

An Unquenchable Thirst for former nun-LU alumna



met Darlene Chandler Bassett, who recognized that while she continued her education, Johnson would also need time, space and privacy to untangle the last 20 years of her life. Bassett invested in Johnson with financial support, resulting in the A Room of Her Own Foundation and a critically acclaimed memoir.

When Mary Johnson '00 graduated from Lamar with a bachelor of arts in English, the former nun hadn't quite reconciled with her decision to leave the Missionaries of Charity. After 20 years of devoted service to the poor under the administration of Mother Teresa, Johnson needed 10 years and "a room of her own" to reflect on her experiences.

Armed with her English degree and a tangle of memories from her former life as a nun, Johnson arrived at Georgia O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch in Albiquiti, N.M. There, she

Lamar in 1998 probably remember someone who didn't smile as much as I do these days," Johnson said. "We weren't supposed to have friends, even among the sisters. Adjusting to life in the real world after the convent was a challenge."

Johnson left the University of Texas in 1977 to join the sisters as an aspirant in the South Bronx, N.Y. She watched as 12 aspirants in the convent dwindled to two, as most could not handle a life devoid of privacy, affection, independent decision-making, even hot water. But a then-19-year-old Johnson, who would be called Sister Donata (meaning "freely given") continued on to work in Washington, D.C., Winnipeg, Canada, and Rome. She struggles throughout the memoir to suppress her doubts



"I started to feel as though I was suffocating," Johnson explained to one guest who inquired as to why she finally left. "They were becoming more narrow-minded. I was still very devoted to the ideals of the group, but I couldn't breathe anymore."

After leaving the order in 1997, Johnson returned to Beaumont, took a full-time job at St. Anne's Church and enrolled at Lamar to complete the degree she had left behind more than two decades earlier. It was at Lamar where Johnson learned to express herself through words and began to assemble her memories from her experience within the confines of the convent.—LB

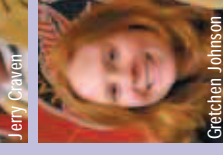


Palmer Hall '64
Jan Seale

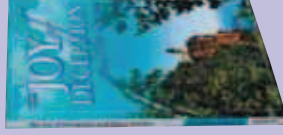
Literary Festival launches LU Press

Authors in fiction, creative non-fiction and poetry visited campus Feb. 13-15 for the Lamar Literary Festival. In addition to showcasing the works of Lamar faculty and regional authors published through Ink Brush Press, the event celebrated the launch of Lamar University Press.

"This means something great for the community because it will be a new local source for literature," said Jim Sanderson, professor of English and writing director. "This puts us on the map because regional, small literary presses are all but being wiped out."



The festival featured readings by Jan Seale of McAllen, the 2012 Texas poet laureate; Jerry Craven '64 of Jasper, editor of LU Press and founder and director of Ink Brush Press; Terry Dalrymple and Chris Elley of San Angelo; Palmer Hall '64 of San Antonio; Dave Kuhn of Fort Worth; and former Texan Andrew Geyer of Aiken, S.C. Featured LU faculty members included professors Sanderson, Jerry Bradley and R.S. "Sam" Gwynn; joined by instructor Gretchen Johnson. Seale and Johnson read from their collections—*Appearances* and *The Joy of Deception*, respectively—the first publications of LU Press.



Saur publishes landmark work

Pamela Saur, Regents' Professor of German, has published a landmark book on Czech literary master Ernst Weiss. Its title is *Ernst Weiss: Life, Works and Legacy of a Czech Literary Master and Friend of Franz Kafka, 1882-1940*.

"This is the first comprehensive assessment in English of the life and legacy of an important, underrated voice from mid-20th-century Central Europe," according to the publisher, Academica Press.

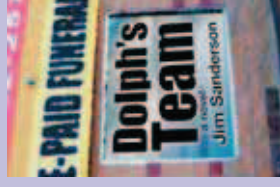
"For over 60 years, literary historians have worked to preserve and promote the writings of Jewish exile writers, like Ernst Weiss, and other victims of World War II and Nazi oppression," Saur said. "I am proud to make this contribution to that effort."

"After the Nazi takeover of Germany and Austria, he lived several years in Paris until committing suicide when Nazi troops invaded the city. Although his career was cut brutally short, he left behind many fine plays, stories, essays and novels that have never had the readership they deserve. I hope this book will bring attention to his talent and importance."



Sanderson pens fourth novel in suspense saga

Lamar's Jim Sanderson has published the fourth novel in his Southwest saga of murder, mayhem and richly defined heroes and anti-heroes. With *Dolph's Team*, Sanderson spins off a storyline that includes *El Camino del Rio*, set in the Big Bend and which introduced readers to the title character; Dolph Martinez. Also including *Safe Delivery* and *La Mardida*, the series takes a colorful cast of characters from the borderlands of West Texas to the neighborhoods of San Antonio, Sanderson's hometown. Ink Brush Press is the publisher of *Dolph's Team*.



"To write about Texas is to write about life on borders—the border with Mexico, the border between the not-so-good old days and the questionable future, and the often confusing border between the good guys and the bad guys," said reviewer Beth Hadas of the University of New Mexico Press. "Jim Sanderson has been writing on those borders for years, and, if you have enjoyed his bittersweet crime fiction, you will love *Dolph's Team*."

Semi-retired and drinking with his buddies, former Border Patrol agent Martinez gets a cause when one of his cronies is murdered in the restroom of Big John's Ice House. He gathers his team—characters from the other novels—and, using a bug-extminating truck, they spy on the bad guys. One critic wrote: "*Dolph's Team* has all the plot points of a suspense novel, but it is actually a meditation on aging."

National Poetry Month

The Lamar Writing Center celebrated National Poetry Month with a reading by faculty members and students April 30. The event featured R. S. "Sam" Gwynn, university professor of English, poet-in-residence at Lamar and author of *No Word of Farewell* and *The Drive-In*; Jerry Bradley, professor of English and author of *The Importance of Elsewhere* and *Simple Versions of Disaster*; Anne-Christine Rudholm (Ana Cristina Rudholm y Balmaeceda, instructor of English and modern languages, featured poet in *Cante Jardo: Josephine Sacabo and Ana Cristina Rudholm y Balmaeceda* and translator of Anna Akhmatova's *Anna Domini in 5 Images* by Joel-Peter Witkin; and Jesse Doiron, instructor of English and modern languages. The program also showcased student poets from *Pulse*, the literary magazine of Lamar University