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## Robert Penn Warren Is Named First Poet Laureate, Poetry Consultant



*Robert Penn Warren (right) speaking with Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin.*

Robert Penn Warren has been named Poet Laureate, Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. The appointment was made and announced on February 26 by Daniel J. Boorstin, The Librarian of Congress. It will take effect in September.

Mr. Warren is the first person to hold the official designation "poet laureate." The title was authorized and, in effect, added to that of "consultant in poetry," through Public Law 99-194, at the initiative of Senator Spark M. Matsunaga (D-Hawaii). The change is expected

*(Continued on p. 79)*

### *Also in This Issue . . .*

- Librarian's speech issued . . . . .78
- Ulane Bonnel elected head of  
history commission . . . . .78
- Harrison Hayford to speak . . .78
- NACO is enhanced through  
LSP . . . . .79
- New MARC publication . . . .80
- Exhibit of Boucher photos . . .80
- Folklife annual launched . . . .81
- PEN short story award-  
winners read . . . . .82
- Poets read at the Library . . . .82
- NISO meets at the Library . . .83
- Law Library publishes  
study of Soviet law . . . . .83
- Ernesto Sábato lectures . . . .84

*There is no Staff News in this issue.*

**Poet Laureate** (Continued from p. 77)

to increase the visibility of the prestigious poetry position, which was established by a private endowment in the Library nearly 50 years ago. Among the 29 persons who have held the position have been Allen Tate, Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost, and James Dickey. Mr. Warren himself served as Consultant in Poetry, 1944-45. The present Consultant in Poetry is Gwendolyn Brooks, who is also, coincidentally, Poet Laureate of Illinois.

In addition to the laureate/consultant's customary duties at the Library, Public Law 99-194 also authorizes an annual poetry program under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Robert Penn Warren is the only person to have received the Pulitzer Prize in both poetry (twice) and fiction. The awards in poetry were for *Promises: Poems 1954-1956* (1957) and for *Now and Then: Poems 1976-1978* (1979). The award for fiction was for the political novel *All the King's Men* (1946). He has also received, among many other awards, the Bollingen Prize in Poetry, the Emerson-Thoreau award of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Book Award, the Irita Van Doren literary award, the Gold Medal for Poetry from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1985), the National Medal for Literature, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was the Jefferson lecturer of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1974 and has received Guggenheim and MacArthur Foundation fellowships.

Born in Guthrie, Ky., in 1905, Mr. Warren was educated at Vanderbilt University, where he was a member of the Fugitive group of poets and graduated *summa cum laude* in 1925. He received a master's degree from the University of California in 1927 and a B. Litt. degree from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes scholar. He began an academic career in the 1930s which included professorships at Louisiana State University (1934-42), the University of Minnesota (1942-50), and Yale University (1950-73). With Cleanth Brooks, and Charles Pipkin, he founded and edited *The Southern Review* at LSU. The two also began there a successful collaboration in innovative college textbooks in literature, including *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943).

In addition to *Promises* and *Now and Then*, some of Mr. Warren's poetry publications are *Thirty-Six Poems* (1935); *Selected Poems* (1944); *Brother to Dragons* (1953, revised 1979), a treatment of a frontier murder involving the nephews of Thomas Jefferson; *Audubon: A Vision* (1969); *Being Here* (1980); and *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce* (1983). His other best-known works of fiction include *At Heaven's Gate* (1943); *World Enough and Time* (1950), one of many literary treatments of the

"Kentucky tragedy"; *Band of Angels* (1955); *Wilderness* (1961); and *A Place to Come To* (1977). He has also written numerous books of biography and social commentary, including *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* (1929); *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South* (1956); *The Legacy of the Civil War* (1961); and *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (1965); as well as numerous essays and books on literary topics.

In making the appointment, The Librarian of Congress said: "Robert Penn Warren is a characteristically American man of letters in the range and versatility of his writings and in his feelings for the promise and the frustration of American life. He has high attainments in poetry, fiction, criticism, and social commentary. He has been a serious though not a solemn surveyor of our America. His materials have included the comic, the violent, and the tawdry as well as the grand and the heroic. He has depicted and dramatized the problems of good and evil and the historic divisions within American society. His works in prose and poetry have been widely read, enjoyed, and reread in the five decades of his fruitful career. If there is any person today whose work unites our America in its splendid variety, that person is Robert Penn Warren. With his advice and guidance we look forward to a great year."

The laureate/consultant will deliver a lecture and public reading during the year, advise the Library of Congress on its literary programs, and recommend new poets to be recorded in the Library's archive. In addition, he will be available, with the approval of the Librarian, for service to other government agencies for particular ceremonial occasions, to the extent possible.

## NACO Is Enhanced Through the Linked Systems Project

The Linked Systems Project (LSP) has allowed the Library of Congress to begin to streamline its contributed authority record processing procedures for institutions participating in the Name Authority Coop (NACO) project that are also members of the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN).

At the end of August, distribution of authority records to RLIN over LSP began and within three months the Library of Congress (LC) and RLIN files had been synchronized. The Library can now send new and updated authority records electronically to RLIN, computer-to-computer, by utilizing LSP's communication protocols, rather than by mailing tapes. RLIN users have access to an authority file on the RLIN system that is current with the LC Name Authority File to within a day or two.

(Continued on p. 80)