

ALABAMA ARTS

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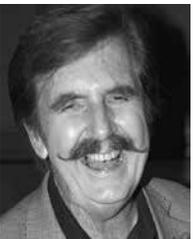
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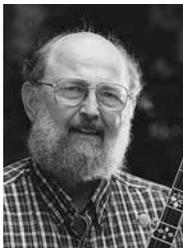
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On the Cover: Created for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's 25th Season in Montgomery, Alabama, "An Architectural Lineage" by Montgomery artist David Braly celebrates the theatre building and its notable architectural lineage from the Italian renaissance and Roman antiquity. Inspired by the Villa Poiana, Andrea Palladio's 16th century villa which inspired the theatre's central entrance, the original work includes watercolor, pencil work, both color and graphite, and represents the ideal geometries of the building's elements, size, proportion and layout. © copyright David Braly

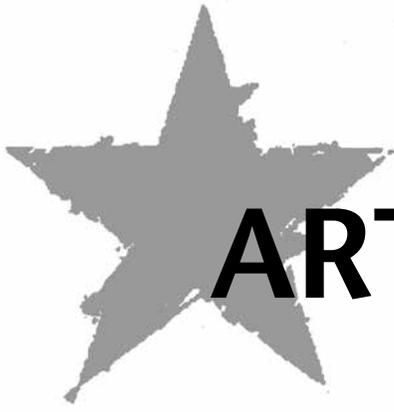
The Alabama State
Council on the Arts



*Celebration
of the
Arts*



2015



ARTS AWARDS 2015

by Al Head

Starting in 1980, thirty-five years ago, the State Council on the Arts began recognizing outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to the arts in Alabama. The long list of recipients is a “who’s who” of personalities representing community volunteers, civic leaders, arts educators, public officials, arts administrators and a vast array of visual, performing and literary artists. Many of these persons are widely known with reputations involving achievement on national and even international levels. In other cases the Council has recognized individuals that have worked quietly behind the scenes with little fanfare but have had a huge impact on their community and, by extension, the state. With all the diversity of recipients from the past the Council in 2015 is proud to put a spotlight on the accomplishments and contributions of a new group of Alabamians who reflect the arts of our state so well.

The 2015 edition of “Celebration of the Arts” highlights the work of a legend in the music recording industry, a world famous and award-winning author, two major patrons and community leaders in the arts, a much beloved traditional musician and a nationally respected choral director, instructor and critically acclaimed vocalist. These individuals represent the scope and breadth of artistic diversity, talent, leadership and generosity that is an integral part of the cultural landscape of Alabama.

The awards program, in addition to recognizing worthy individuals, also renews the pride we share in Alabama’s rich culture that is too often dominated by higher profile images associated with college football, hunting and fishing, and NASCAR. In fact, the arts component of our culture has become a significant creative industry that is increasingly playing an

important role in enhancing education, economic development, community revitalization, tourism expansion and the celebration of cultural diversity. Public-sector support at the local and state levels for the arts has proven to be a wise investment in the overall growth of Alabama. Virtually all CEO’s behind major new business investment cite quality of life as one of the key factors influencing coming to our state. New visitors to the state that are exposed to the arts for the first time are often associated with quotes similar to, “Wow, I had no idea all of this was here.”

So, through this program, “Celebration of the Arts,” the Council hopes to spotlight some of the best of the best, extend special thanks to a few of those in a long line who are deserving, inspire others to support the cause and expand the visions of the those exploring the possibilities of how we individually and collectively make life in our great state better.



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

THE JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Theresa Harper Bruno

Inspiration for Transformation

by Charles Buchanan

Theresa Harper Bruno knows what transformation looks like: Faces light up. Children smile. Minds dance with new ideas. Doors open to a future full of possibilities.

She anticipates that electrifying moment every time someone comes into contact with the arts—whether

that's on stage, at an easel, in a classroom, or in an audience. "The arts have tremendous power to transform lives," Bruno says. "They touch our souls and inspire us to pursue big dreams."

Bruno's own big dream is to share that power and possibility with people throughout Alabama. She has

created, led, and supported innovative programs that have broken barriers between artists and communities, bringing the joy of creativity to children, adults—and even hospital patients—in underserved urban and rural areas. Bruno's excitement and passion for education and outreach shine bright as she joins the ranks



Photo: Ben Van Hook

Theresa on the Sirote Theatre stage at UAB's Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center.

of arts leaders honored with the Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award.

Bruno first felt the power of the arts as a child, growing up outside Orlando, Florida. “I was an artistic kid,” she says. “My head was full of classical music all the time, and my rock ‘n’ roll parents didn’t always know what to do with me.” Determined to become a concert pianist on the world’s great stages, Bruno immersed herself in the instrument. Years of practice earned her admission to the prestigious Juilliard School in New York—but there, unexpectedly, she suffered a wrist injury that ended her hopes for a career as a performer.

Recovering from that blow was one of the toughest challenges of her life, Bruno admits. During her 2014 TEDxBirmingham talk, she recalled asking herself countless times, “What is my voice in the world if I can’t play for you? Without my piano keys, what is my power to make people feel something extraordinary and transform the world for good?” She directed her creative energies into film production and to developing marketing and advertising strategies for Alabama companies. She also began serving on leadership boards for community organizations such as the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, the Birmingham YWCA, and the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Those experiences inspired Bruno to explore the full potential of the arts for education, community revitalization, and economic growth.



Photo: Ben Van Hook

Theresa with students in a visual arts class at ArtPlay, the Alys Stephens Center’s home for education and outreach.



Photo: Steve Wood

Theresa Bruno with the Dalai Lama who participated in a scientific symposium at the Alys Stephens Center during his 2014 visit to Birmingham.



Photo: Courtesy of Theresa Bruno.

Theresa's husband, James Bruno, and their sons, Jordan and Andrew (front).

As corporate board chair for the Alys Robinson Stephens Performing Arts Center (ASC) at UAB, she has strengthened one of the Southeast's premier cultural venues, which presents world-renowned artists in music, dance, theatre, comedy, film, and family entertainment. The landmark facility also is home to the university's theatre and music departments and the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. "The strength of a community depends, in part, on access to a rich variety of arts experiences," Bruno says.

With that thought in mind, Bruno has spearheaded the ASC's bold forays into producing original works. One commissioned piece, *A More Convenient Season*, created by internationally acclaimed composer Yotam Haber, served as a centerpiece for Birmingham's 50th anniversary commemoration of key civil rights struggles. After its premiere at the ASC, the work, which blends orchestra, chorus, solo performances, electronic sounds, and video, debuted in Los Angeles. Other curated events have included songwriting contests to spotlight emerging talent and "Light Dreams," a nighttime celebration centered on a 3-D digital light show



Photo: Mandy Johnson Photography

Theresa with her sister, Lisa Harper, and Lisa's daughter, Missy.



Photo: Nik Layman

Theresa with her husband James Bruno.

that turned the ASC's façade into a magical, morphing cabinet of curiosities. "Events like Light Dreams are living art—art that belongs to an audience in the moment and never takes the same form again," Bruno told *UAB Magazine* in 2014. "There's something really powerful about that."

Equally powerful are the bonds that Bruno has forged with Alabama artists during the development of the ASC's original productions. For example, more than 40 artists—from sculptors, photographers, musicians, and dancers to virtual-reality engineers—contributed installations and performances to Light Dreams, creating a landscape of illumination using smoke, mist, fire, mirrors, and more. It's a step toward an ASC-centered artist community, Bruno says. "We have a passion for local artists, and we can be a haven for them," she says.

In 2010, Bruno led the development of ArtPlay, the ASC's education and outreach initiative. Housed in a lovingly restored Victorian house on Birmingham's Southside, ArtPlay offers classes and workshops to inspire creative growth in people of all ages—everything from primary ballet for preschoolers to acting for adults. Each session is led by an experienced teaching artist from the community.

ArtPlay has energized the Birmingham arts scene with its unique interdisciplinary focus, Bruno says. "We wanted to teach the arts in an integrative, cross-collaborative way," she explains. Students taking piano lessons are exposed to theatre, dance, film, and music technology, for example. "They understand how that piano score connects with those other areas." Other classes use the arts to strengthen math, science, language, and health skills.

ArtPlay also makes a great impact beyond its own classrooms and studios. "I am passionate about arts out-



Theresa with a UAB Highlands Hospital patient who is participating in the Arts in Medicine program.

Photo: Ben Van Hook



Theresa as a young girl.

Photo: Courtesy of Theresa Bruno



Photo: Nik Layman

Theresa and James Bruno with country superstars Vince Gill and Amy Grant at the 2013 ASC Starlight Gala.

reach,” Bruno says. “The arts are most transformational in the life of a child. They can help children develop self-esteem and discipline, along with creativity, and inspire them to set—and achieve—important goals.” Through ArtPlay, K-12 students across central Alabama have the opportunity to learn from world-class artists and see live performances at the ASC. Teaching artists also go on the road to visit children in schools. One signature outreach program, the Make It Happen performing ensemble, chal-

lenges high school students to research and write an original theatrical production while attending weekly theatre classes. The yearlong experience culminates in a performance at the ASC. Observing the students’ progress “is like watching a flower bloom in front of you,” Bruno says. “They begin taking creative risks and become more confident.” Some Make It Happen alumni have earned admission to the Alabama School of Fine Arts; many have gone on to college.

“When you change a child’s life

for the better—when you take a kid who’s living on the margins, and she becomes a contributing citizen, or a kid who’s a potential high school dropout, and he becomes a college graduate, the domino effect in our society is immeasurable,” said Bruno during her TEDx talk.

Altogether, more than 70,000 Alabama children—and adults—have benefited from ArtPlay’s workshops, classes, residencies, master classes, school shows, and other activities. Bruno is especially

proud of efforts in Woodlawn, an urban community in the heart of Birmingham, where ArtPlay and the YWCA of Central Alabama have developed a collaborative venture. Known as ArtReach, the program brings ArtPlay teaching artists to YWoodlawn, where they offer neighborhood residents of all ages free instruction in everything from quilting to jazz. Coupled with investments in housing and commercial growth, ArtReach is helping to power Woodlawn's burgeoning revitalization. "Art is blooming through the cracks," Bruno says. "When the arts touch individuals, change percolates around them. It can transform their families, the jobs they create, and the communities where they live."

Recently, ArtPlay has expanded into rural areas, beginning with Blount County, where artists and art teachers lead programs in classrooms and after-school workshops. Bruno describes a growing need for such programs across Alabama as schools suffer from cuts in funding and the elimination of art, music, and theatre classes. She hopes that ArtPlay will be able to serve more students and communities throughout the state. Eventually, she says, it could become a national—and even international—model for arts education and outreach.

Bruno also has taken the arts into another transformational space: the hospital. In 2013, the ASC and UAB Medicine partnered to launch UAB's Institute for Arts in Medicine (AIM), which places artists-in-residence throughout UAB Hospital to provide creative experiences designed to help patients heal. The ASC



Photo: Mike Strawn

As corporate board chair for the Alys Stephens Center at UAB, Theresa spearheaded a wave of unprecedented community support for the performing arts.

already had some experience in this realm; its ArtCare initiative connects artists with residents in Birmingham-area independent and assisted-living facilities. AIM is a more comprehensive program, however. The artists-in-residence might tell a story to a patient, lead a sewing workshop in a waiting area, encourage family members to dance, or guide clinical staff as they try painting with watercolors. Research has shown that the arts can reduce pain, stress, and anxiety among patients, which could lead to less medication, a faster recovery, and shorter hospital stays. Families and caregivers also benefit from the

relaxing, transporting power of the arts. Plans call for expanding the popular AIM program with additional artists-in-residence and performances and gallery exhibits in the hospital's public spaces.

