

The Florida Current

The University Press of Florida Newsletter

January 2008

Taking the Plunge: On Tour with Lu Vickers

When the subject of book tours comes up, my writer friends tend to fall into two camps. One feels that with all the changes in the book industry, writers must do everything they can to promote their work—including setting up and financing their own book tours. The second camp feels that book tours are more trouble and expense than they're worth. I fell into the second camp, and not just because I'm shy.

My only experience with a book tour, prior to the one I made on behalf of *Weeki Wachee*, *City of Mermaids* was a jaunt across Florida with a friend to promote a book in which we both had stories. I had a blast with my friend, but we only read to a total of seven women and a handful of sleeping cats. I don't think we even sold any books. So, I was a bit leery when UPF's publicist Romi Gutierrez mentioned that a book store in Key West was interested in having me down for a signing.

My partner, on the other hand, had no qualms at all. She said one word: Hemingway. As if a trek to Key West would somehow catapult me into his company. How could I refuse?

I decided to treat the trip as a family vacation and Romi set out to line up readings in cities along the way. Unlike my first publisher who didn't even have a publicist, Romi sent out press releases and review copies and I was soon besieged by reporters wanting interviews (and contact info for mermaids.) The audiences at the venues varied in size; at Sarasota Books and News I read to about eight people (including my family), but one of them was a mermaid I hadn't met before. She'd seen the article about the book signing in the newspaper and drove fifty miles to meet me.



From left to right: Urban Think! Bookstore manager Jim Crescitelli, Ginger Stanley Hallowell (former WW mermaid), Holly Hall (one of the mermaid twins), Lu Vickers, Dolly Heltsley (the other mermaid twin), Darlest Thomas (former WW mermaid), and Frank Billingsley of the Florida Humanities Council.

Voltaire's Books in Key West had a small turnout too, but they more than made up for it. The local paper *Solares Hill* ran a feature review and a travel piece on *Weeki Wachee*. I made connections with a Florida filmmaker, met a woman who used to pilot *Weeki Wachee's* tour boats, and thrilled a couple of people with my vintage *Weeki Wachee View* Master slides. (And I made my Hemingway connection; his grandson John read the day after I did and signed my copy of his memoir.)

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UPF Congratulates:

BILL BELLEVILLE

Winner of the Florida State University's Florida Book Award—Bronze Medal and the 1,000 Friends of Florida Al Burt Award for *Losing It All to Sprawl: How Progress Ate My Cracker Landscape*

MARTIN DYCKMAN

Winner of the Florida State University's Florida Book Award—Bronze Medal and the Florida Historical Society's Charlton Tebeau Book Award for *Floridian of His Century: The Courage of Governor LeRoy Collins*

JOHN H. HANN

Winner of the Florida Historical Society's Rembert Patrick Book Award for *The Native American World Beyond Apalachee: West Florida and the Chattahoochee Valley*

DANIEL S. MURPHREE

Winner of the Florida State University's Florida Book Award—Silver Medal and the Florida Historical Society's Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Book Award for *Constructing Floridians: Natives and Europeans in the Colonial Floridas, 1513–1783*

MARY S. HOFFSCHWELLE

Honorable Mention in the History of Education Society Outstanding Book Award for *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*

KEVIN D. McCRANIE

Winner of the International Napoleonic Society Literary Prize for *Admiral Lord Keith and the Naval War against Napoleon*

WILLIAM N. STILL JR.

Winner of the North American Society for Oceanic History John Lyman Book Award for *Crisis at Sea: The United States Navy in European Waters in World War I*

JOSHUA M. SMITH

Winner of the North American Society for Oceanic History John Lyman Book Award for *Borderland Smuggling: Patriots, Loyalists, and Illicit Trade in the Northeast, 1783–1820*

JOHN H. SCHROEDER

Honorable Mention in the North American Society for Oceanic History John Lyman Book Award for *Commodore John Rodgers: Paragon of the Early American Navy*

FAITH EIDSE

Winner of the Florida Historical Society's Samuel Proctor Oral History Award for *Voices of the Apalachicola*



