



SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER  
2017-2018 NUMBER 1

Editor: Shirley Baugher  
Designer: Norman Baugher

# FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org



## President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*

Welcome back to another year of Friends of American Writers, which—as incredible as it seems—is our 95th!

It's hard to believe that the summer is over, but thanks to our industrious board members and committees, we are ready to begin another season of celebrating books, authors and the arts in general.

Karen Pulver and her committee have done a great job of arranging for a wide variety of programs, including authors Luis Alberto Urrea and Howard

Reich, the well-known *Chicago Tribune* columnist, as well as a curator from the Chicago Historical Museum and the always-popular Betsy Means who'll be portraying Clara Schumann. This is only a sampler, though—there's much, much more—so mark your calendars now because you won't want to miss a single meeting! I also want to thank Pat Adelberg and her committee for working so diligently on our yearbook, which will be ready for distribution in a lovely “lunar blue” color at the September meeting. Ida Hagman, our membership chair, was also kept busy this summer sending out dues reminders and compiling a final list of our members.

And I don't want to forget Carol Eshaghy, our Fortnightly sponsor, who made the arrangements for all of this year's meetings. As always, we are delighted to be at The Fortnightly of Chicago, whose lovely setting and excellent cuisine make every meeting special.

On a personal note, let me add that, although it will be good to see all of you, I am not particularly eager for you to see me, since I am in a heavy back brace due to fall (from a wobbly stool—watch out for those!) which resulted in a couple of cracked vertebrae. I am feeling fine, though, and am eager to begin another season of what has long been my favorite club—Friends of American Writers! 

## SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

### Luis Alberto Urrea poet, novelist, and essayist

by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

This month, FAW is privileged to welcome Luis Alberto Urrea, a Mexican American poet, novelist, and essayist and one of our time's most important literary figures. Urrea was born in 1955 in Tijuana, Mexico. Though he is best known for his poetry, he excels in many literary fields and is the winner of numerous awards. His first book, *Across the Wire*, was named a New York Times Notable Book and won the Christopher Award. In 1994, He won the Colorado Book Award in poetry for *The Fever of Being*, as well as the Western States Book Award in poetry. He was included in *The 1996 Best American Poetry* collection.

The awards kept coming. In 1999, he won the American Book Award for his memoir *Nobody's Son: Notes from an American Life*. His book of short stories, *Six Kinds of Sky*, was named



Luis Alberto Urrea

2002 small press Book of the Year in fiction by the editors of *ForeWord* magazine. *The Devil's Highway* won the 2004 Lannam Literary Award, the Border Regional Library Association's Southwest Book Award, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and for the Pacific Rim Kiriya Prize. It was optioned for a film by CDI Productions and was adopted as the 2010 One Book for Sac State. His short story “Amapola” won the Edgar Award in 2010 for best mystery short story. It can be found in the anthology *Phoenix Noir*.

**Biography** Urrea is the son of a Mexican father and an American mother. He attended the University of California, San Diego where he earned an undergraduate degree in writing. Then it was on to graduate studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Luis Alberto Urrea has led a very interesting life. He served as a relief worker in Tijuana, then went on to become a film extra and columnist-editor-cartoonist for several publications.

Continued 

He moved to Boston where he taught expository writing and fiction workshops at Harvard University. He also had teaching assignments at the Massachusetts Bay Community College and the University of Colorado. He was a writer in residence at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The peripatetic Mr. Urrea now lives in Naperville, Illinois and is a professor of creative writing at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**A Most Versatile Writer** Luis Urrea is adept at both fiction and non-fiction writing. His historical novel, *The Humming-*

*bird's Daughter* and *Queen of America*, recounts the story of his great aunt, Teresita Urrea, who was known as "The Saint of Cabora" and the "Mexican Joan of Arc." A second factual work, *The Devil's Highway*, written in 2004, is a non-fiction account of a group of Mexican immigrants who became lost in the Arizona desert. Both are invaluable studies of a people and a time in our history. It will be fascinating to visit with Luis Alberto Urrea and share his experiences. You won't want to miss this exciting program. ■■



## FAW Offers Scholarship to Columbia College Student

By Roberta Gates

We are pleased to announce that the Foundation of Friends of American Writers has formalized an agreement with Columbia College Chicago to provide a \$1,200 scholarship beginning in November of 2017 to a deserving student pursuing a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in its creative writing program.

Our Foundation already gives a \$1,200 scholarship to a graduate student who's studying writing at National Louis University—something we certainly plan to continue doing. It is with special pleasure, however, that we add Columbia College Chicago as a beneficiary since it is home to one of the best-known creative writing programs in both the city and the state.

