

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Rat-a-Tat-Tat, Rat-a-Tat, It's About Capone and More Than That

BY STEWART TRUELSEN

Imagine for a moment that you are a freelance writer turned bootlegger in Chicago during the 1920s. The pay is better than writing, much better, but job security is about the same. After a long day of working the rackets you are driving home. As you drive down a side street in your long black Cadillac, a big Packard pulls away from the curb and falls in behind your car. In the rear view mirror, you see three guys wearing fedoras. Suddenly the Packard speeds up and pulls around you. There are flashes of light and bullets whiz around your head. Your last thought is that you never should have traded the tap-tap-tap of typewriters for the rat-a-tat-tat of Tommy guns.

The lead paragraph was to get you in the mood for September's IWOC meeting that features best-selling author Jonathan Eig. His latest book, *Get Capone*, published by Simon and Schuster, is a biography that chronicles the rise and fall of Chicago's most notorious gangster, Al Capone. Eig's exacting research turned up new material leading to the perpetrators of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. He also uncovered President Herbert Hoover's obsession with Capone and new details

of the feds plot to get him behind bars.

Get Capone is a fascinating historical narrative, rich in detail, a must-read for those of us living in Chicago, and his appearance at IWOC on Sep. 14 is a must-attend for members and guests.

Eig is a former writer and editor for the Chicago bureau of the *Wall Street Journal* and former executive editor of *Chicago* magazine. He is the author of two best-sellers, *Luckiest Man: The Life and Death of Lou Gehrig* and *Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First Season*.

His next project will not be the story of the Cubs winning a World Series. No writer can afford to wait that long. "I'm in the research phase right now of a few different areas," said Eig. "I haven't decided whether to dive in on any of them. It's unnerving to be without a project, but it's also important to take my time and do all the due diligence."

Get Capone required three full years of research, and in the end, Eig found himself surprisingly open-minded about Al Capone. "He was not quite as demonic as I had expected." Eig leaves it up to the reader to decide how evil Capone was. What emerges from the book is that he was a complicated

man who was done in by his ego as much as his vicious criminality.

Eig will share his experiences in making the transition from writing for newspapers and magazines to authoring books. He will also talk about how he breathed new life into what seemed like a worn out subject—Chicago's gangster era. "The internet was a huge help," he said, "Digitally searching newspapers for example is an enormous advantage." One of his internet searches led to uncovering thousands of government documents about Capone that were hidden away gathering dust.

Join us for an evening with author Jonathan Eig in Room 5033 (new room) at National Louis University, 122 S. Michigan Ave. (across from the Art Institute). Refreshments and networking at 5 p.m., election of officers at 6, followed by the program. Admission is free for IWOC members; \$15 for nonmembers. A buy-your-own dinner follows at a nearby restaurant. Most likely we will be heading for the Exchequer Restaurant & Pub on Wabash. A sign in the front window notes that Al Capone frequented the location. He also liked reporters and other writers. ♡

Officers

President:

Roger Rueff 630/428-3857
president@iwoc.org

Executive Vice President:

Catherine Rategan 312/266-8146

Treasurer:

Barbara Dillard 312/642-3065

Secretary:

Jennifer Lyng 773/769-5291

Parliamentarian:

Harry Karabel 219/921-0877

Board of Directors

Charles Coffin 847/674-2906
David Epstein 708/567-9705
Jim Hodl 773/777-5710
Joel Kimman 708/366-8573
Danielle Schultz 847/864-2761

Committees

Directory:

Chair open.

Marketing:

Cathy Dusberger 312/382-1808 chair

Public Relations

Michelle Beuscher 773/478-6778 chair
Katherine Mikkelsen 847/253-3681
Laura Stigler 773/248-0158

Membership:

Brent Brotine 312/214-2907 chair
Jeff Steele 773/481-0010
Katie Valentino 630/946-9500

Programs:

Stewart Truelsen 847/962-1393 chair
Tom McCauley 224/636-7713
Noreen Kelly 312/988-7562

Social Media

Jay Rodriguez 312-515-9459 chair
Jim Kepler

Seminars:

Chair open.

