

ALABAMA ARTS

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State Arts Awards Issue 2011



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In this Issue

2011 State Arts Awards



3 Arts Awards 2011
Al Head, Executive Director, ASCA



4 Joe McInnes
Southern Gentleman
Al Head



9 Rebecca Luker
Seemingly Ageless Both in Person and in Voice
Alec Harvey



14 Dale Kennington
Representing Leadership and Creative Contributions of Southern Women
Georgine Clarke



19 Sena Jeter Naslund
A Life in the Written Word
Jeanie Thompson and Danny Gamble



25 Dr. Henry Panion, III
Loving Music for the Sake of Loving Music
Michael Huebner



29 Joyce Cauthen
Scholar, Musician and Arts Administrator
Joey Brackner



34 James Bryan
Revered Alabama Fiddler
Joyce Cauthen



On the Cover: *In the Common Interest*, verso and recto, by Dale Kennington, oil on wood panel, 83 in. x 144 in., 6 panels. From the collection of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. Photos by Robert Fouts.

The Alabama State
Council on the Arts



*Celebration
of the
Arts*



2011



ARTS AWARDS 2011

by Al Head

In challenging times the arts are a means by which we can celebrate high achievement of talented individuals, cutting-edge visions for the future and the creative spirit that has been a vital part of community traditions in Alabama for decades. This year we gather at the Celebration of the Arts Awards Program in order to recognize high achievers, remarkable visionaries and masters of Alabama's rich cultural traditions.

The Alabama State Council on the Arts has been giving awards for over thirty-five years in a format that has become a showcase of unique people, significant contributions and artistic talents that have made Alabama a better place to live. The state better known for college football, NASCAR, hunting or fishing does, in fact, have an abundance of rich cultural resources. First-time visitors to the state are pleasantly surprised to find such a vast array of offerings in the performing, visual and literary arts. Many come to experience folk arts that are, in many cases, appreciated worldwide, and can be discovered in virtually all Alabama communities. Those with awareness beyond the superficial know the state to be a concentration of both great arts and great artists.

But, as with all great things, the arts don't just happen without a lot of financial supporters, dedicated professionals and volunteers and, of course, talented artists. This year's awardees represent just such a collection of individuals. In 2011 the Council will be recognizing a major benefactor, enabler, councilor and advocate for the arts from the private sector. We celebrate the career and vast accomplishments of a major Broadway star and a national celebrity in the performing arts for many years. We pay tribute to one who is, first a college educator and inspiration for young musicians but, who is best known worldwide as a musical arranger for both superstars and gospel ensembles. The state this year will be honoring a critically acclaimed and award winning author whose profound images in words have gained her a national following and a significant number of aspiring students. Among the award recipients is an outstanding painter

whose large-scale works, seen in major museum exhibitions and private collections, capture moments, places and people in ways that demonstrate both great technical skill and unique avenues of communicating with an audience. Yet another honoree is a retiring arts administrator who has spent many years and countless hours supporting and promoting the folklife of Alabama while being an accomplished author and practitioner of the traditional arts she loves so dearly. A master fiddler, whose performance excellence reflects the best of the Sand Mountain string-music tradition, is recognized for being a great arts ambassador from Alabama and keeping an important style of music alive by passing it on to future generations. A special Legacy Award is also being presented this year to a former First Lady who provided great leadership and vision to a national project placing a monumental bronze statue of Helen Keller in Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C.

This year's recipients deserve thanks and recognition from all of those who value the arts and have received the benefits of their many contributions here in Alabama. We know the arts enhance learning at all ages, bring vitality to downtowns and community life, are part of economic development strategies, reach children at risk, and are a major way of bringing people together to celebrate cultural diversity and traditions. The Council supports the arts and artists through numerous avenues of assistance; but, paying tribute to those who make the arts "happen" is among the most important functions we at the state level can perform to emphasize the significant role of the arts in improving the quality of life for everyone in our state.



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

THE JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Joe McInnes

Southern Gentleman

by Al Head

Those who have had the pleasure to know Duncan Joseph “Joe” McInnes over the years use descriptions like integrity, professionalism, thoughtful, articulate, loyal, civic-minded and perhaps, most of all, southern gentleman to characterize this friend of business and the arts. He is a true product of Alabama, in the best sense of that word. He is a man born, raised, educated, married, employed and retired in Alabama.

Joe McInnes grew up in Wetumpka, just north of Montgomery, a small town rich in history, natural beauty and most of the cultural traditions that give Alabama its reputation for warm hospitality and a strong sense of community. Wetumpka might be considered a pretty idyllic hometown for a young boy and teenager growing up in the 1950’s and certainly provided the kind of environment that had a positive influence on Joe’s early in life.



Joe McInnes.

It was in these coming of age years in Wetumpka that Joe began to hone his skills for speaking and building working relationships beyond his hometown. He became active in Junior Achievement at the state, regional and national levels, attending national conventions and establishing a network of friends. This background set the stage for

his serving as President of the Tukabatchee Area Council of Boy Scouts of America and President of Montgomery Area United Way.

In the early 1960’s, Joe McInnes enrolled at the University of Alabama. It was an eventful and exciting time for the young man from Wetumpka, considering both national football championships in the heyday of coach Bear Bryant, as well as, the infamous desegregation of the University attracting much national attention and media coverage. Joe graduated from the University in

1966 and went on to receive a law degree from Jones School of Law.

After serving his country in the U.S. Army Reserve, Joe McInnes was hired in 1974 by Winton M. Blount, an Alabamian rapidly ascending in prominence as a businessman, public official, philanthropist and collector of art. It

Photo: Courtesy of Tukabatchee Area Council of Boy Scouts of America.

was there at Blount International, Inc. that Joe developed a keen sense of appreciation for the role the arts play in community building and quality of life. It is safe to say that Winton “Red” Blount was both a great mentor and inspiration relative to the importance of business support for the arts. His philanthropy through the Blount Foundation spread far and wide with his two highest profile legacies being the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. While Red was setting the tone for the Blount giving philosophy, the



Photo: Courtesy of Cleveland Avenue YMCA.

Joe McInnes directed important support for such projects as the Art Center at the Cleveland Avenue YMCA.



Photo: Courtesy of the University of Alabama

Dedication of Blount Undergraduate Initiative Living-Learning Center in spring, 2000. Joe McInnes, Winton “Red” Blount, Sandra McInnes and Dr. James D. Yarbrough, former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.



Photo: Courtesy of Montgomery Museum of Arts.

Joe McInnes and Jimmy Lowder at the Montgomery Museum of Arts.

policies and procedures for contributions were primarily being carried out behind the scenes by Joe McInnes. As time passed, Joe played an increasingly important role in developing the Blount Foundation and establishing priorities for support of arts organizations in Alabama and beyond. He became President and, for most, the face of the Blount Foundation. Joe directed important support for such projects as the Art Center at the Cleveland Avenue YMCA and the youth competition program of the Montgomery Symphony. In his capacity directing the foundation, Joe also facilitated numerous gifts anonymously with no fanfare or publicity, only done for the satisfaction of seeing the needs of a community, an organization or a worthy individual need being met.



Joe McInnes with his family (left to right): Sandra, his wife, son Jody and daughter Missy.

Photo: Courtesy of the McInnes family

Being surrounded daily by a corporate collection of famous art no doubt had a strong influence on Joe's appreciation of fine art. But because of his roots and background, Joe's attraction to folk and regional artists

was not surprising. He particularly loves African American gospel music. He collects notable area artists such as Wetumpka's own, Kelly Fitzpatrick and Anne Goldthwaite, a nationally famous painter from Montgomery. He has become a regular audience member at a wide range of local arts events, large and small.

In 1990, Governor Guy Hunt appointed Joe to the Alabama State Council on the Arts for a six-year term. He served as chairman of the Council for two years and set a standard for leadership that is still remembered and admired today.



Peggy Mussafer, Jim Scott, Laura Luckette with Joe McInnes at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts.

Photo: Courtesy of Montgomery Museum of Arts.

Chairman McInnes placed high emphasis on grant decision-making that maximized fairness, balance and good stewardship of public money. Meetings were conducted under his chairmanship with a priority on preparation and efficiently. It was a period of budget growth and progress focused on the Council's mission of supporting the arts and artists of Alabama.

Photo: Courtesy of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts



Sandra and Joe McInnes with Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Van Sant and Winifred Stakely at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts.

