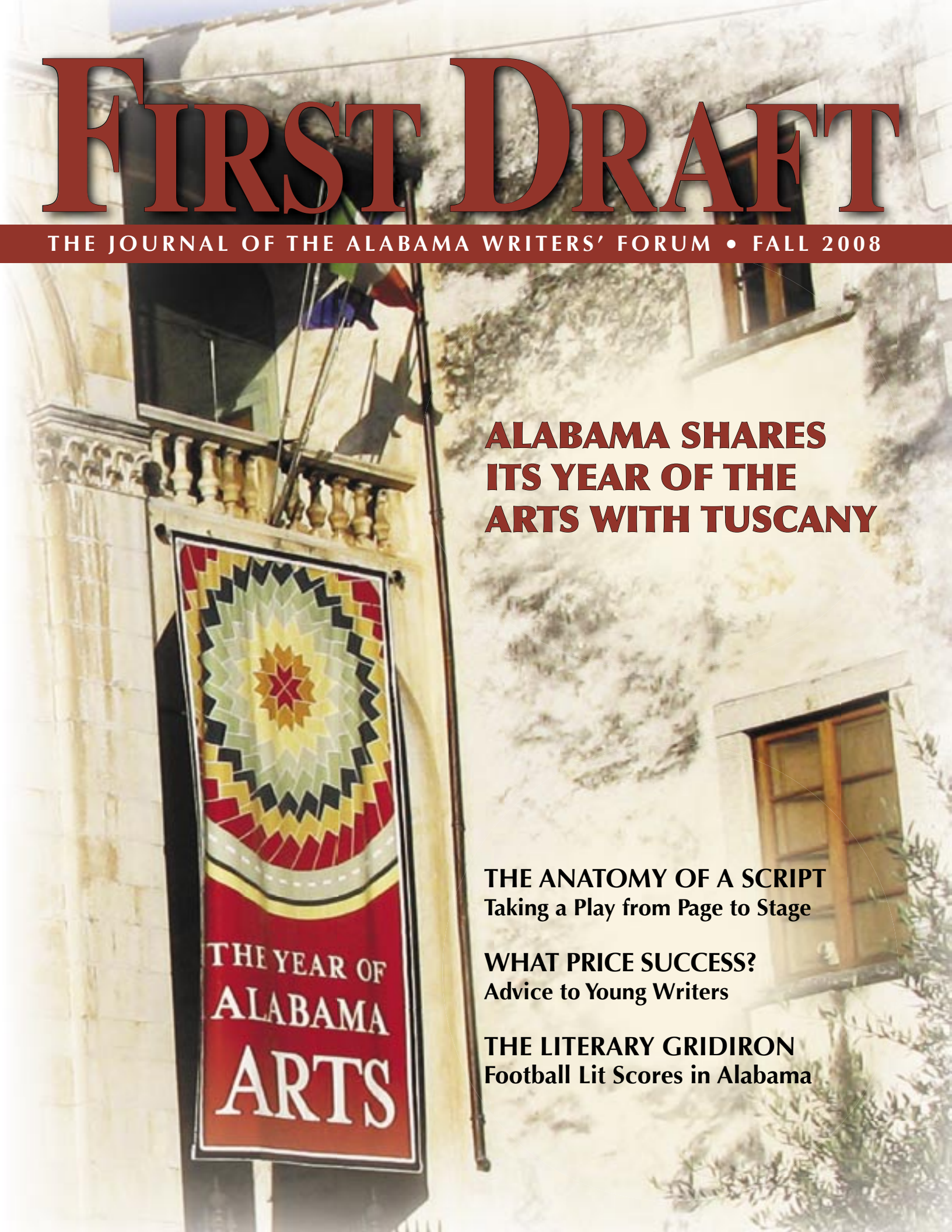


FIRST DRAFT

THE JOURNAL OF THE ALABAMA WRITERS' FORUM • FALL 2008



ALABAMA SHARES ITS YEAR OF THE ARTS WITH TUSCANY

THE ANATOMY OF A SCRIPT
Taking a Play from Page to Stage

WHAT PRICE SUCCESS?
Advice to Young Writers

THE LITERARY GRIDIRON
Football Lit Scores in Alabama

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First Draft is a journal for writers, readers,
editors, publishers, and those who support
and work in the literary arts.

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Alabama Writers' Forum

The Vehicle for Literary Commitment

*There is nothing to writing. You just sit down at a typewriter
and open a vein.* —Walter “Red” Smith

My sentiments exactly as I sit down to write this column.
But I believe it is the only way to approach this or any
meaningful writing. So here I sit on a Thank God rainy summer
afternoon as I try to open the vein that is connected to that
place in my heart where the Alabama Writers' Forum lives.

Writing this column forces me to sit quietly and look deeply
within in order to discover why this organization is important
to me.

First of all, the Alabama Writers' Forum provides support for
all Alabama writers. Truth be told, I would like *to be* an Alabama writer. I just dabble, though.
I write short pieces on visual art called “Art on the Radio” for the Sundial Writers Corner
on WLRH, Huntsville’s public radio station. When I write these pieces, I always begin by
describing the work of art as best I can. These pieces are, after all, for radio. Somehow in the
process I find myself saying things that I did not intend or anticipate. It’s magical, the closest
I’ve ever come to an other-worldly experience. From reading about writers and talking with
writers, I’ve learned that my experience is not unique. The Alabama Writers' Forum provides
me with a community and with opportunities for learning more about this craft.

Secondly, I appreciate Alabama’s strong literary heritage. In this category, our state has
few equals. Since joining the Board, I have made a concerted effort to read more works
by Alabama writers. I have been rewarded with a more profound and more multi-faceted
understanding of this state I call home. In so many of the works, the rhythms of speech are
quite familiar to me. I have been to many of the settings. I have an acquaintance with, if not
a blood relation to, the characters. Yet these writers enable me to see with another pair of
eyes, to hear the music of my state played on a different instrument, in a new arrangement.

Finally, I am committed to the continuation of Alabama’s literary arts. The Alabama
Writers' Forum provides the vehicle for that commitment. Young people are encouraged
by and supported through the High School Literary Arts Awards. Those who have faced
serious challenges are given much-needed outlets for expression through Writing Our
Stories: An Anti-Violence Creative Writing Program. Writers and readers are brought
together at the Alabama Writers Symposium, the Alabama Book Festival, and other such
events. This publication, *First Draft*, and the monthly *Literary News* electronic newsletter
give professional promotion and well-deserved attention to publications, personalities, and
literary events. The first ten winners of the Harper Lee Award for Alabama’s Distinguished
Writer of the Year are showcased in the beautiful new anthology *Gather Up Our Voices*. All
of this work is done by a small group of talented, hard-working people.

I hope you share my sentiments, and I hope to see you at our different events throughout
the state. In the meantime, enjoy Alabama’s wealth of writers and the many benefits provided
to you by the Alabama Writers' Forum.

Lynne Berry
Writers' Representative
AWF Board of Directors

Founded in 1992, the Alabama Writers' Forum is a not-for-profit, statewide literary arts service organization
whose mission is to advance the art of writing by promoting writers, educating young writers, and cultivating
Alabama’s literary arts. The Forum partners with other not-for-profit arts organizations, schools, libraries, and
like-minded entities across the state in a range of public programs and educational endeavors. Some of its partners
include the Alabama Alliance for Arts Education, the Alabama Center for the Book / Caroline Marshall Draughon
Center for the Arts and Humanities, Auburn University College of Liberal Arts, the Alabama Department of Youth
Services, and Alabama Southern Community College. In addition, the Forum works in communities to promote local
literary arts programming and to support teachers of creative writing.

Sustaining funding for the Alabama Writers' Forum comes from our major partner, the Alabama State Council on
the Arts, with additional funds from our extensive membership base, education contracts, individual contributions, and
corporate commitments. Additional funds for special projects have come from the Alabama Children’s Trust Fund, the
National Endowment for the Arts, the Southern Arts Federation, and the “Support the Arts” Car Tag Fund.

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Goldfish and Water Bottles

The Journey from Page to Stage

by Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder

CAROLYN LITTLE



Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder

Everyone has congregated around the table surveying the snacks. It's the first day of rehearsal at the Southern Writers Project (SWP) at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) and before anyone can process the play we are there to workshop, the snacks must be inventoried. The days are long and snacks are a very important part of the rehearsal process.

I am there to workshop my new play, *The Furniture of Home*, set on the Gulf Coast of Alabama post-Katrina. Last year I workshopped another play that was set in New Orleans post-Katrina, but after making a valiant effort to salvage the play, I threw it out and started over. Today, only the title remains the same. That's the wonderful thing about the workshop process—the opportunity for trial and error. With twenty hours of rehearsal over the next three and a half days, I will work with my cast and director to develop the play. This process will culminate in a staged reading in front of an audience.

Playwriting is the most collaborative of all the literary arts. The writing of the words on the page is still a very solitary experience, but it becomes communal when the story is transferred to the stage. On the page, it is a play, but once it becomes a three dimensional story on the stage, it becomes theatre. For the five playwrights who have been chosen to workshop their plays at SWP this is an opportunity to put both their work and the collaborative process to the test.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, which sits on 250

acres in Montgomery, was generously donated by the Blount Family and serves as the State Theatre of Alabama. Currently, it is the sixth largest Shakespeare Festival in the world. The Southern Writers Project was created in 1991 by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the southern storyteller, while promoting new work. Focusing on the Southern and African-American experience, SWP provides an outlet for new stories to be told. It attracts audiences and theatre professionals from around the country during the three day festival each spring.

Development programs are still a fairly new phenomenon in the context of theatre history. Programs such as the O'Neill Theatre Conference in Connecticut laid the foundation for a myriad of festivals, which now exist throughout the country. At places such as the Sundance, Ojai, New Harmony, the Denver New Play Summit, and the Pacific Playwrights Festival a community of theatre people come together to explore new work and hopefully make it better. What makes the Southern Writers Project unique is that through grants and private funding, they commission, develop, and produce new plays which speak specifically to Southern audiences.

Geoffrey Sherman, the artistic director of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, has shepherded dozens of new plays to the stage and has seen plays both triumph and languish as part of the development process. "It is most successful when the playwright is prepared to be a true collaborator," says Sherman. "This does not mean that he or she needs to adopt every crazy idea thrown out by an artist, but a willingness to listen is imperative. Listening can result in extraordinary progress for a playwright whose work is truly in need of development."

For many playwrights, "development" has become an ugly word. Due to financial restraints, many theatres choose to "develop" new work. In other words, they give the playwright a few actors and a director and an opportunity to write and rewrite. Unfortunately, few are able to actually produce these plays. However, in the 2008-2009 season ASF has boldly chosen to produce three new world premier plays, all a product of the Southern Writers Project.

The plays workshopped at SWP are meant to be works in progress and not finished products. Actors, directors, and dramaturges all leave their mark during the rehearsal process. Moments that work on the page may not always work on the stage. With any luck the playwrights will have a supportive team of people who not only ask smart questions, but also help find the answers. If playwrights have done their job, they will hopefully leave with a play that is a little better than when they started.

