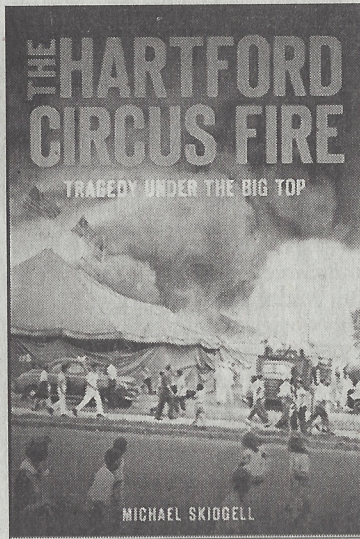

CRITICS' CHOICE

Circus Fire Book

"The Hartford Circus Fire: Tragedy Under the Big Top," by Plainville resident Michael Skidgell (The History Press, 144 pp., \$16.99), was released to bookstores on April 8.

"Tragedy Under the Big Top" is the eighth book — including a novel and one book of poetry — published about the tragedy that took place at a matinee performance of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus on Barbour Street on July 6, 1944. More than 168 people died in the fire; some victims were never identified.

Skidgell's book describes the sketchy precautions by both the city and the circus before the fire, the event of the fire itself and its aftermath. It also includes a 44-page list of identified victims killed in



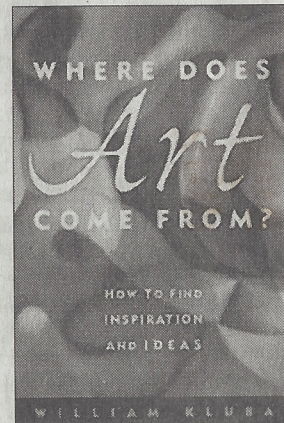
the fire, including their survivors and other biographical information.

In the acknowledgments, Skidgell describes why he wrote the book. His father was born in Hartford two days after the fire. In 2001, Skidgell found some newspapers his father's family had saved to commemorate the day of his birth. The papers were full of circus fire stories. Reading them, Skidgell discovered that one of the victims had lived in the home where his son had just had a sleepover. "I had even been given a tour of the house, which the family was renovating, the night before," he writes. "That was the day that the Hartford circus fire drew me in and captivated me; the more I read about the fire, the more I wanted to learn."

Skidgell is the webmaster of www.circusfire1944.com.

Art Book

Tunxis Community College art Prof. Bill Kluba has just published a book, "Where Does Art Come From? How to Find Inspiration and Ideas." A book release and signing will be held on Tuesday from 3 to 5 p.m. in the cyber cafe on the campus, at 271 Scott Swamp Road in Farmington.



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