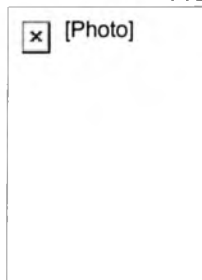


More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: February 1998

Promoting Understanding New Leadership at Federal Cultural Agency

By William R. Ferris

The National Endowment for the Humanities is a small federal agency in Washington, D.C. But its impact nationally far exceeds its size because of the importance of its work. By providing grants throughout the nation for cultural preservation projects, educational improvement, scholarly research and public programs, the NEH promotes knowledge of human history, thought and culture, thereby enriching the nation's cultural life.

A folklorist and anthropologist by training, I am NEH's new chairman, and I am from Mississippi. I say that not to brag but rather to make a point about the philosophy that guides me in my new role. For the past 18 years I have been founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, but my philosophy has gestated for much longer than that. It is this: Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself a "little postage stamp of native soil," as novelist William Faulker put it, and it is to this place that each of us goes to find our clearest, deepest sense of identity.

The South's cultural diversity defines me. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. For years I have interviewed, photographed and filmed southern storytellers, musicians and artists whose stories have become very special to me. Through their voices southern culture speaks its heart, whether it is Jimmy Rodgers' country music, B.B. King's blues or Elvis Presley's rock and roll.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success and make a mark on society, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

Those in politics have voiced their concern over the impoverishment of American life and values, but no one has found an answer to our problems. I suggest that the solution lies in the familiar worlds into which we are born. We must study and understand the worlds that make each of us American and through that journey we will renew American culture.

As the new chairman of the NEH, I am committed to creating opportunities for all Americans to join in this important endeavor.

*William R. Ferris is chairman of the
National Endowment for the Humanities.*

More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: March 1998

Honoring Thomas Jefferson Historian Receives Top Humanities Honor

By William R. Ferris

Imagine a gifted American president who would rather be remembered as the founder of a university than as president of the United States. That was Thomas Jefferson, who in writing his own epitaph listed his roles as author of the Declaration of Independence and founder of the University of Virginia, but not as the nation's third president.

Jefferson's commitment to education and scholarship is celebrated annually with a huge springtime gathering in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The occasion is the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, the highest honor the federal government confers for achievement in the humanities. The humanities are the fields of history, literature and philosophy, in all of which Thomas Jefferson excelled. Each year NEH selects a distinguished American scholar to give this prestigious national lecture, which honors intellectual and civic accomplishment as exemplified by Mr. Jefferson.

This year marks the 27th Jefferson Lecture, which NEH established in 1972 as a forum for discussing important contemporary issues in historical and philosophical perspective. In March, Bernard Bailyn, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian who taught at Harvard University for some 40 years, gave the lecture at Washington's Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. It was titled "To Begin the World Anew."

Professor Bailyn is the nation's preeminent historian of colonial and Revolutionary America. He wrote a book in 1968 that changed our understanding of the founding of America. Ever since its publication, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* has influenced how historians study American history. The thesis is that the American founders, in defying the sanctity of British enlightened despotism, were motivated not just by principles of freedom but also by a deep suspicion of political power. That attitude of suspicion is the "ideology," or worldview, that drove the founders toward rebellion and creation of a restrained form of government that had never before been imagined.

Here is an excerpt from Bailyn's lecture:

"The Founders of the American nation were one of the most creative groups in modern history. ... We have neither their need nor their opportunity to begin the world anew. But we do have the obligation, as inheritors of their success, to view every establishment critically, to remain in some sense on the margins, and forever to ask. . . why things must be the way they are. . ."

NEH's Jefferson Lecture honors Thomas Jefferson's questioning spirit, which is both the heart of our democratic way of life and the essence of the humanities.

If you would like to receive an invitation to next year's Jefferson Lecture, please email your name and mailing address to us at info@neh.gov. We'll put you on our list.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Commonwealth Club
San Francisco, California
March 27, 1998**

Rediscovering America through the Humanities

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I'm delighted to be back here in San Francisco, speaking to the Commonwealth Club. As some of you will recall, I was here just two short years ago--almost to the day. At that time, I came here as the Director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Now, I have an exciting new job, I'm very proud to serve as the new Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Emile Zola once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world. . . I will reply, I'm here to, live my life out loud." Today, I have come to San Francisco to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be *Rediscovering America through the Humanities*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of uncommon men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Willa Cather, Thomas Edison, FDR, Dwight Eisenhower, and others. You know those names. I'm also here on behalf of Paul Fussell, James McPherson, Laurel Ulrich, Professor Patricia Parker of Stanford, and Professor Marianne Constable of U.C. Berkeley, to mention just a few of the scholars, writers, and teachers who keep America's stories alive. The National Endowment for the Humanities helps them keep the stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them, and our children can enjoy and learn from them.

I want to talk to you today about these clients, and how they can help answer two important questions. What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? This is the time and this is the place to ask those questions. The millennium approaches. We have less than 670 days left in this century. As the famous philosopher Yogi Berra once observed, "It's gettin' late early." What will we do with this time? There will be celebrations and dancing in the streets, but we can also use the occasion to explore

where we're going as a country.

Before I discuss where we're going, allow me to briefly explain how I got here.

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. I went to a school where I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day Mrs. Barfield, the sixth grade teacher, asked the students who planned on going to college. No one raised his or her hand. She pointed at me and said, "Billy Ferris, you will go to college. Your parents will make you go." I said, "I ain't going to no college!"

Well, after four decades, one Ph.D., several books, and stops at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow and Trinity College in Dublin, I am here. Mrs. Barfield was right, and I'm glad I was wrong. She was a great teacher. Without her help and that of my parents, my wife and my daughter, I would not be where I am today. They have all inspired my love for, and dedication to, the humanities. That love and dedication eventually led me back home. Thomas Wolfe was wrong, you can go home again.

At home, for the past 18 years I was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. For 18 years, I studied the south. It is a diverse region and the South's cultural diversity defines me. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. As vice-president Gore observed, "Diversity is not an idea or agenda; it is a fact of our world." It has been for a long time. And it's certainly a fact in California, where the population is now 40% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 10% black, and 40% white.

My studies revealed that just as there's more to California than Silicon Valley and Sunset Boulevard; there's more to the South than Faulkner and the Blues. The South is not the moonlight and magnolia monolith many think it is. Tomorrow if you flew Delta Airlines overseas, registered in a Holiday Inn, received your Federal Express package, and watched CNN while sipping a Coke, you'd be using southern products every step of the way. MTV was conceived by Mississippian Robed Pittman. Tennessean Isaac Tigrett created the Hard Rock Cafe and the House of Blues. The South is full of surprises.

Here's one. Allow me to briefly discuss how many of you got here, which certainly sounds presumptuous, but please bear with me.

Thirty two million, or one in eight, Americans now live in California, but it wasn't always so. In 1848 there were eleven thousand non-Native

Americans living in California. Four years later there were 300,000 people who came from all over the country and the world--Chinese, Chileans, Peruvians, Europeans, and Australians. Why? The Gold Rush! Gold that glittered and galvanized hundreds of thousands of hopeful settlers, your ancestors, to drop everything and migrate to California.

I know this because an exciting exhibit, "Gold Fever!," is now on display at the Oakland Museum of California until the end of July. The exhibit is supported by more than half a-million dollars in grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. From September to January '99 it will be at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles. And from July to October 1999 it will be at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium.

Two traveling versions of the exhibit will visit more than a dozen communities during the three years of the "Rediscovering California at 150" Sesquicentennial project. The exhibition will feature some of the personalities being portrayed in the California Council for the Humanities "History Alive!" chautauqua program. It features dramatic, historically accurate portrayals of figures of the California Gold Rush. "History Alive!" will, by the year 2000, go to more than 100 communities throughout California.

So, as you can see, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the California Council for the Humanities are hard at work keeping history alive in California. It is a busy year here. You have two sesquicentennials to celebrate, the discovery of gold in California in 1848, and the ending of the U.S.-Mexican War.

As the world plans to celebrate the millennium, as California celebrates dual sesquicentennials, I'm celebrating my 135th day in office as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In the past. I have known the Endowment from the outside as a grateful grant recipient. After 135 days on the inside, the view is even better, which is why I'm here to spread the word about the National Endowment for the Humanities. Your National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 1965, Congress established the National Endowment for the Humanities, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American. But our national impact far exceeds our size because of the importance of this work.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence, awarding grants to support vital work in America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, public television and radio stations, and other cultural institutions. By providing such grants for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs, the Endowment promotes knowledge of human history, thought, and culture. The humanities help strengthen and sustain the cultural and civic character of this nation. The humanities offer wisdom and vision to our citizens.

Filmmaker Ken Burns once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of Carnegie), gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

Let me tell you about some of the "strands" of that DNA--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. They are not as separate as you might think. The strands are intertwined. The scholar does talk to society. Society needs the scholar.

My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Ken Burns documentary at some point in their lives. NEH funds helped launch the career of Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball* and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him at length, as he says:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders, and oversaw nearly every aspect of the production, but also, through unrelated grants to other institutions, helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. Much of the seminal research our scholars provided came from NEH supported projects. And their interest in our progress insured at critical junctures that we did not stray into myth or hagiography. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

I mentioned that we are a small federal agency with a tiny budget. We don't have much, but we make good use of it. The Endowment's "seal of

approval" acts as a catalyst and attracts other funding. Again, Ken Burns knows from experience, as he explains:

"The NEH grant I got for the Civil War series attracted even more funds from General Motors and several private foundations, money that would not have been there had not the Endowment blessed this project with their rigorously earned imprimatur."

Some filmmakers don't need our imprimatur, but they do need our help. My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Steven Spielberg film at some point in their lives. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he can benefit from our help. Spielberg called *Amistad* "perhaps my most important film ever." For his most important film ever, Spielberg could call on the kinds of scholarly resources funded by NEH. Howard Jones, author of *Mutiny on the Amistad*, a historical analysis of the incident, was in part made possible by a summer stipend awarded to Jones by NEH.

You may have seen other films supported by NEH. A short list includes "Liberty! The American Revolution"; "Huey Long"; "FDR"; "Eisenhower"; "LBJ"; "The Life of Frederick Douglass"; "The Great Depression"; "The Story of Theodore Roosevelt"; "One Woman, One Vote"; "A Midwife's Tale"; and "The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century."

These films will be played over and over again in American classrooms and will continue to have unlimited educational value. But that's not all we do. Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization.

The 1997 Pulitzer Prize in history was awarded to Jack N. Rakove's *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. Rakove's project was originally supported by an NEH Fellowship in 1984. He then tested his ideas with fifteen college teachers from around the country in a 1985 NEH Summer Seminar.

Such honors are not unusual. Works facilitated by the Endowment's Research and Education division have, over the years, garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes, and six National Book awards.

The Endowment is supporting scholarly editions of the papers of U.S. presidents, prominent writers, and others who influenced the course of our history -- for example, John Adams, Jane Addams, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, John Dewey, Andrew Johnson, Mark Twain, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Dwight Eisenhower, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others.

Endowment-sponsored academic research enables authors to produce seminal works such as Paul Fussell's *The Great War in Modern Memory*, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Laurel Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*, and Merrill Peterson's *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay, and Calhoun*.

Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization. But that's not all we do, especially in the information age. The past is not dead, it's being digitized, on CD-ROMs and the Internet--and the Endowment is playing a major role. Let me briefly tell you about some of the exciting projects the Endowment is sponsoring--many right here in California.

The University of California's Thesaurus Linguae Graecae project created a computer database and a CD-ROM containing the entire surviving body of ancient Greek texts.

The University of Southern California is training Los Angeles teachers of all levels to use its digital archive of maps, photographs, English and Spanish-language newspapers, and other materials covering 250 years of California history.

In 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were recovered from caves in the Judaen desert. Now scholars and photographic experts at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California, have devised a method of reading the texts through infrared digital imaging technology. In a pilot project funded by the Endowment, the center's staff tested procedures and designed standards for the digitization of all ancient texts. The methods will be disseminated to other repositories throughout the world.

If we look to the east, we see MIT has developed an interactive videodisk for learning about Spanish language and culture. MIT has also prepared a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays that allows students to see film versions as they read a given passage.

The Endowment's Teaching with Technology program supports exciting new state-of-the-art educational software projects on topics ranging from the civil war to the Supreme Court to ancient Greece and Rome--and the Amistad incident. These are available to all students through the Internet and are being used extensively and enthusiastically in classrooms.

Henry Adams wrote, "A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops." Today, the influence can slow down if teachers aren't properly trained in new technologies. So our new program, Schools for a New Millennium, will help K-12 teachers take full advantage of CD-ROMs and the Internet in their classes.

More than 1,000 school and college teachers are involved each year in intensive Endowment-sponsored humanities teacher development programs, enriching the classroom experience for more than 200,000 students each year. Over the years more than 20,000 school-teachers and nearly 30,000 college teachers have benefited.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history, and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country seeking excellent, content-rich web sites. There is a real demand for this information -- averaging almost 20,000 user sessions a month. To be precise, user sessions mean people are actually using the site, not just browsing. USA Today called it "a compelling and educational place to visit."

As President Clinton said in his recent State of the Union address "The Information Age is, first and foremost, an education age, in which education must start at birth and continue throughout a lifetime." The Endowment provides enrichment for students of all ages.

Three million Americans have taken part in Endowment-sponsored reading and discussion programs at libraries in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands over the last sixteen years. In a typical year, 250,000 Americans participated in programs that took place in nearly 384 libraries across the nation.

"The Age of Rubens," a major NEH-supported exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio, drew the largest attendance of any exhibition in the museum's ninety-three-year history--226,000 over a three-month period. These visitors pumped \$22.8 million into the local economy.

Our special new project *My History is America's History* encourages all Americans to learn more about their family's history--and then relate their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. It will make them better citizens, and that's part of our job.

We always strive to do a better job, that's why I am proposing that the Endowment create a Regional Center for Rediscovering America in every region of the country -- a center which will support scholarship and research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public

partnership, and we intend to work very hard to encourage major private sector support.

Under this initiative the Endowment will work with the foundations, the private sector, and other government agencies to establish these centers around the nation. These centers will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions, each with a mission of broadening public awareness of, access to, and participation in, the humanities.

I have talked to representatives from many organizations and institutions: the National Humanities Advisory Board, the National Council on the Humanities, various State Humanities Councils, and will be convening a National Scholar meeting on April 17. There are issues to be worked out to be sure, but I'm convinced these regional centers can provide "wisdom and vision" for all citizens.

Among the types of activities the Centers could undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies at all levels of education.
- Summer institutes for school teachers from the region
- Production of radio, video, and television features to reach a broad audience
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry to promote cultural tourism
- Development of research collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings.
- Preparation of encyclopedias and other research tools
- Annual conferences with scholars, students, and public policy figures
- Traveling museum exhibitions

The centers will be urged to use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to resources housed elsewhere, including the other regional centers. Also, "smart" interactive classrooms could be

developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the region and nation.

I want to make it clear that the regional centers are in no way designed

to displace existing centers. Endowment-funded centers will be required to coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area.

I also want to make it clear that we will really need the active participation of the state humanities councils for this initiative to be successful. And, in no way will traditional forms of funding from the Endowment to the councils be affected.

Ultimately, the centers will be self-sustaining. We will work with corporations, private foundations, and individual donors on the national, regional, and state levels to help locate support. I might even try to wrangle an invitation to dinner at the Los Altos Golf and Country Club in Silicon Valley for one of those venture capital meetings with the "Band of Angels."

I know this regional centers project sounds ambitious. Hearing it for the first time it may sound like wishful thinking, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation and education in the region. I told you about the Center two years ago. Let me briefly highlight what was accomplished.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi has developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. The center uses an interdisciplinary approach incorporating popular, folk, historical and literary subjects. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

When you come to study at the Center you can not dodge troubling issues. You deal with racial issues in a region that celebrates the birthday of Martin Luther King and Robert E. Lee. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience, progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

To spread its message, the Center has reached out to the general public. Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audience with a broad range of programs. The Center sponsors a quarterly newsletter *The Southern Register* and the magazines *Living Blues* and *Reckon: The Magazine of Southern Culture*, the "College on the Mississippi," an annual week-long trip aboard the Delta Queen, has featured speakers

and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley. The Center produces films, records, and radio programs. Each Saturday night the Center presents "Highway 61," a two-hour blues show that is broadcast throughout the Deep South on Public Radio in Mississippi. And you can find out more about the Center at its website.

Some of the people I've talked to wonder why I'm looking "regional" when everyone else is looking "global." Well, let me adapt an old New England expression, "You can get there from here." Regional often brings one around to global--the Center for Southern Culture was made a member of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization. The Center's work has served as model for similar institutions in Russia, Africa, and Australia. Every nation is working to preserve its traditional culture--did you see the opening or closing of the Winter Olympics in Nagano? Perched on the Pacific Rim, you Californians probably see more of this effort than most Americans.

I've traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest and to Moscow to assist colleagues at sister institutions who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. They recognize that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Think how this great, growing city has shaped you and your children.

Historian Patricia Limerick studies the West. She embraced regional history because, as she said, "I thought it would make us better neighbors.... I thought that regional identity could provide the cultural and social glue to put a fragmented society back together.... Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, business people, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history."

My philosophy is this: Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself 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.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success and make a mark on society, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

You've undoubtedly noticed that I have touched on, but not answered the two important questions I raised at the outset of my talk: What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? I confess I can not. But my clients can. NEH puts them at your fingertips--on web sites, at schools, libraries, museums, archives, seminars, traveling exhibits, and elsewhere. As the millennium approaches, look to them for answers. Have your children look to them for answers. That's how the Endowment, your Endowment, provides "wisdom and vision" for every citizen.

Milan Kundera, speaking from his memory as a Czech whose nation was targeted for extinction first by the Nazis and then by the Soviets, wrote, "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organizing forgetting. And, a nation which loses awareness of its past, gradually loses itself."

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Let us use the past to rescue the future. With your help, we can give every citizen a sense of history, a sense of what democracy really means.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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**American University/AU Phi Beta Kappa
Washington, D.C.
April 1, 1998**

Rediscovering America: The Humanities and the Millennium

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I am delighted to be here at American University, to participate in the annual "Celebration of the Liberal Arts and Sciences" sponsored by the university's Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

Emile Zola once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world.. .. I will reply, I'm here to, live my life out loud." Today, I am here to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be *Rediscovering America: The Humanities and the Millennium*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of uncommon men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others. You know those names. I'm also here on behalf of Paul Fussell, James McPherson, and Laurel Ulrich, to mention just a few of the scholars, writers, and teachers who keep America's stories alive. The National Endowment for the Humanities helps them keep the stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them, and our children can enjoy and learn from them.

I want to talk to you today about these clients, and how they can help answer two important questions. What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? This is the time and this is the place to ask those questions. The millennium approaches. We have less than 670 days left in this century. As the famous philosopher Yogi Berra once observed, "It's gettin' late early." What will we do with this time? There will be celebrations and dancing in the streets, but we can also use the occasion to explore where we're going as a country.

Before I discuss where we're going, allow me to briefly explain how I got here.

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. I went to a school where I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day Mrs. Barfield, the sixth grade teacher, asked the students who planned on going to college. No one raised his or her hand. She pointed at me and said, "Billy Ferris, you will go to college. Your parents will make you go." I said, "I ain't going to no college!"

Well, after four decades, one Ph.D., several books, and stops at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow and Trinity College in Dublin, I am here. Mrs. Barfield was right, and I'm glad I was wrong. She was a great teacher. Without her help and that of my parents, my wife and my daughter, I would not be where I am today. They have all inspired my love for, and dedication to, the humanities. That love and dedication eventually led me back home. Thomas Wolfe was wrong, you can go home again.

At home, for the past 18 years I was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. For 18 years, I studied the south. It is a diverse region and the South's cultural diversity defines me. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. As vice-president Gore observed, "Diversity is not an idea or agenda; it is a fact of our world." It has been for a long time.

There's more to the South than Faulkner and the Blues. The South is not the moonlight and magnolia monolith many think it is. Tomorrow if you flew Delta Airlines overseas, registered in a Holiday Inn, received your Federal Express package, and watched CNN while sipping a Coke, you'd be using southern products every step of the way. MTV was conceived by Mississippian Robed Pittman. Tennessean Isaac Tigrett created the Hard Rock Cafe and the House of Blues. The South is full of surprises.

And so is life. A year ago, the thought of coming to Washington as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities was the farthest thing from my mind. Yet today I stand here in that capacity. It is a position that I value as a high honor, and I am committed to giving to the nation something of the empowerment that NEH gave me as a scholar.

In the past. I have known the Endowment from the outside as a grateful grant recipient. After three months on the inside, the view is even better, which is why I'm here to spread the word about the National Endowment for the Humanities -- your National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 1965, Congress established the National Endowment for the

Humanities, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American. But our national impact far exceeds our size because of the importance of this work.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence, awarding grants to support vital work in America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, public television and radio stations, and other cultural institutions. By providing such grants for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs, the Endowment promotes knowledge of human history, thought, and culture. The humanities help strengthen and sustain the cultural and civic character of this nation. The humanities offer wisdom and vision to our citizens.

Filmmaker Ken Burns once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of Carnegie Foundation), gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

Let me tell you about some of the "strands" of that DNA--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. They are not as separate as you might think. The strands are intertwined. The scholar does talk to society. Society needs the scholar.

My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Ken Burns documentary at some point in their lives. NEH funds helped launch the career of Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball* and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him at length, as he says:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders, and oversaw nearly every aspect of the production, but also, through unrelated grants to other institutions, helped restore

the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. Much of the seminal research our scholars provided came from NEH supported projects. And their interest in our progress insured at critical junctures that we did not stray into myth or hagiography. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

I mentioned that we are a small federal agency with a tiny budget. We don't have much, but we make good use of it. The Endowment's "seal of approval" acts as a catalyst and attracts other funding. Again, Ken Burns knows from experience, as he explains:

"The NEH grant I got for the Civil War series attracted even more funds from General Motors and several private foundations, money that would not have been there had not the Endowment blessed this project with their rigorously earned imprimatur."

Some filmmakers don't need our imprimatur, but they do need our help. My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Steven Spielberg film at some point in their lives. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he can benefit from our help. Spielberg called *Amistad* "perhaps my most important film ever." For his most important film ever, Spielberg could call on the kinds of scholarly resources funded by NEH. Howard Jones, author of *Mutiny on the Amistad*, a historical analysis of the incident, was in part made possible by a summer stipend awarded to Jones by NEH.

You may have seen other films supported by NEH. A short, recent list includes "Liberty! The American Revolution"; "Huey Long"; "FDR"; "Eisenhower"; "LBJ"; "When the Lion Wrote History: The Life of Frederick Douglass,"; "The Great Depression"; "TR: The Story of Theodore Roosevelt"; "One Woman, One Vote"; "A Midwife's Tale"; and "The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century."

These films will be played over and over again in American classrooms and will continue to have unlimited educational value. But that's not all we do. Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization.

The 1997 Pulitzer Prize in history was awarded to Jack N. Rakove's *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. Rakove's project was originally supported by an NEH Fellowship in 1984. He then tested his ideas with fifteen college teachers from around the country in a 1985 NEH Summer Seminar.

Such honors are not unusual. Works facilitated by the Endowment's

Research and Education division have, over the years, garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes, and six National Book awards.

Through the *American Legacy Editions* initiative, the Endowment is supporting scholarly editions of the papers of U.S. presidents, prominent writers, and others who influenced the course of our history. For example, John Adams, Jane Addams, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, John Dewey, Andrew Johnson, Mark Twain, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others.

Here at American University, Professor Charles Beveridge is using NEH funding to prepare an important edition of the papers of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, who designed Central Park and other major projects around the country.

Endowment-sponsored academic research enables authors to produce seminal works such as Paul Fussell's *The Great War in Modern Memory*, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Laurel Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*, and Merrill Peterson's *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay, and Calhoun*.

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The University of California's Thesaurus Linguae Graecae project created a computer database and a CD-ROM containing the entire surviving body of ancient Greek texts.

In 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were recovered from caves in the Judaen desert. Now scholars and photographic experts at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California, have devised a method of reading the texts through infrared digital imaging technology. In a pilot project funded by the Endowment, the center's staff tested procedures and designed standards for the digitization of all ancient texts. The methods will be disseminated to other repositories throughout the world.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed an interactive videodisk for learning about Spanish language and culture. MIT has also prepared a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays that allows students to see film versions as they read a given passage. A class can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

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Henry Adams wrote, "A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops." Today, the influence can slow down if teachers aren't properly trained in new technologies. So our new program, Schools for a New Millennium, will help K-12 teachers take full advantage of CD-ROMs and the Internet in their classes.

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As President Clinton said in his recent State of the Union address "The Information Age is, first and foremost, an education age, in which education must start at birth and continue throughout a lifetime." The Endowment provides enrichment for students of all ages.

Three million Americans have taken part in Endowment-sponsored reading and discussion programs at libraries in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands over the last sixteen years. In a typical year, 250,000 Americans participated in programs that took place in nearly 384 libraries across the nation.

"The Age of Rubens," a major NEH-supported exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio, drew the largest attendance of any exhibition in the museum's ninety-three-year history--226,000 over a three-month period. These visitors pumped \$22.8 million into the local economy.

Our special new project *My History is America's History* encourages all Americans to learn more about their family's history--and then relate

their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. It will make them better citizens, and that's part of our job.

We always strive to do a better job, that's why I am proposing that the Endowment create a Regional Center for Rediscovering America in every region of the country -- a center which will support scholarship and research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public partnership, and we intend to work very hard to encourage major private sector support.

Under this initiative the Endowment will work with the foundations, the private sector, and other government agencies to establish these centers around the nation. These centers will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions, each with a mission of broadening public awareness of, access to, and participation in, the humanities.

I have talked to representatives from many organizations and institutions: the National Humanities Advisory Board, the National Council on the Humanities, various State Humanities Councils, and will be convening a National Scholar meeting on April 17. There are issues to be worked out to be sure, but I'm convinced these regional centers can provide "wisdom and vision" for all citizens.

Among the types of activities the Centers could undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies at all levels of education.
- Summer institutes for school teachers from the region
- Production of radio, video, and television features to reach a broad audience
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry to promote cultural tourism
- Development of research collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings.
- Preparation of encyclopedias and other research tools
- Annual conferences with scholars, students, and public policy

figures

- Traveling museum exhibitions

The centers will be urged to use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to resources housed elsewhere, including the other regional centers. Also, "smart" interactive classrooms could be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the region and nation.

I want to make it clear that the regional centers are in no way designed to displace existing centers. Endowment-funded centers will be required to coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area.

I also want to make it clear that we will really need the active participation of the state humanities councils for this initiative to be successful. And, in no way will traditional forms of funding from the Endowment to the councils be affected.

Ultimately, the centers will be self-sustaining. We will work with corporations, private foundations, and individual donors on the national, regional, and state levels to help locate support.

I know this Regional Center project sounds ambitious. Hearing it for the first time it may sound like wishful thinking, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation and education in the region. I told you about the Center two years ago. Let me briefly highlight what was accomplished.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi has developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. The center uses an interdisciplinary approach incorporating popular, folk, historical and literary subjects. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

When you come to study at the Center you can not dodge troubling issues. You deal with racial issues in a region that celebrates the birthday of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Lee. You study slavery, the civil war, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience, progress is being made. There is power in remembering;

there is power in forgiving.

To spread its message, the Center has reached out to the general public. Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audience with a broad range of programs. The Center sponsors a quarterly newsletter *The Southern Register* and the magazines *Living Blues* and *Reckon: The Magazine of Southern Culture*, the "College on the Mississippi," an annual week-long trip aboard the Delta Queen, has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley. The Center produces films, records, and radio programs. Each Saturday night the Center presents "Highway 61," a two-hour blues show that is broadcast throughout the Deep South on Public Radio in Mississippi. And you can find out more about the Center at its website.

Some of the people I've talked to wonder why I'm looking "regional" when everyone else is looking "global." Well, let me adapt an old New England expression, "You can get there from here." Regional often brings one around to global--the Center for Southern Culture was made a member of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization. The Center's work has served as model for similar institutions in Russia, Africa, and Australia. Every nation is working to preserve its traditional culture--did you see the opening or closing of the Winter Olympics in Nagano?

I've traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest and to Moscow to assist colleagues at sister institutions who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. They recognize that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Think how this great, growing city has shaped you and your children.

Historian Patricia Limerick studies the West, She embraced regional history because, as she said, "I thought it would make us better neighbors.... I thought that regional identity could provide the cultural and social glue to put a fragmented society back together.... Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, business people, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history."

My philosophy is this: Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself 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.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success and make a mark on society, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

You've undoubtedly noticed that I have touched on, but not answered the two important questions I raised at the outset of my talk: What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? I confess I can not. But my clients can. NEH puts them at your fingertips--on web sites, at schools, libraries, museums, archives, seminars, traveling exhibits, and elsewhere. As the millennium approaches, look to them for answers. Have your children look to them for answers. That's how the Endowment, your Endowment, provides "wisdom and vision" for every citizen.

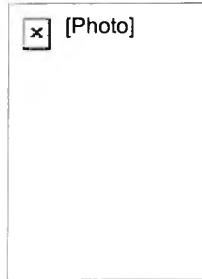
Milan Kundera, speaking from his memory as a Czech whose nation was targeted for extinction first by the Nazis and then by the Soviets, wrote, "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organizing forgetting. And, a nation which loses awareness of its past, gradually loses itself."

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Let us use the past to rescue the future. With your help, we can give every citizen a sense of history, a sense of what democracy really means.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: April 1998

Fostering Education Teachers Become Students with NEH Support

By William R. Ferris

If it weren't for my teacher Mrs. Barfield, I wouldn't be chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities today.

Growing up on a farm 16 miles from Vicksburg, Miss., I went to a school I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day, Mrs. Barfield asked who among us students 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!"

Well, after four decades, getting a college degree, writing several books, and being a teacher myself, here I am. Mrs. Barfield was right, and I'm glad I was wrong. She was a role model who inspired my love for and dedication to my studies.

Great high school teachers who love to learn and get students excited about learning, who stretch students' minds with new ideas, and who help nurture students' interests and talents are one of America's most important resources. But teachers need time for reflection and professional development, time to read books and share ideas with other teachers.

That is why the National Endowment for the Humanities each summer sponsors about 30 humanities seminars for high school teachers on university campuses throughout the nation. The seminars provide the teachers with a relaxed, collegial setting for study and discussion of teaching strategies. Each seminar is on

NEH summer seminars invariably reinvigorate the participants. About 500 teachers attend NEH seminars each summer to deepen their knowledge of the subjects they teach, and they go back to the classroom not only with new material to teach but with renewed enthusiasm for their calling. They reach more than 100,000 students in just the first year after the seminar.

Here are some examples of this coming summer's NEH teacher seminars:

- "Modern Hispanic Drama," Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
- "Teaching Shakespeare," Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.
- "19th Century American Thought," Oregon State University, Corvallis.
- "American Women Writers," University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- "Nationalism in South Africa," Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.

NEH's national program of summer-study opportunities for teachers is the only program of its kind. A great contribution to educational excellence, the program benefits tens of thousands of young people each year through teachers who have participated. My hope is that every student can have a teacher like Mrs. Barfield, because a great teacher can make all the difference.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

a different topic in literature and history and is directed by a professor who is a recognized expert in the field. Ranging from four to six weeks in length, the seminars bring together from all over the country teachers who have similar intellectual interests.

**Arizona Humanities Council
The Lorraine W. Frank Lecture in the Humanities
Phoenix, Arizona
April 4, 1998**

Rediscovering America: The Humanities and the Millennium

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Dan, thank you for that kind introduction. I want to congratulate you and the staff of the Arizona Humanities Council, Joel Hiller and the Board of Directors, and the many people doing such great work for the Humanities here in Arizona. I look forward to working with you closely in the years ahead. My congratulations also to the 1998 award recipients: the Scottsdale Cultural Council, Dr. Chris Smith, and Elsa Paine Mulhern.

I am very excited to be here on Arizona Humanities Day, and I am especially honored that you asked me to deliver the eighth Lorraine Frank lecture in the Humanities. Lorraine Frank has done so much for the humanities here in Arizona. If I'm half as successful in Washington as she's been here in Arizona, I'll be very happy. Fortunately, Lorraine serves on the National Council on the Humanities, so I will be able to seek her advice and access her boundless energy. You are indeed lucky to have her in your great state.

Last week, I spoke before the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. I was just miles from Silicon Valley, the seminal center of everything digital. Out there, everyone is hunting for the next "killer app," the computer breakthrough that will change our lives. But, I found the ultimate "killer app" right here in Phoenix. This device is portable, versatile, and so user-friendly that even a child can access it. This device stores text and pictures. It needs no batteries. I have one with me—it's called a book. **[HOLD ONE UP.]** Your first annual Arizona Book Festival is a very creative idea and a fitting celebration of books, authors, and readers.

An author, Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to Phoenix to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be: *Rediscovering America: The Humanities and the Millennium*. If I

could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of uncommon men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others. You know those names. I'm also here on behalf of Paul Fussell, Laurel Ulrich, Dr. George Cowgill of Arizona State University, Dr. Bella Zweig of the University of Arizona, and Dr. David Padgett of Pima Community College. These are just a few of the scholars, writers, and teachers who keep America's stories alive. The National Endowment for the Humanities helps them keep the stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them.

I want to talk to you today about these clients, and how they can help answer two important questions. What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? This is the time and this is the place to ask those questions. The millennium approaches. We have less than 650 days left in this century. As the famous philosopher Yogi Berra once observed, "It's gettin' late early."

What will we do with this time? There will be celebrations and dancing in the streets, but we can also use the occasion to explore where we're going as a country. Before I discuss where we're going, allow me to briefly explain how I got here.

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. I went to a school where I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day Mrs. Barfield, the sixth grade teacher, asked the students who planned on going to college. No one raised his or her hand. She pointed at me and said, "Billy Ferris, you will go to college. Your parents will make you go." I said, "I ain't going to no college!"

Well, after four decades, one Ph.D., several books, and stops at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow and Trinity College in Dublin, I am here. Mrs. Barfield was right, and I'm glad I was wrong. She was a great teacher. Without her help and that of my parents, my wife and my daughter, I would not be where I am today. They have all inspired my love for, and dedication to, the humanities. That love and dedication eventually led me back home. Thomas Wolfe was wrong, you can go home again.

At home, for the past 18 years I was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. For 18 years, I studied the south. It is a diverse region and the South's cultural diversity defines me. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the

Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. As vice-president Gore observed, "Diversity is not an idea or agenda; it is a fact of our world." It has been for a long time. And it's certainly a fact in Arizona.

My studies revealed that, just as there's more to Arizona than the Grand Canyon and the Petrified Forest, there's more to the South than Faulkner and the Blues. The South is not the moonlight and magnolia monolith many think it is. Tomorrow if you flew Delta Airlines overseas, registered in a Holiday Inn, received your Federal Express package, and watched CNN while sipping a Coke, you'd be using Southern products every step of the way. MTV was conceived by Mississippian Robert Pittman. Tennessean Isaac Tigrett created the Hard Rock Cafe and the House of Blues. And Mississippian Jim Barksdale is CEO of Netscape. The south is full of surprises.

And so is the southwest, as you've demonstrated this past week with your ambitious book festival. I understand Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather and Mary Austin were wandering about telling stories. I'm sorry I wasn't here to see it, but I'm new at the Endowment so I've been burning the midnight oil back in Washington. After four months on the job, I'm more determined than ever to spread the exciting word about the National Endowment for the Humanities -- your National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Three million Americans have taken part in Endowment-sponsored reading programs at libraries in all fifty states over the last sixteen years. In a typical year, 250,000 Americans participated in programs that took place in nearly 384 libraries across the nation.

We're also working hard here in Arizona. The Endowment has supported projects to improve "heritage language" education, a traveling exhibition on the Fred Harvey Company and Southwest Native Art, and a series of community conversations on immigration, to mention a few. That last project was the work of Dan Shilling and your state humanities council. Dan and his staff deserve our thanks for their efforts to reach out to every community, no matter how small. The NEH--state council partnership works well in Arizona, and I look forward to expanding that relationship.

One way to do that is through a new initiative. I am proposing to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public partnership. The Endowment will work with foundations, the private sector, and other government agencies to create the centers. They will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
- Summer institutes for school teachers
- Production of radio, video, and television features

- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.
- Development of collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings.

- Preparation of regional encyclopedias
- Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy

experts, and...

