

An Evening with Pat Conroy

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 08 October 2013 10:24



The Center for the Arts at the University of South Carolina Beaufort will present "An Evening with Pat Conroy," Saturday, Oct. 26, at 7 p.m. at the Center for the Arts on the university's Historic Beaufort Campus.

The event is a kickoff fundraiser to launch a capital improvement campaign for renovations at the center. It will also commemorate the advance release of Conroy's latest memoir, *The Death of Santini: The Story of a Father and his Son*.

Conroy's lecture will be followed by a reception at the historic 1780 Barnwell House across the street from the Center for the Arts. Tickets are available at \$150 per person for reserved seating at the lecture, a signed copy of the new book, and attendance at the reception with the author. Photos with Conroy and book-signing opportunities will be available at the reception. General Admission tickets for the lecture are priced at \$100 per person. Sponsorship opportunities and naming opportunities for distinct sections of the center are available through the Office of Development at USCB.

The first of seven children born to a young career military officer from Chicago and a Southern beauty from Alabama, Conroy time and again drew upon personal experience to create his bestselling novels. Three of them, *The Boo*, *The Lords of Discipline* and *My Losing Season*, focused on his experience as a cadet at The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, located in Charleston.

Conroy's brief tenure as a teacher of underprivileged black children in a one-room schoolhouse on Daufuskie Island formed the basis for *The Water is Wide*, which was later turned into the film *Conrack* starring Jon Voight. The book won a humanitarian award from the National Education Association.

Other Conroy novels were adapted for the screen as well. *The Great Santini*, the precursor to the current memoir, explored conflicts in the author's childhood, including his ambivalent love for his violent, abusive father. It became the basis for a feature-length motion picture starring Robert Duvall in the title role. *The Prince of Tides*, one of the most beloved novels of modern time, was made into a highly successful feature film directed by and starring Barbra Streisand and actor Nick Nolte. His novel *Beach Music* told the story of a young American who moves to Rome to escape the painful memory of his wife's suicidal leap from a bridge in South Carolina. *South of Broad*, his fifth novel and ninth book, was a love letter to the city of Charleston. The *Pat Conroy Cookbook* soon followed, and then *My Reading Life*, a compilation of the books that most influenced him.

Conroy has long been a friend of the University of South Carolina Beaufort. Fifty years after his family first moved to Beaufort, Conroy makes his home today on Fripp Island, a barrier island in the Lowcountry.

"Pat's association with the university goes back decades," says historian Lawrence S. Rowland, Ph.D., professor emeritus at USCB and the author of *The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Volume I 1514-1861*."

Dr. Rowland and Conroy are lifelong friends. The two met in the early 1960s when Conroy moved to Beaufort. "Pat and I sort of grew up together," he says. "We were close friends, part of the same social crowd.

"When USCB was starting its first venture into athletics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Pat volunteered to be our basketball coach for a year or two. He was a magnificent basketball player. I watched him play college games; he was just a spectacular athlete. He was a great coach and we had a lot of fun. I don't think our basketball players were ever particularly successful, but Pat was the team coach for a couple of years."

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Dr. Rowland recalled the first time Pat Conroy set out for Daufuskie Island to teach the local children. "That was the beginning of his missionary work and the beginning of his literary life," he says. "The first time he went out to the island, we took him out in a boat. We dropped him off on the island and he went off to begin his Daufuskie Island experience. Pat and I were good friends back when he was just starting out as a writer."

Conroy drew on that Daufuskie Island experience to write *The Water is Wide*, later to become *Conrack*.

In his latest book, *The Death of Santini*, Conroy revisits his tortured family and describes his father's surprising evolution into a father he could finally love.

"On behalf of our administration, faculty, staff and students, I want to thank Pat Conroy for his generous support of USCB and our Center for the Arts," says Dr. Jane T. Upshaw, the university chancellor. "His novels and memoirs have served as the voice of coastal South Carolina and the Lowcountry for more than four decades. For all that time, he has proven to be a true friend of USCB. We are delighted to have him as an honored member of our university family."

Funds generated by "An Evening with Pat Conroy" will be used to support a wide range of capital improvements at the Center for the Arts: upgrading the lighting system, installing new carpet, replacing 461 seats, painting the interior and putting up new signs.

For more than 30 years, the CFA, formerly known as the Performing Arts Center, served as the cultural hub of Beaufort County. It housed the Beaufort Orchestra, the USCB Festival Series, the Beaufort Theatre Company, and innumerable performances by internationally acclaimed performing artists. USCB envisions the CFA as a regional focal point for the arts through quality performances, gallery events and academic degree programs.

Located in the heart of the Carolina Sea Islands, the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) is a senior institution of the University of South Carolina system serving the southeast coast of Georgia and South Carolina. USCB has been the fastest growing baccalaureate

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institution in the USC system since becoming a four-year university in 2004. The university's two campuses serve a diverse student body of 1,874 students. The Historic Beaufort campus, located on Beaufort's downtown waterfront, houses an innovative baccalaureate Studio Art program in close proximity to Beaufort's many art galleries. The Hilton Head Gateway campus in Bluffton, S.C., offers cutting-edge Computational Science and Nursing laboratories and is the home to Sand Shark athletics. USCB offers students an exceptional place to learn and live in an environment focused on growth, preservation and opportunity. For more information about the University of South Carolina Beaufort, please visit www.uscb.edu online or call the university's Office of Public Information at 843-208-8030.

For more information about "An Evening With Pat Conroy," contact Bonnie Hargrove, director of the Center for the Arts, at 843-521-4145 or visit www.uscbcenterforthearts.com .