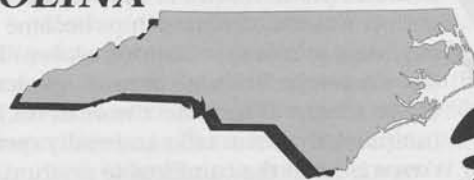


NORTH CAROLINA



Books

Dorothy Hodder, Compiler

Lisa Cantrell's fourth novel, *Boneman*, mixes the local drug trade in Phoenix City, North Carolina, with Haitian voodoo and murder in a plot that moves briskly, but has a somewhat unsatisfying ending.

Something appears to be terrifying the drug dealers in Phoenix City, who aren't easily frightened. People begin to disappear, and there are several unexplained murders. Detective Dallas Reid, the head of the town's small Drug Task Force, can't find anyone willing to talk about what is going on.

Reid is forced to team up with Jackie Swann of the State Bureau of Investigation.

The SBI believes Haitians are trying to move in on the drug trade in North Carolina, with Phoenix City as their first target. Also involved is Reid's best friend, local reporter J. J. Spencer. J. J. has been trying to take a vacation so he can begin a fiction-writing career, but the events in town now claim all his attention as he becomes a potential victim. The investigation moves through the back alleys of town and even into the home of a wealthy dentist who has inexplicably killed his family and himself.

Lisa W. Cantrell.

Boneman.

New York: Tor, 1992. 256 pp. \$18.95.
ISBN 0-312-85307-6.

Cantrell's writing is effective in evoking a chilling atmosphere.

Her blend of horror and suspense should interest readers of both genres, although mystery fans may find that the ending leaves them looking for a more logical explanation. Recommended for public libraries.

— Janet Sinder

Duke University School of Law Library

Favorite Sons, a political/family saga, centers on the forty-year friendship and rivalry of two ambitious North Carolinians. Roger Albright and Worth Patterson meet in the balmy undergraduate days of 1930s Chapel Hill. While Roger chafes to regain the fortunes of his poor but respected family, Worth exudes the self-confidence of one born to great wealth, although his money is soiled by its robber baron origins.

Both become proteges of Professor Ogden, a benevolent Machiavelli who manipulates North Carolina politics from his Institute of Progressive Studies. Through Ogden's influence, Worth and Roger become major figures in fictional 1950 and 1978 senate elections which are marked by the growing power of a New Right conservative, Joe Crain, whose tactics include racism and sexual innuendo.

John Russell.

Favorite Sons.

Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1992. 318 pp.
\$19.95. ISBN 0-945575-36-X.

Although Roger becomes enormously rich and Worth becomes a respected senator, their neglected personal lives resemble soap opera scripts. The eventual alienation from their families and the retrospective emptiness of their successes turn both men toward more fulfilling futures by the conclusion of Russell's first novel.

Russell relates details of the political and private lives of his characters in a fast-paced, masculine style. His authentic election scenes will keep readers wondering if real politicians such as Frank Porter Graham or Jesse Helms are partial models for his characters.

The sense of place he conveys will appeal to North Carolinians, for his descriptions of roads lined by tobacco fields, idyllic Chapel Hill, the peaceful Outer Banks, and their inhabitants capture the essence of the state and its people.

— Christine L. Thomson
Saint Mary's College

Naumoff's *Taller Women* is a provocative portrayal of one man's search for the perfect woman. Relationships become quicksand; men and women must negotiate as role expectations evolve. For well-mannered, erudite Monroe, the women he finds are increasingly too tall, and shorter ones must inevitably be sought. The perfect woman for him is from a time past, one who listens when a man talks and really means it when she says she is his.

Taller Women is set in the comfortable rhythms of a North Carolina community where older neighborhoods reveal only glimpses of private lives. An emergency room physician in his forties, Monroe is not one given to self-analysis — not over his failure to control his wife Katy, last seen suspended in a psychiatric ward window; not over his seething ambivalence toward Lydia, jackknifed with only head, feet, and hands visible from a core of

stacked tires; and not over his fascination with a dog-barking teen escaped into a world of Roy, Dale, and old Gabby. What is clear to Monroe is that women used to let love speak for itself, but “new fangled” women now change once love is declared. He ponders over the depressing state caused by these taller, happier women as he relentlessly ignores, humiliates, and subjugates his helpmates in a quest for the soul mate he deserves.

Naumoff builds emotional intrigue within a well-paced structure of anecdotal episodes which offer droll evidence of sexual domination from another era. His irreverent humor challenges

reader sympathies and assumptions as he presents absurd family squabbles, and ultimately a sly, discomfiting scenario of zero-sum love. The writing is lean and bold with eccentric characterizations emerging from realistically drawn, everyday folks. Naumoff moves the reader with ease and wry humor into the intrinsic and intractable beliefs men have about women and women about men.

