

# FOIA MARKER

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**Collection/Record Group:** Clinton Presidential Records

**Subgroup/Office of Origin:** Speechwriting

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**OA/ID Number:** 17197

**FolderID:**

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**Folder Title:**

Willie Morris

**Stack:**

**S**

**Row:**

**92**

**Section:**

**2**

**Shelf:**

**8**

**Position:**

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note to Joanne ①

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Willie Davis

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Paul Beale



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North Toward Home

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returned home  
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Contingency or Marcus Dorce  
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My Dog Skip - loved it  
story about 10 year old  
dog

Ghost of Medgar Evers.

during  
WWI

— race + love  
+ friendship  
Southern America

1ST QUOTATION of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Simpson's Contemporary Quotations

SECTION: Communication & The Arts

SUBJECT: Literature; Writers & Editors

LENGTH: 86 words

SOURCE: Willie Morris

QUOTE:

When a writer knows home in his heart, his heart must remain subtly apart from it. He must always be a stranger to the place he loves, and its people.

"Coming on Back" Life Jun 81

His claim to his home is deep, but there are too many ghosts. He must absorb without being absorbed.

ib

When he understands, as few others do, something of his home . . . that is funny, or sad, or tragic, or cruel, or beautiful, or true, he knows he must do so as a stranger.

ib

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LEVEL 1 - 30 OF 50 STORIES

Copyright 1993 Gannett Company, Inc.  
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

September 8, 1993, Wednesday

LENGTH: 192 words

HEADLINE: WILLIE MORRIS BIO

BYLINE: The Jackson (Miss.) Clarion-Ledger

BODY:

Here is a brief chronology of Willie Morris' life and career:

- Born Nov. 29, 1934, in Jackson, Miss., and spent his childhood and adolescence in Yazoo City, Miss.

- Graduated from the University of Texas in 1956, editing the Daily Texan in his senior year.

- Upon graduation, became a Rhodes Scholar, attending New College at Oxford University, Oxford, England, for four years, receiving his master of arts degree.

- Married Celia Ann Buchan in 1958 and divorced her in 1969.

- Returned to Texas in 1960 and assumed the editorship of The Texas Observer.

- Joined Harper's magazine in New York in 1963. He became its eighth and youngest editor at the age of 32 in 1967; he resigned in 1971.

- Was Writer-in-Residence at the University of Mississippi from 1980-1991.

- Married JoAnne Prichard in 1991 and lives in Jackson, Miss.

- Books include "North Toward Home," "Yazoo," "The Last of the Southern Girls," "James Jones: A Friendship," "The Courting of Marcus Dupree," "Terrains of the Heart," "Good Old Boy," "Good Old Boy and the Witch of Yazoo," "Homecomings," "Always Stand in Against the Curve" and "After All, It's Only a Game."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



## LEVEL 1 - 6 OF 12 REFERENCES

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Published by Marquis Who's Who  
The Complete Marquis Who's Who (R) Biographies

LAST-UPDATE: July 28, 1998

Morris, Willie

SOURCE: Who's Who in America, 54th Edition, 53rd Edition, 52nd Edition, 51st Edition; Who's Who in Entertainment, 3rd Edition; Who's Who in America, 48th Edition, 49th Edition, 50th Edition, 44th Edition, 45th Edition, 46th Edition, 47th Edition

LENGTH: 287 words

\* \* \* \* \* PERSONAL INFORMATION \* \* \* \* \*

Son of Henry Rae and Marion (Weeks) M.; Married to Celia Ann Buchan, Aug. 30, 1958 (divorced 1969); 1 child, David Rae; Married to JoAnne Shirley Prichard, Sept. 14, 1991.

GENDER: Male

BIRTH-DATE: November 29, 1934

BIRTHPLACE: Jackson, Mississippi

\* \* \* \* \* CAREER INFORMATION \* \* \* \* \*

OCCUPATION: 6430 - author, editor

CAREER: hon. fellow Silliman Coll., Yale.

