

## Remembered Laughter

By Paul Porter

*Remarks delivered at the symposium, "Remembering Katherine Anne Porter," at Georgia State University, November 1990.*

So much has been written about Katherine Anne Porter's difficult life, her illnesses, creative frustrations, unhappy marriages and love affairs, not to mention her highly nervous temperament and contentiousness, that someone who never knew her might conclude that she was, yes, a beautiful lady with a beautiful talent, but cranky, gloomy. That would be wrong. Certainly I remember tears, lamentations, and anger, but also, and most often, I remember the joy she took in gaiety and fun, even silliness. She adored fun, and funny things. . . . in fact, she adored the funnies. She quoted Pogo in her speeches and remembered whole sequences of *Krazy Kat*. She also enjoyed comic writing and could recite passages from *the lives and times of archy and mehitabel* by don marquis. One of her favorite lines from that masterpiece, which I suppose can only be appreciated in context, was mehitabel's reply to an inquiry by a snooping friend, "WHAT kittens?" Another was the famous line from a Ring Lardner story, "Shut up, he explained."

While I was overseas during WWII, almost every letter from Aunt Katherine, besides often being funny itself, contained cartoons, comic strips, amusing news stories, items from the *New Yorker* magazine. Later when she

*Continued on page 2*

## Katherine Anne Porter and Sam Lawrence: A View from Beacon Hill

By Alexandra Subramanian

President, Katherine Anne Porter Society

During my visit to Boston for the 2007 American Literature Association conference, I had the pleasure of meeting Merloyd Lawrence in her home in the Beacon Hill neighborhood. I got in touch with Merloyd originally because she was married to Lawrence during the years between 1955 and 1962, which were crucial for Porter. At that time, Merloyd's husband was doing everything within his power to help Porter through the final stages of her painful journey to complete *Ship of Fools*. I was, of course, delighted when Merloyd agreed to answer my questions about her husband I had posed by email. Our communications led to our meeting in her home in May 2007.

I was reticent to contact Merloyd because I knew that she and Lawrence had divorced in 1984, but my fears were alleviated as soon as I had climbed up the steep granite steps leading to her black front door. A down-to-earth woman answered the door and invited me in. She looked around in her small kitchen for a vase for the flowers I had brought her. We then settled into her living room, which had seemingly remained the same for years: comfortable, casual, and unpretentious. Two large dogs tussled like toddlers and licked me, as our conversation strayed from one thing to another, until we settled into a conversation about Porter and Lawrence.

Black and white photos graced her mantle. Merloyd brought to my attention an old photo of Porter hugging Macy, Porter's four-year-old godchild. Soon after Porter had started to work with Lawrence at Atlantic-Little, Brown, Lawrence asked Porter to be godmother to his first child. Porter accepted, and from that early point in their relationship an almost familial connection was established between author and publisher. The photo was taken during Porter's visit to the Lawrences' rented summer cabin, just after she had handed in the full manuscript of *Ship of Fools*. Porter is dressed formally in a lovely robe; she gently hugs Macy, who sits on her lap in her bathing suit, smiling happily.

Porter loved her godchild. When Macy's brother Nicholas was born, she adored him, too, calling him her "best beau." She also loved to describe Merloyd's beauty and her ability to attract attention from all the men in a room. After visiting their family on vacation, Porter recalled

the delightful week-end in that old-timey log cabin by Abercrombie and Fitch; and the sight of those children really on their own territory being themselves and nobody else--that was a

*Continued on page 2*



*Katherine Anne Porter with her goddaughter Macy Lawrence at the Lawrences' cabin, August 1962. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.*

## Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter

From 1994 to 2008, the *Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society* was published at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, by the Katherine Anne Porter Society. Society membership inquiries should be directed to Beth Alvarez, Archives and Manuscripts, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, Maryland 20742, [alvarez@umd.edu](mailto:alvarez@umd.edu). Entries for the annual bibliographical essay on Porter should be addressed to Christine Hait, Department of English, Columbia College, Columbia, South Carolina 29203, [chrishait@colacoll.edu](mailto:chrishait@colacoll.edu). Articles, announcements, and comments for the society's Web site ([www.kaportersociety.org](http://www.kaportersociety.org)) should also be sent to Beth Alvarez.

Alexandra Subramanian is the President of the Katherine Anne Porter Society. Members of the Executive Committee are Beth Alvarez, Thomas Austenfeld (Université de Fribourg), Jerry Lee Findley (Case Western Reserve University), Christine Hait (Columbia College), Alexandra Subramanian, and Darlene Unrue (University of Nevada, Las Vegas).

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## Editor's Note

After fifteen issues dating from May 15, 1994, the *Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society* is moving into the twenty-first century. The next issue will be published on-line on the society's redesigned Web site, [www.kaportersociety.org](http://www.kaportersociety.org). The new Web site will debut in October to coincide with the publication of the Library of America volume *Katherine Anne Porter: Collected Stories and Other Writings*, edited by Darlene Unrue. Executive committee members have begun exploring the possibility of publishing a scholarly review devoted to Porter on-line in addition to the more informal newsletter. Please contact the editor, if you wish to continue receiving the newsletter in printed form.

## Remembered Laughter

*continued from page 1*

was in Europe, she sent me cartoons clipped from the French and Italian magazines and newspapers, as well as news stories which tickled her sense of the ridiculous. Because we shared a similar (some said an antic) sense of humor, she knew that I would know without her telling me just why she had sent me those particular items.

She liked to tell jokes and to hear them too; and she was a wonderful audience.

You couldn't ask for a more

satisfying reaction than her burst of husky laughter, which could last until tears came into her eyes and she would collapse back in her seat and gasp, "Oh my GOD, darling, how funny. . . ." To be sure, she was apt to have the same reaction to her own jokes; but they were funny, and she told them with all the mimicry, gestures, and exaggerated accents of a standup comedian.

When we went to the theater together, our choice of a play was often a comedy. She loved the high comedic style of the Lunts, of her cousin Lily Cahill, and of Laurence Olivier. She even managed a pretty good imitation of Olivier's comical walk in *The Critic*. But she seemed to enjoy almost as much the low comedy of Zero Mostel in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and other actors in knockabout farces.

Even all these years later, when I see some off-the-wall cartoon, or a particularly funny comic strip, or a great scenery-chewing performance such as Maggie Smith's in *Letting It Go*, I think of Aunt Katherine and how she would have loved it, and wish that she were here to laugh at it with me.



*Katherine Anne Porter, laughing, January 19, 1970. Photographed in her residence at 5910 West Chester Park Drive, College Park, Maryland, by Russell Lynes. Courtesy of the Estate of Russell Lynes. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter. Special Collections, University of Maryland*

## A View from Beacon Hill

*continued from page 1*

sight to remember lovingly all my days. . . . How becoming your life is to all of you, how gracefully you both carry family life. I am sure there is a secret, I even think I know at least partly what it is; something that one has or hasn't got, that can't be bought, begged, or borrowed—lucky You! (KAP to Seymour Lawrence, August 14, 1962)

Merloyd was amused at the way Porter had idealized her family life, including the non-existent "log cabin." She recalled that Porter and one other author had idealized her marriage and family, and that neither one knew much about the day-to-day realities of marriage and child-rearing. Their family life had been happy enough, she said, and of course the children were beautiful as Porter described them. Lawrence loved to talk about his children, and he was very proud of them. Not surprisingly, he was not at all involved with the day-to-day running of their lives.

I soon concluded that Merloyd and Lawrence had been better business than marital partners. In 1964, the couple established their own company, Seymour Lawrence, Inc. Merloyd translated from the French and edited non-fiction books under her own imprint Merloyd Lawrence Books, while Lawrence acquired new fiction and enjoyed the negotiating and promoting as well as the impresario role as a publisher. A friend once referred to the couple as like "Jack Spratt and his Wife" because they never crossed over into one another's territory. Merloyd recalled her past and shared her memories of her husband without bitterness. She is now happily remarried and has her own publishing company, Merloyd Lawrence, Inc.

