

Minutes -Meeting of the Council

Texas Institute of Letters

April 19, 2008

Park Cities Hilton Hotel, Dallas

Meeting called to order at 11 a.m. by President Fran Vick.

Present: Vice-President Paula Marks, Secretary, Darwin Payne, Treasurer James Hoggard, Recording Secretary Robert Compton.

Councilors Fritz Lanham, John Miller Morris, Clay Reynolds, Lou Rodenberger, Jim Sanderson, Jan Seale, Jane Roberts Wood.

Ex-officio members (ex-presidents): Mark Busby, Carolyn Osborn, C.W. Smith, Marshall Terry, Bryan Woolley.

Absent: Carol Dawson.

Retiring Officers: Fran Vick, president; Paula Marks, vice-president; Robert Compton, recording secretary.

Retiring Councilors: Carol Dawson, Clay Reynolds, Lou Rodenberger.

Incoming Officers: William V. Davis (Waco), president; John Miller Morris (Austin), vice-president; Betty Wiesepape (Richardson), recording secretary.

Incoming Councilors: Ty Cashion (Huntsville), Frances Neidhardt (Sherman), W.K. (Kip) Stratton (Austin), Andres Tijerina (Austin).

Treasurer James Hoggard reported that finances are in good order, in spite of a fluctuating market; there are ample funds in Paisano and Houston Endowment accounts to maintain Fellowship stipends at \$18,000 annually, an increase from the previous \$12,000 level. A full financial report is scheduled at the next Council meeting in early fall.

He also said that a \$40,000 government bond that matured recently has been re-invested, on the advice of a financial consultant, in a 15-year, 5 per cent, "Freddie Mac" that cannot be "called" until it is held for a full year.

Carolyn Osborn reported on a March 8 weekend gathering of University of Texas and present and former TIL officials, former Paisano Fellows and others at Paisano Ranch where the fellowship site was toured and the program discussed. Osborn hosted a reception that night for Paisano fellows at her Austin home.

William Davis, incoming TIL president who attended the event, told the Council that Michael Adams, of the Graduate School of UT-Austin, and director of the Dobie Paisano Fellowship Program in cooperation with TIL, had asked that TIL consider including visual artists in the Paisano program. Adams had suggested that perhaps every third year, visual artists might be candidates.

A lengthy discussion by Council members followed Davis' report. C.W. Smith said that during his term as TIL president, such a widening of candidates had been tried, and had been largely unsuccessful, in part because the field of candidates in arts other than letters was very difficult to define. And also, he said, it was difficult to assemble panels to judge candidates for a widened area in the arts, which might include varied creative arts from weaving and pottery to sculpture.

The previous experiment was dissolved after a few years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he said.

Davis said Adams related that he had received a note from a staff member of the Ralph Johnston Memorial Foundation (which funds one of the Fellowships)

voicing support for expanding the program.

While the TIL provides funds for fellowships, the University of Texas owns the Paisano Ranch, maintains it and administers the program, and is represented on the TIL committee which selects candidates.

The Council was generally against offering fellowships outside writing, but felt that more time was needed to discuss the question fully.

Councilor Morris, the incoming TIL vice-president, urged caution by the Council in deciding the matter.

Marshall Terry suggested that a Council committee be formed to study and review an expansion of fellowships, and also discuss other options that might be offered to Adams and the UT Graduate Studies administrators.

Later, Davis asked Vice-President John Miller Morris, former TIL president C. W. Smith, and Councilor Jane Roberts Wood to join as a panel to meet with Michael Adams and Dobie-Paisano fellows to be appointed later to study the future of the program and to make recommendations to the Council.

Hoggard asked that future judges of the Fred Whitehead Award for Trade Book Design be reminded that the prize is for "trade books," not art or "coffee table" books. He said that Whitehead had been explicit before the award first had been arranged that the design was to be for a trade book, but that too often the judges had wandered from the guidelines and had considered art books.

Osborn suggested that publishers be reminded that the TIL prize is for trade books and encourage them to send entries.

Hoggard also warned that the Council should consider a "backup" donor for funding the Stanley Walker and O. Henry awards of \$1,000 each, now provided by Sue McBee. He told the Council that Ms. McBee is in failing health and that should she be incapacitated, it was possible that her foundation might not continue funding.

He also reminded the Council that the \$1,000 John Bloom Award for the Most Humorous Book had not been given for a few years because judges felt that no entries warranted an award.

Compton suggested that perhaps Bloom could be persuaded to instead fund the Stanley Walker and O. Henry Awards if the present donor withdraws.

Hoggard asked that when new award donors are identified, they be requested to fund awards for at least two years. He said that it would be preferable for awards to be endowed. As examples, he pointed out that, assuming a return on investment of 5%, it would take \$15,000 to fund a \$750 award, and about \$50,000 to fund a \$2,500 award.

The Council also named judges for 2008 awards, to be presented at the annual meeting in 2009.

Nominees for judging panels, to be confirmed and announced later (chairmen indicated in some cases):

Carr P. Collins Award for Nonfiction: Ray Farabee, Don Chipman, H.W. Brands, James Haley, Robin Doughty, Bob Krueger.

Jesse H. Jones Award (Fiction), and Steven Turner Award for Best Work of First Fiction: Kathleen Cambor, Deborah Crombie, Sandra Scofield, Jose Limon, Joe Coomer, Beverly Lowry, David Lindsey.

TIL Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book: Jerry Thompson, Paul Boller, Karen Fort, David Edmunds, Ron Davis.

Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry: Christine Leche, Jack Myers, Liane Mercer, Kevin Meaux, Andrew Hudgins, Bob Fink, John Blair.

Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story: Jane Wood, **chair**; Ann McCutcheon, Carolyn Osborn, C. W. Smith, Laura Furman, Elizabeth Crook.

O. Henry Award for Best Magazine Story: Noel Parson, **chair**; Mike Merschel, Charles Ealy, Kaye Northcott, Robert Draper.

Stanley Walker Award for Best Newspaper Story: Darwin Payne, **chair**; Claude Stanush, Robert Compton.

Friends of the Austin Public Library Award for Best Children's and Best Young Adult Books: Rene Saladana, Jan Seale, Bobbie Samuels, Donna White, Carmen Tafolla, Jean Flynn.

Fred Whitehead Award for Trade Book Design: James Hoggard, **chair**; Bryan Woolley, Fran Vick.

Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation of a Book: Susan Briante, Roger Jones, Adan Benavides, Dave Oliphant, Reginald Gibbons.

John Bloom Award for Best Book of Humor: John Erickson, Marion Winik, Lionel Garcia, Jim Sanderson, Sarah Bird.

At the end of the business meeting, Busby proposed that the Council commend retiring president Vick for her guidance and performance during her terms. The Council did so by acclamation.

Vick asked the Council to applaud Payne for engaging the magnificent Harlan Crow Library for the Friday reception, which had been a great success and had drawn praise from those who attended.

Again, the Council responded.

Said Vick, on relinquishing her post to Davis:

"It was a great joy, though I did my best to hate it. And I loved working for TIL and appreciate your letting me do it."

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.