THE MAYBORN LITERARY NONFICTION
WRITERS CONFERENCE
OF THE SOUTHWEST

JULY 14 - 16, 2006
Welcome to the Conference

Welcome to The Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest. This event represents the continuing commitment of the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism to provide unique opportunities for journalism education. Our weekend of literary workshops, lectures and informal gatherings should inspire our students and all writers of the Southwest and beyond to stretch their literary talents even further.

Sue Mayborn, Editor and Publisher
Temple Daily Telegram
Killeen Daily Herald

On behalf of the Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism and the University of North Texas, I welcome you to The Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest. I extend a Texas-size “hats off” to our conference leaders whose literary successes prove that the interest in superb storytelling never goes away. I also thank our sponsors: The Dallas Morning News, Hearst Corporation, American Mensa LTD, Nick and Anne Ricco, The Sid Richardson Foundation and the Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau for their support. By offering literary role models, recognizing literary excellence and bringing writers together, this conference continues to stoke the fires of nonfiction storytelling to make them burn ever brighter.

Mitch Land, Director
Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism
### Friday, July 14

**Hilton Lobby**  
11 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Registration

**Conference Rooms**  
2nd Floor  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Workshops

**International Ballroom**  
5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Close Encounters of the Literary Kind, Session 1 (must be pre-registered)

6 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.  
Tex-Mex Dinner for Writers and Conferees  
**Mitch Land**, director of the Mayborn Institute, will open the conference and welcome our guests.

7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
Keynote Address: **Hampton Sides**  
“Facts are Stupid Things”

8:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
Q & A with **Hampton Sides**

9:05 p.m. to 9:50 p.m.  
Documentary: Colors of Courage  
**Tony Martínez**, director

**Ballroom Lobby**  
9 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.  
**Hampton Sides** book signing

**TBA**  
9 p.m. to 10 p.m.  
Close Encounters of the Literary Kind, Session 2 (must be pre-registered)

**Hotel Bar Patio**  
9:45 p.m. ‘till late  
“Spurs of Inspiration” Release Party  
Conference keg party held for guests over 21 wearing conference name tag.

### In Brief

**Hilton Lobby**  
Late Registration  
8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.

**Val Verde Amphitheater**  
8:50 a.m. to 9:35 a.m.

**Saturday, July 15**

**Hilton Lobby**  
8:50 a.m. to 9:35 a.m.  
**Michael Granberry**, personal essay writer, *The Dallas Morning News*  
“The Best Personal Essays are Ballads of the Heart”

9:40 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.

**Skip Hollandsworth**, executive editor, *Texas Monthly*  
“The Magazine Writer and the Fact Checker”

10:25 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.

10:40 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.

11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.

1:15 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Lunch in Hotel Cafeteria

“The Best Story Wins”

1:15 p.m. to 2 p.m.
Val Verde Amphitheater
2:05 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.
Karen Thomas, narrative writer, *The Dallas Morning News*
“Touching the Story’s Heart”

2:55 p.m. to 3:40 p.m.
“The Terrifying Step”

3:40 p.m. to 3:55 p.m.
Break, refreshments in lobby

3:55 p.m. to 4:40 p.m.
Kevin Helliker, senior editor, *The Wall Street Journal*
“How to Turn Conventional Wisdom on Its Head ”

4:45 p.m. to 5:25 p.m.

5:25 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Wrap-up, Mitch Land

International Ballroom
6 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Literary Lights Dinner

7 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Literary Lights Award Presentations

7 p.m. to 7:10 p.m.
George Rodrigue, vice president and managing editor, *The Dallas Morning News*


Keynote Address, Gay Talese, the Michelangelo of literary journalism “The Origins of a Nonfiction Writer Who Has Mastered the Art of Hanging Out”

A short reading from “A Writer’s Life”

Q & A with Gay Talese

Book signings by Gay Talese and all conference authors

Close Encounters of the Literary Kind, Sessions 3 & 4 (must be pre-registered)

Talk to like-minded writers about what you’ve learned at the conference.

Hilton Bar
9:15 p.m. ‘till later
Hampton Sides is the author of the nonfiction best-seller "Ghost Soldiers," which won the 2002 PEN USA award for nonfiction and the 2002 Discover Award from Barnes & Noble. "Ghost Soldiers" has been published in nine languages, was the basis for an award-winning documentary, "The American Experience," produced by WGBH for PBS, and was the inspiration for the recent Miramax film, "The Great Raid."

