



NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER  
2017-2018 NUMBER 3

Editor: Shirley Baugher  
Designer: Norman Baugher

# FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org



## President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*

November is a big month for FAW! Not only will our Readers & Reviewers group be meeting, but we'll also be awarding two important scholarships.

Shirley Baugher, a facilitator extraordinaire, will be leading a discussion of Amor Towles's *A Gentleman in Moscow*, an inventive novel which came out last year to rave reviews. The discussion will take place in the boardroom, beginning as soon as the board meeting ends, which will be at approximately 10:30 a.m. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Shirley, either by emailing her

at shirleyba@rcn.com or calling her at (312) 787-7025.

Just before lunch, Linda Gustafson, our Foundation chair, will be presenting \$1,200 scholarships to two Chicago-area students who are studying writing at the graduate level. One scholarship will go to Candice Nzingha Smith from National Louis University and the other to Jennifer Love of Columbia University Chicago. This is the first time we'll be awarding a scholarship to a Columbia student, so that makes this year's presentation even more special than usual.

Also attending will be Lou Farr and Lourdeen Drakos from Merrill Lynch, which kindly manages our Foundation Fund pro bono. Other guests will in-

clude Joanne Koch from National Louis and Ann McNair and Eva Rachau from Columbia. We owe Linda and her fellow board members, Corene Anderson and Chris Bern, a big thank-you for overseeing our scholarship philanthropy. In addition, Tammie Bob, a board member and Columbia alumna, deserves thanks for serving as a liaison during negotiations between our organization and Columbia College Chicago.

I hope you'll be able to make the Readers & Reviewers discussion, but even if you can't, do come to the luncheon so you can applaud our scholarship winners and hear Howard Reich, who is sure to be an outstanding presenter (see article below). ■■

## NOVEMBER PROGRAM

### Howard Reich *Prisoner of Her Past*

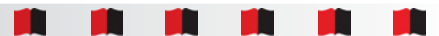
by TAMMIE BOB

You may recognize Howard Reich as the long-time *Chicago Tribune* jazz critic, or as a regular contributor to NBC's *Nightline* or as a frequent NPR commentator, but when he appears as FAW's Nov 8th luncheon program, he won't be talking about music. Reich recently wrote, produced, and narrated a documentary film about his mother's unspoken Holocaust childhood, *Prisoner of Her Past*, as well as a book by the same title.

In *Prisoner of Her Past*, Howard Reich has written a moving memoir about growing up as the child of Holocaust survivors and finding refuge from silence and fear



Howard Reich



in the world of jazz. It is only when Sonia's memories overwhelm her and Howard begins to piece together her story that he comes to understand how his parents' lives shaped his own. The paperback edition includes an epilogue by the author that relates developments since the

publication of the cloth edition.

Reich (who is incidentally a charismatic and entertaining speaker) will talk about the project, showing parts of the film, which was filmed across the United States and Eastern Europe. By interviewing witnesses and gathering documents, he was able to piece together the past that Sonia Reich, Howard's mother, refused to discuss. Mark your calendars for this remarkable event. ■■



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the November 8, 2017 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 5. 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.

### Young People's Literature Committee

ANGELA GALL, *Chair*

"A book is a gift you can open again and again." —GARRISON KEILLOR

The members of the Young People's Literature Committee wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment. So far, our committee has been gifted with thirteen books of the highest quality. We see a potential winner in our midst but will continue to seek out additional books to ensure that we have discovered the perfect one.

Please remember that we will be holding our annual book sale at the November Luncheon. A variety of middle school and high school books will be available for \$2.00 each. I think we all agree that books make the best gifts for the upcoming holiday season!

If you too are seeking the optimal

book for your reading enjoyment, please consider the following recommendations from some of our committee members all-time favorite novels:

"My favorite book is a 13 book series called *Maisie Dobbs* by Jacqueline Winspear whose main character is a psychologist/investigator with a WWI historical backdrop. The books are a combination of historical fiction/detective work, and feature an intelligent, strong-minded woman."

