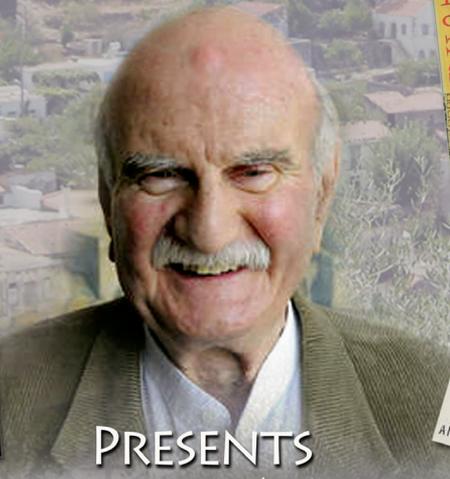
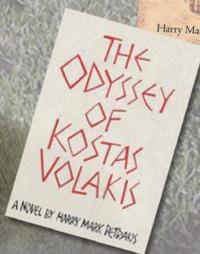
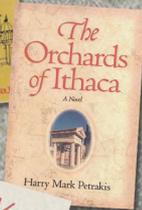
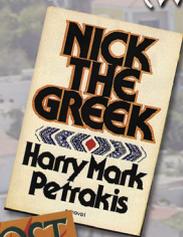


THE CHICAGO LITERARY HALL OF FAME

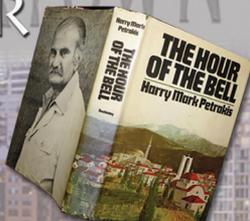
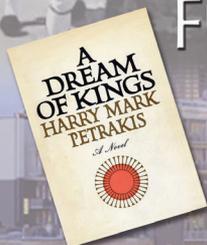
(WWW.CHICAGOLITERARYHOF.ORG)



PRESENTS

HARRY MARK PETRAKIS

WITH THE 2014
FULLER AWARD FOR
LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2014, 7-9PM
THE NATIONAL HELLENIC MUSEUM
333 S HALSTED ST, CHICAGO, IL 60661

CO-SPONSORED BY:
THE NATIONAL HELLENIC MUSEUM
PANHELLENIC SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION
CRETAN FRATERNITY OF CHICAGO
GREEK MEDIA CLUB

2014 FALL/WINTER LITERARY CALENDAR

Nov-Oct. 12: *Native Son*, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave.

Oct. 11: 53rd Chicago Book & Paper Fair presented by Midwest Antiquarian Booksellers Association (MWABA), Plumbers Union Hall, 340 W. Washington Blvd., Chicago, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Oct. 14: *Algren*, Chicago International Film Festival, AMC Theatres-River East 21, 6 p.m.

Oct. 16: *Poetry Day*, with Carolyn Forché and Jamaal May, Cindy Pritzker Auditorium, Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State St., 6 p.m.

Oct. 20: *Algren*, Chicago International Film Festival, AMC Theatres-River East 21, 12:15 p.m.

Oct. 21: *Algren*, Chicago International Film Festival, AMC Theatres-River East 21, 8 p.m.

Oct. 23: Carl Sandburg Literary Awards Dinner. Honoring Doris Kearns Goodwin, Larry McMurtry and Veronica Roth. The UIC Forum, 725 W. Roosevelt Road, 6 p.m.

Oct. 24-26: Chicago Writers Conference, featuring Sara Paretsky, University Center, 525 S. State Street

Oct. 25: Cliff Dwellers Book Club, featuring Michael Hainey's *After Visiting Friends: A Son's Story*, Author will be present. The Cliff Dwellers, 200 S. Michigan Ave. 11 a.m.

Nov. 1: Chicago Tribune Literary Award, honoring Patti Smith, Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.

Nov. 1: Chicago Tribune Heartland Prizes, honoring, Daniel Woodrell in fiction and Jesmyn Ward in non-fiction, Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State St.

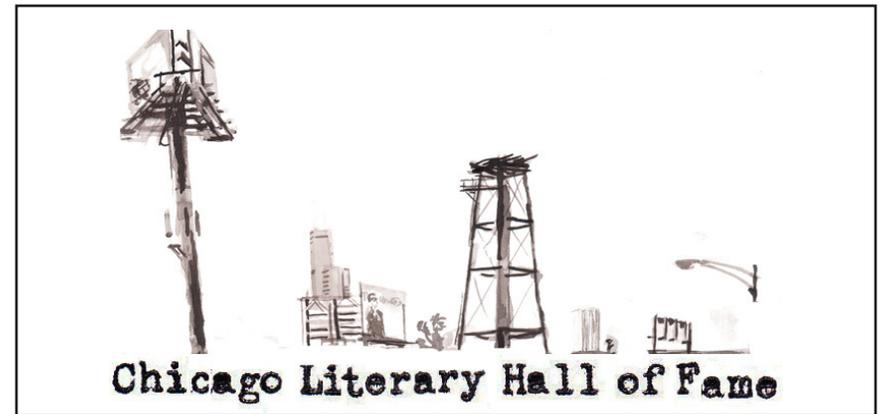
Nov. 9: Curbside Splendor Pop-up Book Fair, Thalia Hall, 1227 W. 18th St.

Dec. 6: 2014 Chicago Book Expo. Columbia College, 1104 S. Wabash Ave.

Dec. 6: Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's 5th Annual Induction Ceremony. Roosevelt University's Ganz Hall, 430 S. Michigan Ave., 7-9 p.m.

Jan. 24: Chicago Writers Association's 4th Annual Book of the Year Awards, The Book Cellar, 4736 N. Lincoln Ave., 7 p.m.

Feb. 6-8: Love Is Murder, Mystery Writer & Readers Conference, Inter-Continental Chicago O'Hare Hotel, 5300 N. River Road, Rosemont ✍️



TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

7 p.m.: Doors and Bar Open

7:30: Opening Remarks: Dan Mihalopoulos (Emcee)

Reading: Robin Metz

Greek Streets (video presentation):

Marco Benassi and Tim Clue

The Island of Crete: John Manos

Reading: Patrizia Acerra

Old Friends: Bill Brashler

Reading: Liz Carlin Metz

Family: John Petrakis

Presentation: Judge Charles Kocoras

Acceptance: Harry Mark Petrakis

8:15 p.m.: Reception

WHAT IS THE FULLER AWARD?

“The Fuller” is awarded by the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame to a Chicago author who has made an outstanding lifetime contribution to literature.

The Fuller Legacy: A Quick Look at a Literary Pioneer

The award was inspired by the literary contribution of Henry Blake Fuller, one of Chicago’s earliest novelists and author of *The Cliff-Dwellers* and *With the Procession*. Both novels use the rapidly developing city of Chicago as their setting and are considered by many to be the earliest examples of American realism.



