



The LIBRARY of CONGRESS

# GAZETTE

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## 2007 National Book Festival Crowd Breaks Record



More than 120,000 readers gather at the National Book Festival to laugh, cry and learn with their favorite writers.

Doug Barber

By Gail Fineberg

**T**he face of the Library's National Book Festival has changed in seven years. When the festival started in 2001, some 30,000 people showed up, mostly white, mostly middle-aged, but with enough young families attending Mumford Room children's presentations to clog the Madison's sixth floor with strollers.

This year, more than 120,000 festival fans flocked to the National Mall between 7th and 14th streets, which, by the diversity of the crowd, looked something like Metro Center at rush hour.

Reflecting the diversity of the festival's 70 authors as well as the capital region's population, people of all colors came to the festival, as did people of all ages—toddlers to teens, mid-lifers to long-lifers.

"It was the best National Book Festival ever. Everyone loved the festival poster and program, the pavilions were filled to overflowing, the authors' presentations were funny, insightful and compelling, and the weather was perfect," said festival manager Roberta Stevens.

"It took a huge number of talented staff members and enthusiastic volunteers to make the festival experience a success, and I am deeply grateful to each

and every person who was a part of the dedicated 900-person festival team," she said.

Who could resist the outdoor-call of an Indian-summer day on the mall? Saturday, Sept. 29, dawned cool enough for a sweater and became warm enough for bare arms. Bright blue sky framed the white Capitol dome on the Hill above the snowy peaks of huge pavilions, which transformed the mall into a storybook scene, an enchanting land of story tellers.

Book-lovers came early, undeterred by a morning triathlon that closed Independence and Constitution avenues west of Seventh Street. Throughout the



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morning they snatched up 30,000 bright yellow Book tv bags donated by C-SPAN2. Collectively, they filled them with as many books as they could afford to buy and 40,000 programs, 22,000 free festival posters, 30,000 free bottles of water, 25,000 Target bags and free handouts from the Library of Congress pavilion and the Pavilion of the States. "I'm a professional scavenger," one full-bag toter explained.

Readers came by Metro, by foot from distant parking spots, by the busload from outlying areas. The youngest came in strollers. The oldest came with the aid of canes and wheelchairs. One frail, older woman arrived in the History and Biography pavilion with her own purple folding chair and a contingent of chair and cooler managers.

People came from nearby neighborhoods and towns. A Children's Hospital Teen Life Club sponsored by the Junior League of Washington came from the District, a busload of students drove in from Harper's Ferry, W.Va., and 22 kids and four teachers came from Suitland, Md.

"Today, I think we are creating book-lovers. Today, the children are making connections with the authors," said Ellis Hicks, an eighth-grade language-arts teacher at Drew Freeman Middle School in Suitland. Her students read every day in class, but on this day, a story came to life as one author, Shelia P. Moses, introduced and told stories about her twin brother Leon and his fictional twin Luke, who with other family members populated her most recent book for young people, "The Baptism."

Hicks had purchased three new books for the school library, and one of her pupils, Johnny Latimer, had presented "The Baptism" to Moses, who took time after her talk to write this inscription: "Many Blessings to Ms. Ellis Hicks."

Speaking in the rhythmic, mellow voice of her Occoneechee Neck, N.C., roots (she has traced five generations to this region), Moses appealed directly to the hearts and minds of every parent, grandparent, aunt and uncle gathered in the Teens and Children pavilion to hear her. "The books we read today will serve



Nancy Alfaro



Michaela McNichol

Book-signing lines stretch so long that fans waiting to meet their favorite authors can catch up on conversation or read several chapters.

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**NATIONAL  
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What better place than the National Book Festival to celebrate a wedding anniversary? Marion and Kenneth Grace of Arlington, Va., mark their 59th year of marriage, enhanced by a shared love of reading.

