

# Texas Institute of Letters



*April/May/June 2014 Newsletter*

**Texas Institute of Letters website:** <http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org/>

## **TIL authors get huge exposure in continuing *Dallas News* series**

Our own Texas Institute of Letters and authors are in the news in a big and significant way. On Sunday, June 29, *The Dallas Morning News* began a much-ballyhooed series which in coming weeks will continue to highlight this organization and present excerpts from the works of distinguished writers who have been honored through the years with our Lon Tinkle Award. As the *News* (Sunday circulation, 360,000) noted, the series will include “work from some of the greatest writers Texas has known.” Naturally, they are (or were) members of TIL.

The series, entitled “Texas Classics,” is edited by our own past president, W.K. (Kip) Stratton, who arranged the deal in conversations with Bob Mong, editor of the *News*. It’s a joint project of TIL, the newspaper, and the University of North Texas’ Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference.

The kickoff on June 29 began prominently with a page-one article by Kip with the headline, “Authors are nailing the Lone Star state: Texas writers mine junction of tradition, change.” And Kip’s lengthy article—“essay” would be a better word for it—is his personal recounting of the meaning of Texas literature with many fascinating references. It continued as it filled all but a single column of the first page of the Arts & Life section with a lengthy excerpt from Larry McMurtry’s *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen: Reflections at Sixty and Beyond* and a profile of Lon Tinkle, written by Marshall Terry. The second installment, Américo Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez* appeared on Sunday, July 6.

All in all, it’s something you’ll want to see—and keep seeing as the weeks go by. So take a look at the first installments, the first four from June 29 and the last one from July 6.

DMN editor Bob Mong’s column: <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/local-news/20140628-editors-note-the-news-offers-a-literary-salute-to-the-texas-classics.ece>.

Kip Stratton’s essay: <http://www.dallasnews.com/entertainment/books/20140628-texas-authors-are-nailing-the-lone-star-state.ece>.

Marshall Terry's profile of Lon Tinkle:  
<http://www.dallasnews.com/entertainment/books/20140627-texas-classics-for-lon-tinkle-literature-and-texas-were-a-perfect-match.ece>.

Larry McMurtry's excerpt from *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen*:  
<http://www.dallasnews.com/entertainment/books/20140627-texas-classics-an-excerpt-from-walter-benjamin-at-the-dairy-queen-by-larry-mcmurtry.ece>.

Américo Paredes's excerpt from *George Washington Gómez*:  
<http://www.dallasnews.com/entertainment/books/20140705-texas-classics-an-excerpt-from-americoparedes-george-washington-gomez.ece>.

## **Billy Porterfield, first Paisano fellow, is dead**

Billy Mack Porterfield, long-time TIL member, Texas author, TV personality, raconteur, and first holder of a Paisano fellowship, died June 29 at Seton Hospital in Kyle, Texas, after a lengthy battle with Alzheimer's. Billy was born in 1932.

A memorial celebration of his life will be held from 2 to 6 p.m. Sunday, July 27, at the Cheatham Street Warehouse, 119 Cheatham Street, in San Marcos. TIL members all are invited, and consistent with his colorful and full life, so are friends, family, colleagues, "onlookers, and random characters."

Billy's writing career, starting at the *Houston Chronicle*, spanned more than five decades. During his Paisano fellowship he wrote his first book, "LBJ Country," published in 1965. His last book was his own autobiography with the quirky (but meaningful to him) title, "Diddy Waw Diddy," subtitled "The Passage of an American Son."

His newspaper work, besides the *Houston Chronicle*, included brief out-of-state stints at the *Detroit Free Press* and *Chicago Daily News*, and then back in Texas the *Dallas Times Herald* and *Austin American-Statesman*. His work appeared in major magazines as well, and he won many awards. During the 1970s he was a TV personality, working as an original member of the "Newsroom" show in Dallas started by Jim Lehrer. Later, he took over as executive producer.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Billy's name to the Texas State University Wittliff Collections or the University Star Scholarship Endowment fund. Gifts can be mailed to Texas State University, Office of Donor Services, 601 University Dr., J. C. Kellam Building, Room 480, San Marcos, TX 78666.

## **RIP—William Harrison and Bruce McGinnis**

William Harrison of Fayetteville, Arkansas, died on October 22, 2013, at the age of 79. Harrison was a novelist, short story writer, and screenwriter perhaps best known for writing the short story "Roller Ball Murder" which was made into the movie "Rollerball" in 1975. Harrison grew up in Dallas and attended Texas Christian University, where he became editor of the student newspaper, *The Skiff*. In 1964 Harrison moved with his family to Fayetteville, Arkansas, where he published his first novels. In 1966 he became the founder and co-director of the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Arkansas. Harrison wrote dozens of short stories and nine novels, several set in Africa, where he traveled extensively. He became a TIL member in 1990.

