

April Ravelli—Our Director of Sales and Marketing by Shannon Purves

April Ravelli's first job after graduating from college with a degree in English literature was at a food co-op. It was the co-op's director who first recognized in April what she labeled "the germ of marketing genius." April paid attention and found herself more and more drawn to a field that involves the ever broadening power of media, and of social media in particular.

Born in rural South Carolina not far from Spartanburg, April spent her school days in Ramseur, NC, near Asheville. As a senior in high school, she applied to only two colleges—UNC Chapel Hill and UNC Wilmington. Accepted by both of them, she chose UNC Wilmington ("It's near the beach!") where she met her husband, Parrish. She and Parrish and their son, Mason, live now in Durham where Parrish works as a grant specialist for non-profit foundations.

Moving on from that first job at the food co-op, April spent eight years working at One World Market, the popular gift shop on Ninth Street that imports and sells—at fair prices—the work of artisans all over the world. She was assistant director for her first four years there and director for the next four. It was while she was running One World Market that she met TFAD resident Rosemary Oates, a shop volunteer who became a close friend. Visiting Rosemary over the years in her three successive residences at TFAD—cottage, apartment, and Health and Wellness—April grew to admire this community and, in March 2017,

accepted the offer of a part time job (20 hours a week) in Sales and Marketing.



At that point, April was particularly interested in working part time in order to spend more hours at home with Mason, then two years old. She had also established her own consulting firm, Seedling Social Media, which she operated from her home office, presumably during Mason's naps.

You're getting the idea, right? April Ravelli is a person with an unusual store of both talent and energy. That, and her growing appreciation of The Forest's special qualities, led her to accept the full time position as director of sales and marketing in September 2018 with the encouragement of Ellen Brown, who was leaving for a position closer to her home in Pinehurst.

Working in collaboration with the three other members of the department—Nancy Perrin, Alia Granger, and Lená Kithcart—April is focused on building the waiting list. One of her approaches to this is presenting, in both advertising and publicity, current residents and their experiences here. In this, she relies

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The Forester

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President's Podium



by Wes Steen

As you know, **Russell Jones** and his wife **Mary Streitwieser** have decided to return to northern Virginia; Russell resigned the office of RA president a few weeks ago and the RA Board asked me to succeed him until the end of his term in October. I am humbled and proud to serve the remaining eight months of Russell's term as president of the Resident's Association.

Like all of you, I deeply regret that Russell and Mary are leaving us. Not only have we enjoyed knowing them as friends and neighbors, they have done great work at The Forest. Mary was treasurer of the RA. Her monthly reports at board meetings were concise and precise; she left the treasurer's office well organized and current. Russell worked tirelessly and constantly, attending almost all RA committee meetings in addition to all the other work of this office. He leaves the RA in good shape. We will miss Mary and Russell and we wish them well.

I have three observations from the last few weeks:

- WOW!!! There is a lot to learn and to do!
- I have been overwhelmed at the outpouring of good wishes and the expressions of support I have received since this news broke. The best part of living at The Forest is the privilege of having friends and neighbors who are so kind, accomplished, and just simply NICE. Thank you.
- Third, I am really, really happy to have as colleagues such outstanding, energetic, and accomplished RA officers, committee chairs, and committee members. This is a team effort, and they are the critical elements. ☸

Library Science 101

by Carol Reese

IMPROVED ONLINE SEARCH

Online search for the Library's collection has been improved. The database is now updated every time we add new data to our system, and the search screen has a new simpler look. When you access it, you will see this new opening screen:



Click on the "Search Catalog" button to see a new search screen:

Enter the title, author, or subject you are checking in the box at the top and then click on the appropriate button below it.

