

Member news

Jean Bethke Elstain has been appointed by the president to the national Council on Bioethics. Also, she was one of the panelists for a BBC broadcast worldwide from Navy Pier Feb. 2 on the state of American politics. And her book, *Sovereignty, God, State and Self: The Gifford Lectures*, will be published by Basic Books in early June. ... A producer for "60 Minutes" interviewed SMA President **Jim Merriner** last month about now-jailed political fund-raiser Tony Rezko, whom Merriner had written an article about in the November Chicago magazine. Merriner also was quoted as "an Illinois political expert who has conducted the only interview with Rezko since his indictment" in a lengthy Feb. 1 piece **Ted McClelland** wrote for Salon.com on the relationship between Barack Obama and Tony Rezko. (Ted is now a regular contributor to Salon.) Also on Feb. 1, McClelland hosted a launch party for *The Third Coast: Sailors, Strippers, Fishermen, Folksingers, Long-Haired Ojibway Painters and God-Save-the-Queen Monarchists*



Ted McClelland

of the Great Lakes (See New Books) at The Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia Ave., Chicago. The party was sponsored by the Chicago-centric Web site Gaper's Block. Sycamore Smith, a Marquette, Mich.-based musician profiled in the book, provided entertainment. ... **June Sawyers** has just signed a contract with an Australian publisher, Murdoch Books, to write *Ten Songs that Changed the World*. She also is awaiting a contract from Barnes & Noble Publishing to write *The Definitive Illustrated Bruce Springsteen*. Her previous Springsteen book, *Tougher than the Rest: 100 Best Bruce Springsteen Songs* (2006) for Omnibus Press is being translated into

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How hooky hooked author on history

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

In the third grade, Joseph C. Morton took on a writing endeavor he could not complete as successfully as his authorial projects in later years: forging a note from his mother to cover up three days of hooky.

The note, referring to a "sore thought" instead of "sore throat" and signed "Joey Morton's mom," fooled no one. As a punishment, his father lectured him about the value of education and ordered him to read all six volumes of Carl Sandburg's biography of Abraham Lincoln.

"Carl Sandburg was a good author, and I enjoyed it," Morton told SMA members at their regular monthly program Feb. 13 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Morton now is a professor emeritus of history at Northeastern Illinois University and author of two books about revolutionary times: *The American Revolution* and *Shapers of the Great Debate at the Constitutional Convention*.

Why write books about the Revolution when already there are more on that topic than perhaps any other American historical event except the Civil War?

"I finally felt that I knew something about the American revolution," Morton explained. "In academe, young assistant professors are expected to publish right away. When I was an assistant professor I

knew less than I know now. But in 40 years of teaching the Revolution, I have learned something. I felt I had something to say."

Unlike some ponderous profferings from historians, *The American Revolution* is a slender volume. Morton said that's partly because he learned early in his career that many students were not reading what he was assigning.

"I would assign my graduate students one monograph a week and ask them to write a review," he said. "I was getting these reviews, and they were terrible. I was getting a review of the first quarter of the book."

Many of the students were high school history teachers with families who just didn't have enough time to read so much, Morton realized. Having seen students so squeezed for time, he decided to keep his book short.

"My hope was that people would actually read my book," he said.

"I also wrote the book because I differed with the conventional wisdom," he added. "I maintain that the American patriots did not win the war militarily. We didn't beat England. ... England remained a powerful military nation. It brought down Napoleon."

Nasty weather kept the numbers down at the program (it took Morton four hours to drive in from Crystal Lake), but those

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Joseph C Morton

March program:
Q&A with Judy Fradin

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Phyllis Whitney

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Tom Ciesielka's
PR tips

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Pair review: How two authors keep children's titles coming

On March 11, Judy Fradin is scheduled to talk about writing children's books at the regular SMA monthly program.

Dennis and Judy Fradin are the co-authors of dozens of children's books, three of which — *Bound for the North Star*, *Ida B. Wells: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement*, and *Jane Addams: Champion of Democracy* — have won SMA awards. The Fradins are working on an eight-book series, "Witness to Disaster," for National Geographic Children's Books.

