

Biblio File

Donald Ray Pollock (see New Members) in May was named the recipient of the PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship for Writers for his debut story collection *Knockemstiff*. The stories, praised as “startling, bleak, uncompromising and funny ... as raw as American fiction gets” by the San Francisco Chronicle, center on the residents of a tough Midwestern American town. The PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship for Writers honors an exceptionally talented fiction writer whose debut work – a first novel or collection of short stories – represents distinguished literary achievement and suggests great promise. The winner receives a cash award of \$35,000, a stipend intended to permit the pursuit of a second work of literary fiction. ... Extending the Society’s international reach, **Connie Goddard** is joining the Peace Corps and going to Romania to teach for the next two years. ... It’s unheard of for SMA Board Member **Mark Eleveld** to miss the annual awards dinner, but it happened this year. The reason? Eleveld was at the White House, helping to organize a poetry reading (sort of a re-creation of the Society’s April poetry program, but with less-distinguished guests). A grateful President Obama has promised in return to put his impressive political operation at Eleveld’s disposal when he runs for re-election to the SMA board. ...



Robert Collins

Robert Collins will speak July 14 at the National Archives of Kansas City, 400 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, Mo., at 6:30 p.m. The speech will be titled “Jim Lane & the Kansas-Nebraska Act.” The talk is related to the Archives moving to a new location, and to one of their exhibits, on the

Turn to Page 2



The winners of the 2009 Society of Midland Authors book awards were (from left): John E. Hallwas, Louise Erdrich, Candace Fleming, Neil Shubin, Aleksandar Hemon and Ronald Wallace. The finalists are pictured on Page 2.

13 authors are honored for best books of 2008

BY ROBERT LOERZEL, INCOMING PRESIDENT

Chicago novelist **Aleksandar Hemon** and Macomb, Ill., historian **John E. Hallwas** accepted prizes May 12 at the Society of Midland Authors' annual awards banquet. They were among six winning authors and seven finalists honored for writing the Midwest's best books of 2008. The emcee of the event was author and professional comedian **Paul Frisbie**.

Hemon, who won the Society's fiction award for his 2002 novel *Nowhere Man*, won this time for his novel *The Lazarus Project*. In his acceptance speech, Hemon said he recently noticed that a memorial plaque has been installed near the Lincoln Park home where Police Chief George Shippy once lived. Shippy shot and killed a young immigrant named Lazarus Averbuch at the home in 1908, sparking the mystery that inspired Hemon's novel. Now, in the wake of Hemon's book, the neighborhood has a marker reminding

people of Averbuch's fate.

“The memory of Lazarus Averbuch was resurrected,” Hemon said. “This isn't due to my book, but rather to the power of the written word.”

He credited an earlier nonfiction book about Averbuch, *An Accidental Anarchist* by Walter Roth and Joe Kraus, for bringing the story to his attention.

“This amazing little book prompted me to write my book,” he said. “The memory of this 19-year-old kid who was shot for no particular reason by a Chicago police chief is now alive among us.”

Hallwas accepted the biography prize for *Dime Novel Desperadoes: The Notorious Maxwell Brothers*. In his speech, Hallwas remarked that historians and nonfiction writers often face the perception that their books are just collections of facts.

“The illusion is that this book is the inescapable truth about this topic.” In

Turn to Page 2

Q&A with
David Hernandez

PAGE 8

New
Books

PAGES 4-5

Writers on Writing:
Arnie Bernstein

PAGE 7

Biblio File

Continued from Page 1

Kansas-Nebraska Act. Also, Collins' second novel, *Lisa's Way*, is finally available in print form (the e-book came out months ago) from eTreasures Publishing. Also, Collins (a 2008 SMA Biography finalist for his Jim Lane book) expects to have another railroad book out soon through Amazon's CreateSpace POD service, an update of his *Ghost Railroads of Kansas*. Also, Collins now has an author profile at Goodreads. ... The May 15 issue of Booklist published **Keir Graff's** short story, "The Read," an affectionate parody of Cormac McCarthy's "The Road." In "The Read," a book



Eugene Kennedy

reviewer confronts life after the apocalypse. ... **Eugene Kennedy** is back writing a book, titled *Redeeming Eros*, after a bad illness in Florida. ... **David Radavich** is retiring from teaching at Eastern Illinois

University and moving permanently to Charlotte, N.C., where his wife's relatives "live cheek by jowl," after more than three decades in the Midwest. That should give him, he says, "something new to write about!" He adds: "I have been delighted by the way in which SMA has revived its activities and spirit in the past few years." ... Word came in too late for our "New Books" columnist (who's already on summer vacation) that **Kevin Mattson** has a new book coming out. But Biblio File never sleeps, so here's the scoop: "*What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?*": *Jimmy Carter, America's 'Malaise,' and the Speech that Should Have Changed the Country* is due out June 23 from Bloomsbury USA. ... In a May 6 report on the then-upcoming SMA book awards, *chicagoist.com* wrote this: "The **Society of Midland Authors** is kind of like the literary Mensa of the Midwest. Since its founding in 1915, members have included Poetry magazine founder **Harriet Monroe**, founder of the U.S. Settlement House movement **Jane Addams**, social theorist **Daniel J. Boorstin**, and two-time

Turn to Page 6



The finalists in the 2009 Society of Midland Authors book awards were (from left): **Tony Romano**, **Jeffery Renard Allen**, **Eric Dregni**, **Curtiss Anderson**, **Daniel L. Everett**, **Thrity Umrigar** and **Gary D. Schmidt**.

Book Awards

Continued from Page 1

fact, he said, "Like novels, histories and biographies are constructed. They're shaped by the author's vision."

