



FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS



APRIL
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CHICAGO
www.fawchicago.org


THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB
OF CHICAGO
120 E. BELLEVUE PLACE

President's Message

CHRISTINE BERN, *President*

It is with great enthusiasm that I announce the acceptance of new Board members at the March meeting. I welcome Sandie Weiss, Marion Sherlock, Karen Baker and Lee Shinnors to the FAW Board beginning June 2014. I look forward to working with you. I am pleased that current Board members Corene Anderson, Angie Higginson and Roberta Gates will remain on the board in a new capacity. Thank you for your commitment.

I would like to thank Linda Gustafson, Carol Es-haghy, Roberta Schaffner and Peggy Iska for their dedication to Friends of American Writers as they transition off the Board. You have served FAW with loyalty and devotion that deserve our gratitude and appreciation.

Last month FAW Past President Minnie Orfanos passed away. FAW thanks Minnie for her time and guidance during her term as President. It is because of dedicated members like Minnie Orfanos that Friends of American Writers has endured. Thank you Minnie. Rest in Peace. 

Renowned Author Susan Hahn to Visit on April 9

ROBERTA GATES,
Program Chair

Susan Firestone Hahn, a highly regarded writer and one of Chicago's literary stars, will be speaking at Friends of American Writers on April 9.




▲ Susan Firestone Hahn

Ms. Hahn first came to our attention when the awards committee read her 2012 novel, *The Six Granddaughters of Cecil Slaughter*. Although it wasn't one of our winners, members of the committee were so taken with it that we knew we wanted her as one of our 2013-14 speakers.

Ms. Hahn, who is the author of nine books of poetry and two plays as well as her novel, is currently the Hemingway Foundation's writer-in-residence, which means that a portion of Oak Park's Hemingway house has been set aside for her exclusive use as a studio. For 14 years beginning in 1995, Ms. Hahn also served as the editor of *TtiQuarterly*, Northwestern University's prestigious literary magazine.

Ms. Hahn was born in Chicago and graduated from Highland Park High School. She has both a B.A. and M.A. from Northwestern University. She is married to Frederic Hahn, an attorney, and is the mother of Rick Hahn, the general manager of the Chicago White Sox.

Don't miss this rare opportunity to see one of Chicago's literati in person—and to enjoy a lovely spring luncheon at The Fortnightly. It will be food for the mind as well as the body. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Luncheon Reservations

Reservations for the April 9 luncheon are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 6. Please note, this deadline is firm. We will not be able to accept reservations from those calling after this deadline. To reserve, please call only Pat Adelberg (847-588-0911) or Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118). The cost is \$40 payable by check to FAW or cash, in the front lobby on the day of the

luncheon. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. If you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

April Business Meeting

April 9 will be our annual business meeting. We urge that as many members as possible attend this meeting to vote on the

new Board members and discuss changes to our By-Laws.

Juvenile Committee to Host Book Sale

Tanya Klasser, Juvenile Committee Chair, would like to announce that the Committee will hold a book sale at the April 9 meeting. The sale will include books submitted to the Committee during the 2013-14 calendar year. There will be many outstanding books available for purchase, and we would appreciate your support for this activity. ■

FEATURE A WOMAN'S PLACE PART 4

F The New American Woman in the Media

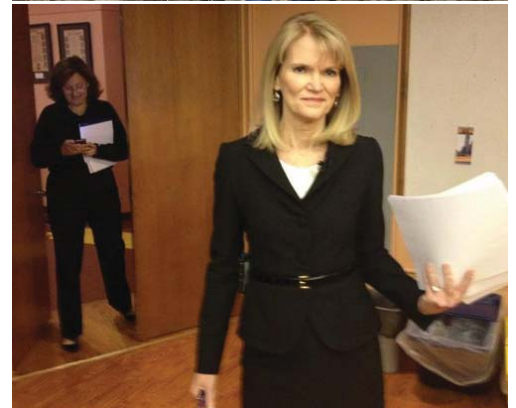


- ▲ Eppie Lederer
Ann Landers
- ▲ Pauline Phillips
Abigail Van Buren—
Dear Abby

Ann Landers, Dear Abby

The pre-feminist era newspaper woman was pretty much confined to her chair as an advice columnist—the best known of which were Eppie Lederer and her twin sister Pauline Phillips. Lederer, as Ann Landers, wrote for *The Chicago Sun Times*. Phillips, aka Abigail Van Buren (Dear Abby), became one of America's most adored newspaper columnists. Both women helped transform the standard "lonely hearts" club column into a more profound and candid feature, and both played a role in changing America's moral conscience.

