becoming a literary light

THE MAYBORN LITERARY NONFICTION WRITERS CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHWEST UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS™

July 27-29, 2007
Hilton DFW Lakes • Grapevine, Texas
William & Rosalie
A HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

William and Rosalie Schiff and Craig Hanley

Winner of the 2006 Manuscript Workshop Contract

*William & Rosalie* is the gripping and heartfelt account of two young Jewish people from Poland who survived six different German slave and concentration camps throughout the Holocaust. In 1941, newlyweds William and Rosalie Schiff are forcibly separated and sent on their individual odysseys through a surreal maze of hate.

Craig Hanley powerfully narrates the struggle of the couple to stay alive and find each other at war’s end.

William and Rosalie Schiff, now both in their eighties, live in Dallas and devote themselves full time to teaching children the dangers of prejudice and hate. Their ongoing campaign is a heroic culmination of two lives scarred beyond belief by racism.

6x9. 192 pp. 25 b&w illus.
$19.95 Hardcover

Purchase your copy at the 3rd Annual Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest or call 1-800-826-8911 or visit www.tamu.edu/upress

---

**becoming a literary light**

---

2Welcome to the Conference
4Conference Committee and Sponsors
6Writing Contest Jury Panel
7Workshops
8Judging Process
11Conference Scholarships
12Conference in Brief
22Conference in Detail – Lecture Descriptions
35Keynote Biographies
39About the University of North Texas
40About the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism
42Map of the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center
44Frequently Asked Questions
Welcome to The Mayborn Conference

I am pleased to welcome you to our third annual Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest. The success of this event in fostering a culture of factual storytelling has been demonstrated in a variety of ways: The Mayborn Literary Journal, which is published by the Hearst Corporation and the Mayborn Institute, the winning manuscripts, such as Craig Hanley’s *William & Rosalie*, published by UNT Press and the Mayborn Institute and the many stories that have been published by conference alumni working at *The Dallas Morning News, The Temple Daily Telegram* and elsewhere. COVER magazine, published last spring by the Institute, is yet another example.

Our conference demonstrates our commitment to journalism excellence, and we’re glad you have chosen to join us this year. We wish for each of you the best weekend ever as you are inspired by our workshop leaders, our keynote presenters and one another.

Sue Mayborn, Editor and Publisher, *Temple Daily Telegram* and *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 Conference. I’m confident that our lectures, keynote speeches, informal gatherings and awards gala will continue to inspire all of us to keep up the culture of storytelling and journalism excellence.


Have a wonderful time!

Mitch Land, Director, Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism
Conference Committee

Mitch Land
Director, Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism

Nancy Eanes
Conference Manager

Ellen Rossetti
Public Information Officer
University Relations, Communications and Marketing

Meg Gupton
Conference Assistant

George Getschow
Writer-in-Residence, Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism

Brandee Harrawood
Assistant Conference Manager

Stan Walker
Development Director
UNT College of Arts and Sciences

Sarah Whyman
Conference Assistant

Mayborn Graduate Assistants

Candace Carlisle
Randena Hulstrand
Sarah Junek

Advisory Board

Ron Chrisman UNT Press
Yolette Garcia KERA
Byron Harris WFAA-TV
James Hornfischer Author & Agent
Tom Huang The Dallas Morning News
Hannibal Johnson Author & Attorney
Bob Mong The Dallas Morning News
Sonia Nazario The Los Angeles Times
Felipe de Ortega y Gasca
The Hispanic Foundation
Norman Pearlstine Time Inc.
Bob Rivard San Antonio Express-News
Hampton Sides Author
Gay Talese Author
Ken Wells Condé Nast Portfolio

Thank You to our Sponsors

Sid W. Richardson Foundation
MARSH

Table Sponsors

D Magazine
Ricco Family Partnership Ltd.
UNT College of Arts and Sciences
UNT Bookstore
UNT Division of Advancement
UNT Murphy Enterprise Center
## Writing Contest Jury Panel

### Article/Essay

**First Round**

- Bill Marvel  
  Freelance Writer  
  UNT Adjunct Instructor  

- Dianne Solis  
  National Immigration Reporter  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

- Dave Tarrant  
  Page One Narrative Writer  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

- Beatriz Terrazas  
  Writing Coach  
  Writer’s Garrett

- Karen Thomas  
  Freelance Writer  
  UNT Adjunct Instructor

**Second Round**

- Skip Hollandsworth  
  Executive Editor  
  *Texas Monthly*

- Sam Gwynne  
  Executive Editor  
  *Texas Monthly*

- Mike Merschel  
  Book Editor  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

- Tom Huang  
  Front Page Editor – Narratives  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

### Book Manuscripts

**First Round**

- Jim Donovan  
  Literary Agent  
  Jim Donovan Literary  

- Kurt Eichenwald  
  Author and Staff Writer  
  *Portfolio Magazine*

- Gregg Jones  
  Investigative Projects Team  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

**Second Round**

- Ron Chrisman  
  Director  
  UNT Press

- David Hale Smith  
  Literary Agent  
  David Hale Smith Literary

- Jim Hornfischer  
  Literary Agent  
  Hornfischer Literary Management

## Workshop Leaders

### Article/Essay

**First Round**

- Dave Tarrant  
  Page One Narrative Writer  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

- Bill Marvel  
  Freelance Writer  
  UNT Adjunct Instructor  

- Beatriz Terrazas  
  Writing Coach  
  Writer’s Garrett

- Karen Thomas  
  Freelance Writer  
  UNT Adjunct Instructor

**Second Round**

- Skip Hollandsworth  
  Executive Editor  
  *Texas Monthly*

- Sam Gwynne  
  Executive Editor  
  *Texas Monthly*

- Mike Merschel  
  Book Editor  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

