

Letter from Chicago

Winter 2012

Luncheon

Sunday, February 12, 2012 • Noon–3:00 pm

The Parthenon Restaurant • 314 S. Halsted Street, Chicago, IL

(Free Valet Parking)

Panel and Discussion

Money, Sex, and Power—Austen Style



Diane Capitani, Garrett Theological Seminary and
JASNA–GCR Educational Outreach Director

Liz Cooper, Regional Coordinator, JASNA–Wisconsin

William Phillips, DePaul University and JASNA–GCR Deputy Coordinator

Moderated by **Shirley Holbrook**, JASNA–GCR Recording Secretary

LUNCHEON REGISTRATION FORM

Members: \$25; Guests: \$35

Registration deadline: February 8

Member Name _____

Guest(s) Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

You can register by

1. Going online to www.jasnachicago.org
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or

2. Mailing your check—payable to JASNA–GCR—and
this form to Cathy Feldman, 17 East Goethe St.,
Chicago, IL 60610-2312.

Jeffrey Nigro



As you know, JASNA AGMs always have a theme. Beginning with the bicentenary of the publication of *Sense and Sensibility* this past year, and continuing over the next few years, we are celebrating a number of major Aus-

ten milestones. Most notably, the celebrations include the anniversaries of the publication of all of her completed novels.

As Austen did not publish in 1812, however, the 2012 AGM in Brooklyn is dedicated instead to three items of perennial fascination: sex, power, and money. Appropriate enough for our contemporary culture, some might say, but what do such vulgar things have to do with the elegant world of Jane Austen? Quite a lot, of course, as even a cursory glance at the novels reveals.

Austen might not directly address many of the political issues of her tumultuous times, but she was concerned about the proper exercise of power. Authority figures in the novels are not always treated sympathetically: even men of integrity like Mr. Darcy or Mr. Knightley can come off as snide or bossy. Sir Thomas Bertram, more interested in being feared than loved by his children, has to learn how to han-



dle his power responsibly. Austen clearly understood the complexity of power dynamics within families: like many grown-up children even today, Emma can sometimes seem like her father's parent.

Money is, of course, an ever-present concern in the novels. We need look no further than the Bennets' urgent need to marry off five daughters with little in the way of dowries (and no son in line to inherit, so that their estate must go to Mr. Collins) to realize that the ques-

LETTER FROM CHICAGO

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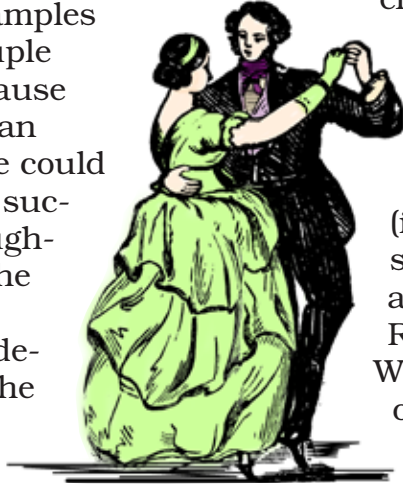
The JASNA/GCR year begins September 1 and ends August 31. Dues can be paid online at www.jasnachicago.org or mailed to

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tion of financial support was as serious a matter in Austen's day as it is in ours. On the other hand, although Austen is skeptical about the romanticizing of poverty, her characters who marry for money rather than love (Willoughby, Maria Bertram) certainly do not live happily ever after.

And sex? There are obvious examples like Lydia and Wickham, "a couple who were brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue" (and their marriage could hardly be considered any more successful than those of the Willoughbys or Rushworths); but even the Wickhams' "passions" pale in comparison to the cauldron of desire and tension stirred up by the rehearsals for "Lovers' Vows" at Mansfield Park, or at the Box Hill picnic in *Emma*.



Whenever we can, JASNA-GCR likes to coordinate the theme of our Winter meeting with the theme of that year's AGM, and 2012 will be no exception. Our February 12 meeting at the Parthenon Restaurant will be a panel entitled "Money, Sex, and Power-Austen Style." There will be three outstanding and engaging speakers: Diane Capitani, JASNA-GCR's Educational Outreach Director, who will discuss Austen from the financial angle; William Phillips, Deputy Regional Coordinator of GCR, who will (in gentlemanlike fashion, one presumes) approach the subject of sex; and our special guest, Liz Cooper, Regional Coordinator of the JASNA-Wisconsin Region, who will discourse on power. A group discussion—a lively one, no doubt!—will follow. You won't want to miss it!

