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# East Tennessee Writer

Newsletter of the Knoxville Writers' Guild: Vol. 9, No. 4, May 2001

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*"You read Jack and you feel you're living in Joyce's Dublin or Villon's Paris. . ."*



Paul Ashdown, editor of **James Agee: Selected Journalism**, writes in his foreword to **Knoxville's Secret History**: "You read Jack and you feel you're living in Joyce's Dublin or Villon's Paris instead of plain old Knoxville. . . . You could spend a lifetime uncovering the secrets this place holds. Fortunately, we've got Jack to do the legwork for us. Jack understands that stories abound on these darkling streets, that every cornice and facade hides a secret history. . . ."

*"These finely wrought stories are rendered in some of the clearest and most graceful prose I know. And best of all, there's plenty more stories where these came from. . . ."*

*"So follow along on Jack's personal guided tour of one of the country's most interesting cities. A city with a secret history waiting to be told."*

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## Neely t Speakt Gud May 3

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Mississippi Writer Eudora Welty coined the phrase "sense of place," but local writer and self-made historian Jack Neely has made those words meaningful for thousands of Knoxvilleians in the columns and articles he writes for *Metro Pulse*, Knoxville's alternative weekly. On Thursday, May 3 at 7 p.m., the Knoxville Writers' Guild members and guests will be treated to a taste of local history when Neely speaks at the Laurel Theater, located at 16th and Laurel Sts. on the UT campus. The theme of his presentation will be "Knowing Your Place: the Importance of Setting in Writing and in Life." In 1981, Neely graduated from the University of Tennessee, where he studied foreign policy.

Perhaps Neely's expertise in understanding people has stemmed from an interesting variety of jobs. He worked at the 1982 World's Fair in crowd control and later as a criminal-defense investigator. Then, as he himself modestly puts it, he "worked for a half dozen comfortable but undistinguished years" as a magazine editor at Whittle Publications. His *Metro Pulse* columns have been collected in two volumes under the title of *Knoxville's Secret History* and printed by Scruffy City Publisher. Neely's work has been honored through the East Tennessee Historical Society's History in the Media Award, The Knoxville Heritage Journalism Award, and the East Tennessee Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists' First Place Award for newspaper columns. He has also written the text for a book of photographs of Knoxville's old cemeteries which is entitled "The Marble City." There is also an element of romance in Neely's own history. Born in northern Japan during the reign of Emperor Hirohito, he is a descendant of the notorious Major James Neely, who was accused of murdering explorer Meriwether Lewis.

The program is open to the public. A dollar donation is requested at the door.



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# Science: A Rich Source of Metaphor

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**Rebecca Efroymson** finds inspiration at the Key West Literary Seminar on Science and Literature

I'm a scientist member of the Knoxville Writers' Guild who does a lot of technical writing and occasionally writes three-quarters of a short story but never quite releases it. I decided to attend my first writers' conference this year, but I wasn't ready for a national workshop, so I picked a "seminar." The Nineteenth Annual Key West Literary Seminar, held in January, 2001, was "Science and Literature: Narratives of Discovery." It had to be good. Even if the talks were lousy, the Caribbean breezes would have inspired me. And I always appreciate the chance to get to a walkable town where Kingston Pikes are banned. But this seminar was special.



Three Nobel prize winners who write about science in poetry, journalism, and books for the public were present: Murray Gell-Mann, Steven Weinberg, and Roald Hoffman. Stephen Jay Gould, who has popularized science in countless volumes, got caught up in phrases that unfurled in many directions (so that some attendees loved him and others walked away confused. I fell in love with Natalie Angier's way of inserting her frank feminism into her pronouncements on-stage and her book *Woman: An Intimate Geography* (Random House, 1999), which I came home and read after the seminar. Carl Djerassi (famous for his work on the birth-control pill, and the only novelist

present) and Roald Hoffman (Nobel-prize-winning chemist and poet) co-wrote a play about the discovery of oxygen that they introduced at the seminar. Both find science to be a rich source of metaphor, and I wish I were as facile with our language as Hoffman is. My book discussion group just read Jonathan Weiner's *Beak of the Finch*, about evolution of finches in the Galapagos, after hearing Weiner's attention to detail. The writers had spirited debates on-stage about the nature of science and the art and craft of writing. We feasted at receptions among the palm trees. Other writers included James Gleick, Lynn Margulis, Dorion Sagan, Dava Sobel, Marcia Southwick, Ann Marie Cunningham, Timothy Ferris, Robin Fox, and Ira Flatow. I particularly enjoyed hanging out with talented writers who write books for children or plays and essays that incorporate science.

I highly recommend this literary seminar and its flawless organization. Next year the seminar theme is "Spirit of Place." So many applicants (300+) signed up in January that it sold out for 2002, but a second Key West Literary Seminar is being offered on this topic, also in January. I may just sign up. After stopping in the Everglades on my drive back to Miami, I felt more inspired to write than I had in years.

