

2018 Royal Palm Literary Award Winners



PUBLISHED BOOK OF THE YEAR

Beached

Mystery OR Crime. Micki Browning

A marine biologist's life unravels after she discovers artifacts attributed to a legendary galleon and must outwit a modern pirate who'll resort to murder to claim the booty first.

Micki Browning. Retired police captain Micki Browning is the award-winning author of the Mer Cavallo Mysteries. She resides in Southern Florida with a vast array of scuba equipment she uses for "research."

Runners-Up:

- 1st Runner-Up. **Pumping Sunshine: A Memoir of My Rural Childhood.** Autobiography OR Memoir. Susie H. Baxter
- 2nd Runner-Up. **Death of a Dinosaur.** Educational OR Informational. Jory Berkwits
- 3rd Runner-Up. **Alara's Call.** Fantasy. Kristen Stieffel
- 4th Runner-Up. **The Summer of New Beginnings.** Women's Fiction. Bette Lee Crosby

UNPUBLISHED BOOK OF THE YEAR

Downhill Fast

Thriller OR Suspense. Dana J. Summers

While protecting a ten-year-old boy, geriatric hit man Lou Braga must overcome his crumbling body in order to save his daughter from a ruthless crime boss.

Dana J. Summers has been a cartoonist for forty years, thirty of those years with *The Orlando Sentinel*. His first novel, *Drawn and Buried*, won the Royal Palm award in 2013.

Runners-Up:

- 1st Runner-Up. **Easing Out: Accepting My Gay Self.** Autobiography OR Memoir, Craig Chambers
- 2nd Runner-Up. **Imminent Domain.** Science Fiction. Carey Winters
- 3rd Runner-Up. **Paranoid.** Thriller OR Suspense. Colleen Kastner
- 4th Runner-Up. **Sandblast.** Thriller OR Suspense. Al Pessin

Best Children's Book

Citrus Green

Middle-Grade Fiction. Annette Masters

When Little Tillie is abandoned on a Florida plantation in 1864, she fights to survive while waiting to be rescued. After months alone, Tillie musters the courage to save herself.

Annette Masters is a certified copy editor, an RPLA winning author, and serves as president & critique-group moderator of the Tampa Writers Alliance. She writes middle-grade novels & picture books.

The Dahris Clair Memorial Award for Plays

Hamlet, Reimagined

Stage Play. Walter Joseph Schenck, Jr.

Angels intercede in Denmark's political and religious affairs, selecting Hamlet, a bi-polar prince, toward familial redemption.

Walter Joseph Schenck, Jr., has been listed on the Kirkus Book Reviews Recommended Read List three times and been featured Writer in Publisher's Weekly. He has won three awards from FAPA, one from FWA, and other critical acclaims.

BOOK-LENGTH FICTION

Unpublished Blended Genre

- 1st Place. **Ripple Effect.** Jenny Ferns. An independent woman raised her dead sister's child during WW II in England. Postwar, the ripple effect of wartime losses, wounds of the soul, secrets, and lies almost destroy her.

Published Blended Genre

- 1st Place. **Avenging Allison**. Tom Bender. A child unleashes mayhem by telling his brother he saw a man falling in the sky. A reporter's daughter is hit by a car. Outraged, he tracks down a psychopath.
- 2nd Place. **Trouble in Tampa**. Louise Titchener. Florida in 1885: wild pigs, wild people, and Trouble in Tampa!
- 3rd Place. **Twice Tethered**. Sabine Priestley. Sensari only bond once. Until now ... Was the tether between Priya and Morgan engineered or is it real? The answer could mean the end of Vega.

Unpublished Fantasy

- 1st Place. **Blaise Fell Through**. B.C Krygowski. Drafted into a living military academy, a teen girl battles to keep a prophecy collection from an evil dictator.

Published Fantasy

- 1st Place. **Alara's Call**. Kristen Stieffel. Many tales are told of heroes who fulfill ancient prophecies. Alara is a heroine who gives new ones.

Unpublished Historical Fiction

- 1st Place. **An Admirer of Books**. Yusuf DeLorenzo. A student of Ottoman law defends a friend from a murder charge and then twists the truth to defend a slave woman and reunite her with her family.
- 2nd Place. **The War That Never Ends**. Yves Masson. A young lieutenant drafted into combat becomes the ruthless warrior he never aspired to be. Upon his discharge, the demons of guilt and anger urge him to end his life.
- 3rd Place. **The Most Invisible Boy**. Gary Robert Pinnell. Troubled by bullies, a 15-year-old hitchhikes from Oklahoma to California to find his ex-marine father, learn to fight, and return to his unrequited love.

