Authors

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A history in pictures

When Del Presley and Smith Banks completed their book, “Images of America, Bulloch County”, Presley said he had one thought.

“I grew up in north Georgia and I was surprised Bulloch County is not a plantation county,” he said. “You don’t have your typical antebellum home. This is hard scrabble country here.”

Banks’ and Presley’s new book gives visual proof to this statement. Old photographs of cotton and tobacco farmers, of families at the annual hog killing and cane grinding, of people working the land, show a population of hard working men and women. The pictorial history begins in early tin-types and goes up through the 1970s.

“We have tried to have a sense of humor while sharing the history and facts,” said Banks. “Also, there are pictures we used where we didn’t know who the people were.

We would love to hear if anyone can help us identify anyone.”

Banks said he and Presley studied the photos carefully so they could add information in the cutlines.

“For instance, if we had a picture of a man and wife with a baby in a carriage, we knew this was a young married couple and he was probably a farmer,” Banks said. “If the carriage was being drawn by four mules, then we knew the couple had a four-horse farm.”

Presley said the book also incorporates the history of the black community in the county.

“We dedicated the book to Dr. Kemp Mabry,” Banks said. “He has done so much for this area. We couldn’t think of a better person to recognize.”

The Statesboro Regional Library will hold a book signing on Monday, Dec. 15 from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. Refreshments will be served by Friends of the Library.

This is the daughter and granddaughter of Mrs. Hagar Hall of the Hagin District.

Here is a farm family in the cotton patch. Shown are (l. to r., standing) Steve Miller and Mr. and Mrs. David “Son” Bule. Their nephews sit on a pile of cotton at the end of a row.
Ancestors
Roster of Bulloch County Confederate Soldiers

BY MARIE DeLAMAR

The people of Bulloch County, Georgia, who are interested in history and genealogy are really on a roll! They have published more in recent years than any county I know of. We first became aware of this through our friend Alveretta Kenan Register, with whom we exchanged data on the family lines we shared. These were Kenan, James, Love, Kimbrough, Hinton, Hardy and others.

Alveretta recognized the historical significance of her native county and devoted much of the last 20 or more years of her life to researching Bulloch County records and people. The last year of her life, she began to compile her extensive research into one comprehensive volume which would contain abstracts and transcriptions of the major courthouse records. After her death in 1985, James Dorsey published, and it is an indispensable guide to anyone needing access to records of this important Georgia county. It is called "Bulloch County, Georgia, Genealogical Source Material," and may be purchased from the Statesboro Regional Library for $32.

The Archibald Bulloch Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, has surveyed and published cemeteries, and this was begun under the capable leadership of Mrs. Register. There are now eight volumes of Bulloch County cemeteries and several on Jenkins County; eleven volumes of birth, death and marriage records from the newspapers 1889-1950; Bulloch census indexes for 1820-1910; other census indexes of Bryan, Emanuel, Tattnall, Burke, Johnson and Screven counties; and much, much more.

Individuals, the library, Daughters of the American Revolution and the Historical Society have all worked beautifully together to make all of this available. A list of all publications with price of each book is in the Bulloch County folder in the vertical files of the Genealogy Room at Central Library. This nine-page listing is entirely too long to be included in this column.

The latest on this long list is "A Roster of Confederate Soldiers of Bulloch County, Georgia, 1861-1865," by Smith Callaway Banks. This is available from the Statesboro Regional Library, Grady & S. Main St., Statesboro, Ga., 30458, for $15. This 140-page work is full of data found in existing records in the files in the Original Document Room at the Georgia Archives as well as those found in the courthouse of Bulloch County. It is indexed.

According to the foreword, by the first of June 1861, a company was organized consisting of 90 men. The company named themselves the Toombs Guards and became a part of the Ninth Georgia Regiment. In addition to the Toombs Guards from Bulloch, there were the following companies: Bulloch Troops, Cone's Company, Tillman's Company, Williams' Company and one company of militia.

In all, about 600 men out of a white male population of about 750 entered service. There were very few slave holders in Bulloch County, yet in proportion hardly any other county furnished more troops to the Lost Cause.

It is too bad that every county in the state does not have a complete printed list of their Confederate soldiers with additional information about them as does Bulloch. This is a must for anyone who had ancestors in that county during this period of time.

Numerous people in the southwest Georgia area have been searching to find out exactly which of the several Jesse Pittmans is their Jesse! We may have some help for them. On Saturday, Sept. 14, there will be the fifth annual Pittman (all spellings family convocation. This will be at the UAW Hall, Local 218, 100 W. Hurst Blvd., in Hurst, Texas. On display will be 12 Pittman books, many family group sheets and photos. A copier will be available and all Pittman descendants are welcome. Time is 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The National Archives S.E. Region Genealogical Festival will be at the Georgia International Convention and Trade Center, 1902 Sillivan Road, College Park, Ga., on Saturday, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration will be 8 til 9:15 a.m. National Archives gift shop and exhibit will be on display all day for your convenience. Sessions will begin at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., with lunch at 11:45 a.m.
Now Published in Book

There are several topics from which to choose in morning and afternoon. General admission is $2, and box lunch is $6. One-hour lectures are $5 each; three-hour workshops are $15 each; and Dwayne Lener will give two lectures, which are $25 each.

There are several brochures in the Genealogy Room with more information. Speakers will be Emmett Lucas, Bob Davis Jr., Mic Barnett, Gayle Peters, Ken Thomas and several others. Space is limited, so this one is on a first come, first served basis.

Get your reservations now. Sponsored by Friends of the National Archives S.E. Region, 1557 St. Joseph Ave., East Point, Ga. 303044.

Please send your queries to Ancestors, 1006 Sixth Ave., Albany, Ga. 31701.

EDITORS NOTE: Marie DeLamar is a professional genealogist, a member of the American Revolution and the Southwest Georgia Genealogical Society.
Author discusses Bulloch ties to historical novel

By HOLLI DEAL BRAGG hbragg@statesboroherald.net

E. Randall Floyd, author of the novel “Deep In The Heart” about a Confederate soldier’s journey through the war and how he ended up in Bulloch County, plans to publish another Civil-War era book soon, titled “High Moon on the March.”

However, it was “Deep In the Heart” that dominated Floyd’s speech during last Thursday’s Statesboro Kiwanis Club meeting.

Floyd told the story of how he came to write the tale of Wiley Nessmith, grandfather of Statesboro’s Paul Nessmith, farmer and former state representative.

Wiley Nessmith was a young soldier who endured the war by writing letters - many unmailed - as he made his way through several battles, including Seven Pines, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg. He kept the letters, but after Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered the Confederacy to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Nessmith headed back home on foot, and for some unknown reason stuffed his knapsack with over 200 letters into the walls of an old farm house.

About 130 years later, the house owners found the letters during remodeling, and tracked Nessmith’s descendants, finding Paul Nessmith in Bulloch County, where Wiley Nessmith’s family eventually settled.

A local couple eventually approached Floyd, then a Georgia Southern University journalism professor, with a request to “just read the letters.” When he did, he was hooked, he said.

After over 10 years of research, Floyd wrote “Deep In the Heart,” which he billed as “a genuine, personal, heart-tugging account of the war from a young dirt farmer from central Georgia.”

He chose to write the book as a novel “to reach a broader audience,” instead of a historical account “only a dozen history professors would read,” he said.

“Most of the characters in (“Deep In the Heart”) really breathed, really lived, and really died,” he said.

Wiley Nessmith lived the rest of his life in Bulloch County, dying in the 1920’s when a fire ignited his quilt as he dozed in a chair beside the fire, Floyd said.