POSITIONS HELD: assoc. editor, Tex. Observer, Austin, 1960; editor in chief, Tex. Observer, 1960-62; assoc. editor, Harper's mag., 1963-65; exec. editor, Harper's mag., 1965-67; editor in chief, Harper's mag., 1967-71; v.p., Harper's Mag., Inc., 1967-71; writer-in-residence, U. Miss., 1980-91

\* \* \* \* \* EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION \* \* \* \* \*

BA, U. Tex., 1956; BA (Rhodes scholar 1956), New Coll., Oxford (Eng.) U., 1959; M.A., New Coll., Oxford (Eng.) U., 1960; Ph.D. (hon.), Grinnell Coll., 1967; Ph.D. (hon.), Gettysburg Coll., 1968

\* \* \* \* \* OTHER INFORMATION \* \* \* \* \*

CREATIVE WORKS: Author: The South Today, 100 Years After Appomattox, 1965, (autobiography) North Toward Home (Carr P. Collins nonfiction award, Houghton-Mifflin lit. award 1967), Yazoo: Integration in a Deep Southern Town, 1971, (children's fiction) Good Old Boy, 1971, (novel) The Last of the Southern Girls, 1973, (memoir) James Jones: A Friendship, 1978, (essays) Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays, 1981, (nonfiction) The Courting of Marcus Dupree, 1983 (Christopher medal), (essays) Always Stand in Against the Curve, 1983, Homecomings, 1989 (Miss. Disting. Book award), (children's fiction) Good

## The Complete Marquis Who's Who (R) Biographies July 28, 1998

Old Boy and the Witch of Yazoo, 1989, Faulkner's Mississippi, 1990, (stories)  
After All, It's Only a Game, 1992, (autobiography) New York Days, 1993 (Gov.'s  
artistic achievement award 1994, Best Book of 1993 Miss. award Miss. Inst.  
Arts and Letters), My Dog Skip, 1995, The Ghosts of Medgar Evers, 1998,  
Introductory Essay Official Games and Souvenir Program for 1996 Centennial  
Olympics Richard Wright medal for literary excellence 1996.

MEMBERSHIPS: Mem. P.E.N. Club, Soc. Rhodes Scholars, ACLU, Phi Beta Kappa, Phi  
Eta Sigma, Sigma Delta Chi, Delta Tau Delta.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 6, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 6 OF 82 STORIES

Copyright 1999 The New York Times Company  
The New York Times

August 3, 1999, Tuesday, Late Edition - Final

NAME: Willie Morris

SECTION: Section A; Page 13; Column 1; The Arts/Cultural Desk

LENGTH: 1230 words

HEADLINE: Willie Morris, 64, Writer on the Southern Experience

BYLINE: By PETER APPLEBOME

BODY:

Willie Morris, the writer and editor whose life and work reveled in the endless contradictions of the South and the region's ghostlike hold on its native sons and daughters, died on Monday at St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson, Miss., at 64.

The cause was heart failure, said a hospital official.

Mr. Morris, who turned his childhood in Yazoo City, Miss., into a place almost as complex and resonant as William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, went from a country boy to a Rhodes Scholar to a literary Wunderkind, becoming editor in chief of Harper's Magazine at age 32.

But just as Truman Capote famously said that all Southerners eventually come home, if only in a box, Mr. Morris returned to Mississippi in 1980 and never stopped exploring what he once described as "the old warring impulses of one's sensibility to be both Southern and American."

He wrote on subjects ranging from his childhood English fox terrier in "My Dog Skip" to the intersection of football and race in "The Courting of Marcus Dupree"; hunkered down in his favorite Mississippi haunts like Doe's in Greenville, Lusko's in Greenwood and Bill's Greek Tavern in Jackson, and delved into the interplay of past and present that defines Southern life.

Still, rather than being merely a vivid interpreter of Southern life, Mr. Morris was someone ahead of his time in exploring the confluence of region and nation, and how the South's distinctive experience of race, family and history was so deeply a part of the nation's experience as well.

"Willie said that Mississippi is America writ large," said Richard Howorth, owner of Square Books, the literary haunt in Oxford, Miss. "And to understand Willie you have to know that he had this amazing knowledge of American history. And I think his understanding of the South and curiosity about the South was very much a part of his understanding and curiosity about America. He understood the South as only a Southerner could, but his perspective was so much broader than just thinking and writing about the South."

The New York Times, August 3, 1999

Willie Morris was born on Nov. 29, 1934, in Jackson. When he was 6 his family moved to Yazoo City, a town on the edge of the Mississippi Delta, which at roughly the same time nurtured figures as diverse as Mike Espy, later to become Mississippi's first black Congressman since Reconstruction and then Secretary of Agriculture; Haley Barbour, former national chairman of the Republican Party, and Zig Ziglar, the motivational speaker.

His father, Henry, ran a gas station, and Mr. Morris grew up in the teeth of the segregation era, in an environment he came to see as wondrous and horrific, where blacks and whites lived together in parallel universes that were utterly apart and intimately entwined. He played taps for the American Legion at military funerals, became a part-time sports writer for The Yazoo Herald and dreamed of ascending to the landed gentry who defined the social and economic overclass of the Delta.