Joe McInnes served on the boards of directors of various arts organizations including the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, the Alabama Humanities Foundation, the Southern Arts Federation and the Alabama Institute for Arts Education. As would be expected, he also served on numerous boards of civic groups and universities including the National Advisory Board of the University of Alabama. He has been a long-time friend, both personally and professionally, to dozens of groups and has channeled financial assistance to worthy causes not only as a corporate leader, but also as a generous individual contributor. Red Blount used to say, "business support of the arts is a matter of enlightened self interest." Joe McInnes has been an ambassador and advocate of not only the theory of self-interest, but the broader notion that suggests that support for the arts is matter of local, state,



Photo: Courtesy of the University of Alabama

Joe McInnes with members of the Blount family at the 2004 dedication of a Winton Blount portrait in Oliver-Barnard Hall on the University of Alabama campus. Oliver-Barnard is one of two Blount Undergraduate Initiative Academic Houses at the center of the campus. The Blount portrait was donated from the Blount family art collection and hangs in Oliver-Barnard's Common Room, a popular gathering place for Blount Scholars. Left to right, Samuel Blount, son of Winton Blount; Dr. Robert Olin, dean of the University of Alabama College of Arts and Sciences; Kay Blount Pace, daughter of Winton Blount; Dr. Robert Witt, president of The University of Alabama; Joe McInnes; and Joseph Blount, son of Winton Blount.

national and global interest. He has had an influence in all of those arenas and his legacy of enlightenment will last long into the future.

From 2002 to 2010, Joe McInnes, on the eve of his retirement, accepted the appointment from Governor Bob Riley to serve as the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Transportation, one of the biggest and most challenging jobs in all of state government. Joe, as in all of his past positions, served with great distinction and earned the respect of all those who worked with him.



Sandra and Joe McInnes.

Joe married his Wetumpka High School sweetheart, and he and Sandra, in spite of her majorette background at Auburn, have remained happily married for forty-four years. Joe and Sandra have been and remain active in a vast array of Montgomery and statewide activities. They have two children, Jody and Missy, and have entered those wonderful years as grandparents. Joe's lifetime of achievement in the arts, business and public service will no doubt be part of a proud legacy passed on to future generations.

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



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 Moring (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).

THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD



Rebecca Luker

Seemingly Ageless Both in Person and Voice

by Alec Harvey

When Rebecca Luker was 16, the footlights of Broadway were just about the furthest thing from her mind.

The Helena teenager was taking weekly voice lessons at the University of Montevallo—“Just the greatest thing I ever did; it changed my life,” she says—but she had no idea what to do with her soaring soprano.

“I was in that music world studying voice, and I clearly wanted to do it in some capacity, but I was so young, and I didn’t really see the possibilities ahead of me, yet,”



Photo: Laurie Marie Duncan

Publicity photo for Rebecca Luker.

Luker says. “And I didn’t really have anyone around me at that time saying, ‘Maybe you could perform on Broadway’ or ‘Maybe you could do this professionally.’”

Maybe.

Three decades later, Luker is a Broadway veteran with three Tony nominations, a thriving cabaret and concert career, two solo CDs and TV and movie credits on her resume.

But none of that may have happened had Luker not decided halfway through her college career at Montevallo that she didn’t want to go into teaching.

“I decided that pedagogy wasn’t for me, and that’s when I started doing community theater in Birmingham, and I met some professionals there,” Luker says. “I ended up interning at Michigan Opera. That’s when I met my agent, and it went on from there.”



Photo: Courtesy of Rebecca Luker

Rebecca Luker’s portrait at Sardi’s Restaurant as illustrated by R. Baratz.



Photo: Maxine Henryson

Publicity materials for *Anything Goes*: Luker sings Cole Porter, 1996.

Teaching's loss was theater's gain.

In 1988, Luker made her Broadway debut as Sarah Brightman's understudy in "The Phantom of the Opera," eventually replacing her in the leading role of Christine and performing it for about two years.

In 2007, Luker shared five "Phantom" memories with The Birmingham News, including the first time she went on in the leading role.

"After nine months of hard work getting ready to do the role of Christine, I finally got a shot at it," she said. "Michael Crawford was my Phantom, my dress was about a foot too short because I'm taller than Brightman, and I forgot to lip-sync on a cross with Crawford! After he sweetly reminded me to move my mouth, all went well."

After that she would star as Lily in "The Secret Garden" (1991-1993),

Magnolia in “Show Boat” (1994-1997), Maria in “The Sound of Music” (1998-1999), Marian in “The Music Man” (2000-2001), Claudia in “Nine” (2003) and Mrs. Banks in “Mary Poppins” (2006-2010). She earned Tony nominations for “Show Boat,” “The Music Man” and “Mary Poppins.”



Photo: Courtesy of Rebecca Luker

Rebecca Luker at the age of two.

Between Broadway engagements, Luker has appeared off-Broadway in “The Vagina Monologues,” “Indian Summer,” “X (The Life and Times of Malcolm X),” “Brigadoon,” “Can’t Let Go” and, most recently, in “Where’s Charley?”

Add to that TV appearances (“Matlock,” “The Good Wife,” the Hallmark movie “Cupid & Cate”), acclaimed concerts, numerous recordings (including the solo



Photo: Courtesy of the Birmingham News

Rebecca Luker performed in concert in Birmingham in 2005.

CDs “Greenwich Time,” “Anything Goes: Rebecca Luker Sings Cole Porter” and “Leaving Home”)



“I think I have never heard the song done quite so well,” the legendary Barbara Cook said of Rebecca Luker singing “Unusual Way” in the line notes of her CD Greenwich Time.

and an upcoming new musical and feature film that she can’t yet talk about, and you’ve got one of the busiest and steadiest careers in the theater world.

“I’m just happy there are still roles for middle-aged leading ladies,” says Luker, who turned 50 on April 17.

In recent years, she’s also garnered some of the best reviews of her career.

In his review of “Where’s Charley?,” The New York Times’ Charles Isherwood called Luker “seemingly ageless both in person and voice.”



Davis Gaines as Raoul and Rebecca Luker as Christine in The Phantom of the Opera, Majestic Theatre, New York.

“To have another chance to hear Ms. Luker’s bell-bright soprano, perhaps the loveliest of her generation, is reason enough to see the show,” Isherwood wrote.

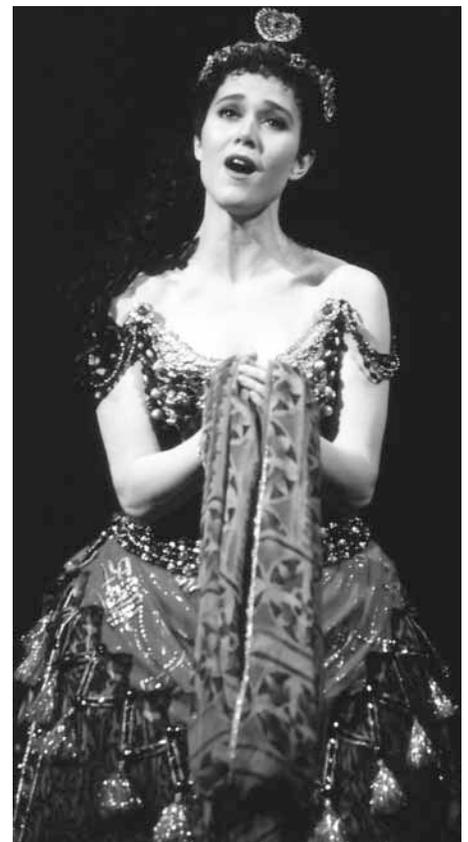
Other critics have compared her to the likes of Julie Andrews and Barbara Cook, and Luker doesn’t

pretend that she hasn’t noticed.

“I do read them,” she says of reviews. “I’m so curious. I hopefully have gotten to the point where if there’s something a little negative said, it might ruin my day but not the rest of my week.”

In 2000, Luker married actor Danny Burstein, whom she had met while working in the musical “Time and Again.” They live on New York’s Upper West Side with Burstein’s two teenage sons and spend a lot of time in their other home in the mountains of Pennsylvania.

Luker returns often to her home state. She’s performed with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and at the Virginia Samford Theatre, and she’s an honorary chairman of the board of Red Mountain Theatre Company.



Rebecca Luker as Christine in The Phantom of the Opera, Majestic Theatre, New York.



Photo: Andrew Eccles

Rebecca Luker as Mrs. Banks in *Mary Poppins* at the New Amsterdam Theatre, New York.

