



**FRIENDS OF
AMERICAN WRITERS
CHICAGO
BULLETIN**

APRIL

2009 NO. 8

PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS

FAW spends most of the club year planning and working toward the Annual Awards Luncheon. April 15th is the day! I hope to see many members and guests at the Union League honoring FAW and its many years of support for Midwestern authors. As you look through the list of award-winning authors in our yearbook, you will see famous literary names (as well as names of unknown authors). It's quite an array of novelists, biographers, short story writers, juvenile authors, etc. We should be proud of them and ourselves for giving them encouragement and some cash to help them along.

I also want to thank the two awards committees for their work and dedication. It is a tremendous time commitment reading and reviewing all the books. I hope all of you know what an important service you render to FAW.

As usual we will have our award-winning books for sale at the luncheon. This year we are accepting cash, check payments and credit cards. 20% percentage of the total will be given to the Awards Committee funds for next year's prizes. We have five honored authors this year so it will be quite a selection. I look forward to seeing you on April 15, 2009, so we can celebrate our great organization together.

**ANNUAL LITERARY
AWARDS**

April 15

**Join us in congratulating the
winning authors!**

Adult Literary Awards

The Seamstress

**Francis De Poncis Peebles
\$2,000**

Conception

**K. Buckhannon
\$2,000**

Juvenile Literary Awards

The Calder Game

**Blue Balliett
\$1,300**

On Rough Seas

**Nancy L Hull
\$1,300**

Third Grade Baby

**Jenny Meyerhoff
\$400**

**ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2009**

**CRYSTAL ROOM, UNION LEAGUE CLUB
65 WEST JACKSON, CHICAGO
\$40.00**

RECEPTION 11 A.M. - LUNCHEON 12 NOON

Reservations close on Sunday, April 12. Please send or phone in your reservations to **Betty Angelos, 3567 South Archer Avenue, Chicago, IL 60609-1135.** This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and hear the remarks of our award-winning authors in the ambiance of the newly decorated Crystal Ballroom of the Union League Club. Do bring your friends to support and applaud these new authors and to share the fun. This is a great opportunity to show the results of the year's efforts to select emerging Midwest writers

PATRONS' FUND

It is not too late to donate to the Patrons' Fund. A \$25 contribution funds the cash prizes for the winners of the Adult and Juvenile Literary Awards. If you do not designate how you would like your contribution distributed, the Bylaws dictate that 60% will go to the Adult Awards and 40% will go to the Juvenile Awards. You may bring a check for \$25 or more to the April 15 meeting or send your check to Eileen McNulty, 4450 North Kostner, Chicago, IL 60630-4102.



BOOK SALE

Copies of the award-winning books will be available for purchase at the Awards Luncheon on April 15 both before the luncheon and following the authors' presentations. You may use cash, check or credit card. Buy a book and have your copy autographed by the author.

2009 / 2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The 2009 – 2010 slate of officers was voted on and approved at the March 11 meeting. The new Board of Directors will be as follows:

President – Marion Faldet
Vice President / Programs – Sean Eshaghy
Secretary -
Treasurer – Eileen McNulty
Awards Luncheon – Betty O’Toole
Bulletin Editor – Vivian Mortensen
Foundation Fund – Alice Sandberg
Literary Awards – Roberta Gates
Juvenile Awards – Lorraine Campione
Luncheon /Social – Rosemary Crowley
Membership – Virginia Dow
Publicity / Historian – Betty O’Toole
Revisions – Angie Higginson
Sustaining Clubs – Corene Anderson
Yearbook / Printing – Pat Adelberg

New Board members will be installed at the May meeting. We also wish to thank those who are going off the FAW Board. Everyone who serves contributes lots of hard work to make this organization run smoothly. Thank you also to the Nominating Committee for their work in putting this terrific board together.



Save the Date

May 13, 2009
Barbara Rinella
Dramatist

CONSIDER JOINING A COMMITTEE

One of the best ways to meet other FAW members is to become more involved in the organization and join a committee. Committee Chairmen are now actively recruiting for several committees, especially the award committees. If you are interested, let the appropriate Board members know you are ready to help. It takes lots of work to run FAW and everyone is welcome.

