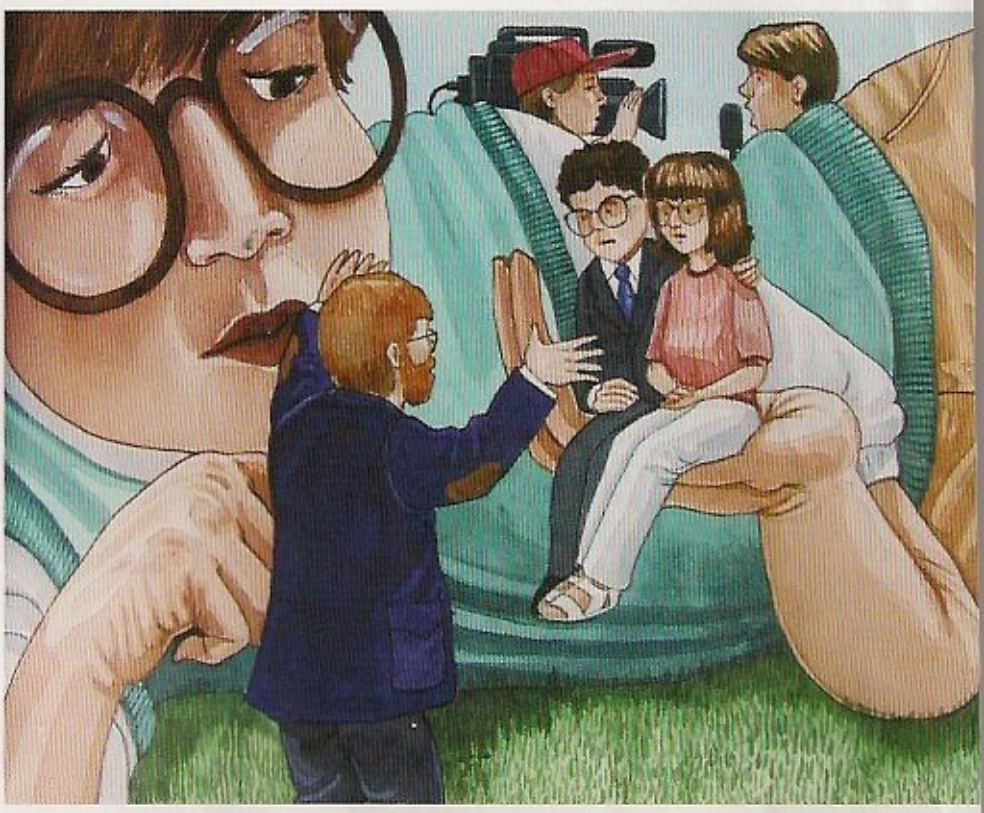
Jackson resident paints a name for himself in the illustrating industry



Chuck Galey illustrates the commotion surrounding an eight-year-old boy's reading-induced growth spurt in Randall Ivey's *Jay and the Bounty of Books* (right).

Galey's stylish canines dance the night away at the "doggy disco" on Beale Street in *Rock 'N' Roll Dogs*, David Davis' tribute to Memphis (below).

creating a scene

BY JENNIFER BARNES MOFFETT

When Chuck Galey experienced recurring bouts of seasickness riding the choppy waters of the Gulf of Mexico, he decided to change his major. Galey, who was studying oceanography at Mississippi State while working at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory during summers, decided to follow a land-bound path dedicated to something he had always loved—art.



Growing up in the Mississippi Delta, where he remembers most people considered creative endeavors to be more of a hobby than a potential career, Galey took a risk to pursue his passion. Galey says his love of drawing goes all the way back to Sunday mornings as a young boy when he would doodle on the church bulletins his dad would give him during long sermons. "I think this was to keep me quiet. I had everything I needed to learn how to draw: A pencil, a piece of paper, and a long-winded Baptist preacher. Many an artist got their start as a child drawing in church," he says on his website.

Galey graduated from college with a degree in graphic design and began a career in the advertising industry while moonlighting as a freelance illustrator. Galey's growing interest in children's books developed when his son Sean was born. Galey and his wife began noticing all of the great children's books and the unique artwork in each one as they read to their son. "My eyes were opened," he says. "I thought, 'I could do this—this is great!' The stories are so imaginative and fun."