Literary License: *You and your husband, Dennis Brindell Fradin, have collaborated on some 30 books for children. Which are your favorites?*

Judy Fradin: My clear favorite is *Ida B. Wells: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement*. I shouldn't say this, but I still think it's the most important book we've ever written, and she was an amazing lady. Dennis' favorite book is his Sam Adams biography, *Samuel Adams: The Father of American Independence*, which he wrote solo.

LL: *How do two authors work smoothly together on so many book projects?*

JF: Who said we work together smoothly? If there is a secret, it's that writing the book is not nearly as difficult as raising three teenagers. We kept them alive, and now they're parents themselves.

Or maybe the secret is that Dennis works upstairs and I work downstairs. We work in the same room when we read our manuscripts aloud or go over picture selections. We frequently pick one another's brains. I guess we've learned to disagree politely, especially since I'm always right. Just ask Dennis.

LL: *How much research goes into each of your book projects?*

JF: Tons of research and hundreds of research hours are involved in each book.

March 11, 2008, program

Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor

6 p.m. - Social Hour
7:00 p.m. - Program

Free - members, teachers, students
\$5.00 - general public

Our computers are clogged with research materials, and every surface in our house is covered with pictures, overdue library books, newspaper clippings, and "pages." We're usually working on several projects at any given time, which only adds to the disarray.

LL: *Do today's children learn as much history from books as they used to, or are they more attuned to getting information from the Internet?*



JF: I don't know the answer to that question. I know our son is always taking his kids to

the library for books. Our fourth-grade grandson is becoming Internet savvy; every fourth grader in his school is issued a laptop. Our high-school nieces use a lot of books for school reports. Their teachers are smart enough to teach them not to rely solely on the Internet. We rely on the Internet quite a bit ourselves, but we triple-check everything we find there.

LL: *Has the growing amount of information available online changed the way you do your research?*

JF: We used to make late-night runs to the Northwestern University Library in horrible weather to access information. Now we can find some of that information on historical Web sites. We can find out whether books we need are available at various libraries. We still spend a lot of time at various libraries and lots of money on overdue books.

Member news

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Spanish and German editions. And she just finished writing *The Distinctive Shopper's Guide to Edinburgh and Glasgow* for the New York-based publisher, The Little Bookroom. ... On Feb. 11, at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, **Stephen Kinzer** bemoaned the staying power of "utopian and millenarian fantasies that drove us into Iraq." Kinzer was on a panel that was part of a cross-country tour calling attention to the dangers of the Bush regime's continued bellicosity toward Iran. ... The Feb. 3 Chicago Sun-Times ran a profile of **Dr. F. Gonzalez-Crussi**, author of *A Short History of Medicine*. Since retiring in 2001 as chief of pathology at Children's Memorial Hospital, Gonzalez-Crussi has been writing full-time. His next book will be a collection of essays



Dr. F. Gonzalez-Crussi

on different organs of the body. He owns so many books, the Sun-Times reported, that he and his wife purchased a studio apartment next to his lakefront condo to keep them in. ... **Edward E. Gordon** recently signed a contract with Berrett-Koehler Publishers for a book titled, *The Global Talent Showdown*, which is scheduled to be published in the spring of 2009. ... **Paul Green** was quoted in the Feb. 7 (Chicago) Daily Herald on John McCain's strategy for the remaining primaries. ... Chicago poet **David Hernandez** was featured at "A Special Evening of Culture and Consciousness" Jan. 30 at Casa Puerto Riquena in Chicago. ... In the Jan. 20 San Francisco Chronicle, a writer said she crisscrossed the country, photographing what people were reading. One of the people she ran across, she said, was "a Midwestern man [who] keeps a copy of *The Short History of a Prince* by **Jane Hamilton**, which is about a gay man like himself struggling with identity, on his nightstand 'just in case.'" ... The Lake County News-Sun on Jan 3 published an account about **Joel**