After reading through the play on our first day, the cast is dismissed and I am left with my director and dramaturg. The director is there to translate the words into a visual picture. The dramaturg, a relatively new addition to the development process, serves another role. Susan Willis, the resident dramaturg at ASF, has been assigned to me. Willis explains, "The

PHIL SCARSBROOK



(l-r) Actors Greta Lambert and Paul Hopper rehearse a scene from Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's play *The Furniture of Home* at the Southern Writers Project at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

dramaturg is theoretically positioned as a resource for writer, director, and cast, but primarily for the writer as someone else 'inside' the work, thinking about its life and its possibilities, watching the internal life of structure, character development, dialogue clarity, dramatic build and peaks, payoffs and imagery." She's also there to hold my hand. Together we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the script and develop a list of issues we'd like to address during the workshop. It's impossible to fix everything, so setting goals makes rewriting a little less overwhelming.

And so began the workshop process. The mornings were spent writing. Each new draft was e-mailed to the stage manager who was waiting with warm copies as the cast filed into the rehearsal room. I would return to the theatre red-eyed,

PHIL SCARSBROOK



(l-r) Moses Villarama and Lori Prince read a scene from *The Furniture of Home* while Paul Hopper looks on.

clutching a fist-full of new pages, which we would then sit around the table, read, and discuss. Notes would be given, and I would once again gather my things and flee to my hotel room.

Pat Cunningham Devoto is making her first trip to the Southern Writers Project, where she was working on a stage adaptation of her novel *My Last Days as Roy Rogers*. She found many differences between writing a novel and writing for the stage. "One is a story that you must bring to life in the mind of the reader and all you have to do it with are black words on white pages," she says. "Whereas with the play, it's like being given a magic pencil and from its tip flows the music, the actors, the scenery."

Like the other playwrights, Devoto is assigned a dramaturg as a guide. Robert Ford, both a novelist and a playwright, was asked to help Pat, a first time playwright, adapt her novel for the stage. "She was fascinated by the vernacular of theatre and threw herself into the process," said Ford. "In the space of four days she made major changes, eliminating characters, streamlining the story."

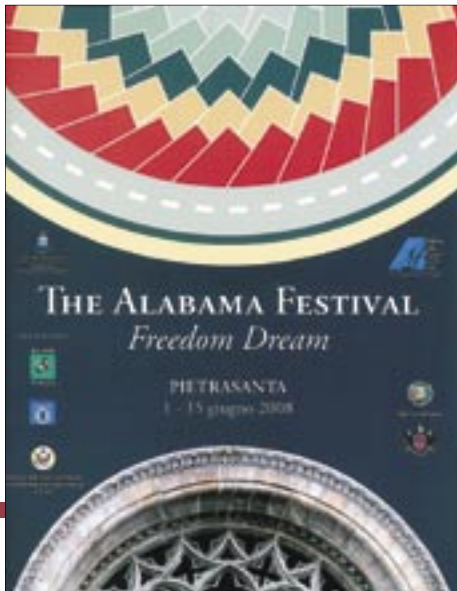
In fact condensing her novel into a two hour play proved to be one of the greatest challenges. "With a play, you don't have the comfort of length. Thirty pages of the novel must be compressed into one scene in a play and still keep its pace and humor or drama, whichever you are trying for," Devoto said. "Now, having had the experience with the SWP, I continue writing novels but with a new eye and ear."

By the end of the rehearsal process, empty bags of Goldfish crackers and water bottles littered my hotel room. With the festival beginning that afternoon, I frantically put the finishing touches on what will be the "reading draft" of the script. We all gathered into our respective spaces for one last rehearsal.

There is an immediacy to theatre that I particularly enjoy. You have a chance to get feedback from your audience. Laughter, tears, and applause are the best affirmation. Devoto agrees. "If I never write another play, if I never have the experience again," she said, "it has served to make me a better writer of all things."

As the theatre begins to fill, I find a seat in the back. It's just as important to watch the audience respond to a work as it is to hear it. The lights go down. The music plays. And as the first line is read, the play that I wrote is transformed into theatre.

Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder is the author of Gee's Bend. She received the 2008 Osborn Award from the American Theatre Critics Association.



THE ALABAMA FESTIVAL Freedom Dream

Paves the Way for Future Exchanges with Pietrasanta, Tuscany

by *Jeanie Thompson*
Photographs by *Wayne Sides*

Reporter's note: The following are highlights, with photographs, of a fifteen-day cultural exchange between two countries which is impossible to fully capture in just a few pages. Because the Alabama Writers' Forum was a participant in the exchange, we wanted to give First Draft readers a taste of The Alabama Festival: Freedom Dream.

A Dream of Freedom Won: In Images and in Music

It was conceived through friendship, between people who desired to share culture between their countries. It was realized through the dedicated efforts of artists and other professionals who cared enough to travel far from home. Once there, they were welcomed to a new home.

Not long after **Al Head**, Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts (ASCA), and **Dr. Daniele Spina**, Minister of Culture for the Comune di Pietrasanta, Tuscany, Italy, met in 2006 they began envisioning a way to have two communities, two cultures, understand one another better through art.

Finally settling on the theme of civil rights put forward by Spina, Head and designated project coordinator **Georgine Clarke**, ASCA Visual Arts Program Manager, began to assemble the pieces of a mosaic that became The Alabama Festival: Freedom Dream. Featuring the story quilts of **Yvonne Wells**, civil rights photography, an onsite art project of found object sculpture and paintings, a troupe of Alabama musicians, and a dash of Alabama literary arts and feature films, the Freedom Dream began to take shape.

Well's quilts, depicting historical facts of Alabama history such as the passage of slave ships, slave auctions, and Biblical parables, were hung among the twelfth and thirteenth century frescoes and the seventeenth and eighteenth century paintings of the Chiesa di Sant'Agostino. In the adjacent cloisters, an exhibit of the late **Spider Martin's** black and white photographs of the 1965 Selma Bridge Crossing were on display with specially printed letter press posters by **Amos Kennedy**. Facsimiles of newspapers of the period and video were included. Two of **Nall's** crosses from the 2006 exhibit *Violata Pax* (also in Pietrasanta) were displayed, echoing the spiritualism of the exhibition.



Alabama musicians Niamh Tuohy Clarke and Bobby Horton tune up prior to a performance in the Cloister courtyard of Sant'Agostino.

In another exhibition area below the cloisters, artists **Charlie Lucas** (Selma) and **Bruce Larson** (Fairhope) exhibited sculpture and paintings they created onsite from found objects, much as they do back home. This work continued the Brothers collaboration exhibited at the Eastern Shore Art Center in Fairhope.

Across the green space of the Cloister of Sant'Agostino, panel exhibits from the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel and the Center for Traditional Culture depicted the geography and resources of the state.

In an adjacent room, four symposia took place during the fifteen-day

festival, covering Alabama arts with **Paige Wainwright** of Sloss Furnace in Birmingham, **Mark Johnson** of the Montgomery Museum of Art, and **Glenn Dasher** of the University of Alabama-Huntsville, Alabama's civil rights history with Lucas, Wells, and **Barry Taylor** of the Birmingham Sunlights, and Alabama literature. In the closing week of the festival, a final symposium addressed the issues of immigration and civil rights in Italy and Europe. Throughout the festival, films based on Alabama writers' books were shown in the local cinema, free to the public. This element was very popular with the

citizens, who had just recently begun summer vacations.

To evoke the spirit of Alabama's civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s, Clarke assembled photographs of the historic Selma Bridge crossing by Martin and letter press posters by Kennedy, featuring words and memorial statements about slain civil rights workers such as **Jimmie Lee Johnson** and others. Browsing in this exhibit, visitors could witness in stark black and white photographs the solidarity of the civil right workers and the unfathomable violence they faced.

Continued on page 9



AWF Executive Director **Jeanie Thompson** featured *Il Buio Oltre le Siepe*, the Italian language edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, during a presentation on Alabama literary arts.



(l-r) **Charlie Lucas** (Selma) and **Bruce Larson** (Fairhope) created sculpture, paintings, and collage in Pietrasanta from found objects prior to the opening of The Alabama Festival: Freedom Dream. Their exhibition was on view adjacent to Chiesa di Sant'Agostino.



The exhibition of the late Birmingham photographer **Spider Martin's** Civil Rights era photographs and York printmaker **Amos Kennedy's** letter press posters, with other historic news items and video, drew visitors to learn about Alabama's racial struggle in the twentieth century.



The center piece of the Alabama Festival featured award-winning Tuscaloosa artist **Yvonne Wells'** story quilts, depicting civil rights and religious themes and hung in the Chiesa di Sant'Agostino.



A bronze head by the artist **Igor Mitoraj**, whose work is featured in one of the town's public spaces next to Gallery Barbara Paci, awaits assembly in one of Pietrasanta's bronze foundries.



Following the MarmoTech expo, the entire delegation headed to Carrara. After being driven in small vans deep into the center of one of the mountains, **Mayor Sam Wright** (r), Sylacauga, and others from the delegation listened to the guide (in pink head scarf, left) describe how Carrara marble is quarried. In Spring 2009, Italians will tour the Sylacauga marble quarry and learn more about how Alabama would like to begin providing more of its marble for fine art.

The Alabama delegation, accompanied by **Valentina Fogher** of Pietrasanta (far left), attended MarmoTech, a trade exhibition at Marina de Carrara, featuring the latest in marble quarrying, cutting, and high-tech sculpting equipment. Marble product was featured in an outdoor area. During the tour, the delegation was treated to a lunch within a special area highlighting contemporary expressions of art and design.





Artisan in a Pietrasanta marble laboratory.

Council Members, Staff, and Elected Officials in the Delegation

In addition to artists and musicians (see Side Bar) featured in The Alabama Festival: Freedom Dream, an Alabama delegation, including ASCA chair **Ralph Forhsin** (Alexander City) and Council member **Lee Sentell** (also serving as Governor Riley's representative in his capacity as director of the Bureau of Tourism and Travel), Head, Clarke, and ASCA staff members **Randy Shoults** and **Steve Grauberger**, made the trip.

Montgomery City Councilman Jim Spear and his wife **Sarah**, Montgomery County Tax Assessor, represented the Capitol City, and **Mayor Sam Wright** of Sylacauga and his wife **Connie** traveled to learn more about Italian marble and the possibility of bringing Italian sculptors to Alabama. Sylacauga mines white marble, very similar to the white marble in the Apuane Alps just above Pietrasanta, where Michelangelo chose stone for some of his most famous works.

Shortly after arriving in Pietrasanta, most of the Alabama delegation toured MarmoTech, an annual trade exposition of marble products, high tech machinery, and design specialists. Organizers of MarmoTech welcomed the Alabama delegation to its exposition just outside Pietrasanta.

Experiencing Artisan Life in Pietrasanta

The Alabama delegation also toured marble and bronze studios

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GOSPEL, BLUEGRASS, & BLUES *Alabama Style*



Bluegrass picker and music historian **Bobby Horton** (Birmingham) charmed the Italian audience with his guitar and banjo. Horton, who was featured in the soundtrack of the Ken Burns film *The Civil War*, also taught lessons on the War Between the States when he performed heartbreaking ballads of the American Civil War.

Whether it was morning, afternoon, or night, when the plaintive strings of a bluegrass guitar, hard driving Delta blues on a National steel guitar, or the sweet harmonizing of gospel lyrics drifted into the streets of Pietrasanta, the city and its visitors came to listen.

The gospel quartet the **Birmingham Sunlights**, bluesman **Kent Duchaine**, and bluegrass musician **Bobby Horton** entertained throughout the fifteen-day festival. Their music provided its own translation, touching hearts in the audience, young and old.



