from the CURATOR

Holly amigo—

In January 2010, I will retire as curator of the Wittliff Collections after twelve-and-a-half very happy and remarkable years.

When I began working here in September 1997, the Southwestern Writers Collection had been in its new space in the Alkek Library for about six years, and the Southwestern & Mexican Photography Collection had opened the year before. The staff back then was pretty small: Steve Davis, who started in 1994, and Mara Levy as library assistants, and a couple of student workers. Though I was well aware of the exceptional holdings in these collections, I knew that the materials on the 7th floor of the library were seen both as the university’s “crown jewels” and as its “best-kept secret.” Now was the time to impress and engage the students, staff, faculty, and public by showcasing the wealth of both collections. The library and the university, to their credit and to our advantage, were in total agreement.

Within months the staff grew to include our first-ever archivist (the position now held by Kate Slausman, since 2004), and two assistant curators: one for the Writers Collection (Steve, promoted in 1997), and one for the Photography Collection (Carla Elland, 2000).

As time passed, our staff has continued growing—we added a media relations and publications coordinator in 2002 (Michelle Miller), and that same year hired a new development officer (Beverly Funden).

We gained another archivist in 2005 (Joel Minor), an events assistant (Amy Cochran, with us since 2006), and, in 2008, an assistant curator for archives (Shin Yu Par, see p. 12). Add an archivist/archivist (Mary E. García, who joined us in 1990), an office manager (now GG Mortonton, since 2008), and in the Cataloging Department a cataloging librarian (Karen Sigler, 2001) and a head cataloging assistant (Joe Sumbera, 2000)—and that puts our full-time staff at 13, plus a support crew of interns, 15 student workers, and one temp (Valerie Anderson, who has just moved on to the Registrar’s Office). And we are all extremely busy.

We host thousands of visitors and hundreds of scholars each year, and the Wittliff Collections now enjoy an international reputation. Our two book series have thrived and, along with our in-house publications, have won scores of design awards. The Keystone debuted in 2003 and has been going strong ever since. We’ve brought in significant new material in literature, journalism, film, television, music, and photography—as a matter of fact, our collections have at least quadrupled in the last 10 years.

Through it all, presiding over the growth and expansion not only of our holdings, but also of our activities and spaces, I’ve felt enormous gratitude for the staunch support and goodwill of our many friends both inside and outside of the academy and for the ongoing guidance of my friend and mentor, founding donor Bill Wittliff. Now, when I walk through the gallery and see the visitors enthralled by the photographs, or when I talk with a manuscript researcher who has flown halfway around the world to access Cormac McCarthy’s papers, or when I speak to a crowd of over 500 people, as I did at our recent Cormac McCarthy Reading, I saw a much different scene than I did when I began working in a rather quiet corner of the library. I see the public success of the Wittliff Collections at last matching the great potential of the literary archives and photographs themselves. I see the avant garde of the twenty-first century library—a place where the visual arts are celebrated, studied, and discussed, and where students and people of all ages come to be inspired.

I write with my mind at ease, because I know our course has been set. The Wittliff Collections are thriving and will continue to do so. It’s been a great and satisfying position, but I came to it somewhat late in life, and in order to enjoy the many things I want to do before heading for the last round up, I figured I’d better start pretty soon.

Mil gracias, amigos, for your support and encouragement along the way: I plan to attend many future Wittliff events, so this is not ashes but simply hasta luego. 

—Comrie Todd, Curator, September 1997 — January 2010

OVER 500 GUESTS CELEBRATED THE WITTLIFF COLLECTIONS GRAND REOPENING ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17. AFTER FOUNDERS BILL AND SALLY WITTLIFF, CURATOR COMRIE TODD, AND TEXAS STATE PRESIDENT DENISE TRAUTH CUT THE SILVER RIBBON TO OPEN THE NEW SPACES, THE CROWD ENJOYED REMARKS BY BILL AND PRESIDENT TRAUNT, A SPECIAL VIDEO PREVIEW FOR THE OCCASION, AND A BRIEF TALK BY PHOTOGRAPHER KERTH CARTER. CARTER LATER TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHAT WITH PEOPLE WHILE SIGNING COPIES OF HIS BOOKS. SURPRISE ATTENDENTS INCLUDED SAM SHEPARD AND JERRY JEFF WALKER, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE ARCHIVES AT THE WITTLIFF.