Their white glove approach to journalism was eventually replaced by such no holds-barred broadcast and print reporters as Diane Sawyer and Martha Raddatz. Raddatz typifies the hard-news, fearless, female broadcast journalist of the 21st century who goes where the action is. She served as White House correspondent during the George W. Bush administration, and went on to become ABC News Chief Global Affairs Correspondent. She traveled to Pakistan and Afghani-



- ▲ Martha Raddatz at the Front, on her way to the 2012 Vice-Presidential Debate, and on the Front Lines

stan, to cover conflicts there. She was on the last convoy out of Iraq and is the only television reporter allowed to cover a combat mission over Afghanistan in an F5 fighter jet. In 2011, she reported exclusive details on the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden. In 2012, Raddatz moderated the Vice-Presidential debate between Congressman Paul Ryan and Vice President Joe Biden. After the debate, she was widely praised for asking pointed questions on a range of issues while maintaining control over the conversation.



Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1850 ▲

The Pen Is Mightier

When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, Harriet Beecher Stowe was outraged. She wrote to the editor of the anti-slavery journal, *National Era*, that she intended to write a story about the problem of slavery. “I hope that every woman who can write will not be silent,” she said. Shortly thereafter, the first installment of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was published. She used the subtitle, “The Man That Was A Thing”, which she later changed to “Life Among the Lowly”. The work was published in book form in March 1852, with an initial print run of 5,000 copies. By the end of the year, *Uncle Tom* had sold an unprecedented 300,000 copies. The book’s emotional portrayal of the impact of slavery captured the nation’s attention and added to the debate about abolition and slavery. That year, 300 babies were named “Eva” in Boston alone. A play based on the book opened in New York in November of 1852. When Stowe traveled to Washington to meet President Abraham Lincoln, he is reported to have met her by saying, “So you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war”, a greeting which may, or may not, have been true.

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a Harvard-educated historian who is noted for her biographies of American Presidents, including *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*; *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys: An American Saga*; *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt* (which won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1995); and *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, part of which served

as the basis of Steven Spielberg’s film *Lincoln*. The book won the 2005 Lincoln Prize awarded for the best book about the Civil War and the American History Book Prize given by the New York Historical Society. Her latest book, *The Bully Pulpit*, deals with the relationship between Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft and the election of 1912. It has been a nonfiction best seller since its publication.

While Goodwin is best known for her historical writing, she is an avid baseball fan and contributed to Ken Burns’ award-winning documentary film *Baseball*. She wrote *Wait Till Next Year*, a book of stories about her father and herself being Brooklyn Dodger fans. She listened to games on the radio and wrote down what happened. Then she replayed the events of the games when her father came home from work. Thus began her career as a historian.

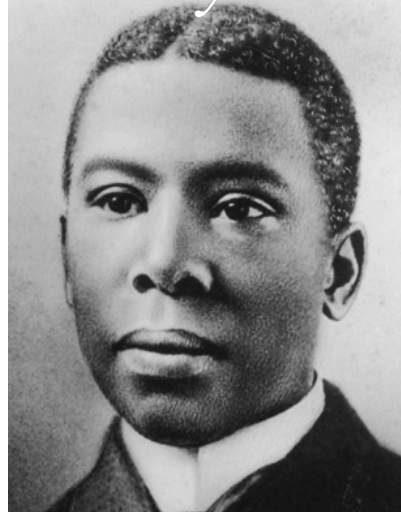
Goodwin served as a White House Fellow during the administration of Lyndon Johnson, a government professor at Harvard, and a member of the Board of Directors for Northwest Airlines. She is the very model of a modern American woman. ■■



▲ Doris Kearns Goodwin

Next month: *The American Woman—Moving on Up in the Boardroom, the Courts, and Social Media*

Poetry Corner



(Editor’s note: This month, I am introducing a poetry feature in the FAW newsletter. My featured poet is Paul Laurence Dunbar, America’s first great black poet. I hope that you will enjoy learning about his life and work.)

Continued on next page ►

Poetry Corner

Paul
Laurence
Dunbar



Who Is Paul Laurence Dunbar?

“Paul Laurence Dunbar? He was my son,” said Matilda Dunbar. “He was just an elevator boy, and a poet”. He was much more. To black authors writing in Harlem in the 1920s, he was their strength and pride—a pioneer in their resistance movement to change the Uncle Remus image of the black man in literature.

