William Faulkner: His Life And Achievements Essay, Research Paper

William Faulkner is viewed by many as America?s greatest writer of prose fiction. He was born in New Albany, Mississippi where he lived a life filled with good times and bad times. However, despite bad times he would become known as a poet, a short story writer, and finally one of the greatest contemporary novelist of his time. William Faulkner?s accomplishments resulted not only from his love and devotion of writing, but also from family, friends, and certain uncontrollable events.

William Faulkner?s life is an astonishing accomplishment; however, it is crucial to explore his life prior to his fixated writing career. In 1905, Faulkner entered the first grade at a tender age of eight, and immediately showed signs of talent. He not only drew an explicitly detailed drawing of a locomotive, but he soon became an honour-roll student: “His report card would show no grades below Perfect or Excellent” (Blotner 21). Throughout his early education he would work conscientiously at reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic; however, he especially enjoyed drawing. His deportment at school was very high, but it was not as high as it was at home. When Faulkner got promoted to third grade, skipping the second grade, he was asked by his teacher what he wanted to be when he grew up, and he replied, “I want to be a writer just like my great granddaddy” (Blotner 23). At last, (in 1914) Faulkner took interest in poetry, but no one in Oxford could tell him what to do with his poems. Meanwhile, Faulkner, who is very talkative, would always entertain Katrina Carter and Estelle Oldham by telling them vividly imagined stories. Eventually, Faulkner grew very fond of Estelle in fact, if he heard her voice he would deliberately attempt to be spotted by Katrina in hopes that she asks him to join her. Estelle soon became the sole inspirer and recipient of Faulkner?s earlier poems. Coincidentally, a gentleman named Phil Stone would fall in love with Estelle?s friend, Katrina. As a result, Katrina had told Stone about Faulkner and his poetry. So one afternoon, Stone walked to Faulkner?s home to get acquainted, and during his visit he received several written verses from Faulkner? poetry collections: “Anybody could have seen that he (Faulkner) had talent?it was perfectly obvious” (Blotner 44). Stone not only became Faulkner?s close friend, but also a mentor to the young writer at the beginning of his career. Stone immediately gave the potential poet encouragement, advice, and models for his study of literature. For example, Stone would give practice drills in punctuation, as well as lecture Faulkner on goals and grammars. Meanwhile, Faulkner?s main interest in school became athletics such as football and baseball, thus his grades started to deteriorate: “Bill showed absolutely no interest in the education being offered?He gazed out the windows, and answered the simplest questions with ?I don?t know?” (Blotner 39). Eventually, he would quit both athletics and school altogether. In 1919, his first literary work was acknowledged and published in The New Republic. The poem is a forty-line verse with a French title that acknowledges the influence of the French Symbolist, “L?Apres-Midi d?un Faune.” In September, Faulkner would enroll in the University of Mississippi, and during his academic years it did not deter him from writing more poems. The Mississippian, the student paper, published “Landing in Luck” by Faulkner- the story is a nine-page short story created from his direct experience in the Royal Air Force flight training in 1916. He has also written several other poems such as “Cathay”, which is published in the Oxford Eagle and “Sapphic”, which is published in The Mississippian. During the summer, Faulkner became a house painter in Oxford, and in the beginning of autumn he enrolled in the University of Mississippi; however, his early pattern of school started to take toll. Faulkner began to cut classes and finally just stopped going. Although, this time he participated in a drama club called “The Marionettes”, and began to publish book reviews in The Mississippian. In the summer of 1921, Faulkner decided to take a trip to New York to receive some professional instructions from editors and critics, since Stone was busy with his academic studies. Faulkner stayed with a man named Stark Young, where they shared an incredibly small apartment. Later, Young introduced Faulkner to Elizabeth Prall of the Doubleday bookstore to see if she wanted some help prior to the Christmas rush. Reluctantly, Prall accepted and never regretted her choice since.

“Faulkner made a good clerk-polite, interested, and one of the best salesman in the store?

All the customers fell for him like a ton of bricks” (Blotner 105).

