

Texas Institute of Letters



**Double Issue:
Jan/Feb/Mar 2013
Apr/May/Jun 2013
Newsletter**

2014 Banquet Info

President's Message

This has been quite a summer, one we'll not likely forget soon. The weather has given us some temperature relief from what we've experienced over the past couple of years, but the drought continues. I have visited the Paisano Ranch maybe ten times over the years, but this summer marked the first time I'd been out there when Barton Creek was completely dry. It was sad to see. I was reminded of an earlier drive I took this year when I made several crossings of the upper Brazos. At the time it also showed the effects of the drought. Like many people, I can't travel through that country without thinking about **John Graves** and the way he wrote so well about such things as land and water and the effects of drought. As you know, he died this summer, leaving a rich literary legacy that is appreciated nationwide.

But Graves left behind a rich legacy to TIL as well. He was a giant among our members, a Council member, a past President, a Lon Tinkle Award winner, a TIL Fellow. Therefore, it seemed fitting that speakers at the memorial services held for him in Fort Worth were TIL members. They included **Steve Harrigan, Bill Wittliff, Bill Broyles, and Rick Bass**. Many other TIL members were in attendance. In his *Houston Chronicle* column, **Leon Hale** mourned Graves' passing and recalled the days when the "James River Bunch," organized by the late TIL member **Bill Shearer**, would gather for Hill Country fishing trips: <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/life/columnists/hale/article/Another-of-the-James-River-Bunch-lost-4738775.php>

In an interview, **Bev Lowry** recalled her time as a member of the Council and Graves' influence: "John was kind of the moral ballast of the Council. Any decision we'd make, we kind of waited for John. It was wonderful because he had such a sense of who we were and what the organization had been and should be. We looked to John. And he'll be a part of Texas letters forever..."

Because of Graves' importance to TIL and to Texas letters, the Council has voted to dedicate the upcoming spring banquet to him.

Graves' archives are housed at the Wittliff Collections in San Marcos, so it seems fitting that we return there for an annual TIL meeting dedicated to his memory. **Our meeting will be the weekend of April 4-5.** So mark the date. Once again, the Wittliff Collections will host our reception on Friday, April 4, and we'll have our banquet and related activities at the same hotel where we gathered last year, the Embassy Suites – Hotel, Spa, and Conference Center. We had wonderful hospitality from the hotel in San Marcos last year, and our members seemed to be very happy with the accommodations, so I'm glad we'll be returning there. I'll have more details to share in the near future.

Please use the form at the end of this newsletter to remit 2013-2014 dues and to make your reservations for the banquet.

Speaking of important members of TIL: A little more than a year ago, **Jan Reid** stepped up to be Secretary at a time when the office was vacant. Jan did so with the understanding that it would be a temporary assignment. I want to thank Jan for his contributions as Secretary as well as some 35 years of contributions to TIL since he was inducted. I'm pleased to announce that **Steve Davis** is now the TIL Secretary. As Steve moves into the Secretary's role, Jan will assume Steve's spot on the Council. Though Steve is a relative newcomer to TIL compared to Jan, he has made his presence known and has been a productive and important member of the Council. I know this will carry over to his new job. My thanks go out to Steve, as well as to all the other Councilors, Officers, and Past Presidents, and to you, the members, for making TIL the great organization it is.

– *W.K. (Kip) Stratton*
TIL President

TIL Goes International

*By Darwin Payne
Past TIL President*

Twenty-six members and spouses from the Texas Institute of Letters are happy to report that our May 25-June 1 visit to Cuba, the “forbidden island,” was not only fun but informative and a bonding experience for us all.

We went, as you may recall, on what is called a general or professional license that permits professional writers and academics to visit the island for research without the need to obtain advance permission from the federal government.

What did we study?

Well, of course, Ernest Hemingway!

We even stayed in the same hotel Hemingway lived in during his first seven years in Cuba. That was the Ambos Mundos, in the heart of old Havana with its many colonial buildings. The Ambos Mundos wasn't a luxury hotel by any means, but it certainly gave us a feel for Hemingway's life there. The old wire-cage elevator that he rode to his fifth floor room is still the same. We visited, too, Hemingway's “farm,” or Finca Vigia outside of Havana where he lived for so many years. Should I mention that we also had a few drinks at his favorite restaurants? And, too, we saw many other aspects of life in Cuba.

You can get a great feel for the trip by looking three sites: Mine, <http://tilincuba.shutterfly.com/>. Also **Clay Reynolds'** site: <http://cubatil2013.shutterfly.com/>. And then there's **Michael Zagst's** 14-minute video in which you can see the streets of Cuba and hear our guide as she talks about our trip. That's at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJvlqKXXhTI&feature=c4-overview&list=UUizDLcAV1xVjF_Ox8LRJesA.

