book) gets negative publicity and the writer wants to cry and throw something at the reviewer.

If your book gets a bad review or a columnist makes a snide remark about the quality of your writing, there are a few things you can do.

1. Determine if the writer actually read your book . While book reviews are subjective, often you can tell if someone who didn’t read the book criticized it unfairly. If it's a columnist or a feature reporter, give that person a call and politely point out why you think he or she was wrong. In either case, it might result in some follow-up coverage that could address your concerns. Be sure to give the reporter good quotes that he or she would want to share with readers.

2. Decide whether it's a trend or a blip . If several media outlets have said similar negative things about your book, then there may be something about the writing that requires criticism. However, if the

first review is negative, be patient. If anything, work harder to get more reviews that may be more positive and make clear the first review was wrong.

3. Deliver a response. Write a letter to the editor of the reporter and ask that it be included with other letters to the editor. If the writer has a blog, write a comment politely arguing that you think he or she was way off base. If other blog writers like your book, let them know about the negative writer and suggest posting something regarding how mistaken that writer was.

4. Accept the truth. In the end, if all the reviews are bad, it might be a losing battle. At that point, stop pitching your book for reviews, and change the focus to feature articles, profiles or how something in your book relates to the news.

Next month's tip: Using Your Existing Network to Promote Your Book

CAROL'S IN-BOX

BY CAROL JEAN CARLSON

With an Elephant Thrown In

In his fourth novel, *Philosophy Made Simple* (Little, Brown), Robert Hellenga brings back characters from his first book, *The Sixteen Pleasures* (which won an SMA fiction award). One needn’t have read the first book, however, to enjoy this one.

Rudy Harrington, an avocado wholesaler in his sixties and a widower with three grown daughters, suddenly decides to leave Chicago and relocate to an avocado farm in south Texas. He hopes that by changing from wholesaler to producer, he can recapture some of the vitality that has been beaten out of him by life’s ups and downs, particularly the death of his wife.

He travels south with a book called *Philosophy Made Simple*, written by the uncle of a daughter’s Indian boyfriend. The adventure that follows has an appealing cast of characters, including Rudy’s workers, his neighbors, his daughters, their friends, a priest, a

guru or two and an elephant. As Rudy goes along he learns a lot about raising avocados, visits a Mexican brothel, plans a wedding with a role for the elephant, develops heart trouble and falls in love, all the while studying philosophy.

All in all, *Philosophy Made Simple* is a sometime humorous and always insightful story of love and death, marriage and family. Hellenga is an emeritus professor of English at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill.

Conversations About God

Chicago Sun-Times religion reporter (and wife of SMA member Maurice Possley), Cathleen Falsani, has interviewed both the “literati and the glitterati,” or public people as she calls them, to get their views on faith, ethics, spirituality and the hereafter. These interviews are collected in her book, *The God Factor: Inside the Spiritual Lives of Public People* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

The book is a diverse compilation—some of the interviewees practice traditional faiths, some are spiritual but not religious, and some are agnostic. Falsani handles all sensitively and respectfully. Falsani, a graduate of Wheaton College with master’s degrees in journalism and theology, reports having had an interest in religion since she was a small child.

Raised a Catholic, she later became an evangelical Protestant. As her book makes clear, although the United States is often described as a nation of believers, we do not all subscribe to the same belief system. Contemporary faith seems to be highly individualized.

Included in the book are interviews with a wide range of subjects: Bono, Dusty Baker, Seamus Heaney, Hugh Hefner, John Mahoney, Mancow Muller, Senator Barack Obama, Harold Ramis, Anne Rice, Tom Robbins, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Studs Terkel and Elie Wiesel, to mention a few of the better known.

Big Iguana...or Online Magazine?

Achy Obejas’s *The Tower of the Antilles*, a short three-person script, appeared in the Jan. 13, 2006, issue of *Otium*, an online prose magazine

produced by students at the University of Chicago.

A quarterly publication, it includes fiction, essays, scripts, memoirs, hypertext, interviews called “conversations,” photography and graphic art. The Latin word *otium* means thinking or dignified leisure or ease. It was chosen by the magazine to denote its mission to connect play with work, and pleasure with critical thinking.

The first issue of the magazine appeared in March 2005 with founder Sarah Adair Frank acting as coordinator. Lecturer Achy Obejas was advisor.

One of the initial reasons for the magazine was to provide writers at the University of Chicago with an outlet for prose that other campus publications had dismissed as too long. By using the Internet, the magazine has no need to impose word or space limits on submitted material.

Though based at the University of Chicago, the magazine accepts unsolicited submissions from writers and artists both within and without the University community, and is particularly interested in projects that combine visual images with text. The magazine does not currently accept poetry.

And where does the iguana come in? The iguana is the magazine’s mascot for no particular reason, although an iguana sunning on a rock may be the epitome of “dignified leisure.”

OTHER MEMBER NEWS

“Sweet and Solid” Results

Jacquelyn Mitchard’s new book, *Cage of Stars*, published May 1, tells the story of a young Mormon girl “torn between retribution and forgiveness” after she witnesses the murder of her two sisters.

Publishers Weekly said the story leads to an unexpected climax as the protagonist “progresses from a stock girl-next-door type to a young woman with considerable emotional depth...The results are sweet and solid.”

New Book Contract

Just as *Literary License* goes to press comes a note from Charlotte Herman:

“I’ve just signed a contract with Simon & Schuster for my children’s novel, *My Chocolate Year*. Hurray!

“I look forward to seeing you at the banquet.”

Higher Education

On March 28, Thomas Frisbie talked to a graduate-level class on wrongful convictions at the University of Illinois-Springfield. The class uses as one of its texts *Victims of Justice Revisited*, co-authored by Frisbie and Randy Garrett.

