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## With Hawks and Angels: Episodes from a Southern Life

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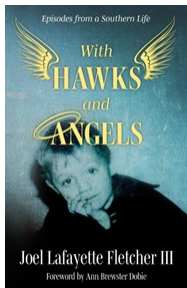
the land.

*Tracing Florida Journeys* is a co-publication with Florida Humanities and the University Press of Florida. Published in 2024, Poole's book was made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Leslie Kemp Poole is an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at Rollins College in Winter Park, FL. With a PhD in History from the University of Florida and as a fourth-generation Floridian, she provides a personal and highly approachable reader for both the academic and general reader interested in the storied and varied history of our nation's 27th state. Before working in higher education, she was an award-winning journalist for several newspapers, including the Orlando Sentinel.

This book is highly recommended for academic and public libraries, especially those with Florida and Southern History collections. Those planning a vacation or day trip centered on historical locations will find it especially enjoyable. Each chapter ends with detailed historical site information covered in the respective section. Additionally, the book includes numerous photographs and historical images that complement the rich descriptions provided by Poole.

Austina McFarland Jordan, University of North Georgia.

### ***With Hawks and Angels: Episodes from a Southern Life***



Joel Lafayette Fletcher, III  
Jackson: University of Mississippi  
Press, 2023  
ISBN: 9781496844699  
256 p. \$30.00 (Hbk)

Joel Lafayette Fletcher III's book *With Hawks and Angels: Episodes from a Southern Life* is a memoir of a privileged life. Privilege is the term he employs to denote the opportunities that come with status and financial security. In many ways, Fletcher did lead a privileged life. He attended a prestigious private university, traveled abroad, and met interesting and famous people. Unlike others with few financial resources, Fletcher not only had the desire to flee the discrimination he encountered, but he also had the financial means

to do so.

Fletcher was born in Lafayette, LA, and his family had power and influence in that community. Fletcher's father, Joel Lafayette Fletcher Jr., served as the president of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette from 1941 to 1966. Fletcher remembers that at the age of five:

As a result of the [Huey] Long scandals, my father became president of the college and we moved into the imposing new mansion that my father's predecessor had finagled for himself. We not only had a cook to prepare our meals, but a maid to do the cleaning, and a male servant who came early in the morning to perform all other tasks. (pp. 211-212)

It was customary for his family to entertain distinguished guests who spoke at the University. Such guests included Archduke Otto von Habsburg (the last crown prince of Austria-Hungary). While there, Joel remembers von Habsburg patting him on the head, then sitting down to play *The Blue Danube* and *Tales from the Vienna Woods* on their piano. Other visiting dignitaries to the family home included a former president of France, Vincent Auriol, and celebrated soprano Lily Pons. These experiences set Fletcher apart from his school classmates and underscored his social difference.

Fletcher suspected that he was a homosexual during his adolescence, and that, too, accentuated his differences. He attended college at Tulane University in New Orleans, and he lived a closeted life there. He dated girls but describes his college years as "still trying to become what I was not" (p. 91). Upon graduation, and at the urging of his father, he received a commission as an ensign in the US Navy. He was assigned to an aircraft carrier based in San Francisco. Fletcher described San Francisco as "then as now a city of irresistible gay temptations" (p. 91).

After fulfilling his terms of service and being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy, Fletcher applied to and was accepted into the graduate program at Stanford University. While at Stanford, he began to explore the possibilities of expatriate life. He was able to save money (largely because during his second year at Stanford, he lived rent free in a cottage on his parents' property) to plan a trip to Europe for a few months.

Fletcher was tired of the homophobia in the United States, and although he wasn't exactly closeted at this time, he also was not living what is now called an authentic life. Once he made the journey to Europe, Fletcher stayed there for 12 years. In Europe, he was able to live his life as an openly gay man. Had Fletcher stayed in the American South during the 1970s and 1980s, such an open lifestyle was almost inconceivable and potentially dangerous. By moving abroad, he was also escaping his family's opprobrium and his father's rejection.

During the course of his travels, Fletcher fell in love with Italy and especially Florence. He set up house in that city and began teaching English classes at the Instituto Americano. The same year Fletcher began teaching at the institute, a smaller but competitive language school closed its doors. Fletcher, along with a friend, bought the rival language school. This marked the beginning of Fletcher's transition to a full-fledged expatriate. While he was in Europe, he met famous artists, authors, and local dignitaries, such as Count Francesco Guicciardini, war correspondent Therese Bonney, photographer Andre Ostier, and painter Mary Guggenheim.

Three years after his father's death, Fletcher decided to return to Louisiana. This is something that he could not and would not do while his father was alive. Despite his father's rejection, he was willed the family's cottage in Stanford, and he resided there with a partner.

Fletcher tells his life's story in vignettes or snapshots, which makes the book an easy read. Less easy to read are his accounts of the discrimination and pain he experienced while trying to please others and failing miserably. His freedom finally came through "hawks" and "angels." According to his life partner John Copenhavers, the hawk symbolizes good fortune. For Fletcher, the angels represent the guardians and protectors. Fletcher noted that "we did have years of financial success, good times, and made great friends while hawks and angels perhaps were watching over us" (p. 4).

This memoir is recommended for those who might be interested in Fletcher's descriptions of Louisiana small town life in French Acadian southwest Louisiana and the Louisiana piney woods, as well as the vibrant city life of New Orleans during the 1960s. His encounters with artists, politicians, the famous, and near famous at home and in Europe will appeal to other readers. Finally,

this book may also be for the readers who are seeking something better and longing to live authentic lives on their own terms.

This book is recommended for public libraries.

*Chris Andrews*, University of North Georgia

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