

TOWA

The Official Publication of the **Texas Outdoor Writers Association**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Blast from the Past: Sage Advice from 2000 Still Rings True Today

The following is a reprint of a TOWA Newsletter column by then President Steve Lightfoot that appeared in the August 2000 edition and still provides solid words of wisdom to our members today. In addition to his service with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Lightfoot has returned to magazine editing as senior editor of Texas Sporting Journal.

This President's Report is being republished as an incentive for our members to reflect upon their efforts in the field of outdoor journalism and renew their commitment to covering, promoting and enjoying the great outdoor resources available in the Lone Star State.



TOWA Past President Steve Lightfoot

I used to get warm and tingly about the first freelance article I sold to a national publication. The gratification from seeing my by-line, my words and my photography — few accomplishments before or since seemed to compare.

Then I came across a copy of that article recently while cleaning out a filing cabinet. After rereading the article, I wondered how in the world an editor at a big-time magazine ever let it see the light of day. Maybe that's why that publication has been out of business for years, but I doubt it. In retrospect, perhaps my true gratification came from the fat paycheck I got for those 2,000 words and handful of slides; more money than I made in two weeks at the newspaper back then.

Several years after I sold that first piece, I became an outdoor magazine editor. Then I understood how a manuscript I thought was fertilizer could

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CALENDAR



Sept. 17-18 – Karnes County Lonesome Dove Fest, the largest family-oriented celebration of the opening of the Texas South Zone dove season, will be held on the grounds of the Karnes County Youth Show Barn in Karnes City. Details available at www.lonesomedovefest.com.

Sept. 26 – TOWA board meeting will be held electronically to fine-tune details of the 2011 conference. Details and meeting agenda are available from Board Chairman John Goodspeed at john@johngoodspeed.com.

Oct. 22 – Operation Game Thief Alamo Area Sporting Clays Shooting Event from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the San Antonio Gun Club in Olmos Park. For more information, call (512) 389-4381 or visit www.ogttx.com.

Feb. 24-26, 2011 – The 53rd annual TOWA conference will be held at Port Aransas with the Port Royal Ocean Resort & Conference Center serving as the host hotel. Hotel information is available at <http://port-royal.com>.

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The TOWA Newsletter is proudly sponsored by Gulf States Toyota. For information, go to www.buyatoyota.com.



TEXAS OUTDOOR NEWS

Free Texas State Parks Guide Available from TP&W Website

AUSTIN – AUTUMN IN TEXAS MEANS EXTRA ELBOW ROOM IN PARK campgrounds and cooler temperatures more conducive to a variety of outdoor activities. And, to help you plan a fall excursion to your favorite park, you can now pick up or download online the new, 112-page Texas State Park Guide.

The digest-size, seventh edition of the Texas State Park Guide puts at your fingertips everything you and your family need to know about more than 90 state parks and special park programs, such as free fishing, Texas Outdoor Family and the Geocache Challenge, designed to make it easier and more fun than ever to enjoy the outdoors. The guide can be viewed online in both English and Spanish.

“We hope the new guide will serve as your compass pointing the way to your next adventure in one of Texas’ great state parks, where we believe ‘life is better,’” said Walt Dabney, director of state parks for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The new booklet provides a broad overview of Texas’ 93 state parks, state historic sites and state natural areas found throughout the state -- from mile-high mountains, canyons and pine forests to Hill Country river country and Gulf Coast beaches. Readers can learn not only about the various places to go, but also about what necessities to bring and what critters you might spy once you reach your destination.

As in past state park guides, the new edition notes dozens of park sites located near Texas’ major metropolitan areas that are perfect for a relaxing day trip or economical weekend getaway. The “Day Tripper” chapter spotlights parks within a two-hour drive of Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.

Did you know, for instance, that you could leave the DFW metroplex by mid-morning and have your campsite set up at Ray Roberts Lake State Park and be skiing across the 30,000-acre reservoir by lunchtime?

For those who prefer not to pitch a tent, the guide points out alternative accommodations found in many state parks, ranging from screened shelters and group bunkhouses to rustic cabins and quality lodges.

Looking for more exotic camping experience? Book a night or two in one of the unusual canvas yurts found at Abilene State Park. Each yurt comes with a double/single bunk bed with mattresses, fold-out sofa, night stand and microwave.

