

Texas Institute of Letters



Jan/Feb/March 2015

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

It's again upon us—our annual meeting, April 10-11, at the University of Houston

For the first time in many years, The Texas Institute of Letters' annual meeting and awards banquet will take place Friday and Saturday, April 10 and 11 at the Hilton Hotel on the campus of the University of Houston.

This time there'll be some new wrinkles, so pay attention!

We begin at 6:30 p.m. Friday with a cash bar, light hors d'oeuvres, music by a string ensemble, and poetry reading by our own **Jim Hoggard**. This will be in the hotel's second-floor Shamrock Room, with **Kurt Heinzelmann** serving as emcee. And then the first two poetry awards will be announced--Helen C. Smith Award for Best Book of Poetry and the Bob Bush Memorial Award for First Book of Poetry. Afterwards, the winners, finalists, and Jim Hoggard will sign books.

Next morning the TIL council will convene at 11 a.m. to take care of all the myriad details that confront this august body. Over business they'll also have a box lunch. This meeting of the councilors ends at 1 p.m. in the Palacio del Rio Conference Room (second floor).

At 2 p.m. Saturday in Classroom 108 on the first floor, the annual new members' readings will

take place. Everybody invited for this one. It's an excellent opportunity to see and hear our new members and to cheer them on. **Steve Davis**, our vice president, will preside. The new members: **Gregg Barrios, Michael Berryhill, James Crisp, Nan Cuba, Ben Johnson, and W.J. Sibley.**

Immediately afterwards, from 3 to 4 p.m. more awards will be presented. That'll be for the Denton Record-Chronicle Best Children's Picture Book, H-E-B/Jean Flynn Best Children's Book, H-E-B Best Young Adults Book, and the Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book.

Our new members will then be available to sign copies of their books.

At 6 p.m. we'll meet for a reception (cash bar) in the Alumni Wall of Honor Room on the first floor. Book signings will be a continuing feature.

Dinner in the Waldorf-Astoria Ballroom, second floor, begins at 7 p.m., and at 8 p.m. the awards program begins. Chairs of the various contests will announce the winners, and the checks and certificates will be presented by our president, Andrés Tijerina. These will include the Steven Turner Award for First Fiction, the "Bud" Shrake Award for Short Nonfiction (followed by a ten-minute feature presentation by Joe Holley), the Ramirez Award for Scholarly Book, the Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story. Then Michael Adams will give a six-minute feature presentation on the Dobie Paisano Fellowships. Awards resume with presentation of the Jesse H. Jones Best Work of Fiction. Presentation of the Lon Tinkle Award to **Lawrence Wright** will include a ten-minute feature and readings by **Rico Ainslie.**

A word about the Tinkle Award: It is given annually for an outstanding career in letters that has brought honor to the state. Wright was selected for that honor by TIL's council and past presidents at its recent meeting. Lon Tinkle was a longtime book editor at the Dallas Morning News, professor of comparative literature at Southern Methodist University, and prominent member of TIL.

Adjournment is scheduled for 10 p.m.

Here are the finalists for the 2014 awards

Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction (\$6,000) Elizabeth Crook, *Monday, Monday*;
Manuel Luis Martinez, *Los Duros*; Smith Henderson, *Fourth of July Creek*

Steven Turner Award for Best Work of First Fiction (\$1,000) Merritt Tierce, *Love Me Back*; Joe Holley, *The Purse Bearer*; Carlton Stowers, *Comanche Trail*

Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Non-fiction (\$5,000) Michael Morton, *Getting Life: An Innocent Man's 25-Year Journey from Prison to Peace*; Ezra Greenspan, *William Wells Brown: An African American Life*; Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz, *Dr. Mutter's Marvels: A True Tale of Intrigue and Innovation at the Dawn of Modern Medicine*

Ramirez Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book (\$2,500) Lawrence T. Jones, III, *Lens on the Texas Frontier*; Houston Faust Mount II, *Oil Field Revolutionary*; Alicia M. Dewey, *Pesos and Dollars* .

Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry (\$1,200) Katherine Hoerth, *Goddess Wears Cowboy Boots*; Jan Seale, *The Parkinson Poems*; Carmen Tafolla, *This River Here: Poems of San Antonio*.

Bob Bush Memorial Award For First Book Of Poetry (\$1,000) Chloe Honum, *The Tulip-Flame*; B.V. Olguin, *Red Leather Gloves*; Gayle Lauradrunn, *Reaching for Air*.

Edwin "Bud" Shrake Award for Short Nonfiction (\$1,000) Pamela Colloff, "The Witness" in *Texas Monthly* (Sept., 2014); Alan Peppard, "Islands of the Oil Kings" in *Dallas Morning News* (Dec 7, 14, and 21); Michael Hall, "The Murders at the Lake" in *Texas Monthly* (April, 2014).

Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story (\$1,000) Brian Van Reet, *Eat the Spoil*; Paul Christensen, *The Man Next Door*; Andrew Geyer, *Fingers*.

Denton Record-Chronicle Best Children's Picture Book (\$500) Pat Mora, *I Pledge Allegiance*; Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus, *Grandfather Gandhi*; J.L. Powers, *Colors of the Wind*.

H-E-B/Jean Flynn Best Children's Book (\$500) Nikki Loftin, *Nightingale's Nest*; Naomi Shihab Nye, *Turtle of Oman*; Greg Leitich Smith, *Little Green Men at the Mercury Inn*.

H-E-B Best Young Adults Book (\$500) Claudia Guadalupe Martinez, *Pig Park*; Katherine Howe, *Conversion*.

Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book (\$750) Bill Wittliff and Ellen McKie, *The Devil's Backbone* illustrated by Jack Unruh; Zeque Penya, *GABI, A Girl in Pieces*, design by Isabel Quintero; Salvador Novo, *Pillar of Salt* design by Lindsay Starr.

Message from our president, Andrés Tijerina

No sooner do we give out the 2015 TIL Awards that we are now soliciting names for judges for the next round of TIL literary contests. We need three judges for each of the contests listed below (the

fiction, poetry, and children's/young adults panels will judge entries for two awards). Judging will begin in the fall and conclude sometime in February, 2016.

In addition, we also need six TIL judges for the next round of Dobie Paisano Fellowships. Judging for the fellowships will begin in January 2016 and conclude in April 2016, more or less.

If you are interested in judging, please let us know by April 8 by replying to TIL Past President Kip Stratton at the e-mail in the TO: line of this e-mail message. Kip will keep the lists of judges for us. Please let me know which contests you'd be interested in judging. Also let me know if you'd be interested in judging the Dobie Paisano Fellowships. The Council will act on appointing judges at its April meeting in Houston.

Some news about our TIL members

Bryce Milligan was very pleased to have new prose poems included in the 100th anniversary issue of *Southwest Review* and in the 20th anniversary issue of the *Asheville Poetry Review*. New poems are also in the *Anglican Theological Review*, *Clover*, and *Cutthroat*.

Among the 18 titles coming from Milligan's Wings Press in 2015 (he's slowing down—Wings published 25 each of the previous two years), there are some significant Texas titles: New poetry includes **Geoff Rips**'s *The Calculus of Falling Bodies* (March), **James Hoggard**'s *Soon After Rain* (March), and Frank Rosengren Duane's *Anywhere from Orpheus* (January). Coming in September/October are **Charles Dameron**'s *Drinking from the River*, Amalia Ortiz's *Rant. Chant. Chisme.*, **Wendy Barker**'s *From the Moon, Earth is Blue*, John Igo's *A Stone for Plot 3*, **Norma Cantu**'s *Transcendental Train Yard*, and **Naomi Shihab Nye**'s *Famous*. Two important volumes of criticism will appear next fall. **Roberto Bonazzi**'s *Outside the Margins*, a collection of literary essays and reviews that covers many Texas writers, and **Dave Oliphant**'s collected criticism on Texas poetry, *Generations of Texas Poets*.