But rather than send Mr. Morris to the University of Mississippi, his father had him go to the distant and alien environs of the University of Texas in Austin. He had, he later observed, no sense that "there were ideas, much less ideas to arouse one from oneself." But after two years of pranks and fraternity hi-jinks, he came to see that books could be, as he later put it, "as subversive as Socrates."

He became editor of the student newspaper, The Daily Texan, where he was asked to resign after the newspaper accused the Governor and state Legislators of colluding with oil and gas interests. After graduating, he went to Britain as a Rhodes Scholar. Then he returned to Texas to edit The Texas Observer, a feisty gadfly publication.

He moved to California and then to New York, where he was hired at Harper's Magazine in 1963. In 1967 he became its youngest editor in chief ever and a major literary figure in a city he came to call "the Big Cave." He presided over one of the legendary eras in magazine journalism, hiring David Halberstam to write about Vietnam, Larry L. King to write about Washington, and printing a 45,000-word excerpt of William Styron's "Confessions of Nat Turner" and 90,000 words of Norman Mailer's "Steps of the Pentagon," about a Vietnam War protest march, which took up the entire March 1968 issue. Six months after becoming editor in chief he also published his autobiography, "North Toward Home," which was a memoir as social history that tried to make sense of the epic changes rattling through the South and what they said about the nation.

But after new ownership took over the magazine, Mr. Morris found himself at war with the management and resigned in 1971, and most of his staff members followed.

Mr. Morris lived and wrote for several years from Bridgehampton, N.Y.

In "North Toward Home" he wrote about how he felt as if "someone had taken some terrible weight off my shoulders" whenever he left the South.

Despite that, he decided to return home. He moved to Oxford as writer in residence at the University of Mississippi. He moved 10 years later to Jackson and spent his time evoking the clattering cacophony of warring emotions -- love, hate, chauvinism, despair and, above all, a sense of something unshakable -- that so many Southerners feel toward the region.

The New York Times, August 3, 1999

Mr. Morris is survived by his wife, JoAnne Prichard of Jackson, and his son, David Rae of New Orleans.

Not all of his work was critically praised. A 1973 novel, "The Last of the Southern Girls," received tepid reviews. And his memoir of his days at Harper's, "New York Days," struck some reviewers as conventional and nostalgic. But few doubt that he captured the South's transition from the days of segregation and the complexities of the Southern experience like few, if any, writers of his time.

"His work in 'North Toward Home' became a mantra for Southerners who fled the South seeking worlds where they could be free and open in their thought but could never escape the love-hate relationship all Southerners carry within them about the place of birth," said William R. Ferris, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a longtime friend from Mississippi.

Mr. Morris drank too much bourbon and red wine, smoked too many Viceroys, stayed up too late and caroused too much. Indeed, friends have marveled at his ability to defy most of the conventions of good health. But, like his writing, his life style betrayed a singular personality, given to long, rambling evocative conversation, and the indelible stamp of his early days in Yazoo City. And friends and admirers say that whatever barbs he could fling at the South's failings were leavened by the degree to which he was, in the end, such a quintessential Southerner.

"Willie was such an honest voice, clear, vivid, never ambiguous," said David Sansing, a retired University of Mississippi historian. "I think people were willing to accept a lot of things from Willie because he didn't fuss at us or belittle us or demean us, because essentially he was one of us. The great thing about 'North Toward Home' is how well it showed how sometimes you have to leave a place to really see it. He had to leave the South to really confirm his own Southernness. But, of course, he came back. Richard Wright once said, 'I got out of the South. But I never got the South out of me.' Willie knew the same thing."

GRAPHIC: Photo: The writer Willie Morris found fodder in his Mississippi childhood, but also headed north in 1963 to work for Harper's Magazine. (The New York Times)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 3, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 3 OF 82 STORIES

Copyright 1999 The Atlanta Constitution  
The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

August 3, 1999, Tuesday, CONSTITUTION EDITION

SECTION: Local News; Pg. 6B

LENGTH: 927 words

SERIES: Home

HEADLINE: OBITUARIES: Willie Morris, 64, noted author, editor

BYLINE: Don O'Briant, Staff

BODY:

Willie Morris, who spun the experiences of his Mississippi Delta childhood into captivating stories, died Monday after suffering a heart attack. He was 64.

The author of the critically acclaimed memoir, "North Toward Home," Mr. Morris became the youngest editor in chief of Harper's Magazine at 33.

As editor in the late '60s, Mr. Morris brought some of the finest writers in the country into the magazine, from Norman Mailer and Gay Talese to Larry L. King and David Halberstam.

