

ALLEN MAXWELL

By Bob Compton

Allen Maxwell was an easy going and friendly man whose laughter could make a room vibrate. On his more serious side, he was an exceptional editor who for many years guided the Southern Methodist University Press, edited the school's prestigious literary journal, *Southwest Review*, was highly active in the Texas Folklore society, and presided over book pages of *The Dallas Morning News* for more than 23 years. At his death in February at the age of 96, he had been a dues-paying member of the Texas Institute of Letters longer than any other living person—more than 65 years.

In 2007, Maxwell was honored by TIL for his long service to Institute, which he had served as vice president twice, and for his many years of promoting Texas writers and Texas literature. The honoree, who had been ill for some time, was unable to attend the banquet, and his wife, Vee, accepted the award for him.

Born in Waco, Maxwell grew up in Dallas, graduated from Highland Park High School, and received his bachelor's degree in commerce, and his master's degree in English from SMU, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

His intention was to go into business, but that goal changed when he became a prize student of John McGinnis, a revered English teacher at SMU, founder of the SMU Press, and editor of the *Southwest Review*. As a McGinnis protege, Maxwell became the first paid employe of the SMU Press in 1939 and was named managing editor of *Southwest Review*.

McGinnis also was the first editor of *The Dallas Morning News* book page, having accepted an invitation from publisher G. W. Dealey to establish regular book reviews in the Sunday paper in 1916. Maxwell became assistant book editor in 1937 and after McGinnis' retirement, he and Lon Tinkle, another McGinnis student, shared book editor duties until 1958 when Maxwell took the title and held it until his retirement in 1981.

Maxwell always shunned the public spotlight, but delighted in his editing duties, and was a friend and editor to a host of Texas writers during the heyday of notable Texas writing from the 1940s through his retirement.

Marshall Terry, a TIL stalwart and a noted SMU English professor who established the school's creative writing program, said Maxwell "encouraged Texas writers, including me. . . He was a mighty force," a "brilliant man of tremendous values. He was a very rare fellow."

In his early years of retirement, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell spent much of their time at their farm in Upshur County, and Maxwell delighted in the rural life, doing farm chores and watching over a small herd of cows and a few horses. And reading. . .

"I want to read without a pencil in my hand," he said upon giving up his editing duties.

Life on the 165-acre farm continued to be a pleasure for the Maxwells until he was slowed by illnesses a few years ago and they retired to their Dallas home, where he died on February 11.

ANNETTE SHORRE SANFORD

By Carolyn Osborn

I first met Annette Shorre Sanford at a signing for the anthology, *Her Work*, at Watson's Bookstore in Austin in 1982. All the women writers who could be gathered were seated in a long line behind tables on a small lawn, and I happened to sit next to Annette. There's where I learned she had, for many years, taught high school English in Ganado, Texas, the small town she and her husband lived in after she'd graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. During those years she had 25 romance novels published under various pseudonyms.

She told me, "I thought, shoot, anybody could do that." I couldn't and I didn't know many writers who could. But Annette wasn't bragging; she'd simply set herself a task and accomplished it.

During her lifetime—she lived from August 3, 1929, till January 2, 2012, 82 years— she also published forty short stories, some gathered in two collections called *Lasting Attachments (1989)* and *Crossing Shattuck Bridge, (1999)* both by S.M.U. Press. All these stories, ten in one book, eleven in another, were first accepted by literary journals and women's magazines such as *McCall's* and *Redbook*. Along the way she received two fellowships from the N.E.A. Often anthologized, her work has been read on N.P.R., Symphony Space in New York, and the Texas Bound Literary Series in Dallas. In 2003 her novel, *Eleanor & Abel*, published by Counterpoint Press, appeared. Her papers, as she wished, were left to the DeGolyer Library at S.M.U.

Though she was brought up in one small town, Cuero, and lived most of her adult life in another, her work clearly reflects the universal problems of human existence. One of my favorites is titled "Living," a fable full of the most concrete details possible. Here's a quote pertaining to something we all might like: "If he could have caught ahold of time. If every now and then he could have held it still with his thumb on its throat, just to feel it quiver, to watch that blue-black vein fill up along its temple and see its heart scared and foolish beneath skin thin as any tree frog's. There'd be a sweetness in that."