When she's not championing the artistic endeavors of others, Bruno spends time with her husband, James, and her two sons. She also has continued to create, designing jewelry that has caught the eyes of First Lady Michelle Obama, movie stars, and fashion magazines. When Bruno reflects upon her life in the arts, however, she thinks about the people and communities she has helped

transform through education, outreach, and advocacy. “I don’t know that I could have done that from the piano bench,” she says. “The people who benefit from the arts are my new voice. They are my new piano keys.”

*Charles Buchanan is editor of UAB Magazine,
the flagship publication of the University of Alabama
at Birmingham.*



Photo: Ben Van Hook

Theresa on the Sirote Theatre stage at UAB’s Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center.

THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD



Everett McCorvey

Vocalist and Arts Advocate Supreme

by Vanzetta Penn McPherson

Upon reviewing Everett McCorvey's vita and a list of his professional engagements, an interviewer wondered "how he sleeps." I have an answer: He was born with access to an alternative universe where the days are 36 hours long. Admittedly, that sounds fantastical, but nothing short of extra-terrestrial advantage can explain the breadth of the undertakings that this remarkable artist has managed so successfully.

Everett David McCorvey was born in Montgomery and spent his early life in Alabama through his first post-graduate job. Renowned throughout the world as a vocalist extraordinaire, McCorvey was first attracted to the trumpet because he thought its sound "was the sweetest music [he] had ever heard." Singing remained in the background when he later switched to the baritone horn. Only after he entered the University of Alabama did he concentrate on voice—and it was simply by chance that he abandoned his brass instruments for the one that continues to distinguish him during the 30 or more solo engagements he has each year. Since that first trumpet lesson, his operatic roles have included Don Jose in *Carmen*, Ferrando in *Così Fan Tutte*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Eisenstien in *Die Fledermaus*, Puck in *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein*, among others.

Even artists themselves acknowledge the folly of the simultaneous pursuit of artistic and business goals, that sometimes conflict between artistic advancement and financial stability, the strain between pushing the artistic envelope and retaining audience loyalty. But,



Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

Relaxing on the stage between performances for It's a Grand Night for Singing, 2013

Everett McCorvey is the quintessential artist, conductor, teacher, entrepreneur, program manager, fundraiser, policymaker, and arts advocate. Throughout his stellar career, which has included performances at the Metropolitan Opera, the Kennedy Center, Radio City Music Hall, and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, as well as performances throughout Spain, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Austria, Japan, China, Brazil, Poland, Portugal,



The American Spiritual Ensemble with its founder and director, Dr. Everett McCorvey.

Hungary, Mexico, Peru and France, McCorvey has repeatedly found ways to make it all work. And he has done it with an impressive combination of well-honed artistry, organizational skill, an urgent yen for innovation, a gift for collaboration, and a creator's zeal.

McCorvey received his bachelor's (1975), master's (1981), and doctoral (1989) degrees in vocal performance from the University of Alabama. Following a two-year stint at Knoxville College, McCorvey—perhaps inadvertently—traded football mania at the University of Alabama, courtesy of the Crimson Tide, for basketball fanaticism at the University of Kentucky, courtesy of the Kentucky Wildcats.



American Spiritual Ensemble with Dr. Everett McCorvey (third from left) pose for a group photo.

Now in his twenty-third year at Kentucky, McCorvey has become a state treasure, and as a music program manager, his record of success is scarcely matched. He is currently the Director and Executive Producer of the University's Opera Theatre. He is a full University Professor of Voice, and he holds the Lexington Opera Society Endowed Chair in Opera Studies. Under McCorvey's leadership, the Opera Theatre has produced over 45 operas, including such classic works as *Die Fledermaus*, *Otello*, and *Madama Butterfly*. Ever the innovator, he has also produced six collegiate world premieres, including *River of Time* (by Joseph Baber), the story of Abraham Lincoln's boyhood life and the influences that made him a successful man.

In addition to his artistic acumen, Everett McCorvey is the designer of an "artbiz" template for program management and financing the arts. Not surprisingly, he developed that skill when he was baptized into Wildcat Nation by a presidential appointment to Kentucky's athletic board. As he explains, "I joined the athletic board, and I really learned so much about how business is done at the university. The athletic board was its own entity, and it worked within the university. And so that gave me the idea that I should create a society, a group, that's similar to the athletic association...and I decided to create a board called the Lexington Opera Society." McCorvey was astute enough to know that art—especially art that reflects the best we have to offer—can generate the same kind of enthusiasm and support as championship basketball. There is no more significant evidence of that enthusiasm than patronage of the UK Opera Theatre's 2012 production of *The Phantom of the Opera*. Patrons purchased 10,000 tickets, and the opera grossed over \$500,000, making it the largest grossing show ever in the 120-year history of the Lexington Opera House.

Today, the Lexington Opera Society contributes more than \$100,000 annually to the opera program. McCorvey has taken that program from financing via an annual \$20,000 loan from the University to an annual production budget of \$1 million and an endowment of \$6 million. Enthusiastic donors have transformed the UK



Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

The American Spiritual Ensemble is a critically-acclaimed professional group composed of some of the finest singers in the classical music world. The vocalists have thrilled audiences around the world with their dynamic renditions of classic spirituals and Broadway numbers.



Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

Dr. Everett McCorvey conducting the National Choral at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

opera program into one of the nations top recommended opera programs. Everett McCorvey's mantra for generating public support is: "If it's important to you, then it's your job to make sure that it's important to them, to everybody." Thus, McCorvey's students sing opera at the Wildcats' basketball games, where the broadest possible audience is exposed to the genre, and they participate at all major events in the city.

McCorvey doesn't just delegate the arts advocacy role to his students. He also invests his own time and talent to support for vocal performance and specifically opera. With a UK colleague in 1993, McCorvey created Lexington's grandest summer music event, *It's A Grand Night For Singing!* which he personally produces. In the wake of the earthquakes in Haiti and with the help of Alltech, a global feed solution company, he founded the Alltech Haitian Harmony Choir, consisting of 33 children between the age of 8 and 15. They traveled the world to present performances and raise money for their school, including a 2013 performance in the United States. He is also the new Artistic Director of the National Choral of New York, NY.

It is easy for McCorvey to justify these and many other seeming distractions from his official duties at the University of Kentucky. He observes that public support



A performer with the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre consults with Dr. Everett McCorvey. Performances take place at the historic Lexington Opera House in downtown Lexington.



Dr. Everett McCorvey leading the crowd at UK-Louisville Game 2014

for his work at UK is important. "It's a reciprocal relationship. I go to [other organizations] first. And I engage in their activity. And then, so it's very easy for them then to engage in my activity because I've already participated in theirs." All of McCorvey's artistic endeavors are triggered by a very simple philosophy: Art is a wonderful catalyst for establishing collaborative relationships that produce mutual benefits.

Among those benefits is a string of auxiliary entrepreneurial ventures. Had Everett McCorvey been hopelessly unable to play or sing an eight-note scale, he would nevertheless have excelled in the business of art. Eschewing a purist's approach to art appreciation, McCorvey champions the notion that art, like any other endeavor, is fueled by financial support, and that without it, the art that no one sees or hears is still art, but it is functionless. He knows that well-financed universal dissemination of art, particularly "the song," is critical to its survival.

Combining his zeal for advocacy and economic support, McCorvey founded in 1995 the American Spiritual Ensemble [ASE], a group of 16-25 classically

Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

trained singers whose mission is to preserve the American Negro Spiritual. He becomes the consummate teacher when discussing the spiritual. “A lot of people...don’t recognize the difference...The spirituals are the folk songs of the American Negro slaves...They took the music, the rhythms of their culture, and combined it with the music that they heard in America. And they created this new music called the spiritual.” ASE performs full concert programs of American Negro spirituals classically arranged by African American composers. The group also performs Broadway, Jazz and Operatic selections highlighting the African American experience. Viewing and listening to selected ASE performances on McCorvey’s website [everettmccorvey.com] is nothing short of heavenly inspiration, a recommended auditory antidote for malaise of any origin.

With appreciation for the economies of operatic productions, he partnered with the UK Center for Visualization & Virtual Environments in its College of Engineering to create projection technology and a projection system called SCRIBE (Self Contained Rapidly Integrated Background Environment). SCRIBE is now a for-profit company called SCRIBE Entertainment, LLC. McCorvey also founded United Artist and Authors Agency, LLC, providing professional representation for performing and creative artists, and its subsidiary, Multigram Productions, which focuses on the development of musical events, audio and video projects, and television programs.

Perhaps the achievement of which McCorvey is proudest is his role as mentor to his students. UK has more singers in the United States Military Chorus than any other university or conservatory in the country. McCorvey doesn’t view his students simply as singers. As he has said, “We feel that we are creating citizens, contributing citizens to society...And our medium happens to be opera and vocal music. But we want people who are going to give to their community...And so in



Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

Dr. Everett McCorvey enjoying some play time on the keyboard.



Photo: Courtesy of University of Kentucky

Alicia Helm McCorvey with her husband, Dr. Everett McCorvey at Avery Fisher Hall in December 2014. Dr. McCorvey is the artistic director of the National Choral.



Photo: Phillip Groshang

Alicia Helm McCorvey and Dr. Everett McCorvey at the close of It's a Grand Night for Singing in 2013

that sense when we bring people to the University of Kentucky, we train the entire person. And yes, you can have a tremendous talent and be a tremendous citizen and a giver.”

This recipient of the 2009 Kentucky Star Award for contributions to the arts in the Commonwealth, this Metropolitan Opera Judge, this fully engaged faculty member and producer in one of the nation’s leading opera programs, this conscientious nurturer of young talent and ambition, and this unfathomably gifted performer manages to achieve myriad goals with success, grace, and seeming ease.

And he does it all in just 36 hours a day.

