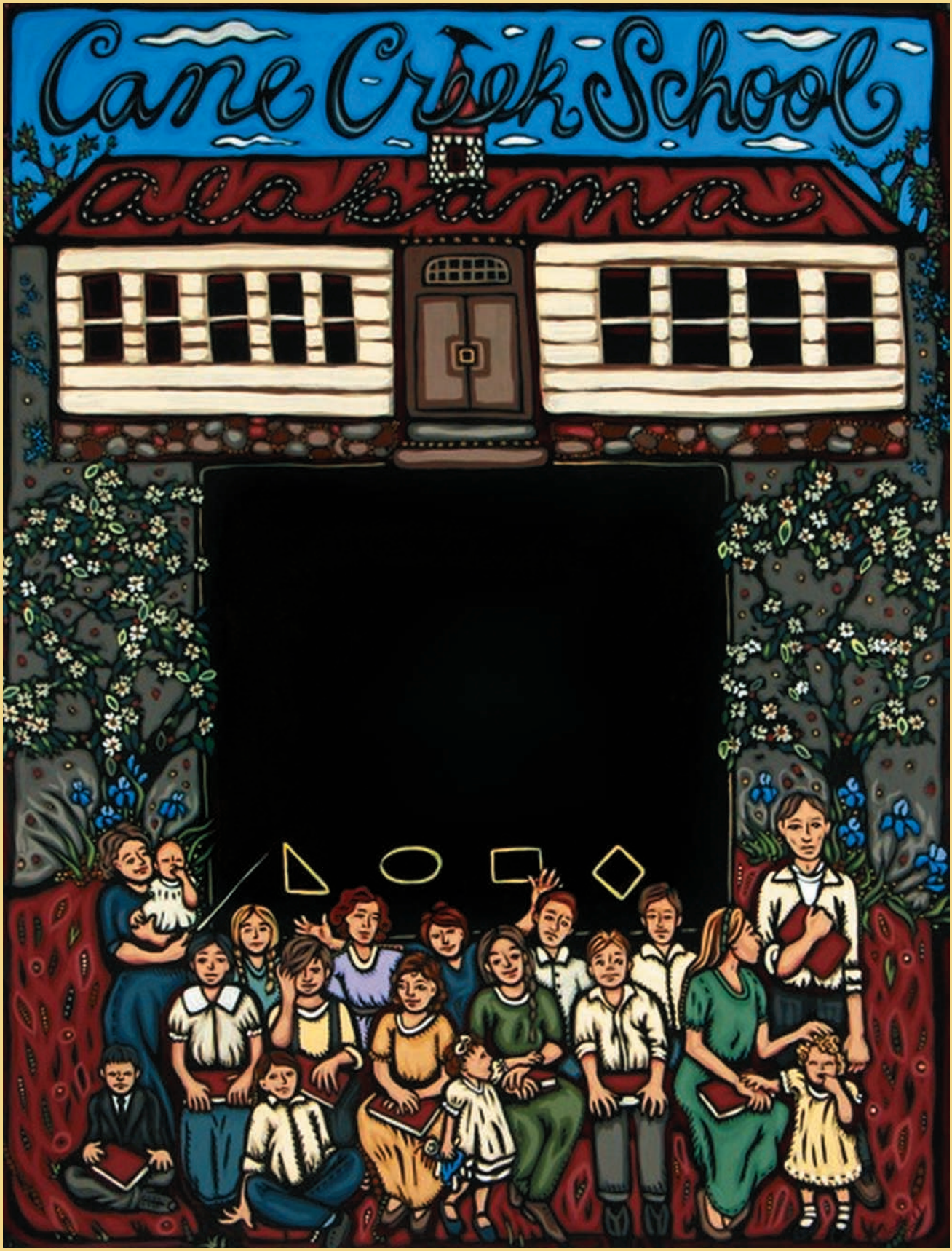
ALABAMA ARTS

Volume XXV, Number 1

State Arts Awards Issue 2013



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STATE ARTS AWARDS 2013

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On the Cover: *Cane Creek School*, 22 x 28, acrylic on paper, 2011. Collection of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Bethanne Bethard Hill was born in Tuscaloosa and raised in Birmingham. She is a 1985 graduate of the Alabama School of Fine Arts, and holds a BFA in painting and sculpture from Birmingham-Southern College. She lives in Birmingham and paints and illustrates full time. www.bethannehill.com

Library of Congress Card No. 74628447

The Alabama State
Council on the Arts

Celebration of the Arts

2013

ARTS AWARDS 2013

by Al Head

Who makes the arts happen in Alabama? What makes Alabama such a culturally rich state? How have we come to understand and celebrate the diversity of artistic expression that is so abundant in Alabama? Why are Alabamians so proud of the place they call home? The answers to all of these questions are to be found in vast contributions of talented, dedicated, generous, intelligent and highly energized individuals who, in various ways, love the arts and the State of Alabama.

Every other year the Alabama State Council on the Arts recognizes a group of individuals who have had a significant impact on the cultural landscape of the state. These special friends of the arts include the "Dean" of the Alabama Legislature, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, a professor emeritus and cultural historian, a university president and his wife, a gifted playwright, an internationally recognized poet, a beloved dance instructor and artistic director, a tradition-rich band, and an exemplary volunteer and patron of the arts.

While Alabama is commonly known for national championships in college football, the state is increasingly being recognized and respected for its significant cultural teams/organizations and players. These cultural resources are all directly connected to homegrown human resources that give Alabama a unique identity and sense of place. Authors have been writing colorfully about this sense of place for years. Visual, performing and literary artists reflect proud traditions and contemporary excellence in our state through a wide range of creative expressions. But the exhibitions, plays, concerts, performances, festivals, books and educational experiences don't just happen. These activities require outstanding artists/players, teachers/coaches and audiences/fans. Our 2013 award recipients are among these outstanding people. And yes, we have won a few national championships in the arts.

Over time, thanks to enlightened and progressive individuals, we have reached a point where the role of the arts in education, economic development, community revitalization, cultural tourism, workforce enhancement and elevating the overall quality of life is being recognized. Signs of progress are being realized by specific examples of both public policy and the investment of private and public financial resources. So, while we all struggle with economic challenges and complex problems, there are many signs of exceptional people doing amazing work throughout the state of Alabama. These leaders in their respective fields give us encouragement and reasons to be optimistic about the future. The Council's *Celebration of the Arts* is a clear reflection of some of these exceptional people doing great work in the arts.

Hopefully these awards are an appropriate way of saying thanks to some special individuals for their contributions to all who are the beneficiaries of their gifts, talents and hard work. Clearly there are many others who deserve attention and our gratitude for making the arts happen in Alabama, but, this year it is hard to argue with the spotlight being shined on the 2013 awardees. It is also our hope that these individuals will be an inspiration for more to follow their leadership and example in contributing to the cultural life of Alabama.

If the many stories of our artists are indeed, "the way great civilizations are remembered," then Alabama has a legacy and a future where both lessons can be learned and accomplishments can be celebrated. The artists who profoundly reflect the culture of their time, and our time here in Alabama, are able to tell an increasingly positive story about the values and accomplishments of a great state to future generations.

Al Head is the

Executive Director

of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

THE JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Lyndra Daniel

A Lifetime of Service

by Gail Andrews

The Jonnie Dee Little Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes deep devotion to, passion for, and knowledge of the arts. In addition, the individual must move those qualities forward so that a broad public has the opportunity to engage and experience what this year's recipient calls "such a positive expression of humanity—the arts express our best qualities." Lyndra Pate Daniel, the 2013 Jonnie Dee Little Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, embodies those qualities in her everyday life and in her many leadership roles in the arts across the state of Alabama.

Lyndra is a native of Shreveport, Louisiana. Through her parents' love of the arts and encouragement, she was an active participant in the arts from an early age, taking piano and dance lessons and singing in her high school choir. Ultimately, she received a scholarship to Centenary College to study music and became a soloist in their choir. Centenary College nominated Lyndra for the Miss Louisiana competition, which she won and then moved on to represent Louisiana in the Miss America pageant. Lyndra later graduated from Louisiana State University with degrees in Music and English.

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra with her son, Zachary, in 1990.

Something that may surprise some individuals: Lyndra enjoys hunting and is an excellent shot. "I was an only child and if my father was going to have a companion to pal around with in his hunting, he had to teach me." A consequence of this training was the sharpening of her eye and appreciation for the natural world. "My father taught me so much about how and what to look for in nature and would point out so much. It definitely developed my interest in botany and birds." It also advanced the appreciation for works of art that would come later in her career and as an art collector.

Lyndra's work with an antiques gallery is what brought her to Birmingham in the late 1970s. She came to showcase antique prints, works by John James Audubon and John Gould, among others, at Bromberg's. It was during her stay she was introduced to her soon-to-be husband, Bill Daniel.

Not long after her move to Birmingham, she became actively involved in the City's cultural life. Her knowledge and love of the visual arts made her a great asset for the Birmingham Museum of Art, where she volunteered in a number of capacities including the Members Board, eventually serving as its president, and chairing the Museum Ball. She is currently a member of the Museum's Endowment Trust and she and Bill are longtime and active members of the Friends of American Art, a collection support group. Lyndra and Bill share a great passion for the arts and have built an excellent collection of American art.

Lyndra became actively involved with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, first joining the Junior Women of the Symphony,

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

Gathering for a photo during the 2001 Celebration of the Arts Awards (left to right): Al Head, Bob Lawrence, Wiley White, Ceil Snow, Roslyn Stern, Rebecca Quinn, Bill Jarnigan, Julie Friedman, Ralph Frohsin Jr., Lyndra Daniel, Elaine Johnson, Alabama's First Lady Lori Siegelman and Governor Don Siegelman.

then chairing the Decorator Showhouse and later serving as a member of the ASO Board of Trustees and Executive Committee. In 2010, she and Bill received the ASO's Outstanding Patron of the Arts Award. She also served as a Board Member of the Alabama Ballet as well as the Honorary Chair of the Pointe Ball in recognition of her many years of support and service to the Ballet. Lyndra has continued to enjoy her love of singing and performance as an active member of the Junior League of Birmingham Choral Group, who recently performed at Carnegie Hall.

In 1984, Lyndra was appointed to the Alabama State Council on the Arts. During her 18-year tenure, she served as Chair of the Long Range Planning Committee, a member of the Grants Review Committee, and Vice Chair and Chair of the Council. Her work on the State Arts Council was exemplary and admired by fellow council members, staff, as well as members of the arts community. Fellow Council member Julie Friedman says:

> "When I was initially appointed to the Council in 1994, I was young and inexperienced. I immediately recognized in Lyndra the qualities I most wanted to emulate. Obviously, she had a passion for the arts, and but more than that she really understood the needs and potential of the organizations in her region. She was a stellar representative for Jefferson County and the surrounding counties. During grants review she could be trusted to know the answers to any questions we might have about applications originating from the greater Birmingham area. Before our meetings Lyndra would always take the time to call and get information that would help the Council come to a fair and just decision on their requests.

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

Lyndra with Ann Delchamps during the 1999 Celebration of the Arts Awards.

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra at the age of three.

One of my favorite memories of Lyndra is leaving dinner one evening and wandering into the old Hank Williams Museum. There was a Williams' lookalike on stage performing Hank's old songs. We all stood in the back having our own sing along. Lyndra was the real star!"