2012 Gala

Elisabeth Lenckos, Director of Programs

For most Janeites, Elizabeth Garvie, who portrayed Elizabeth Bennet in the 1980 BBC production of *Pride and Prejudice*, is indubitably their all-time favorite, and her groundbreaking performance of Austen's most loved heroine has recently been in the headlines again because the version in which she appeared was passionately praised by Amanda Vickery on her much-touted 23 December 2011 program *The Many Lovers of Jane Austen*. Thus, the Chicago Region and I are proud to announce that the lovely and accomplished actor will grace our Spring Gala at the Knickerbocker Hotel on May 5, 2012 with her acclaimed performance of "Jane Austen Delights." We hope that you join our board and me in welcoming Ms. Garvie to our fair city, which, I know for a fact, she has wanted to

visit at least since 2008! She comes to us out of love for JASNA, whose members made her feel so beloved at the 2009 Philadelphia AGM, and as Patron of the Jane Austen House Museum in Chawton, where she has worked tirelessly with Louise West and her staff to promote the author's last home, the birthplace of her finest novels.



Elizabeth Garvie as Elizabeth Bennet.

Definitely Not Just Another Spin-off

An Interview with **Karen Doornebos**, author of *Definitely Not Mr. Darcy* (Berkley)

Of my 141 cookbooks, my sentimental favorite has ever been Peg Bracken's I Hate to Cook Book because it lives up to its tag line: "how to laugh while cooking or how to cook while laughing." As I chuckled my way through Definitely Not Mr. Darcy, I thought, "I'm learning about Regency living just the way I learned to cook!" DNMD follows Chicagoan Chloe Parker as she becomes a contestant in a Regency reality show, only to find the show's more like The Bachelor with chamber pots. To win the \$100,000 cash prize that she needs to cash-infuse her business and keep her ex-husband from gaining custody of their daughter, Chloe will have to win a proposal from Mr. Wrightman.

I never got to interview the late Peg Bracken—but Karen Doornebos? Karen is a member of JASNA-GCR. . . .

Lori: I have to ask “the question”: How did you come to write this book?

Karen: Living and working in London when I was young(er!) partly inspired this book. But years later, in 1997, the idea really gelled when I researched and visited an historic Victorian-era health spa in California, where my husband and I “took in the waters” in stone bathtubs outdoors. Sounds idyllic, relaxing, and healing, right? It sure did when I’d read about it. Except the hot springs water had a high sulfur content—sulfur, as in smelling like rotten eggs. On that vacation, the idea for the novel hit me like a waft of, well, rotten eggs: What if a hopeless romantic gets to experience her beloved Jane Austen’s England, but—it stinks?! I’ve been writing—and rewriting—it on and off ever since. In my Poster at the Chicago 2008 AGM, I said, “Instead of being persuaded to do other things for seven

years or so, be perhaps a bit more resolved, like Marianne Dashwood pursuing Willoughby.” I’m grateful to JASNA-GCR for allowing me the Poster Presentation opportunity—it really did spur me on!

Lori: I opened your book because you’re witty and funny, read on to see how I’d really fare in Regency England, and kept slinking off to my room to find out if what I *hoped* would happen really *does* happen. Was it hard to keep the funny plot or the research-based details or the romance from taking over?

Karen: I got lost in the rabbit hole of research. I was having so much fun discovering everything about daily life in the Regency that I’d often find myself hours later not having written a word, though a stack of note cards had appeared by my side. I’d arrange those note cards in order of what scenes they’d fall into. I used about one third of the research I’d acquired. And I found that so many things were handmade and customized that the elusive “one right way” was not to be had the way it is in our world of mass production. For every Gowland’s Lotion there must have been a thousand local remedies.