AND NOW THE NEW GATES ARE WIDELY WELCOMING VISITORS, CITIES, TOURS, AND RESEARCHERS TO THE GREATLY EXPANDED PUBLIC SPACES. OVER A YEAR IN CONSTRUCTION, THE NEW PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERIES, ENLARGED READING ROOM, AND RENOVATED WORK AREAS ARE AT LAST COMPLETE.

THE GRAND FOYER FEATURES A POLYCHROME CARVED PEGUIN AND EMMETT JAMES BURKE ON CANOE, PAINTED BY KEITH CARTER FROM HIS TWO MOST RECENT MONOGRAPHS WITH SCULPTOR DAVID EVERT. BEHIND THIS ENTRANCE, THE SHOultz HALL EXHIBIT HALL OPENS ONTO A SHORT EXHIBIT HALL OPENING INTO A NEW MAIN GALLERY AND TWO SMALLER ONES NESTED WITHIN. EXHIBITION SPACE IS NARROWLY TIED WITH THE PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS WITH NEW GALLERIES NOW AS MANY AS 150 PRINTS CAN BE ON VIEW. FIRST TO BE FEATURED IN THE NEW EXHIBITION SPACE ARE WORKS BY KERTH CARTER FROM HIS TWO MOST RECENT MONOGRAPHS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS: A CERTAIN ALCHEMY, PUBLISHED LAST OCTOBER IN THE WITTlFF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK SERIES (SEE THE FALL 2008 ISSUE OF THE KEYSTONE), AND FORNIX, CARTER’S IMAGES OF CHILDREN, PUBLISHED THIS OCTOBER. IN THE ORIGINAL GALLERIES ADJACENT TO THE NEW, NAZCA LINES/NEW LIGHT SHOWCASES PHOTOGRAPHS NEVER BEFORE HUNG ON WITTlIFF WALLS (SEE PP. 12-13).

RECEPTIONS, READINGS, PANEL DISCUSSIONS, AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS ARE NOW BEING HELD IN THE MAIN GALLERY. DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT THE SOUTHWESTERN FEELING OF THE ORIGINAL ROOMS, THE NEW SPACE IS ENRICHED BY RICHLY STAINED WOOD. CARPET AND A CERAMIC AND SLATE CEILING MANAGE THE ACOUSTICAL QUALITY OF A BUILT-IN AUDIO/VISUAL SYSTEM. A MOVABLE WALL OPENS TO ACCOMMODATE EVENTS WITH LARGER Audiences.

THE LONE STAR ROOM ALSO RECEIVED A NEW WALL, TO DISPLAY A GROUPING OF BILL WITTlFF’S PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN DURING THE FILMING OF THE MINIATURES. THE PERMANENT EXHIBITION OF PROPS, COSTUMES, SCRIPTS AND DESIGNS, AND OTHER MAKING-OF MATERIALS FROM OUR MAJOR LONE STAR UPROAR PRODUCTION ARCHIVES CONTINUES TO DELIGHT FANS FROM FAR AND WIDE.

THE READING ROOM IS NOW NEARLY TWICE AS LARGE TO ACCOMMODATE ADDITIONAL RESEARCHERS INTERESTED IN THE CORMAC McCARTHY PAPERS. IT FEATURES STAINED-WOOD CABINETS, EQUIPMENT TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO AUDIO/VISUAL MATERIALS, AND TABLES HANDMADE FROM LONGLEAF PINE.

