



Barbara Gushrowski, Compiler

“Stories can have sharp edges,” states Tim Tyson in the Author’s Notes of *Blood Done Sign My Name*. Thirty years after hearing a 10 year old playmate tell him that his father and brother beat and killed Henry Marrow in public, Tyson examines the racial conflict and riots of Oxford, NC in 1970 and the culture that allowed such an event to take place and that allowed Robert and Roger Teel to be acquitted of both murder and manslaughter charges. The tensions of racial conflict and desegregation in Oxford were the same as those being felt throughout North Carolina and the rest of the South. *Blood Done Sign My Name* explores the motivation behind Marrow’s death and the riots afterwards.

Tyson does more in his novel than just cover the racial conflict of Oxford. He embarks on a journey of self-discovery to see how racism affected both Oxford and himself. Tim Tyson is a son of the late twentieth century South, and Oxford is a typical North Carolina small town. His father was a liberal Methodist minister who supported desegregation and worked towards a peaceful solution in Oxford. Tyson grew up in Oxford and knew the participants in the killing and resulting riots. By talking to the African-Americans who supported non-violent methods to protest Marrow’s death and the African-Americans who used violence to force change, Tyson gains their perspectives on Marrow’s death, racism and segregation. Tyson also interviewed the Whites who took part in the killing and its investigation.

Timothy B. Tyson.

Blood Done Sign My Name.

New York: Crown Publishers, 2004.
355pp. \$24.00 ISBN 0-609-61058-9.

Tyson’s book is more than just a recounting of the events that spawned a riot 35 years ago, it is a book that makes the reader aware of the more subtle forms of racism that exist today. Tyson notes in the closing pages that “the enduring chasm of race is still with us, in some ways wider than ever.... White supremacy remains lethal, though most of its victims die more quietly than Henry Marrow.” The characteristics of the people described by Tyson, the white supremacists, and the moderates, liberals and radicals of both races still exist today. Readers will recognize people in their lives who embody these characteristics. The sharp edges of this story will cut but hopefully the cut will release the hidden prejudices of race so that healing can take place.

Tyson writes in a very accessible style. His firsthand knowledge of the racial, spiritual, and physical landscape freed the interviewees (Robert Teel, Mary Catherine Chavis, Ben Chavis, and others) to provide more information to him than they would to an unknown outsider. This insider knowledge allows Tyson to sketch characters that are more than their label of racist or militant, but people the reader can imagine, maybe even know, in their own hometown. Tyson also uses his father’s journals to get insights into the mood of the town and his father’s mind.

One problem with the *Blood Done Sign My Name* is there are no footnotes or bibliography. All of Tyson’s bibliographic information is included in a “Notes on Sources” chapter with a section for each chapter. While this lack of footnotes does not impact the readability of the text, it is a hindrance for researchers who may want to examine the original source material.

This book is recommended for all libraries.

Tim Tyson is a professor of African-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He earned his doctorate from Duke University. He has authored two other books. *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (1999) was the winner of the James Rayley Prize. Along with David S. Cecelski, Tyson co-authored *Democracy Betrayed: the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy*.

— Robert Arndt
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Bruce Strauch has plenty of talent in many areas, but this is his first foray into what one would call “serious fiction.” A lawyer and educator by training, he has published a number of scholarly pieces as well as some “pot boiler” fiction. These have little to do with his current work of fiction, however. Strauch is also an artist, and the cover of this book is graced with a glimpse of some of his strange yet amusing images.

This book needs reviewing because it is different. It’s a tightly-written series of short stories, all set in the contemporary South. There are some who would say that the South of the twenty-first century is nothing but a long stretch of mobile homes, condos, tract houses and McMansions full of people from somewhere else. They might say that the Old South is long gone. Bruce Strauch proves that this is certainly not the case – the South still has plenty of characters true to its origins.

Strauch’s characters are completely authentic in their language. This is Southern Gothic with a twist. There is humor, both light and dark, history, pathos, and the occasional supernatural plot. There is violence, but never is it gratuitous. Even if you are not drawn to such themes, if you love the South or are from the South, you will hear people you know in the characters Strauch has drawn. The characters simply jump off the page and you really can hear them!

Bruce Strauch.

Southern Psycho Tales.

Boone, NC : Parkway Publishers, Inc., 2004.
172pp. \$14.95 ISBN 1-887905-97-9

The setup for most of these stories is simple – characters are entangled in some way in some situation way beyond what they can handle and they try to find a way out of it. Sometimes the path taken leads them into something far worse, but in other cases they are redeemed. The human condition is explored in all its bizarre twists and turns.

Certain stories are unbelievable. The reader is asked to suspend reality in order to take a ride into the unknown. There is a great deal of imagination involved with where these tales go, and the reader must relax and go there without a fight. The language helps, since it is the patois of the region, making each tale believably unbelievable.

I learned years ago that Southern humor can be too dark for some tastes. One may find these stories delightfully crazy, and laugh-out-loud funny. Or not. Some people may find them deeply disturbing, or at least uncomfortably too close to home. Plots themes include corporate fraud, sorority rituals, obsessions with the Civil War, and others too complicated and creepy to try to explain (you have to read the book to understand what I mean!).