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Greenberg (author of *A Natural History of the Chicago Region*), who headed out to the woods on New Year's Day to participate in the Audubon Society's annual bird count. Greenberg's group spotted screech owls, yellow-rumped warblers, goldfinches, downy woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, robins, Canada geese, mallards, a flicker, a winter wren, a hermit thrush, a sharp-shinned hawk, a mourning dove, a cardinal and a red-tailed hawk. ... *Chicago: City on the Move* by **Michael Williams** and **Richard Cahan** was listed at No. 3 in the Jan. 19 Chicago Tribune's "From the Precincts" listing. *Chasing Vermeer* by **Blue Balliett** was listed as No. 2 on Jan. 5. ... **Kim Strickland** signed *Wish Club* and **Rick Kaempfer** signed *Severance* Jan. 24 at Anderson's Bookshop in Naperville. ... **Studs Terkel** was scheduled to sign *Touch and Go: A Memoir* Jan. 19 at the Chicago History Museum. ... In January **Kathy Stevenson** started writing a weekly commentary column for MainLine Life, which serves the suburbs of Philadelphia. She recently published her 16th essay in the Philadelphia Inquirer, and has two essays upcoming in the magazine MainLine Today. ... **Jack Fuller** wrote a commentary in the Jan. 29 Chicago Tribune on what leadership attributes we really want in a president. ... In his television writing workshop newsletter, **Merv Block** last month pointed out that by reflexively using the word "tonight" to make stories seem more timely, newscaster Brian Williams is ahead of his time. "When Sir Edmund Hillary died in New Zealand about 9 a.m. on Jan. 11 there, the time in New York City was about 3 p.m., Jan. 10," Block wrote. "But Williams said in a tease that night, 'When Nightly News continues here this Thursday night, the death this evening of one of the best-known explorers in the world.' This evening? 3 p.m. this evening?" Block gave other examples as well. And



Richard Cahan

to sign *Touch and Go: A Memoir* Jan. 19 at the Chicago History Museum. ... In January **Kathy Stevenson** started writing a weekly commentary column for MainLine Life, which serves the suburbs of Philadelphia. She recently published her 16th essay in the Philadelphia Inquirer, and has two essays upcoming in the magazine MainLine Today. ... **Jack Fuller** wrote a commentary in the Jan. 29 Chicago Tribune on what leadership attributes we really want in a president. ... In his television writing workshop newsletter, **Merv Block** last month pointed out that by reflexively using the word "tonight" to make stories seem more timely, newscaster Brian Williams is ahead of his time. "When Sir Edmund Hillary died in New Zealand about 9 a.m. on Jan. 11 there, the time in New York City was about 3 p.m., Jan. 10," Block wrote. "But Williams said in a tease that night, 'When Nightly News continues here this Thursday night, the death this evening of one of the best-known explorers in the world.' This evening? 3 p.m. this evening?" Block gave other examples as well. And

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SMA seeks volunteers

The Society of Midland Authors has endured since 1915 while many other worthy literary organizations have faded away. The explanation is that generations of leaders have succeeded not only in recruiting new members year after year but also in replacing themselves.

All of the Society's functions are carried out by volunteers. So there's always room for members to become directors and officers.

Activities include sponsoring annual awards in six categories, holding monthly public programs in season and an awards dinner each year, publishing eight issues of *Literary License* and a yearbook, and in general providing fellowship for Midwestern authors.

The SMA is now looking for volun-

teers for the board of directors and as the Society's corresponding secretary. If you are interested, please tell the SMA what interests you most and list your pertinent qualifications.

Send this information to James Merriner, president, 6737 W. Irving Park Rd. #3D, Chicago, IL 60634. E-mail: jlmeriner@sbcglobal.net.

Board notes: At its January meeting, the SMA Board authorized Webmaster Mary Claire Hersh to begin using a service called iContact to send out our e-mail notifications to members of SMA programs and events. The rate for the SMA is \$9.95 a month, with a 20% discount for nonprofits.

The SMA's previous method for doing this has increasingly been blocked by spam filters.