*Vanzetta Penn McPherson is
a retired United States
Magistrate Judge in Montgomery.
She is an arts advocate and former member
of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.
McPherson writes a bi-monthly
public affairs column for
The Montgomery Advertiser.*

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Mack Gibson

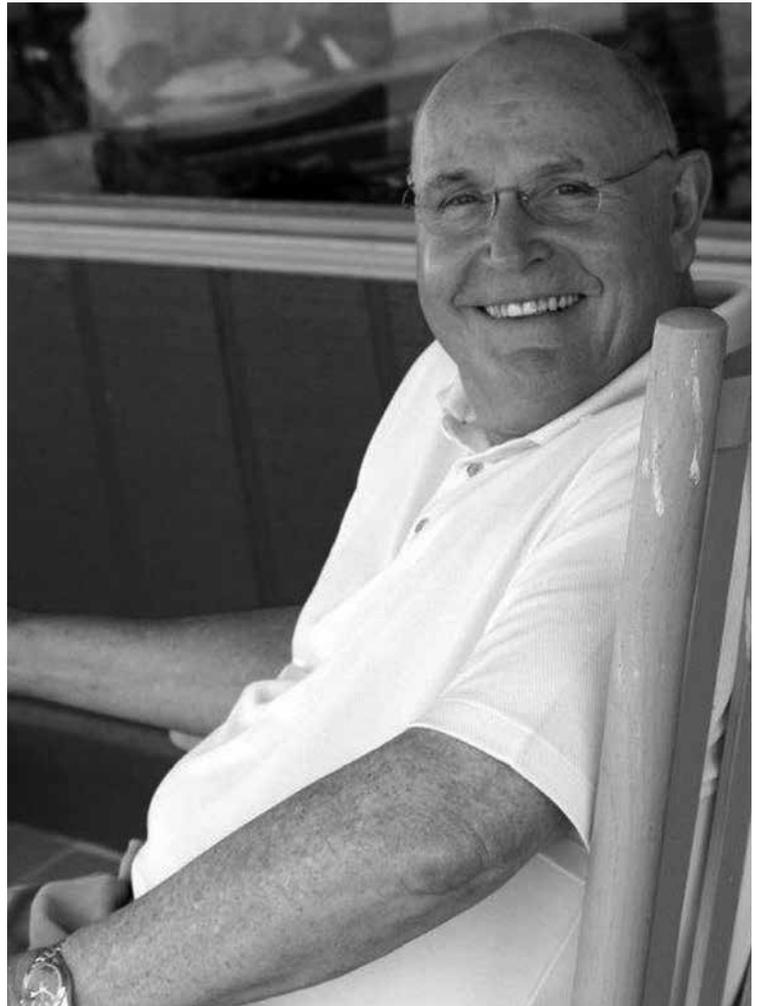
Leading the Rebirth of a City The Holman & Ethel Johnson Center for the Arts in Troy

by Wiley White

Mack Gibson delights in talking about how he was appointed Chairman of the Board of the Troy-Pike Cultural Arts Center, Inc. (TPCAC) on April 24, 2002, when, as a new board member, he missed the first meeting. “It was a conspiracy—they tricked me,” he extrapolates, eyes twinkling, arms wide. What he doesn’t add is the fact that the trick proved prophetic. In nominating Mack Gibson to the position of Chairman, which he still holds twelve years later, they secured the success of their grassroots effort to save Troy’s historic Classical Revival style United States Post Office (circa 1910) and repurpose it for the arts. Today, TPCAC proudly identifies itself as the founding organization of the only cultural arts center within a fifty-mile radius of Troy. “I don’t know of another town in our part of the state that has done what we’ve done,” Gibson says.

Halfway through twelve years of unwavering leadership, Mack Gibson led the charge to accomplish a project that some skeptics considered just a pipe dream. Gibson and his Board achieved their goal in 2008, when they welcomed a huge crowd through the doors of Pike County, Alabama’s first cultural arts center—The Holman and Ethel Johnson Center for the Arts in Troy, now branded The Johnson Center for the Arts (JCA).

Gibson’s Board magnified their triumph with a blockbuster Grand Opening on an unforgettable September Sunday, featuring an exhibit of thirty-five Andy Warhol prints hand delivered two



Gibson enjoying conversation with friends at one of the many fundraising events for the Johnson Center for the Arts.

Photo: Courtesy of the Gibson Family

Photo: Courtesy of the Troy-Pike Cultural Arts Center



On August 1, 2007, the contractor, several TPCAC board members and the executive director break ground on the renovation project.

weeks earlier by courier from the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. *Troy Museum Exhibits Essential Warhol* was the headline of a full-page article in *The Birmingham News*, by James Nelson, Visual Arts Critic. The fact that such an exceptional event was taking place in South Central Alabama was considered nothing short of a miracle, especially by those who hadn't been paying attention to the grassroots effort by a small group of people working since 2000 to save the historic building and repurpose it for the arts.

Gibson's years of service since 2008 have been spent in fundraising to provide operational expenses of the non-profit center as well as the Board's yearly payment of \$89,000 toward the \$1.628m USDA renovation loan. The JCA remains admission-free and has upheld a reputation for showing outstanding art from across the Southeast, art by top Alabama artists,

Photo: Courtesy of the Troy-Pike Cultural Arts Center



Troy-Pike Cultural Arts Center's newly renovated Johnson Center for the Arts in August, 2008.

and student art. “Troy has done great things for its senior citizens. However, we needed to do something for the children of Troy and Pike County,” Mack related. “Our mission statement, *Cultural enrichment of the lives of all citizens through education in, and exposure to, the Arts*, avows that arts education will be at the forefront of this endeavor.”

The birth, emergence and continued growth of the Johnson Center for the Arts, led by its never-say-die chairman, has been widely acclaimed as phenomenal. Visitors as well as artists of all genres have declared it to be one of the finest visual arts spaces in Alabama, and one of the friendliest. The JCA’s highly acclaimed arts education initiative, *ArtBridges*, draws praise from teachers and students of the city and county school systems as well as Troy University’s art faculty and students. The Johnson Center for the Arts has become a culturally significant asset, not just for Troy and Pike County, but the entire Southeast.

Gibson describes the first four years of the project as “bumpy, to say the least,” until that fifth year was reached. He knew the project would succeed when, in 2005, Troy natives, Manley and Mary Lois Johnson made a significant contribution to name the center for Manley’s parents. “It took benefactors like the Johnsons—people who wanted to do something good for their hometown—to really get things started,” Mack said. “Other donors began lining up. That was a great day!”

“Mack Gibson’s persistence and dedication to this project is rooted in his innate love of the arts, his love of this community and its people, and his strong belief that, when a city promotes arts and culture, good things begin to happen,” said Troy Mayor, Jason Reeves.

Andrew Mack Gibson was born February 1, 1939, in the rural Crenshaw County community of Glenwood, Alabama, to parents I.D. and Corrie Gibson. His father, a successful businessman, taught his sons that success requires the responsibility of giving back to your community. Both parents were very involved in the life of Glenwood. Mack and his brother, Wayne, were taught to give back; to be courteous to everybody; to love their country; and to love the Lord—everything that makes a person a good citizen. There were no arts, no TV, no regular newspaper. Like many children of the day, the brothers entertained themselves utilizing their imagination and creativity. The Gibson family took advantage of every opportunity to travel.



Chad Holley of Holley-Henley Builders, Inc. and Corley Chapman, Jr., TPCAC Project Director, review architectural plans for the renovation of the historic 1910 post office with Mack Gibson in August of 2007.

Photo: Courtesy of the Troy-Pike Cultural Arts Center



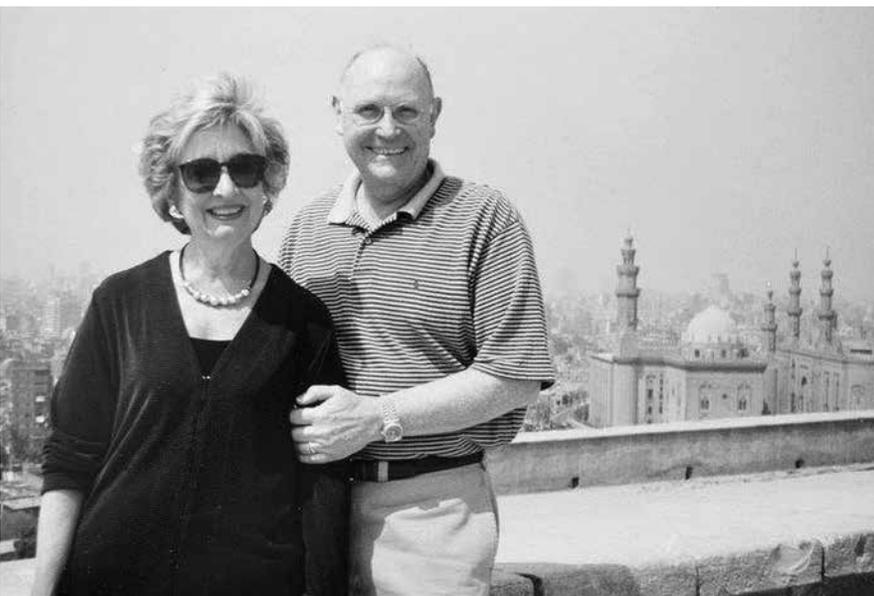
Gibson enjoying those wonderful years in Glenwood, Alabama during the 1950s.



Private Andrew Mack Gibson gave to his nation by serving a two-year tour of duty with the United States Army, 1963-65.

I.D. and Corrie provided each of their sons a college education, letting each choose his particular college. Mack credits his choice to graduate from Baylor University as the best thing that could

have happened to him. In 1960, at the end of his junior year, he experienced a once-in-a-lifetime introduction to the arts. He joined a group of students from several Texas universities on a two-month tour of Europe, led by an exceptional Baylor tour guide, who demanded not only appropriate dress (mostly coat and tie), but that the trip be a learning experience. "We traveled to Europe by ship, visited nine countries via train, plane and boat; literally went into every major museum, cathedral, and architectural wonder; discovered new foods, experienced great hotels and everything else that you would do if you had never been out of the United States," Mack recalled. "For someone coming from Crenshaw County it was something! I can still to this day envision the experience. It was mind-expanding. We didn't miss anything. That trip changed the way I looked



Mack and Mary pose overlooking the city of Cairo, Egypt.



Photo: Courtesy of the Gibson family

A favorite time for the Gibsons is a trip to their Florida beach home with their grandchildren.

at the world and looked at art.”

In 1961, after graduation, Gibson had a job offer in Troy, and decided he wanted to come home and try to make a difference in his state. “I worked for two years until Uncle Sam decided he wanted me,” Mack said. During his two-year tour of duty in the US Army, he took a thirty-day leave and traveled again, taking military flights to span the globe.

Gibson settled in Troy, and began building lasting friendships while building a successful accounting business. He continues as the senior partner in the accounting firm of Gibson & Carden, LLC and even he wonders if he will ever retire. “Troy was not virgin territory for the Arts,” he recalled. “It always has been a cultural town, full of well-traveled and well educated people.” He joined the newly formed Great Books Club and enjoyed cultural interaction with its

members. After a few years, he met and married a local Troy girl, Mary Smith. Mack says, “Mary is a great encourager as well as a good critic. Her help and her hands-on support of Johnson Center



Photo: Courtesy of the Gibson family

Mack and Mary enjoying the beautiful sights and tasty cuisine of Paris.

events have been critical to the success of the project from the beginning.” They have two children, Melanie Geary and Andrew, and two grandchildren, Chase and Annabelle Geary. He involved himself in civic, church and many other related activities. He is a deacon at First Baptist Church, a member of the Troy Rotary Club, has served on the Chamber Board, Troy City Schools Board, Troy Arts Council, Pike Pioneer Museum Board, and the Board of Directors of Troy Bank and Trust Company. In Mack’s opinion, if people are going to be part of their city, its organizations and churches, they need to give it their best. Mack and Mary continue to travel throughout the

United States and abroad at every opportunity. Their home is filled with original art, as is Mack’s office.

Gibson says he was at a loss for words when he received the call informing him of this award. “I was speechless, humbled, to say the least. I had to stop and think what this wonderful honor means,” he said. “Then I realized it means that, through me, a lot of people are being thanked who have worked hard on this project for a lot of years.”

“TROY University and the City of Troy enjoy a strong “town-gown” partnership in the fine arts—Mack Gibson stands at the forefront of that partnership. Mack’s leadership has assured that generations of



Photo: Courtesy of the Troy-Pike Cultural Arts Center

Gibson welcomes guests at an artist reception in the Johnson Center for the Arts.



Photo: Barbara Reed

Artist Don Stewart giving a gallery talk at the Johnson Center for the Arts in September 2014.



Photo: Walter Black

A performance by Troy University students at the Cultural Arts Studio, a renovated warehouse owned by the Johnson Center for the Arts. It is used for exhibitions, education programming and facility rentals.

