

December 3, 1956

Mrs. Percy Jones  
La Center, Kentucky

Dear Miss Jones:

As I mentioned a few days ago, I am quite anxious to get in touch with Mrs. Magruder, or at least with some member of her family who can give me some biographical data about her and some details about her writings.

Some young Kentucky scholars are attempting to prepare a complete biographical and bibliographical census of Kentucky writers. The leader in this effort is Dr. Lawrence S. Thompson of the University of Kentucky, an authority on Southern literature and a close personal friend of mine. We have run into almost a blank wall on Mrs. Magruder. I managed to find a good copy of "Wages" in New York, but have not located any other books. Of course I recall that she published some poems, and perhaps short stories, in the Saturday Evening Post, but I have not been able to find any copy of the volume of poems which I believe she published.

I have always admired Mrs. Magruder very much and want to see her properly represented in the new work. Any leads you can give us will be much appreciated.

I was delighted to see you, Mr. Jones and Jim again.

Cordially,

COPY



La Center, Ky.  
Dec. 7th, 1956.

Mr. W. Hugh Paul  
New York, N. Y.  
Dear Hugh:

Your letter received  
yesterday requesting information  
regarding the writings of Mrs.  
Magruder. I called a friend  
of hers in Woodville and got  
her address for you. Her friend  
Elsie Murphy said Mrs. Magruder  
isn't well but is still active.  
In the same mail as this  
will go to you I'm sending the  
copy of your letter to me, to  
Mrs. Magruder, that will give her



time to think over the things  
you will want to know. I'm  
sure she will cooperate whole  
heartedly with an interesting  
and helpful report.

Mrs. Magruder has written many  
short stories, at one time she  
wrote a Sunday column for the  
News or Sun Democrat under the  
title "Regarding things old and  
new" I clipped some of them.  
surely she has preserved copies  
of all of them as well as her  
poems. Its a fine move to honor  
the Kentucky Writers and save  
this history that has been neg-  
lected so sadly. I'm hoping you  
you soon get the information  
you need to give our good



and deserving friend her  
rightful place in the Literary  
records of her much loved  
state Kentucky.

again let me say I'm sorry to  
have missed your call. Percy  
and I are fine and busy he is  
the corn and coal and I'm  
trying to get ready for the holidays  
and doing the many things I've  
asked to do in the community  
give my love to Margaret and  
hurry back and bring her  
with you. Best wishes now and  
always.

Sincerely-

(Mrs. Percy) Mattie B. Jones



Mrs. Mary Lavinia Magender  
2006 Campbell Ave.,  
Tucson, Ariz.



December 17, 1956

Mrs. Mary Lanier Magruder  
2006 Campbell Avenue  
Tucson, Arizona

Dear Mrs. Magruder:

Mrs. Percy Jones of La Center tells me that she sent you a copy of my recent letter to her about getting information about you and your activities as a writer for use in preparing a census of Kentucky writers. The project is being undertaken by a group of scholars at the University of Kentucky and certain other schools in the State, one of whom, Dr. Lawrence S. Thompson, is a close friend of mine. You may perhaps be familiar with some of Dr. Thompson's work on Southern fiction in general and Kentucky novels in particular.

When I began to help in the project I was amazed to discover how little definite information I could find about you and your work. Your modesty must have led you to shun advertisement. My own memory enabled me to track down a good copy of "Wages", but I could not locate the book of poems I seem to remember. I seem also to remember that you published a good many poems and short stories in national magazines, but I haven't been able to give the time necessary for research in the periodicals.

We would be very grateful if you could give us as much accurate information about yourself and your writings as you can. We would like to have as a minimum the type of information that goes into a "Who's Who" biography and as much additional data as practicable. For instance, I have always been under the impression that your branch of the Lanier family was related to Sidney Lanier, and it would be helpful to have that verified.

COPY



Mrs. Mary Lanier Magruder

-2-

December 17, 1956

It seems a long time since I last had the pleasure of visiting you in your lovely Kentucky home, but I remember those days with pleasure. I got back to Kentucky to see my mother over the Thanksgiving Day week-end.

I hope that you are enjoying life in Tucson. My wife and I spent several winter holidays near there in the late thirties and early forties and we both love the desert. For the last ten years we have concentrated our spare time on our farm in Virginia, but we still hope some day to return to wintering in Arizona.

With sincerest best wishes for a happy holiday season, I am

Sincerely yours,

WHP:VN

COPY



REV. DEAL BARKER & RAWLINGS  
Mrs. Mary Lanier Magruder

February 13, 1957

Of your poems, I remember "Richard" very well, although my memory had it recorded as "Michael". I am not certain about the others, but have an impression that I recall "Snowing" and "The Road to Hollywood".

