The Journal of the Alabama Writers' Forum

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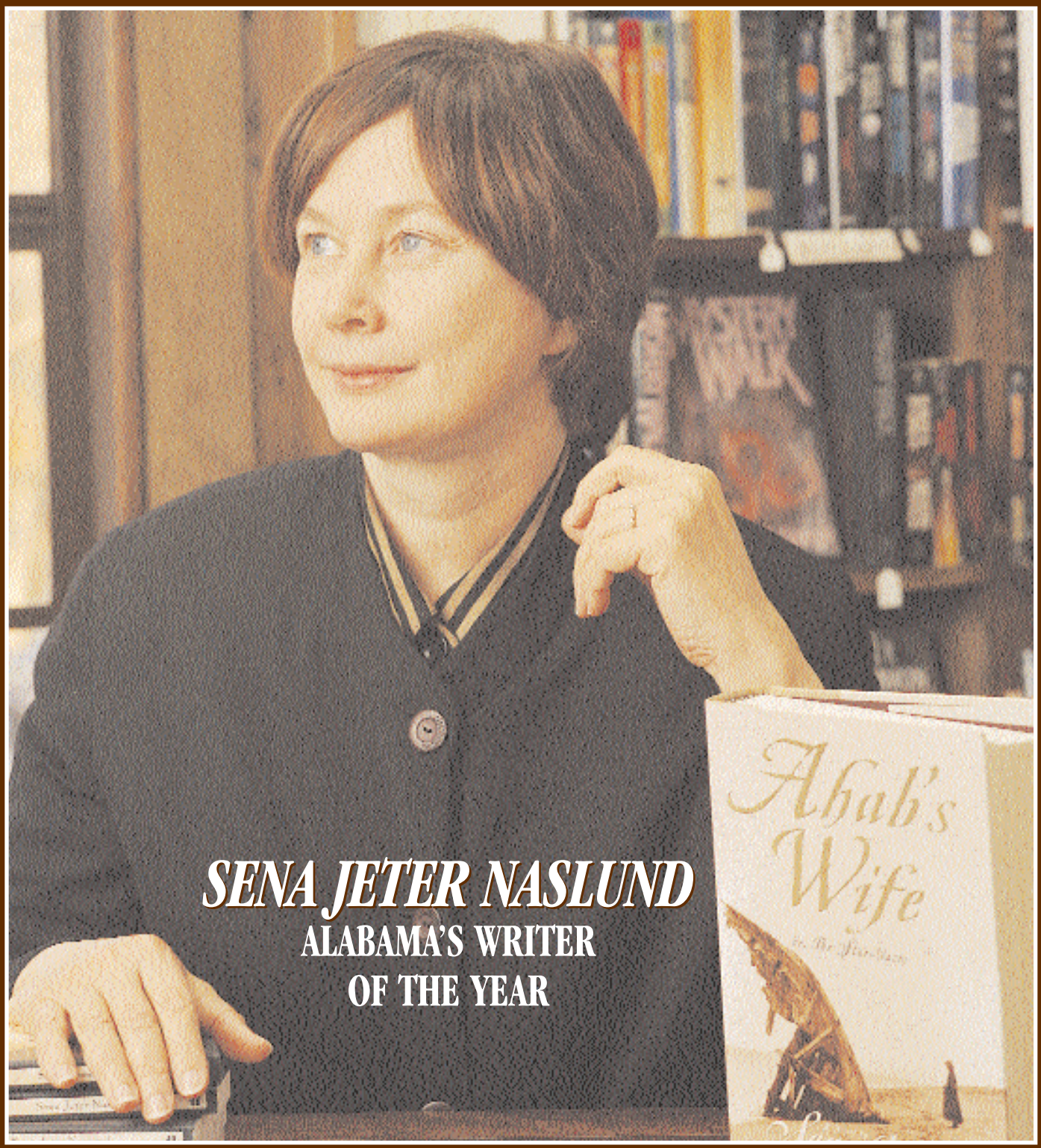
FIRSTDRAFT



SENA JETER NASLUND

ALABAMA'S WRITER OF THE YEAR

photo by: Beau Gustafson © 2001

from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"The Literary Family Must Stand Strong Now"

Jay Sailors

AWF Executive Director Jeanie Thompson.

Our state is facing a turning point in funding education and related entities. As you know, the Alabama Writers' Forum receives major operating and program support from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. The Council is funded through Alabama's education trust fund, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts. As you read about our 2001 Harper Lee Award recipient, Sena Jeter Naslund, or peruse the book reviews in the issue, the funding crisis may not yet be solved. Whatever happens, I want to assure you that with your help the Alabama Writers' Forum will prevail.

Nine years ago, there was no Alabama Writers' Forum. Out of a small gathering of people who care about literary arts in Alabama, an idea formed, and from that idea—with tremendous commitment and a lot of hard work—a nationally recognized statewide literary arts organization was born. With the shepherding of Council executive director Al Head, and with faith in what we could be from the Council in 1993, we launched the Alabama Writers' Forum as a fulltime operation. You know where we are today and you believe in us.

Another reason I feel confident about our success is that our 2001 Board of Directors spent an amazing couple of days in retreat in January charting the Forum's future. A full report will be forthcoming, but I want to state our updated mission statement here:

> *The Alabama Writers' Forum advances the art of writing by promoting writers, educating young writers, and cultivating Alabama's literary arts.*

If you believe that this is a worthwhile mission for the Forum, if you have benefited from the Forum's commitment to writers and writing in our state, and if you see the difference the Forum makes in young writers' lives, I urge you to show that belief by using the return envelope in this issue of *First Draft* to send in your associate's renewal now. Even if your membership doesn't expire for several months, it will help us tremendously in the budget struggle to be able to show our associates' support. Give a subscription to your local library. Give a membership to a young writer or pay for a senior citizen writer to receive *First Draft*.

We need you more than ever now. The literary arts in Alabama are wonderfully strong, and we will weather this storm, but the literary family must stand together now.

Jeanie Thompson
Executive Director

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VOL. 8, NO. 1 SPRING 2001

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Cover photograph by Beau Gustafson, Big Swede Productions, 720 39th Street South, Birmingham, AL 35222; 205-595-0099.

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Sena Jeter Naslund: On *Ahab's Wife* and Life After

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIA OLIVER

The following exchange took place through e-mail during the last days of January and the first week of February. When we began, the author of *Ahab's Wife* had just learned she was to be the next recipient of the Harper Lee Award, given each year by the Alabama Writers' Forum during the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville. She was notified also during this time that she had been named Fiction Writer of the Year 2001 by the Alabama Library Association.

A native of Birmingham, Sena Jeter Naslund has lived since the early 1970s in Louisville, where she is a Distinguished Teaching Professor and a former director of the creative writing program at the University of Louisville. In the fall of 1999, while she was at Auburn University with her husband, physicist John Morrison, Sena drove to Montgomery to meet informally with members of a book club. Later, it came out that everyone in that intimate gathering had felt a special connection with our soft-spoken, unassuming, very articulate visitor—which may be why I have some sense of having conducted this interview not via keyboards and modems, but over teacups.

Sometimes my mother and I stood and looked at our faces together in the oval mirror she brought with her from the East. Along with her library chest of books, the mirror with its many-stepped molding distinguished our frontier cabin from others. Thus, elegantly framed, my mother and I made a double portrait of ourselves for memory, by looking in the mirror.

From the first chapter of *Ahab's Wife*

The arresting first sentence of* Ahab's Wife*—"Captain Ahab was neither my first husband nor my last"—defines your protagonist as a woman who has no bitterness, makes no apology. I think we sense at that moment that Una is going to take us on an exuberant voyage of a life lived to the hilt. The rest of the opening paragraph describes Ahab, as she conjures him in the clouds. How did you conjure this remarkable character you named Una?

Una, unnamed at the time, came to me as a vision while I was driving a rented car in Boston. I saw a woman on a widow's walk at night, looking out at the dark sea, hoping to see her husband's whaleship coming home, its tryworks burning. As she looked, she realized he wasn't coming home—not that night, not ever. With that strange intuition, she lifted her gaze from the ocean to the night sky and the stars and began to question: "What is my place in all that vast glory? Who am I in relationship to the cosmos?" No longer waiting for someone to arrive and define her, she began her own spiritual questing.

Her name came to me slowly. I knew I needed to wait. In thinking about Captain Ahab, I saw him as a kind of medieval knight who fought not a dragon but a vast sea creature. In Spenser's *Fairie Queene,* the Red-Cross Knight is accompanied by a lady named Una. I liked the root of that word, its suggestion of oneness, of whole-

How mysterious water must have been to the ancients! Disobedient unless held in glass or clay, or by the power of miracle. I think of Moses parting the Red Sea centuries after the Magician of the Westcar papyrus had done so. I think of Margaret Fuller letting the sea crash over her body, tumbling her sideways over the ship's deck, of her sinking down, becoming a pendant of new turquoise. Of my own heart that will not obey, that rows endlessly toward love.

From the novella *The Disobedience of Water*

ness. My Una's quest was ultimately toward her own nature, toward feeling at one with the universe. I gave her the last name of "Spenser" as a tribute to the Renaissance poet. Her father's name is Ulysses, another quester, and when Una goes to sea, disguised as a boy, she takes the name, temporarily, of Ulysses.

Of course, Una grew and changed as I wrote the novel. I wanted to create not an allegorical figure but a morally complex woman, with both flaws and virtues—like the rest of us.

You have said elsewhere that you got the idea for this epic novel in late 1993. How long did the seed germinate before you began to write Una's story?

After that vision of the woman on the roof-walk, and the accompanying voice (which uttered the novel's first sentence), I re-read *Moby-Dick*, did historical research, and talked with friends about the idea for nine months, till I began the actual writing. The book was two years in the writing of the first draft, and over the next two years, it went through four very thorough revisions, with comments from my friends on each draft. Parts of it were surely revised fifty times—over and over. I loved both the original writing and the revision process—every minute of it. I fell strangely in love with this book and wanted to be with it, or in it, as much as possible.

The lyricism of the novel's subtitle,* The Star-Gazer, *provides a nice contrast to the straightforwardness of the main title.

I think there's a certain tension between the novel's major title and subtitle. The book comes to you as a stranger with a convenient label, somebody famous's wife. But she's much more than that. When you live with Una by reading her life, you understand that being a star-gazer is for her an emblem of her philosophical quest. Some texts work "against" their titles. In Chekhov's short story "The Lady with the Toy Dog," a man first classifies a woman with that simple label, but she soon becomes more meaningful to him than his own selfishness. In D. H. Lawrence's story "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter," the woman referenced becomes far too complex to be summed up in a phrase that essentially identifies her as the possession of her father.

Sometimes, I think the whole novel is represented by the distance or space between the title and the subtitle.

Debra Morrison

Sena Jeter Naslund with her husband, atomic physicist John C. Morrison, in Monterey, California.

How much pre-planning went into the structure? Did you have any idea at the outset that the novel would have over one hundred chapters?

The first sentence suggested the structure of the novel, but I only knew the identity of the middle husband—Captain Ahab. I discovered, with Una, who the first and third husbands were to be. There were many other surprises along the way; unanticipated characters just jumped out of the landscape. I did know Una had to go to sea one way or another in order to be the "equal" of Ahab for literalist readers/critics. But the voyage that takes more courage is on the inner sea of the self.

By flanking Una with two "real" women—Margaret Fuller, the great nineteenth century feminist and woman of letters, and Maria Mitchell, the great astronomer—I hoped to convince skeptical readers that women of that period (and throughout history) were, in fact, capable of extraordinary intellectual and personal courage.

The division of my narrative into numerous, named chapters, varying from a few sentences to many pages, was an unplanned, spontaneous act, but Melville, in the structuring of *Moby-Dick*, had set the example for me. When I saw that there were going to be many chapters in *Ahab's Wife*, I toyed with the idea of having just the same number as Melville, but that idea seemed mechanical and I discarded it. *Ahab's Wife* has more chapters—just because that's what it seemed to take to tell the tale. It was fun to think up their titles and to vary the relationship between title and chapter. Some of the titles are whimsical and imaginative; others set up suspense questions, or make announcements, or act almost like poem titles.

I want to say, too, gratefully, that the advice of my agent, Joy Harris, and of my editor, Paul Bresnick, helped me a great deal in shaping the book, once it came into their hands. Paul suggested that I write important new scenes as well as cut and re-shape some passages.

In 1999, the year* Ahab's Wife *electrified the literary landscape, your short-story collection* The Disobedience of Water *came out

from another publisher, also to critical acclaim. Some of these stories venture into deep waters. Is there a thematic connection between the books?

The last piece I wrote before beginning *Ahab's Wife* was the title story of the collection. Though I didn't know it then or while I was writing the novel, I see now that that particular story is a kind of preliminary sketch, dealing with a contemporary woman, of Una's nineteenth-century story. In the short stories—which deal with men and boys as protagonists, as well as women—I'm trying to depict how complex we are, how such an assortment of characteristics make up one's identity.

I found the collection in a new paperback edition. Are there plans to re-issue your 1993 novel,* Sherlock in Love*?

Yes, it's scheduled for release in August 2002 as a HarperPerennial paperback. Readers who enjoy the 1830s and 1840s may also enjoy this tale of 1886, which, like *Ahab's Wife*, interjects female participation into a world often thought of as exclusively male.

What are you writing now, and at what stage is it?

I have a contract for a proposed novel about the civil rights struggle of the early sixties in Birmingham, where I was born, went to school, and lived at the time. As of spring 2001, I'm about a hundred typewritten pages into it.

Your career as a teacher of creative writing spans almost three decades, the last of which has seen the publication of your five books of fiction. As a founder of* The Louisville Review *and the Fleur-de-Lis Press, you have helped establish venues for new writers to achieve publication. In another interview, you are quoted as saying, "It was only after my third book that I was able to say to myself with confidence, I am a writer." Do the rewards of simultaneously pursuing two creative paths—as artist, and as mentor—offset the frustrations of having to apportion your time/attention?

