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Award winner: Europe liberation trilogy

Library Trust's 2015 Peggy V. Helmerich Award recipient talks to students about writing war history

Students hear author describe how World War II changed American society.

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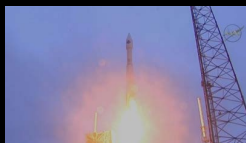
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By NOUR HABIB World Staff Writer | 0 comments

Three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and military historian Rick Atkinson spoke to a group of students at Will Rogers College High School about his writing and World War II during an event at the school Friday.

Atkinson is in Tulsa to receive the Tulsa Library Trust's 2015 Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author award on Saturday


Tulsa World Staff Writer Andrea Eger



Andrea Eger has worked at the Tulsa World since 1999 and has covered public education since 2000. She has completed intensive professional development in education reporting with the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the Education Writers Association.

Over the years, her work has garnered her three first place awards in investigative individual reporting from the Society of Professional Journalists – Oklahoma Pro Chapter and numerous first place awards in education reporting from SPJ and the Great Plains Journalism Awards, an eight state competition.

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Tulsa World



Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and military historian Rick Atkinson speaks to students at Rogers College High School on Friday. He will receive the Tulsa Library Trust's 2015 Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award on Saturday. CORY YOUNG/Tulsa World

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Rick Atkinson presentation

Atkinson will speak at a free presentation and book-signing at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Hardesty Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St. He will answer questions from the audience, and copies of his works will be available for purchase.

it's out of the bottle, is very tough to put back in."

Atkinson also spent time answering questions from students, who asked about things such as his research methods, whether he faced writer's block and how writing about war has affected him.

evening. He will also speak at a free presentation and book-signing event at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Hardesty Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St.

Atkinson, who worked as a journalist for the Washington Post for more than 20 years, left his job in 1998 to write a trilogy about the U.S. role in the liberation of Europe during World War II.

He shared some of this story during his talk Friday.

"And it is a story," he said. "It's the greatest story of the 20th century. It's the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century."

Atkinson talked to the students about how the war affects their lives today, more than 70 years later.

"World War II had a really big influence on our country," he said.

The involvement of black soldiers in the war overseas affected race relations at home, he said.

"There was a recognition by those black soldiers and their families, as well as many other people in the country, that there was a hypocrisy at play in our nation's assertion that we're fighting for liberty and freedom to unshackle those countries in Europe and also in Asia at the same time that there is rampant racism in this country," he said.

Atkinson said the war gave impetus to the civil rights movement.

World War II also led to more women beginning to work outside the home, first out of necessity because so many men were away at war, then because "that genie, once



Staff Writer Nour Habib



Staff Writer Nour Habib covers suburban school districts. She joined the Tulsa World in 2011, and previously was a general assignment reporter for the Scene section. She graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in journalism and political science. Before joining the World, she covered education for a community newspaper.

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Atkinson said he spends lots of time reading archives in order to write about war. He has sifted through letters written to and from soldiers, disciplinary records and secondary sources.

In terms of writer's block, Atkinson said he never had it. Coming from a newspaper background, where "if you don't write, you don't eat," might have helped, he said.

"They're not paying you to sit around thinking, 'Well, I can't seem to do it today.' In the newspaper world, that is complete nonsense."

Atkinson also told the students that, although he is not a pacifist, writing about war for his entire professional life has made him "vehemently anti-war."

He said he views part of his mission as a military historian is to convey to readers "the singularity of death," so that casualties are not just a statistic.

"Each of those deaths ... is as unique as a fingerprint or a snowflake," he said.

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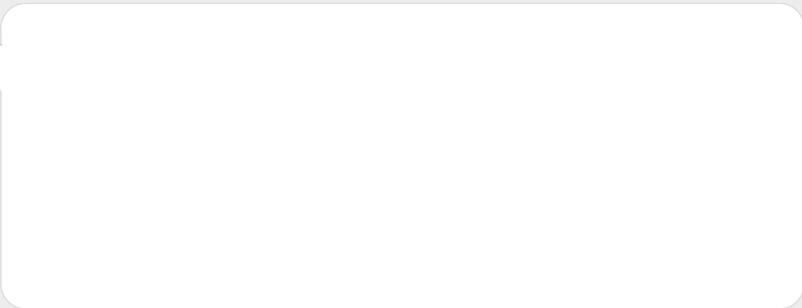


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