Holli Deal Bragg can be reached at 489-9414.
“Beluthahatchee” as defined by noted author Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) is a mythical “Florida Shangri-la, where all unpleasantness is forgiven and forgotten.” When Florida author/activist Stetson Kennedy (b.1916) moved here, the site was named and set aside as a wildlife sanctuary. After WWII, he infiltrated and exposed the KKK and other domestic terrorist groups. Kennedy’s books include *Palmetto Country* (1942), *Southern Exposure* (1946), *Jim Crow Guide* (1956), and *The Klan Unmasked* (1957). The latter two were translated around the world. This site served as headquarters for his pioneering 1950 “total equality” write-in bid for the U.S. Senate. His book, *After Appomattox*, was completed here in 1995, with the help of his wife Joyce Ann. That year he won the Gustavus Meyer Award for doing the most to combat bigotry in the USA. In April 2005 Kennedy was inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame. Beluthahatchee also served as a Florida hangout for America’s legendary folk balladeer, Woody Guthrie. Here, Guthrie completed his autobiographical book, *Seeds of Man*, and over 80 songs, including “Beluthahatchee Bill.” This site was designated a Literary Landmark by Friends of Library-USA in 2003.

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2005
Local Authors will be HERE for a

Book Signing

Images of America Series
Bulloch County

by Del Presley and Smith Banks
and
Dedicated to Kemp Mabry

Monday, December 15
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Statesboro Regional Library Community Room
124 South Main Street

Books available for $16.99 plus tax (Total: $18.01)
Sponsored by the Friends of the Library
Proceeds to the Library’s Genealogy Department
Budding Brooklet author earns high honor

Krystal Grell’s short story chosen for Sci-Fi anthology

By BRITTANI HOWELL
bhowell@connectstatesboro.com

Breaking into the publishing world is hard work, but a Brooklet mother of soon-to-be two has done it in a big way.

Krystal Grell, who writes under her maiden name Krystal Claxton, was awarded recently a place in the Ron L. Hubbard’s Writers of the Future contest — an international writing contest for budding science fiction and fantasy writers.

The Writers of the Future contest invites writers to submit short stories or novellas for a chance to win cash prizes and to be included in an annual published anthology.

Not only does the contest feature a star-studded judging panel, including novelist Orson Scott Card (“Ender’s Game” and the Ender Quartet) and, during his lifetime, Frank Herbert (“Dune”), but it gives its winners notable recognition within the publishing community. Though thousands of people from 160 different countries compete in the contest every year, only 13 are awarded inclusion in the anthology — and Krystal Grell is one of them.

“(T)he fact that we have a winner from your area is an amazing testament to the quality of the writer,” said John Goodwin, the president of Galaxy Press, the publishing entity that runs the contest. “What you have in these ... winners is the best of the best,” he said.

Grell’s piece is a 9,500-word short story titled “Planar Ghosts” set in a post-apocalyptic near-future. Her young protagonist, Pup, sets off on a cross-country trek, following what he thinks is a ghost of a girl only he can see.
Private Wiley Nessmith rests with his wife Martha Ann in Statesboro's Brannen Cemetery more than 120 years after serving as a front line soldier in the Civil War.

Nessmith found comfort in writing home to his family as he made his way across the south, fighting with General Robert E. Lee and witnessing the pain and death of war. Almost 10 years ago, some of his unmarked letters were found hidden in an old farmhouse in Virginia. The letters were given to E. Randall Floyd, an author in Augusta, Va., "Nessmith said. "He said that he was renovating his home and found some of my granddaddy's letters in an old confederate knapsack. He said it was about 50 of them. At first I didn't know what to make of it all, I thought that this man was just some nut pulling a prank, but turns out he wasn't.''

Nessmith said he remembers his grandfather as a kind-hearted man who loved his family.

"When I knew Granddaddy Nesmith he was an old man and I was around seven or eight, " Nesssmith said. "He had been wounded three times in the Army, so he was unable to do very much. He always talked to us children, but never about the war, and we always knew he loved us."

Nessmith's said his fondest memory of his grandfather was the day he asked to shoot the rifle the private kept over his bed.

"That old pistol just fascinated me, Nessmith laughed. "I wanted to shoot it so bad. One day when we were sitting out on the front porch, I got up the nerve to ask Granddaddy if I could shoot it. Just as I finished asking him, an old yellow butterfly flew by, Grandaddy said if I caught him that butterfly, I could shoot his pistol. Well, I never caught it, and I never got to shoot that pistol."

Nessmith said he is reading a special edition copy of "Deep In The Heart" (the book will be in bookstores in August). He said it is exciting to read about your own family.

"I think the book doesn't really portray things exactly like times were back then, but I understand the author had to fabricate it to make it interesting to read," he said. "It is based on fact, and so far, I think it is a very good book. I am enjoying it greatly. I plan to get copies for my son and grandchildren to read, too.

"I've always been proud of Granddaddy Nessmith," he said. "He was a great man and he did his best to help win the war, it just wasn't possible to win it."

Nessmith is not the only who thinks his grandfather was a great man. After years of research, Floyd said he feels a special bond with the Civil War soldier.

"The more I read Wiley Nessmith's letters, the more compelling they became," Floyd said. "Looking at them I could see the pain and suffering this one young foot soldier experienced on the front lines, far away from his home. (No more than 19-year old, married for only 10 months with a new baby), this must have been an awful time for him."

Floyd said he likes to refer to the book about Nessmith's life as historical fiction.

"Eighty percent of the book is factual and is based on government documents, Army, Confederate and state records," he said. "However, there are a few characters thrown in to make the book more compelling."

This is the best book he has ever written, Floyd said.

"This is truly one of my crowning moments as a writer because this is such a wonderful story," he said. "I do admit I am a little sad and depressed now that it is over because it's like some of my best friends (the characters) are gone. But, I've had some interest from producers wanting to do something cinematic with 'Deep In The Heart' within the next couple of years, and I think that would be great."

— Shawanna Lyn Lewis
Deep in the Heart

By Allen G. Breed
The Associated Press

STATESBORO — At 89, Paul Nessmith is one of the few in his family old enough to remember anything personal about his Grampa Wiley.

He recalls the huge pistol Wiley kept on a nail over his bed, and how he watched in awe during the sticky North Georgia evenings as the old man picked off roosting bats from the front porch. When 7-year-old Paul begged to shoot the cannon himself, Wiley agreed, but on one condition: First catch that yellow butterfly fluttering in the yard.

"I didn't catch the butterfly — and I didn't get to shoot the pistol either," he says with a chuckle.

But Nessmith had no stories of his grandfather's Civil War exploits — how he had been wounded at The Wilderness; had survived Petersburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg; had even been at Appomattox Court House when Robert E. Lee surrendered. Wiley never talked of any of that.

The war was not something to reminisce about for the simple farmer who had never ventured outside the state before. The fighting took four of his five brothers and gave him only a Yankee Minie ball in his leg as a remembrance.

"He just wanted to forget it," says his grandson.

But now the taciturn farmer is saying in death what he never did in life. He's speaking through long-lost love letters.

•••

"My dear wife you don't know how glad I would be if I could get to see you once more on earth it would be grate pleasure to hear that peace was made so I could come home to see you and to stay with you the remainder of my days and to enjoy myself with you as I once have in days that is past on gone."

•••

The ungrammatical but unabashed language of this note, sent by Wiley to his wife, Martha Ann, on March 15, 1963, typifies the cache of correspondence that is the basis for a new book, "Deep in the Heart," by Randall Floyd.

It is the latest in a string of novels by Southern authors about common Confederate soldiers. Like the celebrated "Cold Mountain" by Charles Frazier and "The Black Flower" by Howard Bahr, it is a story that has almost nothing to do with the South's "peculiar institution," slavery, and everything to do with just surviving and getting back home.

Floyd, a journalist-turned-history professor, was not interested in the project when Ann Wildenradt first approached him with her great-grandfather's letters, which had been found in a Virginia farmhouse. Mrs. Wildenradt and her husband, Wally, persisted.

The letters, 40 in all, had much in common with other Civil War letters collected over the years, and yet Wiley's words moved him.

"It's a genuine, heartfelt, deep-in-the-earth type approach to explaining his love for his wife," he says. "Between the lines ... I saw a great, beautiful, compelling story."

Using the letters as a map, Floyd has told that story in the book, released in August.