I went to a lot of libraries, starting at the Newberry, as well as my Riverside Library and the La Grange Library (for their reference copies of *All Things Austen* by Kirsten Olsen) and on-line databases for periodicals. The Jane Austen Center in Bath used to have a lot of fabulous articles available on their website. I appreciate and referenced **Sue Forgue’s** *Regency Encyclopedia* website. (Obviously, I’m not the only crazy one!) I poured through blogs *Austen Today* and *Austenblog*, back issues of *Jane Austen’s Regency World Magazine*, JASNA lectures, *Persuasions*, professors’ lectures online, you name it! I reread Austen’s letters and Claire Tomalin’s biography. I perused



Karen Doornebos (seated right) poses with fellow authors at the 2011 AGM. Standing L to R: Sharon Lathan, C. Allyn Pierson, Abigail Reynolds; Seated left Susan Mason-Milks.

Regency cookbooks, recipes, cosmetics. The time I spent on cravats! What does it matter that I know how to tie a cravat when my heroine only needs to know how to *untie* one? Anyway, I found it great fun, but I'm a nerd that way! Some scenes were inspired by the research. I knew Chloe'd be down in the kitchen where she doesn't belong. Somehow, she'd be cooking.

I continued my research sporadically, through three moves, having a couple of kids, freelance and volunteer work. It's just a passion of mine always calling my name. I did a lot of virtual traveling back in time all over England. It's hard to get back to the reality of daily life in modern America!

Lori: So you share that with your main character, Chloe. She's torn between life now and the life she wants to lead in Regency England. That's what gets her on the show. Speaking of show, how did you feel when someone actually produced the reality show *Regency House Party*?

Karen: When someone at a writers' conference said, "The Regency reality show has been done," my heart plummeted. I was devastated. I ordered it and watched it, and though I enjoyed it (and it gave me the idea of cut lemons as roll-on deodorant), I thought the premise of hosting an equal number of gentlemen and ladies inconsistent with a generation whose male population had been drastically reduced by nearly constant war. There was also the deluge of Austen-inspired fiction such as *Austenland*, *Mr. Darcy and Me*, *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict*. With each new release I just didn't know if I could continue. But I was driven. I told myself that my execution was completely different. Are there any original ideas? I'm not sure, but there is original execution. And now Austen-inspired fiction has become a sub-genre in its own right.

Lori: I teach a workshop on creating "iceberg characters"—where seven-eighths is below the surface. I certainly know there's more to Chloe because you cut the first three chapters to jumpstart the action. What do you know about Chloe that we might not know?

Karen: You won't know that she was in a horseback riding accident as a teen that prevented her from going to her junior prom—that was one of the cuts. I know more about her life back home—the letterpress business she's trying to save, how much love and care she had for something so impractical and antiquated. I know she was a fish out of water in our modern world. I know of her real commitment to her daughter, and her love and determination. I don't miss those early chapters. You simply meet her a different way.

Lori: Required question number two: Will there be a sequel?

Karen: I'm proposing another stand-alone book right now. But people keep asking for a sequel!

Tea Recap

Linda Reinert

On Saturday, December 3, 2011 JASNA-GCR celebrated Jane Austen's 236th birthday in the splendid style offered at the historic 1892 Bryan Lathrop House, home to *The Fortnightly*, located on Chicago's Gold Coast. While it is a treat simply to visit the house on any occasion, it is especially gorgeous during the holidays and, as always, the afternoon went all too quickly among greetings, conversation, an enthusiastically presented program, the scrumptious offerings at the formal tea, the many door prizes, and the traditional champagne toast in honor of Jane Austen's birthday.

Mona Scheuermann, professor at Oakton Community College, spoke on the topic, "Jane Austen and Making Do," with particular attention to *Mansfield Park* and the significant historical context behind why the choice of "Lover's Vows" was considered so scandalous to Fanny, Edmund, and Regency readers, though this might not be noticed as such by modern readers.

Chicagoland first-time authors were featured through their books donated as door

prizes. *Wooing Mr Wickham*, a collection of stories with origins in Austen novels, was awarded as one of the prizes. GCR Program Director Elizabeth Lenckos, of University of Chicago, was praised for her contribution to this volume of stories chosen from entries to the 2011 Jane Austen Short Story Award, sponsored by the Chawton House Library. Also featured among the door prizes was **Karen Doornebos's** *Definitely Not Mr. Darcy*, in which a modern-day reality show participant experiences harsh realities of Regency England as she competes for the heart of an estate owner. The final door prize was two tickets to the 2012 spring play performance of *Pride and Prejudice* at Lifeline Theater. Closing out the afternoon's festivities, **Karen Doornebos** creatively drew on the timeline within *Pride and Prejudice*, pointing out that, among other events, 26 November, 2011 would have been the 200th anniversary of the ball at Netherfield. Glasses were raised in honor of such remembrances and to Jane Austen's birthday.