*Continued on page 7*

## Indian Creek in Myth and Reality

By Darlene Harbour Unrue

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

*I am indebted to Walter Louis Robertson for information about Indian Creek and the Russell and Jones families. In the 1990s, an article in a Texas publication mentioned that I was writing a biography of Katherine Anne Porter. That prompted Walter Robertson, a graduate of Southern Methodist University and editor of the Dallas Morning News for twenty-five years, to send me a treasure trove of family histories and photographs as well as copies of land deeds, maps, clippings, and tax records.<sup>1</sup> Limitations of space did not allow use of all the material in my biography Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist (2005), but I am happy to be able to provide this summary for the KAP Society Newsletter. Walter Robertson supplied the photograph of Callie Jo Russell Koch that was first published in the biography and is reprinted with this article.]*

Katherine Anne Porter had no conscious memory of her first two years spent at Indian Creek, Texas, where she was born May 15, 1890. She left Indian Creek in 1892, several months after the death of her mother, and lived out the remainder of her childhood with her father, two sisters, and brother under the dominion of her paternal grandmother, Catharine Ann Skaggs Porter, who owned a remnant of a farm on Plum Creek, in Hays County, and a small house in nearby Kyle.<sup>2</sup> Katherine Anne Porter didn't return to Indian Creek until she was forty-six years old, having relied in the meantime on her considerable imagination and the memories of others to mentally paint an idealized picture of her birthplace. Her older sister, (Anna) Gay Porter Holloway, seems to have been the primary source of her knowledge about Indian Creek. "I carry so many pictures," Gay wrote in 1955, "some of them quite beautiful, that the rest of you know nothing of—one is of that place in Indian Creek, which was a place of beauty, as I remember. Between the house (not the one there now—ours was torn down when you were there) and Indian Creek was one of the most beautiful vineyards I ever saw, with great clusters of purple and white grapes. . . . Also there was a wonderful orchard, with peaches, pears, plums and great pecan trees on the creek. In the yard was a long row of red roses, a row of chinaberry trees, some cedars . . . [and] a white fence."<sup>3</sup>

Gay's mention of the Porter house that already had been torn down "when you were there" refers to the 1936 trip to Indian Creek Porter made with her father and her younger sister during her first visit in Texas after many years spent in Europe, Mexico, and other places. She had walked over the old Porter farm and talked with the two women who lived there, and she gathered pebbles from the creek. But she was careful not to disturb her idealized images of the Indian Creek of the past.

Gay's rosy picture of life at Indian Creek was only a very small part of the reality of the frontier community that lay at the southern edge of Brown County and was circumscribed by the west and east forks of the Colorado-River tributary called Indian Creek. According to local history, Indian Creek was named by William ("Bigfoot") Watson, a land surveyor, who led an assessing party into the southern



*Indian Creek Cemetery, Indian Creek, Texas, April, 1936. Mary Alice Jones Porter's grave is at left. KAP inscribed another photograph taken the same day, "We visited this grave on April 23, 1936. K.A." Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.*

part of Brown County in 1846. Two of the surveyors, who had split off to follow a wounded deer along the unnamed creek, encountered a wandering, solitary Delaware Indian, who told them that his companions had been killed by Comanches. When Wallace heard the story, he gave the forked stream the name "Indian Creek." It was nearly thirty years, however, before the area around Indian Creek was sufficiently settled to make a cohesive society possible. In 1875, Francis Harris opened a store and a post office, and, in 1876, community members, who numbered several hundred by then, founded a school in the pasture of Thomas McAden. By 1879 there was a second store, a cotton gin, and a blacksmith shop.<sup>4</sup>

In May of 1885 John Newton Jones, Katherine Anne Porter's maternal grandfather, sold his property in Seguin, a small town in Guadalupe County, Texas, and paid W. R. Johnstone and G. N. Dilworth \$1,280 for 640 acres at Indian Creek. He moved there with his two adult sons, T. Alonzo (Lon) Jones and George Melton Jones, and their families. His wife, Caroline Lee Frost Jones, was left behind in Seguin at a private home that took in mentally ill boarders. John Jones's decision to move to Indian Creek, a primitive community ten miles south of Brownwood, the county seat, is unexplained. But the reason for the move seems not to have been to escape the embarrassment or the demands of Caroline's illness, for she visited with the family at Indian Creek when her condition permitted, and her name appears among the founding members of Indian Creek's Oswalt Methodist Episcopal Church. Katherine Anne Porter's parents, Harrison Boone Porter and (Mary) Alice Jones Porter, married in 1883 and moved to Indian Creek in 1885, after the birth of their first child, Gay, and after John Jones offered them a free tenancy on his farm.

Gay's memories of the years between 1885 and 1892 are based partly on imagination, for she was still a child when she left with the rest of the family. Many of her recollections are images, flashes of family-life tableaux: their mother sitting in church in a blue and white

*Continued on page 4*

## Indian Creek in Myth and Reality

*continued from page 3*

gingham dress singing "Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land"; their father playing the violin; their mother baking corn cakes and making rag dolls for her daughters. But in addition to heartwarming scenes such as those, the years were marked with drought, economic struggle, range wars, and family losses that began with the sudden deaths in 1885 of George Melton Jones's wife, Louellah (who was Harrison's sister), and two young sons.

Those deaths were followed by that of John Jones, patriarch of the family, who died unexpectedly in 1888 at the age of fifty-five. A year after his estate was divided among his three children, Lon, George, and Alice, Lon bought out the third of the estate inherited by his brother. Three years later, however, both Lon and Alice died, and her third of the estate, according to law, was to be inherited by her children (at their majority), who numbered four at the time of her death. In addition to Gay and Katherine Anne, there were Harry Ray (later "Paul"), born in 1887, and Mary Alice ("Baby"), born only two months before Alice's death in 1892. A second son, John, born in 1889, died shortly before Katherine Anne's birth in 1890.

In 1893, in order to sell Alice's portion of the estate on behalf of her underage children, Harrison formally appealed to the Hays County probate court to be named guardian of his and Alice's children. The filed petition reveals that he secured the signature of his mother-in-law, Caroline Jones, who after the deaths of Lon and Alice was committed to the Southwestern Lunatic Asylum, in San Antonio, by Lon's widow, Sallie, and that his Indian Creek neighbor and friend William Harley Russell acted as bondsman, or advocate, for the legal request.<sup>5</sup>

William Harley Russell, the brother of Walter Robertson's great-grandfather, was born in 1844 in Haywood County, North Carolina, a farming community populated with hard-working farmers such as the Russell family and prosperous, educated slave-holding Cherokee families such as the Teague family. After serving in the Confederate Army from 1861 to 1864, in 1866 William married Caroline Marinda Teague Kirkpatrick, the sister of his company commander, John Teague. Marinda, ten years older than William, had been married to James Maderion Kirkpatrick, with whom she had four children, and was either widowed or divorced. William and Marinda had one child in North Carolina before they moved to Texas, where they had two more. Their only daughter (Marinda had two daughters in her first marriage) was Callie Jo, born in 1878 at Indian Creek.

The Russells and the Porters were close friends, with William and Marinda likely providing support and advice especially after the death of John Jones in 1888. William Russell's 345-acre farm, about four miles by wagon from the Porters' farm, was among the largest in Indian Creek, and, like John Jones, he was widely admired and respected. It is understandable that, without his father-in-law on whom to depend, Harrison would turn to William, just as Alice probably turned to Marinda, who was the same age as her institutionalized mother and shared the same first name, "Caroline." As acknowledgement of kindnesses and friendship, when Harrison and Alice's second daughter was born in 1890, they named her "Callie Russell," the "Callie" in honor of William and Marinda's pretty,

twelve-year-old daughter, Callie Jo, and the "Russell" in honor of the Russell family. Harrison and Alice's fourth child would be known as "Callie" until she was an adolescent, when she gradually changed her name to "Katherine Anne" to honor the grandmother who reared her.