Trojans have been exposed to outstanding performances and exhibits both at the University and in the community, thus developing an appreciation for culture that lasts a lifetime. TROY University could have no better partner than Mack Gibson,” said Dr. Jack Hawkins, Jr., Chancellor of Troy University.

Gibson’s success with the cultural arts project can be attributed to his love of arts and culture and his love of people; however, it’s his financial expertise, persistence, passion and enthusiasm for the project that has kept him, and his Board, focused. “It’s all about relationships,” he said recently when asked about his business success. The phrase also reflects his success with the cultural arts project.

Gibson never meets a stranger, and has no qualms whatsoever about asking others for donations of time and money to the center. He urges his Board to take the same attitude. “People in Troy and Pike County are passionate about the Arts,” he said. “Together we are planting seeds that will grow a forest.”

*Wiley White is the
Development Coordinator of the
The Holman & Ethel Johnson Center
for the Arts.*

Winston Groom

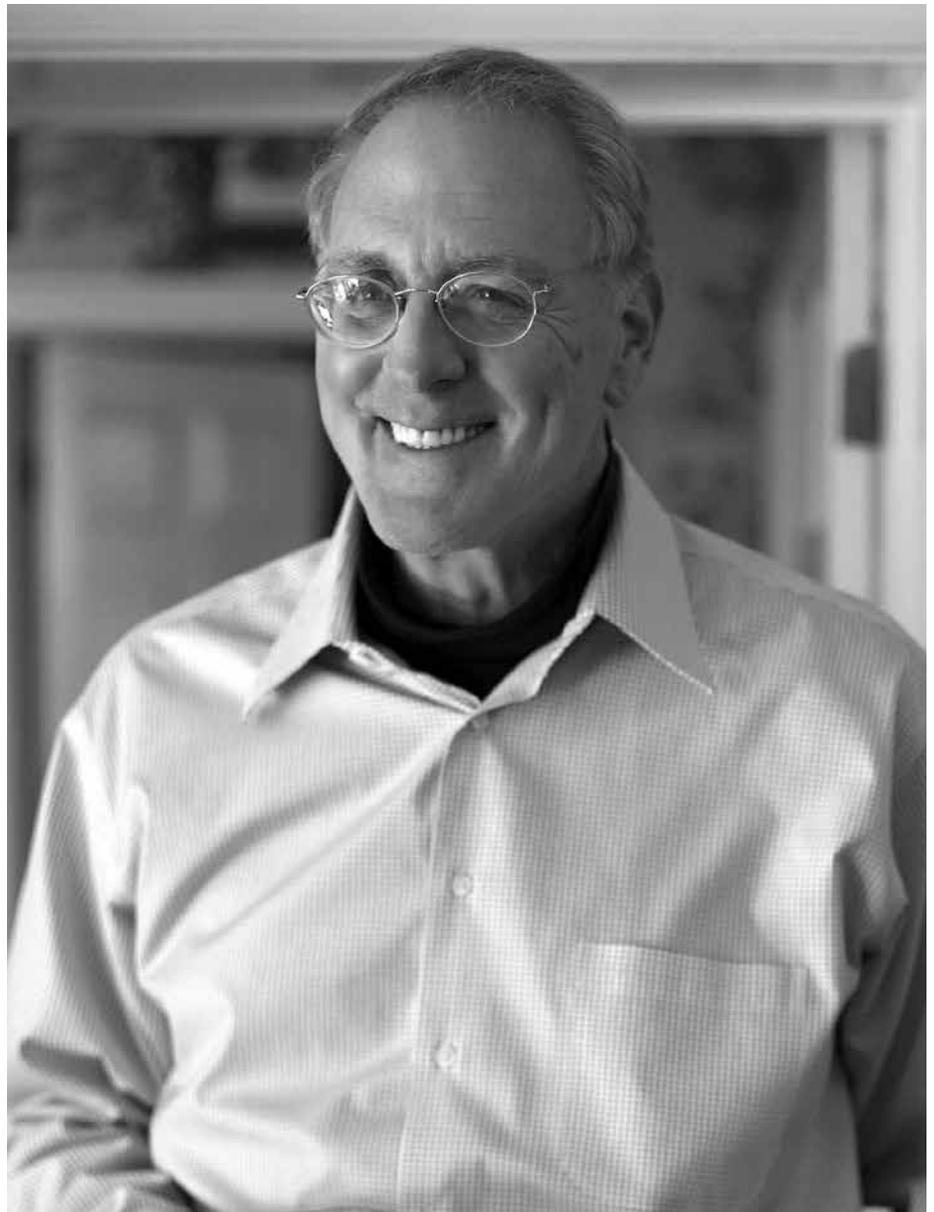
Military Historian, Southern Novelist & Masterful Storyteller

by Dr. Serena Blount

Long-time Mobilian Winston Groom is best known for his novel *Forrest Gump*, a work in the tradition of southern fiction that became a cultural phenomenon after it was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film of the same name. Groom has written a number of novels that draw on his experiences in Vietnam; recently, he has turned to writing historical nonfiction. *Forrest Gump* is more than a best-seller. Now in print for over 25 years *Gump* is a classic—as fresh, entertaining and relevant as the day it was published.

Professor of English Emeritus, The University of Alabama, and Host of Alabama Public TV's "Bookmark" Don Noble places Groom in stellar company. "A writer's legacy might be measured by the number of characters, phrases, words he has put into English usage. Very few writers make this list at all. Shakespeare is first with characters like Falstaff, Lear, et al. and phrases like 'the green-eyed monster,' and countless others. Dickens is second with *David Copperfield*, and "It was the best of times."

"But Groom is right in there. We have *Forrest* himself, an unfor-



Groom relaxing at home.

Photo: Squire Fox

gettable creation, and Gumpisms such as the opening line: 'being a idiot is no box of chocolates' to the closing 'At least I didn't lead no humdrum life.' With the refrain, 'I got to pee,' scattered liberally throughout," Noble has written.

"The novel *Forrest Gump* alone would serve to make Groom nearly immortal but Groom has also established himself as a respected military historian. He reads, assimilates and organizes masses of materials, primary and secondary sources, and then uses his skills as a novelist to tell the story of the Battle of Shiloh or New Orleans or, most recently in *The Aviators*, the remarkable lives of Charles Lindbergh, Jimmy Doolittle and Eddie Rickenbacker."

Born in Washington, D.C., on March 23, 1944, Groom grew up in Alabama. He attended University Military School in Mobile and then entered the University of Alabama (UA), where he was a member of Delta Tau Delta fraternity. He received a B.A. degree in 1965 in English. While working as the editor of a literary magazine at UA, Groom decided against his ambition of becoming a lawyer and instead decided to become a writer.

A member of ROTC at the university, Groom served in the U.S. Army (1965-1967), mostly with the Fourth Infantry Division, completing a tour of duty in Vietnam (1966-1967), an experience that had a profound effect on both his fiction and nonfiction. During his military service, Groom achieved the rank of captain. Upon his discharge, Groom settled in Washington, D.C., and began working as a reporter for *The*



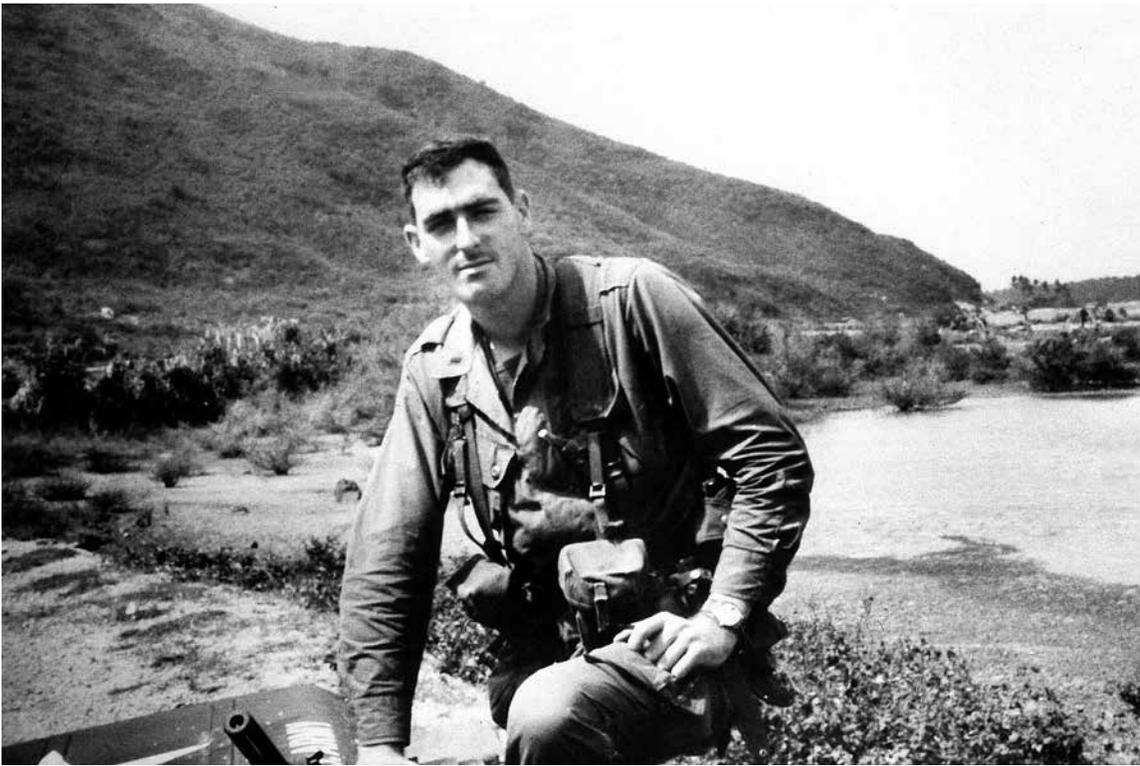
Groom enjoying a hunt.

Photo: Courtesy of Winston Groom



(Left to right) Winston Groom, Karin Wilson and Louis Zamperini of Laura Hillenbrand's book, Unbroken. Groom interviewed Zamperini on stage at the USS Alabama Pavilion to an excited audience of 800.

Photo: Courtesy of Karin Wilson and Page & Palette



Groom's days in Vietnam would serve as source material for his character Forrest Gump.

Washington Star, covering police and court matters and later writing a column. While at the *Star*, Groom met southern author Willie Morris, who encouraged him to go to New York to pursue his writing career. Groom followed this advice, and in New York, he moved in the city's literary circles, encountering among others fellow Alabamian Truman Capote. In 1969 Winston Groom married his first wife, Ruth Noble. They divorced in 1974.

In 1976, he quit journalism and began writing novels full-time, publishing three in close succession: *Better Times than These* (1978), *As Summers Die* (1980), and *Only* (1984). During this period, he also co-wrote *Conversations with the Enemy: The Story of PFC Robert Garwood* (1983) with fellow journalist Duncan Spencer. *Conversations with the Enemy*, a work of creative nonfiction, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Better Times Than These and

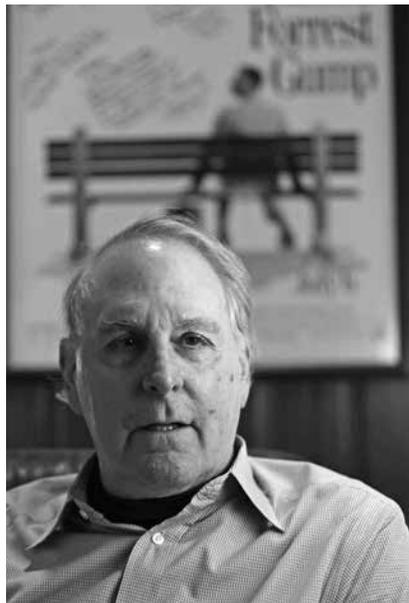


Photo: Mike Brantley

Winston Groom at his home in Point Clear, Alabama. Pictured on the wall of his study is a poster from the 1986 motion picture adaptation of Groom's novel "Forrest Gump."

