

# ALL POINTS NORTH

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Dedicated to  
Harrison, Harrison, Harrison  
Everyone with “Writing Fever”  
Micki, Always Micki



## *Author's Note*

A Christmas gift to me as a small child was a thick, costly book on opera from my Aunt Peggy.

How did she know?

Wherever you may be, Aunt Peggy, thank you, with all my best yet to come.

You alone had clarity, vision, depth, and a heart of gold.



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## *Foreword*

**N**ow the date is early August 2005, and recently I arrived at the age of fifty-two. At the beginning of my new writing career, little did I know how it would snowball. Even two years ago I wondered if I had the “makings” for even one book, with only six short stories finished. I began making notes on paper for the first story which is presented here as volume seven on the evening of January 2, 2002, after walking my back property line just before 7 P.M. I saw the back of a neighbor’s house, where the backyard was lit with a very powerful bulb, and inside a rear bay window I saw a Christmas tree.

A Christmas tree with real tinsel, and I hadn’t seen tinsel on any Christmas tree in over twenty-five years. I went back inside my back kitchen door making notes on paper and mental notes. Then my first assault on writing fiction was the first Tuesday evening in February 2002. I had sixty pieces of assorted paper with notes; five and a half pages

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of notes were typed out, the rest by hand. I placed them in four separate piles. Then my assault began, with a seventy-page legal pad, the first of many, to yield forty-eight pages by 3:25 A.M. The first thirty-one pages consumed all the ink from a new ballpoint pen. That was another first for me, to write all the ink out of a new pen in one sitting and half of another.

Volumes one and three I wrote together the last weekend in February 2002. The last Saturday morning in February 2002 I made my first ever trip to Oxford, Mississippi. I returned home before 2:00 P.M., and I had only given two brief thoughts to my first story here, which began suddenly at 4:20 P.M. that eventful Saturday. I was sitting in my garage, the stereo blasting, my soda half empty. Then suddenly I was moving fast to my writing table, grabbing another legal pad, a new pen, then, deep into the night, with near heart failure, sitting, writing and thinking, and it was so painful to capture on paper, it came out of me so fast, so difficult to capture on paper, it seemed as though it was being fed to my head telepathically, but there were difficult phases of long thinking with little writing. I realized I had reached the halfway point, pulling an all-nighter before I had a working title, which is always a big help before beginning. That was when I wrote “All Points North.”

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Once I commit thoughts to paper, often those things are not much in my head anymore. Five minutes, five hours, five weeks later when I look over something I've written, I am often left wondering, where did that come from?

Writing fever has no cure. There are no cures. Once stricken, always subject to relapse. Caution, yes. Often "Writing Fever" has a mind of its own, and now I can see where fiction leads into reality as much as reality experiences can be woven into crafty fiction on paper and on stage. At least once William Faulkner said, "Read, read, read. Read everything."

Since I began writing in February 2002, full moons often have had a profound effect on me. In mid-July 2002, after returning home on a Sunday afternoon from distant surgery, I went to bed early and awoke just before 11:30 P.M. Something inside me said to go downstairs and out the front door. And so I did. It was a clear night with a full moon almost directly over my roof with several blue rings around it, and I didn't know it was coming! Do you know how I felt standing in front of my house under broad moonbeams with only my shorts on?

Loony.

The old television ad that says or implores, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" has ever new meaning for me.

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Recently I paid my fourth trip to Rowan Oak, William Faulkner's home from 1930 until his death July 6, 1962. Later the University of Mississippi purchased Rowan Oak to preserve the memory of Mr. Faulkner. I am in debt to both the University of Mississippi and to Mr. Faulkner.

Each time on leaving Rowan Oak, I take with me a rock from the drive to the south. My nugget, my memento of an amazing man, horribly conflicted—deeply torn within himself, as am I. Since late 1992 I can only type with one finger, and for over a year I can only read with one eye.

My mid-life theme has become, “If you never start, then you end with a life of wonder without worth.” As you read, throw caution out the window, take a breather, gain a second wind and a new look. Look out. When others ask how I write, all I can say is that I call it some word ability on paper. Some people can and will read anything into what suits them; this is life, which I accept, but I don't always agree as to what others may think.

In September 2004, I paid a visit to a prominent realtor in a prominent building, and in a moment of gathering a few papers before leaving, the realtor asked, “Are you a writer?”

Again taken aback, I said, “Where did you hear that?”  
“Oh, just the name.”

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Then I said, “Yes.”

Immediately he asked what I’d done before that, and equally fast, with no time to think I said, “Fell in the mud!”

While my sight fails, my inner vision grows. I hope my illusion of fiction may brighten your way. I found victory in the valley, and Heaven, too. I’d like to share it with you. If you like to roar on the floor and maybe break, then this book is for you!

It took too long to make the short trip to Oxford. It all began on an airplane in the fall of 2000. When no one was looking, I tore out the page from some flight magazine about a writing competition: the William Faulkner Short Fiction Essay Contest, 5000 words max. I made six entries and, although I won nothing, I found the gold mine of Mississippi literature. At Rowan Oak my hat is off and head forever low.

Come to Rowan Oak. Come to Oxford. Sunny Oxford. Southern comfort and loyalty forever! Mississippi is my kind of place. Perhaps you can find a nugget here to match mine.

Oxford. Forever, Oxford.