

TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS NEWSLETTER

May-June, 2008



Our annual meeting was held this year in Dallas, and the accompanying photographs were taken at the reception at Harlan Crow's library. Some 95 were there for the Friday night reception, and about 145 attended the annual meeting Saturday evening at the Park Cities Hilton Hotel. Our new president, William Virgil Davis, is below, visiting with Toni Terry, center, and his wife Carol. At left, under the imposing portrait, are Joe Osborn and Felix Almaraz.



TIL Winners for Works Published in 2007 Are Named

Prizes totaling \$21,700 were awarded for works published in 2007 at the Texas Institute of Letters' annual meeting in Dallas on April 19. Seven new members were inducted, and SMU historian David J. Weber was honored with the Lon Tinkle Award for excellence sustained throughout a career.

Top prizewinner was novelist John J. McLaughlin of Seattle, Washington, whose *Run in the Fam'ly*, captured the \$6,000 Jesse H. Jones Award for best novel and also the \$1,000 Steven Turner Award for best first novel.

The novel, published by the University of Tennessee Press, is an intimate portrait of the desperate lives of lower class people in an inner city. McLaughlin is a native of San Antonio with an MFA in fiction from the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop,

In the non-fiction category, Robert Krueger and Kathleen Tobin Krueger won the \$5,000 Carr P. Collins Award for *From Bloodshed to Hope in Burundi: Our Embassy Years During Genocide*, published by the University of Texas Press. In the book Krueger, who was ambassador to Burundi, and his wife Kathleen provide an eyewitness report to the genocide occurring there and in neighboring Rwanda and of their efforts to stop it. The Kruegers now live in New Braunfels.

Winner of the \$2,500 TIL award for best scholarly book was Jerry Thompson for *Cortina: Defending the Mexican Name in Texas* published by Texas A&M University Press, 2007. Thompson is Regents Professor at Texas A&M International University in Laredo and former president of the Texas State Historical Association.

Rick Bass, who now lives in Troy, Montana, claimed two first-place awards. His short story, "The Elephant," appearing in the summer 2007 edition of *Tin House*, won the \$750 Kay Cattarulla Prize for Best Short Story, and his article, "The Lives of the Browns," published in *Southern Review*, Autumn 2007, won the \$1,000 O. Henry Award for Magazine Journalism.

Cate Marvin won the \$1,200 Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry for *Fragment of the Head of a Queen* (Sarabande Books).

Todd Bensman of the *San Antonio Express-News* won the \$1,000 Stanley Walker Award for Best Work of Newspaper Journalism Appearing in Newspaper or Sunday Supplement for his series, "Breaching America."

The \$750 Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book went to DJ Stout and Julie Savasky, co-designers of *Reflections of a Man: The Photographs of Stanley Marcus*, published by Cairn Press and edited by Jerrie Smith and Allison Smith.

Arturo O. Martinez won the \$500 Friends of the Austin Public Library Award for Best Children's Book for *Pedrito's World*, published by Texas Tech University Press.

Naomi Shihab Nye's *I'll Ask You Three Times, Are You OK?, Tales of Driving and Being Driven*, won the \$500 Friends of the Austin Public Library Award for Best Young Adult Book. The book was published by Greenwillow Books, an imprint of Harper/Collins Publishers.

The Lon Tinkle Award, won by Weber, carries a prize of \$1,500. Weber, a specialist in the American Southwest and Mexico, is a prolific scholar who is director of SMU's William P. Clements Center for Southwestern Studies.

As part of its efforts to promote the appreciation of literature in Texas, the TIL helps fund the Dobie-Paisano Fellows, awarded annually to promising writers and artists, by giving \$12,000 a year to the Jesse Jones Fellowship and \$2,000 to the Ralph Johnston Fellowship. This year's fellows, who reside at J. Frank Dobie's Paisano ranch, are Alison Moore and Mary Helen Specht. The 2008-2009 fellows are profiled below.

Seven New Members Named at Annual Meeting

New members inducted into the organization at the April 19 annual meeting were:

T. Lindsay Baker of Rio Vista, a prolific author of books on Texas and holder of the W.K. Gordon Endowed Chair in History at Tarleton State University.