In 2002, along with other community leaders, Lyndra participated in the initiative which commissioned a cultural master plan for the twelve-county Greater Birmingham area. Under the aegis of Region 2020, the purpose of the plan was to develop an overall vision for arts and cultural development and to outline the implementation of that vision. The key theme of the plan was to enhance the cultural life of the area through a celebration of the region's rich heritage and diversity. The goals of the plan focused on strengthening cultural organizations and working artists, providing a mix of cultural education opportunities, promoting cultural diversity, fostering economic development of the region, expanding neighborhood and community cultural development programs, planning for new and restored cultural venues, establishing an organization to provide support for the sector, and advocating for public and private funding.

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra Pate's engagement photo.

In 2005, the Cultural Alliance was created to serve as an umbrella organization for all of the arts and to foster continuing support and expansion of advocacy for the arts. A founding member of that group, Lyndra served as Chair of the Board—the only Chair to serve a three-year term. In speaking about Lyndra and her service, Buddy Palmer, director of the Cultural Alliance, said Lyndra was asked to extend her term as Chair because the Cultural Alliance was in transition and she provided great stabilization for this young organization: "She had a history with many of the cultural organizations, as well as valuable insight and perspective. She is knowledgeable about a lot of different art forms and brings a depth of personal understanding about art. She is recognized as a

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra presenting an Audubon print to North Dakota Governor Arthur A. Link.

steady, calm leader and has enormous respect in the community. To have her at the helm at such a crucial time for the organization was extremely valuable. She is an excellent leader. Her approach is gentle and she is soft spoken. She leads with informed opinions and facilitates with such grace."

A 2012 article in the *Over the Mountain Journal* explained, "Though her work in the arts has been constant since she moved to Birmingham nearly four decades ago, she said her proudest moment has been helping establish a comprehensive arts calendar through the Cultural Alliance with the creation of Birmingham365.org." As she told the *OTM Journal*, "I think that was one of our most important achievements," Lyndra said. "It gives people the opportunity to see everything available in the arts, especially those coming from out of town."

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra posing with her parents after winning the Miss Louisiana Pageant in 1961.

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra and Bill Daniel were married on November 6, 1976.

Lyndra is extremely proud of the role the Alabama State Council on the Arts plays in our state. "Creation of the Alabama State Council on the Arts has increased interest in the arts all over the state, from large cities to small towns." She understands that, "Opportunities to intersect and engage with the arts are vital so that people from all walks of life can appreciate what the arts have to offer. With so much today being negative; the arts are a positive expression of humanity that we should champion; it is us at our best."

Lyndra is President of The Daniel Foundation, whose mission is to strengthen communities within Alabama and improve the quality of life for citizens from all regions of Alabama through the support of quality educational programs, arts and culture, civic and community programs, and medical care and research. One cannot understate the important role she plays in this crucial and generous foundation. She brings the same thoughtful questions and thorough study to this role as she does to all other endeavors she undertakes.

Lyndra Pate Daniel is a true model of service. Believing in the positive power of the arts, Lyndra has devoted her community service to perpetuating excellent artistic endeavors as a volunteer, financial supporter, and participant.

Lyndra and Bill are the proud parents of two sons, Zachary and Christopher, who are graduates of Birmingham-Southern College and are presently living and working in Birmingham.

Gail Andrews has served as R. Hugh Daniel Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art since 1996. She first joined the Museum in 1976 as Curator of Decorative Arts, subsequently serving as Assistant Director and Acting Director.

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

The Alabama State Council on the Arts board at Tuskegee institute (left to right): Joe McInnes, Chair of the Council (Montgomery), Elaine Thomas (Tuskegee), Frank Morring (Huntsville), Bobbie Gamble (Greenville), John Price (Tuskegee), Al Head, executive director of the Council (Montgomery), Ann Delchamps (Mobile), Lyndra Daniel (Birmingham) and Yvonne Kalen (Mobile).

Photo: Courtesy of the Birmingham Museum of Art

Lyndra Daniel enjoying the view atop an elephant during the Birmingham Museum of Arts' Maharajah's Ball at Ranga Mahal in 1983. Chairmen for the Ball were Mr. and Mrs. Charles William (Bill) Daniel and Mrs. Hartwell Davis Jr.

Photo: Courtesy of the Daniel family

Lyndra and Bill Daniel turkey hunting with Max Larkin.

THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD

Rick Bragg

Elevating Southern Dialogue and Characters To An Art Form

by Wendy Reed

Two decades before the national deciders tapped our 2013 Distinguished Artist for the highest journalism award in the land, Calhoun County 4-H designated 9th grader Ricky Ed Bragg its public speaking champion.

"I couldn't barbeque chicken or raise a pig or steer so I prepared a speech," said the *New York Times* best-selling author millions of fans now know as Rick Bragg. Though he doesn't remember what his speech was about, he remembers that he expected a hamburger from the two sacks of sandwiches brought in and says it still smarts that by the time he got to eat, the Whoppers were all gone. "I had to eat a Whaler."

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama Writers' Forum

Always a popular guest at the Alabama Book Festival, Bragg entertains the audience during the 2009 event at Old Alabama Town, downtown Montgomery.

Since that time the natural born storyteller has used his distinctive, melodic voice and one-and-the-same prose to amass more than 70 awards, including some of the most coveted in literature and journalism—The Pulitzer Prize for feature writing; the Harper Lee Award, Alabama's highest literary honor; the Clarence Cason Award in Nonfiction Writing; twice, the American Society of Newspaper Editors Distinguished Writing Award; and a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard. Never much for the limits of traditional categories, Bragg was also lauded by the Grammys and twice by the James Beard Foundation, once for an essay on eating oysters. For the Alabama native whose first notions of art involved The Piggly Wiggly and green stamps, and who thought art was the province of museums, a place he didn't venture until he was almost 30, this award serves as a reminder of art's transcendent power and dynamic nature. When asked about art, Bragg gets a bit pensive, as if he's deciding which are the false squash blooms. "We all live with a hand pressing on our chest," he says. "Art tugs the hand off, helps us draw a free breath."

For Bragg, struggle was as common and pervasive as the red clay in his native region, an area that missed the border by miles and got stuck, some might say, with the Appalachians' leftovers. Most of the places around town were rural but there was the Midway Drive-In, where Margaret Bragg, during the summer of 1959, went into labor with her middle son while watching *The Ten Commandments*. Not far from the town square was a college. Some years later there would be a drive-through that served chitlins. But for Bragg the area around Piedmont, Alabama, is simply home. If not the easiest, it is to him, "the most beautiful place on earth." In *All Over but the Shoutin'*, the first of three memoirs about life

Photo: Courtesy of *Southern Living* magazine

Rick with stepson Jake and his Mustang.

and family within the impoverished working class of the industrial south, he writes, "It is as if God made them pay for the loveliness of their scenery by demanding everything else."

And Bragg's family, as his memoirs show, paid plenty.

Raised on front porches by "the best storytellers on the planet" in a county that tried to ban Steinbeck, Bragg took the lessons from kin who "would eat a bologna sandwich sitting on a dead mule to win a bet" and wrote his first stories about sports for Jacksonville High's *Selgae* (eagles spelled backward). After graduation, he attended Jacksonville State for a few months and wrote for *The Chanticleer* and other local papers before landing in 1980 at the *Anniston Star*. "I didn't know who Rick was, just another overwriting sports reporter, until he transferred to city side and began writing features," said publisher Brandt Ayers. "He saw things, authentic things that no one else had seen, even in features that had been done years before." Ayers called the executive editor: "Who is this guy; how'd we get him? He's damn good."

Bragg learned as he went.

And he went about every three years.

After joining the *Birmingham News* in 1985, he moved on to the *St. Petersburg Times* in 1989 to become the Miami bureau chief and in 1992 won a prestigious Nieman Fellowship to Harvard, where he arrived with a white-trash chip on his shoulder "as big as a concrete block." The journalist himself claimed to have had "about as much business there as a hog in a cocktail dress," but after 9 months of taking classes with Ivy Leaguers he was prepared to dislike, Bragg only reports one bad day. Somewhere between the chateaubriand at The Harvard Club and a stirring speech by a Native American newspaper publisher, Bragg's "hypersensitivity" to pretension got the best of him. "I'll tell you what," he said when a friendly debate went south: "I'll drag you out of here and whip your ass."

But no physical punches were thrown and Bragg the "Harvard graduate" came away a little more open. "The truth is that most of them were good people and couldn't help it that the worst day of their lives involved wilted arugula." The admiration was actually mutual. After hearing how an editor had once sneered as he asked Bragg who taught him to write, the program curator said, "The next time someone asks you that, tell 'em it was God."

"It's just telling stories," Bragg told a class of high school juniors who had traveled by bus from Nashville to sit in on his writing class at The

Photo: Steve Latham, Jacksonville State University

Bragg photographed at his home in 2004 for Jacksonville State University's Gem of the Hills *alumni magazine.*

Photo: Courtesy of Eric T. Wright, Digital Producer, *The Gadsden Times*

Rick Bragg with his mom, Margaret Bragg.

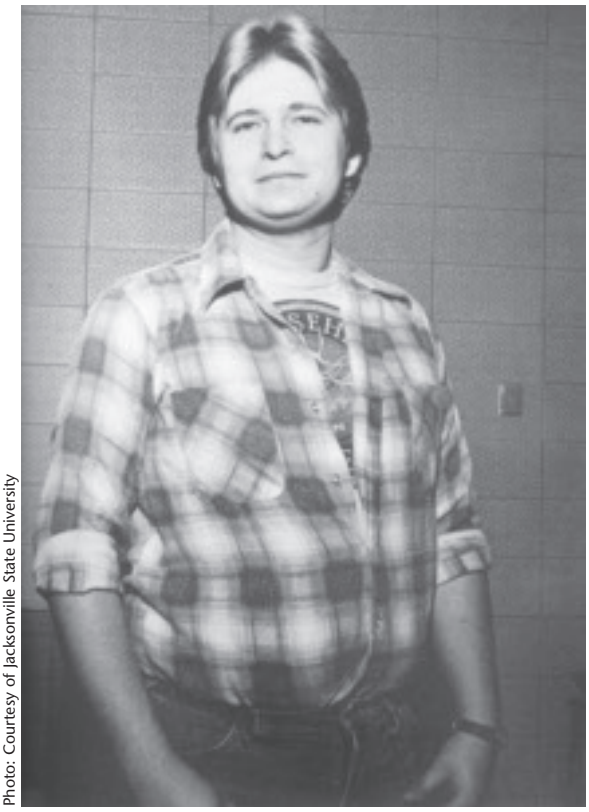

Photo: Courtesy of Jacksonville State University

Bragg's official photograph for the JSU student newspaper, The Chanticleer, *circa 1980.*

University of Alabama, where he became the Clarence Cason Professor of Writing after resigning in 2003 from the *New York Times*. The two university student ambassadors who were assigned to lead the visiting class's campus tour asked if they could stay, even though there were no more chairs. It's impossible to get into his class, they explained. We're lucky to be on the floor.

The University's journalism chair Jennifer Greer verified his popularity. "Students tell me all the time that Rick's class is the toughest they ever had, but that they

Photo: Courtesy of Eric T. Wright, Digital Producer, *The Gadsden Times*

Bragg at his mother's home in Calhoun County, October 2010.

Photo: By Tom Mason

2009 Harper Lee Award winner Rick Bragg pauses in the Monroe County Courthouse following his talk at the Alabama Writers Symposium. The iconic courtroom is the setting for Act II of To Kill A Mockingbird, *adapted from Harper Lee's best-selling novel by Christopher Sergel and staged each spring in Monroeville, Alabama.*

learned the most they ever have." Despite making Cs, students tell her it was their best university experience.

"He teaches differently than most professors," Greer says. "As he does in his books, he tells vivid stories in the classroom. In those stories are the secret to writing well—and the good students unlock those secrets."

