A Bonus Section for Our North Carolina Readers

Carolina Living

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





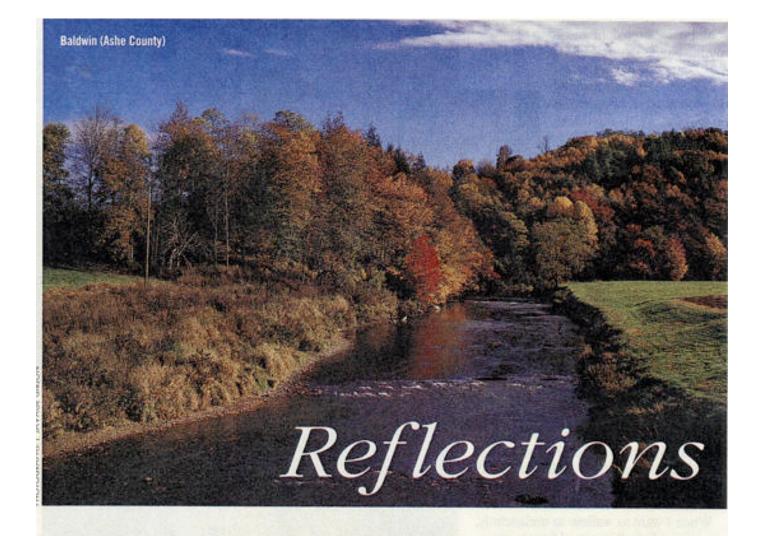




Fall Tales

Four noted writers reflect on the season.

Southern Living



We've asked four North Carolina writers to ponder the season. To them, leaves, lore, and lyrical memories are part of our state's autumn wonders.



Getting Away

Autumn means Ashe County to me. I can't wait to jump in the car and head for the mountains-through Greensboro and Winston-Salem, then north up 421 through Wilkesboro, then up 221 North toward West Jefferson. By now, the mountains are coming up big and autumn bright on every side beyond the quilted land; here a patch of green meadow, there a golden field, there a strip of dark green Christmas trees. The New River meanders dreamily along, shiny as a mirror in the sun, dark and misty under shaded banks. Climbing now, I drive through Baldwin, past the Methodist Church with its magnificent maples that send great drifts of scarlet swirling across the road.

I always get a lump in my throat as I turn

up the steep gravel road to our house. I think of my daddy telling me long ago, back in the steep hills of southwest Virginia where I grew up, "Honey, I need a mountain to rest my eyes against." I do too.

I park at the top and get out. Sumac blazes on the hill; asters and goldenrods and milkweed line the yard. Chrysanthemums and daisies still bloom in my garden by the door, where giant dahlias hang their heavy heads. A little cold wind brings a golden shower from the tulip tree, drifting over the grass. The hazy slopes of Laurel Mountain rise across the sleepy valley. Hawks cut patterns in the clear blue air. Even the yard is filled with memories: here's a hydrangea bush somebody gave my daughter when she graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, there's a walking stick my son carved, a wind chime from a friend, an upturned blue canoe that belongs to my other son, who lives in Los Angeles now. I let the dogs out of the car and grab the grocery bag, breathing in the sharp, fresh mountain air deeply. It seems to go straight to my 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.

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







around I see. O Thou that changeth 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 1, 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

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 shortstory collections. She owns an Arabian horse farm in Pittsboro, where she lives with her husband, Lowry.

Pondering at Piney Creek

by Clyde Edgerton

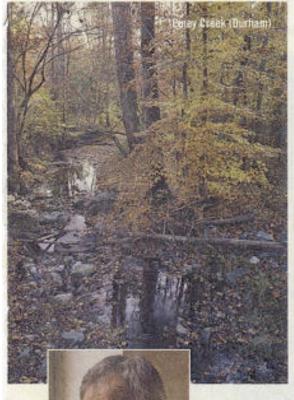
My favorite outdoor place in the fall is down by the creek behind our house at Piney Creek. There is an old heavy wooden lawn chair there, and I sit, wearing a jacket for the first time since May, feeling its warmth against a chill that mocks the bright sunlight.

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.



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