

Joyner Library Presents

Stuart Wright:  
A Life In Collecting

September 7, 2011



## A Message from the Dean

Like Tom Douglass, I first met Stuart Wright when I stepped off the train with my wife Sue in Ludlow, England—the English country squire waiting for us soon proved to be a Southern Gentleman in exile. In fact, I think this was confirmed the night Sue prepared “southern fried chicken” and mashed potatoes. Stuart asked for the recipe after his first helping, feasted on the leftovers for several days, and said it stirred memories in him from long ago.

On our short visit to 28 Old Street, Stuart showed and told us as much as we could absorb about the extraordinary collection of southern American literature that he hoped would eventually come to East Carolina University and Joyner Library. I was delighted with what I saw and heard and carefully calculated how much space we would need to house the collection if we could agree on price and terms. Being only acquainted with the work of some of the authors like Robert Penn Warren, Randall Jarrell, and Eudora Welty, I could not truly appreciate the importance of the book collection or the exceptional quality of the many boxes of letters, journals, and manuscripts that comprised the collection.

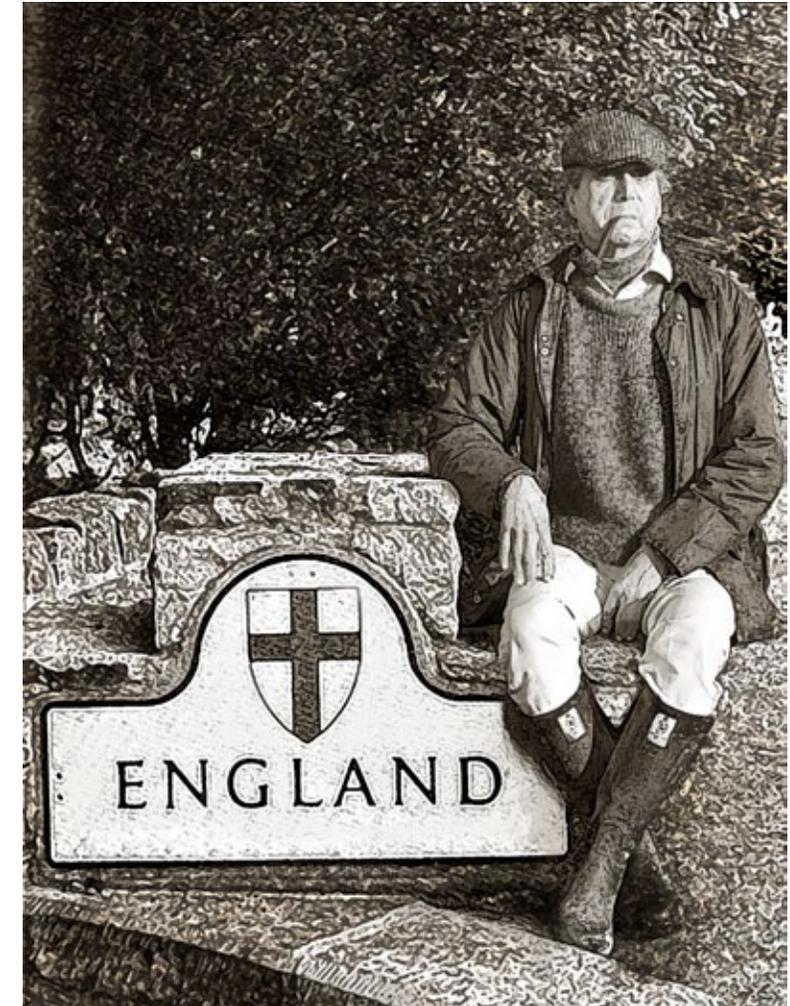
Fortunately, Tom Douglass could and he and Stuart spent many hours poring over the materials and discussing their significance while I could only listen in amazement. My amazement and delight have only increased markedly since the collection has come to Joyner Library. After another visit with Stuart in Ludlow, this time accompanied by Maury York, Assistant Director for Special Collections, our enthusiasm for the collection and admiration for Stuart have increased tremendously.

Joyner Library has been extraordinarily fortunate in acquiring the Stuart Wright Collection. Without Stuart’s patience, his desire to keep the collection together, and his willingness to part with it for far less than its actual value, literary researchers would not be making their way to our university and library to work amongst this treasure trove of southern American literature. I am so thankful to Stuart for his commitment to literature and bibliography, to Tom for his unselfish dedication to this endeavor, and to Maury and our Special Collections team for their skill in cataloging and preserving this remarkable collection.

Sincerely,  
Larry Boyer, Dean  
Academic Library and Learning Resources

East Carolina University®

## STUART WRIGHT: The Badger of Old Street



Stuart Wright Nowhere near Coldstream (2010) [Photo by Linda Fox]

## From the Author

The Stuart Wright Collection (SWC) at ECU provides a rare opportunity for the American scholar to explore the richness of our literary past. I have no doubt that much of the manuscript material will result in revised editions of previously published biographies and criticism, and provide scholars with a more complete assessment of the imaginative accomplishment of the 20th century. For the lucky student, who ventures forth into this vast collection, there will be connections made in the classroom and in print that will last a lifetime.

I am very pleased to have this collection come home to North Carolina and to East Carolina University. Its importance will last for generations, enhancing the quality of education at the university and ensuring the cultural trust to which our library and librarians are dedicated.

From the moment the first box was opened, the first page turned, I instinctively knew how difficult it must have been to collect all of this remarkable material – the vision required, the enormous energy necessary to see things through, the many failures, the obsession with completeness and follow-up, the slavish attention to detail, the stubborn tenacity to get things right no matter what, but most of all, I knew, there was a love for books and the literary imagination in this collection and for those risking everything to write. Stuart Wright is a man of vision who stands on this higher ground.

