

Texas Institute of Letters



Oct/Nov/Dec 2012
Newsletter

Annual Meeting, Banquet Information Announced

TIL's annual meeting will be at the Embassy Suites San Marcos, Hotel, Spa, and Conference Center, in San Marcos, April 5-6. Reservations can be made by calling the hotel directly at 1-512-392-6450 or by dialing Embassy Suite's national reservation system at 1-800-560-7782. Be sure to mention Texas Institute of Letters when making your reservation to get the group rate, which is \$129 per night. This includes breakfast at no cost and free parking (although valet parking is available for \$12 per night for those desiring it).

To make your reservations online, go to Embassy Suites' Texas Institute of Letters' special page at this link:

http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/S/SNMESES-TIL-20130405/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG

Please note that the page may be a little slow in first loading. Click on the "Book A Room" button and the process is easy to follow.

To get the group rate, be sure to make your reservations by **March 6**.

Please use the form at the end of this newsletter to remit 2012-2013 dues and to make your reservations for the banquet.

This year's meeting will be a special treat. On Friday, April 5, the Wittliff Collections and Texas State University will host us at a reception. The Wittliff Collections are home to the archives of many TIL members and is a true treasure of Southwestern literature artifacts and Mexican and Border

photography. As if a reception at the Wittliff Collections were not enough in itself, Curator (and TIL Council Member) **Steve Davis** has arranged for our own Recording Secretary **Betty Wiesepape** to read from her new book, *Winifred Sanford: The Life and Times of a Texas Writer*. In the 1920s **Winifred Sanford** wrote a series of acclaimed short stories chronicling the effects of the Texas oil boom on regular folks. H.L. Mencken championed her work and four of her stories appeared in editions of *Best American Short Stories*. She became an early TIL member but was gradually forgotten—ignored by generations of male literary critics. She has been rediscovered in recent years. A collection of her work is in print and in 1995 Clint Eastwood directed a film based on one of her stories. Sanford's archives reside in the Wittliff Collections, and Betty drew on them while writing her book. *Winifred Sanford: The Life and Times of a Texas Writer* is a title in the Southwestern Writers Series, Wittliff Collections, published by the University of Texas Press. It will be on sale at the reception.

For more information on Sanford, follow this link:

<http://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/a-z/sanford.html>

The reception at the Wittliff Collections is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. The Wittliff Collections are located on the seventh floor of the Albert B. Alkek Library on the campus of Texas State University-San Marcos. And there's even more for early birds arriving in San Marcos.

TIL Secretary **Jan Reid** has made arrangements for TIL members to receive a tour of the former River Systems Institute, now known as the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Aquarena Center. We hope to include a glass bottom boat ride as part of the tour. This is tentatively scheduled for 3 p.m. on Friday, April 5. The Meadows Center has requested a headcount approximation, so if you are interested, please respond by e-mailing: tilsecretary@yahoo.com no later than **March 15**.

For more information on the Meadows Center, follow this link:

<http://www.meadowscenter.txstate.edu/>

And we're not done yet. If you're in the vicinity on Thursday, April 4, you should drop by the Wittliff Collections for a conversation with four writers who are featured in its current exhibition, *Global Odyssey: From Texas to the World and Back*. The conversation begins at 7 p.m., followed by a book signing. The panelists include TIL members **Stephanie Elizondo Griest**, **Manuel Luis Martinez**, and **John Phillip Santos**. Moderating will be TIL Council member **Carmen Tafolla**.

We look forward to seeing you in San Marcos.

Schedule for 2013 TIL Meeting and Banquet

Thursday, April 4

7 p.m. – Panel: *Global Odyssey: From Texas to the World and Back*
Moderated by **Carmen Tafolla**

Friday, April 5

3 p.m. – *Tour of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Aquarena Center*
Hosted by **Jan Reid**

6 p.m. – Reception

Hosted by the Wittliff Collections And Texas State University
Reading by **Betty Wiesepape**

Saturday, April 6

4 p.m. – New members introduction, readings

6 p.m. – Cash bar

7 p.m. – Banquet

And Now For A Not So Trivial Scavenger Hunt....