As an illustrator, Galey's collaboration on *Jazz Cats*, a children's book written by David Davis about felines frolicking in New Orleans jazz clubs, generated more interest in his work. The popular picture book was named to the Children's Choice Top 100 List and was a selection of the Accelerated Reader Program. Galey's illustrations of the characters were unique in that they depicted animals with more human-like characteristics. This personification shows the cats as colorful individuals living up the New Orleans nightlife. Male cats blow the trumpet and pluck the bass in a jazz band, while a lady cat dances the tango wearing a hot pink dress with matching dancing shoes and holding a pink rose in her mouth. When the party's over, a group of cats enjoy coffee and beignets at Café Du Monde.

The popularity of *Jazz Cats* inevitably stems from the original way the words and artwork unite to capture the magical rhythm and vibe of New Orleans. Galey says he spent two days just taking pictures and exploring the New Orleans jazz scene to get ideas for the artwork. This research is an important beginning step in the developmental process, and Galey says his children's book illustrations usually take him up to nine months to complete.

Many children's book lovers may not realize the arduous process involved in the creation of a seemingly simple project. When Galey receives a manuscript from a publisher, he separates the story into page breaks as he generates ideas for possible visual scenes. Most traditional picture trade books require fourteen two-page spreads, which Galey composes by using transparent watercolor on stretched watercolor-pigmented paper that he prepares by wetting the watercolor paper.

But a long road stretches ahead before he actually picks up a paintbrush. Galey says the most challenging part starts with deciding on possible compositions for each page. He composes ten thumbnail sketches (tiny one-by-two-inch drawings) for each possible spread to find the most exciting composition. Then he chooses the best one out of ten for each layout and creates a tiny booklet, called a mock-up, to send to the publisher. Once the revision process starts, he also refines the drawings and sometimes conducts additional research.

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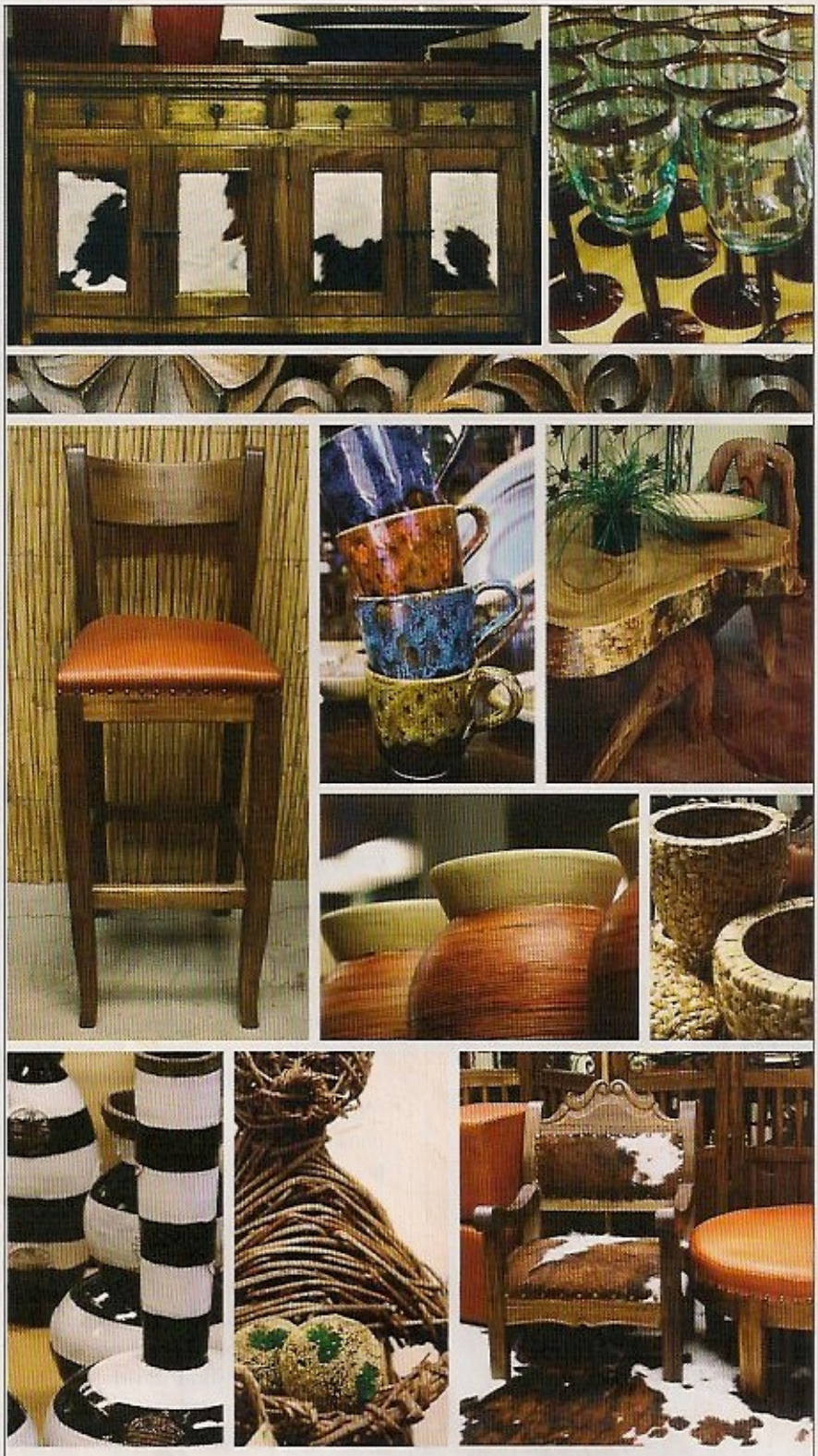

