

CHICAGO LITERARY HALL of FAME
PRESENTS

RICK KOGAN
THE FULLER AWARD
FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

"The soul of a city is in the word."

CHOPIN THEATRE 1543 W DIVISION ST.
OCTOBER 18TH, 2022 7PM DOORS OPEN 6:30

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I've always taken each moment as a precious thing, certainly each day as a precious thing, because I wake up, and on that day, I am going to read something new, meet someone new, I'm going to listen to something new, I'm going to see something new. That, I think, is the adventure of life.

TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

Lela Headd Dyrkacz	Welcome from the Chopin Theatre
Randy Albers	About the Fuller Award
Brian Hieggelke	Your Master of Ceremonies
Nestor Gomez	<i>Motivate</i>
Jamie O'Reilly and Michael Miles	<i>Such Things Are Finely Done</i> (Song words and music by Michael P. Smith)
Tony Fitzpatrick	<i>Kogan</i>
Charles Osgood	Presenting the Fuller Award for lifetime achievement
Rick Kogan	Acceptance Speech
Chris Jones and Rick Kogan	In Conversation
Donald G. Evans	Thank You

...during any day I have had of these 70 years, something has happened that has enriched me, either to a huge extent or to a very minor extent, that has taught me about the joy, pain, and beauty and ugliness of life. You know, we all get—whatever anyone else thinks of it—we get only one shot at this, right? You know this as well as I do. You get one shot. And if you don't take advantage of it—fuck you.



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 first 12 Fuller Awards were presented to Gene Wolfe (2012), Harry Mark Petrakis (2014), Haki Madhubuti (2015), Rosellen Brown (2016), Angela Jackson (2018), Stuart Dybek (2018), Sara Paretsky (2019), Sterling Plumpp (2019), Sandra Cisneros (2021), Reginald Gibbons (2021), Luis Alberto Urrea (2021), and Ana Castillo (2022).

With the passing of Wolfe in 2019 and Petrakis in 2021, the CLHOF established a policy of elevating all Fuller Award winners to induction status, pending board approval. Thus, both Wolfe and Petrakis are now officially part of the CLHOF’s historical canon.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- *Yesterday's Chicago* with Herman Kogan (1976)
- *Dr. Night Life's Chicago* (1979)
- *Sabers & Suites: The Story of Chicago's Ambassador East* (1983)
- *Teamwork: The History of Wells Manufacturing Company* (1987)
- *Pharmacist to the Nation: The History of Walgreen Co.* with Herman Kogan (1989)
- *Brunswick: The Story of an American Company from 1845 to 1985* (1995)
- *Everybody Pays: Two Men, One Murder and the Price of Truth* with Maurice Possley (2001)
- *America's Mom: The Life, Lessons, and Legacy of Ann Landers* (2003)
- *A Chicago Tavern: a Goat, a Curse, and the American Dream* (2006)
- *Sidewalks: Portraits of Chicago* with Charles Osgood (2006)
- *Sidewalks II: Reflections on Chicago* with Charles Osgood (2009)
- *Lambs Farm: Where People Grow* (2011)

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- Chicago/Midwest Emmy: Single Public Affairs Program, "Media Creatures," with Bob Sirott and Richard Roeper (1999)
- Chicago's Best Reporter - *Newcity* (1999)
- Inducted into Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame (2003)
- Studs Terkel Award (2003)
- Distinguished Writer Award - Union League Club (2013)
- Fuller Award for lifetime achievement – Chicago Literary Hall of Fame (2022)

TONIGHT'S PARTICIPANTS



Randall Albers, Chicago Literary Hall of Fame board member, is Professor/Chair Emeritus of Fiction in Columbia College Chicago's English and Creative Writing Department. He founded the long-running Story Week Festival of Writers. Albers is a Story Workshop® Master Teacher, and has been a visiting professor at Bath Spa University and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Albers' fiction and nonfiction have appeared in numerous publications including *Prairie Schooner*, *Chicago Review*, *TriQuarterly*, and *Writers Digest*. Two chapters from his novel-in-progress, *All the World Before Them*, have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.



Lela Headd Dyrkacz is a native Chicagoan who's still in love with this city. After graduating from public housing, achieving her undergraduate degree and MBA was somehow manageable. Several years in managerial positions at Kraft Foods enabled her to pay off her student debt. But then she fell under the spell of the theatre, along with Chopin Theatre's owner Zygmunt Dyrkacz, with whom she shares two sons (16 and 18). As managing director since 2003, she brings the necessary muscle and internet prowess to run eight-to-10 shows per week on two stages.



Donald G. Evans is the author of a novel and a short story collection, as well as the editor of two anthologies of Chicago literature, most recently *Wherever I'm At: An Anthology of Chicago Poetry*. He is the Founding Executive Director of the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame.



Tony Fitzpatrick is a Chicago-based artist best known for his multimedia collages, printmaking, paintings, and drawings. Fitzpatrick's works are inspired by Chicago street culture, cities he's visited, children's books, tattoo designs, and folk art. Fitzpatrick has authored or illustrated eight books of art and poetry. Fitzpatrick's art appears in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the National Museum of American Art in Washington, DC. The Neville Brothers' album *Yellow Moon* and Steve Earle's albums *El Corazon* and *The Revolution Starts Now* also feature Fitzpatrick's art. In 1992, Fitzpatrick opened Big Cat Press, a Chicago-based printmaking studio, which exists today as the artist exhibition space Firecat Projects. Before making a living as an artist, Fitzpatrick worked as a radio host, bartender, boxer, construction worker, and film and stage actor.



Nestor “the Boss” Gomez was born in Guatemala and traveled to Chicago undocumented in the mid 80s. He told his first story at a *Moth StorySLAM* to get over the stuttering that plagued his childhood. Since then, he has won more than 70 *Moth* slams. Gomez has performed in and conducted storytelling workshops around the country. He created his own storytelling show and podcast, *80 Minutes Around the World*, featuring global immigrant and refugee stories. Gomez’s story collection *Your Driver Has Arrived* details his experiences as a rideshare driver.



Brian Hieggelke is a writer, publisher and film producer based in Chicago. Described as a “civic treasure” by Chicago media journalist Robert Feder, Hieggelke is Founder, President/CEO and Editor/Co-publisher of *Newcity*, a digital and print publication started in 1986. *Newcity*’s film production company, Chicago Film Project, produced and distributed *Signature Move*, which premiered at SXSW, won the Grand Jury Prize at Outfest for Best US Narrative Feature, and was the Closing Night Film at BFI Flare. Hieggelke won the Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism from the Chicago Headline Club for his weekly media column in *Newcity*, “Press Relief.” He earned an AB in economics from the University of Chicago, and an MBA in finance from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Hieggelke lives in Chicago, is married and has three children.



Chris Jones is the longtime theater critic and reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. He’s proud to have been Rick Kogan’s colleague and mentee for more than 20 years. In 2021, Jones became editorial page editor at the *Tribune*, where he writes editorials and selects opinion content for the paper while continuing to review shows in Chicago and New York for both the *Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*.



Michael Miles is one of America’s most innovative banjo players. *Banjo Newsletter* described Miles as “a brilliant tour-de force that effectively obliterates the limits of what was thought possible on clawhammer banjo.” He has created over a dozen “musical documentaries for the stage,” including his 2015 one-man show *From Senegal to Seeger* and his latest work, *Way Down the Road*. Miles is a passionate educator, regularly leading songwriting residencies, workshops, and classes at festivals. As program director at the Old Town School of Folk Music (1984 – 1998), he brought the School international acclaim and raised enrollment from 200 students to more than 4,000. Miles is also a teaching artist for the Ravinia Festival, and the “Official Banjo Player” of Rick Kogan’s “After Hours” on WGN radio.



Jamie O'Reilly has been a multi-talented Chicago performer, musician and vocalist for over 45 years. O'Reilly graduated from DePaul University School of Music and debuted professionally at Orchestra Hall, in the 1984 John McCormack Centenary Concert. Currently she is accompanied by the skillful pianist John Erickson, performing a show, *In Old Chicago*, about her feisty, artsy Irish relations in the early 1900s. As musical partner of the late songwriter Michael Smith, she produced over a half-dozen “folk cabarets” and recordings, including *Pasioness: Songs of the Spanish Civil War*, a favorite of Studs Terkel. For several seasons, they performed Smith's trunk show *The Gift of the Magi* with Rick Kogan as narrator. O'Reilly ardently credits Kogan for shifting her reality by dignifying and calling attention to her work.



Charles Osgood collaborated with Rick Kogan for 13 years on Kogan's “Sidewalks” column in the *Chicago Tribune*, photographing a fascinating array of Chicago area people and places for pieces later collected in two books. He received a Master of Fine Arts in photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the equivalent in journalism via reporting for City News Bureau. Retired now from the *Tribune*, Osgood has written and published three genealogy books with his sister, Mary; transcribes often illegible lifelong journals; organizes his images into folders for unknown reasons (to stay alive); and continues his passion for capturing fleeting moments.



...the first memory that I have is the sound of a typewriter clicking in my father's office, because he was in that office in that Old Town apartment all the time, writing his own books. So that sound was a narcotic for me, it really was.

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

By Cate Plys

Rick Kogan's voice warms you up like the liquor he assuredly likes to drink--he once told the *Reader's* Michael Miner that Roger Ebert "God love him" failed to make him stop.

And it's smoky, like his cigarettes.

Of course, Rick's voice is gravelly too, the word most often applied to it. With that voice, Rick can and does call literally *anybody* "honey" and "sweetheart"--for a wildly divergent spectrum of reasons. Coming from Rick, the meanings of those words aren't in any dictionary. It's all in his voice, like a tonal language.

Rick was born for radio as surely as he was born into newspapers. Chicago radio. Chicago newspapers. Chicago, period. Hell, it's like he was pickled at birth in a jar of Chicago history brine, and somebody unscrewed the lid and plucked him out just in time to work for the *Daily News* before it folded, all crunchy and fresh and ready to go.

Exhibit A: His baby shower got a plug in the *Tribune* in 1951.



New Version

"Welcome Kid Kogan," was the legend on the cake served at a baby shower for the soon-to-arrive offspring of Herman and Marilew Kogan. Guests predict a boy, or so it would seem with gifts of pastel yellow and green masculine attire. And as the child of a writer will probably be on the go, Sara Cohen of the Public Library assured his early traveling comfort by train, car, boat or plane in a canvas convertible contraption that is a seat, a bed or a play pen.

young Rick might at any time run into family friends like Studs Terkel, Nelson Algren, Willard Motley, Mike Royko, and Marcel Marceau.



Photo by Cate Plys

Rick's parents were every bit up to entertaining that caliber of guests.

Herman Kogan was a legendary Chicago newspaperman who created the *Daily News'* arts section, *Panorama*, in 1963, and later edited the *Sun-Times'* Showcase and Bookweek sections. Herman also hosted *Writing and Writers* on WFMT for 14 years, and authored books still on any required Chicago reading list, like *Lords of the Levee* with his friend Lloyd Wendt.

Named for the old press haunt Riccardo's—his full name is "Rick," not "Richard"--Rick grew up in a classic six-flat smack in the heart of the Old Town Triangle, long before that neighborhood's name meant "you can't afford it."

Just heading down the hall at 1715 N. Park Ave.,

The sound of Herman's typewriter must have been a staccato lullaby to baby Rick, and it was definitely the steady soundtrack of his childhood and teen years, whether at home or hanging with dad at the office.

Marilew—M'Loo to friends and loved ones—was the kind of character who had *Tribune* owner-publisher Col. Robert McCormick eating out of her hand. And as most readers here probably know, Col. McCormick was more the biting type.

"There are not many people around who worked for the Colonel, fewer still who knew him and perhaps just a couple left who actually rode in his limousine," Rick recounted for the *Tribune*. "But my mother did all three."

Eighteen-year-old Marilew Cavanagh worked days at the Trib, and nights she went to college classes. In the Trib's fashion and travel departments, she did everything from writing movie review synopses to memos for section editors.

Then one day her boss gave her an envelope with strict instructions to deliver it to the Colonel personally--not one of the two secretaries whose desks flanked the Colonel's office door in Tribune Tower. As Marilew argued the point with one of the secretaries, Col. McCormick's door opened. The Colonel's German shepherd emerged and ambled over to Marilew.

"She bent low to pet it," Rick wrote, "and then said to the dog: 'Look, you're closer to the Colonel than anybody. You take this to him.'"

As Marilew held the letter out to the dog, Col. McCormick guffawed from just inside the doorway. Then he came out to meet the cheeky young lady. After that, the Colonel's chauffeur often picked Marilew up after night classes for the ride home to Rogers Park.

Besides raising Rick and his brother Mark, Marilew headed the public relations department at the Art Institute, then managed Midwest publicity for Doubleday Books through most of the 1960s. She introduced her old friend Studs Terkel to her new friend, *Sun-Times* cub reporter Roger Ebert, just one of the matches Marilew engineered. Rick has noted that Nelson Algren probably slept with his aunt because he couldn't sleep with Marilew.

So Rick moved through a personal Chicago history at home, kind of a live-action Studs Terkel oral history.

And his family newspaper background ensured that he saw some very public history too--like the part of the 1968 Democratic National Convention that played out at Michigan and Balbo instead of the Amphitheatre.

As a teenager, Rick watched what would be called a police riot from the glass front doors of the Conrad Hilton. He was helping out as a summer job in the press room in the hotel basement. As he put it when I interviewed him for a project a few years back:

"I was fuckin' 16, getting coffee for these jokers. Yeah, that was an experience. I was wearing my father's Marine Corps jacket...that was my outfit. My hair was about as

long as it is now, and I remember standing behind the cordon of police that were blocking the entrance to the Hilton. And out there, there were people who looked like me, just a few years older, getting the shit beaten out of them. I was interested in girls and playing football. I mean I was not politically motivated at the time. Had no idea what was going on out there. I would say I was politicized at that time.”

18 on squad

Latin tiny but mighty



Members of the Chicago Latin varsity, led by coach Art Davis, head from the North Side school to a practice session in nearby Lincoln Park. The Romans, with only 18 players on the varsity, led the Independent League with a 3-1 record.

That wasn't hyperbole. Rick really was interested in girls and football in 1968. Here he is, fifth player in back of Coach Art Davis, in a 1967 Daily News article by Harvey Duck on the Latin School's hard-working but challenged football team that year. Harvey Duck proclaimed Rick "an effective back throughout the season."

Rick learned a lot that day in 1968, and not just by noticing what was right in front of his face. He took in the police riot, and then he took in the city's reaction.

"I was amazed at the adoration that Daley got," Rick said, still a bit stunned. "That taught me a lot about Chicago too. They were *glad*, for the most part, the majority of Chicagoans were *glad* that [Daley] did what he did. There's *no* doubt in my mind about that. They certainly sided with the police officers because again you fear things that you don't know—these guys with long hair and strange clothes were not part of your scene. Especially in the neighborhoods where people lived. So that's what amazed me. The real reaction had nothing to do with what was happening there. Even with Cronkite and the images on TV and the whole world is watching—OK, the whole world was watching, and [Chicagoans] said 'Good, beat the shit out of those guys.' Daley was a *hero*."

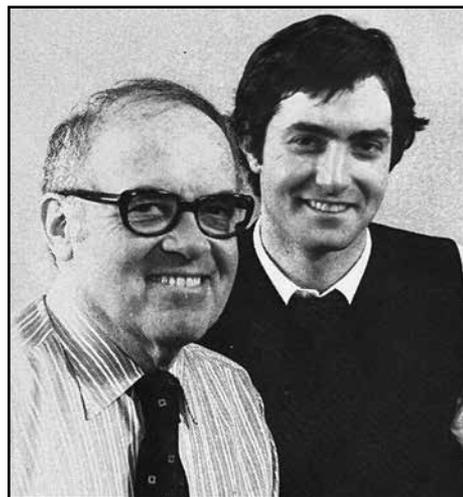
After high school, Rick spent about three months at Circle Campus, figured out it wasn't for him, and started a Bohemian spree that included driving a cab, traveling in Spain, and living in New York's Bowery. A travel story from abroad soon helped him land a staff position at Jon and Abra Anderson's start-up magazine, *The Chicagoan*, which winked out of existence in about a year despite a strong start.

Next, Rick and Herman Kogan co-wrote *Yesterday's Chicago*, a marvelously readable illustrated history. I'll never forget how tickled I was to pick up a hardcover copy (with intact dust jacket) at Powell's one day, and find I already had it autographed by father and son.

Then in 1977 Rick landed a spot on the Panorama staff under Editor M.W. Newman—Herman Kogan had by then retired. The Panorama job lasted a whopping six months—all the way up to the *Daily News*' last day on March 4, 1978. Luckily Rick moved over to the *Sun-Times*, and as we all know, left that paper with the Rupert Murdoch exodus, eventually landing for good at the *Tribune*. That's not to mention the radio shows and the 12 books, including the riveting *Everybody Pays* with Maurice Possley on mob hitman Harry Aleman.

And let's not forget the countless shows that Rick has hosted, the speeches he rips off the top of his head. "He gave a memorial speech for a mutual friend," consummate Chicago politico Don Rose told me recently. "It was another journalist, and it was so impressive I went up afterward and said, 'I want you to give mine.'"

Out of all that work, I've been thinking about *Yesterday's Chicago* more and more as Rick's Fuller Award approached, and this is why:



Between the *Sun-Times* and the *Tribune*, Rick has researched and written literally thousands of articles with one thing in common—Chicago. There are precious few Chicago topics I've researched that didn't turn up a hit with Rick Kogan's byline, always a treasured sight and key source material. Yet it wasn't until I considered Rick's career in its entirety that I finally realized what a downright baby he was when he wrote, as he himself would say, a goddamn *history* book. With his father, yes, but still, a goddam history book.

When Randy Albers interviewed Rick for his own piece in this program, Rick said, "I think that was during the time I was driving a cab, and my father said graciously, 'Rick, do you want to help me with this book?'" Rick compared co-writing the book to "building a log cabin on the prairie" with his dad, even though he modestly referred to it as "basically a pictorial history".

That kept coming back to me as I pondered early Rick Kogan. *Yesterday's Chicago* is a pictorial history—but not in any kind of diminutive sense, only in that it's both pictures and history. Split into several sections with concise overviews, each period

comes alive in the curated photographs set beside concentrated nuggets of information, like historical multivitamins.

