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## THE MIX

## THEY SAID IT

**MARK TWAIN:** "Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you an opportunity to commit more."

## BOOK REVIEW

## New book explores emotional growth



**NUMBER 6 FUMBLES**  
By Rachel Solar-Tuttle  
★★★ out of ☆☆☆

BY CARRIE PHILLIPS  
THE GAMECOCK

What happens to the football player who fumbles the ball? Does he have a girlfriend to comfort him after the game? Were his parents watching? Are his friends sympathetic?

In the opening scene of Rachel Solar-Tuttle's "Number 6 Fumbles," this question hits Rebecca Lowe hard the night of the Penn-Cornell game, when a Penn player wearing the number 6 fumbles the ball at the crucial moment. Rebecca, "Beck," to her friends, realizes the pitiable state that Number 6 is in. Her outlook on life quickly plummets, and she goes through a search for connection and meaning that results in her achieving self-awareness. Solar-Tuttle has created a tale of self-realization that is relevant, touching and quirky, but which lacks the substance to stand up to other novels with its theme.

Beck is the total package as she enters her sophomore year at Penn. She is pretty and popular, she makes straight A's and all the party plans, and she is loved by friends and teachers alike. She is a completely normal, well-adjusted student until Number 6 fumbles the ball — then she suddenly can't bear to be at the game with the Sigma Chi guys, and can't stand to be around the roaring crowd that will never forgive Number 6. She leaves the stadium with her friend Susan and enters into a search for herself that covers days, papers, friends and beds.

That search leads Beck to explore her relationships with her friends and her parents. Her roommates and the fraternity boys that they generally hang out with seem unforgiving and uninterested about her worries and self-doubt. Only her friend Phoebe has the grace and understanding to be Beck's confidant and help her through this time. Though the dialogue is often simplistic and uninspired, it gets its point across in a relatively unobtrusive way.

As she begins to fall deeper and deeper into despair, Beck relives various childhood memories — scarring memories of her parents' lack of reasonable parenting skills. The scenes where she confronts them about these memories have more power than any other part of the book, particularly her conversation with her father.

Beck's fall into depression lands her in more than one bed. She is a perpetual barfly, fake ID in hand. She drinks herself into losing her virginity to Ryan, who lies about his age and never calls back. She begins to seek connection through physical contact with boys, but she never finds what she is looking for.

This is an engaging story about self-discovery, friendship and adjustment. The whole book is written in first person and present tense. Solar-Tuttle uses a stream-of-consciousness narrative style that gives the book a momentum that mimics Beck's own spiral into instability and drives the reader forward into each new chapter. Her stylistic abilities greatly outweigh the story and make the book a pleasant read.

In general, the subject matter of "Number 6 Fumbled" is nothing new. Sylvia Plath tackled this in 1963

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# Reading with Rachel

BY ERIC SUTTON  
THE GAMECOCK

So, what is it like to be South Carolina's first lady? It's busy. Rachel Hodges does more things for the state than one might think. Of course, there is her radio show, "Reading With Rachel." There is a television show. Then there is the Spoleto Festival USA board and the South Carolina Commission for the Arts. And how about being the honorary chair of the Scholastic Press Publishing's Read for 2002, the South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, the Governor's School for the Arts, and the Columbia Museum of Art? The list goes on.

Hodges began the "Reading With Rachel" program in April 1999 "with the simple goal of exciting everyone — children, parents, community members, business leaders — about the joy and power of reading."

The program serves South Carolina in several ways. Besides the weekly radio show, there is a monthly television show broadcast to schools on South Carolina Educational Television. There are visits to the Governor's Mansion, as well as school visits by readers.

"Reading With Rachel" airs on South Carolina Educational Radio every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. On the show, Hodges reads children's books and gives advice about improving literacy. The show came about when renovations to the Governor's Mansion curtailed schoolchildren's trips there.

"I was really surprised at the level of interest from pub-

## Promoting literacy in S.C. schools

lishers and teachers when the radio show began," Hodges said.

Fifteen publishers had enough interest to sponsor the program. They have sent their authors to the Governor's Mansion to read their books and speak to children. They also distribute copies of their books to schools across the state.

The program's aim is to make more children interested in reading by entertaining them with stories. It also shows parents how much fun their kids can have learning to read and being read to. The U.S. Education Department says on the program's Web site: "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children."

The Best Center at USC plays an important role in "Reading with Rachel." Parents, educators and students review newly published material there. This is also where training takes place for Rachel's Readers. Rachel's Readers are volunteers who go to schools around the state and bring books to read to the youngsters. Several of the readers are students at USC.