This is Naumoff's third novel, following *Rootie Kazootie* and *Night of the Weeping Women*. *Taller Women* is highly recommended for public libraries and will be of particular interest to anyone drawn to the dynamics and complexities of love, power, and the gender gap. It presents a quagmire of gender agendas that choose control over validation, while offering an irresistible perspective on the cruel, perilous, and wily interplay love can engender.

— Susan S. Turner
Greensboro, N.C.

Howard Owen's first novel, *Littlejohn*, recounts not a story about a child, as the title might seem to suggest, but the life of an eighty-two-year-old North Carolina farmer who decides that it is his time to die. He goes down to Maxwell Millpond in the Blue Sandhills to talk to his maker and negotiate his final days.

Born Littlejohn McCain, the youngest of six children, he remembers his childhood years growing up in East Geddie. He quit school without having learned to read. Upon his return from the army he found that Sara Blue, whom he remembered as the dark-haired, spoiled, adopted daughter of Mr. Hector Blue, had attended Women's College in Greensboro and returned to teach English at Geddie School. Both Littlejohn and Sara sang in the church choir and became friends in spite of their age difference, and later married. She seemed to be the perfect one to teach someone of his age to read.

Howard Owen.
Littlejohn.

New York: Permanent Press, 1992. 209 pp.
\$15.95 (paperback). ISBN 1-877946-37-0.

Littlejohn and Sara's daughter, Georgia, who also studied English at UNC-G, narrates a segment of the novel describing her childhood and attempt at marriage. She details her husband's affair and her moment of revenge. Her failed marriage she partly attributes to the rebelliousness of her son, Justin, who also narrates his summer with his grandfather, Littlejohn. The author's use of three narrators makes the events of the novel more interesting and believable.

Reminiscing about his long life, Littlejohn is particularly mindful of killing his brother Lafe in a hunting accident, and of having to keep the secret he learned years later, that his wife Sara was in fact Lafe's daughter.

Now on a hot summer day in 1989, this eighty-two-year-old man questions his usefulness. With his parents, wife Sara, and other brothers and sisters now deceased, he has grown weary of guarding the secret and functioning within the realms of another generation. He grows more forgetful, can't find his keys to the truck or remember to turn off the

stove. He realizes that Georgia and Justin must make amends and carry on in spite of his destiny. So as he daydreams by the millpond, he asks the Lord to have His will.

Howard Owen, a native of Fayetteville and the sports editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, has written an enjoyable first novel. Littlejohn is a simple but strong man with a deep sense of right and wrong. The author has him speak in the southern dialect of the Eastern North Carolina farmer of the 1950s, adding to the character's authenticity. One expects more to come from this author in the future. Recommended for popular North Carolina collections in public libraries.

—Waltrene M. Canada
North Carolina A&T State University

An author's unfinished work intrigues because it reveals more of his inner struggle. For Thomas Wolfe, a writer noted for the descriptive intensity of his language and for his inability to bring work to publication, the throes of the creative process prove especially revealing.

Suzanne Stutman's trenchant introduction details the literary and personal difficulties Wolfe experienced in shaping *The Good Child's River*.

Wolfe made his task doubly difficult by writing about a female who was also his lover at the time. Aline Bernstein was a middle-aged Jewish set designer whom Wolfe first met during his voyage to Europe, and who provided the basis for the character Esther Jack in *Of Time and the River*. Wolfe filled three five hundred-page ledgers with preliminary sketches, yet managed to publish only parts of it as two short stories and a section of *The Web and the Rock*.

Why? Stutman feels the failure of this "magnificent digression" stemmed from Wolfe's grandiose concept and his method of writing. He usually wrote several works at once which created problems in shaping his material. In writing about Bernstein's growing up during our nation's coming of age, Wolfe sought to transcend time through creation of the eternal moment. The basis of *The Good Child's River*, however, is outside of his immediate experience. His antisemitic remarks reveal his ambivalence toward his material. Specially lacking is an understanding of women, particularly of one so independent as Bernstein. The final fragments celebrate women's sexuality, yet attribute its source to men. Modern women who define themselves on their own terms would decry such chauvinism. Fittingly, Bernstein wrote her own novel based on her childhood in *An Actor's Daughter*.

— William Fietzer
University of North Carolina at Charlotte



Thomas Wolfe. Suzanne Stutman, ed.
The Good Child's River.

