Authors

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How Florida inspires its writers...

“Florida slowly wraps itself around you like the strangler fig”
—Lisa Unger

“A line drawn in the sand can become a story”
—Julie Gonzalez

“Such clarity and brute force in this light”
—Terri White

For a limited time, all new and renewing members at the $75 level and higher can choose to receive a great premium.

Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida by Gary R. Mormino. Hardcover, 484 pages

Once the least populated and most isolated state in the south, Florida has emerged as one of the largest and most diverse states in the nation. Florida’s meteoric rise has encompassed revolutions in technology, demography, and culture. Historian Dr. Gary Mormino tells this story of compelling characters, bewitching places, and the enduring but changing idea of a dream state. Hand-signed by the author.

Florida Dream Documentary DVD

Co-produced by FHC and WEDU-TV of Tampa, this one-hour documentary explores how Florida’s unique character and culture—so rich, so diverse, so alluring—continue to captivate and inspire. Narrated by actor Ed Asner.

For a limited time, all new and renewing members at the $75 level and higher can choose to receive a great premium.

Pilgrims in the Land of Alligators: More Stories about Real Florida by Jeff Klinkenberg. Hardcover, 264 pages

Pilgrims in the Land of Alligators provides a unique opportunity for readers to discover the characters—and characters —of “real” Florida. In this compendium drawn in part from the award-winning columns, Klinkenberg celebrates some of the Sunshine State’s most distinctive personalities. Ranging from light and comical to wistful and nostalgic, Klinkenberg roams the state from the Panhandle to the Keys, looking to answer the question, “What makes Florida Florida?” Hand-signed by the author.

The American Beach Cookbook by Marsha Dean Phelts. Paper cover, 320 pages

For The American Beach Cookbook, Marsha Dean Phelts collected nearly 300 recipes passed down through generations. “Mouths will water at such treats as fried cheese grits, she-crab soup, seafood casserole, crab coated shrimp chops, cornbread dumplings, chicken curry, corn relish, pickled peaches, Big Mama’s fruitcake, and much more.” Hand-signed by the author.

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transformation a location a place by telling its stories.

...we join Defender, the gold medal winner for fiction in this year's Florida Book Awards. We.ask what further stories feel a sense of place in Florida and how it affects their writing. Their responses are posted on our website at flahum.org.

The responses are fascinating to ponder because they expose the dual nature of a place and place. Florida certainly inspires writers with its subtopical landscape, cultural diversity, and eraia and fauna. Writers can also be found in the stories, both fact and fiction, that bring these places to life and provide a deeper understanding of who we are Floridians. I am driven to Highway 50 without using Zach McEvoy's Islands of Land and Water across the prairie on his marshy pony. Hurricane season always conjures visions of the devastating 1928 flood reconvened in Zena Neale Harmon's Where Else Have I Ever流浪ed God.

This is the third year that FHC has paid tribute to Florida Book Award winners by publishing profiles of the authors and excerpts of their works. These are the winners who are defining Florida's literary landscape and reputation, through their novels, nonfiction books, poetry, and children's books.

Many of this year's winners have turned a literary lens to an aspect of our state's culture or history that helps us to expand, enrich, or maybe even reframe our perception of the places we call Florida. I'll even wave at a beach umbrella again without thinking of Campbell McGrath's poem "We're Watching God" on his marshtackie pony. Hurricane season always conjures visions of the devastating 1928 flood reconvened in Zena Neale Harmon's Where Else Have I Ever wandered God.

To our list of all current and future contributors to the magazine, we offer our gratitude for your continued support. We are committed to publishing the highest quality work in our field and strive to provide a diverse and engaging reading experience for our readers. We value the feedback and suggestions of our readers and are always open to new ideas and perspectives.

If you wish to contribute to the magazine, please visit our website at flahum.org for submission guidelines and information on submission process. We look forward to hearing from you!

Thank you for your support and for making FHC the magazine of the Florida Humanities Council.
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Three new members elected to FHC Board

The FHC Board of Directors has elected three new members, replacing three elected members whose terms had expired. The new members, who will serve through Fall 2011, are:

Mary Anne Hodel, director and CEO of the Orange County Library System, which has won numerous awards and become a recognized leader in technology under her innovative leadership. She has a master of library science degree from Catholic University of America and a bachelor's degree in political science and history from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Before coming to Florida, Hodel was director of the Ann Arbor District Library in Michigan, which was named National Library of the Year while she was there. She has worked in many other libraries and is a member of several professional associations and boards.

William H. Jeter Jr., a lawyer in private practice in Jacksonville, has been president of the Jacksonville Historical Society and a member of Jacksonville’s Historic Preservation Commission. As president of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, he presided over three annual literary conferences. Jeter is a board member of the Southern Academy of Letters, Arts, and Sciences and is active in the Trust for Public Land, the Mandarin Historical Society, the Mandarin Community Club, and the Memorial Park Association. He also has chaired the Riverside Art Festival. Jeter earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Washington and Lee University and a law degree from the University of Florida.

Margo S. Stringfield, a research associate at the University of West Florida’s Archaeology Institute in Pensacola, has won awards for outstanding achievement or service from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation, the St. Michael’s Cemetery Foundation, the Pensacola Archaeological Society, and the University of West Florida. She received the Key to the City of Augusta, Ga., for her contributions to historic preservation there. She is co-author of the recently published book, Historic Pensacola. Stringfield earned a bachelor’s degree in social sciences from the University of Montevallo, Alabama, and a master’s degree in history and historical archaeology from the University of West Florida.

Application deadline for Board: August 31

We are looking for Floridians who share our commitment to our state’s history and culture to serve on FHC’s Board of Directors. Board members come from all walks of life, including academia, business, and government. We look for demographic and geographic diversity in selecting board members who will represent the various regions and diverse populations of Florida.

The FHC board meets three times yearly. Members also are asked to serve on a task force that meets once yearly. Board members make decisions about FHC grants, develop our budget priorities, oversee policy decisions, help develop resources for our programs, and promote our work.

If you are interested in serving on our 25-member board, please submit a resume and a letter of intent to Janine Farver, Executive Director, FHC, 599 Second Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, or email jfarver@flahum.org. We must have your nomination by August 31, 2009.

‘Gathering’ to explore St. Petersburg, Sept. 25–27

Over the past few decades St. Pete, as the locals call it, has experienced a remarkable revitalization of its downtown, making it one of the most desirable communities in Florida. The arts and culture scene is alive and well with seven downtown museums, a thriving Saturday morning farmer’s market, and an active historic preservation group. FHC’s cultural-tourism program, The Gathering, will explore the strong sense of place that thrives in St. Petersburg, while staying at one of the most beautiful boom-era hotels in all of Florida: The Renaissance Vinoy Resort. We’ll give you a behind-the-scenes tour of what makes this remarkable city tick. For more information, go to www.flahum.org. Online registration begins July 1.
Four PBS stations receive FHC grants to produce community documentaries

FHC has awarded $20,000 grants to each of four public-television stations in Florida to develop documentaries exploring how Floridians are creating, rethinking, and redesigning their local communities. WEDU of West Central Florida, WGCU in Fort Myers, WUSF in Tampa, and WJCT in Jacksonville will produce programs using the theme, “Imagining Community in Florida.”

Each documentary will feature the insights and perspectives of humanities scholars; the voices of local residents, developers, urban planners; and the views of those seeking to shape a new vision for Florida communities. These local productions—and a statewide documentary being produced with an FHC grant by public-television station WPBT in Miami—are scheduled to be aired by March 2010.

Funds are available for “Community Conversations”

Nonprofit organizations are invited to apply for funds to support conversations in their communities about the central questions of civic life. Such “Community Conversations” involve discussions of short pieces of literature as a means of reflecting on roles citizens play in their communities. This simple, but stimulating, discussion technique helps participants engage more comfortably in conversations about values, think more deeply about choices, and respond more imaginatively to the needs of their communities. For more information, email FHC Grants Director Susan Lockwood at slockwood@flahum.org.

Our website features Florida’s visual artists

Images by celebrated Florida nature photographer John Moran are appearing on the FHC website as part of an initiative to spotlight Florida’s visual artists. Moran’s intriguing and beautiful photographs will appear in a rotating gallery on www.flahum.org for one year.

The work of a new Florida artist will be selected each summer for the FHC website showcase. (To nominate visual artists who produce Florida-themed images, please email Lisa Lennox at llennox@flahum.org.)

Moran, who has been called Florida’s “photographer laureate,” has a portfolio bursting with Florida landscape art featuring lakes, swamps, rivers, coasts, and springs—and the creatures within them. Go to our website and feast your eyes!

Connect with us! Join our online community.

FHC’s website features a new “Connect Page,” making it easier for you to join our online community. Join the discussions on our new blog. Learn about Florida through FORUM magazine. Listen to FHC radio programs on iTunes. Subscribe to the FHC E-news feed. Check out our Facebook presence. And support FHC when shopping at Amazon.

You can reach our Connect Page at www.flahum.org, or go to it directly at www.flahum.org/connect.
Some Florida writers say that the very essence of this state—its brilliant light, its green fertility, its forever shifting perch on the edge of the sea—persuades their senses and enters their work.

“Florida light invites me to write poems as wildly as I can,” says poet Terri Witek. “Such clarity and brute force in this light, such an invitation to face things...Here even grief must be written in light.”

Witek wrote this in answer to a question we posed to the 30 authors who won honors in this year’s Florida Book Awards competition. We asked: Do you feel a sense of place in Florida—and how does this affect your writing?

One author wrote of the stimulating “hodgepodge” of cultures and compelling characters who seem to walk onto the page. Others said their literary sensibilities were awash in childhood memories of Old Florida places—“a mystic tunnel” under moss-draped live oaks, funky little beach towns, “the pungent smell of the Suwannee.” And some, like Witek, described a feeling of almost channeling some elements of Florida in their work.

Novelist John Tkac wrote, “I am most sure that as I absorb the Florida sun, it flows down my arm, into my hand, through the pencil, and onto the paper. I have worked, most diligently, to have the warmth of that sun shine back into the face of the reader.”

Novelist Lisa Unger cited Florida’s “dark and feral center” as mood-setting for literary pursuits: “Florida slowly wraps around you like the strangler fig...I have a sense that if we just stopped for one second trimming and cutting back, laying miles of concrete and rebar, it would reach out with murky fingers and reclaim itself.”

And novelist Julie Gonzalez explained how even a trip to the beach can evoke a story: “One winter afternoon while my son was surfing in the Gulf of Mexico, I picked up a stick and drew spirals in the sand. As the waves washed away my hieroglyphics, a character was born—a boy who found himself so insignificant that he wouldn’t write his words on paper, but only in the sand where the wind and water soon erased them. The story of this boy might never be published, so the public may never meet him, but the point is this: a line drawn in the sand can become a story.”

