

*A Columbia River waterfall from the deck of the Columbia Gorge sternwheeler during the 1989 Portland convention.*

All photographs courtesy of Preston Lewis



*Preston Lewis with Cheryl Metz at Albuquerque convention book signing.*

## Memorable conventions

**By Preston Lewis**

The incident came to be known in WWA lore as “the day the cowboy writers quit” in homage to Elmer Kelton’s Spur Award-winning novel, but to me it was the closest I ever came to the Old West cliché of the sheriff holding off the lynch mob at the jailhouse door.

My stand came in 1989 at the 36<sup>th</sup> WWA annual convention in Portland, Oregon, where convention chair Irene Bennett Brown with Kay McDonald had put together a delightful meeting that included, on the final day, a WWA autograph party at Powell’s Bookstore, one of the nation’s great book retailers. Because of its sterling reputation, I was eager to visit the famous warehouse of the written word.

Not all the attendees agreed, however, especially those writers that had brought their own books to sell. Bookstore autograph parties were a staple of the convention in the 1980s and 1990s, but bookstores had varying policies about authors selling their own books.

Powell’s declined to allow it, explaining that workers would have to enter the books manually in the inventory system before they could check them out on their registers. Then when the autograph session was over, they would have to manually remove the books from the inventory, calculate how much each author was due and settle up with him or her afterward. It was too much work for the minimal return, so Powell’s said no.

Several authors moaned and complained about the arbitrary policy, demanding members vote to boycott the book signing. That vote came at the honors luncheon three days ahead of the planned visit. As a board member at the time, I was seated at the head table beside 88-year-old C.L. “Doc” Sonnichsen, the venerable Southwest historian and past WWA president. When then-WWA president David Dary called for a show of hands in favor of the boycott, I saw a forest of arms appear from the audience. When he asked for those opposed, Doc and I were the only two that I saw voting against the proposal. There might have been more, but I missed them if there were.

When the honors luncheon was over, Judy Alter, past WWA president and then-*Roundup Quarterly* editor, rushed up and shook her head, telling me, “When I saw how you and Doc voted, I realized I had voted the wrong way.” I was flattered. The straw poll had come on Monday, but by Thursday, the day of the book signing, passions had cooled and the controversy had blown over. As I recall, two or more busloads of WWAers went to the autograph party without incident, and you would never have known of the brouhaha, though it always left me with a special memory.

The greatest WWA book signing in my experience occurred two years earlier at the 1987 convention in Sheridan, Wyoming, where secretary/treasurer Barb Ketcham and husband Garey were the convention organizers. They were

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## CONVENTIONS (from page 7)

so plugged into the community that they convinced *The Sheridan Press* to publish a 24-page supplement to promote the convention and authors. They also secured local businesses to “sponsor” writers by posting authors’ photos and book signing flyers in their display windows.

Though organized by a local bookstore, the signing was held in the banquet hall at the convention host Holiday Inn. The book lovers – it seemed like there were hundreds of them – and the authors were serenaded by the local brass band.

It remains the most memorable and exciting book signing in my experience, as was the Spur Banquet the next night. I was the Spur chair that year, and Barb and Garey with the hotel staff provided a dramatic setting with darkened lights and two spotlights to dramatize the presentations and the recipients.

The author signings also had their comic moments. To me the most memorable was at the Albuquerque, New Mexico, meeting, in 1996 at Winrock Center. Two romance writers, both no longer members, were close alphabetically – so they generally sat next to each other – but far apart temperamentally, generally trying to outdo the other.

At this signing in the mall concourse outside the sponsoring Borders Books, all the authors received standard bookstore name plates in front of their stack of books. One of the women, though, brought her own nameplate about twice as big as the one provided by Borders and placed it in front of her seat. Not to be outdone, her competitor sent her husband down the mall to an office supply shop that did a quick-print job for a new nameplate that was about three times as big as her seatmate’s, so large that it blocked the view of the other author’s stack of books. What amazed me was the two competitors remained all smiles as they tried to one-up each other.

Just as book signings were a staple of the early conventions I attended, so were field trips, as they remain today. While most of those trips are generally by bus, at the WWA meeting in Portland, Oregon, we had a Columbia River excursion on the *Columbia Gorge* sternwheeler. Buses carried members from the Red Lion Hotel on the banks of the Columbia to the Cascade Locks where we enjoyed a salmon barbecue at an adjacent park.

After the dinner we boarded the sternwheeler for an evening ride through the locks and down the Columbia. The cruise included live music, dancing, demonstrations of early gambling games and a relaxing ride on the water. We disembarked at 11 p.m. at the hotel dock there on the river.

