

the Southern Register

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The University of Mississippi

Ferris Takes on Nation's Humanities Work

The Center director for 18 years, Bill Ferris, has moved to Washington, D.C., to serve as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He will be dearly missed, yet faculty, staff, and students at the Center are excited that he has been given the opportunity to lead the nation's foremost guiding institution in the humanities. As witness of his creative vision and exemplary efforts as director of the Center, we realize that the National Endowment for the Humanities is about to experience successful years under his tenure. The following quotes gleaned from press articles surrounding Ferris's

appointment express the confidence we have in his ability to meet the challenges ahead.

University of Mississippi Chancellor Robert C. Khayat: "Bill Ferris has not only garnered the level of serious academic study our region deserves but also has enhanced the public's understanding and respect for it. With his creative talents and vision, Bill will do the same for the National Endowment for the Humanities. We are proud to have one of our scholars appointed to this important post and know Bill will bring even more positive attention to our region and state."

Charles Reagan Wilson, professor of History and Southern Studies, University of Mississippi: "Bill will energize the nation behind a broad-based vision of the humanities. He is a superb communicator who can explain the importance of the humanities to a diverse range of Americans."

Tom Rankin, associate professor of Art and Southern Studies, University of Mississippi: "Bill is a natural. There is no better person out there to lead the NEH. He will be a great spokesperson for the humanities at all levels."

James C. Cobb, history professor at the University of Georgia, who team taught a course with Ferris at the

University of Mississippi for six years: "I think he'll live up to the place. It's going to be very hard to criticize Ferris as spending taxpayer money on programs very few Americans can relate to. I'll bet he's going to think up ways to make the humanities much more accessible to a broader population."

Sheldon Hackney, former chairman of NEH, whom Bill is succeeding: "The critical thing about him is that he operates on a whole range of American culture. He's—and I don't mean this pejoratively—an academic entrepreneur."

Jamil S. Zainaldin, president of the Federation of State Humanities Councils: "He has the traditional certification of an academic scholar and is well entrenched in higher education. But he's also worked extensively with state and local humanities councils, and his programs at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture are all about the public dissemination of the humanities."

University of Mississippi history professor Michael E. Landon: "If anybody can, he will be able to increase funding for the agency from both public and private sources."

Ferris's mother, Shelby Ferris, of Vicksburg, Mississippi: "I think he'll do his best. I know it's the top position in the humanities to which anyone could aspire."

Allison Vise Finch



REXDA BAKER

William R. Ferris, founding director of the Center, was nominated by President Bill Clinton as chairman the National Endowment for the Humanities. His nomination was unanimously approved by a Senate committee comprised of Democrats and Republicans.

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Director's Column

Change is never easy, and it is with both sadness and excitement that I take a leave of absence from the University of Mississippi and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture during my tenure as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I moved to Oxford during the summer of 1979, and the years since have passed ever so quickly. During that time I have been blessed to work with the very finest faculty, staff, and students at the Center, and with University administrators who have understood the vision of our work and given it their full commitment. Three chancellors—Porter Fortune, Gerald Turner, and Robert Khayat—strongly supported the Center's initiatives. Provost Gerald Walton, Dean of Liberal Arts Dale Abadie, Dean of Graduate Studies Michael Dingerson, and Director of the University Foundation Don Frugé provided critical leadership in building our academic programs. Other administrators no longer at the University—Arthur DeRosier, Ray Hoops, Harvey Lewis, Morris Marx, Chuck Noyes, Joe Sam, and Wally Guess—also helped build Center programs.

Outside University walls the Center's devoted State Advisory Committee linked our efforts with their communities throughout the state and beyond. Committee members continue to provide funding and program initiatives that broaden our work in important ways.

We began with a dream, and now we enjoy the reality of an institution that touches lives throughout the world. Our programs evolved over the years and are a testament to the commitment of those who built and sustained them. The Center's Southern Studies B.A. and M.A. degree programs, our *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, the renovation of Barnard Observatory, the establishment of the University's Blues Archive, our conferences on William Faulkner, civil rights, Southern history, Elvis Presley, and the book, and our publications *Crossroads*, *Living Blues*, *Mississippi Folklife*, and the *Southern Register* are but a few of the many milestones that have marked our journey.

As I reflect on the Center's history, I am reminded of the central role that the National Endowment for the Humanities has played in our ability to establish these programs on the American South. Our undergraduate curriculum, the *Encyclopedia*, and the renovation of Barnard Observatory are among the many projects for which the Endowment provided generous support. Without their help the Center could not have moved so quickly to establish its programs. So I feel as if I am moving from one family of kindred spirits to another. I leave my beautiful office in Barnard Observatory for another in the Old Post Office on Pennsylvania Avenue. Both are located in restored buildings that dramatically symbolize the commitment to preservation shared by both the Center and the Endowment.

Recently I was surprised to see a beautiful red-tailed hawk soar past my office above Pennsylvania Avenue and light on a nearby building. It reminded me of the many red-tailed hawks that perch along roadsides in Mississippi during the winter. I felt the noble bird's flight was a sign that my work in Washington will be blessed with friends—both feathered and human—who will travel with me on the roads ahead. I cannot find words to fully express my gratitude to the many friends throughout the nation who have written and called on my behalf over the past months. Your generous support means so much, and I will work to fulfill the confidence you have shown in me.

I leave the Center knowing that it is in the very best of hands with outstanding faculty and staff who over the years have developed the Center's programs with an unflinching commitment to excellence. Both Marcie and I appreciate all the love and support we have received from our friends in Oxford and other places. We look forward to keeping in touch with each of you and hope you will visit us in Washington.

William Ferris

Fifth Oxford Conference for the Book to Be Held March 13-15

Since its inauguration in April 1993, the Oxford Conference for the Book has celebrated books, writing, and reading and has also dealt with practical concerns on which the literary arts depend, including literacy, freedom of expression, and the book trade itself.

The 1998 conference, the fifth in the series, is set for March 13-15, 1998. The program will consist of readings, lectures, discussions, and a performance of a musical interpretation of Lee Smith's novel *Fair and Tender Ladies*. The Young Authors Fair, a special event sponsored by the Oxford Junior Auxiliary and the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, will take place in conjunction with the conference.

Among the notable authors participating in the 1998 Oxford Conference for the Book are Stephen E. Ambrose, Rick Bragg, Larry Brown, Randall Kenan, Thomas P. Slaughter, and Elizabeth Spencer. Ambrose is the author of numerous books of history, including the bestseller *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*. Examining the era portrayed in *Undaunted Courage*, Slaughter will lecture on the topic "Writing the Wilderness from Meriwether Lewis to William Bartram and Back." Slaughter, who teaches histo-

ry at Rutgers University, is the author of *The Natures of John and William Bartram* and editor of *William Bartram: Travels and Other Writings*.

In addition to reading from his work, Ambrose will be on the panel "Wieners and Rebels: Writing from the Trenches of Southern Culture." Other panelists for this session will be historian Jerry E. Strahan and journalist Tony Horwitz. Strahan, manager of Lucky Dogs Inc. in New Orleans, is the author of *Managing Ignatius: The Lunacy of Lucky Dogs and Life in the Quarter*. Horwitz is a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, and his book *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* is soon to be published by Pantheon.

Elizabeth Spencer, whose fiction includes *The Light in the Piazza* and *Other Italian Tales* and *The Voice at the Back Door*, will read from her latest work, *Landscapes of the Heart: A Memoir*. Bragg, correspondent for the *New York Times*, will also read from his recent memoir, *All Over But the Shoutin'*.

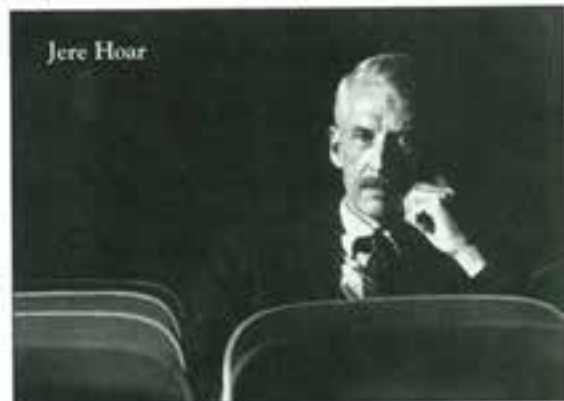
Randall Kenan and Alane Mason will lead sessions on writing, being published, and reaching an audience. Mason, an editor at W. W. Norton, has published Magda Deres's *Castles Burning* and *Last Days of the Dog-Men* by Brad Watson. Kenan is the author of a story collection, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*, and a novel, *A Visitation of Spirits*. He is currently Visiting Southern Writer at the University of Mississippi.

Among those participating in the sessions with Kenan and Mason will be Oxford native Larry Brown, local resident Jere Hoar, and Fredric Koepfel, book review editor of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. Brown is the author of *Facing the Music*, *Dirty Work*, *On Fire*, and, most recently, *Father and Son*. He is currently teaching writing at the University. Hoar, author of the story collection *Body*

The Oxford Conference for the Book

Parts, is an emeritus professor of journalism at the University and an attorney.