You’ll find more excerpted comments from authors throughout this magazine. To read their full responses, go to our website, www.flahum.org, and click on FORUM EXTRA!

The award-winning authors come from a variety of occupations. They include scholars, journalists, physicians, a gambling expert and professional magician, a firefighter and paramedic, a composer of crossword puzzles, and an artist. Their work covers a wide range, from mysteries to histories and from poetry to biography, and it is recognized in eight award categories.

The Florida Book Awards are announced each spring for books published during the previous calendar year. FBA Director Wayne Wiegand, one of the founders of the three-year-old program, notes that the competition has grown steadily. “In our first year we had 71 entries; our second, 85; and this year we rocketed up to 135. I think it’s fair to say Florida authors now know about the Florida Book Awards and that our future looks even brighter today than when we launched the project.”

Wiegand is a professor of library and information studies at Florida State University, where the program is administered. A dozen cultural organizations across the state co-sponsor the program: the Florida Center for the Book; the Florida Library Association; the Florida Center for the Literary Arts; the Florida Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America; the Florida Historical Society; the State Library and Archives of Florida; the Florida Literary Arts Coalition; the Florida Association for Media in Education; the Friends of the Florida State University Libraries; Just Read, Florida!; the Governor’s Family Literacy Initiative—and the Florida Humanities Council.

This issue of FORUM features information about the winning books and authors and excerpts from several books that relate to Florida. Log on to www.flahum.org and click on FORUM EXTRA! to hear our radio interviews with some authors, to read more authors’ comments about writing in Florida, and to buy their books.

BArbara O’Reilley is FORUM editor.
John Dufresne's fiction puts the fun in dysfunction, writes one of his literary admirers. Others describe his writing as funny and heartbreaking, tragic and absurd, and "hilarious seriousness." "Oh! What I would give to live in John Dufresne's brain for just a day and see the world the way he does," writes novelist Ann Hood.

His tragicomic voice is evident throughout Dufresne's fourth novel, Requiem, Mass., which won the gold medal for general fiction in this year's Florida Book Awards. The story is told from the point of view of a 12-year-old boy trying to survive in a wildly dysfunctional family. One of the chapter titles: "If the Phone Doesn't Ring, It's Dad."

Dufresne, who grew up in Massachusetts, taught at universities in Louisiana and Georgia, then moved in 1989 to Florida, where he teaches creative writing at Florida International University in Miami.

Initially, he found that he couldn't write about Florida "because I couldn't understand it," he explained to FORUM. "It's Latin, it's Haitian, it's Caribbean, it's a hodgepodge of cultures. Then I realized that I did understand my neighborhood pretty well, and I liked it. So I started writing about Dania Beach, my little niche, and through this small town, I began to understand the big city that sprawls from the Keys to the Palm Beaches..."

Florida is "where the mix of cultures and the stunning natural beauty spawn and provoke stories," he added. "Florida attracts dreamers and folks who want and need a second chance. All I need to do to find compelling characters for my stories is walk into Publix or open the morning paper."

In a September 2001 interview with Max Ruback of turnrow, a literary/arts journal published by the University of Louisiana at Monroe, Dufresne discussed his journey as a writer and offered thoughts about writing:

I think I had no illusions about being a writer. There were no writers on Grafton Hill in Worcester, Massachusetts. Or doctors. In our neighborhood, the only professional men, the only men who wore suits, were car salesmen. Our aspirations were limited. Boys could grow up to be priests or cops. Girls, nuns or nurses. Ambition was suspect. The arts did not exist. You could go downtown to a movie—that was it. And I knew nothing about living writers. I suppose when I thought about it, I figured writing was a job, a job you could perform at home and without a boss. That was a big plus. I hated work, having worked since I was 10 at paper routes, at mowing grass, at shoveling snow, and in the kitchen at a nursing home. I didn't know if I could be a writer until I was 30 or so.

After I graduated from college, there was a first career as a social worker. I worked with teens on drugs, teens on the run. I ran an alternative high school, a drop-in center, worked a suicide prevention hotline. Things like that. Then the government decided to spend money on treatment rather than prevention. I was out of work. I started a painting company with a friend. All the while I was writing stories but didn't know if I was any good. I decided to go to grad school and find out...

[As a child] I read the stories they told us to read in school, but I couldn't hear that familiar neighborhood voice on the page. And I couldn't find my neighbors, myself, or anyone like us... in the books, and so books meant nothing to me then. But stories meant everything. And that is why I write about the New England I knew—the ethnic, working class, Catholic enclaves in the run-down mill cities.

But it would be the Southern voice that broke the literary silence for...
FLORIDA HUMANITIES COUNCIL FORUM

Tony D’Souza has lived a writer’s dream, experiencing one adventure after another. Serving as a Peace Corps AIDS educator in Africa’s Ivory Coast helped provide the background for his first novel, Whiteman, for which he won the gold medal in the 2007 Florida Book Awards competition. He has also taught English in Madagascar, covered a murder trial in Nicaragua, and studied Asian culture and language on the island of Hokkaido.

The Konkans, D’Souza’s second novel, is narrated by the son of a white woman. She is married to an Indian man who tells of immigration to America and the history of the Konkans, who were Indians converted by the Portuguese from Hinduism to Catholicism in the 16th century.

D’Souza’s own father was Indian, his mother an American Peace Corps volunteer. It is “fine with me” if readers want to consider him the narrator of The Konkans, D’Souza said.

D’Souza, winner of a 2008 Guggenheim Fellowship, lives in Sarasota.

A good short story casts a spell over you, takes you out of your own world and drops you in the world of the characters. It’s an enchantment. It makes you care about the lives of those people, and it compels you to read on. A good story has a visionary quality, a personal voice, a signature gesture. Nothing like it has ever been done before. And no one can ever do it again. It’s exciting and offers new insights at each reading. And when it’s done the lives of the characters have been changed forever, and so has yours. You’ll never see the world in the same way again…

John Dufresne
Gold Medal, General Fiction

Floridians. When I was finally able to hear a narrative voice as compelling as those in the kitchen, it came with a Southern accent. In the works of Flannery O’Connor, William Faulkner, Harper Lee, I found characters I recognized, the people I now write about, people who have been held out of the mainstream or who have decided to hold out. I found the honesty attractive and familiar. I already knew the world was a mess because I looked around me and saw men, young men, grown pale, soft, and cynical, all up and down Grafton Hill, in the Diamond Cafe, the Cosmopolitan Club, Jack’s, Uncle Charlie’s Tavern, the A, the American Legion, sitting with other men in the dark watching TV, smoking, drinking shots and beers, reminiscing, wondering, some of them, where their dreams had gone. I saw friends, teenagers and already alcoholics and junkies, toothless and conniving. So when Harry Crews says of the South: “If we are obsessed with anything it is with loss, the corruption of the dream. And the dream was the dream of the neighborhood,” I know he is speaking as well of Grafton Hill. Small world…

Place is about language as much as it’s about anything. Writing grows out of place, out of community. Community defines language, and language is culture. The place I grew up in—and the South where I have lived for 20 years—have very different relationships to language...

The immigrants [in my hometown] wanted sense from their language. Southerners wanted music. New Englanders want to know “Why?” in 25 words or less. A [Southerner] prefers to tell, not ask, to tell you “How” in as many words as possible, indulgently, discursively, lyrically, following every tangent, surprising even herself with revelation. The two impulses, one toward definition and efficiency, the other toward seduction and song, are not mutually exclusive. Asking “Why?” is the most important question a fiction writer can ask of his stories and his characters. It’s the question that gets below the surface of plot and addresses values and motivation. And, of course, how you tell the truth, how you attend to the gestures and detail, shapes the truth and makes all the difference. When I write about the North, though, I am guided by the former impulse, about the South, by the latter. And I hear, I hope, the appropriate voice.

John Dufresne
Gold Medal, General Fiction

From furrow, the biannual literary and arts journal of the University of Louisiana at Monroe. For link to full article, go to FORUM EXTRA! at www.flahum.org.
THE TURNING POINTS in my life have always arrived disguised as daily life. I never get the opportunity or have the sixth sense to stop and examine them, to time-stamp them on my soul, whisper to myself that this, this thing, this simple boat ride in the Everglades, this phone ringing, this drive home 20 minutes late, was the thing that might do me in.

They never appear important enough to stop the things I’m already doing—like sparring with my husband over the developing nothingness of our marriage, like mixing the right amount of black into the red of a fire sky painting, like sitting down at my computer and reading an email from my son.

“He’s coming home for spring break,” I called down to Cal through the open window, scanning Marshall’s message for more information. “And he’s bringing someone with him.”

“I can’t hear you,” Cal yelled back, the hollow, river rush of water beating against the house for a moment. I read the rest of the email, committing the pertinent facts to memory as a flutter in my stomach began to make itself known, before I headed downstairs and out the kitchen door. The edge of the screen caught the back of my heel before I could get out of its way.

Cal, shirtless and browned, his shorts riding low enough to expose a strip of white skin, squinted at me as he hosed off two bright blue coolers. “What’s up?”

“Marshall’s coming home for spring break,” I repeated, surveying the sparkle of fish scales caught in the crisp grass at the sides of the driveway like diamonds in straw. “And he’s bringing company.”

“The Dalai Lama?” Cal asked, flipping a cooler over and sending a rush of tepid water over my bare feet. “A girl,” I said, and was rewarded for my timing with a squirt of water up my calves. Cal turned to me in surprise, a smile flashing quick and white across his face. I grinned back, raising my eyebrows, a joke, half-formed, about to spill out, before I remembered that we weren’t joking much these days.
Debra Dean
Bronze Medal, General Fiction

After earning a double major in English and drama from Whitman College, Debra Dean worked as an actor in New York theater for nearly 10 years before becoming a writer and teacher.

“If you can imagine anyone being this naïve, I figured if the acting thing didn’t work out, I’d have the English major to fall back on,” she said. She never imagined writing books, but when she grew weary of the theater business, she became an author.

“One key difference, though, is that you don’t have to be hired first before you can write. Another big advantage is that you don’t need to get facelifts or even be presentable,” Dean said.


Dean was born and raised in Seattle but now lives in Coral Gables.

Kristy Kiernan
Bronze Medal, General Fiction

Kristy Kiernan says she uses her own life and the relationships of friends and acquaintances to craft her story lines. “If you’re a friend or acquaintance, don’t worry, it’s not you; it’s other friends and acquaintances, really!” Kiernan said in an online Q&A with “Tom Robinson’s Author and Book Media.”

Matters of Faith, Kiernan’s second novel, is an intricate book about faith, crisis, and forgiveness. It deals with family and social issues, themes that Kiernan believes resonate with others.

“I don’t know a single family that doesn’t have problems, a single mother who doesn’t feel nervous and guilty and concerned about [her] children, siblings who don’t feel resentments, or spouses who don’t make each other crazy sometimes,” Kiernan said in the online interview.