It's truly difficult to balance teaching and writing my own fiction. Teaching can be almost too satisfying; it's wonderful to see students come into their own, and many of my former students have published books as well as in journals. With the publication of my own books, I find that I want more and more time for my writing and freedom from a rigid teaching schedule. I'm in the process of starting a new brief-residence Master of Fine Arts in Writing program at Spalding University in Louisville. Brief-residence programs begin with ten days of residence—workshops, lectures, readings by a varied faculty—followed by students and faculty returning to their far-flung homes for a semester of correspondence. It's a marvelous way to teach all types of creative writing to mature students, and offers a much more flexible schedule for both students and teachers than do traditional writing programs.

It's obvious from everything I've read about you, and from hearing you speak, that you relate warmly to people. You certainly don't lead a reclusive life, yet you incline toward mysticism. I was struck by your resemblance in a recent photograph to the poet Emily Dickinson. Is she a kindred spirit?

What a thrilling question! My mother loved Dickinson's poetry, and I began to appreciate her poems in freshman composition at Birmingham-Southern College as taught by the dean, the late Cecil Abernethy. Much later, I read biographical accounts of Emily Dickinson's skepticism about Christianity and her struggles with dogmatic theology. Una's imaginative questing is, in fact, modeled partly on that of Emily Dickinson. I named Una's friend, the judge, Austin Lord—Emily's brother was named Austin—as a clue to the Dickinson connection. When I was younger, I used to hope that I looked like Emily Dickinson. I'd long ago given up the wish that anyone would see any resemblance.

Julia Oliver is the author of Seventeen Times as High as the Moon, *a collection of short fiction;* Goodbye to the Buttermilk Sky, *a novel; and the forthcoming* Music of Falling Water, *a novel set in 1918 Alabama.*

IN PERSON

Sena Jeter Naslund will be at the Alabama Library Association's luncheon in Montgomery on April 12, and at *Alabama Bound* at the Birmingham Public Library on Saturday, April 28. She will speak at Huntingdon College in Montgomery for the Friends of the Library on Wednesday, May 2, as well as at Monroeville for the Alabama Writers Symposium, May 4-6.

BOOKS BY SENA JETER NASLUND:

Ice Skating at the North Pole, Short Stories, Ampersand Press, 1989

The Animal Way to Love, A Novel, Ampersand Press, 1993

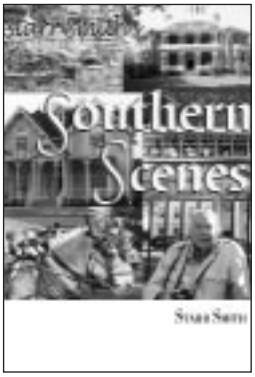
Sherlock in Love, A Novel, David R. Godine, 1993

The Disobedience of Water: Stories and Novellas, David R. Godine, 1999

Ahab's Wife or, The Star-Gazer, A Novel, William Morrow, 1999

Spring 2001 titles

(all available in March and April)



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THE MIDDLEMAN: Nan Talese on Editing and Publishing in America

EDITED BY TRISHA PING

"I'm not sure exactly whether it's been ordained that a novelist should make money."

Nan Talese is a senior vice president of Doubleday Books and has been publisher and editorial director of her own imprint since 1990. Married to author Gay Talese, she is one of the most respected editors in America; the Nan Talese Imprint is known as "author-oriented" and is recognized for its literary excellence. Among its authors are Margaret Atwood, Pat Conroy, Antonia Fraser, Thomas Keneally, and George Plimpton. Recent titles include *The Plato Papers* by Peter Akroyd, *English Passengers* by Matthew Kneale, and *Bruce Chatwin* by Nicholas Shakespeare.

"BookMark" host Don Noble interviewed Talese at Birmingham Southern's "Writing Today" conference in 1997. Among their topics of discussion were how we take the measure of success in publishing and what role an editor can play in it.

You are more than just a book editor; you are an editor with your name on the books that you edit. It's not just a book that comes from Doubleday; it's a Nan Talese book.

Brent Davis

Editor and senior vice president of Doubleday, Nan Talese.

Brent Davis

"BookMark" host Don Noble.

If I were a young writer with a manuscript, why would I want an editor with an imprint? What would be the advantages to me?

Well, I think particularly there's an advantage for the writer who's not known. The bookstores are familiar with my having published Margaret Atwood, Pat Conroy, and other well-known writers, so they immediately have a take on the quality. It's the quality of the writing and of the mind and of the story that makes the difference.

How many writers can you take care of at a time? How many books can you produce under your imprint for a year?

I publish about 15 books a year and I actually do edit books. I also have an editor and two assistants. . . . We do between 10 and 17 books a year, from among 40 or 50 continuing writers.

That's a good-sized party.

It is right now. I'm just about to talk at our sales conference about the books that we will publish next September through December, but I'm actually working on books that I will be publishing a year from now, so you always have these various stages, [in addition to] reading proposals and manuscripts of books that I have not yet taken on.

How much autonomy do you have about choosing which manuscripts actually get published? Is that a decision you actually make yourself?

Yes, it's a decision I make myself, but I call on the publicity and the marketing that serves the entire Doubleday group. And I would be foolish if I just published what I felt was wonderful work and might not catch any note in other people. I would say three-quarters of my authors are authors I've published before, so they're already established. But yes, when you read a book that you're excited about, you say, hey, I've just discovered this wonderful writer, and so I'll show it to the person who will eventually sell the rights to the paperback, or to someone in the sales department, and that's how you begin the buzz on a book. But I have to do a profit and loss statement, and see whether it's a book that we can do well with, not necessarily make a fortune, although I have to make a fortune occasionally.

What constitutes doing well?

I would say net copies, 15,000. Which means you would probably put out 24-25,000. And if you're not going to publish it in paperback within your own group, then to probably have a sale of about $50,000 to an outside paperback publisher.

I have a novelist friend who publishes a book about every two or three years. The book sells about 25,000 copies, very solid. And he's making, from his novels, somewhere in the neighborhood of $25,000 a year. If he were doing anything else, he would be making three and four times that much money. How can a writer make a living?

". . . the thing that makes a poem or a piece of prose work is the passion of the writer behind it."

I'm not sure exactly whether it's been ordained or written that a novelist should make money. I think it's a bad idea for people to assume that they're going to make their living from writing.

Is the day of the professional fiction writer over, in that sense, then?

Well, you know, it's a fairly recent phenomenon. Let's move back a bit. If you look at the bestseller list today in fiction, most of the people were originally paperback writers. They published in their genre, and built their audience through the inexpensive paperback. Dick Francis' audience was built through paperback. And then Phyllis Grant at Putnam said, all right, now it's time to publish him in a big way in hardcover. But he had been at it for years and built his audience. People know exactly what they're going to get when they pay $25 for that book. With, you see, a writer just beginning, it's a rather high-ticket price to find out whether you're going to like something or not.

What about the question of the relationship between the writer and the publisher? In the old days, writers stayed with the same house, perhaps through an entire career, but often through a couple of books that didn't do too well until they caught on. Now is that still possible?

Oh, I think it's still possible; I think it's a lot less usual. You see, first authors begin to leave because they think they can get more money from another publishing house. . . . Then editors begin moving about. . . . When it was possible to make money in publishing, things changed. Our culture is now primarily one of greed. At the time when. . . . you couldn't make money in publishing, loyalty became the most important thing.

Now loyalty has been transferred to the editor?

To the editor? Could be. But I think writers are very much on their own, because a writer's career is going to be longer than an editor's. And, of course, the real relationship is between the writer and the reader. Editors are just the middlemen in all of that.

We often talk about the MFA programs, the writing programs, and the workshops all over America. A great many writers earn a living working in them. I realize this is unanswerable, but is the MFA in Creative Writing good for literature in America?

I think it's very good for writers. The problem is, there are more manuscripts that are publishable today that are very good but don't really have something special to say. The other thing they [MFA programs] do is give a young writer a time and a space and a place among peers to do his work, which is just wonderful to have. But I think the thing that is most harmful about them is that there are a lot of creeps that come out of this, and they become the sort of literati that review each other's books. And this is often where there is a big gap with the public. Readers hear something is wonderful. They pay $25 for a book because it's got this wonderful review, and then they can't understand what is going on, or it doesn't seem very interesting, or it seems too much in the mind of the writer. And that kills that potential experimenter in reading a new work of fiction for a long time. . . . This patting each other on the back, in the end, undoes the good atmosphere for publishing.

Do you think that the writing programs of America might be creating a kind of homogenized product, a kind of uniform, reasonably high-quality product in poetry or fiction?

Well, I do think that there is a high quality, yeah, but the thing that makes a poem or a piece of prose work is the passion of the writer behind it. And that cannot be taught. That comes from inside. I know that my husband, when asked what is literature, has said it's the work that has the power to move. And that cannot be taught. But we also need the atmosphere in which to create it.

We've seen certain trends for the last few years: more and more houses being owned by fewer and fewer companies, more and more regional presses popping up. In general terms, where do you think the world of publishing is going next?

I think new houses will start up, and older ones will get bigger, and then like other conglomerations will begin selling off what they can't handle or what doesn't seem to be profitable. I think the "Gapping" or "McDonalding" of America, in terms of books, will continue. And we're going to have fewer choices. But I think there will always be some diversity and it will probably come from the smaller publishers and then work its way up. The great richness in our society is when we give way to multiple stories and inventions. One of the things we really have to protect is the independent bookseller, because that is where the new voices are heard.

So in the future the young person with a manuscript of his or her first novel will be in better shape?

In the same confused shape as he is right now, I'm afraid. I'm not sure that it ever was much different. It's just that everything is multiplied in terms of numbers.

Trisha Ping is an intern at the Auburn University Center for the Arts & Humanities.

A writer sometimes chooses to work with an editor, especially when preparing a manuscript for a prospective publisher. Other times, working with an editor is not a voluntary decision on the part of the author, but instead is dictated by the publisher. The submission of one's work to the objective eye of an editor can influence a whole literary career. . . and it can be a trial or a pleasure, depending on many factors.

Here fiction writer/dramatist Bill Cobb and his editor, Elizabeth Woodman, ruminate on their working relationship and describe its challenges and rewards. Cobb is author of award-winning short stories and novels—including *A Spring of Souls* (Crane Hill, 1999) and *A Walk Through Fire* (William Morrow, 1992)—and plays. His new novel, *Wings of Morning*, is due out from Crane Hill in October 2001. Woodman co-founded Ventana Press of Chapel Hill, where she served as editorial director until 1996, when she left to pursue a career as a freelance editor.

THE WRITER: BILL COBB

"Crane Hill Press is a well-established, highly successful, small, regional house that has published non-fiction, children's books, novelty books, and so on, but never a novel. I have known its owner and publisher, Ellen Sullivan, for years. Whenever I would see Ellen around town, she'd always say she wanted to publish some fiction, and she wanted it to be something of mine. So, when my agent and I decided we would go with an independent press for my novel, *A Spring of Souls*, she sent it to Ellen. Ellen loved it and offered me a contract. She had no in-house editor for fiction, but she had known Elizabeth Woodman when Elizabeth ran Ventana Press in Chapel Hill. Elizabeth had sold her publishing house so she could get back to doing what she loved: editing. Ellen hired her to edit my novel. Thus the story of how I wound up with an editor in Hillsborough, North Carolina!

Photo by Loretta Cobb

Author Bill Cobb

"Ellen also sent Elizabeth the manuscript of my new novel, *Wings of Morning*. Crane Hill set a publication date of October 1 of 2001, because they were bringing out a trade paperback of my 1992 novel, *A Walk Through Fire*, in the fall of 2000, and they wanted a year between the two books.

"When I first met Elizabeth in person, in the autumn of 1999, in Greensboro, N. C., I was promoting *A Spring of Souls*, which was just out. We had worked intensely on the book together, via phone and e-mail, without ever having met face to face. We had lunch and talked about the new book, and we subsequently corresponded about it, exchanging ideas.

"Ours is an easy relationship, full of mutual respect. I think what a good editor does—and Elizabeth is one of the best—is an art similar to the composition of the work being edited. I don't think of her as an "ideal reader," and certainly not as a 'critic.' She is part of the process of writing the novel.

"I guess the best analogy would be the director of a play. A good editor, just as a good director, gets inside the creative psyche of the writer. She seems to know exactly what I am after in a particular scene or chapter, and she works subtle wonders to bring it out more clearly and effectively. She is a conventional editor as well, doing copyediting, looking for sense and grammar, typos, spelling, all that. Checking facts. For example, in *Wings of Morning*, I had some people in 1964 sitting around the stereo listening to Joan Baez singing 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down.' Elizabeth checked on that and found that Baez had not yet recorded that song in 1964, so we changed it to 'Birmingham Sunday,' which worked a whole lot better anyway.

"The remarkable thing about the process with Elizabeth is that she seems to always know exactly what my intentions are, and I think that defines a good editor. I think most novelists would agree with that. A bad editor interferes, I think, and tries to force changes (usually dictated by the marketing department of the house), and just generally messes around with what the author is trying to do, rather than assisting him in doing it. I have been fortunate to have had two wonderful editors: Elizabeth at Crane Hill and Susan Leon at William Morrow, who edited *A Walk Through Fire*.

"We negotiate changes. We even argue some. She has had doubts about some scenes that I really wanted in, and we discussed them. Most of them are in the book, because I finally disagreed with her, and the author, of course, must have the final say.

"However, she really wanted me to cut a short scene toward the end of *A Spring of Souls* that was pretty graphic and bizarre, even more so than the rest of the book! She felt that it degraded the protagonist, and we had to leave him at least a shred of decency for the reader to care about him at all. We debated it, and finally I was convinced she was right and agreed to the cut. But, I'm still not absolutely sure she was right. . . it was a hell of a scene.

"A good editor makes you a better writer. I don't have much patience with writers who feel that their words are sacred and not a letter can be changed; I think that usually indicates a massive insecurity. My years in the theater working with directors, especially in New York, gave me a respect for the process of collaboration, for working with other artists, and prepared me for working with editors.

"There are a few people to whom I like to give finished drafts from time to time, in order to get some feedback. My wife, Loretta, is a perceptive reader and gives wonderful advice. For years I've shown work to Norman McMillan, a long-time colleague, and to Sandra Conroy, once my student, and now a life-long friend and author of an extraordinary novel called *Making Waves In Zion*. I want my novel to be the best it can possibly be, and if there is a very talented and sensitive someone out there who can help bring that about, I welcome their input.

