

Gary Cartwright

August 10, 1934 to February 20, 2017

By Jan Reid

Gary Cartwright, the dominant Texas journalist and nonfiction stylist of his generation, has died at 82. Gary's accomplishments and stature are measured by honors of the Texas Institute of Letters: the Dobie Paisano Fellowship in 1971, the O. Henry Award for Best Magazine Article in 1977, the Carr P. Collins Award for Best Nonfiction Book in 1979, and the Lon Tinkle Award for Career Achievement in 2012.

Gary spent some of his early boyhood in the West Texas oil boom village of Royalty, where his dad ran a Texaco station, but he grew up in Arlington. In high school there he was inspired when an English and journalism teacher who oversaw his study hall read what he'd been scribbling in his journal and told him he had a gift for it.

After a few semesters at the University of Texas-Austin and his hometown college, then called Arlington State, and a two-year hitch in the army, Gary took a journalism degree from TCU. He caught on first with the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* as a \$55 a week "cop shop" reporter. He later reflected, "Covering the night police beat was where I learned to use fear as a battle-ax. It is cold and relentless out there, and fear is your primary weapon. Fear can induce paralysis, and will if you allow it, but it can also inspire accomplishments that at times seem unlimited."

He operated out of a joint newsroom with new friends and rivals—among them tall, handsome Edwin "Bud" Shrake of the *Fort Worth Press* and a radio reporter, Bob Schieffer, who went on to a sterling career as a network television commentator and anchor. Bud lured Gary to the *Press*, which turned loose on the city a sports staff cocky with flair, wit, and style—Bud, Gary, Dan Jenkins, and their exacting editor Blackie Sherrod. A crank who covered bowling took in Gary's swarthy skin and mistook him for a past Asian-American intern he disliked and groaned about someone letting "that Jap" back in the building. Gary's new cronies at once nicknamed him "Jap." He accepted their term of endearment though he grew ambivalent about it. Decades later, when his rowdy friend and the recovered alcoholic Ann Richards was governor of Texas, she carefully called him Gary, never again Jap.

While with the *Star-Telegram* Gary married an art designer of retail show rooms named Barbara. They had a son and a daughter and divorced after seven years. In Dallas he married a stewardess named Jo, and they too had a son. Gary followed Blackie, Bud, and Dan to the *Dallas Times-Herald* and then the *Morning News*. Jack Ruby gave the sportswriters free drinks at his Carousel Club, for they were celebrities. Some nights Gary, Bud, and Blackie donned capes and tights and conned gatherings into believing they were a troupe of European acrobats called the Flying Punzars. Their pratfalls wrecked a lot of furniture. Bud and Dan soon went off to New York as stars of the newborn *Sports Illustrated* and became accomplished novelists.

Blackie meanwhile edited the *Morning News* sports section and wrote his popular column and Gary specialized in the pro football beat. In 1965 the Cowboys were trying to stop being a woeful expansion franchise. That fall in Dallas, with time running out they were one yard away from upsetting Cleveland's then-mighty Browns and their dominant runner Jim Brown. Don Meredith, the dashing quarterback and past SMU heartthrob, dropped back and threw a pass over the middle straight into the brisket of an astonished Cleveland linebacker. He was ordered to throw to a spot where a Dallas receiver, not the linebacker, was supposed to be. Coach Tom Landry made the call but let Dandy Don take the fall. In the press box Gary began his story with a nod to an apocalyptic verse in Revelations: "The Four Horsemen rode again Sunday in the Cotton Bowl. You remember their names: Death, Famine, Pestilence, and Meredith."

Dandy Don was wounded, but in practice that week he calmed the Dallas players who wanted to take some hide off Cartwright. "Just doing his job," Meredith said of Gary. They remained friends the rest of Dandy Don's life. The last time he called Gary, it was just to sing him a pretty song.

