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# The Texas Institute of Letters

May/June 2007 Newsletter

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## McCarthy, Wright Win Top TIL Awards, Then Cap It Off With Pulitzer Prizes; Bill Wittliff Named Tinkle Recipient

Although it shouldn't have come as a surprise, and although some of the more perspicacious of TIL members may have anticipated it, little did most of us realize at our April 14 annual awards meeting in Dallas that our own Cormac McCarthy, winner of our Jesse Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction, and our own Lawrence Wright, winner of the Carr P. Collins Award, would go on a couple of weeks later to win Pulitzer Prizes for the same books.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that TIL's top fiction and non-fiction prizes have gone on in the same year to win Pulitzers.

It was a grand meeting in Dallas. Some seventy-five attended the Friday night reception in the Hall of State, returning to the site where in 1936 TIL was founded, and about twice that number were at the Saturday night banquet at the Park Cities Hilton where the awards were announced. Thirteen awards totaling \$22,700 were presented.

Recognized as the Lon Tinkle Award winner, given for excellence sustained throughout a career, was William D. Wittliff, cited as an accomplished publisher, writer, photographer, director, producer and screenwriter. Wittliff, a former president of the Texas Institute of Letters, received a cash prize of \$1,500.

As it happened, neither McCormac, Wright, nor Wittliff were in attendance, but all were absent for good reason. McCarthy was attending an important school function for his young son. Wright was in New York completing his one-man show based on his book. And Wittliff was recovering from a back injury sustained while doing battle with a log on his ranch.

A bumper crop of new members, fifteen of them, were inducted into TIL. (See page two.)

Special tribute was paid to Audrey Slate, retiring as head of the Dobie-Paisano writing fellowships. She was cited for thirty-three years of "extraordinary service" as director of the program. Michael Adams was recognized as her successor.

Another tribute went to Allen Maxwell, 91, of Dallas, who was cited for his long service to Texas letters and for 61 years of continuous TIL membership. His career includes service as director of the SMU Press, editor of *Southwest Review*, vice president of TIL, and book editor of *The Dallas Morning News*.



Audrey Slate and Michael Adams at the Friday night reception, Hall of State at Fair Park. Michael has succeeded Audrey as director of the Dobie-Paisano fellowship program.

## Slate Retires; Adams Her Successor

After thirty-three years as director of the Dobie Paisano Fellowships, Audrey Slate has retired. Her successor is Michael Adams, associate director of the James A. Michener Center for Writers and a TIL member since 1992.

Adams met with TIL officers on April 14 in Dallas and revealed his plans to inaugurate a fund-raising program on March 8, 2008, with a goal of \$2 million. This would provide funds for repair and maintenance of the Paisano Ranch and an increase in the \$2,000 per month stipend now being paid to fellows during their six-month stays.

Adams encourages TIL members to submit names of potential donors to him.

He will invite donors, former Paisano fellows, TIL representatives, and others to attend a gala gathering at the Paisano Ranch to launch the campaign.

(See page six for 2007-2008 Paisano fellows.)

## Tributes Given to Deceased Members

At the Saturday night banquet tributes were paid to three TIL members who died in 2006-2007.

Kurt Heinzelman spoke on Carlton Lake; Kaye Northcott on Molly Ivins; Fritz Lanham on Daniel Stern; and John Miller Morris on Jack Jackson.

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## Fifteen inducted into TIL; they hail from around the state and elsewhere, too

Fifteen new members were welcomed into TIL at the April 15 annual meeting in Dallas.

**Kent Biffle**, who lives in Rockwall, is a long-time columnist with the *Dallas Morning News* who specializes in Texas history. Kent formerly worked with *Newsweek* magazine, the *Fort Worth Press*, the *Wichita Falls Times*, and the *Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, OK). He is the author of *A Month of Sundays* and co-author of *A Few Words*.

**Ty Cashion** is a professor of history at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville. He is the author of four books, including *A Texas Frontier: The Clear Fork Country and Fort Griffin, 1848-1887*, and *Pigskin Pulpit: A Social History of Texas High School Football Coaches*.

