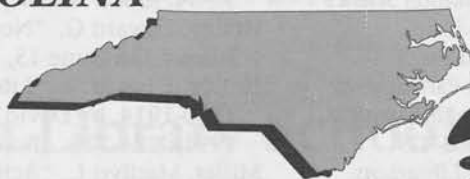


# NORTH CAROLINA



## Books

Robert G. Anthony, Jr., Compiler

**I**n a short documentary entitled "Four Women Artists," produced by the Center for Southern Folklore, Eudora Welty describes how she feels when an author uses a descriptive color that does not fit. She finds it difficult to continue reading the work, regardless of how well it might be written. The author may have been careless or simply unobservant, but the effect on some readers is the sense that something has been spoiled. Randall Kenan, the young black author of this collection of fine short stories, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*, seems awfully close to making something like that mistake in his first short story, "Clarence and the Dead." It reads a little too much like Southern Gothic by the numbers—he's got the dialect perfected, he's got the rhythm of the lifestyle running well, and he's clearly given us a sense of place. It's well done, but nowhere near as rich, sensual, or startling as the remaining stories.

Randall Kenan.

### *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead.*

New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 334 pp.  
\$19.95. ISBN 0-15-149886-5.

Kenan, born in Chinquapin, North Carolina, makes much use of his heritage and memories of life in what those of us from that part of the world call "down East." In his writing, one feels, sees, or just recalls the dark richness of Eastern North Carolina's still undersettled flatlands. Tim's Creek evokes very strong images of small towns and back roads "down East." His stories are filled with familiar sounding names and places. They are rich with expressions that have long been cast aside by some of us.

There is the richly sensual humor of "What Are Days," the story of a woman in late middle age drawn into a brief but sexually liberating affair with a nineteen-year-old boy, or was he just some phantasm? In "Cornsilk," a love affair between a brother and his sister is told in language dripping with sensuality and heavy sexual play. Even so, it is also a story about the battle between a father and son, and of a son's uncertainty about loving his father. The central character in "Cornsilk" is an intellectual and sexual wanderer—a black urban yuppie with his own hysterical angst.

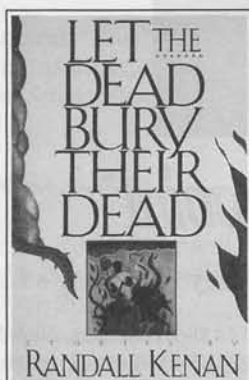
The people in Kenan's stories are of simple hues—they are black or white, male or female. But, in what seems like an incredible piece of literary finesse, he writes of each with an objectivity that is thrilling. You know the color of a character's skin by quirks of language or by some kind of instinct—Kenan rarely has to tell you. His women, Jamonica in "Cornsilk," Lena Rose, Mabel Pearsall, and Bela in "Tell Me, Tell Me," are strongly written observations of what women might think or feel.

The writers and writings, the stories and myths that have influenced Kenan flow from the pages of these stories:

I've done my reading. All my homework. Should I tell you what I've found? Shall I quote Whitman or Auden or Pound? Shall I give you a Canto or a Quartet? Hughes or Baraka or Hayden? Lincoln or Dubois? Eliot's "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be?"

We get glimpses of the pantheon of American literature in all its complex and boundless guises—African American, Southern Gothic, Modern Poetry. There are pieces of Faulkner and Alice Walker and traces of James Weldon Johnson "Simple" stories. The language is as graceful as Walker Percy and voluptuous as Zora Neal Hurston. Kenan turns these influences, plus dozens of others, into his own special creation. He has created in Tim's Creek a wondrous world peopled with characters that may remind some of us of places and things almost forgotten. *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead* is a truly original work. Kenan offers us extraordinary promise of what a fine writer can and should feel confident creating—the mosaic of cultures and colors America is. This is a very, very fine collection of stories. One pleads for more.

— Mitchell L. Whichard, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



**D**oriden helped Gordon Weekley sleep. Dexamyl gave him energy. Together, these prescription drugs controlled this Baptist minister's life for eighteen years.

