

Katherine Anne Porter in Recent Biography of William Niven

By Beth Alvarez,
University of Maryland

An interesting chapter of my Katherine Anne Porter life began on September 22, 1994. On that date, Roland H. Harrison, a grandson of William Niven, telephoned me in my office at McKeldin Library. William Niven served as the model for Givens in Katherine Anne Porter's "María Concepción" as well as the central figure in her sketch "The Charmed Life." Dr. Harrison, a retired research chemist, was at the beginning of the work that resulted in the publication of *Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods*, a biography of his grandfather published by Texas Tech University Press in 1999. The instigator of this project was Professor Robert S. Wicks of the University of Miami in Oxford, Ohio. Professor Wicks had become fascinated with William Niven while still a student in high school; his enthusiasm led him to the Niven family and to involving family members in the biography project. The ostensible reason for Dr. Harrison's first call was to ask me if I would be willing to attempt to identify one of the

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Successful Projects Underway at the Katherine Anne Porter House

In early April, the restoration of the childhood home of KAP in Kyle, Texas, was expected to be complete within one or two weeks. While many citizens as well as the Austin Community Foundation, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Clayton Fund, and others have contributed to the purchase of the house, Bill Johnson's Burdine Johnson Foundation made the extensive and historically accurate restoration, and the lovely landscaping that is to be added over the next month, possible. Mr. Johnson, a local rancher and philanthropist, has done much for the community and was the first recipient of the Preservationist of the Year Award by a local Texas preservation group, Preservation Associates. The foundation's gifts for the project have totaled approximately \$300,000 over

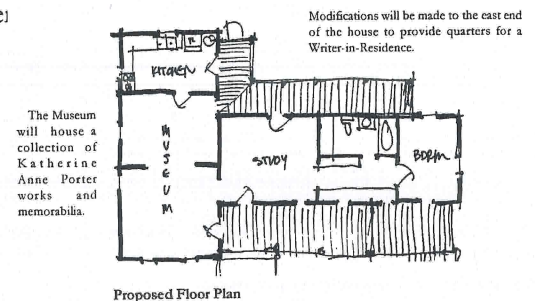
The house is being leased for 99 years to Southwest Texas State University for \$1 a year; Preservation Associates will continue to own it. This is an important cooperative project between the university and the local community. Once complete, those involved will seek to get the house listed in the National Register of Historic Places, which may in help in realizing KAP's longing "to be read, and remembered" (*Collected Stories*, p. vi).

Kurt Englehorn, nephew of KAP's childhood friend Erna Schlemmer, donated \$600,000 to fund the writer-in-residence program. Funding for these operations will commence on June 1. A graduate of the SWTSU MFA program, Melissa Falcon, will live at the house during the first year in order to open the home to sightseers and members of the community. The students in Professor Cynthia Brandimarte's SWTSU graduate program in Public History are formulating an interpretative program for the house. In addition, SWTSU Deans Ann Marie Ellis and Mike Willoughby have just extended additional funding for the KAP house to be used as a center for teaching K-12 students creative writing over the summer.

Visits to the house will begin in September, by which time furnishings should be in place. In addition, Barnes & Noble has contributed

over 400 hardcover books to date for the KAP library and will produce a KAP broadside in a limited edition of 150. These will be for sale to collectors by Fall 2000.

Finally, the first year of visiting writers will be quite impressive. Pulitzer Prize winner Annie



Proposed Floor Plan



Elevation of museum and outbuilding by Mary Giberson; floor plan of museum by Emily Little Architects; both courtesy of Southwest Texas State University.

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Katherine Anne Porter Society

The Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society is published at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, by the Katherine Anne Porter Society, with the sponsorship of the UNLV English Department. Membership inquiries and renewals should be directed to Beth Alvarez, Archives and Manuscripts, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, ra60@umail.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. Articles, announcements and comments for the newsletter should also be sent to Beth Alvarez.

The officers of the Katherine Anne Porter Society are Beth Alvarez, President and Newsletter Editor; Darlene Unrue, Past President; and Janis Stout, Secretary. Members of the Executive Committee are Beth Alvarez, Thomas Austenfeld (North Georgia College & State University), Virginia Spencer Carr (Georgia State University), Christine Hait (Columbia College), John Edward Hardy (emeritus, University of Illinois at Chicago), George Hendrick (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Janis Stout, and Darlene Unrue.

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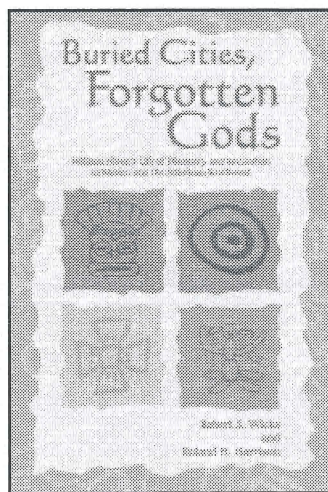
KAP Society Membership

Katherine Anne Porter Society annual dues are \$10 a year. Checks made payable to KAP Society, UNLV Foundation, should be mailed to Beth Alvarez, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. The KAP Society has tax exempt status through the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Foundation, the fundraising arm of UNLV.

Katherine Anne Porter in Recent Biography of William Niven

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women in some photographs taken at William Niven's dig at Atzacapotzalco, north of Mexico City, in the early 1920s. Professor Wicks had alerted him that the woman in question might be Katherine Anne Porter. Dr. Harrison and other family members had a treasure trove of original glass plate negatives made by his grandfather documenting his life and work in Mexico. Both Dr. Harrison and I became very excited during the telephone call, and he promised to send me copies of three prints he had managed to make, even though they were somewhat blurry. In my September 28 reply to the letter in which Dr. Harrison enclosed three photographic prints, I expressed my elation because the "woman in the beret/soft hat in the three photographs" was "definitely Katherine Anne Porter." As far as I know, these are the only photographs documenting the visits she describes as making to Atzacapotzalco in 1920-1921. I suspected that "the more formally dressed people in the group shot may be some of the people who attended the Pan American Federation of Labor conference in Mexico City in January 1921." Both Dr. Harrison and I tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to identify others in this group photograph. I also suspected that the Indian woman and one of the Indian men who appear in the photographs may have served as models for the title character in "María Concepción" and for Juan, her husband.