Hallwas' book profiles a band of outlaws who were as famous as the James gang in the late 1800s. Hallwas said he tried to learn who these young men were, even though many aspects of their lives will always be unknowable.

"You might define a writer as someone who seeks and reveals truths that are not self-evident," he said. "The Maxwell Brothers were even more complex than we can know now. They were not just desperadoes — they were men."

Two finalists in the fiction category also appeared at the ceremony, held at Chicago's Congress Plaza Hotel: **Tony Romano**, author of *If You Eat, You Never Die*, and **Jeffery Renard Allen**, author of *Holding Pattern*.

The Society also honored books by several authors who were unable to attend the ceremony. **Carol Jean Carlson**, one of the judges in the adult nonfiction category, said that the winner, **Neil Shubin's** *Your Inner Fish*, is "really one of the best books I've ever read."

In the children's fiction category, judge **Ilene Cooper** praised **Louise Erdrich**, who won for *The Porcupine Year*, saying: "Erdrich proves once again that she takes as much care with her books for children and young adults as she does with her novels and stories for adults." In the children's nonfiction category, judge **Jane Howard** said the winner, **Candace Fleming's** *The Lincolns*, "totally captivated me."

Describing the winning poetry book, **Ronald Wallace's** *For a Limited Time Only*, judge **Mark Arendt** said it is "filled with a sense of wonder of delight."

Chicago Sun-Times books editor **Teresa Budasi** received the James Friend

Memorial Award for Literary Criticism, which was announced by Beverly Friend. Accepting the honor, Budasi said, "I am really proud of the fact that the Sun-Times sees the value of maintaining a book-review section."

Longtime Society of Midland Authors board member **Stella Pevsner** received a distinguished service award. Introducing her, SMA Treasurer **Richard Frisbie** noted, "She has been an occupant of almost all of our offices."

The complete list of winners and finalists: Adult Fiction

Winner: Aleksandar Hemon, *The Lazarus Project*.

Finalists: Tony Romano, *If You Eat, You Never Die*. Jeffery Renard Allen, *Holding Pattern*.

Judges: Donna Seaman, Mark Eleveld and James McManus.

Adult Nonfiction

Winner: Neil Shubin, *Your Inner Fish: A Journey Into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body*.

Finalists: Eric Dregni, *In Cod We Trust: Living the Norwegian Dream*. Daniel L. Everett, *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle*.

Judges: Carol Jean Carlson, Cheryl L. Reed and Richard Prince.

Biography

Winner: John E. Hallwas, *Dime Novel Desperadoes: The Notorious Maxwell Brothers*.

Finalists: Thrity Umrigar, *First Darling of the Morning*. Curtiss Anderson, *Blueberry Summer: Growing Up at the Lake*.

Judges: Richard Lindberg, Robert Remer and Jim Schwab.

Children's Fiction

Winner: Louise Erdrich, *The Porcupine Year*.

Finalist: Gary D. Schmidt, *Trouble*
Judges: Deborah Abbot, Ilene Cooper and Yvette Johnson.

Children's Nonfiction

Winner: Candace Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*

Judges: Charlotte Herman, Jane Howard and Marilyn Daleo.

Poetry

Winner: Ronald Wallace, *For a Limited Time Only*

Judges: Mark Arendt, Anthony Burton and Richard Jones.

Rain intermittent, authors out in force at Printers Row

Twenty of our members signed up for the Printers Row book fair, which ran June 6-7 this year. That's the most authors we have had in recent years.

We also had a better tent location (V-3) than we have had in recent years. It was right in the middle of the line of tents on Dearborn, which was a good spot for lots of foot traffic, **Rich Lindberg** reported.

Rain, which has been a staple of Printers Row the last couple of years, showed up again and by Saturday's end had pretty much destroyed two large posters that coordinators **Carol Carlson** and **Rich Lindberg** had brought to help promote our authors in our tent.

"Even though the weather was not exactly the best (intermittent rain and temperatures that defied breaking out of the upper 60s), the turnout was great," **Arnie Bernstein** said. "We had a healthy number of people stop by, talk with the authors and learn more about what/who the SMA is and what we do. Plus, we

signed and sold a lot of our books. All in all, a great two days."

"Printer's Row is an experience all its own," **Cynthia Olson** said. "You meet great people and find wonderful books. It's a great time to share ideas and experiences. (I only wish our time slots could be longer!)"

And here is our report from **Anastasia Royal**: "At Printers Row this year, was it my imagination or were people more curious than usual? It was as if hours in front of the computer during the exceptionally sun-less Chicago winter had made them fiendishly eager to mill around and look at books and booths and other real-live human beings. Everyone who passed by V-3 seemed talkative and friendly – maybe there was already a feeling of nostalgia for printed matter because of the hype about the very future of books and if there will indeed be one! I know I felt the preciousness of books more acutely than ever."

The SMA Printers Row tent is available to all SMA authors.

Board Notes

At the May 20 Society of Midland Authors Board of Directors May meeting, held at the home of **Rosina Neginsky**, **Robert Loerzel** presented **James Merriner** a plaque for his distinguished service as president of the Society. Merriner was applauded by other members of the Board.

Also during the meeting, the idea of printing up a special brochure, possibly based on the Sun-Times article about the SMA that runs in a shortened version in the annual banquet program, was dis-

cussed. The brochure could be handed out at events such as Printers Row.

Loerzel said that a PDF of the poster showing the book covers and authors who were 2009 SMA award winners has been put on our Web site and on Facebook.

There was discussion about raising the admission price by \$5 for our monthly programs because the revenue is nowhere near the cost.

