



Volume 36, Number 6

November-December 2014

Enjoy the Holidays!



Tues., Dec. 9 – “*The Most Wonderful Time of the Year*” A performance of **Holiday Music** brought to us by **Laura Freeman, Beckie Menzie & Marianne Murphy Orland**--between 5:30 and 7:30.

Sat., Dec. 13: Holiday Candlelight Dinner Party for Members! Sparkling seasonal decor and glowing candles! A four course gourmet dinner by Chef Victor and musical interludes played by Cliff Dweller Arnie Lanza. An elegant evening!



Wed., Dec. 10: Members Art Exhibition Opening Reception featuring artwork by **Fred Wackerle CD'09, Tobin Richter CD'04, Steven Backman CD'11, James Smith CD'84, Alan Alongi CD'12, and Debbie Hunter Snow CD'13.**

Fri., Dec. 19: Members Holiday Lunch
Sat., Dec 20: Children's Party for Members' Children and Grandchildren
The Club will be closed until Mon., Jan. 5, 2015.



Celebrate a Good Year on the Cliff!

Abner Mikva Receives Presidential Medal of Freedom

By Mike Deines CD'03

In a White House ceremony on November 24, Abner Mikva CD'03 was among 19 American citizens awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest honor bestowed upon American civilians for "extraordinary contributions to our country and the world."

Mikva received the medal from President Obama for "contributions to U.S. security, world peace, and culture." He holds the distinction of having served in all three branches of government—as a five-term Democrat congressman from Illinois, as a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, and as the White House counsel for President Bill Clinton.

In presenting the award to Mikva, President Obama shared a story about Mikva's early ventures into Chicago politics. *Sun-Times* reporter Lynn Sweet captured the incident – "As a University of Chicago student, Abner Mikva stopped by the local Democratic headquarters and asked to volunteer," Obama paused and said. "I love this story. A committeeman asked who sent you. And Ab said, 'Nobody.' And the committeeman said, 'We don't want nobody nobody sent.' That's Chicago for you."

Sweet, in her article added, "That phrase from Mikva—'we don't want nobody nobody sent' came to be the defining shorthand in explaining how Chicago machine politics worked."

Among this year's Medal of Freedom recipients were theater composer Stephen Sondheim; journalist Tom Brokaw; actress Meryl Streep; musician Stevie Wonder; author Isabel Allende; actress Marlo Thomas.

Rep. John Dingell of Michigan, the longest serving congressman in American history; Rep. Edward Roybal of California, founder of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; and Ethel Kennedy, the widow of former Sen. Robert Kennedy also received the award.

Posthumous awards were presented to slain civil rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner who were killed during their work in an historic 1964 voter registration effort in Mississippi.

Following his years of service in Washington, Abner Mikva moved back to Chicago. In 1997 he helped create the Mikva Challenge which strives to develop youth to be informed, empowered, and active citizens and community leaders by engaging youth in action civics. Mikva has often said that of all the accomplishments in his professional life, what he is most proud of is helping found the Mikva Challenge.

And then, there is our connection with Abner Mikva. He joined The Cliff Dwellers in 2003 and frequently visits the Club to share lunch and conversation with friends and family. No longer a Nobody he certainly is Somebody Everybody around the Cliff and beyond knows and appreciates.



President Obama presents the Medal of Freedom to Abner Mikva during recent White House ceremonies.

Letter from the President

Dear Fellow Cliff Dwellers:

As the New Year approaches, the Board of Directors is interested in identifying specific actions that we can take to improve your overall experience as a Cliff Dweller. Attached to this month's newsletter and enclosed in this month's statement is a brief survey, developed by the House Committee and approved by the Board, to gather information about how members use the Club, and what they would like to see enhanced or improved. Please take a few minutes to fill it out, so that the Board can focus its efforts on what is important to you. Better yet, become involved in one of the many committees that help make the Club a vibrant place for artists and patrons of the arts to interact.

With the holiday season upon us, there are a number of special programs and events planned at the Club. Please join us for the renewal of the members' traditional candlelight dinner on December 13th; the holiday luncheon on the 19th; the children's Christmas party on the 20th; and, finally, our Annual Meeting on January 12th, when we celebrate the past year and welcome the next with drinks, fine food, and more than a little irreverence.

