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FAULKNER NEWSLETTER

& Yoknapatawpha Review

Vol. XIX, No. 2

April-June 1999

Cyberspace

Faulkner Readers And Collectors Discover E-Bay

By ROBERT W. HAMBLIN

Need a good used paperback copy of a Faulkner novel you've been planning to read?

Or a book of Faulkner criticism that you can't find in the local library?

Or a reasonably priced first edition to fill out your growing Faulkner collection?

Or even, as two individuals discovered recently, one of the hard-to-find *Ole Miss* yearbooks containing drawings by Faulkner?

The popular Internet auction site, www.ebay.com, may be the place to go.

Founded in 1995, eBay calls itself a site for "person-to-person online trading." Users know it as the largest garage sale in cyberspace.

Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, eBay lists for sale items in more than 1,000 categories, including antiques, books, computers, jewelry, cameras, coins, stamps, toys, and sports memorabilia. Registered users now number almost two million, and more than a million items are offered for sale each day.

eBay sellers list items for 3, 5, or 7-day auctions. Most sellers post photographs, as well as detailed descriptions, of the items offered for sale. In regular auctions the high bidder at the end of the sale period claims the item. In reserve price auctions bidders must meet or exceed a set minimum price (which may or may not be disclosed) to acquire the item. All bids, as well as the final transaction between buyer and seller, are handled via electronic mail.

Registration for eBay is free, and there is no charge for bidding and buying. Sellers, however, pay a nominal fee to list an item for sale, plus up to 5 percent of the sale price. For example, to list an item that sells for \$50 with an opening bid of \$10 would cost the seller \$2.38.

While the book auctions on eBay are small business compared to the site's sales of Beanie Babies, Barbie dolls, Elvis memorabilia, and Lilliput Lane cottages, nevertheless the book trade is quite big—and getting bigger.

Not surprisingly, Faulkner is one of the authors that eBay users find par-

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Major Murry C. (Jack) Falkner



THIS OIL PAINTING of Murry C. (Jack) Falkner in his World War II uniform, by his mother Maud Butler Falkner, is one of several original Maud Falkner paintings at the home of Falkner's wife, Suzanne, and is printed here with her permission.

Fond Memories of Murry (Jack) Falkner by His Wife and Niece Mark Centennial of His Birth

By DEAN FAULKNER WELLS and LAWRENCE WELLS

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of William Faulkner's brother, Murry C. (Jack) Falkner, who was born on June 26, 1899, in New Albany, Miss., about two years after William's birth. Jack, who retained the original spelling of the family surname, was the quietest and most self-effacing of the four Falkner brothers, qualities that belied an adventurous life as a law enforcement officer. He served as a Marine private in WWI and an army intelligence liaison officer in North Africa in WWII. As an FBI officer he was J. Edgar Hoover's personal pilot and also a "collar man" [arrest agent, the forerunner of today's SWAT teams] who helped capture notorious gangsters Pretty Boy Floyd and Baby Face Nelson.

We remember Uncle Jack as a gentleman of the old school, always well turned out, scrupulously dressed and groomed, Bull Durham smoker and storyteller. His memoir *The Falkners of Mississippi* (LSU Press, 1967) is a well-written and poignant account of growing up in Mississippi before WWI. His history of the Falkner family is a valuable addendum to his brother William's work, and brings to life the closeness to nature and the love of horses and of riding which the boys inherited from their father and grandfather. Jack and his brothers cordially welcomed, after the turn of the century, the era of the machine—automobiles, trains, airplanes—with a boyish excitement and curiosity they never outgrew.

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F&Y Conference

Barth, Hassan To Speak At 26th Meet

(This report on program highlights for the 1999 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference by conference director Donald M. Kartiganer is drawn with permission from an article by him for the current issue of *The Southern Register*, the newsletter of the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture.)

By DONALD M. KARTIGANER

John Barth, one of America's leading novelists, and Ihab Hassan, one of the country's most prominent literary critics, will be featured speakers at the 1999 Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference July 25-30.

Theme for the 26th annual conference at The University of Mississippi will be "Faulkner and Postmodernism."

Through lectures and discussions, the conference will address one of the richest, most controversial concepts in contemporary culture and attempt to situate Faulkner's fiction within it.

The debate surrounding the postmodern begins with its relation to the modern: whether it signals a complete break with its predecessor or only a serious modification and revision of it—or whether, as the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard has argued, the postmodern "is undoubtedly part of the modern," perhaps the basis of any modernism, disrupting "the solace of good forms" and determined to put forward the "unpresentable" within presentation itself.

