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# New North Carolina Books

Alice R. Cotten, Compiler

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Ernest B. Furgurson. *Hard Right: The Rise of Jesse Helms*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1986. 302 pp. \$18.95. ISBN 0-393-02325-7.

The first full-length study of the life and career of Jesse Helms appears as the power and influence wielded by North Carolina's senior senator begins to wane. The book's author, Ernest B. Furgurson, no doubt would welcome recent setbacks at the polls encountered by Helms's political machine, the Congressional Club, and the loss of a Republican majority (and thereby committee chairmanships) in the U.S. Senate.

Furgurson, a native Virginian, is the Washington bureau chief of the *Baltimore Sun* and a syndicated columnist. His first book was a biography of William B. Westmoreland. A fascination since childhood with southern demagogues drew him to his present subject, a man he describes as "the most outspoken, unyielding hard-liner in the nation—in or out of office, wearing any political label."

As models for his book, Furgurson looked to Richard Rovere's scathing portrayal of Joseph McCarthy and Marshall Frady's demolition job on George Wallace. In important respects, Furgurson's work is less distinguished than either of these now classic political biographies. The author and subject share similar backgrounds, being Southern Baptists who went into newspaper work. Despite that, Furgurson fails to identify what grounded Helms's ideological development, citing only "a burning need to get even—with Yankees, blacks, outsiders, infidels."

On the subject of Helms's racial views, Furgurson is devastating, offering a careful analysis of his use of jokes and code words. His WRAL-TV editorials, which Furgurson plumbs to good effect, offered "implicit approval" to the Ku Klux Klan and John Birch Society by linking integration with communism. Yet, according to the author, Helms was nothing if not consistent, opposing the Martin Luther King holiday on the same grounds twenty years later.

In studying a contemporary political figure, Furgurson was dependent primarily on interviews and the newspaper record. Although he

talked briefly with Helms and associates such as Thomas Ellis, Furgurson did not have full access or cooperation. Thus he relied on his contacts in North Carolina, which he identifies as "probably the best newspaper state in America." Many readers will be familiar with Helms's record as revealed through newspaper accounts. On the other hand, Furgurson's real intent may have been to explain Helms to a national audience. Nevertheless, this is an important book, vital to all library collections in the state.

Michael Hill, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

Anne Russell and Marjorie Megivern, with Kevin Coughlin. *North Carolina Portraits of Faith: A Pictorial History of Religions*. Norfolk: The Donning Company, 1986. 243 pp. illus. \$25.00. ISBN 0-89865-454-8 (5659 Beach Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23502)

Reading *North Carolina Portraits of Faith* once will not quench the urge to pick it up again and continue learning about the neighbors who go to another church. Looking through the pictures of generations of believers who together have woven the tapestry of North Carolina's cultural history will only increase one's curiosity about the people behind the walls of the church buildings we ride by daily. Russell, Megivern, and Coughlin have provided a generous sample of the religious culture of North Carolina, a sample which might help to explain to those who do not know us well how our state can seem so different from others around us. We are a composite people, created out of many different strands of humanity that found their way here, sometimes on their way elsewhere, and then stayed. In this book we find out what was deepest in the hearts of many of our recent ancestors as well as in the hearts of the original settlers.

Neither of the authors is a professional religionist, nor clergy, and the absence of a particular denominational point of view is a welcome change from writings which even when presenting a variety of churches, manage to press one denomination to the front. The difficult task of getting

started into the book was taken up by organizing the narrative and pictures by denomination and religion and presenting them more-or-less chronologically as they appeared in North Carolina.

This is a pictorial history. The text of each chapter attempts to set the visual impressions in a verbal, historical context. It is hardly possible, however, to answer detailed questions about many decades of a church's complex history in the few paragraphs allowed by the format of this beautifully printed book. In some cases the complexity of this task overwhelmed the pages allowed. The index guides the reader to almost every photograph, though some on the same page may be listed generically.