Benefits:

Chair open.

Writers' Line:

Chair open.

Ellen Krupp 815/578-0295

Karleen McAllester 847/644-2524

Web Site: www.iwoc.org

Joel Kimman, webmaster
webmaster@iwoc.org

Stet is published 11 times per year by the **Independent Writers of Chicago**, PMB 119, 1800 Nations Drive, Suite 117, Gurnee, IL 60031, 847/855-6670. Internet address: www.iwoc.org. Copy submissions and advertising materials are due by the 15th of the month preceding publication. All submissions and ideas will be considered. The subscription rate of \$1 per year is included in the annual membership dues. Copyright ©2010 by Independent Writers of Chicago.

Editor:

Joel Kimman

Contributors:

Joel Kimman, Matthew Mohamad,
Roger Rueff, Stewart Truelsen

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

It's About Time



(Editor's note: This column was originally written for the August *Stet*, but there was no issue in August, so we saved the column for this month.)

I don't know how I missed this one.

I read this morning that on Saturday, August 7, former Denver Broncos running back Floyd Little will be one of seven retired professional football players inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio—becoming only the second-and-a-halfth Bronco to be so honored. (John Elway was first, followed by Gary Zimmerman, who played for the Minnesota Vikings the first seven years of his career but finished out the last five in Denver. Willie Brown and Tony Dorsett also played for the Broncos but entered the Hall of Fame as an Oakland Raider and Dallas Cowboy, respectively.) The news came out in February. Where was I?

Floyd Little. Wow, that takes me back... to Sunday drives in the mountains of Colorado with my family, cruising back down into town on Floyd Hill (no relation to the player) after taking in the brilliant gold of just-turned, high-country aspens and listening to the game on KOA Radio, whose play-by-play announcer, Bob Martin, remains to this day my idea of the gold standard for sports announcing. A man who emanated not a whiff of the malodorous know-it-all, in-your-face arrogance that permeates the modern world of sports broadcasting... or the sicken-

ingly cutesy, look-how-clever-I-am-with-my-semi-obvious-pun-wink-wink commentary on an embarrassing highlight blooper... or the I'm-here-to-give-you-the-inside-scoop-because-I'm-an-insider-don't-you-know-and-you're-free-to-weigh-in-but-just-know-at-the-outset-that-I'm-better-than-you-because-like-I-said-I'm-an-insider tone of pretty much any media figure who has his/her own five-minute spot on a sports broadcast.

Bob Martin was a man with a life and interests outside the sports world. He was thoughtful and possessed a sense of perspective that informed his broadcasts. I remember reading a profile of him in a Sunday supplement magazine when I was in junior high school. And I recall my youthful surprise at reading his response to the interviewer's question: What do you do when you're in another city waiting to broadcast a game? Bob said he would go to a museum. Or take in a concert or a play. He loved his job but gave football a proper sense of both importance and triviality. When I read that, I remember something in the deep recesses of my mind whispering "role model." And that sometimes-raspy voice whispers still, because I look for those traits in the few sports announcers I find ear-worthy... which is why

I'm a fan of Cubs play-by-play announcer, Pat Hughes.

But back to Floyd Little.

He played in the league only eight years (1967–1975), but he had an electrifying style that gave hope to the hopeless—by which I mean Broncos fans of that era, like me. He ran like lightning, caught well, and even returned punts. And when he got his hands on the ball, anything was possible, at least briefly. He played with an angry vigor. And in those eight years, he and his anger amassed over 12,000 all-purpose yards and retired together as the seventh-leading all-time rusher in NFL history.