In his October 26, 1994, letter to me, Dr. Harrison enclosed four photographs of William Niven, Katherine Anne Porter, and various other people, which he numbered 1 through 4. Three of these duplicated the prints he had previously sent me. All were contact printed from William Niven's glass negatives and were much clearer than the prints that I had previously received. One of these prints, which he numbered 2, illustrates this article. His letter asked me specific questions both about possible identities of the individuals in the prints as well as questions that arose as he continued his research. Our correspondence continued to be fairly frequent through 1995. Dr. Harrison's letters often included interesting information about his grandfather, much of which appears in the biography. I learned that the curio store and museum he operated in Mexico City had been housed in two locations: Calle Gante 12 from 1910 to 1917 and at Calle San Juan de Letran from about 1918 to the late 1920s. Also, "contemporary crafts" such as "picture frames, feather pictures, lace work, blankets, leather work, etc." were purchased "from many places and people" to be sold in the shop. I was amazed when he told me that he had over 300 black and white slides of William Niven and his activities in Mexico dating from 1890 to 1929. As I am a frequent visitor to Cuernavaca, he also recounted interesting stories of the Niven family's life in that city in the early years of the twentieth century. In fact, during my 1995 visit, I was able to locate and photograph the still existing grave of Dr. Harrison's great-grandmother Emma Sumner Purcell as well as the building that housed the Hotel Bella Vista. His uncle William Albert Niven managed this hotel before and during the 1910 Mexican Revolution. When I asked Dr. Harrison if William Niven had been involved in any way with the Mexican Revolution, he sent me an interesting account of the travails of the Niven family during that dangerous period, including his mother's evacuation from Tampico by the U. S. Navy. In another letter, he revealed that his grandfather "gave slide shows along with a lecture entitled 'Life in Mexico' beginning in November 1895 and continuing to March 1897 in New York. He used lantern slides and also had some stereopticon pictures" (RHH to RMA, 23 June 1995).

One of Dr. Harrison's early letters described his own Mexican adventure:

When I read the story of "A Study of Two Americas" by Stuart Chase and the "Outline of Mexican Popular Arts and Crafts" by KAP, it took me back 50 years. My uncles, aunts, and cousins showed me most of the places and things mentioned and more, too, as a high school graduation gift. I ate lunch in a boat at Xochimilco, climbed the pyramid of the Sun, prayed at Guadalupe and downtown Cathedrals, viewed the skeletons in the basement of the church at San Angel, attended a bull fight, toured the Desierto de los Leones, shopped at the Mercado and Weston's, ate at Sanborn's on D-Day, toured Chapultepec Castle, danced at the Churubusco Country Club, etc. In Cuernavaca, I visited the Palace and saw Rivera's murals, visited my great-grandmother's grave, visited the Borda Gardens and the Cathedral, walked around the downtown, saw one house where the Nivens had lived, etc. In Taxco, we walked around the town and saw all the silver shops. In Puebla we visited the Cathedral and I ran into a girlfriend from Texas upstairs in a tile factory! All in three weeks, including travel time from Austin! (RHH to RMA, 30 November 1994)

For various reasons, our communication came to a virtual stop until fairly recently. In November 1999, Dr. Harrison called me to discuss the successful publication of Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods and to inquire if mention of it could be included in the next issue of the society's newsletter. He also told me that the publication of the book had engendered the first Niven family reunion to be held since 1937. One of his recent communications included this excerpt from his wife's 1999 Christmas letter.

Well, this was the year of "THE BOOK." Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods, William Niven's Life of Discovery and Revolution in Mexico and the American Southwest by Robert S. Wicks and Roland H. Harrison was published by the Texas Tech University Press at the end of June. It is the culmination of eleven years of concentrated effort. There was lots of waiting while the Press worked things out but when the dust jacket arrived here for approval it really looked like the publishing date was near. Everyone was so excited over the beautiful jacket that we began to plan a Niven family reunion to coincide with the release of the book. [One daughter] said, "Hey, we ought to have a T-shirt with the jacket icon on the front!" So she took over that job. [Another] made a very large, 3' x 8', color-coded Niven family descendant chart. Roland got busy collecting and

arranging Niven materials, pictures and slides for viewing and began sending and receiving numerous e-mail invitations and replies. . . . And it all came together. Niven family reunion II !! 60 people attended. A truly amazing feat for such a short time! Dr. Bob Wicks was able to come and spent a magical evening with slides explaining the place of our ancestor, William Niven, in history. We made Bob an honorary Niven. (RHH to RMA, 19 January 2000)

This article is the most recent portion of the Porter-Niven-Harrison-Wicks-Alvarez story. I agreed to write something for the society's newsletter about Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods, William Niven's Life of Discovery and Revolution in Mexico and the American Southwest. I have read and enjoyed this account of the amazing exploits of Dr. Harrison's grandfather, liberally illustrated with his fabulous Mexican photographs. Other members of the society can purchase copies directly from Texas Tech University Press by calling 1-800-832-4042 or from the Web site of the press, www.ttup.ttu.edu.



A group at William Niven's archaeological dig at Atzacapotzalco in early 1921. William Niven is the seated at the extreme left holding a glass of pulque. Katherine Anne Porter is seated right of center wearing a beret and is also holding a glass of pulque. Thorberg Haberman is at KAP's immediate right. Roberto Turnbull is squatting second from right. The first two figures standing on the left may be the individuals who served as models for María Concepción and her husband Juan in KAP's "María Concepción." Photograph reprinted by permission of Texas Tech University Press and Roland H. Harrison. It appears on p. 191 of Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods.

Successful Projects Underway at Porter House

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Proulx will speak at the house in late September (27-29), and also tentatively scheduled are visits by Pulitzer Prize winner Philip Levine, National Book Award winner Tim O'Brien,

MacArthur Genius Award winner Leslie Marmon Silko, as well as a host of other writers including Don Snyder, James Daniels, Tessa Rumsey, and KAP biographers Joan Givner and Janis Stout, both of whom are expected to appear at the house sometime in October 2000.