To access the Library's database from the RA website (Username: resident; Password: RAweb2701) select "Library Resources" under Quick Links to bring up the opening screen. ¶

AMERICA'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY

For the months of March and April, the library will exhibit books highlighting a variety of cultures about Americans by American authors. Three examples:

- *The Monk of Mohka* by Dave Eggers is a story of a second-generation Yemeni-American, Mokhtar Alkhanshali, living in San Francisco, who was drifting—just waiting for a purpose. He found it when he saw a statue of a Yemeni man drinking a cup of coffee. This statue was erected to celebrate the invention of the vacuum pack that enabled coffee beans to be kept fresh as they were shipped originally from Yemen and Ethiopia. Mokhtar wondered why coffee was no longer imported from Yemen. With no money, and no knowledge, he embarked on an insane endeavor to recreate the original trade route and the trade. A truly uplifting story.
- *American Dervish* by Ayad Akhtar tells a quintessentially American coming-of-age story. While this is mainly a story of a ten-year-old first-generation Muslim-American, Akhtar makes his characters complicated and conflicted but not helpless victims; they make mistakes and do dreadful things, but Akhtar encourages the reader to understand and forgive.
- *LaRose* by Louise Erdrich tells a haunting tale of a tragic accident, a demand for justice, and a profound act of atonement with ancient roots in Native American culture. Erdrich uses a broad reach to show the impact of this accident on all involved. By pushing her characters to the brink, then reeling them back, Erdrich not only tests their capacity to endure but also uses the tension to question the obligations of love in a world set on breaking those obligations. The rewards of this book lie in the quick unraveling and the slow reconstruction of these lives to a moment when animosities resolve into clarity and understanding.

These are just three examples of this interesting exhibit. Come in and explore. I'm sure you will find something you wish to read. This exhibit will be available through April. ¶

In Memoriam

William Henry Rogers	February 28, 2019
Erika Guttentag	March 3, 2019
Edith Borroff	March 10, 2019

William Anderson	March 1, 2019
Linda Jennings	March 7, 2019
Naomi Alpern	March 12, 2019

April Ravelli...

(Continued from Page 1)

on social media as well as the local press, radio, and TV. Examples are: WUNC radio recently reported on The Forest's ventures into maple syrup, *Durham Magazine* covered our support of the Center for Child and Family Health, and *The Herald Sun* noted our Learning Series. But, April says, the best advertising for The Forest at Duke is provided by our residents. Prospective residents enjoy learning more about our community directly from our community,



Photo by Bennett



and she and her team feel truly grateful to have so many Forest residents willing to help.

So, in the seven months April has been in charge of our public profile, she has also celebrated Mason's fourth birthday, seen him enter preschool (which he loves), and ... OK, get ready ... challenged The Forest's IT guys, Matt and Rashad, to a 1,000-rep fitness contest in TFAD's gym. She beat them by completing the challenge in 38 minutes to their ... well, let's just say more than 60 minutes. That she works out at Burn Boot Camp for 45 minutes six days a week may have something to do with that victory.

April Ravelli is, clearly, a great addition to the team. ♣

Welcome New Resident

Michael Frank

Cottage 55

919-489-1964

michael.frank@duke.edu

Mike was born and grew up in Brooklyn, NY, and moved fast through his education. He won a Ford Foundation scholarship to the University of Wisconsin at age 15, and entered Harvard Medical School at 19. He interned in internal medicine at Harvard and then completed his pediatric residency at Johns Hopkins.



Photo by Bennett

He studied immunology as a clinical associate at the NIH for two years and added a study year at the National Institute for Medical Research in London, England. He then joined the National Institute of Allergy, Immunology, and Asthma, ultimately becoming clinical director and chief of the Laboratory of Clinical Investigation.

After 13 years in Bethesda, he came to Duke in 1990 as Chair of the Department of Pediatrics. He led the drive to build the Children's Health Center and built his department from a faculty of 63 to 120. After 14 years as chair, he returned to his laboratory to do clinical and laboratory research. He was an officer of the American Society for Clinical Investigation and was elected to the Association of American Physicians. He received the first patient care award of the Hereditary Angioedema Patients Association. A lectureship in his honor has been established by the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

Mike was married to his wife Ruth for almost 51 years. They had three children. Robert is a surgeon in Chicago, IL; Abigail is a housewife with an MS in Urban Planning and lives in Kalamazoo, MI; and Bruce lives in New York City. Mike has four grandchildren, two in Kalamazoo and two in Chicago. Mike was a longtime enthusiastic welder. For more than 40 years he and a family friend have done a major bicycle trip each year. ♣

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

To eat or not to eat. That is a question?

by Bennett Galef

The Forest at Duke is wonderfully located. It really doesn't much matter whether you are passionate about sports, music, theater, art or cinema, there is ample opportunity to indulge. And if, like Mertice and me, you have a passion for food, living midway between downtown Durham and Chapel Hill is pretty close to heaven.

