

The Tennessee Williams Annual Review

Editor's Note

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As we go to press with the 2009 *Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, we celebrate the tenth year of printed/online versions of the journal since we began publication. We are excited to announce a redesign of our website (www.tennesseewilliamsstudies.org) that will feature a new component—a streaming audio file of selected panels that have been recorded at the Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference. This conference, held annually in conjunction with the Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival, is in its fourteenth consecutive year, and we are now welcoming submissions for presentation at the 2010 conference; all pertinent information is available on our website. This journal and website could not exist without the help of our editorial board and especially The Historic New Orleans Collection publications staff, including Dr. Jessica Dorman, Mary Mees Garsaud, and Anne Robichaux. As always, we are in debt to The Collection's executive director, Priscilla Lawrence, and to Mark Cave and Dr. Alfred Lemmon for their enthusiastic support of both the journal and the scholars conference. Thanks also go to Chip Barham for his website design and continuing devotion to our projects.

^{¶2} This past year has been an auspicious one for Williams followers. Several revivals of his plays appeared Off-Broadway, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* enjoyed its first Broadway run (at the Broadhurst) featuring an all African-American cast, with James Earl Jones starring as Big Daddy. *The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond*, based on Williams's original screenplay, premiered at the Toronto Film Festival, featuring Ann-Margret and Ellen Burstyn. In addition, several books dealing with Williams and his collaborators have been released or are in the works. The recent publication of Stefan Kanfer's biography of Marlon Brando, *Somebody*, offers, according to the *New York Times*, "an antidote of sorts to the unsavory and voyeuristic 1994 biography by Peter Manso" and may help us better understand this enigmatic genius of stage and screen who appeared in one Williams play (*A Streetcar Named Desire*) and two films (*Streetcar* and *The Fugitive Kind*).

^{¶3} *New Yorker* theatre critic and essayist John Lahr continues to make progress on his biography of Williams but declines to offer a specific publication date for his eagerly anticipated volume. On a personal note, our (with coauthor Barton Palmer) book on the fifteen screen adaptations of Williams's work, entitled *Hollywood's Tennessee: The Williams Films and Postwar America* (University of Texas Press) is scheduled for release in April of 2009. Finally, The Fred W. Todd Collection, housed at The Historic New Orleans Collection's Williams Research Center, received additional acquisitions in 2008 and has now become firmly established as a major repository for Williams manuscripts, photos, scholarship, and assorted ephemera related to the nation's greatest playwright.

^{¶4} If 2008 provided Williams devotees reason to celebrate, the year also brought great sadness, as Dakin Williams, Tennessee's only brother, died in late May of last year. Dakin was one of my closest friends. My fellow pallbearers and I laid him between the graves of Tennessee and Rose in St. Louis's Calvary Cemetery on a gray, rainy day during a service attended by Dakin's daughters Anne and Francesca and dozens of friends. An attorney, writer, and WWII veteran, Dakin lived in Collinsville, Illinois, just across the river from St. Louis, the city of his birth. In his later years Dakin described himself as a "professional brother." He was a charming man

of formidable wit and incredible generosity. As the only surviving member of the immediate Williams family, he was also an invaluable source of information for filmmakers, biographers, scholars, and others who were simply curious about his famous sibling. Dakin's relationship with his brother was tested over the years, particularly when he committed Tennessee to Barnes Hospital (probably saving his life) in 1969, but Dakin felt that they were achieving a rapprochement shortly before Tennessee died. Tennessee once said to an interviewer, "Everyone in the family is crazy, but Dakin's the craziest." Dakin's reply? "Maybe so, but I'm the one who got in the car and drove all of *them* to the mental institutions." Dakin was a great friend to the Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival and appeared on dozens of panels through the years. Although he will be sorely missed, Dakin's ebullient spirit will continue to reside in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.