"He brought that magazine kicking and screaming into the present. With his love of words and very considerable charm he'd taken an archaic magazine and made it an exciting magazine that was on the cutting edge. It was a stunning success," Mr. Halberstam said. "There was a moment he sort of owned New York."

Longtime friend and "Forrest Gump" author Winston Groom fondly recalled the literary gatherings with Mr. Morris and others. "Willie was the glue that held us all together. I'm talking about not just a bunch of writers, but people like Jim Jones and Irwin Shaw and Peter Matthiessen and Joseph Heller and Truman Capote. He was the best line editor I ever knew and one of the finest men I ever met in my life."

Born Nov. 29, 1934, Mr. Morris grew up in Yazoo City, Miss., a small town that would become the focal point for many of his stories. He also developed what he called a "good ol' boy" love for the South and its people.

In the 1967 "North Toward Home," Mr. Morris described Yazoo City as "on the edge of the delta, straddling that memorable divide where the hills end and flat land begins."

Mr. Morris and his only child, son David Rae, a freelance photojournalist living in New Orleans, were collaborating on a new book about Mississippi's past, present and future. He said his father had finished his part of the project.

The Atlanta Journal, August 3, 1999

"He was from a generation that had lived through a Mississippi that was at its worst, but he had come to peace with his homeland," David Rae Morris said.

Mr. Morris, who died about 6:20 p.m. Monday at St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson, is also survived by his second wife, JoAnne Prichard, whom he married in 1990.

Ms. Prichard was an editor at the University Press of Mississippi and was responsible for "Homecomings," Mr. Morris' award-winning essay collection.

His latest published book was "The Ghosts of Medgar Evers," a 1998 work about the history of the production of the 1996 Rob Reiner film "Ghosts of Mississippi," a film on the 1963 assassination of the civil rights figure and the conviction of Byron De La Beckwith for the murder in his third trial 30 years later.

In his last book, Mr. Morris explores what the three trials and the film of the surrounding events say about race in America, especially in his home state.

"The basic crisis in America is that of racism," Mr. Morris wrote. "Mississippi has always been the crucible of national guilt."

Earlier this year, filmmakers were in Mississippi for a movie version of one of Mr. Morris' works, a 1995 heart-tugging memoir, "My Dog Skip," which will be released later this year. Mr. Morris attended a screening of the film recently in New York.

Following high school graduation in 1952 in Yazoo City, he left the Mississippi Delta for the University of Texas and served as editor of the student newspaper. He continued his education as a Rhodes scholar, studying history at Oxford University.

He later edited a crusading liberal weekly newspaper in Texas before moving on to Harper's, where he became associate editor in 1963 and editor in 1967. He left in 1971 because of editorial disputes with the owner, and many of the magazine's contributing editors resigned, too.

He moved to Bridgehampton, N.Y., and wrote several books over the next nine years, including the children's classic "Good Old Boy."

Mr. Morris returned to Mississippi in 1980, serving as writer-in-residence at the University of Mississippi, where he wrote "The Courting of Marcus Dupree" (1983), based on a standout football player in Neshoba County. In 1996, he was the winner of the Richard Wright Medal for Literary Excellence.

Author Ellen Douglas said Mr. Morris surrendered to the call to return home.

"He lived his life on his own terms and came back to the South because that's where he wanted to be, and he lived a rich, full life," she said. "What a wonderful exuberant, happy, graceful man he was. They don't make them like that anymore."

Word of the death spread quickly among the literary community.

The Atlanta Journal, August 3, 1999

A weeping Dean Faulkner Wells, niece of William Faulkner, could manage only a few words. "He was my Huckleberry friend, and I'm very, very lonely. I'll never get over it."

Her husband, writer Larry Wells, said Mr. Morris "was one of the true literary voices of the South and of America."

"Willie was all heart. That was his power --- he wrote from the heart. Willie will be known in literary history as one of the great essayists," he said.

The stout, red-faced Mr. Morris did not shy away from controversy, according to Mr. Wells.

"He was a champion of civil rights way back when it was not popular to be so," he said.

Through it all, "Gump" author Mr. Groom said, Mr. Morris loved the written word.

"Willie made some money and did well but he could have been living in a refrigerator carton on the lower East Side of New York and he would still have been writing. He was that devoted to writing. The craft of it and the beauty of it."

--- The Associated Press contributed to this article.

GRAPHIC: Photo

Willie Morris

Graphic

Coming in Wednesday's paper: A look at the life and career of Willie Morris, one of the more colorful and prolific voices of contemporary Southern literature.