February 13, 1957

Mrs. Mary Lanier Magruder  
1077 Flagler Avenue  
Jacksonville 7, Florida

Dear Mrs. Magruder:

Thanks very much for your fine full letter of January 3rd. Since I have been out of the City for a considerable part of the intervening period, I have not been able until now to attempt a proper reply.

The information about your ancestors was indeed welcome. As you say, pride in ancestry is, perhaps, a human weakness. On the other hand, the modern biological scientists, historians and anthropologists seem to report almost unanimously that man can be understood only when viewed in the light of his past - i.e., his ancestry and inherited environment. It was especially interesting to know that Tennessee Williams comes from the Lanier family. I have enjoyed a number of his plays on the New York stage.

If I can impose further on your patience, I would like some additional personal data about you and your immediate family: dates of birth and death; exact names, including maiden names of females; residences and dates of change; public offices held and military service, with dates; and hobbies and general interests. These are merely indicative of the types of information which would be useful, and you may be able to think of much further detail. Speaking as a dabbler in literary research, arising out of my activities as a collector of books and manuscripts, I can tell you that our greatest problem is to get names and dates precisely sorted out and evaluated. Even standard authorities, such as the Dictionary of National Biography, are full of absurd errors due to the failure of contributors to set up accurate chronologies. Lucas mis-dates a number of Lamb's letters and falls into error as to their significance for the same reason.

COPY



February 13, 1957

Of your poems, I remember "Nichaela" very well, although my memory had it recorded as "Michaela". I am not certain about the others, but have an impression that I recall "Awakening" and "The Road to Ballymena".

Do you have extra copies of your uncollected poems and stories which could be lodged at the Library of the University of Kentucky? Even if you do not have extra copies, it would be helpful if the material could be borrowed for photo-copying and return. This may not be practicable in the case of bulky material, but would certainly be easy enough in the case of the poems. I can also say that the University is always delighted to receive gifts of original manuscripts and letters. We of course understand that original material is often piously preserved by the immediate family of a writer, but in a good many cases writers or their families actually prefer the safety and expert care found only in great libraries.

Your kind letter encourages me to make one further suggestion, which you may think most presumptuous. Have you ever considered an autobiography? Or, if that be too taxing, a series of autobiographical sketches? As far as I know no one has ever attempted to record the farm and village life of Western Kentucky of sixty and seventy years ago. You gave us some local color in "Wages", and Cobb, Holt and Warren have treated the material in fiction. As far as I know, however, no one has ever tried to give us an exact first-hand account. Many of the New England writers have done it. Why not Kentucky writers?

I often think of Paul and of his fine, alert mind. We discovered together Darwin, Spencer, Jack London and many others. What has happened to the other members of the McGehee family? It seems a long lifetime since I have heard of them.

Again let me thank you for such a wonderful letter.

Sincerely,

WHP:VN



1077 Flagler Avenue,  
Jacksonville 7, Florida  
January 3, 1957

My dear Hugh Peal:

My son Phil, a Senior Purchasing Agent for Hughes Aircraft in Tucson, forwarded your letter to me here in Jax. I had flown from Tucson, where I had lived more than two years, across the continent to this coast. Hence the delay in replying to your kind letter, which seemed a voice out of a happy past.

I write very little now; had some poems in The Blue Moon---won a prize---and in The Stepladder, a magazine published at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois and presumably quit high-brow.

Shall I give you a bit of Lanier history in which we have much pride, a human weakness that has been justified by a few of our family which includes Sidney Lanier and Tennessee Williams, whose real name is Thomas Lanier Williams.

In 1576 the Count Jerome Lanier, a Huguenot, fled under persecution from Rouen, France. Elizabeth of England received him with honors and made him her court musician.

A lineal descendant, we know as Nicholas I. in our family, was sent by Charles I. of England to collect paintings on the continent as a nucleus for the Royal Gallery. This Nicholas brought the aging Van Dyck to the court of Charles, who did the Baby Stuart known to all of us, and he also painted a picture of this Nicholas for the king.

When Charles lost his head under the axe, among his effects sold at auction was this portrait of my ancestor. It then disappeared from history through two centuries and more, until it came to light once again in the attic of an old manor house in England. Its ultimate fate is not known to me.

xxx --The gay and debonair son of the first Nicholas was a courtier at the dissolute court of Charles II. He accompanied other envoys to Portugal when they brought the poor little Princess of Braganza to be queen to the Merry Monarch. This Nicholas II was a patron of the arts; he loved music and Sam Pepys records how he and Nicholas made music all through a day at Pepys' house, with madrigals and airs. This latter bit of gossip I most delightedly ran into one day in Chicago, when browsing in the small library, I came upon a large single edition of Pepys' diary. Again in some edition found in the library at (of all places), I found my Nicholas at a court function, but Pepys, whose spelling defied modern lexicographers) had written our name as "Lanear", a mistake corrected by the editor in a foot-note.

