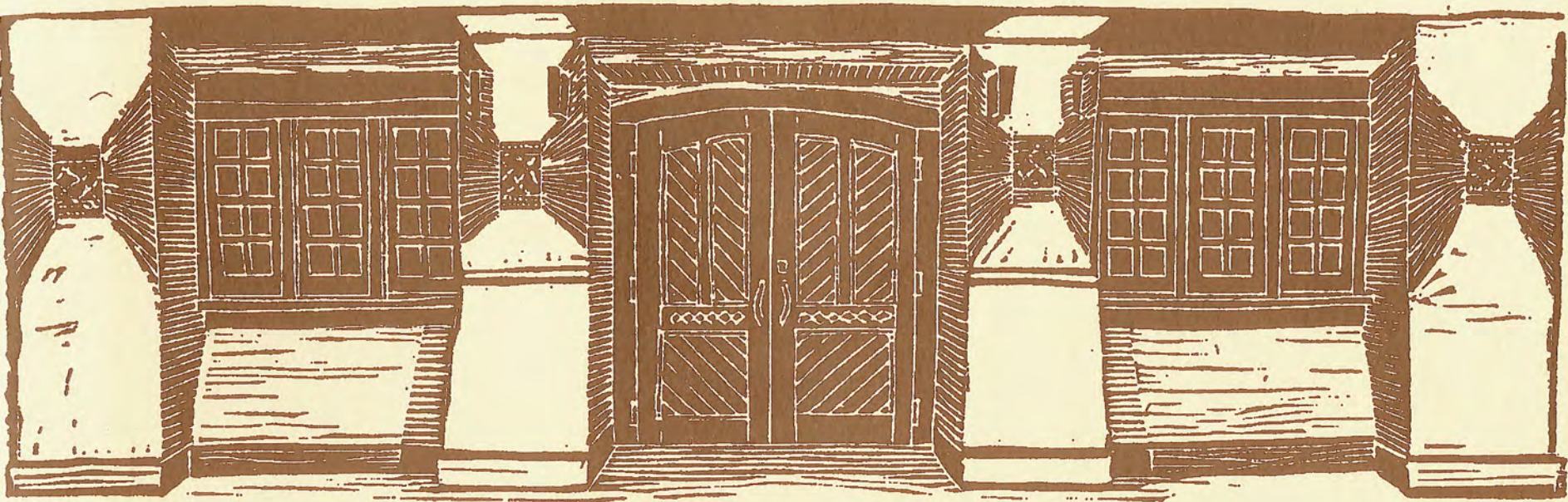


THE SOUTHWESTERN WRITERS COLLECTION DEDICATION



SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

THE ALBERT B. ALKEK LIBRARY

THE SOUTHWESTERN

With an Introduction by Larry L. King

WRITERS COLLECTION

Edited by Richard Holland

DEDICATION



SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
THE ALBERT B. ALKEK LIBRARY

1993

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Editor's Foreword

The dedication of the Southwestern Writers Collection was celebrated during a week of activities in October, 1991. The Dedication Exhibition opened October 1 and featured a selection of historical and literary manuscripts, books, artifacts, photographs, and works of art from the collection. On the first floor of the new Alkek Library, a sizable display of scripts, drawings, and costumes from the CBS miniseries "Lonesome Dove" recapitulated and expanded earlier versions of the popular exhibit. Early in the week there were tours of the exhibition and a gallery talk by Southwest Texas art historian Francine Carraro on the photography, art, and sculpture present in the writers collection.

On Thursday, October 3, collection donor Larry L. King delivered the University's annual LBJ Distinguished Lecture. King captivated the audience in Evans Auditorium, taking the opportunity to reevaluate Johnson in the light of the passing of almost twenty-five years since his caustic portrait, "My Hero, LBJ," appeared in *Harper's*. Another highlight of the week was the reading on Friday, October 4, by writers collection donors Sarah Bird, Stephen Harrigan, and Shelby Hearon. Sarah read from her comic novel, *Alamo House*, Steve from his forthcoming (now published) book on diving in the Caribbean, *Water and Light*, and Shelby from her twelfth novel, *Hug Dancing*, just then published by Knopf.

The dedication itself, on Saturday, October 5, was the culminating event of the week, planned as a way to recognize donors to the collection and to honor founding donors Bill and Sally Wittliff with the presentation of the University's highest award. John Graves had agreed to give the dedicatory talk, and Governor Ann Richards, a personal friend of many of the authors whose work is in the collection, wanted to be present to add her remarks.

On the afternoon of the dedication, close to five hundred guests gathered outside the doors of the collection. Donors and friends came from as far away as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, and Missoula, Montana, joining a cross-section of Texas writers, artists, and friends of the collection from Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and San Marcos. That evening, Jerry Jeff Walker, himself a new donor, played at a party for donors.

Instrumental to the success of the event and not mentioned elsewhere are Bill Mears, Director of the Learning Resources Center, and René LeBlanc, Special Collections Library Assistant. Vice-President for Academic Affairs Bob Gratz was master of ceremonies at the dedication ceremony, greeting the audience and providing introductions for the first speakers.

What follows is a verbatim version of what was said during the formal dedication. The first portion of Governor Richards's remarks and all of Bill Wittliff's talk were extemporaneous, and have been transcribed. The Introduction by Larry L. King is a personal view of the role of literary archives in inspiring young writers and was written for this keepsake.

Larry L. King ★ *Introduction*

Writers are dedicated to the practice of their sullen art, or isolated craft, for a potpourri of reasons. Some may be motivated by a foolish naiveté bespeaking dreams of riches, a preference for indoor work as opposed to heavy-lifting in hostile temperatures, or fueled by fantasies of leaving behind shelves of bound volumes and at least one lifesized statue that glows in the dark. I blush in confessing that each of these vain hopes once applied to me.