I want to thank Linda Fox for her patience with bibliophiles and book collectors and her expert photography in North Carolina and in England. I also want to thank many of my graduate students who have helped me assess the collection – Sean Aube and his assistance with the Eudora Welty material, Brittany Beck with Richard Eberhart and Robert Frost, Robert Bradley and his admirable scholarly work ethic with the Jarrell material, Stephen Mason and his detailed research of the Peter Taylor manuscripts, and Jason Brown who helped in compiling the audio portion of the collection exhibit.

I am indebted to Alex Albright who once again offered his expert editorial assistance gratis. Thanks also to Bruce Southard who first sent me on the trail, and thank you Dean Alan White for supporting my travel to England.

Dr. Thomas E. Douglass  
Department of English  
East Carolina University



Stuart Wright and Tom Douglass talking of the past on a New Year's day (2011).

I first met Stuart Wright on a September day in 2007 after stepping off the train in the medieval town of Ludlow in the west of England. Dressed in a tweed sport jacket, corduroy pants, a driving cap, tattersall shirt with ascot, some comfortable but durable walking shoes, a jaunty pipe packed with Rattray's tobacco askew in his mouth, he was the picture of the perfect Englishman--or so I imagined. But I soon discovered in his gruff but matter-of-fact politeness, that he was a genuinely unreconstructed North Carolinian, not unlike the ones I knew back home.

We immediately fell into talking about my half-day's train journey from London to Ludlow and the layout of the walled town, with its gate houses still standing and a 12th century castle at its center. We walked through the streets, past the shops, the butcher's, the bakery, the fine bookbinder's shop of



Trevor Lloyd's Bookbinding and Restoration  
on Old Street in Ludlow  
[photo by Tom Douglass]

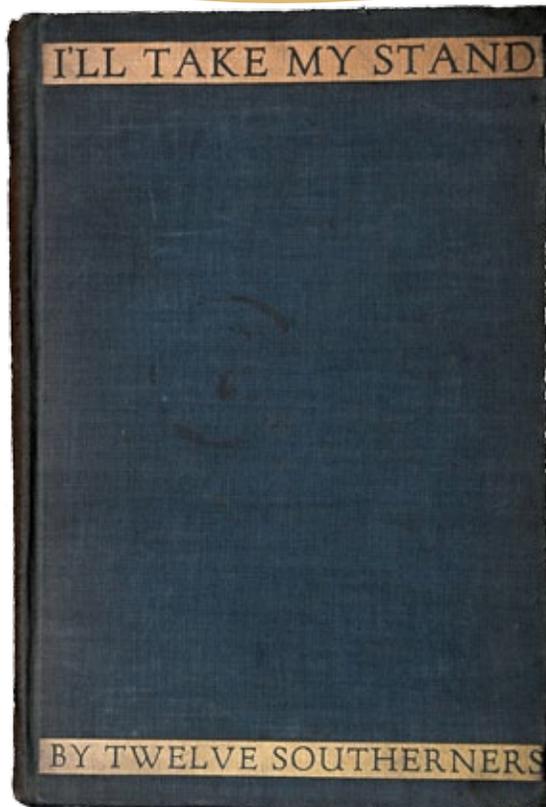


Ludlow Castle

Trevor Lloyd, on our way to 28 Old Street, a cozy 3-story brick-and-beam abode with a walled and wild English garden stretching away at some length from the kitchen window. His dark green front door with iron latch overlooked a telltale welcome mat that said "Go Away!" The church tower and castle in the center of Ludlow town, the train ride through the rolling Shropshire countryside, it was like a fairy tale, or some green and leafy warren in high summer nearby *The Wind in the Willows*. It wasn't long before the small talk ended and books were turned open, the tea kettle on the stove.

All I knew about Stuart Wright then was that he had amassed an amazing collection of literary material, much of it from writers of the American South; I had been sent here on a mission by East Carolina University to assess its scholarly value. Much of this material had never been seen by scholars in the states except for those who ventured a visit to Old Street in Ludlow, like Faulkner's biographer Joseph Blotner, who completed his Robert Penn Warren biography in 1997. I knew Wright was a collector of rare books and manuscripts, but it soon became clear that he was also a collector with a purpose.

Over the next six days, an amazing parade of books, galleys, manuscripts, and letters passed before my eyes--Robert Penn Warren's heavily annotated ex-libris collection of all of William Faulkner; John Crowe Ransom's personal copy of *I'll Take My Stand*; Eudora Welty's *A Curtain of Green* presented



*I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition by Twelve Southerners* (Donald Davidson, Andrew Lytle, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, et al.) is a collection of essays published in 1930 which served as one of the cornerstones of the Southern Renaissance.

to Cleanth Brooks; William Alexander Percy's copy of *The Mind of the South*; *The Letters of James Agee to Father Flye*, a presentation copy from Flye to John Crowe Ransom in 1962. These were the titles of the Southern Renaissance, talked about in the halls and in the university classrooms across the South, literature of a generation that would witness an American literature becoming a world literature.

The depth of associations represented in the many presentation copies was amazing. Many were gifts with personal inscriptions--*The Sheltered Life* signed "For Allen Tate with friendship and admiration, from Ellen Glasgow, August 1932"; Warren's *Selected Poems 1923-1943* presented to Katherine Anne Porter, "June 1944"; Peter Taylor's *A Long Fourth and Other Stories* (1948) inscribed to Randall Jarrell; Warren's

presentation copy of *All the King's Men* inscribed to "Lon" Cheney, Warren's friend who also inspired the character of Jack Burden. One after another the books were turned open, a few, then dozens, until the filled bookcases in every room made it clear--I wouldn't have time to look at them all, each a treasure, most for multiple reasons.

