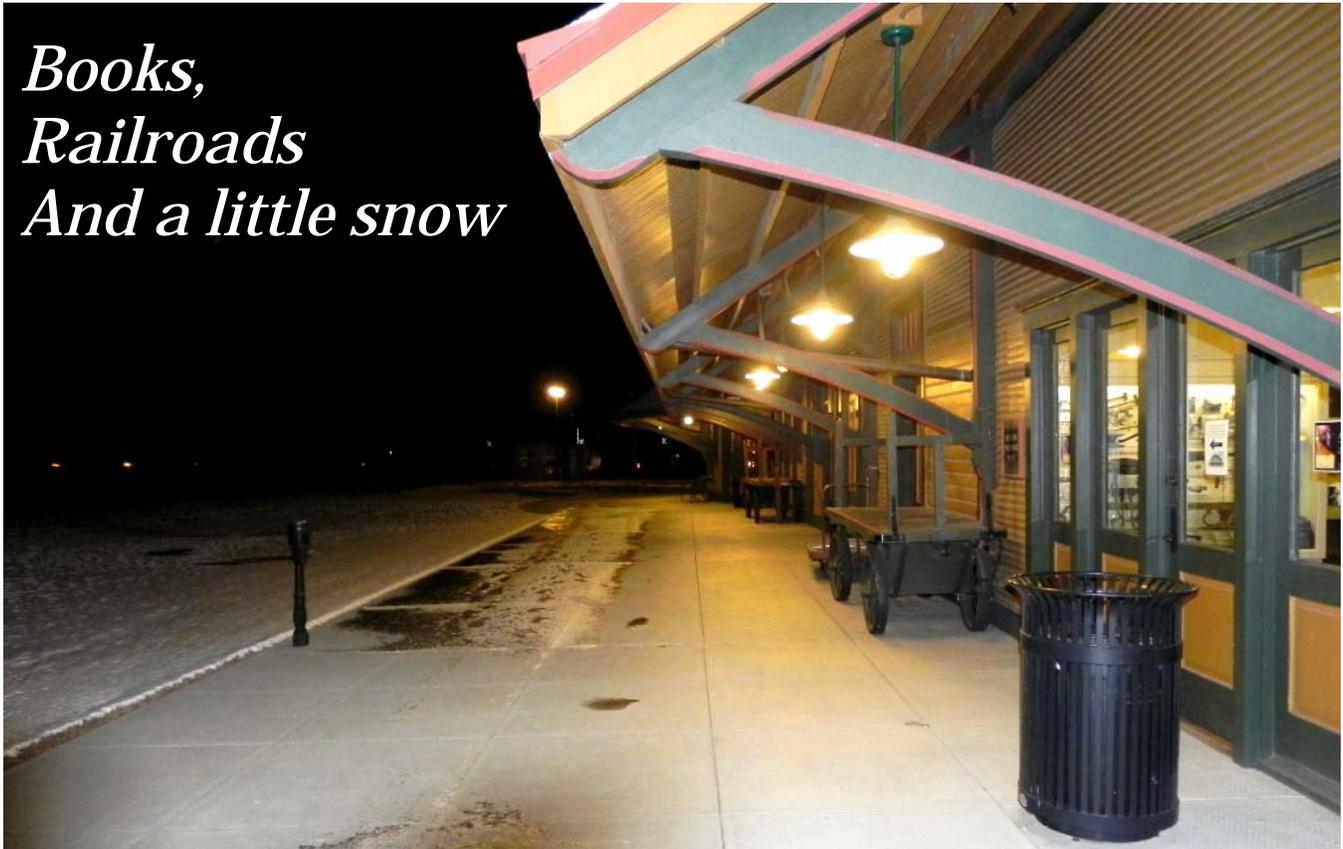


My Book Report

27 December 2010

Hamlet and the North Carolina Sandhills

*Books,
Railroads
And a little snow*



The Hamlet Historic Depot and Museum where the book signing took place

Warm homecoming on a cold night

Several people drove more than 100 miles.

There were old friends and old teammates, a college classmate I hadn't seen since graduation and four cousins I hadn't seen since before then.

And on top of that, the volunteers from the Hamlet Historic Depot and Museum in my hometown arranged the first white Christmas in my lifetime (OK, the snow arrived officially the day after Christmas,

but that was so it would still be fresh for the event).

That's as good as welcomes get.

The first formal book signing for *Through the Heart of the South* took place Dec. 27 in the town that inspired my novel and in the 110-year-old restored train station that preserves Hamlet, North Carolina's history and is the setting for some of

– *Continued overleaf*

Warm homecoming on a cold night

— Continued from previous

the most important scenes in the book.

I want to thank everyone who came and particularly those who volunteered their time to make it a very special night for me:

- Jim Graham, chairman of the museum board, for enabling book sales at the museum shop and backing the event,
- Jeanne Holland Newton, board member, and her husband Steve who did most of the logistical heavy lifting,
- Bobbi Pruitt for the refreshments,
- And especially my "agent," Sharon Davis, who managed my sanity.

These people are not professional event planners or book marketers. But they could be.