Page 6, lower left: Linda Reinert and niece Hannah Ehrenhardt. Lower right: Members enjoying *The Fortnightly's* sumptuous tea; Page 7, clockwise from upper left: Karen Doornebos gives the toast; Penelope Miller checks out a dress; Delicious fare to go with the tea; Jeanne Steen and Anne Davis; *The Fortnightly* not only provides tempting delicacies, but the holiday decorations to accompany them; Speaker Mona Scheuermann.

Tea Photos



Karen Doornebos

Wooing Mr Wickham Will Win You Over

To warm a winter's eve, a Jane Austen fan would do well to pour a cup of tea, pick up *Wooing Mr Wickham*, and enjoy. The anthology of twenty eclectic short stories inspired by Austen's heroes and villains offers something for everyone—from a Brahmin CEO named Firdous Darshan to a Lydia that has fallen in with the Ladies of Llangollen (amazing women well worth a Google).

For us JASNA-GCR members, we can take in a compelling and thought-provoking story, *Jane Austen: 1945*, written by our very own **Elisabeth Lenckos** and inspired by her German mother and grandmother's wartime tales. Yes, this is Lenckos's fiction debut!

It is a true honor and indication of talent to be included in this anthology, as the stories were chosen from a plethora of contest entries. Chawton House Library in England sponsored the contest, their second annual, to encourage contemporary creative writing. Entries poured in from fifteen different countries, from Australia to Siberia.

As a result, the stories have a fresh, international flavor, peppered with settings and timeframes other than the Regency. They range from humorous to profound.

A panel of author and editor judges, Michele Roberts, Lindsay Ashford, and Janet Thomas, selected twenty for publication and awarded one of the stories, *The Pleasures of the Other* by Paul Brownsey, for the 2011 Jane Austen Short Story Award. He's the one that melded Lydia, Wickham, and the aforementioned Ladies of Llangollen to magnificent effect. It's a must-read!

The collection includes nods to many of Austen's characters and recurring themes of second chances in love, imaginations run wild, and prejudices overcome.

Many of the stories are stand-outs, including *Empty Hands* by Rebecca Rouillard. It's about an Alzheimer's patient who believes

she's Elizabeth Bennet. Get your Kleenex out for this one. Her homage to everyday heroes, and not just the alpha male hero, is touching, as is her metaphor for Alzheimer's:

"But her memory sustains it like a fistful of sand—in this moment of clarity it is gritty and substantial but it is so hard to hold on to. It will slip away again soon enough and she will be adrift once again, with empty hands."

Just as poignant and powerful is Lenckos's *Jane Austen: 1945*, where a thirteen-year-old girl is saved, in a sense, by *Pride and Prejudice* as she suffers through WWII, including having to hide in a burrow:

"After she placed me in this hole, she covered me with earth, leaving small openings only for my nose and mouth. . . . My bones grew colder and damper; I breathed uneasily through the clumps of mud heaped upon me."

In *Katie*, by Susan Piper, we get a glimpse of Lady Catherine on her deathbed. The thought-provoking backstory Piper weaves for Lady Catherine encourages us to think that something must have happened in Lady Catherine's past to make her the way she is, and I like Piper's take on it.

On the humorous end of the spectrum, I enjoyed much of Les Wood's *The Darcy Syndrome*, although I admit I may not be young nor hip enough to have understood all of it! I found *Henry Tilney Attempts to Cure His Wife* by Sarah Taylor charming, although I am a big Henry Tilney fan, and I missed his sense of humor in this story.

Little Elegant Compliments by Jacqueline Jean Barrios, a modern take on Charlotte and Mr. Collins's marriage, proved to be a very curious and engaging story, and well worth the read.