Conversations with the Enemy both draw on Groom's own experiences and focus on the lives of U.S. soldiers who served in Vietnam and their experiences after the war. *Better Times Than These*, written from the

perspective of a southern writer who reflects upon the horrific experiences of Company Bravo, received critical acclaim when it was published. In 1980, Groom received the Best Fiction Award from the Southern Library Association for *As Summers Die*, which focuses on a lawyer in small-town Louisiana and his immersion into the realities of segregation and greed when oil is discovered on a black sharecroppers' land. This novel was adapted for television in 1986. *Only* focuses on the life of a sheepdog of the same name and his relationship with his new family.

In 1985, Groom returned to Mobile and began writing *Forrest Gump*. Although it was published in 1986, the book was not well known until it was adapted for the film of the same name in 1994. Early reviews of the book were generally favorable. *Forrest Gump* tells the story of a simple-minded innocent whose life intersects the critical historical moments that occur during

the tumultuous period of American history that includes the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and America's involvement in Vietnam. The plot of the film diverges greatly from that of the novel, in which the protagonist eventually becomes a wrestler, an astronaut, and even a chess player; moreover, the film's Gump is rather more naïve and optimistic than the Gump of Groom's novel. In the



Photo: Courtesy of Winston Groom

Groom in his early writing days.

wake of the film's success, however, *Forrest Gump* became a bestseller (1.7 million copies). Groom soon after published the short work *Gumpisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Forrest Gump* (1994) and the novel *Gump and Co.* (1995). He also followed the movie's success with two cookbooks: *The Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. Cookbook* (1994) and *Forrest Gump: My Favorite Chocolate Recipes; Mama's Fudge, Cookies, Cakes, and Candies* (1995).

In the year after the publica-



Photo: Courtesy of Winston Groom

Groom served in Vietnam in the 1960s mostly with the Army's Fourth Infantry Division.

tion of *Forrest Gump*, Groom married his second wife, Anne Clinton Bridges, with whom he had a daughter, Carolina Montgomery Groom.

Groom's next work of fiction, *Gone the Sun* (1988), centers on a Vietnam veteran who returns to his childhood home in Alabama, takes over the newspaper, and begins uncovering the town's secrets. The novel met with generally favorable reviews, especially in terms of its plot twists and narration, and won the Pulitzer Prize. Groom published his most recent novel, *Such a Pretty, Pretty Girl*, in 1999. The crime thriller focuses on a recently married Los Angeles anchorwoman who is being blackmailed, her former lover, and his investigations into the blackmailer's identity.

Groom's more recent work has focused on historical nonfiction. His first such book, *Shrouds of Glory: From Atlanta to Nashville; The Last*

Great Campaign of the Civil War, was published in 1994. In 2000, Groom published *The Crimson Tide: An Illustrated History of Football at the University of Alabama*. In 2002, he published *A Storm in Flanders: The Ypres Salient; Tragedy and Triumph*



Photo: Courtesy of Winston Groom

Groom early in his military career.



Groom sharing humor with audience members.



Groom during a Q & A session with fans at the Aviators event hosted by the Page & Palette Bookstore in Fairhope.

on the Western Front. He followed these with *1942: The Year that Tried Men's Souls* (2005), *Patriotic Fire: Andrew Jackson and Jean Lafitte at the Battle of New Orleans* (2006), *Vicksburg, 1863* (2009), *Kearney's*

March (2010), *Shiloh, 1862* (2012) and, most recently, *The Aviators: Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle, Charles Lindbergh, and the Epic Age of Flight* (2013).

Groom's work as a narrative historian has earned him much praise by reviewers, who see him as presenting historical events in a novelistic manner for a general readership. *Vicksburg, 1863* earned particularly high praise. In 2011 Groom was honored with the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year, given annually at the Alabama Writers' Symposium at Alabama Southern Community College in Monroeville.

Groom currently resides in Point Clear where he is a literary fixture of the community, graciously signing books requested by patrons of Page and Palette Bookshop in the heart of Fairhope. Page and Palette proprietor Karin Wilson remembers,



Groom signing books at the Aviators event hosted by the Page & Palette Bookstore in Fairhope.

“I met Winston Groom back in 1986 at his first book signing for *Forrest Gump* when I was a senior in high school. At the time, my grandmother owned our family bookstore, Page & Palette. How could I ever imagine that thirty years later I would be able to look back on all the events I’ve hosted for Winston and be able to count him—one of our best-selling authors—a loyal customer and generous friend?”

“One of the most memorable events Page & Palette ever hosted with Winston was when Louis Zamperini, the subject of Laura Hillenbrand’s *Unbroken* was interviewed by Winston on stage at the USS Alabama Pavilion in front of an audience of over 800 people,” Wilson said.

This generosity of spirit and eagerness to meet his readers characterizes Winston Groom, agreed Jeanie Thompson, Executive Director of the Alabama Writers’ Forum. “We have hosted several events at which Winston signed books as long as the readers were there and he always chatted amicably with his fans and was not in a hurry. All writers love their readers, and when a writer is as generous as Winston, that love is returned.”

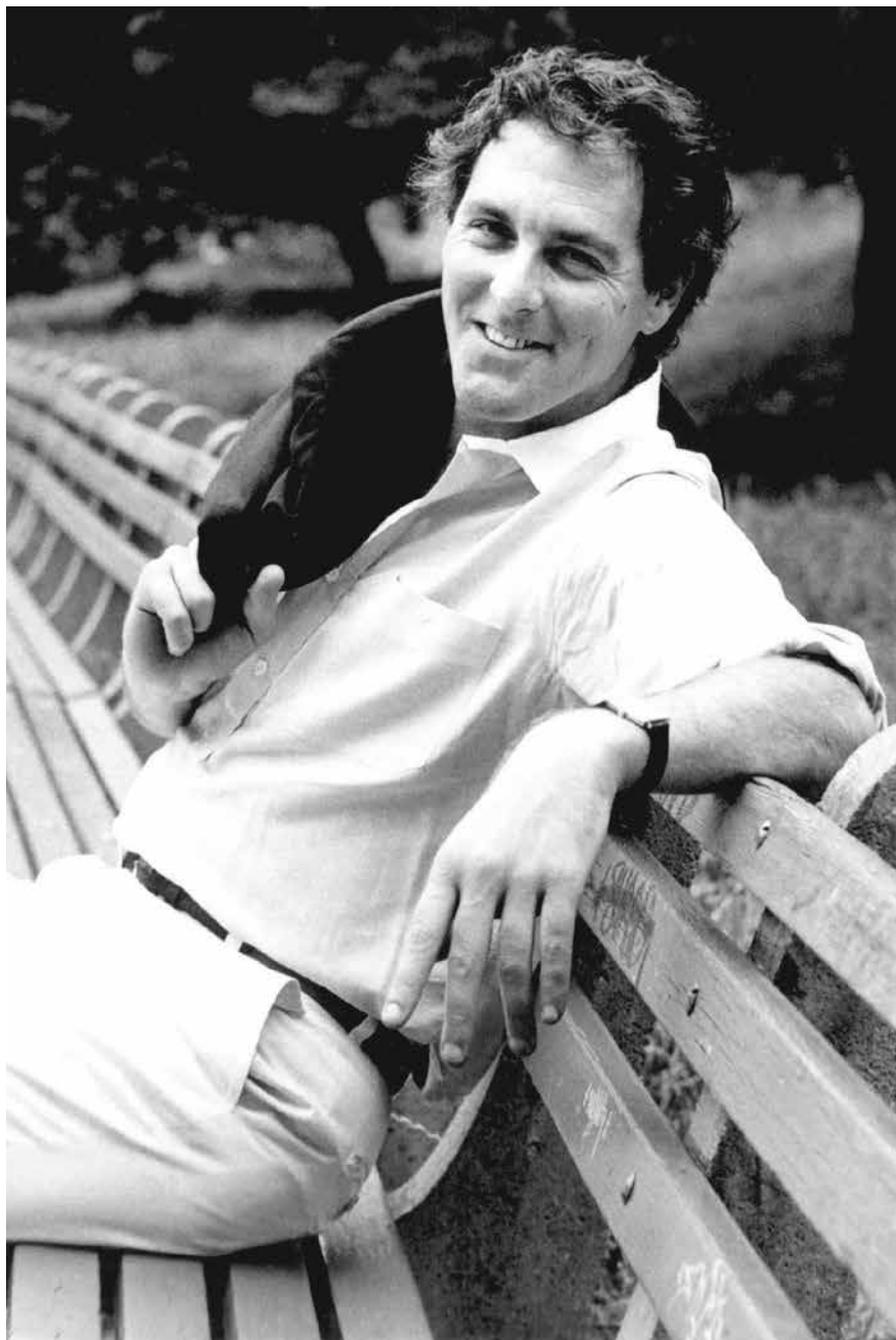


Photo: Courtesy of Winston Groom

Possibly foretelling an iconic scene of Forrest Gump as Groom relaxes on a bench.

Additional Resources: Hoffman, Roy. “The Bard of Point Clear: The Inimitable Winston Groom.” *Garden & Gun Magazine* Summer 2007.

*Dr. Serena Blount
is professor of English
at the University of Alabama.*

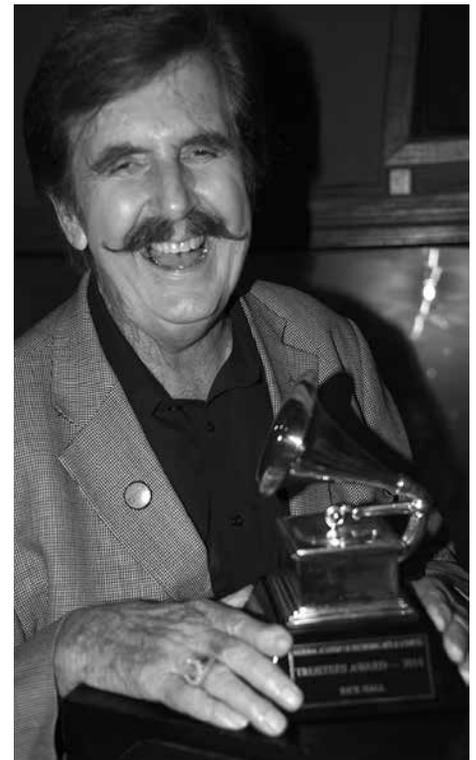
THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Rick Hall

Bringing FAME to Muscle Shoals

by Deb Boykin

“I was hoping it had the magic; I didn’t know. So I brought my band in and went up in the control room, nervously turned on the talkback button to the musicians and said with a slight crackle in my voice, ‘rolling.’ When they kicked off ‘Steal Away,’...the hair on the back of my neck actually stood up. And of course, this was the birth of the Muscle Shoals Sound” In the documentary *Muscle Shoals*, this is how Governor’s Award recipient Rick Hall describes the first recording session at FAME



Rick Hall holding his Trustees Award Special Grammy.