Children Pick Favorite

Arlene Erlbach’s book, *Thanksgiving Day Crafts*, which she wrote with her husband, Herb Erlbach, has received a Children’s Choice Award for 2006.

Children’s Choices are selected each year by 10,000 school children (2,000 in each of five different geographic locations) who pick their favorite books.

The selections are announced and displayed at the IRA National Convention each May. The annotated list will appear in the October issue of the IRA journal, *The Reading Teacher*.

Two New Novels

Kathleen Ernst has two new children’s novels in print. *Highland Fling* (Cricket Books) focuses on a Wisconsin teen as she explores the choices people make about celebrating their ethnicity, and the possibility of ancestral memory.

Secrets in the Hills (American Girl) is a Josefinia mystery set in New Mexico. Kathleen’s previous American Girl mystery, *Danger at the Zoo*, was nominated for an Agatha Award for Best Children’s/YA mystery from Malice Domestic.

And an earlier historical mystery, *Betrayal at Cross Creek*, was honored with the Flora MacDonald Award, given “for making an outstanding contribution to the human community,” from the

Scottish Heritage Center at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, N.C.

Author Himself Drove Race Cars

David Bull Publishing is launching Michael Argetsinger's new book, *Walt Hansgen: His Life and the History of Post-War American Road Racing*, with a series of well-placed book events.

(Hansgen, a famed race car driver, was killed at Le Mans in 1966.)

Argetsinger has been a race car driver himself, beginning in 1965. He raced in Europe for ten years and has competed at 53 race circuits in nine countries.

In March, book signings were held in Florida at the Amelia Island Concourse as well as in Sebring during the International 12-Hour Race. On April 1, Argetsinger gave a talk about his book at the International Motor Racing Research Center in Watkins Glen, N.Y., followed by a talk April 5 at the 100-MPH Club in Milwaukee.

On May 6, the Motorsport Collector Bookstore in Downers Grove, Ill., will host a book signing.

Previously, he edited five books on motor racing.

To expand on his abbreviated introduction as a new member in last month's newsletter: Argetsinger has more than 35 years experience in public and government affairs. As principal of the Chicago public relations firm bearing his name since 1981, Argetsinger provides consulting services to businesses, associations, academic institutions and private individuals.

Before that, he was director of corporate communications and government affairs for Marshall International Trading Company and its subsidiaries.

Earlier, Argetsinger worked in Europe for more than ten years where he was managing director of an American export firm in Amsterdam while providing public relations services on specialized projects for multi-national firms based in Europe.

Poet Hosts Internet Radio Show

Buffalo Grove (Ill.) poet Michelle True was recently asked to host a show on poetry for Internet Voices Radio, a worldwide public internet live talk

radio station along the lines of National Public Radio.

Her show, *Practical Poetry*, launched in April on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. CST.

True plans to touch on topics of interest to poets such as finding poetry markets, tracking submissions, how to self-publish, how to start and run a poetry writers' group, how to start and host a poetry open mike, getting published and self-publishing. Conducting interviews of well-known poets is something she also plans to explore.

See www.internetvoicesradio.com

True presented her "How to Get Your Poetry Published" workshop for the "Inside Writing & Publishing" Series in March and April, at the Arlington Heights, Palatine, Niles and Skokie libraries. These free seminars, presented in affiliation with the North Suburban Library System, offer people an opportunity to meet with authors to learn how to sharpen their writing skills and get their work published. Now she is offering her workshop to other libraries throughout Chicago and its suburbs.

True also hosted the first Annual WriterFest at the Indian Trails library in Wheeling, Ill., on April 8. Twelve local authors representing 10 genres discussed how to write a book, how to find an agent and how to get published, among many other related topics. They also answered audience questions, and signed and sold their books. A free raffle was held and winners received a gift basket containing several of the participating authors' books.

True is busy finishing her first non-fiction book, *The Poet's Manual: How to Go from Aspiring Writer to Published Author and Beyond*, which will be released in the fall.

True has had three books of her own poetry published.

RECENT NEW MEMBERS

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Rick Kaempfer

Rick Kaempfer, a contributing editor at *Shore* magazine, is co-author of *The Radio Producers Handbook*

and is working on two other books: *The Bald Handbook* (as co-author with Dave Stern) and *Severance*, a novel.

He was executive producer of the John Landecker show on WJMK from 1993 to 2003 and previously was the producer of the Steve Dahl & Garry Meier show on WLUP from 1987 to 1991.

While he was executive producer, the John Landecker show won the 1997 Achievement in Radio Award as best morning show in Chicago and the 2001 and 2001 best oldies morning show in America award.

Rick has written and hosted national radio specials and his own comedy radio program. In 2000, he co-founded A.M.I.S.H. Chicago Advertising, where he is senior creative vice president.

Gail Lukasik

Gail Lukasik has published one novel and one work of poetry. Her short stories, poems and articles have appeared in more than 50 literary journals.

She has taught English and writing at North Central College and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her novel *Destroying Angels* was published by Five-Star Publishing, in 2006.

She was born in Cleveland was a dancer with the Cleveland Civic Ballet Company. She has worked as a choreographer and a freelance writer.

Lisel Mueller described her book of poems, *Landscape Toward a Proper Silence* (Eye of the Comet, 1992), as a "splendid collection." Literary journals in which she has been published include *The Georgia Review*, *Carolina Quarterly* and *Mississippi Valley Review*.

In 2002 she was awarded an Illinois Arts Council award for her work. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she taught writing and literature

She lives in Libertyville, Ill., with her husband and their Shetland sheepdog.