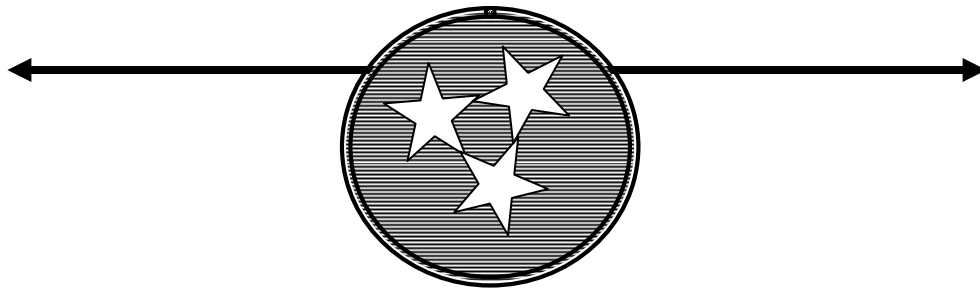


TENNESSEE LIBRARIAN



Fall 2001
Volume 52, Number 4

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The Special Collections Dept. at the University of Memphis
TL Book Reviews

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Printed by Hillsboro Printing, Nashville
Mailed by Advanced Mail Concepts, Nashville

Tennessee Librarian (ISSN 0162-1564) is published four times a year by the Tennessee Library Association, P. O. Box 241074, Memphis TN 38124-1074. Mailed to each association member upon payment of annual dues. Subscription \$10.00 annually, domestic, and \$12.00 (U.S.) annually, foreign. Single issues \$3.00 per copy domestic, and \$4.00 (U.S.), foreign. Back issues may be obtained from the Tennessee Library Association. First-class and other postage paid at Nashville TN and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Tennessee Library Association, P.O. Box 241074, Memphis TN 38124-1074.

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From the Editor

The fall of 2001 will, of course, be remembered primarily for the tragedies of September 11th. One would perhaps expect that in our corner of the state we could view the events as they unfolded with sympathy and shock, but relief that we were far from the sites of terror. This was not the case for us at ETSU, and I am sure it was not true for many of our readers across the state. In our own library, three of our librarians were concerned for the safety of family members living and working in Manhattan. Our Dean's daughter and our Periodicals Librarian's son both live and work in Manhattan, and the brother of one of our reference librarians is an FBI agent in one of the Manhattan offices. This made watching the television coverage that day particularly difficult. Fortunately, all family members are safe. In our world, certainly no place is isolated from pivotal events.

In the intervening months libraries have had to worry about the mail system, reconsider building security, and reconsider the balance between security and confidentiality of patron records. What is most surprising is the speed with which libraries have adapted and continue to provide the same services as before.

In this issue of *Tennessee Librarian*, we offer two articles of historical interest. In the first article, John David Marshall presents his reminiscences about Frances Neel and Brainerd Cheney, two individuals important to both Tennessee literary and library history.

The Fall 2001 issue also includes an article by Ross Johnson describing the special collections department of McWhorter Library at the University of Memphis. I am sure it will be of particular interest to librarians around the state and to scholars who need to use the collections.

Mark Ellis
Sherrod Library
East Tennessee State University

Remembering the Cheneys:
Frances Neel and Brainard/Fannie and Lon

John David Marshall

This reminiscence was presented at the Mid-State Library Association Spring 2000 Meeting at Smyrna Public Library. John David Marshall is librarian/professor emeritus, University Library, Middle Tennessee State University.

In Tallulah Bankhead's thoroughly delightful autobiography *Tallulah* (1952), the late great actress of stage, screen, and television makes no apology for her use of the "perpendicular pronoun, I" – nor does your speaker today who will make some use of the "perpendicular pronoun" as he remembers the Cheneys of Smyrna: Frances Neel and Brainard, or Fannie and Lon.

Before getting into the "perpendicular pronoun" part of the talk, let me tell you a bit about Frances Neel Cheney and Brainard Cheney. Most of you will know something of Mrs. Cheney's career, but you may very well not know much, if anything, about Mr. Cheney.

Brainard Cheney was descended from pre-Revolutionary War settlers of Scotch, English, and German stock. His father grew up on the family's Georgia plantation and at age sixteen joined the Confederate Army; his mother was the daughter of a Charleston, South Carolina physician. Cheney was born on June 3, 1900, in Fitzgerald, Georgia, and spent his formative years in Lumber City, Georgia, a small town on the Ocmulgee River. He was educated at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina (1917-1919), at the University of Georgia (1924), and at Vanderbilt University (1924-1925). At Vanderbilt he met his future wife, Frances Neel, who was the grandniece of Sam Davis, the boy hero of the Confederacy. They were married on June 21, 1928, one week after her graduation from Vanderbilt.

Cheney had worked in Georgia as a bank clerk, a lumber dealer, and a school principal before he came to Nashville in 1924 to enter Vanderbilt where he studied for a year but left without graduating. From 1925 to 1942 he was a member of the staff of the *Nashville Banner*. He was particularly interested in political reporting, and in time he became involved in Tennessee politics when he served as executive secretary (1942-1945) to U. S. Senator Tom Stewart of Tennessee. (Stewart early in his law career was one of the prosecutors in the famous Scopes monkey trial of 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee.) From 1952 to

1958 Cheney was a political aide and speechwriter on the staff of Tennessee Governor Frank Clement. For some 30 years Cheney earned his living as a newspaper reporter in Nashville and as a political aide/speech writer first in Washington, D.C., then back in Nashville.

Brainard Cheney – family and friends called him “Lon” after the well-known American film actor of the 1920s and 1930s – should be remembered as a novelist and sometime literary critic. While he was not a major Southern novelist, he might well be characterized as a major minor Southern novelist. In support of this observation, witness the fact that he has been the subject of two doctoral dissertations. The first – *Look A-Yonder, I See Sunday: A Critical Study of the Novels of Brainard Cheney* by Wilton Irving Beauchamp, Jr. – was written in 1977 at Emory University; the second – *The Search for a Hero: A Literary Biography of Brainard Cheney, Southern Novelist, Reporter, and Polemicist* by James Edwin Young II – was written in 1979 at Vanderbilt University where Cheney’s letters and manuscripts, acquired in 1972, are preserved in the Special Collections Department of the Vanderbilt Library. Some of Mrs. Cheney’s papers are also at Vanderbilt.

Cheney’s four published novels – *Lightwood* (Houghton Mifflin, 1939), *River Rogue* (Houghton Mifflin, 1942), *This Is Adam* (McDowell-Obolensky, 1958), *Devil ‘s Elbow* (Crown, 1969) – are set in Georgia and cover a period of time from 1874 to 1945 with a cast of characters ranging from frontier backwoodsmen to near-contemporary Georgians. None of these novels became national best sellers; they were, however, fairly widely reviewed in major publications and, with some qualifications, were generally well received by critics and reviewers...*River Rogue*, completed on a Guggenheim Fellowship, was a Book-or-the-Month Club selection; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer took an option on it, but eventually had to abandon producing a movie version of the novel because of wartime budgetary considerations.