Scott Blackwood of Austin, novelist and short story writer who is director of the Undergraduate Writing Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Robert Bonazzi of San Antonio, a poet whose works includes volumes entitled *Living the Borrowed Life* and *Maestro of Solitude*.

Emily Fox Gordon of Houston, a novelist and essayist whose book, *Mockingbird Years*, was chosen as a *New York Times* notable book for 2000.

James Hornfischer of Austin, naval historian and literary agent whose *The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors*, published in 2004, won the annual Samuel Eliot Morison Award for Naval Literature.

Noel Parsons of Lubbock, director of the Texas Tech Press and former editor-in-chief at Texas A&M University Press.

Steve Wilson of San Marcos, poet and professor of English at Texas State University.

Dobie Paisano Writing Fellowships Awarded for 2008-2009

Winners of the Dobie-Paisano Writing Fellowships for 2008-2009 are Michael Erard, who holds graduate degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and now lives in Maine, and Vanessa Ramos, a creative writer who is a poet, playwright and creative non-fiction writer.

The fellowships, sponsored by the Texas Institute of Letters and The University of Texas at Austin, allow writers to live and work at the Paisano ranch, J. Frank Dobie's 254-acre retreat west of Austin, now owned and maintained by The University of Texas at Austin.

Erard, holder of the Ralph A. Johnston Fellowship, was born in San Antonio. He holds a BA in American Studies from Williams College and an MA in linguistics and a PhD in English, both from The University of Texas at Austin. He has taught at UT-Austin and Southwestern University.

In 2007, Pantheon published his first book, *Um...: Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean*, which the *New York Times* called "an enjoyable tour of linguistic mishaps." He has been a contributing writer for the *Texas Observer* since 1999. As a freelancer, his reportage, essays and reviews have appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Wired*, *Science*, *Rolling Stone*, *Lingua Franca*, *The New Scientist*, *Seed*, *Technology Review*, *The North American Review*, *Austin Chronicle*, and many other publications. In November of 2007, he moved from Austin to Portland, Maine.

Ramos, holder of the Jesse Jones Fellowship, is a native of El Paso. As a McNair Scholar, she completed an ethnographic study (*Women Between Earth and Sky*) on *curanderismo* or folk-healing in the Southwest. Her awards include a Many Voices residency at the Playwrights' Center (2006 – 2007) and a Loft Mentor Series Award in Nonfiction (2005 – 2006). Her play, *Cuentos, Stories*, was showcased at the Waring Jones Theater in 2007.

Currently, she is a visiting writer in the Writers and Artists in Schools program through COMPAS, an arts education organization in Saint Paul and a creative nonfiction instructor at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. Vanessa is working on a collection of memoir-driven lyric essays that explore the relationship between landscape and memory.

She is an MFA candidate in Creative Writing and a MA candidate in Education at Hamline University. Her work has appeared in *BorderSenses*.

Runners-up for the Ralph A. Johnston Fellowship were William Norris and H. L. Hix. Norris is a fiction writer and author of the critically acclaimed *Snapshots*. Hix is a distinguished poet whose latest book *Chromatic* was a National Book Award Finalist.

Runners-up for the Jesse Jones Fellowship were William Norris (first runner-up for both fellowships) and Owen Egerton. Egerton is a fiction writer and author of the critically acclaimed short-story collection *How Best to Avoid Dying*.

Information and an application for the next Dobie-Paisano Fellowships may be found on line in mid-September—www.utexas.edu/ogs/Paisano. A hard copy can be obtained after October 1 from Michael Adams, Director, Dobie-Paisano Project, Graduate School, The University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station (G0400), Austin, Texas 78712-0531. The deadline for the 2009-2010 competition will be January 15, 2009.

Mayborn Nonfiction Writing Conference Will Offer Prizes and Book Contract

The Mayborn Graduate School of Journalism at the University of North Texas will be hosting a major nonfiction writing conference July 18-20 in Grapevine, Texas, offering \$12,000 in cash prizes to the top six article/essay submissions and \$3000 and a book contract to the top manuscript submission in the writing contests.

