

**Texas Institute of Letters  
Winter/Spring 2022 Newsletter**



[www.TexasInstituteofLetters.org](http://www.TexasInstituteofLetters.org)

Prepared by TIL Secretary, William Jack Sibley

## Greetings from the President

Dear TIL Members:

I am so *excited* for our return to an in-person annual meeting and awards ceremony in El Paso, Texas on April 22-23. The Schedule of Events for El Paso is ready to download on the front page of our website:



<https://texasinstituteofletters.org/TIL-Schedule-El-Paso-2022.pdf>

- TIL Members in the Community, with readings and discussions in the El Paso Public Library branches, Wednesday and Thursday (April 20-21) before the main festivities.
- A special tour of El Segundo Barrio led by notable historian David Romo, Friday morning, April 22.
- A guided tour of the El Paso Museum of Art for 20-30 TIL Members.
- The Opening Reception at 6 PM at the Sky Lounge, with stunning views of the Franklin Mountains, Friday April 22.
- Readings by New Members throughout the TIL weekend.
- The annual banquet at Ardovino's Desert Crossing, featuring songwriter Michael Martin Murphey, lifetime achievement award-winner Celeste Bedford Walker, and more.
- A Sunday hike through the Organ Mountains, with Steve "I-rarely-get-lost" Davis.

We want everyone to be safe in El Paso, which has one of the highest vaccination rates in Texas—85 percent fully vaccinated, for those five and older. So please get your vaccination and booster. We will encourage everyone to wear masks if they are not speaking at the podium or eating. Springtime in El Paso will typically be breezy and sunny, with average lows in the 50's and highs in the 70's.

Get ready to celebrate our fifteen newly inducted Members:  
 Frederick Luis Aldama, Shelley Armitage, Carol Flake Chapman, Catherine Clinton, Will Evans, Lupe Ruiz-Flores, Varian Johnson, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Christina Soontornvat, Francisco Stork, Melissa Studdard, Don Tate, Edward Vidaurre, Amanda Eyre Ward, and Jennifer Ziegler.



Make your reservations at the downtown Hilton Doubletree in El Paso at the special TIL rate *before* April 1<sup>st</sup>: the link is on the front page of our website, [www.texasinstituteofletters.org](http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org). Also, don't forget to buy your banquet tickets for Ardovino's Desert Crossing, Saturday, April 23, 6:00 PM at:

<https://www.texasinstituteofletters.org/payments/index.htm>

We will have a great time connecting with each other again, schmoozing, and yes, drinking, and eating together. I've listed some of my favorite downtown restaurants within walking distance of the Hilton Doubletree on our Schedule of Events. Also, I've included fun driving trips in and around El Paso at the end of the Schedule, which I hope many of you will enjoy. I'm always game for a good road trip!

I believe in my heart TIL El Paso 2022 will be a great exhale for our organization and an opportunity to create new and wonderful memories. I look forward to seeing each one of you in the Sun City.

As always, un abrazo from afar to all of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sergio Troncoso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sergio Troncoso  
President, Texas Institute of Letters

[president@texasinstituteofletters.org](mailto:president@texasinstituteofletters.org)  
[www.texasinstituteofletters.org](http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org)

## TIL: Winter/Spring 2022 Newsletter - Member News

(Sixty-nine updates from TIL Members—a *new record!*—in the order received)

---

**Michael Adams:** On February 9th, a solicitation aimed at saving and restoring the old log cabin at Paisano, <https://www.texasinstituteofletters.org/paisano/> began. On one hand, I want you to know that it is not set up by me, but, on the other hand, I want you to know that it is set up by a friend of Paisano who has become a valuable asset to our program. I make this distinction because I don't want you to feel any obligation or expectation. Yet I want you to know that I DO support this effort by Marv Hackert. Marv is Associate Dean of Graduate Studies who many months ago fell in love with the ranch, and particularly the old log cabin. And he proved to be invaluable during our ordeal with the threatened sale of the ranch. Now he is focused on saving the log cabin which is on the verge of complete dilapidation. To that end, Marv is starting a campaign on a UT crowdfunding platform in order to raise money. Called *HornRaiser*, this platform offers two ways to participate. You can donate, <https://hornraiser.utexas.edu/project/29866t>, to the Paisano log Cabin fund, with no more involvement. Or you can more intimately participate by soliciting another donor or other donors, which would make you an acknowledged *Ambassador*, <https://hornraiser.utexas.edu/project/29866/ambassadors>, of the project. For those of you who do participate I have been assured that your email address will remain confidential. We don't have much time. This might be our last chance to save this special piece of Paisano.

**Cyrus Cassells:** February 15th is the publication date for my eighth book of poems, *The World That the Shooter Left Us* (Four Way Books). “In the aftermath of the Stand Your Ground killing of his close friend’s father, poet Cassells explores, in his most fearless book to date, the brutality, bigotry, and betrayal at the heart of current America. Taking his cue from the Civil Rights and Vietnam War era poets and songwriters who inspired him in his youth, Cassells presents *The World That the Shooter Left Us*, a frank, bulletin-fierce indictment of unraveling democracy in an embattled America, in a world still haunted by slavery, by Guernica, Hiroshima, and the Holocaust, by climate catastrophe, by countless battles, borders, and broken promises—adding new grit, fire, and luster to his forty-year career as a dedicated and vital American poet.”

**Larry D. Thomas:** Larry D. Thomas Welcomes You! 2008 Texas Poet Laureate. Hear Larry Thomas read his own work. Listen at: <http://www.larrydthomas.com/listen.htm>.

**Kevin Prufer:** I've got two books forthcoming, one an edited volume and one a single-author kind of thing. They are these: *The Fears: Poems*, forthcoming from Copper Canyon Press in 2023 and *Jean Ross Justice: On the Life and Work of an American Master* from the Unsung Masters Series, edited with Jerry Harp and Ryan Bollenbach.

**Edward Vidaurre:** “City of McAllen Poet Laureate.” ESSENTIAL VOICE: a FlowerSong Press series will feature our published, and forthcoming authors and artists, translators, and editors. We are lyrical, literary, boundless and want to connect with our local community and

global community. All events are free and open to the public and include book sales and signings with an opportunity to donate in support of the press.

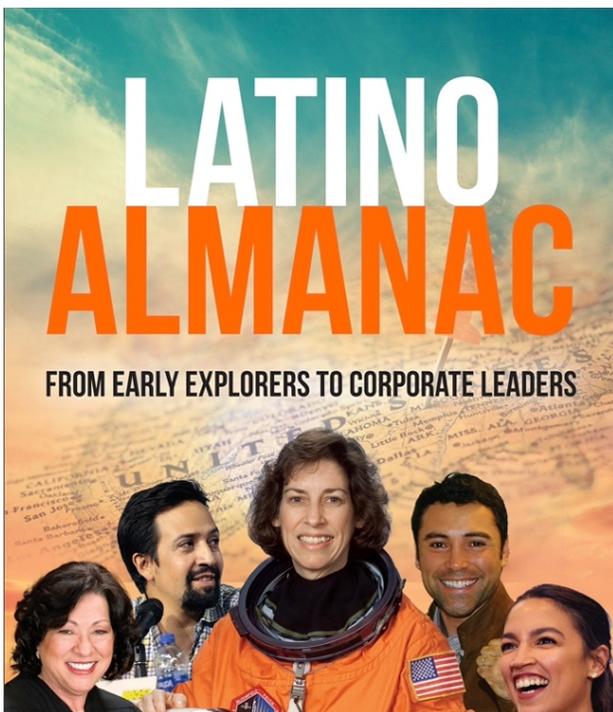
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/4916437724311/WN\\_uB1toV4MR1mwb7ilNmh4WA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/4916437724311/WN_uB1toV4MR1mwb7ilNmh4WA)

**Reginald Gibbons:** My Texas novel SWEETBITTER, which won the Jesse H. Jones novel award from TIL in 1995, and also the Anisfield-Wolf Award, will be reissued in a new paperback later this year by the growing JackLeg Press (<https://jacklegpress.org/jlp-authors>). On Sept. 30, I received the Fuller Award for lifetime achievement, from the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame (<https://chicagoliteraryhof.org/fuller/recipient/reginald-gibbons>).

**Ann McCutchan:** I have three speaking engagements coming up this spring, in Florida.

- Keynote speaker for the Florida Gulf Coast University Writing Awards, Ft. Myers, March 17
- Speaker at the Word of South Festival of Literature and Music, Tallahassee, April 10
- Jill Prescott Memorial Lecture, Florida Historical Society Public History Forum, Gainesville, May 20

**Nicolas Kanellos:** Here's the cover of my forthcoming *Latino Almanac: From Early Explorers to Corporate Leaders*, which is set for an August release.



**C.W. Smith's** : "New novel *Girl Flees Circus* will inaugurate the Lynn and Lynda Miller Southwest Fiction Series on September 1, 2022. Published by the University of New Mexico Press, the novel opens late in the Roaring '20s, when 19-year-old aviatrix Katie Burke appears out of the blue, crash-landing on the only street of sleepy No Name, New Mexico. Her biplane is upended, and soon, so are the lives of the people she encounters: a handsome young mechanic

who lives in a teepee; an ‘old maid’ schoolteacher who longs for Katie’s friendship (and perhaps more); a daringly interracial couple who own the town’s diner; a World War I veteran rocked by PTSD; and a bigoted sheriff who has suspicions about the plane -- and the pilot. As her story unfolds, Katie’s mysteries deepen, revealing shocking secrets, a scandalous past, and a future in true peril. *Girl Flees Circus* takes flight the moment Katie crashes to earth, promising a journey into the lives of a glamorous, redheaded stranger and the people she may change forever.”