- Traveling museum exhibitions

The centers will use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to other regional centers. And "smart" interactive classrooms will be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the nation.

These Endowment-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area, and they will also work closely with state humanities councils in their region.

After five years, the centers will be self-sustaining. We will work with individuals, corporations, and private foundations, on the national, regional, and state levels to help locate support -- much as you have done so successfully with US West here.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. Using an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates popular, folk, historical, and literary subjects, it offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

When you come to study at the Center, you cannot dodge troubling issues. You deal with racial issues in a region that celebrates the birthday of Martin Luther King and Robert E. Lee. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites, and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class, and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience, progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

You know this from your state humanities council's painful yet powerful project, "Transforming Barbed Wire." It told the story of the Arizona detention camps for Japanese Americans during World War II. I'm sure many of you took part in various aspects of that recent series.

In the south, to spread its message, the Center has reached out to the general public. Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audience with a broad range of programs through its quarterly newsletter, *The Southern Register*, and its magazine, *Living Blues*. The "College on the Mississippi," a week-long trip aboard the Delta Queen has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley.

I've traveled to New England, the Midwest, the Southwest and to Moscow to assist colleagues who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. They recognize that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in a deep and lasting way. Think how this vast, varied, expansive land has shaped you and your children.

Historian Patricia Limerick studies the West. She embraced regional history because, as she said, "I thought it would make us better neighbors.... I thought that regional identity could provide the cultural and social glue to put a fragmented society back together.... Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, business people, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history." NEH cannot heal all the ills of society, but we can give kids a stronger sense of place and belonging.

My philosophy is this: Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself 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.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories, and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

You've undoubtedly noticed that I have touched on, but not answered, the two important questions I raised at the outset of my talk: What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do

we want to be in the year 2000? I confess I cannot answer these questions. But my clients can. NEH puts them at your fingertips--on web sites, at schools, libraries, museums, archives, seminars, and traveling exhibits. As the millennium approaches, look to them for answers. Have your children look to them for answers. That's how the Endowment -- your Endowment -- provides "wisdom and vision" for every citizen.

Milan Kundera, speaking from his memory as a Czech whose nation was targeted for extinction by the Nazis and the Soviets, wrote, "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organizing forgetting. And, a nation which loses awareness of its past, gradually loses itself."

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Let us use the past to rescue the future. With your help, we can give every citizen a sense of history, a sense of what democracy really means.

As you can see, I am a Washington outsider, and I intend to change NEH and how it affects each of you. With your support, I hope to bring the humanities home to every American.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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**Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities
Annual Humanities Awards Event
Governor's Mansion
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
April 7, 1998**

Rediscovering America: The Humanities and the Millennium

William Ferris, chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Distinguished guests...I am very glad to be back where I can see the waters of the Mississippi, and hear Muddy Waters.

Michael, thank you for that kind introduction. I want to congratulate you and the staff of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, and the many people doing such great work for the Humanities here in Louisiana. I look forward to working with you closely in the years ahead. My congratulations also to the 1998 award recipients. Your creative talents are exceeded only by your boundless energy.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to Baton Rouge to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be: *Rediscovering America: The Humanities and the Millennium*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of uncommon men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others. You know those names. I'm also here on behalf of Paul Fussell, Laurel Ulrich, Gertiana Williams of the New Orleans Public Library, Dr. Ana Lopez of Tulane University, and Dr. Jefferson Humphries of Louisiana State University and A&M College. These are just a few of the scholars, writers, and teachers who keep America's stories alive. The National Endowment for the Humanities helps them keep the stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them.

I want to talk to you today about these clients, and how they can help

answer two important questions. What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? This is the time and this is the place to ask those questions. The millennium approaches. We have less than 640 days left in this century. As the famous philosopher Yogi Berra once observed, "It's gettin' late early."

What will we do with this time? There will be celebrations and dancing on Bourbon Street, but we can also use the occasion to explore where we're going as a country. Before I discuss where we're going, allow me to briefly explain how I got here.

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. I went to a school where I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day Mrs. Barfield, the sixth grade teacher, asked the students who planned on going to college. No one raised his or her hand. She pointed at me and said, "Billy Ferris, you will go to college. Your parents will make you go." I said, "I ain't going to no college!"

Well, after four decades, one Ph.D., several books, and stops at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow and Trinity College in Dublin, I am here. Mrs. Barfield was right, and I'm glad I was wrong. She was a great teacher. Without her help and that of my parents, my wife and my daughter, I would not be where I am today. They have all inspired my love for, and dedication to, the humanities. That love and dedication eventually led me back home. Thomas Wolfe was wrong, you can go home again.

At home, for the past 18 years, as many of you know, I was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. And yes, somehow, I was lured north. In my defense, it's hard to say no to both President Clinton and Senator Lott. I plead guilty to submitting to bipartisan political pressure. And I'm glad I did. I have an exciting new job, and after just four months at the Endowment, I'm more determined than ever to spread the exciting word about the National Endowment for the Humanities--your National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 1965, Congress established the Endowment, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task.. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously.

The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American. But our national impact far exceeds our size because of the

importance of this work.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public television and radio stations. These grants are used for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs. This work helps strengthen and sustain the cultural and civic character of this nation. It's how the humanities offer wisdom and vision to our citizens.

Filmmaker Ken Burns, once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of the Carnegie Foundation) gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

Let me tell you about some of the "strands" of that DNA--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. They are not as separate as you might think. The strands are intertwined. The scholar does talk to society. Society needs the scholar.

My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Ken Burns documentary at some point in their lives. We have the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to thank for that. Early on, LEH, recognizing talent, helped Ken Burns with his documentary of Huey Long. NEH followed suit, Endowment funds made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him at length, as he says:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders, and oversaw nearly every aspect of the production, but also, through unrelated grants to other institutions, helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. Much of the seminal research our scholars provided came from NEH supported projects. And their interest in our progress insured at critical junctures that we did not stray into myth or hagiography. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

Some filmmakers don't need our imprimatur, but they do need our help. My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Steven Spielberg film at some point in their lives. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he can benefit from our help. Spielberg called *Amistad*, "perhaps my most important film ever." For his most important film ever, Spielberg could call on the kinds of scholarly resources funded by NEH. Howard Jones' book, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, a historical analysis of the incident, was in part made possible by a summer stipend from NEH.

You may have seen other films supported by NEH, a short, recent list includes *Liberty! the American Revolution*, *FDR*, *Eisenhower*, *LBJ*, *The Life of Frederick Douglass*, *The Great Depression*, *TR*, *One Woman, One Vote*, and *A Midwife's Tale*.

These films will be played over and over again in American classrooms and will continue to have unlimited educational value. But that's not all we do. Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization.

The 1997 Pulitzer Prize in history was awarded to Jack N. Rakove's *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. Rakove's project was originally supported by an NEH Fellowship in 1984. He then tested his ideas with fifteen college teachers from around the country in a 1985 NEH Summer Seminar.

Such honors are not unusual. Works facilitated by the Endowment have, over the years, garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes and six National Book awards.

Through the *American Legacy Editions* initiative, the Endowment is supporting scholarly editions of the papers of U.S. presidents, prominent writers, and others who influenced the course of our history. For example, John Adams, Jane Addams, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others.

Endowment-sponsored academic research enables authors to produce seminal works such as: Paul Fussell's *The Great War in Modern Memory*, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and Laurel Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*.

Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization. But that's not all we do, especially in the information age. The past is not dead, it's being digitized, on CD-ROMs and the Internet. But I don't have to tell you that. I know Louisiana was the first state Humanities Endowment to have a web site up and running. I understand it's being redesigned and

a new version will be up soon. I promise to visit you in cyberspace. Please visit our NEH website and our new website EDSITEment.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. There is a real demand for this information - averaging almost 20,000 user sessions a month. To be precise, user sessions mean people are actually using the site, not just browsing. USA Today called it "a compelling and educational place to visit."

Let me briefly tell you about some of the other exciting projects the Endowment is sponsoring.

The University of southern California is training Los Angeles teachers of all levels to use its digital archive of maps, photographs, English and Spanish-language newspapers, and other materials that cover 250 years of California history.

MIT has developed an interactive videodisk of Spanish language and culture. MIT has also prepared a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays. It allows students to see film versions as they read a passage. A class can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

The Endowment's Teaching with Technology program supports exciting new state-of-the-art educational software projects. Topics range from the civil war to the Supreme Court to ancient Greece and Rome--and the Amistad incident. These are available to all students through the Internet and are being used extensively in classrooms.

Henry Adams wrote, "A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops." Today, that influence can slow down if teachers aren't properly trained in new technologies. So our new program, Schools for a New Millennium, is helping K-12 teachers take full advantage of CD-ROMs and the Internet.

More than 1,000 teachers are involved each year in intensive Endowment-sponsored humanities teacher development programs. They in turn enrich the classroom experience for more than 200,000 students each year. Over the years more than 20,000 schoolteachers and nearly 30,000 college teachers have benefited. These are big numbers, they're abstract—until your child has contact with one of the excited, energized teachers who has been to one of our seminars. Or one of yours. LEH summer teacher institutes have reached 2,000 humanities teachers in Louisiana, more than a quarter of all humanities teachers in Louisiana.

This means that statewide, 25,000 students have benefited.

President Clinton said in his recent State of the Union address "The Information Age is, first and foremost, an education age, in which education must start at birth and continue throughout a lifetime." The Endowment provides enrichment for students of all ages.

Three million Americans have taken part in Endowment-sponsored reading programs at libraries in all fifty states over the last sixteen years. In a typical year, 250,000 Americans participated in programs that took place in nearly 384 libraries across the nation.

Our special new project *My History is America's History* encourages all Americans to learn more about their family's history--and then relate their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. It will make them better citizens, and that's part of our job.

We're also working hard here in Louisiana. In the recent past, the Endowment has supported projects to create a documentary film on writer Kate Chopin, a national conference on the Supreme Court *Plessy versus Ferguson* decision, and discussion programs at 60 parish libraries on the state's history and folklore.

Michael Sartisky and his LEH staff deserve a lot of credit for their efforts to reach out to every community, no matter how small, in this great state. Programs such as RELIC, Readings in Culture and Literature, and Prime Time-Family Reading Time, are doing just that. My home state of Mississippi was smart enough to adopt the Prime Time program this year. Next year it will be introduced in Texas and Arkansas. Remember, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

The NEH—State Council partnership is working well in Louisiana, Prime Time is a perfect example, and I look forward to expanding our relationship.

One way to do that is through a new initiative. I am proposing that the Endowment create a Regional Center for Rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support scholarship and research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public partnership. We intend to work very hard to encourage major private sector support. The centers will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions. They will broaden public awareness of,

access to, and participation in, the humanities.

I have spoken with representatives from many organizations and institutions: the National Humanities Advisory Board, the National Council on the Humanities, various State Humanities Councils, and I will be convening a National Scholar meeting on April 17th. There are issues to be worked out to be sure, but I'm convinced these regional centers can provide "wisdom and vision" for all citizens.

Among the types of activities the Centers will undertake are:

Course development in regional studies

Summer institutes for school teachers

Production of radio, video, and television features

Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

Development of collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings.

Preparation of regional encyclopedias

Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy experts, and...

Traveling museum exhibitions

The centers will use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to resources housed elsewhere--including the other regional centers. Also, "smart" interactive classrooms could be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the region and the country.

I want to make it clear that the regional centers are in no way designed to displace existing centers. Endowment-funded centers will be required to coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area.

I also want to make it clear that we will really need the active participation of state humanities councils such as yours for this initiative to be successful. And, in no way will traditional forms of funding from the Endowment to the councils be affected.

I know this Regional Center project sounds ambitious. Hearing it for the first time it may sound like wishful thinking, but I have seen how this

can work.and so have you. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation and education in the region.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi has developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

When you come to study at the Center, you cannot dodge troubling issues. You deal with racial issues in a region that celebrates the birthday of Martin Luther King and Robert E. Lee. You study slavery, the civil war, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience; progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

Some of the people I've talked to wonder why I'm looking "regional" when everyone else is looking "global." Regional often brings one around to global--the Center for Southern Culture was made a member of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization. The Center's work has served as model for similar institutions in Russia, Africa, and Australia.

I've traveled to New England, the Mid-West, the Southwest and to Moscow to assist colleagues who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. They recognize that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in a deep and lasting way. Think how this vast, varied, expansive land has shaped you and your children.

Historian Patricia Limerick studies the West. She embraced regional history because, as she said, "I thought it would make us better neighbors...I thought that regional identity could provide the cultural and social glue to put a fragmented society back together...Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, business people, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history."

My philosophy is this: Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself 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.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

You've undoubtedly noticed that I have touched on, but not answered the two important questions I raised at the outset of my talk: What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? I confess I cannot. But my clients can. NEH puts them at your fingertips--on web sites, at schools, libraries, museums, archives, seminars, traveling exhibits, and elsewhere. As the millennium approaches, look to them for answers. Have your children look to them for answers. That's how the Endowment, your Endowment, provides "wisdom and vision" for every citizen.

I want to bring the humanities home. I want to make the humanities accessible. These are not remote, abstract, lifeless stories. These are the stories of Homer, Lincoln, Faulkner—and your grandmother. We must preserve these stories, we must retell these stories.

Milan Kundera, speaking from his memory as a Czech whose nation was targeted for extinction by the Nazis and the Soviets, wrote, "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organizing forgetting. And, a nation which loses awareness of its past, gradually loses itself."

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Let us use the past to rescue the future. With your help, we can give every citizen a sense of history, a sense of what democracy really means.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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**Guild of the Chicago Historical Society
50th Annual Meeting
Chicago, Illinois
April 23, 1998**

Rediscovering America: The Humanities and The Blues

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you [Madeleine] for that kind introduction and thank you for inviting me. I'm happy to be here for the 50th Annual Meeting of the Guild of the Chicago Historical Society. Your service for the last five decades in supporting the Chicago Historical Society has benefited this great city and the whole country. Congratulations on your unwavering dedication, boundless energy, and monumental success.

I believe you've been remiss in one area however. If I'm not mistaken, you have not yet visited Mississippi on your annual Spring trip. Let's talk about remedying that.

I'm here to talk about the Blues, New Orleans, Chicago, and an exciting new idea for the Humanities. My goal this evening is to better the performance of Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815. That day, Jackson, with the help of French Pirate Jean Laffite, defeated the British in less than 30 minutes and suffered only 71 casualties. Tonight I know I can keep my speech under 30 minutes--it's the casualties I'm worried about. Sure, there may be a few deserters among you, but after 25 years of public speaking, I'm used to that.

There was a second Battle of New Orleans during the Civil War. In fact, Saturday is the 136th anniversary of that 1862 battle. Had the port of New Orleans not fallen to Union Army so early in the war, who knows what might have happened? Perhaps the blues might never have been born? Actually, the blues would have evolved, but they might not have made it from New Orleans to Chicago, as they ultimately did. I can definitely say that without the blues, there would be no rock and roll as we know it. And there might not be jazz as we know it.

Before I try to explain the blues, let me first play the blues. [PLAY.] This is what's called a "blue note" the keystone of blues music. You'll hear musicians play with it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There

are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is the 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]...

Don't underestimate the power of a note. This blue note is credited with loosening up ragtime music, paving the way for jazz improvisation, influencing gospel music, and creating rock and roll. As scholar David Evans notes in the Encyclopedia of Southern Culture (which I just happened to edit, so I can steal from it)

In the 1950s blues-influenced country music combined with black rhythm and blues to produce a new form of music that came to be known as rock and roll. The blues form and blues instrumental techniques were very prominent in most rock-and-roll styles through the 1960s and have continued to be important factors in this music's development up to the present.

So without the blues, during your teen years, instead of sock hops you would have been going to Tarantella formals.

There are many children of the blues, but arguably only one father—W.C. Handy. In part we know this because he told us so in his autobiography *Father of the Blues*. I'm sure it's no surprise to this audience that Handy got one of his first big engagements here in Chicago at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. By the turn of the century, and this is no surprise to me, Handy was the leader of a band sponsored by a black fraternal organization in Clarksdale, Mississippi. (You didn't think I was going to talk for twenty minutes without mentioning my home state did you?) Clarksdale is home to the Delta Blues Museum, and the hometown of Muddy Waters, Sam Cooke, and the Reverend C.L. Franklin (Aretha's dad).

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's publishing opened the door for other songwriters—black and white. 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. Ma Rainey was famous in her own right and secure enough to help Bessie Smith in her career. In the 1920s, Bessie sang with the best, including Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, and Benny Goodman. She 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.

During the 1920s, many New Orleans jazz musicians, including Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong came to Chicago and created a Chicago style jazz. Some of those players included Gene Krupa, Benny Goodman, and Bix Beiderbecke. Jazz and the blues influenced each other, but also grew independently. New Orleans and Chicago were instrumental in the popularization of jazz. As Bill Malone, a Tulane man, and my good friend notes.

The first significant southern band to be recorded was done so more or less by accident. The Dixieland Jazz Band, a group of white boys from New Orleans, was playing in clubs in Chicago when they made their first recordings in 1917. They made the nation jazz conscious, while also popularizing the word jazz. Not until 1923 did the first all-black jazz band, of King Oliver, also playing in Chicago, make its first recordings.

In the 1940s, you might have heard T-Bone Walker, or harmonica player Sonny Terry, or boogie-woogie pianist Meade Lux Lewis. In the 1950s, Professor Longhair, a.k.a. Roy Byrd was the pioneer of New Orleans R&B, and a major influence on Fats Domino. You might have heard his classic, "Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand." In Chicago in the 1950s, Muddy Waters and Howlin Wolf reigned—but I must point out, both came from Mississippi originally.

The names are important to explain the birth of the blues, But there are thousands of nameless others who deserve credit. Going back centuries, 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 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.

Another migration occurred during, and immediately after World War II. This northern migration in search of economic and social freedom brought another wave of the blues from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago and other cities. And, obviously, another wave of people. The blues are sung by and for people. The call and response is basic to the blues. The blues seek to connect. That's why the story of the blues is significant and fascinating, and American. That's why I want to spread that story. That's part of my job as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. With your indulgence I'd like to discuss just how the Endowment, with your help, can preserve and disseminate such stories.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to Chicago to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of accomplished men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, W.C. Handy, Bessie Smith, and many others. The National Endowment for the Humanities keeps their stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them. I want more citizens to learn about these heroes, my clients.

The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be: Rediscovering *America: The Humanities and the Millennium*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public television and radio stations. These grants are used for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs.

Filmmaker Ken Burns once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of the Carnegie Foundation) gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization." The "strands" of that DNA are--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research.

For a long time I have believed that each of us everywhere defines ourselves through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. 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. Conversely, there's much to be learned by visiting others' "native soil." Maine and Mississippi, New

Orleans and Chicago, have more in common than many might think—music, for one thing.

To make this discovery process easier, to spread stories like the birth of the blues, I have a new idea for NEH, one I hope you all will support. I hope to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public partnership. The Endowment will work with foundations, the private sector, and other government agencies to create the centers. They will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
- Summer institutes for school teachers
- Production of radio, video, and television features
- Development of collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings
- Preparation of regional encyclopedias
- Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy experts, and...
- Traveling museum exhibitions, and...
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

The centers will use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to other regional centers. And "smart" interactive classrooms will be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the nation.

These Endowment-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area, and they will also work closely with state humanities councils in their region.

After five years, the centers will be self-sustaining. We will work with individuals, corporations, and private foundations, on the national, regional, and state levels to help locate support.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a

boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. Using an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates popular, folk, historical, and literary subjects, it offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, the source of much of this talk about the blues.

In the south, to spread its message, the Center has reached out to the general public. Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audiences

with a broad range of programs through its quarterly newsletter, *The Southern Register*, and its magazine, *Living Blues*. The "College on the Mississippi," a weeklong trip aboard the Delta Queen has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley.

We formed new partnerships to reach more people as economically as possible. Let me cite just a few examples.

The Center worked with the National Civil Rights Museum to develop their annual conference on civil rights in the South. The museum is housed in the historic Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was assassinated thirty years ago.

The Center worked with communities in the Arkansas Delta to develop the Delta Cultural Center in Helena. It features exhibits on Italian, Lebanese, Jewish, black and white populations who settled in the region. Across the river in the Mississippi Delta, the Center has worked for years with the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale Mississippi. Clarksdale is a busy town; it also holds an annual Tennessee Williams Drama Festival. The Center cosponsors the festival that features lectures, dramatic presentations, and tours of neighborhoods where Williams lived and set some of his plays.

The Center also holds an annual Southern Culture Teacher Institute that draws teachers from throughout the nation. The first institute drew teachers from Los Angeles, Boston, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Delta. One summer 15 high school teachers from Maine joined 15 Mississippi teachers at the University of Mississippi to study and compare the cultures of the two regions. The next summer the same teachers met at the University of Southern Maine, with the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

These are the types of initiatives I would like to see spread across the country via new regional centers. People everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in a deep and lasting way. Think how your City of Chicago has shaped you.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories, and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Yes, the past is here. We need to rediscover and nurture it everywhere across the country.

As you can see, I am a Washington outsider, and I intend to change NEH and how it affects each of you. With your support, I hope to bring the humanities home to every American. Everyone should know the real story of the blues.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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**Partners in Tourism
Culture and Commerce Conference
Chicago, IL
April 25, 1998**

*Who Shot the Real J.R.?
Rediscovering America: The Humanities and Cultural Tourism*

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you. I'm glad to be here for this conference on cultural tourism, a follow-up to our six regional meetings. I'm excited about working with my fellow federal partners on this issue, the state humanities councils, and the many NGOs represented here. I also want to thank the Travel Industry Association of America, and American Express for their continued support.

In pondering what should be our next step, I thought a productive next step might be right out the door. We should all march right out and visit the Chicago Art Institute, the Chicago Historical Society, a few blues clubs, and maybe finish up at Second City for a laugh. We should be cultural tourists for a day! Take advantage of all this great city has to offer. Then I had second thoughts. I've only been at my new job as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities for four months, I decided a vacation would be, at best, premature. The press might get the wrong idea.

Last night was an eventful, if not necessarily edifying, evening for commercial television. The fictional J.R. Ewing, the human oil slick in a ten-gallon cowboy hat, returned to CBS in "Dallas: War of the Ewings." Some of you no doubt remember the television event of the 1980s, the "Who Shot J.R.?" episode of "Dallas." On November 21, 1980, more than ninety million people tuned-in to find out who shot J.R.

This morning, I have a much better story to tell about a real J.R. Today I want to talk to you about this real J.R., and what the humanities are doing for cultural tourism.

Tomorrow is the 391st anniversary of the landing of English colonists at Jamestown, Virginia. In many respects, the end of their 144-day journey marks the beginning of our country. That day, three ships, the

Discovery, Godspeed, and Susan Constant arrived at Jamestown. A real "JR" also arrived, and a real mystery started. The mystery was unearthed, literally, just two years ago at Jamestown island when Dr. William Kelso and his talented team found the site of James Fort, and the site of J.R.'s grave. At the time, Governor George Allen said, "We have discovered America's birthplace." George Stuart of the National Geographic Society said, "Of the 5,000 grants we've made, none has made me more proud." Dr. Kelso called it the finding of the "American equivalent of the Holy Grail." Film crews from all over the U.S., Europe, and Scandinavia came to record the scene.

During their excavation, Dr. Kelso and his team discovered JR--full scientific name JR102C. The "JR" actually stands for Jamestown Rediscovery. It appears that JR was a gentleman, as evidenced by his burial in a coffin. But which gentleman? Captain John Smith wrote of the death of 8 gentlemen among the first 104 colonists, and George Percy wrote of the death of 12 gentleman. Was J.R. actually William Bruster, Thomas Gower, John Martine, or Thomas Studley? We know J.R. was about 20 years old and 5 feet, 5 inches when he was shot in the knee and died. But who shot JR and why? Indians? Friendly fire? Murder? We may never know. This is a real, gripping mystery. As Dr. William Kelso writes "...JR102C remains Anglo-America's oldest Unknown Soldier and perhaps her oldest unsolved murder." This isn't fantasy, it's reality. It's not Disney's take on history, it's the real thing. That's what NEH can bring to this equation: the best minds, authentic stories, careful research.

Jamestown is the story of the birth of our nation. It's an epic story of greed and generosity, risk and reward, determination, death, and ultimately, success. It's a story people want to see. More than 360,000 visitors went to the park last year, 100,000 of them school children. But that's not enough. If we're successful in promoting cultural tourism, ninety million people will go to Jamestown Island to explore our history and the mystery of who shot the real J.R. How can we get them there? Let's get loud.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to Chicago to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen. And when that can't be done, I want every citizen to leave their home and come to the humanities—that's what cultural tourism is all about.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of accomplished men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick

Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, -JR102C--and many others. The National Endowment for the Humanities keeps their stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them. I want more citizens to learn about these heroes, my clients.

The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be: Rediscovering *America: The Humanities and the Millennium*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Cultural tourism will be an integral part of this theme.

The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American. That's not a lot of money. A miniscule drop in the ocean compared to the travel and tourism industry figures.

In 1996, expenditures from domestic and international travel in the U.S. hit \$473 billion; \$489 billion in 1977, and in 1998, travel spending should pass the \$500 billion mark. Much of this revenue is being generated online. The travel industry is taking advantage of available technology. Online travel sales tripled in 1997, and should increase 440% to \$4.7 billion by the year 2000. So how does the National Endowment for the Humanities influence such spending? By doing what it has done for the past 32 years, and especially the last four years.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public television and radio stations. These grants are used for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs.

In the last four years, the Endowment served as a cosponsor, with many of you, of "Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce," the 1995 conference held in conjunction with the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism. NEH was also part of a cultural coalition, with many of you, that conducted six leadership forums on cultural tourism around the country. I'm sure most of you have seen the recent "Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce" report. It gives us much valuable information and a firm foundation to build on. My thanks to the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau for their help with the report.

Filmmaker Ken Burns, who has definitely done his part for cultural tourism, once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of the Carnegie Foundation) gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward

the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization." The "strands" of that DNA are--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. All these strands have direct influence on cultural tourism. Let me give you a few examples to illustrate my point.

First, I'm proud to say NEH helped to find J.R. and the Jamestown fort. NEH supported Dr. William Kelso and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities with a grant of almost \$200,000. Others did also, the state of Virginia, the National Geographic Society, and NASA. Many partners made for productive work. The synergy added to the excitement and the success. So has the latest technology. A special exhibit of the rediscovery project is now on display at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. You can visit the exhibit in real life, or online at <www.nationalgeographic.com> This is a very special online exhibit because you can get live pictures online—and manipulate the video camera yourself to move through the exhibit. You can even zoom in and read the text on the signs! If you brought your laptops, I urge you to visit the exhibit tonight.

In real life, I urge you to visit these exciting sites where NEH has supported innovative projects. The Blackstone River Valley in southern New England spent more than two decades transforming its economy and identity. Last October, the Museum of Work and Culture opened in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, at the restored Lincoln Textile Building. NEH teamed with the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Woonsocket Industrial Development Corporation, and the City of Woonsocket to make it happen. Again, many partners made for productive work. The Museum, The Woonsocket Visitor Center, and many sites along the river, tell the story of how the Industrial Revolution changed an area and a way of life.

In New York City, at 97 Orchard Street, a six-story brick tenement built in 1863 houses the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. It teaches the public about the lives of urban, working-class immigrants. This tenement housed an estimated 10,000 people from more than twenty nations between 1863 and 1935. NEH helped with a challenge grant and project grants.

Barn Again! an exhibition on the American barn is reaching 32 rural museums in Utah, Alabama, Georgia, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, West Virginia, and Illinois. The project involves eight state humanities councils, the National Building Museum, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, and NEH.

Many of you have seen the film, *A Midwife's Tale: The Discovery of*

Martha Ballard, or read Laurel Ulrich's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *A Midwife's Tale*. NEH and the Maine Humanities Council were early supporters of Laurel Ulrich's work. The film and book tell the moving story of the life of midwife Martha Ballard, who lived in Augusta, Maine from 1785 to 1812.

These examples illustrate a belief I've held for a long time. Each of us everywhere defines ourselves through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. 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. Conversely, there's much to be learned by visiting others' "native soil." Maine and Mississippi have more in common than many might think.

To make this discovery process easier, I have a new idea for NEH, one I hope you all will support. I hope to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope. They will definitely promote cultural tourism.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public partnership. The Endowment will work with foundations, the private sector, and other government agencies to create the centers. They will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
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- Traveling museum exhibitions, and...
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

The centers will use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to other regional centers. And "smart" interactive classrooms will be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the nation.

These Endowment-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area, and they will also work closely with state humanities councils in their region.

After five years, the centers will be self-sustaining. We will work with individuals, corporations, and private foundations, on the national, regional, and state levels to help locate support.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. Using an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates popular, folk, historical, and literary subjects, it offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

In the south, to spread its message, the Center has reached out to the general public. Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audiences with a broad range of programs through its quarterly newsletter, *The Southern Register*, and its magazine, *Living Blues*. The "College on the Mississippi," a weeklong trip aboard the Delta Queen has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley.

Realizing that rivers and streams, mountains and trails do not stop at state borders, we at the center worked throughout the region to promote cultural tourism. We formed new partnerships to reach more people as economically as possible. Let me cite just a few examples.

The Center worked with the National Civil Rights Museum to develop their annual conference on civil rights in the South. The museum is housed in the historic Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was assassinated thirty years ago.

The Center worked with communities in the Arkansas Delta to develop the Delta Cultural Center in Helena. It features exhibits on Italian, Lebanese, Jewish, black and white populations who settled in the region.

Across the river in the Mississippi Delta, the Center has worked for years with the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale Mississippi. Clarksdale is the hometown of Muddy Waters, Sam Cooke, and the Reverend C.L. Franklin (Aretha's dad). Clarksdale is a busy town; it also holds an annual Tennessee Williams Drama Festival. The Center cosponsors the festival that features lectures, dramatic presentations, and tours of neighborhoods where Williams lived and set some of his plays.

The Center also holds an annual Southern Culture Teacher Institute that draws teachers from throughout the nation. The first institute drew teachers from Los Angeles, Boston, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Delta. One summer 15 high-school teachers from Maine joined 15 Mississippi teachers at the University of Mississippi to study and compare the cultures of the two regions. The next summer the same teachers met at the University of Southern Maine, with the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

These are the types of initiatives I would like to see spread across the country via new regional centers. People everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in a deep and lasting way. Think how the City of Chicago has shaped the people here.

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Yes, the past is here. We need to rediscover and nurture it everywhere across the country.

As I mentioned, 104 settlers landed at Jamestown 391 years ago--104, that's roughly the number of people in this room. I'm not going to ask you to cram into those three small ships, the Discovery, Godspeed and Susan Constant, and sail across the Atlantic for almost five months. We could try it; the state of Virginia built replicas that are now docked in Jamestown. But we actually have a tougher task; we want ninety million people to rediscover America's history, America's art, and America's culture. If we pull together, we can do it. We just have to be loud—and smart. National Tourism week starts May 3, there will be a huge conference here in Chicago—now's the time to redouble our efforts. I look forward to working with you.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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**American Council of Learned Societies
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
May 1, 1998**

Rediscovering America Through The Humanities

by William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I am delighted to be here today to speak before this distinguished organization. ACLS is an organization that I have admired and respected for many years. As a folklorist and anthropologist and as a teacher and scholar of the culture and folkways of the American South, I have been a member of or been associated with a number of ACLS's many constituent societies over the years.

The American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities share a common and noble purpose--to advance the humanities, particularly learning and scholarship in the humanities, in the United States. Indeed, as you know, ACLS was instrumental in helping to establish NEH in 1965 and has worked ceaselessly to further the agency's mission for more than three decades now.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and to applaud your former president, Stan Katz, for his many years of wise leadership and dedication both to this organization and to the cause of the humanities

Now, under John D'Arms, I know that ACLS--and the humanities in America--will continue to benefit from strong and enlightened leadership. On a personal note, I am sorry that I will not have an opportunity to work more directly with President D'Arms in my new capacity as Chairman of NEH. As you know, John served on the Endowment's advisory board, National Council on the Humanities, before becoming President of ACLS last year. But I hope that we will have many other occasions to work together in the coming years. I also would like to thank John for his excellent and insightful testimony last month before the House Appropriations Committee in support of the Endowment's fiscal year 1999 budget request and my agenda for the agency.

I know I am "preaching to the choir" here today, but I would like to give you a sense of my vision of the Endowment and of its importance to the life of the mind in America.

Throughout my entire professional career as a scholar, teacher, and

administrator, I have been a strong supporter of NEH, an institution that I am convinced makes immense contributions to the intellectual and cultural wellbeing of our nation. Now, as Chairman of the Endowment, I would like every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for them and how the humanities can touch their lives. This is why I am putting in place an exciting new initiative at NEH called *Rediscovering America Through the Humanities*. The centerpiece of this initiative will be the creation of 10 regional humanities centers located in every region of the nation that will provide a direct link between NEH and millions of Americans. I will describe my plans for these centers more fully later in my remarks to you today.

First, let say that I'm here on behalf of my "clients," **OUR** clients, a distinguished group of uncommon men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Mark Twain, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Edison, Willa Cather, FDR, and Dwight Eisenhower, not to mention Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles, Wordsworth, and countless others who make up the record of human thought and action. You know those names. I'm also here on behalf of distinguished scholars and teachers--such as Jack Rakove of Stanford, James McPherson of Columbia, Laurel Ulrich of Harvard, Martha Nussbaum of the University of Chicago, and Joyce Appleby of UCLA--whose basic research and scholarship has enriched our knowledge and understanding of the humanities.

I want to talk to you today about these "clients," and how they can help answer two important questions: What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? This is the time and this is the place to ask those questions. The millennium approaches. We have less than 609 days left in this century. What will we do with this time? There will be celebrations and dancing in the streets, but we can also use the occasion to explore where we're going as a country.

Before I discuss where we're going, allow me to briefly explain how I got here.

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. I went to a school where I was the only student whose parents had attended college. One day Mrs. Barfield, the sixth grade teacher, asked the students who planned on going to college. No one raised his or her hand. She pointed at me and said, "Billy Ferris, you will go to college. Your parents will make you go." I said, "I ain't going to no college!"

Well, after four decades, one Ph.D., several books, and stops at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow and Trinity College in Dublin, I am here. Mrs. Barfield was right, and I'm glad I was wrong.

She was a great teacher. Without her help and that of my parents, my wife and my daughter, I would not be where I am today. They have all inspired my love for, and dedication to, the humanities. That love and dedication eventually led me back home. Thomas Wolfe was wrong, you can go home again.

At home, for the past 18 years I was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. For 18 years, I studied the South. It is a diverse region and the South's cultural diversity defines me. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. As Vice President Gore observed, "Diversity is not an idea or agenda; it is a fact of our world." It has been for a long time.

My studies revealed that just as there's more to California than Silicon Valley and Sunset Boulevard, there's more to the South than Faulkner and the Blues. The South is not the moonlight and magnolia monolith many think it is. Tomorrow if you flew Delta Airlines overseas, registered in a Holiday Inn, received your Federal Express package, and watched CNN while sipping a Coke, you'd be using southern products every step of the way. MTV was conceived by Mississippian Robed Pittman. Tennessean Isaac Tigrett created the Hard Rock Cafe and the House of Blues. The South is full of surprises.

In the past, I have known the Endowment--as many of you no doubt also have known the agency!--from the outside as a grateful grant recipient. After several months on the inside, I have an even better view of just how critical this agency is to American intellectual life, which is why I want to spread the word about the National Endowment for the Humanities. Your National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 1965, Congress established the National Endowment for the Humanities, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously.

As you know, NEH is a small, independent, federal agency. Our current budget is only \$110.7 million, and our budget request is only \$136 million for the next fiscal year, an amount that is roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, or about fifty cents per American. But our national impact far exceeds our size because of the importance of this work.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence, awarding grants to support vital work in America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, public television and

radio stations, and other cultural institutions. By providing such grants for preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs, the Endowment promotes knowledge of human history, thought, and culture. The humanities help strengthen and sustain the cultural and civic character of this nation. The humanities offer wisdom and vision to our citizens.

Filmmaker Ken Burns once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of the Carnegie Corporation), gave Ken a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

Let me tell you about some of the "strands" of that DNA--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, websites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. They are not as separate as you might think. The strands are intertwined. The scholar does talk to society. Society needs the scholar. I'm reminded of a wise observation Charles Frankel made almost twenty years ago: "Nothing has happened of greater importance in the history of American humanistic scholarship than the invitation of the government to scholars to think in a more public fashion, and to think and teach with the presence of their fellow citizens in mind. It would be tragic if that invitation were now made less urgent, or if it were withdrawn." Under my chairmanship, I pledge that the Endowment will continue to hold out this invitation to scholars, and I know that our nation will be the better for it!