Sides' stories have been twice nominated for National Magazine Awards for feature writing, and have appeared in Outside, Esquire, The New Yorker, Men's Journal, Preservation and on NPR’s "All Things Considered." Sides covered the Iraq War for The New Yorker and Men's Journal. He is the author of "Americana" and "Stomping Grounds." His new book, "Blood and Thunder," is a narrative history about the controversial frontier hero Kit Carson and his role in the conquest of the West. Sides is a member of the Author's Guild and a fellow of the Japan Society of New York, through which he was awarded a 1999 media fellowship in Tokyo. A Memphis native and Yale graduate with a bachelor of arts degree in American history, he lives in New Mexico with his wife, Anne, and their three sons.
Keynote Speaker, Saturday

Gay Talese is credited by Tom Wolfe with creating an innovative form of nonfiction writing called “The New Journalism.” Though Talese shuns such labels, he clearly represents literary journalism’s finest. In both his books and in his many profiles in Esquire, Talese demonstrates his extraordinary skill as the invisible narrator. As one writer put it, “What Talese does better than just about anyone is hang out, observe and listen.” Another says Talese is “well known for his daring pursuit of ‘unreportable’ stories, for his exhaustive research, and for his formally elegant style.”

In “Origins of a Nonfiction Writer,” Talese offers insight into his personality and his passion for storytelling. “For individuals who were as shy and curious as myself, journalism was an ideal preoccupation, a vehicle that transcended the limitations of reticence. It also provided excuses for inquiring into other people’s lives, asking them leading questions and expecting reasonable answers.” Talese’s insatiable curiosity has inspired a number of nonfiction best sellers, “Unto the Sons,” an historical memoir that spanned two world wars; “The Power,” a meticulously researched and highly readable book that probes the history and influence of The New York Times; “Honor Thy Father,” the inside story of a Mafia family; and “Thy Neighbor’s Wife,” which examines the changing moral values of America between World War II and the era before AIDS. Talese’s latest, “A Writer’s Life,” was released in April.

Keynote Speaker, Sunday

Melissa Fay Greene is the author of “Last Man Out: The Story of the Springhill Mine Disaster,” the compelling story of a group of men who spent nine days trapped inside a collapsed mine. Greene’s first book, “Praying for Sheetrock” won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award and was a National Book Award finalist and a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. Her second book, “The Temple Bombing,” also a National Book Award finalist, won the ACLU National Civil Liberties Award.

Keynote Address

Hampton Sides
Author: Ghost Soldiers
Keynote: Facts are Stupid Things

The James Frey scandal was only the most conspicuous illustration of it, but 2005-2006 has been a bad year for the literature of truth. In Friday’s keynote address, journalist and historian Hampton Sides takes aim at the curious assault on reality, and why nonfiction writers now more than ever must define and hold the line on “faction.” The impulse to improve on “what is,” to stretch and doctor the truth, is as old as Homer, but it has never been more widespread or acceptable, and its implications have never been more confusing.

Sides discusses the inevitable temptation to “lay it on thick” in the writing of both journalism and history and especially as it relates to his forthcoming “Blood and Thunder,” a narrative history about the controversial life and times of Kit Carson, a real-life man who was also a pulp fiction hero, a figure whose frontier exploits no writer could resist improving upon.

Michael Granberry
Writer: The Dallas Morning News
Lecture: The Best Personal Essays Are Ballads of the Heart

If you’re ready for some comic relief, you’ve come to the right place. Michael Granberry, an award-winning narrative writer, will tell you how to write personal essays that are occasionally funny, occasionally moving and sometimes both. His personal essays have included a homage to a childhood friend who died of breast cancer, a lamentation on the fate of the Cotton Bowl, the impact Harriet Miers’ Supreme Court nomination had on his high school and college, and his comical frustrations with a 12-year-old son who eats only chicken nuggets and fries.

Songwriter Jackson Browne once told Granberry that he wouldn’t have been able to write a single word over the years without taking the most difficult or painful events in his life and turning them into ballads. Granberry will share some of his favorite ballads with you and suggest ways for you to discover the ballads in your life waiting to be told.

Skip Hollandsworth
Executive Editor: Texas Monthly
Lecture: The Magazine Writer and the Fact Checker

Skip Hollandsworth has been a finalist four times for the National Magazine Awards, and his work has been included in such prestigious publications as “Best American Crime Writing” and “Best American
Magazine Writing.” His nonfiction account of the murders of seven women in Austin in 1885 will soon be released by Harper Collins.

Whenever Hollandsworth turns in a story to *Texas Monthly*, he is also required to turn in a long “fact check report” explaining where he got every single fact that is in the story. As part of that report, he not only must turn in all documents that he used to help write the story, he must provide phone numbers for all sources named and unnamed. Hollandsworth will talk about his obsession with fact checking and he’ll explain why that process helps create the kind of vivid realism that is critical in writing narratives.