In *Yesterday's Chicago*, the Kogans breathe life into previously flat, dead facts, like the collapse of Samuel Insull's companies. Insull turns into a real person when you see him tentatively walking through a massive sliding steel door into Cook County Jail in his greatcoat, fedora and handlebar mustache. Then there are the practically unknown and little-known incidents they wisely thread through the required historical milestones--balloon races, Big Bill Thompson's rodeo in the City Council chambers, Wendell Willkie getting pelted with eggs at the LaSalle Street train station during the 1940 presidential campaign.

The Kogans didn't throw that book together on the dining room table in a weekend. Sifting through the facts alone, much less the pictures, would have been a gargantuan project. And we all know it's easy to write long, but excruciating to edit down to the absolute essentials without losing the oddities and anecdotes that spark a reader's imagination.

Yesterday's Chicago is a solid log cabin, built from the ground up by a master craftsman and a talented apprentice. The log cabin, then, was a finishing school too, so that Rick took with him into his first newspaper job at the *Daily News* a unique, probably irreproducible blend of formal and informal training.

Which explains how Rick started with the *Daily News* in September 1977, and within a month his articles progressed from spritely, serviceable coverage of things like a coffee table book of George Lois' ad campaigns and magazine covers, to painfully philosophical reviews of fading stars like Peggy Lee and Eddie Fisher.

"Peggy Lee is no longer an object of sexual fantasy," Rick wrote of the older, heavy Peggy Lee performing at the Water Tower Drury Lane. There's no sugarcoating from Rick on Lee's struggles after 30 years in show biz: "And yet there were moments when the years seemed to drift away; when the uneasy alliance of opulent splendor and intimacy of the theater combined with the grace of the lady's singing and succeeded in discarding time....She still creates some beautiful moments. That may be all there is, but it's more than enough."

Young Rick's review of Eddie Fisher reads like it comes from an author who's gone through just as many marriages and drugs as Fisher himself: "His Friday night performance at a half-filled Blue Max was a sad glimpse at a man so tired and wasted from years in the spotlight that he appears, tragically, to be vanishing before our eyes....An odd and disturbing show, it is a combination of show biz without glitter and nostalgia without warmth....He merely exists, without the inventiveness or dynamic personality needed for a successful comeback....he seems ready, at any moment, to burst into tears....he is a dramatic portrait of all that is wrong with America's passion for personality."

By March 4, 1978, for the final issue of the *Daily News*, the kid—my God, he's still a kid, just 26!—summons the gravitas to analyze how Chicago had changed during the 15-year life of Panorama, which started in 1963 when Rick was 12.

As Rick pointed out in his lede, that day was both Chicago's birthday, and the *Daily News*' last day. "The *Daily News* has been here for most of those years to tell that astonishing and contradictory story," he wrote. "And during the past 15 years we have watched things change, and change again. We have seen the architectural wizards transform the skyline, and in Chicago's typically paradoxical way, we have seen the ghettos grow.... We have seen fashionable near-lakefront neighborhoods revive themselves while Woodlawn burned itself out."

"Look closely now," he concluded. "Beyond the lakefront. Where is the city? It's there, lurking in the corners behind the tall buildings, manifesting itself in small neighborhood groups that say, 'Hey, wait a minute.' The voices are there."

"They almost didn't run it," he told me, because it was so bleak.

But you can always glimpse Rick's optimism shining, however faintly, in the background. He's always faced the ugly parts of his city straight on, and refused to stop loving it.

One of the bleakest days is still, for Rick and so many others, that final day at the *Daily News*. We talked about what the newspaper meant to him, and meant to the city, just as it got snuffed out in 1978. Rick summed it up in this story about his meeting, on that day, with a Polish immigrant cab driver:

"I'll never forget the day the *Daily News* folded, I was taking a cab down to play I don't know, fuckin' racquet ball, with some friend from the paper. I'm in the cab, and the guy is a very deferential cab driver. I obviously said the *Daily News* building, and he's driving down, and he goes, 'I understand there won't BE a *Daily News* tomorrow.' And I said that's true, as of tomorrow, Saturday's the last edition. And he doesn't say another word.

"He goes pulling into the delivery dock. I'm fumbling around for my money and he gets out and comes around and opens the *door*, and he's *crying*. An older guy. He says, 'Sir, I hope you work for the *Sun-Times*.' I said no, I work for the *Daily News*. That's OK, I'm fuckin' 26 years old. And he goes, 'I learned to speak English from reading that newspaper.'

Oh my *God*. And he was refusing to take my *money*."

Rick loved the *Daily News*, and he loves Chicago, but Chicago didn't love the *Daily News* enough for the paper to survive. A classic example of how this damn city will break your heart, and how Rick manages to portray Chicago, and Chicagoans, with a true love and all its glorious flaws intact.

Thanks, sweetheart, for all the words, written and spoken, about the city we love.

Interviewing the Interviewer: Rick Kogan's Life in Words

Rick Kogan and Randy Albers in Conversation

Rick and I meet—where else?—in the Billy Goat Tavern. Rick's choice. And appropriate—not only because for decades it has been a home away from home for newspaper people before they drag off to their real homes after a long day, nerves still buzzing despite the shots and beers. And not only because Rick has frequently been among them—at least until corporate “progress” resulted in closing the Tribune Tower, his longtime office building just up the stairs and across the street.

No, it's appropriate because the Billy Goat, with its simple red-and-white-checked, Formica-topped tables, its squared-off bar lined with scruffy stools, its alcove filled with newspaper clippings, and its journalists Wall of Fame along one wall, is buried below the surface of the city, closer to its beating heart—the place, it seems to me, that Rick is always trying to reach.

The Billy Goat is also the place where, when we can make our schedules mesh, he and I choose to meet more often than not, where our conversation grows ever more freewheeling as the drinks (Jack Daniel's, Dewars, the occasional martini) lubricate the wheels and the stories travel smoothly and widely. Here, I asked him one time if he had an idea for something at Story Week, the festival that Sheryl Johnston and I ran for many years. “I'm looking for something new,” I said, and without any pause, he said, “Ask people—writers, yes, but also politicians, bus drivers, cops, whoever—ask them to read a half-page of their favorite Chicago story to the audience.” Thus was born Chicago Classics, which was always the final event of the week, held in the Cultural Center's Preston Bradley Hall under the magnificent Tiffany dome and hosted magnificently by Rick himself. We called it ending the festival on a high.

This time, we come to the Billy Goat with a purpose, a bit more inclined to keep the wheels on a path. He had interviewed me a number of times, and turnabout is fair play, they say, but I wasn't sure. I was to interview the master interviewer, and I confess to feeling a little daunted. For one thing, it would be impossible to touch on every aspect

A tavern is never as quiet as it seems. It is filled with echoes and memories, of conversations and laughter, of faces and fights, and here there are 40 years' worth hanging heavy in the stale air and making time matter not at all.

From A Chicago Tavern: a Goat, a Curse, and the American Dream

of this man's amazing career. His books reveal an incredible range of subjects and kinds of writing—commissioned (*Brunswick: The Story of an American Company from 1845 to 1985*) or just for fun (*Dr. Night Life*); historical (*Yesterday's Chicago*) or novelistic (*Everybody Pays*); assigned (countless obits) or love's labor (*America's Mom*, i.e. Esther Pauline "Eppie" Friedman Lederer, aka Ann Landers); multifarious (*Sidewalks I and II*) or focused (*A Chicago Tavern: a Goat, a Curse, and the American Dream*). Anyone who has sampled these works or his thousands of columns in three major dailies or tuned into his radio shows over the years on four different stations must be as impressed by the extent of his knowledge about the city as by the apparent ease in that distinctive voice, which *Newcity* once proclaimed the best in Chicago.

We greet each other warmly, and adjourn to a back room, where we settle at a table under a painting with familiar faces—Royko, Studs, the Goat's own Sam and Bill Sianis, and others. He orders a drink, I order coffee ("I'll graduate to something more interesting later," I assure him.), and I tell him I'd like to talk about three main areas: his personal and journalistic history, his writing process, and his connection to Chicago. "Right," he says, "good," nodding as bartender Bobby sets a glass before him. I wonder whether he is saying good to my plan or to the sight of the vodka. Under the flat white lights, with one of the staff at a table across the room noisily cutting cheese for the endless burgers—"Cheeseborger! Cheeseborger! Coke, no Pepsi!"), I plunge on.

You should know that what follows has been edited for clarity and with some nod to limitations of length.

And with that, as Rick says at the end of every email: Onward!

Randy: So, first of all, Rick, congratulations on your Fuller Award for lifetime achievement!

Rick: It's an honor. It's an honor even though you usually give these things to people on their deathbed. I'm not quite there yet.

Randy: We haven't written anybody off yet.

Rick: I know, you haven't killed anybody. It may be a way to live on, a modicum of immortality.

Randy: Well, you know, everybody at the Hall of Fame is very happy.

Rick: And I'm . . . I'm flattered and honored, you know.

Randy: I was happy to be co-chairing the committee. We had a really good, diverse committee and a lot of great candidates, but I'm so glad to see you come out on top.

So we can't get too far on this interview without recalling the famous story of your birth, all right?

Rick: Yes—what little I remember of it. But what I have been told is that in the early morning that I was born, at roughly 4:30—which I would come to know as last call at various places—I was born at Wesley Memorial Hospital. It was a tradition generations ago to take the dad out for a drink, and Studs, who was dear friends of my parents before my birth, and long after my birth, took my dad out for a celebratory drink.

Randy: Right. Did you have a feeling at any point in your life that maybe you were born to write? Growing up in your particular family, having . . .

Rick: Boy, that's a good question. I think probably at some point, because the house was always filled with books, and it was always filled—I would later realize—with writers. And my father was the kind of guy who, whenever I would ask a question, he certainly was a smart guy and would answer a question, but when I was able to read, he would lead me to books that might be more erudite than he and more colorful than his stories. You know, he'd lead me to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. I'd come home from a movie saying, "Dad, tell me more about Spartacus. He has to be more than just Kirk Douglas!" And he would grab a *Britannica* and let me read about it. So words were always, always part of my life. And as I've said many times, apocryphal or not, the first memory that I have is the sound of a typewriter clicking in my father's office, because he was in that office in that Old Town apartment all the time, writing his own books. So that sound was a narcotic for me, it really was.

Randy: Well, and you had people sitting around the living room, like Studs and Nelson...

Rick: Nelson, oh sure, Studs and Nelson, other people like Marcel Marceau and Mort Sahl and Willard Motley. I do remember, I was young enough, whether I remember him sleeping in our living room or not, I am told that Jim Jones returned to spend a few messy days on the Kogans' couch in the living room. I have no distinct memory, but knowing that happened is something that's very special.

Randy: I heard that you got your first byline at 16.

Rick: I did. That was when my dad was working for the *Sun-Times*. And I used to drive, at 16, drive my father to pick up Jim Hoge, the editor of the *Sun-Times*, to play tennis. They were tennis partners. And one day in the car, Jim said, "Rick, how old are you?" "I'm 16, Jim." He said, "Well, why don't you review this book that's come into the office? It's called, *How to Get a Teenage Boy and What to Do with Him When You Get Him*. You'd be perfect for this." I thought, "Well, that would be fun." I do not remember the author's name—I can easily find it; I think it was Ellen something. And I wrote a review that was probably the most savage review I have ever written. And I've seen and read some bad things since then. I'll never forget, it was published in the *Sun-Times*, and it had a huge picture of me—it was my senior yearbook picture, a huge picture, retouched

this would be a good way to pick up stories—though most of the passengers, when I would say, “Well, why are you going to LaSalle and Jackson?” [would say,] “Shut up and drive.” Yeah, there were no really great anecdotes, there were no great stories. When I’d saved up enough money, I went to Spain—not in any Hemingwayesque kind of way. I was still feeling my way, certainly, as a writer. I was writing really bad short stories. But I did publish, thanks to my dad, a travel story in the *Tribune*. He knew the travel editor of the *Tribune*, and that paid \$150, which was two months’ rent. Well, I thought, if this will translate to when I’m 40, whatever my rent is, I’ll make twice as much. And I really, really got a bug over there because there wasn’t a hell of a lot to do. I wasn’t studying bullfighting or something. I wrote all the time.

Randy: You did. Fiction?

Rick: Yes, fiction, and published a couple travel stories. Eventually, after a year, I ran out of money—I did not have much, but it lasted a year—and then came back here. And my dad said, “Well, if you want to be a writer, there’s this wonderful place called Columbia College. My friend John Schultz and Mike Alexandroff are doing some amazing things, and why don’t you try that?” So I went there for one day and did a class, a sort of a reviews and criticism class. And everybody in there wanted to be a critic on TV. And I thought, no, that’s not exactly what I want to do. So, I lasted a day.

Randy: So it took your dad three years to get through U. of C., but you—

Rick: It took me about three weeks to get through college. A total of three weeks.

Randy: Pretty funny. Your dad, though, you wrote *Yesterday’s Chicago* with him.

Rick: I think that was during the time I was driving a cab, and my father said graciously. “Rick, do you want to help me with this book?” And I did. It was a basically a pictorial history. It was still great fun.

Randy: I love that book.

Rick: So do I. It was great fun to work with my father. It was sort of like, you know, a century before, building a log cabin on the prairie or something. I learned a great deal about his astonishing work ethic. And it was a good book. I mean, it was a book that I’m quite proud of. And we appeared together on Studs’s show to talk about it because he and Studs were great friends. And I don’t think I said a word during that entire show—hard to believe. There’s a great picture of us presenting the book to Richard J. Daley.

Randy: Oh, really.

Rick: And it was a good book, because my father certainly was an expert, a passionate expert in Chicago history. And from that point, I think what happened then is, Jon and



Abra Anderson were starting a magazine. She was the great-granddaughter of John D. Rockefeller. Jon was a stylish Canadian. And he and she started a magazine, a very well-funded magazine called *The Chicagoan*, and they hired Dick Christiansen away from the *Daily News*, where my father had made him a theater critic and the head of Panorama. Dick hired me, and I thought he was hiring me to be a copy boy and get coffee for people—I was 20, 21—and instead, he said, “You’re a writer, a staffer. You’re one of the three staff writers.” I had given him my two travel stories—ha, here’s a nice clip book with two travel stories, the review of *How to Get a Teenage Boy and What to Do with Him When You Get Him*, and a piece for the Latin School paper, Why aren’t you coming out to watch us play football? This blistering editorial. I worked there for about a year-and-a-half. The magazine lasted a year-and-a-half, and it was quite a magazine. Dick was great friends with Mike Royko and was able to convince Royko to write the first major piece he wrote after *Boss*, which was a real coup. Dick knew everybody. In its time, it was a great magazine, and it sort of helped give birth to *Chicago* magazine, which at the time was little more than a guidebook, a slightly embellished guidebook.

Randy: Did you know Mike already?

Rick: No. I may have met him, Randy, as a kid sometime in the house or the apartment. I may have met him, but no, Dick Christiansen I knew very, very well, because I would go down to the Panorama offices when I was 12 or 13, hang around on Saturdays and Sundays. Then, that folded, and I wound up starting to freelance for the *Sun-Times*.

Randy: You mentioned your dad’s astonishing work ethic. And one of the things that I am stunned by is how much you get done. You know, you do column after column, you’ve done a bunch of books, you have the radio show, plus you make appearances—

you were with us at Story Week many times. And you know, you're very generous with your time with various things, and I guess I'm curious about how you manage it.

Rick: Well, I don't know how I manage it. Certainly, my father when he would go in on Saturdays and Sundays to the Panorama offices when I would be with him as an impressionable 12- and 13-year-old, what he was doing in the office was reading manuscripts that had come in and submissions that had come in and also writing very personal, typed personal notes, to people—

Randy: —who were sending him things?

Rick: He said thanks for your submission, try again, or much more verbose letters to some people. And the sound of that typewriter never stopped. He wrote books his entire life. And also, he was active in the literary community. Like, you know, they used to have a thing called the Book and Author Luncheon, before Panorama, at the *Sun-Times* that would attract a thousand people.

Randy: Wow. Fantastic.

Rick: Yeah. And all the people of the day, I mean, Dick Christiansen used to work 18 hours a day and Mike Royko used to write six columns. And a great story—I'm sure I've told you—but Mike went on the wagon while he was writing *Boss*, until one day, after a few months, he goes down one Sunday afternoon to Riccardo's, which was open on Sunday night. He sat at the bar, and the bartender, Jose, who I remember quite well, said, "Oh, Mike, so great to see you. Where you been? Been sick? What's the matter?" He says, "No. I've been gone. I've been working on a book." And Jose says, "Oh, wow, that's great." Mike ordered a martini, and he made it, brought it over. "To celebrate finish the book, eh?" And about a half-hour later, he's all by himself. And Jose comes by with a tattered paperback. And it's a Mickey Spillane, one of Mickey Spillane's many books. He says, "Mike, I'm so glad. I'm almost finished with this one. So when I finish this, you can read this one next."

Randy: So generous.

Rick: That story has always impressed me. He just finished writing arguably the greatest political book ever written about the city of Chicago.

Randy: Right.

Rick: But he had finished the book, and it was an era when that work ethic is what—everybody I knew worked their ass off. They loved it too. And were passionate about it. They weren't doing it for money. They were doing it out of passion. And that ever, ever impressed me.

Randy: You think that's what drives you?

Rick: Yeah. I don't know if it's a drive. It's just, it's what infuses what many of my wives and girlfriends have called workaholism. But it's not that. I don't think it's a workaholism. It's just—

Randy: You love what you do.

Rick: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

Randy: I think that's the only reason you should do things, myself.

Rick: If you're lucky.

Randy: If you're lucky.

One thing I wanted to mention, I love the picture on the *Yesterday's Chicago* jacket. You look—

Rick: Young. Very. . .

Randy: And very lovely. But also, I thought it was interesting. You've mentioned a couple short stories. And I think it's there that it says you were working on a novel.

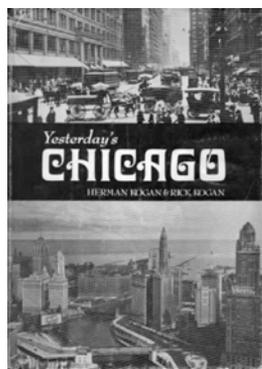
Rick: I've always been working on a novel.