At bottom, however, I simply resolved at an early age to tell tales that might give to others a smidgen of the laughter, knowledge and sense of adventure that Mark Twain's delightfully wrought yarns delivered in the late 1930s to a wide-eyed kid in Putnam, Texas, who slept in my bed each night.

Mark Twain was not the only writer who would share his time and place with me, merely the first and most beloved. Before I physically traveled outside the borders of my native state, I had, through the printed word, visited not only Hannibal, Missouri, and floated with Huck Finn on his raft down the Mississippi, but had joined the London of Charles Dickens, the Manhattan of Damon Runyon, the American South of Robert Penn Warren, the mythical West of Zane Gray and the American frontier of James Fenimore Cooper. Though in real life I would later visit numerous "far-away places with strange-sounding names"—

to quote an old song—few of these personal peregrinations would provide the satisfactions of my earlier “print trips.” A talented writer’s report of what he has seen, felt, smelled, touched, and lived is ever-so-much more vivid than the practiced spiels of tour guides or the rushed impressions of a tourist in bondage to travel schedules or the demands of spouse and progeny; nothing so blunts the ruined beauty of Rome’s Colosseum under a full moon as companions impatiently eager for chainstore cheeseburgers or restroom facilities. Give me books every time. They are reliable and leisurely guides.

The problem with most books, where the average writer is concerned, is that they pass too quickly and are mourned by an indecent few. The shelf life of the non-best-seller or non-classic is so brief as to discourage blinking; then, all too soon, one’s books pass from the shelf into out-of-print oblivion. This plays hell with the writer’s dreams of immortality and may encourage him to take up with strong drink or stray blondes. While these are worthy recreations in their own right, yes, they unfortunately do little to promulgate the cause of Letters.

Those of us who write primarily of our own times and our own places see ourselves as guides posting signs to point the way for future writers who may traverse the same—though ever-changing—territory. Our work is meant to say, simply, “Here is how it was when I passed down this trail you now ride: pass it on.” If each generation is honest and accurate in its reports, the vital linkage of past-to-present will remain a strong chain unbroken. And *that*, I believe, equals History.

My understanding of an earlier Texas was informed by the prior passages of Frederick Law Olmsted, J. Frank Dobie, Tom Lea, Walter Prescott Webb, William A. Owens, John

Howard Griffin, Katherine Anne Porter, George Sessions Perry, Mary Austin Holley, William Sidney Porter, J. Evetts Haley, Dorothy Scarborough, C.L. Sonnichsen, Fred Gipson and T. R. Fehrenbach to name but a vital few; three of my contemporaries who broke into print before I did—William Brammer, Larry McMurtry and John Graves—made it possible for me to believe that if *they* could do it, then maybe *I* could. (Unbecomingly egotistical, perhaps, but young writers who secretly doubt themselves must find their encouragements where they can.) The knowledge that other Texans of my time, who also had grown up in small towns away from intellectual influences, could make literature of their time and place was a valuable, stirring and motivating lesson.

It was a story by J. Frank Dobie that led the young William D. Wittliff—"founding father" of the Southwestern Writers Collection—to the startling conclusion that perhaps *he* could become a writer. As indeed he has. And surely Bill Wittliff's good work has, and will, influence other young men and women who aspire to write. That is what I mean by "passing it on."

When Bill Wittliff first talked with me and other writers about donating our manuscripts and artifacts to the Southwestern Writers Collection, he stressed that perhaps if today's youngsters—and tomorrow's—had the opportunity to see *our* manuscripts and letters and books gathered in one place, then they might feel urges to follow in our literary footsteps and realize that they could. "They will be able to understand," Wittliff said, "that they can come out of the city slums or the farms or ranches or small towns and *still* be able to live the writer's life and produce work from their roots." It was an argument I could not resist, it being full of truth and summarizing my own early uncertainties and need for help.

Not only will the Southwestern Writers Collection preserve the published books, poems, songs and plays of the region, it will—through collecting and making available to scholars, and thus to posterity—preserve those honest confessions and private wails to be found in unvetted personal correspondence; such letters will allow the writer to be seen as he or she really *is*—or was—rather than what he or she might wish to *appear* to be. Writers are human, yes; for all their good intentions they may give themselves the better of it on the page, when writing for the public, and thus report less of themselves than is available for reporting. If others can see, as well, the writer's original, hen-scratched, uncertain manuscripts—some published, some not; some failed, some not—then their creative flailings or agonies may be better appreciated. Be sure your Archives will find you out! Biting my tongue, I took vague comfort from William Faulkner's observation that "'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies," when I turned over to the Southwestern Collection thirty-odd years of my personal correspondence without vetting a single line. . . this in the interest of purer truths.

Wandering among the personal artifacts of writers in the beautiful Albert B. Alkek Library on the Southwest Texas State University campus in San Marcos a few months ago, I was enthralled by the paddle John Graves used while giving his *Goodbye to a River*, by J. Frank Dobie's battered old hat and pipe, the early lyrics of Willie Nelson delivered in a child's scrawl, photographs of the now-grizzled Edwin (Bud) Shrake and Dan Jenkins—my calendar contemporaries—as young newsmen in Fort Worth, each of them looking astonishingly like their own sons. So there is a "fun factor" in the Southwestern Writers Collection as well as scholarly and literary purposes.

Many deserve praise for their contributions to the Southwestern Writers Collection—Bill and Sally Wittliff, above all, for not only having the dream but pushing it to reality—and not the least of these include Southwest Texas State University President Jerome H. Supple and Richard Holland, the collection's good and enthusiastic curator. University regents, faculty members and other employees, graduate students and undergraduates have contributed time, money, work and enthusiasm toward making the Wittliffs' grand idea a proud, earthly fact. We donors are honored by what they have given us, rather than the other way around.

