



Wednesday, February 4, 2004

## Award-winning novelist to read at OU

Acclaimed author **Patricia Henley** will read from her fiction on Thursday, Feb. 12, at 4 p.m. in the Oakland Center Banquet Room A. The reading, followed by a book signing, is open to the public, and admission is free.

Henley, an award-winning novelist, poet and short story writer, won the American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Award and New Yorker Best Fiction Award for her first novel, "Hummingbird House" (1999). She has published two volumes of poetry and three collections of short stories, including "Worship of the Common Heart: New and Selected Stories."

Her most recent novel, "In the River Sweet" (2002), tells the story of Ruth Anne, a middle-aged woman in a strong marriage who struggles with her faith, her family and secrets in her past. Andre Dubus III, author of "House of Sand and Fog," calls the novel "generously written and suffused with wisdom."

Mostly set in Indiana and Michigan, "In the River Sweet" often flashes back in time to Vietnam, when Ruth Anne was a young woman working in a convent library. Henley says "places are very important in my work," and she is praised by reviewers for vividly bringing her settings to life in beautiful, lyrical prose.

Also important to Henley are the larger social and political forces that work on her characters. "Hummingbird House" focuses on conflict in Guatemala and the difficulties brought on by civil strife. "In the River Sweet" deals not only with the Vietnam War but also with sexual roles, religious faith, adoption and motherhood.

Henley is a professor of creative writing at Purdue University. An Indiana native, she grew up in a large, working-class family. Henley earned her master's degree in poetry from Johns Hopkins University and moved during the 1970s to Washington State. She taught high school in British Columbia and also lived in Montana and Oregon before moving back to the Midwest in 1987 to teach in West Lafayette.

Henley's reading at OU is cosponsored by the **Department of English** and **College of Arts and Sciences** Distinguished Programs Fund.

For more information on the reading, call the **Department of English** at (248) 370-2250. For more information on Henley, including biographical information, reviews and interviews, visit the **Patricia Henley** Web site.

### SUMMARY

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