There are a number of classic themes pertaining to sex, drugs and religion that contemporary Southern tales usually include. I expected them, but Strauch’s peculiar interpretations make them seem new. The tall tale element is well utilized, and the regional spread is generous, from Northern Georgia through the Carolinas to Virginia in terms of locale. There are both nods to the Appalachian region as well as to the low country of South Carolina.

I lent this book to a friend of mine, a serious critic of literature, who politely promised me she would take a look. She returned the volume to me not only impressed, but she had also taken notes on the text. She only does this when she really is intrigued by a work.

This book is worth a look, and should be considered for adult collections in public and academic libraries where Southern regional fiction is in demand.

— Eleanor Cook
Appalachian State University

E. B. Alston and Toni Garrett (Illus.)

The Last Voyage of the DAN-D: Alex Takes a Voyage Into Fantasy With Captain Dan.

Timberlake, N.C.: Righter Pub., 2003.
47 p. : ill. \$6.99 ISBN 0974773506

7he *Last Voyage of the DAN-D* is about a nine-year-old-boy named Alex who ends up on an old fishing boat with an old fisherman named Captain Dan. They experience an excitement-filled journey to the Island of Boneless Chickens. *The Last Voyage of the DAN-D* is a wonderfully silly book that will capture many children’s imaginations and is definitely a book for those children ages nine and up who have a “silly bone.”

The author has written several novels and another book for children entitled, The Emerald Necklace and Other Stories.

This is a great book to share with your children and is recommended for all public libraries.

— Vicky L. Dial-Jacobs
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Additional Books of Interest

Florence Thomas with the Editors at McFarland. *The Art of Florence Thomas*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004. 144pp. \$45.00 ISBN 0-7864-1885-0.

Florence Thomas is a native of Grassy Creek in Ashe County, North Carolina. She began her painting career in 1930 as a student at the Moore Institute of Art, Science and Industry in Philadelphia. She also studied briefly with Carolyn Wyeth, sister of Andrew Wyeth, and has spent her life training and perfecting her art.

This book contains reproductions of 124 of Thomas's paintings accompanied by her personal commentaries on the works and a short biography of the artist. Most of the reproductions are of rural and pastoral scenes surrounding Grassy Creek which Ms. Thomas continues to paint to the present.

This book is recommended for all libraries.

Barbara Stone Perry (ed.). *North Carolina Pottery: The Collection of the Mint Museums*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 355pp. \$39.95 (Cloth) ISBN 0-8078-2908-0. \$24.95 (Paper) ISBN 0-8078-5574-X.

The Mint Museums boast the largest holding of North Carolina pottery in a public institution. Barbara Stone Perry, in her introduction, describes the scope of the Mint's collection as comprehensive. The collection includes masterworks by master potters, but also pieces that are valued for their rarity, type of decoration, or an unusual mark or signature rather than for their exceptional quality.

Essays on the pottery traditions in North Carolina written by Daisy Wade Bridges, former associate curator at the Mint Museum of Art and lifelong collector of North Carolina pottery; Charlotte V. Brown, director of the Gallery of Art and Design at NC State; Mark Hewitt, potter; and Charles G. Zug III, professor emeritus of English at UNC-Chapel Hill, provide a valuable introduction to pottery in general and to North Carolina in particular. These essays enhance the appreciation of the pottery viewed in the catalog that follows them.

Nearly 300 full-color plates depict 407 pottery pieces ranging from the whimsical to the sublime that are found in the collection. A short description accompanies each piece and includes details such as type of pottery, potter (if known), any marks found on the piece, size, and donor(s).

Interspersed through these descriptions are short biographical sketches of North Carolina potters, and brief histories of some of the potteries renowned in the state.

Barbara Stone Perry is curator of decorative arts at the Mint Museum of Art and has published numerous other works including: *American Ceramics: The Collection of Everson Museum of Art* and *American Art Pottery*.

This book would make an excellent addition to any library.

John B. Stephens. *Guidebook to Public Dispute Resolution in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: School of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004. 184 pp. \$45.00 ISBN 1-56011-457-6

The information in this book is directed to elected officials and state and local government employees who participate in most public dispute resolution actions. However, the information is also general enough and clearly written for anyone interested to learn about the resolving public disputes.

The author states the main purposes of the book are to assist public officials and concerned citizens in determining when a third-party negotiator or mediator can be helpful; understanding the benefits and limitations of mediators; informing about the ways mediators have been used on public issues; finding potential public dispute mediators; and understanding the ethical issues involved in the process of mediation.

The book contains nine case summaries on a variety of topics from land use to school student assignment. There is also a chapter on stakeholder processes and public participation in mediation. A series of Quick Guides can assist in determining if a third-party mediator is appropriate, how to interview candidates, a list of potential mediators throughout the state, and some ground rules that can be applied to the facilitator.

The author is a faculty member of the School of Government and coordinator of the Public Dispute Resolution Program at UNC at Chapel Hill. He is editor of *Popular Government*, and has co-authored several works including *Reaching for Higher Ground: Tools for Powerful Groups and Communities* and *School Funding Disputes: Mediate, Don't Litigate*.

This book is recommended for public, college, and university libraries.

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