

Cultural Tourism and a Sense of Place

Nonprofits in Travel Annual Conference

February 9, 2000

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Amy, for your kind introduction.

Welcome to Washington! Instead of talking about cultural tourism, I should invite you to see for yourselves this remarkable city—especially its less-traveled parts.

We could get our route from friends at the Humanities Council of Washington, D.C. The Council is a founding sponsor and ongoing member of the D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition.

We could explore Duke Ellington's D.C.--the historic U Street/Shaw neighborhood. We could visit the Latino Community Heritage Center in Mount Pleasant. We might cross the Anacostia River and visit the home of Fredrick Douglas.

We could even visit the National Endowment for the Humanities in the Old Post Office at 11th and Pennsylvania and go up the bell tower to get a great view of the Mall. We could visit Amy at the Smithsonian Institution, and spend weeks in the many museums there, exploring the more than 140 million objects the Smithsonian holds. While there, we might sign up for a study tour. This summer you can take a family adventure to the Galapagos Islands to see iguanas and sea lions, or to Canada's Hudson Bay to see a Viking encampment.

I have worked with the Smithsonian and with many of your institutions on Delta Queen tours on the Mississippi with Alex Haley, Shelby Foote, B.B. King and others. These programs are educational, and I assure you—entertaining.

What I want to explore with you today is the importance of place. In my travels across this country over the past two years as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities I have seen firsthand the thirst for the knowledge you provide—for the authentic experience of people and the place in which they live.

Cultural tourism offers a traveler the chance to experience the history, culture and people that give a place like Washington, D.C. its distinct character. Place is important, whether here or in Paris, Tunis, or Tokyo.

I have always believed that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. Each of us carries within ourselves a "little postage stamp of native soil," as William Faulkner put it. It is where we go to experience our clearest, deepest sense of identity. Eudora Welty calls it her "sense of place"

"It is by knowing where you stand that you grow able to judge where you are... One place comprehended can make us understand other places better."

That is what cultural tourism is about, the effort to understand one place fully. We understand, and connect to place and to each other through travel, education, and memory.

I have fond memories of growing up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. As a child I ran barefoot each summer in the fields. I rode horses bareback.

My grandfather taught me to milk cows and used to tell me that he was raised on cornbread and recollections. Recollections are important. Granddad grew up in the aftermath of the Civil War.

The humanities are about stories...important stories.

We have an exciting new initiative called "My History Is America's History" that celebrates family stories. We have created a guidebook that helps us track our genealogy and a website where we can share our stories with others.

www.myhistory.org, is an electric version of the old front porch where our parents and grandparents passed along history and values from one generation to I hope you will visit it--and share a family story of your own with us.

Family stories are important. Alex Haley once told me how his aunts gathered every summer at his family home in Henning, Tennessee. In the evening they dipped snuff, watched the fireflies, and told stories as they rocked on the front porch. He said one aunt could drop a firefly at ten feet. Young Alex sat there listening to the tales of ancestors like Chicken George, tales that later inspired his epic, *Roots*.

If we forget those stories both we and our nation is at risk.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, James McPherson--who will be our Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities this year has warned, "We confront the danger of historical amnesia. As the sources for understanding our national past deteriorate and vanish, we will gradually lose our sense of identity, our capacity to understand who and what we are."

At the National Endowment for the Humanities we preserve and create "sources for understanding." In your work, you bring people to those sources of understanding, and that is vitally important.

Our mission is to bring the humanities into every home in the country. We do that by awarding grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public radio and television stations. These grants support cultural heritage projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs.

Compared with the travel industry, our budget is modest, about 48 cents per American. I do not have to tell you how big the travel industry is. In 1998, domestic and international travel in the U.S. passed the \$500 billion mark.

And in this enormous industry, Cultural and Historic Tourism is one of the thriving sectors. According to the Travel Industry Association, last year more than 53 million adults reported visiting a museum or historical site, and 33 million U.S. adults attended a cultural event such as a theater, arts, or music festival.

At the Endowment we are enthusiastic supporters of cultural tourism. We have worked with the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism for the past five years; and we were part of the coalition that conducted six leadership forums in cultural tourism. We are also working with local communities across the country.

One of our NEH-supported projects is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum on Orchard Street in New York City. The museum celebrates the lives of working-class immigrants. Ten thousand newcomers from 20 nations came to this building and made it their home from the time of the Civil War to the Great Depression.

Closer to home, Maryland and Virginia have restored colonial sites and excavated some important pieces of history.

St. Mary's City, the first capital of the Province of Maryland, had its beginning in 1634 when 140 English colonists crossed the Atlantic. Today you can visit a rebuilt version of the 1676 statehouse...including a museum, visitor center, and an archaeology site where three lead coffins were found during excavations. The Endowment helped fund those excavations.

Farther south another group of English colonists landed at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. Four years ago at Jamestown Island, Dr. William Kelso and his team found the site of the original James Fort, which had been thought washed away. The Endowment is proud to be involved in that recovery effort. More than 360,000 visitors went to the park last year, 100,000 of them schoolchildren.

Our state humanities councils are involved in similar activities and they are an excellent resource for your programs.

In Maine, -- the Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Office of Tourism, Maine Historic Preservation, Maine Archives and Museums, and the Maine Humanities Council--are working together to promote tourism. The Institute of Museum and Library Services has given a grant to the Maine Humanities Council and Maine

Archives and Museums for a two-year program called "Putting Maine Museums on the Map: Promoting Cultural Tourism."

And in Connecticut, the state Humanities council has carved out four thematic driving trails: a women's heritage trail, the Impressionist Art Trail, The Freedom Trail, and the River Valley National Heritage Corridor. If you visit our website at www.neh.gov, you can link to state humanities council activities throughout country.

Our theme at the Endowment is "Rediscovering America Through the Humanities." Along with our "My History" initiative, we have launched a program to create regional humanities centers in 10 regions of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education and public programs. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope and will be important resources for cultural tourism.

In his State of the Union Address last month, President Clinton talked about our common humanity. He made reference to a finding of scientists--that however different we think we are on the outside--on the inside, genetically, we are 99% the same. We discover our common humanity by traveling. However different we may seem on the outside, in significant ways we are similar. We must both embrace that commonality and celebrate our diversity.

On that note, I think I will turn to a form of our culture that has always been eloquent in speaking to us, no matter where we are. It is the eloquence of music. For me, as a Southerner, that voice is the blues.

Thank you very much.

The Importance of Place in the Nation's Capital

Women's National Democratic Club

February 15, 2000

Dr. William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Anna, for introducing me, and thank you for the invitation to speak to you today at The Women's National Democratic Club.

If I can paraphrase the President, I am here today to tell you the state of the humanities is strong. In large part, our success is due to the strong support of the President and First Lady who are vital advocates for the humanities. Our base of support in the Congress is also expanding with bipartisan commitment to the humanities.

Like the President, like me, my guess is that many of you are not native Washingtonians. Most of us come here from homes around the nation on a mission--to work for the nation's capital, to work for this country, and to work for the world.

You have been here during times of war and peace, prosperity and depression, protest and tribute. What I want to explore with you today is the importance of this idea of place. I also will describe how we are "Rediscovering America Through the Humanities"

I believe that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. Each of us carries within ourselves a "little postage stamp of native soil," as William Faulkner put it. It is to this place that each of us goes to find our clearest, deepest sense of identity. Eudora Welty calls it a "sense of place." She wrote:

"It is by knowing where you stand that you grow able to judge where you are... One place comprehended can make us understand other places better. Sense of place gives us equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction too."

We connect to place and to each other through education, stories and memory.

I have very found memories of growing up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi.

As a child I ran barefoot each summer in the fields and rode horses bareback.

My grandfather was a great teacher. He used to tell me he was raised on cornbread and recollections. Recollections are important.

The humanities are all about—stories.

Every American should know what Lincoln said at Gettysburg in 1863 and what Martin Luther King Jr. said at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. No American should forget how Frederick Douglass stood up and fought for his freedom--and how, one hundred years later, Rosa Parks sat down on the front of the bus and fought for hers.

Alex Haley once told me how his aunts gathered every summer at the family home in Henning, Tennessee. In the evening they dipped snuff, watched the fireflies, and told stories as they rocked on the front porch. One aunt could drop a firefly at ten feet. Young Alex sat there listening to the tales of ancestors like Chicken George, tales that later inspired his epic, Roots.

Such stories are the back bone of our nation.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, James McPherson--will be our Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities this year.

McPherson has warned that, "We confront the danger of historical amnesia. As the sources for understanding our national past deteriorate and vanish, we will gradually lose our sense of identity, our capacity to understand who and what we are, how we got that way, and why."

The National Endowment for the Humanities preserves and creates "sources for understanding."

At the Endowment our mission is to reach into every home in the country. We do that by awarding grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public radio and television stations. These grants are used for cultural heritage projects, teacher training, scholarly research, and public programs.

The Endowment has a small budget, only \$115 million, but we do a lot with what we have.

We have an exciting new initiative called "My History Is America's History." Family stories are the heart of it. We have a guidebook that helps us in tracking our pasts and a website where we can share our stories with others. www.myhistory.org, is a new version of the old front porch where our parents and grandparents gathered to pass along history and values from one generation to another. I hope you will visit My History--and share a family story of your own.

Along with our "My History" initiative, we have launched a program to create 10 regional humanities centers for rediscovering America in every major region of the country. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national and international in scope.

In this region, you may have visited two significant historical places in Maryland and Virginia. Both have restored colonial sites and excavated important pieces of history.

St. Mary's City, the first capital of the Province of Maryland, was founded in 1634 when 140 English colonists crossed the Atlantic. Today you can visit the rebuilt edition of the 1676 state house...a museum, visitor center, and an archaeology site where three lead coffins were found during excavations. The Endowment helped fund those excavations.

Further south in 1607, another group of English colonists landed at Jamestown, Virginia. Four years ago at Jamestown Island, Dr. William Kelso and his archeology team found the site of the original James Fort, which was thought to have washed away. The Endowment also supported that recovery effort. More than 360,000 visitors went to the park last year, 100,000 of them school children.

We are reaching thousands of school children and their teachers through EDSITEment, an award-winning website designed to help teachers integrate peer-reviewed Internet resources into their literature, history, art and culture, and foreign language classes. The site links 70 humanities websites chosen for their outstanding intellectual quality, superior design, and classroom impact. It also features a search engine, lesson plans, and in-class and take-home activities.

To make sure we reach everyone, Extending the Reach, a new Endowment initiative, seeks applications from humanities organizations in states that have not benefited as fully as others from the Endowment's programs. The initiative also seeks applications from historically black, Hispanic-serving, and tribal colleges and universities nationwide.

You know that March is Women's History Month. I am proud to tell you that throughout its 35-year history, the Endowment has supported numerous projects in many areas that seek to improve our understanding of women and their contributions to society. In fact, since 1995, the National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded over 18.5 million dollars through its existing grant programs on projects related to women and children.

Motherread Inc. began in 1978 as a program to teach women in North Carolina correctional facilities to learn to read so that they could read with their children on visiting days. Today, Motherread and Fatheread programs are offered in 18 states.

The Endowment is preserving and cataloguing the papers of Jane Addams, Willa Cather, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and Margaret Sanger.

We are also active on film. I am sure many of you saw the documentary Eleanor Roosevelt that aired on PBS recently, with support from the Endowment.

These are just a few of the exciting projects we are working on. Please visit our

website at www.neh.gov for more information about any and all of these programs.

In his State of the Union Address last month, President Clinton made reference to a finding of the scientists--that however different we might think we are on the outside--on the inside, genetically, we are 99% the same.

However different we may seem on the outside, Democrats or Republicans, in many significant ways we are similar. We must embrace that common humanity and celebrate our diversity.

On that note, I think I will turn to a form of our culture that has always been eloquent in speaking to us, no matter where we are. It is the eloquence of music. And for me, the voice of my region is the blues.

**Testimony of William R. Ferris
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities
Before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related
Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
March 23, 2000**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to come before this committee once again to speak on behalf of the National Endowment for the Humanities and to testify in support of the President's budget request for NEH in fiscal year 2001. During my tenure as Chairman of NEH, I have come to value my conversations with the committee at these hearings, as well as my many meetings with individual committee members, to discuss the important mission we share—the advancement of education, scholarship, preservation, and public programming in the humanities throughout the United States.

The Administration is requesting a significant increase for NEH—to \$150 million—for the next fiscal year. These funds will enable NEH to expand its support for important projects in history, literature, languages, philosophy, and other humanities disciplines that will enrich classroom teaching, humanities programming on public television, museum exhibitions and reading programs, preservation of endangered cultural resources, and the programs of the state humanities councils across the nation.

At the Kennedy Center's Concert Hall next Monday night, American historian James M. McPherson will deliver the 29th Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities. The title of Professor McPherson's lecture is "*For a Vast Future Also": Lincoln and the Millennium*. (As the committee is aware, the Jefferson Lecture is the highest honor conferred by the federal government for distinguished intellectual achievement in the humanities.) Among Professor McPherson's many achievements as a scholar and educator, he is the recipient of the 1989 Pulitzer Prize for History for *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, a magisterial work of scholarship and writing that was supported in part with funding from the Endowment. Shortly after receiving the Pulitzer, Professor McPherson appeared before this committee as a public witness to testify in support of NEH. In this testimony, he warned that the United States was facing "the danger of historical amnesia": "As the sources of understanding our national past deteriorate and vanish, we will gradually lose our sense of identity, our capacity to understand who and what we are, how we got that way, and why."

As Chairman of NEH, I am here today to describe for you how the Endowment guards against the "historical amnesia" that concerned Professor McPherson by helping to ensure that the sources of understanding our past do not disappear.

For more than three decades, NEH has helped ensure that the nation's citizens do not lose their sense of "who and what they are and how they got that way." We do this by supporting such exemplary projects and programs as:

- Summer seminars and institutes for school and college teachers to revitalize their knowledge and understanding of the humanities. This summer's roster of NEH seminars and institutes includes such subjects as "The Great Plains from Texas to Saskatchewan: Questions of Place and Identity," "America's First Nations: American Indians in Social Studies Curriculum," "Teaching Shakespeare 2000," "Worlds of the Renaissance," and "The Poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson."
- Innovative humanities projects employing the new electronic technologies, such as *EDSITEment*, an award winning meta-website undertaken in partnership with MCI WorldCom and the Council of the Great City Schools, that provides teachers and students with access to high quality educational resources in the humanities on the World Wide Web. The site links more than 70 humanities websites on such diverse subjects as the Congress, George Washington, and Martin Luther King, Jr.—sites chosen for their outstanding intellectual quality, superior design, and classroom impact—and features a search engine, lesson plans, and in-class and take-home activities. We also are supporting a new education program, Schools for a New Millennium, that is helping teachers and schools become more proficient in using new electronic humanities materials.
- Our new, NEH-designed and sponsored project—My History is America's History—that encourages Americans of all ages to learn more about their family's history and to place it in the context of American and world history. The project features a guidebook and an interactive website, www.myhistory.org, that encourages citizens to share their family stories. I hope members of the committee will visit the site, if you have not already done so, and share a family story of your own.
- Projects and programs that encourage citizens to make learning in the humanities a lifetime endeavor, including such recent award-winning documentary films as *Africans in America*, *A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America*, and *Frank Lloyd Wright*; educational museum exhibitions like *Barn Again: Celebrating an American Icon*, a traveling exhibit that examines the history of

barns and the farmstead in America and explores the many relationships between town and country; and innovative projects for young people in out-of-school-settings, such as *Girls Dig It!*, an archaeology program that is encouraging more than 100,000 adolescent girls—most of whom are from urban, low income, and minority families—to explore aspects of archaeology with scholars at various urban sites around the country.

- An array of projects and programs sponsored by the 56 state humanities councils, which collectively reach millions of Americans each year. Appropriations for NEH's Federal/State Partnership support a wide variety of innovative projects conducted by the state programs, such as reading and discussion programs for newly literate adults and their children.
- Projects to preserve and increase access to such important cultural and educational resources as books, historically significant United States newspapers, manuscript and archival collections, films and sound recordings, and objects of material culture.
- Research and scholarship critical to our nation's intellectual and cultural life. In addition to James McPherson's one-volume history of the Civil War I mentioned previously, many other Endowment-supported scholars have received Pulitzer Prizes, as well as numerous other awards for intellectual achievement in the humanities.
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The American people are well served by—and can take great pride in—these and other NEH projects. With the cooperation of this committee, we hope to continue this tradition of excellence in FY 2001.

The budget justification we submitted to Congress early last month describes our programming and plans for FY 2001 in some detail. Our request would provide vital funding to the agency's core programs and establish a number of fresh, new grant opportunities and program emphases that would dramatically increase the Endowment's reach across the nation. I would like to draw your attention to the main features of our FY 2001 request.

The centerpiece of our request is a multi-faceted, agency-wide initiative, *Rediscovering America*, that encourages Americans to discover anew the nation's history and culture and preserve its rich heritage for the benefit of future generations. Through this initiative, NEH is expanding its core educational mission in an effort to advance knowledge and understanding of the humanities for *all* Americans. A special focus of the initiative is a new grant competition to establish Regional Humanities Centers throughout the country. Under this special competition, NEH is funding the creation of regional humanities centers where American

traditions and cultures can be explored in the context of place. At each center, a wide array of activities will use the humanities to explore the region's distinctive culture.

In the initial phase of the Regional Humanities Centers competition, which took place in the fall of 1999 and is using \$1 million in funds that NEH has raised from the nonfederal sector, 16 planning grants were awarded in seven U. S. regions. We anticipate that four additional planning grants in three regions will be awarded this summer. For FY 2001, we are requesting \$4 million in special matching funds to support successful implementation projects that will be selected during the initiative's second phase. The remaining \$6 million needed to fund the start-up year of centers will be raised privately.

In addition to the Regional Humanities Centers program, other special *Rediscovering America* efforts planned for FY 2001 include:

- Extending the Reach initiative: As Chairman of NEH, it is my highest priority to bring the benefits of the humanities to every American. A critical component of this effort is the series of new NEH outreach programs we have recently put into place, collectively called *Extending the Reach*, that are encouraging grant applications from states, institutions, and communities that have neither participated in nor benefited as fully as others from Endowment programs and activities. The initiative also encourages applications from historically black, Hispanic-serving, and tribal colleges and universities nationwide. While we have worked hard over the years to broaden the geographic and demographic breadth of our programs and activities, Extending the Reach will intensify and focus our efforts. We are requesting \$2 million in additional funding to sustain this effort in FY 2001.
- Sound recordings preservation initiative: We are requesting \$1 million in additional funds for FY 2001 to launch a major new initiative that would enhance our support for projects to preserve endangered sound recordings, particularly recordings of traditional American music such as folk, jazz, and the blues. This initiative responds directly to guidance provided in the FY 2000 House Conference Report (106-406) and would build on the experience and success of NEH's major initiative for the preservation of brittle books, which was undertaken at the request of Congress in FY 1989.
- Folklore initiative: While the Endowment supports a small number of folklore-related projects each year, this field generally has not received as much support from the agency as many other humanities disciplines. We are thus requesting FY 2001 funding to begin a new effort to encourage and support folklore projects

across the agency that explore the meaning and significance of the traditional customs and art forms of peoples and cultures. In developing this initiative, we will be aided immensely by the presence of NEH's new Deputy Chairman, John Roberts, who is a distinguished folklorist, scholar, and educator. Prior to coming to NEH, Dr. Roberts served as Chairman of the Department of African-American and African Studies at The Ohio State University.

