

Shelby Hearon:

An Inventory of Her Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Hearon, Shelby, 1931-2016
Title	Shelby Hearon Papers
Dates:	1966-1996
Extent:	41 boxes (17.8 linear feet), 1 oversize box, and 9 galley folders
Abstract:	These papers document Shelby Hearon's extensive literary career through manuscripts, galley proofs, research materials, correspondence and photographs. The collection provides insight into Hearon's work patterns, in particular her research methodology and attention to detail. Correspondence with her agent and editor and their comments on new story ideas and marketing plans provide additional interest.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-01891
Language:	English
Access	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days' notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: reference@hrc.utexas.edu

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, 1994-96 (R13123, R13723)
Processed by	Jennifer Peters, 1996
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Shelby Reed was born in 1931 in Marion, Kentucky, and raised in Kentucky and Texas. She displayed an early talent for writing, winning first place in the Texas Interscholastic League ready-writing contest her senior year in high school. After graduating from The University of Texas at Austin in 1953, she married attorney Robert Hearon and turned to raising a family. She was active in the Austin community, serving as president of the PTA, Junior League of Austin, and Planned Parenthood.

In 1962, Hearon began writing fiction, feeling that she had "no work that grew out of my own personal identity." After five years of rewriting and revision, she sent her first completed novel, *Armadillo in the Grass*, over the transom to Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., where it was discovered by editor Judith Jones and published in 1968. The story of artist Clara Blue and her emerging artistic sensibility won immediate acclaim. Since then, Hearon has published thirteen novels, a biography of Barbara Jordan, and numerous short stories and articles for magazines, newspapers, and journals, such as *Redbook*, *McCall's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The Writer*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Texas Monthly*, *Readers Digest*, *GQ*, *Family Circle*, *Southwest Review*, and *Mississippi Review*. After publishing books with Doubleday and Atheneum, Hearon returned to Knopf in 1989 with the publication of *Owning Jolene*.

Hearon's writing focuses on women, often from an upper middle-class background, who are searching for their own identity and voice. Most of her novels have some connection to Texas. The ties of family and friends, a focus on appearance versus reality, and an interest in science further enhance Hearon's plots. A meticulous writer, Hearon researched her topics thoroughly and made considerable revisions before submitting a finished manuscript.

Hearon's skill as a writer were recognized with awards, grants, and teaching opportunities. She was a five-time recipient of the NEA/PEN Syndication short story prize, and twice won the Texas Institute of Letters fiction prize. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship for Fiction in 1982, a NEA Creative Writing Fellowship in 1983, an Ingram Merrill grant in 1987, and an American Academy of Arts and Letters fiction award in 1990 for *Owning Jolene*. She won the New York Women in Communications Award in 1984. She taught at a number of colleges, including Bennington College, the University of Houston, the University of California at Irvine, University of Illinois at Chicago, Colgate University, and the University of Miami. She served on the Texas Commission on the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Hearon died on December 10, 2016, in Burlington, Vermont.

Scope and Contents

The Shelby Hearon papers contain manuscripts, galley proofs, research materials, notes, correspondence, clippings, photographs, and other printed material, and are arranged in two series: I. Books, 1966-1996 (35 boxes), which contains research notes, manuscripts, and promotional files for all of Hearon's books published between 1968 and 1994; and II. Working Files, 1968-96 (6 boxes), which contains a broad assortment of files pertaining to other aspects of Hearon's writing.

Hearon's literary career is well documented in this collection. The files trace Hearon's emerging voice as a novelist, beginning with her talks to womens' groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s focusing on the importance of taking time away from family for one's self, and following her growth into a full-time working writer. Besides books, Hearon's short stories, articles, and book reviews are collected, highlighted by two unpublished stories and one unpublished article from 1974. Also of interest are the files devoted to Hearon's single work of non-fiction, a co-authored autobiography of Congresswoman Barbara Jordan. Non-manuscript material in Series II spotlights Hearon's other literary activities, such as grant requests, lectures, and correspondence pertaining to new editions of her books. Taken as a whole, the collection offers an overview of the career of a late 20th-century midlist writer.

The collection also reveals Hearon's working patterns, illustrating the attention to detail that characterizes all aspects of her writing, from her earliest research, which includes traveling to the place about which she is writing, collecting newspapers, photographs, conversational tidbits, and history, through her many manuscript revisions, following a manuscript from its outline and early notes to galley proofs. Titles are further enriched by the presence of files documenting the promotion and reception of each title, from clippings, to correspondence with the publisher, to fan mail. The researcher should be aware that the materials in this collection contain only a small amount of personal information, much of which must be inferred from documents pertaining to her professional career.

The papers contain a mix of original folders and files created from loose materials by the archivist. Folders with titles in single quotes denote Hearon's original files, whereas those without generally contain materials grouped by subject by the cataloger. The original files are marked by a fluidity of title; Hearon often started a folder for one reason and added related materials later. As a result, date ranges in single folders can be very broad. Additionally, related material is often split up. Researchers may want to check a number of different files for materials relating to the same subject.

Similarly, correspondence can be found throughout the collection, in addition to the files devoted to correspondence in Series II. An index at the end of the finding aid gives the box and folder number for each correspondent; due to its scattered nature, all of Hearon's outgoing correspondence is indexed as well. Of particular note are the files in both series for Hearon's agent Wendy Weil and her editors Judith Jones, Sally Arteseros, and Thomas A. Stewart. Pertaining mainly to the actual publication process, the letters also document the agent's and editor's initial reaction to a new manuscript, and their ideas for marketing and promotion of a title. Additionally, because Hearon developed warm relationships with these figures, their letters exchanged personal as well as professional information. Correspondence with contemporary writers of note such as Allan Gurganus, Sue Kaufman, Reynolds Price, and Anne Tyler is present in this collection, but the letters tend to be single formal exchanges. Far more interesting are the correspondents to whom

Hearon wrote while researching her books, such as J. Eddie Weems and Ross Gandy, who give her background information on, respectively, Waco, Texas, and Mexico City after the earthquake.

Additional notes, drafts, and clippings relating to *Afternoon of a Faun*, *Five Hundred Scorpions*, *Group Therapy*, *Hug Dancing*, *Life Estates* (under title "Friends for Life"), and *Owning Jolene* are available at the Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Books, 1966-96