Photo: Courtesy of Dick Cooper



Muscle Shoals welcomes and celebrates its history.

Photo: Courtesy of FAME studios



A wall of awards attest to Hall’s success as a producer.

Photo: Courtesy of Dick Cooper

studios in 1963. It would not be the last. His determined work ethic, his ability to recognize what makes a hit song, to nurture and inspire performers, and to bring out the best in the musicians he assembled would eventually bring artists from around the world to record in a small town tucked away in the northwest corner of Alabama.

There was nothing about his early life to predict the success that Rick Hall would achieve. Born in



Photo: Courtesy of FAME studios

Clarence Carter's hit Patches had special meaning to Rick Hall.

Tishomingo, Mississippi, young Rick and his sister were raised during the Depression in the isolated, hardscrabble Freedom Hills section of Franklin County, Alabama. His father Herman, a sawmill worker, struggled to support his children. Music was one means of escape for the family. Herman loved to play guitar and sing gospel songs and he looked forward to the annual arrival of the Stamps-Baxter songbook. These gospel songbooks were favorites in the rural south and were inexpensively printed so as to be affordable. Herman Hall often sang tenor in gospel quartets, occasionally taught singing schools and frequently attended singings at area churches. He instilled in his son a love of music, a gift that would set young Rick on his course in life. Rick and his sister Wenoka learned to sing harmony parts to the gospel and country songs their father loved. When a relative brought home a mandolin, a neighbor taught the young boy to tune it and Rick taught himself to play it. Soon, he was playing and singing for the neighbors and his fellow students at Rock Creek School. "I soon started getting the entertainment bug," he recalled in his book *The Man From Muscle Shoals*.

The entertainment bug stayed

with him and he also learned to play fiddle and guitar. At seventeen, Rick Hall went north to find opportunity like many southerners of his age and background. He moved to Rockford, Illinois where he worked as a tool grinder and played in country bands at night. After moves to Battle Creek, Chicago, and back to Rockford, playing music all the while, Rick was drafted into the Army. Throughout his time in the service, he maintained his interest in music, playing with bands whenever he could. Hall



Photo: Courtesy of FAME studios

Otis Redding and Rick Hall in the studio. Redding was at FAME to produce "Sweet Soul Music" on Arthur Conley.



Photo: Courtesy of FAME studios

A hallowed entrance into music history.



Photo: Courtesy of FAME studios

Duane Allman and Rick Hall at the FAME Studios sound board.



Photo: Courtesy of Alabama Music Hall of Fame

Rick Hall with the Osmonds and Casey Kasem

credits his time in the Army with expanding his musical horizons beyond the country and gospel he'd grown up singing and playing. "I began to appreciate all kinds of music, from big bands and blues to jazz and rock and roll," he noted in his biography. This would serve him well.

After leaving the Army, Hall returned to Alabama where he married Faye Marie Stegall in 1955. Determined to escape the poverty of his youth, he worked at Reynolds Aluminum Plant in Muscle Shoals, farmed cotton on a parcel of rented land, and played with a band called the Country Pals. Life was good for the young couple, but their happiness was short-lived. Tragically, his young wife died in an automobile accident in which Rick Hall was also injured. Within two weeks of his wife's death, Rick would also lose his father to an accident. Devastated, he withdrew from life until music came to his rescue in the form of his bandmates in the Country Pals. He began playing with them again on their live radio shows and for dances around the area.

He also began writing songs, often with Billy Sherrill, another Shoals-area musician. An early collaboration, "Sweet and Innocent" was recorded by Roy Orbison. It didn't make much of an impact on the charts, but an article in the *Florence Times-Tri-Cities Daily* caught the attention of Tom Stafford, a Florence theater owner who wanted to start his own music publishing company.

He called Hall and Sherrill to propose a partnership. They reached an agreement, with each one owning a third of the company they called Florence Alabama Music Enterprises—FAME.

Hall moved from Hamilton to Muscle Shoals and formed a band called the Fairlaines with Sherrill, guitarist Terry Thompson, vocalist Charles Senn,

and drummer Randy Allen. Where the Country Pals had played western swing and country music, the Fairlaines played rock and roll, working a regional circuit of fraternity dances and clubs from Mississippi to Kentucky. In addition to his work as a musician, Hall continued to write songs and began to make trips to Nashville to pitch songs he and Sherrill wrote and FAME published. Their songs were recorded by artists including George Jones, Brenda Lee, and other Nashville performers. While Hall was gaining experience and learning more about the inner workings of the music business, his two partners,



(Clockwise from lower left) Rick Hall, John Salstone, David Hood, Barry Beckett, and Randy McCormick with Candi Stanton in the center.

Photo: Dick Cooper

who wanted to take a less intense approach, dissolved their partnership. The two of them formed a new publishing company and left Rick Hall with full ownership of FAME.

Full ownership didn't include recording equipment or a studio, so for a time, Hall continued playing with the Fairlaines and looking for a way to move his company forward.

He took on a partner named Hansel Cross. They had met when Hall wrote and recorded jingles for radio commercials promoting Cross's car dealership. The two men took out a loan, purchased equipment, and set up FAME studio in its first Muscle Shoals location, an abandoned warehouse on Wilson Dam Road. Fellow Fairlaine Terry Thompson, and

Dan Penn, a young songwriter and singer stayed with FAME instead of signing with Hall's former partners. Once the new studio was ready, the three began writing and recording demos of their songs there. Again, Rick Hall took the lead in the business, building his reputation in the Nashville music industry as he went. Within months of opening the studio, he was more successful than he had been in the previous partnership. "I was a now a force to be reckoned with and there was no stopping me," he says.

Hall began to develop an interest in soul, or rhythm and blues, intrigued with the "high quality and diversity" of the songs cut by artists such as Jackie Wilson, Ray Charles, and Ben E. King.

He had an opportunity to produce his first record in that genre when his former partner Tom Stafford asked him to produce Arthur Alexander's "You Better Move On." Hall agreed, drawing on his keen ear and insistence on perfection, teaching himself the process of engineering and recording as he went. Arthur Alexander said later, "Rick Hall lived with that record like a hermit until he had it just right." Throughout his career, getting it "just right" would be Rick Hall's standard as a producer.

"You Better Move On" became a hit, enabling Hall to move from the warehouse on Wilson Dam Road and build the FAME Recording Studios on East Avalon Avenue in Muscle Shoals. He followed that success with "When a Man Loves a Woman" by Percy Sledge and the first hit produced in the new studio,



Photo: Courtesy of Rick and Linda Hall

Rick and Linda enjoying some pool time with their sons, Marcus, Rick, and Rodney.

Jimmy Hughes's "Steal Away." In the years to come, he would produce hits for artists including Clarence Carter, Candi Staton, Joe Tex, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Arthur Conley, and Otis Redding. He assembled studio musicians who are now household names in the music business, including Norbert Putnam, Spooner Oldham, Dan Penn, Peanut Montgomery, Jimmy Johnson, David Hood, Roger Hawkins, and Barry Beckett, all musicians based in

the Shoals. During the turbulence of the Civil Rights Era, these African-American artists and white musicians collaborated to produce music that became part of the soundtrack of the times. This collaboration was all the more remarkable because it took place in a small Alabama town where African-Americans and whites led mostly separate lives. If any discomfort or friction occurred, it came from the world outside the studio.

In the ensuing years, Hall turned his



Photo: Courtesy of Alabama Tourism

The Swampers with Rick Hall (far left, then clockwise) Roger Hawkins, Jimmy Johnson, David Hood and Spooner Oldham.

attention to pop artists such as Osmonds, Andy Williams, and Paul Anka. He worked with Bobby Gentry and came full circle back to his country roots, producing Mac Davis, Jerry Reed, and other country artists, including the group Alabama. He was instrumental in developing a bar band a few blocks up Avalon into the country group Shenandoah.

FAME is still a working studio and Rick Hall continues to produce. He and his wife Linda Cross Hall have three sons, all of whom have joined him in the music business. His oldest son Rick is a lawyer who is involved in entertainment law, and his middle son Mark is a producer, publisher, and songwriter. Rodney is a producer with, in his father's words, "a great passion for the past, present, and future of Muscle Shoals music." Rick has been the subject of a documentary, *Muscle Shoals* and has just published his

life's story: *The Man From Muscle Shoals: My Journey from Shame to Fame*. He received a prestigious Trustees Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Rick Hall's life and career have been marked by tragedies, obstacles, and hard work. He overcame them all to create an unlikely mecca for the best of America's musicians over the last six decades. He made a place where Alabama musicians could develop their talents and create music that is known and loved all over the world.

*Deb Boykin is the Design Arts
and the Community Arts
Program Manager for the
Alabama State Council on the Arts.*



Photo: Deb Boykin

(Left to right) John Paul White, David Hood, Jimmy Johnson, Rick Hall, Spooner Oldham, Donna Jean Godchaux and the Secret Sisters at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame ribbon cutting.

THE ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD



Herb Trotman

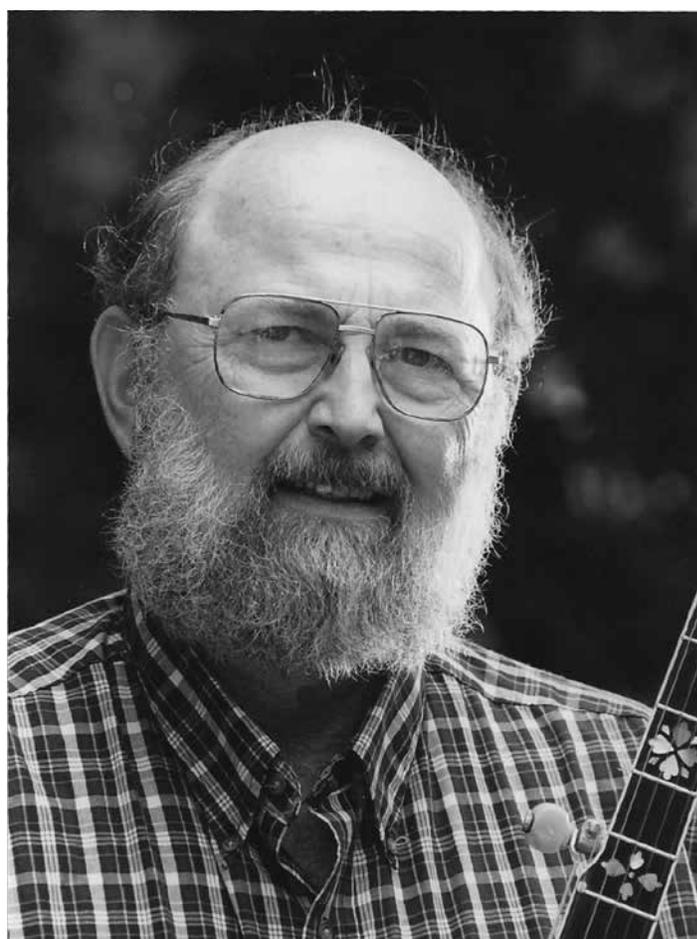
Craftsman, Mentor, and Touchstone

by Joey Brackner

Herb Trotman, a central figure in Alabama's old-time and bluegrass music scene for over 50 years, is a highly regarded banjo player and guitarist, who could have easily made a career as a professional musician. However, his ties to his home town of Birmingham and growing a now legendary business, Fretted Instruments, made him eschew the life of a musician living constantly on the road. Because he is a superior traditional musician, owner of a vital music store, an instrument repairman, a teacher and supporter of music education, and the center of a very large community of acoustic musicians, Herb Trotman is being awarded the 2015 Alabama Folk Heritage Award.