As late as 1676 the given name of "Nicholas" was common in the family. When John Lanier settled on a grant of land near Richmond, Virginia, in that year, his sons were John, Nicholas, Sampson and Robert. My grandfather Lanier was a lineal descendant of this Nicholas; my grandmother of Sampson.

Nicholas married Priscilla Washington, a remote cousin to George



Washington, and Sampson married her sister Elizabeth Washington. These Washingtons were descended from a John Washington of Surrey, England, who was a first cousin to the John Washington of Northampton--"and Sulgrave Manor, and the ancestor of the President.

*This bird*  
The name Lanier means "falcon," and our coat of arms bears these birds and is very beautiful when developed in the correct colors.

From the line of Sampson my grandmother, who married Thomas Lanier, her ~~disent~~ cousin, is directly descended, being about second cousin to the poet Sidney Lanier. On the distaff side Tennessee Williams is of course far-off kin, but the inheritance of a flair for creative work seems bred in our bones. John Powell, the talented violinist, is of the same line.

Enough, perhaps too much, of the Laniers.

Wages is my only book. Submitted in the first Harper Contest in 1923--24, it was chosen as a novel of distinction from more than seven hundred manuscripts. It then became the runner-up in the finals; of the three judges my book received one vote and Margaret Wilson's "The Able MacLaughlins" took the prize with two votes.

The Harper editors once wrote me my novel was magnificent. Evidently the public did not concur in this opinion as there was never another edition although all of the first was quite promptly sold. Copies are practically non-existent; you were fortunate, since you desired the book, to find one.

I have never had a book of verse published, but many of my poems found their way into the anthologies. The favorites were chosen from The Satevepost. George Horace Lorimer bought most lyric verse and, need I say, the vers<sup>es</sup> that is so out of fashion to-day. Over a period of twenty years more or less I made enough sales to The Post to fill a modest volume, but *who* would read it now?

I was proud to be associate<sup>d</sup> in the columns of the Post with Miss Millay, Charles Hanson Towne, Marjorie Pickthall, Dorothy Paul, Arthur Guiterman, Lord Dunsany, Robert Abrahams, Mary Carolyn Davies, and others. I think Lord Dunsany and I are perhaps the only survivors of that era in the writing of lyric verse.

My best-liked poems include "Michaela, Colonel Bristow of Kentucky, In April, The Road To Ballymena, Awakening, Might-born, Emily Bronte, Lanterne Des Mort, The Wind, Long Ago."

Will Farma of Columbia Univ. included Awakening in his book of Drama and Poetry for College use. Dr. Cotton Noe also used more of my verses in his Kentucky Anthology of verse, than any other poet---with perhaps one exception. Night-Born was chosen by Ted Malone for his first volume of poetry; and I gave permission to many other anthologies to use my verse, and never saw <sup>them</sup> nor do I remember the names or years in which the verses were used. I sold short stories long ago to Collier's, the Post, Holland's, and all the New Fiction people who absorbed my light fiction. An agent marketed some of my stories in England and Australia. And after long years of sterile indolence, I am amusing myself revising an old tale of the court of Charles II, and using my



gay blade of ancestor but just incidentally.

Writing has always been an avocation, shall I say escape, from the exigencies of village and farm life in the long ago when our lives were an inescapable round of duties never lightened by the aids farm women have to-day? I liked to work, to entertain, to share burdens, visit the sick, give comfort to the heart -broken as I closed the eyes of one death had marshaled out of life. To be a successful artist in any creative work, one must not be diverted from the straight and narrow road of dedication. Dillettantism in literature brings only the ~~half-loaf~~ and that is what our reward must be unless we forake all else and follow the gleam.

half

The largest collection of my writing efforts are or were in the Western State Normal College in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Or so the librarian wrote me years ago. I was a columnist on the Sunday issue of The Paducah Sun-Democrat for a decade and my fulminations were copied throughout the state when I happened to ring the bell on some theme and editor liked.

May I explain the general appearance of these pages by saying there is no good typist or amanuensis available? So--my slightly arthritic fingers punish your patience with these limping pages. I celebrated my eighty-third birthday on December 6th--is that an acceptable excuse?

I am deeply appreciative of your interest and shall feel warmed in the cockles of my heart by being included with the Kentuckians who have won right title to fame and remembrance. As all my literary references, correspondences and Mss. are left packed in a big old trunk in Tucson, I have had to rely on memory, but I am sure of the accuracy of all I have written.

I am returning, perhaps soon, to Tucson for the desert has me in its spell. I wondered how near you were to our town whose growth now is almost phenomenal. I have knowledge of most of the little towns near Tucson and Phoenix to which capital city we made frequent visits as well as to Nogales, across the border.