- Tom Huang  
  Front Page Editor – Narratives  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

**Book Manuscript**

- Bill Marvel  
  Freelance Writer  
  UNT Adjunct Instructor  

- Tom Huang  
  Page One Sunday Editor  
  *The Dallas Morning News*

- Beatriz Terrazas  
  Writing Coach  
  Writer’s Garrett

- Karen Thomas  
  Freelance Writers  
  UNT Adjunct Instructor

## Workshop Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article/Essay</th>
<th>Book Manuscript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Homestead</td>
<td>1. La Bodega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Haak</td>
<td>2. La Buena Vida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fall Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Delaney II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Delaney I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The boxed lunches and break refreshments will be served outside of Delaney I & II. See the map of the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center on page 42.
Judging Process

First and Second Round Selection Process for Articles and Essays

All submissions were blind reviewed. The Mayborn Conference received 95 personal essays and research-and-reporting-based narratives. Our five first-round judges divided them up, each receiving 25 submissions. Each judge then had to winnow their 25-piece pile down to the best 10. The goal was to select the best 50 submissions for the workshop. The judges did this by using a system that ranked each piece on a scale of one to 10. Stories ranked one to three were put in the “reject” category. Stories put in the four to seven range were put in the “maybe” category. And stories ranked eight to 10 were put in the “accept” category.

After the five judges selected their best 10 (so, 50 in total), they swapped each other’s 10 best selections. The idea was to see if there was agreement on the 50 best pieces. If there was any disagreement on whether the pieces were worthy of submission into the workshop – and sometimes there was – all the judges read the pieces in dispute and discussed them. All five judges had to agree on the 50 submissions accepted into the workshop.

After the 50 pieces were selected for the workshop, the judges had to winnow those down to the 10 “best of the best” to publish in Ten Spurs, the literary journal jointly published by Hearst Newspapers and the Mayborn Institute. Each first-round judge selected the top five out of his or her pile of 10 by once again ranking each piece on a one-to-10 scale. Again, they shared their top five picks – 25 in all – with the other judges. Each judge then selected their top three picks from these selections – a total of 15 in all – and switched the piles again. Each judge read and ranked the top three picks and switched the pieces among themselves again. Each judge read the top 15 picks, conferred and winnowed out five more pieces to get to the 10 “best of the best” submissions.

The process took 12 hours – from 9 in the morning until 9 in the evening.

The top 10 picks of the first-round judges were sent to the second-round judges to determine the six winners of the cash prizes: first place, second place and third place in the research-and-reporting-based category and first place, second place and third place in the personal essay category. The second-round judges consist of two senior editors at The Dallas Morning News and two senior editors at Texas Monthly. The Dallas Morning News editors and Texas Monthly editors selected their top six choices independently. They held a telephone conference July 10 to discuss their picks and reached an agreement on the six winners of the cash awards.

Jury Selection Process for Manucripts

All submissions were blind reviewed. Three authors and agents served as our first-round book manuscript judges. Their job was to select the 20 best manuscripts for the workshops and the top six manuscripts for consideration by our second round jurists.

The three manuscript judges evaluated the quality of the idea, the storytelling
skills of the writer, the commercial potential of the project, whether the writer had devised a structure (or narrative arc) and demonstrated the know-how to sustain a full-length book project.

After selecting 20 manuscripts for the workshops, the judges had to determine the best six manuscripts to submit to the second-round jury panel. The three judges privately selected three manuscripts out of the 20 to advance. The judges agreed on the remaining three picks but felt the next three in the ranking were not nearly as good as their top three picks. Also, one of the judges felt there was another submission worthy of consideration by the second-round judges. Therefore, a seventh manuscript was selected and sent to the second round panel.

The process took six hours – from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon – with all judges reading through lunch.

The top seven picks of the first-round judges were sent to the second-round judges. The second-round judges had two weeks to select and rank their top three picks. Each jurist on the second-round panel was required to send the evaluations to Ron Chrisman, director of UNT Press, no later than the morning of July 9, at which time the jurists and Chrisman conducted a conference call to discuss the jurists’ written evaluations. Weighing their recommendations, Chrisman determined the winner of the 2007 provisional book contract with UNT Press and the Mayborn Institute.

The contest winners will be announced at the Literary Lights Dinner Saturday night before the keynote lecture by Joyce Carol Oates.
## Conference in Brief

### Friday, July 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m. to 5 p.m.</td>
<td>Registration – Make this your first stop to receive your nametag and tickets to dinner events.</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 a.m. to 4 p.m.</td>
<td>Writing workshops for selected entries – See page 7 for workshop sites.</td>
<td>First level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 p.m. to 5 p.m.</td>
<td>Close Encounters of the Literary Kind (I) – See the ticket in your nametag for designated time and location. Bring your ticket and nametag. Important: Please arrive early for your 15-minute appointment with one of our literary agents.</td>
<td>3 p.m. to 5 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Texas-style dinner for writers and conferees – Bring your ticket and nametag. Cash bar available. Music by SouthPaw. University of North Texas Chancellor Lee Jackson will open the conference and welcome our writers and guests.</td>
<td>5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Saturday, July 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m. to 10 a.m.</td>
<td>Late registration</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.</td>
<td>Navigating a career in freelance writing: 10 keys to success by Melissa Shultz, freelance writer</td>
<td>8 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:35 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Q &amp; A with Melissa Shultz.</td>
<td>8:35 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Would you like to see the whale tapeworm? Stalking colorful sources, priceless moments and other essential ingredients for memorable nonfiction by Mary Roach, best-selling author, <em>Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife</em> and <em>Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers</em></td>
<td>7:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:35 p.m. to 9 p.m.</td>
<td>Q &amp; A with Mary Roach</td>
<td>8:35 p.m. to 9 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Debut of <em>Ten Spurs Best of the Best</em> and book signing with Mary Roach for all conferees</td>
<td>9:10 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 p.m. 'til the roosters crow</td>
<td>Spend the remainder of the evening socializing with writers and conferees at the hotel patio-bar</td>
<td>9:45 p.m. 'til the roosters crow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Visit our conference bookstore.  
*Second level, Su Vino*
Conference in Brief

