

1978

William Faulkner of Oxford, Panel Discussion

Victoria Black

Christine Drake

Evans Harrington

Lucy Howorth

Mary McClain

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/ms_studies_eng



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Black, Victoria; Drake, Christine; Harrington, Evans; Howorth, Lucy; McClain, Mary; and Wells, Dean
Faulkner (1978) "William Faulkner of Oxford, Panel Discussion," *Studies in English*: Vol. 15 , Article 14.
Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/ms_studies_eng/vol15/iss1/14

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in English* by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

William Faulkner of Oxford, Panel Discussion

Authors

Victoria Black, Christine Drake, Evans Harrington, Lucy Howorth, Mary McClain, and Dean Faulkner Wells

William Faulkner of Oxford

Panel Discussion

PANELISTS

Victoria Black
Christine Drake
Evans Harrington

Lucy Howorth
Mary McClain
Dean Faulkner Wells

Drake All of the people on the panel knew William Faulkner in some way. The first panelist is Judge Lucy Somerville Howorth. She was a student in the Law School when William Faulkner was enrolled as a special student at the University of Mississippi, and she came to know him very well then. I want to say a word about Judge Howorth because she is distinguished in her own right. After receiving her law degree, with highest honors in her class, she married a fellow student, Joseph Marion Howorth, and established a law practice with him in Jackson, Mississippi. Judge Howorth served as United States Commissioner for the Southern Judicial District of Mississippi, represented Hinds County in the Mississippi State Legislature, and spent over twenty years in Washington, D.C., where she held several important positions with the Veterans Administration and the War Claims Commission. Judge Howorth and her husband now live in Cleveland, Mississippi. It will be my pleasure to present her. The next panelist is Mrs. Mary McClain, who has lived in Oxford all her life with the exception of seventeen years when she was married to a railroad executive and lived in Washington. Her family has lived here for a long time, and she knows Oxford very well. Our other panelists are Dean Faulkner Wells, Mr. Faulkner's niece, and Victoria Black, the daughter of Victoria Fielden and the granddaughter of Mrs. William Faulkner. Each member of the panel will probably refer to Mr. Faulkner in a slightly different way. Mrs. Howorth knew him as Bill. Mrs. McClain referred to him as Mr. Bill because this is the name that people around the town used for addressing Mr. Faulkner. Mrs. Wells and Mrs. Black called him Pappy. Because I came to Oxford in 1951, I called him Mr. Faulkner. I had the

privilege of living with Mr. Faulkner's mother for two years just after I moved here. I came to know her and saw Mr. Faulkner through her eyes. Mrs. Faulkner always referred to her son as Billy, and sometimes I think of him as Billy. Now I'm going to call on our first speaker, Judge Howorth.

Howorth I feel very much at home tonight because the trouble with the projector reminds me of some of our problems at the old Lyric Theater when we put on plays. The picture that we have just watched gives William Faulkner himself—not as an actor, not as an impersonator, but as himself. I was impressed in watching it to get the feeling that he was really very little different in 1951 from the young man who enrolled at the University of Mississippi in September, 1920. The same day that he enrolled as a special student I enrolled as a law student.

I would like for you to be able, if you could, to recapture the campus in 1920. It was not anything at all like it is today. It was not a conglomeration of buildings piled on top of buildings. There were no automobiles to be nuzzling each other and crowding for space. The campus was an expanse of lovely, beautiful trees with about a half a dozen spaced buildings. There was the Lyceum, which you see today. As you stood on the steps of the Lyceum and looked to the left, you saw the Library and beyond it the Chancellor's residence. Around the circle were the historic and beloved Chapel, now called the Y Building, and the old Law School, which you call the Geology Building now. As you stood on the steps of the Lyceum, on your right was old Taylor Hall, which had a few classrooms and some dormitory rooms. Next was Darden Hall, where the boys ate their meals and where they had their rooms. On around the circle was the post office. Yesterday Dr. Collins showed you a picture of the post office and of a room in it labeled *Books*. Well, that was not a bookstore. Don't imagine for a minute that we had a bookstore. That was a place where textbooks were dumped twice a year and where the students scrambled to pick up what they needed from the stacks on the floor. It stayed open a few weeks at the beginning of each semester. In the center of the campus was the Confederate Memorial Statue; that was the trysting point of all the students because you could never miss it. "I'll meet you at the Monument," we said. There were benches where we would sit and watch the world go by. But it

went very slowly; time was eternity to the students at the University of Mississippi. All of life lay before them, so why should they hurry? They strolled, they dawdled, and sometimes they held hands. Sometimes they just strolled together, but they didn't hurry—why bother about getting to class on time? That was not too important. The important thing—and I think it's something that's lost today—was just to daydream a bit and take things as they came.