At the 1993 convention with hosts Dusty and Pat Richards in Springdale, Arkansas, we took a three-hour, 70-mile ride each way on the Arkansas and Missouri Railroad to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where we toured Judge Isaac Parker’s courthouse and the famed jail and had lunch in a quaint restored brewery.

Growing up in West Texas, where I could stand on my back porch and see for 20 miles, I never really understood the concept of bushwhacking until that train ride. You could have hidden an army 20 feet from the tracks among all the trees and brush. I also learned a wooden train seat is not the most comfortable form of travel.

Springdale was also special because I received my first Spur Award at that meeting. I was also honored that my parents, my brother, Harriet, Scott and Melissa were there to share in the occasion as well they should have been because each contributed in his or her own way to my success.

In acknowledging my son and daughter, I said, “Scott and Melissa, who’ve practically grown up with this organization, deserve my thanks for their patience and tolerance. They know full well the trials and tribulations of being a writer’s offspring, things like having to attend this banquet.”



WWA members enjoying the Columbia River cruise on the Columbia Gorge sternwheeler at the 1989 Portland convention.



From left, Harriet Lewis, Jeanne Williams, Melissa Lewis, Gary McCarthy, Scott Lewis and Preston Lewis. Background from left, Natlee Kenoyer and Cheryl Metz.



Gary and Barb Ketcham, then WWA secretary-treasurer, at the 1987 Sheridan, Wyoming, convention.



C.L. "Doc" Sonnichsen, Jeanne Williams and Preston Lewis at a 1980s WWA convention.

The line drew the intended laughs in a memorable Spur moment for me, but the greatest WWA acceptance speech I ever heard came a year earlier from Max McCoy at the 1992 convention in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, at the Snow King Resort. Max was honored with the Medicine Pipe Bearer's Award, given at the time for the best first Western, for his novel *The Sixth Rider*, published by Doubleday in 1991.

The Spur banquet had gotten off to an awkward start with the featured speaker Gerry Spence, a flamboyant trial attorney and author of four books at that time. Wearing a fringed buckskin jacket and speaking in a polished, authoritative courtroom voice, Spence titled his talk "Badmen and Lawmen in Modern Wyoming," though mostly he bragged on his legal victories and the huge settlements he had secured for his clients and himself.

While the braggadocio was tolerable, his language was not, as he peppered his talk with a word that is a staple among today's standup comedians but was still considered offensive by many in 1992. Several members, including me, stood up and started escorting their wives out of the banquet room.

As several of us reached the exit, Bill Gulick, one of WWA's founders, stood up and shouted, "Get him off of there." Spur Award-winning author and musician John Byrne Cooke, one of the convention's co-organizers and the son of Alistair Cooke, longtime host of PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre*, arose and signaled for Spence to wind up his speech, which he immediately and graciously did.

The banquet deserters returned to their seats and the presentations began. When Max received his award, he thanked WWA for the honor and noted that recognitions such as the Medicine Pipe Bearer's Award and the Spurs were important for authors because the monetary compensation was usually small. Max paused, then delivered the *coup de grâce*: "If all you are interested in is money, you become a trial attorney."



Authors Robert Vaughan and Robert M. Utley at WWA's 1996 Albuquerque, New Mexico, book signing at Winrock Center.

He drew great laughter and the heartiest applause I ever remember at a Spur banquet. The line was so well delivered that even Spence grinned.

Over the years, WWA conventions have provided a lot of smiles to me and my family. As WWA celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it's hard to believe I have been a member for 60 percent of its existence and have attended 40 percent of the annual meetings. I kept coming back because of the people I met, the skills that I learned and the fun that I had.

By now I suspect I am considered a WWA old-timer like the Nelson Nyes, the Bill Gulicks and the Tommy Thompsons when I first started attending. I don't know how many of the next 40 meetings I'll be able to attend, but I guarantee I will get to as many as I can for the remembrances and the smiles. As Bob Hope, another old-timer who made a few comic Westerns in his day, would have said, "Thanks, WWA, for the memories!"

## Memorable members

By Preston Lewis

Over the past 40-plus years since attending my first WWA convention in Santa Fe, New Mexico, I have met some of the most intriguing and memorable Western writers of all time, beginning at that inaugural meeting.

The first noteworthy individual stood across from me in Santa Fe's Inn at Loretto meeting room in 1982. He wore Western-cut slacks, flashy cowboy boots, a gaudy belt buckle and a fringed Western jacket that couldn't disguise his middle-aged paunch. Though his white hair was receding on top, he had extravagant mutton-chop sideburns that dominated his ruddy-complexioned face. He was, I thought, the quintessential Western writer. Then he opened his mouth!

