A Theater Filled with Arkansas Sounds

Arkansas Sounds, the Butler Center’s music program, hosted a two-day music festival featuring Arkansas artists in 2012 and 2013, in addition to other events and collaborations with other CALS projects such as the Arkansas Literary Festival. This year, following the opening of the CALS Ron Robinson Theater, Arkansas Sounds has evolved into a concert series utilizing this new space.

The first two Arkansas Sounds concerts held in the theater—both sold out and very well received—were Iris DeMent in May and Sonny Burgess & the Legendary Pacers in June. Paragould native Iris DeMent, who sang and played piano and guitar accompanied by two band members, presented modern-day folk favorites in her unique melodic style.

Summer Seminar: Trail of Tears to Train of Tears

by Kay Bland, Butler Center Educator

On the morning of June 12, forty-five educators from Hackett to Heber Springs to Highland converged at the Historic Arkansas Museum (HAM) Ottenheimer Theater for the opening session of our second annual educator seminar.

Co-sponsored by the Arkansas Humanities Council and the Butler Center/CALS, the seminar offered educators the opportunity to investigate resources associated with the theme of relocation, first focusing on Native Americans in Arkansas and on the Trail of Tears through Arkansas and then focusing on Japanese Americans relocated to Arkansas during World War II on what could be called Trains of Tears. Approved by the Arkansas Department of Education, the seminar provided teachers with professional development hours and resources, including books and lists of online materials featuring entries from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture.

After greetings by David Stricklin of the Butler Center and Paul Austin of the Arkansas Humanities Council, attendees heard from the state’s archeologist, Dr. Ann Early, whose overview of the ancient people of Arkansas provided background for educators who were then able to complete an artifact analysis based on the HAM permanent exhibit, We Walk in Two Worlds. After lunch, attendees boarded a bus for the trip to Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park at Scott, where park interpreters continued the topic introduced by Early and provided guided tours of the mounds and explanations of the museum exhibits.

Following the visit to the park, the educators were transported to the Sequoyah Research Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock campus, where Dr. Daniel Littlefield described the Trail of Tears manuscripts and materials available in the center’s one-of-a-kind-collection. After the tours, teachers met for dinner and an address by Troy Poteete, Cherokee Nation Supreme Court Justice.
Focus on the Train of Tears portion of the seminar began the next day with a curriculum “take and teach” introduction based on resources I provided, as well as a unit prepared by Lisa Lacefield, Arkansas-based social studies curriculum consultant. Educators met in the Ron Robinson Theater on the CALS Main Library campus before walking to Concordia Hall in the neighboring Arkansas Studies Institute building, where they completed another artifact analysis, this time using the exhibition Drawn In: New Art from WWII Camps at Rohwer and Jerome.

The final keynote address of the seminar was held in the Ron Robinson Theater and featured Vivienne Schiffer, author of Camp Nine, a novel based on the Japanese American internee experience at Rohwer during World War II and the community response to that event. Schiffer, who is producing a documentary based on the Rohwer experience, previewed a clip for the educators and provided them with a glimpse of original film footage from Rohwer.

The final activity was the viewing of a student production created by students at Little Rock Central High. Titled “Where is Asia-America?,” the video utilizes student-created dialogue to provide attendees with an example of a possible activity for replication in their classrooms or schools. George West, Central High social studies department educator, provided the background of the student production.

Teachers left with a box lunch for their travel home. Although more than half of the group was from central Arkansas, others came from farther afield—from Texarkana, El Dorado, Forrest City, Beebe, Batesville, Clinton, Cabot, DeWitt, Des Arc, and elsewhere. Before the new school year starts, each attendee will receive a thumb-drive containing presentations and electronic resources.

The seminar was a great success, and some attendees had these compliments to share:

“The information that was shared over the past two days was absolutely wonderful!”

“This [seminar] has exceeded my expectations and has sparked my interest in so much more.”

“I never would have had the opportunity to meet these exceptional people without this seminar!”

