



Bess Whitehead Scott

SCHOLARSHIP FUND NEWS

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Gillis and Kilby Win 2003 Scholarships

by Felton West

The Bess Whitehead Scott Scholarship Committee of the Writers' League of Texas has awarded \$1,000 journalism scholarships to two Texas writers. One is a budding journalist in a college journalism program and the other an accomplished writer and teacher now studying journalism.

The Writers' League gives the scholarships annually in honor of the late Bess Whitehead Scott, a pioneer Texas journalist and teacher. One scholarship is for a college journalism student, the other for a person 40 or older who desires to pursue studies in journalism or other writing.

This year's Scott Scholarship for an undergraduate was awarded to **Shekeira Gillis** of Dallas, a senior at the University of North Texas at Denton. She is the daughter of Katrina Gillis of Dallas.

In addition to working part-time in a retailing job to finance her education, Miss Gillis is a writer for the *North Texas Daily*, the university newspaper. She aspires to work for a newspaper after graduation and has the long-range goal of starting a magazine for young African-American women.

This year's Scott Scholarship for Older Adults was awarded to **Dr. Jan Kilby** of San Antonio, a part-time writing instructor in the English Department at San Antonio College. She is also a freelance writer for the *San Antonio Express-News* and four other newspapers in the San Antonio area and for the Catholic News Service in Washington, D.C. She is also a writing consultant for authors and businesses.



Dr Kilby, 54, has a doctor of philosophy degree in English Education from the University of Texas at Austin, a master of arts degree in English from Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) at San Marcos,



and a bachelor's degree in English and French from St. Mary's University at San Antonio. She has been a writing teacher and author in several fields for many years, but recently developed the urge to take undergraduate journalism courses and pursue journalistic writing. The Scott Scholarship for Older Adults is helping her toward that goal.

BWS Scholarship Info Now on WLT Website

Finally, we are on the Internet! Guidelines for the two \$1,000 BWS scholarships, application forms, a short biography of Bess Whitehead Scott, a news release naming the 2003 winners and this newsletter are now available at the Writers' League of Texas website: www.writersleague.org. Go to the WLT home page (center, scroll down a few lines) and click on the line that begins "Bess Whitehead Scott."

Please give us your feedback on what else should be offered on the website. BWS Committee member Vera Preston-Jaeger is coordinating this effort. Reach her at 512/581-7451 or vp Preston@Austin.rr.com.

Bits of Bess

by Bess Whitehead Scott

This is Part 2 of a story which we began in last year's newsletter (Vol. 9 No. 1, December 2002). Headlined "The Visit of a Texas Girl With Mary Pickford, Doug Fairbanks, Charley Chaplin and Julian Eltinge," the story originally appeared on page 26 of the October 7, 1917, Sunday edition of the Houston Daily Post. The story so far: As "press agent" for the Hulsey Theatres in Texas, Bess visits the Paramount lot in Hollywood. Searching for Doug Fairbanks, she happens upon Wallace Reid, who helps her find Fairbanks. Through the dust, she sees Fairbanks galloping towards her in a scene from a picture in which he plays "Fancy Jim" Sherwood, a Wyoming cowboy. Reid introduces her to Fairbanks. Now read on . . .

Mr. Fairbanks' eyes—yes, girls, I'm coming to it—are dark blue gray, honest, twinkling, friendly eyes; his hair is a very dark brown. I do not need to speak of his trim athletic figure, of his jolly mouth and all round good humored boyishness. It sums it all up just to say that the Fairbanks of real life is exactly the Fairbanks of the screen—and he is never still a second! Not much has been written of Mrs. Fairbanks, but volumes could. She also is merry eyed and gives an impression of quiet strength. It is violating no confidence to tell that she is her husband's business manager, and one of his best press agents. Young Douglas Jr., 7, is a sturdy little replica of his famous daddy whom he worships and imitates and knows as the best pal on earth.

"Have you seen Miss Pickford?" Fairbanks asked me suddenly.

I had not been so fortunate.

"Well, you must," he assured me, "she's a little queen. Hunt me up on the Red Cross band concert at Hollywood park where Charlie Chaplin and some more of us will do stunts tomorrow night and we'll find her. All movieland and his dog will be there."

Do you think I went to the band concert?

I've never but twice seen so many people gathered at one place as were at Hollywood park the evening of the famous Red Cross band concert. Once was at a Bill Sunday meeting; the other time was about a week after this concert when "Little Mary" spoke from the stage of Clune's auditorium.

Mr. Fairbanks was right; all movieland was there. And with them was a great big part of the city of Los Angeles. Hollywood park is more beautiful than I can describe, and every inch of the great grassy lawn was crowded that evening. I was there early, for I was determined to find Mr. Fairbanks and accept his invitation to meet "America's Sweetheart."

But I couldn't find Mr. Fairbanks. Nobody knew where he was, and many people, old and young, were already anxiously asking: "Why doesn't the band play anyway?" asked some one impatiently.

"I heard somebody say," another answered, "that the leader isn't here."

