

# FIRST DRAFT

VOL. 5, NO. 4 WINTER 1999

*The Journal of the  
Alabama Writers' Forum*

COVER STORY:

**Zora Neale Hurston** |  
*Reassessing the life and work  
of the "queen of the Harlem  
Renaissance."*

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*Elizabeth Van Dyke in  
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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**A**s Zora might say there is plenty of "fackin'" in this issue of *First Draft*—and the main fact we'd like you to know is how healthy the literary arts are in Alabama.

In addition to the state's ambitious season of literary conferences, offering something for beginning through experienced writers (take a stroll through "A Literary Tour of Alabama's Spring Writer's Conferences"), we can also sup from the richly laden table of the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance's listing of "Literary Events." Through AAAAA's literary series, executive director Georgette Norman has arranged to bring Alabama-born Zora Neale Hurston to life in performance, through a review of scholarship about her work, and, most importantly, into the lives of some of Alabama's school children. Mark your calendar right now for one of these Zora Neale Hurston celebratory events and get your hand on one of Hurston's highly entertaining books for a New Year's treat.

After you've plotted your literary outings this spring, I hope you will take a few moments to reflect with Dr. Robbie Walker on the fact that 1998 saw the passing of two Alabama-born literary greats—Margaret Walker Alexander and John Henrik Clarke. Dr. Walker places these writers within the canon of important African-American writers. In her "Back Page," Jay Lamar highlights another Alabama-born-and-raised African-American, C. Eric Lincoln, who visited Huntsville and Montgomery through the "Alabama Voices" series this fall. More than just visit, Lincoln reconnected with Alabama.

As you read or practice your own craft of writing, I ask you to remember the work of Priscilla Hancock Cooper and Marlin Barton through the "Writing Our Stories" program that the Forum conducts for the Department of Youth Services in Mt. Meigs and Chalkville. Who knows what emerging Alabama poet or novelist may be given voice through the care and skill of these two fine teaching writers?

I hope to see you in Montgomery on February 12 and 13 at "The Writers' Colloquium," the statewide associates meeting, and perhaps at other literary stops around the state, including the second Monroeville "Alabama Writers Symposium" where will we present the "Harper Lee Award for Distinguished Writer in 1999." Register early for the Monroeville conference—it was a sell-out last year.

We Alabamians are richly blessed with writers and literary opportunities in our state—read, attend, enjoy!



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

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



Elizabeth Van Dyke as  
Zora Neale Hurston.

National Black Touring Circuit, Inc.

# “I’m Cracking but I’m Facking”\*

*Zora Neale Hurston is coming back to Alabama. Her quick wit, sassy mouth and plenteous talent will be on display in a production of Zora Neale Hurston: A Theatrical Biography with Elizabeth Van Dyke in the title role.*

**I**t seems improbable—if not laughable—to hear the ragged old woman in the bus station say, “I was the queen of the Harlem Renaissance.” But she was. As Van Dyke speaks words of Hurston’s from her younger days, the actress sometimes “seems on fire with feeling and the sheer joy of storytelling,” said a *New York Times*

\* “I’m wisecracking but I’m telling the truth,” from “Story in Harlem Slang” by Zora Neale Hurston



*“...on fire with feeling  
and the sheer joy of storytelling,”*

review of the production. And now, though she died in poverty in 1960, Zora Neale Hurston’s literary life is enjoying a renaissance.

Georgette Norman, executive director of the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance, wants to make sure the people of her home state recognize the value of Hurston’s legacy. The Alliance is spearheading a three-day, multi-city tour of the play this spring, along with appearances by Hurston’s niece and her biographers. Norman believes the event should rival in importance the annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival in Eatonville, Fla., where the author grew up.

Lucy Ann Hurston, Zora Neale Hurston’s niece, has produced and hosted two documentaries with Dr. James Miller, professor of Afro-American Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. She directed the first high school presentation of the play *Mule Bone*, a collaboration of Hurston and Langston Hughes, based on a folktale which Hurston had collected. Hurston is an instructor in criminal justice, public safety and sociology at Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College in Waterbury, Conn., and a doctoral candidate in cultural anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She contributes a unique and carefully thought out perspective to the discussion of her famous aunt.

Robert Hemenway, chancellor of the University of Kansas since 1995, is widely known for his 1977 biography of Hurston, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Life*. The biography brought attention to Hurston’s literary legacy and won a number of awards. It was listed by the *New York Times* among its “best books of 1978.” Alice Walker, who is credited with the Hurston revival after she found the writer’s unmarked grave and placed a stone there in 1973, wrote the introduction. In 1991, a reprinting of Hemenway’s book was included as a Quality Paperback Book Club selection.

Valerie Boyd, author in residence at Atlanta’s Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, is currently researching and writing *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston*, a biography

to be published by Scribner in 2001. A former writer and editor for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, she has published free lance articles, essays and reviews in *Ms.* magazine, *The Washington Post Book World*, *American Visions*, and *African American Review*. Boyd recounted in a January 25, 1998, article in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that Hemenway stated at a Hurston festival in 1994 that it was time for a new biography to be written, “and it needs to be written by a black woman.” Boyd knew deep down then and there that she would accept the challenge.

When Boyd first read Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, (1937) she felt that she had found “a kindred spirit, a literary grandmother” in Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston was born in Notasulga, Ala., in 1891. Her mother, a country school teacher, was from a family that became landowners after the Civil War; her father, a carpenter and Baptist preacher, came from cotton plantation tenant farmers. In 1894, the immediate family moved to Eatonville, Fla., which Hurston called “the first town built and governed by Negroes.”

There were fortunate opportunities for schooling, and Hurston excelled. Yet, the death of her mother when Hurston was nine as well as her father’s remarriage were difficult, and so she left home at 14 to work as a maid for a traveling operetta troupe. She attended Howard University and graduated from Barnard where she studied under anthropologist Franz Boa. She became a prolific folklorist, novelist, playwright and journalist.

Hurston was ahead of her time and wouldn’t hold her tongue or write the protest literature advocated by W.E.B. Dubois and Richard Wright. Instead she gloried in the vernacular voice and rich folklore traditions, buoyed up by the indomitable strength of people who were overcoming just by living another day. Hurston’s ambition, as an anthropologist and as a writer of fiction, was to show “real people and real life.” In her renaissance is the victory.



Robert Hemenway



Valerie Boyd





National Black Touring Circuit, Inc.

Joseph Edward and Elizabeth Van Dyke in Zora Neale Hurston: A Theatrical Biography.

## ALABAMA AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTS ALLIANCE Literary Events

JANUARY 15

### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DINNER

Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, Keynote Speaker  
6:30-8:30 p.m. Governor's House Conference Center,  
Montgomery

*Dr. Hilliard is the Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University. As a noted authority on ancient African history and culture, he has conducted study tours to Egypt for 15 years and made presentations throughout the country on classical African civilizations. Dr. Hilliard has written extensively and consulted on teaching strategies, educational testing and assessment, and child growth and development.*

MARCH 19

### STORYTELLER ADORA DUPREE

Montgomery's Union Station Train Shed

*Dupree will participate in the DESTA Black Heritage Festival and work with teachers on teaching storytelling to children.*

MARCH 25-28

### POET/DRAMATIST

### RASHIDAH ISMAILI ABUBAKR

Montgomery, Tuskegee

*Born in Dahomey, Rashidah Ismaili was educated in Dahomey, France, Italy, and the United States. She combines her work as a poet and playwright with an academic background in psychotherapy. Her poetry has been heard in staged readings at the Henry St. Playhouse and La Mama Annex in New York and performed with music at Lincoln Centre and the 92nd St. Y.*

APRIL 17-18

### POET/DRAMATIST NIYI OSUNDARE

Birmingham, Montgomery

Birmingham events will take place at the Malcolm X Center include a Poetry Writing Workshop, a reading/discussion, and a reception.

*Niji Osundare, "farmer born, peasant bred," is one of Nigeria's most prolific and lyrical poets. He is also an*

*continued on page 4*

### ZORA NEALE HURSTON SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### NOVELS

*Jonah's Gourd Vine*  
*Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
*Moses, Man of the Mountain*  
*Seraph on the Suwanee*

#### FOLKLORE, MEMOIRS AND OTHER WRITINGS

*Mules and Men*  
*Tell My Horse*  
*Dust Tracks on a Road*

#### PLAY

*Mule Bone*  
(with Langston Hughes)

*Zora Neale Hurston: A Theatrical Biography* was written by Laurence Holder and directed by Wynn Handman. It stars Elizabeth Van Dyke as Zora Neale Hurston, Joseph Edward as Herbert Sheen, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke and Richard Wright.

**AAAAA LITERARY EVENTS***Continued from page 3*

*accomplished columnist, gifted storyteller, effective social commentator and playwright. Osundare believes in the need to "re-integrate the written word into its oral essence in drum, dance, and music." He has taught creative writing at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and is currently associate professor of African/Caribbean literature at the University of New Orleans.*

APRIL 29

**ZORA NEALE HURSTON  
NATIONAL BLACK TOURING CIRCUIT  
PRODUCTION**

10 a.m. school presentation at the Carver Theatre,  
Birmingham  
7:30 p.m. public performance, Carver Theatre,  
Birmingham

**HURSTON ON HURSTON/TRACES OF ZORA:  
SHARED FAMILY MEMORIES OF  
ZORA NEALE HURSTON**

6:30 p.m. at Roots and Wings,

A Cultural Book Place, Montgomery

*Lucy Hurston, niece of the writer, shares memories of  
Zora from her forthcoming book.*

APRIL 30

**ZORA NEALE HURSTON  
NATIONAL BLACK TOURING CIRCUIT  
PRODUCTION**

7:30 p.m. public performance at the Davis Theatre,  
Montgomery

**HURSTON ON HURSTON/TRACES OF ZORA:  
SHARED FAMILY MEMORIES OF  
ZORA NEALE HURSTON**

Time to be announced, Auburn University Library,  
Auburn, Alabama

*Lucy Hurston, niece of the writer, shares memories of  
Zora from her forthcoming book.*

MAY 1

**ZORA NEALE HURSTON SYMPOSIUM**

10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Jefferson County-Birmingham  
Regional Library

*Lucy Hurston and biographers Robert Hemenway and  
Valerie Boyd will discuss Zora Neale Hurston and her  
legacy, moderated by Robbie Walker  
and Chella Courington.*

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

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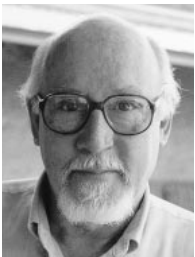
*The Forum greatly appreciates the more  
than 600 individuals, including  
students, who have supported its pro-  
gramming since 1992.*

# A LITERARY TOUR OF ALABAMA'S SPRING WRITERS' CONFERENCES

MONTGOMERY, FEBRUARY 12-13

## THE WRITERS' COLLOQUIUM: AUBURN UNIVERSITY MONTGOMERY AND THE ALABAMA WRITERS' FORUM CELEBRATE CONTEMPORARY WRITING

The Writer's Colloquium combines AUM's highly successful six-year-old writers' conference with the Forum's statewide associates meeting. "I believe this will be a real treat for our associates," said AWF executive director **Jeanie Thompson**. "We will hear from an array of writers in our region who are producing some of today's most interesting and affecting poetry, fiction and nonfiction."