Theodore Dreiser called *With the Procession* the first piece of American realism that he had encountered and considered it the best of the school, even during the days of his own prominence.

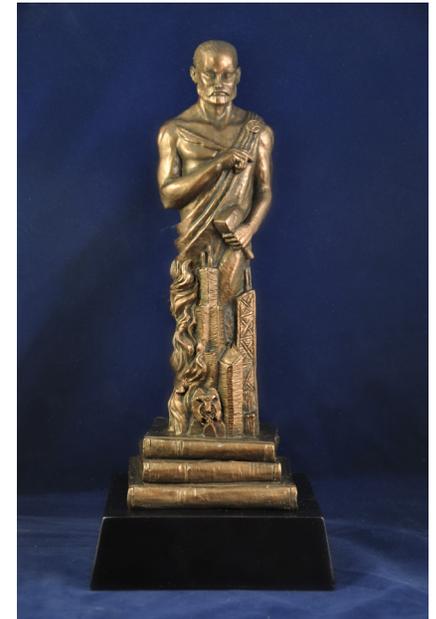
There are additional layers of meaning to the word “fuller.”

A fuller is also a tool used to form metal when it’s hot, an important part of building and a nice metaphor for Chicago, home to the “First Chicago School” of architecture that rose up from the ashes of the Chicago Fire of 1871. Between 1872 and 1879, more than ten thousand construction permits were

issued. Chicago emerged as a resilient city that took risks and made bold decisions—using iron and steel to frame its buildings, giving rise to the world’s first skyscraper. The fuller was one such tool that made it happen, a symbol of possibility and perseverance.

Inspired by the sleek lines and art deco style of Chicago sculptor John Bradley Storrs, whose sculpture Ceres is on top of the Board of Trade building, the award statue for the Fuller was based on Hephaestus, the Greek god of the blacksmith’s fire and patron of all craftsmen. According to legend, Hephaestus was the only god who worked, and he was honored for having taught mankind that work is

noble and one should excel at their craft. The patron of artists and craftsmen, he seemed a fitting symbol to capture the spirit of excellence embodied by the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame’s Fuller Award. ✍️



Ron Swanson made the original statue in clay for the first Fuller Award ceremony in 2012. The sculpture Harry Mark Petrakis will receive tonight is a polyurethane cast copy with a faux bronze finish on a wood base. Ron began as an artist back at Larkin High School, in Elgin, where he was honored as a top artist in the graduating class of 1991. He has studied sculpture, photography, and industrial design. In his working career, Ron has created large fiberglass sculptures, projects for a variety of toy

companies, public art, digital sculptures and 3D printing. He also started his own company, R.E.Sculpture, Inc., doing sculpture work for Tomy, Wilton, Hasbro and other companies.

FRIENDS

By Donald G. Evans

The Greek word “parea” means a group of friends who gather together to enjoy one another’s company. Lifelong companions, the members of a parea do not necessarily meet regularly, but share a spiritual bond. Author Harry Mark Petrakis has known five or six such groups in his life. These eclectic groups—pharmacists and teachers and editors and doctors and lawyers—shared birthdays, holidays and Christenings together. They nurtured and cherished their friendships.

“Friendship has been so important,” Harry says. “One writer once said, ‘life without a friend is death without a witness.’ I treasure my friendships.”

John Blades, the former *Chicago Tribune* book editor, met Harry in the mid-1960s through Jack McPhaul, a veteran Chicago crime reporter and historian. Along with McPhaul, Blades became part of a parea that included authors Bill Brashler and Larry Heinemann, photographer Steve Deutch, and playwright/poet Bill Lederer, among many others. The friends would get together on Halsted Street— at Diana’s Grocery or the Parthenon—and later at Harry’s house at the Indiana Dunes. Kids and friends of kids would be welcome. A feast would be set out around a big table filled with people, and Harry would mesmerize his audience with readings from his latest work.



Musci beatem Ostius, quis videseq uuntorest, sustibeate lab inveniaspid ea dolo id et odis endandia ist, ut facius as vellaborae dolor alignis

“If Harry knows you, he’s your friend,” says John.

But as Harry one by one recalls these friends, he realizes they are dead, disabled, sheltered in nursing homes, scattered about the globe, or simply lost to the ethers of old age.

Harry is 91 and has outlived a lot.

“These pareas are gone,” he says.

Taken together, the characters in Harry’s 25 books, written over the past six decades, form a kind of literary parea. These gamblers and gangsters, priests and peasants, cabbies and cooks, they



appear and reappear, in his memoirs, short

stories and novels, their overlapping stories blossoming with each telling. They are generations upon generations of the lucky and the cursed.

Kurt Vonnegut once blurbed, “I’ve often thought what a wonderful basketball team could be formed from Petrakis characters. Everyone of them is at least fourteen feet tall.”

Harry started writing in the late 1940s, and it took him nearly a decade before he experienced any publishing success. In the beginning, Harry wrote about cowboys, prostitutes, farmers—all manner of characters of which he knew little or nothing. He turned to Greek characters modeled on the people he knew from his father’s parish--St. Constantine and Helen, then at 61st and Michigan. It was then that his authorial voice started to sing.

From that point on, Harry committed to telling, in a variety of ways and forms, a version of the truth. Or at least exploding a literary version of the truth. He suffered through tuberculosis as a child, gambling addiction as a young married man, suicidal depression in his middle years. His characters, much like himself, possess a kind self-awareness and honesty that translates into his literature.

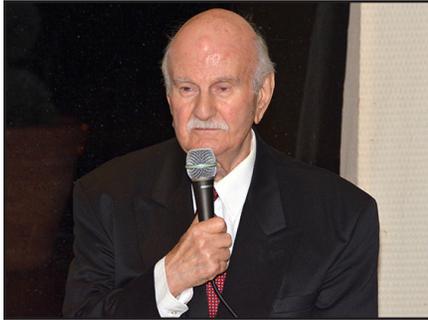
It’s all there, and more, in Harry’s oeuvre, up to and including his completed memoir, *Song of My Life*, which will be published later this year.

The tragic flaw is a staple of Greek mythology, and Harry certainly draws upon those stories. But Harry’s characters are mostly flawed; their strengths are hidden beneath all those dents and dings. These are characters who hope not just for salvation but an improbable largeness.