**Joe R. Lansdale:** Joe R. Lansdale has a new collection forthcoming from Tachyon Publications, *Born for Trouble: The Further Adventures of Hap & Leonard* (March 22, 2022). I attached the press release should you need further information. Joe is also on the Bram Stoker preliminary ballot for Superior Achievement in a Poetry Collection- *Apache Witch and Other Poetic Observations* (Independent Legions Publishing) Joe's next novel from Mulholland Books *The Donut Legion*, is slated for March 2023 publication. And yesterday, Locus Magazine's recommended reading list had *Moon Lake* up for its 52nd Annual Locus Poll & survey Awards. [https://poll.voting.locusmag.com/?fbclid=IwAR0VqWCRfXBgFthj-NN4oQ\\_NBKW5Nb2oIFCnc1oo5ZGeagXvmZVgCLbbmPA](https://poll.voting.locusmag.com/?fbclid=IwAR0VqWCRfXBgFthj-NN4oQ_NBKW5Nb2oIFCnc1oo5ZGeagXvmZVgCLbbmPA)

**Judy Alter:** In October, I had two books of very different nature published. TwoDot finally published *The Most Land, the Best Cattle: The Waggoners of Texas*, my informal history more about the Waggoner family than the famed Three D Ranch. Publication was delayed by those dreaded supply chain problems. Three weeks later, under my own imprint, *Irene in Danger* appeared, the second of my Irene in Chicago Culinary Mysteries, which combine my foodie and mystery interests and set them in the Chicago neighborhood of my childhood, Hyde Park.

**Kurt Heinzelman:** I retired from the University of Texas on Labor Day 2021 after 44 years in Austin and moved to southern California: 504 Via El Risco / San Clemente CA 92673. Most of the people here are wondering why we moved here when everyone they know is moving in the other direction, the way of—that is, the Tao of Tesla. I have a number of answers for that, but the simplest is that our children and grandchildren live here—in fact, our daughter and 3 grandchildren are right next door, and often right here where I’m writing this!

**David Lee:** David Lee's RUSTY BARBED WIRE: SELECTED POEMS will be out from Samara Press in April. His chapbook THE ALLEGORY OF PERFECTION was published in 2021 by Sugar House Press.



**Steven G. Kellman:** My latest published book project is co-editorship of *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism*.

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-Literary-Translingualism/Kellman-Lvovich/p/book/9780367279189>

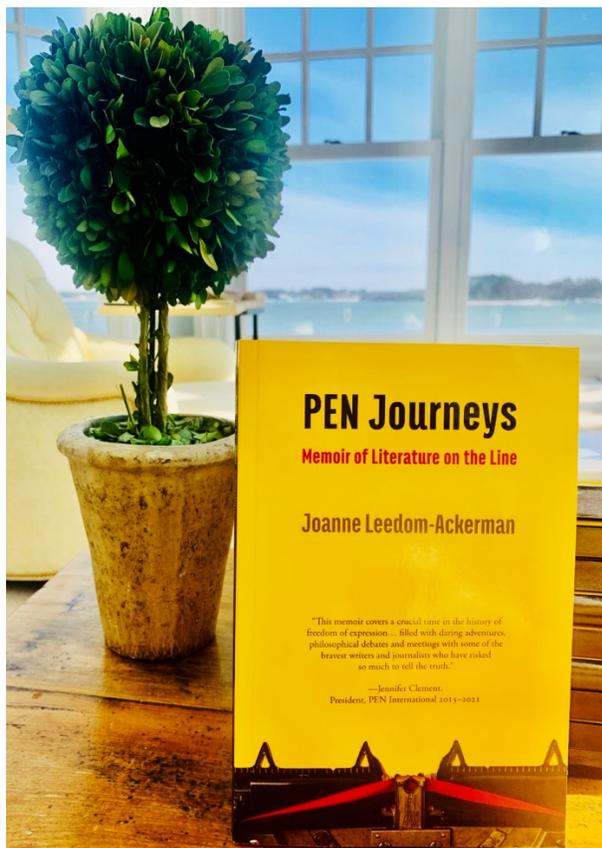
**James Crisp:** I'm very pleased to report that my recently published book, *Inside the Texas Revolution: The Enigmatic Memoir of Herman Ehrenberg*, has received the Summerfield G. Roberts Award from the Sons of the Republic of Texas. My only regret is that I could not make it to Texas in January to accept the award in person, but I'm already enjoying the medal, the plaque and certificate, and, of course, the check!

I have three pieces currently in press: an historiographical article for the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* evaluating that journal's coverage of the Texas Revolution over the past 125 years; a chapter on the "Fragile Prize" of Matagorda during the Texas Revolution for a multi-authored volume to be published by the University of North Texas Press; and what turned out to be a challenging but rewarding essay on the "Legacy of the Alamo" for a special issue on the Battle of the Alamo due out later this year from *Desperta Ferro*, a military history magazine published in Madrid, Spain. Fortunately, the editors in Madrid will supply the translation.

I'm now working on a book that will look back on my historical detective work over the past thirty years -- let's just hope I can find a publisher!

**Joanne Leedom-Ackerman:** Below is an announcement of my new book *PEN Journeys: Memoir of Literature on the Line* just published Feb 1st by Shearsman Books, Jerry D, UK, February 1, 2022. "*PEN Journeys: Memoir of Literature on the Line* covers a crucial time in the history of freedom of expression. The book chronicles Joanne Leedom-Ackerman's stewardship of PEN and is filled with daring adventures, philosophical debates and meetings with some of the bravest writers and journalists who have risked so much to tell the truth." — **Jennifer Clement**,

**President Emeritus of PEN International and author of *Prayers for the Stolen and Gun Love***



**Jerry D. Thompson:** Jerry Thompson's set of childhood recollections, *Under the Pinon Tree: Coming of Age in Pie Town, New Mexico* has been accepted for publication by the University of New Mexico Press.

**Lupe Ruiz-Flores:** Historical picture book, *Piece by Piece: A Girl's Unlikely Gift for a President*, will be published by Millbrook Press, Minneapolis, (imprint of Lerner) and will be coming out in the Fall of 2023. The illustrator is Anna Lopez Real.

**Cynthia Leitich Smith:** SISTERS OF THE NEVERSEA by Cynthia Leitich Smith (Heartdrum/HarperChildren's, 2021), which received six starred reviews, was named a Best Book of 2021 by Publishers Weekly; Kirkus Reviews; the Chicago Public Library; American Indians in Children's Literature; Politics & Prose; and Parents Magazine. The paperback edition will be available May 3. ANCESTOR APPROVED: INTERTRIBAL STORIES FOR KIDS, edited by Cynthia Leitich Smith (Heartdrum/HarperChildren's, 2021), which received four starred reviews, was named a Best Book of 2021 by the International Literacy Association; Kirkus Reviews; the Chicago Public Library; the New York Public Library; Shelf Awareness and Bank Street. I was also named a 2021 Notable Children's book by the ALSC/American Library Association. The paperback edition will be available Feb. 8.



## - Cynthia Leitich Smith

Cynsations Winter Hiatus. By Cynthia Leitich Smith Happy Holidays, Cynsational readers! Effective immediately, this blog is on winter hiatus. We'll return after the ALA Midwinter Conference with more inspiration, insights, and info on children's-YA writing, illustration, literature and publishing. [cynthialeitichsmith.com](http://cynthialeitichsmith.com)

**Carolyn Banks:** When I write a novel, I usually create people and events I'd rather not be a part of. Last year, I had a bolt of inspiration and wrote a comic novel that features a chubby housewife, Erica, who falls asleep watching *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. She wishes she could lose weight the same way Dorian stayed young. Little does she know that the author of that story—the flamboyant 19<sup>th</sup> century wit, Oscar Wilde—is watching her. Oscar, in heaven with his friend Bram Stoker, comes to earth to initiate the charming and whimsical farce that is my novel, *The Importance of Being Erica*. When I sent it to my agent, I told him I thought it was the best thing I'd ever written. Imagine how deflating it was when he told me he didn't think he could sell it! I pleaded, asking that he get another opinion and another agent in the agency told him he wasn't wrong. Well, imagine having written a book you love and having no way to get it into the hands of editors! Every query I wrote fell into a chasm. Only rarely did I hear back, and always it was with an apologetic resounding no. I don't know if many people realize I was a Jack Russell Terrier in a previous life, so I kept on sending and sending and sending my query out, like a JRT after a fox. Finally, an editor at Touchpoint Press wrote me a long, insightful critique. I made all the additions and omissions she suggested and, this morning, she, at Touchpoint, offered me a contract! I haven't even signed it yet, but I want to shout from the rooftops, Yay! Double Yay! I am so glad I hung in there because the book really is funny and I had a great time writing it.

