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MWP Newsletter: Extended News Items, 2003

University of Mississippi. Department of English

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MWP Newsletter – Extended News Items, 2003

Note: Most internet links from the original text have expired and/or are no longer valid, and have been disabled.

- [10th Oxford Book Conference celebrates novelist, drama critic Stark Young \(April 4, 2003\)](#)
- [30th Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference to examine 'Faulkner and the Ecology of the South' \(June 13, 2003\)](#)
- [Arts Commission to support Thacker Mountain Radio \(July 31, 2003\)](#)
- [Back from the brink, *Oxford American* to publish 'relaunch issue' this month \(January 16, 2003\)](#)
- [Barry Hannah receives national short fiction award \(Dec. 17, 2003\)](#)
- [Call for Papers: Delta Blues Symposium X: The 1950s \(added Dec. 9, 2003\), deadline for submissions: Jan. 5, 2004](#)
- [Call for Papers: Faulkner and Material Culture, deadline for submissions: Jan. 15, 2004](#)
- [Call for Papers: Faulkner in the 21st Century \(Deadline: November 30, 2003\)](#)
- [Call for Papers: Faulkner in the World \(added February 18, 2003\), deadline for submissions: September 30, 2003](#)
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- [Clifton Taulbert, famed author, visits Oxford \(February 18, 2003\)](#)
- [David Galef reading to begin Mississippi State University Visiting Writers Series \(Sept. 23, 2003\)](#)
- [Eudora Welty house to become a museum \(Oct. 13, 2003\)](#)
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- [Faulkner Conference to focus on South's ecology \(June 28, 2003\)](#)
- [Faulkner's home sets stage for country stars' performance, tour announcement \(May 30, 2003\)](#)
- [Film version of John Grisham's 'A Painted House' to air on CBS April 27 \(April 22, 2003\)](#)
- [Food writer John T. Edge named 'Top 20 Southerner' by news magazine \(Nov. 26, 2003\)](#)
- [Georgia author, naturalist named Grisham Writer-in-Residence \(Aug. 4, 2003\)](#)
- [Grisham writer-in-residence ends year with new works \(June 3, 2003\)](#)
- [Jim Henson's children repurchase the company their father founded \(May 7, 2003\)](#)
- [Jim Henson statue unveiled at University of Maryland \(Sept. 25, 2003\)](#)
- [Key West festival honors Tennessee Williams \(February 23, 2003\)](#)
- [Latest issue of 'Yalobusha Review' literary journal hits newsstands \(May 28, 2003\)](#)
- [Marty Stuart, Merle Haggard announce tour, perform at Faulkner home \(June 2, 2003\)](#)
- [MSU English professor named associate dean \(March 7, 2003\)](#)
- [Poet Beth Ann Fennelly reads at Library of Congress, on 'Voice of America' \(March 10, 2003\)](#)
- [Poetry, music event to raise money for Mississippi State University literary magazine \(April 21, 2003\)](#)
- [Pulitzer Prize-nominated author Clifton Taulbert to speak at Ole Miss Feb. 17 \(February 13, 2003\)](#)
- [Retired Mississippi State University helps plan upcoming national tributes \(February 25, 2003\)](#)
- [Revived Oprah book club to focus on classics \(February 27, 2003\)](#)

- [Stars to be on hand for opening of University of Mississippi performing arts center \(March 17, 2003\)](#)
- [Tallahatchie RiverFest seeks short fiction \(May 27, 2003\)](#)
- [Tenth Oxford Conference for the Book scheduled for April 10-13 \(March 31, 2003\)](#)
- [UM Journalism seeks nominations for journalism ' Silver Em' award \(June 27, 2003\)](#)
- [University of Mississippi Library receives Eudora Welty scrapbook \(June 24, 2003\)](#)
- [Veteran history professor John F. Marszalek returns to MSU to head scholarship program \(Dec. 15, 2003\)](#)
- [Visiting Ole Miss professor wins National Endowment for Arts award \(January 9, 2003\)](#)
- [Writer, instructor James Whitehead dies at 67 \(Aug. 16, 2003\)](#)

January

Visiting Ole Miss professor wins National Endowment of Arts award

January 9, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — In the space of only a few days, poet Beth Ann Fennelly has been kissed thrice by good fortune.

For the visiting assistant professor of English at the University of Mississippi, success came in a trio of rapid-fire kudos: a prestigious National Endowment for the Arts grant, a second poetry book offer from an elite New York publishing house and feature of her work in a renowned literary journal.

"I couldn't believe it—I just started crying right there," said Fennelly, whose first book of poems, *Open House* (April 2002), won the 2001 *Kenyon Review's* Prize in Poetry for a First Book, considered one of the nation's most notable awards for new authors.

In December, she was among only 38 writers from the United States and seven foreign countries chosen to receive NEA's notable Creative Writing Fellowships in Poetry, which attracted more than 1,600 applicants. Each fellow received \$20,000.

"The judges were some of my favorite writers. Li-Young Lee, Albert Golbarth and former poet laureate Robert Pinsky are people I've really admired for a long time," she said. "Just to take my place alongside them is a great honor."

Joseph Urgo, chair of the UM Department of English, termed Fennelly "immensely talented."

"She is emerging, among the poets of her generation, as one who is sure to outlast the moment's literary chatter," he said. "Her vision is expansive and her voice is strong; she is an original."

Since 1990, 40 winners of NEA's literature fellowship have become recipients of the National Book Award, National Book Critics Circle Award and Pulitzers in fiction and poetry.

But Fennelly's story doesn't end there.

Still reeling from the surprise of her NEA award, she has struck a deal with New York independent publishing house W.W. Norton & Company to publish her second book of poetry, in spring 2004. Norton, which bills itself as the oldest and largest publishing house owned wholly by its employees, rarely accepts poetry by emerging writers, Fennelly said.

The writer said she hopes to use the NEA award to help her “put final finishing touches” on the forthcoming work *Tender Hooks*, a collection of 25 poems. It centers on Fennelly’s 18-month-old daughter, Claire, and explores her experience as a mother, as well as some of the changes that she, her daughter and husband have undergone since Claire’s birth.

“The book takes on the subject of motherhood from a lot of different angles,” said Fennelly. “The poems range informally from a Shakespearean sonnet to a 12-page experimental poem.”

In another fortuitous career boost, Fennelly’s lengthy poem “Telling the Gospel Truth” will appear in an upcoming issue of *The Kenyon Review*. Founded in 1939, the celebrated magazine publishes works by talented emerging writers alongside more established writers.

A native of Lake Forest, Ill., Fennelly taught at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., for two years before coming to UM this past fall to teach poetry and literary studies. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame (Indiana) in 1993. After graduation, she taught English in a coal mining village on the Czech/Polish border.

In 1994, she returned to the United States to earn a master’s of fine arts in poetry from the University of Arkansas. She held the prestigious Diane Middlebrook Fellowship in Poetry at The University of Wisconsin from 1998-99.

Fennelly’s poems have been published in numerous literary reviews, including *TriQuarterly*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *American Scholar*, and Washington and Lee University’s *Shenandoah*. Her poetry has been anthologized in *The Pushcart Prize 2001: Best of the Small Presses* and *Poets of the New Century*.

Fennelly’s work “Poem Not to Be Read at Your Wedding” was included in *Best American Poetry 1996*, *Penguin’s Book of the Sonnet* and the writing textbook *13 Ways of Looking for a Poem*. It also was chosen by Poetry in Motion to be made into a poster to hang in the St. Louis transit system. The New York-based program, which displays poems in buses and subways, reaches more than 10 million Americans daily.

Fennelly’s husband, novelist Tom Franklin, authored the short story collection *Poachers* and was UM’s 2001-2002 John and Renee Grisham Writer-in-Residence. This fall he assumed a similar position at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. The couple collaborated on the short story “Saint of Broken Objects,” which was published in the summer issue of *The Southern Review*. Franklin’s novel *Hell at the Breech* will be published by William Morrow in May.

Award-winning poet David Baker, poetry editor of *The Kenyon Review*, praised Fennelly’s first book. “Beth Ann Fennelly’s *Open House* stands out from the poetry of most younger American poets with their sober self-confessions or, conversely, their sarcastic throwaway wit.

“Here is sincere passion in great, mature portions, with a tenderness toward her characters both faraway and near, a historical aptitude and relevance, a strength of spirit and a wisdom at home in the substantial body of the work. I greet this book, this poet, with joy.”

Back from the brink, *Oxford American* magazine to publish ‘relaunch issue’ this month

January 16, 2003

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — When *Oxford American* editor Marc Smirnoff announced last May that the magazine had two weeks in which to find a new owner or face shutting down for good, things did not look promising.

The struggling “Southern magazine of good writing,” acclaimed for its annual music issues and for a talented and various array of writers and contributors over its ten-year run, was on the brink of financial ruin because of poor subscription sales and low ad revenues. The Spring 2002 issue of the magazine had been completed and sent to the printer, but could not be printed or mailed to subscribers because of a lack of operating funds.

Now, the magazine is back from the brink, thanks to a new owner, a new home in Arkansas, and a new editorial and business staff. Still unchanged is the magazine’s name and its editor, Smirnoff, who founded the magazine in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1992.

The magazine was saved from ruin when At Home Media Group, Inc., an Arkansas-based publisher, teamed up with two local entrepreneurs to purchase a majority interest in the *Oxford American*. Now based in Little Rock, the magazine will continue to offer its eclectic blend of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction for which it has been noteworthy.

According to a FAQ on the magazine’s web site, the magazine’s editorial content was what attracted the new owners in the first place. “I think it would be a significant mistake to tinker with the editorial content of the magazine,” says At Home Media’s Russ McDonough. Because the magazine has “such a devoted following,” the new publisher’s challenge is “to make that a profitable model without alienating our readers.”

The magazine will publish a regular issue every two months, along with special music and food issues each year, for a total of eight issues per year.

The magazine is no stranger to financial troubles. In 1994, the magazine nearly folded from a lack of funds, until bestselling novelist John Grisham rescued the magazine from ruin by purchasing an interest in the magazine and becoming the publisher. Grisham’s relationship with the magazine dates back to the very first issue in 1992, in which Grisham contributed an essay titled “The Faulkner Thing,” about how his own works were frequently compared to those of William Faulkner simply because both of them lived in Oxford, Mississippi.

The magazine also published Grisham’s first published short story, “The Birthday,” in 1995, and a serialized novel, *A Painted House*, in 2000.

The magazine’s most recent financial troubles ironically came as an anthology of the best articles and stories from the first ten years had just been published. *The Best of the Oxford American: Ten Years from*

the Southern Magazine of Good Writing was published by Hill Street Press in 2002 and featured previously unpublished works that appeared in the magazine by such writers as Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, Larry Brown, Barry Hannah, Rosanne Cash, Steve Martin, Donna Tartt, Susan Sontag, Rick Bass, and others.

More information about the magazine, including subscription and submission information, is available from the magazine's web site, www.oxfordamericanmag.com. Also featured on the site are articles from the so-called "Lost Issue," the issue that had previously been stranded at the printer for lack of funds.

February

Pulitzer Prize-nominated author Clifton Taulbert reads on University of Mississippi campus Feb. 17

February 13, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Pulitzer Prize-nominated author and lecturer Clifton L. Taulbert, acclaimed for his best seller *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, reads from his work Feb. 17 at the University of Mississippi.

Free and open to the public, the 7 p.m. reading is scheduled in Old Chemistry auditorium. From 5 to 6 p.m., Square Books in downtown Oxford hosts a book signing for the author. His visit is sponsored by the John and Rene Grisham Visiting Writers Series and the Department of English.

Taulbert, who grew up in the Mississippi Delta community of Glen Allan, writes and lectures about growing up in the segregated South. As president and founder of Building Community Institute in Tulsa, Okla., he speaks throughout the world on the timeless and universal ideas he encountered in his Delta experience.

In *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, he describes his childhood spent in the "colored section" of the small rural town from 1946 to 1962. Although racial injustice was ever present, it isn't the focus of his story, shaped from 150 short stories written over 10 years.

"The whole idea of Southern memoirs has been whitewashed," said Ethel Young-Minor, a UM assistant professor of English and Afro-American Studies. "Taulbert is able to go back and create a culturally-informed memoir.

"The book has moved people because it talks about the South in a way we're not used to. He critiques the system and records the past without fighting with it."

His most recent book is *The Journey Home: A Father's Gift to His Son*, a tender story about a father determined to help his affluent son understand some of the past's forgotten values.

In addition to *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, which was made into a feature film in 1996, Taulbert wrote Pulitzer-nominated *The Last Train North*, *Watching Our Crops Come In*, *Eight Habits of the Heart* and three children's books illustrated by E.B. Lewis—*Little Cliff and the Porch People*, *Little Cliff's First Day of School* and *Little Cliff and the Cold Place*.

An inspiring motivational speaker, Taulbert has delivered his concepts on the role of community to the U.S. Supreme Court, the Library of Congress and Harvard University, as well as to corporate clients such as Lockheed Martin, Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and Ford-Mazda Auto Alliance.

