



JANUARY NEWSLETTER
2014-2015 NUMBER 5

Editor: Shirley Baugher
Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org

President's Message

CHRISTINE BERN, *President*

Why Do I Read

"Why do I read?"

I just can't help myself.

I read to learn and to grow, to laugh and to be motivated.

I read to understand things I've never been exposed to.

I read when I'm crabby, when I've just said monumentally dumb things to the people I love.

I read for strength to help me when I feel broken, discouraged, and afraid.

I read when I'm angry at the whole world.

I read when everything is going right.

I read to find hope.

I read because I'm made up not just of skin and bones, of sights, feelings, and a deep need for chocolate, but I'm also made up of words.

Words describe my thoughts and what's hidden in my heart.

Words are alive--when I've found a story that I love, I read it again and again, like playing a favorite song over and over.

Reading isn't passive—I enter the story with the characters, breathe their air, feel their frustrations, scream at them to stop when they're about to do something stupid, cry with them, laugh with them.

Reading for me, is spending time with a friend.

A book is a friend.

You can never have too many."

GARY PAULSEN—Shelf Life:
Stories by the Book

Happy New Year, everyone.



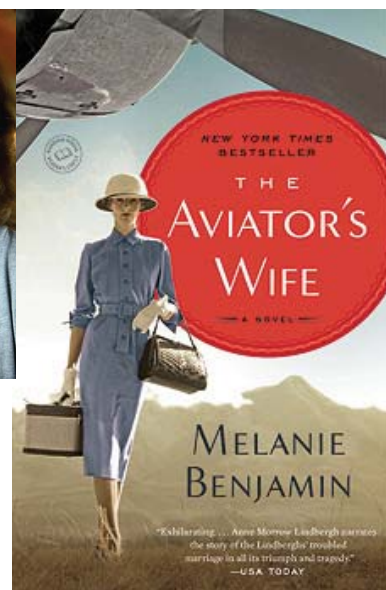
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FAW Welcomes Author Melanie Benjamin

ROBERTA GATES,
Program Chair

By now, you've probably read or at least heard

of *The Aviator's Wife*, Melanie Benjamin's latest bestselling novel about Anne Morrow Lindbergh, the wife of celebrity pilot Charles Lindbergh.



This 2013 book made a big splash by telling the story of Anne Morrow who started life as a shy and bookish girl who felt overshadowed by her millionaire father and dynamic older sister. Then, in 1927, as a senior in college, she met Colonel Charles Lindbergh, whose recent flight across the Atlantic had made him a real-life hero. What followed was a complicated marriage that included devastating lows as well as incredible highs.

The Aviator's Wife is Melanie Benjamin's third foray into historical fiction. Her two earlier novels, *Alice I Have Been* and *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb*, were read and enjoyed by the FAW awards committee, which found much to admire in Benjamin's work—particularly her graceful blending of history with imaginative storytelling.

Benjamin is a Chicago author who grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana. She graduated from Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis; then, after marriage and the birth of two sons, she started writing in local newspapers and magazines. Soon, though, she was drawn to the longer form, which led her to write historical novels, or, as she describes them, the "stories behind the stories."



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the January 14, 2015 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due **no later than 6:00 p.m.** on Sunday, January 10. Please note that this deadline is firm, and no reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please call only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Vivian Mortensen (847-827-8339).

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place. The cost of the luncheon is \$40 payable by cash or check to FAW in the front lobby on the day of the luncheon. Discount parking for FAW luncheon guests is available in the lot just west of the Fortnightly at 100 E. Bellevue Place. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note: 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.

In Memoriam

Sadly, we announce the passing of George Hill, father of FAW president, Christine Bern. Born on November 15, 1932, Mr. Hill passed away in Texas on December 8, 2014. Our thoughts are with Chris at this difficult time.

Literature Awards Committee

Tammie Bob, Chair of the Literature Awards Committee (formerly the Literary Awards Committee) announced a December 10, 2014 deadline for submission of new

books to be considered by the committee. She said that this year, there had been many outstanding entries, nearly 60 of which were eligible under the guidelines.