Brown will also participate in a panel on "Skeletons in the Closet: Writing about the Family." Joining him in this discussion will be Rick Bragg, Elizabeth Spencer, and Daniel



Jere Hoar

ROBERT JORDAN



Jack Gantos

MERRY SCULLY

Woodrell, author of several acclaimed novels, including *Give Us a Kiss*. Another family-oriented session, "Writers' Spouses Speak Out," will feature Stephen Ambrose's wife, Moira; Larry Brown's wife, Mary Annie; and Barry Hannah's wife, Susan.

Book designer and packager Bea Jackson will moderate the panel "Bookmaking in the 21st Century: Technology, Creativity, and Design." Panelists for this session will include Wylene Dunbar, Oxford resident whose first novel, *Margaret Cape*, was recently published; Rita Marshall, a book designer; Claire Bradley Ong, a production manager at Alfred P. Knopf; and Rubin Pfeffer, president of Harcourt Brace.

Appearing on the panel "The Endangered Species: Readers in the

continued on next page

Year 2004" will be Jack Gantos, author of children's books, Barbara Bonds Thomas, owner of Toad Hall Bookstore in Austin, Texas. Elaine H. Scott, moderator of the panel, has been involved with the Reading Is Fundamental program since 1974 and received the RIF Leader for Literacy Award in April 1994. Gantos will also give a presentation on his work, which includes the *Rotten Ralph* and *Jack* series, and visit local schools as part of Young Authors Fair activities.

John E. Marszalek, a history professor at Memphis State University, will give a presentation on his new book, *The Petticoat Affair: Manners, Mutiny, and Sex in Andrew Jackson's White House*. Commenting on the book and its relevance to the present will be Bragg and Horwitz, both winners of the Pulitzer Prize for their work as journalists.

In addition, composers/performers Tommy Goldsmith, Tom House, and Karren Pell will present a preview of their musical version of Lee Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies*. The work was commissioned by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery, where the premiere is scheduled for December 1998.

The registration fee for the entire conference is \$50 for students, \$100 for Friends of the Center, and \$150 for other participants. The daily rate is \$25 for students, \$50 for Friends of the Center, and \$75 for other participants. Additional, optional events are a cocktail buffet on Friday (\$30 per person) and brunch on Sunday (\$30 per person).

The conference is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Square Books, supported by the Oxford Junior Auxiliary and the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, and partially funded by the University of Mississippi and through a grant by the City of Oxford. The Institute of Continuing Studies is coordinator of the event.

For more information concerning the conference, contact Charlene Dye at the Institute for Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 879, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677; telephone 601-232-7282; fax 601-232-5138; e-mail cdye@olemiss.edu.



Elizabeth Spencer

For tourist information, contact the Oxford Tourism Council, P.O. Box 965, Oxford, MS 38655; telephone 800-758-9177 or 601-234-4680; fax 601-234-0355.

Linda Peal White

Center for the Study
of Southern Culture



The President's Initiative on Race to Meet at the University on March 16-17

One America: The President's Initiative on Race will send representatives from its advisory board to hold a public meeting at the University on March 16-17. Former Mississippi Governor William Winter and Duke Professor Emeritus of History John Hope Franklin, chair of the advisory board, will attend.

President Clinton announced the Initiative last June, and the advisory board began holding public meetings in September. The goals of these meetings are to encourage local communities to identify pertinent issues regarding race relations as well as to suggest programs to address problems. The first town hall forum was in Akron, Ohio; other meetings have been held in Fairfax, Virginia,

and Phoenix, Arizona. Although early press reports criticized the slow start of the effort, more recent articles cite the increasing effectiveness of the process.

Governor Winter expressed an interest in having the effort include Mississippi and has worked with Southern Studies alumnae Susan Glisson to bring the advisory board to campus. Glisson is chairing a program committee of students and alumni who are working with a planning committee of University administrators and Oxford leaders to coordinate the event. Dialogue groups representing ten constituencies—art, environment, religion, housing, health care, labor, government, community organizing, education, and business—are discussing

issues and will select representatives to meet with the advisory board at a public meeting in March. The meeting will consist of a dialogue between the constituency representatives and the advisory board followed by an open forum.

"We have accepted the challenge implicit in the President's Initiative and are beginning dialogue on race relations in Mississippi," said Glisson. "We hope the March event will be a catalyst for a coordinated effort to address and rectify racial injustice in Oxford and across the state. It will take all of us working together for a better future."

For information about the event, contact Susan Glisson at the Center; telephone 601-232-5993; e-mail glisson@csc.olemiss.edu.

Spring 1998 Foodways Symposium

The inaugural Southern Foodways Symposium will be held May 1-3, 1998. This event, hosted by the Center and Continuing Studies and sponsored by Bryan Foods, Viking Range, Ellen Rolfes Books, and Mississippi Madness with supporting sponsorship from the American Institute of Wine and Food, will bring culinary historians, anthropologists, chefs, and passionate advocates of regional foods to the University for three days of lectures, tastings, and performances. This inaugural event will provide an exciting opportunity for curious cooks and gourmards alike to better appreciate the culture and foodways of the American South.

Among the scheduled speakers are journalist John Egerton, writer of the seminal work *Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, in History*; culinary historian Jessica Harris, author of *Iron Pots and Wooden Spoons: Africa's Gifts to New World Cooking* and the forthcoming *Nyam! The Food of African-Americans*; and journalist Richard Schweid, writer of *Catfish and the Delta: Confederate Fish Farming in the Mississippi Delta* and *Hot Peppers: Cajuns and Capsicum in New Iberia, Louisiana*.

Augmenting the impressive list of speakers will be a series of informal lunches held in the tree-shrouded grove at the center of the Ole Miss campus. Featuring Southern specialties like golden-fried catfish and smoke-infused pork barbecue, these meals will afford attendees a wonderful opportunity to interact with the speakers. Evening events include a private dinner party at Oxford's own City Grocery and a reading by Norma Jean Darden from her Broadway play, *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine*. Regional product tastings and book signings will also be featured. The weekend festivities will close with brunch served in the grove as a gospel choir performs.

Registration is \$195 for the entire symposium (\$185 for Friends of the Center and members of the American Institute of Wine and Food). With only 75 spaces available, early registration is recommended. For information about registration and arrangements, contact Caroline Herring at the Institute for Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 879, University, MS 38677; telephone 601-232-7282; e-mail cherring@olemiss.edu. For further information about the program, contact the symposium organizer, John T. Edge, at 601-236-7803 or at johnnt@dixie-net.com.

John T. Edge



Sam Doyle, 1906-1985. *Welcome Table*. Paint on metal. 26.25 x 43.5 in. Collection of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia. T. Marshall Hahn Jr. Collection, 1996.174.

Center's Academic Director Named Outstanding Humanities Teacher

Charles Reagan Wilson, professor of History and Southern Studies at the University and academic director of the Center, has been named as an Outstanding Humanities Teacher of 1997 by the Mississippi Humanities Council.



The Council gives the award each October in conjunction with national Arts and Humanities month. To commemorate the award, Wilson gave a public lecture at the Center on October 28 on the topic "When Southerners Became Southerners: The Emergence of Southern Identities."

Wilson received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas at El Paso and his doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin. His specialization is Southern religious and cultural history, and his current research involves an interdisciplinary study of the Southern way of life.

Lucille and Motee Daniels Award Established

Lucille Daniels has established the Lucille and Motee Daniels Endowment Fund in honor of her and her late husband's friendship with Bill Ferris, founding director of the Center. The purpose of the fund is to provide support for the Southern Studies graduate program, specifically through its provision for an annual award in honor of an outstanding Southern Studies graduate student paper. Teresa Parker, who will receive her master's in Southern Studies this May, is the first recipient of the \$250 award. Parker received the award at a September 1997 reception in the home of Marcie and Bill Ferris at which Daniels and her family were in attendance.

Friends of Lucille and Motee Daniels, Bill Ferris, and the Center are invited to make contributions to the endowment fund. Checks should be made payable to the University of Mississippi Foundation and sent to the Center with a note that the funds are for the Daniels Award.



Left to right: Lucille Daniels, Bill Ferris, and Teresa Parker

Center for American History Displays Photos of Natchez

The University of Texas at Austin's Center for American History is displaying more than 100 images by Henry Norman, a photographer who documented daily life in Natchez in the last decades of the 19th century. *Natchez on the Mississippi, 1870-1910*, which will be on display until May 31, 1998, includes photographs of the luxurious interiors of the great paddlewheel steamboats, studio portraits of African American families and Jewish merchants, and pictures of Natchez street scenes, buildings, and plantation mansions. Dr. Thomas Gandy, a Natchez physician, and his wife, Joan Gandy, curated the exhibition over a period of 35 years using the enormous collection of Henry Norman works that they acquired in 1960. The Gandys are the publishers of three books on Natchez life: *Norman's Natchez: An Early Photographer and His Town*, *Natchez Victorian Children*, and *The Mississippi Steamboat Era in Historic Photographs*. For more information on the exhibit, contact Alison Beck at 512-495-4515.

Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival

The sixth annual Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival will take place in Clarksdale on October 15-17, 1998.

Scholars are invited to submit papers for possible presentation at the festival. The deadline for submissions is August 15, 1998. To enter, send a completed paper (7-8 pages) or an abstract (250 words) to Colby Kullman, Department of English, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677.

High school students in Mississippi are invited to enter an acting competition that includes two categories, monologues and scenes. All material must be drawn from the plays of Tennessee Williams. Cash prizes are given for winning monologues and scenes, which will be performed for the festival audience.

