



## ***Marianna Rich, Author Garland High School Class of 1972***

Marianna Rich was born at Sampson Memorial Hospital in Clinton, NC to Sidney and Annie Bell Carter Rich on December 25, 1953. She graduated from Garland High School on June 2, 1972, second in her class. She attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, majoring in English and minoring in History.

Annie Bell Carter, Marianna's mother, was born on July 19, 1919 the youngest child of Rev. Frank Carter and Anna David Strickland Carter. In 1926, Frank Carter built a home for his family of six in Garland. At the time the house was built, the location, today designated as 65 Odham Avenue, was fronted by a dirt road and a lumber yard. Later, Frank's son, Rev. Sylvester Carter (named after Frank's father), would build his own house on the same street. Each of Frank's sons went on to establish their own homes and families, and Frank himself died of pneumonia in 1927. His widow, Anna and their only daughter, Annie Bell stayed on in the house on Odham Avenue. In 1952, Annie Bell married Sidney Moore Rich, born to Willie Rich and Sallie West Rich on August 26, 1911, and Sidney moved into the Garland house with his bride and mother-in-law. In December of 1953, they welcomed their only child, Marianna. Although Sidney Rich owned a farm in Bladen County (purchased from his uncle, Ed Rich), neither Annie Bell nor Anna David could ever be convinced to leave the house in Garland for what was then considered to be the wilds of Bladen County. Sidney and Annie Bell owned and operated Rich's Grill on Front Street for many years until they retired in 1981. They lived the remainder of their lives at the Garland house. Marianna loved the farm the minute her feet first toddled across its black, sandy ground and although the house that Frank Carter built will always be the one she considers "home", every minute spent on the farm was, for her, an adventure that included learning to ride a bicycle and her first copperhead encounter.

Marianna loved words long before she learned to read and write and would often make up stories and "pretend" to read them to her father, who listened raptly to whatever nonsense she came up with. As a child, her love of reading was only matched by her love of animals. Dogs. Cats. Horses. Toad frogs. In the summer, Annie Bell would often find Marianna sitting on the brick columns of the front porch, reading a book and surrounded by lizards, comfortably sunning themselves next to the child, a fact that Sidney handled much better than did Annie Bell. After many years watching his daughter with animals, Sidney one day told the child, "If as an adult you remember only one thing that I tell you, I want you to remember this: Never ever, no matter what, feed a bear."

In 1976, Marianna went to work for Holiday Inn and spent ten (10) years in the 24-hour a day, 7-day a week industry of hotel marketing. In 1986, feeling a real need to work somewhere that she could drive by and it be completely dark in the middle of the night, she changed careers and took a job at Jefferson-Pilot Life Insurance Company. There, she became a certified Managed Health Care Professional and worked closely with both the field sales staff and the company's legal department. In 1998, when Jefferson-Pilot disbanded its commercial group health department, Marianna accepted a position with a consulting company that works with outpatient rehabilitation practices in North and South Carolina, where she continues to be employed today.

Marianna never lost sight of her love of words. A book is never far from her hand, and although she always toyed with writing, she failed to find a character that she could live with long enough to completely tell their story. That is, until Lonnie Briggs walked into her head. Marianna's first mystery novel, *Digging Up Bones*, went from mind to paper in just six (6) weeks. The polishing and fine-tuning took much longer. It was published in 2007 and the second mystery, *Crossing the Straight and Narrow*, again featuring Lonnie, was published in 2008. One of Marianna's most cherished memories associated with *Digging Up Bones* will always be the book signing held at Front Street Grill, the same location where her parents operated Rich's Grill for so many years. A third book in the series (tentatively titled *Dark Water Under the Bridge*) is planned for release during the summer of 2012, and book four (4) has been outlined and plotted, although the title remains uncertain. All of Marianna's books are available from Amazon.com and other on-line book retailers.

The series is set in Eastern North Carolina in Royston County, and while Royston and all of its inhabitants are fictitious, Marianna freely admits that she draws deeply on her roots in Sampson County, and Garland, to paint the landscape background of her writing. She says, "No writer, if they are completely honest, can tell you that they don't rely on people they have known, places they have been and conversations they have overheard for ideas. That doesn't mean that any one character is an exact replica of any real person, or that a place isn't manipulated to fit the writer's needs, or that conversations and events aren't interpreted in ways that lend themselves to the writer's story, but it still starts with something the writer has experienced."

Today, Marianna lives north of McLeansville, NC along with a complete menagerie of dogs and cats, many of whom have inspired characters in her books. For example, if you ever met her Black and Tan Coonhound, Maya's Amazing Grace, you would instantly recognize Lonnie's hound, Rock. Even though her residence is no longer in the Garland area, and in 2010 she moved Frank Carter's house from Odham Avenue in Garland to her farm in Bladen County, she continues to think of Garland as her home, and always will. "My people have been in this area for hundreds of years. The Richs can be traced back to the 1700s in what is now Garland, and the Carters came down to the McDaniel's Crossroads area from Virginia not much later than that," she says. "Long before Garland was more than a crossroads itself, my people have toiled here to survive. A big part of my family tree is planted in the Garland Cemetery, and much of the rest of it is in the Rich Cemetery. Our DNA has leached into the soil and the groundwater by now. When I was growing up in Garland, it was a wonderful town with a good school and thriving businesses, filled with good honest, hard-working people. That is the Garland that lives in my memories and that I still love."