Also, it appears we may have to find a different location for our January program because that date is not available at this time at the Cliff Dwellers. We will keep members posted on the location.

A Note to Librarians and Bookstore Owners

Bookstore owners and librarians: Are you looking for ideas for a display? A poster showing the Society of Midland Authors' award-winning books and finalists from 2008 is available. It's posted on the Society's Web site at www.midlandauthors.com. Click on "Awards Contest: Winners" for a link to a high-resolution pdf file of the poster, which can be printed at small or large sizes. The poster, cre-

ated by Thomas Frisbie, received many compliments from people who saw it at our awards banquet. We encourage you to display it along with copies of the winning books. And all of you authors — please encourage your local bookseller or library to participate. If you have any questions about the poster, please contact Thomas Frisbie at tomfrisbie@aol.com.

Robert Loerzel

A Note from our President

While the May 12 awards banquet was a success, the Society regrets that the event was scheduled at a hotel with labor issues. When the site selection committee visited the hotel in January, no pickets were visible, and a strike there, ongoing for six years, had dropped out of the news. We first learned of the strike by UNITE HERE Local 1 when a member said at one of our monthly programs that he could not attend the banquet because his entire synagogue was boycotting that hotel. By that time the Society had paid a non-refundable \$1,200 deposit. The Board decided that changing the venue at that point merely would cost the Society \$1,200 while giving the hotel a \$1,200 bonus. Many of our authors have a long tradition of supporting organized labor. Two members told us that they skipped the banquet rather than cross a picket line. We are sorry to have missed their company but understand and honor their convictions. **James Merriner**

SMA Support

Thanks to these members who recently donated to this year's awards fund: **Richard Bales, Marianne Forrest, John G. Raffensperger, James H. Mallon, Marcia Z. Nelson, Robert Loerzel, Stella Pevsner, Harriette G. Robinet, Marlene Targ Brill, Marietta Marcin, Carol F. Saller, Charles J. Masters and Richard and Margery Frisbie**. Also thanks to **Lois Hauselman**, who contributed to the Endowment Fund.

Literary License

©2009, Society of Midland Authors
P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610

Editor: Thomas Frisbie
tomfrisbie@aol.com
Copy editor: Steve Huntley

www.midlandauthors.com

New Books

THE TYPEWRITER SATYR

UNIVERSITY
OF WISCONSIN PRESS,
MARCH, 2009

Dwight Allen, whose first book, *The Green Suit*, was a finalist for the SMA Adult Fiction Award for 2001, has published his third book of fiction, a novel called *The Typewriter Satyr*.



Dwight Allen

The Typewriter Satyr is flush with colorful characters, including a Syrian coffeehouse owner who believes the Bush government is after him, a Buddhist monk who grew up in rural Wisconsin, a painter known as the Rabbit

Master, and a homeless writer who roams the streets of Midvale in search of a missing shoe.

SHARED STAGES: TEN AMERICAN DRAMAS OF BLACKS AND JEWS

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING CO.,
MAY, 2009

This May, **Joanne Koch's** play "Stardust," winner of the Nantucket Short Play Competition, was published by Dramatic Publishing Co. *Shared Stages:*

Ten American Dramas of Blacks and Jews, an anthology that includes "Driving Miss Daisy," "Fires in the Mirror." Koch's and Sarah Cohen's "Soul Sisters" has toured to 30 universities and communities around the country and is now being used in many schools. Koch also has collaborated with composer Ilya Levinson and lyricist Owen Kalt on a new musical about an irreverent comic who sold millions of



Joanne Koch

comedy records in the '50s and '60s. "Belle Barth: If I Embarrass You, Tell Your Friends" was produced by Theo Ubique Theatre at the No Exit in November and December, with the amazing Bethany Thomas in the lead. "Belle" has been recommended for a Jeff Award and was praised by Chris Jones of the Tribune and Bill Williams of the Reader. Koch's adaptation of Saul Bellow's "A Silver Dish" will be published in a special tribute anthology honoring her frequent collaborator who just passed away, Sarah Blacher Cohen.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE ZOO?

SYLVAN DELL PUBLISHING,
JULY, 2009

Suzanne Slade's new picture book coming out this July is *What's New at the Zoo?* from Sylvan Dell Publishing. Slade will be reading and signing this new title at the Children's Museum on Navy Pier, July 12 from 11:00 - 12:30. She also be signing at the Sylvan Dell booth during the ALA conference on July 12, 2:30-3:30, and July 13, 12:00-1:00.



Suzanne Slade

DON'T MISS YOUR LIFE! AN UNCOMMON GUIDE TO LIVING WITH FREEDOM, LAUGHTER AND GRACE

S&S/HOWARD, JUNE, 2009

Here's what Publishers Weekly said about **Charlene Ann Baumbich's** new book: "Baumbich, an award-winning journalist and author of the Dearest Dorothy fiction series, has set out to accomplish what few Christian humorists have succeeded in achieving: making her readers laugh deep from the belly while simultaneously trouncing on their faulty 'religious' beliefs. Baumbich's writing style is such that readers will feel as though she's conversing with herself and they are her most fortunate eavesdropping audience."

THE INN KEEPER: AN UNREGISTERED DEATH

ECHELON PRESS LLC,
APRIL, 2009

The Inn Keeper: An Unregistered Death is **Luisa Buehler's** sixth in her Grace Marsden mystery series. A runaway slave and a society girl lie entombed in an Oak Park cellar. Forensic evidence adds a twist; the remains were entombed 80 years apart!