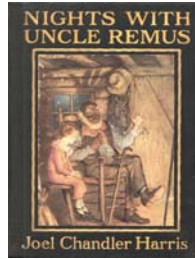
Paul Laurence Dunbar was born in Dayton, Ohio on June 27, 1872. Like most kids, he started to walk and talk at an appropriate time; and, like most kids, he learned to listen when his parents spoke. From his mother, he heard stories of old Kentucky and the days “befo’ de wah.” Unconsciously, he absorbed her phrasing and her dialect, little realizing that, years later, they would become part of his own story-telling.

A man is born, he grows, he goes to school. And one day, between reading and arithmetic, he discovers what he wants to be. While Paul’s friends wanted to be generals, businessmen, and even President; Paul wanted to be a writer like James Whitcomb Riley—one of the most famous poets of his day. He graduated from high school in 1891, the only black student in his class. Paul, who was the editor of the *High School Times*, wrote the seniors’ farewell poem:

*Though lingers on the lid a tear,
'Tis one of sorrow, not of fear,
For well we know we cannot cling
Forever to the parent wing.*

*At last we move; how thrills
the heart,
So long impatient for the start.
Now up o’er the hill and down
through dell,
The echoes bring our song—farewell.*

After graduation, Paul had to worry about how to make a living. There were few opportunities for young black men in 1891. He did not have the money to go to college. He tried to get a job in a newspaper office, but the editors were not hiring black writers. He eventually found work as an elevator boy for \$4.00 a week. It wasn’t much, but it helped take the burden off his mother, who took in laundry to support them.



In 1892 the Western Association of Writers met in Dayton. One of Paul’s former English teachers got him a place on the program, and he read one of his poems. The group was so impressed they invited him to become a member. The editor of the *Denver Times* wrote a biographical sketch about him which attracted a great deal of attention. In December of that year, he published his first book of poetry, *Oak and Ivy*. Just getting it into print was a major accomplishment. Editors demanded the cost of printing up front (\$125), and Paul didn’t have it. Finally the business manager of one publishing company signed a personal guarantee for the costs, and the book was printed. In two weeks, Paul sold enough copies to patrons going up and down his elevator to pay back the loan.

Still, the young man’s life wasn’t easy. He went to Chicago to write and nearly starved before Frederick Douglass met him and paid him \$5.00 a week to work the Haiti Exposition at the Columbian Exposition. He was fortunate to be befriended by Dr. H. A. Tobey, Superintendent of the State Mental Hospital in Toledo, Ohio. Tobey had read Paul’s book and invited him to share some of his poems with patients and staff at the hospital. When Paul stepped out of his carriage in front of the hospital Dr. Tobey remarked, “Thank God, he’s black.” An assistant asked why he was so surprised since he knew Paul was black. “No, I mean really black. Whatever talent he has can’t be attributed to any

white blood he may have in him.”

In 1893, Paul published his second book of poetry, *Majors and Minors*. It was the most notable collection of poems ever published by a black writer and contained one of his most memorable poems:

We Wear the Mask

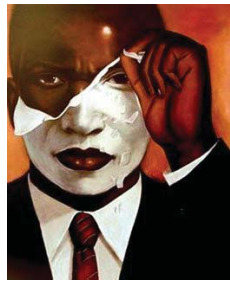
*We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.*

*Why should the world be otherwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.*

*We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise.
We wear the mask!*

William Dean Howells, the foremost literary critic in the United States, reviewed *Major and Minors* for *Harper’s Weekly* magazine. His review appeared on June 27, 1896, in the same issue that reported the nomination of William McKinley for President. Thousands of copies were sold throughout the country. On his 24th birthday, Paul Laurence Dunbar had become famous.

A month later, Dr. Tobey invited Paul to speak at the hospital again—this time the audience included many famous literary men and his fame spread. Jefferson Davis’ widow invited him to do a private reading of his poetry. The editor of the *New York Herald* asked him to become a regular contributor. Dodd, Mead, and Co. offered to publish his latest collection of poetry, *Lyrics of a Lowly Life*. He traveled to England where he caught the attention of John Hay, the American Ambassador to England.



Hay arranged a recital before a very distinguished company. This was one of the poems he read:

When De Co'n Pone's Hot

*Dey is times in life when Nature
Seems to slip a cog an' go
Jes a-rattlin' down creation,
Lak an ocean's overflow;
When de worl' jes stahts a-spinnin'
Lak a picanniny's top,
An' you feel jes' lak a racah
Dat is trainin' fuh to trot—
When yo' mammy says de blessin'
An' de co'n pone's hot.*



While the Englishmen had no idea what co'n pone was, they liked the poem.

