

RON RASH

## Author and poet Rash visits Guilford, speaks about newest novel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The rest of the book follows Maggie, a South Carolinian photographer who grew up near the river the girl had drowned in. She is assigned, along with a reporter, to cover the conflict between environmentalists, who want to protect the river, and the girl's parents, who want to dam the river in order to retrieve the body from a dangerous whirlpool.

Rash spoke to the students about his intentions for the book.

"I hope it was a book that brought up some difficult questions and didn't give you easy answers," he said.

Rash also delved into his personal life, touching on how his son was hit by a car—and lived—six months before he began writing the book.

"I don't think writers understand why they're writing something until after the fact," Rash said.

Rash told the students that he was writing about his fears as a parent and his love of nature. As a South Carolina native, Rash has a passion for the outdoors, which is evident in his writing.

Rash answered the students' questions, which ranged from questions about the plot to the power of photography versus the power of words.

When asked if nature was a character in the novel, Rash responded, "Yes, and I want nature to always be a character in my books."

"Saints at the River" is from a woman's perspective, and Rash defended his decision.

"I've never been one of those writers that believes you should write only about people

like you," Rash said.

He also mentioned that he had begun to write from a male's perspective, but quickly realized the story was meant to be told by a woman.

In response to the photography question, Rash said, "We're all trying to get to the truth, whether it's with words or photography."

He said that each has its pros and cons, and one is not greater than the other.

After the questions, Rash spoke about his newest novel, "Serena," a story about a woman who trains and hunts with eagles. He closed by reading a passage from it.

Overall, students enjoyed Rash's visit and took different ideas away from it.

"It was interesting," Holden said. "I thought that listening to him talk about the book made it seem more enjoyable than I remembered."

"I thought that it was interesting how strongly he seemed to identify with the fathers in the book," said Perry.

Students' response to "Saints at the River" was mixed.

"I liked it, but I also thought it was kind of sad," first year Katie Perry said. "It wasn't like any other books I'd read before."

Fellow first year Susan Robare was less satisfied with the book.

"The whole plot seemed not feasible to me," Robare said. "The whole argument between getting the kid out of the river or keeping it the way it was seemed overdone and unnecessary."

Holden was more ambivalent about the book.

"I thought it was an interesting concept, but I felt like the themes could have been expanded on better," said Holden. "It could have been deeper."



South Carolina author **Ron Rash** spoke about his books "Saints at the River" and "Serena" in Dana Auditorium, followed by a Q&A session in the Greenleaf.

MAX KOCHINKE/GUILFORDIAN

