

MONTHLY REPORT  
MONTH OF: August 1991

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5400 Ramsey Street  
Fayetteville, N.C. 28311-1499  
Phone (919) 488-7110

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PUBLIC INFORMATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bill Billings

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News Bureau Director

METHODIST COLLEGE TO HONOR LEE SMITH

FAYETTEVILLE, NC--Methodist College's 10th annual Southern Writers' Symposium, slated for Sept. 27-28, will examine the works of popular novelist and short story writer Lee Smith.

Dr. Sue Kimball, director of the college's 10th annual Southern Writers' Symposium, said of this year's honoree, "Lee Smith is better than good. Fair and Tender Ladies, which I see as a 'tour de force,' is a magnificent piece of writing."

Ms. Smith has written seven novels and two short story collections. A native of Grundy, Virginia, she wrote her first novel, The Last Day the Dogbushes Bloomed, while a student at Hollins College. That novel won her a fellowship from the Book of the Month Club.

Lee Smith's writing has won her numerous honors: two O'Henry Awards for short stories (1979, 80), the Sir Walter Raleigh Award (1984), and the North Carolina Award for Literature (1985). The Fellowship of Southern Writers recently presented her its first annual Chubb LifeAmerica Fiction Award in honor of Robert Penn Warren.

In addition to writing, Ms. Smith has worked as a journalist and teacher. Since 1981, she has taught creative writing at N.C. State University. She is currently a Fellow at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. The Chapel Hill resident is working on a novel about a country music duo--two sisters carrying on a family tradition.

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At a spring Fellowship of Southern Writers' conference in Chattanooga, Dr. Kimball revealed plans for the symposium, which is officially titled "Lee Smith, Storyteller". Ms. Smith received the ChubbLife America Fiction Award at the Chattanooga conference.

Dr. Kimball's call for papers on Lee Smith, issued last spring, generated a record 40 responses. A total of 23 papers will be read at the two-day event.

Several of the presenters are personally acquainted with Lee Smith. They include: Nancy Parrish (The College of William and Mary), Jill McCorkle (UNC), Dorothy Combs Hill (Georgetown U.), and Kay Byer (Appalachian State U.). "Two English professors -- John Calabro from West Point and Frances Kestler from St. John's University -- are coming just to introduce speakers," said Dr. Kimball.

Lee Yopp, director of the Fort Bragg Playhouse is working on a stage adaptation of Smith's novel Family Linen. Bo Thorp and Bob Bloodworth will be featured in the play, which will be staged Sept. 27 and 28 at 8:15 p.m. in Reeves Auditorium.

Several artists have already entered the juried art show and are preparing works based on Smith's writings. The show is scheduled for Sept. 28, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. in the Mallett-Rogers House. A First Prize of \$500 will be awarded. The entry deadline is August 15.

Special music will be provided at the Friday and Saturday dinners by the Methodist College Music Department. "Pop music composer Bruce Hornsby was inspired to write 'The Valley Road' and 'The Road Not Taken' after reading Lee Smith's Oral History," said Dr. Kimball. "One of those songs will be performed."

The opportunity to meet southern writers is an important part of the annual Symposium. Lee Smith will speak at the Friday dinner and will also attend the

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play, art show, and several other events. In the last four years, honorees Reynolds Price, Doris Betts, and John Ehle have all journeyed to Methodist.

"I hope Tar Heel residents will take advantage of this special event," said Dr. Kimball. "We can all learn greatly from writers like Lee Smith. Continuing education units will be offered for teachers and others who need them."

For more information about the Lee Smith symposium, contact Dr. Sue Laslie Kimball, professor of English at Methodist College, 5400 Ramsey Street, Fayetteville, NC 28311. She can be reached by phone at (919) 630-7025.

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LEE SMITH'S WRITINGS

The Last Day the Dogbushes Bloomed (novel), 1968

Something in the Wind (novel), 1971

Fancy Strut (novel), 1973

Black Mountain Breakdown (novel), 1980

Cakewalk (short stories), 1980

Oral History (novel), 1983

Family Linen (novel), 1985

Fair and Tender Ladies (novel), 1989

Me and My Baby View the Eclipse (short stories), 1990