Rebecca Efroymson is an environmental toxicologist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the winner of the 1999 Leslie Garrett Prize for Fiction. She spends most of her days working on "ecological risk assessments" related to petroleum contamination, air pollution, and military training and testing. You may see her face more frequently at the monthly KWG meetings, as her 2-year term on the City of Oak Ridge Environmental Quality Advisory Board recently ended. She has almost completed three short stories and, she says, "will submit them to a literary journal any day now."

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## **Pulitzer Prizes in the Arts Announced for Year 2001**

Pulitzer Prize winners in journalism and the arts were announced Monday, April 16.

Fiction: Michael Chabon for "The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay." See story on page 5.

Drama: David Auburn for his play "Proof."

History: Joseph J. Ellis for his book "Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation."

Biography: David Levering Lewis for the second volume of his biography of civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois, "W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and The American Century, 1919-1963."

Poetry: Stephen Dunn for his volume of original verses "Different Hours."

General Nonfiction: Herbert P. Bix for his book "Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan."

Music: John Corigliano for "Symphony No. 2 for String Orchestra."

## ***New Millennium Writings* Announces Contest Winners**

Donna Doyle of Knoxville was a first place winner in the Eleventh Consecutive New Millennium Awards Contest. She won for her poem "My Mother, Climbing Her Family Tree." This poem was earlier honored by the Robert Burns Award.

Doyle finished second a year ago in the NMW contest. There was a tie for the Poetry Award this year, however, and Elizabeth Haukaas of New York, NY also won for "The Hummingbird Heart." Donna and Elizabeth will split the \$1,000 poetry prize.

Melita Schaum of Ann Arbor, MI, won the \$1,000 New Millennium Nonfiction Award for her memoir, "The Weight of Spring Wind." Ann Bronston, of Tampa, FL, won the \$1,000 Fiction Award for "Reruns."

The names of winners and runners-up have been posted at the website: [www.mach2.com](http://www.mach2.com), and will appear in the Summer 2001 issue of New Millennium Writings, which all contestants to this contest should receive in June or July.

This issue is sure to be received as one of our best, with fiction, poetry, writing advice and humor from many voices, including excerpts from the best of our interviews and profiles from our first five years.

These included John Updike, Lee Smith, Norman Mailer, Cormac McCarthy, Sharyn McCrumb, Shelby Foote, William Kennedy and others.

New Millennium Awards are presented twice annually for unpublished works of poetry, fiction and nonfiction, or for works that have appeared previously.

For new contest guidelines or more information email [donwill@aol.com](mailto:donwill@aol.com), visit [www.mach2.com](http://www.mach2.com) or send SASE to [donwill@aol.com](mailto:donwill@aol.com)

### ***A note from the President, John Reaves:***

*Believe it or not, it's time to be thinking of ideas for the Guild's next book. Years ago KWG committed to publishing a book every two years. Breathing the Same Air came out in 2000; our next one is due in October 2002. We need to make plans now, starting with a great idea.*

*Start thinking about suitable projects, and watch next month's newsletter for a call for proposals*

## Still Time to Get Poems in for Libba Moore Gray Contest



Midnight, April 30, is the postmark deadline for submissions to the 2001 Libba Moore Gray Poetry Prize, a contest sponsored annually by the Knoxville Writers' Guild since the poet's untimely death in 1995. Toward

the end of her life, she became a nationally known writer of children's books.

Tennessee writers over the age of 18 have been invited to submit up to three unpublished poems for the competition. The entry fee for those who are not members of the Guild is \$10 for up to three poems. Guild members may submit three poems free of charge, but additional entries for anyone submitting work is \$10 for each extra entry.

Guild membership is \$20, \$15 for students. The cover page should include name, address, phone number, and titles. No name should appear on the poems themselves.

Entries should be sent to Linda Parsons Marion, 2909 Fountain Park Blvd., Knoxville, 37917. Only winners will be notified, and poems will not be returned.

Contest winners will be invited to read their work at a future Guild meeting to be announced. Cash prizes are \$300, \$200, and \$100, for first, second, and third prizes, respectively.

## Knoxville Writers' Guild:

Organized in December 1992 in Knoxville, TN, to facilitate a broad, inclusive and egalitarian community among area writers; to provide a forum for information, support and sharing among writers; to help members improve and market their writing skills, and to promote writing and creativity in the wider community through education, publication, and sponsorship of writing-related public events. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at the Laurel Theater.

**Officers:** President: John Reaves; Vice President: Julia Auer; Secretary: Kim Trevathan; Treasurer, Lonnie Butler; President Emeritus: Jack Reese; VP Emeritus: Michael Gillespie; Newsletter Editor: Jeanne McDonald; Webmistress: Jo Ann Pantanizopoulos.

**Board Members:** Julia Auer, Marybeth Boyanton, Jeannette Brown, Alison Conde-Jaenicke, Brian Griffin, Jacqueline Kittrell, Michael Knight, Judy Loest, Flossie McNabb, Elaine Oswald, Kim Trevathan, Penny Tschantz, Allen Wier, and Don Williams.

