



2009 Royal Palm Literary Awards

BOOKS OF THE YEAR

Published (two-way tie)

Don't Sabotage Your Submission

(Educational/Informational)

by Chris Roerden

Raise your manuscript's odds of surviving an agent's and publisher's screening-out process. *Don't Sabotage Your Submission* shares a book editor's insider information and reveals twenty-four clues separating publishable manuscripts from the ninety to ninety-five percent eliminated in the first round.

Chris Roerden edited writers published by St. Martin's, Berkley, Rodale, Viking, and more; authored and ghosted eleven books; and won an Agatha Award. Retired after forty-four years in publishing, Chris now leads workshops at writers' conferences coast to coast.

***Salvos on the Backwater* (Historical Fiction)**

by Erwin Wunderlich

A former naval officer turned civilian avoids contested areas in Civil War-torn Florida. During his travels, he meets a widow likewise struggling to survive in the lush wilderness. Murderous outlaws, however, are determined to bring tragedy to their lives.

Erwin Wunderlich is an Orlando freelance writer. Since the 1850s, his relatives have been residents of Florida, where as a child he was taught to live off the extensive wetlands for weeks at a time. Erwin's website is at www.crackersprings.com.

Unpublished

***Matanzas Bay* (Mystery)**

by Victor DiGenti

Matanzas Bay is a mystery/suspense novel about a private investigator who uncovers dangerous secrets while trying to clear his friend of murder charges. In the process, he unleashes powerful forces that will go to any length to keep their secrets.

Victor DiGenti won the 2007 Josiah W. Bancroft, Sr., Award for his unpublished mystery, *Matanzas Bay*. Today, he still searches for a publisher who does more than ask, "What the heck is the Josiah W. Bancroft, Sr., Award?"

BOOK-LENGTH FICTION

Historical Fiction (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***Salvos on the Backwater* by Erwin Wunderlich**

A former naval officer turned civilian avoids contested areas in Civil War-torn Florida. During his travels, he meets a widow likewise struggling to survive in the lush wilderness. Murderous outlaws, however, are determined to bring tragedy to their lives.

Erwin Wunderlich is an Orlando freelance writer. Since the 1850s, his relatives have been residents of Florida, where as a child he was taught to live off the extensive wetlands for weeks at a time. Erwin's website is at www.crackersprings.com.

SECOND PLACE

***Stealing Trinity* by Ward Larsen**

This is a tale set against the backdrop of WWII which spans the globe and unfolds at lightning speed. It's the biggest power struggle in the history of the world. Those interested in WWII and history will surely enjoy this incredible novel.

Award-winning novelist Ward Larsen is a former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot who flew combat in Operation Desert Storm. Currently a captain for a major airline, Ward lives with his family in Sarasota, Florida.

HONORABLE MENTION

***Missing Sticks* by John M. Taylor**

D-Day—Normandy—behind Utah Beach. Just after midnight the drop begins. Come dawn, eighteen C-47s and their paratroopers are missing. What could the missing troopers have accomplished if they landed safely and engaged the enemy? *Missing Sticks* tells one story.

Combining his experiences as a paratrooper, nuclear weapons specialist, and operations research analyst with travels in the Far and Middle East, Europe, and the States, J.M. Taylor packs a ton of adventure into action-filled thrillers.

Historical Fiction (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

The Shanghai Madonna by Dan Dundon

Set in China between 1930 and 1949, *The Shanghai Madonna* is inspired by a true story of an Italian marine and a Russian exile whose love for one another overcomes Japanese aggression, a world war, and the Communist revolution.

Dan Dundon is a former newspaper reporter and editor who has chronicled the lives of many people, including the couple who inspired *The Shanghai Madonna*. He lives in Jacksonville, Florida, where he works at the University of North Florida.

SECOND PLACE

The Time of the Eagle by Chuck Dowling

Arthur is sixteen. His father, uncle, and the other British leaders are gone. The invading armies are growing. The time of preparing is over. It is time for him to lead the fight. It is *The Time of the Eagle*.

Chuck has written two prizewinning novels about the Marine Corps, along with a number of magazine articles and three as yet unpublished novels. He also teaches creative writing workshops statewide and has been a member of FWA since 2000.

HONORABLE MENTION

Julia, Daughter of Rome by Joyce Moore

This is the story of a little-known love that almost changed history. Julia, strong-willed daughter of Augustus, falls in love with Marc Anthony's son. Can their love survive the scandal and tragedy that will follow?

Joyce Moore writes historical fiction. Her first book has sold over 10,000 copies. Joyce's latest book was released in June, and her next book, a historical novel set in thirteenth-century France, will be published by Five Star in August 2010.