While the area around TFAD may not boast of any international super-star chefs, it is home to a trove of reasonably priced restaurants that any self-respecting foodie would be happy to patronize. And every month sees exciting new additions to the local dining scene. Indeed, this brief note is a result of Mertice's and my experiences over the last few weeks dining for the first time in six relatively recent additions to the culinary scenes in Durham (M Tempura, Copa, West Main Thai, and Cucciolo Osteria) and Chapel Hill (Fusion Fish and Oakleaf), each venue a worthy addition to the local culinary environment. The upshot of all this eating out is our recommendation to those looking for something a little different from our daily bread here at TFAD to pay a visit to an Italian restaurant, Cucciolo Osteria.

Why the Osteria and not one of the five other "newish" restaurants mentioned above, many of which I would happily revisit? First and foremost, because it doesn't matter what one orders from Cucciolo Osteria's menu (and Mertice and I have now eaten there three times), your meal will be delicious. Unusual for a Triangle eatery, the Osteria has even been cited in a national magazine for both the excellence and authenticity of its food.

Second, the classic Roman recipes on offer at the Osteria (vegetarian options are available), although not at all challenging for those new to serious ethnic cooking, are sufficiently novel to be of interest to those with extensive culinary experience. Third, the price of dinner can be very reasonable; one of the

excellent appetizers and a dish of house-made (fresh) pasta can be had for \$22.50 (plus tax and tip), which is the price of one of my own favorite meals at the Osteria: goat-cheese bruschette appetizer and an Italian sausage tjarin (a kind of pasta) as a main course. Just in case you are still hungry, the tiramisu is truly incredible, enough for four, and surely worthy of serious consideration.

Fourth, service is excellent, with knowledgeable waiters willing to explain in detail each of the dishes on offer. Fifth, the restaurant is handicap accessible and only 10-15 minutes by car from TFAD.

So, gather some friends, get a reservation at Cucciolo Osteria (by phone 984-243-8744 or Open Table), contact the Concierge service at TFAD or Uber or Lyft for a ride, and enjoy one of the 'cultural high points' of Durham. The address is 601 West Main Street, Durham. Open every day except Tuesday, dinner only.

Buon Appetito. 🍴



Fresh pasta, waiting to be served!

The Maple Syrup Fest ...

Have you heard of Murphy? He postulated a Law, named for himself, naturally. In lay terms it states that in any new venture anything that can go wrong, will.

I thought that I had identified many campus sugar maple trees; the biggest and best were on Pond View Court. **Mary Anne Walker**, Chair of the Tree Selection Committee, **Gene Yonuschot**, **Lois Fussell**, and I discovered the truth. There weren't any sugar maple trees in that neighborhood. Their bark fooled me, but the leaves told us they were red maples.

As you well know from the location of red sap collecting buckets, we found our sweet and delicious prey along the main entrance into The Forest.

January was going to be our choice month to collect sap. Gene Yonuschot led the tree tapping crew. With a 5/16-inch bit a hole was drilled slightly upwards into the tree to a depth of 2½ inches. The spile, the name for a tap, was pounded gently into the hole. We tapped the five selected trees. Two produced little sap so later on we tapped another three.

For the first ten days of January the weather was too warm. There was no sap to collect. For sap to flow nights below freezing and day times above are required. To increase our take we continued the collection of sap to mid-February.

Our sap collecting leader, "the main sap," as he called himself, was **Ken Barrett**. He and his right-hand man, **Paul McBride**, gathered the sap.

Gene Yonuschot volunteered to boil the sap to produce the maple syrup. Without any previous experience but plenty of studying, Gene proved Murphy wrong. Success in this process requires a keen eye focused on a thermometer in the boiling sap to cut the heat at the right time. Filtering removed any debris and sand-like salts. He kept the batches of product separate until all sap had been boiled, when he



Photo by Bennett

Sap collectors Ken Barrett and Paul McBride

combined them and gave a final filtering. Voila, the delicious result.

All of us involved in this process realize Gene's outstanding contribution. From the 14.4 gallons of sap he produced 46 ounces or 276 teaspoons of maple syrup, a return of 2.5%, just as expected.

According to resident **Penelope Easton**, a native Vermonter, our syrup qualified as Fancy Grade, the highest of the grades during her days in Vermont.