Wooing Mr Wickham is available on www.amazon.com and www.amazon.co.uk. Watch for the American release soon!

2012 Gala

2012 Gala at the Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel

Everyone looks forward to the JASNA–GCR Spring Gala, but the 2012 event gives us even more reason to be excited. In addition to a distinguished lineup of speakers, this year’s event will take place in a truly magnificent setting. Located at the tip of the Magnificent Mile, the Millennium Knickerbocker is an architectural gem that dates back to the Roaring Twenties. After a number of renovations, the hotel was recently restored to its original glory—but with all the modern amenities! Our Gala will be held in the spectacular Crystal Ballroom, the scene of many thrilling performances and historic Chicago events over many



decades. We will enjoy a sumptuous three-course lunch under the glittering gilded dome ceiling, in addition to an informative and engaging program and all the fun we have come to expect from a GCR event.

Mark May 5, 2012, on your calendar—you won’t want to miss this!

Outreach

“The Life and Passions of Miss Jane Austen”

“You cannot imagine—it is not in human nature to imagine what a nice walk we have round the orchard,” Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra on May 31, 1811. The lucky registrants of “The Life and Passions of Miss Jane Austen” knew exactly how she felt. They were treated to a beautiful garden experience while attending this class at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Each week they walked through the garden to the Regenstein Center. Nestled in the Linnaeus Room, with walls charmingly covered with botanical prints and plate-glass windows affording a view of the gardens, ten Austen admirers relived the life of this beloved author. Each week they followed her life’s path from her birth at Steventon to her final days in Winchester. They felt her happiness and sorrows, and saw her homes and the adjoining countryside. Along the way they

met her family, heard some of her juvenilia, and viewed the fashions of her time. Some adventurous souls even experienced country dancing while being cheered on by appreciative classmates. They also learned about the gardens of her time and sights she saw.

A thank-you goes to The Emeritus Program of Oakton Community College for offering **Margaret Eissa’s** six-week course. GCR’s **Beverly Roth**, reports, “Margaret’s class was very clearly presented and wonderfully informative. Enjoyed every minute!” Fellow member **Muriel Smock**, added, “The class was excellent—most interesting, well taught, teacher very knowledgeable, print and visuals very helpful.”

Jane Austen in the garden was a pleasurable entrance into spring, as well as an insightful introduction to this favorite author.

Book Review

Keith Weigle

My First Austen: A Book Review of *Emma*

Keith Weigle is a tool and die maker, a father of two, and an avid reader, especially of nonfiction. However, he had never read any of Austen's books. Enjoy this first-timer's perspective.



Keith Weigle

I knew Jane Austen's body of work existed. I knew information about the era of which she wrote, such as empire style dresses and carriages. So when my girlfriend asked me to read *Emma*, I thought I knew what to expect. And I was wrong.

Emma delighted me. I found the book to be over-the-top hilarious. The thing I take away from the book that impressed me was not to be blind to things that are in front of your face. Mr. Knightly was way more experienced at life and tried coaching Emma. He wanted her to see the errors in her ways. She still needed to experience her pitfalls in order to mature into a self-reliant lady. Once she lived through her tribulations, she was able to have her eyes opened to the love that was in front of her all along.

The character trait that I liked most of Emma was her naiveté. She really had no idea that a little meddling here or there meant catastrophic results for Emma's own "cause," Harriet. Emma didn't comprehend Mr. Elton's true affection, and this blindness is a prime example that she had a lot of growing up to do. Emma urged Harriet to

reject Mr. Martin to engage in hot pursuit of Mr. Elton, thereby ruining a very respectable opportunity for Harriet to live a comfortable life. Emma is completely oblivious to how much havoc she has created. And on top of that, Emma feels that her "matchmaking" is going perfectly according to plan.

Emma, for all her matchmaking "skills," still doesn't understand when someone does have true affection for her. It seems because she is a young woman with means, she doesn't need a man to improve her lot in life. The men that are interested in her quickly become pawns for her to play in other matchmaking setups.

Many of the characters show Emma's immaturity in dealing with relationships. She barely tolerates the Bateses' existence. Jane Fairfax is one whom Emma is clearly put off by to no fault of Jane's! Her attitude towards Jane is so baseless and blatant it becomes obvious to those around her. Frank Churchill is a character that is so fancy-free that Emma mistakes his careless attitude for true affection. Funny indeed! She finally becomes aware of this and loses no sleep in tossing him aside.