He has received numerous writing awards, including the 27th annual NAACP Image Award for Literature. He was one of the first African-American writers to win the Mississippi Arts and Letters Award for Nonfiction and was named one of America's outstanding black entrepreneurs by *Time* magazine.

He received a graduate degree from Southwest Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University and a bachelor's degree from Oral Roberts University.

"Today I wear a label called 'successful,' but I would not be so if not for them, the leaders of my 'colored' community in Glen Allan, Miss., in the 1950s," Taulbert wrote in an article for *USA Weekend* magazine. "Because they cared, shared their lives and trusted each other, they showed me the future. I never want to forget the basic ideals they practiced."

For more information or assistance related to a disability, call the Department of English at 662-915-7439. This event is held in conjunction with "Open Doors," the University of Mississippi's yearlong observance of the 40th anniversary of its integration. View a full schedule on the Internet at www.olemiss.edu/opendoors/calendar.html.

Clifton Taulbert, famed author, visits Oxford

February 18, 2003

By John Wilbert

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the Feb. 18, 2003, issue of The Daily Mississippian.

OXFORD, Miss. — Pulitzer Prize-nominated author Clifton L. Taulbert read some of his prized works Monday night in the Old Chemistry Auditorium as part of Ole Miss' yearlong observance of the 40th anniversary of its desegregation.

Taulbert read from his most recent book, *The Journey Home: A Father's Gift to His Son*, a story about a father dedicated to showing his son what life was like for him while growing up during segregation. Upon returning to Mississippi, Taulbert shared excerpts from his other books, which draw from his childhood.

Taulbert grew up in the Mississippi Delta community of Glen Allan from 1946 to 1962. He speaks to various audiences about his experiences of growing up in the segregated South, the inspiration for his best-selling book *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored* and other autobiographical books.

"I want to set the stage about why coming home is so important to me and so important to me to bring my son, and what it means to come home," Taulbert said. "So I kind of would take a 21st century look at making a decision to take my 21st century son back into another world and what I wanted him to encounter while on that journey."

Taulbert expressed anticipation in visiting Ole Miss, English Department chair Joseph Urgo said.

“We approached him simply on merits of him as a writer,” Urgo said.

Taulbert said he admired James Meredith, who was the first black student at Ole Miss and credited with the university’s desegregation 40 years ago.

“I admire other people like him who pioneered their lives for the benefit of a lot of us,” Taulbert said. “I think it is just absolutely admirable how he managed to move his life through the campus despite the circumstances he faced. I’m not sure if I would be able to do that.”

Taulbert also participated in a book signing Monday at Off Square Books in downtown Oxford. Taulbert, whose visit was sponsored by the John and Renee Grisham Visiting Writer Series and the Department of English, also chatted with fans in the bookstore.

“It’s a great honor for us to have him here,” Urgo said. “He’s a major voice in African-American letters.”

Ethel Young-Minor, assistant professor of English and African-American studies, escorted Taulbert around campus and Oxford Monday.

“The whole idea of him being from Mississippi and the whole world has embraced him, I think we need to do a better job of embracing him here at home,” Young-Minor said.

Taulbert said he is proud to see how things have changed within Mississippi since he moved away from the state when he was 16-years-old.

“I try to find whatever spark of light there is, and I can honestly say that when I returned to my home state for whatever reason, I see an experience with remarkable change,” Taulbert said.

“The world has not come of age. It is still growing in progress and so will the state of Mississippi.”

Taulbert will receive another distinguishing mark Saturday when he gets the Richard Wright Award of Literary Excellence in Natchez.

Aside from writing five books largely based on growing up in the Mississippi Delta, Taulbert is also president of The Building Community Institute in Tulsa, Okla., whose philosophy statement establishes a goal “to energize our efforts to rebuild and build anew environments that foster justice, compassion, productivity and vision.”

Call for Papers: Faulkner in the World

February 20, 2003

Scholars from Europe, Asia, South America, Africa and Oceania are invited to submit their proposals for a compilation of international essays on the reception of William Faulkner’s fiction in specific national, political and historical contexts, to be published in 2004.

The purpose of this volume is to offer a multifaceted discussion of ways in which different political and cultural settings outside North America affect the reading of Faulkner’s fiction; in other words, to study not only the impact of his fiction on different cultural contexts worldwide, but also the impact of those

same contexts on the reading of Faulkner; how different worldviews frame and inform his artistic production. History and memory, national imaginations, cultural difference and , cultural affinity are the suggested themes for the critical analyses to be gathered.

Finished papers (no longer than 6000 words, MLA style) should be submitted to: Paula Mesquita (University of Coimbra), Rua Diogo de Castilho, 12 r-c, Celas 3000-140 Coimbra, Portugal

The deadline for submission is 31 January 2004.

Key West festival honors Tennessee Williams

February 23, 2003

KEY WEST, Fla. (Reuters) — Ernest Hemingway may have been the most famous raconteur to put Key West on the map, but playwright Tennessee Williams is getting his due for works influenced by life in this southern paradise town.

Key West's first Tennessee Williams Festival culminates on Monday—the 20th anniversary of Williams' death at age 72 at New York's Hotel Elysee on February 24, 1983—with a gala appearance by actress Elizabeth Ashley. Ashley starred in a Broadway revival of Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1955.

Williams, who moved to the town on an island south of Miami during the mid-1940s when he was in his mid-30s, won his first Pulitzer in 1948 for his sultry *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Williams rewrote the famed play while living at Key West's downtown La Concha Hotel, although he began penning it as a resident of New Orleans.

In Key West, Williams was known for dressing casually in white, often sporting a mustache and beard. He enjoyed local watering holes such as Sloppy Joe's and Captain Tony's Saloon, cycling around the 2-by-4-mile (3.3 km by 6.6 km) island and taking daily ocean swims.

Retired Mississippi State University historian helping plan upcoming national tributes

February 25, 2003

STARKVILLE, Miss. — A Civil War scholar and retired Mississippi State history professor is among a team of national experts helping commemorate two 19th century milestones.

John F. Marszalek is one of 15 members of the Scholars Advisory Committee at the Mariners Museum in Newport News, Va.

In cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the museum is raising the USS Monitor, the prototype Union Civil War ship involved in the first battle of armor-plated vessels. Not long after its historic 1862 encounter with the Confederacy's CSS Virginia (formerly the Merrimack), the Monitor sank in rough waters off Cape Hatteras, N.C.

"The Mariners' Museum has been designated to care for artifacts from the Monitor, which was the first of a new class of warships for its time," Marszalek said. "The planned USS Monitor Center will open in

2007 to display the artifacts, tell the historical story of naval warfare and the Civil War, and provide more information on the famous Monitor-Merrimac battle that changed warfare at sea.”

Marszalek also is among approximately 100 academic, business and political experts on President Abraham Lincoln and the American Civil War era asked to serve on an advisory committee to the congressionally established Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. The committee will have a major role in planning a national 200th birthday celebration in 2009 of America’s 16th president and first Republican chief executive.

One of MSU’s top William L. Giles Distinguished Professors, Marszalek has authored 11 books and more than 150 articles over his 30-year career. Retired since June, he currently is at work on a biography of the Civil War’s longest-serving commanding general, Henry W. Halleck. The book is scheduled to be published in 2004 by Harvard University Press.

Revived Oprah book club to focus on classics

February 27, 2003

NEW YORK (AP) — Oprah’s Book Club is back, and this time she’s sticking to the classics. Winfrey revealed Wednesday night that she was bringing back her club after a 10-month hiatus. She said she had been reading works by William Shakespeare, William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway and wanted to celebrate these and other writers from the past.

“I’m back in the business of recommending books ... but with a difference,” she told the Association of American Publishers in Washington, D.C. Winfrey, who received a standing ovation, was being honored at the annual meeting for her contributions to publishing.

She did not say when she would make her first new pick, or who the first author would be. She expects to make three to five choices a year, and plans to visit a location related to the book or author.

The new club is tentatively titled “Traveling With the Classics.” Winfrey suspended her book picks last April, later saying she didn’t have enough time to keep up monthly selections.

March

Mississippi State University English professor named associate arts and sciences dean

March 7, 2003

STARKVILLE, Miss. — An English professor who helped establish the creative writing program at Mississippi State University is the new associate dean of arts and sciences at the university.

Gary L. Myers, who joined the faculty in 1989, primarily will be responsible for academic affairs in the College of Arts and Sciences, which, with 16 departments ranging from art to biological sciences to psychology to physics, is MSU’s largest academic unit.

“Dr. Myers has earned the consensus respect and friendship of the college faculty and staff,” said Dean Philip B. Oldham. “His experience and leadership in the arts and humanities will ensure a healthy balance in the dean’s office.”

Recognized with the John Grisham Faculty Excellence Award, Myers directed the university's freshman English program for six years prior to his current assignment.

An active writer, he has published more than 100 poems in magazines and journals that include, among others, the *New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Kansas Quarterly*, and *Louisville Review*. His book *World Effects* earned the Stanley Hanks Poetry Award from the St. Louis Poetry Center. Another book, *Lifetime Possessions*, won the Riverstone Press Poetry Prize from the West Chester, Pa.-based publishing house.

Myers holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska, a master of fine arts degree from the Iowa Writers Workshop of the University of Iowa and a doctorate in creative writing from the University of Houston.

Poet, assistant professor Fennelly reads at Library of Congress, on 'Voice of America'

March 10, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Award-winning poet Beth Ann Fennelly, a University of Mississippi assistant professor of English, read her work March 5 at the Library of Congress.

She also read her work during a March 6 interview on government-sponsored Voice of America, an international broadcasting service, which weekly airs more than 1,000 hours of news, educational and cultural programs to some 94 million people worldwide.

"This marks poet Beth Ann Fennelly's elevation to national status—the elders of American poetry, so to speak, have identified her as one of the next generation of major voices," said Joseph Urgo, UM Department of English chair. "We in the English department made that identification when we hired her, but it takes time for Mississippi literary news to reach the (nation's) capital."

Fennelly joins the ranks of such poets as Robert Pinsky, Yusef Komunyakaa, Rita Dove, W.S. Merwin and Gwendolyn Brooks who have read for the program. The library's Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature contains recordings of more than 2,000 poets.

"I feel so honored to be selected," said Fennelly, whose book *Open House* won the 2001 Kenyon Review Prize in Poetry for a First Book.

Earlier this year, the Lake Forest, Ill., native won a prestigious National Endowment for the Arts grant and soon after struck a deal with New York independent publishing house W.W. Norton & Co. for her second book of poetry. And in another fortuitous career boost, her lengthy poem "Telling the Gospel Truth" appears in *The Kenyon Review*, which publishes works by talented emerging writers alongside more established writers.

Reading with Fennelly March 5 was Linda Gregerson, a widely published poet whose work Fennelly said she has admired for a long time. "Reading with Ms. Gregerson in front of the audience at the Library of Congress will be an honor I don't expect to duplicate or forget," she said.

Fennelly taught at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., for two years before coming to UM to teach poetry and literary studies. She earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Notre Dame in

1993 and then taught English in a coal mining village on the Czech-Polish border. In 1994, she returned to the United States to earn a master of fine arts in poetry from the University of Arkansas. She held the University of Wisconsin's prestigious Diane Middlebrook Fellowship in Poetry from 1998-99.

Fennelly's poems have been published in numerous literary reviews, and her poetry has been anthologized in *The Pushcart Prize 2001: Best of the Small Presses* and *Poets of the New Century*.

Her "Poem Not to Be Read at Your Wedding" was in *Best American Poetry 1996*, *Penguin's Book of the Sonnet* and the writing textbook *13 Ways of Looking for a Poem*.

Stars to be on hand for opening of Ford Performing Arts Center at the University of Mississippi

March 17, 2003

OXFORD, Miss. — A star-studded Inaugural Gala March 28 officially opens the University of Mississippi's Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts.

Three-time Oscar nominated Hollywood actor and Mississippi native Morgan Freeman hosts the evening, which showcases the talents of UM students, faculty, alumni and friends.

Other headliners are actor Gerald McRaney, country music stars Marty Stuart and his wife Connie Smith, *Phantom of the Opera* star Laurie Gayle Stephenson, UM's first Miss America Mary Ann Mobley and her actor husband Gary Collins, *Lawrence Welk Show* alumnus Guy Hovis and actress/singer Mary Donnelly Haskell.

All five university choirs and other student ensembles will be on the program, which also features The Ole Miss Alumni Quartet of U.S. Sen. Trent Lott with Sigma Nu fraternity brothers Hovis, U.S. District Court Judge W. Allen Pepper Jr. of Cleveland and Gaylen Roberts of Norcross, Ga.

Executive producer of the 8 p.m. gala is Sam Haskell III, Amory native and executive vice president of the William Morris Agency in Los Angeles. Michael B. Seligman, who has Academy Awards and Kennedy Center honors to his credits, is producing the event.

Guest conductor is Bill Walker, whose lengthy musical career is credited with bringing mainstream variety and recording precision to Nashville, especially to the careers of Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Johnny Cash and Al Hirt. He also has arranged for symphonies and composed, arranged and conducted movie scores.

"It's going to be a very professional show, and I think that the audience will be awestruck," said Haskell, a UM alumnus. "There will be a lot of wonderful surprises, and our show will definitely be a fitting inaugural performance in the new Ford Center."

