

# FIRST DRAFT

VOL. 5, NO. 4 SPRING 1999

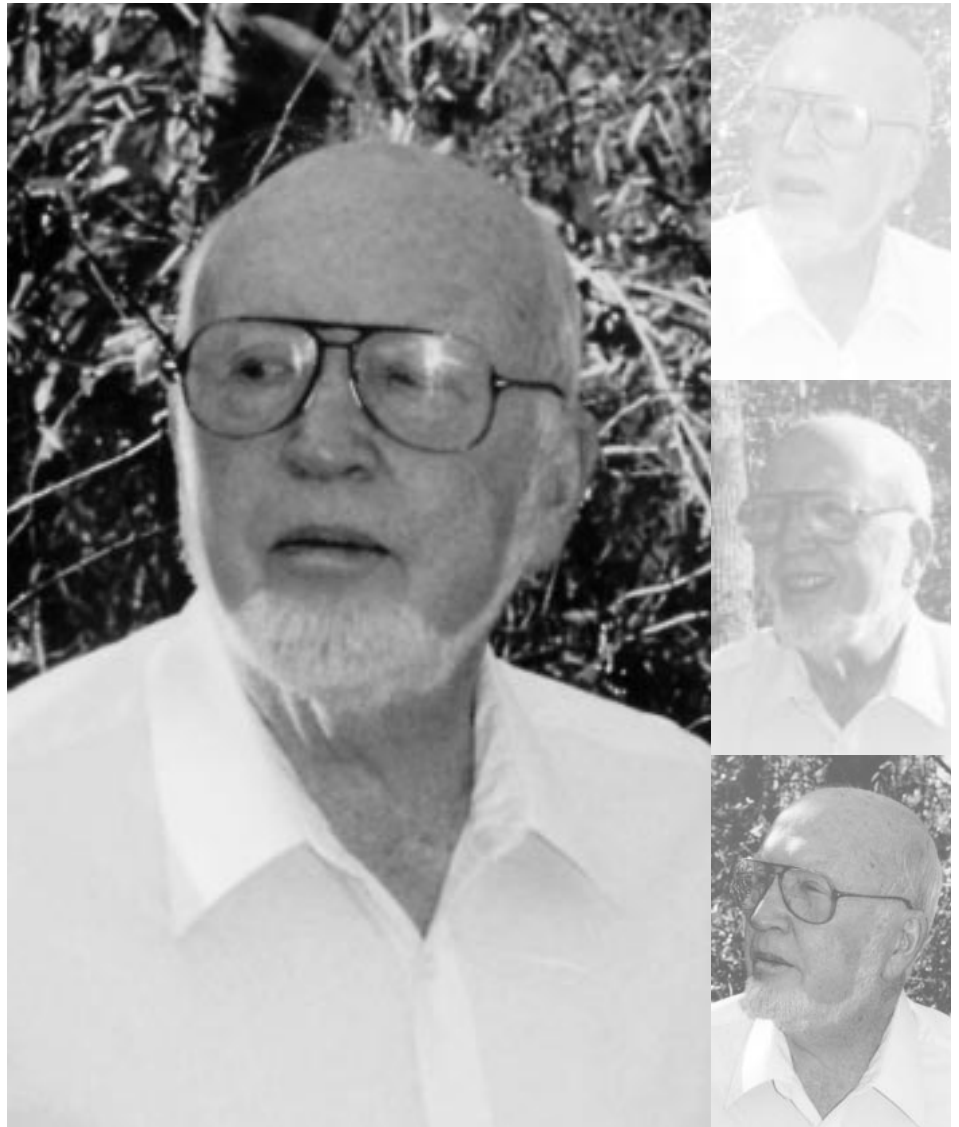
*The Journal of the  
Alabama Writers' Forum*

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*This year's Harper Lee Award  
will go to the dean of  
Southern novelists.*

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*Novelist Madison Jones  
Photos by Katie Lamar Smith*

# ALABAMA WRITERS' FORUM

1998-99

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When he visited Alabama in February for the Writers' Colloquium at Auburn University Montgomery, **NEA Literature Program Director Cliff Becker** said he wished *every* state had an Alabama Writers' Forum. I promised him I would quote him soon and often. We are grateful to Cliff for making the trip to Montgomery to see firsthand the wealth of literary talent—and energy—in this state. *See the story about the Colloquium starting on page 3.*

Even more events are taking shape in Alabama because of this literary energy level. Please note two late-breaking events of the spring literary season. On **April 9** there will be a publication party for **Livingston Press's *Belles' Letters*** at **Highland Booksmith** in Birmingham. Proprietor **Jake Reiss** will roll out the carpet for Alabama's best women short story writers (this feast will move to the **Alabama School of Fine Arts** later that evening). And on **April 24** **Birmingham Public Library** hosts its first "**Alabama Bound,**" a day-long gathering of close to 50 contemporary Alabama authors from children's writers to sportswriters to historians to poets.

Of course, it is not too late to register for the **Writers Symposium in Monroeville May 6-8**, where the second annual Harper Lee Award and Eugene Current-Garcia Award will be presented. *See page 18 for details on these events.*

In between jaunts to readings and conferences, I encourage *all* writers to consider Ellen Garrison's advice as outlined in our series on *Archiving Writers' Papers*. Every writer has something important to preserve.

On a personal note, there is nothing more gratifying to me as director of the Forum, than the day I spent in January working with the Chalkville "Writing Our Stories" program. I was privileged to work with a dozen young women who are finding their voices in poetry and other forms. For a couple of hours we investigated *personification* and some of those results, with further revision shepherded by teaching writer Priscilla Cooper, appear in this issue. With those poems we are also publishing new work from the boys program at the Mt. Meigs site of "Writing Our Stories," where writer Marlin Barton teaches.

The Forum's continuing partnership with the Department of Youth Services is a small miracle of dedication and cooperation—from the teaching writers who work alongside classroom teachers and other staff partners to the board of directors of the Forum who have made the AWF/DYS program a priority. And it is also a small miracle of growth on the part of these young people whom I believe have a future in Alabama as productive citizens. In this spring season of renewal I believe in our work with these young writers and in their future in Alabama. The energy level *is* high. Let's give thanks for it!



*First Draft* is a vehicle for communication among writers and those interested in literature/publishing in Alabama and elsewhere. We encourage publication news, events information, and story suggestions. *First Draft* will grow as the needs of writers in Alabama are identified. Contact: The Alabama Writers' Forum, Alabama State Council on the Arts, 201 Monroe Street, Montgomery, AL 36130-1800.

Phone: 334/242-4076, ext. 233; Fax: 334/240-3269; email:awf1@arts.state.al.us.

## *A Long, Hard Look at the South:*

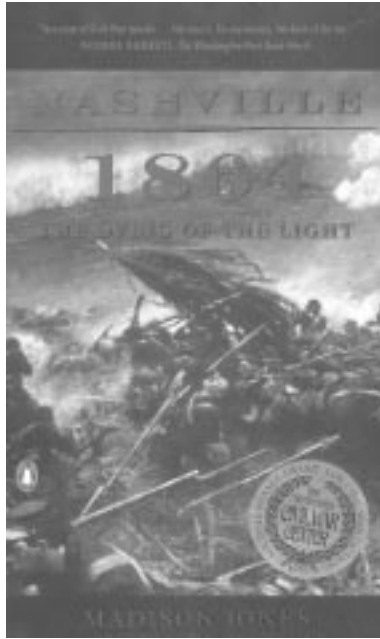
# Madison Jones's 40 Years as a Novelist

**T**he 1999 recipient of the Harper Lee Award for a Distinguished Alabama Writer is novelist **Madison Jones**, professor of English emeritus and University writer-in-residence emeritus at Auburn University. He will receive the award on Friday, May 7, at a luncheon in his honor during the second Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville. During the two-day conference, Jones's novels and their masterful evocation of Southern culture and settings will doubtless form a backdrop for writers' and scholars' discussions of "Alabama—the Place," this year's conference theme.

Born in Nashville in 1925, Jones was reared in and near there. He graduated from Vanderbilt, earned his master's at the University of Florida and taught in Tennessee and Ohio before coming to Auburn University in 1956. Over his more than 30 active years at the university and since retiring to his farm, his stature as a novelist has steadily grown. Among many honors, Jones has received Guggenheim and Rockefeller Fellowships, and most recently he was awarded the T.S. Eliot Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Creative Writing from the Ingersoll Foundation.

Perhaps Jones hints at his own aim as a writer in the prologue to his award-winning *Nashville 1864: The Dying of the Light*. The supposed author of the memoir has used imagination to create details "of gesture and feeling," we are told, in order "to do what any artist must: make memory come alive to its fullest in the crucible of art."

The South is what Jones's art re-creates through his unsentimental portrayals of different times, places and people. In *A Cry of Absence*, a Civil Rights era novel, he gives us "intimations of a time when life exceeded the grasp of stiffened minds and wills" through the tragic tale of Hester Glenn whose rigid acceptance of the old Southern ways led to a murder and the destruction of her family. *A Buried Land*



#### MADISON JONES BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Innocent*  
Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1957  
*Forest of the Night*  
Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1960  
*A Buried Land*  
Viking Press, 1963  
*An Exile*, Viking Press, 1967  
*A Cry of Absence*  
Crown Publishers, 1971  
*Passage Through Gehenna*  
Louisiana State University  
Press, 1978  
*Season of the Strangler*  
Doubleday & Co., 1983  
*Last Things*  
Louisiana State University  
Press, 1989  
*To the Winds*,  
Longstreet Press, 1997  
*Nashville 1864:*  
*The Dying of the Light*  
J.S. Sanders & Co., 1997

evokes the personal and cultural losses inherent in the building of the TVA dams in the 1930s.

In fiction truer than life, Madison Jones handles the big subjects—good and evil, desire, loss, betrayal. Whatever limits his characters—their upbringing, experience, or social situation—there is the possibility of transcendence of spirit. There is hope; they have choices. And so when they make mistakes, as the sheriff does in *An Exile* when he follows desire into an alliance with a brutal bootlegger, it is a true and inevitable tragedy. The Fall re-enacted.

Look for more coverage in the summer issue of *First Draft*.

## MONROEVILLE HOSTS SECOND LITERARY SYMPOSIUM

Monroeville and Alabama Southern Community College gave a southern literary symposium for the first time in 1998, and about 200 people came. "We expect to have double that number this year, and we are prepared to accommodate them," said coordinator **Cathy Power**. Events will be held on the campus of Alabama Southern, at the Monroeville Community House and in the historic Monroe County Courthouse on the square. With registration, a limited number of tickets are available for a performance of *To Kill a Mockingbird* which is staged by townspeople on the courthouse lawn.

Several of the sessions pair a writer with a scholar for a discussion of the writer's work. **Lee May**, colum-



Lee May

nist with *Southern Accents* and author of *In My Father's Garden* is on the program with AUM Dean of Liberal Arts **Robbie Walker**. **Dennis and Vicki Covington** will talk with **Nancy Anderson**, English professor at AUM. **Frye Gaillard**, author of *As Long as the*

*continued on page 23*

**MONROEVILLE CONFERENCE**

**FULL PAGE AD**

**FILM FURNISHED**

# Writers Gather for Colloquium at AUM

Literary arts supporters gathered Friday, February 12 and Saturday, February 13, at Auburn University Montgomery for the sixth “Writers Colloquium,” hosted by AUM and the Writers’ Forum. At the opening session, Forum Executive Director **Jeanie Thompson** introduced **Cliff Becker**, literature program director for the National Endowment for the Arts, as a “missionary from Washington come to give us glad tidings!” Those tidings included news of a \$2.6 million grant budget in the area of literature.

Grants are available to individuals, literary magazines and organizations. Becker outlined the mission of his area of the NEA as threefold: 1) to support emerging and mid-career writers during crucial points in their careers, 2) to broaden and strengthen the distribution of literature in America, specifically through grants to literary magazines, and 3) to ensure all Americans have access to their literary heritage.

