



Saltire

The Official Newsletter of the Friends of the Houston Cole Library

Fall 2007

Friends host Franklin on October 30

Author Tom Franklin, Alabama born and now a resident of Oxford, Mississippi and teacher in the MFA program at the University of Mississippi, will speak on Tuesday evening, October 30, 2007, as the Friends of the Houston Cole Library's fall event.

Franklin is not a stranger to JSU. He has appeared twice at On the Brink, the February literary festival featuring emerging writers of the South. His novel, *Hell at the Breech* draws inspiration from the non-fiction account, *The Mitcham War of Clark County, Alabama*, authored by the head of the Department of History and Foreign Languages, Harvey Jackson III, in collaboration with Joyce White Burrage and James A. Cox. Franklin is married to poet Beth Ann Fennelly who has also appeared as an On the Brink writer.

Currently in print (and available at the event for purchase and signing) are his three volumes, the story collection *Poachers*, the novels *Hell at the Breech* (2003) and *Smonk* (published in 2006). The title story in *Poachers* won the 1999 Edgar Award, and the collection was named a Best First Book of Fiction by *Esquire*. Franklin was awarded a 2001 Guggenheim Fellowship. Of his most recent novel *Smonk*, Franklin's publisher says this:

"It's 1911 and the secluded southwestern Alabama town of Old Texas has been besieged by a scabrous and malevolent character called E. O. Smonk. . . . Every Saturday night for a year he's been riding his mule into Old Texas,



Tom Franklin
Author of
Hell at the Breech
and *Smonk*

Tuesday
Oct. 30, 2007
7:30 p.m.
Houston Cole Library
11th Floor

Photo by Maude Schuyler Clay; courtesy of William Morrow/HarperCollins

destroying the property, killing livestock, seducing women, cheating and beating men--all from behind the twin barrels of his Winchester 45-70 caliber over and under rifle. At last the desperate citizens of the town, themselves harboring a terrible secret, put Smonk on trial, with disastrous and shocking results. . . .

Smonk is also the story of Evavangeline, a fifteen-year-old prostitute quick to pull a trigger or cork. . . . She eventually stumbles upon Old Texas, where she is fated to E. O. Smonk and the townspeople in a way she could never imagine.

In turns hilarious, violent, bawdy, and terrifying, Smonk creates its own category: It's a southern, not a western, peopled with corrupt judges and assassins, a cuckolded blacksmith, Christian deputies, widows, War veterans, whores, witches, madmen and zombies. By the time the smoke has cleared, the mystery of Smonk will be revealed, the survivors changed forever."

While both *Smonk* and *Hell at the Breech* culminate in shootouts that are scathing in their destruction, both contain the fascinating perceptions of young men caught up in a world they only begin to fathom. In *Hell at the Breech* the perceptions and predicament of Mack Burke, a young lad being sheltered for his murdering another, emerge as the

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Since our last issue...

Bret Lott reads for Friends of HCL

Author Bret Lott delighted a small crowd at last fall's Friends of the Houston Cole Library event on September 21, 2006. He read two chapters from his novel in progress, a fictionalized account based on his grandfather's experience working in Hollywood when the "Flickers" were a young industry. Both were early chapters, one chapter describing the magic of attending a show in a fancy theatre, all from the viewpoint of the young lad from rural Texas who is awed by every detail of the ticket booth, the auditorium and the magic of the moving picture show. The other chapter was a fast paced stream of consciousness impression of the lad witnessing a murder as he jumped a ride in a boxcar. Lott took questions to conclude the program and made one important announcement, news not previously released to the public: he had made the decision to give up his position as editor of *The Southern Review*, to return to undergraduate teaching at the College of Charleston.

Among the give and take was Lott's advice to aspiring writers that came from his own recollection of how he learned to remake his story telling style, having read the work of Raymond Chandler. Lott offered many confessionals, in the style of his most recent collection of personal essays, *Before I Get Started*, which concludes with his sobering account of his whirlwind journey to appear on Oprah, years after *Jewel* had been published.

Introduced by Joanne Gates, Chair of the Board of Friends of the Library, Lott recalled more of their graduate class with Lee Edwards, who taught a seminar on Virginia Woolf. Dr. Gates recalled in her introduction the thrill that went round the department when one of his stories got published in *Yan-*



Brett Lott visits with JSU's Steven Whitton during his book signing at Houston Cole Library.

kee Magazine, and referred the audience to its place in Lott's most recent collection of stories, *The Difference Between Women and Men*. Also in that collection, Gates reminded the audience, was Lott's rewrite of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," originally published in a ghost story collection. Gates pointed out that Lott has a special gift for telling a story from a female point of view. Not only the principle narrator of *Jewel*, the story of a mother caring for her Downs Syndrome child, but also the mother-in-law of *A Song I Knew By Heart*, Lott's most recent novel, and Faulkner's Emily herself, tell their own stories.

Join Us...