The supporters of postmodernism regard it as a correction to modernist elitism: the deliberate indifference of modernism to history, mass culture, and the world of the ordinary, in deference to what Frank Kermode once called "a radiant truth out of space and time." The postmodern, in contrast, has blended high and low culture, given voice to the marginalized, violated the alleged distinction of "art" by simultaneously observing and exposing the artificiality of its formal conventions.

Opponents of postmodernism, however—many of whom are not averse to the critique of modernism—find in the apparent openness of the postmod-

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Faulkner Conference

(From Page 1)

ern a lack of depth, a trivialization of history through the random "quotation" of its images, a celebration of the marginal that is seriously undercut by the absence of program and commitment.

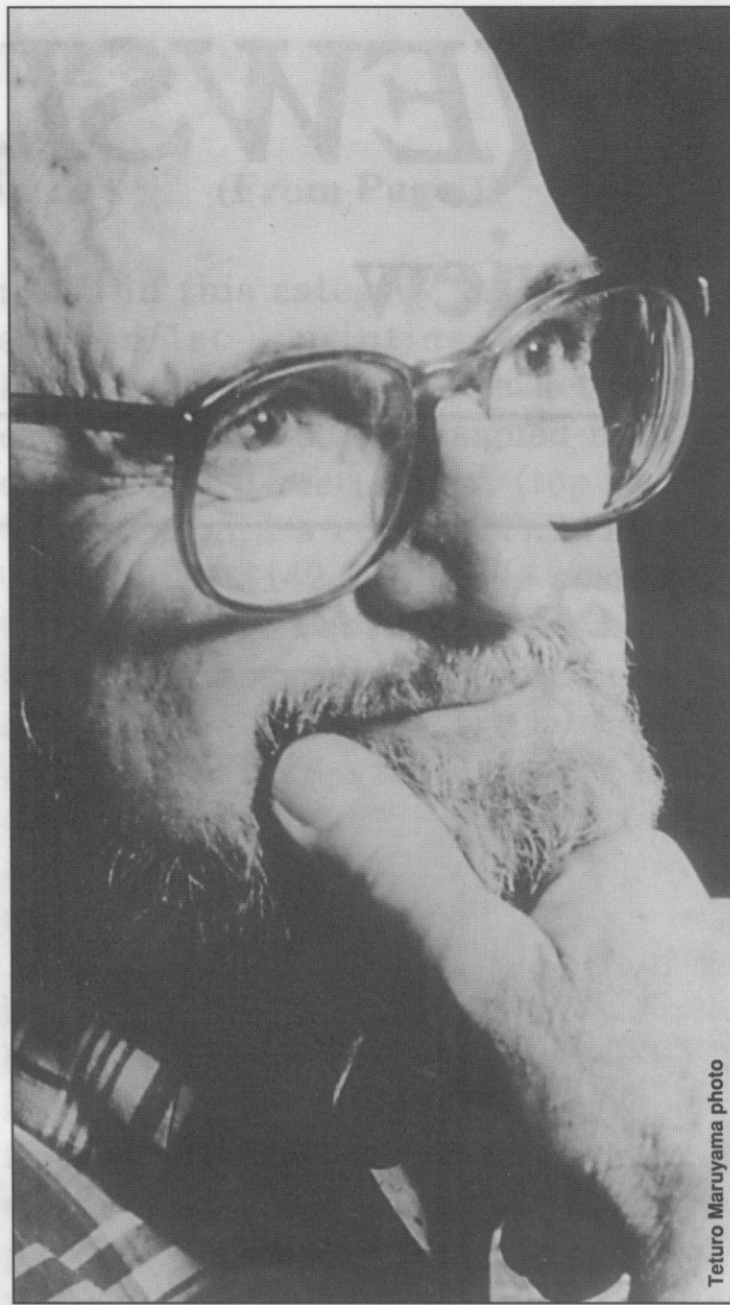
The task of the conference will be to raise the question of where in this debate we locate the career of William Faulkner. Is there, as Lyotard claims, a postmodern force at the core of his modernism? Does some of his most experimental work — *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* for example — anticipate the skepticism of postmodernism toward "the tyranny of wholes," or does it still proclaim the possible triumph of completed design? Is there a break in the career, some identifiable moment when modernist Faulkner becomes post-modernist Faulkner?

