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**AWF-AUM WRITERS' AND
ASSOCIATES' COLLOQUIUM,
ALABAMA VOICES, AND
MORE!**

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 17, 1998, was a watershed day for poetry in Alabama. At the same time that the Alabama State Poetry Society was celebrating its 30th anniversary with a daylong PoetryFest in Birmingham—bringing together over 200 members and others to revel in the Word of poetry—Robert Pinsky, our U.S. Poet Laureate, was visiting Montgomery to fulfill a dream of his own.

Pinsky visited Montgomery to introduce a staged selection of his translation of Dante's "The Inferno" at the historic Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, just one block from the state capitol. Jonathan Levi's production, which features four actors and a violinist, will travel to Miami, Kansas City, Seattle, Boston and back to New York (where it originated at the 92nd Street Y through the auspices of the Unterberg Poetry Center). Montgomery was the only deep South stop for "The Inferno." In the Winter *First Draft*, we will review the production at length.

Regrettably, these events (PoetryFest and "The Inferno" production) conflicted. Many at one event would also have certainly attended the other, but the point to celebrate is that in Alabama on that day, poetry was vigorous, alive, and very, very *audible*. While he was here, Mr. Pinsky encouraged Writers' Forum board members to sponsor a "Favorite Poem Project" event in Alabama and handed out contact cards about his national project. By the year 2000, the poet laureate hopes to have in hand nearly 30,000 letters from individuals around the country that he can present to the Library of Congress documenting the drive to make poetry readily heard in every corner of America. The October issue of *Life* magazine features Mr. Pinsky's campaign.

Look for more about Pinsky's "Favorite Poem Project" in the Winter issue of *First Draft*, but if you would like to write for your own event kit, please call the Forum's office and we'll be glad to give you the address. Within the next month, the Forum will begin encouraging and coordinating some of these events.

Breaking news for poetry is an exciting thing—it doesn't happen a lot. Yet, where two or more are gathered in its name, it *is* there.



First Draft is a vehicle for communication among writers and those interested in literature/publishing in Alabama and elsewhere. We encourage publication news, events information, and story suggestions. *First Draft* will grow as the needs of writers in Alabama are identified. Contact: The Alabama Writers' Forum, Alabama State Council on the Arts, 201 Monroe Street, Montgomery, AL 36130-1800; 334/242-4076, ext. 233; Fax: 334/240-3269; email:jeanie@arts.state.al.us

All Things Southern:

AN INTERVIEW WITH KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM

Kathryn Tucker Windham knew from an early age that she wanted to be a newspaper reporter. After graduating from Huntingdon College in Montgomery, she set about systematically achieving her goal, first as a stringer for the state's major dailies, then as a police reporter and feature writer for the *Alabama Journal*, afternoon paper of the *Montgomery Advertiser* company. The Southern newsroom of the early 1940s, as Windham chronicles in *Odd-Egg Editor* (University of Mississippi Press, 1988), was not hospitable to women, but she persevered and continued her journalistic career with stints at *The Birmingham News*, *Selma Times-Journal*, and as a syndicated columnist.

Unlike her work as a reporter, many of Windham's best known adventures were not planned or sought. It was happenstance, she says, that she became a storyteller, a collector of "true" ghost stories, a commentator on National Public Radio, a photographer with work exhibited in museums, the author and actor of a one-woman play about Julia Tutwiler (and twice gave the Alabama Legislature a tongue lashing in that same guise).

If, as Windham says, these things just happened, it must be because she is wide open to life, people and experiences. Not only does she see stories all around her, she pursues them. Others may exaggerate for effect, but not her. Kathryn Tucker Windham's tales are elucidated by her keen mind and warm wit, and at the same time tempered by her reporter's dedication to facts.

Windham is not a bit coy when she says in this interview, at age 79, that she doesn't know what she wants to be when she grows up. As long as pleasant happenstance leads her destiny, let's hope she never grows up. *ed.*

Joey Brackner, folklife program manager of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, interviewed Windham in 1997, while her recently published book, Encounters, was in production. Photographs by Katie Lamar Smith.



Kathryn Tucker Windham at home in Selma, Alabama

JB: You've written so many books and you're known as a writer and storyteller, but *Encounters* features your photography over a broad period of time.

KW: A long time. I really can't remember when I wasn't interested in photography. I had two older sisters who were a great deal older than I was. I was born the night the youngest one of them graduated from high school. And they had Kodaks. You didn't have much money to spend on film and developing in those days and they both were particular about the pictures they took. As a child, I was not permitted to experiment with their Kodaks. So when I read a sign in the drugstore window—Peoples Drug Company in Thomasville—that Eastman Kodak Company was going to give a Brownie Kodak to every child who was twelve years old in 1930, if you got there in time, well, I got very excited, and I was sitting on the sidewalk curb in front of Peoples Drug Company before the sun came up the morning of the





giveaway. I was the first one in line, and I got my Brownie camera. It opened a whole new world. It was mine. Some of the photographs that I took with it are in exhibits, which is kind of remarkable.

JB: And several are in this book.

KW: Yes. I wish I still had that camera. I don't know what happened to it. You lose things through the years. I graduated to more complex cameras but I really think the pictures I took with that Brownie may be the best ones I've ever taken.

JB: Was that the camera that you actually sent back and they developed the film?

KW: No, no. You took the roll out and took it down to Mr. Rich Anderson's photographic studio and he developed it for you. His hands were brown from the developing fluids and chemicals that he used. And he was hunched over from looking in that big camera on a tripod that he used to take everybody's picture in that whole part of the country. One of my projects in recent years, and one I've failed completely in, is trying to locate his negatives. He's dead and of course his shop is closed, but somebody ought to have those negatives. They would span 60 years of a little country town. I just can't think that anybody would throw all those away, but they may have.

JB: You're a storyteller, a writer, and a photographer. Do you think a picture's worth a thousand words?

KW: Well, I took a lot of pictures when I was a newspaper reporter. I liked to illustrate my own stories. Sometimes a photographer understands exactly what you want and sometimes they just miss, with the best intentions. I know many of the photographers were much better than I was technically but I knew what I wanted to show. So several of the pictures in my exhibits were made when I was a newspaper reporter to help me tell my story. I think in nearly every picture you see there are questions you want to ask about it. Who were these people? What were they doing? What interested you in taking this photograph? Those stories just blend beautifully, photographs and storytelling.

JB: What criteria were you using when you chose the photographs for *Encounters*?

KW: A lot of times it was because they stirred some memories for me. I began to think about the times in which those pictures were made and what prompted the taking of those pictures and who those people were. Most of them are long dead and I got to thinking about some of those people who

had told me wonderful stories. They needed to have their pictures preserved, they were a part of life for me.

JB: In looking at the photographs and the stories that go with them in *Encounters*, it occurred to me that unlike a lot of Alabama writers you seem to be indelibly associated with land and the people on the land. You seem to want to cover yourself up in southernness and Alabama.

KW: I just could not imagine living anywhere else. This is home, Alabama. 'Course we drift over into Mississippi and Georgia, a little bit of Tennessee, not much of Florida. We should have had the panhandle of Florida, you know, it belongs to us. I don't know how we let them get it. This is the part of the country where I feel at home. I understand what people say when they use these expressions that someone else might not understand. I know what they're talking about. I just love the people; they're wonderful. There are still storytellers and they take time to tell stories. They enjoy themselves. We southerners like ourselves. That may be a true mark of a southerner. We like sharing ourselves with other people and swapping experiences and talking, just plain talking.

JB: You are a writer and a storyteller. There's that obvious connection between the two but not every writer is a storyteller and vice versa. Why do you think you are both?

KW: Well, it's quite by accident. I've only been a storyteller in the last, well, since the 1970s. You know that was late in my life. It never occurred to me that I was a storyteller. I had always been a writer and writing things that interested me. I got invited

to tell stories at the National Storytelling Festival. I thought they had the wrong person. I tried to tell them that they wanted my daughter who has a master's in drama and theatre and so forth. They were sure they wanted me and I had never told stories like that before. It was a big joke because the man who runs the festival is named Jimmy Smith, was in Jonesboro, and you know Smith and Jonesboro and a national festival that no one had ever heard of. I thought someone was teasing me about this. It was a big joke and everybody laughed about it. Then they sent the airplane ticket to fly up there and tell stories. I thought, well if they're fool enough to send it I'm fool enough to go. So I went up and told stories and had a good time and I've been doing it ever since.

JB: Once you got up there and started telling stories it didn't seem all that strange to you.

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*We southerners like ourselves.
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 ...just plain talking.*

KW: No, it wasn't strange and it was such an easy start because the groups were so small. You see, that festival now attracts eight to ten thousand people for the weekend. But when I first went up there, which was for the second festival, we would have maybe 25 people in a session.

It was just so nice and informal. You could just talk with them and laugh with them and exchange with them. There was not the intimidation of standing in front of a vast audience with microphones and lights and stuff which I hate. I think that's choked storytelling, what is rare and beautiful in it.

JB: I guess it was your reputation and success as a storyteller that led you to do the radio work that you have done.

KW: Well, it just happened—I never planned it. I think I was telling stories in Tuscaloosa at Kentuck at the folk festival and Bo Pittman, who was manager of the public radio station, WUAL, heard me tell stories and he said he wanted me to do some commentaries for the station. I just said no I wasn't interested, I hadn't really done anything like that. Well, he called me again and I said no and he said I'm coming over to your house and we're going to tape some. You know it's not courteous to tell someone they can't come to your house. So he came and taped some recollections. He ran them on that station and people seemed to like them. He sent a tape to the national headquarters in Washington and they liked what they heard. I guess for about eighteen months they used my commentaries on National Public Radio. Now they're still used on Alabama Public Radio.

JB: I guess readers will recognize your writings with the ghost stories that you collected and published. How did that get started?

KW: It's real strange. People will say to me, "I've read your book." Of course, I know exactly what they're talking about. Though there are many books, it's always just one book, *Thirteen Alabama Ghosts*. I guess it will always be that way though. I think it's some of the least important stuff I've written but it's entertaining and it does get people interested in reading, which is important with children. Let's see, how did that get started? Something strange began happening in this house. Footsteps down that hall, doors opening and closing. I don't know what it was; nobody's ever seen it. But it kind of stirred up my interest in the supernatural. I think everybody's interested in ghost stories. I mean, that's a universal interest. I had heard them all my life and enjoyed them. Never been frightened by them. So I went to Huntingdon where I had

graduated and talked to Margaret Figh who taught folklore there for some 42 years. Do you know her?

JB: I know of her.

KW: She's been dead a good many years. I just went to tell her that maybe I had something in my house. We began to talk about famous Alabama ghosts and lamented the fact that their stories had never been collected in one volume to preserve them and for people to enjoy, and we decided we would write a collection of true Alabama ghost tales. Stories where you could visit the places where they happened and the names of the people and everything was accurate. Then you could decide what you wanted to believe about the supernatural part, because we didn't care. Margaret had taught folklore for so long and had such a vast collection of them, all sorts of stories, we had difficulty trying to decide which thirteen to include in the book. We knew, of course, the face in the courthouse window in Carrollton would have to be in there and the hole that won't stay filled down in Newton where they hanged the Methodist preacher. We wanted stories from all over the state, but we could have filled the book with stories from the Black Belt. We wanted it to be representative of Alabama so we tried to bring in stories from all parts of the state, and we had a good time doing that. She and I thought we were writing a book for adults and it amazed both of us that it was children reading that book.

People would ask me, "Now what grade level is this?" And I would say, "Grade level? How do I know?" The words in it, they would say, were long for children and I would say, "We never intended for children to be struggling with them." But they do. Teachers tell me sometimes that *Thirteen Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey* is the first book they've been able to get a child to read. That makes me happy because if you read one book you're bound to be caught up in the magic of reading. Margaret and I were just flabbergasted that we'd written a book for children.

I had such a good time doing it that I just kept on. It became almost an obsession with me. I've recovered a little bit from it.

JB: The folk traditions that appeal to you and that you have wanted to photograph and write about, were you always interested in them? Did Margaret Figh spark your interest?

KW: No, I think I was always interested in them. My father was just such a wonderful man who broadened my horizon in so many ways. He would point out things like the folk ways, the grave shelters, the songs and the foods. He was so aware





of his surroundings and of people and made me aware. He used to say to me, “It’s not things in this world that are important, it’s people. Don’t get hung up on things.” He would listen to all sorts of people. You know, they would come to him because he would listen. Just an amazing man with little education. “All you need to do is learn to read,” he said. “Then you can learn anything in the world you want to know.”

JB: In looking at *Encounters*, and being a southerner myself, there’s so much that rings true and we share so many interests. I’ve noticed you have quite a few images from cemeteries and grave yards as well as references and even photographs of homecomings that happened there and I know that a lot of non-Southerners don’t understand.

KW: Well, I just love graveyards. I can hardly pass one on a highway. I want to stop and see who’s buried there and read epitaphs. I cannot bear those perpetual care places where one sees a little vase sticking up with plastic flowers in it. I want to mow them all down. There’s a bond with these people who lived before. You can walk among their graves and touch their headstones and wonder what they thought and what songs they sang and what they ate. Almost have close fellowship with them. It’s almost like a reassurance that life does go on and that they knew some of the same joys that you know. There’s nothing sad to me about graveyards, never has been. Live Oak Cemetery here in Selma is one of the most beautiful cemeteries. Have you ever been there?