Writer's retreat available

SMA member Bruce Guernsey and his wife head off to Maine around the first of May each year to eat lobster and watch Red Sox games, and they don't return until mid-October.

Their log cabin on 12 acres of woodland three miles from Charleston, Ill., is available, probably on a monthly basis, for any SMA member hoping to finish a novel, book of poems or some other writ-

ing project. The house is completely furnished, has a well-equipped kitchen and has central air. It is fifty miles from Champaign-Urbana, and Chicago is a three-hour drive.

"We aren't looking to make money," Guernsey writes, "only to have the utilities and lawn mowing paid. And the plants watered!"

If you are interested, e-mail Bruce Guernsey at yazaroo67@yahoo.com or call him at (217) 345-8625.

Hooked on history

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who were present held a spirited discussion.

One historical note that has relevance today was a letter written March 31, 1776, by Abigail Adams to her husband, John Adams, in Philadelphia. Abigail, noting that "all men would be tyrants if they could be," implores him to "remember the ladies" in "the new code of laws which I suppose will be necessary for you to make."

Most people think of the Revolution as a war, but it really was several great movements, Morton said. There was the agitation against alleged British tyranny, the war itself, the revolution in political

philosophy exemplified by the Declaration of Independence and the bringing together of 13 separate colonies under a unified federal government.

"It was a conservative revolution," Morton said. "Or a revolutionary conservative revolution."

Corrections

The yearbook e-mail listing for **Anastasia Royal** has a typo in it. The correct address is anaroyal@aol.com.

Rick Kaempfer's correct e-mail is amishrick@yahoo.com.

Louise Hullinger has moved one block to 2320 West 113th Place, Condo 1326, in Chicago. Her Zip code and e-mail are unchanged.

New books

Freshwater Journey

Ted McClelland's new book, *The Third Coast: Sailors, Strippers, Fishermen, Folksingers, Long-Haired Ojibway Painters and God-Save-the-Queen Monarchists of the Great Lakes* (February 2008, Chicago Review Press) tracks his 10,000-mile journey around the Great Lakes. Dubbing it the "Freshwater Nation," McClelland tours America's only floating post office, escorts a Russian sailor in pursuit of counterfeit Nikes, discovers Buffalo's contribution to arena rock, participates in a re-enactment of the War of 1812 and paints a colorful portrait of the region's distinctive landscapes and loveable characters. Kirkus Review called *The Third Coast*, "Intelligent, witty and downright shameless ... The author struts an extensive knowledge of the area that makes this a must for fans of travel literature." Ted McClelland also is the author of *Horseplayers: Life at the Track*.

"Poignant understanding"

Charlotte Herman's new book is *My Chocolate Year* (Simon & Schuster). Kirkus Review says the book, "reflects a certain childhood sweetness that evolves into a more poignant understanding of the realities of war and the importance of family ties."

Red alert: "Crimson" is in paperback

The paperback edition of *Against a Crimson Sky* was released in December. It's a stand-alone sequel to **James Conroyd Martin's** first novel, *Push Not the River*, which was based on the diary of a countess. The follow-up involves love and intrigue as the Polish lancers accompany Napoleon on his doomed march to Moscow. In 2007, Martin received a Gold Medal Award for Literature from the American Institute of Polish Culture. Publishers Weekly said, "Fans of historical romance will find much to enjoy in this sprawling epic."

Musical mystery

Robert D. Sutherland's *The Farringford Cadenza* (October, 2007, Pikestaff Publications) is a suspenseful, humorous literary mystery. Alexander

Murray, formerly principal flute of the London Symphony Orchestra, said, "A continuous improvisation on a theme which has been heard only in the distant past, *The Farringford Cadenza* takes the reader from interrupted cadence to interrupted cadence in a flow of imaginative counterpoint. At the arrival of the final cadenza, I was eager to give the composer a standing ovation."