—COLLEEN KADLEC

"My favorite book (that I've read many times) is *Happy All the Time* by Laurie Colwin: Vincent yearns to be married like his cousin Guido whose only martial problem is that his wife Holly occasionally wants more space. Meeting Misty, he believes he's found his mate, but she's very nervous that everything's just too perfect. Sparkling dialogue, laugh out loud scenes and happy, sophisticated characters can't help but put a smile on your face. Though written in 1978, it's still in print!" —VIVIAN MORTENSEN

"My favorite book is *Angle of Repose* by Wallace Stegner. It is a beautifully written story of four generations of an American family who help to settle the West. (Pulitzer Prize – 1972)

### Literature Awards Committee

TAMMIE BOB, *Chair*

There are now sixteen members serving on the Literature Awards Committee. Books are arriving daily, but a little more slowly than in previous years.

### George Saunders Wins Man Booker Prize for *Lincoln in the Bardo*

As many of you have probably read, the coveted Man Booker prize for literature was awarded to an American author, George Saunders for his hauntingly beautiful book, *Lincoln in the Bardo*. This is the second year in

a row the award has gone to an American author. Last year's winner was Paul Beatty for his novel *The Sellout*.

The Story: On February 22, 1862, Willie Lincoln, son of President Abraham Lincoln, is laid to rest in a marble crypt in a Georgetown cemetery. That night, under cover of darkness, Lincoln arrives at the cemetery alone to grieve for his son.

Throughout the evening, the President paces the graveyard distraught by the death of his beloved boy and by the grim shadow of the seemingly endless Civil War. Meanwhile Willie is trapped in a state of limbo between the dead and the living – drawn to his father with whom he can no longer communicate, yet existing in a ghostly world populated by those who have recently passed on and many who went to their deaths long ago.

During that long night a chorus of long gone voices explore the meaning of death and grief while looking toward the possibilities of life.

I will be reviewing *Lincoln in the Bardo* in an upcoming newsletter issue. In the meantime, I strongly recommend that you read it. It is unforgettable.

### FAW Membership Corner

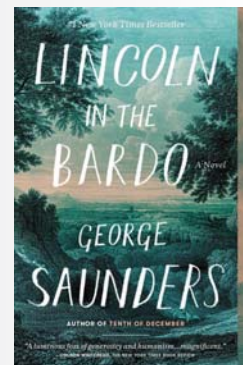
IDA HAGMAN, *Membership Chair*

Thanks to all who have invited friends to join FAW. We have several new members this month. You will want to add their contact information to your yearbook.

The new members are:

#### Francine Brown

2428 Brookwood Dr.  
Flossmoor, IL 60422  
ph (708) 254-1370



Francine's FAW friends are Sandie Weiss, Sherry Weinstein, and Helene Madsen

**Dale Davison**

922 Seminole Rd.  
Wilmette, IL 60091-1223  
ph (847) 920-1010  
dale@dale-davison.com

Dale is a friend of Tammie Bob.  
Club Activity: Literature Awards

**Deborah Hall-Reppen**

2360 Kaneville Rd.  
Geneva, IL 60134  
ph (630) 232-8525  
deb.hallreppen@gmail.com

Deborah is a friend of Jane Foster.  
Club Activity: Young People's Literature

**Judy Share**

850 N. Lakeshore Dr.  
Apt. 1701  
Chicago, IL 60611  
ph. (248) 875-8658  
js32bps@gmail.com

Judy is a friend of Diane Martin.  
Club activity: Literature Awards

**Esther Velis**

1340 N. Astor  
#2302  
Chicago, IL 60610-2163  
ph. (312) 944-1213  
Esther is a friend of Betty Angelos

**Special Guests**

At our November 9th FAW luncheon scholarship portion of the program, the Foundation Fund committee will be introducing two additional guests from Merrill Lynch who have been key to managing the investments of the Foundation Fund:

**Louis Far**—Senior Vice President and Senior Financial Advisor, Merrill Lynch

**Lordeen Drahos**—Registered Client Associate, Merrill Lynch

These Merrill Lynch representatives have done an outstanding job of managing the Foundation Funds allowing us to maintain existing scholarships and add an additional one to the FAW scholarship program.