MARYLN SCHWARTZ

By Bob Compton

Maryln Schwartz had a talent to amuse.

And she did so for years as a featured lifestyles columnist of *The Dallas Morning News*.

Her friends called her Miss Maryln, in deference to her unlikely status as a Southern Belle. Growing up in Mobile, Alabama, where there were plenty of Belles to observe, she decided that

becoming a genteel, mannered Southern Belle was preferable to the hard-edged Jewish Princess, another persona she knew well. If not sisters, the two were certainly first cousins.

She reinvented and defined that ultimate precious lady with her 1991 classic, "A Southern Belle Primer: Or, Why Princess Margaret Will Never Be a Kappa Kappa Gamma," to the delight of ladies all over the country, North and South, who quickly recognized themselves as Belles or wanted desperately to be one. Almost overnight, the book became a bestseller, and Maryln was the subject of magazine and newspaper stories and a guest on national television programs, including the era's Greatest Show on Earth -- Oprah Winfrey. The book has never been out of print, and five years ago it was dressed up with a new cover and updated subtitle -- "Why Paris Hilton Will Never Be a Kappa Kappa Gamma."

Maryln's had a genius for discovering trends, and best of all, a superlative knack for spotting tacky. She joined the News in 1966 and began as a general reporter on City Desk. Her unique and catchy style quickly made her a favorite of readers and she soon became a columnist for the newspaper's lifestyles section, winning numerous national awards.

Maryln loved to write about wretched excess, and she honed in on such Temples of Tackiness as the Miss America Contest, the Orange Bowl halftime show, child beauty contests, Super Bowls, the Pillsbury Bake Off, deb parties and weddings, and lifestyles of the rich and famous. She crawled on the bedroom floor with H.L. Hunt at his mansion, chatted with Israel's former prime minister David Ben-Gurion on his home turf, traveled through Russia with Van Cliburn, and conversed with the Duchess of Windsor.

She was a close friend of the late Molly Ivins, who seconded the nomination of Maryln to become a member of TIL in 2001. Molly, like Maryln, went through a long, frustrating battle with cancer. Maryln, who survived Molly by almost six years, died last September. She was 69.

The long period she spent in assisted living, her eyesight dimmed and her hearing diminished, without anyone to engage in witty conversation, would have driven a less determined person mad, but Maryln's sharp mind was with her to the end. She laughed about entertainment at the facility, when residents were wheeled in to listen to a pianist and perhaps a vocalist singing songs deemed fit for older folks. A few week before her death, she confided that she was worried about her mental state. "I'm actually singing along," she said.

She loved the music of Broadway and particularly the sophisticated verse of Cole Porter, Lorenz Hart, Noel Coward and their like.

Her musical signature was a line from "Thanks for the Memory," that she felt, with a slight change of pronoun, described her perfectly:

"I may have been a headache

“But I **never** was a bore.

MALCOLM DALLAS MCLEAN

By Darwin Payne

Beginning practically from his birth in March 1913 in the tiny settlement of Mud Springs in Bell County, Malcolm D. McLean spent a lifetime fascinated by early Texas history. Mud Springs was on the property of Jefferson Reed, a member of Robertson's Colony, who named the place because of a large spring that watered the cattle and kept the area muddy. As a toddler, Malcolm spent a lot of time on his Grandpa McLean's nearby farm of about 500 acres of black waxy soil in Bell County, where the cotton crop was so prolific that his grandfather hired migrant Mexican labor to help him. As soon as he was old enough, Malcolm, naturally, began picking cotton, too, and he found a boy about his own age, Pedro Aguila, to work alongside. Pedro naturally began to teach Spanish to Malcolm, and thus began Malcolm's lifelong fascination with the language, Tejanos, and early Texas history.

His contributions as a translator and historian during his distinguished career were immeasurable, the most important perhaps being the translation of more than a thousand documents appearing in his 19-volume series entitled *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*. His most recent publication, billed as "one of the most important discoveries in documentary materials for Texas history" that would "influence scholars to re-evaluate earlier conclusions of the tensions in the 1830s that culminated in Texan Independence," was his translation of the municipal council minutes of Goliad between 1821 and 1835, published in 2008 as *Voices From the Goliad Frontier*.