Humor/Satire, Fiction (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

Keegan Bay Park by Veronica Hart

Moira Robbins, widow of the heir to the sultanate of Kushawa, leaves her son in the care of the ladies of Keegan Bay Park, a retirement community that doesn't permit children. Moira will kill to protect her child. The old ladies use their wits.

Veronica Hart is the writing group leader for the Daytona Beach area. She is the author of several plays, an award-winning musical, and five novels, yet to be published.

Inspirational Romance (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

Widow's Run by Ruth Reid

The widow of a failing construction company finds her torn-down life rebuilt with the help of an obstinate electrical contractor. Both, having painful pasts to overcome, must trust God to reconstruct their lives on the firm foundation of Christ.

If readers leave her book having a stronger desire to seek God—then Ruth Reid believes she's accomplished her goal of being a great writer. In all things, give thanks; Ruth is thankful for her supportive husband and three children.

Mainstream (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

Prodigious Savant by John White

Gavin Weaver awakes from a month-long coma in possession of not just one savant ability, but several, including art, music, mathematics, and memory. Unfortunately, there was a price to pay for the new skills, an increasing tendency for violence.

John White has won several awards for his short stories and poetry and has been published in literary magazines. He is currently working on his fourth novel, *Nisei*. He lives in Merritt Island with his understanding wife, editor, and typist, Pamela.

SECOND PLACE

A Breach of Immunity by Robyn Dowling Rhoades and Timothy Bullard

A Breach of Immunity is a suspense novel with subplots that culminate in a stunning revelation in the last paragraph. The reader will travel with billionaire businessman Cameron Collins through grief, confusion, rage, revenge, brilliant strategy, and finally, joy.

Robyn Rhoades is a native Floridian. She has degrees in medical and behavioral healthcare. Her experiences in both fields are woven into her fiction. Her fascination with people, and their shared humanity, has driven her passion for reading and writing.

Timothy Bullard grew up in Tampa, Florida, the city that he still considers home. He currently practices as an emergency room physician. He indulges his passion for travel through compassionate medical missions. He and his family live in Central Florida.

HONORABLE MENTION

Penance by William T. Bonner

FBI agent Jake Baron captures criminals—legally or illegally. His lawyer wife, Paula, defends a client doing penance for the murder of her abusive husband. They join forces investigating the Vice President.

Bill Bonner is a full-time writer after careers in the Air Force and in business. He is a published author whose goal is to portray the culture of our time.

Mystery (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***Stuff Dreams Are Made Of* by Don Bruns**

This suspenseful novel features would-be entrepreneurs James Lessor and Skip Moore and their white box truck. Described as “the Hardy Boys grown up,” James and Skip are more like the *Hardy Boys*—hardly kids, hardly adults, not quite successful, but completely charming and wholly hilarious.

Don Bruns is a musician, songwriter, advertising executive, and award-winning novelist. Bruns is the author of the award-winning *Stuff to Die For*, the first title in the “Stuff” series. Don and his wife Linda divide their time between Ohio and South Florida.

Mystery (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***Matanzas Bay* by Vic DiGenti**

Matanzas Bay is a mystery/suspense novel about a private investigator who uncovers dangerous secrets while trying to clear his friend of murder charges. In the process, he unleashes powerful forces that will go to any length to keep their secrets.

Vic DiGenti won the 2007 Josiah W. Bancroft, Sr. Award for his unpublished mystery, *Matanzas Bay*. Today, he still searches for a publisher who does more than ask, “What the heck is the Josiah W. Bancroft, Sr., Award?”

SECOND PLACE

***Riddle in the Sand* by Candace Carter**

The Colorado Plateau is a sometimes desolate region where forgotten crimes, like rustling, still occur. Henry “Whispering” Smith, a range detective, stumbles upon a murder and uses his unique knowledge and skill as a tracker to bring a killer to justice.

Candace Carter has written for various newspapers and veterinary journals. A career as a veterinarian evolved into a position with the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service working with threatened and endangered species.

HONORABLE MENTION

***No Good Deed* by Judy Weber**

Real estate agent Angela Rossi delves into a murder of a sleazy client when she is suspected of killing him. What she uncovers is a history of pornography and child abuse, which unfortunately touches other members of her beach community.

Judy Weber is a retired real estate agent with a background of writing articles and press releases on residential housing. In a previous life, she published a trade magazine for homebuilders, providing her with an extensive knowledge of real estate.

Romance (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***Jeanne of Clairmonde* by Joyce Moore**

Evicted from Clairmonde, Jeanne joins the enemy camp to regain what is hers, but does not expect capture by the English Army, or the love of a bold French squire.

