



## WNBA/Boston President Kicks Off New Season

Hello members—and welcome to a new WNBA Boston season. I hope everyone had a great summer and I look forward to seeing you throughout the WNBA year (September 2009—June 2010) at several of our planned events.

We have a great line up this year. September began with a visit to local independent Newtonville Books to hear Jessica Shattuck, author of *Perfect Life: A Novel*, and Lucy Honig, author of *Waiting for Rescue*, two great authors. This was followed by a “meet and greet” with WNBA members (see photos page 4). Then, in addition to anticipated wonderful fall weather, October will bring our annual National Reading Group Month (NRGM) event, featuring several area authors reading from their latest works (see article below).

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From left, WNBA/Boston Vice President, Lisa Braxton, President, Erin Brown, national president Joan Gelfand and WNBA/Boston Treasurer Katherine Dibble at the WNBA national conference in June in Nashville, TN.

## Mark Your Calendars For National Reading Group Month

Please mark your calendars for our October National Reading Group Month (NRGM). Some of you will remember that the organization launched this initiative a couple of years ago to promote reading groups and to celebrate the joy of shared reading. We'll plan to meet at 6:30 p.m. on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at HOTEL 140, which is at 140 Clarendon St., in downtown

Boston. Authors Margot Livesey, Katherine Howe, and Lisa Genova are the featured speakers.

Livesey's first book, a collection of stories called *Learning By Heart*, was published by Penguin Canada in 1986. Since then Margot has published six novels: *Homework*, *Criminals*, *The Missing World*, *Eva Moves the Furniture*, *Banishing Verona* and *The House on Fortune Street*.

Livesey has taught at Boston University, Bowdoin College, Brandeis University, Carnegie Mellon, Cleveland State, Emerson College, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Tufts University, the University of California at Irvine, the Warren Wilson College MFA program for writers, and Williams College. She has been the recipient of

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# WNBA Connections Key to Publishing for Member

Although I have won two short story competitions, writing is hard for me. English is my first language, but my native tongue comprises three Chinese dialects: Mandarin, Cantonese and Shanghainese.

With wonderful material to work with, I decided to convert my traumatic family history into a novel, but it was an emotional strain. My children smirked and laughed when they saw a sign for the "Lee Kee Boots" shoe store in Hong Kong. I realized the fun and challenges of straddling two cultures could become an uplifting journey for the readers and me. I began writing a YA story involving Chinese immigration history, family dynamics, kidnap and rescue. *Intrigue in the House of Wong* was born.

After we moved to Boston, I was delighted by the many cultural offerings of the area. During a reading sponsored by Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC), I met Anna Fang who introduced me to WNBA/Boston. I was impressed with the many talented women who have enormous experience in the publishing field.

I rode the "T" home with Marie Cantlon, a retired editor at Harpers,

after a WNBA meeting. As we are neighbors, and Marie often needs rides to go shopping, we became good friends. She reads my work and offers suggestions. I also met Christine Reynolds who operates her own book design firm. She designed my book and I self-published it in June of 2008.

I belong to a number of organizations that help to publicize my book. In Boston, BCNC introduced me to talks in the Boston Children's Museum, and other organizations that are interested in topics about Chinese education philosophy, family values and calligraphy. I appeared on Mary Sit's "Asian Focus" on the Boston's Channel 7, and Smoki Bacon's "The Literati Scene on Boston Neighborhood Network." Katherine Dibble of WNBA introduced me to May Lo, the librarian at the children's room at the Boston Public Library. WNBA member Susan Manning connected me with Jamaica Way Books. Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) led me to the many Saturday or Sunday Chinese language schools in the vicinity. I am doing a series of reading and writing classes for some of these schools. Someone, I still do not

know who, also recommended me to do a talk in the Cambridge Adult Education Center.

Whenever I travel, I also contact the local WNBA and OCA chapters. I recently returned from Seattle where Henriette Klauser, president of the WNBA Seattle chapter, included me in the August meeting. I brought along interested OCA members.

