



Literary License

February, 2007

LITERARY COLLABORATION: WATCH OUT FOR THE @&\$#%&^!* HYPHENS

BY RICHARD FRISBIE

A small group of SMA members who braved the blizzard of Feb. 13 were rewarded by a charming evening at the Chicago Athletic Association with Judy Fradin, who spoke perhaps more freely about the trials of literary collaboration than she might have with the larger, more formal audiences she usually entertains.

Fradin and her husband, Dennis Fradin, also an SMA member, have collaborated on about 30 non-fiction books for children. They're the kind of books that routinely win awards and are snapped up by libraries.

She drew this diagram of how it works at the Fradin house in Evanston, Ill.:

CoLABORation

"The last time we went to bed angry, it was over a hyphen," she said.

In the beginning, Dennis was the writer. He has published about 150 books. Then in the 1980s, when Judy was still working as a teacher, he found himself falling far behind schedule on a contract for 52 small books on U. S. states and possessions in a series called From Sea to Shining Sea.

Judy rallied round to research and write about famous people from each state. She said it was ironic that she was writing history because as a child she had hated the subject. "All those names and dates—who cares?"

But she had been gripped by reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Judy's own grandmother, one of nine children, had lost five siblings and

their families. They had disappeared in Europe during the Holocaust years and never been heard from again.

Now she was excited to be bringing history to life through the eyes of individual persons.

After seeing a video about Ida B. Wells, she was inspired to seek out grandchildren and other living relatives to interview. This led to a series of biographies of prominent Black women including Daisy Bates and Mary Church Terrell.

She said she generally interviews the relatives and finds photo materials. Dennis writes a first draft, then she provides her input.

They read the entire mss. aloud to each other, word by word. A new book can take as long as a year and a half to complete.

When a friendly editor joined the

RESEARCHING AND WRITING BIOGRAPHIES OF DEAD ARTISTS

Speaker: Gerry Souter, president of the Midwest Writers Assn., and co-author with his wife, Janet, of 34 books, including adult biographies of artists including Frida Kahlo, Alexander Calder, Edward Hopper, Diego Rivera and Mark Rothko. Their current book, *The Founding of the United States Experience*, has received much media attention recently for its unique format, including replicas of historic documents and an accompanying CD.

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

When: 6 p.m. social hour, 7 p.m. program, Tuesday, March 13, 2007

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

Other Coming Events

April 10--Page vs. Stage, student vs. teacher ... a fun-filled night of poetry with Richard Jones and Michael Kadela. The opening poet will be Carolyn Aguila.

May 8--92th Annual Banquet and Awards Presentation.

Board Meetings

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

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staff of National Geographic Children's Books, they wrote *5,000 Miles to Freedom*, the true story of a couple who escaped slavery by posing as a slave-owner and servant while they journeyed north and ultimately to England.

This led to recent assignments to write books about volcanoes (already in page proofs), hurricanes and earthquakes.

Although "nobody says 'no' to National Geographic," Judy said, she mentioned the difficulty of finding survivors of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to interview.

A member of the audience, Jim Schwab, was able to provide one: a Sri Lankan woman who speaks English and is now living in Chicago.

A new book by the Fradins from Clarion, *Jane Addams: Champion of Democracy*, came out in December.

SMA has a tradition of carrying on despite bad weather. Long-time members can recall an occasion at the Newberry Library when the unfortunate speaker en route to the program slipped on ice and broke his leg. When it was learned he wasn't coming, some attendees just went home. Others noted that considerable

wine had already been provided. They stayed to enjoy what was later reported to have been "a hellava good party."

NEW MEDIA OFFER NEW PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR BOOKS

BY TOM CIESIELKA

TC PUBLIC RELATIONS

A few years ago, the local newspaper or a monthly magazine might have been the only ways to effectively spread the word about your book. Now, thanks to emerging technology and networking sites, you can skip all the gatekeepers and reach potential readers directly.