Heading up South

Carolina's involvement in the international Scholastic Press' Read for 2002 has been a great success for Hodges. The idea was to get people to stop and read for 2002 seconds last year on Dec. 14. The Hodges, along with S.C. Teacher of the Year Traci Cooper, participated at A.C. Moore Elementary School, where Cooper teaches. A.C. Moore held one of 3,070 reading events taking place in the state that day. Hodges donated copies of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" to the school.

"South Carolina had more participants than any other state in the country and any other country in the world," Hodges said. "I am proud of our students and teachers for demonstrating their commitment to reading."

Hodges, a Hartsville native, graduated from Columbia College with a degree in psychology. She says she had a lot of friends at USC but chose Columbia College because "it is smaller, more in keeping with what I was looking for." After graduating and before



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

South Carolina's first lady, Rachel Hodges, is the founder of "Reading with Rachel," a program that promotes reading enjoyment among children.

becoming first lady, Hodges worked for Springs Industries as a customer service manager and later as marketing and community relations director at Springs Memorial Hospital. She decided to stay at home to raise her family after the birth of her youngest child. The governor and first lady have two children: Luke, 8, and

Sam, 6. Her favorite local delicacy is country-fried steak, and her favorite beach in South Carolina is Pawley's Island.

For more information about "Reading with Rachel," visit [www.readingwithrachel.org](http://www.readingwithrachel.org).

Comments on this story? E-mail [gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com](mailto:gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com)

**"South Carolina had more participants than any other state in the country and any other country in the world. I am proud of our students and teachers for demonstrating their commitment to reading."**

RACHEL HODGES  
SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST LADY

## MOVIE REVIEW

## Cliches weigh down otherwise well-crafted film

### WE WERE SOLDIERS

Starring Mel Gibson  
★★★ out of ☆☆☆

BY BROOK BRISTOW  
THE GAMECOCK

"We Were Soldiers" is a grand homage to the brave heroes who fought in the conflict around Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley, the first major conflict of the Vietnam War in 1965.

Based on the book "We Were Soldiers Once ... And Young," co-written by Lt. Gen. Hal Moore and war correspondent Joseph Galloway, the film concentrates on the horrifying four-day battle. The focus of the story is on the actual soldiers and not the politics or the media or the public's perception of the situation.

Mel Gibson, a well-decorated cinematic war hero from films such as "Mad Max" and "Braveheart," takes on the daunting task of portraying Moore. Moore is a devoted family man, an officer and a gentleman who the Army picks to lead 400 soldiers into "the valley of death" and fight nearly 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers.

The homefront and the battlefield receive about equal attention in the film, and that's about as far as the plot goes.

Much attention is given to Moore's wife, Julie (Madeleine Stowe), and their five children, who live on a military base at Fort Benning, Ga. Also in focus is a young married couple, 2nd Lt. Jack Geoghegan (Chris Klein) and his wife, Barbara (Keri Russell), who are awaiting the birth of their first child.

Stowe does a marvelous job as the homefront hero who informs wives of their husbands' deaths. The government coldheartedly delivers death notices by taxi drivers, but Mrs. Moore tells the nervous cabbies to bring all the telegrams



"We Were Soldiers" portrays action on the homefront as well as the battlefield.

PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

to her door so she can take them to each wife's home and offer solace.

Gibson is great as Lt. Gen. Moore, although there does seem to be something missing. It certainly isn't his "Braveheart" performance; however, Gibson's passion and "go get 'em" quality make him a pretty good fit.

Klein and Russell are great as the young couple whose lives change right before our eyes, and Barry Pepper is eager and tough as Galloway. Greg Kinnear also delivers a fine performance amid the large cast.

Writer-director Randall Wallace takes a more old-fashioned approach to the film by not allowing it to be as combat-based as "Black Hawk Down," which one can't help thinking about while watching this movie. There isn't a single cliché Wallace doesn't embrace at least once, which is

the main problem of the movie.

In "Black Hawk Down," director Ridley Scott cut the usual clichés in favor of a relentless, punishing focus on combat. Characterizations were limited. There was a realistic account of battle, and the film made you feel the intensity and astonishment of war in amazing detail.

"We Were Soldiers" doesn't have this quality. It is well-done, and the scenes are crafted well. But overall it lacks the punch of "Black Hawk Down" or "Saving Private Ryan," both of which will be the measuring sticks of war movies for a long time.

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PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

Mel Gibson is Lt. Gen. Hal Moore.