The energetic and talented **Birmingham Sunlights** performed on the opening day of The Alabama Festival: Freedom Dream to a capacity crowd in the open air Cloister of Sant'Agostino. The Italians and others present clearly appreciated their spiritual music and cheered, "Brava!"



Kent Duchaine, a regular performer in Alabama venues who now resides in Georgia, performed with his National steel guitar Leadbessie, his loyal companion in his blues troubadour life. Duchaine, who also tours extensively in the United Kingdom and Europe, made an instant connection with the Italian audience, proving once again that the language of the blues is universal.



(l-r) Pietrasanta's mayor **Massimo Mallegni** kicked off The Alabama Festival with a welcome to the official delegation and assembled guests, shown here in the Sala dell'Annunziata with **Dr. Daniele Spina**, Minister of Culture, Comune di Pietrasanta; **Al Head**, ASCA Executive Director; translator **Adria Ferrali**; and ASCA Visual Arts Program Manager **Georgine Clarke**.



Dr. Daniele Spina (c), Director of Culture for the City of Pietrasanta, congratulates Alabama artist **Charlie Lucas** (l) as he and **Massimo Forli** prepare to install Lucas' new painting on location in Pietrasanta for The Alabama Festival: *Freedom Dream*.



Matar N'Diaye, Presidente del Consiglio degli Stranieri Provincia di Pisa, and **Federico Oliveri**, Università di Pisa, at the panel on immigrant civil right issues in Italy and Europe at the conclusion of The Alabama Festival: *Freedom Dream*.

during a walk around Pietrasanta one morning. During this tour, people could appreciate the sheer density of artists and artisans per square foot in the city of Pietrasanta. During the summer, as many as 500 people are in residence, working as master artists or students in the city known for its nurturing of Michaelangelo and others.

Among the contemporary sculptors who also live in Pietrasanta are Colombian painter and sculptor **Fernando Botero** and his wife **Sofia Vari**, also a sculptor, who make their home in the city. The city has an impressive collection of public art, including more than forty sculptures in marble, bronze, and other material.

Literature and Film

Films shown during the festival included *Fried Green Tomatoes*, based on *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* by **Fannie Flagg**; *Big Fish*, based on the novel by

Daniel Wallace; *Forrest Gump*, based on the novel by **Winston Groom**; and the enduring favorite *To Kill A Mockingbird*, based on **Harper Lee's** Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

Jeanie Thompson, Alabama Writers' Forum Executive Director, presented "Coming of Age: Consciousness and Conscience," featuring *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a seminal work in modern Alabama literature, and briefly touched on three Alabama writers who have recently published books dealing with racial violence and conscience: **Sena Jeter Naslund's** *Four Spirits*, **Jake Adam York's** *A Murmuration of Starlings*, and **Ravi Howard's** *Like Trees, Walking*.

Thompson quoted well-known passages from *To Kill a Mockingbird* dealing with racial prejudice and the rationale for not killing innocent mockingbirds from the Italian translation of Harper Lee's novel, *Il Buio Oltre la Siepe*. The title translates as "The Darkness Behind the Hedge," referring to the character Boo Radley. Some Italian editions feature a drawing of Radley's face on the cover and others feature a small bird as illustration.

Many Italians in the audience had read the book in school, just as young Americans do, and were eager to discuss the text following Thompson's presentation.

Civil Rights in Italy: Immigration

The final week of the festival, after most of the Alabama delegation had left the city, Thompson and photographer **Wayne Sides** (Florence, Ala.) participated in a symposium on immigration and civil rights in Europe at the invitation of Dr. Spina. Although this was an unplanned event for Sides and Thompson, it provided an interesting way to learn more about the issues facing Italian society that dovetail with those Americans face, specifically, integrating immigrant populations.

Sides had spent a few days photographing the visual effect

Continued on page 19

The Alabama Writers' Forum,
a statewide literary organization promoting writers and writing, wishes to thank
its generous partners and friends who have supported the literary arts in Alabama.

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If you would like to support the High School Literary Arts Awards or other programs of the Alabama Writers' Forum,
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Membership information is also available at www.writersforum.org.

Staying Out of the Clutches of the Goddess

Heeding the Wisdom of
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

by Richard Goodman



Tennessee Williams in college

USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE HARRY RANSOM HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTER, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

On November 30, 1947, Tennessee Williams, in what would become a kind of tradition, published an essay in the *New York Times* prior to the opening of his play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It's titled "The Catastrophe of Success." He wasn't, of course, referring to the astonishing success *A Streetcar Named Desire* would have, since his essay was published before the play actually opened. No, he was writing about what happened to him after the success of *The Glass Menagerie*, his first play produced on Broadway. Subsequent to "The Catastrophe of Success," Williams published quite a few essays in the *New York Times*, each appearing before a new play of his opened. They contain potent wisdom about what it means to be a playwright, what makes a good play,

an honest play, and what it means to be a writer in America. Most of these are collected in his book, *Where I Live: Selected Essays*, published by New Directions in 1978, but it is not a popular or well-known book. Williams is certainly not neglected as a playwright, but he is, I firmly believe, neglected as an essayist, and as a poet. I have recently learned that *Where I Live* will be published in a new edition next year and will contain more of Williams' theatre essays, which is good news, indeed.

Any aspiring or working writer can take much from these essays. They are to some extent about craft. But knowledge of craft, Williams knew so well, is just one aspect of what it is to be a writer. If you are to pursue this writing thing for the long run, it also takes courage, gumption, discipline,

heart, and a sense of values. This is what you learn about when you read Williams' essays. In this first essay, he writes about what William James called "the bitch-goddess success." No one has written about this hag better. In many years of teaching, I have heard again and again requests by students on how to get published, or at least how to find an agent. But no one asks, "What do I do if I'm successful?" Understandable! That seems but a fantasy for the beginning writer, and perhaps slightly absurd. The aspiring writer might well say, "Let me worry about how to deal with success when it comes to me. That's a problem I wouldn't mind having."

Maybe. But any kind of success can catapult the young writer into a world he or she is not accustomed to, and the results can be stultifying, even disastrous. The stories of one-book

authors, or authors whose later writing is a parody of their earlier, famous work, are part of literary lore and depressing. Think of the long, Flying Dutchman-like struggle of Malcolm Lowry after he published *Under the Volcano*. Or Ralph Ellison's lonely battle for a second novel after *Invisible Man*. Of course, we can't always be sure why a writer produces just a single book; the reasons are often complex and indiscernible. But, surely, some writers were done in by the glare and attention and expectations of their first large success, especially if it comes at an early age. But success is relative. It can mean, of course, publishing a first book, but it can also be as simple as publishing an essay or story in a well-regarded journal. It doesn't have to be a success on Broadway or a huge advance from a publisher. It's all part of the same corruptive and disorienting family. The goddess has cousins and nieces.

Then it's time to turn to Tennessee Williams. His "The Catastrophe of Success" is a wonderfully wry and funny essay in addition to being lyrical and wise. After the success of *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams woke up one morning, as Bryon did, to find himself famous:

"I was snatched out of virtual oblivion and thrust into sudden prominence, and from the precarious tenancy of furnished rooms about the country I was removed to a suite in a first-class Manhattan hotel." Here, his troubles began. Luxury was his undoing:

"I lived on room service....Once I ordered a sirloin steak and a chocolate sundae, but everything was so cunningly disguised on the table that I mistook the chocolate sauce for gravy and poured it over the sirloin steak."

But more importantly, he soon found himself "indifferent to people." And, "sincerity and kindness seemed to have gone out of my friends' voices. I suspected them of hypocrisy."

He escaped to Mexico, and there, in "an elemental country where you can quickly forget the false dignities and conceits imposed by success," he found himself again. "My public self," he wrote, "that artifice of mirrors, did not exist here, and so my natural being was

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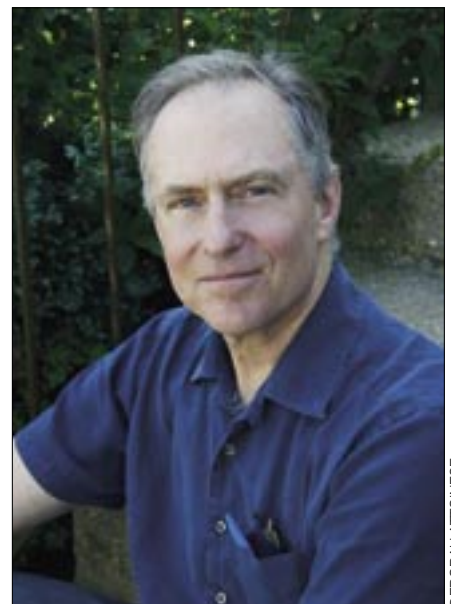
resumed." He was able once again to "apprehend the vacuity of a life without struggle," and that "the heart of man, his body and his brain, are forged in a white-hot furnace for the purpose of conflict (the struggle of creation)." He summed up what he learned from this catastrophe: "Security is a kind of death, I think, and it can come to you in a storm of royalty checks beside a kidney-shaped pool in Beverly Hills or anywhere at all that is removed from the conditions that made you an artist."

The essay must be read in its entirety to get the full impact of this journey back home for Williams. The fact is, though, it's an essay about how to contend with *not* achieving success, as well. Or, to put it another way, it's also about so-called failure. Williams is instructing all artists that they shouldn't be writing for any idea of success, because if, and when, that success arrives, it's only bewildering and can be highly toxic. If you don't "succeed"—if your essay or story or novel isn't accepted for publication—it's a kind of blessing. This may sound a bit absurd coming from a writer whose work *has* been published to a writer who hasn't had the least encouragement about his or her work from editors. But the cold clear fact of the matter is this: One of a writer's greatest assets, greatest gifts, is his or her freedom—freedom to write authentically, from the heart. Success can impede that, even for the strongest of souls. You may begin to feel, subconsciously, you have to write

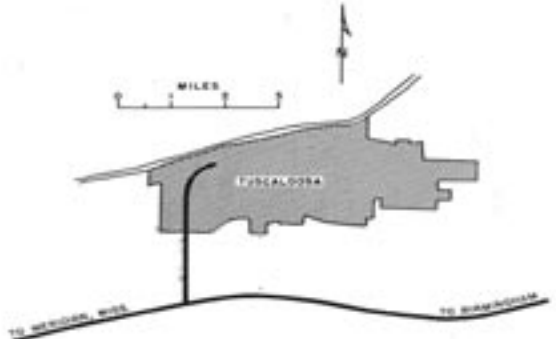
again what made you successful *before*. You feel you can't stray from that. Soon enough comes success's evil twin: a fear of failure. The reluctance to take chances, to listen to your heart. We have heard and seen this story before, but very few have written about it so incisively and feelingly as Tennessee Williams.

A personal note: When I was writing my first book, *French Dirt: The Story of a Garden in the South of France*, I was in a state of blessed obscurity. I had no pressures on me, save what I imposed upon myself, every morning. For one thing, I was forty-six years old, and no one even thought of me as a writer anymore, even in theory. Those days had long passed. I got up early before my job and wrote. I wrote only to please myself, day after day, until the book was finished, a year later. It was an exhilarating time. When the book was published, it received some praise. It wasn't anything remotely near what Tennessee Williams received for *The Glass Menagerie*, but still—expectations were raised. I know for a fact that whatever success I had bewildered me, threw me off balance, and I let it cut me off from my authentic voice. My second book was stillborn, a harsh experience, and it didn't help

Continued on page 14



Richard Goodman



BLACK WARRIOR REVIEW

A preeminent literary journal founded in 1974 at the University of Alabama, *Black Warrior Review* publishes contemporary fiction, poetry, nonfiction, comics, and art by Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winners alongside work by new and emerging voices, in addition to a featured poetry chapbook solicited by the editors.

