ALABAMA ARTS

Volume XXVII, Number 1

State Arts Awards Issue 2017

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ALABAMA**ARTS**
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STATE ARTS AWARDS 2017

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On the Front Cover: Dr. Art Bacon in the 70s worked almost exclusively with ink washes – lots of lines and very little color. In the mid-80s he shifted and began using more color. Every brushstroke of Bacon's powerful and unique style communicates his passion and engages the viewer with the subject. (From top, clockwise) The Blues Guitarman, Acrylic, 2016, 36" x 48"; Contemplation, Acrylic, 2016, 36" x 48" and Pickin' Muscadines, Acrylic, 2016, 40" x 30".

On the Back Cover: Sandy in Her Sunday Hat, Ink wash, 1993, 28.5" x 28.5".

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The Alabama State
Council on the Arts

2017

ARTS AWARDS 2017

MAKING US PROUD TO BE IN SWEET HOME ALABAMA

by Al Head

As we approach the Bicentennial of Alabama's statehood in 2019, we recognize there are so many people who have had an impact on making Alabama the state it is today. Looking at two hundred years of history it is easy to spotlight early pioneers, educators, politicians, athletes, military leaders and business entrepreneurs who have stood out and become "famous" Alabamians. But, perhaps it is Alabama's artists over many years that have done more to give Alabama its identity and place of prominence in the world than any other single group. Mention names like W. C. Handy, Harper Lee, Hank Williams, William Christenberry, Rick Bragg, the Gees Bend Quilters, Fannie Flagg or Lionel Richie and the point about Alabama's identity is made. The fact is, there remain many artists, arts supporters and arts leaders who have had and continue to have a significant impact on the state's identity in a most positive way.

Every other year the Alabama State Council on the Arts showcases some of these exceptional Alabamians in what has become known as the Celebration of the Arts Awards Program. This year ASCA will be presenting awards to three celebrities from the music world: soul vocalist and HOF rock legend Eddie Floyd; a master of the rock 'n' roll keyboard, Chuck Leavell; and renowned bluegrass musician, singer and songwriter, Jake Landers. Luminary awardees from other fields of endeavor in the arts include: highly respected and long-time museum director, Gail Andrews; radio/television program host and "Mr. Literature" in Alabama, Don Noble; nationally recognized city planner and designer, Cheryl Morgan; and educator extraordinaire and world famous African-American painter, Art Bacon. Rounding out the 2017 class of awardees is Mayor of Montgomery, Todd Strange an immensely popular public official and international advocate for the arts.

One of the primary goals of the State Council on the Arts is to increase public recognition for the arts and artists in Alabama. In ASCA's fifty-year history the awards program has proven to be one of our most effective and successful ways of achieving that goal. The only downside to the awards program is the impossible task of spotlighting all of the individuals worthy of recognition in our culture-rich state. We are fortunate that in the two years leading up to the state's 2019 Bicentennial there will be many opportunities to highlight more artists, past and present, more community arts leaders, past and present, and more projects that celebrate the arts and folk traditions of our great state.

The awards program of 2017 is a showcase of "the best of the best." Our recipients reflect the scope and breadth of creativity, commitment, generosity and leadership that make the arts "happen" every day in Alabama. This showcase gives us an opportunity to express our appreciation and respect for their accomplishments, talents and contributions to the state. Finally these individuals give us reasons to be proud of our state and the place we choose to call home.

Al Head is the

Executive Director

of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

THE JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Gail Andrews

Inspiring Action with Passion

by Graham C. Boettcher

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Gail Andrews in the Birmingham Museum of Arts' 18th century English Gallery, 2006.

If you've ever witnessed Gail Andrews speak about the importance of connecting people with art, chances are you've heard the passion in her voice and seen the conviction in her eyes. For this woman, who for the past two decades has served as the director of Alabama's largest art museum—the Birmingham Museum of Art (BMA)—creating meaningful experiences with art is not just a job, it's a vocation, one to which she has tirelessly dedicated herself for more than 40 years. Andrews' staunch advocacy for the arts in our state dates back to her arrival in Alabama in 1976, when she served as the Birmingham Museum of Art's first curator of decorative arts. In 1991, as the BMA's interim director, she guided the Museum through a $21 million expansion and renovation, increasing the size of the Museum by fifty percent and establishing it as the largest municipal museum in the Southeast. In 1996, Andrews was appointed R. Hugh Daniel Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art and under her leadership the Museum has burgeoned: the collection has grown from 13,000 to 27,000 works of art; programming

has been greatly expanded; five key positions have been endowed; and $20 million has been added to the endowment—all while maintaining free general admission. Few individuals have made so great and transformative impact on a single institution. For one who has truly dedicated her entire professional life to the arts of Alabama, the Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award seems a fitting tribute.

Born in Washington, D.C., from age two until the age of six, Andrews lived outside Tokyo, Japan, where her father was an engineer for Philco, the consumer electronics manufacturer. Though she lost her ability to speak Japanese, Andrews has vivid memories of her early childhood abroad, including her Japanese playmates. It is this experience that Andrews credits for her lifelong love of learning about foreign cultures. Andrews' family left Japan for California, where—except for a year in Texas near her mother's family following her father's death—she lived in the San Francisco Bay Area until heading east for college. Andrews' mother was a major influence on her life, providing her with cultural opportunities such as visits to art museums, theater and

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Gail Andrews and artist Whitfield Lovell at the opening of Third Space, *January 2017.*

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Gail Andrews with BMA staff and patrons visiting the artist Emma Amos (center), 2010.

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Andrews and artist Toni Tully discuss a sculpture at a Birmingham Art Association exhibition, early, 1980's.

ballet performances, and botanical gardens. However, it was an elementary school teacher that instilled in Andrews a love of American history that set her on the path to becoming a historian of American decorative arts. As she explains, "I always trace my interest to my love of history, the American experience, to Mr. Pitney's 5th grade history class. I fell in love with and became truly fascinated with the early settlement and development of our country."

Andrews received her undergraduate education from the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. The nation's second-oldest institution of higher learning proved to be an ideal place for Andrews to explore her love of the past, not only because of its history-steeped setting, but also due to opportunities provided by the school's Institute of Early American History and Culture. According to Andrews, "Once there, I explored that area broadly: historical archaeology, which included working on a excavation in Yorktown, and art history and literature courses with focus on colonial and early America. That experience taught me that my interest was social history—how people lived, what they built, made, and surrounded themselves with—particularly decorative arts, paintings, and architecture."

Andrews received her master's degree in museum studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program in historic Cooperstown, New York. As a student in the American Folk Culture Program, Andrews first discovered the work of living folk artists thanks to Dr. Louis C. Jones (1908 – 1990). According to Andrews, "It was Professor Jones who introduced me to folk art, not what I had seen at Williamsburg at the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, but contemporary works by living artists. It opened up a whole new world and view for me, an interest that continues today." Jones's inclusive approach and passionate belief in the importance of the lives of working people whose stories were often left out of formal histories resonated with Andrews. It was at Cooperstown where Andrews also cultivated her passion for and expertise in textiles in general, and quilts in particular, under the instruction of Virginia

Photo: Courtesy of Gail Andrews

Andrews decorating the Christmas tree in the White House's Blue Room, 1975.

Parslow Partridge (1917 – 2007), a weaver and textile historian.

Andrews' time at Cooperstown cemented her aspiration to work with objects, in particular decorative arts, which brought her to Alabama in 1976, as the BMA's first curator of decorative arts. It also instilled in her an interest in oral history and contemporary makers, which fueled her desire to meet quilters and folk artists upon moving to a state so rich in both. Spending time and learning from so many Alabama artists over the years has provided Andrews with many memories. Dr. Robert Cargo (1933 – 2012), Professor of French at the University of Alabama, and one of the most important collectors of quilts in the United States, had an enormous impact and influence on Andrews. From Cargo, Andrews learned not only about the quilts of Alabama, and the people and history of this state, but also—in her words—"about integrity, diligence, and respect." One particularly memorable occasion occurred during a visit to one of the centers where the "Boligee Quilters" gathered one day a week to quilt, talk, and share a meal. As Andrews recalled, "The room was active, alive, full of color and stories and laughter. Then before lunch, all became quiet, and we gathered in a circle, holding hands, and a prayer and a hymn that felt transcendent enveloped everyone. It was the moment that Dr. [Louis] Jones wanted to capture—the work and stories of the everyman, the essential makers—quiet, moving, and compelling."

Among Andrews' other mentors were Dr. David Farmer, director of the Birmingham Museum of Art from 1976 to 1978, and his successor, Richard N. Murray (1942 – 2006), director from 1979 to 1983. Andrews says, "Both were taking risks in mounting some very ambitious exhibitions, ones that would make a contribution to scholarship, while offering our community new and rich opportunities with works of art." When she became director, Andrews continued the precedent established by her mentors, overseeing the organization of dozens of groundbreaking exhibitions which traveled nationally, including *Kamisaka Sekka: Rimpa Master – Pioneer of Modern Design* (2003), co-organized with the Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, the first retrospective of the artist; *Leonardo da Vinci: Drawings from the Biblioteca*

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Andrews examining a late 18th century English creamware epergne, 1982.

Photo: Courtesy of Gail Andrews

Andrews with her next-door neighbor in Japan, the grandfather of her playmates, circa 1959.

Reale in Turin (2011), which brought rarely seen works by Leonardo to the United States for the first time; and *The Look of Love: Eye Miniatures from the Skier Collection* (2012), the first major exhibition of English "lover's eye" miniatures. She was instrumental in bringing landmark exhibitions from other institutions to Birmingham including *Matisse* (2000), *European Masterpieces: Six Centuries of Paintings from the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia* (2002) and *Pompeii: Tales from an Eruption* (2007). The BMA's most recent exhibition under her leadership is *Third Space/Shifting Conversations about Contemporary Art* (2017), the Museum's first major exhibition of contemporary art from its own collection.

Among the many traits that have contributed to Andrews' success and longevity at the Birmingham Museum of Art is her ability to form lasting and meaningful relationships with staff, patrons, and members of the community. Andrews has also forged such relationships on a national level through her participation in the Association of Art Museum Directors. She cites her involvement in the AAMD as one of her most rewarding professional experiences, saying, "I have such regard and affection for so many of my colleagues. They have been available for advice and counsel, for ideas and partnerships, and have truly been a significant part of my life." From 2007 to 2008, she served as president of the AAMD, evidence of the high regard in which she is held by fellow museum directors throughout the country.

In March 2017, Andrews announced that she would retire in the coming fall. She looks forward to traveling with her husband, Dr. Richard Marchase, and spending time with her family: daughter Julia Trechsel Davis, son-in-law Dr. Christopher Davis, and grandson Reynolds; son Andrew Trechsel; stepson Dr. Nicholas Marchase; and step-daughter Allison Marchase. While retirement will allow more time for the pleasures of gardening, hiking, and yoga, she will continue to be involved with the BMA, co-curating an exhibition of Dr. Cargo's folk art collection and writing about the Museum's quilt collection. When asked about her legacy, Andrews says, "I hope I will be remembered for creating a greater sense of inclusion and more diversity among our audience, our collection and our staff, though we know we have more to do. I take a great deal of pride in fostering collecting more works by African American artists, and also by artists who are depicting and reflecting on the Civil Rights Movement. Our community is becoming more diverse and our collection and programming is also reflecting this growth and change as well, in many ways." Indeed, *growth*

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Andrews with kinetic sculptor George Rickey (1907 - 2002), 1997.

and *change* may be the best words to define Gail Andrews' forty years of passionate and unwavering devotion to the Birmingham Museum of Art, which will continue to have a profound impact on the cultural landscape of Alabama for generations to come.

Dr. Graham C. Boettcher is the Deputy Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art.

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Artist Dawoud Bey, Timothy Huffman and Gail Andrews standing in from of Bey's portrait of Huffman at the opening of The Birmingham Project, 2013.

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Andrews chatting with patrons at the Museum's Sankofa Society Gala, 2009.

Photo: Courtesy of the BMA

Andrews addressing a group of museum patrons.

THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD

Eddie Floyd

Architect of Southern Soul

by Deb Boykin

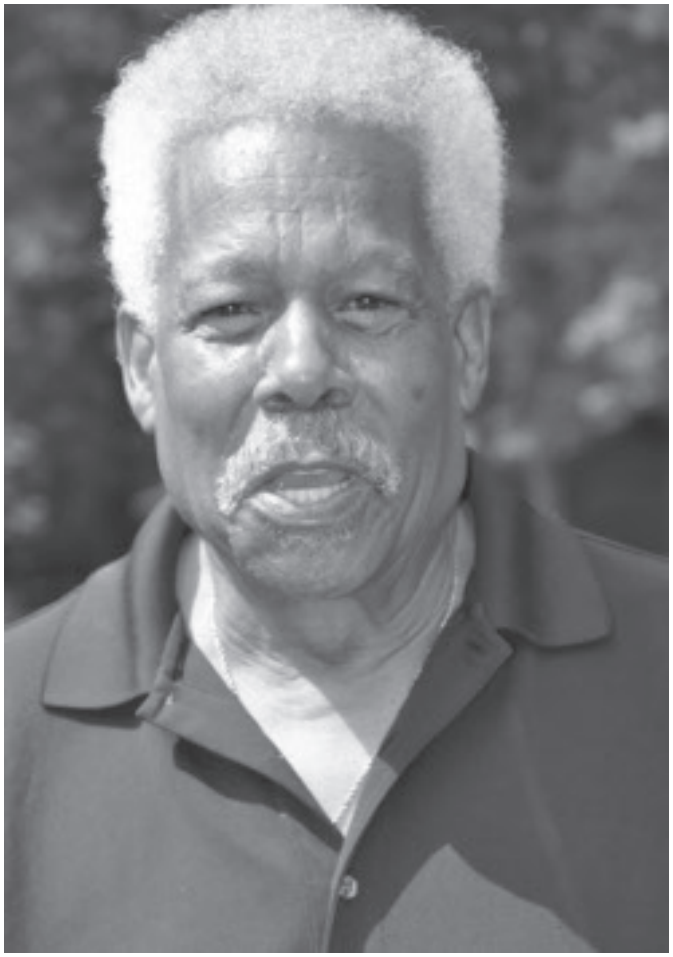


Photo: Steve Grauberger

A current image of Eddie Floyd at his home near Montgomery.

Eddie Floyd learned early on about the life of a touring musician. As a young man in Montgomery, he used to see Hank Williams driving around in a white Cadillac that pulled a trailer. Young Eddie wondered what it would be like to ride out of town in that big car and play music for people all around the country. Before too long, he found out, riding through the countryside in his own white Cadillac and playing his music in clubs and theaters. He began his career as a performer and honed his songwriting talents along the way, creating songs that were recorded by a diverse group of artists ranging from David Bowie, Eric Clapton, Ella Fitzgerald, Bruce Springsteen, Seal, Toots and the Vagabonds, to George Benson. One of his tunes, "Knock on Wood" has been covered more than 460 times. Tall, elegant, and smooth-voiced, Eddie Floyd was an architect of the southern soul sound that came out of the legendary Stax records and an influential figure in American popular music.

Born in Montgomery in 1937, Eddie spent his childhood between Montgomery and Detroit, living in Alabama during the school year and heading north to spend the summers with his aunt and uncle, Catherine and Robert West. No matter where he was living, music was a big part of his life. "I used to just sing all the time," he told an interviewer for the *Alabama Arts* radio program in 2011. No matter where he was, he would be in the audience when stage shows came to town. "I heard folks like Count Basie and Ella Fitzgerald in Detroit. I used to go and see any of the singers that would come to Montgomery." One group in particular had a big influence on a young Eddie. "Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers was one of the groups I was influenced by, Floyd recalls. "My uncle knew that I wanted to start a group and he helped me start the Falcons." Beginning in 1955, this group was a starting point for soul talents Sir Mack Rice, Lance Finney, Willie Scofield, Joe Stubbs, and a young man whose roots were just up the road from Eddie Floyd's home place. He and Wilson Pickett met as teenagers in Detroit, but didn't realize they had both been born in Alabama until they were touring with the Falcons "We were driving through Montgomery on the way from Atlanta to New Orleans and I said, 'I've got to stop and

visit my mom,'" Floyd told an interviewer. "Pickett said, 'So do I. I'm from Prattville.'" Eddie would go on to write one of Wilson Pickett's biggest hits, "634-5789" and the men remained close friends for the rest of Pickett's life. Floyd once commented that he and Pickett, "passed through Montgomery together and it took us all over the world."

Photo: Courtesy of Eddie Floyd

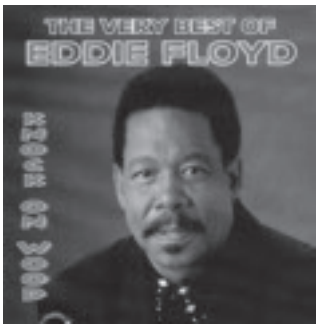
Eddie Floyd and Steve Cropper, May 1968. Floyd signed with Stax as a songwriter and teamed with Cropper for the 1966 hit "Knock on Wood."

Over their seven-year existence, the Falcons released a string of singles including "You're so Fine" and "I Found a Love." Archivist and researcher Kevin Nutt describes their music as "anticipating the soul and pop sounds of the 1960's. Consequently, many of these tunes do not sound dated, but retain a verve and freedom not bounded by the time of their release." The Falcons disbanded in 1962 and Floyd continued to perform as a solo act. When he played Washington, D.C., he met Al Bell, a DJ at WUST who had come north from Memphis. The two became friends and eventually, partners in the Safice record label. At this point another of Eddie's talents came to the fore and his songwriting career began in earnest.

As a young boy, Eddie had encountered a teacher who would be a major influence on his life. "My music comes from the University of Mt. Meigs," he once chuckled, referring to a correctional school where he spent a brief time as an adolescent. Arthur Wilmont, the music teacher there, assembled a chorus and young Eddie was one of the singers. "He also taught me music theory and how to write lyrics and it stayed with me. My style of writing comes from singing in the choir at Mt. Meigs. I could always hear all the parts. Once I hear melodies in my head, I can hear titles, and the process goes on from there. After I began writing songs, I never

Photo: Courtesy of Eddie Floyd

Floyd performing in 1976.



A sampling of some of the many albums recorded by Eddie Floyd.

Photo: Steve Grauberger

Photos documenting Floyd's musical career.

Photo: Steve Grauberger

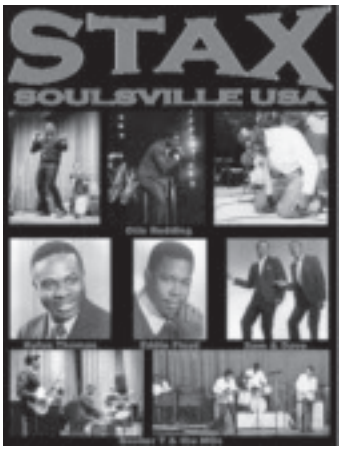
A sampling of singles released by Floyd.

stopped writing. I was always writing. Here at home, even when I'm walking around working on other things, I'm always singing to myself."

Al Bell mentioned that a Howard University student from Memphis named Carla Thomas was looking for songs and Eddie Floyd was ready. He wrote "Stop, Look What You're Doing to Me" and her hit "Comfort Me." When Bell returned to Memphis to join the staff at Stax records, so did Floyd. In his book *Sweet Soul Music*, vernacular music historian Peter Guralnick described Eddie as "one of Stax's most dependable songwriters. With Steve Cropper alone he composed "634-5789" for Wilson Pickett, "Don't Mess With Cupid" for Otis Redding, and his own hit, "Knock on Wood." In addition to his songwriting success, Eddie gained popularity as a performer. His song "I Never Loved a Girl" is as fine an example of a classic soul vocal as anyone has ever recorded. During his years at Stax, more artists recorded Eddie Floyd songs than those of any other composer. Kevin Nutt summarized Floyd's contribution to the legacy of Stax this way: "Throughout the Stax years, Floyd worked closely with musicians and songwriters who propelled this remarkable bi-racial

Photo: Courtesy of Eddie Floyd

Eddie Floyd, Sylvester Rivers and Booker T. Jones.



Stax promo poster.

Photo: Steve Grauberger

Eddie in front of various awards, photos and certificates received during his career.

southern label, giving advice and direction and leaving the Eddie Floyd touch and influence everywhere. The Stax sound was a soul sound; it was a southern sound and it was an Eddie Floyd sound. 'Blood Is Thicker Than Water,' '634-5789 Soulsville USA,' and 'Ninety-Nine And A Half' among others have all become soul standards."

Stax was a like a family to Eddie Floyd and it was a family with some notable members. Otis Redding, Carla Thomas, her father Rufus Thomas, and Booker T. and the MGs were all Stax artists in the 1960's. Occasionally, they traded songs like siblings do clothes, one taking what doesn't fit the other. "Steve Cropper and I wrote 'Knock on Wood for Otis," Eddie said, "but the demo didn't sound right for Otis." It certainly was right for Floyd. His version of "Knock on Wood" charted at number one and sold over a million copies. He continued to record for Stax until 1975. In subsequent years, he has recorded on several other labels, but touring became his primary focus.

Floyd made two notable appearances in the movies as well. The first was *Wattstax*, a 1973 film documenting the performances sponsored by Stax at the Watts Summer Festival in 1972. Two decades later, he and his long-time friend Wilson Pickett teamed up for one of the most

Photo: Steve Grauberger

Floyd's keepsake from his performance in the film Blues Brothers 2000.

memorable moments in 1998's *Blues Brothers 2000*. The former Falcons were cast as the proprietors of "Ed's Love Exchange." What was their number? 634-5789, of course and they performed the song in a production number with young blues performer Jonny Lang and actors Dan Ackroyd and John Goodman. The large, electrified sign from the set is the centerpiece of Eddie's collection of memorabilia at his home in rural Montgomery County.

Photo: Courtesy of Eddie Floyd

Floyd at his 79th birthday celebration, June 25, 2016.

After more than a half-century of touring, Eddie Floyd still performs, taking American southern soul music to places as far-flung as Russia and Croatia. He made his first trip to England in 1967, performing with Otis Redding and others. "It was like an exchange thing, really," he explained. "The Beatles and the Rolling Stones

Photo: Courtesy of Eddie Floyd

Floyd performing at Otis Reddings' Birthday celebration.

Photo: Steve Grauberger

Eddie Floyd enjoying his pond and property near Montgomery.

Photo: Steve Grauberger

Sam Moore and Dave Prater toured with The Stax/Volt Review in Europe in 1967. Eddie Floyd, Otis Redding, Arthur Conley and Booker T. and the MGs were other headliners on that tour.

were touring America at that time and we were receiving the same kind of welcome over there. It was kind of exciting and different, very uptown." Floyd continues to tour in Europe, where he has performed with former Stones bassist Bill Wyman and his group the Rhythm Kings as well as his own band. He finds enthusiastic audiences there, noting that "they keep up with musical trends but they don't turn loose the other music."

Despite his years in Memphis and his extensive touring schedule, Eddie Floyd has always called Alabama home. "I never left Alabama," he says. "It's always been my home, where my mother and grandmother were, where my family is now. I've gone everywhere and done music everywhere. Music has taken me around the world and I've played many other places, but I always come back to Alabama."

Deborah Boykin is a Folklife Specialist for the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture at the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Dr. Art Bacon:

A Life of Art *and* Science

by Valerie L. White

Dr. Arthur L. Bacon, Art Bacon, as he prefers to be called, has spent the last 48 years of his life as a resident of Talladega, Alabama. Although an accomplished scientist and educator, one of his goals has always been to use his considerable artistic skills to visually preserve the people, natural beauty and artifacts of the South. Retired as Professor Emeritus of the Natural Sciences and the Humanities in 2008, Bacon can usually be found doing just that in his studio on Logan Martin Lake or surrounded by a delighted audience at the Jemison-Carnegie Heritage Hall Museum in Talladega.

Bacon was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, to Henry and Thelma Bacon. Although circumstances would not permit either to complete high school, they recognized and nurtured their son's aptitude for art and science very early in his life. They gave him coloring books which only required a brush and water to get colorful pictures. His sister, Marian, later took his pencil drawings and tempera paintings to her Y-Teens meetings—often bringing back ribbons.