Chancellor Robert Khayat said, "We are blessed to present Morgan Freeman, Marty Stuart and some of the university's most distinguished and talented students, faculty and alumni for this historic event. The performing arts center will add a tremendous dimension to the community and will be beneficial to the cultural life of all Mississippians and residents of the Mid-South."

The spirited two-and-a-half hour program will offer a taste of Mississippi's diverse talent. Tupelo native and UM alumnus Hovis opens the evening with combined choirs in a rousing arrangement of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

A medley of songs and dance numbers from the musical drama *West Side Story* will be performed by actor Wesley Rogers and the UM Showstoppers. Actress Bonnie Borst joins Rogers and the UM Wind Ensemble for "The Prayer." Rogers and Borst are UM alumni.

Singer Marsha Tindall will perform with the University Orchestra. Tributes are planned to the founding of the Ford Center and to Mississippi playwright Tennessee Williams.

The Inaugural Gala also introduces UM student Brian Wilson of Amory as recipient of the Mary Kirkpatrick Haskell Scholarship, named for Sam Haskell's mother, who was a public school nurse in Amory for 20 years and Mississippi's first school nurse practitioner. The Haskell Foundation has raised more than \$1 million to help deserving Mississippi children attend college.

Tickets on sale at the UM Central Ticket Office are \$250 for seating in the orchestra, parterre and front mezzanine (\$225 is tax deductible), and \$100 for back mezzanine and back balcony seating (\$75 is tax deductible). Tickets also offer show-goers opportunities to meet performers and other patrons during receptions at 7 p.m. and intermission. Suggested black-tie attire is optional.

Special \$5 tickets for a March 27 dress rehearsal show at 8 p.m. are available for UM faculty, students and staff with IDs. They will go on sale March 24.

To purchase tickets by phone or for assistance related to a disability, call the Central Ticket Office at 662-915-7411.

Tenth Oxford Conference for the Book scheduled for April 10-13 March 31, 2003

Editor's note: This article appears on the official conference web site.

OXFORD, Miss. — 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 and the humanities depend, including literacy, freedom of expression, and the book trade itself.

The 2003 conference, the tenth in the series, is dedicated to Stark Young (1881-1963), a distinguished writer and theatre critic from Mississippi. The April 10-13 program will include a lecture by John Pilkington and other presentations on Young's life and art, dramatic readings from his writings, a screening of the film based on his popular novel *So Red the Rose*, and an exhibition at the University Library.

This year's conference will begin on Thursday afternoon with Thacker Mountain Radio, a weekly radio program broadcast live on WOXD-FM in Oxford and rebroadcast on Public Radio in Mississippi. Appearing on this special conference edition of the radio show will be authors Percival Everett and Robert Stone. The program will continue through Sunday afternoon with addresses, panels, and readings.

Among the notable authors of fiction and nonfiction scheduled to read selections from their work and to respond to questions from the audience are Ace Atkins, Calvin Baker, Emily Bingham, Marshall Boswell, Percival Everett, Tom Franklin, Jere Hoar, Michael Mewshaw, Scott M. Morris, George Singleton, Robert Stone, and Shay Youngblood.

Barry Hannah will begin Friday morning's program as moderator for two sessions for writers and readers. Helene Atwan of Beacon Press, Beau Friedlander of Context Books, and Kathy Pories and Shannon Ravenel from Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill will discuss the publishing business. Ted Ownby has invited authors Michael Mewshaw, Clifton Taulbert, and Lauren F. Winner to talk about memoirs. Kathryn McKee will moderate "Appalachian Voices," a session with comments and readings by George Ella Lyon, Ron Rash, and Crystal Wilkinson. Constance Curry, Paul Henrickson, Winson Hudson, and Charles Marsh will discuss their books on the civil rights movement; Ethel Young-Minor will moderate. Elaine H. Scott, Claiborne Barksdale, and George Ella Lyon will discuss issues affecting readers and reading. David Galef and M.F.A. students from the University of Mississippi will offer two sessions.

The conference will celebrate American Poetry Month with readings by poets Beth Ann Fennelly, Blair Hobbs, Shara McCallum, and Ron Rash. George Ella Lyon, award-winning author of children's books, poetry, and a novel for adults, will speak at the conference and, under sponsorship of the Junior Auxiliary of Oxford, visit local schools and take part in the Young Authors Fair at the Oxford-Lafayette County Library.

Conference sponsors include the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, Department of English, Department of Journalism, John Davis Williams Library, McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College, John and Renée Grisham Visiting Writers Fund, Barksdale Reading Institute, Sarah Isom Center for Women, University Museums, Junior Auxiliary of Oxford, and Square Books. The conference is partially funded by the University of Mississippi and grants from the Mississippi Humanities Council, the Tribal-State Compact Fund, and the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council.

April

10th Oxford Book Conference celebrates novelist, drama critic Stark Young

April 10-13 event brings creative writing, publishing scene home for beginners

April 4, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Novelist, playwright and drama critic Stark Young, a versatile figure in the Southern literary renaissance, is paid a tribute during the 10th Oxford Conference for the Book April 10-13 at the University of Mississippi.

A University of Mississippi alumnus and faculty member from 1905-1907, Young was born in Como and reared in Oxford in the historic Walton-Young House, a Mississippi landmark at the corner of University Avenue and Fifth Street. He died in 1963.

This year's four-day conference of panel discussions, book-signings and social events slates readings and discussions by noted writers, editors, publishers and literary advocates. The event also celebrates National Poetry Month in one of its most popular segments of readings and remarks by celebrated poets.

Most conference sessions are in Johnson Commons on campus and are free to the public, unless otherwise noted.

“Year after year, the Oxford Conference for the Book draws an outstanding assemblage of writers, literary critics, publishers and literature lovers to the Southern literary mecca that is Oxford,” said Ann Abadie, associate director of the UM Center for the Study of Southern Culture. “We have a spectacular lineup.”

Novelist Tom Franklin, last year’s UM John and Renee Grisham Writer-in-Residence, said he awaits the literary gathering: “I’m really looking forward to it—it’s just about my favorite weekend in Oxford, and Oxford has a lot of amazing weekends. The readings, the parties, going en masse out to Taylor, well, I’ve got to figure out a way not to sleep.”

During the conference, Franklin will read from his new novel, *Hell at the Breech*, to be released by William Morrow in May.

“I think the organizers do an amazing job of bringing in a range of exciting authors, both well-established and newer voices,” said poet Beth Ann Fennelly, a UM assistant professor of English and conference panelist. Her book *Open House* won the 2001 *Kenyon Review* Prize in Poetry for a First Book and her new book, *Tender Hooks*, will be published in 2004.

“The atmosphere is very laid back and social, with a lot of opportunities for the conference participants to get to know each other and Oxford, as well as hearing some of the best poetry, fiction, and nonfiction being written today.”

Stark Young devoted his life to the arts and achieved recognition for his contributions as a poet, teacher, playwright, director, fiction writer, essayist, translator and painter. He wrote four successful novels, including in 1934 *So Red the Rose*, which became a best seller and a movie.

At 5:30 p.m. Thursday, the conference hosts an informal kickoff on Thacker Mountain Radio, with a live broadcast on 95.5 FM from Off Square Books in downtown Oxford. The event features live music and readings by authors Robert Stone and Percival Everett.

A “Meet the Speakers” cocktail buffet dinner begins at 7 at Isom Place. Reservations are required, and proceeds benefit the conference. Cost is \$50 per person.

The conference begins at 9 a.m. Friday with a welcome by Oxford Mayor Richard Howorth, owner of Square Books, and a writers workshop, “Submitting Manuscripts/Working One’s Way Into Print.” Novelist Barry Hannah moderates that discussion.

Panelists are Jere Hoar, novelist, UM emeritus professor of journalism and attorney; Beau Friedlander, Context Books publisher and editor-in-chief; Scott M. Morris, novelist and UM instructor in English; Kathy Pories, senior editor, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill; George Singleton, writer and teacher at South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities; and Shay Youngblood, poet, playwright, fiction writer, screenwriter and UM’s current Grisham Writer-in-Residence.

Hannah also moderates a 10:30 a.m. writers workshop, "Finding a Voice/Reaching an Audience." Slated on the panel are Helene Atwan, director of Beacon Press; John Evans, owner of Lemuria Bookstore in Jackson; Percival Everett, fiction writer and professor of English at the University of Southern California; Robert Stone, novelist; and Crystal Wilkinson, writer-in-residence at Eastern Kentucky University.

Other Friday workshops include "Algonquin Books: Discussion," 2 p.m.; "Race and Publishing in America," 3:30 p.m.; and "How to Get the Most from a Creative Writing Workshop," at 8 p.m. A 7 p.m. reservations-only cocktail reception at Off Square Books costs \$25 per person.

Saturday sessions are "The Endangered Species: Readers Today and Tomorrow," 9 a.m.; "Writing Memoirs," 10:30 a.m.; "Stark Young Program" sponsored by the North Mississippi Storytellers Guild, noon; "Stark Young: A Southerner in the Arts," 2 p.m.; and "Selections from Stark Young's Works," at 3 p.m.

Other panels are, Saturday, "Third World Thrillers," 4:30 p.m.; "Open Mike—Poetry & Fiction Jam," 8:30 p.m.; and Sunday, "Appalachian Voices," 9 a.m.; "Books on the Civil Rights Movement," 1:30 p.m.; and "Poetry: Readings and Remarks, Celebration of National Poetry Month," at 3 p.m. The conference concludes with a reservations-required country dinner in Taylor, south of Oxford. Cost is \$25 per person.

Conference sponsors are the Center for the Study of Southern Culture; departments of English, History, and Journalism; John D. Williams Library; McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College; John and Renee Grisham Visiting Writers Fund; Barksdale Reading Institute; Sarah Isom Center for Women; University Museums; Junior Auxiliary of Oxford; Lafayette County Literacy Council and Square Books. It is partially funded by the university and grants from the Mississippi Humanities Council, the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council and the Tribal-State Compact Fund.

For more information or reservations to the two dinners or cocktail reception, contact the UM Center for the Study of Southern Culture at 662-915-5993 or for a schedule go to www.olemiss.edu/depts/south. Those requiring special assistance because of a disability also should contact CSSC.

Poetry, music event to raise money for Mississippi State University literary magazine

April 4, 2003

STARKVILLE, Miss. — A poetry jam will be held April 26 at a Starkville establishment to raise funds for *Jabberwock Review*, Mississippi State University's literary journal.

In addition to a variety of poetry readings, the 8 p.m. public event at Big Daddy's (223 Main Street) will feature performances by three musical groups, "Young Agent Jones," "John Black Attack" and "The Persians."

Becky Hagenston, assistant English professor and publication adviser, said all proceeds from the \$5-per-person cover charge will go to the journal. The funds will be added to ongoing support provided by the Office of the Provost, College of Arts and Sciences, University Honors Program, English department, and subscriptions.

Published twice a year by MSU students and faculty, *Jabberwock* features works of art, poetry and fiction submitted by local and national writers.

Hagenston said the journal currently is soliciting black-and-white photographs for consideration as a cover for this year's spring issue. The winning selection receives \$50.

For more information about the poetry jam or the "Jabberwock" cover art competition, contact Hagenston at (662) 325-2348 or bh133@ra.msstate.edu.

Film version of John Grisham's 'A Painted House' to air on CBS April 27

April 22, 2003

Fans of novelist John Grisham's semi-autobiographical novel *A Painted House* have a reason to tune in to CBS-TV on Sunday, April 27, when a filmed adaptation of the novel premieres to a nationwide audience.

Unlike most of Grisham's fiction, the novel features no lawyers, courtroom antics, or legalistic maneuverings. Instead, it focuses on rural cotton farms, baseball, and migrant workers of northeast Arkansas during the 1950s. Grisham grew up in Arkansas in the 1950s, and he applied much of what he experienced there in this decidedly different change of pace from his bestselling legal thrillers.

"This is my favorite book," Grisham told *USA Today*. "The story was written as fiction, but there is a lot of family history in there.... The stories [depicted in the novel] have been around forever, ever since I was a little kid. A lot of the stories were just old family tales, handed down from a father and grandfather, both with a great sense of exaggeration. So I don't know what's true and what's not."

The book was first published in serial form in *The Oxford American* in 2000, a magazine for which Grisham was then publisher and which was based at that time in Oxford, Mississippi, Grisham's part-time home. Grisham later sold his share of the magazine and it moved its base of operation to Little Rock, Arkansas. The novel, meanwhile, was published in book form in 2001 and became a bestseller.

The novel is the coming-of-age story of a seven-year old farm boy, Luke Chandler, who lives in the cotton fields with his parents and grandparents in a house that has never been painted. Set during the cotton harvest of 1952, the story brings together three distinct groups of people: the Chandler family, a family of Ozarks hill people, and Mexican migrants who are hired to harvest the cotton crop before it is ruined by floods.

The film adaptation of the novel was filmed in large measure in the towns of Lepanto and Clarkedale, Arkansas, about 30 miles from Black Oak, where Grisham grew up, on a farm much like the one depicted in the novel. At Grisham's request, the film premiered on April 14 at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

The film stars Scott Glenn, Melinda Dillon, and Logan Lerman as Luke.

The Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation of *A Painted House* airs on CBS on April 27 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

May

Jim Henson's Muppets now back in the family

Five Henson children buy back the company their father founded
May 7, 2003

Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and the other Muppets—the “marionette puppets” created by puppeteer and filmmaker Jim Henson—are returning home after years abroad.

According to media reports, German media company EM.TV & Merchandising AG has agreed to sell Jim Henson Co., the producer of the Muppets, to the children of their creator for \$89 million. Henson, who created the puppets and performed and voiced several of the characters, died in 1990.

EM.TV bought the Jim Henson Co. from the Henson family for \$680 million in March 2000 at the height of the stock market bubble. Since then, it has sold off parts of the company, including the *Sesame Street* characters and its stake in the children’s networks Odyssey, Noggin, and Kermit.

The sale of the 45-year-old company returns it to Jim Henson’s five children: Brian, Lisa, Cheryl, John, and Heather. All five siblings will serve on the company’s board, and two—Brian and Lisa—will be actively involved in managing the company.

In a statement on the company’s web site, Brian Henson said, “I am absolutely thrilled that Lisa, Cheryl, John, Heather and I will acquire the company our father founded some 45 years ago. This has been a very challenging period for The Jim Henson Company. But the company has achieved some great things over the past few years, continues to have great assets and, we firmly believe, has great potential. Our commitment, as the Jim Henson Company’s new owners and as Jim Henson’s children, is to preserve and enhance those assets, fully realize that potential, and thereby honor our father’s legacy.

“In the months and years ahead, we will be actively exploring new and expanded strategic relationships to help us continue to carry out the company’s mission: making the world a better place by inspiring people to celebrate life.”

The Henson family will pay \$78 million in cash for the characters, the TV and motion picture production companies and the special effects unit known as the Creature Shop. EM.TV will keep Henson Co.’s current liquid assets of \$11 million.

Jim Henson, who was born in 1936 in Greenville, Mississippi, created his trademark puppets nearly fifty years ago for a five-minute late-night puppet show on a local television station. His fur-and-foam creatures gained popularity in commercials and appearances on variety shows, but their big break came in 1969 with the premier of *Sesame Street*. Henson himself performed and voiced his most famous creature, Kermit the Frog, whose namesake was one of Henson’s childhood friends in Leland, Mississippi.

Tallahatchie RiverFest seeks short fiction

May 27, 2003

NEW ALBANY, Miss. — The Tallahatchie RiverFest, which will be held Sept. 26 and 27 in downtown New Albany, announces the 2003 William Faulkner Awards for short fiction.

The adult short story competition is open to all age 19 and older. The work must be original, unpublished short fiction with no more than 5,000 words. The deadline to enter work is June 3. The entry fee is \$10 per work. First place carries an award of \$500 and second place \$250.

Participants are asked to send original unpublished short fiction with three copies of the manuscript and a copy of the work on disc (Microsoft Word format preferred). The original copy must include a cover page with title, name, address, and phone number for notifying winners. Additional copies should include only the title of the manuscript. Lost, misplaced or misdirected manuscripts are not the responsibility of the sponsor. No manuscripts will be accepted postage due.

Winners of the contest automatically release publication rights to the Tallahatchie RiverFest. Winners will be announced during the RiverFest on Sept. 26, 2003. If the winner is in attendance, he or she will be recognized and given the opportunity to read from the work. No manuscripts will be returned and only winners will be notified. For names of winners enclose a SASE.

The 2002 winner was Dory Adams of Pittsburgh, Penn. Adams won the \$500 award for "As Easy as That." The second place winner was Vonnie Madigan, from Sacramento, Calif.

In the student competition the short story must be the original, unpublished work of a Union County or New Albany high school student. The deadline to enter is June 4. The competition is free for high school students.

"The Tallahatchie RiverFest committee wants to encourage individuals to explore expression through the written word," said Anna Quinn, literary competition chairperson. "As the birthplace of William Faulkner, it's only appropriate to hold this competition."

For competition guidelines or more information, call the Union County Development Association at 662-534-4354 or 1-888-534-8232 or on the web at www.riverfest.ms.

Latest issue of literary journal hits newsstands

Collection of 57 works showcases established & new writers, artists
May 28, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — The latest issue of *The Yalobusha Review*, the University of Mississippi's annual literary journal, features short stories by award-winning playwright Shay Youngblood and acclaimed fiction writer Steve Almond.

Twenty-six images, 20 poems, six short stories, three works of creative nonfiction and two translations by other notable writers and artists, as well as UM faculty and students, are highlighted in the publication's eighth volume. Works by lauded poets Claude Wilkinson of Nesbit and Charles Wright of Virginia also are included in the new edition.

Youngblood and Wilkinson are past John and Renée Grisham writers-in-residence, a prestigious teaching appointment at UM. Editor Joy Wilson, a Department of English graduate student from Palmdale, Calif., worked with a staff of other English graduate students for the current issue.

“As opposed to some university literary magazines where graduate students read some of the unsolicited manuscripts, it is really run by our students, from editorial matters to business management,” said David Galef, the journal’s faculty adviser and administrator for UM’s English graduate program. “Thanks to Joy Wilson and her staff, this year’s issue has a lot of superb writers, and it reads wonderfully.”

Incoming editor Andy Davidson of Lexington, Va., said the journal received more than 600 submissions from throughout the world and described the quality of the works as high. The journal accepts poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, photography and black-and-white artwork from established and new writers and artists every Aug. 15 through Jan. 15.

Other featured works this year are a joint interview featuring noted North Carolina authors Lee Smith and Jill McCorkle, and a short translation from Cuban writer Diana Chaviano’s “El Hombre, La Hambre, Y El Hambre.”

Founded in 1995, *The Yalobusha Review* is a collaborative effort between the UM departments of English and Art. It is published each April in conjunction with the master of fine arts programs in creative writing and art. Single issues are \$10, and multiple-year subscriptions are \$8.

For submission guidelines or to obtain a copy, e-mail the editor at yalobush@olemiss.edu or call the UM Department of English at 662-915-7439. Copies can be purchased from the campus bookstore and Square Books in downtown Oxford.

Faulkner’s home sets stage for country stars’ performance, tour announcement

Marty Stuart, Merle Haggard hold news conference at Rowan Oak June 2

May 30, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Country music stars Marty Stuart and Merle Haggard use William Faulkner’s fabled home as a backdrop Monday, June 2, to announce plans for a summer tour across America’s heartland.

At noon, the two will unveil details of their “Electric Barnyard Tour” at Rowan Oak on the edge of the University of Mississippi’s Oxford campus.

The singer/songwriters also will perform at the news conference, which is free and open to the public.

“The Electric Barnyard Tour is a rolling country music show that’s part tent show, part revival meeting,” said Stuart, a country music scholar and frequent performer at UM. “I designed the event to play in small towns and rural atmospheres throughout America, taking various forms of country music back to the people.”

Haggard, who is slated to perform a June 1 afternoon concert at UM’s new Ford Center for the Performing Arts, said, “We’re going back to remember the forgotten ones.”

The tour also will feature Stuart’s and Haggard’s backup bands—The Fabulous Superlatives and The Strangers— as well as BR-549, Connie Smith, Rhonda Vincent and The Rage, and The Old Crow Medicine Show. The groups will perform at the news conference.

Stuart also will announce the July 1 release of his first album this century, which he bills as his “love letter to the country music genre.”

The news conference will be broadcast live by Nashville’s 650 WSM-AM Radio, Sirius Satellite Radio and via WSM Online.

At age 13 in 1971, Stuart joined legendary Lester Flatt’s bluegrass band as a guitarist. Fusing honky-tonk with a gritty rockabilly backbeat and a fondness for bluegrass, Stuart went on to a successful solo career, recording and producing hit records. He has spent the past few years involved in several projects, including film scores, (*All the Pretty Horses*, *Hi-Lo Country* and others); an album and book of words and photographs, *Pilgrims*; and working as president of the Country Music Foundation.

Hailed by many critics as “the greatest country artist of our times,” Haggard enjoyed an extraordinary streak of 37 straight Top 10 hits including 23 No. 1 singles in a 30-year career span. He is noted for his distinctive brand of music that draws from the uniquely American folk, pop, jazz and blues musical traditions. His songs have been recorded by artists from country to rock ‘n’ roll, and have influenced an entire generation of performers.

June

Country stars announce tour, perform at Faulkner’s home

Marty Stuart, Merle Haggard speak and strum at Rowan Oak

June 2, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — As country music star Marty Stuart walked up the cobbled pathway leading to William Faulkner’s historic home Monday, he greeted fans and radio and television crews with melodic strumming from his chocolate-colored mandolin.

Some 200 people lingered on the front lawn of Rowan Oak on the edge of the University of Mississippi’s campus to hear Stuart and country music icon Merle Haggard announce plans for their “Electric Barnyard Tour,” a summer grassroots tour across America’s heartland.

Addressing the crowd, Stuart thanked William Faulkner: “Whether he knows it or not, there are a lot of hillbillies in his yard this morning.” Stuart, 44, is a native of Philadelphia, Miss.

Joined by their bands and other musicians on the tour, Stuart and Haggard, 66, performed at the event, which was broadcast live by Nashville’s 650 WSM-AM Radio, Sirius Satellite Radio and WSM Online.

The tour opens July 6 in Sierra Vista, Ariz., stretches to Boca Raton, Fla., and ends July 17 at Pueblo, Colo. Stuart bills the performances as a “tour of the backyards.” The singer-songwriters plan to concentrate their brand of traditional country music in smaller locales.

“We’re going back to remember the forgotten ones,” Stuart said. “We want to set the stage for protecting the integrity of country music as an art form.”

As a writer and self-proclaimed lover of literature, Stuart said the Oxford setting was perfect to announce the tour with Haggard, “poet of the common man.”

Stuart said tickets for the concerts will be \$25 each in advance and \$30 at the door. For a concert schedule go to: <http://www.martyparty.com>. Waffle House was announced as the tour's major sponsor.

Eddie Stubbs, WSM's Grand Ole Opry announcer and fiddler for the Grammy-nominated Johnson Mountain Boys bluegrass band, said, "This tour is about taking country music with substance back to the people. There's so much more to country music than what you're being force-fed on the radio. People are starved for substance."

Strumming his guitar, Haggard performed "Suddenly It's Over," a new song about the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its media coverage. "I've never sung this early in the morning before," he said.

The tour also will feature the duo's backup bands—The Fabulous Superlatives and The Strangers—as well as BR-549, Connie Smith, Rhonda Vincent and The Rage, and The Old Crow Medicine Show, who performed at the news conference. UM Chancellor Robert Khayat, an amateur guitarist and music fan, joined Haggard and Stuart on stage and strummed along.

Both artists are set to release new albums—Haggard's *Haggard Like Never Before* and Stuart's *Country Music*.

Haggard, whose involvement in music goes back to the 1960s, is hailed by many critics as "the greatest country artist of our times." He became one of America's most successful writers and singers of country music, and enjoyed an extraordinary streak of 37 straight Top 10 hits including 23 No. 1 singles in a 30-year career span.

Stuart is one of country music's best known bluegrass and rockabilly artists. His hits include "Tempted" and "The Whiskey Ain't Workin'," a duet with Travis Tritt. He has spent the past few years involved with film scores, (*All the Pretty Horses*, *Hi-Lo Country* and others); an album and book of words and photographs, *Pilgrims*; and working as president of the Country Music Foundation.

Grisham writer-in-residence ends year with new works

June 3, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — During her just-completed year as Grisham writer-in-residence at the University of Mississippi, playwright Shay Youngblood offered experience to fledgling writers and came to know her colleagues in the Department of English.

The prestigious UM teaching post also afforded some rare and cherished time to the Columbus, Ga., native.

"My year in Oxford has been one of the most creative and productive times of my life," said Youngblood, an award-winning novelist and poet. "The gift of time has been important to the development of my new writing experiments."

The annual appointment is funded by best-selling author John Grisham and his wife, Renee. During her stint, Youngblood finished drafts of two novels and a collection of short stories. And, to her surprise, she completed more than 100 paintings and drawings.

She said she also prospered while teaching the writing craft to undergraduate and graduate students: "One of my most rewarding experiences has been working with a number of talented writing students, seeing them grow and learn to trust their own voices."

Youngblood, whose haunting debut novel, *Soul Kiss* (1997), was nominated for the Quality Paperback Book New Voices Award, leaves the Oxford campus savoring the opportunity "to come home" and enjoy "the poetry in a turn of a Southern phrase" and the "thick smell of pine trees and a heavy rain coming." She returns to New York University's graduate creative writing program, where she will teach through an online mentoring program sponsored by the University of Minnesota. She also plans to finish a contemporary novel for publication.

Joseph Urgo, chair of the UM Department of English, said Youngblood has fulfilled the vision of John and Renee Grisham when they set up the writer-in-residence program a decade ago.

"It's been a great pleasure hosting Shay Youngblood this year and watching her make a graceful, sensitive and quietly inspiring contribution to the community," Urgo said. "Each Grisham writer enriches us, but Shay's presence and the creative eye she has brought to northern Mississippi will linger long after she has gone."