H. Gordon Weekley found his calling early, and his successes came easily. In 1958, as pastor of the newly established and quickly growing Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, Weekley found himself overworked, overtired. To help him sleep, a doctor prescribed Doriden, "a new wonder-drug ... it's safe and non-addictive." With the rest and euphoria the drug produced, Weekley became more and more involved in his church work, even taking part in international mission trips with Billy Graham. It was on a trip to Africa in 1960 that he discovered Dexamyl, a diet pill that provides a rush of energy. Doctors made prescriptions available without question, and for years Weekley took the two drugs day and night. When his family and church leaders finally questioned his behavior, he denied having any problem and began acquiring the drugs on the sly. Over the years he lost his job, family, and home; but he continued to deny his chemical dependence.

Treatment was ineffective. The bulk of this biography is a chronicle of rehabilitation programs, therapy, mountain retreats, even mental hospitals, but each program left Weekley confident that he could control his addiction. At last, surrendering his problems to God, he overcame the need for drugs, became director of the Rebound Christian Rehabilitation

Center in Charlotte, and resumed his ministry.

As a biography, *Balm in Gilead* lacks the energy and style needed to sustain interest. Important characters such as Weekley's wife, Norma Sue, are under-developed. Jeffries, an advertising executive and a member of the board of directors of Weekley's rehabilitation center, has chosen a journalistic style that is unemotional and excessively detailed, and which suppresses an understanding of Weekley's motivation. The scene where Weekley prays for help, and receives it, is underplayed and leaves the reader bewildered and cynical.

The volume is somewhat more successful as a case study in denial and will be of value to libraries with strong psychology, social work, or drug abuse collections.

— Lisa K. Dalton, Rockingham County Public Library

Don Jeffries.  
***Balm in Gilead:***  
***A Baptist Preacher's Personal***  
***Journey through Addiction.***

Little Rock, Ark.: August House, 1992. 238 pp.  
 \$19.95. ISBN 0-87483-190-3.

**T**he tragedy of incest has been visited frequently in recent fiction. It is a powerful theme, yet perilously close to being overdone. In Angela Davis-Gardner's second novel, this difficult topic is approached honestly without being brutal.

The main character, Beryl, experiences all the expected emotions of an adolescent girl growing up in the South in the 1950s. The author draws upon the ordinary to weave a landscape of familiar, comforting images: a pony, a "poodle" skirt, a treehouse, a young girl's diary, a sneaking off to the movies with town boys despite parental disapproval. But beyond this realm of the normal are dark shadows.

One assumes from the dust jacket blurb that *Forms of Shelter* is going to be about secrets — secrets such as incest. Halfway through the novel, however, this reviewer was no longer sure what to expect. The sudden uncertainty compels the reader onward, and this reviewer finished the novel with unusual speed. There is that constant, awful feeling of hope that everything will turn out fine.

*Forms of Shelter* is not a happy story, yet it is a warm one of a family full of wistful yearnings for love but desperately confused, ill, and destined to pain. The book's strength lies in the vivid portrayal of Beryl—and in the clarity with which she remembers incidents that were often never meant to be but nevertheless happened. Her father disappears to Chicago to seek his fame as a jazz musician, never to return. Her mother teeters on the edge of serious depression. Rigidly religious grandparents provide some stability but no warmth. Beryl's brother, Stevie, retreats into his own private world. When an academic stepfather enters the picture, his off-beat house and lifestyle bring ridicule from the kids at school and keep tensions high on the family front.

Davis-Gardner's style makes all this work. The characters are believable; they come alive for the reader. Beryl's confession flows naturally. One finishes the book with a clear sense of the struggles the characters have faced. The resolution of the conflict and surmounting of obstacles seem real.

This book is suitable for adult fiction collections in academic and public libraries and is a must for collections of North Carolina writers. Davis-Gardner, a native North Carolinian, is an assistant professor of creative writing at North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

— Eleanor I. Cook, Appalachian State University



**S**o, too, the inner rages smoldered. Festival citizens were frenzied. Their attention focused on the politics and preparation of the annual Azalea Festival—more concerned with “proper” community image and political implications than with the menacing yellow smoke-veiled sky and the increasing subliminal uneasiness.

