

Randall Kenan receives 1998 Hobson Prize

Outstanding Southern novelist Randall Kenan, whose portrayal of the fictional town of Tim's Creek is often compared to William Faulkner's "little postage stamp of native soil" received the conferment of the Hobson Prize and Medal on May 4.

Touching the medal draped against his chest and recanting the words of a favorite actress upon receiving an academy award, Kenan graciously chuckled and declared, "You don't know how encouraging it is to feel one of these things." Charmed by his disclosure, his audience laughed.

Humbly reminiscing about his challenges, Kenan offered, "I was born poor, illegitimate and black in a place that makes Murfreesboro look like a metropolis, with literally all sorts of odds and evens against me. Through work, faith and the love and support of my family and teachers, many of whom were educated at places like Chowan, I beat those odds and wound up at Chapel Hill where I had a strange encounter with literature.

"Although I probably should have gone on and done something useful, like studied medicine or physics as I originally intended to do, I decided to

become a writer. I don't know if what I have written has measured up to what I wanted it to be, but *this* certainly is encouraging me that I am at least on the right track."

There is no doubt that Kenan is on the right track. He published his first novel in 1989 at age 26 and acknowledged that *A Visitation of Spirits*, which is steeped in the landscape of tobacco farms, backwoods churches, hillbilly diners and a small-town high

school, was influenced by the sermons, prayer meetings and big family dinners of his rural North Carolina upbringing.

His collection of short stories, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*, soon followed. The collection was nominated for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award for Fiction, became a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and was among *The New York Times* Notable Books of 1992. The *New York Times Book Review* read, "Fiercely and relentlessly, hilariously and sympathetically, Randall Kenan unfolds layer upon layer of the interlocked existences of his Tim's Creek citizens . . . he has



graduated with a degree in English after an interest in science fiction led him to creative writing and "an obsession with the written word."

Kenan has won numerous awards including the Sherwood Anderson Award in 1995 and the Whiting Writer's Award in 1994. He was named the Renee and John Grisham Southern Writer-in

Residence at The University of Mississippi in 1997 and was selected as a Guggenheim fellow in 1994. In addition to serving on the faculty at Sarah Lawrence College, Columbia University and Vassar College, Kenan was the first William Blackburn Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Duke University in the fall of 1994 and the Edourd Morot-Sir Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at his alma mater in 1995. He has also held the title of assistant editor at the



created, in a single obscure hamlet, a deeply and peculiarly American community, as memorable as any in recent fiction."

His latest work, *Walking on Water: In Search of Black America*, will be published by Alfred A. Knopf, in 1999.

Born in Brooklyn, Kenan spent his youth in the Duplin County countryside. At seventeen, he left Chinquapin for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Enrolling to major in physics, he

New York publishing house of Alfred A. Knopf.

Awarded annually to recognize the distinguished achievement of a person in the field of arts and letters, the endowed program was established at Chowan by the Hobson Family Foundation of San Francisco, Ca., as a memorial to Mary Frances Hobson, a North Carolina journalist and poet. Kenan joins former Hobson Prize recipients Kaye Gibbons, Mark Richard and Jill McCorkle.

Homecoming 1998 November 13 & 14

Friday

Braves Club Golf Tournament
Alumni Association Reception
Bonfire & Pep Rally

Saturday

Breakfast with Coaches & Players
Homecoming Parade & Alumni Coffee
Annual Alumni Association Meeting
Picnic Lunch
Alumni & Friends Honoree Luncheon
Football - Braves vs. Guilford College
150th Anniversary Alumni Ball

Classes Reunion

1963	35
1968	30
1972, 1973, 1974	25 & friends
1978	20
1983	15
1987, 1988, 1989	10 & friends
1993	5
1996, 1997, 1998	Young 4CE

Watch your mail for final event schedule and registration forms in mid-August. For more information or to organize special reunion activities for your class or group, contact Charlie Aycock, Director of Alumni Services at (252) 398-6266.

granting the library campus-wide access

The Friends of the Library Computerization Campaign Committee and the many friends of Chowan are to be congratulated for their excellent response to the successful \$250,000 fund drive to equip and endow library automation. Members of the committee are left to right (seated) Jack Hassell, Chair Betty Moore, Honorary Chair Esther Whitaker; (standing) Henry Pulliam, Bruce Pulliam, Alice Vann, Joan Horne, Sue Fairless, and Braxton Britt. Not pictured are Honorary Chair Bruce Whitaker, Katherine Allen, Wendy Barnes, Tom Caulkins, Connie Hicks, Fran Minton and Carolyn Taylor.

To everyone who made the campaign a success . . .

THANK YOU!