The fiction of John Barth is widely regarded as one of the prototypes of the postmodern.

Ihab Hassan, Vilas Research Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, has published 12 books. He has lectured in 30 countries. His work is marked by its bold attempt to draw the contours of the new, particularly in comparative contrast with what has preceded it, as he explores the paradoxical qualities of purpose and play, design and chance, hierarchy and anarchy, presence and absence, transcendence and imminence.

Also speaking at the conference for the first time are Professor Molly Hite, Cornell University, author of *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* and *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*, and Philip Cohen, University of Texas, Arlington, editor of *Texts and Textuality: Textual Instability, Theory, and Interpretation* and *Devils and Angels: Textual Editing and Literary Theory*.

Returning to the Faulkner Conference are an additional half-dozen leading Faulknerians: John Duvall, Purdue University, author of *Faulkner's Marginal Couple*; Doreen Fowler, University of Kansas, author most recently of *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*; Martin Kreiswirth, author of *Faulkner: The Making of a Novelist* and co-editor of *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*; Cheryl Lester, University of Kansas, author of the forthcoming *Faulkner and the Great Migration*; Joseph Urgo, Bryant College, author of *Faulkner's Apocrypha* and most recently of *Willa Cather and the Myth*



John Barth

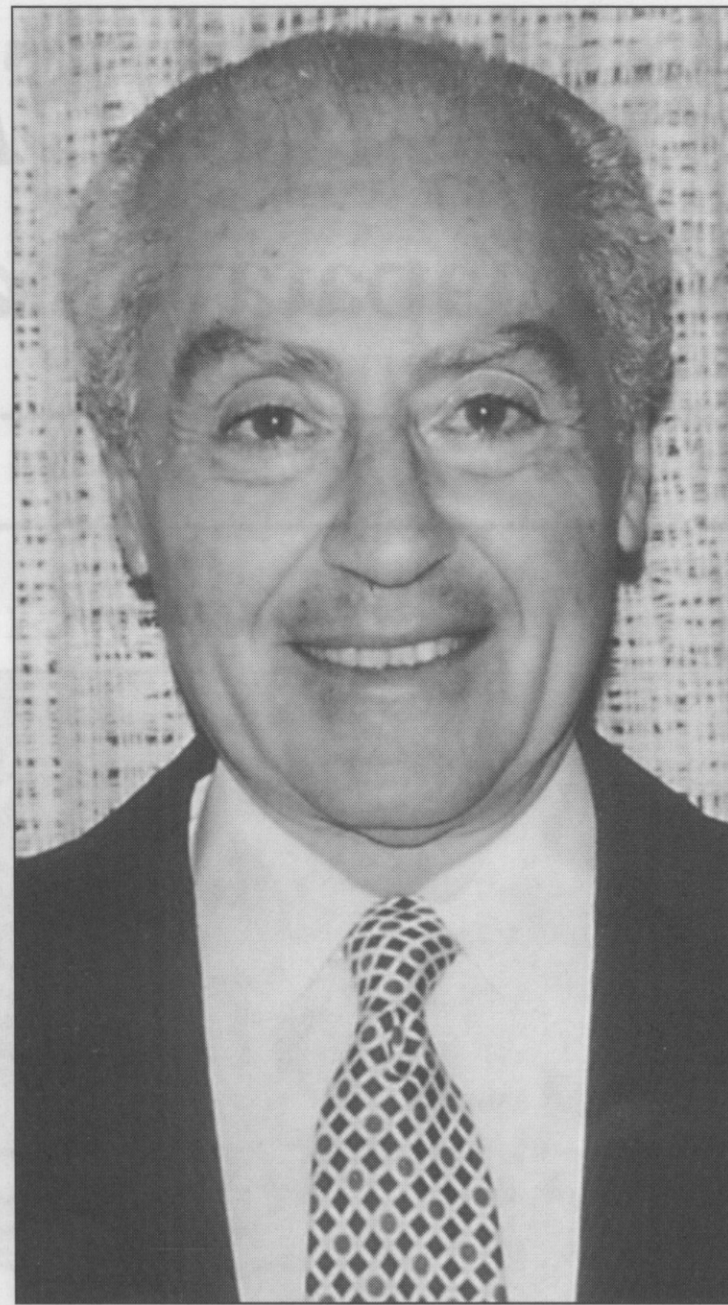
of *American Migration*; and Philip M. Weinstein, Swarthmore College, author of *What Else But Love? The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison*.