The Sugar Maple Fest Committee, created by the Grounds Committee, met on three occasions. The last time was the Monday before the Fest. How were we going to serve the Maple Syrup? How many ways can syrup be served? We must have discussed at least ten.

Chelley Gutin and **Rose Boyarsky**, Co-chairs of the Fest Presentation Committee, and Art Ernteman, Director of Dining Services, led us to a satisfactory solution: small pancakes, Chelley's idea, served with thimble-like plastic cups holding a teaspoon of syrup. Art also served Maple Syrup Pound Cake, Maple Mousse, and Maple Cup Cakes embossed with a maple leaf.

Other committee members not previously mentioned were **Mary Ann Ruegg**, **Christel Machemer**, and **Greg Lockhead**. They seemed to love being a part of this venture.

Perhaps you saw the remarkable four-minute video produced by **Wes**



Photo by Wes Steen

Tree identifiers Gene Yonuschot, Ted Harris, and Mary Anne Walker

... A Ted Harris Fantasy Realized



Gene Yonuschot explaining the art of syrup cooking to Ted Harris

Steen. It certainly was well received. We marveled at its professionalism and his smooth radio voice.

Forest staff was most supportive. Art Ernteman was immediately responsive to the fest idea. Nathan Summers, Director of General Services, researched the equipment needed and purchased the buckets, the taps, the filters, and the tubing connecting taps to buckets. He has washed and stored the equipment should we decide to have a second Maple Syrup Fest.

Sandy Mouras, Director of Resident Life, provided colorful Forest shirts for committee members and serving volunteers. She produced a chart showing

our progress in gallons of sap collected and ounces of maple syrup made. You may have noticed it on the table as you walked into the cafeteria.

The February 22nd Fest began in the Health Center at 3:30 in Carlton under the leadership of Jennifer Kea, Health Center Activities Director. Resident volunteer servers were **John Howell, Chhanda Ganguly, and Annette Kirshner**. Chelley decorated the table with reproduction sugar maple leaves. She also produced a string necklace with a sugar maple leaf pendant for all committee members and servers.

On the main floor the Fest social hour began at 4:30 after a concert by A Touch of Brass, a fitting fanfare to our celebration. The gleeful committee members served the residents. Thankfully, except at our beginning, we never encountered Murphy again. 🌿

— Ted Harris

Nearly a year ago, in the May 2018 Forester, in a piece postdated April 1, 2019, resident Ted Harris fantasized the production of fancy-grade Maple Syrup here at The Forest from sap from our own southern sugar maples. Ted, tree lover and strong promoter of old-growth forests, excels at making dreams come true.



Key West

by Carol Oettinger

There I was in Key West, living on a houseboat. Was it a dream? No, because I was also working at the Mental Health Center. So this is how I got there.

I was married to a Duke professor of art. He had left Duke to paint on his own. While his paintings sold well while he was at Duke, they didn't sell when he left. After living in my home in Chapel Hill for a while, he left "to find a place where a nurse and an artist could live together happily."

He called after about a month and said that he had found the place, Key West. Then he said the magic words. "I have a job."

I found renters for my house, packed my belongings and started down the road to Key West. It was a lovely place, but I found that he was living in his van. The "job" was painting pelicans on pieces of driftwood and selling them in the street market. I found an apartment next to the sign "90 miles to Cuba" and started looking for a job. The Mental Health Clinic had an opening. I was hired.

The ads in the local newspaper, which residents called "the fish wrapper" showed me my new home. A houseboat was for sale at a price I could afford. Moving onto the houseboat began my real life in Key West. We were moored on a bay, next to the home of the Mayor. He told me that when a hurricane came, I could come into his bomb shelter. Happily, I never had

to take advantage of that offer.

Working at the Mental Health Center was fascinating. Key West is as far South as one can go, so many strange and interesting people live there. My work was with a number of them. One of the first was a man who had a choice of jail or the Mental Health Center for being "drunk and disorderly." He had worked on a newspaper in New York and had retired and bought a house in Key West. On the trip down, he had a car accident in which his wife was killed. He came on and moved into his house. He had not been a drinker before, but his sadness led him to bars for company. During his first visit, I got to know him and his story. On every visit after that, the first thing he would say was, "Carol, will you marry me?" And I would reply, "I am married, but there are so many single women out there just wanting to get to know and love you." His reply was always the same. "Those women are not for me. All they talk about is their grandchildren and their bowels." And we would have our laugh.