Surprisingly, most of these tools require very little technical knowledge, and allow you to spend most of your time doing what you do best—connecting with people through writing. Try the following ways to get wired for publicity:

Blog: Go to www.typepad.com or www.blogger.com, and start to establish yourself as an online expert. After creating your blog, choose a topic that you can discuss. Write a short entry about the topic at least twice a week.

Video: With Web sites like YouTube hosting your videos, you can reach the next generation with your message. Set up a video camera and have a friend interview you about the book, or record yourself reading an excerpt.

Newsletters: Work with a designer to develop a template for an opt-in, monthly online newsletter. Whenever you speak or travel, let people know about the newsletter and make it easy to sign up. This will keep you on their radar.

With Web technology becoming more and more user friendly, all sorts of authors are discovering the power of the new Internet. Take advantage of this unique opportunity and

connect with your online audience

OTHER MEMBER NEWS

Electrifying Thought

Deborah Blum, writing recently for the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times*, noted that "the human brain is, in surprising part, an appliance powered by electricity. It constantly generates about 12 watts of energy, enough to keep a flashlight glowing. It works by sending out electrical impulses -- bursts of power running along the cellular wires of the nervous system."

She was commenting on a report that scientists could induce phantom effects -- the sensation of being haunted by a shadowy figure -- by stimulating the brain with electricity.

This makes "perfect neurological sense," she wrote. But does it explain away the "so-called supernatural?" Not necessarily.

Many prominent scientists of an earlier era were fascinated by the possibility that the human brain could function as a kind of receiver, picking up signals at a subconscious level from some undiscovered energy, traveling perhaps in waves, perhaps in currents.

This could explain telepathic experiences, including shared thoughts, and even seeing ghosts.

Her list includes Marie Curie; the British physicist J. J. Thomson, who demonstrated the existence of the electron in 1897; John Strutt, Lord Rayleigh, who won the 1904 Nobel Prize in Physics, and the wireless radio pioneer Sir Oliver Lodge.

The American psychologist and philosopher William James, was also a leader in the Victorian paranormal research movement. As early as 1909 he wrote: "How often has 'Science' killed off all spook philosophy, and

laid ghosts and raps and 'telepathy' underground as so much popular delusion?" And yet people continue believing in the supernatural. "The conclusion has nothing to do with science at all and everything to do with how one sees the world."

She concluded: "I suspect that we'll dwell forever in the haunted landscape of our beliefs. To many people it's a world more interesting -- bigger, stranger, more mysterious -- than the one offered by science. Why choose instead to be creatures of chemical impulse and electrical twitch? We would rather gamble on even a tiny, electrical spark of a chance that we are something more."

Blum, a professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992, is the author of *Ghost Hunters: William James and the Scientific Search for Life After Death*.

Frozen Asset

Tom Frisbie got more publicity than he expected when he agreed to talk about his book, *Victims of Justice*, at the Niles (Ill.) Public Library.

The library posted his name on their tall, free-standing marquee, highly visibly to passing traffic. Then the temperature dropped. Library workers couldn't remove the marquee letters until the sign thawed days later.

Story of Renewal

According to *Booklist*, in *This Tender Place, The Story of a Wetland Year*, Laurie Lawlor "has a remarkably transparent style, the perfect vehicle for capturing the subtle beauty of the fen, a rare and precious form of wetland fed by underground springs . . . [the] book teems with hidden life and significant observations, as she reveals the beauty and inestimable value of an

often-maligned but truly essential natural landscape."

After the deaths of her father and father-in-law, she discovers an unlikely place for healing and transformation in a wetland in southeastern Wisconsin—a landscape of abundant and sometimes inaccessible beauty that has often been ignored, misunderstood and threatened by human destruction.

"In her personal wetland journey, she examines the sky, delves underwater, and peers between sedges in all seasons and all times of day. An engaging and deeply intimate record, *This Tender Place* is, at its heart, a story of refuge and renewal refracted through the lens of life within wetlands—among the most productive, yet most endangered, ecosystems in the world."