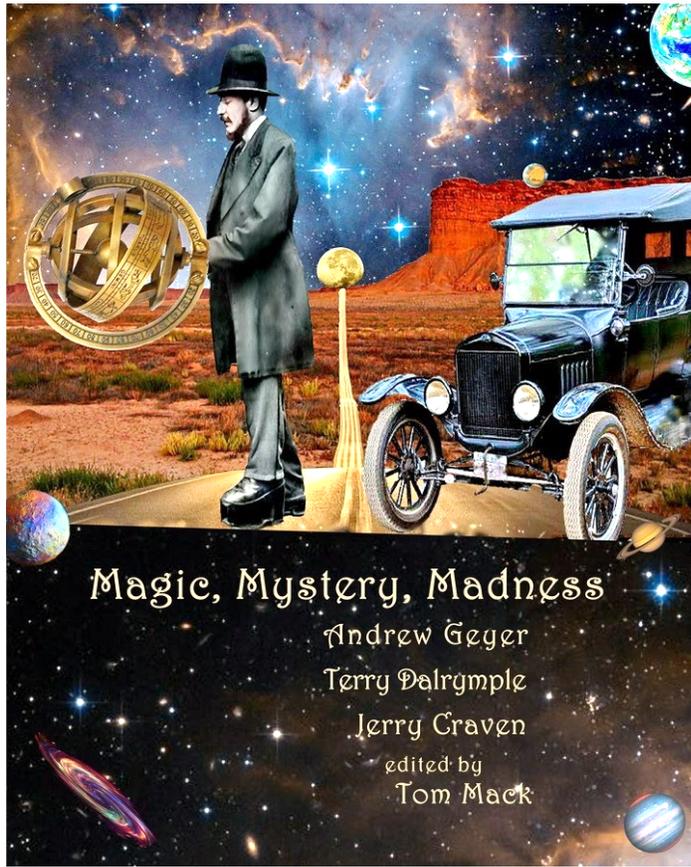


**Shelley Armitage:** Recent publications: "Beyond Borders: Envisioning a New Rio Grande" in *True Border* (El Paso: *Borderzine*, 2020). Accepted for publication: Poem "Plainsong" in *New Mexico Poetry Anthology*, edited by Levi Romero and Michelle Otero (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, forthcoming). Awards: One of ten poets accepted for readings and workshops at the Tucson Festival of Books, March 2022.



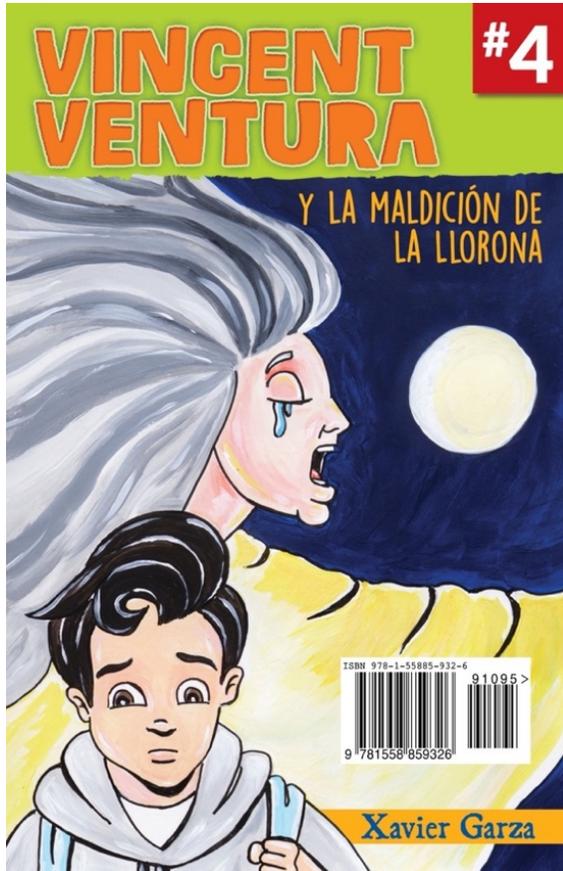
**Deborah Paredez:** Poetry volume, *Year of the Dog*, was the recipient of the 2020 Texas Writers' League Poetry Book Award. Her book of literary nonfiction, *American Diva*, is forthcoming from Norton.

**Jerry Craven:** Andrew Geyer, Terry Dalrymple, and I have completed *Magic, Mystery, Madness: Electric Ekphrastics*, a collection of stories, each coupled with a graphic image I have created. During the two years it took us to finish the project, each of us published in journals some of what we wrote for the book, and one of the images, “A walk Beyond the Moon,” won a blue ribbon in the East Texas Art League’s 2021-2022 Winter Show. Tom Mack edited the volume and wrote the introduction. The book will be published in April 2022.

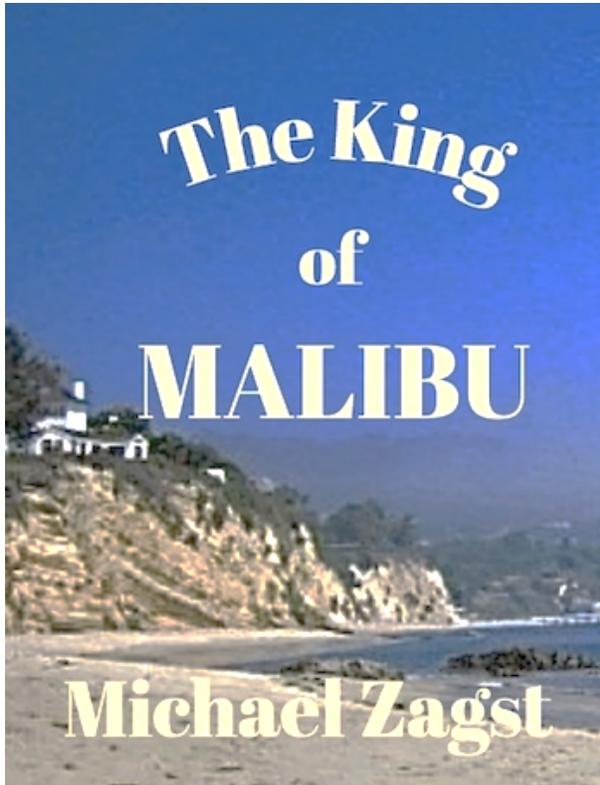


**Mary Rogers:** I have a new book coming out from UT Press in September. *Hope and Hard Truth, A Life in Texas Politics*, is a collection of public and private memories in the weedy world of Texas politics. I’ve worked on it off and on for a few years, and finally finished it while being isolated during the pandemic. I just wanted to pass this information along to you as you prepare the TIL Newsletter, which I always enjoy reading and catching up on what friends are doing.

**Xavier Garza:** Prolific author, artist, and storyteller Xavier Garza has two new books. *Vincent Ventura and the Curse of the Weeping Woman / Vincent Ventura y la maldición de La Llorona* is the fourth installment in the Monster Fighter Mystery series / Serie Exterminador de monstruos for intermediate readers (Piñata Books, 2021). *La Llorona Can’t Scare Me / La Llorona no me asusta* (Piñata Books, 2021) is another bilingual picture book featuring creepy creatures from Latin American lore that’s sure to enthrall the little ones! I’ve attached the covers of the Vincent Ventura book in case you can use some graphics; it’s a bilingual “flip” book, so has one cover in English and the other in Spanish. The art on the cover is by Xavier as well.

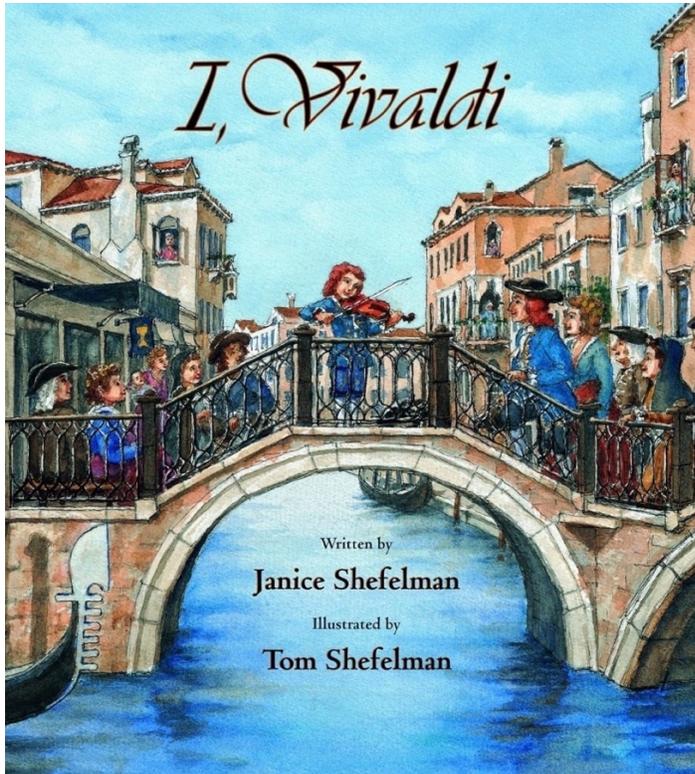


**Michael Zagst:** In the near paradise of Malibu, Sam Carter owes money to Mr. Frank. Trying his best to break even, he could lose his girlfriend, his livelihood, and maybe a couple of fingers. That's the premise of Zagst's latest novel *The King of Malibu*, a near-Hollywood misadventure.



**Jesse Sublett:** Lois and I are leaving Austin for Los Angeles this month. We're planning to spend at least a year, dipping back into the music scene, screenwriting and other artistic endeavors, or maybe just hanging out, painting and birding. There's too much Austin in our blood to stay away forever, so our plans are open-ended, and we'll be back from time to time for writing-related stuff. My nonfiction crime saga, Last Gangster in Austin: Frank Smith, Ronnie Earle, and the End of a Junkyard Mafia, is due from UT Press in May or June 2022, with the audiobook by Blackstone Publishing planned for "around the same time." Book signing events will include a High Noon Talk at the Bullock Museum July 6, at when else? 12 p.m. noon. RSVP here: <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/visit/calendar/education/high-noon-talk-20220706> . September 1, I'll be Zooming myself into the Fort Worth Public Library to discuss Last Gangster and the backstory with the Fort Worth underworld. More details to come. Check out my two-part interview with host Benjamin Morris on Crime Capsule, a true-crime podcast sponsored by Arcadia/History Press, publishers of my book *1960s Austin Gangsters: Organized Crime that Rocked the Capital*. Listen here [<https://evergreenpodcasts.com/crime-capsule/dixie-mafia-pt-2-an-interview-with-jesse-sublett>]. And if you're not completely sick of me yet, check out the gallery of my Austin Bird Series paintings at my revamped online home at [JesseSublett.com](http://JesseSublett.com).