Joan L. Heath ★ *Welcome*

Governor Richards, Members of the Board of Regents, President and Mrs. Supple, members of the President's Cabinet, distinguished donors to the Southwestern Writers Collection, faculty, staff and students of the University, special guests and friends:

On behalf of the University it is my honor and pleasure to welcome you to this very special occasion—the dedication of the Southwestern Writers Collection.

We celebrate the opening of a unique collection which preserves and provides access to works which represent the literary and cultural history of the Southwest. In just a few short years an important body of material has been assembled for this growing collection, spanning from the earliest work on Texas written by Cabeza de Vaca in 1555 up to the works of the present day.

Today we also recognize the more than 150 individuals and groups who have made the Southwestern Writers Collection a reality. Most especially, this ceremony allows us to express our gratitude to the writers and artists who have entrusted us with their manuscripts, personal papers, correspondence, mementoes, photographs and paintings. Their contributions not only bring together the makings of our literary history but also inspire our future writers and artists.

Once again, allow me to extend the warmest welcome to each of you on behalf of the University and thank you for participating in this dedication.

Richard A. Holland ★ *The Southwestern Writers Collection: An Overview*

Last week we were honored to have John Graves visit the Southwestern Writers Collection for a day. It was his first visit to the Library and at one point he turned to me and said, "You know, this library has been a dream of Billy's for a long time." The "Billy" who is Mr. Graves's dreamer is, of course, Bill Wittliff, who, with his wife Sally, founded the writers collection in 1986.

Bill is a compelling storyteller, and I first heard his dream for a collection of the best of Southwestern writing, photography, art, and book design when the Library began to look for a curator for the collection. Bill can take a common object like J. Frank Dobie's pipe or straw hat or Russell Lee's camera and spin a mesmerizing story around it. His gift as a teller of a story was made clear to millions of people all over America and now the world in his television adaptation of *Lonesome Dove*, and will soon be seen again in his original story "Ned Blessing," now being filmed. He mesmerized me with his vision of what his new literary archive could be and I happily left my comfortable niche at the University of Texas Library to come here and help make the writers collection a reality. I like to think that Bill's masterpiece is the library that we are here to dedicate today.

In the fall of 1986 the first five gifts came into the Library. Auspiciously, they were from

Wilson Hudson, who was secretary of the Texas Folklore Society for many years and taught the course on Southwestern Life & Lit. at UT that J. Frank Dobie had invented; Mike Levy, the publisher of *Texas Monthly*, who gave a run of his magazine; Bill and Sally Wittliff, with their first Dobie gift; Jean Lee, who gave her husband Russell Lee's cameras and field books; and Larry McMurtry, who gave sixteen foreign translations of his work, including movie tie-in versions of *Terms of Endearment* from Japan and Finland, among other places, all with Shirley MacLaine on the cover, and all showing the international following that a writer from Texas can generate.

By the time I came along, a year later, there had been seven additional gifts, including important manuscripts from Larry L. King, Bud Shrake, and Stephen Harrigan. The early days here were spent setting up routines, including listing, processing, and cataloging. Invaluable was the help from Bill's office in the person of Connie Todd, who to this day works closely with Bill in preparing the riches that come through his office. Her beautiful work has been admired by everyone from our Ph.D. student at Yale who has made several trips to San Marcos working on his dissertation about the origins of the American folklore movement, to Rick Bass, who has happily become a frequent visitor to the collection and is making creative use of our J. Frank Dobie file on grizzly bears.

The collection in 1987 was housed in a glass-walled room on the top floor of the J. C. Kellam building and was barely known to the world at large. That was changed by "Lonesome Dove." When the miniseries was first broadcast, we set up a little exhibit on a table across from my desk in the glass-walled room. The only costumes we had at that point were Clara's dress that Anjelica Huston had donated and Pea Eye's stained and torn hat that the

actor Tim Scott had given us. We had fewer than a dozen small posters here and there on campus, but the world found us out. San Marcos seems to be full of little children who loved "Lonesome Dove" and I remember one who visited the exhibit turning to his mother and saying, "Mama is that Gus's hat?" and her reply, "No, Honey, it's Pea Eye's." You would have thought that Pea Eye and Gus were the family's grandfather and favorite uncle.

Many visitors beat a path to our door after that, and we had a loyal following for Lonesome Dove that has not diminished. For you Lonesome Dove people, both donors and visitors, there is a sizable exhibit on the book and the television show downstairs on the first floor, where you can pay your respects to Gus, Call, Pea Eye, Deets, Lorena, and Clara, and once again press your nose to the glass to read Cary White's splendid map that summarizes the story.

By the time the Library moved to this building, the writers collection had grown to over two hundred gifts from over a hundred donors. Receiving particular attention was our acquisition in 1989 of a copy of what is considered the earliest Texas book. This was our copy of Cabeza de Vaca's account of his shipwreck off the coast of Galveston in 1527 and his subsequent forced march across Central and West Texas. The book was published in Spain in 1555 and is considered the first European book describing travel on the North American continent. There are only twenty or so copies of the book in the world. Bill and Sally Wittliff, and the Mugar Foundation of Cambridge, Massachusetts, were responsible for the acquisition.

