

The Texas Institute of Letters  
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Newsletter, February 2004

### MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW FOR THE TIL AWARDS BANQUET

The Banquet will be March 27, 2004, at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Fort Worth, where we will honor Bud Shrake with The Lon Tinkle Award for Excellence Sustained throughout a Career. The Radisson Plaza is located at 815 Main Street, and the reservations number is (800) 333-3333. The TIL rate is \$98 with a reduced parking rate of \$5. The cutoff date for reservations is February 24, 2004.

COME EARLY for the reception on Friday night March 26, hosted by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram at the Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

SEE ENCLOSED FORM FOR  
BANQUET, DUES AND THE BALLOT

To keep you posted on the officers and councilors of TIL:

TIL Officers:

Mark Busby, President. Term ends in March 2004

Joe Holley, Vice President

Bob Compton, Recording Secretary

Fran Vick, Secretary

Jim Hoggard, Treasurer

Councilors:

Jerry Bradley (2002), first term ends in 2004

Tom Dodge (2002), first term ends in 2004

Carol Dawson (2003), first term ends in 2005

Dave Hamrick (2003), first term ends in 2005

Dick Holland (2002), first term ends in 2004

Clay Reynolds (2003), first term ends in 2005

Mary Willis Walker (2001), second term ends in 2005

## NEWS OF MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Publishers Weekly of November 10, 2003, reviewed: *Occasions of Sin: A Memoir*, Sandra Scofield, “Although the book is framed by a specific time (the 1950s and ’60s) and place (West Texas), its themes—of wanting to be a perfect daughter, of trying to grasp the concepts of religion and God as a child, of fitting in among peers who seem far more mature—are universal. . . . Poignant and clearly cathartic, this is a tender, melancholic coming-of-age story.”

Annette Sanford, whose *Eleanor and Abel* came out in May from Counterpoint, was hailed in USA TODAY as one of 6 debut novelists who could have “an elusive surprise best seller.” Annette says that so far *Eleanor and Abel* remains elusive, but we predict that won’t last for long. The novel follows short story collections from SMU Press, *Lasting Attachments* and *Crossing Shattuck*.

James Hoggard’s collection of short stories and a novella, *Patterns of Illusion*, was reviewed in the Dallas Morning News, as “quiet stories about the drama of daily life, the small moments we look back on after the storm has passed, wondering why we didn’t see it coming. In the end, the characters that stay in the mind are the fathers—lonely, puzzled figures standing isolated in the landscape, trying to figure out what went wrong and how it might be put right. . . . In their shrewd simplicity, the stories and novella share the clear-eyed gaze at human folly and frailty, and at the tender ways in which we sometimes rise above our limitations.”

Robert Phillips’ sixth book of poems, *Spinach Days*, was just reprinted in a new paperback by Johns Hopkins University Press. His seventh, *Events Beyond Our Control*, will be published by the same press in May. He has edited a Delmore Schwartz reader, titled *Screeno*, for New Directions Publishing, which also will be out in May. His edition of Karl Shapiro’s essays, *Creative Glut*, will be published by Ivan R. Dee Publishing in the spring.

Jim Hornfischer of Hornfischer Literary Management placed H. W. Brands’ *Prometheus Unbound: America Comes of Age, 1865–1900*, a broadly framed history of America’s capitalist revolution, to be published in 2007 as part of “The Oxford History of the United States,” to Oxford University Press. Hornfischer also placed Lewis L. Gould’s *The Most Exclusive Club: A History of the Modern U. S. Senate* to Chip Rosetti at Basic for publication in 2005. Hornfischer also received a review in PW of his own book, *The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors: The Extraordinary World War II Story of the U.S. Navy’s Finest Hour*, calling it, “One of the finest WWII naval action narratives in recent years.”—from Cader Books.

Cinco Punto Press of El Paso has published Tim Tingle’s *Walking the Choctaw Road; Stories from Red People Memory*. The collection ranges from mythic tales of shamanistic sorcery to historical memories of escaped slaves and those who walked the Trail of Tears to stories from Tingle’s childhood.

Bryce Milligan writes in the San Antonio Express News, “Tingle is at the top of his order, with the likes of Joseph Bruchac and Gail Ross, Indians whose intuitive grasp of the deep relationship

between stories and the land and cultural survival makes their tellings into semi-mystical events.”

PW December 22, 2003, carries a starred review in the Children’s Books for Ntozake Shange’s, *Ellington Was Not a Street*. “At once personal and universal, Shange’s poem, “Mood Indigo” (published in her 1983 poetry collection, *A Daughter’s Geography*), serves as the narrative for this elegiac tribute to a select group of African-American men who made important contributions to 20th-century culture. . . . This is truly a book for all ages, lovely to behold and designed to be revisited.”

PW January 5, 2004, Lists *Bushwacked: Life in George W. Bush’s America* by Molly Ivins, read by the author, and *The Wandering Hill: A Novel* by Larry McMurtry, read by Alfred Molina, for Listen Up Awards 2003.