*North Carolina Portraits of Faith* will surprise the reader, both unpleasantly and pleasantly. One who is very well aware of the details of the history of one's own denomination will be able to find omissions and misunderstandings in the text. But it seems clear after more than one reading that dry facts are not the purpose of this book. Some facts are more important than others in capturing the flavor of a history, and the authors cannot be faulted for missing any that loom highest in the mind of a particular reader. Not even the collaboration of the distinguished persons listed in the acknowledgments can assemble the precise proportion of fact and interpretation to please everyone. The pleasant surprise, and indeed almost a breathtaking one, is the sudden interruption of the reading by the idea that this is not a textbook on the history of religions in North Carolina. It is not a reference work to be sought after for single details. It is a mural, a story-telling, a family-reunion kind of narrative with pictures, a family album with all the relatives' words captured once and for all in the text, their proportion of fact to interpretation of fact differing with each part of the "clan" that is presented.

Stereotypes are shattered, and then genuine images put in their places, as religious groups are pictured in their worship settings. The images of the faithful at prayer, weddings, or other high moments of their lives envelop the reader inescapably in the group being pictured. No longer can "they" just be "them."

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North Carolina is portrayed here, and successfully so, from the point of view of the authors' quest for the religious aspects of the essence of its people. Add *North Carolina Portraits of Faith* to those others on a reference list of essential books to explain North Carolina to both native Tar Heels and to others.

Walter Alan Tuttle, National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park.

Marianne Gingham. *Bobby Rex's Greatest Hit*. New York: Atheneum, 1986. 308 pp. \$17.95. ISBN 0-689-11769-8.

"Take Highway 21 from Greensboro and ride about fifteen miles—until all the good rock stations fade out ... Orfax, North Carolina. Bird Sanctuary. Population 3,127, only I think they must have counted in the cows, too. It's not a bad town, really. Just plain. The smell of meat loaf is always in the air ... By the time I was sixteen I looked around at people who'd made their lifelong homes in Orfax, and I was at a loss as to how they'd stuck it out." (p. 67)

Marianne Gingham's first novel leaves no room for doubt as to her genuine North Carolina roots. Crafting characters and locales with the keen eye and discerning ear of one who possesses the gift of creating living fiction, Mrs. Gingham sounds as if she has spent her entire life observing and recording life in a North Carolina trailer park circa 1960. She in fact grew up in Greensboro, attended Salem College and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, taught writing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and currently resides in Greensboro.

*Bobby Rex's Greatest Hit* is a joy from page one. Beginning with a series of letters as a way of introducing both characters and situation, the novel immediately compels the reader to become immersed in Pally Thompson's world. Pally is perhaps the most believable, life-like heroine to be found in recent Southern fiction. Neither she nor her idiosyncrasies are larger, more grotesque than real life, and her Southern-ness is right on the mark recognizable without the slightest hint of ridicule or caricature. Pally's observations of the citizens and events of Orfax exhibit a quick, curious mind filled with questions whose answers are sometimes not to be found in her limited experiences of small-town life, and her ponderings are thoughtful and observant without being artificially profound and wise beyond her years.

Fortunately, Pally is not the only excellent characterization in the novel. The reader will be

delighted with Pally's mother, her best friend Shilda, and a cast of townspeople with personalities as close to real life as have been found on a page. The lives in this town of Orfax, where "mostly you just waited for something to happen. And usually it happened to somebody else," are chronicled as if being told by a life-long friend, detail for detail, but only those that really matter. And when something *does* really happen, one so clearly understands why Pally says "You wanted to disappear in Orfax, you wanted to blend in. Otherwise you were notorious." Pally suffered her small-town notoriety at the hands of hometown-boy-made-good Bobby Rex Moseley, sixties rock-n-roll sensation, and things were never quite the same in Orfax after his hit song "Pally Thompson" hit the charts.

*Bobby Rex's Greatest Hit* is not a novel librarians will purchase solely because of its North Carolina roots. Reviews in popular national periodicals will create demand, and word-of-mouth praise will unquestionably make it an often-requested title in public libraries. Ms. Ginger's first effort is well worthy of such praise—it is an absorbing reading experience.