Steve Davis sends along the “scavenger hunt” questions related to the Global Odyssey exhibit, which will be on display during our reception. You’ll be able to find the answers to these questions from the exhibit. We haven’t seen it yet, but we suspect Katherine Anne Porter probably did not get her mole poblano recipe from Rick Bayless.

1. Why did **Stephen Harrigan** travel to the Czech Republic and what did he find there?
2. What does **Stephanie Elizondo Griest** describe as “the most important element” of life in Moscow?
 - a. vodka
 - b. safety
 - c. warmth
 - d. food
3. **John Graves**, writing about the island of Mallorca off the Spanish coast, mentions that Romans first arrived in 300 B.C. How did the Mallorcans greet the Romans?
 - a. with loaded slingshots
 - b. complimentary tapas
 - c. bizarre fertility rituals
 - d. souvenir stands
4. **Joe R. Lansdale** is featured in an Italian calendar for what month?
5. **Carmen Tafolla** is pictured at a reading in:
 - a. San Antonio
 - b. New Zealand
 - c. Australia
 - d. India
6. **Angela Shelf Medearis** adapted folk tales from which region for her children’s books?
 - a. Southeast Asia
 - b. Atlantis
 - c. West Africa
 - d. Patagonia
7. Which two novelists drew directly from **J. Frank Dobie**’s earlier research in Mexico?
 - a. **Cormac McCarthy** (*All the Pretty Horses*)
 - b. **Harriet Doerr** (*Stones for Ibarra*)
 - c. **Bud Shrake** (*Blessed McGill*)
 - d. **Malcolm Lowry** (*Under the Volcano*)
8. How did **Katherine Anne Porter** acquire her Mole Poblano recipe?
 - a. **Rick Bayless**’ cookbook
 - b. her favorite restaurant in Guanajuato
 - c. **Frida Kahlo**
 - d. her maid
9. What city map is on display from the **William Broyles, Jr.** Papers?
 - a. Pyongyang
 - b. Ho Chi Minh City
 - c. Gotham City

- d. Shanghai
10. **Cormac McCarthy** explained to his Japanese translator that the “zacateros” he refers to in *All the Pretty Horses* are:
- a. gatherers of wild grass for hay
 - b. nomads who shoe wild horses
 - c. midnight harvesters of the maguey plant
 - d. thieves of Xanax prescriptions
-

Stephen Harrigan To Be Presented Lon Tinkle Award

By Jan Reid
TIL Secretary

Stephen Harrigan has spent his life and career disproving the old adage that nice guys finish last. Steve has been first and foremost a steadily producing novelist of national renown. He has also been one of the best magazine journalists and essayists of his generation, a well-produced screenwriter, and a generous peer and mentor to countless friends, admirers, and students who have come to him with draft pages in need of help, or at least his good-natured moral support. Steve Harrigan is recipient of the Texas Institute of Letters’ 2013 Lon Tinkle Award for Excellence in Lifetime Achievement.

Steve was born in Oklahoma City in 1948 and has lived in Texas since the age of five. He grew up in Abilene and Corpus Christi, graduating from the University of Texas in 1971; his feel and affection for the west Texas mesquite savanna and the warm waters, reefs, and sand and shell beaches of the Gulf of Mexico continue to inform his craft and artistry. Steve was first a poet, and for a few years he published a poetry journal, *Lucille*, that featured the verse of several future members of the TIL. In 1973 he was one of several young writers who launched the unlikely but dramatic success of *Texas Monthly*. For many years he was a staff writer and senior editor for the magazine, valued by colleagues for his lyrical prose and his editorial consideration and respect for other writers’ styles.