If I am known on this campus it is for two things—one is bringing Gus McCrae's body from Bill Wittliff's barn to the Library in the back of my Subaru stationwagon, and the

other is my acting as President Supple's bodyguard during the library's symbolic book move. I'm not sure whose idea the symbolic book move was, but it was terrific. On May 1, 1990, a human chain was formed between the old library building and the new, and a few books were passed from person to person. Walking the route was President Supple proudly carrying our Cabeza book. Every thirty feet or so, he would stop and show students or faculty or staff or townspeople the book, repeating the story of Cabeza de Vaca patiently over and over. I thought rare books librarianship had lost a good bet in Jerry Supple as I walked alongside him "guarding" the little volume. You can see the book inside when our dedication is completed.

There is some virtue in concentrating on one thing and doing it well and thoroughly, which is not to say that the story of Southwestern writing is a simple or a one-dimensional story. Looking at our young archive, you can travel with J. Frank Dobie and Henry Nash Smith through Mexico on horseback, share Steve Harrigan's earliest thoughts in the notebooks that he kept before his first drafts of his novels, go dancing with Bill Brammer and Cile Fischer, see Preston Jones's hand-drawn map of his imaginary town, Bradleyville, where LouAnn Hampton Laverty Oberlander and the oldest living graduate live, watch Carolyn Osborn persevere through over forty rejection slips before her story "The Grands" is published by a little magazine in Kentucky and then is triumphantly selected for inclusion in the 1990 O. Henry Prize volume, and trace the slow process of getting a first novel published by reading the three-way correspondence between Bob Flynn, his agent, and the editors at Knopf that resulted in his book *North To Yesterday*.

Our writers deal with the law, politics, racism, sex, divorce, death, country music, jazz

music, and football, and that's just Larry L. King. We are accustomed to thinking of Texas writers, in particular, of being from hometowns like Archer City, Kyle, Chillacothe, Putnam, Taft, Gregory, or Blanco. They usually leave these places and frequently they return, having made names for themselves. Mr. Dobie, as usual, set the pattern when he served as guest lecturer at Cambridge University during World War II. New York City's literary scene in the 1960s had a decided Texas accent with Bud Shrake and Dan Jenkins at *Sports Illustrated*, and most of all, several of the best and brightest Texas writers holding forth at *Harper's* magazine under the brilliant editorship of Willie Morris, a Mississippian who had gone to college in Austin and ran the *Texas Observer* before his move to New York. Some of the best writing ever produced by Southwestern writers appeared in *Harper's* during that period, including Shrake's "The Land of the Permanent Wave," McMurtry's "Take My Saddle From the Wall," and Larry L. King's "The Old Man," one of the best essays in American literature written by a son about his father.

Among our donors are three winners of the Pulitzer Prize—for fiction, history, and editorial cartooning. Other prizes, awards and recognitions include Peabody awards, a Writers Guild Award to Bill Wittliff for the "Lonesome Dove" script, several Emmys (and several that should have been), Grammy Awards, Guggenheims and other awards too numerous to list. John Graves's *Goodbye to a River* was a runner up for the National Book Award the year that the winner was *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.

By the 1970s, Bill and Sally Wittliff's Encino Press was going great guns. They published John Graves, Larry McMurtry, Bud Shrake, and Larry L. King, and won awards for their design and content. Bill's talent for book design, which was recognized by his design

mentor Carl Hertzog, and his gift for discovering talent like the young Barbara Whitehead are what make the Encino Press memorable to this day. In this decade, Wittliff's generation of writers was beginning to come up against the realities of making a living as writers. Several of them turned to motion picture and television work. Wittliff's credits soon accumulated—writing "The Black Stallion," and soon turning his own stories into film, notably "Raggedy Man" and "Barbarosa," his first collaboration with Willie Nelson. The holdings of the writers collection reflect this turn to film, with produced and unproduced screenplays from numerous writers including Gary Cartwright, Dan Jenkins, Bud Shrake, Sidney and Shelby Brammer, A. C. Greene, and Cormac McCarthy.

After the initial Jean Lee gift, the visual arts continued to play an important part in the collection. Jean Lee donated over two hundred Russell Lee prints, printed and signed by him, and along with the Wittliffs and Jim Bones gave us a collection of Bones's beautiful black-and-white and color work. Bill's work as a photographer is present in his literary portraits, his Vaquero photographs, and his charming snapshots from the set of "Lonesome Dove."

Bill saw to it that we had some of Ave Bonar's important work. Bill wanted a Kermit Oliver painting for the collection, and we received a beauty from the artist titled "The Conversion of St. Paul." I wanted a David Everett piece, and David donated one last week, a beautiful carved mahogany paint pony. I had been aware that Bob Wade, now in New Mexico, had built and placed the giant lizard on top of the Lone Star Cafe in New York City. I had not been aware that Wade was an old college buddy of Bill's, until one day his ten-foot-long painting titled "Four Minus Two Equals Waco" arrived and was soon hung



Bill Wittliff, Sally Wittliff, and
Southwest Texas President
Jerome Supple.

John Graves delivering the
Dedicatory Address.





Governor Ann Richards visits with
Larry L. King after the ceremony.
Author Shelby Hearon in background.

The ribbon cutting. Left to right:
Jerome Supple, Governor Richards,
Bill Wittliff, Sally Wittliff,
Richard Holland, John Graves.



on the wall of my office. A little later Bob presented us with one of his beautiful cowgirl paintings. Our latest photography gift is from Laura Wilson, three prints from her magnificent book, *Watt Matthews of Lambshead*.