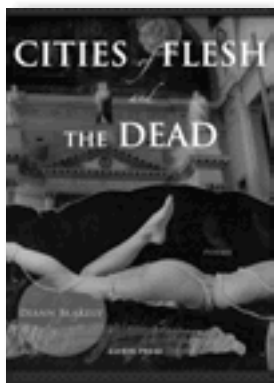
Please visit BWR.UA.EDU for more information, samples of published work, and web-exclusive content.

Cities of Flesh and The Dead

by **Diann Blakely**

“An imaginer who hits the bull’s-eye with every detail, intonation, and emotional twitch, Blakely’s fullness of language quietly and firmly dazzles as she moves among epochs, personae and geographies. She is a master of evoking the bounties of loss while embracing the wayward joys of what is unaccountably found.”

—Baron Wormser, judge
Alice Fay diCastagnola Award



“Attentive, careful, and self-reflexive, these poems create a palimpsest of the contemporary South, where the present is always complicated by the haunting voices of the past.”

—Sarah Kennedy
from the introduction

From Elixir Press, \$17
ISBN: 9781932418262

Continued from page 13

that my editor turned out to be a fair weather friend, did not stick with me during sickness, but only in health, and turned her back on me. It took me seventeen years to come to grips with that—and with God knows what else—and to write a second book. Because of the elapsed time, I wrote the second book in the same blessed obscurity as I wrote the first. I can’t say if the new book is good or not—that’s up to the public to decide—but I can say that it’s *me*. I can say it’s authentic, and that’s the best thing about it, as far as I’m concerned.

Now I don’t mean to say that as a writer you should avoid any chance of success. Any writer wants *readers*, and lots of them. Why else write? Just for yourself? Then why bother publishing? No, writers want readers, and if you are fortunate enough to get them, then that success will affect your life, and—here I can speak from experience—your work. How you deal with it is the rub, and that’s why it’s a good thing to have an ally like Tennessee Williams on your side.

If you want an extended taste of what Williams’ life was like before he became famous, read the excellent biography of his early years, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams* by Lyle Leverich. Practically every other letter Williams writes to his agent, the steadfast Audrey Wood, is for \$5 or \$10 or \$25 to get his typewriter or bicycle out of hock, or to pay a few days’ rent. But even in poverty and obscurity, Williams still battled those demons of success. Headed for New York City in January of 1940—*The Glass Menagerie* would not open until five years later—he wrote in his journal, “Sorry to report I feel rather dull due to the blue devils of defeatism which nearly always rear their ugly little faces in reaction to some period of triumph and elation.”

On that trip and on a few subsequent trips, he stayed at the West Side YMCA on 63rd Street near Central Park West. This happens to be where I gave one of the first readings from my new book, and where I have been many times. When I go, I often think of the young, struggling Tennessee Williams, with his great resolve, working away in his tenth floor room, not yet courted by the bitch goddess, but free to struggle to be the playwright he was meant to be.

Richard Goodman is the author of The Soul of Creative Writing and French Dirt: The Story of a Garden in the South of France.

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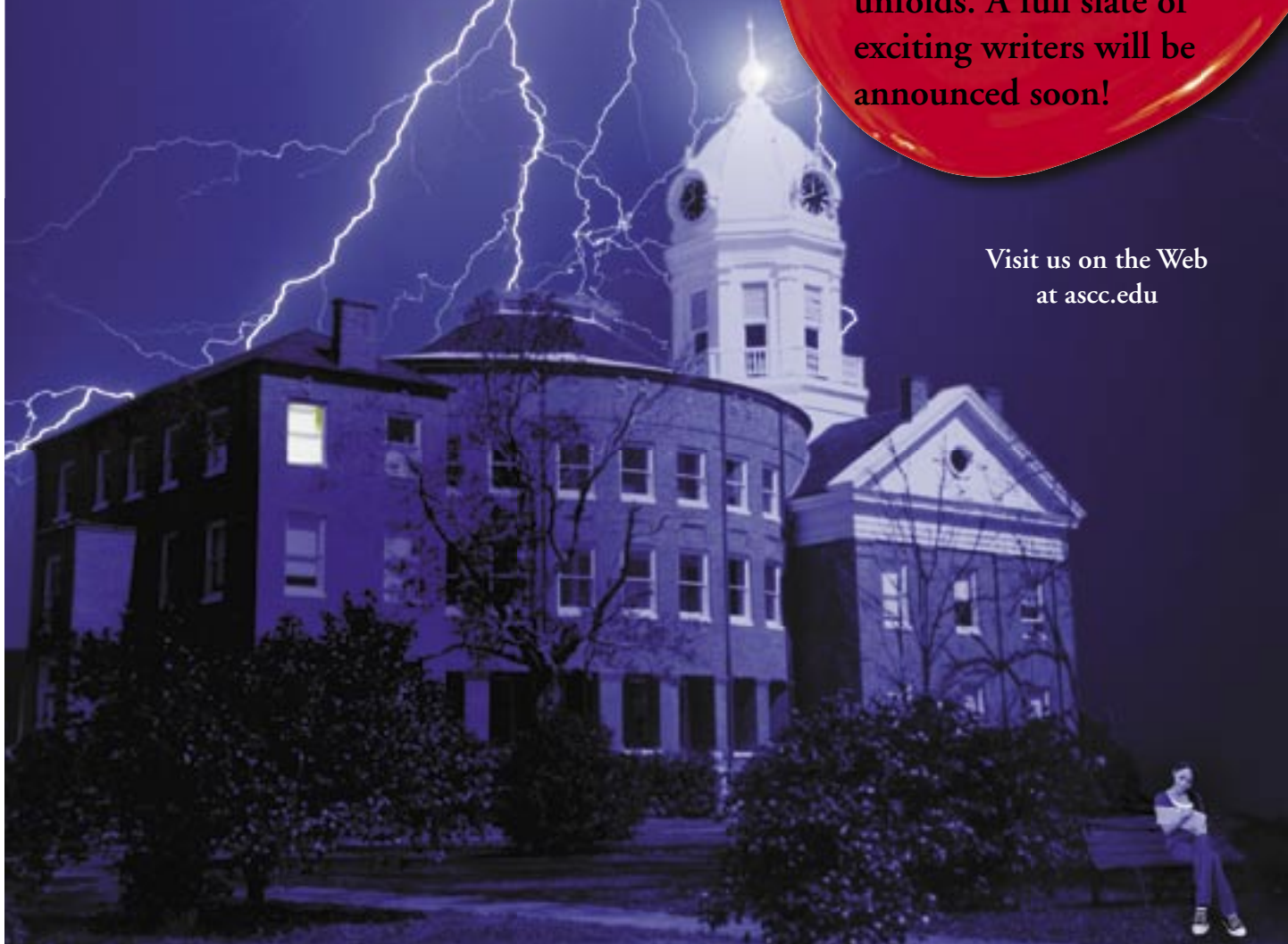
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The Alabama Writers Symposium is a project of the Center for Literary Arts and sponsored by Alabama Southern Community College, Monroeville, Alabama. For information, call Melinda Byrd Murphy at (251) 575-8226.

Alabama High School Literary Arts Awards Celebrates Its FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY

by *Danny Gamble*
photos by *Jamie Martin*

The Alabama Writers' Forum hosted the fifteenth annual Alabama High School Literary Arts Awards on March 12 at the State Capitol Auditorium. Fifty-seven students representing twenty public, private, and home secondary schools received recognition. Senator Parker Griffith (D-Madison, District 7) delivered the keynote address.

Citing John Keats' poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Griffith said, "Keats changed my life. His writing changed my life when he landed in my lap at the Baton Rouge library when I was seventeen."

Addressing this year's winners, Griffith continued, "A natural writer has to train him or herself. A natural writer has to write and write and write some more to train him or herself. When you struggle to find the right word, you grow stronger every day."

AWF Executive Director Jeanie Thompson added, "Over the past fifteen years, if you use this year's contest as an average—with fifty-seven winners and twenty schools statewide represented—we have awarded prizes for writing the best poems, stories, essays, plays, and portfolios to at least 750 young writers. By doing this, we've also recognized their teachers, their schools, and their parents.

"We have given awards to students at urban schools, magnet

arts schools, rural schools, private or parochial schools, and home schoolers," she continued. "The desire—or I should say *the fire*—to write knows no economic boundary. Arts education is making a comeback, and the Alabama Writers' Forum is ready to play our role as an encourager and an advocate for it."

"I'm honored to be presented with these awards," said Nichole Peacock, a student of Foster Dickson at Booker T. Washington Magnet School in Montgomery. "These awards boost my self-confidence and my writing."

Peacock placed in three categories. She also received the Ruth and Ott Senior Portfolio Scholarship.

"The scholarship is an important award," said Peacock, "and I am grateful to the Ott's for endowing the scholarship." Peacock is presently studying English at Huntingdon College.

Each year the Forum presents the High School Literary Arts Awards to students in grades nine through twelve from schools around the state in the areas of creative nonfiction, drama, fiction, poetry, and literary journal editing. Five Senior Portfolio Scholarships include awards of \$500. Deadline for application for the 2009 awards is January 11, 2009.

For a complete list of 2008 winners and the 2009 application form, visit www.writersforum.org/programs.



Senator Parker Griffith (D-Madison, District 7) delivers the keynote address.



Teacher Dianne McWilliams with Stacy Choi, Montgomery Academy, recipient of a Creative Nonfiction Judge's Special Recognition.



FY 08 AWF Board President Derryn E. Moten with Seth Douglas, Montgomery Academy, first-place recipient of the Marie Stokes Jemison Creative Nonfiction Award.



Senator Parker Griffith (D-Madison, District 7) with (l-r) Nichole Peacock, Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, recipient of the Ruth and Jay Ott Senior Portfolio Scholarship; Madeline Wadley, Alabama School of Fine Arts, recipient of the B.T. Thompson Senior Portfolio Scholarship; Natalie Reinhardt, Alabama School of Fine Arts, recipient of the Mildred Lowe and Paul W. Henry Senior Portfolio Scholarship; Molly Saunders, Alabama School of Fine Arts, recipient of the Alabama State Council on the Arts Senior Portfolio Scholarship.



Scholarship sponsor and FY 08 AWF Board Immediate Past President Linda Henry Dean with Natalie Reinhardt, Alabama School of Fine Arts, recipient of the Mildred Lowe and Paul W. Henry Senior Portfolio Scholarship.



Nichole Peacock (c), Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, recipient of the Ruth and Jay Ott Senior Portfolio Scholarship with the award's sponsors.



Avery Driggers (l), Briarwood Christian School and recipient of a Poetry Award, with teacher Jon Carter and parents Bobby and Susan Driggers.



Teacher Connie Nolen (c) with Isaiah O'Hara and Tigger Geeters, Pelham High School, recipients of Poetry Certificates of Recognition.



Alabama State Council on the Arts Executive Director Al Head with Molly Saunders, Alabama School of Fine Arts, recipient of the ASCA Senior Portfolio Scholarship.



Representative Mike Curtis (D-Greenhill, District 2), AWF Executive Director Jeanie Thompson, and Representative Tammy Irons (D-Florence, District 1).