In 1977-78 he was a Dobie-Paisano fellow, and though he and his wife Sue Ellen arrived at the ranch with an infant daughter, he more than measured up to the opportunity, completing a draft of his first novel *Aransas*, published by Knopf in 1980. Its setting is the Corpus Christi Bay and wetlands and the funky coast towns where he had grown up. Novelist Anne Beattie praised that novel, which made the *New York Times*’ list of notable books that year, as “a subtly told and deeply felt story about our attempts to capture those things we hope can make life meaningful — even while fate waits to flip-flop our plans, baiting and pushing us forward. And it is comical and touching to see that the real show in *Aransas* is not a porpoise circus, full of farce and silliness, but the characters’ ceaseless efforts to move with half those creatures’ grace and mystery.”

Steve’s second novel, *Jacob’s Well*, published by Simon and Schuster in 1984, begins with a geologist’s rattlesnake bite in the Chihuahuan Desert and becomes the adventure of scuba divers drawn to the beautiful and sometimes lethal underwater limestone cave in the Texas Hill Country. The *Washington Post* and *Dallas Morning News* hailed it as one of the year’s top books.

The full-time magazine job was never less than demanding. In those years Steve established a difficult routine of rising very early in the mornings to work two or three hours on his fiction before heading

downtown to *Texas Monthly* or on the highway for one of his assignments. He had wanted to write for the movies since seeing *Lawrence of Arabia* as a fourteen-year-old. Collaborating with friend and future Pulitzer Prize winner **Lawrence Wright**, Steve worked on a “spec” screenplay — one with zero guarantees — about astronauts that eventually went unproduced but provided him with another means of livelihood and enabled him to strike out on his own. Over the next three decades Steve wrote forty scripts, thirteen or fourteen of which were produced, carving a niche for himself in made-for-TV movies.

He won coveted membership in the Screen Writers Guild, and at least in prestige, the peak was *The Last of His Tribe*, the 1992 story of the sole surviving Ishi Indian starring Jon Voight and Graham Greene. Twenty-three million viewers watched *Beyond the Prairie* one night in 1999. Other high points were *The King of Texas*, a western retelling of Shakespeare's *King Lear* that starred Patrick Stewart, Marcia Gay Harden, and Roy Scheider; and *The Colt*, an adaptation of a short story by the Nobel-prize winning author Mikhail Sholokhov. Also there was *The O.J. Simpson Story*, churned out in a blaze for the Fox Network, whose executives wanted to precede the football star's trial for the 1994 murders of Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman. Writing for *Slate*, Steve reminisced, “I think I recall reading a positive review from some lonely TV reviewer somewhere in the Midwest, but otherwise the critics universally chose to be appalled. (‘This is another of television's scavenger productions, eager to pounce on the bare bones of any sensational story that might turn up a few gold fillings for the network bottom line.’ Tut-tuts courtesy of John J. O’Connor of the *New York Times*.) It felt good, a little, to be reviled; I’m not sure why.”

That essay was titled “I Was an A-List Writer of B-List Productions.” For Steve there was at least one heartbreaker — *Hands On a Hard Body* for famed director Robert Altman, who died just as the film grew tantalizingly close to production. TV movies waned with the advent of reality shows. But Steve's reflections on Hollywood were often hilarious — such as the time he got the chance to write a script about the starving immigrants trapped by blizzards at 7000 feet in the Sierra Nevadas of California in 1844. “I like the idea,” he reported the response of a studio *jefe* at one all-important meeting, “but couldn't we lose the cannibalism?”

Knopf published *The Gates of the Alamo*, Steve's breakout novel in 2000. Robert Houston praised the book in the *New York Times*: “A time and place, a vanished world in which gallant death and honor still held tangible appeal, while merciless slaughter was more likely the rule, are evoked with great skill.” Michael Lind in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: “*The Gates of the Alamo* is an example of the historical novel at its best. With it, Harrigan has fulfilled his promise and emerged as the leading Texan writer of his generation and an American writer of the first rank.” The 581-page fictionalization of the epic battle received a number of awards, including the TCU Texas Book Award, the Western Heritage Award from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, and the Spur Award for the Best Novel of the West. And it was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Drawing on the interests of his journalism and first co-written screenplay, *Challenger Park* (Knopf, 2006), is a novel about a woman astronaut torn between her responsibilities as a mother and her dreams of flying in space. Writing in the *New York Times*, Thomas Mallon called the novel “a fine, absorbing achievement, probably the best science-factual novel about the space-faring worlds of Houston and Cape Canaveral in the nearly half-century since the first astronauts were chosen.”

