

Book Review

By DOUG BELL
Staff Writer

White People, by Allan Gurganus, is an excellent collection of short stories dealing with white America. Originally written for magazines over the past 20 years, the literary quality of these stories surpass many short stories I have read.

Many of the stories have multiple levels. There are stories within stories. Gurganus leads us beyond the superficial descriptions in many of the cheaper writings today and, instead, takes the reader into the personalities he has created. Many of the stories lead beyond conversations and descriptions into the psychology of each character.

The first story entitled *Minor Heroism* reminds one of many modern families. It begins with a father who recalls how, as a child, he experienced the heroic World War II stories of his own father.

He recalls how everyone told him his father was involved in the shooting down of German airplanes. In actuality, his father was involved in the bombing of Dresden. More people died in the bombing of Dresden than the atomic bomb blast on Hiroshima. The story then skips to his dealings with his own son.

Another story is *Nativity, Caucasian*. This is an excellent portrayal of some upper-class, old-fashioned Southerners and how they interact. These characters are chatty and only irritate the reader with their mindless gabbing. Southerners might hate this story because they may see themselves being teased by the dialogue.

One of the funniest stories is entitled *America Competes*. These are fictional letters written by Americans to tap into the limited funds of a national arts foundation. They seem like actual cover letters saying why they should be given the monies. Gurganus here demonstrates not only his genius at creating so many different people, but shows how stingy some Americans really are.

There are many good stories in *White People*. This book is definitely worth buying.

Club dives into action

By AMY R. HUGHES
Staff Writer

From the Blatt P.E. Center pool to the Florida Keys, the USC Scuba Club is in the water and growing in size.

Club membership has nearly doubled in the past two years. Its 110 members make it the largest Scuba club in the state.

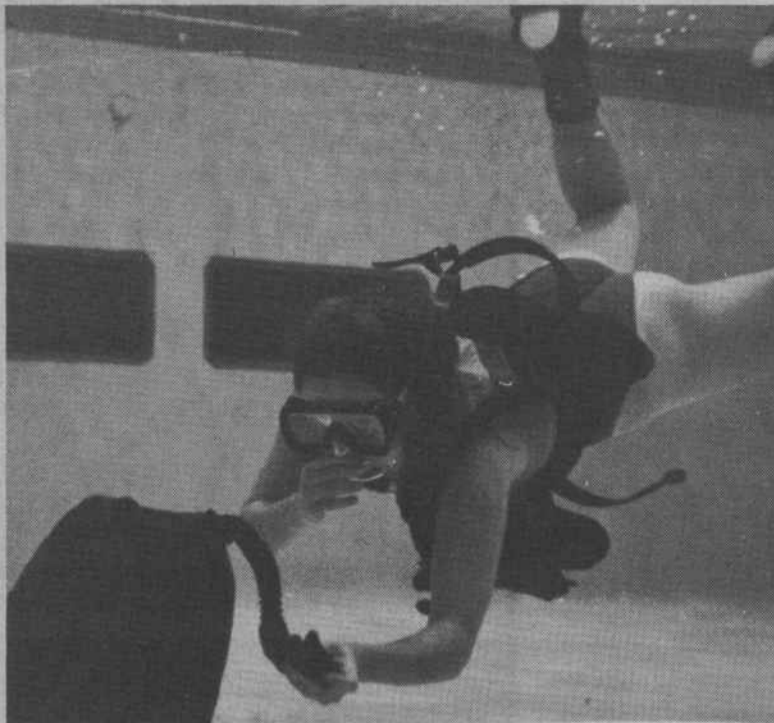
Kerry Pate, the club's president, is a professional instructor and heads the basic training classes for entry level diving. No prior experience is necessary to join.

"I didn't know anything. But everyone is really supportive and very realistic as far as safety goes," said Amy Forester, a new Scuba Club member.

Through 20 hours of classroom instruction and 15 hours of hands-on training in the pool, Pate teaches the basics of safe diving. "Student safety is our number one priority," Pate said.

About 200 people have participated in the program, yet there have been no diving accidents in the USC Scuba Club to his knowledge, Pate said.

The club is an accredited institution of the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) — a non-profit educational association. This accreditation keeps costs for the scuba classes to a minimum. A fee of \$150 includes a one semester membership in the USC Scuba Club, air fills for oxygen tanks, instructor fees and all books and materials used in the course.



