

Biblio File

John Wasik's *Merchant of Power* is coming out in paperback in December. Two years ago, the late **Studs Terkel** (See Final Chapters, Page 10), wrote "One of the most magnetic and powerful



John Wasik

con artists of the Great Depression was Sam Insull. Patron of the arts, philanthropist and Thomas Edison's right hand, he shafted thousands of investors large and small. My mother, one of the latter, lost her bundle during his adventures.

I found the work of John Wasik not only personally enthralling but an informal history of that traumatic time." Terkel furnished the blurb too late for the hard-cover edition, but it should be on the paperback's cover. Also, earlier this year, Wasik co-authored a book titled *iMoney* with Thomas Lydon on exchange-traded funds (Prentice-Hall). ... **Charles Wheelan**, a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy, is running for Rahm Emanuel's soon-to-be-vacant House seat on the platform of an "untraditional" candidate. ... The Feb. 10 Society of Midland Authors program will be "The Future of Fiction" with fiction **Stephanie Kuehnert** and **Shawn Shiflett** (additional panelists may be announced later). Shawn Shiflett, a Columbia College professor, is the author of the critically acclaimed 2004 novel *Hidden Place* and an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship winner. Kuehnert, an Oak Park resident, found inspiration for her debut novel, *I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone*, from her love of punk rock. ... The March 10 Society of Midland Authors program will be about writing children's literature with speakers: **Esther Hershenhorn**, **Laurie Lawlor** and **Patricia K. Kummer**.

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Being yourself makes your blog a site for sore eyes, PR pro says

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

The many thousands of books published each year don't discourage authors from deciding to write one more.

Therefore, public relations specialist Tom Ciesielka told Society of Midland Authors members at their regular November meeting, authors shouldn't be discouraged from creating a new blog even though means that "instead of a zillion blogs there now will be a zillion and one."

When Ciesielka asked those in the room at the Cliff Dwellers club to define a blog, he got a wide range of answers, including: "A colossal waste of time." "A journal/bulletin board." "A way to get your opinions out there."

But Ciesielka said that a blog can be a helpful way to promote books, even for those authors who already have a Web site, because each fills a different role.

"Your Web site is your office, it's more your formal setting," he said. "When you think about a blog, it may be more like a living room. It is a space where you kick back, and relax. People get to see a little but more of who you are. It is a little bit informal."

Before starting your own blog, Ciesielka said, it's wise to first read other blogs and then practice posting on them. Then start writing your own. The result? Ciesielka quoted SMA member **Frank Joseph** as saying his blog has turned out to be a more effective way to promote his books than anything else he tried.

Adding a blog to your promotional efforts increases your chances, Ciesielka said, of a "bump."

The "bump" is something like what happened on the Titanic, he said. Things are moving along at a normal pace, and "then there is this bump. ... People say, 'What happened?'"

In the world of online media, the "bump" means suddenly books sales are taking off. What happened? Maybe a mention of the book has been picked up at a well-trafficked site. Suddenly, "a lot of people are checking out this book."

Also, write often but don't let it take over your life, Ciesielka advised. "Volume is important to readers," he said.

"If you are blogging frequently," you are building a relationship," Ciesielka said. "When your book comes out, it is like any other relationship. You have greased the wheels, so to speak."

And whatever you, don't forget to put in a link so that a reader can click and buy the book, he said.

"Make it easy for them to buy it," he said.

After the meeting, intrepid Literary License beat reporter Sally Reed asked which blog Ciesielka started with himself. It was <http://www.typepad.com/>, and he recommended it for beginners. (There is a fee.)

"In some ways this is selling you," Ciesielka told the assembled authors. "It is not your CV. It is more a 'See You.'"

Tom Ciesielka's column is on Page 3.

Q&A
with Lisa Holton

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Writers on Writing:
Joseph Epstein

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Ace of clubs explains why it's a big deal

Lisa Holton, who began her career as a business writer at the Chicago Sun-Times and today writes about business history and other topics at her own firm, The Lisa Company, will present the Society of Midland Authors' Jan. 13 program. The most recent of her 11 books is *For Members Only: A History and Guide to Chicago's Private Clubs*.

Literary License: What got you interested in private clubs as a topic for a book?

Lisa Holton: Sharon Woodhouse, owner of Lake Claremont Press, suggested the book, but I've had contact with the city's private clubs since I joined the Sun-Times Business Section back in the early 1980s. Neither my family nor I were part of the private club culture in the city I'm from. So my first contact with private clubs was being invited to a lunch at the Union League Club in the early 1980s, and I strolled up to the front door and I was politely led to the side entrance. I kept asking the doorman if there was something wrong, if there was a fire, and he was pleasant, but he wasn't answering my questions. Thinking there was something the club was hiding, I got to a phone inside the club, called my editor, told my story, and he just laughed. He explained I was led to the Ladies' Entrance, and welcomed me to life among the rich and powerful. I couldn't believe it.