Photo credits

The pictures in this newsletter were shot by Jeanne Holland Newton, Steve Newton and David Riddick.

In addition, Bill Dennis shot pictures that can be seen in the Forum section of www.OurHamlet.org.

 INSIDE SPORTS, 1B Raiders travel to Pinecrest for hoop test	 INSIDE NEWS, 5A U.S. officials: No way to effectively close Afghan-Pakistan border	 INSIDE OPINION, 4A 'Sen. Sam' still has lessons to share	 WEATHER Sunny HIGH: 49 LOW: 28
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RICHMOND COUNTY

 WEDNESDAY • Dec. 29, 2010
 Rockingham, N.C. 50 cents

Warmer weather is on the way

Dawn M. Kurry
 RICHMOND COUNTY DAILY JOURNAL

After a colder than usual December, Richmond County should see temperatures rising above freezing in the next few days.

"December has been one of the coldest months on record," said Brandon Vincent, meteorologist for Raleigh's National Weather Service branch. "It's abnormal to sustain cold in December like we have. In January, it does look like we'll be getting back to normal," said Vincent.

"Normal" means slightly warmer than what residents saw this December. "We'll see some warming into low 60's this weekend."

The National Weather Service determined that in our area, December temperatures averaged between 53 degrees and 63 degrees in the past. This year, December's temperatures averaged between 56 degrees and 39 degrees. December's warmest day this year fell on the 22nd, with the observed low of 37 degrees, making it the only day in the past month that saw above freezing low temperatures. December's lowest temperature this year was observed at 11 degrees on the 15th.

January has been colder than December in the past, with recorded lows in the single digits.

"It's normal to fluctuate in the WEATHER CONTINUED ON PAGE 1A

Writer comes home for book signing

Philip D. Brown
 RICHMOND COUNTY DAILY JOURNAL

The Hamlet Depot was the backdrop of a book signing Monday night by a native son whose first novel used Hamlet and the Depot in his novel.

Jody Meacham grew up in Hamlet, so it seemed natural he would use the town as the setting for "Through the Heart of the South," his work of fiction. It seemed even more fitting to celebrate the book's release with a signing at the Hamlet Depot.

"There was no other place to have it than where we had it last night," Meacham said Tuesday morning, reflecting on the event. "The Depot is the setting for a lot of scenes in the book, and in many ways it's the center of life in Hamlet... It's emotional when it's all these people who knew you growing up and your hometown people who come out to see you, even though I know the roads were clear, when it's cold and wet outside and some people would rather stay inside."

Meacham pulled on both his background as a Hamlet resident and his background as a sports journalist to tell the story of a high school football senior during the first year of school integration in a small town.

Sharon Davis attended Hamlet High School with the author, and suggested "Through the Heart of the South" for those who enjoy a good book.

"For anybody who loves the railroad, who grew up in Hamlet or just enjoys reading a good story, this is a good way to spend a winter's evening... or even two," Davis said at the book signing.

The fact that Hamlet was the backdrop for the story, and a personal acquaintance with the author, made Gwen Maples also feel a special connection with the book.

"I enjoyed all the old things, and the people and the places," reader Bobbie Pruitt commented.

Meacham's career as a sports journalist has led him far away from Hamlet, and he now makes his home in San Jose, Calif., where he plans to hold additional book signings.

Sally, he acknowledged the book can hold a special place for those who call Hamlet home.

"I live in California now, and you'll often go places there and realize this was where they shot a famous scene in a movie," Meacham said. "One of the things (readers at the book signing) told me was that they really enjoyed it because they recognized so many elements of the town in the setting. It's a good feeling to know that someone thought where you're from is a special enough place to tell a story about."

He said he didn't think Hamlet could've provided the same energy and inspiration for his fiction had he remained here throughout his life, however.

"Sometimes, there's no real way to gain an appreciation of where you are until you spend time away from it," Meacham explained. "That time away from my hometown has made me appreciate it in a way I couldn't before... It's just that sometimes when you're in the same place, things begin to become ordinary to you."

He said throughout his career, in talking with other sports writers from across the country, he saw the way people were fascinated by the railroad town and that played a part in his choice to use it to inspire the fictional town of Short Ridge.

"They were always really fascinated by things I thought were pretty ordinary, and it gave me a better appreciation of those things to see them through their eyes," Meacham said.

The book is available for purchase at the Depot for \$16, or on the Internet at www.jodymeacham.com in digital or traditional formats, along with special features such as historical background and a question and answer session with the author.

Staff Writer Philip D. Brown can be reached at (301) 593-2111 ext. 32, or by email at pbrown@journaldailyjournal.com.



Author Jody Meacham (center) speaks with Hamlet business owners David and Kim Lindsey upon his return to his hometown to hold his first book-signing for his initial fictional release, "Through the Heart of the South."

Plans are to move graves

Philip D. Brown
 RICHMOND COUNTY DAILY JOURNAL

Descendants of two people buried in Richmond County in the late 1800s are being sought so the landowner can relocate their graves.