For information on the 1998 festival and drama competition, write Tennessee Williams Festival, P.O. Box 1565, Clarksdale, MS 38614-1565; telephone 601-627-7337.

Southern Studies Teacher Institute Planned for June

The Center and the Institute for Continuing Studies will sponsor the fourth annual Southern Studies Teacher Institute on June 21-26, 1998. Elementary and secondary teachers from all over the country are invited to attend this interdisciplinary program that provides opportunities to explore the latest scholarship on Mississippi and Southern history and culture.

This year the institute will open on Sunday with a catfish fry on the grounds of the University followed by a trip to a juke joint near Oxford. Monday will be spent in a day-long Teaching Tolerance workshop with Glenda Valentine of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. Through videos, activities, group discussion, and a generous amount of laughter, the

workshop provides an interactive, non-threatening environment in which educators can begin to examine their personal attitudes regarding race, culture, prejudice, and stereotyping. Tuesday's activities include a lecture on "Women in the Civil Rights Movement" and a trip to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. William Heath, author of *The Children Bob Moses Led*, will lecture on Wednesday following lectures on "Memory and Sense of Place" and "Mississippi Cultural History" and a tour of William Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak. Thursday includes a lecture on "Anthropology of the Blues" by Peter Aschoff and a trip to the Delta for visits to McCarty Pottery Studio, Dockery Farms, and the Delta Blues Museum. Friday's schedule

includes lectures on "Native Americans in the South," "Southern Folk Art," and "Mississippi Autobiography."

The Southern Studies Teacher Institute provides an exciting and stimulating program of study that returns teachers to their classrooms with new insight into the Southern experience and new methods to convey this knowledge to their students. The institute works across the curriculum, enhancing all subject areas by providing connections to students' daily lives, their families, and their own futures. For registration information, write Charlene Dye at the Southern Studies Teacher Institute, P.O. Box 879, University, MS 38677, call her at 601-232-7282, or e-mail her at cdye@olemiss.edu.

Charlene Dye

"Southerners in New York" in May

The diverse achievements of such native Southern luminaries as William Styron, Craig Claiborne, and Clifton Taulbert will be explored at "Southerners in New York: A Homecoming Celebration" to be held in Oxford and at the University May 15-17, 1998. The event will explore the often complex relationship Southerners have between New York and their Southern homeland. Featuring a variety of noted writers, artists, actors, and musicians, the conference promises to offer something for Southerners, New Yorkers, and anyone else interested in the roots of regional identity. Hosts for the three-day event are the Center and the Institute for Continuing Studies.

The celebration begins Friday morning with a special welcome from conference sponsor Roger Malkin and University of Mississippi Chancellor Robert Khayat. Malkin, chairman of Delta Pine and Land Company, is a New Yorker who now lives in Scott, Mississippi. Benny Andrews, a Georgia-born painter living in New York, will discuss his works on Friday afternoon and later greet guests at an evening reception to be held at Oxford's Southside Gallery. On Saturday, conference sessions will feature such topics as growing up black and Jewish in the Mississippi Delta, corporate migration, and blues music. Additionally, writers Willie Morris, Roy Blount, William Styron, and others will offer readings and remarks relating to their experiences in New York. The evening will close with a cocktail party and musical performances. Highlights of Sunday's schedule include discussions led by food critics Craig Claiborne and Jessica B. Harris, a seminar on Southern shape note singing by Chiquita Willis and Warren Steel, and an authentic Southern dinner-on-the-grounds.

"For generations Southerners have left their region and traveled 'North toward home' to pursue their careers in New York," said William Ferris, who initiated the homecoming celebration while he was director of the Center. "This gathering promises to be a meaningful exploration of the challenges and accomplishments of these individuals," he said. For more information about the weekend, contact Charlene Dye at the Institute for Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 879, University, MS 38677; telephone 601-232-7282; e-mail cdye@olemiss.edu.

Teresa Parker

Jim Henson's Muppets Featured on Center for the Book Poster

Mississippian Jim Henson's puppets Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy are featured on a new poster produced to promote the campaign "Building a Nation of Readers" of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. The Center for the Book was established in 1977 to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and libraries and to encourage the study of the role of books and print culture. John Y. Cole, director of the Center, said the theme of the poster "emphasizes the importance of reading to our democratic way of life." The production of the poster coincides with plans of the Library of Congress for celebrating its bicentennial in the year 2000. The 22-by-34 inch poster is available for \$9 in the Library of Congress Sales Shop and by mail from the American Library Association, phone 800-545-2433. Bookmarks are also available at a cost of \$6 for a pack of 100.

Faulkner Celebration in Russia

For over a decade the Center has been a spearhead for contact between scholars of Russian and Southern culture, and the latest stage of that relationship was reached in December as University faculty and administrators attended the annual meeting of the Russian Association for the Study of American Literature and Culture, December 1-7, 1997, in Moscow.

The Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences hosted the meeting, which included a separate program entitled William Faulkner's Centenary. Yassen Zassoursky, of Moscow State University, welcomed participants at the opening ceremony, and Peter Palievsky, of the Gorky Institute, also spoke, suggesting that Faulkner had long ago been prescient about the end of the Soviet system. Palievsky recalled

that Faulkner had declined a United States Information Agency invitation to visit the Soviet Union in the 1950s, suggesting to the American government, though, that a quick end would come to communism if Americans would simply give 10,000 automobiles to Russians. Palievsky related this anecdote to the recent coming of capitalism to Russia and the complexities it has brought, complexities that still make Faulkner relevant to Russians.

Ann Abadie, acting director of the Center, sketched the history of the relationship between Russian scholars and the University in her opening talk, "William Faulkner: From Mississippi to the World." The first trip by Center personnel to Russia was in 1984, for a symposium on William Faulkner, followed by attendance at two other symposia, one on Sholokov and the other on culture of the American South. Scholars from the former Soviet Union who have been at the University for extended stays include, among others, Palievsky, Sergei Chakovsky, and Maya Koreneva, the latter of whom helped plan the conference and spoke on "Faulkner: The Art of Creation."

Most of the sessions at the Faulkner Centenary included University faculty. Donald Kartiganer, William Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies at the University, spoke on "Faulkner vs. the Reader," and Robert Brinkmeyer, professor of English and Southern Studies, placed Faulkner's work in the broader context of the interwar period of the 20th century, addressing the topic "Faulkner and the World at War." Another Center faculty member, Charles Reagan Wilson, argued at the conference that Faulkner's work grew out of the South's culture of death, analyzing his portrayal of funerals, cemeter-

ies, and other emblems of mortality. Tom Rankin, associate professor of Art and Southern Studies, added a visual element to the meeting, showing slides while discussing "Evoking William Faulkner: Martin J. Dain and Yoknapatawpha."

Robert Haws, chairman of the Department of History and former Fulbright Professor of American History at Moscow State University, lectured on "Faulkner and the Historical Context." He brought together the fictional story of Charlotte Rittenmeyer in *The Wild Palms* and the real-life story of Francis Birkhead, a young Mississippi woman who, in 1918, had a botched abortion, like Rittenmeyer in Faulkner's tale, and filed a seduction and breach of promise lawsuit against Mississippi Lieutenant Governor Lee Russell. Haws used the paper to explore American attitudes toward abortion at the time and Faulkner's sensibility in portraying them.

These and other papers presented at the December meeting in Moscow provided the grand finale of a year-long celebration the Faulkner Centenary in a variety of sites throughout the world.

Charles Reagan Wilson



From left: Ekaterina Stetsenko, Maya Koreneva, and Bob Haws during a Faulkner session at the Gorky Institute of World Literature

TOM RANKIN



Donald Kartiganer in Moscow

TOM RANKIN

Charles Reagan Wilson (left) and Bob Haws enjoying the snow in Moscow



TOM RANKIN

Faulkner and America"—the theme of the 25th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference—is at once an obvious way of approaching the writer and a surprising one, given the kinds of critical attention he has received over the last two and a half decades. In the early years of the conference, as was befitting its title and *raison d'être*, the emphasis tended to be on Faulkner the Mississippian and Southerner, the creator of Yoknapatawpha. Moreover, this was an aspect of his life and work that New Criticism, convinced that the best reading of a writer was one that dissociated him from his time and place, had seriously overlooked. More recently, in a series of conferences devoted to ideology, gender, cultural context, and the natural world, the emphasis has been on approaches that might still include the local, while expanding out into larger political and cultural realms, but continued to ignore the distinctively "national" context.

In fact, to some extent there has been a tendency to regard the "American" context as a term and concept calculated to suppress the significance of both the local and the multicultural makeup of the country itself: "American," in other words, as an elitist code of matters exclusively male, white, and Anglo—with a decided bias toward the New England literary tradition—and significantly in opposition to what may be most vital about the country and about Faulkner. The result has been an inclination among Faulkner's best critics to steer clear of the "American" dimension of William Faulkner.

"Faulkner and America," which will take place July 26-31, will be the first Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference to address explicitly that complex connection: how Faulkner and his work "fit" into the various American literary, political, and historical traditions; the degree to which this distinctively Southern writer might be, as an extension of, or contradiction to, his Southernness, an American writer.