Columbia College Chicago, which was founded in 1890, is located at 600 S. Michigan Ave. Its MFA creative writing program was established in 1991 and boasts a large faculty, which includes Joe Meno, who spoke to us in October of 2015, and the internationally acclaimed writer Aleksandar Hemon. After Meno's novel *Hairstyles of the Damned* was published in 2004, he was selected for the Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award program, while Hemon, who is from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was tapped for a Mac Arthur grant the same year.

Special thanks go to Linda Gustafson, Foundation chair, and Tammie Bob, a board member and alumna of Columbia College Chicago, for pursuing this exciting opportunity and making it happen! ■■



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the September 13, 2017 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 10. 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). If you wish a permanent reservation, please mention it to Lorraine or Pat when you call. All Board members automatically have permanent reservations. Also, a reminder that no permanent reservations are held over from last year to this year.

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 W. Bellevue Place. The cost is \$45 per person 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 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.

### A New Sustaining Club

We are proud to welcome the Bad Dog Book Club of Glen Ellyn as our newest sustaining club. It's great to have you on board, and we hope your members will be able to make many of our meetings.

### 2017-18 PROGRAMS

*FAW has an exciting lineup of programs schedule for the coming year. I'm sure you won't want to miss a single one!*

#### Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Award-winning author Luis Alberto Urrea

#### Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Actor and storyteller Megan Wells, *Classic Ghost Stories*

#### Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Author and *Chicago Tribune* journalist Howard Reich - *Prisoner of Her Past: A Son's Memoir*

#### Wednesday, December 13, 2017

Dramatist Betsy Means with pianist Karen Berk - *Virtuoso: The Life of Clara Schumann*

#### Wednesday, January 10, 2018

Chicago History Museum curator Britta Keller Arendt, *Civil War Wear*

#### Thursday, February 15, 2018

Author Sonali Dev, *Bollywood Romance*

#### Wednesday, March 14, 2018

Annette Baldwin, *Literary Lovers*

#### Wednesday, April 11, 2018

Playwright and song writer Katie Dahl, *Stories and Songs from Door County*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Friday, May 5, 2018**

Annual Awards Luncheon

### **FAW Board, 2017-18**

*In case you missed it, here is a list of the FAW Board members for the coming year.*

#### **President**

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#### **Young people's literature awards chair**

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#### **Lorraine Campione**

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#### **Welcome Back Members**

IDA HAGMAN, *Membership Chair*

At our September meeting, members will receive two membership applications to pass on to friends they think would enjoy FAW.

As you know, Friends of American Writers has been recognizing emerging Midwestern authors since 1926. In addition, it assists promising creative writing students by presenting them with scholarships. Members have an opportunity to serve on the awards committees and to help with the tasks of running the organization. In addition to the important work of supporting emerging writers, FAW has delicious luncheons at the historic Fortnightly, entertaining speakers, and best of all, members who love to read!

If you know someone who would like to join—and we bet that you do—consider bringing her/him to our September luncheon. Luis Urrea, our speaker, is a Chicago treasure!

You'll also be able to pick up your yearbook at the September meeting, thanks to Pat Adelberg and her committee who have spent the summer working to get them ready.

And if you haven't sent in your dues yet, please bring a check for \$50 to our September luncheon or mail me a check.

Ida Hagman  
93 S. Park Blvd.  
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

#### **Members Who Went Traveling**

It was good to hear from a couple of our peripatetic members over the summer.

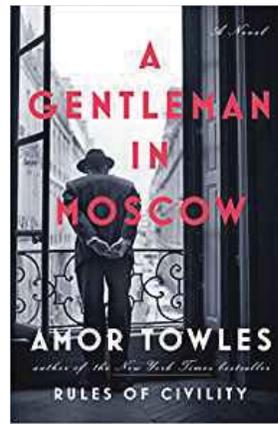
**Christine Spatara** spent a memorable couple of weeks in England, and **Corene Anderson** continued her scholarly studies at Selwyn College, University of Cambridge. Christine documented her travels on Facebook. Corene sent me a lovely postcard of the college in springtime. ■■