Other events of the conference will include discussions by Faulkner friends and family; dramatic readings from Faulkner, sessions on "Teaching Faulkner" led by James Carothers, University of Kansas, Robert Hamblin, Southeast Missouri State University, Arlie Herron, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and Charles Peek, University of Nebraska at Kearney.

The University's John Davis Williams Library will display Faulkner books, manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia, and the University Press of Mississippi will exhibit Faulkner books published by university presses throughout the United States. Films relating to the author's life and work will be available for viewing during the week.

The conference will begin on Sunday, July 25, with a reception followed by an afternoon program during which winners of the 10th Faux Faulkner Contest will be announced. Other events will include a Sunday buffet supper served at the home of Dr. and Mrs. M. B. Howorth Jr. and a Tuesday picnic at Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak. Tours of North Mississippi are scheduled for Friday.

For more information about the conference contact the Institute for Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 879, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677; telephone 601-232-7282; Fax 601-232-5138; e-mail <cstudies@olemiss.edu> or Department of English, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677; telephone 601-232-7439, Fax 601-232-5787, e-mail <engl@olemiss.edu>.



Ihab Hassan

More Conversations With William, Plus John's First Novel, in June

A new collection of interviews with William Faulkner and a previously unpublished novel by brother John Faulkner have been announced for June publication by their respective publishers.

Conversations with William Faulkner, edited by M. Thomas Inge, will be published by the University Press of Mississippi.

Beat Six, John Faulkner's first novel, dating to about 1939, is scheduled for publication by Hill Street Press.

UPM's announcement of *Conversations* notes that, while three earlier volumes were believed to have collected most of Faulkner's interviews, further research has turned up others. Collected here for the first time are conversations dating from 1916 to the last year of his life in the months when he was finishing *The Reivers*.

"Many of these interviews and profiles provide descriptions of Faulkner, his home, and his daily world," the UPM announcement states. "They report not only on the things that he said but on the attitudes and poses he adopted. Some capture him making up tall tales about himself, several of which gained credibility and became part of the Faulkner mythology."

Conversations will include an introduction by Inge and a chronology. It will be priced at \$45 in cloth, \$18 in softcover. Inge, the Blackwell Professor of English and Humanities at Randolph-Macon College, has authored or edited more than 50 books in American literature and popular culture.

In *Beat Six*, John Faulkner "writes about the shock of a townsman who learns the disturbing truth about his neighbors, in particular the lengths to which politicians will reach to pre-

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER
& Yoknapatawpha Review

William Boozer

Editor

Dean Faulkner Wells
and Lawrence Wells

Publishers

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serve local tradition," Hill Street Press states in a catalogue announcing the Athens, Ga., publisher's second season. "In this close-knit and sometimes inbred world, sympathetic outsiders and down-on-their-luck blacks are at the mercy of the local 'white trash.' A Scandinavian transplant turned farmer is murdered and the basic values of the agrarian South are called into question and examined..."

Beat Six will be \$22.50, hardcover.

Hill Street Press last year published a new printing of John Faulkner's *My Brother Bill*, first published in 1963. The new printing has a Foreword by Jimmy Faulkner, eldest son of John (see *FN*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, January-March 1999).

Major Gift Benefits Rowan Oak Home

Rowan Oak, Faulkner's Oxford home, will share in a major Liberal Arts Enrichment Endowment established by Richard and Diane Scruggs and David and Tracy Nutt which pledges \$30 million over the next 15 years for the University of Mississippi. The endowment designates \$20,000 annually to help maintain Rowan Oak. Other allocations include the enhancement of Liberal Arts faculty salaries, the Gerald W. Walton Library, the Freshman Seminar, the Academic Advising Center, the Law Library's David H. Nutt Collection, the Center for Performing Arts, and scholarships for Mississippi students based on merit and need. Mr. Scruggs, a Pascagoula attorney, received a bachelor's degree from Ole Miss in 1969 and a law degree in 1977. Mr. Nutt, a Jackson attorney, received his bachelor's degree from Ole Miss, followed by a law degree in 1971.

