Jackson Library presents

An Afternoon with Fiction and Non-Fiction Writer

Burke Davis

Special Collections Room
Jackson Library 2nd Floor
4:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Parking is available in the Walker Avenue Parking Deck
For more information call Jackson Library at 256-0112.

Books by Burke Davis

Jeb Stuart, the Last Cavalier. New York: Rinehart, 1957.
Biography of Burke Davis
(from http://www.ncwriters.org/bdavis.htm)

Burke Davis was born in Durham on July 24, 1913, and moved with his family to Greensboro when he was six. In high school, he was prodded by his mother into entering an essay contest, which he won. The title of his winning entry: "My Experience as a Snake Man in the Boy Scouts." At Guilford, Duke and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Davis initially set his sights on a career in advertising, but later wandered into journalism. Burke Davis is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After graduation, he worked for newspapers in Charlotte, Baltimore and, finally, back in Greensboro.

In 1960 he left Greensboro to spend the next twenty years as special projects writer for Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. With some fifty books to his credit, Davis is known for both the quality and the variety of his work: novels, biographies, historical tales, and more than a dozen books for young readers, both fiction and nonfiction. A painstaking researcher, he portrays the characters in his novels as realistic human beings, warts and all.

His very first title was Whisper My Name (1949), a novel that deals with a prominent businessman in Charlotte, so thinly disguised that it caused a local sensation over its allegedly fictional disclosures. His first book for young readers was Roberta E. Lee (1956), about a rabbit who was a Southern belle. Two histories for students followed, America's First Army (1962), about the colonial militia, and Appomattox (1963). Some of his many other titles for young readers include Rebel Raider: A Biography of Admiral Semmes (1966), about a Confederate hero, co-authored by Evangeline Davis; Heroes of the American Revolution (1971); Biography of a Leaf (1973); and Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers (1978).

The Ragged Ones (1951) and Yorktown (1952) are among his historical novels, which one critic praised for going farther beyond the historical realism than even James Boyd was willing to go. For the first of these Revolutionary War books, Davis gathered a huge file on various topics: uniforms, geography, firearms, personalities. He even compiled a weather calendar for the first months of 1781 so he could know what conditions were like on any given day.

Beginning with They Called Him Stonewall (1954), Davis turned his attention to the Civil War, following with Gray Fox (1956), the story of Lee's Civil War years, and Jeb Stewart: The Last Cavalier (1957). His To Appomattox: Nine April Days, 1865 (1959) won the Mayflower Cup. He returned to fiction with The Summer Land (1965). Of his later publications, The Billy Mitchell Affair (1967) and Sherman's March (1980) are outstanding. His Black Heroes of the American Revolution also stood out among books published during the nation's Bicentennial. He and Helen Bevington were awarded the North Carolina Award for Literature in 1973, and the North Caroliniana Society honored him in 1990 for his contributions to the cultural life of the state.

Mr. Davis was inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 2000.