Youngblood's time in Lafayette County motivated her to produce new work for the stage: "Oxford also inspired a new play project called the 'Friendship Garden,' based on some of the friendships I've made here and the gardens I've watched bloom in all seasons."

Her short story, "Born With Religion," won a Pushcart Prize. Last year, Youngblood, the author of *The Big Mama Stories* (1992), delivered a riveting reading from her book *Black Girl in Paris* (2000), at the Oxford Conference for the Book. Her play *Talking Bones* received the Kennedy Center's Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award in 1993, and *Shakin' The Mess Outta Misery* received best playwright, producer, director and supporting actor awards from the Hollywood NAACP Theater Awards in 1991.

UM's 2003-04 Grisham writer-in-residence is Janisse Ray, whose first book, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (1999), won the Southern Book Critics Circle Award, the Southeastern Booksellers Award for Nonfiction, the Southern Environmental Law Center Award and an American Book Award.

The appointment includes housing and a stipend. Recipients are required to teach writing workshops and participate in department activities.

30th annual Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference to examine 'Faulkner and the Ecology of the South'

June 13, 2003

By Donald Kartiganer, Director, Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha

As approaches to literature continue to fluctuate, we find that Faulkner's fiction has the uncanny capacity to fluctuate with them—that is, no matter the angle of the approach, Faulkner's work seems to rise to meet it, as the world of his fiction proves to be even more spacious and inclusive than we had imagined. Whatever direction literary criticism takes, it finds Faulkner waiting there to be rediscovered again. The theme of the 30th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference is "Faulkner and the Ecology of the South." The perspective on Faulkner will have the dual focus of current ecological study,

referring to the systems of relations that exist both in the natural world and the constructed world. As Lawrence Buell has recently put it, one of the major tasks of ecocriticism “is to put ‘green’ and ‘brown’ landscapes, the landscapes of exurbia and industrialization, in conversation with each other.”

Faulkner’s fiction is deeply concerned with both the “green” and “brown” landscapes and the “conversation” between them. His created communities—ranging from the townspeople of Jefferson to the country people of Frenchman’s Bend as well as the distinct African American and Native American groups within and without those communities—all exist in place, part of a rich dynamic of peoples and environments.

Six scholars appearing at the conference for the first time are Eric Gary Anderson, associate professor of English at Oklahoma State University; literary critic and poet Ann Fisher-Wirth, professor of English at the University of Mississippi; Keith Marshall, computer graphics designer, art historian, and classical music critic for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*; Scott Slovic, professor of literature and environment and director of the Center for Environmental Arts and Humanities at the University of Nevada, Reno; Cecelia Tichi, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English at Vanderbilt University; and Michael Wainwright, a doctoral candidate at the Royal Holloway Department of English, University of London.

Anderson is the author of *American Indian Literature and the Southwest: Contexts and Dispositions* and is currently working on a book-length study of Faulkner entitled “Envirioning Faulkner: Crime, Place, Narrative.” His paper will be on the relations of ecology, blood, and violence in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Sanctuary*. Fisher-Wirth is the author of *William Carlos Williams and Autobiography: The Woods of His Own Nature* and over 50 published poems. She is also editor of the biannual newsletter of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment and was cosponsor of “‘Coming Nearer the Ground’: An ASLE Symposium on the South” in 2001. She will speak on the interrelations between Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and Peter Matthiessen’s Mr. Watson trilogy, both of which trace the attempt of ambitious men to tame the lawless wilderness, achieving environmental “development” at the cost of nature’s degradation.

Marshall curated and wrote the catalog for the John McCrady retrospective exhibition at the New Orleans Museum of Art, was a 1999-2001 Core Fellow at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and has written extensively about Southern art and exhibitions for several art journals. He will compare Faulkner’s verbal creation of Yoknapatawpha County with John McCrady’s visual creation of Lafayette County, paying particular attention to the ways in which Faulkner’s imagery is powerfully visual and McCrady’s essentially narrative.

Slovic was the founding president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment and is the author of numerous studies of ecocriticism, environmental literature, and American literature. He has written or edited eight volumes, including *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing: Henry Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez* and, most recently, *Getting Over the Color Green: Contemporary Environmental Literature of the Southwest*. His talk will address several Faulkner texts in terms of death and violence: their desire to access a sense of visceral, primal involvement in the more-than-human world and thus reveal the genuine organic nature of the human mind and body.

Tichi is the author of five books, including *New World: New Earth: Environmental Reform in American Literature from the Puritans through Whitman* and, most recently, *Embodiment of a Nation: Human Form in American Spaces*. She will focus on Faulkner’s environmental concerns and his representations

of work—of labor—at a moment when industrial processes obscured the fact of physical labor. Wainwright is working on a doctoral dissertation that studies theories of evolution in relation to Faulkner's fiction. His paper, drawing from materials in the dissertation, will be on the Snopes trilogy in terms of the ecological dynamics of the rise of the Snopes family.

Returning to the conference will be Thomas McHaney, Kenneth M. England Professor of Southern Literature at Georgia State University. McHaney is the author or editor of seven books on Faulkner, as well as ten volumes of the William Faulkner Manuscripts series. He will discuss the ethical and philosophical relationship between Janisse Ray's *The Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* and Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. François Pitavy, professor emeritus of American literature at the University of Burgundy in Dijon, France. Pitavy is the author of several volumes on Southern literature and Faulkner, including *Faulkner's "Light in August"* and, most recently, *"Le Bruit et la Fureur" de William Faulkner*. He is also the translator of three Faulkner novels and is currently working on *A Fable*. In "Faulkner's Impossible Arcadia" he will discuss two attitudes toward nature, one in which the human is dominant, the other in which an Arcadian, peaceful stance is achieved. Faulkner preferred the second, yet he recognizes that the reality of change invariably leads toward the destruction of nature.

Also returning will be Philip Weinstein, Alexander Griswold Cummins Professor of English at Swarthmore College. He is the author of four books, including *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns* and *What Else But Love? The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison*, and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*. Weinstein will focus on the various physical sites of *Absalom, Absalom!*--West Virginia, Tidewater, New Orleans, Jefferson, and Cambridge--each with its own somatic and ideological codes, yet each forced by the novel to interact with each other, thus staging what amounts to a conflict of ecologies.

Other program events will include a reading by novelist and short story writer Tom Franklin, author of *Poachers* and the forthcoming *Hell at the Breech*; discussions by Faulkner friends and family; sessions on "Teaching Faulkner" directed by James Carothers, University of Kansas, Robert Hamblin, Southeast Missouri State University, Arlie Herron, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and Charles Peek, University of Nebraska at Kearney; and an exhibition of Faulkner books, manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia at the University's John Davis Williams Library. Seth Berner, a well-known collector of Faulkneriana, will conduct a special session on collecting Faulkner.

The conference will begin on Sunday, July 20, with a reception at the University Museums and an exhibition of the work of Thomas B. Allen, whose illustrations of Americana have appeared on several record album covers, in numerous children's books, and in *Esquire*, *Life*, and *Sports Illustrated*, to name only a few. The Museums events will be followed by an afternoon program of readings from Faulkner and the announcement of the winners of the 14th Faux Faulkner Contest. The contest, coordinated by the author's niece, Dean Faulkner Wells, is sponsored by *Hemispheres Magazine*/United Airlines, Yoknapatawpha Press, and the University of Mississippi. Other events will include a Sunday buffet supper served at historic Isom Place, "Faulkner on the Fringe"—an "open-mike" evening at the Southside Gallery, guided day-long tours of Northeast Mississippi, a picnic served at Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, and a closing party Thursday afternoon at Square Books. Films relating to Faulkner's life and work will be available for viewing during the week. *Red Hills to Gulf Shores: Autographics*, an exhibition of photographs by Todd Bertolaet, will be on display in the Gammill Gallery at Barnard Observatory.

For more information about the conference contact the Office of Professional Development and Non-Credit Education, Post Office Box 879, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677-1848;

telephone 662-915-7283; fax 662-915-5138, e-mail noncred@olemiss.edu). For on-line information consult www.outreach.olemiss.edu.

For information about participating in the conference through Elderhostel, call 877-426-8056 and refer to the program number 5760, or contact Carolyn Vance Smith by telephone (601-446-1208) or e-mail (carolyn.smith@colin.cc.ms.us).

Eudora Welty as teen: Ole Miss library receives scrapbook

June 24, 2003

By Tobie Baker, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Acclaimed storyteller Eudora Welty was “chief buzzard” in the Blinking Buzzards, a private society she created while a Jackson, Miss., high school student.

An invitation to join the Buzzards, never-published Welty writings and other artifacts are in a 1925 Central High School scrapbook recently donated to the University of Mississippi J.D. Williams Library’s Special Collections.

Mary Ellen Wilcox, a classmate and friend of Welty, compiled the scrapbook. Wilcox’s daughter, Rebecca Larche Moreton of Oxford, is the donor.

“This is one of several surviving scrapbooks kept by Miss Welty’s classmates,” said Thomas Verich, university archivist. “It’s a charming, fascinating artifact of great detail, and quite a colorful piece.”

The fragile scrapbook was packed away in an attic until Moreton realized it should be preserved. She said one of her favorite items in the collection is a loosely styled poem, “Some Unusually Blank Verse,” dedicated to her mother and penned by Welty.

“It’s a medieval romantic spoof by Miss Eudora,” said Moreton, a retired UM French professor and alumna. “It reveals just how widely they read in high school.”

Welty and Wilcox grew up in Jackson, Miss., where they met in elementary school. The collection contains artifacts spanning their childhood—news clippings, ticket stubs and a wooden Seale Lily ice cream scoop.

Wilcox’s bid to join Welty’s Blinking Buzzards society is signed, “Eudora, Chief Buzzard.”

University of Mississippi Journalism seeks names for 2002-03 ‘Silver Em’ Award

June 27, 2003

By Patsy R. Brumfield, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Nominations are being accepted for the University of Mississippi Department of Journalism’s annual Silver Em award honoring an outstanding journalist with a Mississippi connection.

The most prestigious journalism award the university bestows, the Silver Em originated in 1958.

The recipient can be a print or broadcast journalist, living or deceased, whose career exemplifies the highest ideals of American journalism. Recipients include Pulitzer Prize winners and other distinguished journalists.

The award is open to a native Mississippian or anyone who has spent a significant part of his or her career in the state. Nominees do not have to be University of Mississippi alumni.

Nominations are solicited from previous Silver Em recipients, UM journalism alumni, members of the Mississippi news media, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the general public. Deadline for nominations is Aug. 15.

At a minimum, nomination letters should include a summary of the nominee's news career and a description of his or her connection to the state, along with information on how to contact the person. Past nominees are not automatically reconsidered, but a new letter of nomination constitutes submission for the 2002-03 award.

Selection of the Silver Em recipient is by a committee drawn from the UM journalism faculty, former Silver Em recipients and representatives of the Mississippi Press Association and Mississippi Association of Broadcasters. An awards banquet is set for Nov. 6 in Oxford.

The 2002-03 Silver Em recipient is Pulitzer Prize winner Ira B. Harkey, who was vilified for his editorials urging the peaceful integration of the University of Mississippi in 1962 by James Meredith, a black man from Jackson. Others include the late Willie Morris; former presidential press secretary Larry Speakes; nationally syndicated columnists William Raspberry and Rheta Grimsley Johnson; former New York Times editor Turner Catledge; former Lexington Enterprise publisher Hazel Brannon Smith; Hodding Carter III, CEO of the Knight Foundation; and Charles Overby, chairman and CEO of the Freedom Forum. In 2001, long-time Jackson television reporter and anchor Bert Case became the first broadcast journalist to win the award.

For more information, contact Stuart Bullion in the Ole Miss Department of Journalism at 662-915-7146 or via e-mail at sbullion@olemiss.edu. Mail nominations to Silver Em, Department of Journalism, P.O. Box 1848, University, MS 38677-1848, or fax them to 662-915-7765.

Faulkner Conference to focus on South's ecology

July 20-24 meeting to feature scholars from England, Finland and France

June 28, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — William Faulkner's fiction is at the center of a rare ecological study during this year's Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, July 20-24, at the University of Mississippi.

"Faulkner and the Ecology of the South" examines the relationships between the natural and constructed environments in the Nobel laureate's fictional worlds. The 30th annual conference offers a novel look at Yoknapatawpha, the imaginary setting for many of Faulkner's stories and novels, and "its vast system of relationships," said Donald Kartiganer, conference director and UM's Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies.

“We just haven’t looked at Yoknapatawpha in that way,” he said. “Faulkner’s world is deeply concerned with both the ‘green’ and ‘brown’ worlds, the natural and the built worlds, and the ‘conversation’ between them. The current study of ecology also concerns relationships within and between human communities, and Faulkner has created several such communities.

“They range from townspeople of Jefferson to the country people of Frenchman’s Bend, and also include the distinct African-American and Native-American groups,” Kartiganer said. “They are all part of the Yoknapatawpha world, part of a rich dynamic of peoples and environments.”

Since its creation in 1974, the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference has drawn scholars from throughout the world. It is one of the longest-running U.S. literary events focusing on the works of one author. Sponsored by the UM Department of English and Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the conference is coordinated by the Center for Non-Credit Education.