**FAW IS A 501-C-(3) NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**

Contributions to the Patrons Fund and the Foundation Fund are tax deductible. It's an added incentive to contribute generously to the two funds that help Midwestern authors and provide scholarships to worthy writing students. The Patrons Fund supplies the cash prizes to the winning authors each Spring. The Foundation Fund provides money for scholarships for students at Lewis University and Columbia College.

**Handicapped Entrance to the Fortnightly**

Do you have trouble climbing the front stairs? The Fortnightly has a handicapped entrance on the east side of the building that leads you through the basement kitchen to the elevator to access the first floor. If you wish to use this special entry, call ahead to the Fortnightly (312-944-1330) and staff will give you instructions. They will be ready to answer the doorbell when you come and show you to the elevator. ■■

Every year in November, one day is set aside as Veterans Day. The first such observance was held in November 1919 to commemorate the end of World War I. It was called Armistice Day at first because it coincided with the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, when the armistice with Germany went into effect. In 1954, the day was renamed Veterans Day and honored all our veterans who have served in the United States Armed Services. While we appreciate our military every day, on November 11 we pay special tribute to them and thank them for their service.



**IN NOVEMBER WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR VETERANS**

by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

**FEATURE ARTICLE**

**AND IN NOVEMBER WE ARE THANKFUL**



continued ►



## The **First** Thanksgiving

There is a lot we don't know about the first Thanksgiving, celebrated in the Plymouth Colony in 1621. This is because historians, who get their information from primary sources, have had to rely on only two eyewitness accounts of the event. We do know that such a celebration was a rare event. In New England, the pursuit of pleasure was looked upon with suspicion. Games and sports were prohibited. Cards and dice were especially condemned because of the gambling element in them, and gambling was banned by law. Stage plays and dancing between men and women were frowned upon. Shuffleboard was not allowed because it was considered an idle game that caused young people to waste precious time. Likewise swimming was thought to be a waste of time. As for children playing with toys, the Puritans were not favorably disposed toward that activity. Although toys were sold in New England, they were expensive and available only in a very small quantity.

But no one can exist solely without pleasure, and even the Puritans had their diversions. Thus, Thanksgiving. The first harvest at the Plymouth Colony was a disappointment. The wheat, barley, peas, and other things planted with seeds brought from England came to nothing, either from "...ye badness of ye seed, or lateness of the season, or both, or some other defeete," according to Governor William Bradford. Still, the harvest did enable the Puritans to increase the colonists' rations to a peck of meal a week per person. To this was now added, thanks to the Wampanoag Indians and their chief, Massasoit, a peck of corn. Bradford decided this was cause for celebration. He sent four men out to kill wild fowl so that he could hold a feast for the members of his little colony. The men brought back enough to

supply the settlement for a week.

It seemed only right to invite the Indian chief Massasoit and his people without whose assistance the colony would not have survived. Massasoit came with ninety brightly painted braves. He also brought five deer and other good things from the fields and forest.

The gala occasion was not limited only to food. Colonists and Native Americans engaged in games of chance and skill. Afterwards, they gorged themselves on venison, duck, goose, clams and other shellfish, smoked eels, corn breads, leeks, water-cress, and other greens. For dessert, they served up wild plums and dried berries. They washed it all down with wine made from wild grapes of the region. The celebration went on for three days and was proclaimed a great success.

Setting aside a day to celebrate the harvest caught on in other parts of the young nation. The first Thanksgiving in Boston was held on February 22, 1630 to show gratitude for the safe arrival of ships from England bringing food and additional settlers. The next year Thanksgiving Day was held on November 4. As time went on, it became a New England tradition and was even carried West by restless Yankees searching for more land. By 1684, no fewer than twenty-two days were designated in Massachusetts for giving thanks.