“I’m here to support Jeanie Thompson and the Alabama Writers’ Forum. I wish every state had an organization which did the work you do,” said Becker. He stressed the importance of writers’ contributions to the nation. Writing is “heroic work indeed,” he said, because “our literature tells the world who we are.”

Approximately 125 people attended the two-day literary conference. The 18 participating writers, including Montgomery writer **Helen Norris**, read from their work or discussed the craft of writing in panel discussions. After reading a portion of his *Old Dogs and Children*, **Robert**



Cliff Becker, NEA, met members of the State Arts Council Ceil Snow (left), Birmingham, and Wiley White, Montgomery.

Rae Baxley

**Inman** commented that he owed 99 percent of it to the fact that he grew up in Elba. During lunch on Friday, the producers of the Alabama Public Television series “BookMark,” hosted by **Don Noble**, taped an interview with Birmingham mystery writer **Anne George**. Friday night at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, poet and translator **Coleman Barks** read from his own poems and those of thirteenth century Persian poet Rumi.

**Nancy Anderson**, AUM, called the Colloquium “a wonderful collaboration.” The Writers Colloquium was funded in part through a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Conference sponsors and *Amaryllis* literary magazine hosted a dinner for out-of-town writers and guests at the Standard Club on Thursday evening. *Amaryllis* editors

Nancy Anderson, **Lynn Jinks**, and **Donald Nobles** presented guests with a copy of the latest issue of the magazine. To underscore the theme, brilliant red amaryllis flowers bloomed on each table.



Robert Inman read from his novel in progress and talked about how experiences shape his fiction. “My mind is like the worst closet in your house,” he said.

Katie Lamar Smith



AWF board member Jay Lamar, Auburn University Center for the Arts and Humanities, chatted with writer Helen Norris.

Katie Lamar Smith



Katie Lamar Smith

"Southern Poetry Today" was the topic for (left to right) moderator Jeanie Thompson and panel members Jake Berry, Natasha Trethewey, and Robin Behn.

Writers' Forum board members in town for the dinner included president **Brent Davis** of Tuscaloosa, vice-president **Rawlins McKinney**, from Birmingham, Auburn board members **Peter Huggins** and **Jay Lamar**, and Dothan member **Bettye Forbus**. Other board members present were **Ed George**, Montgomery; **Rick Shelton**, Sterrett; **Kellee Reinhart**, Tuscaloosa; and the newest member, **Denise Trimm**, Birmingham.

AUM Chancellor **Roy Saigo** and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs **Roger Ritvo** attended as well as conference coordinator **Pam Stein**. Representing the Alabama State Council on the Arts were Council members **Wiley White**, Montgomery; and **Ceil Snow**, Birmingham. Council staff members present were **Becky Mullen**, who

served for several years as literary liaison to the Forum, and **Randy Shoults**, who recently assumed those responsibilities. Alabama House Ways and Means Committee member Rep. **Mike Hubbard**, Auburn, and House Judiciary Chairman Rep. **Bill Fuller**, LaFayette, were recognized for their concern for the arts.



Katie Lamar Smith

Producer Brent Davis (standing) introduced Anne George and Don Noble, host, before taping their interview for a "BookMark" broadcast.



Katie Lamar Smith

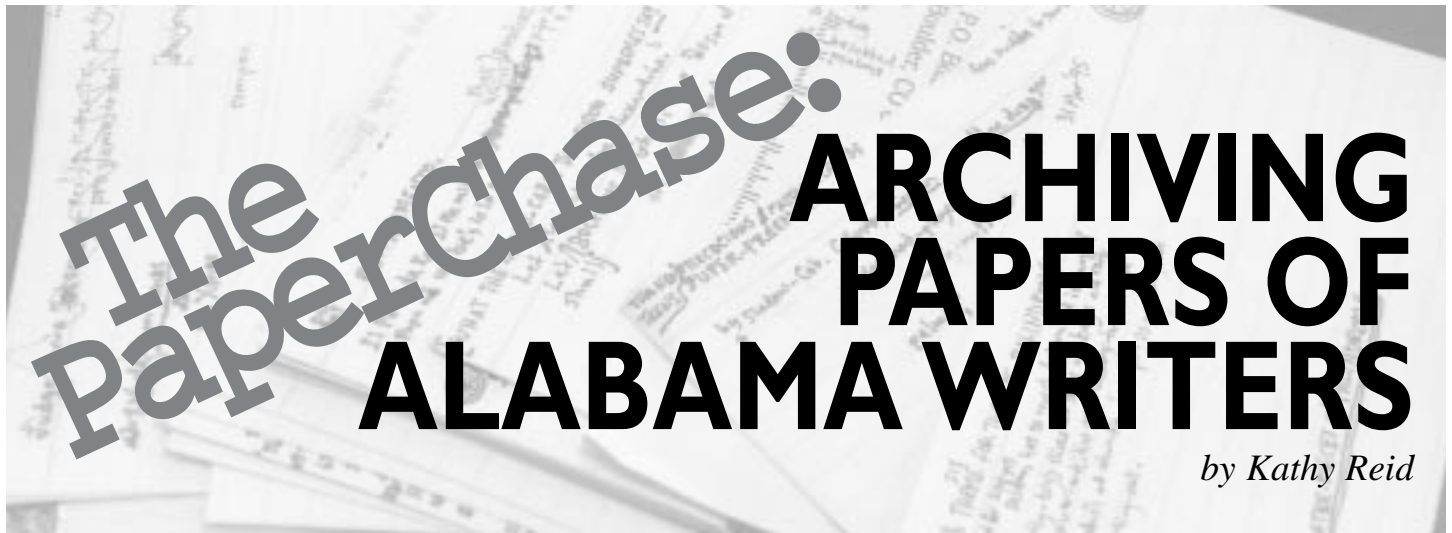
Nancy Anderson discussed book sales with Capital Book and News owners Tom and Cheryl Upchurch after Coleman Barks's reading.



Katie Lamar Smith

Coleman Barks signed one of his collections for a fan at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts.





# The Paper Chase: ARCHIVING PAPERS OF ALABAMA WRITERS

by Kathy Reid

Ellen Garrison was in her first week on the job as curator of the W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama when she saw George Starbuck's obituary in the *Tuscaloosa News*. Without much hope of success, she wrote to his widow and asked her to consider depositing the poet's papers at the University. Though Kathy Starbuck was not ready to make that decision, she felt a great responsibility to her husband's memory as well as concern for making his manuscripts and correspondence available to scholars.

"I didn't want them to go to a big place, like Harvard or Boston University. But Iowa was a logical choice," she recalled. George Starbuck had directed the Iowa Writers' Workshop as well as the writing program at Boston University.

In the months before his death, she had asked her husband's advice. "George had been no help at all because he had no feeling about what should happen to his papers," said Starbuck. In the end she said "yes" to Garrison's request. "I felt drawn to keep his papers here; it was a sentimental choice," she said. In part it was recognition of the warm welcome the academic community had extended to her husband and to her. In 1990 he was named to the Coal Royalty Endowed Chair in Creative Writing for one semester. They made their home in Tuscaloosa until his death in 1996; she lives there still.

The toughest part of the process was looking through all the papers before she turned them over for safekeeping, something Starbuck felt she had to do. The difficulty was compounded by George Starbuck's extreme lack of organization. When he worked at home, she recalled, drafts

would cover the dining room table. He filled the table and then filled the space under the table. "He piled drafts in envelope boxes, and every now and then he would clean up and toss them," she said. "He never really *finished*, even after a poem was in print. He was always revising."

Herself a writer and editor, Kathy Starbuck appreciates the peculiarities of her husband's creative process.

So does Garrison. "The way a person organizes his or her work tells us a great deal about them. Archivists want to preserve those characteristics, while making materials accessible," she said.

Two years after writing her inquiry letter, Garrison carefully packed George Starbuck's papers. The six boxes cataloged as "Papers, 1925-1995 of poet George Edwin Starbuck, 1931-1996" account for about one one-thousandth of the library's manuscript collection.

Starbuck's notes sparkle with wit and wordplay. It is a thrill to open folders labelled "Occasional Verses Worth Saving" and "Current Promising

Drafts" to see unpublished poems that may not have been quite "finished" enough. Over several years, correspondence and manuscripts of Bits Press—*Space Saver Sonnets* and the succinct *Richard the Third in a Fourth of a Second*—give insights into the poet's serious and playful sides.

Box six is almost full of McDonald's cookie boxes. They are packed with three-by-five cards, most of which are covered with tiny, hand-inked letters that are difficult to make out. He was writing at McDonald's, working out palindromes, and he stored them in the cookie boxes that came readily to hand. Turning the pages, getting a glimpse of how George Starbuck's mind worked (and what a mind!) conjured him into the present.

#### BOOKS BY GEORGE STARBUCK

*Bone Thoughts*  
*White Paper: Poems*  
*Elegy in a Country Church Yard*  
*Desperate Measures*  
*Talkin' B.A. Blues*  
*The Argot Merchant Disaster:  
Poems New and Selected*  
*Space Saver Sonnets*  
*Richard the Third  
in a Fourth of a Second*



Rickey Yaneura

Starbuck's palindrome cards are stored in their original McDonald's boxes in the University of Alabama Special Collections.

And then, the last folder: letters from George's father to his ex-wife in California, on letterhead of the Department of Philosophy, Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville. The father's book-in-progress has him "buffaloed completely." He encourages her to send young George on to Cal Tech at age 16; he has an aptitude for math and sciences, and that's the promise of the future. Writing he can pick up on his own later.

Starbuck studied mathematics and went on to study English at Berkeley, the University of California, and Harvard. A poet with a mathematician's mind, he successfully avoided ever getting a college degree. One wonders how many times over the next forty years he contemplated his father's words, written in a flowing hand, "Writing is like spinning a cocoon, with all the chances against ever emerging."

## COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

"Borden Deal's papers went to Boston University, they offered a good tax break," said novelist Wayne Greenhaw. "The tax break is gone, and you don't see those kinds of offers as much." But bidding wars continue to take Alabama writers' papers to libraries and archives in other states.

The battle to preserve historic writings and records is well documented in the correspondence of Dr. Thomas McAdory Owen, founder of the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), and his wife and successor as director of the state archives, Marie Bankhead Owen. "Miss Marie replied to a letter from Grover Hall, editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser* in the 1930s, and gave him down the country for writing complimentary remarks about a professor from North Carolina who visited him on a trip to Alabama for the purpose of collecting—and even buying—papers. She felt that these professors were stealing materials from repositories in the state of Alabama," said archivist Rickie Brunner.

Archives and History has papers and manuscripts of several notable 19th century Alabama writers, including Alexander Beaufort Meek, a lawyer who was better known for his poetry. Meek's unpublished papers include a 1883 diary, "The Notebook of an Omnivorous Reader," 1839; "My Day Book," 1840; a journal covering 1860-1864, and his unpublished *History of Alabama*. (Two chapters of Meek's history were spirited away to North Carolina, Brunner says.) Cross-referenced with Meek is his biographer, Herman Clarence Nixon, and his biographer, Sarah N. Shouse, author of *Hillbilly Realist: Herman Clarence Nixon of Possum Trot*. (University of Alabama Press, 1986). Nixon's papers include the results of his surveys on slavery conducted with former slaves, former slave owners and others during 1912-13.

William Russell Smith and Augusta Evans Wilson, Alabama's most popular 19th century novelist, have papers archived in the state repository. The writing of Thomas Owen's four-volume *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, published by his wife in 1921, generated an enormous amount of correspondence with and about authors. Mrs. Owen's manuscripts and notes for her well known 1948 *The Story of Alabama* are another treasure trove of the Archives. All this, plus *Diddie, Dumps and Tot*. Louise Clarke Pynnelle, the author of these "plantation sketches," circa 1882, was from Selma and corresponded with Dr. Owen.

