

Melrose Florida

Touchstone to four counties

Alachua
Bradford
Clay
Putnam

A LITERARY GUIDE
for readers and writers alike
to the rich writing heritage of our area

Photo courtesy of Clayton's Photography

Shake Rag Art Gallery

Shake rag is an art gallery and gift shop. A popular weekly event is Coffee Talk from 10am - noon each Wednesday. 882 N. Hwy 21, 352-475-5551.



Gallery 26

At Gallery 26 we are local artists and fine craftsmen who have gathered together to form a co-operative venture. We offer one of a kind items in Fine Art, Pottery, Wood Carvings, Handmade Wood Furniture, Jewelry, Found Objects Art, Glass Works, and Needle Crafts. ART, MUSIC & DANCE are here in abundance. You can rent the main concert hall for your own special event. We welcome you to come by for a visit and are always looking for volunteers to share any skills they possess. Highway 26 downtown Melrose, (352)475-2924.



FWA Florida Writers Association

Florida writers are well served online and in reality by the FWA (Florida Writers Association) which follow the edicts of its slogan: **Writers Helping Writers.**

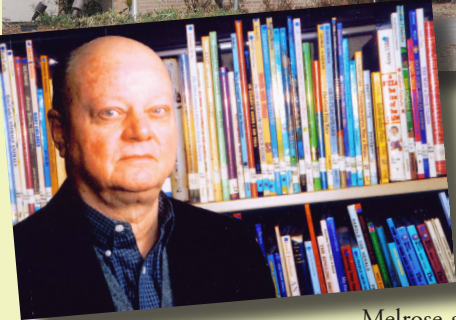
It has branches covering many sections of the state with more blossoming yearly, as visitors to the sunshine state take up residence permanently. Its annual Conference, held at Orlando Lake Mary Marriott, is the setting for authors, agents and publishers to meet for shop-talk and awards to juried contestants at the Royal Palm Literary Awards banquet. More than 450 participants attended the 2011 event.

Closer to home, branches in St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and Fleming Island are an easy drive for Melrose residents.

Writing is a solitary business and organizations like FWA allow some socializing for practitioners of the isolated life. That dog-eared response to an honest answer: "Writer, huh? But what do you do in real life?" becomes old, fast.

FWA can be found online and in the monthly publication, *The Florida Writer* which is available to quill and ink practitioners!

Writers - Talks - Programs Melrose Library - Core of the Community



Florida's destination community of Melrose plays host to one traffic light, two gas stations, three art galleries, and four counties: Alachua, Bradford, Clay and Putnam.

It is the adopted home of Al Burt, *Miami Herald* sports writer, editor, columnist, and author of Florida books.

His tales illustrate another side of a state in contrast to the sun, sand, and surf touted in tourist brochures. Burt's book, *The Tropic Of Cracker*, is a Florida classic tying characters from the frontier state's pioneer families to modern entrepreneurs.

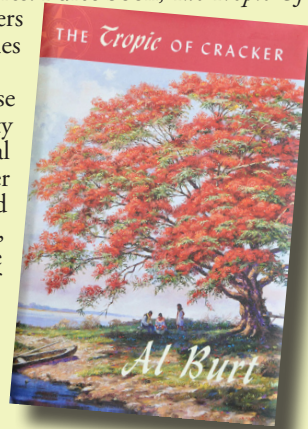
Visits by many other authors whose books line the shelves of the community library have added to literary personal appearances and presentations over the years. Programs for children and those entering their second childhood, including those in-between, provide priceless live interaction in an age of remote, electronic, stimulus.

Al Burt's presence in Melrose is not only marked by a plaque noted by readers and visitors to the community library, but also is recognized by fine diners at the Blue Water Bay Restaurant, where a prominent poster holds pride of place in the main dining room.

He was not the first and will not be the last writer to be influenced by the state. It has survived under seven flags. Florida has been on maps ever since Ponce de Leon sought the Fountain of Youth and landed near the site of St. Augustine on the Atlantic coast in 1513.

Melrose subsequently developed in the path of discoverers for centuries, and has played host to writers, artists and, scholars who have recorded the area's many facets. The independent community is touched by four counties, each with its own historic and written heritage to explore, for resident and visitor alike.