Published Historical Fiction

- 1st Place. **Who She Is**. Diane Byington. In 1967, Faye wants to run the Boston Marathon, but women aren't allowed. While training, strange memories surface. She must solve the mystery and keep her eyes on the finish line.
- 2nd Place. **Liberty Street: A Novel of Late Civil War Savannah**. Lawrence Martin. Can women find love during the Civil War?

Unpublished Humor OR Satire

- 1st Place. **Pretty Words Don't Feed the Cats.** Lynn Schiffhorst. When his parishioners get mad at one another, an elderly Italian priest discovers that cats can be God's peace-makers.

Unpublished Mainstream OR Literary

- 1st Place. **Scars, Scribbles, and the Power of Crayons.** Lara Lazenby. Lexi, A mischievous seven-year-old with stage III cancer, has epic arguments with Death and makes deals with God to stay alive.
- 2nd Place. **Lt. Goodjake.** Donnie Niles. A rookie lieutenant fights fires with his veteran crew of bullies while pursuing the deranged arsonist who has been tempting the city.
- 3rd Place. **Winky's Wager.** Dennis Dunigan. A young woman flees her dead-end existence and heads to Key West on a boat with four males—an angry fifteen-year-old, a wounded Navy Seal, a mad Albanian, and a kindly older man.

Published Mainstream OR Literary

- 1st Place. **House on the Forgotten Coast.** Ruth Coe Chambers. Annelise Lovett Morgan dies with a terrible secret on her wedding day and returns one hundred years later to clear the name of her beloved, wrongly accused of murder.
- 2nd Place. **House of Cry.** Linda Bleser. A secret room transports a woman to alternate realities of her life—voyages of discovery that offer unexpected answers about her family, herself, and her true destiny.

Unpublished Mystery OR Crime

- 1st Place. **Downhill Fast.** Dana J. Summers. While protecting a ten-year-old boy, geriatric hit man Lou Braga must overcome his crumbling body in order to save his daughter from a ruthless crime boss.
- 2nd Place. **Portside Screw.** Gregory S. Dew. Retired PI turned boat bum Jack Cubera must halt an egregious development to save Islamorada's pristine backwaters or surrender it to crafty mobsters and shady politicians.
- 3rd Place. **Death of a Tomato.** Frances Hight. Three strong women and one damaged man fight the system and the evidence to solve two savage murders.

Published Mystery OR Crime

- 1st Place. **Beached.** Micki Browning. A marine biologist's life unravels after she discovers artifacts attributed to a legendary galleon and must outwit a modern pirate who'll resort to murder to claim the booty first.

- 2nd Place. **Yard Goat.** Ray Flynt. Brad Frame revisits one of his early cases, a brutal murder set against the backdrop of a nation recovering from the events of 9/11.
- 3rd Place. **City of Grudges.** Rick Outzen. A Newspaper publisher becomes pariah when he writes an article that gets his best friend arrested. His career and life hang in the balance as he fights for vindication and redemption.

Unpublished Novella

- 1st Place. **Under the Surface.** Joan North. Lauren Summerville has spent her life living on the surface, fearful of the darkness that lurks beneath. But she fears wasting her life if she never risks opening her heart.
- 2nd Place. **Mr. Bones.** Brad Kuhn. Science-minded boy gets religion the hard way and must fight for his life when he accidentally unleashes a Voodoo warlord on Cape Cod.
- 3rd Place. **There Goes the Neighborhood.** Sarah Hein Graves. In a wacky Miami neighborhood, Judy's marriage unravels when their Chihuahua disappears and redneck snake hunters are called after a python sighting in gay-nudist Horace's yard.

Published Novella

- 1st Place. **Missing.** Virginia. Nygard. Detective Carmella Callenda is puzzled by a possible double kidnapping, a rash of crimes in her small Florida town, and unexplained lights and activity in Gopher Slough.
- 2nd Place. **Scotland's Knight: The Rose in the Glade.** Anne Hawkinson. A powerful knight in Medieval Scotland confronts his haunted past and the man who threatens to destroy his life, his newfound love, and his tenuous faith in himself.
- 3rd Place. **A Glimpse of Peace on the Journey to Armageddon.** Walter Joseph Schenck, Jr. Personal, familial, and historical pasts interact with memories of Vietnam, a grandmother who survived a genocide by the Turks, a devoted, caring aunt—reconciled.

Published Romance

- 1st Place. **Legacy of Evil.** Sharon Buchbinder. One battle, one outcome. Who will win? Good or evil?
- 2nd Place. **Lost and Found.** Stephen Leitschuh. Michael and Ruth reconnect after realizing that they still have feelings for one another despite their divorce. The only thing in their way of happiness is a hitman bent on revenge.