Don Noble



Aileen Henderson



Rick Shelton

"The Art of the Interview" is **Don Noble's** topic for the luncheon address on Friday. Noble, professor of English at the University of Alabama, is host of public TV's "Bookmark" series. **Aileen Henderson**, author of young adult novels *The Summer of the Bonepile Monster*, *The Monkey Thief* and *The Treasure of Panther Peak*, and **Rick Shelton**, well known teacher trainer and author of *Hoggle's Christmas*, will make their pitch to participants in a panel called "Why You Should Write Juvenile Fiction." **Anne George**, author of the Southern Sisters mysteries from Avon, and **Carolyn Haines**, writer of 23 published mysteries, will compare their experiences and explain why "Genre is Not a Dirty Word."

Filmmakers **Bruce Kuerten** and **John DiJulio** will talk about their recent film, "The Cracker Man," shot entirely in Alabama, which was adapted from a Helen Norris short story. Journalist-turned-novelist **Phyllis Alesia Perry** (*Stigmata*), University of Alabama English professor **Michael Martone** (*Seeing Eye, Alive and Dead in Indiana*), and novelist and journalist **Roy Hoffman**, writer-in-residence at the Mobile Press Register, will discuss "Writing Literary Fiction and Nonfiction." "Diverse Chorus: Southern Poetry Today" will be the topic for a discussion by



Robin Behn



Jake Berry



Natasha Tretheway

poet **Robin Behn** (*The Red Hour, Paper Bird*), poet, musician and visual artist **Jake Berry** (*The Pandemonium Spirit and Brambu Drezi*), and **Natasha Tretheway**, whose work has been published in *Southern Humanities Review*, *The American Poetry Review* and *African American Review*; AWF executive director **Jeanie Thompson** (*Witness, How to Enter the River*) will moderate.

### SPECIAL GUEST READERS

Poet **Coleman Barks** is emeritus professor of English at the University of Georgia. He has translated 14 volumes of writings of the Persian poet Rumi. Barks's own work is published in three volumes: *We're Laughing at the Damage*, *Gourd Seed* and *Xenia*. Barks will read at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts on Friday night.

**Helen Norris's** fiction collections include *The Christmas Wife*, *Water Into Wine* and *The Burning Glass*.



Coleman Barks



Helen Norris



Robert Inman

She has also published two poetry collections, *Whatever Is Round* and *Rain Pulse*, and her work can be found frequently in *Southern Review*, *Swanee Review* and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Norris reads Saturday morning.

Novelist/screenwriter **Robert Inman** has published three novels, *Home Fires Burning*, for which he also wrote the screenplay; *Old Dogs and Children*; and *Dairy Queen Days*. His script for the Hallmark production of *The Summer of Ben Tyler* won a Writers Guild Award. Inman reads Friday morning.

#### **COLLINS AND HAINES, ASCA FELLOWSHIP WINNERS, TO READ SATURDAY**



Robert Collins



Carolyn Haines

The Alabama State Council on the Arts has awarded Individual Artist Fellowships to **Robert Collins**, associate professor of English at the University of Alabama Birmingham, and

**Carolyn Haines**, University of South Alabama. Collins's most recent chapbook, *Lives We Have Chosen*, won the Tennessee Chapbook Award in 1998. Collins has edited *Birmingham Poetry Review* since 1988.

Carolyn Haines's latest book is *Shop Talk*, a satirical novel published under the pseudonym Lizzie Hart. She has also published 23 mysteries under the pseudonym Caroline Burnes. Her two mainstream novels were published by Dutton, *Touched* and *Summer of the Redeemers*.

Registration for the entire Colloquium is \$125 (when received by 1/29/99). Brochures are available from the AWF (334/242-4076, ext. 233). To register by phone with VISA, MasterCard or Discover, call AUM at 334/244-3929 or 334/244-3804.

HOOVER, FEBRUARY 26-28

### **SOUTHERN VOICES: 1999** A CELEBRATION OF SOUTHERN CULTURE AND ITS CHANGING IDENTITIES

The Hoover Public Library will honor **Lee Smith**, author of *Fair and Tender Ladies*, *The Devil's Dream*, and *Family Linen*, with the 1999 Southern Voices Award for Distinguished Achievement to be presented Friday evening

at a reception at The Wynfrey Hotel. Smith will give the keynote address at the author's conference (8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) on Saturday at The Library Theater in Hoover. Other writers on the program include **Susan Choi** (*The Foreign Student*), **Carter Coleman** (*The Volunteer*), **Hal Crowther** (*Unarmed and Dangerous*), **Tony Horwitz**

(*Confederates in the Attic*), **Phyllis Perry** (*Stigmata*), and **June Spence** (*Missing Women and Other Stories*).

A musical production of Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies* premiered in the fall at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Singer/songwriters, **Tommy Goldsmith**, **Tom House** and **Karren Pell**, who collaborated with playwright Eric Schmiiedl, will present selections from the production at 2:30 and 7 p.m. on Sunday. At 4:30, the author and musicians will discuss the creative process used in writing *Fair and Tender Ladies*. Tickets for the full conference are \$65 from The Library Theatre Box Office, 205/444-7888. For more information, call 205/444-7820.



Lee Smith



Tom Franklin



Phyllis Alesia Perry

JACKSONVILLE, MARCH 6

### **ON THE BRINK**

If you don't know their names already, you will soon. The writers featured at this year's On The Brink writers' conference at Jacksonville State University are rising stars. African-American writer of the "Mama" mysteries, **Nora DeLoach**, has signed a four-book contract with Bantam. William Morrow is bringing out **Tom Franklin's** novella and short stories, *Poachers*, next summer and his first novel the following year. **Phyllis Alesia Perry's** first novel, *Stigmata*, is brand new from Hyperion and **Daniel Wallace's** *Big Fish* from Algonquin. Other names to know and writers to meet "on the brink" are **Tony Earley**, **Judson Mitcham** (*The Sweet Everlasting*), **Rick Shelton** (*Hoggle's Christmas*), and **Gwyn Rubio** (*Icy Sparks*).

"Damn, Boy, I Don't Believe I'd 'a Told That" is the conference theme which will be introduced by JSU historian Hardy Jackson. The decidedly casual presentation will include two panels of writers reading and discussing their work followed by book signings, with an informal luncheon in between. At \$30, including lunch, this is a great deal. Call Gena Christopher (256/782-5856) or Steven Whitton



(256/782-5414) in the JSU English department for more information.

**BIRMINGHAM, MARCH 12 & 13**

**WRITING TODAY**

Alabama's oldest and largest writing conference is Writing Today at Birmingham-Southern College. This is the place for professional and aspiring writers to get an infusion of enthusiasm as well as practical information on publishing.

You'll find national prizewinning novelists, poets, playwrights, historians and literary scholars on the program. Added to this group are influential agents and publishing executives. An early survey of likely faculty members for the 1999 conference includes **Connie Mae Fowler, Richard North Patterson**, (*Degree of Guilt, Private Screening*), playwrights **Rebecca Gilman** and **Keith Glover, David Sedaris, Judith Paterson, Rod Davis** (senior editor of *Cooking Light* magazine), and **Irene Dunlap** and **Patty Hanson** of the *Chicken Soup* books.

The 1999 Grand Master has yet to be announced. Among the notable past Grand Masters are Erskine Caldwell, Donald Justice, Eudora Welty, Edward Albee, William Styron, James Dickey and last year, Horton Foote.

The prestige of Writing Today is also enhanced by its association with the Hackney Awards which are presented each year during the conference. For more information, contact the Special Events Office of Birmingham-Southern College, Martha Andrews Ross, director. Phone 205/226-4921 or 1-800-523-5793 or write: Special Events Director, Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, AL 35254.



Judith Paterson

**FLORENCE, MARCH 25-26**

**15TH ANNUAL UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA WRITER'S FESTIVAL**

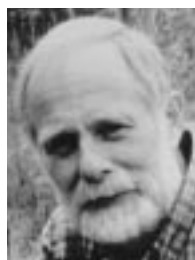
**Anne George, Jesse Lee Kercheval** and **Ronald Wallace** are the featured authors for this year's Festival. It's a simple, straightforward program that offers an unexcelled opportunity to get to know an author and enjoy his or her work. The events begin Friday afternoon with an open reading, followed by "an evening of mystery" with



Anne George



Jessie Lee Kercheval



Ronald Wallace

Agatha Award-winning **Anne George**, author of the Southern Sisters mysteries from Avon.

On Saturday morning, **Jesse Lee Kercheval** will read from *Space*, her memoir of growing up in Florida during the moon race. A professor of English at the University of Wisconsin where she directs the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing, Kercheval is the author of *The Dogeater*, a story collection; *The Museum*, a novel; *Building Fiction*, a book on writing; and *World as Dictionary*, poetry. In the afternoon she will conduct a master class on writing memoirs, limited to 15 participants.

**Ronald Wallace** will read at 11 a.m. on Saturday. Wallace has directed the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin since 1975. His sixth collection of poetry, *The Uses of Adversity*, was published in 1998 by the University of Pittsburgh Press. His more than 600 poems and two dozen short stories have appeared in major publications such as *The American Poetry Review*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Paris Review*.