The setting is 1988-1989, in the coastal area of fictional Festival and Festival Beach, North Carolina. Events unfold for the reader through the perspectives of Jordan Edge, once “stalked by humiliation” as the prologue’s 1967-68 high school freshman newcomer, now a school administrator and volunteer firefighter; Alona Wand, shopkeeper and jewelry-maker whose recurring dream of flowing hair bright as light now awakes her with nightmarish shivers; and Cassie, fourteen, whose rebellion against her county commissioner stepfather and his thinly veiled bigotry intertwines the lives of these key figures as they duel with their innermost fears.

Ellyn Bache.

## ***Festival in Fire Season.***

Little Rock, Ark.: August House, 1992. 239 pp.  
\$19.95. ISBN 0-87483-189-X.



Bache is skillful in developing the personae of these three major characters and those with whom their lives interact. This well-researched, quick-paced novel with its interest in relationships and societal attitudes unfolds through crisp narrative and vivid description. It elicits the reader’s sensory imagination, drawing one into the intensity of the moment. Bache has carefully researched the nature of fires and the tactics of firefighting, acknowledging the editorial assistance of several North Carolina fire fighters. While this reviewer roiled at the attitudes and language of the prologue, its necessity and relevance to understanding the inner struggle and later perspective of each major character are gradually revealed. Fear and courage, love and tragedy collide in this readable book that evokes the humor and compassion of a realistic world—where confusion precedes truer understanding. This book is appropriate for public and academic library fiction collections, and is not inappropriate for senior high collections given the readability and treatment of a universal topic.

Winner of several literary awards and a North Carolina Writers’ Network instructor, Ellyn Bache has received critical acclaim for her first novel, *Safe Passage* (1988), and for her autobiographical sketch, *Culture Clash* (1982), the latter now in its second edition (1989). Bache’s short stories have appeared in anthologies, as well as in popular and literary magazines. A University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill graduate, she lives with her family in Wilmington, North Carolina.

— Libby Grey, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**P**rice’s twenty-third book, *Blue Calhoun*, is summarized by its beginning sentence, “this starts with the happiest I ever was though it brought down suffering on everybody near me.” Sixty-five-year-old Blue Calhoun’s story is told in first person as a lengthy letter. He explains to his granddaughter the relationship between her father’s recent suicide and Blue’s own affair with a young girl thirty years earlier.

The book begins in 1956 when a younger Bluford Calhoun was a recovering alcoholic who had been in control of his actions for only a long year and a half. After causing almost two decades of misery to his religious family, Blue was finally repaying their faith in him by working hard as a salesman in a music store. His steady existence ended abruptly when he fell in love with sixteen-year-old Luna Absher while selling her an Autoharp. His passion stunned him. When he saw Luna, he later recounts, “My whole body felt like a child a-borning, pushed helpless down a dim long tunnel towards strong new light.” Driven by weakness and circumstances, Blue eventually leaves his wife and child for an interlude of sexual ecstasy and self-fulfillment with Luna.

Despite the pain Luna and Blue inflict on the latter’s good-hearted family, Price manages to maintain the reader’s compassion toward the lovers with his depiction of their honesty. Neither has illusions about him — or herself or their future together. Each finds healing in their brief, innocent, loving relationship.

Price’s critics have suggested that women are his finest literary creations, from Rosacoke Mustian in *A Long and Happy Life* to Kate in *Kate Vaiden*. Luna is no exception in her role of a good woman/child despite her unselective promiscuity. From a childhood filled with

Reynolds Price.

## ***Blue Calhoun.***

New York: Atheneum, 1992. 373 pp. \$23.00.  
ISBN 0-689-12146-6.



sexual abuse by her brother and father, she relates to men through the pleasure her body yields them. Her character is the chief vehicle for threading the crippling aspects of incest through the plot. As with all the women in Blue's story, Luna's strength is greater than his, as is poignantly illustrated when she arranges his return to his family and to a reformed life. When Blue is reunited with Luna decades later, he trusts her kindness and wisdom to help his granddaughter recover from the traumatic experience of incest with her father.