**Deborah Crombie** of McKinney, a writer of classic mysteries, is the author of ten novels. Her *Dreaming of the Bones* won numerous honors and was a New York Times Book of the Year for 1997. Her mystery novels have been published in eight countries in addition to the United States.

**Charles (Chip) Dameron**, a poet, is a professor of English and creative writing at the University of Texas at Brownsville. His poems and essays have appeared in numerous literary magazines and journals around the country. He was born and reared in Dallas.

**A.W. (Bill) Gray**, Dallas, is a prolific writer of novels that generally fall under the category of crime fiction. His books have been published by such major New York houses as E.P. Dutton, Viking Penguin, and Simon and Schuster.

**Stephen Graham Jones**, assistant professor of English at Texas Tech University, was the winner of the 2005 Jesse Jones Award for his collection of stories, *Bleed Into Me*. He is a member of the Blackfeet Nation. In 2002 he received a Literature Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Richard G. Lowe** is a Regents Professor of History at the University of North Texas. His book, *Texas Division, C.S.A.: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi*, won the Jefferson Davis Award for 2005. He has written several other books on the Civil War period, and he is editor of *Military History of the West*.

**R. Lee Maril** is chairman of the department of sociology at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. The most recent of his seven books is *Patrolling Chaos: The U.S. Border Patrol in Deep South Texas*. He lived for many years in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

**Karen Olsson** of Austin is the author of the novel *Waterloo*, winner of TIL's Turner First Novel Award and a finalist for the Jesse Jones Award. She is a writer-at-large for *Texas Monthly*.

**Ron Rozelle** is a resident of Lake Jackson, where he teaches high school English. His historical novel, *The Windows of Heaven*, was set during the 1900 Galveston hurricane, and his memoir, *Into That Good Night*, was a finalist for TIL's Carr P. Collins Nonfiction Award.

**Bill Sloan** of Dallas is a longtime Texas journalist and author of both fiction and non-fiction books. He has recently completed a trilogy of books about important battles in the Pacific during World War II for Simon & Schuster, including the battles at Wake Island and Peleliu. The third in this series, about Okinawa, is scheduled for fall publication.

**Willard Spiegelman**, editor of the *Southwest Review* since 1984, is an English professor at SMU and author of numerous books, many of them about poetry. He is a regular contributor to the Leisure and Arts section of the *Wall Street Journal*.

**Claude Stanush** of San Antonio is a widely published native of Texas and former Hollywood correspondent for *Life* magazine. He has written books, countless newspaper and magazine articles, and screenplays. He was co-founder and served as president of the Artists Alliance of San Antonio.

**Andrés Tijerina**, professor at Austin Community College, has published widely on Tejano history, including *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag*, which won the Kathryn Broocks Bates Award from the Texas State Historical Association and the T.R. Fehrenbach Award from the Texas Historical Commission.

**Betty Wiesepape** is senior lecturer and assistant director of creative writing at the University of Texas at Dallas. She writes both history and nonfiction, and is the author of *Lone Star Chapters: The Story of Texas Literary Clubs*.

## Councilors Discuss Myriad Things

At each annual TIL meeting the councilors gather to talk about various things, perhaps most important being the nomination of judges for the various literary contests.

This was achieved at the Saturday, April 15, meeting, and the judges' names will be released as soon as all have been contacted and have agreed to serve.

Another item was approval of a suggestion by Fran Vick, TIL president, that the by-laws be amended to permit members to vote by electronic ballot on proposed by-laws amendments in addition to postal or voice vote. The council approved unanimously, and the amendment was approved unanimously by membership at a meeting later that day.

*(continued at top of next page)*

## Councilors Discuss, continued

Another rule was adopted concerning attendance at councilors meetings. Any councilor who misses two consecutive meetings without a valid excuse may be removed, the council unanimously agreed.

Informally discussed was the site for the 2008 annual meeting. Should members return to Dallas, where Fran Vick will be serving her second year as president; should we return to Austin; or should another more unique site—such as Washington-on-the-Brazos or some such be chosen. An important consideration was what would the impact be on attendance if a site other than a big city is selected. More later on this important topic.

