

2ND & CHURCH

Where America's Writers Read

Issue 4: 2014



Nashville's John Egerton: 1935-2013

REMEMBERING HIS LEGACY

Journalism Issue

IN THE MIDST OF TENNESSEE'S WORDSMITHS

Writer's Day

INAUGURAL EVENT BRINGS JOURNALISTS,
AUTHORS TO THE CLASSROOM

IN THIS ISSUE

Publishing: Steel Toe Books

Featured Bookshop: East Side Story

Literary Garden: Blossoming at Cheekwood

Encore: River Jordan & J.T. Ellison



2ND & CHURCH

Issue 4: 2014

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2nd & Church is excited to bring to its readers another collection of wonderful writers and poets. For a complete list of this issue's contributors, check out their bios on page 70.

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**DYNAM FADELESS
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THE REMOVAL OF DYE
MORNING SUNSET HILLS

LEFT © The Courier-Journal

RIGHT Photo courtesy of NewSouth Books

A Word From the Editor: Remembering, Celebrating John Egerton

For many, it was breaking news. For those lucky enough to have known him, it was heart-breaking news: our friend John Egerton—the author and journalist, the mentor and role model, the chronicler of all things Southern, especially the food—had passed away suddenly two years shy of his 80th birthday.

John was a new friend, but quickly he became a dear one to all of us here at *2nd & Church*.

In the beginning, he was too humble to agree to be the focus of a cover story for this journalism issue. Sitting in a Waffle House booth, sipping a cup of coffee, John said that he'd first like to talk a while and see where the discussions took us. Over several months, we hit the **Send** and **Reply** email buttons while exploring our thoughts and opinions on volunteerism & public service, equal access, English majors, journalism, online responsibility & accountability, and race.

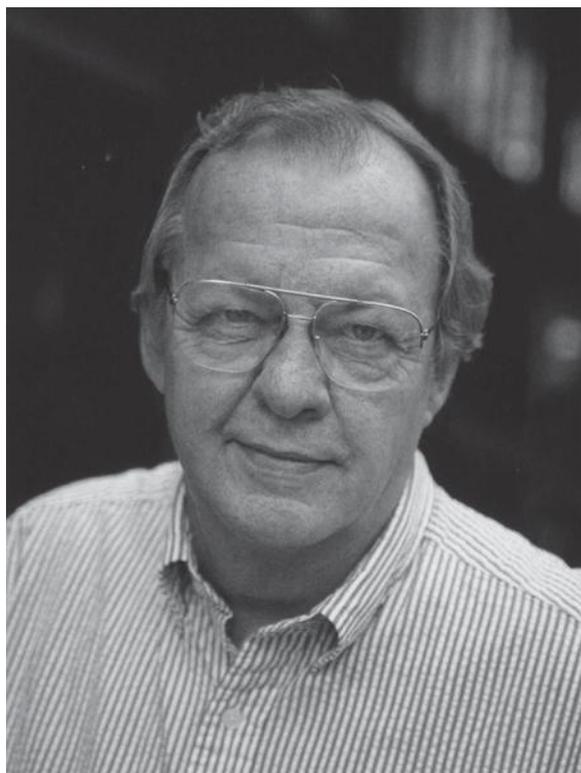
With that Lyndon B. Johnson lean in, John was a close talker and a low talker, requiring me to listen and pay close attention to everything he said. On one such occasion at the 2012 Southern Festival of Books, I was happy to be doing both when John agreed to be the face of the issue and share his beliefs in an interview that quickly expanded from the traditional 2,500 words to 6,000 wondrous words.

Before John could change his mind, I had Nashville writer and photographer Terry Price meet him to take his photos for this issue. They met at the archives in the old Green Hills library, *John's choice!*

We are thrilled to have these images to share on both our website and throughout this issue. (Since John's passing, Terry has been generous enough to share his images with various media outlets in Nashville, and we're thankful for Terry's kindness!)

John was available, kind, and thoughtful throughout this issue's evolution. We met in Nashville restaurants to catch up and explore all sorts of topics, including the journal's public service mission. Giving me the *out* of "not sure if you even have time for this, but..." John

revealed a volunteer opportunity involving a great group of students over at John Early Museum Magnet Middle School. Of course I had time! It was a great afternoon of sharing with students



alongside Nashville novelists, authors, and booksellers—including our own Chuck Beard, who wrote about that day for us in his column. I last saw John on the Saturday of this year's Southern Festival of Books. He suggested that we meet at the café next to the food trucks, and I was happy to share with him the first proof of his issue. He was patient and kind as I explained all of the stories that would eventually appear in each of the blank spaces, including the book review for Varina Willse's *Home to Us: Six Stories of Saving the Land*. John was the book's editor.

He knew from the start that I was going to publish a review, but on that day, I told him something that no one knew, not even the book reviewer: My family was one of those six families.

Well, actually, it's my wife's family, the Fishers. His smile and body language seemed to signal his approval of my decision to withhold my connection from the book reviewer, ensuring an unbiased review.

In my mind, I had spent all morning with John on the day he passed on. John was one of the participants in 2012's Future Break, the Southern Word-sponsored literary and performance arts event, and I was transcribing my notes from one of his presentations when word reached me. His voice was so... immediate, vibrant, and alive in my mind. It was (and is!) one of those stories that almost writes itself because the players are so fresh and interesting.

Since that moment, major and regional newspapers north and south of the Ohio River and east and west of the Mississippi River have reported on this national loss to letters and humanity. With permission, we're reprinting a couple local voices. First, there's "The Head of the Table: Remembering the late John Egerton, who loved the South as fiercely as he fought its injustices," by Margaret Renkl and *Chapter16.org*. Margaret is the editor of *Chapter 16*, a publication of Humanities Tennessee. (Read more of Margaret's work, including more pieces by and about John, online at chapter16.org.) The other piece is "John Egerton:

Author, Booklover, Friend," by Carolyn Wilson of the Women's National Book Association's Nashville chapter. Her column originally appeared in their Winter 2013 newsletter.

And of course, our on-going thanks goes to the usual suspects across Tennessee and beyond for helping us in so many ways to make this issue a reality and available, including the *Louisville Courier Journal* for allowing us to reprint one of its images of John.

If you love journalism, many wonderful hours of reading await you in these pages. And if you're not a hard news kind of person, that's great, too. This issue is packed with literary surprises for you, as well, including a sneak peek into our Hemingway issue, coming up next!



Welcome to *2nd & Church*

2nd & Church is a literary journal by, for, and about writers and readers. We publish several issues a year, and readers may download a free digital copy and/or purchase a traditional paper copy by visiting us online at <http://www.2ndandchurch.com>. Own an iPad? If so, then do you have the MagCloud app? It's free and allows you to download all sorts of FREE publications, including *2nd & Church*! Fire it up and search for us. It's fast, free, and easy.

As part of our public service mission, we make a limited amount of complimentary copies of each print run available at the following locations:

- Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art (Nashville, TN.)
- East Side Story Books (Nashville, TN.)
- Knox County Public Library (Knoxville, TN.)
- Lawson McGhee Library (Knoxville, TN.)
- Mysteries & More (Nashville, TN.)
- Parnassus Books (Nashville, TN.)

- Poets on the Square (Cookeville, TN.)
- Reading Rock Books (Dickson, TN.)
- The Arts Center of Cannon County (Woodbury, TN.)
- Winder Binder Gallery & Bookstore (Chattanooga, TN.)

Our mission

Our goal is to be inclusive of many different types of writers and writing: creative nonfiction, technical writing, literary fiction, W4C, poetry, translation, and commercial fiction.

In addition, *2nd & Church* includes brief news and feature stories that explore the creative writing life. What does it mean for a writer or reader to live a life of fine arts, especially in the 21st century? Where can writers and readers go, either alone or in groups? What do they choose to write and read about? Which experiences make it from their lives to the pages? How are writers engaged,

entertained, and provoked? And in turn, how do those writers engage, entertain, and provoke via their words and phrases? These are some of the questions our editors seek to answer when selecting work for publication in *2nd & Church*.

Submission guidelines

We welcome unsolicited manuscripts, but the expectation is that the work will support our mission. Send up to six poems and/or about 1,000 words of prose. For work over 1,000 words, query first. We will consider novel excerpts, but the selection of material must be able to stand alone — be self-contained. We prefer to assign book reviews and criticism; please don't submit those to us.

And in general, we don't publish essays on craft. (Please visit us online at <http://www.2ndandchurch.com> for complete writing and submission guidelines.)

LEFT Photo by Fredrick A. Dye

From the Poetry Editor

Joining the lines: Documenting history through poetic inspirations and journalistic endeavors by Alvin Knox

Is there a relationship between journalism and poetry? If a poet's works sound like newspaper articles, perhaps a rethinking of the creative process is in order, maybe even a rethinking of the decision to write poems. That is not to say, though, that there is no place in the poet's life for journalism. Journalism, in its varied forms, presents to us a world outside of our own existences, a world more varied, more colorful, and sometimes more tragic than we could ever hope or fear to experience. The great events of our times play across the headlines of our newspapers, arrive in our living rooms via our televisions. Often, even though those events happen at great distance, they affect our lives in personal ways, and our artistic personalities respond: we write poems.

I'm not a great fan of occasional poetry, poetry written to commemorate a person or event, for too much of the sub-genre is generated artificially, not of the need to respond, but from a sense of obligation to an outside entity: a family member or acquaintance, an organization, even a paid or otherwise compensated situation. Those poems seldom have the spark of heart-felt prosody, even if they're well-crafted. But when an event we witness through the journalistic media moves us, the response can be every bit as genuine as the things we witness first hand.

The sources of poetic inspiration are as varied as poets themselves, maybe more so, for each individual can respond to a range of stimuli. The primary source of my own best poems has come from physical work, usually in the outdoors. Over the course of a day's labor, one develops a relationship with a shovel, a lawn mower, a hammer, and there's something about the rhythm of using those tools that can be felt in the poems that

develop while I'm working. A long yet mundane job frees my mind. It doesn't take a lot of concentrated attention to dig a very large hole, so I'm free to observe and remark on details of my environment that I wouldn't notice otherwise. For instance, when I'm grading student essays, I seldom see the paper they're printed on; the more complex task of evaluating the writing blinds me to the physical aspects of the ink, the stains, and smudges. But when I'm weeding the garden I see the dirt, the worms, the leaves, stems, and roots of my work. Loosed from the bonds of concentration, my mind perceives subtle connections and creates the metaphors of my understanding, which are then transformed into language which I rehearse to the scrape of the trowel or the thrum of the mower. Even when a poem's subject is not the work itself, work frees my mind to see other matters in new and often unexpected ways. Something I experienced earlier or have been thinking about finds the means of its expression while I am absorbed in menial tasks.

My Walden

It's not much, this little acre and a half of sod and dirt in Baxter, Tennessee, where today I'm digging a trench for a new yard faucet, but it's enough; indeed, I can hardly conceive the tasks of more. Yesterday's steady rains (the remains of hurricane Dennis) have made the earth soft—heavy, but soft—humbled, and easy to work compared to the foot-breaking hardpan clay of two days ago, and the wind still blows strong, and I am thankful in the heat of the morning sun. Today is Thoreau's birthday, a fact of which I'm most acutely aware

when, despite my best efforts to avoid its path, my digging exposes the conduit to the outbuilding, the twinge of knowing that my life will never be as simple as my desire, that just beyond my sight is the asphalt road, just beyond the shovel's shaft the computer and books, just beyond the end of this trench the myriad other tasks of living, this trench with the sides so square, the bottom so even, that, dimensions aside, it could be being dug as readily for a grave as a waterline.

But work isn't the only activity that evokes my creative/poetic consciousness. Driving has a similar effect on me, and every so often, something I see in the media requires me to respond. When I first heard about a plane hitting the World Trade Center, I was standing in the checkout line at Kmart after dropping my kids off at school. The conversation was overheard, the details vague, and I was free to imagine what I wanted of the event, an unfortunate accident of small proportion, though newsworthy, I thought, and I was allowed to maintain that initial reaction until I reached my house since I didn't have a radio in my car. Yet it bore upon me enough to turn on the television when I got home, and the image of the burning tower was enough to make me sit down and listen.

Within a minute of my engagement, I watched, along with a good portion of America, the second strike. The immediate realization was that this was no accident. Yet, what I was witnessing wasn't thought provoking but mind-numbing.

I sat and absorbed the images and commentary, and in the mental void created by that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

RIGHT Photo by Gayle Edlin

... Joining the Lines continued from page 7

activity, memories began to churn their way into my consciousness, long buried memories of my earliest recollection of death and war, for I was beginning to see the implications of the attacks. This was a modern Pearl Harbor.

Overwhelmed, I needed to get away from the television, so I did the dishes, by hand, and folded laundry, and while doing those tasks, the language to express my personal response began to form. There were no burning towers, no planes, just the view from coffee counter of my father's store in Kellogg, Idaho, during the Vietnam War.

Parade

I hear a drum
Coming down our street

Coming down our street
There is a drum

Coming down our street there is a drum

There is a drum
There is a drum
There is a drum
And behind it

An army staff car
And in the car
A folded flag

And in the car, a folded flag.

Perhaps journalism, especially those forms of it augmented by images, has a closer relationship to poetry than we are first tempted to grant it. Good journalism, like good poetry, elicits a response in the audience, whether it is to make us think or make us feel, to engage our intellects or emotions. Maybe the best of each genre does both.



A Gallery of Poems

Welcome to this issue's collection of inspired works from poets in Tennessee and beyond

Orrery at Sulphur Creek

By Brenda Butka

Watchmaker's wound it a little tight tonight:
Orion waggles his sequined holster
at the Twins, striding,
a seductive hunt, from left to right.
The Big Dipper ratchets through the clockwork sky,
dangles a diamond broker's legacy of light
carelessly as it dissipates, obedient
to rules of gravity and space.

Our orrery's in action: the creek
ricochets from watercress stem to stem, jiggling
neon strings pointing crazily to Mars, to the Gulf
of Mexico. A half-braked moon skids along the ridge--
the whole mess powered by the *putt-putt*
of the spring peepers' noisy two-stroke,
not much of an engine (and poorly maintained,
winter's oil undrained) for this ramshackle armature,
gears, shims, mainspring unwinding,
bending eccentric orbits into spheres, celestial
but reminding a mechanic of repairs
postponed, a little rust in early summer,
weeds and hoops and telescopes.

Tonight's a rich man's toy, jerryrigged
just for the rest of us, our own private
movement of the heavenly bodies
around you and me stopped
at the cattle gap.

**spring peepers: tiny but very loud frogs*

Part Eden Again

By Stefanie Pickett-Buckner

The way world wars make us
doubt God, the way Freud makes us
doubt ourselves, the way Nashville

floods make us doubt spring. The way
I attempt to explain the difference
between illusion and allusion

to sophomores, the way dust congregates
copious on loaded bookcases. The way you feel
guilty for resting and restless when you are

not, the way warm tears haunt your eyes like minor
chords haunt your ears, the way coffee creates a ring
around the inside of a white cup after

sitting still for too long.
The way euphemism never fully veils raw
expletive, the way the psychiatrist won't even

call you back. The way your sister loves
someone she shouldn't and you love someone who
doesn't exist. The way—

in fiction and nonfiction—you find yourself sympathizing
with the monster rather than the
man. The way, knowing hell,

you crave, in your deepest

part, Eden again.

The Garvin Gate Music Festival in Louisville, Kentucky

By Jim McGarrah

On the corner of Oak and Fourth townhouses from a bygone era, rusty red with age and hard use, face the makeshift wooden bandstand.

In between music makers and brick walls, the hot street shimmies with strange revenants of a time when even Baptists understood

harmony, rhythm and good wine, not unlike the blood of Jesus, covered a multitude of sins. A plumber's shop, a Dollar Store,

the hair salon, and one old whore stand unused, idled by the blues.

II

There's one in every crowd listening with his hands, convinced that life has left him with fingers to graft his soul into the sound,

grow beyond sums of frequency and pitch or limits of an ear. This man, lean and long, clicks two spoons together on his dancing thigh

and levitates a bronzed woman off the seat of her ten-speed bike. Their bodies bend, loop, twist, and twirl like winter wheat in a wind storm.

Entranced, they embrace the demon in the boy drummer's voodoo snare.

III

Debutantes from Anchorage, the city's blueblood neighborhood, seem frightened by a sax's wail and the stench of poverty.

As they bravely tap a Gucci toe, their faux-fur coats compliment the booths of garish art and the smiles painted on each junkie artist's face.

A dobro slides a lean row of "Voodoo Queen" between the earthy sounds of horns and bass, plowing toward the Delta from Chicago.

The whole crowd dreams in song, hypnotized by song as dream.

IV

Before long, I wonder why I'm here, bland and limp, like politicians or spaghetti with no sauce, sharing air burned by the scent of cheap wine

and the hint of antebellum angst painted on these faces. A girl standing on my right declares her pregnancy through meth-stained teeth.

The father plays guitar onstage and wears a hat the reads "Jesus is my boss." here's what I've brought to offer back these souls that give me words,

a tiny bit of my own death, the exhalation of my breath in strophes.

Gardeners

By Justin Adams

Leaving my wife's hand, reluctant, I turn from the exhaust churning car, noticing the broken armed storm door, wind blown, against the aluminum siding. There, the three-paned kitchen door holds a worn brass nameplate etched *Gardners*, the earlier family who raised walls around some forgotten sharecropper's log frame. Gardeners among dirt farmers, who planted little seed to survive past the season, they instead raised trees in rows, out the front door, the east door. Summer mornings, trumpet flower sun trills between tasseling corn and low branches before bodies of maple and cedar spread their shape over the still house. I ask myself, having closed the outer door by hand, did he, Old Mister Gardner, plant those trees for the dozen or so mornings before tobacco cutting when he could peer out the east facing bedroom window, see the dark of west leaning leaves and breathe *Let's stay a while* to his wife's sleeping ear.

Night Song

By Kathy B. Lauder

The bachelor mockingbird rehearses all night as we sleep. Waking at three, I wander past the window and hear him tediously practicing his scales.

Discordant and cacophonous, he flounders through Thompson's First-Grade Book. The only songs I recognize are the single scolding barks of cardinals and the incessant chirp of sparrows in the hedge.

Perhaps he will find love next year.

An Argument Against Brussels Sprouts

By Joanne Merriam

They're the most
sensible possible suggestion.
They have a rotten design—
it's like eating plant testicles
or petrified ova. Who does that?
I don't want to be coy about this:
they're disgusting.

But if the table is a warm wood
and music is weaving through the patio lanterns,
if you're singing along with the stereo
and your white dog is nosing at my hand,
if the glazed bowl on the table
is filled with fresh apples
and the air with the apples' fresh scent,
then, I suppose,
I might tolerate them.

Salvation

By Joanne Merriam

As he died
she caught his soul
in her hat
and kept him warm
burrowed into hair.
She kept him company
whispering in the dark.
When nobody was looking
she sneaked him candies.

Interested in Seeing Your Poetry Here? Submit Your Work to *2nd & Church*

What We Print. What does it mean for a poet or reader to live a life of fine arts in the United States, especially in the 21st century? Where can poets and readers go, either alone or in groups? What do they choose to write and read about? Which experiences make it from their lives to the pages? How are poets engaged, entertained, and provoked? And in turn, how do those poets engage, entertain, and provoke via their words and phrases? These are some of the questions our editors seek to answer when selecting poetry for *2nd & Church*. We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Send up to six poems.

Payment. We would love to be able to pay our contributors, and perhaps one day, we will. For now, contributors will receive two copies of the issue in which their work appears.

Submissions: Simultaneous, Multiple, & Otherwise. We are okay with simultaneous submissions. If you don't hear from us within one month, you're free to send your work elsewhere. We do ask that you tell us if the manuscript is a simultaneous submission and notify us if the work is accepted for publication elsewhere. Submissions MUST be in English and previously unpublished.

Manuscript Expectations: Shipments, Rejections, Response Times, & More. Write your full name and address on the outside of the envelope. Address submissions to the "Poetry Editor." Ship your work in a large enough envelope to include your manuscript pages, unfolded. Send to the following address: *2nd & Church*, P.O. Box 198156, Nashville, TN. 37129-8156

Never send your unsolicited manuscript via certified mail. Certified mail is held for signature at the post office. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (S.A.S.E.) with all manuscripts. Business-size. Use a forever stamp on the envelope. Allow two months before querying. Don't send your only copy. We cannot be held responsible for any manuscript that is delayed, lost, or damaged in shipment.

Preparing Your Manuscript: The Nuts & Bolts of It. 8 ½ x 11 paper. (White paper, please.). Typed. Use an ink- or laser-jet printer. Single-spaced for poetry. 12-point type. Black ink. Times New Roman font style/type. Courier or New Courier is okay, as well. A one-inch margin at the top, bottom, left, and right. Your personal contact information at the top of the manuscript's first page, including your name, address, phone number, word count, and email address. Also, if you have a personal or professional website, please include the URL. Starting with page two, either in the header or footer, number the pages consecutively. Instead of the title, many poets include their last name. Your choice. Use paper clips, not staples. Do not include an electronic copy of your piece. Hard copy only, please. Don't spend a great deal of time on the cover letter: allow your work to speak for you. If you include one, be sure and write a two- or three-sentence author's bio note. (Use the third person, please.)

In Depth: John Egerton

A conversation with the South's American journalist by Roy Burkhead

Acclaimed American journalist John Egerton sat down with us not long before his passing to explore such topics as volunteerism, public service, equal access, English majors, the Fourth Estate, online responsibility and accountability, and race in America.

Buckle Up.

Roy Burkhead: What time of day do you like to read and write? Do you have a favorite place to read/write? What do you prefer to write with: typewriter, computer, No. 2 pencil?

John Egerton: I've never followed a strict schedule. When I write depends mainly on external considerations—deadlines, difficulty of task, research requirements. The only internal driver is how absorbed I am in the subject at hand. Over the years, I have always found it easy to start and hard to stop. That has tended to mean that when all the factors are aligned, I put in long days—start early, take few breaks, work late, sleep a little, and do it all over again the next day. That's a young person's regimen. I can't do it like that now. I have a small cottage behind my house where I do all my writing and much of my reading. Even when I'm not working on a project, I tend to spend most of my "regular" hours there. From the beginning in the 1950s until the late 1980s, I wrote on a Royal manual typewriter, working off penned notes on legal pads or cassette tapes. Then I got my first word processor, a Macintosh 512K (a true relic now), and have stayed in the Apple orchard ever since, presently using a 2008 model desktop iMac—the best writing/rewriting instrument ever invented, in my opinion.

RB: What's your favorite book? Do you prefer to read nonfiction or fiction? A different genre? Do you have a favorite newspaper and/or news program that you read/watch?

JE: Most of my reading, whether work-related or not, is in the same broad category: history, politics, social issues, contemporary topics, public affairs. I don't read a lot of fiction, much to my regret. It would be hard to name a favorite book, or my favorite writer—a southern historian or journalist, probably. W. J. Cash's *The Mind of the*

South (1941) and Lillian Smith's *Killers of the Dream* (1949) affected me greatly when I first read them in 1960, and they still hold up. I loved Cormac McCarthy's early novels, and Peter Matthiessen's early work, fiction and nonfiction. I don't watch a lot of television. As for newspapers, I'm a paper guy, and I dread the demise of print journalism as the electronic media rise to dominance. If the day ever comes when I feel I can do without *The New York Times*—or it gives up the ghost—I'll know the sun has set on the Print Age. Fortunately, I'll be too old and senile—or dead—by then to give a damn one way or the other.