Then came *Remember Ben Clayton* (Knopf, 2011), the tale of an emotionally rigid sculptor, his love-starved daughter, and a crusty west Texas rancher, once a captive of Comanches, who loses his son in the killing fields of France in World War I. **William Broyles, Jr.**, the young editor who gave Steve his first

chance at *Texas Monthly* and has since had a distinguished career as an author and screenwriter, praised the book of his old friend: "I was mesmerized to discover whether the sins of the fathers would indeed be visited onto their children. Harrigan understands artists, cowboys, warriors and women; he brings them to life with unflinching but compassionate honesty. He writes about art and war with equal power and authority, but his portrayals of the small quiet decisions that form a life are just as powerful, and sometimes just as shocking, as the wrenching scenes of combat." *Remember Ben Clayton* won the TIL's Jesse Jones Award for Best Fiction in 2012.

Steve has freelanced articles and essays for *The Atlantic*, *Outside*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Audubon*, *Travel Holiday*, *Life*, *American History*, and *National Geographic*. His essays have been collected in *A Natural State* (Texas Monthly Press, 1988) and *Comanche Midnight* (University of Texas Press, 1995.) Another notable book is *Water and Light: A Diver's Journey to a Coral Reef* (Houghton Mifflin, 1992). The shimmering prose inspired this **Larry McMurtry** comment: "Beautifully written, appreciative, lit by the author's sense of dignity and the grace of the ocean world." **John Graves** added, "It records the journey of a quiet, dogged, spiritual, highly intelligent prober after meanings and insights within the wondrous undersea realm. It is also a shapely, strong piece of writing whose style and structure enhance the pull of its lovely material. And through knowledge and feeling it manages, without heavy polemics, to shape a haunting statement about present mankind's relationship to what used to be considered the eternal world of nature. Harrigan's coral reef is in this sense the earth itself, and his people, whether appreciators or spoilers, are us."

Steve lives in Austin with his wife Sue Ellen and is a faculty fellow at the University of Texas' James A. Michener Center for Writers. He is also a founding member of the Texas Book Festival and of Capital Area Statues, Inc., a non-profit organization that commissions and raises money for monumental works of sculpture celebrating the history and culture of Texas. The University of Texas Press will publish a new collection, *The Eye of the Mammoth: Selected Essays*, this spring. Steve is at work on a new novel about the legal career and movements west of young Abraham Lincoln. Steve relates his discovery that Lincoln knew migrants who were stranded and forced into cannibalism at the Donner Pass, but he is too scrupulous and principled to try to slip the future president into the snowdrifts that doomed most members of the wagon train. As novelist he creates problems for himself that are a devil to solve. On reading *The Gates of the Alamo*, one friend thought, All right, it's convincing that the naturalist Edmund McGowan is trapped inside the bloody frenzy of the presidio in Béxar, but how does the novelist rescue the man and redeem his love story? As ever with wit, style, consistency, and invention: McGowan dives deep in the San Antonio River and *swims* out of there.

Member News

Lawrence Wright made the cover of the *New York Times Book Review* for the release of his new book, *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief*. Larry, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his last book, *The Looming Tower*, received kudos from *New Republic* Editor-at-Large Michael Kinsley for his "vast research and reporting." As of this writing, *Going Clear* was #3 on the *Times'* bestseller for hardcover nonfiction. ★★ ★ **Jan Reid's** biography of Ann Richards, *Let the People In*, has won two awards from the Texas State Historical Association: the Carol Horton Tullis Memorial Prize for Best Book on Texas History, and is co-recipient of the Liz Carpenter Award for 2012 work illuminating Women in Texas History. Since the book's publication, it has won praise in the *Washington Post*, *Economist*, *Texas*