In high school, Bacon won a number of competitions, intensifying his love of art and science. In his senior year this love would result in one of the great dilemmas of his life—the choice of a career path—art or science.

Bacon decided to major in biology at Talladega College, but could not abandon his art—it was his passion. He composed posters for campus activities, portraits of his classmates, and backdrops for the College's Little Theatre. He also enrolled in some elective courses

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Dr. Art Bacon at work in his studio.

taught by David C. Driskell, the now internationally acclaimed artist and art historian. Driskell taught him the ink wash technique, with which Bacon later launched his professional art career. In his senior year, hoping to combine art and science, Bacon did an illustrated study of local moss plants for his senior biology project.

On January 2, 1961, the start of the semester he graduated, Bacon was attacked for sitting in the formerly "white" waiting room of the Southern Railway Train Station in Anniston, Alabama. The assault only strengthened Bacon's resolve to succeed. It also heightened his sensitivity to the human condition which is reflected in some of his work—some of which James Nelson, visual art critic for the Birmingham News, referred to as "powerful social commentary." In 2016, a plaque honoring Bacon and commemorating the site was erected as part of the newly installed Anniston, Alabama Civil Rights Trail.

During his zoology studies in graduate school at Howard University, Bacon's involvement in the arts was limited to illustrations for scientific papers. He illustrated his own as well as other graduate students' papers and dissertations. One of those students, Dr. William Sutton, said, "I preferred Bacon's drawings from the microscope to the photographs I took." Credited with discovering and studying a new species of protozoa, Bacon received his M.S. and Ph.D., in 1963 and 1967, respectively. He then spent a year at the University of Miami doing postdoctoral research.

In 1969, Bacon accepted a

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Sandy in Her Sunday Hat *by Dr. Art Bacon.*

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Dr. Art Bacon sketching outdoors.

position as head of the biology department and later that same academic year, chair of the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at his Alma Mater. Despite his administrative duties, teaching, writing grant proposals and launching an undergraduate research program, Bacon became deeply involved in all facets of art—"I thought I would be there a year until both the students and art took hold. The rest is history."

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Field Trip.

Readily embraced by the Alabama art community, Bacon frequently exhibited his work—often as the featured artist.

When Dr. James Hatcher used the Talladega College choir as the chorus in UAB's Town and Gown production of Porgy and Bess, Bacon designed the commemorative prints sold at the box office. He also designed the program cover and set elements for Dr. Hatcher's travelling production of "Speak of Me as I Am."

Later at Talladega College, he collaborated with his former teacher and mentor. "One of the most enjoyable jobs I have had was assisting David Driskell with the design of the stained glass windows for the Deforest Chapel."

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Young Art Bacon with his sister, Marian.

Early in his tenure at Talladega College, Bacon served on science review panels for the Federal Government and on arts project panels for the Alabama State Council on the Arts. He also helped the Birmingham Museum of Art select a hands-on educational project for children.

During his tenure at the College, he received numerous awards—evidence of his contributions as a leader, teacher, mentor and advocate for excellence in education. Among them are: The Tenneco Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1992/1993; Election to the National Black College Hall of Fame; NAFEO Presidential Citation, April 19, 1986; Outstanding Alumni Award, May 15, 1982; a proclamation of Alumni Association Memphis, May 18, 1991; and the Talladega College Board of Trustees Chair's Lifetime Achievement Award, November 2003.

By the 1970s, Bacon exhibited in local and statewide shows and headlined several—he was noted for his ink wash technique. In 1974 at the Brookwood Village arts and crafts show as the only African American, he won second prize and sold thirty ink wash drawings. That event launched his career as a professional artist.

Around the same time, Bacon met Hale Woodruff, who painted the Savery Library (aka Amistad) Murals at Talladega College. Woodruff allayed Bacon's apprehension about his dual career in a note, which said, "…there has always been an affinity between art and science."

In the 1970s, Bacon worked almost exclusively with ink washes—lots of lines and very little color. People were his subjects of choice, especially those whose life stories were reflected in their faces. He believed then that color interfered with his expression of feelings.

In the mid 1980's, Claude Clark urged Bacon to begin using more color. He first added watercolor to his ink washes and then as a wash to his Conte drawings.

Today, most of his paintings are done in acrylics in a very distinctive and colorful style. Every brushstroke of Bacon's powerful and unique style communicates his passion and engages the viewer with the subject.

Employed to lead the sciences by Talladega College

and driven by his passion for art, Bacon seldom took leave—working through weekends, holidays and vacations. It paid off. Notably, in 1996, Peterson's Guide to Colleges and Schools listed Talladega College among the top 200 Undergraduate Science Programs in the Country.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Southern Railway Train Station in Anniston, Alabama where Dr. Art Bacon was assaulted on January 2, 1961.

In 1989, in mid-career at Talladega College, Bacon was appointed Provost and Vice president for Academic Affairs. The job curtailed science teaching and research, but gave him the opportunity to shape the school of fine arts to offer an art major program. He also continued exhibiting and teaching art—exposing as many people to art as he could. "Children are especially appreciative. I have boxes of letters from them." Among the most gratifying students I have demonstrated art to are those at the AIDB (Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind)."

In the fall of 2001, Dr. Henry Ponder, the new president of the College, called Bacon off of Sabbatical to lead the College's bid for reaffirmation of accreditation. With a single letter, Bacon raised a million dollars to facilitate the process and the college's accreditation was reaffirmed—the faculty and staff named him man of the year.

The reach and impact of Bacon's art extends beyond Alabama. He has exhibited at over 100 venues in Alabama, Florida, California, Georgia and Tennessee. His work has also included exhibitions at the Riverside Church (NY), Cinque Gallery (NY) and the UC Berkeley Faculty Club.

Bacon's art continues to be a platform for his educational lectures on Civil Rights—which he sometime complements with his poetry. Many of the workshops take place in Alabama, Georgia and Florida. However, Bacon's reputation and contributions have led him to hold an "Annual Virtual Lecture: Art and the Civil Rights Movement" for an American Studies class at the University of Poland in Warsaw.

A plethora of awards celebrate Art Bacon's collective contributions to the arts and education, civil rights education and the sciences. Among them are the

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Dr. Art Bacon at James Huff's art exhibit.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Dr. Art Bacon with one of his paintings in the background.

Armstrong Award for creative ability; Inclusion in the City of Talladega's "Outstanding Citizens from 1834-2000"; Presentation of the "Key to the City" in Birmingham in the 1970s; the "Realizing the Dream—Mountaintop Award" from the University of Alabama and being named the first recipient of the "Augusta Savage Award" during the Payne Chapel Gala Honoring "Trailblazers, Legends and Rising Stars."

Bacon was invited in 2011 to participate in the Collector's Editions of Visions of Our 44th President—Barack Obama. He was selected as one of the significant African American artists in the nation to develop an artwork using a bust of the 44th president. The works, artist's statements and history were included in a Collector's Edition book, which has been critically acclaimed in various international and national journals.

Contemplation *by Dr. Art Bacon. Acrylic, 36" x 48," 2016.*

The Blues Guitarman *by Dr. Art Bacon. Acrylic, 36" x 48," 2016.*

One of Bacon's most cherished moments came in 2012, when Mrs. I.E. Hudnell, his ninety-plus-year-old former high school art teacher and lifelong inspiration presented Bacon with an elephant that he carved from plaster-of-Paris in the eleventh grade.

After retiring from academia to focus full-time on painting, exhibits and art-related activities in 2008, Bacon has remained busier than ever. *Southern Living* magazine featured him in "Alabama Year of the Arts" in his first year of retirement. When he is home in Talladega, he

Pickin' Muscadines *by Dr. Art Bacon. Acrylic, 40" x 30," 2016.*

teaches adult art classes and gives art talks and demonstrations of his work at Heritage Hall Museum and at his studio.

He continues to live his passion for Art every day: "I enjoy devoting myself completely to my art. I miss the college and science, but am not at all unhappy!"

Valerie L. White is the Director of the Heritage Hall Museum in Talladega, Alabama.

A special thanks to Sara Dunn for photo editing.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Dr. Art Bacon with the Theatre Gates Group.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Art Bacon

Dr. Art Bacon and his students at Talladega College.

Chuck Leavell

Creating Magic with the Rolling Stones Since 1982

by Jim Harrison, III

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Leavell on keyboards.

At the corner of Paul W. Bryant Drive and Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard in downtown Tuscaloosa, the old YMCA building lies in a pile of brick, steel and concrete rubble. A giant demolition track hoe sits atop as if guarding its kill. I remember as a kid, too young to drive, when my mom would occasionally drop me off at the Y on Friday nights to hang out and listen to the band. Wikipedia says that Charles Alfred "Chuck" Leavell was born in Birmingham on April 28, 1952. That may be. But as far as we are concerned, he belongs to Tuscaloosa.

I was about seven in 1962 when Chuck's family settled in T-Town. Chuck's career as a musician started with the tuba in junior high and may have ended right there—the tuba not being known as a rock 'n' roll jammin' instrument—had he not learned the guitar from his cousin Winston Leavell. Fortunately for us and

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Mother Nature Network co-founded by Chuck Leavell going public. On December 11, 2012 Chuck Leavell and his wife Rose Lane Leavell ring the New York Stock Exchange bell for its IPO.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Rose Lane Leavell and Chuck with his Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2012 Special Merit Awards in Los Angeles.

the rest of the music world, Chuck's mother Frances had schooled him as well on some piano basics.

In 1966 Chuck started his first band, The Misfitz, which played a steady gig every Friday night at that very same YMCA. The "Y Party," as it was known, was the hippest scene in town and The Misfitz owned the room. Chuck was cool even then and just got better with time.

At age 13 Chuck got the opportunity to see Ray Charles in concert. He recalls: "Ray and the band played an incredible show. It had such an impact on me that I made up my mind there and then that was what I wanted to do. I decided that night what I wanted as my career." And so it was that The Misfitz called it quits, and at age 15 a young, resolute Chuck Leavell made his way to Muscle Shoals. From here, his story reads like *Forrest Gump*.

In the legendary Shoals studios, Chuck chased session work and connected with Freddie North, playing on Freddie's gold record classic, "Don't Take Her, She's All I Got." In 1968 Chuck began working with Paul Hornsby, who had played with The Hour Glass, forerunner of the Allman Brothers Band. One of Chuck's early mentors, Hornsby moved to Macon, Georgia, to work at Capricorn Records, recently opened by Southern music master Phil Walden. Chuck would follow in 1970 and helped Hornsby form the band Sundown, which made one record on the Ampex label and broke up shortly after. Again, Chuck found himself doing session work at Capricorn, but was soon picked up to tour with Alex Taylor, James Taylor's older brother. They made one record together, *Dinnertime*, which was released in 1972, before going separate ways.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell loves music and nature.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell with Mick Jagger.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Steel Wheels Tour, 1989. From left: Keith Richards, Charlie Watts, Mick Jagger, Bernard Fowler, a Leavell family friend, Frances Leavell, Ronnie Wood, Cindy Mizelle, Chuck Leavell, Bill Wyman and Jo Wood.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell with recording artist John Mayer.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell with his first band, The Misfitz.

It was then that Chuck began working with Dr. John, the time he refers to as his "college education." Passing through Macon, I guess Chuck "graduated." Dr. John moved on. Chuck stayed. It was here that he caught the eye of Greg Allman.

In his 2012 autobiography *My Cross to Bear*, Allman recalls: "He (Chuck) was hanging around the studio and certainly looked the part. But when I heard him play, I knew he was there for a reason. I got him to play keyboards on the Laidback record and he did so well, in addition to being easy to work with. He'd give you exactly what you wanted, without any questions. And if he embellished on a song, he made it better."

And so, in September of 1972 at the tender age of 20, Chuck Leavell became a member of one of the most iconic bands in American music history. Duane Allman had died tragically the previous October and Greg decided not to attempt to recreate the Allman Brothers' signature double-lead guitar sound made famous by Duane and Dicky Betts, but to go in a different direction. It was here that Chuck's keyboard mastery and creativity took the second lead, and never was there a more poignant example of Chuck's musical personality than on their heavily played instrumental, "Jessica," released on the 1973 album *Brothers and Sisters*. That same year Chuck married Rose Lane White, who was on staff at Capricorn. Rosie, as he affectionately calls her, has been his sidekick and partner in crime throughout his extraordinary career.

