

A Bonus Section for Our North Carolina Readers

Carolina Living

people & places

A Rich Habitat
Near Highlands

The Dish on Vietri
Dinnerware

Architect Frank Harmon's
Sense and Sensibility

Food That Fools the
Eye at Tryon Palace



Lee Smith



Clyde Edgerton



Doris Betts



John Shelton Reed

Fall Tales

Four noted writers reflect on the season.

Southern Living

soul. I unlock the door and go in to phone my husband. "Honey," I say, "I'm here. What time can you get away?"

Lee Smith recently stepped down from a creative writing position at NC State, where she had taught since 1982. She is the award-winning author of more than 10 novels, including Fair and Tender Ladies and Saving Grace, and two collections of short stories. She and her husband, writer Hal Crowther, live in Chapel Hill.



John Shelton Reed

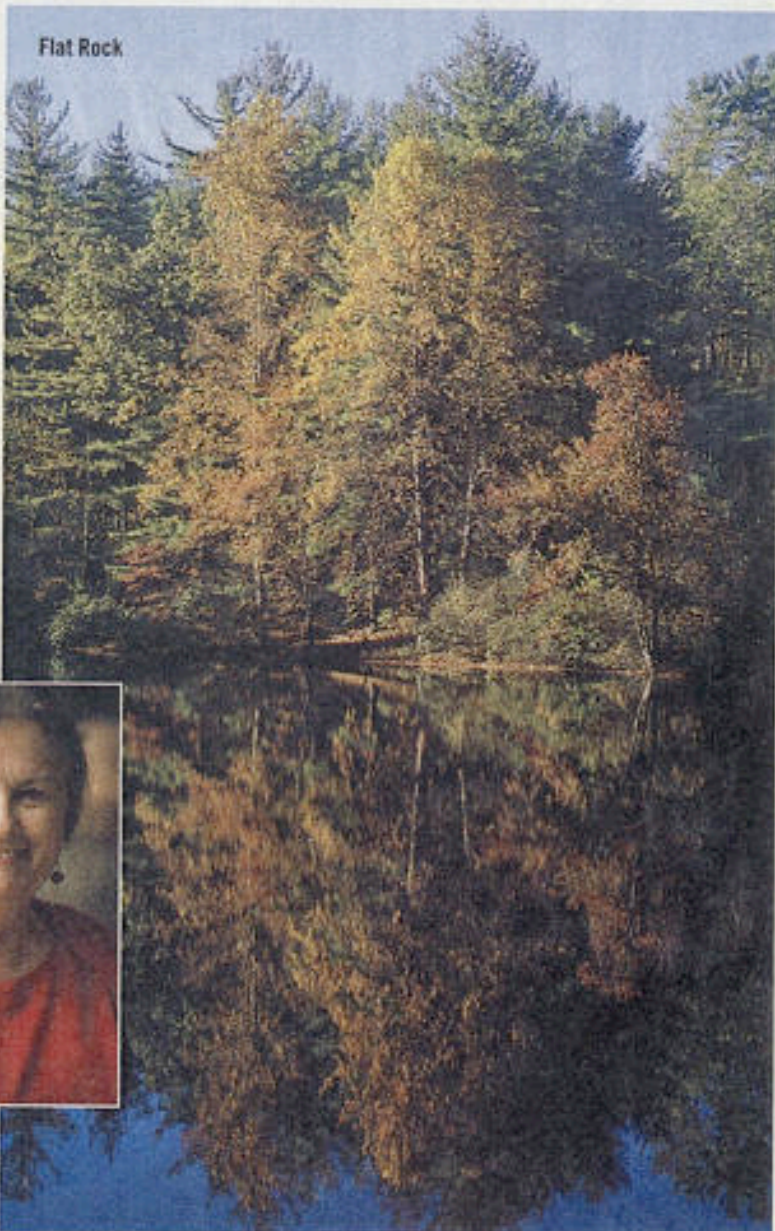
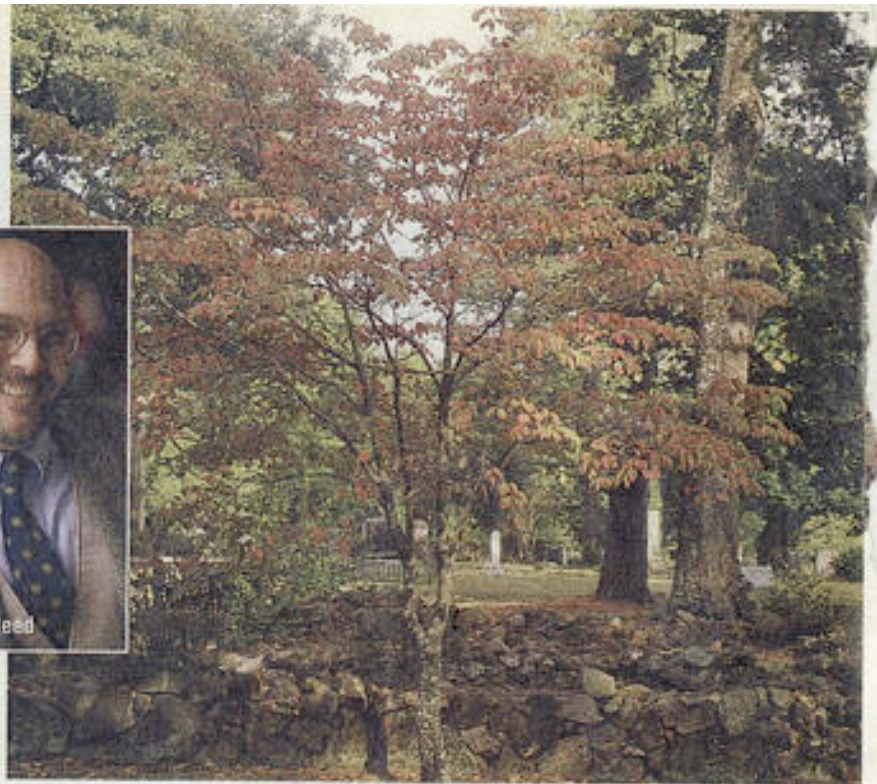
Autumn Blues