Monthly, Texas Observer, Dallas Morning News, and San Antonio Express-News, and the Houston Chronicle cited it as one of the ten best nonfiction books of 2012. Jan says one of the thrills of his life was seeing the Capitol's Senate chamber filled with the late governor's admirers at a Texas Book Festival session ably moderated by Nate Blakeslee. Now Jan is trying to remember where he was on that novel he temporarily had to set aside. ★★ ★ **Chitra Divakaruni** has been keeping up her usual busy pace of work: "I have a new novel coming out in March, *Oleander Girl* (Simon and Schuster). It is a woman's search for her identity and spans India and America and addresses the clash between tradition and modernity in India and the changes wrought in America by 9/11. My first children's picture book, *Grandma and the Great Gourd*, the retelling of a Bengali folk tale, will also be out in March 2013 from Roaring Brook/McMillan. My novel *One Amazing Thing*, which had been chosen as a Houston region-wide read a couple years ago, has since been picked as a city-wide or campus-wide read by a number of venues, including the cities of Richardson and Alliance, Ohio; the California State Universities in Sacramento and Northridge; the University of Maryville in St. Louis; and the Community College systems of Rhode Island and Monroe County, Michigan. *One Amazing Thing* has been optioned by Hollywood. And I have been commissioned to write the libretto for a chamber opera on Indian immigrants in the Houston region by the Houston Grand Opera." ★★ ★ **Alan Govenar's** 24th book, *Everyday Music*, was published by Texas A&M University Press in Fall 2012. Based on Govenar's journey around Texas in the mid-1980s recording on-location radio features for National Public Radio, "Everyday Music" is accompanied by the website www.everydaymusiconline.org that contains audio recordings, film clips, and an education guide for teachers and students. Govenar's feature-length documentary "You Don't Need to Dance" on West African immigrant Sidiki Conde will premiere at Quad Cinema in New York City on March 22. ★★ ★ Talk about a busy year: In January of 2012, **Ann McCutchan** becomes the editor of the *American Literary Review*. A month later, she delivered the keynote address for the Eagle Expo birding festival in south Louisiana and crossed half the country to serve as a guest lecturer/reader at the School of Visual Arts in New York. In the fall she gave a presentation on her book, *River Music: An Atchafalaya Story*, at the Louisiana State Book Festival, with a signing afterward. Then she worked in a lot of research preparing for a new book and working on her opera libretto project. ★★ ★ **Deborah Paredez** published poems in *Palabra: A Magazine of Chicano and Latino Literary Art* and in *The Healing Muse* during fall 2012. Two of her poems won recognition in literary contests: "Santa Lucia, The Dawning" was awarded Honorable Mention in the Betty Gabehart Poetry Prize sponsored by the Kentucky Women Writers Conference and "Memorial Day Ghazal," won second place in the *Adanna Literary Journal* "Women and War: A Tribute to Adrienne Rich" poetry contest. ★★ ★ **Pat Mora** has a new children's book out from Knopf in English and Spanish editions: *The Beautiful Lady: Our Lady of Guadalupe/La Hermosa Señora: Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. ★★ ★ A new member of the Texas Literary Hall of Fame is our own **Joe Lansdale**. His novel *Edge of Dark Water* made young adult "Best of the Year" lists from *Kirkus Review, Booklist, the Boston Globe* and others. ★★ ★ Our past President **William V. Davis** has been honored with the 2012 Distinguished Alumnus Award by The Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. ★★ ★ **Katherine L. Hester** has been named the 2013 Carl Sandburg Writer-in-Residence and will live and work at the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in Flat Rock, North Carolina, this March. Though Sandburg is often associated with Chicago and the Midwest, he acquired property in western North Carolina in the 1940s and lived there with his wife