Gary had also befriended Billy Lee Brammer, author of *The Gay Place*, the classic novel of 1950s Texas politics featuring a dominant governor that resembled Lyndon Johnson, whom Billy Lee had written speeches for in the Senate. That August, while the Cowboys trained in Thousand Oaks, California, Gary had gotten a call from Billy Lee, then freelancing for *Time*. He told Gary to hurry down to the Watts section of L.A., which was aflame. Drawing on the resources of fear and adrenaline he learned as a police beat rookie in Fort Worth, Gary plunged into the gunfire, rage, and chaos, filing report after report. The *Morning News* ran none of it. Gary later wrote that when he was back in Dallas, he challenged the editor-in-chief, who responded airily, "This was an important story, but we couldn't have it written by *one of our own*."

Alienated, weary of Dallas, Gary and Jo agreed without hesitation to a move when the *Philadelphia Inquirer* offered him a sports column at twice his Dallas salary. They liked the city but Gary hated what he was writing, and so did his superiors. He was fired after 89 days. For *Harper's*, then edited by *Texas Observer* ex Willie Morris, Gary wrote "Confessions of a Washed- Up Sportswriter." The essay established him as one of the hottest young magazine writers in the country.

However, back in Texas, with that story still on the stands, Gary was arrested for giving a joint to two cops posing as Austin hippies who had knocked on their door and said they had lost their way on Comanche Trail. The statewide headlines were punishing, and the famed Odessa leader of his defense team, Warren Burnett, advised Gary to pipe down about the Constitution and wanting his confiscated weed back if he didn't wish to spend years in "the Big Rodeo" of Texas prisons. Another defense lawyer, A.R. "Babe" Schwartz, was a state senator from Galveston and won a legislative continuance, allowing Gary to party with pals and their wives for some months in Mexico City, Zihuatanejo, and Acapulco. When the trial began in Austin, Burnett proposed a defense of jury nullification—a theory that juries had the power to refuse to convict when they rejected the laws covered in the indictment. The prosecutors moved for a mistrial and got

one, then lost interest. Gary's indictment went away, but the misadventure contributed to his second divorce.

Gary and Bud wrote a film script about a convict turned rodeo bull and bronc rider, *J.W. Coop*. The movie came out in 1971, but they had to sue the star and director, Cliff Robertson, and then settle in beaten fashion to get some pay and their screen credit. Robertson floated their names in taunting yellow type against a field of yellow wildflowers. Next for Gary came a voyage to Durango, Mexico, to observe the filming of Bud's movie *Kid Blue*, starring Dennis Hopper, who was still riding the success and excess of *Easy Rider*. Gary and Hopper became friends, though in the course of a Christmas party that got out of hand Hopper stuck a cocked and loaded pistol in Gary's face and said, "Bang bang."

While in Durango Gary had gotten a call from Bill Wittliff telling him that he won a Dobie- Paisano Fellowship. The reprieve his freelance hustle provided him six months on J. Frank Dobie's old retreat along Barton Creek and, Gary wrote, certified his hope that he was a real writer. Gary enjoyed the beautiful setting, but the most work that came out of that term was done by a house guest and unofficial fellow, Pete Gent, the ex-Dallas Cowboys flanker who was writing a bestselling novel, *North Dallas Forty*. Still, the return to Austin allowed Gary the fortune of courting, and marrying the love of his life, Phyllis, who was becoming a superior real estate agent. Bud Shrake, a minister of some obscure faith, performed the legal ceremony in a side room of the Texas Chili Parlor, and the party moved on to a club where Gary whanged away on Willie Nelson's guitar and made up a ditty called "Main Squeeze Blues."