An Author's Notes Toward Possible Future Works

IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

by Daniel Wallace

A writing trend in the last few years has been to take minor characters from major novels and give them a book of their own. Having exhausted all the original ideas I've ever had, I'm exploring the possibilities here....

1 Count Vronsky from *Anna Karenina*. He interests me. How does he get along after Anna throws herself under the train? There's a period of grief, of course, but then, just when he least expects it, he meets someone new, and finds the true love of someone who will love him and trust him and who will not, he is sure, throw herself under a train? A twist: Love is only part of it. Vronsky has his own friends, his own interests. Say he invents a form of bowling? I can easily visualize some sort of childhood trauma (wet nurse goes dry?) which would go a long way to explaining why he is the way he is—and why he isn't the way he could be. This might work.



2 *The Catcher in the Rye*. Basically about a guy who goes on a kind of journey, and along the way meets several very interesting people—many of them, arguably, more interesting than the narrator himself. On the very first page, in fact, the narrator mentions a brother, D.B., who lives “in Hollywood.” A screenwriter! Toward the end

of the book he makes another appearance with “this English babe” who is “very good-looking.” A screenwriter with a hot English chick on his arm? Tell me more! Anyway, that's what

I intend to do, but as it's going to take place in Hollywood and all, I think it might come in a brown paper wrapper—in other words, definitely *not* high school material!

3 On page 7 of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway mentions that his family is descended from the “Dukes of Buccleuch.” I skimmed the rest of the whole book and never saw another word about these “Dukes.” It might be interesting to write a book about them, a kind of prequel to *Gatsby*, in which events which have yet to transpire are alluded to obliquely. Like one of the Dukes could be “Duke Katzbee” or something to that effect. Where is Buccleuch though? Must be someplace in Europe. Could be fun. I love to travel.

4 *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*—from the point of view of the BRIDGE.

5 *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad, has always seemed to me like such a—may I be frank?—dark book. In other words, kind of one-sided. Was there a *Heart of Lightness* anywhere in there he might have overlooked? Maybe. My plan is to read the book, find out, and write about it.

6 *Animal Farm*. While I admire what George Orwell did in this novel, there's one voice we don't hear enough of, and that's the farmer, Mr. Jones. We are never “in his head” as the animals take over his farm. What does he think



about a bunch of animals taking his place over? Speaking for myself, I'd be pretty upset. I'd go, "Jesus! These animals—whoa!—they're taking over my farm!" The last we hear of him is pretty early on when he has "hurriedly flung a few possessions into a carpet bag, and slipped out of the farm another way." His future is a mystery. But I see him eventually ending up in New York City, meeting a woman, starting a family. I see him discovering his HUMANITY. Ironic. It could be sold as a companion piece.

7 *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. Hello? What about Slaughterhouses One, Two, Three, and Four? Was there a sixth? This could turn into an industry unto itself. I can imagine myself as an old, old man, terribly rich and famous, walking unnoticed past a couple and overhearing them speak: "Can't wait for *Slaughterhouse-Twenty-seven!*"

8 *The Naked and the Dead*—more naked, less dead.

9 *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. The author let a lot of possibilities slip right through his fingers. For instance, how many times does the *milkman* ring? How many times does the *handyman*? What if the handyman rings the same number of times as the postman and there's a big mix-up? That could be hilarious. I really haven't decided which way to go with this, though—serious or comedic. Tongue in cheek?

Daniel Wallace is the author of four novels, most recently Mr. Sebastian and the Negro Magician.

Continued from page 10

of immigrant communities on historic architecture in the city of Prato as part of his International Global Issues Infusion Grant from the University of North Alabama. He presented these works in a power point presentation that included works by other photographers such as **Eugene Atget** and **Walker Evans**, who had also photographed the changing faces of communities in Europe and America.

Panelists for this final symposium, titled "I diritti di migranti e rom nella soieta Italiana" or "The Rights of Migrants and Rom in the Italian Society," included scholars and community leaders from Senegalese and Rom communities in Pisa. **Matar N'Diaye**, Presidente del Consiglio degli Stranieri Provincia di Pisa; **Etem Dzevat**, Presidente Associazione Comunita Europa Rom di Pisa; and **Guiseppe Faso**, Direttore Scientifico Centro Interculturale Empolese-Valdelsa, discussed the Senegalese and Rom immigrant populations in Pisa and Florence, Italy. **Frederico Oliveri**, Universita di Pisa, moderated.

Sides showed recent photographs from the Chinese garment worker populations in Prato. He commented that he felt his photographs reveal a vital community, full of everyday activities from shopping for groceries to overloading the garbage bins, and his images point out that the immigrants, who have overlaid the historic Italian architecture with Chinese characters on signs and graffiti, seem quite settled in Prato. Yet it is well known that tensions remain.

The issue of how to deal with the clashes between immigrants and Italian citizens was the primary point of the panel, with passionate statements from both the Senegalese and Roma representatives about the plight of those who find themselves in another country, trying to make a living and raise and educate families. Though the panel was scheduled for only one hour, the discussion was far from over when the speakers concluded. Paralleling the on-going discussion of immigration in America, this panel linked the countries on another plane of civil rights.

Alabama looks forward to welcoming an Italian delegation in April 2009

In late April 2009, an Italian delegation of artists, performers, literary scholars, and officials will travel to Montgomery. Based in the Capitol City for about two weeks, the group will see as much Alabama art as possible, and, among other destinations, will travel to Sylacauga to visit the state's white marble quarry and talk about possible exchanges of artisans.

Head said that the delegation in the spring will also participate in several events that continue the theme of marble, sculpture, film, literature, and other contemporary art forms.

"We hope that out of this first exchange of arts, government, and economic interests between Alabama and the Comune di Pietrasanta many continuing liaisons will develop that are based in communities, with arts organizations, or on university or college campuses," said Head. "The Council hopes to have been a catalyst to forging new international relationships."

"The future of this project is about the friendships that have developed among people," Head continued, "and about the dreams that arise from those friendships. It is really about the communities, the institutions, and especially the people, who are drawn to dream together through artistic collaborations."

Surely there will be more good food; lively music, including—everyone hopes—some Puccini opera; literary exchange; and, most importantly, deepening friendships between two strong cultures and their talented visual artists, performers, and writers.

For more information, log on to www.arts.alabama.gov or contact the Alabama State Council on the Arts at 334-242-4076. To learn more about Pietrasanta, or "Little Athens," visit www.pietrasanta.it

TOUCHDOWNS, FIELD GOALS, & GOAL LINE STANDS

Football Sells in Alabama

by Van Newell

Go in any bookstore in Alabama—any bookstore, any time of the year—and you will see books on college football prominently displayed. Why? Because they s-e-l-l.

As a recent returnee to the state it occurs to me more than ever that football-focused literature is as important here as anywhere else in the country. Anywhere you look in this state, from Muscle Shoals to Mobile, memoirs, stratagems, theories, and ideologies about football are proudly and prominently advertised.

And they are not only to be found in bookstores. Businesses of all sundry shapes and sorts are apt to have copies of Tide and/or Tiger paraphernalia—from grocery stores to gas stations. College football in this state is so ubiquitous in the national sports culture that *Sports Illustrated* did a cover story on Tide coach Nick Saban and his team last summer *before* the season even started.

Simply put, stories about football are more important in

Alabama than in other states because college football is more important in Alabama than in other states. Can anyone, anywhere, name the University of Maine's team mascot? How about the University of Montana? The State University of New York-Albany?

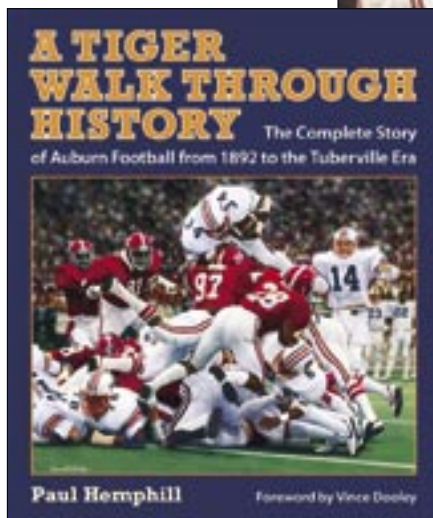
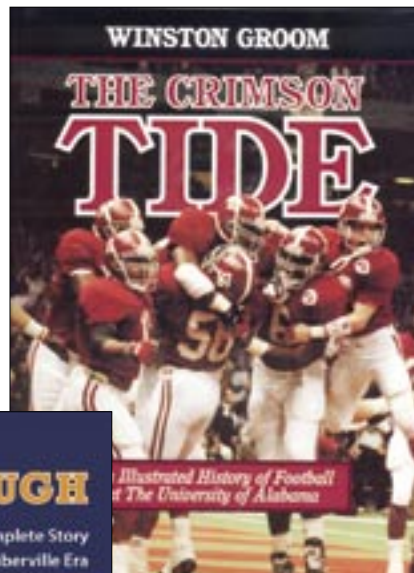
As readers of nonfiction know, how one titles a book reflects who the author wants to read their work. (Just ask Ann Coulter or Al Franken.) Sports literature in Alabama is no different with Keith Dunnivant's *The Missing Ring: How Bear Bryant and the 1966 Alabama Crimson Tide Were Denied College Football's Most Elusive Prize*. One cynical glance might prompt the reader to think, "Apparently, twelve national championships

are not enough." But take another look at the year 1966 and one realizes how sports affects politics and national perception and vice-versa. Birmingham native Diane McWhorter's history of Birmingham in the Pulitzer-winning *Carry Me Home* takes place in the same 1966 Alabama climate as Dunnivant's.

Mountain Brook native Warren St. John debuted with *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer* in 2004, drawing national attention to the colorful world of Bama fans who travel in RVs. St. John's greatest realization was that even sub-cultures (such as Alabama football fans) have sub-cultures of their own (such as those fans who

buy RVs for the sole purpose of following their team from September through January). Interestingly enough, St. John reveals how regular football enthusiasts can become fanatics regardless of religion, education, or income. More recently there has been a next-generation of sports literature books such as the football vault series published by Whitman books featuring books on both Auburn and Alabama with goodies included such as ticket replicas and stickers.

Obviously Alabama, Auburn, Troy, and Jacksonville State each have their own histories, steeped in tradition and fueled with passion. Some have been in place for generations and have a loyal fan base generating millions of dollars annually. Newcomers to the playing field such as UAB and Birmingham-Southern have only lately



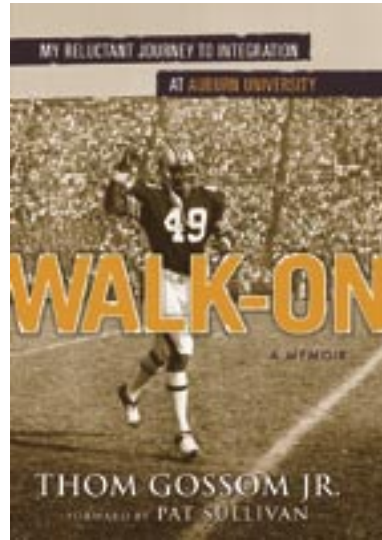
begun to make their mark on the regional radar.