My guess is that everyone in this room has seen a Ken Burns documentary at some point in their lives. NEH funds helped launch the career of Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him at length, as he says:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders, and oversaw nearly every aspect of the production, but also, through unrelated grants to other institutions, helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. Much of the seminal research our scholars provided came from NEH supported projects. And their interest in our progress insured at critical junctures that we did not stray into myth or hagiography. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

I mentioned previously, we are a small federal agency with a tiny budget. We don't have much, but we make good use of what we do have. The Endowment's "seal of approval" acts as a catalyst and attracts other funding. Again, Ken Burns knows from experience, as he explains:

"The NEH grant I got for the Civil War series attracted even more funds from General Motors and several private foundations, money that would not have been there had not the Endowment blessed this project with their rigorously earned imprimatur."

You may have seen other films supported by NEH. A short, recent list includes "Liberty! The American Revolution"; "FDR"; "Eisenhower"; "LBJ"; "The Life of Frederick Douglass"; "The Great Depression"; "The Story of Theodore Roosevelt"; "One Woman, One Vote"; "A Midwife's Tale"; and "The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century."

These films will be played over and over again in American classrooms and will continue to have unlimited educational value. But that's not all we do. Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization.

The 1997 Pulitzer Prize in history was awarded to Jack N. Rakove's *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. Rakove's project was originally supported by an NEH Fellowship in 1984. He then tested his ideas with fifteen college teachers from around the country in a 1985 NEH Summer Seminar. Professor Rakove also consulted a number of NEH-funded documentary editions, such as: The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution, The Papers of James Madison, The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, The George Washington Papers, and The Papers of Alexander Hamilton.

Such honors are not unusual. Works facilitated by the Endowment's scholarly research programs have, over the years, garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes, and six National Book awards. In the last ten years, NEH grantees have won 40 percent of the Pulitzer Prizes in History, and, in the last twenty years, 60 percent of Phi Beta Kappa's Christian Gauss Awards and 20 percent of Ralph Waldo Emerson Awards.

As you well know, the Endowment also supports teams of scholars throughout the nation who are producing authoritative editions of the papers and works of important historical and literary figures--in addition to the projects I have already alluded to, these include the papers of John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Mark Twain, Jane Addams, John Dewey, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony,

Martin Luther King, Jr., Dwight Eisenhower, and many others. NEH is an absolutely critical source of funding for such projects, which, in addition to being monuments of scholarship themselves, also greatly broaden access to these materials for other scholars, students, and general readers.

Continued progress on these research resources is, however, gravely threatened due to substantial reductions in the Endowment's budget in recent years. In FY 1999, if adequate funding is provided by Congress, we plan to launch a special grant competition focused on editions of the writings of U.S. presidents and other major figures in the nation's heritage. This special initiative--*American Legacy Editions*--is designed to guarantee continued support for these projects and to provide incentives for their expeditious completion. The *American Legacy Editions* initiative is one of the cornerstones of my efforts to restore funding for NEH-supported scholarly research in the coming years.

Support for original scholarship that yields new knowledge and understanding in the humanities will continue to be a key objective and priority of the Endowment during my tenure. Individual scholarship is the principal engine of progress in the humanities and NEH is, by far, the nation's primary source of support for such study. While only 6 percent of the Endowment's grant funds go to individual scholars and researchers, the long-term intellectual return on this small investment is incalculable, as demonstrated by such notable Endowment-supported award-winning books as James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Laurel Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*, Bernard Bailyn's *Voyagers to the West*, Joan Hedrick's *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life*, and David Donald's *Lincoln*. Again, let me say that I will be working hard to increase funding in our grant programs for individual humanities scholars: I consider the NEH Fellowships and Stipends program to be one of the Endowment's "crown jewels."

The Endowment is also the nation's primary source of support for major collaborative projects in the humanities, such as ACLS's multivolume American National Biography project, which is preparing up-to-date sketches of 20,000 noted Americans, and the American Antiquarian Society's multivolume History of the Book in American Culture. Funding has also enabled scholars to document ancient languages: For example, the preparation of comprehensive dictionaries of languages vital to Near East studies, such as the Dictionary of Aramaic and the University of Chicago's Assyrian Dictionary, as well as the preparation of a number of Native American languages, including dictionaries of the Hopi, Siouan, Wichitan, Arapaho, and Navajo languages.

I am also committed to maintaining the Endowment's comprehensive

effort to preserve and increase the availability of resources important for research, education, and public programming in the humanities. As you know, for a number of years the Endowment has been the acknowledged leader in the national preservation movement. The heart of our future efforts will remain the important support we provide for major projects that are microfilming brittle books, journals and other documents, but we will also continue to help institutions maintain and stabilize their fragile material culture collections.

Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization. But that's not all we do, especially in the information age. The past is not dead, it's being digitized, on CDROMs and the Internet--and the Endowment is playing a major role. Let me briefly tell you about some of the exciting projects the Endowment's funds are helping to support.

The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae project at the University of California at Irvine created a computer database and a CD-ROM containing the entire surviving body of ancient Greek texts. Another NEH grant has supported the preparation of an electronic database of the works of Dante. And, in a pilot project funded by the Endowment, scholars at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California, have devised a method of reading the texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls through infrared digital imaging technology and have tested procedures and designed standards for the digitization of the ancient texts. Digitization of the Dead Sea Scrolls is expected to produce an extraordinary growth in the coming years in knowledge of the importance of these materials in Western civilization.

If we look to the east, we see MIT has developed an interactive videodisk for learning about Spanish language and culture. MIT has also prepared a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays that allows students to see film versions as they read a given passage. A class can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech as staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

The Endowment's Teaching with Technology program supports exciting new state-of-the-art educational software projects on topics ranging from the Civil War to the Supreme Court to ancient Greece and Rome--and the Amistad incident. These are available to all students through the Internet and are being used extensively and enthusiastically in classrooms.

Henry Adams wrote, "A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops." Today, the influence can slow down if teachers aren't properly trained in new technologies. So our new program, Schools for a New Millennium, will help K-12 teachers take full advantage of CD-ROMs and the Internet in their classes.

More than 1,000 school and college teachers are involved each year in intensive Endowment-sponsored humanities teacher development programs, enriching the classroom experience for more than 200,000 students each year. Over the years more than 20,000 school-teachers and nearly 30,000 college teachers have benefited.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history, and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country seeking excellent, content-rich web sites. There is a real demand for this information -- averaging almost 20,000 user sessions a month. To be precise, user sessions mean people are actually using the site, not just browsing. USA Today called it "a compelling and educational place to visit."

As President Clinton said in his recent State of the Union address: "The Information Age is, first and foremost, an education age, in which education must start at birth and continue throughout a lifetime." The Endowment provides enrichment for students of all ages.

Under my chairmanship, NEH will actively search for new ways that it can serve the American people. Accordingly, I have proposed that the Endowment create a regional humanities center for "Rediscovering America" in every region of the country, a center that will support scholarship and research, preservation, education, and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

This proposal will not cost much--\$5 million for fiscal year 1999. These dollars will be a fraction of what I envision will be a strong private-public partnership, and we intend to work very hard to encourage major private sector support.

Under this initiative the Endowment will work with foundations, the private sector, and other government agencies to establish these centers around the nation. These centers will serve as cultural hubs for each of our nation's distinctive regions, each with a mission of broadening public awareness of, access to, and participation in the humanities.

I have talked to representatives from many organizations and institutions: the National Humanities Advisory Board, the National Council on the Humanities, and various State Humanities Councils. And, just two weeks ago, we had a very productive in-depth discussion at the Endowment with a group of distinguished scholars who have worked in this area. There are, of course, many issues still to be worked out with

the new initiative, but I'm convinced these regional centers will ultimately provide "wisdom and vision" for all citizens.

Among the types of activities the Centers could undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies at all levels of education.
- Summer institutes for school teachers from the region
- Production of radio, video, and television features to reach a broad audience
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry to promote cultural tourism
- Development of research collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings.
- Preparation of encyclopedias and other research tools
- Annual conferences with scholars, students, and public policy figures
- Traveling museum exhibitions

The centers will be urged to use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to resources housed elsewhere, including the other regional centers. Also, "smart" interactive classrooms could be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the region and nation.

I want to make it clear that the regional centers are in no way designed to displace existing centers. Endowment-funded centers will be required to coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area.

I also want to make it clear that we will really need the active participation of the state humanities councils for this initiative to be successful. And, in no way will traditional forms of funding from the Endowment to the councils be affected.

Ultimately, the centers will be self-sustaining. We will work with corporations, private foundations, and individual donors on the national, regional, and state levels to help locate support.

The regional centers initiative will complement our regular programs and operations. I am absolutely committed to sustaining and increasing

support for NEH's core humanities programs. Indeed, the Endowment's FY 1999 budget request of \$136 million is designed to begin the process of breathing some vital new life into these important programs, which have not recovered fully from the devastating reductions that were inflicted on them three years ago.

I know this regional centers project sounds ambitious. Hearing it for the first time it may sound like wishful thinking, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation and education in the region. I told you about the Center two years ago. Let me briefly highlight what was accomplished.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi has developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. The center uses an interdisciplinary approach incorporating popular, folk, historical and literary subjects. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

When you come to study at the Center you can not dodge troubling issues. You deal with racial issues in a region that celebrates the birthday of Martin Luther King and Robert E. Lee. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience, progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

To spread its message, the Center has reached out to the general public. Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audience with a broad range of programs. The Center sponsors a quarterly newsletter *The Southern Register* and the magazines *Living Blues* and *Reckon: The Magazine of Southern Culture*, the "College on the Mississippi," an annual week-long trip aboard the Delta Queen, has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley. The Center produces films, records, and radio programs. Each Saturday night the Center presents "Highway 61," a two-hour blues show that is broadcast throughout the Deep South on Public Radio in Mississippi. And you can find out more about the Center at its website.

Some of the people I've talked to wonder why I'm looking "regional" when everyone else is looking "global." Well, let me adapt an old New

England expression, "You can get there from here." Regional often brings one around to global--the Center for Southern Culture was made a member of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization. The Center's work has served as model for similar institutions in Russia, Africa, and Australia.

I've traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest and to Moscow to assist colleagues at sister institutions who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. They recognize that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. This relationship, which Eudora Welty calls the "sense of place," shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Think how this great, growing city has shaped you and your children.

Historian Patricia Limerick studies the West. She embraced regional history because, she says, "I thought it would make us better neighbors I thought that regional identity could provide the cultural and social glue to put a fragmented society back together Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, business people, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history."

My philosophy is this: Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself 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.

Perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success and make a mark on society, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

You've undoubtedly noticed that I have touched on, but not answered the two important questions I raised at the outset of my talk: What kind of country do we want to be in the year 2000? What kind of citizens do we want to be in the year 2000? I confess I can not answer these questions . . . but my clients can. NEH puts them at your fingertips--on websites, at schools, libraries, museums, archives, seminars, traveling exhibits, and elsewhere. As the millennium approaches, look to them for answers. Have your children look to them for answers. That's how the Endowment, your Endowment, provides "wisdom and vision" for every citizen.

Milan Kundera, speaking from his memory as a Czech whose nation was

targeted for extinction first by the Nazis and then by the Soviets, wrote, "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organizing forgetting. And, a nation which loses awareness of its past, gradually loses itself."

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Let us use the past to rescue the future. With your help, we can give every citizen a sense of history, a sense of what democracy really means.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

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More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: May 1998

Building a Sense of Place NEH Regional Centers Explore Cultural Roots

By William R. Ferris

Everyone is from somewhere, but things get interesting when we realize that our regional roots define us in deep and lasting ways. I believe that by exploring our attachments to the regions that have shaped us, we can rediscover what bonds us as Americans, and we can renew American culture.

The "sense of place" is at the heart of a new initiative I am launching at the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C. As NEH's new chairman, I am proposing the creation of ten regional centers for "rediscovering America," one in every region of the country. Each center will serve as a cultural hub for its region with a mission of broadening public awareness of, access to, and participation in the humanities. I am certain that these centers can provide wisdom and vision for all Americans.

Among the types of activities the centers can undertake are course development in regional studies at all levels of education; summer institutes for schoolteachers from the region; production of radio, video and television features to reach a broad audience; joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry to promote cultural tourism; development of research collections of manuscripts, photography, and film and sound recordings; preparation of encyclopedias and other research tools; annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy figures; and traveling museum exhibitions.

The centers can use technology to assure maximum access and impact. Websites can offer a wealth of information as well as links to resources housed elsewhere, including other regional centers. Also, "smart" interactive classrooms could be developed to share educational programs with other institutions throughout the region and nation.

I know this initiative sounds ambitious, but I have seen how it can work. The University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which I directed for 18 years, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation and education in the South. I have traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest, and even Russia to assist colleagues at sister institutions in developing programs focused on their own distinctive cultures. So I know the interest is there.

As we look to the dawn of a new millennium, now is the time to ask ourselves what kind of nation we want to be. And there is no better way to begin a journey to rediscover America than for each of us to tap the wellsprings of our own sense of place.

*William R. Ferris is chairman of the
National Endowment for the Humanities.*

**Commencement Address
Coastal Carolina University
Conway, South Carolina
May 9, 1998**

Rediscovering America Through the Humanities

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you Ms. Heinemann for that kind introduction. I hope you continue your political career, our country needs leaders like you.

I'm glad to be back here at Coastal Carolina University. President Ingle, Chairman Burroughs, Provost Idoux, distinguished deans and to this fine faculty, my congratulations to you all. As I walk this campus, as I talk to professors and students, I can see that you have created a special place that is, in the words of President Ingle, "small enough for intimacy and large enough for inspiration." I just hope it is also patient enough for my speech.

My congratulations especially to the parents, grandparents, family and friends who have worked so hard to help this graduating class. And congratulations most of all to you students, the Class of '98.

To all of you here today, I offer this sage advice—tomorrow is Mother's Day! If you don't have a gift yet there's still time! Seriously, Happy Mother's Day to all moms present. You know, this is the 90th anniversary of the first Mother's Day celebration. It took place long ago in Grafton, West Virginia. We have Anna Jarvis, a schoolteacher, to thank for Mother's Day; she worked long and hard to make it happen.

All of you have worked hard to make this day happen. The excitement here is palpable, this must be what it feels like to be at a NASA shuttle launch. You the students are sitting atop ten stories of rocket fuel, ready and eager to blastoff. Your parents, the faculty and administration are ready to launch you on your way. The countdown has begun, 10, 9, 8, 7...and then I come along and delay liftoff. But not for long....

I want to talk to you this morning about your Atheneum, Thoreau, J.R. Ewing, and what the National Endowment for the Humanities can do for you.

But first, even before "liftoff," I implore you to come back. This may be the last thing you want to hear as you begin your great adventure. But it is the first thing I want you to remember. Come back. Maybe not right away, but soon. Come back to this campus, this town, this state, this region, this country—from wherever you are. Come home. You will be welcome, you will be needed. Thomas Wolfe was wrong—you can go home—again, and again, and again. Literally and figuratively.

Come back to see faculty and friends, to listen to beach music and dance the shag. Come back to your Atheneum.

Your Atheneum, built on campus in 1966, echoes the Temple of Athene in ancient Athens. About 100 miles from Athens, at Delphi, there was a shrine to Apollo. Inscribed at the Delphic Oracle was the admonition, attributed to one of the Seven Sages and echoed by everyone from Socrates to Sartre, "know thyself." No doubt you've heard that many times in your four years here. Know thyself. But how? There's the rub. Sartre can help, he wrote.

"The philosophies of Descartes and Kant to the contrary, through the *I think* we reach our own self in the presence of others, and the others are just as real to us as our own self. Thus, the man who becomes aware of himself through the *cogito* also perceives all others, and he perceives them as the condition of his own existence. He realizes that he can not be anything....unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself."

This theme, know thyself, is echoed in an article by Sara L. Sanders, "The Story Way of Knowing in the Context of Community," which is on your web site. Ms. Sanders has worked with Dr. Janet Files, the director of the Coastal Area Writing Project.

By the way, it's very exciting that this ceremony is being web cast. If you had told me twenty years ago that I'd be web casting in coastal Carolina in 1998, I would have replied, "Great, I hope I catch a catfish."

Sara Sander wrote a poem, *The Storyteller*, for her aunt. It begins, "You told our stories // And we knew we were special // Because we were // In a story // That was told."

All of you are special. You are in stories that are told—in your home, in your dorm, on this campus, in this community.

Ms. Sanders quotes Frederick Buechner, who wrote, "My story is

important not because it is mine...but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is yours. Maybe nothing is more important than that we keep track of these stories of who we are and where we have come from and the people we have met along the way....to lose track of our stories is to be profoundly impoverished not only humanly but spiritually."

I couldn't agree more. We are in danger of losing our memory as a culture. Essentially, my job as chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities is to help "keep track" of the stories. Who we are and where we have come from as Americans. They are great stories, American stories, your stories.

Sometimes I have this fantasy, that if I could somehow, magically, turn the Statue of Liberty around, so she's facing us, all would be well. She would lift her lamp to us. She would have encouraging stories to tell, millions of them, because virtually every one of us is an immigrant. But monuments, however beautiful and inspiring, can not talk. After five months in the nation's capital, I can confirm this. I know many of you have been to Washington, D.C. and visited the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the new FDR memorial. Breath taking sites, each one of them, our nation's heroes carved in stone. Stimulating, yet silent. They can not talk--but they do speak to us. Anyone who has visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or the Iwo Jima Memorial knows that. It is our obligation as students, scholars and citizens to spread the word. Our democracy depends upon it. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

I am here to spread the word. I am here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of accomplished men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and many others. The National Endowment for the Humanities, and scholars such as Dr. Charles Joyner, keep their stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to South Carolina to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen.

The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be: *Rediscovering America Through The Humanities*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the*

Common Man.

The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American.

In 1965, Congress established the Endowment, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." Since its founding, NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public radio and television stations.

1965 was an auspicious year for American culture, because that same year, Henry Cauthen was chosen to head South Carolina ETV. Henry built South Carolina ETV into one of the best public television networks in the country. We have Henry to thank for such fine programs as *Firing Line*, *The Magic School Bus*, *With God on Our Side*, and *Surviving the Bottom Line with Hedrick Smith*. Thank you for your great work Henry.

Thanks to Henry, most of you know the work of filmmaker Ken Burns. NEH funds helped launch the career of Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders. It also helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

My guess is that everyone here has seen a Steven Spielberg film at some point in their lives. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he has benefited from our help. Spielberg called *Amistad* "perhaps my most important film ever." For his most important film ever, Spielberg called on scholarly resources funded by NEH. Howard Jones' book, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, a historical analysis of the incident, was made possible by a summer research grant from NEH.

Now I know many of your parents are dying to hear my J.R. Ewing story. Students, please indulge me. You see, the television show *Dallas* was to them what *Melrose Place* is to many of you—irresistible trash. Two weeks ago, the fictional J.R. Ewing, the human oil slick in a ten-gallon cowboy hat, returned to CBS in *Dallas: War of the Ewings*. Ask your

parents about the commercial television event of the 1980s, the *Who Shot J.R.?* episode of *Dallas*. On November 21, 1980, more than ninety million people tuned-in to find out who shot J.R.

This morning, I have a much better story to tell about a real J.R. This year is the 391st anniversary of the landing of English colonists at Jamestown, Virginia. In many respects, the end of their 144-day journey marks the beginning of our country. That day, three ships, the *Discovery*, *Godspeed*, and *Susan Constant* arrived at Jamestown. A real "JR" also arrived, and a real mystery started.

The mystery was unearthed, literally, just two years ago at Jamestown island when Dr. William Kelso and his talented team found the site of James Fort, and the site of J.R.'s grave. At the time, Governor George Allen said, "We have discovered America's birthplace." Dr. Kelso called it the finding of the "American equivalent of the Holy Grail."

During their excavation, Dr. Kelso and his team discovered JR--full scientific name JR102C. The "JR" actually stands for Jamestown Rediscovery. It appears that JR was a gentleman, as evidenced by his burial in a coffin. But which gentleman?

We know J.R. was about 20 years old and 5 feet, 5 inches when he was shot in the knee and died. But who shot JR and why? Indians? Friendly fire? Murder? We may never know. This is a real, gripping mystery. As Dr. William Kelso writes "...JR102C remains Anglo-America's oldest Unknown Soldier and perhaps her oldest unsolved murder." This isn't fantasy, it's reality. It's not Disney's take on history, it's the real thing.

I'm proud to say NEH helped to find J.R. and the Jamestown fort. NEH supported Dr. William Kelso and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. Others did also, the state of Virginia, the National Geographic Society, and NASA. Many partners made for productive work.

Jamestown is the story of the birth of our nation. It's an epic story of greed and generosity, risk and reward, determination, death, and ultimately, success. It's a story people want to see. More than 360,000 visitors went to the park last year, 100,000 of them school children. But that's not enough. I want ninety million people to visit Jamestown Island to explore our history and the mystery of who shot the real J.R. If you haven't planned your summer vacation yet, think about Jamestown. When you go on summer vacation, consider an NEH-funded book.

Books funded by the Endowment's Research and Education division have garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine

Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes and six National Book awards.

Endowment-sponsored academic research enables authors to produce classic works such as James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom* and Laurel Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*.

If you take a laptop to the beach, visit some of the exciting technology projects the Endowment is sponsoring.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed both an interactive videodisk of Spanish language and culture and a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays. Students of Shakespeare can see film versions as they read a passage. They can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEMent. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. There is a real demand for this information - averaging almost 20,000 people actually using the site, not just browsing. USA Today called it "a compelling and educational place to visit."

These examples illustrate a belief I've held for a long time. Each of us everywhere defines ourselves through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. 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. It is very true that there's much to be learned by visiting others' "native soil." Maine and Mississippi have more in common than many might think. But it is also true that it is vitally important to return to your "little postage stamp of native soil."

To make this process easier, I have a new idea for NEH, one I hope you all will support. I hope to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
- Summer institutes for school teachers

- Production of radio, video, and television features
- Development of collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings
- Preparation of regional encyclopedias
- Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy experts, and...
- Traveling museum exhibitions, and...
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

These NEH-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area, for example, the Waccamaw Center for Cultural and Historical Studies.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. When you come to study at the Center, you cannot dodge troubling issues. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites, and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class, and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience, progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Dr. Joyner wrote nearly half of it. I can never thank him enough—and we certainly never paid him enough.

Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audiences with a broad range of programs. For example, the "College on the Mississippi," a weeklong trip aboard the Delta Queen has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley.

In this time of global competition, it is fair to ask, why regional centers? Thoreau, that's why. In Concord, and one mile away at Walden Pond, Thoreau discovered universal truths. He didn't need to take the Grand Tour. As he once said, "I've traveled widely in Concord."

This year, we commemorate both the thirtieth anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, and the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Among other things, what they have

in common is that both were greatly influenced by Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*. No minor achievement for a pencil-maker from Concord.

In your time here, I hope you were influenced by Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Lincoln, Jefferson, Adams and many others. Their stories will stand the test of time. As I look at the many guests, I see stories in their faces. Capture those stories soon. There's an old proverb that says, "When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground." Talk to your parents and grandparents, tape an oral history. Your children will thank you.

My best to all of you. If you need to, indulge and enjoy your wanderlust, but please come back. Come back to this campus, this community, to South Carolina, and this country. Again, my congratulations to the Class of '98.

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

#

**Piccolo Spoleto Festival
Charleston Museum
Charleston, South Carolina
May 23, 1998**

Preserving America's Southern Heritage in the Coming Millennium

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction.

I want to thank the festival, the South Carolina Humanities Council, this museum, and the city office of cultural affairs for inviting me. I'm very honored to be here and I'm also very excited. If ever I've been at the right place at the right time—this is it!

Great music, dance, theatre, art, humor, film—it's all here. And that's what I want to talk to you about today. Here. Place. What the South offers the rest of the nation, not exclusively, but I believe predominantly, is a strong sense of place. Place and all it entails, folklore, myth, music, history. Everything you see celebrated at this great festival.

In Washington, D.C., and most places in this country, the first question you're asked is "What do you do?" In the South, the first question is "Where are you from?"

Each of us everywhere defines ourselves through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. 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. It is very true that there's much to be learned by visiting others' "native soil." Maine and Mississippi have more in common than many might think. But it is also true that it is vitally important to carry your "little postage stamp of native soil" with you, and to return to it often.

I would maintain that the South is no longer only in the South. It's everywhere. It has spread from the Mississippi delta to Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle—and the nation's capital.

As the new chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I've

only been on the job 5 months. I am new to the nation's capitol, but I feel right at home. From my office on Pennsylvania Avenue I look towards Capitol Hill and see Trent Lott leading the Senate and Newt Gingrich leading the House. I look in the other direction and I see President Clinton and Vice-President Gore leading the nation. I may have left Mississippi, but I am surrounded by southerners.

It's the same in the business world. Tomorrow if you flew Delta Airlines overseas, registered in a Holiday Inn, received your Federal Express package, and watched CNN while sipping a Coke; you'd be using southern products every step of the way. MTV was conceived by Mississippian Robert Pittman. Tennessean Isaac Tigrett created the Hard Rock Cafe and the House of Blues.

The blues offer a perfect example of how southern culture has spread and influenced the whole country.

Before I try to explain the blues, let me first play the blues. [PLAY.] This is what's called a "blue note" the keystone of blues music. At this festival, you'll hear musicians play with it, bend it, experiment, and improvise with it. There are almost as many types of blues as there are snowflakes, but this note is the 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]...

Don't underestimate the power of a note. This blue note is credited with loosening up ragtime music, paving the way for jazz improvisation, influencing gospel music, and creating rock and roll. As scholar David Evans notes in the Encyclopedia of Southern Culture (which I just happened to edit, so I can steal from it).

In the 1950s blues-influenced country music combined with black rhythm and blues to produce a new form of music that came to be known as rock and roll. The blues form and blues instrumental techniques were very prominent in most rock-and-roll styles through the 1960s and have continued to be important factors in this music's development up to the present.

So without the blues, during your teen years, instead of sock hops, many of you would have been going to Tarantella formals.

There are many children of the blues, but arguably only one father—W.C. Handy. In part we know this because he told us so in his autobiography *Father of the Blues*. Handy got one of his first big engagements in Chicago at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. By the turn of the century, and this is no surprise to me, Handy was the

leader of a band sponsored by a black fraternal organization in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Clarksdale is home to the Delta Blues Museum, and the hometown of Muddy Waters, Sam Cooke, and the Reverend C.L. Franklin (Aretha's dad).

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's publishing opened the door for other songwriters—black and white. 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. Ma Rainey was famous in her own rite and secure enough to help Bessie Smith in her career. In the 1920s, Bessie sang with the best, including Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, and Benny Goodman. She 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. Going back centuries, 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.

Another migration occurred during, and immediately after World War II. This northern migration in search of economic and social freedom brought another wave of the blues from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago and other cities. And, obviously, another wave of people. The blues are sung by and for people. The call and response is basic to the blues. The blues seek to connect. The blues are America's most deeply indigenous music—and the music is a key to the history of race relations in this country. That's why the story of the blues is significant and fascinating, southern and American. That's why I want to spread that story. That's part of my job as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. With your indulgence I'd like to discuss how the Endowment, with your help, can preserve and disseminate such stories.

I am here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of accomplished men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and many others. The National Endowment for the Humanities, and people such as Rodger

Stroup of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Elaine Freeman and Sally Foster of the Educational TV Endowment of South Carolina, David Chesnutt [editor of the Henry Laurens papers] of the University of South Carolina, and others keep their stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to South Carolina to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen.

The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be *Rediscovering America Through The Humanities*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about fifty cents per American.

In 1965, Congress established the Endowment, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." Since its founding, NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public radio and television stations.

Most of you know the work of filmmaker Ken Burns. NEH funds helped launch the career of Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders. It also helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

My guess is that everyone here has seen a Steven Spielberg film at some point in their lives. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he has benefited from our help. Spielberg called *Amistad* "perhaps my most important film ever." For his most important film ever, Spielberg called on scholarly resources funded by

NEH. Howard Jones' book, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, a historical analysis of the incident, was made possible by a grant from NEH.

Books funded by the Endowment's Research and Education division have garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes, and six National Book awards.

The Endowment is sponsoring many new exciting technology projects.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed both an interactive videodisk of Spanish language and culture and a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays. Students of Shakespeare can see film versions as they read a passage. They can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. There is a real demand for this information - averaging almost 20,000 people actually using the site, not just browsing. USA Today called it "a compelling and educational place to visit."

We're also working hard here in South Carolina. In the recent past, the Endowment has supported projects to publish the papers of Henry Laurens, South Carolina statesman and president of the continental Congress....to support an exhibition on the history and significance of the Penn School, one of the first African-American educational institutions in the South...and to support South Carolina's participation in the U.S. Newspaper program to save millions of pages that chronicle the daily history of this great state.

Randy Akers and his staff at the South Carolina Humanities Council deserve a lot of credit for their efforts to reach out to every community, no matter how small, throughout the state. The council just staged their second annual book festival, and their sixth annual Humanities Festival will be held this fall. The NEH-state council partnership is working well in South Carolina, and I look forward to expanding our relationship.

One way to do that is through a new initiative. I have a new idea for NEH; one I hope you all will support it. I hope to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
- Summer institutes for school teachers
- Production of radio, video, and television features
- Development of collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings
- Preparation of regional encyclopedias
- Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy experts
- Traveling museum exhibitions, and...
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

These Endowment-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area, for example, this fine museum.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region. In terms of preserving a southern heritage, the South is ahead of the game.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. When you come to study at the Center, you cannot dodge troubling issues. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites, and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class, and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience; progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

The Center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audiences with a broad range of programs. For example, the "College on the Mississippi," a weeklong trip aboard the Delta Queen has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley.

We formed new partnerships to reach more people as economically as possible. Let me cite just a few examples.

The Center worked with the National Civil Rights Museum to develop

their annual conference on civil rights in the South. The museum is housed in the historic Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was assassinated thirty years ago.

The Center worked with communities in the Arkansas Delta to develop the Delta Cultural Center in Helena. It features exhibits on Italian, Lebanese, Jewish, black, and white populations who settled in the region.

Across the river in the Mississippi Delta, the Center has worked for years with the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

The Center also holds an annual Southern Culture Teacher Institute that draws teachers from throughout the nation. The first institute drew teachers from Los Angeles, Boston, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Delta. One summer, 15 high school teachers from Maine joined 15 Mississippi teachers at the University of Mississippi to study and compare the cultures of the two regions. The next summer the same teachers met at the University of Southern Maine, with the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

When I worked at the Center, I traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest, and to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow to assist colleagues at sister institutions who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. I know this idea can work.

When the new regional centers are in place, the southern heritage will be preserved and disseminated to other regions across the country and around the globe. And students of all ages will be able to access the riches of other regions.

The millennium approaches. As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." If we preserve and pass on our sense of place, we will never forget our past.

This festival celebrates our southern heritage. For their creativity and determination, I salute Mayor Riley, the leaders of the city of Charleston, and all involved. To the question, how best do we preserve America's southern heritage? A large part of the answer is right here, right now, in this place.

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**Commencement address
St. Stephen's High School
Austin, Texas
May 30, 1998**

Risks, Laundry, and the Blues

William Ferris,
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you Headmaster Weissbach, for that kind introduction.

I'm glad to be back here in Austin, Texas, thank you for inviting me. Headmaster Weissbach, Bishop Payne, Mr. Henna, distinguished guests, and to this fine faculty, my congratulations to you all.

My congratulations especially to the parents, grandparents, family and friends who have worked so hard to help this graduating class. And congratulations most of all to you students, the Class of '98—one hundred strong.

All of you have worked hard to make this day happen. The excitement here is palpable; this must be what it feels like to be at a NASA shuttle launch. You the students are sitting atop ten stories of rocket fuel, ready and eager to blastoff. Your parents, the faculty and administration are ready to launch you on your way. The countdown has begun, 10, 9, 8, 7...and then I come along and delay liftoff. But not for long.... I'll try to be quick—quicker than Coach Paschall anyway.

I want to talk to you this morning about your laundry, risk, and what the National Endowment for the Humanities can do for you. Actually, the real reason I'm here is my sister said the tennis teams would help me with my backhand. Congratulations to both teams on their victories. I don't need art appreciation lessons because I can see great works of art by senior Cheyenne Weaver and sophomore Lauren Beck at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. My congratulations to those artists for their success in the Scholastic Arts Competition. Clearly, St. Stephen's is a very creative, fit, community.

Before "liftoff," before you leave this community, I implore you to come back. This may be the last thing you want to hear as you begin your

great adventure. But it is the first thing I want you to remember. Come back. Maybe not right away, but soon. Come back to this school, this town, this state, this region, this country—from wherever you are. Come home. You will be welcome, you will be needed. Thomas Wolfe was wrong—you can go home—again, and again, and again. Literally and figuratively.

Come back to see teachers and friends, to enjoy Amy's ice cream, to reconnect with your school and your family.

When you come back home, and please listen carefully, do not, under any circumstances, bring your laundry. At least not the first time. The first time you come home from college bring your parents a present. They deserve it. And here's the clever part. They'll be so happy they might send you off with a little extra cash for the road. It's a win-win situation.

There is another reason to come home. In your years here I'm sure you've examined, explored, pondered two words—"know thyself." Everyone from Socrates to Sartre offers that advice. But how do you do that? You venture forth, but you also come home.

Each of us everywhere defines ourselves through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. 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. It is very true that there's much to be learned by visiting others' "native soil." Maine and Texas have more in common than many might think. But it is also true that it is vitally important to return to your "little postage stamp of native soil."

You're leaving, off to your adventures. You know how hard leaving is; I understand some of that come out during your recent Toast and Roast night. Leaving is difficult because all of you, students, faculty, administrators, parents, have created a community of caring here. Be thankful for that. And come back to it; it will renew your spirit and energy, which you will need for your next task.

Your next task is to venture forth, experiment, take risks. Business maven Peter Drucker wrote, "There is the risk you cannot afford to take, there is the risk you cannot afford not to take." The challenge is how to choose? Experiment.

Clearly you don't need to risk your life to prove you can chug a pitcher of beer at a college party. You don't need to risk your health and endure hazing to join some college organization. But you may try risking your

comfort and security to discover something about yourself. If you live in the arts building, take an economics course. If you excel on the athletic field, try a ballet course. If you're blessed with many friends, reach out to the loner. If your material needs are met, volunteer to help those less fortunate. In short, take the lessons you have learned in this Christian community and repeat them wherever you go.

I teased Coach Paschall earlier so let me now praise him. As you all know, last summer he had the guts to fly down to Australia to take a role in Terry Malick's film *The Thin Red Line*. Good for him. Coach Paschall took a risk; he stretched himself. He tried something radically different. It pays off. He's too modest to say this, but I have it on good authority that he turned down the lead role in *Titanic* to return to St. Stephen's and coach baseball. You're a good sport, coach.

St. Stephen's itself was a risk when it was founded 48 years ago. In 1950, a boarding school for girls and boys was a radical idea. But Bishop John Hines was not afraid to take a risk. Nor was Founding Headmaster Reverend William Brewster, who moved his family from New England to Texas. These courageous founders had a vision and they were not afraid to act on it. Look around you—see how that vision has grown.

You have to be able to look at the weeds and dust and see an oasis in the future. You have to be able to look at the lump of clay and see a sculpture. How? Just start. Jump in. Take a risk.

I understand that when this school was founded it was so far out in the country that there weren't even phone lines to the school. The school didn't have a phone! Not for long. They set up a radiophone in a car sitting on blocks outside the Headmaster's office. When a call came in, the phone didn't "ring," the car horn blew! Shirley Sherman would go out and answer it. How resourceful, how creative. I suppose St. Stephen's could boast it invented the first car phone? Why not. When I'm done, I think I'll ask Shirley Sherman if she still gets up when she hears a car horn. My point is there is reward in risk. You, the class of '98, one hundred strong, are a testimony to that. In 1950, the whole school had less than seventy students. Now there are more than five hundred and sixty students at St. Stephen's. What a success story.

That is the same kind of creativity and risk-taking I'm trying to bring to my new job as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. What do I do?

