

PRINT NEWS ITEMS ABOUT WLOV MEMBERS, FOR MARCH 2020



The Writing Bug

By Mark H. Newhouse

VILLAGERS ROCK

Royal Palm Literary Awards

THE NAIL-BITER

It was a dark and stormy night. It really was, but I and a crop of Villager writers, anxiously waited to be named winners of the prestigious *Royal Palm Literary Awards*, our Oscar. There was nail-biting and frayed nerves, as members of the nonprofit *Florida Writers Association* from all over Florida hoped their work would be honored. I had little confidence. Last year, the novel about the Holocaust ghetto my parents survived, didn't place. Once I got over my disappointment, I took the judges' comments from the score sheets every entry receives and made improvements. Would it be enough?

THE FINALISTS

In a previous article, I paid tribute to our fantastic finalists who met *RPLA's* high standards. The contest begins in

February, and entrants wait months before the awards banquet. It was great to have many of our friends supporting each other as we waited.

SURPRISE

As *FWA's* Youth Chairperson, I was exhausted from officiating at the Youth Conference all day, with best-selling authors, agents and presenters. I was kind of out of it, until Villager, Chris Coward, *RPLA* Coordinator, announced that my son, Keith, won the *Silver Picture Book Award* for his first book ever, *My Tio's Pulse*. He donates the profits to help others and got twenty artists to donate illustrations. Wouldn't any parent be proud?

I was also thrilled as other Villager winners were announced:

Unpublished Novella- Silver: *Scrubbed* - Christopher Malinger

Unpublished Autobiography or

Memoir- Silver: *Surviving: A Kent State Memoir* - Paula Tucker

Published Autobiography or Memoir- Silver: *A Soldier's Daughter* - Margaret Best

Published Educational or Informational- Bronze: *Memory Lane* - Margaret Wacker

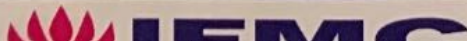
Published Short Story- Bronze: *My Deal with the You Know Who* - Lawrence Martin

Published Blog or Article- Gold: "Pursuing Pele by Air, Sea, and Land" - Clay Gish

My sincere congratulations to all our winners and finalists.

ANOTHER DISAPPOINTMENT?

It was time to announce the winners of historical fiction. Last year my entry,



Free Educational Seminar

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The Devil's Bookkeepers 1, failed to place, so I wasn't optimistic. When it was announced *The Devil's Bookkeepers 2* won **Bronze Unpublished Historical Fiction**, I was excited, but still thought *Book 1* had little chance. That seemed confirmed when my name wasn't called for **Bronze** or **Silver**. I was resigned that *Book 1* hadn't placed. Disappointed, I was still pleased at earning **Bronze** for *Book 2*. And then, the Gold award was announced: *The Devil's Bookkeepers 1: The Noose*. Shocked doesn't begin to describe how I felt at that moment.

THE UNEXPECTED

It was time for the top honors. I was thrilled when dear friend, former WLOV President, Rita Boehm, won *Best Children's Book* for her beautiful picture book, *Bluebirds in the Garden*. When it was time for the *Best Published Book of the Year*, I cheered as four top entries were called to the front of the hall. Then the fifth was called. Me! I was standing with four of the best writers in the contest! How could I possibly be included with such writers? Bullied and abused as a child, I had no confidence I could win gold, let alone the top prize.

When Chris called, the 4th Runner Up, I was sure it would be me. When she called 3rd, I was surprised it wasn't me. When she called 2nd, I was satisfied I would be 1st runner up. No way could a book that lost last year become this year's best. I prepared to congratulate the winner when Chris announced that *The Devil's Bookkeepers 1*, was the *Best Published Book of the Year!*

THE LESSON

In writing about the amazing writers of the Villages for nearly three years, I've learned to appreciate the dedication of these friends. Writing and getting recognition is a challenge for us struggling authors. I sincerely congratulate those who finish books, stories, or poems, and strive for excellence. Last year when I didn't win, I wasn't sure I was good enough to keep trying. It took more than three years of hard work to publish a book that didn't win. I learned a valuable lesson thanks to the writing family in The Villages. If the writing bug bites you, or you just want to read great books, join us at wlov.org and floridawriters.net to find writing clubs, books and authors that will inspire you and support you, as they did me. Congratulations to my fellow RPLA entrants, finalists, and winners. You can join them by entering the *Royal Palm Literary Awards and Collection Contest* this year. Check them out at floridawriters.net and have fun. ■

VILLAGES AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

ROSIE'S RESCUE: ROSIE THE ROSEATE SPOONBILL by Edward Ritts, Village of Hadley Illustrated by Jan Oliver

A full color, hardcover picture book for ages 4-7

When a disastrous Florida storm sends Rosie the baby spoonbill adrift on the water, she waits all night for rescue. At last, a friendly fisherman finds her and wraps her in a warm fluffy blanket for her journey to the bird rehabilitation center. Ultimately, Rosie heals and is able to spread her wings again in the wild.