McLean died on Jan. 19, 2012, and was buried in the Robertson Plantation family cemetery in Salado.

With a major in Spanish, McLean graduated with highest honors in 1936 from the University of Texas at Austin, then went to Mexico, earning a master of arts degree in Spanish in 1938 from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico. His professional career began that same year as field editor in charge of Spanish translators for the Texas Historical Records Survey in San Antonio, 1938-1939.

He married Mary Margaret Stoner of Uvalde in 1939, and that same year became assistant director of the Museum of the San Jacinto Monument upon its opening. World War II saw him working in military intelligence in the Pentagon with a specialty in Latin America. After the war, McLean resumed his academic studies at the University of Texas, earning the Ph.D. in 1951 with studies in Spanish and Spanish American Literature. His studies there led to his discovery of the manuscript by Joseph Antonio Fernández de Jáuregui Urrutia, which he translated and published as the *Description of Nuevo León, Mexico (1735-1740)*.

Later positions followed as associate professor of Romance Languages at the University of Arkansas; with the U.S. Information Agency in Honduras and Ecuador; and associate professor of Spanish and director of Texas Christian University's summer program in Mexico.

In 1976 McLean became a professor of history and Spanish at the University of Texas at Arlington, where he prepared the Robertson Colony papers for publication and became the founder of the UTA Press.

PETE GENT

By Jan Reid

Pete Gent died at 69 of a pulmonary disorder in his hometown of Bangor, Michigan last September. Pete's affiliation with the TIL was brief but the imprint he left on our organization and our region's literature and life is colorful and indelible.

Pete was a star basketball player at Michigan State in the early 1960s. The Dallas Cowboys persuaded him to try football on the basis of sheer athletic ability, and he became a wide receiver; his forte was running routes over the middle and making acrobatic catches seconds before the brutal and blindsided collisions sure to come. He brought the defiant free spirit of the sixties to one of sports' most autocratic coaching regimes. He was in pain the rest of his life because of those five years in the pros.

Pete befriended our TIL colleagues Gary Cartwright, Dan Jenkins, and the late Bud Shrake during those years. Following his retirement he tried being a morning-drive disk jockey for the popular Dallas station KLIF, and he started a printing firm that produced at least one collectors' item — a beautiful poster for the storied and talent-rich 1969 Lewisville Pop Festival that outraged the Dallas establishment two weeks after Woodstock. And he taught with our TIL president Darwin Payne and late member Billy Lee Brammer on the remarkable SMU journalism faculty recruited by Jay Milner.

Not long before Shrake invited Cartwright and Pete and their families to Durango, Mexico, for a film shoot of Shrake's cult classic western *Kid Blue*, Pete started writing a novel about a rebellious wide receiver on a pro team in Dallas. Rules of punctuation were up in the air like catches to be made, but the words pouring out of his roman à clef were all story. We know of the superb shelf of books that has grown out of the Paisano fellowship. What's not so known is that Paisano can claim an unofficial artist and novel. After the *Kid Blue* excursion, when Gary and his wife Jo were at the ranch in 1972, Pete and Jody Gent shared the residence, and he finished *North Dallas Forty*.

The novel came out in 1973. Among its admirers was our Lon Tinkle Award winner Larry L. King, who wrote, "Peter Gent is not just a football player who happened to write a novel, but a writer of

real talent who happened to have played football for the Dallas Cowboys.” The *New York Times*: “Talk to a football fan about *North Dallas Forty* and the fan smiles.” The novel was overshadowed by the 1979 movie adaptation starring Nick Nolte, but Pete wrote the screenplay for that, and the money was good. He told me that when the director’s orders grew ridiculous he slipped out of his trailer’s window and ran off into the night, ensuring that they had to use his dialogue the next morning. Pete wrote a few well-crafted *Esquire* profiles and five more books over the years, none of them as good or successful as the first, but he was a pro — he labored on. And that intuitive first novel holds up as the best book, fiction or nonfiction, written about that game. It’s better than H.G. Bissinger’s *Friday Night Lights*, Dan Jenkins’ *Semi-Tough*, George Plimpton’s *Paper Lion*, Don DeLillo’s *End Zone*, Gary Cartwright’s *The Hundred Yard War*, Kip Stratton’s *Backyard Brawl*, and my *Vain Glory*.