The first afternoon that I was out on the campus I saw a young man, a graceful figure, coming across and calling out my name. It was Ben Wasson. Life seemed a little brighter on the campus when I realized that he was a senior law student. Since we didn't have all these lists of students handed around among us, we had to gradually discover who was here. So we chatted. Both of us were from the same town, but I'd been away for some years and had not seen Ben for a long time. A day or two later he told me that he had a friend here that he hoped I would meet. He thought this friend was very talented; he was writing poetry and he wanted to write plays and he was interested in the drama. Ben suggested that we form a dramatic club. He insisted that he would do all the work and William Faulkner—because that was the person to whom he referred—would give artistic advice. They would depend on me for organizational skills. The next day Ben arranged that he and Bill Faulkner would be on the campus and meet me across from the Law Building. And thus the Marionettes was formed. Some writer has said that William Faulkner was a charter member. We had no charter; we just organized ourselves sort of like protoplasm does in the biology class. Ben was the president, I was the secretary, and we named Bill Faulkner property man because we figured that that was a title and would lend distinction to us, but it was a title which meant that anybody could run around and get what was needed for the play—sofa pillows, chairs, rugs, whatever. Of course, Bill Faulkner didn't do any of that. Ben knew the students pretty well; he knew the talented ones. So we just invited various ones to join with us. Soon we had the organization going. It's an organization that I've always been proud of because it survived the departure of the three founders. It lasted for a number of years under the name that Ben suggested and we adopted—the Marionettes. The name, of course, has become even more famous in recent days because Bill Faulkner used it as the name of a play he wrote.

The group soon selected a play. The play we selected was a very simple one, but after all we were rather simple people. Our play was *The Arrival of Kitty*. We rented the Lyric Theater, and we chose a cast. Bill Faulkner helped substantially as the director of that play. I carried the title of director because I carried the responsibility of getting the characters there to rehearse and of worrying about all the details that a director must worry about. But Bill Faulkner was very helpful in his directional advice and in his assisting the cast to interpret the characters. Miss Ella Somerville, of Oxford, also was of great help. The next play we put on, she directed entirely. We read plays, we had meetings, we discussed drama, and we really hoped that Bill Faulkner would write a play that we could produce. He wrote three plays, but they were poetry, and they were impractical certainly for a group such as ours to produce. He continued his interest, although he attended the meetings very rarely. He didn't like anything like going and sitting still an hour or so while other people wrangled or talked or even just joked. He was writing all the time. He was writing poetry chiefly. When I would see him sometimes, he would be sitting on a bench or I would be sitting on a bench, and he would join me or I would join him. He would fumble in his pockets and bring out his little bits of paper. Now Dr. Collins has said, and I'm sure it's true, that later Phil Stone gave him legal paper on which to write. But then he was writing on the backs of envelopes and on any little bits of paper he could scrounge. He would show these, and he wanted somebody to read them. This was a fact of his character as I saw it then and as I see it now.

When I decided we needed more literary light on the campus, I persuaded the editors of *The Mississippian* to let me undertake to edit a column of book reviews and literary contributions. I named the column "Books and Things." I stole that from *The New Republic*. I subscribed to *The New Republic*, and I don't know whether that was the only copy that came to the campus. But, anyhow, *The New Republic* never objected to the lifting of its title. William Faulkner made the first major contribution to that column. That was, I think, in November, 1920. He continued through that session and the next one. He was away in the autumn of 1921, but when he came back he resumed. I believe it was in January, 1922, that William Faulkner again appeared in the column. His first contribution was a review of William Alexander Percy's "In April Once." If you will get Dr.