Q: WHAT INSPIRED THE BOOK?

A recent trip to Merritt Island Wildlife Center inspired this children's book about the delightful

Roseate spoonbills, which had gathered together in a marsh along the wildlife drive. The colors of this wading bird with the odd beak opened my imagination and child-like wonder. What makes these birds pink? Why are they moving their beaks through the mud? What happens to these birds in Florida storms? It didn't take long after our visit to the wildlife center to write a little story about a bird I called Rosie and what she might have encountered during powerful windstorms. A book was taking shape. Vivid Florida watercolors accompany the story. The result is a delightful hardcover picture book with vocabulary and interesting facts listed in the back.

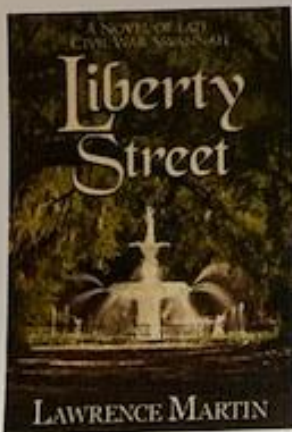
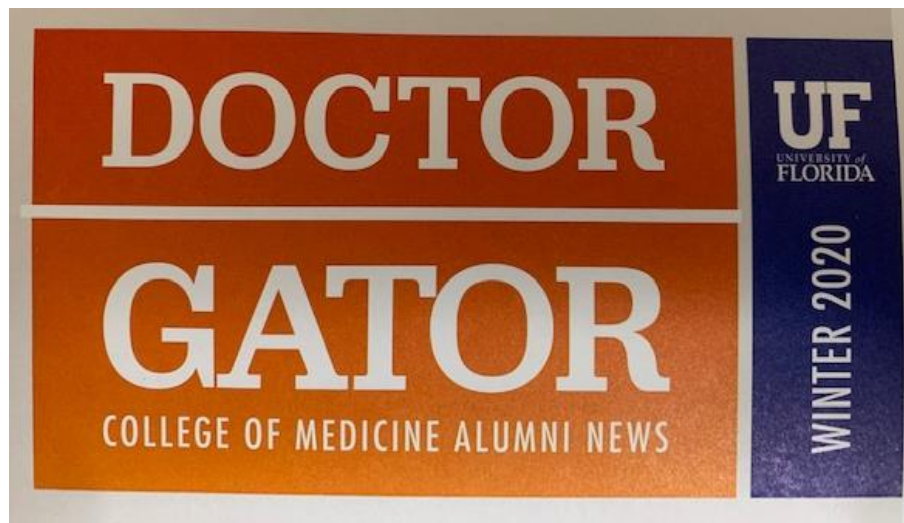
Q: WHAT CAN READERS TAKE AWAY?

Just as I was amazed at nature's diversity and adaptability, I hope that children and grandparents will become aware and advocate for the environmental protection and appreciation of bird habitats and sanctuaries.

Q: WHAT OTHER HOBBIES AND ACTIVITIES DO YOU ENJOY?

I am a relentlessly optimistic golfer. As a retired Miami police officer, I am enjoying my free time to pursue my interests, including writing children's books. Next up: Sandy the Sandhill crane, where Sandy roams the golf course and gets hit in the head with a golf ball. Oh, my! Stay tuned.

Available on Amazon and barnesandnoble.com



AUTHOR: Lawrence Martin, MD '69

BOOK TITLE: "Liberty Street: A Novel of Later Civil War Savannah"

PUBLICATION DATE: July 2017, Lakeside Press, won second-place prize for historical fiction at the 2018 Florida Writers Association's Royal Palm Literary Awards

"I grew up in Savannah, Georgia, which was the end point of Gen. Sherman's March to the Sea in 1864. After touring the mansion where he stayed, I became fascinated with Savannah's Civil War history. I always loved to write, and during my career as a pulmonologist, I wrote a dozen nonfiction books for doctors and the lay public. With my newfound fascination, I decided to tackle fiction and ended up writing three Civil War novels. The latest is the story of a 24-year-old war widow and her complicated love affairs in war-ravaged Savannah."

DUVAL LADIES

MEMBERS HEAR LOCAL AUTHOR, ENJOY DESSERTS

About 40 Duval Ladies enjoyed an interesting, humorous and entertaining presentation by Bill Pullen on Feb. 20 at Truman Recreation Center. Pullen, of the Village of Duval spoke about his memoir, "It Started at The Savoy," said Mary Finley, club president. The book is about his family includes and highlights from Pullen's 52- year-career in hotel management, she said.

— *Laura Sikes, Daily Sun*

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