

**FOR RELEASE
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**NORMAN MAILER TO RECEIVE THE MEDAL FOR
DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN LETTERS
FROM THE NATIONAL BOOK FOUNDATION, TO BE
PRESENTED BY NOBEL PRIZE WINNER TONI MORRISON**

**LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI TO RECEIVE
THE FIRST LITERARIAN AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE
TO THE AMERICAN LITERARY COMMUNITY,
TO BE PRESENTED BY JESSICA HAGEDORN**

**To Be Honored on November 16 at the 2005
National Book Awards Ceremony hosted by Garrison Keillor**

*John Grisham to Announce National Book Award Finalists from
Faulkner's Home in Oxford, Mississippi on October 12*

New York, New York – The National Book Foundation, presenter of the National Book Awards, will bestow its 2005 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters on **Norman Mailer** in recognition of his five decades of brilliant work. Mailer has long been considered a major figure in post-war American literature whose innovative works of fiction and nonfiction have changed the landscape of American writing. He won the National Book Award in 1969 and the Pulitzer Prize twice, once in 1969 and again in 1980. He will receive his Medal at the 56th National Book Awards Ceremony and Benefit Dinner in New York City on Wednesday, November 16. The evening will be hosted again this year by author and radio host **Garrison Keillor**. **Toni Morrison** will present Mr. Mailer with his Award.

Also that evening, The National Book Foundation will award poet and social activist **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** a new award, The Literarian Award for Outstanding Service to the American Literary Community. This Award recognizes Ferlinghetti's tireless work on behalf of poets and the entire literary community for over fifty years. **Jessica Hagedorn** will present the Award.

In making the announcements, Harold Augenbraum, executive director of the Foundation, said, “This year we recognize two giants in the literary world, whose influence will be felt among readers and writers alike for generations to come.” Specifically citing Mailer’s work he said, “Norman Mailer is one of our greatest writers and our Board of Directors is honored to present him with this award for his outstanding achievements.” Previous recipients of the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters are Jason Epstein (a longtime editor of Mr. Mailer’s), Daniel Boorstin, Saul Bellow, Eudora Welty, James Laughlin, Clifton Fadiman, Gwendolyn Brooks, David McCullough, Toni Morrison, Studs Terkel, John Updike, Ray Bradbury, Arthur Miller, Philip Roth, Stephen King, and Judy Blume.

The Board of the National Book Foundation decided this year to inaugurate The Literarian Award to recognize individuals whose life’s work has enhanced the literary world as a whole. “Through his publishing and bookselling at City Lights Books in San Francisco, his inspiration of the Beats, his steady publication of and coverage of poets both classic and avant-garde, Ferlinghetti has been a major force and an inspiration in the literary world,” said Augenbraum. “He has always pushed the edges of the literary envelope and has been unwavering in his commitment to literature.” Next year marks the 50th anniversary of Ferlinghetti’s legal defense of Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl”, one of the most important publishing events in American literary history. *Note: More detailed biographies of Norman Mailer, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Toni Morrison, Jessica Hagedorn, and Garrison Keillor follow at the end of the release.*

John Grisham to Announce Finalists from Oxford, Mississippi on October 12

The eagerly-awaited announcement of the twenty Finalists for the 2005 National Book Awards will take place on October 12 in Oxford, Mississippi, one of America’s most cherished book communities. Bestselling author and Mississippi native, **John Grisham**, will announce the Finalists from the steps of Rowan Oak, the newly restored home of **William Faulkner**, who was a two-time winner of the National Book Award.

“It is fitting that we make this important announcement from one of the great historic literary sites in our country and with the help of one of America’s most important

contemporary writers,” said Augenbraum. “It is an exciting combination that underscores both the distinguished history of the Award and diversity of the books submitted and nominated each year.”

Grisham will announce the twenty Finalists for the 2005 National Book Awards on Tuesday, October 12 at approximately 1:00 p.m. central time at a press conference at Rowan Oak, in conjunction with the University of Mississippi, which owns the Faulkner home. The Finalists are in four awards categories: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Young People’s Literature. The winner in each category will be announced at the National Book Awards Ceremony and Benefit Dinner at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Times Square in New York City on Wednesday, November 16.

For more information about the Finalists Announcement and the invitation-only Awards dinner, please contact Camille McDuffie at Goldberg McDuffie Communications (212)446-5106.

The National Book Foundation was established in 1989 to expand the impact of the National Book Awards – sponsored every year in Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Young People’s Literature – beyond the single focus of literary recognition. The non-profit Foundation is well-known for its sponsorship of the Awards, which have been in existence since 1950, and is becoming equally known for the free educational programs it presents nationwide. The annual Awards ceremony serves as a benefit for the Foundation’s charitable efforts.

