The Greatest Thing since Sliced Bread

Most of us have asked ourselves what we would do if we came into an unexpected fortune. For most, this will remain a hypothetical question. At the age of thirty-six, after years of struggling to make ends meet, training to become a CPA at the urging of his family (he had wanted to study English), and putting himself through law school at night, Mort Zachter found out that he was heir to the family secret: several million dollars. Raised in a culture of extreme frugality and in the shadow of his uncles’ day-old-bread store, where his mother was paid not in cash but in baked goods, Zachter had no idea that his uncles had amassed such wealth. In Dough: A Memoir, for which he received an award for creative nonfiction from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), Zachter takes us through what it might be like to be in the position to answer that question, “What would I do if . . .”

For decades, my immigrant uncles, Joseph and Harry Wolk, sold day-old bread from a dilapidated little store at 350 East Ninth Street in Manhattan. They gave the world, including me, the distinct impression they were poor. They drove an ancient Buick station wagon that was once rear-ended on the Williamsburg Bridge and looked like a giant accordion. For years, they frequented the deeply discounted dental clinic at NYU where interning students treated them. Well into the Reagan administration, they wore suits dating back to the New Deal. In 1994, after Uncle Joe had died and Uncle Harry was nearing the end of his life, I learned their secret—they were millionaires many times over.

At the time, I was a thirty-six-year-old CPA. But I had always wanted to be a writer. Yet, when I discovered the truth about my uncles, a far better story than I could have ever imagined on my own, I went through years of hand-wringing resisting the urge to memorialize the bizarre tale. Why, I wondered, would I want to go public with the personal details of my family’s financial life? I was ashamed of what people would think about me, and about my family. In addition, after recently completing my law degree in the evening over the course of four very long years, how could I give up practicing as a tax attorney?

Long before my discovery, I had been employed as an accountant for Deloitte & Touche on the 101st floor of One World Trade Center. I can still vividly recall spending late hours on cold winter nights in tax season working there. The wind would whip off the bay past Battery Park and up the steel and glass canyons of lower Manhattan. The building would sway, as it was designed to do, and the water in the toilet bowls would swish back and forth with anyone flushing. Doors would creak closed without anyone being there. After a few years, I took a job with another accounting firm uptown, but I never forgot how it felt working in the Twin Towers. In the early 1990s, my old firm moved out of One World Trade Center and Cantor Fitzgerald moved onto the 101st floor.

After 9/11, I stopped caring what other people thought. But for a few changes of circumstance, it could have been me working on the 101st floor that morning. After that terrible day, I stopped practicing as a CPA/tax lawyer. Shortly thereafter, a first draft of my uncles’ story poured out of me.

Many years, and drafts, later, I submitted my manuscript to a national writ-
FROM THE DIRECTOR

This issue of *Inside UGA Press* celebrates two publishing partnerships and the establishment of a new, cutting-edge scholarly series. Our cover story features the highly acclaimed *Dough* by Mort Zachter. This book came to us because of the Press’s long-standing relationship with the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP). Since 1990, the Press has published the winners of the prestigious AWP Award for Creative Nonfiction, “compelling and groundbreaking memoirs and essay collections that embrace real subjects and true events.”

Also in this issue, we are delighted to announce our new publishing partnership with the Southern Foodways Alliance, a program of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Look for our first SFA copublication, *Cornbread Nation 4*, in April 2008! Finally, thanks in large part to a generous gift from the Hodge Foundation of Savannah, the Press has inaugurated a series devoted to publishing new research on the history of slavery from an Atlantic world perspective. Learn about this vital area of historical scholarship from our three series editors (see page 8).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank UGA’s administration, our project and funding partners, and many individual supporters for enabling the Press to publish exciting new literary, scholarly, and regional works, books that we believe engage and inform readers locally, nationally, and internationally.

Nicole Mitchell
Director

FROM THE PROVOST

When I joined the Press’s Advisory Council members for breakfast last October, I had the pleasure of meeting guest speaker Joanna Hitchcock, director of the University of Texas Press (UTP). I learned that UTP has one of the top three university press fundraising programs in the country and that this effort has allowed the press to expand its publishing program and attain a new level of publishing excellence. In 2004, with support from my office and the appointment of a director of development, UGA Press initiated its first formal fundraising program. I am delighted to report that, due to the hard work and commitment of the Press’s relatively new Advisory Council, UGA Press’s fundraising efforts have already had a noticeable and positive impact. I would like to thank the twenty volunteer members of the Press’s Advisory Council for their continued generous support, as well as the many foundations, corporations, and individual book supporters whose gifts have already served to strengthen UGA Press’s publishing program and raise its profile.