Katherine Anne Porter: Writer in Residence

By Robert L. Morris

Reprinted from *Towers in Westchester Park*, December 1999/
January 2000 and February 2000

The year was 1971 and, following a quarter of a century in the U. S. Army, somehow I found myself a vice president of a suburban national bank—director of its military and executive departments. The bank's headquarters was in Rockville, but my activity was sited in one of its numerous branches, in College Park. I knew nothing of Westchester Park and its residents. However, a lifetime bookworm, I very much knew the work of Katherine Anne Porter and was an admirer of her wonderful short stories and novellas about southern life. I knew she was over 80 at the time but had no idea where she lived. I was in for a surprise.

That summer the bank found itself short of branch managers, including the one at College Park. The president asked me if I would assume the management of the branch temporarily until a proper replacement could be hired. I of course acquiesced, though my knowledge of “retail” banking was comparatively scant. My military department was almost entirely a mail operation, essentially a hometown bank for people with no hometown. My executive department was also heavily mail oriented.

Let me digress for a moment to emphasize that banking 30 years ago was far different from today's ultra sophisticated impersonal scenario. Main frame computers had arrived and were used sparingly as a useful extension to our brains, but never as a substitute for them. The idea of clerks in bank lobbies with online computers might have appeared in science fiction fantasies but assuredly not in a practical banking situation. Every action was highly personalized, even by mail. And, oh yes, credit cards were in their infancy—not yet in general use. My daredevil tactics in “overdraft” banking protection dismayed orthodox bankers. Now our citizens are billions and billions in the red and only alarmists view it as other than routine—a gigantic nationwide Ponzi maneuver.

In any event I was thrilled to learn that Katherine Anne Porter was a depositor in my bank and, moreover, if needed, I would be her personal banker. Sure enough, I shortly received a phone call from her. She needed \$10,000. To me her voice seemed like that of a young woman—charming, fresh, gracious, even sexy. She was all feminine in an era before feminism mutated into man-bashing militancy. In this first conversation, she more or less capsuled her whole life.

She purred, “Why, Mr. Morris, would you believe, regardless of all the praise showered on me for my stories, I never made any money—real money, that is. I was always short of the ready, barely making ends meet. Then I submitted a rather lengthy short story/

novella to my editor at my publishers, Little, Brown in Boston. My editor telephoned me and urged me to flesh it out and make it into a full-fledged novel.

“I did so . . . called it *Ship of Fools*. Wowee! The darn thing became an instant best seller and later a hit movie. How the money rolled in! For the first time in my life, I had it to burn—and don't think I didn't do just that—spent a lot of it on items of luxury I could never before have owned—gave it out to people and friends who had been kind to me through the years. My editor, who was also a trusted advisor, persuaded me to let Little, Brown handle the royalties and dole it out to me at the rate of \$3,000 each month. This amount was usually adequate but sometimes I overspent or was too generous with my donations to others in thrall. That is why I have this current need.

“If you okay the loan, you may take the monthly payments out of my account, or perhaps I can soft talk Little, Brown to pay it in full when I can summon up enough courage to tell them I've been naughty.”

I told her that her loan was approved on the spot, and, just as soon as she signed the papers, the proceeds would be deposited to her credit. She thanked me warmly and said she'd send her housekeeper/secretary to pick up the documents. Her tone was that of a winsome child to a generous daddy. I felt like a knight in gleaming armor standing ramrod straight around a round (loan) table.

That transaction was the beginning of our relationship—if that is the correct word to use—though perhaps the word “association” would be more accurate—considering the metamorphosis of the word “relationship” into the tawdry thing it is today in today's connotation. My tenure as branch manager was soon terminated, but Katherine Anne would deal with nobody but me.

Shortly thereafter she moved temporarily to New York City to occupy a prestigious chair at one of its local colleges. She continued to write me of her experiences there, and I still keep her letters in my personal file. A few years ago an excellent biography of her was published, and I thought to myself that the biographer certainly did a poor job of sleuthing to have overlooked these missives, but then they were actually trivial and without impact. We also spoke on the phone numerous times, but the go-between for paperwork was always the housekeeper/secretary.

Perhaps the reader of this piece may have by this time guessed my little O. Henry surprise ending. I never met Katherine Anne Porter! Yes, despite her willingness to confide in me on matters that verged into the quite personal, we never met face-to-face. She alluded to her five husbands (I think it was five) and her displeasure about the frequent diminution of her name. She pouted, southern belle style—she was, after all, from East Texas and New Orleans: “Why, do you know, I even get mail addressed to Katherine A. Porter. That isn't my name, Mr. Morris. My name is

Katherine Anne, and it infuriates me when they make that error." Yes, she was a coquette—bless her. I have no doubt at all that she straightened out St. Peter on her correct name as she duly entered the pearly gates.

Somewhere during that period I was told that she lived in an area known as Westchester Park. When I sold my home in Kensington but continued to work in College Park, I made a reconnaissance to Westchester Park and found the apartments to be first rate. This, of course, was after my association with Katherine Anne.

Nevertheless, one of my reasons for renting in 6200 in the fall of 1979 was the feeling that, if Katherine Anne lived there, the place must be a bit of all right. Even there I was apprised of Katherine Anne's "eccentricities"—that she rented two apartments joined side-by-side and that she kept her coffin in one of her closets in 6100.

Later, after I had moved to 6100 in January 1985, I learned that both rumors were factual. Beulah Sanders, who knows everything worthwhile there is to know about the building and its residents (and, I daresay, some not so worthwhile) verified these facts and also well remembered Katherine Anne. Beulah described her as being a "frisky old lady."

Katherine Anne died in place in 1980 at the age of 90. Earlier in that year I had the bright idea of visiting her and re-establishing our friendship—wondering if she still remembered her old banking crony. I also had in hand the one-volume Collected Stories of

Katherine Anne Porter, which I thought I'd have her autograph. Alas, I was too late. Katherine Anne Porter, acclaimed artist and wonderful human being, was on her deathbed, and I was denied admittance to her quarters. Sic transit . . .