Saturday, July 28

8:50 a.m. to 9:25 a.m.  Keeping the mortician awake
Plenary Session
Val Verde Amphitheatre
by Rob Kaiser, writing coach, San Antonio Express-News

9:25 a.m. to 9:35 a.m.  Q & A with Rob Kaiser

9:40 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.  Finding narratives in the cobwebby corners of American religion and society
Plenary Session
Val Verde Amphitheatre
by Christine Wicker, former religion editor, The Dallas Morning News, and author, Not in Kansas Anymore and Lilly Dale: The Town that Talks to the Dead

10:15 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.  Q & A with Christine Wicker

10:25 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.  Break and refreshments
Outside La Verde / Lobby

10:40 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.  Building turf: Reconstructing scene and dialogue in sports narratives
Plenary Session
Val Verde Amphitheatre

11:15 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.  Q & A with Bill Nack

11:30 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.  True crime truth
Plenary Session
Val Verde Amphitheatre
by Carlton Stowers, narrative writer, Abilene Reporter-News and author, To The Last Breath and Careless Whispers, winners of the Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime Book of the Year

12:05 p.m. to 12:15 p.m.  Q & A with Carlton Stowers

12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.  Lunch — Bring your nametag and ticket.
Hotel Cafeteria

1:15 p.m. to 1:50 p.m.  Adventure writing: It sucks bad, and it really needs to.
Plenary Session
Val Verde Amphitheatre
by Kevin Fedarko, writer and former senior editor, Outside magazine

1:50 p.m. to 2 p.m.  Q & A with Kevin Fedarko.
Conference in Brief

Saturday, July 28

2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Close Encounters of the Literary Kind (II) – See the ticket in your nametag for designated time and location. Bring ticket and nametag. Important: Please arrive early for your 15-minute appointment with one of our literary agents.

2:05 p.m. to 2:40 p.m. War stories: How to distill clarity from chaos with Steve Harrigan, contributing editor, Texas Monthly, and author, Gates of the Alamo and Jim Hornfischer, author, Ship of Ghosts: The Story of the USS Houston, FDR's Legendary Lost Cruiser and the Epic Ordeal of Her Survivors Moderated by Mike Merschel, book editor of The Dallas Morning News

2:40 p.m. to 2:50 p.m. Q & A with Steve Harrigan and Jim Hornfischer

2:55 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Immersion journalism: Taking the perilous journey toward the emotional truth of our stories by Cecilia Balli, contributing writer, Texas Monthly and Harper’s Magazine

3:30 p.m. to 3:40 p.m. Q & A with Cecilia Balli

3:40 p.m. to 3:55 p.m. Break and refreshments Outside La Verde / Lobby

3:55 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Noodling for narratives in science and nature? Try supping on squirrel brains. by Burkard Bilger, staff writer, The New Yorker, former senior editor, Discover and The Sciences magazines, and author, Noodling for Flatheads: Moonshine, Monster Catfish, and Other Southern Comfort

4:30 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. Q & A with Burkhard Bilger


5:25 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wrap-up with Mayborn Writer-in-Residence George Getschow

6:15 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. Literary Lights Dinner and Literary Lights Award Presentation Greg Davis of WRR 101.1 will emcee.
## Conference in Brief

### Saturday, July 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7:45 p.m. to 8:35 p.m. | Keynote Address: Turning nonfiction into art: A process that involves first-rate reportage and new strategies of form  
by Joyce Carol Oates, The Queen of Storytelling |
| 8:35 p.m. to 8:40 p.m. | Short reading from *On Boxing*                                                          |
| 8:40 p.m. to 9 p.m.   | Q & A with Joyce Carol Oates                                                            |
| 9 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.   | Book signings by Joyce Carol Oates and all conference authors                           |

### Sunday, July 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8 a.m. to 8:35 a.m. | Plenary Session: Life on the banks: Finding narratives in everyday life  
by Denise Watson Batts, narrative project team member, *The Virginian-Pilot* |
| 8:35 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. | Q & A with Denise Watson Batts                                                        |
| 8:50 a.m. to 9:25 a.m. | Plenary Session: Storytellers take heart: The age of the Internet will finally set you free.  
by Tony Freemantle, writing coach and editor-at-large, *Houston Chronicle* |
| 9:25 a.m. to 9:35 a.m. | Q & A with Tony Freemantle                                                               |
| 9:40 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. | Dredging a slave ship narrative out of the murky waters of history is hard slogging  
| 10:15 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. | Q & A with Erik Calonius                                                               |
| 10:30 a.m. to 11:05 a.m. | Roundtable Discussion: Mining the narrative: Extracting a compelling story from the investigative mountain  
with Doug Swanson and Gregg Jones, project writers, *The Dallas Morning News* |
| 11:05 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. | Q & A with Doug Swanson and Gregg Jones                                                     |
LAST SUMMER I had the privilege of speaking at the Mayborn Conference. I came to know an extraordinary gathering of writers, journalists, educators, students and readers devoted to the art and craft of literary nonfiction, a subject that has been my passion and my mission for a half century. I'm convinced that anyone who attends the Mayborn Conference will leave with a new level of insights, storytelling skills, and understanding of the aesthetic qualities and requirements of literary nonfiction.