THE NEWLY PAINTED SOUTHWESTERN WRITERS ROOM FOCUS ON THE WORKS OF THE LITERARY ARCHIVES AND THE PROFESSIONAL ROOMS ARE NOW ADDED TO THE SOUTHWESTERN WRITERS ROOM, WITTLIFF LIBRARY, AND THE READING ROOM.

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the short stories entries that evolved through a handwritten journal entry in 1990, and Shepard's sharp-eyed revisions—documented in his archive at the Wittliff Collections—gradually brought the story into a classic novel, a journal entry can spark a story; or a letter sent to a friend can lead a writer down an entirely new path. And then writers fan the flames of inspiration the old-fashioned way: by extensive rewriting and revision. Even Jack Kerouac's On the Road wasn't completed on a long scroll of paper, as legend has it. Kerouac, like all writers, painstakingly reworked his material, understanding that only intense rewriting could lead him closer to his creative vision.

As Mark Twain noted, "the difference between the almost right word and the right word is the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning." The leading writers of the Southwest make it their business to build their archival collections—gradually bringing the story into clearer focus until it was published in his 1996 novel that contains one of the most celebrated opening sentences in American literature: "The first time I saw the lightning field, I was nineteen, and I thought I would die.

The Lightning Field is presented in conjunction with the Wittliff Collections, the new literary exhibition at the Wittliff Collections. The Lightning Field: Mapping the Creative Process, utilizes journals, letters, and manuscripts to illuminate the how of creation. Among the examples visitors will see are the progressive versions of "Falling Without End," a short story composed by Sam Shepard. The story began as a handwritten journal entry in February 1990, and Shepard's sharp-eyed revisions—documented in his archive at the Wittliff Collections—gradually brought the story into clearer focus until it was published in his 1996 collection, Cruising Paradise.
The new biography by Steven L. Davis

J. Frank Dobie:
A Liberated Mind

THE FIRST TEXAS-BASED WRITER TO GAIN NATIONAL ATTENTION, J. FRANK DOBIE captured the Southwest's folk herit-
age in best-selling books such as Tales of Old-Time Texas, Coronado's Children, and The Longhorns. Dobie brought scholarship out of the ivory tower and down to earth, where it could be shared among the people. He rebelled against convention and refused to earn a doctoral degree, famously observing, "The average PhD thesis is nothing but a transfer-
once of bones from one graveyard to another."

Inspiring countless others to realize that authentic writing can spring from one's native soil, Dobie became known as "Mr. Texas," and his influence on the state's cul-
ture is far-reaching. It is fitting that the Southwestern Writers Collection was founded with a gift of Dobie papers from Bill and Sally Wittliff.

"At last, after a long wait, we have a crisp, reliable, and thorough biography of J. Frank Dobie: a colossus who bestrode the Texas literary scene challengingly for more than three decades. Steve Davis gives us a much richer understanding of Dobie than we have had previously. All in all, a fine effort."
—LARRY McMURTRY

Steve Davis, assistant curator at the Wittliff Collections, has written the first new biography of Dobie in 30 years. He shares the story of Dobie's vibrant reassessment of Dobie's life and times published in October by the University of Texas Press in their Charles N. Prothro Texas Series. Davis launched his book tour with a Texas Book Festival discussion presented by the Texas Ob-
serves. "Two Texas Firebrands," which also featured Molly Ivins biographer Bill Minutaglio and moderator Bob Moser.

"Dobie was a complex person," Davis said. "He was hated and loved, sometimes by the same people." Dobie is regarded as one of the greatest professors to ever teach at the University of Texas at Austin, and yet that same university fired him in 1947. A UT regent opposed to Dobie remarked, "He is beloved by all of us and I don't know anybody who isn't his friend." Yet, that same regent added, "I tell you frankly you can either fire him or keep him, you can't control him."