Also, see Michael's Youtube site for his other moving pictures: http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=MSZ1923&oq=MSZ1923&gs_l=youtube.3...1621.1621.0.3220.1.1.0.0.0.58.58.1.1.0...0.0...1ac.1.11.youtube.pg2NuZtrEQs

Paisano Update

*By Michael Adams
Dobie Paisano Fellowship Program Director*

I will try to make this report on Paisano as dispassionate as I can. The reason will quickly become clear. On Christmas Day, while walking the ranch with Paisano Fellow Kelli Ford and her family, I came upon a startling sight at the northern most part of our property. A homeowner in the gated community next to us had torn down a long section our fence (erecting a tall, black, metal fence in its place), bulldozed an acre and a quarter of our property, and cut town several trees. Absolute devastation. To see photographs of the damage go to the link at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wt0slh272oy02g8/jgEpDa30kM>

On a return trip a few weeks later, I discovered that water from his enormous McMansion was being drained onto our property. To see this damage, go to the link at: <http://vimeo.com/65123591>. Why would someone do such an awful and criminal thing? From my one brief meeting with him, I can only assume he wanted a better view of the Hill Country (the vista of our ranch) or he wasn't satisfied with the landscape before him. This was no accident. The land owner admitted to this destructive trespass and rather matter of factly informed us that he wouldn't come onto our property any more. He added that by cutting down our trees he was doing us a favor.

I reported the trespass and destruction to the UT Real Estate Office and to the UT lawyers. I was as startled by their response as I was with the destruction of our land. There was absolutely no interest in charging the man with criminal trespass and there was serious hesitation about suing since it would take time and money—to hell with justice. The frustrations and difficulties of dealing with those who should be outraged would continue for several months. It eventually got to the point that I simply could not continue to serve as Director of the Dobie Paisano Fellowship Program and I resigned. However, the Dean of the Graduate School, to whom I report, refused to accept my resignation and promised to make this right. She asked me for a list of what I wanted done and assured me that she would do everything she could to make this right. The first thing on the list was that I wouldn't have to meet with the UT lawyers again. And I haven't. To read an article on the details of this, go to the *Austin Chronicle's* website at: <http://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2013-06-21/range-war-at-the-dobie-ranch/>

Of course, there are obvious questions still remaining. Why hasn't this man been charged with criminal trespass? (What would happen to me if I tore down the UT football fence and cut down a goal post?) Where are our trees he cut down? The field of mulch in the landowners backyard? Isn't this stolen property? Why were the UT lawyers so reluctant to sue?

At present, the issue has now been taken up by the University of Texas System lawyers. They sent out some restoration experts from the Lady Bird Johnson Wild Flower Center to evaluate the damage. They don't, however, make estimates of cost. My understanding is that the System lawyers are keen to "settle" as well, which doesn't make me optimistic that the land will get anything close to what it needs. It's for that reason that I now turn to TIL for support. Ultimately, it is the Attorney General's office that determines the destiny of a case like this. You can contact that office by writing to: The Honorable Greg Abbott, Office of the Attorney General, P.O. Box 12548, Austin, TX 78711-2548 or by email: greg.abbott@texasattorneygeneral.gov

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The news on other fronts

We have two wonderful writers coming in for the next season at the ranch.

The recipient of the Ralph A. Johnston Fellowship is Ben Fountain. Ben is the author of the *New York Times*-bestselling novel *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (2012), which received the National Book Critics' Circle Award for Fiction, the Jesse Jones Award for Fiction given by the Texas Institute of Letters, the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Fiction, the Flaherty-Dunn First Novel Award, and the PEN-New England Cerulli Award. In addition, *Billy Lynn* was a finalist for the National Book Award, as well as for the U.K. National Book Award in the International Author of the Year category.

Ben's short story collection *Brief Encounters with Che Guevara* (2006) received the PEN/Hemingway Award, the Barnes & Noble Discover Prize for Fiction, and a Whiting Writer's Award. Other honors for Fountain's fiction include two Pushcart Prizes, an O. Henry Award, the McGinnis-Ritchie Prize for Fiction, and inclusion in various anthologies. His short fiction has appeared in *Esquire*, *Harper's*, *The Paris Review*, and *Zoetrope: All-Story*, and his nonfiction has appeared in *The New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, among other publications. In 2010, his reportage on post-earthquake Haiti was nationally broadcast on the radio show "This American Life."

The recipient of the Jesse Jones Fellowship is Antonio Ruiz-Camacho. Antonio earned his MFA from the University of Texas in 2012. At UT, he won the Michael Adams Thesis Prize in Fiction for his collection, *Barefoot Dogs*, whose interlinked stories follow an affluent family from Mexico City as they're forced into diaspora after the family's patriarch disappears.

Born and raised in Toluca, Mexico, he's received the John S. Knight Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University, the Carol Houck Smith Contributor Scholarship at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the Diverse Recruitment Fellowship at UT Austin. For more than sixteen years, he has worked and contributed as a journalist for American and Latin American print and online publications such as *Etiqueta Negra* and *Letras Libres*.

Continuing with good news. *Texas Monthly* has generously offered us public-service announcement space in their monthly magazine. Since the University prevents me from approaching most of the important foundations, corporations, and businesses in Texas (they "tag" possible donors for specific needs on campus), this may, at last, be an opportunity to get the word out about the needs of the ranch and the program. It will be a few months before this can begin, but I will keep you informed of this as well. This is a very generous and thoughtful gesture on the part of *Texas Monthly*.