This series contains files pertaining to each of Hearon's titles from 1968 to 1994, ending with her book *Life Estates*. The files have been arranged alphabetically by book title. The amount of material for each title varies considerably; while some titles contain only a few folders, others follow the work from its original idea, through its final publication, to its reception by the public. Titles which are well represented in this series include *Hug Dancing*, *Life Estates*, *Now and Another Time*, *Owning Jolene*, *A Prince of a Fellow*, and *The Second Dune*. Under each title, the files are sorted into three categories: the first contains research notes and materials, arranged alphabetically by topic; the second includes manuscript drafts, arranged chronologically; and the last group, also arranged alphabetically, follow the book's publication and promotion. The files pertaining to research comprise a wide assortment of materials, and reveal the considerable effort spent by Hearon on background information. Research files contain clippings and articles on themes and subjects of the book, photographs of locations used in the book, and the earliest plot outlines. Scribbled notes on napkins, envelopes, and other scraps of paper document that inspiration often occurred away from Hearon's typewriter. In a few cases, such as the files for *Barbara Jordan* and *Five Hundred Scorpions*, the files document Hearon's earliest arrangement of research materials under chapter headings; these clippings, notes, and background material reveal what Hearon chose to include and what was cut over time. Each book is represented by at least a few folders of manuscripts. For a very few titles, such as *Armadillo in the Grass* and *Barbara Jordan*, the only manuscript materials present are galleys and printer's copy. The other titles are more complete, and demonstrate amply Hearon's writing practices and style. Her earliest notes and drafts are commonly written on yellow legal pads and, later, on notebook paper. Hearon divides working typescript drafts into small sections and revises them repeatedly, annotating heavily, cutting paragraphs and pages, and adding these cuts to other sections, frequently with tape. As a result, her earliest typescripts may run backward, due to their frequent revision and subsequent disposal. Of particular interest is the dating Hearon used for each section, which are sometimes marked with personal observations and remarks on her biorhythms. Where possible, these drafts have been arranged chronologically. Each title also generally contains a completed typescript (sometimes in decorated typing paper boxes), and galleys and proofs from the publisher. Many of Hearon's books went through title changes before their publication, and working titles are documented in this series. *The Second Dune* was originally titled "Migration of the Snow Queen," and also "Afternoon Sea." *Hannah's House* started life as "A Suitable Affection," and *Now and Another Time* was also known as "Your Father/My Mother," "Little Hills," and "Grace Generation." *Five Hundred Scorpions* was titled "The Theoretical Man," and "Dos Hombres," and *Prince of a Fellow* had the titles "The Glass Frog," and "Among the Grandfathers." *Group Therapy* was once "The Sun Does Not Move," and *A Small Town* had the original title "The Housewife of Venice." One of Hearon's most recent books, *Life Estates*, was originally known as "Friends for Life." Hearon's earlier drafts also reveal original character names, and themes later discarded. Within the files pertaining to the publication and promotion of a title are clippings; correspondence with publishers, editors, and agents; fan mail; files pertaining to

paperback rights; and, in the cases of *Owning Jolene* and *Life Estates*, to movie rights as well. Correspondence is scattered throughout these folders, but is more complete in the files for Hearon's agent Wendy Weil and editors Judith Jones, Sally Arteseros, and Thomas A. Stewart.

Series II. Working Files, 1968-96

This series contains working files that follow Hearon's writing career. Arranged alphabetically by subject, the files contain manuscript drafts, correspondence, clippings, forms, financial information, and other printed materials. The collection includes numerous correspondence files, mostly sorted by Hearon, that contain letters from contemporary writers, although they are routine exchanges. Also found is correspondence with former writing students of Hearon's. As in Series I, the bulk of correspondence originates in the offices of Hearon's publishers and her literary agent. Also found in this series are a number of files pertaining to requests for grant funds by Hearon, which are notable because they show works in progress, and offer biographical information. Additionally, the series documents Hearon's many lectures, readings, writing workshops, and other activities within the writing community. All together, these files offer an overview of Hearon's professional activities and her participation in the literary community. Of particular importance is the document box of Hearon's short works, including articles, short fiction, and book reviews. While some are only clippings, others are in manuscript form, including two unpublished stories and one unpublished article from 1974. Also of note is an early file labeled "Speaking in 70s," which contains versions of early talks given by Hearon to women's groups, where she describes what circumstances led her to writing, and how she came to create her first fictional character, Clara Blue, in *Armadillo in the Grass*.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Arteseros, Sally
Bacon, Paul, 1923-
Broyles, William
Busch, Frederick, 1941-
Cheever, Benjamin, 1948-
Davison, Peter
Eisenhower, Josh S. D., 1922-
Gandy, Daniel Ross, 1935-
Geeslin, Campbell
Graves, John, 1920-
Hirsch, Edward
Jones, Judith
Nicholas, Nancy
Stewart, Thomas A.

Weems, J. Eddie, 1924-

Weil, Wendy

Organizations

Pressworks Publishing, Inc. (Dallas, Texas)

Subjects

Jordon, Barbara, 1936-

Authors, American--Texas

American fiction--20th century

Women authors

Document Types

Book reviews

Contracts

First drafts

Galley proofs

Maps

Negatives

Photographs

Scripts

Series I. Books, 1966-96*Afternoon of a Faun* (1983)

'Faun Ms. pages,' [research materials, holograph & typed notes], 1966-81	box 1 folder 1
Typescript, photocopy, nd	folder 2-3
Typescript, photocopy, nd	folder 4-5
Typescript, photocopy [originally bound], nd	folder 6-7
'Book Awards for Faun sub., 1983	folder 8
'PR,' 1982-83	folder 9
'Quotes,' 1982	folder 10
'Reviews,' 1983	folder 11
'Scheduling,' 1983	folder 12
[Weil], 'Wendy on Faun,' 1982	folder 13

Armadillo in the Grass (1968)

'The copy of Armadillo Knopf accepted' [typescript, carbon copy, with holograph corrections and accompanying note from Hearon], 1967-76	box 2 folder 1
Typescript, with holograph corrections & typesetter's markings, printer's copy, 1968	folder 2
'Galley & proofs,' 1968	folder 3
Page proofs with holograph annotations, 1968	folder 4
'Revised proofs' galley proofs, 1968 [removed to galley files]	
'Printer's proof' galley proofs, incomplete, nd [removed to galley files]	
Author's notes, 1976	folder 5

'Acceptance re. Armadillo,' 1967	folder 6
Art, nd	folder 7
'Autograph parties,' 1968-69	folder 8
'Biog re SH,' 1968	folder 9
'Contract,' 1967	folder 10
'Corrections for 2nd printing,' 1968	folder 11
'English, Mark,' 1968	folder 12
'Fan Mail,' 1968-72	folder 13-14
'Jacket & copy,' 1968	box 3 folder 1
'Knopf general,' 1968-70	folder 2
'McCalls,' 1968	folder 3
'Macdonald [& Company] Etc.,' 1970	folder 4
'Money & Receipts,' 1967-73	folder 5
'Paperback,' 1972	folder 6
'Permissions,' 1967-68	folder 7
'Publicity - general & speaking,' 1969-71	folder 8
'Reviews,' 1968	folder 9
'Revisions,' 1967-68	folder 10

Barbara Jordan (1979)

'Outline - I - Grandpa Patten,' 1977-78	box 3 folder 11
'Outline - I - Home,' 1978	folder 12
'Outline - I - School,' 1978	folder 13
'Outline - II - Boston U,' nd	folder 14