For Price's loyal following, *Blue Calhoun* will impart familiar pleasures. In this book, he repeats the theme of a tragic event in a family affecting characters' lives for several generations, a theme he developed fully in *The Surface of the Earth* and its sequel, *The Source of Light*. North Carolina small-town life, specifically Raleigh before suburban sprawl, is drawn like a peaceful road map of times past. For all readers, Price's use of language, especially in his characters' natural, poetic dialogue, is a joy to be discovered and rediscovered with each novel.

— Christine L. Thomson, Saint Mary's College

**M**

ost North Carolinians are well aware of the enormous popularity of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I men's basketball tournament. In recent years teams from this state have had considerable success in that three-week-long extravaganza, winning four titles since 1982. That popularity and that success are celebrated in these two books.

*One to Remember* commemorates the tenth anniversary of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's 1982 title, a team which featured future professional stars James Worthy, Michael Jordan, and Sam Perkins. *Crowning Glory* was produced within months of Duke University's successful 1991 championship run, which was led by Christian Laettner, Grant Hill, and Bobby Hurley. There are some interesting parallels between the rival teams. Both won the national title after finishing second the previous year. The two titles were the first national championships respectively for coaches Dean Smith of North Carolina (Frank McGuire coached UNC's 1957 NCAA champions) and Mike Krzyzewski of Duke after a number of near-misses that caused some observers to question their ability to win "the big one."

*Crowning Glory* is a more substantial work in several areas. Cragg and Sobb, who work for the Duke Sports Information Office, have called on the services of a pair of Duke alumni for special chapters. Sportswriter Bill Brill contributes a segment entitled "Historical Perspective," which unfortunately gives too-brief coverage to the pre-Krzyzewski years. John Feinstein, arguably the country's best-known writer on college basketball, furnishes a chapter on Duke's Final Four victories over the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and the University of Kansas. Cragg and Sobb detail the other four NCAA games and summarize the 1990-1991 season in other chapters. A substantial portion of the book is devoted to largely matter-of-fact profiles of the Duke player. *Crowning Glory's* appeal is considerably enhanced by a large number of color photographs.

David Daly.

### ***One to Remember:***

#### ***The 1982 North Carolina Tar Heels NCAA Championship Team, Then and Now.***

Asheboro, N.C.: Down Home Press, 1991. 120 pp.  
\$34.95. ISBN 1-878086-10-3.

Mike Cragg and Mike Sobb.

### ***Crowning Glory:***

#### ***The Story of Duke's 1991 NCAA Championship Season.***

Durham: Sports Information Office, Duke  
University, Cameron Indoor Stadium, Durham,  
N.C. 27706, 1991. 120 pp. \$29.95.

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Neither *One to Remember* nor *Crowning Glory* is intended to provide profound insights, and neither does. Neither has a bibliography or an index, although *Crowning Glory* does have a useful statistical summary of the 1990-1991 Duke season. Both are oversized coffee-table books designed largely for fans of the respective teams. Of course, that category encompasses a large percentage of North Carolina's population.

— Jim Sumner, North Carolina Division of Archives and History

## Other Publications of Interest

Incorporated in 1740 as Newton, Wilmington has for most of its history been North Carolina's principal port. Its strategic and secure harbor on the Cape Fear River, thirty miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean, attracted British military occupation during the American Revolution. In the two decades immediately preceding the Civil War, it emerged as an important railroad terminus, as the port end of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Blockade-running ships fed supplies so successfully through Wilmington, which was well protected by nearby Fort Fisher, that the railroad earned the nickname "Lifeline of the Confederacy."

In *Wilmington, Port of North Carolina*, Alan D. Watson details these and other chapters in the city's history. Post-Civil War highlights have included service as headquarters city for the Atlantic Coast Line railroad, the construction of 243 vessels, including 126 "Liberty Ships" during World War II, and the creation of the State Ports Authority and state aid for port facilities development after that war. Extensive footnotes and an impressive bibliography will facilitate further research by readers interested in this city whose future promises to remain, as its past has been, closely linked to the waters nearby. (1992; University of South Carolina Press, 1716 College Street, Columbia, S.C. 29208; 213 pp.; \$29.95; ISBN 0-87249-778-X; cloth.)