J.T. Edson (1928-2014) spoke loudly and with the heaviest Cockney accent I had ever heard in person. So much for being the prototypical Western author, but the Melton Mowbray resident of Leicestershire, England, was the most colorful WWA member to ever cross the pond. He published 137 novels, the majority of them Westerns, accumulating 27 million in mass-market sales during his career.

A 12-year veteran of the British army, primarily as a dog trainer, Edson began writing in the military and eventually became known for his right-wing politics, which he often worked into his Westerns. After leaving the military, he supported himself as a mail carrier, fish-and-chips shop manager and pet-food factory worker until his writing career took off.

He is best known for the more than 70 Westerns in his Floating Outfit series with primary protagonist and most popular character Dusty Fog, who was said to be based on Edson's favorite movie cowboy, Audie Murphy. Of his Westerns, the *Sunday Times of London* said, "What they lack in psychological depth is made up for by at least 12 good fights per volume." And his works were known for their catfights with women smacking, clawing and biting each other as they tore one another's clothes off in the mud.

Besides the accent and booming voice, what I remember about Edson was that he loved his ale and always came to conventions with a young "nurse." When Leon C. Metz was host of the 1995 convention in El Paso, Texas, Harriet and I dined at the table with Edson and his health-care assistant at the Spur Awards banquet. Edson kept dozing off during the proceedings, which might not have been too bad, except he snored when he snoozed, much to the embarrassment of his nurse, who was eventually able to convince him to retire to his room.

The irony was that, at the previous El Paso convention in 1978, Leon had lost a night's sleep convincing border officials to release Edson from jail after an illegal border crossing when he neglected to take his passport to Juarez for WWA's evening dinner and bloodless bullfight demonstration.

While he loved writing Westerns, he told *Time* magazine he had no interest in living in the Wild West. "I've never



Leon and Cheryl Metz at the 1996 WWA Albuquerque convention.

All photographs courtesy of Preston Lewis



Spur recipients Frank Roderus for original paperback Potter's Field and Preston Lewis for Western novel Blood of Texas congratulate each other at the 1997 Cheyenne convention.

even been on a horse. I've seen those things, and they look highly dangerous at both ends and bloody uncomfortable in the middle." When he died, the *Sunday Times* obituary listed him as "JT Edson: Politically Incorrect Author of Bestselling Westerns."

Another memorable writer was Ormly Gumfudgin (1922-2009), the stage and pen name of Clarence Stanley Locke. He looked like a lanky Ben Rumson, the Lee Marvin character in *Paint Your Wagon*, and was credited by Ripley's

*Believe It or Not* as being “The World’s Only Living Bazooka Player” during the time he was active with WWA. By bazooka *Ripley’s* didn’t mean a recoil-less, shoulder-fired anti-tank weapon but rather a telescoping brass musical instrument several feet in length.

Ormly’s bazooka concert and comedy act, part magic and part groan-worthy, was a WWA standard for years and a favorite with the children. One year, Ormly called on our daughter Melissa to assist him with his magic coloring book and other tricks. She remained his assistant at four or so meetings. They became lifelong friends and corresponded with each other through Melissa’s college career.

In 2003, Gumfudgin produced a CD, *Warmly, Ormly*, to save the sound of the bazooka for posterity, he said, “despite all advice and protestations otherwise by everyone who has ever heard me play.”

In real life, he worked for years at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena as head of the Employees Recreation Club and editor of the monthly company publication “Lab-Oratory.” He wrote a newspaper humor column for 40 years. Gumfudgin was a chili aficionado, serving as the official historian of the International Chili

Society and attending every World Championship Chili Cookoff from its inception until 2008 when cancer sidelined him and then silenced his bazooka a year later.

A lot of writers from my generation were inspired to tackle our first Western in 1979 when Bantam Books-Twentieth Century Fox announced a \$25,000 First Western Contest. W.W. Southard (1931-1984), or Bill as I came to know him, cashed that Bantam check. A Clovis, New Mexico, newspaper editor who called himself a “week-end cowboy,” Southard wrote the contest-winning *Season of Vengeance*, a spellbinding traditional Western, then followed it up with *A Reckoning at Arrowhead* and *Bitter Pecos*.

When I met him at a WWA meeting, I congratulated him on winning the contest and told him that my losing entry had been published as well. Bill insisted that I sell him a copy, but I refused, giving him one instead as it only cost a \$1.75. At the next convention, he presented me an autographed \$2 bill in payment.

Since I profited by a whole quarter on the transaction, I told Bill I felt like I had won second place in the contest since I was clearing one ten-thousandth of his prize money. We both

laughed and joked about it whenever we got together after that. Bill died of cancer at 52, four years after winning the Bantam contest.