Randy: Have you?

Rick: Yes.

Randy: Good. How's progress, can I ask you?

Rick: Halting! Progress is halting, because one needs, I think, some really—call it free time—to work on a novel, but basically, I've been a newspaperman my whole life. There is in the near future, very near future, sometimes in the very, very near future, a deadline that I've had to meet. I did not have, and don't expect to have, that kind of lengthy time. I mean I have notes, I've started a couple of things and thrown them away, because I just get distracted by real life. Not that a novel's not about real life, I'm not writing about science fiction or something. But yeah, I have ever, even from those early days in Spain, been drawn to fiction. I suppose that in its way, that's why I'm such a huge fan of fiction writing. Because I know, and am very respectful of it too, because I know the difficulties. . . there are people who think, Well, maybe if I just buy a typewriter, I'll be able to write a book, and it's not that. There's so much more involved in it. And I think that's why I have a real—I mean, I have a real, genuine reverence. And I've never interviewed an author without reading the entire book, even if some of them made it a real slog. I respect and understand the time it takes. It's not the time typing. It's everything else that goes into creating a work of fiction.



Randy: Right. Well, I remember asking you one time, How do you manage to ask such good questions of an author, and —

Rick: One thing I learned from Studs. After I joined the staff of the *Sun-Times*—I'm sure I've told you this, too—that I was on Studs's show for Dr. Night Life Chicago. And it was an astonishing hour [taking on Studs's gravelly voice] “We're here with Dr. Night Life Chicago. You've crafted an era. You talk about Riccardo's. Your parents and I met in the late 40s. You talk about the Earl of Old Town, a favorite place of mine. Here you write this so correctly. Rick, let's hear some Fred Holstein, who used to play there.” And he'd play a song. It's a dream interview. And after the whole thing, I get up and my knees are weak from this thing. And he says, “Rick, was it good? Did you have fun?” And I go, “Studs, it was unbelievable. It was astonishing to me. What is the?”—I'm 25 years old or something— “What is the secret? What's the secret?”

“Read the book.”

And not that I was interviewing a lot of authors before I was 25, but I realized it is so much easier to have a conversation that does not start with, “So, what's your book about?”

Randy: Right, exactly. Which you hear so many people do.

Rick: Oh my god, it's unbelievable. And I'm thinking to myself, Okay, what the fuck, it takes a few hours to read a book. . . . It's so much easier, and I think you can get deeper insight about the writer by talking about the book. If you're a great interviewer, read the fucking book!

Randy: One of the things—talking about your process, and your writing—after having taught fiction writing and creative nonfiction writing for many, many years, one of the things I am impressed with is the way you take so many fictional techniques and put them to work in writing nonfiction. You know, I'm thinking of scene. *Everybody Pays* is scene after scene. Very closely observed detail.

Rick: Well, but that, Randy, is what life is all about. That's what I've always tried to do in my journalism, too. I am not a fan of the of the Q&A format. Some things are superficial, like, you know, “Randy Albers said, picking up his pen.” So what? Or, “Randy Albers said, taking a sip of coffee.” I think life is to be observed. Life is *meant* to be observed. And you know, I've always tried to do that, even, you know, in the short *Sidewalks*.

Randy: Right. Wonderful mini-stories,

Rick: Right, they are mini-stories, and you have to realize in telling the mini-story, you want to cram as much as you can in there. Much of it is observational.

Randy: But this is the thing, when you get that kind of seeing going, it has a kind of gestural pull on voice. And you are known for your voice, right?—on the radio, but you're also known for your voice on the page, I think.

Rick: Well, I have ever found—from my earliest, I've found life interesting. And it's my job to find in whatever aspect of life I'm covering, whether it's—for instance, I wrote a story today that'll be in Sunday's paper, about Claes Oldenburg, the sculptor.

Randy: Oh, yes. I saw his death announced on Facebook.

Rick: Do I think that it's important to note that he grew up with a younger brother who became the head of the Museum of Modern Art, and with a dog, a French poodle named Tessie? Yeah, I do!

Randy: Yeah, why not!

Rick: Yeah, takes five words. And it gives something more of texture and color. I'm always looking for that.

Randy: Well, yes, and I think that that's part of why your writing reads so vividly and fluidly. Do you have an audience actually in mind when you're writing?

Rick: No. Me!

Randy: You, OK.

Rick: I really do. I mean, I've ever thought this, that if I am interested in the subject about which I'm writing, it is, first of all, my job to try to make it interesting to other people. And if I write something that is interesting to me—because I'm taking a lot of things and mashing them into 1,000 or 400 or 2,000 words—if I find it interesting, I have to believe, not everybody who reads a *Tribune* is going to find it interesting, but a certain number will be satisfied by it.

Randy: It reminds me of a little passage I came across from your Billy Goat book: "Twenty-five years behind a bar will teach you a great deal about mankind. Not all of it will be good, but much of it will be interesting, and some of it will be important." And I thought, That's a nice summary of not only bartending but also Rick Kogan's approach to writing.

Rick: It tells you that I've known a lot of bartenders! Much of it comes from just talking to people, too. You do get a sense if your encounters aren't totally superficial, and many are. My father used to talk to everybody—so did Studs—and there's nobody they wouldn't talk to. They weren't interviewing people, but they would at least say hello to people. They didn't look through waiters or waitresses or bartenders or guys on the street. Everybody is interesting to me. I am dead serious. They may not be interesting enough to hold my attention for more than five minutes, but they can have five minutes

of my time, sure. You know, life's too short not to give people something of yourself.

Randy: That's what I loved about teaching writing because everybody's got a story.

Rick: You know, of the stories I've written, especially for the papers, they're not all front-page news—or deserve to be. But they deserve to have their stories told, because their stories are part of the fabric of Chicago.

Randy: Let's talk a little bit about Chicago.

Rick: Sure.

Randy: You moved back from Spain, but did you ever think about moving anywhere else to do journalism?

Rick: No. I moved to New York for a time in the late seventies. And lived at Bowery and Houston, when it was really a fucking mess—god! And enjoyed it. One of the great things—my father introduced me, with letters, how wonderful, to Rose Hecht, Ben Hecht's widow. Who invited me up, because I was a nice, cute young guy, and I did have one suit that I would wear. She would invite me up every once in a while for drinks, to their apartment, and tell me stories about Benny. That was something. New York is an incredibly exciting place, and I think being downtown, living across the street from CBGB in the real Bohemian days, I think it beat me down. It was too fast. I smoked more and drank more, I walked faster. And found it interesting for about a year, then came back here. No, I have not thought about living anywhere else. Chicago is ever fascinating to me. And ever interesting. And ever chaotic. And I'm talking about Chicago being at its most chaotic and dispiriting now. But I remain hopeful. As Studs said, Hope dies last. Hope dies last. You turn a corner in this city, and something new is there.

Randy: And evidently, the city is still something you can catch up to. Not like New York, where you were maybe feeling like it was running away from you.

Rick: New York, unless you're going to be Patti Smith or Sam Shepherd and become incredibly famous and incredibly rich there, it's a hard place to live. And I was living in a second-floor loft in a former Battery building at Bowery and Houston, filled with bugs and rats and everything, and most of the people I knew were living in like circumstances. Manhattan changed radically. The last time I was back there, I looked at the building I lived in, and it held multi-million-dollar lofts. I am ever fascinated with New York, but it would be too hard for me at this advanced age to get a handle on that city. It's impossible to get a handle on Chicago, too. [*But*] you know, I have my places, and I can look out at the lake and feel OK.

Randy: Yeah, and you know this city, every corner of it. A person reads those *Sidewalks* books, you know—

Rick: Well, that was the great joy of that invention of mine. I had gotten so sick of—I was an editor at the *Tribune* for a while, editor of the Tempo section, and when that job was over, I said, What do you want to do? Well, I want to go out and just explore the city. I called Charles Osgood, the photographer with whom I collaborated, and said, “I’m going to grab another book. You grab a camera. And let’s go.” And Charley’s like, “What do you mean, go where?” “Anywhere.”

Randy: Anywhere. And he had a car.

Rick: Exactly. Good point. I know how to drive. I’m like Studs. I know how to drive, but I’ve never owned a car.

And we did. We found some amazing places. And we did it for a number of years.

Randy: And not just in Chicago, but Indiana and Wisconsin.

Rick: Yeah, sure, we would take a risk and go outside the borders of the city.

Randy: Did you usually have an idea ahead of time where you were heading?

Rick: Rarely. Occasionally, yeah. Someone would occasionally call and say, “Hey, I love your column. We have a really weird bowling alley in southwestern Michigan. Why don’t you come and see it?” But not often. We’d get in the car, parked underneath the *Tribune* building, or what was the *Tribune* then, and Charley would go, “Which way?” “I don’t know. What do you think?”

Randy: And take off. That’s great.

Rick: That was a way of really experiencing Chicago in a way that most people don’t. I mean, cops don’t—very few cab drivers will go all the way across the city. And we did that, we did *Sidewalks*, and then one year we interviewed every one of the 50 aldermen. I had asked each alderman—and they were impossible to get a hold of, it was the most exhausting year I’ve ever had—

Randy: Well, they were so *busy*.

Rick: Oh, yeah, helping people get new garbage cans. They wouldn’t get back to me and wouldn’t get back to me, and I had asked each of them, for photographic purposes, “Choose something in your ward that is really meaningful to you. Could be your grammar school. Maybe the candy store you went to as a child. Maybe an apartment you grew up in.” And most of them were, like, “Well, what’s meaningful is we’re putting a new sewer in at 74th and Drexel.” No, no. something more romantic or fun.” And then finally Ed Burke, God love him, said, “I want a picture of myself.” And I went, “OK. Fine. Perfect! We’ll do that!” And then that was it. All the other aldermen got pictures of themselves. But it was wonderful to go around and see the city like that. Because no one gets a chance to do that. And I was paid to do it!

Randy: Such a great idea. How do you get most of your ideas? You have people sending them to you? Do you just walk around and look at things? Do you have a notebook and jot them down?

Rick: Some of it, I've been doing radio so long, sometimes I will interview someone on the radio, and I'll think, God, this would make a good story for print. The radio show is fed. Some of my newspaper work—I'm trying to think—the last thing I wrote Tuesday was about the Bughouse Square debates, which I used to host when Studs died, and how they changed, and what does that mean? And there's a lot going on, and it's the oldest park in the city, and it used to be a home to lunatics.

Randy: And the spirit and ashes of Studs are there.

Rick: The ashes of Studs and Ida are there, buried—I don't know exactly where.

That's a good question. You know, I'll read a book and think, This is worth writing about. Claes Oldenburg died, and we don't run in the *Tribune*—*sadly*— the number of obituaries we used to. We did run one of him, but it barely mentioned that he grew up here, for Christ's sake! I knew he had gone to the Latin School. I knew he had lived on Crilly Court, which was in my neighborhood. And I had done a story about the bat, and I was out there as a young reporter when they erected his big bat on Madison Street. And I'm thinking, Wait, this guy deserves more than this.

Randy: I made a pilgrimage there this weekend when I heard he had died. I hadn't seen it in a long time.

Rick: The bat's cool! I like the bat. And the great thing is that Blair Kamin, the architecture critic, who initially called it ludicrous called me today and said, "Rick, I did call it ludicrous, but it's really growing on me." And I said, "Good for you, Blair. Good for you for admitting it."

They come at me from everywhere. I mean from everywhere.

Randy: I know that with the radio, you probably get a lot of PR pitches and so on.

Rick: Most that I ignore.

Randy: Did doing the radio show have any influence on your print writing?

Rick: No. Well, occasionally, I would steal parts of a print piece from a radio interview. And I am a long-form interview guy. I'm not one of those [speaking quickly], "Hey, what's your book about?" So it's easy for me to incorporate some of the interview I've done on the air in a print piece. Not often, but occasionally I will re-interview someone. Radio's been interesting. I mean, I'm glad that it's only two hours a week. I couldn't read a 400-page book a day. In any kind of real radio time, it is a series for four- or five-minute interviews. That's not what I do.

Randy: I guess what I was thinking about in terms of your writing process is that the one thing about radio is, you know you've got an audience out there. You said earlier that you don't really think about the audience when you are writing. Do you think about the audience when you're on the radio?

Rick: No. For me, it's a very weird—to have a Sunday morning show, as I have had for a decade or more, and a Sunday evening show as I have had, I don't know who's listening. I know I have some loyal listeners who will always write in and say, "Great interview!" But no.

Randy: I was amazed that when you would interview me, for instance about Story Week, I would get calls and emails, "Oh, I caught you at 6:45!"

Rick: Well, that's one of the things still about WGN. There are people who've had WGN for 40 years in their house and never turned it off! I like that, and I'm glad for that because it gives me a sense that there is an audience out there that's listening to whatever it is that I'm saying.

Randy: But it wouldn't be any different if you didn't have an audience?

Rick: No. I'd be interviewing interesting people. Interesting to me. And it's nice to get people in, instead of saying, "Hey, I'd just like to talk to you for my own benefit." They'd go, "Fuck you, I'm busy!" "Well, you can be on the radio."

Randy: And there might be somebody up at 6:45!

Rick: So it gives you this modest bit of clout, I suppose, to get people in. And to interview somebody for 45 minutes on the radio, even with commercials, is really worthwhile.

Randy: Yes, and fun. It's that passion, right?

Rick: Yes, indeed, even for the guests.

Randy: I think that one of the things I'm always struck by—well, two things that drive your interviews. One is your own curiosity.

Rick: Yeah!

Randy: You're just curious about people.

Rick: Well, I've never had a list of ten questions, for anybody. You know, because you'd have a list of ten questions, and, "Then you grew up in Topeka, Kansas." "Yeah, but then we moved after my mama killed my daddy." And you go, "OK, and then where did you go to school?" And you go, Wait a minute, that's not. . . . Of course, I have in my head some things I want to know, but I trust myself. If I can't have a conversation with somebody for 25, 35, 45 minutes, I shouldn't be doing what I do.

Randy: The other thing, in addition to your curiosity, is your generosity. I am always impressed by how you foreground the interviewee. You make sure you get the title of the book in. You make sure people know when the event is.

Rick: That's kind of Radio 101. I had to learn that, frankly.

Randy: But you're also generous in that you ask questions that draw people out, not lay them out.

Rick: Oh, no.

Randy: But other people will do that.

Rick: Oh, sure. More so than ever these days. You know, what I do is not adversarial. It would be real easy, "Hi. You know Bill Schmo is here from the American Nazi Party." No, thank you!

Randy: Not interested!

Rick: Not interested. And the other thing I try to do is to have people on who don't have the publicity machine behind them, who *need* promotion, who *need*—Jamie O'Reilly is a good example. She doesn't have any fucking money for advertising or anything. And she's an interesting, wonderful person.

Randy: Right.

[Break for drinks.]

Randy: It was September 2020 that you wrote your column about getting Covid.

Rick: Yes,

Randy: And surviving it. And it was not an easy voyage.

Rick: I got Covid in March of 2020, before most people got Covid. And it was quite serious. I was the second person admitted to the Northwestern Hospital Covid ICU section. And it was terrifying. It was pleasant on one level, because no one else was around, I had a nice room, I had a TV. I'm watching CNN, and everybody who is getting Covid is dying, on a ventilator and dying. There's a lot of debate the first two days about whether I should be on a ventilator or not. And I kept telling them, "Doctor, please, please, yes I'm having trouble breathing, but I don't want to go on a ventilator. Because, literally, all I was seeing was dead people."

Randy: It was like when somebody went on a ventilator, that was pretty much it.

Rick: Yeah. And they didn't know what Covid was, nobody knew what Covid was. I certainly didn't. So I was there for five, five-and-a-half days, and they said, "Well, you can go home." And it was a very debilitating disease. Kate, my longtime love-of-my-life girlfriend, had to move out. And friends brought groceries and left them in front of the door. It was a tough week, a very tough week.

Randy: And could you breathe?

Rick: With difficulty. I could barely walk. I mean, it was like having the worst flu I've ever had. It knocked me out and made me weak and sleeping 20 hours a day, unable to concentrate. Naturally, I had to call the office and say, "I'm sick, man. I can't write for a while." And they said, "You have Covid? You've gotta write about this. You've gotta write about this." And I go, "That's not what I do. There are fucking people *dying*. I'm not going to say, "Ooh, I was sick for five days and in the hospital." "People will love it!" I go, "No, not I."

Randy: Well, you don't write about yourself.

Rick: I don't. Not much. Not much. But, some months later—the recovery was long, it was hard to walk, hard to do a lot of things—I don't know, a few months later, a friend called me from the paper and said, "Rick, how are you feeling? How's everything?" I hadn't heard from him, a copyeditor. I said, "I'm fine. Don't worry." "Were you worried?" "Yeah." "I don't think you know this. The paper had Chris Jones write your obituary." And I said, "Excuse me?" "Yeah, I just read it." "Oh, get the fuck out of here." I go, "OK, you've got to send it to me." "Oh, I can't. I'll get in trouble." I said, "Figure out a way. Copy it, email it to me." And I read it, and it was shit. I mean, I love Chris, and much of it was very flattering, but much of it was also totally wrong. Totally wrong.

Randy: You want accuracy on your own obituary?

Rick: Yeah, really. I've written obituaries for Mike Royko, Gene Siskel, Roger Ebert, Tim Weigel, Maggie Daley, Ann Landers—I mean, I've written a lot of obituaries in my life, and pride myself on getting it right. *That* is what finally compelled me to finally write a story about what it was like to have Covid.

Randy: It was the obituary.

Rick: Yes.

Randy: Oh I didn't realize that. I thought it was just people pressuring you. I remember telling you myself that I thought you ought to write about it.

Rick: No, I fought off the pressure from the editors, because it's just not me. But I could not resist. Plus by that September, I was feeling a little bit better. I was pretty sure I wasn't going to die. But that was something, to read your own obituary—having been a

furious obituary writer over the years.

Randy: Well, it's sobering.

Rick: Sobering is the word. Yes, sobering is the word.

Randy: And who the hell wants to be sober at a time like that?

Rick: Oh, man. It wasn't just sobering. In a way, it was really shocking, and if I had been a different sort of person, I would have said to the editor—and they were shocked that I had found this thing—what I should have said is, “OK, I feel pretty good now, but let me write this. I'll take over here from Chris.”