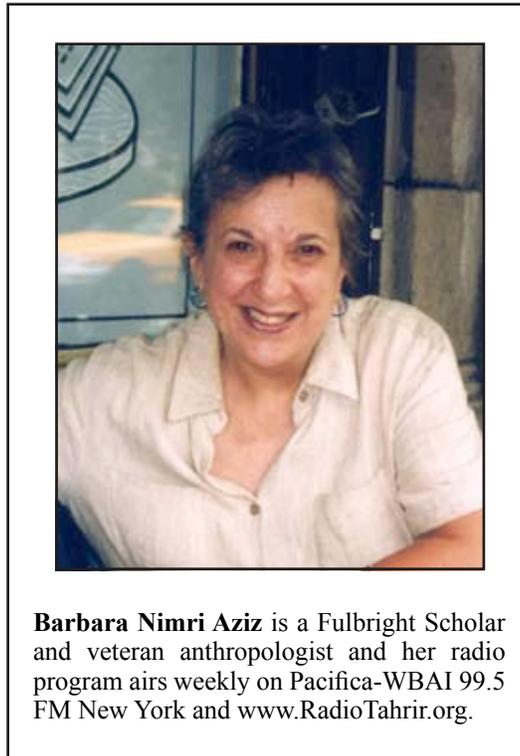
Sitting Down with Author Barbara Aziz

Q: Your dual perspective as a journalist and an anthropologist is clearly evident in *Swimming Up the Tigris: Real Life Encounters with Iraq*. In what ways did your experience and training in these two professions help you tell this powerful story?

A: Journalists do not have the leisure or the copy space, in contrast to anthropologists, to dig deep and reveal connections and links between culture and politics. On the other hand, journalists can be more efficient in some ways. We learn how to use a single case to illustrate a general dynamic. Journalists are generally better writers and they can allow themselves inside the story (to a degree), something anthropologists try to avoid.

As an anthropologist, I brought my 20 years of field experience in Asia to my work in Iraq. I am trained, to see links that are not readily apparent operating among society's institutions, to carefully cross check facts, and gather many case histories. I am also of Arab heritage and I bring my Islamic and Arab values and belief in my heritage as an asset to my work. I sometimes feel I am talking with members of my own family.

Q: Much of what is written about Iraq today focuses on the invasion and the



Barbara Nimri Aziz is a Fulbright Scholar and veteran anthropologist and her radio program airs weekly on Pacifica-WBAI 99.5 FM New York and www.RadioTahrir.org.

military occupation. *Swimming Up the Tigris* provides a unique glimpse into the hardships of the embargo years. As a journalist, why do you think the mainstream media fails to make the connection between the embargo and the Iraqi reaction to the invasion?

A: This is due to the decision by media

managers to keep news simple, to keep it "fresh," to box our knowledge, to keep early history (the history of the British occupation of Iraq, the history of Arab nationalism, the history of friendly relations between the U.S. and Iraq in the 80s, etc.) Many agree that our U.S. historical consciousness can be very shallow. This needs to change.

Iraq as a major source of oil is easy to explain and easy to sell. So is brutal dictatorship. Also media managers to some degree must respond to U.S. political pressures from the U.S. administration and other major interests. They are not independent. We must accept this.

Q: You are adamant that Iraqis are not victims. Why is it so important that the world community view Iraqis in this light?

A: You cannot really respect those who you make 'victims.' Neither do they enjoy self-respect. Victims begin to beg, to become dependent; so we become their masters in another (perhaps kinder) way. Victims often become like children. Men lose their status in society, and this has severe repercussions. We really only care about women and children...and, oh yes, old men. Iraqis understand this process and they refuse to accept this role.

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Audiences at Orlando's Urban Think! Bookstore were treated to the appearance of four mermaids who graciously donated their time: Darlest Thomas, twins Holly Hall and Dolly Heltsley, and Ginger Stanley Hallowell, who later doubled in the 50s horror flick, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

Books and Books in Coral Gables resulted in reunions with a few old friends (and side trips to Monkey Jungle, Coral Castle and the Venetian Pool). An appreciative audience of forty people showed up at the Book Center in Vero; the local paper also featured a travel article on Weeki Wachee and a sidebar about the book. A similar crowd showed up at Jonesberry Books in Gainesville. The arrival of Mary Darlington Fletcher, an original mermaid,

and the crew from UPF made that event particularly special.

Was it worth it? I have to say it was. Sure, I had to pay for most of the trip—but turning it into my family vacation made that reasonable. My kids got a chance to hang out with mermaids and see some of Old Florida. I signed over a hundred books and converted a few unbelievers to believe in mermaids.

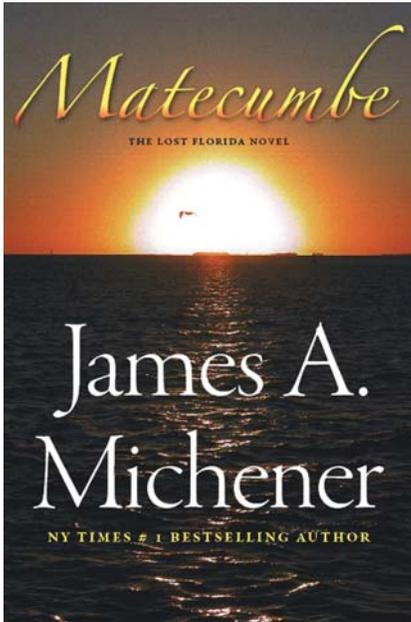
Despite being mortified, I gave my first two radio interviews, one of which I shared with one of Florida's first and shyest mermaids, Nancy Tribble Benda. Nancy and I argue over who is the shyest: her or me. She claims she is, so I was surprised when she walked through the door at Borders in Tallahassee, and even more surprised that she put up with me introducing her to