The Russell family—William and Marinda and their seven children—remained in Indian Creek barely a year after Alice's death and Harrison's subsequent departure with his children to Kyle. In

1893, William and Marinda moved into Brownwood, and, in 1895, they moved, for reasons that aren't clear, with their adult children to Checotah, Oklahoma (Indian territory), where Marinda died in 1901; Callie Jo married R. J. Koch in 1898, had four children, and died in 1943; and William remarried in 1908 and died in 1928. There is no evidence that Harrison Porter communicated with any of the Russells after they left Texas.

It is impossible to know how much Katherine Anne Porter knew about the Russell family or, for that matter, about Indian Creek. But if it is true that she plied her father with questions about her past ("I had to know everything," she said<sup>6</sup>) and, if he was forthcoming, she might well have known more about Indian Creek and the Russell family than she admitted. Although she described the person for whom she was named as "a dear friend of my mother in her girlhood,"<sup>7</sup> she must have known that Callie Jo was only twelve years old at the time of her birth and christening. Had she also known how lovely Callie Jo was as a young woman and how accomplished she was as a horsewoman all her life, she might have been more willing to claim the woman whose namesake she was.

She must have known that Callie Jo's Cherokee mother was named either "Marinda" or "Miranda," as some persons called her and as at least twenty-percent of relevant legal documents recorded it.<sup>8</sup> She might not have known that Cherokee families in nineteenth-century North Carolina were well educated and that Marinda Teague was no exception. We can speculate, however, that little Callie Porter heard "Miranda" if her father mentioned "Marinda," and when the writer Katherine Anne Porter many years later chose a name for the most



*Callie Jo Russell, youngest daughter of William and Marinda Russell, neighbors of KAP's parents at Indian Creek. Callie Jo was twelve when KAP was named for her in 1890. Photograph courtesy of R. J. Koch, Callie Jo Russell's son. Collection of Darlene Harbour Unrue.*

autobiographical of her fictional characters, she selected the name of the mother of the girl for whom she was named, the strong mother and quintessential woman who seemed emblematic of the blooming and fruitful earth Gay described at Indian Creek.

As for Indian Creek, Katherine Anne Porter preferred her idealized images to mundane reality. When she was almost seventy years old, despite numerous opportunities for learning the history of her birthplace (as well as the full story of her mother's family), she admitted that her "memories" of Indian Creek were romanticized. Describing the sounds of spring in Lexington, Virginia, when she was at Washington & Lee as writer-in-residence, she wrote a friend, "[T]here are mourning doves in the leafless trees, that sound always makes me frightfully homesick for something I never knew and cannot describe, or a place very far off or that maybe does not exist at all."<sup>9</sup>

## NOTES

1 Information about the Russell family can be found in Walter Louis Robertson's book, *Four Trails to Texas, Our Direct Descendants from Lawson Robertson (1774-1848), David Russell 1 (1747-1797), Wilhelm Heinrich Pellman (1832-1901), Cornelius Comegys 1 (1630-1708): With Glances at Some of the In-Law Families: Carson, Dixon, Dunn, Gore, and Stevens* (Malakoff, TX: privately printed, 1996). Another coincidental connection between Walter Robertson and Katherine Anne Porter is the fact that when Katherine Anne Porter's grandfather, Asbury Duval Porter, arrived in Texas in 1857 he bought 160 acres of land along Plum Creek from Walter Robertson's great-grandfather Shadrach Dixon.

2 See the first three chapters ("Indian Creek," "Catharine Ann Skaggs Porter," and "The Fiery Furnace") of my *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), pp. 3-28.

3 Gay Porter Holloway to Katherine Anne Porter, 14 December 1955, Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park.

4 T. R. Havins, *Something About Brown: A History of Brown County, Texas* (Brownwood: privately published, 1958), p. 47.

5 Application for letters of guardianship, Hays County, Texas, Probate Court Records, Book E, May 14, 1893, page 25. Harrison was granted guardianship, but records of the sale of the land have not yet been located.

6 Enrique Hank Lopez, *Conversations with Katherine Anne Porter: Refugee from Indian Creek* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), p. 4.

7 Katherine Anne Porter to Leo Porter, 11 November 1964, Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park. Quoted with permission of Barbara



Harrison Boone Porter, Indian Creek, Texas, April 1936, taken during a visit made with KAP and her sister Mary Alice Hillendahl. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

Thompson Davis, trustee of the literary estate of Katherine Anne Porter, and the University of Maryland Libraries.

8 Her name is engraved "Marinda" on her tombstone in Checotah, Oklahoma.

9 Katherine Anne Porter to Jordan Pecile, 9 March 1959, Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park. Quoted with permission of Barbara Thompson Davis, trustee of the literary estate of Katherine Anne Porter, and the University of Maryland Libraries.

# The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2007

By Christine H. Hait, Columbia College, Columbia, South Carolina

Although no full-length studies of Porter in the form of books or dissertations appear, the following essay features a variety of shorter scholarly works of interest to Porter scholars. The essay brings readers up to date by including scholarship from the last few years that did not make it into previous bibliographical essays.

## Chapters in Books

Like me, you may have missed the chapters on Porter in Rachel Cohen's *A Chance Meeting: Intertwined Lives of American Writers and Artists, 1854-1967*, published by Random House in 2004. In thirty-six chapters of "imaginative nonfiction," Cohen tells the connected stories of thirty writers and artists. Two of the chapters feature Porter. Chapter 17, "Willa Cather and Edward Steichen and Katherine Anne Porter," begins with Cather having her photograph taken by Edward Steichen in 1926 and ends with Porter reflecting on Cather's photograph in her essay on Cather. Porter's essay ends with her wish that she had met Cather, and Cohen imagines such a meeting. In Chapter 22, "Hart Crane and Katherine Anne Porter," Cohen tells the familiar story of the writers' stormy relationship during their time in Mexico. She contrasts the brevity of Crane's life and Porter's longevity: "Mexico was a kind of catapult. It shot them both forward . . . He retreated, forever, into his legend and his death. She became a famous southern lady and refused to look back."

David Madden's *Touching the Web of Southern Novelists*, published by the University of Tennessee Press in 2006, includes a chapter on Porter, "Katherine Anne Porter's 'Flowering Judas': The Charged Image of Laura and Braggioni," which originally appeared in *Studies in Short Fiction* in 1970. Madden uses the term "charged image" to refer to "the power of the dominant, controlling image in a fictional work of art." The controlling image of "Flowering Judas" is Laura and Braggioni sitting opposite each other. "This central, most potent image is the hub, and all other images spoke out from it . . ." Madden recalls teaching the story to students by presenting the story as a series of tableaux, illustrating his point that the "energy of the story is transmitted in the kinetic juxtaposition of one charged image to another."

A much-awaited publication this past year was Gary Ciuba's *Desire, Violence, and Divinity in Modern Southern Fiction: Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Cormac McCarthy, Walker Percy*, published by Louisiana State University Press. His Porter chapter's title, "Given only me for model: Porter's Miranda Stories and the Dilemmas of Mimetic Desire," quotes from a letter Porter wrote to photographer George Platt Lynes praising his photographs of her. Ciuba applies the theories of René Girard to the Miranda stories and looks closely at the roles of models and disciples and the act of mimesis in the stories. Ciuba's long chapter is divided into three sections: Models of Desire in "The Old Order," Desire and Death in "Old Mortality," and Riding Toward Death in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" and Writing Beyond "The Grave." According to Ciuba, women in Miranda's life "vividly model [her] very dilemma with modeling." "Each . . . anticipates Miranda's struggle between imitating the ideals of the old order and striving to get beyond the risks of such mimesis." Ciuba highlights Miranda's development in "The Grave," arguing that in the story she "escape[s]

from desire and death by becoming, like Porter herself, an artificer of memory."

## Articles

According to Catherine Himmelwright, many critics misread the last line of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider": "Now there would be time for everything." In "Crossing Over: Katherine Anne Porter's 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider' as Urban Western," *Mississippi Quarterly* 58.4 (2005): 719-736, Himmelwright argues that this line is not ironic. At the end of the story, Miranda has achieved a hard-won freedom "from the bonds not only of a restrictive South but also of the bonds of a sexist West." Himmelwright applies the myth of the Western hero to Miranda, cataloguing the various challenges she faces and overcomes. At the end of the story, "Miranda begins her new life stoic and hardened and capable of continuing on until she meets death again. Miranda has become a Western hero."