A friend has a relative who is a publisher in Taiwan. So there is hope the book may be translated into Chinese and sold in Asia one of these days. *Intrigue in the House of Wong* is distributed by Baker and Taylor and can be ordered by the independent booksellers. It is also available through Amazon.com. In Boston, the Brookline Booksmith, the New England Mobile Book Fair, Mount Auburn Hospital Bookstore, Jamaica Way Books and the Harvard Bookstore.

I am working hard on editing my adult book: *Under the Red Moon*, which received a contract from Kunati Book Publishers. The contract offers nothing except publishing, so I am also looking for an agent to try my luck in landing a big publisher.

—Amy Kwei



Amy Kwei, front row, third from the left, at a recent WNBA Seattle meeting.

## For Your Information

Stellina, a superb Italian restaurant at 47 Main Street, Watertown, MA, is now hosting readings by authors. For more information on how to apply, please contact Dick Haley of Haley Booksellers at [dick@haleybooksellers.com](mailto:dick@haleybooksellers.com). For more information on Stellina, or to sign up for its newsletter, visit [www.stellinarestaurant.com](http://www.stellinarestaurant.com).

# Perseverance is the Key to Publishing Success, Ryan Says

As a consumer investigative reporter, Hank Phillippi Ryan has literally chased down criminals, wired herself with hidden cameras, and gotten doors slammed in her face.

She's taken on government agencies, financial institutions, and the judicial system. Politicians have resigned because of her investigations and new laws have been enacted. She's recovered millions of dollars for scammed consumers. Fear does not enter her mind as she works a story.

So it was surprising to learn that when one of the most hard-hitting investigative reporters in New England sat in front of the laptop to write her first mystery novel, she was terrified.

"I thought, 'this will be wonderful.' Until I realized that people were going to read it," she said. "Then it was scary." Ryan, who joined WHDH 7News Boston 27 years ago, was the speaker for the WNBA Boston Annual Dinner held in June at the Hilton Boston Back Bay. The Emmy-award winning reporter shared with WNBA members and guests the joys and challenges of adding the title "author" to her resume. Ryan has penned *Prime Time*, which received a number of accolades, including the Agatha Award for best first novel, *Face Time*, and the just released *Air Time*. Several more books in the series are scheduled for publication.

"When I started writing my first book I was obsessed with it," she said. "I wrote every waking moment of the day. I took no vacation. Sleep was the first thing to go. There was no cooking. My husband ate take-out. He was very supportive. I wrote all weekend. I wrote all night."

She said when she had written 40,000 words she realized she had no story arc, character development, or point of view. "I called my mother and I said, 'I really love my book, but I'm not sure I can finish it.' She said, 'Well, you'll finish it if you want to.' So I said, there you go!"

Ryan's main character in her books is Charlotte McNally, a 46-year-old television reporter. Readers not only get a mystery with each book, but entrée to the fascinating world of television news.

"As a television reporter you can never make a mistake. If you do, millions see it. It's a very high-stakes, high-stress career. I wanted to show people what it's really like to be on TV and aging on TV. I wanted to illustrate how women wind up at some point in their lives and ask themselves, 'How did I get here?'"

Ryan said she knew when she was 7 years old that she wanted to write mysteries. "I read Nancy Drew mysteries. I wanted to be Nancy Drew. She was my best



Hank Phillippi Ryan signs book for a fan.

friend. She was someone I could rely on. I moved on to Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie. Those books changed my life."

The best-selling author, who lists President Carter, Prince Charles, Muhammad Ali and Warren Beatty among her television news interview subjects, told the audience that perseverance is key for anyone aspiring to fulfill a dream, literary or otherwise. She said she keeps an inspirational note on her bulletin board. "It says, 'What would you attempt to do if you knew you wouldn't fail? You can't give up. It's easy to give up, but you will never succeed.'"

—Lisa Braxton

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NGRM is the WNBA initiative that recognizes the importance of reading groups and promotes the love of literature. The Boston area event will be just one of many being held in October by WNBA chapters across the nation (go to [www.nationalreadinggroupmonth.org](http://www.nationalreadinggroupmonth.org) to learn more). Finally in 2009, we'll hold our annual Holiday Tea at the Copley Plaza Hotel the first Sunday in December. More details on each of these events will be coming to you via email and "snail mail," so please keep

an eye out. As well, we are in the midst of planning some great events for early 2010—including a panel on the digital side of books, a discussion on writing historical fiction, and annual member favorites, the members-only Athenaeum Tour and our Annual Dinner.