Randy: Well, writing your obituary, what has been the after-effect?

Rick: Of Covid?

Randy: Yeah, physically, or even more to the point here, anything in the way you approach life?

Rick: Oh [*Laughs*], yeah, I'd like to say, “I take each moment more precious than before.” I've always taken each moment as a precious thing, certainly each day as a precious thing, because I wake up, and on that day, I am going to read something new, meet someone new, I'm going to listen to something new, I'm going to see something new. That, I think, is the adventure of life.

Randy: And then write something new.

Rick: That's not the adventure, but in a sense—that's a very interesting observation—in a sense, the writing about such things and telling other people is the thank you to life. For allowing me to have met a peanut vendor on the exit ramp of the Eisenhower Expressway. To have gotten to know the Sianis family. I mean, I think that's one of the things that kept Studs alive until 96. All of his brothers died in their forties. I don't go to bed thinking, “Oh gee, who am I going to meet who is so exciting tomorrow?” But when I get up, foggy as I might be, after a couple of cups of coffee, I think, OK, what do I get to do today? It is exciting, life. It is exciting.

Randy: Exactly. When I was listening to you interview Don Evans—this may be related—about the new poetry collection, *Wherever I'm At*, you asked him a question that made me curious about your own view. It had to do with how he was picking the poems. You were asking him about whether they had a spiritual sense to them. And is that something that you feel in some way, that there's a spiritual part to writing—or to living—either one?

Rick: There probably is to living. I'm not sure there is to my writing. I'm not a religious person. My mother was a wildly lapsed Catholic, and my father was a much more interestingly lapsed Jew because he had lived through World War II and couldn't draw

on religion with what he saw. But no, I— [Pauses] That's a really good question. I suppose occasionally you could say that there's something spiritual about life in general.

Randy: Well, that's what made me think of it. Because you were talking about people, what's new and what you can find that's interesting.

Rick: Well, the thing is that when I get up—and I have had some boring days in my life—but I have to think that during any day I have had of these 70 years, something has happened that has enriched me, either to a huge extent or to a very minor extent, that has taught me about the joy, pain, and beauty and ugliness of life. You know, we all get—whatever anyone else thinks of it—we get only one shot at this, right? You know this as well as I do. You get one shot. And if you don't take advantage of it—fuck you.

Randy: I was thinking about Wordsworth. Somebody described Wordsworth's poetry as constantly trying to reconstitute hope. And you mentioned hope earlier, and I am wondering if that attitude, or that sense, is part of what teaches you ways to reconstitute hope in the midst of all the craziness.

Rick: Oh yeah. Studs, one of his last books—Studs just kept churning them out, was *Hope Dies Last*. And I think that that is absolutely true. I just spoke to a dear, dear friend who told me that she has cancer. And the alternative to crying, wailing, is to try to be positive, optimistic, and hopeful. You know, I'm not a doctor, and she was very hopeful. And that encouraged me, too. Life is too short. I don't know if I want to live to be 96 like Studs. Those last couple months were tough. But it was a vibrant, vibrant life.

Randy: Here's another question. I was thinking about you and Chicago. I am curious about your view of the writing community in Chicago. At the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame, we're very interested in promoting and encouraging writers and recognizing great ones like yourself.

Rick: Well, as anyone who writes knows, writing is tough. I mean it's gotten increasingly tough because the publishing biz has gotten increasingly tough. I think and know some astonishing writers in this town. Whether they are going to be the next Saul Bellow, the next James T. Farrell, the next Ben Hecht, the next Scott Turow, I don't know. The publishing business is such a weird kind of crapshoot these days. The *Tribune* does not have anything approaching a book section. Neither does the *Sun-Times*. Those used to be the main way that the *vox populi* would come to know books. There used to be saloons where writers would gather to bitch and moan and compliment each other and insult each other, and that does not seem to exist much anymore. It's become, I think, a more solitary pursuit. You have some writers, and I could name them, who are couples and who must help one another. You have writing groups that have replaced the bitching and moaning groups at saloons. But I still believe there are so many stories to be told in this time, Randy, so many stories to be told from this town to the world

that again, not to overuse this, I am hopeful. I am hopeful. As you well know, the urge to communicate with one another is as old as fucking cave drawings, for God's sake. And whatever form it may take—I, for one, am not fond of reading ebooks and I am not fond of reading shit on my phone, but if that's the way of the future, that's the way of the future.

Randy: Is there anything identifiable as intrinsic to Chicago writing?

Rick: I'm not sure that there is anymore. I mean, there was a real muscle and sinew and hard edge, even with Bellow, that seemed to identify one as a Chicago writer. You think of James T. Farrell and Saul Bellow and Nelson Algren and Willard Motley and all these other characters. You know, Scott Turow is a great writer. Sara Paretsky is a great writer. But I don't know if they are in that lengthy—there is no Chicago road anymore that people travel on. Those who do generally, as I have noted, tend to fuck up.

Randy: I think that people feel generally nourished, though, in Chicago, that they can actually learn and grow as writers. So it may be more important for the younger writers.

Rick: No question, because I still think—what I've noticed about Chicago, as opposed to some fucking snake pit like New York, is that there is a nurturing aspect to the writing community here.

Randy: A lot of reading series. A lot of oral storytelling.

Rick: Yes. A lot of organizations. There's a lot of oral storytelling. There's a kid named Nestor Gomez.

Randy: I know Nestor.

Rick: I met Nestor. I was giving some speech at the Cultural Center about Studs or something. And this kid comes up to me, barely speaks English, and he goes, "I write the stories." And I go, "That's great. You should keep writing stories." And he goes, "I send them to you." I go, "OK, here's my address." And he sent me these stories, and they were really good. And this guy has gone on to win The Moth storytelling contest, like, 50 times! And publish a couple of small books, about driving an Uber or something. It's out there, but it doesn't exist much anymore, the avenues to get those into the general public. That's the problem. Is there going to be another Scott Turow or Sara Paretsky emerging from Chicago? There's this guy named Brad Thor, you know who he is? He writes these thrillers; he sells millions of books. I know him, I've met him, and he's a nice kid. But it's very hard to have that kind of impactful literary career that was once possible here. You know it's hard enough to make a living. You know, Audrey [Niffenegger] is a great writer, Rebecca [Makkai]. . .

Randy: Stuart [Dybek]

Rick: Yes, Stuart's a great writer. But do you think Stuart is making any money from his books?

Randy: Yeah, I get that. One of the things we're trying to do with the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame is think more broadly about how we get Chicago writing out there, not just in the United States but abroad, and it becomes known. We have an incredible number of writers, and a lot of them are great.

Rick: What I would need to do is go back in time and be the age I am now and talk to my father and Studs and Willard Motley and Jim Jones and be in Riccardo's in 1952. Even in 1952, there were a lot more people writing that never emerged, never made money at it, never scored, and I think the same is true now. I am an old kind of hippie in the sense that I believe that talent will out. But that is certainly not the case anymore. I have read so many great writers in this town who sold ten books.

Randy: Well, thank you for doing this, Rick. It's just such a pleasure to talk.

Rick: It's always fun to be with you.

Randy: And congratulations again on your award.

Now, can I buy you a drink?

Rick: You having one?

Randy: Sure

Rick: I'll go get Bobby.

...what I've noticed about Chicago, as opposed to some fucking snake pit like New York, is that there is a nurturing aspect to the writing community here.



Photo by 8 Eyes Photography

Thanking My Lucky Stars for Rick Kogan

By Jamie O'Reilly

I'm not sure when we became aware of each other, or when we became *friends*. I'd learned that high profile entertainment *personalities* had people constantly nipping at their heels for attention. I assumed that the charming Mr. Kogan's journalistic family legacy was well known. His father was the celebrated newspaperman Herman Kogan. His mother, Marilew, was a writer and journalist as well. I figured he had a lot on his plate and that the decades of experience in print and radio he'd acquired asserted who and what he could put his head to. I saw myself as pretty insignificant in that scheme of things.

That didn't turn out to be the case.

In addition to our newspaper connection (my uncle and great-uncle wrote for many of the same papers,) we'd both fraternized with the theater and progressive crowd. He knew my late father James, a gifted larger-than-life actor/director, who contributed to the rise of the off-Loop theater scene in Chicago. With his own father's shadow to come out from under, he knew from whence I came.

Rick came to several shows my late musical partner Michael Smith and I re-staged at the Chicago Cultural Center in the mid 90s. I especially recall his joy at seeing our musical revue *Hello Dali: From the Sublime to the Surreal* (a songwriter's view of painters) which went on to be a box office hit during Victory Gardens Regional Tony Award-winning season.

I met Rick during a cultural heyday in Chicago. A period I called the Weisberg/Medici era, a time before cell phones, digitalization and social media made self-promotion de rigueur. Those days we waited for the phone to ring to get a gig and I was teaching self-employed artists how to stay afloat. I was the vice president of the Friends of the Chicago Cultural Center when the old library was saved from being turned into condos.

Programming from the CCC drew attention to the vital community of area artists, many of whom, like me, while hard to pigeonhole, were darn good at what we did. Lois Weisberg, Peter McDowell, Colleen Sims (Rick's former spouse) and others made sure we got paid.

RADIO DAYS

In the mid-nineties Rick began hosting *The Sunday Papers* morning radio show on WGN. After seeing (and liking) several of my musical revues in area theaters, he invited me on as a fairly regular guest, chatting with me about Chicago culture, the role of artist in society, and promoting my shows. Though prone to hyperbole, I found

his appreciation of my work and philosophy sincere, and benefited greatly from his generous imprimatur. Saying it changed my life is no exaggeration.

“I heard you on Rick’s show,” people stopped me and said. “He seems like a really nice guy. And he sure likes you.”

The thing about Rick is, if he liked you and what you did, you were friends for life. His loyalty knows no bounds. His is just the kind of enthusiasm you want on a bad day, or year, or decade as an artist.

THE CIRCLE EXPANDS

Rick also curated the Notable Chicagoan Series at the former celebrity hotspot Maxim’s in the Gold Coast, which had been acquired by the city and has now been sold. I was surprised and honored to be chosen one of his guests.

Our circle of connections ebbed and flowed over the years. He narrated several evenings of the sweet *The Gift of the Magi* musical Michael Smith and I created, I was written-up several times in his “Sidewalks” column in the *Chicago Tribune*, he gave me a great quote for my website, and I continue to appear on radio with him.

CARRYING THE TORCH

Arguably, the most significant connection which Rick and I cherish, and what united us as friends, was the late Studs Terkel. The story goes it was Studs who took Herman Kogan out for a drink the night Rick was born. Studs includes Herman in the Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Good War*.

It was Studs, all fired-up who approached me, decades ago, after hearing me sing *Annie Laurie*, a ballad the Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons sang in his prison cell. I sang both that Scottish ballad AND the songs of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, (in my show *Pasion: Songs of the Spanish Civil War*). He introduced me to people that way.

“Jamie O’Reilly! She sings Parson’s *Annie Laurie* and *Freiheit*, you know from the Lincolns.”

THANKING MY LUCKY STARS

In the last years of his life, I saw Studs with Rick a fair amount at birthday tributes and city events, at his 90th birthday party at the Chicago History Museum. He was emcee at Studs’ Memorial at Preston Bradley Hall, when I sang *Annie Laurie* upon his passing. That day and many times to follow, Rick spoke of his mentor/friend with deep pride and love.

In the wake of the topsy-turvy events the country has contended with these recent years, I think of Studs a lot, about his passion for the underdog, his belief in the individual, his ethics, and of the passionate power of the stories he told.

The way I see it, Rick Kogan carries that chronicler-torch for all of us Chicagoans, with his near-feverish love of this city and its people, his stunning capacity to take in — and make sense of — the glut of who's-who and what's-what information he's always juggling, and his deft way of navigating loaded subject matter.

What it comes down to is Rick has a keen awareness of what makes a good story and the journalistic prowess to write about it. His efforts unflinching. And we are all the better for it!

This morning, I think about a promise I made to Studs back in 2002, to learn his friend Mahalia Jackson's majestic hymn *Eye on the Sparrow*. And the promise I made in that same conversation, to *keep* fighting for what is right and good.

I thank my lucky stars that Rick Kogan is my friend. A kind of harried knight in the darkness, completing a quest, shining a light on truth, bringing us treasure.

*My first lecture hall, an English lecture hall at Circle, was 400 people, and we were assigned to read *The Red Badge of Courage*, which I had read as a freshman at Latin. And I just decided I didn't think I needed college. It was an arrogant kind of decision.*



Rick Kogan and Chicago: Perfectly Matched

By Patrick T. Reardon

In late 1999, Rick Kogan and I were walking north on Astor Street through the Gold Coast, and, if memory serves, Rick was telling me about long ago summers when, as a boy, he would stroll down this street and listen to the Cubs game on the radio from the succession of open windows.

I can't completely vouch for the accuracy of that recollection because it's the sort of story that can be told and has been told about many neighborhoods in the days before the ubiquity of air conditioning.

Of course, the Gold Coast isn't just any neighborhood. In the 1990s, it was the second wealthiest community in the United States, trailing only Central Park East in Manhattan. And it was by far the most affluent neighborhood in Chicago and more than twice as wealthy as the richest suburb with a similar number of residents, Highland Park.

Rick and I were researching a story for the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* where we both worked. I realize now that the two of us — Rick's a couple years younger than I am — were midway through our writing careers at that point although who thinks about such stuff when you're in your 40s and getting paid to do what you love.

For me, our walk through the Gold Coast was a visit to a rarified place of power and luxury with scores of architecturally significant structures, including the home of the Roman Catholic Cardinal and the former Playboy Mansion.

For Rick, the 28 blocks were home.

He'd grown up and spent his life in and around the Gold Coast. He'd attended Latin School. His mother Marilew — he always referred to her by her first name — lived on one of the side streets we passed or somewhere nearby. He knew people in this building and that building and that building. He talked about the Ambassador East Hotel as other Chicagoans talk about the corner tavern. In fact, in 1983, he'd written a book about it, *Sabers & Suites*, one of nine he's published.

It was unusual that we were working together on a story. As a reporter, Rick has always been a lone wolf, writing from his own enthusiastic, ever-curious perspective, whether as Dr. Night Life (during his tenure at the *Sun-Times*) or as an obit writer for the likes of Mike Royko, Studs Terkel and Roger Ebert (all of whom he counted as friends) or as feature writer highlighting some interesting and often obscure person or some aspect of Chicago history. The one major collaboration of his career was his long-running "Sidewalks" column for the *Tribune Magazine* with Chuck Osgood. Even there, Rick did the words and Chuck the photos.

I don't know which editor came up with the idea of the two of us doing the Gold Coast piece. When it was suggested, I thought: Great! We sat a few desks from each

other in the magazine area on the 5th floor of Tribune Tower where all the Features staff worked. And we often kibbitzed together.

Rick and I share a deep love and knowledge of Chicago. I doubt that, during our time together in Features, anyone else in the building knew as much about the city as we did, and very few people outside the building. I got to know the warp and woof of Chicago through a lot of street reporting and book reading. Rick was the son of a man, Herman, who wrote a lot of the books I was reading, and he grew up around such people as Nelson Algren and Studs Terkel. And, like a younger Studs, Rick was constantly learning more about the city by talking to anyone and everyone. He's always been a voracious listener.

And, as they say in the Big Leagues, he's good in the clubhouse. He's a personable guy, and, when we were together in Features, Rick was ever ready to help, not just me, but anyone who might wander by his desk, looking for some background or a random fact. (Many years after I'd left the *Tribune*, I called Rick to track down a Royko quote for a book I was doing on the elevated Loop, and, sure enough, he pointed me in the right direction.)

Rick and I have a lot of overlap in our knowledge of Chicago, but he is much stronger in the areas of writers, entertainers, bars, restaurants and the social scene. My strengths are in social policy, demographics, politics and the broad umbrella of urban affairs. So, it made sense to have us work together on the Gold Coast story.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, the 5,000-word piece reads smoothly with no indications that one guy wrote this paragraph and the other guy another paragraph. Rick and I are strong professional writers, and it was to be expected that the story would flow.

I'm sure I wrote the paragraph that begins, "Consider this..." because that's a construction I often use. And I'm sure that the sections with the nuts and bolts about the wealth and borders and history of the neighborhood came from me.

And I'm absolutely sure that Rick wrote the sections in which residents talk about their lives there. Such as 80-year-old Yvonne Pen who, as a student at the Goodman School of Drama, met and married her artist husband before settling in an 1880s three-story home where they raised a son who became a music professor and a composer-playwright-actress daughter.

And longtime resident and real estate agent Pat Study who recalled that, in the 1950s, the Gold Coast got kind of "slummy," well, at least relatively so. And a new resident Amy Koch who said, "I like the feeling of being young in a sophisticated place."

I had the sense back in 1999 and I still do that Rick didn't have to find the people he interviewed for the story. He knew them. They were part of his everyday life.

As was Abra Wilkin, the great-granddaughter of John D. Rockefeller, a longtime resident of the Gold Coast and, a decade before Rick, a graduate of the Latin School.

She and her husband Jim lived in a penthouse apartment on the top floors of a building on East Lake Shore Drive, and, when Rick interviewed the couple there, she told him that the Gold Coast had changed since the late 1980s.

“When I first moved in, there were no young people in the building, few in the area. Now you see babies in strollers and every morning the action below: the cars, the joggers, the occasional message written large in the sand on Oak Street Beach. . . . It tells you you are in a vibrant city.”

That “vibrant city” has been the focus of Rick Kogan’s reporting and writing for half a century. He was a vibrant presence in the newsroom we shared, and he’s been a vibrant voice revealing and celebrating Chicago for generations of Chicagoans.

In his obituary for Studs Terkel, Rick wrote that Chicago “perfectly matched — in its energy, its swagger, its charms, its heart — his own personality.”

The same can be said for Rick.

It could have been any of a dozen Chicago neighborhoods, for that is where to find simple pleasures in the middle of the day and out of the way—removed from commercial strips and busy thoroughfares. This is where the real Chicago lives.

From Sidewalks: Portraits of Chicago



The Way Forward

By Dave Hoekstra

A note from Rick Kogan always meant something to me.