Collins' book and read these early writings of William Faulkner, I think you will agree that that is a good review. He didn't go overboard. He didn't say this is a great poet. But, he wrote a fair review. He was reading then books supplied by Phil Stone, who had a standing order with a bookstore at Yale in New Haven. Bill passed those books on to Ben Wasson, and Ben passed them on to me. So we kept current. And it was one of life's joys to me because I had been concerned about where on earth I would get current literature. We all were then and are today grateful to Phil Stone for supplying the books. They were especially useful and helpful to Bill Faulkner.

Now I'm not supposed to talk too long, but I do want to tell you two other things. In the spring of 1921 I was sitting on a bench with Bill Faulkner when a man came by. He was not a student because he was walking briskly, neatly dressed in a business suit, obviously on a serious errand. Bill watched him and said, "I do not see how any person can earn a living." I had the perception then that for a split second the inner man was showing through. I treated it very casually and said perhaps—I don't recall exactly—that probably what is a burden to one man is an opportunity to another. What William Faulkner was saying at that moment was that he could not see how any human being could put himself in a bind and commit himself to a regular schedule and to being where someone else could control his actions and possibly his thoughts. At that date the heat was being turned on Bill Faulkner to get out and hustle and get a job. He just plain didn't see how he could do that.

The other incident was in the spring of 1922 when the Marionettes decided to have a picnic. It was a beautiful afternoon that we had chosen—April in the spring, with everything lovely. As we were walking across the bridge going to Bailey's Woods where there were favorite picnic sites, we met William Faulkner. I remember his exact words and first wrote them down for Mr. Collins in the early 1960s. Bill said to me, "What's all this?" And I said, "If you would come to meetings of the Marionettes you would know what it is. We're having a picnic. Come on and join." "Oh," he said, "I couldn't do that. I have no food." "Oh," I said, "that's foolish. You know there's always twice as much food as needed. Come on." "Well, I will," he said. So we went, and it was an unusually happy occasion. Everything clicked—the ants didn't come, and the mosquitos—the mosquitos in that day hibernated. They didn't come out until about June. Now they stay

out all year round. But they hadn't come out, and it was cool enough for the fire for cooking the weiners and toasting the marshmallows. Everybody was happy at the way the evening was going. Then about nine o'clock—now this wasn't daylight—saving time; this was what the Chicago *Tribune* used to call god's time, so nine o'clock was about what ten o'clock is now—Bill rose and came over to me and said, "I must be going." I said, "Oh, don't hurry off. We'll all soon be going." "Oh," he said, "I have to leave." And then he said this—listen to the exact language: "Thank you for a normal evening." That remark showed some inner turmoil. It was then I knew in those days that Bill Faulkner would be a successful writer. He was trying to write plays, and he was writing poetry. I didn't know which way his talent would turn. I didn't know he would be receiving the Nobel Prize and that I would be watching him in the pictures. But I did think that we had a man of extraordinary talent.

McClain Judge Howorth has given us a good description of the campus. In those days the University was small and so was Oxford. In this small town literally everyone knew everyone by sight. I cannot remember not knowing William Faulkner. To me he was Mr. Bill.

The relation between my family and the Faulkner family goes back to my grandfather and Colonel J. W. T. Faulkner. I have in Colonel Faulkner's handwriting—on two sheets of letterhead printed "Gulf and Chicago Railroad Company, J. W. T. Faulkner, President, Oxford Mississippi, A. E. Davis, General Manager, Ripley, Mississippi"—an accounting and final statement of my grandfather's having served as administrator of his brother's estate, beginning in 1892 and closing May 3, 1900. When the First National Bank was organized in Oxford my father, a much younger man, was a charter member of the board of directors. And this was the time Colonel Faulkner was named president. Through the years of the two factions in the bank, Daddy was on the side with Colonel Faulkner and was with Mr. John even in later years. This Mr. John was J. W. T. Faulkner, Jr. For those who lived in Oxford there was no problem at all with the fact that we had four John Faulkners—Mr. John, Colonel Faulkner, Johnsey, and John, Jr., as we called the son of Mr. J. W. T., Jr. He actually was John Faulkner IV. Those of you who are studying Faulkner may find the four John Faulkners confusing, but it was not the least bit confusing to us.