Courtesy of Bill Pingpank/The Scuba Club
A scuba club member practices putting on and removing her gear in 15 feet of water in the diving pool.

Students are also required to purchase a snorkel, mask and fins. These items must be customized to fit personal size and individual needs. The more expensive equipment, such as air tanks, regulators and buoyancy compensators, are readily available for use by club members.

It would cost over \$1,000 to buy a basic scuba set, but USC Scuba Club members can rent sets here for \$10 a day. "We do it cheaper and better because we don't have the profit motive involved," Pate said.

The USC Scuba Club and

travel go hand in hand. Trips are usually planned three to four months in advance, Pate said.

Reefs, wrecks and state preservation parks provide possibilities for USC divers to see a wide variety of marine life.

"It's the same as walking on the moon," President-elect David Speicher said.

The USC Scuba Club meets in the Blatt P.E. Center on Thursdays at 8 p.m. in room 134. Scuba instruction classes are currently in progress in the center on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. in room 128.

Theater Preview

By NICOLE SUBRIZI
Staff Writer

Theater senior Gregory Tavares challenges traditional USC theater production by directing and producing two one act plays.

Shelly and Biron, which Tavares wrote, and *Cowboy Mouth*, a work by Sam Shepard, will run Thursday through Saturday at Longstreet

Theater. Tavares' undertaking is unique because the plays are running together although they are being promoted separately and have entirely different themes.

Shelly and Biron is not about the lives of romantic poets Shelley and Byron. "*Shelly and Biron* is about poetry and drug use and sexuality, and deviations thereof," Tavares said.

His ideas for the plays developed while he spent time in England in an exchange program this past year. Tavares said *Shelly and Biron* stemmed from his observa-

tions of people openly smoking "hash" and claiming to be artists.

Also while in England, Tavares saw Sam Shepard's *Cowboy Mouth* and decided he wanted to direct it.

Shelly and Biron and *Cowboy Mouth* will run Feb. 21-23 at 8 p.m. at Longstreet Theater. Tickets are \$2.50.

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OUT OF AFRICA African students learn from class, classmates

By SERENA HOLMES
Staff Writer

Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series on African students studying at USC.

African students at USC expect to get a formal education, but they can also learn a great deal on an informal level. "The mingling, the way they have been accepted in the society... those will stay with them longer than the textbook materials they have learned in class," Dr. Jermain Disasa, an international studies lecturer, said.

Disasa, who is from Ethiopia, said some international students will be in policy-making positions when they return home. Their perspective of Africa must be realistic, but hopefully also positive, he said.

"It's just sad if these students go back to their homes without affecting our society here, and without being affected positively," he said.

There are over 50 African students on the Columbia campus, Disasa said, and some of them are experiencing American life for the first time.

Race relations in America are among the first such experiences they have, he said. "I don't think African students, when they come, have a full understanding of what it means to be prejudiced. The first thing they see is the color line. It's very obvious," he said.

Disasa said African-American students could help native African students deal with racial issues. "It is not easy to understand, and that complexity could only be avoided or reduced if there is more interaction between the African students and the African-American students," he said.

There is, however, little interaction between these two groups, possibly because of Africa's image, he said.

"Maybe African-Americans are fed up with the connection in the past, because when you look at the history, it is always negative. Therefore, Africa is perceived as a negative place," Disasa said.

Perception is the greatest threat to reality, he said. Reality in many African societies is the existence of a strong value system, which is a source of pride for African students, he said.

"What it means to be patient, what it means to be humble, what it means to be a person of integrity... these things are important," he said.

These values give Africans a group orientation they don't find in America, he said. "When you come to this country, immediately you are perceived as an individual person. It's very hard," Disasa said.

Many African students, like other internationals, are familiar with working closely with others. They come to USC expecting to participate in the school's community, he said.

Sometimes, these students get the impression that what they have to offer is not wanted, he said. "If you are not perceived as a contributor, your excitement dwindles," he said.

Disasa said many international students must adjust to the individualism they find in this country. Such adjustment can be frustrating, he said.

Interaction with African students is a great way for Americans to gain knowledge without the formal boundaries of the classroom or lecture atmosphere.

"It is a cheap way of obtaining a cultural education; better than trying to bring some man from another part of the country, paying a lot of money. These people are here. They know. They are well-versed in their culture," he said.



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