In 1976 the Allman Brothers temporarily disbanded and Chuck emerged to form the rock-jazz-blues fusion group Sea Level. The group toured relentlessly in the 70's and released five critically acclaimed albums. It was later in 1981 that Chuck

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell on tour with the Rolling Stones.

first auditioned for the Stones alongside Ian Stewart, known as "the sixth Rolling Stone," a moniker that *People Magazine* would bestow on Chuck some years later. Stewart died in 1985 and Chuck took over as the band's keyboardist and "unofficial music director," working with Mick Jagger to create the playlist for each performance. Chuck would say on his website, "It's my job to keep Mick, Keith, Charlie and Ronnie all happy."

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

(Left to right) Keith Richards, Mick Jagger, Ronnie Wood, Chuck Leavell and Charlie Watts.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell with Eric Clapton

Of Chuck, Stones guitarist Keith Richards says, "Without the continuity that Chuck brings to us, the Stones would not be the Stones." At a recent concert in Nashville, I remember with a sense of pride as time and again Mick Jagger and Keith Richards looked back over their shoulders to Chuck for the play call, the signals, the timing. That's our boy!

In 1999 Chuck released his first holiday album, *What's in That Bag?* on Capricorn Records, still a popular Christmas favorite. In 2001 he released Forever Blue: Piano Solo, a collection of seven original compositions and three classics including "Georgia on my Mind." *Southscape* was next with nine Southern jazz tracks, eight of which were written or co-written by Chuck and included a revisitation of the Allman Brothers classic "Jessica," for which he is so well known.

In 2007 Chuck celebrated 25 years with the Stones as they finished their record-breaking 147th show, "A Bigger Bang" tour, as the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band. Chuck's music career now spans over 50 years and has dovetailed with some of the most important moments, performers and performances in rock 'n' roll history. His resume is a music industry's Who's Who of collaborations:

Eric Clapton
The Rolling Stones
John Mayer
The Black Crows (whom he inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame)
George Harrison
The Allman Brothers Band
Indigo Girls
Dr. John
Blues Traveler
Train
Lady Antebellum
Montgomery-Gentry
Miranda Lambert
Lee Ann Womack
David Gilmour—at the Amphitheatre in Pompeii, no less. You cannot make this stuff up! And taken all in stride, all in a day's work. Chuck's awards and recognitions, too numerous to list entirely, include inductions into the Georgia and Alabama Music Halls of Fame, The Bama-Birmingham Area Music Award and, in 2012, the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award for his work with the Allman Brothers Band.

When asked about his favorite contributions to music, he includes:

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck and his wife Rose Lane Leavell with their two daughters Amy and Ashley.

"Jessica," Allman Brothers; "Old Love," Eric Clapton; "Out of Tears," The Rolling Stones; and "Drops of Jupiter," Train. His 2005 book, *Between a Rock and a Home Place*, has been hailed as the best rock autobiography ever.

As if the demands of being one of the world's most sought-after musicians were not enough, Chuck has made a second career out of his passion for the environment and love of America's forests. In 2009 Chuck, along with friend Joel Babbit, formed the Mother Nature Network, an environmental news and information website which has grown to be the most visited independent environmental website in the world. He has written and spoken extensively on conservation, forest land management, and sustainable renewable natural resources, including the award-winning children's book, *The Tree Farmer, Forever Green: The History and Hope of the American Forest*, and in 2011 *Growing a Better America: Smart, Strong and Sustainable*, called one of the best common-sense environmental books of all time. His knowledge has helped shape forest policy in America.

Not just a thinker or philosopher, Chuck and Rose Lane walk the talk as recipients of the National Outstanding Tree Farmers of The Year Award for their beautifully and thoughtfully managed home forest at Charlane Plantation outside Macon, Georgia.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Even as a young boy, Leavell was fascinated with tractors and managing the land.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell with recording artist Dr. John.

About Chuck there is much, much more which could be said, and no doubt much more to come. When asked about his passions, Chuck simply says, "My family, my trees and my music…I have no intentions of slowing down in music now. Maybe one day I will hang up my rock 'n' roll shoes, and if so it will be right here on a pine tree." When Chuck was told by a mutual friend, Jack Leigh, about the demolition of the old YMCA where his life in music began, he asked, "Can you bring me a brick?" Retired photographer and former base player for The Misfitz, Jonathan McAllister said recently: "Those were fun times long ago at those Y parties. Old Chuck has done pretty well."

Yup. Not bad for a kid from Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck Leavell already living his dream as a musician.

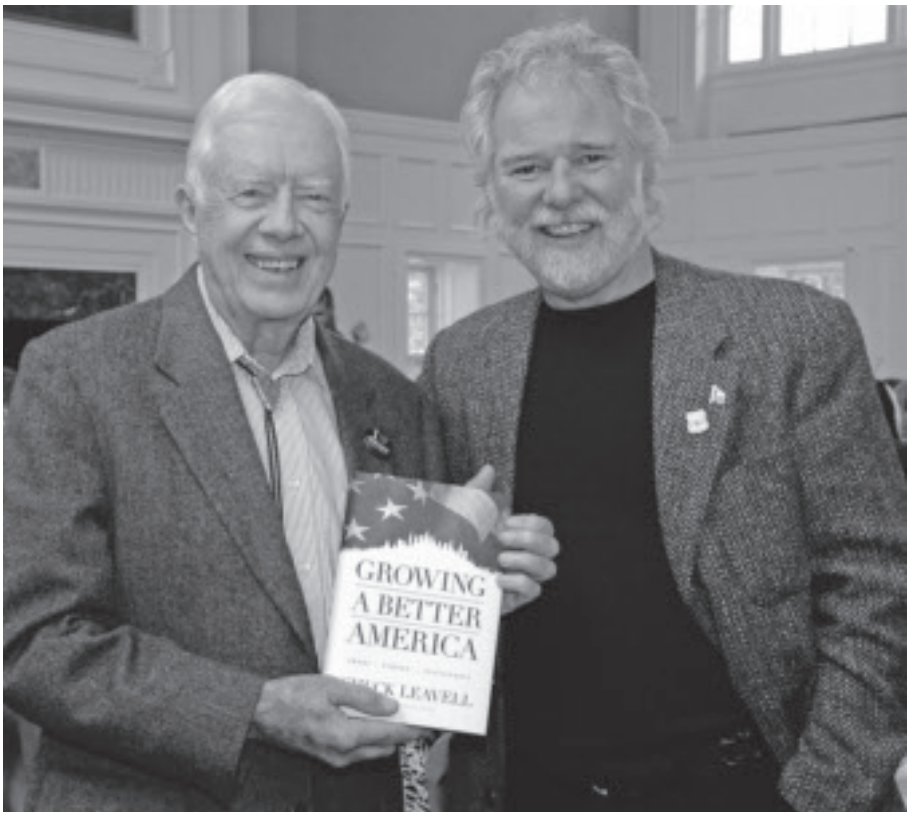


Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

President Jimmy Carter with his copy of Leavell's book, Growing a Better America.

Jim Harrison, III, is the owner and director of Harrison Galleries LLC., which is located in downtown Tuscaloosa. Mr. Harrison is a member of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Currently he serves on the Grants Review Committee but has held numerous other positions with the Council such as Vice-Chair and Chair of the Council's Grants Review Committee. Mr. Harrison also served a two-year term as Council Chairman 2011-2013.

Photo: Courtesy of Chuck Leavell

Chuck and Rose Lane Leavell (center) with their family.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Cheryl Morgan

Making Magic

by Ben Wieseman

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Place matters. The places we come from and the places we live in now can shape who we are and the values we carry with us. They help center us and can give us an anchor as we grow. They are magical and inspirational and they can teach us lessons. There is a magic that can be found in almost every place. It may not be one that we can see, or feel or touch, but one that we can discover and participate in. Places matter because we inhabit them. Cheryl Morgan may know this lesson better than most; from where she grew up, to the places she has travelled, to her home now and how she teaches others to understand the places they are from. Cheryl epitomizes how design and art can play a crucial role in making places great and capturing their magic.

Cheryl grew up in Lost Mountain, Georgia, a rural setting that was defined by its own place in nature with its own lore, myths and unique stories that were passed down through the generations. The area developed as a crossroads for travelers and those that settled the area. It is fitting that some of her strongest memories of Lost Mountain and her family farm center on the corner grocery store that stood as the epicenter for all the activity in the small community. The store itself was a place to gather, buy goods and send mail. The community

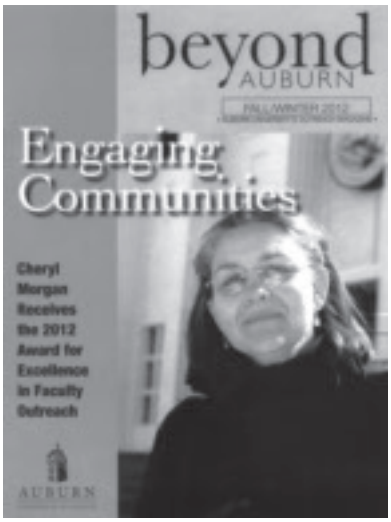


Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Award from Auburn University recognizing her excellence in faculty outreach.

Natalie Cole's unforgettable childhood home in Los Angeles

MANSION

'A house is a machine for living in.'
—Le Corbusier

HOMES | MARKETS | PEOPLE | UPKEEP | VALUES | NEIGHBORHOODS | REDOS | SALES | FIXTURES | BROKERS

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. Friday, May 30, 2014

BUILT ON 'GOOD BONES'

FROM WAREHOUSE TO THEIR HOUSE

Homeowners go industrial strength, turning commercial buildings into homes with historic charm, but construction challenges abound; polishing damaged plaster to highlight its aged patina.

BY CANDACE JACKSON

THE INTERIORS HAD PEELING PLASTER WALLS covered in layers of old wallpaper and paint. A leaky roof and mostly abandoned second-story required immediate attention. In short, the place was a wreck. And yet, "we really just fell in love with it," says Jay McKinney of his Birmingham, Ala., home.

Photo: Wall Street Journal, 2014

Cover shoot of her home that was published in the Wall Street Journal, Friday May 30th, 2014 and also in the book "The New Old House" by Marc Kristal.

developed here, an intersection with a store and a church to mark its location. It was here that a foundation was laid for Cheryl that has been the path that has connected all the aspects of who she is. If you ever get the opportunity to hear Cheryl speak about design and place and why it matters, she will share with you her personal story of Lost Mountain. It is in her storytelling that Cheryl's passion and ability to teach is wonderful to behold. It is inspirational, it is moving and it challenges you as the listener to do more, to be more and to reach out to understand more about the places that you inhabit. This is because Cheryl is a teacher, a designer, an artist, a colleague, a mentor and a friend. She fills many roles for many different people and groups. Labels like professor, architect, artist, speaker, facilitator and board member only capture one aspect of the work she may be doing at a time. Focusing on just those labels, you won't be able to see the rest of the picture that is Cheryl. That's because Cheryl has spent her career on understanding the whole picture and teaching others how to do the same. "Cheryl is one of those rarities who is both a great designer and a great teacher. She's someone we've all been able to use as a resource when we need direction on good design," shared David Fleming, REV Birmingham.

From Lost Mountain, GA Cheryl settled in Auburn, studying Architecture and Arts and receiving Bachelor degrees in Architecture and Sociology. Her next stop would be the University of Illinois Champaign/ Urbana where she received her Masters of Architecture. With this knowledge Cheryl spread her wings further from Lost Mountain and started to travel the world as Director of Georgia Tech's Foreign Study program in Paris, France. Then in 1979 she started her architectural career practicing at firms in San Francisco, CA. Her work out west began to broaden from purely architectural work in a firm to design work in cities and communities throughout California. Her career became more than that of a traditional architect who designs buildings, but one who became a designer of places, cities, communities and neighborhoods; exploring how the built and natural environments intertwine. She taught at the California College for Arts and Crafts and then at Oklahoma State in their Architectural program. Her

career and passions kept developing and growing. Morgan's belief that "good design is more about place than an individual structure," is one of her personal values that continues to fuel her creative and teaching passions. She describes the work she and many others did on Rotary Trail in Birmingham saying, "We wanted something that everyone could enjoy, that would create the potential for economic impact and would enhance the environment. This was a way to eliminate one of the most visible pieces of residual disinvestment in the city." Cheryl gives us concrete examples of how design can affect places and people and add to the magic of the Magic City.