"I wish I could get Elizabeth to edit my short stories before they get sent around, but I couldn't afford her! But there is a residual effect: I have

been working on some short stories, and I tend to write in the present tense. When you write in that tense it's quite easy to slip into a passive voice, and when I do I can hear Elizabeth's voice, even imagine her marks on the manuscript, suggesting strongly that I change from passive to active voice. It's as though she really is editing my short stories, even though she doesn't see them until I send her copies of the journals or magazines they wind up in.

"In regard to agents and editors who advertise, looking for writers, claiming to get a writer's book publishable, I would suggest the writer be wary. There are reputable free-lance editors— 'book doctors'—and legitimate agents will sometimes suggest one before sending a book around. They work for a fee and are quite expensive. To try to find one on your own could result in your being badly ripped off. Anyway, if you place a book with a publishing house, you will have no choice but to work with the editor they provide, likely the editor who acquired the novel in the first place. There are great ones and poor ones, and there's not a whole lot us writers can do about that fact. Good luck!"

THE EDITOR: ELIZABETH WOODMAN

"My background in a nutshell: I've been a magazine and book editor for nearly 25 years. In 1986, I was co-founder of Ventana Press, an independent publisher specializing in technology and design books. I served as editorial director until 1996. Since then, I have worked as a freelance editor for various publishers and web sites. Most recently, I've edited two of Bill Cobb's novels for Crane Hill Books, based in Birmingham.

Photo by Bill Cobb

Editor Elizabeth Woodman

"An editor at times serves as catalyst and sounding board. I also think of the editor as advocate: the writer's advocate, the reader's advocate, the publisher's advocate. At Crane Hill, where Bill now publishes, this advocacy isn't necessary. Bill has a publisher and staff one hundred percent behind him and his works. With larger houses, the editor is the writer's insider, the link between writer and publisher, sales force, production, marketing. As the author's advocate, the editor has enormous responsibility for giving the book its best shot at succeeding in the marketplace. As reader's advocate, the editor provides that all-important outside reading, highlighting and cheering on, but occasionally waving red flags when a manuscript thins or strays. At best, the writer-editor relationship is a partnership, more collaborative than singular, a two-person democracy that strives for balance, fairness. I'm not suggesting that writing is a team sport. The editing process, the final stages of preparing a manuscript for publication, thrives on team effort between writer and editor, and editor and other facets of publishing (publicity, sales, production).

"Bill Cobb is a pro, an editor's dream. His books are fresh and engaging, his stories never fail to surprise. He notes and appreciates positive feedback, and listens carefully to critiques and suggestions. I think of my work with Bill as a long conversation, a running dialogue all through the editing process, sometimes spoken, sometimes annotated on post-its, sometimes scribbled in pencil in the margins, occasionally e-mailed. This relationship is very constructive, open, respectful. Sometimes the writer/editor relationship demands more delicacy, more trial and error in trying to achieve that equilibrium so necessary to the editing process. It can be difficult for writers, particularly new writers, to regard the editor as ally. Some initially view it as inherently invasive, a "trip to the dentist" for a creative endeavor in which they've invested heart, soul, and countless hours, days, months. Most of the time, even the reluctant authors become converts, learn the value of the back-and-forth, the testing of ideas, the catalytic episodes that make a good book even better.

"It can be tricky though. Occasionally, regardless of writer's and editor's efforts, regardless of attempts to show Houdini-like flexibility or Zen-like accommodation, the relationship feels more like dentistry without numbing agents. I'm feeling a little sensitive these days about the author/editor relationship from hell. "Kudzu" cartoonist Doug Marlette, publishing his first novel soon, ran a strip last week in which Reverend Will B. Dunn, standing in front of a casket, solemnly says to the congregation, 'Here lies an editor. . . .' In the next frame, with a huge grin spread across his face, he says, '. . . as usual.' I immediately felt defensive, even though I'm not his editor. Then I thought about one or two, possibly three, authors I worked with over the years who might have at one time or another fantasized about delivering a similar eulogy for me.

"Rare (I hope) but potent, the editing experience from hell is painful all the way around. Those breakdowns can have a silver lining, can be turned into an involuntary refresher course on negotiation and accommodation. There's hardly an editor (I'm no exception) or writer (except Bill Cobb) who can't occasionally benefit from reassessing and thereby strengthening the editorial partnership, ensuring that Will B. Dunn will be retired from the editor-bashing eulogy business.

"Among other things, the editor brings a reader's perspective to the writer. We're the fresh eyes, the ones who get to cheer and applaud in the margins, to suggest and coax when the flow of a narrative hits a logjam.

"My most difficult task? I hate to deliver bad news. Who doesn't? But when you're dealing with literature, with a work of art someone has poured their heart and soul and imagination into, it feels particularly difficult to reject a work or to surprise someone with an honest, but broad critique of his/her work.

"In my experience, most writers deal with it well, suffer the blow or the realization that the book they considered finished needs extensive revision. The greatest reward is delivering great news, reading through a manuscript for the first time and your mind chants, *Yes! Yes! Yes!* As rewarding as discovering a polished gem right out of the FedEx box is recognizing the diamond in the rough. Through the cutting and polishing of editorial work, writer and editor transform the manuscript into a jewel. The greatest of the great rewards for me as an editor is touching any part of any work that is a joy to read.

"My advice for a writer starting out? The advice for the writer starting out is exactly the advice I'd offer a new editor. To the writer: Respect your editor. Listen. To the editor: Respect your writer. Listen. The parallels of the relationship reveal a lot about the dynamics that make it work."

Art "Essential to the Fabric of a Region"

ASCA Fellowship Awards

The 2000-2001 Alabama State Council on the Arts Fellowships in Literature were awarded to poet Carol Pierman and fiction writer Jim Hilgartner. These awards recognize that "at the core of the mission of the Alabama State Council on the Arts are the artists," according to literature programs manager Randy Shoults. "The success of all artistic endeavor lives and dies with the individual artist. We are thankful that we can provide support to Alabama artists of the highest quality."

The awards include $5000 stipends that enable recipients to set aside time to create, purchase equipment, improve their skills, or otherwise enhance their artistic career. Pierman notes that ASCA's support is both financial and moral. And it means that an artist's work is valued as "being essential to the fabric of a region." In the following profiles, Pierman and Hilgartner talk about their work and their fellowships.

CAROL PIERMAN

Photo courtesy of University of Alabama University Relations

Poet Carol Pierman

Carol Pierman taught at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and Bowling Green State University before coming to the University of Alabama, where she is chair of the Women's Studies Department. Her books include *The Age of Krypton* (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1989), *The Naturalized Citizen* (New Rivers Press, 1981), a chapbook entitled *Passage* (Madeira Press, 1977), and two works in progress: *Sweet Franchise* and *Returning Light,* a chapbook. Her work has appeared in *South Dakota Review, River Styx, Black Warrior Review, The Chicago Review,* and *Painted Bride Quarterly,* among many other journals and anthologies.

What led you to apply for the ASCA Fellowship?

I applied because, as a former arts administrator of a literary grants organization (years ago in New York City) and former recipient of an artist's fellowship (in the 1980s when I was living in Illinois), I know what a tremendous boon a direct fellowship is to an artist. Those of us who write, or compose, or paint, work almost exclusively in isolation. Even when we are in a community—of artists, or in a university setting—we do our work alone, in the studio or study. This work is essentially non-commercial, so the recognition and support we receive is often slow in coming and sparse. An artist's fellowship is not only a financial boost, but, even more importantly, it is a boost to one's morale—it is a signal that the state and its citizens value art as being essential to the fabric of a region, to its quality of life.

From a personal standpoint, whenever I receive this kind of recognition, it encourages me to go on, to re-dedicate myself to my writing, to fulfill the purpose of the Fellowship.

What will the fellowship mean for you?

The fellowship will enable me to focus on my writing to an even greater degree than I would have been able to before. To use a truly trite expression, the fellowship support is "empowering."

What are your current projects?

Right now, I am working on three burners—a collection of poems (a book-length manuscript) and a selection of related poems that I hope will be published as a chapbook. In addition, I am working on a book about the players of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (popularly known as a League of Their Own, as per Penny Marshall's film). These women are now in their seventies and eighties, and I'm trying to get their real story down before they pass away. Interestingly, the president of their ongoing Players Association, Delores (Dolly) Brumfield White, is a native of Mobile and a graduate of Montevallo (when it was Alabama College, I believe). I was fortunate to be able to spend some time with her when she returned for her recent college reunion; she currently lives in Arkansas. Hers is a story with Alabama roots, and I want to tell it before her time passes.

My grant is for poetry, not prose, but working on several pieces at once can energize all of the above, because there are no down-times or struggles with writer's block to worry about. For instance, if I reach a crossroads in one piece, I can move immediately to another until I have worked through the transition and can return to the original. It's like plugging in a battery, recharging it.

Do your academic and writing interests intersect?

I teach about women and work. I have been especially interested in women in the sports arena as a workplace. It is wonderful to be in Alabama doing this work, because there is nothing more celebrated [in this state] than football. And yet, it has been fascinating to watch the rise of some women's sports after Title IX. I see the sports arena as being related to other arenas where women are going to work—but where gender is sometimes highlighted. But regardless of that, on the level of enjoyment or entertainment alone, I find it very relaxing. I just happened to cross this topic [of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League] one year when I attended the annual Cooperstown conference on American culture and baseball, and discovered these women are still out there. I want to get a book out on them before they all pass away.

How do you balance these projects?

Actually, my career has taken some unusual twists, because I started out in creative writing, and have been in arts administration too. I guess I found my way over toward an academic department via some of the editing and arts administration I'd done. I was an editor at the Big River Association in St. Louis, and worked on the magazine *River Styx*. It is a standard kind of literary magazine, but it features a pretty representative range of voices.

So I straddle the academic via women's studies and via creative writing, but it is hard. I am always getting my momentum interrupted (especially by having to go to so many meetings)! I really needed the boost of the award to redirect my energies. I am always in sort of mortal combat to get my time straight, to find time. The award reaffirms to me what is important.

This poem by ASCA Fellowship winner Carol Pierman is scheduled to appear in Line Drives*, edited by Broke Horvath and Tim Wiles, to be published by Southern Illinois University Press in 2002.*

Sweet

One lunar eclipse in seven years
and it's raining so we can't see it.
But there's a perfect picture on TV,

over St. Louis, where the Cardinals
play like geniuses against the Braves.
Oh, St. Louis, murmurs Ernie Johnson,

what a sweet franchise. We're in bed,
in Alabama, but I still get
that sliding sensation—planets

riding on the black hip of universe,
the deep shadow of pure night rising
over the pleated lip of Busch Stadium,

and the words *sweet franchise* move
forever outward, like all radio waves,
toward the unreasonable dawn of time—

making chaos sweet, summer endless,
the blue turf fast and true. The ball
coming off the bat makes the most reassuring

sound in the world: the crack of time
straining against the seams,
pouring out toward the warning track.

You're in the outfield now,
dancing under the ball, moonbathing,
the shadow of something—surprise,

a faint smile—crossing over your face.
I can see you now, just counting on
coming back to earth.

With regard to crossing genres and exploring diverse subject matter (like sports): I had to work hard to give myself "permission" to write about anything I wanted. After years in the academy, especially, I had to undo some of the process of what becoming a writer is all about (distinguishing between genres and disciplines, high and "low" art forms, learning forms and formalities). I began to ask myself: in what lifetime would I get these ideas down if I didn't write them now?

I began to feel there was going to be no second chance—so, even though these are perhaps unconventional topics or approaches, I got on with it. I am grateful for the Fellowship for its help in getting on. The Council provides invaluable support for raising the visibility of art and artists in the state; it helps us stay connected.

JIM HILGARTNER

Photo by Patrick Perkins

Writer Jim Hilgartner

Jim Hilgartner came to Alabama in 1994 to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing. At the University of Alabama, he was awarded a Graduate Council Fellowship, and twice received the Alumni Fiction Award. Hilgartner's work has been published in *ACM: Another Chicago Magazine, The Worcester Review, Buffalo Spree Magazine, the Greensboro Review,* and by Stillwater Press. He finished his degree in 1998.

What does the fellowship mean for you?

When I finished my degree, I kept teaching at the University part-time, as an adjunct professor, and I began doing freelance copyediting and proofreading for the University of Alabama Press. All this, you know, to support my writing. I've been teaching for 15 or so years, and I love it, but it's nice to be able to take time off once in a while. I figured the grant might give me a chance, you know, to devote more concentrated time to my novel and to recharge my teaching batteries.

But I couldn't give up teaching altogether. This year, I set up some community-based creative writing classes, using the coffee area at the Book Cellar, an independent bookstore in Northport. It's been fun, and interesting. I've had a real range of students: retired men and women, a guy who manages a drugstore, some university people, a number of school teachers, a couple of nurses, even a high school student. Pretty big spectrum, a great age range. They've tended to work well together, though, and they tell me they've learned a lot. But, then, so have I.

Of course, the big point of the year is to spend a lot of time working on the novel. The grant has been a wonderful opportunity—it's made the writing a lot easier to manage. My objective is to finish the first draft over the grant period. There's a real process of discovery in writing a draft—I don't always know exactly where the work is headed. But I'll have a solid sense of that by the end of this year. Then I'll go back to academic teaching and work on revision.

Are you talking about your novel?

The novel is hard to talk about. I'm naturally reticent about my work anyway, and, too, because it's a work in progress, I'm not always very coherent. Or perhaps I'm just being evasive. But I will tell you, the novel's not real dissimilar from my stories, which are, for the most part, realist in nature, and very attentive to the influence of setting on the narrative development. My stories are mostly set in New England, especially Vermont, which, when I lived there, really got under my skin. I try pretty much to write about regular people, and to treat them with respect. My stock line is to say I write about when bad things happen to good people. That's where it starts.

Writing a novel is different from writing short stories.