JB: Yes, I have.

KW: Then you know how beautiful it is. I like to wonder and read the names and what they wrote about. I think it’s so sad that we don’t put anything on graves anymore—just the name and the dates. Impersonal. Our world is becoming so impersonal. It’s one of the things that grieves me and one of the reasons we need storytelling. It is a personal art.

JB: Do you think the value placed on interpersonal relationships is a southern trait?

KW: Yes. We southerners are not too embarrassed to talk about what’s important to us. In fact some of us will talk it to death. We’re more open. I’ve been known to cry with a perfect stranger on a bus. But he was southern and he had some problems and he needed someone to talk to.

JB: To me, as a student of Alabama history, Julia Tutwiler epitomizes a lot of the accomplishments of Alabama and Alabamians. And you have portrayed her.

KW: Yes, she took over my life.

JB: What drew you to her as a subject?

KW: Happenstance, as my Aunt Bet used to say. A nice happenstance. I was invited to make a luncheon address for the

Alabama Federation of Women’s Clubs. Thrashing about for something to talk about, I realized they were meeting at the University of Alabama and in Tutwiler Hall. And I thought that was the perfect thing; I’d talk about Julia Tutwiler to the Women’s Clubs. But when I began to look for material for a talk there was almost nothing. Just a little mention in the fourth grade history book, some few newspaper clippings, and that scholarly book about Julia Tutwiler and social issues. “Well, someone ought to write a book about Julia Tutwiler,” I thought. I didn’t mean to do it, but she wouldn’t leave me alone. Seemed like everywhere I went people were talking about her or they were singing *Alabama*, reminding me of it. I began collecting material and thought, “OK, I’ll write the book.” I went to Livingston and found that in their library they had some tapes that were done in the 1930s or ’40s of people who had known her and told their recollections of her. I don’t think anyone had ever listened to those tapes. I listened to all the tapes and I read everything in the library and I talked to everybody in that area. I went to nursing homes. I did everything I could to get the material and ended up with stacks of stuff about her. But she wouldn’t get in a book; I couldn’t organize it into a book. She kept telling me, “I want to be alive.” I kept saying, “I can’t write plays, I’ve never written plays and I’m not an actress.” And she prodded me into doing it. Once I started writing it into a play I thought I had done a really good job. I took it to Allen Rankin. Do you remember him?

JB: Yes.

KW: He was my dear friend, I just loved Allen. We were sitting in his sun room and he was reading the script that I thought was just so wonderful and not saying anything, which was just like him. I was so impatient to hear him tell me how great it was, and he finally threw the whole thing on the floor and said, “Jesus Christ, is that the best you can write? Start over again.” So, I started over again and finally, I think it’s a good piece of writing.

[NOTE: KW replaced Rankin on the staff of the *Alabama Journal* when he joined the military around 1940. He was “one of the best feature writers I’ve ever read,” she said, and noted that he later contributed many short pieces to *Reader’s Digest*.]

JB: And you enjoyed the performances?

KW: I have enjoyed the performances. Yes, I have. I don’t guess we will ever produce another woman like her; she was amazing. I keep finding things about her. Like this black family near Livingston—the woman told me about how Miss Julia taught her father. She found out that he and two other young men wanted to teach, and they had to pass the state exam for teachers. She tutored them so they could pass that exam, and did it on campus. I think she had the first integrated campus in Alabama, but I don’t know how you would ever prove it. In my mind I know she did. Well, the woman gave me a list of the accomplishments of the family after this man got to be a teacher. His children and his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren; Annapolis graduates, doctors, teachers, lawyers, more professional people and graduates from the best colleges in the country. All because she took time to teach somebody to read.

. . .the early things from Gee's Bend are gone. . .but there are things that need to be said about Gee's Bend.

JB: What are your favorites of your books?

KW: *A Serigamy of Stories* is near the top. I also like *Alabama: One Big Front Porch*. There's nothing big or moving or touching in it but I like that collection of stories and folklore. And it does surprise me that it still sells. I even like that little thing *Count Those Buzzards! Stamp Those Grey Mules!*. It still sells. The first thing I ever had published was a cookbook and it has outsold all the rest of my books put together.

I have also done some videos. *Thirteen Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey*. That's been very successful, and that same company did *A Sampling of Southern Superstitions*. We toured around a little bit and stamped grey mules and counted buzzards, that kind of thing. They did one called *Cooking up Stories*—me cooking on two hot plates at the Birmingham Public Library while I told stories. It was fun. This video stuff also just fell in my lap. It never occurred to me to do anything like that, but it's been very nice.

JB: You've accomplished a lot in several different artistic forms, with your literature, with performances, and also with your photography. Yet I sense there are some projects that you are interested in doing.

KW: Oh, there are so many of them. I keep laughing and saying I want to decide what I'll be when I grow up. I don't know when I'll get grown up with 80 breathing down my neck. I'm not through with *Gee's Bend*. There's something about that place that holds my interest and my desire to tell the true story. But it never has been probed to its beautiful depth. Those people are changing and the ones who are the heart of Bend, so many have died. I miss them. They had customs and expressions and songs that need to be preserved.

Dean Olive Stone was at Huntingdon College when it was a women's college. Well, in the late 1920s or early 1930s she spent a great deal of time in *Gee's Bend* making recordings which have been lost. She took photographs and did recordings. The people down there still remember her. She was one of the first with an academic background who went in there, but accepting, loving and understanding of the people, too. All of what she did is gone. That's one of my great griefs, that the early things from *Gee's Bend* are gone. People go there and write such superficial stuff about them, but there are things that need to be said about *Gee's Bend*.



NOTE: Gee's Bend is an isolated Wilcox County community which was, until the past few decades, occupied almost solely by the descendants of slaves. Their customs and traditions have long been of interest to folklorists and historians.

Read more about *Gee's Bend* on "The Back Page"



KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM
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On Videotape
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Cooking up Stories

On Audiotape
Alabama Folktales
Jeffrey—Five volumes of ghost stories
Recollections—Five tapes of public radio stories



MORE CONTEMPORARY ALABAMA PLAYWRIGHTS

Words to be Seen ...And Heard

Alabama has long been known as a place of interesting personalities, both actual and fictional, so it is a good place for generating playwrights. **Charlotte Higgins** of Fairfield drew on the women of her own family for the characters in her *Exiting I-59: On the Back Roads With Some Edgy Southern Women*. “My mother has twelve sisters, and I love going back home to family reunions and just listening to the talk. What is actually said by real people is so much better than what I could dream in my imagination,” she said.

Higgins has taken her one-woman show to New Mexico, San Francisco and New York City’s Off-Off Broadway theatres. She says people from all over relate to her characters because they are dealing with common problems and universal themes. Higgins interacts with the audience whenever possible, and is often asked questions about her characters: “Have you ever worked in a nursing home?” “No.” “Well, you got it just right.”

Barbara Lebow had no firsthand experience with her subject, Lurleen Burns Wallace, Alabama’s only woman governor. She is grateful for the help she received in researching *Lurleen*, to premiere March 23 through July 24 at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. “The Wallace children and Lurleen’s best friend have been very open with me. Nobody’s ever told Lurleen’s story before. I couldn’t have done it without their help,” she said. Lebow’s play shows Lurleen as a naive teen overwhelmed by the cocky, ambitious, college man George Wallace and later as a 41-year-old woman of conviction, dying of cancer. Admitting that some of the scenes in the play are painfully honest, Lebow said of her character, “She keeps getting stronger throughout the play. I couldn’t show her gaining in strength unless I showed where she started from.”

The fact that playwriting is “all in the ear,” makes a reading of immense value to the playwright. Without costumes, scenery and lighting to set the scene, the actors sit with scripts and read the play aloud. The power of the words and the skill of the actors must be enough to convey the message.

Lurleen was in its second reading when Lebow

commented, “The play goes through changes at each reading. There were lots of revisions after the first, and there will be more after this one. *Lurleen* is still developing.”

When the reading is finished, the actors move away and Lebow takes one of their chairs to face the audience. She asks them questions: Were there any times when you felt disengaged? Times that you drifted away? Did the main character keep your attention, or was your attention diverted by other strong characters? Did the ending work? As the audience answers her questions, Lebow makes careful notes; she does not attempt to defend her play against the criticism she receives. She is interested, indeed grateful, for the feedback. As she said, there will be more revisions before the play opens, and this opportunity to both hear the play and garner audience reaction has helped her immensely.



William Cobb

The ultimate professional experience, for many playwrights, is to have a play read or workshopped in New York. Playwright and novelist **William Cobb** of Montevallo has had three plays performed at the H.B. Playwright’s Foundation Theatre in Greenwich Village. The three formed a cycle; *Sunday’s Child* was performed in the spring of 1987, with Celeste Holm in the lead; *A Place of Springs* was performed the next spring; and *Early Rains* was done in the summer of 1988. Bill Cobb says of the time he spent in New York, “I loved it. I was able to go there for the casting, to be at rehearsals, and to rewrite as we went. All three plays were successful, well received.” (*Sunday’s Child* has been performed the most; Cobb revised it and had a staged reading at Southern Playworks in Birmingham in the summer of 1997.)

The opportunity of working with professional actors (some famous and others not) was great, he says, calling them the “hardest working people I’ve ever known.” He was impressed with the seriousness the actors brought to their craft and the respect they held for the words they were given to speak. “I learned a hell of a lot from the experience,” he reminisced, especially about moving action through a scene, a lesson which he put to good use in his next novel, *A Walk Through Fire* (William Morrow & Co., 1992).



by Sunshine Huff

TEACHING/LEARNING THE CRAFT

Charlotte Higgins travels to Alabama frequently to lecture, appear on playwriting panels and conduct workshops. She performed part of *Exiting I-59* at the Southern Culture Celebration of Advent Episcopal School in Birmingham during February 1998. **Heather McCutchen** has worked with students in the New Playwright's Program at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. McCutchen lectured,



Heather McCutchen

critiqued students' work, and worked on her own play, *Baby Showers*, as an early version of the work was presented in a staged reading. The first act was then workshopped; between the first and second readings McCutchen's script changed significantly.

"McCutchen's creative process is organic," said Paul Castagno, associate professor of theatre and director of the New Playwright's program.

"Writing a play seems daunting for a young writer, so it is very helpful to actually see how this process happens."

The New Playwright's Program is a place for student and professional playwrights from all over the country to study this specialized craft. It was established in 1982 with an endowment from the estate of the late Marian Gallaway, who was from 1948-73 Director of Theatre at the University of Alabama. It was her dream to support the advancement of aspiring playwrights and to bring accomplished playwrights to the University for lectures and workshops. The program channels new work into the American College Theatre Festival through state and regional competitions, and has gained a national reputation as a venue for readings, workshops and full productions. More than 200 scripts per year are submitted, making the competition fierce. One outstanding work, an adaptation by Hueytown's **John Erlanger** of James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, was first performed at the University. (John Erlanger now writes plays in Chicago.) Other plays written by NPP students and read at the University include *The Gospel According to Esther*, *Southern Girls*, and *Killing Mother*.

Newton Neeley is organizing a playwrights' group under the auspices of the **Alabama Conference of Theatre and Speech (ACTS)**. He would like to see the fledgling group set up readings and other cooperative programs to develop playwriting talent. "There's a lot being written, but it's hard for many people to have their plays workshopped and produced," he said. Neeley teaches in the University of Montevallo

Theatre Department, which offers two playwriting courses. One of them is required for all theatre majors. Neeley explained, "It's important for actors, in fact, everyone involved with the stage, to know how a play is put together."

It's almost a necessity for a playwright to have been involved in theatre to make a go of it, Neeley said. He emphasized the practical considerations: "So many beginning playwrights do something impossible, like putting seven scene changes in the first 30 minutes." Neeley has written plays for children and for adults, including a Tennessee Williams Competition winner. Among his recent works is *Double Double Cross Cross*, a spoof on the murder mystery genre.

R. Eugene Jackson is a prolific playwright and also chairman of the Department of Dramatic Arts at the University of South Alabama. He says the university setting is perfect for a playwright: "It's great to be writing plays where you know you will be able to have them produced." Most of Jackson's plays are for children, including such titles

as *The Nutcracker Ballet-hoo*, and *Who Can Fix the Dragon's Wagon?* His *The Mardi Gras Murders* (for adults) is being produced this fall and his musical adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*, with a Cajun flavor, will be staged in December.

"Children are a tough audience; believe me, they can spot a phony," said **Betty Pewitt**. Since 1980 Pewitt and actress **Jean Pierce** have collaborated on mostly musical, mostly fairy-tale based children's plays.

"We saw a need and tried to fill it," Pewitt said. Over time they have learned to fill the needs of **Birmingham Children's Theatre**, **UAB Bookends** (small, strictly educational and designed to play in limited spaces) and, at the other end of the spectrum, **Seasoned Performers**, a seniors' troupe.



Birmingham Children's Theatre recently produced *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, adapted by Betty Pewitt and Jean Pierce.

