



Academy of Authors  
South Carolina

John William Jakes was born in Chicago in 1932. He was a freshman studying acting at Northwestern University when he sold his first short story for \$25. Jakes later noted, "That check changed the whole direction of my life."

Jakes transferred to DePauw University and graduated in 1953 from the creative writing program. He then attended Ohio State University and earned a Master's degree in American literature. Like many authors, he could not make a living on his creative writing and worked for advertising agencies. He spent his evenings, however, penning short stories, experimenting with several genres, such as fantasy, western, mystery, and science fiction.

For nearly twenty years, Jakes wrote only at night, but, in 1971, he resigned from his position in advertising and began writing full time. To date, Jakes has published over sixty titles, including those written under his pen name, Jay Scotland. His science fiction includes *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1974), *The Asylum World* (1978) and *Master of the Dark Gate* (1970), but his most popular novels are historical.

In 1973, Jakes began working on an eight-volume series, *The Kent Family Chronicles*. The first installment, *The Bastard*, was an instant bestseller, as was the rest of the series. The series follows one family through American history. The second, third, and fourth installments, published in 1975, made Jakes the first author to have three books on the New York Times bestseller list in the same year. Between 1982-1987, Jakes wrote the *North and South trilogy*, another bestselling series that focuses on the friendship between men from South Carolina and Pennsylvania before, during, and after the Civil War.

With honorary doctorates from multiple universities and numerous awards including the Cooper Medal, the National Cowboy Hall of Fame's Western Heritage Literary Award, and a dual Celebrity and Citizen's Award from the White House, Jakes spends time in Florida and South Carolina with Rachel, his wife of 67 years.

## 1996 Inductees to the South Carolina Academy of Authors



*John Jakes*