Volunteerism & Public Service

RB: A commitment to public service is something we appreciate and take seriously at *2nd & Church*. Not long ago, you arranged a literary event at Nashville's John Early Museum Magnet Middle School. Could you share with our readers a little about that event?

JE: I'm a strong advocate of public education, out of a conviction that free public schools are the backbone of a democratic society. I've always kept a hand in as a volunteer. The John Early event resulted from my association with members of the social studies faculty there. They wanted to have a writers day, and I suggested bringing in several local writers for a half-day of small-group and one-to-one exchanges with some eighth graders who opted in to the experience. All of us, kids and grown-ups alike, were there by choice and curious to see what we could do together, so that greatly enhanced the prospect of a productive morning, which it turned out to be. I think our group of visitors, nine or ten of us, got at least as much out of the occasion as the kids.

RB: You allowed our staff to participate. (Thank you for that, by the way!) It was refreshing to see so many local authors, journalists, poets, and bookstore owners giving their time. How did it feel to be a part of this and experience it all come together?

JE: Hands-on activities always seem more effective to me than top-down instruction. Everyone in our group came in with a great

attitude. Their intuition and their innate enthusiasm for what they do with words day in and day out were all the preparation they had for these encounters with curious teenagers, and it proved to be more than enough. Nobody on either side of the table was expecting miracles. I think our elder group simply wanted to hold up writing as an accessible exercise at any age level—a useful, versatile, enlightening, and entertaining form of communication that improves with practice.

RB: I've always felt that others do not have to lose in order for me to win. From what I've seen locally (and beyond, for that matter!), many creative writers and poets believe in this philosophy, too. Established writers are eager to mentor those new to the craft. This isn't always true with every profession. What do you think it is with writers and poets that helps create this sort of environment?

JE: I share your assessment. Facetiously, you might say writers welcome other writers because misery loves company. Writing is a very solitary endeavor, and the failure rate is quite high. Professional baseball players consider a 3-in-10 hitting average as a high measure of success; for writers, it's probably more like 1-in-10. If you can't deal with failure, you probably won't last long as a writer. I can't explain what it is that makes people in this craft more cooperative than exclusive, but I see it in so many of us that I take it as a given. That's not to say that writers are paragons of virtue; they're capable of stealing ideas, and even pilfering long passages of someone else's prose, verbatim. In the main, though, I think professional writers are a generous lot, especially with struggling neophytes.

RB: Let's go back to May 2012. Something special happened with an experience known as Future Break. A group of Nashville writers, musicians, and thinkers came together to imagine the city's future 10 to 10,000 years from now. These presentations included monologues, readings, essays, songs, and spoken word pieces featuring over 60 writers, including you. How did you get involved? What was your experience like?

JE: A brilliant young teacher and organizer



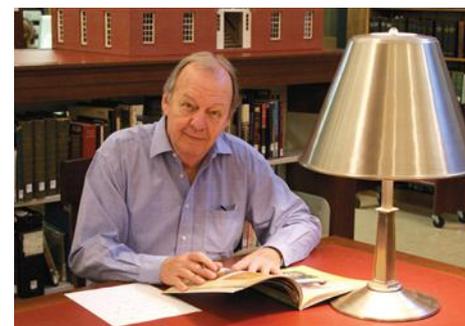
named Benjamin Smith is the brains behind a group called Youth Speaks Nashville. They stage public events that bring a wonderful mix of local people together in public expressions of various kinds, and I was one of the people Benjamin called on, I think at the suggestion of Bill Brown, a superlative poet and teacher whose creative gifts are such a huge asset in this city. Benjamin's expansive troupe of writers, poets, dramatic artists, songsmiths, etc. range in age from their teens (a majority) to about 80 (that would be me), and we were encouraged to produce and deliver original material to live audiences. I love that sort of thing, so I've participated for a couple of seasons now,

and hope to be asked again.

RB: In addition to big name writers and poets, there were many other people speaking, including area students. Do you know if the students arrived with fully-formed pieces, or did the veterans at the events mentor them?

JE: The young participants, guided and directed by Benjamin Smith, came to these events ready and eager to get up and do their thing. They're impressive and inspiring. They give me hope.

RB: You had an important message to deliver in your piece, entitled "A Requiem for Paper," in which you explored our future through Ray



Bradbury and his work, *Fahrenheit 451*.

JE: Ray Bradbury died shortly after I wrote and spoke about him. He was an inspiring man, known for his science fiction novels and stories but a hero of mine for his example: an aspiring writer in college (he wrote *Fahrenheit* on a rented typewriter, 10 cents an hour, in the basement of the UCLA library), a man who became a famous writer but never took himself too seriously, and finally, a paper guy to the end. He had a computer, a website, probably a smartphone, but he remained a champion of words on paper, a tactile communicator. I wanted to talk to the audience at Youth Speaks about the peril confronting paper communication—and the abiding importance of it, even in the Wi-Fi Age. Bradbury's book is a futuristic tale about a society in which books have become so devalued that they are considered a nuisance, then a threat, then a menace to be eradicated. The job of fire departments is to seek out and destroy books by burning them. His book is now 60 years old—and still as visionary and thought-provoking as ever. I wanted to carry the flag for words in print to the new generation of electronic communicators.

...And Equal Access for All

RB: I attended several of the Future Break events last summer, and I noticed that some of the presentations contained themes that our society has struggled with for decades: poverty, class, racism...it's an old list. As Nashville moves along the timeline from 10 to 10,000 years, do you think there's an understanding about our ability to overcome these obstacles and how long that might take?

JE: We hear a lot of talk these days about how great Nashville is, and all that's nice, but we shouldn't swallow it whole. This city is not a shining exception to the general run of American cities, not by a long shot. The unfinished business of America—a dream deferred for the besieged multitudes of poor and underprivileged residents—is a serious problem for Nashville, as it is for all our cities.

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RB: As you pointed out in your presentation, 451 degrees Fahrenheit is the temperature at which paper bursts into flames. I'd like to talk about paper a little bit, in terms of access. Information can be liberating and empowering—yet there seems to be less and less information available in paper form. There was a time when a person could purchase a Sunday paper and find a wealth of information in the Classified Ads section. Most of that material has been moved to the internet. Some state universities are moving course catalogs to their websites. Newspapers and magazines have fewer column inches of copy now, often putting longer versions of the same pieces online. For the first time since the invention of the television, you cannot plug in a TV set and watch something on the airwaves without being forced to purchase another device—a digital converter, a recorder. Many aspects of life are simply easier for those with computers and online access. In your view, what responsibilities (if any) should the electronically savvy—the haves—in our society owe to the have-nots?

JE: The have-nots, in this case, are the people who are not computer-equipped. This remains a substantial percentage, larger than the rest of us like to acknowledge—between a fourth and a third, I would guess, 25 to 35 percent. In the next decade or two, the percentage will continue to fall rapidly, to 5 or 10 percent. We are destined to become a wired society in which virtually all Americans live by the web. What is the place of paper in all this? I would like to think that paper forms—newspapers, magazines, books, library collections—will still be important, even essential. There is a permanence about paper that simply can't be replicated or replaced by what comes and goes in a flash on your computer screen. And yet, the most vital aspect of the web, as I see it, is its archival function. What appears there today will be searchable and retrievable tomorrow, and forever—not just by skilled archivists, but by your average Joe and Jane. That's huge. We can never figure out where we're going unless we know where we have been—and that's the web's strong suit, it's definitive ace. Understanding the past is not knowing everything; it's knowing where to find what you don't know. The internet gives us the capacity to find anything.

RB: It's sort of hard to get information online if you don't have the tool required to get online. It seems sort of unfair at the DNA level not to give people equal access to a fighting chance. If information and tools for self-improvement migrate to a world that only the haves inhabit, what's that

going to do to us all on our journey from 10 to 10,000 years?

JE: As I've already indicated, this problem will lessen as time goes by. Even the poorest of the poor use telephones now; in a decade or so, these same people will be using computers. The big

them different is the distinction between having and not having. The haves are not motivated to help others have; they're not interested in leveling the playing field. If rural America is going to be brought online, where we city folks are comfortably ensconced, it will not be the rich who get

English is getting trashed in the digital age, both literally and figuratively. Grammar, spelling, punctuation are being mauled by the so-called social media.

worry is not whether they will learn to get online and find what they want; it's whether the haves, seeing this equalizing tool spread into general use, will come up with ways to keep the poor at bay by establishing a financial barrier to the web. The old adage still applies: "The rich are different. They have money." Wealth is the ultimate barrier. As long as the internet remains a free tool, we're all still in the game. If entry fees get a foothold, all bets are off.

RB: Do you have a read on how the general population feels about this lack of access? Do most people even realize it's happening? If the popular media is correct, many of the haves are one or two paychecks away from switching teams. Seems people would want to have as much information available in traditional forms as possible.

JE: Open access, full disclosure, transparency, the rule of law—these are the essentials. Right now, these have to be available in traditional forms, which means on paper. We're a decade to a generation away from substituting electronic access for paper—and even then, the paper form will remain an essential element.

RB: I grew up on a dead-end gravel road in rural Kentucky, and having information delivered to me via a bookmobile was a big deal. Kentucky still operates about 98 bookmobiles today (Tennessee has two), according to data provided by the National Center of Educational Statistics. Nationwide, 30 percent of the households in rural America don't have a computer at home, and as a result, access to the internet. Seems to me that those in rural areas could benefit the most from computers and internet access, yet they're not. Do you see this lack of participation financial based? A cultural phenomenon? Something else?

JE: The issues and nomenclature keep changing, but the philosophy stays the same: Those who have find their identity in having, and what makes

them there—it will be the egalitarians, with an ironic boost from the libertarians. Government and private enterprise, working together for the greater good of all: a novel idea—too bad Congress hasn't the will to try it.

Creative Writers: To Be or Not To Be

RB: Last semester, I taught two different English classes at an area university. Out of a total of 36 students, not a single one was an English major. When I talk to students about majoring in English, they look at me as if I'm trying to ruin their lives. Our society is pushing math, science, and technology. The urban myth is that English majors will end up great employees in America's fast food industry. That is simply not true... especially with the internet's need for a constant flow of information. What do you think is behind this misconception toward English and the writing profession?

JE: English is getting trashed in the digital age, both literally and figuratively. Grammar, spelling, punctuation are being mauled by the so-called social media. Our native language (which probably should be called American instead of English, so thoroughly has it been transformed from the original, and for the better) is going the way of legible penmanship—printed/keyboarded/tweeted/texted into something altogether different from the English we took for granted. No wonder the English major is almost extinct. Maybe this will run its course and there will be a rebirth of the form and content of English, but I doubt it. More likely, we "old hands" will be the ones compelled to adapt. In my humble opinion, though, one thing won't change: There will always be a critical mass who will yield to the compulsion to write, and they will always produce more than enough words to meet the needs of the communications industry. Never in human history has

it been necessary to ration words. Writers have always been—and will always be—more than equal to the task of keeping humanity in ample and overflowing abundance, regardless of the demands of the media.

RB: Not long ago, I had a student stand up in class and declare that English, writing, and journalism had never made a positive impact to his life. He said he had never read a story or a book, and it had not impacted his life one bit. I took that as a challenge to prove him wrong. He took another one of my English classes the next semester, so perhaps I was successful. What are your thoughts on how the written word (in any form) can improve the quality of someone's life?

JE: Ignorance is bliss. I presume he can read and write—fill out a job application, etc. What was he out to prove by going to college at all, other than that it can be done? Impersonators have posed as surgeons, scientists, statisticians—it should be comparatively easy to pose as a serious college student. He couldn't possibly know how his life has been affected by what he hasn't read, hasn't done. I'm not qualified to say how what I have read—or not read—has affected my life. All I know is that it would have been a much emptier life if I had chosen not to read and write.

Journalism: Then & Now

RB: Two decades ago, the journalism landscape was much different in Middle Tennessee. Nashville had both *The Tennessean* and the *Nashville Banner*. And there were many smaller newspapers throughout the Midstate competing for news and customers. Do you think the departure of *The Banner* has had any long-term impact to news coverage over the past 20 years?

JE: Two decades ago, journalism in Middle Tennessee—and all over the country—meant competing local newspapers, television news, and a little bit of radio and magazine news. No internet, no smartphones, iPads, Twitter/Facebook/YouTube, etc. *The Banner* played a role, albeit secondary to *The Tennessean*. To its credit, *The Banner*, in its decades under the ownership of the Stahlman family, operated primarily as a public trust and only secondarily as a profit-making enterprise. The same was true of *The Tennessean* when it was owned by the Evans family. Then, Gannett bought *The Tennessean*, and stockholder/executive earnings became paramount. Some local businessmen bought *The Banner*, but in time they sold it to Gannett, which promptly shut the paper down. Its departure left *The Tennessean* with no competition—and just to cement its monopoly position, Gannett bought out the daily papers in nearby Clarksville and Murfreesboro. All of this happened before Gannett's real competition, the electronic "new media," came on

the scene. Now, ironically, the future of *The Tennessean* itself is called into question by portable, hand-held, interactive media.

RB: Gannett now owns a number of smaller papers in our area. How do you view this trend? Do you see any positives or negatives because of the situation?

JE: Even with its Middle Tennessee monopoly in the print media (except for the weeklies and monthlies), the big daily—now derisively called by some "The Thinessean" for its 22- and 24-page makeup on certain days—faces an ongoing challenge to survival, let alone dominance, in the news world. Already, venerable dailies in such cities as Birmingham and New Orleans have quit publishing two or three days a week—making them no longer dailies. Like newspaper companies in general, Gannett was slow to join the electronic fight, but within the past year or so, its papers have made major investments in online content. They have no choice; if they stand and fight as print-only enterprises, they will die. *The New York Times*, America's premier daily newspaper in print form, is now also the nation's best online news organization. That's the model. They couldn't beat the electronic media, so they joined them—and became the best in that realm too. One of the biggest mistakes *The Tennessean* has made, as I see it, is to leave its daily subscribers to wither on the vine, offering them no help or incentive to get computers and learn to read online. They just jacked up the price to everyone, on and off line alike. Probably 35 or 40 percent of their circulation were reading the paper version only. The corporation lacked the vision to see those readers as a vital element in the next generation of readers; inevitably, the arbitrary price hike (and another, announced this summer) will cost the paper thousands of loyal subscribers.

RB: Back then, it was common to cover a county commission meeting at 6:00 p.m. and be in a room with competing reporters from other papers. With so many media properties sharing the same source material today, there's less need to have so many different reporters in the room. Do you think this scenario has any sort of impact, positive or negative, to the final product appearing in the newspaper(s)?

JE: Loss of competition certainly has not helped the surviving newspapers, but it is not the primary cause of their weakening position, or whatever diminished quality they exhibit. I think newspapers are not as good as they used to be because profit-driven owners are no longer willing to invest in all the productive but costly ventures that made them good in the first place. *The Tennessean* serves as a typical case in point. It has fewer reporters and editors gathering the news; that smaller cadre is doing all the traditional

tasks, plus audio and video recordings, blogs, texting/tweeting, and other "new media" jobs; the paper maintains no bureaus outside of Nashville (the Washington bureau belongs to Gannett and serves multiple papers in the chain); the paper uses far more wire-service and syndicated copy than it previously did; there is virtually no budget for assigned op-ed pieces, or for on-site coverage of major national events (except for music and sports). The result is thin papers, fewer front-page stories, more white space, bigger art, less copy. There are some good professional journalists at the paper, as there have always been—but they are fewer in number, have bigger work loads, less time to get their stories done, and less space to put them in.

Race

RB: Many years ago, I traced my family to the 1600s. Like many with roots in America, I discovered that I have ancestors who served in both the Union and Confederate forces. My grandmother's granddad rode with John Hunt Morgan's raiders in Tennessee and Kentucky. For two decades, I've worked in corporate America, and I've learned... not to talk about my interest in the Civil War or my family's involvement in it. Why? Because these discussions became an open invitation for some (not all, but some) people to pull out the "N" word and whisper it, as if they invented it or something. And these were young, highly educated, bright, interesting, engaged people. Would you share your thoughts on why racism still continues in 21st Century America, especially among the younger generations?

JE: This is, as you know, an eternal question for all Americans, and especially for Southerners. For me, it is impossible to think of the history of the United States without confronting the mindset of Caucasian supremacy that drove our forefathers to sweep across this continent, taking control of everybody and everything they encountered. It's estimated that 3 or 4 million native people were scattered across this land in the late 1500s. By hook or crook or long-barrel gun, we subdued them. Just one decade after the white settlers landed at Jamestown, the British colonial enterprise began trading in black slaves imported from Africa, and 250 years later, eleven states (out of 36 at the time) entered into open rebellion against the Union, primarily to protect and extend their right to enslave almost 4 million Africans who made up about one-third of the population of those states. And that was not the worst of it; even though the South lost the war and the rebellious states had to promise full rights to all former slaves as a condition of readmission to the Union, the region made a mockery of efforts

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to “reconstruct” the nation under principles of equality, and before the 20th century had begun, the white South was back in control of its black population under the rubric of “separate but equal” segregation. That lasted about 60 years. Now we are another 60 years down the road, still carrying as part of our historic baggage the leaden weight of white supremacy and black inferiority for new generations to schlep along. Cultural beliefs die hard. I do feel, though, that the totality of young Americans in 2013 is more open to diversity as a coveted asset (not as a stigma) than was true of their parents (that’s your generation) and grandparents (that’s mine).

RB: With genealogy work, one of the most valuable tools is the United States Census, conducted once every ten years. The National Archives has the “72-Year Rule.” Essentially, it states that the National Archives may release a census record to the general public 72 years after the Census Day. Therefore, the 1930 records were released April 1, 2002. The 1940 census was released April 2, 2012. And the 1950 census records will be released in April of 2022. Looking at the 1940 census data, I realized that all of these people were living in the “separate but equal” America. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision was in 1896, and it had 44 years to embed itself into American culture, society, and law by the time of the 1940 census. It wasn’t until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that the Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruling that segregation was “inherently unequal.” Therefore, for over half a century, the United States Government’s laws helped to create an atmosphere of racism, if an individual chose to behave in such a matter. And many of these individuals are alive now. This is the long way around to this question: Is it fair for the modern American media to pluck any single person from this generation, put his or her actions under the microscope, and pass a negative judgment with little or no facts? Of course, I’m talking about the Paula Deen case.

JE: It’s so interesting to me to notice, in reading and watching media coverage of the Paula Deen incident, that her most vocal critics have been white people. In ironic contrast have been the numerous reactions of African Americans showing some sympathy and compassion for Ms. Deen. Is forgiveness more deeply ingrained in the black mind than in the white, and if so, what would account for it? More practice, maybe. African Americans have had a lifetime of experience with white mistreatment, which means they’ve had

many more opportunities to turn the other cheek, either because they had no other choice or, later, because their experiences have taught them that all of us are flawed and perhaps deserving of one more chance to get it right. Whites, in contrast, have always struggled with tolerance, probably because we have lived a history of presumed superiority. Paula Deen is another casualty of our

The First Amendment ... has taken a real beating in the modern age, and the tests keep getting tougher.

racial history—not a deeply compelling and tragic one, like so many suffered by black people and others, but a needless loss nonetheless.

RB: I was serving in the United States Navy at NATO in London in 1988, and I was there during the Free Nelson Mandela concert. It was very much in my mind a few years later when I read about the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). That commission was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened during apartheid. It hasn’t been that long since *Brown v. Board of Education*. Do you think that we need to put a similar mechanism in place in the United States, allowing citizens the chance to publically share their experiences with racism in America?

JE: I went to South Africa on a journalistic assignment in the mid-1990s—visited Robben Island, where Mandela was imprisoned, almost got a chance to meet the great man in person, and spent a full day listening to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it conducted one of its public hearings. That was a profoundly moving experience. It was similar to a courtroom trial, with witnesses called to testify. I heard African men and women describe incidents of cruelty, whites confess to acts of mistreatment, and apologize; I heard one high official in the apartheid government of pre-Mandela days, deny and equivocate about criminal behavior attributed to him. Sitting in the audience, I felt the mostly-black assembly sigh collectively when the man under questioning skirted around the truth. There was not a lot of justice and punishment meted out in those sessions, but they were nevertheless powerful, in that they gave people of both

racess opportunities to stand before their fellow citizens and give or receive forgiveness directly, face to face. I thought at the time—and still think—that such a mechanism would be cathartic for Americans. Undoubtedly, it would have been more so 30 years ago, when so many of the victims and perpetrators of injustice were still living.

Online Responsibility & Accountability

RB: Most first-year journalism students probably know what a gatekeeper is, but I doubt that many of the people putting “information” on the internet have ever heard the term. Would you mind defining it for our readers?

JE: Gatekeeper is a very useful term, very versatile. We have gatekeepers in our personal lives, officials who affirm everything from birth to death. Fraternities, labor unions, professional societies, degree grantors all need gatekeepers—people who make official the stations and milestones in our lives. Referees and umpires are gatekeepers; so are border guards and ticket-takers. Writing has always been a kind of intellectual activity that relies heavily on gatekeepers. We tend to get into writing without a clear understanding of its collaborative nature. All it is, after all, is arranging and rearranging the 26-letter English alphabet and a handful of punctuation marks. We learn early how to spell and how to make complete sentences, paragraphs, term papers, essays.

The form is relatively simple. But the substance is altogether different. Not only in the beginning, when teachers oversee our writing, but all the way into and through our professional lives as writers, we benefit greatly from the eyes of others—proofreaders, copy editors, selected readers, and especially capital-E Editors, skilled in giving out assignments, in following the course of long projects, in making us see our work in a less subjective way than we are inclined to see it as it spills across the page, line upon line. There is such a thing as a bad editor, of course, and we’re apt to encounter some of them as we go along. But a good editor is priceless. Every piece of writing, no matter how polished, benefits from a skillful editor—a gatekeeper who stands between the writer and the reading public. It’s a sad fact that so much of what goes on the web is unedited; so are most e-books and independently published manuscripts.

RB: When I teach an English research class, I tell my students that I will not accept information from Wikipedia. What’s your view of this type of unfiltered material being put online?

JE: To me, Wikipedia is like oral history: useful,



sometimes sufficient, but always in need of corroboration and confirmation. They made an unforgivable mistake in slandering John Seigenthaler, so much so that he probably could have sued them for defamation of character and walked off with a big chunk of Jimmy Wales's money.

But Seigenthaler declined to sue, in part because as a journalist he knows the fine line that separates aggressive reporting from malicious use of harmful information. I think Wikipedia has improved its use of skilled editors to affirm or rewrite or remove questionable material. Even so, it remains true that regurgitation of Wiki facts as gospel is (or should be) insufficient basis for a term paper or a news story. To say "I got it on Wikipedia" isn't enough to satisfy me.

RB: The incorrect information on all sorts of websites range from simple mistakes to the outrageous and libelous. People and sites on the web roughed up the television personality Paula Deen before all (or any) of the facts had been released to the public. I see a lot of opinions online, but I'm not seeing a lot of proof, not at least yet. What are your views on the state of accountability and responsibility on the internet?