I want to briefly say something about San Marcos's contribution to the collection. Three distinguished retired professors, one from A&M, one from UT, and one from SWT, all live in San Marcos and have become major donors. They are the distinguished Mexico scholar Campbell Pennington; Wilfred Webb, from UT, who with his wife Bridget has donated their wonderful library of books on New Mexico; and Bill Pool, whose *Historical Atlas of Texas* is the all-time best-selling book from the Encino Press. University history in the collection is represented in other ways as well, including the work of Wimberly writer Bill Porterfield and *New Yorker* cartoonist Charlie Barsotti, who shared a house on campus in the 1950s. By the time the Library moved to this building, the University was quickly acting on the idea of the writers collection being a major University resource. This became manifest in President Supple's beginning the Center for the Study of the Southwest, whose acting director was a gifted grant writer, Lydia Blanchard. Soon she had obtained grants from the Meadows Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, all based one way or another on the collection. My first foray into the uncharted waters of grant writing was successful in getting a grant from the NEH to plan a traveling exhibit on southwestern journeys, from Cabeza de Vaca to John Graves's trip down the Brazos. The grant-funded Cabeza de Vaca week was a celebration of the book and of our Hispanic culture. This resulted in a major fundraising effort to establish a permanent fund to purchase Southwestern books by Hispanic writers.

We are now five years old and have over three hundred gifts from—at last count—168 donors, although this week we have a lot of exciting new prospects. Our goal for this week is to honor our donors. Please notice that the donors' names on the back of the program and on the broadside are all listed in the same type font and the same size. You have all seen other lists where names are arranged according to the size of the donation. Having platinum, gold, and silver categories is a smart fundraising strategy, I am sure, and one that we might eventually embrace, but for our dedication we wanted to recognize all donors whether they have presented us with one book, or with a legendary archive of material as did Bill Broyles with his gift of Bill Brammer's typescripts to *The Gay Place* and *Fustian Days*. Our donors can be recognized by the nametags like the one I have on.

We approached this event like we would a nice party—we brought out some of our best things to show you for the occasion. We have done this, but what you will see is, of course, just a fraction of what we have. We can and will in the future fill up all of our cases with the works of Graves, or King, or Dobie, or Brammer, or *Lonesome Dove*. You must all promise to come back.

Our next speaker is Mark Busby, who came to this campus two months ago from Texas A&M to become the first permanent director of the Center for the Study of the Southwest. Soon after his arrival, he did exactly the right thing—he brought us a gift of his own writings on Southwestern literature, which includes work on McMurtry, Preston Jones, and the Oklahoma writer Ralph Ellison. We are glad Mark's here—I hope he likes it as much as I do. Mark will introduce John Graves. Thank you.

Mark B. Busby ★ *Introduction of John Graves*

I'm here to tell you about a friend of mine. But I want to be clear that I don't claim too much for myself. Until a few days ago John Graves wouldn't have known me from a hundred of his countrymen that he passed along the trail. But he's still a friend of mine, for I've ridden down the river in his canoe, listened to him ruminate about septic tanks, the virtues of hard scrabble farming. I've spent much quality time with John Graves, because he's the kind of writer who gets inside you, who speaks with a clear personal voice so that when you're through with a book you know you've met a man—a man who knows the light and the dark of his world and a writer who helps you see the grays of it too.

You know that when he writes of his world he's been there. And it's true that he's traveled around the world a few times. Born in Fort Worth on August 6, 1920, he explored the Trinity river bottom before it became layered with Coors cans. He studied at Rice University in Houston with George Williams, who also would teach William Goyen and Larry McMurtry. And he received a master's degree from Columbia in 1947. He then taught for a couple years a few miles up the road at the University of Texas, but the wanderlust got him and he traveled around to France and Spain, where he lived for a while, and then to

Tenerife in the Canary Islands, and to Mexico, before he came back home to his blood's country in 1958 and joined the faculty at TCU.

After taking a canoe trip down the Brazos River in the fall of 1957, Graves wrote *Goodbye to a River*, published in 1960, and in that year bought the first part of his land near Glen Rose. Working that land led to his book about it, *Hard Scrabble*, published in 1974. His third book, *From a Limestone Ledge*, continues his ruminations on his home place and includes essays written over a period of time for *Texas Monthly* magazine. Besides these three major books, John Graves has written on conservation for the Sierra Club in *The Water Hustlers* (1971), and he has published a number of other works—short stories and articles for *The Atlantic*, *American Heritage*, *Esquire*, and *The New Yorker*.

Through all of his writing, John Graves demonstrates how a writer with a clear sense of purpose, a respect for the bounty of the natural world, an understanding of the depth of simplicity, and a strong grip on language can step forth and move people in ways that last. I've always been struck by the subtle persuasion of *Goodbye to a River*. It's the same rhetorical stance that Shakespeare's Marc Antony takes in his famous eulogy for Caesar, saying he comes just to bury Caesar and not to praise him and then he sets about to move his audience in his subtle praise. That's what John Graves does with his piece of the Brazos and it is profound persuasion. It's the work of a masterful writer—one who has now attained the unofficial rank of Dean of Texas letters. I give you John Graves.

John Graves ★ *Dedicatory Speech*

Not long ago I was privileged to do some browsing among documents in this Southwestern Writers Collection, whose formal opening we have gathered to celebrate. One paper that seized my attention was a letter sent to a Texas professor in 1926 by Andy Adams, author of *The Log of a Cowboy*, because something the old trail rider said in this letter made me feel like his blood brother. Writing from his home in Colorado, after some comments about the cattle brands decorating newly built Garrison Hall at the University of Texas, Adams concluded with this statement:

I was invited to attend the dedication of this hall, but was afraid someone might expect me to make a speech, and I would rather be shot at at the distance of ten steps than to face an audience. The trouble is cold sweats—not perspiration.

Such skittishness about public appearances and public utterance is not too uncommon a quirk among cowboys, writers, and other unsocial types. I confess to sharing it in full. In fact, having now reached a relatively austere age when stubborn eccentricity is tolerated better than in younger men, I resolved a couple of years ago that henceforth I wasn't going to take on any more public speaking than I could possibly get out of.