Separated by age, gender, social status, and basic human rights, the mystery of their identities and their deaths is overshadowed by the unlikely of their final resting place. Grace is drawn into the bizarre discovery when an early police report casts suspicion on her friends. She curtails further involvement until she sees the specter of the runaway slave.

He waits outside the building that has hidden his remains for 90 years. He looks to Grace for justice and compassion. Can she deny him in death what he fought to gain in life?

Here's what SMA member **Harriette Gillem Robinet** said, "The Underground Railroad, tunnels, hidden rooms, a Judas quilt. . . . Congratulations! You have another winner."



Luisa Buehler

CHICAGO: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

PUBLICATIONS INTERNATIONAL,
APRIL, 2009

Richard Lindberg's and **Carol Carlson's** new book is a lively narrative about the people, places and incidents of history long forgotten or ignored in the standard guide books. From Norwood Park to Pilsen and down to Back of the Yards, the authors resurrect colorful snippets of lost city history with a wonderful collection of "then and now" photographs

Turn to Page 5

New Books

Continued from Page 4

and drawings. Did you know there were once toll gates on Milwaukee Avenue destroyed in a night of fury by angry



Richard Lindberg

commuters? That up until her death in 1920, Anna Carlo-Blasi was officially recognized as the “Queen of Little Italy?” That promoter “Paddy” Harmon built the Chicago Stadium and died penniless? That Oprah Winfrey’s studio was once an indoor roller-skating rink in the 1880s?

That the oldest house in Chicago is not the Widow Clarke House but the Noble-Seymour-Crippen House in Norwood Park?

BUSINESS VALUATION FOR DUMMIES

WILEY PUBLISHING, APRIL, 2009

Lisa Holton and valuation expert Jim Bates published



Lisa Holton

Business Valuation for Dummies for Wiley Publishing in April. Holton, an author and ghostwriter who presented the SMA’s Jan. 13 program on *For Members Only: A History and Guide to Chicago’s Private*

Clubs, is a former Chicago Sun-Times Business Editor and runs The Lisa Co. in Evanston, Ill. This is her 14th book.

WAITING FOR THE ALCHEMIST

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009

Waiting for the Alchemist is a posthumously published collection of poems by longtime Society of Midland Authors member **Mark Perlberg**, his fourth book

of poems. Mr. Perlberg died last year (see the September, 2008, Literary License.)

Ted Kooser, winner of the Society’s 2005 and 1981 Poetry Awards, writes on the book’s back cover, “I have been following the poetry of Mark Perlberg with great interest for more than 20 years. I have always been impressed by his authenticity.”



Mark Perlberg

THE CUL-DE-SAC SYNDROME: TURNING AROUND THE UNSUSTAINABLE AMERICAN DREAM

BLOOMBERG PRESS, JUNE, 2009

THE AUDACITY OF HELP: OBAMA’S ECONOMIC PLAN AND THE REMAKING OF AMERICA

BLOOMBERG PRESS, AUGUST, 2009

John Wasik has two new books coming out this year (they are coming out close together because the first one was delayed):

– *The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome: Turning Around the Unsustainable American Dream* explores the myriad causes of the U.S. housing bust and proposes solutions on how to make residential housing more affordable, sustainable and socially beneficial in the future.

– *The Audacity of Help: Obama’s Economic Plan and the Remaking of America* is an analysis and overview of President Obama’s economic stimulus and budget plans with examinations of who will benefit and what needs to be done.



John Wasik

THE GARDEN OF INVENTION: LUTHER BURBANK AND THE BUSINESS OF BREEDING PLANTS

PENGUIN PRESS, APRIL, 2009

Jane Smith’s book about Luther Burbank – the most famous gardener on the planet a century ago – is “lush, but hardly sentimental,” the Chicago Tribune said. Smith tells how Burbank learned the secrets of breeding and crossbreeding ordinary plants from farm and garden until they were tastier, hardier and more productive than ever before. “There was always light in this book that brings Burbank to pulsing life even as it teaches plant science, patent law, eugenics, evolution and the fate of the prickly pear,” the Tribune said.



Jane Smith

LOVE AND OBSTACLES

PICADOR, AUGUST, 2009

Aleksandar Hemon, who won the 2009 Society of Midland Authors Adult Fiction Award, has a new collection of short stories out: *Love and Obstacles*, which received starred advance reviews from three of the trade publications. Publishers Weekly said Hemon “again beautifully twists the language in this collection of disquieting stories. The 1992 Bosnian war colors in the background of all the tales, who settings range from Africa to Chicago and Sarajevo.” **Donna Seaman**, writing in Booklist, said, “Hemon infuses everything, from a freezer to bees in a hive, with barbed insights. ... Hemon is world-class writer of seismic depth, rip-tide humor, wine-dark language.”