A few years ago, Montgomery writer Wayne Greenhaw was surprised by a call from Rickey Best, now acting dean of the Auburn University Montgomery Library, who said he would like to start a collection of writers' papers. Was Greenhaw interested in donating his? He certainly was.

In a sense, his papers are more useful to him now than when they were cluttering his home. Said Greenhaw, "They have it all cataloged on computer, so you can find what you want. When I need something, I can get a copy of it." He is relieved to have turned over some items that relate to other writers. "I gave them correspondence with Borden Deal and William Bradford Huie because I thought that should be preserved. And I'd let friends read some of my drafts, like Harper Lee, and I felt like people might be interested in her notes and comments," he said.

AUM also has papers from Faye Gibbons, historian John Fair, and Lella Warren's papers and drafts of all six novels, including six drafts of *Foundation Stone*. "We have drafts of her short stories, too," said archivist Rickey Best, "and most of them weren't published until Nancy got them." At the time of Warren's death, AUM's Nancy



Anderson was the only scholar studying her work. "I had worked with her enough and published enough that her family trusted me and gave her papers to AUM," she said.

Auburn University has letters and papers of quite a few writers, including Mary Barwick, Clyde Bolton, Paula Backscheider, Julia Oliver, Theodore Hoepfner, Edith Royster Judd, Annie Laurie Morgan, James Richard Rutland, Oxford Stroud, Eugene Current-Garcia, Anne George, and Ellen Tarry. Most of the authors had ties to Auburn. "Anne Rivers Siddons was a student, and Mary Ward Brown's husband worked for Auburn University," said Dwayne Cox, university archivist.

The library's on-line catalog contains a description of the holdings for many of the authors "down to the folder level," Cox said. The listing of Madison Jones's Civil War era family letters and business correspondence gives dates, names and subjects.

"John Weld's correspondence with Maxwell Perkins and Charlie Scribner is fascinating," said Auburn English professor Bert Hitchcock, listing personal favorites in Auburn's collections. "I've used some of Paul Hemphill's manuscripts to teach writing classes," he said. "It's nice for students to see his process of corrections."

The University of Alabama's W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library is perhaps best known for its papers of Alabama and Southern political figures and for its "Alabama Collection," which attempts to preserve a copy of every book by an Alabama author or about Alabama.

"We have Hudson Strode's papers, and if all we collected was his student's papers, that would be a major resource for scholars," said Curator Garrison. However, she has a larger mission in mind. "We are actively collecting contemporary Alabama writers," she said. Dale Short, Mark Childress, Nanci Kincaid, and Robert Gibbons are some who have contributed. Robert Inman sends his screenplays. Aileen Henderson, (*Summer of the Bonepile Monster; Treasurer at Panther Peak*) said she enjoys the feeling of putting a book behind her when the box of papers goes to the University archives. Garrison, at the receiving end, finds just as much satisfaction—in preserving a writer's tentative, first ideas, her second thoughts and evidence of the rough edges smoothed out by the editor, the correspondence with a publisher about deadlines and publication dates, in short, the human context of the art.

## “Who Me?”

### QUESTIONS ABOUT DEPOSITING YOUR PAPERS IN AN ARCHIVES

by Ellen Garrison

#### “Who me? Why would an archives or special collections want my papers?”

Archivists want to preserve a broad picture of whatever subject they are documenting, whether that subject is a geographic region or a category of people like women or a specific topic like agriculture. To do that archivists must seek out materials from a wide variety of sources, not just from the few who are rich or powerful or well known.

Staff at the Baseball Hall of Fame, for example, know that no group provides more breadth or depth of perspective on a subject that the people who write about it, so they actively solicit the papers of sportswriters as well as those of players, managers, etc. Fiction writers and poets reflect and influence the culture of which they are a part, and in every society the process of crafting and disseminating words is an important economic and social activity as well.

For all of these reasons archives and special collections welcome an opportunity to acquire the papers of writers of all types and at all stages in their careers. You don't have to be dead or famous to be important.

#### “Papers—you mean my completed manuscripts, right?”

That and more. Researchers will be interested not just in the product of your work but also in how you worked and the context in which you worked. So a repository will also want drafts of your writings (especially those with comments from others) and all the materials that you generate as a professional writer who works with editors, participates in organizations, goes on book tours, and interacts with colleagues, family and friends.

#### “That's an awful lot of stuff to organize. What does it take to get them ready to go to a repository?”

Mostly nothing. You already arrange this material for your own use and the way you do that reflects who you are and the way you work. Archivists therefore want to preserve your filing system as well as the papers themselves. What you can do to help is label your folders, boxes, discs or whatever you use for storage in a way that reflects your method of organization (however little it might appear to serve the term!). Also, try to put dates on as much material as you can. If you follow these suggestions you will not only help potential researchers, but also make it easier for you to find things when you need them.

continued on page 19



# "Writing Our Stories" Takes Different Forms

What does "confused" look like?  
Or "sophisticated," "silly,"  
"depressed?"

In a class period devoted to personification, the girls in Priscilla Hancock Cooper's creative writing class at the Alabama Department of Youth Services (DYS) facility at Chalkville painted word pictures of emotional states. Jeanie Thompson, guest writer, was pleased with the girls' efforts. "They took it seriously and, I believe, developed a new appreciation for the power of language," she said. The girls' latest project is to take photographs and write text to accompany them for an exhibition at the Birmingham

Museum of Art. Suzy Harris, the museum's assistant curator for education and outreach, instructed the girls in photography.

Bart Barton's second creative writing class at the DYS facility at Mount Meigs has presented the opportunity to spend more time working one-on-one with the boys. "We've had more turnover this time, so the group interaction has been different," he said. As a result, Barton has seen some of them get serious about tinkering with their initial ideas to make their finished work more effective. They are learning that skillful rewriting serves self-expression, he said.

Following are samples of work from both programs.

## FROM CHALKVILLE OUTGOING

Ms. Outgoing walks into the room with enough confidence to fill the world.

Ms. Outgoing is filled with determination.

Ms. Outgoing is as strong as Mike Tyson fighting his toughest competitor.

Ms. Outgoing walks with her head up as the morning sun.

Ms. Outgoing has enough energy to climb Mt. Everest on the coldest day of the year.

*N.E*

## DEPRESSED

Depressed sat down in her desk like she was exhausted from a long, hard day at work.

Depressed wears a white shirt, light jeans, and white shoes.

Depressed sits off to herself like she's just lost her best friend in the whole world.

Depressed lets tears fall down her face like the softness of rain before a heavy storm.

Depressed says nothing to anyone and she stares into the atmosphere, dazed, as if she has the world itself sitting on her shoulders.

Depressed misses her mother and she thinks about the pain she's caused her.

Depressed carries a picture of her son, wishing she could be home with him

*T.M.*

## EVIL

Evil came with cool breezes that started a riot.  
Evil was wearing a mask of hate

with a look on his face that said *I can't relate*  
His friends and family disappear  
at the movement of his unheavenly mouth.  
His heart fell from north to south.  
Evil is the thing we all should fear.  
Evil is something you would not want near.  
Evil walked in, the room got quiet.

*K.M.*

## ANNOYED

Annoyed walked in the room and took a real deep breath.  
Annoyed dropped her books as hard as a hammer hits a nail.  
Annoyed wore a black plaid shirt and black jeans.  
Annoyed shouted as loud as a full speed train on railroad tracks.  
Annoyed sat in her room wondering why people just won't leave her alone.

*S.W.*

## SHE

She was as creative as a paintbrush  
running across a board  
making very beautiful pictures  
of flowers with bumble bees  
sniffing the pollen off of them  
The skies were as blue  
as a baby's eyes,  
and the wind softly and slowly  
blowing the trees, and the leaves making this wonderful sound  
that tells her to fall asleep.

*S.W.*

## DEPRESSED

Depressed wears all black like an undertaker  
She crawls through my mind like a snake in murky water.  
She wears a silver cross as a symbol of her undying devotion to her god.  
Depressed carries her taped-together heart in her arms with gentleness, hoping it will never break again.

She screams shrieking cries, as if she were a heretic, gasping for her last breath.  
 She walks around with her uncaring attitude, mocking the world.  
 She sighs and lets out a scream that leaves her deaf.

A.W.

### DISAPPOINTMENT

She runs her fingers through her long stringy pale blonde hair.  
 She stares into space with a blank, curious look on her face.  
 She sits in an old ragged torn discolored wooden chair.  
 She wonders why the sharpness of the pain hidden inside her won't go away.  
 She realizes at last that the feeling of hurt is like having your heart pulled from your chest by a wild animal with long sharp claws.  
 She sits and wishes on a bright beautiful shooting star that all of this distinctive pain inside would disappear into the night and vanish without a trace  
 She wants it to go away and never return so her heart and her mind can be at ease once again  
 She wants to be without all the feeling of being thrown away and an outcast from the world.

A.K.

### BROTHER DEATH

Brother death walks silently into a room as fog creeps into a bay.  
 He wanted an escape route for his bottled up anger.  
 He carries the picture of his next victim and like a hobo it is his one and only possession.  
 Brother death kills swiftly with no chance to say good-bye.  
 Death came in the form of three ganstas on a rainy day.  
 Death was as cold as ice and as uncaring as a woman scorned.  
 He had a dazed look in his eyes as a deer in the glare of a hunter's headlight.  
 He wore Tommy Hilfiger and dark sunglasses, trying to camouflage himself like an elephant with red toes in a strawberry patch.  
 Death thought that he was slick and that he would never get caught because no one knew his name or game.  
 Death looked and smiled like a cat that was about to pounce on an innocent mouse.  
 Death walked free...

S.B.

### LONELY

Lonely sits in the back of the room by herself as if she were in a mental hospital.  
 Lonely wears all black as if she were the sea itself.  
 Lonely clasps her arms around herself as if she were wishing for her arms to be someone else holding her.  
 Lonely carries a bear around with her as if it were the only thing in the world she can hold.  
 Lonely looks worn out, with raggedy clothes and long, dirty, stringy hair like a dirty rag doll.  
 Lonely thinks about having someone to comfort her when times get rough and trials and tribulations are hard to bear, as if the world is falling on top of her.  
 Lonely wishes for a hand she can hold through pain and strife, a hand she can squeeze that will squeeze her back—like an anaconda strangling his prey.

K.R.H.

### CONFUSED

Confused looks as if she's lost and doesn't know where to run.  
 Confused's eyes are low as if they were blinds and they were closed.  
 Confused's face frowns as if her smile has run far away.  
 Confused was very pretty but looked very down and doesn't know where to go.  
 Confused wears a black shirt with butterflies; she wishes she was one so she could fly far away.  
 Confused is holding a grudge against someone and it's holding her down, but she also always carries a bracelet that makes her feel someone is there.  
 Confused's best friend gave her the bracelet on Valentine's Day and her friend told her she would never leave her place.  
 Confused has no money; she's very, very broke. And in her heart she has no hope.

N.C.

### FROM MT. MEIGS

#### OMEGA

I saw the redness,  
 like crimson, drip from the sun.  
 It seemed,  
 as I tried to get away,  
 someone was shackling me down  
 with huge rusty chains.  
 Fire from deep within the earth  
 was shooting out,  
 like a water fountain  
 that never seemed to cease.  
 I stood there thinking of how  
 I could escape from this place,  
 this place of agony,  
 this place of Hell,  
 but nothing came to  
 my slowed mind.  
 For I was weary and weak.  
 A moment later,  
 which favored an eternity,  
 I heard a newborn child crying;  
 the echo of it was all around.  
 It sent deep, warm chills  
 to my insides.  
 My heart felt as if  
 it were being cooked.  
 I wondered if the heavens were falling,  
 and they were  
 like feathers of a dove,  
 soft and white,  
 falling so softly,  
 but covered with crimson  
 as they touched the corrupted ground.  
 Suddenly I heard  
 voices behind the newborn's cry.  
 I was trapped,  
 trapped by the evilness of this time,  
 and could do nothing for either  
 the child, the cry,  
 or the voice.  
 The fright within me  
 was so poisoning  
 that I couldn't holler

to ask where they were  
 so I could join them.  
 Then, within a flash  
 darkness came,  
 quick and black,  
 like a panther,  
 And I stood there  
 looking up at it  
 as it fell upon me,  
 just looking up I was  
 as a lost child.