- Digitization of collections initiative: The Endowment requests FY 2001 funding to launch a new program in its Preservation and Access division that would enhance access to materials important to the nation's heritage. Grants would be provided to museums, libraries, archives, and historical sites to enable them to digitize their major humanities collections. This effort will emphasize collections that are pertinent to the study of America's regional history and culture and will bring online tens of thousands of digital images of manuscripts, maps, photographs, artifacts, and other resource materials that are important for understanding the nation's history and culture.

Other key elements of our FY 2001 budget request include:

- A significant increase in the number of opportunities for the nation's school and college teachers to attend NEH-supported humanities seminars and institutes, and the establishment of new, related grant programs that would help seminar and institute participants disseminate the results of their work to other teachers and schools;
- Increased support for high quality television and radio programs, museum exhibitions, and library reading and discussion programs that will help Americans engage in a lifetime of learning;
- Increased support for NEH's flagship humanities research programs and the creation of new grant opportunities for the nation's scholars through a three-year Archaeological Research initiative and the establishment of a new program of Travel to Research Sites grants; and
- A significant increase in funding for the NEH Challenge Grants program, allowing for the implementation of new opportunities for small and medium size institutions to improve their humanities programming through long-range institutional planning.

Our work will be complemented and supplemented by the local programming of the 56 state humanities councils, all of which would receive significant funding increases at our request level. Collectively, the efforts of the Endowment and the state councils at the FY 2001 request level would bring the benefits of the humanities to millions of Americans across the country.

In FY 2001, the Endowment will also continue its efforts of recent years to encourage humanities projects employing such new information technologies as the Internet and CD-ROMs. As an example, we recently awarded a grant to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, to enable the university to develop an online tutorial for libraries and archives on the basics of digital imaging and to conduct a series of workshops for on this technology for librarians, archivists, and curators. In addition to projects such as this and to the initiatives I have already mentioned, we are encouraging grantees in programs across the agency to explore the innovative use of these technologies and, where possible, to make the results of their projects available online. The Internet is an excellent tool for making the exemplary humanities projects we support more widely accessible to Americans as well as to people all over the world. In the decades ahead, NEH will add to the historical role it has played in helping humanities teachers, scholars, and institutions make use of electronic technology in their work.

The Endowment is also committed to developing viable partnerships with other federal agencies, as well as with public and private institutions and organizations, to advance the humanities. NEH has recently joined forces with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the American Library Association, and The Library of America to help budget-strapped public libraries place 50 of the most recent Library of America editions in their collections and to expand the opportunities for organized literary discussion within their communities. The Endowment has also received grants from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation in New Jersey for two new pilot programs for New Jersey teachers that will extend the impact of NEH-supported summer seminars and institutes. In calling your attention to these partnerships, however, I hasten to add that such arrangements will never serve as more than a small complement to federal support for the humanities. Indeed, studies show that the private and nonfederal sectors could not and would not fill the financial void if NEH's federal funding were to decline significantly or cease altogether. This reality dramatizes the need for the continuing federal role and underscores why the nation is wise to maintain a vigorous federal presence in promoting progress in the humanities throughout the United States.

In closing, it is important to stress that while our \$150 million funding request represents a 30 percent increase over our current appropriated level, this amount is still well below the \$172 million budget the agency had at its disposal in FY 1995. Indeed, as I have noted on a number of other occasions before this committee, the 36 percent reduction in funding that the Endowment sustained in FY 1996 forced the agency to close down many effective grant programs and to lay off a significant proportion of its employees. Since 1996, the number of grants NEH has

been able to award to humanities scholars, educators, institutions, and organizations has diminished correspondingly. This has resulted in a serious decline in the availability of humanities programs for the American people and has eroded the humanities infrastructure the Endowment worked hard to build over the last three and a half decades. The effects of the FY 1996 reduction and subsequent series of level budgets have been profound—

- At present, we are only able to support about one-third the number of summer seminars and institutes for teachers that we supported before the budget cuts. In effect, 1,600 humanities teachers each year are now denied the intellectual rejuvenation that could be gained from participating in these widely acclaimed professional development programs. But the ultimate losers are the approximately 240,000 students who could have been reached by these teachers;
- Endowment-supported films and museum exhibitions available to the public in 1999 fell to 23 hours of television and 19 museum exhibitions at 66 venues, down significantly from the 71 television-hours and 36 museum exhibitions at 200 venues that were available to our citizens in the mid-1990s. This means that the cumulative audience for quality humanities programming fell by approximately 70 million viewers and that almost four million people did not have the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning by visiting educational presentations in museums and historical organizations;
- Approximately 15,000-20,000 fewer brittle books, as well as more than 200,000 fewer pages of U. S. newspapers, are being on microfilm each year, thus slowing the Endowment's efforts to preserve and increase access to these important intellectual resources; and
- The Endowment's ability to support research and scholarship projects, such as the preparation of documentary editions of the papers of historically important Americans, has fallen precipitously.

Our FY 2001 budget would enable us to reverse this trend, to continue our efforts to bring the humanities to significantly greater numbers of the nation's citizens, to institute the new grant emphases and activities I have just discussed, and to re-invigorate federal support of the humanities for the American people.

As the committee is also aware, after several years of \$110 million appropriations, Congress provided a modest increase in funding in our funding for FY 2000—to \$115.26 million. We are indeed thankful for these additional funds, and I assure you that we are using them wisely. This increase affirms the Endowment's national importance and

acknowledges the hard work we are doing to bring the humanities to the nation's citizens. The added funds also illustrate the broad bipartisan support that exists for NEH in both the House of Representatives and the Senate and, most important, among the American people.

Following its lead of last year, the Endowment and the Administration now ask Congress to demonstrate its continuing commitment to the cultural and educational well-being of the nation by honoring our request for additional funds and endorsing our dynamic FY 2001 budget and program plan. At the opening of the new century, this is a propitious time to make a wise investment of \$150 million in public funds that will yield important dividends for the nation.

Creighton University**The Second Annual John C. Kenefick Chair Humanities Luncheon****Omaha, Nebraska****April 4, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Professor LeBeau, for that kind introduction. I am deeply grateful to you, and to Father Morrison and Vice-President Leighton for presenting me with my honorary doctorate. I am honored to have this special association with Creighton University--not only because U-S News and World Report ranks you as the number-one comprehensive university in the Midwest--but also because of your school's close associations with two of the most powerful forces shaping American history. I am speaking, of course, of the telegraph and the railroads.

The Creightons built the first transcontinental telegraph lines; Edward Creighton did not exaggerate when he said the two oceans could be joined. Once communications linked the two coasts, people realized that a transcontinental railroad was actually possible. Rails from coast to coast were joined at Promontory, Utah in 1869. The Union Pacific built the rails west from Omaha, and since that time the company has endured and prospered. It is the only major railroad in the nation that bears the same name it did a century ago. One reason for the company's prosperity is the vision of John Kenefick, for whom this lecture is named, and whose presence honors us today. Mr. Kenefick's name, of course, also honors the Kenefick Chair in the Humanities, a distinguished, multi-disciplinary endowed chair that both recognizes an outstanding scholar and teacher and strengthens the humanities at Creighton.

Now, that is a tall order, considering Creighton's status as a Jesuit university, and the fact that Jesuits have given the world renowned scholars and teachers for nearly 500 years. No group has a more distinguished reputation for intellectual rigor and scholarly accomplishment. Professor Bryan LeBeau certainly belongs in such august company, because of his impressive accomplishments as a historian, and because of his distinguished service with the Nebraska Council for the Humanities, for which we are all very grateful.

Mr. John Kenefick has long been interested in the history of American railroads, a love that deepened during his career with the Union Pacific. He understands that the railroads were not only a powerful force in building this country--they are also the single most important image in American folk song. Railroads and their lore shape memorable songs such as "John Henry" and "The Rock Island Line." Many people think of "Rock Island Line" as a country-style song--but there's a blues version, too:

(Play, sing *Rock Island Line*)

I grew up on a farm near Vicksburg, Mississippi. My first playmates were black

children whose parents lived and worked on the farm. They sometimes took me to Rose Hill Church, where I first heard powerful black spirituals. The congregation sang without hymnals-straight from the heart

Then, as a teenager, I discovered a blues singer named Lovey Williams who performed at his home in a little crossroads community called Rising Sun. Lovey played his guitar and sang with a driving, raw sound.

What was so special about it? Well, let me first demonstrate a little. (Pick up guitar again-play). This is what is called a "blue note"-the backbone of blues music. You will hear musicians play it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is a common element, whether you're playing down home blues (PLAY). . .the jump blues of the 1940s and 50s (PLAY). . .or a blend of the two (PLAY).

I'll just play something here--dedicated to the loveliest lady in Nebraska. (Play: *Baby, Please Don't Go*)

I wasn't the only teenager who liked this sound. My generation in the 1950's played blues on the 45 rpm records and listened to pieces like "Hush, Hush" by Jimmy Reed. On weekends, we listened to a high-powered radio station WLAC in Gallatin, Tennessee, that broadcast a late night show hosted by "John R." Richbourg and Gene "Hoss" Allen, sponsored by Randy's Record Shop. They played blues all night long, and everyone on a date-whether black or white-in the Deep South was tuned in to the music. It was out of these sounds that rock and roll sprung, and the lines between the two musics were hard to define. Muddy Waters once commented that: "The blues had a baby and they called it rock and roll."

(Play *BeBopalula.*)

The more I heard the blues, the more I loved the blues. As a college student, each summer I taped Lovey Williams's blues, as well as the services at Rose Hill Church. I went off to graduate school with a box filled with tapes and spirituals.

But my English professors were not impressed. Spirituals and blues, they said, were not considered "serious" subjects in their department. Then I had the good fortune to study at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, for a year on a Rotary Foundation Fellowship. It was in Dublin that I met Francis Utley, who taught medieval literature and folklore at Ohio State. Over breakfast one morning, I shared with Professor Utley my frustration that there seemed to be no room for the study of oral traditions in English departments. He replied, "You should go into folklore.".

It was as though he had given me the keys to the kingdom.

The next fall, I took my box of recordings and entered the folklore Ph.D. program at The University of Pennsylvania. My advisor Kenny Goldstein took one look at the

tapes, and said, "That's your dissertation." And it was. It also became my first book, "Blues from the Delta."

The blues and the folklore of the Mississippi Delta were the window through which I explored the human experience-the humanities-just as other disciplines have been windows on the humanities for each of you . Whether you studied the history of the Union Pacific, witch trials in Salem, or the lore of the indigenous people of the Great Plains, the humanities are the air we breathe, the cultural river we swim in, the spirit that distinguishes our lives from those of animals.

In my travels around the country, I have learned that the future of the humanities is the public humanities, because the public humanities reach all Americans. The college student who tapes blues singers, the professor who organizes an archeological dig, the teenager who puts together a family history, the lawyer who studies ethics--each of these people is studying the human experience--and their work is the work of the humanities.

At the National Endowment for the Humanities we believe that the humanities are for everyone. That belief inspired our millennium project: My History is America's History. We are helping Americans collect their family stories and through these stories connect to America's history. We have distributed copies of our beautiful My History guidebook to every library in the country-and it can also be downloaded from its own website--www.myhistory.org.

NEH has created another website for teachers and lifelong learners, called EDSITEment. This project links 71 sites with a powerful search engine that allows teachers and students to gather information quickly on a vast array of subjects.

Since 1994 the Endowment has provided 4-point-6 million dollars for humanities projects in Nebraska. A recent 450-thousand dollar challenge grant to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is for the International Quilt Study Center. We provided 138-thousand dollars to complete an Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, and 98-thousand dollars to prepare scholarly editions of the works of Willa Cather. NEH is also proud that its challenge grant helped launch the Center for the Study of the Great Plains, nearly 25 years ago. When I became the first director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, I turned to the Great Plains Center and to its first director, Paul Olson who gave us wonderful counsel. We are building on the success of such regional centers as the Great Plains Center; we have launched a program to create 10 regional humanities centers for rediscovering America in every major region of the country. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national and international in scope.

I am thrilled to see the strong state humanities programs that Jane Hood and her colleagues at the Nebraska Humanities Council are sponsoring--programs such as the recent Capitol Forum, co-sponsored by the Nebraska Humanities Council and Brown University with funding from NEH. Nearly 100 high school students came to

the state capital to discuss the the ethical and moral groundings of foreign policy. Congressman Doug Bereuter spent the entire visisting with those students--which is the kind of participation we welcome from members of Congress.

- Actress Pippa White's continued success with her one-woman program on the Orphan Trains--many people come up after her presentations to describe the experiences of their relatives on the orphan trains. My brother-in-law Jim Magnuson co-authored the book *Orphan Train*, which was made into a film.
- The success of Connections, the weekly show on Nebraska Public Radio, is an inspiring use of the airwaves.
- Your success with Chataqua presentations has been especially exciting--and there will be three more this summer, featuring Andrew Carnegie, Teddy Roosevelt, and Jane Addams.
- I was also thrilled to learn about the upcoming conference on the Book of Esther, a joint effort of University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Creighton University.
- Another exciting program is Nebraska's Cultural Preservation Endowment, a joint endowment that the Humanities Council has with the Arts. Because of that endowment, the Council will add \$65-thousand dollars to its grant program, and \$60-thousand dollars to its Humanities Resource Center programs.
- Together the Nebraska Humanities council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities have established wide-ranging, strongly-rooted programs. The state of Nebraska is leading the way for the rest of the country, showing all Americans that the humanities are for everyone.

The unique culture of Nebraska has been chronicled by my old friend Roger Welsch, the wonderful writer, humorist, and tractor repairman, who has written about his sod house on the Nebraska plains. The sod house represents the strength and endurance of the people who built Nebraska, just as the blues helped black southerners survive in the Delta.

With that in mind, I'd like to dedicate this final song to Roger Welsch.

(Play, sing *Honky-Tonk Blues.*)

I thank you for your time and your attention this afternoon--I thank you for inviting me to play and talk about the blues--but most of all, I thank you for your good work here in Nebraska.

George Mason University

Joint Meeting: Oral History of the Mid-Atlantic Region and Mid-Atlantic

Folklife Society

Fairfax, Virginia

April 7, 2000

William R. Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Elaine for that kind introduction. Good morning to all of you. I see many old friends in the audience today--Peggy Bulger, new head of the American Folklife Center--Bill Ivey is here from the National Endowment for the Arts, along Don Sheehy and Berry Bergey, Peggy Yocom and Mary Helen Washington. Bill and I work closely with Ralph Regula and other Congressional leaders to build support for projects like yours. And I am especially proud that our new Deputy Chairman John Roberts is a folklorist who has done distinguished work as a teacher, scholar, and administrator at Ohio State University and the University of Pennsylvania. John is also a former president of the American Folklore Society. I want to especially thank the members of Oral History of the Mid-Atlantic Region and the Mid-Atlantic Folklife Association for inviting me to speak to you today.

I know you are here to explore ways to closer ties between your organizations, and to explore ways that scholars and communities can collaborate more effectively. I am here to describe how the National Endowment for the Humanities is already building resources you can use in this effort.

(pick up My History Guidebook)

Last November we challenged Americans to do oral histories with their own families. The project is called "My History Is America's History." We placed 2 copies of My History in every public library in America, and I have brought 100 copies of the book for you today. We give readers guidelines for doing oral history; we also include information on how to trace genealogies, to preserve family treasures, to find out more about the experience of their families in America. We include addresses for many of the organizations you work with, and there is a special website for this project at www.myhistory.org.

The web site is a digital version of the front porch where our parents and grandparents gathered to pass along family stories from one generation to another. I hope you will pull up a chair--and share a family story of your own. Stories are the foundation of the humanities--and family stories are closest to our hearts. As you in this audience know all too well, the stories and the lives of everyday people reveal our common humanity--they help us learn and reflect on human experience in its most personal expression.

In addition to our "My History" initiative, we have are launching regional humanities centers in 10 regions of the country. These centers will provide a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national and international in scope.

Many of you belong to organizations that are defined along regional lines--and for good reason. Folk culture and oral history are rooted in places that are nestled in these regions. Planning grants are now in place for the Mid-Atlantic region at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania, and I encourage you to work with these institutions as they develop their plans.

William Faulkner argued that we each carry within ourselves a "little postage stamp of native soil". Eudora Welty writes passionately about place, as a "sensory thing, the experienced world of sight and sound and smell, in its earth and water and sky and in its seasons."

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. My first teachers--the first tellers of stories I knew--were black and white people whose lives were closely entwined in our community. I spent many Sundays at Rose Hill Church where black families have worshipped since before the Civil War. There were no hymnals in the pews--each generation learned spirituals from the previous generation. After church we shared dinner on the lawn--fried chicken, biscuits, iced tea. The church stands on a tall hill, covered with both marked and unmarked. Alice Walker visited Rose Hill Church in 1971.

She stood in its doorway, and later composed this poem, entitled "View from Rose Hill":

Here we have watched ten thousand
Seasons
Come and go.

And unmarked graves atangled
In the brush
Turn our own legs to trees
Vertical forever between earth
And Sun.

Here we are not quick to disavow
The pull of field and wood
And stream;
We are not quick to turn
Upon our dreams.

Our Regional Centers will help deepen this sense of place, that they will develop broad public participation in the humanities. The Centers will work closely with existing educational and cultural institutions that many of you represent.

There are many different ways to understand of our heritage. One of the routes to our roots is, of course, developing a sense of place.

I began taping my conversations with a horse and mule trader in Vicksburg--a

man named Ray Lum. Mr. Lum travelled throughout the South and West trading horses and mules. I collected his wonderful stories in a book--"You Live and Learn. Then You Die and Forget It All." As a young man Ray Lum leased mules to the U.S. Army Engineers to build the levees along the Mississippi River.

"I'd buy young, green mules and send them out on the levee, and them mules would come back fat. The mules hauled willows to make mats for the riverbank. All that was done by the Army Corps of Engineers."

I'll never forget one incident that happened on the levee. A colonel came in one day and said, "I got bad news for you, Mr. Lum."

"Yes, Colonel, what is it?"

"Six of your mules jumped into the river and drowned, and we want you to know that the government is not responsible for those mules drowning."

"Oh, the mules committed suicide, did they?"

"Yes."

"Where are you from, Colonel?"

"Connecticut."

I saw his bread wadn't done, and I got away from him. Down to Judge Pat Henry I went. "Judge, I want to go about this right. I had six mules on the levee that the bank caved off with. The mules went into the river and drowned with harnesses on. And that colonel from Connecticut told me the government wouldn't pay for them."

"Ray, a mule won't jump in a river, will he?"