See SOLDIER, Page 32C

Paul Nessmith, 89, grandson of former Confederate soldier Wiley Nessmith, stands in the doorway of his grandfather's old home in Statesboro. Wiley Nessmith's unmailed letters to his wife, Martha Ann, form the basis of Randall Floyd's novel "Deep in the Heart."
The history of 90 churches, including Mill Creek Church, is featured in a new book by Dorothy Brannen entitled, Early Churches in Bulloch County. Members of the Bulloch County Historical Society obtained their copies at the annual dinner meeting at the Historical Museum on U.S. 301 North on the evening of June 20.

Pictured with the author are Dr. Delma Presley, outgoing Society president, and Dr. Kemp Mabry, incoming president.
Dr. Del Presley - Smith Banks

We are posed in the council room at City Hall. This is a picture taken to use for advertising our book, "Images of America, Statesboro." The book will be out after next week. There will be an autograph party at City Hall on Tuesday afternoon at City Hall.

July 15, 2003
'Deep in the Heart'

by: Randall Floyd

Civil War love letters written by Wiley Nessmith to his wife Martha Ann have been compiled and published.

Long-lost love letters tell of one soldier's Civil War

STATESBORO, Georgia (AP) -- At 89, Paul Nessmith is one of the few in his family old enough to remember anything personal about his Grampa Wiley.

He recalls the huge pistol Wiley kept on a nail over his bed, and how he watched in awe during the sticky North Georgia evenings as the old man picked off roosting bats from the front porch. When 7-year-old Paul begged to shoot the cannon himself, Wiley agreed, but on one condition: First catch that yellow butterfly fluttering in the yard.

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But now the taciturn farmer is saying in death what he never did in life.

He's speaking through long-lost love letters.

Letters filled with love
Former GSU professor turns Civil War letters into novel

The Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Author E. Randall Floyd had written several nonfiction works on the Civil War. Fiction was the farthest thing from his mind.

Then a Virginia couple contacted Floyd about writing a book on the more than 200 letters they found written by a 19-year-old Civil War private from Georgia to his young wife.

Touched by the poignant missives, Floyd turned the letters into the novel “Deep in the Heart,” which has already sold out its initial press run of 10,000 copies.

“I wasn’t really interested in writing fiction,” Floyd said. “But one day they offered me the use of a beach house for a week if I would just take the letters with me and read them. I think they knew once I read them I’d be hooked.”

The letters were written — but never mailed — at the close of the Civil War by Wiley Nesmith from Wilkinson County who was with Gen. Robert E. Lee in Virginia.

The young private was eager to get back to his young wife and the infant daughter he had never seen. After the surrender at Appomattox and before leaving on the long trek home, Wiley hid his knapsack containing the letters behind the wallboards of a nearby farmhouse.

A hundred years later, a young couple who bought the land in northern Virginia found the knapsack as they were restoring the old farmhouse. Eventually, the letters were traced back to Nesmith’s family in Bulloch County, Ga.

Nesmith’s great-granddaughter, Ann Wildenrat, and her husband Wally contacted Floyd, who was then a professor at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro.

“It took them quite awhile to convince me,” Floyd told The Union-Recorder of Milledgeville. “... The Wildenrats knew they had a winner all along.”

Floyd, a nationally syndicated newspaper columnist and former European correspondent for United Press International, spent summer vacations for the next five years doing research for the book.

“I took my wife and son and we tramped through the battlefields, towns and campgrounds that Wiley knew,” Floyd said. “It was while I was in those places that Wiley became a real person for me. Everything became more meaningful when I would find the exact battlefield or campground where he had been.”

The book was published in August, but orders started coming in as early as May. The publishing house of Harper Collins has purchased the mass paperback rights and the History Book Club has inquired about making it a featured selection, Floyd said.

“The bookstores are running me ragged, trying to keep them supplied,” said Floyd, who now lives in Augusta where he lectures on Civil War history at Augusta State University.

NOVEL Continued on page 9A
Guidance counselor authors children's book

By Shawana Lynn Lewis

When it comes to teaching good moral character to young children, Abbey Webb wrote the book.

The Langston Chapel Elementary School Guidance Counselor recently authored a character education book which features a dinosaur known as Rockin Rex.

The book, entitled “Rockin Rex’s Character Development Program,” stresses values such as responsibility, caring, respect and friendship.

Webb said character education has become a popular component in elementary schools throughout the state, because more people are realizing that laying the foundation for a good moral character is just as important as teaching reading, writing and arithmetic.

“One of the reasons I wrote this book was because I teach character education and when I went looking for resources, I couldn’t find any for the population I work with which is kindergarten through eighth grade,” she said.

“I decided to pull together the things I used and my twin brother, who is an artist, did the graphics for me.”

Webb said she drew on all of her resources to make sure the book was something children would enjoy learning.

“I wanted a character kids could relate to, and it seems all children love dinosaurs,” she said.

“When I was bouncing around ideas, I used my son Casey as a sounding board. He is a second grader and was a big help.”

Each of the lessons in Webb’s book works along the same lines. Children are introduced to focus words — words that might be a little advanced for them — and then they, along with Rockin Rex, learn a lesson.

“I wanted to make each lesson a learning experience, but I also wanted it to be fun,” Webb said.

“I use lots of role models and sports themes.”

Although Webb’s book is currently self-published, her work has not gone unrecognized.

She placed first at the region and state level in the Georgia School Counselors Association writing contest. She will go on to compete in the National writing contest sponsored by the American School Counselors Association.

“My hope is that the students will learn these (values) and that they will make lasting impressions upon them,” she said.

“These are lessons for life and if it helps one person, it is well worth it.”

Webb said she is pleased with the outcome of her first published book and is interested in writing a sequel to it.

“It was a lot of fun,” she said.

“I did it all on my own time, using my own resources. My husband Paul and my children McKenzie and Casey were very supportive and so was my principal Mr. (Johnny) Tremble. I am very grateful to them.”
Statesboro began quietly in 1803 as the center of government for the bustling agricultural county of Bulloch. During the last two decades of the 19th century, enterprising outsiders fashioned the small town into a leading commercial and educational center in rural southeastern Georgia. Early in the 20th century Statesboro was one of the world’s top markets for long staple Sea Island cotton; later its tobacco market became the most active and efficient in the state. In 1906 the growing city gained an Agricultural and Mechanical School that grew into Georgia Southern University, a comprehensive regional university now serving over 15,000 students.

Images of America: Statesboro documents the fascinating story behind southern Georgia’s inland leader of commerce and culture. Rare photographs capture daily life from the late 1800s to the late 1900s, exploring education, recreation, transportation, commerce, religion, and local culture. This engaging volume features photographs drawn largely from local family albums and the Statesboro Regional Library.

Delma E. Presley is Museum Director Emeritus and Professor of English Emeritus at Georgia Southern University. Smith C. Banks, a retired Statesboro businessman, is an authority on local history and an eighth-generation Bulloch Countian. Proceeds from this publication support the work of the Statesboro Bicentennial Committee.

Published by Arcadia
An imprint of Tempus Publishing, Inc.

$19.99
Ja'Mario Walker offers encouragement from his own life experiences

By JULIE LAVENDER
Herald Writer

'I am meant to inspire people and teach people to do the best they can do and never give up. No matter how big the problem or situation is, keep trying until you figure out a solution.'

Ja'Mario Walker, author of 'Staying Strong'

When Ja'Mario Walker met legendary Georgia Southern running back Adrian Peterson, his first words were, "Hey, A.P., I can beat you in a race."

Those are strong words coming from a seventh grader. They're even more powerful coming from a young man born with cerebral palsy who gets from place to place with the assistance of a walker.

Then again, Ja'Mario's brazen words match his personality.

With a smile that stretches across his face, young Ja'Mario inspires all who meet him.

"Disabled kids can do more than people think they can do," said Ja'Mario. "I am meant to inspire people and teach people to do the best they can do and never give up. No matter how big the problem or situation is, keep trying until you figure out a solution. When I look at myself, I see an inspiring young man who has a disability but is not afraid to do what he does best."