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. xiv, 292 pp. \$21.95. ISBN 0-8078-2002-4.

So, too, is kinship in this hilarious yet haunting history of the Bales-McCord family of Summerlin, North Carolina. Like a patchwork quilt of many different fabrics, the novel is a series of tales told by different narrative voices. As one family member sagely observes, "Whatever you leave behind is your history, and it better be good, because you're history longer than you're fact." Throughout the novel, storytelling provides a kind of redemption from a bewildering and at times regrettable human existence.

The novel's story evolves from the failure of the marriage between Evelyn McCord and Glenn Bales, whose two sons, Faison and Tate, are raised first by Glenn's family and then by his second wife, Laura. Neither Evelyn nor Laura have a prayer of pleasing Glenn's harsh, self-righteous parents and sisters. Like most stepmothers, "Ma Laura" doesn't have a chance of success with the boys, either. She and Glenn end up dying in separate rooms of the same house, as the rest of the family is feuding. The humor of the situation lies in the intensity of, and the rationale for, all offenses given and taken.

Given the Bales's hold on righteousness, it is not surprising that both Faison and Tate would have developed an abiding appreciation for their uncle, Grove McCord, a sometime pilot, carnival worker, gambler — and the best storyteller in the family. Grove returns to Summerlin with a plan to be buried there, welcome or not. He provides some missing

Clyde Edgerton.

In Memory of Junior: A Novel.

Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1992.
215 pp. \$16.95. ISBN 1-56512-010-8.

pieces of the family history while betraying his own particularly redneck shortcomings.

The young heirs of this simultaneously funny and dismal family history are the "hippy" Morgan, and Faison's deceased stepson, Junior. Of the two, it was Junior who more truly fit into the Bales family. Calling the novel *In Memory of Junior* not only resolves the problem of what name to put on his tombstone, it also summarizes and commits to him the best and worst of the family which claimed him.

A must for collections of North Caroliniana.

— Rose Simon
Salem College, Winston-Salem

In his introduction to *The Rough Road Home* Robert Gingher remarks on the impossibility of making a definitive selection from among the many first-rate short story writers in or from North Carolina. It is difficult to spot any serious omission among the authors represented in this impressive collection of twenty-two stories; if anything, the editor may have been too inclusive. The collection proposes to represent North Carolina's short story writers, but the selections by Clyde Edgerton and Kaye Gibbons are sections from their novels *Walking Across Egypt* and *A Cure for Dreams*. This is a minor complaint, because these are favorite authors and favorite novels. Never having read a short story by either one, however, I wish there had been something new from them here. And if sections of novels qualify for inclusion in a short story collection, I would have added a Neely story by T. R. Pearson.

Robert Gingher, editor.

The Rough Road Home: Stories By North Carolina Writers.

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,
1992. 332 pp \$24.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8078-2064-4.
\$14.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8078-4397-0.

It is even harder to point out a weak story in this book.

Looking over the contents long after first reading the book, one can readily recall details of most of the stories. Stories that were not favorites the first time through grow on the reader. Doris Betts's "This is the Only Time I'll Tell It" stands out as an absolute chiller in broad daylight, the remorseless confession of an uncompromising Presbyterian to the absolutely necessary murder of a child abuser. A man bent on suicide finds the superhuman strength and craftiness to save his life when confronted by death on the river in Tim McLaurin's "Below the Last Lock." An angel

lands in an old woman's backyard in Allan Gurganus's "It Had Wings." Maya Angelou, Robert Morgan, Reynolds Price, Donald Seacrest, Lee Smith, Max Steele, and others tell remarkable stories. Most of them are set in familiar North Carolina, but almost all of them explore mysterious unknown places in the minds and hearts of their characters. The rough road is worth the trip.

— Dorothy Hodder
New Hanover County Public Library

Other Publications of Interest

For history and genealogy collections, Dr. B. G. Moss has undertaken the first exhaustive research on the participants in the Revolutionary War Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, now available in two useful, straightforward rosters. One hundred fifty Loyalists and sixteen hundred Patriots are listed in dictionary form, with genealogical information and summary of military career for each, in his *Roster of the Loyalists in the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge* and *Roster of the Patriots in the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge*. All primary and some secondary sources are given for each individual. Introductory material includes maps. (1992; Scotia Hibernia Press, 519 Batchelor Drive, Blacksburg, SC 29702; xvi, 105 pp. and x, 246 pp. \$20 each, plus \$.75 and \$2 postage, respectively; ISBN 0-9626172-2-9 and 0-9626172-3-7.)