Kiernan was born in Tennessee and raised on the beaches of Southwest Florida, where she still resides with her husband Richard and their dog.

...this state has marked my views of the world and of people, and that’s bound to come through. I love this place, even with all its many changes over the past 38 years that I’ve been here, and it will always be in my heart...heat, humidity, mosquitos, tourists, and all.

—KIRSTY KIERNAN
Bronze Medal, General Fiction
A southern town, Sunday in Jacksonville was for church and prayer—saloons and movie theaters weren’t open on the Sabbath. That didn’t stop the rogue filmmakers from staging bank robberies while the streets were empty. This drew the ire of Jacksonville’s huge population of churchgoers.

Sometimes locals were cast in films without their consent. Fire alarms were pulled when filmmakers needed to shoot fire engines. One moviemaker advertised a parachute jump from the Graham Building, the 15-story tower on West Forsyth Street that was once the tallest building in the city, in order to draw a crowd.

But the biggest debacle, the one that derailed support for the film industry, the one that became the we-told-you-so platform for politicians and reformers, took place on a chilly January morning shortly after New Year’s Day, 1916. The film was an adaptation of a recent novel about an anti-establishment newspaper named The Clarion. On the day’s shooting schedule: a mob scene.

Director James Durkin gave the signal and the mob rushed down the street “hurling bricks, sticks, and every missile they could find.” Once it reached the saloon, the mob became, well, a mob. They rushed into the bar and, while destroying the place, imbibed from the bottles of wine and whiskey left out as props. “In some instances, it is said, they were so eager to get at the choice fluids within that they snapped off the necks and flung away the glass encased corks without ado.”

Forty policemen were on hand but not on duty. They were here to be immortalized in celluloid. “The forty members...were supposed...to rush madly about wielding clubs in an effort to quell the disturbance. The clubs were rubber, however, and the bluecoats got five bucks each for not hurting anybody.”

On January 4, 1916, the Florida Times-Union ran the headline: “Mob Destroys Brick Building on Davis Street and then Wrecks a Saloon.” The structure was toppled, the windows were shattered, and the saloon “was deprived of...a good quantity of choice liquors.”

The Equitable Film Company paid the $2,000 bill.

But the sensational event—liquor, anarchy, annihilation, civil servants who surrendered their sworn duty to the barrel of a Bell & Howell hand-crank camera—portended an inevitable fate. Everyone could see it coming. Even the newspaper columnists, once loyal disciples, changed their tune. “Although Jacksonville has been gradually becoming the motion picture manufacturing center of the Atlantic seaboard, she has never before been the place for such scenes of violence committed in the name of silent drama,” read a Florida Times-Union article. It went on to say that if the first-person accounts of The Clarion debacle were accurate, it “would have resulted in the depiction of a great city tumbling to the tune of a cranking camera silently turned by a practical operator.”

The Savoy Theater was one of the first nickelodeons in Jacksonville.

© 2008 by Shawn C. Bean

I was in fifth grade the first time my family came to Florida... That’s where my sense of place comes from. It was not about culture, economics, or demographics. I was simply an innocent kid awe struck by palm trees and a blazing sun in February. My reaction was biological. People gravitate to Florida for the same reasons they did 10,000 years ago: leave snow, find warm. Snowbirds aren’t northerners who come here when it gets cold at home. They are Homo erectus with Tommy Bahama shirts and Louis Vuitton handbags, fulfilling an age-old migratory instinct.

—SHAWN C. BEAN
Gold Medal, Florida Nonfiction
Floridians have long been interested in the motion picture industry. Oliver Hardy, D.W. Griffith, Mary Pickford, and the Barretts all made movies in the city on the St. Johns River. By 1914, Jacksonville had attracted 15 major companies, including Fox and Metro. By 1928, almost 300 films, including the first in Technicolor, had been completed in Florida.

After beginning his career at CNN in New York, Bean has become one of the most recognized younger writers in Florida. He has twice been named Writer of the Year by the Florida Magazine Association and regularly contributes to Florida Travel & Life, Miami, Miami New Times, and Florida Today.

Bean lives in Melbourne with his wife and two young sons. He says his favorite Florida moment was getting Patrick D. Smith to write a blurb for his book. He bribed the legendary Florida author of A Land Remembered with homemade black-eyed-pea gumbo and peach cobbler.

John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr.
Silver Medal, Florida Nonfiction

John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr., both professors at Florida International University in Miami, discovered at a 1997 academic conference that they had a common interest in the changes that New Deal programs brought about in South Florida. Meanwhile, former Florida State Sen. Jack Gordon, a highly regarded figure in Florida politics for more than four decades, suggested to Stack that the New Deal was deserving of serious study in the Miami area.

Stack, who serves as director of the Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship Studies that is named for Gordon, and Stuart, director of FIU’s architecture graduate program, combined their scholarly interests to co-edit The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933–1940.

The book includes essays by the editors and by other scholars delving into the lasting impact of federally funded Depression-era projects, including the construction of public buildings and housing, the development of public parks, and the creation of murals and photographs.

Gregg Turner fell in love with trains as a youngster, becoming fascinated by the sights, smells, and sounds of steam locomotives. He grew up to be one of the nation’s foremost authorities on railroads.

“My grandmother indulged me with a few train trips and I was hooked.” Turner told the Ft. Myers News-Press in a 2008 interview. “I've never forgotten their magic.”

The Connecticut native began serious railroad study while still in high school. Later, as a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute student, he worked as a tower operator for the New Haven Railroad. He co-edited a railroad magazine, wrote several books about transportation, and became director and curator of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society at Harvard Business School.

A Journey into Florida Railroad History tells how trains helped conquer one of the last American frontiers.

Turner and his wife Nancy moved to Fort Myers four years ago. He is on the business faculty of Southwest Florida College.
I WANT TO SHARE with you a facet of Jacksonville’s history very few are willing to discuss, let alone embrace. Although its darkness may give Jacksonville’s reputation a black eye, the eye-opening details, when synthesized, provide a remarkable history worth telling. It never ceases to amaze me how selective our memories are when it comes to situations filled with embarrassment, shame, and hurt. We choose to forget turbulent times rather than learn from them, as if not talking about them will make them go away. Just as closing our eyes does not cause us to go blind, shutting our mouths does nothing to erase memories or make events disappear from history.

Unfortunately, many whites and blacks in Jacksonville, Florida, have yet to grasp that reality. They have rationalized away the days of racism and segregation while insisting they stay buried in the past. On the surface, “Let bygones be bygones,” sounds plausible. But U.S. philosopher and poet George Santanyana (1863-1952) said those “who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” To paraphrase his words, those who do not learn about their past will assuredly repeat it.

The civil rights movement in the late fifties and early sixties is a history of brave and unselfish black leaders fighting against racism and segregation, and for the equality of all people in the United States. Most black and white citizens of Selma, Birmingham, Memphis, Montgomery, and Atlanta are acutely familiar with the violent civil rights struggles that occurred in their cities. Though the struggles in those cities may be more familiar, Jacksonville was not immune to the same type of cruelties. Some books about Jacksonville’s civil rights history have the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) helping to organize the sit-in demonstrations in Jacksonville. One author wrote that events such as Ax-Handle Saturday legitimized Jacksonville as a progressive southern city. What a regrettably untrue statement!

It seems as if everyone in Jacksonville had a sit-in demonstration story to tell, well intentioned or not, in these books. Unfortunately, many of their accounts, plain and simply, are not true. They inaccurately present information, misread and misinterpret the time frame of many of Jacksonville’s civil rights events, and quote individuals who were uninformed. You can make a comparison at your own convenience. It is not my intent to write a page-by-page critique of some of these books, but I have read enough of them to conclude that the authors lacked the proper perspective. What I submit to you as a former president of the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP, are eyewitness accounts, including my own. Trust me when I say we fought social injustice in Jacksonville as earnestly as those on the national level.

At age 11, I joined the Jacksonville Youth Council National Association of Colored People (NAACP) at the invitation of Rutledge Henry Pearson, the Youth Council’s Advisor and my eighth grade American History class instructor. At age 15, I would become president of the Youth Council NAACP. By the hundreds, young blacks in Jacksonville.
responded to the call of Mr. Pearson to fight racism and segregation through this extraordinary organization.

The Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP represented nonviolent, churchgoing, committed, and dignified young people determined to be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. They have held true to these values throughout their adult lives.

If segregation sought to remind blacks of their perceived second-class citizenship in this country, then segregated lunch counters represented visible vestiges that served up daily insults. The time finally came when the Youth Council NAACP simply said, “enough is enough.” Disregarding the personal physical peril, members of the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP made the decision to confront Jacksonville’s segregated policies and its accompanying Jim Crow laws.

Scores of black heroes who participated in sit-in demonstrations surfaced across the United States. For the most part, those participants came from the campuses of Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). However, in Jacksonville, most of the demonstrators came from black high schools. The peaceful protests of teenagers who dared to challenge segregated white lunch counters is not a myth or an urban legend. Nor is the attack by more than 200 whites with baseball bats and ax handles on 34 black NAACP Youth Council members on August 27, 1960.

Today’s generation must understand the circumstances and the times that led to this racially explosive and violent day in Jacksonville’s history.

It is important to understand that because the philosophies of the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP and Jacksonville’s political and social establishment were so diametrically opposite, violence may have been inevitable. Yet, in a strange paradox, the violence perpetrated on the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP that day changed the fight for civil rights in Jacksonville.

In an apparent effort to cover up the violence against the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP and the sit-in demonstrations that preceded that momentous day, local print media and local television stations conveniently provided little or no news coverage. Local documentation about Ax Handle Saturday is conspicuously lacking. Virtually no photos of that horrific day exist. Thankfully, the black media, even with obvious limitations, provided excellent news coverage.

Regardless of what you have heard or seen about sit-in demonstrations, it was never about eating a hot dog and drinking a Coke. It was always about human dignity and respect.

Blacks in Jacksonville endured an enormous amount of racism, discrimination, pain, and suffering in the fight for civil rights. They endeavored to leave a legacy and heritage from which we can benefit and of which we all can be proud.

It is my prayer that this book helps you appreciate the price they paid for freedom.

From It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!, © 2008 by Rodney L. Hurst Sr.

Rodney L. Hurst Sr.
Bronze Medal, Florida Nonfiction

When he was 15, Rodney Hurst led lunch-counter sit-ins in downtown Jacksonville. They culminated on a day now referred to as “Ax Handle Saturday,” July 27, 1960, when more than 200 white segregationists attacked 34 NAACP Youth Council with baseball bats and ax handles.

It Was Never about a Hot Dog and a Coke! chronicles Jacksonville’s political and racial climate in the late 1950s and how it spawned that infamous day when segregationists tried to break the youth council’s attempts to win a measure of equality.

