

Nonagenarian Mardo Williams' Acclaimed Novel Wins Prestigious Award



Mardo's daughters, Kay Williams {center} and Jerri Williams Lawrence (right), accept a 2009 OHIOANA CITATION for Writing and Editing Excellence for finishing *One Last Dance* from Linda Hengst (left), Executive Director of the Ohioana Library Association. [More Photos, OHIOANA Citation]

OHIOANA CITATION

Kay and Jerri, along with 14 other recipients of the 2009 Ohioana Awards, were honored on October 17 in a luncheon ceremony held in the Atrium of the Ohio State House in Columbus.



“IT COULD BE SAID, ‘like father like daughters.’ **Mardo Williams’** 44 year career as a journalist was followed by his authoring a book about his mother, then a children’s book, and, finally at age 92, a novel about finding love at any age. Mardo’s lifelong love of writing and words most certainly rubbed off on his daughters so they were unquestionably qualified to honor his request that they finish his book *One Last Dance* if he died before the final edit was complete. Kay Williams and Jerri Williams Lawrence kept their promise and the world is richer because of their efforts.



Kay Williams (standing, right) received a B.A. in theater, French, and English from Western College in Oxford, Ohio, and a B.S. in Education from The Ohio State University. She makes her home in New York City where she has been a professional actress in off-Broadway productions, regional repertory, films, radio, and TV. She is also a writer and has helped edit more than sixty books. Her suspense novel about the theater, *Butcher of Dreams*, is co-authored with Eileen Wyman.

Jerri Williams Lawrence (standing, left) earned her B.S. and M.S. in Education from The Ohio State University. She taught English for more than thirty years in the Worthington, Ohio public schools. During her career she taught journalism, composition, humanities, and speech, and served as the advisor for the high school newspaper, *Cardinal Chronicle*, and the literary magazine *Acropolis*. In 1986 she was selected Teacher of the Year. Administrators, colleagues, students, and parents have praised Jerri for professional and personal contributions as a teacher.

Ohioana Luncheon-Jerri & Kay sign books



Jerri and Kay individually have made great contributions in their chosen fields, but as daughters they used their writing and editorial skills in a labor of love to bring their father's book to reality. They have also developed and presented programs around the state and country based on issues raised in *One Last Dance*."

KAY'S AND JERRI'S AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH:



"We thank the Board of Trustees of the Ohioana Library Association for this award, which also honors our dad, Mardo Williams, an amazing, inspiring man.

It's very special to be recognized for the blood, sweat and tears that went into the creation of *One Last Dance*. Dad spent three years—from age 92 to 95--writing the first draft while touring with his first book, *Maude*.

He persevered through illness and blindness. He had to dictate what turned out to be the last 11 chapters into a tape recorder. It was the most challenging piece of writing of his 73-year career as journalist and author.

We made Dad a promise to finish *One Last Dance* if he couldn't. We didn't expect we'd have to do it. We didn't know if we could. But after he died, we knew we had to try.



For the next three years, we walked a tightrope, trying to keep his terrific sense of humor while fleshing out sections that needed fleshing out. He'd given us the quirky characters—Morgan, age 89, Dixie, 79, and Tony, 18; he'd given us the story—except for the ending. He wanted 'a happy one.'

One Last Dance tackles the issues of aging so rarely brought out in fiction format. It could have been a discouraging story, but Dad dealt with these issues openly, honestly, and with humor and thoughtfulness. The book gives people hope, laughs and self-esteem. Since its publication, we've been touring with it as the centerpiece of our program, *Keep Dancing!*, and sharing dad's philosophy, *Live life to its fullest and never give up no matter what your age*.



Dad and Erma dancing their last dance together

Many tributes came to Dad and to his writing after his death in 2001. This Ohioana Citation to us for finishing *One Last Dance* is the ultimate honor of Dad's—and our—careers." **Mardo's bio**-link to http://www.calliopepress.com/maude/about_author.shtml

The Ohioana Library Association's mission [link to: <http://www.OhioanaLibrary.org>] is to recognize and encourage the creative accomplishments of Ohioans; preserve and expand a permanent collection of books, sheet music, manuscripts, and other materials by Ohioans and about Ohio; and disseminate information about the work of Ohio writers, musicians and other artists to researchers, schools and the general public. Over the years, the Association has presented more than 700 awards to some of the most talented artists, writers, and musicians associated with the state of Ohio, including James Thurber, Kay Boyle, Ian Frazier, Toni Morrison, and Elizabeth George.