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The Official Newsletter of the Friends of the Houston Cole Library

Fall 2011



## Friends of Houston Cole Library Welcome Author Ted M. Dunagan

Thursday, October 13, 2011 at 7 p.m.  
Houston Cole Library - Room 1103 B

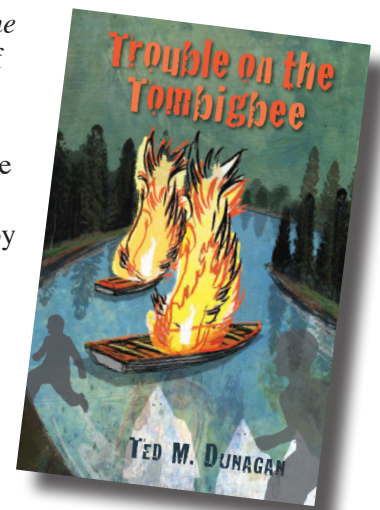
Jacksonville State University and the Friends of the Houston Cole Library will present author Ted M. Dunagan on Thursday, October 13 at 7 p.m. in Room 1103 B of the Houston Cole Library. The award winning author will speak on his three books about growing up in the rural south, near Grove Hill, Alabama. Dunagan has appeared previously at Jacksonville State University as part of the On the Brink Conference of Emerging Southern Writers. This event will coincide with the publication of the third book in his series that traces the friendship between twelve-year-old Ted Dillon, his fictional self, and Poudlum, a fictional black youngster based on Dunagan's real-life friend.

The titles in sequence are: *A Yellow Watermelon*, *Secret of the Satilfa*, and *Trouble on the Tombigbee*. The first two books have won numerous awards, including Georgia Author of the Year in the Young Adult category. Preachers, bootleggers, bank robbers, and questionable lawyers populate his suspenseful plots. The issue of civil rights for blacks appears as a recurrent theme as Ted and Poudlum integrate the cotton fields and promise they will one day eat ice cream together, despite the prejudices of the owner of the drug store. Those new to the South, or those who grew up here in more modern times, will be mesmerized by Dunagan's meticulous descriptions of cane syrup making, hog butchering, church gatherings, and the nitty-gritty existence of everyday life in 1948 South Alabama.

In addition to his novels, Dunagan writes features and columns for *The Monticello News* in Monticello, Georgia, where he lives with his wife.

Copies of Dunagan's books will be available for purchase and signing.

**\*\* THIS EVENT IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. \*\***  
Refreshments will be served.



About the photos: (top) Author Ted M. Dunagan; (bottom) The cover of Dunagan's new title, *Trouble on the Tombigbee*. (courtesy New South Books)

# Author and Educator Daphne Simpkins Presents on Alabama Native Nat King Cole

As part of JSU Friends of the Library's association with the Alabama Humanities Foundation, the Spring semester 2010 offered a Road Scholars program with the focus an intimate study of Nat King Cole, February 24, 2010. Daphne Simpkins was the speaker for this special event.

Simpkins dates her interest in the musician from her mother stressing his importance. She remembers that her mother did not issue very many orders in her traditional Southern family, but when Nat Cole was scheduled to appear on TV, she would stand up and say loudly, "Everyone be quiet. Nat King Cole is about to sing." Needless to say, the family listened, and in the moment of paying attention to an African-American give voice to popular songs and ballads, her Southern family - like families worldwide - heard the most intimate dreams and relationship human beings can have come to life in from an artist who was also black.

Accompanied by handouts that traced the legacy of Cole's achievement, Simpkins displayed her impressive knowledge of the



subject and engaged her audience with the achievements of the legendary artist. Especially informative were details of Nat King Cole being attacked in Birmingham in 1956. Although the attempt to kidnap Cole was quickly suppressed, the overt racism displayed caused Cole to refuse to perform in the South.

Daphne Simpkins teaches writing at University of Alabama, Montgomery. She has published hundreds of essays and short stories in a variety of periodicals nationwide and in Canada. She has written two books: *The Long Good Night*, a memoir about taking care of her father while he died from Alzheimer's, and *Nat King Cole: An Unforgettable Life of Music*, a children's book which she dedicated to two unforgettable mothers - hers and Nat Cole's.

The afternoon program enjoyed a good mix of students and community attendees. As with all Friends programs, refreshments and casual conversation afterwards highlighted the event. Nat King Cole's music served as background atmosphere before and after.

## Friends Mourn Board Member, Professor Emeritus and 'Answer Man,' Dr. George Whitesel



It was with great sadness that the Friends of the Houston Cole Library and Jacksonville State University said goodbye to valued Friends board member, professor emeritus and retired fine arts, communication and language librarian Dr. George Whitesel, who passed away at his home in Jacksonville on June 18 after a short illness. He was 74.

John Graham, dean of library services at Houston Cole Library,

remembered Dr. Whitesel as a man who served the university and the library for many years and who will be remembered as the "answer man" across campus and throughout the community. An Ohio native who held a Ph.D. in English from Michigan State University, Dr. Whitesel began his tenure at JSU on June 1, 1975. In addition to his duties at the Library, he sometimes taught literature classes. He was

awarded professor emeritus status upon his retirement in 2006. He was also active in the community, particularly the local theater. He was current president of the Jacksonville Arts Council and was an active member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville.

Services for Dr. Whitesel were Wednesday, June 29 at 10 a.m. at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville.

### Visit The Friends of the Library on the Web

Learn About Upcoming Programs and More!