Back home, Paul encountered an even greater problem than the language barrier. Discrimination reared its ugly head. Invited to give a recital by Mrs. Merrill, a very wealthy patron of the arts in Albany, New York, Paul was refused admittance to the hotel where a reservation had been made in his name. When he insisted on registering, the police were brought in. Mrs. Merrill herself had to come to the hotel and insist that Dunbar be allowed to register. That same scenario was repeated many times over. When he wrote a novel that featured white characters, the critics excoriated him, saying that he could not write about white people because he did not understand them. They advised him to stick to his own literary side of the street. When he published a collection of short stories dealing with the black experience in America from pre-Civil War days to the 1900s, and used black characters

speaking in “Negro” dialect, the collection was critically acclaimed.

When Dey 'Listed Colored Soldiers

*Dey was talkin' in de cabin, dey was
talkin' in de hall;
But I listened kin' o' keerless, not a-
tinkin' 'bout it all;
An' on Sunday, too, I noticed day was
whisperin' mighty much,
Stan'in' all erroun' de roadside w'en
dey let us out o' chu'ch.
But I didn't t'ink erbout it 'twell de
middle of de week,
An' my 'Lias come to see me, an'
somehow he couldn' speak.
Den I seed all in a minute whut he'd
come to see me for;
Dey had 'listed colo'ed sojers, an' my
'Lias gwine to wah.*

*Oh I hugged him, an' I kissed him, an'
I begged him not to go;
But he tol' me dat his conscience, hit
was callin' on him so,
An' he couldn't baih to lingah w'en he
had a chanst to fight
For de freedom dey had gin him an' de
glory of de right.
So he kissed me, an' he lef' me, w'en
I'd p'omised to be true;
An dey put a knapsack on him, an' a
coat all colo'ed blue.
So I gin him pap's ol' Bible f'om de
bottom of de draw',
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my
'Lias went to wah.*

*Mastah Jack come home all sickly; he
was broke for life, dey said;
An dey lef' my po' young mastah
some'r's on de roadside,--dead.
W'en de women cried an' mou'ned em,
I could feel it thoo an' thoo,
For I had a loved un fightin' in de way
of dangah, too.
Den dey tol' me dey had laid him
some'r's way down souf to res',
Wid de flag dat he had fit for shinin'
daih acrost his breas'.
Well, I cried, but den I reckon dat's
whut Gawd had called him for,
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my
Lias went to wah.*

Poems, short stories, novels, essays—everything Paul wrote drew him closer to his people. In a time when black was not fashionable; when black people were being stripped of status, rights, and identity; when they were told to forget about equality and work to prove their worth to whites, Paul was succeeding. He was the chin of the black man jutted out in pride and defiance. He was their dream come true.



*Be proud, my Race, in mind and soul'
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll
In characters of fire.
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's bright
sky
Thy blazoned folds now fly,
And truth shall lift them higher.*

There are a few more things you should know about Paul. He was married for a few years to a talented and charming woman. But it was a marriage doomed to failure. He was given an honorary rank of colonel and asked to ride in the inaugural parade of President William McKinley. He was invited to the White House by President McKinley. He wrote nine more books. And he came to terms with himself and his world—his own terms.

*Because I had loved so deeply,
Because I had loved so long,
God in his great compassion
Gave me the gift of song.*

*Because I have loved so vainly,
And sung with such faltering breath,
The Master in infinite mercy
Offers the boon of death.*

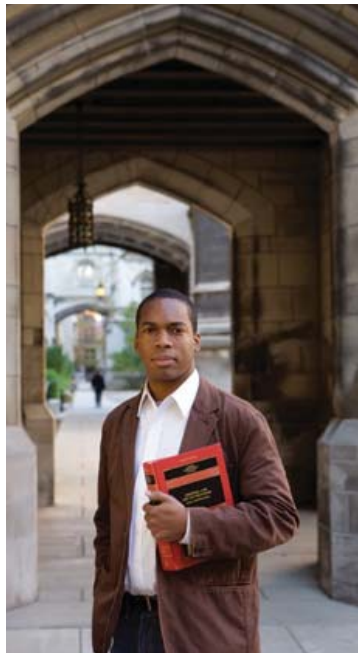
Paul's life ended where it began in Dayton, Ohio. He had been in poor health for years following a siege of pneumonia in 1899. His reliance on alcohol to temper his coughing only exacerbated his illness. He rarely left his room after June 1905 and he received few visitors. He died on February 9, 1906. He was 34 years