Dobie's long-suffering wife, Bertha, often left alone while he set out on adventures, once observed, "I should say that in Frank pig, charging bull and mule together make a half, and that the other half is humanity at its very finest." Dobie was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Lyndon B. Johnson, but FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover secretly investigated Dobie as a possible subversive, according to recently declassified documents uncovered by Davis. Dobie single-handedly integrated the Texas Folklore Society in the 1920s (see p. 15) and by 1948 he was call-
ing for the complete integration of UT-Austin, a courageous stand that alienated much of his readership.

"Dobie gained a reputation as a liberal hero," Davis said, "but he didn't start out that way. He grew up in a time of great prejudice, and those attitudes are clearly expressed in his early work. For that reason he's castigated today as a racist, particularly by Chicano critics. But Dobie never con-
sidered himself a finished person. His early devotion to the open range eventually became a belief in an open mind. The strength of that vision gave him the courage to continually evolve throughout his lifetime."

During the McCarthy era Dobie became Texas's leading dissenter, taking on politicians and censors—anyone he saw as the enemy of human liberty or freedom of thought. The epitaph Dobie penned for his own tombstone sums up his life's journey. "I have come to value liberated minds as the supreme good of life on earth."

Read the Texas Monthly interview with Davis online: http://www.texasmagazine.com/2009/11-01/boominterview.php

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE that Frost Bank has donated to the Wittliff's Southwestern & Mexican Photography Collection 32 original tintypes and 12 archival lightjet prints by internationally acclaimed pho-
tographer ROBB KENDRICK from his series and book titled Revealing Character.

As Tom Frost states in the intro-
duction to the book, Frost commis-
ioned Kendrick in 2004 "to under-
take a Texas expedition to document the character of the land as seen in the faces of its trusty men and women, a riveting account of his experiences, A Personal War in Vietnam (1989), as well as a novel set in Vietnam, The Last Klack (1994). Flynn archive includes records from the organization's previous era, the cultural heritage of Texas and the

FROST BANK donates ROBB KENDRICK tintypes

"This project resonated with our company's deep Texas roots and our belief in the importance of character," said Dick Evans, Frost's chairman and CEO. "We are happy to be able to share these tintypes with the Wittliff, whose commitment to preserving the Southwest's cultural arts ensures that people will enjoy them for years to come."

Frost asked Margaret Blagg, for-

Our deepest thanks to Frost Bank for their most generous gift and for their role in helping us all celebrate the cultural heritage of Texas and the


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(right) J. Frank Dobie: One of Coronado’s Children, 1912. oil on canvas by Alexander Hogue, University of Texas, McFarlin Library, Special Collections (Courtesy of Alexander Hogue Mariners)
SHOWN HERE IS A souvenir image from a brothel on the Texas-Mexico border made circa 1974 by an itinerant photographer who sold it to his client for a couple of dollars. The original was most likely thrown out on the road home, since it was the record of a somewhat shady dalliance—or maybe it was kept as a fond remembrance. This picture was printed from one of 6,416 negatives that comprise the truly astonishing Boystown archive. Purchased and thus rescued from sure oblivion by Bill Wittliff in the mid-’70s, these ritual photographs, made by a dozen or so anonymous men, achieve what scores of celebrated photographers have tried and mostly failed to do: they successfully reveal the marginalized subculture of prostitution.

Brassaï, one of the most notable photographers of prostitutes said, “Life cannot be captured by realism or by naturalism, only by dreams, symbols, or imagination.” The Boystown images are the exception: they capture the life of this community in the simple ritual of taking pictures over and over and over again, until as we look and look and look we begin to know who these people really are, what they’re thinking, how they live. To me, it is the most remarkable photographic archive in the Wittliff Collections.

—Connie Todd
JOHN GRAVES, born in 1920, is one of Texas’s most revered writers. His classic work, Goodbye to a River, first published in 1960 and never out of print, is considered to be one of the finest Texas books ever written.