Keynote speakers include: N. Scott Momaday, Pulitzer Prize winning author and poet laureate of Oklahoma; Bob Shacochis, National Book Award winner; and Candace Millard, author of "River of Doubt." Other speakers include John Burnett from NPR, Stella Chavez of *The Dallas Morning News*, Andy Van De Voorde, associate editor of *Village Voice Media*, Pam Colloff and Brian Sweany from *Texas Monthly*, and Ken Wells and Alexandra Wolfe from *Conde Nast Portfolio*.

Conference details can be found at www.TheMayborn.unt.edu

TIL's Cattarulla Short Story Award To Be Increased to \$1,000

Following is a brief note from our treasurer, James Hoggard:

"Last Saturday evening [in April, that is] I had a conversation with Elliott Cattarulla who, as you know, endowed the Kay Cattarulla Short Story Award a couple years ago. He was asking me if the endowment were bringing in sufficient funds for the award; and during the conversation I said it was but at some point we'd like to increase the award to \$1,000. He said he'd think about that, and we went on, as we'll do, talking about this and that.

"I am happy to inform you that in the mail today came a letter from him and with it a check for \$10,000 to be deposited in our investment account relevant to the award, with the understanding that the Kay Cattarulla Short Story Award will now be for \$1,000. I'm also happy to inform you that because we have the money now in hand the short story award to be given at the awards banquet in 2009 can be (and I trust will be) for \$1,000.

"From this moment on any publicity we send out associated with the Kay Cattarulla Short Story Award should note that it is now for \$1,000."

Note: The award previously was for \$750.

News of Members and Others

Bill Wittliff and Tommy Lee Jones are collaborating on a movie project to bring Ernest Hemingway's *Islands in the Stream* to the screen. Wittliff is writing the script and Jones will direct. It was EH's last published book. This reported by Alan Peppard in the *Dallas Morning News* on May 18.

Folks in Austin and throughout the state—well, maybe the entire nation—are abuzz over **Sarah Bird**'s newest novel, *How Perfect Is That*, just published by Knopf. Its setting is Austin in 2003 with George W. Bush now in Washington, D.C., and there having been a fundamental shift in Austin society because of the Bush connections.

Arts & Letters Live, the highly successful literary and performing arts series at the Dallas Museum of Art, has a series called Texas Bound that features short fiction by Texas-connected authors read by Texas-connected actors. The

director, Carolyn Bess, recently requested that TIL send some of the entries in the Kay Cattarulla Short Story contest to her for consideration for readings. Good luck to our entrants. Should be an added attraction for those submitting stories in our future contests, too.

Anita Bunkley, author of more than fourteen books and resident of Houston, has been named 2007 winner of the Career Achievement Award in African American Fiction from *Romantic Times Magazine*. The award was presented in Pittsburgh, on April 18, 2008.

It's been a good year for **Rolando Hinojosa-Smith**. He received a doctor of letters degree from Texas A&M last fall. Then he was honored with the Bookend Award at the Texas Literary Festival. He was invited to read from his works and to serve as the main speaker for Seoul National University. You may have heard him, too, at the Texas State Historical Association's annual meeting this spring in Corpus Christi.

C.W. Smith gave a reading at SMU's DeGolyer Library on April 24 from his new novel, *Purple Hearts* (TCU Press), an intriguing—well, powerful—story set in Beaumont in World War II. **Bryan Woolley** hailed it as “the best novel I've read about the home front during World War II.” **Steve Harrigan, Jane Roberts Wood, Allan Wier**, and others have given it the highest praise, too. This is C.W.'s eighth novel. He has twice received the Jesse H. Jones Novel Award from the Texas Institute of Letters, not to mention other honors.

Judges Now Being Finalized for 2008 TIL Literary Awards

All but a few vacancies have been filled as TIL establishes the committees for the various TIL 2008 literary prizes. Judges will be announced in the next newsletter.

A Word About the Directory

Our membership directory is constantly updated as we get new contact information for members. I can send you an updated version of the directory at any time by e-mail attachment. Just let me know. Meanwhile, please let me know of any address changes. Also, please send information about yourself and your accomplishments for the newsletter to Darwin Payne, TIL secretary, 9021 Gunnison Dr., Dallas, TX 75231, e-mail, dpayne@smu.edu.

Our website is <http://texasinstituteofletters.org>