Finally, I want to sincerely thank the many members of TIL (especially President Kip Stratton and the Council) who rushed to me with their much-needed support during a difficult time in the history of the program.

UT Press Announces Publishing Endeavor As Big As Texas

Former TIL President and University of Texas Press Director **Dave Hamrick** has announced a major new initiative unprecedented in publishing—The Texas Bookshelf. This UT Press project will be the most ambitious and comprehensive publishing endeavor about the culture and history of one state ever undertaken. The Texas Bookshelf will comprise 16 books and a companion website launching in 2017, all to be written by the distinguished faculty at The University of Texas at Austin, some of whom are TIL members. The first book will be a new full-length history of Texas, followed by 15 books released over five years on a range of Texas subjects—politics, music, film, business, architecture, and sports, among many others.

The Bookshelf will launch in 2017 with a sweeping, full-length history of Texas to be written by Lon Tinkle Award winner and faculty member at the university's Michener Center for Writers **Stephen Harrigan**. "What most excites me about this project is the chance it offers to tell the story of Texas as one enthralling, seamless narrative, the epic chronicle of a place and of the ceaseless attempts by many

different sorts of people to claim it,” Harrigan said. “My goal is to make the events of the modern history of Texas—the Kennedy assassination, the moon landing, the collapse of Enron—as compelling to read about as the siege of the Alamo or the Comanche wars.”

Lawrence Wright, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Looming Tower*, said Harrigan is the perfect writer to tackle this multifaceted subject: “Word by word, book by book, Stephen Harrigan has proven that he’s the best writer Texas has ever produced.”

TIL members **Greg Curtis** and **Bill Minutaglio** are also participating in the project.

Member News

Tim O’Brien, known for novels such as *The Things They Carried* and *In the Lake of the Woods*, has been awarded the Pritzker Military Library Literature Award, the first fiction writer ever to win the award. The Pritzker comes with a prize of \$100,000. ★★★ Our 2013 winner of the Lon Tinkle Award, **Stephen Harrigan**, reports that his novel, *Remember Ben Clayton*, has won the James Fenimore Cooper Prize for historical fiction from the Society of American Historians. You’ll remember it also won TIL’s Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction. ★★★ Texas Review Press has published the second collection of poetry by **Sarah Cortez**, *Cold Blue Steel*, about police work and fire service work. Arte Publico Press has also published the compelling anthology *Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence*, which Sarah co-edited with **Sergio Troncoso**. The anthology of personal essays focuses how the bi-national and bi-cultural existence along the United States-Mexico border has been disrupted by the recent drug violence, with voices from both sides of the border. *Publishers Weekly* called it an “eye-opening collection of essays,” and the *San Antonio Express-News* said it was “exceptionally beautiful and poignant writing.” Really good work by Sarah and Sergio! ★★★ **Bryan Woolley’s** 1981 novel *November 22* is being republished in hardcover and as an eBook in a 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition by Brown Books Publishing in collaboration with the *Dallas Morning News*. It’s due out in September. The novel comprises 24 chapters, from midnight to midnight, following some 30 characters through that day. Bryan says the novel is about Dallas at that time, not the assassination itself. ★★★ Building on his successful saga *Country of the Bad Wolfes*, which appear in 2012, **James Carlos Blake** has issued the first title in a series of “border noir” novels, *The Rules of Wolfe*. It has received starred reviews from *Booklist* and *Publishers Weekly*, among other terrific notices. The publisher is Mysterious Press Grove/Atlantic. ★★★ Here’s an update from **Jesse Sublett**: “Every time I tell people I’ve been working on ‘my Lubbock book,’ they assume it’s about Buddy Holly or some other West Texas music topic. Instead, in Spring 2014 Texas Tech University Press will publish *Broke, Not Broken: Homer Maxey’s Texas Bank War*, which I co-wrote with Broadus Spivey, a former president of the State Bar of Texas. The book tells the story of Homer Maxey, a Lubbock businessman, civic leader, and plaintiff in *Maxey v. Citizens National Bank*, one of the biggest civil cases in West Texas history. Maxey was also the father of the internationally known sculptor Glenna Goodacre. In my other life as a writer and musician, I’ve been ending each of my Murder Ballad Monday shows with a chapter of my end-of-the-world detective novel, *Grave Digger Blues*.” ★★★ **Jan Reid’s** biography of Ann Richards, *Let the People In*, was twice honored by the Texas State Historical Association for 2012: the

Coral B. Tullis Award for the Most Outstanding Book in the Field of Texas History and co-recipient of the Liz Carpenter Award for Research in the History of Women. Also hailed as one of the *Houston Chronicle's* ten best nonfiction books of 2012, a handsome new paperback edition of the biography will be published by the University of Texas Press in September. This summer Jan is writing essays for the anthologies *Curiosity's Cats: Writers on Research* (his assignment: how does one jump from Quanah Parker fiction to Ann Richards fact), by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, and a fine new collection of historical photos of the Rio Grande from the University of New Mexico Press. He's well into his third novel, *Sins of the Younger Sons*, a love story and thriller set amid the Basque separatist strife in Spain. Jan is also writing a story about the remarkable friendship of football greats Bobby Layne and Doak Walker for *Alcalde*, ably edited by its managing editor and **Steve Harrigan's** daughter, Dorothy Guerrero.