Chandra Wells analyzes interracial female friendships in Porter's published and unpublished writings in "Unable to imagine getting on without each other: Porter's Fictions of Interracial Female Friendship," *Mississippi Quarterly* 58.4 (2005): 761-784. Wells explores the complex relationship between Sophia Jane and Nannie in The Old Order stories and points out "an important silence in Porter's text": Nannie's silence when it comes to expressing any resentment towards or resistance of Sophia Jane's power over her. In her unpublished manuscripts of "The Man in the Tree," Porter struggled with a scene in which Nannie expresses anger towards the white family she has served; however, Porter was never able to complete the story. Wells argues that Porter also had difficulty portraying contemporary female interracial friendships, as the fragments "Lila" and "Celestine/The Heart's Deep Choice" demonstrate. Ultimately, Porter's great achievement is her re-envisioning of "the Southern past from a female viewpoint," and her presentation of an interracial female friendship is part of that project.

Although Dallas, Texas, is not known for its place in literary history, a number of authors, including Porter, have connections to the city. In "Literary Connections: Mark Twain, Katherine Anne Porter, William A. Owens, and Tennessee Williams," published in *Legacies* (a publication of the Dallas County Heritage Society) in Spring 2007, Darwin Payne argues that Porter's stay in Dallas, though brief, was eventful. He examines contemporary city directories and archived stories from the *Dallas Morning News* in order to track her activities in Dallas, and he locates a number of photographs of her that appeared in the newspaper during her stay. Porter's first appearance in the Dallas directory in 1915 is as Mrs. Katherine Koontz. In the 1916 directory she appears as Miss Katherine Porter, and her occupation is listed as bookkeeper. Although Porter moved to Denver in 1918, a Katherine Porter continues to be listed in the Dallas directories through 1921. Payne speculates that Porter "may have been seeking to maintain ties to Dallas as she traveled and came back occasionally for temporary jobs that have escaped the notice of her biographers."

This essay does not usually include scholarship concerning the various literary figures surrounding Porter; however, two articles about one of her husbands, Albert Erskine, will interest Porter scholars and are worth noting. In 2005, Joseph Blotner remembered his editor in "Albert Erskine Partly Seen," *Sewanee Review* 113.1

(Winter 2005): 139-161. The long essay serves as a short biography of Erskine and provides information about Erskine's childhood, his working relationship and friendship with Robert Penn Warren, his impressive career at Random House, and his later years. Erskine edited Blotner's biography of William Faulkner, and Blotner recounts their working relationship, making a case for Erskine as "the best editor since Maxwell Perkins." He also discusses in detail Erskine's three marriages, including his marriage to Porter. More recently, James A. Grimshaw, Jr., in "Robert Penn Warren and Albert Erskine, Jr.: A Sixty-Year Friendship," *South Carolina Review* 39.2 (Spring 2007): 110-128, provides another glimpse of Erskine. He uses letters to

Erskine from Robert Penn Warren in a private collection of Erskine's papers and letters from Erskine to Warren in the Warren Papers at Yale's Beinecke Library. Through excerpts from the letters, a picture of a sixty-year friendship emerges. Grimshaw makes the following observation of interest to Porter scholars: "The Erskine portrayed in Porter's letters is not the Erskine revealed in the correspondence between Warren and him."

Please send information on any additions that need to be made to this essay to me at [chrishait@colacoll.edu](mailto:chrishait@colacoll.edu) so that I may include the information in next year's essay.

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## A View from Beacon Hill

*continued from page 2*

Through reading the correspondence between Porter and Lawrence, I had come to know Lawrence as a publisher who had both an uncanny understanding of his difficult client and an inexhaustible well of patience and good will toward her. I asked Merloyd if his faith in Porter had ever wavered during his long struggle to acquire the full manuscript; she said no, that his faith in Porter, which was one with his determination, remained strong throughout. One cannot help but be impressed with Lawrence, who in his late twenties showed himself capable of intuiting the deepest needs of one of the most difficult writers in the publishing business. Porter, after all, had spent twenty-five years at Harcourt, Brace NOT delivering to her publishers the novel that they had demanded. Lawrence succeeded brilliantly where others had failed.

But the information that I had gathered over time, from my Porter colleagues and others, led me to understand that Porter's ideal publisher was quite a bit more complex and human than the man I had grown to admire while reading the letters he had written to Porter over a period of more than twenty years. Lawrence may have shown Porter unfailing loyalty, patience, courtesy, even love, but to those he did not hold dear he could on occasion be abrupt, volatile, and deprecating. Merloyd did not discuss any particular, dramatic episodes, but she did characterize him as a man of his time with a romantic sense of publishing as a gentlemanly career and very British style of dress. He also attended raging alcoholic lunches with his colleagues, after which he would return to the office in an undiplomatic frame of mind. In

his compromised state, disputes ignited. It was this habit, perhaps, that made working within a corporate setting of a publishing house difficult for him. His nature was passionate. Merloyd added that his loyalties, as well as his rivalries and grudges, were lasting.

Lawrence got along beautifully with Porter because he understood her need for highly personal business relationships. Lawrence also understood Porter's revulsion when she was treated as an asset or property. Merloyd pointed out that Lawrence was more apt to become frustrated with new trends in publishing and the ways houses were being run "more and more by accountants and money managers," than he was to lose patience with his favorite client's occasional prima donna behavior. Lawrence and Porter were bonded, always, by their staunch belief in the human element in publishing. Together, they resisted those trends, and together they made an extraordinary journey to bring *Ship of Fools* to the reading public.

My visit with Merloyd Lawrence was both comforting and exhilarating. To meet a persona in a drama that I'd known exclusively through archived letters was thrilling. And to know that she was genial, informative, and willing to help renewed my enthusiasm for my Porter projects. She both confirmed many of my beliefs about Lawrence and shed new light on a man who was a great deal more complex than I had originally thought. I now know Seymour Lawrence from my work in the archives, from colleagues who had met him, and through his one-time wife. I will always remember and be grateful for the perfect spring day, when I walked from the Westin Copley, through the city to one of my favorite neighborhoods in Boston, to meet Merloyd Lawrence.

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## Porter's "The Martyr" on Scribbling Women

"The Martyr," Katherine Anne Porter's short story first published in 1923, was included in the *Scribbling Women* project in 2007. A production of the Public Media Foundation at Boston's Northeastern University, *Scribbling Women* dramatizes stories by American women writers for national radio broadcast. It provides classroom resources for teaching the rich tradition of American literature by women and an opportunity for teachers, students, library patrons, visually impaired listeners, and a general audience to learn about and enjoy work written by significant American women writers. Currently there

are fifteen highly produced thirty-minute dramatizations accessible on the project's Web site: <http://www.scribblingwomen.org>. In addition to "The Martyr," there are dramatizations of short stories by Willa Cather, Rebecca Harding Davis, Harriet Jacobs, Caroline Kirkland, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Ellen Glasgow, Zora Neale Hurston, Kate Chopin, Julia Peterkin, Sarah Orne Jewett, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Susan Glaspell. "The Martyr" was dramatized by Eliza Anderson and directed by Martin Jenkins; Laura Furman and Beth Alvarez served as Humanities Advisors. The Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Summerlee Foundation, and Humanities Texas funded the program.

## Porter Activities at the University of Maryland Libraries

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

This report on the activities at the University of Maryland Libraries covers the period between November 2006 and May 2008. During this period, telephone, mail, and e-mail inquiries were received from Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. I also communicated with individuals from Australia, Austria, China, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Libraries supplied 994 Porter or Porter-related photocopies to meet researcher demand and provided prints or digital surrogates of eight photographs. Elisabeth Cohen Browning, a graduate student in the College of Information Studies, completed a complete overhaul of the Literary Manuscripts Web pages on the Libraries' Web site as an independent study project. Most notably the revisions created a virtual tour of the Katherine Anne Porter Room (See <http://www.lib.umd.edu/litms/kaproom/kaproom00.html>.)