"If you run one up to the river bank, you might go over his head, but he's not going in."

"Ray, don't you worry about that colonel. You just put your bill in for those mules. You will get every dime of it."

"I told the colonel that mules didn't commit suicide. There never was a mule known to commit suicide."

"Ray, you know more about mules than he does."

"Yeah," I thought to myself, " and about a lot of other things besides."

Ray Lum visited me while I was teaching at Yale in the 70s. He showed his sense

of place as he sat outside at Cross Campus green at Yale--on a clear, crisp New England autumn morning--in a swivel chair Ioutside from my office. He sat in that chair for eight hours, with the stone walls of Sterling Memorial Library looming over him, and told his stories to hundreds of faculty and students. I had an old horse tethered nearby, and every hour Ray Lum auctioned off the horse.

Ray Lum was a hit on the Yale campus, as you might imagine. When Horace Taft walked by with Yale's mascot bulldog, he auctioned off the bulldog, also. One member of the Yale English faculty, who sat listening beside me for more than an hour, was Bart Giamatti.

A. Bartlett Giamatti is known to some as a scholar of Renaissance literature; to others as President of Yale University, to others as president of the National Baseball League--and later as Commissioner of Baseball. Bart told me that listening to Ray Lum brought to life the world he had first discovered on the pages of William Faulkner. Bart understood the importance of context, of a sense of place--and maybe understood it a little better after that day at Yale..

Ray Lum's stores are a window both on his life an on a bygone era of mules and men. It is critical that such stores be preserved and shared.

At the Endowment we believe that the humanities are for all people. We reach thousands of school children and their teachers through EDSITEment, an award-winning website designed to help teachers integrate humanities resources into their classes. The site links 70 humanities websites and features a powerful search engine and lesson plans.

Our new Extending the Reach program is designed to assist states, regions, and institutions that have not benefited as fully as others from the Endowment's programs. We are encouraging grant applications from 14 states as well as from historically black, Hispanic, Native American organizations, and rural and inner cities communities. The underserved areas house much of the nation's richest folklore. Please take advantage of what we have to offer, and visit our web site, at neh.gov.

And we are developing a Congressionally mandated initiative to preserve jazz, blues, and folk music collections throughout the nation.

(Take up guitar.)

Now--for my finale--I have had many requests, but I am going to sing anyway, and I want you to sing with me. This is call and response--it is not too complicated--called *Bo Diddley*.

(Play and sing.)

Thank you. Thank you for singing along--thank you for your time this morning,

and most of all----thank you for the good work that you do.

**Davidson College Convocation
Davidson, North Carolina
April 26, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

"Finding Treasure"

Thank you, President Vagt, for that kind introduction. I congratulate each of you who are receiving awards in this Convocation today--because I know all too well and admire the standards Davidson requires of its students. It is wonderful to return to Davidson at this time of year--because some of my fondest memories of the campus are of the times I spent studying romantic poets like Shelley and Wordsworth under flowering trees.

I also remember the time Eudora Welty visited Davidson. Miss Welty's parents were good friends of my grandparents, and I naively wrote and invited her to come to Davidson as our "Book of the Year" speaker. To my amazement she accepted, and rode the train from Jackson to Charlotte. She was on the campus for 2 days, and read her short story, "A Worn Path" to the student body from this podium.

During her visit on campus she confessed that she would like to have a drink. In those days, Davidson was dry--but we were resourceful. A group of my friends and I drove Eudora to a roadhouse in Mooresville called "Hattie's". I understand Hattie's burned down some years ago, and that Hattie Morgan also passed away a few years ago. Miss Welty had a wonderful time, and so did we, sipping our beers with her and talking for hours.

Eudora Welty has written eloquently about the importance of a sense of place in fiction.

I think it was because of my Southern sense of place that I came to Davidson as a freshman in 1960. I was a Mississippi boy who had gone to boarding school in New England, and I felt a deep need to return to the South. The early 60s were not an easy time to be in the South, and it was not an easy time for Davidson. The Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum in North Carolina. Some of my friends and I helped organize Davidson students to march at a civil rights rally in Charlotte. We, and many other black and white Southerners, struggled to find ourselves through the civil rights movement; some of my teachers here encouraged us to do what we thought was right.

While at Davidson I discovered the Library of Congress folksong recordings done by John and Alan Lomax. The Lomaxes truly captured the human spirit in song; they recorded folk artists, including blues singers from the Mississippi Delta. Those recordings inspired me to use my summers in Mississippi to record blues, a music

that spoke to me in a profound way as I was growing up. I left Davidson and went off to graduate school with a box filled with tapes of blues-singers. Those tapes eventually became the basis of my Ph.D. thesis, and my first book, *Blues from the Delta*.

When I was at Davidson, there was a man who worked in my dorm, a man named Cleve Carr. Cleve played amazingly beautiful North Carolina blues. He would sit on the bed in my dorm room with my guitar and play songs like "Keep on Truckin', Baby, Truck my Blues Away". It was also here at Davidson that I first heard Josh White play from this stage, and learned that this powerful music has many styles.

The treasures I discovered at Davidson led me into the field of folklore, and from there to the world of the Humanities. Best of all, because I have spent my time doing work that I loved, I have never had to grow up. I have never had to spend a day doing things I did not believe in. I discovered here at Davidson that my passion could become my life's work.

Let me tell you about what I am doing now, about the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities. We work with colleges and universities, libraries, public television and radio, school teachers, and college professors. The National Endowment for the Humanities is the largest funder of humanities programs in the United States. Our grants support work here at Davidson: we have funded Randall Ingram's research on the Material Spaces of 17th Century Poetry, Mary Vasquez's study of Cuban-American fiction writer Roberto Hernandez; and Peter Krentz's work: *The Storm of War: Warfare in Archaic and Classical Greece*.

I am also especially proud to say that we will have a student from Davidson at the NEH this summer--Cameron Richardson will be in Washington as one of eight NEH Summer Fellows. Cameron, would you please stand and be recognized? Only eight students are chosen nationwide as NEH Summer Fellows. Congratulations--that is quite an achievement.

We also provided more than 800,000 dollars in challenge grants for Davidson, Johnson C. Smith University, and North Carolina State to use to raise more than 2.6 million in private funds. That money has been used to endow professorships in the humanities, to develop outreach activities, and to improve undergraduate teaching. Over the past five years, institutions and individuals in North Carolina have received more than 15-million dollars for projects that preserve the nation's cultural heritage and foster lifelong learning.

The NEH was set up by an act of Congress 35 years ago, an act whose first line reads, "The arts and the humanities belong to all the people of the United States." That belief inspired our My History is America's History project. We are helping Americans collect their family stories, and through these stories connect to America's history. We have distributed copies of our beautiful My History guidebook to every library in the country--and it can also be downloaded from its own website--www.myhistory.org.

NEH has created another website for teachers and lifelong learners, called EDSITEment. This project links 71 sites with a powerful search engine that allows teachers and students to gather information quickly on a vast array of subjects.

And we are launching regional humanities centers in 10 regions of the country. These centers will provide a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national and international in scope. These regional centers build on the powerful connections we have to place. Planning grants in this region have been awarded to the College of Charleston, in South Carolina, and the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, in conjunction with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Treasures will be found in each of those regional centers-just as treasures are discovered each year at Davidson.

My hope for each of you, whether you are in your teens or in your nineties, is that you always look to each day with joy, and to tomorrow with enthusiasm-that you will always have work that is meaningful and important for you. Rita Dove won a Pulitzer Prize for her poetry-NEH awarded her the Frankel Medal for her achievements in the humanities. I would like to share one of her poems with you. It is called "Dawn Revisited."

Imagine you wake up
with a second chance: The blue jay
hawks his pretty wares
and the oak still stands, spreading
glorious shade. If you don't look back,

the future never happens.
How good to rise in sunlight,
in the prodigal smell of biscuits-
eggs and sausage on the grill.
The whole sky is yours.

to write on, blown open
to a blank page. Come on,
shake a leg! You'll never know
who's down there, frying those eggs,
if you don't get up and see.

You will never know if you do not get up and see.

Never stop searching to find out where you are, who is there with you, where you have come from, where you are going, about what your life means. You will explore fully what it means to be alive on this planet-and some perhaps even on another. To live life to the fullest is to be a student of the humanities-and that is what it means to be human.

You have worked hard for this moment, to be honored by this community. Each of

you who receives an award today has discovered treasures. And I am confident you will discover many more in the years ahead. May you follow your heart and celebrate each day of your life.

Thank you.

**Museum of the New South
Charlotte, North Carolina
April 26, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

"Roots and Routes: Cultural History in the New South"

Thank you, Bob, for that kind introduction. Good afternoon to all of you.

In addition to the people Emily Zimmern has recognized, I would particularly like to greet two friends of mine from the North Carolina Humanities Council-Alice Barkley, who is its Executive Director, and Elizabeth Minnich, who is its chair. Elizabeth is from Charlotte, and I know you all must be very proud of her. The work of the state humanities councils is vital to what we do at the National Endowment, and we are most appreciative of the work of the North Carolina Humanities Council. One thing that has always interested me about the Museum of the New South is the way it illustrates something Yeats once said: "If you believe in a dream deeply enough, you can create the reality."

The term the "New South" was coined by Henry Grady, an Atlanta newspaperman and a very popular speaker in the 1880s. More than a century ago, he eloquently described a "New South":

A vision of surpassing beauty unfolds before my eyes. I see a South, the home of fifty millions of people, who rise up every day to call from blessed cities, vast hives of industry and of thrift; her country-sides the treasures from which their resources are drawn; her streams vocal with whirring spindles; her rulers honest and her people loving; her wealth diffused and poor-houses empty; her two races walking together in peace and contentment; sunshine everywhere and all the time.

Now Mr. Grady may have been a little optimistic.

But, as David Goldfield pointed out in his fine introduction to "The New South A to Z"-the booklet that celebrated the opening of the Museum of the New South-a New South has been built. Its heart is here in the Southern Piedmont, where people came to work, where they "built textile mills, experimented with air conditioning, soft drinks, and automobiles, and established great universities." In fact, if you should decide to travel to Paris, you can fly to Paris on US Airways. Once there, you can check into a Holiday Inn. You turn on CNN to watch the news as you drink a Coke. There is a knock at the door as a package arrives that reached you overnight via Federal Express. To get a few French francs, you use your ATM card issued by the Bank of America or First Union. Each of those transactions is made possible by multinational corporations that are part of the New South. Our homegrown institutions have become global empires, and that is

the reality of the New South.

The Museum of the New South has received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities totalling about 250-thousand dollars for a permanent exhibition called "New City, New South: Traditional and Transformation in the Carolina Piedmont." It uses Charlotte as a case study of the New South regional city. The exhibition will open in 2001; it will look at the experience of Southern women, industrialization and life in rural areas of the South. It is going to be a major exhibition, based on the best new scholarship in an interesting and engaging format. I am proud that the National Endowment for the Humanities has a part in it, and I know that you are proud that it will be mounted here at the Museum of the New South.

I was privileged to grow up in the South: on a farm near Vicksburg, Mississippi. My first playmates were black children whose parents lived and worked on the farm. They sometimes took me to Rose Hill Church, where I first heard powerful black spirituals. The congregation sang without hymnals-straight from the heart.

Then, as a teenager, I discovered a blues singer named Lovey Williams who performed at his home in a little crossroads community called Rising Sun. Lovey played his guitar and sang with a driving, raw sound, a sound that inspired me to learn about the blues.

What was so special about this music? Well, let me first demonstrate a little. (Pick up guitar, play). This is what is called a "blue note"-the backbone of blues music. You will hear musicians play it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is their common element, whether you are playing down home blues (PLAY). . .the jump blues of the 1940s and 50s (PLAY). . .or a blend of the two (PLAY).

I will just play something here-dedicated to the loveliest lady in North Carolina- I won't call her name because she knows who she is.

(Play: Baby, Please Don't Go)

The blues were my road, my route, to understanding other people and to understanding myself more as a human being. That is what the humanities are all about-understanding what it means to be human.

The underlying component of all humanities is the story. Whether it is factual or fanciful, the story tells something about both the teller and the listener. They help us connect. Our first stories are family stories-and these stories are an important component of the work of the humanities.

These stories inspired our millennium project: My History is America's History. We are helping Americans collect their family stories and through these stories connect to America's history. We have distributed copies of our beautiful My

History guidebook to every library in the country-and it can also be downloaded from its own website-www.myhistory.org.

Through our Extending the Reach initiative we support humanities projects in 14 U.S. states and Puerto Rico, places that have not received as much NEH support as others, and through it we enhance work in the humanities at Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Native American colleges and universities.

On the Internet, our EDSITEment project links 71 sites with a powerful search engine that allows teachers and students to gather information quickly on a vast array of subjects. EDSITEment was funded through a partnership between the Endowment and MCI Worldcom.

Similar partnerships are also helping us launch regional humanities centers around the country. These centers will provide a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national and international in scope. These regional centers build on the powerful connections we each have to place. Planning grants in this region have been awarded to the College of Charleston, in South Carolina, and the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, in partnership with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Such regional centers will complement the fine work done in the international and national arena by the National Humanities Center. NEH has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with the National Humanities Center; over the past 10 years we have funded 23 projects for more than 5-million dollars.

We are working to build private sector support for the Regional Centers. In fact, the Director of our Enterprise Office, Nancy Sturm, is here with me today. Nancy, please stand up so everyone will know who you are.

Nancy and I can clearly learn a few things from the Arts and Science Council here in Charlotte. The Arts and Science Council raised more than 9-million dollars this year, it was ranked first in the amount of money it has raised per person, and first in workplace giving. That record is a tribute to the generosity of the people of the Piedmont, and to the Arts and Science Council's organizational skills.

I would like you to know that the organization I represent has done its share here in North Carolina-the National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded grants worth more than 16-million dollars in North Carolina in the past five years. Besides the National Humanities Center and the Museum of the New South, the Endowment has given support for Motherread, the family literacy project active in 29 counties. Davidson College, Johnson C. Smith University, and North Carolina State University used more than 800-thousand in challenge grants to raise over 2-and-a-half million-those funds endowed professorships in the humanities, developed public outreach programs, and improved undergraduate teaching. The National Endowment is very proud to work in conjunction with the North Carolina Humanities Council. Your state humanities council is a national leader in offering educational opportunities that are local, civic, and participatory. A fine example of its community-initiated programs is the work in Asheville, "Houseless is Not

Homeless", an exhibit of photographs and oral histories that reframes homeless people as the subjects of their own stories. It is a striking cultural achievement, one that makes a unique contribution to our understanding of what it is to be human.

My final contribution to the cultural climate of Charlotte today will be another song. Technically, this one is not blues-but I thought I could give a nod to tradition, to the mountains, to the Scots-Irish heritage of the Piedmont, and to the time of year, with "Wild Mountain Thyme."

(Play and sing "Wild Mountain Thyme")

Thank you. Thank you for your kindness to me today. Thank you for your support of the humanities-and thank you for the good work you all do here.

**Vermont Council on the Humanities
April 28, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Senator Jeffords, for that kind introduction.

I have had a wonderful time in Vermont today, visiting with Jane Beck and learning about her fine work at the Vermont Folklife Center. Jane is an old friend-we did our Ph.D.'s in folklore at the University of Pennsylvania, and I enjoy seeing her when she attends the Board meetings at the Library of Congress American Folklife Center. She and her husband Horace have done impressive work in folklore over the years.

This afternoon I also visited the 18th Century Ethan Allen Homestead. The National Endowment for the Humanities is proud to have funded the Homestead's impressive multimedia presentation.

I want to say that it is a special honor to visit Vermont with Senator Jim Jeffords. Visiting the Ethan Allen Homestead gave me a good idea of what Vermont was like when the Senator's family first came here in 1794.

Senator Jeffords chairs the Senate committee that oversees the arts and humanities, and he has been a strong supporter of the humanities, both in Vermont, and throughout the nation. I am profoundly grateful for his support of programs that are close to all our hearts, and I am sure you are, too.

My dear friend Victor Swenson asked me to talk to you about the blues-one of my favorite subjects. In many ways, I have loved the blues since I was a child. I grew up on a farm near Vicksburg, Mississippi. My first playmates were black children whose parents lived and worked on the farm. They sometimes took me to Rose Church, where I first heard powerful black spirituals. The congregation sang without hymnals-straight from the heart

Then, as a teenager, I discovered a blues singer named Lovey Williams who performed at his home in a little crossroads community called Rising Sun. Lovey played his guitar and sang with a driving, raw sound.

What was so special about this music? Well, let me first demonstrate a little. (Pick up guitar again-play). This is what is called a "blue note"-the backbone of blues music. You will hear musicians play it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is a common element, whether you are playing down home blues (PLAY). . .the jump blues of the 1940s and 50s (PLAY). . .or a blend of the two (PLAY).

I will just play something here-dedicated to the loveliest lady in Vermont-I won't

say her name because she knows who she is. (Play: Baby, Please Don't Go)

The blues came from the fields, from black people living in slavery, in desperate, back- and heart-breaking conditions. Their music spread when they were freed. As scholar Bill Malone notes:

Emancipation saw the migration of black musicians from the country to town, from town to town, to other parts of the South, and ultimately to cities all over the North.

They also migrated to the Mississippi Delta. Black people migrated there because there was work to be had, building the railroads and raising the levees that have helped contain the Mississippi River.

Another migration occurred after World War II. This northern migration in search of economic and social freedom brought the blues from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago.

W. C. Handy is called the Father of the Blues-because he was the first great popularizer of blues music. The turning point for Handy and the blues came in 1912 when he published Memphis Blues, followed soon by Saint Louis Blues and Beale Street Blues. [PLAY] Handy can be credited with bringing the blues international attention. But he had help from some formidable women-Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.

If W.C. Handy popularized folk blues, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith took the blues to the city-including Chicago and New York. Bessie earned the title Empress of the Blues. Sadly, she died in Clarksdale, Mississippi in 1937 after a car accident. Reason enough for the rest of us to sing the blues.

The names are important to explain the birth of the blues, but there are thousands of nameless others who deserve credit. The blues are sung by and for people. The call and response is basic to the blues. The blues are a key to the history of race relations in this country.

By the time I became aware of blues, a lot of other American teenagers were listening, too.

My generation in the 1950's played blues on the 45 rpm records and listened to pieces like "Hush, Hush" by Jimmy Reed. On weekends, we listened to a high-powered radio station WLAC in Gallatin, Tennessee, that broadcast a late night show hosted by "John R." Richbourg and Gene "Hoss" Allen, sponsored by Randy's Record Shop. They played blues all night long, and black and white teenagers in the Deep South tuned in to the music. It was out of these sounds that rock and roll sprang, and the lines between the two musics were hard to define. Muddy Waters once commented that: "The blues had a baby and they called it rock and roll."

(Play BeBopalula.) As a college student, each summer I taped Lovey Williams's blues, as well as the services at Rose Hill Church. I went off to graduate school with a box filled with tapes and spirituals.