Novel of love and secrets

With her new book, *M.I.A.*, **Michael Allen Dymmoch** is "a writer of crime and mystery novels [who] takes a turn in this mostly successful novel about enduring love and family secrets," Publishers Weekly wrote in its Jan. 7 issue. In *M.I.A.*, Rhiann Fahey's second husband, Michael, a cop, is killed in a car crash, and his best cop-friend, Rory, is determined to look after Rhiann.

"Memorable characters"

The Gambler and the Bug Boy: 1939 Los Angeles and the Untold Story of a Horse Racing Fix (October, 2007, University of Nebraska Press) is **John Christgau's** latest book. Only a few months after Seabiscuit won the Santa Anita Derby, a 1940 edition of the Los Angeles Times reported: "Six Jockeys Admit Horse Races Fixed." Publishers Weekly said, "Christgau unveils the dark underbelly of late 1930s horse racing. ... Christgau is skilled at making memorable characters from his subjects."

"Erudite, amusing and engaging"

"Many, including this reviewer," Larry Thornberry wrote in the Jan. 13 Washington Times, "consider **Joseph Epstein** to be the best essayist on active duty today. So the arrival of *In a Cardboard Belt* is a celebration for Mr. Epstein's loyal readers, and an opportunity for those not acquainted with this erudite, amusing and consistently engaging writer." *In a Cardboard Belt: Essays Personal, Literary and Savage* (Houghton Mifflin), is Epstein's 10th and longest collection of essays, and his 20th book.



John Christgau

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someone out there is listening: A YourHub.com blogger named Brian Olson, complaining about too little attribution in news stories, wrote on Jan. 10, "My writing mentor is Merv Block, who used to write for Walter Cronkite and the CBS Evening News." ... **Luisa Buehler** will appear at 2 p.m. March 15 at the New Castle Public Library in New Castle, Ind. ... **Sally A. Kitt Chappell**, author of *Chicago's Urban Nature: A Guide to the City's Architecture and Landscape*, will give a lecture at 1 p.m. March 2 at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Book signings will follow. ... An article **Pat Colander** wrote 20 years ago for the New York Times titled "Oprah Winfrey's Odyssey" is going to appear in a business article in a NYT anthology to be published in 2009. ... The Jan. 13 (Elgin, Ill.) CourierNews ran a story about **Sel Erder Yackley's** 2006 book *Never Regret the Pain: Loving and Losing a Bipolar Spouse*. "My hope has been to write a book that would reach out to those who face the challenges of bipolar illness and give them hope and courage," Yackley told the CourierNews. "It's been 20 years, so it was perfect for me to do. It was kind of closure, I guess." ... **Charles Wheelan** was a guest Jan. 18 on Minnesota Public Radio discussing the 2008 election campaign. Also, the online Chicago Observer picked up Wheelan's Jan. 28 Yahoo column saying politicians should focus on helping citizens obtain job skills, not claim they can create jobs. ... Dominican University's Albertus Magnus Society will host a presentation by **Carol Rausch Albright** titled "One God, Complex Self" on Feb. 21 at 7 p.m. in Room 263 of the Priory Campus, 7200 W. Division Street, River Forest. Albright is a visiting professor of religion and science at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. ... **Deborah Blum** is the international liaison for the National Association of Science Writers. She's also the North American board member for the World Federation of Science Journalists. The international stuff is keeping her busy, but her