The big book for the year from Wings—and its 200th title—has to be *Her Texas: Story, Image, Poem & Song* (March), a 448-page anthology that the *San Antonio Express-News* described as being “among the most important anthologies of Texas writing in a

generation.” (Do ask your local newspaper about it if they have not reviewed it!) *Her Texas* contains work by 60 Texas women writers, songwriters, and artists. It is edited by Texans Donna Walker-Nixon, Rachel Crawford, Cassy Burlison and Ashley Palmer. The launch party at BookPeople in Austin drew over 100.

Also of interest to many Texas writers will be *Rosengren's Books: An Oasis for Mind and Spirit*, by Mary Carolyn Hollers George (January). This fine remembrance of everyone's favorite bookstore is a real treasure. **David Farmer** wrote of it, “Here is a beautiful tribute, not only to one of America's great bookstores, but also to Florence Rosengren, whose sphere of influence in the book world extended throughout Texas and beyond.”

Wings Press is 40 years old this year. Between the *Her Texas* contributors and editors, and the individual titles, Wings Press is publishing 75 Texas writers in 2015. There will be an appropriate birthday party in October.

Tom Zigal has picked up another award for his memorable novel about the devastating storm Katrina that transfixed the nation and changed the lives of those who lived through it. *Many Rivers to Cross* won the best-fiction-of-the-year award from the Philosophical Society of Texas. Tom drove from his home in Austin to Tyler to receive the award at the society's semi-annual meeting. Speaking of driving, a few weeks ago an Austin driver ran a red light and “t-boned” Tom. The result: a broken collarbone in three places. Hope you're recovering from that, Tom.

News from **Gerald Duff**. His novel *Memphis Ribs*, first published in 1999, will appear in a new edition from Brash Books. Also published in 2015 is his most recent novel, *Playing Custer*, from TCU Press, which illuminates from varying points of view and time events leading up to the death of General George Custer at Little Big Horn.

Sergio Troncoso has a wonderful reminiscent essay in the April issue of *Texas Monthly* entitled “The Good Son.” Here's a suggestive hint of what it's about in the subtitle: “I left El Paso at the age of eighteen and never looked back. Decades later, with my father's health failing, I realize what I left behind.” Sergio now lives in New York City as a successful author who has degrees from Harvard and Yale.

Sarah Cortez has edited a volume of poetry for Texas Review Press entitled *Goodbye Mexico: Poems of Remembrance*. It includes original work from almost fifty poets across the U.S. In addition, one of Sarah's essays on crime has been short-listed for the Tucson Festival of Books Literary Awards in Creative Nonfiction. Sarah recently returned from teaching creative writing in Puerto Vallarta at the Ninth Annual International Writing Conference.

Joe Lansdale reports a forthcoming Hap and Leonard TV series based on his books. Filming begins for the Sundance Channel this summer.

Jim Magnuson is up to his usual, still directing the Michener Center for Writers, but there's more—much more. His new novel, *Famous Writers I Have Known*, was named one of the best books of the year by National Radio. It apparently has not cost him his day job. Research for his next book took him to Lapland in January where it was 39 below. His report on the impact of that freezing temperature: "I nearly died."

Wings Press, as part of its 40th anniversary in the autumn of 2015, will be publishing **Roberto Bonazzi's** *Outside the Margins: Literary Commentaries*. The collection includes essays on (mostly) poetry from independent imprints and university presses that have been published in *World Literature Today*, *National Catholic Reporter*, *Library Journal*, *Southwest Review*, *San Francisco Book Review*, *Vortex*, *New Orleans Review*, *Texas Observer*, *Small Press Review*, many Texas newspapers, including columns for the *San Antonio Express-News*, as well as introductions to books by **Naomi Shihab Nye**, Vassar Miller, Marjorie Agosin, **Elroy Bode**, and a Rumi CD by Robert Bly. International poets from Spain and Latin America—Machado, Jimenez, Garcia-Lorca, Neruda, Parra, Vallejo and Octavio Paz receive essays along with American authors and Texas writers.