Julie W. Coleman, Thruway Branch, Forsyth County Public Library.

Vernon O. Stumpf. *Josiah Martin, The Last Royal Governor of North Carolina*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press for the Kellenburger Historical Foundation, 1968. 252 pp. \$19.75. ISBN 0-89089-305-5. (P.O. Box 8795, Durham 27707)

Josiah Martin, a native of Dublin, Ireland, and from a prominent Anglo-Irish family with important connections in the British Isles as well as in the West Indies and on the North American mainland, was educated privately. At nineteen he entered the army, rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel, but sold his commission after thirteen years to begin a career in government. Through family connections, he was appointed governor of North Carolina to succeed William Tryon upon the latter's appointment to the governorship of New York.

In New Bern on August 12, 1771, the thirty-four-year-old Martin took office. His colony had recently passed through the crisis brought on by the hated Stamp Act and had been divided over the problems of the Regulators. Tryon had led the militia at the Battle of Alamance just prior to his departure. Martin faced a colony ready for revolution over a variety of local problems as well as causes from abroad.

Martin was, as the subtitle of this book indicates, the final royal governor of North Carolina. As such his own personality played a key role. He was thoroughly loyal to the crown and was unwilling to compromise, even on minor matters. He faced numerous conflicts with the assembly and was unable to resolve them, nor was he able to stem the tide that led his colony to revolt. Even so, Martin did not flee as his counterparts in other colonies did. He took up a position in the Lower Cape Fear, part of the time aboard a British ship at Fort Johnston. From there he developed detailed plans to restore his royal government. These plans were approved in London, ordered into execution, and might well have restored royal rule if support from home and from New York had been forthcoming as anticipated.

When further resistance was impossible Martin departed, only to return at a later time with the army under Cornwallis. On several occasions Martin issued proclamations declaring royal government restored, but the army was unable to hold its gains in the state.

This biography of Martin adequately tells the facts of its subject's life and is the only biography of consequence available. Nevertheless, it is poorly written. It is plodding, lacks sparkle and appeal, and in places the sentences are long, involved, and almost meaningless. There are careless grammatical errors, proper names are misspelled, and punctuation is erratic. The index is inadequate with many proper names as well as subjects omitted, and for some subjects only a few of the possible entries are actually included.

Nevertheless, for the reader seeking information on Josiah Martin or on the period of his administration, this book will serve as the basis for further research.

William S. Powell, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Suzanne Newton, *A Place Between*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1986. 199 pp. \$11.95 ISBN 0-670-80778-8.

What does it feel like to be caught in the middle? To be caught between two important times of your life? To be unhappy with both your choices and not really understand why? In *A Place Between*, Suzanne Newton captures this feeling of being caught between childhood and adulthood, a feeling familiar to all adolescents.

The main character is Arden, the young girl from *An End to Perfect*, who thought that the small North Carolina town of Haverlee where she had always lived was perfect. When her father's



plant closes in Haverlee, he feels very fortunate to be transferred to Grierson, a much larger town where his mother lives. But Arden is desolate at the idea of moving away and leaving her best friend, Dorjo. The family moves in with Arden's grandmother, a move no one likes, and Arden begins eighth grade in a brand new school in Grierson. She decides from day one to hate it but in spite of herself manages to make one or two friends. She never allows herself to feel happy, though, and is continually miserable. All her thoughts center around getting back to Haverlee, and she makes her plans accordingly. She thinks perhaps she can live with Dorjo or maybe just camp out in her old house, which hasn't been sold yet. She feels an overwhelming sense of loss—of her old way of life, her old school, her old friends.

sometimes sad, sometimes humorous, sometimes frightening, but always interesting and relevant. Although *A Place Between* is written as a sequel to *An End to Perfect*, either book can be read alone as a well-written story. Told from Arden's point of view, the novel is certainly one that will appeal to adolescents and that will be welcome on the shelves of public and school libraries.

Diane Kessler, Durham County Schools.

Richard Walser and E. T. Malone, Jr. ***Literary North Carolina: A Historical Survey, Revised and Enlarged.*** Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1986. 182 pp. \$10.00. ISBN 0-86526-222-5.