Matsoukas, of *Dream of Kings* and *Ghost of the Sun*, cheats on his wife, cheats at poker, wastes his precious money gambling, pursues dead-end business ventures, and wiles away his time while his family

struggles. But his love for Stavros, his dying son, so permeates his being that we see Matsoukas not as a villain but a soulful man who has been derailed by circumstance, romanticism and reckless dreaming. He wants to cure Stavros and though he won't, can't, that big dream shows a loyalty, fierceness and love greater than all his flaws put together.

Nick is a degenerate gambler, at times exercising virtuoso skill and



Ignatesenis et voluptatem esequias quae vidipsapeEhenet, quatempor atio. Ri dus pari omni repudipis aut pa doloreperio et

discipline and at other times stubbornly playing on until he busts out. He risks not only his own livelihood and safety, but those of his loved ones. even forsaking his fiancé for another run at the tables. But Nick is generous and loyal to a fault, and abides by a code that puts family and friends on a pedestal. He shows gratitude and respect in a world devoid of both.

Mike hovers over a dying breed of icemen in *The Twilight of the Ice*, so prideful and passionate that he literally works himself to death. He is hard on himself and hard on others, but through it all we see Mike as a community builder. He silently accepts responsibility for his apartment building's upkeep, his work place, his neighborhood. More so, he acts upon his instincts to make a better slice of the world, putting aside prejudices--against prostitutes, Turks, the younger generation—for the common good. He ultimately sees people for whom, not what, they are, and dismisses his own heroic accomplishments as nothing. Mike's humility is inspiring, but it also amplifies the idea that the littlest of the little people can make a profound impact.

And on and on.

Harry has put a lot of distance between himself and the persistent rejection of his early writing years. His books have been on the bestseller list, made into Hollywood films, been adorned with prestigious prizes, and generally garnered respect and praise befitting the literary elite. He's taught in the ivory towers of places like San Francisco State University, befriended famous authors like Gwendolyn Brooks, and received flattering reviews from several Nobel Prize winners, including Elie Wiesel and Isaac Bashevis Singer.

But in the end, it is the characters, this literary pareia, that will outlast everything. The short, fat grocer, Akragas. The tart-tongued

Barboonis. The Turkish gorilla, Youssof. The old dealer, Cicero. The butcher, Dan Ryan. The strong, beautiful Caliope. The defiant Marina. The beaten-down lunchroom owner, Javros. The new husband, Sopocles. The legendary gambler, Nestor. The widow, Katerina. The steel-working descendent of Pericles, Angelo. The peace-loving priest, Father Markos. The legendary old Suli warrior, Boukouvalas. The tough, vengeful wife, Nitsa.

"I've been fortunate, that from the shambles of my beginnings I've been able to tell my stories," says Harry. "I'm a writer, doing the best that I can." ✍️

OUR HOST: THE NATIONAL HELLENIC MUSEUM



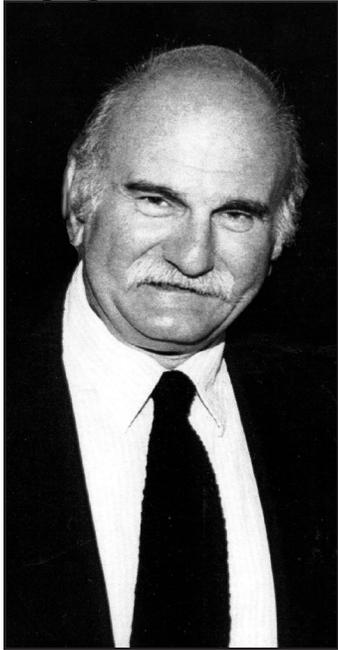
The National Hellenic Museum is the first and only major museum in the country dedicated to the Greek journey, from ancient times to the modern Greek American experience. Chicago has one of the world's largest Greek populations. But Greek or not, this journey touches everyone. Greek history and culture is at the very foundation of western civilization, and continues to influence our lives to this day. Our government, language, architecture and theater all have their roots in ancient Greece.

Located in a new 40,000-square-foot space that is both contemporary and timeless, the Museum connects all generations—past, present and future—to the rich heritage of Greek history, culture, art and the Greek American experience. Since 1983, the National Hellenic Museum, previously known as the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center, has been striving towards this mission. ✍️



A WRITER: PLAIN AND SIMPLE

For Greek families in Chicago, Harry Mark Petrakis is required reading. He speaks to the particular experiences of those men and women trading their lives in Greece for new opportunities in America, while simultaneously trying to hold on to their ethnic identities. He speaks to the mothers laboring to raise broods while contributing to the family businesses; he speaks to fathers worried not just about supporting their nuclear families but families back home; he speaks to children fully assimilated in the American language and customs but wanting still to belong to that world of



their parents. Harry's stories are guidebooks, cautionary tales, and nostalgia rolled into one.

"To be lost in a babble of voices is to be mute," Chicago author Stuart Dybek wrote recently in praise of Harry's newest book. "Chicago writers--African-American, Asian, Hispanic, Irish, Jewish, Polish--have set themselves to transforming a turbulent city's port of entry babble into the mnemonic clarity of beauty of story and song. That is what Harry Mark Petrakis has done for the Greek community over a lifetime of empathetically powerful novels. That vision is the gift to American that he continues to give us all."

Perhaps because Harry's books are so powerful and meaningful to this segment of the population, critics from

time to time label him a "Greek author." That label tends to suggest there are certain prerequisites to appreciating Harry's works, like how overweight people—and only overweight people--get matched to diet books.

"I resist the appellation ethnic writer," says Harry. "Bellow was Jewish, Faulkner Southern, but that is just a beginning. I grew up in that kind of cloistered Greek community. That was what I knew. But at a certain point you cross a threshold, your characters are not Polish or Jewish or Greek, they're human. You use that which is identifiable to you, and then you move on."

Dan Mihalopoulos, a star investigative reporter for the Chicago Sun-

Times and tonight's emcee, began reading Harry as a teen. "I guess the thing that impressed me the most was that someone had written, in English, about our unique little sub-culture," he says. "It struck me that he really told a good story, and he infused his tales with a sense of the Greek-American love for not only food, faith and family but also politics and other human intrigue. He didn't sanitize this world, either, by the way. His work resonated with me because I saw myself as both fully an American of Chicago and fully immersed in my ancestral culture."

Dan pinpoints the reasons Harry is so popular among Greek immigrants, and the children of Greek immigrants. It is their life, after all, that is being dramatized. But in the same sweep of the pen, Harry transcends the Greek, the Chicago, and explores universal ideas like acceptance, love, freedom, hope, ambition, family, friends, and on and on.