The beautiful thing about the novel is that every day I know what story I'm working on. I think it was Truman Capote who said that when you send off a short story to be published it's like taking a child out in a field and shooting it. Certainly in my own experience, I find I go from not knowing anything to knowing an entire story. And then, when I finish that story, I know nothing again; I have to start again from scratch. With the novel it's probably the same process, but it's over a longer period.

You're a student of martial arts. Does this have a connection to your writing?

I'm a second-degree black belt in Bujinkan budo taijutsu, a very old, very traditional Japanese combat art. And sure, the discipline and the sort of "commit-or-die" attitude that training demands pertain to writing as well. If you don't throw yourself into the writing, then you can't make it work. And Bujinkan training requires a high degree of relaxation; it basically doesn't work if you're tense. So if you think about it, when I'm not writing, I'm training in relaxing. And if relaxation and writing don't go together, I don't know what does. Surely my training has made writing, if not easier, then at least more rewarding, but probably easier too. And maybe I should mention that my teacher, Shidoshi Robert Geyer, a fifth-degree black belt, came to Tuscaloosa to get an MFA in Creative Writing.

Who were your writing teachers at Alabama?

I studied with Tom Rabbitt, who helped me tremendously on my thesis, "The Bravery of Muskrats," a collection of short stories, about half of which are now published. Tom's approach to directing the thesis was impeccable and very helpful to me, and I owe him a great debt of gratitude. I took fiction workshops with Sandy Huss, Lex Williford, and Michael Martone, and with John Keeble, when he was visiting here, and I studied screenwriting with George Wolfe. Fantastic training, basically. I can't begin to say how much I learned at Alabama or how great a difference it has made.

Do you have plans beyond the novel?

I am actually working a bit on another collection, more experimental stuff. I'm calling it *Visual Arts*; the stories explore various artistic media and the way narrative happens (or doesn't happen) within those forms. It is mostly not written, but when I get stuck on the novel, that's what I turn to. And I do get stuck on the novel, sometimes. That's just part of the process, probably indispensable. What people like to call writer's block is just a period when it's hard to write because your brain is working something over; it's an incubation or gestation period. The best thing you can do, if you are stuck on one thing, is to relax and get to work on another. Hey, guess what? You're not blocked on everything. You just have to trust the process and go with it.

Self-Defense

Jim Hilgartner provided to First Draft *this previously unpublished short story.*

Mike was walking along the roof peak in sunlight when his foot went out from under him. Then he was down, sliding faster, scrabbling at the slate tiles with his fingers. He couldn't stop.

He grabbed an iron pipe at the edge of the roof as he slid over. It sagged a bit, taking his weight, then stopped him with a jolt that slapped his hammer against his thigh and snapped his teeth together. A tile exploded against the pavement of the alley below him, but he knew better than to look down. He looked up instead, at the rust-flecked pipe with its flaking black paint and his two hands locked so tight to the metal they seemed to be welded on.

Soon he heard voices. Bobby, the crew boss, in the air above him, shouted, "Call an ambulance. Mike fell off the roof." Eric, down below, yelled, "He's still up there. Do something. Hurry."

Mike put the voices out of his mind. They couldn't help him. He relaxed his neck and stared straight into the brickwork. He breathed in through his nose, out through his mouth. He was back at the kung fu school and he could hear Sifu's voice talking a class through the horse-stance exercise: "Relax. Breathe. Focus your will."

In the punching exercise, Sifu always told them, "Keep your fists so tight your forearms burn," and during meditation he said, "The only thing between you and your goal is the noise in your mind."

Mike stared at the brick wall and thought of nothing.

He became aware of a fire-siren rolling nearer, the sound of an air horn and then a diesel rumbling in the alley below. A voice he didn't recognize told him, "Hold on, Mike. You're going to be okay. We're going to get you down."

Mike tasted salt on his lips. He wanted to reassure the firemen, to let them know he was all right, but he didn't want to interrupt the flow of his breathing.

He heard the whir of an electric motor, but he didn't look down. A moment later, he heard a new voice, a woman's. She seemed to be standing next to him. "It's okay, Mike. I'm a firefighter. I'm in the snorkel, right under you. You can let go now."

"No." Mike was careful not to look. "I can hang on."

The woman spoke again, but not to Mike. "Give me a couple more feet."

Mike heard the electric whir again, and the woman firefighter said, "I've got you." He felt her arms go around his waist.

"Don't do that," Mike whispered. "Please. I don't think this pipe will hold both of us."

Voices from "Writing Our Stories"

BEAUTY AND ELEGANCE AT CHALKVILLE

BY PRISCILLA HANCOCK COOPER

Recently, I heard Bill Strickland speak at the Alabama Museum Association's annual meeting in Gadsden. For the past thirty years, Mr. Strickland has used his love of ceramics to transform the lives of unemployed steel workers, welfare mothers, and low-income students of all racial backgrounds in a depressed neighborhood in Pittsburgh. With eloquence and passion, he tells the story of how a small arts program for troubled teenagers that stated in his inner-city townhouse has grown into a multi-million dollar training enterprise called the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild. His current facility boasts grand architecture, original artwork, hand-crafted furniture, state-of-the-art technology, fresh flowers, and gourmet eating facilities. However, these are simply the outward manifestations of Bill Strickland's basic guiding principle and fundamental belief that all human beings long for and deserve elegance and beauty in their lives.

The day after I attended Mr. Strickland's presentation, I met with a group of graduate students in the Book Arts program at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. They are using selected works by Chalkville's writing students to create a hand-crafted book this spring. Before I arrived, they were engaged in deep discussion about the seeming contradictions between the traditional "elitism" of the fine paper and printing associated with the book as art, and the harsh realism reflected in the lives and work of these incarcerated young women. They sincerely did not want to participate in a project that was condescending, exploitative, or offensive.

Bill Strickland's message reverberated in my mind. I reassured them that there is nothing contradictory, exploitative, or offensive in presenting my students' work with the beauty, care, and precision that is characteristic of book art. In doing this project, they are saying to "my girls," who have been so often devalued and undervalued by themselves and others, that their work is worthy of being crafted into a piece of fine art.

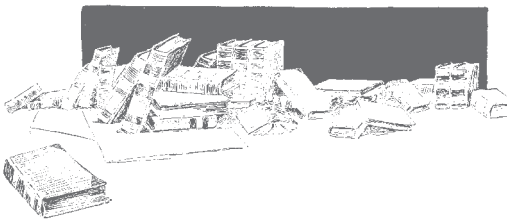
This captures the essence of my feelings about the "Writing Our Stories" project at the Alabama Department of Youth Services Chalkville Campus. Now in my third year of teaching there, I have worked with almost a hundred teen-aged girls from across the state. They are told that this facility is the "last stop" before they end up at Tutwiler Women's Prison. Violence, drug use, and sexual abuse have been all too common in their young lives. Armed with their own unique observations and insights, they shape their words to create poems, stories, and essays that are horrific and humorous, painful and poignant, cruel and courageous, fatalistic and hopeful.

Before I heard Bill Strickland, I primarily though of the writing class as providing the students with a tool of empowerment. I hoped that they would become converts to the power of the written word, anchored in the belief that the pen is mightier than the sword, or at least preferable to a raised fist or a fired gun. I know that the class has helped them to learn what they have to share is important. By writing and re-writing, they have learned discipline and tenacity, as well as better ways to express their thoughts. The publication of their work affirms that other people value what they have to say.

With my focus on improved writing skills, effective therapy, and enhanced self-esteem, I lost sight of one of the most important outcomes of the class. Even as my students write about things that are ugly and brutal, creative writing allows them to share those thoughts with beauty and elegance. I had almost forgotten that one of the benefits of this writing class is that it opens doors to other worlds. Writing allows them to use their own environments and experiences to transport them to new places, broadening both their internal and external horizons.

Being a teaching writer for the Chalkville students has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my personal and professional life. No matter what my mood when I get to the campus, or what challenges may await me that day, I feel better for having been there. Through their writing, these students bring both beauty and elegance into my life.

Priscilla Hancock Cooper is a writer, dramatist, and arts educator who believes in the power of the written and spoken word to inform, empower, enrich, and transform lives. The holder of a Master of Arts degree from The American University in Washington, D.C., she currently provides leadership to The Nia Institute in Birmingham and serves as interim director of the Sixteenth Street Foundation.



REVIEWS

The Year of Jubilo: A Novel of the Civil War

by Howard Bahr
Henry Holt and Company, 2000
376 pages. Cloth, $25

The subtitle of Howard Bahr's second novel announces straightforwardly what his subject is. The main title, however, must be taken as a piece of irony. The first year after the official close of the war is anything but joyous in the Cumberland, Mississippi, that Bahr creates. When the novel's main character, Gawain Harper, returns home from the war, he finds terrible poverty, an occupying federal force, but, even worse, the megalomaniacal "King" Solomon Gault and a murderous set of unreconstructed rebels who intend to keep the war alive. In addition, the girl Gawain left behind, the petulant Morgan Rhea, is not exactly waiting for him with open arms. Bahr skillfully tells this complicated story, not in a seamless narrative, but in jerks and starts appropriate to the chaos he is describing, and along the way he introduces us to an intriguing gallery of characters, some of whom reside on the fringe of the mundane world.

Readers encountering a main character named Gawain, a faithful family retainer named Priam, and a dog named Beowulf will suspect immediately they are entering a world of epic and romance, and a feel for these genres does indeed permeate the book. For example, he chooses to write a return narrative, like the classical *nostoi*, or the return home of heroes from the Trojan War. He also invests nature with extreme sympathetic powers, even giving animals, as Homer did, powers of human observation. For Bahr, natural phenomena repeatedly become objective correlatives for human experience, much as they did, say, for the Gawain poet. In addition, Bahr examines great epic themes such as honor and courage, even going so far as to have a character say to Gawain that "immortal myths will be fashioned about you, and great epics will be wrought." I do not mean to suggest that all of these romantic motifs are intrusive in the book. On the contrary, Bahr more skillfully integrates them into his narrative than any living writer I can think of.

The influence of Faulkner on Howard Bahr, so often mentioned, is certainly to be found in *The Year of Jubilo*. Just as the reader is constantly struck with Faulkner's unabashed love affair with the language, so it is with Bahr. In such an unromantic era as ours, Bahr has the courage to write such a hauntingly beautiful passage as this:

The wisteria was heavy with pendulous blooms; their odor was sweet, so strong it was almost visible, and bees swarmed among them. A pool, encumbered with vines, reflected the brightness of the sky like a sheet of glass; from its shadows, now and then, ancient goldfish rose to gasp at the air, then sink again, their bronze backs glinting for an instant in the sunlight.

Such lyrical passages are common in the book, and we can imagine the joy Bahr took in finding their rhythms.

In *The Year of Jubilo,* Howard Bahr tells a universal story, and he tells it well. He shows us a young Gawain returning home, believing "he would find it magically unchanged, the same people walking around the streets, the ground ready for the plow, mail waiting for him at the post office," but Bahr also tells us that "the scope of his delusion struck him like a physical blow." I think the thing that keeps us reading romances such as *The Year of Jubilo* and re-reading works like the *nostoi* of the ancient Greeks is that we too share in some small way the illusions and delusions of the heroes of those pieces. If we live long enough, we also experience the disillusionment that so often follows. In *The Year of Jubilo*, Howard Bahr has given us another excellent installment of a myth all human beings share.

Norman McMillan is former president of the Alabama Writers' Forum.

Domestic Work

by Natasha Trethewey
Graywolf Press, 2000
58 pp. Paper, $12.95

Once, in response to a question about how he might place himself in a poetic tradition, Robert Hayden described his style as that of a "romantic realist"—a category that I think reflects the imaginative freedoms and responsibilities that any poet who's interested in history must face. Hayden's work provides many consummate examples of how this tension can produce great art. Natasha Trethewey's *Domestic Work* reveals a poet who, like Hayden, is interested in the dual challenge of documenting life as it is lived, while, at the same time, imaginatively freeing her subjects from the dreariness that marks much of their working lives. Trethewey reaches deep into her family's history (all the way back to 1901) and, in doing so, illuminates much about twentieth-century America over the course of this accomplished first book.

Like Rita Dove (who selected *Domestic Work* for the inaugural 1999 Cave Canem Poetry Prize), Trethewey has a finely tuned ear for the spoken idioms of mid-century Black America, and a sharp eye for its details—the beauty shops, social clubs, family parlors, and vacation spots of her native Mississippi coast and New Orleans are made vivid and immediate in poems like "Naola Beauty Academy,

New Orleans, 1945", "At the Owl Club, North Gulfport, MS, 1950" and "History Lesson," set on a recently desegregated Mississippi beach in 1970, where, Trethewey writes, "The sun cuts/ the rippling Gulf in flashes with each /tidal rush. Minnows dart at my feet/ glinting like switchblades."

Whether depicting individuals at work or at play, Trethewey maintains a tight focus on the key images and gestures that communicate a great deal about character—about the dignity and discipline it took to survive, and then prosper, during difficult times. As is the case with Theodore Roethke, Trethewey remains always open to the sudden and poignant lessons one's own family history can teach, often years after a particular incident. "Amateur Fighter," a poem for Trethewey's father, offers an example of this sensitivity in lines like:

> . . . Perhaps he learned
> just to box a stepfather, then turned
> that anger into a prize at the Halifax gym.
>
> Later, in New Orleans, there were the books
> he couldn't stop reading. A scholar, his eyes
> weakening. Fighting, then, a way to live
>
> dangerously. He'd leave his front tooth out
> for pictures so that I might understand
> living meant suffering, loss. Really living
>
> meant taking risks . . .

Natasha Trethewey, who is an Assistant Professor of English at Auburn University, recipient of the Grolier Poetry Prize, and a member of the Dark Room Collective, is a poet who, in *Domestic Work*, takes readers on a powerful personal journey through almost one hundred years of ancestry. It's well worth the trip.