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theory is that writers are better at diplomacy than the current administration. ... On the 30th anniversary segment of "The Week in Review," aired Jan. 25, **John Callaway** lamented the declining health of newspapers. ... **Sharon Draper** is among the authors who will take part in Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing's March 14-27 "Simon Pulse Blogfest," during which teen readers will be able to submit questions, read the authors' responses to the chosen "Question of the Day," and comment on the authors' posts. Draper also headlined this year's Buzz Black Book Fair in Cincinnati. ... In the Jan. 13 Chicago Tribune, Adam Langer wrote of "the rich, vivid place to which I am transported whenever I pick up a **Stuart Dybek** story." ... **Michael H. Ebner** was quoted Jan. 24 in the Harvard Political Review Online about the difference between being a mayor and a president. Ebner said being mayor is "very much a day-to-day proposition in governing," which often denies a mayor the "opportunity to think in a broader context." ... **Jonathan Eig** was in Boston on Jan. 22 to discuss his books. ... **Paul McComas** will read from and sign copies of *Planet of the Dates* [see New Books, January 2008 Literary License] at free publication parties: Feb. 22, 7-10 pm, Writers WorkSpace, 5443 N. Broadway, Chicago; Feb. 23, 7-10 p.m., Pick-A-Cup Coffee Club, 1813 Dempster, Evanston; Feb. 21, 7-8:15 p.m., Schwartz's Books, 2559 N. Downer, Milwaukee. *Planet of the Dates* "is my third book ... my second novel ... my first hardcover ... and the funniest, FUN-est thing I've ever written!" McComas says. ... A New York Daily News columnist with laryngitis wrote on Nov. 22, "To feel better, I went home and reread the Sing Sing section of a book called *A Pickpocket's Tale: The Underworld of Nineteenth-Century New York*, by **Timothy Gilfoyle**, who details the harrowing life in Sing Sing in the 19th century under the rule of strict silence." ... "Double Talks. The World in Iowa: Past, present and future speakers series" featured **Kerry A. Trask** in Des Moines earlier this month.

Get out new sheet of paper, and start the new year right

BY THOMAS CIESIELKA

The word "new," according to dictionary.com, definition #8, means "fresh or unused; example: to start a new sheet of paper." The new year is exactly like that sheet of paper. It is quite possibly one of the best presents we can get for the holidays. The question is: What do authors do with it?

I'd like to suggest a New Year's resolution for everyone: "I (insert your name here) will build quality relationships with the media and the public to become more popular and profitable." Keeping this resolution will create a happier professional and personal life. Use these questions to evaluate the way you handle your relationships and consider making some positive changes.

What's your story? Do you stick to it?

When dealing with the public and the media about your book, you should have the answers to all the questions whether people ask them or not — specifically the answers to those questions dealing with values and beliefs. This is the foundation to any relationship.

You must know yourself before knowing others. Authors must internalize their mission statements and values to keep everyone on the same page and remind everyone of their purpose. I came across Microsoft's mission statement from 15 or so years ago, and it included a statement about Microsoft having its software on every computer in America. Then, that was a very lofty statement, but that dream has practically been realized. Make sure you and others you work with know your story (values, beliefs, mission statement) and stick to it.

Do you connect with the public?

One of the best ways to build new relationships and get people thinking about your books is to distribute some sort of publication. Think newsletter or maga-



Thomas Ciesielka

zine, or turn to the wide world of the Web and create e-zines or e-newsletters. Publications give authors a separate chance to connect with the public, show personality and broadcast company news. There are some great programs, such as Constant Contact and Intelli Contact, which make it easy to organize and distribute information. If you already have a

publication, think about ways it can be revamped. "Makeovers" bring back that fresh feeling and refocus attention on you.

Do you say "please" and "thank you?"

Some of the most basic relationship rules are often forgotten as years pass. Creating and maintaining relationships with reporters and book editors should be handled with extreme care and attention. Simple, sincere acts of appreciation can

Simple, sincere acts of appreciation can reap many benefits.

reap many benefits when it comes to people remembering you and wanting to continue a relationship. When you want a reporter to notice you, take notice of them. Pay attention to what reporters usually write about and contact them with feedback, leads on a source or just a compliment on their article/show. If a news story is published or broadcasted about you, be sure to show your gratitude. Kindness rarely goes unnoticed.

Remember that the new year is your very own, brand-new, blank sheet of paper. Don't throw it away. Addressing these questions will put you on the right path to better relationships, better book success and a better year ... and that sounds like very happy news.

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

Final chapters

Phyllis Ayame Whitney, a member of the Society of Midland Authors for nearly 60 years and a winner of the Society's Lifetime Literary Achievement Award in 1995, died Feb. 8 in Faber, Va. She was 104.