The marriage to Phyllis was not the only influence that settled him down some. Mike Levy, a young lawyer from Dallas who had sold ads for a Philadelphia city magazine, borrowed enough money from his father to pursue his dream of bringing that publishing concept to the whole of Texas. Levy interviewed hundreds of candidates for editor, including Gary, but hired William Broyles, Jr., who in turn hired Gregory Curtis. Bill and Greg had been writing students of Larry McMurtry when he taught at Rice. The birth of *Texas Monthly* turned loose a herd of ambitious twenty-somethings that included Griffin Smith, Al Reinert, Richard West, Stephen Harrigan, Jan Reid, Paul Burka, Prudence Mackintosh, and others of much talent to come. But most admitted they really didn't know what they were doing. Suddenly Gary was the grownup in the room—the seasoned veteran at 39 and leader of the pack. His first feature in the debut issue in February 1973 was a profile of Duane Thomas, the enigmatic star runner of the Dallas Cowboys' first Super Bowl winner.

Gary and Bud dreamed up Mad Dog, Inc. with the slogan "Doing Indefinable Services to Mankind" and the credo "Anything That Is Not Mystery is Guesswork." Members included David and Ann Richards, Pete Gent, Molly Ivins, and Eddie Wilson and other creators of Armadillo World Headquarters, who let them office upstairs in the converted armory. Mad Dog, Inc. was Austin's answer to Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, and though they didn't roam the country in a wildly painted bus, they tried without success to buy three Texas ghost towns where they hoped to rule in anarchy and unbridled fun. All

of their grand schemes fizzled, but in 1976 Hunter S. Thompson came through town and decided he didn't have enough octane to run with that crowd.

In a January 1976 *Texas Monthly* story titled "Is Jay J. Armes for Real?" Gary debunked an El Paso private eye's growing renown as the best shamus in the country. Armes had grown up poor and lost both hands in a boyhood blasting cap accident—he was a genuine wizard at getting through life with hooks instead of hands. Gary punctured his grandiose claims yet portrayed him sympathetically. The magazine had taken on a rookie fact checker named David Moorman. Gary, Broyles, Moorman, and the magazine's libel lawyer Jim George went to El Paso and certified all but one of Gary's allegations. Armes had a menagerie of large caged animals, such as bears and mountain lions, around his mansion. Moorman couldn't prove or disprove Gary's closing line about the menagerie, but how could they not use it? "A neighbor killed the elephant with a crossbow."

Gary's December 1976 cover story was a post-prison profile of Candy Barr, a baby-faced blonde stripper and star of one pornographic movie. Dallas police and prosecutors had put an end to her fame with a marijuana conviction. Gary talked her into letting him come see her in Brownwood. She came to the door with her hair in curlers and wearing a short disheveled house dress and no apparent underwear. Gary recalled the meeting: "'Don't think I dressed up just for you,' she told me."

On and on rolled Gary's panoramas of Texas, Mexico, and points beyond. He wrote about people imprisoned for crimes they didn't commit, and he didn't stop fighting for them when the issue was on the stands and another deadline called. He described the wanton killer Kenneth McDuff under a cover that shrieked, "MONSTER." He was a one-man town without pity on the subject of Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. He spoofed himself as the state's greatest cook and greatest middle-aged lover. "Nobody checked *my* facts on that," Phyllis chided a staff newcomer, John Spong. Gary shared his inconsolable loss and grief when his older son Mark and beloved Phyllis died of cancer.

Gary made one real stab at writing fiction, his 1969 novel about pro football, *The Hundred Yard War*, but he knew nonfiction was his métier. *Texas Monthly* stories spawned his most successful books: *Blood Will Tell: The Murder Trials of T. Cullen Davis* (1979); *Dirty Dealing: A True Story of Smuggling, Murder, and the FBI's Biggest Investigation* (1984), and *Galveston: A History of the Island* (1991). *Blood Will Tell* won the Carr P. Collins Award from the Texas Institute of Letters and was adapted as a TV movie. That book was also translated in Russian by Soviet apparatchiks as proof of the depravity of American capitalism and justice.

Gary and Bud wrote scripts for two TV movies starring Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson, *A Pair of Aces* (1990) and *Another Pair of Aces* (1991.) Following a major heart attack and bypass surgery, Gary wrote *Heartwise Guy* (1998) about his toned-down lifestyle and philosophy. He envied writers of good fiction and read it constantly. He was the last one to condescend to newspaper reporters; many were his friends, and he had given a decade of his life to that hard trade. When Gary retired from *Texas Monthly* he wanted his last column to be a visit with John Graves, the revered but age-stricken author

of *Goodbye to a River* and *Hard Scrabble*. Their lives had played out in such different ways, at different decibels. Some wondered if they would connect, but they did.