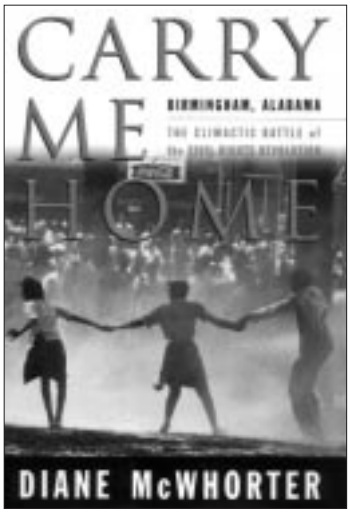
Jim Murphy is an assistant professor of English at the University of Montevallo. His poetry chapbook, The Memphis Sun*, was published in 2000 by Kent State University Press.*

Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama—The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution

by Diane McWhorter
Simon & Schuster, 2001
700 pages. Cloth, $35

Carry Me Home will likely be one of the most widely read and hotly discussed books of the year. The scholarship is meticulous, the story-telling is fascinating, and the actual events portrayed are so monumental that they deserve everyone's careful attention.

Even the most avid civil rights history buff will find revelations in *Carry Me Home*. Author Diane McWhorter, a journalist who has written for the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, grew up in Birmingham and was a member of a prominent country club family. The author's hometown became a crucial battleground in the struggle for equality, and McWhorter looks back almost thirty years later to assess the city's role.



She offers strong evidence that Martin Luther King was not the sole or even the most active leader of the Movement. McWhorter acknowledges that he was certainly the most articulate, but she also recounts his repeated reluctance to participate in, and his early departure from, some of the events for which he was later credited. Many forgotten and deserving civil rights figures step forward. Fred Shuttlesworth, the firebrand Birmingham preacher, emerges as the common sense, we-have-to-keep-going leader. Activist Jim Bevel mobilizes the 1963 jail-filling children's march that effectively propels the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Carry Me Home is also the story of the segregationists. We follow the wealthy white Debardeleben family from their early union-busting days under patriarch Henry, through their support of Hitler's fascism, and down through the generations to Margaret Debardeleben Tutwiler, a high ranking woman in the Reagan and the first Bush administrations, eventually becoming spokesperson for the State Department. We venture inside Klan meetings and through the tangled web of police and FBI collusion in Klan activities.

McWhorter's original motivation was to determine whether her complex, difficult father had participated in the bombings that earned Birmingham the nickname "Bombingham." Throughout the narrative, she intersperses snapshots of her personal life. She tells of attending the Birmingham premiere of *To Kill a Mockingbird* with her classmates, including Mary Badham, who played Scout in the movie. She writes of "the racial guilt we [privileged white girls] shared in rooting for a Negro man."

McWhorter draws on almost twenty years of research to make the reader a participant in both segregationist and Movement activities, using actual, almost verbatim recounts by the original participants. Sixty-nine pages of "Notes" give the sources of McWhorter's narrative and include hundreds of documented interviews. McWhorter also read thousands of historical public and private documents. In 1982, her early research landed her on Governor George

Wallace's "sissybritches" enemies list.

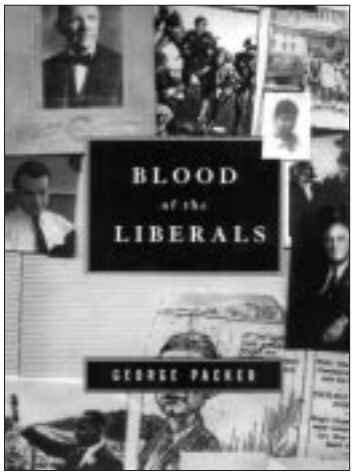
Carry Me Home is filled with small moments of revelation. For example, Alma Powell, the wife of Secretary of State Colin Powell, is the daughter of R. C. Johnson, former principal of Birmingham's Parker High School. Many of his students participated (without permission) in the children's marches, while he sat outside his home at night with a shotgun, determined to protect his daughter and new baby granddaughter while his son-in-law earned military recognition in Vietnam.

In *Carry Me Home* you will learn of the early communist-versus-fascist struggle beneath the racial battleground; you will find out which entertainers supported the civil rights movement; you will read about the sexual blackmail triangle among J. Edgar Hoover, the Kennedys and Martin Luther King. Almost every page brings a new insight or shock about an era, a place, and a movement that changed our nation forever.

Mary Carol Moran is the author of Clear Soul: Metaphors and Meditations *(Court Street Press). This review first appeared in the March 2001 issue of* BookPage.

Blood of the Liberals

by George Packer
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000
405 pages. Cloth, $26



Good memoir lets you taste the times. Good history lets you know the people who lived those times. George Packer's *Blood of the Liberals* does both. He takes us along with three generations of his family through the past to the present of the American liberal tradition. We begin with his grandfather, George Huddleston, who "Born in the nineteenth century, dying in the twentieth, lived mentally in the eighteenth, the century of yeoman farmers and revolutionary democrats." Huddleston began his career in Birmingham as a lawyer, who nightly slept on the desk where he practiced law by day. He spoke for universal suffrage, unions, and the rights of the "Negro" at a time when these were not popular stands. He went on to represent Birmingham, Alabama, in Congress from 1915 to 1937. Ever for the disenfranchised and the individual, he later opposed the New Deal because it diminished the individual and made government our caretaker.

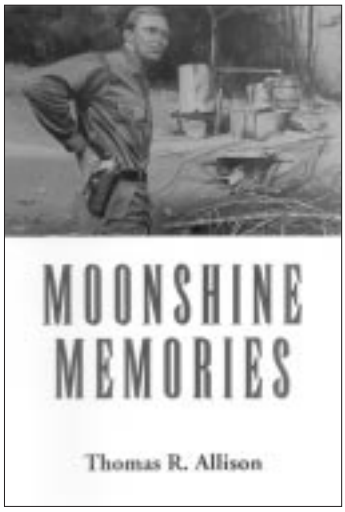
Packer's father, Herbert Packer, was a sixties-era liberal, a professor of law and a dean at Stanford. A casualty of the times, he left the stress of Stanford for calmer seas, suffered a stroke and three years later in 1972 took his own life. George Packer was twelve.

George Packer, coming from two often-conflicting ideals, his father's and his grandfather's, struggles to find his definition of the progressive, the liberal today. His journey is engrossing; his assumptions are persuasive; but the questions are, "What do I take away with me." Packer states, "at ground level, my own life and times look like a random mess. What holds it all together? What are the larger themes? What if the great causes lie in the past? I wonder most, "What is the place of politics in the lives of 'We the People'?"

Perle Champion, born in San Antonio, Texas, lives in Birmingham's colorful Southside, and works as a freelance writer.

Moonshine Memories

by Thomas R. Allison
NewSouth Books, January 2001
392 pages. Cloth, $45



The chapters of Thomas Allison's *Moonshine Memories* are stories strung together in the rambling oral tradition of a southern "good ole boy." Arriving at his office in Anniston, Alabama, in 1955, he found a note on the locked door reading, "New man, go downstairs to the concession stand and tell Bob to let you in."

In the office another note read, "New man, have on green clothes and running boots, will pick you up in front of Post Office at 3:00 a.m."

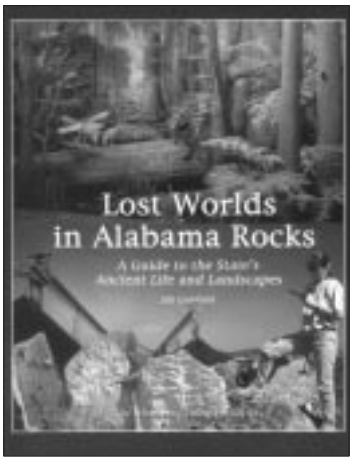
Thus the new man, Allison, began his career as a U.S. revenue agent.

The book is full of real life characters and adventures as remembered by Allison: he tells of moonshiners and revenuers, late night vigils and midnight chases through dark woods and swift rivers. He reminisces, "I always enjoyed telling about the time I ran a moonshiner from an Alabama still all the way into Georgia before I caught him." From the big stills in St. Clair County and Cleburne to the small stills in Clay and Talladega and undercover work in Atlanta, this story is in the people as Allison remembers them.

He remembers that 1958 Autauga County sheriff, George Grant,

had once been a ball player who struck out Babe Ruth, but he doesn't remember if he played for the Tigers or the Cardinals. What comes through in this personal history is a picture of a man who did his job and enjoyed it, lives his life and enjoys it, and wants to share it with others. Most of us are, after all, our own historians.

—Perle Champion



Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks: A Guide to the State's Ancient Life and Landscapes
by Jim Lacefield
Alabama Geological Society, 2001
124 pages. Paper, $25

(*Editor's Note*: The following review, by Thomas and Cheryl Upchurch, owners of Capitol Book & News in Montgomery, originally appeared in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on January 21, 2001. This slightly edited version is reprinted with permission.)

One never knows, do one? Publishers spend millions of dollars to promote their books. They send salesmen to see us, they call us on the phone, they e-mail us, they fax us, they buy ads, they provide us with special displays for certain of their books, they send us free reading copies, and they send their authors on very expensive promotional tours. And in return they expect, and so do we, that all this money spent will help sell books. And sometimes it does.

Yet our biggest selling title so far this year comes from a publisher who spent, as far as we can tell, not one dime on promotion, at least not to the book trade. In fact, we practically had to beg them to sell us the book, and from our negotiations with them it became apparent that we were the only bookstore they had ever sold to. And we only knew about the book because of a small article that we read in the *Montgomery Advertiser*.

The book has a title that most major publishers would probably reject as "not commercial enough," but it seems to work okay with our customers. It's called *Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks: A Guide to the State's Ancient Life and Landscapes*. It's written by Jim Lacefield, and published by the Alabama Geological Society, and we can't put it down.

Laurentia? Laurasia?

You know how every once in a while we Alabamians complain that most of the Florida panhandle should really be part of Alabama? Well, that's nothing. It turns out that there's actually a good chunk of Argentina that used to be part of Alabama, only it broke away from us about 500 million years ago and drifted across the ocean to become a part of that South American country. That happened during the Cambrian Period, when we were part of the continent known as Laurentia, which was located in the southern hemisphere, so we had to do some drifting of our own to get where we are now.

Two hundred million years later we had changed continents again, and were now part of Laurasia, and were about to be bumped into the northern hemisphere following our collision with yet another continent, Godwana. Another hundred million years or so after that we arrived in our present location, and the Gulf of Mexico was formed, as was the oil and gas that Exxon is now found to have stolen from us. Another hundred million years later, coal was formed in Alabama. Sixty million years after that, the Ice Age arrived, and then, two million years later, which was only about 10,000 years ago, the Alabama geology, biology, and climate became about what they are today.

Pretty dry stuff, right? Maybe so, maybe no. This little book illustrates all of these changes with fascinating little maps and photographs, all in full color, from familiar spots all around the state. There's a picture of a stretch of I-65 near Cullman, a road Thomas traveled many times going to and from school in Nashville, and it turns out the exposed wall of the mountain they blasted away reveals about 300 million years of Alabama geological history. And from highway 280 near Alexander City we see a granite pluton, formed 500 million years ago. And the Wetumpka astrobleme (where the asteroid hit). And a spot in Tuscaloosa County that reveals the 200 million year gap in Alabama's geological history. Two hundred million years we can't account for! And we learn why there are canyons in north Alabama, and why our rivers are where they are, and why Emelle is the best place in Alabama to dump garbage. And how Alabama geology determines Alabama biology. And how Dothan came to sit on a chunk of rock that used to be in Africa.

We do know that this book is not going to be everybody's cup of tea. But it is one of those amazing, wonderful, delightful little surprises that still happen from time to time in this business, and you should know about it.

Clear Soul: Metaphors and Meditations
by Mary Carol Moran
Court Street Press, 2001
117 pages. Paper, $9.95

"To see humor and wisdom in the smallest things" is Mary Carol Moran's stated aim in this small but powerful volume. She more than succeeds in these perceptive and witty bits of insight. For example this poem entitled "Orange:" "Sweet/ with pits" or this one,

"Gnat": "My mind is as simple and/elegant as a gnat's."

Some poems are light as a feather. Others reach deep and touch hidden places that make us shiver, as in "Pirate": "Plow my fields with your fingers. . . " or "Vigilant": ". . . Menace my cub, and/ I will kill you."

This is poetry stripped to its essentials: vivid imagery and gut feelings. Consider "Healing," for example: "Raw/ as new skin/ beneath a blister." The title poem, "Ocean," sums it up: "I am empty/ and vast as an ocean of stars,/ a clear soul." Read and enjoy.

Alabama Poet Laureate Emeritus Helen F. Blackshear is the author of many books, including Alabama Album: Collected Poems.

Fair Haven

by Vivian Shipley
Negative Capability Press, 2000
72 pp. Paper, $15.95

The author of this collection of poems has ties to Alabama, having won the Marjorie Lees Linn Award presented by editor John Chambers of *Elk River Review*, and because this is the second of her books to be published by Sue Walker of Mobile. Shipley is a transplanted Appalachian, a professor of English at Southern Connecticut State University, and editor of *The Connecticut Review*.

In *Fair Haven*, her fifth collection in four years, we see that she is a master of the long prose poem; however, this collection contains a number of free verse poems as well, several of which are brief and highly lyrical. In addition we find another of Shipley's fortes, poems that are based on detailed and careful research. If there is an inherent danger in "researched poems," it is only that poems of this nature can lead, in less talented hands, to a prosaic presentation and to the very real difficulty of keeping the forward movement of the narration.

Examples of what one might call "researched poems" include several about Sylvia Plath's life, death, and the tragic causes and effects surrounding her suicide. Although Shipley pillories Ted Hughes, the husband of Sylvia Plath, the powerful evidence brought out by Shipley lets us know that she has made her judgments based on sound facts. What could have seemed like minutia becomes a fascinating close-up look at the lives of these poets and a sense of justifiable outrage at the brutal treatment Plath received from Hughes both before and after her death.

Other poems are autobiographical, and these are some of the poet's strongest work. We learn of her background growing up in the coal-mining section of Kentucky, the difficulties involved in relocating her aged parents to Connecticut, the painful struggle of caring for her father during his terminal illness and in learning to accept her parents' lives and sometimes failures. The book is dedicated to her parents.