Over time, Bragg has spelled out some of those secrets in journalism and writing seminars: "Your color, your imagery, your detail—make it sharp, make it short, make it poignant, make it strong…I love to be excessive… I love the idea of metaphor and simile; they're the chocolate cake of any newspaper diet…I always thought writing should be like screaming. Why in the hell would you ever write anything in a closet? Do it so the most people can see it."

When Bragg learned the Nashville high schoolers' bus driver would be late picking them back up because of a trip to the emergency room for a kidney stone, he entertained them with stories of his own medical experience; a pinecone and coat hanger were mentioned. "We all laughed our heads off," their teacher Dina Tate said. When the bus driver finally arrived, Bragg told him, "Son, you're gonna have to man up; you're in Alabama now." Then Bragg laughed and confessed, "Worst pain I've ever had." Most of the kids had never considered attending The University, but after their time with Bragg, Tate said they'd changed their minds.

"He is a gift that keeps on giving," Former Dean of the College of Communication and Information Sciences Culpepper Clark said. "Having a hand in his coming to The University of Alabama is one of the best things I ever did. Like a boy under the table or behind the couch, he listens in and what he hears becomes the cadence of his art. The fidelity he achieves is magical. No reader or listener can imagine the story any differently or better, and thus we marvel at his talent."

Critics have praised his abilities. One said he "writes like his grandfather drank." *Bookmark*'s Don Noble described his writing as "so lyrical, so poetic that there are whole passages…that drift over the line into what can be best understood as a kind of sturdy poetry." Iowa Professor Amy Weldon compared his storytelling tactics to guerilla

Photo: Courtesy of Eric T. Wright, Digital Producer, *The Gadsden Times*

During a lecture at The University of Alabama's Gadsden Center, October 2010.

warfare, saying by "working quickly and confrontationally, he establishes the stories of every day human experience and the Anglo-Saxon words of everyday life as a vehicle for physical and social mobility. Plain vehicles these words may be, but on them he can travel far."

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama Writers' Forum

Bragg captivates his audience with readings and storytelling during the 2010 Alabama Book Festival, Old Alabama Town, downtown Montgomery.

When voted by students to present The University's Last Lecture in 2012, Bragg acknowledged the honor and attested to the power of the vernacular in his lecture *So People Won't Forget*. Chosen from among The University's entire faculty, Bragg admitted that maybe he wasn't miscast in the role of professor after all. He proceeded to show how language operates by telling among others the story of Galileo, who did not write in Latin, the language of the day's elite scholars. Instead Galileo chose Italian, the language of the people.

Photo: Courtesy of the Bragg family

Bragg with his red Ford truck.

The people clearly love Bragg's work. Book sales have surpassed the million mark. Magazines like *Southern Living* and *Garden and Gun* credit his essays for increased sales. All manner of people across the spectrum of humankind say his work continues to resonate. At one signing a young man plopped *Ava's Man* before him: "This book and long cut snuff got me through the 12th grade."

Bragg transforms stories with an inexplicable alchemy and according to the *Anniston Star* "elevates southern dialogue and characters to an art form," all the while managing to preserve the dignity of a much-maligned region and its people. According to *Publishers Weekly*, he does so "with deep affection, fierce familial pride, and prose that's as sharp and bone-bright as a butcher's knife." *New York Times* book reviewer Anthony Walton says Bragg shows us a place "we have not seen before, not quite like this."

In *Shoutin'*, Bragg writes that it's a "place where gray mists hid the tops of low, deep-green mountains, where redbone and blue tick hounds flashed through the pines as they chased possums into the sacks of men in frayed overalls, where women in bonnets dipped Bruton snuff and hum "Faded Love and Winter Roses" as they shelled purple hulls, canned peaches and made biscuits too good for this world."

As Bragg ponders the future and the changing South, he recently concluded that it may not always be as we remember, but "the South, like chiggers and divinity candy, is everlasting."

Thanks to Bragg, it will endure.

As for his future and legacy, Bragg will continue to teach and write. If William Faulkner gave readers the "view from the veranda," he aims to give them the view from "beneath the Ford Torino jacked up in the yard."

Photo: Steve Latham, Jacksonville State University

Bragg speaks in the Stone Center Auditorium, Jacksonville State University, September 2011.

From any angle, readers are lucky witnesses. Bragg has the ability to reveal a familiar narrative from an unfamiliar place. In his own words, Bragg says, "It wasn't that I had gotten it right, but that I had gotten it true."

Wendy Reed has received two Emmys and fellowships from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and Seaside Institute. As a producer/director with The University of Alabama's Center for Public Television and Radio, Reed wrote, produced, and directed numerous documentaries and videos and the series Bookmark *and* Discovering Alabama. An Accidental Memoir: How I Killed Someone and Other Essays and Stories *is Wendy Reed's latest work.*

Photo: By Tom Mason

In May 2009, Rick Bragg received the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year at the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville. Bragg is shown here with 2009 Eugene Current-Gracia Award for Literary Scholarship recipient Dr. John Hafner of Mobile. Both honorees hold their personalized Clock Tower Bronze sculptures, commissioned by Alabama Southern Community College for the awards, and designed by renowned Alabama artist Frank Fleming. The awards are underwritten by George Landegger, Parsons and Whittemore.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Dr. Wayne Flynt

Writing the Story of Alabama

by Steve Murray

Wayne Flynt spent a career overlooking the confluence of history and the present, observing the influence of the former upon the latter, all the while lamenting the blend of disregard, distortion, and disdain that history received in return. He explored multiple forces in these currents—those related to poverty and politics perhaps drawing the most public attention, and those centered on faith perhaps closest to his heart.

But just as present in the body of Wayne's work is the persistent, soothing, enabling purpose of the arts in the lives of his subjects. Indeed, the ubiquity of music, storytelling, craft making, and other arts in the lives of poor southerners is a core structural element in Flynt's successful re-dimensioning of the lower rungs of society in the South—the positions inhabited by sharecroppers, coal miners, farm wives, and lint heads, presumed by previous generations of historians and journalists to be flat and uninteresting in their poverty.

Instead, Wayne has shown us, these people who feared God also embodied the spark of the divine. They found through creation—of quilts, grave decorations, oral tradition, basketry, carving, and others—effective expressions of the human condition. Often these expressions were rooted in a position of political and economic powerlessness, but they took forms that evinced pride and beauty in equal measure.

Of equal interest for Flynt are the works of a smaller group—the southern intelligentsia who brooded over their region's peculiar blend of generosity and oppression, free thinking and closed-mindedness. Wayne's background lacked the relative privilege experienced by most of these writers, but among them he found

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Wayne's dad, James Homer Flynt (left), allowed his son to conduct many oral history recording sessions about the Flynt family's experiences during the Great Depression. These oral history recordings became the genesis for Wayne's book, Poor but Proud.

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Wayne Flynt as a first-grader.

kindred spirits—William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Robert Penn Warren, and Harper Lee, among others.

In twelve books, numerous articles, countless speeches, the establishment of an arts and humanities center, and the creation of an online encyclopedia, Flynt has directed our gaze again and again to find richness in the artistic lives of Alabamians and southerners. He encourages us to take pride in the accomplishments of our artists, "plain and fancy." And he uses the arts as an instrument for showing us the conflict, achievement, sin, and grace that shaped our path to the present.

Wayne's personal path began in Mississippi in 1940 and subsequently crisscrossed Alabama and Georgia until he had attended twelve schools by the age of fourteen. Undergraduate years at Howard College (now Samford University) brought an awakening to the complexities of race and politics that were dividing the society around him. Coursework in the Classics, religion, history, literature, and debate provided a larger context in which to understand the human frailties that fed racism and injustice. His intellectual journey continued with graduate work in history at Florida State University, where he completed a Ph.D. in 1965 before returning to teach at his undergraduate alma mater.

Back at Samford, Wayne adopted the pedagogical approach that would endear thousands of students over the following decades: content-heavy lectures laced with master storytelling and interjected with poetry, fiction, and music that offered compelling perspectives on history. He also began a career-long commitment to outreach—taking the arts and humanities beyond the

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Wayne dressed as a miniature soldier stands next to his dapperly dressed father who was in the process of renewing his career as an insurance salesman.

walls of the academy—through regular presentations to literary clubs and community dialogs on race.

In 1977 Wayne moved to Auburn University. New administrative duties, campus politics, and a heightened profile in the public arena did little to hinder a profusion of scholarship and the direction of graduate students. His focus in research and writing turned from political biography to studies of poor whites, a core element of Alabama's population but one that had remained invisible or misrepresented in the historical literature.

Two books cast a revealing light: *Dixie's Forgotten People: The South's Poor Whites* (1979) and *Poor But Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites* (1989), the latter of which received a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize and the Lillian Smith Award for Nonfiction, the oldest book award in the South.

In *Poor But Proud*, Wayne illuminated factors that shaped the cultural expressions of poor whites. A lack of educational and material resources meant that folk culture was preserved orally and crafts produced from the materials provided in nature. The rhythms of daily life, tied to the land and agriculture, shone through in the cyclical devotion of time to revivals, quilting, and furniture-making. And race, the persistent Achilles' heel of southern life, provided both a source of cultural enrichment and a dividing line marked by suspicion and violence.

In a subsequent book, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century*, Wayne marveled at the achievements produced in the Alabama milieu. Although beset by challenges in the realms of politics,

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

(Left to right) Wayne with his Pinson cousins, Patsy and Arthur Moore who were visiting from Gadsden.

Rev. Eddie Martin speaking to students at Dothan High School during an evangelistic tent revival in 1955. Wayne is on the second row (fourth from right) and despite his youth, served as a counselor for teenage "enquirers."

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Samford University President Leslie Wright (far right) presenting the John H. Buchanan Award for excellence in classroom teaching to W.T. Edwards (left), Professor of Religion, and to Wayne Flynt (center), Professor of History.

economics, and education, Alabama's artists "seemed to tap into some subterranean aesthetic river, releasing a seemingly inexhaustible spring of the spirit. Like healing waters, their stories, music, and art repaired wounds of poverty, deprivation, racial division, negative stereotypes, and a reputation for backwardness."

This analysis quickly had influence in the burgeoning field of southern studies, and even more immediately in the minds of undergraduates and graduate students in Wayne's classes. Among these were history majors, as one would expect. But their ranks also included education majors who would go on to shape the cultural sensibilities of K-12 students across Alabama, as well as students from nearly every department in the university—those who had heard of a history course that offered insight on the places, politics, and mores that shaped Alabama.

Wayne continued to engage the public directly, and he led the way in institutionalizing this value throughout the university. He joined a cohort of faculty that developed a series of arts and humanities festivals in small towns across the state. These successful events tapped a deep interest in cultural programming and cultivated local networks that would continue to build opportunities for community engagement. The efforts led in 1985 to the creation of the Auburn University Center for the Arts and Humanities, a pioneering program that

has enriched community life in every corner of the state. Wayne subsequently worked to codify the importance of outreach by all campus units, ensuring that university resources would continue to benefit the state's citizens.

An ongoing manifestation of Wayne's vision is the *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, the online reference work that he steered from concept to fully realized compendium of all things Alabama. Although based for several years in the Department of History, EOA is interdisciplinary in content and authorship. Among its richest collections of content are those covering "Arts & Literature" and "Folklife," spanning topics from Sacred Harp and Mose Tolliver to stomp dance and Fannie Flagg. EOA's largest audience is the K-12 community, but readers from all fifty states and more than 180 countries have sought its authoritative and carefully edited articles.