I remember Dean as a contemporary of my oldest brother, their being in high school while I was still in grammar school. Boys would gather on the lot next to Daddy's barn to play ball. The younger sisters just might be permitted to watch, provided they did not bother the boys. The first incident which really made an impression on me so far as Mr. Bill was concerned was when this same older brother announced to my mother that he was through with going to Sunday school. Mother and Daddy did not require us to stay for church, but we were required to go to Sunday school, just as we were required to go to public school. In those days children did what parents required without too much argument. You have probably already guessed that my brother's revolt was brought about by the minister's charges against Mr. Bill.

There was also the relation between the Oldhams and my family. The nurse for Ned, Miss Estelle's brother, would bring Ned to play with my brother. Or Ann, our nurse, would take William to play with Ned. To get me out of Mother's way, probably, I would be taken along. As I was growing up, I was so impressed by Miss Estelle and her sister that I named my dolls and paper dolls Estelle and Victoria. In later years my sister, who is several years younger than I, studied piano with Mrs. Oldham and loved her dearly.

By the time I was studying freshman English at the University I was well aware of Mr. Bill's writing. In fact, I had read and owned an autographed copy of *Soldiers' Pay*, which was later borrowed by an English professor who, when he was asked for it, had misplaced it. When we went to freshman English class we were required to bring a paragraph. Once we were told to bring an anecdote next time we came to class. As my close friend and I were walking from the campus to town, she said, "If you'll stop with me in Lucille and John's, I'll walk on to town with you." At that time they lived in a little white duplex where the Standard Oil Station is, at the corner where Miss Maud's house is located. We stopped in, and Mr. Bill was there. He said, "What knowledge did you gain today?" And Katherine asked, "What in the world is an anecdote? We have to write one before we go to our next class." Mr. Bill said, "Kate, when do you have to have it?" And she said, "Day after tomorrow." He said, "I'll write one for you." As we started to school on that day, Katherine said, "Mary, look at this." She showed me a sheet of paper with tiny writing and said, "I thought I never would be able to copy it all; I've got about two pages to turn in." And with that she tore up the sheet

which had Mr. Bill's writing on it because she knew she was doing something that just wasn't quite right. At that time Dr. A. P. Hudson was chairman of the English department. He had a theme review in which the best and the worst of the themes, as we called these paragraphs, would be published each week. Katherine's anecdote went in the theme review that week as one of the best. If we had a file of that, and I'm sure it is somewhere, we would locate the one which Mr. Bill wrote and which Katherine simply copied. When *Sanctuary* was published, the father of this same friend was reading it. Upon my asking whether I might read the book, he replied, "Mary, you don't want to read this book. You're fond of Bill, and you'd never feel the same about him." Would you believe I continued to read Mr. Bill's other books as they were published, but did not read *Sanctuary* until two years ago? I must admit that I saw the picture and had read reviews and knew enough about it that I hardly needed to read it.

I enjoyed Miss Maud very much. During the last years that I was teaching at the University before I was married, I would walk by for her and she and I would go to the Porters sometimes as often as two or three evenings a week to play bridge. While I lived in Washington I returned to Oxford five or six times a year to visit my mother and father. I always went by to see Miss Maud, who by now was well engrossed in her painting. Sometimes we would sit in the living room, but more often in the room where she painted. Frequently she would show me something on which she was working. If Johnsey came in, he would join us. If Mr. Bill came by, he usually would speak but go back to another room. I would make my departure rather soon, for I would not intrude upon Miss Maud's time with Billy, as she called him.

Until the latter part of the Second World War, I had seen less of Jack than the other sons. He telephoned one day, told me that he was stationed in Washington, had married while overseas, and Suzanne would be arriving that week. Since Suzanne did not speak English, he was hoping that I might spend some time with her. My husband and I enjoyed being with Suzanne and Jack, and the relationship continued after their going to California, then New Orleans and Mobile. In mentioning these relationships with members of the Faulkner family, I may give you the impression that I am saying nothing about William Faulkner. If in conversation with Jack he was relating some incident which involved Mr. Bill, he would mention

him as he would any other person. Miss Maud did the same thing. The point I am trying to make is that friendship existed in a normal way and Mr. Bill and his affairs were not our topics of conversation. I remember being surprised over a little incident in Washington when I shopped for a wedding gift. I've always put the invitation in my bag in order to have the full name and address. I had selected a gift for Jill at Martin's on Connecticut Avenue. When I handed the sales person the invitation in order for her to take the name and address, she exclaimed, "Oh, this is William Faulkner's daughter. Aren't you excited over going to the wedding!" She didn't seem to understand when I stated that I had been in Oxford only recently and would not be going home at the time of the wedding. After that, when I would go in Martin's she would practically knock herself out getting over to wait on me.