In 2012 Gary won the Lon Tinkle Award. His eloquent remarks at the Institute's awards banquet inspired his finale, *The Best I Recall: A Memoir*. He relived high points of his long life but owned up to his considerable failures as a father and husband. "“Maybe I was an imperfect man, writing my own obituary,”” he recalled Willie Nelson saying in a sorrowful conversation they had on the singer's bus. “I didn't understand the meaning at first, but after a few years I discovered that Willie told me a profound truth: once you choose the night life, all roads are pretty much the same.”

Gary Cartwright is interred at the Texas State Cemetery near the graves of his friends Edwin “Bud” Shrake, Larry L. King, and Governor Ann Richards. His papers and mementos reside at the Wittliff Collection at Texas State University in San Marcos.

Tom Curtis

By Mimi Swartz

Tom Curtis, who died of Parkinson's on January 22 at 71, was not an easy man to love, though in my experience most investigative reporters are not. They tend to be tightly wound and sometimes more high minded than the rest of us, but that sort of goes with the territory. Those are also the traits—along with a near pathological relentlessness—that made Tom an award-winning writer for Texas Monthly in its earliest days, and an outstanding editor at Houston City Magazine, where he gave me the opportunity and the tools to build the journalism career I've now enjoyed for decades.

You can read the conventional obits that talk about his work at this magazine and the Washington Post, the Dallas Times Herald, and Rolling Stone. He was a product of the rebellious sixties and seventies, when many young people believed they had an obligation to root out injustice and upend the status quo. Tom exposed the brutality of Houston's police department at a time when most citizens simply accepted their bigotry as part of the landscape; he reported on the origin of AIDS when few would touch the subject. With piercing blue eyes and a long, pointed nose that seemed perpetually sniffing the wind, Tom had an unfailing instinct for deceit and the patently unfair. There are no better examples than this Texas Monthly story [Support Your Local Police (or else) September 1977.]

But what was most important about Tom was his willingness—his passion, really—to share his knowledge with a cadre of eager younger reporters. He wasn't warm and fuzzy—he was too anxious for that—but he had a zeal that was contagious, and the high standards that would make a neophyte terrified to fail. Tom was nearly impossible to please—there was always one more question you should have asked, one more phone call you should have made—and I was a shy, indulged child from a comfy background who didn't understand the importance of crossing every "t" and dotting every "i." But I never refused the push; even though there were many tears and long sleepless nights rewriting stories for the fifth or sixth time—with a typewriter! —I knew on some level that I had found my path, and that Tom was showing me the way. He not only convinced me that I could write, but unlike so many male and female editors, he convinced me that I could write about a lot more than beauty products and other girly subjects. If I had a predilection for exposure—and I did, though I didn't know it at the time—he showed me how to use it in the service of a greater good.

Note: this memorial originally appeared on Texas Monthly's website. Thanks to Mimi Swartz and Texas Monthly for permission to reprint it here.

Remembering Shelby Hearon

By Beverly Lowry

I met her shortly after my first novel was published in 1977. I was living in Houston then and Max Apple—who was teaching at Rice-- was the only other Texas fiction writer I knew. Shelby sought me out. She'd already published three novels by then, with a fourth about to pop. There was a paperback thing, some kind of convention, going on in downtown Houston. I was there taking Max's place because he had a class to teach or a child to take care of, something anyway, and Shelby happened to be there as well and she came up to me, introduced herself—a simple Hi. I'm Shelby Hearon--and something like, we need to know each other—which really meant, I needed to know her. She'd lived in the state longer, knew more people, was well published. I wasn't that much younger in years, but in terms of geography and the publishing world, she became a kind of cultural mentor.