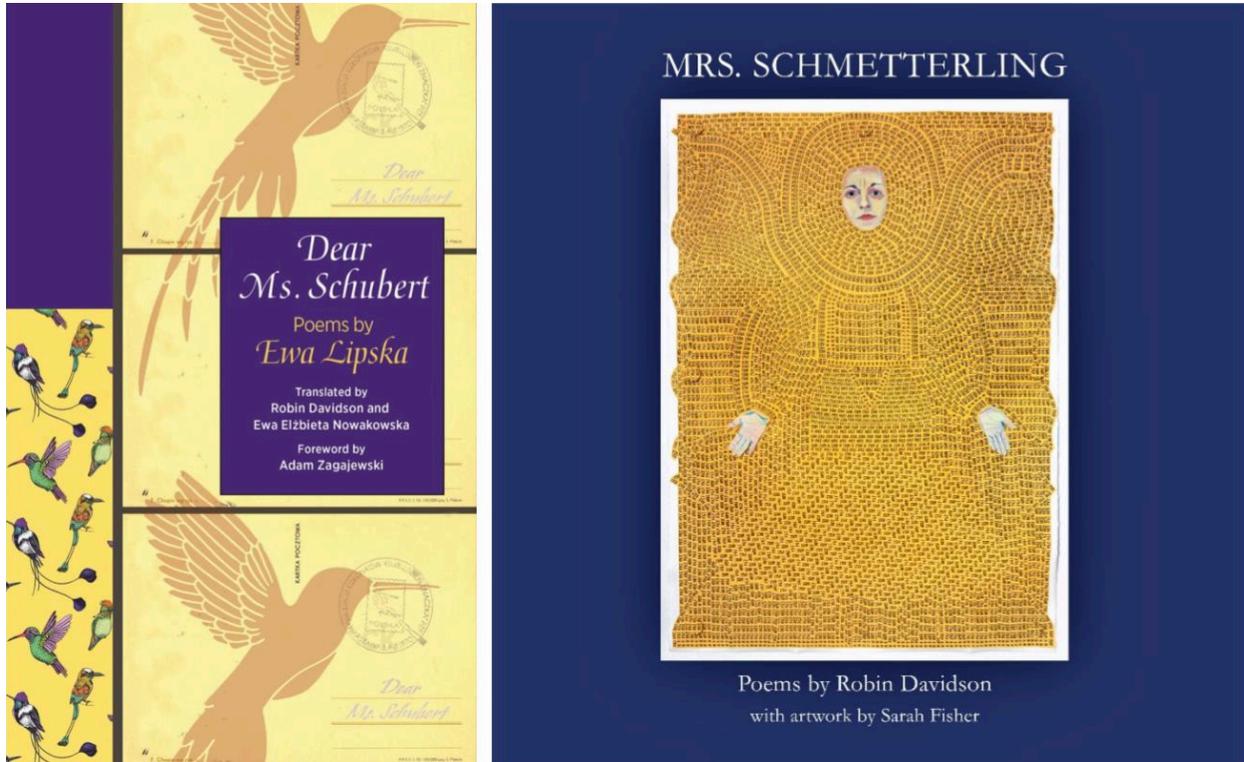
**Janice Shefelman:** I just learned that the new paperback edition of Tom's and my picture book biography, I, VIVALDI, is listed by Amazon on their "Hot New Releases" page. It may be paperback but it's no flimsy little book. The illustrations are as gorgeous as in the hardback, and the cover is nice and stiff. I call it a "cardback." It's for kids and grownups too.



**Robin Davidson:** At long last, I finished my translations from the Polish of Ewa Lipska’s Droga pani Schubert poems that I had worked on since her first volume of the Schubert poems appeared in 2012. In collaboration with my co-translator Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska, our translations appeared in 2021 as *Dear Ms. Schubert* from Princeton University Press’s Lockert Library of Poetry in Translation with the support of the wonderfully generous editors, Peter Cole, Rosanna Warren, and Richard Sieburth. During the remainder of the year, I worked to complete a cycle of my own poems which I began writing a decade ago in response to Lipska’s Ms. Schubert poems, and that poem cycle just appeared from Arrowsmith Press in December 2021 as *Mrs. Schmetterling*. One of the great joys of the *Mrs. Schmetterling* book has been working with Houston visual artist, Sarah Fisher, and including images from her “Stain” cycle as companion pieces to the poems. The images are unique in that they use laundry stickers to craft intricate patterns. The book’s cover image is one such design. I am now engaged in a new translation project that involves poems written by a Polish Holocaust survivor, and I look forward to diving into that poignant work later this spring!

<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691207490/dear-ms-schubert>

<https://www.arrowsmithpress.com/robin-davidson/>



**Jose Antonio Rodriguez:** had two pieces published in *The New Yorker* and two additional pieces published in Sergio Troncoso's *Nepantla Familias* anthology. He is currently at work on a new poetry collection, a Spanish translation of his memoir *House Built on Ashes*, and a sequel to it.



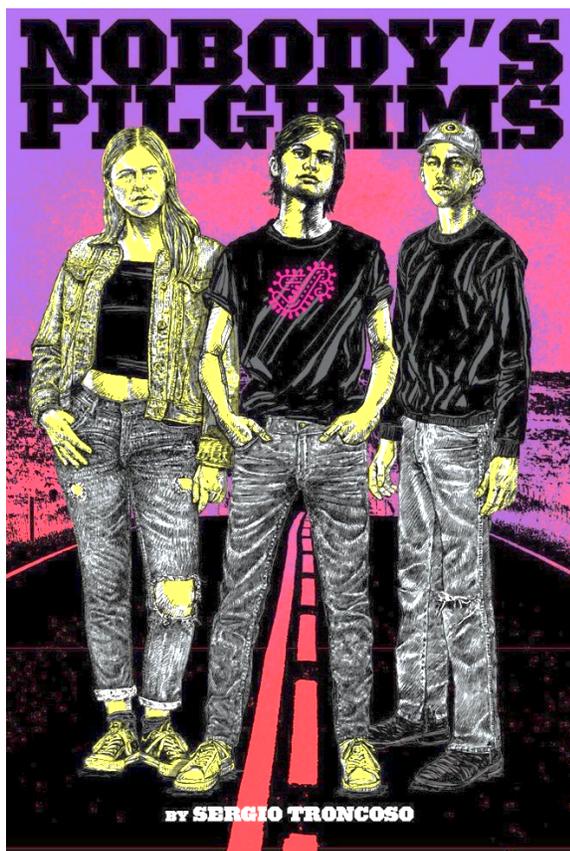
## Jose Antonio Rodriguez

[www.jarodriguez.org](http://www.jarodriguez.org) is poet, writer, and translator Jose Antonio Rodriguez's website. Find contact information, upcoming readings, and links to his work.

[www.jarodriguez.org](http://www.jarodriguez.org)

**Sergio Troncoso:** His latest novel, *Nobody's Pilgrims*, is forthcoming on May 10, 2022. Three runaway teenagers are chased in a road trip from the Texan frontera to New England, by a drug cartel planning to unleash chaos onto the country. Ben Fountain: "In this superb novel, Sergio Troncoso gives us a fresh take not only on the great American road trip, but on the American Dream itself in all its glorious and increasingly fragile promise." Sergio will also be teaching a Fiction workshop at the Yale Writers' Workshop. Please check his website at [www.SergioTroncoso.com](http://www.SergioTroncoso.com) for more news and events. He is also busy planning the TIL annual meeting/banquet in El Paso, April 22-23, including

the opening reception, award presentations, banquet, and community events for TIL Members. Check our website for the latest, [www.TexasInstituteofLetters.org](http://www.TexasInstituteofLetters.org).



**Michael Berryhill:** Texas A&M University Press has been good to me this fall. Two of my formerly published stories, one from 1994 in the Houston Press about Buffalo Bayou, and the other on how fresh water nourishes San Antonio Bay in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine in 2003, were part of a beautiful anthology, *Viva Texas Rivers! Adventures, Misadventures and Glimpses of Nirvana along our Storied Waterways*. The anthology was put together by Steven L. Davis, former TIL president and literary curator of the Witliff Collections and Sam L. Pfister, chair of the Witliff Collections advisory committee. It's thrilling to appear in a book with John Graves and so many other wonderful Texas Writers. TAMU Press has also published a collection of stories by Houston community organizer titled *Da Mayor of Fifth Ward, Stories of the Big Thicket and Houston*, by Robert "Bob" E. Lee. Bob is nationally known as the Black Panther in Chicago who organized the first Rainbow Coalition of Blacks, Southern Whites and Puerto Ricans. He returned to Houston in 1970 and worked behind the scenes to support his younger brother, El Franco Lee, who was the long-time county commissioner of precinct one in Houston. I met him at the Houston Chronicle where I was editing stories for a column called State Lines, and we were friends until he died of cancer in 2017. I wrote an introduction to tell the story of his life and his storytelling. He is pictured on the cover with a shotgun because one of his best stories is about hunting for squirrels with his uncle in the big thicket. Except, of course, it's about far more than hunting.