Lilian Steichen Sandburg until his death in 1967, when the house became a unit of the National Park Service. The park's historical and cultural resources include 264 acres of pastures, ponds, small mountains, and hiking trails, as well as a total of 50 structures, including the Sandburg's residence and goat barn. Katherine reports: "Yes, there are still goats, descendants of Mrs. Sandburg's champion herd! I'll be living in the former farm manager's house, within sight of the barn." ★★★ Speaking of Sandburg's goats, our President **W.K. (Kip) Stratton's** first wife worked on inventorying and accessioning the artifacts for the Sandburg Home way back when. Kip wound up with a genuine Sandburg retail goat milk container (unused) that was deaccessioned by the park service (there were lots of 'em left over). He still has it and keeps it in his office on a file cabinet alongside a Pancho Villa *santo* candle, a statue of a buffalo, and a wood carving by the late Texas/New Mexico novelist Bobby Jack Nelson. At least something good came out of that marriage – just kidding. ★★★ **Tom Zigal** reports that Paul Foreman died shortly before Christmas after a long bout with cancer. Though not a TIL member, Foreman was known by many of us. He ran the Brazos Bookstore in Austin, which specialized in small press publications and hosted poetry readings, workshops, and speeches. Foreman's Thorp Springs Press published works by a number of TIL members, including Tom's own first novel "way back in the day." In other news, Tom reports that he's been pleasantly surprised by the Kindle sales of his Kurt Muller novels, which have been republished as eBooks. He encourages TIL members to get their books on eBooks. ★★★ Speaking of eBooks, **Jesse Sublett** has this update: "In November I released my new serial crime novella, *Grave Digger Blues*, exclusively as both Kindle-type eBook and a Blues Deluxe Edition for the Apple iPad. Both editions include the 52,000 word post-apocalyptic crime novella, set during the last summer before the end of the world, with dueling protagonists – a damaged war veteran/private detective named Hank Zzybnx, and an itinerant jazz bassist, The Blues Cat – and both versions include over 100 spellbinding photos by two prominent Austin art photographers, plus drawings, collages and other graphics by My Terrible Self (Jesse); and the iPad edition also includes over an hour of audio, with blues theme songs by me and audio chapters produced by me and Fort Worth blues musician Johnny Reno. I think I may have created a whole new genre." ★★★ **Clay Reynolds** is also benefiting from the eBook revolution. His eight published novels are now available in electronic format. Baen Publishers have brought out all eight and are marketing them as an omnibus bundle. Here's a link: <http://www.baenebooks.com/p-1746-clay-reynolds-western-bundle.aspx>. For those with Kindle or Nook e-readers, they are also available through Amazon.com. Here's a link: http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Ddigital-text&field-keywords=clay+reynolds+kindle. ★★★ **Betty Adcock**, author of six books of poetry from LSU Press, has been inducted into the Fellowship of Southern Writers – not a membership that generally includes native Texas writers. She will accept the honor at the Fellowship's annual meeting during the Southern Festival of Books in Chattanooga Tennessee in April. Betty's presence among the native Southerners no doubt is due to her deep roots in East Texas ("the other Texas!" as she says) whose landscapes are often settings for her work. Betty finds it especially fitting that she has – as it were – one foot in each world, since she has written, in poems and essays, of the double nature of East Texas as both Southern outpost and Western beginning, "that intriguing mixture still to be found in its culture. . ." ★★★ **Larry D. Thomas'** poems titled "Scrimshaw" and "The Warning" were nominated by the *Red River Review* for the 2013 Pushcart and Best of the Net awards, respectively. Both poems are included in his forthcoming

poetry collection, *The Lobsterman's Dream*, scheduled for release by El Grito del Lobo Press in 2013.