For convenience, the park guide is broken down into the state’s seven tourism regions that are easily located by flipping to the color-coded, centerfold Texas State Parks map. A brief snapshot of the outstanding features found at each park within each region provides photos and pertinent information about each site, including its GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates for the tech-savvy adventurer.

The Facilities & Activities Index at the back of the book provides a greater breakdown of what each site offers, including the types of campsites and trails to be found there. Book a campsite online or make a camping reservation by calling (512) 389-8900.

Free copies of the Texas State Park Guide, sponsored by Toyota, can be picked up at any of the 93 state parks, TPWD law enforcement offices, Sea Center Texas, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, most Texas Department of Transportation travel information centers, and select chambers of commerce and convention and visitors bureaus throughout Texas.

The web address for the guide is www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/parkguide.

— Rob McCorkle

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

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reach print. There’s a lot of bad writing and photography out there and very few good editors to patch things up. After two years, escalating hair loss and several cases of blue pencils trying to resurrect poor writing, I moved on. Magazine editors are a masochistic breed to which I’m happy to say I do not belong. I admire their patience, envy their mastery of syntax and applaud their dedication to detail, but fear they may be fighting a losing cause. In my humble opinion, the art and science of communicating is in a sad state. I include myself among the guilty who have contributed. As a society, trained journalists have become complacent and those among us who didn’t receive formal instruction in communications have few standards by which to compare.

Name one active writer who carries such national awe that you are inspired by their work. There are those who excel at their craft, granted, but are they icons? Would you put them on the same list as Grancel Fitz, Archibald Rutledge, Russell Annabel, Nash Buckingham, Lee Wulff, L.A. Wilke and Jack O’Connor?

If you do not recognize any of the above, I suggest you spend an afternoon in a library. If these names ring a bell, go and do the same. Emulate good writing. Spend time fine-tuning your craft. Consider every article a work in progress right up until the time you hit the send key or lick the envelope. Never submit a first draft. Find good editors who don’t mind pointing out mistakes and learn from them.

The money for my first article is gone, but the printed copy and my name are still out there. I wish I could change the lead.

— Steve Lightfoot

2011 TOWA CONFERENCE UPDATE

Port Aransas Comes to the Rescue!

*By Jonette Childs
Site Selection Committee Chairwoman*

Without warning, all the preparations and planning for our annual conference set for Feb. 24-26, 2011, at Lake Jackson have evaporated like a tailing redfish spooked by a noisy wade fisherman.

The news that scheduling problems with our accommodations in Lake Jackson hit hard and fast – completely out of the blue. There were several personnel changes over the period of our negotiations with the Swiss Cherotel Hotel Lake Jackson, which was perfect for our needs on our last visit in 2003; and the Lake Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau did their best to resolve the issues, but in the end, we just could not overcome the conflict.

Fortunately, the Port Royal Ocean Resort and Conference Center in Port Aransas, where we held the conference in 2009, jumped at the opportunity to host us again. We were very lucky this late in the game to find a new location with such perfect facilities. The staff is virtually the same group of folks who were so instrumental in making our last visit there so pleasant and successful.

I have been assured that the room rates will be the same as they were for our last conference at Port Royal and I think there can be little argument that the food and accommodations were some of the best we have experienced at our annual event.

Just like in 2009, our conference will take place at the same time as the Port Aransas Whooping Crane festival. This event provided entertaining side trips for our members and their guests, plus offered some story angles for those members making the conference a working vacation.

In making the decision to switch the conference location to Port Aransas, the TOWA board members noted that the 2009 event was one of our best gatherings and we are very pleased with all that Port Royal and the Port Aransas area has to offer our group. Visit the hotel’s website at www.port-royal.com for more information about the accommodations and check out the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce website, www.portaransas.org for a wealth of information about the area.

We would like all of our members to plan to enjoy the 2011 TOWA Conference, which will stay on the same date of Feb. 24-26. Details about hotel reservations and possible side trips before, during and after the conference will be featured in the October TOWA newsletter.



Officer Down!

By John Jefferson

That's the call on the police radio that nobody wants to hear. It means an officer has been wounded. Perhaps critically. Perhaps fatally.