“When we started sit-in demonstrations, we wanted everyone to know eating a hot dog and drinking a Coke would not be our focus. Human dignity and respect would be our fundamental focus,” Hurst wrote.

Hurst went on to break a number of racial barriers in Jacksonville, where he served two four-year terms on the City Council.

Hurst’s book has received numerous awards, including the inaugural Stetson Kennedy Award presented by the Florida Historical Society for investigative research that casts light on historic Florida events.

He and his wife Ann have two sons and two granddaughters. He is a devotee of Motown music and spends what he calls quality time as an “oldies” DJ.
DON GOODMAN, who still loved alligators, once was right-handed. Now he did everything with his left. He buttoned his shirt and zipped his pants, steered his car, and even opened a can of peaches one-handed. He learned to shave and to tie his shoes with the wrong hand. The director of Kanapaha Botanical Gardens near Gainesville, he tended plants one-handed without much of a struggle. When he led a tour at his lush 62-acre park, one arm was good enough for pointing out the splendid palms and water lilies the size of magic carpets. Pausing at a pond, he gestured with his remaining limb. “That’s where Mojo used to bask on the bank,” he told me. Mojo was the alligator that had crawled over from a nearby lake about a year before my visit. “When a gator is about 6 feet long, it’s a lizard. When an alligator grows larger, when it really bulks up, it’s a dragon. Mojo was about 12 feet long. He was a dragon.” Mojo wasted no time eating Kanapaha’s other alligators. Always hungry, he went on to prey upon aquatic turtles. When he seized a heavy turtle in those massive jaws, the crunch echoed throughout the park. “You know how alligators will roar at other alligators? Mojo was so dominant that when it thundered, he’d roar back at the thunder.”

As Goodman and I strolled along the pond, he automatically looked for Mojo. “In a strange way,” he said, “I miss him. He was magnificent.” Mojo had a
crooked back. At first, park employees nicknamed him Quasimodo after the Hunchback of Notre Dame. That was shortened to Modo and finally to Mojo. If an alligator can be a celebrity, Mojo was. For a while, he was the most photographed alligator in Florida. He’d lie motionless on the bank for hours, oblivious to the hundreds of amateur photographers who crept near. He lay so still many were sure he was a fake. But he wasn’t. He was just biding his time. Usually after dark he’d slither into the pond and look for something to eat.

Goodman had curly red hair, a moustache, and a wiry build. He was not only the founder of Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, but its most enthusiastic worker. He liked manual labor. It kept him fit. Unlike a lot of bosses, who get stuck in the office doing paperwork, he enjoyed dirty hands. September 23, 2002, was no exception. He had been watching with dismay as algae grew along the bottom of the main pond. As it broke loose and floated to the surface, it became an eyesore in the otherwise stunning park. “I’m a swamp, ” Goodman always told people. He decided to clear the pond of algae himself. The pond was a good half acre wide or so. It was going to be an all-day job.

It was hot, so he got an early start, though he didn’t wade into the water right away. First he looked for Mojo. When Mojo was basking on the bank, Goodman never worried. Mojo was basking on the bank, asleep, hundreds of feet away from the section of pond Goodman intended to clean. He waded into the water with confidence. For two hours he cleared algae while wading in thigh-deep water. It was hard work and Goodman got hungry. At noon he broke for lunch.

He returned at 1:30. He waded into the pond once more. For some reason it never occurred to him to look for Mojo. Live and learn. While Goodman was eating lunch, Mojo had been rambling. He had crept into a new section of pond. In the turbid water, he lay hidden on the bottom.

Oblivious, Goodman slowly worked his way toward those terrible jaws. “It’s amazing how a few seconds can change your life,” he told me. “That’s all it took. One second you’re in the water doing what you love. The next second I’m stumbling out of the pond with half my arm gone.”

I took Goodman to lunch at a Gainesville restaurant. I felt guilty asking him to talk about the catastrophe. But Goodman, a scientist who valued fact, said he didn’t mind. “I never saw him,” he said of Mojo. “He must have seen the shadow of my arm and just
Jeff Klinkenberg jokes that when he was growing up on the edge of the Everglades, he was a member of “the boys without dates club.” He blames it on youthful hobbies, which included catching snakes.

As its title suggests, *Pilgrim in the Land of Alligators* mentions reptiles such as Mojo, a massive saurian that lived in a botanical garden near Gainesville. But this anthology of Klinkenberg’s newspaper columns includes visits with many other Florida residents: the original Coppertone girl, the fiddler who set listeners a fire with *Orange Blossom Special*, and the actor who played *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, to name a few.

A journalist from the age of 16, Klinkenberg has worked since 1977 for the *St. Petersburg Times*, where his job as an outdoors writer evolved into that of chronicler of old Florida culture—before Disney World and suburban sprawl.

He is the only two-time winner of the Paul Hansell Distinguished Journalism Award, the highest honor given by the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors. Klinkenberg lives in St. Petersburg with his wife Susan and a bicycle he calls “Old Betsy.”

Klinkenberg’s weekly visit to Dr. William Baker, a University of Florida neurologist. “Phantom pain is difficult,” Baker told him. “We don’t know much about it, frankly. Your brain still thinks your arm is there. The pain will probably go away in time, but we don’t know for sure.”

Goodman smiled wanly. “It’s the ultimate insult,” he said. “I lost my arm, and the arm that isn’t there still hurts.” Baker prescribed medicine that would help him endure the worst moments, when he felt a crushing pain—almost like something large and strong had gotten a hold of his arm. “In my mind,” Goodman said. “I guess Mojo still has me.”

From *Pilgrim in the Land of Alligators*, © 2008 by the St. Petersburg Times, the Times Publishing Company
The 12 hour, six-part documentary series, directed by Ken Burns is filmed at some of America’s most spectacular locations. The documentary is nonetheless a story of people: people from every conceivable background – rich and poor; soldiers and scientists; natives and newcomers; idealists, artists and entrepreneurs; people who were willing to devote themselves to saving the land they loved.

As companion pieces to this historic story, many Florida PBS stations have produced local programs on Florida parks to showcase the richness of Florida’s landscape and history.

From National parks to Florida state parks, tune in to see stories about this wonderful nation unfold on your local PBS station.
KNOWN AS CHIQUITA, Espiridiona Cenda became a star of the New York entertainment circuit beginning in the late 19th century. She came to the United States when she was in her 20s, seeking not only fame but acceptance as a person rather than as a sideshow feature. She was only 26 inches tall and weighed 18.5 pounds.

Cenda is the subject of a fictionalized biography that won this year’s gold medal for Spanish Language literature in the Florida Book Awards.

An article in the New York Times July 1896, headlined “Tiny Cuban Lady Who Dances,” described her this way:

“She is said to be a university graduate; she must be a believer in dress reform, for she doesn’t wear even a stiff waist under her dainty, modish gowns. She can play, sing, and dance; she is the most graceful little lady imaginable, and she is only two feet in height.”

Consistently described as “fully developed and a little beauty,” Cenda was born in 1869 in the Cuban province of Matanzas, the oldest of five children. Her sister and three brothers were of normal size. She came to the United States intending to entertain only at private gatherings, but eventually (and not always happily) made her way into vaudeville and the circus. Her fame spread so widely that President William McKinley invited her to the White House in about 1900 and, according to lore, gave her a miniature horse and carriage.

The Times article described one of her earlier performances:

“It was in a ball gown that the senorita first appeared before her audience. There was applause when she entered the parlor, her long-trained dress sweeping after her. It was of pale Dresden silk, with jeweled trimming of turquoise and silver around the low-cut corsage, and bands of black velvet. Chiquita carried a small empire fan.”

Cenda died in New York in 1939 having achieved a measure of fame in both the United States and Europe. She spoke seven languages and earned a reputation as an independent woman.
Antonio Orlando Rodríguez
Gold Medal, Spanish Language

Antonio Orlando Rodríguez said it was “love at first sight” when a friend emailed him a photo of Espiridiona Cenda, a 26-inch tall Cuban singer and dancer who conquered American hearts at the dawn of the 20th century.

“The living doll,” as Cenda was known, became the inspiration for Chiquita, an imaginary biography of a real person determined to win respect while refusing to be shelved as a sideshow attraction. In addition to winning a gold in this year’s Florida Book Awards, Chiquita also was judged the best of 511 entries competing for the Premio Alfaguara prize, considered among the most prestigious in the Spanish-language book world.

It took five years to write the book. “What I enjoyed the most was the challenge of plunging into a time period full of political and social changes and striving to recreate it,” Rodríguez said in an interview with Criticas, an English-language magazine about Spanish books.

Born in Cuba, Rodríguez has lived in Colombia and Costa Rica. He came to the United States in 1999 and currently lives in Miami.

José Alvarez
Silver Medal, Spanish Language

When he was still a teenager, José Alvarez became involved in the struggle against Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, but broke with Fidel Castro’s regime three years after the revolution’s triumph.

“I started realizing that the road to absolute power was full of lies, foul plays, and myths and legends far away from the truth,” Alvarez said.

He spent more than 20 years researching and writing Princípio y fin del mito fidelista. The English version of the book is titled Deconstructing Castro’s Mythology.

Alvarez attended law school in Cuba before earning bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate degrees at the University of Florida. He is the author or co-author of more than 250 publications, including four books about agriculture and the sugar industry. In 1999 he won the National Honor Award for Superior Services, the United States Department of Agriculture’s highest award for research.

Alvarez and his wife Mercedes have been married nearly 47 years. They live in Wellington.
Deborah and Joel Shlian
Gold Medal, Genre Fiction

When she was growing up in Baltimore, Deborah Shlian had few friends outside a small group of what she says were “like-minded nerds.” But when she started writing plays for school shows, “the ‘popular’ kids who dreamed of acting careers suddenly became best buddies,” she said.

While she thought seriously about a writing career, her father, a doctor, steered her toward medicine, saying that would pay the bills. He was correct, she said. And besides, she loved the idea of practicing medicine; so she became a physician.

Joel Shlian also grew up in Baltimore, but he didn’t know Deborah until he spied her in an emergency room where both were working as medical students. It was a love-at-first-sight scenario, and Joel did not take long to get acquainted. It took him three days to persuade her to say “yes” to his proposal; they were married six weeks later.

Eventually they landed in Los Angeles where they worked as physicians for 25 years and where Deborah’s creative fire flared anew. Because she and Joel have always done everything together—practiced medicine, completed the UCLA MBA program, produced medical articles and books—it was natural for them to collaborate on fiction.

The couple’s three novels all are thrillers. *Rabbit in the Moon* tells the story of Dr. Lili Quan, a Chinese-American woman studying medicine in China. She becomes a pawn in an international conspiracy involving her grandfather’s discovery of the secret of longevity.