At first glance, the center of the Stuart Wright Collection (SWC) was clearly Robert Penn Warren--known affectionately as "Red"--the only American writer to win the Pulitzer Prize in both fiction (*All the King's Men*) and poetry (*Promises: Poems 1954-1956*) and (*Now and Then: Poems 1976-1978*), a former member of the Southern Fugitives, a Poet Laureate of the United States, editor and co-founder of *The Southern Review*, a literary figure with the pedigree and respect necessary to support and encourage fellow writers, many of whom are also represented in Wright's collection. Warren was literary mentor and friend to many of the great writers of 20th century literature. His writing circumscribed the critical compass and social conscience of the nation, and there has not been a figure of American literature who has served so well. And it's through Warren that many of the connections represented in the SWC are made.

There seemed no end to the variety and richness of the books that passed before me. Dozens were from Warren's personal library, including those from his college days at Vanderbilt and UC Berkeley that hinted at the evolution of a writer--his copies of Conrad, Hemingway, Eliot and Woolf. The childhood and college books of Eudora Welty were here on Old Street--*The Five Little Peppers*, a Christmas gift from her mother in 1916 that inspired the essay "A Sweet Devouring," published in *One Writer's Beginnings*. Also here were dozens of books from the library of Walker Percy's adopted father, William

## Eudora Welty

Eudora Welty (1909-2001), Pulitzer Prize-winning author and protégé of Katherine Anne Porter, received critical support and friendship from Robert Penn Warren, who wrote an influential review of her 1943 collection *The Wide Net*. Along with Porter, Caroline Gordon, and Flannery O'Connor, she made a significant contribution to 20th century American literature. Her close relationships with "Red" Warren and Katherine Anne Porter are clearly on display in the SWC.

Presentation copies of *The Eye of the Story* (1978) and *The Collected Stories* (1980) to Warren contain lengthy typed letters. Another Welty letter to Peter Taylor (16 February 1947) is tipped inside her signed copy of Taylor's *A Long Fourth and Other Stories*.

Twenty-two Welty unpublished black-and-white snapshots include one of three young Mississippi girls tipped into her copy of *The Plays of Anton Chekhov* translated by Constance Garnett (1933); five photos of Henry Miller and friends at Windsor Ruins from the early 1940s are not the images published in *Some Notes on River Country* (2003); two photos depict Welty and friends at a picnic, 1940; six photos of Porter and friends, c.1940-41; and eight photos are from Lavenham, England, with unidentified companions on the River Brett, c.1950-51. Catching the photo bug from her father, Welty was a snapshot enthusiast from the 1930s, when she began her work with the Works Progress Administration, to the 1950s when she lost her camera on a train. In time her photography became famous, and several collections of her photographs have been published: *One Time, One Place* (1971), *Photographs* (1989), and Wright's Palaemon Press limited edition of *Twenty Photographs* (1980), prints of previously published photographs from 1936-42.

Her story "Why I Live at the PO" was inspired by a woman she photographed ironing in the back of a small post office.

Ex-libris books include Welty's copy of William Alexander Percy's *Lanterns on the Levee*; *The Poems of Charles Baudelaire* signed "Eudora Welty, New Orleans, March 15, 1936"; a signed, limited edition copy of e.e. cummings' untitled book of poems published by Covici Friede (1930); and Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel!* signed "Eudora Welty New York 1935." Several of the personal library books from her college days at the University of Wisconsin, such as Chekhov's *Short Stories*, have significant underlining or comment.

Of biographical interest are several gift books between mother and daughter--a first edition of Welty's *The Bride of Innisfallen* and *Other Stories* (1955) to her mother and Margaret Sydney's *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* (1909): "To Eudora from Mother, Christmas, 1916." Welty's childhood copy of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* includes doodles and sketches throughout.

In 1984, at the urging of Wake Forest University President Thomas Hearn, Jr., Wright invited Welty along with Robert Penn Warren to receive an honorary degree, and both were hooded that spring in Winston-Salem.



Welty's copy of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1881).

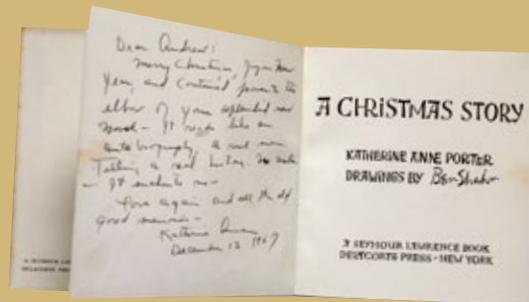
## Katherine Anne Porter

Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980), Pulitzer Prize-winning author of short fiction for *The Collected Stories* (1966) and three times nominated for the Nobel Prize, was a familiar face and friend to many of the writers represented in the SWC--Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty, Andrew Lytle, Allen Tate, and others. The collection provides a rare glimpse into the close relationships between these writers.

For example, six photographs of Porter, dating from about 1940-41, were taken by Eudora Welty (probably at Yaddo). A photograph of Porter with Warren in Manhattan in 1962 shortly after the publication of her novel *Ship of Fools* bears this handwritten caption: "Party for Ship of Fools at '21.'" Many presentation copies of her work have long inscriptions and some with letters tipped in, several to Warren, including *Flowering Judas and Other Stories* (1935), "The Days Before" (1952), *A Christmas Story* (1958), originally

published by Mademoiselle, and *Ship of Fools* (1962). Her 1967 limited edition of *A Christmas Story*, illustrated by Ben Shahn, is inscribed to Andrew Lytle, and a very rare edition of *Katherine Anne Porter's French Song-Book* (1933), the last publication of Harrison of Paris, is inscribed to Monroe Wheeler, who was instrumental in publishing fine art from the Museum of Modern Art during the first half of the 20th century.

Other letters in the SWC from Eudora Welty to Robert Penn Warren refer to Porter and her well-being.



Presentation copy of Porter's *A Christmas Story* to Andrew Lytle. Porter was close to several of the former Agrarians: Lytle, Ransom, Tate, and Warren. Andrew Lytle edited *The Sewanee Review* from 1961-73.

