



APRIL NEWSLETTER
2016-2017 NUMBER 8

Editor: Shirley Baugher
Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org



President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*

In April we will hold our annual meeting at which time we'll elect new officers and board members and vote on a new standing rule (see inside pages for the details). In addition, copies of our annual report will be available so you can see what our committees have been doing.

I can tell you without a doubt, however, that our busiest committees have been the two awards committees. Tammie Bob has done an excellent job chairing the literature awards committee, which considers adult-level books, while the young people's literature awards committee has been guided for most of the year by Marti Daniel. Unfortunately, though, Marti had to resign from her position as chair due to the sudden illness of her son. Thanks to the rest of the committee, however, all end-of-the-year duties were handled beautifully.

This year, Friends of American Writers will be recognizing a total of six authors who either wrote about the Midwest or are Midwesterners themselves. For the literature awards committee, the three winners are:

- Carry On* by Lisa Fenn (nonfiction)
- The Nix* by Nathan Hill (novel)
- The Monster's Daughter* by Michelle Pretorius (novel)

And for the young people's literature awards committee, the winners are:


- Real Cowboys* by Kate Hoefler (picture book)
- Salt to the Sea* by Ruta Sepetys (YA)
- The Forbidden Orchid* by Sharon Biggs Waller (YA)

As of now, four of our authors have responded positively to our invitation for the May 12 luncheon, and we're still hoping that Nathan Hill will also be able to join us.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who contributed to our Patrons Fund because, without you, we wouldn't have been able to give any prizes at all!

If the Patrons Fund has slipped your mind, however, or you've been meaning to contribute but just haven't had a chance to sit down and write out a check, it's not too late. Donors who get their checks for \$25 or more to us by April 10 will be listed on the program, but even if you miss that deadline, we'll make sure that your name is listed in our newsletter.

Just send your checks to:
Dori Roskin, Treasurer
25 East Superior #1506
Chicago, IL 60611

Also, don't forget to mark Friday, May 12 on your calendar because you won't want to miss the most important and most festive luncheon of the year! 

A P R I L P R O G R A M

Elizabeth Berg

The Story Behind the Stories

By VIVIAN MORTENSEN

"Heartwrenching...hilarious....Berg sits somewhere between Anne Tyler and Alice Hoffman."
—CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Bestselling author Elizabeth Berg will be our speaker at the April 12th luncheon. Best known as the author of *Open House*, an Oprah Book Club choice and tv movie, she has written 22 novels, two collections



Elizabeth Berg

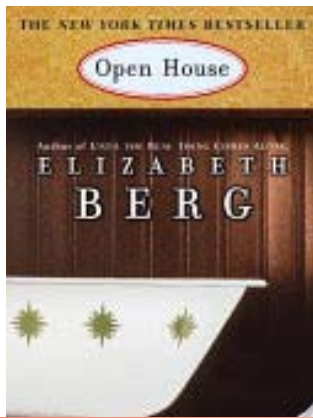
of short stories and two works of nonfiction. Rather than focusing just on her latest book, she will discuss how she creates her characters, how she chooses her plots, how she decides what to write, and much more. There'll be time for questions afterwards as well as a book signing.

Born in St. Paul she grew up on army bases, moving around a lot. Before becoming a writer, she was a registered nurse for ten years. She claims, "That was my 'school' for writing—taking care of patients [which] taught me a lot about human nature, about hope and

Continued ►

fear and love and loss and regret and triumph and especially about relationships--all things that I tend to focus on in my work.” She is divorced with two grown daughters, three grandchildren, two dogs and a cat and lives in Oak Park.

Berg is known as a women’s writer - she specializes in the day-to-day concerns of



women. Starting over after a spouse dies (*The Year Of Pleasures*, 2005), opening your house to boarders when your husband walks out (*Open House*, 2000), going to a class reunion (*The Last Time I Saw You*, 2010), and the life of George Sand (*The Dream Lover*, 2015) are among her many plotlines. ■■



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the April 12, 2017 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 9. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please contact only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Pat Adelberg (847-588-0911).

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 is \$45 payable by check (preferred) in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. For group reservations, 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.

Literature Awards

Literary Awards
TAMMI BOB, *Chair*

This year we again have three winners, but we did not rank them as the votes were quite even.

Winners in alphabetic order:

- Lisa Fenn for her memoir “Carry On”
- Nathan Hill for his novel “The Nix”
- Michelle Pretorius for her novel “The Monster’s Daughter”

Reviews of these books will appear in the May newsletter.