The Writer's Festival is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Lynne Burris Butler, Department of English, University of North Alabama, Florence, AL 35632-0001; 205/765-4238. Call the department early to participate in the open reading or the master class. Dr. Earl Gardner (256/765-4228) is the person to call about teacher in-service credits.

**FAIRHOPE, APRIL 9 & 10**

**THE GULF COAST ASSOCIATION OF CREATIVE WRITING TEACHERS CONFERENCE**

It's "an annual celebration of literature" when creative writing teachers come together. Writers, teachers and graduate students share their latest works of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. "The last few meetings have involved more than 200 hundred teachers and writers from over 30 universities across the country," said **Jim White**, head of the University of South Alabama creative writing program. The meeting is held at the USA Baldwin County Campus, 111 St. James Street in Fairhope. Contact the Creative Writing Program at the USA English Department (334/460-6146) for more information.

**ATHENS, APRIL 10**

**ELEVENTH ANNUAL WRITERS' CONFERENCE ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Howard Bahr, Lynne Burris Butler** and **Tony Moffit** are the featured writers for the Eleventh Annual Writers' Conference at Athens State University. **Bahr's** *The Black Flower: A Novel of the Civil War* was published by Owl Books, 1998. **Moffit** is an acclaimed Native



*"writers in our region who are producing some of today's most interesting and affecting poetry, fiction and nonfiction."*

American poet from Pueblo, Colorado. **Butler**, a University of North Alabama English professor, has published fiction, creative nonfiction and scholarly work. She is the author of three volumes of poetry, *The Dream Thief*, *Forever is Easy*, and *Sunday Afternoons with Tolstoy*, which was awarded the Blue Lynx Prize in Poetry from Lynx House Press, Eastern Washington University.



Howard Bahr



Lynne Burris Butler

The modest \$25 fee for Athens State's one-day event includes a keynote luncheon. The conference will be from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 10, in McCandless

Auditorium. Contact Dr. Penne J. Laubenthal for a brochure. Send email to [laubepj@athens.edu](mailto:laubepj@athens.edu) or call the English Department at Athens State University, 256/233-8273. Preregistration is required.

MONROEVILLE, MAY 6-8

## SECOND ANNUAL ALABAMA WRITERS SYMPOSIUM

Monroeville gave a writers' conference last year, its first, and did it up right, warmly welcoming 300 participants who swarmed the town and the campus of Alabama Southern Community College. Scholarly and popular programs were offered, including readings by memoirist **Rick Bragg** and novelist **Mark Childress**. The courthouse production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was overbooked and conference goers unable to attend received a fine consolation prize: an autographed copy of the book. The high point of the Symposium was the presentation of the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer 1998. **Albert Murray** (*The Omni Americans*, *Stomping the Blues*, and *Train Whistle Guitar*) was the first Harper Lee recipient. **Claudia Durst Johnson** received the first Eugene Current-Garcia Award for a Distinguished Alabama Scholar. The winners for 1999 will be announced soon.

This year's Symposium will begin Thursday evening with dinner and a reception to meet the authors and scholars. Friday's events include the awards luncheon. On Saturday **Marva Collins** will be the luncheon keynote speaker. A Monroeville native and nationally acclaimed educator, Collins is author and editor of *Values, Lighting the Candle of Excellence: A Practical Guide for the Family*.

Under the theme "Alabama—The Place," a fine line-up of writers promises to continue Monroeville's success.

Presenting writers include poet **Rodney Jones** (*The Troubles that Men Start Are Women*, *Apocalyptic Narrative and Other Poems*, and *Transparent Gestures*), **Frye Gaillard** (*Southern Voices: Profiles and Other Stories*, *The Heart of Dixie* and



Frye Gaillard



Dennis Covington



Vicki Covington

his latest, *As Long as the Waters Flow: Native Americans in the South and East*), and *Southern Accents* columnist and author of *In My Father's Garden*, **Lee May**. Also first-time novelist **Phyllis Perry** (*Stigmata*), **Dennis Covington** (*Lizard*, *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*); **Vickie Covington** (*Gathering Home*, *Bird of Paradise* and *The Last Hotel for Women*); and **Carolyn Haines** (*Touched*).

Scholars on the program include **Don Noble**, University of Alabama English professor; **Larry Allums**, University of Mobile; Auburn University history professor and author **Wayne Flynt**; **Frank Toland**, Tuskegee University; **Nancy Anderson**, Auburn University Montgomery English professor; **Robbie Walker**, AUM dean of liberal arts; and **John Hafner**, Spring Hill College.

Preregistration will begin in February. For more information, call 334/575-3156, ext. 223 or write Alabama Southern Community College, P.O. Box 2000, Monroeville, AL 36461.



# Lest We Forget:

## OUR COMMUNAL OBLIGATION TO THE LEGACIES OF MARGARET WALKER ALEXANDER AND JOHN HENRIK CLARKE

By Robbie Jean Walker

Preserving the cultural legacy, strongly endorsed by Margaret Walker Alexander and John Henrik Clarke, now becomes the province of teachers and scholars across the country, particularly those in Alabama. These illustrious purveyors of culture were both born in Alabama in the same year (1915), Clarke in Union Springs and Margaret Walker Alexander in Birmingham. Both felt that teachers, historians, and scholars in every generation had the obligation of preserving the cultural heritage. Their deaths, both in 1998, now place the mantle of responsibility on Alabamians to keep alive the history and culture of the region and its people.

These native Alabamians followed different paths in preserving the cultural heritage. Clarke became known and revered primarily for his editorship and collection of the best works of African Americans in history and the arts. Alexander primarily used her creative powers to promote an understanding and appreciation of the culture with the same intensity that Clarke used to assemble and distribute. This distinction, like most distinctions, simplifies somewhat the totality of their contributions since both writers occasionally wandered into other genres to keep the cultural story intact.

John Henrik Clarke, historian, editor, and philosopher, was a vigilant observer of past and present. He wanted to keep alive the facts of slavery, as horrible as they are. This



effort and other activist projects were perceived by him as instructive, not divisive. Whether serving as editor or commentator, Clarke sought to present the realities to American society, trusting the wisdom of the society to assess the value and implications of them.

John Henrik Clarke assembled and edited a short story collection representing the best works of the century

by African Americans. He also assembled writers and critics to counter what he perceived to be inaccurate representations in William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. In the introduction to *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond*, Clarke quoted the apt observations of Herbert Aptheker, himself a noted preserver of the culture: "History's potency is mighty. . . . Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the history writing on the American Negro People." Essays Clarke collected and edited to note problematic features of Styron's work demonstrate his determination to keep the history of African Americans accurate and in proper context.

Clarke dedicated the *Black American Short Stories* to his daughter, further illustrating his commitment to preserving the legacy. He considered it important to note that Africans did not come to this country devoid of traditions or oral culture. He considered "A Century of the Best" (the subheading for the short story collection) to follow the tradition of slave narratives and subsequent pleas for a united country, tolerant of diverse literary voices attempt-

*"My Daddy wanted me to be a farmer, feel the smoothness of Alabama clay  
and become one of the first blacks in my town to own land.*

*But, I was worried about my history being caked with southern clay,  
and I subscribed to a different kind of teaching in my bones and in my spirit."*

JOHN HENRIK CLARKE

“*Like Religion, the Poetry of a People, their Art, Songs, and Literature,*  
*come from the deep recesses of the unconscious...*  
*the collective body of our ancestral memories,*”

MARGARET WALKER ALEXANDER

ing to dramatize life as the artists saw it.

In his essay “The Origin of Growth of Afro-American Literature” he noted the “now flourishing literary talent of James Baldwin,” emphasizing the evolution—not the instant miracle—of emerging literary art. At the end of this article Clarke argued, “It is time for the black writer to draw upon the universal values in his people’s experience, just as Sean O’Casey and Sholem Aleichem drew upon the universal values in the experiences of the Irish and Jews.” And Margaret Walker Alexander gave eloquent testimonial to this concept in her life’s works, embracing Clarke’s challenge to let the writing of African Americans become “a celebration of survival.”

The latest issue of *Jet Magazine* (December 14, 1998) offers a testimonial to Margaret Walker Alexander. Many readers of *Jet* will not read the established newspapers of the day; this reality increases the responsibility of educators to perpetuate the legacy. The continuity of a culture derives from the wide and continuing distribution and emphasis on a history that should never be forgotten. Walker’s works include *Jubilee*, a poem “For My People,” *How I Write Jubilee*, *Richard Wright: Daemonic Genius*, as well as other poems and essays. She was also a popular speaker; in fact, the quotation prefacing the *Jet* article comes from her 1968 speech before the National Urban League in New Orleans.


No doubt better known by the general public than was John Henrik Clarke, Margaret Walker Alexander’s writing ethos shares a similar aspiration: the perpetuation of the culture of African Americans true to the historical record. Though her numerous awards and honors bespeak a life well lived and a dedication to the arts and humanities, the legacy will rest in the hands of responsible educators and scholars who will preserve conscientiously the cultural and artistic heritage.

“For My People” (1942) received distinction and publication in the *Yale University Series of Younger Poets*. The penultimate section of that poem reads as follows:

for my people standing staring  
 trying to fashion a better way  
 from confusion, from hypocrisy  
 and misunderstanding,  
 trying to fashion a world that will  
 hold all the people, all the faces,  
 all the adams and eves and their  
 countless generations.

This plea, this affirmation is indicative of Margaret Walker Alexander’s commitment to decency and the preservation of records that will illuminate and instruct future generations.

Thus, the ultimate contribution of John Henrik Clarke (1915-1998) and Margaret Walker Alexander (1915-1998) is their plea for continuity of the culture. Educators and scholars must perpetuate this legacy in classrooms, books, articles, and in the

most unlikely places so that people outside academia will also remember these two great voices, silenced in the same year, and dedicate themselves to invoking the wisdom and vision of these outstanding Alabamians at every opportunity. 

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*Robbie Jean Walker is Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University Montgomery.*



# Chalkville Girls: “Writing Our Stories”

“Writing Our Stories” the creative writing violence prevention program which the Writers’ Forum conducted at the Alabama Department of Youth Services (DYS) school at Mt. Meigs during the 1997-98 school year has been expanded to include the Chalkville campus, an all-girls facility. The 14 girls in **Priscilla Hancock Cooper’s** creative writing class come from all over the state; Chalkville is the last stop short of Julia Tutwiler women’s prison for these 14- to 18-year-olds. Their backgrounds may include drugs, abuse, theft, and violence, but Cooper sees each student as a clean slate, a young woman she hopes will use her time at Chalkville to turn her life around.