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Facilitating and teaching at Your Town Alabama in 1988—graduating class at Camp McDowell.

In 1992 Cheryl took her experiences and education and returned to the South as a faculty member with Auburn University's College of Design and Construction, in the Department of Architecture. She quickly expanded on her work and helped to carry on the founding of Auburn's Urban Studio in Birmingham, AL. She led the Urban Studio for over 12 years teaching hundreds of students about the City of Birmingham and places all over the State of Alabama. It was here during her time leading the Urban Studio that Cheryl's work exploded in activity and the number of people she has affected. Her participation with the National Endowment of the Arts on several programs and grants allowed her to bring that work directly back to Alabama. She has started or founded several programs based on national models that show the power of design and art and how places in Alabama can harness their unique assets for their communities. Programs such as the Mayors Design Summit, Your Town Alabama, and the Small Town Design Initiative that has served over 75 small towns throughout Alabama, teaching its local residents why their home town is special, the assets they have and how to connect them to achieve their visions. Working to help model the National Mayors Summit by NEA for a statewide program, she worked with and facilitated over 60 mayors through the process. Her work as a founding member of the Your Town Alabama board, a program that focuses on a yearly retreat for citizens across Alabama to come together for an immersive three day course in designing place, connects them to resources and shows them how they can carry those lessons home and helping hundreds of community members across the state. Cheryl has been part of multiple boards and agencies that continue to serve their communities and has left a lasting impact on each, either through the design skills she has shared, facilitating sessions for them to establish their visions, lending her artistic touch, or by connecting

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Rotary Trail, Birmingham AL, 2016

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Lost Mountain Grocery store, circa mid 20th Century

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Cheryl's father Bob Morgan in the family corn field

people and projects through her network of friends and colleagues to help move projects forward. Some of these groups include Space One Eleven, Magic City Art Connection, Alabama Architectural Foundation, Rotary and DesignAlabama. Her work in and out of the studio has been published in multiple magazines, books, academic journals and newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal.

Her work extends from her beginnings in Lost Mountain to her home in Birmingham today. She has

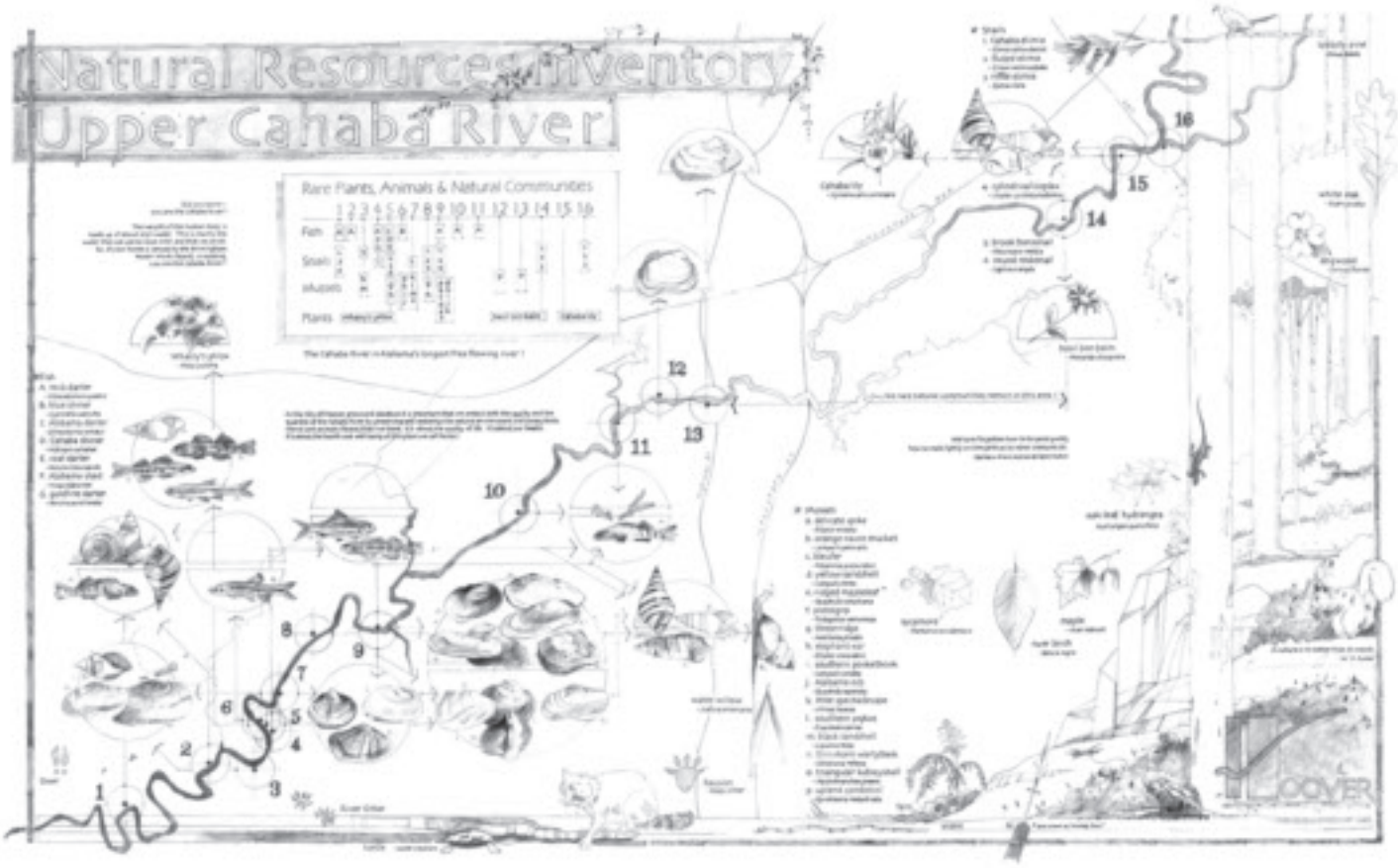


Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Original work by Cheryl for the City of Hoover in 2001, to help showcase the biodiversity and beauty of the Cahaba River.

received multiple awards including being named to 2007's class for Leadership Birmingham, 2007's "Woman of Distinction" by the Cahaba Council of the Girl Scouts and 2010's Thomas Jefferson Award from the Jefferson County Historical Commission. In 2011 she was presented with the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association's Distinguished Leadership Award recognizing her as a "Friend of Planning," and in 2012 she received Auburn University's Achievement in Outreach Award. In addition to these numerous awards, Cheryl has also received the designation as a Fellow by the American Institute of Architecture (AIA) which honors those who have made significant contributions to the profession and society and who exemplify architectural excellence. Approximately 3 percent of the AIA's 90,000+ members have this distinction. She has since retired from Auburn and the Urban Studio as a Professor Emeritus and continues to consult in Birmingham and internationally, most recently as a part of a R/UDAT team for AIA in Dublin, Ireland.

Cheryl's numerous projects are built examples of her values and lessons that she embodies. She continues to practice and consult today. Her work itself is a testament to the life she leads. One can see it when they visit her home in Birmingham. A place that was once just an old industrial building, but with her loving design, has become a published work of art, that connects a visitor to who she is and the City she loves when they are there. It is her teaching, mentoring, consulting, and

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Facilitating a conversation with the Mayor of Eufaula, during their participation in DesignAlabama's Mayors Summit.

her ability to listen that helps people move themselves, their visions and the places they care about forward. Cheryl's life is one that is filled with personal testaments about what she has done for others and how she has shaped the spaces around her and the lives attached to them. Her work as a teacher, facilitator, mentor, advocate, designer and artist has touched hundreds of thousands of lives and hundreds of places. She continues to utilize design thinking and practice today through her role on the City of Birmingham's Design Review Committee, her long lasting relationship with the State Arts Council and her outreach work with local art organizations. Cheryl's life, her values from Lost Mountain and the places she has lived, make a home in the Magic City. Cheryl adds to our collective magic every day.

Ben Wieseman is the Director of Catalytic Development, REV Birmingham, which revitalizes places and energizes business to create vibrancy in the city of Birmingham.

Photo: Courtesy of Cheryl Morgan.

Cheryl and friends Lea Ann Macknally and Phillip Morris, discussing parks and development in Birmingham.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Dr. Don Noble

A Life in Books

by Jennifer Horne

Author's note: In our twenty-five years of being together, I've attended literary conferences with Don, gone on the road with him to record episodes of Bookmark, and been the first reader for his book reviews and essays. I probably know Don better than anyone—but that doesn't necessarily make it easy to write an article about him! How do you write about the person closest to you with some objectivity? Some might say it can't be done, but here's my best shot:

In a 2010 article for *Birmingham Magazine* titled "A Yankee in Literary Alabama," Don Noble wrote, "As an undergraduate student in Albany, New York, I read with fascination the tales of the grotesque Georgia creatures in Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*, and I read of Colonel Sartoris and the trashy Snopeses in Faulkner's 'Barn Burning.' Perhaps most importantly, I was enthralled by Thomas Wolfe's coming of age novel, *Look Homeward, Angel*. Reading Caldwell and Faulkner was like reading a report of life on another planet. Wolfe's people were mountain South, but seemed more plausible. To me, in frozen Albany, the South was truly exotic and I was curious."

Finishing his B.A. at SUNY-Albany, the state teachers college, intending to become a high school teacher, Noble then took a master's in English. Admiring his literature professors, after a year of high school teaching he decided to go back for a doctorate.

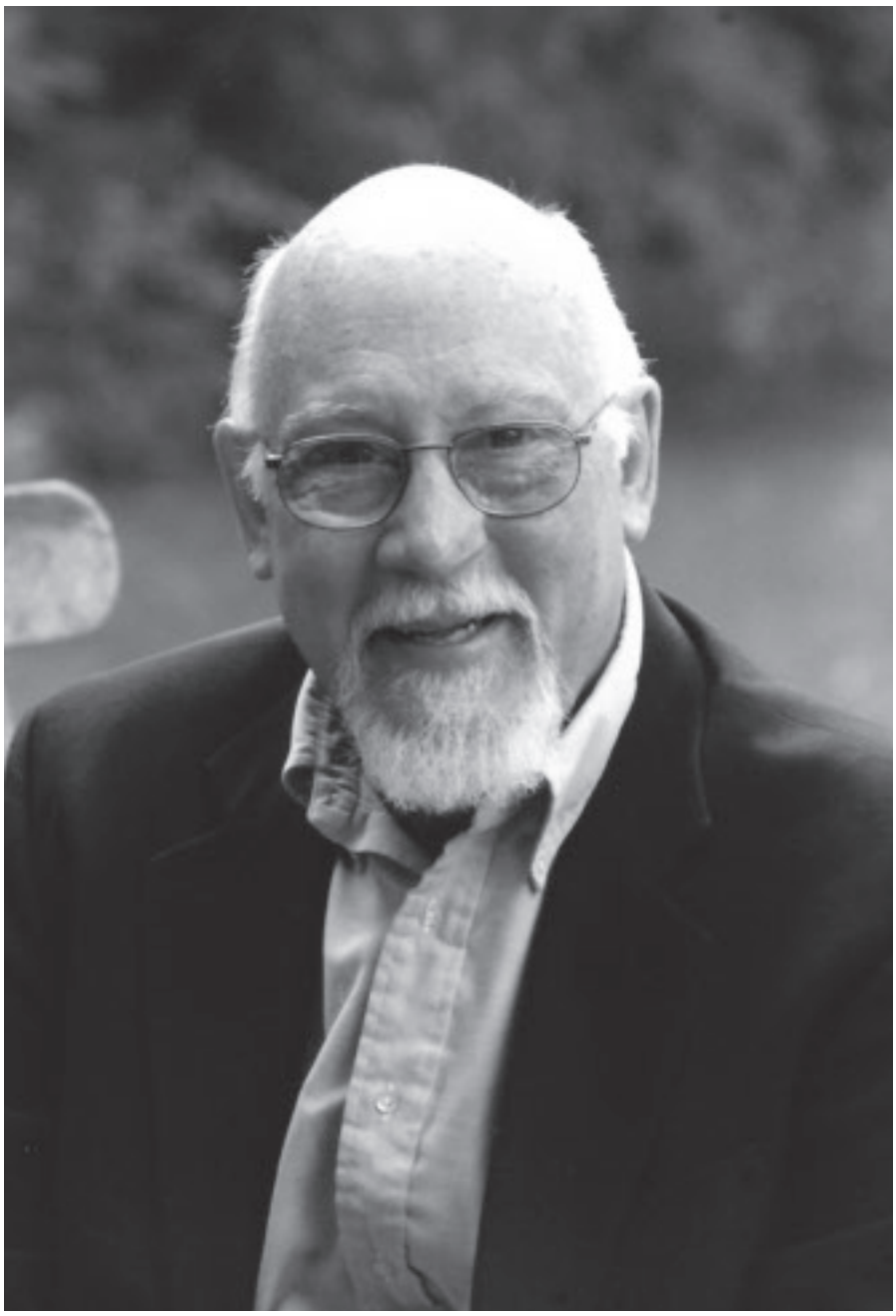


Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Dr. Don Noble.