Cheney was also the author of two plays: *Strangers in This World* (1950) and *I Choose to Die* (1960). *Strangers in This World* is a folk drama, with music and dance, about a rural Tennessee religious cult of snake handlers. It was produced at Vanderbilt in 1952 and at the University of Louisville in 1956. *I Choose to Die* is about Sam Davis and was produced at Vanderbilt in 1960. Cheney also contributed articles, essays, reviews to such literary magazines as *Georgia Review*, *Sewanee Review*, and *Shenandoah*.

While at Vanderbilt, Cheney came to know and to form friendships with Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle, John Crowe Ransome, and other writers identified with the Fugitive and Agrarian groups of the late 1920s and early 1930s. *The Fugitive*, a magazine of verse,

was published by the Fugitives from April 1922 to December 1925. The Agrarians produced a volume of essays, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, which was published in 1930.

Novelist Caroline Gordon, Allen Tate's wife, acted as a literary mentor to Brainard Cheney in his early attempts at fiction. Robert Penn Warren also helped Cheney, and over the years of their friendship, read and offered help with most of Cheney's fiction. Cheney often returned the favor. He helped Warren substantially with a crucial scene in Warren's 1947 Pulitzer Prize novel *All the King's Men* where the novel's central character (Willie Stark) makes his first effective political speech.

In the Fall 1952 issue of *Shenandoah* (published at Washington and Lee University), Cheney reviewed Flannery O'Connor's first novel *Wise Blood*. When O'Connor read this five-page appreciative review of her novel, she was understandably pleased. Early in 1953, she wrote Cheney a letter thanking him for reading her book and "writing about it so carefully and with so much understanding." This letter was the beginning of a long, warm friendship between Flannery O'Connor and the two Cheneyes, Mr. and Mrs., a friendship that ended in 1964 with O'Connor's death at age 39. *The Correspondence of Flannery O'Connor and the Brainard Cheneyes*, edited by C. Ralph Stephens, was published in 1986 by the University Press of Mississippi. This correspondence, beginning February 8, 1953, and ending July 16, 1964, consists of 188 items –117 are from O'Connor (55 to Mr. Cheney, 23 to Mrs. Cheney, 39 to both) and 71 from Cheney. The Cheney letters in the collection were written by Mr. Cheney; unfortunately Mrs. Cheney did not keep copies of her letters to O'Connor and so they are absent from *The Correspondence....* Flannery O'Connor died on August 3, 1964, in Milledgeville, Georgia; Brainard Cheney died on January 15, 1990 in Nashville; Mrs. Cheney outlived Mr. Cheney by some six years. Both are buried not far from their home, Idler's Retreat, in Smyrna.

Frances Neel Cheney was born in Washington, D. C., on August 19, 1906, the daughter of Thomas Meeks and Carrie (Tucker) Neel. Her father was a South Carolinian, her mother a Middle Tennessean. During her early years the Neels lived in Fitzgerald, Georgia, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Newberry, South Carolina. Frances entered Vanderbilt University in 1924, majored in Sociology, and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1928. Shortly after her graduation from Vanderbilt, she married Brainard Cheney.

Mrs. Cheney earned the Bachelor of Science in Library Science from Peabody Library School in 1934 and the Master of Science in Library Science from Columbia University in 1940. Like so many other librarians during their

college years, she worked as a student assistant in the library while attending Vanderbilt. She spent the first 15 years (1928-43) of her professional career at Vanderbilt in various positions in the reference department of the library.

Mr. and Mrs. Cheney worked in Washington D.C. from 1943 to 1945 – Mr. Cheney worked in the office of Tennessee Senator Tom Stewart; and Mrs. Cheney was at the Library of Congress as assistant (1943-44) to Allen Tate, who occupied the LC Chair of Poetry and as a bibliographer (1944-45) in LC's general reference division. Her year as Tate's assistant resulted in the publication by the Library of Congress of a major bibliography, *Sixty American Poets, 1896-1944*, which came out in 1945. Tate provided a preface and critical notes and received official credit for *Sixty American Poets*; Mrs. Cheney provided the bibliographical checklist. Tate later confessed that "Mrs. Cheney did all the work" for the 188-page volume. The Cheneyes returned to Nashville in 1945. Mr. Cheney resumed his writing career; Mrs. Cheney returned to the Joint University Library as head of the reference department. In 1946 Mrs. Cheney joined the faculty of the Peabody Library School and taught there for the next 30 years. In 1951 the U.S. State Department sent her to Tokyo for 18 months to be a visiting professor in the Japan Library School. She returned to the United States and to Peabody in 1952. She devoted her time and considerable energies to teaching and writing until her retirement from Peabody in 1975. She was twice editor of *The Tennessee Librarian* (1949-51, 1953-56), and frequently contributed to such professional journals as *Southeastern Librarian*, *RQ*, *Catholic Library World*, *Journal of Education for Librarianship*, and *Journal of Library History*. Her *Fundamental Reference Sources* was published by the American Library Association in 1971; a revised edition appeared in 1980.

Throughout her career Mrs. Cheney contributed much to the work of professional associations. She served as president of the Tennessee Library Association (1946-47), the Association of American Library Schools (1956-57), the Southeastern Library Association (1960-62), and Beta Phi Mu International Library Science Honorary (1962-63). Within the American Library Association she was president of the Reference Services Division (1960-61) and of the Library Education Division (1964-65).

During her career she received a number of awards for her contributions to librarianship and to the world of books. In 1959 she became the first recipient of the Beta Phi Mu Good Teaching Award. In 1962 she received the Isadore Gilbert Mudge Award from ALA's Reference Services Division for distinguished contributions to reference librarianship. Marquette University in 1966 awarded her the honorary Doctor of Literature degree. In 1976 she was

made an honorary life member of the Southeastern Library Association, and two years later (1978) the American Library Association awarded her an honorary life membership. The Woman's National Book Association in 1976 presented her with its Constance Lindsay Skinner Award for outstanding contributions to the world of books. From the Southeastern Library Association she received in 1980 its highest honor the Mary Utopia Rothrock Award for exceptional contributions to librarianship and library development in the Southeast.

Frances Neel Cheney during her long and distinguished career in librarianship was admired and beloved for both her wit and her wisdom, the latter frequently being clad in the former. She often regaled students, friends, colleagues with such quips as: "We're lawfully wedded wives of the three by fives" or "The days are short, the nights are cool, I sit by the fire and read my Poole." Poole for the benefit of those who may not remember him from library school days refers to William Frederick Poole, who in 1848 published his *Alphabetical Index to Subjects Treated in the Reviews and Other Periodicals to Which No Indexes Have Been Published*. To a literary or library club interested in the "little" magazine, she might recite the old ditty;

If your piece is very vile,
You can send it to *The Dial*;
If your piece is viler still,
You can send it to *The Quill*.