Finally, if you have not already done so, please consider contributing to the Holiday fund for the Staff. Our Staff is paid wages, but the Club does not add gratuities to member's food charges. As part of our tradition, each year we show our appreciation for the Staff's efforts by contributing to a holiday fund. The fund is distributed to the Staff based on salary and years of service. You may contribute by dropping off a check made out to the Cliff Dwellers Holiday Fund at the Club, or request that the Club post your contribution to your account.

On behalf of the Board and the Staff, I wish each of you a wonderful holiday season and look forward to seeing you soon at the Kiva.

Zivio!

Charles Hasbrouck, President

A Timely Historical Flashback

By Bill Drennan CD'02



Ernest Slotar CD'86, Harry Malm CD'69, and Don Amidei CD'84 enjoy their late 1980's pilgrimage to the Eagle's Nest Camp in Oregon, IL.

In 1984 when Don Amidei joined his fellow DePaul University alumni Bill Gorman CD'78 and Jerry Heing CD'74 as a Cliff Dweller, little did he realize what a legacy he would leave the Club.

Amidei thoroughly enjoyed his years as a Cliff Dweller. In turn he served on the Board, as Librarian, and as Archivist. As a teacher and a student of history, he delved into the careers and works of several well-known Cliff Dwellers. With his camera bag over his shoulder, Amidei wandered the Chicago area and beyond documenting the work of Lorado Taft, Alfonso Ianelli, Egon Weiner and others. He delighted in sharing his excursions as well as his slides with other Cliff Dwellers. Ernest Slotar CD'86 referring to the attached photo said, "I was fortunate to have experienced the friendship of Don and Harry. We always enjoyed good conversation. I am also grateful that Don influenced you gentlemen to join the Club."

The legacy of Don Amidei is evident in today's Club as Pat Savage CD'93, George Gabauer CD'94, and Bill Drennan CD'02, all former DePaul Track athletes for Coach Amidei continue as active members. By encouraging friends to join, these three members can account for an additional 16 current members. We like to think that Coach A would be very proud of those who carry on his love of The Cliff Dwellers.

2014 Cliff Dwellers Book Club in Review

By Richard Reeder, CD'12

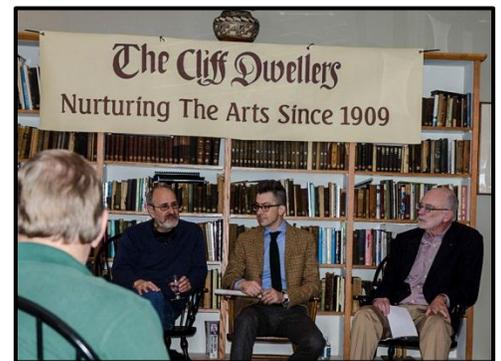
We are completing an extremely successful first year of the Cliff Dwellers Book Club. Usually meeting on the fourth Saturday of the month (except in December), the Book Club starts its discussion at 11:00 in the morning and concludes a little after the noon hour. Many of the participants continue the conversation over lunch at the Club.

The selection of books is from a mix of Chicago authors, past and present. This year we read nine novels, one collection of connected short stories and a memoir. Five of the novels were Chicago-themed classics. Five of the authors joined us at the discussions.

Our best attended discussion of the year was in October, when Michael Hainey, CD'13 joined in the discussion of his best-selling book, *After Visiting Friends*. The book is a memoir, but also is a great piece of investigative journalism which seeks the truth behind his father's sudden death when Michael was still a child.

Club Secretary Bill Drennan, CD'02 joined us that day. Bill was Michael's English instructor, track coach and played an important mentoring role during his high school years. It was an especially emotional, yet inspiring presentation that day in the Sullivan room, as Michael related his personal tale of love and loss.

The second year of the Book Club launches on January 24 with our discussion of Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*. The year 2015 marks the Saul Bellow Centennial, and this will be one of several Bellow-related events at the Cliff Dwellers during the year.



