

Alabama Afternoons: Profiles and Conversations

Roy Hoffman



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Alabama Afternoons is a collection of portraits of many remarkable Alabamians, famous and obscure, profiled by award-winning journalist and novelist Roy Hoffman. Written as Sunday feature stories for the *Mobile Press-Register* with additional pieces from the *New York Times, Preservation,* and *Garden & Gun,* these profiles preserve the individual stories—and the individual voices within the stories—that help to define one of the most distinctive states in the union.

Hoffman recounts his personal visits with writer Mary Ward Brown in her library in Hamburg, with photographer William Christenberry in a field in Newbern, and with storyteller Kathryn Tucker Windham and folk artist Charlie "Tin Man" Lucas at their neighboring houses in Selma. Also highlighted are the lives of numerous alumni of The University of Alabama—among them Mel Allen, the "Voice of the Yankees" from 1939 to 1964; *Forrest Gump* author Winston Groom; and Vivian Malone and James Hood, the two students who entered the schoolhouse door in 1963. Hoffman profiles distinguished Auburn University alumni as well, including Eugene Sledge, renowned World War II veteran and memoirist, and Neil Davis, the outspoken, nationally visible editor of the *Lee County Bulletin*.

Hoffman also profiles major and minor players in the civil rights movement, from Johnnie Carr, raised in segregated Montgomery and later president of the Montgomery Improvement Association; and George Wallace Jr., son of the four-time governor; to Teresa Burroughs, a Greensboro beautician trampled in the march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge; and Diane McWhorter, whose award- winning book explores the trouble- filled Birmingham civil rights experience. Juxtaposed with these are accounts of lesser-known individuals, such as Sarah Hamm, who attempts to preserve the fading Jewish culture in Eufaula; Edward Carl, who was butler and chauffeur to Bellingrath Gardens founder Walter Bellingrath in Theodore; and cousins William Bolton and Herbert Henson, caretakers of the coon dog cemetery in Russellville.

Hoffman's compilation of life stories creates an engaging and compelling look into what it means to be from, and shaped by, Alabama. "*Alabama Afternoons*," he writes in the introduction, "is a small part of the even bigger question of what it means to be an American."

Read an article about domestic lives by Roy Hoffman in the *New York Times* here: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/25/garden/25Domestic.html

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