The Papers of William Alexander Graham, Volume VIII, 1869-1875 concludes the series of Graham's papers begun by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, who edited the first four volumes, and completed by Dr. Max Ray Williams and Mary Reynolds Peacock. Graham was an important public figure in North Carolina politics for more than four decades. This final installment of his papers touches on Conservative attempts to gain political control from the Republican party, Ku Klux Klan activities, the Kirk-Holden War, the impeachment of Governor W. W. Holden, and the development of the North Carolina

Railroad and the University of North Carolina, among other important issues faced by North Carolinians following the Civil War. (1993; Historical Publications Section, Division of Archives and History, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807; xxxiv, 576 pp.; \$45 plus \$3 postage; ISBN 0-86526-245-4.)

Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916, originally published in 1916 and long out of print, has been reprinted by Broadfoot Publishing Company with a brief essay on the author, Dr. James Sprunt (1846-1924), by Diane Cobb Cashman. (1916, 1992; Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1907 Buena Vista Circle, Wilmington, NC 28405, also distributed by New Hanover County Public Library, State and Local History Department, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, NC 28401; xix, 732 pp.; \$30; ISBN 1-56837-050-4.)

In *Employment Law: A Guide for North Carolina Public Employers*, Steven Allred provides a detailed guide to sources of employment law: employment at will; civil rights statutes governing personnel functions; other statutes prohibiting age and handicap discrimination; recruitment and selection; job evaluation, compensation, and benefits; personnel policies; constitutional issues; and discipline and discharge. It includes a subject index and a case index. The book is an expanded version of the author's *Local Government Employment Law in North Carolina* (Institute of Government, 1990). It is clearly written and includes helpful examples to illustrate the laws being explained. (1992; Institute of Government, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, CB#3330 Knapp Building, UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330; 340 pp.; \$20; 1-56011-198-4.)

Just in time for summer vacation is the extremely practical *North Carolina Beaches: A Guide to Coastal Access*, by Glenn Morris. Moving down the state's coast from north to south, the book lists—with addresses, phone numbers, hours of operation, and maps—not only the expected (national seashores, state parks, and historic sites), but also the essential (parking, boat ramps, wheelchair ramps, and public rest rooms). Feature articles on topics ranging from pier etiquette to lighthouses to the names of waves are informative and entertaining. (1993; The University of North Carolina Press, PO Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288; approx. 400 pp.; \$16.95; ISBN 0-8078-4413-6.)

Several writers living in Wilmington have collaborated on a guide called *What Locals Know . . . About Wilmington and its Beaches*, available this June. It includes attractions, accommodations, dining, nightlife, recreation, shopping, maps, and local lore. Edited by novelist Ellyn Bache. (1993; Banks Channel Books, PO Box 4446, Wilmington, NC 28406; 256 pp.; \$9.95 plus \$2.50 shipping and 6% sales tax for North Carolina residents.)

Wild Shores: Exploring the Wilderness Areas of Eastern North Carolina is the first in a series of guide books by Walter K. Taylor, with the piedmont and mountain regions forthcoming. In this highly personal account he explores the Outer Banks, Currituck Sound, Dismal Swamp, Chowan River, Roanoke River, Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds, Neuse and White Oak Rivers, and the Cape Fear River. He mingles history, conversations with locals, and brief information about local outdoor activities for each region, with addresses and telephone numbers for more information. (1993; Down Home Press, PO Box 4126, Asheboro, NC 27204; 159 pp.; \$13.95, plus \$1.50 shipping and \$0.84 North Carolina tax; ISBN 1-878086-19-7.)

Two books for sports collections: Mike Cheatham's *Class of the Carolinas* was described in one review as "a sort of book-length personality profile of Carolina sports legends and characters." He concentrates on the "old heroes" including athletes, athletic directors, coaches, and sportscasters, few of whom are household words today. (1992; Bee Tree Books, PO Box 1684, Asheville, NC 28802; 167 pp.; \$6.95. [No ISBN]) Tom Perrin's *Atlantic Coast Conference Football: A History Through 1991* is a detailed year-by-year history and record book which would be useful for popular reference collections. (1992; McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 466 pp.; \$39.95, plus \$2 postage; ISBN 0-89950-749-2.)

Finally, a collection of poems by Lenard D. Moore, Writer-in-Residence for the United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County, and founder of Carolina African American Writers Collective. In *Forever Home* Moore evokes the mood of rural North Carolina life, with clothes on the line and collards cooking. Themes of work, nature, and family weave a strong fabric for this collection. (1992; St. Andrews Press, 1700 Dogwood Mile, Laurinburg, NC 28352; 53 pp.; \$9.95; ISBN 1-879934-05-1.)