

# Alumna Nevada Barr Is 'Write' on Target

BY LEAH KOLT AND WANDA MODISETTE

She writes, she paints, she acts. She is able to leap onto The New York Times Best-Seller list with a single bound.

This creative superwoman is **Nevada Barr (SCOM '74)**, a self-styled "seeker of truth and amusement" and 1997 recipient of a Cal Poly Honored Alumni Award.

Her 12-book series on Anna Pigeon, a feisty middle-aged park ranger, is based on her own experiences as a National Park Service ranger. In the books, Ranger Pigeon valiantly faces mountain lions, wildfires, dark caves, bears, poachers, hostile co-workers and even urban criminals.

Barr's works have brought her considerable acclaim, garnering both Agatha and Anthony awards for best first mystery for *Track of the Cat*, as well as the prestigious French Prix du Roman award for *Firestorm*.

*Deep South* hit The New York Times Best-Seller list and won the prestigious Barry Award for 2001 Best Novel. *Blood Lure* spent three weeks on The New York Times Best-Seller list.

Her assignments with the NPS eventually landed her in Mississippi 10 years ago, patrolling the state's famous Natchez Trace, a scenic by-way that follows old Native American trails. Newly divorced and not at all pleased with her assignment, she experi-

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enced an improvement in her attitude when exposed to Southern hospitality, while writing her first traffic ticket.

"The gentleman I pulled over was so polite," she recalls. "When he found out I



Nevada Barr (Photo by Wanda Modisette, College of Liberal Arts)

was single and had just moved to the area, he offered to take me home to dinner with his family and introduce me to his single brother-in-law."

But it was fellow ranger Richard Jones who eventually became her husband. The couple resides in Clinton, Miss., with a menagerie of dogs, cats, a stone alligator and a giant catfish sculpture. In fact, Barr

lists painting portraits of pets as her favorite pastime.

The theater is a close second. A speech communication major at Cal Poly, she once played the title role in

"Peter Pan," where her flying apparatus was guided by the same man who coordinated Mary Martin's flights on Broadway. "That was a new twist on learn by doing. If the audience had one-tenth as much fun as I did, they had a great time," she said.

Barr continues to act in local little theater, while managing to churn out a book per year, each written in longhand in spiral binders. So committed is she to kinesthetic creating that she refuses even to be photographed with her computer in the background – lest someone think she composes electronically.

A new Anna Pigeon novel called *High Country*, set in Yosemite, was released in February 2004, and Barr is busily filling notebooks with ideas for her next book.

For more information on Barr, go to <http://www.nevadabarr.com/index.htm>. ■