

NORTH CAROLINA ON THE MAP AND IN THE NEWS

The Famous and Infamous

by Margaret D. Bauer, Editor

When I saw Margaret Maron pick up our call for submissions at the North Carolina Writers Conference last summer, I pounced. A retrospective on her Deborah Knott series, which she'd recently finished, would be just perfect for this issue's special feature section, I told her. Over the course of twenty books, Judge Knott has certainly explored many of the places that put North Carolina "on the map" for vacationers – and craftspeople – world-wide. Traveling with this protagonist, I learned about such North Carolina treasures as Seagrove pottery and High Point furniture.

There certainly is much to be proud of in North Carolina, not the least of which are our many writers well-known around the globe. At that same North Carolina Writers Conference, Zackary Vernon interviewed world-famous Allan Gurganus for this issue, largely about the writer's activism on behalf of his home state – and against those who betray our ideals, whether with hateful bigotry or by withdrawing support from public education. He will not stay silent as he witnesses North Carolina's national rankings slip in one category after another.

Allan Gurganus is only one of many writers who are taking advantage of their time with a microphone to speak out against those who threaten our values, ethics, and natural resources. Bland Simpson is another. For this issue, he returns to the subject of his 2013 *NCLR* essay, celebrating the Old North State while recognizing the threats upon our home,

particularly by those who would deny the devastating effects of climate change or loosen protective environmental regulations – all putting greed in the present before concern about our children's future.

Advocating for the people of North Carolina goes back to early twentieth-century writers like W.O. Saunders, a journalist whom Brian Edwards compares to such transcendentalist writers as Thoreau and Whitman in his essay. And just as Whitman's poetry was often inspired by injustices he witnessed in the America of his day, North Carolina poets do not shy away from difficult subjects that might put our state in the news – but not in a positive light. For example, a KKK parade is the occasion of Priscilla Melchior's poem, which received second place in the James Applewhite Poetry Prize competition.

Every summer since 1937, Paul Green's symphonic drama *The Lost Colony* attracts vacationers from all over the country and beyond for an evening in the amphitheater built for this first-of-its-kind outdoor drama, as noted in E. Thomson Shields's essay about the script's evolution over the years. Of course, vacationers come to North Carolina for such natural wonders as the Outer Banks beaches and the Smoky Mountains – and so much in between. New places that put North Carolina on the map include the restaurants of award-winning chef/television personality Vivian Howard, interviewed about her writing by *NCLR* Assistant Editor Sally Lawrence for this issue.

Early in the twentieth century, Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald vacationed in Asheville, and then later, she checked into the city's Highland Hospital, where she eventually died tragically in a fire. Sheryl Cornett talks with novelist Therese Anne Fowler about her Zelda-inspired novel *Z* (which in turn inspired a television show) and about the author's latest novel with one of the Vanderbilt women at its center.

By the time this issue is published, Alex Albright, Founding Editor of the *North Carolina Literary Review*, will be retired from East Carolina University. He joined the Department of English faculty in 1981, and in 1992 he put North Carolina's rich literary heritage "on the map and in the news" with the premier issue of *NCLR*. Former Dean of Arts and Sciences W. Keats Sparrow once explained that he asked Alex to create what became *NCLR* because he "wanted to make sure [he] was getting the journal into the best hands possible," adding, "Anything Alex does, he does superbly." Indeed. Within its first three years, *NCLR* won the Council of Editors of Learned Journal's Best New Journal Award and numerous awards for its unique design.

As I told *The East Carolinian* student reporter who interviewed me about Alex recently, we can all assume that whatever he does next will be a gift to his community. For more about Alex's service to his beloved home state, especially Eastern North Carolina, read the tribute to Alex we published in *NCLR Online* 2018. ■

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RIGHT North Carolina Award for Literature recipients in attendance at the 2017 North Carolina Awards ceremony in Raleigh, James Applewhite, Margaret Bauer (the 2017 recipient), Margaret Maron, and Shelby Stephenson; also pictured, Jan Applewhite (center)

FAR RIGHT Appalachian State University Assistant Professor Zackary Vernon talking about writing for and publishing in *NCLR* at the 2016 North Carolina Literary and Historical Association meeting panel celebrating 25 years of the magazine

OPPOSITE LEFT Bland and Ann Cary Simpson on the occasion of his receiving the John Tyler Caldwell Humanities Award, Friday Center, Chapel Hill, 27 Oct. 2017

OPPOSITE RIGHT *NCLR* Founding Editor Alex Albright and original Art Director Eva Roberts at *NCLR*'s 25th issue launch, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, 22 Oct. 2016

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