'Outline - II - 4. Houston Law,' 1978	folder 15
'Outline - II - Austin Capital,' 1978	folder 16
'Outline - III - Judiciary/Democratic Party,' 1973	folder 17
'Outline - III - Congress/Blacks/Women,' 1973-75	folder 18
'Outline - IX - Last Term,' 1977-78	folder 19
Typescript, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1978	box 4 folder 1-2
'Foundry proof' galley proofs, 1978 [removed to galley files]	
'Final galley' galley proofs, 1978 [removed to galley files]	
Excerpt, 1978	folder 3
<i>Five Hundred Scorpions</i> (1987)	
[Chapter] '1 & 2. U. S. Open & Charlottesville,' 1984-85	folder 4
'3, 4 & 5. Tepotzlan pre-quake,' 1981-85	box 4 folder 5
'8, 10 & 12. Peg in Charlottesville & Episcopal Church,' 1984-85	folder 6
'9. Sumiya & Cuernavaca,' 1985	folder 7
'11. quake & 13. aftermath & Psychologists in Mexico City,' 1971-85	folder 8
Empty folders with chapter headings, nd	folder 9
'Dos Hombres' [Mexico notebook], 1985	folder 10
Charlottesville research & notes, 1985	box 5 folder 1

Earthquake research & notes, 1985	folder 2
Hurricane research & notes, 1985	folder 3
Japan research & notes, 1985	folder 4
Mexico research & notes, 1985	folder 5
Photographs, nd	folder 6-8
Photographs, nd	box 6 folder 1
Tennis research & notes, 1984-85	folder 2
General research & notes, 1985	folder 3
'Original draft' [typescript, with holograph and typed corrections], 1985	folder 4-5
Incomplete typescript, nd	folder 6
Dust jackets and promotional postcards, nd	folder 7
Reviews, 1987-93	folder 8
<i>Group Therapy</i> (1984)	
'Ms pages' [research materials & notes, typescript fragments], 1983-84	box 7 folder 1
Typescript, some pages photocopied, nd	folder 2-4
Typescript, photocopy, nd	folder 5-7
Typescript, photocopy, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1983	box 8 folder 1-2
Page proofs, incomplete, 1984	folder 3
'Master galleys' galley proofs, 1983 [removed to galley files]	
'Master pages' galley proofs, 1984 [removed to galley files]	

'Authors pages' galley proofs, 1984 [removed to galley files]	
Dust jacket, 1984	folder 4
'Group Therapy' [General], 1983	folder 5
'Reviews,' 1984	folder 6-7
[Stewart] 'Tom,' 1982-84	folder 8
[Stewart] 'Tom - delivered 1-18-82 & 3-16 & 6-5,' 1982-83	folder 9
[Weil] 'Wendy - delivered 1-14-82,' 1982-83	folder 10
<i>Hannah's House</i> (1975)	
'SH Notes on Hannah's House' [research notes, typescript fragments, manuscript pages], 1974	box 8 folder 11
'Early pages' [typescript, with heavy holograph corrections], 1970	folder 12
Typescript, photocopy, with few holograph corrections, nd (1 of 2)	folder 13
Typescript, photocopy, with few holograph corrections, nd (2 of 2)	box 9 folder 1
Typescript, incomplete photocopy, with holograph corrections, nd	folder 2
Typescript manuscript, with holograph corrections printer's copy, 1974	folder 3-4
'Foundry proof' galley proofs, 1975 [removed to galley files]	folder 5
'Final galley' galley proofs, 1975 [removed to galley files]	
Author's note, 1976	folder 6
'Doubleday Promotion - Quotes, conferences, cover, 1975	folder 7
'Doubleday re. paperback,' 1976	folder 8

'Doubleday - Sally,' 1974-75	folder 9
'Fan Mail,' 1974-76	folder 10
'Magzis, Mike,' 1968-72	folder 11
'Publishers re. Hannah's House (A Suitable Affection),' 1973-74	folder 12
'Redbook & Hannah,' 1974-75	folder 13
'Reviews,' 1975-78	box 10 folder 1
'Reviews & interviews 1976,' 1975-76	folder 2
[Weil] 'Wendy re. Hannah's House (A Suitable Affection),' 1973-75	folder 3
<i>Hug Dancing</i> (1991)	
'Church,' 1990	box 10 folder 4
Dancing, 1983	folder 5
'Drew,' 1990	folder 6
'Earth Day,' 1990	folder 7
Farming, 1990	folder 8
'Fire Ants,' 1988-90	folder 9
'Fishing,' 1990	folder 10
Hunting, 1990	folder 11
'Kids - Sch[ool] - Cows,' 1990	folder 12
'Korea,' 1990	folder 13
'LBJ - MVA,' 1990	folder 14
'Notes - Future chapters,' nd	folder 15
Photographs, 1990	folder 16-17
'Politics/TX & RU486,' 1990	folder 18

Science, 1990	box 11 folder 1
'SSC,' 1990	folder 2
Texas, 1990	folder 3
'Waco,' 1990	folder 4
'Waco/Baylor/Weather,' 1990	folder 5
Waco & Environs, 1990	folder 6
Weather, 1990	folder 7
General research & notes on yellow pads, nd	folder 8
General research & notes, 1989-90	folder 9-10
Discarded working draft pages [typescript pages, loose, heavily corrected, interspersed with research notes], nd	folder 11
Discarded working drafts [typescript pages, heavily corrected, interspersed with research notes], 1990 (1 of 6)	folder 12
Discarded working drafts [typescript pages, heavily corrected, interspersed with research notes], 1990 (2-6 of 6)	box 12 folder 1-5
Discarded working drafts [typescript pages, heavily corrected, interspersed with research notes], 1990	box 13 folder 1-2
'Rough pages' [typescript pages, heavily corrected], 1991	folder 3
'Original copy' [typescript, with few holograph corrections], nd	folder 4-6
Typescript, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1991 (1 of 3)	folder 7

Typescript, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1991 (2-3 of 3)	box 14 folder 1-2
'Notes: Hug,' 1990	folder 3
Clippings, 1991	folder 4
<i>Life Estates</i> (1994)	
Anderson, Texas, 1992	box 14 folder 5
Churches, 1991-92	folder 6
'Easley's Dad - Radio,' 1991-92	folder 7
'Easley's 'items' from the papers,' 1991-92	folder 8
'East Texas/Crime/Pests/fangs,' 1992	folder 9
[Illegible] & Guns TX,' 1992	folder 10
Illness, 1992	folder 11
'LaSalle (Bedias, Anderson, Shiro stuff),' nd	folder 12
Photographs, nd	folder 13
Prodigies, 1991-92	folder 14
South Carolina, 1991-92	folder 15
'S[outh] C[arolina] 8-'92 21 & 22,' 1991-92	folder 16
'Upstate SC,' 1990-92	folder 17
Water, 1981	box 15 folder 1
Weddings, 1992	folder 2
Williamstown, SC, 1992	folder 3
Women's issues, 1992	folder 4
General research materials, 1991-92	folder 5

Discarded working draft pages [typescript, with heavy holograph corrections, research notes interspersed], 1991-92	folder 6-7
'Original copy' [typescript], nd	folder 8-9
'Copyedited mss.' [typescript, photocopy, with heavy holograph corrections], 1994	box 16 folder 1-2
'Galleys - Authors 1st pass' [galley proofs, photocopy, with holograph notes & corrections], 1993	folder 3-4
'Author pages' [galley proofs, photocopy, with very few holograph corrections], 1993	folder 5-6
Correspondence and notes re. publication, 1992-95	box 17 folder 1
Promotion and clippings, 1993-95	folder 2
'Life Estates Film,' 1993-96	folder 3
Film script & shooting schedule, 1996	folder 4
Film photographs, 1996	folder 5
<i>Now and Another Time</i> (1976)	
'Research materials for Now/Letters,' 1974	box 17 folder 6
Other research materials, nd	folder 7
'Jasper County 1927/July 1973 the present' [early holograph and typescript drafts], nd	folder 8
'Jasper County 1927' [early typescript drafts], 1974	folder 9
'Roughies June 1974,' [discarded working drafts], 1973-75 (1-5 of 7)	box 18 folder 1-5