Norman Mailer

Born in 1923, Norman Mailer grew up in Brooklyn and attended Harvard University, graduating with a degree in aeronautical engineering. It was while at Harvard that he became interested in writing and his first story was published by *Story* magazine in 1941.

Drafted into the army in 1944, Mailer served as a sergeant in the Pacific. His first novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, which was based on his personal experiences in World War II, was published to critical acclaim and made him world famous at the age of 25.

Since his dramatic debut as a writer, Mailer has written more than thirty works of fiction and nonfiction as well as many superb essays and journalistic pieces. Throughout the 1960s, he reported on the tumultuous politics of the time (including the Democratic and Republican conventions) using colorful prose and a strong personal point of view, paving the way for the New Journalism. He won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1969 for his nonfiction book, *Armies of the Night*, a recollection of his own experiences at the Washington peace rallies in 1968. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize

for fiction in 1980 for his novel, *The Executioner's Song*, which chronicled the life and death of convict Gary Gilmore. While politics and current events have always been major themes in his work, he has also surprised with such novels as *Ancient Evenings*, which was set in Egypt at the dawn of recorded history, and *The Gospel According to the Son*, about the life of Jesus. A large compendium of Mailer's fiction and nonfiction writing, *The Time of Our Time*, appeared in 1998. Last year, in his 81st year, Mailer published a book-length essay on the craft of writing, *The Spooky Art*.

In addition to his enormous achievements as a writer, Mailer also co-founded the *Village Voice* in 1955. Long active as a member of the international writers' organization PEN, he served as President of the PEN America Center from 1984 to 1986. He lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Born in Yonkers, New York in 1919, Ferlinghetti graduated from the University of North Carolina, received an M.A. from Columbia University and a doctoral degree in poetry at the Sorbonne in Paris. He served in the Navy in World War II.

In 1953 he founded, with Peter D. Martin, City Lights Books in San Francisco, the first all paperbound bookstore in the country. He continues to operate the store from its original location and it has remained one of the truly great independent bookstores and a beacon for alternative culture. In 1955, Ferlinghetti launched City Lights Publishers with the now-famous Pocket Poet Series, which included work by William Carlos Williams, Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Patchen, and Antonin Artaud as well as his own works. Ferlinghetti published Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* as Pocket Poets Number Four, for which he was tried on obscenity charges. He was declared innocent, a landmark victory for free speech. The press continues today and is distinguished for its commitment to innovative and progressive ideas.

The author of more than thirty books of poetry, Ferlinghetti's poems employ plain language, and they remain tremendously popular with a wide range of readers. In 1958 he published the volume, *A Coney Island of the Mind* (and in 1997 published a follow-up volume *A Far Rockaway of the Heart*), which has remained one of the best selling poetry books of our time. He is also the author of more than eight plays and of the novels *Love in the Days of Rage* (1988) and *Her* (1966). He was named San Francisco's first poet laureate in 1998 and in 2000 received the lifetime achievement award from the National Book Critics Circle. Ferlinghetti also writes a weekly column about poetry for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Toni Morrison

Born in 1931 in Ohio, Toni Morrison is one of our most distinguished novelists. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for her acclaimed novel, *Beloved* (1987), and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. Twice a Finalist for the National Book Award, she was the recipient of the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished

Contribution to American Letters in 1996. Her novels, which explore the black American experience, include *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*.

She has taught at Princeton University since 1989.

Jessica Hagedorn

Jessica Hagedorn's novels include *Dogeaters*, which was a National Book Award Finalist in 1990, *Dream Jungle*, and *The Gangster of Love*, which was nominated for the Irish Times International Fiction Prize. She is also the author of "Danger and Beauty," a collection of poetry and prose, and the editor of "Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction" and "Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: At Home In The World." Her poetry, plays and prose have been anthologized widely. Also noted for her work in the theater, Hagedorn's wrote the stage adaptation of "Dogeaters," which was presented at La Jolla Playhouse and at the NYSF/Public Theater.

Garrison Keillor

Keillor is the author of many books, including *Lake Wobegon Days*, *The Old Man Who Loved Cheese*, and *Homegrown Democrat*. He is the host and writer of "A Prairie Home Companion," a live radio variety show heard on public radio stations coast to coast on Saturday nights. He was the host for the 2004 National Book Awards Ceremony and Benefit Dinner.

John Grisham

Since first publishing *A Time to Kill* in 1988, Grisham has written one novel a year (his other books are *The Firm*, *The Pelican Brief*, *The Client*, *The Chamber*, *The Rainmaker*, *The Runaway Jury*, *The Partner*, *The Street Lawyer*, *The Testament*, *The Brethren*, *A Painted House*, *Skippping Christmas*, *The Summons*, *The King of Torts* and *The Broker*) and all of them have been bestsellers. There are currently over 60 million John Grisham books in print worldwide, which have been translated into 29 languages. Seven of his novels have been turned into films.

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