Priscilla Hancock Cooper

For many of the girls it is a new and nurturing experience to be part of a small, trusting group where diverse opinions are accepted. Accustomed to confrontation, they are learning to communicate differences in other ways. It’s a challenge not to hurt each other’s feelings. “My main focus is in giving them an opportunity to write, so we do lots of reading and sharing,” Cooper said. “They’re kids like any other kids; they want someone to listen to their ideas without making judgement. We have a rule that nothing we say in class is spoken outside of class, and everyone takes it seriously.”

A performance poet as well as an educator, Cooper started the class with poetry. She plans to work with song lyrics, including blues and rap, and to move on to fiction. Other writers will be visiting the class in the spring. The girls are very prolific,

Cooper says, and seem to express feelings easily through writing. They write about the homes and families they left, about their boyfriends, parents, children. They write about Chalkville, especially the loss of privacy, the structured environment. For some it is the safest place they’ve ever known.

“Writing Our Stories” is something really special for these students. I just wish more could experience it,” said classroom teacher Janet Dixon. While the class size is limited and a waiting list exists, there is a good bit of turnover, too. Students rotate out of the system, and out of the class, and newcomers join the group.

The students’ enthusiasm and participation are significant to Dixon and to Walt Valentine, counselor. “I really like *Open the Door*, the book that came out of the Mt. Meigs program,” he said. “I’m looking forward to seeing what these students produce.”

## PROGRAM BRINGS RESOURCES TO DYS

On December 7 and 8, writing expert Peter Stillman taught in-service workshops for the Mt. Meigs and Chalkville campuses. Stillman, editor-in-chief of Calendar Islands Publishers (Portland, Maine), has more than 30 years of experience in teacher-training and writing for the English education community.


Stillman told the group of teachers, counselors, psychologists, and other staff members at both workshops that people the world over would be better human beings “if they just took time to write every day.” Inviting professionals to consider using writing in a variety of settings—classrooms, journal assignments, and therapy groups—Stillman offered numerous writing prompts.

He encouraged the use of “free writing”—nonstop writing on any subject for five minutes—as a way to loosen up students for further journal assignments. He also offered the notion of dialogue journals, in which student and teacher enter into a written discussion, passing journals back and forth.

Stillman told a number of anecdotes of his own teaching experiences, including one in which a student offered to show him his “other journal,” written in handwriting half the size of the journal the young man had turned in for a grade. It contained heartbreakingly honest stories of his troubled life. “This was the real journal,” Stillman said.

“We learn from our journals. We can learn something by writing in a journal on the last day of our life,” Stillman mused. Throughout both workshops, participants wrote and shared their writings. Stillman commented that both groups produced “truly amazing” work.

Counselor Walt Valentine has worked with Chalkville students for 21 years and has often found writing helpful in reaching students. He recalled a girl who was fascinated by poems he had written and attached to his office door. “She started writing and for the first time she was able to reveal—and deal with—feelings about her difficult home life and her father’s death,” he said. Valentine said Stillman’s workshop gave him good ideas and a lot to think about.

Free writing is one idea he will put into practice. “I’m going to bring an egg timer and have the students write freely for three minutes at the beginning of the session and three minutes at the end. It will help us see where we’ve come from beginning to end, and from session to session.” 

# REVIEWS

**JAY LAMAR**  
Book Review Editor

## *Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!*

by Fannie Flagg  
Random House, 1998  
467 pp. Cloth, \$24

Like all good humor, *Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!* comes from the heart and soul of realism. First, Fannie Flagg knows her people inside and out. Second, she is not afraid of their dark sides. Third, she writes like an angel.

*Baby Girl* has a narrative drive that never slows. And around each corner is the human predicament staring you in the face. Dena, the lonely little girl who grows up with her widowed mother in apartment hotels across America, becomes a television interviewer. She is rich and popular, sad and lonely, and her relationships are so human they become humorous in their reality, like when she calls her college friend Sookie to ask "What does it feel like to be loyal?" She is so wonderfully insecure, you love her—in spite of herself.

When it comes to love, wouldn't you know? Flagg does it perfectly. You forget you're reading. You're there. You are pulling so hard for this woman and this guy, and it is so messed up with wonder and regret and ill-at-ease tension, it becomes sad and funny, and damned if even I didn't get teary-eyed. And just when that happens, you want to strangle Dena Nordstrom! How dare she!

She runs away, working, until... Then she is returned to the scene of her early childhood, Elmwood Springs, Missouri, where she is still "Baby Girl." In early chapters, the people there are near cliché. But with each new scene they breathe with faults and foibles. They are good, steady, hard-scrabble people, but even their charm cannot pull Dena from her chosen path. And even the perfect chapter—a visit with Tennessee Williams in New Orleans—cannot turn her around. She is still unsure, afraid, dreaming strange dreams.

The writing is smooth, the drama tense. The character deepens as secrets

from her past are revealed one after the other with each twist and turn of the plot, proving Flagg the fine, sophisticated, superior novelist that she has become. *Baby Girl* is one whale of a tale!

Wayne Greenhaw's *To Touch a Rainbow: A Reminiscence* will be published in the fall of 1999 by Black Belt Press.

***Big Fish***  
by Daniel Wallace  
Algonquin Press, 1998  
180 pp. Cloth, \$17.95

Fathers and sons are never an easy mix. It's never easy being a father, never easy being a son. There are too many things to know, too many things to discern. So where can we discover each other? Often through the stories we tell, often in what others express about us.



Stories about Edward Bloom are what infuse *Big Fish*, a first novel by Birmingham-reared Daniel Wallace. Those stories are recounted by Edward's son William, who is loved without bounds by the man he calls "smiling, mysterious, mythic, an unknown quantity: my dad."

Home for Edward Bloom has always been "a stop on the way to somewhere else."

Moving through Alabama, from Ashland to Auburn to Birmingham, Edward touches lives. People remember him, his kindness, his tales, his jokes. Yet Edward always returns to his wife and son.

And William thinks he barely knows his father. He spends the early portions of *Big Fish* recording memory after memory of the man he wants to understand. Many of the stories he passes along are exasperating. But then we realize the joy of this small book: William may just know his father better than he thinks. He *is* his father as he spins tales about Edward, a man at home in water, a man whose great moments have centered on water, a big fish. As the son recognizes that the father can be both loving parent and

mysterious stranger (a man, William tells us, who makes "cameo yet heroic appearances in my life"), he also recognizes his old man's legacy: "At any time, at the drop of a hat, he could really break me up."

William accepts his father. In an exquisite final scene, William realizes that his own quest must end. He must set his father free because "the world no longer held the magic that allowed him to live grandly within it." He understands that he has known his father as best he could.

*Big Fish* is a small volume, but it is a grand work. It is a book to have near at hand to reread, to take comfort in, to treasure. And Daniel Wallace is to be embraced for the joy, the humanity, and the exhilaration his book will bring, especially to fathers and sons.

Steven Whitton is a professor of English at Jacksonville State University, and the founder of the Southern Playwrights Competition and of *On the Brink*, an annual conference on emerging Southern authors.

***My Last Days as Roy Rogers***  
by Pat Cunningham Devoto  
Warner Books, 1998  
352 pp. Cloth, \$20

Much like the big fish Tabitha "Tab" Rutland and her friend Maudie

May caught in a deep channel of the muddy Tennessee, I was hooked by the third chapter of Pat Cunningham Devoto's *My Last Days as Roy Rogers*, a coming-of-age novel set in North Alabama. The book chronicles life in a small Southern town during one of the "polio summers" of the 1950s.

Devoto's sense of place is well established—we can see Tab's kudzu-covered hideout, the orderly town of Bainbridge with its front-porch gossips and its back-roads moonshiners, its smelly fish camps, and its red dirt farms. The place is familiar from the start.

But Devoto's strongest talent lies in her creation of living and breathing



characters whose lives are intertwined in spite of race and class differences. Tab Rutland, a ten-year-old tomboy and the novel's narrator, moves through the hot summer with her best new friend, Maudie May, a young black girl who bosses her siblings—look-alike little boys called “the Brothers”—with one hand and creates an elaborate hideout with the other, barely hiding her longing to go to school to know things, to become “a famous teacher.”

And Tab, with a ten-year-old's confusions about the murky world of adults with its social constraints and contradictions, spends the summer learning this week's rules about how to avoid polio and stay out of the iron lung, and how to comprehend the darker side of her small Southern town, a town which only partly accepts Tab's “Yankee” mother, who doesn't know how to behave properly since she is from up North in Tennessee.

The novel's cast of characters, from the white-gloved Mrs. Grace Poovey and the proper members of the “Ladies Help League” to the earthy Miss Maydean, owner of a run-down fish camp, rise from the pages of Devoto's book and become real people we know. And, like real people, some of these characters change their lives, some of them lose their lives, and the rest struggle with whatever life sends them.

*My Last Days as Roy Rogers* is a fine first novel and leaves us looking forward to Devoto's next offering.

*Beth Thames* is an English instructor at Calhoun Community College in Huntsville and a freelance writer.

***Treasure of Panther Peak***  
by Aileen Kilgore Henderson  
Milkweed Editions, 1998  
184 pp. Cloth, \$15.95; Paper, \$6.95

As in her earlier novels, Aileen Kilgore Henderson blends suspenseful adventure with deft evocation of particular setting in *Treasure of Panther Peak*. The twelve-year-old hero, Page Williams, unwillingly moves with her teacher-mother from Alabama to the Big Bend area of Texas. Mrs. Williams is escaping an abusive husband. Page makes friends with others at the one-room, sixteen-student school in the National Park and grows to love the mountain country, especially its animal life: horses, a “tame” panther, even visiting skunks.

Set in the early 1950s (when

author Henderson herself went from Alabama to teach at Panther Junction school), details such as having no phones and mention of earlier Indian inhabitants are historical. The action has contemporary appeal: Page and her friend Allis being caught in a canyon during a sudden storm; malicious boys loosing horses, a few to their deaths, from the corral. Noteworthy is the way the author blends Page's dream of treasure, based on the legends she has read, with Mrs. Williams' creative manner of teaching basic astronomy.

