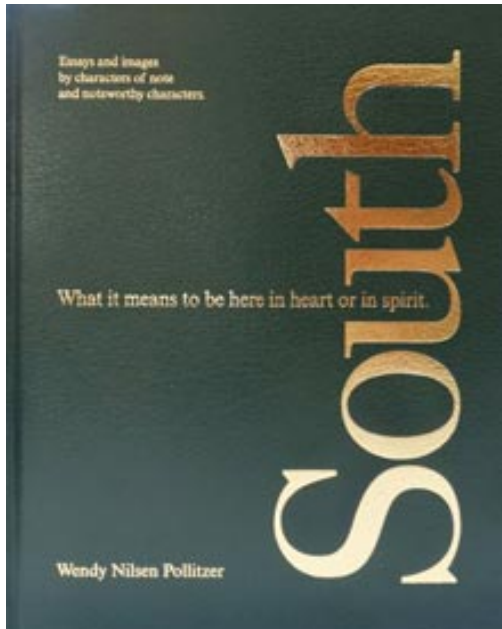




By Margaret Evans, Editor

Two of my friends and creative co-conspirators



have just released a book that people will be talking about for a long time. Publisher/designer Lydia Inglett and author/editor Wendy Pollitzer are the proud parents of *South*, a collection of essays and images by all sorts of interesting characters who hail from the warmer climes – some of them only in spirit. According to the website,

South

features “emotional essays from notable musicians, athletes, journalists, writers, business leaders, artists, actors, clergy, chefs and more . . . with defining photography and quotes that collectively embrace the charm and harmony of the new South.”

Some *South* contributors you’ve undoubtedly heard of include political commentator

James Carville, conservationist Eustace Conway, country music artist Naomi Judd, actress Andie MacDowell and writer Pat Conroy. There are many, many other big names on the list, and several locals (along with Conroy), including Milledge Webb, Marlena Smalls, Malcolm

Goodridge, Tuck Scott, and yours truly. Much of the photography was done by locals as well, including our own Mark Shaffer, who can wield a camera like nobody’s business. Lydia Inglett is a long-time associate of ours who’s responsible for the original design of the publication you’re holding, and Wendy Pollitzer has been a contributing writer to *Lowcountry Weekly* for years. I’m excited about this collaboration, and you should be, too!

As for my part, I was asked to write an essay about what the South means to me... in 500 words or less. They might as well have asked for a haiku. Brevity is not my . . . well, y’all know. But I was thrilled to be included, so I managed to reign in my typical verbosity . . . and even came in 70 words under! (Hold your applause.) Without further ado, here’s my little essay that appears in *South*.

The South of My Heart

I’ve lived in the South all my life – almost half a century – and I’ve seen it change plenty. It’s more like everywhere else now than it used to be, though, famous for its slow and stubborn evolvers, it’s not entirely homogenized yet.

Still, when you ask me to talk about the South – that wholly distinctive place that lives in my

heart – I will always tell you about the South of my youth. About catching lightning bugs on warm Alabama nights and the catfish-gasoline smell of the Tennessee River. I'll tell you about fireworks etched across a dark July sky, about the taste of buttered cornbread and the low drone of honeybees on Confederate jasmine.

Ask me about the South of my heart, and I'll send you to Sunday school in black patent leather shoes . . . teach you to say "yes, ma'am" and "no, sir" . . . make you clean your plate, write thank-you notes, say your prayers, pledge a good sorority, and whip up a casserole when somebody dies. I'll tell you of a place both gentle and hard, where a fixation on good manners is both the grease of society and its squeaky wheel . . . where the exalted ideal of the Nice Girl – with all its burdensome expectations – is enough to turn a girl mean.

Again, this was the South of my youth; we're far more progressive now. But not entirely, and I thank God for that. I thank God that we're not quite up to contemporary code, that we still have some antiquated rules of behavior. For in those rules, I see a terrible beauty. In the southerner's lingering obsession with manners and appearances and honor and "niceness," I see an honest assessment of the human condition and a poignant desire to transcend it . . . or at least to elevate it a bit. In that sense, the unreformed, old-school southerner is something of a tragic figure. And a noble one.

So, you can have your enlightened west-coasters and your sophisticated back-easters. As for me, I'll stay in this hopelessly romantic, sun-rinsed place where the patriotism often borders on jingoism . . . where the religiosity often masks hypocrisy. . . where they preach family values but don't always practice them. I'll stay here, because this is *my* place. These are *my* people, and I love them. Down South, we know things aren't always what they appear to be – that *we* aren't always what we appear to be – but we never stop wishing they were, and we never stop trying.

Meet Wendy Pollitzer at City Java for book signings of 'South' on the mornings of October 15, 22 and 29. Or, purchase your book for local pick up by emailing: booksales@starbooks.biz. Pick up from the Beaufort Regional Chamber Visitor's Center, located at the Arsenal, 713 Craven Street with your paid receipt.

*Margaret Evans is the Editor of Lowcountry Weekly. Read more [Rants & Raves](#) or visit her blog at [www.
memargaret.com](http://www.memargaret.com)*