Unpublished Science Fiction

- 1st Place. **Imminent Domain.** Carey Winters. Mythological creatures return to Earth, threatening Armageddon for the world. Paleontologist Larry Carter has little time to find out where they come from and how to stop them.
- 2nd Place. **The Holoivid Hero.** David M. Pearce. A down-on-his-luck reality show director must coach a new actor through an alien bug hunt.

Unpublished Thriller OR Suspense

- 1st Place. **Downhill Fast.** Dana J. Summers. While protecting a ten-year-old boy, geriatric hit man Lou Braga must overcome his crumbling body in order to save his daughter from a ruthless crime boss.
- 2nd Place. **Paranoid.** Colleen Jeffery Kastner. Reality blurs with paranoia when her best friend commits suicide and her husband's lovers turn up dead. This young mother must take the law into her own hands to save her kids.
- 3rd Place. **Sandblast.** Al Pessin. Using American diversity against our enemies, an Afghan-American U.S. Army soldier goes undercover inside the Taliban on a mission to find the mastermind of a new terror wave.

Published Thriller OR Suspense

- 1st Place. **Beyond the Cabin.** Dana Ridenour. An FBI undercover agent's life hangs by a thread after her identity is compromised while working a dangerous assignment in the treacherous South Carolina Lowcountry.
- 2nd Place. **Parchments of Fire.** John Chaplick. Off the southern coast of Greece, sponge divers discover a two thousand-year-old Roman shipwreck that harbors historic secrets potentially catastrophic to the public image of Greece.
- 3rd Place. **Cold Oath.** Ray Flynt. Ryan Caldwell, struggling with PTSD after five years in Iraq and Afghanistan, pursues a journalism degree on a campus rife with date rape, an unsolved murder, and campus politics.

Published Women's Fiction

- 1st Place. **The Summer of New Beginnings.** Bette Lee Crosby. One fateful summer Meghan Briggs rescues a dog and two sisters learn that together a family can make miracles happen.
- 2nd Place. **The Comfort of Secrets.** Christine Nolfi. Cat Mendoza needs a win. After a business failure and years of dating the wrong men, she's ready to turn things around.

- 3rd Place. **The Lady was a Spy.** Tom Swartz. Pauline Cushman was a Creole kid who became a semi-famous actress and a spy for the Union during the Civil War. Her actions saved thousands of Union soldiers' lives.

BOOK-LENGTH NONFICTION

Unpublished Autobiography OR Memoir

- 1st Place. **Easing Out: Accepting My Gay Self.** Craig Chambers. Do will and prayer truly change innate sexual orientation, or can they lead to an acceptance that God's design shouldn't be tampered with? Funny, heart-wrenching, thought-provoking.
- 2nd Place. **The Reluctant RV Wife.** Gerri Almand. Follow a reluctant wife and her excited husband through two informative years of RV travel. He wanted to do it; she didn't. They both change and learn a new meaning of freedom.
- 3rd Place. **When Paris Was Dark.** Yves Masson. A young French boy grows up in Paris during the German occupation. He is almost shot a couple of times and almost dies of starvation but survives.

Published Autobiography OR Memoir

- 1st Place. **Pumping Sunshine: A Memoir of my Rural Childhood.** Susie H. Baxter. Young Susanette, who grows up in a rural Florida home with no indoor plumbing, wants more than anything to be like her older sisters, who don't have her bad habit.
- 2nd Place. **The Secret Life of a Weight-Obsessed Woman.** Iris Ruth Pastor. This is a story of a wife and mother of five sons—who secretly battled bulimia for 46 years—until she broke free of the monster within and recovered.
- 3rd Place. **Gemini Joe, Memoirs from Brooklyn.** Janet Sierzant. The runt of the litter, Gemini Joe is no stranger to tears. His life is a story—following the Great Depression and his parents struggle to provide for his family.

Published Biography

- 1st Place. **The Force of Destiny.** Michael A. Gabriel. A WWII D-Day veteran overcomes his PTSD to rise to the top of his profession as a conductor and music educator.
- 2nd Place. **Unsung Hero.** Margaret Best. A memoir/biography/tribute to my father.

Published Educational OR Informational

- 1st Place. **Death of the Dinosaur.** Jory Berkwits. How Wall Street has changed and where it is headed—a retrospective drawn from a lifetime of first hand experiences.

- 2nd Place. **My Writers Sampler: Exercises in Learning to Write Fiction.** Marie Brack. A comprehensive guide to the craft of writing fiction.