But all this tradition and passion buzz begs the question: “So why do we care so much?” How is it that stories about football continue to be written, published, and sold? Perhaps, ultimately, we enjoy sports literature for the same reasons we enjoy sports—we crave the thrill of competition, the euphoria of winning, the feeling that we are part of something important. Of course, books are strolls down memory lane for many readers, perhaps wanting to relish the times they spent cheering on their team in the stands or watching the game on a black and white television with inebriated relatives. Through a good book, fans can transport themselves back in time to those moments when they first found their love of the game or when a team won a national championship or a player won the Heisman trophy. We must admit that we live vicariously through our players. How they perform determines how we feel the next day whether in church or underneath the covers battling a hangover.

But in a larger sense, and especially in Alabama, the love of the game and all things football—including books—stems from a deeper root. Before the Civil Rights Movement, people both outside and inside of Alabama thought of the state as impoverished both economically and as such many people in the state had little to be proud of. Who else in the world is proud of a war they *lost*? It is easy to see how athletics and college football in particular gained so much popularity in Alabama. In a very real sense, the people of our state were looking for reasons to be proud of themselves and the place they called home.

These days, as I look at the titles that line bookshelves under the “local” heading in my neighborhood bookstore, I have to wonder if the books that are written about sports are really written for the fans. Are the books being published today, for the most part, “sermons for the choir,” histories for those who already remember, or are they something else? Are they something akin to a love letter to the sport, the state, or the people? Can they be both? Should they be both?

I asked these questions to Todd Jones, editor of *rollbamaroll.com*. “I suppose they can be both,” he replied. “There are plenty of books on the individual teams or the rivalry itself aimed at informing those on the outside of what Alabama and Auburn football means to the people of the state, but for the most part I think that the fan base generally dictates the content of the books that get published. The vast majority of books published about each team are typically written by someone who has a connection to the school, be it a fan, a former player or coach, or a journalist who spent some time covering the subject. They know and understand the desire and hunger by the fan base to make their love for their respective



team a year-long thing and also understand the desire of each fanbase to recall the positives about their team, and at the same time how to underscore the ‘negative’ of the other.”

When Bill Elder, former athletic director at Auburn University at Montgomery and author of *All Guts and No Glory*, was asked what makes good sports literature, he said, “A good sports book is not just a blow-by-blow description of a person’s life. It should be an engaging characterization of an individual’s experiences rather than merely a written listing of his or her accomplishments.... A good sports book should tell a story that will never age. Its story should live on from generation to generation.”

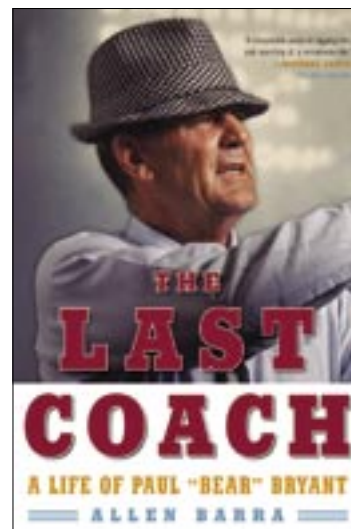
In following Mr. Elder’s advice, we as writers and readers of sports literature in Alabama already have an advantage. Sports—particularly football—legend and lore is already passed along from one generation to the next. The stories themselves already captivate our imaginations because they remind us of what it feels like to be inspired by something. All we have to do is put the passion onto paper. The art is in the telling.

But *where* one tells the story can be just as important. Both the archbishop of Mobile and the snake handlers on Sand Mountain reside in this state, and state-wide perspective is needed to appreciate the culture of sports that encompasses over 52,000 square miles.

“I think the sports culture is similar throughout the state,” states Randy Kennedy, sports editor of the *Mobile Press-Register*, “but one big difference is that the people of Mobile identify with being from the Gulf Coast as much or more than they identify with being from Alabama. So most people in Mobile feel more of a connection with the New Orleans Saints than they ever would any team in Birmingham or Huntsville, even if Birmingham or Huntsville were to field

an NFL team. The exception, of course, is college football. Alabama and Auburn football still dominate the sports conversations year-round.”

And when one mentions the big two universities in the same breath, inevitable comparisons will be expounded upon. Ray Melick, columnist for the *Birmingham News*, feels that “far more books [are] written about [the University of] Alabama, probably because



Continued on page 22

there is far more money to be made on Alabama books and the historical status of the Alabama program is greater, offering more historical ideas for stories. But in the end, I think books on both programs come down to being ‘fan’ books. There have been a few books critical of one program or the other, but they don’t do well and don’t stay on the radar very long, while the ‘fan’ stories that sing the praises of either program tend to sell better and last longer.”

But I wanted also to hear from someone who is not, as George Orwell put it, writing “inside the whale.” That is to say, writing about Alabama and sports while not living in Alabama. Allen Berra, author of the Bear Bryant biography *The Last Coach* and presently a New Jersey resident, said, “The only significant difference that I’ve experience between readers of sports lit in Alabama and other states is that the primary interest in Alabama, as you would expect, is college football—specifically Alabama and Auburn football. Half a century ago, or so I’ve heard, baseball fans were as proportionate in Alabama as everywhere else, but with the shrinking of the minor leagues in the 1950s and 1960s a lot of baseball interest in Alabama died out. Thanks to cable and the Internet, I think there’s been a revival in recent yeas. But obviously a book on anything to do with SEC football is going to have more interest here than in the Midwest or West Coast or anywhere else.”

Finally, Paul Finebaum. Host of his own syndicated radio program and a syndicated columnist, his influence in the state on radio waves and in print carries serious weight. When asked what makes for quality sports literature, he said, “A great sports book is either one which is written in a compelling fashion or breaks new ground. I am tired of the same old book about Alabama football, retracing the same old stories. Tell me something I don’t know.” Indeed, but that begs the question: Why then are there so many books about Alabama and Auburn every year? Mr. Finebaum was succinct: “Because fans will buy anything, particularly, at the holidays.”

Melick added, “Many of the books, to me, seem like mindless fandom, not well written, and offering very little in the way of new perspective. Occasionally you do get a book that does that, and I’ve enjoyed those. But they are rare.”

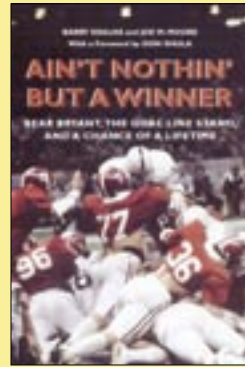
But perhaps that is how it has always been in all of publishing, not only sports literature and sports journalism. People read and buy what they want to read and buy, not what they *say* they want to read and buy. *The New Yorker* film critic Anthony Lane put it best: “Anyone who imagines that a hundred years ago Americans were rushing out to buy the new Henry James is kidding himself.”

Like any genre, there are the puff pieces and there is the meatier fare in Alabama sports literature. Sometimes, we want the book equivalent of steak and lobster and sometimes we want the cheeseburgers, and that, perhaps, is not necessarily a bad thing.

Van Newell teaches creative writing at the University of Alabama.

AFTER-THE-SEASON READING

A Tiger Walk Through History by Paul Hemphill; Foreword by Vince Dooley, Pebble Hill Books/University of Alabama Press, 2008, www.uapress.ua.edu.



Ain't Nothin' But a Winner: Bear Bryant, The Goal Line Stand, and a Chance of a Lifetime by Barry Krauss and Joe M. Moore, University of Alabama Press, 2006, www.uapress.ua.edu.

Always Alabama: A History of Alabama Football by Don Wade, Simon & Schuster, 2006, www.simonsays.com.

Auburn Glory Days: The Greatest Victories in Tigers History by David Housel, Sports Publishing LLC, 2008, www.sportspublishingllc.com.

Auburn University Football Vault: The Story of the Auburn Tigers, 1892-2007 by David Housel, Whitman Publishing, 2007, www.whitmanbooks.com.

Bear: My Hard Life and Good Times As Alabama's Head Coach (with CD) by Paul W. Bryant and John Underwood, Triumph Books, 2007, www.triumphbooks.com.

Bear: The Legendary Life of Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant by Don Keith, Cumberland House Publishing, 2006, www.cumberlandhouse.com.

Career In Crisis: Paul "Bear" Bryant and the 1971 Season of Change by John David Briley, Mercer University Press, 2006, www.mupress.org.

Don't Play for the Tie: Bear Bryant on Life by Creed and Heidi Tyline King, Thomas Nelson, 2006, www.thomasnelson.com.

Game of My Life: Auburn: Memorable Stories of Tigers Football by Mark Murphy, Sports Publishing LLC, 2007, www.sportspublishingllc.com.

Hard Fighting Soldier: Finding God in Trials, Tragedies, and Triumphs by Chette Williams, Looking Glass Press, 2007, www.lgp.com.au.

Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer by Warren St. John, Three Rivers Press, 2005, www.randomhouse.com/crown.

Tales from the Auburn 2004 Championship Season by Richard Scott, Sports Publishing LLC, 2005, www.sportspublishingllc.com.

The Crimson Tide: An Illustrative History of Football at the University of Alabama by Winston Groom, University of Alabama Press, 2000, www.uapress.ua.edu.

The Junction Boys: How 10 Days in Hell with Bear Bryant Forged a Champion Team at Texas A & M by Jim Dent; Foreword by Gene Stallings, St. Martin's Griffin, 2000, <http://us.macmillan.com>.

The Last Coach: A Life of Paul "Bear" Bryant by Allen Barra, W.W. Norton, 2005, www.wwnorton.com.

The Long Shadow of Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant by Dr. Gaylon McCollough, Compass Press, 2008, no Web listing.

The Missing Ring: How Bear Bryant and the 1966 Alabama Crimson Tide Were Denied College Football's Most Elusive Prize by Keith Dunnavant, St. Martin's Griffin, 2007, <http://us.macmillan.com>.

Troy: A Legacy of Champions, The Booksmith Group, 2008, www.troyfootballbook.com.

Walk-on: My Reluctant Journey to Integration at Auburn University by Thom Gossom Jr., State Street Press/Borders Press, 2008, www.borders.com.

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Discovering Alabama Literature

THE GROUPS BEHIND THE BOOKS

by Norman McMillan

When I was named the 2008 winner of the Eugene Current-Garcia Award, I started thinking about my own experience reading Alabama literature. The thing I was most struck by was the slowness with which my interest in and experience of this literature took place.

No discussion having anything to do with Alabama literature can escape having to define what it is. One definition of an Alabama writer is any author driving through Alabama who slows his automobile down to ten miles an hour. I'll be a bit more exclusive, including writers who were either born in Alabama, spent significant periods in Alabama, or wrote works set in Alabama or works on Alabama topics.

I was first aware of Alabama literature when I heard family members in the forties and fifties discussing two works published before my birth: James Agee's masterpiece, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, and Carl Carmer's *Stars Fell on Alabama*. I am not at all sure my parents had read the books, but they disapproved of these two outsiders coming in and taking advantage of local people. As for me, I read Agee when his book was reissued in the sixties and Carmer's book in that same decade.

My teachers at Tuscaloosa County High School held up Harriet Hassell, an alumna of the school, as a model for those of us interested in writing. Decades later I finally read Hassell's only novel, *Rachel's Children*, a rich and allusive family saga written in Hudson Strode's celebrated creative writing class and published in 1938 to great acclaim by Harper and Brothers Publishers in New York.