But my English professors were not impressed. Spirituals and blues, they said, were not considered "serious" subjects in their department. Then I had the good fortune to study at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, for a year on a Rotary Foundation Fellowship. It was in Dublin that I met Francis Utley, who taught medieval literature and folklore at Ohio State. Over breakfast one morning, I shared with Professor Utley my frustration that there seemed to be no room for the study of oral traditions in English departments. He replied, "You should go into folklore."

It was as though he had given me the keys to the kingdom.

The next fall, I took my box of recordings and entered the folklore Ph.D. program at The University of Pennsylvania. My advisor Kenny Goldstein took one look at the tapes, and said, "That is your dissertation." And it was. It also became my first book, "Blues from the Delta."

The blues and the folklore of the Mississippi Delta were the window through which I explored the human experience-the humanities-just as other disciplines have been windows on the humanities for each of you. Whether you study the tales of King Arthur, mill-workers in Winooski or tramp art in the Green Mountains, the humanities are the air we breathe, the cultural river we swim in, the spirit that distinguishes our lives from those of animals.

In my travels around the country, I have learned that the future of the humanities is the public humanities, because the public humanities reach all Americans. The college student who tapes blues singers, the professor who organizes an archeological dig, the teenager who puts together a family history, the curator who makes the 18th century come alive-each of these people studies the human experience-and their work is clearly the work of the humanities.

At the National Endowment for the Humanities we believe that the humanities are for everyone. That belief inspired our millennium project: is America's History. We are helping My History Americans collect their family stories and through these stories connect to American history. We have distributed copies of our beautiful My History guidebook to every library in the country-and it can also be downloaded from its own website-www.myhistory.org. My History dovetails very nicely with the new children's book series that the Vermont Folklife center has been working on-I previewed "The Family Heritage Series" when I visited the Folklife Center this afternoon. That exciting series is based on family stories from the Vermont Folklife Center archives, and it is a very exciting series.

NEH has created another website for teachers and lifelong learners, called EDSITEment. This project links 71 sites with a powerful search engine that allows

teachers and their students to gather information quickly on a vast array of subjects. We are also launching regional humanities centers in 10 regions of the country. These centers will provide a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national and international in scope. These regional centers build on the powerful connections each of us has to place. Planning grants in this region have been awarded to the University of New Hampshire in Durham and to Brown University.

Our new Extending the Reach initiative supports humanities projects in 14 U.S. states and Puerto Rico, places that have not received as much NEH support as others, and at Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Tribal colleges and universities. I know you in Vermont are proud of the Shelburne Museum-you may know that over the years NEH has also recognized its value. Over the past decade we've awarded more than a million dollars to the Shelburne for climate control, security, and fire prevention, to make sure their valuable collection is preserved for generations to come. In the past six years, institutions and individuals in Vermont have received over 5-million dollars from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Vermont Council on the Humanities for projects that help preserve our nation's cultural heritage and foster lifelong learning.

We are especially proud of Connections, your humanities reading and discussion series, the National Endowment and the Vermont Humanities Council have joined forces with the American Library Association to spread the Vermont model nationwide. Because of the leadership of Victor Swenson and his colleagues at the Vermont Humanities Council, our nation is moving closer to full literacy, and more adults are discovering new worlds of books and ideas each day.

I am also grateful that you have been such a wonderful audience for the blues. I would like you to sing one with me. This is a call-and-response piece called, "Hey, Bo Diddley." (Sing Bo Diddley)

Thank you. Thank you for your help-thank you for your indulgence-and most of all, thank you for the good work you all do.

**University of Michigan-Flint Convocation
Flint, Michigan
April 30, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

"Culture and the Voice of Wisdom: Rediscovering America Through Stories"

Thank you, Juan, for that kind introduction. We miss you in Washington, but we are proud of the fine work you are doing here. I want to congratulate today's graduates-as well as their spouses, their parents, their children, their grandparents-and, in some cases, their grandchildren, for doing all you have done to make today's graduation possible.

Today's graduation, and what you did to get here, are an important part of your life's story. I hope you realize how important your story is-as well as the stories of your family and your community.

Remembering of stories is at the heart of what we do at the National Endowment for the Humanities. The stories human beings tell are the basis for the humanities-for history, literature, language, philosophy, anthropology, and folklore. We now know that our earliest literature-the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Genesis-were all told orally before being written down. Our stories, and the stories of our parents and grandparents, show us what it means to be human-they show us where we come from. If we do not know where we come from, we will have no clear idea of where we are going.

In her novel *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Zora Neale Hurston has a scene where Moses is building his own tomb.

Under one stone he found an ancient lizard, and asked him, "What are you doing under there, old lizard?"

"Oh, just resting from living and thinking about the time when my ancestors ruled the world. That was a glorious time."

"How do you know your ancestors ruled the world? Your life span isn't very long, you know," Moses said, sitting down on a rock to listen and rest.

"Oh, we lizards don't try to keep our memories in our bodies. We have a keeper of memories and when we want to know what used to be, we go to him to find out."

"Do all lizards go to ask?"

"No, Moses. . .No, some lizards never ask."

What our stories do-what the humanities do-is to serve as the keep of our memories; they open our minds what it means to be human. Your story is precious. So are the stories of your parents and grandparents, and other people in your community.

I grew up on a farm outside Vicksburg, Mississippi-so did my grandfather. He told me a number of family stories-he said that he had been raised on cornbread and recollections. I came to treasure his stories and recollections, and later to know that they were an important part of the culture. I also was privileged to hear the blues of the Mississippi Delta from a very early age.

Here is one song I learned long ago: *Play, sing: Baby, Please Don't Go*

Those of you here today came from literally hundreds of different cultures. Some of you are descended from ancestors who came from Scandinavia, from Vietnam, from French Canada and many other backgrounds.

Louis Chevrolet came here to Flint from Switzerland by way of France. As a young man, he was repaired bicycles and those amazing new machines called automobiles. One day, he repaired the car of an American named Vanderbilt, who urged him to make a profession of working with automobiles.

He did-and he became a famous driver of racing cars, one of the most daring drivers on the circuit. After his brother was killed in a race, Louis decided he would stop racing and design cars. So he came here to Flint, and started working with Will Durant. That was the beginning of General Motors, a company whose history is so closely connected with the history of Flint.

Other interesting people have come to Flint-some from my home state, from the Mississippi Delta. They brought their music and their culture with them including the blues. One of those migrants was the Reverend C.L. Franklin-Aretha's father.

There is an African proverb which says, "When an old man or woman dies, a library burns to the ground." When our old people die, we all lose a valuable cultural resource.

At the National Endowment for the Humanities, we believe the humanities are for everyone. In fact, when Congress established the agency 35 years ago, they wrote: "The arts and the humanities belong to all the people of the United States." Through our millennium project: My History is America's History, we are helping Americans collect their family stories and through these stories connect to our nation's history. We have distributed copies of our beautiful My History guidebook to every library in the country-and it can also be downloaded from its own website-www.myhistory.org.

For those of you who plan to be teachers-or at least lifelong learners--NEH has created another website called EDSITEment. This project links 71 sites with a powerful search engine that allows teachers and students to gather information quickly on a vast array of subjects.

We are also launching regional humanities centers in 10 regions of the country. These centers will provide a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but

national and international in scope. The centers build in the strong ties we each have to place. A planning grant for a regional center in this region has already been awarded to Michigan State,

In Detroit next month you can visit an exhibition we funded at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. It is called "Wrapped in Pride: Asante Kente and African American Identity". It celebrates the colorful Kente cloth from West Africa and that is a symbol of pride for African-Americans. This exhibit traces the history of the fabric, shows how it is made, what the different designs mean, how to wear it properly, and even how to design your own Kente cloth.

If you go to the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, you will see an exhibition called "Your Place In Time" that explores the interaction of people and technologies in everyday life in the 20th century, that we funded with a grant of 151-thousand dollars.

We are also supporting a history of the Aladdin company, begun by a family that used Michigan's booming lumber industry to support its invention of precut and prefabricated family homes. Fifty thousand Americans built their own homes using Aladdin kits—an entire factory town, Hopewell, Virginia, was built with Aladdin kits.

In the last five years, institutions and individuals in Michigan have received \$14-point-4 million dollars from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Michigan Humanities Council for projects that help to preserve the nation's cultural heritage and foster lifelong learning.

Through the leadership of Rick Knupfer and his staff at the Michigan Humanities Council, over 250-thousand Michigan schoolchildren received humanities instruction materials, including multimedia kits on African American, German, and Great Lakes Native American cultures. The program was originally funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the NEH. It is now self-supporting and managed by the Michigan Humanities Council.

It is important to make the humanities available to all Americans. Our Extending the Reach initiative supports humanities projects in 14 states and in Puerto Rico, and at historically black, Hispanic, and Native American institutions. Your Chancellor believes deeply that a university should improve the educational, cultural, and social conditions of the community it serves. We agree, and we believe that our Extending the Reach initiative will make it possible for all universities to do just that.

I would like to close with a poem from Rita Dove, who won a Pulitzer Prize for her poetry, and a Frankel medal from the Endowment. This poem is called "Dawn Revisited."

*Imagine you wake up
with a second chance: The blue jay*

*hawks his pretty wares
and the oak still stands, spreading
glorious shade. If you don't look back,*

*the future never happens.
How good to rise in sunlight,
in the prodigal smell of biscuits-
eggs and sausage on the grill.
The whole sky is yours.*

*to write on, blown open
to a blank page. Come on,
shake a leg! You'll never know
who's down there, frying those eggs,
if you don't get up and see.*

Never stop searching to find out where you are and who is there with you, where you have come from and where you are going, what your life means, and what it can mean. Explore fully what it means to be alive in this lifetime, on this planet—or maybe even on another. That is what it means to be a student of the humanities—and that is what it means to be human.

You have worked hard to get here today. You will do more good work, I am confident of that. May you enjoy every day and continue to learn.

Thank you.

**American Council of Learned Societies
May 5, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, John, for that kind introduction. I want to congratulate Geoffrey Hartman, who will be delivering the Haskins Lecture tonight. I met Geoffrey during my years at Yale in the 70's, and I am pleased that he is being honored by ACLS for his fine work in English literature. I am happy to see here today Ramon Gutierrez and Ira Berlin both members of the National Council of the Humanities, Gail Leftwich, who chairs the Federation of State Humanities Councils, and John Hammer, who directs the National Humanities Alliance.

We were thrilled to learn that David Kennedy won this year's Pulitzer Prize in history for *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-45*, and that Stacy Schiff won the Pulitzer for biography for her work *Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)*. The NEH supported both of these scholars for research that led up to their Pulitzer Prizes.

This is an exciting time to be at the National Endowment for the Humanities. John described for you our Extending the Reach initiative, which supports humanities projects in 14 states and in Puerto Rico. Extending the Reach will also help develop humanities programs at historically black, Hispanic, and Native American colleges and universities. When I testified on Capitol Hill recently, before the House Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees our agency, the Extending the Reach program was particularly exciting to the members of Congress at the hearing.

When I addressed this group a year ago, I spoke with pride about a joint project of ACLS and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the *American National Biography*. The ANB's 24 volumes have since been published, with excellent reviews, including one in the *New York Review of Books* by Edmund and Marie Morgan.

The Morgans acknowledged that they were among the six thousand historians who contributed to the work, and that they each wrote one biographical sketch. Their review aptly states, "*American National Biography* is an editorial work of art, different in kind from any preceding study of American history." My congratulations to John Garraty and Mark Carnes, the general editors of the *American National Biography*-and congratulations also to the ACLS for sponsoring its publication. On behalf of the Endowment I want to say how proud we are to be associated with this historic publication. The ANB profiles not only Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, but several other Fullers-Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome; Carl Fuller, the original Fuller brush man, and Blind Boy Fuller-a street singer and guitarist and who was an influential blues artist. The ANB reflects changes in humanities scholarship over the past generation such as the greater appreciation of women and minorities that came as a direct result of

the revolutions of the sixties, and the postmodern concern that human achievement be examined within specific contexts. Neither of those changes has been without controversy-but the humanities have always been associated with controversy and change. There was a time, after all, when reputable universities taught literature only in Greek and Latin.

Exploring the humanities forces us to ask new questions, to reframe arguments, to analyze information in different ways. One recurring challenge is how to organize knowledge. It is important to organize knowledge within its specific context before we can articulate a universal truth. Such disparate works of literature as *Beowulf* by an anonymous bard and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe were created within specific contexts, both cultural and historical. We must understand both the historical moment and the sociocultural milieu out of which these works emerged before we can fully understand them as works of art. We know that a knowledge of Anglo-Saxon culture is essential to an understanding of *Beowulf*, while Achebe's work relies on our understanding European colonization of West Africa. Our reading of Achebe's text is further enriched when we understand both the vibrant pre-colonial African cultures that existed long before Europeans arrived, as well as the postcolonial realities that made the book's writing possible and its message poignant. The text also references the poem by William Butler Yeats from which Achebe took his title. When we finish reading *Things Fall Apart*, we understand more about the Ibo culture of Nigeria. But we also understand more about what it means to live in a postmodern world where life is most meaningful when we understand the contexts that inform it.

It was partly in deference to this nexus between the humanities and the places that shape them that we launched our initiative to establish 10 Regional Humanities Centers around the nation. We have now awarded 16 planning grants and expect to award the final four later this year. From the 20 institutions that receive planning grants, there will be a juried selection to choose ten, one in each region. We have invited individuals, corporations, and foundations to assist Congress with the funding for these centers. Many of the organizations that you represent are also organized along regional lines. Courses in the humanities are often organized along regional lines-we study European history, Italian Renaissance art, ethnomusicology of East Africa-and foreign languages are also tied to geographic places.

We should acknowledge the regional movement in literary and historical circles in the United States in the 1920's and 30's, then a reaction to that movement in the 50's, with more emphasis on a national identity. The pendulum then swung back-with the creation of the Center for Great Plains Studies in 1976-the first academic center to promote research, publications, and teaching on an American region. My own work at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture followed in 1977, and has been followed by the establishment of other regional centers around the nation. One exciting development that emerged from this process has been the creation of regional and local encyclopedias, each of which has involved hundreds

of scholars.

Even McDonalds, viewed as a symbol of the homogenization of global culture, has to make concessions to the realities of region. You can walk into a McDonald's in Wichita Falls, Texas, and get fajitas. You can get lobster rolls at McDonald's restaurants in Maine, and in Wisconsin, you can get a Johnsonville brat--a brand of bratwurst. On the international scene--you can order from the "Halal" menu in Saudi Arabia, from the vegetarian menu in India, and you can get a beer at a McDonald's in Germany. Even at McDonald's, they recognize the power of place.

There is another important point to be made about the study of regions. The relationship between white people and black people is a critical barometer in our effort to achieve a pluralistic society in this country. In different regions, dialogue between races has been framed differently. Patricia Limerick, who has written eloquently about the American West, describes the impact of a region on racial discourse in her essay, "The Realization of the American West," she writes: ". . .with very diverse, and permanent, Indian tribes, with longterm Hispanic settlers and recent Mexican immigrants, with white Americans and immigrants of all ethnicities, and with Mormons representing the formation of a new kind of ethnicity, the West was ahead of the rest of the country in the complexity of its race relations." As Patricia Limerick suggests, there are many different ways to frame questions of race.

One of the paradoxes of American life that we have frequently divided ourselves as a people, only to coalesce later as a nation. After defining ourselves as 13 separate states, we united as a union--with the motto "E Pluribus Unum." We repeated the process during the Civil War and its aftermath. Powerful regional movements emerged in the first part of this century, and then Americans united during World War II. We can easily think of ourselves as Americans, while remaining deeply connected to different places. To draw an analogy from nature--the larger the tree, the larger the supporting root system. To reach high, we must sink deep roots. That belief is behind our commitment to regional centers.

Since the creation of the National Endowment 35 years ago, we have worked closely with the American Council of Learned Societies. We deeply value both your support and the leadership you bring to the humanities. We are grateful for this partnership, and we look forward to working closely with you in the future

**Remarks for a Memorial Service for John Blassingame
New Haven, Connecticut
May 13, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I first met John Blassingame in 1972 when he hired me as one of four instructors in the African-American Studies Program at Yale. Larry Neal in literature, Robert Farris Thompson in art, Willie Ruff in music, and I in folklore, taught what became an enormously successful class that introduced more than 100 students each fall to what was then a bold new field of study. The course later served as a model for an introductory, team-taught course in Southern Studies that has now been offered at the University of Mississippi for more than 20 years.

John was my closest friend during the 7 years I taught at Yale. We would begin most days over coffee and bran muffins at Naples Pizza on Wall Street, where John held court every morning for several hours, talking ideas with friends, and writing at his table. It was there we discussed the publication of *Roots* and the television series and their impact on the academy. It was there we planned the honorary doctorate of humane letters that Yale gave B.B. King.

John was born in Social Circle, Georgia. He received his B.A. at Fort Valley State University, M.A. at Howard, Masters of Philosophy and Ph.D. at Yale. He taught at Howard, Carnegie Mellon, and the University of Maryland before coming to Yale. He taught at Yale for 29 years, serving as Professor of History, African American Studies and American Studies. For many years he served as Chair of Afro-American Studies.

His close friend, teacher, and colleague C. Vann Woodward was enormously proud of John's achievements, both as a teacher and as a scholar. Both sons of the South, their friendship steadily deepened over the years.

John's pioneering work on the papers of Frederick Douglass was a monumental contribution. He headed the Frederick Douglass Papers project, which began at Yale in 1973, and remained here for 20 years, during which time the five volume series on speeches, debates and interviews was published.

The Douglass Papers project received over \$800,000 from NEH during the 20 years that John headed it. He oversaw the division of the work in 1992--it continues still with NEH funding.

The editing of the Douglass papers could easily have been John's life's work, but he created even more seminal work, with his books *The Slave Community, Black New Orleans, 1860-1880*; *Slave Testimony*, and his excellent work with Mary Berry, *Long Memory: The Black Experience in America*.

My memories of John are happy memories; I remember how often he spoke of his

family. It was clear that he loved Teasie deeply, and he was enormously proud of the accomplishments of John, Jr., and of Tia. They were the constant subject of his conversation. John was a towering man, literally and figuratively. I remember his tall, thin frame and how he bend over as he spoke with his many admirers, always smiling, always with a familiar twinkle in his eye. He was my best friend, and I loved him like a brother. When I left my office in Afro-American Studies at night, no matter how late, I always looked up and saw the light was still burning in John's office. John, your light will always shine for the rest of us--no matter how late the hour--no matter how dark the night.

**Brooks School, Alumni Address
North Andover, Massachusetts
May 20, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Larry Becker, for that kind introduction. I am deeply honored to speak to Brooks alumni. It is a special honor to speak at one's alma mater. Many of you have found it easy to excel at Brooks. I did not--in fact, my first year at Brooks was the biggest challenge I ever faced in my life.

I want to share with you a letter that I wrote my grandmother in 1957, when I had been at Brooks only a few months. Grammie kept my letter for many years--grandparents consider such letters very precious. I wrote her: "The two subjects that gave me the most trouble when I came here were English and astronomy. I have pulled my astronomy up to an "A", the best you can get. I didn't get an "A" in any of my other subjects I don't think." I added something students probably still mention when they write letters home: "The cooking up here can't compare with what I am used to at your house and ours. That is one thing I am really going to enjoy when I get home." I think all students miss home cooking when they go away to school.