It was a fact; there was no leader there, and the players sat in a dim light waiting silently. The handclaps and impatience of the crowd became more pronounced, and then just at the "breaking point" the leader appeared. He seemed to come from no where, but was crossing the stage to his pedestal when a strong spotlight was turned on him and the band. He was dressed faultlessly and carefully in a light gray summer suit, and his feet were very correct in white canvas pumps; his dark curly hair reached above a very high and a very white forehead. But as he walked across the pavilion he smiled vacantly and benignly—if you know what I mean—and his feet turned grotesquely outward and he stepped as if they hurt him just a little every time he put them down! That was enough. Without make up of any sort, even his derby or cane, the great comedian was recognized in an instant, and that numberless throng applauded, yelled and shrieked the one name—Charlie Chaplin!

Under Chaplin's leadership the band responded with strange and marvelous sounds. One would have to strain a point to call it music, but that wasn't Charlie's fault; he worked hard enough. When the spotlight was turned on the band it was easy to see why the first violin, in the hands of Wallace Reid, refused to harmonize with the flute played by Jack Pickford and the cornet caressed by Sessue Hayakawa! Sprinkled throughout that famous band were Franklyn Farnum, George Walsh, Jack Mulhall, George Fisher, Tom Moore, Thomas Meighan, Roy Stewart, Jack Gilbert and many others of the film colonies. Under the ardent, gymnastic, emphatic and earnest leadership of Chaplin, who occasionally turned a flip in his effort to reach a high or low note, every fellow tried hard to do his bit, but with a fine disregard of conflict with the other fellow!

Suddenly the leader indicated in a manner that could not be mistaken and that left his hair awry and all but broke his baton that the next measure must be played softly and in preparation for the entrance of some new and wonderful feature. And even as they understood, and the lilting strains of "Pretty Baby" began, the light tripping of many feet could be heard and the spot light was turned on a show that many a tired business man would pay his fortune to see!

It was the famous Keystone beauty squad in a bathing suit ballet!

Petite, bewitching Mary Thurman led them, and among them were Myrtle Lind, Maude Wayne, Marvel Rea, Roxana McGowan, Gonda Durand, Ethel Years, Vera Stedman, Eleanor Field, Alice Maison and too many others to name. There were 25 of the famous beauties, and as they sang and danced "Pretty Baby" out came the ever funny Polly Moran dressed as "Cactus Nell, the Sheriff," and nearly broke up the show!

After that things happened so fast it made one's head dizzy. Julian Eltinge, Wallace Reid and Dustin Farnum

came out dressed as chorus girls and sang in regulation baby-doll-chorus-girl voices as they swished dainty ballet skirts and did all the steps! Chaplin forsook his baton and put on an impromptu boxing match with Slim Summerville that outdid his work in "The Champion"! Like magic his mustache and cane had appeared and after his victory he was tipping his familiar little derby!

At this stage there was a sudden lull in the fun, and as the stage grew quiet an expectant calm settled over the great audience. The spotlight moved jerkily up, down and around as if looking for some one, then suddenly flew straight up and settled on the tiptop of a great majestic oak towering far above the band stand. And a great cheer arose from the crowd as there arose from the topmost limb the human squirrel—"Doug" Fairbanks.

In a very short talk that was entirely to the point he told the crowd why they had gathered and how much the Red Cross needed their contributions. Then he announced that he, Chaplin, Farnum, Reid and Eltinge would take collections, vying with each other in "earning the money" and leaving it with each contributor which collector should be favored. And the collectors had agreed that the one getting the biggest sum would double the amount by his personal check! Then without warning Fairbanks sprang from his swaying perch, turned flip after flip in the air and landed catlike on his feet on the pavilion!

It would take a book to recount the stunts that followed, but one can imagine the interest did not wane in the half hour allotted to the collection. Each of the five men drew the cash and checks like magnets and it was easy to see each had his own great following. At the end of the time the last in the list boasted \$632 and Chaplin and Fairbanks were leading with \$987 and \$993 respectively. Thus they stood when the gong was sounded by Ella Hall, and it fell to Fairbanks to make good the agreement to double his amount. Running to the edge of the pavilion he shouted:

"Somebody add just \$7 to this and I'll make it another even thousand!"

Before he had finished the words, the amount was volunteered, then the athletic star, using Chaplin's back for a table, wrote his personal check for \$1,000.

It seemed no time to seek to meet "Little Mary," but I couldn't pass up the invitation I had had. It was characteristic of Mr. Fairbanks that he recognized me and remembered his promise upon simply seeing me.

"I hadn't forgotten you," he said. "Miss Pickford's here all right, though you haven't seen her. She doesn't like publicity, and then if she had been seen there would have been no use for the rest of us to be here. Come this way."

With his hat pulled far over his face and avoiding the lights as much as possible, Mr. Fairbanks piloted us through the pushing crowd toward a far entrance to the park. As we drew nearer, progression grew more and more difficult, and when we were within about 200 feet of the entrance we were compelled to stop.

"Well, I see she didn't escape," observed my companion. "Do you see the big car that the crowd is threatening to demolish? That's Miss Pickford's and she's in it. This is why she so seldom comes to anything of this kind or to any public gathering. It's fine to be appreciated and loved, and she thinks so, too; but when it comes to being mobbed and held up for hours every time one ventures out of the house, it's pretty tough, you know."