He headed to Thomas Wolfe country, choosing the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was mentored by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., one of the earliest literary critics to champion Southern Literature as a field of study.

At Chapel Hill, Don immersed himself in that exotic climate and that Southern prose, and when he came to the University of Alabama in 1969, he would eventually teach not only the authors he'd first come to love—Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Steinbeck—but also the Southern and African American writers, as well as creating UA's first course on Jewish literature. A natural-born explainer, he introduced countless students to the literature of Alabama and the South, and nurtured the careers of many writers, such as Brad Watson, whose *Miss Jane* was recently longlisted for the National

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

(above) Noble accepting the Wayne Greenhaw Award from the Alabama Humanities Foundation from Sally Greenhaw and AHF Board Chair John Rochester, 2013.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

(left) At the 2007 National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Southeast ceremony for Bookmark's Emmy nomination. (Left to right) Wendy Reed, Elizabeth Brock. Preston Sullivan, Don Noble and Wade Woodall.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Dr. Don Noble during a Bookmark *promotion with Helen Ellis, author.*

Don Noble, age 5, reading a book.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

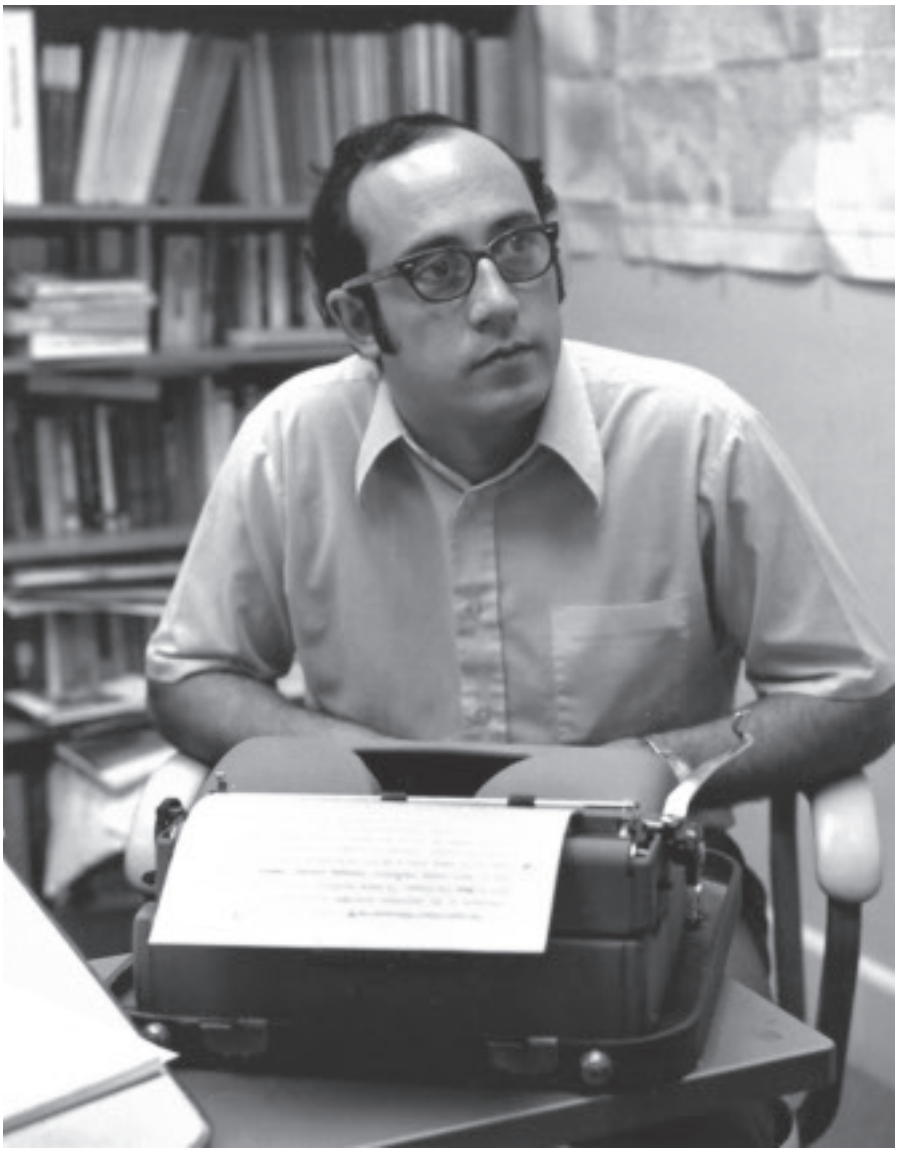


Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Noble as a young professor at the University of Alabama.

Book Award for Fiction.

Noble's reading life began early. As a child spending summers at his paternal grandparents' dairy farm in upstate New York, Don found bundles of old issues of *The Saturday Evening Post* in an attic of the farmhouse. There, on long summer evenings, he first read stories by such contemporary American authors as Ring Lardner. Once a week, his grandmother took him to the library in the nearby small town of Lisbon so he could check out piles of books such as the Wizard of Oz series and the Hardy Boys.

Technically a southerner by virtue of being born in Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1941—his father was stationed at the naval base nearby—Don spent the first four years of his life speaking both Greek and English, as he and his mother lived with her Greek-born parents in Yonkers, New York, while his father served in the Navy in World War II. After the war, they settled in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. Don went from second to twelfth grade at the public schools of Hastings, joined the Boy Scouts, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout, and then received a full scholarship to SUNY-Albany. As a boy, he read dog, horse, and baseball stories; as a teenager, he enjoyed reading classics in American and British literature as well as popular fiction: Raymond Chandler, Zane Gray, and Arthur C. Clarke.

As a graduate student and then a professor, Noble moved from reading books to writing about them as well, taking the literary critic Edmund Wilson as his hero. Publishing numerous article and reviews in journals and newspapers, Don also led symposia at UA on "The Rising South," "The South in the American Revolution," and the work of Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Through

writing, conference-organizing, participation in community events such as Pebble Hill at Auburn's "Read Alabama" program, and lectures and presentations around the state for the past forty-five years, Noble has worked to bring the academy out of the ivory tower and into the public square, familiarizing Alabama's citizens with writers in and beyond the state's borders.

He has written Introductions for a number of Alabama books and reprints including books by William Bradford Huie, Hudson Strode, Bill Cobb, and Marian Carcache. Over the last 45 years Noble has published many essays on Alabama writers in publications such as *First Draft*, *The Alabama Alumni Magazine*, *Birmingham Magazine*, the *Oxford American*, and many others.

Of Noble's edited books, a number have featured Alabama writers, including *Zelda and Scott*, *Scott and Zelda*, *The Rising South*, *Climbing Mt. Cheaha*, which showcased new and emerging Alabama writers, *A State of Laughter*, which brought attention to comic fiction produced by Alabama writers, and, this spring, *Belles' Letters II*, stories by Alabama women, edited with Jennifer Horne. For the Salem Press Critical Insights Series, Noble edited the volume on Harper Lee.

Although he is firmly rooted in Alabama, still living in the same house he purchased in 1969 when he moved to the state, Noble has combined his love of teaching with exploring the cultures of other countries, teaching in Yugoslavia and Romania as Senior Lecturer in American Literature on Fulbright fellowships and leading UA students on summer courses to England and Ireland.

In 1988 he began interviewing authors for the Emmy-nominated Alabama Public Television show *Bookmark with Don Noble*, now approaching the thirty-year mark. He has interviewed hundreds of

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Mary Hemingway, Loretta Bacon and Don Noble at the 1976 Hemingway Symposium at the University of Alabama.

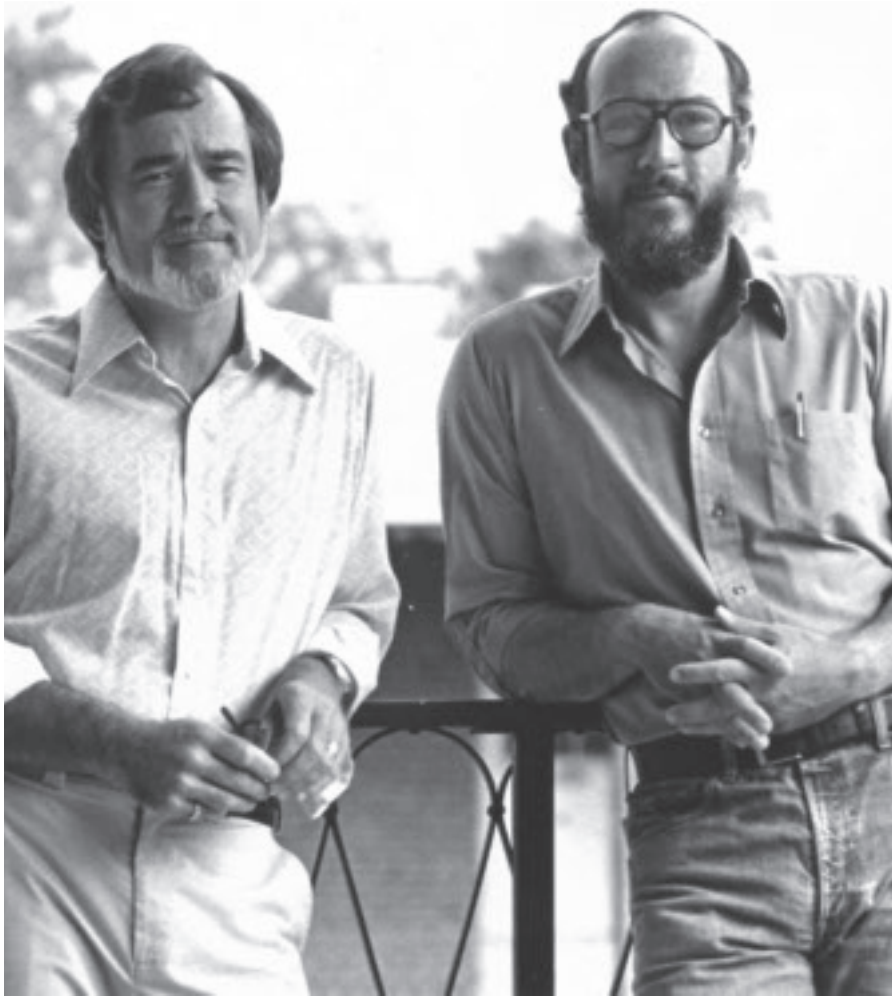


Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Dr. Patrick Green, professor of Religious Studies and Dr. Don Noble at the University of Alabama, circa 1982.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Writer Gay Talese with Dr. Don Noble at the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville.

Photo: Courtesy of Al Nettles

George Plimpton with Dr. Don Noble in Monroeville, Alabama.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Dr. Don Noble with Mark Childress at the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville, Alabama.

writers, mostly southern, for the show, including Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison, who, seeing Don's duct-taped teaching copy of *Beloved*, remarked with astonishment, "Don, you've read the cover off my book!"