After my husband's retirement from Southern Railway, we moved to Oxford. We had not been here long when my husband told me that he had met Mr. Faulkner and that Mr. Faulkner had said that he was mighty glad to meet Mr. McClain because when he made the trip to New York on the train he could answer the porters and conductors that had not understood how he could live in Oxford and not know Mr. McClain. Later in the year Miss Estelle invited us to a little supper party, with only twelve including Miss Estelle and Mr. Bill. We never knew a more gracious host than Mr. Bill that evening. I sat at supper to his right, and he said three things that I could remember, just as Judge Howorth said, almost the words that he used. He said, "Mary, I must find a snapshot that I made of John Ellis falling off a calf, my having dared him to ride the calf." John Ellis was my younger brother, and he played with Malcolm. Then Mr. Bill asked whether I had heard about the christening of the dam. When I told him I had not he told the story of my brother, Malcolm, and Art Guyton, who is now Dr. Art Guyton, damming up a little stream near the house and of Art's being so precise in having the two younger ones do everything just so to be sure the dam was just right. When they had completed it after much work, Malcolm went to the house and got a bottle of beer and went back and christened the dam. And with this, Art decided that the water was polluted, so he broke the dam and let the water run through. Mr. Bill claimed that he had a time because Malcolm came back to the house to get the shotgun because he was so mad at Art.

Now this could just have been Mr. Bill's story, or this could have really happened; I never heard John Ellis tell the story. Mr. Bill also asked me if I remembered a certain professor, one of the most respected professors on the campus. When I said "Yes," he said, "Well, I was on a ship with him one time coming from Europe. You know, around Oxford we all thought he was a teetotaler, but you should've seen him guzzling wine."

The same year, during the Christmas season, Jill's in-laws were guests of the Faulkners and Miss Estelle and Mr. Bill invited a much larger group for an open house. That evening Mr. Bill spent most of the time standing over to the side doing little mixing and mingling. A night or two later Miss Ella Somerville—the same Miss Ella that Judge Howorth mentioned—included Mr. McClain and me among her guests when she had a dinner party for the Faulkners and their guests. Soon after we arrived, sort of out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that Mr. McClain and Mr. Bill were seated on a small sofa or love seat in the corner of the room. After some time I noticed that Mr. Bill took Mr. McClain's glass and his glass, went into the next room, returning a little later with the refilled glasses and taking his seat again by Mr. McClain. They sat and seemed to be talking, so along with others I enjoyed the party and along with others did not disturb the two. When we were walking to the car after dinner, my husband said, "I like Mr. Faulkner, but he certainly is hard to talk to." When I chuckled, Mr. McClain wanted to know what was funny. I told him that if Mr. Bill had not enjoyed their conversation, he would have walked away. Mr. Bill must have enjoyed it, because on other occasions he visited with Mr. McClain. Mr. Bill even came with Miss Estelle to an open house which Mr. McClain and I had. The relationship between the two men says something to us. My husband was not the least literary. He had fifty years as a railroad man, and Mr. Bill just simply enjoyed him and that was all there was to it.

So much has been said from time to time about Mr. Bill's not speaking to persons. I should like to defend him on this point. Through the years I passed him up town when he did not speak, he seemed miles away. Yet, just as many times I passed him on the street when he would bow and tip his hat with "Hello, Mary." I remember shortly after the birth of Jill's first son I met him in front of Stevens and Tatum grocery on South Lamar. He was superbly attired, and as we came face to face, I said, "Congratulations to Grandfather."

Bowing graciously, he replied, "Thank you, thank you, Mary." And with another word or two, I entered the store and he went on toward the square. In all this, I suppose I am trying to say that for me there was a Mr. Bill whom I liked and respected. At the same time, I know there was William Faulkner, a complex personality.