Steve Davis, our vice president, has been on the road, bringing in archives from past and present TIL members to the Wittliff Collections at Texas State University, where he works as the literary curator. Some of these notable acquisitions are: the remainder of (deceased TIL member) **James Crumley's** literary papers, repatriated from Missoula, Montana, back to Texas. Also, the complete **Marc Simmons** library, which the noted historian and TIL member has compiled over the past 60 years. At some 15,000 volumes this represents one of the premier private research libraries on the Southwest. Dr.

Simmons also donated his substantial archive to the Wittliff, which totals nearly 400 boxes. Steve also picked up from **Carmen Tafolla** the archive pertaining to her great-great grandfather, Santiago Tafolla, who wrote a memoir of his amazing life in 1908— an account that was finally published 101 years later as *A Life Crossing Borders: Memoir of a Mexican American Confederate*, edited by Carmen and her cousin, Laura. That original manuscript is now at the Wittliff Collections, where it is the focus of a digital preservation project and online exhibition.

Paul Marks, out Buda way, has become second vice president of the Texas State Historical Association, slated to be president in 2017. Her association with the association (to be redundant) began in the mid 1980s when she was a graduate research assistant on the multi-volume *Handbook of Texas*. The nominee is confirmed by voice vote at the annual meeting. She writes: “Before this vote I had visions of the scene in *The Princess Bride* in which Princess Buttercup at her marriage ceremony is publicly harangued with scorn by an attendee. Fortunately, this did not happen.”

Jerry Bradley has a new title. He was named University Professor of English at Lamar University, the university's highest academic award, and he was selected as a Piper Professor by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation of San Antonio which annually recognizes ten top professors in Texas. Jerry won the 2015 Margie Boswell Award for poetry from TCU. His most recent poetry collection is *Crownfeathers and Effigies* (Lamar University Press). Jerry is co-editing with Ulf Kirchdorfer an anthology of snarky poetry (*The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology*); submissions close June 15, so hustle up!

A.G. Mojtabei's eleventh book, *Shine on Me*, will be published by Northwestern University Press this year.

As this newsletter was being put together, **Christopher Cook** and his wife Katerina (Katka) Pinosova were in the process of moving to the Austin area from Mexico, looking for a house to rent. If they haven't yet found one, let them hear from you. “Also by the time you read this,” Christopher writes, “I suppose I'll be working on a pilot script for a cable TV series based on my novel *Robbers*. The Sony Picture folks in LA are now negotiating terms with several networks who want to deal; final network yet to be determined. And Katka, who is an artist, thinks Central Texas will be a better market for her functional concrete garden art (functional sculptures). As they say: ‘Gone to Texas.’ Again.”

Karla K. Morton admits that she is “SO excited” to announce the arrival of her tenth collection of poetry (and who wouldn’t be?). It’s entitled *Constant State of Leaping*, from the Texas Review Press. This book, already short-listed for the Montaigne Medal, features cover art by legendary artist Donna Howell-Sickles.

Lonn Taylor and Carol M. Highsmith's book, *Texas*, with a foreword by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, was recently published by Chelsea Publishing. Taylor contributed an essay explaining why we Texans are like we are to accompany Highsmith's superb photographs, which cover Texas from El Paso to Beaumont and Brownsville to Amarillo. The book is part of a project undertaken by Highsmith and the Library of Congress to create a photographic record of early twenty-first century America, state by state. The photographs in the book are drawn from 5,000 images taken by Highsmith during a six-month tour of Texas, now in the Lynn Hill Texas Collection at the Library of Congress.

Jerry Craven's novel *Women of Thunder* (TCU Press, 2014) had earlier in manuscript form won first place for fiction from the Deep South Festival of Writers; Ernest Gaines was the final judge. Five of Craven's short stories appear in *Texas 5 X 5, Twenty-five Stories by Five Texas Writers* (SFA University Press, 2014). Also featured in the anthology are TIL members **Terry Dalrymple**, **Andrew Geyer**, and **Jan Seale**; the fifth writer is Kristin vanNamen. As director of Lamar university Press, Craven published 14 books, mostly poetry and fiction. Four were by TILmembers: **Jerry Bradley**, **William Virgil Davis**, **Gerald Duff**, and Lynn Hoggard. As director of Ink Bursh Press, Craven in 2014 published four collections of poetry and a novel by Texas writers.