\*  
amazing

It is fine news to me that your mother is living; never can I forget her kindness to my Aunt Myra, one of the bravest souls I ever knew. I well recall your visit to us; Paul was with you. He has been gone so long; life gave him few breaks. Has it been better with him now? I wonder.

Thank you, Hugh. Take out of these helter-skelter pages anything you might find of interest or worth,  
Faithfully yours,

Mary Lanier Magruder



The poem IS Michaela.

1077 Flagler Ave.,  
Jacksonville 7, Florida  
March 14, 1957

My dear Hugh Peal:

I hereby apologize for my long delay in replying to your good letter. Several things came up to claim my time, the worst being a bout with mine ancient enemy, neuritis of the nerve in my right arm, accompanied by bursitis in the shoulder. I am happy to say the attack is much modified now.

When I left Tucson, I left many things behind to be sent later if at all. As I flew in to ~~the~~ East Coast, I brought the customary forty pounds. Many of my Mss. were left in various containers, but the ones I had planned to revise or copy came in my suitcase with me.

My son in Tucson has been unable to find the collection of my verse and no one can explain its disappearance. This Book of Verse, --the title---contains all my published and unpublished poems. I never can remember much of my verse any more than one can repeat or fully recall a dream. Hence, if this collection in Ms. is lost, I will have only the clippings pasted in various scrap-books, which are stored in a huge trunk in Tucson.

Perhaps very little will be lost to the world should the collection never be found, but I do value more than I can express in halting words your interest in myself. Of course my simple lyric stuff is so out of fashion now I have felt that I had retreated into the limbo of the forgotten.

At this time, with some projects immediately absorbing my time ~~and efforts~~ and efforts, I can not gather up the all-embracing data of my ~~pe~~ family but pigeon-hole it as a task to be attended to when the ~~time~~ time is mine to command. I have four children, only one of whom, my daughter, married a Kentuckian from Carlisle county. Redmond married a Canadian girl; Ben a lassie from Kansas City. Phil's first wife was from Tennessee, his second from Boston, Mass! So---getting the data of their birth, parents' history is something else again! So be patient, please.

I wrote a sort of autobiography ten years ago; sent it to the Ladies Home Journal. There was a manuscript conference and Arne Einselen wrote me the script had extraordinary merit, a decision in which Hugh Kahler joined---but they did not buy. I do not know what the fault was so I laid it by and now, after these years, have decided to try to get an angle of correct vision on it.

A year or two ago I did a short novel or a long novella or maybe it is an extended novelette. At any rate, it is in a way autobiographical, the date beginning in 1888 and the scenes are in Ballard county, Paducah, with old Clinton



College and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 all incidental to the tale. Those were the years of my growing up, but I am positively not the heroine. But all of those long-gone times, our ways, speech and customs remain more vividly pictured in my mind than much of a far wider world I have known for many years now.

Since coming out to Florida, I have written in a dramatic situation which in this day of leaning backward toward integration, may be too hot to handle. Even as late as your mother's girlhood, Southern girls and woman were never left alone, for the Negro man was a subtle but terrible shadow in the back of our thought. You will readily recall some ghastly tragedies involving the black man and his white victims. In the story I do pay tribute to the good kind colored people we knew, and make Black Jess the exception as to evil, I have no real attack in my story, but only the projected crime defeated with her only weapon, a red-hot poker in Aunt Jennie's hands. Of course a white tramp--"stragglers" we used to call them, and I am sure the term was a left-over from the no-accounts in the wake of armies not yet a score of years from The War Between The States. could be substituted, but the point of fear would be dulled. I am now working on the final copy of this tale, inserting the added chapter into its proper place. I have just taken on an agent as I have had none since Bob Hardy sold for me in England, Australia, and here in the States as well.

The title of story was Journal of Evelyn, but now The Diary of Anne (Frank rather puts that into the discard---sounds imitative. So I have thought that, for reason of some connection in the story, of changing the title to The Wind In The Haw Tree. Do you remember the magenta beauty of our black haw trees in the spring in Kentucky, or were they gone from our woodlands before your boyhood? There was one in my Grandfather Lanier's yard on the old farm, and this is a certain tree mentioned in the tale.

Hugh, I am in my eighty-fourth year, and except for the art arthritis, am able to travel by car, plane, bus or streamliner. I read almost incessantly, enjoy good television, and the best in movies. And believe me, these out-pourings are the result of those fine letters of yours. And---I have a life-mask of self, made twenty years ago but good one. My family hates it, so I have left it with Paul's mother; it hangs in her study in Jackson, Michigan. Would anyone want it? Dr. Roof of Paducah made it; it was his hobby. He has one of Irvin Cobb and others.

This must end sometime, so why not now? And thank you for your interest in the small contribution I have tried to make to Kentucky letter. With fervent wished for your continuing success and much happiness in your daily life, I am faithfully yours,

Mary Lanier Inagawder