Joyce Moore writes historical fiction. Her first book has sold over 10,000 copies. Joyce’s latest book was released in June, and her next book, a historical novel set in thirteenth-century France, will be published by Five Star in August 2010.

Sci-Fi/Fantasy (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***Agency Files: Assassin's Nightmare* by Lisa Iriarte**

Normal people dream. Assassins have nightmare. Don’t look into a dead man’s eyes. Don’t get captured. Don’t screw up. All good advice. Not so easy to follow, especially for women in the assassinations division of The Agency.

Lisa Iriarte teaches middle school students in Celebration, Florida, many of whom are convinced she is an assassin by night and teaches as a cover for her less-savory activities. She hopes *Assassin’s Nightmare* will become her first published novel.

SECOND PLACE

***The Sea of Serenity* by David Pedreira**

A war-weary veteran and his small crew of helium-3 miners must solve the first murder on the moon before the killing sparks an all-out lunar war—with their station stuck in the middle.

David Pedreira spent ten years as an award-winning reporter for newspapers, including *The Tampa Tribune* and the *St. Petersburg Times*. He now is co-owner of a successful business and lives with his wife, daughter, dog, and cat in Tampa.

HONORABLE MENTION

***The Fourth Sun* by Dennis Cooper**

The Mayans predicted that the world will end in December 2012. Vance Dryden and his uncle find out that they are right. Now they have to find the key the Mayans hid to stop the coming catastrophe.

Dennis Cooper is a graduate of MIT with a lifelong love of science and literature. He is a member of the Florida Writer’s Association, the SCBI, and the Space Coast Writer’s Guild. This is his first novel.

Thriller (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***Rabbit in the Moon* by Deborah and Joel Shlian**

Rabbit in the Moon is a rich tapestry of suspense, intrigue, and discovery, a moving and miraculous story about finding home and finding hope. It takes us into an unforgettable world of betrayal, love, and revenge, a moving and mesmerizing tale.

Deborah and Joel Shlian have collaborated in their vocations and avocations. They practiced medicine together in a large multispecialty group before returning to UCLA for MBAs. They now balance medical management consulting and writing. They reside in Boca Raton, Florida.

SECOND PLACE

***Conspiracy of Silence* by Martha Powers**

Conspiracy of Silence is a rich, suspenseful tale about how one young woman courageously pieced together a life shattered by lies and confronted the terrifying consequences of learning the truth. It's an exhilarating, inventive page-turner from one of the country's leading thriller writers!

Martha Powers is an award-winning author, sought-after speaker, and humorist. She is the author of nine Regency novels and four thrillers. *Death Angel* was named a finalist in the 2007 Royal Palm Literary Awards competition. Martha and her husband live in Vero Beach, Florida.

HONORABLE MENTION

***In Their Blood* by Sharon Potts**

A gripping psychological thriller propelled by human relationships, *In Their Blood* is a tale of what happens when a seemingly ordinary family is shattered by a violent crime. It's a timely novel that exposes a financial scam that makes Madoff look like an amateur.

Sharon Potts is a former business executive, entrepreneur, CPA, and soccer mom who resides in Miami, Florida. *In Their Blood* is her first novel.

Thriller (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***Brigands Key* by Ken Pelham**

An ageless body at the bottom of the sea. A lethal plague. A ruthless killer. A monster hurricane. Researcher Carson Grant came to Brigands Key to salvage his reputation and finds himself staring down the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

A lifelong resident of Florida, Ken now calls Maitland home and lives there with his wife, two daughters, two four-legged cats, and one three-legged cat. His interests include environmental issues, the sciences, and keeping his boat from sinking.

SECOND PLACE

***Quest for Vengeance* by Bruce Michael Strickland**

Quest for Vengeance is the saga of a skilled CIA agent who abandons his personal code to avenge the brutal murder of his fiancé. His unsanctioned mission is complicated by a beautiful FBI agent and a psychotic clone determined to kill and replace him.

Bruce Strickland lives in Orlando, Florida. He supports his family working as a physician assistant in the Osceola County Health Department in Poinciana. He has been writing for fifteen years. *Quest for Vengeance* is his first novel.

HONORABLE MENTION

***Rusty Steele* by James W. Thompson**

The Company thought they cornered the Tomcat, but in reality, all they had done was set a tiger on their trail.

J.W. Thompson is a veteran of the Marine Corps and has worked with several government agencies in both official and unofficial capacities. Scuba diving and volunteer work at the local hospice retail store are his spare-time passions.