Katherine Anne knew a good place to live when she spied it. It was a place to call home, and it still is. I have made some good friends here and numerous acquaintances. Above all, the management, maintenance, and custodial staff do an outstanding job and, however undeserving, they do favors for my wife and myself (as we used to say in the Army) "beyond the call of duty." I think maybe the aura of Katherine Anne Porter, and the warmth of her stories, still lurk in our (un)hallowed corridors.



Katherine Anne Porter at the entrance to the Westchester Park high rise building in College Park, Maryland, where she lived from May 1970 to April 1980. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

(Editor's note: A retired University of Maryland professor sent a copy of this article to one of my colleagues. As soon as I read it, I telephoned Mr. Morris, who

graciously agreed to allow me to reprint his article in this newsletter. In addition, he agreed to donate his cache of Porter materials to the Libraries. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Morris in person when I picked up the items from him in his Westchester Park apartment, which is located on the same floor of the building where Miss Porter lived from 1970 to 1980.)

Call for Papers

The Journal of English and Foreign Languages (JEFL), published by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL), Hyderabad, India, is intended to serve as a forum for the sharing of experiences and the discussion of problems related to the theory and practice of language and literature teaching. The teaching could be in an actual classroom or a virtual classroom, which would use the distance mode for teaching purposes.

Submissions are welcome from anyone who is professionally involved in the teaching of English or any other foreign language. Since JEFL represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, the editorial board invites articles on a wide range of issues. Articles which draw on relevant research in such areas as anthropology, applied and theoretical linguistics, communication, education, psycholinguistics, psychology, first and second language acquisition, and sociolinguistics and then address implications or applications of that research to issues in literature or language teaching are particularly welcome. There is special interest in articles which

focus on new developments or offer fresh insights and interpretations. Articles written for JEFL should be original and not published before in any book, journal, etc.

JEFL follows a blind review policy. Writers, whose articles are accepted for publication, will receive a copy of the journal along with ten offprints of the published articles. Articles not accepted for publication will be returned only if they are accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Articles should be between 1000 and 4000 words in length. A 200-word abstract should accompany the article. A brief biographical note (fifty words) should also be enclosed with the article. The format to be used for references, etc., in the text, is the MLA format. One hard copy of the manuscript, along with a copy on a 3.5" floppy should be sent to:

Dr. Lakshmi Chandra, Editor, JEFL, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad 500007, Andhra Pradesh, India. E-mail: jeffl@ciefl.ernet.in

If a copy cannot be sent on a floppy, two typed copies should be submitted.

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Porter Activities at the University of Maryland Libraries

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

This report on the activities related to the Papers of Katherine Anne Porter and other Porter-related collections at the University of Maryland Libraries covers the period between April 1999 and March 2000. Since the Porter papers were reopened in February 1999, there has more interest in them than ever before. Twenty-two on-site Porter researchers consulted her papers in the twelve-month period covered by this report. Those from out-of-state included residents of Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas. Susana Jiménez Placer, who teaches at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, enjoyed a six-week visit researching her dissertation on Porter, made possible with support from her government. Nine of the on-site Porter researchers were University of Maryland students or Maryland residents, including three Prince George's County high school students completing a class project on her. Telephone, mail, and e-mail inquiries have also been received from California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Washington, DC. I also corresponded about Porter with individuals from Austria, China, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, and Spain. As usual, the bulk of this came from graduate students and scholars. However, because of the Porter information on the Libraries' Web site, I am receiving an increasing number of questions from high school students, undergraduates, and members of the general public. During this period, the Libraries supplied more than 4,100 photocopies to meet researcher demand and loaned forty-five reels of the microfilm edition of the Porter papers.

I believe that much of this increased interest and activity is due to the Porter resources and information available on the Libraries' Web site. I was astonished to learn that in the month

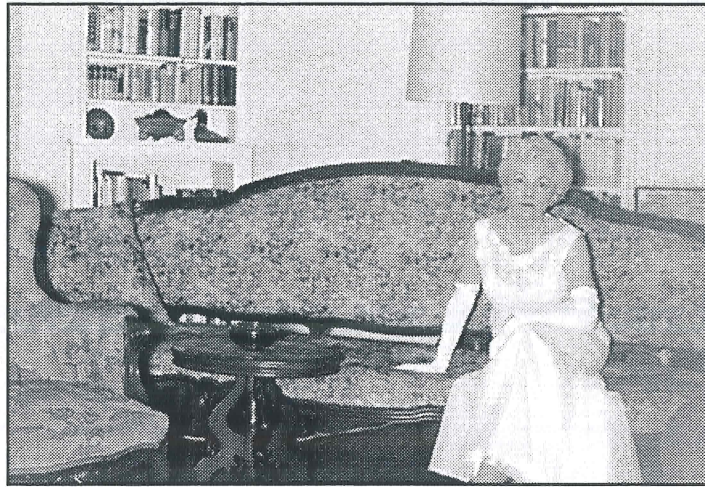
of February alone, there were 828 visits to the first of the society's pages as well as 827 to the top Katherine Anne Porter page, 346 to the narrative portion of the guide to her papers, 356 to the reel/box inventory of the collection, and 629 to the Porter Room page. Virtually all of the credit for these marvelous resources belongs to former project archivist Patty Rettig, who thoroughly revised and updated the Libraries' literary manuscripts Web pages. It was a great loss when she resigned in late August; she is now living in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she is employed at the Colorado State University Libraries. Before she left, Ms. Rettig began the work of completely reorganizing the photographs in the Porter collection. That

work has been carried on by my current graduate assistant, Kara McClurken, who joined the Libraries in August. Her account of her work on the photographs appears in this issue of the newsletter. This work was supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities project that came to a close in November.

Ms. McClurken also completed the arrangement and description of the papers of Edna Tutt Frederikson, which the Libraries acquired last year. The collection consists of eighteen letters that Mrs. Frederikson and Miss Porter

exchanged between 1941 and 1972. Our stalwart volunteer, Bill Wilkins, continued to provide important support for the Libraries' Porter holdings. He completed an inventory of the unprocessed photographs in the Porter collection and resleeved all of the negatives for the photographs.

