



Michael Knight

By ASHLEA RAMEY

While some writers toil as college professors in order to pay bills, some, like Michael Knight, happily balance two passions.

Knight grew up in Mobile, AL, where he first began publishing stories in local literary journals. He moved to Virginia to attend Hampden-Sydney College, and graduated with a BA in 1992, with the intention of progressing to law school.

However, Knight's professors convinced him to try writing, and he ultimately received an MA from the University of Southern Mississippi Center for Writers. Later, he studied at the University of Virginia, earning an MFA in Creative Writing in 1996.

While in Virginia, Knight contributed stories to literary magazines, eventually winning the *Playboy* College Fiction Contest with "Gerald's Monkey." His first collection, *Dogfight and Other Stories*, was published in 1998, and named a *Los Angeles Times* Notable Book of the Year, and received a special citation from the PEN/Hemingway Foundation.

Publishers contracted Knight for his next novel based solely on a verbal outline. *Divining Rod* received the 1999 New Writing Award for Fiction from the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

Over the next decade, Knight released another collection of short stories, *Goodnight, Nobody* in 2003, and his second novel, *The Holiday Season*, in 2007.

The Washington Post Book World praised Knight's work as "understated, graceful, easy," and hailed his ability to portray strained relationships between "characters whose eccentricities, at once comic and sad, are accepted and everyday."

Knight has published in *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review* and *GQ*. His stories appear in several anthologies, such as *New Stories in the South* and *Scribner's Best of the Fiction Workshops*.

Outside of his personal projects, Knight works as a college professor. Immediately after graduating from the University of Virginia, he migrated to Baltimore, where he began teaching at the Gilman School, and then returned to Virginia for a residency at Hollins University. From there, he briefly lived in Kettering, England, where he continued to write and teach.

He then returned to the South to teach at the University of Tennessee in 1999, and now serves as director of creative writing. Knight took a brief sojourn from 2005-06, as the John and Renee Grisham Emerging Southern Writer at Ole Miss.

When he's not working, Knight spends time with his wife and daughter, and says that he will probably never be a full-time writer.

"I really can't imagine my life without teaching in it," he says. "There's a terrific energy I get from working with students who are excited and interested, and it causes me to practice what I'm preaching in class."

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“Good writing is made up of characters who are bigger than their circumstances.”

Bibliography

Divining Rod
(1998)

Goodnight, Nobody
(2003)

The Holiday Season
(2007)

Dogfight
& Other Stories
(2007)