Another important contribution was the arrangement and description of the Glenway Wescott Collection completed by Graduate Assistant Lara D'Agaro in Spring 2008. Isabel Bayley, Literary Trustee for the Estate of Katherine Anne Porter, deposited Glenway Wescott's collection of Katherine Anne Porter materials at the University of Maryland Libraries in 1984 and formally donated it to the University of Maryland Libraries in 1992. In 1994, W. Hewitt Bayley, Isabel Bayley's widower, donated the Glenway Wescott and Monroe Wheeler correspondence with W. Somerset Maugham, Alan Searle, Wallace Stevens, Robin Maugham, and Nelson Rockefeller to the Libraries with his wife's papers. The Wescott Collection includes four versions of the manuscript for the never-completed edition of the letters of Porter and her friends. The book, tentatively titled *Letters to a Circle of Friends 1933-1962: Thirty Years of Friendship*, was originally to include correspondence from Porter, Wescott, Monroe Wheeler, Barbara Harrison Wescott, George Platt Lynes, and Russell Lynes.

The Wescott collection spans the period from 1931 to 1977. There are drafts of the planned edition of Porter's correspondence as well as notes, research materials, outlines, and other materials related to the project. It also includes originals and copies of correspondence exchanged between Katherine Anne Porter, Glenway Wescott, Monroe Wheeler, Barbara Harrison Wescott, Russell Lynes, George Platt Lynes, William Humphrey, Marianne Moore, W. Somerset Maugham, Robin Maugham, Wallace Stevens, Alan Searle, Eugene Pressly, Albert Erskine, Jr., Nelson Rockefeller, Harold Ross, and William R. Ross. In the near future, the finding aid for the collection will be mounted on ArchivesUM (<http://www.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/>), the on-line database that provides access to archival and manuscript collections at the University of Maryland Libraries.

The Libraries' acquisitions in this nineteen-month period included the purchase of Porter's April 13, 1974, letter to Simon Blow. Porter's letter is a response to Blow's of February 19, 1974, in which he had



Beth Alvarez at KAP's grave, Indian Creek Cemetery, Indian Creek, Texas, May 19, 2007. Photograph by Roy Alvarez.

enclosed a copy of his interview with her that had been published in the London *Guardian* on February 16, 1974. The Libraries also benefited from the generosity of Clark Dobson, Jane DeMouy, and Bill and Fern Wilkins. Dr. Dobson, who was an important friend to Porter late in her life, donated Porter's copies of Robert Penn Warren's *Katherine Anne Porter: A Collection of Critical Essays* inscribed by Warren; James Joyce's *Giacomo Joyce*; Iris Origo's *Images and Shadows: Part of a Life*; and the Franklin Library edition of *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*. He also donated his personal copies of *The Never-Ending Wrong*, *My Chinese Marriage*, and *Noon Wine*. Dr. DeMouy, whose monograph on Porter was published in 1983, was with Porter when she died on September 18, 1982. Her donation included Porter's annotated copies of *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and copies of *The Days Before* inscribed to Porter by Glenway Wescott and Pauline, Baronne de Rothschild's *The Irrational Journey* inscribed by Rothschild. This last enclosed Rothschild's December 12, 1967, letter to Porter, which has been incorporated into Porter's papers. Bill and Fern Wilkins's donation consists of one linear foot of papers relating to Katherine Anne Porter, including nine letters from Porter to one or the other of the Wilkensens dating between December 12, 1969, and January 2, 1977.

There were 393 visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter Room the sixty-three Monday, Thursday, and Saturday afternoons the room was open to the public in 2007-2008. Freddy Baer, Shirley Bauer, and Maria Walsh all served as docents through May 2008. Regrettably, Beverly Lewoc, Joan Phelan, and Betty Warner resigned in December 2007, February 2007, and December 2006, each having served many years. Thanks largely to the efforts of Shirley Bauer, three new docents began serving in the 2007-2008 academic year, Nancy Pond, Pamela Gregory, and Susan Moger. Visitors to the Porter Room from on-campus groups during the year included graduate students from the College of Information Studies, an English undergraduate class, a group from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, the staff and vendors of the Prange Collection, and visitors from the Institute for Global Chinese Affairs. A Literary Washington tour group sponsored by the Smithsonian Associates also visited on a Saturday in April 2007.

About fifty individuals visited the Porter Room during our ninth

all-campus open house on April 28, 2007. Activities were once again held in the Porter Room during the day. Docent Freddy Baer and her husband Herb's group, the Saturday Morning Quartet, performed a program of early music as well as two pieces from *Katherine Anne Porter's French Song-Book*. Colleagues Doug McElrath, Jennie Levine, Rachel Kassman, Gretchen Gueguen, Rebecca Wilson, Anne Turkos, Lauren Brown, and I read from the work of Maryland Poets Laureate. I offered tours of the Porter Room at specifically designated times that attracted approximately twenty-five individuals.

On April 27, 2008, the University of Maryland campus hosted the tenth Maryland Day, all-campus open house. Once again my tours



Baynard House, Auburndale, Florida, April 2008. Clark Dobson and Beth Alvarez are visible in the mirror over the mantle. Photograph by Beth Alvarez.

of the Porter Room proved popular—approximately forty individuals dropped by during the times set aside for that activity. The other 2008 Porter Room activities focused on children, specifically children's books by Maryland authors or set in Maryland. The activities included the reading of *The Story of Ferdinand* in English and Spanish by Susanna Van Sant and Kristy Escolaro. Anne Turkos read *Hello Testudo*, and Niko Wilson, Jennie Levine, Valerie Vanden Bossche, Lara D'Agaro, Susanna Van Sant, Anne Turkos, Malissa Ruffner, Liz McAllister, Rebecca Wilson, Anna Doorenbos, and I staged a reading of *Chadwick the Crab*. Local writers Karen Lange and Mary Amato gave presentations on their works—*1607: A New Look at Jamestown* and *Please Write in This Book*.

In Spring 2007, the Libraries set out to establish an endowment to generate annual earnings to enhance our Porter holdings and make them widely available for scholarship. Our first goal for the endowment is \$50,000. Thanks to the support of members of the Society and that of the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust, an excellent beginning of \$25,000 was garnered.

Highlights of my activities since November 2006 include a pilgrimage to the Indian Creek Cemetery in May 2007 and a visit

with Clark Dobson in Lakeland and Auburndale, Florida, in April 2008. My husband and I drove to the cemetery on May 19, 2007, stopping in the town of Early for a bouquet to leave at the grave. Paul Porter's map and directions were perfectly accurate, but we were a bit skeptical when had not located it after five miles on the unmarked farm road. However, at about seven miles in, we located the well maintained cemetery. There were yellow wildflowers blooming on the graves of KAP and her mother. It was interesting to see the graves of the relatives on KAP's mother's side as well as that of Harrison's sister Louellah. Though remote, it is a beautiful and peaceful spot.

My colleague University Archivist Anne Turkos and I visited Clark Dobson on April 7, 2008. He greeted us at his beautiful home in Lakeland and showed us some of the interesting things he has collected over the years. Together we examined his Katherine Anne Porter books, and I identified five items that he subsequently donated to the Libraries. Dr. Dobson then drove us to Auburndale, his hometown, and gave us a tour of the Baynard House, one of the oldest structures in the town, which has been restored through the volunteer work of over 200 students from Auburndale High School. A member of the board of the Friends of the Baynard House, Dr. Dobson is very active on it and other civic organizations of the town. We lunched at Auburndale's Magnolia Tea Room, and, afterward, he took us on a driving tour of Auburndale. It was a thoroughly delightful visit.

Anyone who has questions concerning the Porter Room or the Libraries' Porter holdings should not hesitate to contact me, Curator of Literary Manuscripts, Archives and Manuscripts, Hornbake Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, 301-405-9298, [alvarez@umd.edu](mailto:alvarez@umd.edu). To locate the Katherine Anne Porter resources on the Libraries' Web site, begin at <http://www.lib.umd.edu/litmss/holdings.html#kap> and follow the appropriate links.