LOAD-DATE: August 3, 1999



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See also:

► Photo: [Witch of Yazoo](#)

► Book Info: [Eudora Welty: A Tribute](#) (April 1999)

[The Ghosts of Medgar Evers: A Tale of Race, Murder, Mississippi, and Hollywood](#) (February 1998)

# The Mississippi Writers Page

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Willie Morris

## Willie Morris

During the three decades since the London *Sunday Times* praised his memoir *North Toward Home* as "the finest evocation of an American boyhood since Mark Twain," Willie Morris has written more than a dozen other books (including a second well-received autobiography) and has attained national prominence in his career as a journalist, nonfiction writer, novelist, editor, and essayist. He is particularly well known for the books and articles in which he compares his experiences and his long and complex southern heritage to America's own history. "I am an American writer who happens to have come from the South," he emphasized in the spring of 1997. "I've tried to put the South into the larger American perspective."

William Weaks Morris was born in 1934 in Jackson, Mississippi, but when he was six months old his parents moved to Yazoo City, a small town located, as he writes in *North Toward Home*, "on the edge of the delta, straddling that memorable divide where the hills end and the flat land begins." His family members were all storytellers, and he grew up in the almost conscious tradition of recounting tales and handing them down from one generation to the next.

After he graduated from high school in 1952 as valedictorian of his class, he left the familiar Mississippi Delta for the University of Texas in Austin, where he became editor of the student newspaper, the *Daily Texan*, in his senior year. A member of Phi Beta Kappa when he graduated in 1956, Morris continued his education as a Rhodes Scholar, studying history at Oxford University. When he returned to the United States, he edited the crusading *Texas Observer*, a liberal weekly newspaper, from 1960 to 1962.

In 1963 Morris became associate editor of *Harper's magazine* and in 1967 he was named editor-in-chief, shortly before the publication of *North Toward Home*. Throughout this "autobiography in

### Related Links & Info



You can find out more about Willie Morris's boyhood home at the Yazoo County Convention and Visitors Bureau web site.



In 1967 Morris became the youngest ever editor-in-chief at *Harper's*, the nation's oldest magazine.



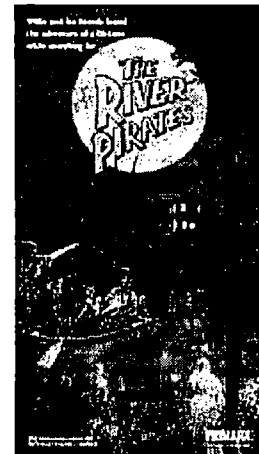
Throughout this "autobiography in mid-passage" he relates his personal development to that of America itself, paralleling his own experiences to various social and cultural forces that characterized the nation during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. With an acute sense of history, place, and family—significant themes in much of his writing—Southern expatriate Morris struggles to understand and come to terms with his own origins and regional identity as he confronts the turbulent complexities of his generation.

*North Toward Home* not only was a best-seller but also received the prestigious Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award for nonfiction as well as several other honors. A selection of the Literary Guild, it was widely praised by critics, including a reviewer for *America* who was prompted to exclaim that "*Harper's* is indeed in good hands."

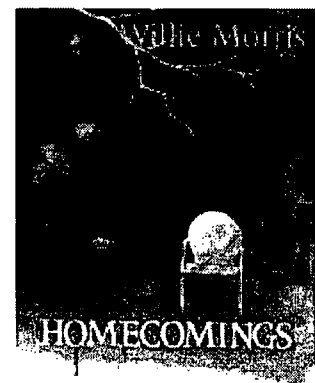
As the youngest editor-in-chief in the history of the nation's oldest magazine, Morris aggressively transformed the venerable yet stodgy *Harper's* into one of the country's most exciting and influential periodicals, attracting contributions from such well-known writers as William Styron, Larry L. King, David Halberstam, Robert Penn Warren, Arthur Miller, James Dickey, and Norman Mailer. Such success notwithstanding, he eventually became embroiled in editorial disputes with the publication's owner. Unwilling to change the focus and content of *Harper's*, Morris quit in 1971—a step that immediately prompted the mass resignations of most of the magazine's contributing editors.

