

THE TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS

Founded 1936

Dear Paisano Applicant:

The Texas Institute of Letters and The University of Texas at Austin have given competitive fellowships to Paisano, J. Frank Dobie's former hill country place, since 1967. Each year TIL and The University of Texas at Austin select two people to receive the chance to write there full time for six months. Because over seventy writers have already worked at Paisano, it is a location rich in tradition.

The fellowship allows writers to have time and quiet in a setting where they can devote themselves solely to their work. If you apply and are selected, you should understand the uniqueness of the place. You will definitely be in the country—twenty miles southwest of Austin and several miles off a country road. Though the ranch is idyllic in many ways, rural isolation can lead to problems. Rains sometime flood the creek making the low water crossing from the house to the road impassable. One writer, caught at the house during a storm, said he learned his “tolerance for solitude” was seven days. Rattlesnakes have been seen quite near the house; fire ants have migrated to this area; skunks, raccoons, and deer live in the fields nearby. So you must be as wary at Paisano as you would be anywhere in the country in Texas.

Your judges consider these realities when awarding the fellowships. They try to decide if an applicant is likely to appreciate the rural conditions at Paisano. Although development is beginning to encroach, it is still a small ranch situated on a creek.

The house is air-conditioned and quite comfortable. However, applicants should understand that Paisano is not just a headquarters but also a home for half a year. Writers who receive the fellowship must view it this way. It is their place to live, to think, and to write.

Most Paisano Fellows look back on their months there as one of the great experiences of their writing life. It is part of a continuing tradition, a link with Texas' past and a promise of its future.

Sincerely,

Fran Vick, President