Yet here I stand before you today, bouncing my voice off of your eardrums and laying claim to your attention. There are two or three good reasons for this abdication of principle on my part. Chief among them, I guess, is my longstanding close friendship with a devilishly persuasive fellow named Bill Wittliff, who is passionate about this collection and has been the prime moving spirit behind its establishment. Another is that I myself believe strongly in the project and its purposes. And still another is that you who are listening to me have attested by the fact of your presence here on this day, that you believe in the project too. In effect we have a sort of family connection based on shared belief. And family members are easier to talk to than strangers. Most of them are, anyhow. . . .

During my lifetime, or at least during the latter half of it that I've spent back at home in this region where I was born and reared, I have been aware of and have occasionally contributed to conversation, argument, oratory, and writing on the topic of Texas and Southwestern literature. True, this isn't a subject that the general population gets highly excited about. But it's one that I imagine has touched the interest of just about everyone in this audience.

I have no intention of tackling here the large and oft-debated question of why and how this region continues to see itself as distinctive in an age that lurches toward sameness everywhere. But by and large the region does thus view itself. And if this all too often leads to jingoism, provincialism, narrow-mindedness, boastfulness, and other regrettable attitudes, it can also lead to more pleasant things, such as the belief, or illusion, or conviction, or whatever it is, that we have a literature of our own.

For, whatever Southwestern literature's virtues and lacks may be, whatever its degree

of acceptance in the wider world of letters of America and the world, it is our literature insofar as we feel ourselves to be Texans, and Southwesterners, just as the work of Shakespeare and Milton and Tolstoy and Faulkner and a host of others belongs to us as conscious inheritors of Western civilization.

These bodies of writing that belong to us play a part in shaping us as a people—at least they do if they deserve the name “literature.” Judged by this criterion, I believe the Texas and Southwestern branch of the world of letters has pretty much proven itself. Certainly it did so in terms of my own generation, for whom the work of the old frontier chroniclers and of Dobie, Webb, Bedichek, Katherine Anne Porter, and the rest has imbued our surroundings with resonance. These writers have heightened our awareness of the Southwest’s land and people. Of woods, hills, mountains, prairies, deserts, and the bays and islands along the Gulf Coast. Of vegetation, geological phenomena, and beasts and birds. Of battles, Indian tribes, and other historic matters. Of towns, accents, dialects, myths, livelihoods, skills, attitudes, and local ways. Their books help us to sense the spirit and feel of our region and of our people past and present, and thereby help us to know, in part, who and what we are ourselves.

And the old books seem to have been doing the same thing for succeeding generations, even in the face of potent national and worldwide pressures toward conformity and the obliteration of regional myths and meanings. I’m not well enough versed in the current publishing scene to cite titles and numbers, but I’m aware that many of the more useful earlier books relating to the Southwest, quite hard to get hold of when I was younger, are now in print again.

And they stay in print because they're being bought. And read.

I would guess that a certain number of the folks who still look on our region and its culture as distinctive, must feel an obligation to learn what those things consist of. I hope so. Without knowledge, the sense of distinctiveness is a shaky proposition in such a time as ours.

It is still growing, this body of expression flavored and textured by the natural framework and history and social circumstances of our part of the world. It is bringing forth new viewpoints on the region's past and the remnants of that past. It is examining urban life in an urban time. And it is being enhanced by the work of people from ethnic groups whose ways once either went largely unrecorded or were interpreted by Anglo outsiders. When we read the work of writers like—just for instance—Rolando Hinojosa-Smith or Americo Paredes or Larry McMurtry, we are compelled to modify in some degree our view of ourselves and the world around us. We are broadened. Our literature is thus still performing the functions of shaping us as people and furnishing us with resonance.

Sometimes furnishing us with dissonance also, but that is part of the whole. A very big part sometimes, and too often it used to be glossed over.

If our regional literature matters in terms like those, and I believe it does, certainly it merits being studied coherently, as it is being studied now in many college courses. And it merits a home—a shrine, if you will, like the one being dedicated here today. A center not only of study but of feeling, where the writings that constitute the literature can be assembled, and when possible the manuscripts from which they were printed, as well as letters, diaries, journals, and other scribblings from the people who wrote the books and stories and essays and such, and artifacts of other kinds, that have association with those people.

As an aside, the appeal of such artifacts is a curious thing, to me. What ought to matter

about writers is their writing, period. Yet there is an undeniable glow to be derived from seeing articles used daily by figures like Keats and Faulkner, or—for us as Southwesterners—from contemplating the Panama hat and briar tobacco pipe of J. Frank Dobie. Individual living writers looking at their own artifacts may feel a different sort of glow. In personal terms, for instance, I don't have any idea what emotions, if any, my old canoe paddle on display in there will arouse in others, but what it chiefly arouses in me, aside from a few recollections, is disgust that I let a useful tool lie out for three or four years among willows beside a stock pond, where it was rotted by weather and fractured by the hooves of Black Angus cows. It is testimony to one of my basic flaws, a slobbishness about personal possessions. I won't attempt to comment on what testimony is offered by another item on display in the collection, my friend Rick Bass's demolished electric typewriter, which he hurled against a stone fireplace because of its insistence on typing several "esses" when he only wanted one. He says it still hums if you plug it in, though it doesn't look as if it would. . . .

The Southwestern Writers Collection as it stands is not a finished thing. In a sense it never can be, not as long as people in our part of the world keep on writing books, poems, stories, articles, songs, essays, plays, filmscripts, and so on. Even in terms of all the writing that Southwesterners have done thus far, it has large gaps, which will shrink as time and money and the availability of specific items permit them to be filled. What is in the collection now is a foundation for what will be built, a seedbed. It is future home territory for our literature and its mementoes and paraphernalia.