The Mayborn Conference is the gathering place in the country for serious nonfiction writers who want to deeply explore the craft and learn how its practiced at the highest levels.

- Gay Talese, The Kingdom and the Power

"IT'S NO ACCIDENT that the Mayborn Conference has very quickly risen to preeminence among the nation's literary conferences. Stacked with talent, smartly choreographed, and well-attended by enthusiastic confreres whose passion for nonfiction is palpable, the Mayborn offers a distinctive format no other conference can match. It's also a lot of fun. For all the high-powered names it draws from year to year, the conference is thoroughly unpretentious, and the gracious staff runs the conference with a heaping helping of Texas hospitality, It was a great pleasure to have been asked to come and address the Mayborn Conference, and I would gladly return in the years ahead."

- Hampton Sides, Ghost Soldiers and Blood and Thunder

JAMES AGEE would have felt at home at the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference. Higher praise, I cannot imagine.

In a universe of mass-media in which reportage is routinely corrupted by political intimidation and marketing formula, and in which writers' conferences generally marginalize "nonfiction" as personal memoir, "inspirational" or some similar market-driven genre, Mayborn stands pre-eminent. It illuminates the highest and most aesthetically satisfying of nonfiction's mandates: to boldly examine what Agee called "the cruel radiance of what is" on behalf of a common reader. The Conference inspires its attendees, as well as its faculty, to write work that involves an insistent probing for factual truth and accountability in our fraught and dangerous society, and world.

Such work, and only such work, can perform a public good, conveyed by narrative prosewriting that equals the deepest satisfactions of fiction. Mayborn, with its persona of moral passion coupled with writerly inspiration, is on its way to becoming a national resource.

- Ron Powers, Flags of our Fathers and Mark Twain

---

Sunday, July 29

11:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Break and refreshments
Outside La Verde

11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Out of madness: Crafting a bittersweet memoir from the substance of a strange life
Keynote Address
Val Verde Amphitheatre
by Allison Hedge Coke, author, Rock, Ghost, Willow, Deer: A Story of Survival

12:15 p.m. to 12:20 p.m. Short reading by Allison Hedge Coke

12:20 p.m. to 12:25 p.m. Q & A with Allison Hedge Coke

12:25 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Farewell address from Mayborn Institute Director Mitch Land

12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. Book signing by Allison Hedge Coke and other conference authors

Visit MaybornInstitute.unt.edu for information on the fourth annual Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest, July 25-27, 2008, returning to the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center.
Saturday, July 28

Navigating a career in freelance writing: 10 keys to success
Melissa Shultz

Whether you’re just starting out, stuck in neutral or are considering making the transition from full-time employment, insure your success as a freelance writer requires more than a copy of Writer’s Market and a computer. Melissa Shultz will share her real-life experiences leaving the safety net of full-time work to pursue the world of freelance writing. Learn the questions to consider before making the leap as well as the skills and processes to master once you have. From script and copywriting for trade associations, to ghostwriting for local publishers, to writing for newspapers and magazines, your success is as dependent on your ability to market yourself as it is on your writing skills. Learn how to prepare for the inevitable “rainy day,” conjure up writing ideas, stay connected and steer clear of the cookie jar when your time is your own.

Friday, July 27

The Austin Ranch
Adjacent to the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center, The Austin Ranch sits on 90-acres of rolling hills. Austin Ranch is one of the oldest dude ranches in Texas and home to the western-themed conference kickoff dinner. Enjoy Texas-style barbecue while socializing with fellow writers and our conference speakers.

Southpaw
Playing country tunes, blues, ’70s rock n’ roll and timeless classics, Southpaw specializes in tight vocal harmonies. The musical group is based in North Texas.

Would you like to see the whale tapeworm?
Stalking colorful sources, priceless moments and other essential ingredients for memorable nonfiction

Keynote Speaker
Mary Roach

It’s not just fine writing that makes nonfiction “literary.” It is creative, dogged reporting. And pre-reporting: all the work that goes into tracking down memorable characters and vivid settings, narrative material so entertaining that a writer isn’t tempted to fictionalize or embellish. Mary Roach talks about the relationship between writer and reality, and how to wring larger-than-life writing out of life-sized realities.

Keeping the mortician awake
Rob Kaiser

Rob Kaiser must be rude. How else to explain his once asking the father of an obese high school football lineman what his son weighed at birth? Or asking a millionaire about the stain on his tie? Or asking a woman what size shoes she wears? Could be that Kaiser simply believes in the telling detail—enough to risk a black eye. But what happens when a journalist writes an impressionist piece? What becomes of detail when the writer squints so as to make out a story’s essence the way Monet must have squinted at those haystacks? What is impressionist journalism, anyway? Whose impression of reality should it reflect? Is it okay for a journalist to filter the world through...
Building turf: Reconstructing scene and dialogue in sports narratives

Bill Nack

William Nack spent almost 25 years at Sports Illustrated writing award-winning long-form narratives. The author will demonstrate how scene-setting, the use of dialogue and other fictive devices can enhance the art of old-fashioned storytelling. Nack will deconstruct his narratives on Hurricane Carter, Sonny Liston and the Dempsey-Tunney long-count fight to illustrate some of the storytelling devices and material he employed to write about people and events from another era. Nack will also discuss his memoirs of two great racehorses, Secretariat and Ruffian. Nack believes that the use of literary devices are particularly useful in enlivening otherwise boring investigative pieces; for example, putting a human face on a Little League coach who molested scores of boys over many years before he was caught or bringing to life a horse-killer hired to maim a show jumper so his patron could collect insurance money. In writing sports narratives, Nack says, “You must immerse yourself totally in the subject – in the place and the time of the action, in the era and the moment – in order to convey a real sense of the event you are writing about and the people about whom you’re writing.”