'Roughies June 1974,' [discarded working drafts], 1973-75 (6-7 of 7)	box 19 folder 1-2
'First draft - Mary - Nov 74' [typescript, incomplete, photocopy & carbon copy, with holograph corrections], 1974	folder 3
'Early version of Mary' [typescript, incomplete, photocopy], 1974	folder
'February 1975 draft' [typescript, with holograph corrections], 1975 (1-2 of 3)	folder 4-5
'February 1975 draft,' 1975 (3 of 3)	box 20 folder 1
'February 1975 draft' [typescript, mostly photocopy, with holograph corrections], 1975	folder 2-3
[Correspondence re drafts], 1976	folder 4
'June 1975 draft' [typescript, incomplete, heavily corrected, title page - p. 81], 1975	folder 5
'June 1975 draft - final 63 pages' [typescript, incomplete, with holograph corrections], 1975	folder 6
'June 1975 draft' [typescript pages, incomplete], 1975	folder 7
'2nd draft - June 1975' [typescript pages, incomplete, with holograph corrections], 1975	folder 8
'Assorted pages from June draft replaced in Sept. draft' [typescript and photocopy manuscript pages], nd	folder 9
'June 1975 draft - carbon' [typescript, carbon copy], 1975	box 21 folder 1-3
'September 1975 draft' [typescript pages, incomplete, with holograph corrections], 1975	folder 4
'Third draft, & final, September' [typescript, mostly photocopy, with few holograph corrections], 1975	folder 5-7

Discarded working draft pages, 1974-75	box 22 folder 1-2
Correspondence re. manuscripts, 1976	folder 3
Typescript, with holograph corrections printer's copy, 1976	folder 4-6
'Foundry proof' galley proofs, 1976 [removed to galley files]	
'Final galley' proofs, 1976 [removed to galley files]	
Excerpt, nd	folder 7
[Arteseros] 'Sally re. Now,' 1974-77	box 23 folder 1
'DLS-FTW Promotion July 1976,' 1976	folder 2
'Fan Mail,' 1976	folder 3
'Publicity - Interviews,' 1976	folder 4
'Reviews,' 1976-77	folder 5
[Vaughan] 'Sam re Now,' 1976-77	folder 6
[Weil] 'Wendy re Now,' 1974-77	folder 7
<i>Owning Jolene</i> (1989)	
AIDS, 1985-86	box 23 folder 8
'Artists Models,' 1987	folder 9
Artists Models, 1986	folder 10
'Brogan (Wine) (AIDS),' 1987	folder 11
Chapter research, 1987	folder 12
'English-Language (L. W.),' 1984-87	folder 13
English language, 1985-87	folder 14
Gardening, nd	folder 15

Mexican folk art, 1986-87	
Photographs, nd	folder 1
'The Rich,' 1986-87	box 24 folder 2
San Antonio, 1986-87	folder 3
'Texas,' 1986-87	folder 4
Texas, 1987	folder 5
General research materials, 1986-87	folder 6
'Mss' [research notes & materials, loose typescript pages, heavily corrected], 1987-90	folder 7
'Original manuscript pages - Jolene pages' [discarded working draft pages, typescript, heavily corrected], 1987	folder 8
'Original manuscript pages' [discarded working drafts, heavily corrected], 1986-87 (1-2 of 3)	folder 9-10
'Original manuscript pages,' 1986-87 (3 of 3)	box 25 folder 1
Discarded working drafts [typescript pages, heavily corrected], 1987 (1-4 of 6)	folder 2-5
Discarded working drafts, 1987 (5-6 of 6)	box 26 folder 1-2
'Final planning ms.' [typescript, photocopy], 1989	folder 3-4
Typescript, photocopy, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1989	folder 5-6
Master set proofs, with holograph corrections, 1988	box 27 folder 1-2
Master set proofs, 1988	folder 3-4
Photoset galleys, 1988	folder 5

Page proofs, 1989	folder 6
'Movie,' 1986-93	folder 7
Promotion and clippings, 1988-91	folder 8
'TX Trip 1989,' 1989	folder 9
<i>Painted Dresses</i> (1981)	
Art, 1978	box 28 folder 1
Early American documents, nd	folder 2
Funerals, nd	folder 3
'Kansas - Menninger,' 1976	folder 4
'Menninger Clinic,' 1976	folder 5
Menninger Foundation, 1975-78	folder 6
New Orleans, 1980	folder 7
'Nick,' 1979	folder 8
'Nick - IMC 1963,' nd	folder 9
'1961,' 1976-79	folder 10
'#474,' 1979	folder 11
Religion, 1977-80	folder 12
'San Francisco,' 1979	folder 13
General research and manuscript notes, 1972-79	folder 14-15
Preliminary leaves, 1981	folder 16
Typescript, mostly photocopy, with a few holograph corrections, 1981	box 29 folder 1-2
Typescript, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1981	folder 3-5
Page proofs, 1981	folder 6

'Authors set' galley proofs, 1981 [removed to galley files]

'Master set' galley proofs, 1981 [removed to galley files]

Galley proofs, unlabeled, 1981 [removed to galley files]

'Interviews & reviews - May-July 1981,' 1981

box 30
folder 1

'Interviews - Schedule,' 1980-81

folder 2

[Stewart], 'Tom,' 1982-84

folder 3

A Prince of a Fellow (1978)

'New Braunfels' research materials, 1974

box 30
folder 4

'Rough draft March 76' [typescript pages, heavily corrected], 1976

folder 5

'July draft' [typescript pages, many photocopied, heavily corrected], 1975-76

folder 6

'Revisions July 5-18, 1977' [typescript pages, some photocopied, with holograph corrections and correspondence], 1977

folder 7

Typescript, incomplete, heavily corrected, 1977

folder 8

Discarded working drafts [typescript & holograph manuscript, heavily corrected, with research notes and materials interspersed], 1975-76 (1-4 of 5)

box 31
folder 1-4

Discarded working drafts, 1975-76 (5 of 5)

box 32
folder 1

'Replaced' typescript pages, 1978

folder 2

'Setting copy' [typescript, printer's copy, with holograph corrections], 1978

folder 3-4

'Final galley' galley proofs, 1978 [removed to galley files]

'Foundry proof' galley proofs, 1978 [removed to galley files]