With producer Brent Davis, Don also created two documentaries on Alabama authors, the regional Emmy Award–winning *I'm in the Truth Business: William Bradford Huie*, and *Hudson Strode: Starring as Himself*.

Don's service to the arts includes planning and participating in all twenty years of the Alabama Writers Symposium, and serving on boards of directors including Writing Today at Birmingham-Southern, the Alabama Writers' Forum (of which he is an honorary lifetime member), the Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum, The Alabama Humanities Foundation, and currently the Alabama School of Fine Arts, the Board of Directors of the Southern Literary Trail, and the Advisory Board for the Alabama Center for the Book and the Alabama Writers Hall of Fame.

Believing that awards give authors encouragement in their often solitary work, Noble has for years served on the selection committee for the Harper Lee Award, is chairman of the committee of the Clarence Cason Award for Distinguished Nonfiction, created and directs the Truman Capote Award, and serves on the Fitzgerald Museum Award committee. In 2016 he was one of a small group producing five thirty-minute radio shows for public radio to celebrate Alabama's Pulitzer Prize recipients.

After his retirement from the UA English Department in 2001 as Professor Emeritus of English, Don began a weekly statewide book review segment for Alabama Public Radio and has since

reviewed more than 700 books, mostly Alabama-related.

With a longtime love of plays, and even having acted a bit himself, in 2004 Don formed the Alabama Readers Theatre and has created, produced, and directed the performances of stories by Alabama authors in Monroeville, Montgomery, Montevallo, and many other Alabama venues.

Don Noble's contributions on behalf of the literary arts and humanities in Alabama have been recognized with the Eugene Current-Garcia Award for Alabama's Distinguished Literary Scholar in 2000, the Wayne Greenhaw Award for Service to the Humanities in 2013, and the Druid Arts Award for Literary Educator from the Tuscaloosa Arts and Humanities Council in 2017.

In nominating Don Noble for this award, longtime colleague Jay Lamar, now director of the Alabama Bicentennial Commission, wrote, "Though our state is rich in many art forms and genres, a case can be made for the uniquely rich heritage and contemporary culture of its literary arts. Don Noble has no equal in his efforts to identify, interpret, support, and promote the Alabama literary arts. On the stage and screen, in print and through the radio, in the classroom and in public spaces, Noble has introduced thousands of people—of all ages and backgrounds—to Alabama writers and their works. This is important for the audience, but it also has a direct impact on the artists by bringing their works to a broad audience and helping them find fresh opportunities for publishing and wider readerships."

Don Noble has been married since 2003 to Jennifer Horne. He has two daughters, Julie Noble and Jenny Noble-Kuchera, from his first marriage, and four

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Toni Morrison with Dr. Don Noble after shooting an episode of Bookmark.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Jennifer Horne and Dr. Don Noble in Ireland, 2011.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Dr. Don Noble in Greece.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

(Left to right) Jenny Noble-Kuchera, Julie Noble, Don Noble and Jennifer Horne at the wedding of Julie Noble to Eric Anderson.

grandchildren. Having completed three-quarters of a century of life, he continues to read, write, and promote the literary arts. We'll let this writer of so many words have the last word here: "When I tell my old buddies in New York that I 'could' review a book by an Alabamian every week for Alabama Public Radio, they simply don't believe it. But it's true. The production of fine writing by Alabamians is astounding. Everybody knows about Harper Lee and *Mockingbird*, and Truman Capote, of course, but needs to be reminded of Winston Groom, Fannie Flagg, Rick Bragg, Mark Childress and, I am sure, literally hundreds of others who are natives or who, like Gay Talese, have a strong Alabama connection, through work or education. It is truly astonishing."

Horne is a writer, editor, and teacher who explores identity and place through poetry, fiction, prose, and anthologies.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Don Noble

Dr. Don Noble introduces the Alabama Readers Theatre at a performance during the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville, Alabama.

THE ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD

Jake Landers

Devoted to Bluegrass: A Man and His Music

by Mary Settle Cooney

Bluegrass icon, Jake Landers, is unique to the cultural environment of northwest Alabama. He is a respected bluegrass performer and composer whose musical achievements are rooted in Alabama traditions. Jake is recognized nationally and worldwide as one of bluegrass music's premier songwriters. He penned such classics as "Secret of the Waterfall," "The Girl I Love," and "The Last Request" and "Walk Softly on this Heart of Mine" (co-written with Bill Monroe). These and other compositions have been performed or recorded by 141 different artists including Bill Monroe & The Blue Grass Boys, The Country Gentlemen, The Osborne Brothers, Bobby Osborne, Vassar Clements & The Bluegrass Cardinals, Iron Horse, and Bobby Hicks. The recording of "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine" by Ricky Skaggs & the Dixie Chicks' was nominated for a Grammy Award. Jake received Gold, Platinum and Double Platinum awards when "Walk Softly…" was recorded on The Kentucky Headhunter album, Pickin' on Nashville. The album sold more than 3 million copies and received a Grammy Award in 1989. "Walk Softly on this Heart of Mine" was the first single recorded from the album.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers in front of the Ritz Theatre prior to the 2013 Jake Landers and Friends concert.

"Sharing a passion for bluegrass music: It almost makes you want to dance—even if you can't."

In addition to a Grammy Award, Jake has been honored for his contributions in a variety of other ways: The Jake Landers Band performed at the 1999 Alabama Hall of Fame Induction Banquet in Montgomery, he was inducted into the Alabama Bluegrass Hall of Fame in 2009 with the first class, his D-21 Martin guitar is on display at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame, and he is recognized as an Alabama Music Achiever at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame.

Jake's life journey began in 1938 in Lawrence County, Alabama. He was born to sharecropper parents. His family included

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Landers and New Home perform at the annual Bluegrass at the Ritz with Jake Landers and Friends.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Landers and granddaughter "Itty Bitty" (Nicole) who loves to perform Bluegrass with her grandfather, circa 2016.

four half-brothers and four half-sisters and he never lived in any one house for more than a year. Music gave him an outlet to express himself and to record on paper the way he felt about life. At the age of five, Jake began singing country music at home with his family, at school and in churches. He learned to play the guitar at the knee of his mother when he was nine. His style was influenced by watching the chord positions used by other musicians and he developed a unique way of playing with his right hand and the straight pic…similar to that of Lester Flat. By the time he was ten, Jake was playing country music in the styles of Faron Young and Ernest Tubbs at a local service station. The business was owned by a friend of the family who recognized the young boy's talent. Jake soon began earning money from appreciative listeners who tossed coins into a hat and he began to compose music and write lyrics at the age of 16. His first composition, "My One and Only," was written for his future bride, Jo Ann Priest, whom he married in 1959. He enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1956. Although he spent 37 ½ years in active and reserve duty serving both stateside and abroad, bluegrass music was a major part of his life and his career.

Mr. Landers was introduced to bluegrass music by his friend Hershel Sizemore, an outstanding mandolin player.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers and Vasser Clements, date unknown.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Landers with Gold, Platinum and Double Platinum Album Awards that include the song, "Walk Softly on the Heart of Mine" co-written with Bill Monroe.

The boys attended Colbert County High School together and in 1956 Hershel and Rual Yarbrough, a notable 5-string banjo player, asked Jake to join them as the Tennessee Valley Boys. Jake's love of bluegrass music was immediate. The threesome became The Dixie Gentlemen a year later. Their sound was built around the vocal trio, the solid instrumentation of Sizemore and Yarbrough and the compositions of guitarist and lead vocalist, Jake Landers. The Dixie Gentlemen traveled throughout the Southeastern and Midwestern United States. They recorded five albums with songs either written or co-written by Landers, including "I'm Finally Over You"

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Jake Landers Band (circa 1981): Larry McWilliams, fiddle; James Whitten, bass; Rural Yarbrough, banjo; and Jake Landers, guitar.

and "Your Heart Tells the Truth." This band remained together for ten years. They performed on numerous television programs, including the Country Boy Eddie show. They also opened a concert for Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton. The Dixie Gentlemen were regulars on WMSL radio in Decatur. Renowned fiddler Vassar Clements and Al Lester played with the group.

In 1959 The Dixie Gentlemen recorded a pair of Lander's gospel songs, "Pray for Me" and "Three Steps," on the Blue Sky label. Nashville fiddler Tommy Jackson enlisted The Gentlemen to accompany him on a Dot album. The group also cut a pair of bluegrass albums on the Time label under the alias The Blue Ridge Mountain Boys. Their crowning achievement in the studio came in 1963 with a United Artists LP album entitled The Country Style of the Dixie Gentlemen that contained a dozen new songs, deep-rooted within the bluegrass tradition, and mostly written by Jake Landers including: "Dear One," "Will You Wait," "Depressed," "Where the Sun Shines on the Mountain," "This Is the Girl I Love," "What Can I Say," "Going Along," "Lonely Highway," "I Will Follow Jesus," and "Why I Love You." The Dixie Gentlemen cut their last album as a working group in 1966 with Vassar Clements on fiddle and Tut Taylor on Dobro.

Jake was a guitarist, vocalist and songwriter with Bill Monroe during the early 1960's. He was one of Monroe's Blue Grass Boys and performed with the group at the Grand Ole Opry and the Friday Night Frolic at WSM studios in Nashville. However, the intense touring schedule with the this group required Jake to spend more time away from his family than he was willing to commit.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Jake Landers Band (circa 1982), front row, left to right: Vance Henry, guitar; Jake Landers, guitar and Rod Carter, banjo. Back row, left to right: Ricky Rogers, bass and Tony Robertson, mandolin.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Jake Landers Band, circa 1985: Tony Lee, bass guitar; Tony Robertson, mandolin; Jake Landers, guitar and Scooter Muse, banjo.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers, Chuck Carpenter and Bill Monroe, circa 1978.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake with his first new guitar, a CF Martin D-28.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

(left) Jake Landers with Okima Lambert (Trulove) 1953. When he was 15, vocalist Okima Lambert asked Jake to perform with her in a Mississippi County Fair Music Competition. They won!

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake with his financée Jo Ann Priest (1958). They wed the following year.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Dixie Gentlemen at Bradley's Barn (recording studio in Nashville for the recording of The Country Style of Dixie Gentlemen. Right to left: Rural Yarbrough, banjo; Jake Landers, guitar; Vasser Clements, fiddle and Herschel Sizemore, mandolin.

He returned to Alabama and assumed responsibility for supporting and rearing a family that, by this time, included three daughters and one son.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Landers family (front row, left to right); Alan, son; Jo Ann, wife and Karen, daughter (back row, left to right); Wanda, daughter; Phillis, daughter and Jake, 1977.

The Dixie Gentlemen dissolved in 1967 and, although he continued to perform with other groups, Jake concentrated on his songwriting, a career that received a boost in 1969 when Bill Monroe recorded "Walk Softly On this Heart of Mine" (Co-written by Jake and Monroe). Landers and Yarbrough formed The Dixiemen in the early 1970's. This group recorded the album Singing Gospel on the Old Homestead label, a company that focused on old-timey, country, roots and bluegrass music. The album was comprised of all gospel material penned by Landers. The Dixiemen produced a number of hit recordings that included Jake Landers composi-

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Dixie Gentlemen (circa 1971): James Bryan, fiddle; Jake Landers, guitar; Rural Yarbrough, banjo and William Smith, bass.

tions "The Secret of the Waterfall," "Your Heart Now Tells the Truth," "Girl Walking in My Dreams" (co-written with James Monroe), "Is This Me" (co-written with J. Palmer), "The Children Cry," "Grandpa John," "I'm going Back to the Mountains," "The Unforgotten One," "I'm Wondering if You're Wondering Too," "The Old Oak Tree," and "Singing, Shouting, Praises." Other albums featuring Jake's songs included: Blue & Bluegrass: Dixie Gentlemen with Tut Taylor, (1967 and re-released in 1973), Together Once More (1973), Dueling Banjo/ This is the Girl I Love (1973) and Today and Yesterday (2001). Jake's "Secret of the Waterfall" became a bluegrass standard when it was recorded by the nationally recognized group, The Country Gentlemen.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers at Fort Rucker, Alabama 1957.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers with his Martin D21 now owned by Tony Robertson of the group Iron Horse. The instrument is on display at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame.