Young People’s Literature Awards
MARTI DANIEL, *Chair*
TANYA KLASSER, *Interim Chair*

The Young People’s Literature Awards Committee has selected three winners from among the many excellent submissions for 2017. They are:

- *Real Cowboys*, by Kate Hoefler, a realistic and poetic picture book about the wide open West, the myth of rough riding cowboys and cowgirls.
- *The Forbidden Orchid* by Sharon Biggs Waller, tells about the adventures of a British girl in China, hunting for the orchid that will save her family.
- *Salt to the Sea*, by Ruta Sepetys tells the story of four individuals in WWII who make their way to the ill fated MV Wilhelm Gustloff.

Membership Update

IDA HAGMAN, *Chair*

Ida announced that FAW now has 91 members plus two Sustaining Clubs. This is an increase of four members since last month.

Foundation Fund Update

As was noted in our March issue, FAW uses the Foundation Fund to award scholarships to worthy new writers at Roosevelt and National Louis Universities. The scholarships are funded from the Fund’s interest money. Foundation Fund Chair, Linda Gustafson, announced that she and FAW member Tammi Bob are working with Columbia College of Chicago to establish a scholarship there. Present plans are for two scholarships to be awarded next year.

A big thank you to Betsey Means for her excellent presentation at our March meeting: Picasso, Picasso, and Paris. Members loved her interpretation of

Gertrude Stein and sharing inside story of her relationship with the great Pablo Picasso. FAW member Ida Hagman snapped this photo during the performance.



Betsey Means with Gertrude Stein

FAW 2017-18 Election

The 2017 Nominating Committee has met and makes the following recommendations for 2017-18. The Membership will be asked to vote on the slate at the April meeting.

President: ROBERTA GATES (one year)

Vice President: CHRISTINE SPATARA

Secretary: KAREN BURNETT

Treasurer: VIVIAN MORTENSEN

Literature Awards Committee:

TAMMI BOB

Young People’s Literature Awards: ANGELA GALL

Program Committee: KAREN PULVER

Revisions: DIANA MARTIN

Foundation Fund: CHRIS BERN

Members of the Nominating Committee were: Pat Adelberg, Tammi Bob, Karen Burnett, Ida Hagman, and Tanya Klasser

New Standing Rule

At our annual meeting in April, the following standing rule will be presented for a vote:

Standing Rule 8

In general, the fee and complimentary luncheon costs for any one speaker or program should not exceed \$500. Total

program costs for the year shall not exceed \$4,000.

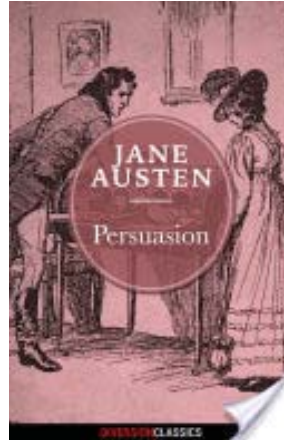
READERS & REVIEWERS

By ROBERTA GATES

Readers & Reviewers Takes a New Look at Jane Austen's Persuasion

Ida Hagman, who taught literature at the College of Du Page, will lead the April 12 Readers & Reviewers discussion of *Persuasion*, one of Jane Austen's most delightful and touching novels. The group will meet in The Fortnightly boardroom after the board concludes its meeting at about 10:30 a.m. All are welcome.


Persuasion, the shortest and probably the most autobiographical of Austen's work, tells the story of Anne Eliot, who, upon the advice of her family, refused a proposal from her first love. Frederick Wentworth was not wealthy or accomplished enough to be acceptable to Anne's family. For eight long years Anne has regretted her refusal. In the meantime her Wentworth has had a very successful career in the Navy and through a variety of circumstances returns to Anne's social circle.



The story is set in the country houses of Somerset, the charming town of Lyme Regis, and the fashionable Regency town of Bath with its assemblies, concerts, and shopping. The style is witty, the characters are well drawn, and as with all of Austen's novels, there are underlying questions about what really matters in life. Is it status and wealth? Whom should we trust? Who deserves our love?

Read the book and share your thoughts on these matters and others at Readers & Review-

ers. Drop-ins are welcome, but if you know that you're coming let Ida know by emailing her at iehagman@gmail.com.

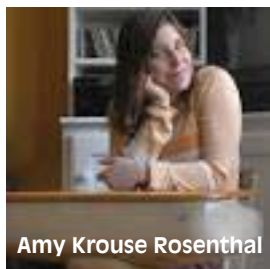
See you there! 