★★★ **Bill Minutaglio** and **Steve Davis** report that their forthcoming book, *Dallas 1963*, due out in October, is receiving good early notices. In a starred review, *Publishers Weekly* noted: "After fifty years, it's a challenge to fashion a new lens with which to view the tragic events of November 22, 1963 – yet Texans [Minutaglio and Davis] pull it off brilliantly." TIL member **Lawrence Wright**, who grew up in Dallas, observed: "All the great personalities of Dallas during the assassination come alive in this superb rendering of a city on a roller coaster into disaster. History has been waiting fifty years for this book." ★★★ **Tom Zigal's** novel of New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina, *Many Rivers To Cross* (TCU), has garnered glowing advance praise from Richard Ford and Scott Turow as well as our own **Steve Harrigan** and **Jan Reid**. The book is set to be published in mid-September. ★★★ **Miles Wilson's** novel, *Fire Season*, won the Stephen F. Austin State University Press Fiction Prize and will be published by the press next year. It was an impressive accomplishment. The manuscript was selected from some 1,300 entries. ★★★ **Carmen Tafolla's** latest book, *Rebozos*, an art and poetry collection highlighting the oil paintings of Catalina Garate, received three First Place Awards at the International Latino Book Awards Ceremony in New York City May 30, taking the titles "Best Art Book", "Best Poetry Book", and "Best Gift Book" for 2012. Carmen, eight days out of cancer surgery, did not make the ceremony, but insists that if the ceremony had been a full ten days after surgery, she'd have been there! ★★★ **W.K. (Kip) Stratton's** *Floyd Patterson: The Fighting Life of Boxing's Invisible Champion* was one of four books short-listed this year for the P.E.N./ESPN Award for Literary Sports Writing. Earlier in the spring, it won the Oklahoma Book Award for Nonfiction and at press time, we've learned that it won the 2013 Writers League of Texas Book Award for Nonfiction (formerly the Violet Crown Book Award). ★★★ **Frank de la Teja** sends this update from the Center for the Study of the Southwest: "The center for the announces a change in the management of its journals, *Southwestern American Literature* and *Texas Books in Review*. David Norman, the editor over the past year, resigned at the end of May to move his family to Madison, Wisconsin, where he will teach writing courses and where his wife is to begin her doctoral program in communication sciences & disorders at the University of Wisconsin-Madison this fall. Although only at the Center for a couple of years, David helped introduce a number of changes, in particular helping me to transition into the position of director and performing a layout makeover of *SAL*, including the introduction of a color cover and photo essays. We are fortunate to have as David's successor Southwest native Will Jensen, a Texas State MFA who grew up in California and Arizona. His short fiction has appeared in *New Plains Review*, *The Texas Review*, and other journals; he has previously been nominated for a Pushcart prize. Aside from taking over as editor of *SAL*

and *TBR*, he will take over as instructor of the introductory courses that serve the Center's minor in Southwestern Studies." ★★ ★ The Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference, the preeminent narrative nonfiction conference in America, took place this summer at the DFW Lakes Hilton Hotel and Convention Center in Grapevine. The director of the conference, **George Getschow**, did his usual outstanding job of organizing the event, which he describes as being "more like a literary hootenanny than a sober gathering of stuffy writers." A number of TIL members have been attending, judging, speaking and even singing at the conference for years. Last year's conference looked at how writers are pushing the boundaries of nonfiction by blending journalism, biography, essay, travelogue, history, memoir, psychology, photography and poetry into an entirely new form of nonfiction literature. This year, George picked a theme that appealed to many Texas writers: "Unearthing the Past." George brought in narrative nonfiction authors and literary journalists who have distinguished themselves in writing historical narratives, biography, memoir, even nonfiction playwriting, including Susan Orlean, author of *Rin Tin Tin: The Life and the Legend*, John Vaillant, author of *The Tiger*, Ron Powers, author of *Flags of Our Fathers*, Caroline Alexander, author of *Endurance* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*, Hampton Sides, author of *Hellhound on his Trail* and *Blood and Thunder*, Kevin Merida, Managing Editor of the *Washington Post* and author of *Supreme Discomfort*, a biography of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and Helen Benedict, author of *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq*, which informed her play, *The Lonely Soldier Monologues*. TIL members **Jeff Guinn**, author of *The Last Gunfight* and *Go Down Together: The True, Untold Story of Bonnie and Clyde* and **Hugh Aynsworth**, the Dallas journalism legend, were panelists. (Hugh is the co-author of seven books with **Steven Michaud**, including *JFK: Breaking the News*). Other speakers included **Jim Donovan**, **Jim Hornfischer**, and **Doug Swanson**. Finally, our own **Skip Hollandsworth** delivered the Mayborn's Sunday keynote and brought the house down with his humorous take on how he turned a nonfiction narrative into a nationally acclaimed movie, *Bernie*. **Fran Vick** sits on the Mayborn Conference board. ★★ ★ Speaking of George Getschow, he published an interesting article on the making of an iconic Coca-Cola commercial featuring Texas football legend Mean Joe Greene (born in Elgin, attended high school in Temple, played college ball at North Texas). The article appeared in *Coca-Cola Journey*. Here's a link: <http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/what-the-iliad-the-odyssey-and-mean-joe-have-in-common> ★★ ★ And speaking of **Jeff Guinn**, he has made a big splash with the release of *Manson: The Life and Times of Charles Manson*, including a rave review in the *New York Times*, in which Janet Maslin describes it as a "brawny, deep-digging biography that's much more riveting that might be expected" given how much has already been written about Manson. But Jeff breaks a lot of new ground in the book. Amazon.com has named it a Best Book of the Month and Jeff has received other accolades for his excellently researched and well written exploration of the killer and cult leader. It's currently on the *Los Angeles Times* bestseller list. ★★ ★ **James Hoggard's** new book is a collection out from Wings Press, *The Devil's Fingers & Other Personal Essays*. Readers familiar with Jim's work won't be surprised to find the subject matter to be wide-ranging and each essay to be exquisitely written. ★★ ★ **Mark Busby's** novel, *Cedar Crossing*, was published by TCU Press in Spring 2013. His reading and signing at Book People, Austin, on June 22 went very well. Also, Mark and his wife Linda joined the TIL group on the Cuba trip after Mark taught a Hemingway seminar at Texas State in the spring. At Hemingway's bar, La Bodeguita del Medio, Mark condensed his semester of lectures into 10 minutes, just before the band's