Continued on next page ▶

old. Three years later, 1,000 people gathered in Dayton to place a monument on his grave. James Whitcomb Riley was there, and Dr. Tobey, and his mother, and his people. Dr. Tobey read his eulogy:

A Death Song

*Lay me down beneaf de willers in de
grass,
Whah de branch'll go a-singin' as it
pass.
An' when I's a layin low,
I kin heah it as it go
Singin' sleep my honey, tek yo' res' at
las'.*



Paxton Williams

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my indebtedness to Paxton Williams for this piece. In mid-March, Williams staged a dramatization of Dunbar's life called *At Mother Dunbar's Request* at the Poetry Foundation in Chicago. Written, directed by, and starring Mr. Williams, it was one of the finest and most moving

productions I have ever seen. Williams took Dunbar's works, as well as selections from Stephen Foster, William Shakespeare, Will Marion Cook, Frederick Chopin, Sir Edward Elgar, and Robert Burns and wove them into a tapestry. Set in 1906 in the Dunbar's living room at 219 North Summit Street in Dayton, the play depicts a soiree hosted by Mrs. Matilda Dunbar. Paxton brought together a brilliant ensemble to perform Mother Dunbar's requests: Sarah Foster, a violinist with the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra in Minneapolis; Luke Foster, her hus-

band, a dentist and a gifted musician who plays piano and organ; Jason Mitchell, a magnificent baritone who has sung in the world's great recital halls and opera stages; and Lauryn Whitney, a renowned actress and classical scholar.

At the center is Paxton Williams, a true Renaissance man. An actor, playwright, and recent graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, Paul holds master's degrees in public policy from the University of Michigan and the University of Birmingham (UK). He traveled throughout the United States portraying George Washington Carver in a one-man play he authored while a student at Iowa State University. He starred in his own adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, for which he received rave reviews. Paxton believes in using the arts to create a more just and empathetic society. He says his love for the arts and humanities makes him a more effective attorney. Asked about his interest in Paul Laurence Dunbar, he had this to say.

Q. Having portrayed George Washington Carver and Othello, what drew you to Paul Laurence Dunbar and his work?

A. I was drawn to Paul by his artistry, genius, and struggle. He had such breadth and depth, and his poems can speak to so many emotions—and often in one poem you can experience feelings of contentment, joy, and heartbreak. I was also drawn to his abilities as a chronicler of his times and the then-not-too-distant past. Additionally, I found that his short stories and novels provided wonderful snapshots of a time, people, and ideals we would be well-served to remember.

Q. Do you identify in some way with Dunbar?

A. I identify with his longing to create and to make positive change. I obviously don't have his multitudes, but like him, I know that I can try,

engage, and put myself out there. That's something we can all do, and that's something I think is one of the great take-aways from his story—we should explore our interests, keep at it, and do what we can today to improve at whatever our chosen craft is. I also identify with Paul's interest in the law. Though he was not able to pursue his one-time dream of becoming a lawyer, it is not lost to me that I was able to attend law school not too far from where he served as Frederick Douglass' assistant in The White City during the time of the 1893 World's Fair.

Q. At Mother Dunbar's Request is such a brilliant work it seems a shame to limit it to one performance and a limited audience. Do you have any plans to repeat the production?

A. I don't have any plans as yet to stage it again, but I'm hopeful someone who saw it or heard about it will see virtue helping us bring it to wider audiences. I think it has the potential to be quite impactful as I've been amazed by the positive feedback I've received. It seems that Paul's life and works are still very relevant, and still have the power to entertain, enlighten, and touch.

Q. You assembled an amazing cast to perform in Mother Dunbar's Request. Where did you find them, and how did you bring them together for the production?

A. First, I owe so much to this cast. I could not have asked for a more talented and thoughtful group of people to help bring this production to life. I have been personal friends with each of them, save for Lauryn who I met several weeks before the production, for a number of years. I have known Luke since 1998. We were fraternity brothers at Iowa State. I've known Sarah since she and Luke began dating when he was in dental school. I had heard Luke and Sarah perform together at enough weddings

to know that I wanted them involved in this project.

I first met Jason in 2009, when I heard him sing at the wedding of a good friend of mine from my University of Michigan days. I knew if I ever had a project that required a really good singer, I'd call on Jason. When I saw that this project was moving forward, I contacted Jason and the Fosters, and they were all very excited about the prospect of coming on board. I actually met Lauryn less than a month before the production. She was referred to me by an actress friend, and did an extraordinary job preparing in a very short period of time.