Interesting isn’t enough: Learning to tell the deepest truth you know

Christine Wicker

For a journalist, just the fact that something unusual or momentous has occurred is enough for a great story. For a nonfiction author, that’s only the beginning of what’s needed for a great book. Fascinating stories, cultural context, historical background and great writing are the building blocks, but they don’t make a great book either. Even deep thinking about what it all means and how it fits together is only the secondary layer. The third element, which may be the most difficult in a reporter’s transition to an author, is sometimes called the story arc. Defined by an editor at Harper San Francisco as “what makes a reader put down $24.95 for a book.” This element often comes from the writer’s overriding, passionate reason for writing this particular book. One editor called it, “that thing that you know for certain that others would be fools not to realize.” Wicker calls it the deepest truth you know. Writer Annie Dillard seems to be talking about this element when she advises writers that they should be writing not about what interests them most but what interests only them. Wicker will be giving examples from the work of others and from her own books and experience with editors to talk about what this element is and isn’t, how to get it, and how important it is to editors, readers and to writers as they struggle to understand what it is that they are really trying to convey.

True crime truth

Carlton Stowers

The ever-growing boundaries of today’s genre known as true crime are as broad as they are flawed. When, during the ’80s and ’90s, the marketplace became literally glutted with lurid tales of man’s darkest inhumanities, bookstore shelf space grew by leaps and bounds with titles that promised the reader that he would “go inside the mind of the serial killer” or learn the “bizarre and gruesome story ripped from today’s headlines.” Often published as original paperbacks with a traditional black and red cover,
the word “blood” in the title more often than not, and always promising a section of “shocking” photographs, the bad books threatened to choke out the good. Veteran crime writer Carlton Stowers, twice winner of the Mystery Writers of America’s Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Fact Crime Book, will speak from the high road, explaining the long and demanding process a writer must vow to travel if a quality nonfiction narrative is to result. The crime that draws the author to his story, regardless of how brutal, evil and nonsensical it might be, is but the starting place from which one begins a demanding quest to learn of its effect on loved ones, investigators, even entire communities; to determine just how much justice the judicial system really has to offer; and to introduce the reader, not so much to a deranged, psychopathic murderer but, rather, to the expansive pool of ordinary people damaged by his sudden, dark cruelty, the innocence he has robbed from society.

Adventure writing: It sucks bad, and it really needs to.

Kevin Fedarko

For the last 30 years, Outside has served as an incubation chamber for leading practitioners of the adventure-travel story, a sub-genre of literary nonfiction that is strongly influenced by two centuries of British and European travel writing, and that evolved from its initial expression to its full maturity in the U.S. between 1977 (the year in which Outside put out its first issue) and 1997, when John Krakauer published Into Thin Air. Kevin Fedarko, who has worked for Outside as both a staff editor and a freelance writer, was inspired as a teenager by the magazine’s commitment to publishing the work of people like Tim Cahill, Kate Wheeler, Bob Shacochis, David Quammen and Randy Wayne White – writers whose stories initially led Fedarko to suppose that mastering adventure writing at its highest level involves embracing the notion that there is, in fact, little difference between being on assignment in a remote and deeply exotic place, and taking a really, really great vacation. Lord, was he wrong. Drawing examples from a litany of wretched assignments that have taken him to northeastern Kashmir, the crest of Caucasus, the Horn of Africa, the Canadian Arctic, the deserts of northern Mexico, and the Grand Canyon, Fedarko will share some of the painful epiphanies he underwent – and continues to undergo with each successive feature as he hones his craft. “Generally, readers are drawn to stories about climbing dangerous mountains, boating perilous rivers or penetrating austere territories far from the comforts of civilization only insofar as these narratives involve a personal or a spiritual journey of some kind,” says Fedarko. “It should come as no surprise to learn that the physical aspect of this journey is often a metaphor for an abstract odyssey that is far more complex, substantive and engaging. What came as a surprise to me, though, was to learn that not only are these experiences almost universally unpleasant, but reporting them often demands that one suffer the misery firsthand.” And thus the cruel conundrum of the adventure writer: Good travel generally makes for bad stories. Bad travel, if you’re very lucky, may make for a good story. And lousy, awful, please-hand-me-that-gun-so-I-can-shoot-myself-in-the-head travel — while getting you into more trouble than you ever imagined and making you wish that you’d never, ever, left home — can occasionally take you into the realm of potentially great adventure writing.

War stories: How to distill clarity from chaos

Stephen Harrigan and Jim Hornfischer

One challenge all writers face at one time or another is how to distill clarity from chaos, and there is no human activity more chaotic than warfare. In this session, nonfiction author James D. Hornfischer, (The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors and Ship of Ghosts) and novelist Stephen Harrigan (The Gates of the Alamo) will discuss the techniques they have learned to help shape historical conflicts into coherent, purposeful stories. How much research is necessary to give the reader an authentic sense of the events? Where should research leave off and where should the seemingly use of the writer’s imagination begin? How much detail is too much when describing the unfolding of a particular engage-
Noodling for narratives in science and nature? Try supping on squirrel brains.