Remembering Jack Falkner



MRS. SUZANNE FALKNER stands next to a framed photo of her late husband, Murry C. (Jack) Falkner (top). Originally from French Algeria, she and Falkner were married in 1943. The photo of Jack, seated and in his uniform as a Marine private in France in World War I, is previously unpublished. Not long after that photo was made he was wounded in combat and awarded the Purple Heart. Major Falkner and his bride Suzanne are shown on a Washington street in 1946 shortly after arriving in the U.S. from France. At bottom, Jack Falkner is shown with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover in Roswell, N.M., in 1937. Falkner served as an FBI Special Agent and as Hoover's personal pilot.

Fond Memories of Murry (Jack) Falkner by His Wife and Niece

(From Page 1)

Jack was devoted to his mother, Maud, writing her every week so that she received a letter without fail on Friday. Whenever he visited her in Oxford, she would phone the milk and eggs delivery man, Mr. Ray, and order two dozen extra eggs and a pint of heavy cream. Though she did not cook for herself and fiercely resisted the stereotypical role of happy homemaker, she loved to make breakfast for her "Jackie."

Jack liked to sit in the living room by the fireplace and roll his own Bull Durham cigarettes. He had a small, wooden cigarette rolling machine, and he would carefully place cigarette paper and tobacco in it, captivating an eight-year-old niece whom he allowed to lick each cigarette as it rolled out of the machine.

His favorite magazine was *Collier's* and he submitted several short stories which the editors turned down. After the magazine folded, he never submitted any more original stories to any other magazine.

Though he did not seriously aspire to a literary career, Jack was serious about good writing. His description of his combat experiences during WWI compares favorably to the best of the war diaries and reveals his courage and his clear-headed attitude toward war:

"What does a nineteen-year-old boy think about when his sole task is to kill others to keep them from killing him? For the most part he doesn't have time to think about anything but the business at hand. Fear almost throttles him, especially during the first few moments of an attack, any attack. He certainly never entirely overcomes it, but he does continue in spite of it, and I think this may be attributed to his love of family and country, his own self-respect and, certainly, as far as the marines are concerned, his pride in that remarkable corps. He thinks of his loved ones at home, possibly with more intense affection than when he is there."

In his Foreword to *The Falkners of Mississippi*, Lewis Simpson examines the legend suggested by the life and times of Jack Falkner: "A Marine private in France in the First World War, in the Second an officer in the Counter Intelligence Corps in Algiers (where he met and married a beautiful French ballet dancer), a Special Agent of the FBI for many years, an airplane pilot in the days when flying was still a highly personal adventure of man and plane—Murry Falkner has had a career that would have pleased not only Tom Swift. It is one in which Tom Sawyer would have taken considerable satisfaction."

Jack's memoirs show his self-deprecating sense of humor and gentle irony. "Several years after the war was over," he wrote, "I received at Oxford a small box and a big letter from Marine Headquarters. The one contained a Purple Heart (as everlasting evidence that I forgot to duck) and the other specified where my lack of presence of mind or memory, or both, had caught up with me—Argonne Forest, November 1, 1918."

Jack Falkner wrote his memoirs shortly after retiring from the FBI in Mobile, Ala. He and his wife Suzanne continued to live in Mobile after his retirement. Jack died on December 24, 1975, and is buried in the Falkner family plot at St. Peter's Cemetery in Oxford.

His wife Suzanne still lives in their home in Mobile. The walls are adorned with paintings of Jack by his mother, Maud Butler Falkner. Under a painting of Jack in his army uniform hangs a Falkner coat of arms. Suzanne is a beautiful and charming lady of grace and dignity, who speaks English with a pronounced French accent. The day of our interview she was wearing purple silk and suede. She has a presence not diminished by time and moves with a ballet dancer's carriage and poise. It is easy to understand why she was Uncle Jack's beloved Suzanne. In celebration of her husband's 100th anniversary she shared her memories in an interview given shortly after Christmas, 1998:

Q: How did you and Jack meet?

A: It was in North Africa, in Algiers, I was in a ballet. He came every night and sat in the same seat. I saw him in the audience. I asked someone who he was, and they said "Major Falkner." Finally we met and he said, "I know you. I watched you dance every night for a week." He sat every night in the second seat of the first row. He wanted me to go to dinner at the Three Stars, which was one of the biggest restaurants. At first I said No, then later we went to the restaurant after the show. Everyone was there—American, British, French. It was an exciting time. It was the war. In April, 1943.

Q: When were you married?

A: On my birthday, in 1944, 24th of August, in Algiers, because I did not finish my contract. After that, we went to Casablanca and Tunisia. Field Marshal Montgomery and General Patton were there. Wherever we went, people would say, who is that officier!