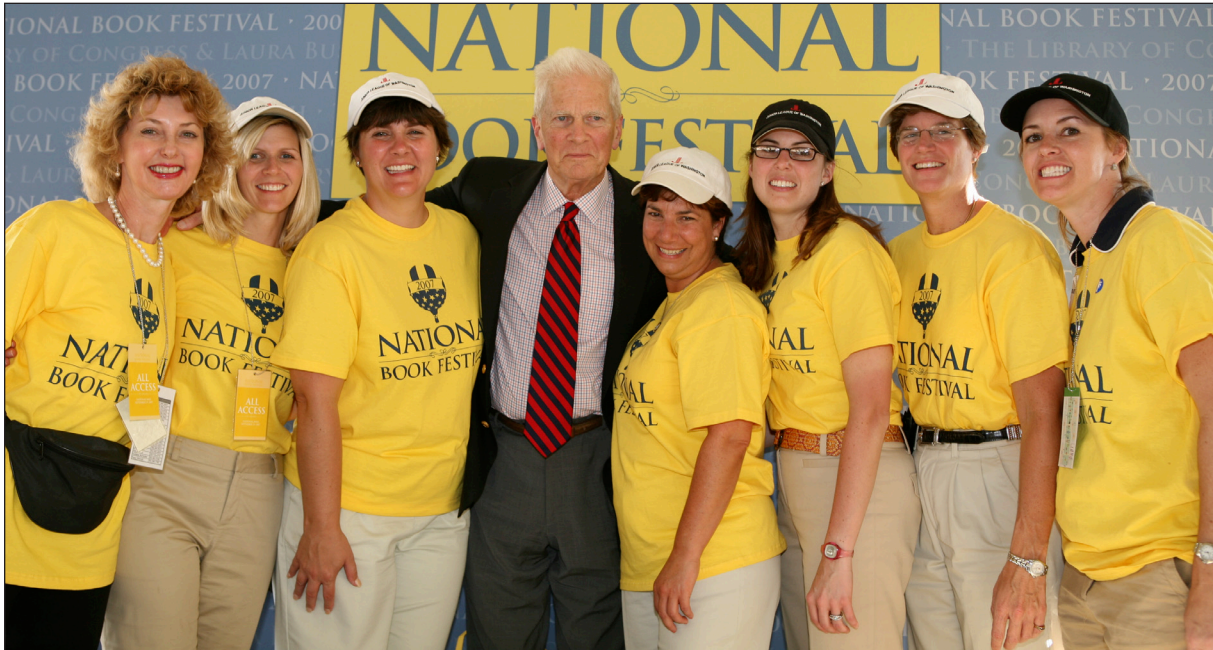


Michaela McNichol

Like kids in a candy store, these find a wide array of books in the Let's Read America pavilion. Here, Kevin Harris, 8, of Temple Hills, Md., checks out "David Goes to School" by David Shannon.



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Librarian of Congress James H. Billington poses with festival manager Roberta Stevens, left, and members of the Junior League of Washington, from Stevens's left, Kristin Urbach, Diana Marousek, Constance Christakos, Meagan Campion, Susan Marshall and Donna Bethea-Murphy. Some 900 volunteers and staff members produced the festival.

Michaela McNichol

us well tomorrow," she said.

"There is help for our children—if you stop letting TV raise them, and give them a book instead."

People came from far away. A Pavilion of the States delegation from Hawaii brought a book about the islands' history especially for the festival host and hostess, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and first lady Laura Bush.

Cynthia Dunn and her friend Logan Ragsdale made a special trip from New York City, just to attend the festival. Reading inscriptions on a large white panel, Dunn stood a long time in the Library's pavilion before the graffiti wall titled "Which Author and Book Inspires You the Most?" Finally she printed neatly, "Marcel Proust." "We're reading him together," she said. "We're on the third volume."

Laughing, Ragsdale pointed out his favorite inscription on the graffiti panel labeled "What Would You Preserve at the Library of Congress?" Someone had written at the top of the panel in perfect Rice penmanship, "The Reference Librarians." Ragsdale is a librarian at the Queensboro Public Library.

A family of four from Fresno was vacationing in Washington and happened upon the book festival by accident. All readers, they were delighted. "It was the most spectacular thing we've



Michaela McNichol

Bullseye, Target's mascot, holds paws with Blumen Stein, a George Washington Middle School student from Alexandria, Va., and gets ready to pose with the Baradi family, including three girls, Jayla, 1, Nicole, 8, and Danielle, 9, and their dad, Omar, of Fairfax, Va.



Gail Fineberg

ever seen," they told former Library staff member Gayle Harris the next day at Mount Vernon, where dozens of tourists were walking around with their yellow book bags from the festival.

A group of six from New Hampshire stood with a "Troops Out Now" sign in a vegetarian lunch line. Although they are readers, New Hampshire Peace Action members Cathy Brentwood and Gary Walker said they had come from a nearby antiwar demonstration to the festival grounds, not for the event or to make a statement but "for the free water and some food."

United by a shared love of reading and books, readers jostled one another politely to grab seats in crowded pavilions to hear their favorite authors of fiction, fantasy, mysteries, thrillers, histories, biographies, books for children of all ages, as well as celebrity chefs and other television personalities. From pavilion to pavilion, laughter rang out as authors turned comedians, telling stories on themselves. Patricia MacLachlan, for example, described her private writing life, in pajamas and surrounded by pets that figure in her books for children and teens. "I write like this, up and down, up



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Michaela McNichol

Let's Read America audience listens to Library of Congress Federal Credit Union presentation by Sammy the Saver Rabbit.

and down. I play a lot of solitaire on my computer, between chapters.”

In Let's Read America pavilions, people lined up for pictures with their favorite PBS characters and Bullseye, the real Target pooch, a study in patience as she focused on the flashing Polaroid camera

and endured hundreds of petting hands. They waited in short lines to sign three huge graffiti walls, long lines to buy food and pay for books, and even longer lines to meet the authors and get their books signed. (Terry Pratchett obliged fans for two hours, and festival poster artist Mercer

Mayer signed posters and his illustrated children's books for 2 ½ hours.)

Helping all these people find programs, certain authors and pavilions, seats, food, water and other necessities were 900 volunteers, whose chrysanthemum-yellow festival T-shirts and welcoming smiles added light and color to the scene. This largest-ever fleet of helpers included 400 members of the Junior League of Washington, which supports literacy programs in the Washington area; some 325 Library staffers, including security teams, author escorts, and festival managers and publicists; and 175 others drawn to the festival over the years from a large community of readers. “I love to volunteer for this festival. It's so organized,” explained one nonaffiliated volunteer serving as a pavilion timer.

