

## Opinion

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

## ONE-ON-ONE

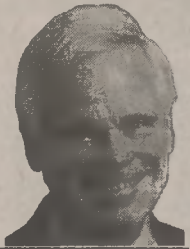
## John Grisham and N.C...

John Grisham's latest novel, "Camino Island," hit the bookstore shelves on June 6.

The book's release marks a growing connection between our state and the bestselling author—more than 300 million in print at last count. Thus, it is an important moment for North Carolinians, some of whom are claiming Grisham as one of their own. They have some good arguments.

"They have some good arguments..."

- D.G. MARTIN



For the first time in many years, he is going on a book tour to promote his book. Of the 11 scheduled stops, four are in North Carolina, twice as many as in any other state. Along the way he is inviting other North Carolina literary giants—Randall Kenan, Jill McCorkle, John Hart, Ron Rash, Wiley Cash and Clyde Edgerton—to discuss his work and theirs.

Another connection is the new book's leading character, Mercer Mann, a fictional writing instructor at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is losing her job and suffering writer's block as she tries to write a novel to follow up her first mildly successful one. She is at loose ends and a prime target to be recruited for an undercover assignment. More about that assignment in a minute.

Her recruiter comes to Chapel Hill and wines and dines Mercer at Spanky's and the Lantern restaurants, two of the town's favorites, and not far from the house where Grisham and his wife Renee live when they visit their daughter and her family in Raleigh.

Now that we have almost made Grisham a North Carolinian, what about the new book?

"Camino Island" breaks some of Grisham's usual patterns. As regular as clockwork for many years, each October Grisham has delivered a legal thriller that quickly becomes a bestseller. But "Camino Island" came out this month instead of October. And it is not a legal thriller. Lawyers make only cameo appearances. The action is set in the literary world, the world of writing, publishing, and selling books. There is also a literary underworld of criminals who steal and distribute valuable manuscripts.

In "Camino Island" a group of clever thieves break into the Princeton University library and walk away with the original manuscripts of "The Great Gatsby" and four other novels written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The papers are insured for \$25 million. The insurance company suspects that Bruce Cable, a rare book dealer and bookstore owner, has possession of the Fitzgerald papers. Cable is the center of a group of writers, fans, and book collectors on Camino Island, a small resort community near Jacksonville, Florida.

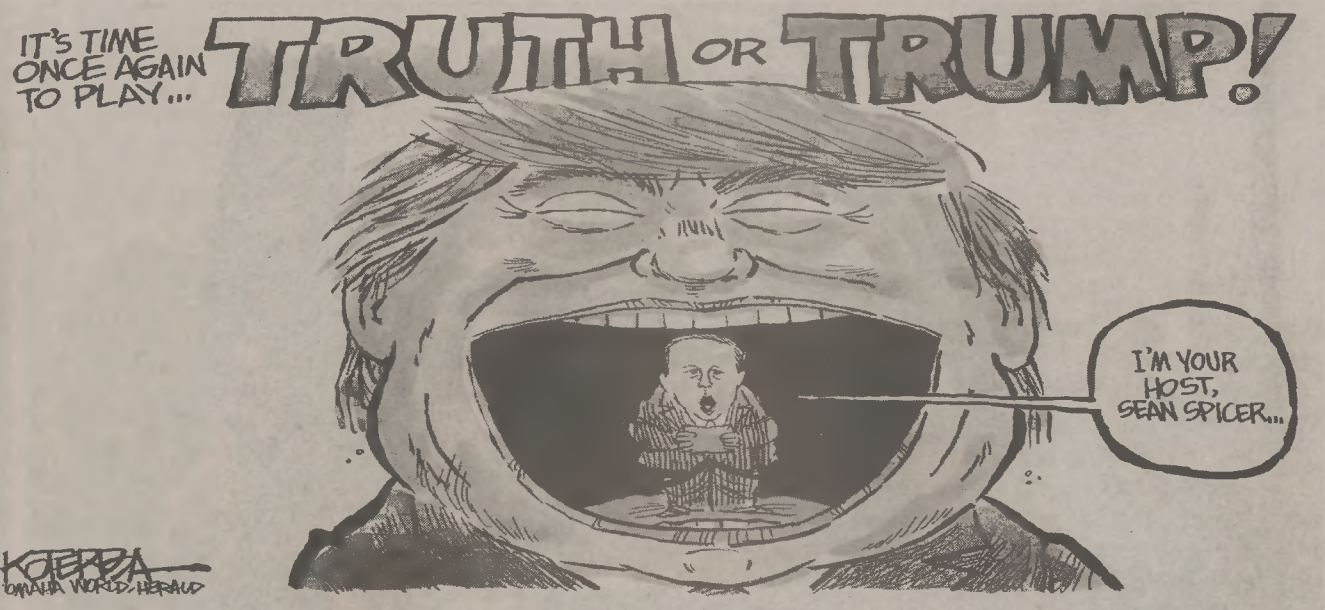
The insurance company sends Elaine Shelby to Chapel Hill to recruit Mercer to go to Camino Island, where she once had family connections. There she can infiltrate Cable's group, make friends with him, and try to learn whether or not he has the Fitzgerald papers.

Along the way Mercer loses confidence in her ability to fool Cable. Elaine, trying to persuade her to stay on the job, tells her that the cover is perfect, "You're a writer living at the beach for a few months in the family cottage. You're hard at work on a novel. It's the perfect story, Mercer, because it's true. And you have the perfect personality because you're genuine. If we needed a con artist we wouldn't be talking right now. Are you afraid?"

Sure enough Mercer gains Cable's friendship and the story moves toward an expected ending. Then, Grisham does his usual, twisting the expected into a set of cascading surprises that fooled and entertained this reader just as he does in his legal thrillers.