And whether that's playing an NFL football player, making good grades in school, riding his new AMBUCS AmTryke or authoring a book, Ja'Mario doesn't know the meaning of giving up.

That attitude helped Ja'Mario write his first book, "Staying Strong." At first, the book was part of a school assignment. Then, with help from teachers, parents, friends and Tommy Lewis of Lewis Color Lithographers, the newly printed book with a foreword by Peterson, the Georgia Southern football Hall of Famer and former Chicago Bears running back, became available for the public.

Ja'Mario had his first book signing at the recent Statesboro AMBUCS Chapter Celebrity Bowl-a-Thon, held at The Clubhouse. Ja'Mario chose to give 50 percent of the proceeds of his book to AMBUCS.

As a former recipient of a bike designed specifically to meet his own mobility needs, Ja'Mario wanted to "help AMBUCS buy another kid a bike."

All 20 bowling lanes were sponsored by local businesses, and each team sported a child who has received, or is on the list to receive, a therapeutic bike. The event was a huge success, raising approximately $5,000 to purchase new bikes.
Kropp’s ‘Bowlegs’

Psychologist taps family vacations for children’s adventure story

By JAKE HALLMAN
jhallman@statesboroherald.net

In local author Joseph Kropp’s “Bowleg’s Bounty,” the bedtime stories “Mr. Kaye” tells to his children have solid roots — in the stories Kropp told his sons years ago after being overrun by pirates.

On a family vacation to Fort Walton Beach in the Florida panhandle, Kropp’s family found the parking lot of their condominium full of pirates.

“It was the end of the Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival parade,” Kropp said. “My kids were wide-eyed.”

Kropp began telling his boys, then 3 and 9, bedtime stories while on vacation about two boys who lived long ago and tangled with the dread pirate Billy Bowlegs, complete with treasure and cliffhangers.

“He was a real pirate, who frequented those waters,” Kropp said. “My wife kept saying, ‘You really need to write those down.’”

Since that time, Kropp, a Statesboro psychologist for 10 years, has had some writing success, with an essay being printed in Southern Living magazine and having several scholarly articles published.

“I love to write,” he said. “To me, it’s almost like sitting down with a good book.”

Kropp said he likes to surprise himself with what emerges from the page while he’s writing.

“Those are my favorite moments,” he said, “when I say, ‘Wow, I didn’t know that was going to happen, or ‘I didn’t know that character was going to do that.’”

Kropp said he learned a great deal from prolific Maine author Stephen King’s “On Writing.”

“I’m a 49-year-old novice,” Kropp said.

In the novel, a father tells bedtime stories to his sons about Bowlegs, and events they do during the day are reflected in the stories.

Melinda Butterworth, creative director of Day to Day Enterprises, publisher of “Bowleg’s Bounty,” said the book had special appeal to her publishing house, which specializes in family-friendly fare.

“It’s an adventure story, yet it’s something (kids) can relate to,” she said. “I like that.”

At first, Kropp intended to self-publish his book, he said. He contacted Butterworth about designing the book.

“We decided it was worth doing more than just designing it,” she said.

Kropp said the book was read by an agent at a large New York publishing house, but passed.

“Juvenile fiction is very competitive,” he said. “I wish I could have a portion of ‘Harry Potter.’”

“Bowleg’s Bounty” will be released at the end of January, and available through all major bookstores.

“We hope that it does real well,” Butterworth said. “Basically, we’re going to start here in Florida, because it’s related to Florida.”

The book will have a major launch during the Billy Bowlegs Festival this June in Fort Walton Beach, Fl.

Kropp has already started work on a second book, “Hickock’s Gold,” which features the same family as “Bowleg’s Bounty.”

“It’s a little bit broader, a
has roots in reality

nor spins intriguing pirate tale

Captain Bowlegs has docked, and are immensely interested in the stories seamen tell of the fearsome pirate. They have heard tell of Bowlegs, or rather how much treasure the evil pirate was able to acquire.

When the pirates leave their ship and go into town to spend their wages, Tip and Tap stealthily make their way to Captain Bowlegs' cabin to acquire some of the bounty. In the time allotted to them, they are only able to steal a few coins and a diamond necklace.

As luck would have it, the beautiful necklace is the thing Bowlegs values the most, and the situation of Tip and Tap takes a turn for danger. The pirate is determined to get his treasure back, and is furious that the two boys have managed to steal from him.

Bowlegs' crew is in hot pursuit of the two boys, and will not hesitate to make them sorry for what they have done. It is up to Tip and Tap to out-smart the pirates and keep the bounty ... and their lives.

Throughout the trip, Mr. Kaye and the boys experience Tip and Tap's exciting adventures, all the while finding strange connections between the story and their own vacation...

If you wish to read the rest of this suspenseful tale, you will be pleased to hear that the book is being released in bookstores this month. Joseph Kropp, a local psychologist, is the author. Many residents of this town and others will be pleased to read this tale of family, treasure, and adventure on the high seas.

Lindsey and Paige Oliver are seventh graders at Bulloch Academy. Their book review of a work aimed at readers ages 9-14 appears the third Sunday of every month.
Local author debuts 1st book

Signing event set for Saturday at Book and Cranny

By JAMES HEALY
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When her children were growing up in the 1970s, Verdery Kennedy told stories to keep them entertained as they drove from Statesboro to Atlanta.

“There were no CD’s or DVD’s or electronic games for the kids,” she said. “All we ever had to entertain us was our imaginations.”

So Kennedy told stories. Lots of stories. But she said she only actually wrote one down on paper – a story called “The Potato Bug Race.”

“My husband Mike prodded me for years to get it illustrated and published,” Kennedy said.

Well, she finally listened to her husband and on Saturday, Kennedy will have a book signing and reading to celebrate the publication of her book, “The Potato Bug Race.” The event is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Book and Cranny bookstore, next to Quiznos at 721 South Main St., across from Georgia Southern.

The story is targeted for children ages 4 to 8 and Kennedy will read her story at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Kennedy said “The Potato Bug Race” is loosely based on a Mark Twain story called “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” She said she told it to her daughters on long drives and retold it to their friends and when she taught preschool in Statesboro.

The illustrator for the book is Sylvia Zellner. While meeting with her weekly coffee club at the Daily Grind, Kennedy saw some cards for sale with illustrations of animals by Zellner. She contacted Zellner and the Millen artist designed and created the book’s illustrations.

Zellner will be at the book signing on Saturday, as well.

Kennedy said she is excited about the debut of her book Saturday at the Book and Cranny and she’s looking forward to meeting children and their parents.

“I know kids will love the story and parents will enjoy reading it to them,” she said.

James Healy can be reached at (912) 489-9402.
Local author honors real people in newest book

By Vicki A. Smith-Davis
Herald Staff Writer

Local author Ric Mandes celebrates real people "whom we never see in the headlines, but do indeed hold this world together just "off stage..." in his latest book "Off Stage."

"Off Stage" is the third of four books, following "The Attic of My Memory" and "Life With Granny," both published in 1996. He is completing work on a sequel to "Granny" which will come out at Thanksgiving.

Mandes will hold book signings for "Off Stage" on Saturday, June 7, and Saturday, June 14, the day before Father's Day, at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Statesboro.

Like the first two books, "Off Stage" is a combination of earlier writings and new material, said Mandes.

"People had constantly asked me when I was going to do a collection of the columns I had written for four or five daily newspapers, and I finally did it. That came out as "Attic of My Mind." The title came from an article I wrote for Southern Living, and it combined my former writings with new writing and ended with a tribute to Lewis Grizzard."

"Life With Granny" started in a similar way.

"I collected about 25 or 30 topics, like her cottage prayer meetings, and the Hogars — four little boys who just scared the daylights out of me."

A native of Philadelphia, Mandes moved to live with his grandmother in the community of Dock Junction, near Brunswick, when he was nine years old.

"She met me at the train and told me 'If you mind me and love the Lord, everything will be okay.'"