As the sixth pick in the NFL draft in 1967, he received a signing bonus of only \$10,000. And no, it was not comparable to what first-round draftees receive now, even taking into account inflation. Floyd knows it, too. In an online article by Denver sportswriter Mark Kizla posted on DenverPost.com last January, Floyd is quoted as summing up the situation this way: "But you know what ticks me off? People try to tell me now that an annual salary of \$25,000 was a lot of money 30 years ago. Well, (Seattle Seahawks running back) Shaun Alexander, a guy who couldn't carry my jock strap, signed a \$62 million contract in 2006. Even with inflation,

Continued on page 4.

Digital Branding Through Twitter, Facebook, Blogging, LinkedIn, and Other Social Media

BY MATTHEW MOHAMAD

Amy Guth, a dedicated distance runner and proud owner of cat “Chairman Meow,” is digital news editor for the *Chicago Tribune* and author of *Three Fallen Women*. She was exuberant and cordial in her presentation about the uses and current necessity for an online presence and “digital branding.”

Her expertise comes from running several blogs, the primary being “Bigmouth Indeed Strikes Again,” and over time learning through it how to best express herself to a digital audience. She claims that the responsibility of self-promoting is massive now that the internet is so integral to life and business, especially to those who are independent writers looking to advertise themselves.

Guth shared her experience of events leading up to the multi-state book tour for *Three Fallen Women*, describing how by the time she had finally agreed on advertising terms with the publisher, So New Media, she had a small army of Twitter and blog followers. She knew she could promote her book tour via blog and tweet, so she did—and ended up making even more stops and sales because followers would offer to set her up at their town, including refreshments and a book-signing location.

When asked why social

media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook were relevant, she said it all came down to a “return of the person-to-person business model.”

Twitter and blogging don’t intuitively come across as such, but Guth started her blogging originally to self-

“If you go for likable, you’re going for everyone and pleasing no one.”

brand and ended up using that same method to self-promote, self-sell, and maintain a business relationship with a multitude of people who were interested in what she had to say.

Guth pointed out that what can be said is also unintuitive. When asked what etiquette and audience analysis had to do with blogging, her reply was that it was only as applicable as the writer wished. She found that at first she was hesitant about what she spoke of online, but slowly, as she picked up followers, she became increasingly brazen.

She claims the online audience respect and demand blunt honesty and at one point she had been over-open with her thoughts. She settled down into a tone and manner she was comfortable with, and she has continued that voice ever since in her online presence.

As for her twitter, it’s a little different. According to Guth, “Twitter has replaced

talking to yourself.” Unlike the blog, which is anything from a diary entry to a philosophical/political tirade to simply a descriptive update, twitter is a means of sharing thoughts online. The capability to “re-tweet”—reiterate someone else’s tweet on your own—shows camaraderie through shared interests.

Her favorite application, the “TweetDeck,” allows users to keep track of any keyword they wish on twitter and then display all tweets chronologically with that keyword. In addition, she says, you can stay up to date on your favorite topics of interest through Facebook and many other online social sites.

Perhaps the most inspirational concept at the meeting was Guth’s self-confidence

throughout the presentation. One might say this is due to her success as an author, or perhaps as an editor for *Chicago Tribune*, but it is also arguable that in developing her online presence, she learned a little something about people in general.

When asked about her blog and what she chose as a voice when writing, it became clear that much of her confidence with people came from her take on a very old adage—“If you go for likable, you’re going for everyone and pleasing no one.” All writers should take that to heart when developing a virtual brand for self-sale, and with that at heart, develop a confidence in their writing along the way. 🐦

It’s IWOC Renewal!



