



## 1986 Inductees to the South Carolina Academy of Authors

Critic, novelist, and poet James Lafayette Dickey, III, was born in Buckhead, Atlanta in 1923. James was introduced to poetry by his father at an early age and spent his childhood reading works by such poets as Lord Byron, Conrad Aiken, and later, Dylan Thomas. Dickey enrolled at the Clemson Agricultural College in 1942, but left before his second semester to join the Army Air Corps. As a member of a night fighter squadron, Dickey served as radar operator. After the war, he enrolled at Vanderbilt University, majoring in English and philosophy and graduating magna cum laude. Following his service in the Korean War, Dickey returned to Vanderbilt to earn a Master's degree in English. After a stint in advertising, he taught English at Rice University and at the University of Florida.

After his first book, *Into the Stone and Other Poems*, in 1960, Dickey focused solely on writing. He considered the decision risky. However, the gamble proved successful when his second book, *Drowning with Others* (1962) outsold his first collection and earned Dickey a Guggenheim Fellowship. *Buckdancer's Choice*, published next, earned Dickey the National Book Award for Poetry. During this time, Dickey was appointed to the Library of Congress to act as a poetry consultant. In 1967, Dickey released *Poems 1957-1967* and lectured at universities across the country.

At the time, Dickey wrote many books, including *Two Poems of the Air* (1964), *Helmets* (1964), *The Strength of Fields* (1979), *False Youth: Four Seasons* (1983), and *The Eagle's Mile* (1990). Dickey also published three novels: *Deliverance* (1970), *Alnilam* (1987), and *To The White Sea* (1993). *Deliverance* won the Prix Medicis, an award for the best foreign-language book, and in 1972 was adapted as a major motion picture. He also wrote the screenplay adaptation of Jack London's *The Call of The Wild* in 1976.

Following his appointment to the Library of Congress, Dickey accepted positions as a teacher and poet-in-residence at the University of South Carolina and continued to earn recognition for his work, including *Jericho: The South Beheld* (1974), *Zodiac* (1976), and *Scion* (1980). Dickey was inducted into the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1972, the same year the film adaptation of *Deliverance* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture. Five years later, Dickey was invited to read his poem, "The Strength of Fields," at the inaugural celebration of President Jimmy Carter. In 1981, Dickey won the Levinson Prize for poems in Puella.

A dedicated educator, Dickey taught his last class at USC five days before his death. He passed away on January 19, 1997, and is survived by his three children, Kevin, Christopher, and Bronwen.



*James Dickey*