I see this year as a time to reconnect with old friends, with members, and with the Boston literary community at large. We'll have our new website up and running soon and will plan to post events and updates on the

site, which will help to keep us all connected. We also encourage YOU, the membership, to connect with each other at our events and bring new WNBA members into the fold. We have a wonderful, thriving organization of people who cherish books and the written word. Let's keep that community growing!

Sincerely,  
Erin Brown  
President, WNBA Boston Chapter

# Day on Capitol Hill Raises Awareness On Role of Libraries

Library staff, trustees, and others from all over the country descended on Washington, D.C. on May 12<sup>th</sup> for National Library Legislative Day. I was among them as a representative of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. It was a day of education provided by the American Library Association (ALA) and visits to members of Congress.

The ALA sponsors the event annually to raise awareness in Congress of the important role libraries play in our lives. The federal government provides critical funds to the nation's libraries to help cover the costs of internet access, computer terminals, online data bases, and outreach to various sectors of the community, including people with disabilities.

I and others were encouraged to talk to legislators about the Library

Services and Technology Act and the Improving Literacy through School Libraries Program. We requested that the Senate include \$300 million for the Library Services and Technology Act and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy through School Libraries Program for the 2010 fiscal year.

In these times of economic crisis, it is more important than ever for citizens who appreciate all types of libraries to urge their elected representatives on the federal, state, and local levels to adequately fund library services. Library circulation and attendance in Massachusetts has risen for the ninth year in a row, yet libraries are being closed, their hours reduced, or staff laid off. I hope all WNBA members are aware of the needs of the libraries in their communities and are doing what

they can to encourage support for them.

—Katherine Dibble

## Kudos

Victoria Abbot Riccardi had an article published about recommendations on places to stay in Morocco on the front page of the Boston Globe's travel section on June 14, 2009.

## WNBA/Boston Members Out On The Town



After a visit to a Newtonville Books author event, WNBA/Boston members and guests dined during a "meet and greet" at Ariadne Restaurant and Bar a few doors down. In photo on the left, outreach coordinator Cyrisse Jaffee (left) chats with guest Gisele Garraway. In photo on the right, literary calendar editor Jean Carr and treasurer Katherine Dibble share a laugh.

# Trip to South Africa Sparks Desire to Read More

Whenever I travel, whether here in the United States or overseas, I try to find some literature on the place that I can read ahead of time. By researching a community's history, geography, demographics, politics, state song, or country motto, I find that I develop a much deeper appreciation for, and investment in, the community than I normally would. I'll spend hours on the internet, poring over tourism and visitor sites, read online versions of the local newspaper, and raid the shelves of my local library.

When I was preparing for a recent trip to South Africa, however, my work and personal schedule did not permit me time for leisure reading and research. I landed at Johannesburg International Airport with only background from the newspaper articles that sometimes appear in the international section of my Sunday *New York Times* and images that occasionally flicker on the nightly newscasts.

However during sightseeing, once the business portion of the trip was completed, I came to realize that I was better served by delaying my

reading until my return to the United States. South Africa is a country that invites one to want to learn more.

One afternoon, our driver dropped us off at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. I had a general idea of what to expect, such as the separate entrances to the building for whites and blacks to give visitors a sense of the way things were before apartheid was dismantled and its thorough documentation of the lives of Nelson Mandela and Steven Biko, but I was struck by the moving tribute to Miriam Makeba, which included a video clip of an early movie she sang in. The Grammy award winning South African recording artist died last November after falling ill during a performance. Her life is detailed in her autobiography, *Makeba: My Story*. She tells the story of the injustices she experienced under apartheid and her personal triumphs and tragedies.