Women's Fiction (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***Cracks in the Sidewalk* by Bette Lee Crosby**

Cracks in the Sidewalk is the story of Claire McDermott's courageous struggle to locate her missing grandchildren and rebuild her life. Only by clinging to faith and helping others in need will she discover the true meaning of family.

Bette Crosby, a member of the National League of American Pen Women, is the award-winning author of *Girl Child*, a freelance writer, and inspirational speaker. She lives in south Florida with her husband and an adopted bichon frise named Katie.

Women's Fiction (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***The Glass Madonna* by Donna Meredith**

Sarah longs to become the first Heimbach woman to blow glass, but union rules and her own bad personal decisions stand in her way. Aunt Livvie's family stories help her end an abusive marriage and fulfill her dream.

Donna Meredith's stories have appeared in the *Seven Hills Review*, *Tallahassee* magazine, the *Columbia School Press Review*, and the *Tallahassee Democrat*. A retired English and journalism teacher, she is currently president of the Tallahassee Writers Association.

SECOND PLACE

***The Backward Promise* by Robyn Dowling Rhoades**

The Backward Promise is the story of Jayne Jackson, mother, therapist, and conflicted woman. Her journey through what she naively believes to be a straightforward decision becomes a life-changing mix of terror and bliss, forever changing her life.

Robyn Rhoades is a native Floridian. She has degrees in medical and behavioral healthcare. Her experiences in both fields are woven into her fiction. Her fascination with people, and their shared humanity, has driven her passion for reading and writing.

HONORABLE MENTION

***As Pretty Does* by Kathyleen Sherrod**

Why does a ten-year-old plot a murder, and what's life like after failing to kill her grandmother? Ellie ultimately must choose between her belt-swinging, well-intentioned Granna and a self-absorbed Mama fantasized to perfection.

Kathyleen Sherrod is a retired senior communications professional from Congress, Peace Corps, and a variety of lobbying/communications Washington trade groups. She began her career as an award-winning Florida newspaper reporter and currently works part time at a West Palm Beach nursing/rehab facility.

Children's (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***I Choose* by Suzin Carr**

A whimsical children's book about the choices humans make every day.

Suzin Helen Carr is the author of *I Choose*, the wife of James, and the mother of Chandler. She lives in Lutz, Florida, where she juggles the life she chooses and is grateful for countless blessings and immeasurable joy.

SECOND PLACE

***Where Do We Go?* by James F. Weinsier**

Where Do We Go? brings joy, play, and ease to what is often an awkward conversation. Its message is a precious tool that will open the hearts and imaginations of readers to a greater awareness of love, life, and beyond!

In 2006, the author experienced the devastating losses of three family members: his father, his son, and his grandson. In response to questions from his other young grandchildren concerning where we go after we die, James wrote *Where Do We Go?*

HONORABLE MENTION

***Jumpy Jimmy Jackrabbit* by Jan Evans**

Jimmy Jackrabbit suffers with Tourette Syndrome. With Dr. Owl's aid, he and his family learn that although there might not be a total cure, there is help and hope. Like superheroes making things click, Jimmy learns to outwit tics.

Jan Evans has been writing since age eight, her first limerick printed in a school paper. She writes daily and keeps journals from which she draws story ideas. Jan has a master's degrees in special education.

Children's (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***Knucklehead the Monster* by David Pedreira**

When a tiny goblin discovers music in the Land of Monsters, he gets ostracized to the scariest of all places: the Land Above. Unluckily for him, the other monsters won't let him stay there for long.

David Pedreira spent ten years as an award-winning reporter for newspapers, including *The Tampa Tribune* and the *St. Petersburg Times*. He now is co-owner of a successful business and lives with his wife, daughter, dog, and cat in Tampa.

SECOND PLACE

***The Legend of the Yule Log* by Kathryn Taromina**

Yule Beaver is lost in a snowstorm on Christmas Eve. He conquers his fear of never returning home when he concentrates on rescuing a poor family of mice. His quick actions and unselfish gifts evoke *The Legend of the Yule Log*.

In the past, Kathryn Taromina was head scriptwriter for a local weekly TV program. In addition, she wrote a weekly newspaper column. Today, her heart and pen are dedicated to writing for children, especially the under-ten age group.

HONORABLE MENTION

***Shula* by Anne K. Hawkinson**

Benjamin's life takes an unexpected turn when a lost dog shows up on his doorstep, but not everyone in his family is thrilled about Shula. A Thanksgiving Day crisis involving the little black cocker spaniel changes their lives forever.

When forced to leave the worlds she's created and populated with characters that make her jealous of their adventures and abilities, Anne K. Hawkinson tears herself away, gets in her car, and goes to work.