JE: There have always been incorrect information and outrageous, even deliberate, falsehood in print, and radio/television junk disguised as news and commentary is as common as a limbo fox (a limbo fox, in case you're wondering, is when

a Rush Limbaugh screed makes the Fox commentariat sound like frogs with laryngitis). What seems different now, and worse than before, is the polarization of political thought that makes practically everyone suspect—Congress, the courts, the White House, the two surviving political parties, the corporations and think tanks, the religious institutions, the universities, the whole ball of yarn.

It was and is a colossal mistake for the web world to allow anonymous commentary—but there's libelous Limbaugh, running his mouth and showing his face and name, and thumbing his nose.

The First Amendment (and the Second, and others) has taken a real beating in the modern age, and the tests keep getting tougher. What is a proper First Amendment response to Julian Assange and Edward Snowden? I must confess I can't come up with a satisfactory answer to that question.

RB: The internet is still a somewhat young addition to the American (and world) culture. Do you think it's possible to gauge the web's impact upon the First Amendment? Do you think the First Amendment can survive the reckless behavior by so many on the Net?

JE: Not just somewhat young—still in its infancy. This is the positive side: If information is the bedrock of knowledge and power (I'm not totally conceding that it is, but just for the sake of this argument), then the web's impact

is immeasurable. It puts in the hands of every literate person an incredibly broad and perpetually accessible archive of information, and as time goes on, a rapidly expanding number and percentage of people will use this information to gain knowledge, power, wealth, influence, etc. On its face, that has to be a good thing, a democratizing shaper of societies.

But the adjustments will be wrenching: formal education, including higher education, will be sorely challenged—why do we need quarter-million-dollar prestigious degrees when much of the total body of knowledge can be acquired elsewhere, cheap or even free? Who will need newspapers, magazines, and books? How can symphony orchestras, theater companies, ballet troupes survive?

Such questions can't be answered now. I will venture to predict this much, based on my own experience as a wordsmith: Those who hold out for paper only will be the first to fall. The survivors will be those who keep the best of what they have as writers (good ideas, words with staying power if not immortality, rewriting, editing, design) and learn as much as they can about electronic communication, so that in a decade or a generation, today's fledgling writers will still be in the game.

Paper is not going to die, but neither is it going to meet the cyberwriters in a showdown and come out triumphant.

The Head of the Table

Remembering the late John Egerton, who loved the South as fiercely as he fought its injustices by Margaret Renkl and Chapter16.org

My friendship with John Egerton began the day his dog Hitch tried to kill my dog Scout in the street. We were passing the Egertons' house, which is a few doors down from my own, and the normally mild-mannered Hitch objected to Scout's incursion into his territory. Neither dog was leashed, and John and I agreed we were idiots for taking a chance like that, even in our quiet neighborhood. But it's impossible not to love the glory of a dog in full squirrel-harassing run, and the fact that we both kept taking the same chance again and again made us regard each other as co-conspirators, I think, long before Humanities Tennessee launched *Chapter 16* and installed me as its editor and John as a member of the editorial board.

I knew John Egerton the writer long before I came to know John Egerton the neighbor, long before I even moved to Nashville. His 1974 book, *The Americanization of Dixie*, was familiar to any student of Southern literature or Southern history coming of age during the years I was in college and graduate school. And because his brilliant, genre-defying *Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, in History* happened to come out in 1987, the year before my husband and I married, we received three copies as wedding gifts.

Speak Now Against the Day, John's great 1994 book about the South in the years leading up to the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, was impossible for any Nashvillian to ignore, even one unfamiliar with John's eleven earlier books. Its title comes from Faulkner's response to his fellow Southerners' outraged reaction to *Brown*: "We speak now against the day

when our Southern people who will resist to the last these inevitable changes in social relations, will, when they have been forced to accept what at one time they might have accepted with dignity and goodwill, will say, 'Why didn't someone tell us this before? Tell us this in time?'" *Speak Now Against the Day* chronicles the slow, inexorable movement toward desegregation in the South, and it was celebrated all over the national media. *The New York Times Book Review* called it "a stunning achievement: a sprawling, engrossing, deeply moving account of those Southerners, black and white, who raised their voices to challenge the South's racial mores." In 1995 it won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award from the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

For all this national praise, it was virtually impossible for anyone who knew John in person to reconcile his self-deprecating, soft-spoken demeanor with his status as a literary lion. Meeting the author of *Speak Now Against the Day*, you might expect to encounter someone who looked less like Mr. Rogers, someone who radiated confidence and accomplishment. But in his own mind, John—who contributed essays and reviews and interviews and even haiku to *Chapter 16*—remained a journeyman writer. He sent in every assignment with a disclaimer: "Margaret, this feels as shaky as a pillar of Jell-O," or "I hope I haven't dragged you off into the quicksand here."

Nor was there any apparent ego in his relationships with other writers: he used to call Clyde Edgerton (who is no relation at all) "my famous cousin Clyde," and he liked to tell about how disappointed his own audience would be

when they showed up at readings expecting the comic Southern novelist.

In conversation, most people wait for the pauses, for a break in the chatter that will give them room to edge in an opinion, tell a story of their own. John had accumulated more stories than he would ever have time to write down or tell at dinner, but he did just the opposite: on meeting someone new, he invariably turned an ordinary conversation into a friendly interview, gently asking questions, encouraging elaboration, nudging for more details. As a result people opened before him, responding to his interest and his obvious delight in them. John's first book, *A Mind to Stay Here* (1970), profiles a range of people who, according to the book's introduction, "differ from the common stereotype" of racist Southerners. They differed from each other, too, but John could talk to them all: old or young, black or white, man or woman, farmer or scientist or lawyer or preacher, the descendant of slaves and the plantation-born patrician alike.

There was such a patent kindness in John, such a profound patience, that no one ever felt foolish in his presence. Many, many people considered John a dear friend, but even more considered him a mentor. Aspiring writers would find in him an encouraging ear and an indefatigable champion. It's impossible to count how many books over the years owe their existence to John's advice and literary matchmaking. If you were a debut author with the immense good fortune of knowing John Egerton, you could count on him to help you to improve the manuscript—and then help you find an agent or a publisher for it, too.



Many readers know John Egerton primarily through his founding of the Southern Foodways Alliance and through *Southern Food*, a book which attempts, he wrote, “to fill some of the open space that exists between cookbooks that disregard history and histories that ignore food.” Others know his lifelong pursuit of what, in *A Mind to Stay Here*, he called “racial reconciliation” in the South. But for John these seemingly disparate aspects of his work sprang from the same source: “Not infrequently,” he wrote, “Southern food now unlocks the rusty gates of race and class, age and sex. On such occasions, a place at the table is like a ring-side seat at the historical and ongoing drama of life in the region.”

John himself saw his life’s work as a project of chronicling and interpreting “this eccentric and enigmatic region in which we live,” as he explained in an essay for *Chapter 16* in 2011. “My forte, so to speak, was foretelling the imminent demise of the South—and all that kept me gainfully employed was its stubborn refusal to die.” But his relationship to the homeland he loved could be vexed, and he was prone to bouts of despair, especially when long-waged and hard-won battles for racial, social, or economic equality were reversed by political fiat.

Talking with John, so mild-mannered and gentlemanly in his collared shirts and soft sweater vests, so judicious in choosing his words, it was easy to forget how fierce he could be, how bravely he spoke the truth in a region that seems at times to have been inoculated against it. It’s not just that he was passionately committed to the cause of civil rights long before most white men in the South could even accept it. It’s that he

never slipped into complacency; he never lost his ability to recognize when his fellow human beings were suffering—and to speak often and openly of their suffering when others would prefer not to be reminded. Earlier this year, when *The New York Times*, riding a wave of fawning national attention, pronounced Nashville the new “it” city and sent a reporter down to consider its marvels, John refused to play along: “People are too smug about how fortunate we are now,” he told the *Times*. “We ought to be paying more attention to how many people we have who are ill-fed and ill-housed and ill-educated.”

In the last years of his life, John wrestled with the realization that his own career as an independent historian would not be possible today. A writer in the digital age faces greater hurdles than even those he encountered as a liberal-leaning journalist in the unreconstructed South. He could adapt to changing technology if it suited him—“I use email and Google,” he once told me, “but I’m not on Facebook, and I don’t Twit”—and the success of his books meant that he could afford to write shorter pieces for paltry Internet rates. But a young writer trying to raise a family by words alone, he knew, has a nearly impossible time of it today. Even so, his fundamental optimism always triumphed over despair. “In the best and worst of times,” he wrote last year in an essay for *Chapter 16*, “a tiny fraction of the population will always aspire to tell their stories; a minute number of writers will actually follow through and complete manuscripts; a mere handful of those in-vitro books will go on to have their own lasting identity; and a small remnant of the surviving volumes, whether printed and bound or digitized and flat-screened,

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS BY JOHN EGERTON

Written by John Egerton

A Mind to Stay Here: Profiles from the South (1970)

Promise of Progress: Memphis School Desegregation, 1972-1973 (1973)

The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America (1974)

Visions of Utopia: Nashoba, Rugby, Ruskin, and the “New Communities” in Tennessee’s Past (1977)

Education and Desegregation in Eight Schools (1977)

Generations: An American Family (1983)

Radnor Lake: Nashville’s Walden (1984)

South (1987)

Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, In History (1987)

Side Orders: Small Helpings of Southern Cookery & Culture (1990)

Shades of Gray: Dispatches from the Modern South (1991)

Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South (1994)

Ali DUBYIAH and the Forty Thieves: A Contemporary Fable (2006)

Edited by John Egerton

Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries, 1780-1980 (1979), edited by John Egerton

Nashville: An American Self Portrait (2001), edited by John Egerton and E. Thomas Wood

Cornbread Nation 1: The Best of Southern Food Writing (2002), edited by John Egerton and John T. Edge

Home to Us: Six Stories of Saving the Land (2013), edited by John Egerton

will have enough of a healthy history to be remembered as something more than a flash of light and a puff of smoke.”

I’ve relied on that tempered optimism many times in this job. More than once, in writing this remembrance, I almost picked up the phone to run a sentence by him, to ask him which of two choices made the most sense.

Since the founding of *Chapter 16*, he has been its patron saint, its moral compass, its greatest champion. I don’t know what in the world I will do without John Egerton, but I think I know what he would tell me if he could hear my anguish: “Try not to worry. It’ll all work out. Everything’s going to be fine.”

For more local book coverage, please visit Chapter16.org, an online publication of Humanities Tennessee.



LEFT Photo by Gayle Edlin

John Egerton: Author, Booklover, Friend

A tribute to one of the best-loved Southern writers by Carolyn Wilson

The news of the death of John Egerton has left us stunned. The Nashville community has lost a distinguished writer, a dedicated and insightful booklover, an encourager for new talent, a humble man with a strong social conscience, and friend to all.

Indeed, not just Nashville but the South he loved are all diminished by our loss. In the days to come, we will continue to read about his substantial contributions, and each word of praise is deserved. I write this as a memory of years of a friendship I will always cherish.

Just a few Christmases ago, John gave his friends and family a cookbook of recipes, the third of a series as I recall. One of those recipes was my pumpkin bread. John's comment with the recipe was that it was books that brought us together, and we continued to share our mutual love of books and of food.

John was my best encourager. As our friendship developed, it was John who came to me with a proposition that the idea of a book festival was festering in the minds of some, and he would like to draw me into that. He felt that this would well serve the mission of the Women's National Book Association (WNBA) and that we could be a substantial support for the endeavor. He wanted me to buy into the idea and promote it within the organization and even more widely. I think John knew I would never say no to books, the idea took root, and the rest is history.

John never took credit for his role in the beginnings of this event, but he gave a year of his life to making it begin and succeed.

In fact, John rarely took credit. He was the most humble and unassuming of men. Few people are as selfless in diverting attention from themselves to others, encouraging young writers, and giving generously of his time, usually to worthy causes. Many times I called on John to help me out in a pinch with a program of some sort, and he once publicly announced that he had

always carried a copy of that book as a hostess gift. One Saturday morning John appeared at my door and handed me a copy of the book. Inside was inscribed, "This is Carolyn Wilson's kitchen copy. Do not remove." That book is well worn, but it will never be replaced.

It would be a serious omission to fail to mention Ann in this tribute. One found it difficult to think of one without the other. They were a devoted couple. Ann served capably as WNBA treasurer for a time, always supportive of the

Few people are as selfless in diverting attention from themselves to others, encouraging young writers, and giving generously of his time, usually to worthy causes.

pulled my ox out of a ditch many times. So he had. An understated and dry sense of humor was just part of his charm.

I once commented to John that I had earned him some royalties in the number of copies of his book on Southern food (*Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, in History*) I had given away. At that time I was doing a great deal of traveling across the country as national president of WNBA, and I

organization. The loss we feel is small compared to the loss of Ann, March and his family, and Brooks and his family. The name of John Egerton stands boldly on any page of a book. He will always be written on the hearts of all of us who were privileged to know and love him.

This column appeared originally in the Winter 2013 issue of the Women's National Book Association newsletter, The Nashville Edition.

Journalism: A Pathway to Fiction Writing

An interview with Susan Gregg Gilmore by Tina LoTufo

Working as a journalist can heighten one's powers of observation and provide intimate knowledge about the way people live, how they talk, and how they may react under pressure. In the hands of a skillful writer, these experiences can also sharpen the tools of the novelist's trade. Storytellers from Mark Twain to Anna Quindlen have successfully made the leap from journalism to fiction, and the list now includes Nashville native and Chattanooga resident Susan Gregg Gilmore. After working for many years in the newspaper business, Gilmore released her first novel, *Looking for Salvation at the Dairy Queen*, in 2008, and *The Improper Life of Bezellia Grove* followed in 2010. Her latest novel, *The Funeral Dress*, which tells the story of seamstresses in a shirt factory in Dunlap, Tennessee, appeared in bookstores in September. Recently, Gilmore spoke with Tina LoTufo about her writing journey.

Tina LoTufo: Was it daunting to walk away from an established career and begin writing fiction for the first time at the age of 40? What gave you the push (and the courage) to try?

Susan Gregg Gilmore: Truth be told, I was 42. And when you put it like that, yes, it was daunting! I knew I wanted to try something new. I figured that out real fast after working four months on an

article for a major newspaper and was paid \$425. Of course, I never once thought of myself as a novelist before that. I had never written one piece

At times, ignorance really is bliss. I never thought about the difficulties of writing a novel. I just took it page by page by page.

of fiction. There was no reason for me to think I could write a novel.

But friends kept saying that was my calling, my voice. Huh, how did they know that? But I'm convinced that when you hear something over and over again, it's important to stop and listen. So I made a promise to myself that I would sit down at my desk and write fifty pages. After that, I would reevaluate my commitment to novel-writing. If I hated the process, I was out of there. No looking back. No guilt. Nine years later, I'm still sitting at

the same desk.

TL: Someone who learned to write within the controlled structure of reporting might find the freedom that fiction provides a bit overwhelming. What has this process of switching gears been like for you? Any "bad habits" you've had to break?

SGG: At times, ignorance really is bliss. I never thought about the difficulties of writing a novel. I just took it page by page by page. Of course, there were some tough days for sure, but it was a wonderful time in my life. I felt so free, so absolutely free to dive into my own head, into my own experience and imagination, and put that story brewing inside there down on paper. I'll never forget the very moment when I realized how joyful the process could be.

It hasn't been about breaking bad habits as much as it's been about learning good ones. And I am committed to learning more and more every day. I want to better understand this craft of writing fiction, good fiction. I made a decision with my third novel to push harder, to reach farther. And it wasn't always easy, especially when I threw away 120 pages and started over. But it's been worth every aching and wonderful moment. I'm proud of this book.

Now starting my fourth novel, I've enrolled



in my first fiction-writing workshop that one of my dear friends is teaching. Her process is different from mine, but I am giving myself over to it. I already see the benefit of approaching a novel with a fresh perspective.

TL: You have said that you love the research involved in developing a story, and for your new book you took sewing lessons, interviewed Sequatchie County residents, and visited historic sites such as the Dunlap Shirt Factory. What was your inspiration for the story of *The Funeral Dress*, and how does your newspaper background inform your process of story development?

SGG: *The Funeral Dress* began with one image, one old Kodak photograph taken years ago of me and my great aunt and uncle in their single-wide trailer. They lived in that same trailer on the banks of Harrison Bay outside of Chattanooga for fifty-two years. As a child, I loved it there. But as a grown woman, I wanted to honor their lives, their commitment to one another, and their contentment in their home. I never once heard them complain about their cramped quarters. It was only near the end of my aunt's life that she admitted wanting to live in a real house.

Now in response to the last part of your question, I think journalists and novelists share an important trait. We both want to know more, dig deeper, understand all that we can. And when you're telling a story, you need to know all that you can about your characters—their likes and dislikes, their good and bad traits, the way they comb their hair or always eat fish sticks on Monday nights but hate the taste of fish. You must know them better than yourself in order for them to live honestly and authentically on the page.

TL: Would you recommend journalism to young writers as an avenue through which to enter the world of fiction?

SGG: I think the great benefit of working as a journalist is that you are writing all the time. With every article, you're honing your skills. And not only your writing skills. You're developing your interviewing skills, your people skills—all of which benefit a novel. Then if you're fortunate enough to land a job, you're earning income at the same time. That ain't a bad gig.

A Solid Block on Writing

How dilly-dallying can ultimately overcome the proverbial block by Gayle Edlin

The phrase conjures the notion of something solid and physical, a simple obstacle to be eliminated. It also sounds uncomfortable and undesirable, an impedance of the flow of words that would otherwise move harmoniously from mind to paper. Self-help books and exercises on this subject abound, demonstrating through their prolific existence that the problem is widespread, if not straightforward to resolve.

I told a friend—and fellow technical writer—that I didn't think writer's block was a problem in the technical field. After all, except for an occasional recalcitrant engineer, what else impedes the creation of a good piece of installation literature? But without explicitly disagreeing, my friend ... well, disagreed. She described a recent project that she'd not known how to begin, and so she'd set it aside and worked on other things ("other things" are prolific and invariably available to technical writers).

She was right, of course.

Subject matter experts hoarding their information is but one block by which technical writers are stymied. The same base struggles that plague creative writers also attack those who labor at instructional manuals and operating guides. Not only may we not see a clear path to begin our work, but we may also struggle with how much detail to provide without overwhelming the reader, or consistency of our word use, or how to best illustrate a key point. While the "point" in technical writing is related to how to get "Tab A" into "Slot B" rather than plot structure, the basic difficulty is not dissimilar.

And all writers have occasion to wrestle with sentence structure. Certainly, a technical editor will slash and burn a blooming field of adverbs and adjectives down to the last scruffy straggler, but there are other concerns that can become sticking points. Particularly when working as part of a larger team, technical writers may find themselves embroiled in such sticky dilemmas as whether or not a procedure requires a leading phrase, e.g., "To operate the boiler." Trust me when I say that prolonged exposure to such discussions is an ideal environment for developing writer's block, even better than fresh agar is for cultivating bacterial colonies.

But my friend's point made me consider not just the specific barriers to technical writing and their similarities to creative writing blocks. Pondering my own writing efforts and my friend's insightful comments, the flashing warning sign is often procrastination. In technical writing projects, it's not easy for me to appreciate that I'm putting something off. Having more work at hand than I can complete dissolves right into the fact that I'm shuffling one particular project to the bottom of the deck over and over again under the guise of "prioritizing."

As my friend pointed out, however, putting something off can occur courtesy of writer's block as it can on account of organizational efficiency. In my creative efforts, writer's block materializes in the same way, but I can and

do choose my alternate tasks outside of the writing realm; when the struggle with my creative projects becomes too much for me, I opt to read, mess around on Facebook, or get some extra sleep.

However, technical writers are seldom encouraged to set aside our writing, writer's block or no writer's block. On the job, my alternate choices are limited to writing, editing my writing, or adapting images. Disguising my avoidance of certain projects in organizational formal-wear may have the perk of being productive at one level, but it's no less unproductive at another: that level being the unstable base of a teetering stack of manila project folders.

The philosophical among us might wonder whether writer's block results in procrastination or vice versa. We might as well wonder if the two are casual acquaintances who happen to frequent the same bar with no cause or effect at all. The fact remains—whatever the relationship—that these undesirables visit most writers, regardless of the material on which those writers work. The primary lesson I've learned from considering that technical writers, too, are affected by writer's block is not about how it starts, but how it evidences itself. Behavioral patterns, after all, occur habitually, and while books may tell of a full spectrum of means of dealing with writer's block, my own personal visible range has always been limited to dilly-dallying.

Because writer's block-related procrastination does not always appear in a form synonymous with goofing off—because it can and does also manifest in a simple difference in tasks—considering the phenomenon of writer's block as a uniform problem to be resolved is ill-advised. Throwing yourself headlong into a barrier is not necessarily the right choice; if you are exhausted, do what is necessary to recoup your strength, whether that be journaling your way through a knot in your plotline or escaping from it for a bit by reading a light-hearted novel. The name "writer's block" is, after all, not the entirety of the situation in which we find ourselves as writers ... we who are accustomed to dealing in metaphor should not assume that any condition involving story is literal.

But as with a host of psychological issues, awareness is key to understanding the issue. As much as it rankles, it is vital to realize that we're shoving that one piece aside because we have a problem working on it, not because other projects are more important. This discernment alone could be all the prompting needed to hunker down and deal with the current writing Waterloo.

And when I think about it, the way I handle writer's block as a technical writer does have a significant advantage over how I deal with it as a creative writer: by switching to another project rather than switching off entirely, I continue to get work done in my technical endeavors. Having several works-in-progress affords one the opportunity to keep writing, and that is both heartening and empowering.



Living Writers Collective

How this Tennessee writer's group motivates local writers through support, learning, and motivation by Charlotte Rains Dixon

When I visited Nashville in January 2013 to present a workshop at the spring session orientation of The Writer's Loft at Middle Tennessee State University, I began my stay in Spring Hill, Tennessee. One of my students, Karen Phillips, had invited me to speak to her writer's group, the Living Writers Collective (LWC).

Fine, I thought, figuring the group would be the usual small, motley assortment of various levels of serious writers, a large number of wannabes among them.

I couldn't have been more wrong, and I left the Thursday night meeting impressed with LWC and wishing I belonged to something similar in Portland, Oregon. They have created a writing group that fosters community around the shared goal of furthering their writing careers through critiquing nights and informational evenings. As LWC Director Karen Aldridge said, "I leave every LWC session newly recharged and highly motivated. My most productive days are those immediately following an LWC session. Spending time with the LWC writers and reading and listening to their beautiful creations inspire me every time."

To learn more about the group, I interviewed several active members—Karen Aldridge (director), Cecelia Dockins (education director), Karen Phillips (advisory committee member), and Maryann Weakley, who, as an early member, has filled a variety of roles.

Dockins explained how the group functions: "The first Thursday of the month is Critique Night. Karen A. puts out a call for manuscripts, and those of us ready for the verbal abuse line up. Really, there isn't much verbal abuse. One of the nice

things about the LWC is the support each writer receives from the group. We really want each member to succeed. The writer reads a portion of his/her work, and then the timer begins. Other members go around the room and discuss vari-

There are no dues to join the group and no real requirements, either. As Phillips explained, "I was about to say that writing was a qualification, but there is a woman who usually comes with her grandson in support of his writing talent. No

It's nice to connect with others with similar experiences.

Also the talent is amazing, so I'm constantly reminded I need to strive to be a better writer.

ous aspects of the manuscript: the good, the bad."

The third Thursday of the month is reserved for the Creative Writing Workshop.