Aleksandar Hemon

Biblio File

Continued from Page 2

Pulitzer Prize winner **Carl Sandburg**.” ... In a May 7 Huffington Post posting, **Jane Smith** (see New Books) wrote of the challenges of having a name that often is used as a sample name on forms. “When I tried to get a reader’s card at the Berkeley (Ill.) Public Library, the librarian sent me to the on-line registration form,” Smith wrote. “‘Fill in your name,’ it said at the top. ‘For example (imagine a little blue box here) Jane Smith.’ So I filled in my name, which by some bizarre coincidence happened to be the same as the one provided on the screen, but the program would not accept my entry. I asked for help, and the librarian abandoned her rather brusque tone as soon as she saw the problem. Suddenly she was exhibiting a degree of affection I do not usually inspire in strangers. ‘No, dear,’ she said, patting my hand and speaking in a very slow and soothing voice. ‘That’s just an example. We need to put *your* name here.’” ... SMA Board member **Rosina Neginsky** organized and was one of the participants at “The Symbolist Movement: Its Origins and Its Consequences” from April 22 to April 25 at Allerton Park in Monticello, Ill. Neginsky spoke about Mallarmé’s unfinished poem, “Les Noces d’Hérodiade.” ... The February 2009 edition of *Literary License* reported that **J. Niimi**’s book *R.E.M.’s Murmur* (Continuum, 2005) had recently been released in Kindle format. Now *R.E.M.’s Murmur* is also available in audiobook format, available either through Amazon.com or directly from Audible.com’s Web site, www.audible.com. ... Former SMA President **Joanne Koch** (see New Books) writes to say that all SMA members are invited to a reception at 6 p.m. June 23 to chat with Julia Keller at NLU, 122 S. Michigan. Keller will then lead a \$30 three-hour writing workshop that night, 6:30-9:30 p.m. Workshops on June 25 and June 27 will feature John Conroy, Dawn Turner Trice and Tim Kazurinsky. All four workshops and a Saturday lunch with the authors are \$100. For more info, go to www.writersweek.nl.edu, contact Joanne Koch at jkoch@nl.edu, or call

Turn to Page 7

Too ‘regional’? Publishers like to stay in comfort zone

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

When **Arnie Bernstein** set out to write about the 1927 school bombing in Michigan’s Bath Township, he immediately ran into a disapproving audience: publishers.

“A lot of publishers said it was too regional a story,” Bernstein said. “I kept fighting that. That is like saying [the shooting spree at] Virginia Tech was too regional – does it have to be in New York? It was frustrating at times.”

The publishers also thought the 1927 event was too far in the past, he said.

Bernstein persevered and eventually linked up with the University of Michigan Press, which published *Bath Massacre: America’s First School Bombing* on March 16. It tells the story of Andrew Kehoe, who – upset by a tax levied to fund a new school building – set off a series of blasts in Michigan’s Bath Township, killing 45 people and injuring 58. Many of the victims were children at the Bath Township school, where Kehoe set off the largest blast. The book was published 10 years after the 1999 school killings in Columbine, Colo.

Fortunately, Bernstein’s saga has a happy ending.

“I have been very pleased with the University of Michigan Press,” says Bernstein, whose previous three books were published by Lake Claremont in Chicago, which focuses on Chicago books. “We are getting some national attention. They have been doing a great job.”

Before the University of Michigan Press stepped in, every major publisher turned the book down because it was too regional, Bernstein said. Six weeks after he closed the deal, however, the shootings at Virginia Tech took place, in which a gunman killed 32 people. Naturally, he thinks had that happened sooner, he might well have attracted much more interest from national publishers.

For example, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in February published *Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siècle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* by John Merriman. The book, which describes an 1894 bombing by a young radical intellectual in France’s capital and subsequent attacks might have attracted a major publisher because it is set “in the exciting international city of Paris,” Bernstein points out.

“My agent said that if you want to interest major publishers you need to find a more national story or one associated with one of the coasts, preferably New York or the East Coast,” Bernstein said. “The West Coast is a good location because publishers think people in Los Angeles will read the book and be interested in making a movie, and publishers want to sell movie rights.”

Some authors he knows have speculated, Bernstein says, that more writers will find themselves in the future turning to smaller presses. “All the majors are having problems,” he says. “University and regional publishers are going to fill the void. The major publishers don’t

want to take a chance. They want to make money right away.”

Bernstein says he persevered because he thought it was a story that needed to be told.

“A lot of people are shocked that Columbine wasn’t the first,” he says. “[Bath Township] is a small community. They didn’t even have electricity the day of the bombing. The school had electricity because it had a generator. It really was the quintessential, rural Midwestern town with glowing nostalgic thoughts. It was like the Roaring ’20s went right past it.”

His experience with *Bath Massacre*, Bernstein says, taught him a lesson about publishing.

“I learned a lot,” he said. “Ultimately, if the story is good one, don’t let [the publishers’ attitudes] get in the way.”

Writers
on
Writing:
Arnie
Bernstein



Tweet! Blowing the whistle on the 'don'ts' of Twitter

Tweet! Tweet!"
It's a bird! It's a whistle!
It's Twitter!

Undoubtedly, Twitter is the newest sensation to continue the great democratization of online media. Free and available to everyone, the goal of this application is to answer the question, "What are you doing?" in only 140 characters. However, Twitter has a bigger role than just an instant diary. Savvy users have realized Twitter's potential for PR 2.0, embracing the site as a method of reaching out and attracting media attention. Read on for a few "Twitter Dos and Twitter Don'ts."

The Do's & Don'ts of Twitter

Do follow ... slowly. The term "following" is used on Twitter to show how many other people you are connected to.

Following on Twitter is to Connections on LinkedIn is to friends on Facebook.

Capturing an audience is important, but you don't need to start following 857 of your closest friends on day

one. Begin by following a few friends, some movers and shakers of your industry and some reporters. Listen to their tweets and offer relevant replies. Contribute meaningful posts that others might find interesting as a way to build your own following.

Do make Twitter work for you. Think Twitter is just another online distraction? Think again. Kraft's new line of frozen pizzas will be marketed largely on Twitter and Pizza Hut is hiring a "twintern" to monitor tweets about the company. Following bloggers and reporters is a great way to facilitate communication. Consider "tweeting" live updates during an event as way to give your readers a play-by-play. Think about what you want to use Twitter for and act on that objective.