**By the President of the United States of America.**

**A Proclamation.**

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out

these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

*In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.*

*Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth.*

**By the President:  
Abraham Lincoln**

**Black Friday**



The idea of an annual day of celebration was not limited having a good crop. It could commemorate a victory over the Indians, the success of the Protestants over the Catholics in Germany, the crowning of a new king, the ending of epidemics, and the suppression of pirates. Nor was Thursday the only day on which Thanksgiving was observed. One year it was held on a Tuesday, another on Wednesday, and so on. Colonist John Cotton wrote, “We sometimes, upon extraordinary occasions or of notable judgments, do set apart a day of humiliation, or upon special mercies we set apart a day of Thanksgiving.”

As the Thanksgiving holiday evolved, it became a day for family and friends to come together and give thanks for their blessings. The feast was an integral part of the day and became more elaborate in good times—less so in hard times. Certain foods, some part of that first Thanksgiving, others added later, were associated with the meal: turkey, squashes, corn, berries (cranberries), dressing (or stuffing), various vegetables, and pumpkin pie.

Although it was celebrated, Thanksgiving did not become a fixed annual observance until 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the first national Thanksgiving and decreed that it should be observed on the last Thursday in November. Federal offices were closed, as were many businesses. But the great god profit would not be ignored. Commercial establishments began opening after the meal was concluded and offering “door busters”—desirable items at ridiculously low prices to lure customers in. The sports world also saw this as a day to lure viewers to their television sets with contests between popular teams. So will you be feasting and shopping, feasting and binge watching, or feasting and feasting and feasting? However you choose to celebrate your Thanksgiving, this year on on November 23, you might give



a nod to those “fun loving” Puritans who made this day possible by putting aside their serious sides long enough to relax and give thanks for the good things they had been granted. ■■

Ben Franklin's preference for the national bird (in Betsy Ross Colors)

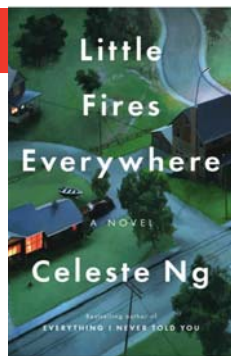


SHIRLEY BAUGHER  
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Chicago, IL 60614

## The Reading Corner

*Little Fires Everywhere*  
By Celeste Ng

Reviewed by  
VIVIAN MØRTENSEN



In a perfect suburban community on a perfectly manicured lawn stands Elena Richardson watching her McMansion burn to the ground. She's stunned but not shocked. She knows the fire is arson and as the book unfolds, the reader too finds out what events triggered this drastic action.

Celeste Ng, an FAW 2015 prize-winner, jumps back several months to when Mia Warren and her daughter Pearl arrive. The time is 1997 in upscale Shaker Heights, a planned community which prides itself on stability and lack of change. Mia is an artist who values

her work instead of money and who moves from place to place as the muse strikes her. They settle in a rented house owned by Elena Richardson and soon Pearl befriends the four Richardson teens. Pearl has never encountered such wealth and consumerism that's essential to the Rich-

ardsons and in turn, they have never met anyone, especially Mia, who cares so little for clothes, televisions, fancy houses and everything else they consider necessary.

Elena is first fascinated and later obsessed with digging into Mia's past. Where did this woman come from? Who is Pearl's father? Why is Mia's portrait in the local art museum? Elena can't understand Mia's mindset and can't leave her alone. Her children also are unsettled by Pearl and try to mold her to their way of life – inviting her to hang out with them, buying her clothes, and taking her to parties.

When Mia needs some grocery

money, she starts working as a part-time housekeeper for the Richardsons and becomes a confidant to the children. While Mr. and Mrs. Richardson are never around, Mia is there afterschool to listen to their problems and offer advice. She provides a moral clash to Elena's views on life, causing "little fires everywhere."

By writing the story through various voices, the author is able to show the differing philosophies and rationales. Though very different, the characters are appealing and have good intentions. It is only when they confront another way of life that trouble occurs,

The characters, even the teenagers, are well drawn and believable. The novel's themes are skillfully woven into the story, making cryptic points without overstating the issues. It's on the best-seller list because it is so readable and assessable. This is Celeste Ng's second novel and FAW can be proud to see that she has gone from an emerging author to a polished, insightful writer.