"Off Stage" gently wanders from manners or the lack thereof — to good old-fashioned pickup trucks to "the quiet little fellow who goes all over town on the back of a garbage truck," says Mandes.

"A lot is local color, but it could be about anybody hanging off that garbage truck."

"It's about the quiet Middle America that just gets the job done."

"My philosophy is 'life ain't no dress rehearsal, you've got to give it all you can."

"There's too many people crowded on stage, either at the top of the line or the bottom of the line. I'm not going to judge either end, but salute those in the middle."

There's still more to tell about "Granny" says Mandes, but when that's finished he has no plans for any further books.

"I'm really excited about the 'Granny' book at Christmas."

She's going to be funny, she's going to be serious, she's going to be real. But then, that's it," he said.

Right now Mandes is looking forward to book signings for "Off Stage", and seeing old and new friends.

"When I held a signing in Brunswick, I saw people I hadn't seen since Boy Scout camp. It was very moving."

"It's extremely important to me when someone chooses to buy my book. I want to write something personal in the fly leaf of that book, not just 'fondly, Ric.' I take it very personally, that's why book signings are so important to me."

Mandes retired from Georgia Southern in 1990 where "I had the privilege of introducing Bob Hope three times" — one of which is remembered with the cover photo of "Off Stage" — and Dale Lick allowed me to be part of the effort to get football started and bring Erk Russell to Georgia Southern. I also worked on the dream of university status, which came one year after I left."
Local author to hold book signings

By Vicki A. Smith-Davis
Herald Staff Writer

Many people talk about writing a book, but few do. Statesboro native Stuart Patray fulfilled that dream with the publication of his novel “The Heroin Highway” and will be signing copies of his book this week at Wal-Mart and On Cue Books.

Patray, a former reporter, editor and publisher of the Statesboro Georgian newspaper, began his novel about two years ago.

“There have been a lot of books relating to drugs, the Vietnam war and POWs, so I decided to tie the abandonment of POWs with the Golden Triangle drug trade,” said Patray.

In Patray’s novel, set roughly in the present, the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIAs is reviewing evidence relating to prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. A professor doing research in the former Soviet Union uncovers evidence that more than 2,000 U.S. soldiers were held following the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, contradicting what the committee has discovered on the topic up to that point.

Journalist Stephen Decatur, covering the Senate committee, goes to Vietnam, where he meets a former U.S. Army Ranger who has been involved in covert missions to try to discover and release POWs. What Jim Laramie tells him is that he has seen American POWs within the past few years, and that they were being used as labor in heroin fields.

From that point on, Decatur is in a race to uncover the truth about the POWs, while other groups try to erase all evidence of their existence. As he continues his search for the truth he finds that certain American agencies, including the CIA,

Author From Page 1

have known about the POWs all along, but have kept the information secret because the POWs have information about the CIA’s involvement in the drug trade in Southeast Asia.

“All this time, the journalist is racing against the clock, before the Senate committee concludes its report,” said Patray.

Patray’s ideas for the novel came together after two real-life events. One was the actual meeting of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, which met in 1991 to 1992. That committee concluded there was no credible evidence that POWs were still being held in Vietnam, but one member, Senator Bob Smith of New Hampshire, disagreed strongly with the report.

The second event was the accusation by a Vietnamese businessman that the late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown was being paid by Vietnam to lobby for an end to the trade embargo against Vietnam.

There was an FBI investigation and a grand jury review, but Brown was never asked to testify, and the grand jury issued a “no-bill” indicating they had found no evidence of wrongdoing.

“Everybody knows that prosecutors decide who they want to indict. That no-bill was a political decision, not a legal decision,” said Patray.

Patray pulled those elements together to create the plot of “Heroin Highway.”

The novel is being distributed regionally, and publisher Black Forest Press is working on plans for national distribution, said Patray.

Patray will sign copies of the book Friday at the Wal-Mart Supercenter, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4 to 8 p.m.

On Saturday, he will sign copies of “Heroin Highway” at On-Cue in the Statesboro Mall, from 2 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m.
Local bestselling author speaks at Averitt Center

By LYNN LILLY
Special to the Herald

Maya Van Wagenen, Statesboro's own bestselling teen author, will read from her recently released book, "Popular: Vintage Wisdom for a Modern Geek," at the Emma Kelly Theater in the Averitt Center for the Arts at 7 p.m. Monday.

The reading is free and open to the public and is sponsored by the Statesboro Friends of the Library. A book signing follows the reading. The Meet the Author event also serves to kick off the Statesboro public library's summer youth reading program, and both adults and youth are invited to attend the event.

"Maya's book is winning fans of all ages all over the country," said Lawton Sack, the president of Friends of the Library. "She's been featured on the 'Today' show and in USA Today, Teen Vogue, and Parade magazine. It's an exciting privilege to bring her to her home community to share her book."

"Popular" is Van Wagenen's preteen memoir about the social experiment she started when entering eighth grade in a small Texas town. A self-proclaimed shy nerd, she explains she was "pretty much the lowest level of people at school who aren't paid to be here."

That's when she decided to follow the advice of a 1950s popularity guide she found in her parents' attic. She complies with it all, from quirky vintage tips, like wearing pearls to school and changing her hairstyles daily, to the more personal, like sitting with different people at school every day. The results are humorous as they are heartfelt as Van Wagenen grows to become a confident, self-assured young woman.

The New York Times book reviewer said: "I was inspired by [Maya's] journey and made a point of saving a copy of 'Popular' for my sister, who starts middle school this fall. Maybe if I had read it when I was her age, it could have saved me from a world of hurt, or at least put that world in perspective."

Gretchen Rubin, the author of "The Happiness Project," noted: "I was utterly charmed by Maya Van Wagenen's honest, funny, and thought-provoking account of her efforts to become 'popular.'"

Prior to the reading, at 6 p.m., the Friends of the Library will hold a members-only reception in the Main Gallery of the Averitt Center with Van Wagenen in attendance. Memberships can be purchased at the door.

The Friends of the Library's mission is to help maintain a quality library for the people of Bulloch County, provide funds to purchase materials and provide programs beyond the library's budget, and offer cultural opportunities to the community.
Local writer comes out with second book

By Scott Garner
Herald Staff Writer

Ric Mandes, a local writer whose columns were once a regular feature in several Georgia newspapers, is releasing his second book in less than a year.

This one is entitled “Mind Me and Love the Lord — Life With Granny.”

Readers of Mandes’ column should be familiar with his writings about Granny, with whom he lived for 10 years. Coming from a broken home in Philadelphia, Mandes said that living with Granny near Brunswick was a double culture-shock.

“Not only was I living with a woman who had already raised her own children and probably thought she had moved past that phase of her life, but I was also in the rural South,” said Mandes.

Mandes thinks the stories of how he and his grandmother bridged the generation gap make the book accessible to all ages.

Mandes’ first book, “The Attic of My Memory,” was released this summer. It was primarily a collection of columns and other previously-written material, whereas “Life With Granny” is entirely new text, written in the form of 10 short vignettes.

“The stories each show how Granny, with her teachings and good moral character, helped me grow up and get through life,” said Mandes. “I don’t think that what she taught was just for me, though. I think nearly anyone can learn from her teachings. They were universal.”

The book will be available locally the day after Thanksgiving.

Mandes

Thursday, November 28, 1996
New author exposes Brooklet background in steamy ‘thriller’

By AL HACKLE
ahackle@statesboroherald.com

Successful, hybrid-published erotic romance author Alessandra Torre, or A.R. Torre, for her latest book, “The Girl in 6E,” has set bits of it in Brooklet, with a character from Statesboro. Released July 8 by the Hachette Book Group under its Redhook imprint, it is her first thriller and first book in hardcover.

Now a resident of Destin, Florida, Torre did some growing up in Bulloch County, but casual acquaintances may not realize it. Alessandra Torre, you see, is the pen name of Carnella Trimble, a 2002 graduate of Southeast Bulloch High School, where she ran track and was the 2001 homecoming queen. But from here out, she will be called Torre, the name associated with her books.