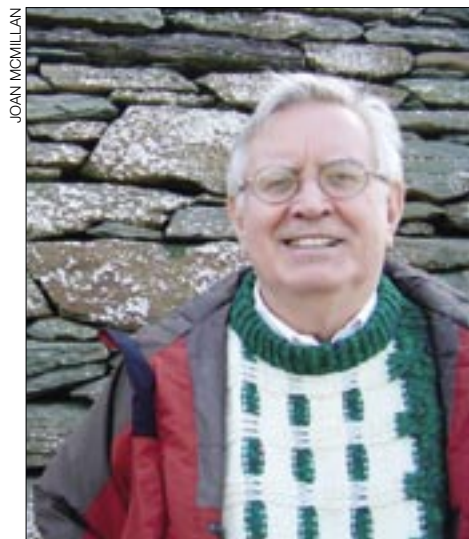
In high school, I read my first book by an "Alabama author," *Dunbar's Cove*, by the Mississippian Borden Deal, also a student of Strode. Well, I didn't exactly read it; I read the *Readers Digest* condensed version. When I picked it up, I had no idea who Borden Deal was or that the book was set in Alabama, but I remember thinking it good.

During my time at the University of Alabama in the sixties, my experience of Alabama literature was somewhat enlarged, though not in class. Professor O. B. Emerson was the only

teacher I knew who assigned Alabama writers and invited them to his classes. I was asked by a study club in Northport to review Elise Sanguinetti's *The Last of the Whitfields*—my first uncondensed novel by an Alabamian. Strangely, I read *To Kill a Mockingbird* a bit later, even though Harper Lee's book predated Sanguinetti's by two years. When I was a teaching assistant in 1964, I placed *Mockingbird* on the list of books my students could write a book report on, and many chose it.

In the sixties, Shirley Ann Grau impressed me when she read at a professional meeting in Birmingham, and I thought *The Keepers of the House* very good. I also began reading Truman Capote and Walker Percy during the sixties, though I was hardly aware that they were Alabama writers. About the same time, I was presented with the quaintest volume by an Alabama writer I ever encountered. Desperate for summer employment, I worked for a very short while at Colonial Press in Northport, which was rumored to be the official printer for the local klavern of the Ku Klux Klan. The volume, titled *Shadows on the Wall*, was by a Huntsville artist/poet named Howard Weeden, who published four volumes nationally. Her specialty was, according to Joel Chandler Harris in his introduction to *Bandanna Ballads*, painting "quality Negroes" (i.e. non-militant ones), and to my untutored eye they were very good. She also wrote persona poems in Negro dialect (not so good), quite often on the theme of how much better things were before emancipation—"When we was gay as children—'case/We didn't have a care."

In 1967, I went to the University of Michigan to study, and I thought very little about Alabama literature, writing a dissertation on seventeenth-century British prose. I began reading it again when I returned to Alabama to teach at the University of Montevallo in 1971. My colleague, William Cobb, not only a writer himself but knowledgeable about Alabama authors, introduced me to Madison Jones, whom I read with pleasure, and I remember having Paul Hemphill and Jim Seay on campus during the



JOAN MCMILLAN

Norman McMillan

seventies and falling in love with their works. In the eighties, I encountered Helen Norris and Mary Ward Brown's great short stories. I met Andrew Hudgins and early on read his fine poetry. I first read Barry Hannah's amazing fiction while he was teaching in Tuscaloosa. I heard Sonia Sanchez read her works in Montevallo and was mesmerized by her recitation of her poems. These were heady experiences for me.

In the late eighties, an explosion of Alabama literature unprecedented in its history began, and I became intrigued. The array of writers whom I have read with tremendous enjoyment is so great that I dare not even begin a list. Rather, I want to list those organizations and individuals most responsible for the attention paid to Alabama writers in the last couple of decades and with whom I have been lucky enough to have direct experience:

- The Alabama Writers' Forum, since its inception in 1992, has done more to promote Alabama literature than any other group. Under the fine leadership of Jeanie Thompson, it has, through its publications and programs, richly informed the reading public about developments in Alabama writing. The sheer number of book reviews over the last sixteen years is staggering.

ALABAMA
WRITERS'
FORUM

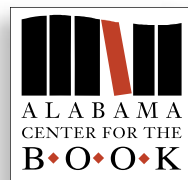


- Many Alabamians have learned of Alabama writers on Don Noble's *Bookmark*, a series of interviews on public television begun in the late eighties. Later, Noble began to do regular book reviews on public radio, many of them finding their way into print.

- The Alabama State Council on the Arts and the Alabama Humanities Foundation have increased their support of Alabama authors in the last fifteen or twenty years.
- The presses of Alabama have contributed greatly to my growing awareness of Alabama literature. The University of Alabama Press created the Alabama Classics series in the early eighties and a decade later the Deep South imprint, bringing back into print a number of fine books. Deep South also publishes original works by Alabamians. Also, UA Press published Phil Beidler's two anthologies, which introduced me and many Alabamians to the scope and quality of Alabama fiction. Livingston Press has over the years published collections of Alabama poetry and fiction as well as books by Alabama writers. Black Belt Press had a long run of publishing Alabama authors, and Crane Hill, River City Publishing, and NewSouth Books continue to publish books by Alabamians.
- Small independent book stores have also done their part to promote Alabama writers by having readings and book-signings. The Alabama Booksmith, Capitol Book and News, and Over the Transom come quickly to mind.
- In the last twenty or so years, the number of literary festivals

in Alabama has grown considerably. Though most do not restrict the writers involved to Alabama authors, all have paid a great deal of attention to them. The Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville has restricted itself to Alabama authors, bringing scores of them to this symposium in the last decade.

- Professional organizations such as the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama and the Alabama Council of Teachers of English have through the years given attention to Alabama writers through their programs and publications.
- The Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for Arts and Humanities at Auburn, since its formation in 1985, has provided programs, such as Read Alabama, which took Alabama writers and scholars into the public libraries around the state.



- A number of libraries—many inspired by the Read Alabama program—have formed their own series of visiting authors as well as reading and writing groups.
- More recently, the Draughon Center has directed the Alabama Center for the Book, which since 2001 has advanced the public's knowledge of Alabama's authors through its various programs such as *This Goodly Land*, an online literary map.
- High school and college curricula seem to have become more amenable to including Alabama writers.
- The newly-launched and beautifully-edited *Encyclopedia of Alabama* will include detailed articles on Alabama writers.
- The Cason Award at UA, the Hackney Awards at Birmingham Southern, and the Harper Lee and Current-Garcia Awards at Alabama Southern Community College bring a positive focus on Alabama writing and scholarship.



I am quite sure there are glaring omissions on my list, but it will at least give you an idea of the major players over the last twenty or so years.

When I go to bookstores nowadays, it is natural for me to go to the collection of Alabama literature, and, though I have not made an official count, I probably read more books by Alabamians than books by people from all other places combined. I don't think that would have happened without the good offices of the groups I have mentioned above. But it also would not have happened without so many fine works by "Alabama writers." And the future looks exceedingly bright.

Norman McMillan is the author of the memoir Distant Son and of the plays Against a Copper Sky and Ashes of Roses.

New Board Members Join ALABAMA WRITERS' FORUM

*The Forum has recently elected
five new members to our Board of Directors.
Join us in welcoming them....*

RICK GARLIKOV, HOOVER PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO



as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Nature Conservancy, Alabama Chapter. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Alabama Humanities Foundation, the Wildlife Habitat Council, Silver Spring, Maryland, and the Salvation Army Advisory Board, Birmingham. He currently serves as President of the Members' Council of Leadership Birmingham, and is a member of the Kiwanis Club of Birmingham. Donaldson lives in Homewood, Alabama, with his wife Debbie and their two sons, Walker, 18, and Ben, 14.

contributor to *First Draft*. She has published articles in *The Albuquerque Journal/Tribune*, *America Magazine*, *The Anniston Star*, *Book Page*, *The Colgate Scene*, *ForeWord*, *Library Journal*, *Novelists, Inc.*, *RiverViews*, *Southern Scribe*, *Stand Magazine*, and others. Pam is a board member of the Alabama Center for the Book and participates in the Alabama Humanities Foundation's "Speaker in the House" program. In 2005 she published *Inner Voices*, *Inner Views: Conversations with Southern Writers*.

DAVID DONALDSON is Director of Community Relations at Vulcan Materials Company, where he is responsible for the community and governmental relations programs of the Company's corporate office and nine operating divisions. Vulcan Materials Company is the nation's largest producer of construction aggregates and a major producer of other construction materials, with corporate headquarters in Birmingham and division headquarters in Los Angeles, San Antonio, Chicago, Atlanta, Knoxville, Winston-Salem, and Jacksonville, Florida. Donaldson graduated from the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, with a B.A. in English Literature. He holds a Master of Arts in Public and Private Management from Birmingham-Southern College. He currently serves



SHANNON WELLS

PAM KINGSBURY is a returning board member. She is an English Department faculty member at the University of North Alabama and a frequent book reviewer for and



GLODY MCCLAUGHLIN

JIM MURPHY was educated at the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Cincinnati. He teaches creative writing at the University of Montevallo, where he has also directed

the Montevallo Literary Festival. His poems have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Brooklyn Review*, *Fine Madness*, *Gulf Coast*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *The Southern Review*, *Texas Review*, and *TriQuarterly*, among other journals. His chapbook, *The Memphis Sun*, published by Kent State University Press, won a Stan and Tom Wick Award. His honors include appointment as a Tennessee Williams Scholar at the Sewanee Writers' Conference and University Scholar at the University of Montevallo. His first full-length poetry collection, *Heaven Overland*, is slated to be published by Kennesaw State University Press in 2009.



DENNIS HOLT

SUE BRANNAN WALKER is a returning board member, having served on the founding executive committee of the Forum from 1992 -1995. Walker was commissioned as Alabama's Poet Laureate in 2004 by Gov. Bob Riley. She holds an M.A., M.Ed., and Ph.D. from Tulane University. She is known nationally and internationally for her poetry and critical articles on poets and writers such as James Dickey, Marge Piercy, Flannery O'Connor, and Carson McCullers. As publisher of *Negative Capability* Press and of the journal

Negative Capability, she has published not only such authors as Jimmy Carter, E.O. Wilson, John Updike, William Stafford, Gerald Stern, Jack Coulehan, David Ignatow, Mary Oliver, Pat Schneider, Karl Shapiro, Richard Eberhart, Diane Wakoski, Roald Hoffman, Bernie Seigel, and Rita Dove, but also numerous Alabama poets and writers, providing them a greater audience and some of them their first opportunity to be published. Walker's poetry, prose, and community service have garnered numerous awards, grants, and fellowships. She has published six volumes of poetry. Her latest collection is *It's Good Weather for Fudge, Conversing with Carson McCullers*. Walker serves as the chair of the University of South Alabama English Department and director of the Stokes Center for Creative Writing at USA.



THE STUDIO AT EASTCHASE

FRANK WHITE received a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Auburn University and completed the Advanced Management Development Program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. His past work experience includes John Portman & Associates, Inc., where he coordinated the design and construction for the 1.5 million-square-

foot Brussels International Trade Mart in Belgium as on-site representative. White also served as the architect's on-site representative for 3D/International during the construction of the Hyatt Hotel in Karachi, Pakistan. Before being named the Executive Director of the Alabama Historical Commission in 2008, White served as the Endangered Properties/Revolving Fund Director at the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. In his eleven years at the Georgia Trust, White built the revolving fund into a self-sustaining program from an initial fund of \$450,000 to \$2,300,000. As program director, he provided alternatives to demolition and neglect of architecturally and historically significant sites by promoting their rehabilitation.