The Wittliff Collections began acquiring John Graves’s literary papers in 1968 through the efforts of his friend Bill Wittliff, and Graves has often figured prominently in the Wittliff’s activities. In 1996 the first book in the newly minted Southwestern Writers Collection Book Series, published by the University of Texas Press, was A John Graves Reader, an anthology of Graves’s work that included never before published material.


In August 2009, Assistant Curator Steve Davis sent John Graves a few questions by e-mail to ask about his creative process.

What can you tell us about your writing process? Do you write every day? Is there a particular time of day you prefer to write?

Most of these questions/comments will have to be in more or less past tense, since at a rather beat-up eighty-nine years of age I am doing very little real writing. This doesn’t bother me much, for I feel that my main literary work has already been done, for better or worse.

But I do pick away at a keyboard each day, recording memories of past friends and events that have touched me during a lifetime which has stretched out beyond what I ever thought it would. Perhaps behind this pecking there is a mild hope that one or another of the jottings might lead to something worth printing, as indeed one passage from 2006 did, turning into a magazine piece and a little book entitled My Dogs and Guns.

Where do you write? Can you tell us about your workspace?

I write at my ancient, large, second-hand desk in what used to be the living room of the little stone house I built in the 1960s, but which became my study as more construction was added through the years. Of course this room is crammed with books in alphabetical (by author) order and damned nearly as many more are stacked chaotically in this study and in the newer living room that adjoins it.

Can you describe your revision process?

I can’t stop adding to and subtracting from and otherwise changing a text until I’m forced to let go of it, and even after publication I find words or passages that I wish I had thus altered.

Do you discuss your work with others while it is in progress? Who do you show your work to first? I usually show new writing first to my wife Jane, who has a good eye for textual matters. And there are old, bright, literate friends like Sam Hyens and Abe Rothberg (both Jay ar) and Bill Wittliff. Plus others if they have a link to the subject matter.

Do you have a current writing project that you can talk about? Are there books remaining that you hope to do?

As the above remarks indicate, I have no current writing projects beyond those jottings, nor do I waste much time forming world current directions, unpleasant though many of them may seem to me. Life has been good and I’m glad to have been here when it was.
NEW ASSISTANT CURATOR FOR ACQUISITIONS

The Wittliff Collections are pleased to welcome Shin Yu Pai as Assistant Curator for Acquisitions, a new position created by Texas State to bolster the Wittliff’s ability to collect major archives. An excellent choice to work in this exciting area, Shin Yu is herself an accomplished artist who has exhibited at several museums and is the author of seven books of poetry. She has taught poetry at the university level and served as the Programming Director at WordSquare, a literary arts nonprofit in Dallas. Her education includes a master’s degree in Museology from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with additional graduate study at the Nasraa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. Please join us in welcoming this talented new addition to the Wittliff staff.

THIS EXHIBITION is a miscellany of photographs never before hung in the Wittliff Collection galleries, so Carla and Shin Yu and I had an intriguing puzzle to solve selecting and arranging the prints, slowly realizing that we would be creating mini-exhibits on each wall for visual continuity and image flow. We wanted to demonstrate that a sensitive combination of two or more great photographs does not diminish their impact but rather amplifies it.

For the first time (excepting of course the Kate Breakey shows) we had a number of works in color, so we decided to hang them all together because they made such a wonderful splash and shared the kinship of tones—the splashiest being no doubt our centerpiece on the long wall—the 42” x 65” digital print by Fernando Montiel Klint, entitled ¿Qué es esto? (Do We Want Cake?). It’s a funny, chaotic, supersaturated piece with a social agenda, it features the artist’s friends—and dogs—in costume inhabiting and acting on a “set.” Created to illustrate the fratic nature of modern life and consumption, it makes its point with edgy and eccentric humor. We surrounded this extremely active photograph with works of brilliant color and absolute stillness, creating a wonderful tension up and down the length of the wall. Of particular interest are the two vivid portraits of Graciela Iturbide and Marco Antonio Cruz, arguably the best photographers and the two smaller photos easily hold their own.