Don't be boring or narcissistic. As fascinating as your life is, the average follower

“Savvy users have realized Twitter's potential for PR 2.0, embracing the site as a method of reaching out and attracting media attention.”

won't really care about what you're eating for breakfast. Or lunch for that matter. Stick to tweeting about pertinent and interesting topics, and find ways to express your personality through the links you post. If you want to use sarcasm or

humor, that's OK; it will help you stand out. Participate in discussion, reply to other users' tweets, re-tweet their tweets. Twitter is not a one-person game, so don't try to be the center of the universe.

Don't say something you'll regret. In cyberspace, a record of your most inappropriate tweet will live on in Twitter infamy long after you've cooled down. It's good to be responsive when someone tweets negatively about you. But never forget that what you say on Twitter can come back to haunt you, so being too cheeky, rude or downright tasteless is a big no-no. Don't treat Twitter like a middle school gossip mill when it comes to talking about your competition either. Play it cool and don't tweet anything you wouldn't say in public; after all, Twitter is incredibly public.

These basic Twitter dos and don'ts will help you get your tweet off the ground and into the Twittiverse. Just remember to start small, think smart and always tweet the twuth.

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

PR Tips
from
Tom
Ciesielka



Biblio File

Continued from Page 6

(312) 261-3103. ... **Charlene Ann Baumbich** (see New Books) was scheduled to be one of the authors when the Hiawatha Valley Education District hosted its annual Young Writers Conference on May 14-15 at Winona State University in Minnesota. ... **Scott Turow** and his mother **Rita Turow** were in a May 10 Chicago Sun-Times feature about Mother's Day. ... **Gail Lukasik**, author of the Leigh Girard mystery series set in Door County, Wis., will celebrate the launching of her new book, *Death's Door*, at 7 p.m. June 9 at the Bookstall at Chestnut Court, 811 Elm Street Winnetka, Ill. ... **Michael Argetsinger** launched his new book, *Mark Donohue: Technical Excellence at Speed* in front of a standing-room-only crowd April 25 at the Watkins Glen Elementary School in Watkins Glen, N.Y., with a cast of Donohue family members, engineers, mechanics and team managers who all shared their reflections. ... *The Wright 3*, by **Blue Balliett** was one of 10 books selected for students to read in this year's Kalamazoo (Mich.) Public Library's annual global reading challenge. Also, students at McCombs school in Des Moines recently spent three weeks studying an interdisciplinary unit centered on the Balliett's book *Chasing Vermeer. The Birchbark House* by **Louise Erdrich** was also one of the choices. ... **Harry Mark Petrakis**, whose most recent book was *The Shepherds of Shadows*, a sequel set during the Greek War of Independence, spoke at the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chicago May 17. His topic: "Freedom or Death – The Struggle for 1821." ... The Aiken (S.C.) Standard on April 25 praised **Arnie Bernstein** for a "workmanlike job" on his new book, *Bath Massacre*. A Chicago Sun-Times profile on Bernstein by Biblio File's alter ego, **Thomas Frisbie**, ran in the Chicago Sun-Times on June 7. ... **Alzina Dale**, who's been slowed recently by a hip replacement, is hoping her next book will be out in time for the Bouchercon 2009 World Mystery Convention in Indianapolis this October. Her book isn't

Turn to Page 10

'Chicago poetry has reached the four corners of the world'

David Hernandez, who has published seven books of poetry, has been called the “unofficial poet laureate of Chicago” and wrote the inauguration poem for Mayor Harold Washington. He was also commissioned by the city to write and perform an original poem commemorating the city’s sesquicentennial birthday. He was the first recipient of the Gwendolyn Brooks Outstanding Poet of Illinois award and also won the Illinois State Library Patron’s Choice award. In 1971, he founded Street Sounds, a poetry music group that SMA member **Kevin Stein** said “blends deft lyricism with expert musicianship, bridging

the chasm between so-called page and performance poetics.” **Q&A** with **David Hernandez** Literary License recently caught up with him for a Q&A. (*Editor’s note: As we went to press, our most recent image of David Hernandez was from 1987, but he looks just the same.*)

Literary License: Chicago is the home of the poetry slam, and recently Chicago poets helped set up a reading at the White House. What does this say about the vitality of poetry in Chicago?

David Hernandez: There’s always been an extremely vital poetry scene in Chicago. This city is a neon lady that nurtures quiet or introspective, loud and brassy poets. There isn’t one given day in this city that a poetry event isn’t happening. In both Ivy and Beer Halls, the park, the schools, cafes, you name it and the word-dealers are there. Poetry slams, performance poetry and recitals make poetry accessible to the public. It encourages people from all walks of life to listen and most importantly to participate. It validates that creativity in all of us and we have fun with it.

The slam is an international event now

and Chicago is the Mecca of it all. Chicago poetry is the product of her vitality, and her poems have reached the four corners of the world. The city sponsors after-school programs and summer jobs for our youth where they get paid to do art, music and write poetry. How great is that? Also, it’s not only Chicago that’s hopping with poetry, it’s also the whole state. Our poet laureate of Illinois, **Kevin Stein**, is putting us on the map and bringing us all together. That’s powerful stuff. He’s a great poet.

Literary License: Do you prefer performing your own poetry or publishing it for others to read?



David Hernandez: Both. I love performing and publishing poetry for others to read. I write poetry for the page and for the stage because I love the intimate challenge of the craft.

Literary License: How did you get started as a poet?

David Hernandez: I began writing poetry 53 years ago at the age of 11, and I never stopped. I knew then that I was going to be a poet for the rest of my life. Ms. Greenspan, my sixth-grade teacher, during a poetry session stated that “poets have a creative license, they can create their own language.” I asked, “Does this mean poets don’t have to worry about spelling or being grammatically correct?” She answered, “theoretically yes.” I said, “Bingo! I’m a poet!” Of course, once I discovered the language of poetry and the craft of writing a poem, I fell in love with it. One of my masters was a sculptor who told me “you give form to formlessness,” and that stuck with me.