The **Literary Awards Committee** meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Fortnighly Club. Books being considered for the literary prizes are passed among the members at the meetings and once everyone has read them, they are rated for their literary quality. Those interested in serving on this committee should call Roberta Gates at 708-447-8471.

The **Juvenile Literary Awards Committee** also meets monthly at the Fortnighly Club. They read and rate the eligible children’s books. If you are interested in children’s literature and would be willing to serve on this committee, call Lorraine Campione at 773-275-5118.

There are also several other committees that meet less regularly during the FAW year. These include **Awards Luncheon** (contact Betty O’Toole at 312-337-5344), **Luncheon – Social** (Rosemary Crowley at 312-856-0009), **Programs** (Sean Eshaghy at 312-203-6896) and **Yearbook and Awards Programs** (Pat Adelberg at 847-588-0911).

ANOTHER LOOK AT: NELSON ALGREN (1909 – 1981)

Nelson Algren, champion of the underdogs of the underworld, has been wrongfully underrated. In spite of receiving the first National Book Award for fiction—presented by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1950 for *The Man with the Golden Arm*, an unflinching novel of poverty, drugs, and desperation—he was dismissed by the public. His books promptly went out of print after his death in 1981, and Algren seemed destined for oblivion. Yet readers, writers, and critics the world over recognized the power of his gritty and caring tales and ranked him beside Theodore Dreiser, Richard Wright, and John Steinbeck.

Of Swedish, German, and Jewish descent, he was born Nelson Algren Abraham in Detroit on March 28, 1909, and grew up in working-class neighborhoods in Chicago. He earned a degree in journalism from University of Illinois during the Great Depression but ended up on the road, seeking whatever work he could find. Inspired by Baudelaire, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, Algren began writing short stories; his first novel, *Somebody in Boots*, appeared in 1935. It was his second, *Never Come Morning* (1942), which ignited the notoriety that obscured his artistry.

Set on the meanest streets of Chicago's Polish American community, *Never Come Morning* portrays Bruno "Lefty" Bicek, a poor, bewildered bruiser trapped in a net of lies and violence. Brutal and disturbing, the novel is nonetheless alight with radioactive lyricism and caustic humor, Algren's signature qualities. *Never Come Morning* outraged Chicago's powers-that-be, who tried to have it banned from public libraries.

Radical and irreverent Algren delved ever more intrepidly into poverty and injustice in his indelible Chicago novel, *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Everything goes wrong for poker dealer and junkie Frankie Machine. It's his fault that his lover is in a wheelchair, and he can't trust anyone in their "world of petty cheats, phony braggarts, double clockers, elbow sneaks, small-time chiselers, touts and stooges and glad-hand-shakers." Furthermore, as Algren avers in a passage key to his steely-eyed vision, they all suffer from the "great, secret and special American guilt of owning nothing, nothing at all, in the one land where ownership and virtue are one. . . . Their very lives gave off a certain jailhouse odor.

A Walk on the Wild Side (1956) takes place in the grimier precincts of Texas and New Orleans. A brilliantly crafted anti-bildungsroman, it stars a rambling, illiterate country boy seeking his fortune among pimps and prostitutes. Expansive, poetic, and roguishly funny, Algren's darkly picaresque tale takes on thorny issues of race, sex, and class.

Embittered by pretension, hypocrisy, and the success of others, Algren wrote poisonous satire about New York's literary establishment and devilishly provocative travel pieces. He finally found sanctuary in Sag Harbor, and planned to celebrate his long-overdue election to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters with a cocktail party on May 9, 1981. But when Kurt Vonnegut called to say he was bringing Salmon Rushdie along, a police officer answered. Algren was dead, done in by a massive heart attack in a house full of unopened bottles of booze.

Algren was burdened by his empathic understanding of lost innocence and strangled hopes, beauty twisted and tattered, life bought and sold. As we mark the 100th anniversary of his birth, we are experiencing the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression due to the very greed and corruption Algren protested. Algren's electrifying prose, marksman humor, and tough compassion speak today with renewed force and resonance.

Donna Seaman, Reprinted from Booklist, March 15, 2009