Essentially, my job as Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities is to help keep track of our nation's stories. Who we are and where we have come from as Americans. They are great stories, American stories, your stories. Stephen Austin, Jefferson, Lincoln,

Frederick Douglass, Soujourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony...

I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen. I urge everyone here to visit our website and find out more about us. From there, you can link up to EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. It will definitely help you with your college studies. Check it out and spread the word. The Endowment is accessible and ready to help.

This year, we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi wrote, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Change takes risk. I know you'll take the right ones.

My best to all of you. Again, my congratulations to the Class of '98. Before I go I will try to live by my words. If you're going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk. If Coach Paschall can act, I can play. Plus, if you lost the sing-song competition to the juniors you clearly need a music lesson before you leave. I will now take a risk and play a little tune in tribute to the class of '98....

Again, thank you for inviting me. Good luck to you all.

More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: June 1998

Teaching with Technology Internet-based Education Gets Boost from NEH

By William R. Ferris

The Internet has revolutionized how we teach and learn. The technology has even redefined our vocabulary. It wasn't long ago, someone once remarked, that a "net" was something you used to catch a fish, a "Web site" was something that needed to be dusted and a "mouse" was certainly not something you wanted inside a school!

Today the Internet is almost universally recognized as a major educational tool. According to a recent poll, more than 90 percent of the nation's teachers believe that using the Internet boosts student achievement and prepares students for a future requiring technological literacy. Yet 60 percent of the teachers are concerned about the quality of on-line content and want help finding what is best for educational purposes.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), a federal grant-making agency in Washington, D.C., is providing key leadership in this area. Strengthening the study of history, government, literature, art history and languages -- the subjects known as the humanities -- is a central goal of NEH. In all education projects it funds, NEH ensures excellence, involving scholars as well teachers in the development of subject matter and teaching resources.

NEH does three things to make the Internet education- friendly:

1) NEH maintains EDSITEment, a gateway Web site located at edsitement.neh.gov that provides links to 49 sites carefully selected for their quality of educational content and design. Instead of having to sift through more than 65,000 humanities-related sites on the Web, anyone seeking the best humanities education materials on the Internet can easily find and access them through EDSITEment. Each site comes with lesson plans offering suggestions on how to use the materials effectively in the classroom.

2) NEH is awarding grants to schools around the nation through an initiative called "Schools for a New Millennium," which will enable those schools to become models of how teachers, principals, librarians and the community can fully incorporate CD-ROMs and the Internet into their everyday teaching.

3) NEH continues to fund the development of excellent new humanities Web sites and CD-ROMs in areas such as the American wars in Asia, ancient cultures of North America, Spanish colonial history, U.S. women's history, and Chinese history and culture.

The Internet places a vast, sometimes disorienting wilderness of information at everyone's fingertips. NEH seeks to provide teachers, students and other curious people with a map to the educational treasures that can be found out there.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Pennsylvania Humanities Council's Technology, Communications,
and Community Program
Hill House Association
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
June 4, 1998**

Humanities and Technology in the New Millennium

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Jim, for that kind introduction. I want to congratulate you, the Board of Directors, Executive Director Joe Kelly, and the staff of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and the many people doing such great work for the Humanities here in Pittsburgh. I look forward to working with you closely in the years ahead.

I'm especially excited to be here at Farm Number Three, Minersville, or as it's now known—the Hill District. Jim Henry and his staff here at the Hill House Association are clearly doing a remarkable job in the community. And I want to thank the citizens of the Hill House community for coming tonight.

Thanks to the generous support of the Howard Heinz Endowment, the Pennsylvania Humanities Council has been able to conduct more than 30 "Technology, Communications, and Community" programs at places such as the Hill House Association. I'm honored to take part in tonight's program.

Tonight, I want to talk about this **[hold up book]** and this **[hold up laptop]**. This book is a very powerful tool. It stores text and pictures. Books spark the imagination, open up new worlds, and change lives. They're easy to open, and thanks to a man named Carnegie, readily accessible at minimal cost. They're portable, user-friendly, and need no batteries. Although they do need a power source, that you provide -- your brain.

This laptop is also very powerful tool. With it, I can look at Picasso's paintings at the National Gallery, visit your website here at the Hill House Association, send electronic mail around the world, listen to the music of Earl "Fatha" Hines, learn about new jobs and apply for new jobs, get the latest ball scores, weather, or health information, buy a book or almost anything else. I can even visit NEH's exciting new

website EDSITEment. New worlds of information are accessible on this machine. This machine is democracy in action. But as we all know, this is a much more expensive tool and a much more complicated tool.

How many of you have pushed the wrong key and lost a file in cyberspace, sat helplessly while the whole computer system crashed, and then listened in a stupor when someone from the computer-help desk tried to explain what happened? I know I have. But I don't feel so badly because it happened to Bill Gates, too! Recently, when he unveiled his newest product, Windows '98, it crashed on him! So there is hope for the rest of us.

I know what this laptop does, but have no idea HOW it does it. My ignorance creates a certain kind of fear -- techno-fear. I wanted to show you our new web site on my laptop, thankfully there's no plug up here on the podium—and don't let me see anyone run for an extension cord. We all have a little techno-fear, no matter how sophisticated we get. Just because you insert your CD in the D drive doesn't mean it's definitely going to run. Things happen.

If you can't afford access to a computer, a whole new set of problems arise—much more important problems. As America rushes into the new millennium on the information superhighway we can't afford to leave anyone behind. We cannot become a society of information haves and have-nots. Just as Andrew Carnegie knew that everyone should have access to these **[HOLD UP BOOKS]**; we must ensure that everyone has access to these **[HOLD UP LAPTOPS]**. But how?

As you know, President Clinton has committed the nation to wiring all schools to the Internet by the year 2000. The Hill House Association is providing community access right here and right now. The Pennsylvania Humanities Council, with the help of the Howard Heinz Endowment, is helping make the technology more accessible statewide. So, what is the National Endowment for the Humanities doing?

Before I answer that, let me briefly address one question. Should we be rushing pell-mell onto the information superhighway? Many critics, including Cliff Stoll, author of the bestseller *Silicon Snake Oil*, have questioned the promise of a digital utopia. The debate echoes one that took place over 150 years ago. In 1844, the first telegraph line was opened between Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. The race was on to "wire" the country—sound familiar? Samuel Morse predicted the telegraph would make "one neighborhood of the whole country." Sound familiar? Henry David Thoreau disagreed, saying, "We are in a great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate." I rarely disagree with Thoreau, but in this case I have to. Maine and Texas

do have important information to communicate to each other.

The Hill House Association, in creating their website more than four years ago, looked to the Chebucto Community Network in Nova Scotia, Canada, for help. The Hill House Association Community Access Network is now sharing their knowledge with other communities in Pittsburgh. This is exciting, encouraging, and powerful. Communication is now two-way, and easy. Scholars, students, and citizens can devote more time to work and study and less to time to aimless searching for quality information. Quality information—that's where the Endowment comes in.

As we have for more than 30 years, we support quality information whether it comes in book or electronic form. The two are not mutually exclusive. A few years ago, at its 30th anniversary, the Endowment held a symposium on "The Humanities and Technology." Patricia Battin, then director of planning at Emory University for the virtual university project, and now an independent consultant, said, "If we are going to use technology in an intellectually responsible manner, rather than be overrun by the profit imperatives of commerce or dazzled by the transient charms of ever-changing technology; it's essential that the community of humanists shape their future by looking carefully at the strengths and weaknesses of the printed page and digital technologies in order to combine the best of both." That's what we're trying to do at the National Endowment for the Humanities, look carefully at the strengths and weaknesses of the printed page and digital technologies and combine the best of both. As part of that effort, last year we issued a report, *NEH in the Digital Age*, **[HOLD UP REPORT]** that explores these issues in detail and is readily available. It also contains a summary of our symposium on the humanities and technology.

Above all, the Endowment is a content provider. We preserve and create high-quality educational content. We identify and disseminate high-quality educational content. And we empower teachers to take full advantage of new technologies. As we have for more than 30 years, we will support advanced technology projects—and some old-fashioned formats—such as books. This particular book is *The Dramatic Vision of August Wilson* by Sandra G. Shannon, who wrote the book on an NEH fellowship.

Another author, Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to Pittsburgh to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be *Rediscovering America Through The Humanities*. If I could choose theme music it would be Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of uncommon men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others. You know those names. I'm also here on behalf of Dr. Christopher Jones of Carnegie Mellon University, Professor Mary Lewis of the University of Pittsburgh, and William Keyes of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. These are just a few of the scholars, writers, and teachers who keep America's stories alive. The National Endowment for the Humanities helps them keep the stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them. We keep the stories alive on paper, on film, on radio, and in digital form.

The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about 50 cents per American.

In 1965, Congress established the Endowment, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." Since its founding, NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public radio and television stations—including WQED, without whom we wouldn't have Mister Rogers.

Another PBS icon, filmmaker Ken Burns, once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of the Carnegie Foundation), gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does -- it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

Let me tell you about some of the "strands" of that DNA--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. They are not as separate as you might think. The strands are intertwined—old and new, book and computer.

NEH funds helped launch the career of filmmaker Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders. It also helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

My guess is that everyone here has seen a Steven Spielberg film at some point in their lives. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he has benefited from our help. Spielberg called *Amistad* "perhaps my most important film ever." For his most important film ever, Spielberg called on scholarly resources funded by NEH. Howard Jones' book, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, a historical analysis of the incident, was made possible by a grant from NEH. You can learn more about the Amistad incident at the Mystic Seaport website, which is available now, and will also soon be linked to our EDSITEment web page.

Books funded by the Endowment's Research and Education division have garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes and six National Book awards.

The Endowment is sponsoring many new exciting technology projects.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed both an interactive videodisk of Spanish language and culture and a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays. Students of Shakespeare can see film versions as they read a passage. They can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history, and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. There is a real demand for this information - averaging almost 20,000 people actually using the site, not just browsing. *USA Today* called it "a compelling and educational place to visit."

We're also working hard in Pennsylvania. The Endowment helped the "Technology, Communications and Community" program get started in 1995 with a \$50,000 grant. Executive Director Joe Kelly and his staff at the Pennsylvania Humanities Council deserve a lot of credit for their efforts to reach out to every community throughout the state with this technology program and their many other fine programs. The NEH—Pennsylvania Humanities Council partnership is working well in Pennsylvania, and I look forward to expanding our relationship.

One way to do that is through a new initiative. I have a new idea for NEH, one I hope you will support. I want to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education, and public

programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope. The centers will use the latest technology and the oldest records.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
- Summer institutes for school teachers
- Production of radio, video, and television features
- Development of collections of manuscripts, photography, film and sound recordings
- Preparation of regional encyclopedias
- Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy experts
- Traveling museum exhibitions, and
- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

These Endowment-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. When you come to study at the Center, you cannot dodge troubling issues. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the civil rights movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites, and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class, and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience; progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

The Center sponsored, and I was proud to edit, *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

Since its inception, the Center has embraced public audiences with a broad range of programs. For example, the "College on the Mississippi," a weeklong trip aboard the Delta Queen, has featured speakers and performers such as Alex Haley, B.B. King, Shelby Foote, and William Styron. The Center's annual symposia feature William Faulkner, southern history, the book, and most recently Elvis Presley.

We formed new partnerships to reach more people as economically as

possible. Let me cite just a few examples.

The Center worked with the National Civil Rights Museum to develop their annual conference on civil rights in the South. The museum is housed in the historic Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was assassinated 30 years ago.

The Center worked with communities in the Arkansas Delta to develop the Delta Cultural Center in Helena. It features exhibits on Italian, Lebanese, Jewish, black, and white populations who settled in the region.

Across the river in the Mississippi Delta, the Center has worked for years with the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

The Center also holds an annual Southern Culture Teacher Institute that draws teachers from throughout the nation. The first institute drew teachers from Los Angeles, Boston, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Delta. One summer, 15 high school teachers from Maine joined 15 Mississippi teachers at the University of Mississippi to study and compare the cultures of the two regions. The next summer the same teachers met at the University of Southern Maine, with the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

When I worked at the Center, I traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest, and to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow to assist colleagues at sister institutions who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. I know this idea can work.

When the new regional centers are in place, students of all ages will be better able to access the riches of other regions and communities—including the Hill District. They will hear about your success story here, how you overcome techno-fear every day and provide access to this important technology. They may even hear how some gentlemen call the computer lab "the barbershop" because they can gather there and communicate with their friends. That's the perfect blend of the old and new.

John Unsworth, director of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia, wrote, "The business of a humanities education and of humanities research is to balance the preservation of cultural heritage with an adaptation to cultural change: If we neglect the first of these duties, we stand to lose our past--but by the same token, if we neglect the second duty, we relinquish our future. The aesthetic, moral, intellectual, and education values and issues that are the focus of the humanities are deeply important to both our

understanding of who we are and our determination of who we will become."

To preserve our cultural heritage and to adapt to cultural change we need both the book and the computer—old and new. You know this, you're using both here at the Hill House Association.

Congratulations on your great work. I'm excited that NEH can work with you through the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and through the support of the Howard Heinz Endowment. This is a successful local, state, federal, private partnership. I look forward to working with you in the future. Please visit us soon, via either book or computer.

Thank you for your time.

**American Association of University Professors
Annual Meeting
Washington Hotel
Washington, D.C.
June 14, 1998**

Humanities and Technology in the New Millennium

by William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction. President Perley, President-elect Richardson, distinguished faculty from around the country, welcome to Washington, D.C. I know the theme of your annual meeting is "Faculty at Work," but I hope you've taken just a little time to "cut class" and explore this exciting city. The Endowment is only blocks away, 11th and Pennsylvania, we'll be open for business tomorrow if you care to visit.

Perhaps some of you ventured across the Potomac to visit the *Newseum*, the new interactive museum that documents the history of journalism. It tells the story of John Peter Zenger, publisher of *The New-York Weekly Journal*. As many of you no doubt know, Zenger spent eight months in jail awaiting his trial in 1735 for seditious libel. His wife, Anna Catharine Zenger, kept the paper running in his absence. Thanks to a brilliant defense by Andrew Hamilton, Zenger was found not guilty. The principle of freedom of the press was born.

I know that economist Edward Ross didn't go to jail in 1900, but he did lose his job at Stanford because Mrs. Leland Stanford didn't approve of his views on the gold standard. Today, we're all grateful to Edward Ross for sticking to his principles. He inspired Arthur Lovejoy and John Dewey to organize the AAUP in 1915 to preserve "academic freedom." For more than eighty years, the AAUP has done just that. Students of all ages, faculty, and the country are all the better for it. Congratulations on your continued vigilance and dedication to this crucial concept. Why is academic freedom so important? As your 1940 Statement of Principles notes, "The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition."

The National Endowment for the Humanities was founded in 1965 with this admonition from Congress, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." "Wisdom and vision" depend upon "the free search for truth and its free exposition."

In our own small way, the Endowment works to create "wisdom and vision." How do we best accomplish this daunting task? In no small measure we rely on you, the teachers and scholars in this room. We could not do it without you. You create new knowledge, reinterpret the old, question the status quo, affirm fundamental beliefs. You educate, enlighten, and inspire, each other and the millions of students and citizens you serve. Yours is an honorable, indispensable profession. Our country depends on you—now more than ever in this Digital Age.

Thanks to the technological revolution the "free search" and "free exposition" of information is infinitely easier than it was in 1940. But the truth is harder to find. Computers and the Internet make us all publishers, which is good news and bad news, and raises the question, what exactly is news?

Matt Drudge spoke at the National Press Club, just blocks from here, two weeks ago. The title of his speech was "Anyone with a Modem Can Report on the World." I'm sure the journalism professors here have seen his on-line Drudge Report. Drudge claims he received six million visitors to his web site last month. I could start a debate right now by asking: Is he a legitimate journalist? And that debate could rage on for hours. Especially if I tell you Drudge compares himself to John Peter Zenger. I'm using Drudge as an example because he illustrates the quintessential problem of the digital age. Today's students and citizens are faced—almost instantly—with thousands of paths and mountains of information. What path leads them to the best information and what do they do when they get there? Who helps them separate the wheat from the chaff? You do.

In the digital age you're more important than ever because for most Americans, access is not the issue, accuracy is. This country needs students and citizens who can analyze, evaluate, and communicate. This country needs what you foster—good judgment.

What can the Endowment do to help in this effort to create wisdom and vision in the Digital Age? Above all, the Endowment is a content provider. We preserve and create high-quality educational content. We identify and disseminate high-quality educational content. And we empower teachers to take full advantage of new technologies. As we have for more than thirty years, we will continue to support advanced technology projects. We also remain old-fashioned in asking one key question, how can technology best be used to help scholars, teachers,

students, and citizens learn?

We should look carefully at the strengths and weaknesses of the scientist and humanist and combine the best of both. Years ago, C.P. Snow, scientist and novelist, wrote, "Literary intellectuals at one pole--at the other scientists.... Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension." All of us in this room have much to learn from each other; the digital age makes it easier to communicate no matter where we are. Let's close the gap.

Some former students are doing just that. A recent nation-wide survey by George Mason University of college graduates aged 30 to 55 indicates technology majors and liberal arts majors envy each other. As George Mason University President Alan Merten explained, "It seems that non-technical people want to know more about technology, while technology people are finding there's more to life than bits and bytes."

I also think it would be healthy to close the financial gap between the sciences and the humanities. Basically, I wish the Endowment had a bit more bite. The Endowment is a small, independent, federal agency. Our budget request is only \$136 million for this next fiscal year. That's roughly 1/100 of one percent of the total federal budget, about 50 cents per American. Federal funding for scientific research runs in the billions. I hope to increase federal financial support for the humanities. I've only been on the job for six months, but the response I'm getting on Capitol Hill is positive and bipartisan. I'm telling Representatives and Senators how important our work is and they are listening. Please continue to make your opinions known in Washington.

Author, Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come here to live the humanities out loud. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be "Rediscovering America Through the Humanities."

PBS icon, filmmaker Ken Burns, once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty, Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (now President of the Carnegie Foundation) gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

We will continue to fund the "strands" of that DNA--film, television, radio, books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, scholarly research. We will continue to support your vital work, and the work of Ken Burns.

NEH funds helped launch the career of filmmaker Ken Burns and made possible the tremendous success of *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The West*. The Endowment helped Burns in many ways. Let me quote him:

"Without a doubt, my series on the Civil War could not have been made without the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Endowment not only provided one of the project's largest grants, thereby attracting other funders. It also helped restore the archival photographs we would use to tell our story. I am extremely grateful for all of those things."

We, in turn, are extremely grateful for Ken Burns.

Thoreau once said, "I've traveled widely in Concord." There, and one mile away at Walden Pond, Thoreau discovered universal truths. Soon, you'll be able to travel widely in Concord, even if you're from California. The Endowment is supporting the creation of the Thoreau Institute, which will house a library and technology center—the best of old and new.

Books funded by the Endowment's Research and Education division have garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes and six National Book awards.

To highlight your work, in 1972 NEH created the annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities. At our most recent program, historian Bernard Bailyn delivered a brilliant lecture this past March at the Kennedy Center.

The Endowment is sponsoring many new exciting technology projects.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed both an interactive videodisk of Spanish language and culture and a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays. Students of Shakespeare can see film versions as they read a passage. They can compare Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech staged by Olivier and Zeffirelli.

Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EdSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country.

In an effort to link more scholars with more citizens, and each other, I have a new idea for NEH; one I hope you will support. I want to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education

and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope. The Centers will use the latest technology and the oldest records.

Among the types of activities the centers will undertake are:

- Course development in regional studies
- Summer institutes for school teachers
- Production of radio, video, and television features
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- Preparation of regional encyclopedias
- Annual conferences with scholars, students and public policy experts

- Traveling museum exhibitions, and...

- Joint ventures with the travel and tourism industry.

These Endowment-funded centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area.

I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region.

The Center developed the most comprehensive southern studies curriculum in the nation. It offers a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Southern Studies. When you come to study at the Center, you cannot dodge troubling issues. You study slavery, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. You study those who historically have been omitted from the history books: blacks, poor whites, and women. The work is designed to heal the historic wounds of race, class, and gender. And it does. I can tell you from personal experience; progress is being made. There is power in remembering; there is power in forgiving.

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Across the river in the Mississippi Delta, the Center has worked for years with the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

When I worked at the Center, I traveled to New England, the Midwest, the West, the Southwest, and to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow to assist colleagues at sister institutions who have developed academic programs that focus on their own regional cultures. I know this idea can work.

When the new regional centers are in place, students of all ages will be better able to access the riches of other regions and communities.

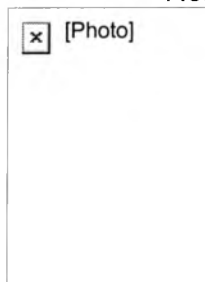
Jon Unsworth, Director of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia, wrote, "The business of a humanities education and of humanities research, is to balance the preservation of cultural heritage with an adaptation to cultural change: If we neglect our cultural heritage, we stand to lose our past--but by the same token, if we neglect cultural change, we relinquish our future. The aesthetic, moral, intellectual, and education values and issues that are the focus of the humanities are deeply important to both our understanding of who we are and our determination of who we will become."

To preserve our cultural heritage and to adapt to cultural change our country needs you. Our country needs you to foster critical thinking and judgment in our students and citizens. Our country needs you to point out the differences between Matt Drudge and John Peter Zenger. In sum, our country needs you to continue your great work.

Thank you for your time.

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More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: September 1998

Preserving Newspapers NEH Solves Case of the Endangered Heritage

By William R. Ferris

Newspapers -- you can't live with them, and you can't live without them. We rely on them daily for information and entertainment, and yet we throw them away as soon as we can.

Newspapers are in fact the first, rough drafts of history, recording eyewitness accounts and immediate reactions to events. Usually taken for granted, newspapers are living documents that chronicle thousands of stories about communities across the nation every day. Properly preserved, they are like time capsules, allowing us to see the world through the eyes of previous generations, and future generations to see the world through our eyes.

To lose historic newspapers is irretrievably to lose vast portions of our collective memory as a nation.

As a solution to this problem of heritage preservation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency, in 1982 launched the U.S. Newspaper Program. Since the start of the program, NEH has given grants totaling \$41 million to libraries and archives in the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to help locate, catalog and preserve on microfilm extant newspapers published in the United States from the early 1700s to the present.

To date, this program has created catalog records for 130,000 separate newspaper titles and has microfilmed 58 million pages of newsprint that would otherwise be lost to posterity. Bibliographic records for newspaper titles are available through a library network called the Online Computer Library Center, and most states provide information about their newspaper holdings through the Internet.

How newspapers are found is often as interesting as the stories they contain. They have been found unexpectedly in attics, in barns, in abandoned missile silos. In one instance, a bridge tender in Ocean Springs, Miss., found a bound set of the New York Albany Atlas from 1848 to 1850 lying in the middle of the Fort Bayou Bridge. The volume, which may have bounced off the back of a garbage truck, was recovered and microfilmed.

Among the historic newspapers you can read is the first and only issue of the Beatrice, Neb., Kicker, published on March 7, 1885, whose motto was "We have come to stay." You can read issues of a handwritten newspaper called The Nation, produced in the late 1850s in Harnett County, Tenn. You can read in the Jan. 4, 1800, issue of the Ulster County Gazette, published in Kingston, N.Y., a reporter's eyewitness account of George Washington's entombment.

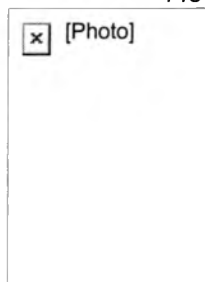
Old newspapers are a treasure trove of Americana. By preserving them, NEH is helping to sustain our nation's living cultural heritage.

For more information about the NEH and its programs, call 202/606-8671.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the

National Endowment for the Humanities.

More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: August 1998

Viewing History NEH Funding Ignites Fall PBS Schedule

By William R. Ferris

Imagine you're a TV quiz-show player, and up comes the category "American History."

Confidently you choose "History for \$200," and the host says, "This fundraising campaign was launched in 1938 to combat polio." You answer correctly. So you return to the category -- "History for \$400" -- and the host states, "This war had the highest mortality rate among American soldiers of any war in U.S. history." You answer correctly again. "History for \$600," you continue. "This person," says the host, "started the birth control movement in the United States and founded Planned Parenthood." Again you get it right. "History for \$800," you persist, and the host says, "This musical instrument was brought to America by African slaves." You have the answer to that, too! So you go for broke: "History for 1,000." The host says, "This government agency is the largest federal funder of history programs for the American public."

You're stumped. You learned the answers to the first four -- the March of Dimes, the U.S.-Mexican War, Margaret Sanger and the banjo -- from watching PBS public television specials during the 1998 fall season, but you missed the credits where it said "Major funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities."

As chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I want you to know it's not too late to learn that the NEH is a government agency in Washington, D.C., which each year brings you outstanding public television and radio programs, museum exhibitions, educational Web sites and CD-ROMs, editions of the writings of great Americans, scholar-led discussion programs in public libraries, academic enrichment programs in high schools, colleges, and universities nationwide, and more.

With an annual budget of only \$110 million, NEH reaches the hearts and minds of millions of Americans through high-quality programs in fields such as history, literature, ethics, foreign languages and comparative religion.

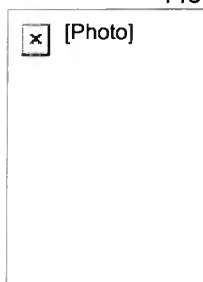
Also it's not too late to watch the four public television specials mentioned above: "A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America," "The U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848)," "Margaret Sanger" and "Africans in America." The four documentary specials, developed with \$4.2 million from NEH, are all airing this fall on PBS stations nationwide.

So check your local listings, sit back and get smart, because knowledge has its advantages.

For more information about the NEH and its programs, call 202/606-8671.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: July 1998

Celebrating Cultural Diversity NEH Honors National Hispanic Heritage Month

By William R. Ferris

Hispanic Americans throughout our nation's history have helped shape American culture into a vibrant, democratic society in many ways, including the struggle for civil rights, religious and political thought, scholarship, and contributions in the arts and sciences.

In honor of those contributions, the U.S. Congress has set aside the period from September 15 to October 15 as National Hispanic Heritage Month. It is a time for the nation to celebrate the rich history and diverse cultures of Hispanic Americans, whose roots span the world.

Since 1965, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in Washington, D.C., has been providing grants nationwide to support projects that illuminate the Hispanic American heritage for the benefit of all Americans. NEH-funded projects have helped Americans explore Hispanic American history and better understand how the Hispanic American heritage has shaped our national culture. Here's a sampling of current NEH projects on those subjects:

- "CD-ROM version of the Hispanic American Lexicon," which documents the evolution of the Spanish language in the Americas from 1492 to the present.
- "U.S. Hispanic Periodical Literature Project," an edition of Hispanic literary materials published in the United States between 1808 and 1960.

- "Bridges That Unite Us," a series of bilingual public programs focusing on Americanization as explored through Latino literature, taking place in public libraries in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.
- "The Growth of Hispanic Culture in the United States," a curriculum being developed at a high school in California's central San Joaquin Valley as a national model for computer-oriented teaching.
- "The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Struggle," a 90-minute PBS documentary film on the history of the United Farmworkers Union and its leader.
- "Folk Art Traditions and Archaeology of Puerto Rico," a summer-study program for teachers and development of educational materials.
- "Documenting Latino Civil Rights History," a cataloging project that is making accessible the records of the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican legal defense and educational funds.
- "The Spanish Explorations and Settlement of New Mexico (1536-1680)," a reference source of documents and essays published in both Spanish and English.

These projects represent some of the most significant work in the nation to advance understanding of the Hispanic American heritage. For more information, call us at 202.606.8671.

*William R. Ferris is chairman of the
National Endowment for the Humanities.*

**American Association for State and Local History
California Council for the Promotion of History Annual Meeting
Sacramento, Calif.
September 10, 1998**

Heroes, Home Runs, History, and the Humanities

**William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities**

Thank you for that kind introduction. My congratulations to the American Association for State and Local History, and the California Council for the Promotion of History, for putting together such an impressive and informative conference. I am excited by the leadership director Terri Davis is bringing to AASLH and am proud that Terri formerly worked with the Indiana Humanities Council.

The theme for this year's meeting is "It's a Living: The Business of History." I would say that history is more than a living; it's a mission—a calling to enrich. Your work enriches your communities and your country and I commend you for that. I'm honored to be here in Sacramento in the company of respected colleagues and old friends such as Lonnie Bunch, Dan Jordan, George McDaniel, Tom Frye, Carey Caldwell, and Jim Quay. Since 1985 we have awarded over \$1 million to AASLH for its projects.

I'm not a big baseball fan, unless it's a Ken Burn's documentary, but it has been impossible to escape the excitement of this year's home run derby. Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa are two men from very different backgrounds, "thrown together by history." They have been thrilling fans all year long in the chase to break Roger Maris's record of 61 home runs set during the 1961 season. Maris bested Babe Ruth's record of 60 home runs set during the 1927 season. Babe Ruth was a heroic figure and many fans hated Maris for breaking the record.

But today, fans love McGwire and Sosa. Even Maris's family went to see their dad's record surpassed. These players are "chasing history," and we are watching history in the making. It's fun, and what drama. McGwire tied Maris's record, playing against Sosa on Labor Day. It was front page news all over the country. The headline in the Washington Post was "McGwire Swings Into

History."

The home run derby is also a welcome distraction from the very serious foreign and domestic problems our country faces today. In Moscow, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C., we are also watching history in the making. But it is difficult, even painful to watch.

But what exactly makes history? What makes a real hero? Let me read you one paragraph from Don DeLillo's recent novel, *Underworld*. The novel starts at the Polo Grounds in October 1951, the playoff between the Dodgers and the Giants for the National League Pennant. Delillo describes a young kid about to sneak into the game:

"Longing on a large scale is what makes history. This is just a kid with a local yearning but he is part of an assembling crowd, anonymous thousands off the buses and trains, people in narrow columns tramping over the swing bridge above the river, and even if they are not a migration or a revolution, some vast shaking of the soul, they bring with them the body heat of a great city and their own small reveries and desperations, the unseen something that haunts the day—men in fedoras and sailors on shore leave, the stray tumble of their thoughts, going to a game."

"Longing on a large scale is what makes history." We're always looking for heroes, local and national. And we're usually looking to historians to define exactly what a hero is. The Center for the American West just hosted a discussion between historians Stephen Ambrose and Patricia Limerick on society's attitude toward heroes.

That's why your work is so important. Your work that focuses on "local yearning" and "assembling crowds." You find the larger-than-life and everyday heroes. "Assembling crowds" go to see them at places such as the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York, and Sutter's Fort here in California.

Historian Patricia Limerick studies the West. She embraced regional history because, as she said, "I thought it would make us better neighbors...I thought that regional identity could provide the cultural and social glue to put a fragmented society back together...Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, business people, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history."

I think the study of local, state, and regional history can indeed make us better neighbors—but it also makes us better citizens.

You discover new stories of courage and determination and find new ways to look at the old ones. You bring the past to light, which enlightens us. More than ever we need you today. Why? Because as President Harry Truman once said, "The only thing new in this world is the history that you don't know."

We do know that today's headlines are alarming: terrorist threats, political scandals, racist murders. We ask ourselves, how will we ever cope, how will we ever survive, can we prevail?

I was born in Mississippi where today a trial of the accused murderers of Vernon Dahmer brings back painful memories of divisive times in our nation's history. I come from the nation's capitol where today there are barriers around the Washington Monument, the Capitol, and the White House. I come from the nation's capitol where the drama of politics is played out everyday—instantaneously. Instant news, instant analysis, instant rumor is changing the nature of our public discourse.

In today's saturated media environment, citizens have a plethora of sources available at the touch of a button. Within the industry, the competition to be fast, first and provocative is tremendous. Journalism is the first rough draft of history, and that first draft is increasingly rushed. Sometimes accuracy suffers. Tabloid journalism is a powerful force. For some in the media, standards have slipped. As Walter Cronkite said, "They'd rewrite Exodus to include a car chase."

On the net, the chase is on. Computers and the Internet make us all publishers, which is good news and bad news, and raises the question, what exactly is news? Matt Drudge spoke at the National Press Club in June. I'm sure many of you have seen his on-line Drudge Report. He claims he received six million visitors to his web site in May. The title of his speech was *Anyone with a Modem Can Report on the World*. Which is true, and presents a whole new set of problems....problems perhaps Plato and Socrates can help us with.

In Plato's Republic, Socrates and Glaucon discuss education and the famous cave. In this cave, the inhabitants are chained from birth so they can only see the cave wall in front of them. Behind them is a fire which projects flickering images of animals, artifacts, and statues of men onto the wall. Since the flickering images are all the inhabitants see, that's all they know, and they

assume the images are reality. To "see the light" they must leave the cave and see real objects. Naturally, they resist and are skeptical of such "enlightenment."

As I re-read the passage about the cave, I think of the television and computer screens that we all spend so much time watching. Thousands of flickering images and words—but not reality. Not the whole story. Not the truth. To get the whole story takes time. You don't get the whole story in one picture or a seven-second soundbite. You get closer to the whole story and the truth when you can see it, touch it, read about it in a museum or at an exhibition. That's why what you do is so important. And you are doing a remarkable job because you have the public's trust. I know this for a fact.

NEH recently funded research on a book by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, to be released this fall, *The Presence of the Past*. It's a revealing national study of American attitudes toward the past. Researchers asked the public what entity they trusted most to relate them to the past. The answer—museums.

The mission of the Endowment is to help with your important work. I will do all I can to help. So will the intelligent, dedicated, accessible professionals at the Endowment. I say accessible because they're here! At the risk of embarrassing them, let me introduce Kathleen Mitchell, Clay Lewis, Andrea Anderson, and Laura Word—all from the Endowment. Could you please stand so folks can see you? They are here to help you with your questions about how to do business with the Endowment, so please take advantage of this time to visit with them. We are here in unusually large numbers because we believe strongly in your work and want to work closely with your members to strengthen their programs through NEH support.

Our Endowment staff will tell you in detail what we're doing, but let me highlight some of the projects we've funded recently.

Tom Frye and Carey Caldwell played a major role in creating the "Gold Fever" exhibit, which just finished at the Oakland Museum of California. This month it opens at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles and runs until January 1999. And from July to October 1999 it will be at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium. The exhibit is supported by more than half-a-million dollars in grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Thanks to Jim Quay and his fine staff at the California Humanities

Council, two traveling versions of the exhibit will visit more than a dozen communities during the three years of the "Rediscovering California at 150" sesquicentennial project. The exhibition will feature some of the personalities being portrayed in the California Council for the Humanities "History Alive!" chautauqua program, which will, by the year 2000, go to more than 100 communities throughout California.

For many years, our Division of Preservation and Access has supported collections care training programs offered by the Campbell Center in Illinois, and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums in Delaware. At the Mark Twain Memorial in Hartford, Connecticut we awarded a grant for the installation of a new climate control system to provide a stable environment for the collections.

The NEH Division of Public Programs is supporting the Anchorage Museum Association in their "Russian Voyages" traveling exhibition project. It examines the Russian exploration of the North Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and combines history, geography and the natural sciences. Public Programs also helped the Fort Bend Museum Association with their project at the George Ranch Historical Park. The project focuses on African American cowboys, tenant farming, and changes in the use of agricultural land. Public Programs supported the Brooklyn Historical Society on their new BROOKLYNWORKS! exhibition. It explores the changing nature of work in Brooklyn during the past 150 years.

The NEH Division of Education and Research in its *Schools for a New Millennium* initiative is also working with museums and historical associations. Education and Research is supporting a project at West Junior High School in Lawrence, Kansas. West Junior High is working with the Watkins Museum and the University of Kansas to develop a curriculum based on the study of state and local history. At the Hogg Middle School in Houston Texas, they're working with Rice University and the Texas State Historical Association. That project will link local history and community studies with global history, political history, cultural anthropology, and historical geography.

Our special project *My History is America's History* encourages citizens to learn more about their family's history—and then relate their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. There's an African proverb: when an old man or woman dies, a library burns to the ground. We're trying to save those

libraries.

So, as you can see, we're funding a wide variety of projects and we'd love to hear from you about your ideas. Please contact us. It's easy to do. Call, write, or visit our website and find out more about us. From there, you can link up to our new on-line project, EDSITEMent. Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEMent. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country seeking excellent, content-rich web sites. It's also a good example of how much can be accomplished by partnering with the private sector.

The National Endowment for the Humanities was founded in 1965 with this admonition from Congress, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." It is a difficult, often daunting task. As you know we're a small agency. But we have great clients... a distinguished group of accomplished men and women: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, and many others.