"I welcome these five new Board members to the Alabama Writers' Forum," said Board president James Buford. "Each brings with him or her unique qualifications that will help stimulate the growth of the Forum in new directions. I look forward to serving with them."

These new Board members join returning members Derryn E. Moten, Immediate Past President; James Buford, President; Julie Friedman, Vice President; Ruth Cook, Secretary; Bill Elder, Treasurer; Lynne Berry, Writers' Representative; Marianne Moates Weber, Writers' Representative; Daryl Brown; John Hafner; Jack Drake; John Nixon; Philip Shirley; and Linda Spalla.



Greetings, Salutations, & Goodwill

First Draft BOOK REVIEWS ONLINE

Dear AWF:

Every book club has the same problem at every meeting: Choose the next book to be read. Not any old book will do for most book clubs. The books must meet the particular interests of that club's membership. The mission of the Black Belt Treasures Gallery in Camden, Alabama, is to give direction for choosing books for its book club. The Gallery was created to give regional artists and craftsmen both encouragement and recognition, and as a place to show and sell their creations. The extension of this goal to the Gallery's book club was to bring together people with an interest in the literary arts for a discussion of books that had a regional theme or that were written by regional authors.

Every member of the book club could suggest lots of good books. The question was how to find exciting regional books written by exciting regional authors? Solving the problem of choosing the books was pretty tough. Then, Marlin Barton came to the book club and captivated us with a discussion of his book *A Broken Thing*. He did more for me than discuss that book. He also introduced me to the Alabama Writers' Forum's *First Draft* Book Reviews Online (www.writersforum.org/books).

What a great site for finding books by Alabama writers, reviewed by Alabama reviewers. I want to express my appreciation to the Forum for providing this review service. Also, thanks to Marlin for introducing me to this Web page.

Jim Herod
Grove Hill, Ala.

Dear AWF:

Thank you for the wonderful review of *The Buccaneer's Realm* by Benerson Little. I've forwarded it to Ben. We will also circulate the review and keep it in Ben's file here. Thank you also for your interest in Ben's work. We will let you know of any future books we publish by Alabama authors.

Wendy Mann Garner
Potomac Books
Dulles, Va.

E-MARKETING

Dear AWF:

I want to thank you for doing a great job on the e-ad for Excalibur Press (August 2008). I think the e-mail blast was beautifully executed and most effective. I'm also grateful to [AWF Executive Director] Jeanie Thompson for suggesting it. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate this support from the Writers' Forum. You guys are terrific!

I don't know how many submissions are coming in from the e-mail blast, but the submissions are coming in from all over the country. I suspect the e-mail blast from the Writers' Forum is the biggest factor. You have been great supporters in this endeavor.

Linda Busby Parker
Excalibur Press
Mobile, Ala.

Dear AWF:

Thank you for your contribution to promoting the Roundtable Technology Exchange in Montgomery (July 2008). Your e-postcard is definitely more successful than the cost and time for a paper postcard mailing.

Susan Perry
Alabama Humanities Foundation
Birmingham, Ala.

NEWSLETTER

Dear AWF:

Your e-newsletter is really impressive. The format is well laid out, and once I remember to "showcase images and enable links" it's easy to get from one place to another. This monthly bulletin, plus the attractive and provocative semi-annual *First Draft*, should encourage all of us to work harder at our craft and to be grateful for the community that has evolved through the Forum.

Julia Oliver
Montgomery, Ala.

Dear AWF:

Thank you so much for including the Limestone Dust Poetry Festival in your e-newsletter (March 2008). It looks fantastic. I want to be sure to let you know how appreciative we are of you for getting us in, and thanks for the lovely layout and placement, too.

Jennifer Roberts
Limestone Dust Poetry Festival
Huntsville, Ala.

Dear AWF:

Thank you for posting the piece about the Southern Slam Queen Competition in your e-newsletter (March 2008). This is a great newsletter in general, very interesting and informative.

I noticed the piece about the Limestone Dust Poetry Festival, which I only first heard about last year. Gypsee Yo, current Southern Slam Queen, was last year's performer there, and I also know [performance poet] Stefen Micko, whom your newsletter informed me is performing this year. Thanks for passing this information along.

Jerri Hardesty
New Dawn Unlimited
Brierfield, Ala.

GATHER UP OUR VOICES

Dear AWF:

I want to give you a big thanks for the recent copy of *Gather Up Our Voices: Selected Writings from Recipients of the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer 1998-2007* you sent to us (www.writersforum.org/programs/voices). I've already read most of the anthology and loved it.

We will be happy to share this anthology with our patrons, and we will also purchase some of the books featured here that are not in our collection.

Thank you, too, for your permission to use a link to your Web site on our Web site.

Gayle Clare
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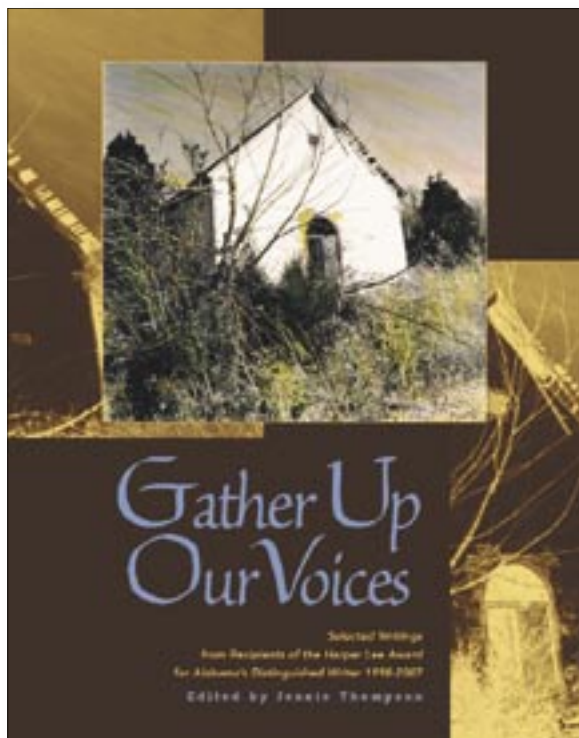
MISCELLANY

Dear AWF:

I'm very proud of all that you do, including the new online newsletter and book reviews as well as the articles in the continuing *First Draft*. Enclosed, find my membership renewal check to cover whatever you may need it for.

Theodore Haddin
Birmingham, Ala.

Send your letters to Danny Gamble, Alabama Writers' Forum,
PO Box 4777, Montgomery, AL 36103-4777,
or e-mail gambledanny@bellsouth.net, Subject: *First Draft*.



This anthology features poems, stories, and nonfiction from the first ten winners of Alabama's most prestigious literary award. The 130-page large format paperback with dust jacket also features twenty-five hand-colored black and white photographs by award-winning Alabama photographer Wayne Sides.

Gather Up Our Voices is available for \$30, or as a premium with a \$100 membership in the Alabama Writers' Forum. To order, contact the Forum at writersforum@bellsouth.net or phone toll free 866-901-1117.

All proceeds from the sale of *Gather Up Our Voices* go to support the programs and services of the Alabama Writers' Forum. For more information, visit www.writersforum.org.

The State of the Forum



Jim Buford

Note: As we begin our fiscal year 2009, I've asked Jim Buford to share his thoughts on the value of literary and cultural stock with First Draft's readers.

—Jeanie Thompson, Executive Director

Dear Reader,

There isn't a Dow Jones Industrial Average or NASDAQ number for the arts and culture in America, but I wish there were. I would enjoy watching the ticker for literature in Alabama continue to climb. It would be exhilarating to know that my investment in Alabama's literary arts was growing, guaranteeing me a continued return on great reading.

By the time this magazine is in your hands, our U.S. president-elect will be losing a lot of sleep trying to figure out the economic situation, as well as other pressing items of global significance. I don't envy this person, no matter who he is, the decisions he will have to make about our country's future.

From *this* new president's point of view, the future of the Alabama Writers' Forum is a lot easier to discern. Many of you timed the market well on this one, joining the Forum in the mid-90s when we were a new offering. Now our stock is solid, a veritable blue chip number in the arts exchange of our country.

I'm encouraged that our work with young authors in schools, emerging writers in communities, and other writing support organizations around the country is imaginatively and creatively handled by our dedicated staff. It's downright amazing how much is done by a fulltime staff of only 4.5 people.

Members of the Alabama Writers' Forum, a partnership program of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, receive the benefits of *First Draft*, a wonderfully written and popular magazine, a dynamic Web site (www.writersforum.org), and an information-packed monthly e-newsletter. Members also have the satisfaction of knowing they've invested in an organization that fulfills the role of literary ambassadorship for Alabama.

The Alabama Writers' Forum pledges to its membership that we aren't going to raise dues this year as a reaction to the fiscal downturn. Further, we pledge to continue to provide as many of the services within our budget as possible. We may have to get a little leaner, but our quality will remain high.

In the spirit of "turn about is fair play" we would like to ask something of you, dear reader. Please pledge to renew your membership this year when that friendly reminder letter arrives. Stay confident in your Alabama literary stock—your personal literary holding—and show that you, too, believe in the worth of Alabama's literary heritage and future.

We believe in the investment that so many people just like you have made since 1994 in the Forum through memberships and the continued financial support of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. And we know that the fine work in arts education made possible through a contract since 1997 with the Alabama Department of Youth Services will continue touching young lives and inspiring teachers.

So switch the channel, watch that imaginary arts ticker for a while, and enjoy the fact that your continued investment in Alabama's literary arts community will pay dividends for a long, long time. Fine books in libraries, young people discovering themselves as writers—these investments are rock solid. Smile to yourself and remember: You got in early!

Jim Buford
 President
 Board of Directors
 The Alabama Writers' Forum

Alabama BOOK Festival



Saturday, April 18, 2009

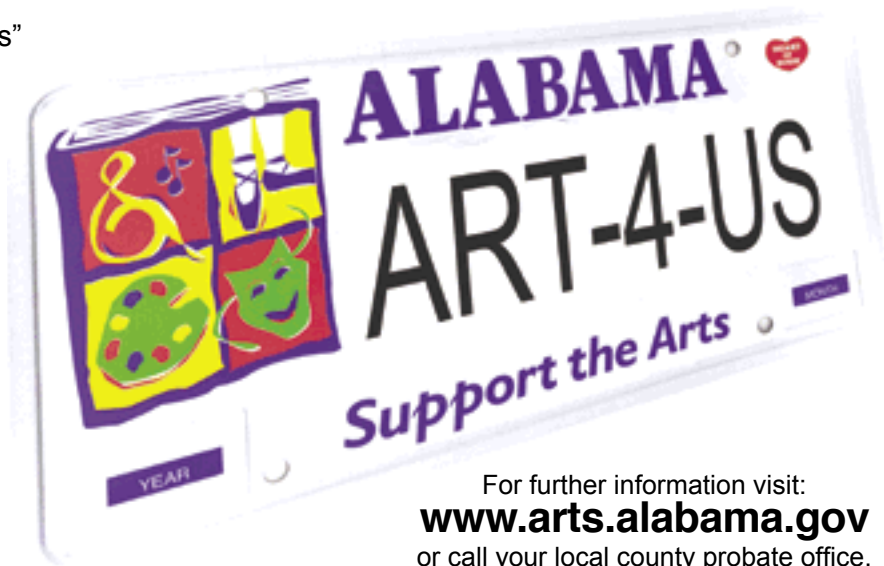
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