lead singer got schooled on the tango by **Bouyant Bob Flynn**. ★★★ Two essays by **Alwyn Barr** have been published recently: "Black Cowboys: Background and Roles in Texas," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book*, v. 88 (2012): 8-17; and "African-American Housing and Health Patterns in Southwestern Cities, 1865-1900," in Richard McCaslin, Donald E. Chipman, and Andrew J. Torget, eds., *This Corner of Canaan: Essays on Texas in Honor of Randolph B. Campbell* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2013): 265-291. ★★★ Houston novelist **Anita Bunkley** has a new release: *A Thousand Steps* (Rinard March 2013). Set in 1855, *A Thousand Steps* moves from the snow-covered mountains of North Carolina to the untamed wilds of Indian Territory, bringing to life the stories of a beautiful mulatto slave, a fierce Creek Indian, an avid abolitionist, and a free black girl – all of whom endure the hardships involved in establishing new lives in a strange new land. ★★★ **Don Graham's** study of an Australian writer, *Michael Wilding & the Fiction of Instant Experience: Stories, Novels, and Memoirs, 1963-2012*, has been published by Teneo Press, Amherst, New York. ★★★ **Christopher Cook** has closed an option with Sony Television Pictures on his novel *Robbers* for a possible TV series. He is contracted to write the pilot script. His next print book, *Langues du feu*, a collection of novellas and stories, will be published in the spring by Payot & Rivages in France. ★★★ **Betty Adcock** was inducted into the Fellowship of Southern Writers at their meeting in April. She was elected a member in 2011 but could not attend that year. The Fellowship meets in conjunction with the Celebration of Southern Literature held in Chattanooga, Tennessee in alternate years. Betty is completing a seventh collection of poems. Recent work appears in *The Birmingham Poetry Review*, *International Poetry Review* (California) and will soon be seen in a new anthology of Southern Poetry from University of South Carolina Press. ★★★ And here's an update from **Jan Seale**: "I always knew Texas was big and the people were generous, but I recognized that in a new way in the role of 2012 Texas Poet Laureate. Since my appointment May 27, 2011, I have travelled 26,000 miles in Texas and have spoken to 5,000 Texans. My work includes 19 college visits, 13 K-12 school visits, 14 readings/talks to associations, 8 club appearances, 7 festival appearances, 6 library and museum programs, 3 school in-service presentations, 5 bookstore and café signings, 4 literary contests judged, 5 various other venues, and 4 books published. The latest book, published in March 2013, is *Jan Seale: New and Selected Poems* in the Texas Poet Laureate Series from TCU Press. Thanks go out to all the TIL'ers who show an active interest in poetry by supporting poetry and hosting visiting poets at their institutions." And we think TIL can thank Jan for representing us so well! ★★★ On April 9, in Atkinson Recital Hall on the campus of New Mexico State University, the University Singers performed the world premier concert of "Never Far Away," an original choral work composed by Dr. Lon Chaffin, composer-in-residence and chair of the NMSU Music Department. Dr. Chaffin used a poem by **Larry D. Thomas**, "From the Faraway Nearby," for the text of the composition. Both the poem and the choral piece were based upon the painting by Georgia O'Keeffe. Larry read his poem as guest artist for the concert in Las Cruces. ★★★ In 2013 **Jerry Craven's** novel, *The Wild Part*, was published by Angelina River, and TCU Press accepted the novel's sequel, *Women of Thunder*, due out in 2014. Craven's story "Brenda Without Skin" was named runner-up for the Texas Institute of Letters Kay Cattarula Award in short fiction. The story first appeared in *Concho River Review*, then was published in Craven's book *Tiger, Tiger* (Mongrel Empire Press). Jerry Craven serves as press director for Lamar University Press and Ink Brush Press. ★★★ And speaking of **Kay Cattarula**, we have this update: "A script I wrote called *Scott and Zelda* was presented as a one-