Painting by Linda Hall. From left to right: Lisa, a friend of Lu Vickers' niece, and Vickers' niece Holly.

everyone who wanted me to sign a book. She signed a few, too. And when the reporter from WFSU shoved her mike in our faces, Nancy and I both made like book tour veterans: we took deep breaths and dove right in.

James A. Michener's "Lost" Florida Manuscript



James A. Michener was a writer's writer, a man who wrote to relax, remember, and perhaps revisit. Such was the case, apparently, with his novella, entitled *Matecumbe*, recently published by the University Press of Florida. With *Matecumbe*, it seems Michener wrote to remember and revisit a love affair in (and with) the Florida Keys.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the era in which he wrote *Matecumbe*, Michener was at a productive peak, publishing *Sports in America* (1976), *Chesapeake* (1978), *The Covenant* (1980), and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 by President Gerald Ford. All the while, he tinkered with *Matecumbe* and maintained a relationship with a woman, Melissa DeMaio, whom he met on the Florida island Islamorada in 1976.

Even as he produced a prodigious number of novels in this era, Michener realized the necessity of utilizing research assistants. To put it in perspective, *Chesapeake* weighed in officially at 888 pages and yet was written in roughly one

year, a mammoth effort for any one author to tackle. One of his assistants from that era, Joe Avenick, hosted Michener often at his home in Islamorada, introducing the author to DeMaio and building a friendship with him.

Upon submitting *Matecumbe* for publication at Random House, his publisher, Michener was informed by his editor Albert Erskine that the novella would not be published. Not exactly used to having his manuscripts turned down, Michener decided to gift the project to Avenick, in part to thank him for his research and writing efforts and, one might suspect, to acknowledge Florida's special place in the author's life. Asked about the importance of Michener's first posthumous publication, Avenick says, "Michener would have wanted one of his works of fiction to come out after his death. He was always thrilled when new generations enjoyed his writing."

Roughly thirty years after *Matecumbe* was shelved and very nearly forgotten, we present for the first time to the public Michener's attempt to distill his Florida days.

—Eli Bortz, Acquisitions Editor

Road Scholars Tour 2007–2008

For the third consecutive year, University Press of Florida has officially partnered with the Florida Humanities Council—the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities—to assemble a group of the state's best scholars in presenting a variety of programs about 20th century Florida.

"As Florida's leading publisher of state history and the humanities, UPF is proud to join forces with the Florida Humanities Council, which has a notable public outreach program devoted to the exploration of history, literary and artistic traditions, cultural values, and ethics," says Andrea Dzavik, UPF's Director of Development.

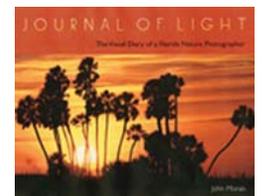
"The Road Scholars touring program provides yet another vehicle for us to reach out through scholarship to the citizens of our state. A major emphasis of our publishing program continues to be on books that are of general interest and usefulness to the people of Florida. As Florida continues to evolve, programs such as this give both newcomers and long-time residents alike an opportunity to interact with the people studying and recording the history and current events that are shaping our state identity."

Last season, six UPF authors gave more than 70 talks on environmentally-themed topics for 3,300 people statewide. This year, seven UPF authors will be hitting the highways from September 2007 through April 2008 speaking on subjects as varied as politics, civil rights, and immigration to art, film and food.

For a list of current and upcoming programs in a town near you, please visit UPF's "Author Appearances" page at www.upf.com/author_appearance.asp and look for listings marked "Road Scholars Event."



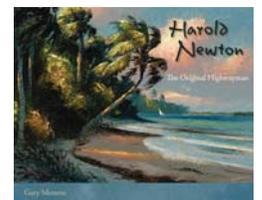
David R. Colburn
From Yellow Dog Democrats to Red State Republicans



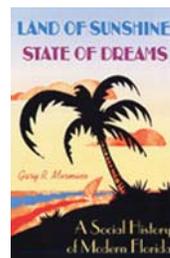
John Moran
Journal of Light



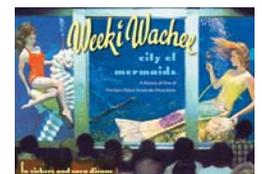
Susan Fernandez & Robert Ingalls
Sunshine in the Dark