In 1991, during three day-long sessions, the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County invited citizens to bring to the library photographs depicting the history of post-Civil War black life in the county. The goal was to secure copies to add to the library's Carolina Room' collections of approximately five thousand photographic prints and seven million photographic negatives, large collections with little showing the life of local African Americans. The response was overwhelming, with 1,500 photographs offered for copying by volunteer professional photographers. Now, approximately 170 of those images have been selected and reproduced in *An African American Album: The Black Experience in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*, Elizabeth S. Randolph, editor, and Pat Ryckman, project coordinator.

Divided into six categories—Home & Family, Education, Work, War, Religion, Community—the photographs show proud and vibrant people engaged in events, both

## The Children's Book Council Inc.

Fred Marcellino has created a full-color 17" x 22" poster encouraging readers to READ ... THINK ... DREAM ... during the 1992 Book Week celebration, November 16-22, 1992.

This poster features a sequence of pictures of a cat and his mouse friend quietly reading a book, then leisurely thinking about what they have read, and finally sleeping comfortably as they dream pleasant book dreams. The poster is included in the Council's official Book Week kit which sells for \$27.50. It may also be purchased separately (prepaid only) for \$7.00.

For a full-color brochure that pictures the poster and all other Book Week materials, send a business (#10), stamped (1 oz. first class), self-addressed envelope to: "Materials Brochure," Children's Book Council, 568 Broadway, Suite 404, New York, NY 10012.



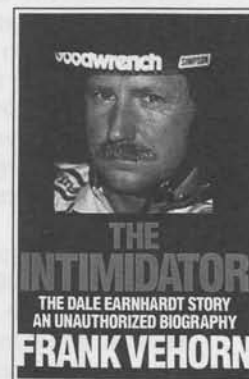
ordinary and extraordinary, that marked the years between the 1870s and 1950 in Mecklenburg County. The result is an attractive coffee-table book, but one that offers the viewer/reader a fuller understanding of, and appreciation for, the history of North Carolina's Queen City and its surrounding area. (1992; Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Attn. Carolina Room, 310 N. Tryon Street, Charlotte, N.C. 28202-2176; 137 pp.; \$30.00, plus \$5.90 tax and shipping; cloth.)

A prominent planter and politician from Brunswick County, North Carolina, at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, Robert Howe quickly emerged as a major military leader. As commanding general of the Southern Department and highest-ranking officer from the states south of Virginia, he was positioned for a pivotal role in the defense of the emerging nation. Yet Howe's "loss" of Georgia by failing to defeat the British invasion there in 1778, his reputation as a "womanizer," and his inability to secure important cooperation from state and local political officials, helped lead to his removal from the Southern command and transfer to the Northern states. They also caused many to view him as an ineffectual military commander and helped destine him to become "Washington's forgotten general" among historians.

In *A Quest For Glory: Major General Robert Howe and the American Revolution*, authors Charles E. Bennett and Donald R. Lennon seek to rescue Howe from his obscurity. They argue that in many ways he was the victim of the conflicts and jealous rivalries that divided military and civilian authorities, and they offer the first comprehensive biographical treatment of this interesting Tar Heel. (1991; University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27515-2288; 205 pp.; \$24.95; ISBN 9-8078-1982-4; cloth.)

Countless Americans find their sports heroes not on football fields or basketball courts or hockey rinks, but at stock car motor speedways located around the nation, especially in the South. In *The Intimidator: The Dale Earnhardt Story, An Unauthorized Biography*, Frank Vehorn relates the rise of one of today's most cheered — and most booed — stock car drivers. Dale Earnhardt, a high school dropout from Kannapolis, North Carolina, learned the sport early and well, following his racer father in the 1950s and 1960s to small racetracks around the South.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the younger Earnhardt has emerged as a talented and fierce competitor known perhaps as widely for his involvements in controversial car bumpings and fender rubbings as for his victories in races. Some readers may be put off by the book's informal, journalistic style, its lack of full citations for quotations from Earnhardt and other drivers, the absence of statistical charts and tables to help compare drivers, and several amateurish production features, such as the meaningless contents page. But others may enjoy this look at an important player in a major American sport. (1991; Down Home Press, P.O. Box 4126, Asheboro, N.C. 27204; 288 pp.; \$13.95; paperback.)



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