

# Lars eigner essay



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## English 101

Lar Eighner is a peculiar writer and sources of information for him were not where I expected them to be. The biggest resource for this Eighner biography came from the Texas Homeless Networks website. The THN gave me the nuts and bolts about his life. On November 25, 1948 in Corpus Christi, Texas, Lars Eighner was born. He spent his early life surrounded by literature influences. He was permitted to attend a three-week workshop on creative writing by George Williams of Rice University, at the tender age of eleven and he is the grandson of Texas poet and author of the grandson of Texas poet and author, Alice Ewing Vail. Eighner is a 1966 graduate from Lamar High School in Houston and attended the University of Texas at Austin. (1998)

In 1988 Eighner lost his job at the state mental institution and became homeless. It was during this time that he wrote his most acclaimed work, *Travels With Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Streets*. It was published in 1993 and became an instant hit. An excerpt from *Travels With Lizbeth*, *On Dumpster Diving* has been reprinted in several college texts and also appeared in *Harpers Bazaar*. (The Writers Presence 2003)

Eighner wrote a few other works in 1995, *Gay Cosmos*, a collection of essays; *Whispered in the Dark*, an erotic short story collection; and *QSF2*, erotic science fiction stories but in 1997 he became homeless once again. He had relocated with his lover Clint and his dog Lizbeth to San Antonio, but the money he had planned on never came but this time his friends and The Texas Observer rallied behind him and raised enough money to get him into

a small apartment. (THN 1998) Eighner now lives in Austin again with his new dog, Wilma and his lover Clint. His homepage says that he is still having trouble getting around but that he is working. His homepage offers an interactive writing course and also gives a wish list. Fans and supporters can send him gifts from his list to support him.

Eighners essay On Dumpster Diving is not just a survival guide for eating and living as a homeless person. Its actually so much more than that; Eighner not only describes his adventures in dumpster diving and details methods for any future divers out there but he gives us food for thought on what materialism is. He pokes at our collective conscious that deep down knows that things arent what are important. Through it all he refers to his only friend, Lizbeth, and subtly shows us that what and where you eat isnt nearly as important as whom you eat with. He not only brings to light the obvious anti-materialism sentiments one must have to live on the streets but he also describes the perils of being too greedy in the dumpster. It seems that when one has nothing and then sees so much offered for free the old feelings of materialism take over.

In another essay, Gifting the Homeless Eighner teaches us how to give money and gifts to the homeless. He details how to give things that the homeless will not only be able to use but wont invite predation. Eighner teaches us that our money is better spent bypassing the agencies and giving directly to the homeless, though we should use common sense when we do. He goes on to show us how to spot those on the street who will simply waste the gift or cash on narcotics and booze and why street life today is not the romantic fantasy that it was in the 1960s. He suggests we get to know the homeless

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as human beings and look at them as mirrors of the future because you may be glad to have a streetwise friend who can show you the ropes when your times comes, or you may end up being shipped to the same camp.

Being a boys dog is among the loftiest of canine callings. Not every dog has the resilience of sinew and ruggedness of spirit required. For those who can cut the mustard, there are a number of perks, as one might guess from the official title of the position which is Best Dog in the World. In Willie Morris' belated memoir (recently re-issued in paperback) of his childhood in Mississippi, the boy Willie's dog Skip seems entirely up to the task.

If there are not many dogs left in the world like Skip, perhaps the reason is that there are not many boyhoods left that of Willie Morris. Skip's exploits take place in a very small Mississippi town (Yazoo City, not named here), before and during the Second World War. The dog's main claim to fame, among many, is his ability to drive a car—but this feat, we discover, is a ruse, and no doubt Morris missed his calling by going into the literary end of things instead of into publicity. Skip, a purebred English smooth-haired fox terrier ordered from a dog breeder in Springfield, Missouri, has his tricks and his flashes of brilliance—but the truth is, any dog that is the best dog in the world can do these things. The critical question is consistency. Hardly anything that Lassie had done would be incredible if she had not done those things week after week.

Skip understands English, at least key words, and this should come as no surprise to anyone who must spell out W-A-L-K or B-A-T-H in the presence of an ever-wary pet. In his idyllic country-town universe, Skip can wander

around town as he pleases, can walk with his master to school and meet him afterwards, as any best dog in the world might be expected to do—except that today no city dog nor many small town dogs could do these things for long before they ran afoul of leash laws or traffic. Yet Skip’s life is not entirely free of danger: there are snakes and even malicious poisoners in this otherwise too-perfect world for dog and boy.

Lars has a sort of every man way writing but at the same time he has a style that is intellectual. His sentences are generally simple but he mixes them with a way of writing that is complex. If there are not many dogs left in the world like Skip, perhaps the reason is that there are not many boyhoods left that of Willie Morris. This sentence is a good example. It is written in an almost Yoda-like manner, backwards but yet forwards. Placing the reason that there are not many dogs like skip left at the end of the sentence gives it a stronger impact than if he just wrote, There are not many boyhoods left that of Willie Morris and thats the reason there are not many dogs left in the world like Skip. Lars writes as though he were talking to you. His sentences always sound like a person who is telling you tale but is always in danger of a tangent, or cant seem to tell you the story fast enough so he has to pack as much information into a sentence as he can. The dog’s main claim to fame, among many, is his ability to drive a car—but this feat, we discover, is a ruse, and no doubt Morris missed his calling by going into the literary end of things instead of into publicity. This is great example, we not only learn that the dog can drive a car but that he has many talents, is famous, that Morris missed out on publicity. Its a fully loaded sentence and shows a great ability to choose the correct words on the fly. Lars doesnt use a lot of alliteration or

poetic wording. He just finds the absolute most efficient way of conveying lots of information in an entertaining manner. None of his writing uses lofty or archaic words but he uses the common language in an intelligent and poetic way. If he wasnt so damned liberal I could probably read more.

Texas Homeless Network

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Accessed Oct, 21 2003

[http://www.thn.org/lars\\_eighner.html](http://www.thn.org/lars_eighner.html)

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Good dog, Lizbeth. Good dog.

Accessed Oct 22, 2003

<http://www.io.com/~eighner/lizpics.html>

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Lizbeth

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