She ended her *Nashville Tennessean* review of Lee Smith's *Fancy Strut* (1973) with the pithy comment: "Now I wouldn't give this book to a prissy cousin in Soddy-Daisy for Christmas, but it would make a fine Christmas gift for anyone with a liking for bawdy humor of the best kind – small town."

We now come to the "perpendicular pronoun" part of my talk in which I will describe some of my encounters with the Cheneyes, which is the subject Virginia Vesper (Chair, Mid-State Library Association) asked me to talk about. My earliest encounter with Frances Neel Cheney was by way of her "Current Reference Books" column published in the *Wilson Library Bulletin* from 1942 through 1972. Mrs. Cheney took over this column from Louis Shores when he left the directorship of the Peabody Library School to enter the U.S. Army Air Force and to serve in the China-Burma-India Theater during the Second World War. Shores chose Mrs. Cheney, then a member of the Vanderbilt University Library Reference staff, to continue his *WLB* column when he entered military service. He did not take it back when he returned to civilian life in 1946. He

left Peabody Library School to become the founding Dean of the Florida State University Library School, a position he had held for some twenty years when he retired in 1967. I was a student of Shores in 1950-51. Mrs. Cheney's "Current Reference Books" column was required reading at the FSU Library School.

Mrs. Cheney wrote the column for thirty years. When she retired from writing that column in 1972, she was honored by a panel of experts and former students writing in *Wilson Library Bulletin* as "the nation's number one reference reviewer." Twenty years later in 1992 at age 85, she received from ALA Reference Services Division an award for her long and distinguished career as a reviewer of reference books, an award that bears the name of Louis Shores who like Mrs. Cheney was long identified with the making and reviewing of reference sources.

By 1992 Mrs. Cheney was wheelchair-bound and living in a nursing home in Nashville. She flew with her nephew, Roy Neel, to San Francisco to accept the Shores Award. Her doctor predicted, "Mrs. Cheney will possibly not survive such a trip. "But" as her nephew would later write, "survive she did, having a grand time visiting [with] old friends, ...numerous former students, and making countless new acquaintances who had known [Aunt] Fannie's work for so many years."

Some four years after my first encounter with Frances Neel Cheney by way of *Wilson Library Bulletin* came my next encounter with her by way of the U.S. Postal Service. Shoe String Press in Hamden, Connecticut, published in July 1955 an anthology of readings in librarianship titled *Books-Libraries-Librarians*. I was the principal compiler/editor of this anthology. Mrs. Cheney reviewed it very favorably in her "Current Reference Books" column sometime in the Fall of 1955. This review was the first or one of the first reviews to appear in a professional journal. I wrote her a note of thanks for the review, and in return received a note from Mrs. Cheney in which she thanked me for my thank-you and commented that she had rarely if ever received a thank-you from an author/editor whose book she had reviewed.

The annual conference of the American Library Association met in Miami in 1956. It was at this conference that I saw, albeit from a very great distance, the Cheney's in person for the first time. Frank Clement was Governor of Tennessee in 1956 and was at age 36 the youngest person serving as governor of a state. He was one of the principal speakers at the opening general session of ALA, and librarians turned out en masse to hear the young governor from Tennessee who was known for his dynamic speaking style. On the stage with Clement were Brainard and Frances Cheney. Mr. Cheney was a speechwriter

on Governor Clement's staff. Clement did not know much about libraries or library services. He was fortunate to have a speechwriter who did know about libraries and library service; what Mr. Cheney might not know he could find out from his wife. I have always rather suspected that Mrs. Cheney probably did a first draft of the Clement speech. I confess that I never worked up enough courage to ask either Mr. Cheney or Mrs. Cheney about the writing of the Governor's speech at ALA.

In the summer of 1957 while visiting a friend in school at Peabody, I decided one afternoon to go over to the Peabody Library and Library School. I was wandering around the Library School when Mrs. Cheney spotted me, recognized me as a visitor, and asked if I needed any help in finding whatever I might be looking for. I identified myself, and we talked briefly. Mrs. Cheney was Acting Director of the Library School in 1957 and was about to leave for the day. She told me that she was living in a house near the Peabody Campus and she wondered if I would like to walk with her and have a cup of tea. This invitation, needless to say, I accepted and for the first time experienced the Cheney hospitality.

During the next ten years (1957-67) our paths crossed from time to time at various library conferences. I became Acquisitions Librarian at the University of Georgia Library in the Fall of 1957. Brainard Cheney's third novel, *This is Adam*, was published in 1958; the editor of *The Georgia Review*, knowing of my Tennessee connection, asked me to write a review of the novel which he published in the Spring 1960 issue. When my *American Library History Reader* was published in 1961, the editor of *The Georgia Review* asked Mrs. Cheney to review the *Reader* for him. She wrote a great review which was published in the Fall 1962 issue of *The Georgia Review*.

In 1967 I returned to my native state to be a member of the MTSU Library staff. Shortly after my coming to Murfreesboro, the Cheneys invited me to the annual picnic, which they hosted each summer at their home in Smyrna for Peabody Library School students, faculty, and friends. They lived in a beautiful antebellum house that had for many years belonged to Mrs. Cheney's family. At the back of the house, known as Idler's Retreat, was a large swimming pool heated in winter and covered with a huge plastic bubble. Both the Cheneys were avid swimmers and made use of their pool Winter and Spring, Summer and Fall. During the next twenty-nine years, what had begun as a professional acquaintanceship evolved into a friendship both personal and professional. The memory of this friendship will remain with me always.

One day in the Spring of 1980, I had a call from the late Linda Hay who was Librarian of the Shiloh Regional Library in Jackson. Linda was Chairman of

the Tennessee Library Association Awards Committee that year. The Committee had selected Mrs. Cheney to receive the 1980 TLA Honor Award, and the committee wanted me to make the award presentation. Now in those days recipients of the award were not told of the award in advance of the presentation. Since Mrs. Cheney had been retired some five years, I asked Linda if she knew whether Mrs. Cheney planned to attend TLA. Linda did not; we agreed that I could tell Mrs. Cheney about her award if she told me that she had no plans to attend TLA in Gatlinburg. I called Mrs. Cheney, and after chatting with her for a couple of minutes, I asked her if she were going to TLA. She was not. I then told her I thought she should plan to go with me. She wanted to know why, and so I had to tell her she was to receive TLA's Honor Award. I got Mrs. Cheney to Gatlinburg on time. When she accepted the award, she received a standing ovation from those attending the dinner at which the award was presented. And she had a great time seeing and talking with friends and former colleagues.