**Bobby and Lee Byrd:** Lee and I received the PubWest Lifetime Achievement Award. Attached is the press release plus a photo with **Jessica Powers**, likewise a member of the TIL. Jessica—a longtime friend, colleague and employee—introduced us.



**Donley Watt:** In February of this year TCU Press published Donley Watt's new novel, *Oaxaca, 1998*. He and Lynn lived in that Mexican city for six months in the 1990s. Also, with much help from Lynn and a friend he has a new website, [donleywatt.com](http://donleywatt.com)

**Susan Wittig Albert:** *Hemlock* (#28 in the China Bayles series) was published by Persevero Press (my imprint) in September 2021. #10 in the Dahlias series (*The Darling Dahlias and the Red Hot Poker*) will be published in June. I'm currently working on a biographical novel about Georgia O'Keeffe and her friend Maria Chabot, set in New Mexico in the 1940s. I've also been coordinating (for the 10<sup>th</sup> year) the Sarton Book Awards for Story Circle Network. [www.susanalbert.com](http://www.susanalbert.com)



### NYT bestselling author - Susan Wittig Albert

Hello, and welcome to my world . . . It's tough out there these days, in a world that seems to be falling to pieces around us. Covid-19 is altering the way we lead our lives. It's no wonder if you feel upset, upended, upside-down. I hope you'll take a deep breath and spend a [...]

[www.susanalbert.com](http://www.susanalbert.com)

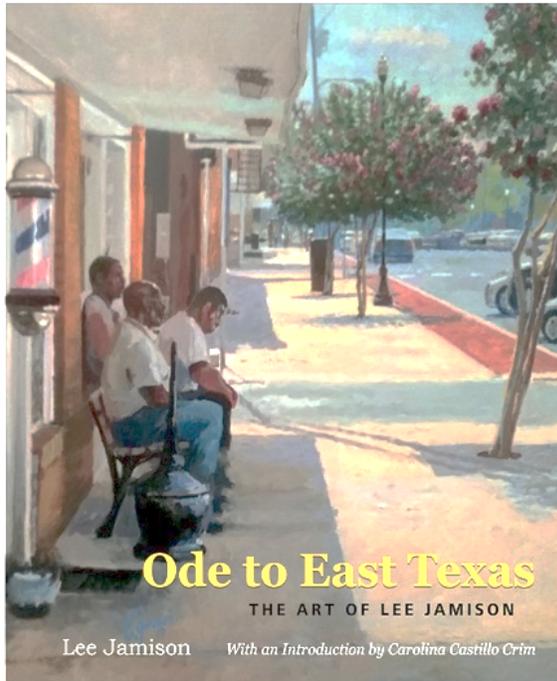
**Naomi Shihab Nye:** *Dear Vaccine, Global Voices Speak to the Pandemic*, edited by Naomi Shihab Nye, David Hassler, and Tyler Meier, will be out from Kent State University Press in Feb. 2022. *The Turtle of Michigan*, a novel for elementary readers, by Naomi Shihab Nye (stand-alone sequel to *The Turtle of Oman*) will be out in March 2022.

**Wes Ferguson:** First podcast, titled "Standoff," is being released this spring. The 10-part series tells the true story of Fred Gomez Carrasco, the San Antonio cartel boss who orchestrated the 1974 Huntsville prison siege. In February, Ferguson left his position as a Senior Editor for Texas Monthly to create his second podcast, a true-crime story that takes place in his native East Texas. Both series are being produced by Imperative Entertainment, a TV, film and podcast studio.

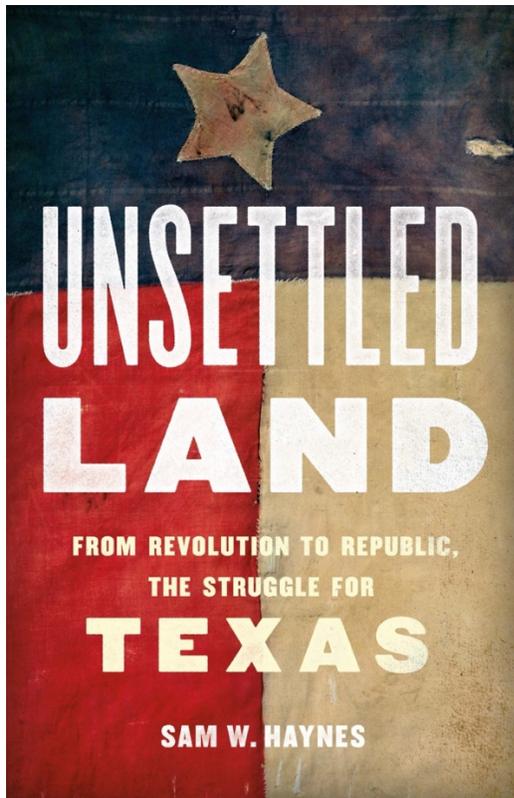
**Steven Schneider:** Taught a master class on narrative poetry for the low-residency MFA program at Maharishi International University (MIU). He also organized a reading and panel on contemporary narrative poems for MIU. Recently, his poem "Chachalacas at La Quinta Mazatlan" was featured in the exhibit "RGVxArtforChange" at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. He will present at this year's FESTIBA conference a program on "Creative Writing in a Time of Crisis."

**Sheryl Luna:** My new poetry collection MAGNIFICENT ERRORS is out from University of Notre Dame Press. It received the Ernest Sandeen Poetry Prize

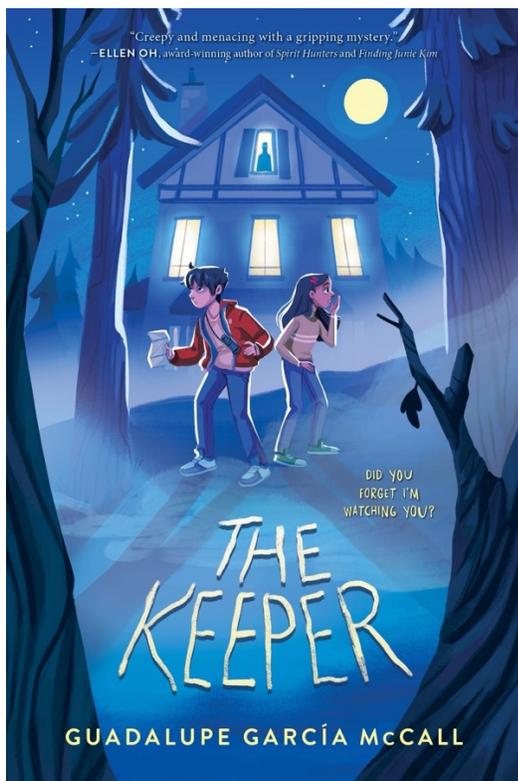
**Fran Vick:** *Ode to East Texas: The Art of Lee Jamison*, prose by Jamison, Introduction, "East Texas Legacies of a Hidden Past," by Carolina Castillo Crimm, Foreword by Frances B. Vick, is out from Texas A&M University Press, #23 in the Joe and Betty Moore Texas Art Series, William E. Reaves and Linda J. Reaves, General Editors, supported by generous gifts from Mary Laura Gibbs and Weldon Granger. Jamison and Crimm will be on the road to 100 schools in East Texas, provided by a grant from Humanities Texas, presenting the art and history to the schools. Books will be given to each school library, provided by a grant from the Vick Family Foundation. The opening event, presenting Jamison's art and prose, a lecture by Dr. Crimm and a book signing, was sponsored by Dr. John Handley, Director of the Museum of East Texas in Lufkin, Texas, where the art is currently on display.



**Sam Haynes:** Basic Books will release Sam W. Haynes's new book, *Unsettled Land: From Revolution to Republic, the Struggle for Texas* in May.



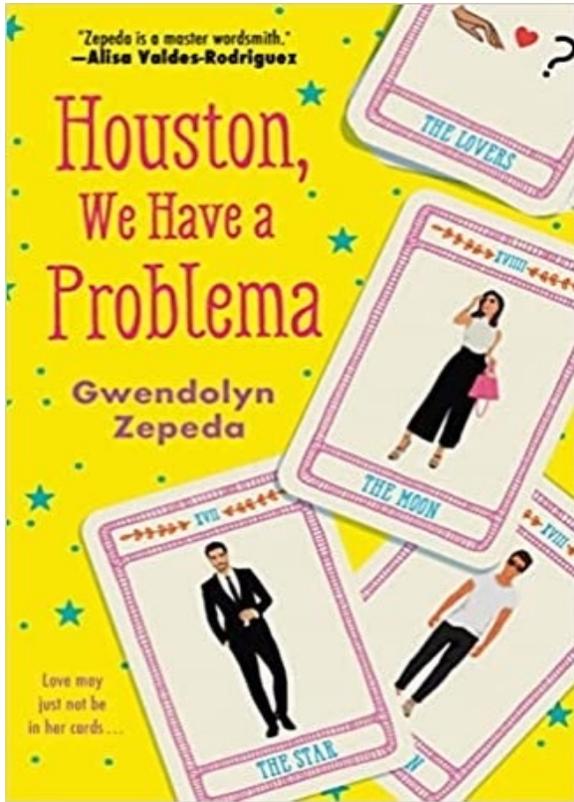
**Guadalupe Garcia McCall:** *THE KEEPER* (MG Horror, Harper Collins) dropped on Feb 8, 2022. The Elevator Pitch: Inspired by a terrifying true story, acclaimed author Guadalupe Garcia McCall creates a twisty tale about a boy desperately trying to survive in a new town with a secret past. *ECHOES OF GRACE* (YA Gothic, Tu Books) will drop in June 2022. The Elevator Pitch: In this triumphant new novel, Pura Belpré Award-winning author Guadalupe García McCall explores sisterhood, family secrets, intergenerational trauma, life, and love in a modern Gothic setting with a magical realist twist.



