

Local Author Awaiting Response To First Novel, Out This Week

BY SUSAN USHER

You may stumble upon Maurice Stanley late of night in a local restaurant. He's the intense fellow with the glasses and the shock of unruly salt-and-pepper hair leaning over the table in the back corner, drinking coffee and scribbling with his favorite pen, a Bic Ultrafine.

Like many of the classic writers he admires most, that's the way the 46-year-old nightowl works best. Surrounded by people and their conversation, but not with them.

Why? "At home I don't get much done," he says. "If the TV is on I want to watch it and I feel too alone with it off. So I go where there are people, but they aren't talking to me."

Stanley doesn't let it bother him that his behavior might appear eccentric to others.

He doesn't want anything to interfere with his goal — to write and to write successfully. When not teaching or working on a book, he's usually reading — either favorite authors or books about writers and their craft.

He writes and rewrites, encouraged by feedback from others, including the agent who returned a manuscript with a three-word note, "Keep at it."

He does and now has something to show for it.

This week John F. Blair, a small but respected publishing house in Winston-Salem, releases Stanley's first novel, *The Legend Of Nance Dude*. The firm had rejected an earlier draft of the book, but Stanley's revised version caught the staff's eye.

Available last month in Waynesville area stores and this month in local bookstores, the book has won favorable review in *Publisher's Weekly* and mixed praise and constructive criticism in *Kirkus Reviews*.

Briefly, it is the fictionalized account based on an event that actually occurred near Waynesville: The charging of a 65-year-old mountain woman named Nancy Ann Kerley, known in her later years as Nance Dude, with the murder of her 2 1/2-year-old granddaughter.

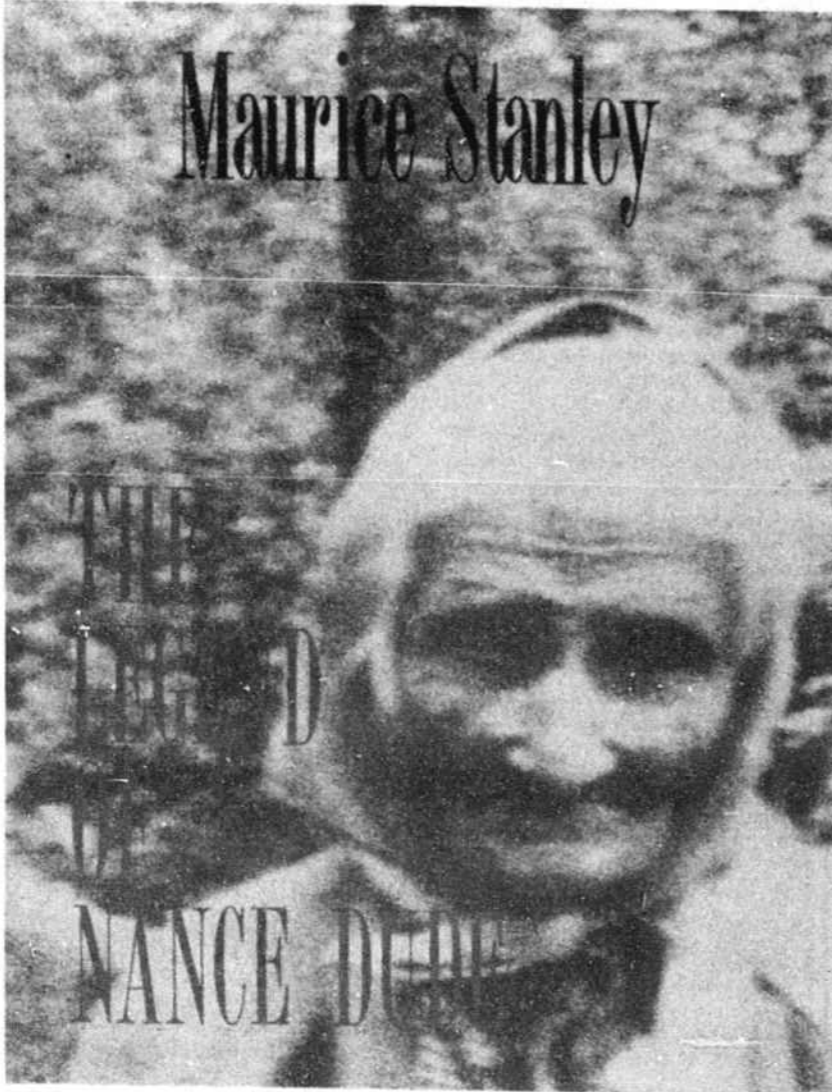
In *The Legend of Nance Dude*, Stanley said he wanted to get as close to the truth as he could without invading the privacy of any living persons. To make the story flow more smoothly, he invented some characters and left out others, and wrote only about those individuals who have died.

But the kernel of his story is true to the legend he first came to know as a young boy growing up in Waterville, in Haywood County near the Tennessee line. Mothers, his own included, would caution their unruly children to behave, lest "old Nance Dude" came and took them away.

Five years ago he began adding to the lore with the sparse facts available in government archives, details from newspaper articles and personal interviews with people who had known Nance.

