

Texas Institute of Letters

April/May/June 2009

\$22,950 in prizes awarded at annual meeting in Waco

The April 17-18 annual TIL meeting in Waco was, by unanimous consent, a rollicking success.

The two-day affair started Friday evening with the reception at the Dr Pepper Museum, located in a historic building a few blocks from the convention headquarters at the Hilton Waco Hotel.

Reception attendance, based on the number of name tags issued, was 71. The museum was very intriguing, with lots of different spaces that were intimate and just right for conversation. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres were plentiful; the museum artifacts were interesting; and many of those present wound up the evening in the Dr Pepper soda room, where the popular drink was a nightcap—a Dr Pepper float!

The Saturday afternoon readings by new members turned out to be far more stimulating than one might expect—humor, pathos, and adventure all were represented. Many of the new members had a real talent for presentation.

Saturday evening's banquet, under the direction of our president, William V. Davis, went off, as they say, without a hitch. Memorials were read for a number of our members lost during the past year—James Crumley, Horton Foote, Lou Rodenberger, Elizabeth Fernea, John W.F. Dulles, and Betsy Colquitt.

Next year's annual event will be in Austin, and Bill Davis is already working hard on it.

Following is the news release that was sent to the state's newspapers and other media outlets:

Prizes totaling \$22,950 were awarded Saturday for works published in 2008 at the Texas Institute of Letters' annual meeting in Waco. Fourteen new members were inducted, and Austin writer Carolyn Osborn was honored with the Lon Tinkle Award for excellence sustained throughout a career.

The Texas Institute of Letters was founded in 1936 to recognize literary achievement and to promote



Ann Weisbarger won the \$1,000 Steven Turner Award for the best first novel, presented by TIL president Bill Davis.

interest in Texas literature. William V. Davis of Baylor University is current president.

Osborn, winner of numerous awards for her short stories, is a former president of the Texas Institute of Letters. The award for this honor is a \$1,500 cash prize.

The Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction went to Thomas Cobb of Foster, Rhode Island, who earned a PhD from the University of Houston. His novel, *Shavetail*, published by Scribner and set in Arizona and northern Mexico in 1871, revolves around a young soldier who finds himself posted there and must prove his courage. The Jones award carries a prize of \$6,000.

Brendan M. Greeley Jr. took the \$5,000 Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Non-Fiction. *The Two Thousand Yard Stare: Tom Lea's World War II Paintings, Drawings, and Eyewitness Accounts* was published by Texas A&M University Press. Greeley is a retired Marine Corps aviator who lives in Annapolis, Maryland.

The Most Significant Scholarly Book Award, with a cash prize of \$2,500, was won by James M. Smallwood for *The Feud that Wasn't, The Taylor Ring, Bill Sutton, John Wesley Hardin, and Violence in Texas*, published by Texas A&M University Press.

Other winners are:

Steven Turner Award for Best First Novel (\$1,000) to Ann Weisgarber, *The Personal History of Rachel DuPree*, Macmillan New Writing.

Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry (\$1,200): James Allen Hall, *Now You're the Enemy*, University of Arkansas Press.

Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story (\$1,000): Kerry Neville Bakken: "Indignity," appearing in *The Gettysburg Review*, Spring 2008.

O. Henry Award for Magazine Journalism (\$1,000): Rick Bass, "Mary Katherine's First Deer," *Gray's Sporting Journal* (Sept./Oct. 2008).

Stanley Walker Award for Best Work of Newspaper Journalism Appearing in Newspaper or Sunday Supplement (\$1,000): Todd Bensman and Guillermo Contreras, *San Antonio Express-News*, for a series, "Texas Deadliest Export."

Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Translation (\$1,000): Reginald Gibbons, *Sophocles, Selected Poems: Odes and Fragments*, Princeton University Press.

Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book (\$750): Barbara Whitehead, *Traces of Forgotten Places* by Don Collins, TCU Press.

Austin Public Library Award for Best Young Adult Book (\$500): Claudia Guadalupe Martinez, *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*, Cinco Puntos.

Austin Public Library Award for Best Children's Book (\$500): Benjamin Alire Saenz, *The Perfect Season for Dreaming*, Cinco Puntos.

New members inducted into the organization were:

Gregg Cantrell, Fort Worth; Mike Cochran, Fort Worth; Steve Davis, San Marcos; Chitra Divakaruni, Houston; Jim Donovan, Dallas. Chris Ellery, San Angelo; David Haynes, Dallas; Jerome Loving, College Station; David M. Parsons, Conrad; Barbara Ras, San Antonio; Geoff Rips, Austin; Amilcar Shabazz, Amherst, Mass.; Carmen Tafolla, San Antonio; and Larry D. Thomas, Houston.

News of Members and Others . . .

Down San Antonio way, **Jay Brandon** pulled a Charles Dickens back in 2001, writing a serialized novel for the *San Antonio Express News* entitled *Milagro Lane*. Now, **Bryce Milligan** of Wings Press has published it in book form. In her blurb about the novel **Sarah Bird** reminds us of another author—she says Jay Brandon does for San Antonio, Texas, what Raymond Chandler did for Los Angeles: he makes the city the most compellingly authentic character in a book filled to bursting with compellingly authentic characters.

News about **Steven G. Kellman**, also of ole San Antone, where he is a professor of comparative literature at UT-San Antonio. First, he recently was elected to a third term on the board of directors of the National Book Critics Circle. Second, he has edited a new edition of the novel, *An American in the Making* (Rutgers University Press), written by M.E. Ravage, who was one of almost two million Jews who, like so many others from eastern and southern Europe, were lured to America by tales of worldly success. Seventeen years after arriving on Ellis Island, Ravage had mastered a new language, found success in college, and engagingly penned in English this vivid account of the ordeals and pleasures of departure and assimilation.

