

North Carolina's First Lady of Literature



DR. BRUCE E. WHITAKER

Dr. Bruce E. Whitaker Says:

It is gratifying to me that the January issue of *The Chowanian* is giving due recognition to Dr. Bernice Kelly Harris and her Creative Writing Class. I am glad that we have made provision for "The Literary Chowanian".

Students in this class include members from surrounding towns in North Carolina and Virginia, as well as members of creative venture at Chowan College, under the able and incomparable leadership of Dr. Harris,

which is a source of great satisfaction to me.

It is my hope and prediction that through this venture in Creative Writing there shall evolve experiences and productions which will enliven and enrich communities and individuals and that there will evolve quite a number of publishable articles, plays and books. I trust there will be a steady kindling of sparks of creativity experienced on the part of all participants.

Chowan College commends and encourages both teacher and students in this creative venture.



THAD STEM, JR.

"She Was Our Voice"

By THAD STEM, JR.
Lawyer, Essayist, Author
Oxford, N. C.

Bernice Kelly Harris is the Tom Wolfe of Eastern Carolina fiction. Indeed, I consider Mrs. Harris and Tom Wolfe as the living pine tree and the ever-blooming laurel of our state's fictional life.

For years Mrs. Harris was our lone voice in the wilderness. Her

magnificent novels such as "Pur-slane", "Portulaca", "Sage Quarter", "Wild Cherry Tree Road", "Sweet Beulah Land", and "Janey Jeems" are redolent with charm, truth, dramatic intensity, and humanity. These cries from the heart of a people had to be written, just as a baby has to be born. But our section was a floor of damning question
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At Home She's "Miss Kelly"

By J. L. WALTER MOOSE

Tar Heel writers call her North Carolina's First Lady of Letters. Wake Forest College and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro have taken note of her literary achievements and honored her with the degree, Doctor of Literature. On the title pages of her novels and other published works the name is Bernice Kelly Harris. But in Seaboard she is Miss Kelly.

And this is no mean title, nor is it bold familiarity on the part of her home town. Rather, it carries a warmth of genuine respect and the friendly neighborliness of the townspeople.

Seaboard has been Bernice Kelly Harris' home for almost half a century. She came to Seaboard to teach English in the local high school and became Mrs. Herbert K. Harris, but everybody went right on calling her Miss Kelly, and Miss Kelly she has remained.

The town knows about PURSLANE and the Mayflower Cup and numerous other literary awards, but it has never made a show over the author. This is exactly the way she prefers it, for she does not want her neighbors making a fuss over her.

Miss Kelly Missed

Seaboard misses Miss Kelly when she is out of town because she is so much a part of the village. Through the years she has maintained a lively interest in community affairs and has manifested a genuine willingness to be helpful wherever her talents are needed. Therefore her neighbors have always felt free to call on her for all kinds of favors.

Children go to her with their interest, too. The little twins on Washington Street stop by Miss Kelly's to hunt bird nests with her--and to share her cookies. Another youngster, who has become interested in the world of color, goes by to show Miss Kelly the different colors he has discovered crushing flower petals, blades of grass, and an assortment of weeds on a sheet of paper. He knows she will be interested, for it was she who told him all about it in the first place, about how as a child growing up on a farm in Wake County she had created a riot of color in exactly the same way. This little boy
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SAM RAGAN

"She Has Influenced Many"

By SAM RAGAN
Executive Editor
News and Observer

The contribution of Bernice Kelly Harris to North Carolina and American literature is well known. Less well known is her immeasurable contribution to people--other writers, her neighbors, her friends--and to living itself.

The influence of this gentle, gracious woman on the lives of so many people is less easy to measure than the impact of her

writing on the literary world. Her encouraging notes and comments to other writers in North Carolina has often meant the difference between success and failure for those writers in what they sought to accomplish. Members of her writing class at Chowan College will bear witness to her devotion to writing and to people.

Still the gentleness of her manner does not mar but rather enhances the incisiveness of her
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Literary Editors Report

Bernice Kelly Harris is the author of ten books. PURSLANE, PORTULAGA, SWEET BEULAH LAND, SAGE QUARTER, JAN-EY JEEMS, HEARTHSTONES and WILD CHERRY TREE ROAD are the novels. THE VERY TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS and SANTA ON THE MANTEL are children's books. SOUTHERN SAVORY, only recently published, is according to a reviewer for a Charlotte paper, "one-tenth autobiography and

nine-tenths a survey of the human heart." The publishers are the University of North Carolina Press at Chapel Hill, Doubleday and Company of New York, Art and Educational Publishers of London and Putnam of Glasgow and London.

Mrs. Harris' short stories have appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers Magazine* and *Pageant*. There have been feature stories in *The Raleigh News*
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THE REVEREND J. L. WALTER MOOSE WITH DR. BERNICE KELLY HARRIS