

Paul Wenz Society Inc. INC9889208

PO Box 260 Willoughby NSW Australia 2068

Email: sabinepierard@yahoo.com.au

PRESS RELEASE

25 August 2008

Photos available.

INAUGURAL PAUL WENZ WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE ANNOUNCED

Two regionally-based authors, one from France and the other from Australia, will swap places in 2009 as part of a unique cultural exchange to build upon the literary legacy left by French-Australian writer Paul Wenz, President of the recently incorporated Paul Wenz Society, Dr Maurice Blackman, announced today.

The selected writers are French novelist and essayist Frederic Chef, from Reims, capital of the Champagne-Ardenne region of France where Wenz was born, and Australian novelist and essayist Merrill Findlay who is based in Forbes, the small Australian town in central New South Wales where Wenz died and is buried. Their month-long residences will coincide with the 140th anniversary of Wenz's birth in 1869, and the 70th anniversary of his death in 1939.

"This exchange is designed to help extend the awareness of Paul Wenz's legacy in his birthplace and in the area where he spent the major part of his life. It is hoped that, with local support in both Reims and Forbes, it will be followed by other cultural exchanges, including exchanges involving school students in both cities," Dr Blackman said.

French writer Frederic Chef says he is looking forward to the opportunity to walk in the steps of an author he has admired for many years, and to visit Nanima, the station Paul Wenz and his wife Hettie Dunne bought on the Lachlan River in 1898. Mr Chef plans to gather a quantity of impressions during his stay which will form the basis of a projected text, a kind of "sentimental promenade" from Reims to Forbes to be published as a tribute to Wenz and the two poles of his world.

For her part, Australian writer Merrill Findlay hopes to creatively explore the social and environmental heritage of Wenz's home province, including the impacts of the Great War on the local people and their landscape. "Paul and Hettie spent the war years working with the Red Cross in Europe and personally witnessed the horrors of the Western Front and the suffering of the French people at this time. But, through their work with the Red Cross, they also understood the sacrifices many Australian families made to the liberation of France," Ms Findlay said. "A number of my own relatives were fighting in the trenches near Reims at this time and I often wonder whether they were amongst the many Australians Paul Wenz tried to rescue."

Frederic Chef and Merrill Findlay will be required to produce a short literary work based on their experiences in La Champagne-Ardenne and the Central West of New South Wales for later publication in both French and English. Wenz's literary legacy may also be celebrated with publication, for the first time, of his travel memoirs, *En époussetant la mappemonde* ("Dusting off the globe"), by Atelier Littéraire Franco-Australien (ALFA) in Paris.

High Schools and local communities in the Champagne-Ardenne region and in inland New South Wales are expected to benefit in the future as the Paul Wenz Society extends its cultural programs.

The Paul Wenz Society was established in March 2008. For further background information on Paul Wenz please see Maurice Blackman's brief biography in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120496b.htm>.

For more on the Paul Wenz Society, including its Aims and Objectives, please see www.merrillfindlay.com/projects/wenz_project.

PWS President and Wenz translator and biographer, Maurice Blackman, and the Australian writer, [Merrill Findlay](#), are both available for interviews through the Society's secretary, Sabine Pierard.

Email: sabinepierard@yahoo.com.au