Three Cliff Dwellers-- Richard Reeder, guest author Michael Hainey, and Bill Drennan—discuss the Art of Writing.

The Midland Authors Host Stuart Dybek at the Cliff

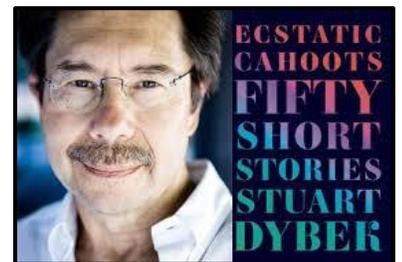
By Richard Reeder, CD'12

It was the evening of November 12, and Chicago's autumn was already transitioning into wintry cold. Yet, the weather did not deter the several score of literary enthusiasts who packed our club that evening to see and hear author Stuart Dybek. The event was hosted by the Society of Midland Authors, a venerable literary group founded in 1915, with a long and sustained relationship with The Cliff Dwellers.

Dybek, who many consider the greatest living Chicago author, has had two collections of stories recently published, *Paper Lantern Love Stories* and *Ecstatic Cahoots*. At age 72, Dybek still seems at the top of his game. In reading the entire story "Cordoba," from *Ecstatic Cahoots*, to us in the assembled audience, he captured our attention with beautifully constructed sentences, haunting imagery and memorable depictions of characters, all expressed in his unique language which still reflects the verbal cadences and rhythms of his native Pilsen neighborhood.

When he took questions after his presentation, Dybek seemed to engage the questioners in conversation, rather than didacticism, an atmosphere conducive to dialogue that seemed to be appreciated by all.

When it was time to conclude the evening, those present realized that they had experienced a very special evening, one that will be fondly remembered for a very long time.

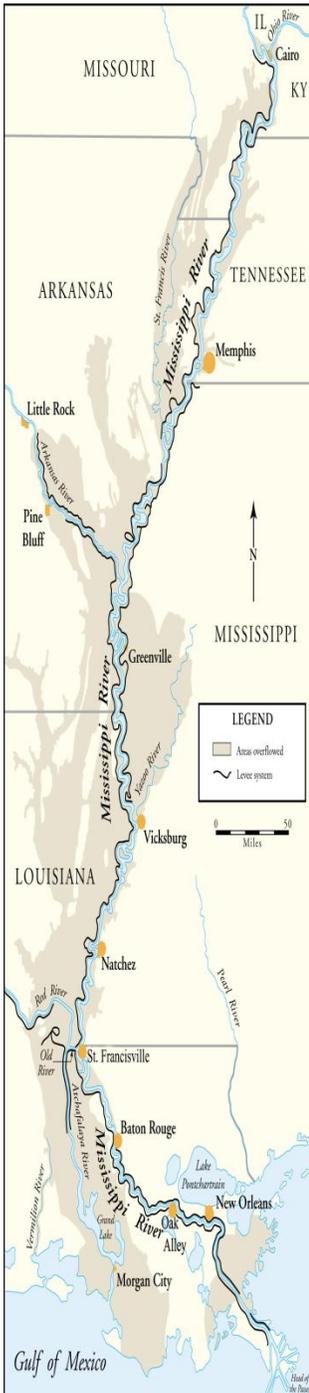


Stuart Dybek had a packed house entranced at the Cliff.

New Orleans Upstream to Memphis

(by way of Oak Alley Plantation, Baton Rouge & St. Francisville, Louisiana and Natchez and Vicksburg, Mississippi)

by *Bill Bowe, CD'99*



In September, 2014 my son Andy Bowe and I flew from Chicago to New Orleans and boarded the newly built Queen of the Mississippi, a diesel powered five-deck boat with a faux paddle wheel. Headed north on the Mississippi to Memphis, Tennessee, we passed plenty of river traffic and a host of petrochemical plants along the Lower Mississippi River. We first stopped at Oak Alley, an 1837 antebellum mansion. Access to this slave-built plantation head house comes through an extraordinary 300-year old oak tree entrance arch, long predating the house itself and seen on this book's back cover.