After a number of months, he was able to work through his grief and stop coming. He did come by later to tell me that he had found a "really nice lady" and they were going to get married. Nice end to that story. And this is just the beginning of my adventures in Key West. ‡



Lighting Up

by Banks Anderson

Leaving Memorial Hall in Chapel Hill on a rainy night after Brahms #2, I viewed the steps ahead with trepidation. There is no worse illumination of steps than a spotlight at your feet glaring upward as you are looking down. This is exactly the situation at Memorial, and I groped for the hand rails. As the light went upward past my face and the columns, it illuminated the bottoms of the low clouds. This dangerous and most egregious waste of energy for purely cosmetic purposes is not unique to UNC. Witness the nightly illumination of the Duke Chapel tower or the minuscule LEDs illuminating two portico columns at our main entry.

Energy conservation should be of high priority, and lighting columns and trees from below for cosmetic purposes should be outlawed. And it has been in Tucson. The Kitt Peak National Observatory is not far away, and strict municipal ordinances help



Abandoned upward-facing luminaire on TFAD Drive

preserve its dark skies. If we were responsible citizens at TFAD, we would eliminate all lighting above the horizontal, and years ago we took major steps in that direction. Architects infatuated with cosmetic lighting had installed zenith-facing tree lights along Forest at Duke Drive.

Nineteen-year resident **Maidi Hall** says she never recalls seeing any of them lit. But if you stroll along our drive near the pond you will see the tops of eight of these abandoned luminaires.

been abandoned early on as the ballast box attached to mine was half full of water, and an incandescent light bulb was corrosion-welded to its socket base. These fixtures were not designed for incandescents; the ballasts are to ignite metal-halide lamps. Lamp replacement must have been extremely laborious because of the need to remove six screws and then the large gasketed glass lens (at right).

Metal halides are bright, long-lasting reasonably efficient bulbs, and we have a bunch of them in full cut-off overhead street fixtures



Archeological remnants

along Forest at Duke Drive as well as eight in the median out front. In the cul de sacs, however, sodium yellow lamps are perched on pole tops. About 30% of their energy is wasted in cloud-bottom lighting. This design is illegal in Tucson and should be illegal in Durham. Also in that second median between our main gate and the main entrance are eight luminaires aimed skyward; at least one has nothing but clouds over it. They too should be junked. Our area's most efficient and best looking outdoor luminaires are those around the new Duke parking garage across the highway from the Washington Duke Inn. Their very efficient LEDs emit only below the horizontal, and they still retain a bit of that London gas light look so dear to landscape architects.

With my little telescope I can see a few stars but the light pollution is so great, especially when the West Campus athletic fields are ablaze, that I have never seen the Milky Way arching across our sky. If we truly care about our environment we should direct night lighting to those areas where it is needed or informative, and that excludes cloud bottoms. ♯

Banks Anderson is Professor Emeritus of Ophthalmology at Duke, amateur astronomer, and frequent contributor to The Forester.

BOOK REVIEW

Nanaville: Adventures in Grandparenting

by Anna Quindlen

(Random House 2019)

