July 13

**Longtime editor and writer for The Wall Street Journal gives keynote address at writing conference**

DENTON (UNT), Texas -- Effective literary nonfiction must thread the needle between investigative journalism and the use of literary devices.

Ken Wells' work history embodies this combination of talents. Wells, a speaker at The Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest, grew up in the Louisiana bayou and was exposed to the art of storytelling early on by his Cajun mother. He later spent decades as a reporter at such newspapers as *The Miami Herald* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

"Literary nonfiction utilizes the devices of fiction, but is not fiction itself," Wells said. "It is enhanced storytelling. It recreates scenes. Much great literary nonfiction is about the depth and gravity of ideas. But it must also implement good journalism skills."

Wells will speak at the conference at 1 p.m. July 24 (Sunday) at the Hilton DFW Lakes located at 1800 Highway 26 East in Grapevine. The Mayborn Writers Conference July 22-24 will explore the art and craft of nonfiction storytelling. The conference is now closed to the public due to the high interest it has generated, but limited space is still available to the media. Contact public information officer Ellen Schroeder at (940) 369-7912 if interested in attending the conference or for scheduling an interview with Wells.

Wells address is titled "Finding Flavorful Narratives in Everyday Life," an apt lecture for Wells, who spent many years as an editor and feature writer for Page One of *The Wall Street Journal*. He currently serves as editor of the *Journal's* book division, a joint venture with Crown Publishers. In this position, Wells encourages his feature writers to evolve their articles into books.

The heart of the conference is about networking, Wells said. He regularly attends conferences at the Faulkner Society in New Orleans and at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla. He keeps in touch with many of the students he meets at these conferences.

Wells is also a novelist. He wrote the *Catahoula Bayou Trilogy*, a series of novels centered on the bayous where he was reared. His first nonfiction book, "Travels with Barley: A Journey through Beer Culture in America" was published in 2004. The book traces Wells' travels from the mega-brewers of Missouri to the micro-brewers of Colorado.

Wells earned an English degree from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La. He now sponsors a writing contest at the school, the Bonnie Toups-Wells Writing Prize, named after his mother. The winner receives $500 for the best submitted feature article about Louisianan Cajun culture. He is currently building an endowment for the prize. Wells donated the stipend he received for attending the Mayborn Conference to the endowment fund.

"My Cajun mother was a good storyteller," Wells said. "She used to scare us with stories about werewolves and floods in the bayou."

Seats are still available for author Susan Orlean's lecture at 7:30 p.m. July 22 (Friday), followed by a question-and-answer session and book signing. Orlean is author of "My Kind of Place: Travel Stories from a Woman Who's Been Everywhere" and "The Orchid
Thief," the basis for the film "Adaptation." Admission to her speech is $25. For more information, call (940) 565-4564 or visit mayborninstitute.unt.edu.
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