Gary Monroe
Harold Newton



Gary Mormino
Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams

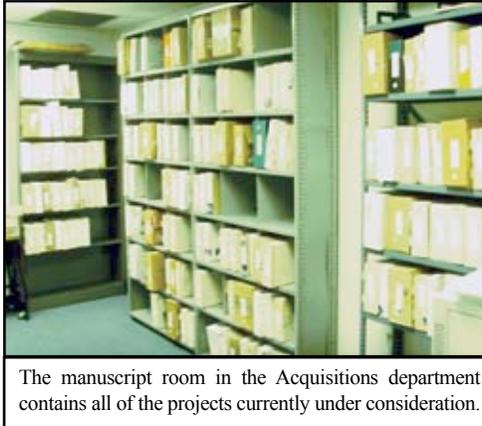


Lu Vickers
Weeki Wachee, City of Mermaids

How UPF Publishes the Best of the Best

Prospective authors frequently ask how publishers decide which projects to pursue given the huge number of diverse book ideas submitted for consideration. UPF receives over 1500 project inquiries each year and the press currently has the personnel and financial resources to support a targeted list of close to one hundred books a year. This means, of course, that over 90% of the projects initially proposed to us are not accepted for publication.

Under these circumstances, how do we determine the best projects for the press? We are normally able to reduce the book candidates by half by identifying proposals that simply are not compatible with our current publishing program. UPF, a non-profit public university press devoted to supporting certain types of scholarly and commercial projects, must be particularly careful to spend its money wisely while also maintaining high standards of quality. These pressures mean that some topic areas are best left to other publishers—European history, Asian studies, and linguistics are three disciplines that we do not currently support at UPF, for example—while we focus our efforts in areas of traditional strength for us—Latin American studies, New World archaeology, and Florida history, to name three.



The manuscript room in the Acquisitions department contains all of the projects currently under consideration.

Another 30% of the inquiries the press receives prove on initial inspection to be worthy of further investigation but, upon more systematic evaluation, turn out to not be an ideal fit with our program goals—the scope of the project may be too narrow or too broad to provide the foundation for a substantial book, for example. These “almost, but not quite” projects can prove the most difficult to decline because at least some aspect of the enterprise shows real promise.

The remaining 20% of each year’s cumulative submissions are more thoroughly developed and reviewed by the press for possible publication. As is typical with university presses, UPF sends completed draft manuscripts that have been determined to exhibit qualities that make the projects worthy of publication to external experts who are asked to independently produce formal written reports on the merits of the manuscripts. Out of the exclusive number of projects that successfully navigate through this rigorous internal/external review process, UPF’s editorial advisory board approves approximately one hundred manuscripts for publication each year. This select group of books is truly the University Press of Florida’s “best of the best.”

—John Byram, Editor-in-Chief and Acquiring Editor of trade titles

Fall Events

Saturday, September 15, 2007 at 6 pm

New York City, NY

McKay Day

with Gary Holcomb, author of *Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha: Queer Black Marxism and the Harlem Renaissance* at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Archives Reading Room 515 Malcolm X Boulevard

Thursday, September 20, 2007 at 8 pm

New York City, NY

Acts of Light

with John Deane and Nan Deane Cano, authors of *Acts of Light: Martha Graham in the Twenty-first Century* at the National Arts Club 15 Gramercy Park South

Thursday, October 4 to Saturday, October 7, 2007

Fernandina Beach, FL

Amelia “Book Island Festival”

with Michael Gannon, author of *A History of Florida in Forty Minutes*; Gary Monroe, author of *Harold Newton: The Original Highwayman and The Highwaymen: Florida’s African-American Landscape Painters*; and Lu Vickers, coauthor of *Weeki Wachee, City of Mermaids: A History of One of Florida’s Oldest Roadside Attractions*
www.bookisland.org

Friday, October 12 to Sunday, October 14, 2007

Nashville, TN

Southern Festival of Books

with David Magee, author of *MoonPie*:

Biography of an Out-of-This-World Snack, and Jean Lufkin Boulter, author of *Exploring Florida’s Emerald Coast: A Rich History and a Rare Ecology*
<http://tn-humanities.org/festival/current.php>

Wednesday, November 14, 2007 at 7 pm

Fort Myers, FL

Night at the Museum—An Author’s Evening With Gary Mormino, author of *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (limited availability; \$25 fee)
2300 Peck Street

University Presses make scholarly endeavor possible and serve the public good by generating and disseminating knowledge. UPF has published over 2,500 volumes since its inception, with a current goal of at least 100 new titles each year. Help support the future of university press publishing ~ gifts to UPF may be eligible for a charitable contribution tax deduction. To find out more, please contact Andrea Dzavik, Director of Development, at 352-392-1351, ext.234.