Published History

- 1st Place. **Ordinary People: Extraordinary Heroes—Afghanistan and Iraq.** Will G. Merrill, Jr. True stories of the bravery and sacrifice of our military after 9/11 inspire all Americans and remind us of the cost of war to the Extraordinary Heroes who protect our nation.

FICTION FOR YOUTH

Unpublished Children’s Picture Book

- 1st Place. **Floppyopolis.** John Hope. Freddy Floppy travels to Floppyopolis only to discover the ick and the grime. But when he sees how Floppies take pride in their home, he brings his lesson home.
- 2nd Place. **Hemi the Fire Station Cat.** Kim English. Hemi loves being the only cat at the fire station. But when three other cats show up, she has to learn how to be a friend.
- 3rd Place. **The Legend of Billy Bob Flybottom: An Old-Fangled Appalachian Tall Tale.** Susan Kite. A kind young mountain boy figures out how to help his people while proving his considerable strength and abilities against a bully.

Unpublished Early Reader OR Chapter Book

- 1st Place. **My Faraway Friend.** Anne Hawkinson. Kathy’s best friend Paul used to live next door. Then he moved far away, across the Atlantic Ocean. Determined to find a way to visit him, she invents something to get her there.

Unpublished Middle-Grade Fiction

- 1st Place. **Citrus Green.** Annette Masters. When Little Tillie is abandoned on a Florida plantation in 1864, she fights to survive while waiting to be rescued. After months alone, Tillie musters the courage to save herself.
- 2nd Place. **Buddy and the Bigot.** Ann Meier. When his Puerto Rican best friend becomes the victim of a hate crime, an eleven-year-old boy is determined to find and stop the bigot promoting the Take Florida Back group.
- 3rd Place. **The Case of the Crazy Chickenscratches.** Mark H. Newhouse. A teenager faces the toughest decision of his life while working with his eccentric lawyer uncle to prove a man who turned his house into a zoo isn’t crazy.

Published Middle-Grade Fiction

- 1st Place. **The Spirit of the Rising Sun.** Ian Coubrough. Thirteen-year-old Phoenix Taylor promises his great-grandfather he'll return his old battle flag to Japan, find the family of the soldier who lost it in WWII, and return it to them.

Unpublished Young Adult OR New Adult

- 1st Place. **Dragon's Claw.** Rhett DeVane. Eighteen-year-old dragon guardian Aidan McAlister leads an Otherworld war against a powerful ebony dragon threatening her family, friends, and Kyle, the fellow guardian she loves.
- 2nd Place. **Dogs and Dirt.** Janelle Gabay. Kendall's alternative upbringing and social ineptitude propel her into the spotlight after a heroic dog rescue. Soon she finds herself spiraling out of control and falling in love.
- 3rd Place. **Growing Season.** Margaret Alford. Left with elderly Alabama relatives by his missionary parents and desperate to fit in at school, Miami-born Sam overlooks a new friend's shifty behavior, with disastrous results.

Published Young Adult OR New Adult

- 1st Place. **The Caging at Deadwater Manor.** Sandie Will. A young woman finds herself imprisoned against her will at a psychiatric hospital where she fights against her captors and secrets of the past.
- 2nd Place. **Kiss Me, Kill You.** Larissa Hardesty. Emmy believes in heart-stopping kisses—but not the kind that land your date in the hospital. Paul had one job: watch Emmy. Should have been easy. But then she kissed that boy.
- 3rd Place. **Triton's Call: Tetrasphere Book 2.** P.T.L. Perrin. In this sequel to Terra's Call, aliens abduct one of four gifted teens. Without her, Earth is doomed. A powerful enemy emerges, but friends are found in unlikely places.

PLAY

Unproduced

- 1st Place. **The Onlys.** Bill Dougherty. In 1937 Boston, ten street kids rescue an out-of-work school teacher to protect them from a corrupt Irish cop who wants to nab them and sell them to the Scotsman in Juvenile Hall.

Produced

- 1st Place. **Hamlet Reimagined.** Walter Joseph Schenck, Jr. Angels intercede in Denmark's political and religious affairs, selecting Hamlet, a bi-polar prince, toward familial redemption.

GENERAL CATCH-ALL

Unpublished General Catch-All

- 1st Place. **What Lies Beneath.** Melody Dean Dimick. In a Central Florida town, a high school senior fears she cannot escape the literal and figurative borders of her survivalist dad's chain-link fence. She seeks peer acceptance.
- 2nd Place. **Peripheral Visions and Other Stories.** Nancy Christie. *Peripheral Visions and Other Stories* is about people who, when dealt challenging hands by life, play those cards to the best of their abilities and in their own unique ways.