Through the *American Legacy Editions* initiative, the Endowment is supporting scholarly editions of the papers of U.S. presidents, prominent writers, and others who influenced the course of our history. I'm sure you have seen films supported by NEH, such as *One Woman, One Vote*; *A Midwife's Tale*; *Truman*; *FDR*; *Eisenhower*; *LBJ*; *TR*; and Ken Burns's series on the Civil War, the West, and baseball. These, and the stories that you tell, are all inspiring American stories.

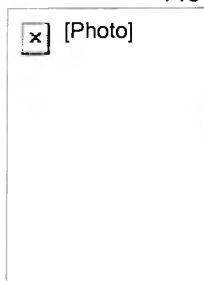
Tip O'Neill often remarked that "all politics is local." Well, all history is local too. It starts in Springfield, Illinois; Wounded Knee, South Dakota; and Harper's Ferry.

As we race to the future, we cannot, and should not, forget the past. As William Faulkner once said, "the past is never dead. It is not even past." Let us use the past to rescue the future. With your help, we can give every citizen a sense of history, a sense of what democracy really means. Especially today.

[General Beauregard story]

Thank you for your time.

More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: October 1998

Celebrating Achievement White House Honors 9 Cultural Luminaries

By William R. Ferris

This year's National Humanities Medal recipients are:

When we think of America's greatest strengths, military power and economic energy quickly come to mind. The quality of life in America, however, depends on much more than our material accomplishments. We are also a nation of great cultural accomplishments, of great scholars and thinkers who write magnificent books, who teach in unforgettable ways, who produce gripping documentary films and radio programs, who design fascinating museum exhibitions, who create engaging family programs about our history and literature and cultural diversity, and who administer inspiring educational programs that reach thousands of people young and old. These cultural activities illuminate our lives, help us understand who we are as a nation and remind us of why our country is great.

Annually in the fall, the President of the United States in a special White House ceremony honors distinguished Americans whose work has deepened our understanding of the nation's rich cultural heritage. On Nov. 5 the President and First Lady will bestow the National Humanities Medal on nine individuals. The award, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, recognizes those whose research, teaching and public outreach in the humanities have significantly enriched the nation's cultural life. The humanities are history, literature, languages, art history, comparative religion and philosophy.

- Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., professor and historian who has twice won the Pulitzer Prize for biographies of Presidents Jackson and Kennedy,
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr., literary critic and scholar of African American studies;
- Stephen Ambrose, biographer of Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, World War II historian who was chief advisor for the Spielberg film *Saving Private Ryan*,
- E.L. Doctorow, novelist whose *Ragtime* is currently a musical on Broadway,
- Garry Wills, essayist and historian who won the Pulitzer Prize for *Lincoln at Gettysburg*,
- Diana Eck, religion professor whose research has revealed new insight into American religious communities,
- Nancy Gaj, founder and president of Motherhead, a national family literacy program that helps newly literate parents read with their children,
- Vartan Gregorian, former president at Brown University and the New York Public Library, current president of the Carnegie Foundation,
- Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, distinguished professor and scholar of Hispanic American studies.

Smart people such as these, who have devoted their lives to spreading understanding about the meaning of America, deserve the gratitude of all Americans. It is fitting that the White

House each year provides national recognition for such individuals to remind us that America's greatest strength is our cultural vitality.

For more information about the NEH and its programs, call 202/606-8671.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Wisconsin Humanities Council
Governor's Humanities Awards
Elvehjem Museum, Madison, WI
October 2, 1998**

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

First, I want to thank the First Lady for that kind introduction, and for your valuable work on behalf of the humanities in Wisconsin. I know you teach 6th graders during the week, but your commitment to public service is a lesson to us all—every day of the week.

Chairwoman Gielow, Dean Hinshaw, Director Vogt, award winners and distinguished guests. I am honored to be here in this glorious museum on this progressive campus in this historic state capital in the "forward" state of Wisconsin. It is abundantly clear that you have succeeded in preserving, and re-creating, a vibrant place of learning. The "Wisconsin idea," the partnership between university and government, is clearly alive and well. For that, I congratulate all of you. The people of Wisconsin have ample reason to be proud and appreciative, as does the nation.

I know I should have come with a birthday cake, but I fear 150 candles would have activated the sprinkler system. A warm happy birthday to this great state and university.

I want to congratulate the Wisconsin Humanities Council on their very successful 25th anniversary year. And I'm delighted to be here for the second annual Governor's humanities awards and the "kick-off" of Arts & Humanities Month.

This is a particularly auspicious year for the Wisconsin Humanities Council, because Governor Thompson and state legislature have appropriated and "awarded" the Council \$50,000. Again, my thanks to the First Lady, the Governor, and the legislature for their support. And my congratulations to executive director Max Harris, his staff, and the many volunteers for all their hard work. The Wisconsin Humanities Council is doing a remarkable job, reaching out to all corners and communities in this state.

My heartfelt congratulations to the Governor's award winners: Professor Harold Scheub; teacher Diane Powell; the Chippewa Valley Potluck Exhibit; and the Hmong American Community Association.

So, we have much to celebrate tonight. You are blessed with an

embarrassment of riches. This is a great university in a great state with many very talented people. As an outsider visiting here, I get a very strong sense of place—the land, the lake, the architecture, the people.

You know you are lucky to live in a special place with special people, and that is what I want to talk to you about tonight, this "sense of place."

I just met with Donna Shalala Thursday. I asked her what she missed most about Wisconsin and she said.....

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. It was a very special place. I miss.....

And I grew up visiting the monuments to the Civil War heroes in Vicksburg—including those soldiers from Wisconsin.

This "sense of place," as Eudora Welty calls it, shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. For a long time I have believed that each of us everywhere defines ourselves through the place where we were born and raised. 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. Conversely, there's much to be learned by visiting others' "native soil." And, increasingly in American society, folks pull up stakes and relocate. They decide to establish a new "sense of place."

That's what French and British settlers did more than 300 years ago when they came here. Centuries later they were followed by Germans, Norwegians, and Poles. And today, Wisconsin has a growing Hmong community. Other than the native Americans, we are all immigrants. We're settlers seeking a "sense of place," new connections, a new community. How is this best accomplished? I believe the humanities are essential to the process, I believe the humanities are essential to everyday life, I believe the humanities are essential to democracy.

This is not news to the Wisconsin Humanities Council. In 1986 the Council commissioned an essay by Wallace Stegner on "a sense of place," and followed it up in 1988 with a conference on place, community and the human condition.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." Today, I have come to Madison to live the humanities out loud. I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen, just as you are here in Wisconsin. The National Endowment for the Humanities theme for the coming years will be: *Rediscovering America through the Humanities*.

I'm here on behalf of my clients, a distinguished group of accomplished men and women: Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and many others. The National Endowment for the Humanities keeps their stories alive so we can enjoy and learn from them--and our children can enjoy and learn from them. And as Max Harris wrote recently, "...we now recognize that there is not just one story that deserves a hearing but many."

There are many ways to get these many stories out and we're working on new ways all the time, as I know you are. That's why I think the Endowment's partnership with the Wisconsin Humanities Council is working so well and I hope to expand that partnership in the years ahead.

Our special project, *My History is America's History*, encourages citizens to learn more about their family's history—and then relate their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. There's an African proverb: when a man or woman dies, a library burns to the ground. We're trying to save those libraries. In Wisconsin, you're putting your libraries to good use.

The Wisconsin "We're Talking History" reading-discussion program is a long-term, exciting success story. It has reached citizens at 65 public libraries throughout the state. At many sites, participants shared books so more people could participate. The Endowment is proud to be a part of this success story, but the citizens of Wisconsin are the ones keeping the program alive. Thousands of dollars have been raised, much of it through donations of \$50 or less.

We probably all did the same thing this morning—read our local paper. That act also gives us a "sense of place." Newspapers constitute one of the single most important sources for understanding the development of small towns and regions throughout the U.S. But they're fragile, so we're trying to preserve them. In 1982 NEH created the United States Newspaper Program to locate, catalog, and preserve newspapers published in the U.S from the 18th century to the present. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin has completed its newspaper preservation effort, cataloging 9,000 titles as a national repository project. They have saved Wisconsin's first newspaper, *The Green Bay Intelligencer*, from 1832. And other smaller papers such as the *Argyle Agenda* and the *Shullsburg Pick and Gad*.

The Endowment is also helping the Wisconsin State Historical Society to compile *The African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography and Union List*. It is the first comprehensive guide to literary, historical, and political periodicals by and about African-Americans. It includes Frederick Douglass's publication, *the Northern*

Star and Freeman's Advocate, the *New York Amsterdam News*, and *The Golden Rule*, published by African-Americans in my hometown of Vicksburg, Mississippi, at the turn of the century.

Because Chancellor Ward was born in England, I know he recalls the bromide that the U.S. and the U.K. are two nations divided by a common language. On this side of the Atlantic, Frederic G. Cassidy, Professor of English, Emeritus, is trying to solve that problem. He is the chief editor for *The Dictionary of American Regional English*. *DARE* is a comprehensive reference work of the regional and folk speech of the U.S. The dictionary builds on almost 100 years of archival materials and interviews with more than 3,000 people in rural and urban areas across the U.S. John Gross wrote in the *New York Times*, "...the dictionary will rank as one of the glories of contemporary American scholarship..." Three volumes in a series of six have been published to wide acclaim. My congratulations to you, Professor Cassidy.

I think the Endowment got involved in this project because it's so much fun! Now I know what people from Wisconsin mean when they say someone "has beans up his nose," i.e. their motives are suspect. Now you can find out what Mississippi folks mean when they call someone a "bobbasheely," or close friend. Do you know what a "bone orchard" is? A cemetery. If I were to speak harshly tonight I would, "tell you how the cow ate the cabbage." And if you're a great dancer you "cut the pigeon wing."

Since I consider you my "bobbasheelies," I'll let you in on a secret, another exciting University project the Endowment is helping to fund. To discover a "sense of place" start with the six volume *The History of Cartography*, edited by Professor David Woodward and the late Professor J.B. Harley. It's the first comprehensive account of maps and mapping worldwide from prehistory to the present. This is what Ronald Rees of *Geographical Review* had to say about it, "As well as enlarging the mind and lifting the spirits through the sheer magnitude of its endeavor, the collection delights the senses. The illustrations are exquisite..."

Our Constitution is an exquisite living document in no small part due to an important project here at the university. Since 1982 the Endowment has provided support for the *Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights*. Project Director John Kaminski is collecting and publishing the record of the debate over the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the adoption of the Bill of Rights. More than 12,000 manuscripts and some 40,000 newspaper items have been assembled. This is a gold mine for scholars and students of all ages.

The Endowment, through its *Schools for a New Millennium* initiative is working to help young students in your state. In Milwaukee we're

supporting the Forest Home Avenue School in a very creative project. Using on-line resources, they plan to explore the folklore of African, American, Asian, and Hispanic cultures. They'll be consulting with scholars from the Folklore Program here at the university. Also in Milwaukee, we're supporting the Wisconsin Conservatory of Lifelong Learning in creating an interactive Virtual Olympics web site. The Conservatory is one of the few pre-kindergarten through grade 12 schools in the country. It is creatively serving the needs of children growing up in difficult inner-city environments, and the Endowment is happy to help.

We are also trying to help teachers as much as we can. Last fall, the Endowment, along with MCI and the Council of Great City Schools, established EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country seeking excellent, content-rich web sites. If you haven't already, I urge you to visit our EDSITEment website.

Perhaps your most popular program is your speakers program, and I know it will be even more popular this year with Bill Malone talking about country music and the blues. A Texas and Tulane man, I know Bill has discovered a new "sense of place" here in Madison, and a new home.

My friend Bill has been kind enough to provide me with a guitar. This song is my way of thanking the First Lady, the Governor, and the state legislature for their \$50,000 award to the Wisconsin Humanities Council. I would remind them that next year, for \$100,000, I promise NOT to sing. So keep that in mind during the upcoming legislative sessions...

[SONG HERE...]

Happy Birthday! Thank you for your time.

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**Yale Political Union
New Haven, Connecticut
October 6, 1998**

RESOLVED: FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE HUMANITIES SHOULD BE
DOUBLED

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction. I must say that the Yale Political Union's reputation for taking on controversial topics appears to be undiminished under its current leadership.

It's an honor to present a resolution for debate by Yale's oldest and largest political organization. You have had a distinguished line of speakers over the past 60 years, including, I believe, more presidents of the United States than any other student organization. Those speakers surely recognized that there is no more fertile ground in which to plant a new and challenging idea than within the Yale Political Union.

I spent seven of my happiest years on the Yale campus. I was a resident fellow at Calhoun College, and I fondly remember gazing out on the Cross Campus Green. Photography is one of my hobbies, and I photographed the green over many seasons. It became a visual diary of my time in the 'Houn.

I also well remember the time I brought a mule-trader storyteller from Mississippi to the Cross Campus Green. Ray Lum was a man born in the previous century. He practiced a trade that was essential to the economies of the South and the West for the first half of this century. Waving his arms and spinning his tales, Mr. Lum mesmerized both students and faculty. He actually auctioned off a horse and the Yale bulldog. Then he charmed scholars at the National Humanities Center. What Mr. Lum was doing that day was practicing the humanities. Through his storytelling, he preserved memory and created a generational bridge between centuries.

I tape-recorded Mr. Lum's tales and published them in a book with a title he often repeated: *You Live and Learn. Then You Die and Forget It All*. The research for that book and the film that was made afterwards were supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

You might ask what the story of a mule man from Mississippi has to do with the cold war and the battle for our national soul. The answer is simple: the National Endowment for the Humanities deals with our cultural soul, our intellectual vision of ourselves. And much of its work deals with preserved memory, with funding the storytelling, the preservation work, the original research of the humanities. It also includes the teaching and media outreach that spread the treasures of the humanities to every American.

Let's step back for a moment and ask ourselves, what are the humanities? We know they are the study of certain disciplines, the widening of knowledge and the deepening of understanding. But, as an everyday matter, from the point of view of our daily lives, what are they? That, too, is not a hard question: the humanities are the intellectual air we breathe, the cultural sea we swim in, the spiritual matrix that makes our lives different from that of machines or beasts. When we study history, learn languages, or read philosophy, we are enhancing and living the humanities. But when you tape-record the remembered lives of your grandparents and transmit oral history, you are also practicing the humanities. The humanities define the context, the culture that enriches our lives beyond material wealth. The humanities give meaning to where we are in the great flow of human history.

How do we define ourselves? Are we, as Marx believed, essentially economic beings whose quality of life can be measured solely in material terms? Or are we beings whose condition in the world is determined by our military might? By both those measures, Americans have the right to feel a sense of pride. We won the cold war. We have the mightiest economy on earth. We have medical miracles to report every few months. We're on the cutting edge of the information age.

These things are all good. But is that all there is?

I don't think so. I think we've won many wars, but we face an uphill battle when it comes to the condition of our souls. I say souls because I want to raise a spiritual issue that has to do with the content of our lives, with our Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, with what William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize speech, called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

The cold war is only recently behind us. But let's not forget that its chief instrument of repression, besides guns themselves, was intellectual. The press, books, television and radio, even the classroom were all in the iron grip of the communist party. The oppressors practiced what Milan Kundera, the great Czech writer, called "organized forgetting." When you kill memory, you kill national spirit, and ultimately you kill democracy.

"Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens," wrote the U.S. Congress in its legislation that founded the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965. This is a clear-eyed reflection of Thomas Jefferson's caveat two hundred years ago that "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic." Helping the nation achieve enlightenment and vision is the everyday business of the endowments.

But today funding for humanities endowment in America is down. Our efforts to preserve and enrich American culture and education have been under attack in recent years. Their programs have been denounced as elitist – which makes you wonder about Ray Lum, the mule trader. Would he, a man without a high school diploma, have considered the publication of his memoirs elitist? I am frankly appalled that in the late 20th century, on the cusp of the millennium, at a time when we're flush with a peace dividend, some have actually advocated "zeroing out" the modest cultural budgets of both national endowments.

And in fact, they've half succeeded. Since 1995, the NEH budget has been cut from \$177 to \$110 million. The National Endowment for the Arts was cut even more. Even though 90 percent of our budget is sent straight back to taxpayers in the form of grants for humanities projects, our totals are pitiful compared to public spending on culture in other industrialized nations. In Europe, for instance, robust cultural and education budgets are a mark of national pride, part of what defines a people as a nation. The NEH budget is one one-hundredth of one percent of our federal budget – or 41 cents per American. If you combine it with all direct public cultural spending, it comes out to three dollars per capita. Contrast this with Germany's public cultural spending at \$39 per capita. Or France's at \$35.

It hardly seems excessive to suggest that we could spend 82 cents rather than 41 cents per person per year on our work.

The truth is, we should be talking tonight about more than doubling the widow's mite that is the current NEH budget. Compare our funding with that of military projects or even with the National Science Foundation, whose budget is \$3.6 *billion* annually – 32 times greater than ours. Even when combined with the funding of the National Endowment for the Arts, our national cultural spending through both endowments doesn't equal that of the city of Berlin, Germany, which spends \$500 million per year.

Where will we be in the 21st century if we've won our economic and military wars but lost our souls--if we don't know where we've come from or where we're going, except to the nearest McDonalds or computer store? We can protect our borders, but if we haven't protected our own culture, what is there to live for?

Talk of wiping out our cultural preservation programs can only come from those who think we have no culture, and don't deserve one. If they succeed, we could find ourselves in a Beckett-like absurdity, like "Krapp's Last Tape," sitting alone in an empty room talking to ourselves. "Nothing to say, not a squeak," says Krapp in his final soliloquy. "Never knew such silence."

Well, they'll have to find silence without me. I plan to make noise. Like Emile Zola, who said, "I'm here to live my life out loud," I'm here to preach the humanities out loud.

Snuffing out America's cultural endowments would be like taking away Sterling Library and expecting Yale to function as a great university. We cannot function as a great nation without a strong national commitment to the arts and humanities.

Each year we fund more than 500 projects including major book projects, creating new Web sites, and using computers in schools around the nation. Last year Americans submitted 3,514 applications for NEH support. We funded 682 of them. Scores of worthwhile projects went unfunded, or under-funded, because of budget cuts.

Over the years, dozens of projects have been funded right here at Yale, totaling \$5.4 million since 1993. They include the monumental collection and publication of the Benjamin Franklin Papers, now up to 33 volumes, and the preservation on microfilm of 16,000 volumes of endangered books.

But perhaps the most inspiring NEH-sponsored project at Yale focuses on teaching and intellectual exchange. It is the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute.

Charles Frankel, the Columbia University philosopher, once said that nothing more important had happened to American scholars than the government's invitation to them through NEH "to think in a more public fashion" and "to teach with...their fellow citizens in mind." That's exactly what happened at the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute.

Started 20 years ago, the Institute is a hands-on educational venture. It brings Yale faculty together with New Haven inner city teachers in five-month seminars of cross-disciplinary studies and curriculum development. It has a direct pay-off in the education of young people who will be either the next generation of college students or the next generation of drop-outs, depending on the imagination and resources we devote to them.

The project has been an enormous success in bridging the gap between

the ivory tower of the academy and the mean streets of the city. I can personally attest to the program's value because I was one of the first Yale faculty members who took part in it in 1978— I encouraged teachers to use music, the blues, quilt-making and local folklore as teaching tools.

The Institute has also been a roaring financial success, and no longer needs federal dollars. After 16 years of NEH support—over \$2.2 million-- it acquired its own endowment and now helps other cities around the country emulate its model.

NEH is also at the forefront of the technology revolution. We've placed great emphasis in recent years on developing web sites, CD ROMs and video disks that carry the humanities to a large audience. Even before Steven Spielberg made his film "Amistad," we funded the Amistad web site at the Mystic Seaport Museum just down the road in Mystic, Connecticut. The Web site does what the movie cannot: it takes you to the original documents about the slave mutiny and sensational trial, including newspapers, court documents and even the personal diary of John Quincy Adams. Such primary records give us the flavor of life in that time. [When I looked at that web page recently, I saw a line in Adams's diary that could have written by any of us in this room: "I talked again too much. At 2 a.m. we arrived at New Haven, and I took lodgings...[and had] Breakfast immediately after."]

Only original research, and fastidious attention to primary documents, can bring this kind of resource with a mouse click to millions of Americans. This is the preservation of memory in digital bytes, our electronic connection to our turbulent past. This is what NEH supports.

The truth is that NEH is part of the national cultural bloodstream. The work of deepening knowledge, preserving memory, creating new works of scholarship goes on in thousands of seedbeds around the country every day, with NEH funds as the starting point.

A farmer knows that a 100-pound bag of seed will yield a ton of crop. In the same way, \$100,000 of NEH support invested in an exhibit, a book, or a film will yield millions in matching funds and cultural tourism dollars, not to mention the immeasurable benefit to the quality of our lives.

Opponents argue that these programs could easily be duplicated with private investment. The facts are the opposite: NEH money *generates* new investment into the humanities by stepping in where the private sector usually fears to tread.

NEH is the great catalyst for private and nonprofit funding. There is perhaps no better example than the work of Ken Burns, the filmmaker

who brought us his great series on the Civil War, Baseball and The West. Starting with NEH grants, Ken was able to use the imprimatur of NEH funding to leverage other support. Ken's Civil War proposal was originally funded by NEH. Armed with that seal of approval, he turned to the private sector, where he was able to leverage a grant from General Motors of another \$2 million. The series was such a success that, under the cost-recovery clause that is in every NEH grant, Ken was able to pay NEH back. We were then able to recycle those funds into new projects, including another series by Ken Burns.

This is the multiplier effect of the NEH imprimatur. And it all begins with initial funding from people like you – the taxpayers.

The fruits of our funding documentary and historical films several years ago are apparent this fall on public television. In September, a documentary was shown on the U.S.-Mexican war of 1846-48 that, for the first time, looked at the war from the point of view of both sides. Last night, actress Olympia Dukakis narrated an exceptional documentary on polio and the search for a vaccine by Dr. Jonas Salk and Dr. Albert Sabin. Next Monday night, you can watch the first full-length film treatment of the life of Margaret Sanger, the mother of modern birth control. And on the following Monday night, October 19, an epic four-part series begins on "Africans in America" – the history of African-Americans from Jamestown and the first slave ships through the start of the Civil War.

All that is the good news. The bad news is that it will be a while before we have another fall television season as rich as this one. Because of congressional cutbacks that slashed our budget by almost 40 percent, public television programming sponsored by NEH has fallen from 71 hours in 1995 to 33 hours in 1999 – a 54 percent drop-off. Today we would be unable to fund a project like "Africans in America." Even if we were to double our budget overnight – as I believe we should – it would take several years for the funding cycle and long-term production schedules to begin to approach the 1995 level.

The humanities endowment is an essential source of start-up capital for American intellectual life, doing for the humanities what the small business administration does for American entrepreneurialism. We're the small business administration of the thinking world. We support the grassroots creative process through which we enrich and preserve our culture.

A Ken Burns work, an Amistad Web site, or a blues music seminar at the Teachers Institute each offers a new lens through which we view ourselves and our culture. The crowds pouring into the National Gallery of Art in Washington this week to visit the great Van Gogh exhibit are

looking through the artist's lense – how he saw the wheat field or the twilight differently from anyone before him. It's the same wheat field, the same twilight. It's just the lens that is different. So it is with the work of the humanities. The Frederick Douglass and Ben Franklin Papers give us a new lens on these men, on our early history, and, by extension, on ourselves.

Less than a month before his death, John F. Kennedy said that he looked forward to an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Within two years, that impulse was answered by the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. For 30 years, the endowments have kept Kennedy's flame alive.

Now, at this crucial moment, we must reaffirm our priorities. As we chart our intellectual course into the next century, we must insure, as Faulkner said, that "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded," we don't find ourselves staring silently into an empty room wondering where our heritage and culture went.

Thank you.

**The Public Humanities and the New Millennium
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, Rhode Island
October 14, 1998**

A Sense of Place: Rediscovering America through the Humanities

by William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I'm delighted to be here at the Multicultural Center. I know it is in fine hands with my friend Melvin Wade as director. Thank you for inviting me to take part with this distinguished panel in this discussion of place, policy, and politics. The subject is an important one to me. Each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. The sense of place shapes each of us in deep and lasting ways. Each of us carries within ourself 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.

Your "native soil" is blessed with a very active, effective, Committee for the Humanities. Joseph Finkhouse and his staff are doing a fine job. I understand the Committee, the State Arts Council and "First Night Providence" just received state funding for the "Rhode Island 2000" millennium project. Congratulations on this new partnership.

Our partnership with the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities is working well. Over the last five years, institutions and individuals in Rhode Island have received more than \$8.5 million from the Endowment and the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities--and we want to continue to help.

In many fundamental ways, Rhode Island has been more than generous to us. Rhode Island gave us Claiborne Pell, who helped write the legislative language creating the National Endowment in the first place. And we have enjoyed the continuing support of men like Senator Chafee and Senator Reed.

Their encouragement has been instrumental in our work with all of you--with the Rhode Island School of Design--where there is a fine collection of Egyptian faience on display at the moment--with the John Carter

**The Center for the Study of Lives
10th Anniversary
University of Southern Maine
Portland, Maine
October 15, 1998**

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

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, President Pattenau, for that kind introduction. My congratulations to you on this, the 10th anniversary celebration of the Center for the Study of Lives.

My congratulations to Bob Atkinson, you've done an incredible amount of work getting this Center up and running, I know it has been a labor of love, and we're all enriched by your efforts--the state of Maine and the country.

Thank you for inviting me here to share in the celebration. I'm very glad to be back in Maine, in many ways I consider it a second home because of my wife Marcie. Her parents spend half the year in Kennebunkport, so we spend a lot of time with them. And, when I was young, my uncle used to take me fishing in Maine and we'd buy all our equipment at L.L. Bean's. As a teenager, I used to listen to *Bert and I*. So I have many fond memories and they're much more than magnet memories—more than a little red lobster to take home and stick on the refrigerator.

I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. As vice-president Gore has observed, "Diversity is not an idea or agenda; it is a fact of our world."

Another fact of our world is that we are in danger of losing our memory as a culture. Pulitzer prize-winning historian James McPherson 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, how we got that way, and why." The Center for the Study of Lives is a source for understanding our national past—and our present. That's why the work of the Center is so important.

Essentially, my job as chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities is to help "keep track" of our stories. Who we are and where we have come from as Americans.

Zora Neal Hurston wrote a story that, in part, explains my job. Let me read a brief passage from her novel, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. At this point in the story Moses is in the mountains building his own tomb.

Under one stone [Moses] 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,"

My job is to be the "keeper of memories." That's what the Center for the Study of Lives does also. We all have to remember to ask about those memories. We can't be like those lizards who never ask. Or we'll all end up fossils.

These memories are vitally important because they are stories of human connection. That's what the humanities are all about. The humanities explore how we connect to each other.

How do we connect? It's a crucial question: for adolescents trying to discover their identities, for artists trying to communicate, for families trying to stay together, for immigrants coming to a new land, for all of us in our daily struggles. It's not easy. We connect through these stories. They help point the way. Stories that tell of joy, fear, growth, pain, courage—and humor.

GEN. BEAUGREGARD STORY /MAINE MOOSE HUNTER STORY

Those stories are amusing because they play on stereotypes from Maine and Mississippi. To shatter such stereotypes, you have to get to know each other. Just like there's more to Maine than lobster and pine trees, there's more to Mississippi than moonlight and magnolias. A few years ago, I was fortunate to be involved in a teacher exchange program between Maine and Mississippi.

"Region and the Imagination: New England and the South," was a joint project of the Maine Humanities Council, the New England Studies Program here, and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi.

After attending the summer program, one teacher wrote, "I now have an understanding of what shapes our differences and therefore shapes our similarities."

Another teacher wrote, "The similarities between Maine and Mississippi came through again and again—families steeped in tradition, haunted by their pasts, and drawn to region." That's why the stories are important. That's why region is important.

I have believed for a long time that people everywhere define themselves through the places where they are born and grow up. Eudora Welty calls this, the "sense of place," as she wrote:

"It is by knowing where you stand that you grow able to judge where you are. Place absorbs our earliest notice and attention, it bestows upon us our original awareness; and our critical powers spring up from the study of it and the growth experiences inside it....One place comprehended can make us understand other places better. Sense of place gives us equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction too."

Now, perhaps my philosophy runs against the grain, for we Americans are taught to devalue the places we come from. We are taught that to achieve success and make a mark on society, we must separate ourselves from our roots. I believe that these places, memories and values are essential to life and should not be abandoned in the name of progress.

The story of Martha Ballard is just such an essential memory. In 1980, Professor Laurel Ulrich discovered the eighteenth-century diary of midwife Martha Ballard. NEH and the Maine Humanities Council were early supporters of Laurel Ulrich's work. In 1982 and 1985, she received NEH support to research and write *A Midwife's Tale*. The book won

almost every important award for which it was eligible, including the Pulitzer Prize. Many of you have seen the film, *A Midwife's Tale: The Discovery of Martha Ballard*.

With the Maine Humanities Council, the Endowment is working hard here. In the last five years, institutions and individuals in Maine have received more than \$6 million from the Endowment and the Maine Humanities Council for projects that help to preserve the nation's cultural heritage, foster lifelong learning, and encourage civic involvement.

All of these projects tell the story of Maine people, American stories.

The Century Project: Modern Times in Maine and America 1890-1930, uncovered many great sources for understanding our past—and preserved the stories in print and on film. The project involved more than 100 of Maine's smallest towns, many of them through intergenerational oral history projects.

Many great stories were discovered, listen to what a woman in her late 90s from Aroostook County remembers about the old days, "I left school about age 14 or 15 and kept house for a family with several boys. I cooked, made butter, raised chickens, turkeys. Helped with various farm chores. During harvest time we boarded all of them and I did most of the cooking. It was hard work."

Clayton Johnson of Bailey Island, Harpswell remembers hard work. "My father had two, three vessels. When I got big enough, why I was with him, went in the dory. God, that was wicked work, you know....We'd haul over the bow of the dory. We had to haul by hand and I'm telling you that was hard work."

And I know what Bob is doing at the Center for the Study of Lives is hard work. But it is incredibly worthwhile. There's an expression, when an elder dies a library burns to the ground. Bob is preserving many great "libraries." Let me briefly quote from two stories captured here at the Center.

Rafael Papa was born in Manila, the Philippines. He lived in Spain and the U.S., and now retired lives on the Maine coast. He can speak ten languages. He said:

"There is value in a multicultural upbringing, learning all the languages and different cultures. It helps me to respect other people and other cultures. Did I tell you that I have fourteen nationalities in my family? I can't afford to be prejudiced—I might be prejudiced against...one of my own!"

Gerald Talbot, equal rights activist and Maine's first black legislator, said:

"I can tell you a lot about some history, some pain. I will wear a lot of scars that I had then, about jobs, about housing, about name calling, about one thing and another. But those are the scars that I wear. And what I've tried to do is I've tried to work to make your lives and my life a little better. I don't want you or anybody else, whether it's you, your children, or your grandchildren wearing those kind of scars....I don't think it's necessary that we do that. Because we all have to work together. We have to think together. We have to respect each other."

In today's society none of us can afford to be prejudiced. But we still are. Look no further than the tragic story of Matthew Shepard, a young gay student at the University of Wyoming. He was pistol-whipped, tied to a fence and left to die. In the hospital Monday, he did die. The humanities can not prevent murder—but they can promote greater understanding.

We need to learn more about each other. Our special new NEH project, *My History is America's History*, encourages all Americans to learn more about their family's history--and then relate their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. It will make them better citizens, and that's part of our job. Why?

Because in 1965, Congress established the Endowment, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task.. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously. We're using every tool at our disposal to do so—including technology.

I urge everyone here to call, write, or visit our website and find out more about us. From there, you can link up to EDSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. Check it out and spread the word. The Endowment is accessible and ready to help. I know you can also easily access the Center for the Study of Lives on-line. Pay a virtual visit. Let's use technology to preserve memory.

Milan Kundera, speaking from his memory as a Czech whose nation was targeted for extinction first by the Nazis and then by the Soviets, wrote, "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organizing forgetting. And, a nation which loses awareness of its past, gradually loses itself."

The truth is that NEH, the Maine Humanities Council, the Center for the Study of Lives, the American & New England Studies Center —and you— are part of the national cultural bloodstream, critically involved in the work of deepening knowledge, broadening our historical base, preserving memory, and creating new works of scholarship and history.

Please keep up this essential work.

It is not possible to discuss culture without discussing music and song. I could talk about the blues for hours, or I could just play it. So if you'll indulge me.

SONGS/DISCUSSION

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**Business leaders breakfast
Portland, Maine
October 16, 1998**

The Humanities Mean Business

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction. My congratulations to you and the Maine Humanities Council on the great job you're doing for the humanities here in Portland and throughout the state.

I'm very glad to be back in Maine, in many ways I consider it a second home because of my wife Marcie. Her parents spend half the year in Kennebunkport, so we spend a lot of time with them. And, when I was young, my uncle used to take me fishing in Maine and we'd buy all our equipment at L.L. Bean's. As a teenager, I used to listen to *Bert and I*. So I have many fond memories and they're much more than magnet memories—more than a little red lobster to take home and stick on the refrigerator.

The local roads are packed with tourists excited to see the color. It's just like Bath Iron Works at closing time. Maybe it's a little too packed, but I've seen the same thing happen at Graceland on Elvis's birthday, so I understand.

The tourists come here to see the land, the lakes, the mountains, this incredible seacoast—all that nature has to offer. And they come to see what you, the citizens of Maine, have to offer—and the sights you have created, and preserved, are very impressive indeed: The First Parish Church, the Old Port Library, Portland Observatory, the boyhood home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the list goes on and on.

You have done a remarkable job making Portland a rich, vibrant place to live. You have created a unique city, a cohesive community that attracts vital people. That's what I would like to discuss this morning--this sense of place and how people respond to it. I believe that each of us everywhere defines ourself through the place where we were born and raised. We each carry within ourself a "little postage stamp of native soil," as Faulkner put it.

Let me read how writer E.B. White felt about this place, Maine. This passage is from his 1955 essay *Home-coming*.

"What happens to me when I cross the Piscataqua and plunge rapidly into Maine at a cost of seventy-five cents in tolls? I cannot describe it....but I do have the sensation of having received a gift from a true love. And when, five hours later, I dip down across the Narramissic and look back at the tiny town of Orland, the white spire of its church against the pale-red sky stirs me in a way that Chartres could never do. It was the Narramissic that once received as fine a lyrical tribute as was ever paid to a river—a line in a poem by a schoolboy, who wrote of it, 'It flows through Orland every day.' I never cross that mild stream without thinking of his testimonial to the constancy, the dependability of small, familiar rivers. Familiarity is the thing—the sense of belonging. It grants exemption from all evil, all shabbiness."

E. B. White added a P.S. to his essay in April of 1962. "A trip home over the highway still warms me in the same indescribable way, but the highway itself changes from year to year. The seductive turnpike, which used to peter out conveniently at Portland, introducing the traveler to the pleasures of Route 1, now catapults him clear through to Augusta and will soon shoot him to Bangor if he isn't careful."

I'm on my way to Orono next, so I guess I'll have to be careful the highway doesn't "catapult me clear through" to Presque Isle.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." I have come to Portland to live the humanities out loud because I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen.

When that can't be done, I want every citizen to leave their home and come to the humanities—come to Portland—that's what cultural tourism is all about. Cultural tourism is tourism that gives the traveler the chance to experience the history, culture and people that give a place like Portland its distinctive character. These tourists want authenticity and quality. That's where the humanities come in. The humanities are good for cultural tourism and cultural tourism is good for business. I don't have to tell you that. Tourism could soon be Maine's number one industry. The humanities can help make that happen because the humanities are good for business.

Nationwide, tourism is big business, second only to health care in terms of our economic future. In 1996, expenditures from domestic and international travel in the U.S. hit \$473 billion; \$489 billion in 1977, and in 1998, travel spending should pass the \$500 billion mark. Much of this revenue is being generated online. The travel industry is taking advantage of available technology. Online travel sales tripled in 1997, and should increase 440 percent to \$4.7 billion by the year 2000. So

how does the National Endowment for the Humanities influence such spending? By doing what it has done for the past 32 years, and especially the last four years.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public television and radio stations. These grants are used for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs.

In the last four years, the Endowment served as a cosponsor of "Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce," the 1995 conference held in conjunction with the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism. Last year NEH was part of a 12-member coalition which convened cultural tourism forums across the country. The forums brought together more than one thousand leaders from the tourism industry and the cultural community to launch collaborative relationships.