The National Book Festival opened at 9:55 a.m. on a thoughtful, philosophical note with remarks by the Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington, who invoked the reverence of the nation's founders for books and knowledge. He spoke, appropriately, in the History and Biography pavilion—the one pavilion devoted solely to instructional nonfic-



Doug Barber

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and Book World editor Marie Arana prepare to open the festival.



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tion, the one pavilion that, over the years, has drawn the largest crowds, consistently, all day long.

“The goal of the National Book Festival,” he said, “is not only to encourage Americans to read often and widely, but also to make reading a lifelong practice.”

To emphasize the importance of reading to become informed citizens with responsibility for their government, he quoted President James Madison in his second annual message to Congress (Dec. 5, 1810): “A well-instructed people alone can be permanently a free people.”

He also quoted Thomas Jefferson, who said in an 1821 letter to Madison: “A library book lasts as long as a house, for hundreds of years. It is not, then, an article of mere consumption but fairly of capital. . . .” He noted Jefferson’s patronage of the Library of Congress, which for 207 years has preserved the nation’s book-capital investment and nurtured and protected it with copyright.

Billington then introduced Marie Arana, editor of Book World, the book review section of The Washington Post, which she noted is a “proud charter sponsor” of the National Book Festival. “Thanks to Dr. Billington and Mrs. Billington for all they have done for books,” she said.

For the next seven hours, prize-win-



Nancy Alfaro

“Iron Chef” Cat Cora gives a high five to Gabriel Greenwood, a fourth-grader who with his mom drove 4 hours and 13 minutes from Princeton, N.J., to get to the festival. “Cat is awesome,” he said.

ning biographers and historians told the stories behind the stories, beginning with ABC News correspondent Jan Crawford Greenburg’s inside story of the struggle for control over the Supreme Court and ending with Ken Burns’s and Geoffrey Ward’s behind-the-lens story of shooting the film “The War” and writing the book “The War, An Intimate History, 1941-1945” (see the following pages).

At the end of the Burns-Ward presentation, various members of the audience asked Burns why he hadn’t included more battles and more veterans’ experiences in his film. “I am pretty thrilled that, after a 450-page book and a 15-hour documentary, your biggest concern is what is left out,” he responded, laughing.

“Why not this? Why not that? Why not everything?” Billington remarked in his typical, expansive approach to Library events.

Addressing his parting words to the 5 o’clock crowd that included some 300 standing at the open edges of the History and Biography pavilion, he said: “I hope this festival sparked your imagination and love of reading.”

The responding applause indicated that was the case. ♦



Barry Wheeler

Elizabeth McCarthy, of Silver Spring, Md., adds the names of her favorite authors to a graffiti wall in the Library of Congress pavilion. Visitors filled three panels.

  
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## NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL — VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

*Views of the War a Matter of Perspective*

By Gail Fineberg

The 2007 National Book Festival, which concluded Saturday evening, Sept. 29, with presentations by filmmaker Ken Burns and historian Geoffrey Ward, was not timed to coincide with the PBS premiere of their gripping seven-part World War II documentary, “The War,” and publication of their book “The War, An Intimate History, 1941-1945” (Knopf, 2007).

But that concurrence of events certainly did not hurt record-breaking festival attendance, and it probably sparked the interest of hundreds of readers (and watchers) who crowded into the History & Biography pavilion to hear Burns and Ward tell about finding veterans to feature in their “bottom-up” documentary.

Nor was the festival scheduled intentionally to occur the very week that Simon & Schuster released the monumental 950-page reference work, “The Library of Congress World War II Companion,” written and edited by Margaret “Peggy” Wagner, Linda Barrett Osborne and Susan Reyburn, all senior writer-editors in the Library’s Publishing Office. Stanford University history professor David M. Kennedy, another festival speaker, was a consultant and contributor to this book.

But the festival provided an ideal Veterans History Project venue for the release of their book, which gives the reader a wide angle view of the war that engaged the major powers of the world in prolonged battle—with incredible loss of life—60 million people, according to Burns.

Both of these publishing events also tied in nicely with the work of the Library’s Veterans History Project (VHP), which, at the direction of Congress, mounted a nationwide campaign to collect the personal histories of World War II veterans and civilians who supported the war effort, while they were still around to tell their stories.

During the past five years, the VHP has amassed some 50,000 veterans’ stories on tape, photos, diaries, journals, maps and other papers, which the



A Veterans History Project presentation draws a crowd as historian Tom Wiener, seated next to ASL interpreter, interviews Ward Chamberlin, Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein. A founder of the Corporation of Public Broadcasting, Chamberlin recalled presenting Ken Burns with a \$30,000 check for his first documentary to air on PBS. Novick and Botstein discussed their research for Burns’s new film, “The War.”

Library is archiving and preserving for posterity. Interviewers range from some professional folklorists to grandchildren and great-grandchildren asking veterans questions about their war experiences and recording the responses.

For their reference work, the Library authors drew on these and other sources within the Library’s collections as well as some outside sources. Burns and his research assistants relied largely on the oral histories, diaries, letters and memoirs of veterans they discovered in four towns—Sacramento, Calif., Mobile, Ala., Luverne, Minn., and Waterbury, Conn. They used official war footage from the National Archives and Records Administration and received an outpouring of home movies that Americans shared for the film-making project.

