

**Texas Institute of Letters Summer 2020 Newsletter**



[www.TexasInstituteofLetters.org](http://www.TexasInstituteofLetters.org)

**Prepared by TIL Secretary William Jack Sibley**

Dear TIL Members:

I hope all of you are staying healthy during the pandemic that's crisscrossing the country. Now more than ever we understand how interconnected we are and how we have to work together to persevere through this crisis. And we will. I am confident of that. I also believe TIL Members will appreciate how important it is to keep our literary community together so that we can use art as well as our bonds with each other to create the country we want.



For those of you who missed our New Member Readings on Zoom, please visit **TIL's YouTube Channel** to listen to spectacular readings from our 2020 class of inductees. Already our YouTube Channel has surpassed 1,000 views, and so a wider audience than before has been enjoying the work of our New Members. (Go to YouTube.com and type in 'Texas Institute of Letters', and our Channel will be the first result.)

I am also busy filling the committees for our **literary contests**, which will be open for submissions in the fall. As always, I've been consulting the Officers and Council and many of you, pestering people with emails and asking Members to serve as judges. My aim is always to have a diverse balance within each committee. I am grateful for those who are willing to serve. As you know, each contest has a small fee, and the money is evenly split between the judges of each contest, so that we can provide them with a modest honorarium for their valuable work. The details to enter our contests will be announced on our website in mid-September.

I've also been gratified by how many **TIL Members have paid their dues recently**. And for those who haven't, please go to our website's Front Page or Members Page for the link to pay your dues: [www.texasinstituteofletters.org/payments/index.htm](http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org/payments/index.htm). As soon as you do, yours truly (who also doubles as the webmaster) will put your name on the stellar list of Active Members who made it a point to support our organization during the current year. All the Officers and Council Members work as volunteers. The TIL has always run a lean operation. We aim to keep it that way, even though at some Council meetings we do buy cookies to appease a voracious ex-prez who even pockets a few for the trail ahead. We appreciate your support.

Mark your calendars: our **next annual meeting** will be in El Paso, Texas on April 16-17, 2021. Of course, we will see how the pandemic, vaccines, therapeutics, and travel have evolved by early next year, but at the moment we remain hopeful and committed to having a wonderful get-together with innovative programming, readings throughout the city, and a weekend to celebrate our New Members and the winners of our literary contests. I know all of us are looking forward to that day when we can easily reconnect with old friends in person and exchange stories and maybe even a joke or two. Let's keep thinking of that 'TIL campfire' under the desert stars, and soon enough it will be here.

As always, your suggestions and feedback about the TIL are welcome. You can contact me at: [president@texasinstituteofletters.org](mailto:president@texasinstituteofletters.org).

Sergio Troncoso

**TIL: Summer 2020 Newsletter - Member News**  
**(Fifty-one updates from TIL Members - in the order received)**

**Ellen Temple:** I'm co-producing with filmmaker Nancy Schiesari, director, a 1-hour documentary film about the Texas fight for the vote for women entitled "Citizens at Last". Our website with more information will go online in mid-August and the film will release in early October. Our undaunted film team has forged ahead in spite of closed archives and social distancing, using Zoom in post-production. I'm eager for all to see it! Stay tuned!

**W.K. (Kip) Stratton:** His fourth book of poetry, *Betrayal Creek*, will be published in upcoming weeks by Lamar University Literary Press. Kip says: "I began a different collection in late 2018 after completing work on *The Wild Bunch: Sam Peckinpah, A Revolution in Hollywood, and the Making of a Legendary Movie*. Some of the poems were written while I was on the road in the West promoting the Peckinpah book. I completed a book-length manuscript, but then life got in the way, my focus changed, and I discarded most of what I'd written. Almost all of *Betrayal Creek* was written in March and April while I was locked down and sheltering-in-place because of the novel coronavirus. This book took me into the territory of *Life Studies* (Robert Lowell) and *The Dream Songs* (John Berryman). I never thought I'd end up there."

Kip has also agreed to a contract with Penguin's Dutton imprint to write a nonfiction book called *Devils on Their Trail* about a group of legendary deputy U.S. Marshals battling an equally legendary group of outlaws in Oklahoma Territory in the 1890s. "It's a compelling saga," he says, "one of the last great episodes in the history of the Old West. It's never been documented accurately. The story is particularly apt for our times. It's set against massive treaty violations with Native peoples and the dissolution of tribal sovereignty in the American Indian commonwealth that once existed in what's now Oklahoma. It also has something to do with capitalism run amuck in the form of large railroad concerns." Finally, Kip is completing two assignments for *Texas Monthly* as well as seeing through production a book he collaborated on with the late Bob "Daddy-O" Wade, *Daddy-O's Book of Big Ass Art*. It will be published in the fall by Texas A&M Press and contains contributions from several TIL members.