But that phrase "what is in the collection now," covers quite a lot of material. It includes the basic beginning, the earliest book ever published about this region—the very rare Spanish first edition, dating from 1542, of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca's account of

his extended wanderings among aboriginal tribes and primeval landscapes, after being shipwrecked on the coast of present Texas. At the latter end of things it includes scripts and diverse picturesque objects associated with Bill Wittliff's recent and much acclaimed television series based on the McMurtry novel, *Lonesome Dove*. And in between these ancient and contemporary pieces of work are enough books and papers to preoccupy a devotee for months on happy months. In time there will be enough to preoccupy him or her for years on happy years.

As a writer myself, and in view of the project's name, the Southwestern Writers Collection, I have been dwelling here mainly on writing. But the collection has a fine admixture of other esthetic efforts, from the superb book designs of Carl Hertzog and the Holmans and others, to photographs and paintings and the song manuscripts of Willie Nelson. These things belong in this room also.

Elsewhere, collections exist whose focus is on Southwestern literature, or on individual Southwestern writers, or on groups of them. But I know of none with the scope and spirit that this one seeks to attain. That it is already well started toward that attainment and that it has been provided with such a fit and handsome home in which to consolidate and grow, bears testament to vision and taste and hard work from Bill Wittliff and Dick Holland and a number of other people; to understanding and warm cooperation from the faculty and administration here at the University; and to generosity from individual donors who number in the hundreds by now. All of these can and I think do feel strong honest pride in the enterprise.

I myself feel pride in having a small part in its launching. Thank you.

Jerome H. Supple ★ *President's Award*

Beyond these doors lie seeds and roots and fruit and tools. It may sound like a farm, and it is, sort of. It's the kind of farm that captures the cultural and literary roots of this region. It stores the fruit of hundreds of writers and photographers and screen artists. It offers the seeds for future writers and the tools to help them.

Bill Wittliff says that's been a plan of his for years—to set up a place “to inspire young men and women with an itch to write and not yet the courage.” And the need for such a collection was obvious to him—“We need to know where we came from.” Bill was an early convert to his life's work. After reading J. Frank Dobie's *Old Time Tales of Texas* when he was twelve, he decided that story-telling was in his own future.

He gave in to a yearning to produce books by Southwestern writers in 1963 when he set up Encino Press in his garage with three hundred dollars in poker winnings. He ran the press at nights and on weekends, while Sally kept the office and the books.

He began writing professionally himself when he was in his thirties. “Thaddeus Rose and Eddie,” a 1978 TV movie, was his first script to be produced. Then came “The Black Stallion,” “Honeysuckle Rose,” “Raggedy Man,” “Red-Headed Stranger,” and “Country.”

In 1986 he began the arduous task of converting *Lonesome Dove* to the television screen

and watched that project become lovingly embraced by the American public in 1989. He's now filming another TV movie near Austin for airing this spring.

Bill is a wonderful photographer, writer, movie producer, director, and book designer. He does a lot of things well. But first of all he's a Texan and a Southwesterner. He doesn't try to explain his love for his native state—he says, “It's my place, as simple as that.” And he's intent on preserving its heritage in a special place.

So in 1986 the Wittliffs approached Southwest Texas with the idea and together we set up the Southwestern Writers Collection. The collection is doing what Bill hoped it would—inspire future writers as the Dobie book inspired him.

Author Stephen Harrigan says, “I was working in ignorance when I started out. I didn't know any writers. If I had wandered into a room like this, I would have been enchanted. Just to see that there were other people trying the same thing I wanted to do.”

The Wittliffs have established a treasure that belongs to the Southwest, to Texas, and—we are proud to say—to Southwest Texas. Bill and Sally, we thank you for bringing this magnificent archive and educational tool to Southwest Texas.

To show our appreciation, today we want to present to you the highest honor the president of SWT can give for outstanding contributions to our mission and future. Would you please accept from Southwest Texas State University our President's Excellence Award.

Bill Wittliff ★ *Remarks*

Years ago when I was a child my mother ran the telephone office in Edna, Texas. There was a man in that town named Tips Westoff who ran the hardware store, and he used to give me old boards and nails and so on and he told me stories. One of the stories he told me was of an escaped slave woman who lived in the river bottom, the Navidad River bottoms, and the men around there for years tried to catch her and never could. But they did find her tracks, and for a time they found the tracks of a small child with her tracks. . .but after a while the small tracks vanished. I guess I must have been six or seven and I was so hugely and deeply moved by that story of the slave woman and her lost child that it became then and still is a part of me.

Six or seven years after that when I was thirteen or so, an aunt, who worked in the book department of Joske's, in Houston, sent me a copy of J. Frank Dobie's *Old Time Tales of Texas*, and in that book was a story called "The Wild Woman of the Navidad," which was the story that I had first heard as an oral tradition. Well, it just set me afire—I had never realized that books, writing, a literature could spring from the very piece of ground that I had lived on or was living on. I guess whatever participation Sally and I have had in this

thing really comes from that moment, so that it was kind of Dobie's influence passing through me to this.

I got the itch then, I certainly didn't have the courage to try to write—it wasn't until I was thirty, I guess, that I got a single good sentence—but the spark came from there. My hope for this thing and Sally's hope for this thing is that with everybody else's help that spark keeps passing on down.

And I want to thank everybody here at Southwest Texas and all of you who have given of your time, your artifacts, your manuscripts, your books, and given of your hearts. Thank you most kindly.

