
27 Views of Durham is a lively, eclectic, rousing montage of essays, poems, memoirs, and fiction depicting the grit and grace of the Bull City. It is the fourth collection of “27 Views” to be published by Eno Publishers of Hillsborough. Others in this series include collections for Hillsborough, Chapel Hill, and Asheville.

Steve Schewel, cofounder of The Independent Weekly, states in his introduction to this collection: “While few have captured Durham in fiction, our city attracts more than its share of journalists and bloggers, essayists and advocates, historians and slam poets.” Here you will find stories of Old Durham and tales of a much revitalized Durham that still retains its persistent grit and occasional eccentricity. As Jim Wise notes in his essay, “Durham has also turned its gritty side into a badge of honor.”

In his remembrance, Walter Matthew Brown conveys what it was like as a boy growing up in the 1930s in Durham’s West End section, then going on to attend North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University). Novelist Lewis Shiner recounts a memorable evening in 1964 hearing jazz artist Charlie Shavers at the Wonderland Theater in the Hayti section of Durham. And more than one writer in this collection espouses a love for baseball and for the Durham Bulls. In “Last Days, Old Ballpark,” Clyde Edgerton tells of attending baseball games with his eccentric uncles and gives us a history of the various ballparks that have graced the city.

Dawn Baumgartner Vaughn, in “Durham, Unvarnished,” writes of her love for the old brick textile and tobacco factories that have been repurposed, of the new, highly successful Durham Performing Arts Center (DPAC) that has sprung up adjacent to the American Tobacco Campus (former factories now thriving as office space and restaurants), and of the old Lucky Strike Tower that is lit up at Christmas. “New Durham gathers to play where Old Durham once worked,” she observes.

“Harry Potter on Ninth Street,” by John Valentine (co-owner of the Regulator Bookshop on Ninth Street in Durham) recounts the HP phenomenon from the perspective of a bookshop owner and father of avid readers. He tells us that his favorite part of the wildly successful Harry Potter release parties was seeing young readers curled up in various nooks of the Regulator, some with their favorite pillow, entranced with the latest Potter installment.

Novelist Katy Munger, after admitting to several failed relationships in her life, talks of her love/hate relationship with Durham in “Best of Towns, Worst of Towns – My Town”:

Eventually, as is the case with all lasting relationships, I have come to love Durham for what it is, not for what I want it to be . . . Thus it is that I still proudly call myself a citizen of Durham – the town that is what it is, with few pretensions; the town that manages to find room for everyone, without making anyone feel out of place; the town that, like all good relationships, lets you be yourself.
This fine collection concludes with the heartfelt “One Square Mile: A Durham Anthem” by Rebecca Newton of Rebecca & the Hi-Tones, her band of 30 years (http://www.reverbnation.com/rebeccanewton).

Suitable for all libraries.

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