The Shlians now live in Boca Raton, where they balance their writing with caring for patients and consulting on medical management.

Their extensive travels to China and their experiences as hosts for mainland Chinese students at UCLA, where they both taught, brought *Rabbit in the Moon* an authentic tone.

The couple has no children or pets, but has lots of hobbies, including tennis and photography.

Lisa Unger
Silver Medal, Genre Fiction

As a youngster, Lisa Unger traveled widely, enjoying the experiences but always feeling a sense of separation. “I don’t recall ever exactly fitting in anywhere. Writers are first and foremost observers... and one can’t truly observe unless she stands apart,” Unger said in an online biographical note.

Unger built a reputation for her literary thrillers featuring Ridley Jones, a freelance writer. She also has produced a mystery series under her maiden name, Lisa Missione.

*Black Out* is a stand-alone thriller. As is the case with much of Unger’s other work, the story hinges on the idea that one’s past is ever-present—sometimes in frightening ways. *Black Out* tells the story of a woman who lives in a pleasant Florida suburb when a supposedly dead serial killer she once knew seems to slip back into her life.

Unger’s novels have been published in more than 27 countries. She lives near Tampa with her husband and daughter.

If New York is in your face, an assault on all of your senses, demands your full attention, Florida slowly wraps itself around you like the strangler fig. It becomes a part of you – its natural beauty, its mystery. For all its kitsch and sunshine, it has a dark and feral center that really appeals to me. It’s a wild place. I have a sense that if we just stopped for one second trimming and cutting back, laying miles of concrete and rebar, it would reach out with murky fingers and reclaim itself.

—Lisa Unger
Silver Medal, Genre Fiction
Deep in the dark, wild swamps of Florida amid the lush black-green foliage and through the still, teeming waters, wild orchids grow. Over the last century, orchid hunters, breeders, and poachers have donned their waders and raped the swamplands of these delicate flowers, filling trucks with the once-plentiful plants and shipping them for huge profits all over the world. Now they are so rare in the wild that environmentalists are struggling to rescue the waning populations, and the search for wild orchids is ever more desperate. Most legendary among them is the elusive ghost orchid. Snow white with delicately furled petals, the leafless epiphyte never touches the earth and seems to float like a specter, hence its name. In the history of Florida, people have lied and stolen, fought and died in their quest for the ghost orchid, which flowers only once a year.

Detective Harrison always liked the idea of this, the idea of men who risked their lives in pursuit of the single fragile object of their passion. At the best of times, Harrison considered himself to be one of these men. Through the hinterland of lies, in the decaying marsh of murder, he searched for the fresh white thing that was pure, elevated above the murk, drawing its nourishment from the air.

Like the orchid hunters, he didn’t mind the trek through the dark and shadowy spaces, his goal moving him toward places where, less motivated, others wouldn’t dare to go. He could sit at his computer until his eyes stung and his head ached; he could make a hundred fruitless calls, drive hundreds of miles, talk to dozens of surly, uncooperative lackeys, and never think of giving up. It just never occurred to him that he might not find what he was looking for.

He felt like a hunter the evening after my memorial service and his conversation with Ella. He was alone in his office in the station house. Everyone else on the detectives’ floor had gone home for the evening. Somewhere he could hear a phone ringing, and somewhere else a radio played some hip-hop crap he couldn’t name. Someone was working out in the gym upstairs; he could hear the weights landing heavily on the floor above him.

He didn’t have much to go on. He had a website address, the name of a murdered shrink operating without a license, the meticulous notes and collection of articles from a dead bounty hunter, a missing woman with a false identity who also happened to be the ex-girlfriend (or captive, depending on whom you talked to) of a serial killer. Then, of course, there was her husband, a former military man, now owner of a privatized military company, who for some reason had visited Simon Briggs’s motel room just an hour after Briggs’s murder.

Harrison had made the call to his wife, Sarah, telling her not to expect him and to lock up the house for the night and that he’d see her in the morning. Then he popped up his Internet browser and began the long, lonely slog through the marsh, searching for his ghost orchid.

From Black Out, © 2008 by A Room of My Own, LLC
NOISE WAS ONE OF the few things that moved freely inside a prison. The haunting echo of my own footsteps followed me down the long, windowless corridor inside the maximum security wing of Florida State Prison in Starke. I’d visited many prisons, and the smell was always the same: a choking mixture of piss, shit, fear, and desperation, wiped down by harsh antiseptics.

Walking through an electronically operated steel door, I was patted down by two stone-faced guards. Satisfied that I was not carrying weapons or contraband, they passed me off to a smirking inmate with a hideous purple birthmark on the side of his face. He took off at a brisk pace, and I followed him into the cellblock that housed death row inmates.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Garvin,” he replied, not breaking stride.

“What are you in for?”

“I shot up my family during Thanksgiving dinner.”

I walked past the cells in death row with my eyes to the floor, feeling their occupants’ presence like a fist pounding on my back. When we arrived at an empty cell, Garvin slid back the door, and stepped to one side. “Wait inside here,” he said.

“What if no one comes?” I asked.

“Make some noise, and I’ll come get you.”

I entered the cell, a 10-by-10 concrete square with two wood benches anchored to the floor, and a small wood table. Garvin slammed the door behind me, making me jump. He chuckled as he walked away.

I took the bench nearest the door, and stuck a piece of gum into my mouth. I chewed so hard it made my jaw ache. I’d put scores of bad guys into Starke, and I didn’t want to be here any longer than I had to.

I stared at the table. Inmates were not supposed to have anything sharp, but the table said otherwise. Names and dates and ugly epithets were carved into every inch of wood. One name stood out over the others.

Abb Grimes

I had been involved in Abb’s case, and I knew his story. A Fort Lauderdale native, he’d quit high school at 17, done a stint in the Navy, gotten married and had a kid, and gone to work driving a newspaper delivery truck—an ordinary guy, except that he liked to kill young women.

Abb’s killings followed a pattern. Late at night, he left his house, and walked to the neighborhood grocery. There, he’d hidden behind the Dumpsters. When a young homeless woman would show up looking for food, he’d drag her into the woods, rape and strangle her, then stuff her body in a large garbage bag, tossing her into a Dumpster.

As mass murders went, it was nearly perfect. The victims were women no one cared about, and the bodies were disposed of for him. It might have gone on forever, only one night a surveillance camera filmed Abb with the body of a victim draped in his arms. As was his custom, the store manager viewed the tape the next morning. Seeing Abb, he called 911.

The police found the woman’s body in
the Dumpster. They got a search warrant for Abb’s home and in his garage they found a cardboard box containing women’s underpants. Each of the pairs was different.

Their next stop was the Pompano Beach landfill, where trash in Broward County was taken. Using earth movers and cadaver dogs, they’d moved several acres of trash, digging up the bodies of 17 strangled women.

Eleven of the women were carrying ID. As head of the Broward County Sheriff’s Department’s Missing Persons unit, it had been my job to contact their families. It had been one of the hardest things I’d ever done.

The remaining six women were still Jane Does. I had hoped to identify them one day, and put their memories to rest. Only I’d lost my job after beating up a suspect, and never gotten it done.

It ate at me.

Hearing footsteps, I went to the cell door. Wearing leg irons and handcuffs and flanked by two guards, Abb shuffled down the hall. Tall and powerfully built, he had an angular jaw and dark, deeply set eyes. During his trial, the prosecution had called him “The Night Stalker,” which had been a TV show that had lasted one season. It had scared the hell out of everyone who’d seen it.

“I’m going to die soon,” Abb said. “Did my lawyer tell you that?”

“No, she didn’t,” I said.

“They’re going to execute me in four days,” Abb said. “Think you can find my grandson before then?”

Abb’s grandson, 3-year-old Sampson Grimes, had disappeared from his bedroom three nights ago. I’d read about it in the Fort Lauderdale newspapers, and knew that the police had been stymied in their efforts to locate him.

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Eckerd College congratulates Helen Wallace on receiving a 2008 Florida Book Awards Bronze medal in Poetry for her first book, Shimming the Glass House.

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"I’m going to try," I said. "Now, why don’t you tell me what happened."
"I get an hour each day to exercise in the yard," Abb said. "Two days ago, a photograph of my grandson and a ransom note got slipped into my back pocket. I didn’t see who did it."
"Do you still have the note and photo?" I asked.
"I gave them to Ms. Stone." I looked at Stone. "I’d like to see them."

Stone unclasped her briefcase and handed me the items. The photo showed a tow-headed little boy with a face like the Gerber baby lying on a blanket. His clothes looked clean, as did his face and hands, and his eyes showed no sign of fear. I took these as a sign that his captor was not abusing him. Lying on the blanket was a copy of the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel with the date prominently displayed. It was a trick used by kidnappers to show that their victims were still alive.

I shifted my attention to the ransom note. Written in pencil, it said, "Stop talking to the FBI or Sampson will die." The handwriting surprised me. Most kidnappers used typewriters, or glued letters cut from a magazine. However, whoever had kidnapped Sampson obviously didn’t think he was going to get caught.

"What are you talking to the FBI about?" I asked.
"I’m in their VICAP program," Abb said. "I was supposed to go under hypnosis to help them identify those Jane Does. I still don’t remember the things I did."

VICAP was the FBI’s Violent Criminal Apprehension Program. Cops had an expression when criminals entered programs like VICAP, and agreed to help the police. They called it taking a shot at heaven.

"Does the FBI know you were contacted by your grandson’s kidnapper?" I asked.
Abb shook his head.

"How about the police?" I asked.
Abb shook his head again.
"Why haven’t you told them?"
"Because I want you to find him," Abb said.
"Why?" I asked.
"I’ve met six guys in Starke who are serving life for kidnapping little kids. You put them here. That’s why."

I slipped the ransom note into my pocket.
"You’re going to take the job?" Abb asked.
"Yes," I said.
"Good."

I stood and so did Stone. She went over and placed her hand on Abb’s shoulder. Under her breath she said, "I’ll call you tomorrow, and let you know how the appeals are going."

Abb gazed up at her and nodded.

I slipped the ransom note into my pocket.
"You’re going to take the job?" Abb asked.
"Yes," I said.
"Good."

Abb cast his eyes to the floor. He had asked me here because he did not want to go to his death knowing he’d caused an innocent child to suffer. I had to think it was one of the more decent things he’d done in his life.

"Okay," he muttered.

He was still staring at the floor when we left.


James Swain
Bronze Medal, Genre Fiction

A gambling expert and professional magician who has been billed as one of the best card handlers in the world, James Swain writes about life in the shadows—where cops, criminals, con men, and victims come together in seedy communion.

Swain has written nine best-selling novels, many, like The Night Stalker, set in Florida. In Night Stalker, a convicted serial killer is days away from execution when his grandson is kidnapped. The story is based upon an actual case in Florida, when a boy was taken from his bedroom while his grandfather was on Death Row.

