

# Author's life commemorated



— Photos by Terry Dickson/staff

The Rev. John Law, pastor of St. Simons Presbyterian, greets some of the people at the Eugenia Price memorial.

## 300 celebrate life of novelist Eugenia Price

By Terry Dickson  
Times-Union staff writer

**S**T. SIMONS ISLAND — About 300 people celebrated the life of Eugenia Price on her 80th birthday anniversary yesterday, a month after the author of historic novels died of heart failure.

Eleanor Maxwell drove from Jacksonville to attend the 11 a.m. observance at St. Simons Presbyterian Church.

Maxwell said she has been familiar with the island for about 40 years but nobody wrote about it like Price.

"When I was in my teens, I read *The Beloved Invader*," Maxwell said. "She captured the essence of this island instantly."

Joyce Blackburn, Price's longtime companion and fellow author, welcomed the celebrants and told them they should think of Price as living.

"I want you to think about her life



Authors Bill Diehl and Joyce Blackburn share memories of St. Simons novelist Eugenia Price, who died last month.

now," Blackburn said, "her ongoing life in the very presence of our redeemer."

The memorial service was for people to share not only their grief but their joy and laughter as well, she said.

Price's private funeral was May 30, two days after she died of heart failure,



The Rev. Ron Watson plays the bagpipes as celebrants leave a memorial service for Eugenia Price.

and was attended by a dozen people, Blackburn said.

Most of yesterday's service was a repeat "of what we did two days after she went to heaven," Blackburn said.

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"I think she [Price] might be saying, 'If you must do this ... let it be full of light and beauty and songs and grace and let it be to the glory of God.'"

The music included an organ concert of Bach compositions all with a Christian theme. Outside before the service, the Phil Morrison Trio played old jazz standards as the crowd sat somberly inside, but a stir went through the crowd and people smiled when the trio began playing *When the Saints Go Marching In*. Near the end of the service the congregation

sang *Amazing Grace*, one of Price's favorite songs. Afterward, the Rev. Ron Watson repeated *Amazing Grace* on the bagpipes.

God was given glory in a passage from *The Beloved Invader* that the Rev. John H. Law, pastor of St. Simons Presbyterian Church, read during the ceremony.

The excerpt was from Anson Dodge's sermon at his young wife's funeral at Christ Church on St. Simons: "My dear friends, I can tell you on this bright, beautiful Sunday morning on our Island that Jesus Christ is alive. He came

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out of his tomb ... and because He lives, our loved ones live also. Your loved ones, whose bodies lie outside in our dear, familiar churchyard, are not dead," Law read.

"Genie particularly loved not only the lyrics to John Newton's *Amazing Grace* but the amazing conversion story of this slave ship captain who became an Anglican minister and hymn writer," Law read.

After the service, island resident Bill Baxter said he moved to St. Simons a year ago, many years after reading *The Beloved Invader* and being captivated by the island as

Price described it.

"I pretty much moved down because of *The Beloved Invader*," Baxter said. "It just took me a long time to get here."

Most of those who came remained for a reception where Blackburn greeted each one.

Some watched a videotape of *Eugenia Price's South*, a 45-minute Georgia Public TV production that aired before and after her death.

Blackburn said the intent of yesterday's celebration was not to mourn Price but to celebrate her life. "I think we did that," Blackburn said.