Popular interest in Porter remains high. During the last year, there have been nearly 500 visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter Room. The room was open on fifty-five Monday and Thursday afternoons during the academic year because of the efforts of a loyal band of volunteer docents: Freddy Baer, Shirley Bauer, Dorothy Galvin, Beverly Lewoc, Joan Phelan, and Betty Warner. The Porter Room was also open on the afternoon of Friday, October 29, as part of the University of Maryland's Homecoming, when my mother, Mary Moore, served as docent. The room was featured as part of washingtonsidewalk.com's feature on "Literary Washington" in July and served as the venue for a University of Maryland Senior University study group entitled "Riches Revealed" in September and October. Four other Special Collections



KAP seated on her eighteenth-century canapé in the house on Q Street, in Georgetown, Washington, DC, that she rented from 1959 to 1962. Photograph by Paul Porter. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

colleagues and I made a series of presentations for this university program that operates under the University's Center on Aging and the Office of Continuing and Extended Education.

The Libraries received a number of donations that increased or benefited the Libraries' Porter and Porter-related holdings in the last year. Robert L. Morris, who served as Miss Porter's "banker" in 1972 and 1973, gave the Libraries the five letters Miss Porter wrote him during this period. His charming recollection of that "association" appears in this issue of the newsletter. Bill and Fern Wilkins graciously parted with another part of their own Porter collection, thirty-five letters and cards they exchanged with Toni Willison between 1997 and 1997, many of which discuss Miss Porter, their mutual friend. Paul Porter's very generous gift will enable the Libraries' to conserve and reupholster Miss Porter's canapé, her eighteenth century serpentine sofa. She acquired this piece in Belgium in 1955 and used it in various residences until it came to the Porter Room in the 1960s. Donald C. Williams, a conservator of furniture and wooden objects, will complete this work in November 2000. Mr. Williams, who works for the Smithsonian Institution, surveyed the condition of all of Miss

Porter's furniture in the Porter Room in 1995. The Libraries and I are extremely grateful for Mr. Porter's largesse and are very much looking forward to seeing it beautifully restored in the new Porter Room in Hornbake Library.

Planning for the renovation of and forthcoming move to Hornbake Library once again occupied much of my time in the last year. As this report is being written, demolition has begun and completion of construction is scheduled for late July. My colleagues and I expect our move to take place sometime between August 2000 and January 2001. I will notify the members of the society and the wider Porter research community of any disruptions of service to the Libraries' Porter holdings that this move will cause.

Anyone who has questions concerning the Libraries' Porter holdings should not hesitate to contact me, Curator of Literary Manuscripts, Archives and Manuscripts, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, 301-405-9298, ra60@umail.umd.edu. To locate the Katherine Anne Porter resources on the Libraries' Web site, begin at www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/ARCV/litmss.html and follow the appropriate links.

Memories of Katherine Anne Porter and Her Return to Texas: A Talk by Dr. Roger Brooks

Reprinted by permission of the Southwestern Writers Collection, Southwest Texas State University

"Katherine Anne Porter: An Evening of Reminiscence," commemorating the presentation of the Roger L. Brooks Katherine Anne Porter Papers to the Southwestern Writers Collection took place on Thursday, April 15, 1999, in the Albert B. Alkek Library at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Acquired by the Southwestern Writers Collection in late 1998, this collection of correspondence, photographs, interviews, and inscribed books was maintained by Porter's friend, Dr. Roger L. Brooks, and it traces the arc of Porter's life back to Texas.

Dr. Brooks was the president of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, when he learned that Porter, one of America's greatest writers, had been born a few miles away in Indian Creek. Porter's mother died when she was two, and the family then moved to Kyle to live with her grandmother. Though Porter's childhood in Kyle provided the setting and substance of many of her best short stories, she had a troubled relationship with her native state, which she felt was unappreciative of her.

As President of Howard Payne University, Dr. Brooks organized a conference of Porter scholars and arranged for her

to receive an honorary degree. Dr. Brooks took Porter to visit her mother's grave in her hometown cemetery. It was at this time that Porter decided to be buried next to her mother, thus beginning the process of her reconciliation with her Texas roots.

Porter and Dr. Brooks became close friends in the last few years of her life, and his collection of correspondence, photographs, interviews, and inscribed books traces the arc of Porter's life back to Texas.

(Editor's note: The URL for the Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State University is www.library.swt.edu/swwc; that for the guide to the Roger L. Brooks Katherine Anne Porter Papers is www.library.swt.edu/swwc/archives/writers/porter.html.)

Selected Shorts in April 1999

Katherine Anne Porter's "He" was one of the short stories featured in "Selected Shorts: A Celebration of the Short Story" presented at Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th Street, New York City. 1999 was the fifteenth season for the series, which presents evenings of classic and new short stories read by Broadway and Hollywood actors. Porter's story was on the program of April 7, 1999, hosted by Tess Gallagher and featuring Mary Beth Hurt, Meryl Streep, and Cherry Jones. The other stories read that evening included William Trevor's "Broken Homes" and Gina Berriault's "The Infinite Passion of Expectation."

From Corpus Christi to Connecticut: An Update on the Katherine Anne Porter Photo Collection at the University of Maryland Libraries

By Kara M. McClurken

When I interviewed for a job in the Archives and Manuscripts Department at the University of Maryland Libraries, the interview took place in the Katherine Anne Porter Room. I understood from my interviewers that this room was very special, and as I looked around, I found that it was certainly interesting—but who was this Katherine Anne Porter? I had never heard of her! Imagine my surprise a few weeks later when Beth Alvarez informed me that I would be working with her and that my task would be to arrange the 1700 photos in the Porter Collection. I was a history major in college, who worked mostly with the nineteenth century, not an English major of the twentieth century. As I glanced through the rough drafts of the photo guides, I recognized few of Porter's friends. How was I supposed to identify who these people were or when the photo was taken if I knew nothing about them?