Other poems deal with her near death from a brain tumor. She writes adeptly of the problems most of us encounter in bringing up children. These are problems that Shipley presents with poignancy and insight, drawing us in to share every nuance of what it means to see our children leave and face the world and to see our parents age. Shipley is particularly strong in the closure of her poems. Often her endings are a *tour de force*, resonant with broader implications, while tying together in harmony all the elements that may have seemed disparate until then. She does this in poem after poem. As an example, here is the ending line of a poem about the death of her father as she recalls her childhood upbringing and how her father went with her to the very spooky root cellar to retrieve fruit jars, "Spiders tied nets; my father went first to break the veil."

When she moves her parents to Connecticut, she digs up their peonies to transplant and ends the poem, ". . . I will save what/ I can of my mother, of my father from this earth/ from the dissolution that binds us all."

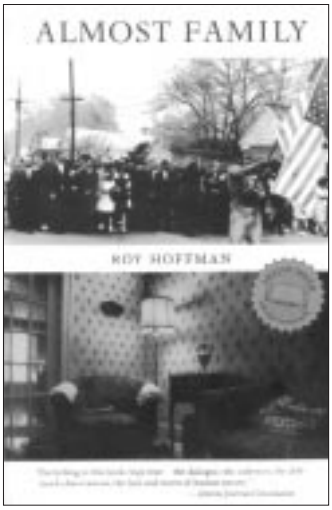
Shipley is a woman of high achievements. During the past few years, she has consistently won many of the most prestigious prizes for poetry that this country has to offer. *Fair Haven* is evidence of her accomplishments in her career, her daily life, and her art.

Sue Scalf is an adjunct teacher of creative writing. Her latest collection of poetry is South by Candlelight.

Almost Family

by Roy Hoffman
University of Alabama Press: A Deep South Book (Dial Press, 1983), 2000
248 pp. Paper, $15.95

Roy Hoffman, now writer-in-residence at the *Mobile Register*, set himself some ambitious goals in his Lillian Smith Award-winning *Almost Family*. He tells the story of two families, one white, one



black, in fictional Medoc, Alabama (obviously Mobile) from 1946 until 1975, a tumultuous time for race relations in Alabama and the United States in general.

The story begins with Nebraska Waters going to work as a domestic for the Gold family. She will work directly for Vivian Gold, and the two will raise their own children together and, in an admittedly unbalanced way, they will raise each other's as well. Nebraska and Vivian become close. "How close" is the question. To Vivian Gold, the Waterses are "almost family." Vivian is a woman with almost no prejudice, but is human, not a saint. Nebraska spends a lot more time in Viv's home raising little Golds than Vivian will ever spend in Nebraska's home. Nebraska will "know" the Golds, mother, father, and children, far better than the Golds will ever know the Waterses. What assumptions do whites make about these intimacies? Black writers occasionally remind white readers, in works such as *The Color Purple* and *We Wear the Mask*, of the finally unbridgeable gulf between the races in spite of a lot of goodwill.

In this novel, Hoffman has taken on two cultures, indeed two dialects. The Jewish culture he obviously knows well. The novel contains a bris, no less. But he does not idealize that culture. The Jews have their intramural squabbles just like anyone else. At the bris, some modern Jews are horrified and exclaim that a bris is pagan and the Orthodox Jews are descended from peasants. The rebuttal: "Goyim. The Reform Jews in Medoc are Goyim."

Hoffman treats his Jewish community with honesty as well as compassion. He is just as unsentimental about Nebraska's world. In the course of the novel, a Jewish housewife is raped by two black men, and we are told that Nebraska's husband, Abraham, is difficult, drinks rather too much, and works not often enough. Neither tribe is a tribe of saints, or stereotypes.

Although Hoffman knows both worlds, it seems to me, not surprisingly, that the glitches occur when he is describing the black world. Is it African-American expression, for instance, when Mary says, early in the story, to Nebraska, "You never worked a Jewish house, I take it?" I take it?

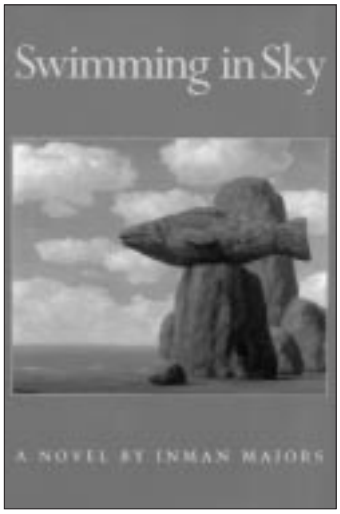
But Hoffman has hit on something valuable in constructing this tale of attempted biracial harmony. Who might better understand the feeling of prejudice and discrimination against blacks than a community of Jews? The most prestigious country club is closed to both, and slurs and epithets are never very far away.

Vivian and Nebraska move through the decades together. King is killed. The riots erupt. Wallace stands in the schoolhouse door. And finally Nebraska quits working for the Golds. She just doesn't want to go here anymore. Hoffman ends the novel with the two women apart, but the reader may sensibly hope that even if the employer/employee relationship is not restored, the friendship might be.

Don Noble is professor of English at the University of Alabama and host of APT's BookMark.

Swimming in Sky

by Inman Majors
SMU Press, 2000
241 pp. Cloth, $19.95.



The jacket bites all evoke the name of Holden Caulfield, so you know what you're in for—Southern style. In fact, this first novel by sixth-generation Tennessean Inman Majors, set in Knoxville/Anywhere, turns out to be more slacker-rap than Southern spiel: a reminder of modern cultural leveling. Majors' most enthusiastic readers no doubt will relate less to the Southern trimmings than to the suburban American main dish. And our Southern Holden Caulfield is grown up: "twenty-five-year-old unemployed grimace of urban cynicism," Jason Sayer, former significant dude losing his dudeness, alone and adrift at the misty frontier of youth. With his "completely useless liberal arts degree" gathering dust, a disillusioning trip to Australia just behind him, his old pals becoming strangers, and shadowed by the effects of a recent bad acid trip and other vague Furies, he is back in Knoxville and sleeping on the couch in the house his mother shares with her boyfriend. The narrative covers four months, May to August, in this twenty-something impasse—a movement from spring to the chilling scent of fall that gives the soliloquy its structure.

And all we have is the Voice (actually more reminiscent of Binx in Walker Percy's own debut novel *The Moviegoer* in 1961 than Holden) to escort us through this hazy summer. Fortunately, it is an engaging voice, adept at characterization and comic episode, and the monologue it spins, dropping references to Jethro Bodine and

Dolly Parton as easily as Milton to and Virgil, develops momentum, even suspense, as we wonder if the author will dare to arrive anywhere—suspecting he won't—and he doesn't. But out of honesty. We see the girl, Beth, who could have given the story its sit-com ending—but we know, just like Jason, she's going to marry some "terminally competent" square. What matters is, it's hard not to like Jason, not only for his honesty, his occasional tenderness, but also for his attentiveness. For all the drug and alcohol blur of the summer, he redeems his aimlessness by being observant—God knows there's time enough in middle age to miss everything—and the ending, where he'll be "moving on," a modern-day lighting out for the territories that is the only way to end the book, seems good enough, even if the territories ain't what they used to be. As Tom, his mom's boyfriend, dying of cancer, says: "You don't have to worry about this one . . . He'll figure it out."

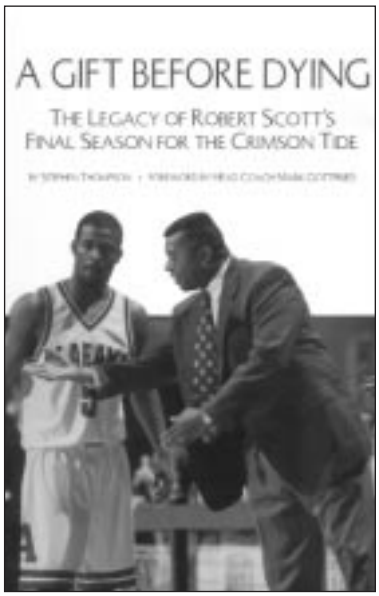
Wolfe said "you can't go home again," but, if it does nothing else, *Swimming in Sky* will remind you that you can't stay there either; the same forces operate in either case—and perhaps the greatest strength of this novel is Majors' psychological portrait of the young man who has outgrown his home town: the painful breakdown of college boy male bonding, the girls now women, less receptive, beginning to focus somewhere past you, rumors of weddings coming like alarms of war, the old places predictable, the bar scene stale, the growing realization that you aren't what you were and this place won't let you be anything else. Jason takes it out on "one horse" Knoxville. He looks at the Sunsphere from the 1982 World's Fair and sees "a golden golf ball on a tee, Knoxville's monument of height and progress, three hundred feet high and sunk in a ditch. Three hundred feet of hot damn we made over the mountain jubilation reduced to chinning the Holiday Inn on the hill, waiting patiently for some hillbilly giant to smack it into oblivion with a two iron."

Okay, it's frustrating. But for all the topical features of this "strip mall world," this "paved hell," for all the modern cynicism of "suburban orphan" Slackerdom where you see through all the refuges, the "half-ass fake family Christmas" dinners and all the rest, with an disillusionment almost too complete for even irony—the story is actually an old one: boy becoming man. Father Time materializing in the clearing mist. So get a job. Join something. Reproduce. Write a novel. You have to "ride it out and work hard and not be a loser," as Pete, Jason's brother, puts it. After all, the line between slacker on couch and yuppie with job is frighteningly fine. Face it: both the American Dream and its hollowness are clichés. And when your useless liberal arts degree finally lands you in a community college some place, take some time to say how it was. Hopefully in a manner as entertaining as *Swimming in Sky.*

Johnny Williams is a writer and an associate professor at LaGrange College.

A Gift Before Dying

by Stephen Thompson
NewSouth Books; 2001
298 pp. Cloth, $24.95.



While a law student at the University of Alabama, Stephen Thompson observed and interacted with the basketball team for a season. Robert Scott, legendary Alabama basketball player and coach, was an assistant coach on that team. His heroic fight against cancer is interwoven with the team's efforts to persevere while witnessing the decline of a trusted mentor and friend.

Both Coach Scott and the team begin with high hopes of prevailing. Each is beset with considerable adversity, Coach Scott fighting against unrelenting progression of his disease, the team combating youth and formidable opponents. Coach Scott never quits and the team does well in the face of its adversity, complicated by numerous injuries.

We are provided an impassioned portrait of the mechanics of college basketball. The author comes across as an avid participant and recorder of Alabama basketball, with Coach Scott standing as the epitome of excellence. If ever there was a real life story that fulfills the admonition of your parent, or high school coach, that the hard lessons of "the game" instill values, strengths, and courage that will someday stand you in good stead, this is it. He notes that, admittedly, "People knock the testosterone-filled world of male team sports, and the negatives are abundant," but "Striving to win means everything because it is the goal that unites. Within the rules the effort to win purifies completely. It demands selflessness."

There are myriads of emotions portrayed: "Tears began flowing down the cheeks of the seldom emotional Scott. "I saw his tears and tears raced down my face." The contrasting styles of the head coach and Coach Scott, one white, one African-American, each a former player at the University of Alabama, and their synergism make for a moving story. Sarcasm, threats, and humiliation alternate almost seamlessly with Olympian moments, glorified exultation, and prayer. The roller coaster of physical exertion, emotional liability, and intense pressure are compellingly and realistically portrayed.

This book is interesting from the points of view of the laudatory and exemplary life of Robert Scott; the University of Alabama basketball team; friendships; black white relationships; a study of young people; and, from the point of view of the author, following your dreams, passionately. Having been introduced to this group, I find

myself now interested in their progress and wishing them the best. It is a book worth reading.

David Hodo practices psychiatry and writes reviews in Selma.

Dog Island

by Mike Stewart
Putnam, 2001
416 pp. Hardcover, $23.95

Alabama's detective novel fans have been familiar with Mike Stewart's work for a couple of years now. His first novel, *Sins of the Father*, earned rave reviews in *Booklist* and *Kirkus* and was a favorite in his home state. With his next effort, *Dog Island,* readers everywhere have taken notice of the author's smart and satisfying plots.

Tom McInnes, Stewart's protagonist, is a good-guy Point Clear lawyer turned detective. When he receives a pre-dawn phone call from Susan Fitzsimmons, Tom reacts like the southern gentleman his mother hoped he would be, by coming to her aid. Susan is sheltering Carli Monroe, an abused teenage runaway, who was the only witness to a late-night murder in a beach house along the Gulf Coast.

As in all of the classic detective novels, Tom has an accomplice helping him work the case. Joey McInnes' Watson, is a "former shore patrolman, former Navy intelligence officer, former Alabama state trooper, and former Alabama Bureau of Investigation agent." The two friends share a dislike for authority.

When Tom uncovers Carli's father's connection to a crime cartel, whose primary work is smuggling cigars from Cuba, he places Carli, Susan, Joey, and himself in danger.

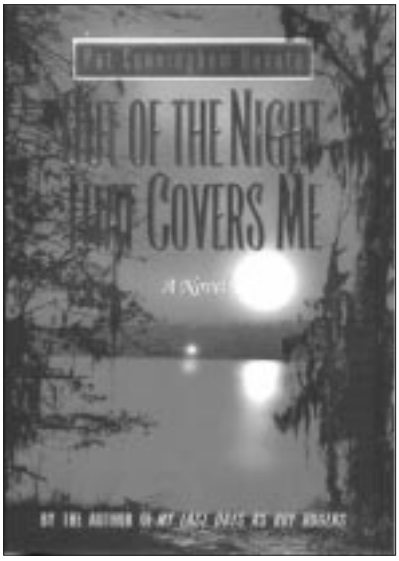
In reviewing detective fiction, there's always a fine line between summarizing the plot and giving away the plot. Suffice it to say, Mike Stewart's *Dog Island* deserves to be on *the New York Times'* 'best-seller list. His descriptions of the Emerald Coast are lavish. His characters are both likable and believable. Stewart creates suspense and a fine story with ease. *Dog Island* is a must-read for the aficionado of detective fiction and Alabama-based fiction.

Like his main character, Tom McInnes, Mike Stewart is an attorney who grew up in a small sawmill town near the Alabama River. He was educated at Auburn University. Stewart currently lives in Birmingham with his family and just recently left his position in the corporate/legal world to write full time.