Literary License: Do you have a favor

rite among the poems you have written?

David Hernandez: Two things happened to me in 1971. My first book of poems titled *Despertando/Waking Up* was published, and I founded my poetry/music ensemble “Street Sounds.”

Since then I have written, published, performed and recorded many poems. Some of my favorite poems are about this neon lady I grew up with called Chicago and the people who live here. Sometimes I would lock myself up so I could write more introspective poems, but I got bored with myself. I found out that deep down inside, I’m really superficial and I need the people sights and sounds in order to create.

Literary License: What are you working on now?

David Hernandez: Right now I am working on programming some shows in my Blue Line Studio, preparing some prose and poetry manuscripts including writing plays. I am also writing poems and songs for my group “Street Sounds” and teaching my 11-year-old daughter the family business.

She plays violin with the Chicago Youth Symphony, and once in a while she plays with my group. Recently, she noticed that I pay my musicians, and now she wants money plus her name on the flyers. Imagine that! That’s learning the family business.

Literary License: When will you next perform with Street Sounds?

David Hernandez: My next performance with my poetry/music ensemble “Street Sounds” will be at the Green Mill Lounge on Sunday, July 19 at 7:30 p.m. This is the Poetry Slam hosted by my longtime friend **Marc Smith**.

Finally I want to say that I consider it an honor to be a member of the **Society of Midland Authors**. What great writers

New Members

Donald Ray Pollock was born in 1954 and grew up in Knockemstiff, Ohio. He dropped out of high school at 17 to work



Donald Ray Pollock

in a meatpacking plant and then spent 32 years employed in a paper mill in Chillicothe, Ohio. He is graduating this spring from the MFA program at Ohio State University and lives in Chillicothe with his wife, Patsy, a high

school English teacher. His debut short story collection, *Knockemstiff* (Double-day), was published last year. As noted in this issue's Biblio File, he in May was named the recipient of the PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship for Writers.

Jennifer Stevenson, author of *Trash Sex Magic* (Small Beer Press, 2004), *The Brass Bed* (Ballantine Books, 2008), *The Velvet Chair* (Ballantine Books, 2008) and *The Bearskin Rug* (Ballantine Books, 2008) was born in Waukegan and has lived in Illinois for most of her life. She is the granddaughter of A.A. Dornfeld, long-time night editor at the City News Bureau in Chicago, and skates as Flash Hottie of the Haymarket Rioters, farm team to the Windy City Rollers roller derby league.



Jennifer Stevenson

Suzanne Phillips Clauser, author of the novels *A Girl Named Sooner* (Double-day, 1972) and *East of Mandalay*, graduated in 1951 from Indiana University with a degree in American and British literature. After living in Burma and Rangoon, she and her husband, Charles, settled in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She is a former "Bonanza" script writer and has written TV movies, including "Pioneer Woman" (1974); a four-hour adaptation of *Little Women* that won a Christopher Award, and "Johnny Cash in the Pride of Jess Hallam," which won another Christopher and also a Writers' Guild of America, West award for best screenplay of the

year. Clauser also wrote "Calamity Jane," which starred Jane Alexander and which, along with "Pioneer Woman," won a Western Heritage Award. In 1993, she had 10 hours prime-time (two mini-series, one that was four hours, one six hours) with her name the sole credit, which is something of note in TV. She also won the Ohioana Foundation award for fostering literature in Ohio and "furthering the writing careers of others" and a nomination from the Writers' Guild for best adaptation – of her own novel, *Sooner*. And her "Christmas Snow" was named best children's program at the 1987 Golden Gate Awards.

Beryl Satter was raised in Chicago, Skokie, and Evanston, Illinois. A graduate of the Harvard Divinity School and the Yale American studies program, she lives in New York City. She is author of *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity and the New Thought Movement, 1875-1920* (University of California Press, 1999) and *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2009). She is chair of the Department of History at Rutgers University in Newark.



Beryl Satter

James Ballowe, distinguished professor of English emeritus from Bradley University, is the author of *A Man of Salt and Trees: The Life of Joy Morton* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), *A Great Outdoor Museum: The Story of the Morton Arboretum* (Morton Arboretum, 2003), and *The Coal Miners* (Spoon River Poetry Press, 1979). He is also editor of *George Santayana's America: Essays in Literature and Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 1967). He is editing an anthology of Illinois Christmas essays, poetry, and images for the U. of I. Press and is working on collections of his own Illinois essays and poetry. He also has published numerous essays, poetry and reviews, many on Midwestern subjects. He chaired the Illinois Arts Council's literature and individual artist panel from 1975-1985.

John K. Wilson is the founder of the

Institute for College Freedom. He is author of *Barack Obama: This Improbable Quest* (Booklist: "a thoughtful look at what Obama's candidacy means"); *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*; *Newt Gingrich: Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors* and *Patriotic Correctness: Academic Freedom and Its Enemies*. Wilson also has a paperback update of his Obama book, *President Barack Obama: A More Perfect Union* (Paradigm Publishers), coming out in July, and is working on a book about Rush Limbaugh.

Anne-Marie Cusac, assistant professor in the Department of Communications at Roosevelt University and a contributing writer to the Progressive, is author of *Cruel And Unusual: The Culture of Punishment in America* (Yale University Press, 2009). She is also author of the poetry books *The Mean Days* (poetry) and *Silkie*. She won the George Polk Award for work as a journalist, and on three occasions won the the Project Censored Award.



