

# Longmire novelist Craig Johnson to receive Owen Wister Award from Western Writers of America

*Award for Lifetime Contributions to Western Literature to be Presented at WWA annual convention, scheduled for June 18-21 in Amarillo, Texas*

EMPORIA, KS, UNITED STATES, March 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Craig Johnson](#), whose novels about a Wyoming sheriff named Walt Longmire have made

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*Craig Johnson*

The New York Times bestseller list and inspired a popular TV series, is the 2025 recipient of the Owen Wister Award for Lifetime Contributions to Western Literature.

The award, given annually by [Western Writers of America](#), is to be presented during WWA’s 2025 convention, scheduled for June 18-21 in Amarillo, Texas.

“With my ranch only 15 miles from the Occidental Hotel here in Wyoming where the Virginian got his man, the weight and width of Owen Wister’s works cast a broad

shadow across Western literature and I’m simply stunned at having my name uttered alongside his,” said Johnson, who lives on a ranch in Ucross, Wyoming, with his wife, Judy.

Previous Wister recipients include novelist-poet N. Scott Momaday; historians Will Bagley, David Lavender and Robert M. Utley; and bestselling novelists Rudolfo Anaya, Tony Hillerman, Elmore Leonard and Lucia St. Clair Robson.

“Not only is Craig Johnson a masterful storyteller, he’s also a whale of a nice man,” WWA president Melody Groves said. “He tells great stories on paper – and in person – and unequivocally deserves the Wister Award. WWA is honored to count Johnson as one of ours.” Johnson started his series, published by Viking, with *The Cold Dish* in 2004. Another *Man’s Moccasins* (2008) and *The Longmire Defense* (2023) won Spur Awards from WWA, and *Any Other Name* (2014) was a Spur finalist. *Return to Sender*, the 21st novel in the series, is set for a May 27 release.

“Today, over two decades since his first of 20 full-length Longmire novels, Johnson is an ambassador of Western literature and is considered one of the most influential authors of modern Western mystery writing in the 21st Century,” said WWA vice president Stuart Rosebrook, who chaired the Owen Wister Award selection committee.

Johnson’s novels have also earned recognition as Mountains & Plains Book of the Year, Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, Library Journal’s Best Mystery of the Year and several

Will Rogers Medallion awards. The Wyoming State Library selected Spirit of Steamboat (2013) as the inaugural One Book Wyoming, a statewide program created to encourage Wyoming residents to read and discuss the same book and bring the community together through literature.

The TV series, starring Robert Taylor as Longmire, debuted on the A&E Network on June 3, 2012, becoming the network's highest rated original drama series. It aired three seasons on A&E, then was picked up by Netflix for three more seasons, ending its run in 2017.

That series, Rosebrook said, "quickly influenced the resurgence of the modern Western in all genres."

In 2012, Johnson started "[Longmire Days](#)" in Buffalo, Wyoming – the inspiration for Johnson's fictionalized town of Durant, Absaroka County. The event brings in some 15,000 fans worldwide and helps support Johnson's The Longmire Foundation, founded "to facilitate the Johnson family vision of community involvement and support based on the Longmire principles of honesty, integrity, and compassion."

The foundation has given money to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Johnson County Search and Rescue, K9s for Warriors, Puppies Behind Bars and other organizations. This year's festival is scheduled for July 17-20.

The Wister Award is a bronze statue of a bison, Lord of the Plains, by the late Texas sculptor Robert Duffie. It was created especially for WWA by Duffie, and each year's Wister award is cast from the original mold.

Western Writers of America is a nonprofit organization established in the early 1950s to promote the literature of the American West. It has more than 600 members worldwide, including writers and editors of fiction, nonfiction, songs, poems and screenplays.

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