Next thing I knew I'd been invited to become a member of an organization I'd never heard of, the Texas Institute of Letters. I said yes thank you without much thought, and then, maybe a year later, I got a call from Shelby asking me to be on the council. She was the first woman president of TIL since Diana Hobby and that was the end of the list of women presidents. No women served on the council. I said yes again, for one reason because it seemed the right thing to do—after all, I was a Texan now, wasn't I?-- but more than that because Shelby was a force and she could cheerfully and cleverly convince you of something she thought you needed to do and sometimes you didn't realize you'd said yes until you turned around and there you were, doing it.

My first council meeting was held in Shelby's house, in her small living room, and I was late. By the time I got there, everybody else was drinking coffee or considering taking a shot from the bottle of bourbon sitting square in the middle of the coffee table, a tradition I doubt has remained in place, which Shelby said was more honored in its ritualistic continuation than the actual participation. I especially remember the three staunchest members of that august group looking up at me: Marsh Terry, John Graves and A.C. Greene. TIL hadn't yet met in Houston at that time, and my city and the university where I'd taken a job—the U of Houston— weren't seen as especially attractive to the organization.

So my attendance was slightly off-center to begin with, slightly transgressive, slightly questionable. And I was late. The other person who fish-eyed me for my tardiness was herself, Madame President, Shelby. Her pretty face closed up slightly in a kind of disapproving squinch. I started to explain but she shut me quickly down and the business of the council went on.

She had an edge, Shelby did, and as somebody who grew up thinking girls should win hearts and never disappoint, I admired the hell out of that. She also had as quick a mind as I've ever run across, one that could snap to on a dime and sum up a situation quicker than you might well be ready for.

We became friends after that. We'd drive from our homes, she from Austin and me from Houston, to the Bon Ton Cafe in LaGrange, not exactly on a schedule but roughly once a month. We'd sit there and drink coffee and order scrambled eggs and biscuits. We always arrived after the breakfast hours were over but Shelby could convince our server that surely they had a stale biscuit or two left over in the kitchen and some bacon and eggs? The waitress would sigh and we got what we wanted. We talked books, editors, agents, men, marriage, children not so much, mainly because we'd have already filled our time up with other topics.

She reached out to people. Women especially. She said, in essence, you're one of us, come sit here and we'll talk.

I loved her novels, especially *A Prince of a Fellow* and *Owning Jolene* and thought she was particularly brave to take on a biography of Barbara Jordan, who was also a force but of a different order altogether.

I saw her in her New York home a couple of times and once when she was doing a reading at UT a few years ago. She was crisp, feisty and as funny as ever, happy in her new life far away from where she'd started out, then moved to, then left.

I'm grateful to have met her when I did.

John Miller Morris

John Miller Morris, Jr., 64, passed away on February 16, 2017 in a San Antonio hospital after surgery, attended by friends who traveled thousands of miles to come to his bedside. He is survived by a daughter Erin Claire Noakes of Washington D.C. He will be missed by his longtime companion, many friends, colleagues, and neighbors.

John grew up in Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle and his early experiences in the southwest shaped his work, home, and life. He was an Eagle Scout and high school underground newspaper editor demonstrating his civic priorities from an early age. He obtained a bachelor degree (Plan II Honors Program), two master's degrees (Community & Regional Planning and Slavic Literature and Language), and a doctoral degree (Geography and Planning) from The University of Texas at Austin where he also competed in fencing. His love of the land and his personal heritage was demonstrated through his long involvement in the family's business, the C.B. Morris Company, one of the first family farm corporations in Texas.

As a scholar, he authored and edited multiple books on his way to his full professorship at the University of Texas at San Antonio, including *El Llano Estacado* which remains the definitive work on the history, geography, culture and peoples of that region. He also received multiple awards including the UT Regents Outstanding Teaching Award and the Piper Professor Award for his "dedication to the teaching profession and for outstanding academic achievement."