Herb was born in Birmingham in 1944, the only child of parents who enjoyed music of all kinds and kept instruments out and available around the house. Herb picked up a ukulele at age 4 and, on his own, was able to listen to recordings and figure out when to change chords. By his early teens, he was learning to play the guitar. His father, Herbert Trotman, Jr., who worked at U.S. Steel and called square dances on the side, preferred to call to live music, so Herb was around country music and musicians throughout his childhood. Since his dad started the first Alabama Jubilee square dance weekend in Birmingham in the 1950s, held at the YWCA where contra dances are now held, it is fitting that Herb has been a strong supporter of the Birmingham Friends of Old-Time Music and Dance. Today, he leads a band that continues to be a favorite of the dancers.

During his teenage years, Herb began playing the banjo. It was the sound of the banjo heard in his friends' recordings of the Kingston Trio that really caught his ear. He wanted to hear more. He started watching Flatt and Scruggs on Saturday afternoon/evenings with his



Herb Trotman

Photo: Mitchell Sargeant

mom and dad. Their shows, sponsored by Pet Milk and Martha White, aired between The Willis Brothers and The Porter Wagner Show on the local station during the late 50s and early 60s. Then Herb became friends with well-known banjoist Jim Conner who took him to meet Sand Mountain traditional musicians such as Arthur Kuykendall and Monk Daniels and he learned

Photo: Courtesy of Trotman family



Herb's parents, Herbert and Martha Trotman, are seen here working on a Joplin rag at home in the 70s. Martha studied piano with Jim Walbert of the Vaughn family, famous for their gospel songbooks. Herb's first business partner is David Walbert, Jim Walbert's son.

Photo: Courtesy of Trotman family



Herb and Herbert playing music at home in Fairfield, 1966.

those older styles of playing. He continued to play folk music and bluegrass through high school (Marion Military Institute) and college at University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, where he graduated with a degree in Sociology/Anthropology with a minor in Psychology. During the 1960s, he often appeared on stage with Jim Conner and Richard Lockmiller at the Lowenbrau Haus pub in Homewood, helping make it an important venue for folk musicians from the early 1960s through the early 1980s.

In 1974, after serving in the Air Force, Herb started a music store in Homewood, Alabama, initially with Homewood musician David Walbert and later Ricky Stone. This was to become a watershed moment in the Birmingham area string band music scene. Today, Herb owns the business himself and is not contemplating retirement because Fretted Instruments has become more than a job to him being a vehicle for fun and connection to musicians across north and central Alabama which it serves.

On the surface, Fretted Instruments is a quality music store best known for its high-end Martin and Collings guitars. Herb acts as a consultant, taking a special interest in finding the right guitar for each customer. He repairs instruments and many musicians who have encoun-



Photo: Courtesy of Trotman family

Doc Hamilton and Herb sharing recordings of live shows and interviews (1969, Austin, Texas).



Herb with his first guitar, the "house" guitar, shared by him and his dad (mid 50s).

tered last-minute problems with instruments have been grateful to him for getting them in working condition before a big gig. This list of grateful customers included Odetta and Bo Diddley. But even more important, Fretted Instruments has become a touchstone and point of reference for a large community of area musicians. When traditional music scholar Joyce Cauthen, a fine musician in her own right, asked Herb if he ever intended to start such a community he replied that, "it just happened." But everyone knows that it would not have happened without Herb's commitment to helping musicians learn to play and find good instruments and the high standard of musicianship he modeled for them.

Because Herb has created such a community around



Fairfield High School seniors Gene Waldon, Frank Garzarek and Herb Trotman (class of '62) entertain at school assembly.

Fretted Instruments, old-time and bluegrass musicians, guitar pickers and singer-songwriters drop in during the week and on Christmas Eve and Fourth of July, bringing their instruments, refreshments, and families to celebrate together. He is quoted as saying, "I sometimes view myself more as a custodian for a rather large amorphous therapy group." That expression became the subtitle for 12 CDs (and counting) of Christmas music played by area musicians and given out for free at Fretted

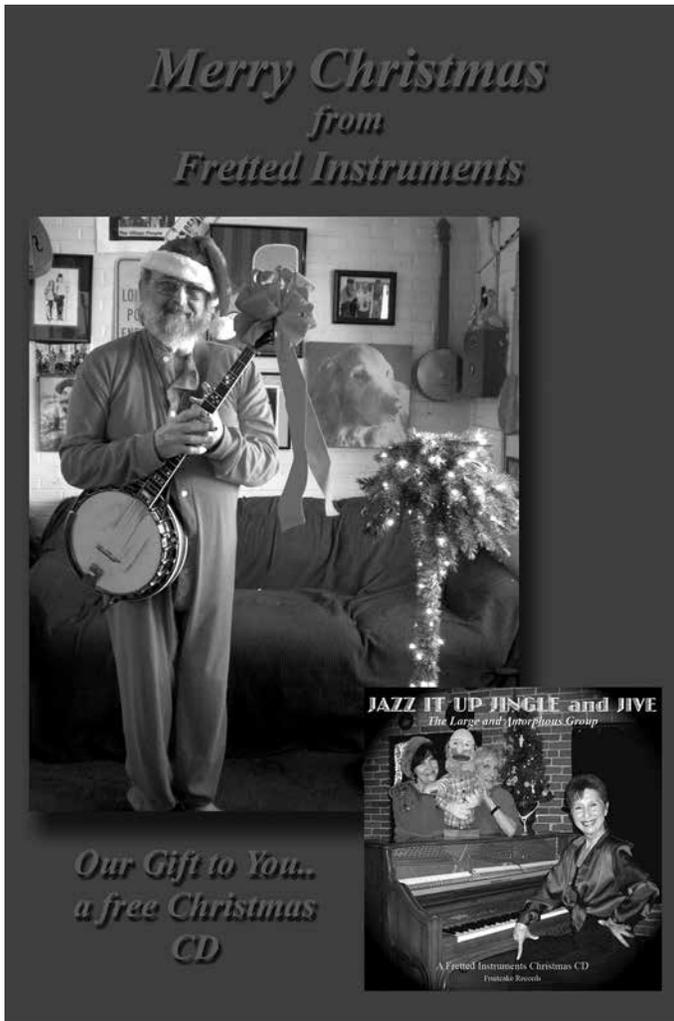


Herbert and Herb play a little music at home during one of Herbert and Martha's visits from Pittsburgh (late 70s).

Photo: Courtesy of Trotman family



Banjo workshop at 1991 Walnut Valley Festival, Winfield, Kansas (Participants Ron Block, Herb Trotman, Ritchie Dotson, Lynn Morris, and Alison Brown).



Instruments. Each year, for over a decade, the “Large and Amorphous Group” has recorded, with the help of Dr. Wayne Anderson, Christmas music especially for this CD. The music includes holiday standards and original songs ranging from sacred to sentimental to downright funny. For many people in Alabama the appearance of the new Christmas CD at Fretted Instruments means the holidays have begun. Herb and his “Large and Amorphous Group” have graciously allowed “Alabama Arts Radio” to broadcast selections from this CD during the Christmas season for several years.

Kathy Hinkle moved to Birmingham in the late 1970s and became involved in area choral music performance. She eventually joined the local country dance group now known as the Birmingham Friends of Old-Time Music and Dance or FOOTMAD where she was exposed to a different type of music. Kathy met Herb in the early 1990s when Joyce Cauthen, her new guitar instructor, suggested she visit Fretted Instruments to buy a guitar. Herb and Kathy became friends almost immediately. Their mutual love of music and dance led to the altar. As Kathy recalls, “One of my dance gypsy

Poster for Fretted Instruments 2010 Christmas CD: The CD Cover, lower right, features the Something Else! Trio with “Little Herb”, a David Stephens puppet. Fretted Instruments has created twelve Christmas CDs, thanks to the hard work of Wayne Anderson and his interest in this project since 2003.

trips took me to the Augusta Heritage Festival in Elkins, West Virginia in 1996. The next year I invited Herb to go along. We decided to attend Old Time Week instead of Dance Week... We began the week by applying for a marriage license during our Monday lunch break and we ended the week with a noon-time wedding in the judge's chambers of the Randolph County Courthouse, before heading back to our afternoon classes! I have a wonderful memory of that evening's dance. As we passed Jim and Joyce Cauthen on the dance floor during a waltz, Joyce asked us what we had done that day. Our response: "Oh, we got married!"

For the last 13 years, Kathy has performed in The Herb Trotman Band now consisting of herself, Herb, Andy Meginniss, and Jimmy Warren. For this and his many prior years of performance with various bands and artists such as Claire Lynch, Herb Trotman was inducted into the Alabama Bluegrass Association's Hall of Fame in 2010.

Herb's favorite activity at the shop is teaching. He is a kind and patient teacher who can take new musicians (young and old) as far along as they wish to go. One former student, Daniel Wallace, author of *Big Fish*, stated, "Along with Betty Caldwell, my English teacher in 11th grade at Altamont, Herb Trotman is one of the most powerful inspirations in my creative life. He was my banjo teacher for two years, and he was one scary character, intimidating in the best possible ways. He demanded

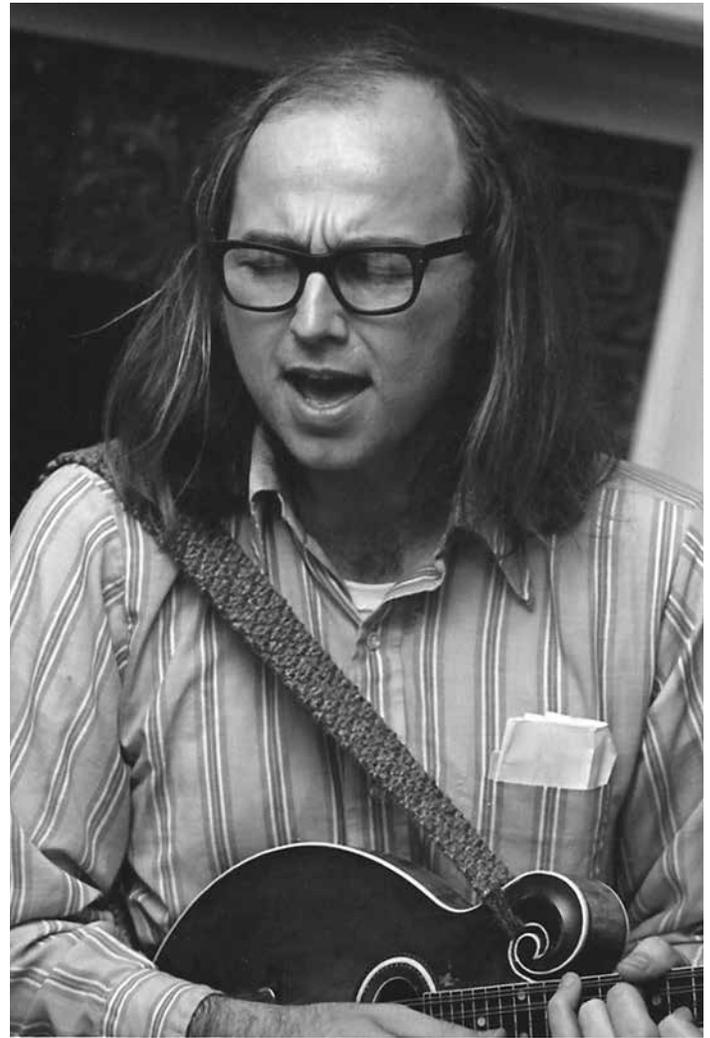


Photo: Doug Stocks

Herb singing and playing the Mandolin at a house jam.