Young People's Literature Awards Committee

Tanya Klasser, Chair of the Young People's Literature Awards Committee (formerly the Juvenile Awards Committee) reported that the group had received 30 submissions eligible for awards consideration. The committee will meet on January 21, 2015 to begin determination of the winners. She also noted that the committee had taken in \$90 from the November book sale. Congratulations to all involved. All unsold books will be donated to the Ogden School.

Proposed Changes to FAW Bylaws

The following are proposed changes to the FAW Bylaws. Members of the Board approved them at the December meeting. They must now be approved by the membership before taking effect.

Article VII Friends of American Writers Awards, pp. 55-57

SECTION 5. *Sentence one shall be changed to:* The Literature Awards Committee shall consist of no more than sixteen current FAW members appointed by the Literature Awards Chairman. Sentence two shall be eliminated.

Paragraph two shall be eliminated.

Paragraph three shall remain as is.

SECTION 6. *Sentence one shall be changed to:* The Young People's Literature Awards Committee shall consist of no more than ten current FAW members appointed by the Young People's Literature Awards Chairman.

Sentence two shall be eliminated.

Sentence three shall remain as is.

SECTION 7. Eligibility requirements for both categories of awards are as follows: The setting of the story is the Midwest or the author must either live in the Midwest or have strong Midwestern ties. The author may not have published more than three books (the third publication is eligible.) The book must have been published in the current calendar year.

SECTION 8. *The former Section 7 will become Section 8.* The titles of the committees shall be changed to Literature Awards and Young People's Literature Awards.

Nominating Committee

The following FAW members have been named to the Nominating Committee: Shirley Baugher (Chair), Marion Sherlock, Tammie Bob, Vivien Mortensen, and Marti Daniel.

As was mentioned in the December newsletter, there are nine positions open on the Board for 2015: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Literature Awards Chair, Young People's Literature Awards Chair, Revisions, and Yearbook. If you are interested in serving in one of these positions, please contact Shirley (shirleyba@rcn.com.) The group will meet in January to draw up a slate of candidates to be presented to the full membership for approval at the March meeting.

A Book on Every Bed


Many of you have heard of Amy Dickinson. She writes the "Ask Amy" advice column for the *Chicago Tribune*. This past December, she wrote a column to honor her mother's memory by asking her readers to participate in the "Book on Every Bed" project. Actually, it was the fifth

anniversary for her campaign to share a gift-giving tradition that is inexpensive and offers rewards that last a lifetime. She got the idea from famed historian David McCullough (author of *Truman*, *John Adams*, and many more.) McCullough said that every Christmas morning during his childhood, he and his siblings awoke to the gift of a wrapped book on their beds—delivered by Santa during the night. The concept is simple. Take a book (new or a childhood favorite),

wrap it on Christmas Eve (or whatever holiday you celebrate: Hanukkah, Kwanza, a birthday, etc.) and place it on a child's bed. In the morning, the children will wake to a gift that will outlast any toy; and lead the child into the world of literature.

Ms. Dickinson expressed her belief that reading will unlock untold opportunities, mysteries, and passions. "When you have a book and the ability to tell, read, and share stories," she said, "you gain access to the universe of

others' imaginations. If you have a book, you are never alone."

I thought this was an especially fitting idea for the Friends of American Writers. Even though the holiday season is over, the time for reading and giving books is not limited to one week in December. There are many occasions throughout the year when you can leave a book on a child's bed and allow him or her to wake up to a whole new world. It's a lovely tradition to carry on. 

FEATURE AN HOMAGE TO P. D. JAMES

The world lost many important artists in 2014: James McGregor Burns, Robin Williams, Nadine Gordimer, Maya Angelou, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Shirley Temple, Mike Nichols, and many more. Of these, no loss will be more greatly felt than that of Phyllis Dorothy (P.D.)

James, known as the "Queen of Crime" for her complex, multilayered mystery novels. Ms. James died at her home in Oxford, England on November 27. She was 94 years old.