"I thought this was a terrific premise for a thriller, and used that as my starting point," Swain says on his website.

Swain’s books have been chosen as mysteries of the year by Publisher’s Weekly and Kirkus Reviews and have received two Barry Award nominations. In 2006, he was awarded the French Prix Calibre 38 for best American Crime Fiction.

He lives near Tampa with his wife Laura.

To listen to an interview with the author, go to FORUM EXTRA! at www.flahum.org.
EMMET MACWAIN left Sloppy Joe’s Bar, crossed Duval, Key West’s main street, walked the block over to Whitehead Street, turned left and began the long, hot, walk to the beach. He was in no hurry. He enjoyed the late afternoon strolls almost as much as the evenings spent on the beach where he’d walk the surf line casting his baited hook, angling for the plentiful sand perch or grunts, which he usually de-hooked and tossed back into the waves. Too boney. Occasionally, he would catch a stray snapper, or two, and he would keep these to take home and eat.

He could have just as easily walked the opposite direction and fished off the docks at Mallory Square. It was closer but sometimes travelers, tourists, hung out there watching the sunset and generally being a nuisance, asking him what he used for bait, what was biting tonight and so on.

Emmet preferred solitude. That was one reason he’d come to this remote Florida island that curved away from the mainland west, into the Gulf of Mexico, like a giant, craggy fishhook. He preferred the beach’s coolness in the pre-dusk hours, the quiet lap of the surf, the long blue shadows that formed in the sand as the sun set on the opposite, crowded, side of the island.

The routine was this: grab the rod and tackle, head over to Sloppy Joe’s about mid afternoon, have a couple drinks and wait for the day to cool off. He’d taken to drinking rum, a liquor he’d acquired a taste for since moving here a few months ago and for which his fellow kinsmen, the Scots, given their predilection for malt whiskey, would never forgive him. Not that there were any other Scotsmen in Key West; this “end of the world” place. After the
one or two drinks and sometimes a
game of cards with some of the colorful
locals, he would buy a pound of shrimp
from Mr. Josie, the barkeep, and head
toward the beach. He walked by boli
booths, where numbered slips of paper
were exchanged for cash, and past alleys
where make-shift pens were constructed
and bright, fierce, gamecocks ripped
into each other as the Cubans thronged
around them, hands and money waving
in the air like the unfettered but
windless sails of a ship going nowhere.

Emmet enjoyed his time alone
but he also enjoyed the solitude one
can find in a bar, alone in a crowd.
He was a listener, an observer of not
only people but the environment that
enveloped them and in which he, by
proxy, could step in and become a part
of that environment, then step out when
it no longer served his interest. It was
not the bar itself but the heavy overhead
fans slowly cooling the humid air, the
smell of fish frying in hot pans of oil, the
tinkling and melodic sounds of glasses
being filled or washed, and the spirited
conversations among the bartenders,
sailors, and fishermen who frequented
the place and tried to forget there was a
depression going on. The bar was a nice
refuge except, of course, when it grew
too loud, which it occasionally did when
the resident celebrity, a book writer
named Hemingway, came in and swilled
too many. Sometimes even he could
be interesting, at least for the first few
drinks. But, the man did not know his
limit and would soon be bragging about
some beast he’d killed in Africa, the
huge marlin he’d landed, or how much
money his last novel had earned him.

Time and again, the writer, whom
everyone insisted on calling “Papa,”
would encourage the poor Negro who
mopped and cleaned the place and
who possessed the strength of a bull,
to crouch under the piano and, at Papa’s
boozey command, lift the instrument off
the floor. The Negro would do it, too,
beads of sweat popping out of his ebony
pate like nitroglycerin oozing out of
unstable dynamite. He’d gnash his big
horse-teeth and grunt and sometimes
fart, which made the writer laugh all the
more until, finally, the piano legs were
clear of the floor and a round of applause
would signal it was okay to set it down.
Then Papa would buy the Negro a drink
which he would take with him to the
back of the kitchen and sip while he
waited to mop up another overturned
beer, or grant a request for an encore
performance with the piano.

If Emmet had been a society snob,
he’d have labeled the novelist a bore.
But, as he was cut from common cloth,
as he suspected was Hemingway, he
simply labeled him a loud-mouthed fool;
a buffoon who reveled in the extremes,
wanted everything, but appreciated little.

Emmet had seen many men like the
writer when he was first a soldier, then a
copper in London. Self-destructive sots
who were fine, even good, company until
they passed their limits of alcohol, then
had to be put in their place. Sometimes
there was no one to take care of that task
and, sometimes, there was.
Patrick Kendrick  
*Bronze Medal, Genre Fiction*

Patrick Kendrick’s father, a half-Apache, was a blacksmith and rodeo man from Oklahoma; his mother was a Missouri farm girl turned nurse. They moved their four children to a Belle Glade migrant workers’ camp when the future author was only three weeks old.

“My father left my mother soon afterward to return to work in Colorado and never returned,” Kendrick said. “My first memories still vibrate with the reality of growing up poor in a home with no screens in the windows [and] hairy ‘Florida spiders’ on the ceiling…”

He describes subsequent childhood years growing up in a sleepy West Palm Beach where Seminole Indians, dressed in colorful patchwork and beads, frequented one of the few grocery stores.

Kendrick went on to earn a fine arts degree from the University of South Florida and spent four months in Venice, Italy, while studying for a master’s degree in a New York University program.

“From early on my mother instilled in me a love of the arts, reading, and the ocean—and I have never lived far from it,” he said. When he grew disillusioned with the art world, he moved back home and became a firefighter and paramedic—and has continued in these professions for more than 25 years.

At the same time, he also became a writer—and has been published in a variety of newspapers and magazines. He won the Opus Magnum Discovery Award from the Hollywood Film Festival for *Papa’s Problem* and was knighted by the Venerable Order of Michael the Archangel Police Legion for his articles on crime.

Kendrick said that, like his life, his writing “does not always follow the staid and certain path, a preconceived and conventional plot, or the perfect picture.”

*Papa’s Problem*, a historical mystery, is set in Key West—where famed writer Ernest Hemingway is suspected of murder.

Kendrick lives with his wife and two sons in West Palm Beach.

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Martha Powers  
*Bronze Medal, Genre Fiction*

Martha Powers first worked for advertising agencies in Chicago, finding a creative outlet by writing musical comedies for local theater groups. “The pay was two tickets down front and instant gratification when the audience laughed at the jokes,” Powers says on her website.

On a dare from her husband, she submitted an article to a small newspaper, whose quick acceptance launched Powers as a humor columnist, a calling to which she recently returned. Her freelance work has also included composing crossword puzzles.

In 1987, her first novel was published, a Regency historical romance. Although she went on to write eight more in that genre, mysteries have remained her first love and she has produced several.

*Conspiracy of Silence* is the story of a woman who discovers that she had been adopted, then learns that her birth mother was murdered. She tries to find out the whole story, which others want to bury.

Powers lives in Vero Beach with her husband.

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**I certainly feel a sense of place in Florida because I have grown up here and witnessed the changes that have transmogrified this formerly rural, agrarian state into the cultural, go-to spot in the nation, like a marriage, for better or worse.**

—PATRICK KENDRICK  
*Bronze Medal, Genre Fiction*
David Kirby
Gold Medal, Poetry

For the second consecutive year, Florida State University English Professor David Kirby won poetry gold, his latest in a long list of honors.

The prolific professor has written more than 22 books on a variety of subjects. He has won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, in addition to numerous other awards. He also has earned the highest distinction that FSU faculty can bestow upon a peer, the Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professorship.

“That’s all the headlines,” Kirby quipped in a website article about FSU faculty. “They don’t talk about all the liquor stores I held up.”

The same article mentioned that Kirby once wrote the names “John Keats” and “Little Richard” on wet cement in front of his house. The poet and the entertainer are two of Kirby’s favorites—Keats for his graceful language and Little Richard for the driving energy in his songs.

Married to poet Barbara Hamby, Kirby lives in Tallahassee.

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...when I entered into the estate of young manhood, [Florida] was where other rascals and I went to drink watery, overpriced beer and pursue the women who fled from us. So Florida has always been a paradise to me, a land of infinite potential.

—DAVID KIRBY
Gold Medal, Poetry

THE BEACH
By Campbell McGrath

Beach chairs in the surf
so the moms don’t have to move—
long day at the beach.

Jackson says it’s like
a mad symphony today,
the sound of the waves.

Beach chairs rotating
around shade umbrellas like
sundial shadows.

Warm water—the smell of Florida! The Gulf Stream, blown west, waves hello.

Seaweed: someone says
it’s like swimming in salad—
long day at the beach.

Campbell McGrath
Silver Medal, Poetry

Campbell McGrath draws inspiration from many sources, including music. “From Woody Guthrie to contemporary rock and roll, I’m very influenced by ‘American’ music,” McGrath said. In the early 1980s, while a student at the University of Chicago, McGrath was a member of a Punk band, “Men from the Manly Planet.”

He says he also has been inspired to write poetry by the television program, The Price is Right, and by the late actor, Charlton Heston.

McGrath has been recognized with some of the most prestigious American poetry awards, including the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, a Pushcart Prize, the Academy of American Poets Prize, a Ploughshares Cohen Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Witter-Bynner Fellowship from the Library of Congress, and a MacArthur Foundation “Genius Award.”

A creative writing teacher at Florida International University, McGrath lives in Miami with his wife and two sons.

To listen to interviews with these authors, go to FORUM EXTRA! at www.flahum.org.
Everglades
An Ecosystem Facing Choices and Challenges
by Anne Ake
Winner of the Silver Medal in the Young Adult Category of the 2009 Florida Book Awards

ISBN 978-1-56164-410-0 • $19.95 • 100 color photos • April 2008

Ages 11–14. The Everglades is like no other place in the world. Its shallow, slowly flowing waters create an ecosystem of mysterious beauty with a great diversity of plant and animal life. This book documents the beauty of the Everglades for young readers in text and color photos and explains why it is an ecosystem in trouble.

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The Honored Dead
by Robert N. Macomber

“The seventh novel in the Honor Series...is so vividly written that it’s easy to forget Wake is a made-up character. … Highly recommended for fans of naval fiction, especially Patrick O’Brian’s Aubrey/Maturin series, C. S. Forester’s Hornblower novels, or anything by Bernard Cornwell.”—Booklist

ISBN 978-1-56164-484-3 • $21.95 • March 2009

The Honored Dead is the seventh book in the award-winning Honor Series of naval historical fiction. The series follows the life and career of Lt. Cmdr. Peter Wake from 1863 to 1907, a time when the United States Navy helped America become a global power. In this novel, Lt. Cmdr. Peter Wake, Office of Naval Intelligence, is in French Indochina in 1883 on a secret mission for President Chester Arthur, during which he encounters opium warlords, Chinese-Malay pirates, and French gangsters. Wake quickly learns nothing is simple in the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Empire of Vietnam.
ON THE SUWANNEE

BY HELEN PRUITT WALLACE

As children we played along this bank
where limestone craters the shore.