Andrew Hudgins, Ohio State University professor and Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-nominated author of *Ecstatic in the Poison*, has a new collection of laugh-out-loud tongue-in-cheek nursery rhymes that do for poetry what Edward Gorey (Edward who?) did for cartooning. Illustrated by Barry Moser, *Shut Up, You're Fine!* (Overlook Press) includes such heart-warming titles as "Playing Houth," "The Thumping of the Bed," "Two Starving Kids in Africa," and "Daddy, Are We Meat?"

Our true crime-writing member **Gary Lavergne**, who draws a paycheck from the University of Texas at Austin, has received the President's Outstanding Staff Service Award for his work there.

Paula Marks has edited and written an introduction for a publication offered by the recently revived Book Club of Texas entitled *When Will the Weary War Be Over? The Civil War Letters of the Maverick Family of San Antonio*. The book is published in an edition of 450 full cloth copies plus 20 quarter leather deluxe copies enclosed in slipcases. The book has illustrations and scholarly annotations. Samuel and Mary Maverick had three sons in the Confederate Army and a teenager, Willie, at Bastrop Military Academy, eager to join his brothers on the front. Paula is a professor of history at

St. Edwards's University in Austin. Russell Martin of SMU's DeGolyer Library is executive director of the Book Club of Texas.

Reginald Gibbons, director of Northwestern's Center for the Writing Arts, has launched a new blog on writing, reading, learning, and teaching at the Center's website. Other faculty at Northwestern and writers who have visited the campus also contribute to the site. Check it out at <http://www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/index.html>.

Greg Garrett, professor of English at Baylor, returns to fiction with a 2009 novel, *Shame* (David C. Cook). *Shame*, which is narrated by its hero, a farmer and part-time basketball coach, was favorably reviewed in *Publishers Weekly* in March; citing its strong characterizations and dialogue, PW said the book "plows deep furrows in the heart—a slam dunk for Garrett." Other books forthcoming from Greg in 2009 include a second book of memoirs, *No Idea*, from Cook, and a book on religion and culture, *We Get to Carry Each Other: The Gospel according to U2* (Westminster John Knox).

Report from **Judy Alter**, director of the TCU Press: "I have a new cookbook/memoir, *Cooking My Way Through Life with Kids and Books*, from State House Press. It's divided into four sections reflecting changes in the cuisine around me: my childhood in a slightly British home in Chicago; marriage to a Jewish man and moving to Texas (two new food groups); my years as a single parent of four—"The Casserole Year"; and the present when cooking is my avocation and I entertain frequently, almost always experimenting."

Congrats to **Paul Ruffin**, Sam Houston State. He's the new poet laureate for Texas for 2009.

Numbered and signed prints of Glenn Whitebread's beautiful nighttime painting of Paisano are being offered to TIL members for \$50. They are 14 x 19 inches in size, and, of course, are intended for framing. These prints are given each year to Paisano Fellows. To purchase a print send a check for \$50, payable to Texas Institute of Letters, c/o Darwin Payne, 9021 Gunnison Dr., Dallas, TX 75231, and it will be mailed to you in a secure mailer.



Paisano, Full Moon

Mayborn Conference to Feature Paul Theroux, Ira Glass, Roy Blount Jr., and Others

George Getschow, writer in residence for the nationally-acclaimed Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest, is inviting members of the Texas Institute of Letters to the 5th annual conference, July 24-26 at the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center in Grapevine, TX., five minutes from the DFW Airport. This year's conference features a diverse group of storytellers from genres unexplored in previous years, including travel writing, broadcast, nature writing and documentary film.

Keynotes include one of America's literary lions, Paul Theroux, author of acclaimed travel literature, short-story collections, novels, criticism and children's books; Ira Glass, National Public Radio's host and producer of "This American Life: and editor of a breathtaking anthology called "The New Kings of Nonfiction"; Alma Guillermoprieto, Latin American correspondent for "The New Yorker" and "The New York Review of Books." The nation's foremost humor writer, Roy Blount Jr., will also be speaking at the conference, along with Stephanie Elizondo Griest, the "accidental memoirist" of Mexican-American society; "Vogue's" renowned narrative essay writer, Julia Reed; the nation's leading authority on Abraham Lincoln's assassination, Michael Kauffman; Gordon Grice, "the Stephen King of nature writers"; "Wall Street Journal" foreign correspondent and hunger expert, Roger Thurow; internationally acclaimed documentary filmmakers Allen Mondell and Cynthia Salzman Mondell; and a number of other storytellers. Bob Shacochis, a National Book Award Winner ("Swimming in the Volcano") who spoke at last year's conference, says the Mayborn is "the most compelling, remarkable writers' conference I've attended in more than 20 years of writers' conferences around the nation. Thanks to the Mayborn tribe of storytellers, I think of Dallas as a preferred destination, a center of literary gravity, perhaps the very heart of the universe these days for nonfiction writers in America."

The conference includes a book manuscript and essay writing contest. The manuscript winner will receive a \$3,000 cash prize and an option to enter into a provisional publishing contract with UNT Press. The article and essay writing contest offers \$12,000 in cash prizes. The 10 best articles or essays, including the six cash award winners, will be published in a literary journal jointly published by Hearst Newspapers and the Mayborn Graduate School of Journalism. Conference fees are \$295 for the general public. Educator fees are \$270. Student fees are \$225. The fees include fine dining. Conference seating is limited. To register, visit www.TheMayborn.unt.edu. For more information, call George Getschow at 972-746-1633.

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Website: <http://texasinstituteofletters.org>/Please send news items, changes of address to Darwin Payne at dpayne@smu.edu.

