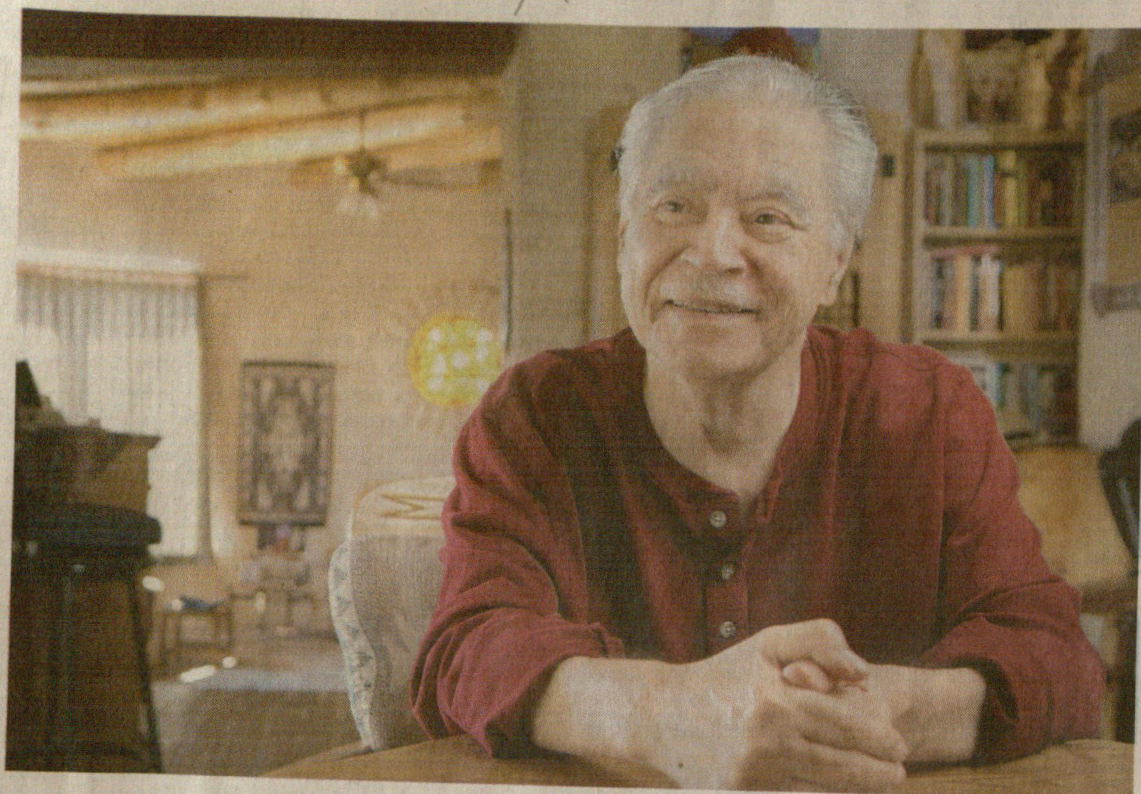


July 1, '18



MARLA BROSE/JOURNAL

Albuquerque author Rudolfo Anaya was recently honored by the Western Writers of America with the Owen Wister Award for lifetime achievement in Western literature and also inducted into the WWA Hall of Fame. Anaya, who considers himself a writer of Chicano literature, rather than Westerns, was somewhat surprised by the WWA recognition.

A larger landscape

Author Rudolfo Anaya surprised by honors from Western Writers group

BY OLLIE REED JR.
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

BILLINGS, Mont. — Chalk up some more honors for celebrated Albuquerque author Rudolfo Anaya.

Anaya, best known for the 1972 novel "Bless Me, Ultima," has been recognized previously with the NEA National Medal of Arts Lifetime Honor, the National Humanities Medal and the Premio Quinto Sol award, the latter presented for the best novel written by a Chicano.



But his most recent accolades caught Anaya somewhat by surprise because they come from the Western Writers of America, a national organization of more than 650 men and women who write fiction and nonfiction, poems, songs, screenplays, etc. about the old and new West.