“I never wrote until about 2½ years ago when I sat down to write my first book,” Torre said in a phone interview. “That was the first time I ever did any writing other than creative writing courses in high school and college.”

After SEB, she went to Florida State University, where she received a degree in hospitality and business administration. She worked in banking for two years and then did office work for a developer before her husband sold his real estate business and their new financial security allowed her to quit her job.

Searching for a new direction, she found herself reading rabidly and was impressed by author E.L. James and “Fifty Shades of Grey,” Torre said. Her husband suggested she try writing a book.

Another title she picked up at the time was Stephen King’s “On Writing.” She was about halfway through that book when she became convinced she could write one.

“So I sat down and just...
‘Out of the Past’ brings Boro author to life

By KATHY BRADLEY
Herald Columnist

With the distinction of being the first female child born in Statesboro after the Civil War, Maude Brannen Edge began life as a curiosity of sorts.

When she returned to her hometown in the late 1930s after having spent most of her adult life outside the South, she continued to be a curiosity: She read and spoke nine languages and had completed nearly all of the requirements for a Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University. She had followed her pastor husband through six different states, borne seven children and survived the heartbreak of her husband’s suicide.

In 1957, at the age of 76, she began writing the newspaper columns that are the subject of “Out of the Past: Selected Writings by Maude Brannen Edge.” The book was edited by Delma E. Presley and Marvin Goss and is published by the Bulloch County Historical Society with underwriting support provided by the Jack N. and Addie D. Averitt Foundation.

It is difficult to categorize the book as history; much of what is offered as fact resonates in the Southern mind as anecdote. But it is equally difficult to set aside the detail-laden tales as simply the reminiscences of an aging intellect. Those who have been members of the Statesboro and Bulloch County communities for extended periods will, upon reading the book, find themselves nodding in recognition of events portrayed in a particular column and then raising their eyebrows as previously unknown specifics of the event are offered. The best example of this is in Edge’s retelling of the stay in Statesboro of members of General Sherman’s army on the infamous March to the Sea.

Edge’s writing style is clearly reflective of the journalistic fashion of her era. Her generous use of rhetorical questions and exclamation points would draw the ire of any current writing teacher, but, together with her intentional colloquial word choice, they create a connection between the writer and her audience of small-town newspaper readers.

Whether intentional or not, the use of stream of consciousness that moves the reader from one subject to another totally unrelated one leaves her feeling as though she were sharing a slice of pound cake at her grandmother’s kitchen table or sitting on the back porch shelling peas while the women of the family repeat oft-heard tales.

Editors Presley and Goss chose to include in the book 71 of the approximately 250 columns Edge wrote over a period of five-and-a-half years. Arranged chronologically, the first 29 focus on local history, the remaining on what the editors call “practical wisdom and spiritual reflections.” It is in the latter that the character of Maude Brannen Edge is most clearly revealed.

She is plainspoken in her position that those who call themselves Christians have a responsibility to care for the needs of others, actually listing the names of those in the community who had come to the assistance of a family in dire straits. She is equally adamant regarding the horrors of war, the need for education of all children and the ignorance of those who, well into the 20th century, continued to vilify Abraham Lincoln.

There is, however, evidence of a woman who, for all her education and forward thinking (she wrote her newspaper columns under her maiden name), is still very much a product of her times. One column includes a joke about domestic violence, and another, recounting a conversation with the elderly black man who helped her work in her garden, is clearly meant to be complimentary but still comes across as vaguely patronizing.

And, in the end, it is this evidence, along with that of the keen intellect and broad education and varying interests, that makes Maude Brannen Edge come alive.

Kathy Bradley writes a column twice a month for the Statesboro Herald and is an assistant district attorney with the Ogeechee Judicial Circuit.
Pictures of Stetson Kennedy
St. Augustine, FL
8/08
'Popular' it is:
Teen's book on bestseller list

From staff reports


An April 25 Statesboro Herald story about Van Wagenen and her book suggested that readers watch the list, based on a tip by the author's mother, Monica Wagenen. "Popular" showed up this week at www.nytimes.com/bestsellers-books, where it ranked 13th on in the Young Adult category. The list also appears in the May 4 edition of the New York Times Book Review.

But that particular ranking was based on sales during the week ending April 19. So the book, released April 15 by the Penguin Group, made the list its first week.

Meanwhile, Van Wagenen's April 26 book signing at Books-A-Million in Statesboro drew about 200 people. Some purchased multiple copies, and with the prior week's sales, the store had sold about 240 copies of "Popular" by the end of the day. General Manager Sarah Morgan said. She is inviting the teen author back to sign more books.

"Popular" is the story of Van Wagenen's anachronistically living out advice from the 1951 book "Betty Cornell's Teenage Popularity Guide" while an eighth-grader in a Texas middle school two years ago. Cornell, who was a teenage model in the 1940s, is now in her 80s. She wrote the foreword for "Popular," and Van Wagenen wrote a foreword to a new edition of Cornell's book.

DreamWorks has purchased an option to make a movie based on "Popular," and Van Wagenen, now a sophomore at Statesboro High School, has a contract to write another book for publication by Penguin.

A May 11 version of the New York Times list, updated Friday, did not show "Popular" in the top 15, but the earlier list is still accessible online.
Above, author Ellen Murkison, center, greets autograph seekers as she and her family launch her book, "Prayers from Fiji," with a book-signing and reception Saturday at the Averitt Center for the Arts. The book recounts the story of the miraculous recovery of her son Brian Murkison, 9, from a nearly fatal auto accident in 2011.

Right, the miracle boy himself, Brian, makes his appearance after mom Ellen shares her thoughts on her book at the reception.
Romance Means Big Business
For Statesboro Novelist

by Cierra Montaigne

Cierra Montaigne is a free lance writer who enjoys shaking things up in Statesboro. A love of investigative snooping has resulted in bylines which have appeared throughout the region.

Constance Conant loves telling stories, so she weaved one into a book that is so hot it sizzles.

Among all the other historical romantic novels in local book stores today, Southern Star is an eyecatcher.

The colorful bookcover and exchanges of stormy passion between two conflicting characters in the scorching heat of Brazil are enough to capture any historic romantic novel lover's interest.

"You've got to have conflict so it doesn't read like a bus ticket," said Conant.

Despite her book's success, the Statesboro author has kept her head. Unlike some first-time published authors, Conant acts as if she is used to seeing her name in bookstores throughout the United States and Canada. The publication of her book has changed nothing. "I'm just an old lady that writes books," Conant said modestly.

Sitting in her home, Conant does appear to be the typical housewife. She dresses comfortably and has a cat. Her home is immaculate — except for her writing room.

But as she talks about writing, her face lights up and it's evident she's more than a homemaker. She is a storyteller who loves transforming her ideas into books.

Sitting behind a typewriter in her paper-strewn "den," (converted from a bedroom) Conant looks every bit the author. As fast as the ideas come to her, her fingers pound the typewriter keys, occasionally hitting two keys at once.

But she continues, trying to keep up with the words that are spilling from her mind onto paper. And for Conant, the words do flow - sometimes for three days, sometimes for three hours.

"I don't sit down to the typewriter everyday," said Conant. "I would go out of my mind if I did. I'll type three hours, then I'll say 'that's enough of that.' Then, I might not type again for three weeks."

But when she does, she "might get a fit" and type for three days in a row. Pointing to her forehead, she said, "Every little electrolyte up here is thumping away."

Southern Star took two years to create. The idea for the book came to her after she read an article about Brazil and did enough research to fill up boxes.

Month after month, she worked on the book that is a bit "steamy" and before long the book's main characters, Star Randall and Martin Cabral "built their own lives and sort of took over the story. I just sat there and did what they told me to do," Conant said.

Finally, the book was finished.

Over one hurdle, she moved on to another. Writing the book was one thing, but selling it was quite another.

"I'm a new writer that had never been published before. It was difficult and it took years. All those rejections ... you know nobody has touched it. They have taken it out of one envelope and slipped it into another with very impersonal form letters."
‘Spirit of a People’ goes on sale Monday

Herald staff report

“Spirit of a People” will go on sale Monday at the Statesboro Herald circulation office at Number 17 Simmons Shopping Center.