Among the speakers who will be presenting papers will be James Carothers, University of Kansas, author of *William Faulkner's Short Stories*; Richard Godden, University of Keele, author of *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution* and *Fictions of Capital:*

1998 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference

The American Novel from James to Mailer; Kathryn Burgess McKee, University of Mississippi, author of essays and papers on such writers as Kaye Gibbons, Ellery Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Josephine Humphreys, Bobbie Ann Mason, Sherwood Bonner, and Ellen Glasgow; Peter Nicolaisen, Paedagogische Hochschule, Flenburg, Germany, author of books in German on Edward Taylor, Ernest Hemingway, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Jefferson, and Faulkner; Noel Polk, University of Southern Mississippi, author of *A Study of William Faulkner's "Requiem for a Nun" and Children of the Dark House: Text and Context in Faulkner*; Hortense Spillers, Cornell University, author of numerous essays on black feminist criticism, including the groundbreaking "Chosen Place, Timeless People: Some Figurations in the New World," "The Permanent Obliquity of an In(phi)libly Straight': In the Time of the Daughters and the Fathers," and "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," and coeditor of *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*; and Linda Wagner-Martin, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, author of *Hemingway and Faulkner: Inventors/Masters*, *Dos Passos: Artist as American*, *Ellen Glasgow: Beyond Convention*, *Sylvia Plath: A Biography*, *Telling Women's Lives: The New Biography*, and "Favored Strangers": *Gertrude Stein and Her Family*.

In addition to the formal lectures, there will be a dramatic production by Voices of the South, a two-woman company specializing in "narrative theater": the art of adapting short stories and novels for the stage from the language and images inspired through the text. Alice Berry and Jenny Odle,

native Southerners and award-winning actresses, will perform the Joan Williams short story "Twenty Will Not Come Again," which traces the author's long relationship with William Faulkner, and scenes from the novel *Light in August*.

Other program events will include the presentation of the winners of the ninth Faux Faulkner Contest. The contest, coordinated by the author's niece, Dean Faulkner Wells, is sponsored by Jack Daniels Distillery, Yoknapatawpha Press and its *Faulkner Newsletter*, and the University of Mississippi. There will also be discussions by Faulkner friends and family, a slide presentation by J. M. Faulkner and Meg Faulkner DuChaine, and sessions on "Teaching Faulkner." The University's John Davis Williams Library will display Faulkner books, manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia; and the University Press of Mississippi will exhibit Faulkner books published by university presses throughout the United States. Films relating to the author's life and work will be available for viewing during the week.

Tours of North Mississippi are scheduled for Tuesday. Sunday there will be a buffet supper served at the home of Dr. and Mrs. M. B. Howorth Jr., and Wednesday a picnic will be served at Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak. The conference will end on Friday, July 31, with a reception at the home of Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Falkner.

For more information about the conference, contact Charlene Dye at the Institute for Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 879, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677; telephone 601-232-7282; fax 601-232-5138; e-mail dye@olemiss.edu.

Donald M. Kartiganer

Center Becomes Fourth Sponsor of Natchez Literary Celebration

Ninth Event Set for June 4-6, 1998

The Center is joining forces with the award-winning Natchez Literary Celebration, becoming the fourth sponsor of the annual event. "We are truly excited and delighted to have such a prestigious organization cosponsor our literary celebration," said Carolyn Vance Smith, one of the founders and a current cochair of the NLC. Other sponsors are Copiah-Lincoln Community College, the National Park Service, and the Natchez National Historical Park.

"It is with special pleasure that we will cosponsor the Natchez Literary Celebration," said Ann Abadie, acting director of the Center. "We have supported the celebration since its founding in 1990 and are honored to join the other sponsors in this important program. Through the years, the celebration has drawn both local and national audiences and has provided thousands of people with a new and enriched understanding of our region's literary experience."

The ninth NLC will be June 4-6, 1998, with the theme "The South: Its Land and Its Literature." More than a dozen scholars, writers, and lecturers have confirmed presentations. These include Joseph Blotner, who will talk about the influence of land on the writings of William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren; Clifton Taulbert, who will discuss the Mississippi Delta; Courtney Parker, who will speak about regional foods; and Felder Rushing, who will talk about yard art and old-time garden objections.

Blotner is the author of biographies of Faulkner and Warren. Taulbert's books include *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*. Parker, an award-winning food journalist, is the author of *How to Eat Like a Southerner and Live*

to *Tell the Tale*. Rushing is the author of four books on Southern gardens, one of which, *Passalong Plants*, won a national award for the best gardening book in America in 1994.

Patricia Galloway, special projects officer at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, will talk about Choctaw Indians and their relation to the land, and historian James Wiggins Jr. will present "Land Fever: Settling the Old Southwest." John Michael Vlach, author of *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, will present "Reflections of Antebellum Society in Southern Landscapes." Also confirmed as speakers are landscape architects Edward L. Blake Jr., whose talk is titled "Time, Place, and a Landscape's Architecture," and Gordon W. Chappell, who will speak on the use of the land by early settlers for both practical and aesthetic purposes.

In addition to Blotner, literary scholars signed up for the program include Peggy W. Preshaw, who will discuss Southern women writers; Sterling Plumpp, who will speak on blues and Mississippi writers; Jerry Ward, on Mississippi autobiographical voices. Also, Kenneth W. Holditch and Colby Kullman will discuss the use of the land in the dramas of Tennessee Williams, and Patrick Samway, S.J., will examine the influence of New Orleans on Southern Writers.

For additional information, contact Carolyn Vance Smith, P.O. Box 894, Natchez, MS 39121-0894; telephone 601-446-5874; fax 601-446-1296. Tickets are available by calling Natchez Box Office at 800-862-3259. For information about lodging and other arrangements, call the Natchez Convention and Visitor Bureau at 800-647-6742.

Memorial Gifts

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who have made memorial contributions to our programs:

In memory of

Betty Lou Dahlberg Ely

Dale and Ann Abadie

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Upton Black Jr.
Shelby Flowers Ferris

Dr. Lucien Ferris

Al and Libby Hollingsworth

Lucy Somerville Howorth

Elinor Boyce

Ashton Douglass

George Ingram

George Hite McLean Sr.

Al and Libby Hollingsworth

Irving A. Metz III

Lynn Tackett

Don Clark Triplett

B. C. and Bonnie Crawford

Elizabeth Dobbins White

B. C. and Bonnie Crawford

Call for Papers

The Society for Commercial Archaeology (SCA) invites proposal for papers for its annual conference to be held October 21-24, 1998. "Drivin' the Dixie: Automobile Tourism in the South" will explore automobile tourism and its impact on the commercial-built environment in the region. The conference will include one day of papers (20 minutes each) and two days of tours focusing on cultural resources along the routes of the Dixie Highway in North Georgia and Tennessee.

Papers should examine any aspect of roadside architecture or historic highways. Papers that address Southern resources are especially encouraged. Submissions (300-word abstract and a brief biographical summary/cv) should be sent by June 1, 1998, to Steven H. Moffson, SCA Conference, c/o Historic Preservation Division, 57 Forsyth Street NW, Suite 500, Atlanta, GA 30303. For additional details, contact Moffson by telephone (404-651-5906), fax (404-657-1040), or e-mail (Steven_Moffson@mail.dnr.state.ga.us.).

Reading the South

Reading the South: Book Reviews and Notes by Faculty, Staff, Students, and Friends of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

Elizabeth Spencer, *Landscapes of the Heart: A Memoir*. By Elizabeth Spencer. New York: Random House, 1998. 346 pages. \$24.00.

Elizabeth Spencer's new memoir is one of considerable charm, with vivid details, entertaining stories, and incisive characterizations. She has won acclaim for her nine novels and three short story collections, and her new autobiography will surely add to her reputation. This gentlewoman of Southern letters evokes the past, from growing up in Carrollton, Mississippi, to her time in New York City, Italy, and Canada. It is a discreet book, though, in which she conveys the sights and sounds and, especially, the marvelous stories of the people she has known but not how these experiences moved her emotions. She does not bare her soul, but her observations and insights of people and places are reward enough.

Spencer's childhood was "a time of enchantment and love," and she tells of playing among pecan trees, eating cold watermelon on summer days, and roller skating through town during long afternoons, seeing "Lawyer Yewell asleep in his office window." She summons haunting memories of family and townsfolk from Carrollton, Mississippi. She loved visiting her aunt who "would talk a blue streak—visiting she called it." Her uncle had a weakness for miracle cures, including the Crazy Water Crystals that many Southerners trusted. Spencer comes to see that "my memories have more in common with country life as described by Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Turgenev than with the America of that time as we read about it in Dreiser or Sinclair Lewis."

Spencer grew up with racial segregation, "the ugly system," she calls it, taking it for granted as "part of the eternal" as a child. The vicious beating of her family's cook by a townsman seared into her soul, becoming "the greatest horror I can in all my life remember" and a key incident in her novel *A Voice at the Back Door* (1956). Spencer etches a memorable portrait of the complexity of the Southern social system in general, noting its "gentle and soft" aspects but not flinching from its painful memories.