**Keep your Mind in Shape**  
**Go for it! Use your library!**

But when she returns to Haverlee for a visit, she finds that things are really not the way she remembered them. The place that she and Dorjo used for a hideaway, for example, has been taken over and ruined by vagrants. Everything seems spoiled or smaller. When Arden comes back to Grierson, she tells her brother that she has been "wilderness wandering," just as he had been several years before. She tells him that their grandfather referred to being between where you had been and where you were going as "wilderness wandering," and that she has finally understood what he meant. She is ready to get on with the business of living in Grierson. But she will always be glad she grew up in Haverlee and will always want to go back to visit.

Like all of Suzanne Newton's other books, *A Place Between* deals with the maturing process in adolescence; in Newton's hands the process is

Sixteen years ago the first edition of Richard Walser's *Literary North Carolina* appeared in print. Since that time, new writers have gained statewide and national recognition, interest in poetry has surged, and another genre of writing, "Whodunits and Sci-Fi," has come into its own in North Carolina.

Those are some of the developments that are chronicled in the new version which, like its predecessor, surveys literary achievement in the state from the documented recordings of the earliest explorers to the contributions of contemporary authors and their schools of writing. Some attention is given to out-of-state authors who have spent time writing in North Carolina. Pulitzer prize winning poet Carolyn Kizer was poet-in-residence in Chapel Hill in the seventies, and Carson McCullers wrote *Reflections in a Golden Eye* while living in Fayetteville during the

forties.

Poet laureate Sam Ragan observes that as many as eighty good poets have been productive in this decade. Fred Chappell, James Applewhite, R. T. Smith, Michael McFee, and Lenard D. Moore are some of those whose work is described. Fiction writers who have arrived lately on the scene include T. R. Pearson, Lee Smith, Jill McCorkle, Clyde Edgerton, Gail Godwin, and Angela Davis Gardner. This edition discusses these new writers as well as later works of authors who were introduced in the earlier edition. The survey was published before the National Book Critics Circle announced its award to Reynolds Price for his most recent novel, *Kate Vaiden*, and before Doris Betts' *Heading West* had gone into production as a movie.

One of the most important features of the book is the chapter on publishing. Pulling together information that is scattered throughout the first edition and adding new data, Mr. Malone treats the development of publishing from the time of the colony's official printer, James Davis, to the recent rise of the small press, an example of which is Algonquin Books. Established in Chapel Hill in 1982 by literature professor Louis D. Rubin, Algonquin's policy has been to publish diversified literature, and its output has included works by 1984 Pulitzer Prize holder Vermont Royster and more than twenty other books of high quality. *Pembroke Magazine* at Pembroke State University and *Cold Mountain Review* which has been published at Boone since 1974 are two of a fold of some forty literary journals and other magazines that have been active in publishing North Caro-

lina writers in the eighties.

The richness of the first edition of this title has been preserved and enhanced by the addition of new scholarship and new features. One appendix lists recipients of North Carolina literary awards, and another provides a bibliography of selected anthologies and general works by North Carolinians. These will be particularly useful to the reference librarian in a public, school, or academic library, and the book is highly recommended for those kinds of collections. There is an excellent index. A generous number of illustrations amplify the text: reproductions of photographs, portraits, book jackets, playbills, newspaper clippings, and six drawings by Mr. Malone.

Mr. Walser is professor emeritus of English at North Carolina State University and is respected for his efforts to encourage and promote the talents of his fellow writers and for his own considerable output of writing and editing. One of his best known titles is *Nematodes in My Garden of Verse: A Little Book of Tar Heel Poems*, which he edited. His publishing includes books about Thomas Wolfe, Inglis Fletcher, Bernice Kelly Harris, and a biography of George Moses Horton entitled *The Black Poet*.

Mr. Malone is on the staff of the Historical Publications Section of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. A poet in his own right, he has to his credit two collections of his work: *The Cleared Place of Tara* and *The Tapestry Maker*.

Rebecca Ballentine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

