

Author shares experiences that led to novel



Author Peggy Payne, right, answers questions from a student at the morning session held in the Music Room. PHOTO: VOICE STAFF

By SARA KENNEDY and ASHLEY DIXON

On February 5, 2002, at 7:30 p.m. the author of the novel "Sister India," Peggy Payne, spoke to an audience of about 125 people.

Margaret Baddour, Humanities instructor, arranged for Payne to speak and introduced her.

Payne has visited over 27 countries and has been a freelance writer since 1972.

She won an Indo-American Fellowship to spend several months in the ancient holy city of Varanasi (Benares) along the River Ganges, which helped develop her inspiration for "Sister India."

Payne said, "This was a city that would take me outside of myself, out of my own limited patterns of thinking."

She wore a bright red sari embroidered with gold threads from India at the evening reading and a blue silk sari at the morning reading held in the Music Room.

Reading part of her book and sharing her experiences living in India as a travel writer, Payne helped the audience imagine life in India.

Every aspect of life was new to Payne. Simple things such as mailing a letter proved to be a long process that involved half a morning's time.

Payne also carried a little notepad taking notes of her surroundings and languages foreign to her.

The setting for "Sister India" is a guesthouse run by a 400-pound American expatriate named "Natraja." on the Ganges River.

Each guest at the Inn takes a turn as the narrator.

A violent incident between Hindus and Muslims causes their quarantine in Varanasi and curfew at the guesthouse.

Payne's articles have been published in major magazines like *Family Circle*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Ms*.

Her travel articles and essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Christian Scientist Monitor*.

Along with Payne's latest article she is co-author with Allen Luks of *The Healing Power of Doing Good*.

She has been employed with NC Public Television, the NC Governor's Office, Tanner Companies, Sprint, Kiawah Island, among others.

She is currently a resident in Chatham County with her husband Bob Dick, a clinical psychologist.

Payne answered questions at the end.

One student asked if she would like to return to India. Her response was, "Yes, I plan on it."

An audience member asked if she had always known she wanted to be a writer. Payne said she has known since she was in the 8th grade.

Another audience member asked, "Do you see yourself continuing writing?" Her answer, "Yes."

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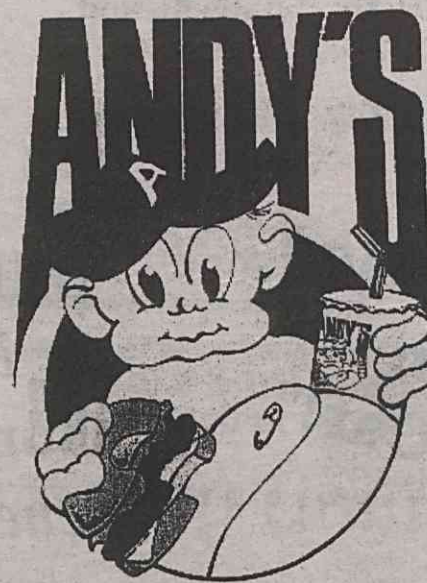
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