William G. Coleman Papers Now Available

The William G. Coleman Papers, a collection now available in the Research Room of the Arkansas Studies Institute (ASI) building, contains documents, correspondence, publications, and other materials accumulated during the time self-proclaimed “friend of the trees” William G. Coleman was active in environmental efforts in Arkansas. Now with Great Ecology Inc. in the San Francisco Bay Area, Coleman spent the first ten years of his forty-year career as an environmentalist working for Arkansas Power & Light Company (AP&L—now Entergy Corporation).

William Gilbert (Bill) Coleman was born on August 1, 1951, in Little Rock and grew up in western Tennessee. He studied environmental and natural science at the University of New Mexico, becoming active in the environmental movement during the first Earth Day on the New Mexico campus in 1970.

Coleman began work in March 1974 as the first staff environmental scientist hired by AP&L. He was eventually promoted to Manager of Environmental Affairs and served from 1981 to 1984.

Coleman participated in a number of conservation projects through his involvement with the Arkansas Conservation Coalition. His efforts focused on wilderness conservation; preservation of water quality, wetlands, and forests; and protection of unique species of plants and animals. He was appointed to two environmental committees during Bill Clinton’s first gubernatorial administration and served as an advisor to a task force on timber management.

Coleman earned a degree in environmental psychology at the University of Arkansas in 1983. In 1984, months after marrying Robin Rae Crank, he accepted an executive internship position with the environmental and governmental affairs department of the Edison Electric Institute (EEI) in Washington DC. At the end of the EEI internship, Coleman remained in Washington and worked for the Electric Power Research Institute.

In 2003, after moving to the West Coast, Coleman founded the Earth Assets Group, which promoted incentive-based restoration of the environment through the use of environmental credits. He has since held a variety of professional positions in natural resource management, working through community-based organizations to support conservation and consulting on development efforts designed to make environmental protection economically viable.

Documents in the collection relate to wilderness and environmental legislation, as well as the work of the Arkansas Conservation Coalition, the Sierra Club, and the Ozark Society. Of special interest are documents from the Ozark Society’s R.A.R.E. II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation) project, including testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands.

Coleman contributed eleven essays for The Arkansas Wilderness, a book of line drawings by Arkansas artist Susan Morrison, and this collection contains material relating to that project, as well as many articles, newsletters, and other publications from Coleman’s years in Arkansas. The collection also contains hundreds of slides depicting wilderness areas and points of environmental concern in Arkansas.
One of the great things about working at the Butler Center and CALS is the opportunity for fun partnerships. And a really fun one is coming up in September. We will be part of four events with the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, revolving around The Rep’s production of *Memphis*, a musical that evokes the social and creative changes coming out of that city as people questioned the laws meant to separate races. The play focuses special attention on disc jockey Dewey Phillips, who was one of the people who created the rock ‘n’ roll revolution and thought it made no sense to have music segregated on “black” radio stations and “white” radio stations. We are co-producing an appearance by the remarkable Velvet Kente Arkestra on The Rep’s main stage on the evening of September 22 (see page 4 for ticket information). Velvet Kente’s great band is expanded on special occasions into the Arkestra, with a full horn section and dancing backup singers, and they will create a musical journey from 1950s Memphis to present-day America. We will also be part of The Rep’s panel discussion about *Memphis* at the Clinton School of Public Service on September 4, the day after our own Legacies & Lunch talk by Marvin Schwartz, the author of *We Wanna Boogie*, our new book on Memphis’s Sun Studios recording artist Sonny Burgess and the rise of rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s in Newport and up and down U.S. Highway 67 in Arkansas (see page 6). And we will take part in two of the salons The Rep will hold, featuring Rep director Bob Hupp and actors from the play, after the *Memphis* productions on September 3 and 4. We are excited that all of this will happen during the month we will release *We Wanna Boogie*. So make plans to get to The Rep, the Clinton School, and the CALS Main Library for all of these cool events.