### Texas Book Festival News

The weekend of November 15 & 16, Book TV

C-SPAN2, highlighted and featured authors at the Texas Book Festival. The 1 p.m. program featured Barbara Bush, author of *Reflections: Life After the White House*; Nellie Connally, wife of the late governor of Texas John Connally, who was wounded during the assassination of JFK, an event she recounts in *From Love Field: A Remembrance*; George Crile, author of *Charlie Wilson’s War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History*, who appears with the subject of his book, former Rep. Charlie Wilson (D.-Tex.); historian H.W. Brands, who talks about his new biography of Woodrow Wilson; and syndicated columnist Molly Ivins and Lou Dubose, co-authors of *Bushwacked: Life in George W. Bush’s America*. “Morning Edition” also interviewed Molly Ivins about the book. —PW Daily for Booksellers

In roaming the booths, C-SPAN found photographer Michael O’Brien at the Bright Sky Press Booth and interviewed him, about *The Face of Texas: Portraits of Texans*, which was the official gift for sponsors, speakers and others who helped in special ways at the Texas Book Festival.

This year’s Texas Book Festival will be held October 29–31, 2004. More details about the Festival can be found at <http://www.texasbookfestival.org/>.

In other Festival news, after leading the Texas Book Festival through eight successful years, Director Cyndi Hughes will be leaving at the beginning of March to pursue new opportunities. Festival organizers will begin the search for a new director immediately. Peggy Hubble will lead the search for the new Director. Interested applicants should send resumes or contact Hubble at [TXBOOKFESTDIRECTOR@austin.rr.com](mailto:TXBOOKFESTDIRECTOR@austin.rr.com).

### Miami Book Fair Draws 400,000

The 20th annual Miami Book Fair closed at Miami Dade College’s Wolfson Campus. Fair organizers were thrilled by the turnout of more than 400,000 visitors to the eight-day fair, which featured 270 programs in English, 80 programs in Spanish, and more than 300 exhibitors.

“You understand the diversity of Miami by watching the crowds,” said fair co-founder Mitchell Kaplan, who observed hundreds streaming out of a packed reading by Augusten Burroughs, while hundreds more were lining up to hear Mario Vargas Llosa, who was speaking in Spanish in the same building. Kaplan also warmed to the sight of hordes of school children working their way through the booths and listening to authors last Friday. “To have these kids so enthusiastic about books and authors is a hopeful thing, because it represents the future of the fair,” he commented.

### More on Review Publications

The last newsletter carried an excerpted piece on the importance of some publications for review purposes. TIL councilor Clay Reynolds responded to the article with the following information. We appreciate Clay letting us share his observations regarding the reviews as one of the reviewers:

“You were right on the money with regard to the impact reviews in Publishers Weekly (PW), Library Journal (LJ), Kirkus Review (KR), and the New York Times Book Review (NYTBR) have on publishers and sales; what you may not know is that I also write or have written for all of them. I’m approaching 700 reviews, by the way. I no longer write for KR and LJ, as their policies forbid anyone from writing for PW or one of the others (except the NYTBR), and the work they offered was steadier and more reliable. I’ve now done 87 reviews for PW (given three stars in all that time). For years, Sybil Steinberg was the Forecasts Fiction Editor there, but she retired about two years ago, and the position was taken over by Deena Croog. Sybil ran a tight ship and taut operation. Deena, who sounds as if she’s about 13, is a little less well organized, but she’s a tougher nut to crack in some ways. What’s interesting about the PW reviews, though, is that copy is sometimes altered before printing. On a few occasions, I’ve had opinions utterly reversed from what I wrote. I’ve questioned this, but I’ve never received satisfactory answers. I keep doing it because it’s good work and satisfies the university administration. I’m thinking of “retiring,” though, when I hit number 100.”

As a further follow up on the problems of getting books reviewed in the four national review publications and thus out to the public awareness, recently the Washington Post noted how local literary parties were tapping attendees to purchase the book being celebrated on a regular basis. Now, New York Magazine finds that NY book parties often don’t offer anything more than copies of the jacket. “And when there are books, it can be just as awkward.... ‘I went to my pal’s party,’” says another editor, ‘and he was sheepishly keeping a bag of books under his chair and trying to casually mention that they were for sale. It’s like, ‘I like you, dude, but not 29 bucks’ worth.’” —(from Cader Books.)

Our response to that is, yes, but if that is the only way to get books out to the public, including friends who want to purchase your book, what is the problem with having literary parties? The chains do not respond to carrying some of the books, and sometimes it is hard to get a book reviewed in local papers so that people will know about it. For those of us who want to support our friends who are authors and want to have copies of the books they have written to give as presents, what is the choice? We welcome responses to this dilemma.

And more to this ongoing discussion of getting the news out about books and authors, the “Book Babes” club joins in with why newspapers should support book readers. The “Book Babes” discuss why it is short-sighted for newspapers to be anything but vigorous in their coverage of books and courting of book readers. And it is not just about review pages—they cite book clubs, serializations, community book festivals, regional bestseller lists and Internet extras. And newspapers that don’t court readers may lose them. Sites run by TheBookReporter.com are “getting more than half a million unique visitors every month and making money besides. As newspapers chop book coverage, she’s there to scoop up the reading and writing audience.”

The club run by the Minneapolis Star Tribune, for example, “is stunning in its reach and commitment.” It includes a seven-day serial, a major tie-in with Minnesota Public Radio, and a sell-out live event.—Book Babes Column

<http://click.email-publisher.com/maabJAHaa2G2da32BIwe/>

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