John was well-respected throughout the state and was a member of many professional organizations including the Texas Institute of Letters, the Texas State Historical Association, and the West Texas Historical Association (current president). He was also a charter member of the Sensitive Men, a monthly brunch/politics/Frisbee fellowship in Austin and a vital member of the Pros & Cons, a group of scholarly colleagues who met monthly for critical dialogue and conviviality.

John was also an integral force in keeping his Austin neighborhood and the surrounding area on RM 2222 beautiful, livable places. He worked tirelessly to improve and expand Long Canyon's unique hiking trail system. He served on the homeowner's association board for numerous terms. He worked with developers in the RM 2222 corridor to assure that developments would be tasteful, as unobtrusive as possible, minimize environmental impacts, and in character with the Hill Country.

He was brilliant, outgoing, inquisitive, energetic and unique. One of his many legacies is a 140- year-old Victorian house he rescued from demolition in the west campus area in 1978, moved twice, and lovingly restored in the woods and hills of west Austin.

Memorial contributions may be made on his behalf to the John Miller Morris UTSA scholarship: <https://giving.utsa.edu/Morris>

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Eulogy for Marsh Terry

By C.W. Smith

The story begins, “The sky was Greek blue. An hour before the contest, the endzone was filled. Then it was filled so tightly, much over capacity, that there was no room to move up and down the steps. Everyone was crushed into the other, like a wriggling coiled caterpillar wreathing in and out in fuzzy jerky ripples with one heart.” Turns out we’re in the Cotton Bowl, where the Cowboys of yore played on natural grass, and we’ve got the cheapest seats in the stadium, the *endzone* where proles of all colors sweat together. The hated Packers arrive to taunt and strut; our narrator says they’re “hideous mothers, the sons of dogs and pigs and goats, the living hunks of massive bone muscle....”

A fight breaks out in the stands, cops are tossed pell-mell into a whirling mass, then out on the field, Bob Hayes, “zephyr-footed, fastest man in the world,” first fumbles and risks being eaten alive by an angry crowd but scores near the end and “everyone smiled and turned to suck the blood from the throat the one next to him.”

The story was called “End Zone” and appeared in *The Southwest Review*, must’ve been the mid- 70s. I’d been living out of state and longed to get back. Sampling writing by Texas talent was a vicarious way of being here, and Marsh’s story blew me down. It’s a compressed, vivid portrait of testosterone and blood lust and patriotism and class anger compacted into one long description.

I could say “little did I know” and/or “the rest is history,” but that would apply to everything that happens to a person. I read that story shortly before Marsh’s review of my first novel appeared in “The Dallas Morning News,” and I broke protocol by writing a thank-you afterward and telling him how much I liked that story. I met him in person when I came South for the Dobie-Paisano Fellowship. After I moved to Dallas, I became a writer for the “Dallas Times Herald,” my first adult full-time job after a decade of freelancing and keeping out the cold by lacing up swatches of part-time jobs and wrapping them around me. The job required 50 weeks of on-site work per annum. I was horrified. I ran to my newfound pal, then acting chair of SMU’s English department, and cried, “Save me, brother!”

And he did. Based on my two novels, I was shoe-horned into a tiny creative writing contingent (Marsh and poet Jack Myers), and so he became my mentor and brother; for the next three decades, where he stepped, I stepped after; what he started, I continued. If he went to Taos to teach at our Fort Burgwin campus, well then, so did I; if he spent five weeks in Oxford teaching, well, then, so did I. He has had more influence on my adult life than any other person save my wife.

But enough about me: who is *he*?

Well, first, he was one of us, a writer. The story I quote above is in his collection *Dallas Stories*, a series that captures the best and the worst of the citizens in that titular city. His

novel, *Tom Northway*, won our Jesse Jones Award in 1968, but it was only one among many he produced in a productive lifetime: *Old Liberty*, *My Father's Hands*, *Ringer*, *The Murder of Milo*, *Tex Rex*, *Land of Hope and Glory*, *The Memorialist*, and *Angels Prostate Fall*, which I list last because it's maybe my favorite: a droll and often hilarious account of a nice old fellow undergoing treatment for prostate cancer. He also edited a collection of historical essays about SMU entitled *High On the Hilltop* and wrote a memoir of his time there – *Loving U*.