Galley proofs, unlabeled, 1978 [removed to galley files]	
Excerpt, 1978	folder 5
'Reviews,' 1978	folder 6
<i>The Second Dune</i> (1973)	
Author's note, 1976	box 32 folder 7
Discarded working draft pages [typescript, some pages carbon copies or photocopied, with holograph corrections], 1972	box 33 folder 1-2
'First draft Jan. 72' [typescript with holograph corrections], 1972	folder 3
'Revision after Acceptance Oct. 72' [typescript], 1972	folder 4
'Notes on Sea,' 1973	folder 5
'Final version' [typescript, with holograph corrections], 1973	folder 6
'Setting manuscript' [typescript, printer's copy, photocopy, with holograph corrections], 1973 74	folder 7
Author's note, nd	box 34 folder 1
'Contracts - sample included,' 1972	folder 2
'Fan Letters,' 1973-74	folder 3
[Jones] 'Judith re Dune,' 1972-73	folder 4
'Knopf (old to file) & 1976-77,' 1968-76	folder 5
'Migration of Snow Queen - early draft of Second Dune rejected - pre-agent,' 1971-72	folder 6
'Money,' 1972-75	folder 7
'Permissions,' 1973	folder 8
'Publicity,' 1973-74	folder 9

'Redbook & Dune,' 1973	folder 10
'Reviews,' 1972-74	folder 11
'Revisions,' 1973	folder 12
[Weil] 'Wendy - General,' 1972-73	folder 13

A Small Town (1985)

Fragment of plot synopsis, nd	box 34 folder 14
'Copyedited manuscript' [typescript, photocopy, with correspondence & notes at front], 1985	folder 15-17
Typescript, photocopy, with holograph corrections, printer's copy, 1985 (1 of 3)	folder 18
Typescript, 1985 (2-3 of 3)	box 35 folder 1-2
'Repro roughs' proofs, 1985	folder 3
Galley proofs, photocopy, 1985	folder 4
'Master pages' galley proofs, 1985 [removed to galley files]	
General publication file, 1985-86	folder 5
Reviews, 1985-86	folder 6

Series II. Working Files, 1968-96

Activities [clippings, flyers, posters, programs, postcards], 1977-1988	box 36 folder 1-2
'Alcalde,' 1989	folder 3
'Am[erican] Academy & Inst. of A[rts] & Letters May 1990,' 1990-92	folder 4
'Atheneum - Faun - Tom [Stewart],' 1977-83	folder 5
'Atheneum - 87-88 - Scorpions,' 1983-88	folder 6
Clippings, newspapers and other unidentified research materials, 1984-90	folder 7
'Contemporary Authors 88,' 1988-89	folder 8
Correspondence, 1977-96 (1-2 of 6)	folder 9-10
Correspondence, 1977-96 (3-6 of 6)	box 37 folder 1-4
'Cosmo,' 1986-88	folder 5
'Countryside,' 1991	folder 6
'D[allas] M[orning] N[ews] 84 Reviews,' 1982-85	folder 7
'D[allas] T[imes] H[erald],' 1982-84	folder 8
'Dallas T-H 1984,' 1984	folder 9
'Fnds [Friends of the] Dallas Library,' 1986	folder 10
'GQ,' 1986-88	folder 11
'Greenhouse 8-76,' 1976	folder 12
'Greenhouse packet,' 1976	folder 13

'Guggenheim 1981,' 1981-92	folder 14
'Hearon's former students,' 1991-93	folder 15
'Housewife of Venice,' 1984	folder 16
'Ingram-Merrill Fndtn,' 1986-87	folder 17
Knopf, 1967-92	box 38 folder 1
'Knopf 87,' 1987-88	folder 2
'Letters re. SH stuff from non-writers,' 1988-92	folder 3
Literary materials, 1985-87	folder 4
Maps, 1989	folder 5
'Miss Texas correspondence,' 1974	folder 6
'Money - 2 Book contract books,' 1975-77	folder 7
'Movie & publishing letters excluding Life Estates,' 1992-93	folder 8
'Moyers,' 1984-89	folder 9
'NEA 82,' 1981-84	folder 10
'New Growth/Corona Press, S.A.,' 1984	folder 11
NYWICI, 1984	folder 12
Other writers, 1984-90	folder 13
'Permissions,' 1984-87	folder 14
Personal papers, 1983-85	folder 15
'PR & Reviews,' 1981-93	folder 16
PR, reviews, & other materials About Hearon, 1976-95	box 39 folder 1-2
'Pressworks,' 1982-83	folder 3

Pressworks, 1984-85	folder 4
'Pressworks - Armadillo,' 1983	folder 5
'PW Interview,' 1984-87	folder 6
'Readings,' 1987	folder 7
'Redbook - Born-Again,' 1976-77	folder 8
Reviews by Hearon, 1984-94	folder 9
'Reviews to keep,' 1985-86	folder 10
'Royalty statements 86-87,' 1984-87	folder 11
'S.C. Arts Writers Forum,' 1984-87	box 40 folder 1
'SMU - Common Ground [Bonds],' 1988-90	folder 2
'Speaking in 70s,' 1968-78	folder 3
Theater, 1985-93	folder 4
'TX Commerce Dept. - Photo,' 1991-92	folder 5
Unidentified research notes, 1979	folder 6
'Unknown Texas - Prince - 2nd serial,' 1988	folder 7
'Warner Books 89-90,' 1988-92	folder 8
'Weil Agency,' 1987-91	folder 9
[Weil] 'Wendy 83-84,' 1983-85	folder 10
'Weil, Wendy 87-88,' 1986-93	folder 11
'White Plains Book & Author 'Two by Two' 3-19-86,' 1986	folder 12
Works by Hearon	

"Small Expectations"	box 41 folder 1
Typescript, photocopy, with author's notes, 1970	
'Fan Mail re. 1971-77	box 41 folder 2
'Redbook & McCalls,' 1970-71	folder 3
'Wanda - magazine only,' 1970-72	folder 4
General, nd	folder 5
'2 unpublished stories & 1 unpublished article,' 1974	folder 6
A-L, 1976-91 [Ancestry of Your Characters, Back to Atlantic City, Barn Burning, Bazaars in Zanzibar, Breathing Life into Fictional Characters, The British Museum, Contemporary Authors article, Daddy and the Mailbox, Do Not Open Till Christmas, Famous Man's Daughter, Foreword: The Eyes of Texas, Gathering Facts for Fiction, The Golden Wedding, Growing Boys, Growing Up Black in Texas (excerpt from <i>Barbara Jordan</i>), I Never See You Write...I Never See You Philosophize, I've Seen It Twice, Life On (and Off) the Midlist (or Pulling Out of the Midlist)]	folder 7
M-Z, 1976-96 [Making a List and Checking It Twice, Missing Kin, A Most Unusual Wedding, My Country Childhood, Order, Pitch-Perfect Dialogue, The Rematch Game, Reunion Time in Texas, The Small World of Manageable Toys, The Sweet Smile of Success, The Undertow of Friends, Vanity Fair, Vast Distances, War & Peace]	folder 8
'The Writer,' 1986-88	folder 9
'The Writing Self,' 1991-92	folder 10