A reunion of The Dixie Gentlemen in 1973 included James Bryan, Jake Landers, Rual Yarbrough, Vassar Clement, and Hershel Sizemore. The gathering resulted in an album also released on the Old Homestead label entitled Together Once More. The LP included Jake's songs: "This Is the Girl I Love," "I'll Never Forget," "Waves of Sorrow" (co-written with Vassar Clements), and "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine."

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Dixie Gentlemen (circa 1960s): W. F. Killen; Rural Yarbrough; Herschel Sizemore; T. R. Campbell; Vasser Clements and Jake Landers.

In the 1980s, Landers' daughters became interested in Jake's music and he formed the Jake Landers Family Band, a group that also recorded on the Old Homestead label. The Jake Landers Band continued to play at bluegrass venues throughout the Southeast for the next two decades and Jake continued to write his music.

In 2010, the Tennessee Valley Art Association organized an annual Bluegrass at the Ritz with Jake Landers and Friends in honor of Mr. Landers lifelong contribution to bluegrass music. Jake remains involved in this event that has featured: The Claire Lynch Band, Iron Horse, Carl Jackson, James Bryan with Carl Jones, Wayne Jerrolds and Savannah Grass, Southern Strangers, Kay Bain, The Jake Landers

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

The Dixie Gentlemen perform in Sheffield, Alabama (circa 1950s): Herschel Sizemore, mandolin; Dick Crawford, fiddle; Rural Yarbrough, banjo; Jake Landers, guitar and Paul White, bass.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake and his wife Jo Ann in 2017. Their wedding picture and his Bluegrass Boy belt buckle are displayed on the shelf behind them.

Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers with Richard Young of the Kentucky Headhunters group.

Band, Herschel Sizemore, New Home, Gary Waldrep and others. The Landers bluegrass event includes an educational segment each year that has featured: performances at senior citizen residence centers, a Bluegrass Harmony Singing workshop, a beginner harmonica workshop, a Bluegrass Songwriting workshop and screenings of The Alabama Public Television documentary "Sucarnochee: A Revue of Alabama Music" that features an interview with Mr. Landers. When asked why he continues to perform, Jake said; "It's about being with people who share a passion for bluegrass and like to socialize with each other. Bluegrass is not 'stand-offish'—the music is felt inwardly and I think that's important. There's another part of it that just blazes. It almost makes you want to dance—even if you can't. One of these days, if that kind of music goes to the side, there won't be any bluegrass around. It's the reason we are doing this program at the Ritz—so we can bring some younger people around and let them see what bluegrass is all about."

Today, Jake continues to write music and sing at festivals, concerts and other public gatherings. He has created a personal song inventory of one hundred sixty-two songs. A collection of his unpublished lyrics lives on a shelf in his office just waiting to join the other hits Jake Landers has penned. Through music and verse, this artist has documented scores of stories about the way he feels about life, love, hardship, sorrow, faith, and relationships, among others. His outstanding contributions make him a worthy recipient of the Alabama Folk Heritage Award as he leaves future generations with a legacy that preserves old time country, bluegrass and gospel music.

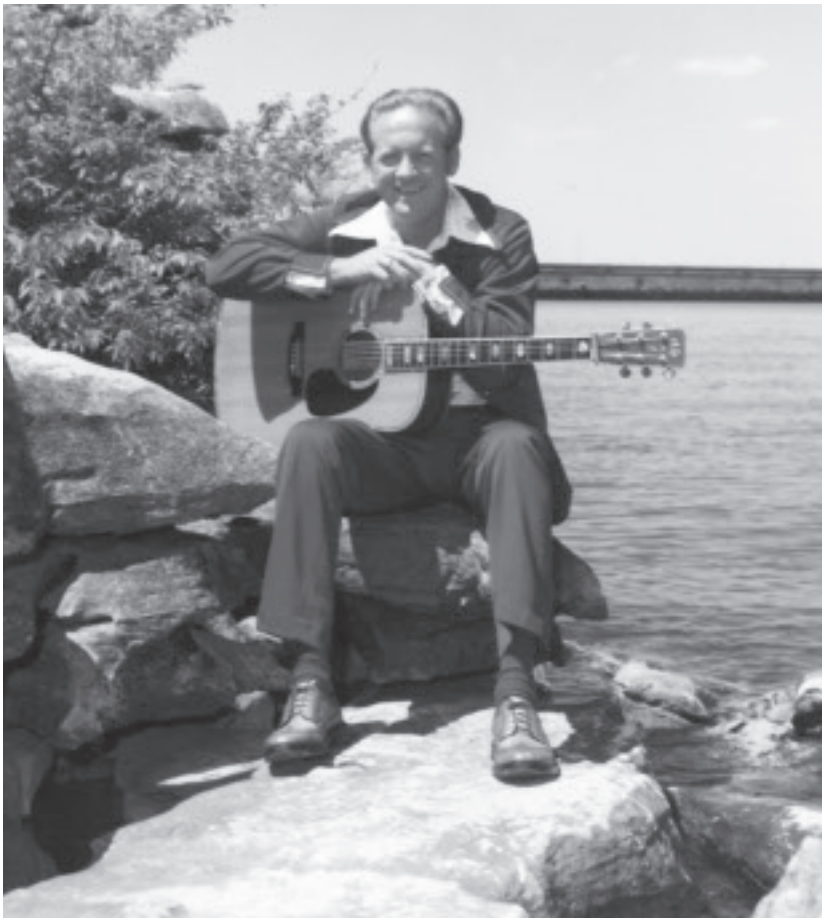


Photo: Courtesy of Jake Landers.

Jake Landers in the early 1980s.

Mary Settle Cooney is the Executive Director of The Tennessee Valley Art Association in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

THE SPECIAL COUNCIL LEGACY AWARD

Todd Strange

A Mayor Wearing a Coat of Many Colors

by Al Head

Todd Strange is a man of many skills, talents and areas of interest. He is known for his success in business, politics and public service and some might concede his success extends to the golf course on a good day. But his interest, support and advocacy for the arts has won him a whole new group of fans over recent years. Actually Todd's leadership in the arts, both in the private and public sectors, has a long history and clearly has made a lasting impact on the cultural landscape of not only Montgomery but the entire State of Alabama. The State Council on the Arts, Special Legacy Award for 2017 is thus presented to an Alabamian that has made a significant difference in the arts and quality of life for the citizens of a culturally rich state.

Todd Strange is a native of Mobile, Alabama and a graduate of Murphy High School. He received his B.A. degree in Political Science from the University of Montevallo and entered the business world with the South Central Bell Company (now AT&T). His professional career expanded with his work as Senior Vice-President of Administration, Blount International Ltds., as well as CEO of Blount Development Corporation. It was his work with and exposure to Winton "Red" Blount that Strange references as the point that "my mindset about the arts changed in 1983 as my co-workers and I

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Todd Strange

Mayor Todd Strange prior to the start of a meeting with the Montgomery City Council.

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Mayor Todd Strange, with wife Linda pose with recording artist Michael Bolton (center) and Emily Lowder Wootten, an ASF Board member, with her husband Sam Wootten

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Mayor Todd Strange, Laurie Jean Weil, ASF Board Chairman, Eve Loeb, ASF Development Director and Robert R. McGhee, ASF Board member & Tribal Council member, Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Todd Strange and Linda Strange meet with Elton John backstage after a concert in Montgomery.

learned how much the arts and culture could impact the community through Blount's generosity." These and other comments about the importance of the arts in economic development were made by Mayor Todd Strange after winning the Winton Blount Arts Leadership Award presented by the Montgomery Business Committee for the Arts.

Prior to serving as Montgomery's 56th mayor, Todd Strange was appointed by Governor Bob Riley as the Director of the Alabama Development (Office) where he was responsible for recruiting major industries to Alabama. He often tells the story of bringing the Hyundai officials to the Blount Cultural Park by helicopter as part of efforts to show off Montgomery's cultural resources and quality of life. Realizing the importance of Montgomery arts organizations to the city's growth and future the Mayor has been generous with financial support to a wide range of cultural groups annually in the city's budget. Todd Strange has demonstrated many times over in word and deed how to combine the interests of business, the community and the arts.

In the years before Todd Strange was elected Mayor of Montgomery he served as chairman of the Montgomery County Commission, the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the Riverfront Development Committee, chairman of the Montgomery Area United Way, chairman of the Board of Trustees at the University Montevallo and the list of public service goes on and on. He is especially proud of his service as president of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Foundation in Talladega. Additionally he currently serves on the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Board of Trustees. Having won many prestigious community awards over the

Photo: Mickey Welsh, *The Montgomery Advertiser.*

Mayor Todd Strange making a presentation during the 2013 dedication of the Wright Brothers Flyer replica built by Burt Steel. The sculpture is located at Wright Brothers Park (formerly Overlook Park) and is prominently displayed on Maxwell Boulevard, leading to Maxwell Air Force Base.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Todd Strange at Maxwell Air Force Base underneath a Wright Brothers sculpture by artist Larry Godwin.

Photo: Courtesy the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Mayor Todd Strange with Anne and Ken Upchurch at Alabama Shakespeare Festival's 25th Anniversary Gala.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Todd Strange (seated in folding chair) awaits his welcoming talk to Air University.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Todd Strange poses with Air University instructors at Maxwell Air Force Base.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Strange with his wife Linda at the Leaning Tower of Pisa, during the 2016 Cultural Exchange with Pietrasanta, Italy.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Strange admiring the painting by Mark Dauber of the iconic water fountain in downtown Montgomery.

years it is easy see where Todd's life and achievements in public service are long and extensive.

Now in his third term as Mayor of Montgomery the Strange legacy has manifested itself in to some exciting new frontiers. In 2008 and 2009, Montgomery and the Italian city of Pietrasanta entered into a "Sister City" relationship, as part of a state cultural exchange that involved bringing Italian artists to Alabama and sending Alabama artists to Italy. After a pause due to a change in politics and leadership the Sister City relationship commenced again in a big way when Todd Strange invited newly elected Pietrasanta Mayor Massimo Mallegni and his wife to Montgomery for the mayoral swearing

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Montgomery County Commissioner Daniel Harris, Jr. and Mayor Todd Strange admire the recently debuted Rosa Parks statue in Statuary Hall at the U. S Capitol in Washington.

Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Strange and wife Linda during their travels in Italy.

in ceremonies in November of 2015. Italian exhibitions at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and the Alabama State Council on the Arts were highlights of a visit that expanded to include dignitaries from the Pietrasanta and the Region of Florence. The friendship and vision of the two mayors grew to a point where a Montgomery delegation made a trip to Pietrasanta in June of 2016 in an exchange of exhibitions and artists. The City and Region of Florence were included in the exchange festivities and the hospitality extended to the Montgomery group. Personal relationships were strengthened and expanded creating lasting cultural appreciation and a commitment to continue exchange activities in the future.

Photo: Elliot Knight.

Pietrasanta, Italy Mayor Massimo Mallegni and Mayor Todd Strange show off their signed cultural exchange documents.

Photo: Elliot Knight.

Pietrasanta, Italy Mayor Massimo Mallegni and Mayor Todd Strange take questions from the audience during a cultural exchange meeting.

Photo: Elliot Knight.

(left) Mayor Massimo Mallegni (Pietrasanta, Italy), Mayor Todd Strange (Montgomery, Alabama) and Al Head, Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts with an art piece created in 2008 by Alabama Artists Bruce Larsen and Charlie Lucas.

It is hard to overstate the "ambassador for the arts" mantra for Mayor Todd Strange whether in Alabama at a leadership retreat for arts professionals or in the City of Pietrasanta which is inarguably the sculpture capital of the world. His words come from the heart and the head, both seasoned from years of professional experience and public service. The City of Montgomery and the State of Alabama have clearly benefited because of the leadership, vision, contributions and years of dedicated work by Todd Strange. Mayor Strange is one of those special individuals leaving a lasting legacy in his home State of Alabama.

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

Photo courtesy of Mayor Strange.

Mayor Todd Strange walks Dexter Avenue during Veterans Day parade.

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