Alexander Percy, and the Agrarians--Andrew Lytle, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Merrill Moore, Donald Davidson, and more from the libraries of their students Randall Jarrell and Peter Taylor.

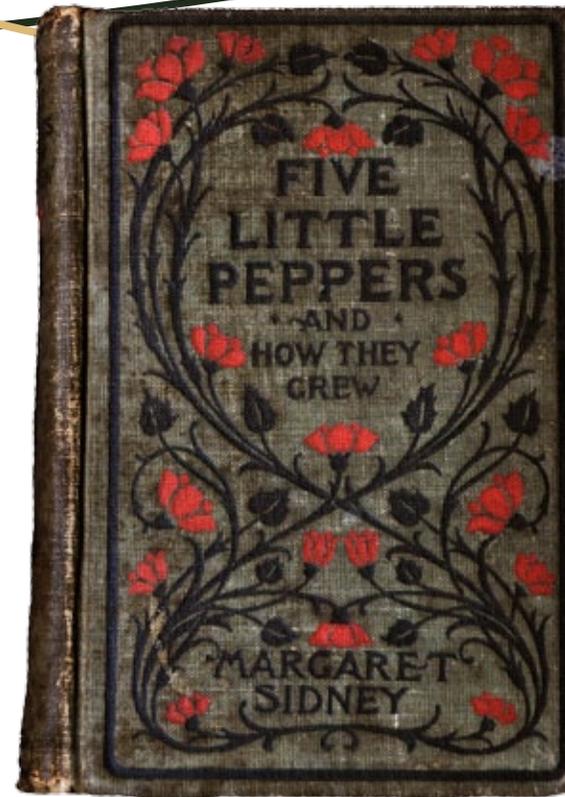
Who could own such books? I wondered, unless they came as an inheritance? But that, I finally realized, was exactly what the Stuart Wright Collection was -- an inheritance that I hoped might find a new home in North Carolina. Here, so far from where they had been born, were the biblio artifacts of Southern Renaissance history and our great literary heritage.

Dozens of the ex-libris books had letters folded within their pages: Welty and Katherine Anne Porter to Warren, Welty to Peter Taylor, Taylor to Warren, Lowell to Jarrell, Fred Chappell to George Garrett, and many others, each offering bits of biography, praise, literary news and gossip, letters typed

and handwritten, sometimes a mix of both, that personally and indelibly marked their time.

I wondered how in the world did all of this come to rest in the west of England so far away from home? But pieces of the how and why would come to me only in brief glimpses. Slowly, after days of tea and nonstop reading, and nights of walking the bridge over the River Teme for a pint or two at the Charlton Arms, Wright's favorite pub, and after long talks of the writers Wright had come to know and love (writers I had only encountered on the page), I began to understand the enormity of Wright's accomplishment as a collector.

One photograph hanging in Wright's home, in a second story hallway, gave but a small hint at the eccentricities of my host. In it, Wright is hooding Warren as he receives an honorary degree from Wake Forest University in 1984. Wright wears the academic regalia that had belonged to J.R.R. Tolkien,



*Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* (1881) was the first in the Five Little Peppers series for children by Margaret Sidney pseudonym for Harriett Mulford Stone Lothrop (1844-1924).

the professor who had signed Warren's diploma from Oxford. Then there was Aaron Copland's baby grand piano sitting in the alcove of Wright's book-lined living room, where a formidable collection of Wright's other interests was also on display: English watercolors crowded the walls, and classical music and jazz filled the house during my stay--Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams and a playlist of jazz CDs comparable to Philip Larkin's *All What Jazz*. In the bathroom, a photo of John Updike raising Wright's Confederate stars-and-bars up the flag pole at the Updike home in Beverly, Massachusetts, and along the second floor stair balcony a stunning array of autographed photos with dedications "to Stuart" from Ammons, Welty, and Warren; Chappell, Garrett, Styron and Updike; Peter Taylor, James Seay, Harry Crews, Barry Hannah, Mary Lee Settle, Shelby Foote, and Walker Percy.

Manuscripts came to me on the third day-- Warren's *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices (New Version), Audubon: A Vision, A Place To Come To, Portrait of a Father* (Warren's last book), some complete manuscript material from holograph notes to typescripts to galley proofs. The manuscript "Poetry and Democracy" was especially intriguing--it would be published in 1975 as *Democracy and Poetry*, a polemic for the political and social purposes of poetry, in the name of individual freedom, in the name social democracy. Warren by then had traveled the long way from the regionalism of the Fugitives and the confines of New Criticism to embrace the multicultural voices of the postmodern age, an evolution of the American critical perspective and the conscience of the nation. The notes and successive drafts of this essay lay before me, from first scribbling to galley proof.

Some sunny days do come to England in September, and on those days Stuart and I would leave the books behind to walk around the castle walls and through the town. Into Church's Pub for an afternoon pint we might amble, after an alfresco lunch of pork-filled baguettes from Vaughn's Meats and Poultry, all the while talking books,



Charlton Arms on the River Teme



Stuart Wright hooding Robert Penn Warren at Wake Forest University in 1984. WFU President Thomas K. Hearn, Jr., far right.



Wright's study on Old Street

mutual connections, tales of Faulkner's pipe. But I was always anxious to get back to Old Street and Wright's study to see what else might appear before me. Throughout my days there, he would offer tea and inquire if I had found "anything interesting," all ears, though pretending not to listen as he paused to light his pipe. I would often utter *unbelievable* while reading through the stacks he had put out each morning for me to see.