**Ron Tyler:** retired director of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art as well as the University of Texas at Austin, has been working on a book on Texas-related lithographs of the nineteenth century for more than thirty years (off and on). He has now wrapped it up and submitted it to the University of Texas Press. Publication of *Texas Lithographs: A Century of History in Images* is due in October.

**Geoff Rips:** My novel, *Personal Geography*, was released in February by Welcome Rain Publishers. It's not a waltz across Texas but a scramble from Texarkana to the Davis Mountains by a retired private investigator from NYC and a Texas-born disappeared-persons expert to find a friend determined to disappear from the grid. Joe Holley wrote: "at times deeply serious, at times laugh-out-loud funny, *Personal Geography* is well worth the trip."

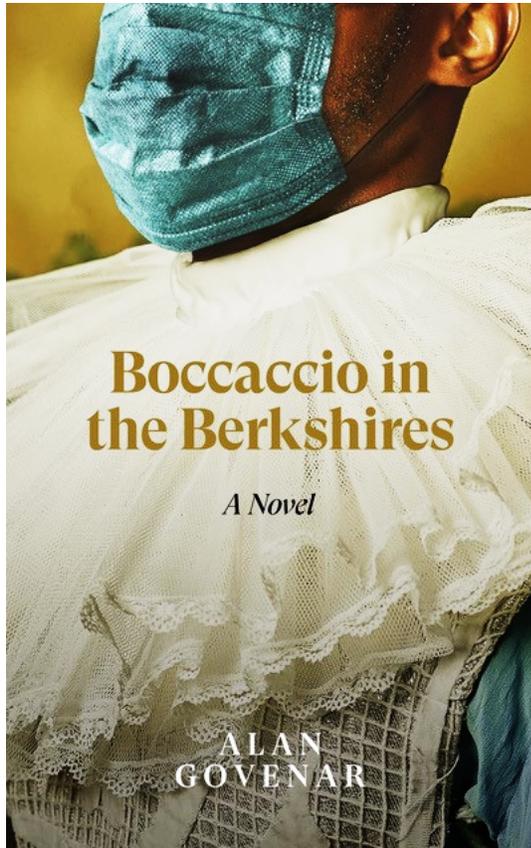
**Gwendolyn Zepeda:** Hachette has re-released her first novel, *Houston, We Have a Problema*. This story of a superstitious young woman looking for love in all the wrong places is a featured title in their new Forever imprint.



**Sandra Cisneros:** *Martita, I Remember You/Martita, te recuerdo* was published on September 7, 2021. Additionally, she has a new Spanish translation by Fernanda Melchor of *House on Mango Street* coming out soon.

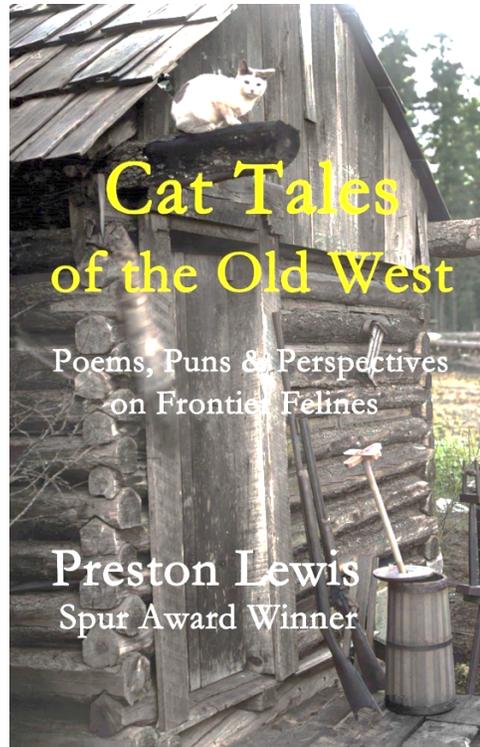
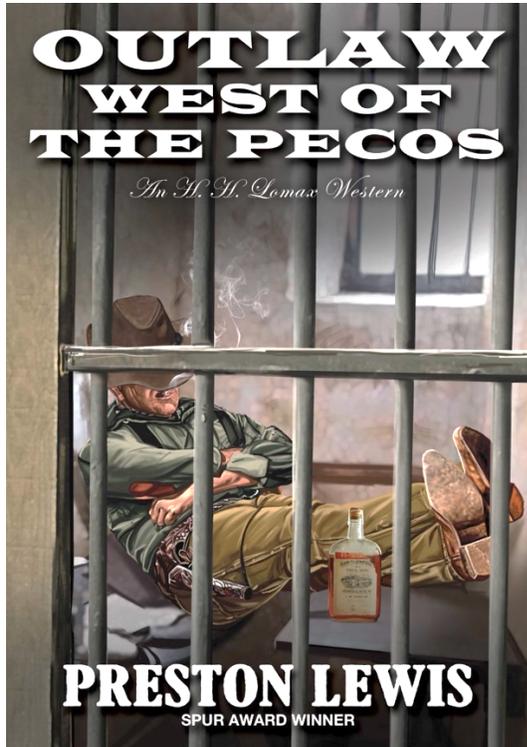
**Jerry Bradley:** New collection of poetry is *Rapunzel's Parrot* just out from Angelina River Press

**Alan Govenar:** Debut novel *Boccaccio in the Berkshires*, published by Deep Vellum in January, and his newest collection of poems *A Pillow on the Ocean of Time*, published by Riverside Press in 2021, are now available. Govenar's new musical *Stompin' at the Savoy*, based on his children's book by the same title, will be presented in a developmental workshop in New York City, April 18-May 1. Truth in Photography ([www.truthinphotography.org](http://www.truthinphotography.org)), an open-ended forum for active dialogue and discussion about photography and social change, developed by Govenar and produced by Documentary Arts in collaboration with Magnum Photos, Aperture Foundation and International Center of Photography, is updated quarterly with the Spring Edition to launch in April. The newest chapter of Govenar's ongoing sound installation, *Words Without Photos*, at the International Center of photography, features Nakeya Brown, Kija Lucas, Tanya Marcuse, and Pacifico Silano, whose work is on view in *A Trillion Sunsets: A Century of Image Overload* and *Actual Size! Photography at Life Scale*, January 28-May 2.



**Emilio Zamora:** I am happy to announce that the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin has appointed me to the Clyde Rabb Littlefield Chair in Texas History effective September 2021.

**Preston Lewis:** *Outlaw West of the Pecos*, the seventh comic novel in Preston Lewis’s “Memoirs of H.H. Lomax” series, was released Feb. 9 by Wolfpack Publishing. The three previous historical novels in the series won Will Rogers Gold Medallion Awards—two gold and one silver—for written western humor. *Rio Hondo*, the third book in Lewis’s “Three Rivers Trilogy” on the Lincoln County War, is scheduled for release in May from Five Star. *Rio Hondo* is Lewis’s 44<sup>th</sup> published novel. *Rio Bonito*, the second volume in the trilogy, was named one of the top novels of 2021 by *True West* magazine. Additionally, Lewis in December ventured into independent publishing with his release of *Cat Tales of the Old West: Poems, Puns & Perspectives on Frontier Felines*. The nonfiction book explores frontier perspectives on cats as reported in newspapers west of the Mississippi. There’s plenty for both cat lovers and cat haters in the 24,000-word volume.



**Jan Seale:** Did a solo reading/signing and another signing with the two new Poets Laureate of McAllen at the Palms Crossing Barnes & Noble near McAllen. She also gave a poetry reading and a workshop on valuing family storytellers for the McAllen Library virtual “Booktacular” South Texas Book Festival.

### Jan Seale

Jan Seale was the 2012 Texas Poet Laureate. She is the author of nine volumes of poetry, the latest being *The Parkinson Poems*, published by Lamar University Literary Press. She has also authored two books of short fiction, five volumes of nonfiction, and a number of children's books.

[www.janseale.com](http://www.janseale.com)

**Frederick Luis Aldama:** Completed his YA novel, *The Absolutely (Almost) True Adventures of Max Rodriguez*, published his children's picture book *Con Papá/With Papá* as well as the edited volume *Latinx TV in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. On March 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> he inaugurates his yearly BIPOC POP Expo & Symposium at UT Austin that clears a creative critical space for making and strengthening community and creative critical action today and tomorrow in the comics, gaming, animation, & multimedia storytelling arts.



**Chris Barton:** My newest nonfiction book for young readers, *Moving Forward: From Space-Age Rides to Civil Rights Sit-Ins with Airman Alton Yates* (illustrated by Steffi Walthall), was published in January by Simon & Schuster. Now 85, this Florida native participated in a host of Aeromedical Field Laboratory experiments in 1950s New Mexico only to be subject to Jim Crow again as soon as he crossed the state line into Texas. When I read about Alton's activism that soon followed -- and about the racist assault that Jacksonville's brave young civil rights protesters encountered on Ax Handle Saturday -- I was struck by the reminder that great advances in science and technology could take place at the same time as such a primitive expression of hateful, ignorant cultural attitudes. But his story also reminds us of the endlessly renewable courage of people young and old to carry on the work of transforming this country into a more perfect union.