**Evan Smith**

*Editor: Texas Monthly*

Lecture: *Soul of the Machine*

For more than 33 years, *Texas Monthly*’s commitment to literary nonfiction has been clear and sweeping, publishing some of the greatest long-form writers of two generations, including William Broyles, Paul Burka, Mimi Swartz, Nicholas Lemann, Joseph Nocera, Emily Yoffe, Jan Jarboe, Robert Draper, Skip Hollandsworth, Pamela Colloff, Karen Olsson, and Nate Blakeslee. The magazine’s current editor, Evan Smith, will talk about *Monthly*’s rich history and explain why and how that commitment is honored each month, at a time when the industry is cashiering staff writers, cutting pages, and taking both the patience and the intelligence of readers for granted. He’ll also recount his own nearly twenty-year history in the business -- how he was inspired in 1987 by Sally Tisday’s *Harper’s Magazine* essay “We Do Abortions Here” to make a career of editing literary nonfiction. And he’ll offer his insights into what makes a successful, sticky magazine story these days, when competition for people’s time and attention has never been greater.

**Robert Rivard**

*Editor: San Antonio Express-News*

Author: *Trail of Feathers: Searching for Philip True*

Lecture: *Searching for Story*

When Philip True, the *Express-News* Mexico City correspondent, disappeared while trekking through the Sierra Madre in search of solitude and a story about the reclusive Huichol Indians, Robert Rivard went looking for him. True was his reporter. They were not friends. They didn’t even know each other well. None of that mattered. Rivard had to discover for himself the story behind his reporter’s disappearance. He was part of a small search party that found True, buried in a hidden grave in one of Mexico’s deepest canyons. Along the way, he found much more.

Rivard will discuss the story behind the creation of “Trail of Feathers,” a book he says he had to write, a book that became a story about True, about Mexico, about himself. It became a story about searching, about life quests. The author is convinced a lot of writers, journalists and editors have their own defining stories of searching to tell, if only they would sit down and write them.

**H.W. Brands**

Author: *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*

Lecture: *The Best Story Wins*

H.W. Brands, a history professor at the University of Texas at Austin, has written 20 books, coauthored or edited five others, and published dozens of articles and scores
of reviews. He is a regular guest on national radio and television programs.

Writers of all kinds tell stories. Some stories are simple, some convoluted. Some come wrapped in analysis, some enfold lessons or morals. But all forms acknowledge, explicitly or implicitly, that the human mind and heart respond to stories: contingent tales of developing events, where cause and effect mingle promiscuously with chance and accident. H. W. Brands considers what distinguishes fictional stories from the non-fictional ones, what ties them together, and why— in life and literature— the best story wins.

Karen M. Thomas
Writer: The Dallas Morning News
Lecture: Touching the Story’s Heart

Karen M. Thomas has worked at The Dallas Morning News for 13 years, specializing in family issues, essays and narrative writing. She has followed a family of Russian immigrants to describe a three-generational adjustment to American life. She has traced the impact of Martin Luther King, Jr’s dream on the lives of several generations of one family and examined a chronically ill mother’s drive to make her children’s musical dreams come true.

How do you get readers to care about characters who live on the margins of society? Thomas will discuss some of the pieces she’s written about people invisible to the public eye, people broken and neglected, people who have no reason to want to share their hard-luck stories with the public. Such stories require considerable time, careful thought, sensitivity and patience from the writer. It takes a gentle hand, she says, to touch the heart.

Ron Powers
Author: Flags of Our Fathers
Lecture: The Terrifying Step

Ron Powers is the author of “Flags of Our Fathers,” a collaboration with James Bradley, a son of one of the six flag raisers on Iwo Jima. The book was No. 1 on The New York Times hardcover nonfiction list for five weeks and remained on the best seller list for 46 weeks It has been developed as a motion picture by Steven Spielberg, with Clint Eastwood directing.

Powers will explain how to take “the terrifying step” out beyond the realm of the self, to produce work that is deeply inflected, charged with detail, voice and meaning, and rich with the “personal voice” that aesthetic techniques alone can never guarantee.

Kevin Helliker
Senior Editor: The Wall Street Journal
Lecture: How to Turn Conventional Wisdom on its Head

Kevin Helliker won the Pulitzer Prize in 2004 for explanatory reporting for a series on aortic aneurysms as a common and preventable killer that the medical profession has largely ignored.