**James E. Crisp:** James reports that after more than 27 years of research and almost three years of solid writing, he has finally finished *Inside the Texas Revolution: The Enigmatic Memoir of Herman Ehrenberg*. Crisp has been assisted in the final stages of German-to-English translation and interpretation by fellow-TIL member James C. Kearney. (Professor Louis E. Brister, who translated the bulk of Herman Ehrenberg's memoir of the Texas Revolution for this volume, passed away in 2017.) Crisp and Ryan Schumacher, his editor at the Texas State Historical Association, have been involved for the past few months in selecting and acquiring illustrations for the book, which has been no easy task with most libraries and archives closed or restricted because the coronavirus pandemic. The heavily annotated *Inside the Texas Revolution* should be ready for purchase late this year or early in 2021.

Crisp is presently at work on another arcane piece of Texana -- a stand-alone chapter on the role of the port of Matagorda in the contest for control of Texas in 1835-1836. Herman Ehrenberg, a survivor of the Goliad Massacre, was held prisoner in Matagorda after his re-capture by the Mexican army on the banks of the Colorado, but he managed to slip away from his captors a second time. He lived for several years in the Texas Republic and even served as a frontier ranger in 1840 before

returning to Europe to publish his memoir in Leipzig in 1843. Back in America by 1844, he took the Oregon Trail to the Pacific and sailed among that ocean's many islands before spending the last two decades of his life as a prominent explorer and mining engineer in California, Sonora, and Arizona.

**Kathryn Jones:** This spring eight poems and an essay, “Desperado in Palo Duro,” were published in the online literary journal, [tejasCOVID.com](http://tejasCOVID.com), created by Laurence Musgrove in response to the pandemic. Out of 160 poems published, 30 were chosen to be included in a special pandemic-themed anthology of the *Langdon Review* this fall. My visual poem “Vessel” was among those selected. Also, my poem “Oysters Don’t Feel Pain” was chosen by editors at Lamar University Literary Press for inclusion in an anthology, *Odes and Elegies: Ecopoetry from the Texas Gulf Coast*. It was a top selection of previously unpublished poems and won a monetary award of \$500. The anthology will appear sometime next year. I’ve also been finishing (yes, still) my Ben Johnson biography and carrying forth the banner for journalists as Texas and Oklahoma coordinator of the Society of Professional Journalists and co-director of the Texas Center for Community Journalism. Journalists and our very democracy are under attack as never before. I’m doing what I can to help behind the scenes.

**Robert Earl Keen:** I have an article about Willie Nelson’s songwriting in an upcoming special edition of *Texas Monthly* about Willie: “Willie Nelson, Songwriter- Simple is Simply Moving To Me: How Willie Nelson does so much with so little.” This past Friday, June 19th, I did a live stream concert with Lyle Lovett. There is a feature in *American Songwriter* by Holly Gleason soon to be released. It explores my career as a songwriter and entertainer. I’m doing live stream with Willie Nelson for the Biden campaign on June 29th. We are celebrating our 10th year of Robert Earl Keen on the River on July 4th here in my hometown, Kerrville Texas. My podcast, AMERICANA PODCAST, is celebrating its 20th episode with a spotlight on Americana darlings, The Milk Carton Kids. We are number 20 on Apple’s US music interview chart and number 15 in the UK. And personally, I’m building a video studio, Snake Barn Movie Ranch Studios. Our goal is to better serve the music community with high quality video production. That should be completed this coming fall. Happy to send all website names, Instagram handles and Facebook connections if anyone is interested.

**Lisa Sandlin:** My last book, *The Bird Boys* (Cinco Puntos Press, 2019) is/was a finalist for the Edgar Award, the Shamus Award, the International Thriller Award, and was chosen by Marilyn Stasio of the *New York Times* as one of the 10 best crime novels of 2019. Working away on next book.

**Reginald Gibbons:** Eleventh book of poems, *Renditions*, will be published in early 2021 by Four Way Books.

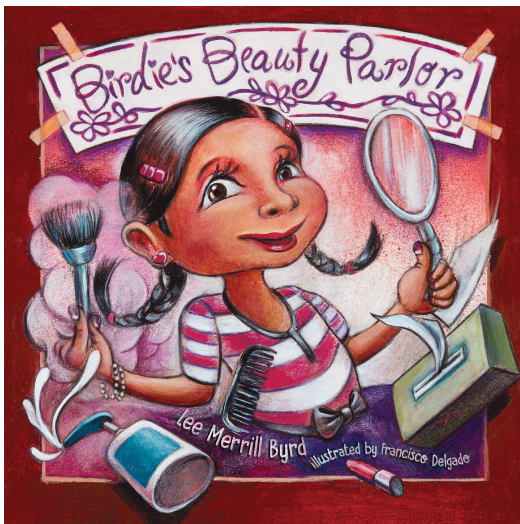
**Bill Wright:** My latest book, *Music of the Big Bend*, written by Marcia Hatfield Daudistel and photographed by Bill Wright, will be released from Texas A&M Press in 2021. While sheltering in place for three months, I have gotten a lot of work done on various neglected book projects.