time benefit reading at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in Williamstown, MA, on July 1. Actors John Benjamin Hickey and Patricia Clarkson portray the famous Fitzgerald's and their famously complicated marriage through their own words, drawn from novels, letters and other writings. The piece was first seen in 2002 in Dallas as part of the Arts & Letters Live series and has not been done since because of restrictions on the literary materials. It's back now in time for Gatsby-mania. . ." ★★★ **Andrew Hudgins** reports he published two books on June 11. A memoir called *The Joker* (Simon and Schuster) and *A Clown at Midnight* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). "As you'd guess from the titles," he says, "I'm working a theme here. And just in case they might make you laugh more than they make you wince, I'll paste in a couple of things S & S had me do to support the book." Here are the links:

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-71r3OWGsTEauM_vZoRtKugC_C5dlcwK and

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/136523390/THE-JOKER-author-Andrew-Hudgins-Ten-Favorite>

★★★ **Michael Zagst** is busy putting together an eBook of photos of Cuba's vintage cars (see the links in Darwin's Cuba dispatch for samples). "Such works of art," Michael says, "just rolling down the payment. Remarkable, really..." ★★★ **Myène Dressler's** novella, *The Wedding of Anna F.*, has been published in *Big Fiction* magazine, and her novel *The Medusa Tree* has just been re-released as an eBook by Untreed Reads. She has essays forthcoming in the *Kenyon Review* and *Flyway Journal*. She's the current Visiting Writer at Guilford College in North Carolina. ★★★ **Gerald Duff** sends this update: "I've had some good recognition for my novel *Dirty Rice: A Season in the Evangeline League*. It was named a finalist for Book of the Year in the *ForeWords Reviews*, and it won a silver medal in the Independent Publishers competition in the category of best regional fiction, Southern, for 2012. Earlier in the year, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* listed it as one of the top 25 works of fiction published in 2012. Later this summer, my novel *A Crop of Circles* will be published by BlackWyrn Publishers in Louisville as my first venture into science fiction satire. In February of this year, the Philosophical Society of Texas awarded my novel *Blue Sabine* the award for best work of fiction published about Texas in 2012." Way to go, Gerald! ★★★ *Confederate Bushwacker: Mark Twain in the Shadow of the Civil War* is a micro-biography set in the most important and pivotal year in the life of Mark Twain. In 1885 he was at the top of his career as an author and businessman, his own publishing firm bringing out not only *Huckleberry Finn* but also the triumphantly successful *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*. Twenty years after the end of the Civil War, Twain finally told the story of his past as a deserter from the losing side, at the same time befriending and publishing the General from the winning side. Coincidentally, the year also marks the beginning of Twain's descent into misfortune, his transformation from a humorist into a pessimist and determinist. Interwoven throughout this portrait are the headlines and crises of 1885 – the black lynchings, Indian uprisings, anti-Chinese violence, labor unrest, and the death of Grant. The year was at once his *annus mirabilis* and the year of his undoing. **Jerome Loving's** full-bore treatment of a single year enables him to look backward and forward from this plank to capture both Twain and the country at large in a time of crisis and transformation. The book is available from University Press of New England. ★★★ **Ben Rehder's** Blanco County mysteries are officially in development with USA Network and Warner Bros Horizon Scripted Television. The writer/showrunner is Rob Thomas, of *Veronica Mar* and *Party Down*. Here's a link: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/tv-upfronts-usa-air-daytime-523949> The ever-busy Ben has released his seventh Blanco County mystery, *Hog Heaven*, first in eBook format on Amazon with print and audiobook following. ★★★ **Pat Carr** mentored the

