

## FOR ITS FOURTH ANNIVERSARY

### THE CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE RAISES AWARD FIVE FOLD TO \$5000

*Deadline for entries is June 15*

**April 7, 2016 CHAPEL HILL, NC** – The Crook's Corner Book Prize, given annually for the best debut novel set in the American South, has increased its prize money from \$1000 to \$5000, beginning with its fourth-anniversary winner, to be announced in January 2017.

"We are tremendously pleased," said Anna Hayes, president of the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation. "Our goal is to provide financial help and to focus attention on new writers, who have the toughest struggle to achieve recognition. In particular, we are interested in novelists who have something to tell us about the American South as viewed from the 21st century."

Co-sponsored by Crook's Corner Bar & Café, the James Beard America's Classics restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the prize is the first in the United States to be modeled on the tradition of prestigious awards given by the famous literary cafés of Paris.

"The idea makes sense, for Crook's Corner Café & Bar in Chapel Hill, NC, has a rich history of supporting artists. This idea is splendid." —John T. Edge, Southern Foodways Alliance

"Crook's Corner took a cue from the Bohemian cafés of Paris for a concept well suited to Southern soil—the Crook's Corner Book Prize." — *Garden & Gun*.

"As far as we know, Crook's is the only restaurant in the United States to offer a literary prize, but we would love to start a trend." —Anna Hayes, Crook's Corner Book Prize

With a sense of humor and Gallic style, Crook's offers the winning author one free glass of wine at each visit to the restaurant during the prize year. Crook's has long been known for its "sumptuous take on Southern comfort food and as a gathering spot for the city's abundant

creative community,” wrote *Garden & Gun* magazine. Indeed, Crook’s has a rich tradition of supporting artists of all types—culinary, literary, visual. Some history: Bill Neal, who co-founded the restaurant in 1982, was a literary chef whose influential cookbooks, beginning with *Southern Cooking* in 1985, sparked the revitalization of Southern cuisine. Bill Smith, now the established chef at Crook’s, following Bill Neal’s death in 1991, has his own superb cookbooks, including his latest, *Crabs & Oysters*. On the walls at Crook’s, you will always find exhibits of visual artists. Behind the bar, there is always a stack of books from the Crook’s Corner Book Prize longlist finalists, along with prize-winning cookbooks.

Since its launch in 2013, the Prize has spotlighted some exceptional new writers and achieved wide recognition. Early supporters include *Publisher’s Weekly*, *Shelf Awareness*, the Southeastern Independent Booksellers, the James Beard Foundation, the Southern Foodways Alliance, *Oxford American* and *Garden & Gun*.

“A list of exceptional debut novels set in the south,” said *Publisher’s Weekly*, of the longlist announced each summer.

Here’s a news roundup on past winners of the Crook’s Corner Book Prize:

**2014: *A Land More Kind Than Home* by Wiley Cash.** The first winner, chosen by judge Jill McCorkle, was Wiley Cash for his novel, *A Land More Kind Than Home*. Cash has since been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the North Carolina Arts Council and has published the national bestseller, *This Dark Road to Mercy*, which won best novel from the UK’s Crime Writers’ Association and was a finalist for an Edgar Award. Cash was recently named writer-in-residence at UNC-Asheville. Two of his stories have been nominated for 2015 Pushcart Prizes. “Winning the Crook’s Corner Book Prize was an incredible honor for me,” said Cash. “The restaurant, its owner, its chef, and its patrons reflect the culture and taste of the South, so to be recognized by such an institution is both a confirmation and an affirmation for a new Southern writer.”

**2015: *Byrd* by Kim Church.** The second winner, chosen by judge Randall Kenan, was Kim Church, for *Byrd*. Church has also received a \$10,000 North Carolina Arts Council fellowship

award. Church is at work on her second novel. The Crook's Corner Book Prize set off a cascade of prize attention for *Byrd*. It won the Independent Publisher Book Award bronze medal for literary fiction, was a Chautauqua Prize finalist and a Balcones Fiction Prize finalist, and was longlisted for the SIBA Book Award. **"So many doors were opened to me because of the Crook's Corner Book Prize,"** said Church. "It was *Byrd*'s first prize and my favorite—because of the momentum it created, and because it represents support from a literary community I admire and love."

**2016: *The Marauders* by Tom Cooper.** Judge Lee Smith chose Tom Cooper, for *The Marauders*, which is being translated into six languages. Cooper will be teaching in Paris this year and is at work on some television projects and his next novel. "The Crook's Corner Book Prize party **was one of the most effusive receptions I've received so far in the United States,"** said Cooper. "And so many people in attendance. It was overwhelming. And the food, and the wine, and the many interesting people I met. I can't tell you how important this kind of support is to a relatively new writer. To have so many attentive and friendly readers is nothing short of an inspiration. And to be the recipient of such kind praise from a legendary writer like Lee Smith: what a lucky guy I am!"

How it all begins: Each year the Crook's Corner Book Prize enlists an accomplished novelist as its judge, who selects the winner from the three or four finalists that emerge from the entries, which are first evaluated by an army of first readers, then honed to a shortlist by the foundation board. The narrow niche of debut novels set in the American South has produced around four dozen submissions each year.

The deadline for submissions for this year's prize is June 15, 2016.

This year's judge is the gifted novelist and writing professor, Tom Franklin, who lives in Oxford, MS.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** visit [www.crookscornerbookprize.com](http://www.crookscornerbookprize.com) and <https://>

[www.facebook.com/CrooksCornerBookPrize](https://www.facebook.com/CrooksCornerBookPrize).

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