Burkhard Bilger

Whether writing about the race to exploit the richest gem deposits on earth in Madagascar or an arachnologist on a spider-hunting trip in the southwest, Burkhard Bilger, a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and a native of Oklahoma, begins the research for his stories like any child fascinated with nature and science. He’ll go skydiving with a French astronaut, hike for miles in prehistoric shoes, make cheese with a nun-turned-microbiologist, or sling homefries in Las Vegas to study the neurobiology of short-order cooking. For his story on spiders, he crawled through basements in Los Angeles, New York and Tucson (the “spider-bite capital of the United States”) collecting some of the world’s most dangerous species and helping to milk their venom at a spider farm in Arizona. Bilger believes that science writers can learn much from the “experimental villainies” of French entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre, who spent the last years of his life studying bugs in his garden. Fabre combined a scientist’s logic and precise observation with a novelist’s language and sense of narrative. His descriptions of two tarantulas locked in deadly combat, or of a young sparrow dying from a spider bite, function both as case studies and as miniature existential dramas. As Bilger points out, “Time spent in the company of spiders can cure anyone of his sentimentality.”

How do you get a book editor interested in your non-fiction narrative? How do you get a book critic to read it and review it? And other hot topics in literary book publishing

Nan Talese

Nan Talese is publisher and editorial director of Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, a trade-book publishing imprint known for its literary
excellence. She enjoys a close editorial relationship with such bestselling nonfiction authors as Margaret Atwood, Thomas Cahill, Pat Conroy, Susan Hertog, Thomas Keneally, Ian McEwan, Peter Ackroyd and Alex Kotlowitz, a speaker at the first Mayborn Conference. Talese will sit down with veteran book reviewer Jerome Weeks to discuss the nonfiction book publishing business in general, and her working relationship with authors in particular. If you want to know what sort of nonfiction book proposals capture her attention, whether she’s willing to consider proposals from first-time authors, whether she’s willing to read a “rough draft” or only well-polished finished manuscripts, to what extent she edits her authors’ work, how often she sends manuscripts back for revision, whether the deceptions of James Frey, author of A Million Little Pieces, has changed the way she scrutinizes manuscripts, this is a panel discussion you won’t want to miss. Talese will also take questions directly from our confreres. 

Jerome Weeks, book critic, will moderate the discussion of “Hot topics in literary book publishing.”

Kithara Duo
Musical entertainment at the Literary Lights Dinner and Award Presentation

Fernand and Olga Vera formed Kithara Duo in 2002. Fernand has explored the South American folk guitar tradition in Ecuador and now earns a doctorate in guitar performance at UNT. Olga Amellkina-Vera began her musical studies on cello and piano at a young age but did not discover the classical guitar until 1998 when she moved to the United States from the former Soviet Union. She is a UNT doctoral student of music arts. They have performed as guest artists at the Montgomery Guitar Festival, the Mesquite Guitar Festival and the “Classical Minds” Guitar Festival at the University of Houston Moores School of Music. Kithara Duo was featured in Antonio Vivaldi’s “Concerto for Two Mandolins” by the Flower Mound Chamber Orchestra in 2004. Together with Valerie Hartzell-Nejako, the Kithara Duo organize and co-direct the “Classical Minds” summer guitar festival at UH.

Turning nonfiction into art: A process that involves first-rate reporting and new strategies of form

Keynote Speaker
Joyce Carol Oates

Joyce Carol Oates believes the aim and art of the contemporary nonfiction essay, or memoir, is a heightened attention to detail that allows the reader to see, hear, witness, as if at first hand, what the writer has witnessed. This attention to detail, she says, is often drawn from first-rate reportage and new strategies of form. Oates notes that there’s “an infinite variety of realities that are available to us as writers.” The challenge for nonfiction writers, she says, is make these realities come alive on the page through the appropriate selection of detail, nuanced prose, pacing, structure, fragmentation, collage and other “aesthetic strategies of fiction.” When nonfiction writers employ these approaches, she says their stories are “likely to be valued as art, not journalism.” Oates will use a few selections from her book, On Boxing and her memoir-in-progress, The Lost Landscape, to illustrate some of the literary devices she employs in her nonfiction prose.

Life on the banks: Finding narrative in everyday life
Denise Watson Batts

Writer and philosopher Will Durant said it best: “Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shouting and doing things historians usually record, while on the banks, unnoticed, people build homes, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry ... The story of civilization is what happened on the banks.” Hanging
Dredging a slave ship narrative out of the murkey waters of history is hard slogging

Erik Calonius

In 1858 a slave ship landed on Jekyll Island, Ga., igniting a national debate that helped push the nation into civil war. Then, almost as suddenly, the story of the slave ship, her crew and her captives disappeared beneath the waves of history and was largely forgotten. It took Erik Calonius in *The Wanderer: The Last American Slave Ship and the Conspiracy that Set Its Sails* to bring the Wanderer episode back to the full light of day. But the Wanderer didn’t give up her secrets easily. In writing his story, Calonius and an assistant spent months digging into the resources of the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Georgia Historical Society Library and many other repositories. Then it was a matter of shaping the voluminous research. What should be left out and what kept in? Where is the narrative thread in it all? And most importantly, how do you take dry documents – court records and microfilmed records – and turn them into a flesh and blood tale? Calonius describes how he made order out of chaos, and brought life to this long-forgotten story.

Mining the narrative: Extracting a compelling story from the investigative mountain

Doug Swanson and Gregg Jones

You’ve spent months gathering government documents, court transcripts and elusive interviews. How do you transform this mountain of material into a riveting story? Too often investigative reports founder on impenetrable writing. Great digging is obscured by a story that fails to engage and inspire. When *The Dallas Morning News* took on the subject of big-rig safety in 2006, a key to capturing the attention of readers was building a narrative that would illustrate broader problems reporters had identified. In this session, *News* reporters Gregg

Storytellers take heart: The age of the Internet will finally set you free.