One day, he showed me Caroline Gordon's short story manuscript "The Fiddles and the Flutes" sent to Peter Taylor for comment and suggestion—a story that would eventually be published in *The Sewanee Review* as "The Waterfall" in 1950, and that would reflect much of Taylor's input. But I was not prepared for what followed, dizzying as the variety already was: on the table in the study waiting for me one morning was a large box of envelopes, handwritten letters, telegrams, and photographs. These were Peter Taylor's wartime letters to his soon-to-be-wife, Eleanor Ross Taylor, from 1943-1945—hundreds of them are in the SWC. His letters are beautiful to read, affectionate but also quite literary in a Jamesian sense, his style the same as in his fiction: elegant, precise, Proustian in its reflection.

Peter and Eleanor Ross Taylor met at Vanderbilt in 1943, shortly before his military tour began, and the letters trace his military experience on a near-daily basis from his stateside training to England, where he was stationed near Devon in preparation for the Normandy invasion. As he waited for orders, he wrote letters recounting his impressions of Ireland and England. He comments "the countryside which is so like Middle Tennessee" that "I am reminded constantly of my childhood on Franklin Pike, and of my days at Vanderbilt."



Peter Taylor's wartime letters and photographs 1943-45  
[photo by Linda Fox]

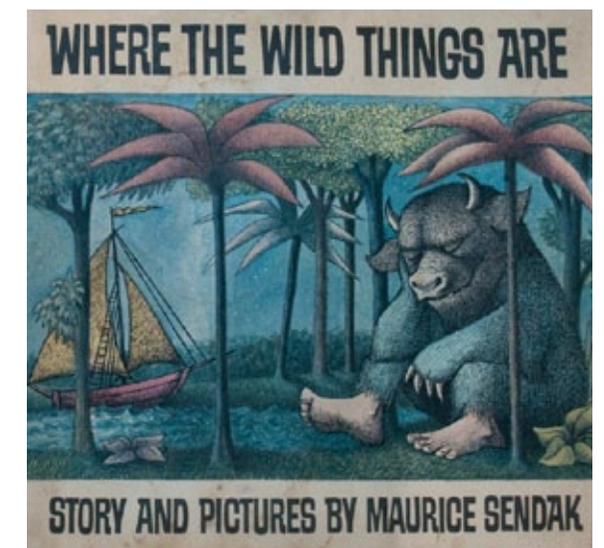
Not so far from where I sat, but nearly 60 years prior, Taylor had written on April 1, 1945, to his future bride, just short of her 25th birthday:

*My life here would be relatively comfortable if I could only stop trying to write but I cannot. The only compromise I can make is that of being satisfied with making notes on stories instead of writing them. Heaven knows if I shall ever go back and write all the things I make notes on, and I suppose it doesn't matter as long as I get it off my chest. But will I ever, ever, ever be able to really write something again? I must have a year after this war is over in which to do nothing but write. I intend to read no book, listen to no music, regard no painting. That, at least, is how full I feel of things. I am unable to write in a place where there is always a radio or chatter. I don't dislike those or any other sociable past time for themselves, but it's a real nuisance never to be able to escape them. Only in Salisbury on an occasional pass can I really get to myself in the library there and what writing can I, the slowest of mortals, accomplish in one day?*

Other letters recount his almost meeting with T.S. Eliot and then meeting Gertrude Stein in Paris: "I was with her for more than two hours, and it was one of the most exciting two hours I've ever known, and when I had left her apartment and started down the stair she opened her door again and called to me with a smile, 'Remember, face the facts.'" Because these letters are written so frequently, they also tell the day-to-day story of his friendship with the English gentleman,

Mr. Abbott of Devon, and of his membership in the Churchill Club for which he was invited to give an informal talk about "the Agrarians and regional writers." And the letters explore story ideas and discuss short stories he had submitted—"Edward, Edward," "Rain in the Heart," "A Sentimental Romance," "Charcoal: Early," and "A Notice of Death," among others. As with many of the books in the SWC, the letters often held surprise bonuses, photos tucked inside their envelopes. Wyatt Prunty, John Casey, Ross Taylor, Daniel O'Neill, and Steven John would read excerpts from these letters at Peter Taylor's funeral in Charlottesville in November 1994.

On day five came the Randall Jarrell manuscripts—his wartime notebooks with photos laid in and two of his poetry notebooks with entries from his last weeks in Chapel Hill before his death in 1965. The material is lucid and full of creativity—a table of contents for a new book of poetry and many unpublished fragments. Jarrell's own copies of his published work with margin emendations and corrections lay before me to see. Especially fascinating was Jarrell's copy of his second



*Where the Wild the Things Are* by Maurice Sendak (Harper & Row, 1963)

## James Dickey

In his sophomore year at Wake Forest University, 1967-68, Stuart Wright met James Dickey (1923-1997), who came to campus to give a reading and attend a party held by English professor, Lee Potter. Wright admired Dickey's charm, his guitar playing poetry bravado, his success with women, especially Dickey's success with the girl Wright himself had taken to the party. Wright then began to collect books by Dickey. Later when Wright became a faculty member at Wake Forest, he would follow Lee Potter's example by extending invitations to contemporary writers to visit campus and read from their work, even without university authority. From his interaction with Dickey, Wright became aware of first editions and first appearances of an author's work.

For the 1973-74 academic year, Wright secured a teaching position at Pamlico Community School. He moved to Greenville and lived at 145 Tar River Estates, frequently dining out at Darryl's (now a parking lot) next to the Greenville Post Office on Tenth Street. In the evenings, his book habit would take him to the North Carolina Collection at ECU where librarian Minnie Marguerite Wiggins guided him through the material that most interested him, Civil War history, and all things North Carolinian and Southern.

