



DECEMBER NEWSLETTER
2017-2018 NUMBER 4

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Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org



President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*

As we approach the end of 2017, I am happy to report that Friends of American Writers is thriving. Our house is in good order, and even more importantly, we're exploring new opportunities that have to the potential to grow our club in the future.

At the current time, we have 90 members, including six new members who have joined during the last month. I want to extend a big thank-you to anyone and everyone who's encouraged a fellow-book lover to come to a meeting or join one of our two awards committees. And I particularly want to thank Ida Hagman, Karen Burnett and

Norman Baugher for producing a very attractive brochure which can be given to prospective members.

Also, thanks to the generosity of our members, we've already collected \$2,245 for the Patrons Fund, which is allocated for our new-author awards.

As for new ventures, I'm happy to report that our Readers & Reviewers group attracted 13 members in November for a discussion of *The Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles. Kudos to Shirley Baugher for doing such a great job of facilitating!

I also want to thank Linda Gustafson and her Foundation board for giving not just one scholarship this year, but two. In addition to the scholarship winner from National Louis University

(whose students have been receiving scholarships for the last 14 years), we had the pleasure of awarding a scholarship to a student from Columbia College Chicago, whose writing programs have received national attention.

And finally, I'd like to draw your attention to a new feature which Karen Baker, our dedicated webmaster, is planning for the FAW Chicago website. Thanks to her expertise, we expect to be able, very soon, to offer our members (and others) an opportunity to give online. Watch future newsletters to find out more about this exciting new development.

And now, before I close, let me take this opportunity to wish all of our members, as well as their families, a happy and healthy new year! 📖

DECEMBER PROGRAM

Betsey Means Returns A Musical Program on Clara Schumann

by ROBERTA GATES

Betsey Means, a well-known Chicago actress and popular FAW presenter, returns on December 13 for a portrayal of Clara Schumann, the wife of the composer and a virtuoso in her own right. She will be accompanied by the pianist Karen Berk.

"You will never make an artist until you have loved and suffered!" said Clara Schumann, commenting on what makes a pianist great. "The playing needs that fire and depth of feeling



Clara Schumann

which springs from the joys and sorrows of life. What a splendid thing to be an artist. I can turn all my suffering and joy into divine music."

Clara Schumann was the daughter of a remarkable piano teacher named Fred-

erich Wieck. Regarded as a *Wunderkind*, she met the young Robert Schumann when he became a resident piano pupil in the Wieck household. Clara, a brilliant performer, and Robert, a gifted composer, fell deeply in love, and their

marriage is one of their great love stories of all time. Music sustained both of them, and Clara was eternally grateful for the support it gave her, both in times of triumph and of tragedy.

Betsey Means is a professional actress who has performed with the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Shakespeare on the Green, the Blue Rider Theatre and the Chicago Children's Theatre. She researches and writes her own scripts and is always a compelling performer.

You won't want to miss this special musical program, so mark your calendars now for a holiday treat that includes a festive menu and The Fortnightly's own beautiful decorations. 📖



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

Attention FAW Members: Luncheon reservations for the December 13, 2017 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 10. **Please note, and this is very important, 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,
Midwestern Author

The members of the Young People's Literature Committee wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment. So far, our committee has been gifted with thir-

teen 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 marital 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)"

—*Tanya Klasser*

Literature Awards Committee

TAMMIE BOB, *Chair*

There are now 16 members on the Literature Awards Committee. To date, 27 books have been received.

Membership

IDA HAGMAN, *Chair*

A warm welcome is extended to our newest members:

Katherine Hagman

2839 West Cortez, Apt. 2
Chicago, IL 60622
Khagman@gmail.com
(630) 329-9451

Katherine is Ida's daughter. She works as a corporate recruiter and enjoys volleyball, bicycling, writing and scrapbooking.

Karen Herbst

1209 North Astor Street
Chicago, IL 60610
kherbst1@aol.com
(312) 654-8441

Karen owned a culinary travel company for 25 years and enjoys literature, travel and sports.