week-long Hemingway Retreat at the Hemingway/Pfeiffer Center in June, the same month that her graphic novel, *Lincoln, Booth, and Me* came out from El Amarna Press. She's also won the 2013 Porter Prize for a lifetime of literary achievement. Way to go, Pat! ★★ ★ **Lonn Taylor** sends this news: "I am serving as guest curator of an exhibit of 19th-century Texas furniture at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin. The exhibit, 'Texas Furniture from the Ima Hogg Winedale Collection,' opened on July 11 and will remain up through September. It includes 40 pieces of hand-made furniture and a 19th-century Texas cabinetmaker's shop." ★★ ★ And here's some news from **Bruce Bond**: "Last Fall I received the first UNT Foundation Eminent Professor Award. Also my book *Choir of the Wells: A Tetralogy* was released from Etruscan Press this past May, and two new books are forthcoming: *The Other Sky* (poems in collaboration with the painter Aron Wiesenfeld, intro by Stephen Dunn; Etruscan Press) and *For the Lost Cathedral* (LSU Press). Many thanks to TIL for all they do each year." And thanks to you, Bruce, for all you do for Texas letters! ★★ ★ **Kathi Appelt** has impressed the critics with her new novel, *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp* (Atheneum), which had a publication date of July 23. It garnered starred reviews from *Kirkus*, *Booklist*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and *School Library Journal*. Lyle Lovett narrates the audiobook version. ★★ ★ **Clay Reynolds** is enjoying a major milestone with the publication of his 20th book (and ninth novel), *Vox Populi*, by Texas Review Press. All his other fiction titles have been re-edited and issued as eBooks by Baen Books; they're available in bundles from Baen or from Amazon.com. Clay adds, "My collection of essays, *Of Snakes and Sex and Playing in the Rain* will be reissued by Baen later this summer, as well; and a larger and expanded edition of the collection of dime novels I edited, *Hero of A Hundred Fights*, in 2011 is also available in electronic format from Sterling Publishers and also may be purchased through amazon.com." ★★ ★ **Karla K. Morton** has had three recent poetry books published. The first is *8 Voices: Contemporary Poetry from the American Southwest* (Baskerville Publishers), a collaboration with seven other poets she describes as *amazing*: Alan Birkelbach, Gary Swaim, Ron Moore, Nathan Brown, Elizabeth Raby, Tony Mares, and Jeffrey DeLotto. Next is *Passion, Art, Community: Denton, Texas, in Word and Image* (City of Denton, Texas), which has been described as a ground-breaking book of Public Art. It won the North Texas Book Festival Book Award, and was a finalist in the National Indie Book Award and the Eric Hoffer Book Award. The city of Denton asked her to write the history of the town in poetry form, then held a call for artists, and matched up each poem with a local artist. The result is a beautiful, full-colour hard-bound book. And appearing the second week of June was *Hometown, Texas: Young Poets and Artists Celebrate Their Roots* (TCU Press). She spent three years touring smaller Texas towns under-served in the Arts, paying special attention to the middle schools and high schools. All she asked was that the schools hold a poetry and an art contest about their town. Karla wrote a poem about each place, then selected the kids' winning poetry and art, and put them together in this book – allowing kids from all across Texas to be published. And, as we all know, nothing inspires future writers and artists more than seeing their names and work in print! ★★ ★ **Paul Ruffin's** fourth collection of short fiction, *Jésus dans le brouillard*, was published in French translation by 13E Note Editions, Paris, last year; his fifth collection, *Living in a Christ-Haunted Land*, will be released by Louisiana Literature Press this summer. His fiction has recently appeared in *Boulevard*, *Southwestern American Literature*, and the Fourth Edition of the *College Handbook of Creative Writing* (Wadsworth), with new stories due out soon from *Boulevard* and *Hopkins Review*. ★★ ★ Sheriff Dan Rhodes made a return this summer as St. Martin's published

Bill Crider's *Compound Murder*. Bill thinks it's the 21st book in the series – “Hard to believe,” he says. We believe it though, as Bill continues to show himself to be one of Texas' most productive writers. He adds he's slowly getting his backlist into eBook format: “That's proved to be an interesting experience.”

★★★ And, finally, in the egg-on-our-face department: In the last newsletter, we accidentally published some news concerning **Babette Hale** that had already been reported in an earlier newsletter. It was our fault and we apologize. We don't want it to appear that there was any undue boasting coming from **Leon**. But while Leon and Babette are on our minds, we want to say it was sure great seeing them at the banquet in April.

TIL Literary Awards For 2013 Presented

The awards are for works appearing during calendar year 2012. Authors must have lived in Texas for at least two years or their works must relate to the state. Winners were announced April 6 at the 77th annual banquet in San Marcos.

Here are the finalists for each award, with the winner identified in bold:

JESSE JONES AWARD FOR FICTION (\$6,000)

William J. Cobb, *The Bird Saviors* (Unbridled Books); Joe Lansdale, *Edge of Dark Water* (Mulholland Books); *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club*, Benjamin Alire Saenz (Cinco Puntos Press); Ben Rehder, *The Chicken Hanger* (TCU Press); **Ben Fountain, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*** (Ecco Press)

CARR P. COLLINS AWARD FOR NONFICTION (\$5,000)

Robert Caro, *The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (Knopf); Jan Reid, *Let the People In: The Life and Times of Ann Richards* (University of Texas Press); Joe Nick Patoski, *The Dallas Cowboys: The Outrageous History of the Biggest, Loudest, Most Hated, Most Loved Team in America* (Little, Brown); **Margie Crisp, *River of Contrasts: The Texas Colorado*** (Texas A&M University Press)

STEVEN TURNER AWARD FOR FIRST FICTION (\$1,000)

Keija Parssinen, *The Ruins of Us* (Harper Perennial); Rene S. Perez, *Along These Highways* (University of Arizona Press); **Kevin Grauke, *Shadows of Men*** (Queen's Ferry Press)

TIL AWARD FOR SCHOLARLY BOOK (\$2,500)

Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State* (University of Georgia Press); Russell M. Lawson, *Frontier Naturalist: Jean Louis Berlandier and the Exploration of Northern Mexico and Texas* (University of New Mexico Press); **Kate Sayen Kirkland, *Captain James A. Baker of Houston: 1857-1941*** (Texas A&M University Press)

