



• *Author*

TIMELINE

1936 – Draws and writes verses, notes for parents

1938 – Father moves family to Atlanta

1938 – Flannery and her mother move to Milledgeville

1941 – Father dies of Lupus

1942 – Graduates from Peabody High School; enters Georgia State College, one block

Flannery O'Connor

1925–1964

Inducted 1992

Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah in 1925. She spent most of her childhood there, the daughter of staunch Roman Catholic parents. Catholics were a minority group at that time, and even as a child in parochial school, Flannery was aware of being regarded as somehow different. Though in her later years many of her artistic contemporaries regarded religious orthodoxy freakish, Flannery never lost her vital connection to her faith and her church.

While still young, the Great Depression and her father's illness forced the family to leave Savannah. Her father took a position in Atlanta, but after a few months in the city, Flannery and her mother moved to a family residence in Milledgeville, Georgia. Her father remained in Atlanta, joining them on weekends.

An only child, Flannery grew accustomed to living with a lively extended family. She and her mother shared their house with two maiden aunts, a great-aunt, an uncle and a boarder. Various uncles and cousins frequently visited.

Flannery's father died when she was 15, having suffered a slow decline from lupus. Despite the painful loss, Flannery finished high school in Milledgeville and attended Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College & State University) just a block from her home. She graduated with a major in Sociology, though fiction writing had been her real interest since childhood.

On advice from teachers, Flannery entered the Writers Workshop at the State University of Iowa, taking a Master of Fine Arts degree there. She was then invited to continue her work at Yaddo, the artists' colony of the Trask Foundation at Saratoga Springs, New York. There, she continued to advance her style while meeting literary friends with whom she would form lifelong friendships. It was at Yaddo that she met her future editor, Robert Giroux; the poet Robert Fitzgerald and his wife, with whom she lived for two years in Connecticut countryside and referred to as her "adopted kin;" and the novelist, Caroline Gordon, to whom she continued to send her work for criticism as long as she lived.

away from her home

1943 – Writes stories and poems for college literary magazine: The Corinthian

1945 – Applies to graduate schools; accepted at University of Iowa

1945 – John Ranson, editor of Kenyon Review chooses to read one of her stories during classroom visit

1946 – Sewanee Review rejects two of her stories; in Fall, enrolls in Writer's Workshop

1947 – Andalusia Farm is left to her by uncle

1947 – Sells story "The Turkey" to Mademoiselle for \$300

1948 – Moves to Yaddo Artist's colony in New York where she meets many prominent literary friends

1949 – Returns to Milledgeville for Christmas and learns she must undergo operation

1950 – Spends January in hospital after surgery; misdiagnosed with acute rheumatoid arthritis and undergoes cortisone treatment

1951 – Diagnosed with Lupus (but not told by family); undergoes blood transfusion

1951 – Moves to Andalusia and takes room on ground floor

1952 – *Wise Blood* published by Harcourt, Brace

1952 – Takes up painting, uses farm scenes as subjects

1952 – Receives more transfusions; spends six weeks in bed; is told about lupus

1956 – Learns that hip is

Flannery's literary career was a race against time. The symptoms of lupus appeared just as she was finishing her first novel, *Wise Blood*. The disease progressed with occasional remissions—restrained by medication that simultaneously damaged her bone structure. Aware of the fragility of her existence, Flannery wrote and revised with tireless intensity. Two collections of stories, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* and *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, and a second novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, were all she was able to finish. Other work was published posthumously by friends.

Flannery's writing did not receive its highest honors until after her death, but her reputation has grown steadily and, today, she is everywhere recognized as one of the most important American writers of the 20th century.

Additional Resources

Flannery O'Connor Collection

Ina Dillard Russell Library
Georgia College & State University
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 445-4047

progressively degenerating from hormones injections for treatment

1957 – Hip x-ray shows that hip is no longer deteriorating

1958 – Travels to Europe; is blessed by Pius XII

1959 – Completes first draft of novel *The Violent Bear it all Away*; published a year later

1960 – Delivers lecture "Some aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" at Wesleyan College in Macon, GA

1964 – Fibroid tumor is successfully removed; operation reactivates lupus and infections confine Flannery to bed; unable to regain strength

1964 – Slips into coma on August 2; dies of kidney failure within 24 hours

Copyright ©2005 Georgia Women of Achievement, Inc. All Rights Reserved.