That call crackled across the airwaves during the early morning hours of March 17, 2007. Justin Hurst had been a model game warden — easy going, no arrogance. His superiors and his contemporaries alike respected him. He even became friends with some of the suspects he brought to court. He was a degreed wildlife biologist who became a game warden so he could make a difference. It was his 34th birthday.

Scott Blackburn was a good friend and classmate of Hurst's at the Texas Game Warden Training Academy in Austin. They both later worked Wharton County. Blackburn was sitting in the dark on the Lissie Prairie near Wharton that night when a shot rang out. He saw headlights coming toward him and turned on his red and blues. The oncoming vehicle slowed as if it were going to stop, then accelerated, slinging oyster shell from the rice field roadbed. The chase was on.

It lasted over an hour. Blackburn radioed that a suspect was fleeing arrest. Several deputy sheriffs, a constable and two Texas Highway Patrol units joined in the pursuit. All had their flashing lights on. Justin Hurst had been on duty in another part of the county when he heard the call for back-up. He was one of the last ones to catch up with the posse.

The suspect led them up and down rice

field back roads and Highway 90-A, accelerating there to speeds over a hundred miles an hour at times.

Spike strips were laid by the Highway Patrol to deflate the suspect's tires. It worked. The end was nearing. As one of the Highway Patrol units bounced across the railroad tracks and saw the suspect's truck slow down and drive into a long, circular driveway by a cemetery, he told his partner to unsnap his holster strap. A long chase was about to turn into a longer night.

The Lissie Cemetery Shootout

The suspect's tires were deflating. He pulled to a stop, angled to the right side of the driveway so this driver's side door was away from the headlights following him. The officers fanned out in an arc with their lights on him. He opened his door and immediately came out firing a .357 Sig caliber Glock semi-automatic pistol.

The stunned officers took what cover they could in their vehicles. When the suspect emptied his pistol, he reached back into his pickup and came out strafing with a semi-automatic AK-47 rifle. It was a demonic barrage directed at eight armed but temporarily helpless lawmen. Testimony later told of the terror to those under the gun. But one man reacted to do something about it. Leaving the only cover there was around that prairie cemetery — his truck — Justin Hurst moved in the dark toward the chain link fence around

the cemetery, totally unprotected and in the open, to flank the shooter and free the other officers from the assault.

Hurst got off several shots from his AR-15 rifle, but the muzzle flash gave away his position. It became a gun battle between the suspect and him. His rounds struck the suspect three times in fleshy parts of his body. Several of the suspect's shots tore through the chain link fence behind Hurst. One round entered Hurst's upper left arm as he aimed the rifle. The bullet followed his arm into the body, through both lungs and clipped his aorta.

As the suspect broke toward a tree line at the end of the cemetery with both guns and extra clips, Wharton County Deputy Sheriff Roddy Rodriguez took him down with one shot from a .45 caliber Glock, shattering his lower leg at the ankle.

Warden Scott Blackburn went to Hurst and administered CPR until paramedics arrived. The downed warden was airlifted to Houston Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

He is survived by a grieving widow, an infant son who barely knew him, two equally saddened parents and an older brother... and a cadre of fellow wardens and other lawmen. The ones there at the Lissie Cemetery that night will carry the scars the rest of their lives.

The man who shot Justin Hurst has been tried for capital murder of a peace officer, convicted and given a death sentence. An automatic appeal is pending.

Although each one is a tragedy, fortunately, warden deaths are fairly uncommon. There is no complete single-source list of warden deaths in the United States, and not much literature on the subject. By contacting a number of state conservation law enforcement departments directly and pouring over accounts on the "Officer Down Memorial Pages," research for this article identified 269 state warden deaths plus ten more among the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other federal agencies, for a total of 279. Some date back into the 1800s.

It is encouraging to note that law enforcement deaths from all agencies — police, sheriff's departments, game officers and others — declined in 2008 from 2007, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Fund. Deaths from firearms in 2008 reached a 50-year low. Some feel better training and better equipment — like protective vests and tasers — may be a factor. Officers are being taught Force Options training to better understand when to react in which manner. Tasers may also be encouraging officers to employ them sooner than they might use deadly force.