During a visit just an hour outside of Johannesburg to Maropeng: The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage site, I learned lessons on the formation of fossils, the creation of the earth and the unique characteristics

that make us human. An account of "Lucy," the oldest, best-preserved skeleton of any erect-walking human ancestor ever found is offered in *Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind*.

We not only walked with the elephants, we got to feed them and ride them as well at The Elephant Sanctuary at Hartbeespoort Dam just an hour from Johannesburg and Pretoria. The sanctuary offers a halfway house for young African elephants until they can be released into an environment where they can be more independent. *African Elephants*, by Reinhard Kunkel, captures elephants in all aspects of daily life.

We visited a couple of African marketplaces, but we also found a number of unique craft pieces at makeshift shops set up on the sides of the road. Chatting with these artisans we soon discovered that many of them were refugees from Zimbabwe. *Where We Have Hope: A Memoir of Zimbabwe*, by Andrew Meldrum, documents a journalist's tumultuous expulsion from Zimbabwe and racial and political strife of the country.

On our last night in Johannesburg I grumbled to our host because I wanted to go back to the hotel to pack. But he insisted on taking us to Soweto to what looked to be a hole-in-the-wall after hours dive, but was actually an important piece of African cultural heritage. The music blared, a couple of men shot pool and only beer by the bottle was available. Our host told us we were visiting a Shebeen, a venue that served as an alternative during apartheid for black Africans not allowed to enter pubs or bars reserved for whites. Patrons often met there to discuss political and social issues. *Shebeens Take a Bow!* by Jim Bailey, celebrates the Shebeen lifestyle.

—Lisa Braxton



Lisa Braxton rides high at the elephant sanctuary.

# WNBA/Boston Officers 2009-2010

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## POETRY CORNER



### PENELOPE

Mother's on her knees, fitting a skirt—let's say it's that blue corduroy with the front patch pockets—to my body that does not yet have a waist or hips. Next she'll take chalk, mark the seams, then pull each pin out till the skirt is back

to pieces falling to the floor, my mind elsewhere in the silence, Mother's mouth full of straight pins when she sews. I never let her teach me that reversal she would work—the pinning and unpinning to pin again a seam to finally sew,

her knee against the handle that fed the whirring needle—though I never meant not to. It's just there was no time, my need always to be elsewhere, anywhere, but the kitchen where my mother sewed. Bad enough I had to stand there

for the fitting, for the hemming, for the letting down of hems when I was growing inches by the month. Or maybe even then, I sensed the undoing that could happen: more than panels of a skirt, she could let loose, she could let go

of me. I never spoke with her of this. She's long been gone as have the gods been gone, and my husband, though not gone to war or wandering, is not present, my husband close to death, which is why I need to know what my work does:

Keep him alive? Or me faithful? Perhaps both, what Mother did, not makework but what I now must learn in middle age: there is no other work but starting over, which means to pin and fit and pin again, let out, let down, take up,

the man I wait for never coming back as I knew him, my husband, who now has left me to draw the line between vow and need, my memory fixed on the horizon where last I saw him, piecework in my hands, these pins in my mouth.

— Moira Linehan

From *IF NO MOON: POEMS BY MOIRA LINEHAN*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2007.

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fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the N.E.A., the Massachusetts Artists' Foundation and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Katherine Howe's debut novel, *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* has been called this year's answer to *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Historian*. Paced like a thriller, set at a university, and plotted around the search for a breakthrough in a historical mystery, it's the perfect summer read.

Scholars of the Salem witch trials have long asked why the accusers chose to ruin so many lives, but Howe asks, what if the women really were witches? What if the magic was real? In the novel, Harvard graduate student Connie Goodwin finds the name "Deliverance Dane" on a scrap of paper inside an old Bible. This discovery launches Connie on a quest to find out who this woman was.

Lisa Genova graduated valedictorian from Bates College with a degree in Biopsychology and has a Ph.D. in Neuroscience from Harvard University. She has done research on the molecular etiology of depression, Parkinson's Disease, drug addiction, and memory loss following a stroke. *Still Alice* is a compelling debut novel about a 50-year-old woman's sudden descent into early onset Alzheimer's disease, written by first-time author Genova. Her work has been called a masterpiece.

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