“They’re doing such great work at Red Mountain,” she says of the theater that used to be Summerfest, where Luker starred in musicals early in her career. “The scholarships that they are giving to young performers are wonderful.”

Luker also visits family in the area, including her mother, Martha Hales, her stepfather and assorted siblings. Last year, many of them gathered to watch Luker receive an honorary doctorate and deliver the commencement address at the University of Montevallo.

“All of that keeps me tethered to Alabama,” Luker says. “There are also a lot of friends from my past that I still stay in touch with and love.”

Luker is finishing up her first feature film and looking forward to a new musical and beyond.

“I always say that I’m looking forward to the next ‘whatever comes along,’” she says. “Hopefully, I’ll just hang in there and keep doing good work.”

Alec Harvey is features editor for The Birmingham News. He is thankful that he gave a young Rebecca Luker a positive review early in his career reviewing theater in Birmingham, long before he knew who she was or what she would become.

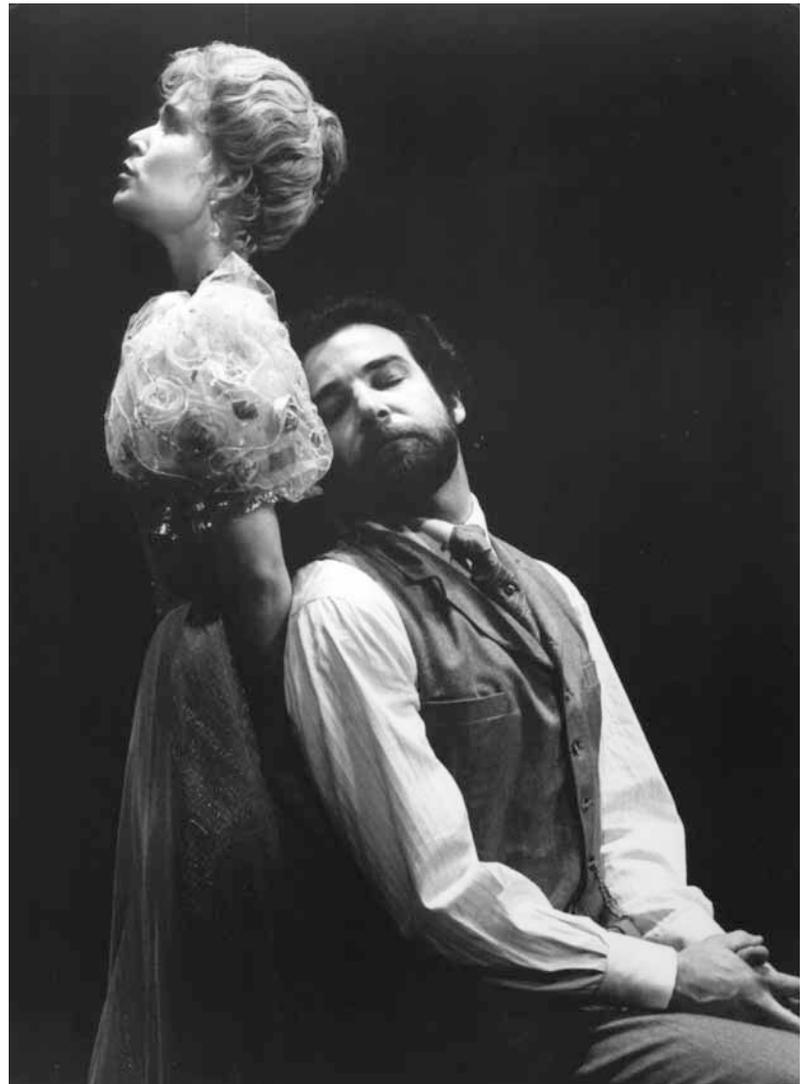


Photo: Joan Marcus

Mandy Patinkin and Rebecca Luker in the 1990 production of *The Secret Garden*, St. James Theatre, New York.

Dale Kennington

Representing Leadership and Creative Contributions of Southern Women

by Georgine Clarke

Twelve Alabama artists were selected for an exhibition titled *Voices Rising: Alabama Women at the Millennium*, presented at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. Dale Wilson Kennington of Dothan was one of those artists. The exhibition included her large oil on canvas paintings, with subjects ranging from a Ku Klux Klan rally to debutantes at the ball sponsored by Dothan's black community. Dale Kennington represents the leadership and creative contributions of women in the South as part of broader art history.

Born in Savannah, Georgia on January 24, 1935 to Edward Karow



Dale Kennington and a painting in progress, which includes images of forty-six people.

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington

Wilson and Lucile Hughes Wilson, Kennington has lived all but the first six months of her life in Alabama. She graduated from Dothan High School in 1953, entered Huntingdon College, and then transferred to the University of Alabama, where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1956, marrying fellow student Don Kennington that same year.

She has said she never expected to be an artist. Her college studies were in art history and design because she didn't want to be a teacher, a nurse or home economics

major. She has been quoted as saying, "Art was socially acceptable, I liked it, but it was not that I had this burning desire to be an artist. I just majored in it."

It followed that Don attended veterinary school at Auburn University. Dale taught figure drawing there, sharing an office with Hugh Williams, 2009 recipient of The Alabama Governor's Arts Award. "She's an astounding woman," he says. "I'm so pleased she is receiving this recognition," noting that her painting is so personal

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington



Dale and her husband Don at home, circa 1990.



Photo: Courtesy of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

Dale Kennington with Mark Johnson, director of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, and the screen Long Day, Late Night, in the collection of the MMFA.

and focused. He also says they like to visit and eat oysters and talk about their trips to Paris.

Returning to Dothan and raising three children, Kennington had very little time to paint. But in the early 1970's, motivated by a desire to have portraits of her children, she began to make art again, using children of her friends as models for practice and giving them the paintings in return. Her reputation grew, and for about 15 years she became much in demand for commissioned portraits, travelling nationally to photograph subjects and then completing the pieces in Dothan.

In 1986, Kennington “quit the portraits” and began to, as she says, “Paint for me.” She continues, “I had to make up my mind that I might never sell a painting.”



Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington

Dale Kennington's studio.

Dr. Lee Gray, Curator of Exhibitions at the Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, has observed Kennington's

career and notes that artists need risk, need to move from safety and follow their own path. She says Kennington did just that several times in her career, taking risks to

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington



The Bride choose Red and Whimsey, by Dale Kennington.

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington



Family Picnic by Dale Kennington.

find what was meaningful for her, finding her own voice.

Although she never lost focus on the human figure, Kennington's work moved from portraiture to narrative canvases, capturing moments of human interaction in everyday life. These large canvases pictured street scenes and barbershops; people at swim meets, waiting in line, playing pool, and conversing in restaurants. She designated this as "contemporary realism." The works began with what she calls a "rapid-fire sketchbook," dozens of camera shots of certain scenes that interested her. The images were re-combined to create a picture from her imagination, a fictional story. Her mastery of painting technique, detail, rich color palette, and dramatic use of light converted each story into a flawlessly



Tea at the Ritz by Dale Kennington.

finished canvas. These works were nationally successful, with museum exhibitions, catalogues, and gallery representation. She did indeed sell paintings, despite her early reservations. She said, “I fall in love with whatever I’m painting every day.”

The death of Kennington’s husband, Don, in 2002 was followed by yet another season of artistic risk-taking and transition. She studied the design principles of Asian folding screens, leading her to develop a new format and an even larger scale.

Ten wooden folding screens were painted on both sides, each offering complementary parts of a single idea. The series, titled *Contemporary Mythologies* dealt with themes of movement and departure. *Long Day*, *Late Night* offered passengers on a train on one side and empty escalator steps on the other. Titles such as *Ritual for the Dead*, *Is This the Way Home?* and *When Night Has Come* are depicted with a darker palette and establish themes with a deep emotional edge. Kennington has said

these screens were her “salvation.”

Following these pieces, another set of screens were developed, these with increased de-emphasis on the figure and punctuated by small, concealed compartments opened with a key. All of these large screens, in both sets, become significant objects to encounter, engulfing the viewer. Each establishes a kind of universe, where time stops, where the angles change, and where the viewer can become part of a mysterious world, using the painted images to create

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington.



Dale and Don Kennington with grandchildren, (left to right) Ian Kennington, Kelsey Kennington, Leighton Lindstrom, Robert Lindstrom and Kyle Kennington



Dale and Don at a High School dance before they married.

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington

Photo: Courtesy of Dale Kennington



An earlier photo of Dale and her paintings.

a personal story, a partnership with the artist and a common bond with all humanity.