**Larry D. Thomas:** Newest poetry collection is *Journeying with the Owl*, an e-chapbook published by *Right Hand Pointing* in June 2020. *In a Field of Cotton: Mississippi River Delta Poems*, published by Blue Horse Press in 2019, has continued to receive very favorable reviews in many distinguished national literary journals, most recently in the *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies*. Thomas will be the featured poet in a forthcoming issue of the *Delta Poetry Review*.

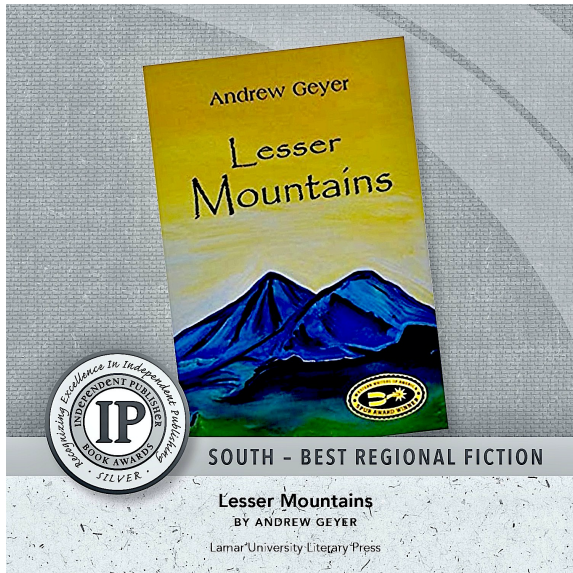
**Lee Merrill Byrd:** *Birdie's Beauty Parlor*, illustrated by Francisco Delgado. Birdie and Grandma are having a girls' day! They must have had fun because Grandma's all worn out now. Birdie has a solution: a makeover! It'll give Grandma a chance to relax. Birdie insists that Grandma lie down because this beauty parlor has a lot of moving parts, chinny-chin-chin hair removal, long stretches of blush, slashes of lipstick, and eyeshadow. Earrings, scarves, the works! Birdie knows best: she owns this beauty parlor!

*Birdie's Beauty Parlor* is the second bilingual, bicultural, multigenerational collaboration between Lee Byrd and Francisco Delgado. Lee draws inspiration from her grandchildren for the story, and Francisco's illustrations are based on his children. Lee Merrill Byrd is the co-publisher of Cinco Puntos Press so she can, without hesitation, write and publish books about her grandchildren who, she claims, are brilliant and beautiful.



**C.M. Mayo:** Working on a memoir / portrait of her native Far West Texas. Her related "Marfa Mondays" Podcasting Project, exploring Marfa, Texas and the greater Big Bend region in 25 podcasts is up to podcast #21, "Great Power in One: Miss Charles Emily Wilson." Her paper, "John Bigelow, Jr.: Officer in the Tenth U.S. Cavalry, Military Intellectual, and Nexus Between the West and the Eastern Establishment" was published in the *Journal of Big Bend Studies*, vol. 30. In February Daniel Chacón interviewed her for KTEP's "Word on a Wire" about her previous book, *Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution: Francisco I. Madero and His Secret Book, Spiritist Manual*. And a short story, "Majesty," appears in *Down on the Sidewalk: Stories About Children and Childhood from the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction*, edited by Ethan Laughman (University of Georgia Press, 2020).

**Andrew Geyer:** Latest book, *Lesser Mountains* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2019) won the 2020 Independent Publisher Book Award (IPPY) for U.S. South - Best Regional Fiction, Silver Medal.



**Alan Govenar:** The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of my biography *Lightnin' Hopkins: His Life, His Blues* (ARSC - Association for Recorded Sound Collections - Award for Best History in Music) will be published in September by Chicago Review Press. Documentary Arts (the non-profit organization I founded in 1985 to broaden public knowledge and appreciation of the arts of different cultures in all media) is launching a co-publishing imprint with Aperture Foundation with the publication of *Ming Smith: An Aperture Monograph* in September. My feature-length film *Tattoo Uprising*, which had its theatrical premiere in New York City and Los Angeles in 2019, was released on DVD by First Run Features this spring and has been translated into French for its European premiere in 2021.

**Gerald Duff:** My novel *Memphis Bluff* was published in May by TCU Press, and my interview with Michelle Lancaster about the book appeared on June 17, 2020 on the *Lone Star Literary Life* site.

**Cyrus Cassells:** Awarded a *Civitella Rainieri* Fellowship. Thirty international poets and writers chosen as *Civitella Rainieri* fellows in Italy. *Civitella Rainieri* Foundation invites about 12 to 15 Fellows for each session for a residency Fellowship of 6 weeks. The Fellows are chosen through a competitive nomination and jury process for each discipline; visual arts, writing, and composing. Fellows are given free time and space to work at Civitella, and are also encouraged to participate in excursions through the Umbrian countryside, take Italian classes, and give presentations about their work while at the castle. The Foundation pays for all major expenses for all Fellows who are our guests. The Fellowship, paid for in full by the Foundation, includes travel, room and board, studio and workspace.