*J.B.*

### DANGEROUS

As I would fumble around in the closet,  
 like a grandmother trying to find a dress to wear  
 on a Sunday morning, I would see the big black  
 rusty trigger of the double barrel that I always  
 wanted to hold.

Its old black tunnels, which I looked into deeply,  
 made me afraid. I always hoped to be braver,  
 but I would back down from the challenge  
 that it held.

*A.W.*

### THE SECRETS OF THE WORLD

If you look to the ocean  
 and listen to what it has to tell you,  
 it will tell you the secrets of the world.  
 The words would be a story that never ends.  
 They would be beautiful like the morning sunrise.  
 The words would be about today,  
 tomorrow, sadness and sorrow.  
 They would be a silent whisper  
 of a lost loved one crying out.

But the waves of the ocean don't always whisper.  
 They can be an army of men  
 running violently through a battlefield,  
 destroying everything in their path.  
 In a blink or bat of an eye,  
 they can swallow you whole, suck you under.  
 They will never let you go,  
 never stop until they consume the whole world.

Nobody has the key to the secrets of the world.  
 Only God and the ocean see all.  
 The ocean never lets the story of time get away.  
 It will never let you go.  
 The ocean holds the memories of life and death  
 It has captured countless lives  
 of strangers and old loved ones.  
 It can swallow you whole.

*C.L.M.*

### THE COLD CELL

As the door is pulled open,  
 the draft of the cold air  
 hits the bottom pit of your throat,  
 just like a cold winter front  
 when you first walk outside.

The light shines on you  
 like you're the main character  
 in a play that never ends.

The hard, cold floor  
 is like a glacier  
 that doesn't ever melt or get warm.

When you talk or shout,  
 it echoes like you are alone  
 in the deep mysterious mountains,  
 and no one is there to answer you.

And when the door is slammed shut,  
 it makes you shudder with chills  
 like fingernail sliding slowly  
 down on a chalkboard.

*B.B.*

### MY DOOR OF LONELINESS

My door of loneliness  
 is as strong as my desire  
 to stay away  
 from others.  
 It is as  
 blue  
 as I feel deep down inside.  
 The windows  
 of my door of  
 loneliness  
 are as clear as  
 the tears that  
 fall  
 from my eyes.  
 Many come  
 and try to open  
 my door of  
 loneliness  
 but it is always  
 locked and closed up  
 just as I am.  
 Although  
 my door of  
 loneliness  
 is very strong, it is  
 beaten and battered  
 because of others trying to enter.

*R.S.*

# Barbara Lebow: A PLAYWRIGHT'S PROGRESS

by Allan Swafford

Though they may share short stretches of track, no two writers follow identical paths through the tangled forest of literature. In spite of points of similarity, a writer's progress in this never-charted wilderness is as individual as are writers themselves. And, though never a dependable map, the history of each writer's progression is illuminating for others of his questing ilk.

In Barbara Lebow, whose *Lurleen* is currently playing at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival to sold out houses, writers have an unusual opportunity to study such a progress. Not only does she herself speak insightfully about her development as a playwright, but Frank Wittow, the director of *Lurleen*, speaks of this development with equal authority and possibly greater objectivity as he has been an almost constant witness to and influence on that development for over three decades. In recent weeks the two separately shared their observations on her career for this article.

A New Yorker, born and bred, Lebow like many of us fell under the spell of the pencil as a child. Her theater-loving mother exposed her to the stage at an early age, and she recalls creating "little scripts" on a child's typewriter (the kind with a hand-turned disk) for neighborhood children and one-man shows for her coercible brother. She says, "I'm one of those who started Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland style when I was seven years old— 'Hey, kids, let's put on a show.'" She continued writing in various genres through high school and her college years at Vassar.

But not until she resettled in Atlanta in the early 1960s and involved herself in the milieu of the Academy Theatre, which Wittow tells me he founded in 1956 as Atlanta's first professional theater, did she really blossom as a playwright. In a class taught by Academy personnel she wrote a one-act. "Because of the quality of that play," Wittow says, "I thought she'd be a good person to have as the writing component of this experimental workshop." The experimental workshop, a recent addition to the Academy, functioned with its resident ensemble in social

outreach programs important in Wittow's theatrical philosophy.

What the director/actor/playwright perceived in Lebow's work was an attempt "to break rules and find her own voice and not be hampered by the forms of the day—to break free and experiment. It appealed to me a lot as I remember." In fact, these traits meshed precisely with the goals he had set for the new workshop.

Recalling the same experience, Lebow is emphatic about its importance to her development. Of a long one-act, *I Can't Help It*, written early in their relationship, she says, "It was a breakthrough in the sense of process, of seeing something through from initial idea, to working with actors, to polishing, to refining, to reading and rehearsing, to seeing it on stage, and then feeling it with an audience. In terms of content, it may or may not have been a breakthrough. The experience was like the final hook for an addict. It was a breakthrough *event*."

From that start, their artistic collaboration assumed the guise of playwright and dramaturg. Wittow, she says, "is the best—and always was—dramaturgical mind for me. He

really asks the right questions and doesn't—as dramaturg or director—make the play his." Of those early creative days, simultaneous with her third pregnancy, she recalls, "I started really writing plays in 1965. Even my head was pregnant. I just exploded. I wrote a play a week, a one-act play. I couldn't write fast enough. It was exciting."

Both Lebow and Wittow remember her development from this start as evolutionary rather than epiphanic. There were no overpowering revelations, but each play built on the technical prowess attained in the preceding work.

He says, "I think in each play there have been breakthroughs—in each play. I don't think Barbara tended to repeat herself...in terms of form. She has never repeated herself in terms of content because she has chosen a great variety of settings and themes. In each play there has been a reaching forward to try something new and different



Barbara Lebow

continued on page 24

# REVIEWS

JAY LAMAR  
Book Review Editor

***Belles' Letters: Contemporary Fiction by Alabama Women***

Edited by Joe Taylor and Tina N. Jones, with a foreword by Tina N. Jones  
Livingston Press, 1999  
184 pp. Paper, \$23.95

The cleverly titled *Belles' Letters* plays both on the genre "belles lettres" and on the notion of a Southern belle. Likewise, the twenty-one stories and five novel excerpts in this collection play on notions of what it means to be a woman in the South, particularly in Alabama. As co-



editor Tina N. Jones notes in her foreword to the book, these writers must move beyond "misleading stereotypes which trivialize their own identities as women and writers" so that they may "reveal the humanity of individuals."

An alternate title for this work, therefore, might be "Beyond Belles." Topics covered in the stories include sex, marriage and its discontents, cancer, race relations, spouse abuse, loss of a child, rape, murder, single motherhood, war and its effects at home, suicide, AIDS, the loss of parents, and even necrophilia (this last might make you think twice about being cremated). These stories take place mostly in rural areas and small towns, in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and include women of varying age, race, class, and upbringing.

In fact, perhaps the single most pleasing quality of *Belles' Letters* is its variety. Distinctive voices, characters, settings, and plots make each story or excerpt stand on its own and attest to the diverse talents represented in this book.

One thing that can be said about a number of the female characters: they are not doormats. Violence, revenge, and even murder may be found in these pages, from the fed-up girl who beats up her bully of a cousin to a strong and silent woman who bashes in the head of a competitor for her husband's love and attention.

In this book you will also find great tenderness, in the person of a

nurse who cares for a dying man, a granddaughter who learns to appreciate her brusque but loving grandmother, a college student discovering her identity and finding out about grown-up pain, and the small town that grieves to lose one of its best citizens, a Japanese-American man they call T-Coyote, to the internment camps of WWII. Flashes of humor appear in these pieces like fireflies on a summer night, but like the night, they are more dark than otherwise.

Jones asserts in her foreword that the book is important because in it "Alabama women are allowed a voice all their own. They do not have to share their pages with anyone but themselves." In a state that has brought us Harper Lee, Mary Ward Brown, and Vicki Covington, to name a few, I'm not sure Alabama women need a separate space, but I am certainly glad this rich and provocative volume exists. It is, truly, a volume of belles lettres—fine literature I enjoyed reading and happily recommend to others.

*Jennifer Horne is associate editor of Alabama Heritage magazine and a poet and teacher. She lives in Tuscaloosa.*

***Dramatic Technique in Fiction***

by Robert Bahr  
Factor Press, 1998  
158 pp. Paper, \$12.95

Fact or fiction, when it comes to good writing, it doesn't matter. All



writing can, and should, be enjoyable, clear, and deliberately structured, says writer and teacher Robert Bahr in *Dramatic Technique in Fiction*.

The author of eight nonfiction books, a biographi-

cal novel, and a short story collection, Bahr believes that dramatic technique—or a deliberate awareness of the author's creative abilities and powers—is not only the choice of the author but also his duty.

His book addresses such topics as how to find the best voice to narrate a story, what sets great literature apart from the ordinary, and the importance

of the creative intent. Bahr points out that before an author reveals truth to his audience, he must first confront the truth about himself. "Originality requires honesty, and honesty requires the ability to think for one's self," he notes. To find his originality, a writer must cultivate honesty, humility, focus, confidence, and courage.

*Dramatic Technique* has been widely praised by creative writing teachers and is suitable for writers at any level. Though not a lengthy book, *Dramatic Technique* packs a lot of punch.

*Carolyn Haines is the author of the critically acclaimed Touched and Summer of the Redeemers, as well as more than 25 mystery and romance novels.*

***Some Personal Papers: A Novel***

by JoAllen Bradham  
Black Belt Press, 1998  
158 pp. Paper, \$14.95

JoAllen Bradham's *Some Personal Papers* won the Townsend Prize for Fiction by or about

Georgians. It is a riveting and sophisticated work of contemporary urban Gothic which both distorts and affirms the conventions of maternal sentiment and tests the boundaries of



what is sympathetic in the human capacity for love. The title refers to the six-day, first person, pre-execution confession of a social worker named Miss Eugenia Putman, a Southerner of African-American descent with profound emotional and spiritual ties to the memory of her preacher father.

"Miss Genie" has devoted her life to her profession, a passionate devotion distorted by the emotional rigors of the child welfare system and the deep and ironic divide between professional ethics and personal morality. Bradham explores the tension between the compartmentalization of public perception and the ontological condition of individuals when she has her protagonist write: "Records miss reasons just like forms miss the very thing they are supposed to pinpoint. Getting the personal truth is the hard part."



As a matter of record, Miss Genie has murdered four small boys, each grotesquely abused and abandoned by his natural mother, each crushed by the severity of his physical and psychological handicaps. Three of her "sons" are buried in her garden; the fourth, a nameless infant abandoned in a K-mart, hangs in a basket from a limb in a stand of ancient magnolias on an abandoned rural estate. By murdering these children, Miss Genie believes she has given their lives a dignity and significance they would not otherwise have; she has liberated them "from their multiple cages," and for her, "[f]reedom, not graves, was in the garden." The murders are a tender consummation of love: "Every morning I felt I had come to worship. I come into my garden as a garden of herbs. My beloved is gone down into the garden." But this is a promise interrupted by the public cry for justice. The last cry that Miss Genia Putman answers.

*Kelly Gerald is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Auburn University with a specialization in southern literature.*

***Flowing Through Time: A History of the Lower Chattahoochee River***  
by Lynn Willoughby

University of Alabama Press, 1999  
264 pp. Cloth, \$29.95

Along the lower Chattahoochee, among the Muskogee, Lynn Willoughby writes, "First thing every morning, summer and winter, every able-bodied man, woman, and child went to the river and plunged under the water four times." The river was life; from it the Muskogee drew spiritual sustenance and nourishment in the form of catfish, bass, and bream. The river transported them in leather boats and dugouts as far as the Bahamas. By the late twentieth century, the river suffers from sewage dumping, industrial pollution, and siltation from timbering. Its flowing waters have been imprisoned by dams that created cesspool lakes where swimming is forbidden and eating the fish is a health hazard.