Although officially retired since 2005, Wayne remains widely sought as a speaker and actively engaged in the cultural life of Alabama. And a new title—"performer"—has become fitting as Wayne collaborated with Kate Campbell, a former graduate student and accomplished folk musician, in sold-out events featuring Kate's music and readings by Wayne from southern literature and stories. A newly released CD, "Live at the Library," makes available to a much larger audience a performance by the duo at Samford University.

These latest, creative contributions demonstrate that the distance between Wayne Flynt the historian

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Dartie and Wayne Flynt leaving Parker Memorial Baptist Church on their wedding day. Wayne had just left his ministerial duties as summer youth director at the church for a new career as a graduate student. Dartie had just left her teaching job for the uncertainty of helping Wayne complete his Ph.D.

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Wayne with sons David (age five) and Sean (age one) in front of Beeson Hall on the Samford campus where the history department classrooms and offices were located.

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

and Wayne Flynt the artist was never very far. Although working in a different medium and equipped with a different methodology than a professional or folk artist, Wayne put his craft to the purpose of showing society a portrait of itself—complex, frightful, and inspiring—and asking society to aspire to its better nature.

Wayne has written that *To Kill a Mockingbird* has such resonance globally because of its achievement in "teaching values of racial justice, tolerance for people different from ourselves, and the need for moral courage

Wayne holding his dog Buster at his home on Michael Lane in Anniston in the late 50s. Immediately behind Wayne is the rock terrace he and his Dad built. Wayne had just told his father that he decided against attending college. The difficulty of the hard labor building the wall with pick and shovel in the hard North Alabama clay during a scorching summer quickly changed Wayne's mind about attending college.

in the face of community prejudice and ostracism." For contributing to these same ideals through scholarship, teaching, and outreach, Wayne Flynt is justly deserving of the Governor's Arts Award and the gratitude of all Alabamians.

Steve Murray is director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

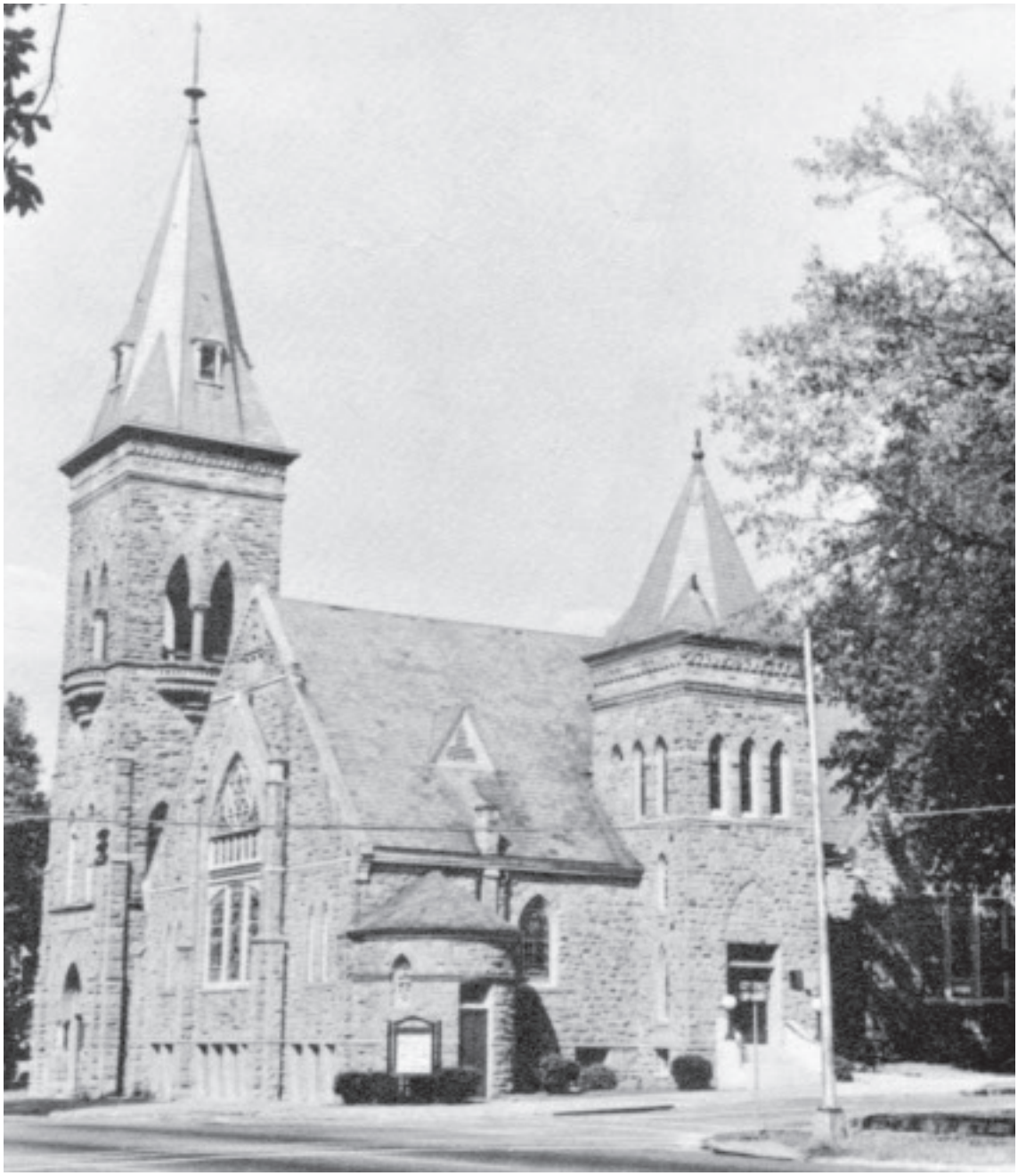

Photo: *From Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* by Wayne Flynt, Copyright 2011 The University of Alabama Press

Anniston's Parker Memorial Baptist Church in the 1940s. This church and its controversial pastors Charles R. Bell and B. Locke Davis were formative influences on Wayne's theology and ethics.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Gordon and Geri Moulton

Champions of Art Throughout the University of South Alabama, Mobile Region

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

During their forty-six years of service to USA, Gordon and Geri Moulton have consistently made art a priority and integrated a love of art into projects at the University and across the region.

Two boys hang from monkey bars. A girl makes her first ballet step. A group of children pose for a photo, while six others play tug-of-war.

Such iconic bronze sculptures dot the scenic Geri Moulton Children's Park, offering nature and art—two ingredients for helping people heal—to those who stroll along the calming grounds from Mobile's Springhill Avenue to the University of South Alabama Children's & Women's Hospital and the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute.

The park offers both a place of joy and celebration for those experiencing the miracle of birth, but also a place of comfort for families and health care professionals coping with the challenges of illness.

The 7-acre park, which includes more than 50 bronze sculptures, was made possible by a wide range of supporters, including employees, friends of the University, medical professionals and the families of children cared for at the hospital.

USA's Board of Trustees named the park in honor of Geri Moulton, wife of USA President Gordon Moulton, who took up the park as a personal cause and worked tirelessly to secure the many donations of sculpture to make it possible.

That combination of devotion, leadership and advocacy on behalf of public art projects illustrates the contributions of Gordon and Geri Moulton. The park is but one example of the Moultons' transformational impact on the arts across the Mobile region. The couple has encouraged an artistic renaissance across USA's campuses as well as throughout the community. During their 46 years of service to USA, the Moultons have consistently made art a priority and integrated a love of art into projects at the University and across the region.

The Moultons are arts patrons whose ability to gather support and lead others in public arts projects has elevated the arts across the area, resulting in projects such as: the

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

Murals that depict teaching, research, health care and outreach were installed at the base of the Moulton Tower in 2012. Jason Guynes, USA visual arts department chairman, created the panels with the help of students. The idea for the murals, which were supported by private donors, was launched at the Moultons' dining room table.

Children's Park, the University sculpture collection, the USA Glass Art Studio and program, and the recently unveiled murals at Moulton Tower & Alumni Plaza. Each project adds to the beauty of the USA campus and medical facilities, while helping improve the environment for students, faculty, staff and patients.

Over the years, their personal philanthropy has touched numerous artistic and creative endeavors, such as Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, Geri Moulton Children's Park, student scholarships, faculty support, USA's creative writing program, and many others. In addition to their generous financial support of the arts, their vision of the integral role of art as a teaching and healing tool has been an essential force to inspire others to support projects for the betterment of all.

Since being named USA's leader in 1998, President Moulton has been an advocate for integrating art, sculpture and cohesive architecture

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

Due to the increasing popularity of glass as a medium in visual arts, and as a way to attract more art students to the University, the Trustees passed a 2008 resolution to begin the glass program. The undergraduate program began in 2010 and now enrolls more than 75 students each semester. It has been a bridge to bring visiting artists to campus and further strengthen ties with the local arts community.

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

The setting at Geri Moulton Children's Park, with lush green landscaping and sculptures, offers a place of joy and solace for patients, families and health care professionals. Geri and Gordon Moulton helped welcome the public to the park, which opened in 2001.

into improvements and enhancements across campus. He has advocated a cohesive architectural look for major construction projects on campus including landmark buildings such as Shelby Hall, the Health Sciences Building and the Student Recreation Center, which are complemented by attractive entry portals that give the University a sense of place.

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

Geri Moulton worked for more than a decade to secure donors and sculptures for a children's park between Spring Hill Avenue and the University of South Alabama Children's & Women's Hospital and USA Mitchell Cancer Institute. The park was later named Geri Moulton's Children's Park in her honor.

"When I go into the community, people are excited about USA's physical improvements and the beautification of our campus," said USA President Gordon Moulton. "These enhancements have reflected the maturing of the institution as a desirable place to live, learn, work and play."

Through the leadership of the Moultons and gifts from private donors, sculptures have been added throughout campus, such as the minstrel piper in front of the USA Laidlaw Center for Performing Arts. When the new Student Recreation Center opened, a key feature was a bronze abstract sculpture that emphasizes teamwork as a way to overcome adversity. The new Shelby Hall, a landmark building that houses USA's

College of Engineering and School of Computing, offers a bronze sculpture of Einstein on a bench. Students can sit with the scientific genius as they take a break from their studies. And a newly installed large bronze sculpture of the University's mascot, SouthPaw, welcomes alumni and visitors from his new home in front of Alumni Hall, an 1828 historic home for which Mrs. Moulton guided the restoration.

Beyond the physical infrastructure of campus, President and Mrs. Moulton advocated for an expansion of arts education in the Visual Arts Department. Due to the increasing popularity of glass as a medium in visual arts, and as a way to attract more art students to the University, the Trustees passed a 2008 resolution to begin the glass program. The undergraduate program began in 2010 and now enrolls more than 75 students each semester. It's been a bridge to bring visiting artists to campus and further strengthen ties with the local arts community.

While President and Mrs. Moulton were leading the charge for a more art-filled and vibrant campus, alumni and USA supporters were working to create a campus landmark. After years of planning, fundraising and hard work by countless University of South Alabama alumni and supporters, a new bell tower emerged at USA in 2010.

A 140-foot-high brick and stone bell tower houses an electronic carillon as well as four bronze bells, ranging in size from 600 pounds to more than a ton.

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

A minstrel piper welcomes all to the USA campus and the Laidlaw Center for the Performing Arts. The sculpture, donated by a private donor, is an example of the advocacy and leadership the Moultons' have demonstrated over the years.

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

A bronze statue of Einstein beckons students to stop for a visit near the new Shelby Hall, home of the USA College of Engineering and School of Computing. Made possible by a generous donation from private donors, the sculpture illustrates the Moulton's commitment to including artistic works in all new construction projects.

