

# PenChant

To increase awareness and appreciation of the Literary Arts

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 9

SEPTEMBER 2004

## Libraries Remember *Let your voice be heard.*



A Commemoration  
of September 11, 2001  
by Local Poets

Saturday,  
September 11, 2004  
Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room  
326 S. 7th St. — 5 p.m.

Please join the members of Poets & Writers Literary Forum for readings which will commemorate the anniversary of September 11. Bring any poem you have written in the spirit of the event, or bring the work of another poet to read.

A free chapbook, available that evening, will be produced featuring the work of the event's participants.

If you have a poem you would like to submit for the book, email it to [cfrisch@insightbb.com](mailto:cfrisch@insightbb.com)

Deadline for submissions to the chapbook is Monday, September 6.

*This event is sponsored by  
Lincoln Library, Springfield's  
Public Library  
and  
Poets & Writer's Literary Forum*

## A CONSIDERATION OF *THE POEMS OF H—* BY JOHN E. HALLWAS

*By: Job Conger*

Though poetry is most often written by living practitioners of the art, it's also fair to say that poetry is written by the dead. In ways never imagined when living, dead poets, inspiring living poets, continue to write poetry after the meter of their own hearts has been stilled. The writer looking for new inspirations, diamonds forged in distant yesterdays to be celebrated and transformed into new jewels of crafted words today, should consider *The Poems of H*, a hardbound 243 page compendium about the most successful poet to put down roots in central Illinois before the Civil War. The book, published in 1982, appears to be out of print, but Amazon.com lists a copy for \$22.95.

John E. Hallwas is a prolific author of books about Illinois and Midwest history. The Western Illinois University professor has produced an annotated edition of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, probably a "must read" for those so inclined. *The Poems of H* is divided into a lengthy introduction in

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which his life is described, groupings of his poems by type (early, satirical, poems on legends and mythology, etc), titles in the order of publication, notes, a glossary and index of titles.

Hallwas tells us that "H," who also published early as "J.H." was born in Scotland, lived in London and came to the USA in the early 1820s. Before he left his homeland, he had established himself as a serious poet. Hallwas' research ties names, subjects, similar poems and phrasing shared in early London

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## A WORD OR TWO FROM VICKI

This time I have a bunch of words to write about. In English, you can make a word into its negative form, or its opposite, by adding certain prefixes: such as “possible” and “impossible”. Well, I’ve found that the rule doesn’t always apply when you look at negative words.

Someone on the radio said something about “whether he did it advertently or inadvertently...”. That caught my ear; is “advertent” a word? I looked it up, and it is. It means “attentive, heedful, or noticing.” I don’t recall hearing it used before. That got me wondering about other

common words that are a negative form, like unspeakable, implacable, and disgruntled. I looked for positive forms: speakable, placable, grunted. They do exist!

Speakable, rather obviously, means “that can be spoken”. Implacable means “unable to be appeased; refusing to be reconciled; unyielding,” and placable means the opposite. Disgruntled means “in a bad humor; discontented; disgusted; displeased.” Grunted means “pleased; contented.” These words are in the dictionary and you never hear them used. Are we wasting vocabulary?

More words that we normally only use in the negative form: ineffable (effable means “utterable, expressible”), inevitable (evitable means “avoidable”), inexorable (exorable means “that can be persuaded,” or “easily influenced by request”), insufferable (sufferable means “that can be endured; tolerable; bearable”).

I thought of a couple of words that are more often used in writing rather than speaking: hapless and feckless. We have the words careless and careful, so I looked for “hapful and feckful.” They don’t exist.

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## THE POEMS OF H

*By: Job Conger*

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papers with work printed in Springfield’s *Sangamo Journal*. Hallwas notes, “The ninety-three items (poems) are probably not all that the poet ever wrote, but they are probably all that will ever be recovered.”

From 1831 to 1846, “H” was a bartender in Springfield – a natural line of work for a Scot. We know this because in one of his poems “H” refers to himself as “the taverner of Jabez Capps’ Grocery.” At the time, general stores often had taverns in back. We don’t know that he knew Abe Lincoln, but we don’t know that he didn’t. Both walked the same streets

during some common years. After leaving Springfield, he continued to send poems to *Sangamo Journal*.

Several poems are described in detail in the notes preceding the poems. It’s great to read what Hallwas says, turn to the poems, and reap a richer understanding of the poet from this process. There is scholarship aplenty in the author’s approach, and readers read it -- this plentitude of grains and nuggets of knowledge and inspiration -- and reap.

The author concludes his detailed introduction and notes about the poems of “H”

saying, “Considered as a British author, H is simply a talented minor poet of the Romantic period – distinguished chiefly for his focus on the American frontier, his humor, and his facility as both a satirist and sonneteer. On the other hand, viewed as part of the American tradition, he is the finest poet of his era in the Midwest.”

Next month: two favorite poems by “H.”