Very interesting news from **Marian Schwartz**, who has just translated an important Russian novel. In June 2013, the Russian government passed laws prohibiting "gay propaganda." That same month, in spite of these harsh laws, a Russian publisher released Daria Wilke's *Playing a Part*, a YA coming-of-age novel with openly gay characters. Arthur A. Levine Books has just published her translation of this book, which she believes also has the distinction of being the first Russian YA novel to be published in English.

Jesse Sublett is getting lots of attention on this one. And check out this title, a natural. March is the month of the release of my new book, *1960s Austin Gangsters: Organized Crime that Rocked the*

Capital, from History Press, with book events in Austin during SXSW week, a grand release party at BookPeople in Austin on March 23rd, 7 PM, and an appearance at the Wildcatters Exchange Festival in Fort Worth on March 27. “This time out,” Jesse writes, “my first book-PR outing was at Owen Egerton’s One-Page Salon at the South Austin pub, Whip In. After reading new true crime piece, I was approached by three individuals who claimed a past relationship with the underworld characters I’ve written about. Each of those individuals struck me as knowing enough about it to be credible—and I know enough not to give their real names here.”

Joyce Roach has two new books, *Short Call: Snippets from the Smallest Places in Texas*, UNT Press for Texas Folklore Society in December 2014; Texas lore told in the voices of the folk with Joyce playing all the parts; and *Land of Rain Shadow: Horned Toad, Texas* from Texas Tech University Press, April , 2015; a story collection of West Texas voices and themes.

Ann Weisgarber recently went to Los Angeles to meet the producer and screenwriter/director for her novel, *The Personal History of Rachel DuPree*, winner of the 2008 Stephen Turner Award for Best Work of First Fiction. She’s read several drafts of the screenplay, and the location’s been scouted. Viola Davis plans to play the lead role and no, Ann hasn’t been asked to play a cameo part. That’s fine with her since the very notion of a film is almost more than her nerves can take. We’ll see you in Houston, Ann.

Fran Vick is putting finishing touches on the Texas Folklore Society publication for 2015, *Tales of Texas Cooking: Stories and Recipes—from the Trans Pecos to the Piney Woods and from the High Plains to the Gulf Prairies*. Present and former TIL members represented include **Jean Andrews, Roy Bedichek, Bob Compton, J. Frank Dobie, John Erickson, Bob Flynn, Jean Flynn, Leon Hale, Elmer Kelton, Gary Lavergne, James Ward Lee, Jane Monday, Joyce Roach, Walter Prescott Webb, Jane Roberts Wood.**

Alwyn Barr authored the chapter on “African Americans” in *Discovering Texas History*, edited by Bruce A. Glasrud, **Light Townsend Cummins**, and Cary D. Wintz, and published by the University of Oklahoma Press in 2014. At the 2015 annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association on March 5-7, Alwyn also served as one of five panelists at a session discussing that historiographical volume.

On March 9 **Alan Birkelbach** was informed by the Western Writers of America that his poem *A Little Longer Than The Moment* had won the Spur Award in the Best Western Poem Category. Since 1953 the WWA Spur Awards have honored the best in Western fiction, nonfiction, song lyrics, poetry and film scripting. The Awards Banquet will be held June 27th in Lubbock.