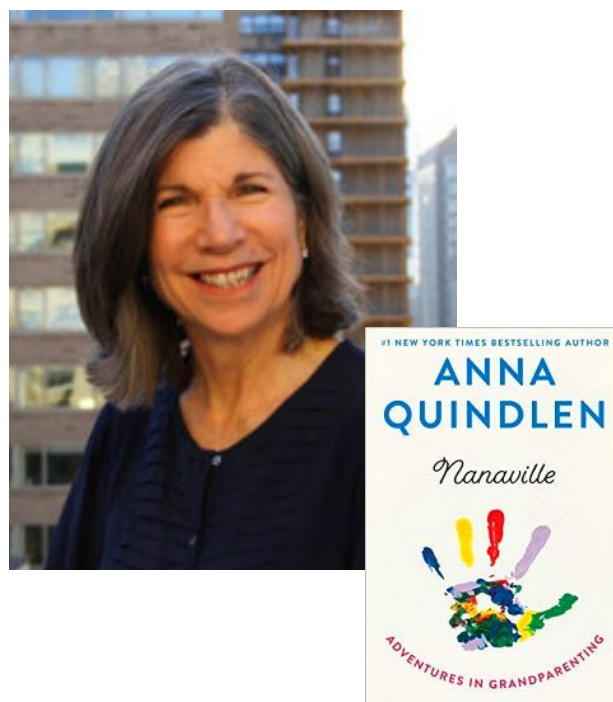
by Shannon Purves

Anna Quindlen, longtime columnist for *The New York Times* and author of 20 books—nine novels, nine nonfiction titles, and two children’s books—has recently become a grandmother. Being Anna Quindlen, whose husband once asked her, “Could you get up and get me a beer without writing about it?” she has written a book about her new classification with her usual acute insight into family life and love.

A baby boomer, Quindlen has a sharp eye for the small details that reveal larger truths of her generation. The first few lines of *Nanaville*: “Sunlight spreads across the checkerboard tiles in the kitchen, and so do many other things: wooden spoons, a rubber frog, Tupperware, a couple of puzzle pieces, some plastic letters ... a little hand rests lightly on my leg, a pale starfish of almost no weight, so that I might not know it was there were I not looking down at it as though it were the Mona Lisa, the Pyramids, the Sistine Chapel ceiling ...”

Alternating chapters describe special times spent with grandson, Arthur—an early diaper change (“... as I try to get in the creases of his thighs with a wipe, I look at his, let’s face it, largely formless face and unfocused eyes and fall in love with him. Look at him and think ... I will do anything for you as long as we both shall live, world without end, amen”); overnights in Quindlen’s New York apartment (“Is there anything better than sitting in a rocking chair with a little boy next to you while you read him *Goodnight Moon*?”); weekends in the country (“Arthur is telling me a long,

involved story about a turtle coming out from under the dock ... I am getting maybe every third word, distracted by worrying about him falling into the pond.”)



Interspersed with these moments and the lessons she has learned from them are Quindlen’s observations and interpretations of her new role as secondary character and support to the parents of her grandson. She writes, “Where I once led, I have to learn to follow.” Here celebrating her new status, Anna Quindlen is, as always, candid, frank, funny, and very wise. ‡

Anna Quindlen will visit and speak at McIntyre’s Books in Fearrington Village April 24th. For more details check McIntyre’s website www.fearrington.com/mcintyres-books or call the store: 919-542-3030.

CAROL'S CORNER

Blinded by Snow and Love

by Herbert L. Carson

We drove hundreds of miles
Filled with dreams and smiles
To scan a lake front that sold
Cabins with neither heat nor cold.

Just two short miles this resort
From a ski run frequented by the sport,
But would they rent a cabin equipped so ill
For a few days of pleasure and nights of chill?

And looking back more than seventy years
And the strain of sibling feeling and fears,
We could not raise sufficient money
To buy this folly of deep snow and singeing sunny.

And best of all despite my fears I was blind
And I wanted to please my kin and kind
But 'Twas not to be nor to be
Rustic and ridiculous cabins not for me.

And thus I blindly went my way
Until one glorious and wonderful day
The veil lifted and I opened my eyes
And I saw to my great surprise

She who would be always my endear,
She who made my life free of flimsy fear.
The sun was bright as was the moon
Every night and day made me swoon

For now I had met my Waterloo
A happy moment so wise and true
For now I had the love given to the few
The love and brightness of my Ada Lou.

Saved from that idiocy of cold or heat,
Saved from a life of asinine retreat,
To me at last with the one all above
The one to whom I gladly gave my love

In a way the cabins too cold or hot
Were happily put aside and forgot.
I welcomed the life and love good and true
The star-studded beauty of my Ada Lou.

Rebecca Squires (Becca)

by Carol Oettinger

Becca Squires has permanently given up the “Re,” so we all call her Becca. It was clear from the

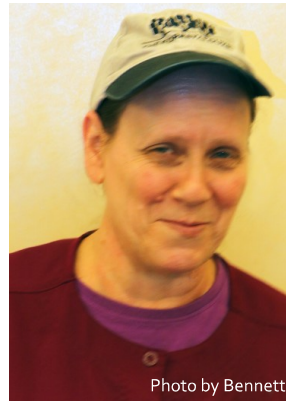


Photo by Bennett

beginning of our talk that she was a caring person. She felt that the place we were in was too cold, so she told me to “bundle up, put on a sweater.”

