



New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) Honors Historian and Bestselling Author Winston Groom with Its Lifetime Achievement Award

A Genealogy by NEHGS of Groom—Author of *Forrest Gump*—Tells of Southern Ancestry and of Notable Kin Including Harper Lee and Truman Capote

October 26, 2017—*Boston, Massachusetts*—Best-selling author Winston Groom was honored by New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) with its Lifetime Achievement Award in History and Literature at its Fall Family History Benefit Dinner in Boston on Thursday evening.

At the event Brenton Simons, NEHGS President and CEO, presented Groom with an expertly prepared genealogy of his family—a tradition of NEHGS for many years. Simons revealed in detail Groom's deep southern roots and ethnic variety including Croatian, Irish, Spanish, and French ancestry. Highlighted were the author's ancestors noted for their patriotic service including the Civil War, the War of 1812, and the Revolutionary War.

But the surprise of the evening for Groom, who won the 2011 Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year, was that he is Harper Lee's 7th cousin once removed. He is also a 7th cousin twice removed of Truman Capote and an 8th cousin once removed of Alabama actress Tallulah Bankhead. "This is the kind of surprise we love to reveal," said Simons.

Winston Groom took the publishing world by storm when his 1986 novel *Forrest Gump* flew to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list and stayed there for 21 weeks. It has sold over 2.5 million copies in the United States alone, and millions more worldwide, on the heels of its blockbuster movie adaptation starring Tom Hanks. The book has also been reprinted in eighteen languages.

Born in 1943, Groom grew up in Mobile, Alabama, where he attended University Military School prep. In 1965 he graduated from the University of Alabama with an AB in English and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army. He served in Vietnam, mostly with the 1st Brigade of the Fourth Infantry Division from July 1966 to September 1967 when he was honorably discharged with the rank of Captain. He then spent the next eight years working as a reporter and columnist for the *Washington Star* before becoming a full-time author. He holds several honorary PhD degrees as a "Doctor of Humane Letters."

Groom is the author of more than 20 books. In addition to *Forrest Gump* and *Gump & Co.*, Groom's novels include the award-winning *As Summers Die*, which was made into a movie starring Bette Davis; *Shiloh, 1862*; *The Aviators*; and *The Generals*. He is also the author of *Conversations with the Enemy*, a non-fiction account of the experience of an American prisoner of war in Vietnam, a brilliantly rendered Pulitzer Prize finalist. His latest novel, *El Paso*, was published by Liveright in 2016.

Past recipients of the NEHGS Lifetime Achievement Award have included Boston Mayor Thomas Menino (2009), Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. (2010), documentary filmmaker Ken Burns (2011), former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and Kitty Dukakis (2012), CNN senior political correspondent David Gergen (2013), author and presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin (2014), actor of stage and screen Dame Angela Lansbury (2014), author HRH Princess Michael of Kent (2015), political consultants Mary Matalin and James Carville (2015), author Nathaniel Philbrick (2015), two of America's legendary television journalists Bob Schieffer and David Hartmann (2016), journalist and historian Cokie Roberts (2016), and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Stacy Schiff (2017).

The dinner's Silver Benefactor was Sit Investment Associates. David H. Burnham, Stephen H. Case, Thomas Bailey Hagen, Nancy S. Maulsby, Mark Kimball Nichols, and Welch & Forbes LLC also were benefactors for the evening. Honorary Co-Chairs were Judith and Louis Freeman.

NEHGS, with its national headquarters located in Boston's Back Bay, is the oldest and largest genealogical society in America. NEHGS was formally constituted in March of 1845 by an act of the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and now consists of more than 250,000 constituents engaged in family history nationally and around the world. It is home to a world-class

research library and archive, and an expert staff. NEHGS offers an award-winning genealogical research website at AmericanAncestors.org and maintains a publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials.

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(Left) Brenton Simons, NEHGS President and CEO, with honoree Winston Groom.

(Photo by Pierce Harman)

Note: A hi-res version of this image is available from jim.power@nehgs.org.

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