The second half of this memoir shows Spencer moving

into wider worlds. She studied at Vanderbilt University, working with the Agrarian legend Donald Davidson, and taught for several years, including at the University of Mississippi in the late 1940s. She tells of Ella Somerville,

"the Oxford lady to reckon with," whose dinners and parties were legendary, and of Stark Young, who delivered a memorable lecture during the Southern Literary Festival at the University. She moved on to New York City to devote full time to writing. Winning a Guggenheim Fellowship, she lived in Italy, which became her most significant literary source after the South. She finds beauty everywhere, from the statues and fountains that are a part of everyday life to the pleasures of the opera she discovers. She meets her future husband, John Rusher, in Italy, and they eventually move to Canada, where she long taught.

Spencer picnics with Saul Bellow in Paris, discusses Faulkner with his friend Phil Stone, sips whiskey with Philip Rahv (editor of *Partisan Review*), attends the Bread Loaf writers' conference in Vermont, has a memorable supper with Robert Frost and Donald Davidson, and visits often with Robert Penn Warren and, particularly, her friend Eudora Welty, who lovingly recurs throughout. Each real-life character is finely drawn, and Spencer entertainingly recreates her encounters with the famous and the ordinary with detail and verve.

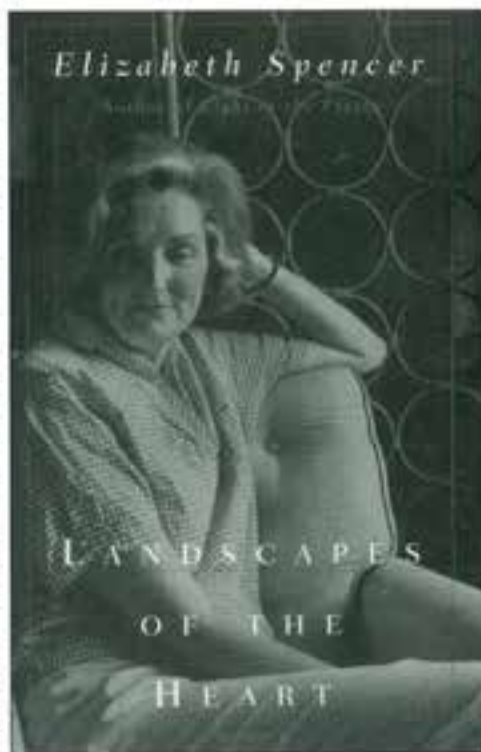
Charles Reagan Wilson

Editor's Note: Elizabeth Spencer will "come home to Mississippi" in March to participate in the fifth Oxford Conference for the Book.

Body Parts. By Jere Hoar. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997. 286 pages. \$26.00.

Body Parts, the first collection by Jere Hoar, emeritus professor of Journalism at the University of Mississippi and an attorney, contains 11 stories spanning the last 60 years. The volume has been warmly received, as a few excerpts from reviews indicate.

Kirkus Reviews: "Many of Hoar's tales are set in the same region of Mississippi that Faulkner wrote about—but his closest



Reading the South

literary ancestor is really Erskine Caldwell. That's especially true in 'The Snopes Who Saved Huckaby.' . . . It's a delightful story, funny as Caldwell, but gentler, with a hilarious sequel, 'How We've Went.' . . . By contrast, 'Tell Me It Hasn't Come to This' is mindful more of Flannery O'Connor."

Tom Drury, *New York Times Book Review*: "In 11 stories, the writer ranges across seven decades and three or four modes of storytelling to present a rough survey of the mythology and manners of the 20th-century South. Thus we find moving Depression memories next to raucous tall tales next to violent modern satire. Jere Hoar draws comparisons to O'Connor here, Barry Hannah there, Erskine Caldwell somewhere else; and sometimes the stories take over, drawing no comparison at all."

Brett Lott, *Raleigh News and Observer*: "Jere Hoar is the real thing."

Which is a blessing and a curse. The blessing: In a time when books seem increasingly homogenized and diluted, force-fed to us through literary IV tubes hooked directly to the thin drip of New York publishing conglomerates, Hoar's voice is a welcome, refreshing aberration. Rock-hard and crystal-clear, his lines and their images give us a world we have no choice but to acknowledge as here with us, its heart beating so furiously we can't help but look up from the page to our own world, and in that moment see the truth this writer speaks.

The curse: It takes a university press, and along with it all the attendant difficulties of distribution and marketing that smaller presses have to get the truth out. Be ready to have to special-order this one, although it will certainly be worth the wait."

***Managing Ignatius: The Lunacy of Lucky Dogs and Life in the Quarter.* By Jerry E. Strahan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998. 264 pages. \$24.95.**

With the posthumous publication of John Kennedy Toole's comedic masterpiece *A Confederacy of Dunces*, LSU Press introduced the world to one of the most compelling, appalling, and ultimately entertaining characters in the history of Southern letters. Walker Percy, in his introduction to the novel, termed Ignatius J. Reilly a "slob extraordinary, a mad Oliver Hardy, a perverse Thomas Aquinas rolled into one."

Percy claimed that Reilly has "no progenitor in any literature I know of," and anyone who has been fortunate enough to read Toole's novel would be hard pressed to take Percy to task. Even more difficult than imagining Ignatius's progenitor is imagining his progeny. The mind reels.

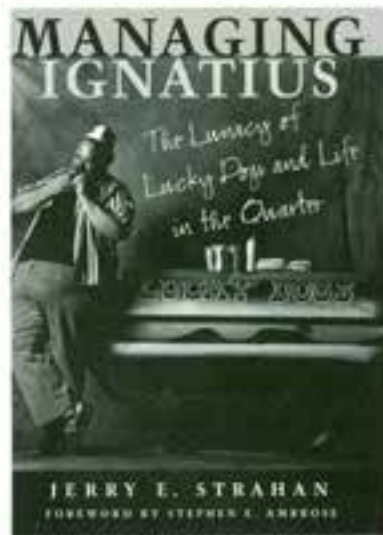
With the publication of *Managing Ignatius* by Jerry Strahan, LSU Press has brought to light not one but many possible progeny. As longtime manager of the troupe of street vendors who peddle Lucky Dog hot dogs in the New Orleans French Quarter, Strahan—a historian by training and a

"conservative redneck" from Sullivan's Hollow, Mississippi, by birth—has seen and heard it all. Though Ignatius's antics may have ruffled a few feathers at Paradise Vendors (Toole's fictional equivalent of Lucky Dogs), Strahan's deadpan delivery and sly wit give readers the impression that Ignatius would have been the least of his worries.

"Ex-carnies, phony clergymen, seamen between ships, disillusioned doctoral candidates, the love-scorned, the sex-crazed, and wayfarers simply looking for an alternate lifestyle"—Strahan has had them all in his employ. Reading of his travails, you can't help but laugh. Through it all, Strahan professes to be unfazed by the circus that is his job. But even Strahan has his limits, as evidenced by his appraisal of one of his veteran vendor's taste in attire: "Smitty came in the shop wearing red hot pants, fishnet stockings, pink ballerina slippers, a ruffled tuxedo shirt, a bra, a Prince Valiant-style wig, and smoking a pipe. He insisted on working his cart like that. I told him absolutely not. Board of Health regulations dictated that the pipe had to go."

Author Jerry Strahan will speak at the fifth Oxford Conference for the Book, scheduled for March 13-15, 1998.

John T. Edge



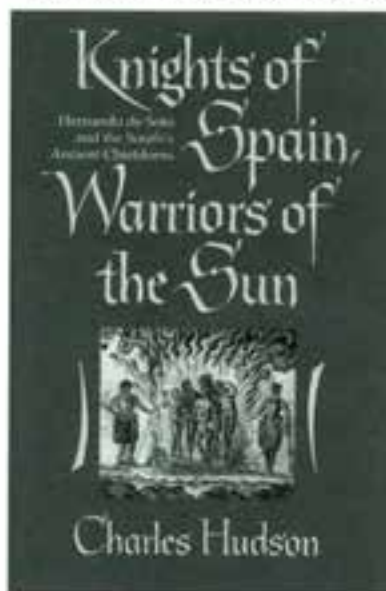
***Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms.* By Charles Hudson. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997. 561 pages. \$34.95.**

In *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms*, Charles Hudson, one of the most preeminent American scholars, places the capstone on a 15-year-long effort in scholarship, publications, and debate. Using the chronicles of the Hernando De Soto and other early Spanish expeditions and much archeological evidence, Hudson and his colleagues in the past decade and a half have produced the best-argued reconstruction of the trail of De Soto through the Southeastern United States, and in the course of this reconstruction, they have come to a deep understanding of the native polities, or chiefdoms, through which De Soto and his army of 600-plus passed. Hudson brings all of this research together in a volume that itself reads like one of the De Soto chronicles—only one written by an acute observer, intelligent scholar, and precise anthropologist.

Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun lands the reader at Tampa Bay and then takes her through *La Florida*, as North

America was called at the time. Hudson gives an almost day-by-day account of De Soto's movements and the grueling hardships of life on the march through a territory fiercely defended by its native inhabitants. In truth, it is these native inhabitants, and not De Soto, that Hudson has pursued so doggedly. But it was De Soto's footsteps through the 16th-century South that led the way to understanding Southeastern Indian society at the moment of European contact. Through painstaking examination of De Soto's movements, Hudson and his colleagues were able not only to place Southeastern Indian chiefdoms on a modern map, but also to discover something about the internal structure and dynamics of these political orders, the daily lives of the people, and the relationships between chiefdoms.