You have such collaborative relationships in Maine. You're all working together to promote tourism—the Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Office of Tourism, Maine Historic Preservation, Maine Archives and Museums, and the Maine Humanities Council. The cooperation resulted in a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to the Maine Humanities Council and Maine Archives and Museums. The grant will be used for "Putting Maine Museums on the Map: Promoting Cultural Tourism" a two-year program.

We have a partnership with your Humanities Council, the Endowment is working hard here in Maine. In the last five years, institutions and individuals in Maine have received more than \$6 million from the Endowment and the Maine Humanities Council for projects that help to preserve the nation's cultural heritage, foster lifelong learning, and encourage civic involvement.

All of these projects tell the story of Maine people, American stories. That's what the humanities bring to the table. The humanities are good for business, but they are bigger than business. Maine is a special place because you can't walk along Perkins Cove or stand atop Cadillac Mountain without contemplating your relationship to nature. You can't read *A Midwife's Tale* without contemplating your relationship to the people around you. It's a story of human connections, and that's what the humanities are all about. The humanities explore how we connect to the land and each other.

How do we connect? It's a crucial question: for adolescents trying to discover their identities, for artists trying to communicate, for families trying to stay together, for immigrants coming to a new land, for all of

us in our daily struggles. It's not easy. For Martha Ballard, a midwife in Hallowell, Maine, it was hard work.

You all know the story of how in 1980, Professor Laurel Ulrich discovered in the Maine State Archives an eighteenth-century diary of midwife Martha Ballard. NEH and the Maine Humanities Council were early supporters of Laurel Ulrich's work. In 1982 and 1985, she received NEH support to research and write *A Midwife's Tale*. The book won almost every important award for which it was eligible, including the Pulitzer Prize. Many of you have seen the film, *A Midwife's Tale: The Discovery of Martha Ballard*.

A Midwife's Tale is solving a problem raised by Pulitzer prize-winning historian James McPherson who 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, how we got that way, and why." *A Midwife's Tale* is a rediscovered source, a memory. We can't connect without memory, a sense of the past.

The Century Project: Modern Times in Maine and America 1890-1930, uncovered many great sources for understanding our past—and preserved the stories in print and on film. The project involved more than 100 of Maine's smallest towns, many of them through intergenerational oral history projects.

Many great stories were discovered, listen to what a woman in her late 90s from Aroostook County remembers about the old days, "I left school about age 14 or 15 and kept house for a family with several boys. I cooked, made butter, raised chickens, turkeys. Helped with various farm chores. During harvest time we boarded all of them and I did most of the cooking. It was hard work."

Clayton Johnson of Bailey Island, Harpswell remembers hard work. "My father had two, three vessels. When I got big enough, why I was with him, went in the dorrie. God, that was wicked work, you know....We'd haul over the bow of the dorrie. We had to haul by hand and I'm telling you that was hard work."

And listen to what one person had to go through to get to school every day. "I walked three and a half miles every morning, three and a half miles home—there was no buses—and I had to cross the Piscataqua River and I had to know how to row my own boat in the summer. In the winter I crossed on ice. I took skis and I had to carry them on my shoulder all the way to school because it was mostly uphill. Coming home at night I could ski."

The Century Project was excellent—to the point the Maine Humanities Council won the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History.

I am not surprised, the Maine Humanities Council is responsible for many excellent programs: the Maine Collaborative teacher programs; the Cultural Heritage programs; the Contemporary Issues program now focusing on literature and medicine and offering seminars for health professionals; and the Maine Center for the Book. We were all "Born to Read."

The Council also took part in the National Conversation. The Maine Sunday Telegram, the Maine Council of Churches, and the Council formed a partnership to discuss the fundamental question: What does it mean to be an American? Participants included the Portland Police Department, the Maine Youth Center and the Cumberland County Jail.

All these projects go to make Maine a better place to live—and visit. The truth is that NEH, the Maine Humanities Council—and you—are part of the national cultural bloodstream, critically involved in the work of deepening knowledge, broadening our historical base, preserving memory, and creating new works of scholarship and history.

Recall the words of E. B. White, "Familiarity is the thing—the sense of belonging. It grants exemption from all evil, all shabbiness." We all need that "sense of belonging." All of you are doing a great job creating that here in Portland. It is indeed a special place.

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**First Annual Constance H. Carlson Public Humanities Prize
University of Maine, Orono
October 16, 1998**

Rediscovering America through Reading

William Ferris, chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction. I want to congratulate you and the staff of the Maine Humanities Council, and the Board of Directors, and the many people doing such great work for the Humanities here in Maine. I look forward to working with you closely in the years ahead.

Chief Justice Wathen, it's an honor to appear with you on this memorable occasion.

We are in the perfect place, the Page Farm and Home Museum tells so many Maine stories. We are surrounded by history, my compliments to all involved in making this such a successful museum.

I'm very glad to be back in Maine, in many ways I consider it a second home because of my wife Marcie. Her parents spend half the year in Kennebunkport, so we spend a lot of time with them. And, when I was young, my uncle used to take me fishing in Maine and we'd buy all our equipment at L.L. Bean's. As a teenager, I used to listen to *Bert and I*. So I have many fond memories.

I am especially pleased you asked me to be here for the first annual Constance Carlson Public Humanities Prize. Constance (Connie) Carlson did so much for the humanities here in Maine. Founding member of the Maine Humanities Council in 1975, board member until 1981, former president of the University of Maine at Presque Isle, Dean of University College in Bangor, first female president of a University of Maine System campus, first woman to be named outstanding professor of the year at Orono—the list of her accomplishments goes on and on. More importantly her spirit lives on and on—and this award is a tribute to that spirit. That is why Tabitha King is the perfect choice as the first recipient of this honor.

Trish Riley, co-chair of the award committee said, "Connie believed passionately in the power of the humanities to enrich, enlighten, and leaven our lives," So does Tabitha King. So do I. We all do, that's why

we're here.

This award is a very creative idea and a fitting celebration of books, authors, and readers. Tabitha King is an avid reader, and a very talented novelist, witness *Survivor*, *Small World*, *Caretakers*, *One on One*, *The Book of Reuben*. But she's more than a reader and a writer, she's a tireless supporter of the humanities in Maine. Today we honor her for her hard work and dedication. She has given abundantly of her time and money. She has made Maine a better place to live.

An extremely generous four-year grant from the Stephen and Tabitha King foundation to the Maine Humanities Council is earmarked for family literacy programs. These programs will make certain that every Mainer knows how to read and that every infant in the state is hearing books read aloud. Why is reading so important?

Filmmaker Ken Burns once told the following story to Congress. When Burns was working on his film about the Statue of Liberty. Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library, gave Burns a tour of the library. Gregorian gestured toward the precious books lining the shelves, and said, "This is the DNA of our civilization." How true, and that's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

Books are a crucial part of the DNA strand of our civilization. If you can't read, you don't have access to our civilization. Without that access you're not an informed citizen and democracy suffers. As Jefferson said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be."

That's why NEH is in the book business. The 1997 Pulitzer Prize in history was awarded to Jack N. Rakove's *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. Rakove's project was originally supported by an NEH Fellowship in 1984.

Such honors are not unusual. Works facilitated by the Endowment's Research and Education division have, over the years, garnered more than 500 nationally recognized awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes and six National Book awards.

Endowment-sponsored academic research enables authors to produce seminal works such as: Paul Fussell's *The Great War in Modern Memory*, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Merrill Peterson's *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay and Calhoun*, and Laurel Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*—a Maine story.

Just because I'm listing great books doesn't mean I'm a Luddite. I

believe in the new technology, as with any tool it's how you use it. NEH is using the new technology to spread the word about the humanities. I hope you'll visit our NEH website. From there, you can link up to EdSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country. This technology opens up new worlds.

Scientific advances are opening up new worlds every day. Just last week the Hubble Space Telescope revealed about 100 galaxies never before seen. As Astronomer Rodger Thompson said, "We are seeing farther than ever before. We have not reached the edge [of the universe], but we have made a step into a new arena." This new arena, these new galaxies are more than 12 billion light-years away.

But there are limits to what science can see. As Henry David Thoreau asked, "With all your science, can you tell how it is, and where it is, that light comes into the soul?"

Science can not do that. No telescope can see that far. It is the job of the humanities to address such questions. One of the most important tools we possess is—the book.

I do not want to suggest that humanists and scientists should exist in separate worlds—especially not on the campus of this great university. To the contrary, it's more important than ever that we talk. Scientist and novelist C.P. Snow once wrote, "Literary intellectuals at one pole--at the other scientists....Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension." We have to bridge that gulf—and soon. Science is not slowing down.

You know about Dolly the sheep--cloned last year in Scotland. Scientists in Hawaii recently cloned mice in such a fashion that experts are saying human cloning is now more possible than ever. Lee Silver, a professor of genetics at Princeton said, "If you can clone from adult mouse cells, there's basically no reason you can't do this in humans. I'm absolutely convinced it will happen, and I think it will happen sooner than we thought a year ago." This is a daunting development, full of possibilities and fraught with problems.

The scientists have told us we can clone humans. But should we? The historians, philosophers, poets--the humanists can help answer that question. Scientists and citizens have to start talking to each other. Reading and discussion can help.

In Maine, doctors and patients are already talking. That's the point of the Maine Humanities Council project "Literature and Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care." NEH is helping to fund this

valuable program. Over the course of three years, seminars will be held at all 41 Maine hospitals. A pilot program at the Eastern Main Medical Center had participants reading Camus, Chekov and Faulkner—with tremendous results. Listen to what one doctor said after taking part, "It causes everyone in health care to rethink what health care's all about."

That's what reading and discussion can do. That's what the Maine Center for the Book is all about. In recognition of its leadership role in promoting reading as a lifelong activity, the Maine Humanities Council was designated to serve as the Maine Center for the Book by the Library of Congress. Unless you go deep into the Maine woods, you can't hide from the Maine Center for the book. Let yourself be found and take part in one of these great programs: Prescription to Read, New Books, New Readers, Family Scrapbooks, or Born to Read.

Don't take my word for it, listen to the parents who took part in "Born to Read." One mom said, "I never knew how important it was until I got started reading to my daughter. I was amazed how much better we communicated. Her speech just got better and better."

One dad said, "There are all these great books out there and they're not expensive. I don't think any toy can do what a book can do."

In addition to the Contemporary Issues program and the Maine Center for the Book, the Maine Humanities Council is responsible for other excellent programs: the Maine Collaborative teacher programs and the Cultural Heritage programs.

The Endowment is also working hard here in Maine. In the last five years, institutions and individuals in Maine have received more than \$6 million from the Endowment and the Maine Humanities Council for projects that help to preserve the nation's cultural heritage, foster lifelong learning, and encourage civic involvement. And they tell some great stories.

You all know the story of how in 1980, Professor Laurel Ulrich discovered in the Maine State Archives an eighteenth-century diary of midwife Martha Ballard. NEH and the Maine Humanities Council were early supporters of Laurel Ulrich's work. In 1982 and 1985, she received NEH support to research and write *A Midwife's Tale*. The book won almost every important award for which it was eligible, including the Pulitzer Prize. Many of you have seen the film, *A Midwife's Tale: The Discovery of Martha Ballard*.

The Century Project: Modern Times in Maine and America 1890-1930, uncovered many great sources for understanding our past—and preserved the stories in print and on film. The project involved more

than 100 of Maine's smallest towns, many of them through intergenerational oral history projects. I think this is so important; there's a saying, when an elder dies it's like a library burns down. This project made sure that didn't happen.

Listen to what a woman in her late 90s from Aroostook County remembers about the old days, "I left school about age 14 or 15 and kept house for a family with several boys. I cooked, made butter, raised chickens, turkeys. Helped with various farm chores. During harvest time we boarded all of them and I did most of the cooking. It was hard work."

Clayton Johnson of Bailey Island, Harpswell remembers hard work. "My father had two, three vessels. When I got big enough, why I was with him, went in the dorrie. God, that was wicked work, you know....We'd haul over the bow of the dorrie. We had to haul by hand and I'm telling you that was hard work."

The Century Project was excellent—to the point the Maine Humanities Council won the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History. I am not surprised.

The Council also took part in the National Conversation. The Maine Sunday Telegram, the Maine Council of Churches, and the Council formed a partnership to discuss the fundamental question: What does it mean to be an American? Participants included the Portland Police Department, the Maine Youth Center and the Cumberland County Jail.

All these projects go to make Maine a better place to live—and visit. The truth is that NEH, the Maine Humanities Council—and you—are part of the national cultural bloodstream, critically involved in the work of deepening knowledge, broadening our historical base, preserving memory, and creating new works of scholarship and history. Please keep up your great work. My congratulations again to you Tabitha.

For a surprise ending to my speech, I contemplated reading the surprise ending to *Bag of Bones*, Stephen King's new novel. I thought that would wake everybody up. But then I decided not to tangle with an author whose characters are capable of such grisly acts.

So I've chosen the end of *Emma* by Jane Austen. As many of you may know, Constance Carlson named her dog Austen. So here's the description of Emma's wedding to Mr. Knightley.

"The wedding was very much like other weddings, where the parties have no taste for finery or parade;the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered

in the perfect happiness of the union."

At this ceremony, we don't need the finery or a parade—we have great books. At this ceremony, with this "small band of true friends," I hope your wishes, hopes, confidences and predictions have been fully answered in the happiness of our union.

Thank you for your time.

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**University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio
October 22, 1998**

America Has Won the Cold War but is Losing the Battle for Its Soul

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Professor Miller, for that kind introduction. And thank you for your years of service on the Ohio Humanities Council.

I'm very glad to be here at this great research institution on faculty retreat day.

My congratulations to UC archaeologist Brian Rose, head of the Troy excavation project. After visiting the latest discovery east of Troy, Rose said, "I have held more gold in my hands this summer than I have ever held in my life." We have a lot in common. I too am continually searching for treasure—buried or otherwise. I can't help but thinking if he would just donate one necklace to the Endowment, all our financial problems would be over. Just in case, I'll leave my number.

In 1965, Congress established the National Endowment for the Humanities, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task.. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously. I'm here today to discuss how best to do that—how best to foster wisdom and vision in our citizens.

Let me start with a series of hypothetical questions.

What if you went to the National Archives and there were no Archives there?

Or what if the Archives were open but no scholars came? Or the scholars did research but it was never published?

We are all connected in an undertaking of crucial importance to our country. We need the primary source material, the scholars, the publishers, and the readers to pass our culture along from one generation to another. That undertaking is at risk, and that puts our nation at risk.

As we approach the millennium, we can look back with satisfaction, and ahead with hope. We have the strongest military in the world, the healthiest economy in the world, the most advanced scientific community. In many respects, we stand on a pinnacle. But what does that mean?

What does it benefit us as a society if we've struggled to the top but lost our soul in the process? What if we, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, have the experience but miss the meaning?

By souls, I don't mean to raise a strictly metaphysical or moral issue. I do mean to raise a spiritual one that has to do with the content of our lives, and the order of our values, our Index of Leading Cultural Indicators. It is what William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize speech, called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

The Cold War is over; democracy has triumphed, but democracy must be maintained and nourished. Great civilizations crumble and decay from within. As Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

The Endowment combats ignorance with the preservation of primary sources, research to create new knowledge, and the dissemination of that new knowledge. Our Research and Education division is designed to facilitate basic research and original scholarship, and to strengthen teaching and learning in schools and colleges. We support fellowships and stipends, research, seminars and institutes. In short, we support what you do. For example, at UC, NEH has given grants to...

The Pylos Regional Archaeological Project and Director J.L. Davis here at UC...

Professor John Hancock to produce an interactive CD-ROM, a video, a web site and teacher materials on the ancient cultures and monumental architecture of the Ohio River Valley and to Professor Susan Bacon for a regional summer institute in Cincinnati and Puebla, Mexico on the language and culture of Mexico for elementary teachers from Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio.

Our support of research and scholarship here at UC will continue because we have an important task, just as important as scientific research.

We know that science has triumphed in many areas—on earth and in outer space.

In a few days, Senator John Glenn will make his second space flight, aboard the Shuttle Discovery. Scientists are raising fundamental questions of life and death, and space explorers such as Senator Glenn are testing the endurance of the human body.

But science can only go so far. As Henry David Thoreau asked, "With all your science, can you tell how it is, and where it is, that light comes into the soul?"

At the Endowment we are trying to help enlighten the soul of society. We are trying to help foster wisdom and vision in our citizens. As you know, it is not an easy task. Here on earth we need dedicated scholars who will create new knowledge.

Scientist and novelist C.P. Snow once wrote, "Literary intellectuals at one pole--at the other scientists....Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension." We have to bridge that gap.

As you are at this great university, across the land we must intensify the dialogue between the scientists and members of other disciplines. That can be done—in forums such as this one. Something else must be done and this is where I plan to shout a bit—metaphorically speaking.

Emile Zola, once said, "If you ask me what I have come to do in this world . . . I will reply, I'm here to live my life out loud." I have come to Cincinnati to live the humanities out loud because I want every citizen, everywhere, to know what we can do for each of them. I want to bring the humanities home to every citizen.

For more than 32 years NEH has fostered individual and institutional excellence. NEH awards grants to America's schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, archives, and public television and radio stations. As you know, these grants are used for cultural preservation projects, teacher training, scholarly research and public programs.

In recent years, as you're all aware, the Endowment has suffered severe budget cuts. I will work as hard as I can to reverse that trend.

Sir Isaac Newton, in a letter to Robert Hooke, wrote, "If I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants." As we approach the millennium, we have to make sure the Endowment is not left standing in a hole.

Our country deserves the best the humanities can offer. But now the money for serious humanities research is not the best our country has to offer. When compared with other industrialized nations, it's rather anemic.

Since 1995, the NEH budget has been cut from \$177 to \$110 million. Even though 90 percent of our budget is sent straight back to taxpayers in the form of grants for humanities projects, our totals are rather pitiful compared to public spending on culture in other industrialized nations. In Europe, for instance, robust cultural and education budgets are a mark of national pride, part of what defines those people as nations. By contrast, the NEH budget is one one-hundredth of one percent of our federal budget – or 41 cents per American. If you combine it with all direct public cultural spending, it comes out to about three dollars per capita. Contrast this with Germany's public cultural spending at \$39 per capita. Or France's at \$35.

Compare our funding with that of military projects or even with the National Science Foundation, whose budget is \$3.6 billion annually – 32 times greater than ours.

Even when combined with the funding of the National Endowment for the Arts, our national cultural spending through the Endowments doesn't equal that of the city of Berlin, Germany, which spends \$500 million per year.

Each year we fund more than five hundred projects ranging from major book projects to creating new Web sites to using computers and other tools in schools around the nation. Last year Americans concerned about the humanities submitted 3,514 applications for NEH support. We funded 682 of them. Scores of worthwhile projects went unfunded, or underfunded, because of budget cuts.

In fact, if you take away NEH and the Mellon Foundation and you've pretty well wiped out humanities funding in this country.

But I think we've hit bottom and I believe we have nowhere to go but up. I am optimistic because I think there has been a sea change in Congress. I have been up to the Hill to meet with members, including Congressman Ralph Regula.

The Endowment will find more money, if not public, then from the private sector. The Endowment will draw up a list of "Most Endangered Humanities Projects." With that we can say to CEOs, this nation is going to lose Presidential papers, a new website on American history, or a collection of 18th century newspapers, if you don't help. And we can say to the general public, can you afford twenty dollars to preserve a national treasure? I think the public is ready to help.

The Endowment is helping here in Ohio. With the Ohio Humanities Council, the Endowment is working hard. In the last five years,

institutions and individuals in Ohio have received more than seventeen million dollars from the Endowment and the Ohio Humanities Council for projects that help to preserve the nation's cultural heritage, foster lifelong learning, and encourage civic involvement.

The Age of Rubens, a major NEH-supported exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio, drew the largest attendance of any exhibition in the museum's 93-year history—226,000 over three months. These visitors pumped almost twenty-three million dollars into the local economy.

The VRoma project, a computer network, is enabling students in Miami University's classics program to interact with other classics students in classrooms worldwide.

The staff of the Ohio Newspaper Project has traveled to 742 sites in Ohio's 88 counties, inventoried nearly 17,000 newspaper files, produced 10,747 bibliographic records and 18,861 holding records for newspaper titles, and microfilmed 2.4 million pages of newspapers that would otherwise be lost because of their fragility. They've saved such historic newspapers as the *True Blue and Castigator* and the *Orville Ventilator*.

More than 600,000 Ohioans of all ages participate in Ohio Humanities Council activities each year. The annual lecture series, the *Ohio Forum* brings nationally known speakers such as Toni Morrison, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Doris Kearns Goodwin here. I know Michael Beschloss was in Cincinnati in May and I understand Jane Smiley is coming to Cincinnati on November 5th.

Perhaps you saw "Under Fire: Soviet Women Combat Veterans" a travelling documentary exhibition of the wartime experiences of twenty-seven Red Army women veterans. The project came about when in 1990, Noel Julnes-Sahner, an ordained Episcopalian priest, went to Kharkiv, Ukraine, under the Cincinnati-Kharkiv sister-city project.

In a significant step, the state legislature has granted the Ohio Humanities Council one hundred thousand dollars, which is a first for the Council.

With this new money for the Council and a new executive director, Gale Peterson, I'm optimistic about our partnership here in Ohio. I believe he is here. Gale could you please stand for a moment. Some of you may know Gale from his tenure of almost twenty years at the Ohio Historical Society. Gale is open to new ideas and I know he wants the help of the academic community in reaching out to local communities throughout the state. I look forward to working with Gale in the future. Thank you

Gale.

Books are central to all our lives. Vartan Gregorian, when he was president of the New York Public Library, referred to the books lining its shelves as "the DNA of our civilization." That's what the Endowment does, it takes care of "the DNA of our civilization."

The "strands" of that DNA are books, manuscripts, photographs, web sites, museum exhibits, films, television, radio, and scholarly research. Increasingly, the strands are intertwined.

Consider Steven Spielberg's film *Amistad*. Spielberg certainly doesn't need Endowment money to make a film, but he has benefited from our work.. One of the scholarly resources, Howard Jones' book, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, was made possible by a grant from NEH. Even before Steven Spielberg made the movie, we funded the Amistad web site at the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. It takes you to the original documents about the slave mutiny and sensational trial, including newspapers, court documents and even the personal diary of John Quincy Adams. Primary records give us the flavor of life in that time.

Perhaps you've been watching the PBS four-part documentary *Africans in America: America's Journey through Slavery*. This documentary received NEH support, and the last episode airs tonight. It tells the history of African-Americans from Jamestown and the first slave ships through the start of the Civil War. It doesn't blink in looking at our troubled past.

We also supported the documentary on polio, *A Paralyzing Fear*, which aired recently. It told the story of the search for a vaccine by one of your own alumnus Dr. Albert Sabin and by Jonas Salk..

We are now working on a new project, *My History is America's History*. It encourages Americans to learn the story of their own families—how they got here, how they made their way--and then to relate that to the broader sweep of American and world history. It will fill in the many threads of our past, and make us aware of the things we share in common. It is knowledge we can pass along to a new generation.

The NEH is working to preserve, create and disseminate new knowledge., whether it comes from our own histories or something as ancient as the Dead Sea Scrolls. We're using every tool at our disposal to do so—including technology. Original research, and fastidious attention to primary documents, can bring history within a mouse click of millions of Americans. This is the preservation of memory in digital bytes, our electronic connection to our past. This is what NEH supports.

So please visit our website at www.neh.gov and find out more about us. From there, you can link up to EdSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country.

Why is this all this work so important? Because we are in danger of losing our memory as a culture. Pulitzer prize-winning historian James McPherson 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, how we got that way, and why."

You create those "sources for understanding." Without scholarly research, we have no new knowledge, no greater understanding of who we are as Americans.

The truth is that NEH, the Ohio Humanities Council, the University of Cincinnati, and you—are part of the national cultural bloodstream, critically involved in the work of deepening knowledge, broadening our historical base, preserving memory, and creating new works of scholarship and history.

Emerson said this about teachers, "By simple living, by true speech, by just action, by an illimitable soul, you inspire, you correct, you instruct, you raise, you embellish all....Work straight on in absolute duty, and you lend an arm and an encouragement to all the youth of the universe."

Thank you.

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**American Folklore Society
Portland, Oregon
October 29, 1998**

Folklore and the Humanities in the 21st Century

William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, John [Roberts], for that kind introduction.

Good morning, fellow folklorists! I want to dedicate this talk to two distinguished folklorists who could not be with us here today, Kathryn Morgan and Alan Lomox, and to the memory of Gerry Davis, whose life and works shaped our field so deeply.

I speak to many groups all over the country these days, but none more distinguished than this one. Today it feels like I've come home. It's a great honor to be with you, both as a professional colleague and as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It was, of course, high time they got a folklorist for this job, and I'm sure it has nothing to do with the fact that I'm from a state that has a long border with Arkansas.

Folklorists are popping up all over the place in Washington these days. My colleague, Bill Ivey, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, is a trained folklorist. We should recognize that Bill's and my presence as chairmen of the two Endowments is a direct response to the 40 percent cuts these institutions endured. The Clinton Administration and Congressional leaders believe that folklorists are ideally equipped to respond to the needs of all Americans, a belief that is reflected in our nomination by President Clinton and in our unanimous confirmation by the Senate.

And, as you know, Bill Ivey and I are not alone. Across the Washington Mall at the Smithsonian Institution, Richard Kurin heads the Center for Folklife program and Amy Kotkin is director of Smithsonian Tours, Alan Jabbour directs the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and Joe Wilson heads the National Council for Traditional Arts. So, you see, you don't have to be a Southerner to succeed in Washington these days, just a folklorist.

I'm sure everyone here has an interesting and probably unexpected

story of how he or she became a folklorist. Ours is a field that almost none of us intended to get into from an early age, but were drawn to by our work and interests. Nobody is here because they have to be a folklorist; you could be out doing something that makes money. You chose folklore because you loved the work. I think that's one thing we can be sure of today: everybody is here because of a passion for their work.

Let me tell you how I came by my passion for folklore. I got into the field by accident. In fact, I was a folklorist long before I'd heard of folklore as an academic discipline. I grew up on a farm near Vicksburg just below the Mississippi Delta, right on the Big Black River. Most of my early playmates were black children who lived on the farm. The black families had their own church on the farm, called Rose Hill. As a child, I sometimes went to Sunday services at Rose Hill and vividly remember the music. The Rose Hill congregation sang their spirituals without hymnals, a religious music that came straight from the heart.

By the time I was a teenager, I had discovered the blues, local blues through Lovey Williams, a musician who lived across the Big Black River at a little crossroads called Rising Sun. One Saturday night, my black friends took me over to hear Lovey sing blues in his living room. I sat up late in his house listening to homegrown blues sung by a man who felt every word he was singing. He played with a raw artistry that would make you weep. I loved the music; I loved the authenticity of it; I loved the rarity of it. I knew it was different from what you could hear on the radio. I knew it was unique, and, after I got to college, I knew it was perishable. That's when I came back with recording equipment. I taped Lovey Williams's blues and the services at Rose Hill Church, and then I finished my undergraduate degree in English literature.

My life was in boxes. My recordings and my written notes about the unsung black musicians and storytellers I knew were in a big cardboard box. My academic career was in another box: the box of rigid disciplinary definitions. As I studied for my master's degree in English at Northwestern University, it was clear to me that there was no place in the English department for a box full of blues recordings. I headed off on a Rotary Fellowship for a year at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

Like many Americans who studied abroad, I finally "found myself" in Europe. I actually found myself over a breakfast table with a professor from Ohio State. Francis Utley was staying at the same Dublin bed and breakfast I was. Professor Utley was a medievalist and a folklorist. I was studying Irish and Southern literature, and I shared with Professor Utley my frustration that there was no room for the study of oral traditions in English departments. I felt boxed in by the academy. He gave me the

keys to the kingdom: he said, "Go into folklore, young man." I'd never heard of studying folklore. But it took no convincing. The next fall, I carried my box of recordings into the Ph.D. program at Pennsylvania. Kenny Goldstein looked at my box and said, "That's your dissertation." And it was. It also became that book, *Blues from the Delta*, that John Roberts mentioned in his kind introduction.

These are uniquely challenging times to be a folklorist. We live in an era when the technology explosion gives us unprecedented opportunities for comparative research and cross-cultural communication. Folklorists can structure projects with world-spanning reach. Globalization is here in the form of the Internet and the digital revolution. We can take in more, share more, and send out more. The Internet, not to mention CD-ROMs and digitized databases, give us much greater public outreach. NEH supports all these efforts and looks increasingly for ways to combine traditional research with the latest means of dissemination. With an institutional base as strong as ours, with prominent programs at Pennsylvania, Indiana, Berkeley, Ohio State, Texas, and UCLA, we have a bright future to look forward to.

Of course, there's a downside to all this also. We who are used to seeing the world as a wide and diverse place, and who have explored its differences as much as its similarities, are faced with the fact that it is becoming, electronically at least, a smaller place. This is both an opportunity and a curse. We can click on a RealAudio download and hear a folksong recorded 10,000 miles away. But we can also suffer a globalization of culture that flattens and homogenizes the traditions that we folklorists have traditionally sought out.

This is where, I think, our work begins to merge with other disciplines. We can't cling to rigid definitions of what constitutes folklore, or anthropology, or ethnomusicology, or even history, any more. All these fields have a legitimate claim on all or part of the body of folklore research - a trove of photographs and recordings at the Maine Folklife Center, a collection of oral histories in East Central Los Angeles, a collection of Woody Guthrie's manuscripts in Tulsa. All disciplines contribute to the understanding and interpretation of these materials. In fact, it is my belief that for our own survival, and for the betterment of our work, folklorists need to think more about ways to work across disciplines. After all, other fields borrow generously -- and shamelessly! -- from folklore. Historians and literary scholars increasingly rely on folklore to enrich their work. Think of Larry Levine, Leon Litwak, and Pete Daniels. Old-fashioned turf jealousies may enhance departmental budgets, but they don't necessarily enhance research and the creation of new knowledge. When you reach freely across disciplines, you deepen cultural understanding. You give folklore a human face and a richer

context.

We must also consider how folklore finds its place within the humanities --and finds funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Over the past five years, 27 projects have been funded for \$1.6 million. But in this era of heightened interest in oral history and genealogy with ethnic pride and mini-nationalisms springing up around the world, it is wise for folklorists to seek out coalitions with colleagues in other disciplines for cross-cultural, cross-national and cross-disciplinary work. We should also look to the state humanities councils in our respective states. The folklore community needs to step forward and suggest ways in which it can fit into this fluid new situation, and ways that the NEH can work with them.

Folklorists should also look beyond our own borders. We know about the early epic singers in what is now Yugoslavia. We know equally well that a deep understanding of folklore, of the narratives and cultures of other social groups, is what can bridge racial and ethnic and national divisions. In my case, it was the blues that served as a critical bridge between black and white worlds; other black musical traditions served the same purpose in the civil rights movement. Likewise, folklore has a role in explaining, and perhaps, in healing the horrors of ethnic violence in places like Bosnia and Kosovo.

There is no question that folklore should and will have a greater voice as we build a contemporary vision of the humanities. There is room in the humanities house for Plato and Shakespeare, British ballads, and Tex-Mex music. All deserve to be part of the humanities canon.

Think of folk art. The old rap against folk art is that it pleases only popular taste, not refined taste, so it's not high art, or real culture. But consider the irony:

today, people are lining up for five, six, or seven hours to visit the wonderful new Van Gogh exhibit at the National Gallery of Art in Washington -- 4,000 people per day. Van Gogh is the platinum standard of high culture, but he's also the great crowd-pleaser. Contrast this with the work of a folk artist like Theodora Hamblett, a painter who grew up in Paris, Mississippi. Only a few score people have ever seen Mrs. Hamblett's pointillist paintings of life around Paris.

Both painters drew on an internal and external sense of place that deeply shaped their work. Ms. Hamblett painted the little schoolhouse in Paris; Van Gogh the night café in Arles. Both artists worked from a platform of creativity rooted in dreams and visions. When I studied Ms. Hamblett's work for my book on the sense of place in folk art, she told me that during a hospital stay, she was haunted by a vision of vines, so

that she was finally compelled to paint them. "After I paint them, then I'm never bothered [again]...," she said. The visions are released into art; the artist feels cathartic. One is reminded of Van Gogh's letters to his brother, Theo, which he wrote after stays in a mental hospital. "Though I am often in the depths of misery, I see paintings or drawings in the poorest cottages, in the dirtiest corners. My mind is driven towards these things with an irresistible momentum."

So the old formula is reversed. Van Gogh belongs to our humanities canon despite his popularity; Theodora Hamblett belongs there despite her lack of it.

Folklore is by far the oldest tradition in our humanities history, and it will always be the deepest and most emotionally ingrained in our lives. When we study folklore, we study the DNA of our culture. Literary critics study Faulkner and Twain; folklorists study the mule traders and riverboat pilots who were the raw material of the writers' work. It's out of these tangled webs of stories and music and belief systems that everything else can be understood. Bart Giamatti, the late president of Yale, once told me that he never understood Faulkner until he met Ray Lum, the Mississippi mule trader I wrote about.

Our guiding theme as we steer toward the new millennium is "Rediscovering America." This term focuses on preserving and capturing American stories and American traditions. We are supporting a great deal of research, from the monumental collection of Benjamin Franklin's papers at Yale, to film documentation of oral traditions in Appalachian Kentucky. And we are reaching beyond the traditional scholarly world, encouraging community projects in which children tape-record grandparents, public schools that create folklore projects.

To broaden the range of voices from the historic canon to include those of our own people, we are launching an initiative called "My History is America's History." That will use oral history to explore the lives of every American. And we are making changes within the Endowment to make the institution a healthier, more responsive place, a visionary organization. We have created five working groups that bridge each of our five divisions in the areas International Programs; Science, Technology, and the Humanities; Teaching; Regional Programs; and Extending the Reach.

These programs are all part of the "Rediscovering America" initiative. As we reach out with humanities programs, we will offer grants for first-time applicants; we will build significant new public-private partnerships; and we will bring strong support to all of our state humanities councils.

Helping Americans collect and connect their narratives is critical at the

turn of the century. "There's no secret to making history come alive," said historian David McCullough, quoting Barbara Tuchman, who said, simply: "Tell stories."

Ms. Tuchman had it dead right. She understood that, with the divisiveness and strife that sometimes tears apart our society, it's important to remind people that, somewhere along the line, our stories intersect. So the important thing is to tell them, and, from our professional point of view, to collect them. This was underscored recently from an unexpected quarter. Oprah Winfrey, the talk show host, told an interviewer how deeply she was affected by the experience of making her new movie, "Beloved." The movie is based on Toni Morrison's book about the brutal memories of a freed slave in postbellum Ohio. In studying the lives of slaves and slave owners, said Oprah, the key lesson she learned was that, "My history is nothing without yours. And yours is nothing without mine." That could be a guiding mantra for an America searching for its soul on the cusp of a new century.

And indeed, I believe it is our soul that we need to be concerned about. As we enter the 21st century, America is riding a wave of success. We have the mightiest economy on earth. We are on the cutting edge of the medical and information revolutions. And yet, because we have beggared institutions that study and celebrate our culture, we are losing the battle for our souls, for what Faulkner called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

The budgets of the NEH and its sister organization, the National Endowment for the Arts, are concrete measures of our national commitment to our culture. Since 1995, as you know, the NEH budget has been cut from \$177 million to \$110 million.

Because of the cuts, program funding has suffered across the board. To take one example, our support of documentary films on public television has fallen from 71 hours in 1995 to 33 hours in 1999 -- a 54 percent drop-off. Under our present budget, we would not have been able to properly fund such an historic and important project as Ken Burns's series on the Civil War, or the recent six-hour epic on Africans in America, which was funded before the budget cuts.

This is a terrible commentary on our national priorities. What kind of a peace dividend is it if we win our military and scientific wars but lose the battle for our souls? Where will we be in the 21st century if we don't know where we come from or where we're going, except to the nearest McDonalds or computer store? We can protect our borders, but if we haven't protected our own culture, what is there to live for?

We have only to look to our neighbors in other industrialized nations to understand how far we lag behind. If all direct public spending for culture is lumped together, America spends \$3 per capita per year. Compare that with Germany's \$39 per capita in direct public spending and France's \$35.