Photo: Courtesy of Trotman family

Children's program sponsored by the Alabama Sampler Stage during Birmingham's City Stages festival. Herb Trotman with friends Laura Vines and Scooter Muse.



Herb playing at Morgan Hall in 1966.

*Special thanks to the following individuals
for assistance with the article:
Deb Boykin, Joyce Cauthen, Kathy Hinkle,
and Anne Kimzey.*

my best. Six months passed before I saw him smile, because it took that long for me to learn how to do an acceptable Scruggs roll, and it pleased him to hear it. I borrowed from him a work ethic without which art is just a hobby. Now we're friends and that, to me, is really exceptionally cool."

As a teacher, Herb immediately saw the value of the Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell when it was founded in 2007. He and Kathy serve on the Board of Directors, volunteer their time to raise money for its programs and direct the bluegrass and guitar sessions. Thanks to Herb's dedication and support, the "Bluegrass & Gee's Bend" workshop has brought hundreds of people to the folk school to learn bluegrass-style music from talented musicians like Charlie Cushman, Claire Lynch, Mark Schatz, Roland White and many more. These talented instructor musicians come to the folk school because they respect Herb as a person and as a musician.

As Alabama Folk School director Sarah Nee put it, "not only has Herb organized this workshop for many years, but he also participates as an instructor, spreading his invaluable knowledge about bluegrass music to folk school students. He is such a big part of what we do here at the folk school that we put him on our poster! Herb's involvement in the Alabama Folk School is a small part of his lifelong promotion of bluegrass music in Alabama. He is truly a living legend, highly deserving of the Alabama Folk Heritage Award."

*Joey Brackner is the Director of the
Alabama Center for Traditional Culture
Alabama State Council on the Arts.*

THE SPECIAL COUNCIL LEGACY AWARD

Jim Hudson

Giving Back and Thinking Forward with a Keen Eye for the Next Great Idea

by Lynne Berry



Photo: Courtesy of HudsonAlpha

Jim Hudson holding his Downtown Huntsville Advocate Award.

Although Jim Hudson created the largest privately-owned arts center in the United States, he is not typical of a leader in the arts. He is a scientist who is positioning his non-profit research institute on the cutting edge of the exploding sector of genomic research. He is a serial entrepreneur, a mentor to many other entrepreneurs, an angel investor, a real estate developer, and a philanthropist.

After moving with his family to Huntsville at the age of 11, Jim Hudson attended public schools, graduating from Huntsville High School in the class of 1960. He went on to study chemistry and later receive a master's degree in physics from the University of Alabama before serving as a decorated helicopter pilot in Vietnam. After returning to Huntsville to work alongside his father in the family's foundry

Jim Hudson and Lonnie McMillian in front of HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville.

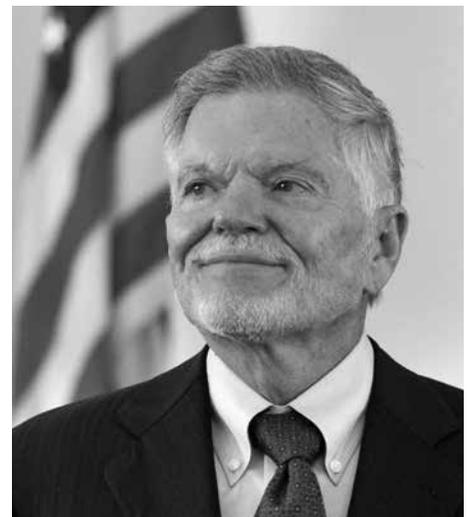


Photo: Courtesy of HudsonAlpha

Jim Hudson at the Alabama Academy of Honor Induction ceremony.



Photo: Courtesy of HudsonAlpha



(Left to right) Gene Sapp, Lonnie McMillian, Governor Bob Riley, Jim Hudson, Mark Smith, Roy Nichols, John Wynn and Milton Harris breaking ground at HudsonAlpha.

business, his interest in science prompted him to return to school to pursue an additional degree in molecular biology from the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Hudson's business acumen was nurtured by his father. Jim's father, together with sons Jim and Gary, operated Hudson Metals, a gray iron and aluminum foundry. Jim Hudson helped

elevate Hudson Metals to the most productive small foundry in the Southeast. From 1970 until the company was sold in 1982, Hudson Metals grew by 30 percent each year.

In 1987, Hudson founded North Alabama's first biotech company, Research Genetics, with an initial investment of \$25,000. While conducting research that required a piece of synthetic DNA, Hudson was surprised to learn that it would take up to four weeks to receive his order. It took only four hours to produce DNA but his order was behind many others, being produced by a single machine. "In that instant, I knew exactly what my business model would be," he said. "I was going to have enough machines so that I could ship tomorrow everything ordered today."

Hudson led Research Genetics to become the world's leader in genetic linkage products and an integral partner in the Human Genome Project. Hudson is



The HudsonAlpha Board (Left to right) Gene Sapp, Lonnie McMillian, Irma Tuder, Jim Hudson, Governor Bob Riley, Linda Smith, John Wynn, Danny Windham and Milton Harris.



Photo: Courtesy of Lowe Mill.

Huntsville Drum Line performs on the grounds at Lowe Mill.

also credited with helping create at least a half-dozen other biotech businesses in Huntsville during this time.

Research Genetics was sold to San Diego's Invitrogen Corp. in December 1999.

Following the sale of Research Genetics, when most men would be considering retirement, Jim Hudson was about to begin two projects that would have immeasurable influence on the arts and sciences in Alabama.

In 2001, Hudson invested in one of Huntsville's historic mill properties. Lowe Mill was built a century before Hudson purchased the property. From 1901 to 1929, the mill was a textile manufacturing center. Then it sat vacant. Genesco took ownership of the mill and manufactured shoes from 1946 to 1979. The mill then fell into disrepair until Hudson purchased the property.

"In 1979, I had traveled to Arlington, Virginia, on business and got to tour a place called the Torpedo Factory," said Jim. "It was a crude place, an old abandoned torpedo factory the city owned, which they rented to a community of artists for a dollar a year. It was fascinating." It gave him an idea, too, for

an artists' complex in Huntsville.

In 2005, Hudson welcomed Lowe Mill's first tenant, the Flying Monkey Arts Center. The Flying Monkey is a nonprofit community arts collective that includes music, film, theater, dance, puppetry, visual and performing art with a focus on experimental works for mature audiences.



Photo: Barbara Reed

A painter working in his studio at Lowe Mill. Visitors can stroll in and out while witnessing the creation process.



Photo: Courtesy of Lowe Mill.

Crowds enjoying the "Good Day" activities at Lowe Mill.

Photo: Barbara Reed



Printed photographs and other paper works on display at one of the many shops.

Jim Hudson has great respect for The Flying Monkey. In a recent newspaper interview, Hudson said, “They go beyond the boundaries of traditional art. It is a serious laboratory for the arts where they believe that experimentation and continuation is key to the creative process. I don’t like art so much as I like artists. I like the out-of-the-box, the eclectic. I like thinking creatively.”



Photo: Courtesy of Lowe Mill.

Children and families enjoy numerous hands-on activities at Lowe Mill.

A few years after The Flying Monkey opened, Hudson formally named the property the Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment Center. Renovations and expansions have continued over the years, adding more and more studio space. In 2014, the renovation of its 37,000 square-foot north floor increased the center’s square footage by 30 percent and the number of working artists and creative entrepreneurs in the facility to 200, making it the largest privately-owned arts center in U.S.



Photo: Courtesy of Lowe Mill.

Some of the many hands-on activities available at Lowe Mill.

The mission of Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment is to promote non-commercialized art, music, entertainment, and food and to support a diverse creative community dedicated to the free expression of the arts in Huntsville. “Entry into this community is juried,” said Jim, “and that maintains a high standard for the quality of art represented there. Another important component is the requirement that every artist be in the studio at least 50 percent of the time during public hours. We did not want this to be a place where artists go to hide and create; we



An artist displays stained glass, handcrafted woodwork and furniture at Lowe Mill.

want the public to have access to this as an educational center, where they can come and learn from the artists and watch them work.”

Huntsville artists explore, create, and invent in Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment Center. Artist and Media Director Dustin Timbrook believes that Lowe Mill is part of what is called the maker movement, an idea created at MIT, where artists, engineers, and entrepreneurs can co-exist in informal, industrial-type spaces.

In Huntsville’s Cummings Research Park, Jim Hudson, with Adtran cofounder Lonnie McMillian, developed another internationally recognized center for creative discovery—the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology. HudsonAlpha opened in 2008. It was created to be a world-class non-profit biotechnology institute dedicated to genomics-based research to improve human health and well-being. HudsonAlpha also nurtures the next generation of biotech researchers and entrepreneurs through educational outreach. And it is a business incubator of sorts, a place where for-profit companies work to speed discoveries to the market-

place. Today it houses 15 faculty investigators, more than two dozen life science companies, and a flourishing educational outreach program.

At HudsonAlpha, Hudson and McMillian developed a creative, scientific campus, and—like Hudson’s Lowe Mill property—a place that blends art and science. In 2009, University of Alabama sculptor Craig Wedderspoon installed “Space/Place”—two sculptures of molecules on permanent loan from the University of Alabama’s College of Arts and Sciences. The sculptures suggest the basic components of matter: molecule, atom and nucleus. Wedderspoon created the piece as a symbol of the beauty in the creative process and in the smallest components of life.

In early 2010, Hudson commissioned sculptor Victor Issa to create “Power of Thought.” Issa, one of the country’s foremost figurative sculptors, linked science, engineering, and the arts in “Power of Thought” to celebrate the way a single vision or thought can become material and have the potential to change the world.

While the HudsonAlpha Institute



Families stroll past the many shops and artist studios at Lowe Mill.

and the Lowe Mill property blend art and science, one of Hudson's other business interests, CityScapes, has worked to make downtown Huntsville more attractive in an effort to grow Huntsville's "creative class."

CityScapes was founded by Jim Hudson and his late wife Susie to help create a comprehensive urban mixed use environment so that citizens can work, play, and shop downtown. CityScapes' 2007 renovation of downtown Huntsville's Mason Building preserved the structure's full front terra cotta facade, greatly enhancing the streetscape and contributing to the ongoing renovation of Huntsville's downtown historic district. In addition to the renovation of the Mason Building, CityScapes' other

downtown projects have included the historic Terry Hutchens building makeover, the opening of two restaurants in Huntsville's Five Points historic neighborhood, and the Washington Square development.

"From historic preservation projects to the ongoing investment in North Alabama's largest arts center and his support of the creative process embraced by scientists and artists alike, Jim Hudson is a quiet champion for art and artists in Alabama," said Allison Dillon-Jauken, Executive Director of The Arts Council, Inc. "Hudson has made an immeasurable and uncommon impact on the arts in our state. Jim Hudson's legacy is one of giving back, thinking forward, and having a keen eye for the next great idea."



Photo: Courtesy of Lowe Mill.

St. Paul and the Broken Bones perform on the dock at Lowe Mill.

*Lynne Berry is the Director
of Advancement for
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for Biotechnology
in Huntsville.*

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