In the center of one prominent wall we placed Head of a Dead Man by Joel-Peter Witkin, from his Mexico hospital morgue series, an excellent, large, strong, and disturbing image. How to flank such a photograph? We had to find two masterful, dramatic, albeit smaller pieces, so we went to Graciela Iturbide and Marco Antonio Cruz, arguably the best photographers in Mexico, and hung her divine Bird made in the sixteenth-century convent of Terespol and his profane Up Against the Wall taken in a Mexico City jailhouse. It’s a perfect combination of two smaller photos easily hold their own.

We have a group of three iconic images by the father of Mexican photography, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, and with them we placed a fourth image, called I like, by John Lewis that is itself a Bravo homage and very happy in the company of its inspiration. Michael O’Neill’s whimsical portrait of Tom Waits shares a corner with Lizeth Aranáz Velasco’s little bullfighter from her series, Mirar hacia arriba (Looking Up), an appropriate duo.

There are many other tableaux created for this extraordinary exhibition, with works by Jayne Hunts Bidaust, Keith Carter, Edward Curtis, Faustéus Deraet, Jerónimo Hernández (from the Casasola Archive), David Johndrow, Robb Kendrick, O. Russell Lovett, Robert and Shana Parke-Harrison, Sean Perry, Ken Rosenthal, Rocky Schenck, Antonio Torel, and Jesús Sánchez Uribe.

Please come and look and pay particular attention to the grouping of the photographs—how we combined them, how we turn the corners in the galleries—how we enhance the experience through insightful placement. I hope you enjoy it, because we had a wonderful time putting it together.