YA (Published)

FIRST PLACE

***Ghosts: Another Summer in the Old Town* by Randy Cribbs**

In *Ghosts*, Randy Cribbs interweaves the fabric of Old St. Augustine and its ghost-filled landscape with the sleepy modern town of today, building a mystery that forces three courageous youngsters on a mission to confront powerful spiritual forces they don't understand.

Randy Cribbs, a retired Army officer, holds degrees from UF, PLU, and JSU and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and Armed Forces Staff College. He has seven published books, five set in St. Augustine, where he resides.

SECOND PLACE

***My Best Friend Ever* by Sylvia Fiorello**

This humorous, fact-filled fiction book is for young persons to share with a parent or mentor or for adults to read with their emerging teens. Each chapter challenges readers to tackle their own food demons and become healthier for the rest of their lives.

Sylvia Fiorello is a snowbird with a background in teaching, counseling, and working in prevention education. Growing up in a society that rewards thinness, she knows intimately the pain endured by children who are the products of unhealthy eating and lack of exercise.

YA (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***The Girl Who Swam to Atlantis* by Ellen Thornton**

Twelve-year-old Gabriella's father won't say where Mama is, and the neighbors are bullies, but that summer with the African-American Marine Hawkins as her swim coach in the river, Gabriella finds her heart and place in the world.

Ellen Thornton's publication credits include *The Connecticut River Review* and *The Concho River Review*. Her reporting has appeared in *The Wichita Eagle*, *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, and many other newspapers and magazines. She writes young adult novels, short stories, and poetry.

SECOND PLACE

***The Spirit Journey of Timothy Michael O'Hara* by Mary Lois Sanders**

When his Pa dies in October 1774, Tim O'Hara, 12, travels east from the Allegheny to find his guardians. But halfway to Alexandria, he is kidnapped and must escape or spend the rest of his life as a bond slave.

Mary Lois Sanders has written for children since 1987, with short stories and articles in *Boy's Life*, *Calliope*, and *Cobblestone* magazines. She is a member of FWA, SCBWI, and the Editorial Freelancers Association (EFA). She is editor/publisher of *Creative Writer's Notebook*.

HONORABLE MENTION

***Ward of the State* by Shellie McCombs-Posey**

When a small-town African-American family opens their home to a thirteen-year-old foster boy, their lives will forever change as they are pulled into an intriguing and suspenseful world of the paranormal and a secret government agency.

Shellie is a late bloomer, having a son at forty-one. For this son, she started writing. African-American children should have characters having marvelous adventures and look like them to read about. *Ward of the State* is Shellie's third unpublished novel.

SHORT FICTION

Flash Fiction (Published)

FIRST PLACE

"Not a Good Night at Ford's" by Gerry Wolfson-Grande

"Not a Good Night at Ford's" was written in response to a prompt by the January 2009 Writers One Flight Up Prose Competition. The story won and was published in the Winter/Spring 2009 edition of *Pulse* magazine.

Gerry Wolfson-Grande is a writer, editor, musician, and paralegal living in Orlando. She is currently working on a mystery novel and has another novel, as well as several short stories, in various stages of development.

Flash Fiction (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

"The Leaving" by June Lands

A disenchanted young woman longing for more....

June Lands, Ponte Vedra, is an essayist, memoirist, and short story writer. Published locally and nationally, she has been a contributing writer to *Water's Edge* magazine, Jacksonville, for eight years. June credits her critique group, RCW: six Really Creative Women!

SECOND PLACE

"Vietnam 1968" by Frank Ridge

The author has written many stories of his time in Vietnam. This story is different from the normal themes and yet it retains some of the horror of that war with a twist ending that may relax the reader.

F.X. Ridge is an attorney/writer from Boston. Undergrad studies included majors in history and political science and a minor in English. His Army time included service in Vietnam with the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile), which changed his life.

HONORABLE MENTION

"Talonfire" by John White

The tale of a fantastic battle between the fair Prince Kenneth and the evil dragon, Talonfire, flows from the creative mind of a seven-year-old girl at play with her favorite toys.

John White has won several awards for his short stories and poetry and has been published in literary magazines. He is currently working on his fourth novel, *Nisei*. He lives in Merritt Island with his understanding wife, editor, and typist, Pamela.

Short Story (Published)

FIRST PLACE

"Second Chance" by Deborah Shlian

How often does someone get a second chance in life? Especially when that person is a seventeen-year-old rising tennis star killed by a drunk driver on her way to a championship match?

Deborah Shlian is a physician, medical consultant, and author of nonfiction and fiction. Her third novel, *Rabbit in the Moon*, co-written with her husband Joel, won the Gold Medal for the 2008 Florida Book Award for Genre Fiction. It is also a finalist in the 2008 Book of the Year for ForeWord Magazine.