I spent the first few days just looking through the boxes of photos. At first, I could not even tell which female in the photo was KAP. But after a while, she became more and more familiar. So did her friends and family. Of course, Beth was a gold mine of information. In those early months, I would come to her with a photo, and often she could tell me who was in the photo, where it took place, and sometimes even what year! Other times she sent me to the top floor of the library, where the literature section is located. I would return with an armful of books, all of them filled with pictures and valuable biographical information that could help me pinpoint when and where a famous (or not so famous) writer had been with KAP. Sometimes I would find copies of the same pictures I was trying to identify, with complete citations. That happened rarely, though. Mostly, I

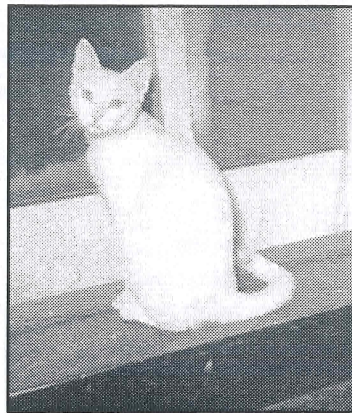
used the photographs in the books to try and determine the relative age of the individual in our photos. I have examined wrinkles, hairstyles, and geographical clues in intimate detail. I have written letters to the relatives of Porter's friends, hoping that they can identify an aunt or father. I have become, in effect, a private investigator, tracking down the clues to the mystery of Katherine Anne Porter's life.

I have learned many things along the way—for one thing, I now try and date and identify my own photos, so that twenty

years from now, I will not be scratching my head, trying to figure out who or what was in a photo. I have also learned about Katherine Anne's life and work, her friends and her homes. I have become quite fond of the people I meet through the photos as I watch them grow older over the years. One day I came across a picture of Lucifer, one of KAP's cats. Knowing that it was the last picture taken of him before he was put to sleep, I found myself with tears in my eyes. I had become used to seeing the cat in Porter's photos—he was a great identifier of time, and I would miss him.

As of the first week in April, I have organized the photos through the early 1960s. I must confess that I cannot

solve all of the mysteries. Several photos have been listed at the end of the guide, in bold, meaning that I have no idea when or where the photograph was taken. And they may not be in exact chronological order—but I believe that they are close. They are certainly in a much more coherent order than they were nine months ago. My adventure investigating the life of Katherine Anne Porter has become one of my most favorite duties of the week. Hopefully, by the end of 2000, I will have completed the task and researchers will have a much more useful guide to the photos of Katherine Anne Porter.



Lucifer, one of KAP's cats, Southbury, Connecticut, January 1958. Her inscription reads, "Lucifer begging to be let out, when he was crippled and I had to keep him inside!" Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

Katherine Anne Porter School

The Katherine Anne Porter School, a non-profit free public high school chartered by the Texas Education Agency, was opened in August 1999 with an enrollment of sixty-four. Located in the heart of Hays County in the hill country community of Wimberley, Texas, it was founded by former board members of the Katherine Anne Porter Museum in Kyle, Texas. The philosophy of the school is to foster appreciation for learning as the foundation for future success in life, to nurture individual interests, and to

enhance personal responsibility. The school offers courses from ninth to twelfth grade that are required for high school graduation, plus an enriched curriculum tailored to meet each student's individual needs and interests. Available are individual education plans and one-to-one instruction. Special Education inclusion, advanced technology, and small class size are objectives. Courses include English, languages, literature, social studies, science, math, art, theater arts, economics, ESL and bilingual education, ecological studies, communication skills, vocational technology, and

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Katherine Anne Porter Society Activities at the American Literature Association Conference in Baltimore

Janis Stout, Dean of Faculties at Texas A & M University, chaired the Katherine Anne Porter Society's session held in Baltimore on Friday, May 28, 1999. The session entitled "New Views on Katherine Anne Porter" began with Professor Stout's overview of the current state of Porter scholarship followed by three papers. The first, "The Rhetorical Use of Memory and Knowing in Porter's *The Grave*," was read by Melinda Williams, of Texas Woman's University. Susana M. Jiménez Placer of the University of Santiago De Compostela, Galicia, Spain, presented "Grandmother, Aunt Nannie, and the Rolling Pin of Life." "Tuberculosis and Changing Views of Illness in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction," was the subject of the paper of Lisa C. Roney of Pennsylvania State University.

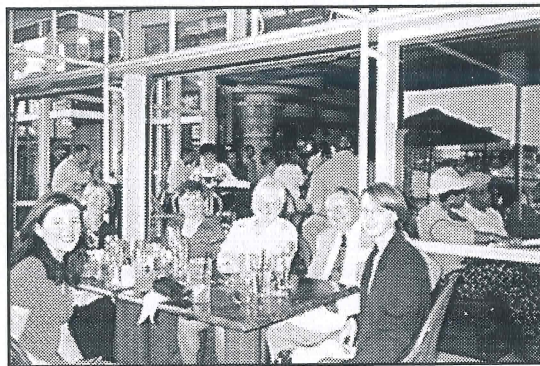
The Society held a business meeting after the paper session. President Beth Alvarez reported that the balance in the Society's account in the UNLV Foundation in 1998 was \$492.46. Revenue for 1998 was \$122.00. The balance in the Society's account at the time of the meeting was \$614.00. Alvarez explained that the Dean of Liberal Arts at UNLV pays for the Society's newsletter; the English Department at UNLV assumes the costs of mailing the newsletters; and the Archives and Manuscripts Department at the University of Maryland Libraries provides institutional support for the president/

newsletter editor. In May 1999, there were thirty-two regular members of the Society, and nine honorary members. The president will send a letter to all former and current members as well as others interested in Katherine Anne Porter urging them to join or renew membership in the Society. After a reasonable period elapses to allow for renewals and new memberships, the revised by-laws will be mailed for a vote by all members. The newsletter will return to publishing only one

issue per year. Members were urged to submit articles, news items, and announcements. Future meetings of the Society will be held at forthcoming American Literature Association conferences. Thomas Austenfeld will chair the session to be held in Long Beach, California, and Christine Hait will serve as chair at the Baltimore, Maryland, session. Those present were urged to submit paper proposals for these sessions.

At the conclusion of the business meeting, Beth Alvarez introduced Patty Rettig, the

Project Archivist for the Preservation Microfilming of the Katherine Anne Porter Papers at the University of Maryland Libraries. Ms. Rettig explained what had been completed on the project and the Porter resources that are available on the Libraries' Web site (www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP). She also solicited suggestions to improve the usability of the information on the Web site.