—Connie Todd
recent ACQUISITIONS

the SOUTHWESTERN WRITERS COLLECTION

The collection currently comprises over 6,080 linear feet of materials from the region’s authors, playwrights, screenwriters, and songwriters. Recent acquisitions listed below represent additions from January through July 2009. Not listed are the numerous gifts of books, magazines, films, CDs, and other items that supplement our primary source materials. The success of the Southwestern Writers Collection depends on the generous support of our donors. Thank you! Photograph: MARK ALPAGGETTE’s images of Texas musicians and fans discover life on the stage and on the dance floor. Depicted are artists such as Robert Earl Keen, Roger Craig, Bruce Robison, and Eliza Gilkyson performing at the Guinn Hall, Gordes, and other popular venues. (Gift of Alpagglette) The notable career of Texas Tornadoes ERNIE DURAWA’s is recognized through photographs, plaques, certificates, and other awards including the proclamation of “Ernie Durawa Day” in Austin, Texas, February 5, 2005. (Gift of Durawa) The research and writing interests of southwestern literature professor and scholar WILSON H. HUDSON are represented by the addition of correspondence, manuscripts, notes, and published materials. (Gift of Joe Scrggus) New LARRY L. KING materials include correspondence with friends and colleagues, primarily discussing King’s health and the passing of writer and King’s good friend, Bud Shalke. (Gift of King) The cancellation of KING OF THE HILL (see p. 10) has resulted in an influx of scripts and production records to complement the already extensive archive. (Gift of Jim Daniefer) Correspondence, drafts, photographs, and articles by and about GROVER LEWIS document Kip Strattin’s work as co-editor of the 2005 Grover Lewis anthology from UT Press, Splendor in the Short Grass. (Gift of Rae Lewis) the PHILLY MORRIS PAPERS document her research and writing of Marc Simmons of New Mexico; Maestros Historian, a biography of the noted southwestern scholar and writer. (Gift of Morgan) CELIA MORRIS continues to gift her papers to the Collections. Recent items document her political interests and work on behalf of the Democratic Party. (Gift of Morgan) Album recordings, CDs and videoassets, posters, magazines, and artifacts celebrate the music career of FREDDY POWERS. (Gift of Texas State’s Center for Texas Music History) DICK J. REAVES continues to donate materials relating to his prolific writing career as well as items documenting his research on the 1931 siege on the Branch Davidian complex in Waco, Texas. (Gift of Reaves) FRI and Texas Ranger reports relating to the Branch Davidian siege were added to the growing ASHES OF WACO collection of materials documenting this historic conflict. (Gift of Matthew Wittern), as were a selection of surveillance and negotiation tapes (Gift of Catherine Wessinger). Both collections of supports the online digital archive developed by Archivist Joel Minor (see p. 5). Additions to the MARC SIMMONS papers pertain to the 400th anniversary of the founding of New Mexico. Included are correspondence, published materials, and newspaper clippings. (Gift of Simmons) Additions to the BILL WITTLIFF archive include screenplays, photographs, exhibit catalogues, correspondence, videotapes, and published materials, as well as obituaries and articles, memorial service programs, and speeches from the funeral of writer Bud Shalke. (Gift of Bill & Sally Wittliff) the SOUTHWESTERN & MEXICAN PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION New purchases include photographs by KEITH CARTER and FAUSTUN AG DEBÁRT. Color photographs of George Strait by MIAL O’BRIEN. Historical images of Texas and Mexico. Carbon-ink prints from K2 Press of BILL WITTLIFF’s BRAZOS: Genesis of the Texas Cowboy traveling exhibition. New gift includes photographs by KEITH CARTER (gift of artist) ROBB KENDRICK’s Revealing Character tintypes, see p. 7 (Gift of Frost Bank) Silver-gelatin print, Roses San Miguel, 2009 by BILL WITTLIFF (gift of artist) BORN IN 1904 near the Texas-Mexico border in Roma, Texas, JOVITA GONZALEZ would become the first Mexican American to serve as President of the Texas Folklore Society. While earning her bachelor of arts degree from Our Lady of the Lake College, she continued to study Spanish at the University of Texas at Austin, and it was there in the summer of 1925 she met Frank Dobie. Not only did they both share a passion for the folklore of Texas, Dobie encouraged her to write down the stories she knew. He and his wife Bertha helped secure loans for her education and González was often invited over for dinners at the Dobie home. It was Dobie who introduced González to the Texas Folklore Society; at his request she gave the feature presentation in 1927. She then went on to serve as a vice president and then as president of the society in the 1930s. This was an incredible accomplishment for several reasons—she was female, she was young (not yet 30), and she was a Latina writer. She continued on her way to becoming a major Texas writer when she married Edward E. Mires in 1935. Unlike her friend and mentor, Dobie, González’s new husband did not encourage her writing, in fact he dismissed it, and with the exception of several stories in The Southwest Review and Folklore Publications, none of her manuscripts were published before her death in 1983. During an interview in the 1970s, González was ques- tioned about her unpublished novel and Mires quickly stated that the manuscript had been destroyed; however, González discreetly indicated to the reporter that Mires was wrong. Researchers Teresa Palomo Acosta and Cynthia Orozco are credited with bringing González’s work to the attention of scholars, but it was not until the 1980s that the manuscripts were published. While the majority of Gonzalez’s papers reside at the Bell Library of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, the Jovita González Mires Papers at the Wittliff Collections consist of manuscripts, correspondence, financial records, several art- ists and other documents, photographs, and material relating to the Spanish teaching career of both González and her husband. Of particular interest is the master’s thesis she wrote while working on her MA at UT-Austin. Submitted in 1930, the work gives a first-hand look into the life of border, with insights to the culture, language, racial relations, and economic conditions of the time. Thanks to efforts by researchers Maria Eugenia Cotera, Life Along the Border: A Landmark Trauma Thesis was published in 2006 by Texas A & M Press. Edited and with an introduction by Cotera, González’s original thesis titled “Social Life in Webb, Starr, and Zapata Counties” appears much as it would have when González turned it in to her advisor, Eugene C. Barker. This is the fourth body of work written by González that has been published posthumously. With Dobie’s help, González’s MA research resulted in a Rockefeller grant award in 1934. It is believed that during this time she may have started work on her novel Caballero. Further evidence of this is found in the Wittliff Collections. As a result of a contract signed from 1939 signed by Jovita Gonzalez de Mires and Margaret Ester (Eve Raleigh, pen name) concerning the novel All This is Mine (Caballero), “a historical novel of the border during the Mexican War.” This original contract (below) was discovered by a researcher who found the foldable document inside González’s address book. Caballero was eventually published in 1996. Dew on the There was published a year later by Arte Publico Press, and The Woman Who Lost Her Soul and Other Stories was published in 2000. (above) Jovita Gonzalez, San Antonio, 1931 Courtesy of the E. Mires and Jovita Gonzalez Mires Papers Special Collections and Archives, Mary and Jollie Library Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
exhibitions & events CALENDAR [ADMISSION IS FREE]