The complex also features seating for small and large events, as well as an amphitheater, two arbors, an alumni plaza and Walls of Honor with the names of the 1,300 donors to the project.

"At first, the dream was that of simply a large campus landmark," said Dr. Joseph F. Busta Jr., vice president for development and alumni relations, "but it evolved to be much more than a concrete and brick structure. The dream, now realized, is a special, nay, a sacred space."

Even while the tower was still under construction, USA's Board of Trustees in 2009 unanimously passed a resolution naming the tower "in appreciation and recognition of the service of President Moulton and Geri Moulton," calling it "fitting and appropriate to associate their names and legacy with the bell tower—a pre-eminent landmark structure that will be an enduring symbol of the spirit of the University of

South Alabama."

Reflecting on the board's resolution to name the Tower in his and his wife's honor, President Moulton said, "Working with the students and faculty, and being able to see this institution evolve, have been very rewarding experiences for me. I couldn't imagine anything better than having your colleagues say thank you in a way like this.

"It's been a great journey, and Geri has been a part of it every step of the way," he added. "Her help has been immeasurable."

Mrs. Moulton said she was deeply touched by the board's gesture.

"This is a statement about my husband's life's work," she said. "The unyielding trust and support of the board propels him to do his best. The University of South Alabama has given him an opportunity to make a living, to make a life and to make a difference. What can possibly be better than that?"

Since its dedication in 2010, the Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza complex has become a place where artistic performances occur, students meet and groups gather, and it is now the centerpiece of major University moments, including homecoming and graduation.

At Homecoming 2012, as part of the University's 50th Anniversary celebration, another artistic aspect of Moulton Tower was unveiled: hand-painted, European-style murals in its vaulted masonry ceiling.

The three-year labor of love began as an idea, one first conceptualized at the Moultons' kitchen counter. Yet again, the Moultons demonstrated leadership and advocacy of art in public spaces, this time in conversation with Jason Guynes, chairman of USA's visual arts department.

An accomplished muralist with a national reputation for creating exquisite works of public art, Guynes was excited by the opportunity on campus. The work is a montage of people and moments—enthusiastic students, committed faculty, dedicated researchers, skilled physicians, triumphant athletes, gleeful marching band musicians and cheerleaders, and proud alumni. The colorful murals are an awe-inspiring representation of the heart, soul and mission of the University.

The murals are yet another example of how President and Mrs. Moulton, through their leadership and advocacy of the arts, have transformed both the University and the region. Their example and vision of integrating art into public spaces have shaped the feel of the University and will continue to influence both the campus community and the larger community for generations to come.

Article submitted by

the University of South Alabama,

Office of Public Relations.

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza has become a campus landmark and gathering place for events. Named in honor of President Gordon Moulton and Geri Moulton, the complex was dedicated in 2010.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Jean Prescott Pierce

A Girl That Loved Fairy Tales

by Charlotte Lane Dominick, Betty Pewitt and Jane Trechsel

Once upon a time in the land of Alabama, a little girl was born who loved fairy tales. This very clever little girl grew up to be Jean Prescott Pierce, the literary fairy godmother for thousands of children in her land and elsewhere.

Jean Pierce has spent over half a century volunteering her time, energy and many talents to the Birmingham Children's Theatre, the resident professional theater company at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center. BCT has grown to be recognized nationally as one of the most highly regarded theaters for young people in the country. The company occupies three theater spaces in the BJCC and its touring arm, Theatre in Motion, covers the entire state, as well as many other venues in the Southeast. Mrs. Pierce has contributed mightily to its growth with her dedication and talent.

Jean says, "I was both thrilled and amazed even to be considered for this award. Having believed strongly that awards should reflect some measure of toil and sacrifice; I guess I feel undeserving because it's been too much fun." She goes on to say "Birmingham Children's Theatre has made possible the beautiful and professional productions my scripts

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Jean Pierce on the set of Rapunzel & The Rabbit *(BCT 2013).*

have received, not to mention the vast audiences the theatre has provided me. A playwright could not be more fortunate."

Although Jean is extremely modest about her accomplishments, others have recognized her brilliance. She received the Silver Bowl Award for Drama from the Birmingham Festival of Arts in 1982 and the Distinguished Alumni Award from Birmingham-Southern College in 2007.

"We are so pleased that Jean is being recognized with this important honor. She has written countless plays and has been instrumental in the success of the BCT Wee Folks series. Thousands of children owe her a debt of gratitude," says Tim Harper, outgoing President of the Board of Trustees.

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Cinderella *(BCT 2007) L-R: Mary Claire Alford, David Page & Will Harrell with puppet step-sisters.*

Following her graduation from Birmingham-Southern College with both academic and leadership honors (Phi Beta Kappa and Mortar Board), Jean Pierce headed west for two years' graduate work in theater at the University of Utah. She built upon the skills honed at BSC's College Theater under the tutelage of Dr. Arnold Powell and Dorothy Schwartz (founder of Birmingham Children's Theatre). Returning to Birmingham, she became Miss Jean on WBRC's Romper Room, an acclaimed show for children in the early days of television, many years before Captain Kangaroo and Sesame Street.

It was not long before she became an active member of the Board of Trustees at BCT, serving in many capacities over the years, including President of the Board twice. She also contributed her considerable abilities as an actress and director, and later playwright, always refusing any royalties or other financial compensation.

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

The Little Engine That Could *(BCT 2012) L-R: John Reed lll, Jean Pierce, Ri Greene, Jessi Tidwell & Amanda Maddox.*

In addition to her roles in more than two dozen plays at BCT, she also remained involved in local community theater productions playing leading roles in *Anastasia, Summer and Smoke, The Rainmaker, The Dresser* and others. She has played several Dickensian characters; Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* being her all-time favorite. A true advocate of "the show must go on" she has more than once been called on to fill-in an emergency. When she directed her show *Dear Santa*, she had to step in at the last minute as Mrs. Claus, another role she loved. Some of her other favorites were Aunt Gulnare in *Ali Baba's Gold* and Mrs. Armstrong in five different BCT productions of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.*

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Goldilocks & The Three Bears *(BCT 2009) L-R: Amanda Maddox, Ri Greene, Jean Pierce, Gina Gioiello & Elise Fierman.*

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

The Little Red Hen *(BCT 2005) Melissa Baldwin with puppet Peepers.*

Jean and her friend from college days, Betty Pewitt, also an active volunteer and Board member, were encouraged by the late Jim Rye, then Executive Director, to try their hand at writing a play. Their first play was *Backstage Baby*!, a full-fledged musical comedy set in the vaudeville era. Jean directed and Ray Reach, a local musician, wrote the score. When BCT took it to Louisville to the Southeastern Theater Conference, it was received with astonishment. With its complex production and top notch performers, BCT had clearly raised the bar for children's theaters everywhere. After a successful run in Birmingham, *Back Stage Baby!* went on an extensive tour and was invited to play a three-day engagement at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Jean's work was beginning to enjoy regional and national acclaim.

Five more scripts were written for BCT by Jean and Betty as well as national prize winning radio dramas for WBHM. They wrote a series of plays for *BookEnds*, a venture for UAB's theater students touring schools to encourage reading, and

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

The Gingerbread Boy *(BCT 2006) Melissa Baldwin & Katie Britt with puppet cookies.*

they also contributed to the repertoire of The Seasoned Performers, a troupe of senior actors performing in schools and retirement homes.

When BCT established its Wee Folks Series in 1991, Jean and Betty were asked to write a holiday play with Santa as the central character, so they picked up their pens once again and wrote *Santa's Adventure in the Merrywood Mega-Mall. The Elves and the Shoemaker* soon followed.

In 1998 Betty decided to put down her pen and leave the playwriting business in Jean's capable hands. Jean realized that, although she could write scripts and lyrics, she needed a partner to write the music. She found excellent collaborators in Ray Reach, Jim Aycock and David Itkin. Since 1998, she has partnered exclusively with composer and arranger Jay Tumminello. A classically-trained pianist, Jay provides tunes, orchestrations, and sound effects. Since Jay is based in New York, the two work long distance.

Summoning her muses, Ira Gershwin and Lorenz Hart, Jean writes the lyrics, sends a tape of herself speaking the lines with meter and rhyme stresses to Jay and he writes the score. "Jay is a genius!" Jean says. "He creates the musical magic that makes BCT productions unique."

Since 1998, BCT and Theater in Motion have commissioned and produced at least one Jean Pierce play per year. Pierce and Tumminello have written over 100 songs. Betty says "Jean's gift for writing lyrics is amazing. She can hit the rhythm and meter in a clever song that moves the characters and plot forward in an unforgettable manner. She can reach across the footlights to three-year olds and teenagers, to parents, teachers and grandparents." Jean writes the old tales that children love, and that teachers' request, but she always adds a twist and makes sure that even the villains are funny/mean.

"I admit my primary goal is

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Dear Santa *(BCT 2003) L-R: Tom Geislinger, Jean Pierce & Carl Dean.*

to entertain. I don't deal with serious social issues, though I'm well aware that many in our audience have problems in their lives. I try to offer an hour of fun and laughter, a story well-told by believable characters and enhanced with music, costumes and colorful sets. There are lessons hidden in the story: lessons about kindness, friendship, sharing, listening to wise advice and striving to be the best one can be. If a child says 'I had fun,' I'm happy. If a child says 'I had fun and that princess learned to keep her promises,' then I'm even happier." Jean Pierce

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Great Expectations *(BCT 1996) Jean Pierce as Ms. Havisham and Philip Mann as Pip.*

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Jean Pierce & Betty Pewitt on the set of Rumplestiltskin *(BCT 1982).*

When you step into the theater for one of her plays, you can meet that princess who doesn't keep her promises in *The Frog Prince*, Goldilocks who stumbles into the Bear's cabin while they are out making a reality TV show, *Hansel and Gretel* who make themselves sick gorging on

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Jean Pierce with composer, Jay Tumminello.

sugar and long for vegetables, and the stage-struck goat in *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, who has to show courage to make it to Broadway.

"Jean feels strongly that theater can and should be a learning experience that encompasses all the arts—visual, language, music and dance," says Betty Pewitt.

"Jean likes to include puppets in her plays wherever possible. Over the years, to the delight of the children, there have been bees, elves, baby chicks, raisin cookies and a pair of prancing poodles who pop up in a circus train. In *Cinderella* the two life-sized stepsisters are attached to the mother's costume," says Charlotte Dominick, long time board member and former executive director of BCT.

"Jean Pierce has dedicated her remarkable talent as a playwright to introducing children to the joys of live theater. The children of Alabama owe her a great debt of gratitude," says Jack Lemmon, current Executive Director of BCT.

"Jean has been generous in many ways to the theater community of Birmingham and Alabama, including as a mentor to aspiring playwrights. When asked, she has gladly offered guidance, helping others with their scripts," according to Camille Butrus, long BCT Board member.

Jean has been married to Mallory Pierce for over 50 years. They are the parents of two sons, Adam and Stephen. With the Pierces, BCT is a family affair. Mallory has volunteered as a musician, Adam has contributed countless hours of computer and technical support, and Stephen has been a dedicated, full-time employee for 16 years.

Photo: Courtesy of Jean Prescott Pierce

Ali Baba's Gold *(BCT 1998) L-R: Joe Sniegocki, Jean Pierce, Gil Hunter & Michael Bridges.*

"For decades thousands of children, not only in Birmingham, but in the entire state, have benefitted from the phenomenal talents of Jean Pierce. Alabama's children are indeed fortunate that she came their way," says Incoming President of the Board of BCT, Guin Robinson.