Morris's departure followed on the heels of a painful divorce, and he withdrew to Bridgehampton, New York, a small town on the east end of Long Island. A few months after leaving New York City, he published *Yazoo: Integration in a Deep-Southern Town* (1971), a moving exploration of how the forced integration of the public schools affected this Deep-Southern town on the edge of the Mississippi Delta. Subsequent books include the children's classic *Good Old Boy* (1971), a celebration of Morris's youth complete with boyish misadventures, a daring rescue in a haunted house, and the infamous *Witch of Yazoo*; *Book-of-the-Month Club* selection *The Last of the Southern Girls*

Willie Morris at the grave of the Witch of Yazoo, a legendary character immortalized in his 1971 book *Good Old Boy*. [Larger view](#)



A 1988 film adaptation of Morris's *Good Old Boy*: *A Delta Boyhood* was re-released on video in 1994 as *The River Pirates*.



*Homecomings*, a collection of essays which features the art of William Dunlap, was published by the University Press of Mississippi in 1989.



selection *The Last of the Southern Girls* (1973), a novel of a Southern debutante who comes to Washington, D.C.; and *James Jones: A Friendship* (1978), a heartfelt reminiscence about his longtime comrade and fellow author.

In 1980 Morris returned to his native state as writer-in-residence at the University of Mississippi in Oxford and wrote *The Courting of Marcus Dupree* (1983). In this alternate selection of the Literary Guild, the author skillfully combines sports reporting, historical analysis, and biography as he recounts the madness surrounding the college recruitment of a talented Southern black athlete.

As writer-in-residence, Morris eagerly encouraged aspiring young authors, especially when they exhibited exceptional talent. One example was an Ole Miss freshman named Donna Tartt, whose work particularly caught Morris's eye. Her first novel, *A Secret History* (1992), was begun while she was still in college and ended up on *Publishers Weekly's* bestseller list for thirteen weeks. In another instance, a University of Mississippi law student who had sat in on some of Morris's classes began writing his first novel and asked Morris for advice, which was generously given. Subsequently, Morris wrote a blurb for the book's dust jacket, praising John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* (1989) as "a powerful courtroom drama" and "a compelling tale of a small southern town searching for itself."

Morris told an interviewer in 1979 that "if there is anything that makes southerners distinctive from the main body of Americans, it is a certain burden of memory and a burden of history.... I think sensitive southerners have this in their bones, this profound awareness of the past." Morris's rich heritage is particularly evident in his books of essays. He is a master stylist in this genre; *Homecomings* (1989), with its original artwork, in particular illustrates his precision and eloquence in crafting short works of fiction and nonfiction. His lengthy narrative "My Own Private Album: The Burden and Resonance of My Memory," introduces *A Southern Album* (1975). His cover story in the March 1989 issue of *National Geographic*, "Faulkner's Mississippi," with photographs by William Eggleston, forms the core of the coffee-table book that appeared a

Several of Morris's books, including *Good Old Boy* (1971), have been re-issued by the Mississippi-based Yoknapatawpha Press.



Morris's 1995 book *A Prayer for the Opening of the Little League Season*, a tribute to children's baseball, features illustrations by artist Barry Moser.

year later under the same title. *A Prayer for the Opening of the Little League Season* (1995) is Morris's poetic and heartfelt tribute to children's baseball, with watercolor illustrations by prize-winning artist Barry Moser.

In 1990 Morris married long-time friend JoAnne Prichard, an astute, imaginative editor at the University Press of Mississippi who was responsible for *Homecomings*, his award-winning essay collection. After their marriage, they moved to Jackson, Mississippi, where he began poring over *Harper's* papers and writing old comrades for reminiscences in preparation for a second autobiographical volume, *New York Days* (1993). In this triumphant sequel to *North Toward Home*, he reflects not only on his exhilarating years at *Harper's* but on how that period mirrored the tumultuous 1960s. He followed this Book-of-the-Month Club selection with another, the widely reviewed bestseller *My Dog Skip* (1995), which is not only a poignant, bittersweet tribute to the canine companion of his boyhood but a memoir of a bygone era as well.

While Morris contemplates the inevitable *South Toward Home*, he continues to work on other projects, having, as he puts it, "no alternative to words." In the last few years his eclectic endeavors have included writing the introductory essay to the official souvenir program of Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Games, "A Prayer Before the Feast," and the introduction to Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1996), part of Oxford University Press's acclaimed twenty-nine-volume set *The Oxford Mark Twain*. He also served as a consultant on the Rob Reiner motion picture *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1996), a true story of the murder of civil rights leader Medgar Evers and the thirty-year-long pursuit of the assassin, Byron de la Beckwith. His article on the movie production appeared in the January 1997 issue of *George magazine*, and he has recently completed a book on the subject for Random House. At the Natchez Literary Festival in 1996 he received the third annual Richard Wright Medal for Literary Excellence, joining the select company of the previous two winners, Eudora Welty and Margaret Walker.