**Eugene Lee:** I've got a new play, "Lyn' Ass" that was scheduled for a reading presentation at Queens Theatre in New York for April, but the pandemic changed that, and the reading presentation will now be virtual on June 30th. And was asked by TIL new member Regina Taylor to pen a new short piece on the theme "Love and Kindness in the Time of Quarantine" which will be presented virtually on June 29th.

I also was asked to serve as Co-chair of the Biden campaign's Arts Policy Committee for the battleground state of Texas and I'm excited about reaching out to artists and arts organizations about that arts policy and share and seek ideas.

**Steven Schneider:** "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" poem was published in [tejascovido.com](http://tejascovido.com) on May 18, 2020. He will be giving a reading and presentation from his books *Borderlines: Drawing Border Lives* and *The Magic of Mariachi* sponsored by Bookworks on Zoom July 19 at 3 p.m. Mountain Time. Event link: <https://www.bkwrks.com/steven-schneider>. Steven's exhibit *The Magic of Mariachi / La Magia del Mariachi*, created in conjunction with his artist wife Reefka, was featured at the Performing Arts Center at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley during FESTIBA this spring.

He will be teaching online a new graduate course entitled "Covid-19: Writing in a Time of Crisis," in the summer of 2020.

**Wes Ferguson:** Article titled "Angels in East Texas," from the November 2019 issue of Texas Monthly, was a finalist for a National Magazine Award in Feature Writing from the American Society of Magazine Editors.

**Jerry Bradley:** Latest poetry book is *Collapsing into Possibility* (Lamar University Literary Press). He has recent poems in [tejascovido.com](http://tejascovido.com) and *The Langdon Review of the Arts*.

**Bruce Bond:** I have decided to retire from my job as Regents Professor at University of North Texas, but I will still be around as affiliate graduate faculty to teach now and then. A tough decision, but one that thrills my wife who had already decided to retire from Texas Woman's University. Meanwhile I will be writing still and returning to my former music career. Two of my books came out last year: *Plurality and the Poetics of Self* (Palgrave) and *Words Written Against the Walls of the City, Dear Reader* (LSU Press). The book of poetry *The Calling* was released in January. Forthcoming still are the books *Patmos* (Juniper Prize, University of Massachusetts Press), *Behemoth* (New Criterion Prize, Criterion Books), *Choreomania* (MadHat), *Scar* (Etruscan), and *Invention of the Wilderness* (LSU Press). The poem "Bells" will appear in this year's *Best American Poetry*.

**Robert Flynn:** My bio/ profile will be in the 2020 Marquis Who's Who in the World.

**Joanne Leedom-Ackerman:** Has edited a new book *The Journey of Liu Xiaobo: From Dark Horse to Nobel Laureate*. With Yu Zhang, Jie Li, and Tienchi Martin-Liao. Translated by Stacy Mosher and Andréa Worden published by Potomac Books (University of Nebraska Press). <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/potomac-books/9781640122246/>

[The Journey of Liu Xiaobo - Book Page: Nebraska Press](#)

The Journey of Liu Xiaobo draws together essays and reflections on the “Nelson Mandela of China.” The Dalai Lama, artist and activist Ai Weiwei, and a distinguished list of leading Chinese writers and intellectuals, including Zhang Zuhua, the main drafter of Charter 08, and Liu Xia, the wife of Liu Xiaobo, and noted China scholars ...

[www.nebraskapress.unl.edu](http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu)

**Olive Spitzmiller:** A celebration of the life and career of Houston’s iconic artist/activist/actress and all-around provocateur and troublemaker, Gertrude Levy Barnstone, (b.1925) who died this past December. She had been leading me a merry chase for more years than I care to admit during which I saw and heard her perform her wild tales about growing up and becoming an artist in booming, rollicking Houston during the 30s and 40s. Married to architect Howard Barnstone in 1955, she became half of a dynamic couple who joined an elite group of artists, architects and intellectuals who congregated at the fledgling Contemporary Arts Museum, where new art from Europe was first being presented to Houston audiences. In Gertrude’s stories about fighting it out with the conservative majority as one of 3 liberal Houston School Board trustees, I was struck by her indelible and unfailing charm and politeness in the face of racist and anti-Semitic slurs from her opponents. How Gertrude overcame these and many other obstacles to continually pick herself up after personal disasters to reinvent herself as another kind of artist in a new medium, welding steel for a living after her divorce, and then creative steel sculpture that made her locally famous.

**Loretta Diane Walker:** I am excited to be selected as one of the featured poets for the upcoming [#colorstory2020/](#). ColorStory 2020/(21) is a Literary: Visual: Words: Art collaboration of twenty plus artist paired with poets from 12 states and 3 countries. The idea of ColorStory was birthed by artists Leslie Gaworecki and Marlo Saucedo. Originally scheduled for November of 2020, the exhibition date has been postponed to next spring and is TBD, but the event will be held at Spring St. Studios in Houston, Texas. Watch [www.colorstoryart.com](http://www.colorstoryart.com) for updates! @Spring Street Studios.