★★★ **Ben Fountain's** novel *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* was published in May by Ecco/HarperCollins to wide acclaim. Ben reports, "For two delirious weeks it hung onto the bottom rungs of the *New York Times* bestseller list." It also received the Flaherty-Dunn First Novel Prize, and the inaugural PEN New England/Cerulli Award for Excellence in Sports Fiction, and was a finalist for the National Book Award as well as the U.K. National Book Award in the International Author category. Ben's also been busy with short nonfiction as well, with essays appearing in *The Wall Street Journal*, *D Magazine*, and the fortieth anniversary issue of *Texas Monthly*. ★★★

★★★ **Rico Ainslie** sends this update: "My big news is *The Fight To Save Juárez: Life in the Heart of Mexico's Drug War* will be out in April (University of Texas Press). I don't know if 'anticipatory news' is 'news' but there it is!" We think it's big news. Rico put his personal safety on the line in violence-torn Ciudad Juárez while researching this book. We're anxious to read it. ★★★ And this update arrives from **Norma Elia Cantú**: "I will be moving to Kansas City! As Professor of English and Latina/o Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, I will be developing an undergraduate program in Latino Studies. I continue to work with the founders of CantoMundo, the Latino poetry group as we prepare for our annual workshop to be held at the University of Texas in Austin this coming summer." Best wishes to Norma as she heads to the Midwest. ★★★

★★★ Bastrop writer **Carolyn Banks** just finished a new short film, "Penumbra." The movie, produced by Upstart, is funded in part by Texas Commission on the Arts. Banks, who won an Austin Film Society production grant for her previous short, "Sex and the Septuagenarian," wrote and directed "Penumbra." Banks will send the movie out to selected festivals, concentrating on Texas. "If 'Penumbra' gets into festivals," Banks says, "I want to be able to go." "Sex and the Septuagenarian" was shown in Canada and Seattle, Washington, she says, but she was unable to attend. While "Sex and the Septuagenarian" was a comedy – it won Best Short Comedy at Houston Worldfest – "Penumbra" is an eerie neo-Noir film. The logline is, "She walks in the penumbra, a scant distance from death. The others await her...perhaps too impatiently." It was filmed entirely in Bastrop, which Banks dubs "The Rural Movie Capital of Texas." ★★★ **Greg Garrett** spent 2012 writing about politics, religion, and culture before turning back to some equally fanciful but more imaginative writing toward year's end. Greg

blogged for *Huffington Post*, wrote a weekly column on politics for *Patheos*, and published a book, *Faithful Citizenship*, on the challenging relationship between faith and politics (Patheos Press). He was interviewed this year by print, broadcast, and new media ranging from BBC Radio to the *Los Angeles Times*; his favorite experience was being the hour-long guest on an episode of the BBC Scotland show "Sunday Morning with...", where his writing career (to date!) was the subject of the morning conversation. Greg spent six weeks at Gladstone's Library in Wales, his third year to write at that great British residential library, and he recommends it highly to TIL members as a place to be pampered by an attentive staff, surrounded by books, and in the presence of interesting guests from all over the planet. Who wouldn't want to live in a library? Greg continues to teach at Baylor, to collaborate with the Austin Film Festival and the Writers League of Texas, to speak all over the country and in the UK, and to be a host for BookPeople's Theology on Tap series in Austin. He is currently working on two contracted books, a novel with best-selling author Brennan Manning to be published in 2013, and a book on the afterlife in literature and culture for Oxford University Press to appear in 2014. ★★★ From Fort Davis, we received this dispatch from **Lonn Taylor**: "My news is that Volume II of David B. Warren's and