# READERS & REVIEWERS

By SHIRLEY BAUGHER

Our next discussion group for Readers and Reviewers will be held on November 8, 2017 at 10:30 a.m. in the Board

meeting room at the Fortnightly Club. Your editor (Shirley Baugher) will be leading the discussion. The book I have selected is the excellent *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles, author of the wildly popular *Rules of Civility*. *Gentleman* came out in 2016 and immediately landed on the New York Times Best Seller list. It remains there to this day. The book is a fascinating story of life in Russia from the end of the Revolution to the end of World War II. The story is told by a Russian count, Alexander Rostov, who escaped the firing squad by virtue of his service to revolutionary principles prior to 1918. Instead of execution, he is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand Hotel in Moscow across the street from the Kremlin. He will never be allowed to leave the premises, not even for a breath of fresh air in front of the hotel. While the count had lived in the hotel when his country home was confiscated by the revolutionaries, he is not permitted to keep his elaborate



suite of rooms. Instead he is sent to an attic room formerly used by servants of visiting dignitaries. He is allowed to take clothing, his books, and a few personal items into his confinement. But Count Rostov is nothing if not resilient. And, in Faulkner's words, he not only survives, he prevails. For over two decades, he becomes an observer of some of the most tumultuous years of Russian history from inside the hotel: who comes and goes from Moscow,

what intrigues are plotted against the communist regime, what goes on among members of the hotel staff—who is and who is not to be trusted—, He even becomes involved in the changing circumstances of the state through his guardianship of a young girl left at the hotel and eventually, in his care. But will he ever see the outside world again? For the answer to that question, you will have to read the book—and, of course, come to the Readers and Reviewers discussion. I'll be looking for you. ■

**I**T'S HARD to believe the summer of '17 is over. Wasn't it only yesterday FAW had its June luncheon and honored those selected to win its 2017 awards? And yet, September is upon us. Before we say a final farewell to summer, however, let's take a moment to reflect on those happenings—large and small—that made it memorable.

## THE THINGS WE DID LAST SUMMER

by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

### Here's What Happened in June 2017

- For you movie buffs, you might remember that "Wonder Woman" directed by Patty Jenkins was released and earned over \$100 million in North American in its opening weekend. This was a domestic record for a female director.
- President Donald Trump announced that the US would be withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, inciting criticism worldwide.
- There was a terrorist attack in Borough Market, London by three men who drove their van into a crowd of pedestrians. The terrorists then proceeded to stab and kill seven people and wound 48. The attackers were shot dead by British police.
- Indian author Arundhati Roy published her second novel *The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness*—20 years after her first, *The God of Small Things*, for which she won the Man Booker Award for fiction in 1997.
- Ex-FBI chief James Comey testified to a US Senate com-

mittee that US President Donald Trump told "lies plain and simple".

- At the 71st annual Tony Awards: "Dear Evan Hansen" took the honors for best musical and "Oslo" for best play.
- In sports, the Pittsburgh Penguins defeated Nashville Predators, 2-0 in the Stanley Cup finals, the first defending champions to do so for nearly 20 years; and the Golden State Warriors won their second NBA title in three years over the Cleveland Cavaliers.
- Otto Warmbier was returned to the US in an unresponsive state after being held in a North Korean jail for 17 months. He died shortly thereafter.
- The US Senate approved new sanctions against Russia as punishment for meddling in the 2016 election; Russian President Vladimir Putin promptly cut American diplomats in Russia by 755 in response to American sanctions.
- The US Library of Congress named Tracey K. Smith as Poet Laureate.
- A fire in the Grenwell Tower block in London, England, killed 79 persons and injured 37.
- Amazon announced that it was buying Whole Foods for \$13.7 billion.
- A collision in Japanese waters between U.S.S. Fitzgerald and ACX Crystal, a Philippine cargo ship, killed seven US sailors.
- Prince Harry stunned much of the world by claiming that no one in UK royal family wanted to be King or Queen.

- Adam West, the American actor best known for his portrayal of Batman, died from leukemia at 88. Death also took A. R. Gurney (playwright, *Love Letters*), Glenna Headly (actress), Michael Bond (creator of the beloved Paddington Bear), and sportscaster Jimmy Piersall.

## What Happened in July 2017

- North Korea tested its first successful intercontinental ballistic missile into Sea of Japan.
- 101 people were reported shot in Chicago over the 4th of July weekend.
- The Illinois State Senate voted to override Governor Bruce Rauner's veto and approved the state's first budget in more than two years, the longest any state had gone without a budget.
- A giant iceberg broke away from Larsen C Ice Shelf in Antarctica. It was about 6,000 sq km in length.
- Reince Priebus resigned as Chief of Staff to US President Donald Trump, the shortest non-interim tenure ever.
- General John Kelly was appointed the new Chief of Staff by the President.
- We said goodbye to film stars Elsa Martinelli, Jeanne Moreau, and Martin Landau; to designer Kenneth Jay Lane; and to playwright Sam Shepard.

## What Happened in August 2017

- London's famous Big Ben clock chimed for the last time before a four year restoration process.
- A total solar eclipse visible from North America occurred on August 22.
- Northwestern and Notre Dame football coach Ara Parseghian left us; along with Judith Jones (famed cookbook author), Barbara Cook (Broadway star and singer), Dick

Gregory (civil rights activist and comedian), and Jerry Lewis (comedian). Glen Campbell, famed country singer, will no longer welcome us to Phoenix. A fond farewell to all of them, and thanks for the memories.

