

January 2008

## REVIEW: Walker Percy Remembered: A Portrait in the Words of Those Who Knew Him

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*Macon State College Library*

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### Recommended Citation

Borck, Pat (2008) "REVIEW: Walker Percy Remembered: A Portrait in the Words of Those Who Knew Him," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 44 : Iss. 4 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol44/iss4/26>

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cleans up an old typewriter and sits down to write. Raunchy and relentless, this book is not likely to be a hit with the best-sellers crowd in libraries with small budgets. The right audience for this title from the indie Coffee House Press will be readers who are clamoring for edgy, experimental, no-holds-barred fiction. ►►

—Reviewed by **Teresa Pacheco**  
Northeast Georgia Medical Center Library

**A Gentle Rain** by Deborah Smith  
(BelleBooks, Inc., 2007; ISBN 978-0-9768760-7-6, 16.95).

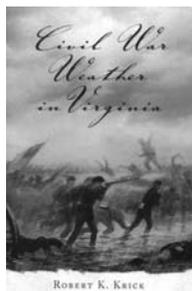
Deborah Smith delivers another heartwarming sophisticated work of romantic fiction in her latest novel, *A Gentle Rain*. The story alternates between the points of view of the two main characters, Kara Whittenbrook and Ben Thocco. Kara, a New England heiress in her early 30s, is struggling with the deaths of her parents. Soon after their deaths, Kara is stunned with the news that she was adopted. On a journey to know her birth parents, Mac and Lily, Kara sets off to the Florida ranch where they now live. When Kara arrives at the ranch, she is surprised to find out that it is a special needs ranch. There she meets the owner of the ranch: single, warm-hearted and self-sacrificing Ben Thocco, who is caring for his own brother, Joey, also mentally challenged. Kara begins to discover love in various ways from all of the characters in this story. The bonds that are created while Kara is at the ranch are a touching account of human kindness at its best. Deborah Smith does a magnificent job of bringing to life both the characters and locations of the novel. Set primarily in northern Florida near Orlando, the places discussed will be familiar to anyone who has ever lived in the South. Deborah Smith's latest novel is very much along the lines of her other books in style and ambiance. *A Gentle Rain* would certainly be a wonderful addition to any wholesome contemporary romance or fiction collection. ►►

— Reviewed by **Carolann Lee Curry**  
Mercer University Medical Library

## NONFICTION

**Civil War Weather in Virginia** by Robert K. Krick (The University of Alabama Press, 2007; ISBN 978-0-8173-1577-1, \$39.95).

Inspired by Douglas Southall Freeman's exhortation for Civil War historians to provide a meteorological register of the War Between the



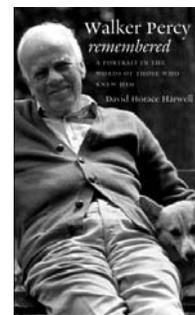
States, Robert K. Krick, himself a prolific Civil War historian (and former chief historian of the battlefield parks of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania), provides a rich reference source on the weather conditions experienced by armies engaged in the tumultuous Northern Virginia theater of war. Union and Confederate armies sought and menaced each others' capitals, Richmond and Washington, D.C., on this ground. Krick draws up weather charts from October 1860 through June 1865. Prior to the establishment of the National Weather Service by a resolution signed by President U. S. Grant in 1870, historians have long relied on soldiers' diaries, memoirs and letters to describe actual battlefield meteorological conditions, the significance of which can hardly be underestimated in 19th century combat. A heavy rainstorm or even hot, dry, dusty weather could be just as potent as field artillery in determining the outcome of a battle. Krick's great reference coup is his transcription of the meticulous meteorological recordings of the Reverend C. K. Mackee of Georgetown, D.C., into monthly charts that include daily temperature and precipitation readings at 7 a.m., 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. The charts, juxtaposed with local newspaper and soldiers' observations (e.g., "it was very hot," "a tremendous storm moved in," "today's been cold and miserable," "muddy roads ... The weather was cold with much snow and rain") make for surprisingly interesting reading. The book is a unique reference source for Civil War buffs and professional historians. ►►

— Reviewed by **James Taylor**  
Atlanta-Fulton Public Library

### Walker Percy Remembered: A Portrait in the Words of Those Who Knew Him

by David Horace Harwell (University of North Carolina Press, 2006, 978-0-8078-3039-0, \$24.95).