Dr. Arnett C. Mace Jr.
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

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“The Greatest Thing since Sliced Bread” cont’d from page 1

Why, I wondered, would I want to go public with the personal details of my family’s financial life?

I gave up hope. My wife, Nurit, told me it was time for me to view writing as my hobby and not a vocation. She suggested I consider working as a reporter at the local newspaper. I placed my manuscript in the bottom drawer of my desk and prepared to move on with my life.

But at eight in the morning on Friday, May 26, 2006, ironically, right before Memorial Day, our phone rang. A woman with a name straight out of a V. S. Naipaul novel, Supriya, spoke to me of a writing organization called the AWP. It had been so many months since I had submitted my manuscript that I had no idea what she was talking about; I thought she was trying to sell me a subscription to a literary journal. Not quite. She was calling to tell me I had won the 2006 Association of Writers and Writing Programs Prize in nonfiction and “a highly regarded university press” was going to publish my manuscript. After years of writing and rewriting, of loneliness and frustration, I felt elated.

I soon heard from the acquisitions editor, contracts manager, and marketing director of the University of Georgia Press. Getting published was top drawer. Nurit stopped talking about my “hobby” and e-mailed most of the English-speaking world that she was married to an award-winning writer.

That was just the beginning of a surreal journey that would ultimately make me the University of Georgia’s best-known Garden State export since Hershel Walker played for the New Jersey Generals in the old United States Football League.

Surprisingly, the first inkling that Dough was on the rise came from our nation’s capital. Producers at both National Public Radio’s All Things Considered and All Things Considered Weekend wanted to interview me for a national broadcast. Weekend won out. They sent Jacki Lyden to interview me in the Ninth Street Bakery.

Although my family has not owned it for years, the bakery still exists in the same spot my grandmother selected over eighty-years ago. A Ukrainian couple owns it now but the chocolate babka is still excellent. So when you’re in New York City, be sure to visit. Tell Pavel I sent you.

But the best was yet to come. After years of reading the New York Times Book Review, on Thanksgiving weekend 2007, I opened it up to see Dough favorably reviewed. For any author this is the literary equivalent of winning the lottery. And a few weeks before Christmas, Harper Collins gave the University of Georgia Press a holiday present by purchasing the paperback rights to Dough.

Not wanting to leave my family needy at holiday time, Sony Pictures made an “inquiry” into the availability of the film rights for Dough. Mere “inquiry” was more than enough for my family to begin dreaming of which film star would play their part in what, we’re all convinced, will be the biggest Hollywood epic since Gone With the Wind. According to the Zachter casting crew, the leading candidate to play Uncle Harry is Tony Shalhoub. Uncle Joe’s part is still open, but Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara are the popular choice for my parents. Charlie, my quick-with-a-quip brother-in-law, believes his part should be played by Jack Nicholson; no word yet from Jack.

Nurit suggested Scarlett Johansson portray her. I told my beautiful wife of twenty-two years, “In that case, I’ll play myself.”

But the person with the clearest vision of who should play her part is my mother-in-law, Ellen. At the age of eighty, after bravely battling cancer for over three years, her stated goal is to live long enough to see the filming of Dough.

“All this thanks to a wry little book about rye bread. Why, I wondered, would I want to go public with the personal details of my family’s financial life?”

Mort Zachter at the Ninth Street Bakery for his interview with Jacki Lyden for All Things Considered Weekend.

“Dough” will be available in paperback from Harper Collins in August. Zachter is currently at work on his next book Gil Hodges: The Man behind the Miracle.
The New York Times called DOUGH a “small, wry memoir . . . that is miraculously loving and nonjudgmental as it is clear-eyed,” and the Los Angeles Times said of author Mort Zachter: “As is true of the best memoirists, he comes to a deeper understanding of himself—of what it means to carry on in the present, now that the past has been revealed.”

SUPER AMERICA also caught the eye of the New York Times: “Panning’s new collection radiates infectious optimism,” and of Publishers Weekly: “The warmth and originality of these pieces demonstrate Panning to be an astute and empathetic observer.”