In a career that spanned more than 50 years, she wrote 18 crime novels, picking up many awards for her works along the way, including her induction into the International Crime Writing Hall of Fame and the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America. She was made a doctor of letters by more than six universities and an honorary fellow of St. Hilda's College, Oxford, Downing College, and Girton College, Cambridge. She was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Royal Society of Arts.

A link with the golden age of detective writing that flourished in England between the wars, P. D. James was the successor to such notable crime writers as Agatha Christie (Hercule Poirot), Dorothy Sayers (Lord Peter Wimsey), and Margery Allingham (Albert Campion.) James herself is best known for her creation of the handsome, urbane, cerebral detective Adam Dalgliesh. Seven of her Dalgliesh



Feature by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

mysteries were adapted for the public television series *Mystery* and were shown in both Britain and the United States.

Phyllis Dorothy James was not destined to be a writer. She was born in Oxford in 1920 to Sidney and Dorothy James. Her homelife was not a happy one, mainly because her father, a civil servant,

thought it was not good to inflict too much education on his daughter and would not allow her to go to university after graduating from Cambridge Girls High School. When World War II broke out, she got a job handing out ration cards in Manchester. During the war, she married Ernest C.B. White, a doctor who served in the Royal Army Medical Corps. She later served as a Red Cross nurse until the war ended.

Her life changed forever when her husband returned from the war with a mental disability that left him with fits of violence so severe he had to be confined to the hospital. When it became clear he would not work again, Phyllis knew she would have to support her two daughters. She went to work for the National Health Service and studied hospital administration. The experience, though difficult at the time, would serve her well in her next career.

So how did it happen that the hospital administrator morphed into one of the greatest crime writers of all time? Turns out she always wanted to be a writer and that she was intrigued by the concept of mysteri-

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ous death. She was fond of saying, “When I first heard that Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall, I immediately wondered: Did he fall, or was he pushed?”

She was 39 when she finally decided to exercise her passion for writing. She chose the detective-story form because she liked reading detective stories, and she thought she had a better chance of being published if she chose a popular form. It took her three years to complete her first mystery novel, *Cover Her Face*, because she could only work on it early in the morning before she went off to her hospital job. In 1962, when she was 42 years old, the book came out, first in Britain and subsequently in the United States. She thought it might be a one-off and that she would later turn to straight fiction, but the immediate success of *Cover Her Face* persuaded her to stick with the detective story. She said, “I came to believe that it is perfectly possible to remain within the mystery genre and be a serious writer, saying something true about men and women and their relationships and the society in which they live.”

She did not devote herself exclusively to writing after her first book was published. Her husband died in 1964, and she became an administrator in the forensic science and criminal law divisions of the Department of Home Affairs. Working there allowed her to familiarize herself with the realistic procedural details that defined her novels. She rarely went into details of actual murders, but her descriptions of the state of the victims’ bodies were so dreadful and appalling they had an indelible impact on those who discovered them. Because Ms. James wanted her readers to share that impact, she made the descriptions as realistic as possible. No one could describe a murder scene and its aftermath better than P. D. James. Consider this passage from *The Lighthouse*, published in 2005:

They were ready to leave. The enclosing sheet seemed to have softened, defining rather than obliterating the sharp point of the nose and the bones of the quiescent arms. And now, thought Dalgliesh, the room will take possession of the dead. It seemed to him, as it always did, that the air was imbued with the finality and the mystery of death: the patterned wallpaper, the carefully positioned chairs, the Regency desk, all mocking with their normality and permanence the transience of human life.



Roy Marsden as Commander Adam Dalgliesh

Phyllis James retired from government service in 1979 and became ever after P.D. James (short and gender neutral.) Though she had a small, but devoted following, she did not attract a wide reading audience until 1980 with the publication of her breakthrough novel *Innocent Blood*. Since then, her book sales have soared, more than 10 million in the United States alone, and have been translated into many languages. While reviewers praise her for “transcending the genre,” she made no apologies for sticking to the detective mystery. She presented the mystery genre as a modern morality drama that adhered to enduring social values. People would read detective stories because they made the universe intelligible by sticking to established moral norms, and maintaining the sanctity of life. Because society is unable to solve its larger problems: war, racism, drugs, and violence; she believed readers would be attracted to a form in which a problem is presented, examined, and solved by the end of the book.