I am also excited my poem "Will We Desire Touch" was selected for inclusion in the *Langdon Review* in TejasCovid 2020. I am so delighted to learn I will be a participant in an upcoming event "The Unfinished American Dream" as a ritual of a Declaration of Interdependence for our aching country. A diverse group of poets and performers will gather to recite either their own poems or poetry of past American voices that speak to the themes of unity and hope and peace, and justice for all. The event will be hosted on Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook on Saturday, July 4 at 10:30 am (PST). I am also honored I have been selected as the featured poet for Poets at the Zoom Bench on Sunday, June 28th at 3 pm (PST).

**Susan Wittig Albert:** Latest mystery, *A Plain Vanilla Murder*, took silver in the 2020 Foreword Indies Book of the Year Awards. Her novel, *A Wilder Rose*, has been optioned for TV/film.



**James C. Kearney:** My new book *The Forty-Eighters on Possum Creek* is due for release by Statehouse Press (A&M Consortium) at the end of June. The book is an annotated translation of an historical novel and roman a clef by the Texas German author W.A. Trenckmann. His book treats the hard choices faced by the German settlers of Possum Creek (Millheim, TX) during the Civil War. These settlers were largely political refugees from the failed European revolution(s) of 1848; men and women who had been inspired by democratic ideals in the Old Country, which had been crushed and that they then transferred to the situation they found in Texas. For many, slavery was the great fly in the ointment. In the book, the young hero, Kuno Sartorius, has just turned eighteen and is faced with conscription into the Confederate army. What to do? He is torn between his beloved teacher who is appalled by slavery and hates the Confederacy, and his father who feels it his son's duty to serve even in a bad cause. To complicate matters his sweetheart, the daughter of his teacher, sides with his father in this dispute. Kuno is based loosely on the author's older brother, Hugo, and indeed most of the characters (and situations) are historical. The issues raised are perennial for any democracy and the author offers no easy answers. To my knowledge this is the only Texas Home Front novel written by a contemporary in any language and it occupies, therefore, an important place in Texas literature. With many wonderful vignettes of home front life from the rich plantation owners to the humble squatters, the book is a delightful window into those troubled times. It was originally serialized in Trenckmann's Texas German newspaper *Das Bellville Wochenblatt* in 1908. This is its first appearance in translation.

**Ann Weisgarber:** I was in North Dakota (yes, North Dakota) in early March for six book events and was on the last leg of the trip home when WHO announced the coronavirus was a pandemic. There's nothing like being on a plane with 260 other passengers when the news breaks. Since then, my husband and I have been holed up in Galveston where we try to avoid the thousands of visitors that descend daily on the island. Early on, my saving grace were the three Zoom TIL readings of the 2020 inductees. (Thank you, Sergio, for making these happen.) The readings were beautiful, and I look forward to meeting the inductees when we gather in El Paso next year. If you missed the readings, they're on the TIL website.

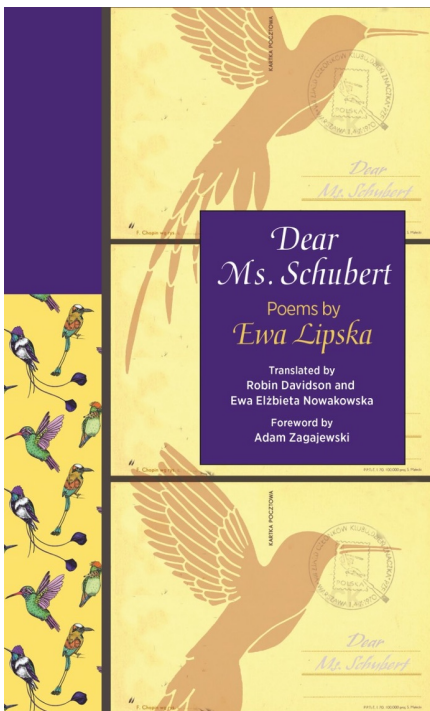
**Jim Sanderson:** Jim will have a new literary/crime novel published by Moonshine Cove Publishers in 2021. The title is under debate.

**T. Lindsay Baker:** With wife Julie, he remains secluded during the pandemic at the Baker Farm in Hill County, Texas. Here beneath the live oaks where in June they are tromping through the fully seeded beggar's lice plants, they remain healthy and happy in a historic farmhouse a quarter mile away from the nearest neighbor. Julie is tending a big vegetable garden with eight 18-inch-tall, 6- x 20-foot raised beds, while T. Lindsay is writing on the rough draft of the next-to-last chapter of a large book manuscript for the University of Oklahoma Press on the foodways of roadside dining along old U.S. Highway 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles. The work will include fifty vintage recipes from historic roadside eating places, and the couple is already kitchen-testing multiple 1920s to 1960s recipes and drafting them into a consistent format that unfamiliar modern readers will be able to recreate in their own home kitchens. In the meantime, "for entertainment," T. Lindsay is writing features for the quarterly *Route 66 Magazine* based on material unearthed during the past dozen years of research on roadside dining along the motorway that John Steinbeck in 1939 christened as the Mother Road.