I became a staff writer at the *Chicago Sun-Times* in the winter of 1985. Growing up in Chicago's western suburbs I had read Rick's work and the writing of his father Herman Kogan. I became acquainted with Rick during my early 1980s gig at the *Suburban Sun-Times*. However, by the time I landed on the fourth floor of the *Sun-Times* building at 401 N. Wabash, Rick had just departed for the *Chicago Tribune*. Rupert Murdoch had purchased the *Sun-Times* and Rick had no interest in seeing Sammy Davis, Jr. promote the new owner's "Wingo" giveaway games.

If memory serves, Rick had been doing a "Dr. Night Life" weekend column towards the end of his *Sun-Times* run. When I started at the *Sun-Times* I was cast in a similar role with a weekend column called "Nocturnal Journal." We had fun. We drank. We danced. Sometimes we ran into each other.

After work, many weary newspaper people would adjourn to the taverns around the near north *Sun-Times* building and Tribune Tower. I was always more of a Riccardo's guy than a Billy Goat guy. And of course, Rick is named Rick as a tribute to Riccardo. (The late owner Richard Novaretti, Sr. was also a dancer and painter.) But then Rick was also a Billy Goat guy because he sees no barriers. He would follow the genuine glow.

And now that we are each in the twilight of our careers, I celebrate the fact that Rick still signs off correspondence with "onward." Rick is one of the great chroniclers of Chicago history. He knows the city's past better than any Chicago journalist. He is as much of our fabric as green rivers in March and blue notes in December.

But he still looks onward.

This is what keeps Rick going.

Rick has written several books but his early 2000s *Sidewalks* series with former *Tribune* photographer Charles Osgood are the ones I return to. They are vivid collections of stories Rick and Charles did for the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, back when there was such a thing.

They honor Chicago's regular people doing rather regular things: a family-owned hardware store on Seventy-eighth Street, a guy who made a room-sized model of Wrigley Field, a man who spent a year taking pictures at bus stops, the dapper piano bar player Dave Green. These characters still visit my living room library. These words and pictures make me proud of Chicago's grit.

I was a Chicago newspaper nut growing up. My father brought home four newspapers (two mornings, two afternoons) on his daily commute on the old Burlington Northern Railroad. I loved the language of M.W. Newman, the wit of

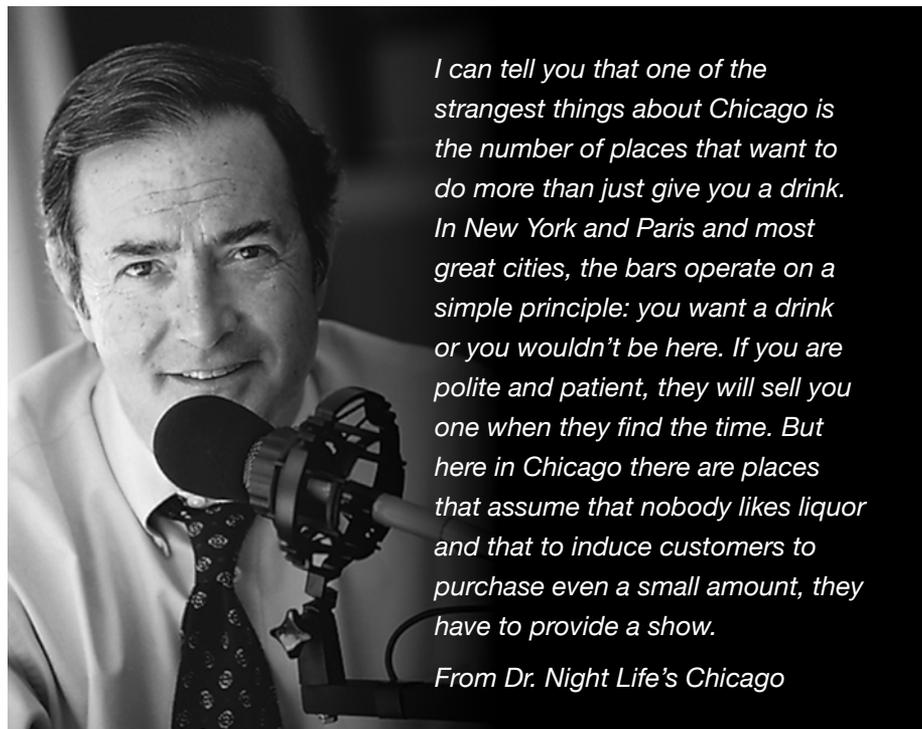
Paul Galloway, and Rick's understanding soul. I admire Rick's economy in writing and forward spirit in cynical times. He has been a cheerleader for so many artists, musicians, and writers. Rick has been supportive of my career offering praise and reality checks. In his deep smoky voice, Rick has called me "Sweetie" several times. And we weren't even drinking.

Rick is so gifted he could have moved on to another market. New York? That's a lot of attitude. Los Angeles? Too much glamour. Chicago is about an unfiltered heart. Rick has had a lifelong commitment to exploring our collective heartbeat.

Rick does not carry any pretense or deal with fancy manners. Like me, he does not have a college degree. I wonder if that has something to do with his plainspoken approach. We've never talked about that. But we have talked about our love of Chicago, our dislike of meddling editors, and the wobbly future of the newspaper business.

It makes me happy to hear that some other people in my media circles have adopted the "Onward" thing.

Because there is no other way to look at life.



I can tell you that one of the strangest things about Chicago is the number of places that want to do more than just give you a drink. In New York and Paris and most great cities, the bars operate on a simple principle: you want a drink or you wouldn't be here. If you are polite and patient, they will sell you one when they find the time. But here in Chicago there are places that assume that nobody likes liquor and that to induce customers to purchase even a small amount, they have to provide a show.

From Dr. Night Life's Chicago

Count on Rick

By Donna Seaman

When the *Chicago Tribune* lived in its own 1920s neo-Gothic Michigan Avenue skyscraper studded with stones from significant sites around the world, it filled floors with cubicle mazes bristling with sharp-eyed individuals who seemed to be doing ten things at once without being too busy to give an awed interloper a raking once-over. I was honored to be writing freelance reviews for Elizabeth Taylor, editor of the newspaper's prestigious Sunday book review section. Liz had asked me to come by to look through the books she was hoping to assign--the same sort of enticing cache I routinely sorted through at *Booklist*. As I walked the gauntlet of assessing stares, fast-typing fingers, and on-the-phone murmurings, I was assaulted by flashbacks of every awkward moment and rejection I'd endured since kindergarten. When I finally reached the distant books precinct, there stood a guy clearly bemused at my discomfort, but not unkindly so. What Rick Kogan said to me I don't remember, but it was delivered with a teasing gruffness I instantly trusted. I laughed with relief and gratitude. I soon learned that Rick is always as generous as he is astute and witty.

I've always admired and been fascinated by Rick, from his deep roots in Chicago culture, thanks, at the start, to his journalist parents, Marilew and Herman Kogan, to how he managed to keep up with Chicago's creative spirits without ever losing his edge. Visual artists, writers, musicians, actors, directors, filmmakers, teachers, chefs, sports figures, media folks, proprietors of bookstores, bars, theaters, and interesting shops, not-for-profit leaders, community activists, and community characters--anyone and everyone doing something to keep the city vital and vivid and itself. His energy and versatility are phenomenal. I've benefited directly from Rick's literary and artistic zeal, thrilled to be interviewed by him on several occasions, and to have him write about my book, *Identity Unknown: Rediscovering Seven American Women Artists*, with gratifying expertise and perception.

Rick is an incisive and rollicking interviewer, at once respectful and irreverent, feeding you a lifeline with each question, drawing you forward so that you can articulate your best self. His thorough understanding of what you've done and what it took to do it, his pleasure in the volleys of conversation, his mordant wit, and his voracious and tenacious enthusiasm are all in play. Idealistic and pragmatic, compassionate and caustic, ever-curious and shrewd, he brings the same verve and clarity to the page, along with his unfailing storytelling chops. Hard-boiled precision and mischievous high spirits make for a heady narrative cocktail.

Rick is also a fine and provocative ringmaster, always a thrill to see in action. I particularly loved the Chicago Classics nights Rick orchestrated during the glory years of Story Week, a literary festival produced by the Fiction Writing Department at

Columbia College Chicago under the dynamic direction of department chair Randy Albers and artistic director Sheryl Johnston. Rick brought a motley crew of booklovers together to read from the works of past, perhaps forgotten Chicago writers. The result was enlightening and transporting.

Rick's ongoing commitment in print and on the air to his fellow creative and resourceful Chicagoans is one of the city's superpowers. Yet for all his accomplishments, so righteously celebrated with the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's Fuller Award, Rick Kogan is wryly self-deprecating, as true heroes tend to be.

Congratulations, Rick!! And thank you for every rescue and every inspiration.

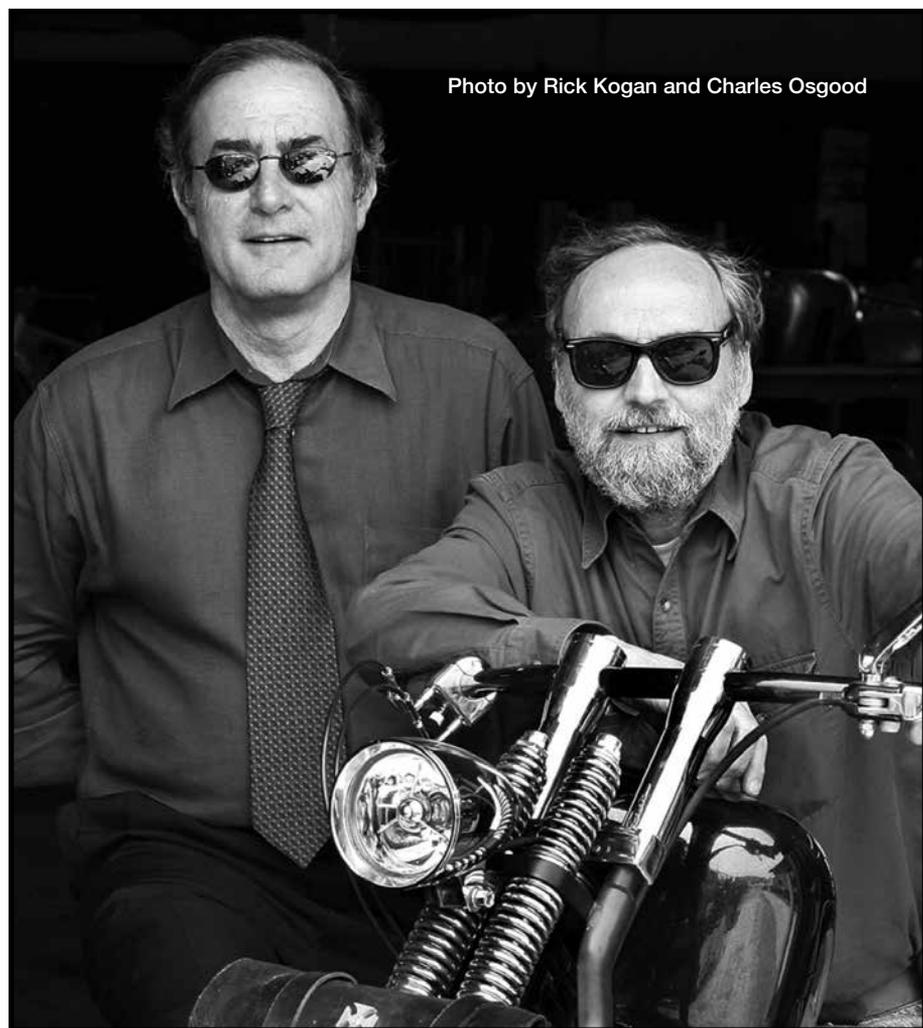


Photo by Rick Kogan and Charles Osgood

My Boss' Son

By Gary Houston

I have this picture in my memory from the brief time in the '80s when Rick lived east of my apartment on Cornelia. It was winter and the snow piled high on the street parkways and its flakes gusted in excited swirls in concert with the howls of the season. He was with his partner at the time, Jennifer, and their German Shepherd named Deadline, boisterous and stumbling, Rick talking in his laughter, smoking, coughing as they ran the best they could homeward on the icy sidewalk of Elaine Place, surely inebriated. You could not smell the whiskey but you thought you heard it traveling on their cigarette smoke. This coursing through the city snow remains a picture of a kind of attained happiness, for there had been no guarantee it would be Rick's.

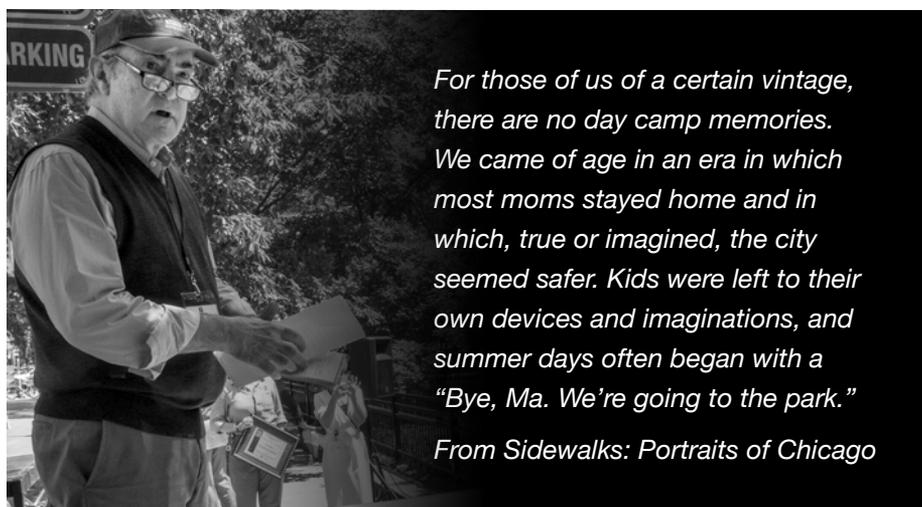
He would visit the cubicle where I worked under his legendary dad Herman Kogan at the *Sun-Times* (where now stands the Trump Tower). We edited the Sunday supplement variously called over the years Showcase and Show, always with the subsection Book Week, with transitions from rotogravure to run of press, hot type to cold and swiftly what they were calling electronic editing that meant typewriters had given way to computers they were calling vdts, or visual display terminals. Herman stayed on long enough to take the paper's "classes" on how to handle vdts, but in 1976 he decided to retire, leaving me pleased he'd wanted me to take the section over though considerably unmoored. The powers that be, or were, had other ideas, and early the next year I left too. Perhaps it was kismet.

From my first day in late 1969 it often felt like a family affair. Herman's vigorously activist wife Marilew phoned often, often getting me, and we saw a great deal of Rick and his younger brother Mark. Other visitors included Studs, Petrakis, Cyrus Colter and from down the hall at the *Daily News* came Royko, Christiansen and Sydney J. Harris. That's not to forget the *Sun-Times* reporters, critics, Field Enterprises bigwigs and...I'll steal a trick from Rick whose column today on independent bookstores cuts short a series of names with three dots and the words "it's a long list." He was 18 when I was hired and already keen about journalism. How could he not be? You could see he was going to join it very soon. I hope I have the order right. There was the magazine Christiansen left the *Daily News* to edit; when it folded they both were back at the *Daily News*, but then it folded and Rick was at the *Sun-Times*, in effect in my old job but with a different supervisor. Then the *Tribune*. I repeat: I hope I have that right.

Herman died in March, 1989, at my age now, 75, but far, far more accomplished. He was a father and loving husband, Marine, a U of C intellectual, illuminating writer and Chicago historian, theatre critic, impeccable and demanding editor and a fearless man. It was no fun to face his wrath, which he always made up for soon and with great warmth. A month later a memorial was held at Newberry Library. Back then there was

a fashion, I'll call it, of memorials being celebratory--often termed "a celebration of a life"--instead of an occasion for grieving. (In truth it's a fashion that hasn't gone away.) Jazz was piped into the large room with the explanation that Herman loved the music. Many of those named above spoke, but as I stood in a back corner I wondered what Rick would say. When he finally stood behind the lectern he did not look celebratory. He said something like, "I am not in a mood to celebrate. I am damned angry that my father died. I am damned angry to lose him..." And he was, and as he went on about it I cheered inwardly. With new approaches come new understandings, and one should respect a new approach, even to death, even in celebration, if it contributes a new meaning to a life. But a matter of fashion, of following a trend? No. And of course the death of someone you have loved all your life can indeed make you angry.

"Let them be well used," says Hamlet of plays and players, "for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." In the long trajectory to follow Rick has been our chronicler, the Studs of our time, if you will. With the inquisitiveness of the bright pupil he puts what he already knows in a box in order to merely, sincerely probe, in print and on radio, politics, literature, music, theatre, the fine arts, bars, eateries, public health, sports and above all, rather like Herman, history. Even, to use one of his titles, sidewalks. Perhaps that is why my mind has kept alive that snowy sidewalk scene on Elaine Place. It makes me appreciate where he went from there. He is one of those forces that stitches and glues together as much as any one person can this complex, stimulating, divided city.



*For those of us of a certain vintage,
there are no day camp memories.
We came of age in an era in which
most moms stayed home and in
which, true or imagined, the city
seemed safer. Kids were left to their
own devices and imaginations, and
summer days often began with a
"Bye, Ma. We're going to the park."
From Sidewalks: Portraits of Chicago*

Motivate

By Nestor Gomez

When I was a little kid living in Guatemala, I approached my uncle and asked him to read a story I had written.

This was a huge thing for me, for several reasons.

Reason number one: my uncle was a school teacher and I looked up to him.

Reason number two: back then, I was extremely shy, and I often shied away from talking to people. It took a lot of courage for me to ask my uncle to read my story.

Reason number three: Due to a severe stutter (the reason for my shyness), writing was my preferred form of communication. Back then I feared that I was never going to be able to speak properly, but I hoped that at least through my stories I could communicate my feelings, hopes and ideas with others.

But my uncle not only read my story, he also provided harsh commentary. I know that he probably meant well, but at the age of eight years old, hearing (among other things) that I had committed too many orthographic errors, my characters were weak and boring, and my plot made no sense was a bit too much, and it shattered my dreams of becoming a writer.

Although I continued writing, I banished my writing to the confines of my underwear drawer. Over the years, the occasions when my poems or stories dared to see the light of day were far in between.