Even though I have attended events at many of these clubs in the years since – even after they opened their doors to female members – I admit my curiosity about the city's oldest established clubs began with that strange greeting more than 25 years ago.

“The worst part about producing any book is the writing – the fun comes with the research and then finally seeing it in print!”

Literary License: Did you run across any information that surprised you while researching the book?

Lisa Holton: Plenty: The incredible amount of architecture in this city that defunct clubs have left behind; The schism between Eastern and Western European Jews that led to the founding of the Covenant and Standard Clubs, respectively. How the private clubs founded by women have held onto much more secrecy and exclusivity than clubs founded by men. How amazingly long it took for people of color and women to break through. Probably a few more I'll remember later.

Literary License: Many of the decisions that shaped Chicago were made behind mahogany doors in exclusive clubs. Do any institutions fill that role today?

Lisa Holton: The Commercial Club and the Civic Committee, of course. They helped fund the Plan of Chicago and continue to gather some of the most powerful executives, educators and political figures today.

The Executives Club, while not a “clubhouse” club, also fills a role similar to the Commercial Club in that the city's power elite meets there on a regular basis.

The Chicago Club still manages to corral Old Money and Corporate Power in this town. The Union League Club is a center of Republican money and power in a very Democratic city.

Literary License: We hold our programs at the Cliff Dwellers. What sets this club apart from the others?

Lisa Holton: It's always had a rich history representing artists of various pursuits – writers, musicians, architects and

January 13, 2009, 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

arts enthusiasts of all kinds, and it was never all about wealth.

Even after being exiled from Orchestra Hall to the comparatively modern Borg Warner building, it's held onto much of its historic decor. I have to say that in the experience of writing the book, it was one of the friendliest and most cooperative clubs I worked with.

I always loved the fact that it gave Louis Sullivan a free membership when he fell on hard times – as you probably know from the Sullivan Room, he wrote his autobiography there a few short years before he died.

Literary License: You've written books both under your own name and as a ghostwriter. Which is more fun?

Lisa Holton: Fun? The worst part about producing any book is the writing – the fun comes with the research and then finally seeing it in print! I would have to say that *For Members Only* was the most fun of any book I've produced because it gave me a chance to really learn the city's history and create something that wasn't in existence in the marketplace.

My other books have either been market- or client-driven, not passion projects like this one.

Literary License: What's your next book project?

Lisa Holton: I'm working on two books concurrently, which is something of a challenge!

I'm doing a how-to on business valuation for the Dummies series and a ghost-written title for an executive in the advertising industry. They'll be my 14th and 15th books, and after that, I'd like to spend some time on a play idea I've been thinking about. If it ever gets done, I'll tell you all about it.

Q&A
with
Lisa
Holton



Use Web sites and technology to network with your readers

Remember the iPhone? Yeah, you know, the new phone from Apple that came out last summer? Well, now it's the iPhone 3G. I don't remember seeing 2G. Or even 1B. Actually, there might have been a 2.5G in there somewhere. But still, this tells us two things: One, technology can advance at a mind-boggling rate. And two, there will *always* be someone with a more technologically advanced phone than you, even if you buy it on the day it debuts.

Lucky for us, we don't need a crystal ball to take advantage of new technology and Internet trends. The following suggestions explain ways to use these new developments when trying to communicate with the public. While reading this tip, I challenge you to think outside the box. Actually, forget the box altogether. Let's pretend there has never been a box. It is just you and a world full of endless possibilities.

Let's get social

Social Web sites are taking over the Internet.

According to a study by Morgan Stanley using Alexa Global Traffic Rankings, seven out of the 10 most-frequented Web sites in 2008 were social Web sites, compared with one of 10 in 2005. You want to know where the people are? They are online. They are being social e-butterflies. They are on (to name a few) YouTube, Facebook, Hi5, Wikipedia, Orkut, Live and the "oldie" (but goodie) MySpace. If your potential customers or clients are online, where do you think you should be? A couple examples of what you could do with these sites:

YouTube. Create a video to post on YouTube and let the power of viral marketing do its thing. Ahhh, the beauty of "copy, paste and forward." Have you been interviewed on television? Post a clip of your interview on YouTube, giving yourself and your books represent double the exposure.

Wikipedia. Wikipedia says, "people of

all ages and cultural and social backgrounds can write Wikipedia articles." That is an open invitation from the Wiki masterminds to write an article about yourself. This can increase your credibility as well as search engine exposure.

Move with the times

Non-arguable Truth #134: People are mobile. Because people are mobile, they like their electronics to be mobile or mobile-friendly. The new thing is checking your e-mail while in the bathroom. That's why iPhone 3G's slogan is "On the go? Got to go? No problem." OK, that's not true. But the point is that the more easily accessible you are to people on the move, the more you will be top-of-mind. Some examples of mobile-friendly developments:

Amazon Kindle. This is an amazing device for all you authors and publishers that allows your work to be downloaded and read on a hand-held electronic device. Having your title available on Amazon Kindle is another avenue to further exposure.