Kartiganer and nine other literary scholars and critics from across the United States and Europe are slated to lecture and lead discussions.

“No matter the angle of the approach, Faulkner’s work seems to rise to meet it, as the world of his fiction proves to be even more spacious and inclusive than we had imagined,” Kartiganer said.

Before July 1, conference registration fee is \$150 for students, \$250 for Friends of the Center and \$275 for all other participants. Cost does not cover lodging, optional tours and meals. Fees increase by \$25 after July 1. Only students can register for single conference sessions. On-site registration July 20 begins at 10 a.m. in UM’s Yerby Conference Center, with the opening program at 2:30 p.m. in Paul B. Johnson Commons ballroom. Lectures are in the ballroom.

Seven scholars appearing at the conference for the first time are Ann Fisher-Wirth, literary critic, poet and UM professor of English; Eric Gary Anderson, associate professor of English at Oklahoma State University; Keith Marshall, computer graphics designer, art historian and classical music critic for *The Times-Picayune* newspaper in New Orleans; Mikko Saikku of the University of Helsinki, Finland; Scott Slovic, professor of literature and environment, and director of the Center for Environmental Arts and Humanities at the University of Nevada-Reno; Cecelia Tichi, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English at Vanderbilt University; and Michael Wainwright, a doctoral candidate at the Royal Holloway Department of English, University of London.

Returning lecturers include Thomas McHaney, the Kenneth M. England Professor of Southern Literature at Georgia State University. He is the author or editor of seven books about Faulkner, as well as 10 volumes of the “William Faulkner Manuscripts” series.

Also returning is François Pitavy, professor emeritus of American literature at the University of Burgundy in Dijon, France. He is the author of several volumes on Southern literature and Faulkner, including *William Faulkner’s Light in August: A Critical Casebook* and, most recently, *Le Bruit et la Fureur de William Faulkner*.

Philip Weinstein, the Alexander Griswold Cummins Professor of English at Swarthmore College, also returns. He is the author of four books, including *Faulkner’s Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns* and *What*

Else But Love? The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison, and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*.

Other conference events include a reading by novelist and former UM Grisham writer-in-residence Tom Franklin, author of the forthcoming book *Hell at the Breech*, and discussions by Faulkner friends and family. Also planned are sessions on "Teaching Faulkner," directed by James Carothers of the University of Kansas, Robert Hamblin of Southeast Missouri State University, Arlie Herron of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Charles Peek of the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Faulkner books, manuscripts, photographs and memorabilia are to be on exhibit at UM's John Davis Williams Library. Seth Berner, a well-known collector of Faulkneriana, is to conduct a special session about collecting Faulkner.

A conference highlight on July 20 is announcement of the winner of the 14th Faux Faulkner Contest, which draws writers who try to produce, according to the rules, "one really good page of really bad Faulkner parody." Coordinated by the author's niece, Dean Faulkner Wells, the contest is sponsored by *Hemispheres* magazine/United Airlines, Yoknapatawpha Press and UM.

Other Oxford-area events for registrants include a Sunday buffet supper at historic Isom Place, open-mike night dubbed "Faulkner on the Fringe" at Southside Gallery, guided day tours of northeast Mississippi, a picnic at Faulkner's Rowan Oak and a closing party Thursday afternoon at Square Books.

Films relating to Faulkner's life and work are scheduled to be available for viewing during the week. "Red Hills to Gulf Shores: Autographics," an exhibition of photographs by Todd Bertolaet, is on display in the Gammill Gallery at Barnard Observatory on campus, and the illustrations of Thomas B. Allen are to be exhibited at University Museums.

For more information, assistance related to a disability or to register for the conference, contact the Center for Non-Credit Education at 662-915-7283 or go to www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner/. The center also can be contacted at P.O. Box 879, University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677-1848 or by e-mail at noncred@olemiss.edu.

Other information on Lafayette/Yoknapatawpha County, Miss., is available through the Oxford Tourism Council at 800-758-9177.

July

Call for Papers: Faulkner and Material Culture

July 31, 2003

The 31st Annual Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference: "Faulkner and Material Culture", July 25-29, 2004

The aim of cultural studies is to situate the literary text within the multivaried phenomena of cultural context. It is to see the text not so much as a unique object, somehow separate from its socio/political/economic origins, but as touching every level of the cultural fabric within which it was created. As Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt have written, the task of cultural criticism is "finding the creative power that shapes literary works outside the narrow boundaries in which it had hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries."

While we often think of culture, both “high” and “low,” in terms of the creations of language—from lyric poetry to locker-room limericks, the visual arts—from Old Master paintings to subway graffiti, and music—from string quartets to rap, perhaps most abundant and having the most bearing on how we live (and what we create) is the material world we often do not see in “cultural” terms, because we are so deeply embedded in it. This is the material way of our lives, our homes, our clothes, our transportation, our work, our sport, our food and drink. Each is a source of creative power and each is itself a product of such power.

The world of Faulkner’s fiction is a world of material abundance, intensified for readers by its relationship to the real world in which Faulkner lived and wrote and which he “translated” into “Yoknapatawpha.” The 2004 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference will explore Faulkner’s material world in its fictional and historical manifestations. Consider, for example, the significance of houses in Faulkner, from the Rowan Oak estate, which he renovated and lived in for 30 years, to the homes of Sutpen and McCaslin, McCallum and Bundren. Or the importance of costume for this writer, who alternately presented himself in the “dandy” garb of “Count No ‘Count” and the aristocratic hunting dress of Virginia, and described meticulously the strangely contradictory clothing of Joe Christmas: trousers soiled but sharply creased, shirt soiled but white, “and he wore a tie and a stiffbrim straw hat that was quite new, cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face.”

What do these material concerns tell us about Faulkner and his fiction? What is the work and play of men and women in his world? What does it mean to be a planter or a sharecropper, a horse-trader or spinner of tales? How do we read the “shards of pottery and broken bottles and old brick” surrounding the graves in “Pantaloon in Black,” the “hog-bone with blood meat still on it” in “That Evening Sun,” the “graphophone” that is the culminating prize at the end of the journey in *As I Lay Dying*?

We are inviting both 50-minute plenary addresses and 15-minute papers for this conference. Plenary papers consist of approximately 6,000 words and will be published by the University Press of Mississippi. Conference papers consist of approximately 2,500 words and will be delivered at panel sessions.

For plenary papers the 14th edition of the *University of Chicago Manual of Style* should be used as a guide in preparing manuscripts. Three copies of manuscripts must be submitted by January 15, 2004. Notification of selection will be made by March 1, 2004. Authors whose papers are selected for presentation at the conference and publication will receive (1) a waiver of the conference registration fee and (2) lodging at the University Alumni House from Saturday, July 24, through Thursday, July 29.

For short papers, three copies of two-page abstracts must be submitted by January 15, 2004. Notification will be made by March 1, 2004. Authors whose papers are selected for panel presentation will receive a waiver of the \$275 conference registration fee.

All manuscripts and inquiries should be addressed to Donald Kartiganer, Department of English, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677. Telephone: 662-915-5793, e-mail: dkartiga@olemiss.edu. Panel abstracts may be sent by e-mail attachment; plenary manuscripts should only be sent by conventional mail.

Call for Papers: Oprah Anthology
July 31, 2003

We are soliciting papers for an academic anthology on the phenomenon of Oprah. It is undeniable that Oprah Winfrey has transcended the iconic cult of celebrity to become a Western cultural force of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As her show nears its much anticipated end — though its endless reproduction in syndication seems inevitable — it seems appropriate to produce an anthology that evaluates the multifaceted influences and implications of Oprah.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Oprah as a cultural phenomena
- Oprah as icon
- Marketing Oprah
- Oprah and Black feminisms
- Oprah and spirituality
- O magazine
- Oprah and autobiographical confession
- Oprah and middle-classes identity
- Oprah and economic empowerment
- Oprah and female empowerment
- Racial uplift and Oprah
- One of my best friends: Oprah and white viewers

If interested, please send an abstract (no more than 1 1/2 typed pages) to either by November 30, 2003:

Elwood Watson, Ph.D., Associate Professor/ Assistant Chair, Department of History, East Tennessee State University, P.O. Box 70672, Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1709, (423) 439-8575, watsone@mail.etsu.edu

Jennifer Harris, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Windsor, 401 Sunset, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4

Arts Commission grant to support Thacker Mountain Radio

July 31, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — A new grant to the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture will support Thacker Mountain Radio, a popular hour-long variety show that celebrates literature and music.

Center director Charles Reagan Wilson said the \$5,400 Mississippi Arts Commission grant will enable the show to continue its unique efforts at promoting the two art forms in Mississippi.

Oxford's only live radio show, Thacker Mountain features literary readings and musical performances broadcast from Off Square Books near the Oxford Square downtown. The 8-year-old show, which has grown in popularity with features of celebrated local and national talent, also is broadcast by Mississippi Public Radio.

Sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Square Books of Oxford, with assistance from local businesses and other grants, Thacker Mountain Radio shows are free and open to the public. The program airs Thursdays from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on WOXD-Bullseye 95.5 FM and on the Web at www.Bullseye955.com. Its fall premiere is Sept. 11.

Featured this season are readings by authors Kevin Baker, Elmore Leonard and T.R. Pearson, as well as performances by musicians Drive-By Truckers, Sid Selvidge and the show's house band Taylor Grocery. Emcee is Jim Dees, former editor and writer for *Oxford Town* magazine.

Established in 1968 by the Mississippi Legislature, the Mississippi Arts Commission is the official grants-making and service agency for the arts in the state.

To see a schedule of upcoming or previous shows or for more information about Thacker Mountain Radio, go to www.thackermountain.com.

Georgia author, naturalist named Grisham Writer-in-Residence

July 31, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Janisse Ray, author of the poignant American Book Award-winning memoir *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, is the 2003-04 John and Renee Grisham Writer-in-Residence at the University of Mississippi.

The Georgia native assumes the prestigious teaching post in the Department of English Aug. 15.

A naturalist, activist and regular commentator for National Public Radio, Ray is the newest recruit for the 11-year-old program which embraces emerging Southern writers. The annual appointment, including housing and a stipend, is funded by the best-selling author and his wife, who were Oxford residents for several years. Recipients are invited to teach writing workshops and participate in department activities.

Ecology of a Cracker Childhood (Milkweed Editions, 1999) is Ray's story of growing up poor and white, amid a junkyard in Baxley, Ga., near the Florida border. Raised by fundamentalist parents, including a father whose junkyard was located in the middle of a longleaf pine forest, Ray comes to embrace and help save the beleaguered Southern forests in the book's moving commentary. It is required reading for English students at UM and at some other universities and colleges around the country.

In her latest book, *Wild Card Quilt: Taking a Chance on Home* (Milkweed Editions, 2003), Ray passionately describes returning to her childhood home, with her 9-year-old son, after spending years in Montana. "Could I resolve the troubles of childhood, since I would no longer be a child in a childhood place?" she asks in the book's opening pages.

"I am thrilled that Janisse will be at the University of Mississippi this year," said Ann Fisher-Wirth, a professor of English who teaches creative writing. "She is a wonderful writer, a compelling teacher and speaker, a passionate environmentalist and an all-around amazing woman, whom I am honored to have as a friend."

Fisher-Wirth, who also writes about the environment, met Ray four years ago at Ossabaw Island, off the Georgia coast, at a writer's weekend retreat which Ray said she organized "to meet other people who wrote environmental poetry, fiction, or nonfiction in the South—to build an artistic and activist community."

"Many firm friendships, many environmental projects and a lot of good writing have resulted from the group that formed, which included writers such as Lola Haskins, James Kilgo, Frank Burroughs, John Lane, Bill Belleville and Susan Cerulean," Fisher-Wirth said.

A phenomenal success, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* also won the Southeastern Booksellers Award for Nonfiction, Southern Environmental Law Center Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern Environment and Southern Book Critics Circle Award. It also was honored by the Georgia Center for the Book as "The Book Every Georgian Should Read."

Joseph Urgo, UM English chair, said his faculty were tremendously impressed with the book.

"In a short time, Janisse Ray has established herself as an important new voice in what's called creative nonfiction—essays, nature writing, sustained observation and reflection," he said. "We wanted to invite someone working in this genre, and when we sat down to talk about it, Ms. Ray's name kept coming up."

Ray has published essays and poems in magazines and newspapers such as *Audubon*, *Coastal Living*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Sierra Tallahassee Democrat*, *The Sun*, *Georgia Wildlife*, *Orion*, *Wild Earth*, *Missoula Independent*, *Florida Wildlife*, *Hope* and *Florida Naturalist*. She also has provided commentaries for Peach State Public Radio and NPR's "Living on Earth."

As an activist, Ray hopes to slow the rate of logging in Southern forests. She is a founding board member of Altamaha Riverkeeper, a group dedicated to repairing the Georgia's mighty Altamaha River. She helped form the Georgia Nature-based Tourism Association and worked to save the 3,400-acre Moody Forest in her Appling County home.

For more information about the John and Renee Grisham Writer-in-Residence program, call 662-915-7439.