The Mobile Press-Register called AMERICAN WARS, AMERICAN PEACE “revealing and delightful . . . Eclectic, personal, philosophical, and meaningful.”

Alan Cheuse, of NPR’s All Things Considered said of THE PALE OF SETTLEMENT: “The triumph . . . is that we enjoy the questions as much as any answers that might appear.” And the Miami Herald noted that “Singer’s seasoned and deeply moving interconnected stories . . . read more like the work of a veteran novelist and add up to one of the most astonishing literary debuts in recent memory.”

TELL BORGES IF YOU SEE HIM was well-received by the Providence Journal: “It is clear that LaSalle is a major talent in this often overlooked genre. . . . His stories are both thought-provoking and extremely satisfying”; the Atlanta Journal-Constitution: “Dreamy stories, deliciously descriptive”; and Library Journal: “The eleven stories [LaSalle] here collects combine humor with beautiful imagery. . . . An enjoyable read.”

Civil War Times ran a cover feature of DIEHARD REBELS in its November/December issue. The author, Jason Phillips, edited the major themes of the book into a three-thousand-word essay for the piece. Midwest Book Review said of it: “Phillips’s book is engaging and illuminating for bringing together diverse material in support of his topic; and in so doing, bringing out new perspectives on always interesting subjects such as cultural differences between North and South and the course of the Civil War.”

Booklist described John Lane’s newest book, CIRCLING HOME, as “eloquent and esoteric essays about the archaeological and ecological wonders found beneath his feet . . . [an] intricate portrait of the land he lovingly calls home.” The Charleston Post and Courier notes, “What really shines are the personal encounters at Circling Home’s core. Through these encounters, Lane shows us just how connected we are to the land.”

On February 5, UGA Press author Judson Mitcham was the featured speaker at Reynolds Plantation’s Linger Longer Living Cultural Lifestyle Experiences, an event series developed by Marie Garrison, Member Events and Cultural Director at RP. Mitcham, author of two Townsend Prize–winning novels, The Sweet Everlasting and Sabbath Creek, both published by UGA Press, read from and discussed Sabbath Creek and A Little Salvation: Poems Old and New (UGA Press, 2007), his newest poetry collection. With exquisite clarity he talked about his creative process, what fascinates him about people and life, and what moves him to write.
This symposium was originated and hosted by UGA Press Advisory Council member Dr. Paul M. Pressly. The standing-room-only crowd was composed of more than five hundred people from eighteen states and three countries. Several UGA Press authors were featured speakers, and the Press will proudly publish the symposium volume.

The role of African Americans in the history of Georgia’s barrier islands—and Georgia’s place in the larger Black Atlantic world—has been significant but largely overlooked by scholars who have traditionally focused on South Carolina. This symposium featured ten of the leading voices in the field and provided a much-needed forum for new directions and new scholarship.

Nancy Grayson (center) with symposium keynote speakers Emory Campbell (left) and Philip Morgan (right). Morgan will serve as editor of the symposium volume to be published by UGA Press.

Two UGA Press authors are nominees for the 2008 Orion Book Award, JOHN LANE for Circling Home and SYDNEY PLUM for Solitary Goose. The Orion Book Award is conferred annually to an outstanding, literary, book-length work that is ecological in context and has as its foundation the human relationship with the natural world.

SPIT BATHS was a finalist for the 2007 Paterson Fiction Prize.

“Breaker,” a story from THE IMAGINARY LIVES OF MECHANICAL MEN, won the Pushcart Prize XXXII: Best of the Small Presses.

JOURNEY TOWARD JUSTICE was named one of four finalists for the USA Book News “National Best Books Awards for 2007.”

Recognized for outstanding design in the 2008 AAUP Book, Jacket, and Journal Show were WRITING MATTERS, Mindy Basinger Hill, designer; DOUGH, Erin Kirk New, designer; and DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES OF GEORGIA AND THE SOUTHEAST, Mindy Basinger Hill, designer.

DEMOCRACY RESTORED won the Georgia Historical Records’ Award for Excellence for Research.

The Atlantic World and African American Life and Culture in the Georgia Lowcountry: 18th to the 20th Century, February 27–29, 2008, in Savannah, Georgia

This symposium was originated and hosted by UGA Press Advisory Council member Dr. Paul M. Pressly. The standing-room-only crowd was composed of more than five hundred people from eighteen states and three countries. Several UGA Press authors were featured speakers, and the Press will proudly publish the symposium volume.