In 1974 R.R. Bowker published in 8 volumes (8,917 pages) *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*; the set sold for \$185. Shortly after the set came out, Mrs. Cheney called to tell me that *Reference Services Review* had sent her the set for review, and that she wanted me to have the set. I had to confess that I had already invested in the set, and I wondered if she might not want to give it to Vanderbilt. "Oh," she said, "you can send your set back to Bowker and get your money back. Vanderbilt can buy its copy. I want you to have this copy, and I need the shelf-space it's taking up. You can come get the books in a week or so. I'll let you know when to come pick them up." In a couple of weeks I picked the set up, and in time I was able to negotiate with Bowker for a refund. That set today is quite rare and hotly sought after by Churchill collectors. An ex-library copy with all the various library markings was recently offered by a dealer for \$875; a copy that is not an ex-library copy will probably be offered for \$1000 or possibly even twice that.

In 1964 and again in 1979 I was Louis Shores' bibliographer. Both Ed Gleaves and Mrs. Cheney knew of these bibliographies, which had been published by the Florida State University Library School's chapter of Beta Phi Mu. Largely, I suspect, because of my work as Shores' bibliographer, Gleaves invited me sometime in 1980 or 81 to compile a bibliography of works by and about Frances Neel Cheney for publication in a *festschrift* he and John Mark Tucker were preparing for publication by Lexington Books/D. C. Heath and Company. *Reference Services and Library Education: Essays in Honor of Frances Neel Cheney* was published late in 1982. My contribution – "FNC in Print" – contains 611 entries. Of these 611 entries, four represent 5,819

appraisals of “Current Reference Books” published in *Wilson Library Bulletin* (1942-72), appraisals of 2,044 titles published in *Reference Services Review* (1973-75), reviews of 103 titles in *American Reference Books Annual* (1973-82), and an unknown number of unsigned reviews for *Subscription Books Bulletin* (1954-82). Between 1936 and mid-1982 Mrs. Cheney wrote for the *Nashville Banner* and the *Nashville Tennessean* a total of 283 reviews. Whether long or short, her reference book reviews were always instructive and knowledgeable, forthright and unambiguous, interesting and carefully written. Her reviews for professional journals and literary magazines both inform and evaluate, which is, of course, what a good review should do. Her newspaper reviews reveal a canny wit that is thoroughly refreshing. She is unquestionably a master of the art of the book review.

In compiling “FNC in Print” I was fortunate to have the help of Mrs. Cheney who was a master practitioner of the artful craft and crafty art that is bibliography. She reviewed my work, and from time to time would alert me to some item that she remembered writing. For example, one day she called to tell me that she had just remembered writing an essay review of William Faulkner’s longest novel *A Fable* (1954). It had been published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. She wondered if I had found that review. I had not, but I soon located the review in the Fall 1954 issue of *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Ida Read was a long-time and valuable member of the staff of the MTSU Library cataloging department. She was and is a talented photographer. Her photographs of people have always reminded me of those by the famous Canadian photographer Karsh of Ottawa. I very much wanted her to photograph the Cheney’s. In the fall of 1978 or early spring of 1979, the Cheney’s agreed to be photographed by Mrs. Read. She and I spent a Saturday afternoon with the Cheney’s at Idler’s Retreat. Mrs. Cheney served us coffee and some of her wonderful yellow pound cake. Mrs. Read took a great series of photographs of the Cheney’s at home. You have seen these photographs today in the Cheney exhibit, and now you know why I always think of Ida Read as the Karsh of MTSU Library.

In the fall of 1980 Mrs. Cheney and Mrs. Read drove with me down to Birmingham for the 60th anniversary conference of the Southeastern Library Association. At this conference Mrs. Cheney received SELA’s Mary Utopia Rothrock Award for exceptional contributions to library development in the Southeast. Four years earlier (1976) Mrs. Cheney – a past president of SELA (1960-62) and recently retired from a 30-year teaching career at Peabody Library School – had been awarded honorary life membership in SELA for her

“significant and lasting contributions to the association and to the library profession.”

In 1994 The Tennessee Library Association added to its membership categories Honorary Life Membership. This membership recognizes “lifetime achievement and contributions to the field of librarianship.” Frances Neel Cheney was chosen to receive this recognition at the 1995 TLA conference. At this time TLA believed that Mrs. Cheney would be the first person ever to be awarded honorary life membership in TLA. Much as I would have liked Mrs. Cheney to have this distinction, she was in fact the second person to receive this recognition. In 1956 Mary Utopia Rothrock – a past president of the American Library Association (1946-47), twice president of the Tennessee Library Association (1919-20; 1927-28), a founding member of the Southeastern Library Association (1920) and SELA president (1922-24) – was awarded honorary life membership in TLA for her outstanding and lasting contributions to librarianship in Tennessee and beyond. (See *Tennessee Librarian*, June 1956, p.100)

In 1995 TLA met in Nashville. Mrs. Cheney was 89 years young and was living at National Health Care Center in Nashville. She was brought to the TLA session at which the life membership was presented. From her wheelchair to the surprise of nobody present she responded with a “thank-you” that will not soon be forgotten by those who heard it. This was for Mrs. Cheney her last library conference. She died on May 5, 1996 in her 90th year.

Before – long before – paper recycling became fashionable, Mrs. Cheney was a self-styled “paper recycler.” For many of her notes and letters she used the back of a book publication notice or notepaper advertising some company’s wares or services. In 1974 I was the recipient of such a note. It is dated 2/26/74, and is handwritten in pencil on the Brookhaven, Mississippi, *Daily Leader’s* notepaper promoting its commercial printing department. The letter reads:

Dear, dear, John David –

Bless you for including Ortega’s
essay which tells us what we must do.
My students will have to read it to pass
my courses.

Love,

Fannie

Ortega refers to Jose Ortega y Gasset’s 1934 essay “The Mission of the Librarian”. It is one of the essays included in my *Of, By, and For Librarians*:

Second Series published on February 23, 1974 by Shoe String Press, Inc. Mrs. Cheney reviewed this anthology for the *Nashville Tennessean* on April 14. She also made considerable use of this anthology in her essay "The Librarian as Bookman" which was published in the July 1974 issue of *Catholic Library World*. That FNC liked *Of, By, and For Librarians: Second Series* pleased both me and my publisher very much.

Several days after the death of my mother in 1985 at age 93, I received a letter from Mrs. Cheney. She wrote on Idler's Retreat stationery from Smyrna. The letter is dated October 16, 1985. It reads in part:

Dear John David,

I learned at church about your mother and you have been on my mind very much ever since. I know that even though it was not unexpected of one very old and frail, it is still a great shock and Lon and I send our deepest sympathy. Please pardon my using the typewriter but my handwriting, never more than barely legible, isn't even that.

Fondly,
Fannie

For me and many other librarians of my generation Frances Neel Cheney will always be remembered as a great teacher whether she taught us in or out of the classroom, as a librarian for all seasons, as a great human being and a very great lady. In my time she was the First Lady of American Librarianship, and she will in my memory always remain so.