When Mike, the Greek iceman, feuds with his Turk colleague, Suleiman, in *The Twilight of the Ice*, the tension is not specific to either nationality. Mike, through Harry's treatment, finds his way to something like open-mindedness. He puts away ancient grudges and gives the Turk the benefit of being a singular human being. Likewise, in *The Hour of the Bell*, an historical novel that revolves around the Greek revolution for independence from Turk rule, themes such as the violent nature of man take precedence over the more particular overarching theme.

"When I read his work for the first time, among the first things I thought was, that he had described Greek Americans so accurately," says Maria Karamitsos, associate editor of *The Greek Star* and also a co-founder of the Greek Media Club. "But also, that these characters were so human. The characters could have been immigrants from anywhere else in the world. His characters were identifiable and relatable. What also struck me was the way he told the story. I was captivated. I couldn't wait to read another Petrakis story. I wanted to read all of them."

But when Harry gets tagged an ethnic writer, it's not just that his characters are Greek, or that they identify so closely with their ethnicity. Harry's characters and plots sometimes closely follow mythological story lines. His characters are often named after Greek Gods and Goddesses. Artifacts, such as the alabaster model of the headless and armless Aphrodite of Cyrene, suggest Greek mythological heroes.

"His technique of insinuating Greek myths into the lives of working class Greek immigrants might have looked like it was closing in on

magic realism had some of those books been published 20 years later,” says Roosevelt University Professor of Humanities Gary Wolfe. “Remember, it was about the same time Updike was doing something similar in *The Centaur*, but with no interest whatsoever in actual Greek culture.”

Praise for Harry’s work has come from all quarters, praise mostly blind to everything but the quality of the craftsmanship. John Cheever and Isaac Bashevis Singer ranked Harry among the world’s greatest writers, Greek or not. Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel said, “In his tales, violence is measured by brotherhood, passionate hate by passionate love. And in the end it is man who, despite his weaknesses and his blindness, has the right to victory.”

Everybody is right. Harry is surely one of the best Greek-American writers of his generation. He is one of Chicago’s all-time best writers. And, simply, he is near the top of our greatest literary writers, period.

“Few writers in the history of Chicago have worked more diligently and passionately at their craft than Harry Mark Petrakis,” says Chicago Tribune journalist and WGN radio personality Rick Kogan. “He persevered through a lot of struggles to become one of the most articulate and thoughtful voices in the history of literature.” 

A LIVING WAGE

By Donald G. Evans

“**T**he one thing worse than a poor young writer is a poor old writer,” says Harry.

For Harry Mark Petrakis, like many serious writers, his literary labor had to be funded. He has worked long hours these past six decades inventing, plotting, drafting, revising, tweaking and editing. Stories. Novels. Essays. Memoirs. Nonfiction books. Alone in that writing room, Harry entered all manner of invented worlds, but outside the real world demanded payment for rent, utilities, clothes, diapers, baby formula. There were car payments, gas money, pocket money. The mail--all those notices and reminders--did not stop to accommodate his art.

Of course, we know the end to this story, and it is a story that mostly gets told about the successful authors. Harry has gone on to publish 25 books, as well as essays and stories in the most prestigious magazines, newspapers and literary journals. He has twice been nominated for the National Book Award in fiction; he won the O. Henry

Award; was given the Chicago Public Library’s Carl Sandburg Award, as well as awards from the Friends of American Writers, Friends of Literature, and the Society of Midland Authors. He has adapted his stories and novels for film and television. So it is easy to say, “Aha, told you so!” or “It was all worth it.”

But success was never guaranteed, even for a writer of Harry’s immense talent.

“The field is littered with these wonderful writers whose work is not known,” says Harry, using his now-deceased friends William Stevens and Gladys Schmitt as examples. “[William] was a magnificent writer, but there was no entry of any kind for him. [Gladys] wrote monumental books. Whenever I want to feel humbled I read a few pages of her work.”

Harry dropped out of Englewood High School as a sophomore, and with no education or marketable skills took what employment availed itself.

What availed itself were grinding, unattractive positions he found difficult to keep.

Harry hauled crates onto and off of a beer truck; ran an industrial lunchroom; poured sodas and delivered prescriptions at a drug store

fountain; sold package liquor; unloaded packages from the railway car at the 12th Street station.

“I pressed cloths for a cleaner--an onerous profession,” says Harry. “Steam releases this fuselage of odors--shit and piss on the pants. I remember once pulling a soiled pair of pants on the floor, and I told Max, ‘I quit!’ Max said, ‘I wish I worked for somebody else so I could quit too.’ ”

He was a dispatcher at the icing company on 15th and Halsted called Team Track, and answered complaint letters at Simoniz Wax company that went something like, “I’m very sorry your experience with our wax was not satisfactory. “

“Simoniz Wax company fired me on a Friday afternoon,” Harry says. “Diana cried, and my mother in law slapped her head, as if I and Jesus were both being crucified.”

At U.S. Steel, Harry wrote production sheets and picked up overtime in the bone yard. He sold real estate out of Baird & Warner’s Hyde Park and South Shore offices. He swept up after the degenerate gamblers in betting parlors, like the shanty near the 12th Street railroad station that had a sign warning, “Don’t piss on the walls.” You name it—fleeting positions imbued with drudgery and despair. “All the jobs that look so attractive on the book jacket are hell when you’re going through them,” he says. “The truth is, I had no other access to employment, had no training. I couldn’t get a white-collar job. These were the jobs I was forced into. Diana’s mother thought it was a terrible idea to marry somebody at 21 with no prospects.”

Finally, in late 1956, The Atlantic accepted Pericles on 31st Street, and Harry revived the joy he’d experienced as a boy reading to his Koraes Elementary School classmates and then as a fledgling writer fooling Columbia College peers into believing his fiction had to be based on reality. When he received the acceptance note, Harry practically guffawed, part happiness and part relief, for himself, his wife Diana and his three sons. He was 33 years old and had a sense that he had made it, though of course it wasn’t and never would be that simple.

“That was after ten years of writing and rejection slips,” he says.

The Atlantic paid Harry \$400 for that story, and then added a bonus of \$700 as recognition for Pericles being deemed the best of the magazines “firsts.”

Soon, Harry made the decision to be a freelance writer, despite the warnings from agents, publishers, friends—everybody, basically—

saying, “Don’t do it!”

“That was a reckless undertaking,” Harry admits.

He made about \$1,600 that first year as a professional writer; around \$2,200 the next.

Magazine money was better back in Harry’s early publishing years, but still hardly a fortune relative to the time it took to finish top-quality work. Playboy once paid him \$2,500 for a story, the most he had made until Land’s End gave him five grand each to place three of his stories in their catalogue.

