



St. Andrews PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Andrews to honor three with Sam Ragan Fine Arts Award

(Laurinburg, N.C.) – Three distinguished fine arts awards will be represented to the recipients of the 27th Annual Sam Ragan Fine Arts Awards at St. Andrews Presbyterian College on Jan. 24.

Musician Barbara L. Geer, sculptor and designer Thomas Sayre and fictionist Charles Blackburn Jr. will receive the awards in a public ceremony in the Carol Grotnes Belk Main Room of the William Henry Belk Center at St. Andrews. Free and open to the public, the presentation will begin at 7:30 p.m.

“Each year, we honor distinguished North Carolinians – past and present,” said Ron Bayes, chair of the Ragan Awards Committee. “Honorees are persons who have, over a long period, been outstanding practitioners of their art, and who have selflessly shared their talent with other creators, working in their primary genre and beyond.”

A graduate of St. Andrews, Barbara Geer is a music consultant in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System. She has taught elementary, middle and high school vocal, instrumental, and general music.

She has a distinguished record of state and national leadership experience having served as president of both the Southern Division of the National Association for Music Education (MENC) and the North Carolina Music Educators Association. During her term on the MENC National Executive Board, she served as a member of the Finance Committee, National Executive Committee, National Convention Task Force, Vision 20/20 Seminar, and planning committees for national conferences in Washington, Nashville and Minneapolis.

Geer is currently a member of the Lowell Mason Fellows Selection Committee and the National Anthem Project Committee. Additionally, she chairs the North Carolina In-Service Conference and district vocal and large choral festivals.

Thomas Sayre first came to North Carolina as a Morehead Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He majored in English and studio art, graduating summa cum laude in 1973. A Ford Foundation grant allowed Sayre to be a Michigan Fellow at the University of Michigan, making sculpture. He attended the Master of Fine Arts Program at the Cranbrook Academy of Art for one year.

Sayre returned to North Carolina in 1977 and began a non-profit organization dedicated to the improving of institutional environments for mentally impaired individuals. In 1981, Sayre and architect Steven D. Schuster formed Clearscapes, a multi-disciplinary design firm in Raleigh, N.C.

Yet his heart has remained in sculpture, with awards and shows continuing throughout the years. In 1995, he received a NEA/SEA Fellowship. He has also received the Design Guild Regional Award from the College of Design at North Carolina State University and the Raleigh Medal of the Arts Award. While participating in several group shows, Sayre has had several

individual showings, including the “Thomas Sayre” display at Artspace in Raleigh in 2007 and “Thomas Sayre: New Work at the Glance Gallery also in Raleigh in 2005.

Charles Blackburn Jr. grew up in Henderson, N.C. and graduated with a degree in English from Barton College in 1974.

The senior writer and editor of Sigma Xi, an honor society of 90,000 scientists and engineers, Blackburn began his official writing career as a newspaper reporter and editor. He also served as associate director of public relations for Duke University Medical Center.

A three time winner of the Crucible’s annual fiction writing contest, Blackburn served as President of the North Carolina Writers’ Network, chaired the North Carolina Writers’ Conference in 1998 and was the 1997-1998 North Carolina Artist Grant Award Recipient. He was also instrumental in the founding and continuing working of the Paul Green Foundation established in 1982 to perpetuate the vision of playwright and activist Paul Green, whose commitment to the arts and human rights continues today through the mission of the foundation.

According to Marsha Warren, a fellow literary artist in North Carolina and a previous recipient of the Ragan Award, Blackburn’s passion for the various works of literature in the state is legendary.

“Charles’ ongoing work with the N.C. Writers’ Network is legend,” she wrote. “He served as president for several terms and spearheaded their fine website design and maintenance. Most recently, Charles co-chaired, with me, the campaign to ‘Bring Sam Home.’ This great effort, his original idea and brainchild, sought to raise sufficient funds to purchase a magnificent bust of Sam Ragan, rendered by nationally-acclaimed sculptor, Gretta Bader. After a year of successful fundraising, the unveiling occurred on Sept. 17, 2005 at the Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities in Southern Pines, to a large, appreciative audience. The bust now stands proudly in the Literary Hall of Fame.”

Blackburn is a contributing editor to Pembroke Magazine and a frequent contributor to Our State Magazine. He currently resides in Raleigh with his wife and daughter.

About the Award

The Sam Ragan Fine Arts Awards were initiated in 1981 to honor of Ragan, North Carolina’s first Secretary of Cultural Resources, and to celebrate the fact that North Carolina was the first of the United States to establish a cabinet-level position recognizing the fine arts. Ragan also served as the state’s poet laureate and ran The Pilot newspaper in Southern Pines. Previous recipients have included Gov. Bob Scott, David Brinkley, Loonis McClohon, Kathryn Gurkin, Paul Jeffrey, Sally Nixon, Sally Buckner, and the Right Rev. Shelby Spong among others.

About St. Andrews Presbyterian College

St. Andrews Presbyterian College is a four-year liberal arts and sciences college situated on 600 acres around a 70-acre lake in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. Long known for its innovation and academic excellence, the college boasts an unparalleled interdisciplinary curriculum, a study abroad program on three continents, a multidisciplinary science lab the size of an indoor arena, the first undergraduate college press in the country, the first four-year degree in therapeutic horsemanship and equine business management, and an award-winning bagpipe band. Students enrolled at St. Andrews come from 42 states and eleven countries.

Further information may be obtained by visiting the College's website www.sapc.edu or calling admissions at 800-763-0198 sending an e-mail to admissions@sapc.edu.