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Nancy Grayson (center) with symposium keynote speakers Emory Campbell (left) and Philip Morgan (right). Morgan will serve as editor of the symposium volume to be published by UGA Press.
The summer of 2008 marks the seventieth anniversary of the University of Georgia Press. Throughout all these years we have published quite a number of books—nearly three thousand—one thousand of which are still in print. As we begin our eighth decade, we are most grateful for the generosity of those listed below, without whom we would not have such an outstanding collection of publications.

If you would like to support the Press, we would deeply appreciate your gift. We have enclosed an envelope for your convenience. Please make your check payable to The Arch Foundation and designate it for the UGA Press Fund, for general operations, or the UGA Press Friends Fund, which was established to help underwrite advances against royalties and special editorial, design, production, and marketing costs related to selected Press publications. For other giving opportunities, please feel free to call me at (706) 369-6049. Thank you!

Lane Stewart
Director of Development

UGA Press wishes to thank Bill Jones III and the Sea Island Company for their generous gift of funding the publication of Spring and Fall 2008 issues of Inside UGA Press.
Joanna Hitchcock, director of the University of Texas Press, was a featured speaker at the October Advisory Council meeting.

Advisory Council members and spouses. 1st row: Diana Barrow, Peggy Galis, Karon Meyer, Judy Hales; 2nd row: Craig Barrow, Louise McBee, Rick Meyer, Ed Hales; 3rd row: Lindsay Thomas, Peter Candler, Paul Pressly; 4th row: Marvin Singletary, Henrietta Singletary, Linda Bachman; 5th row: Sarah Ross.

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Krissoff: If you’d started this new series a few years back, it might have been called Race in Early America. Why have many historians chosen to shift to an Atlantic world focus?

Sinha: In recent years, transnational approaches to American history have become popular and significant in opening new avenues of research as well as shedding new light on older subjects. One of the most exciting subfields in the transnational approach has been Atlantic history. Studying racial slavery as a hemispheric institution or the slave trade as a world history event that affected the destinies of four different continents has deepened and broadened our understanding of the black experience. The Atlantic approach has led to the discovery and recognition of long-forgotten black intellectuals, writers, and abolitionists whose stories spanned Africa, America, and England. Recent scholars have uncovered the story of black loyalists during the American Revolution, whose search for freedom sent them to Nova Scotia, England, and the newly founded nation of Sierra Leone in western Africa. Comparative studies of race and emancipation have also enriched our understanding of the transition from slavery to free labor.

Krissoff: Tell me a little about the inaugural title in the series, The Hanging of Angélique.

Rael: The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal is an auspicious start for the series. University of Toronto historian Afua Cooper narrates the remarkable story of Marie-Joseph Angélique, a Portuguese-born slave woman of African descent, who in 1734 was accused of setting a fire that burned the heart of Old Montréal to the ground—a crime for which she was tried, tortured, and hanged. Like the story of Tituba, the Caribbean-born slave woman of eighteenth-century Massachusetts, that of Angélique challenges the myth that slavery in nonplantation societies was a benign institution and at the same time demonstrates how even the frontiers of the African diaspora were deeply connected to the broader Atlantic world, its commerce, and its social systems. Angélique traversed the Atlantic, carrying with her an indestructible desire for autonomy and self-determination that played itself out amidst the repressive legal codes required to keep millions of human chattels enthralled to a system of forced labor. Cooper’s writing reflects her work as a poet, capturing in rich prose the texture of eighteenth-century Canada as reflected in this oldest of New World slave stories. It is a remarkable, painful story that carries with it the promise of redemption merely through the telling. We are immensely proud to list it in our series.

Krissoff: What drew you to the University of Georgia Press? How would you characterize the relationship between the new series and the rest of Georgia’s publishing program?

Newman: When my colleagues and I thought about creating a new series on race in the Atlantic world, UGA Press seemed like a natural fit. Georgia has a great tradition in several key areas: slavery, civil rights movements, and of course the U.S. South. It’s published some terrific books, ones that deal with the wider meaning of racial oppression and uplift in the Atlantic world, like Stuart King’s study of free blacks in St. Domingue and Sarah Meear’s book about the relationship between slavery and minstrelsy. We were particularly impressed that Georgia wanted to back a cutting-edge series on race edited by a rising generation of scholars. Our fabulous advisory board has what I think is the best collection of midcareer scholars working in race and emancipation studies. Since a lot of presses would want only senior faculty, I think this gives our series a distinctiveness in the marketplace. We’re in touch with people who are helping rewrite the fields they work in.