my *Texas Furniture: The Cabinetmakers and Their Work, 1840-1880* was published by the University of Texas Press in October. This is the volume that contains color photographs and descriptions of one hundred and eighty pieces of nineteenth-century Texas furniture that have come to light since the publication of David's and my first Texas furniture book in 1975. In November David and I enjoyed series of highly successful signing parties at Bayou Bend in Houston, the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin, the Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture in New Braunfels, and the Witte Museum in San Antonio. I have been invited to serve as guest curator of an exhibit of Texas furniture from Ima Hogg's Winedale Collection which will open at the Bullock Museum next July. The exhibit is jointly sponsored by the Bullock and the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin." It's great to see the *Texas Furniture* volumes back in print in expanded editions. Beautiful books, and true Texas classics. ★★ ★ **Judy Alter** will see the first in a new series, Blue Plate Café Mysteries, come out in February from Turquoise Morning Press, titled *Murder at the Blue Plate Café*. It is set in a small East Texas town – actually inspired by her many happy meals at The Shed in Edom. She now has three Kelly O'Connell Mysteries in print and as eBooks: *Skeleton in a Dead Space*, *No Neighborhood for Old Women*, and *Trouble in a Big Box*, all from Turquoise Morning Press. "It seems I retired to a whole new career," Judy says, "and while I'm getting neither rich nor famous, I'm loving it." ★★ ★ And, finally, the **Leon Hale** update. The nonagenarian former Council member writes: "Hello. In case you missed the announcement, I wanted to let you know that a short story written by my wife, Babette Fraser Hale, won the 2011 David Nathan Meyerson prize for fiction. Her story, "Silences," appears in the new issue of Southwest Review, Volume 96, Number 4. The judge for this competition was Francine Prose. Babette is the donor of TIL's Soeurette Diehl Fraser translation prize." Belated congratulations, Babette, and continued thanks for your generous support of the translation prize.

Paisano Update

The encroaching development around the Dobie Paisano Ranch continues to be a concern as Director **Michael Adams** reports that a developer recently tore down part of the fence surrounding the property and installed a big, wrought-iron entry gate – without first seeking permission. Michael has taken before and after photographs of the fence and will attempt to resolve the problem with the developer. This is the latest incident to indicate that the retreat is becoming less and less remote.

In other Paisano news, Michael says the Trail Tamers, a volunteer group that typically only clears trails on land with public access, has made an exception for the cedar-infested Paisano property, and they have cleared the first trail, a trail that leads to the creek. Although these volunteers have eradicated some cedar, much more eradication is needed. Michael plans to honor individuals, groups and foundations who make donations for cedar eradication by placing plaques with their names on benches that will be placed at strategic locations. He has already purchased benches and placed one honoring the William A. and Madeline Welder Smith Foundation on the first cleared trail. The Trail Tamers will also be honored at the annual TIL banquet.

Michael also reports that the Smith Foundation, who gave a donation of \$10,000 in 2012, have given an additional \$10,000 donation to the restoration project. With this money Adams purchased a chest of

drawers for the bedroom. He is planning to use a portion of these funds to build a new storage shed, and will use additional funds (\$500 to \$600) to spread corn glutton in areas of the property where goatheads are abundant.

President's Message

Our 2013 annual meeting and banquet at San Marcos promises to be memorable. The chairs from the various committees judging the literary competition are reporting back some outstanding entries, and we'll all be looking forward to seeing those worthy writers receive their awards. We'll also enjoy meeting the remarkable talents who will make up our incoming class of new members. But I encourage you all to make every effort to attend the reception on Friday at the Wittliff Collections on the campus of Texas State University. If you've not been there, you're in for a treat. Among its many treasures are archives of important writers of the Southwest, many of them TIL members. I have attended many events at the Wittliff Collections, and the staff always does a terrific job of playing host.

One person who will be on my mind that night will be **Larry L. King**. His archives at the Wittliff Collections are among its most significant holdings. Larry was a larger-than-life character, funny and profane, intelligent and talented. He was a friend to and an influence on many in TIL. But above all, he was one hell of a terrific writer. A landmark piece of Texas writing was his *Harper's* essay "The Old Man," from 1971. It's currently available on the *Harper's* Website.

Check it out at this link while it's available:

<http://harpers.org/archive/1971/04/the-old-man/>

It remains a powerful piece, even 40 years later.

– W.K. (Kip) Stratton, TIL President

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Send news for the next TIL Newsletter to Jan Reid: tilsecretary@yahoo.com

2012-13 Dues Form, Banquet Reservation Form

Please print this form and send it with a check for your 2012-13 dues to the address below.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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TIL dues for fiscal year 2012-13 _____ \$50.00

Paisano Fund _____

Fred Whitehead Memorial Endowment Fund _____

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April 6 Banquet Tickets, \$50 per person _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

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