Fast forward to March 2014, many years after my family had emigrated to Chicago. Rick Kogan was doing a reading at the Cultural Center. To be honest, I had no idea who Rick Kogan was, but my wife—who just happens to be an English teacher—and I had just started dating, and she had gotten us tickets to that event. I went to the event reluctantly, but I was glad she had convinced me to tag along.

Mr. Kogan did a reading which captivated the audience, including me. After the event I approached Mr. Kogan and made a comment about how I had wanted to be a writer. To my surprise, he gave me his email address and suggested that I send him one of my stories.

At home, I told my wife about my conversation with Mr. Kogan, but she warned me:

“He probably was just being polite, I doubt that he has time to answer your email, let alone read your story.”

“Well, I have nothing to lose,” I responded, and I decided to write to him anyway.

To my surprise, a couple of days later, Mr. Kogan not only responded to my email, but he actually read my story. I know because he made some references to the story in his email, and he also encouraged me to continue writing.

Now, this is the part of the story where the novice writer gets motivated and goes on to become a successful writer. And yes, in a way that's what happened. I had become a kind of successful storyteller.

I know what you are thinking right now. That story was not very good. The plot was obvious and cliché. You are like my uncle now.

Because that's not the point of the story or where the story ends.

My example is just one of many. I am but one of hundreds, if not thousands, of the many people Mr. Kogan has helped, encouraged, and motivated through the years. His commitment to the advancement of the literary arts in Chicago is extensive and profound not only due to his body of work as on-line reporter, commentator, interviewer, writer, host for a variety of television and radio outlets, and much more but because of his constant and selfless support for emerging and fellow artists.

Look around this room tonight and you will see many people, including myself, who will always be grateful to Mr. Rick Kogan.

...it was an era when that work ethic is what—everybody I knew worked their ass off. They loved it too. And were passionate about it. They weren't doing it for money. They were doing it out of passion. And that ever, ever impressed me.

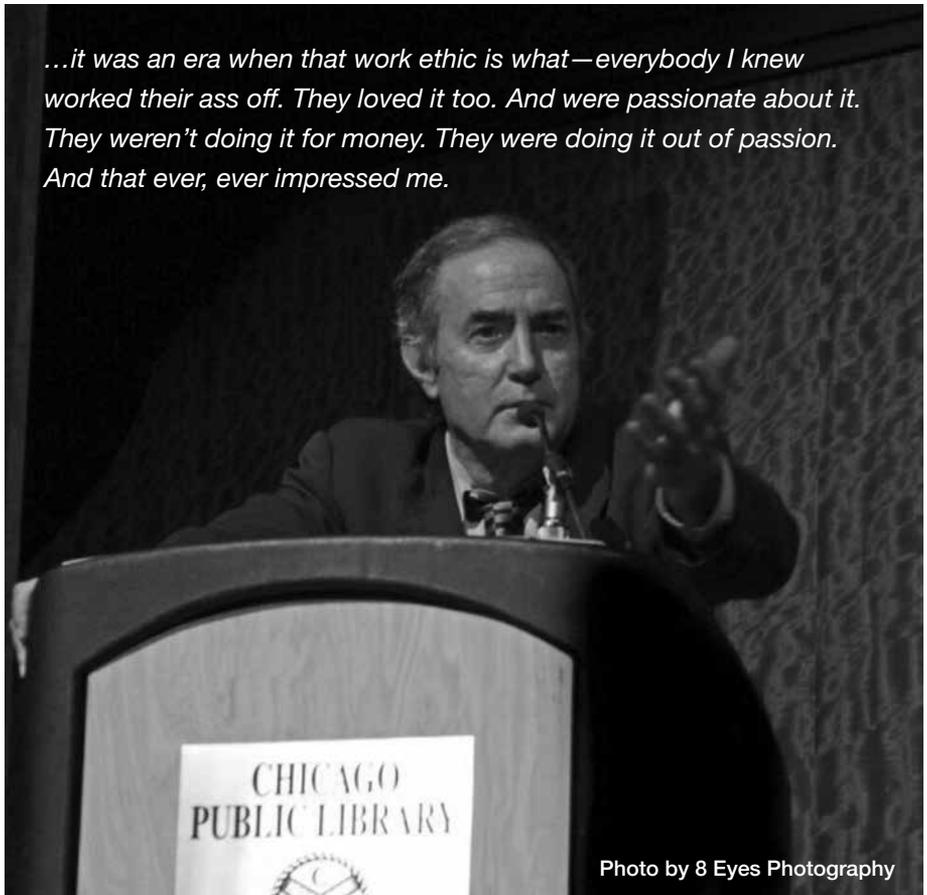


Photo by 8 Eyes Photography

Chicago's Great Exemplar

By David Mamet

My family is very close with Rick Kogan. He was the matchmaker at one of the great love stories of the twentieth century: my Dad and Royko.

He is the great exemplar (and second-generation chronicler) of The American Century in its purest state, which is to say, of Chicago. This purity, as seen by his fellow journalists, Dreiser, Frank Norris, and Finley Peter Dunne, is not that of morals, but of their absolute absence, which is to say, of our Human Condition.

This condition, prior to the destruction of the Newspaper, was known and acknowledged by anyone who lived west of Twelfth Avenue, New York. And, so, we readers smiled, and nodded at our daily dose of murder, corruption, folly, shame and sin; and those who didn't like one paper's particular brand of outrage, simply chose another; for they all told the same stories, but each pinned the blame on those with whose politics they differed. But they did not serve hypocrisy.

Rick writes, as Dr. Night Life, in *Sidewalks*, in his interviews in his books, about actual people, and we recognize them. Because he does.

He's part of the tradition of Ben Hecht's *1001 Afternoons in Chicago*, and Finley Peter Dunne's "Mr. Dooley," the newspaper writing of Will Rogers, Dorothy Kilgallen, and Eppie Lederer.

Strangers introduce themselves to me, announcing they're from Chicago; I ask what part, and am, invariably told "Wilmette."

Wilmette et al are not Chicago. They are close to Chicago. The Chicago of the Neighborhoods, of those neighborhoods of my youth, is aged-out. Those neighborhoods differed, in many ways, their beloved prejudices prime among them, but I think they shared the Chicago understanding of cause-and-effect: that the only true response to a request was either "sure," or "hell, no."

In his capacity of Food Critic for the Trib, Rick took me and mine to a new, hot, "you can't get in," joint on the West Side. He'd made a reservation for 7:00, we got their early, and waited through the hour, and through most of a second, while this or that group, notable, or friendly with the owner, was ushered in.

I steamed through what was to me an enormity of impertinence, I looked at Rick who was, as always, relaxed; finally, "enough of this vile impoliteness," I said (or something like that) and we walked out. As we left, the owner out on the sidewalk, was greeting some new late arrivals – ballplayers, I think, and gladhanding them into the joint.

"Rick," I said, "Lend me one of your cards." So he did. And I took the card to the owner. Card read: "Rick Kogan, Chief Food Critic, Chicago Tribune."

"I'm Rick Kogan," I said, "Food Critic of the Trib. We didn't ask for special

treatment, but made a reservation, just like ordinary folk. AND YET, you have shown preference to those who, demonstrably, did not have the foresight to reserve a spot.” (Or something like that.)

The Owner (did I mention that the place was rather far out West?) responded in rage, and with a complete disregard for linguistic nicety, that he had never in his life shown preference to any guest, and so on. And who knows how the thing may have ended, had I not looked over at Rick, like patience on a monument, and realized I was making a fool of myself in front of one of the few whose opinion I respected. His look said, “Yeah. We didn’t get in, and we’re hungry. Let’s get something to eat.”

Rick called in January to tell me that Dick Christiansen had died. Dick, along with some of us actors, writers, and directors, created the Chicago Theatre. “Rick,” I said, “here’s an idea: we get up a plaque and put it in the lobby of the Trib, on Michigan.”

We could, Rick said, but the Trib moved out of the Tower four years ago, and we’re now in some industrial park in Des Plaines or something like that.

Well, things change. But, should folks be around in five hundred years, and turn curious, they will not seek information on our time in the self-absorption of The Literate, but in the abstract and brief chronicles of those who had to make a deadline.

God Bless Rick Kogan.



TRIBUTES

Shining Through the Spaces

From his days as a high school football star at Mather, which made him King of West Rogers Park, to today, no other living Chicago journalist has written with a deeper sense of our city or a more lovely and expressive way of capturing its treasures and complexities than Rick Kogan has. He is a star not only as a print journalist, but also on the radio where he routinely shows himself to be an incisive and sympathetic interviewer.

Rick is the true heir to his father, Herman, a legendary Chicago author and journalist at the Chicago *Daily News* and *Sun-Times*. Rick shares not only his father's vocation, but also the same reverence for literature, and the same deeply humane spirit in their writing. Rick, without embarrassment, believes in human goodness and the fact that it resides in all of us, whatever the obstacles to its expression. In his personal life, his helping hand is always extended, whether to younger writers or the people he meets on the street. He is no Pollyanna. But somehow I always come away from what Rick writes in a mood of greater optimism, and always full of admiration for him as a stylist. He observes the reserved strictures of journalism but inevitably shining through the spaces between the careful words is a poet's soul.

Scott Turow

Rick Kogan Is Chicago History

When I was a terrified first-time author writing about Chicago history, Rick Kogan embraced me and my book with incredible kindness, enthusiasm, and generosity—and several memorable outings at the Billy Goat. As everyone at this gathering knows, Rick is a legend—not only for his decades of important, historic work in Chicago journalism, but for his unflagging support of the literary community. I will forever be grateful for his sage advice, friendship, and careful reads of my rough drafts, and I can't think of a more worthy recipient for a Fuller Award.

Congratulations, Rick! Chicago is so lucky to have you. I wish I could be there in person to buy you a few rounds at the Billy Goat.

Karen Abbott

A Question About Rick Kogan

I was the annoying little sister of Rick's best friend, Ron Pen, at the Latin School of Chicago. Back in 1971, I was also a child actor who happened to be performing in the hit show, *Grease* - and Rick wanted tickets. He got them through charm, and he has continued to charm our whole family to this very day. Rick spoke movingly and hilariously at the memorials for both of my parents. I love to just hear his voice - that sonorous gravel. Although all that he's said and written is so public, it's so intimate. He has always felt like family to me - but he's not. How does he do that? It must be deeper than charm.

Polly Pen

A Poet, a Hero, a Friend

Behind the words,
you hear a great spirit,
reaching into the depths of kindness,
thoughtfulness and wisdom,
breathing it outward,
covering the universe,
in a most mesmerizing fashion,
biting but soothing,
truth-filled but soft,
and always essential,
esoteric, and existential.

An interview with Rick
is a private session with the muse,
blinking over the airwaves,
linked through cyberspace,
inked on news.
He's a poet, a hero, a friend
from the very hip, to the top of my head
down to the tip of my toes
And I've never seen his glasses
slip completely off his nose.

Thank you, Rick, for taking care of me for so many years. And congratulations for your lifetime achievement award (which is a bit pre-mature, wouldn't you say?)

Corky Siegel

A North Star

When I was growing up in the Chicago suburbs, my parents subscribed to the *Chicago Tribune*, which I read too. Thanks to *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, I became a fan of the “Sidewalks” column, written by Rick Kogan and photographed by Charles Osgood, marveling at the ordinary and extraordinary wonders of the city that seemed so close and yet so far away. Kogan’s generous curiosity for the urban landscape and the people who inhabit it has always served as a beacon—a north star for lucid writing about how setting shapes culture, history, and destiny.

Kathleen Rooney

Dr. Night Life & Me

It’s flattering to have any reporter take interest in one’s work but when that reporter is Rick Kogan it feels legit. Rick has personal ties to many of the writers and artists who made Chicago’s culture what it is, so when he gives you his attention it feels like you’re part of something bigger than just another wannabe trying to leave their mark. I don’t think that he communicates that feeling consciously or intentionally, it’s more of a byproduct of the times he’s lived through and the things he’s seen. Any conversation with Rick is a window into a world where the past and present coexist in ongoing, sometimes fraught dialogue. It’s a much richer and more nuanced experience than most of what passes for journalism these days.

Also, *Dr. Night Life* is a hoot.

Dmitry Samarov

Ourselves Reflected

Where do I sign up for the Rick Kogan Fan Club?

Before I had the experience of knowing him personally, I was a fangirl awed by the deeply human lens he employed in his writing. Rick tells stories in which any one of us might see ourselves reflected. Messages of hope, togetherness, resilience, determination, dreams, courage, humor all come together when we step foot on his sidewalk.

Rick presents as a throwback to the days when the fourth estate was full of character and characters. The contraction of newspapers today is depressing. However, give me a Kogan byline and my mind pops open a dry, cold Champagne to celebrate!

Janet Davies

Sitting by the Spook Who Sat by the Door

Actually I was sitting by the door of The Cove, a bar on the South Side, next to Sam Greenlee, the author of the revolutionary 60s Chicago-based novel, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*.

And who walks in? Rick Kogan.

Rick was there to interview yours truly about my latest project. But when I introduced Rick to Sam, for a moment I worried I may have played my cards a little too....loose. I didn't realize Rick had read Sam's book years ago and he seemed a lot more interested in talking to him about his almost 50-year-old trenchant treatise than me, about my relatively modest current tome.

But Rick, gent and consummate schmoozer that he is, gave Sam his due, bought him two or three straight vodka shots and proceeded to get enough out of me to write a story...that I'm still trying to live up to.

The piece that ultimately ran had a great shot of me at the bar. And an even better shot of the sly guy sitting next to me.

Thanks Rick.

Lowell Thompson

Saluting Rick Kogan

Rick Kogan's deep love of the city, of history, and of the written word is all but palpable, and for years I've admired him from afar. Though Chicago is (sigh) not my hometown, my grandparents lived in Hyde Park. As a kid, I adored the city's nervy energy, the stories that seeped through its pores. After j-school at Northwestern, I headed east but Chicago snuck into my books. Then in 2018, I was invited to be a guest on *After Hours*. Was I nervous about speaking with the legendary Rick Kogan? Are there ballgames at Wrigley Field? But I was in for a treat: Rick is that rare interlocutor who just gets your book, better than you get it yourself. As a writer and a reader, I'm indebted to Rick Kogan for his generosity, curiosity, wit, and sheer brilliance—and I'm honored to have the chance to say thank you.

Dawn Raffel



Author Sam Greenlee at
The Cove tavern in Chicago.
(Terrence Antonio James, Chicago Tribune)

Great

Rick Kogan is a giant, and a giant in an honorable Chicago lineage that includes Studs Terkel and Mike Royko. This is a lineage of tough, loving honesty, a lineage with guts enough to accept the world just as it is without every lying down for it, a lineage of standing up for the little guy, a lineage that understands that how we say a thing is as important as what we say: the heart in Rick's work is found in its music. I'm proud to know him, and am inspired by this life and his work.

George Saunders

Algren and Terkel's Dream

If Studs Terkel and Nelson Algren got together to create a Chicago newspaper man, they'd probably come up with someone like Rick Kogan. Gritty but tender. Angry but compassionate. Driven but unselfish. Biting but funny. And he'd be the kind of whip-smart and savvy journalist who wouldn't need Google Maps to find his way around town.

Rus Bradburd

Our Cicerone, Our Champion, Our Friend

Rick Kogan's passion for the written word comes in many forms: reporter, columnist, author, a voracious reader, and interviewer who loves connecting writers with readers. He is the Windy City's literary cicerone.

Rick is not only my friend, but also mentor, advisor, and all-around advocate. I once brought an idea to him for a book proposal I was considering. Said Rick: "If I were a publisher, I'd give you a contract right now." I knew I was on the right path. The book thrives, and in no small part to Rick's encouragement from conception to publication and beyond.

When Rick interviews you, you leave his studio feeling like you've won a combination of the Pulitzer Prize, Nobel Prize for Literature, and Best in Show trophy. On the other side of the radio is Rick's steadfast audience. I was at an event one evening where Rick was speaking. Someone in the crowd spontaneously yelled, "We love you, Rick!"

That we do—everyone of us. Cheryl and I are thrilled that you're the recipient of this much-deserved Fuller Award. We join the many who offer you our love, respect, and genuine affection for all you have given to us and your city.

Arnie Bernstein

“Onward,” and Rick Kogan Showed Us the Way

I am one of countless Chicago writers who owe the start we got to the generosity of Rick Kogan.

On the strength of one bare connection, Rick bought a babbling young Ohioan three stiff drinks at the Billy Goat, and told me which of my story ideas to pitch to the managing editor of the once-great *Chicago Tribune* Sunday magazine. Reemerging on the surface of the Earth, I understood that my pitch would be Kogan-endorsed, and that this really was my shot at the Big League.

Long before that article was published—the first of many I would write for that magazine and other important publications in Chicago and beyond—I wrote to Rick in astonished wonder, asking what motivated him to help out a dummy like me, in this way.

I wish I had the email he wrote back, because paraphrasing Rick Kogan is like paraphrasing—well, Herman Kogan. But I do remember that Rick invoked his dad in his reply, saying that giving hungry Chicago writers a leg up was a Kogan tradition that he did not start—and specifying that the way to pay it back was to be as helpful as I could to young writers, too. And I know he signed it as he signs all his emails, “Onward.”

The promise I returned to Rick, I consider to be among the most sacred I have ever made.

David Murray

The Secret of Success

The secret of Rick Kogan’s success as a radio host is his ability to make his guests feel at home. Rick doesn’t interview you. He engages in a conversation with you—a conversation between equals. That’s why every time Rick invited me to be on his show, I not only eagerly accepted I actually looked forward to it. I knew it would be a pleasurable experience and it was—I was never disappointed—because Rick made the whole process seem effortless—not an easy feat. Similarly, the secret of Rick Kogan’s success as a journalist is his ability to really listen to the person he is talking to, to get their story down, without any preconceived notions. He also embodies the very notion of empathy. He allows the reader to enter the world of his subject. For whether appealing to a listener across the airwaves or a reader in the pages of a book or article, he knows it is never about him.