But to return to that grade in English. My course in English was my greatest challenge, but it turned out to be the subject I enjoyed the most. In fact, in college I majored in English, and went on to get a master's degree in English.

Why? I had an exceptionally fine English teacher my first year at Brooks whose name was Warren McIsaac. He challenged me to write in ways that made me struggle to understand texts, and then to write thoughtfully about them. The best student in my class was John Bingham, a fellow southerner from Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. McIsaac was so impressed with John's first paper that he simply wrote across the top of his first page, "Go West, young man!"

We had fine teachers here; I remember with special warmth Nicholas Evangelus--who taught me chemistry and coached me in football, baseball, and basketball. Mr. Evangelus inspired us both in the classroom and on the playing field.

For all of us who came to Brooks during its first 46 years of existence, the towering figure was Frank Ashburn, the founding headmaster of Brooks. Most of you know that Mr. Ashburn was asked to lead the school by Endicott Peabody, a man he greatly admired; we know that came to Brooks as a young man recently graduated from Yale, a young man who turned down a Rhodes scholarship to head Brooks. I think fewer know that Endicott Peabody asked Mr. Ashburn to get a divinity degree before coming to Brooks--and Mr. Ashburn refused. Mr. Peabody decided Mr. Ashburn was still the best man for the job, and he was right.

I discovered so much at Brooks. I discovered the work of James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner in Mr. McVey's classes. I discovered classical music, both through my classmates and by singing in the choir directed by Edward Flint. Mr. Flint was a superb organist, and I thought it a special privilege to turn pages of his musical score while he played pieces like Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*.

Mr. Flint would strike notes on the organ with the same finality that he wrote "Q.E.D," "Quod Erat Demonstrandum" on the chalkboard after completing an algebra problem. He would add an exclamation point before laying the chalk down.

Being at Brooks was a great privilege, as well as hard work. The first day I was here I found myself both in an exciting new world, and right at home. At my first meal I sat at a table hosted by my French teacher, Rene Champollion, a descendant of the famous Frenchman who deciphered the Rosetta Stone--the key to understanding the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt. His wife Stella asked if my father's name was also Bill Ferris, "Yes, ma'am, it is," I answered. She replied, "I danced many a mile with your father at Millsaps College in Mississippi." It was an introduction to a world that mixed new academic challenges with reminders of home, a combination that would recur throughout my years here at Brooks.

At Brooks I reflected with mixed emotions about my home state and the culture of the American South, which I had known all my life. I grew up on a farm outside Vicksburg, Mississippi, a farm where I was privileged to hear stories of the old South, blues, and powerful spirituals--to borrow a phrase from my grandfather, I was "raised on cornbread and recollections". The writer Robert Penn Warren once told me that a fish never thinks about water until he is out of it--and we never think about our worlds until we are out of them. In my first year at Brooks I was very much a fish out of water. While at Brooks I learned to appreciate my southern world--both its shortcomings and its glories.

Its shortcomings would soon become national headlines. My years at Brooks were in the late '50s, at the beginning of the struggle for civil rights--and my home state was one of its primary battlegrounds. I was increasingly troubled by the injustices inflicted on black people--and our headmaster Frank Ashburn helped me realize that I had to confront important moral issues.

My struggle was reflected in a story entitled "Shorty Boy" that I wrote during my first year at Brooks and published in *The Bishop*. Shorty was a nickname for Robert Appleton, a black dwarf who lived on our farm in Mississippi. We often worked together in my mother's garden and called each other "Shorty Boy" and "Billy Boy". Here is part of what I wrote:

We seemed to understand each other perfectly. He was never too busy to let me drive the mules on the way to get fertilizer or to try to use his shovel, which was too big for me.

While working we always exchanged a few jokes. After a few minutes, Shorty asked me, "Billy, if ah wuz in jail you'd come and git me out, wudn you?" It made me feel all funny inside. I liked Shorty about as much as I thought possible to like a person. What made me mad was I felt so helpless. It was as if you try for something with your heart and soul and just can't quite reach it. I told Shorty I'd do my best to get him out and he laughed and said, "Ah knew ah cud count on you."

Brooks taught me to appreciate my native culture. I was proud that William Faulkner not only came from Mississippi but also wrote so vividly, so lovingly about its complex worlds. I had heard Mississippi Delta blues all my life, and took the blues for granted, but at Brooks I discovered a classmate--Freeman Crocroft--who listened seriously to the blues. Freeman assured me that in 10 years this music would be appreciated. I began to record blues artists during summer vacations, when I was home from Brooks and later from college. Those tapes I made became the topic of my Ph. D. dissertation and my first book, Blues from the Delta.

I want to talk a little about the blues.

(Pick up guitar, play.)

This is a blue note. This "blue note" is the backbone of blues music. You will hear musicians play it, bend it, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is a common element, whether you are playing down home blues (PLAY). . .the jump blues of the 1940s and 50s (PLAY). . .or a blend of the two (PLAY).

(Play, "Before you Accuse Me")

I am very proud of what we do at the National Endowment for the Humanities--I have a short video here, which will give us an overview. That magnificent voice you hear narrating the video is that of the distinguished actor Morgan Freeman, who has been a very good friend to the Endowment:

(Show video.)

I want to talk about some of the programs Morgan Freeman mentioned in that video, and relate them back to my experience at Brooks. While at Brooks I came to a greater appreciation of my own regional culture.

Each region has its own culture, its own history. It has its own variety of the humanities--and for that reason, the National Endowment for the Humanities has launched an initiative to create 10 Regional Humanities Centers in different areas of the country. My own experience at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi showed how the study of regional culture builds important bridges. It helped the people of the Deep South realize that whether

they are descended from Europeans, Africans, or Native Americans, they are all Southerners who share a common culture.

To help our nation's teachers, the Endowment created a portal to a collection of web sites called EDSITEment. Funded by MCIWorldcom, EDSITEment links 71 sites that provide information in the humanities-on areas such as African studies, the Great Chicago Fire, the Lewis and Clark Expeditions, ancient cultures of the Mediterranean-a wide variety of subjects. EDSITEment also provides lesson plans in the humanities for teachers from kindergarten through high school. Teachers from all around the country have let us know how much they appreciate EDSITEment--and it always makes me think of my superb teachers here at Brooks. Brooks also has a fine tradition of teaching history, not as a series of memorized facts, but as a living process, involving real people. At NEH we have launched a program relating family history to American history.

Last Thanksgiving we published a beautiful booklet, *My History is America's History*. I brought copies for you today, and NEH has put copies in every public library in the country. The booklet can also be downloaded from our web site. It shows you how to track your family history, then how to put it in the context of the history of your community, America, and the world. We encourage all Americans to do this.

I enjoy my work at the National Endowment for the Humanities--I have enjoyed my work as a folklore scholar, and as a teacher at Jackson State, at Yale, and at the University of Mississippi. I always tried to make my teachers here at Brooks proud of me, and I hope they were. But I also know it was important to them that I did what I believed was right, and that I loved my work. I know that was particularly important to Mr. Ashburn.

During the 70's, Mr. Ashburn was a member of the Yale Corporation, the governing board of Yale University. He visited me several times at Yale, where taught in the American and African-American Studies programs. During one visit Mr. Ashburn viewed the rough cut of a film we were editing on the blues.

Besides being an inspiring headmaster and a gifted teacher, Mr. Ashburn had many other talents. He was an outstanding baseball player-and he wrote fine poetry. He wrote one poem called "Nocturne at New Haven", in which he recalls his alma mater, Yale University. I think the poem also relates to Brooks, which was truly his greatest love:

*There are deep voices under elms tonight,
As though the Campus were alive with ghosts
Clinging to talk and laughter and firelight.
The spirits gather from the misty coasts
That are oblivion, under gray gates,
Whispering old names. And when the songs are done
There is an echo that still hesitates*

As though somehow the singing had gone on.

*And we who never knew cannot forget
A beauty that is old, so dearly old.
Sweet as a perfume in the hours of dawn
It holds the ghosts, till each of them, alone,
Goes back from friendly shadows he has met
And ends the story that was never told.*

I would like us to add our own voices to the conversation. (Pick up guitar.)

This is a call-and-response song.

Hey, Bo Diddley.

Thank you. Thank you for your work as a chorus, and thank you for asking me to speak today. And thank you for giving me yet another fond memory of Brooks.

**Brooks School, Cum Laude Ceremony
North Andover, Massachusetts
May 20, 2000**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Larry Becker, for that kind introduction. I am deeply honored to be speaking at Brooks today, on this occasion. My congratulations to the members of Cum Laude. I well know and admire the academic standards at Brooks.

I appreciate these standards particularly because my first year at Brooks was not easy--in fact, it was the biggest challenge I ever faced in my life. I want to share with you a letter that I wrote to my grandmother in 1957, when I had been at Brooks only a few months. Grammie kept my letter for many years--grandparents consider such letters very precious. I wrote her: "The two subjects that gave me the most trouble when I came here were English and astronomy. I have pulled my astronomy up to an "A", the best you can get. I didn't get an "A" in any of my other subjects." I added something you probably still mention when you write home: "The cooking up here can't compare with what I am used to at your house and ours. That is one thing I am really going to enjoy when I get home." I think all students miss home cooking when they go away to school.

But to return to that grade in English: the course work in English was greatest challenge, but it turned out to be the subject I enjoyed the most. In fact, in college I majored in English, and I went on to get a master's degree in English.

Why? I had an exceptionally fine English teacher my first year at Brooks whose name was Warren McIsaac. He challenged me to write in ways that made me struggle to understand texts, and then to write thoughtfully about them. The best student in my class was John Bingham, a fellow southerner from Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. McIsaac was so impressed with John's first paper that he simply wrote across the top of his first page, "Go West, young man!"

I discovered so much at Brooks. I discovered the work of James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner in Mr. McVey's class. I discovered classical music, both through my classmates like Joe Hammer and by singing in the choir directed by Edward Flint. Mr. Flint was a superb organist, and I thought it a special privilege to turn pages of his musical score while he played pieces like Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*.

Being at Brooks was a great privilege, as well as hard work. The first day I was here I felt both in an exciting new world, and right at home. At my first meal I sat at a table hosted by my French teacher, Rene Champollion, a descendant of the famous Frenchman who deciphered the Rosetta Stone--the key to understanding the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt. His wife Stella asked if my father's name was also Bill Ferris, "Yes, ma'am, it is," I answered. She replied, "I danced many a mile

with your father at Millsaps College in Mississippi." It was an introduction to a world that mixed academic challenges with reminders of home, a combination that would recur throughout my years at Brooks.

At Brooks I reflected with mixed emotions about my home state and the culture I had known all my life. I grew up on a farm outside Vicksburg, Mississippi, a farm where I was privileged to hear stories of the old South, blues, and powerful spirituals. The writer Robert Penn Warren once told me that a fish never thinks about water until he is out of it--and we never think about our worlds until we are out of them. During my first year at Brooks I was very much a fish out of water. While at Brooks I learned to appreciate my southern world--both its shortcomings and its glories.

Its shortcomings would soon become national headlines. My years at Brooks in the late 50's marked the beginning of the struggle for civil rights--and my home state was one of its primary battlegrounds. I was increasingly troubled by the injustices inflicted on black people--and our headmaster Frank Ashburn helped me realize that I had to confront important moral issues.

My personal struggle was reflected in a story entitled "Shorty Boy" that I wrote during my first year at Brooks and published in *The Bishop*. "Shorty" was a nickname for Robert Appleton, a black dwarf who lived on our farm in Mississippi. We often worked together in my mother's garden and called each other "Shorty Boy" and "Billy Boy". Here is part of what I wrote:

We seemed to understand each other perfectly. He was never too busy to let me drive the mules on the way to get fertilizer or to try to use his shovel, which was too big for me.

While working we always exchanged a few jokes. After a few minutes, Shorty asked me, "Billy, if ah wuz in jail you'd come and git me out, wudn you?" It made me feel all funny inside. I liked Shorty about as much as I thought possible to like a person. What made me mad was I felt so helpless. It was as if you try for something with your heart and soul and just can't quite reach it. I told Shorty I'd do my best to get him out and he laughed and said, "Ah knew ah cud count on you."

Brooks taught me to appreciate my native culture. I was proud that William Faulkner came from Mississippi and wrote so vividly, so lovingly about its worlds. I had heard Mississippi Delta blues all my life, and took the blues for granted, but at Brooks I discovered a friend who considered it to be important music. He was a classmate from the San Francisco Bay area--Freeman Crocroft--and he listened seriously to the blues. Freeman told me that in 10 years this music would be appreciated by more Americans. I began to record blues artists during summer vacations, when I was home from Brooks and later from college. Those tapes I recorded became the topic of my Ph. D. dissertation and my first book, *Blues from the Delta*.

I want to ask each of you a question--how many of you come from a region?

Each region has its own culture, its own history. It produces its own variety of the humanities--and for that reason, the National Endowment for the Humanities has launched an initiative to have 10 Regional Humanities Centers in different areas of the country. My own experience at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi showed that the study of regional culture builds important bridges. It helped the people of the Deep South realize that whether they are descended from Europeans, Africans, or Native Americans, they are all Southerners.

Now I have another question: How many of you use the Internet when you do research for your school papers? Each of you uses the Internet when you are looking for information, and we have a program that will be very useful to you, and to your teachers. It is a portal to a collection of web sites, called EDSITEment. EDSITEment links 71 sites that provide information in the humanities--on areas such as African studies, the Great Chicago Fire, the Lewis and Clark Expeditions, ancient cultures of the Mediterranean--a wide variety of subjects. EDSITEment also provides lesson plans in the humanities for teachers from kindergarten through high school. I don't have to ask how many of you have families. We all do. You will be interested to know that we also have a program that links family history to American history. Last Thanksgiving we published a beautiful booklet, *My History is America's History*. I brought copies for you today, and NEH has put copies in every public library in the country. The booklet can also be downloaded from our web site. It shows how to track your family history, then how to put your family in the context of the history of your community, America, and the world. We encourage all Americans to do this.

I enjoy my work at the National Endowment for the Humanities--I have enjoyed my work as a folklore scholar, and as a teacher at Jackson State, at Yale, and at the University of Mississippi. I always tried to make my teachers here at Brooks proud of me, and hope that they were. But I also know it was important to them that I did what I believed was right, and that I loved my work. I know that was particularly important to Mr. Ashburn.

Because I sang in the choir, I was selected to help Mr. Ashburn vest for his sermons. I hung up his coat and helped him don his vestments. I consider those moments precious memories--because Mr. Ashburn focused on me, asked me about my life--and called me "Billum".

Mr. Ashburn's commitment to social justice was underpinned by his strong Christian faith. He wrote lovely poems that expressed both faith and exasperation, as in his "Sonnet written after hearing a Sermon":

*But this man's god, this vanishing surmise
Conceived in dull despair and praised in hope!
A bearded being sitting in the skies*

*Letting religion dangle like a rope
Whereby vociferous sinners may arise
Receive their quota of white robes and wings,
And wear them, the envy of angelic eyes
The way great Archangels wear their things?*

*Heaven an emptiness of all desire,
Contented angels strumming on their harps,
Amicably heedless of the flats and sharps,
(Hell is at least the house of souls on fire.)
An idle, harp-contented, vengeful Lord,
And all facilities for being bored.*

"Souls on fire." To Mr. Ashburn someone with a soul on fire was infinitely preferable to a soul that was obedient but dull. It was important to him that those he taught find within them the fire of conscience and a passion for life. I learned many important things at Brooks, but the most important was the belief that I must listen to my conscience, and that, to be fulfilled, I must have a passion for my work.

Having a passion for one's work is hardly a new idea. In fact, the minister for whom this school is named, Phillips Brooks, used the idea in a sermon more than a century ago, when he reminded his congregation that: "No man to whom the details of his task are repulsive can do his task well constantly, however full he may be of its spirit. He may make one bold dash at it, and carry it over all his disgusts, but he cannot work on at it year after year, day after day."

I have been able to enjoy my work, day after day and year after year, and have built on lessons I learned here at Brooks. Each of you has laid a foundation here so that both your work and your life can be a joy to you, every day. I can wish you no greater joy--and that is what I do wish you--each and every one. Thank you.

D.C. Beyond the Monuments**Washington, D.C.****June 1, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, (Kathy Smith), for that kind introduction. At the National Endowment for the Humanities, we tell America's stories, and Washington's diverse neighborhoods are full of interesting stories. Our mission at the NEH is to bring the humanities to all Americans, and the powerful partnership which created the Washington Beyond the Monuments map and neighborhood brochures represents cultural heritage tourism at its best.

These maps show the locations of nine of DC's most interesting neighborhoods, and the Metro stops you can use to explore them. They also have information about each neighborhood and the history that makes them so fascinating.

We at NEH are proud of our Rediscovering America initiative, and with the results of our partnership with the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., the D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro), and the Washington Convention Center. By bringing together Washington cultural institutions--both federal and local--with the region's transit system and its convention center, we clearly see how linking cultural heritage tourism interests with a region's transportation system enhances public understanding of history and culture, and increases economic development.

Washington's famous landmarks are also a backdrop for people's lives: Pennsylvania Avenue has witnessed hundreds of historic parades-but Markus Ring, who grew up here, remembers the street as the place where he made money as a kid-he rented wooden crates to people who wanted to watch the parades but could not see over the crowd.

Capitol Hill is an international symbol of the power of the United States Congress, but for people who grew up here, it is also a neighborhood. One resident wrote this: "We knew the Capitol was there, but we had no dealings with it from day to day. We had our own separate lives-our own stores, our own businesses. We used to call our block the village because everybody told you what to do."

In this city we can visit places that were stops on the Underground Railroad, and the scene of a dramatic attempt at escape by 77 slaves on the ship Pearl. DC has been home to many of America's greatest artists and entertainers-Duke Ellington among them. The city also offers public spaces to enjoy, museums to explore, restaurants, and people from all over the world, with their own stories to tell.

A city is her people-and their memories are her story. D.C. Beyond the Monuments will help residents and visitors alike discover the stories of our great city-and help each of us create precious memories of our own. Thank you.

Remarks at the opening of the Ben Shahn exhibition at the Phillips Collection

Washington, D.C.

June 7, 2000

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Jay Gates, for that kind introduction. This is a historic exhibit, and the National Endowment for the Humanities is very proud of the part it has played in putting it together. I am especially pleased to see how the Phillips emphasizes Ben Shahn's ties to neighborhood. As you move through the exhibit, you will see that the curators have placed specific neighborhoods in different rooms. Because Shahn's work is grounded in place, the arrangement of his work by neighborhood was an inspired choice. My congratulations to the curator, Elizabeth Turner, her assistant Elsa Smithgao, and to Jay Gates and to all the Phillips staff.