The book is a 352-page collection of articles and stories about Bulloch County history, published by the Statesboro Herald in observance of the county’s 200th birthday.

The first 200 customers will receive copies signed by the editors, Larry Anderson and Dr. Kemp Mabry.

Anyone who has been a subscriber to the Herald for the past 12 months or more will receive a free copy of “Spirit of a People.” Anyone who has been a subscriber for less than 12 months can buy a copy for $4.95 plus tax. The retail price is $9.95.

“This book is the culmination of 14 months of hard work by a lot of people,” said Anderson. “We had never tackled a project of this magnitude before, and all members of the Herald staff put in extra time and effort to get it done. I think it’s a book that anyone interested in Bulloch County history will enjoy reading.”

Mabry pointed out that the book is not a definitive history of the county, but is a reflection of the spirit of the county.

“The stories in this book reveal two things — the richness of the history of Bulloch County and the spirit of the people who brought us to this time in history,” he said.

Dozens of Bulloch County citizens wrote and submitted articles and stories for the publication. Because of time and space constraints, some of the material could not be included in the book.

Mabry, who is executive vice president of the Bulloch County Historical Society, said articles that were not included in “Spirit of a People” will eventually be published by the historical society.

For customers who want to send “Spirit of a People” to out of town relatives, the Herald will ship copies of the publication anywhere in the U.S. for an added fee.

Larry Anderson, editor of the Statesboro Herald and “Spirit of a People,” presents the first copy off the press to Dr. Kemp Mabry, contributing editor. “Spirit of a People,” published in recognition of Bulloch County’s bicentennial year, will be available at the Herald circulation office Monday.
Statesboro woman is author of recently published book

By HOLLI LYNNE DEAL
Herald staff writer

Statesboro resident Constance Conant has become a first-time published author.

Her book, “Southern Star,” is a compelling romance set in the 1800’s in Brazil when it was common for women to obey men in a quiet, submissive fashion, she said.

“Southern Star” from an article she read about white slavery still existing in Brazil.

And while “Southern Star” was spun entirely from the author’s mind, there is a great deal of fact woven into the story, she said.

The scenery depicted in the book is authentic and one character, Emperor Don Pedro II, was actually a real emperor during the time in which the story is based, she said.

“Southern Star,” originally titled “Fazenda,” (Portuguese for plantation) is not the first book Conant has written, although it was the first published.

Conant’s first attempt at writing a novel produced “Le Cougar,” to be released in May 1988. “Le Cougar” deals with the same family characterized in Southern Star, the Randalls, only about 100 years earlier.

It focuses on a “scheming, conniving” Victoria Chisolm, who later becomes a Randall by marriage and is responsible for acquiring the Randall fortune, she said.

Mrs. Conant has been a resident of Statesboro for almost two years.

Formerly of Hartford County, Md., she is a retired teacher and guidance counselor. Her husband, Donald, is a retired bridge and building erector from Lynn, Massachusetts.

When asked why they chose Statesboro as a new home, Mrs. Conant said she was intrigued with the south after reading a book by Peter Dickinson called “Retirement in the Sunbelt.”

When she saw the house in which they currently reside, she said she thought that it would be ideal for her family of three.

The third resident of the Conant household is a 13-year-old black cat named Shadow. She is very much a part of the family, Conant fondly admits.

Conant belongs to many organizations such as the Newcomer’s Club, the Bulloch County Historical Society and the Hartford County Historical Society.

She enjoys history and said her “great, great Grandfather fought for the north in the Civil War.

Two autographing sessions for “Southern Star” will be July 29, 10:30-noon; and August 1, 2-3:30 p.m., at the Book-Balloon Gallery.

Conant said it takes her about two years to complete a book from the time an idea forms in her mind to publication.

She said she got the idea for
BELUTHAHATCHEE
(Miccosukee, "Dark Water")

"Beluthahatchee" as defined by noted author Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) is a mythical "Florida Shangri-la, where all unpleasantness is forgiven and forgotten." When Florida author/activist Stetson Kennedy (b.1918) moved here, the site was named and set aside as a wildlife sanctuary. After WWII, he infiltrated and exposed the KKK and other domestic terrorist groups. Kennedy's books include Palmetto Country (1942), Southern Exposure (1946), Jim Crow Guide (1956), and The Klan Unmasked (1957). The latter two were translated around the world. This site served as headquarters for his pioneering 1950 "total equality" write-in bid for the U.S. Senate. His book, After Appomattox, was completed here in 1995, with the help of his wife Joyce Ann. That year he won the Gustavus Meyer Award for doing the most to combat bigotry in the USA. In April 2005 Kennedy was inducted into the Florida Artists' Hall of Fame. Beluthahatchee also served as a Florida hangout for America's legendary folk balladeer Woody Guthrie. Here, Guthrie completed his autobiographical book Seeds of Man, and over 80 Florida songs, including "Beluthahatchee Bill." This site was designated a Literary Landmark by Friends of Library-USA in 2005.

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August 16, 2008, at 6 p.m.
St. Johns County Convention Center at World Golf Village
The Literary Legends Awards Banquet
Honoring
Jack Hunter, Stetson Kennedy and Patrick Smith
For their lifetime contributions to Florida’s heritage and literature
Special Guest Speaker
The Honorable Kurt Browning
Florida Secretary of State
Saturday August 16th, 2008 6:00 p.m.
RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY AUGUST 4th

at
The St. Johns County Conference Center at the World Golf Village
$50.00 dinner and silent auction
Table of 10 - $450.00
Reservations: Marie Cashat
904-940-0890 • info@fhbookfest.com
Please include telephone number or e mail address to confirm your reservation
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Proceeds to support
THE FLORIDA HERITAGE BOOK FESTIVAL

Jack Hunter is the award-winning author of 16 novels with his 17th, The Ace, soon to be released. Hunter's Sweeney's Run is set in St. Augustine, and his first novel, The Blue Max, was translated into many languages and made into a major motion picture.
http://www.jackhunter.com/

Stetson Kennedy, activist, folklorist, environmentalist, and author of Palmetto County, is the recipient of awards and honors including the Florida Folk Heritage Award and induction into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame.
http://www.stetsonkennedy.com/

Patrick Smith is best known for his novel, A Land Remembered. His honors include three nominations for the Pulitzer Prize, six nominations for the Nobel Prize for Literature, and induction into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame.
http://www.patricksmithonline.com
Celebrating the Books that Bring Florida to Life

Friday & Saturday, September 12-13, 2008

This premier literary event showcases Florida's unique culture and heritage by honoring authors who write about or live in the Sunshine State.

Our mission is to develop literacy by bringing inspiring authors to the public. Proceeds will benefit the St. Johns County Friends of the Library organizations and the Newspaper In Education program.
White House Sailor

William M. Rigdon with James Derieux

THE PRESIDENT'S ASSISTANT NAVAL AIDE TELLS OF ELEVEN HISTORIC YEARS WITH FDR AND HST, SERVING THEM AT THE BIG WARTIME CONFERENCES, AT VACATION RETREATS, AND ALONG CAMPAIGN TRAILS AS OFFICIAL LOG KEEPER, SECRETARY, PHOTOGRAPHER, AND GENERAL HANDYMAN.

COMMANDER WILLIAM M. RIGDON

William M. Rigdon, a native of Statesboro, Georgia, joined the Navy in 1922. Called off a destroyer tender in 1942, Rigdon (then Warrant Officer) was assigned as Assistant Naval Aide to the Chief Executive, and served as mailman, secretary, mess officer, banker, companion, and keeper of the secret files. Promoted five times before his retirement in 1953, he has since attended Cornell University, and is now a tax accountant for a law firm in Washington, D.C.
Diana New Dozier, left, and Saralyn Brett Davis, right, worked together to complete a book that had its beginnings years ago when Davis wanted to be able to give children a special gift on special occasions. Dosier served illustrator while Davis wrote the book and produced a whimsical tape to go along with it.
Saralyn Brett Davis and Diana New Dosier are learning about realizing dreams. And in the process they are teaching children — and many adults — about self-esteem.