Jerome H. Supple ★ *Introduction of Governor Ann W. Richards*

Some Hollywood producers used to tell Bill, “It’s ridiculous to think you can live in a place like Texas and write movies.” Bill showed them that you can not only write movies in Texas—you can film them here, too.

Our next speaker has been spreading that same word. She recently returned from California, where she told the movie people what Texas has to offer. She is spreading all kinds of good words about Texas—in the state as well as out of it.

She tells Texans that we can overcome the current fiscal crisis by using our resources wisely. She tells us that our hard work, our common sense and our energy can restore our state’s vitality. She tells us how all of our citizens can contribute to making Texas great again. It’s something she’s always believed in—the participation of all citizens. She has been active in the community all of her professional life, first as a public school teacher, then as an elected official. She ran campaigns for others before running her own. She served as a county commissioner and state treasurer, then launched her campaign for the top seat in state government. From her childhood in Waco to the Governor’s mansion, Ann Richards,



like Bill Wittliff, has been influenced by Texas stories—the legends, the heritage, the characters that make Texas bigger than life. That background helps her believe in a bright future for the state of Texas. And she is working to insure all of us a future that lives up to those stories. It is quite fitting that such a public official helps us dedicate our Southwestern Writers Collection. Would you please join me in welcoming Governor Ann Richards.

Governor Ann W. Richards ★ *Remarks*

I didn't expect to find myself feeling emotional today, even though it's an exciting day for all of us and for Southwestern writing and Texas history. When I walked in and saw my friend Jean Lee, I felt quite overcome with the realization that I have at one time or another in my life met and known a number of people who are contributors to this collection. I've sat at Jean and Russ's feet in the old days and some of the new days and I saw Bedichek and Webb and Dobie sprawled on the rocks at Barton Springs. I have had many good times with Larry King and Billy Brammer, listened to Larry McMurtry spout forth at Scholz Garten, spent a lot of enjoyable time in the company of Gary Cartwright and Bud Shrake. I could go on for a long time, but we have made a sort of common pact that I won't tell what I know about them if they won't tell what they know about me.

But as I was sitting here listening, I thought of one story that I thought I really must share with you. It was a river trip, John, down the Rio Grande River. I have forgotten which canyon, most likely Boquillas or Mariscal. And there were a number of renegades and vagabonds who were on that trip. In one boat was Willie Morris. Willie was having all of his success as editor of *Harper's* magazine, and he was in the canoe with a man named Neil Caldwell. Neil is now a district judge in Angleton, Texas. I thought of this particular

story because I just spent last week riding the Rio Grande again, about 20 feet above normal, and experiencing that wonderful country once again. Anyway, Willie Morris and some of the other fellows on the trip were inexperienced paddlers—and you really don't get on the Rio Grande River unless you have some notion about what you are doing. But we felt that Neil was skillful enough to get Willie through almost anything. And he did. But we camped out one night on the river. The next morning I was going down to the water's edge, and there was Willie with a collapsible toothbrush, performing his morning cleansing in the Rio Grande River. And I said, "My God, Willie, don't you realize that all the effluent of Mexico and a number of houses that should go unmentioned is coming directly into this river and you're putting it in your mouth!" Willie was really horrified at the lack of the pristine nature of the out of doors.

I wanted to tell you that story so that you would know that we must not deify these people—because they are fallible.

Unlike John Graves, I make a lot of speeches. But I must say that the speaking of words at a convocation for some of the best writers in the world is an awesome prospect—especially when many of those writers are your cherished and admired friends. If you take from a shelf a long-worn and much-loved copy of a book like *Goodbye to a River* or *The Gay Place* or *Blessed McGill*, you explore familiar territory. As an older and more experienced—if not wiser—Texan, you are really stunned by the truth of what you read, with the power of letters and syllables and images that provoke recognition, that make you lapse into reverie, that make you warm with memory.

You read the words written by people who are often contemporaries, and you know from

first-hand observation that they are plainly mortal, and you realize that they possess some peculiar clairvoyance that materializes in ink. In *Blessed McGill*, Bud Shrake wrote, "More enters a man's head than he perceives, so we do things that amaze ourselves." The artists who are part of this collection have shared the same Southwest with us, but somehow more of it has entered their heads and come back to us in ways that amaze years after the work is done. Whether it is the photographs of Russell Lee, the plays of Preston Jones, the screenplays of Billy Wittliff, or the novels of Larry McMurtry, the characteristic that unites these artists is the ability to connect a place and the people who draw life from it.

When our friend John Graves writes about the Brazos, he writes about a whole river, a river that weaves itself into the lives along its banks. And when Billy Lee Brammer wrote about Arthur Fenstermaker, he wrote about a politician who was so much a part of Texas that we cannot imagine one existing without the other. When he describes the land in Texas as "barbarously large and final," you know he could just as well be describing Governor Fenstermaker.

What we sense in all this work is that we in the Southwest are bound to what the Spanish language calls *querencia*, a place of such deep meaning and strong fealty that neither time nor distance can separate us from it.

If we recognize ourselves in the works of this collection, it is because we are there. J. Frank Dobie said, "It seems to me that other people living in the Southwest will lead fuller and richer lives if they become aware of what it holds." The men and women whose work is represented here heighten that awareness and show us a truth about ourselves that we might have missed without their amazing ability, as Bud said, to know more than we per-

ceive. These artists remind us that who we are and where we come from is a source of pride and limitless imagination. We are indebted to Bill Wittliff for the wisdom to know that this extraordinary talent should be collected in one place to inspire young talent, to offer a center for research, and to give the world a chance to know us better than we know ourselves.

People ask me all the time, “What is it about you people from Texas? What is it?” And I usually answer that I think it’s in the water. But the more likely truth is that it is in the writers who tell our story.

It is a privilege to be here today.

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