Like a fairy godmother, Jean continues to wave her pen like a magic wand. Producing new plays year after year, she continually creates memorable characters that bring joy to Alabama children of all ages. After all, her characters always live "happily ever after."

Charlotte Lane Dominick is the past managing director and past board president of the Birmingham Children's Theatre, Betty Pewitt, former board member and long-time supporter of Birmingham Children's Theatre and Jane Trechsel, long-time supporter of Birmingham Children's Theatre.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Sonia Sanchez

Creating Community through Poetry

by Heather Martin

Poet, playwright, educator, and activist Sonia Sanchez was born Wilsonia Benita Driver on September 9, 1934, in Birmingham, Alabama, to Wilson L. and Lena Driver. Her mother died when Sonia was a one-year-old, leaving her and her sister, Patricia, to be raised by her grandmother in Alabama. Sanchez's grandmother was an inspiration for many of her poems. Her father, Wilson L. Driver, taught at Parker High School in Birmingham and was later inducted into the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame.

Sanchez spent her early childhood in Birmingham and attended Tuggle Elementary School. Although she stuttered as a child, she expressed herself through poetry. In 1943, she and Patricia moved to Harlem, New York, to live with their father who had moved north.

Sanchez earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Hunter College in New York City in 1955. She completed one year of graduate work at New York University, where she studied poetry with Louise Bogan, from whom she says she learned much about the craft of poetry. Malcolm X, Zora Neale Hurston, and Countee Cullen were among her early influences. Her daughter Anita was born in 1957 and twin sons Morani Neusi and Mungo Neusi were born in 1968.

In the 1960s, Sanchez was active in the Civil Rights Movement as a member of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and other organizations. Sanchez was also a major influence in the Black Arts Movement, which included writers Amiri Baraka, Ed Bullins, Nikki Giovanni, and Haki Madhubuti, among others. The Black Arts Movement, or BAM, stressed using the arts for community engagement and social activism. The wish to continue the ideas of Malcolm X after his death in 1965 was the driving force of BAM. Sanchez describes BAM as "one of the most important cross-generational movements." The political and cultural influences of the Black Arts movement along with her experiments with style and form set the tone for *Home Coming*, her first book of poetry, published in 1969 by Broadside Press. Broadside, run by Dudley Randall, was one of the major presses of the Black Arts Movement.

After *Home Coming*, Sanchez released other books

Photo: Marion Ettlinger

Sonia Sanchez began writing poetry in the 1960s, and became an iconic figure in the Black Arts Movement for community activism through the arts.

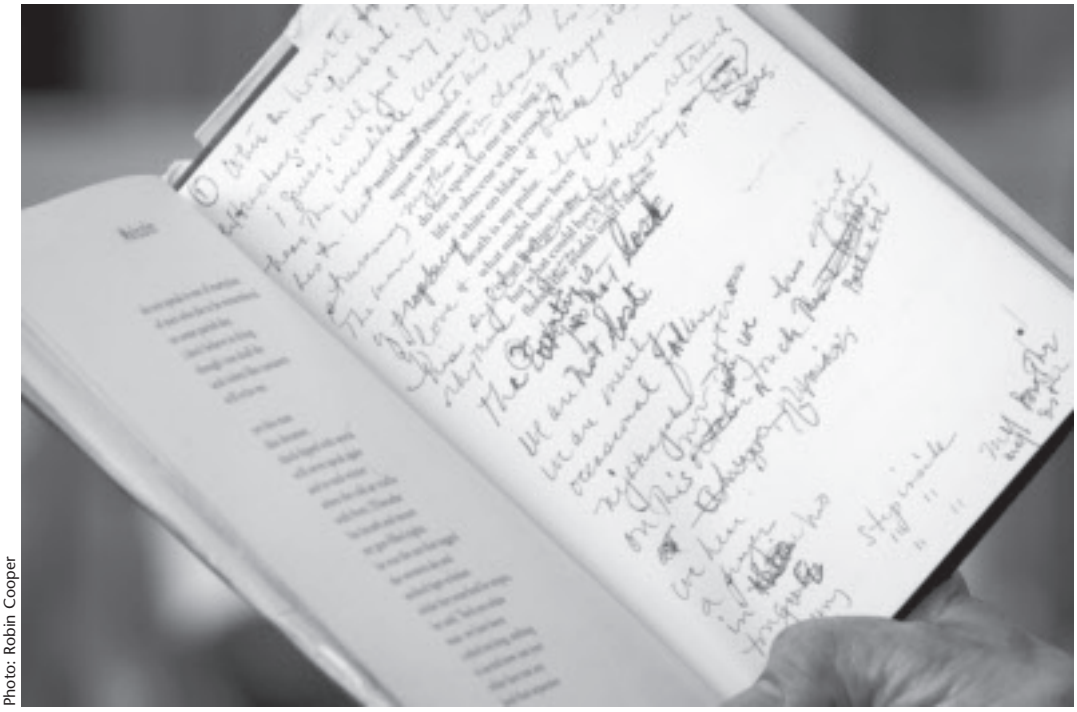

Photo: Robin Cooper

Sanchez often writes over her printed work. Here, she has hand-written a newly inspired poem on top of a published one.

of poetry including *We a BaddDDD People* (1970), *A Blues Book for a Blue Black Magic Woman* (1973), *Love Poems* (1973), and *I've Been a Woman* (1978). In 1985, she received the American Book Award for one of her most lauded works, *Homegirls and Handgrenades* (1984).

Under a Soprano Sky (1987), *Continuous Fire* (1994), *Autumn Blues* (1994), and *Wounded in the House of a Friend* (1995) followed the publication of *Homegirls and Handgrenades*. Her 1997 work, *Does Your House Have Lions*, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Other books of poetry include *Like the Singing Coming off the Drums* (1998), and *Shake Loose My Skin* (1999). Her poetry also appeared in the movie *Love Jones* (1997). In her latest work, *Morning Haiku* (2010), Sanchez embraces and plays with the Japanese poetry form in reflections on family, friends, and African American writers, musicians, and civil rights activists.

Sanchez's poetry has been better

Photo: Jessie Bennett

Always eager to meet her readers, and especially young people, Sanchez has signed thousands of her books since publishing Home Coming, *her first book of poetry, published in 1969 by Broadside Press. She is shown here at an autographing session for her latest work,* Morning Haiku *(Beacon Press, 2010).*

known, perhaps, than her plays until recently. However, both are connected by her imagery, lyricism, and jazz cadence that permeate so much of her work. Productions of her plays have premiered in New York (including Joseph Papp's Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre), Chicago, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. In 2010, her plays were collected for the first time in *I'm Black When I'm Singing, I'm Blue When I Ain't and Other Plays*. The collection includes the plays *The Bronx Is Next* (1970), *Dirty Hearts* (1971), *Sister Son/ji* (1972), *Malcolm/Man Don't Live Here No Mo* (1979), *Uh, Uh; But How Do It Free Us?* (1975), and two previously unpublished plays, *I'm Black When I'm Singing, I'm Blue When I Ain't* (1982) and *2 x 2* (2009). Sanchez also edited the anthology *We Be Word*

Photo: Robin Cooper

Reading from Shake Loose My Skin *for students and teachers at G.W. Carver High School in Montgomery as part of the Alabama Book Festival's Outreach to Youth, sponsored by the Alabama Writers' Forum and the Montgomery City County Public Libraries.*

Sorcerers: 25 Stories by Black Americans (1973) and wrote three children's books published by Broadside Press and Third World Press.

Sanchez's enthusiasm for teaching has led to a prolific career as an educator in academic and community settings. She has taught at numerous institutions including Downtown Community School in San Francisco from 1965 to 1967 and San Francisco State College (now University) from 1967 until 1969. At San

Photo: Robin Cooper

Juanita Owes, Director of the Montgomery City County Public Libraries, and school librarians welcomed Sonia Sanchez before she spoke with young readers during the 2011 Alabama Book Festival's Outreach to Youth at George Washington Carver Library in Montgomery.

Photo: Robin Cooper

After reading to G.W. Carver High School students from her poetry, Sanchez led a discussion about writing and the place of poetry in their lives.

Francisco State, she helped develop the first Black Studies program and taught what are considered to be the first African American literature courses at a predominately white institution.

Sanchez also taught at the University of Pittsburgh (1969-1970), Rutgers University (1970-1971), Manhattan Community College (1971-1973), Amherst College (1972-1975), and the University of Pennsylvania (1976-1977). At Temple University, where she is now Professor Emeritus, she was the first Presidential Fellow and held the Laura Carnell Chair in English.

In addition to being an American Book Award winner and National Book Critics Circle finalist, Sanchez has received numerous other awards for her work as a poet, playwright, educator, and activist. Among these are a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship (1978-1979), the Lucretia Mott Award (1984), Outstanding Arts Award from the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women (1985), Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities (1988), Peace and Freedom Award from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (1989), PEW Fellowship in the Arts (1992-1993), Langston Hughes Poetry Award (1999), Poetry Society of America's Robert Frost Medal (2001), and the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year (2004). Although she travels frequently, Sanchez now claims Philadelphia as her home. She was named the first Poet Laureate of Philadelphia in 2012.

Photo: Marion Ettlinger

Sonia Sanchez deeply identifies with the rights of all oppressed people, expressing herself through poetry, plays, prose, and social activism throughout her life as a writer and teacher.

In recognition for her influence in American letters, Sonia Sanchez has been awarded numerous honorary degrees, including Doctorates of Humane Letters from Ursinus College, Haverford College, Bernard M. Baruch College of CUNY, Hunter College of CUNY, Temple University, Buffalo State College of State University of New York, and Wilberforce University.

Sanchez's contribution to the advancement of civil rights in the United States is chronicled as part of *Freedom's Sisters*, a national exhibition created by the Cincinnati Museum Center and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution, with grant support from the Ford Motor Company Fund. The exhibition, which was displayed at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in 2009, honors Sanchez and nineteen other African American women who fought

Photo: From the Sonia Sanchez Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University

An internationally-known Alabama-born writer, Sonia Sanchez visited Cuba in the 1970s as part of a seminar on the communities of Black, Chicana, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Caribbean and Asian people in the United States.

for equality and justice for people of color. She is also a Sponsor of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Board Member of MADRE, a group that champions the rights of women in Nicaragua.

Her poetry, plays, and activism have opened doors for her all over the world, including poetry readings in Africa, Cuba, England, the Caribbean, Australia, Europe, Nicaragua, China, Norway, and Canada. However, Sanchez still takes time to visit her birth state: "I become quite pensive and starry-eyed every time I come back here and see the place where I was born," she told Alabama Arts Radio in 2011. On her return to Alabama that same year, Sanchez visited George Washington Carver High School in Montgomery as part of the 2011 Alabama Book Festival's Outreach to Youth, sponsored by the Alabama Writers' Forum. Sanchez talked with the high school students about their writing, shared her experiences as an artist, and encouraged them not only to write but to give back to their communities. She also exhorted them to take care of themselves, saying, "I want

Photo: From the Sonia Sanchez Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University

From the beginning, Sonia Sanchez has blended her activism and her poetry. Always comfortable before a crowd, she exhorted listeners to speak truth to power through her poetry and her belief in political freedom.

to come back here next year and see you. I want to see that you are still here!"

Sanchez emphasizes the importance of teaching in the community and not just in academia. In addition to teaching in colleges and schools, she has taught in prisons, led workshops for women who have AIDS, and introduced senior citizens to writing poetry. For Sanchez, "poetry is an important tool in teaching people not only about themselves, but about the country, about the world."