## News of Members and Others

**Judy Alter**, in her *Dallas Morning News* column, “Texas Letters,” pays tribute to our president, **Fran Vick**, in her May 13 column on the book page. Very interesting profile, and we’re reminded that in 1996 the DMN listed Fran as one of 100 women, living and dead, who left a mark on the state of Texas. “Stories are her life’s story” was the headline given for the profile, a reference to Fran’s lifelong fascination with them.

Pleased to see, too, that **Jesus Frank de la Teja** has won a rare distinction. He has been appointed by Governor Rick Perry to be Texas’ first State Historian. Frank, chairman of the Department of History at Texas State University, says: “I was born in Cuba and raised in New Jersey. I also let them know that there was a man from New Jersey at the Alamo. I’m not the first one here.” In his capacity as president of the Texas State Historical Society (whose numbers include many TIL members), Frank announced recently that the long-time relationship between the University of Texas at Austin and the TSHA is being severed. The university advised him that “the missions of the two organizations have diverged substantially over the years, [and] the special relationship between the two organizations can no longer be justified.”

*What Wilderness Is This: Women Write about the Southwest*, an anthology published by the Southwestern Writers Collection, Texas State University, and UT Press, has four women editors, including **Jan Epton Seale**, Susan Wittig Albert, Susan Hanson, and Paula Stallings Yost.

What’s happening to the nation’s book review sections? It’s not good. The *Los Angeles Times* has folded its book review section into an opinion section, and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* eliminated the book review section. The *Dallas Morning News* has reduced its already meager book review pages. As a result of this unfortunate trend, the National Book Critics Circle has launched its Campaign to Save Book Reviews. Beginning in April and continuing through May the organization has asked authors, editors, journalists, publishers, and

anyone else to speak out on the value of books and book reviewing. For more information go to [www.bookcritics.org](http://www.bookcritics.org).

Errata from last newsletter. *Sophie’s War*, written by Janice Shefelman, a finalist for the Best Young Adult Book, was published by Eakin Press, not Shoal Creek. Concerning last week’s item about L.D. and LaVerne Clark and their bequest. It’s the *Clarks’* house in Smithville, not the “Smiths” house that will be given. Those 240 acres that are part of the bequest will be used by Texas State University as a center for writers. .

**Elizabeth Crook’s** novel, *The Night Journal* (Viking/Penguin, 2006), has won the Western Writers of America 2007 Spur Award for the best long novel of the West. For a fascinating Q & A with Elizabeth about her approach to writing historical fiction look at this site: [http://www.elizabethcrookbooks.com/elizabeth\\_crook.htm](http://www.elizabethcrookbooks.com/elizabeth_crook.htm).

Many TIL members knew and will lament the passing of Kurth Sprague on March 18 in Fort Worth. Kurth was a poet, novelist, and popular professor of English and American literature at UT-Austin. As one memorialist wrote: “Falstaffian in his exuberance, Sprague was a large and imposing but gentle man. The workings of his mind were as colorful as the medieval Celtic art that he loved.”

**Clay Reynolds** has published a new book of essays with a most provocative title: *Of Snakes and Sex and Playing in the Rain: Random Thoughts on Harmful Things*. Publisher is Stone River Press.

The awards just keep coming for **Ben Fountain**. Now he has won the 2007 Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for his first book of fiction, *Brief Encounters with Che Guevara* (HarperCollins). Patrick Hemingway, the son of Ernest, presented the award to him on April 1 at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. The award carries with it an \$8,000 prize and a one-week residency in the Distinguished Visiting Writers Series at the University of Idaho’s MFA program in creative writing. As reported in the last newsletter, Ben recently was honored by Barnes & Noble as the winner of its 2006 Discover Great New Writer Awards.

**Marshall Terry** received a signal honor at SMU’s May 19 commencement proceedings. He was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters for his more than fifty years as an English professor, founder of the creative writing program, administrator, and many other accomplishments at the university where he received both B.A. and M.A. degrees. President R. Gerald Turner declared Marsh to be one of the most beloved figures in SMU’s history. Journalist Bill Moyers, who also received an honorary doctorate, was speaker at the commencement exercises.