[www.jsu.edu/library/friends/](http://www.jsu.edu/library/friends/)



**The Friends are on Facebook!**

[www.facebook.com/FriendsofHoustonColeLibrary](http://www.facebook.com/FriendsofHoustonColeLibrary)

### 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 call the Office of the Dean of Library Services, at 256-782-5255. Contact a Board Member if you have suggestions for next year's speaker.

Joanne Gates, chair  
Karen Gregg  
Hervey Folsom

Mary MacArgel  
Gloria Horton  
Angie Finley\*

\*Appointed to fill remainder of Dr. George Whitesel's term

## Glen Browder Speaks on Stealth Reconstruction

On May 17, 2010, Dr. Glen Browder, well known to the JSU and Jacksonville community as professor emeritus and former Congressman from the Third Congressional District, offered his insights on the initial efforts to assure that integration be achieved in a political climate that at times was hostile to such changes.

His latest book, *Stealth Reconstruction*, which he co-authored with Dr. Artemesia Stanberry of North Carolina Central University relates how a number of progressive-minded white politicians worked quietly with a number of black leaders and activists to reform Southern politics in the aftermath of the 1960s civil rights movement. Dr. Browder accompanied his presentation with a slide show that featured achievements locally, including those when he was Secretary of State. With Dr. Stanberry, he presented his book's results at an audience for the National archives in January of 2010. This was accompanied by his appearance on Washington Journal. Both

programs can be found at the video archive of the C-Span website. For the library event, Dr. Browder prepared a handout that tested and explained the authors' theoretical approach to the nature of a constructive political movement that included the "quiet, practical, biracial politics" that aimed to make a positive difference in the practical lives of people. Dr. Stanberry, now an assistant professor in Political Science at North Carolina Central University in Durham, worked on Congressman Browder's staff and has held other congressional staff positions.

This is Glen Browder's third book since retiring from Con-



gress. A record of his recent speaking engagements and next project, a memoir entitled *Professor-Politician: The Biography of Alabama Congressman Glen Browder* (co-written with journalist Geni Certain and forthcoming from New South books, can be found on Browder's web page, <http://www.futureofamericandemocracy.org/>.

Dr. Browder was at ease communicating his admittedly controversial theoretical framework for his progressive politics for he could explain how it was grounded in the autobiographical account of his years of public service. He allows that there is still work to be accomplished, noting, unfortunately that the climate of campaigning and of governing sometimes clash. He roots his optimism in the inclusive attitude that sees the benefits of government as a part of a solution to our most pressing problems. His book recalls that he consciously brushed off controversial subjects such as the Confederate flag dispute in order to stress the more urgent and real issues that contributed to policy (page 184). He also showed his influence in helping to form the Blue Dog Coalition among the House Democrats (188). He gave insights into the current campaign of Artur Davis and remarked on President Obama's efforts to forge a post-racial progressive politics.

The Browder collection of papers related to his Congressional service is housed at JSU Library. An electronic finding aid organized the collection at this web address: <http://www.jsu.edu/library/collections/browder.html>.



## Poet Beth Ann Fennelly Appears at Friends of Library Fall Event

Poet Beth Ann Fennelly, head of the creative writing program at University of Mississippi in Oxford, entertained the audience with an engaging reading / performance on November 9, 2010. Much of Ms. Fennelly's work is about discovering a regional southern culture after relocating to the south. A Chicago native and graduate of Notre Dame, Fennelly earned her MFA at the University of Arkansas in 1998. Her books include: *Unmentionables*, 2008; *Great with Child: Letters to a Young Mother*, 2006; *Tender Hooks*, 2004; *Open House*, 2002; and *A Different Kind of Hunger*, 1998. She is widely published in poetry journals, is a frequent contributor to *The Oxford American*, and is the recipient of numerous awards. She also has received recognition for writing about motherhood, as depicted in both her poetry and her acclaimed series of letters written to a former student as the younger woman anticipates the birth of her first child. *Great With Child*, translated into numerous languages, has been hailed as an intimate and heartfelt series of letters than reassure a young woman about her impending motherhood.

Interviewed by phone before the event by *Anniston Star* Arts Beat reporter and Friends Board member Hervey Folsom, Ms. Fennelly rang true to her promise that she would "recite rather than read" her poetry. From her very first poem, a mesmerizing rendition of "First Warm Day in a College Town" through her engagement with



the last book buyer requesting a signed copy, Ms. Fennelly captured the sense of what it means to live immersed in writing as automatic as breathing, the essence of one's life. She spoke of the many emotions of mothering, and included in her readings poems addressed to her daughter as if grown up. She arrived very expectant with her third child and had earlier in the year completed a Fulbright residency in Brazil. She is married to novelist Tom Franklin. (Both were attendees at JSU's On the Brink Conference on Emerging Southern Writers before being invited back to a Friends event. Franklin spoke at JSU in the fall of 2007 and he has since published the acclaimed *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*).

Dr. Joanne E. Gates of the English department, chair of the Friends board, introduced Ms. Fennelly and expressed her appreciation especially for the poems that found their genesis in Fennelly's research on real people-- the daughters of John Milton, the French impressionist painter, Berthe Morisot. She also spoke highly of Fennelly's achievement in her multi-part poem, *The Kudzu Chronicles*, which captures not only the essence of the invasive vine but its presence in the mind of the South. Section 12 of *The Kudzu Chronicles* contains Beth Ann Fennelly's tribute to William Faulkner, to whose Oxford, Mississippi grave everyone, Fennelly included, goes to leave a supplication.



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