Drake Thank you, Mrs. McClain. Now I'm going to say a few words about Mr. Faulkner's mother in whose home I lived for two years just after I moved to Oxford. She was always warm and gracious and had a sense of humor; she was animated, but she was a quiet kind of a person. She had an epigrammatic style of speaking. One day Mrs. Faulkner asked me to tell her about my mother. I was trying to tell her that Mother was quite a community worker and very much interested in helping people—this, that, and the other. I was going through a whole paragraph, and Mrs. Faulkner just summed it up and said, "Yes, I know, the bird with the broken wing type." Of course, that was exactly right. I didn't have to go on with my paragraph.

Mr. Faulkner was certainly devoted to his mother in every way; he came to see her regularly—in the mornings or in the afternoons. A lady said to me recently that one of the sweetest things she remembered about Oxford was driving down South Lamar and seeing Mr. Faulkner turn in to see his mother. Mr. Faulkner was very much like his mother in so many ways. Mrs. Calvin Brown said that Mr. Faulkner inherited his talent from his mother. Well, I don't know whether you can inherit talents or not, but he was very much like her. Mrs. Faulkner was a very small person; in fact, she was so small that she was very much disturbed about getting something to fit her. She told me, "When I go to town to try to buy clothes, the clerk shows me children's clothes." As you know, Mr. Faulkner was small, too.

She believed strongly, as Mr. Faulkner did, in the right to privacy. You heard his comment in the film that he did not want any intrusions. When a writer from *Life* magazine wrote a review on the Faulknors, Mrs. Faulkner was so antagonized by the article she just went to the telephone and sent a wire. Her son Jack had given her a subscription to *Life* for a Christmas present, so she had sent the wire to *Life* magazine asking them to please cancel her subscription immediately.

She never intruded on me in any way; she never came in my room.

We visited together in the living room or maybe in her room sometimes or in the dining room where she did a great deal of painting. She never intruded on Mr. Faulkner either. If she met him up town when he seemed to be very deep in thought, she would just pass on by. She said, "If I walk by Billy and I see that he's thinking, I just don't disturb him."

She was always very fair and very generous and did so many things that I was not quite accustomed to having done for me or to knowing that people did in those days, certainly not anybody with whom I had ever stayed. Once in the summer I went on vacation and my mother happened to be ill and I was gone longer than I expected to be. A whole month or more had gone by and when I was going to pay her, Mrs. Faulkner said she did not want me to pay her for the room because I hadn't used it. I couldn't quite understand this, but I couldn't argue her down and so she would not take any rent. Well, I had never had any treatment like that before, but Mrs. Faulkner, like her son, felt that you should get what you pay for in this world.

Soon after I came to live with Mrs. Faulkner I realized that she painted a great deal. She painted at the end of the dining room where there were windows and she had a good light. She painted all kinds of things—flowers, maybe more flowers than anything; a great many homes here in Oxford have pictures of roses, violets, pansies, irises, and magnolias that she painted. She also painted portraits. She painted for the Dean of Women a portrait of her mother and father when they were young and then a portrait of each of them when they were older. And she copied masterpieces. She had Negro scenes that she painted; they were not copied, of course. She enjoyed painting and sold some of these paintings. This gave her the feeling of independence. She used to tell me over and over, "Oh, I'm running my own show." She was glad to sell her paintings and to have her own money and not feel that anybody really had to help her. Now the scenes of Negro life were greatly admired by someone who came to see Mr. Faulkner, a man from the East; he was greatly impressed by them, and he took them all to New York with him. When I came home in the afternoon from the office she told me she was so elated to have him take these pictures off because she felt there might be a chance that she would get some recognition, she herself, for something that she had done. I thought how wonderful it would be if she could get that recognition. Certainly she has had

recognition in the eyes of the world through her son. A man who came to do research asked me one time if I thought Mrs. Faulkner realized his greatness. I said, "Indeed, she did." Although Mrs. Faulkner was such a quiet, demure, dainty little person, she was worldly-wise in many ways and she realized how very great he was. I think that certainly her memory will live on through her son in the stature he achieved.