Dale Kennington represents the art of Alabama well, an artist of this place and time, fitting into a strong art history. She has written, "I believe that our lives are ultimately shaped not by the few cataclysmic events that happen to each of us, but by the everyday things we do. It's only by looking back on years of such moments that we can draw conclusions about our society and ourselves. The sensational event is daily life."

Georgine Clarke is the Visual Arts Program Manager for the Alabama State Council on the Arts as well as the Alabama Artists Gallery Director

Sena Jeter Naslund

A Life in the Written Word

by Jeanie Thompson and Danny Gamble

Sena Jeter Naslund was born in Birmingham, Alabama, the daughter of Martin Luther Jeter, a physician, and Flora Lee Sims Jeter, a musician. Naslund's two brothers are also writers. Marvin D. Jeter, an archeologist, edited *Edward Palmer's Arkansaw Mounds* (The University of Alabama Press, 2010). John Sims Jeter, a retired engineer, published the novel... *and the angels sang* (Livingston Press, 2007).

A love of language, music, and the arts was instilled in her at an early age. The state of Alabama also figures prominently in her writing with such places as Helicon and Birmingham in *Four Spirits*, but Naslund's settings range far and wide, including Europe, the Middle East, and in times both present and past.

Naslund grew to love the arts and to absorb knowledge, and she has also grown to love imparting that knowledge to others. Naslund has studied on the graduate level, teaching in several settings, including secondary, undergraduate, and graduate. Perhaps most significantly, in 2001 she co-founded a graduate brief-residency writing program in her adopted state of Kentucky. The Spalding University brief-residency



Naslund relaxing in her home in St. James Court historic district in Louisville, Kentucky.

Photo: David Stewart, Ad Cat Media



Photo courtesy of Sena Jeter Naslund and Spalding University.

Naslund enjoys teaching abroad and leading students to locales such as Argentina as she did with student Marilyn Rockefeller in the summer of 2010.

Naslund earned her MA and PhD from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. She has taught in the MFA programs at the University of Montana, Indiana University, and Vermont College. Presently, she is Distinguished Teaching Professor and Writer in Residence at the University of Louisville and the program director of the brief-residency Master of Fine Arts in Writing at Spalding University. One of the distinguishing features of the Spalding University program is its summer residency abroad. Beginning in 2007 in Paris, Naslund has led students and faculty to study writing in settings rich with cultural heritage and history. A recent trip was to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in Summer 2010.



Photo courtesy of Sena Jeter Naslund and Spalding University.

Naslund with Spalding faculty K.L. Cook and Luke Wallin in San Antonio de Areco, Argentina, during the 2010 Summer residency abroad.

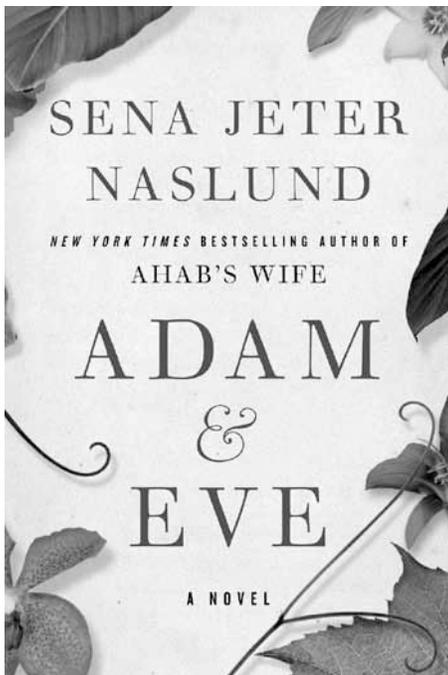
MFA Writing Program was ranked among the best in the U.S. within the first ten years of its founding.

Naslund grew up in Birmingham's Norwood neighborhood and attended Norwood Elementary School, Phillips High School, and Birmingham-Southern College. At BSC she received a BA in English, won the B.B. Comer Medal in English, published work in the student literary magazine *The Quad*, and attended the renowned Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. The college later honored her with its Distinguished Alumni Award. While in Birmingham, she taught English, French, and Latin at E.B. Irwin High School. Thus her love of teaching began early, as did her sense of herself as a writer.

Sena often tells young writers and beginning adult writers about her personal experience of becoming aware of the power of words. In *The Remembered Gate: Memoirs by Alabama Writers* (ed. by Jay Lamar and Jeanie Thompson, The University of Alabama Press, 2001), she writes, "When I was about ten, one hot summer day, I sat reading to myself in the living room—no air conditioning, and you don't run an attic fan during the day—reading a description of a blizzard in one of the beloved Laura Ingalls Wilder books. Suddenly I came out of the dream of the narrative to notice that I was shivering! Yet it must have been ninety-five degrees in the room. *Why am I cold?* Then I articulated the answer: 'These words, just this lan-

guage, made me feel cold.' And then I thought, 'I want to be able to do that.' That was the first time I consciously thought of becoming a writer. I wanted to have the power to transport not just myself but others through the medium of language."

Naslund's literary oeuvre includes adaptations of prose for the stage, essays, novels, poetry, and short stories. She is the author of six novels: *Adam & Eve* (William Morrow-HarperCollins, 2010); *Abundance: A Novel of Marie Antoinette* (William Morrow-HarperCollins, 2006); *Four Spirits* (William Morrow-HarperCollins, 2003; Harper Perennial, 2004); *Ahab's Wife; or, the Star-Gazer* (William Morrow, 1999; Harper Perennial, 2000; Harper Perennial Modern Classics Series, 2008);



In 2010, Naslund published her sixth novel, *Adam & Eve*.



Naslund greets students from the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham who won fiction prizes in the 2010 Literary Arts Awards.

Photo by Jamie Martin

Sherlock in Love (David R. Godine, 1993; Harper Perennial, 2001); and *The Animal Way to Love* (Ampersand Press, 1993). She has also published two short story collections, *The Disobedience of Water* (David R. Godine, 1999; Harper Perennial, 2000) and *Ice Skating at the North Pole* (Ampersand Press, 1989).

Naslund's *Ahab's Wife*, a Book-of-the-Month Club Main Selection and national bestseller, was selected by *Time* magazine as one of the five best novels of 1999, appearing on the notable book lists of *The New York Review of Books* and *Publishers Weekly*. It was a finalist for the coveted Orange Prize in the United Kingdom. *Abundance* was given a top rating by *People* and *Entertainment Weekly*. *Four Spirits*, a

national bestseller, appeared on the notable book lists of *The New York Review of Books*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Seattle Times*, and *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal*. *Adam & Eve* was also a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

With her childhood friend Dr. Elaine Hughes (now retired from the University of Montevallo Department of English), Naslund adapted *Four Spirits* for the stage through the Southern Writers' Project of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Theatre in 2005. *Four Spirits: The Play* was fully produced by the University of Alabama in Huntsville in 2008. About this work, Naslund has commented, "Four Spirits was certainly a painful book to write. The research was



Naslund greets readers during a 2009 benefit book-signing in Montgomery, Alabama, for *Adam & Eve*.

painful in itself because I discovered a number of atrocities that I had not been aware of when I was young—the castration of Judge Aaron, for example. I did participate to some extent in the civil rights struggle, but looking back, of course I wish I had done more.

“In a way, writing this book is an attempt ‘to do more.’ It also fulfills the promise I made to myself almost forty years ago—that if I ever did become a writer, I would write about those times. Ultimately, the civil rights movement is a triumphant story; though the transformation is not complete, I feel we live in a more just society now. Some

of the pain of that time is partially mitigated by writing, also, about the courage, kindness, and love that existed then.”

Naslund’s work has been reprinted in England and Australia and translated into German, Japanese, Spanish, Danish, Hebrew, Korean, Greek, and Polish. Her short fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The American Voice*, *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere.