RICHARD S. NEWMAN is an associate professor of history at Rochester Institute of Technology and the author of Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers. MANISHA SINHA is an associate professor of African American studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is author of The Counterrevolution of Slavery and coeditor of African American Mosaic: A Documentary History from the Slave Trade to the Twenty-first Century. PATRICK RAEEL is an associate professor of history at Bowdoin College and the author of Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North.
The Southern Foodways Alliance documents and celebrates the diverse food cultures of the American South. It is a member-supported organization of more than 800 chefs, academics, writers, and eaters. *Atlantic Monthly* called the SFA “this country’s most intellectually engaged (and engaging) food society.”

www.southernfoodways.com

**Cornbread Nation 4**
The Best of Southern Food Writing
Edited by Dale Volberg Reed and John Shelton Reed
General Editor, John T. Edge

*Says Stevens:* How did you end up in Oxford at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture where you wrote your master’s thesis on pot likker? Why pot likker?

*Answer: Edge:* After an inauspicious early ’80s student stint at the University of Georgia, I took a corporate job in Atlanta. I did pretty well. Bought my own house in Little Five Points. Ate and drank righteously. Made great friends. But I was bored. There was a big disconnect between my Saturday nights and my Monday mornings. So I bailed. Moved to Oxford, Mississippi, to pursue a master’s in southern studies. I met fellow students who were studying the South from a multitude of perspectives. Studying beauty queen culture. And the import of front porches as social spaces. That was liberating. Not long after I settled on food as my angle of approach, I was lucky enough to find, at Emory, a stash of letters from the 1930s, letters that detailed the great Pot likker Debate of 1931 between Huey Long of Louisiana and Julian Harris of Georgia.Parsed, the letters reveal attitudes about race, class, gender, and provincial pride.

*Says Stevens:* How did the SFA come to be and what is its mission? For that matter, what are foodways?

*Answer: Edge:* We were founded in 1999. John Egerton, author of two towering books on the discrete topics of race and food in the South, begged the question and rallied the original fifty founders. Membership now tops eight hundred. We have five employees and we stage eight to ten events each year.

Our mission is to document and celebrate the diverse food cultures of the American South. You’ll note that language is pluralistic. Not one South, but many. A social consciousness undergirds what we do. We set a common table where black and white, rich and poor—all who gather—may consider our history and our future in a spirit of reconciliation.

Foodways refers to the study of the procurement, preparation, and consumption of food. To the systemic interdependence of agriculture and culture, both historical and contemporary. How do you see our role in helping each others’ missions?

*Says Stevens:* Why is it important for the SFA to partner with UGA Press? How do you see fit, especially when you take into account UGA’s recent publications in the field of food studies?

*Answer: Edge:* We’re an organization with broad popular appeal. But our work benefits from an academic backbone. UGA Press has academic bonafides, but also has the ability to sell into the trade market. Perfect for the SFA’s response to it? Our members wanted to help in the recovery. In the immediate aftermath, we helped displaced restaurant workers find jobs. But a more hands-on project arose quickly: rebuilding Willie Mae’s Scotch House, a fried chicken café in the Tremé neighborhood.

Before it was all over and the restaurant reopened, we had raised more than $200,000; 150 members had a year’s worth of reconstruction work under their belts; and John Currence, an SFA member here in Oxford, had transitioned (at least for the two years it took to complete the job) from chef to contractor, trading his knife for a hammer.

**JOHN T. EDGE** is the director of the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi. He is the author or editor of ten books and served as general editor of *Cornbread Nation 4*, forthcoming from UGA Press in April. A critically acclaimed writer, he was a finalist for the M. F. K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award from the James Beard Foundation. He lives in Oxford, Mississippi, with his family. His Web site is www.johntedge.com.
Books for UGA faculty, staff, and alumni receive a 30% discount.

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- An overview and chronology of O’Connor’s life and legacy
- Maps to sites in Savannah, Milledgeville, and the house and grounds at Andalusia
- Discussions of O’Connor’s life and writings
- Listing of O’Connor’s works and suggestions for further reading

One of Mary Flannery O’Connor’s typewriters.

Photograph from A Literary Guide to Flannery O’Connor’s Georgia, by Sarah Gordon.
Photo by Marcelina Martin

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