Questioner You and other speakers have indicated that you all knew Mr. Faulkner in different ways and this accounts for the different ways that you addressed him or that you think of him. I understand part of this, but there is some of this I don't quite understand. I wonder if you could explain fully how one becomes, as in the film, Stone instead of Phil Stone or how one knows, feels, or senses how you should address a person.

Howorth I think it's very simple. A mother calls her son one name. A pal down the street uses another. When he gets to be a big executive or a distinguished person, people use another form. I was a fellow student with William Faulkner at the University of Mississippi. When he enrolled, I enrolled; I was Lucy, and he was Bill.

Drake I didn't arrive until a long time after the time he had won the Nobel Prize, and I called him Mr. Faulkner.

McClain I think we're getting away from it now but I believe through the South we've had a tendency to use special terms of address. For a woman older than I, I would say Miss So-and-So. A man, I would call Mr. John, if maybe I didn't want to be so formal as to say Mr. Faulkner. This is the way these things start. Now Mr. Bill was older than I, so I wouldn't have dared as a child walk up to him and say, "Hello, Bill." This may be just a Southern thing. Now my husband would call me Miss Mary, and that was an endearing term; he was older than I. If you noticed, I called him Mr. McClain. His daughter said to me one time, "I do wish you wouldn't call Daddy Mr. McClain." I knew him as Mr. McClain, you see, and I just never did change.

Wells Vicki and I said "Pappy" because it is the closest thing to Daddy.

Questioner Is it a problem to be known as a relative of William Faulkner's? Are you uncomfortable here tonight because you are here as relatives of his?

Wells I'm incredibly uncomfortable.

Black In everyday life, no. But being put on the spot, like tonight, yes.

Wells But, then sir, Vicki and I were talking on our way here this evening that when we were growing up it was not always a very pleasant thing to be a Faulkner, to be a member of *that* family because we were not always revered and people were not always glad to see us. We were on the wrong side of the beer referendum, for instance, and the wrong side of swearing, and that sort of thing. So it's nice to be socially acceptable for the first time. Vicki agrees.

Harrington Dean, would you tell us about riding horses?

Wells Oh, yes. Jill, as I'm sure most of you know, was a splendid horsewoman. She rode beautifully. It was a joy to see her ride. Vicki rode very well.

Black I broke my leg doing it.

Wells Somehow I was stuck at home one year when Jill was off and married and Vicki was away in school in Switzerland, so I was the only one there to work the horses. Every afternoon about three o'clock Pappy would say, "It's time to ride." And I would start saying, "Oh, dear Lord, let it rain." But I rode every day, regardless, and I hate it to this day.

Questioner I was just curious about whether or not there was outward hostility toward the Faulkners in the era in which Faulkner was growing up in general? And I would like to get a little bit more feeling of what it meant to be a Faulkner and what the family perceptions of him were at the time when he was doing the writing.

Black Well, when I was just in junior high everyone thought he was rather a character, a real Count No-count. We rode in this

horrible, horrible car that had a hole right through the bottom. I lost a bathing cap through it, and I thought, "You really are a Count No-count when I can lose a bathing cap through your hole in your car." But then I rode to school one day and there was a lady who taught typing and she came running up to me and said, "Bill Faulkner has won the Nobel Prize!" I said, "THE Nobel Prize?" She said "Yes, *the* Nobel Prize." And I said, "What's that exactly?" And she said, "Oh, that man that invented dynamite!" So, all of a sudden, he was accepted. He was IT in this town. Until that time, he was nothing, absolutely nothing. He was considered a drunk; he was a scapegoat; he was a bad man.

Wells I was off in school in Little Rock when Pappy won the Nobel Prize. Nanny had tried to telephone me early in the morning to forward the good news, but somehow I had missed connections and I did not know. When I walked into my English class, my teacher said, "Oh, Dean, I know you are delighted that your uncle has won the Nobel Prize." And I said, "Oh, yes'm. Which one?" We were naive, when we were growing up. I think Vicki and I probably realized that Pappy was a very special person when we were in the seventh and eighth grades when *Intruder in the Dust* was filmed here. Suddenly we had all the Hollywood glitter. Do you remember Claude Jarmon, Jr., the young man who did *The Yearling*? Well, he was here, alive, and we were very excited about it. Once again, I was off in school, in Clarksdale this particular year, but Pappy sent for me and I was brought home and got to see the filming and then went to the premiere of *Intruder in the Dust*. Suddenly it dawned on us that somebody in our family was a very, very important man.