The story of the lower Chattahoochee, skillfully researched by Lynn Willoughby, provides the history of the river, the peoples that have lived along it, and the changes that transformed a free-flowing stream into one of the most threatened rivers in the United States. She writes of the European intruders who explored the area and describes Muskogee power politics played to preserve their lands. But by the 1830s, they had been forced to move to Oklahoma. Settlers and slaves took their place, and the river remained important for transportation of cotton. Cities grew, and in the 1830s the river was bridged at Columbus, Georgia, by Horace King, a slave.

Willoughby describes the Civil War and its effects on the river, the days of steamboats, the lives of pilots, stevedores, and passengers. Development of dams for hydroelectric power, attempts at river improvement by the Army Corps of Engineers, and recreational reservoirs defined the river's history into the twentieth century. Today urban and industrial growth have nearly destroyed it. In an important chapter Willoughby discusses pollution and the environmental laws used to save the river. She closes with an analysis of the "Water Wars" fought by Georgia, Alabama, and Florida over the river. Whether these states can solve their dilemma is open to question, but Willoughby calls for those who love the Chattahoochee to make sacrifices to preserve it.

*Suzanne Marshall is associate professor of history at Jacksonville State University and conservation chair of the Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club.*

***Body Parts: Stories***

by Jere Hoar

University Press of Mississippi, 1997  
286 pp. Cloth, \$26.00

This collection of stories is Jere Hoar's showcase of award winners. All laurels are well deserved. "The Snopes Who Saved Huckaby" was selected by Allan Gurganus as co-winner of the Pirate's Alley William Faulkner Prize for Fiction. That story and its complement, "How Wevel Went," were chosen by Ernest J. Gaines as winners of the Deep South Writing Conference Competition. And with most of the

stories in *Body Parts* included in Hoar's manuscript that was a finalist for the Flannery O'Connor Award, well, it's not difficult to understand the trend.

Hoar's fiction captures what's best in the tradition of Southern humor, ranging from the raucous and violent satires and raunchy tall tales of the Old Southwest to the documentaries of time and place in his sexual coming-of-age stories to myth-weaving magical realism. Part one of the collection contains five stories, including the title story, "Body Parts: A Memory of 1944," a post-war narrative of adolescent discovery. Part two is composed of six stories that are more eclectic, eccentric, and if possible, more sophisticated than those of part one.

*Body Parts* is a fascinating book for its range of styles and subjects, its complexity, and wit. There's not a dull moment in this one, folks, and that's a promise.

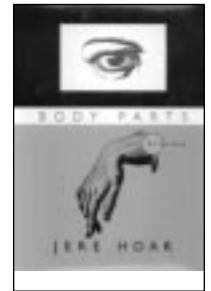
*Kelly Gerald*

***Flights of Angels: Stories***  
by Ellen Gilchrist

Little Brown and Company, 1998  
320 pp. Cloth, \$24

"Yes, it's me, Rhoda Katherine Manning, and I am back at my typewriter after a long vacation spent trying to live a normal life and act like a sixty-year-old woman who has learned something from experience."

Ellen Gilchrist once described her recurring character Rhoda Manning as "a mirror of myself." So what has Rhoda/Ellen learned from experience as revealed in her new collection, *Flights of Angels*? In the story "Free Pull," Rhoda's knowledge runs the gamut from the practical to the metaphysical. Taking a series of lovers results in bladder infection and "large bills for cosmetics from



Neiman-Marcus," but the compulsion that brought about these maladies can be eliminated merely by stopping the estrogen treatments. She learns too that life for a sixty-year-old woman can still be filled with surprise and possibility. Like Rhoda, characters in this collection are suffused with an energy that springs from the enjoyment of life on a primitive level and a growing, if somewhat cautious, optimism.

The darkest story in the book is "Mississippi," in which Larkin, a young white woman, winds up on death row after killing the murderer of a friend. The friend was a young black man, a lifelong companion, brilliant, with great promise, who dies in Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1960s after being intentionally run over at a civil rights rally. Raised in the rural Delta by a benevolent grandfather in a tradition of tolerance and respect for others, Larkin could not deal with the meanness of the '60s. Ultimately, her family and friends rally around her, obtaining a stay of execution from the governor. Redemption is available, if not yet realized.

Other characters adjust and go on despite hardship, family squabbles, death, tragedy, and dishonor, countering them with a zest for life, bemused observation of the weakness of others, familial loyalty, and a basic goodness that redeems in spite of bad choices. And these stories are told, as all good stories are, in context. A sense of place gives them the framework that enables each to stand on its own yet together make a cohesive whole.

Gilchrist's splendid collection reveals both the horrible truths of human existence and the miraculous ability of humans to continue to live sanely despite them. One of these truths is stated directly in the prologue: "the weak destroy the strong within a family as well as in larger worlds. This happens in every family. It is inevitable as the sun and rain." Taken as inevitable this is depressing indeed. But the human quality that saves and redeems us is also clearly stated: "We're going to die when this is over, Suellen. We need to be nice while we wait."

Lynn Jinks is an editor of the journal *Amaryllis*.

***To Hide in the Light***  
by Bonnie Roberts  
Elk River Press, 1998  
96 pp. Paper, \$12

The paradoxical title of Bonnie Roberts's new collection of poems, *To Hide in the Light*, evokes the ancient story of Eve, who only thought to hide herself once she had tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge and seen the light. Poets do this, hide themselves in the words that bring us hard-won, deeply lived truths. The cover, in fact, features a woman painted in light from an unseen window, some of it dappled through unseen trees. Open the book, follow her gaze, and her journey is as compelling as that of any gifted novelist's protagonist. Why do so many of us resist reading poetry, experiencing its dense textures as obstacle rather than invitation?



Things known in Roberts's world are as familiar to most Southerners as dirt, a favorite topic of hers, her presentation of the quotidian so immediate and sensual, we are reminded of how sublime life can be in its accruing, momentary experiences: "tube rose, mint, and wild grape of evening air," "the layer of fall leaves on the front porch," "a beaded necklace,/ a tin of cloves, and a painted rocking horse," "blueberries. . . blue herons. . . or chromis fish," or "bluebottle eyes streaked/ with sunlight and cream."

But, she writes,

If you live only by the sweet,  
the bitter will not exactly touch you.  
It will annihilate you early on.  
They will find you,  
a smiling vegetable  
in a nursing home...

Among my favorite poems in the book, in fact, is one about her sister, her own grief and regret in the wake of losing her. In "The Wild Ponies of List Hope" she confesses to "betrayal" of her sister's wild inventions:

Let's hop a freight train. . .  
all the way to New Mexico. . . we can. . .  
buy wild ponies.  
. . . Acres . . . of wild ponies.

"No, we can't run away," the poem's speaker responds. "This is the craziest idea I've ever heard."

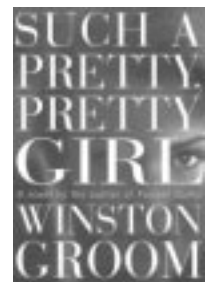
The knowledge the poet earns in her "fall," she gives back to us as an affirmation of our human worth and an insistence that we call upon her with our own "list hope." "Human Beings Will Not Be Expendable in My Art," she writes in one of the last poems. "You are more beautiful than anything." And in the final poem, "Poet of Gristle," she urges us,

Demand that this honorless poet love  
you.  
Turn my face to you.  
Put my fingers in your mouth and bite  
them.  
I will be shocked, but I will know you  
are real,  
of power.

Poet Susie Paul is associate professor of English at Auburn University Montgomery.

***Such a Pretty, Pretty, Girl***  
by Winston Groom  
Random House, 1999  
306 pp. Cloth, \$23.95

Winston Groom's books are like his latest complex, sexy, multilayered heroine: you never know what you're going to experience next. Not only is Delia Jameson *Such a Pretty, Pretty Girl*, but she shifts personality gears from page to page, and Groom proves himself once again a unique and multifaceted talent.



"It was raining in Los Angeles that evening, an omen of some magnitude out here," he begins. Two sentences later Delia enters the bar with "long strands of lustrous auburn hair barely touching her shoulders." It's a beginning, foreshadowing mystery and love, worthy of James M. Cain or Raymond Chandler. And Groom's deft social commentary of the sophisticated scene, from L.A.'s Peninsula Hotel to Elaine's on New York's Upper East Side, is modern-day Scott Fitzgerald.

As the successful screenwriter-turned-detective for his old lover, Johnny Lightfoot, a Southerner, is the author's alter-ego. Lightfoot even has Groom's taste for riding trains across the continent. He peels away the layers

of the mystery that is bothering his lady friend by visiting her former lovers. Not as quirky as Kinky Friedman, Groom's detective yarn has that same fun-time ring of truth, peppered with real places and people, slices of life that remind Lightfoot of movies and stars. Yet a real undercurrent of tension steadily builds. He uncovers more and more about this butterfly who flits from flower to flower—and each new fact is not necessarily as beautiful as it seems. From the Wall Street investor to the crusty old English professor to her husband's best friend, he encounters Delia's past—then revisits his own life with her to discover visions of himself he had previously failed to see.

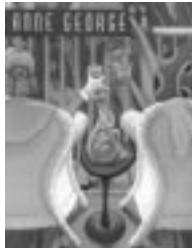
Johnny Lightfoot, native of North Carolina and resident of the world, is more interesting and complex than Spenser or any of the other '90s detectives. And *Such a Pretty, Pretty Girl* would make one helluva movie.

Wayne Greenhaw's *Beyond the Night: A Remembrance*, will be published by Black Belt Press this fall.

***Murder Gets a Life*  
by Anne George  
Avon Books, 1999  
248 pp. Cloth, \$20**

Anne George's Southern Sisters are back. Patricia Anne, the bright little sister, tells the story. Her big sister, Mary Alice (6 ft., 250 lbs.), plays Dr. Watson to her Sherlock Holmes. The tale is carried along by a great deal of chatty-chatty, often mocking sister talk which neatly conveys the exposition of the mystery—first of all, that Mary Alice's son Ray has married Sunshine Dabbs of Locust Fork, Alabama, out in Bora Bora where he operates a diving ship. The action of the story takes place, however, during a hot August in and near Birmingham. Many other characters are introduced, including Sunshine's grandmother Meemaw Turkett ("Meemaw's a little strange since she saw the flying saucer, but that happens sometimes."), Paw-Paw her grandfather, and a slew of relatives who live in the Turkett mobile-home compound.

Strange things happen. Sunshine disappears, reappears, disappears again; a murder occurs; mystery thick-



ens. The sisters are in the midst of the happenings, Patricia Anne relating them all with indomitable wit. The author gives us a lively read and in the last 50 pages arranges for little Pat to solve the mystery and for the Southern Sisters to save themselves from (almost) sure and certainly horrid death. The book is diverting, the Alabama background feels right, and the plot plausible.

Norman A. Brittin is professor emeritus of English at Auburn University.

***On the Hills of God*  
by Ibrahim Fawal  
Black Belt Press, 1998  
450 pp. Cloth, \$27.95**

In his first novel, Ibrahim Fawal has created a powerful and disturbing work about a 17-year-old Palestinian boy, Yousif.

But the book is not a typical "coming of age" narrative, for when the U.N. votes to partition Palestine and give land to the returning Jewish people, Yousif faces life and death choices and sees the Jewish-Arab violence come closer and closer to home.