Bruce McGinnis, 72, died April 5, 2014, in Amarillo. McGinnis was inducted into TIL in 1984. He was a retired professor of English at Amarillo College, where he taught for thirty-seven years. McGinnis was a novelist and poet. His novels included *The Fence*, *Sweet Cane*, *Reflections in Dark Glass*, and *Dog Dreams: The Comanche and the Wolf on the Llano Estacado*.

## **TIL fund-raising committee members push hard and raise \$22,500 for Scholarly Book Award**

TIL's annual Scholarly Book Award, unlike TIL's Jesse H. Jones Award for fiction and the Carr P. Collins Award for non-fiction, has never been endowed. For the past several years our organization has paid the annual \$2,500 award for winners from its own funds.

Well, members, there's good news tonight. It comes from the fund-raising committee appointed by past president Kip Stratton at the January TIL Council meeting at Paisano Ranch. At that meeting Kip appointed former president Fran Vick as chair of the new committee. In recent weeks the committee obtained a \$10,000 award from the Summerlee Foundation for the Scholarly Book Award fund, an amount which complements a previous \$12,500 grant from the Ramirez Family obtained single-handedly by our current president, Andrés Tijerina, and announced at our 2014 annual meeting in San Marcos.

This total sum of \$22,500, raised in four short months, presents a comfortable foundation for the award for the next several years. During that time TIL will be seeking further funds to achieve a permanent endowment for the award, which in the future will honor South Texas banker and civic leader Renato Ramirez and his family as the Ramirez Family Scholarly Book Award.

Vick's team consisted of Stratton, Tijerina, and treasurer Jim Hoggard. They obtained the grant from Summerlee this spring after a whirlwind campaign to meet a tight foundation deadline which required TIL financial statements, summaries of activities, biographical profiles of officers, and other documents relative to the organization.

And thanks to the good work of council member Karla Morton, TIL will offer a new award of \$500 for the best children's picture book published in 2014. Karla obtained a commitment from the *Denton Record-Chronicle* and publisher Bill Patterson to fund the award. The judging committee for the Children's and Young Adult books will also select the winner for the best Picture Book. In related good news, H-E-B has renewed its commitment to fund the Children's and Young Adults book awards.

All this productive money-raising energy means that every one of TIL's annual awards are sponsored at this time.

## **Here's a closer look at two TIL authors currently in the limelight—Sarah Bird and Elizabeth Crook**

TIL is accustomed to having its writers gain significant national attention for their works, and this is no more exemplified by the attention now being paid to two of our most honored

authors, Sarah Bird and Elizabeth Crook. Sarah's new novel (her ninth), published by Knopf, is entitled *Above the East China Sea*. Its setting is in faraway Okinawa.

Elizabeth's new novel is *Monday, Monday* (published by Sarah Crichton Books, FSG), and it has a far more familiar setting, for it is the fictionalized account of the 1966 incident on the UT-Austin campus when Charles Whitman went to the top of the Tower with a footlocker filled with weapons and began firing on pedestrians below. The novel focuses especially on the aftermath of this frightening incident.

Stephen Harrigan had this to say about Elizabeth's book: "*Monday, Monday* begins by throwing us into the midst of one of the worst mass murders in American history, a scene painted with such harrowing exactitude that it leaves you wondering how the characters can possibly survive and how the author can possibly sustain such a high level of narrative momentum and emotional insight. And yet Elizabeth Crook pulls it off. This is a brilliant and beautiful book."

Joy Tipping, writing in the *Dallas Morning News*, said this in her review about Sarah's novel: "*Above the East China Sea* should be the one that lands Bird among the literary elite. This is the rare tome that has the goods for both popular and critical acclaim at the highest level."

Now, let's very briefly excerpt from recent interviews conducted with the authors about their work.

**First, Elizabeth Crook**, interviewed by Sofia Sokolove for the website, Dallas Culturemap: <http://dallas.culturemap.com/news/arts/06-22-14-elizabeth-crook-monday-monday-books-every-texan-should-read/>.

Crook: "This was the first of these horrendous school shootings, and people were slow to believe it was actually happening. Other than that, the reactions were similar to what we see today. "People took care of each other. A lot of students risked their lives to help others. A lot of students didn't and felt the need to atone or explain in some way. Society as a whole responded with the same media obsession and with all the unanswerable questions of why? What, exactly, went so horribly wrong?"

"I think the main difference is that the 1966 incident was an isolated event that happened without warning. Today we've had plenty of warning. We know there's another coming. We need better, more accessible mental health care, and we need reasonable gun laws. We're not naïve anymore. . . ."

"This was the first book I've written that didn't require years of research. I grew up just down the road in San Marcos, so I already knew the places I was writing about. I knew the landscape, the weather, the kind of people my characters were. And I have friends who were students at UT in the '60s, and quite a few who were there on campus the day of the shootings. Most of the research just involved talking to people and asking the right questions. . . ."

When asked about her current reading material, Crook responded: "I have a huge stack of history books I need to get through for research on a story I'm thinking about writing next. So I don't read much for pleasure. The last book I was smitten with was [\*The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking\*](#), by Oliver Burkeman — lots of wisdom and humor in that book.

"The most recent novel I loved was [\*The Sense of an Ending\*](#) by Julian Barnes. I've just started John le Carre's [\*A Delicate Truth\*](#), and it's already swept me away. And I'm looking forward to reading Sarah Bird's new book, [\*Above the East China Sea\*](#)."

**And now Sarah Bird** (from an interview by Mary Helen Specht, found at <http://necessaryfiction.com/writerinres/InterviewwithSarahBirdAbovetheEastChinaSea>).

Bird: "I'm fascinated by the intersections between fact and fiction. In the case of *Above the East China Sea*, the book absolutely wouldn't exist had I not been a military kid. (I disavow the term "military brat," since, as a group, children raised by soldiers who put The Mission above all else, including family, are some of the least bratty America produces.) While I was

growing up, we were stationed in Japan and Okinawa, and I based a novel, *Yokota Officers Club*, on those experiences. In researching that book, I was astonished at what I did not know about Okinawa or our country's relationship with the chain of Ryukyu Islands that it is part of.

"At the age of eighteen, I'd stood at the top of a popular destination, Suicide Cliff, and I'd toured yet another, the vast labyrinth of tunnels constructed by the Japanese army with native labor, and been absolutely unaware of their significance. I didn't learn for another thirty years that more lives had been lost during the Battle Okinawa than at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. That the invasion was the largest land-sea-air battle in history. That over one-quarter of the Okinawan population had died in agonizing ways, and virtually the entire cultural history of the islands had been lost.

"The story of the Princess Lily Girls, the sheltered native girls from an elite private school who were conscripted by the Imperial Army to serve in their cave hospitals under the most horrific conditions imaginable, embodied this tragedy. I told the historical half of the novel from the perspective of two sisters who refuse to let anything, not the struggles of nations, not even death, tear them apart."

## **Report from TIL president Andrés Tijerina**

It is a pleasure to write an update on the activities and plans of the Texas Institute of Letters. Our story is one of fascinating writers engaged in dynamic literary events across Texas. As individuals, our TIL members capture the headlines and claim the literary awards in New York, in Dallas, and in universities across the nation. The last TIL Awards Banquet was one of the largest in years, and the new membership growth is characterized by youth and diversity as the TIL asserts a growing presence in Texas literary news.

We are very proud, of course, of the "Texas Classics" literary series that the *Dallas Morning News* is now running in conjunction with the Texas Institute of Letters. The best part is that they recognized that the TIL writers represent the priceless repertoire of Texas works from which to choose. Our own Marsh Terry, Kip Stratton, and George Getschow have all been instrumental in initiating in the series.

Also last week, a few of us met in Houston to make preliminary arrangements for the TIL's 2015 Awards Banquet to be held at the University Hilton on campus at the University of Houston. Houston is one of the largest cities in the nation, and it offers a vibrant intellectual community of young, energetic writers for the TIL event. In touring the facilities of the University Hilton, I had the valuable guidance of TIL Council member Sara Cortez and former TIL Vice-President Joe Holley, Editor of the *Houston Chronicle*. The hotel was recently renovated to include expansion of the rooms with fine appointments and fixtures. At \$109 for standard room rates, it is easily accessible to all the freeways and to downtown as well. Our plan is to sponsor a writer's symposium a few weeks before our banquet, and to have the Friday reception in one of Houston's finest art museums. We'll keep you posted on the details as we confirm the arrangements, but save the week-end of April 3 and 4 for a fine reception and a prestigious awards banquet in 2015.

And finally, I want to point out how several of our TIL Council members worked so closely to assemble the grant application package by a short deadline for the Summerlee Foundation grant. Please share any ideas with us on other prospective sources of funding for the book prize in order to help us achieve our goal of a self-sustaining prize fund.

Thanks for submitting all the member news items, for lending your resources, and for helping us to represent the Texas Institute of Letters in the finest light.

Andrés Tijerina  
TIL President

## **News about our TIL members**

**Emilio Zamora**, history professor, UT-Austin, will be a featured author at this fall's Texas Literary Festival. Emilio recently edited and translated (with Ben Maya) *The World War I Diary of José de la Luz Sáenz*, published this year by Texas A&M University Press. This book "stands as the only memoir of a Mexican American soldier in World War I (and for that matter, probably the only account by a Tejano serviceman who fought between WWI and the Vietnam War)." It "provides not only first-hand information on military training and on action in France, but offers valuable insight into the social life of early twentieth-century Mexican American communities."

**W.K. "Kip" Stratton**, our past president, has agreed to a deal with Bloomsbury Publishing to publish his book about Sam Peckinpah's "The Wild Bunch" and the cultural and historical influences that led to its creation, as well as the vast influence the film has had on popular culture in the years since its release. "No work of art has influenced me more than The Wild Bunch," Kip said. "Writing this book is a dream project."

**Rod Davis**, our very prolific and relatively new member (as of 2013) (<http://roddavisauthor.com/>), has published a mystery thriller, *South, America* (please note the important comma). The hero is a former Dallas television weekend anchor living in New Orleans. Rod's first book, a non-fiction effort entitled *American Voudou*, was published by **Fran Vick** when she headed the University of North Texas Press. You can see an ecstatic review of *South, America*, in the *Dallas Morning News* at <http://www.dallasnews.com/entertainment/books/20140607-thriller-review-south-america-by-rod-davis.ece>. You will remember Rod as editor of the *Texas Observer*, not to mention other things.

**Lawrence Wright's** *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood and the Prison of Belief* has been chosen as the *Dallas Morning News'* Points Summer Book Club. There will be a special forum on July 20 with Larry in attendance.

**Michael Zagst** is right on top of this new age of publishing. He reports that he has gone over his three early novels, "published in hardcover a century or two ago," line-by-line and prepared them as e-books for Amazon Kindle. Their titles: *The Greening of Thurmond Leaner*, "M.H." *Meets President Harding*, and *The Sanity Matinee*. The Amazon page with the results is [http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Michael+Zagst](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Michael+Zagst). And if you want to see Michael in his sometime role as an actor, check out his own screenplay, *Divine Access*, in which he was cast in a small role as a hayseed with a near-death experience. Check it out at: <http://variety.com/2014/film/news/gary-cole-billy-burke-starring-in-divine-access-exclusive-1201173767/>

**Jan Reid's** essay "Comanches, Cowboys, and a Political Rock Star" appeared in the anthology *Curiosity's Cats: Writers on Research*, edited by Bruce Joshua Miller and published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. Historians, literary critics, novelists, and a filmmaker were asked to reflect on the gumshoe aspects of their work. Jan wrote about the vastly different but strangely intertwined research of his historical novel *Comanche Sundown* and *Let the People In*, his biography of Ann Richards.

**Doug J. Swanson** is the author of the forthcoming biography of the noted one-time Dallas and Las Vegas gambler Benny Binion. Its title: *Blood Aces: The Wild Ride of Benny Binion, the Texas Cowboy Who Created Vegas Poker*. Publication date is August 15, 2014, with a first printing of 15,000 copies. Swanson used government files never before revealed and conducted interviews with Binion cronies who have never talked publicly. Swanson, an investigative reporter at *The Dallas Morning News* and twice named the top newspaper reporter in Texas, has written five novels, *Big Town*, *Dreamboat*, *96 Tears*, *Umbrella Man* and *House of Corrections*.

**C.W. Smith** reports that several of his books are now available in all epub formats: *Country Music*, *The Vestal Virgin Room*, *Buffalo Nickel*, *Hunter's Trap*, *Letters From the Horse Latitudes*, *Understanding Women*, and *Steplings*. <http://cwsmiththeauthor.com>.

**Lonn Taylor**, from his home way out west at beautiful Fort Davis, sends news that he'll appear on Sept. 11 on the popular and nationally televised "Colbert Report" to discuss his book *The Star-Spangled Banner: The Making of a National Icon* (Smithsonian Books, 2008). It's for the 200th anniversary of the bombardment of Fort McHenry, the time when Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that became the national anthem on September 13-14, 1814. During his years at the Smithsonian Institution's Natural Museum of American History Taylor was the historian for the Smithsonian's Star-Spangled Banner Preservation Project. This led to his book about the Star-Spangled Banner. Ever versatile, has also written books on American cowboys, New Mexican furniture and Southwestern history. He retired from the Smithsonian in 2002.

**Rolando Hinojosa-Smith**, for the sixth summer in a row, will be teaching fiction writing at Graz University in Austria. His students, chosen on merit and scholarship, hail from Europe and from parts of Africa, e.g., Algiers, The Republic of South Africa, etc. **Dagoberto Gilb** is writing an article on Rolando's work to be published by *Texas Monthly*, and UT's *Alcalde* magazine will publish Rolando's own essay titled "On Writing."

**Lynn Hoggard** has been in a reflective mood. She has just published a coming-of-age memoir about growing up in deep-south Louisiana. Its title is *Motherland, Stories and Poems from Louisiana* (Lamar University Press). She and husband **Jim** (our faithful treasurer, past president, fellow, etc., etc.) are spending the summer at their mountain cabin outside of Red River, New Mexico, at an elevation of 9,300 feet. The elk are daily visitors. Lynn's website [www.lynnhoggard.com](http://www.lynnhoggard.com) has information about her new book and recent poetry she has published over the past year.

**Robin Doughty** soon will be departing on his second voyage with the Semester at Sea program out of the University of Virginia. In his first semester he taught courses during a round-world voyage from Florida to San Diego via dozen ports of call. The current one, beginning in August 2014, will depart from England and make a clockwise trajectory around the Atlantic

Ocean basin, beginning in St. Petersburg Russia south into Ghana, across to Rio de Janeiro and north through Cuba into Florida. As for Robin's publishing life, he is completing a new book with Matthew Turner that explores the range of concerns about the so-called Invasive Species.

**Alwyn Barr**, a TIL member since 2011, is busy as always from his post at Texas Tech. He reports serving on the board of Humanities Texas, speaking at teacher workshops on Texas and American history, and serving on the editorial committee at the Texas Tech University Press, the Calvert Prize committee for the Texas A&M University Press, the editorial board of the journal *Military History of the West*, and the publications committee for the Texas State Historical Association.

**Mike Cox's** book *Cowboy Stuntman: From Olympic Gold to the Silver Screen*, (By Dean Smith with Mike Cox, Texas Tech University Press, 2013) was one of two finalists for a Golden Spur Award from the Western Writers of America. Mike will be recognized on June 27 at the WWA's annual conference in Sacramento. The same book was singled out by the American Library Association as one of the 11 best university press books for 2013. The stuntman in question, Dean Smith, 82, lives on a ranch between Breckenridge and Graham. He did stunts in 11 John Wayne movies, including his 1960 Alamo film, in addition to scores of other films, TV shows and conventions.

**Jake Silverstein**, editor of *Texas Monthly* from 2008 to 2014, has forsaken the Lone Star State for the Empire State. He's now the editor in chief of the *New York Times Magazine*. Brian D. Sweany has been appointed interim editor of *Texas Monthly*.

**Jerry Cravens** is one of five Texas writers represented in *Texas Five X 5, Twenty-five Stories by Five Texas Writers*, a volume published in May 2014 by Stephen F. Austin State University Press. Other writers in the book include TIL members Terry Dalrymple, Andrew Geyer, and Jan Seale. The fifth writer is Kristin van Namen. *ForeWord Magazine* named Craven's 2013 book finalist for best novel of the year from an independent press (Angelina River Press) in two categories: multicultural fiction and YA fiction. As director of Lamar University Press, Craven saw through to publication a number of books in 2014 including several by TIL members: *Crownfeathers and Effigies* by Jerry Bradley, *The Bones Poems* by William Virgil Davis, *The Parkinson Poems* by Jan Seale, and *Motherland, Stories and Poems from Louisiana* by Lynn Hoggard. As director of Ink Brush Press, Craven published in 2014 a collection of poetry, *Shattering and Bricolage*, by David Bowles, winner of TIL's Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for best translation.

**Carolyn Banks** sent this in under her description, "News of the Weird." But it's not so weird—it's good, in fact, it's great! She's a Democratic candidate for the Texas House of Representatives District 17, encompassing Bastrop, Caldwell, Lee, Gonzales and Karnes counties. "I'm not sure exactly how this happened," Banks says. She suggests we check out [www.carolynbanks.org](http://www.carolynbanks.org) for clues. (Editor's note: check it out for sure.) "Mine is a progressive agenda," she tells us. "Pro-arts, pro-environment, pro-choice." Carolyn is executive director of Upstart Media Arts Center in Bastrop.

**Ty Cashion**, our historian at Sam Houston State University and former TIL council member, writes: "Been estivating in Montreal these past few years . . . Plan to have my



manuscript in the can by the time I return mid-August. Don't know if that's newsworthy, but thought at least it would make a good "Comment howdy vous!" to put a Texan twist on a standard French greeting. My prospective title is: *The End of Texas Exceptionalism, An American Intellectual History: Promise & Peril beyond the Cultural Turn.*" (Here's a photo of Ty in Canada: [http://i266.photobucket.com/albums/ii270/his\\_rtc/Montreal%202014/IMG\\_0780\\_zpsb2228b3b.jpg](http://i266.photobucket.com/albums/ii270/his_rtc/Montreal%202014/IMG_0780_zpsb2228b3b.jpg).)

**Jerry Bradley**, down Beaumont way, says his new poetry book, *Crownfeathers and Effigies*, was published this spring by Lamar University Press. He's also had poetry published in recent issues of *Red River Review*, *Writing Texas*, *Parody*, and *Voices de la Luna* and in two anthologies. Well, then, there's more. He also published a story in the most recent issue of *Bluestem*. And did we mention that he also continues as poetry editor of *Concho River Review*? Jerry's fine work and classroom performance has not gone unnoticed. He recently received a Piper Professorship from the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation of San Antonio, awarded annually to ten outstanding Texas professors. And, he acknowledges, in "an embarrassment of recent good fortune," he received the 2014 University Professor Award from Lamar University, the highest academic honor on campus, and the 2014 Ann Die Hasselmo Faculty Excellence Award from Lamar University.

**Judy Alter**'s fifth Kelly O'Connell Mystery comes out at the end of July—*Deception in Strange Places*—and she's working on the sixth, so far untitled but something to do with revenge. In October, she'll self-publish a standalone, *The Perfect Coed*. And there's been a bit of renewed interest in her book on Texas chili. She says, "Life is good."

**Dick Reavis** is back in Texas, having retired from teaching at North Carolina State University. Welcome back, Dick!

**Larry D. Thomas** (2008 Texas poet laureate) will read from his work as the Featured Writer of the Cameron University (Lawton, OK) Visiting Writers Series. His reading, Oct. 9, 2014, will include selections from his most recently published poetry collections: *The Lobsterman's Dream: Poems of the Coast of Maine* (<http://larrydthomas.com/LobstermansDream-info.pdf>) and *The Goatherd* (Mouthfeel Press, El Paso, TX). Larry's poetry appears or is forthcoming in the *Midwest Quarterly*, *Arkansas Review*, *Texas Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Ruminate Magazine*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Southwestern American Literature*, and *Concho River Review*.

**B.H. (Pete) Fairchild**'s new book, *The Blue Buick: New and Selected Poems*, comes out from W.W. Norton July 21. Pete, who lives in Claremont, California, will be on the faculty of the Sewanee Writers Conference in late July.

**Bryan Woolley**, our former TIL president, etc., etc., moved in May into an assisted living complex in Dallas (C.C. Young, immediately north of White Rock Lake). His new address is 4847 W. Lawther Dr., Apt. 103, Dallas, TX 75215. His cell phone number is 972-989-6340.

**Nicolás Kanellos**, professor of Hispanic studies at the University of Houston, director of Arte Público Press and active with an extensive program aimed at the recovery of the literary tradition in the United States, has been honored with the National "Enrique Anderson Imbert"

Award, bestowed annually by the North American Academy of the Spanish Language (ANLE). This award recognizes those who have contributed with their studies and works to the knowledge and dissemination of Hispanic language and culture in the United States. Such recognition is not new, for our honored TIL member received just last year the 2013 City of Houston Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award for Education.

**Paula Marks** is no stranger to awards either—and for that matter, neither are so very many of our TIL members! Here's Paula's recent honor: the 2013 Faculty Award from the national Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs at its annual meeting in Chicago last October for her graduate liberal arts teaching at St. Edwards University.

**Christine Granados**, a Fredericksburg resident who was inducted into TIL in April, was happy recently to meet **Donley Watt**, a fellow F'burg resident and TIL member. Donley informed Christine that their Hill Country town, (population about 10,000) has more members per capita than any other city in the state. Anybody wanna challenge this?

**Betty Adcock** has a chapbook, *Widow Poems*, forthcoming this fall from Jacar Press in North Carolina. It'll be an eventful fall season for Betty—she'll be inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in Southern Pines, NC. As for this summer, she's raising four baby chicks in her basement for her granddaughter Mollie. Mollie, all of eleven years old, plans to go into the egg business “in a small neighborhood way.”

**Clay Reynolds** at UT-Dallas says he's had “a very modest year. Well, that's not the way many of us would see it. He published a scholarly essay, “Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch: A Retrospective and Evaluation*,” in *Studies in the Western*; two short stories, “Gethsemane” in *A Shared Voice: A Tapestry of Tales*, Lamar University Press, and “Night Work,” in *Dallas Noir*, Akashic Books. And then there was his fascinating essay, “From Castro to Cancun,” appearing in *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. This latter piece was researched while he was with our TIL group during its week in Cuba in spring 2013. He also saw his novels, a volume of short fiction, and a volume of essays issued electronically by Baen Publishing Company. Oh yes, Clay's writing student, LaToya Watkins, won a Pushcart for her short story, “Mother,” which she composed originally in one of his classes. “I am more proud of that than of anything,” Clay says. LaToya has published three stories over the past twenty-four months in major venues.

**Robert Bonazzi** has just completed a manuscript entitled *Reluctant Activist: The Spiritual Life and Work of John Howard Griffin*, the official biography from The Griffin Estate. Robert has been working on it since the 1990s, and it's now out to publishers. *Reluctant Activist* draws on Griffin's journals (1950-1980) which reveal his private spiritual meditations, a dimension that was inferred but not really discussed in *Black Like Me* or any of his other books. *Reluctant Activist* is a follow-up to Robert's *Man in the Mirror: The Story of Black Like Me* (Orbis Books, 1997). Scheduled for September publication by Wings Press is Robert's collection of essays and reviews on international, U.S., and Texas writing under the title *Outside the Margins: Literary Commentaries by Robert Bonazzi*. It includes essays on many TIL members, including but not limited to Naomi Shihab Nye, Vassar Miller, Paul Christensen, Rosemary Catacalos, Bryce Milligan, Dave Oliphant, Robert Flynn, Elroy Bode, Ronnie Dugger, James Hoggard, and Jan Seale.

**Dale Walker** writes that **Elroy Bode**, his El Paso amigo for about 50 years, has written his tenth, and what he says is his last, book. It's now out under the title of *El Paso Days*, published by **Bryce Milligan's** Wings Press. **Steve Harrigan, James Hoggard** and **Robert Flynn** have given it an excellent blurb sendoff and **Robert Bonazzi** supplied a fine introductory appreciation of Bode's work. A long-time TIL stalwart, Bode's first book, *A Texas Sketchbook*, appeared in 1967 from Texas Western Press at the University of Texas at El Paso. It was designed by Carl Hertzog.

**Paul Ruffin** (the very laconic Paul Ruffin) reports that he has recently had fiction published in *Boulevard, Hopkins Review, Modern Age*, and *South Carolina Review*. Good work, Paul, but tell us more!

**Rolando Hinojosa** was recently awarded the prestigious Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Book Critics Circle. Additionally, Arte Público Press has released a first-ever bilingual edition of *The Valley / Estampas del Valle*.

**Sergio Troncoso's** literary thriller, *The Nature of Truth*, originally published in 2003, has been issued by Arte Público Press as an updated, and first-ever paperback edition.

**Naomi Shihab Nye** received "The Betty Prize" for service to poetry from Poets House, New York City, in honor of Elizabeth Kray, co-founder of Poets House and founder of the Poets-in-the-Schools project in the United States. Naomi's novel for children, *The Turtle of Oman*, will be published in August (Greenwillow Books).

**William Virgil Davis** (we generally call him Bill) has a new book of poems--*The Bones Poems*—published by Lamar University Press. Ever active, Bill continues to give readings (he's just back from Paris—that's Paris, *France*—with readings soon in Connecticut, Oxford, and Canada). He's had a flurry of poems out recently in such publications as *Sewanee Review, Concho River Review, Cottonwood, The New Criterion, The Wallace Stevens Journal*, etc. etc.

**Pat Carr** has just had a new story collection published by High Hill Press, *The House on Prytania*, with stories set in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Again this fall, November 3-7, Pat will be conducting the Hemingway Retreat at Piggott, Arkansas (where Hemingway hung his African big game trophies and sponged off his in-laws when he wasn't letting them send him on safaris), and she'll be doing a monthly writers' workshop from now until the end of the year at the Village Writing School in Eureka Springs. Pat also will be giving the September Sundays, a writing seminar from 1-4 every Sunday afternoon in Fayetteville. Oh, yes, Pat won the 2014 Porter Literary Award presented annually to an Arkansas writer who has accomplished a substantial and impressive body of work meriting enhanced recognition.

**David Lee's** new book *Last Call*, will be out from Wings Press in August

**Christopher Cook** sends exciting news about recent events in his writing and personal life. Let's hear it in his own words: "The Sony option for a cable TV series based on my novel *Robbers* took another step forward as singer/actor Tim McGraw recently signed with Sony to act in a leading role. By the end of summer we'll have pitched to networks to move forward on the script/scripts. I've contracted to be a scriptwriter and executive producer on the project.

My collection of novellas and stories, *Langues de feu*, recently published by Editions Payot & Rivages in France, is doing well there. Meanwhile, my wife Katerina (Katka) Pinosova and I are still living in Guanajuato, Mexico, where I run the altiplano trails and go horseback riding in the mountains as often as possible. We are considering relocating in the autumn to Central Texas (if it happens, it will be a shock to be living back in the States after 20 years in Europe & Mexico. I sorta feel like a foreigner when I'm there now), where Katka would establish her garden art/sculpture business and I would continue writing my current novel and, if it comes to pass, work on writing/producing the Robbers TV pilot and series, which would be filmed in Texas. It seems one just has to keep rolling the dice.”