VENUES FOR ALABAMA PLAYWRIGHTS

There are approximately 39 regional and community theatres across the state, according to Melissa "Mel" Christian, administrative director of ACTS. One that has shown particular interest in new playwrights is Theatre Tuscaloosa. It showcases new work through its "Second Stage" initiative. One Alabama playwright to have a production mounted there is **Brad Bailey** of Birmingham; Theatre Tuscaloosa did his *Womenfolks* a couple of seasons ago.

The **Southern Writers' Project** (see Summer 1998 *First Draft* for more information) of the **Alabama Shakespeare Festival** regularly invites people from regional theatres in the



Writing and Redemption

The Southern Writers' Project sends professional playwrights into schools to share their experience and expertise with students. After the playwright's talk, students try playwrighting exercises in class. The first playwright to participate was **Keith Glover**, who was writer in residence at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival at the time. Keith also taught two sessions of "Writing Our Stories," the Forum's creative writing program for incarcerated boys.

Keith is a handsome, accomplished African-American actor with impressive credentials from theater, movies and television. (He even had a recurring part in "As The World Turns.") He grew up rough in Bessemer. In the seventh grade, he

was told he was functionally illiterate; he was involved in petty larceny as a child, and once even threw another teen ager off a four-story roof, breaking one of his legs. "I was a wild animal," he said. "I just knew I had to change." His break came when he, at 17, submitted a play (inspired by the love of jazz instilled in him by his stepfather) to the Young Playwright's Festival in New York. Although he didn't win, Keith received encouragement from the founder of the Festival, Gerald Chapman. He went on to study acting with Lee Strasberg, later landing parts in August Wilson's *Fences* and *Two Trains Running*.

Keith's first play, *Dancing on Moonlight*, was produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival. Subsequent



plays, *Coming of the Hurricane* and *Thunder Knocking On the Door: A Bluesical Tale of Rhythm and the Blues* have also made an impressive showing nationally. In 1997 he won the Osborn Award from the American Theatre Critics Association.

Southeast to its readings and workshops. Lisa and Jeff Adler, co-artistic directors from Horizon Theatre Company in Atlanta, attended a recent reading, as did Linda Sherbert, acting artistic director of the Theatre in the Square in Marietta, Georgia.


There are organizations, in addition to the ones already mentioned, that concentrate exclusively on producing new work. One is **Southern PlayWorks**, a joint venture of the **Birmingham Festival Theatre**, the UAB Department of Theatre, and the Library Theatre of the Hoover Public Library. The director of Southern PlayWorks, **Vastine Stabler**, says they produce two to four plays per year; they do not always premiere the work, but they are new shows, and they are always Southern. The group has worked extensively with **Lee Shackleford**, who has been writer-in-residence at UAB. In addition to *Holmes and Watson*, which was produced Off-Broadway and elsewhere, Shackleford has written a number of liturgical plays. (Stabler points out that religious plays are frequently commissioned and can offer excellent opportunities for new playwrights.)

"Our plays come from a variety of sources," said Stabler. "We announce in the newspapers that we are looking for scripts, but generally the bulk of our submissions come through the theater networks we have—for example, we get plays sent to us from ASF or from the Horizon Theatre in Atlanta."

Stabler has worked with **Tom Key**, originally from Birmingham, well-known for his *Cotton Patch Gospel*; **Sally Nemanth**, who succeeded at playwrighting with *Millfire* and

several other plays and is now a screenwriter, and **Betsy Dewberry** of Birmingham who wrote *Flesh and Blood* and *Many Things Have Happened Since He Died, And Here Are the Highlights*.

One of the plays that Southern PlayWorks will produce this season is *Finding. . .* by **Bonnie Alice-Louise Morgan**, a Montgomery native. The play won the 21st Century Playwright's Festival in 1995, and was given a month's run at Theatre Row Theatre in New York. It was called a "noir psychodrama" by a Birmingham newspaper, which pleased the author very much. The blurb in the Southern PlayWorks schedule describes it as "set in the '40s, in which an attorney struggles to solve a mystery, complicated by visions from his past—the memory of a bewitching lover named Rose."

Playwrights like Morgan create compelling characters who come to life on the stages of community and regional theatres. Are they headed for Broadway? Who knows. But the current trend toward mega-musicals in the Lloyd-Webber and Disney mode is making good regional theatre and off-Broadway playhouses destinations in themselves. Alabama playwrights are likely to be well-represented there in the next few years. 

Sunshine Huff wrote the first installment of this article for the Summer issue of First Draft. A writer all her professional life, she moonlighted as costume director for the theatre department of Barnard College and apprenticed with a Broadway costume designer while living in New York City.



Young Men Find Their Voices



Katie Lamar Smith

Open the Door, an anthology of poems and stories from AWF's creative writing program for incarcerated youth, has drawn widespread public attention and praise. More than 100 people have requested copies of the book, including a criminal justice professor who plans to use *Open the Door* as a supplemental text.

Fifteen young authors read selections of their work from the book for a standing-room-only crowd in the chapel at Mt. Meigs youth facility on September 2. Later they signed books and mingled with guests and friends who came to congratulate them. AWF Executive Director Jeanie Thompson presented the first book to James Dupree, former director of the Alabama Department of Youth Services (DYS), with thanks for his "believing in the project and making it a priority." John Rickicki, acting DYS director, noted that "a primary purpose of the program was to bring these young people into a new means of non-violent self-expression." Rickicki said that the program also improved reading comprehension, writing skills and critical thinking. State Rep. Bill Fuller urged the young men to make the most of the positive experiences they had discovered



through writing; and creative writing teacher Bart Barton praised them for the honesty and energy they brought to class sessions and individual work.

Despite limited media access to the event, the story was distributed by the Associated Press and received prominent coverage in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, *Birmingham News*, *Tuscaloosa News*, *Florence Times-Daily*, and *Mobile Press-Register*. Tim Lennox of Alabama Public Television's "For the Record" aired a segment on *Open the Door* which included an interview with one of the boys, Richard Allen England (Valley), who had been released but came back to the campus to take part in the book signing.

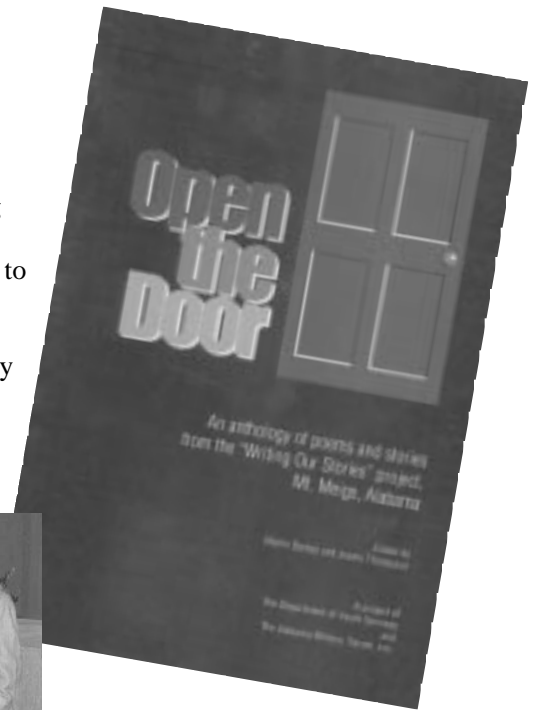
"Reading their work, I see how important it is for these young men to come to grips with their life experiences. I'm glad we have been able to encourage them and give them tools to express themselves," said Jeanie Thompson.

The "Writing Our Stories" pilot program took place at the Lurleen B. Wallace School on the Mt. Meigs campus of DYS. From November 1997 through July 1998 writer Bart Barton of Montgomery taught creative writing two mornings a week in Queen Barker's classroom. Students elected to participate in the program and there was a waiting list for others to attend. "We were told that a waiting list was a first for an academic program," Thompson said. As students rotated out of the system, others were able to take part in the creative writing experience.

Open the Door represents the work of almost every student who participat-



Bart Barton



ed. "Every effort was made to include at least one piece of writing by students who were in the class for four weeks or more," said Thompson.

During the 9-month residency a number of published writers, most of whom have strong Alabama connections, visited the class. Each talked about his or her writing experience, shared published work and worked with the students on a writing exercise. Some of the poems and prose pieces in *Open the Door* sprang from those visiting writers' lessons. Among the guest writers were Charles Gaines, Birmingham; Anthony Grooms, Atlanta; Mark Swanson, Westminster, South Carolina; and Lex Williford, Tuscaloosa. Others were poets Natasha Tretheway, Auburn; and Jeanie Thompson, Montgomery; and playwright, actor and director Keith Glover, Bessemer and New York City.

Thompson said the "Writing Our Stories" program also provided DYS with teacher-training workshops, lesson plans that can be used by classroom teachers and a library of contemporary poetry, prose and related texts for the Mt. Meigs school's permanent collection.

"Writing is a good way to deal with difficult subjects, a productive way of saying 'I'm here,' and trying to

continued on page 10

YOUNG MEN FIND THEIR VOICES

Continued from page 9

understand what that means," Thompson said.

One of the young contributors to the anthology commented, "I used to wonder how to become a writer, and now I wonder what I am going to write next."

PROGRAM EXPANDED

More young people will benefit from "Writing Our Stories" this fall when Bart Barton returns to Mt. Meigs


to teach creative writing and a second program starts at the Chalkville DYS facility for girls. Priscilla Hancock Cooper of Birmingham will teach the Chalkville class.

Cooper tours nationally as a performance poet and has been a resident artist in literature and creative dramatics. She has professional experience not only as a poet, but as a journalist, radio and video script writer/director, copywriter and curriculum writer. She has created and pre-



Priscilla Hancock Cooper

sented arts programs for grades K-12; with the strongest emphasis on middle and high school students.

Cooper's master's degree is in international communication from American University in Washington, D.C. Her undergraduate majors were journalism and history. She has taught communication courses at the University of Montevallo and at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky. 



APT's Tim Lennox interviewed Richard Allen England.



Acting DYS Director John Rickicki praised the "Writing Our Stories program.

FROM OPEN THE DOOR

OPEN THE DOOR

Open the door, I want to come in and learn All I can. What do you mean, I can't come in? What, Tell you why I want to come in? I want To come in so I can get an education and make Something of myself. I don't want to be one Of those people who live on the streets and who Could have made it in life. The sign reads *enter at own risk*. Let me enter at my own risk. Because when I do enter, I am putting the signs that read *do not enter, no trespassing, private property, dangerous curves* and *railroad crossing* of education aside. If you open the door, I can do all of these things.

So please open the door.

D.F.

FIRST TIME DETENTION

The first time I walked into Detention Hall, I was trembling and shaking violently. The first thing I saw was a big gate, On top was the razor wire that glimmered in the sunlight. I kept asking the man if they would Put me in a one-man room so I Wouldn't get beaten up. The huge Guards kept Reassuring me that nothing Would happen. I just couldn't Believe them. I stayed in the one-man cell for a week. It looked like A small isolated room in a psychiatric hospital, And smelled like a hospital room full Of dead rotten people. Then they put me In population.

The other kids were twice my size. I was only eleven years old. If you could Have seen the looks on their faces. They looked like angry bears Just woken up.

M.A.

Hearing Alabama Voices

In its fourth year, Alabama Voices brings nationally recognized Alabama authors to public libraries and educational institutions throughout the state. This year poets, novelists, and writers of creative nonfiction are included in the diverse line-up. Fully funded by the Alabama State Council on the Arts, **Alabama Voices IV** is sponsored by the Alabama Writers' Forum, the Auburn University Center for the Arts & Humanities, and the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance.

Phyllis Alesia Perry spent 16 years as a journalist in Tuskegee, Montgomery, and Atlanta, a successful



Perry

career which included a Pulitzer Prize for a series she co-wrote on infant mortality. Perry's first, highly acclaimed novel, *Stigmata*, was published by Hyperion and released this fall.

4 p.m., October 18, 1998, Macon County-Tuskegee Public Library in Tuskegee. Co-sponsored by the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance. Call 334/727-5192.

Dr. C. Eric Lincoln, distinguished scholar and author, has published fiction, poetry, and non-fiction. Dr. Lincoln is internationally known as an authority on the sociology of religion, race, and ethnic relations in the U.S. His most recent book is *Coming Through the Fire: Surviving Race and Place in America* (Duke University Press, 1996).

Three Appearances:

11 a.m., November 10, 1998, University of Alabama in Huntsville, sponsored at UAH by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

4 p.m., Nov. 10, 1998, State Black Archives on the campus of Alabama A&M.

Call Dr. James Johnson, 205/851-5846. Additional local support comes from the Huntsville Literary Association and the Huntsville Arts Council



Lincoln

3 p.m., November 12, 1998, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), Montgomery. Call 334/242-4363.

Patricia Foster is a writer and editor whose nonfiction books include *Minding the Body*, *Sister to Sister*, and *The Healing Circle*. She is at work on a book about growing up in Alabama.



Foster

4 p.m., January 10, 1999, Parnell Memorial Public Library, Montevallo. Co-sponsored by the University of

Montevallo. For more information, contact Renee Palmer, 205/665-9207.