According to Dr. Derryn E. Moten, Professor of Humanities at Alabama State University, Sanchez is a major figure in Alabama's literary cannon as well as an important figure in American history. "Renowned poet, social activist, and humanitarian Sonia Sanchez is an Alabama treasure and native daughter. Her poetry bears long witness to the tumults of race, gender, and sexual identity politics in our country's democratic experiment. As someone who walked with Martin, Malcolm, Robert, and John, Ms. Sanchez symbolizes a generation of idealists who had and have the audacity to believe, as Nikki Giovanni writes, 'in the power of poems.'"

Photo: Beacon Press

Among Sonia Sanchez's many accolades is the 2004 Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year.

Photo: Ozier Muhammad, From the Sonia Sanchez Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University

One of Sonia Sanchez's recurring themes is love of and respect for others, both as a listener and as a comrade in literary and political matters.

Heather Martin is Reference Librarian for Arts and Humanities at Mervyn H. Sterne Library, University of Alabama at Birmingham.

SOURCES:

www.bu.edu/dbin/archives/

The Sonia Sanchez collection of personal and professional papers and memorabilia is housed at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Kitty Seale

A Passion for Dance that Inspires

by Jennifer Stewart Kornegay

"What moves you?" It's an interesting question to pose to someone whose career has been dominated by movement. It drew a heartfelt answer. "Watching a child come into the studio and be transformed by what we teach them, watching them turn from a duckling to a swan, that's what keeps me passionate about dance," said Kitty Seale, Artistic Director and founder of The Alabama Dance Theatre, a prolific promoter of her chosen art form and one of this year's Governor's Art Award recipients.

When she was just a toddler growing up in Montgomery, she was introduced to dance. "I can remember taking from Jackie Rocheleau, a very popular teacher in the city, in her little carriage house studio behind her house in Cloverdale," Seale said. The meeting sparked an affair that has yet to fizzle out, even decades later. "I fell in love with dance then, and I've never really stopped," she said. After high school, she went to Sweetbriar College where she studied modern dance.

Photo: Courtesy of the Seale family

Kitty in the early years of the Alabama Dance Theatre.

Soon after college she moved back to Montgomery and married Turner Seale, and for one year, love for her new husband left little room for her first love. It was the only time Seale can remember being removed from dance. But she soon found room for both of her sweethearts and joined the Montgomery Civic Ballet as a company member and as a teacher of modern dance.

Photo: David Robertson, Jr.

Kitty Seale with some of the company's dancers.

It was there that her relationship with dance really blossomed when she discovered an affection for teaching. "I knew right away that it was right for me," she said. When the Civic Ballet split into two different schools in 1976, Seale went with the Montgomery School of Fine Arts and progressed from a teacher to eventually become the program's executive director.

She was happy, but not fully content, and so, as love often makes us do, she took a leap and formed a new company and school, The Alabama Dance Theatre. She opened ADT in the Armory Learning Arts Center on the edge of downtown Montgomery, and thanks to a staff that shared her vision, and help from the Arts Council of Montgomery, things got off to a good start, with 80 students and a yearly budget of $8,000. The next year, ADT gave the city a marvelous Christmas present, performing "Mistletoe," which has become its signature annual holiday production.

Since its founding, ADT has hit many high notes, but Seale pointed to some true spotlight achievements. "Gaining membership in the Southeastern Regional Ballet Association (SERBA) in 1989 and moving up to honor company status fairly quickly is a real highlight for ADT," she said. "SERBA is exclusive and sets a very high artistic standard; companies must audition to become members. Plus, we have maintained our membership all these years." ADT has brought SERBA's annual event to Montgomery twice now and next spring, ADT will host again, bringing over 800 dance enthusiasts, teachers and dancers to the capital city.

Seale also pointed to some of the stars who shone at ADT before going on to professional dance

careers, including Wendy White. "I loved teaching her," Seale said. White went on to dance with Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble and Complexions Contemporary Ballet in New York City. Another standout, Foye Dubose, has returned to become ADT's ballet master.

Yet another past student has come back to be a part of the SERBA faculty the years that ADT has hosted, and his story proves the value of ADT's classical training. Twitch Boss took jazz at ADT in high school and then left to chase his dancing dreams in Los Angeles. Seale had always told him if was ever going to be truly successful, he'd need to take ballet too, but he didn't heed her advice. "One day we see him on television as the first runner up on the show 'So You Think You Can Dance'," Seale said. "He had made it. Then he comes home for a visit and comes to the studio. I told him I was proud, and that I was wrong about the ballet. He said, 'Oh no you weren't. I ended up paying to take lessons in L.A.; I couldn't have done it without ballet.'"

Photo: Courtesy of the Seale family

Kitty with her late son, Turner, Jr.

Photo: Courtesy of the Seale family

Kitty and her husband Turner enjoying some time at the beach.

ADT's resident choreographer Sara Sanford has garnered recognition as well, earning the National Choreography Plan in 2012. So too has the company's other resident choreographer, Janie Allen Alford. Her piece "Dances of Faith" was a collaboration with Grammy-award winning recording artist Beth Nielsen Chapman and was performed at the prestigious International Ballet Competition in 2010.

Seale has seen and shepherded plenty of talent through the years, but perhaps her favorite student is a spunky red head who she's been teaching all her life. "It was fun

Photo: David Robertson, Jr.

Kitty and her daughter Kate Robertson celebrate the Alabama Dance Theatre's twenty-fifth anniversary.

teaching my daughter Kate," she said. "I've enjoyed watching her progress, and I'm proud of what she's accomplished, but she had many other influences too." Kate spent many summers away from Montgomery and her mother, studying with renowned programs like the Joffrey Ballet School, and she was an apprentice with The Alabama Ballet while in college. "Not having only me instructing her, that's how it worked," Seale said. Kate has followed in her mother's dance shoes, dancing in ADT's professional company for several years and now teaching ballet to some of ADT's youngest students.

Seale never hesitates to praise all of ADT's students. "Our students are wonderful," she said. "I would hire my dancers to work for me, and have, not just for their dance skills but their other skills. I would put a dancer up against anybody for a lot of different jobs. They know how to work hard, how to organize their time. They are competitive, yet support each other. They posses a maturity level that is often unusual for their age, and have a good respect for authority. I think they get that from dance. These are just some of the skills that the arts and dance can give young people."

ADT has given young people in the Montgomery area an opportunity to seriously study the art of dance, but it has given much to its city too: quality professional performances, including a free event, "Stars on the Riverfront," that draws stellar crowds downtown to the Amphitheater on the banks of the Alabama River every summer.

Seale wears many hats at ADT and spends some of her time tending to the business and administrative sides of the organization, which she knows is important. Still, it's when she's in studio teaching or she's discussing her favorite ballet (it's a toss up between "Swan Lake" and "Giselle") or the many, many contemporary choreographers she admires that her face lights up. She shines even brighter interacting with a group of young dancers as she explains exactly where their tiara should sit on their head for upcom-

Photo: Courtesy of the Seale family

Kitty teaching Wendy White Sasser as a young student. Wendy went on to perform with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and later with Complexions.

ing recital photos. "I'm happiest when I am with my dancers," she said.

In 2013, ADT is celebrating its silver anniversary, and in its 25 years, its school and company have grown, as has its budget and its facilities. ADT now instructs over 300 students in the art of dance, be it ballet, jazz or modern, and the budget has swelled to $728,000 for last year. Plans for a fourth studio at the Armory are currently in the works.

Most wouldn't hesitate to give Seale the lion's share of the credit for ADT's longevity and success, but she won't take it. "It has been a group effort," she said. "I did not even try to do it by myself because I knew I couldn't. Everything that ADT is the result of a team."

She won't deny her pride though. "When I look at my life, I am most proud of ADT and of my family. It has been difficult at times to strike a balance," she said. "I am really proud of what ADT has become, a good, safe place for young people to be nourished and to grow and develop into outstanding citizens, whether they go on to become professional dancers or not."

Kitty Seale is dedicating her award to her late son, Turner Seale Jr., who always supported her work and never missed an ADT performance.

Jennifer Stewart Kornegay is a freelance writer in Montgomery. Her articles have appeared in Southern Living, Alabama Magazine, American Profile, Southern Lady, Georgia Magazine *and more, and she writes a monthly food column for* Alabama Living *magazine.*

Photo: David Robertson, Jr.

Kitty Seale blowing out the candles as the Alabama Dance Theatre celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary.

Photo: Courtesy of the Seale family

Kitty (far left) rehearsing in the early 80s.

THE ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD

The Excelsior Band

Leading the Parade for 130 Years

by Joey Brackner

The Excelsior Band of Mobile, Alabama, celebrates its 130th anniversary this year. This marching brass band is best known for its Mardi Gras performances but also plays other engagements such as weddings and jazz funerals. The group, which sometimes performs as many as 300 times a year, also can play as a quintet for smaller events. The current members of the band are: Hosea London, Danny Moseley, Jr., and Leroy Bosby, Jr. on trumpet; Leon Rhoden and Jerome Bryant on drums; Charles Hall on tuba; Marion Ward, Carl Cunningham, Jr., and Patrick Pettaway on trombone; and Theodore Arthur, Jr. and James Moore on saxophone. This year's Alabama Folk Heritage Award honors these fine musicians and also honors the institution of the Excelsior Band.

The Excelsior Band of Mobile, Alabama, was founded on November 23, 1883 by Creole Fire Company president John Alexander Pope to celebrate the birth of his son John Clement (Clemon) Pope. The original band consisted of Pope, Ted Collins, Tilly Laurendine, Leo Battiste, "Cootie" Williams, Alex Terez. Terez was also a member

Photo: Courtesy of the Excelsior Band

The band posing for a photo prior to performing.

of the Creole Fire Station No. 1, thus leading many to suppose that the original group, among other activities, functioned as the fire house band. John A. Pope, the son of John M. Pope, a free person of color, was born in 1863 in Mobile. John C. Pope later led the band that was founded in his honor. The Popes were primarily undertakers and tinsmiths by trade, but these men and their colleagues built a musical institution that has come to embody Mobile's cultural heritage.

Photo: Joey Brackner

The Excelsior Band marching in the 2013 Mardi Gras parade in Mobile.

Brass band music was a beloved genre of nineteenth-century American music. Military regiments, towns and fire brigades all developed brass bands. Some noted groups toured the United States during the antebellum period. The availability of brass instruments led to many regional variations on this music, not the least of which was Dixieland jazz. While New Orleans is most noted for this genre, it was popular throughout the Gulf South. Any public commemoration would likely involve a brass band. On July 31, 1859, *The Mobile Press Register* described a Democratic Party function which featured "Gass' German Band" and the "Creole Brass Band." Mardi Gras parades, funerals, baseball games, weddings and various political events were accompanied by the big, bright sound practiced and perfected by local musicians.

During its history, the Excelsior Band has served the City of Mobile and the state of Alabama as master artists and ambassadors, maintaining a tradition of excellence, respect, and musical proficiency. Only the finest of veteran musicians are invited to join the band. Hosea London, a retired elementary school music teacher, has been the ensemble's leader for the last several years. "People in Mobile like history, so they really, really like the band and they support the band," London told the Mobile *Press-Register* in 2008. The Excelsior Band plays various music styles including Dixieland, jazz, blues and pop. Some of their most popular tunes include: "Margie," "Hello Dolly," "St. Louis Blues," "South Rampart Street Parade," and, of course "When the Saints Go Marching In." The band's sound is much the same today as it was decades ago. Tunes like "'Just a Closer Walk with Thee'—those have been around since

Photo: Courtesy of Mrs. Eoline Scott. The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama

J. A. Pope, founder of the Excelsior Band, 1863-1951.

Photo: Courtesy of Mrs. Eoline Scott. The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama

Marching in a 1940s parade.

forever," Hosea London said. "They are timeless. We've added some new things, like 'Audubon Zoo' and things like that that came from the New Orleans style. But we never get away from what was working 100 years ago."