SECOND PLACE

"The Last Buffalo" by Kristen Stieffel

The legendary White Buffalo Calf Woman said that when the last buffalo dies, the world will end. The zookeeper caring for the only remaining American Bison is about to see that prophecy fulfilled.

Kristen Stieffel is the news assistant at the *Orlando Business Journal*, where she has written many dull news-brief columns and a handful of clever opinion columns. Most weekdays, Kristen writes and delivers OBJ's stock market report, heard on WLOQ-FM in Orlando.

HONORABLE MENTION

"Don't Lie to Me" by Frank Ridge

How much can one young man take? What will it take to break him until he truly no longer cares? How can you understand his experience, then and now?

F.X. Ridge is an attorney/writer from Boston. Undergrad studies included majors in history and political science and a minor in English. His Army time included service in Vietnam with the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile), which changed his life.

Short Story (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

“Snakes Alive” by Mary W. Bridgman

Every Southern family has a few good snake stories, and this family is no exception. Granny kept the genre alive during her lifetime, but now the serpentine torch has passed. Here are a few of their choicest tales.

Mary W. Bridgman is a fifty-something lawyer who spent over twenty years working in the corporate environment. She grew up in Gainesville and graduated from the University of Florida. Mary lives in Jacksonville, Florida, with her husband Ben.

SECOND PLACE

“Saving Sam” by Victor DiGenti

“Saving Sam” is a short story delving into the tattered psyche of a woman who has struggled to save both her husband and her home. She appears to be losing the struggle—and maybe more.

Vic DiGenti is asked many questions about publishing. The most frequent by his wife, who daily asks, “When are you going to get a real job?” DiGenti has three published novels, several short stories, and eighty-two rejections to his credit.

HONORABLE MENTION

“Above the Bay” by Robyn Dowling Rhoades

“Above the Bay” tells the story of a young teen’s loss, with its myriad consequences. Told through the child’s eyes, it weaves humor with tender heartache into the alchemy that makes up our lives.

Robyn Rhoades is a native Floridian. She has degrees in medical and behavioral healthcare. Her experiences in both fields are woven into her fiction. Her fascination with people, and their shared humanity, has driven her passion for reading and writing.

BOOK-LENGTH NONFICTION

Autobiography (Published)

FIRST PLACE

ZigZag Pass: Love and War by Leon Hesser

ZigZag Pass is a memoir of the author’s chilling experiences as a teenage infantryman in battles in the Philippines during World War II and his later service in the Army of Occupation in Japan. Interwoven is a love story.

The author attributes his later career as a Foreign Service Officer to having been exposed during WWII to cultures that differ from those of his youth in the Midwest. He earned a PhD in Economics and served to alleviate global hunger and poverty.

SECOND PLACE

***Running with Stilettos: Living a Balanced Life in Dangerous Shoes* by Mary T. Wagner**

After switching careers from journalism to criminal prosecution, Mary Wagner returns to the keyboard with a collection of essays from the heart. *Running with Stilettos* is a window into one woman’s mission to give every day her best shot … in fabulous shoes.

Mary T. Wagner is a prosecuting attorney, award-winning photographer, and the author of *Running with Stilettos: Living a Balanced Life in Dangerous Shoes*. Her byline has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

HONORABLE MENTION

***As I Am* by Garret Lee Frey and Dr. Karen Hutchins Pirnot**

In a single moment in time, an active and energetic four-year-old was transformed into a quadriplegic, ventilator-dependent boy, who struggled to make sense of a world in disarray.

Garret Frey is a twenty-six-year-old ventilator-dependent quadriplegic, who was paralyzed at the age of four. Via psychotherapy, Garret learned to cope with his disability and to live a happy and enriched life.

Dr. Pirnot is a clinical psychologist who treated Garret for seven years in which the child was reoriented to a world where his cognitions guided his learning and his motivation to develop lifelong coping skills.

Autobiography (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

***Rabbit Trail: How a Former Playboy Bunny Found Her Way* by Tricia Pimental**

A teenage girl from Brooklyn leaves Irish Catholic roots and family behind when she embarks on a personal odyssey in Los Angeles in the 1970s, journeying from heaven to hell to Heaven.

Rabbit Trail is Tricia Pimental’s first full-length work. An Advanced Toastmaster-Bronze, she is a member of the FWA and ACWA, as well as SAG and AFTRA. Tricia is currently at work on her second book, *A Moveable Marriage*.

