

**FOR RELEASE JANUARY 7**

**WINNER ANNOUNCED FOR FIRST ANNUAL CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE**

**January 7, 2014 CHAPEL HILL, NC** – Wiley Cash has won the first annual Crook's Corner Book Prize for best debut novel set in the American South for his book, **A LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME**, published by William Morrow/Harper Collins. The award was announced in Chapel Hill, North Carolina at a festive party hosted by Crook's Corner Café and Bar, for which the prize is named.

From 68 submissions, a dozen books emerged for the longlist, then the choice was narrowed to four finalists. In addition to **A LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME**, the other finalists were: **LEAVING TUSCALOOSA**, by **Walter Bennett** (Fuze Publishing); **CODE OF THE FOREST**, by **Jon Buchan** (Juggling Board Press); and **THE ENCHANTED LIFE OF ADAM HOPE**, by **Rhonda Riley** (Ecco).

Well-known novelist and short story writer Jill McCorkle chose the winner. Speaking to a rapt audience at Crook's Corner, closed for the occasion, McCorkle said, “The four finalists were all excellent choices and worthy of high praise. I was most impressed with Wiley Cash's **range of voice within the telling and the seamless movement in time as the story unfolds**. I think, at this point in the contest, it all becomes subjective, and I'll confess to being drawn to successful children on the page. I think it's extremely difficult and that Wiley Cash did it beautifully, while also stepping into the shoes of an elderly midwife as well as a world-weary sheriff. And that does not even touch the depictions of others we meet. **There were times I realized I'd been literally holding my breath, for pages, which is a rare occurrence.**”

Launched a year ago under the auspices of the non-profit Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation, the prize **is open to self-published as well as traditionally published authors, and is intended to encourage emerging writers in a publishing environment that seems to change daily.**

**A RICH TRADITION OF EXCEPTIONAL FIRST NOVELS**—Shannon Ravenel, Algonquin Books co-founder and Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation board member, recently referred to a number of exceptional first novels. “Among the most memorable Southern debut novels that come to mind, she said, “are **THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER**, by Carson McCullers; **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD** by Harper Lee; **THE ORCHARD KEEPER**, by Cormac McCarthy; **LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL**, by Thomas Wolfe; **WISE BLOOD**, by Flannery O’Conner; **LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS**, by William Styron; **INVISIBLE MAN**, by Ralph Ellison; **OTHER VOICES, OTHER ROOMS**, by Truman Capote; and **THE BLUEST EYE**, by Toni Morrison.”

**“It was exciting to find so many great books—several of them from independent publishers (even micro-publishers)—emerging from our reading,”** said Anna Hayes, founder and president of the Foundation.

Jamie Fiocco, owner of Flyleaf Books and president of the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance, concurs. “This grassroots effort to discover and champion books in general, Southern literature in particular, is amazing and refreshing,” she said. **“The Crook’s Corner Book Prize is a great example of what independent booksellers have been doing for years: finding top-quality reading experiences, regardless of the book’s origin—small or large publisher.** Readers trust the rich literary history of the South to deliver a sense of place and great characters; now this prize lets readers learn about the cream of the crop of new storytellers.”

**INSPIRATION FOR THE PRIZE—**The award was inspired by the famous literary cafés of Paris, which for many years have given significant and prestigious literary prizes. Crook’s Corner Café & Bar is a James Beard American Classic restaurant and has a rich history of supporting artists. In partnership with the Crook’s Corner Book Prize Foundation, Crook’s hopes other restaurants might offer their own book prizes.

“This may be the age of the restaurant,” said Katharine Walton, Southern publicist and board member for the Prize. “Culinary arts seem to be trumping literary arts in terms of media coverage, so this is a way to join forces.”

“The linkages between good writing and good food and drink are clear and persistent,” said John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance. “I can’t imagine a better means of celebrating their entwining than this innovative award. **The only fault I find is with the beverage that will be tendered to the winner. Bourbon seems a better choice.**”

**READERS AND WRITERS IMBIBE—**Those who, like John T. Edge, prefer bourbon over wine may want to try the Book Prize cocktail created by mixologist Shannon Healy of Crook’s and Alley Twenty Six in Durham, NC. **It features the metaphorical makings of a great novel: Larceny (Bourbon), Americano (Cocchi), yes, some Bitters, and—maybe—a Twist.** So writers and readers, published or unpublished, can belly up to the bar and order a Book Prize.



**Photo caption:** Author Wiley Cash (left) accepted the Crook’s Corner Book Prize for best debut novel set in the South (*A Land More Kind Than Home*) from Gene Hamer (right), founder and owner of Crook’s Corner Cafe & Bar a James Beard American Classic Restaurant, in Chapel Hill, NC. Wiley Cash received \$1,000 and—every evening the author visits the restaurant during the prize year—a glass of wine on the house.

**Photo credit:** David Poulos

**NOTE ON NEXT YEAR'S PRIZE**—The Foundation is now accepting submissions for next year's prize. The deadline is June 30, 2014. Writer Randall Kenan will be the judge for this year's prize.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, visit <http://www.crookscornerbookprize.com>. Under "News" you will find the longlist for the prize. Wiley Cash's website is <http://www.wileycash.com>.

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