We balanced on knobs of cypress knees,
barefoot, baggy jeans rolled up, eager
for a white splash of bass. In one hand
I gripped a reed and stirred

as you caught minnows in a cup,
breadcrumbs scattering like ash.

We watched them spiral down and slowly
sink, then sailed our woven twigs

around the bend. What floats,
what sinks, what particles dissolve,

I understood those concepts
better then: the river was clear-black,

rocks were white. But now I find
what disappears in day

quietly emerges at night, and most
of the rocks I’ve kept are really gray.

From Shimming the Glass House, © 2008 by Helen Pruitt Wallace
Terri Witek  
*Bronze Medal, Poetry*

Terri Witek grew up attending daily Catholic Mass, where she absorbed the sensory experiences of chanted Latin and vivid Italian mannerist art. “The accompanying mysteries were both terrifying and thrilling,” she said. “A sense of the rich unknowableness of things and a preference for lush visuals certainly lingers in my poetry from those early childhood experiences.”

A year in Brazil as an exchange student also stirred the budding poet. *The Shipwreck Dress* is Witek’s fourth book of poetry. She lives in DeLand with her husband, comics scholar Joseph Witek. She directs the Sullivan Program in Creative Writing at Stetson University, where she also teaches in the English department.

*Florida light invites me to write poems as wildly as I can. Such clarity and brute force in this light, such an invitation to face things.*

—TERRI WITEK  
*Bronze Medal, Poetry*  

**Florida Book Award Winners • Poetry**  

**Frank Giampietro**  
*Bronze Medal, Poetry*

While serving as CEO and general manager of a family-owned appliance business in Dover, Del., Frank Giampietro still found time to earn two master’s degrees. He is continuing his academic career as a Ph.D. candidate in Florida State University’s creative writing program.

Giampietro’s poems have appeared in journals such as *Columbia Poetry Review, CutBank, 32 Poems, Exquisite Corpse,* and *Poetry International. Begin Anywhere* is his first book of poems.

“Giampietro’s unique brand of genius makes the world more glorious, uproarious, and lonesomely true,” wrote Julianna Baggott, a winner in last year’s Florida Book Awards.

Giampietro is founding editor and designer of *La Fo/v.altea,* an online poetry journal featuring the work of nearly 200 poets. It rejects old models of publishing poetry and allows poets themselves “to champion people they love and have their opinions matter,” Giampietro wrote in the site’s mission statement.

He lives in Tallahassee with his wife, potter Cherie Giampietro, two young children, and two old cats.

**September 11-12**

**Florida Heritage Book Festival**

Get literary at this celebration of the authors and books that chronicle the ethnic, social, and historical heritage of the Sunshine State. Events and activities will include workshops, readings, and book signings by popular authors. Panel discussions will focus on the business of book publishing, as well as how-to sessions for aspiring authors. Except for a few ticketed events, including a motorized tour of the oldest city’s literary landmarks, all events are free and open to the public. The festival will be held at Flagler College, the Casa Monica Hotel in downtown St. Augustine and Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra Beach.

**For more information go to**

www.fhbookfest.com  
**or call 904.940.0194**

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A Trip to Florida for Health and Sport: The Lost 1855 Novel of Cyrus Parkhurst Condit
Edited and with an Introduction by Maurice O’Sullivan and Wenxian Zhang
More than eighty years before Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings published The Yearling, Cyrus Parkhurst Condit wrote this coming-of-age novel about a teenage boy in Florida who learns to hunt, builds a fence, and takes a fawn as a pet. Undiscovered and unpublished until now, this engaging story is historically significant as one of the first Florida novels ever written. Fascinating historical and literary context is provided by the editors.

Paperback $14.95

Palmetto Country
A Classic Florida Book with an introduction and for the first time richly illustrated with period photographs
Stetson Kennedy collected folklore and oral histories throughout Florida for the WPA between 1937 and 1942. The result was this classic Florida book, back in print for the first time in twenty years with an Afterword update and dozens of historic photographs never before published with this work. Alan Lomax said, “I doubt very much that a better book about Florida folklife will ever be written.”

Paperback $24.95
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Ben Green
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WE ARE PROUD TO OFFER OUR NEW RELEASES:
John Tkac
Gold Medal, Young Adult Literature

In John Tkac’s *Whispers from the Bay*, the young protagonist learns to communicate with dolphins through mental imagery. Eventually, the smiley-faced marine mammals transport him to their top-secret world, where it is possible to change the course of history.

“It’s like Harry Potter from the Keys,” said a 14-year-old reviewer in an online comment.

Tkac (pronounced tack) grew up in Miami and takes great joy in writing about the sea and its creatures—two of his lifelong passions.

In addition to being a storyteller, Tkac is a nationally known sales trainer and consultant. He has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Notre Dame and a master’s degree from the University of Georgia.

He lives in Delray Beach, where he is working on the second and third books of what will be a series called “The Dolphin Chronicles.”

Anne E. Ake
Silver Medal, Young Adult Literature

Veteran traveler Anne Ake enjoys offbeat destinations—such as the Sydney, Australia, brewery where she has booked rooms for her trip this summer. She and her companions also will stay at a zoo.

“I am still researching funky places to stay for the rest of the trip,” Ake says. Her writing reflects her varied exploration. Ake’s previous books for adult and young adult audiences have been about Hungary, Austria, America’s Apache Indians, and gorillas.

She also wrote the text for artist Dean Mitchell’s first book, has written many magazine articles, and, with her daughter, published *Cool Kidstuff*, a children’s magazine. For eight years, she handled the chores for an arts and entertainment publication. Her interest in the Everglades grew when she began slogging through the region while a resident of South Florida.

Her husband Bill encouraged her writing, but died before *Everglades: An Ecosystem Facing Choices and Challenges* was published. She lives in Lynn Haven with four dogs, two cats, and several fish.

Julie Gonzalez
Bronze Medal, Young Adult Literature

Julie Gonzalez says she never really considered writing as a career path. But she got started by writing a children’s arts-and-crafts column for a newspaper and, later, for a magazine. Eventually, young adult literature became her literary forte.

“I am most strongly drawn to young adults because I really like that age-group as people. I enjoy their sarcasm and wit, and I treasure their innocence or lack thereof, depending on the person,” Gonzalez said.

She also works as a tutor and has held an array of jobs: teaching, sales, bartending, and operating a water slide, to name a few.

In *Imaginary Enemy*, heroine Jane White is usually quite normal—but she writes letters to Bubba, her self-created nemesis. Then one day Bubba writes back. Gonzalez also wrote *Ricochet* and *Wings*, which won the Delacorte Press Prize for First Young Adult Novel.

She lives in Pensacola with her husband Eric. The couple has four children, a dog, and a cat.
DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE 1920s BOOM, it was not unusual for Miami to issue 50 or more real estate licenses daily. As the classic joke went at that time, the devil resorted to caging real estate men from Miami or they would have subdivided Hell and sold it all within two hours.

Tales such as these abound in the new edition of Arva Moore Parks’s *Miami: The Magic City* (Community Media, 328 pages, $49.95)—a collection of stories, anecdotes, photos, and illustrations labeled “The Official History of the City of Miami.” Another historical nugget:

The birth of the city was sparked in the 1890s when Julia Tuttle, known as the “Mother of Miami,” persuaded magnate Henry Flagler to extend his railroad from Palm Beach to Miami. She gave him 300 acres of her land on which to build a luxury hotel and lay out a town. When Flagler’s workers cleared land for his Royal Palm Hotel, they first carted away bones from a Tequesta Indian burial mound that was described as a “mountain” at the mouth of the Miami River.

This book is one of several new titles that will appeal to those interested in the history of Florida cities. A second Miami book, *Coming to Miami: A Social History* (University Press of Florida, 352 pages, $39.95), offers a study of the city’s development as viewed through the lenses of race, women, and labor. Melanie Shell-Weiss explores the all-important Florida dynamic of migration and immigration.

*Tampa on My Mind* (University Press of Florida, 176 pages, $34.95) features 183 color images of the city, produced by professional photographers and edited by Kimberly Williams, Gregory Thomas, Ronald Williams, and Cheryl Borman.

Pensacola this year celebrates its 450th anniversary, and *Historic Pensacola* (University Press of Florida, 200 pages, $27) describes the Panhandle city’s role as a crossroads where colonial European powers jostled for empire. John J. Clune Jr. and Margo S. Stringfield have written a book accessible to a general audience, and even to younger readers.

St. Augustine, meanwhile, is credited with being America’s oldest city. *St. Augustine and St. Johns County: A Historical Guide* (Pineapple Press, 112 pages, $14.95) features maps, directions, photos, and narrative to tell the stories of more than 80 of the nation’s oldest historic sites. Author William R. Adams has a doctorate in history and is director of St. Augustine’s Department of Heritage Tourism.

Other new Florida books delve into aspects of the state’s environment, culture, art, cooking—and tabloid journalism.

*In Paving Paradise: Florida's Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss* (University Press of Florida, 376 pages, $27), journalists Craig Pittman and Matthew Waite write about the impact of development on Florida’s 10.5-million acres of wetlands and the failure of a federal policy designed to protect them.
The authors point out that Florida has a larger collection of marshes, ponds, swamps, and tidal zones than any other state but Alaska—and it also has a history of issuing more building permits than any other state. For example, local governments in Florida approved the construction of about 250,000 new houses, condos, and apartments in 2004—nearly 50,000 more than were approved in California, which has twice the population and three times the land area.

Janis Owens made her debut a few years ago with a trilogy about the tribulations of a West Florida family. Now Owens, a born-and-bred Floridian whose father was a Pentecostal preacher and an insurance “policy man,” has written *The Cracker Kitchen* (Scribner, 277 pages, $25). Pat Conroy, widely known for his novels set in the Carolina low country, supplied the introduction.

The cookbook is organized by occasion—food for funerals, Sunday dinner, and light summer supper, for example. Readers may feel the urge to eat, preferably something fried, baked, or hunted. If it is game you are serving, “Try not to run it to death before you kill it, or all the soaking in the world won’t help,” Owens writes in one of many tidbits that make her cookbook equally significant as a cultural exploration.

A few more snapshots:

*Suwannee River Guidebook* (Pineapple Press, 180 pages, $14.95). The Suwannee is among the nation’s most widely recognized rivers, and prolific Florida author Kevin McCarthy has written a comprehensive manual for exploring it.

*Ichetucknee: Sacred Waters* (University Press of Florida, 119 pages, $34.95). Florida Park ranger Steven Earl has photographed, painted, and written about the glass-clear north Florida river for more than 20 years. A collection of his artful photos and watercolors shows many intriguing aspects of the Ichetucknee’s haunting beauty.