August

Gifted writer, instructor James Whitehead dies at 67

August 16, 2003

By Jerry Mitchell, *The Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi)

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — Jim Whitehead never forgot where he came from.

The graduate of the old Central High in Jackson helped found the nationally acclaimed Creative Writing program at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and spent 35 years teaching writing there, but underneath it all, "he was a deep-dyed Mississippian," said author Barry Hannah of Oxford.

The 67-year-old writer and poet died Friday, Aug. 15, at Washington Regional Medical Center in Fayetteville of a ruptured aortic aneurism, an unexpected event that stunned those who knew him.

"I'm just crushed," said Hannah, the author of *Airships*, who plans to attend funeral services Wednesday. "I doubt I'd be anything without Jim Whitehead giving me confidence in the 1960s. He's been a pal, an absolute sterling friend. He was a wonderful gentleman and a part of truth and beauty."

Midway through the civil rights era, Hannah arrived in Fayetteville, sickened by the hate and cowardice of the Klan that had torn his state apart. "I was ashamed," he said. "I didn't want to come back." In Whitehead, Hannah said, he found a loving mentor who "made me proud of my state all over again."

After graduating from Central High, Whitehead attended Vanderbilt University on a football scholarship, eventually earning a master's in English before going to the University of Iowa and receiving a master of fine arts from Iowa's nationally renowned creative writing program.

His literary awards included a Guggenheim Fellowship in fiction and a Robert Frost Fellowship in poetry. He wrote four books of poetry, *Domains*, *Local Men*, *Actual Size* and *Near at Hand*, and a novel, *Joiner*, which was on the *New York Times*' Noteworthy Books of the Year list for 1971. He gave the Presidential Poem for President Jimmy Carter on his return to Plains, Ga., in 1981, and later edited his book of poems.

Whitehead's daughter, Kathleen Paulson, said her father had been upset Friday because funding had been cut for the writers program he so treasured. She said he was on the way to buy flowers for his 44th wedding anniversary, when he started having abdominal pain.

Paulson rushed him to the hospital. Tests showed he had a leaking aneurism. Doctors rushed him to surgery, but it was too late. The aneurism ruptured.

"He gave so much to his students," she said. "He was tough on them, but they loved him."

His students and friends knew him as "Big Jim," a broad, sturdy man who was nothing less than intense. Whitehead and his wife, Gen, together raised seven children, including triplets.

"He would intimidate you, if you didn't know him any better," said Ole Miss alum Sidney Thompson, who studied under Whitehead in the early 1990s and is featured in *Stories From the Blue Moon Cafe 2*. "Once you got to know him, he was a warm, good-hearted man."

Thompson remembered Whitehead's kindness from the first day, when Whitehead asked him, "Do you have a place to stay? If you don't, you can stay with me."

The very first voice that Indianola native Steve Yarbrough heard after he arrived at the University of Arkansas campus in 1981 belonged to his teacher.

"As soon as I got a phone, it rang, and it was Whitehead," recalled Yarbrough, the author of *Oxygen Man*, who now teaches writing himself. "If you were from Mississippi, that meant you were his. He called and said, 'Are you coming over or not?' He was one of the big reasons I decided to go there."

Students recalled how Whitehead would in one animated conversation expound upon the poetry of W.B. Yeats to his hopes for 2004 Democratic contenders. He was completing a screenplay on the life of the first-century Roman soldier Tiberius Julius Abderus Panter.

Whitehead spent hours in the evening with his classes and hours with individual students, returning manuscripts full of editing, Yarbrough said. "The amount of ink tripled the weight of it."

If a student had written poorly, Whitehead would pound his head against the wall, recalled Steve Yates, assistant marketing manager at University Press of Mississippi. But he balanced sternness with compassion, said Yates, a 1998 graduate of the master of fine arts program at Arkansas. "When he was happy with you, you felt so golden, and you felt so good at what you'd achieved."

Visitation is 6-8 p.m. Tuesday at Moore's Funeral Home, 206 W. Center St. in Fayetteville. Services are 2 p.m. Wednesday in Giffels Auditorium in Old Main on the University of Arkansas campus. Memorials may be made to the "Writers in the Schools" program or to the Creative Writing Program at the University of Arkansas.

Writer, instructor James Whitehead dies at 67

August 17, 2003

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — James Tillotson Whitehead, 67, died Friday, August 15, 2003, at Washington Regional Medical Center, of a ruptured aortic aneurism. A visitation will be held at Moore's Chapel in Fayetteville, Ark. on Tuesday, from 6-8 p.m. with family present. A memorial service will be held at Giffels Auditorium in Old Main at the University of Arkansas campus on Wednesday, at 2 p.m. A reception will follow.

He was born on March 15, 1936 in St. Louis, Mo., to Dick Bruun Whitehead and Ruth Ann Tillotson. He married Guendaline Graeber on August 15, 1959 and together they raised seven children, including a set of triplets.

Jim grew up in Mississippi, graduating from Jackson's Central High. He attended Vanderbilt University on a football scholarship where he received a BA in Philosophy and an MA in English. He then earned a MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Iowa. Together with Miller Williams and William Harrison, Jim founded the nationally acclaimed Creative Writing program at the University of Arkansas where he taught for 35 years.

Jim's literary awards included a Guggenheim Fellowship in Fiction and a Robert Frost Fellowship in Poetry. His publications include four books of poetry, *Domains*, *Local Men*, *Actual Size*, and *Near at Hand*; and a novel, *Joiner*, which was on the New York Time's Noteworthy Books of the Year list for 1971. He gave the Presentation Poem for President Jimmy Carter on his return to Plains, Georgia, in 1981, and later edited President Carter's book of poems. Never less than intense, Big Jim, as he was known to his friends, would in one animated conversation expound upon the poetry of W.B. Yates, the paintings of Vermeer, the dead lying in Flanders Fields, the theology of St. Augustine, the prospects for the Razorback's upcoming season, and his hopes of the 2004 Democratic contenders. At the time of his death, Jim was completing a screenplay on the life of the First Century Roman soldier Tiberius Julius Abderus Pantera.

Of all his man accomplishments, he was most proud of his family. Survivors include: his wife of 44 years, Gen; seven children and their spouses, Bruun Whitehead and Kim Willis of Annandale, Va., Dr. Kathleen W. Paulson and George P. Paulson of Fayetteville, Ark., Eric T. and Jennifer Whitehead of Overland Park, Kan., Joan and John Threet of Fayetteville, Ark., Ted and Kelley Whitehead of Fayetteville, Ark., Ruth and

Kevin Trainor of Fayetteville, Ark., and Philip and Kamron Whitehead of Fayetteville, Ark.; ten grandchildren, Eleni C. and George Bourland Paulson, ages 14 and 19, of Fayetteville, Ark., Jack and Anna Threet, ages 7 and 4, of Fayetteville, Ark., Rayner and Henley Whitehead, ages 3 and 3 months of Fayetteville, Ark., Collin Whitehead, age 3, of Fayetteville, Ark., Nina Whitehead, age 3 of Annandale, Garrett Whitehead, age 2 of Overland Park, and Emma Trainor, age 2 of Fayetteville, Ark.; a brother, Jared Whitehead, of Marietta, Ga., and an aunt, Jean Davis of Wauwatosa, Wis.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to either "Writers in the Schools" or the Creative Writing Program at the University of Arkansas, c/o Molly Giles, English Department, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

September

Call for Papers: Faulkner in the 21st Century

September 8, 2003

In 1992, the English Department of Peking University, together with the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, held the first international conference on William Faulkner to discuss Faulkner's sense of tragedy and history, his narrative techniques and stylistic devices, his influence on Chinese writers and issues in teaching Faulkner and translating his works into Chinese. In 1997, in commemoration of his centennial, the second international conference was co-sponsored by the English Department of Peking University, the English Department of Hong Kong Baptist University, and the American Studies Center at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Partly funded by the D.C.Lam East-West Center of Hong Kong Baptist University, the proceedings, *William Faulkner: Achievement and Endurance*, was published by Peking University Press in 1998. The two conferences had positive effect on the teaching and study of Faulkner in China.

With the coming of the new century, will Faulkner continue to keep his place in the history of American and world literature? Will his themes continue to touch the souls of the readers and open their eyes to reality? Will his techniques continue to fascinate the readers and influence a new generation of writers? Are the "new" theories and critical methodologies that have now become prevalent helpful in understanding or in discovering new meanings or new values of his work? Are the "old" theories outdated and valid no more? Have we found new ways in teaching him or in bringing him to more readers in China?

To explore these questions and to promote the study of Faulkner from all perspectives, the English department of Peking University and the Center for the Study of Humanism of Sichuan International Studies University will hold a Third International Conference on William Faulkner toward the end of May 2004. The theme of the conference is "Faulkner in the 21st Century." The conference will be held at Sichuan International Studies University in Chongqing, a municipality directly under the control of the Central Government, which is located on the Yangtse River and is well known for its beautiful scenery. The working languages are both English and Chinese. Any one who is interested is to hand in a one-page abstract by the end of November, 2003 and the complete text by the end of March 2004 to Li Ling by mail, fax, or e-mail.

Mail address: Ms Li Ling, Center for the Study of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing, China , Fax (Phone) number: 011-86-23-65385080, E-mail address: cllcs@sisu.edu.cn or martin942003@yahoo.com

Call for Papers: *The Mississippi Encyclopedia*

September 12, 2003

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi is compiling the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, a large scholarly reference book the University Press of Mississippi plans to publish in 2006. We encourage everyone who might be interested in volunteering to write articles to contact us at afinley@olemiss.edu or to consult our website at www.olemiss.edu/depts/south/ for information, including potential topics, about the Encyclopedia. People interested in writing or discussing articles should contact Managing Editor Andrea Finley at afinley@olemiss.edu or 662-915-5993 or Ted Ownby at hsownby@olemiss.edu.

Partners in compiling and publishing the *Mississippi Encyclopedia* are the Mississippi Humanities Council, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the University Press of Mississippi, and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Charles Reagan Wilson is editor-in-chief, Ann Abadie and Ted Ownby are consulting editors, Andrea Finley is managing editor, and numerous scholars are serving as associate editors and as contributors.

Faulkner birthday celebration set for Sept. 25 at Ole Miss

September 20, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — It's only a matter of time before local leaders declare William Faulkner's birthday to be a civic holiday in Oxford.

At least that's the belief shared by some literature lovers at the the University of Mississippi as they plan a free, public celebration of what would have been the Nobel Prize-winning author's 106th birthday this Thursday, Sept. 25.

"I don't know why Faulkner's birthday is not already a state or national holiday, for that matter," said Joseph Urgo, chair of the Department of English.

"Very few towns in America can attest to having been home to one of humanity's giants. Because of Faulkner, today Oxford, Mississippi, is the epicenter of American literature and world literature."

Held at Faulkner's historic home Rowan Oak on Old Taylor Road, the 4 p.m. celebration is sponsored by the University Writing Center and Department of English. Cake and punch will be served.

Coinciding with UM's Writing Emphasis Week, the event features a reading by North Dakota native Larry Watson, author of *Orchard*, his sixth and latest novel. It is a portrait of the entangled lives of two couples in rural Wisconsin during the 1950s.

Commemorative toasts are to be offered by Donald Kartiganer, UM's Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies, and Charles Reagan Wilson, director of the UM Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Oxford Mayor Richard Howorth will reflect on Faulkner at Rowan Oak.

"It's no Hollywood set, but it is far more glamorous to us," reads invitations to the event.

For more information or for assistance related to a disability, call the Department of English at 662-915-7439.

Fiction reading is first in Mississippi State University Visiting Writers Series

September 23, 2003

STARKVILLE, Miss. — STARKVILLE, Miss.--Mississippi fiction writer David Galef will read from his works during an Oct. 2 public program at Mississippi State.

The first featured guest for the university's 2003-04 Visiting Writers Series, Galef will excerpt, among others, sections from his new short story collection, *Laugh Track*. His 7:30 p.m. presentation in the Colvard Union small auditorium is sponsored by the MSU English department.

An eight-year member of the English department faculty at the University of Mississippi, Galef has academic responsibilities both for creative writing and modern British and American literature. He holds master's and doctoral degrees from Columbia University and a bachelor's degree from Princeton University.

In addition to *Laugh Track* — a publication of the University Press of Mississippi — he has produced two novels, *Flesh* (1995) and *Turning Japanese* (1998), as well as children's books *The Little Red Bicycle* (1998) and *Tracks* (1996).

Galef also is the author of two books of literary criticism and translator of two books of Japanese proverbs.

Among professional activities, he serves as fiction editor for the University Press of Mississippi and editorial board member of *Twentieth Century Literature*, a scholarly journal.

For more information about Galef's presentation or the MSU Visiting Writers Series, telephone the English department at (662) 325-3644.

Jim Henson statue unveiled at University of Maryland

September 25, 2003

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The University of Maryland has unveiled a statue honoring Jim Henson and his signature creation, Muppets.

The statue was unveiled Wednesday, Sept. 24, during a special ceremony. NBC's Willard Scott emceed the event.

Henson graduated from the University of Maryland. The statue on the College Park campus depicts the puppeteer and one of his most loved characters, Kermit the Frog. The statue is located outside the Stamp Student Union.