Susana Jiménez Placer, Lisa Roney, Melinda Williams, Janis Stout, Carl Griffin, and Patty Rettig celebrating in the Baltimore Inner Harbor after the KAP session at the American Literature Association Conference in May 1999. Photograph by Beth Alvarez.

2001 Conference on American Literature in Baltimore

The Katherine Anne Porter Session at the forthcoming American Literature Association conference will be chaired by Professor Christine Hait of Columbia College. The topic for the session will be "Theoretical Approaches to the Works of Katherine Anne Porter." Anyone interested in submitting a proposal should send a 150-word abstract to Professor Hait, Department of English, Columbia College, 1301 Columbia College Drive, Columbia, South Carolina 29203. Her e-mail address is chrishait@colacoll.edu. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2001.

The conference will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, in May 2001. Details of the conference and information about hotel reservations will appear on the home page of the American Literature Association (<http://humanities.byu.edu/ALA>).

Katherine Anne Porter's "Rope" at the National Portrait Gallery

An adaptation of Katherine Anne Porter's short story "Rope" was performed at the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery on Monday, November 22, 1999. One of the programs of the museum's Culture in Motion series, "Readers' Theater: Southern Accents" featured "Rope" and Truman Capote's "Children on Their Birthdays." The program supported the exhibit, "Tête à Tête: Portraits by Henri Cartier-Bresson," which included photographs of Porter and Capote. The reading of "Rope" was directed and adapted by Shona Tucker and featured Aron Weidhorn playing "He" and Amy Redford playing "She."

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 1998

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

Although, according to the MLA Bibliography, no books or dissertations on Katherine Anne Porter were published in 1998, articles in journals and e

ssays in books were plentiful. A trend evident in works published on Porter in 1997, intertextual readings of Porter, continued in 1998. In 1998 Porter's work was compared to the works of writers as diverse as María Cristina Mena, Mark Twain, Eudora Welty, Juan Rulfo, and Dorothy Parker. Additionally, her roles as mentor to Texas writer William Humphrey and competitor to another Texas writer, J. Frank Dobie, were considered. Articles on Porter in 1998 are notable for their various theoretical approaches. Scholars used the theories of Edward Said, Michel Foucault, and Mikhail Bakhtin to gain fresh insights into Porter's work.

Books/Collections/Special Issues

No books were published on Porter in 1998. However, a special issue of *Southwestern American Literature* (24.1[1998]) based on a symposium at Southwest Texas State University on May 15, 1998, featured thirteen articles on Porter. For an extended discussion of the symposium, readers should see Mark Busby's article in last year's newsletter. The articles in the special issue include the following: "Writing Home: Katherine Anne Porter, Coming and Going," by Janis Stout; "Katherine Anne Porter's Birthdays," by Darlene Unrue; "Katherine Anne Porter and the University of Texas: A Map of Misunderstanding," by Richard Holland; "Troubled Innocent Abroad: Katherine Anne Porter's Colonial Adventure," by Jeraldine R. Kraver; "Gender and Creativity in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Princess,'" by Christine Hait; "Trapped by the Great White Searchlight: Katherine Anne Porter and Marital Bliss," by Larry Herold; "Porter and Dobie: The Marriage from Hell," by James Ward Lee; "The Prodigal Daughter Comes Home," by Lou Rodenberger; "Katherine Anne Porter and Texas: Ambivalence Deep as the Bone," by Mark Busby; "Knowing Nature in Katherine Anne Porter's Short Fiction," by Terrell F. Dixon; "A 'taste for the exotic': Revolutionary Mexico and the Short Stories of Katherine Anne Porter and María Cristina Mena," by Rob Johnson; "Katherine Anne Porter and William Humphrey: A Mentorship Reconsidered," by Bert Almon; and "Memories that Never Were: Katherine Anne Porter and the Family Saga," by Sylvia Grider.

Articles and Essays in Books

Deborah Cohn, in "Paradise Lost and Regained: The Old Order and Memory in Katherine Anne Porter's Stories and Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*," *Hispanofila* 124 (Sept. 1998): 65-86, finds parallels between Southern and Mexican experiences of social upheaval as depicted in the Miranda stories and Juan Rulfo's novel *Pedro Páramo*. Additionally, she compares the war settings of the novel and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" and explores the emphasis on distortions of the truth and consolidation of power that the works share. Finally, Cohn argues that the role of memory in "keeping the past alive well beyond its time, making it responsible for condemning the present to death, is a prominent concern for Porter and Rulfo."

William V. Davis, "The Native Land of My Heart: Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda Stories" is included in *Literature of Region and Nation: Proceedings of the 6th International Literature of Region and Nation Conference*, 2-7 August 1996, published by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, with University of New Brunswick in Saint John, and edited by

Winnifred M. Bogaards. Although Davis covers familiar territory—the significance of memory to Porter's artistry, the function of dreams in her fiction, the sequential nature of the Miranda stories—his clear prose offers readers an opportunity to appreciate anew the process by which Porter produced her art. "The Grave," Davis points out, provides a frame for the two sequences of Miranda stories, the two longer stories and the series of shorter ones, and all of her stories provide "an exploration of an epistemological obsession that goes beyond both place and time."

What do Amy in "Old Mortality," the title character of "He," Mr. Helton in "Noon Wine," and Otilie in "Holiday" have in common? According to M.K. Fornataro-Neil, in "Constructed Narratives and Writing Identity in the Fiction of Katherine Anne Porter" *Twentieth Century Literature* 44.3 (1998): 349-61, all four characters "cannot speak for themselves [and] are destined to be written by others." Miranda's family writes Amy, Mrs. Whipple writes He, the Thompsons write Mr. Helton, and the Müller family writes Otilie. Porter's silent characters, according to Fornataro-Neil, "allow her a greater opportunity to comment on the construction of identity and to critique the notion of objective truth." Although Porter's silent characters have been studied elsewhere, Fornataro-Neil offers an interesting grouping of these characters. One of Fornataro-



This photograph of Katherine Anne Porter was taken by Eugene Pressly in Basel, Switzerland, in summer 1932. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

Neil's most thought-provoking arguments is that "Mrs. Whipple has done such a good job of defining or writing [the] identity of [He]. . . that even the critics are fooled." Fornataro-Neil encourages readers to question Mrs. Whipple's narrative concerning the extent of His impairment.