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The Special Collections Department at the University of Memphis's
McWherter Library: Unearthing Regional Treasures

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The Special Collections Department of the McWherter Library, located on the campus of the University of Memphis is becoming an important research center for scholars and writers studying the music made in Memphis, Tennessee and its surrounding environs during the twentieth century. The collection contains a broad range of music related resources that reflects the major role that Memphis music played in the last century's cultural history; everything from newspaper clippings to photographs of musicians to sheet music to personal papers to interviews with key Memphis music figures can be found in Special Collections. It is interesting to note that the bulk of the collection related to music has come together almost by accident. Certainly the materials did not just magically appear in the archive; Special Collections curators have been diligent in their collection development efforts. But proximity and providence have also played a role in assembling these materials in one place. The main focus of the Special Collections Department is on the regional history of Memphis and the Mid-South, which includes parts of Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Memphis, Tennessee has long been known as a city with a rich musical heritage. Its primary claim to fame is its identity as the hometown of singer Elvis Presley. The city has been the fertile breeding ground for not just singular musical talents like Presley but also for several influential music styles such as blues, rock and roll, and soul music. Many music fans know Memphis first and foremost as the home of the blues, an African-American musical form that developed from the life experiences of Africans brought to this country as slaves. Most music scholars agree that the form known as blues has many African antecedents in the music that Southern slaves made in the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries, but that the form as it has become known around the world was first heard and recorded by African-Americans in the Memphis/Mid-South region in the early part of the twentieth century. The city is often given credit for developing the pop music style known as rock and roll. It should not be forgotten that Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, and Roy Orbison all got their commercial start on the Memphis-based Sun Records label along with Elvis Presley in the mid-nineteen fifties. And in the late nineteen sixties Stax Records had many worldwide hits with artists like Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, Eddie Floyd, and Booker T. & the MGs.

That Memphis has such a rich musical heritage cannot be disputed. However, the city and its citizenry are notorious for caring little about this heritage. That seems to be changing in recent years. Several archives and museums devoted to preserving and publicizing this history have been established in the Memphis area. In Spring 2000 Gibson Guitar Corporation opened the Rock 'N Soul Museum in the shadow of historic Beale Street. And the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Music Academy and Performing Arts Center will be built on the site of the demolished Stax Records building in South Memphis. Before any of that happened the Special Collections Department was acquiring material relevant to the subject in various formats for several decades, amassing an impressive collection of Memphis music memorabilia. It may not be as well publicized as some of the glitzier collections in town, but it is just as substantial if one cares to do a little digging.

History

The Special Collections Department, originally known as the Mississippi Valley Collection, opened in 1963 in the Brister Library of what was then called Memphis State University (renamed the University of Memphis in 1994). It was developed at the urging of faculty members, particularly in the English Department, who wanted the university library to start a collection focusing on Southern regional writers. That was the original idea for the collection, but soon afterward it became apparent that many of these regional writers had already placed or made plans to place their papers and correspondence in other university collections. Since that time the collection has broadened and changed focus to include local and regional history and culture rather than concentrating on literary figures exclusively.

With that broader collection focus the department began collecting all kinds of material relevant to the history and culture of the Mid-South, which certainly included music of the region as well. Special Collections Department

Curator Ed Frank is not exactly sure when music related materials started showing up in the collection, but he believes that the first music oriented collection came to the department no later than 1970. A lot of this material was donated by faculty members in the History Department who began and finished this research on their own; they did not consider the possibility that their work would eventually be placed in the Special Collections Department when they began it.

As curator Ed Frank says of the collection, "It just grew; it didn't grow according to a plan."¹ He acknowledges that much of the existing music related collection arrived almost purely by accident. However, some collections were specifically targeted and found their way into the department in an intentional, premeditated way.

At some point in the development of the department, the Mississippi Valley Collection was subsumed under the umbrella of Special Collections since the archive houses more than just regional and local history materials. The department is also responsible for the rare books collection, the security and maintenance of incunabula and first editions, as well as the Mississippi Valley Collection related materials. In the nineteen seventies there was some confusion on the part of library staff and users, who never quite knew how to refer to the archive, as Special Collections or MVC. Curator Frank says that "the Mississippi Valley Collection is simply the largest portion of Special Collections, the portion that is focused on local and regional history and culture per se." It is his understanding that "Special Collections was instituted later as an umbrella under which the MVC and the other non-local/regional materials could fall."

Collection Development

Chance may have been a factor in bringing the bulk of the collection together, but the Special Collections Department has always been receptive to acquiring any music related materials it has been offered. It should be remembered that twenty to thirty years ago popular music was not considered in the same light that it is now in academic circles.² Rock and roll, blues and country music were widely regarded as trash by many Memphians during the fifties and sixties. Such music was not something to be studied or collected. It was something to be embarrassed by and, at best, ignored. Of course, that changed as rock and other forms of popular music gained critical and cultural cachet in academic circles in the late twentieth century. When Elvis biographer Jerry Hopkins donated his papers to the Special Collections Department of what was then known as Memphis State University in 1981, the

music materials in the collection gained a higher profile, and more use was made of these materials after Hopkins placed his papers there.

Another stroke of good fortune was the donation of the *Press Scimitar's* clipping file to Special Collections after the Memphis daily afternoon newspaper folded in October 1983. The clipping file included not only text clippings from the pages of the *Press Scimitar* but also numerous photographs used by the newspaper. These photographs have proven to be a real treasure for those doing research on Memphis music; there are pictures of local music figures, both well-known and obscure, that rate as priceless in the study of this region's musical history. Even though curator Ed Frank and his predecessors did not set out to amass an impressive array of Memphis music resources, that is exactly what happened in Special Collections. There may not be a formal collection development policy specific to music related materials, but the growing prominence of these holdings acts as something of a magnet for acquiring such items in the department. And the collection continues to grow in reputation and quality.

Collections

The bulk of Memphis music related materials will be found in the *Press Scimitar* clipping file and photo morgue that was donated to the Special Collections Department in 1984, after the Memphis afternoon paper ceased operation in 1983. When the *Press Scimitar* stopped publication, staff members were allowed to pick through the morgue and clipping file for materials they wanted, so that some of the more mainstream music material (photos of and stories related to Elvis Presley, for instance) was removed before it got to Special Collections. However, there is plenty of important information dealing with the development and history of the region's music just waiting to be discovered in the clipping files and photos from the *Press Scimitar*.

Jim Cole, library assistant in the Special Collections Department, said, "Memphis music materials sometimes turn up in the oddest, unrelated places. For example, pictures of music figures may show up in folders related to Memphis society events. There is a great picture of record producer Sam Phillips at a Cotton Carnival party. There is no way to get at everything related to Memphis music in the clipping file except by digging. Sometimes you just have to be lucky because the most interesting photos and stories are often found in the most unlikely spots."³ Cole estimates that there are probably 300,000 pictures in the *Press Scimitar* photo morgue.