“We call the remodeling of our kitchen, the Land’s End Kitchen,” Harry says.

With publishing success, Harry’s reputation as a serious literary figure grew. That increased his ability to make money in academia, and on the lecture circuit.

“I had been an actor in school,” Harry says. “They would put on these tragedies in Greek. I played the parts of Agamemnon, Oedipus, Creon. It was real training for public speaking later on; it gave me both Thespian training and some confidence.”

By his last count, Harry had been to 73 writers conferences, including five times at the University of Rochester, five times at Indiana University and five times at the University of Wisconsin. Harry was Columbia College’s very first writer-in-residence. He has held appointments at Ohio University as McGuffy Visiting Lecturer and at San Francisco State University as Kazantzakis Professor in Modern Greek Studies.

“We wouldn’t have been able to live on the writing alone,” Harry says. “The reading and lecturing sustained us. I developed a reservoir of lectures, and really lived on those.”

Indeed, hardly any writers could. Can. There are bevvies of grim statistics available, most in agreement that only the top couple percentage of all writers earn enough to subsist. Writers have to do something else—something that comes with a check.

“It’s always a struggle,” Harry says. “It’s a very tenuous profession, a profession where you love what you do and can only see yourself doing it—so damn the consequences.”

In the late 1970s, the Chicago Public Library hired Harry to set up writing workshops at the Edgewater branch. The program was so successful, Harry wound up visiting 27 libraries in two years. That success led to a Board of Education gig, in which Harry was its

writer-in-residence. He would drive each day to grade, middle and high schools, visiting 63 schools before his two-year tenure ended. "It was a great experience," says Harry. "I went all over the city, in neighborhoods I didn't even know existed, like Jenner School, under Cabrini Green."

All this time, Harry was churning out new books, each with the promise of additional income, perhaps even financial stability. With his fifth book, *Dream of Kings*, Harry hit it big. The novel stayed on the New York Times bestseller list three months; became a Book Club selection; was translated into a dozen languages; and the rights were eventually sold to National General to make a feature-length film. Harry was hired to write the script.

"Today it would be much bigger," Harry said. "Then, it was good for a few years then back to the grind again. There was a little money coming over period of a few years from the film, but that was about it."

That success led to a three-book deal from Doubleday, and he fulfilled the contract with *Nick the Greek*, *Hour of the Bell* and *Vengeance*.

"I never earned the advances I got from Doubleday," says Harry. "They never got their money back. The books made some money, but not enough."

In the early 60s, before *Dream of Kings*, Harry had written a biography of Paul Galvin, who had founded Motorola. Herman Kogan had recommended his friend Harry, who worked two years, knocking down good commission checks, to finish that book. Paul Galvin's son, Bob Galvin, liked the book immensely, and around 1988 commissioned Harry to write the company's corporate history. That was followed by work on a biography of Henry Crown.

"I spent most of the 90s on commission work," says Harry. "It took me away from writing my own books. But these books allowed us for the first time to build a modest estate, travel around the world. I'm grateful. I don't regret it."

When Harry talks about his life, he almost always uses "us" or "we" rather than I. He is extremely grateful to his family-- wife, Diana, three sons (Mark, John and Dean) and now four grandchildren. He has written extensively about their support, always sensitive to the hardships they endured.

There is no doubt that Harry's lifetime of writing has also been a lifetime of other work. The saving grace for a writer is that those

experiences are fodder for literature, and Harry's oeuvre is absolutely sparkling with stories born in tedium, agony and sacrifice.

PROGRAM

We'll bring folks from our club. Bring some of our youth clubs to come. College age kids. As well as sort of our main chapter.

Did get you musicians. They're not professional musicians. Two, stringed instrument. Talk to them. Older.

Kids to dress up. see if I can get some by today. Maybe two to four kids. College or younger.

Dan: I think I first became aware of Harry when he came to speak at my Greek Orthodox parish in the suburbs. I may have been too small to have listened at that time. But my parents -- both of whom emigrated from Greece -- and other immigrants at the church were clearly impressed that there was "a Greek writer" among us. (My mom is from Achladokambos, a small village in the Peloponesus region. She came to Chicago when she was 12, in 1960. My dad came here from Tripoli in 1970, aged 24, and met my mother two weeks later.)

Somehow, I found Harry's books as a a teen. I knew Greektown, of course, but only as a restaurant row. I was fascinated by his description of Greektown when it was truly a neighborhood, in the era when you could walk to a church or an ethnic grocery store or coffeehouse. It was a world that was both familiar to me and also something of a lost world, since most of us Greeks lived in the suburbs by that point.

I guess the thing that impressed me the most was that someone had written, in English, about our unique little sub-culture. It struck me that he really told a good story, and he infused his tales with a sense of the Greek-American love for not only food, faith and family but also politics and other human intrigue. He didn't sanitize this world, either, by the way. His work resonated with me because I saw myself as both fully an American of Chicago and fully immersed in my ancestral culture. 

SONG OF MY LIFE A MEMOIR

Nine decades of life. Six decades writing top-shelf literature. Harry's third memoir, *Song of My Life*, will be, from all accounts, as revealing and compelling as any of his other 24 books to date. Harry writes vividly, frankly, and critically on topics ranging from the near-fatal childhood illness that compelled him toward a literary life, to his youthful gambling addiction, to the enormous lie of his military draft, to a midlife suicidal depression. He writes lovingly about his parents and five siblings, with nostalgia as he describes the Greek neighborhoods and cramped Chicago apartments of his childhood, and with deep affection for his wife and sons as he recalls with candor, comedy, and charity a writer's long, fully-lived life.

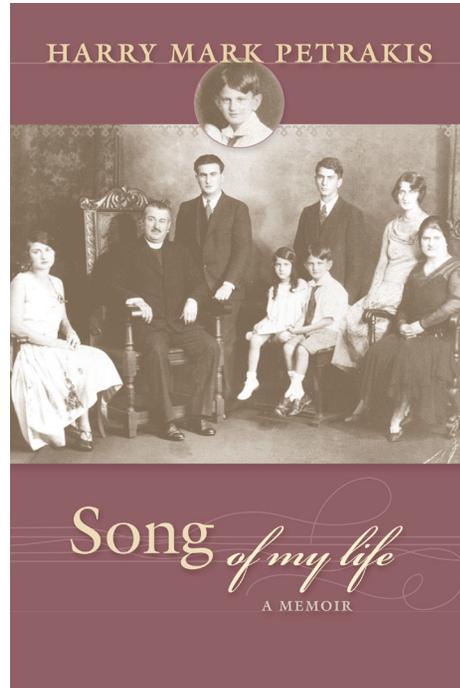
Some of this ground has been covered in *Reflections: Journal of a Novel*, *Stelmark* and *Tales of the Heart*. But even the old territory is approached from a fresh perspective, that of a man contemplating his life and its approaching end.