Pam Kingsbury writes and teaches in Florence.

Out of the Night That Covers Me

by Pat Cunningham Devoto
Warner Books, 2001
409 pages. Cloth, $23.95.



Pat Cunningham Devoto is not a stylist, but her characters stand up and walk the walk, coming alive with passion on the pages of her new novel, *Out of the Night That Covers Me*.

With the swiftness of a page-turning thriller, Devoto's novel moves the reader into the shadows of a small Black Belt town in rural Alabama, where the exterior world appears to have a Mayberry-type pleasantness. When 8-year-old John McMillan III's mother dies, he is moved to Lower Peach Tree with his aunt and her hell-for-leather husband and their two children.

Young John is consumed by this new word of hard labor, little food, beatings, and beratings. Like a hero out of Dickens, the boy begins using his native intelligence to find and escape from this hell. He manages to climb out by befriending the local banker, who is blind, and his sweet wife. However, because of the circumstance of the human condition, when people are afraid to verbalize the depth of their love, John finds himself questioning even the genuine warmth of their behavior toward him.

The boy begins to relate to the black people who are the victims of the rich white establishment. He retreats into the world of Tunway, a strange mixture of both black and white, who was taken in as a lost child himself by Mama Tunway, in the hidden and interesting world of Kay's Bend. When John seeks to run away to Chicago, where he believes the black people go after they have been mistreated, he finds himself in an isolated world where, once again, he is totally different from his surroundings.

Devoto has created an enchanting and horrifying milieu, at once scary and totally believable. Her writing is tense and terse, a fine rendering of perfect images for the geography where she takes us.

Wayne Greenhaw, a writer who lives in Montgomery, is working on a screenplay for a cable television network.

PUBLISHING ON DEMAND: A Shift of Cosmic Proportions

BY CLAIRE L. DATNOW

Dr. Boris Datnow

Author Claire L. Datnow.

There has been a cosmic shift in publishing, aptly dubbed publishing on demand or POD, and it is changing the face of the industry forever. Whatever the consequences of this revolution, it has given publishing a shot in the arm and opened up new possibilities, the likes of which have not been seen for eons.

Those of us who have chosen to be on the forefront of the POD revolution have no exact idea what the outcome will be, but the ride is proving to be both exciting and frustrating.

Let me take you through the process I followed in getting my novel, *One Cause Too Many*, published as a POD. The first step, doing research on-line and selecting a company that seemed legitimate, was easy. As of this writing, there are a dozen companies on the web, iUniverse and Xlibris among them, offering publishing on demand.

iUniverse seemed like a good choice for me, but before signing on I ordered two books from their on-line store. Within a week, they were delivered to my doorstep. One novel, I thought, was well written and has been made into a movie. The other started off well enough then fizzled out in the last few chapters.

Having reassured myself that iUniverse would deliver, I began preparing my manuscript for submission. With the help of four readers to edit and proof the manuscript, I went through the tedious process of refining and re-working it. iUniverse will provide proofreaders for a fee, otherwise the onus is squarely on you to ensure that the manuscript is completely ready for publication. With this step out of the way, I felt ready to send the manuscript to iUniverse for publication.

I got on-line and, with many a mouse click, filled in all the necessary forms, signed an on-line contract, and paid a small processing fee of $99. The terms of these contracts vary with the publisher, but all offer royalties based on sales, an ISBN number, and listing with all major on-line booksellers. With these terms, I felt reassured that this was not a self-publishing deal, or a vanity press, since I do have a contract, and iUniverse will profit if sales go well.

Next, I uploaded my manuscript to a formatted shell provided for the purpose. My editor, John Anderson, called to let me know he would be working with me. He also sent an e-mail confirmation that he had received the manuscript in good order.

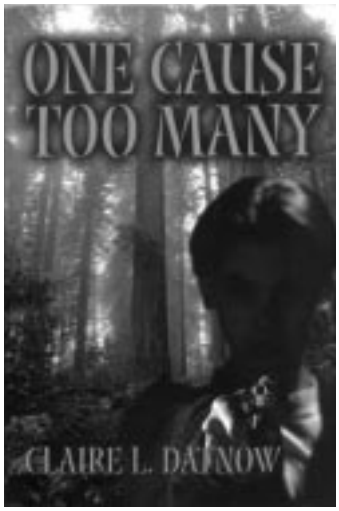
Then the manuscript was set in book form, and the book block was downloaded for me to proof. All errors had to be noted on a proof sheet and sent back to the editor. iUniverse allows up to 22 minor errors, but no re-writes. I found 31 typos, for which I had to pay an additional fee. A graphics artist created a four-color cover to my specifications. The cover can be re-drawn if you don't approve, but this will cause delays, of course. On the whole, the process went smoothly, but took longer than the four weeks iUniverse had promised. My novel took about twelve weeks before it could be ordered on-line, considerably shorter than the time it takes traditional publishing houses.

"The brave new world of POD and the Internet is now making it possible to build new writers."

IUniverse, as promised, posted my novel on all major on-line booksellers, including Borders, Amazon, Books-A-Million and iUniverse within about three weeks. I received five free copies. The finished book, in soft cover, measured up to the standards of other published books on the shelves, and I was quite pleased

POD has some real advantages. First, and foremost, you can get actually get your book published. Now, we all know that the odds of getting published by a mainstream publishing house, let alone a smaller press, are squarely stacked against us. Today there are six major houses run by the editors who "anoint" the author of the day (backed, of course, with megabucks for the promotion). If you are fortunate enough to get your manuscript beyond the slush pile, it's only too common to hear the editor say she loved your writing but couldn't fit your book into any category. In other words, they have decreed your book not publishable because it won't sell.

No wonder that after years of writing, and not getting anywhere, writers stop writing. They quit, not because they are making so little money, but because they can't find readers. For the first time ever, POD gives writers a product at minimal cost and an avenue by which to find readers. The brave new world of POD and the Internet is now making it possible to build new authors—with no returns, no warehousing, and no big investment. If only 1,000



copies are sold, it's a bonus. It's a start.

Another major advantage: Your book can be ordered anywhere in the world. iUniverse provides an ISBN number and has the book listed with Bowker's and *Books In Print.* Booksellers can order the books from Ingram. iUniverse makes it clear that the books are made available immediately through Ingram.

A third advantage is that your book will never go out of print since it is stored electronically, ready to be printed on demand as soon as the order comes in.

Last, but not least, POD books save resources—money and trees in particular. Editors always say they're finding these great writers they can't afford to publish. Now the author and publisher can promote the book on the Internet. If the book takes off, both will profit; if not, little has been lost. Best of all, no one is left sitting with crates and crates of unsold books collecting dust in warehouses or basements.

". . . on-demand publishing may lull writers into publishing before their work has been put through the painstaking process of refining and rewriting."

But before you rush your book into POD, consider the cons. First, marketing your book will be tedious and difficult. You have a book available for printing on demand, but no reviews, and nobody knows who you are. You spend a lot of time and a fair amount of money trying to get the book reviewed. You send e-mails, press releases, do book signings, make web pages and links to the Internet, even try to sell to libraries in an attempt to get some word-of-mouth going. That is what you must do. Yes, POD companies make your book available through the same channels as any other book, but it's up to you—as it is with many a mainstream published author—to get the word out.

The next hurdle to surmount is the lack of acceptance of POD books. Proving yourself in this new industry is very difficult. It does not help that on-demand publishing may lull writers into publishing before their work has been put through the painstaking process of refining and rewriting. Poor work will lead readers and reviewers to thumb their noses at POD books.

Actually, it's amusing that many in the establishment have so quickly started to downgrade PODs. I believe that PODs could become incredibly important in publishing new authors. PODs might even save the mid-list. If they're published carefully and strategically, readers won't know the difference between them and books published traditionally. If they're good books, why should they care? Let the readers decide what they want to read.

Many feel tremendous affection and nostalgia for the kind of publishing we held up as a goal. American publishing has been as serendipitous and problematic as American history: great books have come from it, but as an industry it perpetuated prejudices we should not be too proud of. Publishers were so sequestered that only a handful of books from African American, Asian American, or Latino American writers got published. Books from women ran into the same prejudices.

We all dream of finding an editor that will discover and nurture us, an editor who will stay at the same publishing house and not leave us stranded. We dream of finding agents who will not be greedy, and marketing that respects the editorial department's acumen in choosing the books. I'm not naive enough to believe that the electronic book and print-on-demand revolution is going to fix any of this, or that it will usher in a perfect new order. Revolutions bring chaos before they bring about needed changes. In fact, we can guess at the future from what happened in the past: There never was a golden era in publishing and probably never will be.

Is it glamorous to go the POD route? No. Does POD provide a new avenue for writers? Yes. Does POD mean progress in providing new avenues for the publishing industry? Yes! And yes again.

By the way, has anybody seen those ATM-like machines that are supposed to come to bookstores near you, and will print books while you wait?

Claire Datnow taught creative writing to gifted and talented children in the Birmingham Public School System. Born in South Africa, she immigrated to the United States in 1965 and has taught in California, Minnesota, and Alabama. She received a Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher scholarship to travel to Japan in 1998. Edwin Hubble: Discoverer of Galaxies *and* American Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers *are her most recent books for young adults.*

ALABAMA LITERARY NEWS

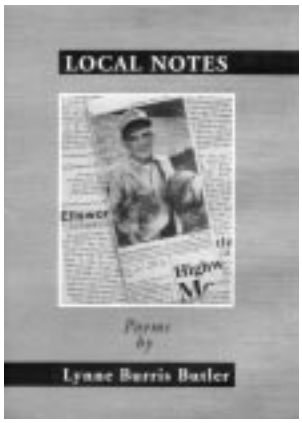
Jason Harris,

Honorée Fannone Jeffers with Governor Don Siegelman at the Society of Fine Arts Gala.

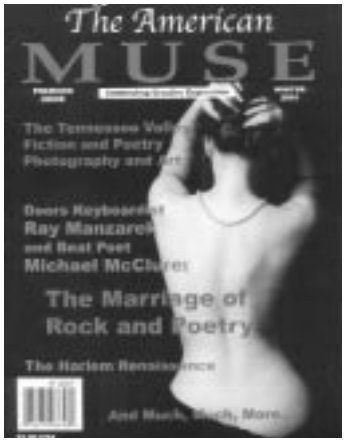
Writer **Honorée Fannone Jeffers** was honored at the University of Alabama's Society of Fine Arts gala on February 8th, as a recipient of one of the SFA's Artist of the Millennium awards. Her book of poetry, *The Gospel of Barbecue,* published by Kent State University Press in 2000, won the Stan and Tom Wick Prize for a first book. The SFA awards recognize Alabamians and UA alumni who have made an impact on the creative and performing arts in Alabama.

River City Publishing (formerly Black Belt Press) announces the **Fred Bonnie Memorial Award**, presented for best first novel. Created in memory of writer Fred Bonnie, the award carries a $1500 prize and publication of the manuscript by River City. An entry fee of $30 is required and entries must be submitted by May 15, 2001. Pat Conroy and Sandra Ray Conroy are judges. Contact River City Publishing, LLC, Fred Bonnie Award Submission, 610 North Perry St., Montgomery, AL 36104. The first 200 entrants will receive a free copy of Bonnie's novel *Thanh Ho Delivers*.

Astarte, a Birmingham-based literary journal initiated in 1989, has been transformed into **PMS poem/memoir/story**, a journal of women's writing that made its debut in March. Edited by Linda Frost, associate professor of English at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, *PMS*'s first issue will feature memoirs by Birmingham's own Vicki Covington, a novelist and columnist for the *Oxford American*, and nurse-activist Emily Lyons, who was critically injured in the 1998 bombing of the New Woman All Women clinic in Birmingham. *PMS* will be published once a year in the spring and will accept unsolicited manuscripts (up to 5 poems or 15 pages of prose) from September through December. For more information or submission guidelines, see www.pms-journal.org or send an SASE to *PMS*, UAB, Department of English, 900 South 13th Street, Birmingham, AL 35294-1260.



Poet and editor Lynne Burris Butler and designer John Turner announce the opening of **Woodland Press, LLC**, an international artisan press available for subsidy publishing of memoir, poetry, fiction, and scholarly books. In the spirit of William Morris and the craftsman movement, the press will publish specialty books based on the idea that books should be both beautiful and useful. The press's first publication is Butler's *Local Notes*, a collection of poetry. The press will conduct a national competition for its upcoming chapbook series later this spring. For more details and submission guidelines, contact Woodland Press at Box 2423, Florence, AL 35630.



North Alabama has a new arts magazine, ***The American Muse***. According to editor and publisher Mary E. Alderman, the magazine will "celebrate creative endeavors as well as creative achievements." Subscriptions are $16 (U.S.). Send subscriptions and/or queries and submissions to *The American Muse*, 11321 Mountaincrest Drive, Huntsville, AL 35803.

Tom Franklin, author of the award-winning collection of short fiction *Poachers*, has been named the 2001-2002 John and Renee Grisham Writer-in-Residence at Ole Miss. The appointment includes teaching one fiction workshop each term, several public readings, and community outreach.

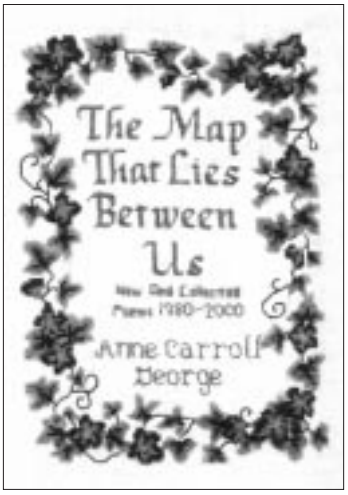
Dan H. Fuller

Tom Franklin

Robin Behn, a professor at the University of Alabama, won the Brittingham Prize. Her new book of poetry, *Horizon Note*, will be published by the University of Wisconsin Press in November 2001.