Whether photography or painting, Ben Shahn's art was always direct, always provocative. His art makes people think. In *The Shape of Content* he wrote: "I believe it is. . .moments of enlightenment that are formulated and perhaps preserved in art. I believe that artists are always in pursuit of the ultimate according to their lights--the perfect religious emotion, the very fundamentals of form, or the underlying character of man."

Ben Shahn's work and his artistic vision move seamlessly from one medium to another, not unlike another photographer in a New Deal government project-Eudora Welty. Most people know Miss Welty as an author--but during the 1930s she traveled the state of Mississippi as a photographer for the Works Projects Administration, the WPA--and the inspiration for several of her short stories came from pictures she took during those assignments. I have a personal connection with Ben Shahn that comes from this time: he was friends with Walker Evans, who made historic photographs of the Deep South. Walker suggested Shahn follow his Southern route to get some good images of the region. Both men photographed Ray Lum's mule barn in Natchez, Mississippi--and four decades later I used the Walker Evans photograph in an oral history I wrote on Ray Lum with the title, "You Live and Learn and then you Die and Forget it All"

The careers of Ben Shahn, Eudora Welty, and Walker Evans underscore the importance of government support for the arts and the humanities. Each artist developed an artistic vision through government projects, and, indeed, Shahn's most famous unfinished project, the Riker's Island murals, were unfinished precisely because government support did not continue. You can feel in this exhibition how powerful those murals might have been.

Washington is blessed to have a complete set of Ben Shahn murals--the Social Security murals-in a government building at 3rd and Independence. The Voice of America is housed there now, and if you take a tour of VOA, you can see those impressive murals. In fact, Duncan Phillips was instrumental in assuring that those

Chairman's Remarks**State Encyclopedia Workshop****Washington, D.C.****June 9, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

The creation of encyclopedias is a noble tradition that dates back at least to Plato, who believed that to think better one must know all.

Aristotle and Plato are acknowledged as the originators of the encyclopedia as a means of providing comprehensive knowledge. Their fields of study included grammar, rhetoric, music, mathematics, geography, natural history, and philosophy, and were referred to in Latin as *Humanitas*. Together these fields were also known as *enkyklios*--the "complete system" or "circle of knowledge", *enkyklios paideia*, from which the term encyclopedia derives.

The Speculum Maius ("The Greater Mirror"), completed in 1244, was an important medieval encyclopedia, whose author Vincent of Beauvais argued that his work showed the world what it is and what it should become.

The contemporary view of the encyclopedia as a starting point from which we embark on a voyage of discovery is at least two centuries old. Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert's famed *Encyclopedie*, a landmark for the Age of Enlightenment, was important for both content and literary style, and it influenced both fiction and nonfiction in the 18th and 19th century French literature.

Encyclopedias dealing with a single country or region are especially important in the 20th century. They exist in many European countries, including Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* numbers 65 volumes. Beyond Europe, there are encyclopedias on Burma, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, Mexico, Canada, and Indonesia.

The encyclopedic approach to ordering our history and culture, to examining these worlds with loving but critical care is also an important influence within modern literature.

Balzac establishes an encyclopedic perspective within his massive *Comedie Humaine* as he surveys the entire fabric of the human experience in a focused, defined manner through fiction.

James Joyce, trained by the Jesuits, developed an Aristotelian view of the universe on his fiction. Because of his insistence on encyclopedic detail, Joyce's biographer Richard Ellman suggests that the writer used a "spider's eye" to describe his characters and their Irish worlds.

Chairman's Remarks**Grocery Manufacturers of America****White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia****June 9, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

"Humanities Begin At Home"

Thank you (Ron Demczak) for that kind introduction. I am thrilled to be a part of this exciting weekend, and I want to thank each of you for getting up so early on a Sunday morning to talk about the humanities.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is an independent federal agency headquartered in Washington, DC. We provide grants to support research, education, and public programs in the humanities throughout the nation. Manley Molpus and Grocery Manufacturers of America supported one of our high-profile events this year--a Congressional breakfast featuring Civil War historian and novelist Shelby Foote. The breakfast was very well-attended--and a number of congressional leaders stayed afterwards to ask questions and talk with Shelby.

One of our best-known projects was the *Civil War* series produced by Ken Burns, which aired on public television a few years ago. NEH made possible much of Ken's research, as well as the preservation of the materials he used.

We also fund museum exhibitions, library discussion programs, the preservation of historic books and newspapers, teacher training, and internet and computer resources, as well as a great deal of scholarly research. We have also partnered with business leaders such as my good friend John Bryan and his colleagues at the Sara Lee Corporation, who generously underwrote our Jefferson Lecture for five years. Bert Roberts and his team at MCI Worldcom funded EDSITEment, a portal to the finest humanities materials on the World Wide Web.

I know that your companies support other humanities activities. I also know that many of you support cultural activities in your own communities. I want to share with you a short video about the National Endowment for the Humanities. The wonderful voice you hear narrating the video is that of actor Morgan Freeman, who is a strong supporter of the Endowment.

(Dim lights, show video).

NEH does all this important work on a fairly modest budget. Contrary to our name, the National Endowment for the Humanities is not an endowment--we largely depend on an annual Congressional appropriation. Our current budget is \$115 million--less than the annual budget of many community colleges.

The basic unit in the study of the humanities is the story. Telling stories is our

oldest, most human activity. The story is at the heart of literature, history, and folklore; it underlies much of philosophy, language, and religion. People in all cultures define themselves through stories about their past and who they are.

We hear our first stories at home. Stories bond our families as a unit. Your business have also helped bond families together. Household products, whether they are food, pharmaceuticals, or cleaning materials are all familiar part of our culture; their advertising campaigns influence our art and our language. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, for example, which I helped edit, includes entries on Goo-Goo clusters, Coca-Cola, and Moon Pies. In fact, there is a Moon Pie Cultural Club based in Charlotte, North Carolina. You cannot be considered truly learned about Southern culture, in my opinion, if you have not read about and tasted Moon Pies. And on the radio, Southern blues and country music programs were underwritten by flour companies. Sonny Boy Williamson's blues show in Helena, Arkansas, was appropriately named the "King Biscuit Hour". And Texas country artist Bob Wills named his group the "Light Crust Doughboys". Even medicines like Hadacol were popularized by the "Hadacol Boogie!"

I heard my first stories at home--as I am sure you did. My grandfather passed family stories along to me, and was fond of saying that he had been raised on "cornbread and recollections." I grew up on a farm near Vicksburg, Mississippi--and as a child I heard spirituals sung by black Southerners in a small church.

As a teenager, I discovered the blues. (pick up guitar) There was a blues singer named Lovey Williams who performed at his home in a little crossroads community called Rising Sun. Lovey played his guitar and sang with a driving, raw sound.

Let me demonstrate a little. Part of our job at NEH is teaching. (Pick up guitar again-play). This is what is called a "blue note"--the backbone of blues music. You will hear musicians play it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is a common element, whether you are playing down home blues (PLAY). . .the jump blues of the 1940s and 50s (PLAY). . .or a blend of the two (PLAY).

I want to play a piece that is dedicated to the loveliest lady at the Greenbrier. I won't call her name because she knows who she is.

(Play / sing)

Now, you may well ask, how would blues music be humanities? It is impossible to understand the blues without knowing the culture they spring from--the poverty and discrimination that singers faced, and the music's roots in African and slave music. Your work provides each of you with a window on the humanities. When you make marketing decisions, for example, they are based on your knowledge of the culture of your market, whether you market to a region of the United States, the entire nation, or a foreign country.

Many people learn best about history, literature, and culture, by studying their own family histories. NEH's family history project, My History is America's History, is an exciting project that features a web site called MyHistory.org. Genealogy.com contributed expertise and financial support to help people trace their family trees; PSINet hosts the website; the National Association of Broadcasters is helping to provide information to the public; and Heritage Preservation provides information on how to preserve family artifacts. FamilyFun, a magazine for parents with young children published by Buena Vista Magazines, provided us with different ways families can collect and appreciate their history; Houghton Mifflin provided historical reference material. We have printed these resources in this guidebook. (Hold up guidebook.)

We have placed two copies of this beautiful guidebook in every public library in the country. I have copies available for each of you here today. The My History project helps us all connect to the nation's history through our family stories.

Some ways of recording family histories are utterly unique--Ethel Wright Mohamed captured her family history with needlework. (Show picture of Sacred Harp Singing) Mrs. Mohamed embroidered this piece showing Sacred Harp singing at a rural church. Sacred Harp music is unaccompanied four-part singing. Mrs. Mohamed also embroidered a picture of her husband's dry goods store (page 108, Local Color). Her work became so well known that it was featured at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington and on the cover of Smithsonian Magazine. Mrs. Mohamed was born in Mississippi--her husband was born in Lebanon and came to Mississippi as a young man. They lived in Belzoni, Mississippi, which is also Manly Molpus's home. My favorite stitchery by Mrs. Mohamed captures a story that her husband loved to tell her children. "If we take one stick, it is easily broken. But if we take the many sticks bound together they cannot be broken. A family that sticks together cannot be broken." Her stitchery shows sticks bound together with a ribbon. Our My History is America's History project teaches people how to use oral history as part of their family histories.

You and your companies can connect to the MyHistory project through the NEH Enterprise Office, which is dedicated to building partnerships with the private sector. There are many tie-ins related to food traditions, history, cultural traditions and educational themes. I have information packets here--and of course I can discuss this with you here this weekend, or if you get in touch with me in Washington.

Within the next year NEH will launch a series of traveling humanities exhibitions on history, literature, and cultural events of the United States. We are seeking corporate partners to help us launch those projects.

Our largest corporate opportunity is in the area of regional centers. Our Regional Humanities Centers Initiative is creating 10 regional humanities centers in the United States. These regional centers will provide resources to study local and regional history, to examine how a region's culture reflects its ethnic and racial

diversity. They will offer public programs, research, historic preservation and classroom learning from Kindergarten to adult education. They will provide a rare opportunity for our partners--foundations, corporations such as your own, individual philanthropists--to preserve and celebrate American history and heritage.

One of the paradoxes of modern life is that the more international we become, the more we seek our roots. While I was Director of the Center for Southern Culture, I discovered that the study of regional culture is unifying for the nation as a whole. People in each region quickly discover that they share a common culture, regardless of race, class, or gender. The children of Ethel Wright Mohamed treasured their mother's Mississippi roots and also learned Middle Eastern folk tales from their Lebanese father. The cultural legacy of both parents lives on in Mississippi through their children.

The heritage of Jews who live in the south is another intriguing example. My wife Marcie is studying Jewish food traditions in the South, as part of her work for a Ph.D. in American Studies. She has studied her grandmother Luba Cohen's recipe box and found recipes that she learned as a child in Russia, others she learned as a young woman in New York City, and finally those she discovered as a housewife in Blytheville, Arkansas. What a family eats at the dinner table defines their history as much as the stories they tell. Women are a powerful force in shaping cultural identity because they decide what appears on the dinner table.

If you key in the words "Shalom Y'All" on an internet search engine, you will get links to web sites for at least a dozen Jewish congregations in the South--including the largest Orthodox congregation in the United States, Baron Hirsch in Memphis, Tennessee. The people who set up those web sites are both Jewish and Southern--they have traditions in common with other Southerners, and with Jews all over the world. The discovery and acknowledgement of the complexity of one regional culture often helps people appreciate more the cultures of other regions--and, most important, it shows our common humanity. Region becomes an important way to understand a global culture.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have--but first I want you to sing with me. I have a call-and-response song: Bo Diddley.

(Play, sing Bo Diddley).

Thank you. That was an amazing performance for so early in the morning. Thank you for singing with me, and for hearing what I had to say. I look forward to your questions.

Dedication of the Margaret Walker Alexander Papers**Jackson State University****Jackson, Mississippi****July 7, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Barbara, for that kind introduction. I am honored to be addressing such a distinguished audience--Governor Ronnie Musgrove, Senator Thad Cochran, Mayor Harvey Johnson, Guy Hovius--representing Senator Trent Lott. I also want to acknowledge old friends: Doris Saunders, who is professor of Journalism emeritus at Jackson State and is now a consultant at Johnson Publishing Company; Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, my former student who is now Professor and Graduate Director of the Department of English at Western Michigan; Maryemma Graham, who is now at the University of Kansas; Leslie Burl McLemore, who was a colleague of mine here at Jackson State, who has since served as a board member of both the Mississippi Humanities Council and the Federation of State Humanities Councils; Seetha Srinivasan, director of the University Press of Mississippi; Carolyn Vance Smith, who is on the board of the Mississippi Humanities Council, and Dorothy Moore, the gifted singer who is known for her "Misty Blue." There are a couple of faces I miss--that of the late Walter Payton who was beginning his career here at Jackson State while I was here, and Richard Jefferson. "Jeff" was the chair of the English Department in the early 70's. When I first came to Jackson State Jeff told me "Now, Ferris, after you've been teaching for a while, you may get depressed and feel like you need a break from Mississippi. That happened to me when I first began teaching here. I decided I had to get out of the state and drove up to Memphis. Just before I crossed the state line I heard a racket in my trunk. I pulled off the highway, grabbed a tire tool from under the seat and opened the trunk. When I did a big black snake rose up with his arms up in the air and said 'Don't hit me, Jeff. I'm trying to get outta Mississippi too!'"

Well thankfully those days are gone.

This is an exciting new era of growth, and the dedication of Margaret Walker Alexander's papers signals exciting times for Jackson State University and for the entire state of Mississippi.

I began my teaching career here at Jackson State, 30 years ago, in the fall of 1970.

Those were tense times for the Nation, tense for Mississippi and especially so at Jackson State, where 2 students were shot and killed by police gunfire in the middle of the night in May 1970. A number of faculty left after the shootings, and I always felt I got my job because of the tragedy. During that period we referred to ourselves as being "behind the stockade."

My two years at Jackson State were a wonderful time for me. I was one of a handful of white faculty members who were embraced by the warm, exciting culture that prevails here. I quickly made friends here, at Tougaloo College, and within the legal community working for civil rights. Alice Walker was part of the community then--she taught courses at Tougaloo, and we became good friends. Life here was completely integrated, and there were many warm, lively faculty parties.

During my teaching at Jackson State, I realized more deeply than ever that segregation denied me opportunities as white person, just as it denied education and opportunity to black people. Segregation denied me the opportunity to share the rich, exciting culture of African-Americans.

I learned many things while I was at Jackson State. I taught just about every course in the English Department--the survey of British Literature, the survey of American literature, creative writing. I taught areas I had not studied since my undergraduate years--and sometimes, I studied subjects a week or two ahead of my students.

Jackson State students were exciting to teach--many were the first members of their families to go to college, and learning was precious and exciting to them. I discovered the importance of reading literature aloud in class--particularly poetry. Many of my students had a talent for reading aloud, and for asking questions I had never considered. I probably learned as much from them as they did from me, a lesson I have not forgotten.

I lived two doors down from Margaret Walker Alexander on Guynes Street--a street since renamed Margaret Walker Alexander Avenue. Two doors in the other direction stood the house where Medgar Evers was killed.

Dr. Alexander was awe-inspiring. She published her novel *Jubilee* in 1966, and she had been an established literary figure since she won the Yale Younger Poets Award in 1942. When I first met her in 1970, she had taught for many years at Jackson State, and had founded the Institute for the Study of Black Life and Culture--this institute which, more than 30 years later, now bears her name. I had the privilege of working with her to develop programs on black studies at Jackson State.

She spoke to my students here at Jackson State, at Yale, and at the University of Mississippi, and always she spoke brilliantly about literature and the works of writers like Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston.

When Margaret died in 1998 at the age of 83, I was reminded of that African proverb--when an old man or woman dies, a library burns to the ground. She was a living library who wrote 11 books, including fiction, poetry, essays, biographies. She taught the Bible as literature here at Jackson State for 20 years, and taught Bible study classes at her church for 25. In her humanities classes, she taught the

wisdom literature of the East: the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the *Bhagavad-Gita* from India, *Gilgamesh* from the ancient Middle East, and the African epic *Sundiata*.

This collection of her papers is a national treasure. The organization I chair, the National Endowment for the Humanities, gave a grant of \$131,000 to arrange and describe her collection, to catalog and preserve her work for future generations. I cannot tell you how proud I am that this work is done. Margaret's papers will be invaluable to future generations. You may know, too, of other connections NEH has to Jackson State--Dr. Alfredteen Harrison has been a visiting scholar at the Endowment, and our Extending the Reach Initiative provides resources for humanities programming in underserved areas of the country--including historically black colleges and universities.

NEH also supports work to preserve and make available the archives in all historically black colleges and universities. We have two major projects under way at the moment--one which provides training in archival management, and another conducting a national inventory, to identify the rich historical records held by our nation's historically black colleges.

This work is critical to the humanities and to our nation. We sometimes fail to appreciate the impact of African-American culture on the world. I am not talking just about the culture brought from Africa, although that is certainly important. I am talking about the culture developed here, in the United States, by people of African descent. In popular music alone, music developed by African-Americans tradition has dominated the world for more than half a century. Wave after wave of music; from spirituals, jazz, and blues through gospel and rock and roll to hip-hop and rap, the inexhaustible well of African-American creativity has given the whole world its music. African-American writers such as Toni Morrison, Margaret Walker Alexander and Alice Walker are read throughout the world.

It is sometimes difficult to appreciate treasures when they are mixed with injustice and with sorrow, as the African-American experience has been. There is so much around us that we should treasure, that we should preserve, that too many of us are willing to let go--records and artifacts of our heritage that, in a generation or so, we will dearly wish we had preserved. I am thinking particularly of the Farish Street development project, a project that needs and deserves so much more support than it has received. Many people underestimate the value of Farish Street, as they underestimated Beale Street and its importance a generation ago. I have to tell you that a few generations ago, the only reason old houses were left standing in Natchez and Charleston and Savannah was the lack of money to demolish them and rebuild. Well, thankfully those houses have now taken their rightful place as treasures. Treasuring our past, and learning from it, is part of our endless desire to know where we came from, and where we are going. It is the job of the humanities to help us find answers to these questions. And, contrary to what many people think, it is the job of government and of society to help bring creativity to full flower.

Let us consider the case of Margaret Walker Alexander. She was truly a genius--that was clear from the time she was a young girl. But even a genius needs help overcoming the barriers of discrimination, and even a genius needs to eat--and government support, through the Federal Writers' Project in the Works Progress Administration, made it possible for the young Margaret Walker to support herself with her writing. The Writers' Project launched a number of other writers--including her friend and biographical subject Richard Wright. Eudora Welty also worked for the WPA--as a journalist and photographer, and the photographs she took in Mississippi in the 1930s inspired some of her wonderful short stories.

The world might never have known of the genius of Margaret Walker Alexander had not three important people in her life fought hard to make sure the barriers of racism and sexism did not stop her. Langston Hughes read her poetry when she was in high school, and declared, "Get her out of the South so she can become a writer." While she was at Northwestern University her professor, Edward Hungerford, had her admitted to the Poetry Society of America; Margaret did not know until after she graduated what a fight he waged to break down the barriers of racism in the Poetry Society. All of us here know that Margaret won the Yale University Younger Poets competition with her poem, "For My People". What many people do not know is that she submitted poems for five years, that the publishers involved in the competition refused to publish work by a black woman. Steven Vincent Benet, a pre-eminent American poet and one of the judges of the competition, told the publishers that if they did not award her the prize and publish her work that he would not write any more for them--and finally Margaret won the prize that launched her distinguished career.