At The Journal, Helliker has served as a bureau chief in Chicago and Dallas, as a correspondent in London and as a Page One editor in New York. He believes once you’ve written or read enough stories about corrupt politicians, fraudulent companies and impure medical research, bad behavior ceases to surprise you. But, there is no end to the surprises that can come from questioning conventional wisdom.
Publishers Roundtable
4:45 p.m. to 5:25 p.m.

**Luke Dempsey**
Senior Editor: Crown Publishers

Luke Dempsey has edited four *New York Times* best sellers for Crown Publishers: “Elvis by the Presleys,” by Priscilla and Lisa Marie Presley; “John” by Cynthia Lennon; “Git-R-Done” by Larry the Cable Guy; and “For Laci” by Sharon Rocha. He is working on Nando Parrado’s “Miracle in the Andes.”

**Ken Wells**
Editor: *The Wall Street Journal* book publishing division


**Ron Chrisman**
Director: University of North Texas Press

Ron Chrisman began his publishing career in the editorial department of the Syracuse University Press in 1988. In 1993 he moved to the University of Oklahoma Press. In 2000, he became director of the University of North Texas Press in Denton, Texas, which is part of the Texas A&M University Press Consortium.

Keynote Address
7:30 p.m. to 8:40 p.m.

**Gay Talese**
Keynote: The Origins of a Nonfiction Writer Who has Mastered the Art of Hanging Out

There is no substitute for “being there,” hanging out with the person you want to know well enough to write about, or fall in love with, or have a serious encounter with -- to understand, to chronicle, to reflect upon and do justice to in words that (one hopes) have lasting merit and meaning. This is how Talese works -- hanging out, spending time with people and, alas, putting up with anguish that inevitably follows as he tries to put words on paper. The author explains: “Writing well is never easy for me. I have never been a prolific writer. I have “bled” my way through each and every page. I have tried to shorten (or sweeten) the experience, but have never found a suitable shortcut. So I take my time to write, take days and weeks to write very little; but when I am finally finished with the sentence, or when a sentence has finished me, I’m content with the notion that I have done my best. Then, I move on. . . to the next sentence, and the next . . .”

His book, “A Writer’s Life,” is about what it is like to write -- and not write -- a book. “It is a book,” he says, “about all the people who have driven me to drive many miles to meet them, and about the many encounters that have led me nowhere and somewhere, and to many places in between.” Many people read books, without ever knowing how the writers have written the books. This book is Talese’s response to the challenge of writing, the joys of finishing and the hopes that endure long after he’s on the road again.
Macarena Hernández
*Columnist: The Dallas Morning News*
*Lecture: Moving Beyond the Cinco de Mayo Story: How to Mix Research, Reporting and Opinion into a Persuasive Narrative*

Prior to coming to *The News*, Hernández was the Rio Grande Valley Bureau Chief for the *San Antonio Express-News*, where she covered South Texas and Northern Mexico. Hernández has written for *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Los Angeles Times*. She has written for national magazines and her work has been featured in college textbooks.

Compelling narratives persuade with a mix of interviews, research and opinion woven into a story. Hernandez will discuss how using characters, anecdotes and a sense of place to illustrate policy, such as immigration reform, can be far more persuasive than wagging your finger at the reader. The old adage -- show, don’t tell -- applies in any form of storytelling, including editorials.

Kurt Eichenwald
*Senior Writer: The New York Times*
*Author: Conspiracy of Fools: A True Story*
*Lecture: John Grisham Can Teach Us Something About Investigative Journalism*

In “Conspiracy of Fools,” Kurt Eichenwald explores the greatest corporate scandal in history: Enron. *The New York Times* best seller has become a cause célèbre in its own right, and made Eichenwald one of the most talked about business journalists in America.

In his lecture, Eichenwald will compare how John Grisham writes fiction, creating characters that are multi-dimensional, true to life and interesting, with the often stoic writing styles used by the very investigative reporters that inspire Grisham’s novels. Eichenwald will also talk about some of the devices he uses to develop character and drama in his investigations of corporate malfeasance.

Sonia Nazario
*Reporter: The Los Angeles Times*
*Author: Enrique’s Journey*
*Lecture: The Harrowing Journey of Transforming a Newspaper Narrative into a Book*

Sonia Nazario is a nationally acclaimed journalist and author. In 2003, her story of a Honduran boy’s struggle to find his mother in the U.S., entitled “Enrique’s Journey,” won more than a dozen awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. Her book with the same title was recently released by Random House. HBO is also producing a mini-series on “Enrique’s Journey.” Nazario often writes about complex social issues involving people who are in danger, particularly kids. Bringing the plight of these kids to life through narrative storytelling is the hallmark of Nazario’s work.