Q: When you met Jack, did he speak French?

A: No, just a little bit. He was really smart and learned so fast. There was a Scottish librarian in Algiers who taught lessons. Jack learned so fast he was her best pupil. All our life together, we spoke French to each other, everywhere.

Q: When you first were married, what do you remember about Jack? Did he like French cooking?

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Readers and Collectors Are Discovering E-Bay

(From Page 1)

ticularly attractive. As this is written, on any given day, eBay lists 40-50 Faulkner items for sale, up significantly from the 20-30 items a day just three months earlier.

As with any auction or garage sale, buyers are looking for real bargains—and, ideally, for that “steal” of a priceless collectible that is undervalued, perhaps even considered as mere junk, by the unsuspecting present owner.

Two recent eBay Faulkner bidders have had just such an experience, picking up at surprisingly low prices copies of two of the Ole Miss yearbooks which contain early drawings by Faulkner. A 1921 yearbook (volume XXV) was acquired with a top bid of \$227.50. A 1918 yearbook (volume XXII) went for \$179.50. The current asking prices for these same yearbooks by rare book dealers range from \$4500 to \$6000.

Listed below are a few other Faulkner items that have been sold on eBay recently, together with the price the item brought. If not otherwise indicated, the listed books are first editions, first printings, with dust jackets. Double price entries represent separate auctions. Purchase prices shown do not include charges for shipping and handling, which are usually paid by the buyer.

Achievement of William Faulkner (Millgate), \$10.50; *Across the Creek* (Jimmy Faulkner), \$9.75; *The Bear*, 16mm film, \$27.00; Blotner biography, 2 vols., \$18.25; Caedmon Faulkner recording, \$31.75; Campbell and Foster, *William Faulkner*, \$7.49; *Cofield Collection*, signed, \$86.00; *Essay, Speeches & Public Letters*, \$82.00; *A Fable*, \$86.00, \$51.00; *A Fable*, British, \$129.00.

Father Abraham, trade edition, \$30.00, \$20.50; *The Faulkner Reader*, Modern Library, \$10.50; First-day cover of Faulkner stamp, \$7.00, \$4.26; *Go Down, Moses*, without dust jacket, \$71.00; *A Green Bough*, \$227.50; *The Hamlet*, \$381.00; *The Hamlet*, without dust jacket, \$60.00; *The Hamlet*, 1st/2nd without dust jacket, \$42.00; *Intruder in the Dust*, 1st/3rd without dust jacket, \$9.25; Karl biography, \$7.00.

Light in August, without dust jacket, \$118.50; *The Mansion*, \$56.00, \$81.00; *Mayday*, trade edition, \$10.00, \$15.00; MGM Faulkner recording, \$152.50; *Mirrors of Chartres Street*, \$36.00; *New Orleans Sketches*, \$28.00; *Nobel Prize Speech*, limited edition, \$36.00; *Pylon*, 1st/2nd with dust jacket, \$51.00; *The Reivers*, \$35.00; *The Reivers* (movie) lobby cards, \$18.49.

Requiem for a Nun, signed limited, \$835.00; *Requiem for a Nun*, \$110.00, \$51.00; *Requiem for a Nun*, 1st/2nd without dust jacket, \$4.50

Predictably, some of the best Faulkner items offered on eBay fail to find a buyer because the top bid falls below the seller's reserve price. Recent

items in this category include a 1st edition/1st printing of *The Unvanquished* with dust jacket (highest bid was \$305.00); a signed limited edition of *A Green Bough* (top bid of \$406.00); and a copy of *This Earth* (high bid of \$142.50). While post-auction exchanges between sellers and buyers are not recorded on eBay, it is doubtful that these items sold for the bid amounts. In such cases, sellers often choose to offer the items again at a later date, sometimes at a lower reserve price.

The biggest disadvantage to online buying, of course, is that one does not have the opportunity to examine the item first-hand. Thus, the exact condition of the item may become a real concern during the bidding process—especially for the higher-priced items. Fortunately, most sellers provide accurate, detailed descriptions of the items being sold (the scanned pictures also help), and many allow for 7-day returns. Bidders are also encouraged to e-mail specific questions to the seller before placing a bid. Most importantly, eBay's policy of allowing site users to post positive and negative feedback on all transactions promotes (though, of course, it cannot guarantee) honest, responsible behavior by all involved parties.