The Library, PBS and Burns have an

agreement to wage a complementary national campaign to encourage the nation’s veterans to contribute their stories to the nation’s historical record. As part of this agreement, the VHP, a program of the Library’s American Folklife Center, has produced a companion Web site for “The War” ([www.loc.gov/vets/stories/thewar](http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/thewar)), which guides users through each episode of the PBS documentary and enhances those veterans’ experiences with veterans’ stories archived at the Library, which announced the site on Monday, Oct. 1.

**The Big Historical Picture**

Speaking before Burns and Ward, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David M. Kennedy put World War II into global perspective.

He said Adolf Hitler, upon hearing



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Helen Dairymple

Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns answer questions about their new film, "The War," which they based on the personal stories of veterans they found in four American towns.



Doug Barber

Historian David Kennedy gives a global perspective of World War II.

that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, remarked that, with the help of this new unvanquished ally, Germany was assured of victory. Upon learning of the bombing, Winston Churchill said he anticipated U.S. entry into the war at last and, finally, a good night's sleep.

Kennedy also quoted remarks of Hitler's foreign minister, who had written that Germany had "just one year to cut Russia

off," and warned that Germany would have a difficult time if the United States were able to arm the massive Soviet army. He also quoted Japan's naval commander, who wrote 15 months before Pearl Harbor that the Japanese forces could "go wild for one year," but not for two, three or four years.

The moral, Kennedy said, quoting a Chinese proverb, is to "know your enemy."

Kennedy said the United States implemented a new primary military tactic on Aug. 17, 1942, when a squad of 12 B-17 bombers took off from the south of England and dropped their payloads on the German-occupied French city of Rouen on the Seine. "The object of strategic bombing was to deliver a blow to the enemy heartland and to terrorize the enemy, which would lose the will to fight," Kennedy said.

On Oct. 6, 1942, Donald Nelson, then head of the War Production Board, told war planners in Washington that the United States could not possibly convert civilian resources to war resources in one year. As a result, Kennedy said, D-Day was delayed by one year, from May 15, 1943, to June 6, 1944, and an original plan

to launch 215 U.S. divisions in Europe was scaled back to 90 divisions.

The United States bet it could leverage its economic and industrial capacity to win the war with armaments rather than sheer numbers on the ground. "The United States had decided to fight with American money, American machines and Russian men," Kennedy said.

His recital of war dead by country seemed to support his thesis:

Soviet Union, 24 million people dead, including 16 million civilians.

Germany, 6½ million dead, including 1½ million civilians.

Poland, 8 million dead, including 6 1/2 million civilians, of whom some 6 million died in Nazi death camps.

Japan, 3 million dead, of whom 1 million were civilians.

Yugoslavia, 2 million dead, of whom 1½ million were civilians.

Great Britain, 350,000 dead, including 100,000 civilians.

United States, 405,399 dead, including six civilians.

The only U.S. civilian casualties were a Sunday school teacher and five children who died in the coastal logging town of Blye, Oreg., when they stumbled upon a fire bomb deposited by a balloon launched from Japan.

"America's war was like no other war in the world," Kennedy said.

### Personal Perspectives on War

Burns said when he set about making "The War" five years ago, he was interested "in getting at the human dimension . . . to give the sense of what it might have been like to be in that war."

Most historic war films lacked intimacy, he said. "We were not interested in interviewing generals, in statistics that abstract human suffering and cost. . . . We wanted to talk to men who had seen the elephant, who had been in combat, who had killed and seen their buddies killed."

Burns said he also wanted to make a documentary that was instructional as well as appealing. That was in response to a National Council for History Education finding that many high school seniors thought the United States had fought with



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Germany against the Soviet Union.

Another motivating factor was the realization that more than 1,000 World War II veterans were dying every day. “We were losing these men; we were losing these stories.”

Burns noted that “The War” aired on Sunday night, Sept. 23, 17 years from the moment that PBS launched his series “The Civil War,” from which Ward wrote a textbook that is widely used in the classroom.

Burns said that film began with a quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said, “We have shared the incomparable experience of war. . . . We are as human beings drawn to war. Out of the worst of human behavior comes sometimes the best of human nature.”

The only thing that changed from the 1860s to the 1940s was that “Civil dropped out” of the title and the war, Burns said. “This [World War II] was the worst war ever, responsible for the death of nearly 60 million human beings.”

Outside the pavilion, a man on a bicycle pedaled slowly by with a rippling white flag that said “Vets for Peace.”

Ward the script- and book-writer, who has collaborated with Burns on 23 projects, said, “I am, I think, the luckiest historian on earth. I get to tell great stories [for film], and then I get to tell them again [for books]. I get to revive characters who died on the cutting-room floor, and I can tell more about the characters we met on the screen, or tell about new ones.”

Ward said as he researched and read widely for “The War,” he encountered similar stories and war and homefront experiences. “What stunned me was the universality of this war,” he said.

When an audience member asked why the film emphasized America, Burns responded: “I’m an American film maker. That’s what I do. Besides, the experience is universal.”

He said he was nervous about showing the film at the Cannes Film Festival, “but they saw people like themselves . . . not as Americans, not as Japanese-Americans, but as human beings.”