**Naomi Shihab Nye:** Collected and new poems *Everything Comes Next* (we surely hope so) will be out in September 2020, from Greenwillow.

**Fran Vick:** The new book from the Texas Folklore Society due out in November is *A Biscuit for Your Shoe: A Memoir of County Line, A Texas Freedom Colony*, by Beatrice Upshaw, Introduction and photographs by Richard Orton, which captures the lore of a community which began as a freedom colony west of Nacogdoches. The memoir also tells of beliefs, home remedies, folk games, and customs, with a rich source of colloquial language and proverbial sayings. Richard Orton was introduced to County Line by F. E. "Ab" Abernethy, Secretary-Editor of the Texas Folklore Society for nearly four decades. The Texas Folklore Society will be moving to its new home at Tarleton State University as soon as the pandemic allows. It will function under the auspices of Dr. Eric Morrow, Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts.

**Robin Davidson:** My primary news is that I have a new book of translations forthcoming in December. *Dear Ms. Schubert: Poems by Ewa Lipska*, translated from the Polish by Robin Davidson and Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska, with a foreword by Adam Zagajewski. The Lockert Library of Poetry in Translation, Princeton University Press, <https://press.princeton.edu/series/the-lockert-library-of-poetry-in-translation>



**Michael Berryhill:** Here's my good news from Steve Davis, the curator of the Wittliff Collections and editor of a forthcoming anthology. We have selected Michael Berryhill's story, "Born on the Bayou," originally published in the *Houston Press*, May 25, 1995 for the forthcoming literary anthology, *Viva Texas Rivers!* This book will be published by Texas A&M University Press as part of its Wittliff Book Series.

*Viva Texas Rivers!* brings together the best writings on Texas rivers, highlighting the “spirit of place” of each waterway. We hope this book will educate, illuminate, and even inspire love and devotion for these rivers. Authors in the anthology include John Graves (author of the classic *Goodbye to a River*) along with Sandra Cisneros, Stephen Harrigan, Naomi Shihab Nye, Américo Paredes, Paulette Jiles, Larry McMurtry, Bill Sibley and many, many more.

**Doug Swanson:** *Cult of Glory: The Bold and Brutal History of the Texas Rangers* was published by Viking in June. Writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, historian Douglas Brinkley said, "Swanson has done a crucial public service by exposing the barbarous side of the Rangers." After a chapter from the book was excerpted in *D Magazine*, the city of Dallas removed the statue of a Ranger from the main lobby of Love Field.

**Sergio Troncoso:** Sergio is the editor of a new anthology forthcoming in 2021: *Nepantla Familias: An Anthology of Mexican-American Literature of Families in between Worlds* (Texas A&M Press and part of a series from the Wittliff Collections). Twenty-five of the thirty works in the anthology will be published for the first time, including work from TIL members Sandra Cisneros, Stephanie Elizondo Griest, José Antonio Rodríguez, Diana López, Severo Perez, and Irene Lara Silva. Sergio also has a forthcoming novel in 2021, *Nobody's Pilgrims* (Cinco Puntos Press), about teenagers escaping the border who find themselves pursued for contraband they unwittingly carry in their pickup in a dystopian society collapsing because of a pandemic.

*A Peculiar Kind of Immigrant's Son* (Cinco Puntos Press, 2019) was chosen for the list *Best of Texas 2019* by *Lone Star Literary Life*: "An outstanding collection of connected short stories uniquely reflecting life along the troubled Texas-Mexico border."



**David Parsons:** Here is a link to an article by noted Texas Historian, Robin Montgomery that is to be an entry in a forthcoming book about the history of Montgomery County. I hesitated to submit this article...it is so humbling to read and I think “over the top.” However, I am extraordinarily appreciative for it. It appeared in *The Conroe Courier*, *San Antonio Express-News* and elsewhere... I thought, “I’m not dead yet.”

<https://www.yourconroenews.com/neighborhood/moco/opinion/article/Dr-Robin-Montgomery-Poet-laureate-Parsons-15177461.php>

**Jerry Thompson:** *Wrecked Lives and Lost Souls*, the story of his outlaw Cherokee grandfather, was released by the University of Oklahoma Press recently and has received excellent reviews. Harwood Hinton’s biographical study of Gen. John Ellis Wool (one of the few officers to serve in the War of 1812 and the Civil War), *Courage Above All Things*, that Harwood worked on for fifty years had been revised and edited by Thompson and will be released by the University of Oklahoma Press in October 2020. Thompson also edited the journal of a soldier from Maine who was stationed on the Texas Coast in 1863-64 that was published in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*.