Another writer who died way too early was Terry C. Johnston (1947–2001), who won the Medicine Pipe Bearer’s Award for best first novel in 1982 for his fur-trade novel *Carry the Wind*. He wrote 31 novels, including his 16-volume Plainsman Series on the Indian Wars. What I remember about Terry is that he was the consummate showman at book signings, a dead ringer for George Custer in dress and appearance.

The book signing at the Jackson Hole convention was on a square downtown and, at his table, Terry displayed buffalo robes, weapons and period artifacts from the Indian Wars. When you purchased a book, he gave you a feather for a bookmark. Not only did he put on a good show, Terry knew his history and could talk with authority on the Indian Wars. He died of colon cancer at 54, way too soon for such a fine writer and showman.

While those were all memorable, the most noteworthy to me was Jeanne Williams, who was always so giving of her time to me and other aspiring writ-

**MEMBERS** (continued on page 12)



*Preston Lewis and Jeanne Williams admire the Spur she had previously predicted he would one day receive.*



*Four Spur winners from the 1997 Cheyenne convention gather after the awards banquet, from left, Preston Lewis, Leon C. Metz, Loren D. Estleman and Frank Roderus.*

**MEMBERS** (from page 11)

ers. My entry in the Bantam first Western contest was published in 1981, then I went eight years without another publication. Jeanne sustained me during those bleak publishing years.

We first met at the San Antonio meeting in 1985 when she agreed to read the faded carbon copy of a historical novel I had written. Instead of taking the bus excursion the next day to Bandera and Kerrville, Jeanne stayed at the hotel to review my manuscript.

It was a nervous excursion for me as I wondered whether my writing would cut it with a bestselling author of her stature, having won a Spur a decade between 1960 and 1990, and receiving the Saddleman Award, predecessor to the Wister Award, as well as being a past WWA president.

The bus didn't return until after 10 p.m. Jeanne had retired, so the suspense was prolonged until I ran into Spur winner Frank Roderus, who informed me Jeanne had been suitably impressed with my manuscript, saying I had talent. I slept well that night.

The next day we met, and she told me the strengths of the novel and some areas where I could improve on it. The other thing she said was that she had seen the work of a lot of talented writers over the years, but those that didn't persevere didn't succeed over the long term. Perseverance trumped talent, she explained.

Two years later I was Spur chairman at the Sheridan, Wyoming, convention. As Harriet and I were seated at the head table that evening, our son and daughter sat at Jeanne's table. On the return trip to Lubbock the next day, Scott said Jeanne had announced at the table I would win some Spurs before I was through. I replied that I had always wanted to win "a Spur." Indignant at my response, Melissa said, "No, Dad, she said you would win SPURS!" Our family became close to Jeanne, visiting her twice in her Portal, Arizona, home and she stayed once with us in Lubbock.

Within a decade of the Sheridan convention, Jeanne's prediction came true as I was a six-time Spur finalist and two-time Spur recipient. Appropriately, I received my first finalist certificate from Jeanne, who was Spur chair at the 1990 San Angelo convention.

My first Spur came in Springdale, Arkansas, in 1993, for a *True West* article and my second at the 1997 Cheyenne convention for a Western published by HarperCollins. Other Spur recipients those years included, in 1993, Elmer Kelton, who first encouraged me to join WWA, and, in 1997, Stephen Ambrose, Loren D. Estleman, Metz, Frank Roderus and Richard S. Wheeler.

I couldn't have been prouder of my Spurs, though I have to admit I felt out of place among those writing giants. But it never would have been possible without Jeanne's support and faith, both directly and indirectly. I have on the wall of my office to this day the letter I received from Jeanne and framed after my second Spur was announced.

The opening and closing sentences of that missive read, "What a joy to congratulate you on your first Spur for a book, and such an excellent book .... So, blessings on you, Preston. You have your Spurs, and they were splendidly won!" With that letter just a few feet away from my computer when I write, she still inspires me to this day.

Over the years I've come to realize it wasn't the flamboyant personalities like J.T. Edson that were the quintessential WWA members but rather the quieter ones like Jeanne Williams, who exemplified the Western spirit by giving a helping hand to a fellow writer in need. Jeanne remains to me the personification of WWA, not only because of her willingness to help and encourage other writers, but also because of her pride in seeing them succeed.

That is a spirit that I am proud to say remains to this day in WWA.