Fawal offers historical and political background to 1947 Palestine through newspaper accounts and radio broadcasts as he contrasts Yousif's private, internal conflicts of career, friendship, and love with external conflicts: the British soldiers who still occupy Palestine, the Zionist zealots who begin massacring Arabs, the father of his beloved Salwa who wants her married to an older, more stable man before war is declared, and his fierce love for his country and desire for peace. One of the most powerful scenes in the novel occurs when Yousif, unable to stop Salwa's marriage through peaceful negotiations, literally breaks up the Christian wedding, risking her father's anger and Salwa's denial of love. The private drama of Yousif's lonely fight for Salwa parallels his country's lonely and helpless fight against the Zionists and their allies.

When the rape of his friend's wife by a Zionist soldier signals the end of pacifism for Yousif, his ensuing journey toward Jordan and away from God is a Dantesque trip through hell, littered with Palestinian bodies. Despite the human carnage, Yousif is



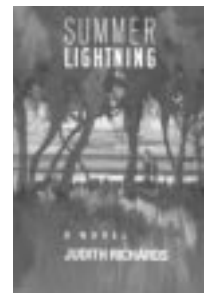
able to find some spiritual solace on the hills of God.

*On the Hills of God* is an enlightening account of the Palestinian position and a deserving recipient of the PEN Oakland Award for Excellence in Literature. Fawal lives and teaches in Birmingham.

Wanda Cook is assistant dean and English/speech instructor at Bevill State Community College, Brewer Campus.

***Summer Lightning*  
by Judith Richards  
Pierian Quality Reprints, 1987  
271 pp. Paper, \$13.95.**

It is difficult to decide who is more fortunate: those given the chance to revisit Judith Richards' 1978 novel or those lucky enough to be reading it for the first time. It really doesn't matter. *Summer Lightning*, soon to be a film, is back for us all.



Set near a migratory worker camp in the 1941 Florida Everglades, this treasure of a novel is the story of six-year-old Terry Calder, who was "smoking at four, wandering far and wide at five," and stealing into our hearts at six.

Things aren't going well for Terry at home. With World War II at hand, his father worries where the government agency he works for will send him. His mother is a bundle of nerves while awaiting a new baby. Terry spends his days associating with, among others, those whom his mother calls "tough, transient children." But Terry's big secret is elderly Jackson Cole McCree.

McCree lives in the swamps, alone except for occasional visits from Terry, whom he calls Little Hawk. He has taken a shine to Terry, teaching him the ways of the swamp and the ways of the world. If all this sounds a little like Huck Finn and Jim, it is. It is Scout and Atticus Finch, too. But more important, it is Little Hawk and McCree. Some of the most lyrical passages of the novel are set in the swamp—away from the civilization Huck understood all too well. As Terry is taught by McCree, so are we, learning the lessons of understanding, compassion, and trust.

*Summer Lightning* moves seamlessly from the perspective of a child

to that of an adult and back again, as we watch Terry grow up a bit during this important summer. This gem is a good book to curl up with, to be young again with, to be wistful with. And it is a summer to be revisited whenever we need.

*Steven Whitton is professor of English at Jacksonville State University and the founder of the Southern Playwrights Competition.*

***Twin Willows***  
by Kay Cornelius  
Harper Paperbacks, 1999  
375 pp. Paper, \$5.99

*Twin Willows* will appeal to the reader who likes history, romance, and adventure. Kay Cornelius is an avid historian and descendant of a famous revolutionary general who helped settle Kentucky. Her passion for both writing and history are evident in the details of the novel, set in the years following the American Revolution when Kentucky and Ohio were still the western frontier.



Ian McKnight, a Scots fur trader, has married a beautiful Delaware woman, Silverwillow, who dies while giving birth to twin daughters. The midwife in attendance decides that it would be best for the girls to be separated. Anna Willow McKnight is reared amongst the Shemanese (her father's people) while Littlewillow is reared in the village in the traditional way.

Anna has always wanted to meet her mother's people and see the territory that her father has spent his lifetime settling. Anna's curiosity and strong will sustain her through a perilous boat journey from Philadelphia to Kentucky where the settlers and the Indian tribes are fighting over land ownership. During one of these clashes, Anna Willow McKnight and her sister inadvertently change places, changing their lives forever.

Kay Cornelius is a founding member of the Alabama Writer's Forum. She has taught creative writing for more than twenty-five years and now writes full time from her home in Huntsville, Alabama. *Twin Willows* is her tenth novel.

*Pam Kingsbury writes and teaches in Florence, Alabama.*

***As Long as the Waters Flow: Native Americans in the South and East***  
Text by Frye Gaillard, photographs by Carolyn DeMerritt. Foreword by Vine Deloria, Jr.

John F. Blair, 1998.  
242 pp. Cloth, \$21.95

This handsomely designed book, highlighted by Carolyn DeMerritt's stunning photographs of more than sixty contemporary Indian chiefs, artists, potters, basketmakers, and dancers and their families and children, living in the south and east, might seem an attractive book for the coffee table. But its message is timely and serious.



The text by Frye Gaillard provides a fascinating but sobering history of some sixty-two tribes found east of the Mississippi River. And although most of them are tiny both in number of persons and size of land holdings, Vine Deloria, Jr. states in his foreword that contrary to the popular notion that the government moved most Indians west in the 1830s, "at least half the natives in the east remained where they were." They survived, he states, mostly by some kind of accommodation to state and local governments rather than to the federal government.

Frye Gaillard, a native of Mobile and the author of fifteen books, has long been interested in the history of southern and eastern Indians and, indeed, found a tiny Creek community still surviving north of Mobile. He and Carolyn DeMerritt, whose award-winning photographs have been shown internationally, were both inspired by the story of how, during the 1970s, the Catawba Indians in North Carolina laid claim to 144,000 acres which they demonstrated the government had illegally taken from them in the nineteenth century. After more than twenty years, the Catawbans achieved a land settlement in 1994.

The "Catawba Renaissance," as it has been called, was due in part to a new generation of leaders, many of them veterans of service in the army and navy, who took over the leadership

of the tribe. The same pattern occurred in many of the other tribes all over the south and east. The Catawba Renaissance, however, was much more than new chiefs such as Keith Brown and Gilbert Blue. Talented potters revived old skills; dancers performed long-neglected ceremonies. John George became a modern-day medicine man for his people, and although often in disagreement, somehow both progressives and traditionalists managed to bring the Catawba Nation to a new life.

After studying the Catawbans, Gaillard and DeMerritt began a two-year trek to see what was happening in the other Indian communities. Each group's experience was different, and fortunately they let the spokesmen of each tribe do the talking and explain their sense of the tribe's history, their own views, their hopes. Indeed this book is notable for its ability to capture Indian voices.

The authors close their account in the middle of the fight as it were. They find Wisconsin Indians seeking a return of the buffalo as a symbol of their own ongoing survival, and twenty-three of the sixty-two tribes covered here are fighting the government over rights. In reporting on these tribes the authors are clearly in the Indian camp. Their purpose they admit, is to "record a story of hope and give it a face." Nevertheless in acquainting us with the story of these tribes and their contemporary Indian leaders, they have rendered us a valuable service.

*Howard R. Lamar is emeritus professor of history at Yale University. He is the editor of the recently published New Encyclopedia of the American West (1998).*

#### COMING IN SUMMER 1999:

Reviews of  
Rodney Jones'  
*Elegy for the Southern Drawl*;  
Dennis and Vicki Covington's  
*Cleaving: The Story of a Marriage*;  
Tom Franklin's  
*Poachers*;  
Kenneth Wilkes'  
*Dowsing for Light*;  
Sheri Cobb South's  
*The Weaver Takes a Wife*.

# ALABAMA LITERARY JOURNALS

## Alabama English

*The scholastic journal  
of the Alabama Council  
of Teachers of English*

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

## Alabama Literary Review

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

## Amaryllis

P.O. Box 6330  
Montgomery, AL 36106-0330  
E-mail [Anderson@strudel.aum.edu](mailto:Anderson@strudel.aum.edu)

## Astarte

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

## The Auburn Circle

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

## Beyond Doggerel

*A Poetry Journal for Four-Year and  
Community College Instructors*

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

## Birmingham Poetry Review

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

## Black Warrior Review

The University of Alabama  
Box 82936  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35486-0027  
205/348-4518

## Copper Blade Review

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

## Elk River Review

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

## Negative Capability

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

## Noccalula

Shelby Cochran, Editor  
Gadsden State Community College  
P.O. Box 227  
Gadsden, AL 35902-0227

## POEM

Nancy F. Dillard, Editor  
c/o English Department  
UAH, Huntsville, AL 35899  
Subscription: POEM, c/o HLA  
Dale Griggs  
1009 Brookridge Circle  
Huntsville, AL 35801

## Southern Humanities Review

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

*If there are other statewide reviews or  
journals that should be listed here,  
please contact the AWF.*

Birmingham Public Library presents

# ALABAMA BOUND

A Book Fair Celebrating Alabama Authors and Publishers

Saturday, April 24, 1999

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Central Library  
2100 Park Place

For more information call 205/226-3604.

# CALENDAR

## QUARTERLY EVENTS

### Through July 24—*Lurleen*, Montgomery

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival presents *Lurleen*, by Barbara Lebow. For tickets, call 334/271-5353 or 1/800/841-4ASF.

### Apr. 8—BACHE Visiting Writers Series, Birmingham

**Carol J. Pierman** has published two volumes of poetry and her work has been published in many distinguished journals. She will read at 7 p.m. in the Harbert Auditorium on the Birmingham Southern campus. Call Robert Collins, 205/934-4250 or Margaret Armbruster, 205/934-5634.

### Apr. 9—*Belles' Letters* Authors at Highland Booksmith, Birmingham

Editors **Joe Taylor** and **Tina N. Jones**, along with more than 20 of the women writers whose stories are collected in Livingston Press's *Belles' Letters*, will be at Highland Booksmith, 2255 Highland Avenue, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 205/939-3169.

### Apr. 9—Readings from *Belles' Letters*, Birmingham

Most of the authors of *Belles' Letters* will be recognized at the program and some will read from their work. The time is 7 p.m. at the Alabama School of Fine Arts, 1800 8th Avenue North. Call 205/252-9241.

### Apr. 11—Alabama Voices, Bay Minette

**Frye Gaillard** will read from his work at 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 11 at the Bay Minette Public Library. Call Charlotte Cabaniss, 334/937-7947.

### Apr. 15—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

**Susan Griffin's** most recent book of poetry, *Unremembered Country*, won the Commonwealth Prize. She has published widely and received a MacArthur Grant. She will read at 7:30 p.m. in room 30, Alston Hall, University of Alabama. Call 205/348-0766.

### Apr. 17 & 18—Niyi Osundare, Birmingham and Montgomery

"Farmer born, peasant bred," **Osundare** is a lyrical and prolific poet and an emerging playwright. Times and

places of readings to be announced. Contact the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance at 334/263-2787.

### Apr. 20—BACHE Visiting Writers Series, Birmingham

**Lewis Nordan** is the author of three short story collections and four novels, the latest of which is *Lightning Song*, (1997). Nordan will read at 7 p.m. in the Comer Auditorium at the University of Montevallo. Call Robert Collins, 205/934-4250 or Margaret Armbruster, 205/934-5634.

### Apr. 24—Alabama Bound, Birmingham

Celebrating Alabama authors and publishers, the Birmingham Public Library's book fair will bring 40 published writers to the Linn-Henley Research Library 3rd floor auditorium, 2100 Park Place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring your own or purchase books to be signed. Call 205/226-3604.

### Apr. 29—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

**Bob Perelman**, the author of ten books of poetry, will read at 7:30 p.m. in Room 205, Smith Hall. Call 205/348-0766.

### Apr. 29—May 1—National Black Touring Company, Birmingham and Montgomery

*Zora Neale Hurston: A Theatrical Biography*, a play about the famous black author, will be presented at the Carver Theater in Birmingham and at the Davis Theatre in Montgomery. Related events include Hurston on Hurston/Traces of Zora, in which writer **Lucy Ann Hurston**, her neice, will read from her new book and share family memories in a series of appearances and the Zora Neale Hurston Symposium, at the Jefferson Birmingham Regional Library on May 1. Contact the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance at 334/263-2787 for more information.