Widely recognized by her peers as well as readers, Naslund has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the



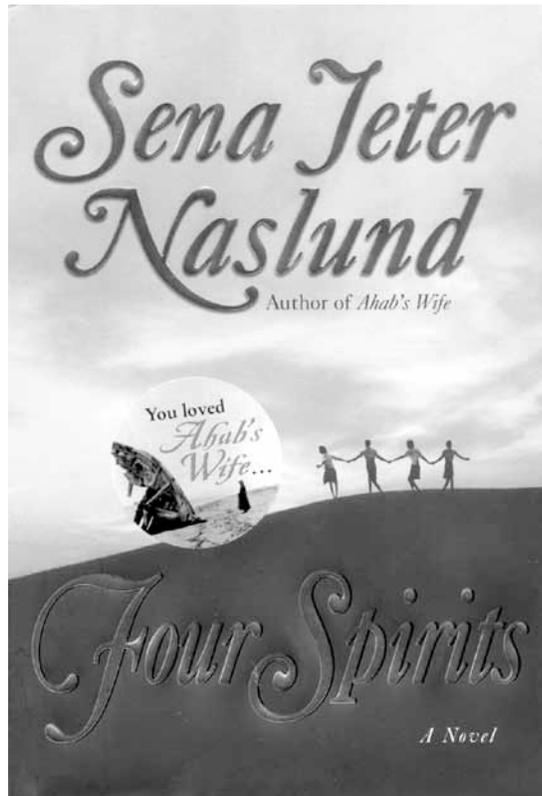
Photo Courtesy of the Alabama Writers' Forum/Beau Gustafson

In 2001, shortly after the publication of her best-seller *Ahab's Wife*, or *The Star-Gazer*, Naslund received the Harper Lee Award. That spring *First Draft* featured her on the cover as “Alabama’s Writer of the Year.”



Kentucky Arts Council, and the Kentucky Foundation for Women. In 2001 she was recognized by the Alabama Writers' Forum and Alabama Southern Community College with the prestigious Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year. She also received the Alabama Author Award, the Hall-Waters Award from Troy University, the Lawrence Fiction Prize, and the Hasley Prize.

Always happy to return to her native state, Naslund has given back to Alabama students and fellow writers. She has served as the Paschal P. Vacca Professor



“*Four Spirits* was certainly a painful book to write. The research was painful in itself because I discovered a number of atrocities that I had not been aware of when I was young—the castration of Judge Aaron, for example. I did participate to some extent in the civil rights struggle, but looking back, of course I wish I had done more. In a way, writing this book is an attempt “to do more.” It also fulfills the promise I made to myself almost forty years ago—that if I ever did become a writer, I would write about those times. Ultimately the civil rights movement is a triumphant story; though the transformation is not complete, I feel we live in a more just society now. Some of the pain of that time is partially mitigated by writing, also, about the courage, kindness, and love that existed then.”

—Sena Jeter Naslund



*In Paris, during the 2007 brief-residency abroad, Naslund was invited to read from *Abundance*, a Novel of Marie Antoinette for Spalding University students and faculty at the home of the American Ambassador to France.*

in Liberal Arts at the University of Montevallo, Visiting Eminent Scholar at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Writer in Residence at Wolff College in Fairhope, and Kentucky Poet Laureate. In 2009 she gave a benefit reading of *Adam & Eve* at Troy University, Montgomery Campus on behalf of the Alabama Writers' Forum's High School Literary Arts Awards, and in 2010 she judged the fiction competition and met the winning students at the awards ceremony. Naslund's level-headedness as a writer is always evident, and she exhorts students to remember that "the competition is in the library!"

For Sena Jeter Naslund, words are paramount. A writer, a teacher, and a vibrant citizen of the world, she has made her life in the written word. Sharing it with others is her greatest joy.

Jeanie Thompson is Executive Director of the Alabama Writers' Forum, a partnership program of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Danny Gamble is Communications Director for the Alabama Writers' Forum



Naslund hosted author Ann Patchett in 2008 during the Spalding brief-residency in Louisville, KY.

Dr. Henry Panion, III

Loving Music for the Sake of Loving Music

by Michael Huebner

While working in his studio at UAB one day in early 1992, Henry Panion III received a call from his secretary, who informed him that Stevie Wonder had just called, and that he would call back.

"Come on," he said incredulously. Knowing that his secretary was not one to joke about such things, he waited by the phone.

"Sure enough, he called back," recalled Panion recently. "He said he had heard about my work and would like me to arrange some tunes—some old stuff, some new stuff."

Of course, such requests from multi-platinum, Grammy-winning superstars don't come out of the blue. Panion was already established as a conductor, composer, arranger and recording artist. He had won two Grammy awards of his own and had performed with the gospel artists, the Winans.

Panion recalled his first encounter with the Winans, a performance at a Pentecostal convention in Columbus, Ohio.

"The Winans were late, as stars can be," said the 51-year-old musician. "I had rehearsed with the choir and orchestra, everybody was ready, and they didn't make it to rehearsal. I was so deflated. With 7,000 people in the audience, they got on stage and it was an amazing success. The Winans were so impressed with how well the arrangements worked, how I maintained the integrity of their music, how the crowd responded. They told me if we ever get a chance to work together again, we'd love to. Two months later, Quincy Jones signed them and they called me to do the arrangements for the recording. It won



Dr. Panion taking a break from composing.

Photo: Courtesy of the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Doves and Grammys. That led to so many other things."

With a music education degree from Alabama A&M and masters and doctorate degrees in music theory



Using the newest technology, Dr. Panion is continuously writing and composing new work.

from Ohio State, Panion had a firm classical grounding. But he had always loved gospel music, as well as jazz and pop, so applying that training came naturally.

“At A&M, there was a kind of bias toward music that may not have been classical, so as a music major on scholarship, it was OK to do jazz band.”

When the A&M band director and chief arranger took another job, Panion stepped up and put together several arrangements.

“As drum major, I could see how the band directors arranged music,” he said. “I had an opportunity to take over the show, the rehearsals, everything, so I’m honing conducting skills. There were 75,000 people literally jamming to those arrangements.”

Those skills landed him in graduate school at Ohio State. Those degrees, in turn, landed him the UAB job, over a hundred other candidates. Having grown up in

Bessemer and Birmingham, he was back home.

Panion’s early musical influence came from his aunt,



Photo: Marc Bonderenco

Stevie Wonder relaxes with his friend and creative partner, Dr. Panion.



Photo: Marc Bonderenco

Stevie Wonder performing as Dr. Panion looks on.

who bought him a trombone when he was in kindergarten. His parents—a steel mill worker and stay-at-home mom—had no musical background, but there was a piano in the house.

“I was exposed to a lot of music early on, loving music for the sake of loving music,” he said. “In those days it was so important to play an instrument and take a general music class.”

At Midfield High School in Birmingham, he decided to make music his career—as a high school band director.

“When my friends were choosing marine biology or chemistry or whatever, I chose music,” he said.

“I didn’t know it would lead to the various things I’ve done.”

Those “various things” have flowered. A European tour with Wonder led to a nearly 20-year relationship. He has conducted the Royal Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Boston Pops and Tokyo Philharmonic, to name a few. He has performed for the Sultan of Brunei, the Crown Prince of Dubai and Prince Albert of Monaco, and with Aretha Franklin, Eugenia Zukerman, Chaka Khan, Carrie Underwood and Ruben Studdard.

During the Alabama Symphony’s 1995-1997 bankruptcy and reorganization, he conducted the Birmingham Metropolitan Orchestra, comprised of many of those same ASO musicians.

“I would mix up the music at those concerts,” he recalled. “I had the opportunity to bring in a diverse audience. A lot of folks would come to those concerts who had never been to a classical concert before.”

At UAB, Panion developed a music technology program, and has taught music theory and orchestration. Taking a cue from his own teachers, he has taught technical skills, but stops short of teaching the creative process.

“I don’t think you can really teach creativity,” he said. “You can only nurture creativity and provide an opportunity for creativity to flourish.”

Panion’s crowning achieve-



Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Henry Panion, III

With an enhanced ear, Dr. Panion ensures that the right sound and feel of the music is conveyed to the audience.

ment was his “Gospel Goes Classical” album, which featured Juanita Bynum and Jonathan Butler and remained on Billboard’s gospel and classical charts for more than a year.

“It has been a real phenomenon,” he said. “I have been part of many great commercial records, but this record, for which I was totally in charge of producing, is the most important.”

His proudest work was “Are You Listening,” a love song for Haiti earthquake relief recorded by gospel artist Kirk Franklin and 150 Nashville singers.

“I wrote the arrangement overnight. To see the musicians show up at the studio, some still in concert dress, was heartwarming. The Gospel Music Channel played it for hours.”

Although it didn’t start out that way, Panion’s career has had a worldwide effect on bridging the classical-popular divide.

“It’s amazing how you start out thinking you want to be a high school band director, then you look at great singers, such as Renee Fleming, who do pop and jazz and bring legitimacy to it,” he said. “My



Photo: Courtesy of the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Being caught on one of the many keyboards.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Henry Panion, III



Rehearsing the new project, *A Gospel Symphony Celebration*.

work in gospel and pop has given me opportunities in the classical world. And my work in the classical world has given me opportunities in the pop world.”