Throughout history, firearms have been the leading threat to wardens. Most poachers encountered by wardens are armed. Thankfully, being armed in itself doesn't mean someone — even one about to get a citation — will fire on a warden. But some do.

Causes of deaths listed in descending order are: gunfire (98), auto accidents (44), drownings (38), aircraft accidents (29), miscellaneous/unknown (21), heart attacks (18), illness (7), assaults (6), weather (5), vehicle pursuit (4), vehicular assault (4), motor cycle accidents (3) and boating accidents (2).

"Miscellaneous/Unknown" includes those where no accurate cause of death was reported.

Where and why did these deaths occur? Good question. One might guess that the states with the highest populations or the most remote territory would lead the list. That works in some cases; not in others. Deaths occurred from coast to coast and from border-to-border. The states with the most deaths, again, in descending order are: Minnesota (19), Texas (18), California (17), Maine (14), Florida (14), Wisconsin (13), Illinois (12), Washington (11), and Michigan (10). Below ten, the numbers drop off.

Minnesota led primarily by having deaths

in the most categories — eight. Texas, California and Maine followed with seven, each. About the only common denominator among the leaders in this dubious league is that all have large amounts of water to patrol, providing opportunity for additional deaths through drownings. Maine, although having the lowest human population among the leaders, had the second highest number of drownings and also had some unusual situations. Few states have log drives on their streams, and one warden's canoe capsized there when it struck a log in the spring of 1933. Illegal Canadian beaver trappers are also somewhat unique to Maine, as is being killed while blowing up beaver dams. Each caused deaths.

Some cases began with gunfire. Several wardens were either shot in their vehicles as they drove up, or as they were getting out. One involved an officer whose wife was riding with him. But not all cases were shoot-outs from the get-go. That's disturbing. In a number of them, the wardens seemed to have deemed the situation under control after the initial encounter only to have it go bad after letting their guard down. Wyoming agent, John Buxton, encountered two men hunting after the season was over. He confiscated their rifle and walked away to put it in his truck. One of the men called to him and as he turned, the man shot and killed him with a pistol he had concealed in his clothes.

Following gunfire, the next highest number of casualties came from vehicle accidents. Many of these were cases where wardens were on the way to or from investigating a suspected game and fish violation. But quite a few were situations where an officer was patrolling and was in an accident just because he was driving on a public roadway. Information is sketchy, but at least one accident involved alcohol on the part of the other driver.

If auto accidents are a major cause of wardens' deaths, it would seem that states with hazardous road conditions — especially during hunting seasons — would dominate. Statistics from Colorado dispute this. With only two reported warden deaths and many miles of treacherous roads, it doesn't support the premise. Adding the fact that many drivers on these roads are tourists or hunters from out-of-state and unaccustomed to that kind of perilous driving, drinking some Colorado Cool Aid, and it looks like even more of an anomaly.

It would also seem that highly populated states would have the most auto accidents due to the sheer number of drivers on the roads. However, Illinois, with eight, doubled the number of warden auto deaths in Texas and the other larger populated states.

The list is surprisingly devoid of tales of grizzlies attacking wardens, Louisiana or Florida conservation officers being carried off by gators to feed the family or even six-foot long diamondbacks disabling wardens in the brush near the border. Nor was there even one mention of a chupacabra encounter. Officer Michael Lee Staples, however, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Law Enforcement team was killed in Minnesota when another vehicle struck a deer, propelling it into the air and through the officer's windshield.

Most of this article is concerned with warden deaths. Records of mere assaults not leading to death were even harder to acquire than those of fatal incidents. Some interesting accounts were furnished, though, by Kevin Dodd, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement in Alabama.

One "lucky to be alive" warden was Alabama Wildlife Conservation Officer Dan Ward, who was shot in the back by a hunter in 1948 while checking an illegally baited field, shot at several times by a hunter in 1949 and shot in the neck by an intoxicated dove hunter in 1952. Officer Ward was not sure whether his wounds were accidental or on purpose. Another Alabama officer, J.D. Turner, was checking a hunter's shotgun on posted land when the hunter drew a pistol and shot at Turner six times without hitting him. Turner returned fire, killing the shooter. An illegal raccoon hunter raised his shotgun at Officer Steve Pepper and pulled the trigger in 1972, but it just snapped, having not been re-loaded after its last shot. A number of wardens have been fired at, but missed.