Carolyn Haines is a former photo-journalist who turned to fiction writing a decade ago. To date, Ms. Haines has written two general fiction books—*Touched* (Dutton, 1996) and *Summer of the Redeemers* (Dutton, 1994)—as well as more than 20 romance and mystery novels.



Haines

4 p.m., Feb. 9, 1999, Beville State Community College, Jasper. Call Marthanne Brown, 205/387-5115.

Frye Gaillard, has written more than a dozen books. His latest book on 20th-century Native American life and culture is called *As Long as the Waters Flow: Native Americans in the South and East*.



Gaillard

Reading to be scheduled in the spring in Atmore.

Call Jay Lamar, 334/844-4947.

Robert Collins is an award-winning poet who teaches at UAB. His chapbooks include *Lives We Have Chosen*, winner of the Tennessee Chapbook Award, and *The Glass Blower*.



Collins

7:30 p.m. January 21, Hale County Public Library,

Greensboro. Call Carolyn Hemstreet, 334/624-3409.

Nanci Kincaid is the author of *Crossing Blood*, *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*, and *Balls*, a recently published novel about the professional and personal life of a football coach's wife.



Kincaid

Reading in late spring, Houston Love Memorial Library, Dothan.

Call Bettye Forbus, 334/793-9767.



NEWS

AWF ASSOCIATES MEETING: FEBRUARY 12-13, 1999

MEET AND LEARN FROM FELLOW ALABAMA WRITERS

The second statewide meeting of **Alabama Writers' Forum** associates will be held **February 12-13, 1999** at **Auburn University at Montgomery** in conjunction with the **7th Annual AUM Writers' Colloquium**. "The Alabama Writers' Forum and the Continuing Education division of AUM decided to combine our two efforts this year so that we could maximize our conference resources," said Jeanie Thompson. "We are pleased that the audience developed for the Writers' Colloquium will be joined with the associates of the Forum. This will be a fruitful partnership, and one that we expect to continue!"

The opening convocation on Friday will feature **Robert Inman** reading from his new novel, *Dairy Queen Days*. A luncheon will follow, with a program on "The Art of the Interview" by University of Alabama English Professor **Don Noble**, host of "Bookmark" on Alabama Public Television.



Robert Inman

Both afternoons will be devoted to panel discussions. Topics and presenters include "Why You Should Write Juvenile Fiction," **Aileen Henderson** and **Rick Shelton**; "Genre' is Not a Dirty Word," **Anne George** and **Carolyn Haines**; "Writing Literary Fiction and Nonfiction," **Michael Martone** and **Roy Hoffman**; "Diverse Chorus: Southern Poetry



Anne George

Today," **Robin Behn**, **Natasha Tretheway** and **Jake Berry**, with moderator **Jeanie Thompson**; and "Adapting Fiction to Film," **Bruce Kuerten** and **John DeJulio**.



Coleman Barks

Arts. A reception will follow. **Helen Norris** will read during the Saturday morning session. On Saturday, the luncheon program will feature readings by **Robert Collins** and **Carolyn Haines**, 1999-2000 Alabama State Council on the Arts Fellowship Winners in Literature.



Helen Norris

Books by authors on the program will be available, with plenty of time for autographs, and there will be exhibits by literary organizations, journals and presses.

"The Alabama Writers' Forum has helped us in the past with conference planning and marketing. It seemed like a natural step to join forces and produce one larger conference sponsored by both entities," said **Pam Stein** of AUM's continuing education department.

A brochure with a registration form will be mailed to all Writers' Forum associates. If you are not currently a member, call 334/244-3929 or 334/244-3804 for registration

AWF AWARDED NEA GRANT

The Alabama Writers' Forum has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts through the ArtsREACH program. The funding will be used to produce and distribute the first Alabama Literary Resources Directory, a publication listing information on Alabama writers, writers' conferences, and schools and libraries which host visiting writers or present literary programs. The information will also be available on-line.

"We often hear from organizations that want to hold literary events, and from writers who are looking for opportunities to present and publicize their work. This publication will meet the needs of both groups," said Jeanie Thompson.

ArtsREACH was designed to improve access to the arts for residents in cities, small towns and rural areas. The program will fund 84 grants totaling \$733,757 to a wide variety of non-profit and public organizations in 20 states. The nine grants to Alabama arts groups amount to more than \$87,000.



IN MEMORIAM

John Henrick Clarke (1915-1998), professor emeritus of African World History at Hunter College in New York City, was the author of more than 50 short stories and author or editor of more than 20 books. He also wrote numerous essays and articles on American history, politics and culture. He was a co-founder of the *Harlem Quarterly*.

AWF Literary Awards Honor Young Alabama Writers

As proud parents and teachers looked on, young writers—high school students from all across Alabama—were honored by the Writer’s Forum at the annual Literary Arts Awards luncheon in Montgomery last April. The students’ prize winning submissions of poetry, creative nonfiction, fiction and drama were selected from a total of more than 500 entries.

Several of the judges for the competition presented awards, including fiction writer William Cobb, Montevallo; poet Sue Scalf, Prattville; and Robert Halli, professor of English at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor for the *Atlanta Constitution* judged creative nonfiction and playwright Barbara Lebow, also of Atlanta and author of *Lurleen*, to be premiered at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in 1999, judged the drama entries.

“Our goal is to recognize young writers as they begin their journey,” said Jeanie Thompson. “We hope that this contest will also validate the hard work that creative writing and English teachers do. Perhaps through the encouragement of the Literary Arts Awards, more school systems will appreciate the value of creative writing—which is really about writing and reading,” she said. “These are our future writers, but also our future teachers, scientists and leaders.”

Anita Miller Garner, assistant professor of English at the University of North Alabama, Florence, receives and screens the entries. She said the quantity of entries is growing and the quality continues to improve.

One of the 1998 scholarship winners, Emma Bolden, will have at least one piece included in an anthology of contemporary Alabama writers being published by Livingston Press, according to her teacher, Denise Trimm. Trimm said honors like the literary Arts Awards provide important incentives for young writers. “It’s great to have that boost, that



Front row: Emma Bolden, Morgan Kopaska-Merkel, Amethyst Vineyard, Nikkita Marie Kind, Alexis Willa Adams; Middle row: Sally Spaulding, Brooke Lowder, Shelba Harden, Candice Bailey, Joe Halli, Wesley Self; Back row: Emma Bolden, Haley Hogan, Jessica Smith, Ben Rogers.

recognition at a young age that says ‘you are good at what you do.’ ”

WINNERS

\$500 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

Emma Bolden, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Birmingham

Shelba N. Harden, student of Jane Ellen Stritzinger, Demopolis High School

Jessica Smith, student of Mary Ann Rygiel, Auburn High School

Judge: **Dr. Robert Halli**, professor of English, the University of Alabama



Dr. Robert Halli and scholarship recipient Shelba N. Harden.



Nancy Strachan accepting from Brent Davis for her student Tom Radcliff, second place, creative nonfiction.



William Cobb and Brooke Lowder, second place, fiction.



1998 LITERARY ARTS AWARDS BY GENRE

First place winners receive \$150; second place winners receive \$75; judge's special recognition winners receive a certificate. A plaque with the names of winners and teachers is presented to each winner's school. Winners also receive books by the judges.

CREATIVE NONFICTION

First Place: **Wesley Self**, student of Darlene Montgomery, Bradshaw High School, Florence

Second Place: **Tom Radcliff**, student of Nancy Strachan, St. Paul's Episcopal School, Mobile

Third Place: **Kimi Jones**, student of Jerry Krayner, Hewitt Trussville High School, Trussville

Judge: **Cynthia Tucker**, editorial page editor, the *Atlanta Constitution*.

DRAMA

First Place: **Emma Bolden**, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Second Place: **Ben Rogers**, student of Mary Ann Rygiel, Auburn High School

Judge: **Barbara Lebow**, playwright and author of *Lurleen*.

FICTION

First Place: **Emma Bolden**, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Second Place #1: **Brooke Lowder**, student of Martin Hames, the Altamont School, Birmingham

Second Place #2: **Sally Spaulding**, student of Jim Palmer, the Altamont School, Birmingham

Judge's Special Recognition: **Haley Hogan**, student of Jon Carter, Briarwood Christian High School, Birmingham

Morgan Kopaska-Merkel, student of Annette Dudgeon, Tuscaloosa Central High School - West



Emma Bolden, scholarship recipient, won firsts in drama and fiction and judge's special recognition in poetry.



Nikkita Marie Kind, first place, poetry.



Amethyst Vineyard, judge's special recognition, poetry.



Sue Scalf and Joe Halli, judge's special recognition, poetry.

Lydia Brawner, student of Mary Ann Rygiel, Auburn High School

Amanda Murray, student of Jim Palmer, the Altamont School

Judge: **William Cobb**, novelist and author of *Harry Reunited*, *Somewhere in All This Green*, and other works.

POETRY

First Place: **Nikkita Marie Kind**, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Second Place: **Alexis Willa Adams**, student of Anne-Wyman Black, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Judge's Special Recognition: **Emma Black**, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Paula Guillian, student of Jean Arndt and Marsha Scarborough, Grissom High School, Huntsville

Candice Bailey, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Amethyst Vineyard, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Emma Bolden, student of Denise Trimm, Alabama School of Fine Arts

Joe Halli, student of Annette Dudgeon, Tuscaloosa Central High School-West

Judge: **Sue Scalf**, poet and author of *South by Candlelight* and other works.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

MAJOR SPONSORS:

Alabama State Council on the Arts—1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999

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1999 LITERARY ARTS AWARDS

GUIDELINES

The deadline for **receiving** both the Literary Awards entries and the Scholarship entries is **February 12, 1999**. Complete entry guidelines are given below. **Entries not conforming to complete guidelines will be disqualified.**

Mail all entries, each with an entry form, to:

Anita Miller Garner
c/o Department of English,
Box 5050
University of North Alabama
Florence, AL 35632-0001

For more information contact Garner at 256/765-4889 or email at agarner@unanov.una.edu.

ELIGIBILITY

The literary arts awards are open to Alabama high school students grades 9-12, and the scholarships are available to seniors in Alabama high schools.

LITERARY ARTS AWARDS

Creative Nonfiction: 1st place (\$150), 2nd place (\$75), "Judge's Special Recognition"

Poetry: 1st place (\$150), 2nd place (\$75), "Judge's Special Recognition"

Short Fiction: 1st place (\$150), 2nd place (\$75), "Judge's Special Recognition"

Each winner receives a certificate and a book signed by the author. Each school receives a plaque listing winners and their teachers.

JUDGING

Writers of national recognition in the fields of creative nonfiction, drama, poetry, and fiction will choose the winning entries. The names of the

judges will be announced when the awards announcement is made.

FORMAT FOR ENTRIES

Submit entries in a 9" x 12" envelope. Submit clear photocopies only; students should retain originals. No manuscripts can be returned. Do not attempt to send entries via fax. Students' names should appear only on the entry form since all works are judged anonymously.

All short fiction, drama, and creative nonfiction entries should be typed and double-spaced. Poetry entries may be typed single-spaced or double-spaced. **Students must designate on the entry form the category for which they wish the work to be considered.**

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS IN LITERARY ARTS

The scholarship awards in literary arts are open to seniors **in good standing in Alabama high schools**. Portfolios placed in consideration of the scholarship awards in literary arts will be judged anonymously by a panel of judges from the fields of literature and creative writing. Awards are based solely on merit of works submitted. A portfolio of no less than 20 pages and no more than 50 pages of work from at least two categories is required.

All entries should be typed and double-spaced, one side only. Poetry may be single-spaced.

CATEGORIES FOR PORTFOLIO WORK

- Poetry (three shorter poems, or longer works totaling no more than 10 pages)
- Short fiction (20-page limit)
- Creative nonfiction (15-page limit)

- Chapter(s) from a novel accompanied by a one page synopsis of the novel (25-page limit)
- Vignettes
- Short drama/screenplay (25-page limit)
- Scholarly essay or research paper with a creative focus (10-page limit)

FORMAT FOR PORTFOLIOS

Portfolios should be submitted in duplicate. Students should retain originals. No manuscripts can be returned. Make clear photocopies. Do not attempt to send entries via fax. Students' names should appear only on the entry form. The title page should also list the names of the individual works that make up the portfolio with each work's category designated.

HOW TO MAIL ENTRIES FOR THE LITERARY ARTS AWARDS OR SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS IN LITERARY ARTS

Mail entries in envelopes clearly marked "Literary Arts Awards" or "Scholarship Entry" in the lower left corner. Please do not send works in binders, folders or any type of cover. Paper clip or staple pages together. Mail to Anita Miller Garner at the address above.

Official announcement of the Literary Arts Awards and Scholarship Awards will be made in April 1999 at the Literary Arts Award luncheon in Montgomery.

**NOTE:
THE ENTRY FORM
IS NEW THIS YEAR.**

ENTRY FORM

1999 LITERARY ARTS AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

This form takes the place of a cover sheet. You may duplicate it as often as necessary. Please type or print. All entries must have an entry form attached. Do not put student's name on work submitted. NOTE: Read this whole form before completing it.