In November of 1973, Dickey came to ECU during his barnstorming for poetry tour. Wright, then 25, served as Dickey's "minder" and brought along his collection of Dickey first editions and other articles for Dickey to

book, *Little Friend, Little Friend* (1945) - heavily amended by the author. The Jarrell material makes clear his many connections to the literary world. His life-long friendships with Robert Lowell, Peter Taylor, Robie Macauley, and his admiration of Elizabeth Bishop, Allen Tate, and John Crowe Ransom are also apparent



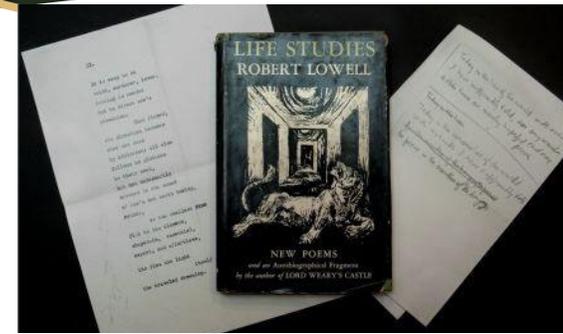
Presentation copy of James Dickey's 1950 Master's Thesis "Symbol and Image in the Short Poems of Herman Melville" from Vanderbilt University to Stuart Wright with several photos laid in. "To Stuart Wright: 'me and Herman' from James Dickey on 'the date' -- thirty years later May 19, 1980."

autograph. He even grabbed the Gideon's Bible from Dickey's motel room, and Dickey signed it "James Dickey, posing as God."

Wright compiled and published *James Dickey: a Bibliography of his Books, Pamphlets, and Broadides* in 1982. The bibliography includes an amusing foreword by Dickey: "... I feel no need to comment on whatever value Mr. Wright's work may have, or that of the writings themselves, but would like to make public my extreme gratitude to Mr. Wright for his trouble, and thank him for the fact that if I ever want to read my own work, I know where to find it." Wright's Palaemon Press published eight broadsides and chapbooks by Dickey; "The Shark at the Window" (Palaemon Broadside no. 6) is accompanied by an original woodcut by North Carolina artist Robert Dance. Dickey was named Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1966 and won the National Book Award for *Buckdancer's Choice*.

in the Jarrell manuscripts, notebooks, and ex-libris books collected by Stuart Wright.

Jarrell's interest in illustration and children's books is represented by sketches, self-portraits, and correspondence with Maurice Sendak, with whom he collaborated on three books. In addition



*Life Studies* by Robert Lowell (1959) is Lowell's most famous book, marking a new direction in poetry and influencing the work of John Berryman, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, et al.

to presentation copies of two of these, *The Bat Poet* and *The Animal Family*, there is also in the SWC a presentation copy of the first edition of Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, inscribed to Randall and Mary Jarrell, with an original drawing of the book's main character, Max.

Also remarkable is the Robert Lowell material in the SWC. Lowell, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and former Poet Laureate (like Jarrell and Warren), was a roommate and friend of Jarrell and Taylor at Kenyon College, where they all would study under John Crowe Ransom. I held in my hands a copy of Lowell's famous *Life Studies* inscribed to his student W.D. "Dee" Snodgrass, another future Pulitzer-winning poet. I read correspondence between the two (1957-1977) about literary and personal matters. I saw a copy of Lowell's *Old Glory* inscribed to Randall and Mary Jarrell and a typed letter by Lowell, tipped in, a tribute to the poet written after Jarrell's death. Other gems that had me muttering *unbelievable* were Lowell's *Land of Unlikeliness* inscribed to his friend Peter Taylor; Lowell's most anthologized poem, "For the Union Dead," dedicated to "Red" Warren; four photographic prints of Lowell and Ransom from the mid-1960s; and a long letter from Jean Stafford Lowell in 1944 to the newly married Eleanor Ross Taylor about Lowell and their mutual friends.

Lowell's connection to yet another Pulitzer-winning poet, Richard Eberhart, yields an extensive collection of books and manuscripts in the SWC. It was Eberhart, another Poet Laureate, who discovered the Beat poets for the rest of America in his 1957 seminal review in *The New York Times Book Review*. The collection related to him includes working manuscripts, ex-libris books, and presentation copies and letters from Frost, Warren, Lowell, John Ciardi, and Allen Ginsberg, among others.



George Garrett c. 1985  
[orig. photo by Mark Morrow]

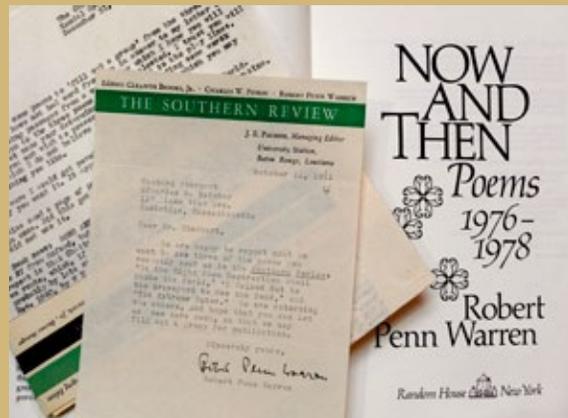
The web of connections represented in the SWC is stunning. All of these literary treasures made me aware of Wright's uncanny networking ability, his collegial demeanor that invited friendship and trust – "how way leads on to way" as Frost described it. In a letter from the Southern writer Barry Hannah to Wright, for example, Hannah writes, "The air is clear with you and I like it like that." Karl Shapiro, another Pulitzer poet, dedicated his poem "Poet in Residence" to Wright: "The poet shy and bold as a bullet / Arrives at his residence / Booted and spurred but often with tie. / To some that man is patently impossible, / To others potentiality in person."