Nancy Schultz

3851 North Spruce Court
Wadsworth, IL 6008-39573

*Mention the name **Santa Claus** and most of us will envision a rotund figure in a red suit with long white hair and a white beard. That wasn't always the way people saw Santa. As a matter of fact, that image didn't even exist until the 1930s when an Old Town artist by the name of Haddon Sundblom created him for the Coca Cola Company. Here is how it all began.*



SANTA CLAUS HAS COME TO TOWN

by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

Haddon Sundblom Biography

Haddon Sundblom was born in Muskegon, Michigan. His parents came to America from Sweden and settled in Michigan. Though Haddon grew up in Muskegon, he moved to Chicago's Old Town neighborhood to pursue a career as an illustrator. He rented an apartment on Crilly Court, a haven for Chicago people in the arts. He worked as an apprentice for a design studio before deciding to become a free lance artist—a very wise move. He was to become one of the most successful commercial artists of the twentieth century who, more than any other artist, including Norman Rockwell, redefined the image of the American dream in paintings. Among his iconic images are the “Quaker Oats Man,” and “Aunt Jemima.”

Santa Claus took a number of forms before he emerged from the brush of Haddon Sundblom. Before Christianity became the main religion of Europe, the Germanic peoples celebrated a midwinter event called Yule. Many of the Yule traditions became part of the modern Christmas experience. During Yule, supernatural occurrences were said to take place, such as the Wild Hunt, a ghostly procession through the sky. The leader of the wild hunt was Odin, a white-bearded figure in a blue cloak who rode an eight footed gray horse called Sleipnir and brought gifts to people. Odin's appearance might have influenced later concepts of St. Nicholas, although his gray horse was traded for reindeer in North America. Odin himself transformed into Father Christmas, then Santa Claus. continued ►



Odin the wanderer

FEATURE ARTICLE

an FAW
newsletter
annual
feature

Santa Claus Through the Years

As the years passed, Santa Claus evolved in popular culture into a large, heavyset person. One of the first artists to draw a more modern version of Santa Claus was Thomas Nast, an American cartoonist of the 19th century. In 1863, Nast drew his idea of Santa Claus for a January 1863 issue of Harper's Weekly. He dressed Santa in an American flag and included in the drawing a puppet with the name "Jeff" written on it, reflecting its Civil War context. Placing Santa Claus at the North Pole may also have been



Thomas Nast's Santa Claus addressing the troops during the Civil War

Nast's idea. In December 1866, Nast did a collage of engravings for Harpers which he called Santa Claus and His Works. In the collage, he placed Santa in a place he called "Santa Claussville." A color collection of Nast's pictures, published in 1869, had a poem also titled "Santa Claus and His Works" by George P. Webster. Webster popularized the notion that Santa Claus's home was "near the North Pole, in the ice and snow." A boy from Colorado writing to the children's magazine "The Nursery" in late 1874 said, "If we did not live so very far from the North Pole, I should ask Santa Claus to bring me a donkey."

Yes, Virginia, There Really Is a Santa Claus

"Is There a Santa Claus?" was the title of an editorial appearing in the September 1897 edition of The New York Sun. A little girl had written to the newspaper asking if there was a Santa Claus. The paper put her letter in an editorial, which included the famous reply "Yes, Virginia, there really is a Santa Claus." The response has become

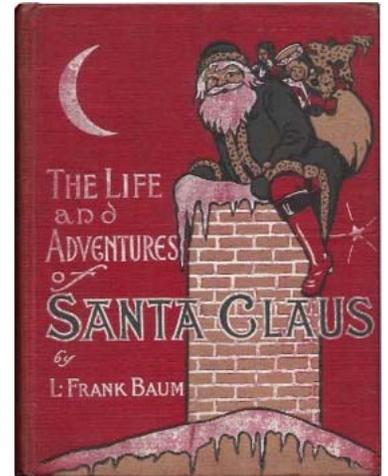
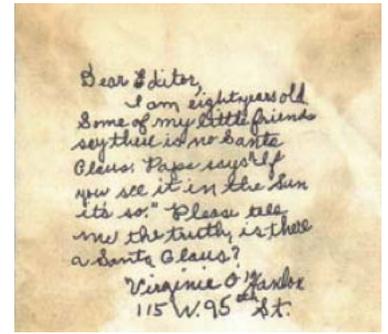
part of popular Christmas lore in the United States and Canada.

L. Frank Baum, creator of The Wizard of Oz, wrote a children's book in 1902 which he called *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*. Baum had a character in the book called "Neclaus" (Necile's Little One). Neclaus lived in the Laughing Valley of Hohaho with ten reindeer—who could not fly, but who could leap in enormous, flight-like bounds. Baum's book established Santa Claus as a gift-giver. When Ak, Master Woodsman of the World, showed him the misery and poverty of children who lived in the world outside Hohaho, Santa decided he wanted to bring joy into the children's lives. He invented toys as a way to do this.