The Indians that De Soto encountered were quite different from the Southern Indians with which most people are familiar. The people living in the South during the 16th-century were constituents of well-defined political territories,



ruled by an elite believed to be descended from the Sun, and with political and religious centers dominated by large earthen mounds and other monumental architecture. They were also heirs to a centuries-old military tradition. Apalachee, Cofitachequi, Coosa, Tascaluza, Quizquiz, Guachoya, Quigualtam, Anilco—these are the names of the some of the South's ancient chiefdoms that Hudson restores to our historical consciousness. Moreover,

Hudson brings these chiefdoms to the forefront of the historical stage as the powerful *caciques*, or rulers, and their fearless warriors confront, cajole, harangue, acquiesce, accommodate, and otherwise interact with Hernando De Soto and the others in this premodern Spanish army trekking through *La Florida* in what turned out to be a futile search for riches and an altogether doomed expedition. Hudson's narrative style emphasizes the daily encounters between the knights of Spain and the warriors of the Sun as single events, with some being mundane and with some being quite spectacular. However, he never loses sight of the larger significance within which these encounters took place, and he places all of these events within a longer-term historical context. The end result is not only an account of the De Soto expedition and a reconstruction of the conquistador's route, but also an extraordinary volume on the life and ways of 16th-century Native Americans in the South.

Robbie Ethridge

The Natures of John and William Bartram. By Thomas P. Slaughter. New York: Vintage Books, 1997. 304 pages. \$14.00 paper.

Attention, bird people, travelogue people, art people, plant people, environmental people, 18th-century people, people people, and *Cold Mountain* fans: here is the book for deep winter reading. In *The Natures of John and William Bartram* Thomas P. Slaughter, a history professor at Rutgers University, examines the lives of John Bartram, one the greatest botanists of the Colonial era, and his son, William, America's first native-born naturalist painter. Not only does Slaughter use the lives of the two Bartrams to illuminate the worth of 18th-century science, exploration, and environmental ethics (not such a modern concept, after all), but he examines the father/son relationship of the men, especially the curse of the son who must grow up in the father's very long shadow. William's fecklessness, melancholia, and bad luck make his life much the more interesting of the two; he eventually became his own man, writing his *Travels* (Penguin, \$13.95 paper), in which are many exquisite descriptions and watercolors of the Southeast, its flora and fauna and native people. Charles Frazier, author of *Cold Mountain*, used Bartram's *Travels* as the spiritual compass and crutch upon which the wounded Civil War soldier, Inman, depended to guide him home. (See *Southern Register*, Fall 1997.)



Thomas Slaughter, who will speak at the fifth Oxford Conference for the Book, March 13-15, 1998, is also the editor of *William Bartram: Travels and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1996).

Lisa N. Howorth

Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South. By Brenda E. Stevenson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 457 pages. \$35.00, cloth, \$16.95 paper.

Stevenson details the differences of the meanings family and community had for free people and slaves in antebellum Loudoun County, Virginia. While whites defined themselves and their hopes for permanence and status through their households, slaves struggled to maintain control over their family lives. Like many historians, Stevenson stresses the adaptive nature and malleable definition of slave families, but unlike most, she sees the potential for tension, frustration,

Reading the South

and suffering that accompanied that adaptability. Full of the stories of individuals and addressing an important topic, this fine book may become a classic in Southern scholarship.

Ted Ownby

***Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925.* By Paul Harvey. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 330 pages. \$17.95.**

Studying all Baptists in the postbellum South, Harvey's work proceeds along two parallel tracks, showing how whites and then African Americans dealt with four themes: organizing churches and associations, addressing issues of middle-class respectability, the place of preachers in a congregational polity, and ideas and limits of progressivism. In doing so, Harvey shows that Baptists were a complex group, full of questions and tensions and not the group so many have found so easy to stereotype.

Ted Ownby

***The World Don't Owe Me Nothing: The Life And Times Of Delta Bluesman Honeyboy Edwards.* By David Honeyboy Edwards. Foreword by Albert Murray. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1997. \$24.00.**

This is the oral autobiography of Honeyboy Edwards, as told to Janis Martinson and Michael Frank, who are to be congratulated for deftly piecing together interviews with Honeyboy conducted over a five-year span without sacrificing the distinctive, highly readable flow of his speech.

Honeyboy Edwards was born in 1915 in Sunflower County, Mississippi, and could be the original die used to cast the Mississippi-born, Chicago-bred itinerant bluesman. Edwards, a man who proclaimed early in life that "I had three ways of making it: the women and my guitar and the dice," gives firsthand accounts of plantation life in the Mississippi Delta including the flood of 1927. Honeyboy also shares the particulars of small town dances, vagrancy laws, and county cotton farms that were often worked by black men brought in on trumped-up charges coincidentally at harvest time.

Driven by an amazing wanderlust, Honeyboy experienced much that has become part of the blues lexicon. He often traveled by hopping legendary trains such as the Pea Vine, the Southern, and the Yellow Dog. He performed in such blues Meccas as Memphis, Helena, Dallas's Deep Ellum, and Chicago's Maxwell Street Market in its prime with a list of companions that include Big Joe Williams, Tommy McClennan, Charlie Patton, Memphis Minnie, and Robert Johnson to name just a few.

Besides giving accounts of people, places and events which have gone on to become synonymous with the blues, *The World Don't Owe Me Nothing* is also an amazing read because of Honeyboy's gift for storytelling and language. For those off-put by the absence of footnotes, Michael Frank has added appendices to clarify the dates and other particulars of the stories.

The World Don't Owe Me Nothing is a major accomplishment in the field of black autobiography and is a must-read for anyone with an interest not only in the blues, but in Afro-American history, Southern culture, or oral history.

Scott McCraw

***Conversation with the Blues.* By Paul Oliver. Illustrated with photographs by the author. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. \$49.95.**

This is a beautiful hardback reissue of Paul Oliver's 1965 classic which, along with *Blues Fell This Morning* and his other works, established him as one of the earliest scholarly exponents of the blues. Compiled from interviews Oliver conducted in 1960, *Conversation with the Blues* features the words of blues performers from New Orleans to Chicago and all pertinent points in between. We are given the words of rural and urban artists of various levels of popularity or obscurity speaking on all aspects of blues culture.

Oliver's contributions include a lengthy introduction that reveals his love and respect for the blues as a poetic medium of black culture, detailed notes on the speakers, and stunning photographs, which alone would make a formidable volume.

This new edition is accompanied by a CD that includes some of the book's moving narratives that were taken from Oliver's field tapes of the 1960s.

Scott McCraw

***Southern Writers. Photographs by David G. Speilman and Text by William W. Starr.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997. 150 pages. \$24.95.**

This pictorial of 72 critically and popularly acclaimed writers of the contemporary American South on their native ground reveals each bard's sense of place, work methods, and habits. Photographer David G. Speilman delights in the interplay between a writer's work space and his literary genre while book critic Starr offers insightful sketches that attend to each subject's life, work, and critical reception. This is a photographic album of the best sort, picturing a distinct time in the literary life of the South. With its informal portraits of favorite and as yet unread authors, it is a visual guidebook to contemporary Southern literature.

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News of the Spirit

Lee Smith Talks About Southern Writing, Women's Humor, and Naming Her Stories

Lee Smith recently left her North Carolina home, where she teaches creative writing at North Carolina State University, to visit Oxford and read at Square Books from her newest short story collection, *News of the Spirit*. Smith has written two other volumes of short fiction and nine novels, among them *Oral History*, *Fair and Tender Ladies*, *The Devil's Dream*, and *Saving Grace*.

I watched you talk about the centennial of William Faulkner's birth on TV with Jim Lehrer, and I thought we might start by going back to some of your remarks on that program. You said: "I read *Absalom, Absalom!* like some people read the Bible." Can you talk about that?

When I first read Faulkner I was in college, and I was already trying to write things. At that point I was blown away by the language. I was just drunk on the language. I really don't think I understood a whole lot of what was going on. I think I was drawn to it because like anybody who is from the South and who would write about it, I also was alienated from it. I think I really identified with "I hate it! I hate it!" in a way that I never understood at that point. Later, I was interested in the sense of place because I come from another place that's made an indelible imprint on me and that fascinated me. Later, I think, as I was trying to write, I was interested in the writing itself and in the technique. One thing I didn't get to say on that show was that Faulkner wrote each one of his novels with a different narrative strategy. He was above all a great innovator, a totally experimental writer, the first great experimental writer, I think, in this country. Those novels are all like doors that any would-be writer can walk through, and so it's exciting to read Faulkner when you're trying to learn to write. Later, after a certain age, you discover mortality and then Faulkner makes a whole different kind of sense and you discover all kinds of things like loss and unredeemable sadness of one kind or another. Then you get to a whole bunch of other things—ideas and attitudes—

that I never suspected before. Faulkner is rewarding to read at whatever point you are in life.

You also said during that interview: "All great literature is regional." You praised the "exquisitely specific" nature of regional writing. Can you expand on that idea of a connection between place and writing?

Well, the great thing about the novel is that it confirms the everyday, and it tracks people through time in a way no previous form of narrative ever did. The paradox, of course, is that any writer who would be universal has got to first of all be absolutely specific to her own or his own time and place. Faulkner, of course, is so wonderful an example of that in this country. The more specific you can be to time and place and circumstance, then the more universal the work will be because people reading fiction don't want to be in their own heads; they want to be in the world of the fiction, and you have to give them a sufficient world.