Of course he was a member of TIL. He was here when I got here in 1973 – no telling how long he'd already been seated at the table. He served as President of the TIL and until recent years was almost always at council meetings *ex officio*, providing guidance and a historical perspective in that same low-key way he used to nudge the direction of things at our campus. He could recall a TIL that was, uh, *tribal*, you could say – business conducted without by-laws, uttering grunts in lieu of showing hands, a bottle of Jack Daniels Black the table's centerpiece. And he has been a donor to the Lon Tinkle Award for many years.

He was a teacher, and a very popular one. He often said his model was Wallace Stegner, under whom he'd studied at Stanford, who “always sat in the corner with a cigar and grunted,” though truthfully Marsh was more like a cuddly, avuncular bear with students. He was fond of making cryptic comments, not only to students but also to friends and colleagues. Joe Coomer, a former student (and TIL member) said that when he had his first student story conference with Marsh, and Joe asked him what he thought, Marsh said, “The old Comanche chief always says that when the sun is low on the horizon, the eagle must descend.” Since there were no native Americans in his story, Joe was puzzled for days after – knew there was an applicable metaphor there somewhere.

He taught a general education class called “Myth of the West,” introducing successive squads of SMU linebackers and tackles and business majors to canonical works such as *The Ox-Bow Incident*, *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, and *Lonesome Dove*. They ate it up – remembered the class for years after, as for many it was the first literature they'd encountered since leaving 10th grade and would likely be the last.

He was kind, he was funny, he was easy-going to his students, but he also wanted his students to be better writers when they left than when they came. He was unflappable, and never once in my 37 years of knowing him did I see him angry, though he'd sometimes tell me he got mad when such-and-such happened. In department meetings, he watched quietly as people bounced ideas or whined or ranted or prattled on, until finally he'd insert something sensible, though maybe too it might be one of those elusive metaphors. People deeply respected his opinions and wanted him on their side. He tended to make his points and pursue his notions by having quiet one-on-ones with people rather than making public stands. He had enormous influence on the curriculum, on policy, on hiring, and yet his hand was so light he got things done very quietly. He never made speeches, seldom spoke more than a paragraph or two in meetings, and yet his mark was on decisions big and small across the campus.

Around our campus, he was Mr. SMU. He'd been there since the early 1950s, after starting at Amherst and Kenyon, first as a student then as young faculty. You know how the old Kiowa Satank sang his death song while in chains on his way to prison at Huntsville – this is a good day to die, he sang, “But O Earth, you go on forever.” That was how it was with Marsh and SMU. Presidents and provosts and deans came and went, but Marsh went on forever. He went back and forth between the English department and the administration (was associate provost for a time), teaching new presidents and deans what they should be learning (though not all did), what they should be valuing, what they should be funding. (He got really cross-wise with our penultimate provost over abolishing the SMU Press.) He led commissions and studies and committees and departments.

He started the SMU Literary Festival in the early 1970s and for decades brought emerging Texas writers and national household names to the campus for week-long readings, workshops, dinners and parties; he and Toni always hosted the Sunday night opening pre-reading buffet at their house, where we all met James Dickey, Joyce Carol Oates, Johns Cheever and Updike, Gail Godwin, Saul Bellow, and gobs of more glitterati. We got to watch celebs eat off plates teetering on their knees, always instructive and leveling.

He was such a fixture on campus that he was frequently asked to speak at memorial services in Perkins Chapel – it happened that not long after I'd come to SMU I'd seen him speak at no fewer than three within a couple months' time and got the notion he was a Methodist preacher on the side (it is nominally a Methodist school) because he had a sort of amiable kindness about him that would pass for, say, being a pastoral counselor, if not a pulpit pounder, and so when Marcia and I decided to get married, I asked him to officiate at our wedding. He thought that was hilarious.