*Then-WWA First Lady Harriet Lewis with Ormly Gumfudgin.*



*Melissa Lewis with her buddy and the world's only bazoooka player, Ormly Gumfudgin.*



*Ormly Gumfudgin in concert with capable assistant Melissa Lewis. Jim Bob Tinsley provides accompaniment in the background.*

# Roundup roundup

## Decades of news from WWA's magazine

By Johnny D. Boggs

During my first WWA convention – 1997 in Cheyenne, Wyoming – I interviewed Elmer Kelton for a feature article in *Cowboys & Indians* magazine, asked Loren D. Estleman to sign a novel for me and made many lifelong friends – but never imagined that I would be editing WWA's bimonthly *Roundup Magazine* during WWA's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Ever the curious journalist, I recently read through years of *Roundups* to see what has been going on at WWA since 1953. Here's a smidgen:



**May 1953:** “The other night an acquaintance remarked: ‘You boys who write Westerns must be cleaning up. You couldn’t ever have had it so good. Westerns on television and radio; Western movies by the dozen and twenty-five cent books by the hundreds.’

“And then he gave me one that came up from the floor. He said patronizingly, ‘People must really go for that crap.’” – *Harry Sinclair Drago*

**March 1959:** “An apology to the Western Writers of America is in order, and since nobody else seems about to make it, I will. The sin was not mine, however.

“A Hollywood Reporter review of the motion picture, ‘The Hanging Tree,’ says the story won a Spur Award; some of the advertising says the movie was made from ‘the prize novel by Dorothy M. Johnson.’

“This story did not win a Spur Award, and I never said it did, so I’m embarrassed. ‘Lost Sister,’ the first story in the book entitled ‘The Hanging Tree,’ did win that award, and I’m very proud of it. But it’s Hollywood’s idea, not mine, to give credit where credit is not due.” – *Dorothy M. Johnson*



**December 1962:** “The big thing – always the greatest to the professionals in this outfit, has been the knowledge it gave us of belonging, of knowing others were sharing the pangs and joys of daily living like hermits above the clatter of our keys between the postman’s visits.” – *Nelson C. Nye*

**May 1967:** “At times we may have lost sight of those original goals by crowding away professionalism with non-professional activities. But WWA is a social organization: we don’t need either a circus or a sobersided four-day business conference. What we seek is a balance.” – *Brian Garfield*

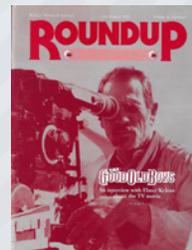


**June 1970:** “John Foreman, the producer of ‘Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,’ has sent me a cordial but corrective wire, arguing that in my review I probably overhuzzahed the writer, William Goldman, and under-bravoad the director, George Roy Hill.” – *Robert Vincent Wright*



**December 1975:** “WWA active member Louis L’Amour sailed past John Steinbeck, Emilie Loring and others to become the new No. 1, all-time, best-selling author at *Bantam* when his newest novel, *THE MAN FROM BROKEN HILLS*, was published in October.” – *Judy Alter*

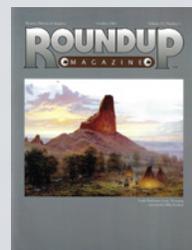
**November 1980:** “Two members took aim at *The Roundup*. They insisted I Xerox it as a means of saving money. That I flatly rejected, as it is my intent to improve *The Roundup*, not send it lurching back through time.” – *WWA president Leon C. Metz*



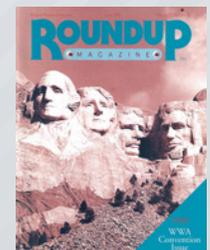
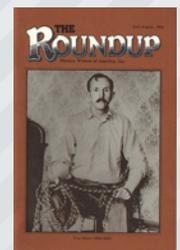
**July-August 1985:** “She listened for history’s heartbeat/On drums long westerly,/And heard the native wed the classic/On a field at Wounded Knee.” – *Harry W. Paige*, “To the Memory of Mari Sandoz”

**July-August 1995:** “Someday. In the not so distant future, we will find ourselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. No doubt, the West of the 1800s will continue to grab the imagination and inspire countless writers. But, there is a place for the 1990s.” – *Marilyn Irvin Holt*

**June 1999:** “We are all well aware that the type of book being written and published today is far different from that on the market a decade or two ago. But it is good to see mainstream America recognizing that western writers, write of *the West*, and no longer tell only mythical, stereotypical stories.” – *Candy Moulton*



**October 2003:** “For myself, I’m proud that I could add my small bit, bringing the legacy into being – and I know my colleagues of 1953 would want to join me in saying, ‘Thank you, WWA! You’ve made it worth the effort.’” – *D.B. Newton*



# Winning that first Spur 'I'm pretty sure I squealed like a 12-year-old'

By Micki Fuhrman

You always remember your first Spur award, that is.