Early-bird renewal begins on Wednesday, September 1 and runs until Thursday, September 30. With the new website, you’ll find it much faster and easier than last year. The early-bird price goes up in a puff of smoke on September 30, but why not try out the new site on Wednesday? These are tough times economically, so we’ve lowered the dues a bit, and you’ll get six free listings instead of five. Plus, there are extra-listings packages that give you a bigger discount the more you order. When work gets scarce, you need IWOC more than ever. It’s a major business tool: links to the major social networking sites, programs that give you new skills and/or feature hirers, the rate survey, *Stet*, and much more. IWOC membership is the cheapest possible advertising you could get. For the price of dues, you get a whole year of exposure on a site that’s constantly visited by potential employers, that gives you an opportunity to post samples, and that links directly to your personal website. Plus, we’re breathing new life into Writers’ Line. (We’ll be announcing a new chair in early September.) We know you want a WL that works, and we’re going to see that it does. Starting on Wednesday, September 1, click [HERE](#) to rejoin now or go to the website. 🐦

President's Column Continued from Page 2.

you know the relevancy between \$25,000 and \$62 million? None. There is no relevancy."

That's it, Floyd. Push the pile.

In his final game at Mile High Stadium, against the Philadelphia Eagles, he even had the chutzpah to call his own play—and own number—in the huddle, based on some flaw he'd detected in the Eagle defense. The quarterback okayed the play change, maybe just out of respect, and threw the ball to Floyd on a flare pattern. A few seconds later, the Broncos had 66 more yards of offense and six more points on the scoreboard. A fitting end to his NFL career.

And now, as he prepares for induction in Canton, he faces another challenge—how to sum up his thoughts/career/life-to-this-point in an eight-minute speech.

Now there's a test worthy of a TV reality show.

Forget about surviving on an island or chasing clues around the globe. Get out of the kitchen where four chefs try to outdo each other making restaurant-worthy dishes with mystery ingredients. Un-high-heel the waiflike wannabe runway models, and stick popsicles in the mouths of the eager Idol-atrous crooners.

Sum up your life-to-this-point in eight minutes. Ready? Go!

The same online article that makes known Floyd's sentiments regarding Shaun Alexander and his jockstrap reveals something else about Floyd—the fact that he still plays football in his dreams. And almost wakes up tired, because they're so real. Jim Brown, he says, does the same thing, and he's almost 70 years old.

Here's hoping that if and when I ever put away my keyboard-for-hire, I don't still dream of the day job. Of crafting a play? Sure—the first draft, at least, when no one has yet read it or weighed in on whether it works. Of writing about writing? Why not. Even petrified opinions cry out to be expressed. Of working on a novel, a short story, a screenplay—or even jotting down a sudden burst of inspiration on a napkin? Okay.

But of staring a blank screen and clunk-a-chunking my way past a brutal encounter with writer's block? Unh-unh.

In fact, if it came down to a choice between dreaming of having my face driven into the stadium turf by an NFL defensive lineman trying to rip a football from my arms... and of trying to get a client to pay an overdue invoice?

Well,... point me to the huddle. 🐾

Below is the slate of officers to be elected at the September meeting:

Roger Rueff, President
David Epstein, Executive Vice President
Jennifer Lyng, Secretary
Barbara Dillard, Treasurer
Catherine Rategan, Parliamentarian
Jim Hodl, Board Member
Joel Kinnan, Board Member
Danielle Schultz, Board Member
Betsy Storm, Board Member
Don Talend, Board Member

Calendar

September 14

IWOC Monthly Meeting. Join us to hear Jonathan Eig, author of *Get Capone*, tell about his adventures in researching the book, and more. The meeting will be held at National-Louis University, Room 5033, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program 6 p.m. Networking 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15; IWOC members free. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers welcome. For more information, call 847/855-6670 or visit www.iwoc.org.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org.

September 28 (4th Tuesday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Join near-west suburbanites for a noon lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Check before you come. This lunch is monthly only if there are enough people who can attend. Note: The lunch is now on the 4th Tuesday, not the 4th Thursday as it had been in the past.

September (1st Thursday)

IWORP Monthly Breakfast. Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

We are saddened to report the death of Terry Sacks, who was a long-time member of IWOC and a board member at one time. Our condolences to his wife, Mary Jane, and their children and grandchildren.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in Coming Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG