

Texas Institute of Letters

January/February/March 2010

Make Reservations Now for April 30/May 1 Meeting

A new wrinkle added to Friday night reception—WhoDo band will perform for us

The deadline for special rates at the site for our annual meeting, the downtown Austin Radisson Hotel, is approaching. It's April 7. Special rates until then are \$130 per night for TIL members. Mention our special rate when you call or write. The website is: http://www.radisson.com/hotels/us/tx/austin/42?s_cid=se.ggl.RAD_kw014755.

Reservations by telephone may be made by calling 1-800-395-7046 or 512-478-9611.

To make reservations for the Saturday, May 1, banquet send in your check and fill in the form that's on the last page of this newsletter. It goes to our treasurer, Jim Hoggard. Also indicate whether you'll attend the Friday night reception.

Now, about that reception. Not only will our members enjoy the lovely home and grounds of Carolyn and Joe Osborn at 3612 Windsor Road, including refreshments and drinks, but we'll also be entertained by the band WhoDo, featuring two of our members—Rico Ainslie and Larry Wright. It'll be a reception not to be missed. The time is 5 to 7 p.m. Friday, April 30. (See directions in the last item in this newsletter.)

At 3 p.m. on Saturday we'll have our annual readings from our new members (see the next item for their names) in a meeting room at the hotel. From 6 to 7 p.m. we'll enjoy a cash bar, also in the hotel, and then we'll retire to the banquet room for a program beginning at 7 p.m. Our president, William V. Davis, will preside. At that program presentations will be made to the winners of our literary contests, memorials will be read for members who died during the past year, and there'll be conviviality all around.

A few more words about WhoDo: Here's who they are and what they play: Rico Ainslie, author of *Long Dark Road: Bill King and Murder in Jasper, Texas* and *No Dancin' in Anson*, will be on the guitar; Larry Wright, prizewinning author of *The Looming Tower*, etc., will be on keyboard (at least, he thinks he'll be there, pending a necessary trip to New York at about that time); John Burnett of NPR will be on harmonica; attorney Brian Turner will strum a guitar; Jimmy Umstand, a real estate man, will play bass, and a student, Christian Umstatt, will bang the drums—and not very slowly, we suspect.

Ten Writers Approved for TIL Membership

The votes are in, and at our April 30/May 1 annual meeting ten new members will join the Texas Institute of Letters. Each one was nominated by a TIL member and seconded by another, as required in the by-laws. The new members were approved for consideration by TIL counselors by a four-fifths vote in January, and then submitted to members for a vote by mail and e-mail. All those submitted were approved by majority vote.

The new TIL members will read from their works on Saturday afternoon at the Radisson Hotel.

As the following brief summaries indicate, they are interesting people of significant accomplishments.

Susan Wittig Albert, author of the "China Bayles" mystery series for young people and more recently a memoir entitled *Together, Alone: A Memoir of Marriage and Place*, published by the University of Texas Press. Susan is a former vice president for Academic Affairs at Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State) who gave up her college administrative career to be a free-lance writer in Bertram in the Texas Hill Country. She was co-editor with current TIL member Jan Seale of the anthology, *What Wildness Is This: Women Write About the Southwest* (2007).

Joseph E. Chance of Edinburg, a widely published author and editor of military history in Texas, the South, and Mexico. His books include *Jose Maria de Jesus Carvajal: The Life and Times of a Mexican Revolutionary* (Trinity University Press, 2006), *My Life in the Old Army: The Reminiscences of Abner Doubleday* (editor); and *Jefferson Davis's Mexican War*. Chance is a retired mathematics professor at the University of Texas-PanAmerican.

Light T. Cummins, Guy M. Bryan Professor of American History at Austin College in Sherman, most recently published a biography of Stephen F. Austin's sister, Emily Austin Perry, entitled *Emily Austin of Texas, 1795-1851*, as part of the Texas Biography Series from the TCU Press. He is on the board of directors of the Texas State Historical Association, and is a lifetime fellow of that organization.

George Getschow, Flower Mound, is writer-in-residence at the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest, an annual three-day literary event at the University of North Texas in Denton. He is a former writer, editor and bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*. Some of his feature stories have been anthologized in books such as *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing*.

M. Jimmie Killingsworth, College Station, is chairman of the English Department at Texas A&M. He is an authority on the poet Walt Whitman, and has been acclaimed for his biography, *Walt Whitman and the Earth*, a groundbreaking study of a great poet who lived in an era in which the environment was seen mainly as a disposable commodity. Another of his works is the commentary accompanying the nature photographs of D. Gentry Steele in *Reflections of the Brazos Valley* (Texas A&M, 2007).

Rich Levy, Houston, executive director of Inprint, a literary organization that among other activities has brought well-known writers to Houston such as John Updike and E.L. Doctorow. Inprint also sponsors workshops and other programs that serve the Houston literary community. Levy is a widely published poet whose first collection, *Why Me?* has just been published by Mutabilis Press. Levy has an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop.

Ann McCutchan, Denton, is a creative writing teacher at the University of North Texas who has had two books published and a third one due publication this year. Her published books are *Marcel Moyse: Voice of the Flute* (Amadeus Press, 1994) and *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process* (Oxford University Press, 1999). Her third book will be a collection of essays entitled *Circular Breathing*. She is prose editor of the *American Literary Review*.

James McWilliams, Austin, is a historian at Texas State University who has begun to specialize in cultural and ecological history as well as sustainability and environmental issues. His latest books are *American Pests: The Losing War on Insects from Colonial Times to DDT* (Columbia, 2008) and *Just Food* (Columbia, 2009). His book, *A Revolution in Eating* (Columbia, 2005), examined the culinary history of Colonial America.

Debbie Nathan, New York, author of books, essays, and articles dealing with immigration, the U.S.-Mexico border, and sexual politics. She has been published in periodicals such as *The Village Voice*, *The Nation*, *MS*, *Playboy*, *Texas Observer*, *New York Times*, and *Redbook*. Among her honors are as recipient of the H.L. Mencken Award for Investigative Journalism and the PEN West Award for journalism. Her latest book is *Pornography: A Groundwork Guide* (2007).

James S. Olson, Huntsville, is professor of history at Sam Houston State and author, co-author, or editor of more than fifty books. He has won numerous awards for such varied works as *Historical Dictionary of the New Deal* to *The History of Cancer* to *John Wayne American*. His book, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*, was a best non-fiction book selection of the year selection by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Our Recording Secretary Busy Compiling Past Records

Betty Wiesepape is on the lookout for programs of our annual meetings for 1967 and 1988. She's trying to get membership lists for those years. Any of you who happen to have saved those programs could help her out by sending her a copy (or, of course the original).

Terry Dalrymple Issues Call for Submissions

Call for Submissions: short stories somehow inspired by a song by a Texas singer/songwriter; approximately 15 stories will be included in *Texas Soundtrack*, a book to be published by Ink Brush Press. For submission guidelines, e-mail Terry Dalrymple at terry.dalrymple@angelo.edu.

Finalists Will Be Announced Soon in TIL Literary Contests

The deadline for finalists in the literary contests is March 1. When they all are confirmed, members will be sent the full list. Winners, of course, will be named at our annual banquet in Austin on May 1.

News of Members and Others . . .

Jerry Bradley's new book of poems, *The Importance of Elsewhere*, has just been issued by Ink Brush Press. Check Jerry's other new poems in *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *New Texas*, and *Chest*. More honors for Jerry, who teaches at Lamar University: He recently won the inaugural Distinguished Leadership Award from the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association for having chaired its creative writing program since 1992, and he placed second in the 2010 Texas Poetry Calendar contest judged by Mark Doty.

Liz Carpenter will turn 90 years old next September, and the birthday wish of this faithful Democrat is to make sure her party takes back the governorship, Senate and Texas Legislature in 2010. She appreciates old friends and urges them to come by or call her and visit. Her number is 512-327-4242 and her address is 116 Skyline Dr., Austin, 78704.

Gary Lavergne has a new book due out this fall: *Before Brown: Heman Sweatt, Thurgood Marshall and the Long Road to Justice* (UT Press). TIL's new 2009 TIL member, **Amilcar Shabazz**, professor and chair of the W.E.B. DuBois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, says: "At last someone has told the story of Heman Sweatt, one of the great sons of the struggle for freedom and justice, with all the drama and passion it deserves." Gary's previous books include *A Sniper in the Tower: The Charles Whitman Murders*.

Ann Weisgarber, whose novel, *The Personal History of Rachel DuPree*, won the Steven Turner Award last year, writes with news about **Thomas Cobb**, whose novel *Shavetail* won TIL's 2008 Jesse H. Jones Award. If you read the fine print about recent acclaimed movies you may have noticed the news, but most likely you didn't. Cobb's first novel was the basis for *Crazy Heart*, just released as a movie to wide acclaim. Jeff Bridges has the lead role. He recently won the Golden Globe Award for best actor, and he is a nominee for best actor in the Academy Awards. The movie also has been nominated for two other Academy Awards. Ann has been in touch with Tom and she reports that he was in Los Angeles for the movie's premiere. "It's so exciting, and I'm thrilled for him," she writes. "He's such a great guy. He's also the last person on earth to toot his own horn, so I'm doing it for him." Thanks, Ann. We're so pleased to hear about this.

Abraham Verghese, our physician/author, formerly of San Antonio and now the chair for the theory and practice of medicine at Stanford University, is on the road promoting paperback publication of his novel, *Cutting for Stone*. "It is amazing to think that this will be my sixth book tour (hardback and paperback of three books); the excitement I feel is much like the first time," he writes. "I particularly have enjoyed meeting former students and long lost friends not to mention those with whom I have never lost touch. More than ever, these tours are also a writer's way of supporting the great independent book stores in this country—I owe them for the wonderful word-of-mouth they have generated around *Cutting for Stone*. Here's the **Knopf Doubleday Vintage Reading Group** link to places Abraham—Dr. Verghese—will be: http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375714368&view=isbn_events. Abraham also has a Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Abraham-Verghese/58682802789>) which is updated as he makes the round, and he has found that he loves Twitter, too, and his address there is *cuttingforstone*.

Kimberly Willis Holt's new novel, *The Waterseeker*, will be published in May 2011. Meanwhile she is offering five free books to some lucky souls. Go to <http://whatsnewwithkimberly.blogspot.com/> for details.

TIL OFFICERS

President, William Virgil Davis, Waco, William.Davis@baylor.edu (underscore between William and Davis)

Vice President, John Miller Morris, Austin, jmorris@utsa.edu

Secretary, Darwin Payne, Dallas, dpayne@smu.edu

Treasurer, James Hoggard, Wichita Falls, james.hoggard@mwsu.edu

Recording Secretary, Betty Wiesepape, Richardson, Betwx@aol.com

TIL COUNCILORS

T. Lindsay Baker, Rio Vista, first term ends April 2011

Ty Cashion, Huntsville, first term ends April 2010

Emily Fox Gordon, Houston, first term ends April 2011

Fritz Lanham, Houston, second term ends April 2011

Frances Neidhardt, Sherman, first term ends April 2010

Jan Seale, McAllen, second term ends April 2011

W.K. (Kip) Stratton, Round Rock, 1st term ends April 2010

Andres Tijerina, Austin, first term ends in April 2010

**Please use this form for remitting your dues for 2009-10 fiscal year
and for reserving banquet tickets for the spring annual meeting.**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-Mail _____

TIL dues for the fiscal year 2009-10 _____ \$50.00

Paisano Fund _____

Fred Whitehead Memorial Endowment Fund _____

Scholarly Book Award Endowment Fund _____

O. Henry Award Endowment Fund _____

Stanley Walker Award Endowment Fund _____

May 1 banquet tickets, \$50 per person _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

Make check payable to Texas Institute of Letters and send to:

James Hoggard, Dept. of English, Midwestern State University, 3410 Taft, Wichita Falls, TX 76308.

Directions to Carolyn Osborn's house from the Radisson Hotel for the Friday reception:

From the front of the hotel facing north: Turn west, which is left, on Caesar Chavez. Pass through three traffic lights. Angle right on MoPac Expressway (Route 1) and continue to the Windsor Rd. exit, which will be the second exit after you enter MoPac. Turn right and continue under MoPac to stop light. Cross Exposition. a major street with a another stoplight. Continue west. Cross Pecos, a four-way stop. 3612 Windsor is three blocks past Pecos on the right.

If you're coming from the north, take MoPac (Route 1) south, take Windsor Rd. exit to the right and at the first stoplight, turn left. Follow directions above, that is, cross Exposition, etc. Her phone: 472-4533.