Student's name _____

Student's address _____

Student's home phone _____ Student's grade _____

Teacher's name _____ Teacher's daytime phone _____

Principal _____ School phone _____

School _____

School address _____

- This submission is for Literary Arts Awards.
Grades 9-12 eligible.
- Check one: Creative Nonfiction Drama/Screenplay Fiction Poetry

Title(s) of work submitted:

- This submission is for the Portfolio Scholarship Competition.
Seniors Only. Submit between 20-50 pages, in at least two categories.

List Categories and Titles of work submitted:
Eligible categories are creative nonfiction (15-page limit), drama/screenplay, novel (25-page limit), poetry (10-page limit), scholarly essay (10-page limit), and short fiction (20-page limit).



Jay Lamar, Book Review Editor

REVIEWS

Balls
by Nanci Kincaid
Algonquin, 1998
396 pp. Cloth, \$21.95

Two professions automatically command respect in most Southern towns: preacher and football coach. In *Balls* we have an authentic, first-hand account of the latter by a gifted writer who has been close to the game all her adult life. Like Kincaid herself, Dixie marries her school sweetheart, Mac, who becomes a football coach.



(Kincaid's first husband coached at many schools, including the University of Alabama. Her current husband is head coach at the University of Arizona.) Through a host of characters, Kincaid follows this couple as the husband's career takes them to Birmingham University (Ham U), a fictional college in Alabama, where he ultimately leads one of the nation's most prestigious and demanding programs.

Balls is an entertaining and compelling book, and football fans will enjoy the stories Kincaid tells about monomaniacal coaches, obsessed fans, crooked boosters, and self-centered athletes. The vivid way she captures the fervor of the fans shows that the author is a keen observer of the game and of those in the stands. But the book is at its best when Dixie tries to figure out her husband, and one needn't be a fan to be fascinated with this exploration. Why is he drawn into this world of other men? What is it about the locker room—a world where Dixie is excluded—that allows Mac to cry for joy after a victory or embrace an injured player and weep with him? Yet at home this man she loves, this man who no doubt loves her, says little other than to make sure that the trustees and big school boosters will be well-fed and entertained during the post-game party.

Some readers may be frustrated with the book's shifting viewpoints, but Kincaid skillfully weaves the separate accounts into an entertaining, thoughtful, and, at times, painful book that

examines two of our great pastimes: football and the ways of men and women.

Brent Davis is public information manager at the University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio and president of the Alabama Writers' Forum board of directors.

Stigmata
Phyllis Alesia Perry
Hyperion, 1998
235 pp. Cloth, \$21.95

Phyllis Alesia Perry's *Stigmata* is a novel filled with dreams, visions, and eventual redemption—a memorable fairytale for adults.



Lizzie DuBose is the daughter of an affluent Tuskegee couple. Her father is a doctor and her mother gives teas for charitable organizations. At the age of 14, Lizzie inherits her maternal grandmother's quilts, which tell the story of the family's slave ancestors. Her grandmother died before Lizzie was born and her mother is puzzled about why her daughter was selected for an inheritance that should have been hers.

Lizzie has the uncanny ability to reveal family secrets that she has no rational way of knowing. One evening she wakes up in a pool of her own blood. She believes that the blood on her wrists and back comes from the slave manacles that she has been dreaming about. Her horrified parents believe that she has attempted suicide. Lizzie will spend the next 20 years in and out of institutions where therapists aren't always sympathetic to her claims of reincarnation and that her scars are healing stigmata.

Upon her return home, Lizzie uses the quilt-making skills she picked up in occupational therapy to show her parents what she could not tell them at age 14. The years of accumulated and cross-generational suffering melt away, allowing the family to successfully bury the past.

Perry is a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper editor who lives in Atlanta. *Stigmata* is a selection of the Book of the Month Club and a finalist for

Quality Paperback's New Voice Award. The author is at work on her second novel.

Pam Kingsbury is an adjunct instructor in English at the University of North Alabama and member of the Alabama Humanities Foundation Speakers Bureau.

Gone for Good
by Mark Childress
Knopf, 1998
370 pp. Cloth, \$25

Gone for Good, the latest offering from Mark Childress, is skillfully written, take-you-away-from-it-all escapism.

Childress, who lives in Costa Rica, sets most of this book in his own tropical backyard. Full of magic and sex (and magical sex), this is primarily the story of 1970s folk-rock star Ben "Superman" Willis and his rollicking, wildly comic adventures on a remote otherworldly island. A subplot involves his son, Ben Junior, and his funny, heartrending search for his missing father. Childress does a fine job of blending the two.



A disillusioned Superman, flying to his next concert, veers off course and crash lands on a mysterious tropical island. No ordinary dot in the ocean, it's the perfect place for a man to disappear. And it's home to a collection of famous and infamous people from all over the world—including some you thought were dead and buried. The island itself is magical, with talking monkeys and life-changing natural springs. Mix this with some crackpots whose dementia almost defies description and you have all the ingredients for a big adventure. To read this one, you—like our hero—have to put the real world on hold. You also have to suspend belief in lots of things—including the laws of physics.

Gone for Good is a fun, well-told adventure story with some thought-provoking commentary on celebrity, success, money, love, and sex.

Editor and writer Susan Swagler is the book columnist for The Birmingham News.

Many Voices, Many Rooms: A New

REVIEWS

Anthology of Alabama Writers
 Edited by Philip D. Beidler
 University of Alabama Press, 1998
 335 pp. Paper, \$22.50

Philip Beidler has done it again. In *Many Voices, Many Rooms* he has tapped the treasure of Alabama writing, introducing us to new finds and reacquainting us with old favorites.

Just a decade ago, Beidler produced *The Art of Fiction in the Heart of Dixie*, which became a catalyst for burgeoning interest among scholars and readers exploring the legacy of Alabama literature. Beidler's selections for that volume spanned almost 200 years but were limited by space and permission availability. This new volume attempts to complete the earlier one, to introduce new discoveries, such as Viola Goode Liddell's fiction, and to include writers gaining national prominence, such as Mary Ward Brown.

The selections represent the state's literary history and its culture, beginning with chapters from *The Lost Virgin of the South*, a "gothic-sentimental-historical-picaresque" novel from the early 1880s, and ranging to contemporary selections that seem to reflect the state's obsession with football, Babs Deal's "We Got to Beat Georgia" and Jimmy Buffet's "Off to See the Lizard." In between, the selections provide insight into the changing nature of the state, from a segregated world of post-Reconstruction to a society beset with turmoil from Civil Rights marches. Some authors are familiar; others are obscure; all are delightful.

Kudos to Phil Beidler for giving the people of Alabama another literary treasure.

Elaine Hughes is professor of English at the University of Montevallo.

Encounters
 by Kathryn Tucker Windham

Black Belt Press, 1998
 112 pp. Hard Cover \$29.95; Soft Cover \$19.95; Limited edition of 100 slip-cased, signed and numbered, \$100.00

Alabama's best friend and foremost storyteller, Kathryn Tucker Windham, once again shares her wonderful capacities for understanding, appreciating, and enjoying the human race in *Encounters*, a collection of her own photographic work. Lige Danzy, basketmaker, "a fine craftsman," Uncle Hiram Davis, "the only ex-slave I ever knew," and many others whose names she never knew are included. The book depicts a wide variety of Southern scenes, many of which we will not see again—domino players on the front porch of a country store, mules and plowman heading home after a day in the fields, and clothes hanging to dry on a barbed wire fence, for example.

Windham dedicates her book to Eastman Kodak because she never thanked the company for its gift of a Brownie camera when she was 12. We add our thanks, for that present has benefitted us all as it led to Windham's lifelong interest in photography. The pictures in this small, well-designed book reflect the photographer's humor and compassion for Alabamians, their habits and habitats. This is a book to spend time with and treasure.

Mary Ann Neeley is director of Landmarks of Montgomery. Her photographic history of Montgomery, Capital City Corners, was published in 1997.

Dancing on the Edge
 by Han Nolan
 Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997
 244 pp. Cloth, \$16.00

In November 1997, the prestigious National Book Award for Young People's Literature was given to Alabamian Han Nolan for her novel *Dancing on the Edge*.

Her teen hero-narrator, Miracle (so named because she was delivered from her accident-killed mother), lives with a spiritualist grandmother and alienated grandfather. When she is 10, her father

disappears, and Miracle comes to believe herself responsible: that she is a mistake, not a miracle. Dance is a



release from her growing disorientation. But when she falls off the edge, a psychiatrist's care and her aunt's love heal her.

Nolan has said in an interview that her books are about "young people com-

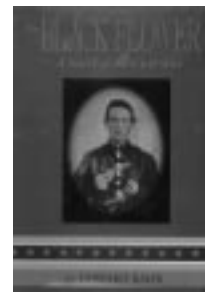
ing into their own and finding themselves." Her earlier works—*If I Should Die Before I Wake* (1994) and *Send Me Down a Miracle* (1996 National Book Award finalist)—also feature heroes struggling toward maturity through social as well as individual dilemmas.

Joan Nist is Professor Emerita in Children's Literature at Auburn University.

The Black Flower:
A Novel of the Civil War
 by Howard Bahr
 Owl Books, 1998
 267 pp. Paper, \$12

From the get-go, Howard Bahr's *The Black Flower* puts the reader into the fray of the Civil War with 26-year-old Bushrod Carter, a Mississippi boy faltering far from home, dreaming of hoe cakes slathered in molasses. Reminiscent of *Cold Mountain* simply because it is about the same war and the writing is as rich with down-home details, *The Black Flower* bores into the dirt and the grime and the blood of war. It is its own book, a story of people facing the facts of war: stomach-growling, breeches-itching, heart-hitting combat.

Bahr's characters are swollen with reality: from the Marvelous Dog, a terrier cur named Old Hundred, to legend-creating Jack Bishop, who frightens the enemy by running naked through the forest the night before battle, to Virgil C. Johnson, the fiddler, to Sam Hook, the chaplain and owner





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of Old Hundred. Even Nebo Gloster, the inept conscript, grabs the reader's heart and squeezes, especially in the final pages.

His pen as deft as a single-shot Enfield long rifle, Bahr creates anticipation, grating in the words themselves, as the fighting nears, giving the reader what Mailer, Jones, and Crane have laid out before. The mournful soul of a soldier and a sound, like the Taps, lingers after the book is put aside, all the more poignant when the men fighting each other know they should be neighbors, not enemies.

Bahr is so perfect in his descriptions that he makes you ask, "When was the last time I saw a morning glory awaken?" He makes solitude live. Not since Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* have I been swept so strongly through a narrative by the sheer pull and power of the words of a book.

Wayne Greenhaw's latest book, *To Touch a Rainbow: A Reminiscence, his thirteenth, will be published next year by Black Belt Press.*

Eakin's Mistress

by James Bradberry
St. Martin's Press, 1997
169 pp. Cloth, \$19.95

A successful architect in the Philadelphia area, James Bradberry, an Auburn native, established himself as a serious mystery writer with the 1994 publication of *The Seventh Sacrament*, the first book in his Jamie Ramsgill mystery series, followed a year later by *Ruins of Civility*. Ramsgill, also an architect, has a sharp eye for place and visual detail and a penchant for stumbling into dangerous and criminal situations.

Philadelphia and the Pocono town of Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania, are the settings for *Eakin's Mistress*, the third Ramsgill mystery. Ramsgill accepts an offer by an old friend, David Laycutt, to interview for a partnership in his architectural firm. When Laycutt disappears, along with \$75,000 of his firm's money, Ramsgill is drawn into the hunt and discovers that Laycutt was probably mixed up in a scheme to substitute a forgery for a valuable, uncatalogued, and privately owned Thomas Eakin painting. Ramsgill sets out to ascertain the authenticity of the painting and to

uncover the identity of Eakin's young model, whose erotic pose displayed far less modesty than was common in the Victorian era.

Eakin's Mistress is fast-paced and, like early John Fowles novels, full of unanticipated twists and turns. Bradberry delights in surprising the reader by the piecemeal disclosure of unexpected flaws of ambition, greed, or exaggerated concern for reputation. Readers who pay attention to detail, noting whether characters shake or stir their martinis, will appreciate Ramsgill solving one of the mysteries in *Eakin's Mistress* by observing whether the Chippendale chair in the disputed painting was made in Philadelphia or Boston.

Allen Cronenberg is director of the Auburn University Center for the Arts & Humanities.

POETRY

Babylon in a Jar: New Poems
by Andrew Hudgins
Houghton Mifflin, 1998
72 pp. Cloth, \$22

In his fifth book of poetry, *Babylon in a Jar*, Andrew Hudgins resecures familiar territory and extends his lines in important ways. Familiarly, many poems relate thematically human and natural forces, but now human history integrates with the living world. Such vision implies a spirit behind creating and uncreating, and this is Hudgins' most religious collection. People, nature, and civilizations live, die, become dust, and, as dust, are breathed in by the living human as the living world breathes out. Reciprocity of breathing, a recurrent motif, establishes the organic unity of all. Obliteration and renewal are the same; "death is never wasted."