Participants after the staged reading of *Chadwick the Crab*, Katherine Anne Porter Room, Hornbake Library, April 27, 2008.

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## In Memoriam

Three women with connections to Katherine Anne Porter died since the last issue of the *Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter* was published in December 2006: Tillie Olsen, Nancy Tate Wood, and Fern Wilkins.

Tillie Olsen, whose short stories, books, and essays depicted the struggles of women and working-class people, died January 1, 2007, in Oakland, California. A daughter of immigrants and a working mother with little time to write, Olsen drew from her personal experiences to create a small but influential body of work. Tillie Lerner was born on January 14, 1912, on a tenant farm in Nebraska. She was the second of six children of Samuel and Ida Lerner, Jewish immigrants from Russia, socialists whose political and social beliefs heavily influenced Olsen. During the Depression, she began work as an activist for social and labor causes, joining the Young Communist League and organizing packinghouse workers in Kansas and Nebraska. She contracted pleurisy and tuberculosis working in a factory, and while recovering began her first book, *Yonnondio: From the Thirties*. Olsen returned to issues of feminism and social struggle throughout her work, publishing a nonfiction book, *Silences*, in 1978, an examination of the impediments that writers face because of sex, race, or social class. Porter wrote Seymour Lawrence, who published *Silences*, that she "loved" and "admired" it. Porter's subsequent admiring letter to Olsen prompted a response in which she thanked Porter for the model and inspiration she had provided—"a lifeline. Always, picking up and re-reading you, even against the sense of the, for me, unattainable, your writing kindles mine" (Tillie Olsen to KAP, undated, Papers of Katherine Anne Porter).

Nancy Tate Wood, of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, died on March 29, 2007. The only child of poet Allen Tate and his first wife, the novelist Caroline Gordon, Wood spent her childhood in Kentucky, New York, Paris, and Tennessee. She attended St. Mary's School in Sewanee and, in 1944, wed Percy Hoxie Wood. After the war, the couple lived in Memphis while Mr. Wood completed medical school. They then settled in Princeton, where they raised their four children. Ardently committed to the peace movement during the Vietnam War, she worked as a fundraiser for Senator Eugene J. McCarthy during his bid for the presidency in 1968 and ran as his vice-presidential candidate in 1976. After the Woods retired to San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, they continued their famous southern hospitality, opening a guest house for foreign travelers. In Mexico, Mrs. Wood pursued her love for horses, riding into the mountains almost every day, and established the Chiapas chapter of the national environmental protection organization, Pro Natura, dedicated to the preservation of indigenous species and wilderness. As the child of two of Porter's important friends of the 1920s and 1930s, Wood developed a warm relationship with Porter during her childhood. In a letter to Porter, Wood wrote that "you are one of the major inhabitants of the time when I was a child" (Nancy Tate Wood to KAP, January 14, 1963, Papers of Katherine Anne Porter). Porter responded that Wood was "a very important person" in her life and recounted her recollections of their interactions in the 1920s and 1930s, especially her "delightful company and the days at your home in Ben Folly" (KAP to Nancy Tate Wood, March 5, 1963, Papers of Katherine Anne Porter).

Fern Wilkins died April 22, 2008, at the Columbia, Maryland,



KAP and Nancy Tate, Benfolly, Clarksville, Tennessee, August 1937. KAP inscribed this photograph, "K.A.P., Nancy Tate, about 12, at Benfolly, Summer 1937 with our lapful of kittens. Nancy was a dear love, my favorite child from two years until grown." Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

home she shared with William R. Wilkins, her husband of nearly sixty years. After graduation from Humboldt State College in Arcata, California, Fern Stahl married her college sweetheart, and they embarked on their adventures occasioned by Bill's career in the U. S. Navy. Their two children, David, born in 1954, and Robin, born in 1957, enjoyed the travel and various residences resulting from their father's years in the navy. That service took the family to Hawaii; the Philippines; Monterey, California, for language school; and then to Turkey and the South of France. In the 1960s, Bill was posted to Maryland, where he ended his Navy career. About that time, Fern began her own career as a Montessori teacher.

Bill, Fern, and their daughter Robin met Porter in early November 1968, after the funeral of David, who had been killed in an automobile accident on Halloween night. Fern's cousin, Robert Beach, who was a member of the University of Maryland's University Relations staff and had driven with the Wilkens to the funeral, made a stop at Porter's home in the Spring Valley section of Washington, DC, on the return trip to Maryland from the funeral. Porter invited Bill, Fern, and Robin into her home and served them lunch. From this kind gesture, a warm friendship grew that lasted for virtually all of Porter's remaining life.

## Katherine Anne Porter Society Activities at the 2008 American Literature Association Conference

On Friday, May 23, 2008, Jerry Findley, Case Western Reserve University, chaired the Katherine Anne Porter session at the 2008 ALA Conference in San Francisco, California. Entitled "Innocence and Experience in the Stories of Katherine Anne Porter," the session featured three speakers. Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland, presented "fools of life, . . . fugitives from death" in Katherine Anne Porter's "Holiday." Kellie Warren, Tulane University, presented "The Ethnographic-Participant Observer as Narrator: Ethics and Memory in Katherine Anne Porter." The final paper by Alexandra Subramanian, Independent Scholar, was "Magic: Porter Breaks the Spell of her Publishing Commitments."

The society's business meeting took place after the session had concluded.

Executive Committee members Beth Alvarez, Darlene Unrue, Thomas Austenfeld, and Jerry Findley were present. Darlene Unrue gave the



*Johanna Sieber (partially obscured), Thomas Austenfeld, and Darlene Unrue, ALA Conference, San Francisco, California, May 23, 2008. Photograph by Roy Alvarez.*



*Jerry Findley, Beth Alvarez, Kellie Warren, and Alexandra Subramanian, participants in the KAP session at the ALA Conference in San Francisco, California, May 23, 2008. Photograph by Roy Alvarez.*

financial report, and she expressed gratitude to David Vlazny for his generous donations in 2007 and previously. Beth Alvarez reported that the society's bank account will be moved from the UNLV Foundation to the University of Maryland Foundation, perhaps by the beginning of the new academic year. Beth Alvarez is also working on the last hardcopy issue of the newsletter. Other business discussed included the redesign of the Katherine Anne Porter Web site, which will be up and running by October 2008.

We were fortunate this year to have the presence and support of David Vlazny and Dave Clingerman. One of the founding members of the society, Johanna Sieber also attended the session and the business meeting. She travelled from Vienna to the conference. Our conversations about Porter and other topics were greatly enriched by these valued friends of the Katherine Anne Porter Society.

## PEN American Center Porter Prize

The establishment of the PEN/Katherine Anne Porter First Amendment Award, sponsored by the Katherine Anne Porter Foundation, was announced by President Francine Prose at the PEN American Center in November 2007. This \$10,000 prize, honoring a United States citizen or resident who has fought to safeguard the First Amendment's right to freedom of expression as it applies to the written word, will be conferred annually. The Porter Award succeeds the PEN/Newman's Own First Amendment Award, which concluded a thirteen-year run in 2006. During that time, PEN recognized the efforts of schoolteachers, librarians, booksellers, journalists, school administrators, prison inmates, and government translators who challenged attempts to censor or suppress literature or written materials. Recipients came from throughout the United States, often small towns or communities.

Laura Berg received the inaugural prize at PEN's Annual Gala on April 28, 2008, at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. An Albuquerque Veterans Administration psychiatric nurse, Berg faced a sedition investigation after the September 2005 publication of her letter to the editor of the local weekly paper *The Alibi*. The letter criticized the Bush Administration's handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster and the Iraq War. Within days of the letter's appearance, her office computer was seized, and the VA

began its investigation into possible charges of sedition. Berg's union representative confirmed that the letter had been sent to the FBI for investigation as well. When New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman learned of Berg's situation, he called on Veterans Affairs Secretary James Nicholson to investigate the VA's actions and the ACLU of New Mexico began working on her behalf. Berg pressed for a public apology from the VA, and, in March 2006, Berg received an admission from a top official that it had been wrong for the agency to accuse her of sedition. She also received a private apology from her boss. The admission, which was made public by the ACLU of New Mexico, came in a letter dated March 14, 2006, from Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson to Senator Bingaman. While vindicated of the sedition charges, Berg continues to speak out and advocates a written policy at the VA that clarifies the First Amendment right to freedom of speech for all employees.