Nazario will give a cautionary tale of what it took to turn “Enrique’s Journey” into her first book. She will talk about the things she wishes someone had told her before starting out on this journey, and if, with her newfound knowledge, she’d be crazy enough to do it again.
Keynote Address

Melissa Fay Greene
Author: Praying for Sheetrock
Keynote: Aristotle and the AIDS Pandemic

Melissa Fay Greene will discuss how getting close to the big stories, the global catastrophes, is daunting. How is it possible to tell the most dire stories, the ones involving tens of thousands or millions of victims, in a way respectful of human dignity and individual struggle? How do you paint the big picture without resorting to the graphs and data of epidemiology, or to hyperbole, or to statistics too staggering to comprehend?

Greene will explain how, even on the front lines, it is possible for nonfiction to borrow a few tricks and angles from drama and fiction, and to glean insights from the single greatest theorist of dramatic plot: Aristotle. This is not about manufacturing “truthiness” or faking composite characters. It’s about edging your way close to a crisis, and choosing and arranging the stories that can illuminate the whole.

Agents Roundtable

Jim Donovan
President: Jim Donovan Literary

Jim Donovan has worked in the book business for more than 20 years. He began as a bookstore clerk, became manager, and then bookstore chain buyer. He was a trade book editor for five years before starting his own Dallas-based literary agency in 1993. Donovan handles commercial fiction and nonfiction, particularly in the areas of history, biography, sports, business, popular culture and reference. Books he has sold have been made into movies and have hit The New York Times Best Seller List. He is also the author of several books, most recently “Custer and the Little Bighorn.”

James D. Hornfischer
President: Hornfischer Literary Management

James D. Hornfischer is one of the few agents in the country who is both a licensed attorney and a former New York book editor. In 13 years as a literary agent, he has handled eight New York Times nonfiction best sellers (including two number ones) and several finalists for major book prizes. Recent projects include “Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times” by H. W. Brands, and “Mark Twain: A Life” by Ron Powers. Hornfischer is also the author of “The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors,” published in 2004 by Bantam Books. His next book, “Ship of Ghosts: The Story of the USS Houston, FDR’S Legendary Lost Cruiser and the Epic Ordeal of Her Survivors,” will be published by Bantam in October.
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Article Essay

Katherine Jones
Thomas Huang
Bill Marvel
Dave Tarrant
Beatriz Terrazas

Manuscript

Deanne Stillman
Charlotte Rains-Dixon

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The Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism, the only nationally accredited professional master’s journalism program in Texas, offers specialties in print and broadcast news, photojournalism, integrated marketing and communications and publishing.

Alumni of the journalism program have won seven Pulitzer Prizes and many outstanding award winners in advertising, public relations, newswriting-editorial, photojournalism and broadcast news. The North Texas Daily and its predecessor, the Campus Chat, have earned three regional and six national Pacemaker awards, the last two presented by the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the Associated Collegiate Press. The newspaper has also earned All-American honors 86 times, awarded by the Associated Collegiate Press and the College Media Advisers.

The journalism department’s graduate program built on its tradition of excellence when it was named, in 1999, the Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism through a generous gift from the Frank W. & Sue Mayborn Foundation. The Mayborn Institute offers both master of arts and master of journalism degrees. Graduate work at the institute equips individuals with professional and academic skills to succeed in the mass media professions and in teaching journalism. The program’s strength lies in its relevance to the needs of today’s mass media environment and its opportunities for research at a variety of levels.

The University of North Texas is the leading university of the Dallas-Fort Worth region and the region’s largest, most comprehensive graduate and research university.

UNT offers more graduate degree choices than any university in the region -- 114 master’s degree programs and 49 doctoral programs -- with many programs nationally recognized. The university has more than 7,600 graduate students.

UNT’s outstanding graduate faculty is widely recognized -- even internationally known. The university offers small classes for individual attention; its overall student-faculty ratio of 16:1 is even lower for graduate classes.

Research opportunities abound. Graduate students often assist with research projects or become involved with the university’s more than 60 research and service centers and institutes. In addition, graduate students intern with top corporations, government agencies and other institutions.

UNT offers the most extensive computer resources of any DFW university. Its library system, with two million cataloged holdings, is the largest in the region and has been designated a major research library by the U.S. Department of Education.

UNT is the flagship of the University of North Texas System, which includes the UNT Health Science Center at Fort Worth and the UNT System Center at Dallas, which is expected to become a full university in 2007.
Sponsors
American Mensa, LTD
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