"I went back over areas I had written about before, parents, siblings, friendships, but went at them with an altered perspective.," says Harry. "When I wrote them—it might have been 30, 40 years ago. I wrote them now from the perspective of turning 90."

There is plenty of fresh material, as well, such as insight into his experiences in Hollywood, where Harry had gone to write the screenplay of his best-selling novel *A Dream of Kings*.

"The style is vintage Petrakis: storytelling with a fine blend of passion, humor, and self-reflection," blurbs Dan Georgakas, director of the Greek American Studies Project, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, City University of New York.

The book is due out in November of this year. ✍️



THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

- *Lion at My Heart* (1959). Boston: Little, Brown.
- *The Odyssey of Kostas Volakis* (1963). New York: David McKay.
- *Pericles on 31st Street* (1965). Chicago: Quadrangle Books.
- *The Founder's Touch: the life of Paul Galvin of Motorola* (1965). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- *A Dream of Kings* (1966). New York: David McKay.
- *The Waves of Night, and other stories* (1969). New York: David McKay Company.
- *Stelmark: A Family Recollection* (1970). New York: David McKay.
- *In the Land of Morning* (1973). New York: David McKay.
- *The Hour of the Bell: a novel of the Greek War of Independence against the Turks* (1976). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- *A Petrakis Reader* (1978). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- *Nick the Greek* (1979). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- *Days of Vengeance* (1983). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- *Collected Stories* (1987). Chicago: Lake View Press.
- *Ghost of the Sun* (1990). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- *Henry Crown: the life and times of the Colonel* (1998). Co-authored with David B. Weber. Chicago: Henry Crown & Company.
- *Tales of the Heart: Dreams and Memories of a Lifetime* (1999). Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.
- *Twilight of the Ice* (2003). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- *Reach Out: The Story of Motorola and Its People* (2003). Kingsport, TN: Quebecor World/Kingsport.
- *The Orchards of Ithaca* (2004). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- *The Shepherds of Shadows* (2008), sequel to *The Hour of the Bell*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- *Legends of Glory and other stories* (2007). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- *Cavafy's Stone and other village tales* (2010). Chicago: Wicker Park Press.
- *Reflections: A Writer's Life, A Writer's Work* (c1970, c1983). Chicago: Lake View Press. Contains *Stelmark* and *Journal of a Novel*.
- *Journal of a Novel* (2012). Chesterton, IN: Dunelnd Books. Previously published in *Reflections*.
- *Song of My Life* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014). ✍️

PARTICIPANTS



Dan (Dionysios) Mihalopoulos has been a staff reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times since March 2012, focusing on investigative projects and writing a weekly column for the Sun-Times' Early and Often political portal. Born in Chicago to parents from Tripoli and Achladokambos, he graduated from the Missouri School of Journalism in 1996 and began his journalism career at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Dan's reporting assignments have included the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, the 2004 Athens Olympics and covering the City Hall beat for the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago News Cooperative (Chicago section of the New York Times). This year, his Sun-Times articles about politically connected charter schools won the national Education Writers Association's top prize for investigative reporting and the Chicago Headline Club's Watchdog Award for Excellence in Public Interest Reporting.



Liz Carlin Metz has worked in professional theatre as an actress, director, and voice/dialect coach. She is the co-founding artistic director of Vitalist Theatre and professor of theatre at Knox College. She serves as the director of the Roger Williams University London program every three years, and with her husband, Robin Metz, founded the Knox travel course, London Arts Alive. Also at Knox, Liz teaches courses in

acting, directing and dramatic literature., and directs productions for the main-stage. She variously chairs the Department of Theatre and is the Smith V. Brand Distinguished Professor of Theatre.



Marco Benassi has been a full-time faculty member at College of DuPage for more than 25 years. He's written and produced three professional plays in Chicago with Tim Clue, including Greek Streets, adapted from the stories of Harry Mark Petrakis. He's published numerous arts, entertainment and feature stories for the Chicago Tribune. He was inducted into the National Forensic Association's Hall of Fame for

outstanding achievement as a national championship college speaker and speech and drama coach.



Tim Clue is a local writer and performer who performs comedy and is often hired to speak for companies and educators.



Born on Crete, **John G. Manos** immigrated to the United States in 1967 and grew up in Chicago. He received a degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1984 and established himself not only as a prominent architect but a successful banker, currently president of Bank Financial, Illinois' largest thrift. He's also a founder of a grocery chain specializing in Cretan-Greek products. Proud of his Hellenic roots,

Manos has held leadership roles in many local, regional, and national Greek-American organizations,. most recently as president of Pancretan Association of America – one of the largest non-profit Greek-American organizations in the world. Among his many civic honors, he was recognized by Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Chicago City Council with an Outstanding Citizen Award in 2007.



Robin Metz received the Rainer Maria Rilke International Poetry Prize for his book Unbidden Angel, as well as a citation for excellence from U.S. President William Jefferson Clinton. He has also won the Literal Latté International Poetry Prize, the Marshall Frankel American Fiction Prize, and 16 additional international awards, as well as awards and fellowships from the Illinois Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

He is co-founder of Chicago's acclaimed Vitalist Theatre Company and Director of Creative Writing, Knox College.

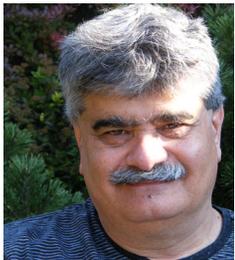


Patrizia Lombardi Acerra is a Chicago-based stage director, deviser, and producer. She is the founding artistic director of Premiere Theatre and Performance, and the Executive Director of the International Voices Project. In 2000–2001, she resided in Rome, Italy, working with The English Theatre of Rome, and created an ensemble of actors for the then newly formed International

Theatre of Chicago. From 2000 to 2002, she resided in Rome, working with The English Theatre of Rome, where she formed The International Theatre of Chicago (now Premiere Theatre and Performance). Ms. Acerra holds Master's degrees in theology and directing. Favorite projects include *Iphigenia In Kingman*, *Immaginalo!* with the English Theatre of Rome, *Right!* (adapted from Pirandello's *Così è (se vi pare!)*), and the original performance pieces *Ocean Sea/ Oceano Mare*, *Einstein's Dreams*, and *The Quiltmaker's Gift* (in collaboration with Dawn Arnold and The Moving Dock Theatre). Locally, she has directed for and collaborated with Silk Road Theatre Project, Clock Productions, Moving Dock Theatre Company, Rasaka Theatre, and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. Ms. Aceera is an advisor and visiting faculty with DePaul University and adcotural candidate at Salve Regina University.