Membership in Excelsior has been the highest achievement among Mobile's musicians. "Nobody ever leaves," according to Hosea London. "It's not easy to get a spot in the band." He said, "At the time I started over 30 years ago I was probably the youngest person in the band. Guys have stayed as long as 50 years, until they have become just unable to perform with the band." Recent past members have included James Seals, Phillip Moody, Ernest Coleman, Herbert Dillard, Joe Morrison, Joe Lewis, William Burks, James Moore, Joseph Morris, Sr., Robert Petty, Sr., James Matthews, Sr., Hubert Stanfield and Ray Packer. The band does not use sheet music and because they perform so often together that they rarely rehearse as a group. New members are recommended by existing members; therefore, the group continues by adding and training new members. In the infrequent times that a new person is added to Excelsior, "we kind of teach them from what we know, and they kind of catch on."

Excelsior was a 2012 Inductee to the Gulf Coast Ethnic & Heritage Jazz Festival Hall of Fame. They are featured in the music gallery at the Mobile Carnival Museum and on the Year of Alabama Music website developed by the Alabama Tourism Bureau. A clip of the band marching and performing during Mardi Gras is in the 2001 documentary film, *Coat of Many Colors: A Tapestry of Alabama Artists* by the Center for Television and Radio, University of Alabama and sponsored by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Members of Excelsior have taught in the Alabama Folk Arts Apprenticeship

program. The group has also been featured in posters, prints, postcards, paintings, and other signature works of art and memorabilia of Mobile's Mardi Gras or Carnival celebrations.

During the Carnival season, the Excelsior Band leads many if not most of the parades, starting at the Mobile Civic Center. In the parades, they serve as a marching brass band playing jazz music. The band has secured a unique place in Mobile heritage, serving both blacks and whites during the festival. As such, they are Mobile's official band, providing music for all occasions. Their trademark black suit, white shirt, hat and tie is an important part of the tradition and represents the band's respectability.

The longevity of their work, individual skills and talents, and the many contributions of the members to Alabama's music education and heritage make them a leading band that has had, and will, continue to have a long-term impact on musical genres locally and nationally. Excelsior marched in its first Mardi Gras parade in 1884, the first carnival season after its founding. It marches to this day!

Joey Brackner is Director of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture.

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www.alabamamusicoffice.com

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Photo: Courtesy of the Excelsior Band

(Left to right) Charles Hall, Danny Mosely, Hosea London, James Moore, Theodore Arthur, Marion Ward, Carl Cunningham, Leon Rhoden, and Jerome Bryant. Missing are band members Patrick Pettaway and Leroy Bosby.

THE SPECIAL COUNCIL LEGACY AWARD

Senator J.T. "Jabo" Waggoner

A Forty-Year Legacy of Service to the State and to the Arts

by Al Head

A native son of Birmingham, J.T. "Jabo" Waggoner grew up in a middle-class steel community as part of a family very familiar with public service and giving back to the community. His mother was an elementary school teacher and his father J.T. Waggoner, Sr. during the nineteen fifties and sixties was a city commissioner and in charge of public improvements. Under his leadership, among other contributions, the city created the Birmingham Beautification Board. His son remembers J.T., Sr. for his accessibility and confronting difficult issues head on. He remained involved in politics and public service for many years. Jabo has been quoted as saying, "I would like to think I'm half the man my father was."

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama State Senate

Senator Jabo Waggoner

Jabo Waggoner, born in 1937 during the depression years, was educated in the Birmingham public school system graduating from Ensley High. He received his BA degree from Birmingham-Southern College where he attended on a basketball scholarship and was a star player for the Panthers from 1958-60. Waggoner was inducted into the BSC Sports Hall of Fame in 2007. Upon graduation from Birmingham-Southern, he earned his J. D. degree from Birmingham School of Law.

No doubt inspired by family, his educational background and a desire to serve his hometown, Jabo ran for a seat in the House of Representatives in 1966 and, at the age of 29, began his service in the Alabama Legislature. He commented recently that "In those days the makeup of the legislature was all male, all white and all Democrat. Waggoner stayed in the House for seventeen years and after an unsuccessful run for the U.S. House of Representatives he was elected to the Alabama Senate in 1990 where he has served with distinction to this day.

Jabo Waggoner is currently the Senate Majority Leader and Chairman of the powerful Senate Rules Committee as well as the Senate Confirmations Committee. To say the least, Senator Waggoner is one of the most influential members of the Alabama Senate and Legislature. His almost forty years in the legislature is the longest record of service of any legislator from Jefferson County in Alabama history. Waggoner has a long

list of important bills he has sponsored or co-sponsored ranging from illegal texting and required child restraint to, perhaps, the bill he feels most passionate about known as "Early Intervention," a law providing support for young children with special needs and problems.

All of these accomplishments and years of stellar service to the State of Alabama are part of the reason for the Council's special "Legacy Award," but there is much more beneath the surface of contributions focused on the arts that warrant recognition in the cultural arena. A particular case in point is the fact that Jabo Waggoner was one of the co-sponsors of the legislation that created the Alabama School of Fine Arts in 1971. ASFA, located in downtown Birmingham, is a national model for schools of the arts in the United States and a source of great pride for Alabama. The school has an impact far beyond the City of Birmingham, providing a unique education in the arts for students, grades 7-12, throughout the state and country. ASFA has a distinguished list of alumni including, most recently, Suzanne Collins, author of *New York Times* bestseller *The Hunger Games* trilogy. The school's new 10 million dollar state of the art performing arts theatre is a cultural resource of significant proportions.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo and Marilyn at a formal function.

But Senator Waggoner's contributions to the arts do not stop at the School of Fine Arts. He has generously given of his time and considerable expertise speaking to arts groups, appearing at arts education conferences, and has been consistently present for student awards programs such as those sponsored by the Alabama Writers' Forum. The

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo with President Ronald Reagan.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo Waggoner with his Ronald Reagan Lifetime Achievement Award.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo with Governor George Wallace.

Senator has been author and part of numerous House and Senate Resolutions recognizing Alabama artists and arts organizations. Jabo Waggoner has been an advisor to the State Council on the Arts for many years on issues ranging from communication with public officials to legislative appropriations. Like his father, he has always been accessible and has addressed issues head-on with a clear and keenly focused perspective.

Senator Waggoner and his wife Marilyn are the parents of four children: Scott (deceased), Mark, Lyn Waggoner Kilpatrick and Jay. As part of his commitment to public service Jabo is on the board of directors of the Birmingham Business Alliance; Faulkner University and is a member of the Birmingham, Hoover, Shelby County and Vestavia Hills Chambers of Commerce; Vestavia Hills Civitan Club; Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau; Alabama Sports Hall of Fame and the Pinnacle Bank Board. He has

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Marilyn and Jabo Waggoner with President George Bush and First Lady Laura Bush.

served as head coach of the Birmingham Touchdown Club and was president of the Birmingham Tip-Off Club. In 2012, Senator Waggoner received the prestigious Ronald Reagan Lifetime Achievement Award from the Alabama State Republican Party.

A high profile public official, Waggoner is well known as a man of many interests and professional endeavors. Perhaps, the Senator is less known for his love of gospel music. In particular, he is a big fan of the Gaither Family Band where tenor, Wes Hampton from Birmingham is a prominent vocalist with the group. He has been known to leave otherwise important events to make it home to hear the Gaither's on television. In addition to enjoying gospel music, given Waggoner's humble upbringing and strong family roots, it is little surprise he would be a fan of traditional potter Jerry Brown. Brown, a National Heritage Award winner from Hamilton Alabama is a fifth generation potter famous for his face jugs and indigenous clay vessels. On visits to Jerry's home and unique studio, complete with the family mule grinding clay process, Jabo Waggoner has become a Senator with first-hand emersion with Alabama folk art and artists.

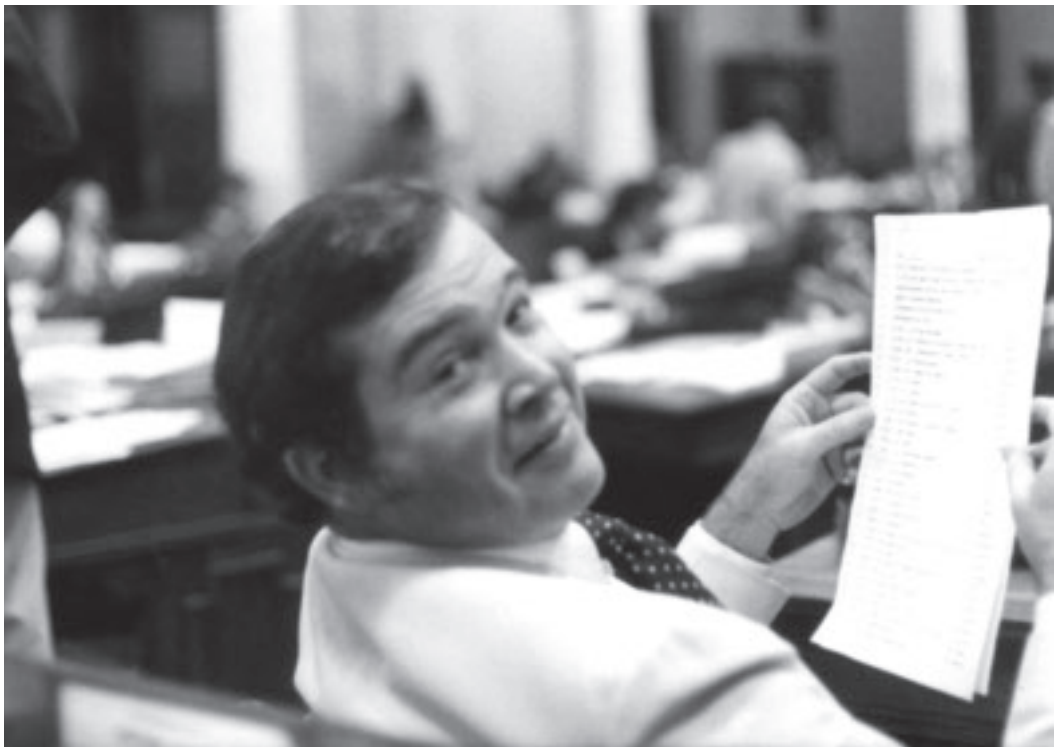

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

In the Legislature.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Lyn and Mark Waggoner, President Gerald Ford, Marilyn and Jabo Waggoner.

A reputation for dancing the "Bop" in the 1950s along with recent official duties associated to traditional Polish dance and culture at the Barber Motor Speedway in Birmingham add to Waggoner's growing artistic credentials.

Senator J.T. "Jabo" Waggoner has served the arts, the Legislature and the State of Alabama with distinction, generosity and wisdom for four decades. His contributions are significant and his legacy will be felt long into the future by many generations of appreciative Alabamians.

Al Head is the Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo and Marilyn Waggoner with Lyn, Jay, Scott and Mark.

Photo: Robin Cooper

Jabo Waggoner with Lita Waggoner at the 2013 Alabama High School Literary Awards. Lita won first place for fiction. She is a student at the Alabama School of Fine Arts.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo and Mark Waggoner on a hunting trip.

Photo: Courtesy of the Waggoner family

Jabo in his Ensley High School football uniform.

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