After reviewing *Homecomings* almost a

decade ago, a *Boston Globe* writer concluded, "There's damn fine life left in this man's prose." As is evident by Willie Morris's most recent work and his current projects, there is little doubt that this man's prose will continue to be fresh, lively, and thought-provoking.

—JB

## ● Publications

### Nonfiction

- *North Toward Home*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.
- *Yazoo: Integration in a Deep-Southern Town*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- *A Southern Album: Recollections of Some People and Places and Times Gone By* (edited by Irwin Glusker, narrative by Morris). Birmingham: Oxmoor House, 1975.
- *James Jones: A Friendship*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978.
- *The Courting of Marcus Dupree*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983.
- *Faulkner's Mississippi* (photographs by William Eggleston). Birmingham: Oxmoor House, 1990.
- *New York Days*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1993.
- *My Dog Skip*. New York: Random House, 1995.
- *The Ghosts of Medgar Evers: A Tale of Race, Murder, Mississippi, and Hollywood*. New York: Random House, 1998.

### Essay Collections

- *The South Today: 100 Years After Appomattox* (edited by Morris). New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- *Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home*. Oxford, MS: Yoknapatawpha Press, 1981.
- *Always Stand in Against the Curve and Other Sports Stories*. Oxford, MS: Yoknapatawpha Press, 1983.
- *Homecomings* (with the art of William Dunlap). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989.
- *My Two Oxfords* (wood engravings by John DePol). Council Bluffs, IA: Yellow Barn: 1992.
- *After All, It's Only a Game* (with art by Lynn Green Root). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992.

### Books for Children

- *Good Old Boy: A Delta Boyhood*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- *Good Old Boy and the Witch of Yazoo*. Oxford, MS: Yoknapatawpha Press, 1989.

### Fiction: Novel

- *The Last of the Southern Girls*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

### Other Works:

- *A Prayer for the Opening of the Little League Season* (illustrated by Barry Moser). San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995.




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WE'VE GOT  
THE ANSWER

## Mississippi Author Willie Morris Dies

The Associated Press  
 Monday, August 2, 1999; 9:51 p.m. EDT

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) -- Willie Morris, one of Mississippi's most treasured writers who wrote stories based on his childhood in the Delta and other experiences, died Monday night. He was 64.

Morris died at St. Dominic Hospital, where he had been taken earlier Monday after an apparent heart attack.

Morris, who developed what he called a "good ole boy" love for the South, grew up in Yazoo City, the small town that would become the focal point for many of his stories.

In his work, "North Toward Home," he described Yazoo City as "on the edge of the delta, straddling that memorable divide where the hills end and flat land begins."

Morris had more than a dozen books to his credit. Among his better known works are "North Toward Home" (1967), and "Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home," (1981).

His latest published book was "The Ghosts of Medgar Evers," a 1998 work about the history of the production of the 1996 film "Ghosts of Mississippi." That film was about the 1963 assassination of the civil rights figure and the conviction of Byron De La Beckwith for his murder.

In his last book, Morris explores what the three trials and the film of the surrounding events say about race in America, especially in his home state.

"The basic crisis in America is that of racism," Morris wrote.  
 "Mississippi has always been the crucible of national guilt."

Morris became associate editor of Harper's Magazine in 1963, and in 1967, became the youngest editor-in-chief of Harper's, the nation's oldest magazine. He left Harper's in 1971, and stayed in the New York area until 1980.

He returned to Mississippi, serving as writer-in-residence at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where he wrote "The Courting of Marcus Dupree" (1983), based on a standout football player.

In 1996, he was the winner of the Richard Wright Medal for Literary Excellence.

Morris and his only child, son David, a freelance photojournalist living in New Orleans, were collaborating on a new book. The author is also survived by his second wife, JoAnne Prichard, who he married in 1990.

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LEVEL 1 - 4 OF 82 STORIES

Copyright 1999 Southam Inc.  
The Gazette (Montreal)

August 03, 1999, FINAL

SECTION: News; E8

LENGTH: 310 words

HEADLINE: Willie Morris, Mississippi Delta writer

DATELINE: JACKSON, Miss.

BODY:

Willie Morris, one of Mississippi's most treasured writers who wrote stories based on his childhood in the Delta and other experiences, died last night. He was 64.

Morris died at St. Dominic Hospital, where he had been taken earlier Monday after an apparent heart attack.

Morris, who developed what he called a ''good ole boy's love for the South, grew up in Yazoo City, the small town that would become the focal point for many of his stories.

In his work, North Toward Home, he described Yazoo City as ''on the edge of the delta, straddling that memorable divide where the hills end and flat land begins.''