I wish I could tell you how that crowd acted. They were like wild men and women, and little children called for "Mary" and cried to see her. I wanted to see her, too, just as much as anybody, but I found myself hoping and almost praying that she would not step out of that closed car. I was actually afraid she would be hurt, for I couldn't see how the mob could be pressed back if she should attempt to step from the car!

"What do you think of that?" laughed Fairbanks. "Isn't it great? Not another girl in the world could do it, not another girl in the world! And she does it without trying!"

It was impossible for us to get out, on, or back, and the crowds grew more insistent every minute for Miss Pickford's appearance.

"She'll come out," said Mr. Fairbanks, "for she can't stand to disappoint a crowd. But she had hoped to escape notice tonight and for that reason did not leave her car all during the concert but kept over there where it is comparatively dark. That's—"

Before he had finished the cheering grew to a roar, and the door of the big car opened. Mary Pickford in a simple little white dress, white lace hat, and with a bunch of pale pink sweetpeas at her waist stepped out and climbed on the highest part of the fender, while that mob gave her a reception that has been accorded few people. For two minutes the park resounded with cheers, then in sudden and complete silence the people who loved her waited for their idol to speak. When she did speak I had the surprise of my life, for little Mary is truly a tiny girl, looking like a child there above the crowd, but her voice is deep and resonant, pitched low in the scale but remarkably clear and carrying.

"I can not make a speech my friends," she said in her quaint "Yankee" accent, "for I don't know how. But,"—she threw out her arms in appeal—"I love you every one!"

That was all, but the mob was wild with delight and was appeased, and if there was one person there that night who was not the little girl's lover when he came, he was won over then and there. Why, one couldn't help loving her, and though I can't explain it any better now, after seeing her and hearing her, I do understand better why she is "the only girl in the world who can do it." She was allowed and helped to get back in her car, but the cheering did not cease until she was far out of sight down the street.

"Well," smiled "Doug" as we moved on, "there wasn't a chance for us tonight. But never mind; you be on hand at the Lasky lot tomorrow evening after eight. I happen to know she has to work on some night scenes there. We won't be cheated; you shall meet Little Mary."

To be continued . . .

It's a Wrap!

Sixty-one Writers' League volunteers wrapped gifts in December 2002, earning \$2,850 for the BWS Fund. DIANE ANDERSON scheduled wrappers, who worked at four Austin bookstores: the Arboretum and Westlake Barnes & Noble bookstores, and the north and south Borders bookstores. CAPITALIZED NAMES denote gift wrapping angels, who wrapped seven hours or more.

DIANE ANDERSON	Sara Laas
Joanna Athey	Evelyn Lai
Sally Baker	KEN LOVELESS
Kris Barnes	Pam Marshall
Cory Barnett	Ronald Mendell
Dorothy Barnett	Fred Meredith
Shia Barnett	Susan Meredith
Jill Bartel	Cynthia Miller
Ray Bronk	Mark & Marsha Mitchell
E. J. Brown	Jeff Morris
Jo An Brown & Family	Camille Nerada
Joyce Burton	Joan Neubauer
LIZ BURTON	Diane Owens
Sandra Bybee	Vera Preston-Jaeger
Lana Castle	Toni Rayner
KATHY CENTER	Mindy Reed
Travis Chow	Chiara Rivera
Dyanne & Javier Cortez	Kate Rizzato
ELAINE DAVENPORT	Hiromi Sakamoto
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Nancy Eskridge	Humphrey Seay
Jennifer Evans	Bruce Shotkin
Susie Kelly Flatau	Taylor Skaar
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Linda Germain	Gayle Stewart
Helen Ginger	JO VIRGIL
Rochele Gonzales	Martha Kooock Ward
Angero Holt	Wendy Wheeler
Beverly Horne	Blaine Williams
Jackie Kelly	

Financial Update; Call for Donations

The BWS Fund now totals over \$33,000, with a goal of reaching \$50,000. In addition to money from wrapping books, we received \$1,930 from private donors during the past year. Gifts to the Fund, administered by the Writers' League of Texas, a nonprofit group, are tax-deductible. Please use the enclosed envelope, making checks payable to "WRITERS' LEAGUE OF TEXAS BWS FUND." The generosity of those listed below is very much appreciated.

Also in 2003, we offered copies of Bess's autobiography, *You Meet Such Interesting People*, for \$10 each, and sold 17 books. The offer is still open! If you would like a copy or two, the \$10 price includes sales tax and postage. Make checks payable as above, and mail to the League address.

Betty Sue Beebe	Angela Smith
Roy Bohrer	Jan Thomas
Judy Brooks	Bruce Whitehead & Kathy Myers
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THANK YOU and HAPPY HOLIDAYS from the BWS Scholarship Committee: Betty Sue Beebe, Sandra Bybee, Meredith Hight, Vera Preston-Jaeger, Angela Smith, Taylor Skaar, Felton & Jean West. Chair: Elaine Davenport. Newsletter Editor: Jeff Morris

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