HELEN C. SMITH MEMORIAL AWARD FOR POETRY (\$1,200)

William Wenthe, *Words Before Dawn* (LSU Press); Nick Norwood, *Gravel and Hawk* (Ohio University Press); Joseph Campana, *Natural Selections* (University of Iowa Press); **Ken Fontenot**, *In a Kingdom of Birds* (Pinyon Publishing)

BOB BUSH MEMORIAL AWARD FOR FIRST BOOK OF POETRY (\$1,000)

Kathleen Winter, *Nostalgia for the Criminal Past* (Elixir Press)

H-E-B AWARD, CHILDREN'S BOOK (\$500)

Donna Rubin, *Log Cabin Kitty* (TCU Press)

H-E-B AWARD, YOUNG ADULTS BOOK (\$500)

Ben Rehder, *The Driving Lesson* (Privately Printed); Cynthia Levinson, *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* (Peachtree Publishers); **Melodie Cuate**, *Journey to Plum Creek* (Texas Tech University Press)

EDWIN "BUD" SHRAKE AWARD FOR SHORT NONFICTION (\$1,000)

Robyn Ross, "Tracking Creation in Glen Rose," *Texas Observer*, April 4, 2012; Diane Jennings and Selwyn Crawford, "The Unknown Exoneree," *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 18, 2012; **Melissa del Bosque**, "The Deadliest Place in Mexico," *Texas Observer*, February 29, 2012

KAY CATTARULLA AWARD FOR SHORT STORY (\$1,000)

Jerry Craven, "Brenda Without Skin," *Concho River Review*; Jan Epton Seale, "Going Forth," *Appearances*; **James Sanderson**, "Bankers," *descant*

FRED WHITEHEAD AWARD FOR DESIGN OF A TRADE BOOK (\$750)

Kristina Kachele, *In the Country of Empty Crosses*, (Trinity University Press)

New Members Inducted

At the April banquet in San Marcos, the TIL inducted seven outstanding new members. For those of you who missed the banquet, please note that the readings by new members is becoming one of the real highlights of the TIL annual meeting. The room was packed full as we got to meet these new members in person and hear them read from their work.

New members are:

Paul H. Carlson is a retired history professor from Texas Tech University who lives in Ransom Canyon outside Lubbock. His area of specialty at Tech is the American West and American Indians. He is the author or co-author of eight books, which have won the Richardson Award for Best Book on West Texas

and been a selection of the History Book Club. Among his titles are *The Plains Indians* and *The Buffalo Soldier Tragedy of 1877*.

Christopher Cook is a native of Texas who grew up in Port Neches. He currently divides his time among the Czech Republic, Mexico, and the Bolivar Peninsula of Texas. He is the author of the novel *Robbers* and the short story collection *Screen Door Jesus*, which was a finalist for TIL's Jesse H. Jones Award. He also authored two novellas and an additional story collection. He's won awards from Barnes & Noble and the Sorbonne University.

Rod Davis is an eighth-generation Texan who currently lives in College Station, where he works as an administrator at Texas A&M. A well-known political journalist (*Texas Observer* and others), he is the author of two books, *American Voodoo* and *Corina's Way*, which Kirkus Reviews called "a spicy bouillabaisse....in the tradition of Flannery O'Connor or John Kennedy Toole." He's won a PEN Southwest Book Award and taught at UT and SMU.

Gerald Duff was born and raised in Nederland. He continues to write about his home state from his current home in Illinois. He is the author of ten books of fiction, two collections of poetry, and two literary studies; his writing has appeared in many of America's most prestigious literary journals. He has won or been a finalist for many literary awards, including TIL's Jesse H. Jones Award. His novel *Blue Sabine* won the Philosophical Society of Texas's award for best novel in 2012.

Stephanie Elizondo Griest was born and raised in Corpus Christi. She has explored some 38 countries and is the author of *Around the Bloc: My Life in Moscow, Beijing, and Havana* and *Mexican Enough: My Life Between the Borderlines*. She has written for *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and received numerous awards. She also written the guidebook *100 Places Every Woman Should Go* and edited the 2010 volume of *Best Women's Travel Writing*. She is an Assistant Professor of Creative Nonfiction at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Janice Sheffelman is a Texas native who has lived in Austin for many years. Widely published as a children's book author, Sheffelman's books have been published by Eakin, Random House, Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt Brace, and Eerdman – thirteen titles in all, ranging over different categories of children's books. *A Paradise Called Texas* made the Bluebonnet List of the Texas Library Association and is still being used in fourth-grade Texas history lessons as a textbook.

John Spong is a senior editor at *Texas Monthly*. He has published nearly one hundred articles in the magazine, one of which led to his recent book, *A Book on the Making of Lonesome Dove*, based on interviews Spong did with almost 50 people associated with Larry McMurtry's novel or the CBS miniseries. Spong has been nominated for a National Magazine Award (magazine writing's equivalent of a Pulitzer) and has twice won TIL's award for magazine journalism.

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Send news for the next TIL Newsletter to Steve Davis: tilsecretary@yahoo.com

2013-14 Dues Form, Banquet Reservation Form

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