A Jim Henson garden has also been created there. The sculpture and garden are gifts from the classes of 1994, 1998, and 1999.

Filmmaker and puppeteer Jim Henson was born in Greenville, Mississippi, in 1936 and grew up in nearby Leland, Mississippi. His signature character of Kermit, whose voice Henson himself supplied, was named after one of his childhood friends in Mississippi.

Henson died of pneumonia in 1990.

October

Eudora Welty's house in Jackson, Miss., to become museum

October 13, 2003

By Gary Pettus, *The Clarion-Ledger*

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the Oct. 3, 2003, issue of The Clarion-Ledger.

JACKSON, Miss. — Stepping through Eudora Welty's front door is like walking into your grandmother's house, assuming your grandmother wrote like an angel and won the Pulitzer Prize.

Or came across an owl in her refrigerator.

Although Welty died two years ago at 92, a gentlewoman's aura still occupies the rooms of 1119 Pinehurst St. in the smell of old books and fine wood, in the sound of creaking stairs, in the soft glow of the pale blue walls in the bedroom where she wrote.

Like a good and wise grandmother, Welty willed her letters, her garden, her books and her 78-year-old home in Jackson's Belhaven neighborhood to her rightful heirs: everyone.

The executor, more or less, is the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, which is working to restore and preserve her legacy.

Although her garden will open April 3, it will be summer 2005, or so it's hoped, when Welty's home, along with correspondence from fans, friends, fellow authors and celebrities is unveiled to scholars and the public.

"We want it to look as if Eudora just walked out the door," says Mary Alice White, Welty's niece and director of the Welty House.

The endeavor to turn the chocolate-brown, Tudor-style home into a literary museum received a boost last week with the awarding of a \$251,000 federal Save America's Treasures grant. Archives and History will match it with a portion of \$700,000 in bond money from the state Legislature.

Prospective visitors to the home will be glad to hear that this money will pay for, among other things, central air, which Welty herself pooh-poohed.

"She didn't think she needed it," White says. "She wasn't that hot."

The house Welty's father built will be refurbished also with new wiring, plumbing, a stabilized foundation and more. A visitors center set to be built on adjacent property will display, among other items, Welty's awards and honors — a show of pride she shunned in her home.

“We found her Pulitzer Prize inside a corrugated storage box she kept in a closet,” White says.

Welty preferred to show off such items as a dancing-bear vase she brought back from Italy and had transformed into a lamp.

“She had no need to make an impression,” says Suzanne Marrs, a Welty scholar and the author’s longtime friend.

“The house is a warm and open and engaging place, just as she was a warm and open and engaging person.

“When visitors are able to go into the house, they’re going to see the books she read, the art she hung on the walls, the vase she brought back from Italy.

“They’ll see photographs of her friends. It will be like having a conversation with Eudora Welty.”

Welty, who also was an accomplished photographer, left books, letters, manuscripts and photos to the state. White and her sister, Elizabeth Thompson, donated the home’s remaining contents.

Much of the valued records of her life have already been collected and cataloged.

Before inventory began, White calculated that there were some 5,000 books shelved in the Welty home, “not counting the ones scattered around the house.”

The writer’s rooms were like short stories, and her books were the themes. In the living room, for instance, are books of fiction, travel and art.

The kitchen, of course, has cookbooks but also holds another literary claim: This is where, in a fit of disappointment, Welty used the wood-burning stove to set fire to the only existing manuscript of her *Petrified Man*, after two publishers rejected it and just three weeks before one asked her to submit it again.

“She had to recreate it from memory,” White says.

During the Depression, when Welty’s mother ran the house, the books shared rooms with boarders, including an eccentric naturalist with a penchant for fauna of a sinister bent.

“It wasn’t unusual to find an owl in the refrigerator,” White says.

Besides owls and books, the rooms held letters. No one knows how many yet.

Lil McKinnon-Hicks does know this: “The box from which I take these letters is a magic replenishing box.”

McKinnon-Hicks is one of 16 Junior League of Jackson volunteers who, along with 12 Millsaps College students, are cataloging or inventorying correspondence or books.

“Many of these letters to Miss Welty were beautifully written,” she says. And not just those by the likes of Robert Penn Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, Roger Mudd and James Thurber. There are many valiant, if self-conscious efforts, from lesser-known fans and friends.

“Reading them, I wonder, is this the style this person writes in?” says McKinnon-Hicks. “Or have they read Miss Welty’s works and, in this case, developed a nice, slow pace and Southern cadence, weaving in all these charming anecdotes?”

“You want to curl up with a cup of coffee and read them.”

The letters, it seems, tell as much about the recipient as the sender. Maybe more.

“There’s one addressed to ‘Eudora Welty, The Brown House, Jackson, Miss.,’” McKinnon-Hicks says. “What more do you need to say?”

November

Food writer John T. Edge named ‘Top 20 Southerner’ by international news weekly

November 26, 2003

By Jennifer Southall, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi, is on *Financial Times*’ inaugural list of “Top 20 Southerners to Watch.”

The international news weekly published the list as part of a special issue focusing on the American South.

“The people who made the list are people we believe will make an impact on a national scale,” said Betty Liu, managing editor of the special issue. “These are the brightest lights we see coming out of the region.”

The more than 150 nominations for the list came from a panel of distinguished Southerners, including William Ferris, founder of UM’s Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which houses SFA. Formerly director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Ferris is senior associate director at the University of North Carolina’s Center for the Study of the American South.

The final Top 20 list was compiled by *Financial Times* editors and CNN’s former CEO Tom Johnson. Others who made the cut include Sen. Elizabeth Dole; John Hughey, editorial director of Time Inc.; C. Ray Nagin, mayor of New Orleans; and actress Reese Witherspoon.

“John T. Edge richly deserves to be included,” said Ferris, who nominated Edge. “He’s pioneered the study of Southern foodways through the impressive programs of SFA, which feature the finest chefs and scholars and draw capacity crowds of enthusiastic audiences. His field is especially appealing because it combines stimulating scholarship with good food in a truly unique contribution to the study of the American South.”

Edge, who holds a master’s degree in Southern studies from Ole Miss, became particularly interested in the culture of food after moving to Oxford to study in the early 1990s.

"I came to Ole Miss with a general interest in all things Southern," Edge said. "The Southern Studies program taught me to look with a more critical eye upon everyday aspects of Southern culture, and I realized that through examining foodways I could ponder all the big questions: race, class, gender."

Edge has pondered those questions not only through his work with SFA, now in its fifth year, but also through his writing. He frequently contributes to *Gourmet* and other magazines, and his essays have been included in the 2001, 2002 and 2003 editions of the *Best Food Writing* compilations.

He is the author of several books, including *Southern Belly* (Hill Street, 2000) and *A Gracious Plenty: Recipes and Recollections from the American South* (Putnam, 1999). He is working on a series of four books that examine iconic American foods. The first, *Fried Chicken: An American Story*, is slated to be published by Putnam in fall 2004.

"I'm humbled by the honor and by the company in which I find myself," Edge said when asked about being named to the Top 20 list. "That said, I'm pleased by what such recognition says about the work of SFA."

"This is a very deserved recognition for a very deserving staff member," said Gloria Kellum, UM vice chancellor for University Relations. "Through his creativity, enthusiasm and energy, John T. Edge is creating new interests in the traditions of the South. It brings honor to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the university to have one of our staff recognized in such a significant way."

December

Call for Papers: Delta Blues Symposium X: The 1950s

December 9, 2003

The Department of English and Philosophy with the assistance of the Department of Music, Department of Theatre, and Office of the President at Arkansas State University B Jonesboro campus is sponsoring its tenth Delta Blues Symposium on 25-27 March 2004. We welcome presentations on any aspect of Delta life (art, education, folklore, history, music, literature, politics, and sociology) and are particularly interested in proposals which focus on the seven-state Mississippi River Delta and its culture during the 1950s. Topics responding specifically to Symposium X's theme might deal, for example, with the impact of the Brown v. Board decision, the decade's literature and art, the rise of agribusiness, migration from the Delta, rockabilly music, and, of course, Elvis.

The Delta Blues Symposia have provided opportunities for scholars, artists, performers, and the general public with an interest in the blues and in the Mississippi River Delta to come together to share insights, discuss issues, and celebrate a regional culture. Among the presenters at Symposium X will be rock 'n' roll pioneers Sonny Burgess and Billy Lee Riley; Joel Williamson, Lineberger Professor in the Humanities at the University of North Carolina; and former Senator Dale Bumpers. John Bensko (poetry) and Cary Holladay (fiction) will read from their work and conduct workshops for creative writers.

Proposals for participation should consist of 250-word abstracts for papers and organized panels or a sample of work for creative presentations. The deadline for proposals is 5 January 2004. Address materials to

Delta Blues Symposium X, Department of English and Philosophy, PO Box 1890, Arkansas State University, State University, AR 72467, Phone: 870-972-3043, Fax: 870-972-3045, E-mail: delta@astate.edu, Website: www.clt.astate.edu/blues

Veteran history professor John Marszalek returns to Mississippi State University to head highest scholarship programs

December 15, 2003

STARKVILLE, Miss. — A Mississippi State University history professor emeritus is returning to campus to lead the university's two most distinguished scholarship programs.

John F. Marszalek, a Giles Distinguished Professor who retired in 2002, is the new Schillig Scholar Mentor and head of the Presidential Scholars Program. He also will serve as chair of the Competitive Scholarship Selection Committee.

The Schillig and Presidential scholarships are the highest academic honors MSU bestows on incoming freshmen. Competitively awarded on the basis of academic and leadership accomplishments, they cover the cost of books, tuition and room and board for four years.

Marszalek earlier served as Schillig mentor for the four years leading up to his retirement. He succeeds MSU President Emeritus Donald W. Zacharias, who is stepping down after several years in the position.

"Dr. Marszalek is an exceptional scholar, respected both by his peers and by students," said Peter Rabideau, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "He will be an outstanding role model and mentor to some of the brightest minds on our campus."

Marszalek has authored 11 books and more than 150 articles during a 30-year career. He continues research and publishing in fields that include civil rights and Civil War history.

Currently, he is completing a biography of Union leader Henry W. Halleck, the Civil War's longest-serving commanding general. The book is scheduled for publication next year by Harvard University Press.

Marszalek also is a member of the jury for the 2003 Lincoln Prize, which recognizes the best book of the year about the Civil War period. Additionally, he is among approximately 100 professionals working on the advisory committee for the congressionally established Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission that is planning a 200th birthday celebration in 2009 for the 16th U.S. president and Civil War leader.

Writer-in-Residence Barry Hannah receives national short fiction award

December 17, 2003

By Deidra Jackson, University of Mississippi News Services

OXFORD, Miss. — Author Barry Hannah, University of Mississippi's writer-in-residence, has been honored with the PEN/Malamud Award. Given annually since 1988 in memory of the late author Bernard Malamud, the award recognizes excellence in the art of short fiction.

Hannah received the award and read from his work Friday (Dec. 12) at the PEN/Faulkner Reading Series at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.

“The award is pleasing but not surprising,” said Joseph Urgo, chair of the UM Department of English. “Barry Hannah is a major figure in the world of literature. In Oxford he’s just Barry, I know, but step off into the metropolis and you realize we are hosting, again, a literary phenomenon in this hamlet.”

Hannah, who shares this year’s award with novelist Maile Meloy, directs UM’s creative writing program. He is the author of three short story collections, *High Lonesome*, *Bats Out of Hell* and *Airships*, and eight novels. His first novel *Geronimo Rex* won the William Faulkner Prize.

His other prizes and awards include the Award for Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Robert Penn Warren Lifetime Achievement Award in fiction.

Nationally recognized artist, arts commentator and educator Bill Dunlap, who was Hannah’s classmate at Mississippi College in the mid-1960s, tags his friend as “the most extraordinary writer of muscular prose today.”

“I knew he was a great writer, but I didn’t know he is also a great teacher,” said Dunlap, commentator on WETA-TV’s Washington, D.C.-based cultural round-table show *Around Town*.

Hannah received a master’s of fine arts degree in fiction and a master’s in English, both from the University of Arkansas. His undergraduate degree, also in English, is from Mississippi College.

Call for Papers: Eudora Welty in/and America

December 24, 2003

For a special session to be proposed for the annual MLA Convention, December 27-30, 2004, Philadelphia, paper proposals are welcomed on any topic examining the impact — on Welty studies and/or on constructions of American literature — when Eudora Welty’s works (the first by a living author to be published in the Library of America series) are accorded their long-overdue centrality in the twentieth-century canon.

What happens to Welty, and to American literature, when/as she takes her rightful place as a major author? Topics might include Welty as southern vs. Welty as American writer; Welty and literary history; Welty’s influence on postmodern American writing; Welty not Faulkner; changing ideas and valuations of regionalism; etc.

The session is being organized and proposed on behalf of the Eudora Welty Society.

Inquiries or 500-word abstract plus brief vitae by 1 March 2004 to David McWhirter, Dept. of English, Texas A&M University, 4227 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-4227, or email to [d-mcwhirter@tamu.edu](mailto:mcwhirter@tamu.edu).