

## Scott Russell Sanders

*Distinguished Professor of English*

After 38 years of teaching and service to Indiana University, Scott Russell Sanders retires in May 2009. Scott was born in Memphis, Tennessee, grew up on an Army base in Ohio, studied at Brown University before going on, as a Marshall Scholar, to complete a Ph.D. in English literature at Cambridge University, and in 1971 joined our faculty, where he reached the rank of Distinguished Professor of English. He will be difficult to replace since all who have come into contact with him over his years here know him as a skilled and patient teacher, a generous and supportive colleague, and one of the country's most gifted and insightful writers of prose, whose work is sure to be read and reread for decades to come. His personal vision as revealed through his writing—a gentle wisdom combined with fierce love for the earth and all those who inhabit it—is increasingly vital at this time. Through each of his many books he is concerned with our place in nature, the work of social justice, the practice of community, and the search for a spiritual path.

Scott has published 20 books, including novels, collections of short stories, essays, and personal narratives, and he has also published seven storybooks for children. His work appears in such distinguished magazines as *Orion*, *Audubon*, and *The Georgia Review*, and has been widely reprinted in *The Art of the Essay*, *American Nature Writing*, *The Norton Reader*, and scores of other anthologies. His collection of essays *The Paradise of Bombs* won the Associated Writing Programs Award in Creative Nonfiction in 1987. *Staying Put*, a celebration of the commitment to place, won the Ohioana Book Award in 1994. *Writing from the Center*, an account of the quest for a meaningful and moral life, won the 1996 Great Lakes Book Award. His more recent books include *Hunting for Hope* (1998), an exploration of sources for healing and renewal; *The Country of Language* (1999), an account of experiences that have shaped his work as a writer; *The Force of Spirit* (2000), meditations on the sacred in everyday life; and *A Private History of Awe* (2006), a coming-of-age memoir, love story, and spiritual testament, which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. His latest book is *A Conservationist Manifesto* (2009), which lays out the ecological, ethical, and practical grounds for shifting from a culture based on consumption to a culture based on stewardship. Through personal narrative and reflection, the book argues that the practice of conservation is our wisest and surest way of caring for our neighbors, for our planet, and for future generations.

Scott has received fellowships for writing from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Indiana Arts Commission, the Lilly Endowment, and the Guggenheim Foundation. His work has been selected for *The Best American Essays*, the *Kenyon Review* Award for Literary Excellence, the PEN Syndicated Fiction Award, the John Burroughs Essay Award, and the Indiana Humanities Award. Most recently, the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature has named Scott as the 2009 winner of the Mark Twain Award “for distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature.” Previous winners include Toni Morrison, Jim Harrison, Ray Bradbury, Gwendolyn Brooks, Stuart Dybek, and Jonis Agee.

For his collected work in nonfiction he was honored in 1995 with a Lannan Literary Award.

Scott's work has also been celebrated by those outside the academic community. In 2007 a group of nationally known, southern Indiana songwriters—including Krista Detor, Tim Grimm, Carrie Newcomer, Tom Roznowski, and Michael White—released a CD of songs inspired by Scott's collection of tales *Wilderness Plots* (1983; revised edition 2007), which chronicles the settlement of the Ohio Valley between the years of the Revolution and the Civil War. For the past two years, Scott has been performing with these musicians in a stage show featuring the stories and songs, before enthusiastic audiences across the Midwest. Last year, Bloomington's own WTIU television station released an hour-long documentary about the making of the show, and PBS is distributing the program for national viewing in 2009.

At Indiana University Scott has received the Frederic Bachman Lieber Award for Distinguished Teaching, the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association Distinguished Faculty Award, and the Students' Choice Teaching Award. He has also been granted honorary degrees by Otterbein College, Unity College, and Berea College.

Scott has also performed admirable service for the university. He was a member of the charter faculty of the English department's M.F.A. in Creative Writing program, serving two stints as director, and for many years he anchored the program's course offerings in both fiction and creative nonfiction. He also served as director of undergraduate studies for English and, beyond the department, he served as director of the Wells Scholars Program (1997–2003).

*A Private History of Awe* contains an epigraph from the poet, social activist, and theologian Thomas Merton that seems pertinent to Scott's years here at Indiana University: "There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun." While such telling may be hard, those who know Scott have seen him in the classroom, in the community, and on the written page seeking to help others realize their brilliance.

~Anthony V. Ardizzone