June Sawyers

A Salute to the Chip and the Block it came Off Of

Back in the early 70s my wife and I were both members of the Organic Theater Company of Chicago. It was one of the various small theater groups around the city at the time struggling to keep our heads above water and still hopefully create some meaningful theater art in a city better known for its orchestra and its pizza than its original theater works. My wife was the publicist for the Organic at the time and it was her job to try to convince the press of the city that supporting these small theater venues was as important as showcasing the expensive Broadway fare that periodically came through town. As one would imagine it was an uphill battle, but one bright light in that firmament was one Herman Kogan who not only treated my wife with the respect she deserved but also made it a point to give due to the efforts the Organic was making. In an almost unheard of gesture at the time we garnered the cover of the Arts & Leisure page of the *Sun-Times* for one of our productions, and the name Kogan became one of the patron saints of our theater company.

Jump cut some years later and I'm in Chicago getting ready to mount a production of a play on Lenny Bruce I directed and had the pleasure of spending some quality time with a leaf that didn't fall far from the tree, Rick Kogan. To say Rick is a shining reflection of the kindness, taste, intelligence, wit, passion and compassion of his legendary dad would at very least be an understatement. Chicago has been lucky to have had the Kogans in their midst and I am one show business professional who most whole heartedly supports that fact.

Bravo Rick, this is a so well-deserved honor and you are a credit to a family name that is a credit to this great city.

Joe Mantegna

Always About Others

Back in the early 90s, when I owned the Book Stall in Winnetka, I'd tune into WGN radio every Sunday morning. Rick Kogan would be doing his review of the week. I'd perk up when, almost without fail, he'd mention my store. Rick would talk about an author appearance, a new book. He'd wax poetic about the glories of Chicago's independent bookstores. And it was clear that when Rick talked about books—especially CHICAGO books—he knew them. Had *read* them. I'd see Rick in my store at various times throughout the year, and about town. Everywhere you turned, there was Rick Kogan—always, as was natural to him, using his spotlight to benefit the good work of his community. Congratulations on all your achievements!

Roberta Rubin

Lenny Bruce's Chicago Angel

I am over the moon that Rick is being honored by the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame for his lifetime achievements!

About five years ago in the middle of the original Los Angeles run of *I'm Not A Comedian...I'm Lenny Bruce*, I was introduced to Rick over the phone. He needed a quote on a piece he was writing titled "Lenny Bruce is Back, but Brandeis doesn't want him." I was thrilled to be asked to participate in the piece. Within moments of talking to Rick on the phone I knew this guy was special. We really hit it off about Lenny but just about life in general. I learned of his relationship with my director and dear friend, Joe Mantegna. The conversation was nice and easy and we stayed in touch over the next few years.

The first time I met Rick in person was closing night of our nine month run off-Broadway in New York. When the show was over the first thing he said to me was "We HAVE to get this to Chicago. They will love it! Let me know if you want to do that and I'll help you." AND boy did he ever! There were many amazing people in Chicago who supported our journey BUT Rick was by far our biggest angel. I don't say that lightly.

I can't possibly put into words all he means to the show and to me personally. He saw the show at least six times during our run and when he wasn't writing about it, he was talking about it all over town. It was not easy being away from my home and it was a tough commute to and from Los Angeles for such a huge chunk of time. But I stayed in Chicago for two six-month runs and one of the major reasons I was able to do that was because of Rick's generosity not only as a writer and a Chicago legend but also just his kindness as a friend.

Rick, from the deepest corners of my heart, I am thrilled that you are being honored because you have helped so many people over the years... and now it's your turn to take a bow! Well done my pal... I'm proud to know you and call you my friend. Onward YOU go indeed.

Ronnie Marmo

The Once and Future Kogan

Chicago doesn't go in for aristocrats all that much, but Rick Kogan is our kind of royalty because with him, it's not just about bloodlines, it's about ink. His parents were writers. He was raised around writers. And he became a writer the first chance he had. No one knows Chicago's stories like Rick Kogan, and no one can tell them with his kind of bone-deep understanding. Kogan isn't from Chicago. He *is* Chicago.

Thomas Dyja

Radio? Really?

When I first came to Chicago in the late 1980s to make it my home, I fell fast in love with Rick Kogan's work in the *Chicago Tribune*. His observations and endearing approach to telling the story of the everyman, the unsung artist, the everyday hero was second-to-none. He reminded me of Hemingway—the straightforward style, the deep and complex meaning hidden just below the surface. He may not have thought of his writing as prose. He likely saw it as just good journalism. But it has always been more than that.

Then I heard he was going to be on the radio.

I had been working in broadcasting for more than twenty years by then, and although I loved Rick's writing and reporting, I wasn't so sure he could master the airwaves. It's a different discipline. It requires different skills. He's going to struggle, I thought.

Foolish me.

Rick quickly showed me. He was the quintessential storyteller and great storytellers can nail it every time, anywhere. Plus, he was a solid and engaging interviewer. He listened. He was truly interested. And he was authentic. Rick on the radio was Rick everywhere. It became all very clear to me in his on-air conversations with writers, artists, filmmakers, musicians, and on and on. And when he interviewed me when my first book, *Accidental Lessons*, was released in 2010. What great questions. What superb observations. It was as real as two guys talking over a beer at our favorite tavern.

I was convinced, although I should have never doubted any of it.

Rick was and is simply a natural.

David W. Berner

Radio Sage

Like his father Herman, Rick Kogan is an outstanding writer and reporter whose unending explorations have opened his readers' eyes to so many great cultural corners and secrets of our ever-changing city. But what I have enjoyed most over many years are Rick's WGN radio broadcasts and interviews with scores of writers, artists, musicians, movers and shakers. His bubbling enthusiasm, his bursts of energy, his perceptive insights have enlightened listeners across Chicago, the Midwest, and with the Internet, the World. They have brought us not only immense pleasure, but an eagerness to explore the creations of these artists. So many people he will never meet are indebted to his great professional diligence and fond followers of his literary adventures. Thanks Rick, and don't stop now just because you've won the Fuller Award!

R. Craig Sautter

Ode to Kogan

A Chicagoan's Chicagoan,
A beau idéal newspaperman,
A chronicler and raconteur
Of Chicago's cultural milieu,
With insight and erudition,
In the grand Royko-nian tradition,
A wordsmith extraordinaire,
Whether on the page or on the air,
Whether elegantly phrasing or cracking wise,
So it's really not a big surprise,
That to the title of scribe most eloquent,
We add, "Fuller Award Recipient".

Eric Charles May

The Lyrical Reporter

I read and admired Rick's writing long before I met him in 2003 and learned how generous he is in celebrating the creative work of others. A true man of letters, he's as adept at lyrical writing as he is at oral interviewing. He also hunts down facts with the relentless precision of a beat reporter. Rick was born into this career—and born for the work—and admirably, he's never rested on his laurels. Even now, as you read this, he's mulling story ideas, kicking around potential projects, considering another book. You can't stop him. You can only be grateful he continues to turn out his signature work, in print and on air, with all the qualities we readers and listeners have come to expect in Rick Kogan pieces: thoroughness, lucidity and delightfully conspicuous artistry. Congratulations, Rick. There could hardly be a more appropriate spot to quote you than right here, right now: "Onward."

Michael Austin

Too Good to Envy?

Rick Kogan is a Chicago institution and treasure. An unparalleled talent, he's a font of historical information and has a keen nose for a great story, whether it's about a person on the street or in the ivory tower. He's the type of writer who's so damn good that you can't envy him. You just have to stand in awe. It was my sincere pleasure to work with him at the *Chicago Tribune*.

Dawn Turner

Rick Kogan is what it means to be a Chicago journalist

Rick Kogan is the epitome of Chicago journalism, a reporter who also is a storyteller, able to weave words off an unmatched contextual loom into articles that always inform and most often entertain. To me, he is the “good Rick” and I am the “bad Rick” because the stories and topics he covers are an eclectic representation of the city, its places and its people. Moreover, his ability to remain a vital part of Chicago through decades of changes in journalism and news platforms speaks to his intelligence, always on display dressed in a simple humbleness. I am happy to be able to call Rick a friend, much more than a colleague. But I am also happy that his journalism, his style, his context and his knowledge remain part of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Rick Pearson

Curious Mind, Envious Talent, Enormous Heart

There are a million ways to immerse yourself in Chicago’s history. You could read *The Jungle* or *Boss* or *The Third Coast*. You could roam the halls of the Chicago History Museum or audit “History of the Chicago Metropolitan Area” at the august University of Chicago. You could (and should) follow Dilla on TikTok.

Or you could (and should) read Rick Kogan’s obituaries. He penned Studs Terkel’s and Irv Kupcinet’s and Hugh Hefner’s and Art Paul’s and Roger Ebert’s and Maggie Daley’s and Eleanor “Sis” Daley’s and so many more.

“Louis Terkel,” Kogan wrote after Studs died in 2008, “arrived here as a child from New York City and in Chicago found not only a new name but a place that perfectly matched—in its energy, its swagger, its charms, its heart—his own personality. They made a perfect and enduring pair.”

No one has lived and loved and paid tribute to Chicago like Rick.

If you worked with Rick, as I had the absolute privilege and honor of doing for 23 years, you know he is profane and hilarious and likely the keeper of the office whiskey and certainly the keeper of journalism’s biggest and best heart. He greets new colleagues with an extended hand and a sincere, look-you-in-the-eye, “Who the hell are you?” He greets old colleagues with an endearing, “Hi, honey.” He greets each day with curiosity—a writer’s best and most important trait.

I’m profoundly grateful to know him. Chicago’s profoundly lucky to have him. We’re all wiser to have read him.

Heidi Stevens

If Chicago Had a Voice

As a transplanted, Midwest journalism student, I was obsessed with Chicago's newspaper legends. Those I had studied were gone (or mostly) by the time I moved here, but in the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* I found a writer who spoke for the city in our time.

Rick Kogan has bottomless curiosity and endless amounts of empathy, and he cares deeply about the things that Chicago is best at. Literature. Comedy. Music. Art. Food. Entrepreneurship. And that voice, oh my Lord, on the radio, which is all Rush Street restaurant booths and crumbling sidewalks. We have been so lucky to have Rick speak for us. No one has been luckier than me, who has had Rick Kogan as a mentor, a champion, and a friend.

If Chicago had a pen, it would write like him. If it had a voice, it would sound like him. If it had a job, it would hustle like him. If it had a heart, it would beat like his.

Kevin Guilfoile

The Storyteller

You are only hours old when Studs Terkel shows up to take your father out for a celebratory drink. Col. Robert McCormick has such concern for your mother's well-being that he arranges her safe passage home from work. Your earliest memories involve Mike Royko and Nelson Algren. The Chicago literary tradition is in Rick's blood. He is a joyful writer, one who celebrates everything about Chicago's richness and who understands the city's history is ... complicated. Like the best writers, Rick's work is lyrical and subtle and seemingly effortless. We have been friends for many years, and I've watched him stretch his interests. There are few people in Chicago who can write with such authority about this city's culture and politics, its leaders and grifters, its glory and its mayhem and who can make it all so much fun. Rick is also a wonderful conversationalist, on air, on stage, around the bar. I've been interviewed by Studs and I've been interviewed by Rick, and it's easy to see how much Rick learned from his family friend, the greatest interviewer of our time. Rick draws out stories as well as he tells them.

Rick Kogan is one of the great figures in Chicago journalism and deeply deserves the Fuller Award.

Bruce Dold

Our Spencer Tracy of the Keyboard: Look 'em in the eye and tell the truth

We have in this city a precious handful of natural prose masters. So many, already gone: Ebert. Royko. Cassidy.

But a few are here tonight. One, THE one, is Rick Kogan, a friend, a colleague, a first-rate wedding officiant--he was good enough to marry me and Heidi Stevens -- and a beautiful, beautiful writer.

I like to think of Rick as a man for all seasons, and eras. Eighty, 90 years ago, he'd have excelled on radio, playing gruff, side-of-the-mouth tough guys, like Studs Terkel did. Rick's doing that every week right now, in fact, on his own show. Playing himself. Like no one else.

He communicates in front of a microphone or a camera the same way he writes a sentence: plainly, directly, with a singular lack of cant and a clear, knowing gaze into the soul of our city.

It is a great city without much natural elevation, roughly 597 feet of it. Yet there is a mountain here, a mountain of literary gold in our literary past, present and future. Effortlessly, mysteriously, Rick evokes all three. He is a prose master. A poet, ink-stained. And a reminder to future generations: Follow your curiosity. Ask questions. Open your heart along with your eyes.

Future writers: If you have a smidgen of the skill and ease at the keyboard this man has, you just might make your way--and delight more readers and listeners than can accurately be counted.

Onward, Rick.

Michael Phillips

The University of Rick Kogan

Although Rick Kogan never earned a college degree, he's received the street-equivalent of a B.A., M.A., M.F.A., and several Ph.D.s in the study of Chicago. Rick writes like Chicago would write if it could pick up a pen and sounds like Chicago would talk if it had its own radio show. Like our hometown, he's complex, funny, rough-edged and big-hearted. He seems to know just about everyone in the greater metropolitan area—and thanks to his compassionate approach to his subject matter and congenial prose style, most of us feel we know him, as well. In short, he richly deserves the Fuller Award, which I view as a kind of honorary doctorate in a field of study for which he's already one of the world's foremost experts: the city he loves.

Miles Harvey

Don't call him a national treasure, ok?

When I take stock of the things I'm grateful for, my friendship with Rick Kogan always makes the list. He is a living legend. Chicago literary royalty. A brilliant writer and a truly genuine and generous human being. One time, at a lit event called Come Home Chicago, I told a crowd, "I'd introduce him as a national treasure, but we're a little too proprietary for that here, so please welcome Rick Kogan, a *municipal* treasure." There were probably some people in the audience who were unfamiliar with Rick and his work who thought that intro was adulatory, like I was just being nice. Then Rick started reading a piece he had written the day before, on short notice, especially for the event--a recollection of taking his aunt out for lunch when he was a teen, and hearing her unvarnished confession of an affair with the Kogans' close family friend, Nelson Algren. It was riveting (yep that's the word for it), it was hilarious, and it was heartbreaking. And everyone in that room felt lucky. That's just one story. I could go on and on. We all could go on telling great stories about Rick Kogan. And we will.

Don De Grazia

Chicago's Champion

I've heard it said of talk-show hosts—and I'm sure it's true for radio ones as well—that they have to decide whether to make themselves look good at the expense of their guests, or make their guests look good at the expense of themselves. Rick's always been the latter kind of host, using his platform generously, not to look down on others but to elevate them. Beneath the gruff newspaper exterior is a tender and generous heart, one open to talented storytellers from all walks of life who deserve a wider audience. That's not to say he's a pushover—if you're not producing great stuff, you probably won't hear back from him when you query—but as my authors and I have learned, if you are writing books that are worth reading, you'll find no greater champion than Rick.

Gerald Brennan

Interviewed by a Legend

Being interviewed by Rick Kogan was one of the highlights of my writing career. He was warm and funny and generous to a new writer, and he took my book of stories, *American Salvage*, seriously. Talking to him was like talking to a Chicago God—certainly he's got the voice of God. He knew everything, including what was in my book and what other critics had said about the book, better than I did, and he handily put my stories about working class men into a social context that astounded me. Just by talking to him, I got smarter.

Bonnie Jo Campbell

Smoke & Ice Cubes

Rick Kogan is not unlike his Wikipedia page. Smart, warm, tightly drawn and directly to the point. He is a writer's writer. A raconteur's raconteur.

He is someone still in love with people, all kinds from the Studs Terkels to the Nelson Algrens to the Harry Alemsans, from the gritty prose producers to the ruthless, bloodless mobsters.

His voice, the spoken one and the written one, is smoke and ice cubes in a short glass. He is what we used to call "a newsman."

Ink in his veins. Chicago in his heart.

Carol Marin

In the Realm of Gurus and Wizards

My memories of various Rick Kogan sightings (among them, Printers Row Lit Fest and the first floor of the erstwhile Tribune Tower) and the exchanges I've had with him over the years are all bathed in golden light and mellifluous tones.

I met him in 2010, when he invited me onto his radio program to talk about my first book, and being welcomed into his studio was both daunting and elating. Somehow he was able to put me at ease, doubtless aware but kind enough to ignore any nervousness on my part, being the sympathetic pro he is.

Over the years, I've observed how tirelessly and generously he promotes and celebrates other writers. Even in a city with a tradition of writers helping other writers, Rick is a standout, an eminence, a guru, something of an earthbound literary deity or perhaps, more aptly, a wizard. Praised be Rick Kogan. Now and always! (And thank you, Rick, for being so tremendously who you are.)

Christine Sneed

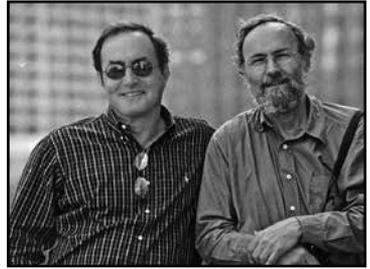
The Guy Who Knows This Other Guy

Life around here moves fast. People come and go, businesses disappear, comets blaze and fade, and our attention spans are pulled tauter than ever. Before you ask, "Wait, didn't that used to be....?" just check with Rick Kogan. If it was interesting, he saw it, interviewed it or enjoyed a few rounds there. If it shook with that certain Chicago vibe we all know, he's written about it with skill and passion. From neighborhood dives to world-renowned artists, Rick will not let something that is worthwhile be covered by demolition dust. He knows where we've been, and from that, he knows where we're going.

James Finn Garner

When I Think of Rick

When I think of Rick Kogan, words ricochet between the neurons. He's gracious, life of the party, loves his bourbon/rocks, fills the room with laughter, writes through moist eyes eloquent obits of Chicago celebs, is self-assured, courageous. He's an incisive writer, a Chicago historian, a newsman to the core, and friend.



On top of all that, he is the most generous person I've ever known. Just try to buy him a meal, or a drink ... maybe a coffee if you're up before him (unlikely) and have prepaid. Even doing him a favor is difficult. He's the one who does favors, gives comfort, moral support, praise. He's also funny as hell, known to have strong feelings enunciated with sweet or tart quips.

He remembers everything, everyone. When he's trying to think of the name of someone (e.g. while sitting on a stool at the Billy Goat) you can watch his brain going through some internal rolodex, and in a few seconds a light smile. Bingo!

We met in 1987 when Kogan was writing a cover profile for the Friday section on Koko Taylor, Chicago's Queen of the Blues. I was assigned to photograph her. A few years later he moved to the Sunday Magazine and came up with the idea for one of the great gigs in journalism; he wanted to write a column about anything Chicago which he aptly named "Sidewalks." Osgood, do you want to be the photographer for the column, he asked?