Mine came about in June, when "You Oughta See Wyoming" won for 2022 Best Western Song. I hesitate to call it my "first" Spur Award because, well, it might be my *only*.

But what an honor! I'm running with the big dogs, as my dad used to say.

My Spur-winning experience is still fresh, but I reached out to a handful of members who have picked up multiple Spur plaques and they graciously shared their memories of winning No. 1.

James A. Crutchfield says he got a letter – *in the mail* – from Spur chair Ralph Cross. (Yes, that's how we used to communicate, he says.) He figured it was some sort of WWA business.

"I was quite shocked when I read that he was congratulating me for being awarded a [1991] Spur for short nonfiction" for "Marching with the Army of the West," published in *Blackpowder Annual*.

"I had been a WWA member since 1985 and I had never given

a thought that I would receive an honor from the organization for writing. Needless to say, I was humbled by such recognition."

In response to my e-mail, Loren D. Estleman, an Owen Wister Award honoree and five-time Spur-winner, said, "I'll try to answer [your questions] truthfully, but after all I am a writer of fiction."

He learned of his 1981 Best Historical Novel Spur win for *Aces and Eights* as he was headed to New York for the Mystery Writers of America Edgar awards banquet. He shared the news with his crime-writer tablemates and "they responded with reserved politeness. At that time, there wasn't a lot of crossover between genres, and mystery folk are suspicious by nature."

The Spur news came at an opportune time for Estleman. "I was living with my parents and had just quit my last newspaper job in order to write fiction full time. That decision became immediately less terrifying when I got the news. See, back then I connected honors with income. I had so much to learn."

Carol "C.K." Crigger's *The Woman Who Built a Bridge* was the 2019 Best Western Romance Novel winner. "It was a cold, snowy day and I almost didn't answer when the phone rang." Seeing Quackgrass Sally's name on caller ID, she took the call. "I'm pretty sure I squealed like a 12-year-old. I never, ever expected to win a Spur, especially in the romance category since I always say I don't have a romantic bone in my body. Sometimes I still can hardly believe it."

With a record nine Spurs and an Owen Wister Award, Johnny D. Boggs had to scroll way back to recall his first win for 2002 Best Short Fiction, "A Piano at Dead Man's Crossing," a heartrending story told from the point of view of a family's piano.

Boggs was a Spur judge that year for another category. Chair W.C.

Jameson called and "asked when he might expect my picks. I panicked; said I had mailed those in weeks ago.

"Then he laughed and said he was just messing with me, that I had won the Spur for my short story." That brought about "... a wild mood swing. From the panic of trying to find my Spur rankings to that what-did-he-just-say feeling to Oh, My God!"



Micki Fuhrman and her first Spur Award: Best Western Song for "You Oughta See Wyoming," 2022.

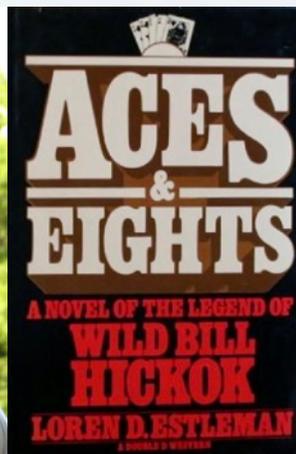
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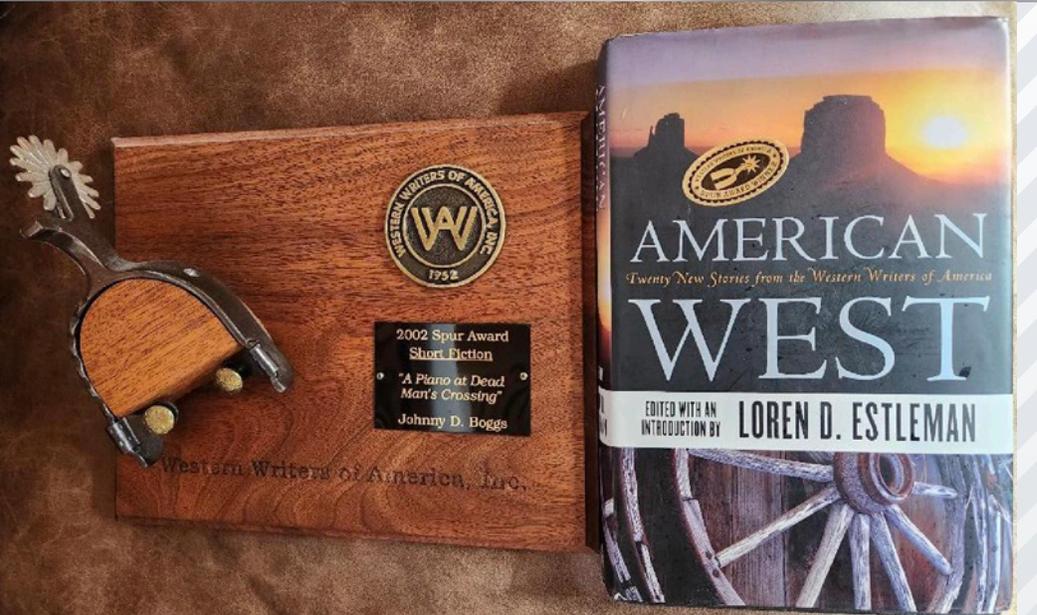
James A. Crutchfield, Best Short Nonfiction Article for "Marching with the Army of the West," 1991.