Speaking of cool, I’m pictured here with the wonderful mother-and-daughter duo Rosalie Santine Gould and Vivienne Rosalie (Lie) Schiffer. In Kay Bland’s piece on pages 1–2, you can read about the terrific seminar for teachers we had in June with the help of another great partner, the Arkansas Humanities Council. Rosalie’s gift to us of the extraordinary collection of art and documents from the World War II camp at Rohwer has led to further gifts of art created at Rohwer, the other Arkansas camp at Jerome, and even camps in other parts of the United States, much of which is now on display in our *Drawn In* exhibit in our Concordia Hall gallery, which teachers viewed during the seminar. Rosalie’s presence at the seminar was very meaningful to the teachers, as were Lie’s talk and her screening of a portion of her film on the Rohwer camp, which is generating a great deal of excitement all over the country.

Finally, a note of celebration for the life of Dora Johnson Ragsdale, whose death saddened everyone in the Arkansas history community. DeDe and her devoted husband, John G. Ragsdale Jr., were stalwarts at history gatherings throughout the state for many years, and an inspiring array of organizations, projects, and awards felt the benefit of their generosity and goodwill, including our own Butler Center Books. John is still in touch from his new home in Texas near the four Ragsdale children and often sends greetings to friends back in Arkansas. When I finish typing these words, I will go to a meeting in the John and Ragsdale Jr., were stalwarts at history gatherings throughout the state for many years, and an inspiring array of organizations, projects, and awards felt the benefit of their generosity and goodwill, including our own Butler Center Books. John is still in touch from his new home in Texas near the four Ragsdale children and often sends greetings to friends back in Arkansas. When I finish typing these words, I will go to a meeting in the John and DeDe Ragsdale Room in our building. I think of them both every day.

**A Word from the Center**

David Stricklin, Manager of the Butler Center

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**Clinton School to Co-Host Legacies & Lunch**

The Butler Center is pleased to announce a new arrangement with the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service by which the Clinton School will join the Butler Center four times a year in hosting a Legacies & Lunch program. These special programs, which will support the missions of both organizations, will be held in the CALS Ron Robinson Theater on the Main Library campus, rather than the typical Legacies & Lunch venue of the Main Library’s Darragh Center. The entrance to the theater may be accessed from the Main Library parking lot; attendees of any Legacies & Lunch program receive two hours of free parking in the lot.

The first of these co-hosted programs will be on August 6, noon-1 p.m., featuring Frank Sata. David Stricklin, manager of the Butler Center, will interview Sata, who lived as a young child in Japanese American internment camps in Arkansas and other states during World War II. Sata’s father, J. T. Sata, was an artist who created some of the artwork of *Drawn In: New Art from WWII Camps at Rohwer and Jerome*, on view now through August 23 in Concordia Hall of the Butler Center Galleries, 409 President Clinton Avenue.

Legacies & Lunch programs are free, open to the public, and sponsored in part by the Arkansas Humanities Council. Attendees are invited to bring a sack lunch; drinks and dessert are provided. For more information, please call Kate Chagnon at (501) 918-3033.
Tony Kopek, a student at Central Junior High in Springdale, was the recipient of one of the state History Day cash prizes the Butler Center awards to students presenting projects on Arkansas topics.

The Butler Center’s genealogy and local history specialist Rhonda Stewart recognizes the efforts of Jacqueline Oakley (right) and Jacqueline’s aunt, Susan Oakley (left). Jacqueline, a sophomore at Hendrix College, worked for the Butler Center digitizing the Reubel Funeral Home records from 1901 to 1925 for a Girl Scout Merit Badge project.

The Butler Center’s art administrator Colin Thompson assisted with the installation of Celebrate, CALS’s newest public art piece, which was commissioned in 2010 to celebrate the CALS centennial. The bronze-and-steel kinetic sculpture of a toy top offers forty-six translations of the word “celebrate,” including Braille, binary code, Klingon, and Pig Latin. The piece, which was designed by Michael Warrick, is located by the southwest entrance to the Arkansas Studies Institute (ASI) building.

