

University of Mississippi

eGrove

---

Staff Residencies

Mississippi Lab

---

9-1-2022

## Create New Recipes (Summer 2022)

Sara Camp Milam

*University of Mississippi*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/staff\\_res](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/staff_res)

---

### Recommended Citation

Milam, Sara Camp, "Create New Recipes (Summer 2022)" (2022). *Staff Residencies*. 11.  
[https://egrove.olemiss.edu/staff\\_res/11](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/staff_res/11)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Mississippi Lab at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Staff Residencies by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

**Sara Camp Milam, Managing Editor, Southern Foodways Alliance, developed a novel, *Pages*.**

I thank the Mississippi Lab and the University for giving me the opportunity to work on *Pages* for the week of June 27 through July 1. Thanks to supportive colleagues and supervisors at the Southern Foodways Alliance and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the process of disengaging from my regular work was seamless. I had just finished a significant project (the summer issue of *Gravy*) the previous Friday, so the timing was perfect to let my imagination wander on a completely different topic during the week of the creative residency.

Thanks to the generous stipend of \$500, I was able to budget for some extra babysitting time that week, which allowed me to dedicate more hours to my project. My other significant expenditure was a one-year subscription to Evernote. After I had been notified of my acceptance to the creative residency but before I took my week to write, I accidentally erased most of the contents of an iPhone Note that contained more than a year's worth of notes toward this project. It was a significant and frustrating loss but a good lesson that I needed a more reliable, cloud-based note-taking system that was not as easy for me (or my children, who often play with my phone) to delete by accident.

During my week-long creative residency, my children were at home on summer break with their babysitter, so my goal was to get out of my house to write. I spent about half of the week at the UM Library, where I have long enjoyed working when I need a change of scenery from my office. The rest of the time I split between coffee shops and a couple of stints in one of the Adirondack chairs on the grounds at Rowan Oak when it was not too hot. I did a mix of writing long-hand in a notebook, for minimal distraction, and typing on my laptop.

I have no formal training in writing fiction, so I struggled—albeit pleasantly—with how much to outline vs. how much to just *write*. Although I did a productive mix of both, I think that the answer for me going forward is focus on the writing itself, because otherwise I could outline forever. Plus, as I'm sure any experienced fiction writer could have told me, it was fun to think of unplanned twists and turns and details as I went along. In addition to a more fleshed-out sense of characters, backstories, and plot, I came

away from the week with several thousand words of the novel's first chapter.

*Pages* tells the story of a year in the life of a literary magazine of the same name, based at a fictional liberal arts college in a fictional Mississippi town. Its characters are the magazine's staff, past and present, and their families. The novel's central question is: How, if at all, can the production of art flourish in harmony with the life of a family? Two of the novel's main characters, Malcolm Page and Kathryn Parrish, began along similar paths, but a decade later they lead very different lives, having arrived in their current circumstances as a result of different choices and, as the reader comes to see later, varying degrees of agency. A third main character, Meacham Caldwell, is just beginning her career at *Pages* when the novel's action begins. As she gains a greater understanding of her job, her coworkers, and her career prospects, she begins to wrestle with the sacrifices that career might demand.

While it will likely be holiday break before I am able to dedicate real effort to this project again, I am eager to do so whenever I can create the opportunity for myself. Thanks again to the Mississippi Lab for giving me a chance to get started.