Riley Paving is soliciting relatives of the occupants of two graves about a quarter mile up Glider Road to the west of Camp Mackall near the Moore County line. They are about 2,000 feet from U.S. 1.

The name on one headstone is James S. Hughes, born on June 23, 1813 and died Dec. 11, 1899, and the other is Nancy A. Hughes, born Jan. 24, 1831 and died Aug. 8, 1882.

Richmond County Historical Society Genealogy Committee members May Williams said records show the two were husband and wife.

A legal notice about moving the graves appears in today's Daily Journal.

"We hope there's somebody still in Richmond County who can look back in their family records and find out they're related to these folks," said Jerry Paving, General Manager of Riley Paving.

He said the company owns a sand pit on the property, and wants to move the graves to excavate the land.

Richmond County Register of Deeds Linda Douglas said in order to move a grave, a certificate must be obtained from the county health department. Then, the certificate is filed at the Register of Deeds office to keep a record of where the graves originally were and where the remains are being moved.

"That way, if any next of kin comes forward at a later date to find the grave, we know exactly when they were buried, when they were moved and where they are buried now," Douglas said.

She said the process isn't used very often in the county.

As new year draws closer, resolutions are drafted

Dawn M. Kurry
 RICHMOND COUNTY DAILY JOURNAL

The new year draws near, and some people are thinking of ways to better themselves in 2011.

One of the most popular resolutions people make is to lose more weight.

"The new year is a fresh start and after indulgence of holidays and gifts, new folks come in and set goals," said fitness instructor Joannie Pike at FirstHealth Fitness Center in Rockingham.

Pike said a good percentage stick to their goals and remain committed, and at least 80 percent have it on their minds when they come in. The facility offers promotions for newcomers. If you commit to a year, the price of each month of membership is reduced from \$59 to \$43, and January is free. Personal trainers and counselors are also nearby if you get discouraged, confused, or begin to develop a rut and need to break out of it.

"Fitness and changing what you eat is something everyone has a challenge with," said Pike. "We get a lot of fresh clients in the coming months, especially for spring when it's almost bathing suit weather. They come in all different shapes and sizes."

While some people avoid resolutions because of fear of failure, one agency in Richmond County knows support helps.

Laura Clark of Monarch, an adult group home established to help those with disabilities who wish to be more independent, said their staff is working together to motivate each other to lose weight.

"We talked about it," said Clark. "We're all trying to lose weight. We would weigh in each week, and put in \$1 when we weigh in." The biggest loser would get the money.

New law provides added protection for women in safe homes

Hollie Nivens
 RICHMOND COUNTY DAILY JOURNAL

Victims of domestic violence now have added protection, due to a law that went into effect at the beginning of this month.

It says that no one with a 50-B protective order against them could enter a safe house. Not abiding by this law would result in a felony offense.

Beth Froehling co-executive director of the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, said the law will increase the safety for victims housed at shelters as well as those who are employed there.

"This law had been pending since 2007," she said.

It stems from the case of Bonnie Woodring. In 2008, after several attempts to get a court order against her abusive husband John Woodring, he found her at a domestic violence shelter.

John had tried to contact her numerous times but a final e-mail looked as though he had given up the fight. That wasn't the case. He stole a car and drove to the shelter and used a stolen shotgun to force his entry onto the premises, and after threatening an employee Woodring came out of hiding and jumped in front of the employee to save their life.

Woodring was then shot at point blank range.

"This recent law will be enhanced next in an effort to assure this type of incident doesn't happen again. No reports have been made deaths at shelters since then as well."

"This is another tool for us to help keep our clients safe," said Renee McGill-Cox, the residential services director for Domestic Violence Shelter and Services Inc. in Wilmington. "If (a) victim has gone and has been granted a restraining order and they come to our shelter for safety - this person should not have to be fearful that someone should be coming after them."

The NCCAW 2011 legislative

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The crowd begins to arrive in the depot rotunda. I'm signing for Betty Lynn Warnock and her husband Doug, a high school football teammate.

Former neighbor and high school classmate John Adeimy with his new wife Christin. It would be bragging (and a lie) to say Christin came all the way from Germany for the signing. She came from Germany to be with John; they came from Atlanta.





I had not seen Teresa Weaver Foster, a classmate at UNC and fellow resident of Morrison Dorm, since we graduated in 1973. She is a nurse and detoured on her holiday trip from Hickory to the beach to get a book. Jim Graham of the museum board is behind her.



In the museum gift shop

Long-time family friend David Lindsey and his wife Kim. David's mother was a research source, and the house where he grew up was used as the scene of a wedding in the novel.



Cuz! I'm sure I'll get the name of the Evans cousins in the wrong order: JoEllen, Libby, Cartie and Becky.

Bill Dennis shot pictures for
www.OurHamlet.org.



Steve and Jeanne Newton

David Riddick looking for the perfect shot.



Bobbi Pruitt with the hot cider



Signing for Sharon Davis

Goodbye from the North Carolina Sandhills



Bethesda Presbyterian Church in Aberdeen, Moore County, not far from my sister's house in Pinehurst, where I stayed for the book signing.