Black But all through those years, you must realize, we never followed the man around with a notebook.

Questioner I'd like you to describe his routine, or lack of routine, as you remember it.

Black His routine was completely outside of our lives. He started at five o'clock in the morning. We'd hear the tap, tap, tap of the typewriter, but we were just thanking God that we didn't have to get up that early to go to school. We would go to school; he might pick us up, he might not. We would come home; we always had what we

called dinner, our main noonday meal, at home at the dining room table. Supper was sort of catch-as-you-can; it was nothing. He spent most of the afternoons out in the pasture. Pappy was an environmentalist. At Christmas time, with all of those woods, we could never go out and chop down a Christmas tree. We would go out and we would chop down three scraggly pieces and staple them together. And that's how we made our Christmas tree.

Wells He was very kind to us. This has come up before, the fact that Pappy did love children and he did enjoy them. I still find it extraordinary that he took time to play with us. He was not a distant figure. He seemed to enjoy children's activities, and he found time regardless of his schedules to be with us, which is a very precious thing to me.

Questioner I guess I'm really asking how you saw him balance his time when he was writing so much.

Wells Once again, when Vicki and I were small we were totally unaware of the fact that he was writing, much less that the man was a genius. How he organized himself is yet beyond me. I am almost a totally disorganized person. I know that he did beautifully at whatever plan he had. I know that he appeared in my later years at my grandmama's steps every afternoon at four o'clock. So it's part of the whole genius. That's all I can say.

Questioner Possibly connections are being made between characters in Faulkner's novels and townspeople of Oxford. Did any of the townspeople identify themselves in any of the novels? If they did, did they ever get terribly insulted or did they get swelled heads?

Wells They were insulted.

McClain I think the answer to that is the people, the ones we might think he was writing about or using in a novel, did not read what he wrote. I have always been tremendously interested in what scholars say of Jason and Benjy. The first time I read *The Sound and the Fury*, I thought Jason was a perfect description of a certain man I knew, and the store Jason worked in is an accurate description of one I knew.

Wells Pappy made up a family ghost for us which was a wonderful thing to grow up with, though terrifying. Judith was the daughter of the family who built Rowan Oak. When the Yankees came through Oxford, Judith fell in love with a Yankee. Her family said, "You may not marry a Yankee." Evidently things got very complicated and Judith walked up on the second story and threw herself off the balcony and broke her neck on the front steps. Vicki and I grew up believing that Judith lived in the house.

Black Yes, but in addition to that she did commit suicide and, of course, she was then not fit to be buried in consecrated grounds so she was buried underneath a magnolia in front of the house. Under the magnolia there's a mound, and that's supposedly where Judith was buried. It fitted in very nicely; there is a mound there. I've wanted to dig it up so many times, but I'm scared.

Wells But she did appear for us regularly when we were little girls. She walked in the light of the moon in July and then again at Halloween. And she was an extraordinary looking lady—very tall, very pale, with long, long black hair parted in the middle, and she always wore a dead gardenia and long flowing white robes. And her hands were skeletons. She was an extraordinarily frightening creature, and Vicki and I, of course, believed in her tooth and nail.

Black Well, all I can say about Judith is that I don't really believe in her because I know that Pappy made her up. I know also that my mother has seen her. Now who do you believe? My mother woke me up once in the middle of the night when I was fourteen. And I don't believe any normal mother wakes her child up in the middle of the night to say, "Judith is here." And I said, "She is?" And my mother said, "Yes, and I want you to see her." And I said, "I don't want to." I pulled the sheet up over my head, and I never did. So, I don't want to call my mother a liar, but you know it's hard for me to believe in, and yet I have felt her down there. And that house will always have that feeling for me. I cannot go down there without feeling that funny sense of fear, of a chill that I think Judith is watching me. And she's not a bad ghost. Let's get that straight. She is not bad. She's just a little mischievous, perhaps. But she's not bad.