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Photo: Matthew Huesmann

Dr. Panion conducting the *Alabama Symphony* during a performance at the *Alys Stephens Center* in Birmingham.

Joyce Cauthen

Scholar, Musician and Arts Administrator

by Joey Brackner

When Joyce Cauthen retired as Executive Director of the Alabama Folklife Association last fall, the multitude of people gathered in Belk, Alabama, to honor her represented the many facets of her career as a public folklorist and advocate of Alabama's traditional arts. Joyce has been involved in almost every significant presentation of Alabama folk culture in the last twenty-five years. She is a musician, a scholar and an example of how one's passion can motivate others. As a scholar of Alabama fiddle music, African American hymn singing and children's folk songs, she has produced books, articles and documentary recordings. As an administrator and presenter, she organized the first Alabama Folklife Festival as part of the first City Stages, revitalized the Alabama Folklife Association and helped found the Friends of Old Time Music and Dance. As a lecturer, she has visited every part of the state helping Alabamians understand the diversity and depth of the state's



Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama Humanities Foundation.

Joyce has been part of the Alabama Humanities Road Scholars Speaker's Bureau since 1993, speaking on topics such as fiddling, shape-note singing, urban legends, Alabama foodways and more.

local community traditions.

Joyce grew up in Texas and attended Texas Christian University. After securing an MA in English from Purdue in 1969, Joyce moved to Alabama, met and married Jim Cauthen, an Alabamian, and taught at Parker High School in Birmingham. In Birmingham, she became interested in the local old-

time, bluegrass and country-dance scene. While there was already an established bluegrass scene and a few old-time players, there was practically no country dance in Birmingham. Joyce and Jim, as far as I know, organized the very first contra dances ever held in Birmingham, after going to Berea, Kentucky, for training. They recruited local musicians and invited callers from Atlanta and elsewhere to start regular dance opportunities in Birmingham. During this time, Joyce helped start the Birmingham Country Dance Society (now known as the Friends of Old Time Music and Dance). She and her husband Jim began honing their music skills performing with several bands.

Her growing interest in roots music led her to research Alabama's old-time musicians. The resulting book, *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow* is the definitive work on Alabama fiddle music. Joyce has a well-earned reputation as a leading authority on the topic, often lecturing or acting as a judge for fiddle contests around the state.



Joyce Cauthen (center) singing from *The Sacred Harp* with Margie and Noah Lacy, in Ider, Alabama in 1988.



Joyce accompanied fiddler Howard Hamil at a celebration sponsored by Center for Traditional Culture in Old Alabama Town, circa 1990.

Joyce made significant contributions to the preservation and encouragement of folk traditions by overseeing the resurrection of the Alabama Folklife Association. In doing so, she built one of the strongest statewide folklore nonprofits in the nation. After the establishment of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture (ACTC) at ASCA, Joyce helped broker a mutually beneficial public/private partnership with state government. In 2000, the AFA hired Joyce as executive director

The Alabama Folklife Association, started in the late 1970s by Brenda McCallum, Hank Willett and others had become dormant after McCallum left Alabama. In the late 1980s, Cauthen, with the help of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, worked to reorganize the AFA after it became apparent that the state desperately needed a statewide folklife nonprofit. Joyce identified traditional arts enthusiasts and re-established the lapsed IRS 501c3 status. This was accomplished while she prepared and directed Alabama's first statewide folk festival.

The 1989 Alabama Folklife Festival was the first of five, which gave the fledgling organization a focus for

their research and presenting efforts. Because the first two festivals were produced with City Stages, Joyce was a founding (and very active) board member of the Birmingham Cultural & Heritage Foundation. As such, she worked planning and overseeing the City Stages for over a decade developing the “Alabama Sampler” portion of the festival as a venue for traditional music.

Institute (ACSI), which she began, has trained more than seventy Alabamians to document and pres-

ent various aspects of our state’s folk and cultural traditions. These gatherings have had an impressive

Photo courtesy of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture.



Joyce enjoys a Moonpie while listening to Mardi Gras music played by Mobile’s Excelsior Band at the Alabama Folklife Festival in Montgomery, circa 1993.

During her tenure as AFA’s first executive director, Joyce was instrumental in creating awareness of Alabama’s folk culture around the state and region. The Alabama Community Scholars



Joyce and Jim in 1986 with Everis Campbell of Troy. Mr. Campbell was featured in her book, *With Fiddle and Well Rosined Bow: Old-Time Fiddling in Alabama*.

Photo: Kim McRae



Joyce and Jim Cauthen with Philip Foster teaching and performing Alabama music at the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes, Port Townsend Washington in 2008.

multiplier effect, continuing to generate partnerships and projects around the state.

The fieldwork resulting from those projects will eventually become part of the Archive of Alabama Folk Culture (AAFC), another project that has benefited from Joyce's energy and enthusiasm. She was part of the planning committee that established the AAFC as a repository for the fieldwork of Alabama folklorists and scholars and her efforts as a fundraiser and advisory committee member continue to be invaluable to the Archive.

The stability of AFA under Joyce's leadership has enabled the organization to produce a number of documentary products and publish the annual journal *Tributaries*. The pioneering folklorist Archie Green and Joyce Cauthen became

good friends after meeting in 1986 when he was a featured speaker at an ASCA conference in Birmingham. They kept in contact and Archie convinced Joyce to follow up on

his curiosity about "Dr. Watts singing" in the Talladega Forest of Alabama. This resulted in the book/CD *Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book: A Primitive Baptist Song Tradition*. Joyce



Joyce Cauthen with Bill Allen in the Alabama Folklife Association booth at the Chicken and Egg Festival in Moulton in 2010.



Photo: Mark Cooch

Joyce and Jim Cauthen at Moss Rock Preserve in Hoover.



Photo courtesy of Washington County Library.

Washington County Library where Joyce Cauthen participated in the Smithsonian traveling exhibit *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* in 2009.

tions from her home in Birmingham. The Alabama State Council on the Arts is pleased to award Joyce Cauthen a Governor's Arts award for her effective documentation and presentation of Alabama traditional arts.

Joey Brackner is Director of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture

headed several other projects including the documentary cassette *John Alexander's Sterling Jubilee Singers of Bessemer, Alabama* and *Bullfrog Jumped: Children's Folksongs from the Byron Arnold Collection*. She also contributed strongly to the book/CD *Spirit of Steel* produced by Sloss Furnace.

As she prepared to step down from the AFA directorship and join her husband in retirement, Joyce worked hard to ensure a smooth transition for the AFA. She has been very helpful to the new director Mary Allison Haynie, and will continue to be a part of the AFA's projects and activities.

Joyce Cauthen's work, especially with the growth of the Alabama Folklife Association has had a positive impact on many traditions and communities in the areas of advocacy and preservation. Joyce continues to perform old time music with bands Flying Jenny and Red Mountain as well as research various folk tradi-



Photo: Steve Graubergner

Joyce Cauthen attending a Bill Bates Leadership Conference at Cheaha State Park.