Overall, I actually enjoyed the book and was struck by how modern it was. Lessons learned could definitely be applied today. The book is truly timeless, which is probably why it is so widely read and loved still today.

Members

Welcome to New Members!

Holly Field Julie Otten
Jill Fruhwirth Helen Sebastian
Bill Jones Mary Teeter

Thank You to JASNA-GCR Contributors

Elizabeth Pavelka
Jeff Nigro
Barbara Storerand

We Remember

Sara Okey

Anna Raymond Massay

(11 August 1937–3 July 2011) and

Georgette Lizette “Googie” Withers

(12 March 1917–15 July 2011)

Austenites have recently lost two memorable actresses that played some of Jane’s most unforgettable characters. Anna Raymond Massay portrayed Aunt Norris in *Mansfield Park* in the 1983 TV miniseries, and Georgette Lizette “Googie” Withers played Mrs. Allen in *Northanger Abbey* in the 1987 TV series *Screen Two*. Both had prolific acting careers that spanned for decades and we will truly miss their contribution to the art.

Anna Raymond Massay had a fifty-year career on stage, screen, and television. She began her career at seventeen and was noted by critic Ivor Brown for displaying “a nice, down-to-earth determination.” She had a role in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Frenzy* (1972) and won a BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) award for her role as a lonely writer of romantic fiction on holiday in Switzerland in *Hotel du Lac* (1986), Christopher Hampton’s adaptation

of Anita Brookner’s novel. It was the sort of role in which Massey was supreme: placid on the surface, with passion deep within her. She also read *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* for the LibriVox audio book series.

Googie Withers began her acting career at the age of twelve. She began as a chorus girl and was discovered by a Warner Brothers casting director. She was cast in her first film *The Girl in the Crowd* (1935). One of her most memorable performances was *It Always Rains On Sunday* (1947), a film where she portrays a bored housewife who hides her ex-lover, a criminal played by John McCallum, the man who eventually became her husband. This was one of many performances in which Withers plays an unsatisfied wife. Despite her move to Australia in the 1950’s, she continued to do TV series and films such as *Shine* (1996). In 2001, she was awarded the CBE, Commander of the Order of the British Empire, for her services to British theater, film, and television. She is survived by her three children.

A Regency Ball

Lori Davis

The Regency Exhibition Ball, in South Bend, Indiana, March 24, 2012, 11 am–3:00 pm, \$35 until 2/24 and \$45 after. The Chicago AGM Ball turned me into Lydia Bennet, living for the next ball. But I craved an authentic ball with all things modern forbidden or hidden. My dream came true at The Regency Exhibition Ball, now held in the Palais Royale’s opulent ballroom. With “formal dress of Regency period requested” and a Regency luncheon served by costumed servants, nothing mars the ambiance. The courtly Glen Morningstar directs the dances so expertly that even novices

are confident and experienced dancers charmed. Hosted by historical re-enactors, their website <www.regencymasqueradeball.blogspot.com/> has outstanding resources for turning resale finds into Regency-esque finery, though All Dressed Up here in Batavia rents costumes reasonably <www.alldressedupcostumes.com>. The YouTubes of past balls attest that The Regency Exhibition Ball is worth driving 2 ½ hours to South Bend. Alas, this ball will be the last if more don’t attend, so don’t plan to put it off for another year.

LETTER FROM CHICAGO

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WINTER MEETING

Sunday, February 12

Calendar



- Feb, 12, 2012** Winter Meeting. “Money, Sex, and Power—Austen Style” discussion led by Diane Capitani, Garrett Theological Seminary at Northwestern University and JASNA–GCR Director of Education Outreach. Parthenon Restaurant, 314 S. Halsted Street, Chicago. 12:00–3:00 pm. **Please note this is a Sunday.** Free valet parking.
- May 5, 2012** Spring Gala. Millenium Knickerbocker Hotel, 163 E. Walton Place, Chicago. 9:00 am–3:00 pm.

For more events and programs that will be of interest, visit our website: www.jasnachicago.org, and click on “Midwest Events for Janeites.”