I'm sure I missed many occurrences of importance—but these do give you a sense of the summer of '17. On now to autumn. 🍂

### Youthful Readers Enjoy FAW Prize Winners

Thanks to member Pat Adelberg for this shot of an adorable toddler "reading" a couple of FAW prize-winners.

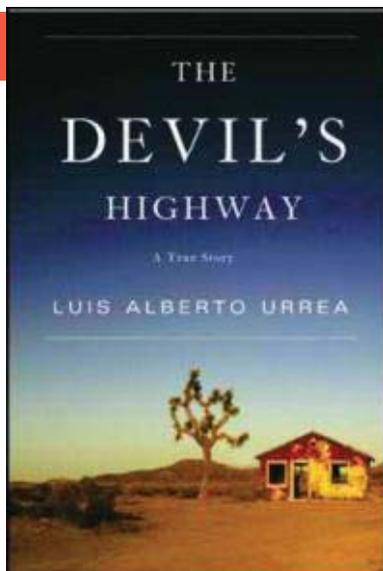


Which shall I read first, Real Cowboys or Mr. Mosquito Puts on His Tuxedo?

## The Reading Corner

*The Devil's Highway*  
By Luis Alberto Urrea  
Reviewed by  
Roberta Gates

*The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea is a classic which was shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize when it was published in 2005. *Devil's Highway* was not just a



critical success, but a bestseller that readers applauded for its searing portrayal of what Mexican immigrants face when crossing the border into the United States.

Regardless of your feelings about immigration, Urrea asks you to take a second look at the issue by telling the stories of 26 men and boys who, in May of 2001, attempted to enter the U.S. via the so-called Devil's Highway, a route which crosses the southern Arizona desert, one of the deadliest regions of the continent.

Continued ▶



SHIRLEY BAUGHER  
1710 N. Crilly Court  
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Among those who made the trip were Reymundo Barreda Maruri, the oldest at 56, and his son, Reymundo Jr., who was the youngest at 15; Efraín, Isidro and Mario González Manzano, all brothers from Hildago; José Isidro Colorado and his 16-year-old nephew, Edgar Adrian Martinez; and Mario Castillo Fernandez, a 25-year-old coffee and citrus plantation worker who had previously worked in Galena, Ill.

Their reasons for making the trip varied. Castillo dreamed of opening a bodega in Veracruz. Enrique Landeros García wanted to send his seven-year-old son to school. Julian Ambros Malaga, a former soldier, wanted to build cement walls for his mother's house, while his brother-in-law, Rafael Temich González, a corn farmer, needed money to support an extended family that included his wife, year-old daughter, mother, two sisters and their four daughters.

Luis Alberto Urrea traces the trip these men made beginning with their recruitment by Mexican gangsters who visited their isolated villages. The

venture was not cheap, often costing as much as 20,000 pesos, the equivalent of a year's salary. But for those who didn't have the money up front, Don Moi and others like him were happy to arrange the needed loans at a 15% interest rate. Once the group reached the border, three *guias*, or guides, took over. These *guias* expected to earn \$3,000 from this trip alone, but their incompetence left most of their clients dead.

Reymundo Barreda, whose son, Reymundo Jr., died in his arms, went berserk afterwards, tearing up all the American money he had saved for the trip before dying himself. Sixteen-year-old Edgar Adrian Martinez, who had hoped to work five years in the U.S. so he could return to Mexico to marry his sweetheart, died just as a rescue helicopter was landing. Still others became disoriented or lost.

In the end, only a handful survived, including the brothers Isidro and Mario González, who were lucky enough to find prickly pears whose liquid saved them. Others were rescued by Border Patrol agents who started searching for

them as soon as they heard about the first fatalities. But it was a close call even for these survivors. By the time they arrived at Yuma Medical Center, two were in serious condition and one was in critical condition. In addition, all of them suffered from kidney damage.

Luis Alberto Urrea, whose research for this book was extraordinary, writes in an immediate, up-close style that allows the reader not only to know these men and the ordeal they endured, but to experience it with them. Better still, however, he gives us important context, noting for instance that, although Mexican immigrants used about \$250 million in social services, such as Medicaid and food stamps, in 2002, and another \$31 million in uncompensated health care, they paid a total of \$600 million in federal taxes, meaning that they paid in \$319 million more than they took out.

But whether you read *The Devil's Highway* for the story it tells or the way it illuminates an important issue of our time, I can guarantee that this is one book you'll never forget! 