Davis is the author and Dosier is the illustrator of “The Happiness Story,” a book accompanied by a tape.

“Saralyn has had a dream of writing children’s books for years,” said Dosier.

The two explained that when their children were young Davis wrote a couple of stories and Dosier did drawings for them. Davis then produced a tape to go with the story. The stories were called “The Beached Baby Whale” and “The Grasshopper Finds Happiness.”

“It was just to give away to friends,” said Davis. “We xeroxed it and used it for gifts for birthdays and Christmas. It was to have something unique.”

Davis said since then she gets at least two letters a month from people all over the United States who want to know if there is a book. She said they seem to think the copies they are seeing are from an original published book.

“Obviously my tape has been circulated,” she said. “This was the beginning of the seriousness of the dream.”

But, although the dream was there, Davis continued in her teaching career and later left teaching to join her husband in business. And while Dosier enjoyed her artwork and even sold some pieces, she also continued teaching.

One day Davis saw an Oprah Winfrey show that made all the difference.

“It was about people changing their lives and it was so fascinating to me,” Davis said. There was a book one woman had written on “I Could Do Something So Wonderful If I Only Knew What It Was.”

Davis was so taken with the idea that she started to call and order the book. But she stopped short.

“I realized I didn’t even need to call. I knew what it was I wanted to do,” said Davis. “So at the end of last year I made up my mind that I was going to do it. If I fell on my face, I would at least be going in the right direction.”

She then approached Dosier to do the illustrations.

“I experimented with all kinds of media,” Dosier said. “I tried pastels. I tried acrylics. Then I ended up with colored pencils. I liked the idea of simplifying to make it look like media that children used. The colored pencils do give the appearance of crayon, but they’re easier to control and the colors are so brilliant.”

But it wasn’t a smooth road. Davis knew what she wanted, but wasn’t an artist and had a difficult time communicating her wishes to Dosier. Dosier, on the other hand, feared she might jeopardize her friend’s dream.

“When we were working on ‘The Beached Baby Whale’ and ‘The Grasshopper Finds Happiness’ I didn’t feel intimidated because we weren’t doing it on a large scale but more out of fun for a few select friends and their children.”

But this was different and Dosier said she felt frightened and frustrated as they searched for a style.

“I felt somewhat uncomfortable about the idea of illustrating ‘The Happiness Story’ because I could tell she was really serious about writing children’s stories. I hesitated and I tried to get out of it many, many, many times. I didn’t want to jeopardize her dream. But she kept coming back to me.”

The two went to the library and checked out award-winning children’s books to see what kind of artwork was used. They clipped items out of magazines and newspapers and tried to keep them all in order.

“We finally found a way to tackle it and we moved right along swiftly together,” Dosier said. “We researched and gathered materials and put them in some semblance of order. We would sit at the kitchen table and Saralyn modeled for me.”

“Yep, I even leaned up against a tree and got ants all over me,” said Davis, laughing.

Once the text and artwork were ready, Davis put together a “book” using her computer, Dosier’s artwork and the story. She cut and pasted and then headed for the printers. She worked with Kip Collins at Lewis Color Lithographers.

“I had no idea how long it was going to take,” she said.

But the work was just beginning. Pictures had to be sized and readjusted. Colors were too light or too dark and required adjustment. The type needed to be bolder. The technical work was almost as heavy as the creative work, Davis said.

Meanwhile, Davis was working on producing the tape.

“I had to get the moving and I was spread pretty thin,” she said. “But it was so much fun.”

The tape, which sounds as if it features a cast of 20 or so, actually features just Davis. She is the voice of Tiffany and all the animals in the story, creating a three-dimensional piece with story, music and humor all rolled up in one. She said it only took a day to complete the tape, but that day was preceded by weeks of rehearsal.

“It’s just amazing how she is the voice of all the different animals,” said Dosier. “People can...
not believe she did all the voices, but she did."

"I found it particularly challenging to sing harmony with myself!" she said.

Everything came together last Friday. Now the Davis and Dosier are ready to market the book. They already have several local distributors (The Hen House, Frazier’s Florist, DeLoach’s Music) and have two author and artist book signings scheduled in May. The first will be at Frazier’s Florist on May 26 and the second will be at the Hen House on May 27.

Next the two plan to head for their hometown of Sandersville to pick up some distributors there.

Although the book was originally meant for children, Davis has been surprised at the interest shown by adults. One man ordered 30 for his business. He told Davis that the book and tape were motivational.

"He said the hardest time he had was getting people to develop their own talents," she said. "So, although I was writing a children’s book, I guess I’m reaching more than that. And that’s wonderful."

—Nancy Welch

—Photos by Robert Cooper

Dosier said she tried to back out of doing the artwork for the book many times, but Davis convinced her she was the right person. The two did extensive research before deciding on style and media.
Setting the scene
Author's new book takes place in, around Bulloch

By JULIE LAVENDER
Herald Writer


Everson lived in Screven County until she turned 19 and is a multiple award-winning author of more than 30 books. She is also the president of Word Weavers International, which is a writers' critique group, and the co-director of the Florida Christian Writers Conference.

What may be the most interesting facet of Everson's accomplishments to her home area, however, is the setting of her newest book. "The One True Love of Alice-Ann" is set in the fictitious Bynum, Georgia, and Everson intended for Bynum to be a stone's throw from Bulloch County.

"I was picturing the Screven County I knew as a child," said Everson of her book's setting. "I wanted my family and everyone in my home area to feel honored. I love the area I came from."

Everson's brother, Van Purvis, still lives in Sylvania, and she often makes trips from her home in central Florida to visit. She also has aunts, uncles and cousins in Bulloch and Tattnall counties.

"I lived in Bulloch County briefly and worked at what was then Bulloch Memorial Hospital in the 1970s, in pediatrics and in the nursery. I was also charge nurse, the 3 to 11 shift, at Nightingale Nursing Home. I loved working there!"

Everson's newest book takes place in 1941 and finds 16-year-old Alice-Ann dreaming of capturing the attention and heart of her brother's friend, Mack, despite their five-year age gap. But when they receive news of the attack on Pearl Harbor and Mack decides to enlist, Alice-Ann realizes she must declare her love before he leaves.

Mack promises to write but doesn't verbalize feelings for Alice-Ann before leaving. When his letters cease, Alice-Ann fears the worst — but a surprising phone call from overseas changes everything.

Readers find references to Bulloch County, Camp Stewart, Statesboro, Oak Grove Baptist Church, Savannah and several other familiar locations.

"I just fell in love with the characters," said Everson of her book. "I spent time talking to my own family and hearing their stories. I watched documentaries that said while we can, we should talk to the people of this generation.

"Today, we think of that era as romantic. Those people were hanging on to survive," she said.

Everson said Alice-Ann was inspired by the real-life Mack, the inspiration for her book's character, was shot down in the Pacific during the war, and his wife, Alma, was informed of his death. She moved back to her family's farm that had no phone. Six months later, his wife received news, by way of a neighbor who owned a telephone, that her husband was indeed alive and had been recovering first on a submarine and later in a Pearl Harbor hospital.

"I was working on my book 'Five Brides,' and this title, 'The One True Love of Alice-Ann,' popped into my head and wouldn't leave me alone," Everson said. "Mack and Alma's story came back to me, and, as any good novelist, I said, 'What if?'

"I put aside editing 'Five Brides' and wrote the whole synopsis, sent it to my critique partner to read, then sent it to Tyndale and went back to work," she said.

Everson said Alice-Ann validates the saying "Man makes his plans and God laughs," loosely paraphrased from Proverbs 16:9 — "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."

A successful writing career came later in Everson's life, but she's certainly packed a great deal into the career that began at the age of 40.

Real-life Mack

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Former Bulloch teacher releases 3rd book in 'River's Trilogy' series