SECOND PLACE

***Flight from Fear* by Rabbi Samuel Cywiak with Jeff Swesky**

Flight from Fear is the true story of Rabbi Samuel Cywiak, who survived the horrors of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin as a young rabbinical student. His account of this life-altering period is blended with wisdom, humor, hope, and faith.

Rabbi Samuel Cywiak has served God for over sixty years as a rabbi, mohel, and cantor in the United States and Venezuela. Since 1992, Rabbi Cywiak has been the rabbi for the Sons of Israel Congregation in St. Augustine, Florida.

The ghostwriter of this memoir, Jeff Swesky, is primarily an author of literary fiction. His work will be featured in the FWA Collection, *From Our Family to Yours*, as well as the Rogues Gallery Writers collaboration, *Writing is Easy*.

Biography (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

Dynamite Mike by Lona Smith

All his life, Mike McGee has been doing things he was not supposed to do. He lived. Diagnosed with dwarfism, he became a racecar driver. After an accident left him with traumatic brain injury, he became an artist.

Lona Smith lives in upstate New York and Florida. She is the author of a self-published novel, *Morning Walk*, set in south Florida. Involved in prison ministry for sixteen years, she used her writing to address social issues.

Educational/Informational (Published)

FIRST PLACE

Don't Sabotage Your Submission by Chris Roerden

Raise your manuscript's odds of surviving an agent's and publisher's screening-out process. *Don't Sabotage Your Submission* shares a book editor's insider information and reveals twenty-four clues separating publishable manuscripts from the ninety to ninety-five percent eliminated in the first round.

Chris Roerden edited writers published by St. Martin's, Berkley, Rodale, Viking, and more; authored and ghosted eleven books; and won an Agatha Award. Retired after forty-four years in publishing, Chris now leads workshops at writers conferences coast to coast.

SECOND PLACE

You Can Cope with Peripheral Neuropathy: 365 Tips for Living a Full Life by Mims Cushing and Normal Latov, MD

In the USA alone, twenty million people of all ages suffer with peripheral neuropathy, which causes burning, tingling, pain, muscle loss, and numbness. There is no known cure, but "COPE" will offer "HOPE" and will also entertain and enlighten.

Mims Cushing has written for dozens of magazines and the *New York Times*. She has written 1,600 book reviews for Florida media. She won an FWA award in 2002 and in the 80s won numerous writing prizes in Connecticut.

HONORABLE MENTION

***Then Man Created God: The Truth About Believing a Lie* by Dennis McLeod**

The book brilliantly answers several of life's questions that many people have but are too afraid to voice. It turns the spotlight on the flaws and inconsistencies in many popularly held controversial beliefs—politics, religion, abortion, homosexuality, and more.

D.G. McLeod is a modern-day author and philosopher who grew up on the beautiful West Indian island of Jamaica before migrating to the US. His core belief is that man should always strive for truth.

SHORT NONFICTION

Creative Nonfiction (Published)

FIRST PLACE

"Growing Up Without Ken" by Mary W. Bridgman

Barbie, the shapely doll that burst onto the American scene during the wonder years of the baby boomer generation, is turning fifty. This author grew up with Barbie, but without Ken, her main squeeze. The resulting issues are finally resolved.

Mary W. Bridgman is a fifty-something lawyer who spent over twenty years working in the corporate environment. She grew up in Gainesville and graduated from the University of Florida. Mary lives in Jacksonville, Florida, with her husband Ben.

SECOND PLACE

"May It Please the Court" by Mary T. Wagner

After switching careers from journalism to law at the age of forty after a near-tragic riding accident, the author vividly describes the journey that took her from life on the sidelines as a "soccer mom" to the state supreme court.

Mary T. Wagner is a prosecuting attorney, award-winning photographer, and the author of *Running with Stilettos: Living a Balanced Life in Dangerous Shoes*. Her byline has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

HONORABLE MENTION

"Escaping Domestic Violence" by Betty Bogart

Imagine being held down and beaten by a family member. In "Escaping Domestic Violence," the author reveals her feelings while living with an abusive husband. Courage overcame shame and fear—leading her to rescue herself and her son.

The author wrote professionally in a corporate environment for twenty-one years, while personally winning poetry and nonfiction awards from multiple writing associations. Her intimate memoir, "Escaping Domestic Violence," is published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul—Tough Times, Tough People*.

Creative Nonfiction (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

“Empty Nests” by Ann Giesken-Kelsey

“Empty Nests” is a personal nonfiction essay that explores a woman’s emotional response to her children leaving for college as raccoons are removed from the attic of her condo during the early years of the Florida real estate crisis.

Ann Giesken-Kelsey received her bachelor of science degree from the University of Connecticut and her master’s degree from Quinnipiac University. A Florida resident for seventeen years, she writes essays and a newsletter, volunteers for literacy, and is working on a memoir.