## Richard Eberhart

Richard Eberhart (1904-2005) was the Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress immediately following Randall Jarrell and Robert Frost. He won the Pulitzer Prize in poetry in 1966 and the National Book Award in 1977. His many literary associations include his student Robert Lowell and his mentor Robert Frost. The SWC includes 14 poems by Eberhart with holograph comments by Frost, several manuscript versions of published Eberhart essays about Frost, correspondence with John Ciardi, W.H. Auden, and T.S. Eliot, and three typescript poems sent by May Sarton to Eberhart for comment. His literary associations also include John Crowe Ransom, who encouraged Eberhart early in his career, and Robert Penn Warren, who frequently accepted Eberhart poems for *The Southern Review*. Of particular note in the SWC are the items associated with the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997).

In 1956, the *New York Times Book Review* commissioned Eberhart to assess the West Coast beat poetry scene. His article "West Coast Rhythms" (Sept. 2, 1957) helped focus national attention on this new movement in poetry, especially on the work of Ginsberg. Eberhart wrote: "The West Coast is the liveliest spot in the country in poetry today. ... San Francisco teems with young poets. ... The most remarkable poem of the young group, written during the past year is 'Howl' by Allen Ginsberg, ..." The SWC includes Ginsberg's presentation copies to Eberhart of *The Fall of America* with a hand drawing depicting the outline of America crying "Help!" and *Collected Poems 1947-1980*.

Other items in the SWC associated with Ginsberg and the Beats include an autographed copy of *Howl* and a double-sided single-spaced City Lights Bookstore postcard (July 11, 1959) from Ginsberg to John Ciardi. Ciardi was a columnist and poetry editor for *The Saturday*



Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks founded *The Southern Review* in 1935 and published the best writing in America. This 1941 (miss-typed 1951) letter from Warren to Richard Eberhart is a notice of acceptance and pending publication of several Eberhart poems. The correspondence was found within the pages of Warren's copy of *Now and Then* which won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1979. [photo by Linda Fox]

*Review of Literature* who protested the seizure of the Beat magazine *Big Table* founded by Ginsberg, Kerouac, Burroughs, et al. The U.S. Post Office seized the edition because of the printed excerpt from Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*. Ciardi defended *Big Table*, calling both the University of Chicago and the U.S. Post Office "book burners." In his column, Ciardi described Burroughs as "a writer of great power and artistic integrity engaged in a profoundly meaningful search for true values" and described the excerpt as "a masterpiece of its own genre." On the postcard Ginsberg wrote: "...I read your editorial on *Big Table* and was overjoyed ... your article is the first & classic public appreciation of Burroughs' intelligence & art & comedy & sad genius." Ginsberg also mentions Kerouac: "Kerouac listens and transcribes the exact flow of his mind, over time, in an improvised (Midnight) or pre-set (Dr. Sax) structure. I buy this as a major new form. He is a fabulous workman [sic], no-one digs that yet. Also he has real soul to work with, and that is rare."

The Eberhart portion of the SWC contains over 1200 catalog entries listing 3600 items.

George Garrett's dedication of *Luck's Shining Child* to Wright is also a testament to Wright's steadfast and steady work as a bibliographer, publisher, collector, university professor, and friend.

Stuart Wright's career as a litterateur began soon after he earned his graduate degree at Wake Forest University. At 28, Wright was already a published historian of the Civil War and of North Carolina state history. Then he met A.R. Ammons in 1976 and thus began an association with many of the great writers of the 20th century. That year, he also established



Fred Chappell c.1985 [original photo by Mark Morrow]

Palaemon Press, for the purpose of publishing his first book on the Civil War, an edited translation of *The Great Cavalry Battle of Brandy Station, 9 June 1863* by Heros von Borcke and Justus Scheibert. Soon after, however, the Press's scope expanded to include the publication of original poems, limited editions of fiction, and poetry collections by Ammons, Chappell, Welty, Richard Wilbur, Karl Shapiro, James Dickey, William Styron, Peter Taylor, and many others.

Among the many notable Palaemon titles are first appearance publications of Ammons's "Breaking Out," illustrated by the author himself; a limited edition of 20 Welty photographs; a limited edition of Welty's play *Bye Bye Brevoort*; and

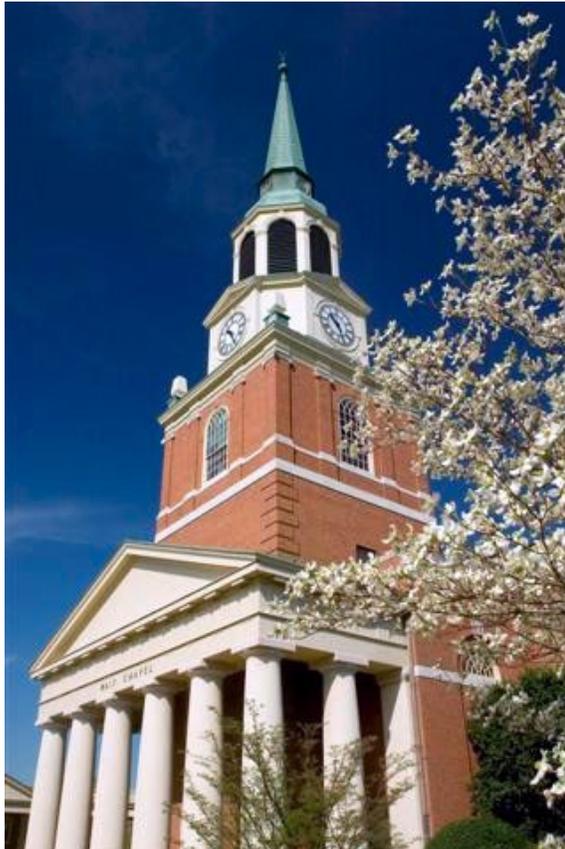
commemorative broadside folios in limited editions for Warren, Welty, Garrett, Reynolds Price, and Aaron Copland. Palaemon's *Northern Lights* broadside folios included new poems by W.D. Snodgrass, John Updike, James Merrill, John Ciardi, Richard Wilbur, Donald Davie, Mark Strand, Howard Nemerov, Howard Moss and Louis Simpson. Other Palaemon editions focused critical attention on the works of George Garrett, Eleanor Ross Taylor, Barry Hannah, Harry Crews, and William Goyen.