The Commercial Appeal, Memphis's other daily newspaper, which is still in operation, also contributed a quantity of photos to the Special Collections Department in the mid-nineteen eighties. These pictures were unsorted and without attached clipping file stories, for the most part. Special Collections staff has organized many of these photographs into categories, but the *Press Scimitar* files are greater in quantity and receive more use. These photos tell a story about the history of Memphis music in a way that newspaper articles do not. There are pictures of musicians in some of the most unimaginable and downright weird contexts. Memphis has always been a city full of eccentrics and contrarians, who have traveled their own strange paths, and these photos bear witness to that maverick stance.

The department's collection of books about music is varied, ranging from obscure academic monographs to religious hymnals to artist biographies and autobiographies. And, of course, there are plenty of books about Elvis Presley. The titles range from academic to sentimental to simply strange. There are also plenty of lurid titles in the Elvis book collection: boudoir memoirs penned by former lovers, remembrances of the King by distant relatives, and tell-all exposes by disgruntled Memphis Mafia. Of course, this range of books on Presley reflects the general trashiness of titles available about him and does not reflect a bias toward collecting the trashy and tawdry on the part of Special Collections staff. Curator Ed Frank comments that "many of these books on Elvis came to us as gifts and there was no concerted effort to add these titles to our collection."

Jerry Hopkins, author of *Elvis: A Biography* and several other rock star biographies, placed a large collection of his papers on deposit in Special Collections on June 15, 1981. Much of the collection has little or nothing to do with regional Mid-South music, particularly the research files on other performers and the general entertainment and music files, which contain press clippings, press releases and publicity kits. The Hopkins Papers may not be that vital or rare, but they are certainly a nice addition to the collection and have raised the profile of the department as a depository for other similar papers.

There is a collection of sheet music in the department, most of it dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The bulk of it is sheet music for popular songs published in America during this period; the more "serious" sheet music collection is housed in a separate music library on the campus of the University of Memphis. However, sheet music for the golden period of Memphis music (mid-fifties through early seventies) is not really found in the collection.

There are interview tapes done with Memphis music figures; they were placed in Special Collections by the Oral History Research Office on campus. They exist predominantly in cassette format, but a quantity of interviews done in the late nineteen sixties are in the almost antique reel-to-reel tape format. A large quantity of these taped interviews has been transcribed as well. These interviews are invaluable for historical purposes, since many of the subjects interviewed are no longer living, and several of them were interviewed exclusively by the Oral History Research Office staff. An Elvis Presley cultural conference with speakers and presentations has been held on the campus of The University of Memphis each August for more than twenty years; the conference is videotaped each year and these tapes are archived in Special Collections along with a few other materials from the annual conference.

Access and Use

The Special Collections Department got its start in the old Brister Library of Memphis State University, a less than perfect spot for creating and maintaining an archive. The Brister Library building was cramped and subject to extremes of temperature and humidity, subjecting the often delicate materials stored in the department to less than favorable storage conditions. That changed when Memphis State University became the University of Memphis in July 1994, and the Ned R. McWherter Library opened for operation on September 1, 1994. The department is now located on the fourth floor of what is a state of the art library building, which provides more storage space and fewer extremes of climate.

The Special Collections Department primarily serves the academic community of the University of Memphis, but the collection is open to anyone doing research into the culture and history of the Mid-South region. Of course, materials do not circulate, and users must request them from staff who bring items to a reading room from closed stacks. There these sources can be viewed and copied if necessary on a copy machine kept in the reading room.

Writers and researchers from all over the world come to the department to utilize these Memphis music materials. Elvis biographer Peter Guralnick made extensive use of the collection in writing his two definitive books on the subject of Presley, and numerous filmmakers from PBS and the A & E Network have used still photos from the archives in their productions. The importance and prestige of this collection have grown exponentially due to the flood of books and films that were enriched by sources found in the department. This archive may have come together mainly by fortune and

proximity, but it is fast becoming one of the most treasured and highly valued music related collections in the Mid-South. Apparently good luck can sometimes serve as a very effective collection development strategy.

NOTES

¹Ed Frank, interview by author, tape recording, Memphis, Tenn., 30 August 2000.

²Bonna J. Boettcher and William L. Schurck, "From Games to Grunge: Popular Culture Research at Bowling Green State University," *Notes* 54 (June 1998): 850, 859.

³Jim Cole, interview by author, Memphis, Tenn., 17 May 1999.

Tennessee Book Reviews

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Billings, Dwight B., Gurney Norman and Katherine Ledford, eds. *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

This outstanding collection of twenty-one essays by Appalachian activists, critics, and scholars successfully refutes the many stereotypes persisting to this day about the Appalachian region and its inhabitants. Beginning to manifest in late nineteenth century local color writing, these stereotypes have been, and continue to be, reinforced in the public consciousness through such media as comic strips, motion pictures, and television programs. The Appalachia of popular culture is a wild, inhospitable wasteland inhabited by feuding, impoverished, incestuous, ignorant, racist and uneducated hillbillies who have turned their backs on economic and social “progress.” The essays collected here successfully shatter those images.

The editors originally conceived this book to be a collection of responses to Robert Schenkkan’s epic drama *The Kentucky Cycle*. This play, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992, was confirmation to the editors of how deeply embedded stereotypical images of Appalachia had become in the public consciousness, so much so that drama critics and many literary scholars hailed the play as an “authentic” depiction of Appalachian culture and history. Several of the essays in this volume closely examine *The Kentucky Cycle* and expose it to be the shameless rehashing of classic Appalachian stereotypes it is, but the book goes much further than that. Using *The Kentucky Cycle* as their catalyst, the activists, critics, and scholars here examine from both personal and scholarly perspectives the cultural and historical dimensions of Appalachian stereotypes which reveal why something like Schenkkan’s work could be hailed as “authentic” and receive so much positive recognition.

The essays collected in this volume are quite varied in the subjects they tackle. Ronald Lewis examines late-nineteenth century local color writing that began shaping the stereotypical images of Appalachia that persist to this day. Katherine Ledford also contributes a literary study focusing upon early travel narratives. Historians take to task historical myths about the Appalachian region, such as it being exclusively Unionist during the Civil War, or that it ever had a uniform culture or homogenous population. Additional essays examine such subjects as the origin of the hillbilly character and the perpetuation of the redneck stereotype in popular culture.

These important, provocative essays are an outstanding contribution to Appalachian studies scholarship, but they are also quite accessible to non-specialists. The book will serve as an excellent introduction to Appalachian regional studies. It is an essential purchase for academic collections, and I highly recommend it for public libraries where there is a strong interest in books on the Appalachia region.

Ed Sullivan

*School of Information Sciences
University of Tennessee*

Buchanan, John. ***Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters***. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2001. 434pp.