*(More news of members and others on page six.)*

## Award Winners and Their Books

At the Saturday, April 15, annual banquet, the following awards were announced:

Cormac McCarthy won the Jesse Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction in 2006 for his novel, *The Road*, published by Alfred A. Knopf. The prize brings a cash award of \$6,000. (This was followed soon after with the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, carrying an award of \$10,000.)

Lawrence Wright's book on the origins of terrorism, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, also published by Knopf, took top honors in the Carr P. Collins Award for non-fiction with a prize of \$5,000. (This was followed soon after with the Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction, carrying an award of \$10,000.)

TIL Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book, \$2,500, went to Jerry Thompson, *Civil War to the Bloody End: The Life and Times of Major General Samuel P. Heintzelman*, published by Texas A&M Press.

Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry, \$1,200, to Christopher Bakken for *Goat Funeral*, published by Sheep-Meadow.

Steven Turner Award for Best Work of First Fiction, \$1,000, to Dominic Smith for *The Mercury Visions of Louis Daguerre*, published by Atria.

Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation of a Book, \$1,000, to Marian Schwartz, for her translation from Russian of Ruben Gallego's *White on Black*, published by Harcourt.

O. Henry Award for Best Work of Magazine Journalism, \$1,000, to John Spong for "The Good Book and the Bad Book," published in *Texas Monthly*, September 2006.

Stanley Walker Award for Best Work of Newspaper Journalism Appearing in Newspaper or Sunday Supplement, \$1,000, to Tony Freemantle for "The Gulf Coast Revisited," *Houston Chronicle*.

Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story, \$750, to Mark Wisniewski for "Prisoners of War," published in *Glimmer Train*.

Friends of the Austin Public Library Award for Best Children's Book, \$500, to Tim Tingle for *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom*, Cinco Puntos Press.

Friends of the Austin Public Library Award for Best Young Adult Book, \$500, to Heather Hepler for *Scrambled Eggs at Midnight*, published by Dutton.

Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book, \$750, to Mary Ann Jacob for *Timeless Texas*, Texas A&M Press.



Paula Bosse of Borders Books sold copies of award nominations at the Saturday night banquet.



Jane Roberts Wood, Fran Vick, and Frances Neidhardt

## Send News, E-Mail Addresses, Directory Changes to TIL Secretary

Keep your fellow TIL members informed--both as to your whereabouts and your activities.

Send news of your activities and directory corrections to Darwin Payne, TIL secretary, [dpayne@smu.edu](mailto:dpayne@smu.edu), or 9021 Gunnison Dr., Dallas, TX 75231.



Lane Sloan and new member Bill Sloan; Paula and Hugh Aynesworth



Marshall Terry, David Searcy, and Bryan Woolley



At the Saturday night banquet: C.W. Smith, Marsha Smith, and the somewhat ghostly figure of new member Willard Spiegelman.



Three new members at the Friday night reception: Betty Wiesepape, Ty Cashion, and Andres Tijerina.



Bob Compton, TIL recording secretary, and Charlene Howell of Rosewood Foundation.

**News of Members and Others, continued**

Look for **Tom Curtis's** piece on Galveston's increasing vulnerability to hurricanes in an upcoming issue of *Cite*, the quarterly magazine of the Rice Design Alliance at Rice U. Meanwhile, Tom attends to his day job as director of research communications for the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. Recently he publicized two UTMB physicians' paper in the *Journal of Medical Biography* in which they made a strong case that Lincoln was suffering from the early symptoms of smallpox when he delivered his Gettysburg address.

**Robert Fink's** literary nonfiction book, *Twilight Innings: A West Texan on Grace and Survival* is one of five finalists for *ForeWord Magazine's* Book Of The Year in the "essay" category). The book was published in September 2006 by Texas Tech University Press. Fink's literary nonfiction essay, "Pilgrims: Snapshots from an Idaho Family Album," is in the current issue (Spring 2007) of *Image: Art, Faith, Mystery*.