Shelby Hearon Papers--Index of Correspondents

- A.P. Watt and Company--38.14
- Adams, Ralph N., 1924- (University of Kansas)--28.4, 28.14
- Aldridge, Roberta (The Junior League of Midland, Inc.)--40.3
- Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.--2.3, 2.6, 2.10, 2.13, 3.1-7, 3.9-10, 9.11-12, 17.1, 27.9, 34.3-6, 34.12, 36.3, 38.1-2, 38.8, 38.14, 38.16, 41.4
- Allen, Joan Marie--2.13
- American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters--36.4
- American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers--38.14
- Anderson, Peg--2.13
- Andrew Nunberg Associates (London, England)--40.11
- Andrews, Patricia B.--2.13
- Antes, Leland L.--2.13
- Arteseros, Sally--9.7-9, 10.1, 20.4, 22.3, 23.1-2, 23.4-6, 30.7, 32.2, 38.7, 38.14, 41.4; see also Doubleday and Company
- Ashley, Beth--2.13
- Atchley, Margaret--2.13
- Atheneum (Firm: New York, N.Y.)--1.12, 8.6, 8.8-9, 30.3, 34.15, 35.5, 36.5-6, 36.9, 37.16, 39.6, 40.9, 40.11
- *The Atlantic Monthly*--1.13, 23.7
- Authors' Guild (U.S.)--36.5
- Bacon, Paul, 1923- --9.10
- Barker, Dorothy--2.13
- Barnes, Marguerite Johnston (The Houston Post Company)--17.6
- Bartz, Lola--2.13
- Baskin, Joan Ragsdale--11.10, 36.9
- Baylis, Jamie--see *Harper's Magazine*
- Bell, Louise--41.2
- Benge, Bill--38.6
- Bialer, Matthew (Curtis Brown Ltd.)--36.6
- Bird, Mildred--9.10
- Bischoff, George, Mrs.--2.13
- Blitman, Nan--see Creative Artists Agency
- Blumer, Olivia B.--see Warner Books (Firm)
- Bode, Roy E.--see *Dallas Times Herald*
- Bodley Head (Firm)--8.10
- Boe, Mary--2.13
- Book-of-the-Month Club--34.5
- Bowen, David--see Corona Publishing Company (San Antonio, Tex.)
- Boyd, Carole--9.10
- Brewer, Darlyn--36.6
- Brown, Helen Gurley--see *Cosmopolitan*
- Brown, Maggie E.--2.13
- Brown, Rosellan--9.10
- Bruhardt, P.H.--2.13
- Broyles, William (*Newsweek*)--36.9
- Buck, Martha--2.13
- Bulkeley, Valerie--2.13
- Burack, Sylvia--38.3
- Burka, Paul, 1942--see *Texas monthly*

- Burke, Patricia--see Jaffe-Lansing (Firm)
- Busch, Frederick, 1941- --37.2, 37.4
- Bush, Barbara, 1925- --37.4
- Busselle, Rebecca, 1941- --37.3
- CBS Records (Firm)--38.14
- Call, Hughie, 1890-1969--2.13
- Callil, Carmen--see Chatto & Windus/The Hogarth Press
- Camara, Amiye--35.5
- Cannon, Maureen (The Ridgewood Library)--34.5
- Carlisle, Kitty, 1915- --3.9
- Charles Scribner's Sons--35.5
- Chatto & Windus/The Hogarth Press--35.5
- Cheever, Benjamin, 1948- --36.10, 37.4
- Ciardi, John, 1916- (*Saturday Review*)--2.13
- Clark, Grace--2.13
- Claycomb, Carol H.--2.13
- Comer, Suzanne--see Southern Methodist University Press
- Compton, Bob--35.5, 37.7
- *Contemporary Authors*--35.5, 36.8
- Corona Publishing Company (San Antonio, Tex.)--38.11
- *Cosmopolitan*--35.5, 37.5, 40.11
- Cottrell, Sophie--see Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- *Countryside*--37.6, 38.3
- Cousins, Margaret, 1905- --9.7
- Cox, Bill--38.6
- Creative Artists Agency--17.3
- Cronemiller, Catherine E.--2.13
- Curran, Carolyn--2.13
- Currie, Judy--2.13
- Curtis, C. Michael--see *The Atlantic monthly*
- Cuthbertson, Charles, Mrs.--2.13
- Dallas Public Library--37.10
- Dallas Public Library. Friends--37.10
- *Dallas Times Herald*--37.8-9
- Daniels, Gayle Garth--2.8
- Daniels, Judy--38.3
- Davenport, Elnosa--40.3
- David Higham Associates--17.1, 27.7, 36.6, 40.10
- Davis, Rod--see *Texas Parade*
- Davison, Jane--10.2
- Davison, Peter--37.4
- Davison, Sue Lane--41.2
- de Jongh-Kearl, S.--9.10
- Delbanco, Nicholas (Bennington Writing Workshops)--1.12
- Demetrian, James--see Des Moines Art Center
- Des Moines Art Center--38.14
- Desser, Robin--see Vintage Books (Firm)
- Dexter, Pete (Houston Post Company)--35.5, 36.6
- Dickson, Anne Ponder--39.3; see also Pressworks Publishing, Inc. (Dallas, Tex.)
- Donohue, Gail--see University of Houston. Creative Writing Program
- Doty, E. W.--2.13

- Doubleday and Company--4.2, 9.7-9, 10.1, 20.4, 22.1, 22.3, 23.1-2, 23.4-7, 30.7, 32.2, 38.7, 41.4
- Downs, Cecelia--37.15
- Dowty, Leonhard--see *Good Housekeeping*
- Dugan, Fred--see Society of University of Texas Librarians
- Dunnam, Val--39.3
- Dynak, Sharon--see Atheneum (Firm: New York, N.Y.)
- Edwards, Bill--9.10
- Eisenhower, John S.D., 1922- --36.10
- Ellis, Norma Millay--23.1
- Elsik, Isabel--38.6
- English, Mark--2.12
- Ensworth, Kay--2.13
- Evans, Joni--34.6; see also William Morrow & Company
- Farrar, Straus & Giroux--38.14, 41.4
- Farris, Berneice--2.13
- Farris, Chester--2.13
- Feferman, Anita Burdman--37.3
- Feltman, Kathy--2.13
- Fielder, Marguerite--2.14
- Fiske, Frances--2.14
- Flowers, Betty S. (University of Texas at Austin)--36.3
- Ford, Harry--see Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Fortenberry, Rie--see *Mississippi Review*
- Fortuna, Tom--see Hearst Entertainment (Firm)
- Four Corner Productions--27.7, 38.8
- Frazee, Chris E.--2.14
- Freeman, Dianne Mendoza--see Texas. Tourism Division
- Fuldheim, Dorothy (Scripps-Howard Broadcasting Company)--30.2, 36.9
- Furman, Laura--38.16
- Gale Research Company--36.8
- Gandy, Daniel Ross, 1935- --4.5, 4.7-8
- Garwood, Miriam F.--2.14
- Gee, Barbara--41.2
- Geeslin, Campbell (Life)--5.2, 36.6, 37.1
- *Gentlemen's Quarterly*--37.11
- Giles, Gail--see Millay Colony for the Arts, Inc. (Austerlitz, N.Y.)
- *Glamour*--8.6
- Goldsmith, Mary--9.10
- Goldstein, Dan--2.14
- Goldstein, E. Ernest--2.13-14
- Goldstein, Peggy--2.14
- *Good Housekeeping*--1.13, 23.7
- Gottlieb, Maria Tucci--38.1
- Grams, Carol--2.13
- Grant, Lyman, 1953- --38.11
- Graves, John, 1920- --10.2, 37.4
- Green, Doris--37.13
- Greene, A. C., 1923- --8.10, 36.6
- Greiner, Gail--37.5; see also *Cosmopolitan*
- Grimes, Beth--10.2