"Members volunteer and lead the group through a creative writing prompt," Dockins said. "It's a fun way to let loose and just enjoy the writing process and the camaraderie."

"These sessions give writers a chance to step outside of their normal and comfortable writing style and try something a little different," Aldridge added.

When there happens to be five Thursdays in a month, "it's time to buckle down and learn some aspect of the craft," Dockins said.

"The third meeting is devoted to education, usually planned by our education coordinator," Weakley said. "Occasionally, we invite well-known writers to speak to us."

In between meetings, LWC members stay connected by pairing with a critique buddy, someone who, according to Dockins, "you can send a work-in-progress to at any time and get some feedback."

ritual except to put your name on a place card, so everyone can know you."

The group started in January 2007, first meeting in the Spring Hill Library, then progressing through coffee shops and book stores until landing at its current location, Rippaville Plantation, in June of 2010. In exchange for the use of the Excel building, LWC offers writing services and labor for community projects.

"Our move to Rippaville put our attendance growth in overdrive," Aldridge said. "In June of 2010, we were averaging twelve to fourteen in attendance. Now, we see between twenty and twenty-five at most meetings. And, to date, we are still able to do it without charging any fees—all our needs are met through donations and member volunteers."

While it is easy to describe the group's mechanics, the number in attendance, how it functions, where it meets, and so on, it is much more difficult to evoke the atmosphere LWC has managed to foster.

"My favorite thing is how the group supports each other," Phillips said. "There's a comradeship among this group that feels inclusive and caring."

"I really enjoy the friendship," Dockins said. "Writing can be a lonely and rather demoralizing occupation. It's nice to connect with others with similar experiences. Also the talent is amazing, so I'm constantly reminded I need to strive to be a better writer."

And, said Weakley, "Our group is unique as far as writing groups go. We have fun in a learning environment. The camaraderie is inspiring. It is all for one and one for all."

The foursome shared amusing stories gleaned

from meetings which alas we don't have room for here, but can best be summed up by Dockins, who said, "What goes on at Rippaville, stays at Rippaville."

Now, aren't you as inspired by reading about this group as I was when visiting them? If you'd like to learn more, or perhaps visit sometime, the group's website can be found at <http://living-writerscollective.blogspot.com>. And since this is a magazine about all things literary, let's hear more about each of the writers who agreed to be interviewed:

Karen Aldridge writes fiction, freelance articles, and does freelance copyediting. Her website is

makingeverywordcount.com.

Cecelia Dockins writes horror and fantasy and is a graduate student at the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast Creative Writing program. Find her short story "Womb" in the *Dark Side of the Womb* anthology available on Amazon.

Maryann Weakley's memoir manuscript, *Veils and Vows: A Woman's Journey From Monastery to Matrimony*, is currently with an agent, and she writes a regular column for *The Informer Community News*. Karen Phillips is midway through the second draft of a literary fantasy novel.



LEFT Photo by Gayle Edlin.



LEFT Photo by Terry Price

Future Break: Nashville

Veteran writers join a younger generation in performing their predictions of the city's future from 10 years to beyond by Roy Burkhead

From the Frist Center, they spoke; from the Nashville Public Library's auditorium, they spoke; from the Sigourney Cheek Literary Garden at Cheekwood, they spoke; from the Dark Horse Theater, they spoke.

Throughout May of 2012, they spoke their sonnets and stanzas, their verses both free and formal, their dramatic poems with lines enjambed and end-stopped at a series of events known as Future Break.

"In Future Break, Nashville's writers, musicians, and thinkers came together for seven unique performances to determine the city's future 10 to 10,000 years from now," said Valerie Hart. "Each show was a series of staged monologues, readings, essays, songs, and spoken word pieces featuring more than 65 writers and musicians." (Hart directed one of the events, along with fellow directors Mary McCallum, Shawn Whitsell, and Kelly Falzone.)

"A brilliant young teacher and organizer named Benjamin Smith is the brains behind a group called Youth Speaks Nashville," said the late John Egerton. "They stage public events that bring a wonderful mix of local people together in public expressions of various kinds, and I was one of the people Benjamin called on."

According to the organization's website, Youth Speaks Nashville was founded in 2008, and the organization changed its name to Southern Word in 2011 to reflect the expanding services in building a culture of literacy in Tennessee and beyond: "In pursuing this mission, Southern Word conducts spoken word school residencies, after school workshops, open mics, and shows. Spoken Word, also known as performance poetry, has proven effective as a youth development, literacy, and leadership tool across the country."

"Future Break expanded on the success of Nashville Now: Spoken Word Census," said

Southern Word founder and executive director Benjamin Smith. "In 2010, 55 writers convened to create a breathing portrait of Nashville, a literary arts census. Over three nights, they represented Nashville voices through a collection of essays, songs, and poems."

2012's Future Break was a month-long riff across Nashville that spliced voices, harmony, and musical notes—ricocheting them between venues, settings, and listening experiences, as well as shuffling the singers, musicians, and speakers at the specific venues. Blended together were both the youth of Music City and mentor-worthy artistic veterans.

"The young participants, guided and directed by Benjamin Smith, came to these events ready and eager to get up and do their thing," said Egerton. "They're impressive and inspiring: they give me hope."

The late John Egerton is the acclaimed American journalist and author who wrote or edited nearly two dozen non-fiction books and one contemporary fable, as well as contributed scores of articles to newspapers and magazines. Last summer, John moved between the Future Break events, speaking on the future of the book and the late Ray Bradbury in a speech he entitled, "A Requiem for Paper:"

The noted and seemingly immortal American fiction writer Ray Bradbury now 91 years old and still going strong published a novel in 1953, almost 60 years ago, that still speaks to me and countless others, thousands of others, both from the page and from the Netflix film file. The title of the book and the movie which was made in 1966 is Fahrenheit 451. That's the temp at which paper bursts into flame. It's a story about a future American society in which

owning words in print is forbidden. And even reading is against the law. In the community in which the story takes place, the fire department is sometimes called to a house where books have been found. The men with the hoses are not there to put out the fire, but to set one, to burn the books. And the house in which they are hidden may become collateral damage. The main character in this dark drama is a fireman named Montag who harbors doubts about the consequences of this restrictive law. The defining moment comes for him one day when he goes on an emergency call to destroy books in a suburban house that is reported to contain a secret library. At the scene, Montag revolts, he throws down his matches and walks off the job. His fellow workers and on-lookers are so incensed by this dereliction of duty that Montag is forced to flee the town.

Some critics interpreted this story as an outcry against book banning and censorship, which were frequent occurrences in the cold War anti-communism era of Senator Joe McCarthy in the early 50s when the book was written.

But Bradbury said he wasn't thinking of book burning. He was instead worried about what broadcasting, and especially television, was going to do to the time-honored practice of reading. Until radio was introduced in the 1920s and television just two decades after that, reading had absolutely no competition at all. Think of it. Until radio and television came along less than a hundred years ago, the only way you could learn anything except talking face to face with someone was to read letters or magazines or newspapers or books.

"The commie chasers, book banners, and censors will eventually burn themselves out," Bradbury said, "but be worried about an approaching time when television will entice young people away from reading and a new age of ignorance will be upon us."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

... Future Break: Nashville continued from page 29

I wonder how Mr. Bradbury is faring in the new electronic age? If he feared 60 years ago that communication on paper was facing genuine peril, what must he think of the internet and smart phones? You suppose he's on Facebook? Does he tweet? Well, I googled him, and I found that he has a website, ray-bradbury.com, and a web newsletter, and a fan club, and a message board, and online video clips of the man himself at work in his paper-filled and cluttered office in the basement of his Los Angeles home. He's 91. You can tell the clips were all made the same day because they show Bradbury wearing the same blue shirt and tie and matching blue boxer shorts. You see him at his electric typewriter, but his computer is not visible. He admits to using the internet but mostly for listening to music.

On one of the video clips, Bradbury voices the same caution he raised about television in the 50s. Talking about computers he says, "Is this just gonna be a toy, another expensive elaborate toy for people to waste time on?"

It was a fair question back in the 50s, and it still is. Bradbury wrote Fahrenheit 451 on a rented typewriter. .10 cents an hour in the basement of the UCLA library. This is a guy who finished high school and never went to college. He once said that "I got my education in libraries because they're free. College cost a lot of money."

This is an old fashion typewriter guy, a copy paper guy, a throw the carriage guy, a pen and pencil guy, a real book guy as opposed to an e-book guy. They don't make em like Bradbury anymore. I wonder what made me think of him when I sat down to write this essay for Future Break and for southern speakers? Young people. You notice I'm not young. They have me on here for ballast. Bradbury's not southern, though. If he ever came to Nashville, I must have been out of town.

But then picking up on some of the language in this future stuff, I saw this word, this Bantu word, Nomo. This could be a Nomo if it manages to speak Bradbury into existence as a scout.

You know, there are three kids of people in the world. There are leaders, there are followers, and there are scouts. Scouts are the ones who go out ahead alone to survey the landscape and come back to tell the rest of us what to expect when we cross the next mountain or the next river. Bradbury is one of the scouts who have guided me safely thus far. His scout was probably Aldous Huxley with his vision of a Brave New World in 1932. And this is what I take away from Bradbury and Huxley and so many brave visionary scouts. And this is what I want to pass on to you. Be wary of your machines. Save some paper. Some pencils, pens, ink, and erasers. Don't forget how

to put your thoughts fearlessly into words on paper. And if the power fails, you'll still be able to read and write.

"Ray Bradbury died shortly after I wrote and spoke about him," Egerton said. "He was an inspiring man.... I wanted to talk to the audience at Youth Speaks about the peril confronting paper communication—and the abiding importance of it, even in the Wi-Fi Age.

"Bradbury's book is a futuristic tale about a society in which books have become so devalued that they are considered a nuisance, then a threat, then a menace to be eradicated. The book

Smith walked to the microphone, and the band cooled it.

"This puts me in the mood, the mood for poetry," Smith said. "What will Nashville be? How will Nashville be? What will we be in the future?"

Back at the Frist, answers come.

"I can see you Nashville, I can see you in the future, in 20,000 years," said writer and actor Barry Scott, the founder and producing artistic director of the American Negro Playwright Theatre at Tennessee State University. "I see....I see....I see.... I see you Nashville, I see your future Nashville."

Scott's words mingled among the large crowd filled with all ages, all races, all classes: Kids with

I can see you Nashville, I can see you in the future, in 20,000 years. I see....I see....I see.... I see you Nashville, I see your future Nashville.

is now 60 years old—and still as visionary and thought-provoking as ever. I wanted to carry the flag for words in print to the new generation of electronic communicators."

* * *

From the shady shelter of a thick cloud passing high above Cheekwood, Nashville's accomplished poet and veteran educator Bill Brown said, "It's great to be here, great to be reading with the students... You're in for a real treat for these students."

And Benjamin Smith added, "We're raising new poets and also a generation of new communicators; every night is a different lineup; this is a creative opportunity for young people to create and perform, a proud opportunity for young people to come and channel their energies."

"My mama is the only super hero I know," declares Sean Smith from the Frist Center's auditorium, following it up some lines later with a "gotta press pause on the perfect moments."

Within the Dark Horse Theater, optional writing prompts brings together those sitting in the many brown chairs reminiscent of those in many eclectic college theaters across the country—all combining to create a well-worn, intimate setting aglow from an EXIT sign. No one is in any particular mood to move, especially with the musicians (James Haggerty – bass, Tyson Rogers – piano, Brian Owings – drums, and Goffrey Moore – Guitar) tiptoeing their notes across the stage and throughout the room.

high top shoes, the elderly taking pictures with smart phones, the middle aged aglow with iPhones. People within this mass of bobble heads laugh, react, smile, clap, react.

The adhesive that binds this event together is musicians Jody Nardone and Jerry Navarro. Up on the stage, the single mike, black piano, and tall brown bass allow Jody and Jerry to play peek-a-boo with the crowd between each individual presentation. The lights go down, their faces light up, and fingers strum, pluck, and tickle.

Local writer and educator Christine C. Mather is "demolition ready," and math teacher Raziya said, "I am a teacher...I love my job...I'm tired...I work hard: this summer, I'm gonna get a whole lot of sleep...the only thing better than that last day of school is the first day of school."

Teacher Kathy Halbrook asked, "Does one person matter much?" while Cool People Care founder Sam Davison wondered "What did Nashville think 60 years ago what Nashville might be like today?"

"The Nashville I hope for and dream about is a place where we all are."

Southern Word's work and events continue. To learn more, please visit the organization online at: <http://www.southernword.org/>

Future Break is sponsored through the generous support of the Metro Nashville Arts Commission, Tennessee Arts Commission, Nashville Public Library, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, and Cheekwood.





LEFT Photo by Terry Price

Stories from the Street

Nashville's *Contributor* lends voice to the homeless, reaches circulation milestone as the largest street newspaper in America by Amanda Moon

The sanctuary is dark. Sun tries to penetrate the hundred-year-old stained glass windows. It's cool, a welcome respite from an early spring heat wave. People stream in with reluctance, filling up the back of the room first. Voices discuss how long the last meeting was and how soon this one might be over. They want to get back to work. The bi-monthly *Contributor* release meeting is like any other staff meeting, except people sit in pews instead of around a conference table.

And most of the people in the room have former and/or current experience with homelessness.

Each month, well over a hundred thousand copies of *The Contributor* are sold on street corners throughout Middle Tennessee. It is the largest street newspaper in America and the only one with two issues each month. Now, there are over 400 registered *Contributor* vendors, the people seen on the side of the road in winter's snow and summer's heat selling the paper. This is the most vendors per capita of any street newspaper in the world. About half of them are at this release meeting, for which they will receive ten free papers. They will pay a quarter for each additional copy of the paper.

The Contributor released its first issue in November 2007 with ten vendors and three volunteers. *Growth was explosive.*

In January of 2010, they sold 12,000 copies. By the end of that year, circulation hit 120,000 papers per month. When asked about the factors contributing the exponential growth, former Editor Andrew Kinks said that he is unable to pinpoint a single event. Nashville's 100-year flood of 2010 was certainly a factor, but he also said that he believes that Nashville is unique in that it is a "Faith-based city that is progressive enough to know they should be helping people." It is

that generosity that has helped one-third of *The Contributor's* vendors find housing.

The Contributor doesn't operate off a typical editorial calendar. Each issue is planned individually and features about 20 writers, including poets and letter submissions. Feature stories center on poverty issues in Middle Tennessee and are often written by the paper's single staff writer. The Vendor Spotlight, a get-to-know you piece featuring a different vendor each issue, is often written by a freelancer. The rest of the paper is made up of personal essays and poetry, chosen to complement the theme set by the feature.

Unlike a city-wide newspaper with local offices and a regular staff of writers and freelancers, *The Contributor's* writers don't have the luxury of dis-

their allotment of papers—and this is often the only time they have to interact with other writers. Potential writers can schedule a meeting with the editorial staff to flush out their ideas.

"The editorial philosophy is to help people say what they are trying to say and make it easy for the reader, but without changing the voice of the writer," Kinks said.

According to Kinks, for those who are uncomfortable with the writing process or who has never learned how to write, the editorial staff will set up a tape-recorded interview to help the person tell his/her story. The recording is then transcribed and edited for print.

"Everyone has a story to tell," Kinks said.

The Contributor accepts submissions from

... *The Contributor's* writers don't have the luxury of discussing story ideas over lattes. Many of them are current or former homeless residents of Music City and spend their days selling the paper to survive.

cussing story ideas over lattes. Many of them are current or former homeless residents of Music City and spend their days selling the paper to survive. Their articles are sometimes turned in as hand-written pieces, to be retyped by one of the paper's volunteers. Limited transportation, computer, and telephone access make it hard for the paper's editor and staff to communicate with writers except for the twice-monthly release meetings at Nashville's Downtown Presbyterian Church. Before and after the meeting, vendors line up—first waiting to get into the meeting, then waiting to get

anyone. Writers who have experienced homelessness may write on any subject desired. Freelance writers contributing to the paper must write on issues pertaining to poverty and/or homelessness. The few freelance writers in each issue are paid cash by the word. Vendor writers are paid in copies: one copy per ten words, with a minimum of 15 copies, which vendors then sell. Kinks said that although the selling price of the paper is on average a dollar, vendors make about two bucks

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RIGHT Photo by Terry Price

... Stories from the Street continued from page 33

per copy after tips.

Several vendor-writers have regular columns in the paper. Sports Columnist Ponce de Leon has been writing for the paper for five years. He was the first person to get off the streets with his income from *The Contributor*.

Ninety-five-year-old Ed Ganely also found housing while writing for *The Contributor*. Now residing in Maine, he continues to submit to almost every issue.

As with any publication, writers at *The Contributor* experience rejection. If a piece doesn't fit in the paper, it doesn't run, whether or not its author is experiencing homelessness and whether s/he is a regular contributor or not.

Renee Sawyer, referred to by Kinks as the paper's *best* vendor-writer because of her "natural, stylized point of view," stopped working with *The Contributor* for months after an article she wrote was rejected in 2010. That same year, her piece "Identity Crisis" was picked by the North America Street News Association (NASNA) as the Best Vendor Essay in all of the member papers. Much like the Associated Press (AP), the NASNA makes stories from each of its member newspapers available for others to print. At the awards ceremony, Sawyer met people from all over the country who had read her story of trying to obtain a state identification card without access to her birth certificate. The experience helped her reconcile with *The Contributor* staff.

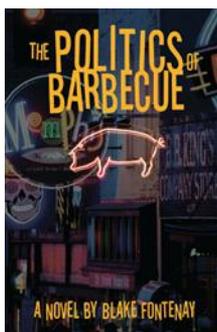
The documentary film *Street Paper* by Chris Roberts chronicled the paper's ascent in 2010 and includes several interviews with Sawyer. Another writer featured in the film, Chris Scott, had his 100th poem printed in April 2013. He also complained in the film about poems that have been rejected.

In 2012, *The Contributor* added a second issue each month. This, in conjunction with the expanding reach of the paper (Franklin passed an ordinance in 2013 that would ensure vendors could sell legally) could continue to provide a voice, and a job, for Middle Tennessee's impoverished...with the public's continued generous support, of course.



The Politics of Barbecue: A Review

Blake Fontenay's debut novel skewers Memphis city government by Mary Popham



Blake Fontenay's first novel, *The Politics of Barbecue*, takes a wry look at city government, how its secret manipulation is developed and employed behind the scenes, and how the under-the-table work affects the people for whom it is established. Set in Memphis, the book is a love letter to the city where the author lived and worked as a reporter, journalist, and communications director for three different departments of Tennessee state government. He has obtained insider's information: the structure of power, how its abuse might be covered up, and how one favor requested leads to several corrupting obligations.

The author's lead protagonist, ad-man Joe Miller, is laid-back and looking for a bit of excitement in his boring job. When he gets involved in Mayor Pete Pigg's campaign to build the Barbecue Hall of Fame in Memphis, complete with cooking contests, a gift shop, and a food court, he steps into more than he imagined.

"There are no innocents in the political arena," says Scott Paulk, an Elvis impersonator and Joe's best friend.

Fontenay introduces the players giving us a clear picture of one, then another, then circling back to see them together. He describes them well, along with their motivations as they move forward into ever-converging action. Yet, since wit and irony form the cornerstone of a clever satire, he isn't much concerned with nuances of good and evil in each character. The good guys are young and adventurous like Joe and Scott, as well as Barry Brett, their intellectual new friend living in an abandoned houseboat on the river. Joe's and Scott's idealism grows as they team up with a patriotic and beautiful Memphis-born movie star and her gorgeous liberal lawyer. This foursome is a match for the villains—the liars and cheats who employ cutthroat tactics to gain fortune and stay in power. The author has fun creating his antagonists, with names and places that Dickens would have cheered: Mayor Pete Pigg: "five-foot-six... completely bald... beady brown

eyes... ruddy complexion ... [and] the kind of physique a man gets from working around barbecue his entire life." The restaurant is the Pigg Pen, its scantily dressed waitresses are called Pigglettes. The mayor has a rival in evil from Kansas City, Billy Boy Bradwell, whose weapon of choice is a branding iron.

While Fontenay meticulously builds a fictional network around the workings of civic pride and responsibility versus political greed and ambition, he promotes the city of Graceland, Sun Studio, Beale Street blues, and barbecue.

He sets the action in beautiful landmarks such as the Peabody Hotel, a paddleboat on the Mississippi, and Overton Park, "... one of the city's greatest assets—a three-hundred-acre-oasis of lush grass in the heart of Midtown, which contains the Brooks Museum of Art and the Memphis Zoo." Even with references as old as the City Hall Building which "... looked like a giant Rubik's cube painted in Wite-Out," his affection overrides the criticism. He also shows the run down areas: North Memphis, South Memphis, and Orange Mound.

In this historic and beloved city, Mayor Pigg is elected because of the lack of a viable opponent. A large roster of lack-luster candidates gives him 17 percent of the vote, the majority, and thus the means to work the taxpayers' money into his pocket.

The Pigg Pen is the scene of many meetings and deals, and where Mayor Pigg boldly tells his chief of police, Chief Bruno, "It's not about law and order and the scales of justice and all that crap. It's about advancin' my agenda." Number one on Pigg's agenda is to build a World Barbeque Hall of Fame on some devalued property which he has obtained in downtown Memphis at Wolf River Harbor. Although he announces his project to the community council and news outlets with claims that it will spur tourism, the beneficiary

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Home to Us: A Review

A Land Trust memoir of six Tennessee families by Candace White

A mocking bird is heard, its many songs repeated against the low haunting call of a pair of mourning doves. A quiet gurgle of clear creek water adds to the sound as it spills over the tumbled mossy rocks into a clear deep pool darting with tiny minnows, water strider's skating across the calm surface.

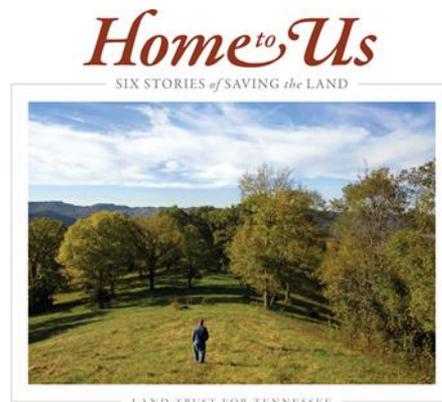
Rustling leaves of a laurel oak, still clinging as winter's crispy mantle not yet pushed off by spring's new growth, sound a soft timpani of background rhythm to the intertwining melodies of every small sound in the deep woods. Flashing cobalt, a bluebird darts into a deep evergreen grove of trees, scenting the breeze with sharp woody cedar. A drift of yellow green petals from a tulip poplar gather as a bright note on the edge of a citadel of standing hardwoods, walnut, hickory, elm, and oak marching away to the top of the gentle hill until falling out of sight down the other side.

These trees are skirted deep with dead decaying leaves, which hide new growth of jack-in-the-pulpit and tiny nubs of wild morels, wild fungus prized for its deep earth flavor and rarity. The crisp early morning air mixes with the warmth rising from the earth to form a white mist that lingers in the deep woods, a mist that has its own stories to whisper of secret caves that hid Civil War soldiers and Native American warriors who have long since passed beyond recollection, stories of the land, stories of the people who tend the land, stories of those who respect the land, who are part and parcel of this Tennessee dirt.