The Poetry Foundation also played a big role in our ability to share this work. I wrote them an unsolicited email introducing myself and sharing this play. They requested to read the manuscript, liked it, and provided us with some support and a wonderful space to premiere this work. I think we did Paul and his life and work justice, and for that I am both extraordinarily humbled and pleased. 📖



The Reading Corner

Sycamore Row By John Grisham

John Grisham has been called one of the “great story-tellers” of his time. Read his latest, *Sycamore Row*, and I'm sure you will agree.

In *Sycamore Row*, Grisham returns to Clanton, Mississippi; the site of *A Time to Kill*. Three years have passed since Jake Brigance did the impossible: he got an acquittal for a black man who had killed a white man for raping his young daughter and throwing her by the side of the road like so much trash—the infamous Hailey Trial. In those three years, Jake's reputation has grown; but he has had his house burned to the ground by the Klan and he still gets death threats from the red neck denizens of Clanton.

A twist of fate brings Jake back to center stage. That twist involves the suicide of a wealthy white man named Seth Hubbard. In a previous will, Seth had left his estate to his two grown children. But on the day before his death, he writes out a new holographic will in which he cuts out his family and leaves 90 percent of his assets to his black housekeeper, Lettie Lang. The rest he leaves to a long-lost brother (there has to be a long-lost brother so he can show up at the crucial time) and his church. He sends the will to Jake's office, along with a letter saying, “These are not nice people, and they will fight. So get ready. Fight them, Mr. Brigance, to the bitter end.”

He was right. The amount of money involved, upwards of 20 million dollars, brings lawyers out

of the woodwork—from as far away as Memphis, along with an endless stream of Lettie's relations—all with their hands out. Lettie's potential inheritance would make her the richest woman in Ford County, and the racists of that county are not about to let

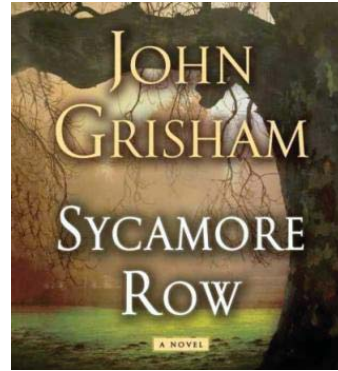
that happen. Money, notwithstanding, as Lucian Wilbanks, a disbarred lawyer and drunk who won't stay out of the case—or Jake's office, since he is the landlord—observes, “Every-

thing is about race in Mississippi.”

Jake has one thing, and one thing only to prove, testamentary capacity—was the witness in his right mind when he made the second will? Or was he so incapacitated by pain-killing drugs, chemotherapy, and his housekeeper's wiles that he was not thinking clearly. Jake is up against a crew of smart, experienced lawyers who resort to multiple courtroom dirty tricks. He allows himself to be “gobsmacked” by a witness who was unknown to him beforehand; and by a previous incident involving Lettie that the opposing lawyers unearth causing her to lose the jury's sympathy.

The trial will keep you on the edge of your seats before arriving at a Poirot-like conclusion where “all is revealed”: including the reason for Seth's actions and for his choice of the Sycamore tree as his hanging spot, leaving you to agree with a local waitress, “We haven't had this much excitement since the Hailey trial.”

Many of you probably saw the film made from “A Time to Kill”, starring Matthew McConaughey as Jake Brigance. We can only hope *Sycamore Row* will put McConaughey right back in that courtroom. 📖





THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB OF CHICAGO

120 E. Bellevue Place
Chicago, IL 60611-1112

Patron's Fund Form



The Patron's Fund is an educational fund used to support the annual awardees selected by The Friends of American Writers. The fund is divided into two categories: The Literary Awards Fund and the Juvenile Literary Awards Fund. Monies are allocated to these funds from members' dues, sale of books, and patrons' donations.

Donor's Name _____

Donor's Address and/or
Contact Information _____

How Donor's Name Should
Appear in the Program Book _____

Amount of Donation _____

How Money is to be Divided:
Literary Awards _____

Juvenile Awards _____

(Undesignated contributions shall be allocated as follows: fifty percent to the Literary Awards Fund and fifty percent to the Juvenile Literary Awards Fund.)

Please mail your contributions to Ms. Eileen McNulty, 4450 N. Kostner, Chicago, IL 60630.