Podcast. A podcast is like a little radio program that people can listen to through the Internet and also download and listen to on their mp3 players or iPods. Being interviewed on a podcast means you have the capability of going anywhere your listener goes! A livecast is similar to a podcast except that it is a like a little mobile television program.

After all is said and digitized, it is important to remember that no matter what type of technology is developed to enhance communication, we should remember that technology is developed to do **ONLY** that: enhance. New paths are created to reach the public but good communication skills are still necessary to effectively "speak" through those paths and cultivate relationships.

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PR Tips
from
Tom
Ciesielka



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Hershenhorn's next book, *S Is For Story: A Writer's Alphabet*, will be published next fall by Sleeping Bear Press.

Lawlor's recent titles include *He Will Go Fearless*, *The Two Loves of Will Shakespeare* and *This Tender Place*.

Kummer, a Lisle resident, has written 60 books, including many nonfiction books for children. ... The April 14 Society of Midland Authors poetry event will feature Slam poetry founder **Marc Smith** vs. Illinois Poet Laureate **Kevin Stein**. The poets will switch off reading and performing their work thematically through the night. The program, "Poetry: Stage vs. Page." will bring together two poets from completely different worlds, one of whom writes primarily for the page and another who writes primarily for the stage. The poets read together for almost an hour, back and forth, poem for poem.

It will not be a slam or competition in any way, just a good spirited, entertaining poetry evening from different poetic genres. ... While researching *Yesterday's Cities: Chicago*, due out in early February from Publications International,

Richard Lindberg and **Carol Carlson** discovered the oldest standing house in Chicago is not the Widow Clarke House, as many people commonly assume, but the refurbished Noble-Seymour-Crippen House in Norwood Park. ... **Joseph Epstein** discussed writing, led a question-and-answer session and signed his latest book, *Fred Astaire*, Nov. 13 at the Highland Park (Ill.) Library. ... **Jim Schwab** has a chapter, "The Role of Planning in Reducing Impacts of Global Warming," in a new book from CRC Press, *Global Warming, Natural Hazards, and Emergency Management*, released in October. He is also the general editor of *Planning the Urban Forest: Ecology, Economy, and Community Development*, which is going to press as a Planning Advisory Service Report from the American Planning Association, due out by year's end. The report is the product of an APA research project Jim managed that was supported by the U.S. Forest

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Service. APA's magazine, Planning, is featuring an article in its December issue by Jim about his time spent this summer as a visiting fellow for the Centre for Advanced Engineering in New Zealand. And in mid-December, Jim is representing the APA on a trip to China to discuss planning for recovery from last spring's Chengdu earthquake. ... **Ron Offen's** semi-annual poetry magazine, Free Lunch: A Poetry Miscellany, has received a Special Assistance Grant from the Illinois Arts Council. The \$1,000 grant (given for the fifth time) will pay some publication expenses of Free Lunch, which has been published since 1989. ... A Dec.14 interview with **Gladys Swan** ran in the e-zine Pif Magazine. Also, novelist Wally Lamb told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune on Nov.15 that when he entered MFA program at Vermont College he got advice from Swan that always has stayed with him. "She told me that I would never tell an original story," Lamb said. "The best you could do is tell your version of the archetypal stories." ... Midland Authors President **Jim Merriner** was interviewed on MSNBC Dec. 10 about political corruption in Illinois. A posting on InstaPundit.com said this about Merriner's new book: "A crusading politician who wound up in jail – a perfect selection for Election Day." ... **Libby Fischer Hellmann** appeared Nov. 13 with Sean Chercover at the Book Stall in Winnetka. Also, Hellmann now has three short stories recorded on audio. They are: "The Day Miriam Hirsch Disappeared," the prequel to her Ellie Foreman series; "Detour," her first hard-boiled story about a hit woman on the job; and "House Rules," which was nominated for an Agatha and an Anthony. They're all available on a short-story Web site called Sniplits (www.sniplits.com) for less than a dollar. In fact, "Detour" is one of the site's featured stories. Hellmann also has a new Web site URL: <http://libbyhellmann.com> ... **Jane Anne Morris** did an eight-day California book tour in August to promote her new book, *Gaveling Down the Rabble: How "Free Trade" is*

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New Books

A PURE DOUBLE CROSS

BLUE STEEL PRESS
NOVEMBER 1, 2008

John Knoerle's new novel, titled *A Pure Double Cross: Book One of the American Spy Trilogy*, is set in 1945 Cleveland. In it, Hal Schroeder returns from a two-year stint behind German lines as an undercover agent for the OSS. The horrors of war have left him bitter and cynical. He is recruited by the FBI to infiltrate a local mob that is pulling bank heists. The feds have concocted a sting operation to capture the head of the gang and they want



John Knoerle

Hal to execute it. He agrees. But Hal Schroeder is no longer interested in being a hero. Hal Schroeder is interested in a fat payday.