It was a chance to find stories, the kind that might never be assigned by an editor, that piques a curiosity and is an excuse to meet some interesting looking person that makes you slam on the brakes, or who we stumble upon walking down the sidewalk.

Our first "Sidewalks" day started by simply walking out of the Tower, talking to people, learning fun or odd or amazing new things. In 2011 I stopped shooting for the column and 11 years later he's still writing it, discovering new, fun, and hidden stories in the city.

Everyone in the Chicago area who reads, or hears him on WGN, knows Kogan. Everyone. If they don't, they must be from some far-off state of mind.

There are two books of "Sidewalks" columns. For years we gave presentations at libraries or country clubs in the area where he used his cigarette radio voice to suck them into his aura, chatting casually with the audience even before being introduced.

My aversion to public speaking meshed nicely with his bravado. But one night he had a conflict and said I'd have to present alone. Na, they come to see you, says I. It's too

late, he says, it can't be cancelled. Terror knocked. I can't do this alone! Sure you can. It's easy.

He was of course right. After being an unconscious understudy for a year, I was easily able to copy my sensei. I began by casually chatting with the audience, then repeating some of his hilarious "Sidewalks" stories and being rewarded with the same empathetic tears or hardy laughs he always got. I was Kogan for a night. What a gift!

I am not by any means the lone recipient of his selflessness. It's clear with his interactions with others on all levels of society. They, we, are all "Sidewalks" stories.

I don't remember the last story we did together for it seems there will always be another. Nor do I remember which editor assigned me the Koko Taylor story, but am forever grateful. Rick, do you remember the name?

Charles Osgood

A Touchstone for Friend and Foe Alike

My first impression of Rick was at a DePaul pub, the Red Lion, with his girlfriend and mine sharing commiseration for our ailing cats – in his case totaling, Rick said, some three thousand dollars in vet fees. It was clear that more drastic measures were not on our agenda, his or mine.

Keep in mind that I was the neophyte and Rick was the spirit guide, despite the fact that he was the one who usually knew where and how our adventures should unfold. And he was the one, generous to a fault, who grabbed the check, or the cab fare, to and from Riccardo's.

I had recently signed on as press secretary to Mayor Harold Washington, in the heat of Chicago's "Council Wars." Rick was both a touchstone and a signal to friend and foe alike that, owing largely to Rick's reservoir of both goodwill and experience, our side would be less likely to make dumb mistakes.

Two major figures in the endgame -- Harold Washington's allies finally prevailed -- were Studs Terkel and Mike Royko. For details, you want Wikipedia, where you will find the editing treatments this tale deserves. There you will also find Rick's credentials as a leader in the world of the arts.

As recounted in Wikipedia, "Rick did not earn a college degree, and worked a variety of jobs in his late teens and early twenties, including as a cab driver." It was a measure of his ethical as well as his practical commitment to inspire young journalists. But it's hard to imagine any institution of higher learning who would decline the offer.

Alton Miller

PARTNER TRIBUTES

In Rick's writing, you feel Chicago in all its complexities. No one marvels more its triumphs, or excoriates its failures. His writing bloodline carries the City's DNA.

Bill Kurtis & Donna LaPietra



**KURTIS
PRODUCTIONS**



**AMERICAN
WRITERS
MUSEUM**

Rick Kogan's love for Chicago -- not in spite of its flaws but because of them -- shines through in his tireless work as a writer, broadcaster, educator and friend of the written word. The **American Writers Museum** offers its congratulations to him on this well-deserved honor.

WGN Radio congratulates Rick Kogan, one of its – and Chicago's – very own, on his lifetime achievement award from the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame. Rick

is incomparable in his breadth of knowledge about the city he grew up in, lives in and works in. His genuine passion for Chicago is evident across many media. Rick is unique amongst peers to be both an eloquent writer and speaker, and his distinctively deep, rich voice compels your attention to every word. Rick, we are proud to join in this celebration to honor you.



THE NEWBERRY

For decades, Rick Kogan has chronicled and celebrated Chicago's history through engaging stories about its people and institutions. All of us at the **Newberry Library** appreciate Rick's longstanding dedication to Newberry programs. As emcee of the Bughouse Square Debates, Rick has shared his passion for history and his talent for storytelling with thousands of people. Rick Kogan continues to be an integral part of the Newberry community, and his many friends at the Newberry congratulate him on his Fuller Award for lifetime achievement.

Rick Kogan writes and we rush to grab the page. Be it in a book or newspaper copy, here is a master of story. Rick Kogan speaks and we are equally mesmerized. His words and stirring voice bring us more great tales. Altogether, **The Cliff Dwellers** applaud Rick Kogan's rich contributions to Chicago's cultural life and literature. And we are delighted for his receipt of the Fuller Award.



The Cliff Dwellers

It's hard to think of anyone more worthy of the Fuller Award for lifetime achievement than Rick Kogan. I met Rick more than 30 years ago when he guest-hosted a radio show I was producing (Steve & Garry/AM 1000), and then again shortly thereafter on Tim Weigel's porch, sampling a brandy after one of Tim's great parties. After only meeting him twice, Rick became one of my greatest champions. It was his advice that led me to create my publishing company **Eckhartz Press**. In the eleven years since, he has been an enthusiastic supporter of my 80-some Chicago books and authors. And I'm not alone. Every time I read his column or listen to his radio show, I find another lucky recipient of Rick's encouragement and largesse. I don't know anyone in Chicago's writing/media community that doesn't have tremendous respect for him. That admiration goes beyond Rick as a man. It extends to his magnificent writing. Rick Kogan writes from a reservoir of great knowledge about the past and present luminaries and locations in this great city of ours. But most importantly, he does it with the empathy and heart of a man who treats each written word with the dignity and respect he shows the people in his life. I'm proud to know him and will always remain a fan.



The Sam Sianis family would like to congratulate Rick for being honored by The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame for the year 2022 Fuller Award. He is one of the great storytellers this city has had and we are all lucky to have him as a voice for Chicago. Rick has always been very close to the Sianis family and we were so proud to have had him write a book and tell the **Billy Goat** story in the way a great storyteller would. We are honored to call him our close family friend and a Hall of Famer.

Congratulations, Rick, on this honor! It is so well-deserved! All Our Best,
Steve, Liz, + the entire Gibsons Group



Rick Kogan is Chicago. Our bard, who lovingly keeps our past remembered and is perpetually curious in his chronicles about our city's present and future. A dear friend of Eli and all the Schulmans, a regular at our restaurant, a fan of our cheesecake and the author of Eli's plaque in the Eli Schulman Playground. Thank you, Rick, for all you do to celebrate all that we love about Chicago.

An invaluable advocate for literary arts in Chicago, the **Seminary Co-op Bookstores** is thrilled to congratulate Rick on receiving the Fuller Award.

**SEMINARY
CO-OP
BOOKSTORES** 57TH STREET
BOOKS



The Open Books Team is honored to recognize Rick Kogan for a lifetime of journalistic excellence. Thank you for all you have given to us!

Rick Kogan has championed for writers, bookstores, musicians and small businesses throughout his career and we are thankful for his generosity! Rick's storytelling ability is tough to match. Cheers!!

The Book Cellar Team



**Centuries & Sleuths
Bookstore**

Rick Kogan is the Literary Analyst for Chicago, the Midwest, the United States....He knows what interests, intrigues, and disappoints us. He reads the books he reviews and recommends, which is a great courtesy he extends to his guest authors. He is a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of bookstores and, especially, **Centuries & Sleuths Bookstore**. He is fun and enjoyable to be around, but serious about books and their value to us all. He is a good and thoughtful man.

For his tireless devotion to the word and his relentless support of fellow writers, Rick Kogan is an ideal choice for this award.

Chicago Writers Association



When I first met Rick Kogan in 2000, he and Charles Osgood were on a “Sidewalks” story seeking adventure. As they headed toward Soldier Field, we figured they were covering Dave Matthews who performed there that night. Instead, they stopped outside the Field Museum, listening to Chicago funk band, Bumpus. Rick interviewed them, while Charles snapped their pictures. Later, we were thrilled to see their “Sidewalks” feature in the *Chicago Tribune*.

For years, I've escorted authors and other guests to Rick's iconic WGN Radio show. He has always read their books and knows their stories. His questions and observations are brilliant and insightful. He makes everyone feel at home.

He is generous. In 2019, he spoke to my DePaul book publicity class, completely mesmerizing the students. One told me she was so inspired she called up all her friends that night, to meet for pizza so she could share everything she learned from Rick. Later, he invited her to his show.

It is a pleasure to honor Rick Kogan, our astute cultural observer and Town Crier. We are so fortunate to read and hear his eloquent words.

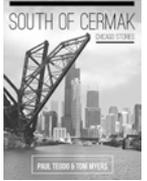
Sheryl Johnston

The editors of *Chicago Quarterly Review* are delighted to support the celebration of Rick Kogan's illustrious career in our city, a city made more vibrant because of him. Congratulations, Rick!



Rick Kogan and the **Guild Literary Complex** have been part of Chicago's social fabric for over 30 years. Rick has enhanced our city through countless stories that explore the richness of Chicago's cultural life. We offer our gratitude and our warm congratulations to Rick for the well-deserved Fuller Award!

His laugh is long and full and boisterous. The sexiest voice in Chicago... the low purr of a lion in repose. Reared by Marilew and Herman in their living room full of Turkel, Algren, Sahl and Ebert, his knowledge of the city and its quirky inhabitants expands upon that storied lineage. His writing is a celebration of the rights and wrongs, the poets and thieves and the heroes and villains of this great city with the greatest of flaws. A curious soul, a heart of gold, there's only one Rick Kogan, and Chicago's got him.



Paul Teodo and Tom Myers



Here's to the bond that Mike and Rick shared and to the love the Royko family has for Rick.

Judy, Kate and Sam Royko

Rick Kogan has been a dear friend to **Lambs Farm** and has used his talents to support our purpose



of helping people with developmental disabilities lead productive, happy lives. Congratulations Rick!

Chicago Tribune

If Chicago journalism has a history, then Rick Kogan is both the keeper of that history and one of its longest practitioners — beginning his writing career more than 50 years ago. Today, Rick, who has authored several books, remains a regular columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, contributing what few others can: a deep and longtime understanding of Chicago and its days of old, and a first-hand knowledge of its people, both the boldface names that make headlines and its everyday citizens.

The **Chicago Bar Association** congratulates long-time friend of the CBA, Rick Kogan, on receiving the Fuller Award from the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame. We commend Rick for his lifetime contributions to literature, journalism, and the city of Chicago.



CHICAGO LITERARY HALL OF FAME



The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame (CLHOF) honors, celebrates, preserves, and promotes the development of Chicago's great literary heritage—past, present, and future. CLHOF seeks to realize this purpose by annual inductions of selected great writers from the past; ceremonies honoring living writers whose lifetime contributions to the literary arts warrant the highest recognition; literary awards to young people; classes, panels, and other literary endeavors designed to encourage the development of writers at all ages. CLHOF also creates written materials that record the lives and works of Chicago's most important literary figures and presents these and other materials on its website, in exhibits, author events, public art installations, literary tours, and programming relevant to the organization's goal of promoting Chicago's vibrant literary tradition and culture. CLHOF formed as a project of the Chicago Writers Association in 2010, and splintered into its own nonprofit 501 c(3) entity in 2014.

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Visit us at ChicagoLiteraryHOF.org

SPECIAL THANKS

Many people gave their time and talents to making this ceremony a success. Most are included somewhere in this program; others deserve a proper acknowledgement here. Lela and Zygygy opened their doors to us, as they have for so many others, and then worked diligently to ensure a glorious evening. Randy Albers, in addition to his wonderful interview with Rick, did all manner of behind-the-scenes work—his determination to make this evening special resulted in what you experienced here tonight. Barry Jung, as always, was indispensable as a chief editor of this program and equally valuable for his help with ceremony logistics. Cate Plys, on top of her great profile of Rick, also volunteered her editorial gifts to making this a better, cleaner booklet. Rich Kono made the nice slideshow; Hannah Jennings created the beautiful poster; Jeff Waggoner designed the program; Breaker Press did the great print job; Don Seeley took world-class photographs; and Rana Segal, with the able assistance of Haley Hawkins, memorialized everything on video. John Barnicle helped produce the livestream of the ceremony, with generous contributions from Liviu Pasare. Our partners provided essential support while also elevating this to a true community celebration; the presenters took seriously the mission to do justice to a great writer's legacy; the program contributors showed us, once again, why Chicago's literary community is second-to-none. Private individuals like Eve Moran, Mike Burke and Dan Burns, as they do on a regular basis, did quiet parts in bolstering our efforts. As always, the CLHOF Board and Associate Board, along with Social Media Coordinator Ellie Martin, did everything required to solidify and advance our organization's standing.



...life's too short not to give people something of yourself.

OUR HOST: CHOPIN THEATRE

Since 1990, when Zygmunt Dyrkacz purchased the **Chopin Theatre**, more than two thousand different theater, literary, music and film presentations have been staged, before audiences in total of more than one million people. That includes more than 100 in-house productions, many Eastern European. Chopin has hosted performers from each American state and from more than 40 countries.

Lela Headd married Zygmunt in 2001 and soon became managing director. It is the team of Zyggy and Lela that keeps up the breathless pace of world-class quality programs, on average eight-to-10 per week.

Chopin Theatre Productions is a not-for-profit art presenter and producer. It received its 501(c)(3) status in 2019, but its activities are a continuation of work done in almost thirty years as the for-profit Chopin Theatre. It operates in the historic Chopin Theatre, originally constructed in 1918 by Worthmann & Steinbach Architects as a 546-seat nickelodeon in the heart of Chicago's Polish community. In 1990, Zygmunt purchased the vacant building, continuously rehabbing it while at the same time presenting programs to a large artistic community living in the then-crumbling Wicker Park neighborhood. Today it houses a Main Stage (200 capacity), Cabaret Studio (50-100) with its Pregnant Buffalo Lounge, the Nelson Algren Café, East Wing Art Gallery and office/residence of the owners.

The Algren Café got its name in large part because Zygmunt was heavily involved in the name change across the street, from Nelson Algren Fountain to Nelson Algren Fountain at the Polish Triangle. "It was a very historical place for over one million Polish immigrants," Zygmunt said. "Even in Algren's books, he called it Polish Triangle. We named it Nelson Algren Café to balance that Algren/Polish Community controversy. We've had at least half a dozen events for Nelson Algren including parties for him attended by Studs Terkel, Art Shay and their friends."

Chopin, now regarded as one of America's most active arts centers, takes as its mission the promotion of enlightened civic discourse through a diverse range of artistic offerings. Its many guests have included Pulitzer winners Gwendolyn Brooks, Yusef Komunyakaa and Studs Terkel; renowned authors Stuart Dybek, Aleksandar Hemon, Haki Madhubuti, Sara Paretsky, Zadie Smith, Bronislaw Wildstein, Phillip Levine, and Howard Zinn; celebrated poets Nikki Giovanni, Li-Young Lee, Luis Rodriguez, Charles Simic, Marc Smith, Michael Warr and Adam Zagajewski; popular actors John Cusack and Jeremy Piven; acclaimed musicians Edward Auer, Peter

Brotzman, Chuck D., Kurt Elling, Von Freeman, Fareed Haque, Adam Makowicz, Rob Mazurek, Dominic Miller and Paul Wertico. Chopin has been the site of many important Chicago literary occasions, including the Leon Forest Prose Awards, the Gwendolyn Brooks Open Mic, journal launches and poetry festivals. The Young Chicago Authors regularly did readings at Chopin and the National Poetry Slam twice hosted its finals there.

“Chicago writers are a permanent feature in the history of Chopin Theatre,” said Zygmunt. “One of the first writers was Studs Terkel who came when the theater did not yet have much except a few chairs in a dinky basement. He was extremely cheerful when I announced that Chopin Theatre was back. I’m not sure why people choose Chopin Theatre for their readings. Perhaps they see that we try out best; we were committed to each reading to associate it more with music and visuals, etc.”

A multitude of local media have heralded Chopin as one of Chicago’s best venues, including the likes of *Time Out Chicago*, which wrote that the theatre was one “of the last old-school entertainment venues in Wicker Park.” Venus Zarris, writing in *Chicago Stage Review.com*, called Chopin “a rare and wonderful location” and applauded the owners’ “uniquely lovely vision. You see the evidence of it in every nook and cranny at the Chopin and you can feel the inviting warmth as soon as you step inside.” *Chicago Journal’s* Timothy Inklebarger wrote that “The gritty theater regularly presents performances like the (Bill) Gates piece that aim to challenge the status quo and take an honest look at the human condition.”

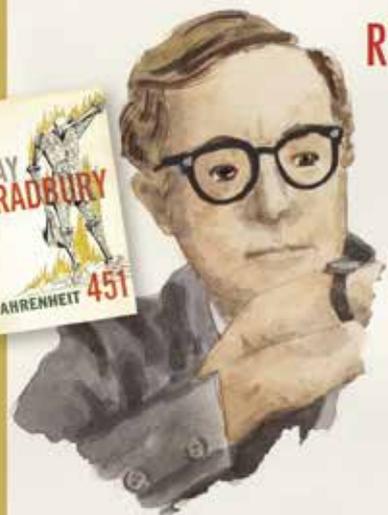
Zygmunt acknowledged that “Father Time” was catching up to him, but that he and Lela were as passionate as ever about their project. “What drives us to do what we do is to be with like-minded people who enjoy unconditional friendship and the arts,” said Zygmunt. “We hope that we would not have many regrets that we did not try. That we extended the conversation beyond the popular media noise and created a climate for enlightened civic discourse.”



I think life is to be observed. Life is meant to be observed. And you know, I've always tried to do that...

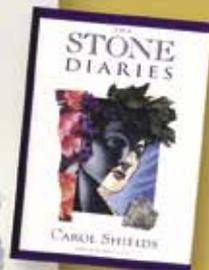
Drawing by Dmitry Samarov

Chicago Literary Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony Class of 2021



Ray Bradbury

Ethel
Payne



Carol Shields

November 3, 2022

6:30-7:45 pm

City Lit Theater

1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
Chicago, IL 60660

Free and open to the public
Registration is required



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