*Category 5: The 1935 Labor Day Hurricane* (University Press of Florida, 368 pages, $29.95). In an era when forecasting lacked detail, a monster storm tore apart the Florida Keys, killing three in every five residents. Thomas Neil Knowles, a fourth-generation Conch, former naval officer, and retired college administrator, combed obscure official records and interviewed survivors and victims’ relatives. The unnamed blow—the weather service still was not naming storms—was the first known Category 5 hurricane to strike the United States.

*The Highwaymen Murals: Al Black’s Concrete Dreams* (University Press of Florida, 160 pages, $29.95). In a new twist to the Florida Highwaymen saga, Gary Monroe tells the story of an artist who struggled with drugs and went to prison, but kept on painting. While incarcerated, Al Black decorated walls with his thematic landscape paintings.


*Lessons Learned? The History of Planning in Florida* (Sentry Press, 465 pages, $34.95). Here is the context for Florida’s 21st-century growth management issues. Authors Richard G. RuBino and Earl M. Starnes provide a detailed journey from Ponce de Leon to the administration of Gov. Charlie Crist, showing how politics and economics have influenced development philosophy.

JON WILSON, recently retired after 35 years with the St. Petersburg Times, is pursuing a master’s degree in Florida Studies at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.
Susan Womble
Gold Medal, Young Adult Literature

Susan Womble loves technology, science fiction, learning, and the work of 19th-century visionary Jules Verne. “So I took all of those loves and added in my desire to teach through my writing about tolerance” and about how kids should look for what is best in themselves. “The end result was my first published book,” Womble said.

“My son and I talked [during a car trip] about the idea for the book and the name of my character,” Womble said. Newt’s World: Beginnings tells the story of a wheelchair-bound boy who turns a NASA computer program into a holographic game. The book, which also includes an international espionage ring that takes Newt’s school hostage, is the first book in a series about Newt and his adventures.

Womble teaches reading, special education, language arts, math, and social studies. She lives in Tallahassee with her husband Gregg, children Thomas and Amanda, and dog Maggie.

Donna Gephart
Silver Medal, Young Adult Literature

Donna Gephart knew early in life that she wanted to be a writer. “I saved babysitting money when I was 14 so I could purchase a typewriter and type out my stories and send them to places so I could get rejection slips,” Gephart said.

From that beginning, Gephart has built a career. She has written stories, articles, and poems for children’s magazines, humorous essays for adult publications, restaurant reviews, and greeting cards. She has even created puzzles for specialty magazines.

As If Being 12 ¾ Isn’t Bad Enough, My Mother is Running For President is her first novel. It tells the story of an anxious preteen girl highly irritated by her mother’s candidacy and the accompanying pressure.

Gephart lives in South Florida with her husband Dan, two boys, and cat Jasmine and dog Lady. She likes bike rides, hanging out at the libraries and bookstores, and long walks on beaches. “Whenever possible, I avoid alligators, fire ants, and hurricanes,” she says.

Loreen Leedy
Bronze Medal, Young Adult Literature

A college art major, Loreen Leedy wasn’t quite sure what creative discipline fired her imagination the most. At first she made polymer clay jewelry and chess sets, selling them at craft shows. One day—there must have been magic in it—Leedy imagined one of her jewelry pieces as a book character. The vision launched a new career.

Leedy has written and illustrated more than 35 children’s books that explore science, social studies, language arts, and math—and tell tales about trolls and dragons.

Her prizewinner, Missing Math, sends a detective in search of numbers, which have disappeared. Written in verse, the story shows how the world falls apart without numerals and tells of the quest to get them back.

Leedy lives near Orlando with her husband Andy, who is a scientist working on space biology research at Kennedy Space Center.
New and Notable

Fine Art, Florida Style

The Highwaymen Murals
Al Black’s Concrete Dreams
Gary Monroe
“There are only two ways to get to know Al Black’s art: 1) buy this book, or 2) go to jail.”—Maarten van de Guchte, director, Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens
Hardcover $39.95

Ichetucknee
Sacred Waters
Steven Earl
“The Ichetucknee is Florida’s sacred river, and no artist I know has captured its beauty more impressively than Steve Earl.”—John Moran, author/photographer of Journal of Light
Hardcover $34.95

Great Masters of Cuban Art, 1800–1958/Grandes Maestros del Arte Cubano Ramos Collection/Collección Ramos
Zeida Comesañas Sardiñas
“The Ramos Collection is historically significant and underemphasized, as the represented artists were major contributors to the cultural life of pre-Castro Cuba.”—Wayne David Atherholt, Executive Director, Daytona Beach Museum of Arts and Sciences
Hardcover $60.00

Great Beach Reads

Truth, Lies, and O-Rings
Inside the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster
Allan J. McDonald with James R. Hansen
“We all watched in shock and disbelief when Challenger was lost. Probably no one felt more disappointment and regret than Allan McDonald, who had warned us not to launch that day.”—Robert “Hoot” Gibson, former Space Shuttle pilot and commander
Hardcover $39.95

Tabloid Valley
Supermarket News and American Culture
Paula E. Morton
“At last, the story behind the journalistic movement that gave us Bat Boy and Elvis Lives!, and changed American politics forever. Your wait in the supermarket line will never be the same.”—Mark Lane, author of Sandspurs: Notes from a Coastal Columnist
Hardcover $24.95

Paving Paradise
Florida’s Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss
Craig Pittman and Matthew Waite
“An important book that should be read by every voter, every taxpayer, every parent, every Floridian.”—Carl Hiaasen
Hardcover $27.00

Category 5
The 1935 Labor Day Hurricane
Thomas Neil Knowles
“A gripping account. . . . Winds were so strong that they tore babies from the arms of their parents. Over 400 people lost their lives, including over 200 veterans of World War I. It was a tragedy that did not have to happen.”—John Wallace Viele, author of The Florida Keys
Hardcover $29.95

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Emmett H.L. Snellings Jr.
Gold Medal, Book Design

As a young man in northern Virginia, Emmett H.L. Snellings walked through plowed fields with his grandfather, searching for Indian artifacts. In later life, Snellings found prehistoric campsites in the area and continued to research Native Americans, learning about some of the terrible things they endured.

“Having some of the Seminoles befriend me later in life has been an honor,” he said.

_Seminole Views: A Postcard Panorama of America’s Only Unconquered Tribe_ took nine years to produce. To create it, Snellings worked closely with tribal officials and was allowed unusual access to information about Seminole culture and history.

Said a publisher’s promo blurb: “He is a man who knows how to show respect and do what he says he is going to do—both marks that created trust within the Seminole Tribe.”

One tribal medicine woman affectionately nicknamed Snellings “Little Bubba Cypress.”

He lives in Sarasota, where he continues to write articles about American Indians.

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**Emmett H.L. Snellings Jr.**
Gold Medal, Book Design

Here is the place where the front line of ecopolitics is drawn. Here is where the environmentalists battle the wealthy developers for every inch of what remains of Florida’s natural splendor, its clear water, and its once abundant wildlife. It could be described in more vivid terms as verbal cockfights where, in this case, one may lose a fortune and the other may lose a national treasure. It is here on this front line that I work. It is here where I tell the stories of those who have little or no voice. The stakes are high...will we lose the real Florida? Will the charm of this magnificent place soon be gone forever? People sometimes ask me if I’m originally from Florida. My answer—no, but I got here as soon as I could.

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Florida Cattle Ranching: Five Centuries of Tradition

The exhibit is produced by the Florida Folklife Program in partnership with Florida Cultural Resources, Inc., with funding support from the Florida Humanities Council, Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Florida Cattlemen’s Foundation, Florida Cracker Cattle Association, National Endowment for the Arts, Iris Wall, and others.

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“We transform a location to a place by telling its stories,” writes John Duvnies, the gold medal winner for fiction in this year’s Florida Book Awards. We ask her to share her insights on how she feels a sense of place in Florida and how it affects her writing.

The responses are fascinating to ponder because they expose the dual nature of place and story. Florida certainly inspires writers with its sublime landscape, cultural diversity, and enigma then and now. Writers, on the other hand, tell the stories, the real and the imaginary, that bring these places to life and provide a deeper understanding of who we are as Floridians. I can’t drive across Highway 98 without seeing Zach Melby of Patrick Smith’s A Land Remembered. We have a responsibility across the panhandle on his marble concrete. Hurricane season always conjures visions of the devastating 1928 flood recorded in Zaia Neile Harman’s Their Eyes Were Nothing Good.

This is the third year that FORUM has paid tribute to Florida Book Award winners by publishing profiles of the authors and excerpts of their books. These are the writers who are defining Florida’s literary landscape and reputation, through their novels, nonfiction books, poetry, and children’s books.

Many of this year’s winners have turned a literary eye to an aspect of our state’s culture or history that helps us to expand, enrich, or maybe even imagine who we are.

This year’s winners have turned a literary eye to an aspect of our state’s culture or history that helps us to expand, enrich, or maybe even imagine who we are. We asked him and other award winners if they feel a sense of place in Florida.

We think you will find it in one of this year’s award-winning books. The Florida Book Awards remind us each year that our state is cultivating other events surrounding the 1960 Jacksonville sit-in demonstrations. The Beach with its “beach chairs rotating around shade umbrellas like sundial shadows.” His book Seven Notebooks...
How Florida inspires its writers...

"Florida slowly wraps itself around you like the strangler fig."
—Lisa Unger

“A line drawn in the sand can become a story.”
—Julie Gonzalez

“Such clarity and brute force in this light.”
—Terri Witek

Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida
by Gary R. Mormino. Hardcover, 484 pages
Once the least populated and most isolated state in the south, Florida has emerged as one of the largest and most diverse states in the nation. Florida’s meteoric rise has encompassed revolutions in technology, demography, and lifestyle. Historian Dr. Gary Mormino tells this story of compelling characters, bewitching places, and the enduring but changing idea of a dream state. Hand-signed by the author.

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Co-produced by FHC and WEDU-TV of Tampa, this one-hour documentary explores how millions of people from across the United States and around the globe migrated here in search of the Florida dream. The documentary was inspired by Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida. Narrated by actor Ed Asner.

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The American Beach Cookbook, University Press of Florida, 2008
For The American Beach Cookbook, Marsha Dean Phelts collected nearly 300 recipes passed down through generations. Mouths will water at such treats as fried cheese grits, shecrab soup, seafood casserole, crab coated shrimp chops, cornbread dumplings, chicken curry, corn relish, pickled peaches, Big Mama’s fruitcake, and much more. In addition to the recipes, readers will enjoy compelling vignettes that illustrate the heritage of people and potables, vintage photographs, and area maps that together tell one of the great stories of a unique community.

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