By far her most popular character is Commander Adam Dalgliesh. In creating him, she wanted a detective who was not only realistic, dedicated, and skilled; but one who was a complex, sensitive human being. Dalgliesh possessed all of these attributes. In addition to being the top Scotland Yard detective, he was a published poet and an incredibly romantic figure: tall, dark, handsome, intelligent, and a little aloof. Ms. James found him very sexy—an idealized version of what she would have like to be had she been born a man.

Roy Marsden played Dalgliesh in the PBS *Mystery* series. James thought he was a very good actor, but somewhat different from her Dalgliesh. Marsden was balding, had a mustache, and was not as meticulous in his dress as her Dalgliesh who had a full head of hair, no mustache, and would never wear his signet ring on the wrong finger.

Ms. James held many public positions during her lifetime. She served as a governor of the BBC, a magistrate in Middlesex and London, and a member of the board of the British Council. In 1983, she was appointed OBE and in 1991, she was made a life peer as Lady James of Holland Park.

P. D. James last novel, *Death Comes to Pemberly*, was published in 2011. It did not feature Dalgliesh. A sequel to Jane Austen’s *Pride and*


Prejudice, it was a whodunnit set in 1803, six years after the events of *Pride and Prejudice*. It was also made into a PBS miniseries and recently played in the United States.

Though she retired from public life, P.D. James never retired from her profession. Well into her nineties, she appeared at literary festivals and on cruises discussing her work right up until her death. She could be warm and comforting, but also possessed a “splinter of ice in her heart.” Though she had no problem depicting the dark side of human nature, she hated and feared violence. Her mystery novels were a way of exorcising this fear.

Upon hearing of her death, Roy Marsden, the actor who portrayed Adam Dalgliesh, said, “She used

to write, better than anything else I’ve read in my life, a description of place. She’d have made the greatest travel writer if she turned her pen to it.” Consider the following passage from *The Lighthouse*:

The unfolding landscape had the neatness of a needlework collage, the clusters of woodland worked in knots of dark green wool, the linen fields, some in muted colours of brown, pale gold and green, and the winding side roads and the rivers laid out in strips of glistening silk. The small towns with their square church towers were miracles of meticulous embroidery.

Nobody did it better. If there is a heaven, I’m betting Lady Phyllis Dorothy James is right up there entertaining the angels with celestial mysteries. 

The Reading Corner

Cover Her Face
P. D. James

Reviewed by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

*Cover her face,
Mine eyes dazzle: she died young.*

JOHN WEBSTER
The Duchess of Malfi

Cover Her Face, published in 1962, was the first mystery novel written by P. D. James and introduced her memorable Scotland Yard detective, Commander Adam Dalgliesh, to the world. The story takes place in the fictional Essex village, Chadfleet. It opens with a dinner party hosted by Mrs. Eleanor Maxie at Martingale, a medieval manor house. The cast of characters is introduced at the party: Mrs. Maxie’s son Stephen, a physician and her daughter Deborah Riscoe; Dr. Charles Epps, the family physician; the vicar Bernard Hicks; Mr. Felix Hearne, a solicitor and Deborah’s suitor; Miss Alice Liddell, warden at St. Mary’s Refuge for Girls; and Catherine Bowers, a guest at the estate, who is supposedly in a relationship with Stephen Maxie.

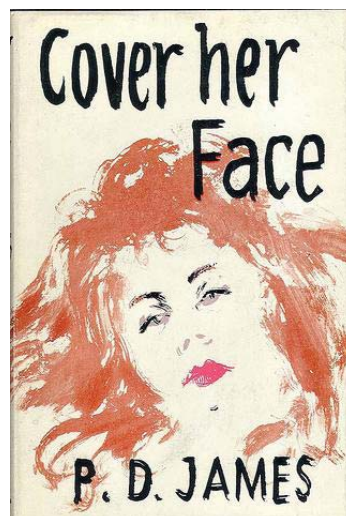
Mr. Maxie is a presence, but only as a dying figure in an upstairs bedroom who requires constant care. Servants attending the guests are Sally Jupp, an unmarried mother with an infant son; and Martha the Maxie’s elderly domestic servant who has an intense dislike of Sally. During the dinner, Deborah makes the prophetic observation that Sally will cause trouble.