Henderson, who now lives in Brookwood, is vice president of the Guild of Professional Writers for Children. She has volunteered at a home for abused women and children. Previous works are the award-winning *The Summer of the Bonepile Monster* (1995), set in Alabama, and *The Monkey Thief* (1997); she has recently completed a fourth novel.

*Joan Nist is professor emerita of children's literature at Auburn University.*

***The Boat***  
by Tom Kelly  
The Lyons Press, 1998  
152 pp. Cloth, \$22.95

This book begins with the author in a duck blind in Baldwin County, Alabama, contemplating, among other things, the boat that brought him there. It is a reproduction of the boats that first appeared in those coastal marshes in the late 1890s. This one is made of fiberglass, bought to replace one made by him from juniper some thirty or so years previously.

The story line is a memoir somewhat loosely based on the construction and service of that original boat, with digressions, flashbacks, and running commentary. The commentary especially is important because there are facts and premises that establish the context. For example, the specific gravity of juniper, the economics of logging longleaf pine near the turn of the century, and the Riparian characteristics of certain rivers and streams on the Gulf Coast are only a few examples of things you have to know about. It is also important to understand the aesthetics and metaphysics of field



artillery, elements of British common law, and the moral and ethical paradox faced by a lid drinker in a wet-dry election.

What does all of this have to do with a boat, admittedly not built to what some would consider even reasonable standards of craftsmanship, and ultimately passed on for one dollar and other valuable considerations? Well, for example, in the final stages of construction, someone knowledgeable regarding the finer points of boat building was leading up to a dismissive comment (not the lid drinker; he kept his thoughts to himself), but Kelly only had to mention that he had commanded a Firing Battery (both words capitalized) while his potential critic had been in service battery (both words lower case). As you might guess, that preemptive strike ended the discussion.

Or maybe you didn't guess. Still, that's not really a problem because when you come to such points in the narrative, Kelly has already laid everything out. As when he and his friend run into a hornet's nest on the boat's maiden voyage, who is somehow destined to get stung? You will not even have to guess. Kelly has such an engaging conversational style that even the more unlikely connections to the larger universe seem not only plausible but essential. *The Boat* is a fine piece of writing.

*Jim Buford is an author, educator, and avid reader whose column on Southern literature runs weekly in the Montgomery Advertiser.*

***Secret Pleasures: A Journey in My Head***  
by Tom Fitzpatrick  
Strawtown Press, 1998  
276 pp. Paper, \$12.95

This exuberant collection of 55 essays by a retired Montgomery attorney covers a wide range of subject matter, from the forewarned “Bawdy Tales” of the subtitle to in-depth analyses of plays presented at the Alabama



Shakespeare Festival. Allusions to writers and literary works abound, even in articles on other topics.

The author's narrative style blends erudition with humor. For

instance, in "The Story Behind *Peter Pan*:" "At the University of Edinburgh [James Matthew] Barrie flunked lunch, that is, he was shy and unable to connect with his fellows." And this provocative opener: "June 19 is the anniversary of an event that improbably links former Governor Guy Hunt with the French Impressionist Edouard Manet..."

One incisive piece instructs the reader in how to "scent the occult," as poems by Robert Browning, Emily Dickinson, and Robert Frost are plumbed for hidden erotic content.

When he was five years old, Tom Fitzpatrick, who has spent most of his life in a wheelchair, was treated for polio at the famous Warm Springs Foundation in Georgia. An account of that experience concludes with his being taken one evening to dinner at the Pine Mountain Inn restaurant, and this eloquent sentence: "No wrack of memory survives the meal except for the drama of my first taste of wine, but I well recall that through the glass wall enclosing the dining room at the rear, one could see miles and miles of tree tops, as well as faint, wavering lights from isolated homes scattered throughout the valley, most of which seemed to be conquering the black night surrounding them."

*Julia Oliver, a former and founding board member of the Alabama Writers' Forum, is a Montgomery writer.*

***Images of America: Etowah County***  
by Bob Scarboro & Mike Goodson  
Arcadia Press, 1998  
128 pp. Paper, \$16.99

***Images of America: Calhoun County***  
by Kimberly O'Dell  
Arcadia Press, 1998  
128 pp. Paper, \$16.99

These two county photographic histories are part of the Images of America series by Arcadia Publishing. According to the publisher, the series is designed to chronicle the history of diverse communities across the country. Each volume contains 128 pages and is illustrated with more than two hundred black and white photographs. The photographs vary in quality from muddy to outstanding defin-



ition and depict a variety of people, places, buildings, events, businesses, and spectacular accidents.

The Etowah County volume is organized into eight chapters as follows: Towns, Businesses, Pastimes, Industries, Civil Service, Schools, Transportation, and People. Chapters are not prefaced by any historical overviews as in the Calhoun County book and there is no bibliography.

The chapter organization works for both books, although I prefer the more generic outline of the Etowah County volume. The author of the Etowah book states that many of the photographs included in the publication were taken by Adolph Lebourg, but, with a few exceptions, images are not identified. The source for all photographs is given in the Calhoun County volume. Both volumes suffer for lack of a comprehensive index.

Despite individual deficiencies, both volumes have great value in disseminating information about each county's history. However, they should be considered as a supplement to any existing well-documented county history.

*Doug Purcell is executive director of the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, based in Eufaula.*

***The Alabama Baby Indestructible Doll 1899-1932***  
by Bonnie Gamble Ballinger  
Pineywood Creek Press, 1997  
90 pp. Paper, \$16.95

With the publication of *The Alabama Baby Indestructible Doll 1899-1932*, "Alabama Baby" doll enthusiasts throughout the United States finally realized the nostalgic development of this special and sought-after collector's item.

The Alabama Baby was the product of Ella Louise Gauntt Smith (1858-1932). Settling in Roanoke, Alabama, in the mid-1880s to teach art and music, Smith developed a plaster of Paris technique for the design of the "unbreakable" doll which



became a patented, marketable item. The remarkable Ella Smith Doll has become a rare collectible and has been reproduced by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The book contains chapters on the doll factory, the production and selling of the doll, detailed description of doll features and clothing, with photos and illustrations that enhance the narrative.

From an exciting, prosperous beginning to a tragic ending, the Ella Smith Doll story is captivating. The clear, flowing narration moves the reader from a concise history of the rag doll to the emergence of Smith's creativity and the development of her doll industry. It is a beautiful, well-organized book. It is also history and no doubt will be welcomed by librarians and doll collectors, but the story is not just for doll enthusiasts.

The author spent considerable time researching and writing this book at her home on Lake Wedowee. As a serious doll collector, her historical knowledge on the subject contributes to the book.

*Jimmy New, a former music instructor at Southern Union Community College, is a freelance writer, beekeeper, and sculptor in Wedowee.*

***1999 Writer's Market***  
**The Electronic Edition**  
Kirsten C. Holm, Editor  
Writer's Digest Books, 1998  
1112 pp. plus disk; Paper, \$49.99

***1999 Poet's Market***  
Chantelle Bentley, Editor  
Writer's Digest Books, 1998  
604 pp. Paper, \$22.99

Whether you're a new writer or a seasoned professional, consider adding the *1999 Writer's Market*, electronic edition, to your desk and your desktop. The edition includes both a 1112-page trade paperback and a CD-ROM (Windows), so finding places to sell your work is easy. Browse the book for briefs on 1,170 book publishers, 1,534 consumer magazines, 464 trade magazines, and 250 script buyers. Go to the CD-ROM for the full text of the writing guidelines for each publisher. The CD-ROM is searchable and includes the *Writer's Encyclopedia* and a handy utility for tracking submissions.

Completely updated, the 1999 edition includes nearly 1,000 new markets and several thousand returning markets, all royalty paying; vanity presses are gone from the listings. The format





remains clean. Books and magazines are separated. Magazines are categorized logically. Handy icons show at a glance if a listing is new, whether it accepts submissions only from agents, and the range of payment. Publishers who buy from freelancers most often are highlighted with a star. The edition also has a section on agents; first-person articles on how to get published and the business of writing; and interviews with successful, best-selling authors.

For poets, the sister publication, *1999 Poet's Market*, includes helpful insider reports from poets, editors, and contest winners. No CD-ROM with this regular edition, but the book lists 1,800 places to publish: books, journals, chapbooks, and contests. A resources section provides information on conferences, workshops, organizations, publications, and websites. Editor Chantelle Bentley rounds out this impressive package with a detailed section on rights, cover letters, manuscript formatting, contracts, and manuscript tracking.

*Carmel Thomaston is a freelance writer and former associate editor of the Lee County Eagle in Auburn.*

### **1999 Song Writer's Market**

**Tara A. Horton, Editor**  
**Writer's Digest Books, 1998**  
**522 pp. Paper \$22.99**



Featuring hundreds of resources and thousands of phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and websites, the *1999 Song Writer's Market* could keep a song writer busy for many months finding new outlets for his or her work. For

artists new to the business of music marketing, the first section covers the basics, and it is organized to make the process and the overwhelming amount of information a little less intimidating. The markets listings are concise and easy to scan, with icons that indicate new, Canadian, and international markets. What to send, how and where to send it, contacts, types of music they're seeking, types of music they've released, when to follow up, and who they've signed are all included in each listing.

The resources section provides listings of organizations, workshops and

## **STUDENT WORK PUBLISHED IN HECTOR STREET**

"Come to this volume with an open mind: there is nothing amateurish about the quality of the writing in the inaugural issue of Alabama's first literary magazine dedicated to serving the high schools of the state," wrote Anita Miller Garner about *Hector Street, Alabama's High School Literary Journal*. Garner, a fiction writer who teaches English at



the University of North Alabama, knows student work and is the chairman of the AWF Literary Arts Awards for high school students.

According to Garner, *Hector Street* editor

Joseph Halli has done "an incredible job" of pulling together from all over the state some amazingly fine examples of creative nonfiction, drama, fiction, and poetry. He had the help of fellow students Christopher Guin, fiction editor; Brooke McClelland, poetry editor; and Lauren Bryant, drama editor. From more than 100 submissions, the greatest number of them poems, they selected about 40 pieces from students in 13 public and private high schools.