Al Burt spent a lifetime excavating stories. As contestants of the annual competition, who echo his *Tales of Florida* can attest, there are more tales to tell!



Bellamy Road: Art Books, Authors, Film - plus!



The late David (Turner) Warner's concept of a cultural center catering to the slightly skewed point of view of the off-beat resulted in the Bellamy Road Gallery (State Road 26). The author and documentary filmmaker showcased like-thinking writers, artists, musicians, and movie-makers to the community.

Frequently, the renovated Victorian-era wooden structure creaks under the weight of SRO audiences. People flock to regularly scheduled art shows, lectures, and performances from all points of the compass.

The art gallery showcases works of award-winning artists and hosts the end-product of the annual *Plein Aire* (in the open air) event. Dozens of artists "Paint the Town" in a variety of methods from water, oil, and pastel colors and photography to assemblages and sculptures, for prizes and recognition by their peers. Competition is



Stetson Kennedy

lively and attracts curious and studious onlookers, literally into the field.

Along with the gallery space, and an out-door reception area for bonfires and musical performances. Bellamy Road also contains a vast collection of out-of-print books. They are the accumulated trophies of Keith Bollum, vice-president of the Foundation.

Gallery and library hours of viewing follow the seasons. It is best to call (352) 475-3435 or (352)283-9700 for current information.

Melrose Bay Art Gallery



It is the first of the current crop of cooperative galleries located within the community. Membership is limited to 14 artists who participate in shows and the "grunt" work of manning floor and front desk, thus sharing the work-load. Many are active participants in other endeavors, too. For opening hours and one-on-one meetings by appointment, call: (352) 475-3866.

WAG Writers Alliance of Gainesville

It has been said many times, "Everyone has a book in them". The Writers Alliance of Gainesville, an active full-service organization for scribes of all persuasions (perhaps that should be rephrased to emphasize, genres), acts upon that premise.

Newbies to professionals can lurk or participate in monthly programs, and get input on their output of prose or poetry in customized "pods". Writers of Memoirs, SciFi or Chick-Lit can find an empathetic ear from a peer in an equally-shared interest area.

In addition to honing the writers' craft, a platform is provided for their poetry and prose in the annual issue of BACOPA Literary Review. Academicians (it is a University community) to school-bus drivers have an equal opportunity to hone their prose at WAG. Reach online via Google or mail to WAG, P.O. Box 358396, Gainesville, FL 32635-8396.

Florida Humanities Council

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EVENTS For Writers & Readers

Florida Heritage Book Festival

Annual (September) event.

Jointly sponsored by the Friends of the Library, Tourists Development Council of St. Johns County, and the *St. Augustine Record*. A weekend of author, agent, publisher workshops, book signings and awards.

Contact: www.FHBookFest.com

Amelia Island Book Festival

Annual (February) event.

Sponsored by the *News Leader*, Florida's Oldest Weekly Newspaper and others. Smorgasbord of books, authors, workshops, news.

Contact: ameliaislandbookfestival.com

Florida Antiquarian Book Fair

Annual (Second Weekend March).

The "grandfather" of old out-of-print book fairs in Florida is staged at St. Petersburg Friday-Sunday, the second weekend in March. It showcases books, printers, authors of yesteryear, and prime-source material for research.

Contact: www.floridabookfair.blogspot.com

Miami Book Fair International

(Second Week November).

Authors, publishers, and booksellers, old and new, flood downtown Miami every November to see, hear and talk books. A series of lectures, workshops, and panels occupies most of the week with international authors. The weekend street fair is part carnival, happening, and book scrum for readers of all genres.

Contact: www.miamibookfair.com

Sisters In Crime

First Saturday of the month, 10:30 a.m. at Southeast Regional Library, Jacksonville.

You don't have to be a lady to support these writers. Sheriff, Highway Patrol, Detectives, and Forensic Experts of either gender go through procedural steps for wannabe writers of the genre. Fancy a spot of arsenic at Happy Hour? Find out how long it will take to kick in!

Contact: www.floridasistersincrime.com