

Schiller's Mission Keeping the Mailer Spirit Alive

A few months before Norman Mailer died in November of 2007, his longtime collaborator Lawrence Schiller sat down with the legendary author to discuss his legacy. "There's a whole generation of people out there who don't know who you are," Schiller told Mailer, "and I don't want you to be an author who someone reads six or seven books and doesn't read the rest." Since Mailer's death, Schiller has devised a plan to make sure that doesn't happen, launching the Norman Mailer Writing Awards, organizing the Norman Mailer Writers Colony and enticing publishers to reissue or repackage some of Mailer's lesser known books. "Usually all an estate does in the first five years after a writer's death is issue a comprehensive book of letters—and, yes, we'll do that—but this has a different energy to it," Schiller said.

The first Norman Mailer Writing Awards will be presented this October 20 at a benefit gala chaired by Tina Brown and David Remnick at Cipriani in New York City. Four awards will be presented. Toni Morrison will be honored for "lifetime achievement" and the late David Halberstam for "distinguished journalism"; as well, there will be two winners of a new nationwide writing contest, sponsored by the Norman Mailer Writing Colony and administered by the National Council of Teachers of English. One prize of \$5,000 will go to a high school senior and a \$10,000 award will go to a college student. The idea behind the awards, explained Schiller, is to expose Mailer's name to as many young people as possible. "I want students to go out and discover who Norman Mailer was and is," he said.

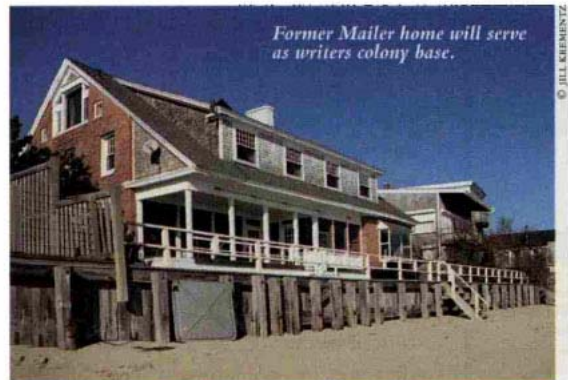
The Writers Colony, situated in Mailer's former home in Provincetown, Mass.,

will induct its inaugural class of fellows this July. The first list of seven fellows includes Philip Shenon, author of *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation*, and Alex Gilvarry, a former editor at Scholastic. Lasting a month, it caters to emerging writers of fiction and nonfiction who will be given room, board and a community with which to discuss their work.

The program will be overseen by Greg Curtis and Jim Magnuson, both of the University of Texas at Austin, where the Mailer archive is held. In addition, starting this month, the colony will begin a series of workshops taught by Mailer's friends, ranging from J. Michael Lennon teaching "Writing Techniques of the New Journalism" to Douglas Brinkley on "Historical Research and the Narrative." All workshop participants, save for two of seven spots, will be funded by scholarships from the colony.

Finally, Schiller has enlisted publishers to publish collections of letters and take another look at some of Mailer's lesser-known works. *The New Yorker*, the *New York Review of Books* and *Playboy* have all published excerpts from Mailer's letters, while Taschen has two new books planned, including *MoonFire*, a collection of photos of the first moon landing that will incorporate text from Mailer's 1970 book on the landings, *A Fire on the Moon*, and *America*, a photographic compendium, also with text by Mailer. "All the introductions to Mailer's works from now on will be done by young writers. Colum McCann will introduce *MoonFire*, for example," said Schiller.

"What Larry is doing is something that encapsulates all sides of Mailer, his public persona and his private side," said Chris Napolitano, *Playboy's* editorial director, who has worked with both Mailer and Schiller. "Our various projects—the colony, prizes, publications—are not only to preserve interest in his writings, but his craft," Schiller said. "The way he worked—the tenacity, creativity and generosity—is in some way just as important as the books, the films and his run for mayor." —Edward Nawotka



© JILL KENNEDY