FLYING FROM THE BLACK HOLE

NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS,
MAY, 2009

Robert O. Harder's next book is the 336-page *Flying From the Black Hole: The B-52 Navigator-Bombardiers of Vietnam*. It includes 30 black-and-white photos and illustrations.

Harder, an active-duty U.S. Air Force officer from 1966 to 1970, served in the Strategic Air Command and flew 145 combat missions during the Vietnam War as a B-52D navigator-bombardier. He later became a commercial pilot and certificated flight instructor. Now a retired retail chain executive, he lives in Chicago.

U.S. Air Force navigators and bombardiers have long labored under the shadow of pilots, their contributions misunderstood or simply unknown to the public. This was especially the case with the B-52's non-pilot, officer air crewmen in the Vietnam War. Yet without them it

would have been impossible to execute nuclear war strike plans or fly conventional bombing sorties. Harder offers a history of the development of bombing techniques and the evolution of bomber aircraft, focusing on the Vietnam-era B-52. Final chapters turn to the 11-day "Christmas War" over Hanoi and Haiphong for an insider's view of that defining battle.

THE CIVILIZED SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW

LITTLE BOOKROOM
NOVEMBER 4, 2008

June Skinner Sawyers' new book, *The Civilized Shopper's Guide to Edinburgh and Glasgow*, was published on Nov. 4. Now a writer and editor in Chicago, Sawyers is a native of Glasgow, which has been named the top shopping destination in the United Kingdom outside of London. Sawyers signed her book at 7 p.m. Nov. 19 at the Book Cellar, 4736-38 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, and held a book signing/whisky tasting at 2 pm. Nov. 30 at Printers Row Wine Shop, 719 S. Dearborn St., Chicago.

ADULT CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: CONFUSED LOVE SEEKERS

GREENWOOD PRESS
OCTOBER 30, 2008

Geraldine K. Piorkowski's new book is about today's grown children of divorce who are confused in the realm of love. A clinical associate professor of psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Piorkowski has been in private practice for 40 years. She writes that for teenage and adult children of divorce, romantic love can be especially elusive because they have no road map for a stable, satisfying, romantic love derived from their own parents. They are confused about what love is and tend to make poor partner choices. Borrowing unrealistic standards from popular culture, they become disillusioned when their all-too-ordinary lovers don't measure up.

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New Books

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CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS AND
SUBURBS: A HISTORICAL GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
NOVEMBER 15, 2008

Ann Durkin Keating is editor of this 329-page softcover book rooted in work done for *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (of which Keating was coeditor). It charts Chicago's evolution, with comprehensive, cross-referenced entries on all seventy-seven community areas, along with many suburbs and neighborhoods both extant and long-forgotten, from Albany Park to Zion. The book includes interpretive essays by **Michael Ebner** and other urban historians.

Carol Saller helped with the editing, and **Dominic A. Pacyga** is among the contributors.

"Over time, different kinds of neighborhoods have filled an evolving regional shell," Keating writes in the book's introduction. "This shell is relatively flat, but it is not featureless, having been shaped by natural and artificially constructed waterways, by patterns of railroad and expressway development, and by waves of

migrants and immigrants who have made the Chicago region home."

MORE THAN A MEMORY:
REFLECTIONS OF VIET NAM

MODERN HISTORY PRESS
DECEMBER, 2008

Victor R. Volkman has edited a new 228-page softcover anthology about the legacy of American involvement in the Vietnam War, which still looms large in the lives of the veterans who experienced it. This new anthology of poems, stories, and essays features the work of 15 veteran writers, and it defines how modern warfare affects the lives of those who lived it and subsequently their own families after returning from the war.

AUTHORS ACCESS:
30 SUCCESS SECRETS
FOR AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS

MODERN HISTORY PRESS

Victor R. Volkman and **Tyler Tichelaar** are two of the three co-editors of the 232-page *Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers*, in which experience industry veterans share their hard-won secrets

about editing and working with an editor; writing effective prose; marketing your product; Amazon programs and Amazon Kindle book proposals that work; exploiting Web 2.0 to promote your book; book design; freelancing; online sales opportunities; branding yourself or your book; book reviews; ghostwriting; self-publishing; expanding publicity; galleys and ARCs, and more.

THE ONE AND ONLY MARIGOLD

SCHWARTZ & WADE
JANUARY 13, 2009

Florence Parry Heide's new children's book has four vignettes about Marigold, a strong-willed monkey who talks back to her mother, buys a new coat (don't worry, she still wears the old one to bed. She's a very loyal person), plays a great trick (involving a Special Surprise Treasure Stand and worms), and much more. Along the way readers meet Marigold's best friend – her purple coat – and her next best friend – Maxine. Publishers Weekly wrote: "Heide introduces a stubborn, potentially maddening character, but Marigold's sunny disposition and creativity make up for her mischief; she will ring true for friends and parents of inventive children."