Nancy Plain, right, presents Carol Crigger the 2019 Spur for Best Western Romance Novel for *The Woman Who Built a Bridge*.



Loren D. Estleman, winner for Best Historical Novel for *Aces & Eights*, 1981.



*Nine-time Spur winner Johnny D. Boggs's first spur came in 2002 for the short story "A Piano at Dead Man's Crossing," published in American West: Twenty New Stories from the Western Writers of America.*

*Jim Jones performs his Spur-winning song "Texas is Burnin'" at the 2013 WWA convention.*

That short story taught Boggs a lesson. Max Evans had once told him, "Writers only have so many words in them ... before you start writing, make sure it's what you want to write."

"Winning the Spur opened doors for me," Boggs says. "I realized I could, and should, take chances. And that for book-length fiction, I didn't have to just write Western potboilers."

Robert "Dick" Vaughan had been penning Westerns for 37 years when, writing as K.C. McKenna, he won the 1994 Paperback Original Spur for *Survival*, a Donner Party tale.

"I was thrilled ... and though I had been nominated for other awards, this was the first time I had ever won anything." Vaughan has written more than 500 books during his career, under his name and multiple pseudonyms. He recently received the Will Rogers Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award.

When three-time Spur winner Jim Jones won the 2013 Best Western Song Spur Award for "Texas Is Burnin'" he says, "I'm pretty sure I was speechless, which, to those of you who know me, is inconceivable. When you win a Spur, you are in the company of greatness ... it takes your breath away.

"... the Spur gives you credibility and gravitas ... most importantly, it sets your own personal bar higher and you work harder."

Oh, and in spite of his three Spurs, Jones says, "I still wear the same hat size."

Without a doubt, a Spur Award from WWA carries a lot of weight, not only in the Western genre but within other literary circles as well. Kudos to all who have been honored and, to those of you who haven't scored that plaque, keep writing "what you want to write," and keep submitting your work. It just might be your year.



*Robert Vaughan, 1994 winner for Paperback Original for Survival (published under the pen name K.C. McKenna), with Vicki Evans.*



Other  
First Spur  
Award  
Winners

*Nancy Oswald, Best Western Juvenile Fiction for Edward Wynkoop: Soldier and Indian Agent, 2015.*



*Chris Enss presents James Wade his Spur for Best Western Historical Novel for All Things Left Wild, 2021.*



*Michael Punke, Historical Novel for Ridgeline, 2022.*



*Craig Johnson, Best Western Short Novel for Another Man's Moccasins, 2009.*  
All photographs from Roundup Magazine files



*Thadd Turner, Western Drama Script for Miracle at Sage Creek – a tie with Kirk Ellis, also a first-time Spur winner, for Into the West, 2006.*



*Sherry Monahan presents Clay Reynolds his Spur Award in 2012 for "The Deacon's Horse" for Best Short Fiction Story.*



*Loren D. Estleman and Medicine Pipe Bearer Award winner Jon Chandler for Best First Novel for The Spanish Peaks, 1999.*



*Lori Van Pelt, Best Short Fiction for "Pecker's Revenge," and Candy Moulton, Best Biography for Chief Joseph: Guardian of the People, 2006.*

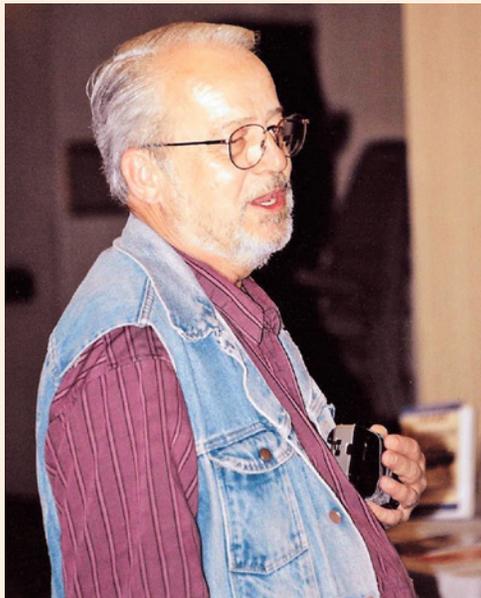


*John D. Nesbitt, Best Original Mass Market Paperback Novel for Trouble at the Redstone, with Dorchester Publishing editor Leah Hultenschmidt, 2009.*

# WWA Remembers

Since the early 1950s, WWA has welcomed a wide array of great writers and solid leaders who are no longer with us in the physical sense. We don't have room to remember them all, but we would like to recognize several who helped blaze this trail.

