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## Reader-Quest: A Literary Magazine Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary with an Unusual Contest

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## Reader-Quest:

### ***A Literary Magazine Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary with an Unusual Contest***

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Though most American writers since the 1920s have been published in them, little literary magazines have always had to struggle to find readers.

And they've tried almost everything. Even when *The Paris Review* set up a booth outside the French pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York, it sold less than one copy per day.

But holding a contest? That's what the Bloomington-based *Clockwatch Review* is doing to celebrate 10 years of publishing and bolster readership for the anniversary issue.

All who order a copy of the new anniversary issue will be entered in a drawing with the winner to receive a lifetime subscription to the award-winning magazine.

"Your lifetime or ours, whichever comes first," according to editor James Plath, a professor of English at Illinois Wesleyan University. And he's serious. "The average life span for an American literary magazine is only one-and-a-half years, so a tenth anniversary is worth celebrating."

Two runners-up will receive five-year subscriptions and the first 50 people to order will receive an issue from the magazine's first year, Plath said. But he adds he isn't worried about being swamped by requests.

"When I interviewed Vincent Price for the magazine in 1985, he told me our magazine would never have the circulation of the *National Enquirer* because 'Great art is communication to the few, unfortunately. It is not communication to the many.'"

According to Plath, the average subscription base for a small literary magazine is only 150 to 250 readers. "There are serious readers out there," he said, "but because literary magazines don't have the money to advertise, it's tough to find them. Maybe this contest will uncover a few."

The contest is the kind of "stunt" one might expect from the magazine that gave the literary world "The Brown Issue," a parody of literary magazine special issues in which every writer, artist, and advertiser was named Brown. Or the magazine that came up with *Clockwatch Review Light*, a special humor issue that featured what may have been the first comic-style treatment of a serious literary short story.

Those are the kinds of things that have delighted readers and earned the magazine an Editor's Award from the Council of Literary Magazines & Presses, honored in 1990 as one of the top five magazines in the nation.

The anniversary issue features what Plath calls "the best fiction we've ever published," including two stories that were 50 manuscript pages long. "The Man Who Loved Knives" by Mark Johnson is a haunting narrative about a man who loved them too much, while "The Challenge" is a new story from Ray Dean Mize, whose work last appeared in *Playboy*.

The issue also features the eclectic variety of interviews that has been the magazine's signature, including Chicago blues singer Koko Taylor, writer Jamaica Kincaid, and a Russian icon painter, interviewed by a young Moscow writer. Past issues have surprised and delighted readers with a host of big-name interviews, including Bob Newhart, Jimmy Buffett, Arlo Guthrie, Dik "Hagar the Horrible" Browne, Friz "Bugs Bunny" Freleng, Dawn Upshaw, David "Airplane!" Zucker, and Buddy Guy.

Also included in the anniversary issue are contemporary poetry, book reviews, artwork, several essays, and a 10-year index.

The drawing for a lifetime subscription and other prizes will occur on September 1, with the winners notified shortly thereafter. To order a copy and enter the drawing, send \$8 (postage paid) with name, address, and phone number to *Clockwatch Review*, Department of English, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL 61702-2900.

Illinois Wesleyan, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,800 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. For the last five years, *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked IWU No. 1 among Midwest regional colleges and universities in its annual "America's Best Colleges" issue. *U.S. News* also rated IWU as a "best buy" in higher education in its first survey, "Paying for College," published in October 1993.