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FROM: The Florida Humanities Council

**Journalist and Author Edna Buchanan Wins
2017 Florida Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award for Writing**

Edna Buchanan, a legendary crime reporter for the *Miami Herald* and the author of 16 mystery novels in the Florida noir genre, has won the 2017 Florida Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award for Writing. The award, sponsored by the Florida Humanities Council, is scheduled to be presented April 6 at the Florida Book Awards banquet in Tallahassee.

In selecting Buchanan, 77, from among 19 nominees, the judges said, “A mover and shaker in not one but two fields, Edna Buchanan won the Pulitzer Prize for police reporting and went on to become a pioneer in Florida crime-writing with a series of best-selling novels as well as a true-life crime memoir, *The Corpse Had a Familiar Face*.” Her work also includes several other nonfiction books about Miami and the darker side of its culture.

Buchanan, dubbed “the queen of crime” by the *Los Angeles Times*, reported on more than 5,000 violent deaths, 3,000 of them murders during her 18 years with the *Herald*. She also covered kidnappings, riots, fatal fires, major plane crashes, and other disasters.

“We are thrilled to honor Edna Buchanan, who has had such an important influence on Florida journalism and the crime-writing genre,” said Steven M. Seibert, executive director of the Florida Humanities Council, which oversees the award nomination process, convenes the judges’ panel, and announces the winner. “We see this as a fitting tribute to a long and rich career. She is a Florida treasure.”

When told of the award on Wednesday, Buchanan, a Miami Beach resident, said she was astonished. “It was the last thing I expected,” she said. “I’m surprised and shocked and happy that somebody remembers me.”

Buchanan is hard to forget. A few years ago, Writer Calvin Trillin wrote in the *New Yorker* that in Miami, “few figures are regularly discussed by first name among people they have never met. One of them is Fidel. Another is Edna.”

Even the victims of crimes she covered remember Buchanan. In April, she’ll attend the wedding of a kidnap victim she wrote about more than 35 years ago. She also is helping the victim to write a book.

Buchanan’s work includes a fictional series with a female protagonist, Britt Montero, who is a crime reporter for a major Miami newspaper. The panel of judges speculated, as have others, that Montero, a Cuban-American, is a disguised version of Buchanan, herself, a “relentless, tough-as-nails sleuth who lets nothing slow her in her quest for answers.”

In an interview after she was informed of the award, Buchanan reminisced about her work on the Miami police beat. She recalled a case in which officers had discovered a corpse in a bathtub. A legion of reporters arrived at the scene, and police said they could view the body, one at a time. Pressed on deadline, Buchanan quickly said: “Ladies first,” strolled into the bathroom, saw the dead person and got the scoop.

The Florida Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award is the latest recognition Buchanan has received over a long career, including her Pulitzer Prize in 1986 for General News Reporting. *Miami, It’s Murder* was nominated for an Edgar Award, which honors the best mystery writing, in 1995. *Nobody Lives Forever* was made into a TV movie in the 1990s.

Buchanan says she is close to finishing her latest book, another Britt Montero novel titled *Dead Man’s Daughter*. She also has been a consultant for producers of true-crime programs on television.

Born in Montclair, N.J., Buchanan attended Montclair State University but did not major in journalism. “My childhood dream was to write books,” she said. “I fell into journalism. I thought while working for a newspaper, I can write the great American novel. That was insane. I didn’t realize at the time that daily journalism was a whirlwind.”

Her mother fostered her literary aspirations by reading to her every day, Buchanan said. “I loved stories. For a while, I would wander the neighborhood with a book under my arm and ask people to read to me, like the mailman.”

Buchanan's first job was with the *Miami Beach Daily Sun*. She covered every topic of news, including dog-racing for the sports department. She picked more winners than her colleagues, she said, simply by looking at the program and choosing the names she liked.

After about five years with the *Sun*, she started with the *Herald* as a general assignment reporter, but soon gravitated toward the police beat, something that had first appealed to her at the *Sun*. "I sort of felt it was really the right place for me," she said.

On her website, Buchanan shares some of her professional philosophy. Among her truisms: "If kidnapped, ask for fried chicken when your captors offer food. The FBI will find your fingerprints in their hideout even if they never find you."

The seven previous recipients of the Florida Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award for Writing are David Kirby, an internationally recognized poet and author who is a professor at Florida State University; historian Gary Mormino, University of South Florida St. Petersburg history professor emeritus, co-founder of the Florida Studies Department, and prolific author and essayist; Janet Burroway, an FSU creative writing professor and author of novels, short stories, and nonfiction books who influenced legions of writers; Enid Shomer, an elegant writer of poetry and fiction; the late Patrick D. Smith, beloved author of the Florida novel "A Land Remembered"; Carl Hiaasen, a Miami journalist and best-selling novelist; and Michael V. Gannon, eminent Florida historian and University of Florida professor emeritus.

Established in 1973, the Florida Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, develops public programs and resources that explore Florida's history, literary and artistic traditions, cultural values, issues, and ethics.

The members of the 2016 judging panel are: Maurice J. O'Sullivan, Kenneth Curry professor of English at Rollins College; B. Lester Abberger, emeritus Board member of the Florida Humanities Council; David Kirby, winner of the 2016 Florida Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award for Writing; Lynne Barrett, founder and editor of "The Florida Book Review" and professor of English at Florida International University; and Colette Bancroft, book editor of the Tampa Bay Times and board member of the National Book Critics Circle.

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