- Grubbs, Ann--2.14
- Grumbach, Doris--23.2
- Gurganus, Allan, 1947- --37.1
- Hairston, Maxine--35.5, 40.3
- Harcourt Brace Jovanovich--23.1, 34.8, 38.14
- *Harper's Magazine*--1.13
- Harrigan, Stephen, 1948- --35.5
- Harris, MacDonald, 1921- --37.4
- Hart, William, B.--34.6; see also *Redbook*
- Haslund, Elizabeth--36.9
- Hearon, Anne--30.4
- Hearon, Robert J. (Graves, Dougherty, Gee, Hearon, Moody & Garwood)--2.10
- Hearon, Shelby, 1931- --1.1, 1.8-9, 2.3, 2.5, 2.9, 2.12-13, 3.1, 3.3-4, 3.6-7, 3.9-10, 4.6, 5.2, 7.1, 8.8-11, 9.7, 9.9, 9.11-13, 10.3, 15.6, 17.1, 17.6, 19.4, 22.3, 23.1, 23.7, 27.7, 28.5, 28.14, 30.3-4, 30.7, 34.2-8, 34.10-13, 34.15, 35.5, 36.1-6, 36.8-10, 37.1, 37.5-6, 37.9-12, 37.15-17, 38.1-2, 38.6, 38.8-10, 38.14, 39.3, 39.8, 39.9, 40.1, 40.3, 40.5, 40.8-11, 41.2-4, 41.7-9
- Hearst Entertainment (Firm)--38.8
- Heinemann (Firm)--35.5
- Heiney, Donald--see Harris, MacDonald, 1921-
- Herr, Ruth--9.10
- Herter, Carolyn--1.12
- Hirsch, Edward (University of Houston)--36.10, 37.4, 38.1
- Hobart, Tiny--2.14
- Holland, Richard (Richard A.)--see Southwest Texas State University. Southwestern Writers Collection
- Holman, Amy--37.15
- Hoover, Lee--9.10
- Houghton Mifflin Company--38.14, 41.4
- Howar, Barbara--23.2
- Howard, Richard--1.10, 35.5, 37.3
- Hubbert, Miriam Berry--2.14, 23.2, 35.5
- Hutchins, Betsey--see Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Hutchins, Sandra--34.3
- Ingram Merrill Foundation (Village Station, N.Y.)--37.17
- Irving, Patricia (Viking Press)--9.12
- Jaffe-Lansing (Firm)--35.5
- Janzer, Donna--9.10
- Jarrell, Andrea--11.10
- Jarrett, Mary--see *Redbook*
- John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation--37.14, 38.10
- Johnson, Jeanne--9.10
- Jones, Judith--2.6, 2.10, 3.1-3, 3.5-6, 3.9-10, 9.12, 17.1, 34.3-6, 34.12, 38.1-2,. 41.4; see also Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Jones, Martha--2.14
- Jones, Mimi--see *Redbook*
- Jordan, Barbara, 1936---38.3
- Julian Bach Literary Agency--1.13, 9.8, 10.3, 23.7, 34.2, 34.5, 34.7, 34.10-11, 34.13, 35.5, 36.6, 36.9, 37.5, 37.11, 38.1, 38.6-7, 40.9-10, 41.4
- Kamerman, Sylvia E.--see *Writer*
- Kampen, Irene--9.10
- Kane, Vera D.--9.10

- Kaufman, Sue, 1926-1977--3.9, 38.1
- Kelly, Patricia (The Scribner Book Companies)--35.5
- Kern, Judith T.--36.6, 36.9; see also Atheneum (Firm: New York, N.Y.)
- King, Philip P.--9.10
- Knopf, Alfred A., 1892-1984--34.5
- Kolovakos, Gregory (New York State Council on the Arts)--38.3
- Koner, Silvia--see *Redbook*
- Korda, Michael, 1933- --see Simon & Schuster, inc.
- Korn, Jacqueline--see David Higham Associates
- Kumin, Maxine, 1925- --37.4
- Lewis, Steven--see South Carolina Arts Commission
- Logan, William--38.3
- Lopate, Phillip--30.2
- Luzader, Marthanne--23.3
- McCartney, Louise Baker--2.8
- McElhenney, Ada Marie--2.14
- *Mademoiselle*--36.9
- Magelli, Paul J.--see Wichita State University
- Magness, B. Don (Miss Texas Scholarship Pageant)--38.6
- Magzis, Michael (Coward, McCann & Geohagen)--9.11, 41.4; see also Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Marmon, S. A.--2.14
- Martin, Donna (Andrews, McMeel & Parker)--35.5, 38.3
- Mason, Shelley (The Poetry Center)--36.9
- Mast, Bernice--37.15
- Masters, Pat--2.14
- Maw, Rosemary--2.14
- Mayer, Kay--2.14
- Meeker, Wendy--37.15
- Menninger Foundation--28.4
- Menninger, Roy W., 1926- (The Menninger Foundation)--37.4
- Mercer, H. Lynn-38.6
- Merritt, Teresa--38.6
- Mewshaw, Michael, 1943- --36.10, 37.4
- Michael Joseph Ltd.--36.6
- Michael Tannen (Firm)--38.14
- Millay Colony for the Arts, Inc. (Austerlitz, N.Y.)--36.9
- Minot, Susan--38.9
- Miss El Paso Scholarship Pageant--38.6
- *Mississippi Review*--36.9
- Monte, Dan--38.3
- Montgomery, Anne (The Junior League of Corpus Christi)--40.3
- Morris, Lillian (The Junior League of San Antonio)--40.3
- Morris, Suzanne--23.3
- Moyers, Bill D. (Public Affairs Television)--37.4, 38.9
- Murray, Wendy (*Redbook*)--36.9
- National Endowment for the Arts--8.8, 38.10
- Nelson Algren Award--36.9
- Nicholas, Nancy--2.3, 2.10, 2.13, 3.1-2, 3.4, 3.7, 3.9-10, 38.14; see also Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- North White Plains (N.Y.) Library. Friends--1.12
- Notestine, Elaine Folley--2.14, 40.3, 41.2
- Nuttli, Otto W. (Saint Louis University)--35.5, 36.9