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Sept 10th • 7pm
Mayor's Blues Reception

Sept 11th • 12noon
Blues Film Festival
Nelco Cineplex

Sept 12th • 5:30pm
Main Street Association Blues Block Party
Downtown Greenville

Sept 13th • 7pm
Greenville Arts Council & Delta Symphony Association
Jazz Tribute to the Blues
E.E. Bass Cultural Center

Sept 14th • 6pm
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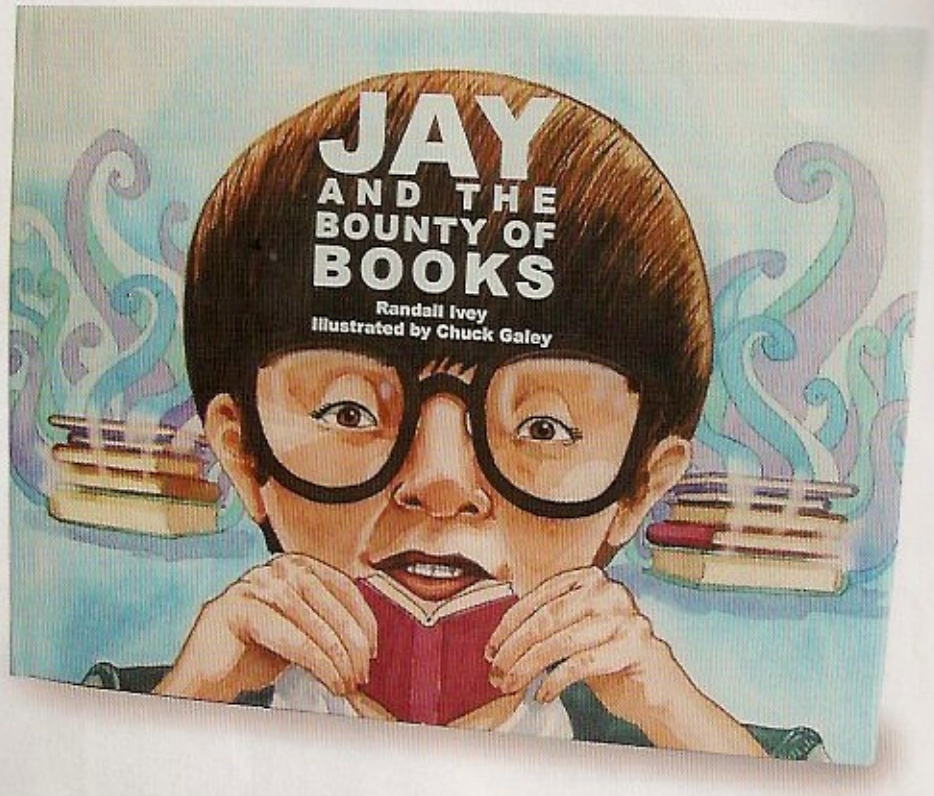