... The Politics of Barbecue continued from page 36

will be his own enterprises. Blatantly, he explains how local government can maneuver to his advantage by using federal monies to cover certain costs; by voting a tax freeze; and by job creation including "...other infrastructures which carry big budgets. Plus money in the construction reserve fund for unspecified enhancements."

As Mayor Pigg's plans develop, Fontenay creates several lines of suspense and keeps them



Home to Us is a lush beautiful book that tells the stories of six Tennessee families that are the stewards of these lands, stewards who recognize that they are but a season in the history of this Earth. Even still, their intent is to protect it for generation upon generation. They are protecting a part of who they are to the land, as farmers, as historians, as keepers of the earth known as Tennessee. In partnership with the Land Trust for Tennessee, a non-profit formed in 1999, under the guidance of Jeanie Nelson they have formed a legal framework of conservation easements that protects the identity of their lands forever but allows them to preserve private ownership for those who come after, ensuring that the farms continue as farms, that wild spaces are home to wild things.

The stories of these families who have donated

or protected their land through the Land Trust are told in honest detail by Varina Willse and edited by acclaimed American journalist and editor John Egerton. Willse captures the family members' love for and their connection to the land, what they plan as a legacy to their own families and our families by protecting this Tennessee land. Green space, cow pastures, sheep farms, organic vegetable and chicken farms, important architecture and simple breathing room for the soul—that is what they have allowed, along with over 200 other families across the state, 84,000 acres preserved for all of us...so far.

The photographs by award-winning photographer Nancy Rhoda are painted with a watercolor elegance from a paintbox of spring greens, sky blues, and earth dark browns. They give certainty to the feeling that we know these people personally, that we know their land. They are our neighbors, our friends, our family. They have given us forever in a most unselfish way, all the changing seasons to come in these Tennessee hills and valleys. *Home to Us* is a testament to the work that has been going on for 24 years by The Land Trust for Tennessee to preserve our natural landscapes and historical places. It is also absolute hope for the future safekeeping of more natural places if enough people know that conservation easement is an option for their own property. *Home to Us* is an excellent way to get the word out and to help raise money to support The Land Trust for Tennessee.

Please visit them at www.landtrusttn.org

has a hilarious scene involving either an exchange of humorous banter or an over-the-top slapstick routine.

Fontenay has written a thought-provoking book that delivers humor in large doses to combat the scenes of government's dark side which occur not just in Memphis but in most cities where the opportunity for easy fortune suppresses man's better nature.



Capturing Young Minds

How several wordsmiths helped encourage the creativity and technical skills of some passionate Nashville students by Chuck Beard

For me, April is the best of times and the worst of times. Stop me if you've heard me rant about this before, but read on if you want to be inspired. I'll assume you are like most people who, when given the chance to hear good and bad news, choose to hear the bad first. In regards to saying the worst of times, the only bad thing about April is the pollen. On the flip side, the best of times is everything else. It's a special time of the year when gardens are planted, flowers begin to bloom, spring is born anew, and young people all around town suddenly find themselves falling in love with the art of writing.



Okay, a few of my April best of times examples are fairly commonplace. That said, I believe that the last one, the one about youth falling in love with writing, is the most important one of the lot that you should take notice of and believe in for years to come after hearing about what I experienced earlier in 2013. Don't believe me? Read on and be inspired.

It was on a cloudy, overcast kind of day, the tenth of April to be exact, when I was asked to meet eight other well-known and well-respected literary folks in the lobby of John Early Museum Magnet Middle School. I didn't know exactly what I was getting myself into, per usual, but I did know that nothing but great things happen when you surround yourself with the likes of great scribes such as Alice Randall, Steve Womack, Paul Clements, David Ewing, Roy Burkhead, Amanda Little, Bill Brown, and the late John Egerton. The acclaimed American journalist John Egerton served as the ringleader of the cohorts and the event to be had, in partnership with school faculty members Becky Verner and Lynn Edmondson. I went back to school, joined the group, and followed instructions with the best of my creativity.

To preface, some of the faculty at John Early began meeting with Egerton in February 2013

while discussing innovative ways to inspire students, to foster a passion and focus on writing, to introduce a variety of styles and professions of writing possibilities, and to increase student achievements—in general—in a positive light. The result of those early brainstorming sessions would become a Writer's Day at the school with a tentative plan of bringing several local wordsmiths to the school for several hours on a given day and letting each of the writers have some individual *face time* with a small group of students. Egerton put those thoughts to emails and got busy, immediately breaking open his contact list and drumming together a diverse representation of writers who have been successful throughout the entire spectrum of writing novels, poetry, publishing, online, freelance, teaching, et cetera.

"I thought I could interest some of my colleagues in this endeavor, but I was frankly amazed that every one I asked either came that day (9) or begged off because of schedule conflicts (3)," Egerton later said. "Twelve out of twelve makes a big statement, and what it says to me is this: Nashville is a community of creative people who gladly and generously share their talents with others for good cause—especially with young students like those we met at Early.



"It makes me proud as a writer to say I live in this city."

Fast forwarding to that day in early April, the teachers took each of the invited guests to different classrooms and groups. I was asked to walk upstairs and meet face to face with four very different students. I learned they all enjoy writing outside of class, but I say they were different because one student loves to journal, another spends most of her days texting until her thumbs go numb, another writes songs every day, and yet another actually had been published for her poetry. I enjoyed talking about how each one of their styles had its own purpose for communicating and sharing original stories. I also had them do a few fun creative writing exercises, but our time seemed to come to an end just when we were hitting our stride.

I returned downstairs to meet the faculty and other invited guests to be debriefed over the day's

activities. Sure we were with different students in different rooms, but the majority of our experiences appeared to follow the same flow.

"I was a little worried about dynamics working with groups of just four students, but the kids were all great, attentive, and filled with thoughtful questions about writing and each writer's life," said Nashville poet and retired educator Bill Brown.

We came away feeling like the talent and imagination was evident within these kids and most of them only needed the initial spark to get started on their own journeys. Journalist and educator Amanda Little had success with her group by garnering excitement from the kids by motivating them to utilize their computer skills to start a blog about the school and their sports teams. Attorney David Ewing instilled newfound confidence in his group's writing and public speaking abilities simultaneously by having them write letters to President Barack Obama and then stand up individually to read the letters aloud in front of the group.

But like any group of young teenagers, not everyone was swayed instantly by complete strangers coming into their school and sharing stories. That is until those young students learned that you can make a good living being a good writer. We learned days later that one particular student who originally hated reading and writing before the Writer's Day—who had been in novelist Alice Randall's group and had learned about her storied career—now can't stop writing and expressing himself via personal stories and song lyrics. In fact, this student has said that because of meeting the visiting authors, he is now looking toward writing as a means of earning a living.

"I was honored to be included and thought the session was a great opportunity to reinforce the real-world importance of language skills *and arts*," Randall said. "At a time all who care about the education of children must be critically concerned with what can be measured, how to measure, and how to interpret the measurements, we are also wise to remember the power of simple contagion—getting kids around people who love language, who love stories, who love the new ways words and pictures are coming together, who love the ways language can freeze history—contact with authors often results in kids loving language too, almost immediately."

In the end, I'm certain last year's Writer's Day was just the beginning of many Writer's Days to come for all involved and more. Everyone agreed that pretty much anything could be possible for these students if they use their newfound passion for writing to learn more about the actual mechanics of writing and continue to practice in and out of the classroom while making their stories most effective.





From Idea to Bookshelves in Nothing Flat

East Side Story's owner connects with writers by Suzanne Craig Robertson

East Side Story's Chuck Beard is all about the story. And not just stories that end up in published books—he cares about the ongoing story of the people who write them.

"When anything is sold I email the authors to tell them and to let them know where their book is going," he says. He likes "making that special connection between the reader and the writer." In the email he tells the authors whatever he remembers about the person who bought their books.

That's not something most bookstores—if any others—do.

Beard, 32, has made a habit of not doing things the way others do, it seems, like the method and velocity that the store was conceived and born. It went from idea to opening in "lightning speed,"

he says.

Beard recalls last summer as he sits in his office, a corner of East Side Story marked only by a slim table holding a laptop computer and a rolling metal file cabinet stuffed with paperwork. He wears a brown cap, a well-loved flannel shirt over a t-shirt, a bushy brown beard, and a constant smile.

He had entered his idea for the store into a nationwide idea contest, "Launch," that was put together by Nashville's Proof, a full service branding solutions company. The contest asked anyone "with a good idea to explain what it was about, what it would become if realized, and how it would positively effect the community that it is located inside and beyond into the future," Beard explains on his website. Out of more than 100

applicants, he won. The prize included business and marketing plans, a logo, and a selection of website designs.

The idea for the bookstore started tugging at him when his friends Bret and Meg MacFadyen (who own Art & Invention Gallery) opened Five Points Collaborative/An Idea Hatchery in East Nashville. When Beard won the contest he knew right away he wanted his store to be in that eclectic gathering of shops featuring folk art and gifts, vintage clothes, an art gallery, and a print shop.

That was July 2012, and by August 1 he had keys to the store with a goal to be open in time for the annual Tomato Arts Festival. That gave he and his wife, Emily Harper Beard, roughly 10 days to take the empty space and transform it.

"The only thing that's happened fast is opening

LEFT, BELOW Photos by Terry Price

the place," he says. "Everything else was gradual." He saw the venture as "a collective breath of fresh air, a cool idea that needs to happen."

And happen it did. They turned the store—about the size of a mid-sized living room—into a cozy haven for readers and writers, painting it with aquas and reds to accent the dark, wide-plank wood floors. They mounted lots of shelves; some are made from old crates, and some are actual encyclopedias on their sides glued to brackets.

Regular bookshelves also line the walls, with a moveable one in the center so space can be made for visiting school groups, readings, or other gatherings. In fact, the store's design is all word-related, with oversized replicas of Scrabble letters for art on the wall and actual Scrabble letters spelling "poetry," "nonfiction," and "fiction" on their racks as if waiting for a player to come along.

But the best of what's sitting on the shelves are

the books, and a miracle all by themselves given the time constraints Beard had to get them there.

In that short span of time between getting keys and opening day, Beard also went about getting the merchandise. His business model is a little different from most stores, where he is the sole proprietor and everything that's for sale is on consignment. He describes this as "a direct connection between reader and writer with less strings attached in the middle. I deal with one or two publishers, but 98 percent is the author bringing it in here. They get to promote it how they want." With about 65 percent of the books self-published, this is a good deal.

The cut is 60 percent for the author and 40 percent for him. "Everyone wins," he says.

His goal at the outset was to get 20 local authors into the bookstore in time for the festival, and with a simple "Call for Authors" email to about

10 friends—both self-published and best-selling published authors—word spread fast.

He opened the store with more than 100 authors and their books of all genres stocking his shelves.

"It's not me," Beard says, shunning the credit. "Everybody's put in the hard work. If you [authors] didn't bring your books in here I'd have an empty room. It's a good spotlight for everybody in here."

Beard says the proposition is self-supporting; store hours are Tuesday through Friday 1:00 to 6:00 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or by special appointment. This accommodates his morning job as learning center coordinator at Oasis Center, an organization offering safety and support to Nashville's most vulnerable and disconnected youth.

From Bowling Green, Ky., Beard has lived in Nashville nearly four years, making the transition when he married Emily. Before he underwent what she calls his "Extreme Makeover: Life Edition," Beard was a freelance writer and editor, working in a family road construction business. The Centre College graduate and Americorps veteran studied abroad three times during school and played football and baseball in college.

"Wearing about 16 hats, you could easily swamp yourself if you bite off too many ideas at once," he says.

Yet he does have a lot of ideas that have turned into realities. Like his "Book Me" program where a reader writes a note to the author about what he liked about the book and brings it back to the store, and Beard sends it to the author. After doing this for five books, the reader gets a coupon for a meal at a local restaurant.

Another idea is "Eastside Storytelling," where an author reads from his or her book and a musician plays original work. It's every first & third Tuesday night at 7:00 p.m. and can be heard on WAMB Radio afterward. Then, you can read about all the events as if you were there, on Beard's blog at <http://eastsidestorytn.com>.

"I treat this place like a blank canvas," he says.

If someone has an idea, Chuck said he is open to giving it a try. This is a man with many favorite events, ideas, and books, and a man who is loving his work and the joy it brings to others.

But ask him what his favorite event has been, he looks exasperated and says, "That's like saying what's your favorite book!"





LEFT Photo by Fredrick A. Dye

A Poem is Not Automatically a Song

On the craft of joining words and music by Les Kerr

Gertrude Stein wrote, “Rose is a rose is a rose.” She did not write, “Rose is a daffodil. After all, they’re both flowers. Same thing, right?”

A song lyric and a poem are examples of creative expression using words, but they are not always the same. Fortunately, unlike the rose and the daffodil which can never be substituted for each other, sometimes poems are good song lyrics. Song lyrics often make good poems. But it’s not a given that they can be automatically interchanged.

I remember magazine ads during the 1960s and 1970s that promised to “turn your poems into songs.” Just for kicks recently, I went online and found websites that make the same promise. It can be done, but it’s not just a matter of finding a melody for the poem’s lines. To take any group of words and mold them into a song requires a lot of thought and skill. I am a songwriter who has occasionally dabbled in poetry. But it would be a stretch to call me a poet. Pondering this, I decided to call a friend who is an expert in weaving words with music to create a song.

Songwriter Tricia Walker is also a publisher, performer, and a recording artist. During her two decade-plus career as a major player in Nashville’s music scene, her songs were recorded by Faith Hill, Patty Loveless, and others. Alison Krauss’ performance of Tricia’s “Looking in the Eyes of Love” earned a Grammy. Tricia’s own *The Heart of Dixie* CD achieved critical acclaim, and her original rendition of the title song was included in *The Oxford American’s* 2002 music sampler CD.

Now Tricia is the director of Delta Music Institute where students at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi earn degrees in music industry studies. They learn everything from songwriting to production. In addition to overseeing the program, she teaches Craft of Songwriting and Business of Songwriting courses as part of the Music Entrepreneurship curriculum.

Tricia said adults are more likely to approach

answer is simple: words alone are not a complete song.

“A song lyric is only half a song because those are the words, and you have to put music to them,” according to the songwriter. “A poem is a complete work. It’s meant to be read, where lyrics are meant to be sung.”

Elements of form in song lyric include verses, choruses, and bridges, though each of those is not

“They tend to think they can write without any form,” said Tricia about some of her students. “It’s sort of that, ‘I’m an artist, and I’m going to write what I’m going to write [attitude].’ They think they can write without form, and then they realize that form is what holds it all together.”

her with a poem they, a friend, or family member may have written with the idea that it would make a good song. The issue she sees with younger people is the absence of structure in their lyrics.

“They tend to think they can write without any form,” said Tricia about some of her students. “It’s sort of that, ‘I’m an artist, and I’m going to write what I’m going to write [attitude].’ They think they can write without form, and then they realize that form is what holds it all together.”

Why is form so important in songwriting? The

a requirement for every song. Some poems may have repeating stanzas, but many do not. Many songwriters consider a repeating chorus necessary in lyrics. It would be hard to imagine Chuck Berry’s hit song “Johnny B Goode” without the chorus. It’s short, it’s simple, and it’s repetitive. Not to mention easy to remember.

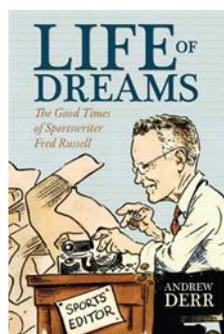
However, plenty of songs have become major hits without repeating choruses. Bobbie Gentry’s “Ode to Billy Joe” comes to mind. But while there is

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Life of Dreams: A Review

Author Andrew Derr reveals how Fred Russell realized his dream of writing sports, provides guidance to new sportswriters by Nansy Grill

Whether it's a childhood fantasy or a well-thought-out plan, dreams can and do come true, some by chance, others by choice, and maybe none more frequently than in the world of sports.



Andrew Derr is a 1992 recipient of Vanderbilt University's Fred Russell-Grantland Rice Scholarship for sports journalism. It is befitting that as an author Derr pay tribute to one Vanderbilt man who made the scholar-

ship possible.

A Life of Dreams: The Good Times of Sportswriter Fred Russell tells the story of how a young man's

dream of living in the sports world becomes a reality. Fred Russell represented integrity in the world of sports journalism and though his love of sports started in the small community of Wartrace, Tennessee, his sports columns took his name from Nashville to every major city in the US. The network of Fred Russell followers was amazing considering he worked without Twitter, Facebook, and cell phones.

Russell's life, as told by Derr, is chock full of sports history including the story of Olympian Wilma Rudolph. Derr highlights Russell's courtroom experience, as he tells of Russell covering an Atlanta trial. The lawsuit was against the *Saturday Evening Post* charged with libel by Wally Butts, University of Georgia athletic director, and Paul "Bear" Bryant, University of Alabama head football coach.

Fred Russell was a loved and respected

journalist. Derr credits Russell as founder of Banquet of Champions, and provides a list of awards attributed to Russell throughout his sports writing career. This is a natural read for Vanderbilt University fans or students. Some must know VU history lives in the pages of Derr's book. Sports history addicts will relish in the details Derr outlines, albeit the book is not always chronological.

Lastly, though Derr often repeats himself, this book is a necessary read for journalism majors, especially sports writers. Russell's legacy and the message Derr conveys best is how to realize your dream. Remember "if you built it they will come?" Russell's message relayed by Derr is if you work at your dream, build it, it will become a reality, and others will be there along the way to help make it the biggest and best dream ever. It doesn't matter if it's a childhood fantasy or a well thought plan, dreams can and do come true

... A Poem is Not Automatically a Song continued from page 43

no repeating chorus, the key line about jumping off the Tallahatchie Bridge is repeated in most of the verses and keeps the listeners focused.

"At the end of the first three verses, the line... is repeated," said Tricia, "It's not a separate chorus but it comes at the end of those sections, and it's a repetitive element. Once we hear it and we know it's coming again, our ears are ready for it."

Similarly, in Rudyard Kipling's classic poem "Gunga Din," the meter of the last line of every verse is the same and the last two words of that line are always, "Gunga Din." When Jim Croce recorded his musical version of the poem, very few of Kipling's original words were changed. They were written in a way that fit very logically to a melody.

Poets and songwriters have employed

transitional phrases to bring the listener or reader from one part of the piece to another. A good example of this element in a song, called a bridge, is in Dave Loggins' "Please Come to Boston." The song has three verses and three repeating choruses. Between the second and third verses comes the bridge that leads logically into the last verse and chorus.

As is the case with choruses, not all songs have bridges. "Margaritaville" by Jimmy Buffett and "Good Hearted Woman" by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson are examples. No bridges, but both have a repeating chorus.

In the 1970s when I began to write songs, I never sent my lyrics off to have them put to music. Even then, there were plenty of resources available on developing songwriting skills. On my desk,

I still keep Tom T. Hall's *How I Write Songs*, the 1976 book by the man who wrote "I Love" and "Harper Valley PTA."

Now there are even more resources including the Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI), The Songwriters Guild of America, and other organizations. NSAI has regional chapters throughout the country. There are also countless books to read and courses to take devoted to songwriting.

If you are a poet interested in turning words into songs, another good way to start is to find people you know who are already writing songs. If you don't play an instrument, find someone who does and ask to collaborate. Remember, "Silent Night" was originally a poem. Look what a nice melody did for it!





Born Free on Orcas Island

Making music with the muse by River Jordan

I've forgotten how to write a novel. I've heard authors say that, and I've responded, "Don't be silly. You've written multiple books. You know how to write a story." But now I get it. Only too well.

I'm staying at a beautiful hideaway home courtesy of some saints of the written word who realize that sometimes we need to leave the business of writing to get back to writing. So—a few days ago I set my email notice to—*color me gone*. My voicemail the same way. I packed my bags and headed west to the beautiful Island of Orcas, Washington to work on a new novel, the labyrinth book, my newsletter, the *Psychology Today* spirituality blog, and this overdue piece to *2nd & Church* that has been promised for months.

I told the editor that I would write it on the plane. I lied. Not intentionally, of course, but by the time that I had made the flight, squeezed into a seat (in a full flight!), and sat down, I realized while clutching that laptop how wordlessly exhausted I was.

When I arrived via ferry and friends to the

'retreat' house, I unpacked and took a day to recover. Life had been busy with family, travels, appointments, and meetings. Envisioning this opportunity for solitude and writing kept me from going crazy. *If only I can hold on a little longer*, I told myself, *the words will wait, and all will be well*. I declared to my husband that this uninterrupted time was going to be so amazing that I was going to write a novel in two weeks. I don't think he believed me. For good reason.

On my second day with a view so mesmerizing I kept thinking it was a movie set. I opened the laptop and prepared to dive right in where I had left off. After all, the novel had been on my mind all this time. Grudgingly, the story moved along at the pace of mud. Something felt all wrong. I felt like I was pushing a dead mule. Up hill. I twisted the plot to and fro in my mind—trying to make a decision about the direction the story would turn. Then I realized that I didn't have writer's block. It was worse. I had forgotten how to write a novel. Completely. I kept coaching myself, saying, "Look,

you've done this before. You have the published novels to prove it." But still, I felt like Chevy Chase's character on *Funny Farm* where he put that first piece of paper in the typewriter. That was the beginning and the end for him.

Normally, I don't have to struggle so hard to write. Not that writing isn't work: it is. Not that I don't go through rewrites: I do. But I knew the way that I wrote had a musical quality to it, a creative essence that reminded me of playing the piano when I was a child when I was sounding out the theme song to "Born Free" by ear in the third grade. I simply heard the music calling to me. It was also the way I had always written. I heard the story calling just blocks of silence where I forced words like stones in any available spaces.

I began to think that the scenery was so beautiful that it was distracting. I moved to another chair, turned my back to the sound. I wrote words. I hammered them. I chiseled them. And I bumped into such a sludge of trouble that I wondered if I should completely forget this

LEFT Photo by Chris Blanz, River Jordan with "Big Dog," also known as Titan, her Great White Pyrenees.

marvelous, page turning idea that I was so sold on when I arrived. Then it occurred to me. I had been trying to tell the story on my own, relying solely on my own abilities.

I had forgotten to unpack my muse.

I'm certain different writers find their muses in different ways. Perhaps it's a thirty minute run before they write. Or reading Shakespeare. Or making blueberry muffins. It doesn't matter what it is, but the fact is—it is. Call it muse or creative energy or inspiration: some of us abide by it.

In the course of being out here, in this incredible writer's retreat, with such high expectations of myself to make up for time not spent writing, I began to struggle. All I needed to do was take a deep breath, step away, and remember to hear the music...to hear the story.

Frequently, people ask if I have any writing rituals. The answer is yes and no. I don't have a lucky chair, lucky laptop, or lucky dog. There aren't any definite things I feel I must do to write. Except one.

In *Life*, Keith Richards's autobiography, he describes how he used to sleep with his guitar in the event that he woke up inspired and needed to immediately capture the music in his mind. I thought about what a great attitude that was. To always be open and ready to hear the music. To trust that the muse would surface, perhaps unexpectedly, but that it would indeed surface.

When I realized this, when I remembered that the story wasn't something I had to create without inspiration, that the bottom line was that I wasn't alone, that I was created to create and that's what I would do, I was filled suddenly with several

answers to the story that had been troubling me. I remembered a prologue I had written months ago and saved under a different file. When I found it I realized it had been the right piece for the opening all along. Something dashed off in a fit of inspiration that was good. Then the answer to a major plot issue rolled out in my mind like a red carpet.