# September 2004

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 IMO's open mic at 7p.m.	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 9/11 Commemorative @ Lincoln Library
12	13	14	15 IMO's open mic at 7p.m.	16	17	18
19	20 PWLF Board Meet- ing @ Pitchford's at 7p.m.	21	22	23 Barnes & Noble open mic at 7p.m.	24	25
26	27	28	29 IMO's open mic at 7p.m.	30		

# October 2004

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat

					1	2
3	4	5	6 IMO's open mic at 7p.m.	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 <i>Tentative Date for PWLF Trivia Contest</i>
17	18	19	20 IMO's open mic at 7p.m.	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Barnes & Noble open mic at 7p.m.	29	30
31  Happy Halloween						

## SAVE HARRY POTTER — READ A BANNED BOOK! By: Corrine Frisch

Throughout the country, most children are starting a new academic year. Teachers are sending out their lists of required readings, and parents are beginning to gather books. In some cases, classics like "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "The Catcher in the Rye," and "To Kill a Mocking Bird," may not be included in curricula or available in the school library due to challenges made by parents or administrators.

Since 1990, the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom has recorded more than 8,000 book challenges. A challenge is a formal, written complaint requesting a book be removed from library shelves or school curricula. About three out of four of all challenges are to material in schools or school libraries, and one in four are to material in public libraries. The Office for Intellectual Freedom estimates that less than one-quarter of challenges are reported and recorded.

It is thanks to the com-

mitment of librarians, teachers, parents, and students that most challenges are unsuccessful and reading materials, like "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," "Slaughterhouse Five," and the Harry Potter series remain available. When parents in a south Georgia school this summer challenged the use of John Steinbeck's classic "Of Mice and Men" in the sophomore advanced-level English class, the school superintendent rallied to keep the book.

The most challenged and/or restricted reading materials have been books for children. At the same time that families nationwide have embraced the series that has encouraged many youth to delve into thousands of fantasy-filled pages, the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling has been the most frequently challenged title in the country. In fact, this spring a U.S. district judge ordered the books back into general circulation in the Cedarville (Ark.) School District after the district restricted access.

Challenges are not simply

an expression of a point of view; on the contrary, they are an attempt to remove materials from public use, thereby restricting the access of others. Even if the motivation to ban or challenge a book is well intentioned, the outcome is detrimental. Censorship denies our freedom as individuals to choose and think for ourselves. For children, decisions about what books to read should be made by the people who know them best—their parents or guardians.

*In support of the right to choose books freely for ourselves, the ALA is sponsoring Banned Books Week (September 21 - 28, 2004), an annual celebration of our right to access books without censorship. This year's observance is themed "Ban No More 2004" and commemorates the most basic freedom in a democratic society—the freedom to read freely—and encourages us not to take this freedom for granted.*

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## A WORD OR TWO (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 2)*

ist. The word feckless means "futile, ineffective, or spiritless, worthless." "Feck is a word. It is actually a Scottish word that means effect, value, vigor, or energy. There is no word "feck-full"; we have other

words for someone who is the opposite of feckless. The situation is the same with hapless: there is no "hapful," but there is a word, "hap". Hap is an archaic word that means "chance or luck," or "an occurrence, accident, or happening." The

positive form of hap is archaic, but its negative form, "mishap," is still in use. Perhaps -- which has "hap" as its root! -- perhaps mishaps are too common for us to give up such a useful word!

There are some words that

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Poets & Writers Literary Forum

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If you are interested in contributing to—or taking over the task of editing—the Pen-Chant, please contact any of the PWLF Board members.

It is through the contributions and energy of all that we are successful.

*PWLF*

*To increase awareness and appreciation of Literary Arts*



## Poets & Writers Literary Forum of Springfield Calendar of Events

Sept. 1st—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

Sept. 11th—5:00 p.m. 9/11 Commemoration @ Lincoln Library

Sept. 15th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

Sept. 20th—7:00 p.m. Board Meeting @ Pitchford's

Sept. 23rd—7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Open Mic at B&N

Sept. 29th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's



### A WORD OR TWO FROM VICKI (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 5)*

don't seem to have a positive form. Besides hapless and feckless, I've found that there is apparently no such word as "eluctable," although we do have "ineluctable". You often hear of someone being intransigent but there's no such word as "transigent". Intransigent means "unwilling to agree or compromise; uncompromising; irrecconcilable". A friend told me he has never been "combobulated." A look at the dictionary shows why.

There are a few words where what looks like the positive form of a commonly used negative word is something completely different. The word "discomfit" is an example. Discomfit means "to defeat completely; rout; or to embarrass greatly, confuse, or disconcert". "Comfit" has nothing to do with defeat or victory, confusion or clarity. It refers to a type of candy!

Then there are some words

where the main meaning of the negative and positive words are close but not quite the same. For example, "infamous" is not the opposite of "famous". It doesn't mean "not well known". As we know, "famous" means "very well known" and there is an informal use that means "first rate, or excellent". There is an archaic meaning of "notorious" which relates to the meaning of "infamous," which is "so bad as to deserve public disgrace; shamefully bad; very wicked". Synonyms of *infamous* are *disgraceful*, *scandalous*, *odious*, *notorious*, and *disreputable*.

What I got from this exploration was: 1) a lot of fun browsing the dictionary, and 2) the realization that in English, as I said at the beginning, the rules don't always apply. That's probably due to the many different sources that went to create this language, and one of the things that makes it such a great language.