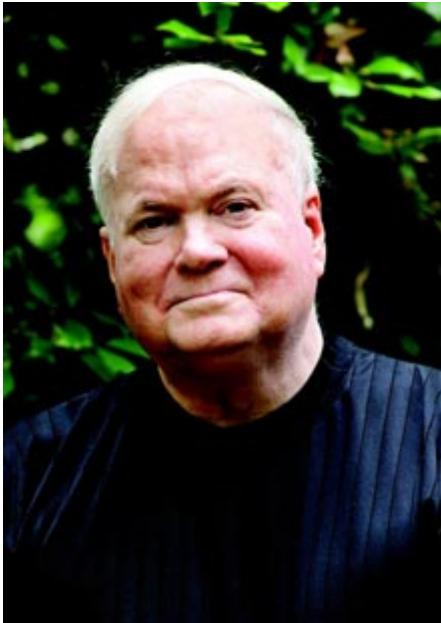


Conroy's Archive Goes to USC

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 20 May 2014 13:10 - Last Updated Wednesday, 21 May 2014 06:12



What do Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller and Beaufort's own Pat Conroy have in common? They're all great American writers who have original work preserved at the University of South Carolina. Conroy's archive, which includes handwritten manuscripts of his 11 books, family scrapbooks and personal diaries packed with story ideas, poems and musings, now belongs to USC.

The collection will be housed in the Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library on the Columbia campus. It chronicles the work – and life – of the writer who has spent his career telling the rich stories of South Carolina and its people. His books include *The Great Santini*, *The Prince of Tides* and *Beach Music*.

"Pat Conroy, for so many of us, defines everything that is mysterious and beautiful about the Lowcountry. His influence goes beyond South Carolina, but this is where he lives and this is where he writes," said Tom McNally, dean of University Libraries. "This collection, which is one of the premiere archives of one of the most important living writers, had to be here."

The University of South Carolina received the collection as a gift from the Richard and Novelle Smith family in memory of Dorothy Brown Smith, a longtime supporter of University Libraries.

"It is only fitting that Carolina's Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, which holds the

work of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller and many others, is now able to add this extensive archive from another great American writer, Pat Conroy," said Carolina President Harris Pastides, who announced the gift at a ceremony May 16. "We are most grateful for the generosity of Richard and Novelle Smith, who provided this gift as a wonderful tribute to the late Dorothy Brown Smith."

Conroy, who writes all of his books by hand on yellow legal pads, holds on to everything. The collection features more than 10,000 handwritten pages of his work, 15,000 typewritten pages, screenplays, letters to his parents during his years at The Citadel, 80 family scrapbooks assembled by his father, thousands of family photographs and boxes of letters from writers and fans. The archive will include everything he writes for the rest of his life.

"My papers belong here, I wanted them here, I am happy they're here, I am proud that they're here. And I will try to add to them for the rest of my writing life and that is my pledge to you all," Conroy said at the Friday morning announcement in the Hollings Library, where he talked about his writing life, family and archive.

"This archive is like Pat's writing – it's wide open," McNally said.

And that openness means the collection will draw students, writers and researchers to Carolina. Because the collection is so comprehensive, it offers the opportunity to trace a writer's work through all stages and gain insight about the craft.

For example, researchers will be able to see every draft of the book and the screenplay for *The Prince of Tides*, and cross-reference it with Conroy's journals, where he details the problems he faced in writing parts of the book.

"This is our most comprehensive literary archive. It is amazing to see Mr. Conroy's hand-written drafts and the early copy-edited typed versions of his work from his youth through the present. The archive is an incredible treasure for researchers, including our own faculty and students," said Elizabeth Sudduth, director of the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections at Carolina.

It also means the University of South Carolina is establishing itself as the place for other contemporary American writers' papers. The University Libraries already are home to some of the world's top collections of Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald's work. The Conroy acquisition is "a whole new beginning for contemporary Southern writers. Pat Conroy will help us build this archive to include others," McNally said.

Donor Richard Smith said he hoped the Conroy archive would inspire students, faculty and researchers from around the world to come to Columbia.

"I grew up a loyal Gamecock and my whole family graduated from USC. My mother was a great supporter of the university by contributing to scholarships, programs and new buildings on campus. My mother believed in the value of education and the central role the library plays. She enjoyed reading, literature, and especially the writings of Pat Conroy," Smith said. "I know she

Conroy's Archive Goes to USC

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 20 May 2014 13:10 - Last Updated Wednesday, 21 May 2014 06:12

would be very excited about this opportunity."□ University Libraries has a full-time archivist working on the Conroy collection.

Select pieces are on display in the Hollings Library, and the entire collection should be processed and available to the public in about 18 months, Sudduth said.