It's beautiful on Orcas Island, but a story is calling. One where it's a late, rainy night in Nashville. More mist than rain really, a night where the air is thick with dreams and possibility. I think I'll hang around, just to get the words down.

Fueling Young Minds, Books Create New Readers

Book Reviews: *Born Yesterday: The Diary of a Young Journalist* and *Herman's Journey: A True Story* by Janelle Hederman

"The books we enjoy as children stay with us forever -- they have a special impact. Paragraph after paragraph and page after page, the author must deliver his or her best work."

- Sid Fleischman, author of *The Whipping Boy*, the 1987 Newberry Award Winner

For many of us, reading as children ignited any sense of wonder about our world, distant lands, that family of bears who lived in a tree and taught morals while wearing that same pair of clothes book after book, or simply made us want to write our own stories. And perhaps it is because of those fueled and fed wondrous moments that so many of us become writers, or specifically writers for children. The difference between writers for adults and those for children wanes as the crossover genre continues to skyrocket thanks to technology and universal, ageless themes. But what is it that we as authors, or as parents or both, look for in a book for children? Certainly some of us wish to pass on our memories or childhood favorites, but I believe we wish to give them

dreams, to inspire them with the unexplored or unknown, or just humor them in an effort to get them to quiet down one more time before sleepy-time down South. And as a result, I have found two delightful read aloud picture books that will keep young listeners reaching and laughing, while entertaining parents and authors with each turn of the page.

Born Yesterday: The Diary of a Young Journalist by James Solheim is a fantastic diary of a newborn baby. The illustrations by Simon James are as clever and snappy as the humor in the text. The young journalist narrates his discovery of toes and hair while dreaming of becoming an author, going to kindergarten, and climbing Mount Everest. In the meantime, the newborn is figuring out the mobile above her bed, stating "I don't know what it is about that thingy. I mean, it's only a green star shape on a string, but it twirls and sparkles and taunts me." Of course, the protagonist has a big sister who can already do so much that the newborn thinks she is a genius, or in some

cases, "...she knows someone important, like the bus driver." For all of the sharp witted hilarity in this book, there are a few gaps in the storyline that make the reader question, upon closer inspection, if the book really is about a newborn who wants to become a journalist, or if it is about sibling rivalry and friendships. Young readers don't appear bothered by the discrepancy, seeing as to how it was an IRA Children's Choice Award winner in 2011, a BCCB Blue Ribbon winner in 2010, and most recently the Red Clover Award winner in Vermont, an award which goes to the best contemporary picture book award in the elementary school system. As for all books, whether children's or not, a good story is a good story, and this one is funny enough to read again and again and again.

Aside from a good laugh, another type of feel good story that authors and parents alike wish to impart on young readers is inspiration, that notion that anything is possible. *Herman's Journey: A True Story* by Jamina Carder and Kaaren Engel is

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LEFT Photo by Gayle Edlin

The Musical Journey of *7 Days*: A Review

Singer/songwriter Jeff Jacob's independent project to benefit animal and literacy organizations by Les Kerr

Jeff Jacob is a well-rounded songwriter whose CD *7 Days* makes the listener's journey from the opening playful tempo of "A Biblical Way" to the moving "Sabbath Medley" a very pleasant and logical trip. "A Biblical Way" may be the only song I've ever heard using a beach motif while employing a banjo. But



it works! The song brings a smile with the line, "I want to know you in a Biblical way; the kind of stuff that got Adam in hot water," referring to a female on the beach who even got "the pelican's attention." The jaunty rhythm

coupled with Katy Clark's banjo playing gives the album a cheerful start.

Jacob is a thoughtful and literate wordsmith who uses intelligent metaphors expecting the listener to understand them. His background as the former marketing and event programming coordinator for Borders Books in the Southeast obviously enhanced the literary bent of his music. He wrote or co-wrote all of the songs on *7 Days*, and the title song expresses a thought which is probably universal among thinking people: "I'm searching for meaning in a fast-food world." There is no "fast-food" songwriting on this album. Each item on the musical menu was carefully crafted to appeal to a thoughtful mental palate.

"November Again" evokes the storytelling style of Dan Fogelberg as the singer becomes the bartender/listener for people dropping in for a drink. "Can I tell you about my day," says the first customer, a young woman. "I'll bet that you have

a way of listening." With guest vocalist Amber Van Parys, Jacob paints images that say "November," like "wood smoke and cold rain; sweaters and old blue jeans; now that it's November again." A cab driver tells the bartender, "I've spent ten years fighting memories, dropping drunks off at their homes." This very conversational style brings the listener belly-up to the bar where these souls bare their feelings to a bartender that we eventually learn has emotions and memories of his own that he reveals to another.

The songwriter's spiritual side is revealed in several songs, including "Hine Ma Tov." Jacob's contemporary English lyrics are intertwined with a Hebrew Liturgical melody and brought to life by guest vocalist Elisheba Cote who sings, "Why can't we all just get along?" "Strong Like Abraham" is a lyrical prayer for strength and confidence: "In the face of it all, will I answer the call... give me faith in who I am."

Technically and musically, *7 Days* does not disappoint. The three "Live" tracks ("Highway 9 Love Song," "Sabbath Medley," and "The Calling") are as clean as the other nine songs, highlighting vocals and instruments at just the right moment. A variety of rhythms and instrumentation keep the album interesting, as well. In addition to the standard bass, drums, guitar, and keyboard, the aforementioned banjo, fiddle, and accordion bring just the right touch without being overbearing. Particularly tasteful is the trumpet playing of Marine Band Sergeant Joshua Koskela on "Hine Ma Tov."

So often, independent projects produced by songwriters sound like dressed up demos. That is not the case here. Jacob has found the right musicians and production to support his songs that not only express his own emotions but reach those of the listener as well. And to illustrate his efforts to use music to benefit the broader good, proceeds from the CD will benefit animal and literacy organizations.

7 Days

CD: *7 Days*

Artist: Jeff Jacob

Label: independent

Songs: A Biblical Way/ Rescued/Highway 9 Love Song (Live)/7 Days/Strong Like Abraham/Hine Ma Tov (guest vocals Elisheba Cote)/That Ain't What Love Is (guest vocals Scott Barrier)/November Again (guest vocals Amber Van Parys)/With Open Doors/Sabbath Medley (Live)/Bonus tracks: The Harder You Fall (guest vocals Kira Small)/The Calling (Live).

Cannon County Arts

Arts Center fosters, develops local traditions and talent by Peggy Smith Duke

Twice named one of *The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America*, an Appalachian hamlet's very isolation as a geographic area has sewn the coin of craft in its hem. Rich in the claim of birth-place of the Grand Ole Opry's first real superstar Uncle Dave Macon and multiple generations of white oak basket, chair, and whiskey makers, the county's beating heart is the Arts Center of Cannon County. A Grammy and a Governor's Arts Award only partially tell the story of a small-town playhouse that grew into a cultural powerhouse. A record label, folk art museum, gallery, nationally recognized annual White Oak Crafts Fair, and performance venue for the preservation of traditional Tennessee music are the backdrop for strong educational and workshop programs ensuring future generations of artisans and art appreciation.

Cross disciplines and passion seasoned with home-grown skills created a nucleus around which people express themselves in ways that are important to Americana. Development of the center hinged on shared interests of three organizations, eight family generations of craft, and a wizard of preservation, Donald Fann.

"We became who we are by embracing the diversity and scope of what the word 'arts' means in our name," said Fann, former Executive Director and 2013 recipient of the Governor's Arts Award

for Arts Leadership.

Cannon County grew as a classic Appalachian culture, said Dr. Robert "Roby" Cogswell, Director of Folk Life for the Tennessee Arts Commission. An amalgam of Scottish-Irish, Germanic, and English migrated to the isolated foothills of Middle Tennessee from Virginia in the 1820s and 1830s. Baskets, chairs, and whiskey became their economy. Largely subsistence farmers and coal camp workers, settlers traded their homemade currency for groceries and supplies. The Bristol-to-Memphis Highway sliced through the area and spread the word of the artisanal expertise.

"Preserving the legacies of Cannon County is critical to understanding our rural heritage," said Dr. Cogswell.

Few counties have seen the cooperation or intentional organization that can turn a local playhouse into a broader-serving arts center with a vision to preserve the area's endemic folk life. In 1989, the Cannon County Historical Society and Cannon Association of Craft Artists joined forces with the Cannon County Playhouse in a capital campaign to build a cultural home. Its roadside perch on John Bragg Highway near Woodbury overlooks rich river bottomland, the work inside fueled by a bank of solar panels.

Two more expansions were paid through the

center's revenues, and the latest capital campaign in 2006 provided a rehearsal hall, restaurant, museum, and office space pushing them well over 11,000 square feet. They are positioned as a significant leg of a cultural heritage tour that includes the Readyville Mill, the Arts Center, and the new Short Mountain Distillery for authentic Tennessee moonshine.

The unique confluence of the center's work brought recognition in 1996 and 1998 as one of *The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America* by travel writer John Villani. Serving 2,600 people in 1991, the reach has grown to over 4,000 performance patrons, 40,000 through the facility, and over 150,000 unique visits to their Spring Fed label recordings and website in 2011.

"Home grown" has special meaning for the center as Fann celebrated his eighteenth year as executive director. Sprung from the community he serves, the first show Fann saw was a 1983 Cannon County Playhouse production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. By the mid 1980s, he was filling in for the sound tech, ran sound the next year, and in 1986 joined the High School Forensics Team coached by Darryl Deason, an Arts Center founder. Fann directed *Noises Off*, went away to college to major in dramatic arts, and became arts education director of the center in 1994. In September 1995



LEFT Photos by Clark Thomas



he took the job of executive director.

For three years at its inception the playhouse shared the Lions Club building in Woodbury, striking the sets between weekends to allow for Lion's Club meetings. They moved to a converted boiler room in the basement of the high school gym until the capital campaign built a home for the growing center. A 1991 reprise of *Harvey*, the first show produced in the Lions Club building a decade before, was the new building's first production.

Smoothing over early stumbles with the Arts Center's craft fair, Donald Fann's organizational skills and connections were critical. He married Cortilla Youngblood, a member of one of the stalwart families reaching back seven and eight generations in basket and chair making. The success of the White Oak Crafts Fair served as an incubator for other artisans. Few geographic areas are as richly resourced with artists—200 within a thirty-mile radius and growing.

"I know for a fact six or seven artists moved here directly because of our designation as one of the '100 Best Small Art Towns in America,'" Fann said.

In 2002 the Arts Center received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to hire a folklorist. Every other staff member of the center began as a volunteer, further enriching the center's ability to honor the local culture.

Folklorist Evan Hatch began working with them about the time the Spring Fed Records label released its first traditional music CD. The effort was a way to introduce music that languished on LP vinyl records to a new generation of listeners. Spring Fed re-issued a Tennessee Folklore Society recording of Uncle Dave Macon playing in his home in 1952. It launched the label that has produced 38 titles and secured a 2008 Grammy for Bruce Nemerov for Best Album Notes on *John Work III: Recording Black Culture*, co-produced by Hatch.

Hatch helps collect oral histories from the multi-generational craft artists, curates the museum and resident collections, and works with loan programs from other museums. The museum is home to the Ben Caldwell White Oak Basket collection.

"We recognize that fine craftsmanship doesn't necessarily mean an artist has to be a professional," Fann said. "We are showing people that the quilt on their bed is a piece of art, and that art is inherent in their everyday lives."

Boots on the Ground

Small press musters big opportunities for poets by Elizabeth Burke

Located atop one of the highest points in South Central Kentucky stands the bronze likeness of Henry Hardin Cherry. The founding president of Western Kentucky University stands guard in front of his namesake, Cherry Hall—a three-story academic fort with columns of the Ionic order.

Built in 1937, it has two wings that extend to the back of the building and join forces with a five-foot-deep trench that Confederate troops dug when they occupied Bowling Green during the Civil War in 1861. Chimes were installed in the building's tower back in 1957, and they serenade the school's approximately 21,000 students during the day and into the night.

When first built, the temple's square feet (about a hundred thousand of them) housed all the academic classes, chemistry and physics labs, the college bookstore, post office, and even some administrative offices. Today, of course, most of those functions and offices are in their appropriate spots throughout Western's still-scenic (but constantly growing) campus, but one group has remained entrenched within the structure all these years: the Department of English.

This department offers all the Shakespearean studies one would image required for students and scholars earning English degrees, and at some point, all students report here to study the required general education English classes. There's a yearly celebration of writing, a writing project with a young writers camp, a competitive winter writing workshop, an undergraduate conference, symposiums, a series of talks. Heck, there's even blogs and journals.

Still, though, there's more...if one knows

where to look.

The old wooden door that leads into office 131A could be that of any award-winning researcher and poetry professor, but it's not. Nestled not far from the structure's entrance is the office of Dr. Tom C. Hunley. When officially on duty, he teaches poetry, an advanced creative writing workshop, and a world literature course. When off duty, he's the creator and director of Steel Toe Books (steeltoebooks.com).

fellow poets by getting their poems out of notebooks and into the hands of the public.

"Publishing with Steel Toe was also a nice jolt to my confidence as a writer—something I think many of us don't really appreciate how much we need," said poet Gabe Welsch. "For me in particular, since I work in administration at a college without a creative writing program and am thus comparatively isolated from creative influences and peers, having such a great press be enthusiastic about

Boots on the ground, we work hard to find the best unpublished manuscripts, to turn them into the best books possible, and to get them into the hands of readers.

With the mission of helping poets reach out to the literary world, this small, independent poetry press focuses its attention on manuscripts that have stories worth sharing. Affiliated with WKU and commonly known as Steel Toe, this press laces up to help poets shoulder the grunt work of editing, submitting, and networking with in the literary circuit.

"Boots on the ground, we work hard to find the best unpublished manuscripts, to turn them into the best books possible, and to get them into the hands of readers," said Hunley. "We aim to be the hardest working small press in po-biz."

(The term po-biz refers to anything and everything required to get poems published.)

According to Hunley, he strives to serve his

my work has been helpful."

Steel Toe Books published Welsch's latest poetry collection (*The Four Horsepersons of a Disappointing Apocalypse*) early in 2013.

Serving as a bridge between lonely poet and the community of artists, Steel Toe said it works hard to connect writers not only to the public, but to the writing community, as well.

"Publishing with Steel Toe has introduced me (and re-introduced me) to some wonderful other writers," Welsch said. "The stable is strong at Steel Toe, which I knew from reviewing some of their books, but when I started reading more of the list and after having a reading with many of them at AWP in Boston, the strength of their picks became even more apparent."



The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) “provides support, advocacy, resources, and community to nearly 50,000 college and university creative writing programs, and 125 writers’ conferences and centers.”

Hunley said that working on *Steel Toe* can be strenuous; it does not come without its rewards, though. Dr. Hunley said that he is well aware of the emotional toil writing takes on the poet. It is not easy trying to make one’s voice heard among the cacophony of other writers.

“The writing life can feel like a big, impossible competition if you let it,” Hunley said. “It can feel like you’re against the world, and there’s always this danger for me to be resentful when others publish in venues that pass on my work or win awards that I apply for.”

With an understanding of the publishing battlefield, Hunley said that he endeavors for *Steel Toe* to be a breath of fresh air to the poetry community.

Richard Carr, author of *Imperfect Prayers*, said, “*Steel Toe Books* took a chance on a manuscript that other publishers wouldn’t consider because of its length and subject matter, and it felt good to find a publisher who really understood what I was trying to do.” Among *Steel Toe*’s many other poets, Carr expresses thankfulness for this operation as

something that presents a unique publication option for poets. *Steel Toe* is a venue for publication that few other presses offer.

Founded in 2003, Hunley said that the press is in the process of publishing book number eighteen and what prompted the creation of *Steel Toe* was his desire to offer poets the opportunity to read and publish complete collections of single author poetry, a rather narrow market in the publishing sphere: “When I was finishing my Ph.D. at Florida State University, I considered starting a literary journal, but looking around I saw that there were plenty of well-run lit mags but a dearth of publishers committing to the sort of full-length collections that I wanted to read. Also, I was finishing and submitting my own full-length manuscript, and I thought it would be instructive to see how other poets were arranging and presenting their work.”

Steel Toe gives poets the break they sometimes need to take the plunge into the literary world, making it a small press with a big impact.

Ultimately, *Steel Toe* is about celebrating writing with fellow artists.

“Directing the press has brought me into a deeper sense of community with other poets, freeing me from the destructive tendency to isolate,” Hunley said. “When one of the press’s poets

wins an award or reaches some career milestone, I can rejoice because I have a stake in their work. It’s great to have so many opportunities to celebrate the success of people whose work I admire.”

The press publishes one-to-three single-author manuscripts a year, and it has had a number of successful books. *Steel Toe Books* encourages poets to submit their manuscripts in the fall during the press’s open reading period between September and October. In 2012, *Steel Toe Books* received over 156 manuscripts. Out of this sea of poetry, the press chose Charles Rafferty’s *The Unleashable Dog* for publication in early 2014. In response to the publicity *Steel Toe* offers its authors, Welsch said, “I think they do a good job getting the books in the hands of influencers and getting their names out, which is a crucial part of the effort when partnering with a press.”

Their poets and authors have been featured on Garrison Keillor’s radio program, “The Writer’s Almanac,” on Ted Kooser’s newsletter, “American Life in Poetry,” as well as on the websites “Poetry Daily” and “Verse Daily.” Their books have also been reviewed in fine publications such as *Harriet*, *The Briar Cliff Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *Cranky*, *Diner*, *The Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *The Midwest Book Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Rattle*, *Review Revue*, *Rhino*, *Small Press Review*, and *Verse*.

My Affaire de Coeur with Nashville

How a trip to Love Hill began a life-long love affair with Nashville by J.T. Ellison

It began with a man, of course. (Doesn't it always?) I met him at George Washington University, in Washington, D.C. He was adorable, and suave, and brilliant, and funny, and I fell head over heels in love.

There was just one little bitty problem. He was from Nashville. And to Nashville he ultimately wanted to return. I ignored that little tidbit, launched headlong into a steamy love affair that culminated in a ring and a gorgeous white dress. My bliss was just beginning.

My husband brought me to Nashville a few times while we were dating, both to see family and inoculate me, I believe. Our very first trip, we drove up Love Hill on a crooked little road called Love Circle, and my then fiancé told me he'd like to live there someday. There's a magnificent view of downtown from the Hill, and I was shell-shocked, thinking how utterly romantic it was that this man I loved took me to a place in his hometown called Love Hill. Staring over the city, it seemed so big, which surprised me (now I realize just how small we are.) He took me to a bookstore called Davis Kidd – then a true independent store nestled in Green Hills, one of the upper echelons' playgrounds. (Told you he was smart.) I was utterly charmed by the store, the area, and understood innately that I could make this place home.

Of course, ten years later, I set a murder on Love Hill. How could I resist? But I'm getting ahead of myself.

In 1998, adorable husband got an offer he couldn't refuse from a newspaper called *The*



Tennessean. Nashville became home a few weeks later.

It was through this eclectic town that I truly found myself. I drifted into the city's rhythms almost effortlessly, without realizing I had. I missed D.C., missed the culture, the museums, the music. Wondered for weeks if we'd made the right choice. Then slowly, inexorably, Nashville began to bleed into my veins.

Setting a sense of place is vital to introducing a city in literature. Nashville lends itself to the task. We're a very Southern city. This is the Deep South, where manners are paramount, where celebrities are as likely to belly up to the counter at Waffle House as they are to be spotted at the Sunset Grill. We have restaurants with names like Tin Angel, Sambuca, and Valentinos cozying up with Tootsie's

Orchid Lounge and Rippy's Barbeque. Our free weekly, the *Nashville Scene*, sponsors a yearly contest called "You're So Nashville If..." which gleefully celebrates the random unique craziness that is the Third Coast, NashVegas. Our politicians have a tendency to be bent, but polite society flourishes, their extremely expensive Belle Meade homes a throwback to real money and class, while gangs run the midnight streets.

It was these very dichotomies that drew me to write about my adopted hometown. I started my Taylor Jackson series in 2003, knowing that the city of Nashville would be a major character in all my books. There are tons of nooks and crannies that lend themselves to murder. In my first novel, I set a pivotal scene at the entrance to Belle Meade. The life-size bronze thoroughbred and her colt are a perfect landmark; everyone knows exactly where that is.

I've lived in a lot of places, and none of them had the ineffable charm and friendly spirit of Nashville. It's a city that is a hometown, with fireflies and fireworks, neighborhoods and parades, civic pride and an ever-expanding roster of residents from everywhere in the world. All you need is an afternoon at the Farmer's Market on the Bicentennial Mall, walking through the spice stalls, to show you that we aren't just Southerners. What we call "meat and threes," meat with three sides, abound on many corners, alongside a multitude of Starbucks, though the privately held coffee shops like Bongo Java draw the college crowds.

The Bat Building, also known as the

headquarters to Bellsouth, is the crown jewel of our downtown skyline, with the Pinnacle Building and its understated wee signage glossing up the edges. We have a well-respected NFL team (Tennessee Titans) and a world-class NHL hockey team (Nashville Predators.) We have a minor league baseball team too, the Nashville Sounds, and if you're ever in dire need of a fireworks fix between our stellar Fourth of July celebrations, that's where you need to go because they shoot them off after every game.

Downtown is home to tourists and musicians alike, a cacophony of sounds reminiscent of a smoky night in New Orleans. From Printer's Alley to LoBro (Lower Broadway), you can walk into a club and hear everything from blues to country to alternative to old school Southern Rock (I don't think I've ever been downtown without hearing at least one rendition of "Sweet Home Alabama" – odd considering Tennesseans and Alabamans don't necessarily get along.) Did I mention that's twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week? You can get great live music everywhere in the town, anytime, for free. Amazing, when you think of it.

Music Row is chock full of every bit of musical history you can think of and continues to break musical ground every day. The Bluebird Café draws the biggest and best names in songwriting. Third and Lindsley, Exit In, and Mercy Lounge serve up helpings of brilliance night after night. You'll always find a gaggle of young women doing what the cops call the Nashville Walk—moving in and out of the clubs in sub-zero weather wearing their little black dresses and clutching their arms for warmth because, really, who would ruin a great outfit with a coat?

Music City is an earned nickname—any fan of country music can recite the history of this

town with breathless anticipation. Nashville is to songwriters what L.A. is to actors. You can't swing a cat in this town without hitting someone who is involved in the music industry. No one can hear the words Grand Ole Opry or The Ryman and not feel a chill run down his or her spine. And trust me, when June died, then Johnny died, then their beloved home burned down, the city collectively wept.

As you can imagine, this is a rich and fertile playground for a mystery writer. I don't focus on the country music scene, I prefer to show the Nashville I experience on a daily basis. But there's song by Hank Williams, Jr. called "Country Boy Can Survive" that sums up Nashville better than I ever could. It was that irreverent attitude that allowed me to abandon my preconceived notions of what this city is about and my own notions of who I thought I was. Nashville is all about just being who you are, and if someone doesn't like that, tough. We are who we are, no airs, no apologies.

There was one spot that I knew immediately was the perfect setting for a murder. Drive up West End Avenue and you'll run into Vanderbilt—a section of town covered with ubiquitous joggers, fresh-faced students, and medical personnel milling the streets—and enter Centennial Park. This is the home of the Parthenon, a perfect replica of the original in our sister city of Athens, Greece, including a massive statue of Phidias's Athena, forty-two feet tall, sculpted by famed Nashville artist Alan LeQuire. I've always seen Taylor Jackson as the warrior goddess of Nashville, as the city's protector, as the guiding light of wisdom and truth. When I set a crime scene at the Parthenon in my third book, it fit so perfectly. Here was a physical embodiment of Taylor's very essence, in the middle of her city.