*Hector Street* will be published annually and accepts manuscripts year-round. Submissions must be received by June 10 to be considered for that year's publication. Work must be from students who are in

high school in Alabama the year of submission and should have no identification except the title of the work. Send works in duplicate, with a SASE and cover sheet with name, address, phone number, school, year of graduation, genre, and title to *Hector Street*, P.O. Box 71628, Tuscaloosa, AL 35407. To purchase a copy, send five dollars in cash or a check made out to *Hector Street* to the above address.

*Crescendo*  
 by Nikkita Kind

Sometimes  
 I listen to songs  
 without hearing the words that  
 pull me back into dresses  
 strong with starch and lace,  
 into porch swings and pianos whose  
 keys sang with the touch of your  
 fingertips.

Days after December  
 when trains were distant whistles  
 we went to the lake to skip stones  
 and  
 bury our thought in red mud,  
 our feet in leaves left by autumn.

In March  
 we gathered at your grave  
 as women sang sober sopranos.  
 The weight of words fell  
 like the lilacs in your hair,  
 like cricket symphonies in newborn  
 sunlight.

And when breathing was not an  
 option  
 but an interlude into the next song,  
 the next breath  
 I'd close my eyes,  
 resurrecting your voice.

From *Hector Street*

conferences, retreats and colonies, contests and awards, grants, publications, and websites. In her introduction, the editor shares words of encouragement from professionals in the field: "Just keep writing. Keep trying. Keep working. Persevere." A song writer who applies the same level of perseverance and thoroughness that went into the compilation of the *Song Writer's Market* will find it a very useful tool.

*Musician and song writer Becky Mullen is the performing arts program manager for the Alabama State Council on the Arts.*

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

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CONTESTS

### AWF LITERARY ARTS AWARDS

See pages 22-23 in this issue of *First Draft* for information and an entry form.

### YOUNG WRITERS'

### LITERARY AWARDS

**Postmark deadline January 15, 1999.**

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

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

**SCHOLARSHIPS TO CONFERENCES**  
**Entries must be postmarked during January or February 1999.**

Writers' Conferences & Festivals (WC&F) is conducting its annual competition to provide scholarships for emerging writers. Submissions in fiction, nonfiction and poetry will be

considered. Two scholarships of \$500 each will be applied to fees to attend any of the member conferences of WC&F, an association of conferences, colonies and festivals for writers. For a complete directory of members, visit [www.gmu.edu/departments/awp/wcf](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/awp/wcf) or purchase a directory for \$7 from the Associated Writing Programs. Write to: WC&F Directory, Associated Writing Programs, Tallwood House, MS 1E3, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030. Make checks payable to Associated Writing Programs. For contest guidelines, write to WC&F Scholarship Program, P.O. Box 386, Amherst, MA 01004, Attention: Michael Pettit.

### PHILLIPS POETRY PRIZE

#### ANNOUNCED

**Postmark deadline January 31, 1999**

Manuscripts of 30-50 pages of poetry in any theme or form are being sought and should be submitted with a cover sheet bearing the poet's name, brief biography and contact information. A \$1,000 award will be given to the winner of the Richard Phillips Poetry Prize within 90 days of the postmark deadline. The winning manuscript will be published by the Phillips Publishing Co. in September 1999. Mail entries to The Richard Phillips Poetry Prize, P.O. Box 121, Watts, Oklahoma 74964.

### SOUP'S ON

**February 15, 1999**

Co-authors Jennifer Read Hawthorne and Marci Shimoff of the best-selling *Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul* and *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul* are looking for true and inspiring stories for their next book, *Chicken Soup for the Single Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Hearts and Rekindle the Spirits of Single People*. The best entry will earn

\$1200. Send stories from 200-1200 words to P.O. Box 1959, Dept. Contest, Fairfield, IA 52556 or fax to 515/472-7288 or email to [chicken-soup@lisco.com](mailto:chicken-soup@lisco.com). "Contest" must be written on entries. Guidelines are available by fax, email or at website [www.chickensoup-womanssoul.com](http://www.chickensoup-womanssoul.com). The authors are also accepting submissions for which writers will receive payment and a brief bio in the book.

### PLAYWRIGHT SEARCH

**Deadline February 15, 1999**

The Southern Playwrights Competition seeks to identify and encourage Southern playwrights. Winners have included *Make Haste Slowly* by D.K. Beyer (1989), *Play It As It Lies* by Granville Burgess (1990) and *Mustard Seed* (1998) by Kenneth Heaton. An award of \$1,000 will be presented to the first-prize winner, as well as a production by the Jacksonville State University Department of Drama. Playwrights must be native to or resident of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia or West Virginia. Plays must deal with the Southern experience. Entries must be original, full-length plays; no musicals or adaptations will be accepted. Include a synopsis. Request an official entry form from Steven J. Whitton, Department of English, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265-9982. Call 256/782-5411 or fax to 256/782-5441.

### FICTION FROM APPALACHIA

**Postmark deadline March 1, 1999**

*Now & Then* magazine's 1999 Appalachian Fiction Competition is accepting entries from authors who are from Appalachia or currently live

along the mountain chain from southern New York state to northern Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. In addition to cash prizes of \$500 and \$200 for first and second place, writers will have their winning stories published in the summer 1999 "Appalachian Lives" issue of *Now & Then*. The issue will focus on autobiographies and biographies, so all entries need to fit those topics. Submit up to two stories of no more than 3,000 words each.

For complete guidelines, write to *Now & Then's* Appalachian Fiction Competition, Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, East Tennessee State University, Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614-0556. Call 423/439-5348, or visit <http://cass.etsu.edu/n&t/contest.htm>

### **MONTGOMERY CONTESTS**

#### **Deadline March 3**

Information is available on the Creative Writers of Montgomery Poetry Competition and the Pen Women Writing Competition. The latter accepts entries in fiction, non-fiction, essay and poetry categories. Send SASE to Donna Jean Tennis, P.O. Box 230787, Montgomery, AL 36123-0787.

#### **\$1,000 POETRY CHAPBOOK AWARD**

#### **Postmark deadline March 15**

Anamnesis Press is sponsoring its 4th annual poetry chapbook award competition. The winner will receive a cash prize, certificate and 20 copies of the chapbook. Submit 20-30 pages of your best poems, typed or laser printed and single spaced with no more than one poem per page. Entries must include a table of contents and two title pages (only one should have your name and address on it.) Reading fee is \$15. Send a check or money order for \$15 and SASE for prize notification to Anamnesis Press, Poetry Chapbook Award, P.O. Box 51115, Palo Alto, CA 94303. The winner will be

announced in June. Manuscripts will not be returned.

### **CONCLAVE COLLECTS WINNERS**

#### **Postmark deadline June 1, 1999**

#### **(no entries accepted before May 1)**

Entries in the Alabama Writers' Conclave 1999 Writing Competition will be accepted in 15 categories including fiction, essays, poetry and one-act plays. Members pay a \$2 fee per entry; non-members pay \$3. There is no limit on the number of entries permitted, but entries must not be under consideration in another contest at the time of this competition. For complete entry information, write John Curbow, Contest Chairman; P.O. Box Box 277; Wetumpka, AL 36092. Send dues (\$15 annually) to Harriette Dawkins, Treasurer, 117 Hanover Road, Homewood, AL 35209.

### **CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS**

#### **HISPANIC PLAYWRIGHTS PROJECT**

#### **Postmark deadline January 15**

Latina/Latino writers are urged to submit plays for the 1999 workshop and summer reading program to be held in Costa Mesa, CA, June 17-27. New and unproduced plays are preferred, but previously produced plays that would benefit from further development may be considered. Musicals are not acceptable, nor are plays written completely in Spanish. Send script with a synopsis and bio to Juliette Carrillo, South Coast Repertory, P.O. Box 2197, Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197. Send SASE if you want the script returned. For more information call 714/708-5500, ext. 5405.

#### **SOUTHERN EXPERIMENTS**

#### **Postmark deadline February 1**

*New Orleans Review* is planning a special issue about "The Other South." Editors Bill Lavender and Ralph Adamo are seeking experimental poetry, fiction, nonfiction and graphic arts by southerners, as well

essays on southern writing and regionalism. Works selected will be published in an expanded issue next spring. Queries may be sent to [wtlmc@uno.edu](mailto:wtlmc@uno.edu), but submissions should be hard copies sent to: The Other South, *New Orleans Review*, Box 195, Loyola University, New Orleans, LA 70118.

#### **BLACK WARRIOR**

Published biannually, *Black Warrior Review* publishes contemporary fiction, poetry, reviews, essays, interviews, and photography. Each issue features a poetry chapbook by a major poet. Submissions are accepted any time. Write for guidelines: *Black Warrior Review*, P.O. Box 862936, Tuscaloosa, AL 35486-0027. Sample issues are available for \$8; one year subscriptions for \$14. Make check payable to the University of Alabama. Check the website, <http://www.sa.ua.edu/osm/bwr>

#### **NEW PLAYWRIGHTS SOUGHT**

The New Playwrights Program, an adjunct to the University of Alabama's M.F.A. program in playwriting and dramaturgy, welcomes submissions from unproduced, first time writers. Funded through the Gallaway Endowment, the program provides financial support for the development of new plays, including stipends, expenses, travel funds and other funding. All formats are welcome, from short one-acts to full-length productions and from traditional to post-modern. Dramas with dance are of particular interest. Musicals are also considered. Writers may submit a detailed query letter and synopsis and/or completed script. Include a properly-sized SASE with postage if you would like your script returned. Submissions are accepted each year between August 15 and April 15. For more information contact Dr. Paul Castagno, director, New Playwrights Program, UA Dept. of Theatre and Dance, P.O. Box 87239, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.

# CALENDAR

## QUARTERLY EVENTS

### January 15—Martin Luther King, Jr. Dinner, Montgomery

African scholar and educator **Dr. Asa Hilliard** will be the keynote speaker for the annual dinner sponsored by the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance (AAAAA) from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Governors House Hotel and Conference Center. Call 334/263-2787 for tickets.

### January 21—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

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

### January 21—Alabama Voices, Greensboro

**Robert Collins** will read from his work at 7:30 p.m. at the Hale County Public Library. Call Carolyn Hemstreet, 334/624-3409.

### February 4—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

**Lynn Emanuel** is the author of two collections of poetry, *Hotel Fiesta* and *The Dig*. She will read from her work at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall. Call 205/348-0766.

### February 4 & 5—Southern Cultures Celebration, Birmingham

Advent Episcopal Day School presents its fifth annual event for students and teachers. To register, call 205/252-2535.