SMA History

Society of Midland Authors Vice President **Robert Loerzel** recently ran across the 1930 SMA membership book, which the University of Illinois at Chicago, curator of the SMA archives, has posted online.

(It's also now on the SMA Web site at www.midlandauthors.com.)

In it, Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, the first president of the society, writes about our organization's origins:

"None but a bold man would have sought to weld such individualistic – dare I say egotistic? – creatures as authors into a society of any sort," he wrote.

At a later point, he tells how the Society derived its name and borders:

"[Hamlin Garland] this doughty champion of the Middle West orated unabatingly until the domain of the proposed socie-

ty had been so extended as to include within it all that vast region of the land lying north of the Ohio River and between the Alleghenies and the Rockies.

Being temperamentally adverse to the term "Middle West," I mildly suggested the word "Midland" between flights of Mr. Garland's eloquence, and for my unwonted interference was elected to bear upon my shoulders the weight of the new Society's chairmanship. Indeed, without any of us knowing precisely how it happened, we authors . . . resolved ourselves into a Society of Midland Authors, pledged to recruit our ranks to full war strength from those of our fellow craftsmen in eleven other states of the Union."

Chatfield-Taylor goes on to say, ". . . authors are 'onery critters' and therefore difficult to drive. Moreover, to expect them to prepare masterful creations merely to read to each other, when mil-

lions of readers are crying for their wares and affluent publishers with chequed books lying open before them wax impatient at their desks, is to demand too much of human nature."

In conclusion, he writes: "Indeed, if the Society of Midland Authors has a just reason for being, it lies, I repeat, in its avowed purpose of bringing the writers of the Middle West together in closer association. Though a society of authors, it is nevertheless free from cant and prejudice, the creation of both friendship and goodfellowship among the men and women of the Middle West who write for a living being the object for which it was founded. Because of this it differs from other societies of its kind and plays, I fondly believe, a useful as well as pleasing part in the life of this workaday portion of the land."

AWARDS ENTRY FORM

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: February 2, 2009

Duplicate this page. Make three copies for each book entered. Send one book and one copy of this completed form to each of the three judges in the book's category. Please type or print clearly.

Name of book: _____

Publisher: _____

Publication date: _____

(If publication date differs from copyright date, please explain in "Comments" section below.)

Author: _____

Author's address: _____

Category of entry (circle one). Entries improperly categorized will be disqualified.

ADULT FICTION

POETRY

CHILDREN'S FICTION

ADULT NONFICTION

BIOGRAPHY

CHILDREN'S NONFICTION

I nominate the above work for a Society of Midland Authors Award. (An author may nominate his or her own work.)

Your name: _____

Signature: _____

Company and business title: _____

Telephone and/or email address: _____

Address: _____

Comments:

2009 Society of Midland Authors book competition judges

The 2009 Society of Midland Authors annual book competition is under way.

Authors may enter their books published in 2008 either by using the form included in this issue of Literary License or by downloading the form off of the SMA Web site.

Instructions for entering are on the form. There is no fee.

ADULT FICTION

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Board Notes

The May annual awards banquet will be held at the Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan. This is a different location than last year.

Dinner will cost about the same as last year, although the Board has not yet calculated how much the ticket price must be to cover our costs.

Garage parking directly behind the hotel is \$13.

Letters to the Editor

Another fine issue of Literary License.

Ron Offen

SMA Support

The Society always needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May banquet. Thanks to these members who made contributions along with their renewals: **Bob Remer**, **Mary Claire Hersh**.

Also, we are hoping to boost the Society's endowment fund so that we can increase the size of the cash awards we give winners of the Society's annual book competition. Please consider making a direct donation or remembering the Society in your will.

Contact our Endowment Fund Chairman **Bob Remer** at chibooks@aol.com.

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Stealing Our Democracy. She did book readings at Four-Eyed Frog Books in Gualala, Copperfield's Books in Sebastopol, Mendocino Book Co. in Ukiah, Avid Reader Bookstores in Sacramento and Davis, and the Gallery Bookshop in Mendocino. Morris also spoke in the Post-Petroleum Tent at Solfest in Hopland, Calif., on "Why a Green Future is 'Unconstitutional' and What To Do About It," and gave other public talks in Fort Bragg, Monterey, and Point Arena. While in California, she also did numerous radio interviews, including Deborah Lindsay's "Tomorrow Matters" program on KRXA. ... **Paul McComas** did a radio interview about his novel, *Planet of the Dates*, Dec. 4 on the WBEZ-FM's "848" show. It is streamable/downloadable from the station's archives at: http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/Program_848.aspx. ... A page-and-a-half spread in the New Republic featured **Richard Cahan** and **Michael Williams'** new book, *Who We Were: A Snapshot History of America*. ... **Scott Turow**, who had been appointed by Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich to a state ethics commission, has been widely quoted on the recent Blagojevich scandal. He also wrote a Dec. 10 op-ed on the scandal for the New York Times. **Dick Simpson** also has been widely quoted on the subject. ... **Jacquelyn Mitchard** has a brand-new discussion board on her Web site, "one that is useable by a normal human being and doesn't take up your whole day figuring out how to reply to a comment or make one. It also resists the customary barrage of Viagra ads and worse." ... **William McGrath** was appointed in June to the editorial board of the ABA's *Landslide*, a new publication focusing on intellectual property law. ... The St. Photios Foundation of the Greek Orthodox National Shrine in St Augustine, Fla., invited **Nicholas D. Kokonis** Oct. 24 to lecture on "Arcadia and Values for Today." ... At 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 11, **Stephen Kinzer** will speak at the Lakeshore Unitarian Society, 620 Lincoln Ave., Winnetka, Ill. on "Rwanda: From