Of my city.

Since we've lived in Nashville, there have been some changes. The Frist Center for the Arts has opened, a stellar museum reminiscent of the Corcoran in Washington, D.C. The world-class Nashville Symphony now plays in the newly-built Schermerhorn Symphony Hall, based on the Viennese Opera Houses of old. New restaurants open daily, and downtown is filling with residential and mixed-use housing.

But the best change I've seen is the literary renaissance Nashville is undergoing. We are a creative town, not just in music and art, but in books. Authors abound, and we all know one another. We gather, attend signings and events, and revel in the fact so many of us exist here, in this in between land. The favorite stop in fly-over country.

This city seized me in its jaws and hasn't let go. It's wildly independent, sophisticated, and cultured, yet remains as fresh and raw as the wild strawberries that grow in all of our lawns. There are many, many facets of this town that I love—the friendliness, the intelligence, the fact that I can exit the highway ten minutes from downtown and drive through bucolic green fields littered with cows and horses like I'm deep in the country. Yes, it only takes ten minutes to drive from one end of Nashville to the other, from the Cumberland River to West End. But that's Nashville's charm – it packs so much into a small package that you get more than your money's worth.

I just can't imagine being anywhere else. Nashville has stolen my heart.

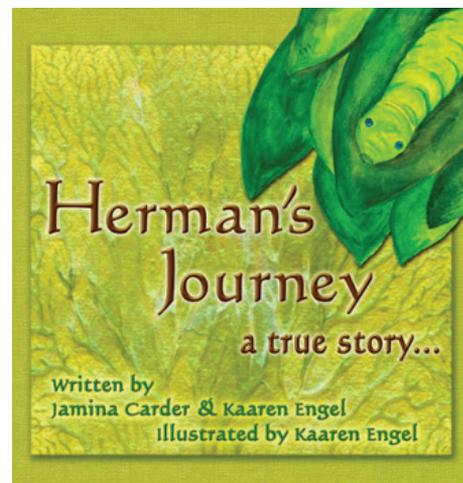
... Fueling young minds continued from page 47

dedicated to "anyone who has ever wanted to fly." The watercolor illustrations, also by Kaaren Engel, carry the simple story of two friends, Jamina and Kaaren, on a road trip to be a part of a kirtan, or Indian celebration. Along the way, they notice a third passenger, a caterpillar whom they name Herman.

The pair takes great care in preserving Herman's home plants, including him in the celebration and protecting him from a torrential rainstorm. On the way back, Herman appears to be lost somewhere, or even worse, "squashed," and as time progresses the friends must accept that their blue eyed, green wiggly friend is gone. Then a few weeks later, Kaaren noticed a pair of yellow wings in her car, and she realized Herman

was alive! He had turned into a beautiful yellow swallowtail butterfly that flitted around her yard, much to her and Jamina's delight. While the book is simple enough in its lessons of "friendship, faith, and love," it is that notion of "So we can all fly," that resonates throughout the book.

It is a sweet book that would make a lovely gift to an old friend, but at the same time, for our young readers, there is an introduction, though a scarce one, of another culture and customs mentioned as well as preserving nature and its creatures. *Herman's Journey* also shows that there are miracles every day to be found. Even in the ordinary, there is extraordinary, and that is something I believe all writers and readers care to discover again and again and again.





LEFT Photo by Gayle Edlin

Out, Out, Brief Candle

Flash Fiction from Signal Mountain's J.S. Petree

"We know you set them fires, Harry. We just don't know why."

Detective Jordan stood up in the small interrogation room and leaned over with both palms flat on the table. His coat, which looked slept in, was thrown over a chair. He yanked loose his tie and unbuttoned the collar of his limp, size XL shirt. He chomped down on the stump of his cigar and glared across the table.

"Talk to me, Harry."

Harry swallowed and stared back at him with a *why me* look. His blush nearly matched his carrot-red hair. He licked his lips, and the nervous tic of his left eye quickened. Sweat was beginning to show on his dark green, freshly starched service uniform with the Krispy Kreme logo.

"You got the wrong man, chief. I didn't do it," Harry stammered. "I've got no cause to set fires. Why would I try to burn down places where I work?"

"That's what we're tryin' to figure out. See this gentleman here?" Jordan pointed to the man seated in the back of the room. "He's the state arson inspector. He gets called in whenever any fires *just* happen.

The arson inspector peered over his glasses at Harry: "It would seem that fires in four Krispy Kreme stores here, one right after the other, suggest pyromania."

"Yeah, but what's that got to do with me?"

"You've worked at all them stores recently," Jordan said, "...and you've got a door key."

"Why don't you talk to my helper, Jim? I'm not the only one that's got a key," Harry said and crossed his arms over his chest.

Jordan kept glaring at him.

"We've got Jim down the hall. I'm givin' you a chance, Harry. 'You know anything; you'd better come clean."

The intercom crackled: "Detective Jordan, come to Room Two."

"Looks like Jim's got something to tell us," Jordan said as he buttoned his shirt collar and adjusted his tie. He picked up his coat and walked toward the door. He paused and turned back toward Harry. "If I was you, I'd get my heart right. If your buddy talks, it's some serious jail time."

"Don't listen to that little liar. He had a big beef with the company about overtime pay, and he's mad as hell at 'em. He'll say anything."

"Like what, Harry?" Jordan's hand rested on the door.

"He'll point his finger at me, but he did it. I finally realized what was goin' on after the last one, but I didn't want to snitch on him. He's got to be one of them that love to set fires."

"You're saying Jim's the pyromaniac?"

"Yeah, yeah. He must have put a candle close to the cooking oil where they fry the donuts. When it burned down, the oil drippings would catch fire."

Jordan paused, "Well, Harry, if that's your line.... I've got to hear Jim's story."

After Detective Jordan left the room, Harry lit a cigarette and tapped on the table nervously. He tilted his head and blew smoke rings toward the ceiling. A few minutes later he glanced at the wall clock. Jordan was staying a long time, and this arson inspector kept looking at him.

"You're the state's arson brain, huh? Ever seen fires set like these?"

"Not exactly, Harry, but there's enough evidence to show that they happened just like you said. Some people who set fires even brag about their work, and most of them confess... eventually."

The door opened, and Detective Jordan walked in with an open folder.

"Well, Harry, you were right. Jim fingered you."

"Hah, I knew it. I knew that little rat would try to nail me."

Harry grinned at both men and then looked down at the table. Detective Jordan walked around to his seat, took his coat off, and dropped it on the chair. He threw his folder down and leaned forward. He slammed the table with his right fist.

"Don't look at the table, Harry. Look at me."

Harry looked up. Beads of sweat formed on his brow.

"Do I look like I just got off the turnip truck? I know Jim was trying to save his hide. Funny thing is, Harry, Jim didn't know how the fires started, but you knew all the details. Now, quit wastin' our time. Give me a statement."

Chapter One

Excerpt from *Crush*, a novel by Stephen Woodward

The Orange Peel, Asheville, North Carolina

The strap of his electric guitar settled in between his bony shoulder blades and swung like a pendulum gently across the concave mold of his stomach. His hand dangled limp by his side as he took one sure step toward the microphone. The speakers squealed like lightning across a still body of water, preparing for whatever was getting ready to rip through their circuits. He looked out over the seats in the empty, dark theater.

Silence.

The kind of silence before music had ever been turned on, before the expanding Universe twisted itself into planets and stars and the Milky Way. Before vast computer networks, the Sistine Chapel, pyramids, dinosaurs – before those tiny molecules of oxygen vibrated to life for the very first time and sent tidal waves of sound through the air. His thumb twitched, and he plucked an open, low E-string, and the theater filled with a deep, billowing sound.

He opened his eyes.

Wallace Crush sat in a stiff, black plastic chair in front of a long mirror that stretched around his dressing room. His hands were in his lap, catching beads of sweat that dripped from his chin. More sweat coming down the back of his neck and down his chest and soaking his white t-shirt until it felt like a glove on his skin. He could hear a soft thump through the white walls: his band warming up in the next room. Jay crashed on the symbols, and Sonny noodled on the bass, playing what resembled a bluesy version of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

He could see it all in the mirror: a

thirty-year-old, with the same shoulder-length hair he’d had since he first started playing shows. He was still thin as a guitar neck, with razor lips, and a smirk that said I’m the greatest guitar player in this whole damn place. He’d been trying to get rid of that smirk his whole life.

He wanted to enjoy the solitude in his dressing room before he went on stage for the Asheville audience. But he was having trouble breathing in this room because of the heat. He pulled out his inhaler when he saw, in the mirror, Howard appear at the door in the back of the room, his sculpted black hair squirming like a small animal on his big head.

“It’s game time,” Howard said, leaning against the threshold. “We’re late.”

“I didn’t even know we were expecting.”

“Funny,” Howard said, unsmiling, checking his watch. “You’ve got twenty minutes. You’re already supposed to be in there warming up.”

Crush stared at Howard through the mirror and noticed just how much slimmer he looked lately, compared to the years ago when they first met. Howard was still the same old manager, sweating before concerts like a machine gun. Crush could still remember seven years ago hearing that huffing and puffing echo through the parking garage in Knoxville as he walked to his Astro van after a show. He turned around – a twenty-three-year-old blues prodigy with about as much business sense as a stray dog – and there was Howard in that black cowboy hat, sucking in air like a beached whale, holding out his business card like it was going to transform into a horse drawn carriage.

How things change.

Now Howard’s brow dripped like a faucet, and his eyes darted around at his feet like he was modeling new shoes.

“You okay, Howie?”

“I just got off the phone with Julius.”

“He giving me a raise? I’ve been a good boy. I’ve stopped drinking. Mostly.”

Howard’s eyes bulged a bit, and he wiped his brow.

“Christ, spit it out.”

“He’s stopping the tour.”

Maybe Howard should have kept that one to himself. A lot of things had changed in the five years since he won the Grammy- but this, this, was a declaration of war. A betrayal from Columbia Records of the highest order.

“I’m sorry,” Howard said. “I really tried. He says ticket sales for the rest of the leg don’t justify the cost at this point. After tonight. This is the last show.”

A guy can win a Grammy and sell a million copies of an album, but if he doesn’t do something to beat that a year or two later, people will forget about him. Or else they start getting antsy, and Crush could tell his biggest fans were getting antsy. Columbia just said to hell with it. We’ve got more young guns we can bring up through the ranks. Who needs Wallace Crush?

A lot of people did years ago. He met Howard at twenty-three, added Sonny and Jay to form The Crush Trio at twenty-four, and released *Say Anything* the same year, nailing the Grammy for Best New Artist. He had two more albums and even a few live recordings under his belt, but



none ever had the success of that first album after it took off in Nashville and Knoxville, then throughout the South, then all over the country. He and Sonny and Jay toured all over the place, playing small arenas and packing them full almost every show. His single, "Wildfire," was always on the classic rock stations and was even the theme song to a sappy NBC reality show about teenage

missionaries falling in love with each other in Africa.

After winning the Grammy, he felt like he had finally made it. He staggered into his house the morning after the ceremony and found a voice-mail from the man himself, Eric Clapton, telling him in a low, craggy whisper, "Hold onto yourself, kid. The road gets a lot more crooked from here

on out." At that point, Crush felt like his rocket had risen up with all of his heroes: Clapton, Stevie Ray, and Buddy Guy. He was "the man" in blues circles. The Stratocaster that Fender had designed for him became the top-seller: a dark, moody blue body with a single white racing stripe across the lower half. For some models he even signed the pick guard, a squiggly dash across the plastic finish: *Crush*.

It was about as close to mainstream success as you could get. But it was like setting a world record for the fastest mile run, then trying for the rest of your life to beat that time. Now he was beginning to think it was impossible. Every show, the crowd still wanted to hear those older songs more than the new stuff: "Try it Out," the groovy ballad that he could solo for hours on end if Sonny didn't cut him off; "Wildfire," the closest thing to a hit he ever wrote; and the title track, "Say Anything," the first song that ever convinced him he had talent as a songwriter, not just as a guitar player. But even those songs could show their age. Slowly, he felt he was becoming the one-hit wonder, or a one-album wonder, the time machine on stage for everyone to step into.

At thirty, everything was unraveling.

Howard shuffled his feet and popped his eyebrows up high with a smile. Crush could see it in Howard's eyes. The glimmer of potential success, the three cherries lined up on a video slot.

"Tonight's where you make the move."

Crush had written a song called "Runaway" after years of writer's block. He just sort of found it on the fretboard one early morning after a long, sleepless night. The chorus came out all major key, a thrashy beat that was pretty catchy. At practice, his old bass man Sonny growled, "It's a damn pop song."

Whatever it was, Crush knew it wasn't ready to be played live, but nothing could help that now. Depending on how the crowd took it tonight, it would either launch Crush into the mainstream or push him farther away from relevance – make him a joke, washed up on the shores of VH1 look-back specials. Either way, it was all Crush had to fight with now. Blues Gods be damned.

Howard walked back to the door, giving up. Then he stopped and turned around. "Change your shirt. You look like a wet rag."

"Have you looked in the mirror lately?" Crush said, smirking.

Howard's sloppy suit was soaked through like a sponge. They both cackled, not even laughing at the suit anymore, but at the career that had launched straight up years ago, touched space, and now spiraled back down to Earth like a spent bottle rocket, pulled by the most natural force, the Song of the Universe.

Gravity.

A Writer's Legacy Lives On: Sigourney Cheek

The Sigourney Cheek Literary Garden by Roy Burkhead

One May, not long ago, on Nashville's western edge, the great, thick branches of a common hackberry tree rose up, up, up about fifty feet toward heaven; the hardwood's upper branches seemed to zigzag with leaves that appeared to dance about with gravity. A waist-high stone wall followed the Wills Perennial Garden and pointed toward a valley.

Nestled throughout that valley were the sounds of literature, taking the physical form of hammers, saws, and construction crews that were scattered throughout this 55-acre botanical garden and art museum on the historic Cheek estate. In about a week, seven large-scale tree houses—each representing a different great work of literature—would appear, stay for the summer, and draw in 125,000 visitors.

In the Wills Perennial Garden, rolls and rolls of white chairs collaborated with a wooden podium and director's chair to give structure to the open grassy space. The chairs were filled with men and women all waiting for the day's first literary event with Robert Massie, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author. The men wore the usual garb that men wear in public gardens: dress pants or blue jeans, casual shirts, and dress shoes or tennis shoes. But the women, those women! Hats of all assorted styles and shapes. Stylish slacks. V-neck, colorful breezy shirts, ranging from casual comfort to formal attire. Stunning, all.

The breeze sand papered across the

microphone at the podium, the tree leaves rustled, and the birds shared their secret sounds.

And there was Jim Cheek's voice.

"I'm delighted to welcome you here," Jim Cheek said. "This is an extraordinary day for me and my family, but it's a wonderful day for Cheekwood."

Jim Cheek, his children, and scores of friends were at the day's first event to celebrate Jim's late wife, Sigourney Cheek, and the Sigourney Cheek Literary Garden that bears her name.

Sigourney Cheek passed away in April 2010 after a lengthy and courageous battle with leukemia. According to Amazon.com, "When first undergoing treatment for cancer, Sigourney Cheek sometimes didn't have the energy to do anything more than sleep. So she created an e-mail list of people and logged on to give updates when she could."

"She decided she wanted to have the ability to communicate, so she created a cyber community," Jim Cheek said. "By 2008, five hundred people were on the list. She shared her journey of healing with this illness, took to journaling, and created a wonderful memoir (*Patient Siggie: Hope and Healing in Cyberspace*). It was through cancer that she found her voice."

(*Between Flights: Persevering with Optimism Through Life's Traumas* was her second book, written not long before her passing, and it is Sigourney Cheek's personal memoir.)

Addressing the crowd, Jim Cheek said that the

garden's creation was a blending of three things: 1) Sigourney Cheek having served as Chair of the Board and President of Cheekwood; 2) Her garden; she took a piece of ground adjacent to her house and turned it into a world-class garden for four decades; and 3) her becoming an author with the publication of *Patient Siggie: Hope and Healing in Cyberspace*.

"It's an intimate garden, designed to have intimate author readings... designed to be able to be used by kids," Jim Cheek said.

Later in the day, an easy walk away into the Sigourney Cheek Literary Garden, infants were chillin' in strollers with their own personal canopies sheltering them from the elements. Plenty of sandals, spare clothing, and juice boxes peppered the amphitheater setting intended for hosting poetry, book readings, receptions, and social gatherings. Velocity-challenged toddlers tested out their new-found balance with mixed results. Wasps and bees teased and taunted the grandparents and parents who were busy providing refreshments to their little ones.

The authors took turns talking and reading, and they came with their own sound effects and props, including rattles, drums, and various other musical contraptions—including a large butterfly that they glided between and among the children.

"See the butterfly mommy!" a small child tried to say as one of the writers dropped a colorful

CONTINUED ON PAGE 67





LEFT Photo by Fredrick A. Dye

Writing on Alabama's Gulf Coast—The Pensters

Since the 60s, this writing group has continued thriving and supporting the work of its Alabama membership by Linda Busby Parker

Time is a writer's most valuable asset. Most writers work a full time job, care for their families, and write in the margins of their lives, and many times the *margins* are razor-thin. So, why does a writer take on the responsibilities of serving as president of a regional writing society? That's the question I posed for poet and essayist P.T. Paul, president of The Pensters. Her book, a collection of personal essays and poems, titled *To Live and Write in Dixie* was published by Negative Capability Press in 2010, and her poems have appeared in *The Oxford American*, *Birmingham Arts Journal*, and *Literary Mobile*.

Before revealing her answer, let me share a little information about the group that P.T. serves as president—The Pensters, the oldest continuously meeting writing group in the state of Alabama. The group was founded by Frances Ruffin Durham in 1965 with the express purpose of improving writing craftsmanship and promoting members' work. The group meets on the second Saturday of every month from September through May with the program including a published writer as speaker. Each meeting also includes a writing contest with awards presented in poetry and prose: \$10 for first place, \$5 for second, and an

Honorable Mention for third.

The writing contests are fun, and the membership loves the opportunity to submit its work and have it evaluated by a professional writer. The judge for the competition is that month's speaker. At each meeting, writers are given a prompt, and this prompt is the theme or catalyst for their work which they submit at the next meeting. Winners in each genre read their work to the group, and there are no sour grapes—everyone joins in the fun and wholeheartedly celebrates with the winners.

Over its nearly fifty year history, the group has thrived. Current membership is 140, and the average meeting size is fifty, but it can expand significantly if the speaker is particularly well known—example, when the 2011 National Book Award Winner, Jesmyn Ward (*Salvage the Bones*), spoke.

So, why does an active poet and essayist give her valuable time to chairing this writing group? P.T. Paul explains that the writer's life is solitary "hunched over a computer keyboard or hidden in the corner of a coffee shop with a legal pad and pen, but writers need the fellowship of other writers, and that is what the Pensters Writing Group is

primarily about."

Maintaining a writers' group, however, comes at a high cost. Paul estimates that she spends approximately five standard working days a month sustaining the group, everything from maintaining the member database to communicating with members, assisting with publicity, contributing to the newsletter, arranging and corresponding with speakers, as well as setting up meetings.

P.T. Paul concludes: "Time invested in the Pensters is time invested in my own identity as a writer and in my own growth as a member of the writing community."

With time being the writer's most valuable asset, investing that time is always a major decision. P.T. Paul has decided that investing time in a writing group pays off.

The Pensters meet on the Fairhope campus of the University of South Alabama. The group constitutes a powerful force in the writing life on Alabama's Gulf Coast. Each year the Pensters publish a booklet complete with By Laws, group information, and speaker information. Contact The Pensters at: P.O. Box 7723, Spanish Fort, Alabama 36577.

BELOW Photo courtesy of The University of the South

RIGHT Photo by Don Hamerman

Sewanee Bound

University of the South provides public access to Sewanee Writers' Conference events by Roy Burkhead

How many times have you wanted to attend a literary conference or class...if only? If only you didn't have to work, or if you could reach it in time, or if you could afford the registration fee, or if you had any vacation time left at all, or if it had more sessions in your genre...

Now, you can.

You always could, but now it's possible on a much larger scale than in previous summers.

So, that first draft of your novel is ready for the next stage? How about a two-day event or public gathering? Bookend it with a publishing panel and another one on editing. In between, slip in a handful of fiction and poetry readings. And don't forget that opportunity to meet the aspiring and the accomplished.

Why not design your own weekend writing retreat, packed with two presentations and Q&A sessions from literary agents? Be sure to sprinkle in plenty of poetry, playwriting, and fiction readings and take a long walk over the Cumberland Plateau, where you can make notes for your next project and read some from that book in your back pocket.

(Ppsst: Attendance of all public events is free, too, just in case you're not already excited!)

So, what is this magical, mystical haven for creative writers and poets, and where is it?

About an hour and half outside Music City, smack dab in between Nashville and Chattanooga, atop the Cumberland Plateau, there's a 13,000-acre peaceful domain that is the campus of The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. It has been there for a little over 150 years.

Over two decades ago, the University started hosting the Sewanee Writers' Conference thanks to the estate of the late Tennessee Williams. When the playwright passed away, his sister Rose became the sole beneficiary of the estate; since her passing, the royalties from his plays have gone to Sewanee (his wishes) to sponsor creative writers who gather in Sewanee each summer.

In some important ways, the Sewanee Writers' Conference is akin to similar programs, like Yaddo in New York and

Breadloaf in Vermont. For example, the literary workshops are limited to the conference's participants, those officially accepted into the program. Following the admission process, the conference accepts approximately 150 writers to attend.

"Almost all writing programs are built around the workshop, and you don't want to get away from that," said Wyatt Prunty, the founder and director of the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

However, Sewanee's conference is different in scale and degree of contact.

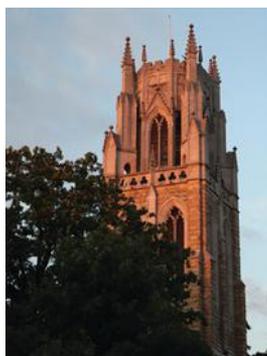
At the 2013 conference, over 50 of the events on campus were open to the public and free. From July 23 to August 3, anyone was welcome to attend any of the 34 public readings, 11 lectures, four panel discussions, and two talks/Q&A sessions devoted to fiction, poetry, playwriting, publishing, editing, and literary agencies.

Those onstage ranged from Alice McDermott, Jill McCorkle, Robert Haas, Tony Earley, Richard Bausch, Wyatt Prunty, Tim O'Brien, Daisy Foote, and Mark Strand to literary agents Georges Borchardt of the Georges Borchardt, Inc. Literary Agency and Gail Hochman of Brandt & Hochman Literary Agents, Inc.

"If we were in Nashville, we'd might see more of the general public," Prunty said. "But Sewanee is in easy driving range, and it is ideal for visits."

According to Prunty, granting access to the public is something not always provided by other programs: "Yaddo is a residency, therefore secluded, and Breadloaf is sequestered by location. Sewanee is just off I-24."