Talent still needs help to grow and succeed. Historical artifacts and archives must be carefully preserved because they describe the talent of our people, and their history. Our are treasures, and their papers should be treated as a treasure. The papers of Margaret Walker Alexander are a special treasure. Margaret once said, "If I could write my epitaph it would read:

*Here lies Margaret Walker
Poet and Dreamer
She tried to make her life
A Poem."*

Margaret's life was a poem--an epic poem. And because of the work done on her papers, generations of students will be able to read and understand the poem that was her life. And that is fitting--because, above all else, she loved her students. She wrote movingly of Jackson State:

"This is my black-eyed-susan school. These minds were touched by my black mind. And from the riches of God's earth, sky, sea, and all inner recesses of hearts and spirits like ancient alchemists searching for secret veins, turning dross to gold, turning clay to consummately precious jewelry."

Precious jewelry. She left her treasure in the minds and talents of the young people whose lives she touched. Margaret Walker Alexander's treasure endures through her papers. And through this wonderful center that bears her name--her papers will enrich the minds and hearts of many generations to come.

Thank you.

Chairman's Remarks**Smithsonian Interns Career Symposium****July 27, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Elena, for that kind introduction. Good afternoon to all of you. I understand you have received some excellent career advice this week and last week, and later on you will receive more from my good friend Bill Paterson from Montgomery College.

The first suggestion I have is that you look around this room and make sure you know everybody here, and how to get in touch with them when your summer program is over. This is a highly selective program, and the fact that you are here marks you as someone with potential for high achievement in museum work and related fields. Twenty years from now, people who are in this program will very likely have key positions in museums, universities, foundations and government--the people around you will be an important part of that network. Our Summer Fellows and Interns from the National Endowment for the Humanities are here today. Our program, like yours, is very selective, and we expect that the our fellows and interns will have leadership positions in the humanities. Get to know each other--you will be very valuable to each other in the years ahead.

As Elena told you, I am Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I was appointed by President Clinton to this office and confirmed by the Senate. I oversee federal programs in the humanities--those include history, philosophy, languages, folklore, law and government. I have a short video to show you about the work of the NEH. You will recognize the voice of the narrator on this video as that of the distinguished actor Morgan Freeman, who is a good friend to the Endowment.

(show video)

That gives you an overview of what NEH does. One of special interest is My History is America's History. We are encouraging Americans to follow the history of their families and discover America's history. The My History program has its own website, www.myhistory.org. Americans using this website can share family stories and find out how to preserve their family histories. We rolled the project out last Thanksgiving, and since then it has become enormously popular. I have with me a number of the My History books which NEH distributes. It is a beautiful book; it has won the Distinguished Achievement Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing from the Association of Educational Publishers. The My History project has become the "electronic front porch" we hoped it would be, where people come and tell their family stories. Those stories really make history come alive. One story I will share with you is of a young man named Richard Gill Forrester. He was born in 1847, and, at the age of 13, he held a position most

unusual for a young black man in those days--he was a page at the Virginia State Capitol. When Virginia seceded from the Union, the flag bearing the Stars and Stripes was taken down and tossed on a rubbish pile to be burned. Young Richard took that flag, hid it under his shirt, and took it home to hide it under his bed. He told no one, and slept on that flag for the entire duration of the Civil War. After Richmond was captured by Federal troops, he raised the flag once again over the State Capitol, and then presented it to the 13th New Hampshire Volunteers Regiment as they entered the city. Today this same flag is proudly displayed in the Hall of Flags at the New Hampshire State Capitol. There are many more wonderful stories on that web site--from eyewitnesses to the attack at Pearl Harbor, a Chippewa woman's story of discovering her heritage, a story of buried treasure in a back yard in Laredo, Texas, and the saga of an Italian family who immigrated in 1900.

You might wonder how I got to have this job--since one of you might chair the Endowment some day. I was an English major in college, and I went on to get a master's degree in English. I grew up in Mississippi, and I always loved the blues.

When I was a teenager, I discovered a blues singer named Lovey Williams who performed at his home in a little crossroads community called Rising Sun. Lovey played his guitar and sang with a driving, raw sound. What was so special about this music? Well, let me first demonstrate a little. (Pick up guitar--play). This is what is called a "blue note"--the backbone of blues music. You will hear musicians play it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is a common element, whether you are playing down home blues (PLAY). . .the boogie-woogie blues of the 1940s and 50s (PLAY).

I have had a lot of requests this afternoon, but I'm going to play anyway.

I will just play something here-dedicated to the loveliest lady at the Smithsonian Institution--I won't say her name because she knows who she is.

(Play: Baby, Please Don't Go)

During the summers, when I was home from college, I taped blues singers, and, by the time I went to graduate school, I had many hours of recordings. However, those tapes were not what my English professors in that department wanted to hear. Spirituals and blues, they said, were not considered "serious" subjects. Then I had the good fortune to study at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, for a year on a Rotary Foundation Fellowship. It was in Dublin that I met Francis Utley, who taught medieval literature and folklore at Ohio State. Over breakfast one morning, I shared with Professor Utley my frustration that there seemed to be no room for the study of oral traditions in English departments. He replied, "You should go into folklore." It was as though he had given me the keys to the kingdom. The next fall, I took my box of recordings and entered the folklore Ph.D. program at The University of Pennsylvania. My advisor Kenny Goldstein took one look at the tapes,

and said, "That is your dissertation." And it was. That body of tapes was also the basis for my first book, "Blues from the Delta." I would like to emphasize here that this opportunity came about for me for a couple of very important reasons--one is that I was able to take advantage of the Rotary Foundation Fellowship, and I would encourage you to take advantage of as many such study opportunities as you can. Another is that I had already done a lot of work--on a subject I loved. I had a passion for it--I still have a passion for it. You should follow your heart so that your work sustains you spiritually.

My work on folklore and the blues led me on to graduate work, and on to teaching, in American Studies and African-American studies. I taught at Jackson State, and then at Yale, and most recently at the University of Mississippi. I also served as the first director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. The Center shaped a new breed of scholarship, looking at culture in an interdisciplinary way, so that literary critics became more comfortable with the blues and with southern history, and folklorists became more sensitive to the literary and musical traditions of the South. We built a bridge between an academic institution and the cultural world within which it exists. We published the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, which described every aspect of the South's life and thought, the impact of its history and politics, its music and literature, its manners and myths, even the iced tea that washes down its catfish and cornbread. And, I am happy to say, the National Endowment for the Humanities is encouraging the growth of regional humanities centers all over the United States, and we are helping various regions, states, and cities to write their own encyclopedias.

Something I had to learn to do midway in my career is something you should learn early in yours. You will need to be able to raise money for your projects. The financial resources for cultural organizations have shifted dramatically in the past twenty years, and they will continue to change.

We have an Enterprise Office at NEH, and its mission is to raise money from private sources. Those sources are very important--for example, MCIWorldcom made it possible for us to launch the EDSITEment project; the Sara Lee Corporation underwrites our Jefferson Lecture. The Jefferson Lecture is the highest recognition the federal government grants in the humanities and we are very grateful to have corporate support for it.

If you are going into museum management, or the management of any sort of cultural activity, you need to know how to raise money. If you are going to have an academic career--you will need fellowships and grants to support your research.

I want you to remember three points: start building your network here, learn to raise money, and do what you love. The greatest of these points is the last--do what you love. I have been able to enjoy my work, day after day and year after year. Each of you has laid a foundation so that both your work and your life can be

a joy to you, every day. I can wish you no greater joy--and that is what I do wish you--each and every one.

Now, I would like for you to join me in singing a song. It is a call-and-response song: Hey, Bo Diddley.

(Sing Bo Diddley)

Thank you. Now I would like to take your questions.

**Chairman's Remarks President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC)
Arlington, Virginia
September 20, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I want to thank my friend Joe Thompson for that kind introduction. The President's Information Technology Advisory Committee has carefully examined how our government should operate in an information age, and how it can resolve the digital divide between technology "haves and have-nots". An important part of what this committee does deals with the humanities—dealing with human thought and culture.

Some of you work in the fields where humanities and technology interface—Library and Information Science, for example. I am happy to see Dr. Ching-chi Chen, a member of PITAC, who worked with NEH to produce a laser disk and CD-ROM called "The First Emperor."

I want to share with you a short video on the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the federal agency that I chair. The narrator on this video is the distinguished actor Morgan Freeman, who is a good friend of the Endowment.

(SHOW VIDEO)

That video refers to electronic databases and our work with the Internet. Technology and the humanities have been joined at the waist since the invention of writing . They evolved together through the invention of the bound book, which created a portable written word; through the invention of the printing press and movable type, and on to the development of radio, television, and the Internet.

The Internet is as profound a revolution as these other changes in technology. It has changed the way information is created, stored, and disseminated. It has had a dramatic impact on academe and on learning in general. Basic building blocks of education like reading and writing, are affected by a hypertext world in which nonlinear narrative is becoming the norm. The internet has also drastically changed the concept of a publisher. I can publish a book on the Internet for free, and every person on the planet can read it. This forever changes the way information is disseminated.

NEH has given support for nearly 300 web sites. One of these, called Oyez, Oyez, Oyez is a multi-media database at Northwestern University on the U.S. Supreme Court. Users can go to this site, and search for every case ever decided by the Supreme Court. For example, if you search for Reno v. ACLU—you will find that the Supreme Court struck down two provisions in the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which was intended to protect minors from unsuitable internet

material. That could be an important piece of information for a student of communications—or for the lawyer of an Internet Service Provider.

That is a fairly simple example of technology and the humanities working together—here is a more complex project: EDSITEment. NEH has partnered with MCI Worldcom, with The Council of the Great City Schools, and the National Trust for the Humanities, to bring together the best of the humanities on the web. EDSITEment is a portal to 105 outstanding humanities sites that were all selected through a rigorous merit review process. Some have very sophisticated content—such as Columbia University's Digital Dante, which includes not only translations of Dante's works, but also scholarly commentary, student papers, great art work, and references that place Dante's work in context.

EDSITEment also provides important help for students from Kindergarten through high school, and important support for their teachers. For example, a high school English teacher explores the Literature and Language Arts section—and looks at what's appropriate for grades 9 through 12. Teachers can request lesson plans for that grade level. They may decide to use the lesson plan on Nathaniel Hawthorne as Author and Narrator. The plan asks students to describe the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter*, to examine the works of Hawthorne's contemporaries to get some context, and to use some of Hawthorne's short stories. The teacher can check this lesson plan against standards set by the National Council of Teachers of English and other teachers' groups. EDSITEment is a wonderful example of a communications company providing financial support and expertise to help students and teachers in the humanities.

Another such partnership is the My History is America's History project. NEH has as its partners in this project PSINet, which provides the hosting services for the website, and Genealogy.com, which has contributed expertise and financial support. Through this web site, Americans can now trace their family trees, and connect their family history to America's history. The site has developed into an electronic front porch for Americans to share their diverse family stories. In September we encouraged people to write about School Days, and received vignettes of school days from the 1920s in Kansas and Arkansas. We have memorable stories like that of Aaron Zeide's grandfather, who, in the closing days of World War II, was a soldier in the army of the Soviet Union. He and another soldier were in an advance guard, moving behind the retreating Nazis, and entered a deserted town. The town's residents had either evacuated or been killed by the Nazis.

Here's how Aaron tells the story: "As my grandfather and his partner explored the main building, they heard a kitten's meow. They converged on the sound and discovered that it emanated from the chimney's ground access door. After checking for booby traps, the partner took pity on the kitten and began to open the door. All of a sudden, my grandfather slammed it closed. On a hunch, he reached inside to feel about. Sure enough, there was a kitten. But he also noticed

that a string had been tied onto the hind leg of the kitten. He severed the string, withdrew the kitten and examined the situation. It was discovered that the string was connected to a switch, that, with a sharp tug, would detonate the huge quantities of explosives later discovered under the floorboards of the buildings."

Hundreds of family stories like that of Aaron Zeide are now on the website.

Another site funded by NEH is [The Valley of the Shadow](#), a portrait of people who lived in two ends of the same valley during the Civil War—one county in Pennsylvania, the other in Virginia.

This project contains a massive database with records that describe daily life in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and Augusta County, Virginia, as well as the battles involving units from those counties, and the military records of the men from those counties who fought in the Civil War. If we request military dossiers from Augusta County, and type in the name Watkins—we find four names. The 1860 Census tells us that before the Civil War Thomas Watkins was the manager of a railroad; information compiled from military records shows us what battles he was in, that he was killed at Bethesda Church in 1864—and we learn that he had a brother who also enlisted. His brother John's records show that he survived the war, that in 1870 he was a clerk in a dry good store, and that he died in 1918, at the age of 79.

This site also features animated maps that show the movements and battles involving units from the two counties. If we select the First Virginia Cavalry, we see it was formed early in the war, in 1861—(*follow animation*)—and we can follow the timeline marker moving across the bottom of the screen. We see that this particular unit was involved in many battles, including First and Second Manassas, Gettysburg, Antietam. . .and that they were in the final campaign ending at Appomattox. It is also possible to explore individual battles, to find out who was commanding, who was killed—we can even get weather reports.

One very rich source of information for these two counties is their [newspapers](#). Newspapers are a fundamental key to our country's history and culture. NEH supports the United States Newspaper Program, which locates, catalogs and microfilms the newspapers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Trust Territories. To date the project has catalogued 146-thousand newspaper titles, and preserved—on microfilm—60 million pages of newsprint. Those microfilmed newspapers document daily life in this country from the 1700s through the middle of the 20th century.

Our effort to preserve newspapers would be much more meaningful if we could provide access to those newspapers over the Internet. Digital technology offers the potential to make the content of those microfilmed newspapers accessible to millions of people all over the world.

The information that newspapers contain is complex in its format and organization,

and the capture of that information poses some challenging research issues for computer science. I think you will agree, however, that it would be well worth solving those problems to have a searchable database for all available American newspapers.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is launching on-line encyclopedias in every state, region, and major urban area. One such encyclopedia is *The Handbook of Texas*.

North Carolina is also building its online encyclopedia, and at the North Carolina State Library website, we can look under state symbols, and scroll down to the category of State Vegetable, and discover that the newly designated state vegetable is the sweet potato— chosen because North Carolina leads the nation in sweet potato production.

Another important NEH initiative is the Regional Humanities Centers. While we often talk about one nation and a global culture, culture is created at a regional level. The information revolution is not the only one going on around us—there have been profound changes in the areas of heritage preservation and cultural tourism—activities that concentrate on the uniqueness of place. We think of ourselves as Americans, but we are also Westerners or Southerners or New Englanders. Regions, with their accents, history, culture, and folkways, shape who we are.

We have already awarded planning grants in ten regions and will establish Regional Humanities Centers in each of those regions. Each Regional Humanities Center will have an administrative home in a single institution, but its activities will reach across state, regional, and national boundaries. The Centers will develop new programs and resources that will compliment the work of existing educational and cultural institutions. Institutions selected to receive NEH funds to establish regional centers will also have to raise 15-million dollars each in matching funds. This is a clear opportunity for interested corporations or individuals to make an important difference in the study of the humanities in the places they call home.

There is another area in which technology and technology companies are welcome partners for the humanities, and that is in the transfer of archives and other records from obsolete media. As technology moves forward, we lose the ability to access information that is stored in electronic form.

It is ironic that we can still read writing on an ancient Egyptian scroll, but cannot access the records of the Mars Explorer because they are stored on magnetic tape, and magnetic tape is proving to be an unreliable system for archiving. A recent video by the Commission on Preservation and Access, called *Into the Future*, dramatically shows how we are not ensuring that our electronically stored information will be accessible in the future. We need to have continued access to the knowledge we have acquired. The Endowment supported the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), which produced guidelines for formatting humanities texts to

ensure their effective retrieval and their persistence in the face of rapidly changing technology. More than 60 electronic text centers, digital libraries and individual projects in North America and Europe currently use the TEI. NEH also supported Encoded Archival Description (EAD), the basis for formatting archival finding aids for Internet retrieval.

NEH has also cooperated with the National Science Foundation on the Digital Libraries Initiative, an ongoing series of research and demonstration projects that resolve some of the problems posed by the digitization of humanities collections. We believe that only a coordinated effort among government agencies will ensure the effective creation of the next generation of digital libraries.

The future for technology and the humanities is one in which access to information must be democratic, a future we can shape together. We look forward to working with each of you as technology and the humanities begin their journey into the 21st century.

Thank you.

Chairman's Remarks**President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities****September 22, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

(Introduced by John Brademas, Chairman of President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.)

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for that kind introduction. It is an honor to be here with your distinguished committee, and I am especially pleased to be present at the lovely tribute to my dear friend Harriet Fulbright.

We are all thrilled to be working with Bunny Burson, who brings exciting ideas and energy to the Committee. Bunny's talents as an artist and as an administrator were clearly demonstrated in her previous work at Vanderbilt University and at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We are also grateful for the tireless efforts of Carole Watson, who has helped strengthen the Committee's ties with the humanities.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has been a very busy place since I last spoke with you. I am deeply grateful for your support of My History is America's History. We have had 5.5 million hits on the Web site since we launched it the past Thanksgiving. That's an average of about 1,000 per day. We had a nice "spike" around August 22 when the *Los Angeles Times* published a feature article on My History. The site will have an updated design and new features this fall.

I want to talk to you this morning about our creation of 10 Regional Humanities Centers. Although we live in an age of rapid travel, worldwide telecommunications, and a global economy, trends in heritage preservation and cultural tourism remind us that we all seek to rediscover cultural roots, to connect with places that hold special meaning for us.

Regions have always provided an anchor for individuals living in this large, diverse nation.

(begin slide presentation: map)

NEH has identified ten regions in which to locate humanities centers, and we have awarded planning grants to 20 institutions. Regional centers will use place as a window for understanding our nation's diverse voices and for reaffirming our common bonds as Americans. (slide for funding plan) NEH has requested 2-million in federal funds for each center; we plan to match this support with 3-million in individual, foundation, and corporate grants for each center to make a 5-million dollar implementation grant—one million each year for five years--for each of the ten institutions chosen to create Regional Centers. Each of those institutions will in

turn have to raise 5-million in matching funds, for a total of 20-million to endow each Regional Center.

(slide on relationships)

I want to emphasize that these centers will in no way compete with existing institutions. Each institution will coordinate its efforts with many different organizations involved in humanities work—from state humanities councils and art councils, to chambers of commerce, cultural tourism organizations, schools—all those groups you see here and more.

This network of Regional Centers is a historic step for the humanities. These centers will link their programs with international students and scholars, and will train them to develop similar projects in their own countries. Bunny Burson has suggested working with Veterans' Hospitals to collect Oral Histories—I think that is a wonderful idea, and one that would fit nicely into this plan. This effort grows out of my work as a folklorist and as a director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. I want to share my personal journey in search of place. It is a journey that these Centers will encourage in every part of our nation.

