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2002 AMBASSADOR BOOK AWARD WINNERS
A MIRROR TO AMERICA

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2002—

At this particular time in history, Americans have a strong belief that the rest of the world does not understand who we really are. The Ambassador Book Awards address that concern. “Mirrors held up to ourselves as Americans, the winning books open vistas of thought to better see America as what it is, what it was, and what it might be,” said Awards Chairman, J.D. McClatchy.

Sponsored by The English-Speaking Union of the United States the 2002 Ambassador Book Awards were conferred at the New York Public Library, Trustees Room, Thursday, September 5, honoring authors in five categories: *Lifetime Achievement*, *American Studies*, *Biography & Autobiography*, *Fiction*, *Poetry*. Sets of the winning books will be presented by The English-Speaking Union to libraries in 36 countries. “The most intriguing aspect of the Ambassador Book Award is not just that a prestigious committee picks expertly written books but that they pick books that cast a light on some facet of American life. The set of winning books is, like ambassadors, sent all over the world to help others understand us for what we are,” explains Alice Boyne, Executive Director of The English-Speaking Union of the United States. Winner David McCullough said his biography of John Adams is, “one of the stories of who we are and I am happy that it will be a current ambassador as John Adams was the first ambassador to George III.” “The idea that a novel of mine will find sympathetic readers all over the world as a direct result of this honor, that they will find in *EMPIRE FALLS* an America that’s different from the one they’re used to seeing on television and film, is both gratifying and humbling.”

Present to accept her *Lifetime Achievement Award* was Hortense Calisher author of *SUNDAY JEWS* (Harcourt Trade Publishers) (see attached bio). Diane McWhorter accepted her *American Studies Award* for her *CARRY ME HOME: BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA: THE CLIMACTIC BATTLE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS REVOLUTION* (Simon & Schuster) and David McCullough was there to receive the *Biography Award* for *JOHN ADAMS* (Simon & Schuster). Also present, Anthony Hecht, author of *THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT* (Knopf) won the *Poetry Award*. The *Fiction Award* for *EMPIRE FALLS* (Knopf) by Richard Russo was collected by his agent, Nat Sobel. Awards were presented by J.D. McClatchy, editor of *The Yale Review*, Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets, and Chairman of the *Books-Across-the-Sea* Committee. Winners received a cash prize.

Several past recipients include Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Arnold Rampersand, Tom Wolfe, Grace Paley, Doris Kearns Goodwin, John Updike, and Michael Beschloss.

Each year, The Ambassador Book Awards are presented by The English-
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Speaking Union *Books-Across-the-Sea* Committee to celebrate the written word in the English language. Winners of the Ambassador Book Awards are selected from approximately 50 American titles chosen to reveal the current or past American scene to the rest of the English-speaking world. (Shortlist available upon request)

Subsequently, the ESU sends a set of the winning Ambassador Books to approximately 30 of the 50 ESUs worldwide for inclusion in local libraries.

Books-Across-the-Sea started just after World War II when The Outpost, a group of Americans stationed in war-torn England, recognized the need for books. A group of book-minded Americans rushed 70

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books to the U.K. The books were welcomed as Ambassadors and London responded by sending 70 books in exchange. The books in each case had been chosen to reflect the life and culture of each country. The ESU took over the program in 1947 under the chairmanship of T.S. Eliot.

Books-Across-the-Sea and its Ambassador Book Awards is one example of the educational projects of The English-Speaking Union of the United States. The Committee conducts author events in New York and throughout the ESU network of 76 US Branches, and maintains the Ruth M. Shellens Memorial Library at ESU National Headquarters in New York City.

For short list of books and authors, and a list of selection committee members, please log on info@english-speakingunion.org

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