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New Members

Anya Achtenberg, a fiction writer and poet, has taught creative writing at New York University, the School of Visual Arts in New York, the University of New Mexico, The Loft and Minneapolis' Intermedia Arts, online for Writers.com/Writers on the Net, and numerous places throughout the country. Achtenberg is author of a novella, *The Stories of Devil-Girl* (2008, Modern History Press), and two books of poetry, *The Stone of Language* and *I Know What the Small Girl Knew*. *The Stone of Language* was a finalist in five poetry competitions. Her recently completed novel, *More Than The Wind*, has been excerpted in Harvard Review, and work on her novel-in-progress, *History Artist*, which centers in a woman born at the moment the U.S. bombing of Cambodia began, received a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board in 2008. She is also writing a book to turn her multi-genre series, "Writing for Social Change: Re-Dream a Just World," into a moveable workshop. She writes about writing at her Web site, www.anyaachtenberg.com.

Greg Borzo is a news officer at the University of Chicago. Formerly, he was a science writer at the Field Museum, a health writer at the American Medical Association and editor of Modern Railroads magazine. He is the author of *The Chicago "L"* (2007, Arcadia Publishing) and *The Windies' City: Chicago's Historical Hidden Treasures* (2006 Highlights of Chicago Press). He has a master's in journalism from Northwestern University.



Greg Borzo

Louis Daniel Brodsky was born in St. Louis in 1941. From 1980 to 1991, he taught English and creative writing at Mineral Area Junior College in nearby Flat River. Since 1987, he has lived in St. Louis and devoted himself to composing poems. He is a Faulkner scholar and is author of 60 volumes of poetry and 23 volumes of prose (including nine books of scholarship on William Faulkner) and

seven books of short fiction. Among his books are *The Complete Poems of Louis Daniel Brodsky: Volume One, 1963-1967*, *The Complete Poems of Louis Daniel Brodsky: Volume Two, 1967-1976*, *William Faulkner, Life Glimpses* and *You Can't Go Back Exactly*, which was named the 2004 best book of poetry by the Center for Great Lakes Culture.

Bill Borst is a professor of history at St. Louis University and author of *The Scorpion and the Frog: A Natural Conspiracy*, which examines secret societies and their negative influence on American social and cultural history and *Liberalism: Fatal Consequences* (1999, Huntington House). A passionate baseball fan, he also is author of *Baseball Through a Knothole* and *The Best of Seasons: The 1944 St. Louis Cardinals & St. Louis Browns* (1995, McFarland).

Sylvia Hubbard has written four books published in paperback and more than 10 e-books. *Stone's Revenge* (2005) was voted best African-American mystery by Mojolist.com, and she was named by Romance Book Cafe as a favorite author.

Stephanie Kuehnert lives and works as a bartender in Forest Park, Ill. She attended Antioch College, then Columbia College for her bachelor's and master's degrees. She has published short stories, interviews and essays in Hair Trigger and No Touching magazines. She is author of *I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone* (2008, MTV Books), and the upcoming *Ballads of Suburbia* (MTV Books).



Stephanie Kuehnert

Donna Latham is the author of numerous books for children and has written plays for young adults and adults. Among her titles are *Hurricane! The Galveston 1900 Night of Terror* (2005, Bearpoint Publishing), *Fire Dogs; Space: Surviving in Zero-G* (2005, Bearpoint Publishing) and *Superfast Rockets, and Superfast Trucks; Ghosts of the Fox River Valley* (Quixote Press). *Fire Dogs* won the 2006



Donna Latham

Interstate 90: From Chicago to Boston, will be released in spring 2009

Sherry Quan Lee recently retired from 10 years of teaching creative writing at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul. She is program associate for the Split Rock Arts Program summer workshops and the Online Mentoring for Writers Program at the University of Minnesota. She is author of *Chinese Blackbird* (Asian American Renaissance, 2002; reprinted by Modern History Press, 2008) and *How to Write a Suicide Note: Serial Essays That Saved a Woman's Life* (Modern History Press, 2008). She earned an M.F.A. in Creative Writing, focusing on poetry and nonfiction, at the University of Minnesota.