Ward and co-producer Lynn Novick explained why they selected the image of the soldier that appears on the book cover



Gail Fineberg



Michaela McNichol

Signing their reference work “The Library of Congress World War II Companion” are, from right, Susan Reyber, Linda Barrett Osborne and Margaret “Peggy” Wagner, all of the Library. In addition, the VHP offered four other festival presentations: interviews with veterans featured a new 2008 calendar “Forever a Soldier: The Veterans History Project,” which was on sale at festival; interviews with veterans featured in David Halberstam’s final book, “The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War”; a demonstration interview with 442nd Regiment veteran Joe Ichiuji; and a panel discussion by those who supported and researched Ken Burns’s “The War.”

and in promotional materials and why he remains anonymous. “We looked for one image that tells the story. We wanted the expression to show the authenticity of the war experience,” Novick said in response to a question during an earlier VHP discussion.

They found it in the face of one of four Marine stretcher bearers shown in a published Life magazine photograph. A family thought they recognized the man as their uncle, who had worked in a Waterbury factory, but they decided not to release his name.

“They thought he should stand for everyone in that war,” Ward said.

Someone asked how the four towns were selected for “The War.” Ward and Burns said they first thought they could tell the story with Waterbury representing “Every Town,” because many of its

citizens had gone to war and worked in a factory that was ramped up for war production. The city had preserved records of the war years.

Then they kept running into mention of Eugene B. Sledge, whose memoir about his experience in the South Pacific they could not ignore. His story took them to Mobile.

They also wanted to tell the stories of Japanese-Americans, who were recruited from American internment camps to serve in Europe. Sacramento had a number of these veterans, as well as two big air bases and factories that were built for war production.

In the small northern town of Luverne they found the only African American who saw combat duty on the front lines in an infantry unit, only because he volunteered for a dangerous mission.



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He survived, only to have a Red Cross hospital ship barber refuse to cut his hair—until the ship commander ordered the haircut.

“How do you communicate, in this age of entitlement, the sense of shared sacrifice?” asked an audience member, adding that after 9-11, the American people “were told to go shopping.”

Ward noted that Americans in the 1940s were used to sacrifice because they had just endured the Great Depression. And the president not only warned there would be sacrifices, but he raised taxes so everyone would feel some pain. However, he noted earlier that America’s economy was the only one to grow during the war — by 14 percent.

“Despite how acquisitive we are, I think we feel a poverty of spirit and yearn for community. I think that’s why people respond to ‘The War.’ I think if called upon, Americans today would sacrifice willingly,” Burns said, to applause.

The story of scouting for the four American towns and researching “The War” also unfolded earlier in the day as Veterans History Project historian Tom Wiener interviewed Novick, co-producer of “The War,” and Sarah Botstein, who spent five years looking for home movies, historical films and other documentary materials to include in the film. Wiener also interviewed Ward Chamberlin, who drove a field ambulance with the French and British armed forces in the European theater. Later, as a founder of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), he financed Burns’s second documentary about the life of Huey Long and supported PBS production of other films, including “The Civil War.”

In another panel session, Wiener interviewed the Library authors of “The Library of Congress World War II Companion,” which encompasses the perspectives of “every major power involved . . . on all topics,” according to Peggy Wagner.

“This was a World War. We wanted our book to be different, to be an international expression,” Susan Reyburn added, explaining that unexplored resources have become available over the past 60 years as national archives opened their

war-era records to the public.

To understand the causes of the war and the complex era of totalitarianism that threatened to engulf the world, the team began with the Treaty of Versailles in 1917 and Japan in Asia in 1937.

But they created far more than a dry political-military history by interweaving descriptive narrative with eyewitness accounts, maps, tables, charts and more than 160 illustrations.

They included personal stories they gathered from veterans on the National Mall during the World War II monument dedication in 2004. They explored the VHP’s collections and drew on the Library’s unparalleled resources, such as the papers of J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of the atomic bomb project, and diplomat Averill Harriman; Hitler’s library; Japanese propaganda pamphlets; and

an international array of wartime books, posters, maps, photographs, drawings, films and radio broadcasts; declassified intelligence reports; and postwar analyses of the conflict.

Guided all the way by editor Kennedy, who wrote the introduction to the book, the authors organized their material into 12 chapters, each with a list of suggested readings.

Each of the researchers found surprises and items of interest. Wagner became interested in armaments and alluded to a strange story about “a lady and a spider” (read the book to find out more, she said). Osborne was fascinated by accounts she found of fire-bombings and the effect of atomic bombs. Reyburn was “interested in how fast we prepared for war. We went in incredibly naked, and in six months we turned it around.” ♦



Waiting in lines is one order of the day at the National Book Festival. Lines formed for book-signings, picture-posing, book sales, give-aways, food and water.



## NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL — HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY PAVILION

# Nonfiction Writers Bring History, People to Life

*The History & Biography pavilion at the National Book Festival always draws prize-winning authors and big crowds of curious readers who are fascinated by the inside stories of public figures and events. Following are brief reports of some, but not all, who spoke this year.*

*Future issues of the Gazette will publish reports of talks given in other festival pavilions.*

## Jan Crawford Greenburg

*By Helen Dalrymple*

Jan Crawford Greenburg was the first speaker of the day in the History & Biography pavilion at this year's National Book Festival, and she set the tone for the day with her lively and perceptive comments about the U.S. Supreme Court.

Greenburg, who has covered the court for 12 years, currently provides legal analyses and commentary for ABC News. She has also covered legal affairs for The Chicago Tribune, where she began her career, and National Public Radio.

