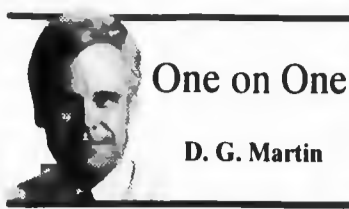


VIEWPOINTS



One on One

D. G. Martin

North Carolina writes about women of the South

"What have you been reading?" It is my favorite question.

These past few weeks I have been reading about one of my favorite topics — Southern women. I am going to tell you just a bit about five great new books about Southern women by North Carolina authors. If you read this column to the end, I will also share with you some good news that explains why I am reading so many books these days.

The Modern Library's new collection of Elizabeth Spencer's short fiction, *The Southern Woman*, should be a permanent part of the bookshelf of every fan of Southern literature. Ms. Spencer's novels and short stories have been nationally acclaimed since she began writing them more than 50 years ago. This volume is a selection from her best short fiction covering her entire career. It includes her classic short novel, *Light In The Piazza*, and more than 25 other stories. One of my favorites, *First Child*, is set in North Carolina, at the beach, where young lovers on a weekend vacation, babysitting the woman's nephew, learn about a possible life together — one that doesn't work out. Like Ms. Spencer's other complex stories and character studies, *First Child* is set in what would be ordinary place, except that her rich, sensitive, and sometimes sensuous descriptive powers make the ordinary special for us.

Hillsborough's Michael Malone's new book, *Red Clay, Blue Cadillac: Stories Of Twelve Southern Women*, is quite a different kind of book. His stories about strong women characters are almost all set in North Carolina. They are usually in the middle of a mystery story in which they take matters into their own hands — and sometimes get away with it. Even when Malone's plots are a little strained, his stories entertain and engage. You will see some of your friends in his characters. *Red Clay, Blue Cadillac* is a great vacation book. All the stories are great page-turners, and you will be proud to show off the cover that tells your friends you are reading a highly respected writer like Michael Malone.

University of North Carolina Professor Trudier Harris's new book, *Saints, Sinners, Saviors: Strong Black Women In African American Literature* is about the popular images of African-American women as portrayed by important authors. Her premise is a shocking one. She asserts that the popular image of African American women as strong and resilient is a problem. Instead of a positive factor for Black women, it is a negative, a disease called strength, according to Harris. I found myself arguing with her from the beginning. But I was surely engaged. Her book is important because it challenges conventional thinking. Even if they do not agree with her, Harris helps her readers clarify their understanding of an important block of literary work and gives them new ways to see the racial differences that still complicate life in our region.

Joan Medlicott's third volume in her *ladies of Covington* series is an easier read. It is a continuing story about three women, all past retirement age, who have recently moved to a farm in the North Carolina mountains. From *The Heart Of Covington* centers on the arrival of the adult daughter of one of the three women. The newcomer, who has been estranged from her mother for years, comes to the farmhouse to recover from an accident and the loss of a loved one. The women try to wrap their arms around this new woman. But taking care of her is not easy, and bringing her into their home complicates the lives of everyone else.

The ladies of Covington and their stories will grow on you and deliver a warm pleasure.

All these four great books (See MARTIN, page 12A)

Death by peach tree preferable to feelings resulting from a physical

A couple of weeks ago I decided I needed a good physical examination. It just seemed to me it was time to check all the vitals. When one gets old and close to the top of the hill, one will think about those things.

I wasn't prompted to get a physical because I felt bad; most of the time I feel good. As my father used to say, "If someone asks you how you feel, tell him 'good' because nobody is interested in how you feel." If you are ever tempted to ask someone how he feels, and he or she spends 45 minutes of your time telling you, don't complain because I just warned you.

Regardless, I got a physical and a good one. When those necessary tests came back, I was informed that I would probably live a while longer; although there are no guarantees, life should be rosy. I have felt worse than a run-over dog since I got that physical. Instead of getting one in the future I think I will just die a natural death or get killed by a fallen peach tree.

You can get carried away with these things and get some answers you don't want to hear. Just as the wife who got up early one morning and exclaimed, "Oh God, I'm convinced my mind is almost completely gone."

Her husband looked up from the newspaper and commented, "I'm not surprised, you've been giving me a piece of it every day for 20 years."