For two or three years our past President Don Graham invited Pete to speak to his University of Texas class on “Life and Literature of the Southwest,” a course he inherited from J. Frank Dobie. Some Longhorn athletes always signed up. Don writes: “Pete Gent was one of the greatest natural classroom teachers I have ever witnessed. He was absolutely spellbinding. The students wouldn’t let the class end; they hung on every word; and he told them the absolute truth about life in pro football. I can guarantee that his visits were the only times that the athletes in my class were ever really, deeply involved in the course. Everything else was just books, but Pete, to them, was the real deal. And he was.”

I lobbied for Pete’s induction into the TIL in 1980. Pete was perfectly behaved at that year’s banquet, though he did murmur to Cartwright that he was carrying his trademark gun. Why he thought he might need one in our crowd I can’t imagine. Pete was afflicted by some dark and paranoid moods, and when they came over him I learned to just go away. But he was one of the funniest men I’ve ever known. One afternoon Dorothy and I were at our favorite weekend hangout, the Raw Deal. Pete and Jody came in and joined us. They had set out from Wimberley with plans for a travel, but Pete said when they were driving into the airport he saw a sign that read “Terminal Parking.” He thought about that and kept right on going. A photograph of Pete and Jody hung on the Raw Deal’s walls. They looked like movie stars.

Their subsequent divorce and child custody battle was bitter, and when he moved back to Michigan he left behind most of the friendships he had made in Texas — I think for him it just had to be that way. But he welcomed Kip Stratton’s correspondence when he was starting out as an author. And somehow I knew that I was excused from his emotional exile. My last communication from him was a blurb for a book of mine that he said was “a great read — as always when a good writer realizes The End is close and that mortality and pain will be his companions ‘til then.” Those words serve as my epitaph for a person who never quit being my friend.

TOM PILKINGTON

By Don Graham

Tom Pilkington was a true pioneer and trailblazer in the field of Southwestern Literature. In 1973 his first book, *My Blood's Country: Studies in Southwestern Literature*, was the start-up, really, of post-Dobie era interest in SW Literature. The book covered an amazing range of writers, from Cabeza de Vaca to Larry McMurtry, and is still as clear and as insightful as it was the day it appeared.

One of the great things about Tom's scholarship is that he wrote in English instead of the jargon-laced, often impenetrable prose of many academics. I don't think he ever wrote an unclear sentence. And his judgments and evidence were always well thought out and well argued. It was always a pleasure to read his work.

And there was a lot to read. He wrote or edited a total of thirteen books. He also wrote scores of essays, scores of reviews, and served on several editorial boards for both university presses and at least two journals.

He did all of this writing and publishing while teaching a heavy load of courses. His publishing record puts to shame that of many of my colleagues at Flagship U, where the teaching load is 2 courses a semester compared to the 3 or 4 that Tom regularly taught during at least the first half of his career.

Tom was also a great collaborative editor. I know this first-hand because I edited a book with him called *Western Movies* in 1979 and we also worked together on another book in 1983. But the edited book of his that I think is probably the most valuable is one that he did with his longtime colleague and friend at Tarleton, Craig Clifford. *Range Wars: Heated Debates, Sober Reflections, and Other Assessments of Texas Writing*, published in 1989, is an excellent collection of essays about the lively literary wars in Texas that broke out in the 1980s.

Tom's last book, *State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture*, 1998, is another very valuable work of criticism; in a way it is kind of a bookend to his first book. Like much of his work, it introduces readers to all manner of works that they might not have heard about before. One anecdote from 1997 or so when Tom was working on that book: Tom sent me the chapter on Sports and Texas Literature and wanted me to look over the first few pages in particular. He wanted to know if I thought he was apologizing too much for being a lifelong sports fan. He had read something that Hillary Clinton had said disparaging sports and sports fans. I told him who cares what Hillary Clinton thinks and that he shouldn't apologize about anything. And so he didn't.

If somebody were to read every author that Tom wrote about, that person would have a very sound education indeed. If, and I say *if* deliberately, *if* people in the future care about Southwestern literature, they will find Tom as sure a guide then as we all have for the past forty years. He will be sorely missed.

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