The time has come to stop speaking about restoring our cultural budgets to their 1995 levels and to demand that Congress significantly increase them. We should more than double our present commitment to the humanities and the arts. Talk of wiping out our cultural preservation programs can only come from those who think we have no culture and don't deserve one. If they prevail, we will find ourselves in a Beckett-like absurdity, like "Krapp's Last Tape," sitting alone in an empty room talking to ourselves. "Nothing to say, not a squeak," says Krapp in his final soliloquy. "Never knew such silence."

They will have to find silence without me. I plan to make noise. Like Emile Zola, who said, "I'm here to live my life out loud," I'm here to preach the humanities out loud.

Less than a month before his death, John F. Kennedy said he looked forward to an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Within two years, that impulse was answered by the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts. For 30 years, the Endowments have kept Kennedy's flame alive.

Now, at this crucial moment, we must reaffirm our priorities. As we chart our intellectual and cultural course into the next century, we must ensure, as Faulkner said, that "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded," the human voice will still be heard, endlessly talking, and you can be sure that a folklorist will also be there recording that voice for posterity.

Thank you.

More of the Chairman's columns are available [here](#).



News USA: November 1998

Living the Past History -- Everybody Does It, New NEH Study Finds

By William R. Ferris

A new study funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities reveals that millions of Americans are dedicated historians and do not even know it.

Some people compile photo albums, collect antiques or visit historic battlefields. Others keep diaries, plan annual family gatherings or make patchwork quilts in a tradition handed down from ancestors. Each of us has ways of communing with the past, and our reasons for doing so are as varied as our memories.

The study is titled "The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life" (Columbia University Press), and is the work of two history professors, David Thelen of Indiana University and Roy Rosenzweig of George Mason University. The two asked 1,500 Americans throughout the nation how they think about the past, how the past influences their daily lives and their hopes for the future.

The study shows that people assemble their experiences into narratives, which they then use to mark change, create continuity and chart the courses of their lives. A young woman from Ohio, for instance, speaks of giving birth to her first child, which caused her to reflect upon her parents and the ways their example would help her become a good mother. An African American man from Georgia tells how he and his wife were drawn to each other by their shared experiences growing up in the South in the 1950s. A Massachusetts woman traces her guarded attitude toward life to

While the past is omnipresent to Americans, "history" as it is usually presented in textbooks leaves many people cold. The study finds that history as taught in school does not inspire a strong connection to the past. It also finds that race and ethnicity affect perceptions of the past: most white Americans tend to think of the past as something personal, while African Americans and Native Americans are more likely to think in terms of shared experiences, like slavery, the civil rights movement and the violation of Indian treaties.

I am grateful to Professors Thelen and Rosenzweig and to the Indiana Humanities Council for bringing this study to light. The findings show that Americans intuitively know the importance of history in their lives. That information is a foundation on which the National Endowment for the Humanities can build. As chairman of NEH and a folklorist, I seek to help Americans find their place in the great stream of our history. The theme at NEH is "Rediscovering America," a term focusing on capturing and preserving American stories and traditions before they are no longer available. Projects NEH is funding include oral history projects, public programs and digitization of library resources to make the nation's cultural legacy available on the Internet. You will be hearing more from us.

For more information about the NEH and its programs, call 202/606-8671.

William R. Ferris is chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

witnessing the assassination of President John Kennedy on television when she was a child.

**University of Iowa Arts and Humanities Initiative
Old Capitol Senate Chamber
Iowa City, Iowa
November 2, 1998**

Remarks by William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you, Jay [Semel], for that kind introduction. It is I who should be singing the praises of you and your colleagues for your wonderful initiative to support the arts and humanities. By taking the fight for the humanities to the legislature and the budget process, you are the real heroes in the battle to preserve our culture and heritage where it really counts! Sometimes we in the academic world get so caught up in our work that we lose sight of that essential ingredient -- money. But obviously, nobody in Iowa has lost sight of it.

President Coleman, Vice President Skorton, I want like to add my congratulations, and that of the NEH, to you for your extraordinary accomplishment. You have set a national example by raising support for the humanities to the top of your academic and legislative agenda - where it belongs. You have made yourself a beacon of enlightenment in the darkness of attacks on cultural spending. And you can be sure I will hold up the Iowa example in my talks around the country.

You Iowans have already done what we in Washington are, for the most part, still just talking about. To preserve our Endowments, and thereby make a tangible commitment to preserving our cultural memory and heritage, we have to understand and explain the importance of the humanities to our national life, and our national character.

Supporting the humanities is not just about funding scholarship and making films for public television. It is about the survival of our cultural soul. The humanities shape the culture that enriches us beyond our material wealth. As you so well know, the humanities give meaning to where we are in the great flow of human history.

Let's ask ourselves, what are the humanities? We know they are the study of certain disciplines, the widening of knowledge and the deepening of understanding. But they are much more: the humanities are the intellectual air we breathe, the cultural sea we swim in. They are the spiritual matrix that makes our lives different from the worlds of machines or animals.

Robert Penn Warren once wrote: "A fish doesn't think much about water until he's out of it." So it is with the humanities. They surround and sustain us in our daily lives, but we are rarely aware of them - until we begin to lose them.

And we are in danger of losing the humanities if we fail to preserve our national heritage and our sense of who we are. We won the cold war, and we're on the cutting edge of the information revolution. Yet we are losing our souls.

I say souls not in a religious sense but in a spiritual sense. This issue has to do with the quality of our lives, with what William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize speech, called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

I want to raise the question: where will we be in the twenty-first century if we have won our scientific, economic and military wars while losing our souls -- if we don't know where we've come from or where we're going? We can protect our borders, but if we have not protected our own culture, what is there to live for?

The cold war is only recently behind us. But let us not forget that its chief instrument of repression, along with guns, was intellectual. The press, books, television, radio, and especially the classroom were all in the iron grip of the communist party. The oppressors practiced what Milan Kundera, the great Czech writer, called "organized forgetting." When you kill memory, you kill national spirit, you kill democracy, and you kill the humanities.

It is no accident that great leaders nurtured their dreams of freedom through the humanities. Because of what he wrote, playwright Vaclav Havel went to jail where he continued writing and eventually became President of the Czech Republic after the cold war ended. Russian physicist Andrei Sakharov turned his genius to humanitarian writing and embarrassed the Soviet government so much that they set him free. It was not guns that finally won the cold war: it was the human spirit, kept alive through the very things the dictators sought to oppress: words, books, poetry, ideas. The pen, finally, was mightier than the sword. And the pen is the essential tool of the humanities.

Yet our efforts to preserve and enrich American culture and education have sometimes been labeled elitist. This is an odd accusation when you consider what we do. Up in Dearborn, Michigan, college students are working on an NEH grant to gather oral histories of automobile workers. Think of it: people who have lived through the automotive revolution, and through the social revolutions of our industrial cities, telling their stories, creating on tape the primary documents of a key part of our history. Down in the North Carolina mountains, we're helping Cherokee

Indians research and preserve their culture at Western Carolina University. And, right here in Iowa, NEH funded your efforts to repair and replace important historical materials damaged in the Midwest floods of 1993. As an unintended consequence of that project, a Flood Recovery Booklet was developed that had great impact here and around the country. The booklet went out to thousands of people and institutions in Iowa and has become a national model that is being used in other states.

The people doing this important grass-roots work would surely be surprised to hear themselves described as elitist. What they are doing is the spadework of history, the preservation of memory, without which we cannot understand ourselves as a nation.

Oprah Winfrey, who is hardly an elitist, recently told an interviewer: "My history is nothing without yours. And yours is nothing without mine." She was talking about the experience of making "Beloved," her new movie. But she put her finger squarely on one of the essential tasks of the humanities - finding out where our stories intersect and shape our history.

Of course the NEH also supports traditional scholarship. The scholar working with primary documents is the beginning of the food chain of the humanities. But, with NEH help, that scholar's work can reach a much broader, less specialized audience.

A classic example is the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *A Midwife's Tale*, by historian Laurel Ulrich. Professor Ulrich's research began with the discovery of the diary of an 18th-century New England midwife in a library in Maine. With support from NEH, she wrote her book, giving us new insights into colonial American life. Then NEH supported a documentary film made from the book that was shown on public television to more than 4.6 million viewers. Such is the reach of humanities scholarship.

Lina Kerber's exciting new book *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* shows how the Endowment's support makes a difference. In 1994 we awarded Professor Kerber a Fellowship for University Teachers to develop her book. Four years later her fine work is in print and was reviewed by Kirkus Associates as "a tour de force in every respect and required reading for American historians and legal scholars. Kerber's new book is stunning."

As we read her credentials, Amazon.com notes "Linda K. Kerber is Mary K. Brodbeck Professor of History at the University of Iowa." Professor Kerber honors both the University of Iowa and the National Endowment

for the Humanities with her work.

You in Iowa know the importance of NEH support. Through the competitive merit-review process, you have won nearly \$5 million in NEH grants over the past five years. Here at the university, the "Art and Life in Africa Project" has developed an interactive CD-ROM with thousands of images of sub-Saharan arts and crafts for use by high school teachers and students. Another statewide effort was the "Utopian visions of work and community" project. It brought together faculty from this campus and from Augustana, Kirkwood, Luther, Central and Morningside. They presented public programs all over Iowa on Utopian strivings in literature and life, from Plato's Republic to communitarian living in the Amana Colonies. Iowa's regional importance and cosmopolitan reach were underlined by NEH-funded summer teacher institutes in Russian language and culture.

Let me also mention Humanities Iowa, your state humanities council. They've done outstanding work in supporting chautauquas, library reading programs and humanities festivals all across the state. Humanities Iowa can be especially proud of its outreach to underserved rural communities.

You can hardly call work that reaches such broad audiences elitist. Yet since 1995, the NEH budget has been cut from \$177 to \$110 million. Even though 90 percent of our budget is sent straight back to taxpayers in the form of grants for humanities projects, our totals are only a pittance compared to public spending on culture in other industrialized nations. In Europe, for instance, robust cultural and education budgets are a mark of national pride, part of what defines a people as a nation. The NEH budget is one one-hundredth of one percent of our federal budget - or 41 cents per American. If you combine it with all direct public cultural spending, it comes out to about three dollars per capita. Contrast this with Germany's public cultural spending at \$39 per capita. Or France's at \$35. This is an embarrassment, and it is a dangerous position for the country which leads the world in military, medical and technological achievements to be in.

The truth is, we should be talking about more than doubling the widow's mite that is the current NEH budget. Compare our funding with that of the National Science Foundation, whose budget is \$3.6 billion annually - 32 times greater than ours. While NEH is only able to invest about \$5.6 million per year into supporting our elementary and secondary schools, the National Science Foundation spends \$167 million. That's a startling and troubling discrepancy.

Talk of wiping out our cultural preservation programs can only come from those who think we have no culture, and don't deserve one. If they

succeed, we will find ourselves in a Beckett-like absurdity, like "Krapp's Last Tape," sitting alone in an empty room talking to ourselves. "Nothing to say, not a squeak," says Krapp in his final soliloquy. "Never knew such silence."

They will have to find silence without me. I plan to make noise. Like Emile Zola, who said, "I'm here to live my life out loud," I'm here to preach the humanities out loud.

As you have demonstrated with your CD-ROM on African art, NEH is giving full support to the technology revolution. When we fund projects for CD ROMs, video disks, and the digitizing of huge document bases, we create intellectual multipliers which carry the humanities to a vastly increased audience. Teachers and professors from isolated communities who once had to travel hundreds of miles to the great libraries can now access primary research materials from the comfort of their own keyboards.

And the audience is not just the humanities scholar or the teacher but average citizens as well. Some of the great stories of our history are now often only a mouse click away from any American with access to the Internet. One example tells the story.

Some of you probably saw Steven Spielberg's movie, "Amistad," about a 19th-century slave mutiny that led to a sensational trial in the United States. You were no doubt deeply moved by Spielberg's movie-making. But you might also like to get a feel for the original atmosphere surrounding the case by looking at primary documents. A decade ago, you would have had to travel to libraries and archives all over the eastern United States. Now you can call up the Amistad web site maintained by the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. This web site contains hundreds of original documents, including letters written by the captured Africans from their jail cells and the diaries of John Quincy Adams. NEH supported this site long before Spielberg made his movie, and it is accessible to every movie-goer in America.

NEH-funded projects are part of our nation's cultural bloodstream. Yet our detractors argue that NEH-funded programs could easily be duplicated with private investment. The facts are the opposite: NEH money generates new investment into the humanities by stepping in where the private sector usually fears to tread.

NEH is the great catalyst for private and non-profit funding. There is perhaps no better example than the work of Ken Burns. Ken is the filmmaker who brought us his great public television series on the Civil War, Baseball and The West. Beginning with NEH grants, Ken used the imprimatur of NEH funding, to leverage other support. For the "Civil

War," he obtained a \$2 million grant from General Motors.

Think of NEH as an essential source of start-up capital for American intellectual life. NEH does for the humanities what the Small Business Administration does for American entrepreneurialism. We support the grassroots creative process through which we enrich and preserve our culture.

Less than a month before his death, John F. Kennedy said he looked forward to an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Within two years, that impulse was answered by the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts. For thirty years, the endowments have kept Kennedy's flame alive.

Now, at this crucial moment, we must reaffirm our priorities. As we chart our intellectual and cultural course into the next century, we must ensure, as Faulkner said, that "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded," we don't find ourselves staring silently into an empty room wondering where our heritage and culture went.

Thank you.

**National Collegiate Honors Council
Palmer House
Chicago, Illinois**

November 5, 1998

Videotaped remarks by William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

It is a great honor to speak to such an important part of our university community as the National Collegiate Honors Council. The work you do in cultivating and challenging the talents of our most ambitious students is crucial to our intellectual capital in America.

I am sorry I cannot be with you in Chicago, but I am committed to take part tonight in awarding the annual Humanities and Arts Medals at the White House here in Washington. This is one important way America recognizes those who make significant contributions to our nation's art and humanities worlds.

And that is what I want to talk with you about, for the National Endowment for the Humanities deals with our cultural soul, our intellectual vision of ourselves. The humanities define the context, and shape the culture that enriches us beyond our material wealth. The humanities give meaning to where we are in the great flow of human history.

Let's step back for a moment and ask ourselves, what are the humanities? We know they are the study of certain disciplines, the widening of knowledge and the deepening of understanding. But, as an everyday matter, from the point of view of our daily lives, what are they? That's not a hard question: the humanities are the intellectual air we breathe, the cultural sea we swim in. Robert Penn Warren once wrote: "A fish doesn't think much about water until he's out of it." So it is with the humanities. They surround and sustain us in our daily lives, but we are rarely aware of them. Yet they are spiritual matrix that makes our lives different from the worlds of machines or animals.

When we study history, learn languages, or read a book before going to bed, we are living the humanities. When you tape-record the memories of your grandparents to preserve their oral history, you are practicing the humanities.

We can approach the humanities through a simple question: How do we define ourselves? Are we, as Marx believed, essentially economic beings?

Can the quality of our lives be measured solely in material terms? Or are we beings whose condition in the world is determined by our military might?

By both those measures, Americans have the right to feel a sense of pride. We won the cold war. We have the mightiest economy on earth. We report medical miracles every few months. And we are on the cutting edge of the information age.

These historic achievements are significant, but do they add up to a rich and full life for each of us?

I do not think so. We have won wars on the military, economic, and medical fronts, but we are losing the struggle for our souls. I say souls because I want to raise a spiritual issue that has to do with the quality of our lives, with our Index of Leading Cultural Indicators -- with what William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize speech, called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

The cold war is only recently behind us. But let us not forget that its chief instrument of repression, along with guns, was intellectual. The press, books, television, radio, even the classroom were all in the iron grip of the communist party. The oppressors practiced what Milan Kundera, the great Czech writer, called "organized forgetting." When you kill memory, you kill national spirit, you kill democracy, and you kill the humanities.

It is no accident that great leaders nurtured their dreams of freedom through the humanities. Because of what he wrote playwright Vaclav Havel went to jail where he continued writing and eventually became President of the Czech Republic after the cold war ended. Russian physicist Andrei Sakharov turned his genius to humanitarian writing and embarrassed the Soviet government so much that they set him free. It was not guns that finally won the cold war: it was the human spirit, kept alive through the very things the dictators sought to oppress: words, books, poetry, ideas. The pen, finally, was mightier than the sword. And the pen is the essential tool of the humanities.

Two hundred years ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic."

When the U.S. Congress wrote the legislation that founded the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, it said: "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." Helping the nation achieve wisdom, vision and enlightenment is the everyday business of the endowments.

Today funding for the humanities endowment in America is down. Our efforts to preserve and enrich American culture and education have been attacked in recent years and our programs denounced as elitist.

This is an odd accusation when you consider what we do. With our help college students in Dearborn, Michigan, are gathering oral histories of automobile workers. We are helping National Public Radio broadcast stories on the impact of immigration on our society. And we are funding Cherokee Indian studies at Western Carolina University.

The people doing this grass-roots work would surely be surprised to hear themselves described as elitist.

We also support scholarship. That is the job of universities, and our job is to support them in this traditional work. The scholar working with primary documents is the beginning of the food chain of the humanities. But that scholar's work often reaches a much broader, less specialized audience. What starts off as esoteric research in an obscure library often enriches college courses, museum exhibits, books and - in some cases - popular films that reach hundreds of thousands of Americans.

A classic example is *A Midwife's Tale* by historian Laurel Ulrich. Her research began with the discovery in a Maine library of the diary of an 18th-century New England midwife. With support from NEH, Professor Ulrich wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book that gave us new insights into colonial American life. NEH then supported a documentary film made from the book that was shown on public television and reached more than 4.6 million viewers.

You can hardly call work that reaches such broad audiences elitist. Through our films, radio shows, summertime chautauquas, and books, we reach tens of millions of Americans every year. That's a pretty big elite.

The humanities are about preserving memory and storytelling. As a folklore scholar, I received NEH support years ago when I tape-recorded and published the recollections of a Mississippi mule trader named Ray Lum. Mr. Lum was an uneducated storyteller, born in the previous century. Through his stories he poignantly captured the history of his time and place. Talking about the great mule trains and Southern lifestyle in the early part of this century, Mr. Lum was an oral historian -- though he would never have called himself that. Without even a high school education, Mr. Lum would hardly have considered himself and his stories elitist. That is the kind of work that NEH supports.

Since 1995, the NEH budget has been cut from \$177 to \$110 million.

Even though 90 percent of our budget is sent straight back to taxpayers in the form of grants for humanities projects, our totals are only a pittance compared to public spending on culture in other industrialized nations. In Europe, for instance, robust cultural and education budgets are a mark of national pride, part of what defines a people as a nation. The NEH budget is one one-hundredth of one percent of our federal budget - or 41 cents per American. If you combine it with all direct public cultural spending, it comes out to about three dollars per capita. Contrast this with Germany's public cultural spending at \$39 per capita. Or France's at \$35.

Even when combined with the funding of the National Endowment for the Arts, our national cultural spending through both endowments doesn't equal that of the city of Berlin, Germany, which spends \$500 million per year.

It hardly seems excessive to suggest that we might spend 82 cents rather than 41 cents per person per year on our work.

The truth is, we should be talking about more than doubling the widow's mite that is the current NEH budget. Compare our funding with that of military projects or even with the National Science Foundation, whose budget is \$3.6 *billion* annually -- 32 times greater than ours. While NEH is only able to invest about \$5.6 million per year into supporting our elementary and secondary schools, the National Science Foundation spends \$167 million. That's a startling and troubling discrepancy.

It raises the question: where will we be in the 21st century if we have won our scientific, economic and military wars while losing our souls -- if we don't know where we've come from or where we're going, except to the nearest McDonalds or computer store? We can protect our borders, but if we have not protected our own culture, what is there to live for?

Talk of wiping out our cultural preservation programs can only come from those who think we have no culture, and don't deserve one. If they succeed, we will find ourselves in a Beckett-like absurdity, like "Krapp's Last Tape," sitting alone in an empty room talking to ourselves. "Nothing to say, not a squeak," says Krapp in his final soliloquy. "Never knew such silence."

They will have to find silence without me. I plan to make noise. Like Emile Zola, who said, "I'm here to live my life out loud," I'm here to preach the humanities out loud.

Snuffing out America's cultural endowments would be like taking away the Regenstein Library and expecting the University of Chicago to function as a great university. We cannot function as a great nation

without a strong national commitment to the arts and humanities.

Each year NEH funds hundreds of projects including major books, the creation of new Web sites, and the development of computer programs for schools around the nation. Last year Americans submitted 3,514 applications for NEH support. We funded 682 of them. Scores of worthwhile projects went unfunded, or under-funded, because of budget cuts.

A wonderful example of an innovative program that broke new ground is the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. This project set a new standard in the area of teacher training and intellectual exchange. Started 20 years ago, it bridged the gap that existed between the rarified precincts of Yale and the glaring needs of the inner city schools of New Haven.

Columbia University philosopher Charles Frankel, once said that nothing more important had happened to humanities scholars than NEH's invitation "to think in a more public fashion" and "to teach with...their fellow citizens in mind."

This joining of academic resources with immediate human need is an example of our intellectual capital doing what it is supposed to do -- enhance our national social capital by lifting the lives of our most endangered children. It has a direct pay-off in the lives of at-risk young people who will be either the next generation of college students -- or the next generation of drop-outs, depending on the imagination and resources we devote to them.

As if all this praise were not enough, let me add the crowning touch: The Yale-New Haven program is also a financial success. After 16 years of NEH funding - over \$2.2 million -- the Institute raised its own endowment. It no longer needs federal dollars. In fact, it is giving money away under a grant from a major foundation, so that the Yale-New Haven model can be implemented in other cities.

I can think of no better expenditure of my tax dollars, and yours, than this.

NEH is also at the forefront of the technology revolution. In fact, we see technology as the greatest boon to the humanities since the invention of movable type. Our funding supports the creation of CD ROMs and video disks, and the digitizing of huge document bases. All these are intellectual multipliers which carry the humanities to a vastly increased user-base and audience. Teachers and professors from isolated communities who once had to travel hundreds of miles to the great libraries can now access primary research materials from the comfort of their own keyboards.

And the audience is not just the humanities scholar or the teacher but average citizens as well. Some of the great stories of our history are now often only a mouse click away from any American with access to the Internet. One example tells the story.

Many of you saw Steven Spielberg's movie, "Amistad," about a 19th-century slave mutiny that led to a sensational trial in the United States. You were no doubt deeply moved by Spielberg's movie-making. But you might also like to know more, and get a feel for the original atmosphere surrounding the case by looking at primary documents. A decade ago, you would have had to travel to libraries and archives to learn about the incident. Now you call up the Amistad web site maintained by the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. This web site contains hundreds of original documents, including newspaper reports, letters written by the captured Africans from their jail cells and the diaries of John Quincy Adams. NEH supported this site long before Spielberg made his movie, and it is accessible to every movie-goer in America.

Projects like the Amistad site are just as much humanities undertakings as the preservation and annotation of Benjamin Franklin's original papers at Yale University. A humanities web site is the preservation of memory in digital bytes, an electronic connection to our sometimes turbulent past.

This work brings us closer to bringing the humanities within arm's reach of every American - no more than a keyboard or a library away.

NEH-funded projects are across the landscape. They are part of our nation's cultural bloodstream. The work of deepening knowledge, of preserving memory, of creating new works of scholarship goes on in thousands of intellectual seedbeds around the country every day, with NEH funds as the starting point.

A farmer knows that a 100-pound bag of seed will yield a ton of crop. In just the same way, \$100,000 of NEH support invested in an exhibit, a book, or a film will yield millions in matching funds and cultural tourism dollars, not to mention the immeasurable benefit to the quality of our lives.

Opponents argue that these programs could easily be duplicated with private investment. The facts are the opposite: NEH money *generates* new investment into the humanities by stepping in where the private sector usually fears to tread.

NEH is the great catalyst for private and non-profit funding. There is perhaps no better example than the work of Ken Burns. Ken is the filmmaker who brought us his great public television series on the Civil

War, Baseball and The West. Beginning with NEH grants, Ken used the imprimatur of NEH funding, to leverage other support. For the "Civil War," he obtained a \$2 million grant from General Motors.

This fall, we were treated to a wonderfully rich line-up of NEH-funded films on public television. There were documentaries on the U.S.-Mexican war of 1846 and the struggle against the polio epidemic in the early part of the century. There was a biographical film on the life of Margaret Sanger. And just last week, many of you watched the epic, four-part series on the history of "Africans in America" from the arrival of the first slave ships up to the start of the Civil War.

Each of these groundbreaking films are based on meticulous research. They took years to make, and they were also expensive. Yet NEH played a major role in bringing them to the public, where they deepened and enriched our understanding of our history, in dark ways as well as bright ones. [But all these films all had been funded by NEH before the Draconian budget cutbacks of the mid-Nineties. In today's parsimonious atmosphere, they wouldn't have been funded, or only partially funded. We would certainly be unable to fund "Africans in America" today, and a great and important exploration of our early history on film might simply not have gotten done. This is the tragedy of a mindset which believes culture is a luxury and that our endowments should be reduced to a financial trickle.]

The humanities endowment is an essential source of start-up capital for American intellectual life, doing for the humanities what the small business administration does for American entrepreneurialism. We are the small business administration of the thinking world. We support the grassroots creative process through which we enrich and preserve our culture.

A Ken Burns work, an Amistad web site, a blues music seminar for teachers -- each offers a new lens through which we view ourselves and our culture. The crowds pouring into the National Gallery of Art in Washington this fall to visit the Van Gogh exhibit look through the artist's lens - how he saw the wheat field or the twilight differently from anyone before him. It's the same wheat field, the same twilight. It's just the lens that is different. So it is with the work of the humanities.

Less than a month before his death, John F. Kennedy said he looked forward to an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Within two years, that impulse was answered by the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts. For 30 years, the endowments have kept Kennedy's flame alive.

Now, at this crucial moment, we must reaffirm our priorities. As we chart our intellectual and cultural course into the next century, we must ensure, as Faulkner said, that "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded," we don't find ourselves staring silently into an empty room wondering where our heritage and culture went.

Thank you.

Penn State, Harrisburg
November 9, 1998

Rediscovering America Through the Humanities and Regional Culture

by William Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I'm honored to be here with you at Penn State Harrisburg, specifically the Eastgate Center—this is a special place in a special city. This locale speaks volumes about your commitment to the city. My congratulations to all of you on the great work you're doing here in Harrisburg. Distinguished guests from the arts, academic, and humanities communities, thank you all for coming.

Simon, congratulations to you. You've done an incredible amount of work at the Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies. I know it has been a labor of love, and we are all enriched by your efforts on behalf of the state of Pennsylvania and the country. Thank you also for all the good counsel you've provided NEH over the years. And if I can embarrass you for a minute, I want to praise your book, *Following Tradition: Folklore in the Discourse of American Culture*. It is a very impressive, thought-provoking work. I hope I can be half as thought-provoking today.

In 1965, Congress established the National Endowment for the Humanities, saying, "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." That is a towering task. Wisdom--vision--democracy. At the Endowment, we take our charge very seriously. I'm here today to discuss how best to do that—how best to foster wisdom and vision in our citizens.

Clearly, you the leaders and citizens of Harrisburg are already thinking how best to do that in this region. With *Envision Capital Region*, you're hard at work "focusing on the future." You already have a vision statement, a list of core values and priority issues, and benchmarks to measure progress. This is a challenging and exciting time in Harrisburg. Congratulations on your determination and foresight, and congratulations to David Schankweiler and Barbara Groce for their leadership. I'm sure you'll get many more than 300 organizations to sign on.

At your January 1998 "Stakeholders Summit" I understand you created a top 10 priority issues list. The top four were: education; economic

growth/development; quality of life; and regional cooperation. In your strategies to achieve your priorities you included the arts and cultural opportunities under education and quality of life. I know I'm preaching to the choir, but as you get ready for your meeting later this month, I want to emphasize two points. One, the humanities are good for business. Two, the humanities are essential to democracy. The humanities can help you achieve your priorities.

How are the humanities good for business? Tourism, specifically cultural tourism that gives the traveler the chance to experience the history, culture, and people that give a place like Harrisburg its distinctive character. Cultural tourists want authenticity and quality. That's where the humanities come in. The humanities are good for cultural tourism and cultural tourism is good for business.

Nationwide, tourism is big business, second only to health care in terms of our economic future. In 1996, expenditures from domestic and international travel in the U.S. hit \$473 billion; \$489 billion in 1977, and in 1998, travel spending should pass the \$500 billion mark.

In the last four years, the Endowment served as a cosponsor of "Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce," the 1995 conference held in conjunction with the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism. Last year NEH was part of a 12-member coalition which convened cultural tourism forums across the country. The forums brought together more than 1,000 leaders from the tourism industry and the cultural community to launch collaborative relationships.

In addition, the Endowment is helping regions across the country to develop cultural tourism areas.

The Blackstone River Valley in southern New England spent more than two decades transforming its economy and identity. Last year, the Museum of Work and Culture opened in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, at the restored Lincoln Textile Building. NEH teamed with the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Woonsocket Industrial Development Corporation, and the City of Woonsocket to make it happen. The Museum, the Woonsocket Visitor Center, and many sites along the river tell the story of how the Industrial Revolution changed an area and a way of life.

In New York City, at 97 Orchard Street, a six-story brick tenement built in 1863 houses the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. It teaches the public about the lives of urban, working-class immigrants. This tenement housed an estimated 10,000 people from more than twenty nations between 1863 and 1935.

The Age of Rubens, a major NEH-supported exhibition at the Toledo

Museum of Art in Ohio, drew the largest attendance of any exhibition in the museum's 93-year history—226,000--over three months. These visitors pumped almost \$23 million into the local economy.

This diverse region—her land, her labor, her people--offers similar opportunities. Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have much to offer—but so does this central Pennsylvania region. This is an important, exciting place.

I am a long way from my native "place," Mississippi. I grew up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. My hometown of Vicksburg is a community on the Mississippi River where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek, and many other ethnic families have lived for more than a century. That experience shaped me in countless ways, much as Pennsylvania has shaped you and your families.

I have believed for a long time 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," as she wrote:

It is by knowing where you stand that you grow able to judge where you are. Place absorbs our earliest notice and attention, it bestows upon us our original awareness; and our critical powers spring up from the study of it and the growth experiences inside it.... One place comprehended can make us understand other places better. Sense of place gives us equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction too.

"One place comprehended can make us understand other places better." That is what regionalism is all about, the effort to understand one place fully. But how do we understand, how do we connect to place and to each other? Through education and memory.

Unfortunately, I fear we are in danger of losing our memory as a culture. Pulitzer prize-winning historian James McPherson 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, how we got that way, and why."

What we're doing at the National Endowment for the Humanities, what you're doing at Penn State Harrisburg, at the Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies, at the Women's Enrichment Center, is preserving and creating "sources for understanding." That's why your work is so vitally important.

As we approach the millennium, we can look back with satisfaction and ahead with hope. We have the strongest military in the world, the healthiest economy in the world, the most advanced scientific community. In many respects, we stand atop the heap. But what does that mean? What does it benefit us as a society if we've struggled to the top but lost our soul in the process? What if we, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, have the experience but miss the meaning?

We know that science has triumphed in many areas—on earth and in outer space. On Friday, scientists announced they had isolated human embryonic stem cells. These cells can grow into muscle, bone, brain, every type of human tissue. Here on earth, such discoveries are raising fundamental questions of life and death. In outer space, brave explorers such as John Glenn, who just landed, are testing the limits of the human body.

But science can only go so far. As Henry David Thoreau asked, "With all your science, can you tell how it is, and where it is, that light comes into the soul?"

At the Endowment we are trying to help enlighten the soul of society. We're trying to help foster wisdom and vision in our citizens—in order to preserve democracy. As you know, it is not an easy task. We start with connections—at the local level.

But how do we connect? It's a crucial question: for adolescents trying to discover their identities, for artists trying to communicate, for families trying to stay together, for immigrants coming to a new land, for all of us in our daily struggles. One way is to connect through stories. They help point the way. Stories that tell of joy, fear, growth, pain, courage—and humor.

GEN. BEAUREGARD STORY /MOOSE HUNTER STORY

Those stories are amusing because they play on stereotypes from Pennsylvania and Mississippi. To shatter such stereotypes, you have to get to know each other. Just like there's more to Pennsylvania than coal and steel, there's more to Mississippi than moonlight and magnolias. The Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies is a vital source to learn about this region. And the Endowment is active in Pennsylvania, trying to disseminate other stories.

With the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, the Endowment is working hard here.

Joe Kelly and his staff at the Pennsylvania Humanities Council deserve a lot of credit for their efforts to reach out to every community throughout

the state with their many fine programs. The NEH—Pennsylvania State Council partnership is working well in Pennsylvania, and I look forward to expanding our relationship.

In the last five years, institutions and individuals in Pennsylvania have received more than \$27 million from the Endowment and the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. The funded projects help to preserve the nation's cultural heritage, foster lifelong learning, and encourage civic involvement. For example....

With grants of \$1.2 million, the State Library of Pennsylvania, right here in Harrisburg, has cataloged 7,921 historic newspaper titles from the state's early history. Already, 3.1 million pages have been microfilmed as part of a nationwide preservation effort. In Central Pennsylvania, a virtually complete run of the *Snowshoe Times*, a paper published in the little town of Snowshoe in the early 1900s, was recovered from boxes and trunks in an elderly resident's house.

"Raising Our Sites: Women's History in Pennsylvania" created a network for integrating women's history into the educational programs of historic sites and museums. It is now serving as a national model.

Storyline, a radio discussion sponsored by the Pennsylvania council on contemporary fiction, has reached more than 200,000 listeners.

And I know that Simon is working hard at the Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies. The exhibits, conferences, courses, performances, collections, archives, publications...the list goes on and on. But it is incredibly worthwhile work. There's an expression, when an elder dies a library burns to the ground. Simon is preserving many great "libraries." In so doing, he is improving the quality of life in the region.

And so is Dr. Irene C. Baird here at the Women's Enrichment Center. In 1994, with help from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and Cowles Media Enthusiast, the Center started a reading and creative writing project for female offenders at the Dauphin County Jail. They read the works of Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Sandra Cisneros. They write about what they're going through.

Let me read from parts of one poem, "Things I Could Never Tell My Mother!" by Anie Rodriquez.

I sometimes hate you for never knowing who my father really was

I know that you always blamed me for being one of your mistakes

I was embarrassed when you would get drunk and would act the way you did

I know you always favored my sister over me and I hate her for it....

I was always ashamed of how are family is!

I know you favored your first grandchild over mine, and I have always hated you for it....

I love you in spite of all these things and don't understand why....

I always wondered what your childhood was like

I want you to be my mom one day.

In spite of all her difficulties within her family, this woman still wants to connect with her mother. This program helped her realize and express her feelings. Anie is now in a halfway house, reunited with her family, working on her skills and looking for a job.

Dr. Baird's reading and writing program is so successful she now has a waiting list of people who want to take part. She has also expanded the program in the last three weeks, meeting with a group of men who are in jail on sex abuse and domestic violence charges. In a brilliant stroke of justice, she is reading to the men the writings of women who have been victims of sex abuse and domestic violence. This is a very successful program that is clearly changing the lives of the participants. Hats off to Dr. Baird and to Joe Kelly for his support.

I hope our new NEH project will be just as successful. NEH has launched a new initiative, *My History is America's History*, so all citizens can explore their past. It encourages all Americans to learn more about their family's history--and then relate their history to the broader sweep of American and world history. It will make them better citizens, and that too improves the quality of life.

I have a new idea for NEH; one I hope you will support. I want to create a regional humanities center for rediscovering America in every region of the country. The centers will support research, preservation, education, and public programs. The centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region, and they will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope. The centers will use the latest technology and the oldest records.

These centers will coordinate their work with that of other cultural and educational institutions in the area. I know this regional center project is ambitious, but I have seen how this can work. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which began 21 years ago, has been successful beyond my wildest dreams. It has been a boon to tourism, preservation, and education in the region. The center sponsored and I was proud to edit *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

When the new regional centers are in place, students of all ages will be better able to access the riches of other regions and communities—including central Pennsylvania.

New projects call for new money. The Endowment will find more money, if not public, then from the private sector. The Endowment will draw up a list of "Most Endangered Humanities Projects." With that we can say to CEOs, "this nation is going to lose presidential papers, a new website on American history, or a collection of 18th century newspapers, if you don't help." We can say, "we need help with these new regional centers." And we can say to the general public, "can you afford \$20 to preserve a national treasure?" I think the public is ready to help.