THE ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD

James Bryan

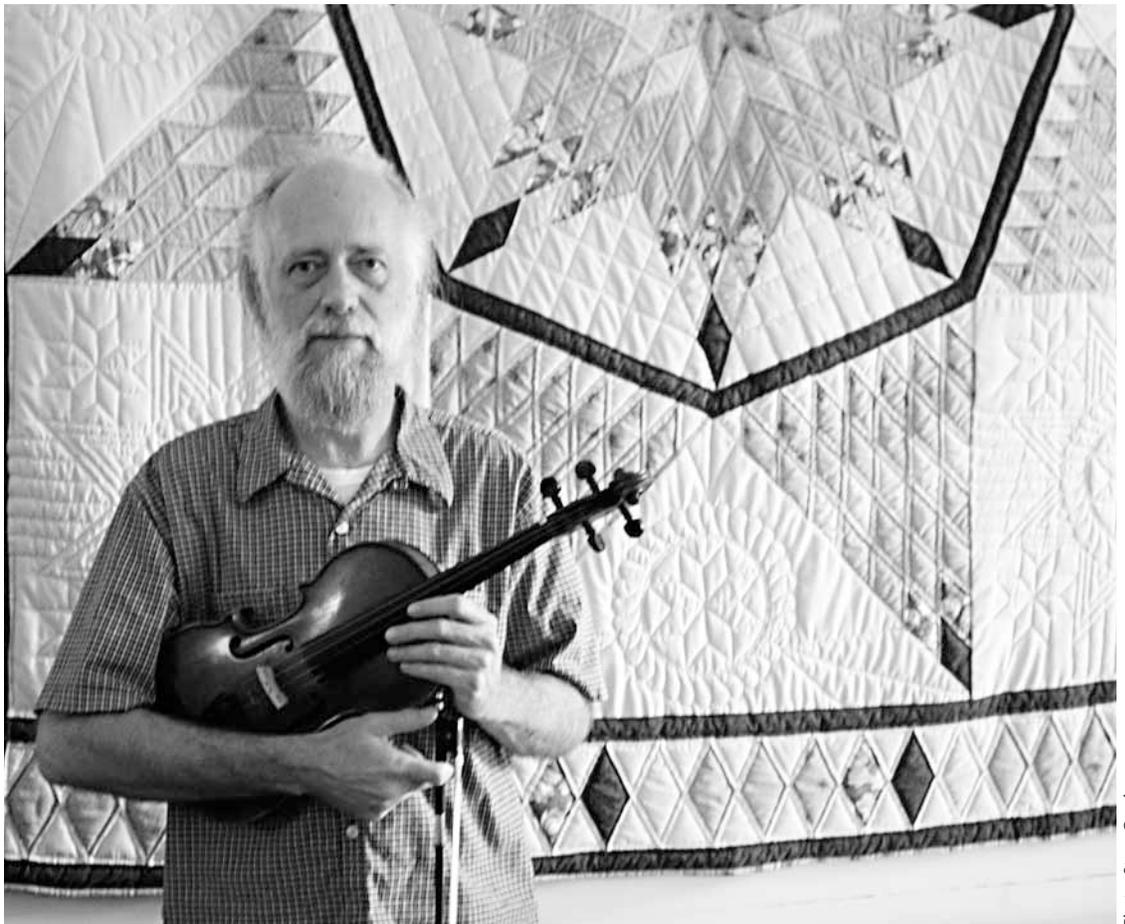
Revered Alabama Fiddler

by Joyce Cauthen

James Bryan has brought recognition to the state of Alabama among people who love traditional fiddle music. Learning his tunes from his family and mentors on Sand and Lookout Mountains as well as from old records and tune books, he developed a large repertoire that he has shared with the nation. He has a unique style of playing that has grown out of his attention to tone, intonation, and bowing enriched by his understanding of the history of the music. He discovers interesting tunes and plays them with subtle emphasis on the notes and chords that make them special.

Old-time fiddling is often wild and woolly, but James Bryan proves that it can also be graceful and elegant.

Old-time fiddling is a genre of country music that consists primarily of old tunes played for dances, fiddler's conventions, and at home



James Bryan at the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture.

Photo: Steve Grauberg

for relaxation at the end of the day. Many of these tunes originated during the 18th century, though new tunes that sound old have been introduced to the repertoire throughout the history of the genre. Bluegrass and modern country music

grew out of old-time music and have become its commercial branches while old-time music has remained mainly in the hands of amateur musicians. Uninterested in improvisation and hot licks, old-time musicians enjoy learning, sharing and



Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

Ras Johnson, James Bryan, Adous Johnson, Pattie Bryan and Leo Johnson.

preserving old tunes, usually passing along information about the fiddlers they learned them from. As a professional fiddler who is firmly rooted in old-time music, James is sought out by those who want to learn good tunes and the secrets of his smooth and soulful style of playing.

He was born in Gadsden in 1953, raised in Boaz, and began playing fiddle when he was eleven. His father Joe Bryan played fiddle and guitar and performed with Sand Mountain fiddler Monk Daniels on local radio stations and at fiddlers' conventions. Joe Bryan gave James his first lessons and made sure that his son met all the older fiddlers in the area such as those in the famous Johnson family of Sand Mountain and the Blalock family of Mentone. He also shared with James his collection of 78 rpm recordings of Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers, Fiddling John Carson and other old-time musicians who had been

commercially recorded in the 1920s. James learned those tunes and also received enthusiastic instruction from Marvin Downer of Rainsville. When he was 12 he got further encouragement by winning second place at the Walnut Grove Fiddler's Convention in Blount County where his band, with Gunterville teenagers Jimmy and David Bright, got the prize for best entertainers.

Kenny Baker, fiddler for Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys, took an interest in James' fiddling and encouraged the 16-year old to visit for extended periods, sit in on jam sessions with other Bluegrass Boys, and attend their performances at the Grand Ole Opry. That year Bryan won the prestigious title of Fiddle King at the Tennessee Valley Old-Time Fiddler's Convention in Athens, Alabama. About that

time he joined bluegrass musicians Rual Yarbrough and Jake Landers in the Dixiemen, based in Muscle Shoals. They played at festivals across the country and made four albums on the Old Homestead label, one an all-instrumental album featuring the fiddling of James Bryan at the age of 19. After the Dixiemen disbanded in 1973, James moved to Nashville where he played with the



Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

James Bryan at two and one-half years of age.

Misty Mountain Boys and performed on various occasions with music luminaries such as John Hartford, Norman Blake, Bill and James Monroe, among others. There he met a young woman who was learning to play mandolin. They married in 1977 and Patty Bryan performed and recorded with him on several occasions while maintaining a career as a nurse.

Until he was 20 years old, James learned all of his tunes by ear, or by “looking and listening,” as many describe the process. At that time he taught himself to read music by comparing the playing on recordings by the champion Texas fiddler Benny Thomasson with transcriptions of the same tunes printed in *Cole’s 1000 Fiddle Tunes*, first published in the 1880s as *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection*. After learning how to figure out a melody from notes printed on a page, he collected other music books and mined them for interesting tunes.

His performances with legendary folk and bluegrass musician Norman Blake led to the formation of an iconic string band, the Rising Fawn String Ensemble. With band member Nancy Blake on cello, the music had little to do with bluegrass music and defied categorization. In earlier days old-time music was performed on whatever instruments were available and one finds early recordings with bowed basses, accordions, autoharps, pump organs and more. Rising Fawn returned to that concept. Two albums, “The Rising



Tom Jackson, James Bryan, Norman and Nancy Blake.

Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.



(Left to right) James Bryan, Wayne Lewis, Bill Monroe, Randy Davis and Bill Holden

Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

Fawn Ensemble” (1979) and “Full Moon on the Farm” (1981) on Rounder Records offered uncommon, elegant and beautifully harmonized tunes and songs, some archaic; some composed by the Blakes. James also accompanied Nancy and Norman Blake on their own solo albums. He says that playing alongside the cello helped him develop a smoother bowing style.

Rounder Records issued James’ first solo album, “Lookout Blues” in 1983 followed two years later by “First of May.” In 1987 old-time banjoist and folklorist Bob Carlin included James and four other noted old-time fiddlers on the album “Banging and Sawing.” This recording highlighted the distinctiveness of James’ fiddle style. In 1995 he recorded “Two Pictures” in collaboration with vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Carl Jones.

When his daughter Rachel was



James Bryan, age 12 with David Bright and Jimmy Bright.

14, James suggested that she learn to accompany him on guitar. At first, she admits, the idea of playing with

her father sounded embarrassing, but when her friends at Fort Payne High School told her they thought it would be cool, she decided to do it. In short time she became a first-rate guitarist due her willingness to put in long hours of practice plus the pointers she got from Norman and Nancy Blake, Carl Jones and her parents. For the next six years Rachel performed regularly with her father, offering a back-up style that suited his playing perfectly. She also learned to play fiddle and mandolin. Rachel now lives in Nashville with her daughter Madeline and her husband Matt Combs, a fiddler, writer, producer, and head of the fiddle department at Vanderbilt’s Blair School of Music.



(Left to right) D. M. Foxx, Mildred Foxx, Bill Picket, Jr., Scott Bryan and Joe Bryan on the Radio.

Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.



Mack Blalock and James Bryan.

James Bryan has shared his tunes and techniques as a master artist in the ASCA Folk Arts

Apprentice Program (1989, '90, '97) and at music camps and old-time music weeks across the country,

including the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, Washington; the Swannanoa Gathering at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina; the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, West Virginia; the Blue Ridge Old Time Music Week at Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, North Carolina; the Bluff Country Gathering in Lanesboro, Minnesota, and the Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell, Nauvoo, Alabama. At such venues you will see a roomful of reverent listeners, each with a digital recorder in hand, capturing obscure tunes beautifully played by James Bryan. While attending James' class at the Alabama Folk School in 2010, Charlie Hartness from Athens,

Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan.