### Apr. 30, May 1 and 2—ELF Writer's Conference, Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

Writing competitions and workshops will be held in fiction, essays/nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting and playwriting and children's and young adult literature. **David Tillinghast** is leading

the fiction and creative non-fiction sessions. \$100 advance registration includes Eastern Literary Fellowship membership and t-shirt. Write ELF, 204 S. Holland St., Clinton, SC 29325 or call Bonnie A. Jones, 864-833-5991.

### May 2—Reception, Birmingham

Creative writing and photography by Chalkville students will be included in a Birmingham Museum of Art exhibition. Call 205/879-0679.

### May 4—Alabama Voices, Dothan

Nanci Kincaid will read from her work at the Houston Love Memorial Library on Tuesday, May 4. Call Bettye Forbus, 334/793-9767.

### May 6-8—Second Annual Alabama Writers Symposium, Monroeville

Writers and scholars discuss literature and Alabama. Friday presentation of Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer 1999 and the Eugene Current-Garcia Award for the Distinguished Alabama Scholar 1999. Call 334/575-3156, ext. 223, or write Alabama Southern Community College, P.O. Box 2000, Monroeville, AL 36461.

### June 18 & 19—Mid-South Reading & Writing Conference, Birmingham

Presentations by nationally-known authorities are geared to the needs of elementary and middle school classroom teachers, administrators and teacher educators. Contact **Dr. Maryann Manning**, 205/93-8359, or Literacy First 800/607-5692. Pre-register before May 15 and pay \$59. Mail to

### June 19 & 20—Spoken Word Festival, Birmingham

Literary events are once again included in the annual City Stages festival.

**Sonia Sanchez** will be featured at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. For more information on readings, contact Hunter Bell, 205/939-1975.

## ONGOING EVENTS

### BIRMINGHAM

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

### HUNTSVILLE

**Huntsville Literary Association** members' groups include the Literary Discussion Group which meets the first



Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Call 205/881-2114 for information. The Fiction Writers' Group meets at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month. Phone 205/882-2348 for details. On the fourth Tuesday of the month, the Poetry Writing Workshop is held from 7 to 9 p.m. at Shaver's Book Store at 2362 Whitesburg Drive. For information, call 205/536-9801. Huntsville Literary Association membership is open to anyone. Contact Susan Anderson, 8019 Navios Dr., Huntsville, AL 35802, 205/881-2935.

#### **MONTGOMERY**

For information about the **Alabama African-American Arts Alliance** or readings at **Roots and Wings: A Cultural Bookplace**, contact Georgette Norman, 334/263-2787 or Gwendolyn Boyd, 334/262-1700; Fax 334/262-8498. Monthly events of the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance are held at Eight Thirty House, 830 S. Court Street. The Nommo Study Group meets the second Tuesday evening from 6 to 8. The Creative Writers Gathering is the third Saturday from 10 a.m. until noon. Poetry readings are included in the Music in de House/Voices program, 6 to 8 p.m., third Sunday of the month. **Montgomery Creative Writers** meets the third Sunday of every month from 2-4 p.m. at the Vaughn Park Church of Christ on Vaughn Rd. The meeting is open to anyone interested in writing. Dues are \$12 annually. Contact Donna Jean Tennis, P.O. Box 230787, Montgomery, AL 36123-0787, 334/244-8920; e-mail poettennis@the-link.net

#### **TUSCALOOSA**

**The Guild of Professional Writers for Children** meets on the second Saturday of every month (except August) at the Tuscaloosa Public Library from 10 a.m. until 12 noon. Dues are \$15 annually. Contact Aileen K. Henderson, Vice-President, GPWC, 10924 Big Hurricane Spur, Brookwood, AL 35444, 205/556-0861.

#### **"WHO ME?"**

*Continued from page 7*

#### **"Discs? Can archives really preserve stuff other than paper?"**

You bet they can. In fact, if you work on a computer you will do both yourself and archivists a favor if you stop from time to time, take a "snapshot" of your work on a floppy disc in a generic format like ASCII, and label the disc with the title, date, type of computer and type of file. Then you or researchers will be able to access the original even after shifting to a completely different computer system.


#### **"I still feel silly. Who am I to think that a researcher will be interested in my papers someday?"**

You don't take time to preserve the papers you no longer use on a regular basis in order to gratify your ego or create a legacy, you do it as a kindness to yourself and your heirs. That's the only way you can avoid the risk of inadvertently discarding something important in a burst of overzealous housecleaning or a hasty move. If you take care of the task now you'll also relieve your heirs of the burden of having to make sense of your papers and decide what to do with them.

#### **"Won't I lose control of my writings if I deposit them in an archives? Besides, my friends won't appreciate having their letters to me read by other people."**

Archivists understand that you have concerns about these and related issues and want to work with you to arrange terms of ownership and access to your papers that meet your needs. In fact, archivists know about a variety of options for depositing papers in an archive and are experienced in making arrangements that protect your legal and financial interests as well as your privacy. But you have to take the first step by contacting an archivist and asking for what you want.

#### **"OK, you've convinced me. How do I decide what archives gets my papers?"**

Individual groups of papers gain in research value when they are housed with similar papers, and researchers are also more likely to use papers in a repository which holds a number of similar collections. So think about how you define yourself—by state or region? profession? gender? ethnic group?—and look for a repository that holds material from similar people. Ask other writers and academic researchers about their experience with various archives, nothing better testifies to the quality of a repository than satisfied customers. Then pick one or two and find out whether they have the willingness and the ability to provide a permanent home for your papers on terms that make you comfortable. Most archivists will be delighted to hear from you and eager to answer your questions. 

Visit our new web site at

**[www.writersforum.org](http://www.writersforum.org)**

You'll find the latest literary arts news, including the Forum's current programs statewide, a calendar of literary events, contests, calls for submissions and much more.

In addition, you'll have access to *First Draft*, publishing resources and links to other literary sites in Alabama.

There are lots of exciting additions still to come, so plan to visit us often.

# NEWS

## LITERARY MARKETPLACE COMING TO THE NEXT FIRST DRAFT

If you have books to sell or writing/editorial services you would like to publicize, consider placing an ad in the new Literary Marketplace in *First Draft*. Typing, manuscript reading, and web site design are other likely services. "We hope to devote a page to small listings as a service to our members, and at the same time generate revenue to plow back into the magazine," said AWF Executive Director **Jeanie Thompson**.

A single listing will cost \$35 per issue; advertisers who buy four issues will pay \$25 for each ad. To place advertising in the Literary Marketplace, mail your ad copy of 25 words or less and a check payable to the Alabama Writers Forum to Wordcraft, P.O. Box 6467, Montgomery, AL 36106. Copy deadline for the next issue is May 17.

## BONNIE'S BACK

*Detecting Metal*, a collection of short stories by **Fred Bonnie** published by Livingston Press, is one of 28 works of adult fiction listed as a 1998 Editors' Choice by *Booklist*, the journal of the American Library Association. The book contains stories written between 1979 and 1995, and is Bonnie's sixth collection of short fiction. A recipient of the Hackney Literary Award and former garden editor of *Oxmoor House/Southern Living*, Bonnie now lives in Winston-Salem, N.C. His previous book was *Food Fights: Tales from the Restaurant Trade*, published by Black Belt Press in 1997.

## SURF THE WRITE SITE

The Forum's web site is up and running at [www.writersforum.org](http://www.writersforum.org). Visit it to find out what's happening

on the state literary scene. You'll also see in-depth features on AWF programs and activities. The past four issues of *First Draft* are archived on the web site so that you can read or print out excerpts from them.

Send us news of literary events and announcements of contests so that we can post them. The email address is [awf1@state.arts.al.us](mailto:awf1@state.arts.al.us)

## "ALABAMA BOUND" BRINGS WRITERS TO THE BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

An email message from the Birmingham Public Library promises the realization of many a book lover's dream:

"On Saturday, April 24th, the downtown library is going to be transformed into a book fair from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. In the atrium we will have a little cafe set up—tables under the ficus trees, pastries, coffee, soft drinks available. Just inside the library will be a sales table with the books published by the Alabama authors participating in the fair. There will be two signing tables on each of the first three floors of the library—six tables in all. Authors will sit at their assigned tables for an hour or so (as scheduled) to be available to sign copies of their books and to talk with readers.

"Alabama Bound is on the same weekend as the Magic City Art Connection—a terrific juried art show held annually in the Linn Park adjacent to the library. The art show brings throngs of people downtown on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, so we expect a good turnout for the book fair.

"We will have an eclectic group of more than 40 authors—writers of fiction, of non-fiction (everything from diet books to memoirs), history, poetry, and children's books."

## OUT OF PRINT? CHECK GUTENBERG

The Gutenberg Project is putting classic and out-of-print books on line. Subjects in the latest *Project Gutenberg Newsletter*, published on line the first Wednesday of each month, indicate the broad scope of the endeavor. There are 36 new Etexts available since Gutenberg reached number 1900 last month. Included in the new selections are works by Balzac, Hawthorne, Thackeray, Horatio Alger, Martin Luther and others. Among the latest titles available is a new edition of *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*.

Send a message to [gutenberg@fireantproductions.com](mailto:gutenberg@fireantproductions.com) to find out more about the Gutenberg newsletter and catalog of on-line books.

## ENTRIES INCREASE IN AWF STUDENT COMPETITION

"I know we had at least 938 entries from all over the state, said **Anita Miller Garner**, soon after the deadline for entries in the AWF High School Literary Arts Awards and Scholarship Competition. Last year there were more than 500 entries, so it is incredible how the competition has grown, she said.

Garner unpacks the entries, reads just a smattering to make sure they are entered in the right category, and packages them to go to the judges. "I have to stay on task, but it's hard not to read more of them," she said. The one judge who has completed the judging was "bowled over" by the student writing and wrote "This is professional quality" on the top of at least one entry.

The awards banquet for Literary Arts Awards winners and their teachers will be in Montgomery on April 29.

**CONCLAVE COMPETITION**

**The Alabama Writer's**

**Conclave** has announced a June 1 deadline for its 1999 Writing Competition. Both members and non-members may send in entries in 15 categories of short stories, essays, articles, poetry, one-act plays and TV scripts. Entry fees are \$2 for members, \$3 for non-members. Send manuscripts with fees to John Curbow, AWC Contest Chair, P.O. Box 277, Wetumpka, AL 36092. Entries should be received between May 1 and June 1.

Members' dues are \$15 annually. Send dues to Harriette Dawkins, Treasurer, 117 Hanover Road, Homewood, AL 35209.

**POET LAUREATE NOMINATIONS CLOSING MAY 1**

Nominations are made through members of the **Alabama Writer's Conclave**. If you are a Conclave member, send the name of the poet you wish to recommend, along with the verification that the nominee is willing to serve for four years at their own expense, as well as a list of accomplishments of the candidate. Mail information to John Curbow, P.O. Box 277, Wetumpka, AL 36092.

**ROBERTS WINS STATE POETRY BOOK AWARD**

**Bonnie Roberts's** *To Hide in the Light*, published by Elk River Review Press, has won the Book of the Year Award for

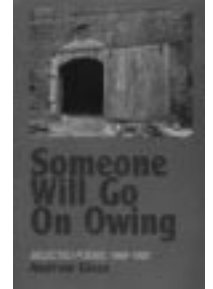


Bonnie Roberts

1998 from the Alabama State Poetry Society.

**SEBA PRESENTS BOOK AWARDS**

Andrew Glaze's *Someone Will Go on Owing: Selected Poems 1966-1992*, published by Montgomery's Black Belt Press in April 1998, has received the first Southeast Book-sellers Association's Award for poetry. Black Belt Press was the only independent publisher to win an award.