Babylon in a Jar also presents poetry as visual experience. The title poem and others fill their pages massively; poems on vegetation assume the verticality of shoots. In "The Chinaberry" carefully placed repetitions reinforce a discussion of shadowing, and "sprang" springs from line to line. Always, Hudgins' diction and

imagery convince: "the confines of our longing," a retriever retrieving "alight with the exacting genius of her joy," a hunting dragonfly as "a whip tip crackling gnats out of the air."

These poems offer many "a miracle made from this world," and Hudgins teaches us that miracles can be made from nothing else.

From "Ashes"

Eight months her ashes challenged me to grieve.
But I kept waiting
and, as I knew it would,
the magic
leached away, the awe
withdrew.
and I disposed of it, her dust, as we do
almost all
the dead—even those
we loved,
loved utterly—
because they are sheer dust
and should be honored as the dust they are.

Robert Halli is professor of English at the University of Alabama.

Lives We Have Chosen by Robert Collins

In *Poems and Plays, Issue #5* (Winner of the 1998 Tennessee Chapbook Prize) Single copies are \$6 from *Poems and Plays, English Dept. Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132*

An aura of sadness emanates from the fourteen poems of Robert Collins' new chapbook, the title of which refers to lost souls described in the poem "Those Who Have Vanished." Midlife losses goad the persona of these poems as he strives to renew his faith in the world.

As the chapbook continues, however, several poems offer acts of imagination as the solution to emotional stagnation. "Always Stay Calm, Never Shout Fire," "The Editor of Dreams," "The Magician's Assistant," and "The Counterfeiter's Confession" present a world made fresh through a renewed creative vision.

In the penultimate poem, "Epiphany," the speaker experiences a moment of connectedness with the world's beauty, but in the final poem, "Running It All Back," he once again reviews the film of his life and finds himself wishing he could "run it all back" to a place of innocence—the dream of a prelapsarian existence. The other poems in the chapbook belie



REVIEWS

that dream, and the best of them point toward a harder but perhaps more realistic alternative.

Jennifer Horne is a poet who lives in Tuscaloosa.

Hard Facts

by Peter Huggins

Livingston University Press, 1998
59 pp. Paper, \$9.95

Peter Huggins' first volume of poetry, *Hard Facts*, is a book that does two things well: it presents keenly observed experience, and it conveys experience in words equally keen for their precision and memorable quality. Huggins breaks away from the musical quality that is traditional for the lyric poem in favor of an incisiveness of tone. In "Fear" the speaker contemplates the variety of ways in which he might encounter death, ranging from criminal mischief, cracked brake drums, and insanity. He ends the poem with his own fear:

I say it's Bierce
Writing to his wife
And riding off with Pancho Villa
Adios, goodbye, you devils.

The last fear is more compelling and encompassing than the rest, a willful giving over to the impulse toward madness and misanthropy. Huggins likes to write toward the end of the poem, toward some dramatic or rhetorical high point. His poem about Ezra Pound, which presents the mad poet rattling his wire cage in Pisa, ends with Pound "Silenced by the cricket/Singing in the dry grass." The sundry devastations that come with time comprises one of the book's major themes. This theme provides the book with its most compelling tensions and some of its best imagery, found in "How to See the Invisible" and in the wonderful "Glendalough," a moving lyric about the caprice and calamity of history. For these and many other reasons, *Hard Facts* is a delight to read. The book revels in the mind's play in the arena of ideas and shows how this arena is various and inexhaustible.

Scott Ward's Crucial Beauty won the 1990 Loiederman Poetry Prize. He teaches at Eckerd College in Florida.

BOOKS NOTED

Suzanne Pickett's *Hot Dogs for*

Thanksgiving: a Memoir (Black Belt Press, 1998) is a little jewel of a book. Her well-developed sense of drama and her skill with telling detail make its clean, unselfconscious prose shine. The only awkward thing about the book is its title; it somehow falls shy of the richness of the story. In spite of that, you'll find that within a few pages you're chest-deep in her tales of life in the Appalachian coal fields and mining camps and can't put them down.



J. Richard Gruber's *William Christenberry: The Early Years, 1954-1968* (University of Alabama Press, 1998) is a significant and thorough consideration of the artist's life and work. Published in cooperation with



the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia, and a catalogue for the museum's major Christenberry exhibition, it

explores the Alabama native's painting, photography, and "constructions" both in their connection to the culture and environment of his native South and in the context of major American art movements. Full of images of the artist and his work, the book is rich with biographical and critical information, as well as with Christenberry's own ideas and reflections.

Lizzie Hart, a.k.a. Carolyn Haines, author of more than 25 books, including the critically acclaimed *Touched* and *Summer of the Redeemers*, explores the dark, and hilarious, side of writers' groups and television repair in *Shop Talk* (KaliOka Press, 1998). This, the first offering from the newly established KaliOka Press based in Semmes, Alabama, covers quite a lot of



territory—from alien DNA to beefalos to cheesecake. In the middle—or from the fringe—the members of the Writers of Mississippi Books (WOMB) women's writing group solve mysteries, find love, and finally get published. Prediction: a cult following for this book will be starting near you.

Published to enthusiastic reviews, **Dorothy Herrmann's** *Helen Keller: A Life* (Knopf, 1998) is an important book for anyone interested in the woman who is arguably Alabama's most famous native. Born in Tuscumbia in 1880, Keller has been the subject of other works, notably William Gibson's play *The Miracle Worker*, and the facts of her life are well-known. Herrmann tells us what we couldn't have known, but might have wondered if we'd considered all the implications of Keller's circumstances. Acknowledging Keller's outward accomplishments, astounding still, she pushes on to explore the private costs, compromises, and unsuspected graces of disability, celebrity, and dependency. Her portrait of this highly intelligent, complex woman is fascinating and thought-provoking on many levels.



First Draft welcomes publication news. Please let us know of books and journals—your own or those by others with connections to Alabama—you would like to see reviewed. Contact Jay Lamar at 334/844-4947 (Fax 334/844-4949) in Auburn.



FROM OPEN THE DOOR

Continued from page 10

THE VASE

I watched my art teacher as she molded the clay into a vase on the potter's wheel. God, I don't have time for this, I thought. I did not like Mrs. Dolores at all. She was boring, glum, and didn't seem to care for anything but soft art and classical music, all of which I considered boring.

But one day I stayed behind after the class left school, for she was my last period.

"Why do you like this boring stuff?" I finally blurted out. "How can you just sit and do this stuff day after day?"

Mrs. Dolores looked up from the vase she was molding and seemed to be piercing my soul with her grey eyes.

"Because I'm good at it and it soothes my soul and calms me down," she answered in a voice that I had never heard from her. It was bright and enthusiastic and her grey eyes seemed to glow.

God, Mrs. Dolores, your soul should be the calmest in the world and the most undisturbed soul with the boring stuff you do all the time, I thought.

"Listen to me," Mrs. Dolores went on, "I know you don't like my class, but you could at least show some appreciation for something different than rap music and your Gangsta homies."

"Well I...", I tried to say.

"Come here," she said.

I walked over to the potter's wheel where she was and she stood up and let the potter's wheel stop.

"You are going to finish this vase, anyway you want to, but you are going to finish it," Mrs. Dolores said.

I took off my jacket and set my bookbag down. I sat in the stool in front of the wheel and started it. I didn't know how to finish it, so I looked up at her, puzzled.

She took my hands in hers. Her hands felt good against mine with the wet, moist clay. She guided my hands with hers, ever so gentle. Her voice, every time I messed up, encouraged me, and I saw a side of Mrs. Dolores that I had never seen before. She constantly flashed a bright smile as she helped me. And I enjoyed every bit of it. The classical music added to the calm atmosphere. Finally when we were finished I stood back up and admired the vase. With Mrs. Dolores's help that lump of clay had turned into a beautiful vase.

I.M.

WHEN THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND

When things got out of hand at times
I'd go to my special place where I knew
He'd never find me.

I would not breathe because of course

I knew what would happen.

He couldn't see me up under the house,

But I could hear the creeping of the boards under his feet.

I smelled the steak that he had fixed.

He was trying his best to get me.

I couldn't see a thing because it was black as night.

I watched him until he went to bed.

I came to eat my food. He would be asleep.

As the monster snored and ground his teeth,

I knew I would be safe as long as he slept.

The smell of the steak was deep in the night.

I just couldn't keep myself from crying.

I think about him and now I am safe—

He won't do it anymore because I am a man.

T.L.

HE WENT TO BUY A PACK OF SMOKES

The bright heat

Of an Alabama sun

In July

Fell from father's shoulders,

Off his bare chest,

And to his feet

As he walked to the store shoeless

To buy a pack of smokes.

Mother said he was crazy

The years before I was born

And I knew it must be true

If he was anything like

The years after I came.

Three girls in a car passing by,

All strange and maybe beautiful,

Said they were going to California,

Did he want to come?

And just like that he was gone

From mother's life and mine,

The child yet born, the son unknown,

Leaving his wife without her heart.

He went barefoot everywhere he could,

And when I asked,

All he said was:

"I like to feel the earth."

When he was my father,

He was older,

And maybe not so crazy,

But I would hold his hand tight anyway,

So afraid of losing him

When we walked along that highway

He had walked so long before.

R.E.

CALENDAR

QUARTERLY EVENTS

Oct. 18—Alabama Voices Phyllis Perry, Tuskegee

Author **Phyllis Alesia Perry** will read from her novel, *Stigmata*, at the Macon County-Tuskegee Public Library at 4 p.m. Call 334/727-5192.

Oct. 21—Alabama Authors, Alexander City

Philip D. Beidler, University of Alabama professor of English, will present a critique of Mary Ward Brown's *Tongues of Flame*. The program is part of a series sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation called Today's Society: Its Beliefs and Practices as Portrayed by Alabama Authors. Classes meet from 1 until 3 p.m. in the Horizons Unlimited Room on the third floor of the Thomas D. Russell Library on the Central Alabama Community College campus. Call Dr. Bill Niedermeier, 256/825-5535.

Oct. 28—Alabama Authors, Alexander City

William Cobb, University of Montevallo English professor and author in residence, will read from and discuss his novel, *A Walk Through Fire*. The final program in a series sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, the session will meet from 1 until 3 p.m. in the Horizons Unlimited Room on the third floor of the Thomas D. Russell Library on the Central Alabama Community College Campus. Call Dr. Bill Niedermeier, 256/825-5535.

Oct. 29—Writers Harvest, Huntsville & Tuscaloosa

North Alabama writers will participate in a read-in at Alabama A&M in Dawson Auditorium at 7 p.m. as part of the Share Our Strength national network to feed the hungry. Contact Dr. Virginia Gilbert at 256/464-9130. In Tuscaloosa, a reading will be held at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall on the University of Alabama campus. Call the Creative Writing program at 205/348-0766.

Nov. 6—Auburn Humanities Center Program, Auburn

Bryding Adams, author of *Made in Alabama*, a book on the history of Alabama's material culture. Sponsored by the Auburn University Center for the Arts and Humanities, the program will be at Pebble Hill at 4 p.m. Call 334/844-4946.

Nov. 10—Humanities Center Program, Anniston

Putting Loafing Streams to Work, the story of Alabama Power Co. dams, will be discussed by author **Harvey Jackson III** at Westside Baptist Church at 6 p.m. Sponsored by the Anniston Kiwanis Club. Call 334/844-4946 for information.

Nov. 10—Alabama Voices C. Eric Lincoln, Huntsville

Noted black scholar **C. Eric Lincoln**, author of *Through the Fire: Surviving Race and Place in America*, will make several appearances. At 11 a.m. he will be at the University of Alabama Huntsville, hosted by the UAH Office of Multicultural Affairs. At 4 p.m. there will be an informal discussion and reception at the State Black Archives and Museum on the Alabama A&M campus. Contact Dr. James Johnson, 205/851-5846.

Nov. 11—UAB Writers' Series, Birmingham

Fiction writer **Abe Fawal** will read from his work at 8 p.m. at the UAB Honors House, 1190 10th Avenue S. Call 205/934-5293.

Nov. 12—Alabama Voices

C. Eric Lincoln, Montgomery
Dr. Lincoln is well known for his scholarly contributions to the sociology of religion and to the study of race and ethnic relations. He will lecture at 3 p.m. in the Milo B. Howard Auditorium of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Call 334/242-4363.

Nov. 13—ASFA Creative Writing Department Benefit Reading, Birmingham

Faculty members **Denise Wadsworth Trimm, Anne-Wyman Black, Bruce**

Alford, Mike Florence, and Iris Rinke-Hammer will read. Admission free with a non-perishable food item or donation to provide food for the hungry on Thanksgiving. The reading will be in the Hess Abroms Recital Hall, Alabama School of Fine Arts, at 7 p.m. Call Denise Trimm at 205/252-9241.

Dec. 2—Highland Booksmith, Birmingham.

Kathryn Tucker Windham will be signing copies of her new book, *Encounters*, from 3 to 6 p.m., 2255 Highland Avenue. Call 205/939-3164.

Dec. 3—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

Author **Franz Lidz** will read from his work at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall at the University of Alabama. Call 205/348-0766.

Dec. 4—ASFA Creative Writing Students' Reading, Birmingham

Poetry and prose read by young authors, many of whom are winning literary awards. The reading will be in the Hess Abroms Recital Hall, Alabama School of Fine Arts, at 3 p.m. For information call Denise Trimm at 205/252-9241.