**Marian Schwartz**—our Russian translator in Austin--what a year she is having. “This is shaping up,” she writes, “as one of those years when many projects—translations of Russian literature--see the light of day at once. So far, I've published two novels—Andrei Gelasimov's *Rachel* (AmazonCrossing) and Yuri Mamleyev's *The Sublimes* (Haute Culture)—and two stories—Victor Shenderovich's ‘Ars Long, Vita Brevis’ (Subtropics) and Olga Slavnikova's "The Cherepanova Sisters" (New England Review) and seen one story by Nina Berberova republished "The Argentine" (Chtenia). Then there are the forthcoming for the year: Mikhail Shishkin's "The Calligraphy Lesson," which includes four of my translations, including the title story, to be published by Texas's newest literary publisher, Dallas-based Deep Vellum Press. And there are to be four more books: *High Society Dinners*, by Yuri Lotman and Elena Pogosjan (Prospect Books), *Walpurgis Night*, by Venedikt Erofeev (Yale University Press), *Playing the Part* (title subject to change), by Daria Wilke (Arthur A. Levine Books), and, saving the best for last, my new translation of *Anna Karenina*, scheduled for publication this fall from Yale University Press. I expect the pace to slow considerably in 2015.” Indeed, Marian, what a year!

**Joe Lansdale** reports that a TV series based on his work is moving forward. Bill Paxton will direct Joe's novel, *The Bottoms*. Other stuff is in the mill. Check it out: <http://www.joerlansdale.com/>.

**Ben Fountain** sends this news! He'll serve as University Endowed Chair of Creative Writing at Texas State University during 2014-16.

**Jay Brandon's** next novel will be published October 1st. Among the advance praise, David Liss wrote: “*In Shadow Knight's Mate*, Jay Brandon creates an irresistible mix of vivid characters, a thrilling conspiracy, a broad (and clever) historical scope, and a great narrative voice. In short, this is an absorbing, exciting, and absolutely entertaining novel.” All right, then, Jay, we can't wait!

**Jan Seale**, our 2012 Texas poet laureate, and her photographer son Ansen recently entertained 650 teachers attending the annual Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts in Corpus Christi with a dialog on the creative process. Then Jan flew to the University of South Carolina-Aiken as a guest of the Oswald Distinguished Writers Series. This included an evening reading of her poems and a short story featured in a new anthology of paired stories of Texas and Carolina writers, *A Shared Voice*, edited by TIL member **Andrew Geyer** and his colleague Tom Mack. *Concho River Review* published her article “Tripping the Light Fantastic” in their spring issue, and *English in Texas* will publish “Creative Joy: Process and Product” in the fall. *Texas Review Press* will publish a happy volume of recipes by the Texas poets laureate, among the entries are Jan's border recipes for Drunk Beans and Margaritas. Her latest book, *The*

*Parkinson Poems*, published by Lamar University Press last November, has been doing well despite its grim subject—40 poems based on her husband’s 20-year existence with Parkinson’s Disease. And forthcoming is Jan’s family biography of creativity, *Nature Nurture Neither*, from Angelina River Press.

**Karla K. Morton**, our 2010 Texas poet laureate, has initiated an intriguing and worthwhile project—gathering new books for schools in West, Texas, which were devastated by the huge fertilizer plant explosion in 2013. She is partnering in the project with the West Independent School District. Karla is encouraging TIL members especially to join her in this effort by sending the school district their signed books.

**Elizabeth Crook** 's novel *Monday, Monday* opens with Charles Whitman's shooting rampage from the UT tower in 1966 and follows the lives of three fictional characters brought together by that event. Published by Sarah Crichton Books of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, it's this year's selection for the Austin Mayor's Book Club. A starred KIRKUS review says this about it: "Framing a story in the context of calamity—in this instance, mass murder—invites both sensationalism and sentimentality; there have been few memorable successes, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Wally Lamb's *The Hour I First Believed* among them. Add Crook's latest to the plus side of the list...confident and lyrical as it smartly engages terror and its aftermath." (See in this newsletter's a brief excerpt from an interview with Elizabeth about *Monday, Monday*.)

**Bruce Bond**'s book, *Immanent Distance: Poetry and the Metaphysics of the Near at Hand*, has been accepted by the University of Michigan Press for publication next year. Essays from the book have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Philosophy and Literature*, *Kenyon Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Coldfront*, and *Los Angeles Review of Books*. In addition, two volumes of poetry will be published next year: *For the Lost Cathedral* (LSU) and *The Other Sky* (Etruscan).

**Paul Carlson** 's 22nd book, *Dancin' in Anson: A History of the Texas Cowboys' Christmas Ball*, will be released by Texas Tech University Press in October, 2014. Michael Martin Murphey, a Grammy-Award winning musician who performs annually at the family-oriented dance in Jones County, has written a foreword to the book.

## **TIL Officers**

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Sarah Cortez, Houston, first term ends April 2016

Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, Austin, second term ends April 2016

Russell L. Martin III, Dallas, first term ends April 2016

Karla Morton, Denton, first term ends April 2015

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