by John Shelton Reed

Autumn sometimes makes me blue. The falling leaves mark another year almost gone, reminding me that I've seen far more than I have yet to see. Even Halloween can make me maudlin, evoking memories of little girls who don't live here any more, and with November comes the Feast of All Souls, a time to recall the faithful departed, whose blessed company each year includes a few more friends and schoolmates.

When I want to wallow in melancholy, sometimes I stroll in our old town cemetery. For over 200 years this ground has received the remains of all sorts and conditions of Chapel Hillians. Confederate soldiers lie here alongside white merchants and professional men and their wives. In a separate section to the west lie their servants, with black craftsmen and pastors and teachers, a black physician who developed a treatment for pellagra, and a laundress who starched and ironed thousands of student shirts. Some of those students are buried here as well, far from their homes and families. Nearby are university grandees: presidents, deans, professors of national renown, and others whose fame was more modest and local. Many have names I recognize from campus buildings, but vandals have toppled their gravestones and stolen much of the intricate wrought iron. The words of a great Victorian hymn come to mind:

Change and decay in all



Doris Betts



around I see! O Thou that changest not, abide with me.

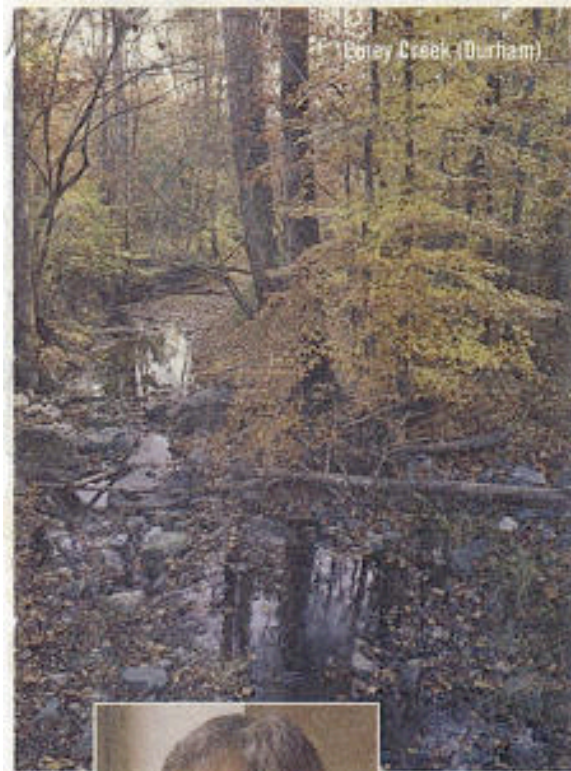
Winter is coming. The azaleas and bluettes will bloom again, but first we must have winter. An overcast autumn day, a day that complements the grey of the old stones, and my mood, is a foretaste of that.

John Shelton Reed is a sociologist and author of many books about the South. He's the director of the Institute for Research in Social Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He and his wife, Dale, co-author of their book, 1001 Things Everyone Should Know About the South, live in the Triangle area.

Fall Beginnings

by Doris Betts

Because I met my husband-to-be at Bonclarken, the summer retreat for the Associate Reformed Presbyterians near Hen-



dersonville and Flat Rock, that area remains a favorite mountain destination. Carl Sandburg loved it and built Connemara close by for his privacy and his wife's pedigreed goats. I was 14 when I met Lowry there.

When we married in 1952, Lowry, then almost 22, and I, 20, honeymooned on the Bonclarken grounds, staying in his Uncle Bynum Betts's cottage, long since sold, as Uncle Bynum is long since dead. (Bynum was an A.R.P. minister, but his secret passion was the Brontës, of whom and about whom he owned almost everything ever written.)

After we had washed off the JUST MARRIED paint marks on the car, we thought we were handling our new domestic status like old pros. Lowry had forgotten a toothbrush; that morning we went into Hendersonville to buy one and stood at the drugstore counter examining the merchandise, discussing the merits of hard/soft bristles and brand names, only to blush when the druggist said with a grin, "Just married, are you?" Now we have



Clyde Edgerton

three children and three grandchildren.

When we go back now, the church grounds contain many summer houses, and it's harder to locate the moonlit paths we both remember. The largely wooded paths on which all of us teens walked and held hands and hoped we weren't getting "out of line" now look like suburban neighborhoods. Still, the leaves there, in the surrounding Flat Rock and Hendersonville area, and nearby at Carl Sandburg's farm, turn vivid in the fall.

Doris Betts is Alumni Distinguished Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has published six novels, including her latest, The Sharp Teeth of Love, and three short-story collections. She owns an Arabian horse farm in Pittsboro, where she lives with her husband, Lowry.

Pondering at Piney Creek

by Clyde Edgerton

My favorite outdoor place in the fall is down by the creek behind our house at Piney Creek. There is an old heavy wooden lawn chair there, and I sit, wearing a jacket for the first time since May, feeling its warmth against a chill that mocks the bright sunlight.

The brown and yellow leaves that float along—some stopping to rest here and there—are dead. They are bound for a state of dust or mud or something in between. But the trees that bore them still breathe. Their hearts beat. They live—though resting, retreating, preparing to wait out the fall chill, which will mature into a winter freeze, a time of more darkness than light, a time of silences, secrets, mourning. The trees will wait, and will win, for the winter will finally leave them alone. And that's when the celebration starts.

But now is the time for the trees to withdraw, to sleep, to dream, to fold up against winter. They will wait.

I stand and walk back to the house, bring in some firewood, consider how I might use this season of death and retreat to write a few paragraphs about hope, about waiting.

Clyde Edgerton is author of seven novels, including his latest, Where Trouble Sleeps. He teaches at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He and his wife, Susan, and daughter, Catherine, live in Durham.