Stephen Tomlinson

Robin Behn



Shortly before her dearh, **Anne George** learned that *The Map That Lies Between Us* (River City Publishing, Black Belt Imprint, 2000) had been chosen as the Alabama Poetry Society's 2000 Book of the Year. Judge Sandra Soli, poetry editor of *ByLine Magazine*, noted: "This small volume is rich in poems that honor, not only the generations, but also the possibility for joy in all circumstances. It is indeed a collection that serves as 'praise for the giver' and 'a prayer for all that endures.' The speakers in these poems sustain us with the knowledge that even as 'living surprises us all,' every story becomes a blessing in the telling."

Natasha Trethewey, a professor at Auburn University and author of *Domestic Work*, will give several readings in Birmingham this spring as part of the BACHE Visiting Writers program. Readings include Montevallo University on April 17 and UAB on April 18. Trethewey will also appear at Miles College, Birmingham-Southern, and Samford University. Call 205-934-5634 for more information.

Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers is holding its ninth annual conference in Fairhope, AL on April 20 & 21. The conference will feature poet **Robert Phillips** of the University of Houston, as well as more than seventy novelists, short story writers, poets, screenwriters, and non-fiction writers from forty universities. The $20 registration fee is waived for students. For more information, call 334-460-6147.

Patricia Yeager, a professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, will speak at Auburn University on April 26. Her appearance is part of the Benson Lecture series. Yeager is the co-author, with Beth Kowalski Wallace, of *Refiguring Father: New Feminist Readings of Patriarchy.*

Julie Checkoway, editor of *Creating Fiction*, will read as part of the UAB Writers' series on May 2 at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Birmingham. Call 205-934-5634 for more information.

The **Society for the Study of Southern Literature** calls for papers for its 2002 conference to be held in Lafayette, Louisiana, March 14-16, 2002. The theme is "Southern Literature in Black and White"; Ernest Gaines and John Shelton Reed will be among the featured speakers. Papers should examine the connections between southern literature and African-American literature, black writers as southern writers, and the influence of the South upon black literary movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts movement. Send 500-word abstracts to Margaret Bauer, Dept. of English, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.

Sue Silverman and **Patricia Foster** will read at the University of Alabama on April 12. Silverman has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize and conducts creative writing seminars throughout the state. Foster is the author of *All The Lost Girls: Confessions of a Southern Daughter* and an associate professor of English at the University of Iowa.

Dates and Events

APRIL
National Poetry Month
Academy of American Poets
212-274-0343
www.poets.org

APRIL 1-7
National Library Week
American Library Association
312-280-5044
www.ala.org/pio/nlm

APRIL 2
International Children's Book Day
United State Board on Books for Young People
www.usbby.org

APRIL 16-22
Young People's Poetry Week
Children's Book Council
212-966-1990
www.cbcbooks.org

APRIL 23
World Book and Copyright Day
UNESCO
www.unesco.org/general/eng/events/book.html

MAY 6-12
Reading Is Fun Week
Reading Is Fundamental
202-287-3220
www.rif.org

Alabama's new **on-line cultural calendar**, a searchable database of arts events in the state and part of Arts Over America, can be accessed through the Alabama State Council on the Arts website at arts.state.al.us or directly at al.artscal.org.

From the Field

TIME WITH THE BUTTERFLIES

BY TRISH O'KANE

"You the new doctor?" a blonde inmate with 1970s turquoise eye shadow asks as I walk through the corridors of Julia Tutwiler women's prison.

"No, I'm the creative writing teacher in the Medical Isolation Unit (MIU)."

She gives me a big "ooohhhh."

"Death row, huh?" she says and laughs conspiratorially with an inmate standing next to her.

My students are all HIV-positive, and this is typical of the attitude of many people towards anyone who is HIV positive or has AIDs, especially in the prison system. There is some truth to the "death row" tag and I am mad and sad about it. For a person with a weak immune system, a lengthy sentence in a crowded prison could become a death sentence. And in Mississippi and Alabama, HIV-positive inmates serve even longer sentences than inmates without HIV. Since they are in segregated units, they are unable to participate in work release programs where they can work off their sentence sooner.

I remember this on days when class poetry readings are punctuated by hacking coughs and the empty seats of those too ill to attend are pregnant with silence.

When I walked into the tiny white classroom the first time, students crammed into every available inch, I stepped into a garden forgotten. Older students sat, magnolias in full perfume, oozing a rich, dark humor. There were proud grandmothers, counselors, amateur biblical scholars. The youngest student was only 18, eager to be a wife, mother, and undertaker. They were black and white, and so many shades in between. Deep, and from the deep South.

During the two-hour rain of words, they twined like creepervines all over walls and out the one barred window, reaching for Pablo Neruda, Alice Walker, Frida Kahlo. Questions wrapped themselves around me like wisteria. What is an essay? What is a metaphor? Everything I had ever read and loved suddenly became a gift to give to someone.

I asked them to write about the kind of animal that they were. Nearly everyone chose the butterfly. Ever since, they refer to themselves, to me, and to any visiting writer or poet, as a butterfly. I receive letters addressed to "the Cloverdale Butterfly," or "the butterfly on the outside," and signed by "a beautiful butterfly." A visiting poet from California is referred to as "the West Coast Butterfly."

I taught freshman writing at a California university years ago, but I had never taught in a prison and knew nothing about the HIV virus. Humor is healing, so I started them off with the published letters of a California comedian who wrote to corporations complaining about their products. A class favorite was a detailed letter to Hershey's, complaining about a deformed M & M (chocolate piece enclosed). A lively discussion on irony ensued.

They asked me to bring in different kinds of music and this quickly became a favorite creative exercise. One day I brought my strangest CD, a singer named Yma Sumac, a kind of operatic gibberish backed by a big band. Students closed their eyes.

"You are on the New York subway, sitting across from a person who is listening to this music on a Walkman. It is Monday morning and everyone is packed in like sardines, trying to get to work. This person is oblivious, transported by their music. Who is this person and why do they love this CD?"

One student wrote of a frustrated middle-aged secretary on her way to work in a stodgy corporate office. A plain graying Jane in office garb that no one gave a second glance to. The one who poured the coffee, answered the telephones and gritted her teeth for years. But all this changed, Friday nights, when she escaped to the opera.

As the months passed, they learned other writing tricks like personification and I gained a greater respect and loathing for certain objects in the classroom. I asked students to write a class poem about an inanimate object. I'd never noticed the clothing iron sitting in a corner before, but 25 adjectives and verbs later this piece of metal had become a malevolent, sneaky, devious, abusive and downright evil spirit that urinates, spits, burns, and routinely punishes inmates.

An old broken-down computer perched on a gray file cabinet recently winked at me slyly. In a homework assignment one student described it as "an octopus with ninety-eight eyes" that brings "fire to the brain," and "sits exiled on a rugged mountain-top waiting for someone to arouse him."

Every class brings me new gifts. A 19-year-old student describes her mother's voice over the telephone as "white as rain." After a mini-lecture about the perils of using words like "good" and "beautiful," another student writes of a "popsicle perfect" day in the summertime.

Inmates at Julia Tutwiler prison experience the joy of accomplishment with their teacher, Trish O'Kane.

One day, there was a white plastic chair that was conspicuously empty. Quiet and sweet-demeanored Tammie, who dreamed of being an artist and a good mother, was suddenly paralyzed and bed-ridden. Prison officials said she was in the "final stages" of AIDs. I had been teaching for eight months and it finally hit me that somebody in here might die. Lesson plans flew out the window as students panicked about never seeing their children again.

"This is our future," one wailed as we tried to comfort her.

Their writing was very much about the every day. A loss of laundry privileges meant dirty clothes for more days, the risk of germs spreading. Students wrote with anguish about not having enough bleach to clean toilets or soak underwear. Staying clean might mean staying alive long enough to get out.

Before Christmas, Tammie was granted a "compassionate release" because of her medical condition, and because she was a non-violent offender. While she waited for release, her health improved somewhat and she rejoined my class temporarily.

Just before she was paroled, we played a game called "Definition." In this game each student had to pick five words from the class "magic word" jar. I wrote the words on the board, and students read each definition aloud. I told them to pick one word, write their own definition for it without using the word, and keep it a secret.

"Use your imagination," I said, an utterly unnecessary instruction.

Tammie sat with a sneaky little smile and drew herself up in the white plastic chair as she began to read her own definition. The class had to guess the word. The scene was an outdoor picnic in a beautiful park. A large family gathering. The smell of barbecue wafting in the breeze. Children played on a swing set.

The other students listened to Tammie, puzzled.

I scanned the vocabulary words on the blackboard. Had Tammie understood the exercise? What was she writing about?

And then suddenly. . . Tammie paused for dramatic effect. . . a big bunch of killer bees attacked the crowd. Pork chops flew through the air in the frenzied scramble to flee. Everyone ran away.

We howled with laughter and the students clapped for Tammie. The word she chose to define was "departure."

Trish O'Kane worked for nine years in Central America as a journalist and human rights activist. She is the author of Guatemala: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture *(Interlink Books, 1998) as well as numerous articles published in* Time *magazine, the* San Francisco Chronicle, *and other magazines. She began volunteer teaching at the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in January 2000.*

THE BACK PAGE

Alabama School of Fine Arts Celebrates 30 Years

BY JOHN NORTHROP

Two years ago, CVS Pharmacies named the Alabama School of Fine Arts an "Innovations in Education" awards school, one of a handful in the nation. We've enjoyed the recognition, but we love the accompanying $75,000 CVS grant in support of our Write Now! outreach program.

Write Now! is the brainchild of Denise Trimm, our creative writing department chair, who decided a while back that our school should find a way to promote and celebrate writing by school children statewide. CVS spotted a winner and signed on to pick up most of the tab for three years.

Now I could tell you a lot more about Write Now!, but that's not really my point. My point is that good things tend to happen when creative people decide to do something worthwhile. Opportunities tend to crop up.

The Alabama School of Fine Arts is itself an example. Maybe like me, you feel a twinge of wonder that there even is an Alabama School of Fine Arts. Sure, there are many local arts schools in Alabama and beyond, but I can think of only one or two other states that run statewide public arts schools for middle and high school students.

Unlike many local magnet schools, ASFA did not come about to serve some purpose tangential to the arts—for example, to foster desegregation. Neither did ASFA's organizers sell it as a means to raise standardized test scores, the rhetorical gruel we sometimes must dish out these days out to win grudging support for arts education.

Somewhat as Blanche Dubois depended on the kindness of strangers, ASFA is rooted in love of the arts themselves and the genteel opportunism of a small band of Birmingham arts advocates. Back in 1967, they motored to Montgomery for an audience with Governor Lurleen Wallace, who, despite her encroaching illness—or maybe even because of it—made a down-payment on a legacy. She gave the arts leaders a small sum of discretionary money to support community-based arts training for Birmingham high school students, an action that Governors Albert Brewer and George Wallace later saw fit to emulate.

In 1971, the state legislature joined the act. That year, the lawmakers passed a joint resolution formally establishing the school, which, under a quarter-century of leadership by executive director James R. Nelson, grew to offer intensive, self-contained specialty programs in creative writing, dance, math/science, music, theatre arts and visual arts, plus a full core academic program, grades 7-12.

Alabama School of Fine Arts

John Northrop, director of the Alabama School of Fine Arts with some of his students.

These days, ASFA serves 350 creative students of all hues from as far south as Mobile and as far north as Huntsville. Newsweek magazine a year ago declared us the number 10 public high school in the nation. Our students win top scholarships from the best colleges, universities, conservatories and performing companies in Alabama and throughout America. And, yes, our students also earn some of the highest standardized test scores in Alabama—but, once again, that's not our purpose.

This year we're taking time to say thanks. Unless you're even more math-challenged than I, you can calculate that 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of legislative recognition of the school and the beginning of its long, patient ascent to excellence. On April 7, we'll honor Jim Nelson and a number of other community leaders, elected officials and educators who helped ASFA grow into a source of pride for the entire state.

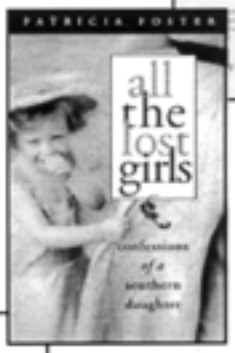
Meanwhile, we say thanks to you. As an Alabama citizen with an explicit commitment to the arts, you've helped foster a cultural and political climate that makes a school like ASFA possible. Quite literally, we couldn't be here without you!

John Northrop is the executive director of the Alabama School of Fine Arts and the author of a nameless play, 99 percent complete.

Deep South Books

Sweet Mystery
A Book of Remembering
Judith Hillman Paterson

All the Lost Girls
Confessions of a Southern Daughter
Patricia Foster



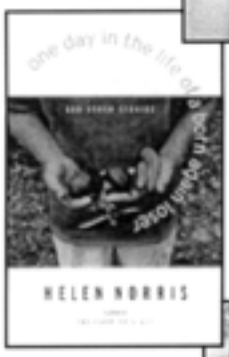
Whiskey Man
Howell Raines

Leaving Birmingham
Paul Hemphill

Almost Family
Roy Hoffman

Gathering Home
Vicki Covington

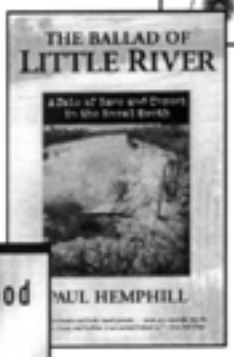
"...prose as pure as branch water..."
—*People*

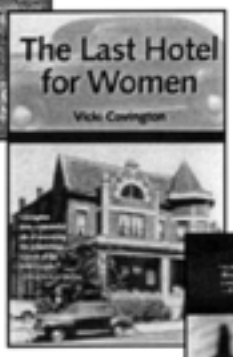


One Day in the Life of a Born Again Loser
and Other Stories
Helen Norris

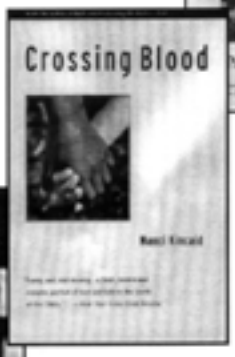
B-Four
Sam Hodges

FORTHCOMING
The Ballad of Little River
Paul Hemphill





The Last Hotel for Women
Vicki Covington



Crossing Blood
Nanci Kincaid

Tongues of Flame
Mary Ward Brown

Alabama

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