Our own **Bill Davis** (okay, former president **William Virgil Davis**) has been informed that Professor Francisco José Craveiro de Carvalho, of the University of Coimbra in Portugal, has begun a project to translate my poetry into Portuguese. About a dozen of his translations of Bill's poems have been published to date. Other news from Bill: "I judged the competition for the X. J. Kennedy Poetry Prize. The winning book will be published in 2015. My poem, "Scattering the Ashes," has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. I was interviewed by Joel Ferdon, an MFA student at McNeese State University, who is writing his thesis on my poetry. And there's more: "My poem, "Corminbeouf 432" (In Memory of Robert Rehder), was published in Gargoyle, No. 61 (2014), 68. My poem, "Seventeen," was published in Gargoyle, No. 61 (2014), 68. My poem, "An Unexpected Visit," was published in The Antigonish Review (Canada), No. 178 (Summer, 2014), 45. I gave readings of my poetry at Texas A & M and Blinn College in February."

Larry D. Thomas's poetry collection, *The Goatherd* (Mouthfeel Press, El Paso) won the 2015 Western Heritage Award (literary/poetry book category). Sponsored by the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, the Western Heritage Awards are among the top national awards for creative work in literature, music, and film/television which celebrates the historical or contemporary American West. Thomas's **As If Light Actually Matters: New & Selected Poems** is forthcoming later this year from Texas Review Press (Texas A&M University Press Consortium).

Shelby Hearon, last word, was still snowed in up there in Vermont, where she now lives, and happy to be there. She's reading all the historical novels (Dreyfus, Pompeii, etc) by Robert Harris. "Still love to hear about you guys," she writes. Shelby—you are missed down here in Texas. If you ever get tired of that snow. . . .

Greg Garrett writes from Austin that his lead trade book for Oxford University Press, *Entertaining Judgment: The Afterlife in Popular Imagination*, launched in January at Austin's BookPeople. Greg, **Sarah Bird**, and Owen Egerton had a lively conversation there about how writers

wrestle with the Big Questions. Greg did a March “Brews and Views” at Austin’s Cactus Café with KUT Austin’s Jennifer Stayton, where he was preached at by a UT coed and converted a bartender to the Episcopal Church (or, roughly, no net change), and he also talked about the book with KERA Dallas’ “Think” and BBC Scotland. *Entertaining Judgment* has been featured in *New Statesman*, *Publishers Weekly*, and other media outlets, and Greg was invited to contribute cover articles on the afterlife and pop culture to Salon.com and the UK’s second-oldest magazine, *The Tablet*. In other news, *Verlorener Sohn: Roman*, a German translation of *The Prodigal*, Greg’s 2013 novel with Brennan Manning, was published in Germany in February, and Greg says it is crazy cool seeing how the book’s epigraph from Mumford and Sons becomes completely unsingable in German. Greg also did speaking and teaching gigs this spring in Dallas, Delaware, Florida, Arizona, Wales, and for the Texas Writes! Program in Pearsall and the Writers League of Texas in Austin, all in addition to his lovely longstanding teaching job at Baylor.

Kathi Appelt has two new picture books out this spring. Released in January, *When Otis Courted Mama*, illustrated by Jill McElmurry, published by Harcourt Houghton Mifflin is the tale of Cardell, a little coyote who has to learn how to cope with his new stepfather, Otis. It’s based on Kathi’s memories of her stepfather George, who was a master story teller. *Kirkus* and *School Library Journal* both gave it starred reviewed. *Counting Crows*, illustrated by Rob Dunlavey, is a counting book. It was just released in March, and has garnered three stars from *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus*. In February, she and her husband Ken traveled to NYC to see the premiere off-Broadway production of *Texas in Paris*, a play written by TIL member **Alan Govenar**. The play is based on oral interviews and actual concerts that Alan did with folk legends Osceola Davis and John Burris.

Joe Lansdale tells us that a Hap and Leonard TV series based on his books begins filming for Sundance Channel this summer.

Andrew Geyer’s short story “Fingers” won the 2015 Spur Award for Best Short Fiction from the Western Writers of America. This is Geyer’s second Spur Award win. “Fingers” is the opening story in the composite anthology *Texas 5X5* (Geyer’s co-authors are **Jerry Craven**, **Jan Seale**, **Terry Dalrymple**, and Kristin vanNamen) which has just been named a finalist for the Foreword Magazine Book of the Year Award in the Short Stories category.

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