For her recent book, "Supreme Conflict: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Control of the United States Supreme Court," she interviewed all nine sitting justices and did extensive research at the Library using Justice Harry Blackmun's papers in the Manuscript Division.

"I cannot overstate how wonderful the staff of the Library of Congress was [in assisting me] in the research on my book," Greenburg said.

She discussed the stability of the court in the years between 1994 and 2005, when there were no changes in personnel. "Reporters kept thinking that by 2000 someone would retire," she said, but no one did.

Justice O'Connor went to her closest friend on the court, Chief Justice Rehnquist, in 2004 and told him that she was thinking of retiring, according to Greenburg. Ill at the time, Rehnquist said that they didn't need two vacancies on the court at the same time. He later told her he had decided to continue in office, and O'Connor reluctantly agreed to step down then, rather than wait for another two years. However, the chief justice



Kristina Nixon

Jan Crawford Greenburg signs her new book about the Supreme Court.

died the following summer, and the court was faced with the exact situation that Rehnquist had wanted to avoid.

"President Bush then had a historic opportunity to move the court to the right," said Greenburg, "and he was determined not to repeat his father's 'mistake' in nominating David Souter [who often took more liberal positions than expected] to the court."

With the appointments of John Roberts as chief justice in 2005 and Samuel Alito as an associate justice in 2006, "no historian will be able to write that Bush didn't accomplish on the court what he set out to do," said Greenburg. He changed the direction of the court, and she asserted that the nomination to fill the next vacancy, whether it falls to President Bush or a future president, will set the course of the closely divided court for the next several years.

In closing, Greenburg said that during her years covering the Supreme Court she has developed enormous respect for the institution and for the men and women who serve there. "They are an amazing group of individuals, struggling with their views on cases, who have enormous power over American life."

## James L. Swanson

*By Donna Urschel*

James L. Swanson, author of "Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer," told his audience that many myths surround the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and he proceeded to dispel those false stories and notions.

First myth: John Wilkes Booth planned the assassination for a long time. On the contrary, Swanson said, Wilkes probably planned the murder around noon on April 14, when he walked over to Ford's Theater and heard that the president and his wife would be attending the show that evening.

A few months earlier, however, Booth organized a band of conspirators and concocted a plot to kidnap Lincoln from his carriage on his way back to the White House after viewing a play at a military hospital. He wanted to hold the president hostage in the South. But Booth's intelligence was faulty; Lincoln did not attend the play, and the plan failed.

Second myth: Laura Keane, an actress at the Ford's Theater, was a heroine. Not at all, said Swanson. She rushed to Lincoln's box and cradled the president's head in her lap because she wanted to put



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Kristina Nixon

James L. Swanson



Doug Barber

Michael Oren



Doug Barber

Meryle Secrest

herself in the limelight and always be remembered in history.

Third myth: Secretary of War Edwin Stanton was a bad person and somehow connected to the plot. A vicious rumor, said Swanson. "Anyone who suggests that Stanton was connected to the assassination is either mentally ill or an idiot." Stanton was one of the great unsung heroes of American history, according to Swanson. Lincoln had the utmost faith in him and said he did not know how he could have survived the grueling years of the Civil War without Stanton.

Swanson dispelled several other myths: Booth was not a crazy, mad man, but a rational person who committed murder; Mary Surratt was not innocent, but knew much of Booth's intentions and also participated in the failed kidnap plot; and Dr. Samuel Mudd was not innocent. He was another participant in the kidnap plot and he knowingly helped Booth escape on April 15. Swanson said Mudd should have been hanged.

Also, contrary to what people believe, Lincoln's death was not universally mourned. Some people were expressing joy at his demise. In the days after the assassination, 200 people were murdered throughout the United States for expressing pleasure at the death of Lincoln.

"All in all, John Wilkes Booth has gotten away with Lincoln's assassination, in terms of history," said Swanson, who believes that Booth has been romanticized and erroneously viewed as a flawed,

tragic figure who made a great sacrifice and should somehow be admired.

Swanson expressed dismay at how Booth's image is used today. A banner depicting Booth is displayed on the streets of Washington, D.C. to point the way to Ford's Theater. Would Lee Harvey Oswald's image be placed on a banner in Dallas to point the way to the book repository building? Or a James Earl Ray banner in Memphis? At the Lincoln Library and Museum in Springfield, a life-sized polymer sculpture of Booth stands inside, staring at a display of Lincoln and his family. Would a similar Oswald figure stand in the Kennedy Library?

Swanson said, "John Wilkes Booth was a racist and a murderer, and he killed our best president."

### Douglas L. Wilson

*By Donna Urschel*

Douglas L. Wilson painted a sharp and colorful portrait of Abraham Lincoln as a writer, expounding on the 16th president's technique, his love of writing and the perception of his talents in the mid-19th century.

"As much as Lincoln was admired when he was elected, no one had the sense that he had writing or literary ability. After all, they knew he had little formal education," said Wilson, the author of "Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words" and the co-director of the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College in Illinois.

One editor queried in the pages of his newspaper, "Who will write this ignorant man's state papers?" The government offered to hire writers for the new president, but Lincoln refused. "I have to do it myself," he told the officials. It was important to him to craft his words, Wilson said, and writing became an important part of what he did as president.