**Upcoming Arkansas Sounds concerts:**

**Ben Nichols**  
Fri., Aug. 29, 7 p.m.  
CALS Ron Robinson Theater  
100 River Market Ave.; Tickets: $20; available at Butler Center Galleries and www.arkansassounds.org.

**Velvet Kente Arkestra**  
Mon., Sept. 22, 7 p.m.  
In partnership with the Arkansas Repertory Theatre’s production of Memphis; Arkansas Repertory Theatre, 601 Main St.; Tickets: $10–$20; visit www.therep.org or call The Rep’s box office at (501) 918-0405.

**Suzy Bogguss**  
Sat., Sept. 27, 7 p.m.  
CALS Ron Robinson Theater; Tickets: $25; available at Butler Center Galleries and www.arkansassounds.org.

**Pipes & Drums of Lyon College**  
Fri., Oct. 24, 7 p.m.  
CALS Ron Robinson Theater  
Free admission.

For more information, visit www.arkansassounds.org or call (501) 918-3033.
Composing a Music Collection

The Butler Center’s Arkansas Music Collection (BC.MSS.99.01), containing an eclectic mix of materials, is growing all the time. According to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas’s entry on Music and Musicians, “Arkansas has long been among the most significant contributors to the nation’s musical foundation, serving as fertile ground for the development of multiple genres as well as being native home to some of the best-known and influential musicians, singers, songwriters, and songs that the world has known. Much of this is due to the state’s geography—both its diverse landscape and populace and its proximity to key musical hubs and regions in the nation.”

Preserving this rich musical culture is an ongoing priority for the Butler Center. Arkansas music includes many genres, from country and folk to blues, jazz, and rock. In addition to the music produced in Arkansas and by Arkansans, the state has often been the subject of songs, reflecting the perceptions of natives and of outsiders at various points in history. Arkansas has hosted many important venues and events, and significant contributions have also been made by Arkansans behind the scenes in music production, management, and technology.

The collection is organized into the following large categories: People and Events; Sheet Music/Lyrics; Posters/Musician Items; and Miscellaneous (mostly magazines and publicity clippings). Researchers working in the People and Events category can discover files on Arkansas greats such as Patsy Montana, “Sister Rosetta” Tharpe, Levon Helm, and Johnny Cash. Digging a bit deeper will reveal information about the King Biscuit Blues Festival, mountain dulcimers, and Robinson Center Music Hall.

Sheet music aficionados will enjoy the myriad rare and notable selections in the collection, including several different “Arkansas Traveler” variations, as well as “Arkansas, I Love You,” by Maude Bethel Lewis (undated), “How I Love You, My Arkansas” by Harrison Howe (1923), and “Arkansas, My Arkansas” by Thomas Morrissey (1949).

Additional items of particular interest include the Ruth and Howard Bearden Scrapbook collection, containing photos and memorabilia from the big-band era, as well as photographs and memorabilia from the Light Brigade, a local band that performed and recorded mostly during the mid-sixties through the late seventies.

The Arkansas Music Collection is an open and growing collection, continually adding relevant materials. View the full finding aid in the Arkansas Studies Institute (ASI) building Research Room or at www.arstudies.org.
History on the Wild Side: Comics and Rock ‘n’ Roll

Arkansas in Ink

In 1837, a state representative stabbed the speaker of the house to death during a debate about wolf pelts. In 1899, Hot Springs police shot it out with the county sheriffs over control of illegal gambling. In 1915, people first reported seeing a giant gray monster along the White River near Newport; a refuge was created for the mythical “Whitey” in 1973. In 1974, President Richard Nixon resigned in part due to the outspokenness of Pine Bluff native Martha Mitchell.

These and other stories from Arkansas history will appear this fall from Butler Center Books in Arkansas in Ink: Gunslingers, Ghosts, and Other Graphic Tales, edited by Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture (EOA) editor Guy Lancaster and illustrated by cartoonist and features writer for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Ron Wolfe. Pairing Wolfe’s delightful cartoons with selected EOA entries, this special print project of the online EOA brings these and many other oddities, absurdities, and fascinating figures of our state’s history to life, including election fraud; bandit queen Belle Starr; diamonds buried in the Arkansas soil; fake artifacts; ghosts lurking in hotel rooms; turkeys dropping from the sky; the mysterious Gurdon Light; and much more.