Southern novelist Walker Percy's early years were marked by tragedy. Both his grandfather and father committed suicide, and his mother died in a car accident, which some think may have been a third suicide. It isn't surprising, then, that Percy's protagonists always seemed to be on a search for the meaning of life. He didn't begin his career as a writer, however. At the urging of his uncle, Percy went to medical school, but when he contracted tuberculosis at the age of 26, his medical career was cut short, and he spent the next two years in a sanatorium. During this time of recuperation, Walker began to read the works of philosophers and novelists, which began his lifelong quest to make sense out of the strange, tragic events of his life. Shortly



thereafter, he established himself as a writer, winning the National Book Award for his first published novel, *The Moviegoer*, in 1961. Using an oral history technique, author David Harwell provides a glimpse into the parts of Percy's character not otherwise covered in previous biographies. Through his extensive interviews with 13 individuals who knew Walker Percy, including Percy's brothers, his housekeeper, former teachers, community members and his lifelong friend author Shelby Foote, rich tapestry is woven. We learn of his involvement in civil rights, his role in his community, his conversion to Catholicism, his spirituality, his struggles with depression and his unwavering quest for meaning in life. He was a quiet, private person, not seeking the limelight, who was often surprised when his literary accomplishments were acknowledged publicly. Because Harwell allowed the narrators to talk about themselves as well as their relationship with Percy, some interviews tend to wander from the focus of the subject; however, the final result is a collection of remembrances that serve as an important complement to the longer, more comprehensive biographies of Walker Percy. The book is recommended for academic libraries and especially for Percy fans. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Pat Borck**  
*Macon State College Library*

**Blood & Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1927** by Sarah E. Gardner (University of North Carolina Press, 2004; ISBN 978-0-8078-5767-0, \$19.95).

Historical perspectives on the Civil War and its aftermath were reflected in and shaped by the writings of Southern white women. Sarah E. Gardner traces the progression of women's themes from journals and letters written during the war through postwar histories and biographies. She covers the efforts of the United Daughters of the Confederacy to influence women's writing and shows how idealistic "Lost Cause" accounts gave way over time to less romantic views. Gardner examines in detail Margaret Mitchell's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Gone With the Wind* (1936) as a landmark work with national appeal and Caroline Gordon's *None Shall Look Back* (1937) as an early attempt at a Civil War epic. Gardner places women's writings in the context of national cultural and political movements as well as in seminal works by male authors and brings to life the personalities of the women who helped fashion postwar Southern culture. Scholarly in depth, *Blood & Irony* is also engaging, good-humored and highly readable. Includes bibliography and illustrations. Highly recommended for



academic libraries and collections focusing on the Civil War, Southern history or Southern women. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Maureen Puffer-Rothenberg**  
*Valdosta State University*

**Community Journalism: Relentlessly Local, 3rd ed.** by Jock Lauterer (University of North Carolina Press, 2006; ISBN 978-0-5629-1, \$29.95).

Lost in the world of megamedia emphasizing "the culture" and international events is the fact that most of us still have a need for local news. Lauterer's book is a combination of passionate hymn and textbook on that subject. He is a former small-town publisher in North Carolina, now teaching at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Journalism. Twenty-four chapters divide the territory into smaller segments: news, sports, graphics, ethics, "speed bumps and troubleshooting" among them. Lauterer defines "community journalism" as those publications under 50,000 circulation within a definable area. These dominate the American landscape: 9,104 out of 9,321 newspapers fit that definition. Smaller newspapers are more likely to be locally owned, and there are many more small newspapers than large ones in every state. Most offer their news and ads on a Web site. The dynamics of facing and serving those you cover is at the heart of all this. Lauterer is in love with editors who cover things that the metro dailies don't have time for: Little League, Boy Scouts, biggest pumpkin in the county, fundraisers and government. There is a special tension, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, between readers and editors at that level. This is primarily a textbook, though anyone will find it useful and enlightening. His chattiness and informal writing style were exasperating at times, and the photos make every small town look like the set of "Mayberry RFD." But it is heartening to know that there are still many devoted to serving the news needs of smaller communities where many of us live. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Wallace B. Eberhard**  
*University of Georgia (Emeritus)*



**Georgia Quilts: Piecing Together a History** edited by Anita Zaleski Weinraub (University of Georgia Press, 2006; ISBN 0-8203-2850-2, \$34.95).

In 1990, the Georgia Quilt Project (GQP) set out to create a written and photographic history of Georgia quilts. Over the span