SECOND PLACE (TIE)

“My Self and Peggy Lee” by June Lands

No matter one’s joy and love and happiness, we sometimes wonder if there’s more.

June Lands, Ponte Vedra, is an essayist, memoirist, and short story writer. Published locally and nationally, she has been a contributing writer to *Water’s Edge* magazine, Jacksonville, for eight years. June credits her critique group, RCW: six Really Creative Women!

SECOND PLACE (TIE)

“Line-Dried Laundry” by Joan Levy

A young girl builds memories from a seemingly mundane household task—laundry. Join the girl, her mother, and three pesky neighborhood boys under the backyard clotheslines. The slice-of-life moments make you long for the ritual of line-dried laundry.

Joan Levy is a public relations professional and freelance writer. Her articles have appeared in central Florida magazines. She returned to college at age forty-seven. Joan admits to killing a hundred-billion brain cells for the sake of higher education and her passion—writing.

HONORABLE MENTION

“C.M., My Box Top Cat From God” by Loren Leith

Six-year-old Elizabeth and her family move in with a grandmother, and their cat is taken away. Elizabeth, seeing her siblings tear off box tops and send away for toys, holds box tops up to God and prays for a cat, though she’s not allowed pets. As an adult, a cat shows up at her back door, and she realizes it is the cat she prayed for long ago.

Bachelor of arts, English; master of arts, psychology; Licensed Professional Counselor, Forensic Counselor, Criminal Justice Specialist. Forty years writing experience: a novel, technical manuals, professional papers, short stories, poems, and songs.

Essay (Published)

FIRST PLACE

“Richer or Poorer” by Ruth E. Jones

Ruth E. Jones’ personal essay, “Richer or Poorer,” relates the author’s experiences providing physical therapy to a patient in Tampa’s most notorious public housing project.

Ruth E. Jones’ essays have appeared in The Healing Project’s *Voices of ... Anthology*, *The St. Petersburg Times*, and *Cup of Comfort*. A graduate of Northwestern University, Ruth writes and works as a physical therapist in Tampa.

Essay (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

“I Will” by Anne K. Giesken-Kelsey

In the essay “I Will,” a woman recognizes that her inability to disagree with her brother stems from years of living in pain. When her daughter is diagnosed with the same disease, she finds the strength to write about it.

Ann Giesken-Kelsey received her bachelor of science degree from the University of Connecticut and her master’s degree from Quinnipiac University. A Florida resident for seventeen years, she writes essays and a newsletter, volunteers for literacy, and is working on a memoir.

SECOND PLACE

“Is This My Baby?” by Shara Pendragon Smock

After years on an adoption waiting list, a woman gets the call from the attorney. It’s not to say an infant’s due in several months: a boy was just born and the prospective mother must decide on the adoption now.

Under various names, Shara Pendragon Smock has written the books, *Living with Big Cats* and *Hooking the Reader: Opening Lines that Sell*. She has also written book chapters and computer manuals, as well as features for magazines, newspapers, and a column for *The Sarasota Herald-Tribune*.

POETRY

Poetry (Published)

FIRST PLACE

“Rendezvous” by Michael Ray King

Peace and serenity delivered in a moment.

Michael Ray King, author of the books *Fatherland 101* and *Loves Lost and Found*, hails from the mountain state of West Virginia. Michael is a member of the prestigious Rogues Gallery Writers.

Poetry (Unpublished)

FIRST PLACE

“Ictus and Breve Loss” by Casey Curry

Casey Curry was inspired to write “Ictus and Breve Loss” after getting a massive text message from her daughter and longing for a real conversation.

Casey Curry is a high school creative writing teacher. The author of a children’s grief book written after the death of her youngest daughter, Casey is married to a naval officer and has moved thirteen times in twenty-six years.

SECOND PLACE

“As I Was Drowning” by Casey Curry

“As I was Drowning” is a poem that speaks of pressing forward, not giving up, and finding your voice.

Casey Curry is a high school creative writing teacher. The author of a children’s grief book written after the death of her youngest daughter, Casey is married to a naval officer and has moved thirteen times in twenty-six years.

HONORABLE MENTION

“On the Day that I Became Eighteen” by Arthur Heath

A young man must choose between youthful idealism and a responsible sense of honor and marches proudly into the moral quagmire of war, only to discover that duty to country often extracts a dear price.

Arthur Heath was born in Newport, Rhode Island, and moved to the South at age fifteen. He has worked as a craftsman for a world-renowned cutlery company in Orlando, Florida, for the past thirty-five years.