FEATURE ARTICLE

by Shirley Baugher

Letter to an Unknown Woman: Amy Krouse Rosenthal

CHICAGO
LOSES A BELOVED
AUTHOR OF
CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE



Amy Krouse Rosenthal

Just one more walk around the garden, One more stroll along the shore, One more memory I can dream upon, until I dream no more. Just one more time perhaps the dawn will wait, And one more prayer it's not too late, To gather one more rose before I say goodbye And close the garden gate.

—Burton Lane, Alan Jay Lerner

By now, many of you have heard of Amy Krouse Rosenthal. She was the amazing woman who, upon learning that she had terminal cancer, decided that she would leave this world not with a whisper, but a bang-- and according to a "Plan Be" filled with all the things she loved to do.

In her last essay, Amy Rosenthal wrote that in September of 2015, she was experiencing pains on her right side symptomatic of appendicitis. One evening, the pains were sufficiently severe that she and her husband Jason went to the hospital emergency room, fully expecting to be told that Amy's pains would necessitate an appendectomy. After several hours and many tests, that was not the diagnosis they received. Amy had ovarian cancer, and it was terminal. Just like that, Amy's earth stopped spinning on its axis, the moon disappeared, and the music of time ceased to play. So many things that should have been on Amy's horizon dipped below it, and her world became a place of "would nots."

She would not take that trip with her husband and her parents to South Africa.

She would not tour Asia with her mother.

She would not have a writer's residency in some exotic locale. She would not see her children marry and have children of their own.

She would not grow old with her husband and experience the "best that was yet to be" promised by the poet Robert Browning.

Would not, would not, would not.

Continued 

Her past had been lived. Her present was limited. She had no future. Of all the things that crowded her mind that fateful evening, the foremost was Jason—her husband of nearly thirty years. She wanted more time to be with him, to look at him, to share the joys and pains of everyday existence with him. She wanted MORE.

Who Was Amy?

Amy Krouse Rosenthal was a Chicago writer, film maker, and radio talk show host. She attended Tufts University and went to work in California after graduation. After a short time, she moved back to Chicago to pursue her writing career. And write she did. Between 2005 and 2017 (the year of her death), she published more than thirty children's books. Three of her books made the Best Books for Family Literacy in one year.

The New York Times called her books "terrific." She had a lively imagination that could take the most mundane subjects and make them uplifting. Imagine a piglet who hates being messy. That is *Little Oink*. Then there is *Spoon*, about about a once-happy little utensil who decides that life as a Spoon isn't so great; and that Fork, Knife, and Chopsticks have it so much better. But do they? By the end of the book, Spoon has discovered he has unique qualities and reminds us how important it is to celebrate what makes us each special. *I Wish You More* is a book of good wishes that appeals not just to children, but to readers of all ages: wishes for curiosity and wonder, wishes for friendship and strength, and wishes for laughter and peace. Then there is the magical *Uni the Unicorn*. Uni, who is like all the other unicorns in so many ways, is different in one. She wants to become friends with a real, human girl and she firmly believes that this is possible. Piglets, utensils, unicorns: all I can say is, I wish I had written every one of them.

Many of Amy's books made the NYT's Best Seller List: *I Wish You More*, *Uni the Unicorn*, *Plant a Kiss*, *Exclamation Mark*, *Cookies*, and *Duck, Rabbit*. (*Duck, Rabbit* was read at President Obama's White House during an Easter Egg Roll.) In addition to bringing magic to lives of children through her books, Amy was a frequent contributor to Chicago's NPR affiliate WBEZ and to the TED (technology, entertainment, design) conference.

Amy wrote two memoirs, both of which became best sellers. *Encyclopedia for an Ordinary Life*, published in 2005, was named one of Amazon's top ten memoirs of the decade. NPR said of it, "What a delight it was to spend time with this "ordinary" person, learning her quirks and hangups, her likes and dislikes, her everyday (and not) adventures, including the inspired way she attempted to get out of paying a parking ticket—all arranged encyclopedia style from A ("Amy", "Anxious Things That Make Me," "Ayn Rand") to Y ("You"), with appropriate cross references and clever drawings." Her second memoir, a follow-up to the first, was called *Textbook Amy Krouse Rosenthal* and was published in 2016. It is the first book to include an interactive text messaging component.