Bill Brashler, a freelance journalist, novelist and baseball historian, has published more than a dozen books, dating back to the early 1970s. His critically acclaimed book, *The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings*, was adapted for a movie starring Richard Pryor and James Earl Jones. Other books include the novel *City Dogs* and the biography *The Don; The Life and Death of Sam Giancana*. He has written for

magazines such as *Esquire*, *Newsweek* and *Playboy*, and been a contributing editor/columnist to the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* and *Chicago Magazine*.



John Petrakis, one of three sons of Harry, teaches screenwriting at the School of the Art Institute and at the University of Chicago. He was a film critic for 25 years, including a lengthy stint at the *Chicago Tribune*. He has collaborated with his father, Harry, on a number of film projects over the years, including an adaptation of his short story "Song of Songs," which aired on Showtime, directed by Peter Bogdanovich. They have currently started working together on an original western.



Judge Charles Kocoras is a United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, where he served as Chief Judge from 2001-2006. Among his many honors in an illustrious law career are: the Department of Justice's Special Commendation Award for Outstanding Service;

the Department of Justice's Director's Award for Superior Performance as an Assistant State's Attorney; John Marshall Law School's Award of Excellence; and the Women's Bar Association of Illinois' Mary Heftel Hooton Award. He received honorary doctorate degrees from DePaul University, as well as John Marshall, where he has taught trial advocacy for nearly 40 years.

Dimitris Hatzis plays the Cretan laouto and is from the village of Kissamos near Chania, Crete. **Frank Savakis** plays the Cretan lyra and is from the village of Galia near Iraklion, Crete. Their love affair with Cretan music and their respective musical instruments started from a young age and still goes strong to this very day. Their passion for Cretan music has lead them to play at many events including the 1976 United States Bicentennial Celebrations in Washington, D.C. ✍️

PETRAKIS TOWN

By Donald G. Evans

“He was grateful when they left the district of the damned and drove into a street of small shops and stores. With relief he noticed they bore Greek names. A narrow office housed the Hellenic Greek Press and beside the building the Zephyr Coffee Company. A curtained window with lettering on the glass designated the Icarian Steam Baths and a striped barber pole stood before Spiro’s Barbershop. There was the Athens Wholesale Grocery, whose double windows held casks of olive oil, loaves of round bread, and bottles of wine. The Macedonian Apothecary had a pyramid of medicine bottles in the window and the Drollas Funeral Parlor had its windows decorated with palm plants and a wreath of flowers.”

—From Nick The Greek

The first Greek immigrants came to Chicago in the 1840s, just three years after it gained status as a city. Those first Greek immigrants were traders, and many returned to their native Greece telling of the infinite possibilities in the new city. But it wasn’t until after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 that the city became the Greek capital of America. Greeks came to claim construction jobs, becoming part of the global crew working furiously to rebuild the city. Others opened restaurants or became merchants on Lake Street, when Lake Street was Chicago’s main commercial drag. Enough of those Greek immigrants succeeded, and news of their triumphs rippled across the Atlantic. They came from Sparta. They came from Laconia. They came from Arcadia. They were men dodging Turkish rule and military service. They were men eager to improve impoverished lives. They were men sealing tight envelopes stuffed with cash, heading the other way over the big pond. They were men dreaming of the time when they’d move back to their beloved homeland. And eventually, more than a decade after the fire, they were women, sailing over to make their families whole.

Greek immigrants naturally congregated near the thriving wholesale markets on Fulton and South Water Streets, but eventually they made their ways south and a bit west. Greeks attracted other Greeks; like immigrant groups before them they found comfort and support in a community of their own people, speaking their own language. By the turn of the 20th century, the intersection of Harrison, Halsted and Blue

Island Streets was known as the Greek Delta. Greeks established businesses and restaurants, built churches and schools, formed fraternal organizations and mutual benefit societies, even started their own newspaper. When the dust of the Great Depression had settled, there were 30,000 Greeks in Chicago, a number that would swell to a half million.

The area became known locally as Greektown, and kept that name even after the University of Illinois-Chicago, in the 1960s, shoved the neighborhood north and scattered its residents to different enclaves throughout the city and suburbs.

Greektown, like a lot of Chicago, has somewhat fluid boundaries, but in its current incarnation exists primarily on Halsted Street north of the Eisenhower Expressway for a few blocks. The storefronts and residences comprising the community have changed and changed again. Greeks have moved out; Poles and Koreans and Mexicans and Italians, among others, have moved in. There are lots of students, walking purposefully with backpacks strapped across their shoulders, jabbing I-phones en route to lectures on economics, literature, psychology and American history.

Greektown still thrives in its own way, but how much of it is a state of mind?

“The reality of what Greektown was was less important than what I construed it to be,” says Harry Mark Petrakis.

Chicago’s Greektown is the epicenter of Harry’s fictional universe. It is to him what Yoknapatawpha County was to William Faulkner, a little patch of land infinite in its possibilities for the exploration of the human condition.

“There was no tradition that ran beneath the city pavements,” Harry says. “So I took it and simply added to it as I wished.”

Harry did not grow up in Greektown. He never, in fact, lived there. As a central conceit in his stories, though, Greektown plays a convenient and dramatic part. We see, in Harry’s Greektown, a kind of fictional history of the place, grounded in a realistic landscape that metaphorically rises above street level. Harry captures a spirit, a character, that anchors the community, or rather links it to itself.

Harry’s characters live and die in Greektown. Nick the Greek descends upon Halsted Street in the post-World War I era; Matsoukas arrives post-World War II; Mike the iceman wanders the area in the 1950s; Matsoukas returns in 1974.

In creating a Greektown more extreme than it exists in reality, Harry

has conjured something closer to the truth than the truth, in much the same way Chicago thinks of itself as a blue-collar city even as accounting and investment banking and architecture and internet technology have become its foremost industries.

“Somehow, I found Harry’s books as a teen,” says Chicago Sun-Times investigative reporter Dan Mihalopoulos. “I knew Greektown, of course, but only as a restaurant row. I was fascinated by his description of Greektown when it was truly a neighborhood, in the era when you could walk to a church or an ethnic grocery store or coffeehouse. It was a world that was both familiar to me and also something of a lost world, since most of us Greeks lived in the suburbs by that point.”

