MARCH IS WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

A Famous South Carolina Woman

Julia Mood Peterkin was a southern writer best known for her sympathetic portrayals of black folk-life in the South Carolina Low Country, where she was born October 31, 1880. Her novel *Scarlet Sister Mary* won the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1929.

Early reviewers focused on her depiction of black culture rather than on her literary techniques. Black intellectuals in particular, such as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and Walter White, praised her avoidance of the racist stereotypes common at the time among white writers, North and South. W.E.B. Du Bois said of her, “She is a Southern white woman, but she has the eye and the ear to see beauty and know truth.”

Scholars continue to find in her delineation of the worldview of a black community and in her depiction of its creole language, Gullah, a near-native sensitivity and richness of texture. She may, in fact, be regarded as a native speaker of the language. Raised by a Gullah-speaking nurse after the death of her mother, she wrote, “I learned to speak Gullah before I learned to speak English”.

Folklorists have praised Peterkin’s “primary knowledge” of Afro-American folk culture. Her explanation was that “I have lived among the Negroes. I like them. They are my friends, and I have learned so much from them.”

The literary establishment, after its initial enthusiasm, ignored her writings for more than a generation. Not until the late 1970s were the literary aspects of her work—its scope and themes, characterization and narrative techniques—examined. Now literary scholars rank her fiction high, and recognize that she, like Joyce and Faulkner, was more interested in individual human beings in timeless and universal struggles than in local color. Although many of the incidents in her books she had personally witnessed on her plantation, Lang Syne (near Orangeburg, S.C.), the physical setting—Sandy Island, Heaven’s Gate Church, and “Blue Brook” (Brookgreen) plantation—is often the Waccamaw region of Georgetown County, her summer home.

Peterkin’s narrative technique grew out of the southern storytelling tradition (with the Gullah necessarily simplified to accommodate the limitations of her readers). She did not attempt, as did Hemingway, Dos Passos, Faulkner, and many of her other contemporaries, to borrow experimental styles from such modern European masters as Joyce. Unlike those of most writers, her male and female characters are equally well drawn and credible. Her vivid characterization owes much more to reality and the burdens of the immoderate past than to literary influences. There are no literary counterparts to her God-haunted, courageous, and compassionate black heroes and heroines—*Scarlet Sister Mary*, *Black April*, Cricket, Maum Hannah, and Killdee Pinesett, whom a modern critic calls “one of the most moving, one of the most admirable characters in modern fiction.”

Among her most important works are the mythic *Green Thursday* (1924), a story-cycle like *Go Down Moses* and *Dubliners*; her classical tragedy *Black April* (1927), which has been called “perhaps her most powerful work of fiction;” her feminist comedy *Scarlet Sister Mary*, and her magisterial work of non-fiction, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1933).

-Encyclopedia of Southern Culture-

REMINDER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readership:

If you know of any Salkehatchie employees who are not currently receiving *Salk Talk*, please ask them to send their email address to me at: emerwin@mailbox.sc.edu
ACADEMIC CALENDAR
2011

April 25, Mon.: 
Last day of classes

April 26, Tues.: 
Reading day

April 27-May 4, Wed - Wed.: 
Final examinations (see dates on webpage)

May 2, Mon.: 
Commencement

FACULTY HAPPENINGS

Dr. Arthur Mitchell Publishes Another Fine Book

Following the publication of his book, ‘South Carolina Irish’ by the History Press of Charleston, Dr. Arthur Mitchell spoke at the Salkehatchie Arts Center on Friday, March 11.

He will also give a lecture to the Charleston Historical Society on March 15.

Dr. Mitchell, a Professor Emeritus at Salkehatchie, has been researching this work since he arrived at the Salkehatchie Campus in 1976.

Dr. Rodney Steward Gives Talk At Colleton County Historical Preservation Society Walterboro:

On Thursday, March 10th, Dr. Rodney Steward gave a talk to the Colleton County Historical and Preservation Society titled: “Loyalty and Property Confiscation: Sequestration in Civil War North Carolina.”