It is clear early on that Sally will be the victim of the piece. What is not clear is who will be the villain, since of all the characters, Stephen is the only one who actually champions her. The others dislike her for one reason or another. Deborah becomes suspicious of her intentions when, on a trip to her brother’s hospital in London, she finds Sally giving a medicine vial containing Mr. Maxie’s tablets to Stephen. “Why,” she wonders, “is she giving the vial directly to Stephen rather than to Mrs. Maxie or herself.” She becomes even more suspicious when Sally turns up at the annual village fete hosted by the Maxie family wearing an exact replica of her (Deborah’s) dress and carrying the same accessories. After the fete, when the guests are gathered

in the dining room, Mrs. Maxie asks Sally to serve them. Sally responds that such a task would be unbecoming for someone to whom Stephen Maxie has just proposed. When Miss Liddell appears distraught about the announcement, Sally accuses her of being a “sex-starved old hypocrite” and threatens to reveal unsavory information about her. She then sweeps out and goes upstairs to her bedroom carrying a cup of milk—an important detail.

The next morning, Sally does not report to the kitchen. Martha complains that she has overslept again. When there is no response to repeated knocking at her locked bedroom door, Stephen and Hearne get a ladder and enter through the bedroom window. Inside, they find Sally Jupp’s lifeless body lying on her bed. She has been strangled and, quite possibly, drugged. Her infant son is crying in the crib next to the bed.

When informed of the incident, the local police request that Scotland Yard send an experienced homicide detective to deal with the case. Enter DCI Adam Dalgliesh and his detective Sergeant Martin. Hearne



Cover Her Face, First Edition Cover

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CHRISTINE BERN
1028 S. Butternut Circle
Frankfort, IL 60423

immediately remarks, “Well, they have sent the best.” In the ensuing investigation, we learn a great deal about the Maxie family, their guests, and Sally. Sally has been blackmailing her uncle for money that will enable her to leave England and join her husband (yes, she is not really an unwed mother, but pretends to be one in order to gain sympathy and protect her husband’s job) in South America. She never had any intention of marrying Stephen Maxie. She only wanted to annoy the family. Her uncle is an unsavory character himself, having cheated Sally out of a modest trust fund, a fact he does not want revealed. We learn that Martha has been secretly drugging Sally so that she would oversleep, be discredited, and be dismissed from Martingale. Mrs. Maxie, at first impressed with Sally’s work, turns against her when she learns of the supposed engagement to

Stephen. Catherine sees Sally for the schemer she is and wants her gone. Then there is Derek Pullen, a young local man hopelessly in love with Sally—a love that was not reciprocated—and willing to do anything for her. But Sally was using him, as she used everyone else.

One by one, Dalgliesh interviews them and dismisses those who had no compelling reason for wanting Sally dead—or at least no reason that would have resulted in her murder. We are privileged to go along with him, share his thought processes, until, in a very Poirot-like move, he calls all of the suspects into the drawing room, recounts the steps each took leading up to the murder, and reveals the murderer. At the end, James leaves us all breathless and waiting for the next Dalgliesh case, especially since she has introduced the prospect of a romance between Dalgliesh and Deborah Riscoe.

Cover Her Face was well received by critics and the reading public, although James herself later described it as the least favorite among her books. One reviewer wrote:

[James] first detective story is immediately pleasing and impressive. The pace is deliberate, the characterization of the members of an English county family very well done, and the central character of Sally Jupp—a servant girl with imagination and a love of power—most unusual, but compelling. Inspector Dalgliesh is perhaps too quietly competent in his disclosure of Sally’s killer—and, despite the title, the girl isn’t a Duchess of Malfi.

A television version of the novel, starring Roy Marsden as Dalgliesh, was produced for Britain’s ITV network in 1985. BBC Radio 4 subsequently broadcast a radio serial of the book starring Hugh Grant.