Anne-Marie Cusac

William Cronon is author of *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* and *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. He is editor of *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* and other books and co-editor of *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*. In 1992, Cronon was named Frederick Jackson Turner and Vilas Research Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin/Madison after having served for more than a decade as a member of the Yale History Department. Among the prizes he has won are the Chicago Tribune's Heartland Prize for best nonfiction book in 1991, the 1992 Bancroft Prize and a 1992 Pulitzer Prize nomination for history.



William Cronon

Biblio File

Continued from Page 7

a mystery, but has a lot of stories about mysteries, writers and her young life abroad. ... The Peoria Journal Star in an article about **John E. Hallwas** winning the SMA Biography Award, quoted him May 15 as saying he wrote a series of articles on the Maxwell brothers (the topic of his winning biography) more than 25 years ago and kept a file of information running. "Finally, I knew that there would be enough information out there to support a book-length biography," he said. "I launched into the project, which took nine years of focused research and took me to eight states." Hallwas told the Journal Star he usually has a few books in the writing process at the same time. The one closest to being completed is about the Civil War-era home front in western Illinois. ... **Paul McComas'** still-kickin' college band, The Daves, was scheduled to headline May 9 at the "Best-Boss Benefit" (a fund-raiser for Carol Kent, a friend who is battling cancer and for Carol's fave charity, the Evanston Animal Shelter) at Carol's cafe: the cool and eco-conscious Pick A Cup Coffee Club in Evanston. (Paul does bass and vocals.) McComas also won the inaugural "Best Short Feature" prize at the Talking Pictures Festival for his horror homage, "Blood of the Wolfman." He shot the majority of "Wolfman's" 8 mm footage in 1975 at age 13. McComas, who has an MA in film from Northwestern, used an analog splicer to meld together segments from more than 40 different childhood films, with new scenes shot on Super 8. He transferred the footage to digital, adding post effects and sound tracks. As a novelist, McComas is currently collaborating on a sequel to the sci-fi classic *Logan's Run* with original author William F. Nolan. It is scheduled to hit the shelves

Letters to the Editor

What a good evening of poetry and fellowship the Society sponsored [April 15]. **Marc Smith** is an interesting act, and I enjoyed the chance to be a part of the effort to bring stage and page together.

Kevin Stein

in conjunction with a new Warner Bros. film adaptation of the original in 2010. ... Author **Eric Dregni** will be in the Chicago and Milwaukee areas this summer promoting his SMA prize-winning travel memoir *In Cod We Trust*: Friday, June 26, 7:30 p.m., Minnekirken Lutheran Church, 2614 North Kedzie Boulevard (Logan Square), Chicago, (773) 252-7335 and Sunday, June 28, 2 p.m., Boswell Book Co., 2559 N. Downer Ave, Milwaukee (414) 332-1181. ... New City's "Lit 50," out in May, included incoming SMA President **Robert Loerzel**. Outgoing President **Jim Merriner** has gone to the family homestead in Ohio for the summer to recuperate from his two-year term. ... The June 3 New York Times carried a profile of slam poetry and its creator, **Marc Smith**, "Like it or not, Mr. Smith's concept has become a global phenomenon, especially among young people," the Times said. Smith's and **Kevin Stein's** poetry performance at this year's SMA poetry program is on YouTube (the link is posted on the SMA Web site). ... Here's what **Aleksandar Hemon** said in the June 10 New Yorker: "I quite like the literary scene in Chicago, where I've lived (apart from the Paris stint) for the past 17 years. There is plenty of solidarity and friendship among the writers, and the readers appreciate their local authors, if for no other reason than because they did not succumb to the temptations of gloss and glamour, and move to New York." ... **Stephen Kinzer** will be traveling during June to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Israel. His book *All The Shah's Men* (reissued last year in paperback) is quite topical again as President Obama spoke recently of the CIA's coup d'etat in Iran in 1953.

Note: This is a combined May-July issue of Literary License, allowing our vast editorial staff to catch up on summer reading. The next issue, also a combined one, will be August-September.

SMA's new liquid assets

The hottest items on this year's literary scene are the Society's new mugs, available for purchase at Society events or for \$15 plus \$3 for shipping from the Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610.

Contributions get SMA through a difficult year

BY RICHARD FRISBIE, TREASURER

Generous contributions from many SMA members to the Awards Fund, the Endowment Fund or both helped the Society get through a difficult 2008-09 fiscal year.

It was a year that saw grants from foundations discontinued as they were forced to cut back by shrinking portfolios.

Net Worth 6/30/2008

Checking account: \$6,000.99

Endowment CDs: \$20,533.43

Total: \$26,534.42

Net Worth 6/12/2009

Checking account: \$4,005.70

Endowment CDs: \$24,947.64

Total: \$28,953.34

Net Worth gain: \$2,418.87

OPERATIONS 7/1/2008-6/12/2009

Income

Dinner tickets, \$3,900.00

Donations, awards fund, \$2,845.00

Dues, \$11,550.00

Endowment gifts, \$2,360.00

Grant, \$1,250.00

Interest, \$489.16

Other income, \$140.00

Printers Row income, \$375.00

Program admissions, \$120.00

Total Income, \$23,022.16

Expenses

Ads, \$60.00

Awards, \$2,964.40

Dinner, \$5,804.97

Membership, \$1,478.01

Office, \$119.11

Postage, \$56.91

Premiums, \$572.14

Printers Row, \$965.00

Programs, \$2,105.69

Publications, \$6,062.12

Supplies \$222.62

Web site, \$199.32

Total Expenses, \$20,610

NET, \$2,418.87