A tribute to
**Susan
Herport
Methvin**



November 19, 2007

Ms. Methvin, a Creative Writing teacher in JSU's English Department, passed away in March. Selections from her poems will be read and distributed. If you wish to participate, contact Joanne Gates of David Hodnett.

Co-sponsored by the JSU English Dept.

Friends of the Library Board Membership

Members serve for three year terms and may be invited to run for a subsequent term. Ballots go out in January and if you wish to be nominated, please contact Mr. Bill Hubbard.

Contact a Board Member if you have suggestions for next year's speaker.

Karen Gregg expiring January 2008
Sandra Walker expiring January 2008
*Joanne Gates expiring January 2009
Kelly Osterbind expiring January 2009
Shirley Mogil expiring January 2010
George Whitesel expiring January 2010

* chair of the board

Anderson shares insight about Harper Lee

On April 12, 2007, in a program provided by the Alabama Humanities Foundation's *Road Scholars*, Nancy Anderson, Associate Professor at Auburn University, Montgomery, dispelled myths that Nelle Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was a recluse. They have remained acquaintances since they met in 1983. Anderson also passed out a brief list of other published work

by Lee, as an assurance that she was not averse to writing and should not be dismissed as a one-book author. More excitingly, she predicted that a manuscript she was sure existed would be published posthumously, the non-fiction account of a sensational series of murders and the trial that ensued. Anderson led the audience through some significant details



Nancy Anderson, left, talks with Friends at Houston Cole Library.

of literary craftsmanship of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She recommends re-reading it regularly, as she had recently done, to teach in her classes, and to lead a seminar in Huntsville organized around a community reading event. Anderson's program offering for the AHF series comes amidst other distinguished accomplishments. She has edited two books on the writings of Richard Marius and was the state's 2006 recipient of the Eugene Current-Garcia Distinguished Scholar

Award, presented by the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville. Monroeville, the true setting of Lee's fictional Macon, has capitalized on its locale as home of Harper Lee to host the writers conference and bring distinguished writers together every May. A performance of the stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is organized as part of the symposium.

DiBiase presents lecture on Travel and Translation

On May 16, 2006, Carmine DiBiase, Professor in JSU's English Department, delivered a lecture on Travel and Translation, on the occasion to honor the publication of a collection of essays. Four other members of the JSU faculty also contributed to the volume.

Formed from the contributors to a conference originally held at Houston Cole Library in November 2002, *Travel and Translation in the Early Modern Period* is Volume 26 of the *Approaches to Translation Studies*, published by Rodopi Press of Amsterdam and New York.

DiBiase's lecture included new thoughts on his work on Translation and Travel and ranged from his work on the Renaissance Florios, father and son exiles from Italy, to his recent teaching of Hamlet in the undergraduate classroom, when he took note of the particularities of the text as they addressed his theme. In the introduction to his volume, Dr. DiBiase uses his expertise on Michelangelo and John Florio to investigate concerns of the whole volume, especially as it



DiBiase

relates to crisis points in the life of an exile and how the act of translation is transformative and cultural. DiBiase is now at work on a translation of the works of the Trieste writer, Italo Svevo and his brother.

Suhor demonstrates Jazz Roots

Charles Suhor, gave a mixed media demonstration of the roots of Jazz on March 9, 2006.

The spring program of the Friends of Houston Cole Library regularly offers a program made available through the Alabama Humanities Foundation.

In 2001, Dr. Suhor published *Jazz in New Orleans: The Postwar Years Through 1970*. His AHF-sponsored program, "The Jazz Story--African Roots, American Branches" included demonstrations on a number of instruments, the playing of sound recordings, and many visuals to enhance the presentation.

Charles Suhor, PhD, was born and raised in New Orleans, and is an accomplished jazz and swing band drummer.



Suhor

Franklin • Continued from page 1

book's important mystery while much of the main action chronicles the self-administering vigilante justice that is set against the right-minded sheriff, Bill Waite. Likewise, in *Smonk*, the perceptions, urges and miscalculations of the youngster William R. McKissick, Junior propel the story towards its underlying humanity.

Also recurrent in his fiction is the character of Widow Gates, a midwife who senses whenever one of her own is in mortal danger. Of the sheriff in *Hell at the Breech*, JSU history professor Hardy Jackson notes: "Tom [Franklin] took a bloody event in which both our families were involved and from fact created fiction. The Billy Waite of *Hell at the Breech* was my Great-grandfather and, though fictionalized, I like to think they shared some character traits."

The Friends of the Library welcome Tom Franklin as he marks the accomplishments of a distinguished writing career.

Refreshments will be served after the program. Open to all.



HCL staff maintains Friends displays

Part of the success of our programs is due to attractive lobby displays created by staff at the Houston Cole Library. The Friends are grateful to the staff for their assistance in publicizing our events by creating these catchy displays.



**Friends of the
Houston Cole Library
700 Pelham Road North
Jacksonville, AL 36265**

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