Enter Haddon Sundblom

Which brings us to Haddon Sundblom. In 1931, Coca-Cola approached Sundblom with the idea of creating a Coca-Cola Santa for the holidays. The company did not want the grim characters who had been associated with Santa Claus in past years. They wanted a happy person who would characterize the season and, of course, make viewers want to enjoy what later became known as the "pause that refreshes."

When Sundblom was searching for an inspiration for his Santa Claus, he thought of Clement Moore's poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas" (written in 1822). You know how it goes, "T'was the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."



Moore went on to describe the toy maker as "chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf." Haddon Sundblom had his inspiration. He changed that elf into a friendly and jolly human. He started out using his friend, Lou Prentice, a retired salesman, as his Santa model. But Lou died suddenly. Instead of finding another model, Haddon Sundblom looked in the mirror and decided to use himself. Since he didn't have a beard, he just painted one on.

Coca Cola Santa Claus Images Through the Years

For 35 years, Haddon Sundblom painted pictures of Santa. They were used in magazine ads and posters. They now appear in special exhibits around the world. Haddon Sundblom painted his last Santa portrait shortly before his death in 1976. He left behind a well-known, mischievous Santa who raids the fridge, eats cookies and even enjoys a Coke once in a while. ■■



The Reading Corner

Before We Were Yours

By Lisa Wingate

Review by
KAREN BAKER

I was looking for a new book to read while traveling and opened the website Goodreads.com to see what was new and recommended. I was in a bit of a hurry and ultimately chose *Before We Were Yours* by Lisa Wingate. It had lots of stars (recommended) and I liked the pretty cover featuring two adorable young girls sitting on a suitcase. I was looking for a light and warm family story. Well, don't judge a book by its cover, as the subject matter of this novel is not pretty fluff. Instead I was drawn into the lives of itinerant shanty-boat children who are unlawfully abducted and placed in a children's home to be brokered out for adoption and profit.

The setting is the Mississippi River near Memphis in the year 1939. The five Foss children are left alone on their shanty-boat while their father transports his wife to get medical intervention for an early delivery of not one – but two new

babies. The parents hesitantly leave the children on their own, promising return or send help by morning. The oldest, Rill, a 12-year-old girl, is left in charge to protect and care for three younger sisters and one toddler brother. The next day terror strikes when strangers abduct them from the river and impound them in the Tennessee Children's Home.

The story leaps into the present-time with a seemingly unconnected meeting of a nursing home resident, May, and Avery, of the prominent and politically connected Stafford family. Avery is intrigued after a chance meeting during a PR event of nursing home resident, May, and a mysterious photograph belonging to May. Who are those people in the

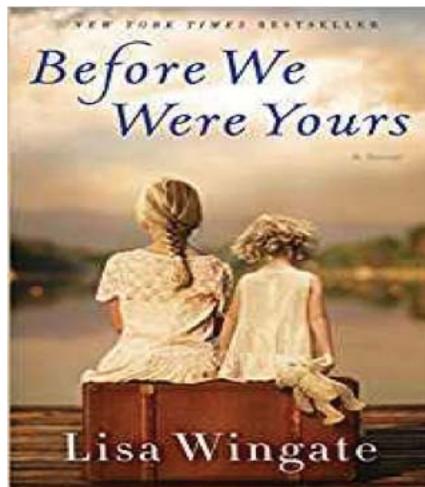


photo that have uncanny resemblance to her Grandmother, and where did this stranger get this photo? These unanswered questions lead Avery to further investigate the connection between her aging Grandmother and May and any possible threats to the respected Stafford family name.

Avery's narration alternates with Rill's descriptions of the despicable events at the Tennessee Children's Home. Rill and the other Foss children don't understand where they are and what exactly has happened to them. They keep hoping that any time their father and mother will show up to bring them back to the river. You feel Rill's pain and terror as the children are paraded like prize livestock at adoption screenings and her sisters and brother disappear – never to be seen again. As Rill's story unfolds, you can almost see the building of the bridge that binds together the lives of Avery, the Stafford family, and the Foss children.

This book is more than a fictional account of the tragedy of trafficking children for profitable adoption and the horrors committed by Georgia Tann within the Tennessee Children's Home. It is a story of family and what binds us together, when to forget and when to remember. It is sad and lovely - just like the cover. ■■



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