Dec. 13—Auburn Humanities Center Program, Fairhope

Wayne Flynt, whose latest book is *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, will speak at the Fairhope Public Library at 10 a.m. Call 334/844-4946.

Dec. 31 DEADLINE

Hackney Literary Awards short story and poetry entries should be post-marked by this date. Mail to Hackney Literary Awards, Birmingham-Southern College, Box 549003, Birmingham, AL 35254, call 205/226-4921.

Jan. 10, 1999—Alabama Voices Patricia Foster, Montevallo

Writer and editor **Patricia Foster**, whose books include *Minding the Body, Sister to Sister*, and *The Healing Circle* will read from her work and talk about her forthcoming memoir of growing up in Alabama.

CALENDAR

Jan. 21, 1999—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

Mary Swander, award-winning poet and nonfiction writer, will be the Coal Royalty Chairholder in Creative Writing for the spring semester. She will read from her work at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall. Call 205/348-0766.

RESERVE THESE DATES

Feb. 4, 5, 6, 1999—24th Annual Symposium on English and American Literature, sponsored by the UA English Department, Tuscaloosa.

“Magical Muse: The Drama of Tennessee Williams” is the topic. For additional information contact symposium directors Ralph Voss, 205/348-8523 or Don Noble, 205/348-4507.

Feb. 12-13, 1999 A Writers’ and Associates’ Colloquium, Auburn University at Montgomery

The statewide annual Associates Meeting of the Alabama Writers’ Forum will be held in conjunction with AUM’s 7th Annual Writers’ Colloquium. Contact Jeanie Thompson at 334/242-4076, ext. 233.

ONGOING EVENTS

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham area coffeehouses and clubs offer regular readings. They include Celestial Realm Coffee House, 2827 Highland Avenue, 205/327-5505 and The Highland Booksmith, 2255 Highland Avenue, 205/939-3164.

HUNTSVILLE

Huntsville Literary Association members’ groups include the Literary Discussion Group which meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Call 205/881-2114 for information. The Fiction Writers’ Group meets at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month. Phone 205/882-2348 for details. On the fourth Tuesday of the month, the Poetry Writing Workshop is held

from 7 to 9 p.m. at Shaver’s Book Store at 2362 Whitesburg Drive. For information, call 205/536-9801. Huntsville Literary Association membership is open to anyone. Contact Susan Anderson, 8019 Navios Dr., Huntsville, AL 35802, 205/881-2935.

MONTGOMERY

For information about the **Alabama African-American Arts Alliance** or readings at **Roots and Wings: A Cultural Bookplace**, contact Georgette Norman, 334/263-2787 or Gwendolyn Boyd, 334/262-1700; Fax 334/262-8498. Monthly events of the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance are held at Eight Thirty House, 830 S. Court Street. The Nommo Study Group meets the second Tuesday evening from 6 to 8. The Creative Writers Gathering is the third Saturday from 10 a.m. until noon. Poetry readings are included in the Music in de House/Voices program, 6 to 8 p.m., third Sunday of the month.

Montgomery Creative Writers meets the third Sunday of every month from 2-4 p.m. at the Vaughn Park Church of Christ on Vaughn Rd. The meeting is open to anyone interested in writing. Dues are \$12 annually. Contact Donna Jean Tennis, P.O. Box 230787, Montgomery, AL 36123-0787, 334/244-8920; e-mail poettennis@the-link.net

TUSCALOOSA

The Guild of Professional Writers for Children meets on the second Saturday of every month (except August) at the Tuscaloosa Public Library from 10 a.m. until 12 noon. Dues are \$6 annually. Contact Aileen K. Henderson, Vice-President, GPWC, 10924 Big Hurricane Spur, Brookwood, AL 35453, 205/556-0861.

SEND US YOUR NEWS

Write or email AWF with details of your own or other Alabama writers’ honors and accomplishments. Write: Alabama Writers’ Forum, 201 Monroe St., Montgomery, AL 36130-1800; email: jeanie@arts.state.al.us.

VITAL CONTACTS

Poets & Writers

72 Spring Street
New York, NY 10012
212/226-3586
M-F 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Poetry Society of America

15 Gramercy Park West
New York, NY 10003
212/254-9628

National Writers Club

1450 South Havana, Suite 620
Aurora, CO 80012
303/751-7844

Associated Writing Programs

804/683-3839

PEN

(Poets, Playwrights,
Essayists, Novelists)
212/334-1660

PEN West

213/365-8500

Mystery Writers of America

17 East 47th Street, Sixth floor
New York, NY 10017

Romance Writers of America

713/440-6885

Science Fiction Writers of America

P.O. Box 4335
Spartanburg, SC 29305

Western Writers of America

416 Bedford
El Paso, TX 79922

National Writers Union

873 Broadway, Suite 203
New York, NY 10003
212/254-0279

International Women’s Writing Guild

212/737-7536

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONTESTS

PRIZE HONORS RANDALL JARRELL

Postmark deadline November 1, 1998

The winner of the ninth annual Randall Jarrell Poetry Prize will receive a \$1,000 prize, publication in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, and a reading and reception.

Submit two copies of one to three unpublished poems, not to exceed ten pages total, and a cover sheet with name, address, phone numbers and poem titles. Names should not appear on the manuscript. No manuscripts will be returned. Entry fee is \$7. Send entry to N.C. Writers' Network, 3501 Hwy. 54 West, Studio C, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. Winners will be announced in February.

ALABAMA'S PRESTIGIOUS HACKNEY AWARDS

Postmark deadline December 31, 1998

The Hackney Awards offer \$5,000 in prizes for poetry and short stories (\$2,500 for national and \$2,500 for state level; \$600 for first, \$400 for second and \$250 for third place). Winners will be announced at the Birmingham-Southern College Writing Today Conference on March 12-13, 1999.

Short Story length should not exceed 5,000 words per story. Poetry should not exceed 50 lines per entry; more than one poem may be submitted. Please remit \$10 per entry.

Poetry and short story entries from Alabama will be entered in the state contest unless specified for the national competition. Entries can be judged in only one category, not both state and national.

Short story manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced. Poetry entries should be typed. Each entry submitted must have two copies of the cover sheet listing the title of the work, author's address and telephone number and category of the work. The author's name must not appear on the actual pages of the manuscript.

Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish to receive a list of

the winners. Refunds for withdrawn entries will only be given through December 31. Please do not send cash.

Call 205/226-4921 for more information. Mail entries to Hackney Literary Awards, Birmingham-Southern College, Box 549003, Birmingham, AL 35254.

YOUNG WRITERS' LITERARY AWARDS

Postmark deadline January 15, 1999.

The Alabama School of Fine Arts is sponsoring a creative writing contest open to all Alabama students in grades five through twelve. Work may be any length and on any subject. Prizes will be awarded for poetry, short fiction, and creative nonfiction in each of three divisions: grades 5 through 7, grades 8 and 9 and grades 10 through 12. Prizes will be given in each category and each division; \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 for third place.

Entries must include a cover sheet listing the student's name, address, phone number, school, grade, English teacher's name, category entered and title of each work submitted. The student's name should not appear anywhere on the work itself. Entries must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper and stapled. No notebooks or binders will be accepted. Mail entries to Creative Writing Contest, Alabama School of Fine Arts, 1800 8th Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. For further information call the ASFA Creative Writing Department at 205/252-9241 or email ablack@asfa.k12.al.us or dtrimm@asfa.k12.al.us

PHILLIPS POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCED

Postmark deadline January 31, 1999

Manuscripts of 30-50 pages of poetry in any theme or form are being sought and should be submitted with a cover sheet bearing the poet's name, brief biography and contact information. A \$1,000 award will be given to the winner of the Richard Phillips Poetry Prize within 90 days of the postmark deadline. The winning manuscript will be published by the Phillips

Publishing Co. in September 1999. Mail entries to The Richard Phillips Poetry Prize, P.O. Box 121, Watts, Oklahoma 74964.

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

CHAPBOOK SERIES SEEKS WRITERS

New Dawn Unlimited, publisher of *Alternative Harmonies* literary journal, is currently accepting manuscripts for next year's "NDU Presents" chapbook series. Authors selected earn 100-200 copies. The first chapbook from New Dawn was a collection of poetry by Jerri Dawn Buckingham Hardesty called *Bloom of the Muse*. Errol Miller's *The Evening of Seasons* will be released this fall. Each is available for \$5, including postage.

NDU is also accepting poems and artwork for a theme anthology, *Southern Girls*. Send \$1 per entry or 50 cents a page for stories, or send \$10 for unlimited entries. Pay for *Southern Girls* is two copies for each submission used. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to New Dawn Unlimited, Route 1 Box 219C, Brierfield, AL 35035.

NEW PLAYWRIGHTS SOUGHT

The New Playwrights Program, an adjunct to the University of Alabama's M.F.A. program in playwriting and dramaturgy, welcomes submissions from unproduced, first time writers. Funded through the Galloway Endowment, the program provides financial support for the development of new plays, including stipends, expenses, travel funds and other funding. "We are especially interested in encouraging the work of Alabama playwrights," said Paul Castagno, director and dramaturg.

All formats are welcome, from short one-acts to full-length productions and from traditional to post-modern. Dramas with dance are of particular interest. Musicals are also considered.

Writers may submit a detailed query letter and synopsis and/or com-



ANNOUNCEMENTS

pleted script. Include a properly-sized SASE with postage if you would like your script returned. Submissions are accepted each year between August 15 and April 15. For more information contact Dr. Paul Castagno, director, New Playwrights Program, UA Department of Theatre and Dance, P.O. Box 87239, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.

BEYOND DOGGEREL GOES TO COLLEGE

Beyond Doggerel, which previously published poems by K-grade 12 personnel, seeks poetry submissions on any subject and in any form from four-year and community college instructors. Poems 10 to 20 lines long are preferred. Submissions for the next issue, to be published in the fall of 1999, will be read in January and February. Send poems and college affiliation with SASE to Claire T. Feild, editor, *Beyond Doggerel*, 1141 Knollwood Court, Auburn, Alabama 36830-6126.

BACK TO SCHOOL WITH HECTOR STREET

All currently enrolled Alabama high school students are invited to submit poetry, short fiction, drama and creative nonfiction for the second volume of *Hector Street: Alabama's High School Literary Journal*. Work should be typed, doubled-spaced, submitted in duplicate, and accompanied by a cover sheet listing author's name, address, phone number, school, year of graduation, and the title(s) of work(s). Other than titles, no identification should appear on submissions. Individual pieces of prose and drama should be no longer than 15 pages.

Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of work and readers' comments. Authors whose work appears in *Hector Street* will receive two copies of the journal. Deadline for the fall 1999 issue is June 10, 1999. Copies of the first volume of *Hector Street* are available for \$5. Send your name, address and payment to *Hector Street*, P.O. Box 71628, Tuscaloosa, AL 35407. For further information, call editor Joseph H. Halli, 205/533-3737.

SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT FOR A MEMORY BOOK

KaliOka Press has issued a call for stories for a proposed 1999 collection featuring memories of "meetings, lunches, dinners, conversations, collaborations or some shared experience with Eugene Walter."

Walter died March 29 in Mobile, where he was born. An award-winning novelist, poet, lyricist, film actor and editor, Walter developed friendships and working relationships throughout the United States and Europe.

"The stories can be funny or serious, but they should be true," explained Carolyn Haines, president of the press. Rebecca Barrett, vice president of KaliOka, said the collection will be called *Moments with Eugene* and all profits will go to the Eugene Walter Memorial Fund.

"We're taking submissions now," Haines said. "There is no word length and no specific style. What we want to do is capture Eugene in the mirror held up by his friends." Submissions should be typewritten, double-spaced and sent to KaliOka Press at 2486 Ellen Drive, Semmes, AL 36575. For more information, call Carolyn Haines at 334/649-9456 or Rebecca Barrett at 334/666-6529.

SOUTHERN EXPERIMENTS

New Orleans Review has announced a February 1, 1999 deadline for its next special issue about "The Other South." Editors Bill Lavender and Ralph Adamo are seeking experimental poetry, fiction, non-fiction and graphic arts by southerners, as well as essays on southern writing and regionalism. Works selected will be published in an expanded issue next spring. Queries may be sent to wtlmc@uno.edu, but submissions should be hard copies sent to: The Other South, *New Orleans Review*, Box 195, Loyola University, New Orleans, LA 70118.

LONZIE'S HOT AND CRISPY

Lonzie's Fried Chicken, which bills itself as "a Journal of accessible Southern fiction and poetry," welcomes

submissions of short fiction, self-contained novel excerpts and poetry with a feel for the Southeast.

Send up to 10 pages of fiction and up to 40 lines of poetry with name, address, phone or fax number and word count on the title page. Manuscripts should be clear, double-spaced and previously unpublished. *Lonzie's* acquires first-time rights and pays three copies. The first issue is due this summer; the second is planned for next winter. Mail submissions to E.H. Goree, editor, *Lonzie's Fried Chicken Literary Magazine*, P.O. Box 189, Lynn, NC 28750.