Like many of us, Amy made short films using her iPhone and Flip camera. Some ask viewers to interact, some are stand alone social pieces, and some build on each other. Her films

include: *17 Things I Made*, *Today is a Gift*, *ATM: Always Trust Magic*, *The Kindness Thought Bubble*, and *The Beckoning of Lovely*. *Beckoning* was composed of a series of events held at Chicago's Millennium Park between 2008 and 2011. For the first one, held on August 8, 2008, Rosenthal invited viewers to meet her in the park at 8:00 p.m. to make a thing together. The "thing" was a party. She expected perhaps 30 people; 400 showed up. They sang, danced, exchanged flowers, even fell in love. It was an evening to remember.

Beyond Biography

But all of this is the stuff of biography—and Amy was so much more than biography. She was a joyful spirit about whom her friend John Green (*The Fault in Our Stars*) wrote, "As a parent, a writer, a spouse, and a friend, Amy Krouse Rosenthal was what I wanted to be when I grew up." Amy met the love of her life, Jason Brian Rosenthal, on a blind date set up by her uncle in 1989, when they were both 24. For Amy, who initially had "zero expectations" for the date, it was love at first sight. By the end of the evening, she knew she wanted to marry him. It took Jason a year to arrive at the same conclusion. But once he did, they were married and embarked on their "happily ever after" journey. They had three children, two boys and one girl, all grown now, and their lives really were "such stuff as dreams are made on." Sadly, "happily ever after" was shorter than they had hoped.

Following that fateful emergency room visit in 2015, Amy and Jason entered a phase of their lives Amy called "Plan Be". She continued to write. He took time from his law practice to care for and be with her. For as long as they could, they lived what remained of her life in the present. They did the things they enjoyed. Amy even got a tattoo, its message suggested by a reader: the word "More." She remarked that it was her first spoken word and might well be her last.

You May Want to Marry My Husband

Now I come to the part that brought Amy Krouse Rosenthal to national attention. In March 2017, Amy wrote an essay that was published in the Sunday New York Times. It was called, "You May Want to Marry My Husband." She called it "a valentine that didn't come in a vase." In it, she shared with readers all of the extraordinary qualities of the man to whom she had been married for 26 years in the hope that one very special person would come forward and share with him the years she would not have. She spoke of his style, his intelligence, his love of music, his sense of humor, his whimsy, his ability to cook and fix things around the house, his artistic talent, and his good looks. She noted wistfully how she would miss looking at his handsome face. (If you would like to read the entire piece, here is the link: www.nytimes.com/2017/03/03/style/modern-love-you-may-want-to-marry-my-husband.html) Ten days after the essay was published, Amy Krouse Rosenthal died.

Letter to An Unknown Woman

I called this piece, "Letter to an Unknown Woman," because, even though I was not fortunate enough to have known Amy Krouse Rosenthal personally, I wanted to write about her. I

hope her family will not think me presumptuous for doing this. I just want to tell her that she has made an impact on my life. ■■

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Dear Amy,

I did not know you personally, and sadly, now I will never know you. I really wish I had. You seem like the kind of woman with whom I would like to have spent time and shared thoughts. As a writer, I feel a kinship with you. I admire your style—your ability to connect with readers in a very personal way. Your ability to say things with insight and humor. Your optimism and magical thinking. Your generous spirit and loving demeanor. And, if I may borrow from one of my favorite writers, “the pilgrim soul in you.” I am sorry they were taken so soon.

I loved your generosity in wanting to share your husband’s extraordinary qualities with another special someone. Sadly, I cannot take you up on your suggestion. Two reasons: I am old enough to be his mother, and I am already married to my own Prince Charming (nearly 50 years.) I wish I could have given you a few of those years—but that was not within my power.

I do want you to know, that I believe you lived more and felt more in the short time you were here than most people who were granted much longer lives. You had a profession you loved, and you were good at it. You had a husband you adored, and he felt the same about you. You had children whom I am sure you raised to be decent, caring individuals. You had a sense of wonder few of us will ever experience, and you shared that wonder with the world. Your legacy is rich and enduring. While I know you would trade all of this for more time on this earth with those you loved, know this: you mattered!”

I will read and share your books. I will pore over your memoirs. I might even get a “More” tattoo. Through all of these, I will, at least, make your acquaintance. So good-bye, Amy. “And flights of angels speed you to your rest.”

Love,
Shirley

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Amy Krouse Rosenthal died on March 13, 2017. She was 51 years old. Interestingly, as I wrote this piece, WBEZ was playing “Dance of the Blessed Spirits.” ■■

FAW Member Goes to Cambridge

(NOTE: FAW member and past president Corene Anderson has been studying at Cambridge for several summers, and I have been begging her to share her experiences with us. This month, she has been kind enough to acknowledge my request. Thank you so much, Corene.)