Tony Freemantle

Journalists in the early days of the 21st century are understandably nervous about the future of the profession. The new technology of the new century will utterly change the landscape of journalism in ways that are only now emerging. Already it is clear that newspapers are shifting breaking news operations to their Web sites, many of them 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The inverted pyramid lives again. For writers and reporters who have been nudging their editors away from “news voice” toward a more narrative style of writing and reporting, this is not good news, at least superficially. But it could be argued that his trend actually offers a rare opportunity to the practitioners of narrative nonfiction in newspapers. Major papers, free of the need to remain relevant in a 24-hour news cycle, are now concentrating on more in-depth content in their paper product. They will seek to provide more background, context, depth, analysis and storytelling. Perhaps the age of the Internet will usher in the age of the “literary journalist,” where, freed from the need to “feed the beast,” even breaking news stories will offer the opportunity for writers to stretch themselves and develop “hard news narratives.” Instead of seeing the rise of Internet journalism as a threat, Tony Freemantle thinks literary journalists should see it as a friend, setting free the writer inside the journalist.

on the banks, that’s where *The Virginian-Pilot*’s narrative team finds its best stories. Not on Main Street, but in the alley over. By swooping in when the news cameras have long gone and the main headlines have died. Denise Watson Batts will discuss how to unearth fresh stories buried by the obvious and how to bring them home in creative ways.
Mary Roach is an American original, an uproariously funny writer with a trenchant wit and an eye for the oddball. In her monthly column for Reader’s Digest and in her essays and feature articles for Outside, Wired, GQ, Salon.com and The New York Times Magazine, her writing gravitates toward the peculiar: flatulence, Eskimo food, vaginal weight-lifting, carrot addiction, amputee bowling leagues, and the question of how much food it takes to burst a human stomach.

Her first literary nonfiction book, Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers, explores the scientific uses of the body after death in such a clever and dignified way that it “welcomes readers back to the world of the living,” as one reviewer put it. The book was a New York Times Bestseller, a 200 Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers pick, and one of Entertainment Weekly’s Best Books of 200. Stiff has been translated into 16 languages, including Hungarian (Hullamerev) and Lithuanian (Negyveilai).

Roach considers her latest book, Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife, a giggly, random, utterly earthbound assault on our most ponderous unanswered question: Does the soul survive our physical demise? The book balances Roach’s skepticism and her endless curiosity about the unexplored nooks and crannies of forensic medicine, science and nature. As a contributing editor at the science magazine Discover, Roach likes to write about anything she can’t understand.

She has received numerous writing awards. A 1995 article by Roach called “How to Win at Germ Warfare” was a National Magazine Award Finalist, and in 1996, her article on earthquake-proof bamboo houses took the Engineering Journalism Award in the general interest magazine category, for which she was, she readily admits, the only entrant. Her column “The Slightly Wider World of Sports” (Sports Illustrated for Women) did not garner any awards, Roach says, but afforded her an opportunity to learn alligator wrestling, jousting, dirt biking and knife throwing.

When she isn’t writing, Roach enjoys bird watching, backpacking, thrift stores, overseas supermarkets, Scrabble, mangoes and that late-night Animal Planet show about horrific animals, such as the parasitic worm that attaches itself to fishes eyeballs but makes up for it by leading the fish around.
Joyce Carol Oates is a literary legend, one of America’s most prolific, versatile and distinguished writers of the last century. She has written novels, short story collections, several volumes of poetry, books of plays, five books of literary criticism, and some of the most savvy and penetrating nonfiction essays, articles and books published in the last 25 years. No wonder the renowned novelist John Gardner called her “one of the greatest writers of our time.”

Oates has won nearly every literary award on the planet, including the 2005 Prix Femina, France’s literary prize for the best novel published in the country. 2004 Fairfax Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Literary Arts, PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in short fiction, the Rosenthal Award from the American Academy - Institute of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the O’Henry Prize for Continued Achievement in the Short Story, the National Book Award for her novel Them, and in 1978, membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. What I Lived For was nominated for the 1995 PEN/ Faulkner Award. In 1999 she was nominated for the Nobel Prize for the third time. In 2003 she received the Commonwealth Award for Distinguished Service in Literature and the Kenyon Review Award for Literary Achievement. When she received the Chicago Tribune Literary Prize for Lifetime Achievement last year, the Tribune’s cultural critic wrote that Oates “chronicles the breadth of the American experience as no other author ever has, striking every important national touchstone – social justice, sports, race, gender, terrorism – but not as broad categories, not as labels, but through stories about people – people and the places in which they thrive or falter, dream or don’t dream, live and die.”

Despite her literary fame, Oates has remained down to earth. “I take my writing seriously, but I don’t take myself seriously,” she says. In The Faith of a Writer, Oates writes about her humble origins in rural, upstate New York, attending a one-room schoolhouse that lacked indoor plumbing. In that schoolhouse, she began to write her first “books,” filling pages with her observations and drawings of the world around her. She never stopped writing. She sees it as sacred ritual, a way to find meaning even in the most violent and cruel corners of life. Her literary nonfiction book, On Boxing, for example, explores boxing’s brutality, but also truths about the drama “of life in the flesh” experienced in the ring. To Oates, writing is art – an immersion of drama, language and vision. “My belief is that art should not be comforting,” she writes in her introduction to The Best American Essays of the Century. “Art should provoke, disturb, arouse our emotions, expand our sympathies in directions we may not anticipate and may not even wish.” Last year, Pinckney Benedict, an author who once studied under Oates, spoke about her literary master in a way that gets to the core of her enduring legacy. “She’s a warrior for the truth,” he said.