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

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*The Forum greatly appreciates the more than 600 individuals, including students, who have supported its programming since 1992.*

# FROM THE FIELD

## The Gift of History

by Tom Franklin

On the Sunday after Thanksgiving of last year, I drove two hours north of Mobile to Grove Hill, where I was born, to meet Hardy Jackson and Jim Cox at Hardy's father's house. They were to show me around Mitcham's Beat, the part of Clarke County where a feud occurred late last century and where several people were killed. This feud, known as the Mitcham War, is the subject of a novel I'm working on. Hardy Jackson, some of you know, teaches history at Jacksonville State University; Jim Cox is Editor and Publisher of the Clarke County Democrat. Together with Joyce Burrage (who taught me English in the ninth grade), they wrote a wonderful book called *The Mitcham War*, an account of the events that have become infamous in the county.

What I saw that day in Mitcham's Beat was amazing, crumbling houses and rotting grave markers and the sites of murders and lynchings, and what I heard was even more amazing. It was a privilege to listen to Hardy and Jim—two of the premier authorities on this subject—discuss the true cause of the Mitcham War which, Hardy suggested, was honor. "All those sharecroppers had back then," Hardy said, "was their pride. That and family. If you took that away, you took everything."

This land we passed was familiar to me, these hills and ridges, the magnolias and the pines, the carpet of dead, dry leaves: the landscape of my childhood. The temperature was in the low sixties that day, the sun so high and bright I had to keep adjusting the Jeep's visor. We passed pick-up trucks parked beside the road and hunters walking with their rifles, even a muddy hound or two, and I remembered things from my own past, stories about my grandfather, Dock Bradford, who I'd never met, and of his oldest son, Marion, the tale-spinner of our family who now lives in Birmingham and who I rarely see.

Later, back at Mr. Jackson's place, Jim led me into a small wooden building behind the house. This was Mr. Jackson's "Poutin' House," where his wife allows him to come and drink. It's kind of an institution in Grove Hill, a place where people meet to discuss (or argue about) politics or football, and where they occasionally take a drink. I sat down in a plush chair, just right for football, and looked around. One wall held an Alabama map from the



Tom Franklin

1940s, which I found out was the map Mr. Jackson followed when he first came into Alabama years before. Mr. Jackson wore slippers and eased himself into a chair that I knew was his regular seat, beside the refrigerator and with a perfect view of the television. Jim stood against the bar and as Hardy mixed us drinks Mr. Jackson began asking me about "my people." As I named each of them, he nodded, smiling, as if he remembered each face. He knew my father, he said, and my mother and aunts. Knew my grandfather well, and knew Uncle Marion, who he called,

"Strut."

"Strut?" I asked.

"Strut Bradford," Mr. Jackson said. "Called him that cause he used to strut around so."

We talked on, and Mr. Jackson told me more stories about Strut Bradford and about his father—my grandfather—Dock Bradford. Some were stories I'd never heard, others familiar, like the one about Strut being elected to the state legislature because his father had canvassed the entire county. How Dock got tired of the raccoons eating his corn at night but was helpless because of the law that kept him from having both a gun and a light in the woods—night hunting was a problem. Uncle Marion, who spent much of his time with Dock, drove to Montgomery and pushed through a law that allowed hunters a light and gun, but only with number eight shot so no deer could be killed. Mr. Jackson told me they'd named the law The Bradford Raccoon and Opossum Act of 1955—which I knew—but what I hadn't heard was that they'd done it as a joke on old Strut.

The stories—and the drinking—went on. Each time my mug got low, Hardy filled it.

"Whenever I tell Daddy I'm bringing somebody by," Hardy said, "he always asks me a bunch of sly questions about 'em. What he's trying to find out is if they're okay."

Jim was sipping bourbon, as were Hardy and Mr. Jackson.

"What he means by 'okay,'" Jim added, "is whether or not they'll take a drink."

Mr. Jackson laughed. "When I found out you were Strut Bradford's nephew and old Dock Bradford's grandson, hell, I knew you'd raise a glass with us."

*continued on page 24*



**MONROEVILLE CONFERENCE**

*Continued from page 1*

*Flow: Native Americans in the South and East*, and **Carolyn Haines**, author of *Summer of the Redeemers* and *Touched*, will talk with **Larry Allums**, professor of literature at the University of Mobile. **Phyllis Perry**, author of the novel *Stigmata* will speak with **John Henry Hafner**, professor of English at Spring Hill College.

Friday morning sessions will include "Perspectives on Alabama" with Tuskegee University history professor and Civil Rights activist **Frank Toland** and University of Alabama English professor **Philip Beidler**. Historian and author **Wayne Flynt** will moderate. "The Role of Alabama in its Literature" will be discussed by novelists **William Cobb** (*Harry Reunited* and *Somewhere in All This Green*), **Robert Inman** (*Old Dogs and Children*, *Home Fires Burning* and *Dairy Queen Days*) and **Wayne Greenhaw** (*The Golfer* and *King of Country*). The moderator will be **Don Noble**, host of Alabama Public Television's "Bookmark."

There will be poetry readings by **Peter Huggins**, Auburn University professor and author of *Hard Facts*, and **Rodney Jones**, National Book Critics Circle award winner. Jones's most recent book is *Elegy for the Southern Drawl*. Other featured writers include **Nanci Kincaid** (*Crossing Blood, Pretending the Bed is a Raft*, and



Rodney Jones



Marva Collins

the recently released *Balls*) and **Marva Collins**, educator and author of *Values*, and *Lighting the Candle of Excellence: A Practical Guide for the Family*.

For registration information, call **Donna Reed** at 334/575-3156, ext. 223 or email [dreed@ascc.edu](mailto:dreed@ascc.edu). For updates and to register on-line, go to [www.ascc.edu](http://www.ascc.edu).

**ABOUT THE HARPER LEE AND EUGENE CURRENT-GARCIA AWARDS**

The **Harper Lee Award for a Distinguished Alabama Writer** is given annually in recognition of the lifetime achievement of a writer who was born in Alabama or who has spent a significant portion of his or her writing life in the state. The recipient is to be a writer of national reputation, whose body of work is recognized by critics, publishers, and editors as clearly superior. The recipient should also have received major awards and prizes. Harper Lee, whose novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* has sold more than 30 million copies, is a native of Monroeville where the Alabama Writers Symposium is held.

The Forum assembled a statewide committee to provide nominations and select the second Harper Lee Award recipient. Committee members were: **Brent Davis**, AWF president; **Rawlins McKinney**, AWF vice-president; **Jay Lamar**, AWF secretary; **Norman McMillan**, AWF immediate past president; **Ruth Beaumont Cook** and **Peter Huggins**, AWF writers' representatives; **Jeanie Thompson**, AWF executive director; **Don Noble**, University of Alabama; **John Sledge**, *Mobile Press-Register*; and **Bert Hitchcock**, Auburn University.

Also at the Friday award ceremony, the **1999 Eugene Current-Garcia Award for Distinction in Literary Scholarship** will be presented to **Philip D. Beidler**, professor of English at the University of Alabama. Beidler has made major contributions to literary scholarship during his 25 years at the University of Alabama. His two anthologies of fiction by Alabama writers, *The Art of Fiction in the Heart of Dixie* and *Many Voices, Many Rooms* will be joined by *First Books: The Printed Word and Cultural Formation in Early Alabama*, forthcoming from the University of Alabama Press. He has published extensively on the literature of war, especially as it deals with the Vietnam conflict. The recipient of this award is selected by the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama.

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**CAMERA READY**

**FROM THE FIELD**

*Continued from page 22*

Well, we raised a few glasses that night. And I heard stories about Clarke County and the Mitcham War and more about my own family. As I sat there with my head buzzing, I felt a connection with Marion “Strut” Bradford, and I felt an even stronger connection with my grandfather, who had died two months before I was born. It may have been the beer buzz, but I felt closer to Alabama than I ever had. As if I’d been given a gift that night, the gift of history, of spending the day with people who loved and honored the past, who’d lived their lives trying to understand it.

The novel I’m writing is historical, but I’ve always been a sloppy student of history, more interested in the

future. Yet driving away that night, I felt how crucial history is to us all, to the understanding of our ancestors, of the places we grew up, of ourselves. History reaches forward, too, touches us still. I had been welcomed into the Poutin’ House, had been given a seat of honor there, because of my people, because of an uncle I don’t see very often, and a grandfather I’ve never met. And even as I drove home, drinking coffee now, the windows open, I felt what I’d just experienced already becoming history, part of me, a story I would tell. 

*Tom Franklin’s first book, Poachers (William Morrow), will be in bookstores in June. The title novella has been selected for New Stories From the South: The Year’s Best, 1999 and the annual anthology Best American Mystery Stories. It has also been nominated for an Edgar Award. Franklin teaches creative writing at the University of South Alabama.*


**BARBARA LEBOW**

*Continued from page 11*

based on whatever breakthrough happened in the previous work, a constant searching for better ways to give a fuller expression to whatever the material is at hand.”

As an example of the same idea, Lebow cites the evolutionary development of a memory technique which first surfaced in her 1981 *Little Joe Managhan*, a historically based play about a woman who lived her adult life as a cowboy. From that play, in which memory sequences helped externalize the character, through *A Shayna Maidel*

(1985), *Cyparis* (1987) and *The Keepers* (1988), the technique deepened into fantasy and hallucination sequences which offered ever better methods of revealing the characters, of letting the audience “see what this person is thinking without an obvious aside.” These passages occur within a grounding context of naturalistic scenes.

“It’s been,” she concludes, “an evolving process, not breakthroughs. I figure I’m still on the journey.” Pointing to the effect of this evolutionary process on her latest play, she says, “Everything I’ve mentioned has led to *Lurleen*. Elements of the play are in her head and help illuminate what is going on.” 

*Writer Allan Swafford has reviewed theatre in Montgomery for more than 15 years.*

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**CAMERA  
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*Lurleen*

will run in repertory at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery through July 24.  
For performance dates, times and to purchase tickets, call 1-800-841-4ASF (4273). Locally call 271-5353.

**EDITOR’S NOTE**

We apologize for omitting Anne Rutledge and Evie Spearman, Huntsville Literary Association, from the list of contributors to the C. Eric Lincoln Program in “The Back Page,” Winter Issue.

In the same article, Dr. Lee Williams’s affiliation should be listed as the Office of Multi-cultural Affairs at the University of Alabama Huntsville.



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### *Our writing faculty...*

James White, Director, is the author of *Birdsong*, *Clara's Call*, *California Exit*, (Methuen) and *The Ninth Car* (Putnam's). He has co-edited *Where Joy Resides: A Christopher Isherwood Reader* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) and recently completed editing Isherwood's *Commonplace Book*. A Guggenheim fellow, White graduated from Brown University in 1973 and has taught writing since—at UCLA, USC, and USA. White's former students include Mark Andrus, co-author of the film *As Good As It Gets* and Carolyn Haines, author of *Touched*.

Sue Walker, Chair of English, holds a Ph.D. from Tulane and edits *Negative Capability*. Her many books include *The Appearance of Green* (Nightshade Press), *Shorings* (South Coast Press), and a new book forthcoming from Amherst Artists and Writers Press. She has co-edited *Ways of Knowing: Essays on Marge Piercy*, *Life on the Line*, and *Marge Piercy: Critical Views*. Winner of an Alabama Artists Award and numerous others, Walker has organized poetry workshops and conferences as well as served on state and national literary boards.

Tom Franklin's *Poachers* will be published in June, 1999, by William Morrow & Co. Inc. (and in French by Albin Michel). His novel *Hell at the Breach* will appear in the summer of 2000. In 1998 he won the Writers at Work Literary Non-Fiction Prize. He has published stories, poems, and articles in numerous magazines. A graduate of the MFA program at the University of Arkansas, he was a recipient of an Arkansas Arts Council grant for the short story. As an undergraduate at the University of South Alabama, he was a winner of the *Playboy* College Fiction contest.

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