Morris had more than a dozen books to his credit. Among his better known works are North Toward Home (1967), and Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home, (1981).

His latest published book was The Ghosts of Medgar Evers, a 1998 work about the history of the production of the 1996 film Ghosts of Mississippi. That film was about the 1963 assassination of the civil rights figure and the conviction of Byron De La Beckwith for his murder.

In his last book, Morris explores what the three trials and the film of the surrounding events say about race in America, especially in his home state.

''The basic crisis in America is that of racism,'' Morris wrote.  
''Mississippi has always been the crucible of national guilt.''

Morris became associate editor of Harper's Magazine in 1963, and in 1967, became the youngest editor-in-chief of Harper's, the nation's oldest magazine. He left Harper's in 1971, and stayed in the New York area until 1980.

He returned to Mississippi, serving as writer-in-residence at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where he wrote The Courting of Marcus Dupree (1983), based on a standout football player.



In 1996, he was the winner of the Richard Wright Medal for Literary Excellence.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 3, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 5 OF 82 STORIES

Copyright 1999 Times Mirror Company  
Los Angeles Times

August 3, 1999, Tuesday, Home Edition

SECTION: Part A; Page 14; Metro Desk

LENGTH: 638 words

HEADLINE: OBITUARIES;  
WILLIE MORRIS; MISSISSIPPI DELTA WRITER

BYLINE: From Times Staff and Wire Reports

BODY:

Willie Morris, one of Mississippi's most treasured authors, who wrote many stories based on his childhood in the Delta, died Monday night. He was 64.

He died at St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson, where he had been taken earlier Monday after suffering a heart attack.

Morris, who developed what he called a "good ole boy" love for the South, grew up in Yazoo City, the small town that would become the focal point for many of his stories.

Most of his writing was about himself, but he brought to his novels and nonfiction works an understanding of the South and showed how his life and the region's related to a larger national experience.

"I go back to the South, physically and in my memories, to remind myself who I am, for the South keeps me going," he wrote in "Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home," published in 1981.

In his 1967 autobiography, "North Toward Home," he wrapped his personal history around the history of the country as a whole, giving his life story both character and rich context. In writing about such diverse experiences as life in Yazoo--a city "on the edge of the Delta, straddling that memorable divide where the hills end and flat land begins"--and the high-powered New York publishing world, he spoke "in the accent of a region," reviewer Peter Schrag wrote in the Reporter, giving readers "something fundamental in the meaning of America."

In "Yazoo," "Good Old Boy" and "Terrains of the Heart," he reminisced about his hometown and early years, explaining transformations in Southern society through his own experiences. In "Yazoo," published in 1971, he returned to his hometown to explore how a Supreme Court order to integrate the local schools was carried out. The change was made peacefully, he wrote, and he spoke of the values and traditions that held the community together through what could have

Los Angeles Times August 3, 1999, Tuesday,

been a traumatic episode.

Morris had more than a dozen books to his credit. His latest was "The Ghosts of Medgar Evers," a 1998 work about the history of the production of the 1996 film "Ghosts of Mississippi." That film was about the 1963 assassination of the civil rights figure and the conviction of Byron De La Beckwith for his murder.

The book explores what the three trials and the film of the surrounding events say about race in America, especially in his home state.

"The basic crisis in America is that of racism," Morris wrote. "Mississippi has always been the crucible of national guilt."

Morris was a journalist early in his career. He was editor in chief of the Texas Observer in Austin from 1960 to 1962. Then he moved to Harper's magazine as associate editor, rising to become its youngest editor in chief in 1967, when he was 33. He left Harper's in 1971 but stayed in the New York area until 1980.

"He brought that magazine kicking and screaming into the present. With his love of words and very considerable charm, he'd taken an archaic magazine and made it an exciting magazine that was on the cutting edge," said writer David Halberstam, recruited by Morris at Harper's. "There was a moment he sort of owned New York."

He returned to Mississippi, serving as writer-in-residence at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where he wrote "The Courting of Marcus Dupree," a 1983 book based on a standout football player.

In 1996, he was the winner of the Richard Wright Medal for Literary Excellence.

Writer Larry Wells said Morris "was one of the true literary voices of the South and of America."

On a personal level, he said Morris was a famous practical jokester who "had fun; everything about him was fun."

Morris and his only child, David, a freelance photojournalist living in New Orleans, were collaborating on a new book. The author is also survived by his second wife, JoAnne Prichard, whom he married in 1990.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Willie Morris in 1991 PHOTOGRAPHER: Associated Press

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: August 3, 1999