### February 4-6—23rd Annual Symposium on English and American Literature,

sponsored by the UA English Department, Tuscaloosa. "Magical Muse: The Drama of Tennessee Williams" is the topic. For additional information contact symposium directors Ralph Voss, 205/348-8523 or Don Noble, 205/348-4507.

**February 9—Alabama Voices, Jasper**  
**Carolyn Haines** will read at 4 p.m. at the Walker College Campus of Beville State Community College. Call Marthanne Brown, 205/387-5115.

### February 12-13—The Writers' Colloquium, Auburn University Montgomery

The statewide annual AWF Associates Meeting will be held in conjunction with AUM's 7th Annual Writers' Colloquium. Telephone 334/242-4076, ext. 233.

### February 15—Reflections II: A Topical Study of Alabama History, Sylacauga

**Brooks Blevens**, author of *Cattle in the Cotton Fields: A History of Cattle Raising in Alabama*, will speak at 12 noon at the B.B. Comer Memorial Library. Call 256/249-0961.

### February 18—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

**Kate Braverman** is the author of four books of fiction and four poetry collections. She will read from her work at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall. Call 205/348-0766.

### February 25—BACHE Visiting Writers Series, Birmingham

**Anthony Grooms's** *Trouble No More: Stories* won the 1996 Lilian Smith Prize for Fiction. He has read at the National Black Arts Festival and other well-known venues. Grooms will read at 11 a.m. in the Brown Hall Chapel at Miles College. Call Robert Collins 205/934-4250 or Margaret Armbruster 205/934-5634.

### February 26-28—Southern Voices, Hoover

**Lee Smith**, award winner, also Tony Horowitz, Susan Choi and June Spence. Call David Ryan at the Hoover Public Library, 205/444-7800.

### March 1—Reflections II: A Topical Study of Alabama History, Sylacauga

**Hardy Jackson**, author of *The Redneck Riviera*, and head of the history department at Jacksonville State University will speak at 12 noon at the B.B. Comer Memorial Library. Call 256/249-0961.

### March 4—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

Guggenheim Fellowship winner **Charles Baxter** has published novels,

poetry and collections of short stories. Baxter will read from his work at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall. Call 205/348-0766.

**March 6—On the Brink, Jacksonville**  
"Damn, Boy, I Don't Believe I'd'a Told That," is the theme of the fifth conference on emerging Southern authors. Call 256/782-5856 or 256/782-5414.

### March 8—BACHE Visiting Writers Series, Birmingham

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

**March 9—Alabama Voices, Oneonta**  
**Han Nolan** will read from her work at 7 p.m. at the Oneonta Public Library. Call Kossie Buckelew, 205/274-7641.

### March 12 & 13—Writing Today, Birmingham

Readings and presentations will be given by national authors and Hackney Literary Award winners announced at Alabama's largest writers' conference. Birmingham-Southern College. Contact Special Events Director, 205/226-4921 or 1-800-523-5793.

### March 18—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa

**Allen Grossman** is the author of six books of poetry. He will read at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall. Call 205/348-0766.

### March 25 & 26—UNA Writer's Festival, Florence

**Anne George, Jessie Lee Kercheval** and **Ron Wallace** will read and discuss their work. Call 256/765-4238.

### March 25-28—Rashidah Ismaili AbuBakr; Montgomery, Tuskegee, Huntsville

Born in Dahomey and educated in Europe and the U.S., poet and dramatist **Rashidah Ismaili**, has been published in Africa, France, Puerto Rico and Turkey. She will read at AUM, Tuskegee University and Alabama A&M. Contact



the AAAAA at 334/263-2787.

**April 10 & 11th Annual Writer's Conference, Athens**

9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Athens State University. Call 256/233-8273.

**April 10 & 11—Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers Conference, Fairhope**  
Call 334/460-6146.

**April 11—Alabama Voices, Bay Minette**

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

**April 15—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa**

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

**April 17 & 18—Niyi Osundare, Birmingham and Montgomery**  
"Farmer born, peasant bred," **Osundare** is a lyrical and prolific poet and an emerging playwright. Times and places of readings to be announced. Contact the AAAAA at 334/263-2787.

**April 20—BACHE Visiting Writers Series, Birmingham**

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

**April 29—Bankhead Visiting Writers Series, Tuscaloosa**

**Bob Perelman** is the author of ten books of poetry including the forthcoming *Selected Poems*. He is a visiting professor at King's College in London and Chair of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Pennsylvania. He will read at 7:30 p.m. in room 205, Smith Hall, University of Alabama. Call 205/348-0766.

**April 29 & 30—National Black Touring Company, Birmingham and Montgomery**

*Zora Neale Hurston*, a play, will be presented at the Carver Theater in Birmingham and at the Davis Theatre in Montgomery. Related events include Hurston on Hurston/Traces of Zora, in which writer **Lucy Ann Hurston**, her niece, will read from her new book and share family memories in a series of appearances, and the Zora Neale Hurston Symposium at the Jefferson Birmingham Regional Library on May 1. Contact the AAAAA at 334/263-2787 for more information.

**May 4—Alabama Voices, Dothan**  
**Nanci Kincaid** will read from her work at the Houston Love Memorial Library. Call Bettye Forbus, 334/793-9767.

**May 6-8—Second Annual Alabama Writers Symposium, Monroeville**  
Writers and scholars. Friday presentation of Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer 1999 and the Eugene Current-Garcia Award for the Distinguished Alabama Scholar 1999. Call 334/575-3156, ext.223, or write: Alabama Southern Community College, P.O. Box 2000, Monroeville, AL 36461.

## ONGOING EVENTS

### BIRMINGHAM

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

### HUNTSVILLE

**Huntsville Literary Association** members' groups include the Literary Discussion Group which meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Call 205/881-2114 for information. The Fiction Writers' Group meets at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month. Phone 205/882-2348 for details. On the fourth Tuesday of the month, the Poetry Writing Workshop is held from 7 to 9 p.m. at Shaver's Book

Store at 2362 Whitesburg Drive. For information, call 205/536-9801. Huntsville Literary Association membership is open to anyone. Contact Susan Anderson, 8019 Navios Dr., Huntsville, AL 35802, 205/881-2935.

### MONTGOMERY

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

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

### TUSCALOOSA

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

### SEND US YOUR NEWS

Write or email details of your own or other Alabama writers' honors and accomplishments. Write: Alabama Writers' Forum, 201 Monroe St., Montgomery, AL 36130-1800; forward email to awf1@arts.state.al.us.

# To Hell and Back

by Allan Swafford

EDITOR'S NOTE: Before a packed house at the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church last October, U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky prefaced a reading of his translation of *Dante's Inferno*, by comparing the poet's journey through Hell to a tale of classic depression. Drawing on his own religious heritage, Pinsky commented, "The Talmud contains the saying 'the evil others do to us is as nothing compared to the evil we do ourselves.' I believe this is the subject of *Inferno*."

Pinsky's words and sensibilities made Dante's struggle as current as the daily newspaper, and his choice of this church and this city gave even more currency to a journey that descends to great depths before its maker, rising, "once more [sees] the stars." The production originated with the 92nd Street Y Unterberg Poetry Center's National Literary Audience Development Project and came to Montgomery in association with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the King Memorial Church and with assistance from the Alabama Writers' Forum and Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Our language does not lack translations of Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*. Numerous English writers have left versions, some in prose and some in poetry. Perhaps the most surprising translator is Dorothy Sayers, now remembered primarily for her detective, Lord Peter Wimsey. She gave us a version toward the end of her life in the early 1950s.

The Sayers translation preceded by some five years one of the more notable American versions—that of poet and critic John Ciardi—of the *Inferno*, the first of the three parts of the *Commedia*. And America has contributed its share to this library of English adaptations. Our first poet of international importance, Longfellow, offered one of his own. It seems each generation retranslates the literary classics, but in the case of the *Commedia* the frequency of translation may exceed generational demands.

So the fact that Robert Pinsky, our current poet laureate, published in 1994 a new edition of the *Inferno* is not in itself surprising. The surprise came later when the noted director, Robert Scanlan, chose to adapt and direct Pinsky's translation for the stage.

Like Ciardi, Pinsky is careful to keep the poem in vernacular English. After all, Dante's use of vernacular Italian in the *Commedia* was one of its distinguishing aspects and one with long-range effect in that it established Dante's Tuscan dialect as standard modern Italian. Also like Ciardi, Pinsky retained Dante's terza rima rhyme scheme, although Pinsky's rhyming methods are subtler, less obvious, than Ciardi's or, for that matter, than Dante's easily rhymed Italian.

Perhaps this quality of spoken language, of eminently speakable language, suggested to Scanlan the dramatic possibilities of Pinsky's translation. Over the centuries, however, episodes from the *Inferno* have generated a multitude of dramatic works. The Paolo and Francesca passage has given rise to plays, operas and ballets while a bare mention of a name suggested the comic *Gianni Schicchi* to Puccini. However, the



Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky (left), AWF Executive Director Jeanie Thompson, and Al Head, Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

Bill Fuller

notion of dramatizing the whole *Inferno* is, to say the least, intimidating. Its unities are not the unities of the stage.

How well Scanlan succeeded became a matter of record in October for some three hundred Montgomerians who filled the historic Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church to see a pared down production. That Montgomery was even included on the brief list of cities to host this touring production is owing to the poet laureate's fascination with symbolism of performing this work in this church. So Montgomery joined Boston, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Miami, Seattle and New York as venues for mounting!

And what did this audience see?

In order to fit the production into the confines of the King Church, the local performance omitted the John Deegan/Sarah Conly scenic design which was based on Michael Mazur's monotypal illustrations for Pinsky's book. Thus, we saw a spare, even austere, presentation. Ultimately this austerity, far from being a detriment, compounded the emotional impact of the work by forcing the audience to an unswerving focus on the spoken word.

The *word* dominates in this dramatic reading. What the audience heard was of greater consequence than what it saw.

For this is a theater of language rather than of action, a theater that in some ways, in spite of the visual presence of the actors, harks back to the golden era of radio theater. In other ways its effects recall pure readers' theater. Its palpable power springs from the spoken word.