How do you connect that sort of specificity to the notion that great writing is universal?

Well, to be abstract does not mean to be universal. This is the paradox. Young writers are always turning in these stories where nobody has a name and I say "why don't you give them a name?" It's "he and she"; the characters are abstractions. So I say: give them a name, put a shirt on them, give them a kind of earring, are they wearing sandals or are they wearing wingtips? The more specific you can be, the more universal, and this can be hard at first to get across to students.

Is region ever a barrier to understanding? For instance, do you think your

work means something less or something different to people outside the South?

I do think there still exists a certain prejudice against regional writing. Certainly an anti-Southern prejudice still exists unless a writer somehow manages to

Kathryn McKee (left) and Lee Smith



break through that or overcome it in one way or another. It's sort of an anti-compone thing. It particularly has to do with dialect. You write in dialect at your peril, whether it is African American or rural South or Appalachian or just whatever it might be. There's a certain set of associations that people (not people in the South, but elsewhere) have that must be overcome, and that's done in various ways. I think a good example is *Cold Mountain*, which is written in this beautiful, sort of 19th-century prose and, although it's taking place in the South and it's about the Civil War, yet it doesn't have the compone thing that turns people away. It is not a first-person narrative, and of course the dialect, when it's used in conversation, doesn't turn people off. I think another thing that turns people off is the notion of the South as violent. For instance, I think one of the great, great writers of all time is Larry Brown. I think *Father and Son* should have the readership that *Cold Mountain* is getting. I think they both should have it. But Larry's people are violent, and, like dialect, that

continued on next page

scared people. Inman [a character in *Cold Mountain*], on the other hand, has simply fallen into a violent world. He has to deal with it, but he didn't create it; it's not coming out of his own personality. I think there are things that are part and parcel of the Southern experience, and if you write about them in a certain way, you are going to mystify or throw off readers in other parts of the country.

You praised Faulkner for his ability to combine comedy and tragedy. It seems to me that you have that same ability—to make something funny and at the same time profoundly serious.

Well, I don't know. I think that maybe I am one of those people who take an essentially tragic view, a very serious view, and the thing is if you do that then you've got two choices: you can just go in the closet and close the door after you or you can make a joke and figure out ways to make it through the world. I think that humor is often very, very helpful. I came from a funny family that just loved making jokes and telling stories. For me, one of the functions of story and of writing is that it provides a way to make it through the night anyhow.

Is reading out loud part of your writing process? Do you stop and think: "how does this sound?"

No. But I do think that part of the process for me is certainly oral. I mean, I do hear a voice in my head literally when I'm writing and oftentimes it is the first person voice of the speaker or the narrator. That was particularly true for *News of the Spirit* because this collection is specific people's stories. The book has only gotten one bad review, and it was in Boston. Somebody sent it to me. It's hysterical—it's written by this woman who hates it. She says the book is just like those people who come up to you on the street and pull at your sleeve and start telling you a long story that you didn't have time to hear. And they don't know when they should leave you alone. "Who are these insistent women in this book?" she asks. But of course, it's true in a way. She's right.

When we were having our earlier conversation, you said: "Women have always used humor to help them say

what they mean." Can you say more about that?

I think it's only recently that women feel perfectly comfortable in saying what they mean. And a number of them still don't. Women of my generation were brought up to make other people feel good, you know. My mother's great quote was "a lady never lets a silence fall." That is terrifying! You were supposed to smooth the way, make other people very comfortable. Part of making other people feel comfortable can be to not state a preference, or to not state an opinion too strongly. But with humor I think you can say something and make a little joke of it. You can say what you want to say without it being threatening to someone else. You can get what you want to say across without offending. Humor is a corrective. I mean, there may be something that we're trying to get across, and we just don't want to hurt someone's feelings or rock the boat. Women have become very adept at this, particularly, I think, women earlier who were not in positions where they could exercise power directly. They had to find all sorts of ways to get things done the way they should be done and the way they wanted them done without angering people.

Particularly Southern women I imagine.

Absolutely. That's where, of course, the whole stereotype of the steel magnolia comes from, the one who's smiling and cracking the whip. Women had to become adept at both if they wanted to take care of children and get things done.

What has the humor in your work allowed you to say or to do that you might not have been able to otherwise?

I think now I feel very comfortable in writing about anything in any way I want to. But earlier on, humor allowed me to write about things that were scary to me. In an earlier novel, *Black Mountain Breakdown*, for instance, I was writing about passivity among women. There I was writing about something that I was feeling very strongly and that I think my generation felt—again that thing of being raised to please other people, your mother or your husband or whoever—but not being raised to wake up one day and wonder who you are, which, of course, is a log-

ical consequence of living that way. That topic was scary to me. I didn't know I was writing about that specifically. I was just writing the story of *Crystal*, but I think making it funny at certain points enabled me to write it. The same is true for "The Happy Memories Club" in *News of the Spirit*. I think we're all scared of aging and of dying and of having our loved ones change beyond recognition and losing the things we've given our life for. Alice Scully's language and her teaching are all so important to her in that story, and so those losses are terrifying. The best way I can touch it is through humor. It makes me able to deal with those issues. And I hope it would make someone else able to read about them.

Let's talk some more about *News of the Spirit*. You seem to be equally good at writing short stories and novels, but is your writing process different? Do you start on something and say—this has got to be a story?

Actually, I do. I kind of know what it's going to be. But it takes me a long time to do stories and I don't think they're really very good. They're not what I think stories should be; mine are more like little collapsed novels. They have too much in them. I have trouble paring them down and making them be what a story should be. The stories are not formally formed enough. But I love the shorter form. I particularly like the 100-page story. It's an unsalable length, but it's my favorite length. I love that completely unpublishable forsaken length.

"The Bubba Stories" in *News of the Spirit*—is that you?

Yeah, oh yeah, it really is. That very painful period of the writing class scenes is me. Although I did not have an affair with my teacher, nor did I make up a brother. But those were some of my ideas about wanting to write.

What holds this collection of stories together?

These stories were all about women telling stories. Two of them messed me up and turned into novels. *Saving Grace* was going to be one of these and she would not quit. She just would not quit. But I

continued on next page

Southern Studies 401

Poverty and Culture in the 20th-Century South

Southern Studies and History Professor Ted Ownby's Southern Studies undergraduate seminar, SST 401, is a study of the cultural response to poverty in the South. Noting that one of the apparent continuities in the South is the degree of poverty and the importance of poverty upon the identities of its inhabitants, Ownby has structured the course to explore the following questions: (1) How have poor Southerners interpreted and solved their own economic problems? (2) How have Southerners who are not poor interpreted poverty and dealt with it? (3) Does poverty inspire particular forms of creativity? (4) How has Southern poverty changed with the decline of agricultural work and the growth of Sun Belt cities?

To attempt to answer these questions, SST 401 students read fictional,

historical, anthropological, and sociological texts related to poverty in the South, including Pete Daniel's *Breaking the Land*, James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land*, Harry Crews's *Classic Crews*, and Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*. Ownby was pleased with the students in last fall's class, noting their high interest in the course: "Although many people think most of our [Southern Studies] undergraduate students come from upper-class backgrounds, the topic of poverty was alive and personal. It was the most talkative group of undergraduate students I have ever taught."

In addition to taking a final examination and participating in class discussion on the readings, each student in SST 401 is required to write a research

paper exploring the issue of poverty in Southern culture. Representative papers from last fall's class include Tamika McCullar's study of Richard Wright's literary depiction of poverty and family life and Jason Wester's analysis of economic change at the Choctaw reservation in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Several students chose to research poverty in their hometowns when writing their papers. For example, Lesley Ayres of Hammond, Louisiana, wrote about the need for public transportation in the rural areas of her parish while Lindsay Nusloch of New Orleans, Louisiana, recorded her observations of the community of lower income residents living in her city's Catholic-sponsored AIDS care clinic. Overall these students gained a better understanding of poverty and the nature of cultural responses to it.

For more information on the Southern Studies 401 seminar, contact Ted Ownby by phone at 601-232-5360 or via e-mail at hsownby@olemiss.edu.

Allison Vise Finch

had her in there initially as a story. And then also I had a story that became *The Christmas Letters*. It was just 120 pages, but it was published separately. And so I feel like I've been working on this book for a long time. I do have trouble controlling my characters.

How did "News of the Spirit" get to be the title story?

Actually I had wanted to name something "News of the Spirit" for a long time. But originally the title I had on that particular story was "We Don't Love with Our Teeth," and I really wanted that.

That's what the characters in the story say to the dog . . .

I really wanted that title and everybody at the publisher thought it was sort of kinky and kept imagining some kind of weird sexual thing! So then I thought of "News of the Spirit." But I liked "We Don't Love with Our Teeth" as a title.

Conducting the interview was Kathryn McKee, one of two James M. and Madeleine McMullan Professors at the University of Mississippi. McKee has a joint appointment in Southern Studies and English.

Notes on Contributors

Charlene Dye coordinates Public Program on the South for the Institute of Continuing Studies at the University of Mississippi. She is completing an M.A. degree in Southern Studies.

John T. Edge, a graduate student in Southern Studies, writes about Southern food and travel. At present, he is at work on the Southern Culture Cookbook, to be published by Putnam in 1999.