California has not had a warden death since 1984, but has had five wardens involved in shootings since 2005 — all drug-related. Nowadays, the term Marijuana and Meth Marshalls may be replacing Possum Cops as a slang word for game wardens. Drug cases seem to be the inevitable consequence of patrolling the backwoods where hunters and fishermen were once the ones most likely to be encountered. Most proprietors of these new enterprises carry guns, and they are often fully automatic.

Jefferson Details Texas Game Warden Shooting in 2010 EIC Category 15 Contest Winner

Veteran TOWA Member and Past President John Jefferson stepped away from his camera just long enough to compose this award-winning entry in the 2010 Excellence in Craft competition, winning Category 15: Magazine Feature Over 25,000.

While he is well-known for his photography skills, Jefferson excelled in writing with this piece called "Officer Down" that was published in the September 2009 edition of *Outdoor Life Magazine*. The judges said: "John Jefferson gets the nod for first place with his moving and informative article on how the murder of a Texas game warden illustrates how protecting our woods and waterways is becoming one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States. For good measure, he throws in plenty of statistics to prove the point of his article. Excellent."

The award-winning piece is being offered to our members as an example of some of our best works of the past year and to give everyone an incentive to submit their most creative achievements in the 2011 contest. Winners will be honored during our annual awards banquet, which will be held Feb. 26, 2011, at Port Aransas.

And for a small state that had no actual warden deaths, New Hampshire had probably the most sensational near miss. The warden was spared only because the round struck his windshield first, then hit his badge at an angle ... and was deflected away. Others that day weren't so lucky. Two Vermont officers, a judge and a newspaper editor were killed by the same gunman.

One of the most notorious warden murders involved a reclusive trapper — often called a “mountain man” — named Claude Dallas. He was investigated by Idaho wardens William Pogue and Wilson Conley Elms for numerous poaching violations in 1981. Elms entered Dallas’ tent and found poached bobcats. Outside, Dallas shot Pogue and when Elms exited the tent, he shot him, too, though Elms was unarmed. Dallas then put a bullet in each of their heads, execution style, and hid their bodies. He then skipped out and was a highly sought fugitive in the back country for over a year. He was finally caught, tried and convicted of manslaughter and using a gun to commit a crime, and sentenced to prison. After escaping in 1986, he was on the lam in the wilds for about another year. He was ultimately caught and returned

to prison. He was pardoned in 2005 for good behavior. He has been glamorized in books, a TV movie and song as a folk hero who stood up against a government whose laws he didn't believe applied to him.

There are no songs, no books, no movies about a role model of a young man who helped tutor other cadets in game warden academy — a man who became a warden so he could educate people about what their crime was doing to wildlife. No books are written about a man who left the safety of his own vehicle to go out in the open to flank a mad man who had law men penned down under rifle fire. One Book, however, speaks of the love it takes to give up life for others. That Justin Hurst did that is not in dispute among the other lawmen there at the Lissie Cemetery in the dark that early Saturday morning. This young warden, husband and father was cut down by a loser who later claimed as a defense in court that he was trying to commit suicide by cop, an insidious defense in itself. At least nobody has tried to make a folk hero out of him.

Over a thousand people attended Justin Hurst's funeral in the little town of El Campo, Texas, population 10,000. Many were game

wardens. Even cadets who were in the academy, studying to be the kind of man Justin Hurst was, respectfully lined the street as the family drove to the church. The sanctuary, the fellowship hall and another auditorium of the church were packed. People stood on the lawn and listened over loudspeakers. The attendees were asked to gather outside after the service. A 21-gun salute was fired by a game warden honor guard. Bagpipes played “Amazing Grace,” The flag that draped the casket was folded in military manner and presented to Hurst's widow, Amanda, by Col. Peter Flores. As a hush fell over that part of El Campo that morning, the voice of El Campo police dispatcher, Donna Hubenak, crackled over the church's loud speakers and game warden radios in vehicles parked nearby.

“El Campo PD to 4113. (pause)
El Campo PD to 4113. (pause)
Attention all units: clear all radio traffic; attempting to make contact with 4113.
El Campo PD to 4113... (a final pause)
Attention all units: on March 17, 2007 @ 1:00 AM, Wharton County Texas Game Warden Justin Hurst, 4113, answered his last call. He will be off duty ending his tour of duty.”