All photographs from *Roundup Magazine* files



**Dale L. Walker (1935-2005):** WWA president, 1992-1994; four-time Spur winner; 2000 Owen Wister Award recipient; Roundup editor, 1980-1985.



**Matt Braun (1932-2016):** Two-time Spur Award winner; 2004 Owen Wister Award recipient; author of *How to Write Western Novels*.



**Chet Cunningham (1928-2017):** Author of more than 300 novels, 2016 recipient of WWA lifetime membership; founder of the nonprofit San Diego Book Awards Association.



**Elmer Kelton (1926-2009):** Seven-time Spur Award winner; 1977 Saddleman Award honoree (forerunner of the Owen Wister Award); WWA president, 1962-1963; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**Will Bagley (1950-2021):** Three-time Spur Award winner; 2019 Owen Wister Award recipient and Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**James Ersfeld (1949-2011):** WWA assistant director, 2006-2011; namesake of WWA's James Ersfeld Memorial Symposium.



**Tony Hillerman (1925-2008):** Two-time Spur Award winner; 2008 Owen Wister Award recipient; New York Times bestselling author; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**Max Evans (1924-2020):** Two-time Spur Award winner; 1990 Saddleman recipient; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**David Dary (1934-2018):** Two-time Spur Award winner; 2002 Owen Wister Award recipient; WWA president, 1988-1990; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**Kathryn Swarthout (1919-2015):** 2010 Branding Iron Award recipient; helped establish the Swarthout Writing Awards for young writers at Arizona State University.



**Cotton Smith (1939-2015):** Spur Award winner; WWA president, 2006-2008; 2011 Branding Iron recipient.



**Robert M. Utley (1929-2022):** Four-time Spur Award winner; 1994 Owen Wister Award recipient; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**Leon C. Metz (1930-2020):** Spur Award winner; WWA president, 1980-1981; 1985 Saddleman Award recipient; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**Dusty Richards (1937-2018):** Three-time Spur Award winner; WWA president, 2012-2014; and **Robert J. Conley (1940-2014):** two-time Spur winner; WWA president, 2010-2012; 2014 Owen Wister Award recipient; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



**Andrew J. Fenady (1928-2020):** Screenwriter, producer, songwriter, novelist; 2006 Owen Wister Award recipient; 2015 Western Writers Hall of Fame inductee.



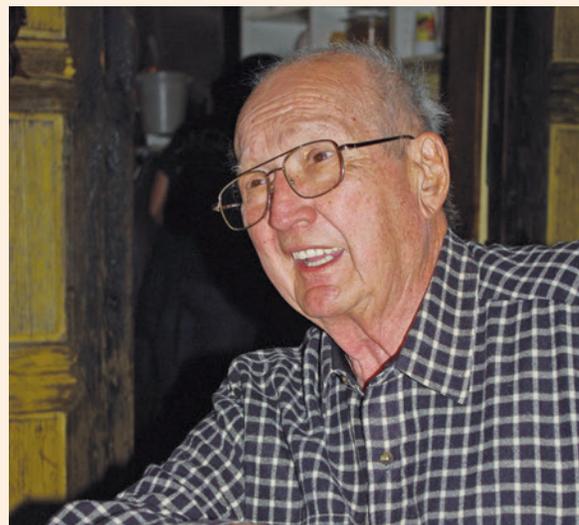
**D.L. "Donnie" Birchfield (1948-2012):** Spur Award winner; Roundup Magazine copy editor.



**Dwight Bennett "D.B." Newton (1916-2013):** Founding member of WWA; secretary-treasurer, 1952-1958, 1967-1971; author of more than 70 novels; screenwriter, short-story writer and consultant for many TV Western series.



**Natlee Kenoyer (1907-2012):** Spur Award winner; WWA president, 1982-1983; WWA member, 1962-2012.



**Emil Franzi (1939-2017):** Host of Tucson, Arizona-based radio program Voices of the West, often showcasing WWA members; 2014 recipient of WWA's Lariat Award.