Please visit our website at www.neh.gov and find out more about the Endowment. From there, you can link up to EdSITEment. This new website identifies the best educational websites in English, history, and other humanities subjects. It provides a single, accessible site for parents, teachers, students, and citizens across the country.

The truth is that NEH, the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, Penn State Harrisburg, the Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies, the Women's Enrichment Center, are part of the national cultural bloodstream. You are critically involved in the work of deepening knowledge, broadening our historical base, preserving memory, and creating new works of scholarship and history. In short, you're improving the quality of life, and more importantly, preserving democracy. Without you, we have no new knowledge, no greater understanding of who we are as Americans. With you, I envision a bright future for this region and the country.

Please keep up your essential work. Thank you.

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**Shape of the Humanities Symposium
Stanford University
Palo Alto, Calif.
November 13, 1998**

The Public Humanities in a Silicon Age

by William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction. It is wonderful to be back at Stanford and see so many friends and colleagues again.

I also want to recognize James Quay. Jim is head of the California Humanities Council, and does an outstanding job of bringing the humanities to the people of this state. Through chautauquas, traveling exhibits, and an anthology on the Gold Rush, the council is deeply involved in California's Sesquicentennial commemoration. The Council co-funded with NEH the wonderful Gold Rush exhibit created by the Oakland Museum. This great piece of California history has now moved to the Gene Autry Museum in Los Angeles and next year, it will go to Sacramento. Another traveling version has gone to Eureka, Lompoc, St. Helena and Santa Rosa.

I am especially glad to see Bliss Carnochan again. Bliss was head of the Stanford Humanities Center when I was a fellow here in 1990. Your program is without parallel in the United States. The fact that you bring such a wide variety of scholars into your fold, and create an atmosphere of collegial discourse across disciplines, is a rare accomplishment. Thanks to your fellowship program, I was able to take a year's leave from the University of Mississippi so I could come out to California and finish an oral history of a Mississippi mule trader. The fact that scholars working on Shakespeare, mule traders, and labor history could be in the same fellowship program, sharing ideas over lunch at Mariposa House is a great tribute to the Stanford way.

Like my grandfather before me, I was raised in the South on cornbread and recollections, and I can't resist the chance to tell a story. While we were living here, my daughter, Virginia, who was five years old at the time and was constantly drawing, was asked by the fellows to sketch Mariposa House. Sometimes children capture our worlds in a way that just delights. The Humanities Center reproduced Virginia's drawing on a tee shirt that year, and it is still used on their note cards.

The Stanford Humanities Center is a source of great pride to those of us

at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Over the past two years, the Center has received a major NEH challenge grant of \$625,000 to help establish its permanent endowment. A challenge grant offers seed money that grows more money. The Center has to raise matching funds of four times the amount of our grant. Keith tells me we are getting down to the wire and I hope everyone here will be writing him a check before I leave town.

I also want to congratulate the Stanford School of the Humanities on its 50th anniversary. The work of this remarkable school during the past half-century has had great international impact and, quite literally, has changed the world. Your dedication to the promotion of the humanities is one of the crown jewels of American intellectual life. It is a real privilege to be part of this celebration.

You have chosen a challenging, very appropriate topic for your commemoration of this anniversary. We all should be asking ourselves, as we near the end of the century, what is the state of the humanities today?

My short answer is simple: We are half way home and still have a long way to go. Let me explain.

First, I am not at all dismayed by the upheaval we sometimes call the "culture wars." If we were not, at this fascinating moment of history, debating the canon and the purpose and methods of the academy, we would be derelict in our intellectual duty.

It is incumbent on every generation to hold its received wisdom up to a bright light and examine all its facets. Every generation reinterprets Shakespeare to suit its time and place.

Those who speak of the treason of the intellectuals, who denounce any departure from the traditional practices of the academy, should consider that it is our duty to break the old rules, to open the windows of inquiry. After all, that is what Socrates, Copernicus, and St. Thomas Aquinas did. Every generation has intellectuals who commit artistic and intellectual treason. James Joyce and William Faulkner did not become part of the literary canon by leaving things as they were.

I do not suggest that in our search for new ways to see and understand our past we should neglect the basics. The texts must still be taught. Students must wrestle with the original works. And the importance of teaching cannot be overemphasized -- the backbone of a great university is great teaching, as you at Stanford know so well from the brilliant teaching of St. Clair Drake and his daughter Sandra Drake, Clay Carson, Albert Guerrard (father and son), Thomas Moser, George

Fredrickson, and Sharon Holland.

As humanists, we must preserve the basic intellectual canon of our culture while looking for new ways to examine and interpret it. At the same time, we must be open to new definitions of what our culture is. Historically the Greco-Roman-Judaeo-Christian canon did not include black literature, women's literature, American-Hispanic literature. Now these traditions have found a voice in our classrooms.

It is a Jeffersonian belief that the academy should debate the humanities anew in every generation. Public discourse and debate is one of the measures of a healthy, open society, and that is what America stands for.

Today the humanities face an important challenge: how to survive, and how to enrich our nation's life during a period of rapid change and exponentially expanding knowledge. The velocity of our changing world makes the humanities more important than ever, for humanities are the intellectual backbone of our nation, the bedrock of our values. As the silicon chip carries us farther and farther into a virtual world, the power and scope of the humanities - telling us who we are and where we are going - becomes a touchstone of our reality.

The faster we travel into our future, the more firmly we need to be intellectually and culturally rooted in our past. Mexican-American historian Ramon Eduardo Ruiz was chosen by NEH to receive the National Humanities Medal last week from President Clinton. Professor Ruiz reminded us, "History is the surest way of knowing who a people are....without your history, you do not know who you are."

That sentiment was echoed by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who also received a National Humanities Medal last week. Professor Schlesinger spoke eloquently about the significance of the humanities in an age when the computer revolution is reprogramming "not only the external character of our lives but our minds" as well. At this remarkable moment in history, when Henry Adams' law of acceleration has reached hyperspeed, the significance of the humane tradition is more important than ever, says Schlesinger. He adds that the great point of the humanities is still what it always was: self-knowledge. And self-knowledge is even more imperative in an age of transition. If the greatest master of self-knowledge is still Shakespeare, how do we combine the tools of technology with the great truths of the canon? That is exactly what we are trying to do at NEH .

But what of the public humanities? We must ask ourselves: what is the role of the academy in sharing the humanities with a wider public? How do we touch an ever more diverse populace - what Henry Louis Gates

calls "the multiplicity of human life in culture" - a public that is saturated with mass culture and information overload?

The public humanities are the humanities that filter through to the average American, to what Congressman Ralph Regula of Ohio, one of our great supporters on Capitol Hill, calls Joe Lunchbucket. That's where the National Endowment for the Humanities plays a special role. Jefferson told us -- and his words ring truer than ever -- that "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic." Contributing to the enlightenment of the citizenry is the job of the academy and is a special trust of the Endowment. When Congress wrote the founding legislation for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, it said: "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." Helping Americans acquire wisdom, vision, and enlightenment is the Endowment's everyday job and, I believe, it is yours, too.

The future of the humanities is the public humanities. Our survival as humanities professionals rests on how successfully we can step outside our intellectual towers and reach the widest possible public. If the public feels disconnected from the work that we do, they might well ask: why should we support you with our tax dollars? It is our job to effectively answer that question. It is our job to make Huckleberry Finn and King Lear relevant to street kids in South Central Los Angeles. It is our job to help Americans find their place in the great stream of our history by teaching them how to gather their own stories through oral history and genealogical projects.

In Dearborn, Michigan, for instance, NEH is funding a project that teaches students at Henry Ford Community College to research the history of their town by recording the oral histories of the city's auto industry workers. "Oral history has brought a humanities tool into the technical education field," says Professor Rick Bailey, the project director. "For our students, it's an electrifying experience to sit with seasoned automotive professionals and hear them tell their stories. Our NEH grant is fundamentally changing the way we educate people."

Reaching the widest possible public has never been easier, thanks to technology that was largely invented within 50 miles of this building. We stand at a historic crossroads where science can help address our need to deepen our humanitarian tradition. The very force that threatens to overshadow the humanities can be harnessed to promote them.

Put simply, the information revolution now enables us to put the humanities at the fingertips of an ever-larger audience, with ever deeper access to into primary resources. Our window on this brave new world is the Internet. NEH supports projects throughout the nation that are

digitizing historical documents and putting them on Web sites. Let's consider the Amistad incident, the slave mutiny that was so dramatically portrayed in Steven Spielberg's movie, "Amistad." With NEH support, Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut, has created a Web site that allows scholars and average citizens alike to read hundreds of documents that were once scattered in libraries across the eastern United States. The site includes letters from slaves imprisoned after the mutiny, court documents, and the diaries of John Quincy Adams.

NEH actively supports projects that use the latest technology to preserve and share the oldest treasures of our historical legacy. One outstanding example is the online encyclopedia of philosophy that John Perry and Edward Zalta, of the Center for the Study of Language and Information here at Stanford, are creating with an NEH grant. This groundbreaking project is generating a dynamic reference work that allows its authors to update their encyclopedia entries at will. Think of it: Scholars throughout the world can address the battle of obsolescence.

NEH is supporting other high tech projects that are doing pioneering work in preserving the humanities. Our "Text Encoding Initiative," for example, will help scholars format humanities texts for multiple digital uses. We are also partnering with the National Science Foundation to create standards that provide uniform access to historical and cultural resources, that allow searches across humanities collections in different formats held by many different institutions.

If you want to know more about the problems associated with digital preservation, you should look at a documentary film we funded called "Into the Future: Addressing Our Digital Memory Crisis." NEH not only saves endangered books and newspapers and the personal papers of Benjamin Franklin. We also preserve data from the early digital age. Did you know, for instance, that NASA -- the people who sent John Glenn around the world more than 100 times last week -- stored all its early data on old magnetic tapes, and that 10 to 20 percent of them now contain significant errors because magnetic tape is so poorly suited as an archival medium.

The work of the humanities reaches deep into the past, but it deals with our present and future, too.

Indeed, I am reminded of Faulkner's comment in *Absalom, Absalom* that the dream of every artist is to etch his "mark on the face of oblivion." At the NEH, we are etching our mark on oblivion with laser beams and microprocessors.

While keeping ourselves on the cutting edge of technology, however, the humanities must constantly address another crucial issue: public

outreach. This is one of the most important goals at NEH. The humanities are belong to everybody. E. L. Doctorow, after receiving his National Humanities Medal last week in Washington - you see, I can't resist quoting our own NEH heroes - said, "I don't really know how to distinguish the humanities from life."

To show how life and the humanities are interwoven, through history, through literature, through the preservation of memory is our job as humanities scholars. We must find ways to bridge the gaping divide between the priesthood and the populace.

Where does all this leave us? If we agree that the humanities are more important than ever in a changing world; if we understand the need for broad public outreach and an expansion of the public humanities through technology - then what is the problem?

The big problem is money, a problem with which you are all familiar. We are especially familiar with it at the NEH because of recent attempts to destroy the agency. In fact our budget is down forty percent, from \$177 million to \$110 million. This was a terrible blow to our nation. It would be difficult for NEH to sustain its support of great film series like those of Ken Burns on the Civil War, Baseball, and the West or that of "Africans in America" series which ran on public television last month. In 1995, before the budget cuts, NEH-supported 71 hours of public television documentaries. Next year we will have only 33 hours worth of films on PBS. That's a 54 percent cut.

This is a sad commentary on our national priorities. Where will we be in the 21st century if we do not know where we've come from or where we're going, except to the nearest McDonalds or computer store? We can protect our borders, but if we haven't protected our own culture, what is there to live for? Where is the peace dividend if we win the Cold War but lose the battle for our souls?

Chesterton said that "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another." And, indeed, I believe it is our soul that we need to be concerned about. As we enter the 21st century, America is riding a wave of success. We have the mightiest economy on earth. We are on the cutting edge of the medical and information revolutions. And yet, because we have beggared our culture, we may lose the battle for what Faulkner called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

We have only to look to our neighbors in other industrialized nations to understand how far we lag behind. The NEH budget amounts to 42 cents per American per year. If all direct public spending for culture is lumped

together, America comes out to three dollars per capita per year. Compare that with Germany's \$39 per capita in direct public spending, and France's \$35.

The time has come to speak up for not only restoring our cultural budgets to their 1995 levels, but for dramatically increasing them. For these budgets are the tangible index of America's commitment to her culture. Talk of wiping out our cultural programs can only come from those who think we have no culture, and that we don't deserve one. If they succeed, we will find ourselves in a Beckett-like absurdity, like "Krapp's Last Tape," sitting alone in an empty room talking to ourselves. "Nothing to say, not a squeak," says Krapp in his final soliloquy. "Never knew such silence."

They will have to find silence without me. I plan to make noise. Like Emile Zola, who said, "I'm here to live my life out loud," I'm here to preach the humanities out loud.

Besides public funding, NEH is also turning to the private sector for partnerships. Like the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, NEH is well suited for partnerships with private industry and foundations. For example, the MCI Corporation partnered with NEH, the Council of the Great City Schools, and the National Trust for the Humanities in creating EDSITEment, and educator's website with links to 50 top humanities sites. Instead of slogging through 65,000 humanities-related sites, teachers can now go directly to EDSITEment for one-stop shopping. They find the best resources on virtually any humanities subject, along with curriculum guides. We've received wonderful feedback from the teachers. "I have struck a gold mine," wrote Joyce Taaffe of Marietta, Georgia. "And I will definitely recommend you to my colleagues at Wheeler High School."

We are the beneficiary of other partnerships, too. The Sara Lee corporation has pledged \$385,000 to underwrite the Jefferson Lectures at the Kennedy Center in Washington for the next five years. And television producer Norman Lear and his wife Lyn made a stunning gift of \$1 million to support our ongoing projects to preserve presidential papers.

But, quite frankly, we need more -- much more. And we have high hopes that some key funding partnerships will come from the world of high technology, from right here in the former apricot orchards where Steve Jobs grew up, that place you now call Silicon Valley.

Let me give you some examples where I think forward-looking technology firms could play a key role, both with their money but

especially with their expertise.

We've begun an initiative called "Schools for a New Millennium." It is designed to jump start the process by which U.S. schools and their teachers become competent and comfortable with newly digitized humanities materials and technologies. By the year 2000, U.S. schools will be well on their way to being wired to the Internet. But the infrastructure is in danger of getting way ahead of the learning curve of our teachers. That is why we need focused training in model settings-- such as our Schools for the New Millennium. We've costed this project out at \$4 million dollars, and are in need of a funding partner.

An even bigger initiative is "Preserving Access to America's History and Culture in the 21st Century." This is a mammoth undertaking that addresses the need for every American to have online access to our digitized cultural legacy. Through the multiplier effect of NEH grant-making, this project will affect every museum, library, archive, and historical organization in the country. We've estimated its budget at \$10 million, and would welcome partners from the private sector or foundation world.

As we approach the new century, our guiding theme at NEH is "Rediscovering America." This umbrella term focuses on preserving and capturing American stories and American traditions before they are no longer available. We have five key program areas under this theme: international programs; science, technology, and the humanities; teaching; regional initiatives; and extending the reach to a wider public.

Each of these areas lends itself ideally to partnering with private philanthropy and foundations. We plan to create a "Fifty-Fifty Club" made up of 50 major donor organizations - one from every state who has given to state humanities council in their states and fifty who have given to NEH. Each year, these donors will travel to Washington for a two-day visit to the Endowment, including an evening at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to hear our annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities. This is one way to demonstrate the importance of the humanities to corporate America as we increasingly bring private donors into the world of the humanities.

It is clear that our work is more relevant than ever, and that the technological revolution can make the humanities the primary force of our national character in an age of explosive change.

It is important to show those who have little contact with the humanities how they affect both our lives and the destiny of our nation. Less than a month before he died, President John F. Kennedy said he looked forward

to an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Within two years, that impulse was answered by the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts. For 30 years, the endowments have kept Kennedy's flame alive.

Now, at this crucial moment, we must reaffirm our priorities. As we chart our intellectual and cultural course into the next century, we must ensure, as Faulkner said, that "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded," we don't find ourselves staring silently into an empty room wondering where our heritage and culture went.

So I have come here to ask you to remember how earlier in this century the captains of industry--Mellon, Rockefeller, and Carnegie who made their fortunes through coal, oil, and steel--left a legacy for our nation of art, libraries, and foundations that support the nation's rich legacy of arts and humanities.

I am here to call on the captains of technology to make a similar commitment to their nation. And what better place to issue that call than this great university whose distinguished faculty, students, and programs symbolize the best and the brightest of our future.

Like Dr. King, we have been to the mountain and have looked over into the valley. We have seen the dream of green pastures, of clear rivers, of flowing fountains of learning. It is a dream that awaits us, and this rich valley that has given us a bountiful harvest of both apricots and technology can and will decide whether we will continue to dream or whether we will realize the reality of generous support for our nation's arts and humanities.

Thank you.

Federation of State Humanities Councils
Annual Meeting
Washington, D.C.
November 21, 1998

Remarks by William Ferris, chairman
National Endowment for Humanities

We all should be asking ourselves, as we near the end of the century, what is the state of the humanities today?

My short answer is simple: We are half way home and still have a long way to go.

I am not at all concerned by the upheaval we sometimes call the culture wars. If we were not, at this moment of history, debating the canon and the purpose and methods of the academy, we would be derelict in our intellectual duty.

It is incumbent on every generation to hold its received wisdom up to a bright light and examine all its facets. Every generation reinterprets Shakespeare to suit its time and place, finding the universals that have survived for 400 hundred years and applying them to current circumstances.

Those who speak of the treason of intellectuals, who denounce any departure from the old practices of the academy, should consider that it is our duty to break the old rules and open the windows of inquiry. That is what Socrates and Copernicus and St. Thomas Aquinas did. Every generation has intellectuals who commit treason. James Joyce and William Faulkner did not become part of the literary canon by leaving things as they were.

I do not suggest that in our search for new ways to see and understand our past we should neglect the basics. The texts must still be taught. Students must wrestle with the original works before they can understand new departures. And the importance of teaching cannot be overemphasized.

As humanists, it is our job to preserve the basic achievements of our culture while looking for new ways to examine and interpret them. At the same time, we must be open to new definitions of what our culture is. What was historically the Greco-Roman-Judaeo-Christian legacy did not include black literature, women's literature, American-Hispanic

literature. Now these traditions have found their place in our canon. We must learn to walk in the shoes of others, enter the worlds of Chief Joseph, of Martin Luther King, to create a national chautauqua under the big tent of the humanities, as we "rediscover America."

It is a Jeffersonian ideal to have an academy of ideas that debates the humanities anew in every generation. Public discourse and debate is one of the measures of a healthy, open society, and that is what America stands for.

Today the humanities face an important challenge: how to survive, and how to enrich our nation's life during a period of rapid change and expanding knowledge. The velocity of our changing world makes the humanities more important than ever. Humanities are the intellectual backbone of our nation, the bedrock of our values. As the silicon chip carries us farther and farther into a virtual world, the power and scope of the humanities - telling us who we are and where we are going - become a touchstone of our reality.

The faster we travel into our future, the more firmly we need to be rooted, intellectually and culturally, in our past. Ramon Eduardo Ruiz is a Mexican-American historian who was chosen by NEH to receive the National Humanities Medal last week from President Clinton. Professor Ruiz told us, "History is the surest way of knowing who a people are....without your history, you do not know who you are."

That sentiment was echoed by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., also one of our National Humanities Medal winners last week. Professor Schlesinger spoke eloquently about the increased significance of the humanities in an age when the computer revolution is reprogramming "not only the external character of our lives but our minds" as well. At this remarkable moment in history, when Henry Adams' law of acceleration has reached hyperspeed, the significance of the humane tradition is more important than ever, says Schlesinger. He adds that the great point of the humanities is still what it always was: self-knowledge. And self-knowledge is even more imperative in an age of transition. If the greatest master of self-knowledge is still Shakespeare, the central question, then, is how to combine the tools of technology with the great truths of his canon, and that is exactly what we are trying to do at NEH.

But what of the public humanities? We must ask ourselves: what is the role of the academy in promoting the humanitarian tradition in a way that is accessible to a wider public, and, indeed, reaches out to that public? How do we touch an ever more diverse populace - what Henry Louis Gates calls "the multiplicity of human life in culture" - a public that is saturated with mass culture and information overload?

The public humanities are the humanities that filter through to the average American, to what Congressman Ralph Regula of Ohio, one of our strongest supporters on Capitol Hill, calls Joe Lunchbucket. That's where the National Endowment for the Humanities plays a special role. Jefferson told us - and his words ring truer than ever today - that "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic." Contributing to the enlightenment of the citizenry is the job of the humanities. When Congress wrote the founding legislation for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, it said: "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." Helping Americans acquire wisdom, vision and enlightenment is the Endowment's everyday job and, I believe, it is yours, too.

The future of the humanities is the public humanities. Our survival as humanities professionals rests on how successfully we can step outside the intellectual monastery and reach the widest possible public. If the public feels untouched and unenlightened by the work that we do, they might well ask: why should we support you with our tax dollars? It is our job to effectively answer that question. It is our job to make Huckleberry Finn and King Lear relevant to street kids in South Central Los Angeles. It is our job to help Americans find their place in the great stream of our history by teaching them how to gather their own stories through oral history and genealogical projects.

Reaching the widest possible public has never been easier, thanks to technology. We stand at a historic crossroads where science can help connect the humanities to every American. The very force that threatens to overshadow the humanities can be harnessed to promote them.

Over the past year, I have traveled the breadth of the country and seen for myself how successfully each of you have embraced this goal. Some of the projects I have been fortunate enough to learn about up close are Arizona's book fair, Maine's programs on law and medicine, Oregon's partnership with the Arts and History Museum, Florida's partnership with their new teachers center and the University of South Florida, and the partnership of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona for "Trails through Time" with Patti Limerick. I want to work together to build on each other's successes and to carry the message of the humanities to every corner of the nation.

People are thirsty for this message. There is a palpable hunger for the search for meaning. In awarding the National Humanities Medals two weeks ago, President Clinton said: "Now, more than ever, therefore, we need our artists and patrons, our historians and educators to help us make sense of the world in which we live, to remind us about what really matters in life, to embody the values we Americans hold most dear-

freedom of expression, and tolerance and respect for diversity. . . . This tradition of our shared culture is one we must nurture and take with us into the new millennium."

We see it in all contexts of American life, in politics, in religion, in pop culture. The humanities are needed now more than ever. We face an uphill battle when it comes to the condition of our souls. By souls, I mean to raise a spiritual issue that has to do with the content of our lives, what William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize speech, called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

The cold war is only recently behind us. But let's not forget that its chief instrument of repression, besides guns themselves, was intellectual. The press, books, television and radio, even the classroom were all in the iron grip of the communist party. The oppressors practiced what Milan Kundera, the great Czech writer, called organized forgetting. When you kill memory, you kill national spirit, and ultimately you kill democracy.

The strength of our democracy ultimately rests on the character of our people. We should also take a look at what other nations spend on culture. In Europe, for instance, robust cultural and education budgets are a mark of national pride, part of what defines those people as nations. Germany spends \$39 per capita on cultural spending, France \$35. In the United States, the figure for all direct public cultural spending - federal, state and local -- is closer to \$3 per person. The NEH budget of \$110 million represents only 41 cents per American -- one one-hundredth of one percent of our federal budget. This shameful imbalance must change.

My frequent visits to Capitol Hill have given me great reason for optimism. Legislators know about the great work of the state councils and NEH. They are excited and proud of our work. They are no longer talking about cuts, and that is significant progress. The climate has changed and there is greater receptivity to pushing for increased funding. That is our collective challenge.

Less than a month before his death, John F. Kennedy told us he looked forward to an America "which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength but for its civilization as well" -- an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Within two years, that impulse was answered by the creation of the NEH and NEA. For 30 years, the endowments have kept Kennedy's flame alive.

As we chart our nation's course into the next century, we must insure, as Faulkner said, that "when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded," we don't find ourselves staring silently into an empty room

wondering where our heritage and culture went.

Together we can ensure that this does not happen.

Thank you.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Atlanta, Georgia
December 7, 1998

Seizing the Day:

A Vision for a Golden Age of the Humanities in the 21st Century
William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for that kind introduction. It's really great to be back home and to see so many friends again.

After my first full year as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, it is a special honor to speak to the Southern Association. As you know so well, it was the intellectual ferment of recent decades in the South that made it possible for us to do our work at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Many of you were a part of that project, and I feel like I carry your spirit with me every day when I go to my office a few blocks from the White House to fight for one of the central pillars of our nation, our humanities tradition.

Thomas Jefferson's words ring truer than ever today -- that "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic." Creating an enlightened citizenry is the job of all of you here today, and that is the job of the NEH. We are all doing Mr. Jefferson's work.

I'm especially glad to see Jamil Zainaldin here today. Jamil is director of the Georgia Humanities Council. Like our state councils all over the country, the Georgia council does a wonderful job of bringing the humanities to the people of this state. Let me cite just one example: In 1996, just in time for the Atlanta Olympics, the Georgia Council produced a new book called *The New Georgia Guide*. This was an update of the famous Guide published in every state by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. The new book was a great hit with Olympics visitors to Atlanta and has sold more than 25,000 copies. This 700-page work, written by scholars and professional writers, is an excellent road map to Georgia's cultural and social history and is now being used as a model for other states.

The Georgia Guide is also a model of a four-way humanities partnership, the kind of joint venture that we should all be seeking. One partner was Governor Zell Miller, who provided leadership, money and enthusiasm. Another was the University of Georgia Press in Athens, which published

the book. The third was the private sector and philanthropic community, which provided more than half the money. And the fourth was the humanities council, which managed, compiled and edited the Guide.

There you have the political establishment, the academy, the business community and the public humanities -- supported through federal taxes -- doing something together that none of them could have done alone.

This cooperative undertaking was such a success that those same partners are doing it again. They are in the planning stages of an all-electronic *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. The Encyclopedia will initially be produced online, not on paper, and scholars can update their entries at will. This puts the work of the Georgia Council on the cutting edge of the modern humanities. It combines the latest technology with broad popular outreach. Anyone with a keyboard and a mouse will be able to access the Encyclopedia – from the smallest school house to the mightiest corporate boardroom. It also dovetails perfectly with our guiding theme at the National Endowment for the Humanities as we enter the 21st century: "Rediscovering America."

Two-hundred years after Jefferson instructed us on the importance of an educated populace, we stand at an historic crossroads. Thanks to our technology and our wealth, we have an unprecedented opportunity to bring the humanities to everyone. If we seize the moment, we can claim the 21st century as our own.

We Americans live today in an extraordinary time of peace and prosperity. The Cold War is behind us, and we are surfing the crest of the information revolution. The White House has put education at the top of its national agenda. And in last month's elections, the voters told us that education was their number-one priority.

This confluence of political will and peacetime wealth puts us in an unprecedented situation. For the first time ever, we have the money, the manpower, the time, and the political support to devote great resources to educational excellence and to the broadest possible outreach.

What is demanded of us in the academic world and in the public humanities is leadership – and a belief that our time has come. President John F. Kennedy told us that he looked forward to an America that would be remembered "not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." That was in October 1963, a few weeks before his death. Now, 35 years later, we may have our best chance to fulfill that vision.

If the 20th century was "the American century" in terms of military and

economic might, let the 21st century be the humanitarian century, the educational century, the cultural century. The problems that face America 400 years after Jamestown and Plymouth, 140 years after our most devastating civil strife, are the kind of social and cultural problems for which the humanities provide indispensable guiding principles.

We are faced with the still unfinished struggle for America's soul. By soul, I mean the spiritual issue that William Faulkner raised in his Nobel Prize speech, what he called "the agony and sweat of the human spirit."

Where will we be in the 21st century if we have won our economic and military wars but lost our souls? We can protect our borders, but if we haven't protected our own culture, what is there to live for?

For us to lay claim to a bright future, we must deal with a number of challenges. One of these is change, both social and technological. Another challenge is our ability to carry the humanities out of the academy and into the public arena.

A third challenge, as always, is money.

Let's talk for a moment about change. The world has never changed so fast as in the past half-century, perhaps even in the past six months. Those of us who are the keepers of the canon, the great humanities traditions, are sometimes resistant to change. After all, Plato and Shakespeare have served us well for a long time, and their legacy must be preserved.

Yet each of us should welcome the challenges that social and digital changes bring to our world. We should see them as an opportunity to spread the humanities in wider, more relevant ways.

Some speak of the crisis of the humanities. There is even talk of the treason of the intellectuals. I prefer to think of the debate over the canon as a healthy opportunity for renewal and reflection. Every generation should hold its received wisdom up to the bright light of examination. It is our duty to open windows of inquiry, just as Socrates, Copernicus, and St. Thomas Aquinas did. James Joyce and William Faulkner did not become part of the literary canon by leaving things as they were.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., after receiving our National Humanities Medal at the White House last month, noted that society is undergoing change as profound as our shift from an agrarian to an industrial society two centuries ago. This process is traumatic because it is faster, more compressed. The computer chip and all that flows from it are

reprogramming not just our lives, but our minds, as well.

The faster the change, the greater our need for the guiding hand of the humanities. The farther we travel into the future, the more firmly we need to be intellectually and culturally rooted in our past. As the silicon chip carries us deeper into a virtual world, we need the spiritual touchstone of the humanities for our inner reality -- telling us who we are and where we are going. The humane tradition is the intellectual backbone of our nation, the bedrock of our values.

The great point of the humanities, Professor Schlesinger reminded us, is and will always be self-knowledge. Our task in a changing world is to find ways to combine technology with the great truths of the canon. And that is exactly what we are doing at NEH .

We have seen how public television can be a crucial agent of dissemination for the humanities. NEH-funded projects such as Ken Burns's famous series on the Civil War and on baseball significantly changed the way the humanities are understood by millions of Americans.

At NEH, we support numerous projects for the digitization of old data and the gathering of new information – such as the *Georgia Encyclopedia*.

We are also partnering with the National Science Foundation in a Digital Library Initiative to create standards that allow searches across humanities collections in different formats held by many different institutions.

With leadership from the Council of Great City Schools and a funding partnership with MCI, we built a humanities clearing house on the World Wide Web called EDSITEment. The humanities Web site guides teachers quickly through the proliferating thicket of materials on the Internet to the 50 most useful, curriculum-oriented sites.

Technology has become the greatest resource for the humanities since the invention of movable type. Its resources allow us to achieve the dream of the humanities in the 21st century: outreach to the broadest possible public.

E. L. Doctorow recently remarked after receiving his National Humanities Medal, "I don't know how to distinguish the humanities from life." As humanities scholars, our domain is life, as it touches both the most learned among us and the least privileged among us. Our challenge is to show how the profound fruits of the academy relate to the lives of

everyday Americans.

Thanks to the information revolution, what was once the exclusive preserve of priests and scholars is now accessible to everyone.

My vision is of a time in which the humanities will reach every household in the nation, from the hollows of Harlan County to the shotgun homes of the Mississippi Delta and the streets of Cabbage Town here in Atlanta. We will give people richer and fuller lives by taking them into worlds previously open only to the privileged few who could attend college.

The future of the humanities is the public humanities.

We must find ways to bridge the gap between the priesthood and the populace. We must bring the humanities to people where they live. We support oral history projects that encourage students to gather local stories that connect them with larger regional and national history. Our Schools for the New Millennium project is designed to help schoolteachers learn to use new technologies to bring humanities content to their classrooms. At Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, teachers are training their students to interview participants in the civil rights movement in their historic neighborhood. African-American children from South Memphis routinely pass by the National Civil Rights Museum in the old Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was killed. By interviewing their neighbors and relatives -- people who vividly remember the struggle of the 1960s and its historic gains, the young people establish a deep connection to the history that surrounds them.

All this flows from NEH's new theme "Rediscovering America." By refocusing on our own stories, our local histories, the rich resources at our fingertips, we extend the humanities outside the academy.

Oral history is a dynamic teaching technique that NEH is also supporting at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Michigan, where students are researching their town's past by recording interviews with the city's auto industry workers. Project director Rick Bailey says his students are electrified by the experience of hearing living history from the mouths of the participants. "It is fundamentally changing the way we educate people," he says.

Americans are clearly hungry for a more direct connection to their past, and for signposts that define us as a nation. A newly published study funded largely by NEH has produced fascinating data on how Americans relate to history. Written by Roy Rosenzweig at George Mason University and the David Thelen at Indiana University and based on 1,500 random interviews, the authors argue that when Americans engage their past, their preferred sources are not professors, teachers, books and films.

Their most trusted sources are (1) museums and (2) grandparents and close relatives. Eyewitnesses come third, and we professionals are a dubious fourth and fifth. This should come as a wake-up call to us all.

The key lesson is that people want to engage the past in a hands-on way. Relatives are trusted, said one interviewee, because "grandma doesn't make up stories like the movies do." One Oglala Sioux Indian who was interviewed explained why he trusted a museum more than a book. "The bones don't lie," he said.

This brings me back to a subject which I'm sure engages all of you every year: money. How to pay for our ambitious agenda is the perennial struggle of the educator, especially in the humanities. As you well know, our cultural spending budgets lag far behind those in other industrialized societies. The time has now come to demand more support and make our humanities heritage a centerpiece of American life in the 21st century.

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities has called for a dramatic increase in funding for the national endowments, and I am optimistic that Congress will be receptive to funding increases. My frequent visits to Capitol Hill have shown me that our legislators believe in the work of the NEH and our state humanities councils. The political climate has changed, and legislators are excited and proud of what we do. They are no longer talking about cuts, and that is significant progress. Helping them understand our work so they can support us enthusiastically is our collective challenge.

But we need to do more than simply turn to the federal purse. We need to reach out to our friends in business and industry and the foundations for support. In his State of the Union address last January, the President called for public-private partnerships to preserve America's cultural and historic treasures. Much of the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities is aimed at doing exactly that. We welcome and encourage private industry and philanthropy to partner with us in preserving our past and making it accessible to our citizens.

We have received generous support from MCI and also have a wonderful grant from the Sara Lee Corporation to underwrite our annual Jefferson Lecture at the Kennedy Center in Washington. And television producer Norman Lear privately made a stunning \$1 million gift to support our presidential papers.

Yet there's a crying need to partner with our great corporations in putting the humanities at the center of American life and thus building a stronger country, a more resilient democracy, a more vibrant economy.

I want to encourage corporate leaders to remember the captains of industry in the early part of this century. Ford, Mellon, Rockefeller, and Carnegie made their fortunes through cars, coal, oil, and steel. But they are remembered today for their legacy of art, libraries, and great foundations.

Today I call on the captains of technology to make a similar commitment to their nation. Think of the great companies that have risen from southern soil, from Coca-Cola to Delta Air Lines, from Federal Express to WorldCom (which now owns MCI), from NationsBank to Ted Turner's CNN right here in Atlanta. These distinguished enterprises, and many others in the South, are making indelible marks on world commerce. Many of them have made significant philanthropic gifts, especially in their home towns and states. I urge business leaders to remember the cultural legacy of their predecessors in the early part of this century. Our Enterprise office at NEH is a channel through which private donors may shape their nation's humanitarian legacy with funds that can be earmarked for key projects.

One such project is our Regional Initiative. Building on the experience of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, I plan to establish ten regional humanities centers throughout the country. These centers will preserve and disseminate the unique heritage of each region. They will serve as a new platform of learning, regional in nature, but national in scope. Each center will support scholarship and research, preservation, education, and public programs.

My commitment to regional humanities centers arises from the power of what Eudora Welty calls "a sense of place." As we in the South know so well, our regional roots define us in deep and lasting ways. By exploring our attachments to the regions that have shaped us, we can rediscover our bonds as Americans, and we can renew American culture.

At NEH, we make more than 500 grants per year, from \$4,000 research awards to hundreds of thousands of dollars for major studies or film series. Many of you, as scholars or as institutions, have received NEH grants for your worthy work; you know what an essential role the Endowment plays in providing the seed money for key projects. I think of NEH as the Small Business Administration of American intellectual life. Without the start-up capital, many important projects would never get done.

We must remain vigilant against those who would deprive us of our culture. If earlier efforts to eliminate our cultural preservation programs had succeeded, we could have found ourselves in a Beckett-like absurdity, like "Krapp's Last Tape," sitting alone in an empty room talking to ourselves. "Nothing to say, not a squeak," says Krapp in his

final soliloquy. "Never knew such silence."

Emile Zola once said, "I'm here to live my life out loud." Well, I'm here to preach the humanities out loud.

I hope you will join me in this grand effort as we shape the coming century into a golden age for the humanities and intellectual life in America.

Thank you.