To date neither the relatively small volume of eBay Faulkner auctions nor the moderate sale prices represents any real threat to rare book dealers or serious collectors. But, as has been the case with other Internet marketing sites, the sale of Faulkner items on eBay is bound to increase as more and more individuals discover and utilize the site. The increased usage will almost certainly result in higher competition and thus higher prices for the items. Until that time, however, there will still be some real bargains to be found.

See you on eBay!

(Robert W. Hamblin is Professor of English and Director of the Center for Faulkner Studies at Southeast Missouri State University. He is co-editor, with Charles A. Peek, of *A William Faulkner Encyclopedia*, forthcoming from Greenwood Press.)

FAULKNER FIRST EDITIONS

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Memories of Jack Falkner

(From Page 3)

A: Oh, he was a very finicky eater. With his food. He rarely ate a big meal. Breakfast was his favorite meal of the day. Eggs, little biscuits, some cereal. Sometimes three eggs, some ham. He was always glad to see the breakfast table.

Q: Tell us something about Jack's FBI career, his most celebrated cases.

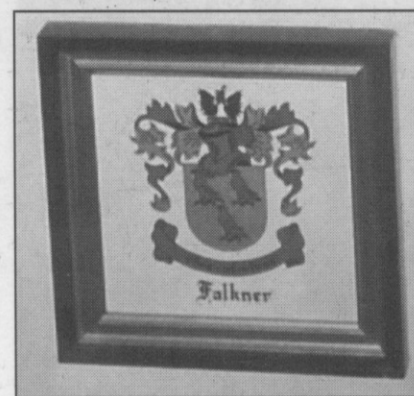
A: He worked on the case of the Lindbergh baby, that was kidnapped. He was part of the search party. And of course the capture of Baby Face Nelson.

Q: When did you first meet Jack's brothers, Bill and John?

A: In 1946, we came down from Washington. I had met John there, first. I knew John before I knew Bill. They looked so much alike to me that I got them confused. When I met Bill, I said, "Oh, we have already met!" And Jack said, "No, that was John. This is Bill."

Q: What was your first impression of the Faulkner men? What did they have in common?

A: They were *tres distingue*, most distinguished. Well born, beautiful manners. I liked every one of them. Oh, yes, very much. And their mother was a very nice lady.



Falkner
Coat of Arms

Q: What did Jack and Bill think about flying, they were both pilots and loved to fly. Did they ever fly together? In some ways, Pappy envied Jack his army career. He was the soldier that Pappy wanted to be.

A: That's true. I cannot believe he is not here any more. We had thirty-three years and he was gone. How soon it was gone. As to flying, no, they never flew together. Never.

Q: Did you see Bill and Estelle when you and Jack lived in Memphis?

A: Yes, we lived there from 1954 to 1956. Estelle and Bill came to see us and we went shopping. We sometimes had lunch at the Peabody Hotel. Bill would leave us for awhile so that Estelle and I could do women things, you know.

Q: Did Jack come to Bill's funeral?

A: Yes, but I stayed in Mobile. I did not attend the funeral. Whenever the Faulkners needed him, Jack was there.

Q: When Jack wrote his memoirs, did he use notes or diaries or rely strictly on memory?

A: Yes, from memory. It was formidable. Good memory, good head. He began writing his book in 1965. He would write all morning, stopping only to eat, telling me, "Tell me when it is twelve o'clock."

Q: What was Jack's favorite among Bill's books?

A: Soldiers' Pay. *Voila*, Soldiers' Pay. If my memory is correct.

Q: Why didn't Jack put a u in Falkner, as Bill and John did?

A: His great-grandfather spelled it that way. And his grandfather and father, also. He wanted that spelling to continue. It was for the sake of continuity.

Q: Did Bill ever call upon Jack for help, either financial or emotional, to support him in a crisis?

A: Sometimes when they got together they discussed the education of the children in the family, of Jill and Jimmy and Chooky, and of you, Dean.

Q: Did they ever go hunting together? Bill loved to hunt.

A: No, Jack hunted gangsters. He was too sensitive to hurt an animal. He hunted people, not animals. Bill asked him once to go with him on a big hunting party, and Jack said, "Never, not me."

(Dean Faulkner Wells is the niece who at age eight helped her Uncle Jack roll his Bull Durham cigarettes. Dean and husband Lawrence Wells operate Yoknapatawpha Press and are publishers of The Faulkner Newsletter.)

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER



& Yoknapatawpha Review

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