NATIONAL OUTDOOR NEWS

Federal Scientists Seek Public Assistance in Reporting Banded Birds

HOUMA, LA – With large numbers of birds being rescued, treated and relocated in the Gulf States as a result of the BP oil spill, people seeing banded birds are asked to report sightings.

As part of this unprecedented unified response to the BP oil spill, the public is being asked to help report oiled wildlife. A large percentage of captured birds are being successfully treated and released back into the wild. These birds are being fitted with leg bands that provide identifying information to assist Federal scientists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey and other organizations in studying these birds after release.

Scientific information being collected from this oil spill will expand the scope of knowledge that bird researchers and other scientists will have in the future to help ensure the health of migratory birds. Among other information, scientists will learn the extent to which released birds return to their original habitat.

Birds are released only after wildlife specialists determine they are sufficiently prepared and exhibit natural behavior including waterproofing, self-feeding, normal blood values, and are free of injuries or disease. They are released in appropriate habitats where human disturbance is minimal. While the birds are often released in the Gulf area, they are released as far as possible from areas affected by the BP oil spill. Choosing release sites is complicated; biologists want

to make sure that birds are released into the same populations from which they came, but with as little risk of getting re-exposed to oil as possible.

All birds released from rehabilitation are banded for identification purposes. Ultimately, scientists use information gleaned from reports of banded birds to help answer a host of questions.

Among those questions are: How long do formerly oiled birds survive? Where do the birds travel? Do immature birds select locations different than breeding-age adults? Do captured birds return to the area where they were captured? Do rehabilitated birds breed in future nesting seasons — and where?

Birds from the BP oil spill are banded with metal federal leg bands with a unique ID number. In addition, brown pelicans also receive a large color leg band. Three colors of leg bands are being used:

- Orange bands with no identification numbers or letters.
- Red bands with identifying numbers and letters.
- Pink bands with identifying numbers and letters.

People who see the birds are asked to report sightings to the National Bird Banding Lab online: <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/default.htm>. Reporting the band number and the bird's location will help biologists understand the movements and survival of the birds after their release.

TOWA Member Attends First Annual OWAA Goldenrod Writing Workshop

By Mike Price

The faculty and students of Goldenrod Writing Workshop sat entranced as Ted Gup read from his newest book, *A Secret Gift*. Gup's words transported us to a church on Christmas Eve, 1934 in Canton, OH, and went on to set the scene for the story of how his grandfather anonymously helped people during the Great Depression. I vowed to buy the book when it comes out on Oct. 28.

The reading also set the scene for a week of writing, listening to one another read their writing, critiquing and getting a wealth of helpful information from the faculty and our peers.

Gup was a member of the faculty of the first Goldenrod Writing Workshop sponsored by the Outdoor Writers Association of America. He is chairman of the Journalism Department at Emerson College in Boston, MA, has been an investigative reporter for the *Washington Post* and *Time* magazine, and wrote a bestselling book, *Book of Honor*.

The other three instructors were: Lisa Densmore from Hanover, NH, a book and magazine writer, television producer, photographer, and Emmy-award winner, Alan Liere from Spokane, WA, a humorist and newspaper columnist who had just finished his fourth book, and Holly Endersby from Pollock, ID, a writer of equestrian, wine, and children's books. Guest speakers were outdoor humor writer, Pat McManus and Bill Schneider, editor, writer, and founder of Falcon Publishing.

Goldenrod Workshop was held at the University of Montana in Missoula. From two to four students were assigned to each instructor. Each morning we met at the School of Journalism building. My instructor was Ted Gup, and my fellow students were: Anne Ake, editor and young adult book author from Panama City, FL, Greg Patterson, editor of *Farm Bureau Magazine* in Arkansas, and Carol Raitt, a writer for the zoo in Seattle, WA.

Gup repeated the phrase, “what's it all about, what's it all about” many times in an effort to give depth and meaning to our writing. For example when we read and discussed Rick Bragg's piece published in *The New York Times* about Oseola McCarty, an 87-year-old African American cleaning lady who gave \$150,000 to a scholarship fund for black students at the University of Southern Mississippi, Gup pointed out examples of showing rather than telling, weaving facts into storytelling, and detail in service to theme.