He was captain of our softball team, but – now please don't tell him I told you – he wasn't much at bat because he was *tuerto* (one-eyed) but took great pride in short-stopping.

He knew the word *honyock*. I'd say, “Hey, you old honyock,” and he'd say, “You too.”

He was an exemplary husband and father. Toni was one year behind him as an undergrad at SMU, and he always said that when he saw her coming down the stairs in Dallas Hall, “I knew she was the girl for me.” Her first impression was not so savory, though: she said she first saw him at a fraternity shindig and that by the way he acted “he was just a Yankee show-off.” Nonetheless, they married in 1953 and stayed that way until he died, 60+ years. As a couple and as a family, they were the gold standard for stability, mutual respect, and longevity, for all of us, and my wife Marcia always said she wished they could've been her parents. They had their own children – two daughters now grown, one a lawyer, the other a screenwriter, both offering up grandkids. (Grandson John, graduating Harvard, aspires to be a writer like his granddad.) They've lived in the same house for longer than I've known them – maybe over four decades.

Lastly – and I apologize for bringing me up again – he was a great pal. If you were a pal of his, now and then you'd discover that something good had come your way without quite knowing how or why (say, an award, a posting, an invitation to a retreat), and it might be months or years later before you'd come to know he'd made that happen for you.

Thomas Whitbread

August 22, 1931- October 1, 2016

By Joe Kruppa (via Kurt Heinzelman)

Thomas Bacon Whitbread was a poet, a teacher, an avid tennis player and a warm friend. A New Englander, Tom was educated at Amherst and Harvard, took his first academic job as an Instructor in the English Department at The University of Texas at Austin in 1959, and stayed there until his retirement. Tom taught a wide variety of courses: Modern Poetry, Creative Writing, Modern Short Story and Shakespeare while carrying on a full teaching schedule and engaging in a range of academic responsibilities, Tom also found time to publish extensively and give poetry readings. During his lifetime he gave over 40 readings both in Texas and across the country, as well as participating in writing workshops. In these readings and workshops, Tom's love of poetry was palpable. He was a walking resource for his colleagues in the English Department, quoting liberally from his favorite poets, especially Wallace Stevens whose work Tom seemed to know by heart. To be around Tom in these moments was to experience a true poetic inspiration, to know intimately what poetry could mean in a person's life.

Tom published three books of poetry and had one poetry journal devote an entire issue to his work. *Four Infinitives* came out in 1964, *Whomp* and *Moonshiver* in 1982, *The Structures Minds Erect* in 2007, and the periodical *Lucille Poetry Journal* in 1978. He also published five short stories and six critical articles in his career. Tom contributed to a number of journals, ranging from *Atlantic Monthly* through *Harper's* and *New Yorker* and *Virginia Quarterly*, over 140 poems in all, plus 19 poems in anthologies, including the *New York Times Book of Verse* and the *New Yorker Book of Poems*.

Tom received many awards over the years, including the Voertman's Poetry Award in 1982 for *Whomp* and *Moonshiver* and the Third Aga Khan Prize for Fiction for a story, "The Rememberer," which appeared in *Paris Review*. But he was especially proud of awards given by students for his teaching, including a scholarship that carries his name and a colleague's, endowed by a former student who had been "profoundly impacted" by their teaching. Again the awards showed how closely Tom integrated his writing and his classroom activity, for he brought his poetic sense into his teaching, inspiring his students.

At a memorial service for Tom after his death, various colleagues and former students spoke of him affectionately and with respect. Perhaps the best words about Tom and his life and work can be found in his own revered poetic inspiration, Wallace Stevens. Stevens wrote of "The poem of the mind in the act of finding/What Will suffice." Tom's whole life represented that very quest. At the end of that same poem, Stevens wrote "It must/Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may/Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman/Combing. The poem of the act of the mind."

That was Tom Whitbread. WOOF TOM.