James and his daughter, Rachel Combs.

Georgia, wrote:

“Cast aside any notions you might have about old-time fiddle music sounding scratchy, erratic and slightly out of tune and listen to the playing of James Bryan. He breathes new life into traditional tunes and resurrects forgotten fiddle pieces from manuscripts that lie yellowing on library shelves. James is a man who devotes himself to playing and sharing this music of America. His fiddling is so sweet and lyrical it makes the listener close his eyes and better savor the sensations of such pure sound. It is an honor to study with this fine and gentle musical craftsman from Alabama.”

Submitted by Joyce Cauthen

*Former Executive Director of the
Alabama Folklife Association*



Photo: Courtesy of James Bryan. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

James and his daughter, Rachel Combs

THE SPECIAL COUNCIL LEGACY AWARD



Former First Lady, Patsy Riley

A Light for Us All

by Al Head



Photo: Courtesy of the Governor's office

Mrs. Riley, always the perfect host at the Governor's Mansion.

The U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C. is an impressive building on many levels. From the outside the massive dome is an iconic fixture to the landscape of our nation's capital.

The inside accommodates spaces where not only the laws that govern our country are made, but the story of the United States is told through many forms and symbols. From the marble floors and walls to the his-

toric paintings to the grand chambers of the House and Senate, the interior of the Capitol leaves most visitors with a series of images they will never forget.

A feature of the building that gives the interior space a unique sense of personality and tradition is Statuary Hall. Statues depicting two individuals of significance from each of the fifty states are represented in marble and bronze in the great hall. The chosen figures are a virtual hall of fame of the most important Americans throughout the history of our country. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Dwight Eisenhower, Will Rogers and Ronald Reagan are but a few of those representing their home states.

It was in this setting and as part of tours of Statuary Hall that then-Representative Bob Riley and his wife Patsy gave birth to the idea of Helen Keller needing to be one of the two individuals representing the State of Alabama. Mrs. Riley often shares the story of giving candlelit tours at night in the dramatic setting of Statuary Hall and having guests from Alabama ask, "who is



On October 7, 2009, the sculpture of Helen Keller was unveiled in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. Governor Bob Riley escorts Carl Augusto, President of the American Federation for the Blind.



The Helen Keller statue being unveiled in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in front of a standing-room-only audience, congressional dignitaries, national media, and representatives from Alabama.

Jabez Curry?" Curry was the second representative from Alabama alongside the famous Confederate general, Joseph Wheeler. While Curry was a prominent public official, Confederate officer, educator and noted statesman, history has all but forgotten his many contributions. On the other hand, Helen Keller is known nationally and even internationally as one of the most important women of the Twentieth Century, pioneering recognition of and appreciation for the abilities and rights of persons with disabilities.

So, the long and multi-layered task of replacing Curry with Helen Keller began under the leadership of the Rileys, first in a congressional capacity, then as Governor and First Lady. Federal and state authorizing legislation had to be authored and passed. Private money had to be raised, an artist selection committee had to be formed and strict procedures for replacement had to be followed. Mrs. Riley was named the Chair of the Helen Keller Sculpture Project Committee and thus, was responsible for a long, involved and, at times, challenging undertaking. With the constant and able assistance of Dr. Joe Busta, the former president of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind and current Director of Development for the University of South Alabama, the project got formally underway in 2005.

Mrs. Riley's commitment to the various components of the project was comprehensive and always a priority, which in the middle of



Photo: Barbara Reed

The Rileys are joined by Keller Johnson, a member of the Keller family during the unveiling of Helen Keller II.



Photo: Barbara Reed

In December 2009, First Lady Patsy Riley and Governor Bob Riley dedicated the duplicate bronze sculpture of Helen Keller to the citizens and the state of Alabama at Alabama's State Capitol.

many other First Lady projects and demands, was remarkable. It was Mrs. Riley who advocated to have Helen sculpted as the young girl at her Ivy Green home in Tuscumbia at the famous moment when she first connected the flow of water

from the pump on her hand with the word WATER. The curatorial staff at the Capitol and the congressional review committee for the project had reservations about Helen Keller being depicted as a child in the midst of all the distinguished men in Statuary Hall. After much persuasion and personal contact, Mrs. Riley won the day on that critical issue. Helen would become the first child and the first person represented with a disability in Statuary Hall.

Completion of the sculpture became a long and arduous process involving both the artist and the review committee in Washington D.C. Issues such as should Helen's

The maquette of the sculpture in progress in the artist, Edward Hlavaka's studio.



Photo: Courtesy of the Governor's office



First Lady Patsy Riley shares her long awaited dreams of making the statue a reality during the unveiling of Helen Keller II.

eyes be open or shut, what should she be wearing, how should her expression be represented at the “moment” at the pump and what should be the patina treatment of the bronze be in the final sculpture all needed considerable attention. Mrs. Riley and, at times the Governor, were both sensitive to and involved with those important decisions. The artist, Edward Hlavaka was both impressed and amazed that the First Lady and the Governor were so committed and close to the project. Observing Governor Riley on his stepladder in the studio manipulating Helen’s facial expression, Hlavaka was over heard saying, “Ain’t no way my buddies at the bar are going to believe this.” Hlavaka was so impressed by the Rileys’ support and interest in the project, that he

decided to make a duplicate copy of the sculpture and give it to the State of Alabama through the Governor and Mrs. Riley.

On October 7, 2009, the sculpture of Helen Keller was unveiled

in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in front of a standing-room-only audience of congressional dignitaries, national media, representatives from the Institute for the Deaf and Blind, the disabled community and the proud Governor and Mrs. Riley. Bands played, speeches were made, cameras were rolling to a worldwide audience and there was the seven-year old Helen Keller in bronze, at the pump and in the midst of all those dignified statues. Mrs. Riley was quoted during the placement process, “It’s about time we had someone other than the red wood forest of white men in Statuary Hall.”

Helen Keller had been hoisted several hundred feet into the Capitol the night before the unveiling by a boon truck and a steel cable. The moon was full, the iconic monu-



Dr. Joe Busta, Director of Development for the University of South Alabama in Mobile and former president of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind joins the Rileys at the podium during the unveiling of the Helen Keller II.



Mrs. Riley with the newly planted camellias on the grounds of the Alabama State Capitol, one of her many projects as First Lady.

ments along the Mall were glowing and there was the young girl suspended in the cool autumn air symbolizing another source of light in the darkness that night in our nation's capital. The metaphor of light in the darkness was not lost on the small group watching the grand entrance of Helen Keller in to the Capitol and Statuary Hall. This was a proud moment for all Alabamians.

After another unveiling ceremony in Montgomery, Helen Keller II (as the duplicate became known) toured the state in 2010 and was permanently placed in the Alabama State Capitol for thousands of Alabamians to see every year. At the unveiling Mrs. Riley, with obvious deep emotion said, "Our Helen has come home and remains here as a light for us all." Mrs. Riley left many legacies as First Lady of Alabama but, perhaps, none more endearing than the sculptures of Helen Keller.

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



Mrs. Riley, a strong supporter of quality education for Alabama's children, shares an entertaining moment with Elmo at the Alabama State Capitol.

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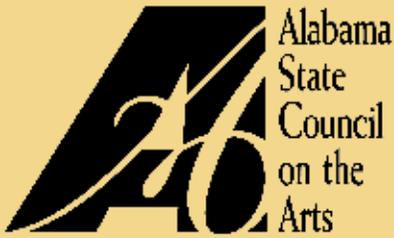
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Photo: Courtesy of Architect of the Capitol

A statue of a young Helen Keller now greets visitors at the new Capitol Visitor's Center in Washington, D.C. The Keller Statuary Hall project was significant on many levels for Alabama, our national capital, the disabled community and the role of the arts in the United States. The bronze statue by Edward Hlavka was unveiled with a great national and international attention. The bronze piece captures the likeness of Helen Keller at a water pump at her home in Tuscumbia at the very moment where she solves what she called "the mystery of language." It depicts the moment in 1887 when teacher Anne Sullivan spelled "W-A-T-E-R" into one of the child's hands as she held the other under the pump. It's the moment when Keller realized meanings were hidden in the manual alphabet shapes Sullivan had taught her to make with her hands.

During the unveiling, national and state public officials praised Keller as a trailblazer and an inspiration for those with disabilities.

The Helen Keller statue is the first in the National Statuary Hall Collection that depicts a person with a disability, and the only statue of a child.