**George Getschow:** A few months after Larry McMurtry's death, George Getschow rounded up a bunch of writers, mostly from Texas, to contribute essays to a tribute volume about Larry that he was editing, and to read them to an audience assembled at the Royal Theater in Archer City, the actual location where the 1971 film adaptation of Larry's book, *The Last Picture Show*, was shot. The writers speaking at the Royal Theater included Steve Harrigan, Sherry Wagner, W.K. Stratton, Elizabeth Crook, Carol Flake Chapman and other members of the Texas Institute of Letters. "If we didn't do this," Getschow told Harrigan for an article published by Texas Monthly, "we would have missed an opportunity to celebrate Texas's most influential writer. He's shaped us, he's defined us. The way we see each other is all through the prism of Larry's eyes." The title of the event, *Larry McMurtry: Reflections on a Minor Regional Novelist*, as Harrigan noted, was a reference to the sweatshirt that McMurtry occasionally sported as a young Texas writer aware of, and ironically claiming, his outsider status with the distant New York literary establishment." <https://www.texasmonthly.com/arts-entertainment/what-texas-inherited-from-larry-mcmurtry/>



## What Texas Inherited From Larry McMurtry – Texas Monthly

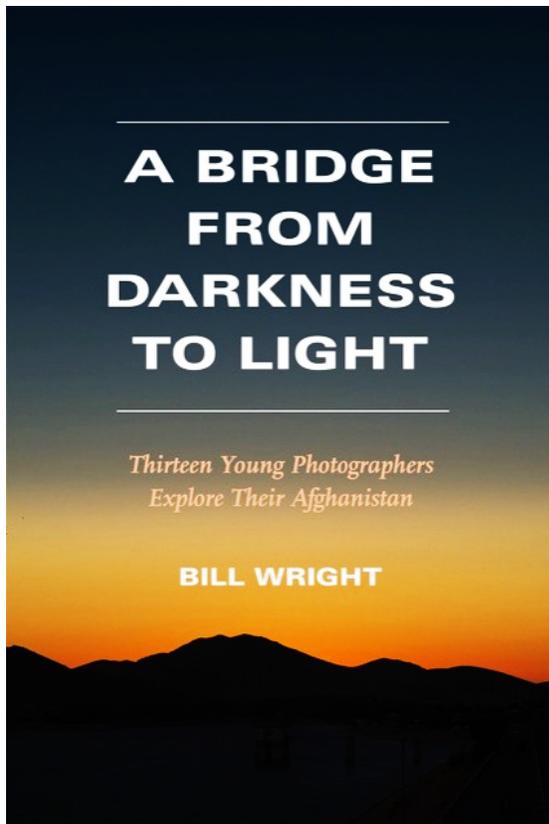
The title of the event, *Larry McMurtry: Reflections on a Minor Regional Novelist*, was a reference to the sweatshirt that McMurtry occasionally sported as a young Texas writer aware of, and ...

[www.texasmonthly.com](http://www.texasmonthly.com)

An outdoor screening of *The Last Picture Show* after the tribute provided the most powerful testimony of McMurtry's impact. Several hundred people gathered in folding chairs watched the fifty-year-old movie projected onto the inner wall of what had been the original Royal Theater. Harrigan described what we all felt. "As we watched *The Last Picture Show* in Archer City it did not feel, even after half a century, that we were seeing a projection on a wall. It felt like we were looking in a mirror." For a magazine piece in the Small Towns Issue (August 2021) of *Texas Highways*, Getschow visited a tiny village in the hinterlands of the Panhandle four times over the previous year to capture life in Lipscomb—population 44--a place that reminded him of an abandoned frontier outpost on the edge of civilization. For her Editor's Note in the August issue, Emily Stone, the magazine's editor, asked Getschow what his most important takeaway was from his visits to Lipscomb. "The hallmark of my trips there was seeing the freedom of how they live. Kids are allowed to be kids; adults are allowed to be quirky and weird. Nobody says, 'You can't paint your house pink.' People just accept one another, and that's an act of freedom." <https://texashighways.com/culture/people/the-unconventional-and-idyllic-life-of-lipscombs-44-residents/>

**David Montejano:** After twenty years of living and working in Berkeley, I'm returning home to San Antonio. Looking forward to reconnecting with old acquaintances and to making new ones. *Nos vemos luego.*

**Bill Wright:** *A Bridge from Darkness to Light*, Thirteen Young Photographers Explore Their Afghanistan. In 2006, Texas businessman, historian, and photographer Bill Wright was encouraged—though not officially invited—by the US Department of State to teach a class in digital photography to young Afghans in Kabul. The course was sponsored by an Afghan Non-Governmental Organization, ASCHIANA, which helps to support "working children and their families." This book records Wright's experiences and celebrates the creativity he saw flourish at the heart of a war zone. For thirty-five years Wright owned and managed a petroleum marketing company. After selling his company to his employees in 1987, he has devoted his time to writing, photography, and public service for a number of nonprofit organizations including the National Council for the Humanities, the Texas Council of the Humanities, and most recently as a commissioner on the Texas Commission for the Arts. Published by Texas Christian University Press



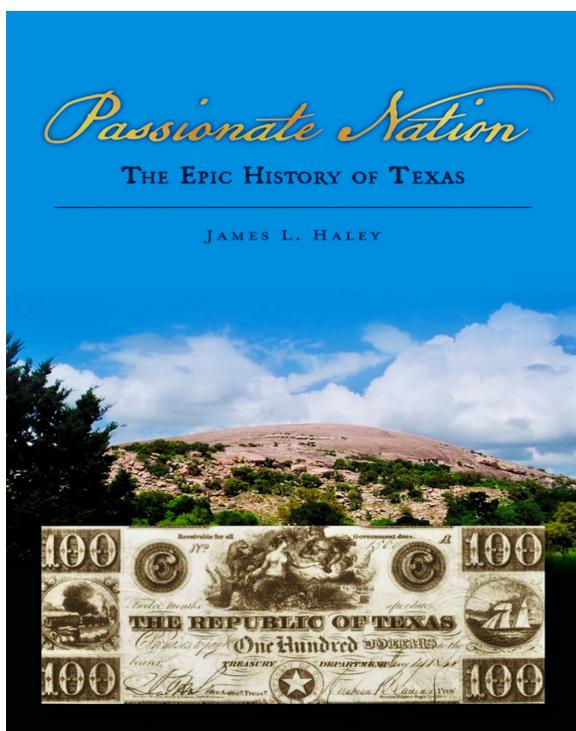
**Glenn Blake:** We are moving back to Texas after living up East for the last decade. If I may, I am wondering if any of you professors at universities in The Lone Star State know of any teaching positions, any teaching possibilities, in your departments. I taught in the English department at Rice University for ten years, in the Creative Writing program at the University of Houston for ten years, and for the last ten in the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins. I am currently Senior Editor of Boulevard. I have three story collections. I am excited about coming back home, but, truth be told, I have grown rather fond of eating, Glenn, (713) 724-5123, [glennleoblake@gmail.com](mailto:glennleoblake@gmail.com).

**C.M. Mayo:** "Julius Knows," my short story featuring a typewriter, was published in the fall 2021 issue of the lovely *Catamaran Literary Reader*. I keep meaning to type "Julius Knows" on my Hermes 3000 and put photos of those pages on my blog. I also keep meaning to get my latest "Marfa Mondays" podcast on a visit to Sanderson, Texas, posted as well. Time itself seems to have taken on surreally elastic qualities in what the Germans call "Covidzeit." Speaking of German, I continue working on my English translation of an Austrian countess' memoir of a journey to Mexico in 1864. [www.cmmayo.com](http://www.cmmayo.com)

**Celeste Bedford Walker:** My musical "Over Forty" goes up at the Jubilee Theatre in Fort Worth TX -- March 24 – April 24. Check it out if you're in town. Finally, after a two year wait, my military drama "The Red Blood of War" will be performed at the Wm. Inge New Play Lab Festival in Independence Iowa –April 22-24. Most importantly, I'm honored to say that I will receive the Texas Institute of Letters' prestigious Lon Tinkle Award for Lifetime Achievement, to be presented at TIL's annual banquet on April 23, 2022 in El Paso Texas! Author of over 40

plays! *Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed* (2021 Centennial Commemoration, Tulsa, OK). *Sassy Mamas* (NAACP Theater Awards – Triple Winner, 2015; Broadway World Regional Awards – Best Play, 2017). *Camp Logan* (Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Theatre Awards – Best Play, 1994; Best Playwright, 2013). *Distant Voices* (Susan Smith Blackburn Prize – Finalist, 1999-2000)