Allison Hedge Coke, of Cherokee, Creek and Huron lineage, learned at an early age to use words that “have movement and dance within them ... words to breathe.” In Rock, Ghost, Willow, Deer: A Story of Survival, the award-winning author has written a powerful memoir that breathes and moves “fluidly across boundaries between prose and poetry, dream and reality, myth and history, animal and human, the personal and political,” as one book reviewer put it. Rock, Ghost, Willow, Deer is a narrative of her life as a mixed-blood woman coming of age off reservation; her schizophrenic mother and the abuse she inflicted on herself. The memoir became a book-of-the-month selection for Native America Calling and AIROS.

Hedge Coke’s writing has been published in many journals, magazines and anthologies, including Speaking for the Generations and the Lands (Univ. of Arizona Press, 1998) and Reinventing the Enemy’s Language (W.W. Norton, 1997). She is currently a professor of creative writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts, teaching nonfiction writing, poetry, script, literature and theory. She edited or co-edited five anthologies, including Voices of Thunder and It’s Not Quiet Anymore for the Institute for American Indian Arts, and is currently editing two new anthologies – Working Clans, a collection of writing representing Native work ethic and contemporary labors, and Radio Wave Mama, a collection of work from writers whose parents suffer mental illness. Recently she spoke at the United Nations on the subject of how publishing affects indigenous communities.
University of North Texas, Established 1890

The University of North Texas is a student-centered public research university and stands as the most comprehensive in the Dallas-Fort Worth region.

UNT offers far more graduate degree choices than any university in the region – 111 master's degree programs and 50 doctoral programs – with many programs nationally recognized. The university is also the region's leader in offering graduate academic certificates.

Graduate students have a major presence at UNT. The more than 12,000 graduate students comprise 21 percent of the university's enrollment of 33,500 students – a higher percentage than at most of Texas' largest universities.

UNT’s graduate faculty members are experts in their fields, and many are widely recognized. UNT has more than 900 full-time faculty members, allowing individual attention in many classes. The university's overall student-faculty ratio is 19:1.

Many graduate students assist professors with research projects or work in the university's 60 organized research and service units. Internships at corporations, government agencies and other institutions are also widely available.

UNT offers the most extensive computer resources of any public Dallas-Fort Worth university. Its library system, with more than 5.9 million cataloged holdings, is the largest in the region and has been designated a major research library by the U.S. Department of Education.

Founded in 1890, UNT is a thriving university with a legacy of excellence in many academic areas. UNT is the flagship of the UNT System, which includes the UNT Health Science Center at Fort Worth and the future UNT Dallas. The current UNT Dallas Campus, an extension of the flagship, moved to the first building on the new 266-acre campus in January 2007. In 2009, UNT Dallas will become the city's first public university.
The Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism

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 communications and publishing.

The Department of Journalism at the University of North Texas has been a major producer of professionals and academics for mass media since the department’s beginning in 1945.

Alumni have won eight Pulitzer Prizes and many are outstanding award winners in newswriting-editorial, broadcast news, advertising, public relations and photojournalism.

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 Mayborn Institute offers classes off campus – currently at The Dallas Morning News and KERA studios.

A narrative writing course in Archer City, Texas, home of Larry McMurtry, immerses students in the setting of their stories, allowing for extensive daily reporting. Stories from the 2005 Archer City class are published in the Mayborn literary journal, Spurs of Inspiration.

The Mayborn Distributed Reporting Project investigated Taser usage by Texas law enforcement. The stories, which were published in the Fort Worth Weekly, attracted the attention of state Rep. Lon Burnam, D-Fort Worth who presented legislation to limit usage in 2006. The project also earned the 2006 Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc. Certificate and the 2007 First Amendment Award from the Society of Professional Journalists, Fort Worth Professional Chapter.

The magazine production class offered by the Mayborn Institute allows students to create and publish COVER magazine, “the journal for journalists.” The annual magazine and its staff of students have earned recognition from the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association for feature stories, photo stories, design and overall excellence.
Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center

First Level
Workshop sessions for select participants (See page 7 for assignments.)

Second Level
Lobby – Registration desk
Su Vino – Conference bookstore
Val Verde Amphitheatre

Third Level
International Ballroom
FAQs

When do I need my nametag and included tickets?
Please wear your nametag to all events during the weekend. We have included tickets in your nametag pocket for the dinners Friday and Saturday nights. You will need to present these at the door.

Where should I sit during the lectures?
All seating is general admission. You have a better chance of snagging one of our rolling chairs if you arrive early to the Val Verde amphitheatre. To accommodate more people we have armless chairs in the last two rows.

Where is the bookstore located?
The bookstore is around the corner from the Val Verde amphitheatre in the Su Vino. Just follow our signs. They will be offering a 10% conference discount.

Where do I get breakfast?
We will have continental breakfast refreshments Saturday and Sunday in the break area outside the Val Verde amphitheatre. This is included in your registration fee. If you prefer to pay for a hot breakfast, please visit the Vineyard Restaurant located on the second level of the conference center.

Whom do I contact if I have a special need or request?
Please see a conference staff member at the registration table. Look for the green ribbons on their nametags.

How do I find out about the 2008 Mayborn Conference?
The next conference is scheduled for July 25-27, 2008, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center. Visit MaybornInstitute.unt.edu to stay up to date with the latest plans for the fourth annual Mayborn Conference.

Contact Details
Nancy Eanes 972.880.2540 cell
Brandee Harrawood 817.944.8434 cell
Mayborn Institute Telephone 940.565.4564
E-mail MaybornConferenceInfo@unt.edu
Web Site MaybornInstitute.unt.edu