exhibitions

OCT 17 – MAR 1
THE LIGHTNING FIELD: Mapping the Creative Process
The papers of Cormac McCarthy, Sam Shepard, John Graves, Rick Riordan, and many others illustrate a variety of authors’ compositional dilemmas and, through them, illuminate the how of creation. Supporting Texas State’s 2009-2010 Common Experience theme, “The Whole Mind,” (see p. 5).

Rick Riordan
RickRiordan.com

OCT 17 – MAR 13
A CERTAIN ALCHEMY: Photographs by KEITH CARTER
Drawing from the animal world, popular culture, folklore, and religion, Carter explores relationships that are timeless, enigmatic, and mythological. This film-image show celebrates Carter’s latest book in the Wittliff’s Southwestern & Mexican Photography Collection Series with the University of Texas Press.

coming up

february

18 FRANCINE PROSE
reads for the English Department’s TKL/KAP Series. Book signing and Q&A to follow.

OCT 17 – MAR 13
FIREFLIES: Photographs of Children by KEITH CARTER
As does his newest book from UT Press, this exhibition showcases the transcendent, lyrical depictions of children Carter has crafted throughout his career.

OCT 17 – MAR 13
NUEVA LUZ / NEW LIGHT: Recent Acquisitions. With over 60 images by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Marco Antonio Cruz, Graciela Iturbide, Robb Kendrick, Tina Modotti, Edward Weston, Joel-Peter Witkin, and many others. A high-impact show and a host of other internationally acclaimed photographers, this high-impact show is not to be missed. (see p. 12)

ON PERMANENT DISPLAY
LONESOME DUCK Collection
Costumes, props, set pieces, designs, scripts, and other “making of” materials are permanently on view from the CBS miniseries based on Larry McMurtry’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

OCT 10 – JAN 3
Eyes to Fly With: Photographs by Graciela Iturbide, the exhibition based on the Wittliff book, is at Beaumont’s Art Museum of Southeast Texas

sept 19 – jan 3
Sixty of Bill Wittliff’s images from A Book of Photographs from Lonesome Dove are at the Witte in San Antonio along with pieces from the making of the miniseries. Guts “mortal remain” and grave marker, his Colt Walker pistol, and the iconic painted dove from Pumphrey’s mercantile.

sept 27 – jan 17
Over 70 images from Port of the Ordinary: Photographs by Keith Carter are at College of Saint Rose’s Esther Massry Art Gallery in Albany, NY.

special assistance

Would you like to schedule a group or class tour? Call us at 512.245.2313 or request a tour online. If you require accommodations due to a disability, please call ahead and we’ll be happy to assist.

our gift shop is open!

We’ve begun to offer our literary and photographic series books, Encino Press books, posters, and other items for sale online. See the website to begin shopping.