In Harry’s Greektown, merchants give and take away credit. A man that cheats, and the women with whom he cheats, are known to all. Arguments and rivalries spill onto the streets. Extended family members pile on top of each other in simple apartments. There is a support network that celebrates success and confronts failure as a community. The residents’ peccadillos are in display, as though in neon.

Harry’s characters careen from familiar spot to familiar spot. They play poker in the back of the Minoan Music Shop; place horse bets at Falconis’ cigar store branches; roll dice at the No-worry Club. They slurp soup at the Athenian; nibble wrapped koulara at Anthoula’s bakery; sample sticky ouzo at the Olympia; pluck Calamata olives in Tegea grocery. They hole up in the Royal Arms on Jackson Boulevard and take up with prostitutes at the Olympia Club brothel.

Whenever we enter Greektown in a Petrakis story, we get that familiar feeling of being in a home away from home.

“He didn’t wait to see if they believed him or not but started down Halsted Street,” says the narrator of *Twilight of the Ice*. “In the stark dawn, the taverns were locked and dark. He passed a few homeless men sleeping in doorways beneath ragged coats or under layers of newspaper and cardboard.”

Back in the mid-1980s, Professor of Humanities Gary Wolfe and Roosevelt University were courting Harry to become their writer-in-residence. As a result, Gary and Harry shared several meals together. Gary writes that, “Every restaurant owner in the Loop, even of pubs like the Exchequer, was Greek and practically worshipped Harry, and Harry himself was fascinated at how classical Greek culture somehow got transformed into the world of these restaurant owners and the other working class folks he grew up with.”

Harry has been up and down Halsted Street over the years, and obviously has great affection for its restaurants. Ownership in the various establishments has changed hands or been passed down to the younger generations, but still everybody everywhere in Greektown knows Harry.

“Now, we don’t get in but once or twice a year,” says Harry, as he laments the burning down of one restaurant, and a corner grocery store, and the passing of old merchants. That nostalgia, too, can be found in Harry’s literary Greektown.

“He began a resolute search along Halsted Street for traces of his past,” says the narrator of *Ghost of the Sun*. “So many people and places he recalled couldn’t simply have vanished.”

Julia Jakubow helped research this article. 

“It is not possible to admire a man more than I admire Harry Mark Petrakis. That he is one of the finest writers, of that there is no doubt. But he is a man of great generosity, not only to his family, which is obvious to anybody who knows him, but to friends and everybody he meets. I have more respect for Harry than I could ever say.”

—Chris Tomaras, founder of Kronos Foods, a leader in Greek community, and one of Harry’s greatest friends

CONGRATULATIONS FROM HARRY'S FRIENDS

The following groups made significant contributions to the success of this evening's ceremony and party.

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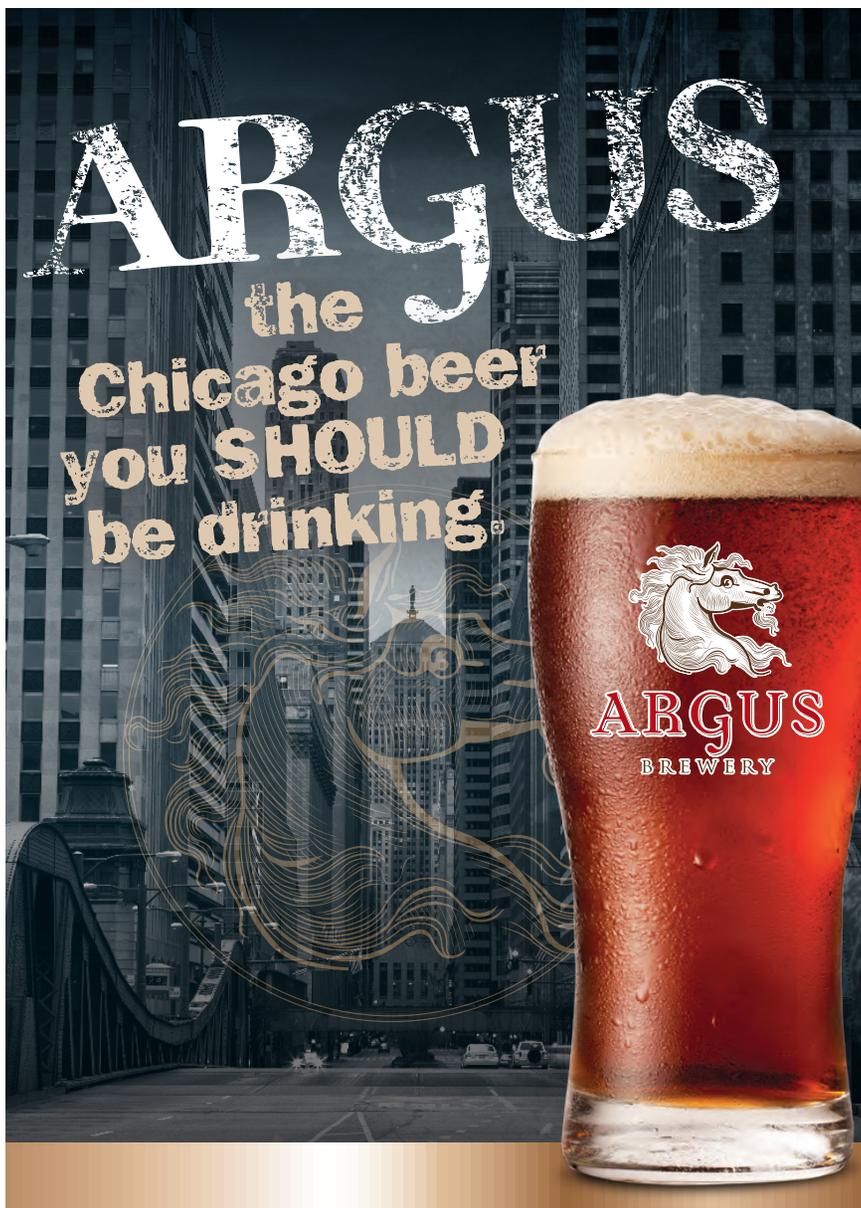
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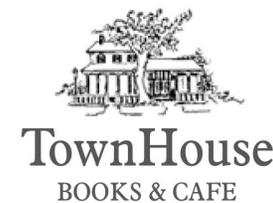
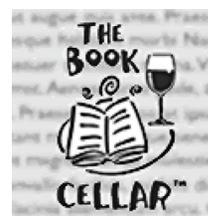


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Your works have touched the lives
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With deep admiration and respect,

Chris P. Tomaras
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