During its annual convention, held last week in Billings, Mont., the WWA honored Anaya with the Owen Wister Award, presented for lifetime achievement in writing Western literature, and also inducted him into the WWA Hall of Fame. Since 2015, all recipients of the Wister Award, named for the author of the classic Western novel "The Virginian," automatically become hall of fame members.

"I don't think of myself as a 'western writer,'" Anaya wrote in an acceptance letter, read by WWA president Nancy Plain during the organization's awards banquet June 22 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Billings. "My locus has always been the Southwest, specifically New Mexico."

Besides the Owen Wister Award recipient, WWA members also vote an author from the past into the hall of fame. This year that honor went to another New Mexican, Paul Horgan (1903-1995).

Horgan was born in Buffalo, N.Y., but moved to Albuquerque when he was 12, attended the New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell and served as that school's librarian for some years. Most of his writing, fiction and nonfiction, is set in the Southwest. He won two Pulitzer Prizes for history, the first in 1955 for "Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History" and the second in 1976 for "Lamy of Santa Fe."

During the Billings convention, the WWA also



JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

Paul Horgan, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who moved to Albuquerque as a child and wrote mostly about the Southwest, was inducted into the Western Writers of America Hall of Fame during the WWA convention in Billings, Mont.

presented Spur Awards for excellence in writing about the West in 19 categories. There were no New Mexico Spur winners this year, but Johnny D. Boggs of Santa Fe; Paul Hutton, distinguished professor of history at the University of New Mexico; and Doug Figgs of Lemitar were Spur finalists.

Boggs was a finalist in best Western short fiction for the story "The San Angela Stump Match of 1876"; Hutton was a finalist in best Western short nonfiction for an article titled "The Great Western"; and Figgs was a finalist in songwriting for "Alchesay." Boggs, Hutton and Figgs have all been Spur winners in previous years.

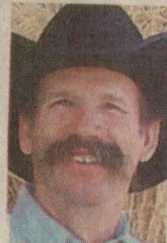
At age 80, Anaya no longer travels, so he was not in Billings for the convention. But from his home here in Albuquerque, Anaya talked to the Journal about his latest honors.

He said he thought of Western writers as people who wrote about cowboys, the kind of cowboys who appeared in the Western movies he went to see when he was a kid living in east-central New Mexico. He and his friends pretended to be when they played.

"I found a TV station that runs old TV shows — 'Bonanza,'



Paul Hutton



Doug Figgs

'Gunsmoke,' 'The Rifleman,'" he said. "I started watching 'Bonanza.' After the Civil War, a lot of those Southern people, who had lost everything, who had nothing to go back to, moved West. A friend told me they learned most of their cowboying from Mexicans who were already in Texas. You don't hear much about that in 'Bonanza.' And in 'Bonanza,' they all wear holstered pistols."

He said the cowboys he knew, some of them his own relatives, during his childhood in Guadalupe County, did not wear guns on their hips.

"They all carried a .22 rifle in a truck, mostly to discourage coyotes," he said. "Is there another West?"

In today's WWA, there are all kinds of Wests. When the organization was founded in 1953, its members were mostly writers of traditional Westerns, stories about gunfights and chases on horseback. But today's membership writes all sorts of stories about all aspects of the West. That's why Anaya is a Western writer.

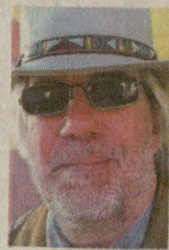
"Anaya brings to readers an incisive, unromanticized look at a Latin American culture too often marginalized by traditional Western writing," said writer-producer Kirk Ellis of Santa Fe, the WWA's immediate past president.

Anaya's "The Old Man's Love Story" was, in fact, a finalist in the best Western contemporary novel category in the WWA's 2014 Spur Awards competition. "The Old Man's Love Story," about a writer who shares his deepest feelings about his late wife, is as far from traditional slap-leather literature as it gets.

In his acceptance letter, Anaya referred to himself as "a Chicano writer, for the moment a Western writer," catapulted out of my Southwest home into a larger landscape.

"I hope I bring a renewal of diversity to the organization," he wrote.

Journal staff writer Ollie Reed Jr., a WWA member, attended the Billings, Mont., convention and was presented The Branding Iron Award for "outstanding service to the WWA."



Johnny D. Boggs