The first American southwestern frontier was not in Texas or New Mexico, but in what is now central and west Tennessee, west Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. The Western Waters are six rivers that begin in the Smoky Mountains and converge into the Tennessee River, which runs through the middle of the Deep South. In the years leading up to the 1790s, land-hungry Scotch-Irish and English settlers had crossed the Appalachian Mountains, setting the stage for an all-out confrontation with the southern Indian nations. One people would find the life denied them elsewhere; another people would lose their sovereignty. Andrew Jackson, an orphan from South Carolina, achieved military and political success within the folk movement of the Anglo and Scotch-Irish people in the original American southwest.

John Buchanan's *Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters* is a well-written account of Jackson during this time (roughly 1790-1812). Buchanan was an archivist at Cornell University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art before becoming an historical author. He is an excellent writer who treats history with the panorama and emotion it deserves. *Jackson's Way* presents, in coherent form, a lesser-known chapter in American history. The centerpiece of the book is Jackson's campaigns against the Creeks

and Chickasaws, but Buchanan also includes a very detailed account of the Battle of New Orleans at the book's conclusion.

So what are we to make of Jackson? Buchanan presents his subject as beholden to a different set of values and historical necessities. Jackson, like most American frontiersmen, belonged to a world well acquainted with natural danger and want, violence and the rude realities of survival. Nevertheless, Buchanan is clearly taken with his subject and admires his considerable achievements.

For lovers of all things Tennessee, *Jackson's Way* is a must-have. Andrew Jackson is one of Tennessee's foremost historical figures, and Buchanan's prose will entertain even the most seasoned Tennessee historian. Jackson is intricately bound with the history of East and Central Tennessee, from his days as a judge in Jonesborough, to settling at the Hermitage in Nashville. His many duels and scandalous marriage have become part of Tennessee lore.

This title is an old-fashioned narrative history. It is a self-assured masterwork that feels free to imbue its subjects and events with an emotion and sweep that they, of course, possessed. *Jackson's Way* is most recommended for a general audience, but specialists and historians will also be well served by this book.

Charles Allan

Sherrod Library

East Tennessee State University

Clay, Julie. *The Stars That Shine*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. 101pp.

Country music is full of songs that tell stories, so what can be more natural than a book made up of stories told by country musicians? Julie Clay, a former executive director of the Nashville Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, asked twelve well-known country music stars to share a childhood memory. *The Stars That Shine*, a children's book that is suitable for sharing with the entire family, is the result.

Contributors range from established stars like Brenda Lee, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, and Willie Nelson, to relative newcomers LeAnn Rimes and Tim McGraw. Other contributors are Vince Gill, Patty Loveless, Trisha Yearwood, George Jones, Marty Stuart, and Pam Tillis. While the story, "The Coat of Many Colors," will be familiar to Dolly Parton fans because of her song by that name, others will be new. The importance of family and having a dream are two recurring themes. Some stories are poignant, such as Brenda Lee's "A Gift from the Angels," about a mother's sacrifice to keep a promise to her

daughter. Marty Stuart's remembrance of the time his grandfather bought a 1956 Chevrolet BelAir that he could not drive is quite funny as is Willie Nelson's story of Booger Red and his cow. Many of us will be able to relate to ten-year-old Trisha Yearwood's efforts to become a glamorous movie star and her family's attempt to humor her or to young Grant's discovery that practice and belief in yourself are better than a good luck charm in Vince Gill's "Listen to the Mockingbird." Whether a story describes a childhood spent in poverty or one spent in middle class comfort, the common humanity that unites all of us is clearly evident.

This book is illustrated with paintings by Dan Andreasen. Each entry has the star's picture as a child at the beginning of the story as well as a current photograph at the end. A nice feature is the section after the story that not only gives biographical information, but also tells how the story relates to the star's life. Ms. Clay hopes this book will raise awareness for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, as she has donated ten percent of her advance proceeds to the hospital. *The Stars That Shine* would be a nice addition to any public or school library. It would also be a good addition to any academic library with an interest in country music or storytelling.

Kathy Campbell

Sherrod Library

East Tennessee State University

Drake, Richard B. *A History of Appalachia*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000. 292pp.

A History of Appalachia is a broad overview of the Appalachian region from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. Written by Richard Drake, professor emeritus at Berea College and one of the founding members of the Appalachian Studies Association, this work attempts to provide a comprehensive history of the region and its people from 1800 to the present. The book is divided into three parts; "The Contest for Appalachia," "The New Nation and the Appalachian Backwoods," and "Modern Appalachia."

Part three, "Modern Appalachia," is the most comprehensive of the sections and best demonstrates the work's greatest strength. Touching on a variety of ideas and themes from politics to Hollywood to geography, without going into great detail on any one topic, makes it an excellent survey of Appalachian history. No doubt this work will appear on the reading lists of a multitude of history courses. Drake also includes some historiography throughout the book, which points readers to other Appalachian history sources. For people just

beginning their study of Appalachia, Drake's work is the place to start. However, this is not the book for those already knowledgeable about the field.

The role of Tennessee in the Appalachian tapestry is peppered throughout the work with particular focus on Chattanooga and Knoxville. Both cities played important roles during the Civil War and later as railway centers. However, the very nature of Drake's effort to provide a comprehensive history of the region prohibits him from spending too much time on any one area.

While Drake does provide an extensive list of sources, footnotes are not included in the text. Another feature of the work is a small photo collection of people, places, and events located together in the middle of the text. There are also a few maps scattered throughout the book. Since this work is a survey, the detailed index provides an important tool for those wanting information on a particular topic.

Overall, this work is recommended for undergraduate libraries of all kinds, as well as public libraries. The general reader may find the book a bit tedious, but the importance of the book as a general survey far outweighs that concern. *A History of Appalachia* would also be appropriate for advanced high school collections. Drake's style is smooth and easy and, although he has a mountain of material to cover, he generally avoids becoming bogged down in details, thus making the work highly accessible.

Lisa A. Ennis

Instruction Librarian

Georgia College & State University

Dortch, Chris. ***Gentleman Champion: Lew Oehmig's Romance with Golf.***

Chattanooga: CME Publishing. 2001. 168 pp.

Gentle Champion relates the life story of one of the greatest amateur golfers to come out of Tennessee. Born in Cincinnati, Oehmig's family moved to Chattanooga when he was a child. Raised in a sports minded setting, young Lew was often seen with a shortened golf club in his hands, either swatting golf balls or copperhead snakes as the need arose. At Baylor School in Chattanooga, he was not only a standout golfer, but was also the school's outstanding quarterback.