(Personal slide presentation, ad lib)

(slides end, lights up)

We have heard impressive reports on how institutions with planning grants are developing new partnerships. One said, "The planning process . . . included the challenge of identifying constituents in every part of the region. . .we have encountered enthusiasm everywhere we have been. Simply put, people want to be part of this Center and appreciate having the opportunity to be involved in the planning stages for it."

Another report: "We have used the past six months to explore new partnerships for the Regional Humanities Center with the state Humanities Councils and other regional cultural institutions. We have already begun to forge new relationships that will sustain all of us, no matter what the outcome of the grant process might be. The planning process itself has established the principle of collaboration between the universities and regional cultural institutions and has helped to further the mission of the 'public humanities.'"

An initiative that has already created this kind of cooperation and excitement is one worth supporting. The project is successfully challenging institutions to work together throughout each region. The president of one university with a planning grant told me the region has always viewed itself as an "overfly zone" for the nation, and this project will dramatically change that viewpoint.

I appreciate your time and attention this morning, and I would welcome your

counsel and support as we create these Regional Humanities Centers.

Thank you.

Chairman's Welcoming Remarks: Public Programs Project Directors' Meeting**National Endowment for the Humanities****Washington, DC****October 30, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Nancy (Rogers) for that kind introduction. Good morning to all of you. I want to welcome you to the National Endowment for the Humanities. I greet you on behalf of all our staff, and want you to know that we consider the Public Programs the "headliners" of our work here. Your library and archive programs, your interactive exhibits, your discussions, radio and TV programs and your museum presentations are our most visible humanities projects, and we are deeply grateful to each of you for creating them.

I want to take a few minutes this morning to describe the big picture of what we do here, through our video, *Rediscovering America*. The video is narrated by our good friend the distinguished actor Morgan Freeman:

SHOW VIDEO

As most of you know, in 1995, Congress cut this agency's budget by more than a third—our budget dropped from \$172 million to \$110 million—less than what it takes to run many community colleges. We lost three of our six divisions, and our funding programs were reduced from 31 to 9.

When I was confirmed as Chairman of NEH in 1997, two years after these cuts were made, our Congressional funding remained at a flat \$110-million. It was clear that our staff was demoralized, that the humanities and this agency had little public recognition. Both NEH and the many programs it supports were at risk. We developed an aggressive, positive message about the humanities, aimed at both Congress and the American people—the video you just saw helped carry that message.

I am happy to say that our past two annual budgets have each provided a 5-million dollar increase for NEH, an increase that brings our annual support from Congress to \$120 million. I had the privilege of standing behind President Clinton as he signed the recent Department of the Interior budget including our second increase. If you ask me how we are doing, I would say we are half way home and a long way to go.

We do a lot here at NEH with a relatively small amount of money; I want to tell just a few things that I think will be of the mos interest to you. We created four working groups to review our resources and see how they might best be used to serve the humanities community. Over the past two years these groups

Chairman's Welcoming Remarks: Summer Institutes and Seminars Project Directors' Meeting**National Endowment for the Humanities****Washington, DC****November 2, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Candace (Katz) for that kind introduction. Good morning to all of you. I want to welcome each of you to the National Endowment for the Humanities. I greet you on behalf of all our staff, and want you to know that the work you do, the enrichment of the professional lives of humanities teachers, is vitally important to this agency and to the humanities.

If it were not for my teacher Mrs. Barfield, I would not be chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I grew up on a farm 16 miles from Vicksburg, Mississippi, and I went to a school where I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day, Mrs. Barfield asked who among us planned on going to college. No one raised a hand. She pointed at me and said, "Billy Ferris, I know you will go to college. Your parents will make you go." I said, "I ain't going to no college!" I am grateful to Mrs. Barfield for many things—and one of them is that she was a better prophet than I was.

I want to take a few minutes this morning to describe the big picture of what we do here through our video, Rediscovering America. The video is narrated by our good friend the distinguished actor Morgan Freeman:

SHOW VIDEO

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National Council on the Humanities, Plenary Session**Chairman's Remarks****National Endowment for the Humanities****Washington, DC****November 17, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Council for the Humanities

Welcome to all of our distinguished Council members to the first council meeting of this fiscal year, and the last of this administration.

Congressional Report: We look forward to working with the new administration, and we are pleased that we will be doing so with an increase in our budget. Congress has appropriated an additional 5-million dollars for our budget, bringing our total to \$120-million dollars for the fiscal year. When Congress allocated the funds, they gave substantial increases to Federal/State Partnership, to the Divisions of Research and Public Programs, and to the Office of Challenge Grants. Due to the increase we will be able to raise the award amounts for NEH Fellowships and Summer Stipends. Beginning with the current round of fellowship awards, which the Council will consider later this morning, full-term fellowships will increase from \$30-thousand to \$35-thousand. Similarly, Summer Stipend awards, which will be considered at our March meeting, will rise from \$4,000 to \$4,500. This is the first increase in these awards the agency has been able to make in more than a decade.

The national elections have provided high drama, and, as I am sure you are aware, some key races are not yet decided. Regardless of how these races are resolved, the National Endowment for the Humanities will continue to forge bipartisan support with Congressional leaders and with the next President of the United States.

Council nominees: Our ten nominees to the National Council are still being considered by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, chaired by Sen. Jim Jeffords. I have spoken with Sen. Jeffords and Sen. Kennedy, the ranking minority member of that committee, urging them to move our nominees out of committee for confirmation by the Senate. I have also spoken with key people in Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's office to ensure they will move quickly to consider the nominees once they move through the committee.

Overview of recent accomplishments: I want to mention some of our recent accomplishments. First, I would like to call your attention to the latest issue of *Humanities* magazine.

We have finished our "one book", *Grants 2000-2001*. This streamlined printed version of NEH application information puts everything an applicant needs to know for all NEH programs in one place. It replaces 17 booklets and an overview, and

will save more than 2-million duplicated pages. It will also be available online very soon.

Our four Working Group Papers on regional studies; teaching and lifelong learning; international studies; humanities, science, and technology are all available online at neh.gov; printed copies will be available later this month.

We are putting the finishing touches on a handsome 100 page, 4-color book celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the NEH; it features an introduction by Stephen Ambrose and will also serve as our report to Congress in January. This book vividly shows how our support for humanities projects large and small has transformed our understanding of the nation and the world.

The Jefferson Lecture presented earlier this year by James McPherson is being printed in a beautifully designed limited edition. Copies will be in the hands of all NEH staff, our Council, Congressional leaders, and friends by the end of this month.

At this Council meeting, we will complete the first cycle of institutional grants in the Extending the Reach Initiative. These grants are to 14 states and to historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities.

Humanities programs we have funded continue to garner prestigious awards. The documentary film about George Wallace, *Settin' the Woods on Fire*, won a special jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival. The radio project *Lost and Found Sound* won a Peabody and a Clarion Award, as well as a Webby award for its web site. The museum project *Native Lands: Indians and Georgia*, won an award of merit from the Atlanta Historical Society as well as two awards from the Southeastern Museum Conference—one for its an outstanding exhibition, and a second award for its teachers' guide.

In October we notified the Executive Directors of the State Humanities Councils of a special national initiative to provide support for the creation of new online encyclopedias of U-S states, territories, and the District of Columbia. In order to get this initiative under way as quickly as possible, we set a deadline of January 5, 2001, for receipt of applications for planning grants.

The Working Group on Teaching and Lifelong Learning organized a very successful Colloquium on the Humanities in Community Colleges, to discuss professional development, curriculum, scholarship and research, and distance learning in community colleges.

In October we hosted a Forum on Folklore and the Humanities. Speakers examined academic theory, issues in public programming and documentation, and traced the roots of folklore studies within intellectual history.

As you may know, the Federation of State Humanities Councils is also meeting in Washington this week. The Federation has dedicated this week's meeting to the memory of Michael Lanza, because of the very important work Michael did with the State Humanities Councils. Michael died last Thursday, November 9th, in his home town of Lake Charles, Louisiana, among family and friends. Michael worked tirelessly to build support for state humanities councils within our agency, and he traveled to councils throughout the nation to assist them with their important work. A framed photo of a young Michael with his former teacher and mentor John Hope Franklin hangs above his desk at NEH, recalling his days as a history graduate student at the University of Chicago. Michael's spirit will live on through his legacy as a scholar, teacher, humanities advocate, and friend. I want to take a moment of silence in Michael's memory.

(Pause)

Just last month, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation renewed its support of our Humanities Scholars and Teachers in Residence program for New Jersey Teachers. The \$50-thousand grant represents a second year of Dodge funding for this model project. The program now serves as a model for our Extending the Reach states.

By the end of the year, we expect to be able to accept contributions online. Anyone will be able to log on to our web site, make a donation with a credit card, which will be processed by the Mellon Bank and the U-S Treasury Department.

This year marked our first joint participation with the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts in the "Coming Up Taller" awards program. The Coming Up Taller Awards celebrate the creative accomplishments of America's young people, and they highlight the power of the humanities to help us give our children a productive and safe start in life. Included in the packet for Council members is the Coming Up Taller Awards program booklet, which so captures the spirit and energy of these outstanding young people, and there are additional copies of the booklet available in the foyer for others who may not have seen it.

The new Executive Director of the PCAH is Bunny Burson, who is with us today. Bunny brings impressive energy and vision to this Committee . She has had a distinguished career as an artist, instructor, administrator and curator. She has built nationally recognized programs at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center and at the Department of Veterans Affairs. We are honored to be working with Bunny Burson, and I want to call on her to say a few words:

(Bunny Burson speaks)

Already getting critical acclaim is the NEH-funded *Napoleon* series currently airing on PBS. I am pleased to show you striking full page ads in Time Magazine, U.S. News and Newsweek which prominently credit NEH. There are also articles on the *Napoleon* series among a selection of our recent NEH press clippings in your

packets.

We are also pleased to share with you a preview of the upcoming NEH-funded documentary series, *JAZZ*, by Ken Burns, which will begin airing on PBS on January 8th. You can see the stunning *JAZZ* posters here in the room today; Council members also have a CD and other *JAZZ* material in your packets. This 10-part series celebrates the history and heritage of what has often been called America's classical music. This is the first television series to present the story of Jazz--and demonstrate its impact on America's history. We hope you enjoy this special preview. *[Roll tape.]*

Our guest speaker today is Doug Barnett, Assistant Director for Research and Information Services at the Texas State Historical Association. Doug served as managing editor of The New Handbook of Texas and continues in that role with the Handbook of Texas Online, an Internet edition released in 1999. He is coordinating a multi-year project to transform the website into a digital gateway for Texas history, geography, and culture. Doug received his BA and MA in historical geography from the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include the historical geography of place-making , ranching, and the Edwards Plateau of Texas. He gave a superb presentation at our State Encyclopedia Workshop here in June, and has updated it for our plenary today, to include a segue from our video on *JAZZ*. Please welcome Douglas Barnett.

(Douglas Barnett speaks)

Intro John Roberts for Staff Report

Federation of State Humanities Councils**Washington, DC****November 18, 2000**

William Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Gail (Leftwich) for that kind introduction. I want to welcome you all to Washington. You have arrived here at a very interesting time. We at NEH are looking forward to working with the new administration.

I want to thank each you for the wonderful reception you put on at the Arts Club of Washington. I greatly appreciate the fine work done by your board, and especially by Chairman Lester Abberger. You have excellent leadership in Gail Leftwich and in Esther Mackintosh—and my hat is off to all of you who serve the humanities through your state councils. I want to recognize two members of our National Council who are here: Lorraine Frank, who was the Founding Executive Director of the Arizona Humanities Council, and Peggy Prenshaw, who holds the Fred C. Frey Chair of Southern Studies in the English Department at Louisiana State University.

There is someone else to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude, who is with us today in spirit. Michael Lanza died a week ago Thursday, November 9th, in his home town of Lake Charles, Louisiana. We have received many expressions of condolence from the state humanities councils, for which we are grateful; they are most appropriate, since Michael 's work in Federal/State Partnership was done with deep commitment. Those of you who worked with Michael during the past five years know that he battled a devastating illness, but his perseverance and his zest for life made it easy to forget how seriously ill he was. Michael was a life-long friend of his mentor John Hope Franklin, and he had a career as an effective, energetic teacher and scholar before he came to NEH. Each of us can recall times shared with Michael , and we know that his spirit will live on through his legacy as a scholar, teacher, humanities advocate, and friend. I think it is appropriate to observe a moment of silence in Michael's memory. (*Pause.*)

This past session of Congress was a good one for the humanities; for the second year in a row, we have received a \$5-million increase in our budget. That brings our annual budget to \$120-million dollars. As a result of that increase, all state humanities councils have received increases in their grants from NEH for the coming year.

In October we wrote to Executive Directors of all the State Humanities Councils, notifying them of a special national initiative to create online encyclopedias in all U-S states, territories, and the District of Columbia. This initiative will harness the talents of scholars throughout the nation, who will focus their gaze state by state, region by region, city by city. We are pleased and proud to be launching this initiative as a partnership with State Humanities Councils.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has been in the news in the past few months—some of the coverage has been very favorable, but there has been criticism, and I would like to address that criticism. I have been accused of trying to popularize the humanities. I stand before you today to state unequivocally that I believe the future of the humanities will be decided by our ability to support the public humanities, those that reach the average American. If someone says to me, "I hear you think that exhibition 'Barn Again' was terrific." I would have to admit that, yes, I do think it was wonderful, that an exhibit that attracts hundreds of thousands of people to think about the barn as a symbol of country and community life, was a great idea and a highly worthwhile project. The cooperation of state humanities councils with NEH, the Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service, and National Building Museum produced a well-researched, engaging travelling exhibition, which helped Americans learn about themselves and about an important component of American culture. If we had a dollar for every person in this country, I would want to do a great many more such exhibits.

The implied part of that criticism, however, is something to which I strenuously object. The implication is that support for the popular humanities undercuts our support for scholarly work in the humanities, and that is absolutely not true. For the public outreach of any humanities program to have meaning, it must be based on rigorous academic standards and research.

Let me review a little of our history here. Congress reduced our agency's budget by nearly 40-percent for fiscal 1996. Congress reduced funding for all our research, education, and public programming areas by more than 50-percent from their fiscal 1995 levels. The budget for NEH has remained absolutely flat—until the last two years. Congress increased our budget to 115-million dollars last year, and to 120-million this fiscal year. With those increases, we were able to increase support for research—in fact, out of the 5-million dollar increase we received for this fiscal year, Congress allocated a \$1-million increase for our Research Division. With that increase, we will be able to raise the award amounts for NEH Fellowships and Summer stipends—the first increases we have been able to award for more than a decade. While I have been Chairman, the NEH has strengthened humanities scholarship by securing increased dollars for all our programs. Given the very modest pie with which we serve the entire humanities community, I think we are all better served by working together rather than by quarrelling over whose portion is larger.

I particularly cherish the cooperation we receive from the Federation and the state humanities councils, and I deeply appreciate our friends at the state councils who leapt to the defense of NEH.

The impression has also been given that NEH funds have been diverted from research to launch the regional humanities centers initiative—those impressions are mistaken. The \$1-million used for planning grants was raised primarily from

private sources. I would like to take a few minutes here to describe plans for the regional centers, and my thoughts that inspired me to support them.

(Lights down: Slide presentation)

(Slide 1: map) As many of you know, NEH has identified ten regions in which we will locate humanities centers, and we have awarded planning grants to 20 institutions. Regional centers will use place as a window for understanding our nation's diverse voices, and for reaffirming our common bonds as Americans.

(Slide 2: funding) NEH has requested 2-million in federal funds for each center, and we plan to match this support with \$3-million in individual, foundation and corporate grants for each center to create a \$5-million implementation grant -- \$1 million each year for five years for each of the ten institutions chosen to create regional centers. Each of those institutions will in turn have to raise \$15-million in matching funds, for a total of \$20 million to endow each regional center.

(Slide 3: connections) I want to emphasize that these centers will in no way compete with existing institutions. Each institution will, through an advisory board, coordinate its efforts with many different organizations involved in humanities work. From state humanities councils and art councils to Chambers of Commerce, cultural tourism organizations and schools—all of those groups that you see here before you and more. This network of regional centers is a historic step for the humanities. These centers will link their programs with international students and scholars and will train them to develop similar projects in their own countries.

(Slides 3 & 4: architecture, banjos) For me, this effort grows naturally out of my work as a folklorist and director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. I want to share my personal journey in search of place. It is a journey that these centers will encourage Americans to make in every part of our nation.

(Slides 5,6 & 7: Changing light on tree) I was thinking about this, looking one morning at a tree on the farm where I grew up in Mississippi, a tree that I have known since I was a child, thinking about how place and early morning light shape that tree in such a special way. As I watched, there was a different light and a different tree. A few moments later, yet a third tree. Yet it was the same tree—with its roots deep in the same soil, in the same place. I began to think about place and what a powerful force it is in every one of our lives. Within these places images that are global in their relationships are grounded within the day to day lives of people.

(Slide show continues: ad lib)

(Last slide) So from the first worlds of sunrise to sunset, we are reminded about how closely people and places are tied together and how powerful the drive to understand regional culture is, as a way of understanding our own life as

Americans.

Lights up.

We have received impressive reports from the institutions that have planning grants. They are building new partnerships in their region as part of the planning process.

One reported: "We have used the past six months to explore new partnerships for the Regional Humanities Center with the State Humanities Councils and other regional cultural institutions. We have already begun to forge new relationships that will sustain all of us, no matter what the outcome of the grant process might be. The planning process itself has established the principle of collaboration between the universities and regional cultural institutions and has helped to further the mission of the 'public humanities.'"

An initiative that has already created this kind of cooperation and excitement is one worth supporting. The project is successfully challenging institutions to work together throughout each region. The president of one university with a planning grant told me the region has always viewed itself as an "overfly zone" for the nation, and this project will dramatically change that perspective.

I believe humanities are for all the people. As a folklorist, I have spent much of my life working with the poor and dispossessed, seeking a voice for them with the academic and public worlds, through books, records, films, and public festivals that celebrate their lives and their culture. From locally celebrated blues artists, quilt makers and storytellers to internationally-known artists like B-B King, Eudora Welty, Steven Spielberg, and Alice Walker, I have been privileged to work with many of the great artists and writers of my time. That work continues as we build through the humanities a cultural and educational platform for all Americans who seek to tell their story and to understand their history.

The work that so many of the State Humanities Councils do, with those who are newly literate, with those who are trying to become literate, with those who speak another language, and those who struggle with poverty is some of the most important work we can do.

Earl Shorris, founder of the Clemente Course in the Humanities, has shown us that the poor and dispossessed have a profound understanding of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and of the moral dilemmas facing Antigone. All of us who are human have a right to understand what it means to be human. That is the great work of the humanities.

Thank you for doing that work, for sharing the humanities with all Americans. Thank you for your appreciation of scholarship and research , and for your ability to show all our citizens how this work relates to them. Thank you for making all our lives richer, for making this world a better place in which to live.