CREATING A SCENE

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But it is still not quite time to paint. "Sometimes what I do in between the painting and the little sketch is create a 'pencil rough,' which is a pencil drawing with a No. 2 pencil on a regular little sketch pad," he explains. "This can help with the refining of the drawing as well making sure that it looks good and is accurate. It also helps with value study to show 'this is what is dark and light, and this is what is gray, mottled, and so on.' Then I enlarge that drawing on the watercolor paper itself."

Galey's meticulous work ethic shines through in his finished product. His completed illustrations are whimsical and vibrant, which entices young children to pick up a book even if they don't yet know how to read. Children will return to their favorite books, even if it's just to see the exciting pictures, but they inevitably begin to retain the repeated words being read aloud to them.

Galey says that he is inspired by the idea of getting kids excited about reading. "What a great mission to have: to help kids learn to read and become lifelong readers," he says. "If children become better readers, then they will do better in school, and then they will become better high school students. When they go off to college, they will become better college students, and when they graduate they will become better citizens."

Galey goes beyond illustrating from his studio in Jackson to further this lofty mission. His personal appearances at local libraries in Mississippi and Louisiana also help expose children to literature and art while teaching them about the fundamentals of illustrating.

Galey attributes a young-at-heart spirit to fueling his passion for such an imaginative line of work. "I must say I don't think I really ever grew up past age 12," he admits with a laugh.

Visit Chuck Galey's website www.chuckgaley.com for more information about his upcoming library appearances.

JAY AND THE BOUNTY OF BOOKS

Story by Randall Ivey; illustrations by Chuck Galey Hardcover, $15.95 Pelican Publishing Company, www.pelicanpub.com.

Concerned about her eight-year-old son's summertime television habit, Jay's mother drives him to the library to pick out books. The drama ensues when Jay disappears from their backyard leaving only piles of the books that he had finished reading. Jay's mother is shocked when she discovers her son has grown "taller than their house and almost half as wide."

Randall Ivey, a professor of English at the University of South Carolina, spins an imaginative story in his children's book debut, *Jay and the Bounty of Books*. Inspired by his nephew who shares his love of learning and reading, Ivey has fun with the well-known idea of how books can expand one's mind by creating an engaging tale about how reading actually expanded one boy's physical size.

Children will love the thrilling events that follow Jay's physical surge, from the flashing lights and loud sirens of police cars and fire trucks to Jay's attention from the media. In the end, a kind professor-like gentleman figures out the solution to Jay's predicament.

Ivey's message shows how consuming and sharing knowledge can change the world. Chuck Galey's illustrations capture the playfulness of the story while emphasizing the dramatic effect of the premise.

ROCK 'N' ROLL DOGS

Story by David Davis; illustrations by Chuck Galey Hardcover, $15.95 Pelican Publishing Company, www.pelicanpub.com

In David Davis' new companion book to *Jazz Cats*, a wild pack of canines takes over a "doggie disco" called The Fireplug on Beale Street. Davis writes: "It's a dancing doghouse hounds know well, Right beside the Housebroke Hotel." Motorcycle mutts sport black leather jackets, while lady pups dance and twirl wearing poodle skirts in Davis' tribute to Memphis, *Rock 'N' Roll Dogs*. Characters with names like Cool Buddy Collie and Puggy Sue add a little history to the mix.

Davis conjures more rhythmic lines and catchy rhymes, while Chuck Galey illustrates new fanciful animal characters. Children will enjoy the song-like stanzas, and adults will appreciate the humorous tales of canine romps around Memphis hotspots Davis writes:

You're all welcome;
dig those teenage pets
Kids can visit—
but they don't let vets
Come hear Rock 'n' Roll
Memphis Blues Dogs.