Published General Catch-All

- 1st Place. **Escape to Canada, Rendered in Poetic Overtures.** Walter Joseph Schenck, Jr. A poet is accompanied by his friends and wife to Canada where a conflict of interest arises, threatening to destroy the friendship. The need for friendship wins.
- 2nd Place. **MoMEnts: A Dad Holds On.** Patrick L. Hempfing. A stay-at-home dad conquers the day-to-day challenges of daddy-daughter chaos while embracing the pockets of love, joy, and happiness that make fatherhood exhilarating.
- 3rd Place. **Whitetails and Tall Tales.** Susan Lindsley. This collection of short stories takes the reader into the land of the improbable, into the realm of dreams and the halls of justice served and justice impossible.

SHORT FICTION

Unpublished Flash Fiction

- 1st Place. **Scheduled Delivery.** Joan J. Harris. They each waited in dread. If it was going to happen, it would be between three o'clock and four. The hour seemed interminable.
- 2nd Place. **Terra-Cotta Triggers.** Annette Masters. When Clementine's psychiatrist wears orange clothing, the color stimulates Clementine's childhood memories and provokes behaviors that land her in jail.
- 3rd Place. **Love Behind Bars.** Kim Hackett. New relationships are forged under unlikely circumstances.

Published Flash Fiction

- 1st Place. **Flight of a New Dawn.** Arielle Haughee. After spending months as his brother's caretaker, Jon must find a new life for himself now that Patrick is gone.
- 2nd Place. **Garden Party.** Tricia Pimental. Sometimes the most taciturn folks can leave us speechless.
- 3rd Place. **I hit a deer.** Lawrence Martin. A retired man driving home from a doctor visit skids on icy road, hits a deer (he thinks).

Unpublished Short Story

- 1st Place. **Seis Dedos, Six toes.** Amarilys Gacio Rassler. An eight-year-old, Cuban girl struggles to save the lives of her family when they hide a fugitive from the Bay of Pigs Invasion.
- 2nd Place. **Lost Key.** Maria Fox. A woman used as a biometric key must escape her master before she is decommissioned—and terminated.
- 3rd Place. **Crusade.** Lawrence Martin. Lung doctor's creative gambit to get his patient to quit smoking.

Published Short Story

- 1st Place. **Pink Collar.** Tricia Pimental. When Amanda Wright's irritating cousin and her latest love interest appear unexpectedly, a hurtful memory is rekindled. But that's not the only thing that will soon be up in smoke.
- 2nd Place. **Halloween for Aiden.** Arielle Haughee. Devoted mother Renee is determined to give her autistic son Aiden the best Halloween, no matter what it takes.
- 3rd Place. **The Masters Reimagined: Regarding Mr. Bulkington.** Elle Andrews Patt. Ahab. Ishmael. Bulkington. A secret kept for a lifetime.

Unpublished Poetry

- 1st Place. **Anniversary.** Karen Ann Wilson. Memories of married life after forty years together.
- 2nd Place. **A Cup of Tea, a Bit of Toast.** Linda Kraus. The speaker of the poem questions the life and happiness of a lonely, withdrawn woman.
- 3rd Place. **October 1960: The Confiscation of Narcissa Too Part 1.** Elena Fowler. My experiences as a child trying to escape from Cuba on our boat, the Narcissa Too, and its confiscation.

Published Poetry

- 1st Place. **Redefining Beauty.** Linda Kraus. A potter's creative use of broken shards provides a new way of seeing beauty.
- 2nd Place. **School Shooter.** Rick Cooper. Sometimes bad things don't happen.

SHORT NONFICTION

Unpublished Creative Nonfiction

- 1st Place. **Basement Level.** Loren Leith. Victims of a leveling-behavior individual are trapped in a metaphorical basement. Heavily impacted, one breaks free, the others refuse rescue.
- 2nd Place. **River of No Return.** David C. Edmonds. A U.S. Embassy official in Peru goes into the jungle on a drug raid with DEA agents, only to become a victim of the raid.
- 3rd Place. **Dinner with a Side of Thanks.** Catherine Underhill Fitzpatrick. A metro daily reporter learns two lessons while on assignment at a Habitat for Humanity home site: Don't take notes in the rain, and don't rush to judge people's cuisine.

Published Creative Nonfiction

- 1st Place. **Sick Day.** Laura Holian. A triathlete husband's duty to home and self is challenged by the juggernaut of work, a distressed wife and world without sick days.