Sherry Quan Lee

In 2004 she was named Distinguished Alumni at North Hennepin Community College.

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Evanston author has healthy interest in writing

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Joseph Epstein knows he is ill – with the writing sickness. “I think the way the writing sickness works is that if you are not writing, you feel like your life is pointless,” Epstein told Literary License recently in his home just south of Northwestern University in Evanston, where he taught for many years. “If a week goes by and I haven’t written something, I just feel – what’s the point, what a useless human being I am.”

As author of 20 books, retired editor of *The American Scholar* and writer of numerous articles for such publications as the *New Yorker* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, Epstein hasn’t had much time to feel writing sickness symptoms. But, like many Midland authors, he is familiar with the daunting sensation of setting out to write a book.

“When you begin to write a book, you say, oh, my God, why did I start this? It’s a big mistake, I don’t have anything to say. But I don’t want to give the money back.” That, said Epstein, “is the only thing that keeps you going.”

And when the book is finished, an audience always turns up to read it.

“I am always surprised about who is reading where,” said Epstein, who many Midland Authors members remember from his entertaining acceptance speech when his *Fabulous Small Jews* was named a finalist for the 2004 Adult Fiction Prize. “The country is so vast, so strange. When I edited the *American Scholar*, I would get the most astonishing letters from people in small towns who were so serious and who were so well-read. I remember I had a letter from a physician, it was upstate New York, and he told me that he had been reading this column I had in the *American Scholar* with much pleasure and he said there was a writer he thought I might be interested

in, F.L. Lucas, who meant a lot to him. He read F.L. Lucas, and F.L. Lucas convinced him that he wasn’t an educated person because he didn’t know ancient Greek.”

As a result, the physician learned to read ancient Greek, Epstein said.

“The country is filled with people in funny places who are very impressive characters,” he said.

“If you think the reader is dumber than you, you are bad shape,” Epstein added. “If you think of them as much smarter than you, you are daunted.”

At one point, Epstein laid out three criteria that tell you if you are an author.

“No. 1, you have to quickly discover that you can’t do anything else,” he said.

“No. 2 is that you have to develop contempt for all other kinds of work. Not only can’t you do it, but you don’t think it is worth doing. And No. 3, you are insane enough to believe that people care about what you think. You have to really

think that they care.”

Of course, even success doesn’t answer the question of whether they will keep caring.

“I am now 71, and at some point one wonders, will the time come when people say: Enough already from this guy. Does he have anything left to say? I feel that – I don’t know if you read the novels of John Updike or Philip Roth, I feel gosh, here’s another one, I think I know every move they have, these guys, and yet obviously they can’t stop.”

Epstein’s latest book is *Fred Astaire* (Oct. 21, Yale University Press), which he wrote as an appreciation to the entertainer. He is about halfway through a book about gossip he expects to be published in 2010 and he is working on another book of short stories due for 2011. And he keeps up with his reading, too.

“I don’t run out of things to read,” Epstein said. “There is always something I somehow meant to read.”

Writers on Writing Joseph Epstein



Biblio File

Continued from Page 7

Genocide to Star of Africa?” ... After 1,063 posts over the past three years, **Rick Kaempfer** is taking the month of December off from his blog. He has a screenplay to finish (oh, so close, he says), and he is working on two book projects. ... *The Calder Game* (Scholastic Press) by **Blue Balliett** was picked as one of the best 2008 children’s books by The Christian Science Monitor. ... The Iowa Independent on Dec. 3 published an interview with **Stephen Bloom**, author of the 2000 book *Postville: A Clash of Cultures in Heartland America*, about the massive immigration raid at the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant in Postville last May. “Bloom is uniquely qualified to provide the historical context of what happened in Postville,” the newspaper said. ... **Stuart Dybek** read sections from his short story *Thread*, at a discussion on Dec. 9 sponsored by Fordham’s Center on Religion and Culture. **Patricia Hampl** moderated the event.

Buy Books!

Michael Allen Dymnoch forwards this note from Roy Blount Jr.:

“We don’t want bookstores to die. Authors need them, and so do neighborhoods. So let’s mount a book-buying splurge. Get your friends together, go to your local bookstore and have a book-buying party. Buy the rest of your Christmas presents, but that’s just for starters. Clear out the mysteries, wrap up the histories, beam up the science fiction! Round up the westerns, go crazy for self-help, say yes to the university press books! Get a load of those coffee-table books, fatten up on slim volumes of verse, and take a chance on romance!

“There will be birthdays in the next 12 months; books keep well; they’re easy to wrap: buy those books now. Buy replacements for any books looking raggedy on your shelves. Stockpile children’s books as gifts for friends who look like they may eventually give birth. Hold off on the flat-screen TV and the GPS.”

Final Chapters:

Bruce L. Felknor 1921-2008

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Bruce L. Felknor of Evanston, author of 12 books and a longtime Society of Midland Authors member, died Sept. 27 of lung cancer at age 87 after a long illness.