Beginning in 1978 and for the next 15 years, Wright compiled bibliographic checklists and descriptive bibliographies for Ammons, James Dickey, Eberhart, Garrett, William Goyen, Jarrell, Andrew Lytle, Robert Morgan, Walker Percy, Reynolds Price, Henry Taylor, Peter Taylor, John Updike, and Charles Wright for university presses, *The Bulletin of Bibliography*, and *The American Book Collector*. It was in these processes that he would come to own most of the titles he was listing in his published bibliographies.

While a faculty member at Wake Forest University, Wright invited many of these writers to stay at his home on Faculty Drive and to give readings at the university -- Eberhart, Garrett, Updike, Price, Wilbur, Dickey, Ammons, Chappell, they all came. His office in the cupola in Wait Chapel



John Updike in Winston-Salem c. 1982



Wait Chapel, Wake Forest University

housed a massive collection of Southern literature and Civil War history. In the heady collecting days of the 1980s, Wright became a member of the prestigious Grolier Club, his membership sponsored by the grand dame of the House of Books Ltd, Marguerite Cohn. By the time he finally decided to emigrate to England in the 1990s, pieces of his collection had made their way to the libraries of Vanderbilt, Wake Forest, Emory, Duke, the Ransom Center at Texas, the University of North Carolina. But most of what he collected crossed the Atlantic with him and came to rest in Ludlow town, before finding its new home in Joyner Library's Special Collections.

Some four years later I returned to Ludlow over the New Year's holiday. Stuart and I sat before the fire, drinking wine and pints of ale, reading Larkin poems out loud, toasting to *auld lang syne*, and I asked my friend if he had any regrets about certain books that had gotten away, the missed opportunities of a collector, pieces he could have had. Several instances came immediately to his mind. Ruefully, he mentioned the manuscript letters from James Agee to Father Flye that was his for the asking, and two books he had owned only for a short time--the dedication copy of *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis for his friend Philip Larkin; and the presentation copy of Red Warren's novel *All the King's Men* to his friend Lon Cheney. "I should have never let them go," he said.

True it is, there are books that are read and admired and put back on the shelf, but then there are books that one never forgets and can never hold tight enough. That one man could have collected so many of these literary treasures is remarkable. Thank you, Stuart Wright, for both your life in collecting and for this unbelievable collection that has found its last home here, at ECU, to be kept in trust for all time.

Thomas Douglass  
September 7, 2011

## Stuart T. Wright

Stuart T. Wright (1948- ) was born in Roxboro, NC, the son of Frances "Critcher" Wright (1919-2010) and Wallace Lyndon Wright (1921-1965). From the time of his fifth grade year, Wright was an avid reader and patron of the Person County Library, reading books of history and science, thanks to Pearl Street, the librarian, who one day gave him a copy of Carl Sandburg's *Storm Over the Land*, an excerpted volume from Sandburg's biography of Lincoln. The boy and his father became engrossed in the Civil War centennial fever that touched the nation then, and together they toured Civil War battlefields, searching for artifacts -- belt buckles, Confederate mini-balls, and Union cartridge shells, buttons -- that could and can still be found. His father's influence encouraged his avid interest in history, and in one of his dedications, Wright called him the "armchair historian extraordinaire." His mother was a piano teacher of note in the community for more than fifty years.

Wright graduated Roxboro High School in 1966, and during those teenage years, he fed his early collector's interest by visiting the treasures of Willard M. Marley (c. 1906-1988) at the Book Exchange in Durham (which closed in 2009 after 75 years in the book business.) The Book Exchange specialized in law, history and medical titles popular with Duke and NC Central students, but it also held used book gems and complete in-print runs of major publishing houses, including New Directions. Wright would also buy from Jeremy North, who managed the Gothic Bookstore on the Duke campus: the Jeremy North Book Collecting Contest has been held for Duke students since 2003. And Wright also ventured down U.S 15/501 to Chapel Hill to buy titles from Paul and Bunny Smith, then owners of the Old Book Corner on East Franklin Street.

In the fall of 1966 Wright entered Wake Forest University, where he studied pre-med, history, German, and music. He lived for a term in England, and while there checked out a copy of Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel!* from the local library in Hampstead. He became a Wolfe aficionado, and when Wright returned to Wake Forest to pursue graduate study, he focused his interest on Southern Studies, history and literature -- the perfect background for his ambition: to build an authoritative Southern Studies Collection for Wake Forest University.

Wright then began trading with Tom Broadfoot, who specialized in Southern history and Civil War titles, and who would become an important book dealer in North Carolina. Broadfoot helped Wright develop his Southern literature collection by offering him complete first edition collections of Southern Renaissance writers. Wright also corresponded and traded with Bell Irvin Wiley (1906-1980), eminent Civil War historian and book collector, whom Wright described as "the unexcelled Boswell of the common soldier."

In 1977 Wright secured a teaching position with Reynolda House, an affiliate of WFU, opened to the public and dedicated to the arts and arts education since 1965. He taught music and anatomy classes for student artists. In 1978 he became Professor of Southern Studies at the university. During his 10 years at Wake Forest, Wright was a prolific author, bibliographer, and publisher.



Stuart Wright before the fire  
[photo by Linda Fox]

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Badger steps out in winter [photo by Linda Fox]

“The Stuart Wright Collection (SWC) at ECU provides a rare opportunity for the American scholar to explore the richness of our literary past. There is no doubt that much of the manuscript material will result in revised editions of previously published biographies and criticism, and provide scholars with a more complete assessment of the imaginative accomplishment of the Twentieth century. For the lucky student, who ventures forth into this vast collection, there will be connections made in the classroom and in print that will last a lifetime.”