Arkansas in Ink (September, $22.00 large-format paperback) has nearly 100 entries with cartoons and photographs.

We Wanna Boogie

Also coming this fall from Butler Center Books is We Wanna Boogie: The Rockabilly Roots of Sonny Burgess and the Pacers by Marvin Schwartz, which tells the story of how Sonny Burgess, his band, and the Arkansas town of Newport helped give rise to an iconic new sound that helped change the face of popular music.

From his start in Newport, Rockabilly Hall-of-Famer Burgess literally has rocked his way around the world in a career spanning six decades. Now, Burgess and his band members tell of their energetic live shows in the Newport area, their original recordings for Memphis’s Sun Records in the 1950s, and what it was like to share the stage with Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and others.

Burgess, whose music evolved in the Silver Moon and other clubs around the Arkansas Delta, later influenced rock and roll music internationally and has led the contemporary rockabilly revival in the United States and overseas. Burgess’s insight and wit speak to the challenges posed by an often capricious music industry over his long career.

Newport was home to numerous music clubs, where national artists performed and illicit back-room gambling was widely accepted, and We Wanna Boogie also tells the history of this once-prominent and high-spirited Delta community of extensive agricultural wealth. A microcosm of postwar southern American culture, Newport saw idyllic 1950s prosperity followed by a massive outmigration of farm workers. Burgess is a product of this history, his vivacious music shaped by his town and its dramatic transformation.

“Marvin Schwartz has woven an unforgettable story,” notes Preston Lauterbach, author of The Chitlin’ Circuit and the Road to Rock ‘n’ Roll. “The great Sonny Burgess and his raucous sound leap from these pages. Marvin’s story and Sonny’s songs are like a séance, bringing old joints like the Silver Moon back from the dead.”

Marvin Schwartz is a freelance writer who specializes in Arkansas history and culture. We Wanna Boogie will be available in September in hardcover ($36.95) and paperback ($23.95). Schwartz will speak and sign books at the Sept. 3 Legacies & Lunch, Noon, Main Library, Darragh Center.

Honors for Butler Center Books

We are pleased to note that Political Magic: The Travels, Trials, and Triumphs of the Clintons’ Arkansas Travelers by Brenda Blagg, published by Butler Center Books in 2013, won first place in the Arkansas Press Women’s annual contest and third place in the National Federation of Press Women’s contest in the nonfiction books for adult readers category. Political Magic is the story of how Bill Clinton’s lifelong friends—the Arkansas Travelers—helped the
governor of a small state become president of the United States. The Travelers personalized policies and helped make a difference in Clinton’s election.

Also, we are proud to announce that two titles from Butler Center Books—the Encyclopedia of Arkansas Music (another special print project of the EOA) edited by Ali Welky and Mike Keckhaver, and Muzzled Oxen: Reaping Cotton and Sowing Hope in 1920s Arkansas by Genevieve Grant Sadler—have been selected for inclusion in the Center for the Book at the Arkansas State Library’s 2014 “Arkansas Gems” program, which honors recent books by Arkansans. Bookmarks and posters featuring the front covers of these two books will be distributed at the Arkansas booth during the National Book Festival this September in Washington DC and also will be mailed to schools and libraries throughout Arkansas.

Publishing at the Butler Center
Butler Center Books is the nonprofit publishing division of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies. Book purchases and direct donations help ensure that we will continue to publish unique and scholarly books on all aspects of Arkansas history. Books published by the Butler Center are available at River Market Books & Gifts on the Main Library campus in Little Rock and other local bookstores, from online retailers, and from the University of Arkansas Press (via University of Chicago Press) at (800) 621-2736. To see a complete list of titles published by Butler Center Books, visit www.butlercenter.org/publication.
Sonny Burgess & the Pacers playing at the University of Arkansas in 1956.