"If you look at Lincoln as a writer, at his familiarity with and usage of words, at his ability to inspire and evoke feelings and convictions, no one can compare," said Wilson. "No one was like Lincoln; no one was in his class."

Wilson said "Lincoln as a writer had a long foreground." As a child, Lincoln loved to make the shapes of letters. He drew the shapes in dirt and in snow. As he grew into a young man, Lincoln was cast in the role of neighborhood secretary, because he could write quickly. He wrote letters for his neighbors, many who were unable or illiterate.

Lincoln was also a tender-hearted child and didn't like other children's cruelty to animals. As a young boy he wrote an essay about the subject for a local paper. Then as a young man he wrote many essays for newspapers, either anonymously or pseudonymously. "He was always writing," Wilson said. "But those pieces are long lost."

Lincoln started to save his papers when he went to Congress in 1847. At this point, scholars can begin to study him as a writer.



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Wilson said Lincoln was an assiduous craftsman and a deliberate writer. Wilson read a description of Lincoln's writing habits by the president's oldest son, Robert: "He was anything but rapid. He sat a table in ordinary posture. I never saw him dictate. He thought nothing of the labor of writing. He personally made many scraps of notes and memoranda. He wrote, corrected it and rewrote the corrected version."

Lincoln always revised; he was never satisfied with a first draft. "He had a superb ear and feel for the flow of the language, and he was always looking for that in revision," Wilson said. With *The Farewell Address*—a short, heartfelt speech delivered in 1861 as he left Springfield, Ill., for his first inauguration—Lincoln condensed it, improved it and made it pithier.

Wilson also talked about Lincoln's penchant for tearing off scraps of paper and writing a phrase or sentence on them. Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, said Lincoln always was writing on scraps and putting them in his hat. For the House Divided Speech of 1858, Lincoln dumped his hat on a table, numbered the scraps, arranged them in numerical order and wrote the speech. He did the same with the Erastus Corning Letter of 1863. Wilson said, "Lincoln was a pre-writer as well as a rewriter."

White House servants said they were forever picking up scraps of paper and handing them back to the president. Explaining his habit of jotting things down, Lincoln said, "It is easier to catch ideas, words or sentences on the fly as they come to you. I wouldn't let them get away from me."

Lincoln lived in the Golden Age of Oratory, but he decided he wouldn't write or give speeches in that lengthy, ornamental, flowery style. He wanted a more direct, plain style. Lincoln once advised a friend, "Don't shoot too high. Don't use fancy words to impress people. Aim lower and hit the public."

Lincoln's writing style was considered odd at the time. In fact, according to Wilson, people would often say, "He has a peculiar way of expressing himself. How strange it is that he is so effective.")

## Meryle Secret

*By Donna Urschel*

Meryle Secret entertained the audience in the History and Biography Pavilion with tales of her experiences and adventures in writing nine biographies of major artists, art dealers and leading figures in American Broadway theater.

Secret is the author of "Shoot the Widow: Adventures of a Biographer in Search of Her Subject." Secret took the title from a famous phrase by Justin Kaplan, "first shoot the widow," which crystallizes the frustrations of biographers who are often stymied in their quest for information by spouses of dead subjects.

Secret first considered writing a primer for biographers, but realized the techniques used and problems encountered with each subject were so different that it would be hard to write a set of rules. Instead, she wrote a memoir. "I decided I wanted to write about how I got to write about all these people," she said.

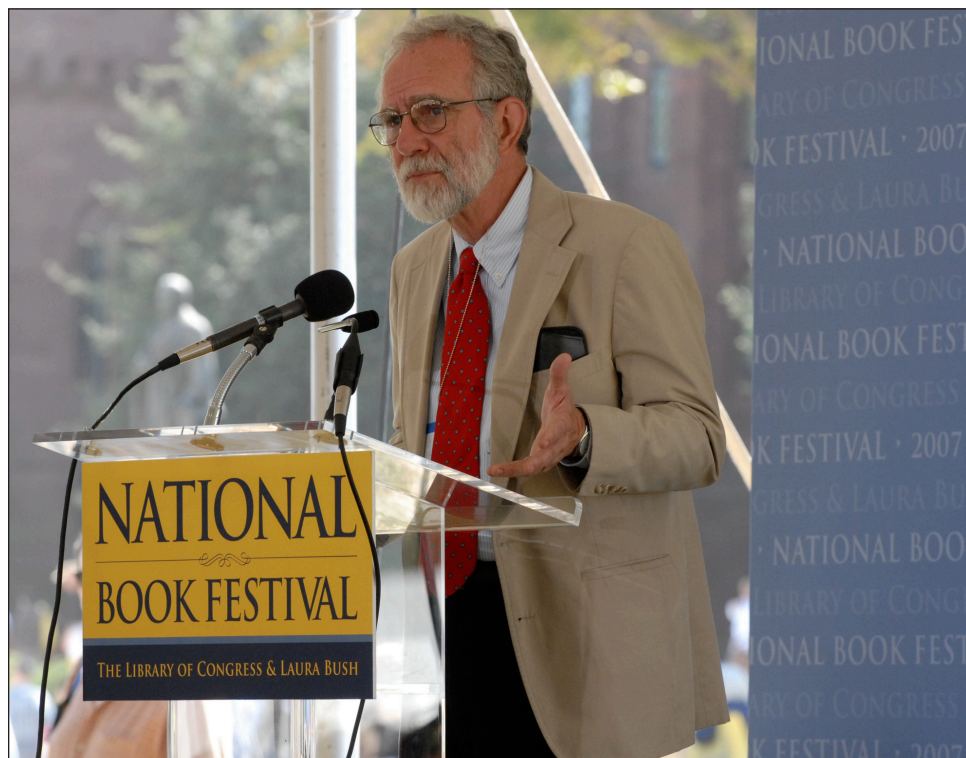
Secret's interviewing skills were honed at *The Washington Post*, where she worked as a culture writer for nearly 11 years. In 1975 she left the *Post* and tried

to write her first biography on a little-known artist named Romaine Brooks. Once she realized how hard it was to promote a biography of someone who was not known, Secret decided to stick to bigger names. "Think big," an editor told her.