If you are worried about missing his regular annual legal thriller, don't. He promises that a new one will be ready, as always, in October.

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," which airs Sundays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.



## SMALL TOWN GIRL

## Holding on for the ride...

Sometimes in life, I have learned the only thing to do is hold on tight and ride it out.

This wild ride has been my life since the first of May.

After going 11 months symptom free, Gabriel woke up with the familiar rash we have seen many times.

After watching him for several hours, we realized it was not going to get any better and it was time to start making the appropriate phone calls and plans.

My husband Shenon and I ended up taking him to the children's hospital in Greenville for labs and to meet with a Pediatric Oncologist.

Gabriel remained stable throughout the weekend, but did not improve. So on Monday he was scheduled to see a dermatologist hoping we would get some new answers.

The new doctor thought we may never get an exact diagnosis for Gabriel's illness.

As parents we made the decision to admit him to the hospital and allowed the doctors to give him the proper medications to make him well.

Gabriel recovered and we thought we were back to normal - until the next weekend.

We were shopping in Norfolk, Va., when Shenon began to notice changes in his vision in his left

"It is never easy for anyone. It can be stressful."

- LESLIE BEACHBOARD



eye.

He is always aware of the slightest changes due to him having ocular implants, Laser treatments and numerous surgeries since he was 8.

On Mother's Day, his vision had deteriorated.

After an emergency appointment that afternoon, Shenon was diagnosed with an eye hemorrhage.

They put him on bed rest at a 30-degree angle until his normal surgeon could see him.

The next day we were sitting back in Greenville. It was a newspaper deadline day, and I was worried about him.

So here I am, sitting in Greenville trying to write a story from my daughter's laptop and listening to the doctor.

We were sent to another specialist to rule out a retinal tear. If he did have a tear it would require immediate surgery.

Thankfully after being told he did not have a tear, we were free to go. At this point, I was on a mis-

sion for food and wireless internet to send in my story.

It was not exactly how I wanted to spend my Mother's Day, but I was thankful Shenon would make a full recovery and I had survived.

A few weeks went by, and as I thought things were getting back to normal, Shenon's eye hemorrhaged again this weekend.

Thankfully this was a smaller one, but we are still waiting to see his surgeon to see why it is recurring.

I am always one who likes to have a plan or schedule for everything. It just makes life a little easier, but in times like this I have learned just to hold on and just try to survive.

It is never easy for anyone. It can be stressful, but I have learned humor and knowing it soon will end gets my family through it.

So until things transition back to a slower pace, I will balance keeping an eye on Shenon, being a mother, and continuing to write my stories and holding on for the ride.

Leslie Beachboard tries to balance being a wife, mother and Staff-Writer for the Bertie Ledger-Advance. She can be reached via email at [lbeachboard@ncweeklies.com](mailto:lbeachboard@ncweeklies.com).

## AROUND HERE

## Memorable moments...

As a music fan growing up, I remember how excited I'd get as the house lights went down and one of my favorite artists took the stage.

As a concert photographer for about 25 years, I have had many of the same feelings - feelings of excitement, as the artists I used to admire were standing just a few feet away from me and my camera.

The goal of any photographer, whether he is shooting a news event, a sporting event or even a concert, is to get the best pictures possible in the time available.

Concert photographers are different in that they are only allotted a certain amount of time (usually two or three songs) in which to capture the artist's photo. They also must take pictures from a designated position set by the artist - usually it's in front of the stage, but occasionally it's from the soundboard area, located around halfway back in the venue. Some venues have their soundboard area farther back than others.

I have photographed hundreds of artists and concerts since 1991.

This column, however, is not about my favorite artists to photograph; rather, this is about some of the memorable moments I've witnessed or been a part of associated with said artists.

"What I wouldn't give to have a photo of that."

- JIM GREEN



Amy Grant: She was the first national act I ever photographed, and one of my favorites to this day. We were given the first three songs, but the first song was really short (barely over two minutes), so were given the first two minutes of the fourth song.

Shinedown: During the Carnival of Madness Tour, the weather became an issue. Shinedown came on in the pouring rain. My camera was protected, but trying to shoot was arduous. Between the second and third song, singer Brent Smith came down and shook the hand of every photographer who braved the elements in order to document the band's performance.

Def Leppard: The night of the show, a severe thunderstorm swept through the venue, forcing promoters to postpone the event. There was lots of damage to the grounds, but the band made up the date two weeks later.

Brian McKnight: A few minutes before his performance, we were standing under the VIP tent when

a heavy storm came through - it was a real gullywasher. Fortunately, it passed a few minutes later and the artist went on stage just a few minutes late.

Green Day: During my film days, before digital cameras, the challenge was to take the film out of the camera and put it away - all in low light. I got my first roll of film out of the camera, but it rolled right out of my right hand and into a storm drain near the stage. While I will never know what's on that roll, I did take five more rolls of 36 exposures that night - and no, I didn't lose any of them.

U2: One of my favorite bands of all time, I was just overwhelmed to be standing in the pit at Carter-Finley Stadium. Looking around and seeing 57,000 people just sent chills down my spine.

Aerosmith: During a tour stop in Greensboro, the band had a walk-out that separated sections of the crowd. Photographers were situated at the end of this walkout. During the band's second song, I was checking my camera when lead singer Steven Tyler kneeled in front of me and playfully started moving my glasses up and down my face. What I wouldn't give to have a photo of that.

Jim Green is Sports Editor of the Bertie Ledger-Advance. He can be reached at [jgreen@ncweeklies.com](mailto:jgreen@ncweeklies.com).

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