**Jesus Salvador Treviño:** Video I made especially for the TIL John Rechy award recognition at: <http://latinopia.com/latino-literature/latinopia-word-texas-authors-honor-john-rechy/> I know he wanted to be there but because of the Covid-19 alas...

I also made other videos of TIL members and others commenting on Rechy and his works:  
<http://latinopia.com/latino-literature/latinopia-word-steve-davis-on-john-rechy/>  
<http://latinopia.com/latino-literature/latinopia-word-alicia-gaspar-de-alba-on-john-rechy/>  
<http://latinopia.com/latino-literature/latinopia-word-jonathan-kirsch-about-john-rechy/>

**Jim Donovan:** Has just started working on a new book of nonfiction, about the three-day battle for the bridge at La Fiere in Normandy, which culminated in a near-suicidal charge across the bridge three days after D-Day by elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. It will be published by Dutton in 2024, to coincide with the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.

**Sherry Wagner:** My novel *Hannah Jackson* was published by William Morrow Co. in the fall of 1966. (I began the work when I was 22 years old and completed it when I was 25.). Now, the novel is being re-published this fall by the TCU Press as part of its Texas Traditions series.

**Laura Wilson:** Has photographed 34 writers for her current project. Among them are Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Mexico City, Seamus Heaney in Dublin, Zadie Smith in New York City, Ian McEwan in Gloucestershire, J.M. Coetzee in Vienna, and Margaret Atwood in Toronto. She is looking to add 3-5 younger, more culturally diverse writers to this project. Publication will be in 2021. The Writer's project has been done under the auspices of The Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin.

**George Getschow:** *The Wild Snakes of Texas* was the cover story of the February issue of *Texas Highways Magazine*. Here's a link to the story:

<https://texashighways.com/things-to-do/wildlife/the-wild-snakes-of-texas/>



[The Wild Snakes of Texas | Texas Highways](https://texashighways.com/things-to-do/wildlife/the-wild-snakes-of-texas/)

A Texas Master Naturalist offers lessons for living alongside the venomous and non-venomous predators in an ever-growing state  
[texashighways.com](https://texashighways.com)

And...





### [Essay: George Getschow Attempts to Escape the Noise | Texas Highways](#)

I leave Palo Duro Canyon and head southeast toward a prairie sea of cliffs, bluffs, and escarpments in the Panhandle, just short of the region known as the Big Empty. My destination lies 100 miles away: Caprock Canyons State Park, a remote, 15,300-acre expanse that's largely unknown even to avid campers and hikers who live in the Panhandle.

[texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com)

<https://texashighways.com/culture/people/essay-george-getschow-attempts-to-escape-noise/>

**Katie Hoerth:** My fourth poetry collection, *Borderland Mujeres*, is due out in Fall 2020 from SFA University Press. The book is a collaborative, bilingual conversation in poetry and art with poet and translator Julieta Corpus and graphic artist Corinne McCormack Whittemore. I have also had poetry published recently or forthcoming in *Rougarou*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Writing Texas*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Glass*, *Tipton Poetry*, *Summerset Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *I-70*, *Langdon Review of the Arts in Texas*, and *Chestnut Review*. Recently, *Poets and Writers* interviewed me for their Postcards from the Pandemic series. Over the summer, I received a fellowship from the Center for History and Culture of Southeast Texas and the Upper Gulf Coast to publish an anthology project titled *Odes and Elegies: Eco-Poetry from the Texas Gulf Coast*. My student, Daniel Valdez, and I are editing the anthology together. The anthology will feature many poems by TIL members. Hopefully, we will be hosting a reading and celebration soon (probably virtual, alas)!

**Betty Sue Flowers:** Has asked that we mention the upcoming Philosophical Society of Texas Book Awards, new deadline for submission, August 1: *"The Philosophical Society of Texas presents three book prizes annually, each with a \$2,500 prize: a Fiction Prize, a Nonfiction Prize, and a Poetry Prize. For the upcoming awards, all entrants must have been published in 2019. A nonfiction work must be about Texas. A fiction or poetry entrant may either be about Texas or have been written by an author who has resided in or who was born within the boundaries of the Republic of Texas as claimed in 1836."* For further details, [www.pstx.org](http://www.pstx.org) or email, [Dawn.Orsak@TSHAonline.org](mailto:Dawn.Orsak@TSHAonline.org), or call (512) 471-3272.

**Joe Lansdale:** Forthcoming novel, *More Better Deals*, will publish on July 21st. Attached is a brief description of the book, as well as the book cover. <https://www.mulhollandbooks.com/titles/joe-r-lansdale/more-better-deals/9780316479912/> *"From the Edgar Award-winning author of the Hap and Leonard series, a hard-boiled novel set in 1960s Texas in which a no-nonsense car salesman faces a tempting decision, a dangerous deal, and an alluring affair."*



**Xavier Garza:** The third installment in Xavier Garza’s bilingual *Monster Fighter Mystery* series / *Serie Exterminador de monstruos* for intermediate readers, *Vincent Ventura and the Diabolical Duendes* / *Vincent Ventura y los duendes diabólicos*, will be published by Arte Público Press, October 31, 2020. Once again, Vincent Ventura recruits his cousins and gathers his monster-fighting tools—crosses, holy water, packs of salt, silver metal beads and slingshots—for the upcoming showdown with yet another creepy creature! This spine-tingling short novel introducing Latino creepy creatures to kids ages 8-12 is sure to thrill a new generation of readers.