Robbie Ethridge is one of two James M. and Madeleine McMullan Professors who joined the University faculty in the 1997 Fall Semester. A specialist in Southeastern Indians, she holds an appointment in Southern Studies and Anthropology.

Allison Vise Finch, a Southern Studies graduate student who holds a B.A. in English from Baylor University, is currently studying the effects of major chain stores on small business owners in the South.

Susan Glisson is a doctoral student at the College of William and Mary. She received a master's degree in Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi in 1994 after earning two B.A. degrees, one in history and the other in religion, at Mercer University.

Lisa N. Howarth is the editor of *The South: A Treasury of Art and Literature* and author of *Yellow Dogs, Huskypuppies, and Bluetick Hounds: The Official "Encyclopedia of Southern Culture" Quiz Book*.

Donald M. Kartiganer, author of *The Fragile Thread: The Meaning of Farm in Faulkner's Novels*, is the Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies at the University of Mississippi.

Scott McCrow is a graduate of the Southern Studies master's program. He is currently working at the Center as an administrative assistant.

Kathryn McKee is James M. and Madeleine McMullan Assistant Professor of Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. She also holds a joint appointment in English.

Ted Ownby, author of *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*, holds a joint appointment in Southern Studies and History.

Linda Peel White, an accomplished editor and author, is a writer for the public relations and marketing department at the University of Mississippi.

Charles Reagan Wilson, a Southern Studies and History professor, is academic director for the Center. He is coauthor of the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* and the author of *Judgment and Grace in Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis and Baptized in Blood*.

In Memoriam Evans Harrington

Evans Burnham Harrington died in Oxford on December 1, 1997, after battling courageously with cancer for several months. He will be missed by family, friends, colleagues, students, and an endless list of persons whose lives he enriched during his 72 years.

Harrington grew up in Mississippi, living in several towns where his father was a Baptist minister and, no matter where the family lived, vying with his mother for each issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. "My mother was a great reader, and she and I would hide the *Post* from each other until we had read all the fiction," he said. "I loved to read so much and decided I would like to write stories like those I read. I think it was that simple."

After completing his B.A. at Mississippi College in 1948, Harrington was a high school teacher, first in Decatur and then in Oxford. In 1955 he became an instructor at the University of Mississippi, where he later earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees and was promoted to professorial rank in 1962. He chaired the English Department from 1978 until 1987.

A beloved teacher of literature and creative writing, Harrington drew on his own experiences as a dedicated reader and as an accomplished author. Among his publications are *The Prisoners*, three other novels, numerous short stories, and many essays. His story "The Knife in the Dark" was adapted for television by Rod Serling in the 1950s, with actor Paul Newman taking the leading role. Also, he wrote the script for *Faulkner's Mississippi: Land into Legend*, a documentary film, and the book and lyrics for two musical comedies.

In addition to teaching courses and nurturing creative writers, Harrington organized a number of outstanding programs featuring writers and their work. A leader in the Southern Literary Festival for more than 30 years, he contributed to many annual meetings and planned memorable programs for sessions held at the University during his three terms as president. In 1965 he organized a three-day meeting during which authors Eudora

Welty and Robert Penn Warren, critic Malcolm Cowley, actress Ruth Ford, and photographer Martin Dain gathered to pay tribute to William Faulkner. Festival president again in 1976 and 1987, Harrington organized addresses and readings by such writers as Robert Canzoneri, Beverly Lowry, Willie Morris, William Styron, and Sterling Plump. Two participants in the 1965 Southern

Literary Festival—Eudora Welty and Ruth Ford—returned to Oxford in 1987 for the University's Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, an annual six-day event Harrington helped organized in 1974 and directed for the next 20 years. While orchestrating lectures, discussions, readings, tours, and other activities, Harrington selected and arranged passages from Faulkner's work for dramatic readings called *Voices from Yoknapatawpha*, with various versions presented at the annual conference. For the 1976 meeting he wrote the book and lyrics for *The Battle of Harrykin Creek*, a musical comedy based on a Faulkner short story.

Richard Howorth, one of his former students and now proprietor of Square Books in Oxford, said he will always remember how Harrington "brought literature to life. He was just a tremendous teacher. Because of what he did here and the people he brought to the University, specifically Barry Hannah, the University has a reputation for a writing program that's known across the nation."

Harrington's broad intellectual and academic interests were evidenced by his serving as an enthusiastic member of the planning committee for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and he remained one of its strongest advocates. In addition to planning and speaking for the Center



and serving on the search committee for its first director, he for many years was one of six instructors for the popular team-taught course Introduction to Southern Studies.

Harrington was, as Jim Dees wrote in the *Oxford Eagle*, "one of the true trailblazers on Oxford's path to literary eminence." But his interests were not exclusively literary or academic. Dees notes that Harrington was also, along with his wife, Betty, a long-time supporter of freedom of speech causes such as those championed by the ACLU and Common Cause. He attributed some of his political convictions to the Meredith crisis at the University in 1962. "That night when I saw the Mississippi Highway Patrol inciting people to throw rocks at Meredith was the night I became an activist," Harrington said.

All who knew Evans Harrington would no doubt agree with Barry Hannah, who said "I don't know of a better reader, literary man, and uncommon gentleman." All who knew him will continue to miss him and to rejoice in his memory.

Memorial contributions to the Evans Harrington Creative Writing Scholarship Fund, which provides an annual award of \$1,000 to promising young writers in poetry and fiction, may be sent to the University of Mississippi Foundation, P.O. Box 249, University, MS 38677.

Regional Upcoming Events of Interest Roundup

The Valentine, the Museum of the Life and History of Richmond, Virginia, opened an exhibition on January 16 to kick off its centennial year. The exhibit, *Settlement to Streetcar Suburbs: Richmond and Its People*, highlights events, institutions, and individuals that have shaped the city's development. It includes biographical sketches of city residents and a time line in the shape of the James River. For more information, call 804-649-0711.

Alsace to America: Discovering a Southern Jewish Heritage, an exhibit presented by the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, will be on display at the Mtel Center in downtown Jackson from May 29 to August 31, 1998. The exhibit is being presented as a companion to the Mississippi International Commission on Culture's *Splendors of Versailles* exhibit. *Alsace to America* reflects the life and times of 19th-century Jewish pioneers who immigrated to the Mississippi River regions from Alsace and Lorraine provinces of France and Germany. Tickets can be purchased through Ticketmaster by calling 601-355-5252. For more information call the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience at 601-362-6357.

A permanent Louisiana State Museum exhibit, *Louisiana and the Mighty Mississippi River*, opened January 23, 1998, at the Arsenal on Jackson Square in New Orleans. The exhibit explores the unique legacy of the Mississippi River through ship models, artifacts, paintings, documents, and photographs. For more information, call the Louisiana State Museum at 800-568-6968 or visit their website at www.crt.state.la.us/crt/museum/lsmnet3.htm.

On April 1, 1998, the Department of History at Rhodes College will sponsor "Campus, Community, and Civil Rights: A Public Symposium in Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." The symposium will begin at 3:00 p.m. with a screening of the documentary *At the River I Stand*, which chronicles the 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike in Memphis. Following the film, historian Michael Honey of the University of Washington, Tacoma will give a presentation on the strike and answer questions from the audience. At 7:30 p.m. a panel composed of former Rhodes administrators, faculty, staff, and students will offer personal recollections of campus and city events 30 years ago. Some of the panelists marched with the striking sanitation workers and with Dr. King. Audience participation and discussion will follow. This panel is in association with the 150th anniversary of Rhodes College. For more information, contact Tim Huebner, Department of History, 901-843-3653.

Gift Ideas from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

Raisin' Cotton

Raisin' Cotton depicts life on a Mississippi Delta cotton plantation from 1938 to 1942, as seen through the home movie camera of Emma Knowlton Lytle. Mrs. Lytle donated the original 8mm silent home movies to the Southern Media Archive. Producer Karen Glynn has interwoven these movies with a recently recorded commentary from Mrs. Lytle. *Raisin' Cotton* depicts the full cycle of a cotton crop from breaking ground, to making a bale, to weaving the cloth in the textile mills of North Carolina. The film was recently featured in an article in *Soybean Digest*. 1997, 34 minutes. V9997\$25.00



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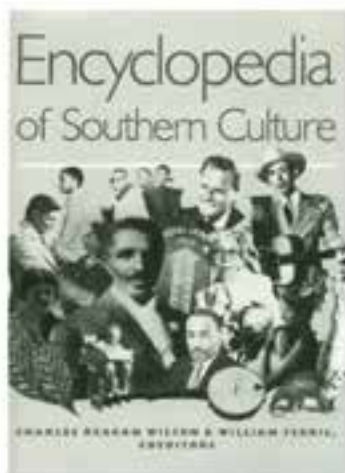
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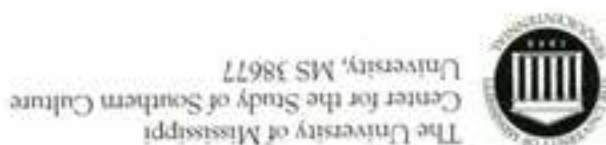
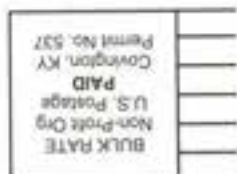
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