Dues are \$20, \$15 for students. The KWG does not discriminate against any person because of race, age, gender, handicap or country of national origin.

Tel: 531-8855; e-mail should be addressed to [jmd@utk.edu](mailto:jmd@utk.edu)

Website: [www.knoxvillewritersguild.org](http://www.knoxvillewritersguild.org)  
To change your mailing address, email [vgr300z@infi.net](mailto:vgr300z@infi.net)

## Author William Gay Will Read at Cookeville Conference June 16

The Cookeville Creative Writers' Association will present the Sixth Annual Cumberland Writers' Conference on June 16, 2001 at the Tennessee Tech Student Center in Cookeville, Tennessee.

Conference speakers include Carol Davis, National Editor for Publishing Group of America and *American Profile* Magazine, who will speak on "Writing for the Hometown Market;" JoAnn Ross, USA Today romance author of over 70 novels, who will talk about "Using Setting as Character in Your Novel;" William Gay, author of the acclaimed new novel, *Provinces of Night*, who will read from his book and share his perspective on writing the literary southern novel; Buddy Blackmon, bluegrass banjo player, songwriter, and music producer, who will explore the differences between writing a poem and writing a song; Sue Loper, founder of Loper Literary Agency, who will talk about finding an agent; and LaVerne Cobb, geologist, lawyer, and author of four novels, who will talk about getting published.

The CCWA's 19th annual writing contest winners will be announced at the conference and special awards in best-of-contest and the Woodland Award in Poetry will be awarded.

Prizes in all categories are \$50, \$25, and \$10. Fiction should be 3500 words or less; nonfiction, 3000 words or less; poetry, one to three poems of any length, rhymed or unrhymed; short-short story, 1250 words or less; novel, opening 15 pages and synopsis (total not to exceed 20 pages); song, any style or format and must include a written copy of the lyrics. Entries must be postmarked by April 30th.

For more details, contact Janet Biery, 931-526-2034 or email [bieryj@usit.net](mailto:bieryj@usit.net)

## **Williams to Teach Writing Class at Christ Chapel**

Don Williams, columnist, short story writer, and founding editor of New Millennium Writings, will teach "Experiments in Writing." The six-week course is open to anyone who would like to know more about the asics of creative writing. Beginners are welcome.

The class begins at 7 p.m. Tuesday May 8 at Christ Chapel, in the Fort Sanders Community near UT. Classes will meet two hours each Tuesday for six weeks. Participants will engage in writing exercises, critique each other's works, study examples of effective wordcraft, hear from guest speakers, and consider strategies for getting published.

Among topics covered will be: "Great opening lines," "Drawing on family history and the subconscious for material," "Writing effective dialogue," "Point of View," "Creating memorable characters," "Striking the right tone," "Communicating with editors and agents," "Building a writing community," "Using the Internet," and "The benefits and pitfalls of self-publishing."

Cost for the entire six-week course is \$135. This includes the price of text materials, which will be provided. To enroll, writers should send a check or money order to Don Williams at PO Box 2463, Knoxville, TN, 37901, phone 423-428-0389, or Email: [Donwill@aol.com](mailto:Donwill@aol.com).

*Meetings of the Knoxville Writers' Guild are held the first Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Laurel Theater, located at 16th and Laurel Streets, two blocks off Cumberland Avenue.*

*Refreshments are served. Meetings are open to the public. A one-dollar dondonation is requested.*

## **Chabon Reacts to Winning the 2001 Pulitzer Prize**

On Monday, author Michael Chabon reacted to the news that he has won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for his 2000 novel, "The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay" (Random House). The award is the first Pulitzer for Chabon, whose book brings to life World War II America and the golden age of comic books. Chabon was a runner-up in the 2000 National Book Critics Circle and PEN/Faulkner Awards. "Did I really win?" he asked The Associated Press Monday. "I had kind of figured it was not my year. My goodness, this is exciting."



(COURTESY RANDOM HOUSE)

Chabon's book "Wonder Boys" was turned into an Oscar-nominated film last year. The author says he has long been a fan of comic books, and from that interest grew the story of two friends who create a superhero called the Escapist. "I had a box of comic books left over from my childhood collection," he said recently. "It was taped shut and it just went with me from place to place. After 'Wonder Boys,' I untaped it and the smell of old comic books wafted out. It just triggered something."

Whatever that "something" was, it helped Chabon become the 75th author to claim the fiction prize as the Pulitzer Board at Columbia University announced its annual winners in 21 categories on Monday.

To join the Knoxville Writers' Guild, complete the form below and mail to P.O. Box 10326, Knoxville, TN 37939, along with annual dues of \$20, \$15 if you are a student. Membership entitles you to participate in study groups, receive Guild discounts on books and merchandise, and monthly issues of the newsletter. For questions about dues or change of address, email [vgr300z@infin.net](mailto:vgr300z@infin.net)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

*For questions about dues, or to change your mailing address, e-mail [vgr300z@infi.net](mailto:vgr300z@infi.net)*

*Knoxville Writers' Guild*

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