She went on to write the biographies of Frank Lloyd Wright, Salvador Dali, Bernard Berenson, Kenneth Clark, Joseph Duveen, Leonard Bernstein, Richard Rodgers and Stephen Sondheim.

Secret even encountered three death threats while she was writing the biographies. The first came from a person associated with art historian and collector Bernard Berenson. "I met this man at Trafalgar Square and he told me, 'If you're going to write about Berenson, watch your back.'" The second threat came from a shady character connected to Salvador Dali. "It was suggested that my knees might be broken," Secret said. And the third threat came from, of all people, an associate of Richard Rodgers.

"Richard Rodgers!" said Secret. "He wrote 'Oklahoma' and other happy musicals. When I was poking around Richard Rodgers' life, I was told by this person, I'm not going to bump you off myself, but



Douglas Wilson discusses the writing habits of Abraham Lincoln.



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I'll see it's done.”

Secrest said she was surprised to learn that Frank Lloyd Wright was a very funny man. He had a sense of humor that often surfaced. Once when a friend wanted to show him the architecture of a new hotel called the Shamrock Inn, Wright said, “I can see the sham but where's the rock.”

Secrest also said that Stephen Sondheim and Richard Rodgers hated each other. “They were diametric opposites. Rodgers wrote music that was sunny, but he was a depressive alcoholic. Sondheim's work has a dark side and somber edge, but he is an optimistic and upbeat person,” said Secrest.

Who was her most interesting subject? It was Kenneth Clark, the British author, broadcaster and museum director. Secrest said, “He was the most fascinating man I've ever met, and I've met a lot.”

### Michael B. Oren

By Donna Urschel

Michael B. Oren gave the nonfiction audience a fast-paced, detailed and surprising survey of U.S. involvement in the Middle East over the past 230 years.

An American-Israeli historian and author, Oren's latest book is “Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present.” He is also the author of the best-selling “Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East” (2002).

Oren, a dazzling storyteller, explained how a high-ranking American diplomat, in the pursuit of peace, once asked the envoy of a Middle Eastern leader to stop the attacks on Americans. The envoy said no, as it was the right and duty of Muslims to make war upon the infidels. Who was the diplomat? Someone from the Bush Administration? No, it was Thomas Jefferson in 1785, and the Middle Eastern leader was the pasha of Tripoli.

In the early years of the United States, Muslim Barbary pirates were attacking American vessels, capturing, torturing and enslaving hundreds of innocent men and women. The United States responded by creating a navy in the 1790s, primarily to crush the Barbary pirate states and



Historian Michael Beschloss and C-SPAN2's Peter Slen, senior executive producer of Book tv, discuss Beschloss's new book, “Presidential Courage: Brave Leaders and How They Changed America, 1789-1989” (Simon & Schuster, 2007).

Doug Barber

protect American traders and missionaries. And so begins two centuries of entanglements with the Middle East.

According to Oren, there are three underlying themes that surface when examining America's foreign policy tradition in the Middle East: power, faith and fantasy.

As America became stronger, the United States tried to use its political power to pursue interests in the Middle East. From the creation of a U.S. Navy in the 18th century to involvement in the regimes of various shahs and leaders in the 20th century and the war in Iraq today, the United States has been exerting its influence.

Another theme is faith. Oren said religion has been a big component of U.S. involvement in the Middle East. The interests of Protestant missionaries, who were trying to convert Muslims to Christians, drove U.S. policy in the 19th century. The missionaries also championed a Jewish state in Palestine long before the Zionist movement.

“Puritans identified with the Jewish narrative,” Oren said. “They felt the new Promised Land was linked to the old Promised Land. And the United States

came very close to having Moses as the national symbol.”

When the missionaries realized they couldn't convert the Muslims, they worked instead to spread the “gospel of Americanism,” liberty, human rights and democracy.

Another theme or component of U.S. engagement with the Middle East involves fantasy. Americans have held romantic fantasies about the Arab and Persian worlds, generated by “1001 Arabian Nights” and movies in the 20th century such as the Indiana Jones series. These fantasies often run aground when the realities of the area are confronted.

Herman Melville, carrying a copy of “1001 Arabian Nights,” visited the Middle East with high hopes of adventure but was disappointed and distraught by what he saw, according to Oren. Another starry-eyed tourist to the area was Samuel Clemens, who confronted with poverty and pestilence, wrote a brutal depiction of the area. Hollywood, however, continues to perpetuate various fantasies of the Middle East.

Oren's presentation was extensive, running five minutes overtime and leaving no opportunity for questions. ♦