Next the Queen tied up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana's capital. We first travelled by bus north to the pre-Civil War Rosedown Plantation in nearby St. Francisville. Also built with slave labor, this 1834 mansion was furnished with imports from the North and Europe, most of which are still in place. Later, we went to see the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge. Built in 1847 and now a museum, its distinctive cast iron crenellated battlements and turrets was abandoned when Governor Huey P. Long got the 46-story New State Capitol built in 1932. He was a U.S. Senator and national figure when he was assassinated there in 1935.

When cotton was king before the Civil War, Natchez had more millionaires per capita than any other city. Construction began in Natchez in 1860 on the 30,000 square foot Longwood Mansion, now a National Historic Landmark. Only the first of six floors was finished when the Civil War changed everything.

We were reminded of the War's great tragedy at the Vicksburg National Military Park. While preserving a Civil War battlefield, its cemetery has the largest internment of Civil War dead in the nation. Forty percent (36,325) of the Union troops in the Vicksburg battle came from Illinois and the 1906 Illinois monument overshadows all of the other memorials there.

Finally, we arrived in Memphis, Tennessee. We saw Beale Street, the famous marching ducks at the Peabody Hotel, Sun Records, the historic recording studio, and then Elvis Presley's home.

Unfortunately, by the time Andy and I arrived at Graceland, Elvis had left the building.



The Queen of the Mississippi



Oak Alley mansion opens for visitors.



Live oaks drape the plantation walk.



Elvis's Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee

Cliff Notes—

- Since our last publication six individuals interested in literature and the arts have become members of The Cliff Dwellers. We welcome them and look forward to their active participation in Club activities and events.
Faith Hurley, David Halsey, Robert Jordan, Joan Pantsios, Neil Steinberg, Elizabeth Wright.
 Additionally, a note of appreciation is extended to the following members who nominated these individuals:
**Elizabeth Purdy, Charles Hasbrouck, Leslie Recht, Virginia Harding,
 Eve Moran, Nicole Simon, Bill Drennan.**
- Tim Samuelson CD '03 was honored by the Society of Architectural Historians for his “Stewardship of the Built Environment” at its Annual Gala in early November. He was recognized as the Cultural Historian of the City of Chicago, for his lifelong commitment to discovering and sharing the history of Chicago and its architecture and his work as an early preservation activist. 
- A thought-provoking CD New Year’s Resolution offered by CD Treasurer David Chernoff: “If every resident member came to lunch or dinner just one more time each month our net bottom line would improve by approximately \$30,000 - \$40,000 at the end of the year. Think about it.”
- Richard Hunt CD'12 will preview *Sixty Years of Sculpture* an exhibition of his artistic work Friday, December 5, 2014, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the Chicago Cultural Center, Exhibit Hall, 4th Floor North. The Exhibit will open December 6 and run until March 29, 2015. An honorary member of The Cliff Dwellers, Richard is also having an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art starting in January. 
- Friday, December 12 the Cultural Mile’s Second Friday program will feature the Laurenzi/Ernst/Green Trio. The group’s blends, jazz, folk, and improvised music yield an honest and refreshing take on the saxophone/bass/drum trio. Thanks to Leslie Reicht and Lindsey Hugel for pulling together an excellent series of “Jazz on 22” Second Friday evenings this summer and fall. Keep it up!
- A reminder looking forward—The Annual Meeting will be held on January 12. For Long-standing members and those who are quite new to the Club, this is an evening of positive traditions and an affirmation of our support for the Arts in Chicago. Brief, but high-spirited reports will be offered by our officers and committee chairs. The food will be splendid; the friendship, fine! Truly, this is a must attend event!
- Please take a few minutes to respond to the questionnaire/survey that accompanies this issue of the newsletter. Positive observations are as important as constructive criticism, or, maybe, affirmative responses are more important in maintaining the features of The Cliff Dwellers we most appreciate but too often take for granted.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

MEMBERS WISHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO *ON AND OFF THE CLIFF*
 CAN SUBMIT STORIES, REFLECTIONS, ARTICLES, POEMS, PHOTOS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE ARTS TO
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR MIKE DEINES by e--mail mjdeines@yahoo.com
 Share Current, Past, and Future Stories about The Cliff Dwellers.