The PEN American Center is the largest of the 141 centers of International PEN, the world's oldest human rights organization and the oldest international literary organization. The Freedom to Write Program of the PEN American Center works to protect the freedom of the written word wherever it is imperiled. It defends writers and journalists from all over the world who are imprisoned, threatened, persecuted, or attacked in the course of carrying out their profession and seeks to preserve and expand free expression in the United States.

## 2008 American Academy of Arts and Letters Katherine Anne Porter Prize

John Edgar Wideman was awarded the Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature by the American Academy of Arts and Letters at the Academy's annual Ceremonial in New York City on May 21, 2008. The biennial award in the amount of \$20,000 was established by the Literary Trust of Katherine Anne Porter. It recognizes "a prose writer whose achievements and dedication to the literary profession have been demonstrated, and for whom the award will provide a gift of time and some relief from secular obligations." The first recipient was Lynn Freed in 2002; succeeding awardees were Nicholson Baker and Arturo Vivante. The members of the Academy's 2008 literature awards committee included Mary Gordon, Allan Gurganus, A. R. Gurney, Edward Hoagland, Charles Simic, Jane Smiley, Rosanna Warren, and Edmund White.

The Ceremonial citation for Wideman noted that he was "a champion athlete" who "has also brought to his writing his great strength and skill and suppleness. Celebrated as a novelist, short story writer, memoirist and travel writer, he is as down-to-earth as he is urbane, as compassionate in his treatment of individuals as he is wise and humane in his approach to other nations. He has explored the dark themes of poverty and violence, but he has also celebrated the joys of love, intellectual endeavor and family loyalty. He is one of our most accomplished writers working at the height of his powers."

Currently John Edgar Wideman is Asa Messer Professor and Professor of Africana Studies and English at Brown University. His

other awards and honors include the O. Henry Award, the American Book Award for Fiction, the Lannan Literary Fellowship for Fiction, and a MacArthur Fellowship. He was the first individual to win the Pen/Faulkner Award for Fiction twice. His articles on Malcolm X, Spike Lee, Denzel Washington, Michael Jordan, Emmett Till, and Thelonius Monk have appeared in *New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *Esquire*, *Emerge*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. Monographic publications by Wideman include fifteen novels, four collections of short stories, and three autobiographical works. His most recent work, the novel *Fanon*, was published in February 2008. In it, Wideman weaves fiction, biography, and memoir to evoke the life and message of French philosopher, psychiatrist, and political activist Frantz Fanon. Lee Siegel's April 27, 2008, *New York Times* review of the novel characterized it as "thrilling, important . . . by turns eloquent, crude, despairing and heartbrokenly hopeful."

The Academy's exhibition of work by newly elected members and recipients of honors and awards was on display at its New York City galleries on Audubon Terrace from May 21 to June 15, 2008. The Wideman materials displayed included handwritten and typed drafts of "Les Blancs" as well as copies of *A Glance Away* (1967), *Reuben* (1987), *Fever* (1989), *Damballah* (1998), *Hoop Roots* (2003), *The Island Martinique* (2003), *God's Gym* (2005), and *Philadelphia Fire* (2005).

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## Porter in Great Texas Women Exhibit

The Gallery of Great Texas Women, an exhibit honoring the accomplishments, sacrifices, and contributions of women in Texas from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century, was formally unveiled on April 12, 2007, at the University of Texas at Austin. Katherine Anne Porter is among the forty-six noteworthy Texas women celebrated in the the Kinsolving Residence Hall exhibit. The project was completed by the Institute of Texan Cultures at the University of Texas at San Antonio, a center for

the interpretation of subjects relating to the history and culture of Texas. Open to the general public, the exhibit was mounted in this all-female residence hall to inspire students, faculty, staff, and visitors to the university. The Porter display features the iconic 1932 George Platt Lynes photograph of Porter, a line drawing of a ship, and biographical text. The related Gallery of Great Texas Women Web site (<http://www.utexas.edu/gtw/>) brings together resources including biographies, essays, articles, personal accounts, and other information on more than 1,000 great Texas women.

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## 2007 and 2008 KAP Fiction Prizes at the University of Maryland

The winners of the annual graduate student poetry and fiction competitions sponsored by the Creative Writing Program in English at the University of Maryland read from their works on May 9, 2007, at Ulrich Recital Hall in the Tawes Fine Arts Building. Amy Hempel served as judge for the Katherine Anne Porter Fiction Prize. Willie Davis won the award for his story "Tyrannosaurus." Honorable mention awards were to Charlotte Cline for "Cowboy Chronicle" and

to Ken Weaver for "The Fourth Tap."

The 2008 award program took place on May 7, 2008, in the Special Events Room in McKeldin Library. Stacey D'Erasmio served as judge for the Katherine Anne Porter Fiction Prize. Tamar Jacobs won the award for her story "Watering African Violets." Honorable mention awards were to Basit Chaudhry for "A Binary Star System" and to Brandon Thomas for "Alone at My Kitchen Table."

The Porter Prize was established with an endowment from the Literary Trust of the Estate of Katherine Anne Porter during the tenure of the late Isabel Bayley.

## Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center News

The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center at 508 Center Street in Kyle, Texas, serves as a venue for readings and talks by visiting writers; a museum; and a home for writers-in-residence. During the 2006-2007 academic year Ron Carlson, Charles Baxter, C. D. Wright, Forrest Gander, Eleanor Wilner, Percival Everett, Carole Maso, Yiyun Li, and Catherine Barnett gave readings at the center. In 2007-2008, the readers included U. S. Poet Laureate Charles Simic; National Book Award winners Tim O'Brien and Robert Stone; as well as John Gallaher, Bret Anthony Johnston, and Mary Gaitskill. The reading series is supported by the generosity of the Burdine Johnson Foundation.

Texas State's MFA program publishes an on-line literary journal, *Front Porch* (<http://www.frontporchjournal.com>), which includes fiction, poetry, reviews, and nonfiction by emerging and established authors. Video of readings and Q&A sessions by distinguished

writers who visit the KAP Literary Center is available and regularly updated on the *Front Porch* Web site. Videos of KAP Literary Center appearances include those of Charles Baxter, Ron Carlson, Percival Everett, Bret Anthony Johnston, Yiyun Li, Carole Maso, Tom O'Brien, and Eleanor Wilner.

The Writer-in-Residence at the KAP House is Michael Noll. Noll is a graduate of Texas State University's MFA program. Funded by a grant from Curt Englehorn's "Angel" Foundation, the Writer-in-Residence lives in the house and acts as curator of the museum. The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center is open to visitors and school groups by appointment. To arrange a visit, call (512) 268-6637.

Updated Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center information appears at <http://www.english.txstate.edu/kap/>. Inquiries concerning Texas State's MFA in Creative Writing can be made through the program's Web site (<http://mfa.english.txstate.edu/>), via email at [mfinearts@txstate.edu](mailto:mfinearts@txstate.edu), or by phone at (512) 245-7681.

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## Leaders in their Field: Katherine Anne Porter School

By Yana Bland, Ph. D., Superintendent, KAP School

The Katherine Anne Porter School's All-in Blues Band banished the blues produced by a week of state exams on May 2, 2008. The band performed as part of a student-led and totally student-organized event that raised money for a music room at KAPS. From 6 to 10 pm, KAPS's musicians played in an intriguing variety of combinations and riffs, interspersed by comedy, solos and duets of astounding quality. The grand acoustics in the 10,000 square foot open space at the center of the school building, surrounded by a fascinating art display on a musical theme and the wavy-walled classrooms, contributed to the creative atmosphere enjoyed by young and old this special evening.