A WORD FOR THE WISE

CONGERIES (n.): a collection or mass of entities (as objects, forces, individuals, ideas): aggregation, agglomeration.

“Epitome,” “circus,” “tribunal,” and “congeries” have a lot in common. All are part of a relatively small collection of English nouns that made the transition from Latin to English unaltered in both spelling and meaning. “Congeries” joined this group in our language in the early 1600s. The Latin congeries is itself from the earlier Latin verb congerere, which meant “to carry or bring together” and which is also the source of our word “congest.”

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF HUMAN RELATIONS

- SPEAK TO PEOPLE. There is nothing so nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
- SMILE AT PEOPLE. It takes 72 muscles to frown, only 14 to smile.
- CALL PEOPLE by name. The sweetest music to anyone’s ears is the sound of his own name.
- BE FRIENDLY and helpful. If you would have friends, be a friend.
- BE CORDIAL. Speak and act as if everything you do is a genuine pleasure.
- BE GENUINELY interested in people. You can like almost everybody if you try.
- BE GENEROUS with praise - cautious with criticism.
- BE CONSIDERATE with the feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: Yours, the other fellow’s, and the right side.
- BE ALERT to give service. What counts most in life is what we do for others.
- ADD TO THIS a good sense of humor, a big dose of patience and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded many-fold.

-William Runnebaum-

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WEAR WORKING UNDER YOUR VEHICLE ESPECIALLY IN PUBLIC!

A couple drove their car to K-Mart only to have it break down in the parking lot. The man told his wife to carry on with the shopping while he fixed the car there in the parking lot. The wife returned later to see a small group of people near the car. On closer inspection she saw a pair of male legs protruding from under the chassis. Although the man was in shorts, his lack of underpants turned private parts into glaringly public ones. Unable to stand the embarrassment she dutifully stepped forward, quickly put her hand up his shorts and tucked everything back into place. On regaining her feet she looked across the hood and found herself staring at her husband who was standing idly by. The mechanic however, had to have a bunch of stitches in his head.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first bank president of a national bank who was a woman was Frances Estelle Mason Moulton, who was elected on January 11, 1938, as president of the Limerick National Bank, Limerick, MWE, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of her father, Jeremiah Miller Mason.

-Famous First Facts-

DEEDS

When deeds speak, words are nothing.

-Pierre-Joseph Prodhodon-
SERIES TO FEATURE TOP DISASTER EXPERTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Columbia:

Some of North America’s top disaster experts will speak at the University of South Carolina in March and early April.

The series of four public lectures is organized by the Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute in the College of Arts and Sciences’ department of geography. All lectures are free and open to the public and are set for 3 – 5 p.m. in the Russell House theater.

Titled “Calamities from the Past or Portent of the Future,” the series will address a wide range of environmental hazards, risks and disasters.

The schedule is as follows:

**March 17** – “Mapping Flood Risk,” by Dr. David Maidment, University of Texas Austin. Maidment is the Hussein M. Althary Centennial Chair in Civil Engineering and director of UT’s Center for Research in Water Resources.

**March 24** – “Increasing Public Preparedness for Disasters,” by Dr. Dennis Mileti, University of Colorado. Mileti is former director of the National Hazards Center in Boulder, Colo. His work on public risk communications has earned him international recognition from the World Health Organization, the International Engineering Association of Structural Safety and Reliability and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**March 31** – “Long-Term Strategies for Reducing Losses from Natural Disasters and Other Extreme Events,” by Dr. Howard Kunreuther, University of Pennsylvania. Kunreuther is the Cecelia Yen Koo Professor of Decision Sciences and codirector of the Risk Management and Decision Processes Center at Penn’s Wharton School. A fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he is a member of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program’s advisory committee on earthquake hazards reduction.

**April 7** – “Adapting to Extreme Events and Climate Change: Entering the Period of Consequences,” by Dr. Ian Burton, University of Toronto. Burton is scientist emeritus at the Meteorological Service of Canada and a professor emeritus at Toronto. He has served as a lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessments.

*Cont. on page 4, column: 1*
It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order of things. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institutions, and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones.

-Machiavelli-