Jeraldine Kraver, in "Laughing Best: Competing Correlatives in the Art of Katherine Anne Porter and Diego Rivera," *South Atlantic Review* 63.2 (1998): 48-74, asserts that the "discourse of post-colonialism offers a compelling insight into Porter's expatriate experience," and her essay demonstrates her assertion. The work of Edward Said particularly informs Kraver's argument that "Porter ultimately approached Mexico with a colonial mindset." Kraver characterizes Porter's attacks on Diego Rivera in fiction, letters, and interviews as often misguided and unfair. Rivera, however, may have had "the last laugh," Kraver argues. She point out that a character in "Folklore and Tourist Mexico," a panel in Rivera's Hotel Reforma mural offering "a satiric depiction of the superficial and destructive character of foreigners in Mexico," bears a striking resemblance to Porter.

Ellen Lansky's intertextual reading of Dorothy Parker's "Big Blonde" and Porter's *Ship of Fools* in "Female Trouble: Dorothy Parker, Katherine Anne Porter, and Alcoholism," *Literature and Medicine* 17.2 (1998): 213-30, "brings together the authors and their fiction over a common complex: alcoholism and the 'female troubles' that they encounter as they try to negotiate a life for themselves in a culture that asks them, as heterosexual women, to subordinate their bodies, desires, and aspirations to their male partners." Lansky uses Michel Foucault's concept of the Panopticon to explore the ways that the transgressing female drinkers in the story and novel "become adjusted to being watched" by male partners and then "internalize the panoptic gaze" and watch themselves. Lansky's analysis of Mrs. Treadwell in *Ship of Fools* is fascinating, but readers may take issue with the close parallels Lansky finds between Porter's and Parker's lives, and particularly between their problems with alcohol and the impact it had on their later lives.

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "the carnivalesque" operates as the theoretical framework of Janis Stout's "Katherine Anne Porter and Mark Twain at the Circus," *Southern Quarterly* 36.3 (1998): 113-23. A comparison of circus episodes in *Huckleberry Finn* and Porter's "The Circus" leads to further comparisons between the child figures at the centers of the two works, Miranda and Huck, and between the two authors, who, Stout

points out, experienced similar tensions between their roles as artists and entertainers/performers. Stout documents Porter's long-standing fascination with Twain and attributes Porter's difficulty with a lecture she struggled to prepare on him in 1959 to her recognition that Twain's troubles and fears mirrored her own.

Darlene Unrue's "*Losing Battles* and Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools*: The Commonality of Modernist Vision and Homeric Analogue" is included in *The Late Novels of Eudora Welty*, published by University of South Carolina Press and edited by Jan Nordby Gretlund and Karl-Heinz Westarp. E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* and Homer's epics are useful reference points for readers of Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles* and Porter's *Ship of Fools*, according to Unrue. The two writers, best known for their short fiction, shared with Forster and with each other a modernist vision of the novel, which included the "new use of traditional materials." Welty and Porter also shared a love of Homer's epics, but their different Homeric models—for Welty, the *Iliad* and for Porter, the *Odyssey*—"reveal the differences in their artistic visions."

Dissertations

None.

Although I was unable to obtain the article through interlibrary loan, I want to mention an article published in 1998 with a particularly intriguing title: E.W. Smith's "Thereby Hangs a Tale: Rope in the Hands of Plautus, Porter and Hitchcock," *Arachne* 5.1 (1998): 53-78.

Also, Beth Alvarez brought to my attention an article that has not been included in Porter bibliographies: Lakshmi Chandra's "*Ship of Fools*: The Novel as History," *Indian Journal of American Studies* 19.1 & 2 (1989): 15-18. Borrowing the phrase "The Novel as History" from Allen Tate, who used the term to draw a distinction between historical novels such as *Gone with the Wind* and novels that could be material for historians due to their authors' acute "consciousness of the past in the present," Chandra categorizes *Ship of Fools* as a novel that operates as history.

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

Katherine Anne Porter Society Membership Application/Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

Institutional Affiliation _____

Telephone (work) _____ Telephone (home) _____

FAX _____ E-mail _____

Make checks payable to the Katherine Anne Porter Society, UNLV Foundation; mail to Beth Alvarez, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

Call for Papers

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(Editor's note: Dr. Lakshmi Chandra is one of the seven members of the Katherine Anne Porter Society who reside in foreign countries [one of our two Indian members]. She and I began corresponding regularly in the spring of 1999 when she discovered that I spelled her name incorrectly in the Porter bibliography that is mounted on the University of Maryland Libraries' Web site. She

has been teaching at the college level all over India for the last fifteen years. Her dissertation was judged the best doctoral thesis by an Indian on American Studies by the American Studies Research Center, Hyderabad. It was published as Katherine Anne Porter: Fiction as History by Arnold Publishers in 1992. She co-authored Improve Your Writing and Learn English Through Science and has done freelancing for magazines and newspapers. As an academic, she has supervised post-MA research; eight of her students have received their degrees.)

Katherine Anne Porter School

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industrial cooperative training. The school has non-discriminatory policies on race, gender, or disabilities and offers small classes, an accelerated curriculum, flexible schedules for working students and home schoolers, and computer-assisted instruction.

The KAP School board meets every first Thursday of the month. Students and parents are encouraged to take an active role in the school. It sponsors the annual Katherine Anne Porter Literary Festival held in Kyle as well as monthly literary arts

presentations for the students and the Wimberley community. Yana Bland, who with her husband David owned and operated the Katherine Anne Porter Museum, serves as Director and Principal of the school. Contributions and donations to the Katherine Anne Porter School are tax deductible. The address is 15572 Ranch Road 12 North, Suites 1 & 2, P.O. Box 2053, Wimberley Texas 78676. Telephone: 888-847-6867. E-mail: kapschool@wimberley.net. Webpage: www.kapschool.org.