Mr. Felknor, who was born in Oak Park and grew up in Illinois and Wisconsin, was the former executive editor of Encyclopedia Britannica and a former member of the Lake Forest High School Board of Education. He also helped to lead a campaign to win recognition for World War II U.S. Merchant Marine veterans, of which he was one.

An expert on campaign ethics, Mr. Felknor was executive director of the national nonprofit Fair Campaign Practices Committee in the 1960s and was author of *Dirty Politics* (1966) and *Political Mischief: Smear, Sabotage, and Reform in U.S. Elections* (1992). He also co-authored *Prejudice and Politics* (1960) with Charles P. Taft, the son of President William Taft.

Sarah Felknor, Mr. Felknor's daughter, said every year, as he updated his entry in *Who's Who in America*, he would end it



Bruce L. Felknor

by writing: "Man's greatest gifts are empathy and the ability to penetrate balderdash."

"That was so like my father in terms of being able to see through things and being transparent," she said. "He had a lifelong interest in fairness and ethics and believed that politics should be a honorable career choice."

Drawing on his war service as a radio officer in both the Atlantic and Pacific, Mr. Felknor also wrote *The U.S. Merchant Marine at War, 1775-1945* (1998) and provided testimony for Congress in favor of a bill granting pensions to Merchant Marine veterans that passed the House in 2007 but didn't come to a vote in the Senate. Merchant Marine veterans were not covered by the G.I. Bill of 1944, although they

were awarded limited benefits in 1988. He also was an active member of the Midwest chapter of the Merchant Marine veterans and attended meetings even after he became ill, said co-president Robert McGaghie of Orland Park.

Mr. Felknor also wrote *Of Clubbable Nature: Chicago's Tavern Club at 75* (2005), a history of the club. A member

for 30 years, he anonymously wrote the club's monthly bulletin, the *Barflier*.

"Bruce never admitted to it, but everyone suspected he was the author because he was such a good writer, was so good with words, and he had a wonderful sense of humor which came through in the *Barflier*," said Pete Bowman, a member of the club's board of governors and a member of the law firm Defrees & Fiske LLC.

After attending the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Mr. Felknor moved to New York City in 1941, where he worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad, his family said. After World War II, he worked as a writer and advertising and public relations executive.

In those years, he married his wife, Edith, and reared three children in an Armonk, N.Y., farmhouse he remodeled himself on weekends.

He was an active member of the Highland Park Presbyterian Church, co-authored plays and musicals for community theater, spoke Japanese and in his later years played percussion for Evanston's Ridgeland Community Band.

"He had a fine personal intellect and command of the best in the English language," said the Rev. Carl Gray, former pastor of Mr. Felknor's church.

Studs Terkel, 1912-2008

Society of Midland Authors member **Studs Terkel** died on Oct. 31 at the age of 96. A Pulitzer-Prize winning author, television pioneer, theatrical actor and longtime radio host, Terkel's best-selling books included *Division Street America*, *Working* and *The Good War*. He also had his own talk show on radio station WFMT from 1952 to 1997.

He was born in New York City, and moved to Chicago when he was 8. He graduated from the University of Chicago School of Law.

He worked on the Depression-era Federal Writers' Project and performed in radio soap operas. In 1939, Mr. Terkel married social worker and activist Ida Goldberg. The couple had one son, Dan Terkell, who added another "l" to his name. Ida Terkel died in 1999.

After entertaining troops in the Army Air Forces in World War II, Mr. Terkel

began a broadcasting career in TV and a 45-year association with WFMT. "Studs' Place," an NBC program from 1950 to 1953, helped establish Mr. Terkel as a national personality. But anti-communists used Mr. Terkel's 1930s socialist activities to pressure NBC to drop his TV show, and Mr. Terkel was blacklisted and unable to find steady work for the next several years.

"To give you an idea of the fear," Mr. Terkel told the *Sun-Times* in 1976, "an important soap opera producer once asked me to do some test scripts. I did them, but the sponsor said, 'No, we can't use him.' The producer berated me, as if it were my fault, 'How come you didn't tell me?' That's how deep the fear was."

Mr. Terkel eked out a living making speeches. But Edward Clamage of the

Illinois American Legion would tell sponsors that they were hiring a "dangerous subversive."

Mr. Terkel's first major work was *Division Street America*, in 1966. Later books included *Hard Times* (1970), *Working* (1974), *Talking to Myself* (1977), *American Dreams: Lost and Found* (1980) and *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II*, which won a Pulitzer in 1985. His last book, *P.S. - Further Thoughts from a Lifetime of Listening*, was published just days after his death.

Mr. Terkel received the Peabody Award, the Prix Italia, the UNESCO Award for best program on East-West values and the University of Chicago Communicator of the Year Award. A celebration of his life will be scheduled.



Studs Terkel