According to the program's website, Yaddo was founded in 1900, and it is located on a 400-acre estate. And Breadloaf's online information indicates that "Bread Loafers are housed on the mountain campus of Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT in the Bread Loaf Inn and its cluster of cottages and buildings." The University of the South is not secluded, and things are about to become even easier for members of the general public. A new Inn will open in Sewanee in May 2014.







... Sewanee Bound continued from page 64

Once the Inn is ready, the public will be able to use the conference's list of events to plan an overnight or weekend stay in order to attend the program's public offerings, events such as talks and Q&A sessions that will happen Saturday, July 26 and Sunday, July 27 in the Cushman Room of the Bairnwick Women's Center with literary agents Georges Borchardt, Valerie Borchardt, and Gail Hochman.

"The agents gave good practical advice on who agents are and what they are able to do for writers," said physician and former astronaut Rhea Seddon. "In addition, the speakers shed light on the publishing world and answered practical questions for the audience.

"A wonderful experience for a first-time author and a nice introduction to the renowned Sewanee Writers' Conference!"

Dr. Seddon was one of the first six women chosen for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut program in 1978. Not formally enrolled in the conference, the Murfreesboro native and resident said that she drove in to attend an event similar to the one

planned for the 2014 conference because she was wrapping up a manuscript about her time in the space program with her husband (fellow former astronaut Robert Lee "Hoot" Gibson) and she was about to search for a literary agent.

"Why do you need an agent?" asked literary agent Valerie Borchardt from the stage where she sat next to her father, Georges Borchardt. "It is very difficult to find a commercial publisher without an agent, and a writer lucky enough to be offered a publishing contract would certainly want an agent to protect his or her interests."

Georges and Anne Borchardt co-founded the New York-based literary agency Georges Borchardt, Inc. in 1967, and Valerie Borchardt joined the agency in 1999. The Borchardt Agency is legendary.

"We're still a very literary agency, and it can take a long time to find a book a home," Valerie Borchardt said. "We have to do many submissions before we find a place. For example, Karen Brown's *The Longings of Wayward Girls* took time, but when it did sell everyone was excited."

According to Georges Borchardt, foreign

rights are an enormous part of their business today: "We're selling more and more of our books in China."

Georges Borchardt was awarded the insignia of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 2010. His agency has introduced to the American public works by such writers as Samuel Beckett, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Lacan, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Elie Wiesel. Georges Borchardt, Inc. Literary Agency represents over 200 authors including eight Pulitzer Prize winners and two Nobel Prize winners.

"We're a very small agency," Georges Borchardt said. "We all do the same thing, but at different levels. There are hundreds of agents in existence, and we all do the same things; those at the Borchardt Agency operate differently because we're different people."

The 2014 Sewanee Writers' Conference will be held from July 22 through August 3, and they began accepting online applications January 15. To learn more, visit online at: <http://sewaneewriters.org/> And if you can't apply this year, don't forget to go online and get a copy of their free 2014 events, available the first week of July.

... A Writer's Legacy continued from page 60



ABOVE Photo by Terry Price

RIGHT Photo courtesy of Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art

scarf over the children to help them visualize the caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly.

"We were delighted to find ourselves as part of the opening celebration of the Sigourney Cheek Literary Garden at Cheekwood," said Kaaren Engel. "Surrounded by blooming flowers, we read our book, *Herman's Journey*, about an adventurous caterpillar, acted out the story with the help of an attentive audience, and then had everyone join in with singing, dancing, and drumming.

"The beautiful background of the new literary garden was the perfect spot for sharing the magic of *Herman's Journey*. We were so grateful to have been invited to be included in the illustrious lineup of authors present that day."

(*Herman's Journey a true story...* was written by Jamina Carder and Kaaren Engel, illustrated by Kaaren Engel.)

Later in the afternoon, the children surrendered the gardens to the adults for one leg of a city-wide series of performances and readings known as Future Break, in which select writers and poets painted the future of Nashville into existence through languages (see related Future Break coverage in this issue on page 29), and the garden was ready to carry out its on-going cultural mission of serving Nashville's literary community through such programs as Annotations: Authors @ Cheekwood and Garden Tales.

To learn about upcoming literary events at the garden, check out Cheekwood's website at <http://www.cheekwood.org>





LEFT Photo by Robert F. Burgess

Preview: Hemingway

2nd & Church's next issue reveals never-before published Hemingway photos, critiques of his work, and much more by Roy Burkhead

The Hemingway Issue

We're excited to reveal that our next issue will be our Ernest Hemingway issue. Writer Robert F. Burgess is a novelist and author of non-fiction adventure books, as well as a sports writer and professional photographer. For over three years, Robert and his wife lived in Spain, where he met and photographed Ernest Hemingway. This work became the foundation and inspiration for his 2001 memoir, *Hemingway's Paris And Pamplona, Then And Now*. The centerpiece of our special Hemingway issue will be a collection of Hemingway photos from Robert's private collection and a 3,000-word essay by Robert on his experiences with Papa, entitled, "Meeting Hemingway in Pamplona."

Additional stories include:

Two Hemingway-related short stories: "A Café Crème at the Closerie" and "Hemingway in the Pyrenees: A Bus to Burguete."

A Q&A with Robert F. Burgess

A review of the 2012 publication of *A Farewell to Arms: The Hemingway Library Edition*. Ernest Hemingway (Author), Seán Hemingway (Introduction), and Patrick Hemingway (Foreword). It includes the author's 1948 introduction, early drafts, and all of the 39 alternative endings.

A creative nonfiction piece on the Ernest Hemingway Birthplace and Museum in Chicago, Illinois.

An In Depth feature story on Shakespeare & Company bookstore in Paris, France with owner Sylvia Whitman and the late-George Whitman.

A Q&A with Hemingway Society President James Meredith.

Oak Park Native Janice Byrne belongs to the International Hemingway Society, The Ernest Hemingway Society of Oak Park, and sits on the Board of Directors of the Michigan Hemingway Society. She's sharing 1,200 words on her experiences doing Hemingway research at the JFK Library. The piece is entitled, "A Visit to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library Hemingway Collections."

Writer and Hemingway scholar Stone Shiflet writes about her 2010 trip to Cuba.

A review of the memoir *Meeting Hemingway in Pamplona*, by Robert F. Burgess.

Educator and writer Molly McCaffrey writes about her trip to Papa's place in Key West.

Even More in the Issue...

In addition to the Hemingway material, additional stories and pieces include:

A review of Mike Pentecost's book, *Bus People*.

Novelist Jason Hunt writes about his experiences publishing his first novel, *A Midsummer Night's Gunfight*.

Writer Terry Price does a dual review of Richard Goodman's *A New York Memoir* and *A High Old Time...or How to Enjoy Being a Woman Over Sixty*, by Lavinia Russ.

Writer Suzanne Craig Robertson's feature story on Yeoman's in the Fork rare book and document gallery.

Columns by Gayle Edlin (Technical Writing), Les Kerr (Song Writing), Chuck Beard (East Side Story Books), Julie Schoerke (Book Business), from the Poetry Editor, and From the Editor.

And we introduce our National Correspondents! We are thrilled to announce that starting with this issue, we will be adding correspondents from five states across the country.

A local writer in each state will write a feature story on a local book or literary event that s/he thinks our Tennessee readership would be interested in discovering. Cities and correspondents are:

La Crosse, WI: Gayle Edlin

Los Angeles, CA: Deidre Woollard

Portland, OR: Charlotte Rains Dixon

Mobile, ALA: Linda Busby Parker

Louisville, KY: Katy Yocom

Meet Our Authors

Read more about our new additions to *2nd & Church*

JUSTIN ADAMS

Poetry: "Gardeners"

<http://theartofthecommonplace.blogspot.com/>

Justin Adams teaches middle school English in Logan County, Kentucky, where he lives with his gracious wife in a quiet farmhouse, a full mile from anyone else.

CHUCK BEARD

<http://www.nashvillesheart.com>, <http://www.eastsidestorytn.com>

Bookseller Column: "Capturing Young Minds"

Chuck Beard is a thinker by trade (will think for food; food for thought if you will), people observer-questioner/mental note-taker by habit (self-taught mind you), and curator of meaningless words searching for a dome near you. He works part-time at Oasis Center, is the editor for *Number*, contributor for Nashville Galleries *Examiner*, a blogger, freelance writer, published author, and sole proprietor of East Side Story (Nashville's only all-local bookstore). Follow him on Twitter: @eastsidestorytn.

STEFANIE PICKETT-BUCKNER

Poetry: "Part Eden Again"

Stephanie Pickett-Buckner is a graduate of Samford University and Duke Divinity School. Her poems have appeared in *Byline Magazine*, *Time of Singing*, *Sacred Journey*, *The Penwood Review*, *The Poet's Art*, *Ruah*, *SP Quill Quarterly Magazine*, *Pulsar Poetry Magazine*, *New Verse News*, and *Lyric*. After living in many beautiful southern states, Buckner now resides in Nashville, Tennessee with husband and teaches English.

ELIZABETH BURKE

Feature: "Boots on the Ground"

Elizabeth Burke is a graduate teaching assistant at Western Kentucky University. She has not authored much other than some terrific academic papers for her literature classes at Western and Campbellsville University. Though she has won a few writing contests and awards here and there, her most outstanding achievement is still her novella which she wrote and self-published with a glue stick in the eighth grade. She is currently working on a collection of short stories to put toward her master's thesis in creative writing at Western. When she is not pouring over pen and pad, Elizabeth enjoys cooking, confiding in her two dogs, and taking leisurely strolls on Bowling Green's Greenway with her husband. As of May 2013, Elizabeth's last name has been changed to Garrett so she and her husband could match each other in fashion and moniker.

BRENDA BUTKA

Poetry: "Orrery at Sulphur Creek"

Brenda Butka practices medicine and poetry in Nashville, where she and her husband live on an organic farm. She has had poems published recently in *The Threepenny Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Slant*, *Alimentum*, *Tabula Rasa*, and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, among others.

CHARLOTTE RAINS DIXON

<http://www.charlotterainsdixon.com>

Column: "Living Writers Collective"

Charlotte Rains Dixon mentors entrepreneurs and creative writers from passionate idea to published and highly profitable. Charlotte is a free-lance journalist, ghostwriter, and author. She is Director Emeritus and a current mentor at the Writer's Loft, a certificate writing program, at Middle Tennessee State University.

She earned her MFA in creative writing from Spalding University and is the author of a dozen books, including *The Complete Guide to Writing Successful Fundraising Letters* and *Beautiful America's Oregon Coast*. Her fiction has appeared in *The Trunk*, *Santa Fe Writer's Project*, *Nameless Grace*, and *Somerset Studios* and her articles have been published in *Vogue Knitting*, the *Oregonian*, and *Pology*, to name a few. Her novel, *Emma Jean's Bad Behavior*, was published in February of 2013.

PEGGY SMITH DUKE

<http://www.dukeperformance.com/page6.html>

Feature Story: "Cannon County Arts"

Peggy Smith Duke is a freelance writer and poet living in Middle Tennessee. She has published broadly for over 40 years, most recently in *Subtropics*, *Christian Woman*, and *Minnesota Review*.

GAYLE EDLIN

http://www.gcedlin.com/?page_id=2

Technical Writing Column: "A Solid Block on Writing"

Gayle Edlin excelled in undergraduate mathematics and chemistry but floundered in graduate studies in physics. Through an unlikely sequence of employment events, Gayle made her way into technical writing where she flourished ... at least on the surface.

Technically satiated but creatively starving, Gayle stumbled across a writing group and seized the chance to join it. Sparks flew and before she knew it (i.e., five years later), Gayle finished her first novel, which she is now revising in preparation for seeking a publisher. Gayle also enjoys photography and

takes frequent walks to indulge both this interest and her love of nature. She is seldom at a loss for words in the written form, but frequently stumbles over them in speech.

J.T. ELLISON

<http://www.jtellison.com/>

Essay: "My Affaire de Coeur with Nashville"

J.T. Ellison is the bestselling author of ten critically acclaimed novels, including *Edge of Black* and *A Deeper Darkness*, and her work has been published in over twenty countries. Her novel *The Cold Room* won the ITW Thriller Award for Best Paperback Original and *Where All The Dead Lie* was a RITA® Nominee for Best Romantic Suspense. She lives in Nashville with her husband. Visit JTEllison.com for more insight into her wicked imagination, or follow her on Twitter @Thrillerchick.

NANSY GRILL

Book Review: *Life in Dreams, The Good Times of Sportswriter Fred Russell*

Nansy Grill is a independent writer and former newspaper journalist. She has successfully completed writing courses at Stanford University. She is a published short story writer, blogger, and teaches writing workshops at a regional writing conference. Memberships include Chattanooga Writers' Guild and Knoxville Writers' Guild. She works as a staff accountant at a chemical company, too.

JANELLE HEDERMAN

www.hereIbowroom.blogspot.com

Book Review: *Born Yesterday: The Diary of a Young Journalist*

Book Review: *Herman's Journey: a true story...*

Janelle Hederman has been published in *AOPA Flight Training* magazine, *poetryrepairs*, *Ellipsis*, *The Trunk*, and several other publications. She has an MFA from Spalding University and a BA in Communications and Journalism from Clemson University. She is a writing consultant and freelance writer in Middle Tennessee.

RIVER JORDAN

<http://www.riverjordan.us/>

Essay: "Making Music with the Muse"

River Jordan is the critically acclaimed author of four Southern literary novels filled with mystery and mystical suspense. Her most recent work is the best-selling non-fiction, *Praying for Strangers: An Adventure of the Human Spirit*. She travels the country speaking on *The Power of Story*, is a regular contributor to *Psychology's Today's Spirituality* blog, and is the host and producer of the literary radio program, *Clearstory* which airs from Nashville where she makes her home. Ms. Jordan is currently at work on a new novel, *The City of Truth* and a non-fiction book on *Labyrinth*.

LES KERR

<http://www.leskerr.com>

Songwriting Column: "A Poem is not Automatically a Song"

CD Review: "7 Days," by Jeff Jacob

Les Kerr is a songwriter, recording artist, and performer who merged Cajun music, blues, Rockabilly, bluegrass, and New Orleans music to create his own

genre, "Hillbilly Blues Caribbean Rock & Roll." A Nashville resident since 1987, the Gulf Coast native was born in Louisiana and raised in Mississippi. Kerr has recorded six CDs and performs his original music at concert venues, festivals, nightclubs, and special events throughout the U.S. He is also featured periodically in broadcasts, including *Civil War Songs and Stories*, a PBS TV documentary aired nationwide in 2012. Having earned a journalism degree at Ole Miss, Kerr is a former broadcast news director. He co-authored *The All-American Truck Stop Cookbook* (Thomas Nelson) and *Tennessee* (Graphic Arts Books), and two of his original lyrics were included in the New Orleans poetry anthology, *Maple Leaf Rag IV* (Portals Press). Allusions to works by authors as diverse as Hemingway, Dickens, and Hunter S. Thompson have found their way into some of Kerr's music.

"Most of my songs tell stories or describe people, places, and things I've done," Kerr said. "I have always been influenced by authors and others who tell great stories in person or in print."

ALVIN KNOX

<http://www.mtsu.edu/english/Profiles/knox.php>

From the Poetry Editor Column: "Joining the Lines"

Alvin Knox received his MFA in Creative Writing--Poetry from Vermont College in 1999. Currently an Instructor of English at Middle Tennessee State University, he is one the founding mentors of MTSU's Writer's Loft program. His poems have appeared in various publications, including the *Southern Indiana Review*, *Algonquin*, *Frisk Magazine*, and *Tar Wolf Review*.

KATHY B. LAUDER

<http://www.civicscope.org/nashville-tn/NashvilleHistoricNewsletter>

Poetry: "Night Song"

Kathy Lauder, who taught high school English for 30 years, has worked at the Tennessee State Library and Archives since 2003. Her work has been published in *Parnassus*, *Potato Eyes*, *The Northern New England Review*, *Lost Coast Review*, and other journals. She authored the website, "This Honorable Body" at <http://tn.gov/tsla/exhibits/blackhistory/index.htm> and is a frequent contributor to *The Tennessee Conservationist*.

TINA LOTUFO

<http://www.chapter16.org/>

Interview: "Journalism: A Pathway to Fiction Writing, An Interview with Susan Gregg Gilmore"

Tina LoTufo is a contributing writer for Chapter16.org who lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

JIM MCGARRAH

Poetry: "The Garvin Gate Music Festival in Louisville, Kentucky"

Jim McGarrah's poems and essays appeared recently or are forthcoming in *And Know This Place: Poets of Indiana*, *After Shocks*, *Poems of Recovery*, *Bayou Review*, *Breakwater*, *Connecticut Review*, and *North American Review*. He is the author of two award-winning books of poetry (*Running the Voodoo Down* and *When the Stars Go Dark*), a memoir of the Vietnam War (*A Temporary Sort of Peace*), which received the 2010 Eric Hoffer Award for Legacy Nonfiction, and was a finalist for the Montaigne Medal. His newest book of nonfiction, *The End of an Era*, was released by Ink Brush Press in February of 2011.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 73



LEFT Photo by Kristy G. Dye

JOANNE MERRIAM

<http://www.joannemerriam.com/>

Poetry: "Salvation", "An Argument Against Brussels Sprouts"

Joanne Merriam is a Nova Scotian living in Nashville. Her poetry has appeared in dozens of journals, including *The Fiddlehead*, *Southern Gothic*, and *Stirring*, as well as in her collection *The Glaze from Breaking* (Stride, 2005; Upper Rubber Boot, 2011). She owns and runs Upper Rubber Boot Books, located at: upperrubberboot.com

AMANDA MOON

<http://www.amandamichellemoon.com>

Feature Story: "Stories from the Street"

Amanda Moon is a writer, jewelry designer, and Pilates instructor. She has a Certificate in Creative Writing from Middle Tennessee State University and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Belmont University. She has contributed articles to radiantmag.com and pilatesdigest.com. Excerpts from her current works-in-progress, along with links to her jewelry and Pilates pages, may be found at her website.

LINDA BUSBY PARKER

<http://www.lindabusbyparkertypepad.com/>

Feature Story: "Writing on Alabama's Gulf Coast—The Pensters"

Linda has taught on the faculties of Eastern Michigan University, Iowa State University, and the University of South Alabama. She is the author of two college-level textbooks. Her novel, *Seven Laurels*, won the James Jones First Novel Award and the Langum Prize for Historical Fiction.

She has published short pieces in *Writer's Digest*, *Big Muddy*, and *Confluence*. Linda has served as editor and publisher of *Mobile Bay Monthly* and as publisher of Excalibur Press. She has reviewed books for *The Mobile Press Register*, the Alabama Writers Forum, and the *San Diego Union Tribune*. She has been a fellow in fiction at Bread Loaf and a Tennessee Williams Scholar in fiction at the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

J.S. PETREE

<http://j12pet12.weebly.com/>

Short Story: "Out, Out, Brief Candle"

Joseph Petree is a native of Newport, Tennessee. He has a degree in Electrical Engineering from Tennessee Technological University and is a retired engineer/contractor. He and his wife, Jean, live in Signal Mountain, Tennessee. They have two children and two grandchildren in the Boston area.

He is an elder at Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church and a member of Chattanooga Writers Guild and the Hemingway Society. His first publication, *Mountain Remembrances*, was a non-fiction article on the early days on Walden Ridge and the town of Signal Mountain, north of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The article was published in the *Chattanooga Area Historical Journal*, Vol. 13, Number 2, in the winter of 2010. His novella, *Just The Way He Is*, is a work of fiction inspired by a true story. His short story, "Once Upon a Train," was published in August 2012 in the *Signal Mountain Mirror*.

MARY POPHAM

<http://marypopham.wordpress.com>

Book Review: *The Politics of Barbecue*

Mary Popham's fiction, nonfiction, poetry, essays, and book reviews have appeared in the *Courier-Journal*, *ForeWord Reviews*, *Appalachian Heritage*, and *The Louisville Review*. She has produced short plays and published short stories in anthologies, holds an MFA from Spalding University, and is an active member in three writers groups. In the fall of 2013 she had an essay published in *This I Believe: Kentucky*, and in the fall of 2013, her novel *Back Home in Landing Run* was published by MotesBooks. She is currently writing a collection of short fiction.

MARGARET RENKL

<http://www.chapter16.org/>

Essay: "The Head of the Table: Remembering the late John Egerton, who loved the South as fiercely as he fought its injustices"

Margaret Renkl grew up in Homewood, Alabama, and was educated at Auburn University and the University of South Carolina. As a writer she has published widely in both literary and mainstream magazines, including *The Southern Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Health*, *Parents*, CNN.com, and iVillage.com, among others. She joined Humanities Tennessee in 2009 as editor of Chapter16.org, a daily source for literary news, author interviews, and book reviews with a Tennessee focus.

SUZANNE CRAIG ROBERTSON

Feature Story: "East Side Story: From Idea to Bookshelves in Nothing Flat"

Suzanne Craig Robertson has been editor of the *Tennessee Bar Journal*, a statewide legal publication, for more than two decades. In the course of this work, she has written about members of the state and federal judiciary, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, lawyer-missionaries, low-income people in need of legal services and those who helped them, pioneer women who broke through glass ceilings, and more.

She received her bachelor's of science degree in communications/public relations from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, a certificate in creative writing from The Writer's Loft at Middle Tennessee State University, and has been a workshop participant at the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference in Grapevine, Texas.

CANDACE L. WHITE

www.aintgotenoughgravy.com

Book Review: *Home to Us*

Candace White is a mountain girl born at the foot of the Blue Ridge in North Carolina. She grew up near a cotton mill town on her Granny's farm where stories and the tellin' of them were Saturday night entertainment in the front yard as the sun set and the cool air, soft with the scent of flowers, crept from the pine woods. A chorus of tree frogs from down at the creek provided a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 74

background cadence to the spoken words of relatives and friends who had just stopped by for cake, coffee and visitin'. In this place of mountain laurel and bubbling creeks that sprang from artesian wells, a mountain child with bare dirty feet learned to live in the world.

Candace tells this story in her creative non-fiction novel that is nearly complete and refers to it often on her blog and in her cookbook that shares the food and wisdom that she inherited from the women who raised her up.

CAROLYN WILSON

<http://www.lipscomb.edu> and <http://www.wnbanashville.org>

Essay: "John Egerton: Author, Booklover, Friend"

Carolyn Wilson currently serves as Director of Library Services at Lipscomb University. She has a career of extensive service to book-related causes, including the Southern Festival of Books since its inception, the Women's National Book Association (WNBA), in which she holds an Honorary Lifetime Membership, and numerous professional associations in the library field. She has directed Lipscomb University's Landiss Lecture Series for over

twenty-five years, bringing a host of distinguished writers to the Lipscomb campus.

She was twice a nominee for the ATHENA award, a recipient of the Frances Neel Cheney Award from the Tennessee Library Association, and a recipient of the Baker Faculty Summer Fellowship Award at Lipscomb.

STEPHEN WOODWARD

<http://www.stephenwoodward.net>

Novel Excerpt: Chapter 1 from *Crush*

Stephen Woodward was the overall winner of the Write Movies International Screenwriting Competition in 2013 with his screenplay *Crush*, a fictional musical biopic about a struggling blues guitar player turned pop star, adapted from his novel. Woodward holds an MFA from Spalding University and teaches composition at Emory & Henry College and Milligan College in Virginia. He has written articles for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, *Bristol Herald Courier*, and *Marquee Mountain South Magazine*. Follow him on Twitter @woodward2267.

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