Narratively the *Inferno* depicts Dante's journey through the multiple levels of Hell with the classical Roman poet Virgil as his guide. Descending through levels of ever greater sin, the two poets finally confront Satan himself with his three faces—those of the betrayers Iscariot, Brutus and Cassius. Along the way Dante meets various despairing sinners. Ultimately—using Satan as a curious sort of ladder—the wanderers emerge on the far side of Hell in a cave which symbolizes a redemptive new birth.

What is noticeably lacking here is conflict, tension. That lack is enough to deny the Scanlan-Pinsky collaboration the full name of drama despite the powerful emotional impact of the stage piece. At the same time, the production expands our notions of theater. Specifically the unique use of a solo violinist—the virtuosic Gil Morgenstern playing the haunting, original

continued on page 21

# NEWS

## READ ON!

The New South Performance Poets Association (NSPPA) stages readings and spoken word events in order to make poetry accessible and enjoyable to the general public. Poet, author and lyricist **Ruth Solomon** brought NSPPA's guidelines and procedures from a similar group, the Performance Poets Association of Long Island, NY, which holds more than 25 readings a month in bookstores, coffee houses and cafes. Through literary events, tours and workshops the group hopes to be a vehicle for many creative persons and to explore a fuller integration of poetry with music, art and other creative forms of expression. For more information, contact New South Performance Poets Association, c/o Alen Enterprises, P.O. Box 2068, Fairhope, AL 36533-2068. Call Ruth Solomon at 334/990-7872 or email [Ruth@bookrealm](mailto:Ruth@bookrealm)

## MADISON JONES HONORED

**Madison Jones** is the 1998 recipient of the prestigious T.S. Eliot Award from the Ingersoll Foundation. Past recipients of the award, which carries a \$20,000 prize, include V.S. Naipaul, Richard Wilbur, Ionesco, Walker Percy, and Mario Vargo Llosas. Jones's *Nashville 1864: The Dying of the Light*, published by J.S. Sanders & Company in 1997, won

the Michael Sharer Award for Civil War Fiction. It is a Book of the Month Club, History Book of the Month, and Conservative Book of the Month club selection, and will be reprinted by Penguin Books in the spring.

## POETRY HAS ITS DAY

"PoetryFest '98 was a big success, with over 100 poets and their friends and families attending," reported **Barry Marks**, incoming president of the Alabama State Poetry Society (ASPS). "We raised over \$1,000 and added 15 new members to the roll."

The day's events combined "open mike" contests, a poetry slam, presentations of children's works with readings, lectures and workshops by recognized Alabama poets, including James Mersmann, Susan Luther, Robert Collins, Virginia Gilbert, Alan Perlis, Sandra Agricola, Bonnie Robers and Michael Virga. "We are already planning a second festival for late 1999 or early 2000," Marks said. ASPS will be seeking ideas, manpower and financial support. Contact Marks by email at [bsm@blik.com](mailto:bsm@blik.com).

## REGIONAL NEWS

### PUBLISHERS APPLAUDED

Each year the Publishers Association of the South (PAS) presents the Robin Mays Award for "unusual and sustained contribution to book publishing in the South." This year's recipients are **Milburn** and **Nancy Calhoun**, publisher and vice-president of Pelican Publishing

Company in New Orleans. Before buying Pelican in 1970, the Calhouns operated Bayou Books, a mail order company. They acquired Pelican at a time when closure was imminent and transformed the company into a highly successful operation.

## WRITING OF THE SOUTH

Winners of the 30th Anniversary Lillian Smith Book Award are **John Lewis**, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, with **Michael D'Orso** (Simon & Shuster, 1998), and **Elizabeth Cox**, *Night Talk* (Graywolf Press). Since 1968, the Lillian Smith Book Awards have recognized and encouraged outstanding writing about the South. The region's oldest and best-known book awards, they honor serious, well-crafted, artistic and scholarly books that contribute to a better understanding of human rights and other social issues. Nonfiction finalists were Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, University of California Press, 1997; Joanne Grant, *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound*, Wiley and Sons, 1998; Tony Horwitz, *Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*, Pantheon, 1998; and Steve Watkins, *The Blacks: Racism and Redemption in an American Corporate Empire*, University of Georgia Press, 1997. Fiction finalists were Dorothy Allison, *Cavedweller*, Dutton, 1998 and James Kilgo, *Daughter of My People*, University of Georgia Press, 1998.

## TO HELL AND BACK


*Continued from page 20*

composition of Bruce Saylor—stretches our imaginations. this is *not* incidental music nor is Morgenstern an accompanist. The violin becomes a speaking character who informs the other characters and comments on the minimal action.

The cast of four—Bill Camp as Dante, Reg Cathey as an organ-voiced Virgil, Leslie Beatty as various women and Michael Balcanoff as various men—effectively created their characters but were circumscribed by the undramatic nature of their

script. They are stylized in vocal delivery and physical movement in a manner certainly appropriate to this stylized theater with overtones of ritual. Perhaps the closest parallel can be found in our admittedly conjectural ideas of ancient Greek theater.

Scanlan and Pinsky's *Inferno* is a profoundly moving theatrical experience, glorious in its language, but it is not theater. However, it is undeniably among the finest sermons ever preached.

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

## 1999 AWF LITERARY ARTS AWARDS GUIDELINES

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

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

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

For more information contact Garner at 256/765-4889 or email at [agarner@unanov.una.edu](mailto:agarner@unanov.una.edu).

## ELIGIBILITY

The Literary Arts Awards are open to Alabama high school students grades 9-12, and the Scholarships are available to seniors in Alabama high schools.

## LITERARY ARTS AWARDS

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

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

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

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

## JUDGING

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

judges will be announced when the awards announcement is made.

### FORMAT FOR ENTRIES

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

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

## SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS IN LITERARY ARTS

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

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

### CATEGORIES FOR PORTFOLIO WORK

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

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

### FORMAT FOR PORTFOLIOS

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

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

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

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

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



# THE BACK PAGE


## Heartbreak and Hope, Challenge and Reward

I shall always be sentimental about Alabama. It used to be my home." For anyone who met and heard Dr. C. Eric Lincoln at either of his two fall Alabama Voices IV programs those words, from his book, *Coming Through the Fire: Surviving Race and Place in America* (Duke University Press, 1996), have a special poignancy. In eloquent, moving talks about his growing-up years and his lifetime of creative and scholarly work on race and American culture, this Alabama native shared heartbreak and hope in equal amounts.

In Huntsville, the University of Alabama-Huntsville, its office of Multicultural Affairs, the State Black Archives, Museum, and Research Center, the Huntsville Literary Association, and the Huntsville Arts Association, as well as the primary Alabama Voices IV sponsors—The Alabama Writers' Forum, the AU Center for the Arts and Humanities, and the Alabama African-American Arts Alliance—worked together on the program. Dr. James Johnson of the State Black Archives and Dr. Lee Williams of the Huntsville Literary Association and the Huntsville Arts Association, brought people from all over north Alabama to hear Dr. Lincoln. At his first Alabama Voices IV program Lincoln, whose work in music, literature, social science, and philosophy defies any categories we could suggest, challenged us to reconsider our ideas of race and place. His own considered perspective, developed over a lifetime of travel, scholarly study, and creative expression, made us look again at where we have been, where we are today, and where we want to be in the next century. No simplistic answers, only challenges to be the best we can.

In Montgomery, another coalition which included the Alabama Department of Archives and History and the Governor's office, as well as the Forum, the Center, and the Alliance, filled the Milo B. Howard Auditorium in the Archives building, just a stone's throw from the State Capitol. Dr. Lincoln spoke elegantly and powerfully of his own life. He acknowledged hatred and bigotry, and he did not spare us the anguish that they can cause a sensitive soul. But he also celebrated the strength and potential of the human spirit. Through his own good will, abundant good humor, and generous spirit, he offered us the best of what human beings can be. When the Governor's office proclaimed November 12 Dr. C. Eric Lincoln Day in Alabama, every citizen of this state had something to celebrate.

In the spirit of Dr. Lincoln's gifts to us, we recognize and celebrate the great cooperative effort that Alabama

Voices IV demands. Through it, citizens as well as various state, community, and educational organizations have an opportunity to come together, to learn about and support one another, to acknowledge state treasures, and to be challenged, enlightened, entertained, and inspired. This is the best Alabama Voices IV offers us and the best it requires of us. As the ongoing cooperative venture that is Alabama Voices IV brings writers to the people of the state, as we learn about and affirm the best they have to offer, we stand in a good place, tuned in to many voices, privy to many visions. Frye Gailliard, Nanci Kincaid, Han Nolan, Bob Collins, and Carolyn Haines are among those voices we look forward to hearing this winter and spring. Like Dr. Lincoln, they will bring us challenge and reward. 

Jay Lamar is Assistant Director of the Center of the Arts and Humanities at Auburn University.

### HEARING ALABAMA VOICES IV

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

7:30 p.m., Thursday, January 21, Hale County Public Library, Greensboro, Call Carolyn Hemstreet, 334/624-3409.

**Carolyn Haines**, a former photojournalist who turned to fiction writing a decade ago, is author of two acclaimed general fiction books—*Summer of the Redeemers* (Dutton, 1994) and *Touched* (Dutton, 1996) as well as more than 20 romance and mystery novels.

4 p.m., Tuesday, February 9, Beville State Community College, Jasper; call Marthanne Brown, 205/387-5115

**Han Nolan** won the 1998 National Book Award for *Dancing on the Edge*. Her other books, also critically acclaimed young adult novels, include *If I Should Die Before I Wake* (1994) and *Send Me Down a Miracle* (1996).

7 p.m., Tuesday, March 9, Oneonta Public Library; call Kossie Buckelew, 205/274-7641.

**Frye Gailliard** has written more than a dozen books on topics as diverse as country music, car racing, and Jimmy Carter. His latest book, *As Long as the Waters Flow: Native Americans in the South and East*, was published in fall 1998.

4 p.m., Sunday, April 11, Bay Minette Public Library; call Charlotte Cabaniss, 334/937-7947

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

Tuesday, May 4, 1999, Houston Love Memorial Library, Dothan; call Bettye Forbus, 334/793-9767.



## University of SOUTH ALABAMA

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### *Our writing faculty...*

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

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

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

# JOIN THE ALABAMA WRITERS' FORUM

Do your part to support the literary arts in Alabama. Receive news, benefit from consulting services for programming and grants sources, and be a part of Alabama's literary renaissance.

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