She published her first short story in the Chicago Daily News and went on to become a best-selling author of numerous romantic mysteries, young-adult novels and children's mysteries for more than 50 years. During the 1940s, Ms. Whitney also served as children's book editor of the Chicago Sun's Book Week (1942-1946) and the Philadelphia Inquirer (1947-1948).

When she won her SMA award, Ms. Whitney said she had long been grateful to the Society for the early support and encouragement its members gave to her. Later, she arranged to have herself photographed with it in her "award corner" at her home and sent a copy of the photo to the SMA with a note saying the picture also included special leather-bound copies of first editions of some of her books. "Publishers used to do this [for authors]," she wrote. "No more!"

In 1941, Houghton Mifflin published Ms. Whitney's first book for young people, *A Place for Ann*, a young-adult novel about girls who create a personal service organization doing jobs like dog walking. In 1943, her first adult suspense novel,

Red is for Murder, was published by Ziff-Davis Publishing Co. She also taught juvenile-fiction writing courses at Northwestern University in 1945 and at New York University from 1947 to 1958.

Ms. Whitney's Web site carries this statement: "Perhaps I could say that most of my writing has been concerned with understanding between people. Whether of different races, or religions, or even in the same family I tried in my books ... to deal with the subject of understanding the other fellow."

Ms. Whitney, who once said she stayed young by writing, wrote books until she was 94. Her last was *Amethyst Dreams* (1997), about a young heiress who disappeared from a family seaside home and who could be found only by her best friend.

In 1995, Literary License wrote: "Perhaps it is the varied background of her childhood that set Phyllis' imagination on fire. Born in Yokohama, Japan, to American parents, she also lived in the Philippines and China by age 15,

when she moved to Chicago, where she lived until 1946. Graduating from McKinley High School in Chicago, she gained her higher education, she says, by working in bookstores and libraries, after her parents died while she was in her teens. In time, she studied in Frederic Nelson Litten's courses at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, attending evening seminars and learning



Phyllis A. Whitney

On behalf of her daughter, Philip Tyo, webmaster of the Official Phyllis A. Whitney Web site, invites members of the Society of Midland Authors to share their thoughts and memories of Phyllis through her official Web site at <http://www.phyllisawhitney.com>.

her craft."

In all, Ms. Whitney produced 39 adult suspense novels, some with a Gothic twist (with titles like *Woman Without a Past* and *The Glass Flame*); 14 novels for young adults (*A Window for Julie*, *Nobody Likes Trina*); 20 children's mysteries (*Mystery of the Scowling Boy*, *Secret of the Missing Footprint*); several books about writing; and many short stories for magazines, the New York Times wrote. Her novels, considered fast-paced with lots of cliffhangers, were translated into 30 languages and sold in the millions. Though many have gone out of print, some have continued to be re-released in paperback.

Her earliest novels took place in Chicago, later settings became more glamorous and romantic: Palm Springs, Calif.; Sedona, Ariz.; and Maui, Hawaii, as well as Turkey, Norway and Greece.

"Never mind the rejections, the discouragement, the voices of ridicule (there can be those, too)," Ms Whitney wrote in *Guide to Fiction Writing*. "Work and wait and learn, and that train will come by. If you give up, you'll never have a chance to climb aboard."

Literary License

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New members

Liesel Litzenburger, who was "one of those kids who tried *Anna Karenina* in the third grade," is author of the novel *The Widower* (2006, Shaye Areheart Books) and the story collection *Now You Love Me* (2007, Three Rivers). Litzenburger was born in Petoskey, Mich., and then moved to nearby Harbor Springs. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in English and worked as an editor of a trivia book series before returning to school to receive her M.F.A. in creative writing. She has taught

at universities in Michigan and Florida, and her stories and essays have appeared in various magazines and anthologies. She has been awarded residencies at the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo.

Of *The Widower*, Publishers Weekly said, "The wounded of heart and mind take the slow lane to redemption in this quiet debut novel, set in a small town in northern Michigan."

Of *Now You Love Me*, the Chicago Tribune said, "There is also beauty here, in the determination of these broken, isolated people to survive and, ultimately, to connect."