"She is what Carl Jung would call an archetype of the wicked old witch," said Stanley. "I basically traced the myth, the fairy tale, to its origins in fact and reality."

Unlike many in her community at the time, the writer's point of view is sympathetic to his main character as he traces the desperate times and poverty she must have endured—



STANLEY'S NOVEL explores the possible motivation behind the gruesome murder of a child by her grandmother.

that may have motivated her actions.

He describes her as a "survivor" above all else, though suggesting a possible darker side.

"I do expect readers to sympathize with her," he says. "If you can shed a tear for her then it may not be so hard to forgive yourself for your own failings." I think some of the most dangerous people in the world are those who can't forgive themselves—they turn that anger on others."

Stanley earned a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and now teaches part-time at Brunswick Community College and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. While he sometimes admits to a sense of failure for not having a well-established career, the schedule Stanley follows does accommodate, to an extent, his passion for writing and the necessity of paying bills.

He also writes a twice-weekly column for *The Laurinburg Exchange* and has authored two philosophy textbooks. All were penned by hand, then typed by his wife, Glana, who teaches in Scotland County, on a Smith-Corona. Stanley says he prob-

ably never will learn to use a typewriter or word processor himself.

Seeing *The Legend of Nance Dude* in print is different, somehow, from his other publishing successes.

"It's prettier and I feel more like a writer," he said. "A textbook is more prosaic, matter of fact. With fiction your soul has the freedom to be creative."

His first novel, partly autobiographical, "never saw the light of day". Stanley has already completed the first draft of another book, a story that turns around a grandfather he never knew.

He has learned, he said, not to wait to hear from publishers about the fate of one effort before going on to another. "A watched pot doesn't boil—and besides, it would drive you crazy waiting."

Now he's waiting to see how the reading public reacts to the book.

"Writing fiction is like building a house on spec," he said. "You don't know if anybody will want to live in it or not."

Whatever else, he would like to think *Legend* is a solid enough story to have an enduring quality. "I think it's a good book. It is a small book, but I hope it is one that will last."

Watching The Pollen Blow

BY BILL FAVER

This is the time of year we can see pollen settling on cars and accumulating on porches and yard furniture. Dusts of the yellow powder can be found floating on the surface of meandering streams. The pines and vines are some of the producers along with oaks and many others. Some folks spend the pollen season all choked up and sneezing from the spring pollen.

Recently I watched a mockingbird building a nest in a shrub at the beach. It was sunny and clear and the temperature was in the low 80s with a gentle breeze. The mockingbird would fly from the shrub to a pine tree and each time the bird landed on a new "candle" on the pine a fluffy yellow cloud of pollen would be set free.

I was reminded of the ways pollen can "travel" from one plant to another in order to fulfill its purpose. We all know about the bees and other insects, butterflies, hummingbirds and moths who move from flower to flower and help the plants on which they feed. We can see the wind and the air movements as I did last week. As in many other areas of the natural world, there was an abundance of pollen—far more than necessary to carry out pollination. Probably most of the pollen never reached the intended plant parts.

The mockingbirds were intent on their nest building and probably had little knowledge of their role in releasing pollen from the pines.

I doubt that the birds and butterflies and bees know they are taking a role in pollinating the plants upon which they feed. Their concern is finding nectar for the energy-giving sustenance they get from the plant.

Watching the pollen blow can be an interesting pastime when we realize how important the pesky pollen is to the plant world. Even when we sneeze and cough and wait for rain to wash it away, we need to know that without it we would have no fruits and



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

MOCKINGBIRDS help release pollen when they land on pines and shrubs.

berries, flowers or trees. And much of our woodlands in Brunswick County would be bare. Become aware this spring as you watch the pollen blow.

Hope Harbor Home Volunteers Raising Funds With Cookbook

Volunteers of Hope Harbor Home Inc. are hoping their first cookbook will be a best seller.

Work began last summer on *A Treasure of Recipes*, said cookbook committee member and Hope Harbor employee Amanda McDonald. The books arrived in early April and are now available for \$5 each from the Hope Harbor Home office in Shallotte or from volunteers. "So far I'm amazed at how well sales are going," said Ms. McDonald.

The cookbook is a collection of approximately 250 recipes compiled by volunteers from their own recipe files and from friends, neighbors and relatives. It also includes helpful references such as a seasoning chart, a dictionary of cooking terms and household hints.

A volunteer, Cathy Guidry, the

agency's former director and program manager, headed the committee that also included Ellen Doak, Maxine Hammon, Harriet Hart, Alice Smith, Laurie Webb and Ms. McDonald.

A Treasure of Recipes is dedicated to all battered and formerly battered women and their children. Proceeds from sales will be used to help the agency's clientele, Ms. McDonald said.

Volunteers hope to net at least \$700 from the limited (300 copies) first printing. The proceeds will go into the volunteer account to use to help formerly battered women who are making a fresh start, to buy equipment for the shelter, and to buy materials for the Wednesday night women's empowerment and children's groups.

To order a copy of the cookbook, call Hope Harbor Home Inc. at 754-5726, or write P.O. Box 230, Supply, N.C. 28462.

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