

Faculty Happenings

Chowan College English Professor Rekindles Interest in Twain Writings

A Chowan College English professor is on the forefront of a national effort to rekindle interest in the writings of Mark Twain.

Not only is Dr. John Davis a founder of the Mark Twain Circle, a national organization that produces the "Mark Twain Circular," he has also contributed 13 articles to the Mark Twain Encyclopedia to be published no later than 1993.

To cap his recognition as a Mark Twain authority, he was one of a handful of professors nationally invited to present a paper at the third annual Fall Twain Symposium in Hartford, Conn. Oct. 10-11.

The symposium, devoted to "The Myth of the Frontier," was held at the Mark Twain Memorial, the home where Mark Twain lived with his wife Olivia for 20 years.

Davis shared the podium with noted Mark Twain experts from Princeton, Dartmouth, the University of Virginia, the University of Texas at El Paso, and the State University of New York.

Davis said that Mark Twain has not always been held in high esteem in his own country. He said some critics conceded he was a great humorist, but faulted him for a lack of organization and seriousness of purpose. They said his success was an "accident."

This trend has been reversed in the past 20 years, according to Davis. He said intense current investigation of Mark

Twain's published and unpublished works, centered at the University of California at Berkeley, has resulted in a renewed appreciation for the complexity of his writings.

"These studies reveal that Mark Twain was very well organized and that his writings were not just ramblings of his own experiences and travels but also fiction, a product of his own imagination," said Davis. "As for his humor, it's enjoyable standing by itself. But he used it as a tool to expose hypocrisy, racism and other social ills. I believe he was a genius."

He traces his love for Mark Twain to his high school days. Both his master's thesis and Ph.D. dissertation at Auburn University were devoted to Mark Twain.

He drew upon his dissertation in preparing his 30-minute paper which included an examination of some of the frontier myths that Mark Twain exposed as false after traveling west with his brother.

Davis said the myths include a code of honor among gunmen, the frontier dude, and a relative automatically avenging the murder of a kin.

Samuel Clemens, who used the pen name of Mark Twain, served as a reporter in Virginia City, Nevada and San Francisco. Later he was a reporter in New York City and Buffalo.

Davis also believes "Mark Twain himself becomes myth." He said, "In creating Mark Twain, Samuel Clemens mythologized a public and literary persona."

He said Clemens attempted to capitalize on making the character of Mark Twain larger than life.

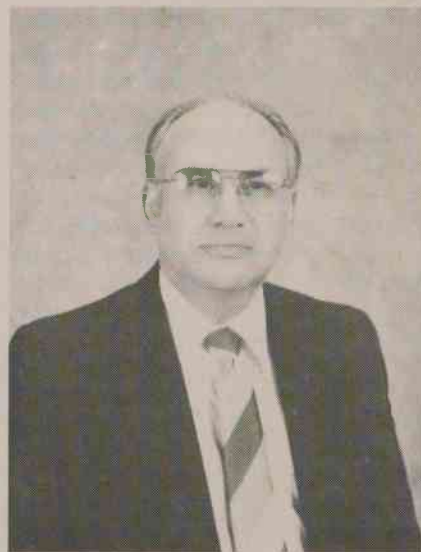
Mark Twain amassed a fortune from his writings and lectures. He nearly lost everything when an investment in a printing press failed. To avoid bankruptcy, he sold his Hartford home.

nkee.
Mark Twain's place in American literature is secure, according to Davis.

"Mark Twain was the most thoroughly American writer. His novel, Huckleberry Finn, is considered one of the two greatest novels written by an American. The other is Moby Dick."

Davis said he is pleased to have a role in the growing popularity of Mark Twain. He is glad to see a number of Twain's lesser known works included in collections of his short stories.

Article by Phil Royce



Davis

"I believe he [Mark Twain] was a genius." --
Dr. Davis

Winslow Carter Bids Adieu

From the poverty of rural farm life to teaching in an African village, snorkeling in the Indian Ocean and climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, to a career recruiting and working with young college students, Winslow Carter epitomizes the American ideal of growth through education.

Carter left Chowan College this summer to return to a profession he began upon his own graduation from Chowan--work he has pursued on a personal level by opening his home to emotionally-disturbed foster children.

Carter assumed the position of Job Skills Coach for a high school in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, assisting handicapped youngsters with vocational placement.

Before working at Chowan, Carter was director of admissions at Campbell College for seven years; He was director of admissions at Chowan for seven years until last April when he was appointed dean of student development. As director of admissions, he always met or exceeded his goals for recruits for the upcoming freshman classes.

The accomplishment for which he would most like to be remembered concerns young lives. "I'd like to think I had a good impact on students here," he says.



Carter

He will miss the people he worked with and the campus. "There's an aura about this campus," he said. "It's something you have to experience to understand."

Carter attributes much of his professional growth to workshops he attended and often led for the state's admissions professionals organization (CACRAO) and his contact with those professionals. "It has helped me appreciate the value of education and the way it can change a life," he said. "To know I've had a part in that has helped me grow. If you don't grow and continue to learn, you dry up inside."

Carter and his wife, Harriett, have a son Andrew, 7 and daughter Emily, 11.

Asked what perceptions and hopes he has for Chowan College's future, Carter is eloquent: "... a liberal arts college that can help young people who don't have all the

advantages make a good life for themselves. I hope Chowan College can do for others what it did for me--open doors culturally, open up friendships, make their world larger."

As he moves on, he will strive to continue the philosophies he has propounded throughout his life: It is better "to be rather than to seem," and success "is not so much inspiration as perspiration."

His conviction "there is some good in everybody" will surely bring him the same esteem among his new students and associates he has attained here.

Article by Jeanne V. Blair



Henderson

Faculty Focus

Mrs. Phyllis Dewar presented a paper, "ABC's of Chemistry," at the National Science Teachers Association Area Convention in Charlotte December 10.

Resident directors at Chowan College collected toys and money for Toys-For-Tots and Help-A-Needy-Child-At-Christmas.

Jeanette Henderson became secretary to the director of annual giving and alumni services, and to the director of college relations last October.

Her husband of 18 years, Jack, became business manager of Roanoke Chowan Community College in Ahoskie, a year and a half ago. They moved to Hertford County from Chesapeake, Va., and now reside in Murfreesboro.

The Hendersons have two children, David, 11 and Melissa, 13.

While living in Chesapeake, Jeanette worked as office manager and director of development for Triple R Ranch, a Christian summer camp and year-round retreat center.

She owned horses and taught horseback riding in the Chesapeake area. The Hendersons attend First Baptist Church of Ahoskie where they are involved with the youth program.