**Celeste Bedford Walker:** January – “Sassy Mamas” Karamu Theatre, Cleveland. February – “Camp Logan” Dunbar Repertory Theatre, New Jersey, Greenwood Reading, Metropolitan College, Manhattan, N.Y. April – “Camp Logan” Upstate New York, cancelled due to COVID-19. May – “The Red Blood of War,” Selected for Wm. Inge Festival New Play Lab, Independence, KS, postponed by COVID. June – “Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed” Virtual Reading, Ensemble Theatre, Houston TX. Currently, as a member of an advocacy and action group of women playwrights over 40 called *Honor Roll!* I’m helping to organize an event sparked by the George Floyd death called “8:46 Say Their Names,” readings of plays and monologues about Black Women+, Indigenous Women+ and Women+ of Color who have died at the hands of law enforcement, hosted by Dominique Sharpton-Bright, National Action Network, New York, October.

**Natalia Sylvester:** My debut novel for young adults, *Running*, will be out July 14 from HMH. It's received starred reviews from School Library Journal and Booklist, which said it "embodies the theme of our decade: to stand up and speak up for what we believe in." Signed personalized copies can be ordered here: <https://www.bookpeople.com/signed-personalized-copies-running> and more information about the book is [here](#).

**James L. Haley:** Is continuing his series of tall-ship adventure novels with the fourth installment, bringing it home to Texas with *Captain Putman for the Republic of Texas*. Pub date of October 20, from G. P. Putnam's Sons. The history books are wrong, only in fiction can you say what really happened! Publicity imminent.

**Jesse Sublett:** By coincidence, I had just begun a new book project when the C-19 lockdown began. Fortunately, I had collected quite a bit of research on it beforehand, so I just had to haul the files in from the garage and start calling people for phone interviews, the only method acceptable during this time. It's going to be a short book about Frank Hughey Smith, son of a Baptist preacher from Waco who, despite two felony prison terms, quickly became the biggest bail bondsman in Central Texas in the mid-1970s, in addition to being the biggest auto salvage dealer in the region. All this despite having served two prison terms between 1950 and 1974, both for car theft. He knew what he liked, OK? Despite his powerful position and immense influence, Frank was indicted for his role as a mastermind of a botched armed robbery of a rival salvage business in 1976. When newly elected Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle took office in January 1977, the indictment was filed and the case was tried that fall, resulting in a conviction for robbery and habitual criminal, with a term of life imprisonment. Despite having hooked (and not always landed) seemingly bigger fish over his 30 years in office, including a number of naughty politicians, Earle always considered it his favorite case and his finest hour. Sadly, Earle passed away on April 5 just as I was getting underway. UT Press will publish in 2022.

**Barbara Ras:** My Fulbright to teach at the University of the Western Cape, in Cape Town, South Africa, for April 2020 was postponed and hopefully will be recreated next year. A collaboration between me and the filmmaker Sam Gilberg, featuring my poem "You Can't Have It All," was released by New Angel Productions, combining music, images, and a chorus of voices reading my poem, was released in June (<https://vimeo.com/420972360>). The same poem, "You Can't Have It All," was featured on the NPR podcast by Carrie Fountain, "This Is Just to Say" (<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/599139246/this-is-just-to-say>) on April 9, 2020). My fourth book of poems, *The Blues of Heaven*, is forthcoming from the University of Pittsburgh Press in Spring 2021.

**William (Bill) Jack Sibley:** "We have selected your excellent work, 'The Nueces River,' for the forthcoming literary anthology, *Viva Texas Rivers! A Collection of Writings on the Waterways that Connect Us All*. This book will be published by Texas A&M University Press as part of its Wittliff Book Series. *Viva Texas Rivers!* Authors in the anthology include John Graves, Sandra Cisneros, Stephen Harrigan, Naomi Shihab Nye, Américo Paredes, Paulette Jiles, Larry McMurtry, Michael Berryhill and many, many more - Steve Davis." Thanks Steve! My story on San Antonio Arts patron, Robert Tobin, will appear in the fall issue of *Society/Texas Magazine*. My third novel was completed in a Colorado cabin in June. Now the fun part - editing and proofing. My final appearance at *Dobie Dichos* will be Friday, November 6<sup>th</sup> - Oakville, TX (provided Covid-19 doesn't alter our plans.) Come hear Norma Cantu, Steve Hardin, Hugh Fitzsimons and many more. Stay tuned – [www.dobiedichos.com](http://www.dobiedichos.com).



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