

Mary Ann Ellis

'Guest Columnist'



[HOME](#) [TOP HEADLINES](#) [OPINIONS](#) [FEATURES](#) [CLASSIFIEDS](#) [LEGALS](#) [ABOUT](#)

Baxley News Banner
Volume 11 Number 29
May 14, 2008

Originally posted at: <http://www.baxleynewsbanner.com/ellis.html>

Reading and Writing Along the Altamaha

Last Thursday night, May 8, the Friends of the Library in Hazlehurst hosted Mr. William V. Reynolds as he talked about his books and his writing career. I've read some of his books (River Pilot and Call of the Pines) and look forward to reading more, especially after hearing him speak. I found him fascinating. Furthermore, he is a native of Appling County and grew up on and around the banks of the Altamaha River. When he talks about rivers, he knows what he's talking about. He permeates his tales with real life.

As he read the first chapter of *Life with Charlie*, Mr. Reynolds' voice hypnotized me and pulled me right in to that moving train. I've rarely ridden any kind of train, but the motion became real to me through his words and my imagination. As I saw the train barreling toward the boulder on the tracks, my terror grew. I knew it was there. The engineer did not. When the author quit reading, I wanted more and more. What happened to Sam? And what about Charlie? I can hardly wait to begin the adventure promised in the first chapter of that book.

The best authors make stories so real that the reader can participate in the action, no matter how unreal that action may be. When Stephen King published his first novel, *Carrie*, I became his instant fan. He too can take the reader directly into a story and make him quake in fear with every turn of the page. Proof of that ability came with *'Salem's Lot*, his second novel.

Very much a fan of horror stories in my younger days, I started this novel on a Friday night after my son Calvin was tucked in bed at his grandparents' house. My only son at the time, he liked nothing better than spending the weekend with Granny and Granddaddy Nichols. My husband was working the night shift, and the whole night stretched before me—just me and my book.

Other Stephen King fans know that *'Salem's Lot* is about vampires, not my favorite subject for horror stories, but I was intrigued because I'd recently finished *Carrie* and was eager for more of this author. Never once have I even imagined that such creatures

as vampires might exist; I've never worn any garlic to ward them off, but I probably should have that fateful night. Expecting a good story with little reality, if such a thing exists, I started to read about 7 p.m. Before 8 I was terrified. My plan to be home alone to read 'Salem's Lot backfired. Nonetheless I continued to read.

Larry called at 11 p.m. to say there was an emergency and he had to work over. He wasn't sure when he'd be home, so burrowing under the covers with my book, I read on. When King described vampires that slept in small enclosed areas under mobile homes, my terror intensified. Larry had built such a storage place for Calvin's go cart under the back of our mobile home. I could see a couple of small vampires curled up in there snoozing away, and I was too scared to go to the kitchen for a glass of water. Even as I read, I realized my fears were ridiculous, even laughed at myself, but I read on and enjoyed every page. When Larry drove into the driveway at 8 the next morning, I was still reading. I had read the whole night away.

I'm not as much of a Stephen King fan as I once was, but any author who can make me fear vampires in this day and age is a talented writer. Notice, I said author. I never watch King's movies.

We don't have to go far from home to find good reading material though. I've already mentioned Mr. Reynolds. A couple of weeks ago, I stopped by Common Ground and ran into Mrs. Janisse Ray, Baxley author of Ecology of a Cracker Childhood. And anybody from this area who hasn't read Caroline Miller's Lamb in His Bosom certainly should. Keep your ears open too because we have more famous writers in the making. Give them a few years. You can say you heard it from me first.