

## Ms Press Release Service

### Another Mississippi Writer Spotlights the Mid-South

Former Jacksonian, Dr. J. John Portera, is already receiving wide-spread acclaim for his new novel, *Conspirators of Revenge*, just released in September. This seventies story begins in the Memphis area, a few miles east of present day Germantown, where “Big Frank” Laursen, a Memphis real estate developer lives. Frankie, his brilliant but troubled only son, is the central character around whom the action revolves. And there is plenty of action as Frankie moves from Germantown to Oxford, MS., where he enters law school at Ole Miss and then, upon graduation, joins a law firm in Jackson, MS. He practices criminal law there for a short while before moving back to Memphis—the place where this complex mystery/thriller comes to a climax.

Dr. Portera chose the Memphis area as the prime locale for the novel because he has many fond memories of weekend getaways spent there as a college student at Ole Miss and young dentist in Clarksdale, MS. His life long love for Memphis made it natural for him to choose it as the home of his main character, Frankie Laursen. He spotlights Memphis staples such as Silkys, the Rendezvous, Paulette’s, Grisanti’s, Central Gardens, and Southwest College (now Rhodes) to mention just a few. Those familiar with Oxford and Ole Miss will no doubt recognize such famous places as Hemingway stadium; the home of William Faulkner, Rowan Oak; the Beacon restaurant; the Lyceum Building; the Oxford Square; and many other historical spots well known to most Mississippians. The author does the same when he moves the novel’s locale to Jackson, MS., and vicariously takes the reader to the Belhaven residential area, Millsaps college, and such hot night spots of the seventies as Poet’s, the Cherokee Lounge, the Sun ‘N Sand, Ceramis, Bennigans, The Patio Club, and The Edgewater.

The storyline for *Conspirators of Revenge* was developed from a conversation Portera had with a friend. “In talking about a former spouse, the individual said something that piqued my imagination,” Portera said. “My book is certainly more than 95 percent my imagination but, like most fiction, it has a few veins of fact.” Dr. Portera’s two previous books includes a non-fiction chronicle of his brother’s fight against leukemia titled “Tribute to a Champion: A Fight for Life” and a book of humor involving true dental stories gathered from all over the US titled “Grinning and Grinding: A Collection of America’s Dental Humor”. His first book is now considered somewhat of a collector’s item--due to its original low number of published copies and its present out of print status. In new condition, the book is commanding a significantly higher price than its original issue cost.

J. John Portera is quite a story in and of himself. He graduated from Ole Miss with a B.A. degree, and then accepted a graduate fellowship in the English Graduate School. His intention at the time was to become a writer; however, the responsibility of

supporting a family prompted him to accept a dental school position. He practiced and taught reconstructive cosmetic dentistry for 29 years in Mississippi, 8 of those years as an associate professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. Retiring from dentistry to pursue his artistic bent, in 1998, he moved on to a quarter horse ranch, became a physical fitness trainer, and began to change an already intense interest in carving exotic hardwoods into a passion for bronze sculpting

In 2000 he moved back to his native West Point, MS where he began to turn out bronze sculptures in earnest. The main motif of his sculptures are life-size busts of prominent Native American leaders like Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and Crazy Horse, as well as an exquisite reproduction of Chief Joseph, the great warrior of the Nez Perce. He has many wildlife sculptures which he has given imaginative names like “Defiant” for a Bighorn ram and “Rage”, for a charging African bull elephant. Pictures of his sculptures can be seen at his website: [www.giovanнисculptures.net](http://www.giovanнисculptures.net).

Ultimately his creative and imaginative talents funneled into the creation of what turned out to be “Conspirators of Revenge”. It was a ten month project from beginning to end, working 10-12 hours a day. Besides being a highly psychologically charged piece of literature in the murder mystery/thriller genre, the novel has what Portera describes as his “author stamps or water marks”: Whenever the weather is presented, it is accurately described for the specific date and location. Many times the weather fits his scene perfectly. The author says his other unique trait is reflected in the ear he has for our deep Southern drawl which, oftentimes, is heard as an improper or indistinct dialect form that he can quite accurately convert into the written word.

Dr. Portera has been guest speaking to book lovers at regional libraries, as well as doing signings in Kentucky and Northwestern Tennessee. His next scheduled signings will be in his home town of West Point, MS., at Cigar Charlies on Dec. 17; Coca Cola and Domino’s Pizza will participate. He will be signing books in Memphis at the Barnes & Nobles at Wolfchase Mall on Feb 11 and at Barnes and Noble in Collierville, TN., on Feb. 12. Signings in Jackson, Oxford, and Iowa, are anticipated after the first of the year. He will be in Memphis to present a program on his bronze sculptures to the Artist’s Link group on Feb 20.

The novel can be ordered directly from the publisher at [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com) (1-888-280-7715) or at [www.jjohnportera.com](http://www.jjohnportera.com). The book is also available online at [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Reader reviews, from as far away as Florence, Italy are posted at both of those sites. Dr. Portera said he was very moved by a personal letter from the Assistant Warden and Treatment Director at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Anamosa, Iowa, expressing his gratitude that the book is now in the prison library and available for inmate reading. Barnes and Noble stores have the book in stock and most retail bookstores can order the book through their usual distributor, such as Ingram.