Medieval Moments

by CORENE ANDERSON, FAW member and President 2011-13

Happiness is...receiving my 16th catalogue to study at Cambridge University in England. It has been my joy since I first discovered Cambridge, the town and learned of its magical

history. Subsequent to my initial discovery, I returned to study at this famed university. As a lifelong learner, the story of the town, as well as weekly classes on England’s amazing history, inspire me each year. The daily lectures are both stimulating and rewarding. They add depth to my understanding of both English and global history. The extensive bibliography keeps me busy reading prior to attending classes.

This year, my studies will include Alfred the Great and the Anglo Saxons and the demise of the Roman Empire. Fun!

If you are interested in knowing more about the Cambridge University International Summer Program, I would be happy to share my information with you. ■■

The Reading Corner

Six Four
Hideo Yokoyama

Reviewed by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

Six Four is a book that succeeds on so many levels. It is a first rate detective story. It is a police procedural that informs

readers of the painstaking steps that go into solving crimes—sometimes successful, sometimes not. It is an insight into the often-fractious relationship between the government and the press. It is an examination of the people’s need to know versus the victim’s right to privacy. It is study of family dynamics: how well do we really know those we love and how well do they know us? And, most importantly, it is a story of revenge.

Let me begin by explaining the title. *Six Four* refers to a fourteen-year old unsolved kidnapping/murder case upon

which the statute of limitations is about to expire. After nearly fifteen years, the police are no closer to finding the killer of the seven-year old victim than they were when the crime took place, and the press have not let them forget their failure. The case resurfaces when the young daughter of a prominent citizen is kidnapped under circumstances very similar to those of *Six Four*—right down to the ransom note and instructions for finding the girl. Though the government would like to keep a lid on the details of the case in order to facilitate their investiga-

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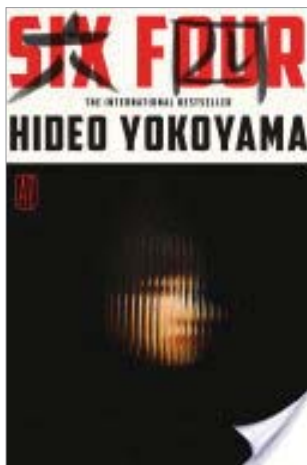


SHIRLEY BAUGHER
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Chicago, IL 60614

tions, the press has gotten wind of it and is clamoring for information.

The story takes place in an area known as Prefecture D in the Japanese countryside outside Tokyo. There are three main organizations involved in the case: the administration, the ministry of media relations, and the press. The main character is one Yoshinobu Mikami, a former detective now

forced to serve as director of media relations. Mikami was lead detective on *Six Four*, and the case still haunts him. It is Mikami's job, and a thankless one, to feed reporters as much information as possible without giving them anything that could jeopardize an investigation or violate the privacy of innocent parties. The book opens with a hit and run in which the perpetrator is a pregnant woman who happens to be the wife of a government official. The government refuses to divulge her name both because



of her condition and her husband's position. This results in a stand-off between media relations and the press, with the press threatening to go on strike.

Matters escalate quickly. The daughter of a prominent citizen goes missing in circumstances very similar to *Six Four*. Again, the issue arises: how much to tell the press and how much to hold

back. A key matter of contention is the government's refusal to divulge the girl's name and the name of her father. While the case brings out Mikami's investigative instincts, he is ordered to deal only with media relations. Two other distractions impede Mikami's actions. His own daughter has disappeared, although it is clear she has run away and is not a victim of foul play. And Tokyo is sending a commissioner to Prefecture D to visit the site of *Six Four* and question the girl's father. It is Mikami's responsibility

to get approval from the girl's father for the visit, which to his surprise, he does. But the father disappears a few days before the commissioner's arrival and cannot be found. Mikami is distraught over the purpose of this visit. Is the commissioner really coming to drag up *Six Four*, or is he coming to shake up Media Relations and destroy Mikami's chance of returning to Criminal Investigations? Tokyo refuses to divulge the purpose of the visit. And, Mikami does not want the commissioner to learn of the new kidnapping.

Yokoyama does a masterful job of keeping all these balls in the air for over 500 pages. He lets events unfold very slowly—almost maddeningly so—and methodically builds to a surprising conclusion. *Six Four* won many awards in Japan, including the Best Japanese Crime Fiction Book of the Year Award, and sold more than a million copies there in its first week of publication. It quickly became a best seller in the U. K. as well. *Six Four* is Yokoyama's sixth novel and his first to be published in English. ■