The 47th reunion in Gibsonville is now history. We had a great time. Once again, I discovered that many people have some serious eye problems. If you haven't seen a person in many years and they say to you, "You haven't changed since the first time I saw you." If the first time was 50 years ago, they are either lying or should see their eye specialist immediately, because they are going blind. Now don't get me wrong; no one at the reunion told me such. However, when I spoke, a good 100 yards from the house, a member of the class yelled, "That is Raz Autry, I could tell that voice anywhere." At least after 47 years some part of me can be recognized. I reminded some of the class members when they invited me to be the graduation speaker that it was my first graduation speech. In jest, I also said that I gave three more at different graduations and then realized that no one was listening. A member of the class said, "I was listening, see if this line is familiar to you?"

He then quoted it: "Nothing you do in life is important unless it makes you a better person."

I remembered that statement; therefore I was convinced at least one person was listening.

The class reunion brought a lot of good memories back to me. It was a different time in a different day. Most high schools had from three to four hundred students, the school was the meeting place for everything that took place. The student body took pride in their school and respected those who taught. When a student was disciplined, his parents were concerned. They usually visited the school to see how they could help. Just a mother and father showed up; a lawyer wasn't present. Things weren't perfect; mistakes were made just as they are today. The difference the people talked about them and sought a solution.

One of my greatest moments came with my first principalship. The high school boys were hardheaded just as they are in many situations today. However, you didn't worry about drugs, except in the form of alcohol — they would nip at parties if they could get away with it. I had the same rule I had for 20 years as a high school principal. If a student skipped school I gave him or her a two-day vacation and required them to bring one of their parents when they returned to school. One particular cut-up, a fine young man — nevertheless one who could get in a lot of mischief — decided it was more important to go fishing than attend school. I can relate to that, because I love to fish, but there is a time and place for everything. Cutting school is not the time and place. His mother brought him back to school when his two days were up. However, she waited until all of the high school boys were on their lunch break. She marched him in front of them holding her hand; then she brought him to my office. I never had to discipline him again. The mother

knew there was more than one way to skin a cat.

My parting thought — Mr. Jones stood in the bedroom of the house he'd just built.

"I don't care whether you believe

me or not," Mrs. Smith said, "but each time a train enters the station, the bed shakes so bad I fall out."

Checking his watch, Jones said, "There's a train due in just a minute. Do you mind if I see for myself?"

Not objecting in the least, Mrs.

Smith pointed out which side was hers, and Mr. Jones lay down. Moments later Mr. Smith walked in.

"Hey," he bellowed, "Just what do you think you are doing?"

"Would you believe," said the builder, "Waiting for a train?"

A View from the Country

Raz Autry



SAVE UP TO

Spring Sale & 50% OFF STOREWIDE!

CLEARANCE

PLUS...SAVE EVEN MORE WITH YOUR BONUS COUPONS!

Valid through Sat. June 8, 2002

take an extra **15% off***

ANY SINGLE SALE-PRICED ITEM

Normal exclusions apply. Cannot be combined with any other coupon or discount.

take an extra **15% off***

ANY SINGLE SALE-PRICED ITEM

Normal exclusions apply. Cannot be combined with any other coupon or discount.

save up to **50% off** group of ladies' spring & summer dresses

Reg. 39.99-89.99.

entire stock! ladies', men's, & kids' sandals

Buy 1 pair & get 2nd **1/2 price!**

ONE WEEK ONLY! 2nd pair must be of equal or lesser value.

entire stock! **14.99** ladies' denim & twill shorts

By Miss Erika® Bill Blass® Mission Blues® & Quepasa® Values to 25.00.

sale **7.99-12.99** mens' Ruff Wear® tees & polos

Reg. 9.99-14.99. Sizes M-2X. Assorted colors.

sale **19.99-29.99** group of Rosetti® handbags

Reg. 29.99-39.99. Assorted styles & colors.

special group! **9.99** men's shorts

By Paco® Union Bay® Duck Head® Nikoata® Ruff Hawn® Wear First® Levis® & Bugle Boy® Values to 38.00. Styles may vary per store.

entire stock! **25% off** ladies' foundations

Reg. 13.00-29.00. Pastels, white & black.

save **40% off** girls' Pogo Club® capri sets

Sale 15.00-16.80, reg. 25.00-28.00. Sizes 2-4T, 4-6X & 7-16. Assorted colors.

SENIORS' DAY Thursday, June 6 take an extra **10% off*** On Any Purchase, Sale Or Regular Priced

*Normal exclusions apply. Seniors 55 and older.

Moore's

Your Hometown Department Store
RAEFORD, Hoke Village, 401 Bypass, Mon.-Sat. 9-8

No Service Charge Layaway • Return For Easy Exchange • Free Beautiful Gift Wrap • Moore's Gift Cards Available