Cluster-Buster Shares Tips

Rita Emmett, author of *The Clutter-Busting Handbook*, will speak at the Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox Ave. in Chicago on Sunday, April 22. Info from Peig Reid at 773-282-7035, ext. 19.

Emmett says she is a "Recovered Pack Rat" who, in her "Clutter Busting" presentation, will teach attendees that clutter does NOT come from being lazy, messy or disorganized. It comes from four ("that's right, only four") habits.

Her other books include *The Procrastinator's Handbook* and *The Procrastinating Child: a Handbook for Adults to Help Children Stop Putting Things Off*.

Planners Abroad

Stuart Meck and Rebecca Retzlaff, both SMA members, presented a paper titled "Reconstructing Golden v. Planning Board of the Town of Ramapo: The Real Story Behind the First Major Growth Management Plan in the U.S." at the 12th International

Conference of the International Planning History Society in Delhi, India, in December.

Meck is the director of the Center for Government Services at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N. J.

Dr. Retzlaff is an assistant professor in the community planning program at Auburn University in Alabama. She also presented a paper titled "Urban Biodiversity Protection in World Class Cities: The Case of the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan" at the International Urban Planning and Environment Symposium in Bangkok in January.

RECENT NEW MEMBERS

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Kate Klise writes and lives on her 40-acre farm near Norwood, Mo. She also works as a correspondent for *People* magazine, covering such stories as Timothy McVeigh's execution. Her first play, a musical titled *(Really) Grim Fairy Tales*, opened in 2001. She has written eight middle-grade and young adult books and adult nonfiction, including *Deliver Us From Normal*, *Trial By Journal*, *Regarding the Sink*, *Letters From Camp*, *Regarding the Trees* and *Regarding the Bathrooms*.

Julia Cook is author of *My Mouth Is a Volcano* (CTC Publishing, 2006) and *A Case of Bad Tattle Tongue* (CTC Publishing, 2005). *My Mouth Is a Volcano* was a winner of the Association of Educational Publisher's 2006 Distinguished Achievement Award for Children's Books in Graphic Design & Illustration.

Lisa Greyhill, an alumna of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, is author of *Miss Adventures*

(Cornerstone Press), a collection of stories based on Greyhill's experiences as the founder of the Adventure Travelers Society in Hinsdale, Ill. Using vivid descriptions, she allows readers to escape to exotic lands such as Chile and Mongolia, where, during both business-related and personal trips, Greyhill has found herself in extraordinary situations such as eating frogs because of extreme hunger.

Evelyn Johnson is author of *Barns of Old Mission Peninsula* (Dickinson Press, 2006), which won the State History Award from the Michigan Historical Society in September, 2005. She lives with her husband, Carl, in Traverse City.

Frank S. Joseph is the author of *To Love Mercy*, his first novel. The

novel reflects his background in Chicago and opens at Comiskey Park in 1948 as the White Sox play the Yankees.

Joseph grew up in the Chicago neighborhoods of Kenwood and Hyde Park and received his bachelor's degree in creative writing from Northwestern University.

He was a journalist with the old City News Bureau of Chicago and the Associated Press, covering the Democratic National Convention disorders, the Detroit riot and many other disturbances of the mid-'60s before moving to the Washington, D.C. area, where he still lives with his wife, Carol Jason, a painter and sculptor. They are parents of Shawn and Sam.

Elaine Soloway is the author of

The Division Street Princess, a coming-of-age story of a girl, a store, and an immigrant Chicago neighborhood, set in the 1940's.

The memoir was published May, 2006 by Syren Book Company.

She holds a master's degree in Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a bachelor's in Education from Roosevelt University in Chicago.

Her essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *WomanNews*, *ActiveTimes Magazine*, *Today's Chicago Woman* and *Chicago Jewish News*; as well as on 2Young2Retire.com, jewishmag.com and skirtmag.com.

She also is president of Elaine Soloway Public Relations and a freelance writer.