Becca lived in Indiana until she was 13 when her family moved to Durham. She lived in North Carolina until she finished high school. Then she moved to Chicago for three years to help her sister who had three small children and had to work. She moved back to Durham to be near her folks. She had two marriages, the first one “a bad mistake.” Her marriage to Jeff Squires has been happy for 25 years. She has a daughter, 25, and a son, 18. Both have the same birth date, May 18.

Becca worked at a number of interesting jobs. She found that she wanted a “different environment,” which she saw at The Forest at Duke. She applied and was accepted by the housekeeping department on June 14 of last year. Becca works mostly in the cottages.

She loves the residents and would like to stay until she can “retire from here.” You can see that that would be pleasing to Fluffy Jebens, too. ☘

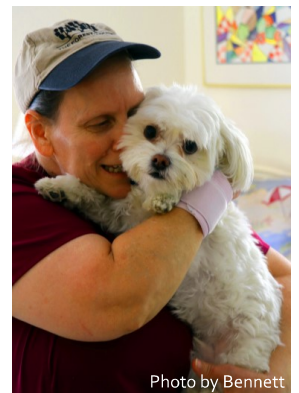


Photo by Bennett

Blood and Tears

by Ellen Baer

Tim Tyson made me cry—not just me, but several of my friends as well. We recently read *Blood Done Sign My Name* by Timothy B. Tyson and cried while talking about it. In one sentence in the first chapter, the author lays it out for the reader: “So while this is the story of a small boy in a small town one hot Southern summer, it is also the story of a nation torn apart by racial, political, social, and cultural clashes so deep that they echo in our lives to this day.”

Tyson was the boy and Oxford, 30 miles northeast of Durham, was the town. What happened there was the murder of a black army veteran by three angry white men who thought the young black man had said something inappropriate to a white woman. Sadly, it’s not an unfamiliar story but one whose horror is somehow magnified by the fact that it happened right up the road at a time not so long ago: May 1970. Although there were witnesses, the killers were found “not guilty.”

Tyson, a white Methodist preacher’s son, was 10 years old when the murder and the following riots occurred—old enough to remember but not old enough to understand; so, as a Duke graduate student, he wrote a master’s thesis on the subject. Later he turned it into a book for a wider audience and wider understanding, believing that “we are all captives of our own origins, especially when we do not fully know and understand them.” I must have resisted becoming part of that wider audience because I bought the book soon after it was published in 2004 and put it on my bookshelf to read “later.” It might still be there if my women’s book club hadn’t put it on its list for 2019.

A blurb on the book jacket calls the story “wrenching,” and it is. It wrenched us all, Southerners and Northerners and Californians alike, out of our well-intentioned, do-gooder comfort zones and

pummeled us with the truth of Tyson’s life and our own. As for me, during all the recent talk of white supremacists, I’ve felt smugly virtuous, wrapping my liberal politics around me like a shield; but Tyson cracked that shield when he asserted that white people, especially white Southerners, in the 1950s and 1960s unconsciously absorbed a degree of white supremacy because it was in the air they breathed. I breathed that same air.

Now I’m surprised by what I didn’t know: simple facts like North Carolina was the most active state for the KKK in 1965—and complex facts like the Wilmington riots of 1898. Beginning with the killing in Oxford, the book moves backward to the forces and factors that allowed it to happen and also forward to show the consequences and effects of that one act. Along the way, we get insights into the racist history of North Carolina and neighboring states as well as Tyson’s own personal history of dealing with it.

It’s a heavy history, and we felt its weight in our book club discussion, trying not to take personally this quotation from James Baldwin: “A civilization is not destroyed by wicked people; it’s not necessary that people be wicked but only that they be spineless.” But, as citizens, don’t we have to take it personally? After all, our nation’s history reveals the blood that done signed all our names.

Tyson, now a Duke professor, challenges us today when he says “the work we face is to transcend our history and move to higher ground,” but he insists that we can’t transcend it without ever actually confronting it. This book is a good step on that path, but I’m warning you. It may make you cry. ☹

In her work life, Ellen Baer used to write media releases, annual reports, and articles for trade journals. Now she prefers to write essays, often inspired by the writings of others.