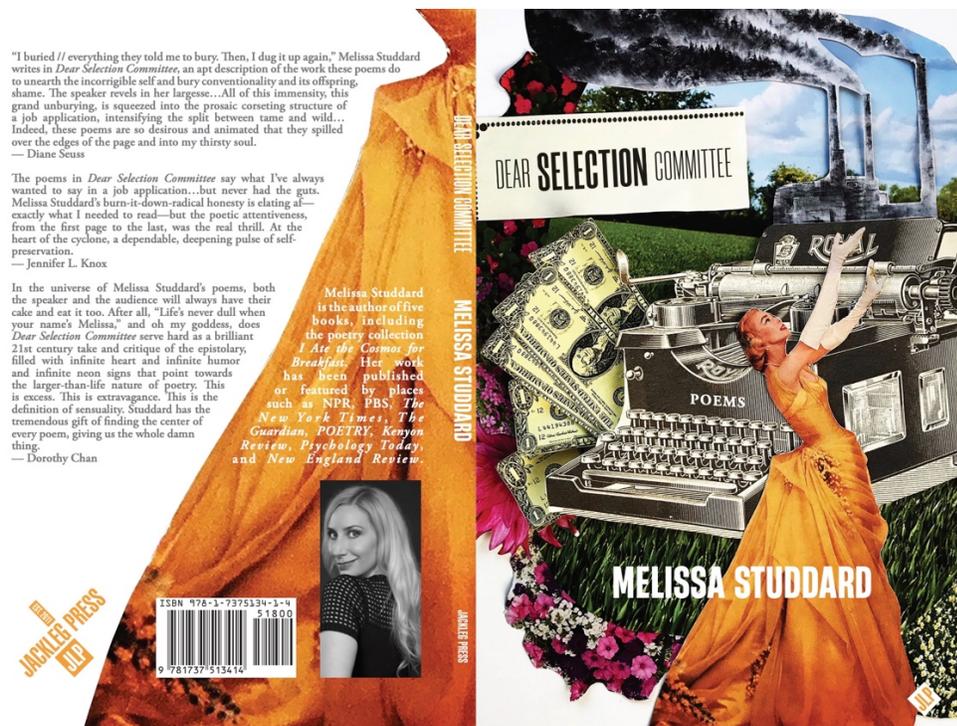
**James Haley:** Fifteen years after James L. Haley’s *Passionate Nation* won the Texas Historical Commission’s Fehrenbach Book Award, the University of North Texas Press has reprinted it in trade paperback. Volume 4 of the *Taming Texas* series for 7th graders, *Women in Texas Law*, co-authored with his long-time series collaborator Marilyn P. Duncan, is now in press. As other Texas projects are readied for publication, Haley is taking up the post of Writer-in-Residence at The Pines Ranch, a nonprofit retreat center in the Sangre de Cristo Range near Westcliffe, Colorado. There he will be researching the Western Expansion, when not leading nature walks, campfire talks, and frolicking in the San Isabel National Forest with the head of security, Ahnak the Wolf.



**Don Tate:** On Friday, February 11th, I had the honor of accepting the 2021 Texas Writer Award, given by the Texas Book Festival. The award was given out at the First Edition Literary Gala. Past recipients include Stephen Graham Jones, Attica Locke, Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, Dan Rather, among others. Award recipients are also bestowed the coolest pair of handmade custom cowboy boots, made by Rocketbuster Boots of El Paso, Texas. Don recently finished the final revision to his forthcoming picture book biography “Jerry Changed the Game! How Engineer Jerry Lawson Revolutionized Video Games Forever” (S&S/Paula Wiseman Books), a portion of which he'll read at the upcoming TIL banquet in April.

Melissa Studdard: *Door Out of the Fire*, a group of poems commissioned by Nicolò Spera and set for chorus and guitar by Christopher Theofanidis, was performed by the University of

Michigan Chamber Choir this past fall, and will be recorded by Exigence Vocal Ensemble of the Sphinx Organization this summer, as well as performed by The Washington Chorus this upcoming fall. All of these performances feature Nicolò Spera on guitar and are conducted by Eugene Rogers. The poems were commissioned to address the difficulties of our times and inspire hope and courage for posterity. My forthcoming poetry collection, *Dear Selection Committee*, is framed as a job application and employs surrealist imagery and irreverent humor to consider, among other topics, the value in how we choose to occupy our time and attention. It will be released by Jackleg Press on May 17th. I am also very much looking forward to a SWWIM residency in March at the Betsy Hotel in Miami.



**Katie Hoerth:** My latest book, *Prairie Madness*, was just published from North Dakota State University Press! The book is a little extra special because it is completely hand-made by the students at NDSU and printed using antique letterpress equipment. The books also have real dried flowers from the prairie glued to the cover. Each book is unique, numbered, and made with a lot of love and care! You can read more about *Prairie Madness*, learn about its printing, and read a few sample poems here: <https://ndsualumni.org/magazine/2022/01/winter-read-recommendation>. *Flare Stacks in Full Bloom*, a poetry collection, is forthcoming from Texas Review Press later this year! I am also gearing up to present at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) this year about my work on *Odes and Elegies: Eco-Poetry from the Texas Gulf Coast* (2020) and the College Arts Association (CAA) about our collaborative poetry and art collection, *Borderland Mujeres* (forthcoming from Stephen F Austin University Press).

**Chris Barton:** New from me: *HOW TO MAKE A BOOK (ABOUT MY DOG)* and *MOVING FORWARD: FROM SPACE-AGE RIDES TO CIVIL RIGHTS SIT-INS WITH AIRMAN ALTON YATES*. My other recent titles include *FIRE TRUCK VS. DRAGON*, *WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A VOICE LIKE THAT?* and *ALL OF A SUDDEN AND FOREVER*. I'm also the author of

*WHOOSH!* (included on 21 state reading lists), *THE DAY-GLO BROTHERS* (winner, Sibert Honor), and *SHARK VS. TRAIN* (a *New York Times* bestseller) and the co-host of "[This One's Dedicated to...](#)" You can visit me at [www.chrisbarton.info](http://www.chrisbarton.info).

**Barbara Ras:** In 2021 Barbara Ras published *The Blues of Heaven*, which was reviewed in *Booklist*, *Sewanee Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Rumpus*. In addition to a dozen online events at bookstores and reading series nationwide, she was featured on Texas Public Radio's show "Book Public," hosted by Yvette Benavides. Ras will be participating in the following upcoming events: Sunday, February 20, 11 am EST, online with the Poets' Theatre/Community Church of Boston; in person, March 22 at Smith College with Ellen Dore Watson; online Wednesday, April 20, The Big Texas Read; online, Monday, May 2, Cafe Muse Literary Salon, with Maggie Smith (who named *The Blues of Heaven* one her top ten books of poetry in 2021); in person, Saturday, May 21, San Antonio Book Festival. After nineteen great years of living in Texas, Barbara left San Antonio for Denver, to be closer to family.

**Tom Zigal :** Assisted veteran Austin news reporter Neal Spelce in the writing of Spelce's memoir, *With the Bark Off: A Journalist's Memories of LBJ and a Life in the News Media*, which was published in the fall 2021 by the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History in partnership with UT Press. Spelce's book continues to receive attention in book reviews, excerpts in various publications, and interviews with the media. He was interviewed by Michael Barnes in the Austin American-Statesman.

**Karla Morton:** 2010 Texas Poet Laureate karla k. morton is happy to announce that her poetry book *The National Parks: A Century of Grace* (TCU Press) has entered its second printing! Fellow 2005 Texas Poet Laureate Alan Birkelbach co-wrote this historic book of poetry -- historic because never before has there been a book of poetry ever written *in-situ* from all 62 National Parks! Their *Words of Preservation: A Poets Laureate National Parks Tour* took four and one-half years, but Morton and Birkelbach made it to every single National Park (an epic adventure!!!), performing poetic Public Outreach programs at as many Parks that could host them! Morton and Birkelbach were out there in the world, spreading and supporting poetry and the Arts; trying to culturally preserve and protect these sacred spaces for the next seven generations. Morton and Birkelbach give a percentage of their royalties back to the National Park system, and TIL members can still get a first edition copy signed by THREE TIL MEMBERS: Morton, Birkelbach, and the incredible singer-songwriter Michael Martin Murphey, who wrote the amazing Foreword for this glorious, hard-bound, full color book! (Contact karla for a copy!) Also, Morton's 15<sup>th</sup> poetry collection, *Politics of the Minotaur* (Texas Review Press), has been published! She also wanted to thank Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas for publishing her chapbook about the pandemic titled *Where to Go Among the Chaos*. It is part of the "Voices of the Coronavirus Pandemic: The Chancellor Carine M. Feyten Collection at TWU". Says Morton, "It is an incredible gift."

**William Jack Sibley:** My novel *HERE WE GO LOOP DE LOOP* was published in September. Subsequent interviews and book signings later I was asked to be a guest panelist on "New Texas Fiction" at the Texas Book Festival in Austin. In December *HWGLDL* was listed as one of the 10 Most Notable Books of the Year by the San Antonio Express News. This month I'm teaching a class on writing dialogue at Gemini Ink in S.A. and will be speaking at the San Antonio Book

Festival in May. My contribution (“The Nueces River”) came out this month in the long-awaited VIVA TEXAS RIVERS. Props to the illustrious Steve Davis on this sparkling anthology. Work on novel #4 underway. [www.williamjacksibley.com](http://www.williamjacksibley.com)



#### **The Attuned Art of Writing Dialogue with Bill Sibley**

Hybrid: Students may attend in-person or via zoom

Wed., Feb. 23 & Mar 2, 6:30-8:30pm

Nonmember: \$150 Member: \$125 Student/Vet/Mil: \$75

**Save 20% off through February!**

Work closely with award-winning author and screenplay pro William Sibley to learn some expert advice on what makes for unique dialogue that “sells” the writing for the reader—whether for a novel, play, film, or TV series.

## **Texas Institute of Letters Officers**

President, Sergio Troncoso, El Paso

Vice President, Diana Lopez, Corpus Christi

Secretary, William Jack Sibley, San Antonio

Treasurer, W.K. (Kip) Stratton, Austin

Recording Secretary, Marcia Hatfield Daudistel, El Paso



## **Council Members**

David Bowles, Rio Grande Valley, second term ends 2022

Ben Fountain, Dallas, second term ends 2023

Cliff Hudder, The Woodlands, first term ends 2022

Michael Hurd, Houston, first term ends 2023

Kathryn Jones, Walnut Springs, second term ends 2022

Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Eagle Pass, first term ends 2023

Mary Beth Rogers, Dallas, first term ends 2022

Celeste Bedford Walker, Houston, second term ends 2022