

REGISTER OF THE BETSY BYARS PAPERS
1962 - 1991

Betsy Cromer Byars -

MSS 129 4 cu. ft.

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INTRODUCTION

Betsy Cromer Byars, author of books for children, donated her manuscripts to Clemson University September 30, 1986. The collection consists mainly of her original manuscripts and galleys from published books. This register was initially prepared by Berniece Holt in the 1980's and completed by Karen Bates and student assistants in 1992; and includes accession #'s: 82-30, 86-104, 87-71, 88-15, 87-125, 89-6, 89-~~6~~, 89-204, and 89-227.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Betsy Cromer Byars was born in North Carolina in 1928 and grew up during the Depression. Her parents, George Guy and Nan Rugheimer Cromer, were well educated and avid readers; her mother had majored in drama at a small girls' school. Byars's childhood was spent in a small mill village near Charlotte, N. C. where her father worked. She has always loved to read, having learned well before she started school.

After high school, Betsy Byars attended Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, for two years and then transferred to Queens College in Charlotte, where she majored in English. After her graduation in 1950, she married Edward Ford Byars, a graduate student in engineering at Clemson University. The next six years were spent in Clemson, living a pleasant life as a wife of a graduate student and then junior faculty member. In 1956 the Byarses moved to Urbana, where her husband pursued further graduate work at the University of Illinois. They had two small children and were expecting a third. Byars knew no one in Urbana, and her husband was involved with his studies all day and often after dinner as well, and this situation proved to be the ideal time to try a hand at writing.

Two years later, the family moved to Morgantown, West Virginia, where Edward Byars joined the faculty at the University of West Virginia. Betsy Byars's first writing success came with the publication of short, humorous pieces in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, *Everywoman's Magazine*, and *TV*

Guide. Soon she began to write for children, but many failures preceded her successes. Ms. Byars started writing children's books as someone unfamiliar with the classic works of the genre. She still reads very few children's books, although she is an avid reader of adult fiction.

Clementine (1962) was her first published book. It was dedicated to her four children, who ranged in age from four to eleven. The book takes the form of a small boy's first-person account of his imaginative play with a toy dragon named Clementine.

Her honors and awards include: Child Study Association of America's Book of the Year selection, 1968, for *The Midnight Fox*; 1969, for *Trouble River*; 1970, for *Summer of the Swans*; 1972, for *The House of Wings*; 1973, for *The Winged Colt of Casa Mia*; 1968 and *The 18th Emergency*, 1974; for *After the Goat Man*, 1975 and many other book awards.

Betsy Byars received the Newberry Medal in 1971 for *The Summer of the Swans* and the American Book Award in 1981 for *The Night Swimmers*. Nancy Chambers, editor of the British critical journal *Signal*, has characterized her as "one of the ten best writers for children in the world." Her books have won high favor with children in the United States and Britain as well: of the twenty-five books she has published in the United States, twenty-two are currently in print; sixteen of her books are listed in *British Books in Print 1985*. Her books have been translated into at least nine languages, and several of her novels have been dramatized for television.

Biographical information taken from Dictionary of Literary Biography, American Writers for Children since 1960: Vol. 52 1985 and Something About the Author Vol. 46. 1982

SCOPE AND CONTENT

These papers contain many of Byars' early published and unpublished writings; some correspondence, newsclippings, book reviews found in journal and magazine articles as well as television scripts based on her novels. The papers consist mainly of typed copies and galleys from Byars' books. Translations of some of her books are contained in this collection, as well as video cassettes, videotapes and audio tapes. Oversized galleys can be found in box 9 of the collection. They are arranged alphabetically by type of material. Special Collections also has copies of most of the editions of books by Betsy Byars.