- Oestreich, Gail--9.10
- O'Hagan, Christine--37.15
- O'Keefe, Dan (*Reader's digest*)--36.9
- O'Malley, Judith--see *Glamour*
- O'Neill, Hugh--see Doubleday and Company
- Parker, Mel--see Warner Books (Firm)
- Peachtree Publishers--39.9
- PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction--36.9
- PEN Syndicated Fiction Project--8.8
- Perkins, William Drew--37.15
- Pettit, Michael--36.10
- Phillips, Donna--see PEN Syndicated Fiction Project
- Piatkus Books (London, England)--35.5
- Pinther, Paulette--41.2
- Pocket Books--23.7
- Potts, Kippy--1.9
- Presley, Juanita--9.10
- Pressworks Publishing, Inc. (Dallas, Tex.)--35.5, 39.3-5
- Price, Reynolds, 1933- --37.3-4
- Pruyser, Paul W.--see Menninger Foundation
- QM Productions--23.7
- Quinn, Monica M.--2.14
- Raab, Jamie--see Warner Books (Firm)
- Randerson, Middy--2.14
- Ray, Gordon Norton, 1915- --see John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation
- *Redbook*--9.10, 9.13, 34.10, 34.13, 36.6, 36.9, 38.6, 39.8, 41.3
- Reed, Fran--2.14; see also Wilcox, Fran
- Reynolds, Betty Jo--9.10, 34.3
- Rice, Joe--see University of Dallas. University Relations
- Richards, Ann, 1933- (Office of the Governor)--38.3
- Richards, Denise (North Texas State University)--36.1
- Richards, Elizabeth--37.4, 37.15
- Richter, Walter--2.14
- Riddle, Marilyn--34.3
- Riley, Malinda--9.10
- Rissik, Maureen--see Bodley Head (Firm)
- Rittenberg, Ann--38.8; see also Atheneum (Firm: New York, N.Y.)
- Roach, James R. (University of Texas)--2.14
- Roberts, Warren, 1916- (Humanities Research Center)--2.14
- Robin, Ira--see Michael Tannen (Firm)
- Robinson, Anne Durrant--40.3
- Robinson, Betsy--2.13
- Robinson, Malcolm (Hooper & Robinson)--2.14
- Rodriguez, Jackie--36.6
- Rodriguez, Sara--9.10
- Rodwell, M.--2.13
- Rorke, Robert--37.15
- Rose, Nancy A. (Levine, Thall & Plotkin)--38.8
- Rosen, Emily--38.3
- Ryniker, Colleen--36.9
- Sagan, Kathy (*Redbook*; *Family Circle*)--35.5, 36.9

- Saltus, Sue--2.13
- Sanchez, Irene M.--41.2
- Sanderson, Ada B.--2.14
- Sandlin, Tim (SMU)--37.1, 37.4
- Sanford, Sam--11.10
- Saunders, Joan St. George--2.14
- Savage, Marcia A. (Manhattanville College)--36.6
- Schatski, Lorraine--2.14
- Schnurr, Eileen--see *Mademoiselle*
- Schroeder, Herbert S. (First Presbyterian Church)--2.14
- Scofield, Sandra Jean, 1943---37.4
- Scribners/Atheneum--8.5
- Seitz, Kathrin (Talent Associates Ltd.)--23.7
- Sherwin, Janet--9.10
- Sherwood, Mary Alexander--2.8, 40.3
- Shipman, Diane Lehman--2.14
- Shulman, Alix Kates--17.1
- Silden, Isobel--34.3
- Simon & Schuster, inc.--36.6
- Smiley, Jane--37.3
- Smith, Anne Mollegen--39.8; see also *Redbook*
- Smith, Carol Houck--37.4
- Smith, Thomas J.--3.9
- Society of University of Texas Librarians--40.3
- Solomon, Bob--1.10
- South Carolina Arts Commission--40.1
- Southern Methodist University Press--40.2
- Southwest Texas State University. Southwestern Writers Collection--38.3
- Sprague, Kurth--9.10
- Sroufe, Jane--2.14
- Steeger, Betsey B. (Association of Junior Leagues)--1.9
- Stein, Joan--27.7, 38.8; see also Four Corner Productions
- Stern, Ellen--see *Gentlemen's Quarterly*
- Stewart, Thomas A.--8.6, 8.8-9, 30.3, 36.5-6; see also Atheneum (Firm: New York, N.Y.); see also Scribners/Atheneum
- Stuart, Dabney, 1937- (*Shenandoah*)--37.2
- Swartz, Marie--9.10
- Tackett, Helen--3.9
- Tanner, Jane--see *Texas books in review*
- Tate, Marilyn F.--9.10
- Tenings, Elsie--2.14
- Terry, Marshall, 1931- (SMU)--37.1
- *Texas Books in Review*--36.9
- *Texas Monthly*--35.5, 38.6
- *Texas Parade*--23.4
- Texas School for the Blind--40.3
- Texas. Tourism Division--40.5
- Texas Union--40.3
- Theatre Pop, Inc.--27.7
- Thompson, Bill (Briarwood Writers' Alliance)--38.8
- Thompson, Franklin--see QM Productions

- Thompson, Ralph--see Book-of-the-Month Club
- Thompson, Robert C. (Group III Management)--40.11
- Tobin, Marian H.--see North White Plains (N.Y.) Library. Friends
- Trachsel, Bonnie--9.10
- Turino, Mary B.--2.14
- Tyler, Anne--3.9, 37.3-4, 38.1
- Unger, Jeffry S.--see *Dallas Times Herald*
- University of Dallas. University Relations--36.9
- University of Houston. Creative Writing Program--36.1
- University of Texas. Ex-students' Association--36.3
- Vaughan, Samuel--23.6
- Vintage Books (Firm)--17.1
- Wagner, Libby--40.12
- Walker, Ethel--2.14
- Walsh, Sylvia, 1937--36.9
- Ward, Ethel R.--41.2
- Ware, Agnes C.--9.10
- Warner Books (Firm)--40.8, 40.11
- Warner, Janet Wheeler--2.14
- Warner, Theodore B.--41.2
- Weddington, Sarah Ragle--8.11
- Weel, Gordon J.--see Doubleday and Company
- Weems, J. Eddie, 1924- --11.6, 38.16
- Weigard, Marc--41.2
- Weil, Wendy--1.13, 9.8, 10.3, 23.1, 23.7, 27.7, 34.2, 34.5, 34.7, 34.10-11, 34.13, 35.5, 38.1-2, 38.6-8, 39.11, 40.9-11, 41.4; see also Julian Bach Literary Agency; see also Wendy Weil Agency
- Weingarten, Violet--34.3, 34.11
- Wendy Weil Agency--27.7, 40.9, 40.11
- Wheelock, Ernestine--see University of Texas. Ex-students' Association
- Wheeler, Gordon--34.3
- Wheeler, Isabelle--2.14
- White, Martha Reed--2.14
- Wichita State University--8.8
- Wilcox, Fran--34.9; see also Reed, Fran
- Willcox, Sally--see Creative Artists Agency
- William Morrow & Company--41.4
- Williams, Elizabeth--27.7, 38.8; see also Four Corner Productions
- Williams, Jane--40.3
- Williams, Pris--2.14
- Women in Communications, inc. Austin Chapter--40.3
- Women in Communications, inc. New York Chapter--38.12
- Woodward, Joanne, 1930- --34.3
- Wright, Lawrence, 1947- --37.4
- *Writer*--41.9
- *Writing Self*--41.12
- W.W. Norton & Company--40.11
- Zafar, Rafia (Book-of-the-Month Club)--36.5

Barcode Index

- 1--059188000149503
- 2--059188000149571
- 3--059188000149562
- 4--059188000149554
- 5--059188000149546
- 6--059188000149538
- 7--059188000149520
- 8--059188000149511
- 9--059188000149601
- 10--059188000149597
- 11--059188000149619
- 12--059188000149635
- 13--059188000149589
- 14--059188000149775
- 15--059188000149783
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