

Bettye Hammer Givens

Bettye Hammer Givens is a Plainview native and award-winning writer who set most of her novels and plays in Hale County. Three of her five novels — *The Diaries of Emily Saidouaili*, *Farewell Gift*, and *Pheobe Mae* — and her three commissioned plays are about this area. Her play “Running Water Draw,” based on local history, was produced in early 2000 in Running Water Draw Park and was attended by 2,500 people. Another novel, *What Emily Learns*, also became a play and was produced locally in mid-2000, and a centennial play, “Giant of the Great Plateau,” was performed in Olton in the 1980s. In addition she has published a number of short stories, articles, and essays as well as a book of poems, *French Windows*.

Mrs. Givens is the winner of literary awards from Italy, Switzerland, and the Philippines, and she was knighted Dame of Grace by the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem Knights of Malta in 1976. She has given papers at Cambridge and Oxford in England; in Manila, the Philippines; and in Auckland, New Zealand, where she served as dean of the fine arts department of Paris American Academy. She is a member of the Dramatist Guild, winner of a fellowship at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos, and a finalist for the PEN Texas Fiction award. She founded the summer writing workshop at the Paris American Academy in France and has directed it since 1984. As president of the World Congress of Poetry, she hosted poets and writers from 35 foreign countries in Plainview for a week 2002.

She was born Bettye Hammer in Plainview in 1927. Her grandparents Ira and Kate Hammer had settled here in 1907 and helped build the West Side School, attended by both Bettye and, before her, her parents Paul and Opal Damron Hammer. Bettye graduated from Olton High School in 1944 and earned her bachelor’s degree at Wayland. She also holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in writing from Vermont College. She married A.J. Givens in 1945. They have two children, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

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