An interesting year for **Rick Bass**. His recent story collection, *The Lives of Rocks*, was a finalist for The Story Prize as well as the Orion Book Award this year; a story from that collection, "Goats," was selected for inclusion in both the Pushcart Prize and New Stories From the South anthologies. Early in 2008, Houghton Mifflin will publish a memoir of his work as an activist in the Yaak Valley of northwestern Montana, entitled *Why I Came West*. Rick continues to be very active with a local grassroots environmental organization, the Yaak Valley Forest Council, and, as he reports, "We are hoping to find sponsors in the new Montana delegation for introduction of a community-based bill we have co-written that will finally help protect some roadless lands in the Yaak--the Land the Wilderness Act (of 1964) Forgot--as designated wilderness." He'll spend the summer shuttling one daughter, Mary Katherine, to volleyball and cross-country camps, when not working with his other daughter, Lowry, on a rock clubhouse and buck-and-rail fence for her horses. "We all hope to get up into northern British Columbia for a camping trip at some point in the summer."

Veteran and acclaimed journalist **Hugh Aynsworth** is working on his memoirs, and they promise to be sensational: "My first 50 years in journalism....a few inside stories concerning coverage of the JFK, Huey Long and Martin Luther King assassinations, the story of the Russian spy who killed himself after the *Times Herald* exposed his 30 years of espionage, the unveiling of a Navy deserter and possibly murderer who came to Dallas and became a humungous civic leader (John McKee), inside stories about H.L. Hunt, Ross Perot, exposure of a congressman who had two wives (at same time), what happened to Howard Hughes' fortune, how Billie Sol Estes became the biggest con in Texas history, how New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison was more of a criminal than anybody he charged in his JFK investigation and how Henry Lee Lucas made the Texas Rangers look like Keystone Kops.

Should be finished early in 2008." No publisher as of yet, but Hugh is looking.

**Elmer Kelton** and his wife Ann celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in grand fashion on July 3 in San Angelo. There will be a steak dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Cactus Hotel, and afterwards at the Riverstage the San Angelo Symphony will perform a pops concert. Not only will the occasion honor the Keltons anniversary, it will also mark the publication of Elmer's *Memoirs of Sandhills Boy*.

## **Alison Moore and Mary Specht Named Dobie-Paisano Writing Fellows for 2007-08**

Winners of the Dobie-Paisano Writing Fellowships for 2007-2008 are Alison Moore and Mary Specht. The fellowships, sponsored by the Texas Institute of Letters and The University of Texas at Austin, allow writers to spend 5 ½ months at Paisano, J. Frank Dobie's 254-acre retreat west of Austin.

Moore, who will hold the Ralph Johnson Memorial Fellowship, will begin residence at Paisano in September 2007. Mary Specht will hold the Jesse Jones Writing Fellowship and begin residency at Paisano in March 2008.

Moore is a former assistant professor of English/Creative Writing in the MFA Creative Writing Program at the University of Arizona and a current Humanities Scholar in Arkansas. She received her MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers in 1990. Currently, she lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Terlingua, Texas, and is completing a novel on the Orphan Trains.

Mary Helen Specht, born in Abilene, Texas, is a graduate from Emerson College with a MFA in creative writing. Her publications include, "In Search of a Bird" (*Night Train VII*); "The Emerging Critical Power of Cool" (*Michigan Quarterly Review*, Fall 2006); "Too Heavy to Carry Home" (*Colorado Review*, Fall/Winter 2006); "House of Guns" (*The Florida Review*, forthcoming); and several articles in *The Houston Press* and *The Abilene Reporter-News*. A Fulbright Scholar, Specht has received Night Train's "Richard Yates Short Story Award," the "Emerson Graduate Fiction Award," and was a Hanszen College Fellow at Rice University.

She is working on a collection of short stories that explore what she calls a "post-western" Texas, in which characters try to piece together an identity amongst the remnants of what Texas used to be and still remains in the minds of outsiders.

Information and an application for the next Dobie-Paisano Fellowships may be found on line in mid-September — <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/Paisano/> A hard copy can be obtained after October 1 from Michael Adams, Director, Dobie-Paisano Project, Graduate School, The University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station (G0400), Austin, Texas 78712-0531. The deadline for the 2008-2009 competition will be January 15, 2008.