Oehmig continued his golfing career at the University of Virginia during which time he won his first of eight Tennessee Amateur Championships over the course of 37 years. After college and a stint in the Navy during World War II, Oehmig passed up a professional golfing career to work in sales with the Coca-Cola Company. However, golf remained his passion. His amateur career lasted over fifty years in which Oehmig won three United States Senior

Amateurs titles, seven Chattanooga Metro Men's Amateurs tournaments, eight Tennessee Amateurs, and seven Tennessee Senior Amateur Championships, to name a few. Listed among his honors are his distinction as the first non-playing captain of the Walker Cup team, member of the Tennessee Golf Hall of Fame, and recipient of the United States Golf Association's Bob Jones Award.

The author, Chris Dortch, is a journalist who has covered golf, football and basketball in the South for over 20 years. He has also edited other works such as the *Blue Ribbon College Basketball Yearbook*. He has thoroughly researched his subject, and his knowledge of golf history in Tennessee is evident.

This book traces Oehmig's life in general chronological order with some chapters focusing on a particular aspect of his life. It includes many anecdotes on golfing history in Tennessee. Academic and public libraries will find this work a valuable addition to their sports or Tennessee history collections. Those readers interested in golfing history will find this work entertaining, and Oehmig's life and character on and off the golf course inspiring.

John N. Hitchcock

James E. Walker Library

Middle Tennessee State University

Insoe, John C. ***Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation***. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

Only recently has serious study been conducted on the African-American experience in Appalachia. In this collection of eighteen essays, scholars examine the experiences of blacks in the southern Appalachian region from the antebellum period through segregation. The essays confirm that African-Americans did indeed have a profound impact upon the economic, cultural, and social landscapes of southern Appalachia.

The contributors examine a variety of subjects in their essays: the impact of slave labor upon the southern Appalachian economy; education and religious missions directed toward Appalachian Blacks; the influences African-Americans had upon music and other aspects of Appalachian culture; political activism of blacks in the Reconstruction period; and the racial attitudes of white highlanders. Richard Drake examines slavery and the abolitionist movement in southern Appalachia. Drake confirms that, contrary to popular belief, slavery did exist and even thrived in some parts of southern Appalachia. Marie Tedesco examines a legal case involving Adam Waterford, a free Black slave owner in East Tennessee. Conrad Ostwalt and Phoebe Pollitt offer a

history of the Salem School and Orphanage, established by Mennonite Brethren Church missionaries for Blacks in North Carolina in the late nineteenth century. John Stealey examines the role of slave labor in the Kanawah Salt Industry in West Virginia. Fitzhugh Brundage examines incidents of lynching and other racial violence in southern Appalachia.

Appalachians and Race is an important contribution to both the fields of African-American and Appalachian regional studies. It sheds light upon a significant part of southern culture and history that has been largely neglected by scholars. An essential purchase for academic collections.

Ed Sullivan

School of Information Sciences

University of Tennessee

Maraniss, David and Ellen Nakashima. *The Prince of Tennessee: The Rise of Al Gore*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Parts of this biography of Al Gore, Jr. were first published in the *Washington Post* beginning in January 1998 and continuing through August 2000. Both authors are reporters for the *Post*. Maraniss won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the presidential campaign during 1992. He is also the author of the Bill Clinton biography, *First In His Class*.

The authors have credited an impressive five hundred people as sources for the *Prince of Tennessee*, ranging from Gore's Harvard professors and classmates to his mother, Pauline Gore, to Jesse Jackson. They also acknowledge Al Gore's cooperation in granting six interviews, although they are careful to state that this book is in no way an authorized biography. The book relates nothing surprising about Gore. It painstakingly chronicles his childhood and college years, his service as a reporter for the *Nashville Tennessean*, his time as Congressman and Senator, his attempt for the presidency in 1988, and his decision to join Clinton in 1992. His time as Vice President of the United States is covered more briefly than other parts of his life, but is interesting nonetheless.

The book gives the impression that Gore is, and always has been a reasonably decent, although flawed man. Gore is shown in these pages to be intelligent, loyal, and extremely studious (often to the point of overkill), and capable of great passion in subjects such as the threat of nuclear annihilation and the environment. He is also shown to be stiff and overly formal in speech and manner and to have a strong tendency to exaggerate his importance or role in events. The authors very sympathetically relate that his manner and his propensity to exaggerate come in part from a deep and abiding insecurity. The

impact his father had on Gore's political ambitions and career is emphasized throughout the book. An interesting chapter relates the story of Tipper Gore's life while her husband was Vice President, including her work with the homeless and people who suffer from mental illness.

The journalistic style is easy to read and digest. *The Prince of Tennessee* may not add much unique information to the story of Al Gore Jr., but it is a credible biography of a man who has attempted to serve the public for most of his adult life, and who will probably continue to be in the public eye. This book is recommended for public and undergraduate library collections.

Jennifer Newcome

Hardwick Johnston Memorial Library

Hiwassee College

Younger, Richard. ***Get a Shot of Rhythm and Blues: The Arthur Alexander Story***. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000. 222p.

Born in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, Arthur Alexander has the distinction of having his songs recorded by Bob Dylan, The Beatles, and The Rolling Stones. Virtually unknown to the general public, musicians contend that Alexander's influence on popular music was significant.

Unlike other Alabama musicians who had to leave the state to record and become famous, Alexander created a precedent for remaining within Alabama while cementing the burgeoning Muscle Shoals—the hotbed of southern soul--music scene. In fact, Younger attributes the creation of the Muscle Shoals music scene solely to Alexander. Frequently an outsider among musicians, Alexander made up for not knowing how to play an instrument by writing songs, and singing. Alexander's distinctive, satisfying vocals and influential, yet quirky style of sixties soul, and unique arrangements merge soul with country for an uncommon sound. Difficult to categorize in the clearly delineated musical genres of the sixties, his crossover appeal languished. Alexander's limited success was due in part to poor management, trivial marketing, and slapdash distribution.

Younger places Alexander firmly in the larger context of the sixties soul music scene and injects various characters and minor cast, providing a glimpse of the innovative era. Alexander is infrequently mentioned in some chapters because the author devotes his research to the broader music scene, at times exploring tangential musicians, producers, and recording studios. However, Younger discusses the influence of country-western music on Alexander's style, while referencing Black hillbilly bands that proliferated in the South during the early half of the century. When it came to music, race was never an

issue for Alexander, who said, “When I grew up, I heard white singers before I heard black singers. You know a good song. I don’t care who’s singing it, man, it’s a good song.” The book documents the ups, downs, dramas, comedies, and heartaches that characterized Alexander’s musical career, as well as the bittersweet comeback just before his death in 1993.

A keen addition to music biographies, Younger imparts a rich, informative social and cultural history of fabled Muscle Shoals, the birthplace and hub of so much historic root music. Extensive interviews, history of Alabama’s music scene, and the author’s clear affection for his subject, make this an important contribution to music scholarship. The book includes black and white photographs, the author’s notes, a bibliography, a discography, and an index. Public and academic libraries with strong music collections will want to add this title.

Rebecca Tolley-Stokes
Sherrod Library
East Tennessee State University

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