During his stay in New York, Maud Faulkner and Stone

became very worried about Faulkner and his financial troubles. Meanwhile, Stone immediately went to work on behalf of his friend, and soon became the Assistant District Attorney. As a result, Stone used his political powers and appeals to influence U.S. Senator Harrison to promise Faulkner a decent job as a postmaster at the university substation. Faulkner?s job would last him between 1922 to 1924 with an annual salary of fifteen hundred dollars. Even as postmaster, Faulkner still found time to write and publish a short prose poem “The Hill”, in The Mississippian. This poem was a great importance to Faulkner as it served to be the beginning of the rural setting of his future Yoknapatwpha novels, and his first objective to “real life” characters.

As a result of friends and unexpected events, William Faulkner would soon write novels. Consequently, he realized his career faced the best of times and the worst of times. However, it became clear that his writing would eventually become his life long happiness. During the late months of June through November in 1923, there was a correspondence between Faulkner and the Four Seas Company, a publisher in Boston, concerning Faulkner?s manuscript entitled “Orpheus and other poems”. Unfortunately, the publication of the poems was futile without a financial contribution, which he was unable to provide. However, Stone helped Faulkner by writing to the Four Seas Company in hopes of offering Faulkner?s manuscript “The Marble Faun”. Reluctantly, it was accepted and by the end of the year the company published 1,000 copies of his novel, which was dedicated to Faulkner?s mother, and prefaced by Stone. In May, Faulkner finished the typescript for Soldier?s Pay, which he sent to the publisher Horace Liveright, who gave Faulkner two hundred dollars in advanced pay. He used the money to pay for his trip to Europe. While in Paris, Faulkner began to work on the novel Elmer; unfortunately, it was never completed, but exists today in several versions. After arriving in England, Faulkner decided to go back home. Upon his arrival in New York, he immediately began his next novel Mosquitoes, which was published a year later by Boni & Liveright. In September of 1927, Faulkner finished yet another novel entitled Flags in the Dust; however, it was rejected in the following month, and was returned in December. Afterward, Faulkner received the go ahead by his publishing company to send his typescript to another company, which is now Harcourt, Brace. Unfortunately, even though the novel was published, it was reduced to 110,000 words and the title Flags in the Dust was finally replaced by Sartoris instead. Within the same month, Faulkner began The Sound and the Fury, which was finished by October. The published novel soon became a critical success with only 1,789 copies. In 1928, Faulkner broke ties with Harcourt, Brace, and signed a new contract with a new publishing house of Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, which entitled them to Faulkner?s new novel entitled, Sanctuary. Faulkner took the typescript and decided to correct the proofs on his honeymoon with his wife, Estelle. Finally, Faulkner?s novel, Sanctuary, was soon published, and in astonishment 6,457 copies were sold. As a result, Faulkner soon realized that he is now the most important figure in American letters.

William Faulkner deserved every single award given to him, because of his intense love and dedication to literature. Nevertheless, it is just as important to know what he has won, as well as how he won them. Therefore, in examining and analyzing Faulkner?s work it will help us understand and appreciate his gift of writing. Throughout Faulkner?s life he has won many awards on behalf of his talent for literature, and the following are just a few of his awards: (1950) Nobel Prize for Literature, (1950) American Academy?s Howell?s Medal for Fiction, (1951) National Book Award for Fiction, (1951) Legion of Honour in New Orleans, (1955) Pulitzer Prize, (1957) Silver Medal of Greek Academy, (1962) Gold Medal for Fiction from the National Institution of Arts & Letters. Even though Faulkner won all these awards, there was at least one award that had many conflicting views by many American critics. That award pertains to the Pulitzer Prize awarded to Faulkner? novel, The Fable. The story takes place within a fortress city of Chaulnesmont, two days after the mutiny of a French regiment. The chief plot is set when a regiment of soldiers refused an order to fight knowing that the attack would not be successful. The theme of sacrifice is the central meaning of the novel. Is it on the grounds of military necessity or expediency, or on the grounds of personal sacrifice for some universal ideal; as a result, the main question asked is what is actually achieved by sacrifice. Several critics have pointed out the dualism that runs throughout A Fable, in which there are presence of good and evil, guilt and innocence, and bravery and fear. Despite America judging Faulkner?s novel as a failing accomplishment of its literary goals, A Fable was for the European readers: “The most important novel?a literary masterpiece” (Blotner 595).

As we have seen, William Faulkner?s interest in writing was so intense that the meaning of “giving up” never crossed his mind. As a result, whenever he experienced hard times there would always be family and friends to aid him in his career. In any event, Faulkner proved that with great dedication and devotion anybody could achieve their goals.