Each day we were given a 750-word writing assignment. The assignments and the high quality writing of my fellow students created a challenging atmosphere. The following day Gup and the each student critiqued the work. Everyone delivered criticism with kind words and received it with appreciation.

From 1 to 4 p.m. there were presentations by OWAA staff and guest speakers. Pat McManus told his Deer on a Bicycle story and talked about humor writing. Bill Schneider went into how the publishing business is changing because of the digital revolution.

The faculty and students slept at Craig Hall dormitory and ate at Food Zoo cafeteria, on the university campus. Food, lodging for six nights, and the workshop cost \$995.00. The Clark Fork River, shops, restaurants, and bars were a 15-minute walk from the dorm.

Three rivers meet in Missoula, and mountains and National Forest Lands are close by. On Wednesday afternoon we took a break. Some people visited an old mining town, some went tubing; and I went fly fishing on the Blackfoot River with writers Greg Patterson and Ben Moyer. Clear water moved so swiftly that wading was nearly dangerous. Tubers exchanged greetings, and eagles observed from above while six to twelve-inch rainbow trout hit our prince nymph flies.

Joel Vance from OWAA said in a post Goldenrod e-mail, “We're going to do Goldenrod again and again in years to come and we would sure like to see all of you again.” My post workshop comment to OWAA was, “I am very grateful to the staff and faculty of OWAA for organizing and conducting Goldenrod Writing Workshop. My interactions with staff and fellow students left me rich with writing fodder.”

For more information go to <http://www.owaa.org/goldenrod-writing-workshop>.



Ted Gup, Greg Patterson, Carol Raitt, Anne Ake, and Mike Price at the Goldenrod Workshop.

Three TOWA Members Honored at Annual POMA Conference

Three TOWA members were honored by the Professional Outdoor Media Association at the organization's annual conference held Aug. 12 in La Porte, Indiana.

TOWA Board Member Kendal Hemphill and former TOWA President John Jefferson each received POMA Pinnacle Awards for their published works, symbolizing the highest achievement in their fields.

In addition, Vickie Gardner, a supporting member of both TOWA and POMA, received the Betty Lou Fegley award for service to POMA above and beyond the call of duty.

Hemphill's column took first place in the Newspaper/Web Division and appeared in several Central Texas

newspapers and various websites. He was also interviewed on NRA Radio about the article.

The winning entry was a humorous piece (his specialty) based upon his version of Jay Leno's "Jaywalking" segment, during which Kendal interviewed people at a mall in San Antonio about their knowledge of hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits; and reported their inane and uninformed answers.

Jefferson's article appeared in the Sept. 2009 issue of Outdoor Life Magazine and won in the Magazine Division. It was a tribute to fallen Texas Game Warden Justin Hurst, who left a position of relative safety



John Jefferson and Kendal Hemphill share a celebratory moment at the 2010 Annual POMA Conference.

in the dark behind his truck and moved into unprotected territory to flank a poacher who had seven other lawmen pinned down with a semi-automatic version of an AK-47.

Hurst got off several rounds and wounded the poacher before the flash from his weapon gave away his position. He was hit one time and died in the senseless gun battle that began over a minor game law violation. The article also reported and categorized all other U.S. game warden deaths in the line of duty and concluded with the touching tributes to Hurst at his funeral in the small Texas town of El Campo.

The Pinnacle Awards consisted of handsome, four-tiered slate replicas of the majestic mountains near Telluride, CO, plus cash prizes of \$800, each. Mossy Oak, one of POMA's most dedicated supporters, sponsored the awards.

Vickie Gardner, an affable supporting member, was awarded the prestigious Betty Lou Fegley Emerald Cornerstone Award for her exceptional and tireless volunteer service to the organization.



TOWA Supporting Member Vickie Gardner, Winner of the Betty Lou Fegley Emerald Cornerstone Award.

"No one need ask Vickie for help ... she offers assistance before there's a chance to ask," said POMA Executive Director Laurie Lee Dovey. "Most amazing is Vickie's attitude — always positive — always a smile. She lifts us continuously. She's a beacon of energy, the power of positive thinking and caring."