AMARYLLIS BLOOMS

Published by the Chunnenugee Literary Society, Inc., *Amaryllis* is looking for poetry, reviews, short fiction, "experiments" and non-scholastic essays. Manuscripts are read year-round. Send three copies of previously-unpublished work to *Amaryllis*, P.O. Box 6330, Carolyn Station, Montgomery, AL 36106-0330. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your writing returned.

HARMONIOUS PROGRESSIONS

Alternative Harmonies Literary and Arts Magazine needs poetry, short fiction, prose, photos, essays and drawings to fill about 40 pages quarterly. Send \$1 per entry or 50 cents a page for stories, or send \$10 for unlimited entries and receive a copy of the upcoming issue. Pay for contributors is one copy for each submission used. Annual subscription is \$15. Send submissions and inquiries to: New Dawn Unlimited, Route 1 Box 219C, Brierfield, AL 35035. The first in a series of chapbooks from New Dawn is a collection of poetry by Jerri Dawn Buckingham Hardesty called *Bloom of the Muse*. It is available for \$5, including postage.

LITERARY MARKET NEWS

The Literary Network News, Canadian and international online market publication for writers, publishes monthly and offers up-to-date market listings. The Literary Network also

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publishes poetry, short fiction, articles, essays and reviews. Printouts available to those not on the internet by sending a SASE to: The Literary Network, Box 31, 2060 Queen St. E., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4E 3V7. Requests may be sent by email to tplantos@direct.com

WOMEN'S WORK

Shatter the Glass Ceiling, a bi-weekly women's business magazine on the internet, is soliciting manuscripts, both fiction and nonfiction. The magazine covers "all aspects of a woman's life, except romance." There are sections on health, current events, business, family, humor and literature. While the publication does not have the financial backing to pay writers, it does offer an international readership in 27 countries. All articles from past issues are placed in the "Shatter Archives." Review the magazine at: <http://www.theglassceiling.com/shatter> or look at the entire website at <http://www.theglassceiling.com>

HYPertext CONTEST

Salt Hill is looking for solid literary hypertext fiction, poetry and design. Works may be text only or incorporate multimedia including video, animation, images and sound. Submissions must be viewable over Internet browsers such as Netscape 3.0 and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Accepted work will be posted on the Salt Hill site, which can be found at <http://www-hl.syr.edu/cwp>

Send your url address, or your work as an attachment to jsparker@mailbox.syr.edu or address an envelope with floppy disks to Salt Hill Hypertext Contest. All entries will also be considered for regular posting at the site. A \$30 payment will be made to authors whose work is selected. There is a reading fee of \$10. Send checks made payable to Salt Hill to the Salt Hill Hypertext Contest, Syracuse University English Department, Syracuse, NY 13244-1170. The deadline is January 31 annually.

ALABAMA LITERARY JOURNALS

Alabama English

The scholastic journal of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English

253 Smith Hall
Troy State University
Troy, AL 36082
334/670-3286

Alabama Literary Review

Ed Hicks, Editor

253 Smith Hall
Troy State University
Troy, AL 36082
334/670-3286

Amaryllis

P.O. Box 6330
Montgomery, AL 36106-0330
E-mail Anderson@strudel.aum.edu

Astarte

The English Department
University of Alabama
at Birmingham
Birmingham, AL 35294

The Auburn Circle

Publications Suite
Foy Union Building
Auburn University, AL 36849
334/844-4142

Beyond Doggerel

A Poetry Journal for Four-Year and Community College Instructors

Claire T. Feild, Editor
1141 Knollwood Court
Auburn, AL 36830-6126

Birmingham Poetry Review

Bob Collins, Editor
UAB English Department
Arts & Humanities Building
Birmingham, AL 35294
205/934-4250

Black Warrior Review

The University of Alabama
Box 2936
Tuscaloosa, AL 35486
205/348-4518

Copper Blade Review

c/o Troy State University-Dothan
P.O. Box 8368
Dothan, AL 36304
334/983-6556, Ext. 397

Elk River Review

John Chambers, Editor
606 Coleman Avenue
Athen, AL 35611-3216

Negative Capability

Sue Brannon Walker,
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62 Ridgelawn Drive East
Mobile, AL 36608-6166

Noccalula

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P.O. Box 227
Gadsden, AL 35902-0227

POEM

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UAH, Huntsville, AL 35899
Subscription: POEM, c/o HLA
Dale Griggs
1009 Brookridge Circle
Huntsville, AL 35801

Southern Humanities Review

Dan Latimer, Dave Haney,
and Margaret Kouidis, Co-editors
Department of English
Auburn University, AL 36849

Choosing the Next Poet Laureate

The Poet Laureate Committee of the Alabama Writers Conclave is now receiving nominations for the next Poet Laureate of Alabama. The election will be held at the August 1999 annual meeting of the Conclave, elected by a majority of the membership present and voting. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the annual meeting, but those nominated must have previously agreed to serve, and meet the qualifications.

The committee is charged with the selection of the best nominees to present to the membership, as provided for in the Code of Alabama, S 143, Powell, approved May 5, 1931. The elected Poet Laureate will be commissioned in a ceremony by the governor.

The nominees need not be members of the Conclave. Anyone can make a recommendation for nomination, but a member of the Conclave must actually place the name in nomination. If you have a person in mind, or have been given a name, please make sure you send not only the name, but the data, and the known willingness of the person to serve.

When you are placing a name for nomination, remember that the following are the most desirable qualifications considered by the Poet Laureate Committee in selecting a nominee to place before the Conclave members:

The Poet Laureate must have been a resident of Alabama for the past 15 years, and must be able to fund his/her own expenses of office.

Other criteria looked at by the committee are:

1. The poet must be the author of poems of high quality as determined by the markets to which he/she has sold.
2. The poet must have a prize record at local, state, and national levels.
3. Poems in his/her collection must be of high quality.
4. He/she must show long-term service in the field of poetry, literature, and the arts in Alabama.
5. The poet must show competency in editorial writing and other areas of writing or teaching.
6. The poet must have the ability to speak, read poems and give programs, and a willingness to answer such calls as may come for such programs.
7. The poet must be prepared to write poems of a commemorative nature

when necessary.

The Poet Laureate is not chosen by the number of nominations. The excellence of his/her work is the overall determining factor.

Choose a Conclave member who will make your recommendation and send it to:

John Curbow
P.O. Box 277
Wetumpka, AL 23092

There are several hundred members of the Alabama Writers' Conclave. Most are from Alabama, although many states are represented. Members include fiction and non-fiction writers, novelists and short story writers, poets, writers of business and scientific works, freelance journalists, romance writers, publishers, and teachers. If you wish to join, send your \$15 check made out to Alabama Writers' Conclave to: Harriette Dawkins, AWC Treasurer, 117 Hanover Road, Homewood, AL 35209

Alabama Poets Receive Recognition

Robin Cooper-Stone, a master of fine arts candidate in creative writing at the University of Alabama, was selected as one of two poets nationwide to receive a \$15,000 Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship for 1998.

This is one of the largest awards given to aspiring writers in the U.S.



Cooper-Stone

The awardees were chosen from more than 100 applicants who had been nominated by their department chairs or program directors.

Selection of the Ruth Lilly Fellowship winners was made by the **Modern Poetry Association of Chicago**,

publishers of *Poetry* magazine. The judges for the 1998 fellowship were Joseph Parisi, editor of *Poetry* and chairman of the Lilly Fellowship Committee, and poets David Bottoms of Marietta, Ga., and John Frederick Nims of Chicago. The fellowships are awarded annually.

Lynx House Press announced that the 1998 Blue Lynx Poetry Prize has been awarded to **Lynne Burris Butler** for her book of poetry, *Sunday Afternoons With Tolstoy*. The prize carries a cash award of \$1,500 and Lynx House Press will publish the book. This is the first year for this award. Nearly 350 entries were judged by a panel of readers and the final reader,

Primus St. John.

Since 1975, Lynx House has brought out more than 100 poetry and fiction titles. Its authors have received the National Book Award, Pulitzer Prize, the Kingsley Tufts Award, and the Prix de Rome.

Butler, a native of Kansas, lives in Florence where she teaches at the University of North Alabama. She has previously published two books of poetry, *The Dream Thief* and *Forever Is Easy*. She has been an active AWF member, served for many years on the board of the Florence Public Library, and was a scholar in the Auburn University Humanities project on Southern Autobiography.

THE BACK PAGE

“Everybody Got a Right to the Tree of Life”

Clinton O. Pettway was salvaging fish hooks from a tangle of old nets and lines at a landing on the backwaters of the Alabama River when I stopped to talk to him.

“I’m fifty-eight years old,” he told me, “and been here all my life. Named Pettway now, but my family had another name in Carolina. Johnson. Was named Johnson.” As he talked, he cut the rusty hooks loose with his pocket knife and laid them in a pile on the ground beside him. “When old man Pettway bought my great-grandmother in Carolina, her name was Johnson.”

Still busy with his hooks, he told the handed-down story of his great-grandmother and her baby boy, Saul, who would become Clinton’s grandfather.

It seems that soon after Mark Pettway became the owner of Gee’s Bend, he made preparations to move his large family and their possessions, including his slaves, from North Carolina to Alabama, a long and hard journey. When he learned that one of his slave women had a new baby, he ordered her to leave the child behind.

“But you know how women is about their babies,” Clinton said. “She couldn’t go off and leave him. So she sewed Saul, her baby, up in a mattress ticking and put that mattress in a wagon and brought him on down here. That was my grandfather. Lived to be one hundred twenty years old. Didn’t join the church until he was over one hundred. Kept a sound, settled mind, too.” As he talked, he shifted a matchstick from the side of his mouth to the front and back again, back and forth very slowly.

Mention of joining the church reminded Clinton that he had made a contract with the Lord that if God would get him out of the hospital and get him better, he would go carry His word.

“I knowed I had to preach,” he said, “but I was doing everything I could to miss it. Jonah and me are alike. He ended up in the whale and me in the hospital. I ain’t started preaching yet, but I got to. Preaching is one of the worstest things that have to be done. I ain’t saw a preacher yet that wanted to preach. It ain’t what he wanted to do, it’s what he got to do.”

He was silent for a moment as he gathered up his fishhooks and put them in a box in his boat. He looked out across the river. Then, almost as if he were practicing a sermon, he began to speak. “Everybody in the world got a right to the Tree of Life. Two commandments will get you to Heaven: love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and might and strength; and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That’s the hardest thing to do. We ain’t exactly doing that.” Clinton was silent so long I thought our conversation had ended. Then he looked up at me and spoke again. “I had a vision when I was a teenager and got religion,” he said.

It has long been the rule at the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Gee’s Bend that

no one could become a member until he or she seriously seeks the salvation of his or her soul. If the seeking is successful, God sends the seeker a vision. The vision must be described to the preacher and deacons, and if they believe it to be a true vision from God the person becomes a candidate for baptism. The seeker goes off alone, usually into the woods, to pray and to meditate. Sometimes the seeking lasts for weeks before the prayed-for vision comes. While I was in Gee’s Bend, I heard accounts of several visions but none more vivid than the one Clinton told that afternoon at the boat landing. Two johnboats, one half-submerged, were tied in the sandy shallows, and the current lapping against their metal sides beat a soft cadence for Clinton’s story.

He saw himself, he said, in a refrigerated ice house with all the doors shut and no way out. The huge blocks of ice began moving, coming together. He heard men hollering as the ice closed in on them. He prayed hard, and a door opened. As he continued to pray, other doors opened for him. When he got out, two policemen began to chase him and to shoot at him. Clinton started catching the bullets, each one about the size of a golf ball, in his hand and dropping them. He kept praying. God enabled him to jump up and fly over the policemen. Those same two policemen got a helicopter and began chasing Clinton in it. He kept flying and praying. God sent a big wind that blew rusty cups and buckets at the helicopter, and then came heavy black smoke between Clinton and the helicopter so that his pursuers could no longer see him. He came down from the sky and lit right at the church door.

Clinton was emotionally moved by the telling of his vision, an account he must have told dozens of times before. He waited to regain his composure. Then he said softly, “After God showed me that vision, I knowed I didn’t have to cross Hell on a spider web.”

Excerpted from “Gee’s Bend” in Kathryn Tucker Windham’s book *Twice Blessed* (Black Belt Press, 1996)



Gee’s Bend Baptizing, from *Encounters* by Kathryn Tucker Windham, Black Belt Press, 1998.



SUPPORT THE ARTS!

A special motor vehicle license tag authorized by the State Legislature is available at all license locations for an additional \$50 fee which is a charitable deduction. Tag sales will provide funds for a variety of grants in arts education, fine arts, dance, folk arts, drama and music. With payment of the additional fee, any new tag already purchased can be easily traded in for a Support the Arts tag.

The Alabama Writers' Forum gratefully acknowledges those who make possible literary arts programming in Alabama.

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Yes, I would like to become an associate of The Alabama Writers' Forum.

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Please list your genre (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, etc.) or your association with literature (editor, publisher, etc.). If you are an arts administrator, please tell us your position/agency. If you have published books, please list title, date, publisher.

Mail form and check payable to:

The Alabama Writers' Forum, Alabama State Council on the Arts, 201 Monroe Street, Montgomery, AL 36130-1800

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