As the annual Talent Show held on Katherine Anne Porter's May 15 birthday approached, there were feverish student preparations. The organizers, Jessica and Nick, collaborated with students in the after-school 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Program this year.

It is the student ownership of KAPS that gives it such a dynamic, progressive quality. The balance is unique: a dedicated, talented faculty; an open-minded and hardworking administration; exceptional parent participation; strong community support; and a student population that strives to be ahead of its time, as Katherine Anne Porter, herself, succeeded in being.

Senior and junior students experienced a sneak preview of *At the Death House Door*, a documentary following the career of Reverend Carroll Pickett. Pickett served fifteen years as the death house chaplain, presiding over 95 executions, at Huntsville, Texas. Executions in the United States for 2007 totaled 42, Texas accounted for 62% of the total. Currently there are 371 people on death row in Texas, 41% are African American and 27% are Hispanic. This is a subject about which every citizen should become fully informed.

Katherine Anne Porter's awareness of the horror and injustice of executions is evident in many of her writings and her fearless opposition to the 1927 killing of the two immigrant anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

In 2008, the Katherine Anne Porter School honored thirty-four graduates. We also celebrated the successes of KAPS's alumni as they complete college courses. Among them, Derrick Hiebert-Flamm graduated from George Washington University Summa cum Laude with a 3.90 GPA, placing him in the top 2% of all current GW students and at the head of the Geography Department! All transitions are challenging, but we feel confident that KAPS students will all be open-minded critical thinkers and many will be, like Katherine Anne Porter, leaders in their field.

The Katherine Anne Porter School is a free, accredited public charter school in the Texas Hill Country with a focus on learning, nurturing individual interests, and enhancing community responsibilities. In small classes using an integrated and practical approach, students are encouraged to become lifelong learners and to achieve an accredited high school diploma. Founded in 1998 by the former board members of the Katherine Anne Porter Museum, the Katherine Anne Porter School is a charter school located in Wimberley, Texas. The school was founded to provide an open and free environment not only for the students, but for the staff as well. KAPS seeks to provide the best education possible with a focus on smaller classes and more individual attention for every student. The school is located at 515 FM 2325, Wimberley, Texas; the mailing address is PO Box 2053, Wimberley, TX 78676; telephone, 512-847-6867; fax, 512-847-0737; website, [www.kapschool.org](http://www.kapschool.org).

## Call for Papers for the 2009 American Literature Association Conference

The Katherine Anne Porter Session at the twentieth annual American Literature Association conference will be chaired by Darlene Unrue, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The topic for the session will be "The Transformation of Autobiography into Art." Please send proposals of 250 words to Professor Unrue at Department of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154-5011. Proposals may also be sent by e-mail to unrue@unlv.nevada.edu. The deadline for submissions is December 15, 2008.

The Society encourages submissions by newcomers and by established scholars of all ranks. Reading time for papers should be no more than twenty minutes. According to the rules established by

the American Literature Association, those submitting abstracts for one session may not submit abstracts for other sessions in the same year. E-mail submissions are encouraged. With the abstract, please include home and office phone numbers, mailing address, and e-mail address. Also specify if you will require the use of any equipment.

The conference will be held at the Westin Copley Place, 10 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts, May 21-24, 2009. Details of the conference and information about hotel reservations will appear on the Web site of the American Literature Association ([www.americanliterature.org](http://www.americanliterature.org)).

## Call For Papers:

### *Journal of Texas Women Writers*

*Journal of Texas Women Writers* (JoTWW) is a new, online, peer-reviewed, biannual journal dedicated to the study of Texas women writers. JoTWW will publish scholarly articles about the lives and texts of women writers from Texas and/or women writers who have lived for significant periods in Texas, as well as reviews of critical and biographical studies that include Texas women writers. Issues will be published online in spring and fall.

JoTWW will focus both on well-known Texas women writers, such as Katherine Anne Porter, Sandra Cisneros, and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, as well as lesser-known writers, such as Dorothy Scarborough, Jane Gilmore Rushing, Naomi Shihab Nye, and others. JoTWW will also include articles about texts by non-Texas women writers that are set in—or in some way related to—Texas. Moreover, JoTWW will feature studies of Texas women's unpublished personal writings (journals, letters, etc.) that are of historical and cultural interest.

#### Call for Submissions:

*Journal of Texas Women Writers* invites submissions for Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 2008. All submissions should be previously unpublished and should follow the *MLA Style Manual*, 6th edition, 2003. Articles should be approximately 3,000-7,000 words, but shorter or longer pieces may be considered. Reviews should not exceed 1,000 words. To submit online and to get more information, visit JoTWW's website: <http://journals.tdl.org/JTexwomenwrit>

#### Deadline:

October 15, 2008 (The Spring 2009 issue deadline is March 15, 2009.)

#### Contact Information:

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## Katherine Anne Porter Society Activities at the 2007 American Literature Association Conference

On Saturday, May 26, 2007, Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland, chaired the Katherine Anne Porter session at the 2007 ALA Conference in Boston, Massachusetts. Entitled "Porter, War, and Politics," the session featured four papers. Jerry Findley, Indiana University, presented "Millennial Change: Historicizing the Political Movements of the Twentieth Century." "Jeffersonian-Democrat Hackles: Katherine Anne Porter and the Hollywood Witchhunt" was the subject of the paper of Richard Pickering, University of Connecticut. The paper of Christine Grogan, University of South Florida, was "A Reading of 'That Tree': Katherine Anne Porter as Expatriate." The final paper by Janis Stout, Texas A & M University, was "Porter in a World That Kept On Falling."

The society's business meeting also took place on May 26. All of the Executive Committee members were present: President Alexandra Subramanian, Darlene Unrue, Thomas Austenfeld, Christine Hait, Jerry Findley, and Beth Alvarez. The balance in the society's account in the UNLV Foundation on May 24, 2007, was \$3,510.58; revenue for the fiscal year on that date was \$957.00. Expenditures totalled \$476.50, \$370.65 for the layout and printing of the newsletter and \$105.85 for mailing the newsletter to members. President



*Jerry Findley, Janis Stout, Richard Pickering, and Christine Grogan, participants in the KAP session at the ALA Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, May 26, 2007. Photograph by Thomas Austenfeld.*

Subramanian expressed the society's gratitude to society member David Vlazny for his generous donation. Jerry Findley announced that he would accept papers on any topic related to Katherine Anne Porter for the society's session he will chair at the 2008 American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco. Other business discussed included future publication of the newsletter on the society's Web site, redesign of the Web site, and eventual on-line publication of a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, tentatively titled the "Katherine Anne Porter Review."

## Yaddo Exhibit at New York Public Library

"Yaddo: Making American Culture" will open at Gottesman Hall in the New York Public Library's Fifth Avenue Humanities and Social Sciences Library on October 24, 2008. The exhibition, which will remain on display until February 15, 2009, will explore the multiple ways that Yaddo as an institution, and the artists it supported, were ultimately anything but sequestered from the shifting social, political, and economic crises that marked the twentieth century. The displayed materials will draw from records of the Corporation of Yaddo that were acquired by the NYPL in 1999 through a gift of the Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund, from collections throughout the NYPL, as well as from Yaddo's own holdings. Mounted in a nearly 6,400 square foot space, the exhibition will use letters, papers, photographs, rare books, art works (paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture), furniture, ephemera, and sound and multimedia components, to explore the multiple ways that Yaddo as an institution, and the artists it supported, were never quite able to retreat from the wider world and found themselves responding to the shifting social, political, and economic crises that marked the twentieth century. Both an exhibition companion volume, with essays by the exhibition curator, scholars, and artists, and a Web site will be produced to coincide with the October opening.

The University of Maryland Libraries is one of as many as twenty institutions that will mount a collaborating show. The display in the Katherine Anne Porter Room will focus on Porter's long association with Yaddo and will feature correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, and other items from her papers. The exhibit will open to coincide with the October opening in New York City and will remain on exhibit through May 2009.



*KAP and Ole Possum, North Farm, Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York, Winter 1941. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.*