

## Eugenia Price Dies at Age 79



Eugenia Price, or Genie, as she was known to her many friends, died May 28, 1996, only days before her 80th birthday. She was buried on May 30 in Christ Church, Frederica cemetery under the spreading oaks where she received her first inspiration for the turnabout in her writing career.

**Photo By Merriam A. Bass**

In 1961, Genie was already well known in the religious field as the author of numerous Christian books. On a trip from her home in Chicago to Jacksonville for a book sellers convention - a combined business/pleasure trip - she and her colleague Joyce Blackburn, who accompanied her, noticed Fort Frederica on their road map. There was no Interstate 95 then and they were driving on Highway 17, the main artery south.

They decided to take time to cross the causeway and explore [St. Simons Island](#). It was a fateful decision, one they never regretted. They spent the night at the King and Prince Hotel and the magic of St. Simons, its windswept beach and moss-draped oaks totally enchanted them.

Wandering through [Christ Church](#) cemetery they stumbled upon the graves of Anson Dodge, his wives Ellen and Anna, and his child. Genie, who was searching for a way to expand her writing, to move into another dimension, was intrigued by these graves. She wandered if the story behind them was what she was looking for. Her desire was to write about real people, to set them against the history of their times and to relive their lives and experiences. Biographies? Yes, but biographies about unknown, average people, people whose lives had impact only on those around them, rather than on a world wide stage.

Genie quite literally created a new genre with her first book about St. Simons Island, "Beloved Invader", which as we all know was the story of the Reverend Anson Dodge, the heartbroken Episcopal priest who came to St. Simons after the Civil War.

To write this book, to research the Island families entwined in the story, Genie spent two seasons on St. Simons in a rented cottage. During that time she reached the decision to move to St. Simons Island. She bought property, contracted for a house to be built and not only turned her writing career around but also her whole life, moving from the whirlwind activities of life in Chicago to the quiet life of the Golden Isles.



These were hard working days for Eugenia Price, who quickly followed her first historical biography with two more, moving backward in time with "Lighthouse" and "New Moon Rising". And as she learned more about her craft, her style grew more focused, her work more polished. She joked about this, telling us, "Someday, someone will read these books in their historical order, not the reverse order in which they were written. And then they'll say, 'Poor old Eugenia, she's losing her touch, her work is deteriorating, she's getting senile.'"

That was one of her many qualities, the ability to enjoy a good laugh, a good ball game, a quiet evening with friends. In fact, Genie never sought out the social life of the Golden Isles, rather she remained almost

a recluse, choosing to work long hours and in her leisure enjoy the beauty of the Island and her close circle of friends.



A true liberated woman of the sixties, for many years Eugenia Price had the philosophy "I'll do it myself." Not only did she keep strict working hours dedicated to writing, she personally answered her voluminous mail, spent hours and days in meticulous research, handled her own business affairs and negotiated with her publishers. In the early years, Genie handled everything herself with the exception of retyping and preparing her manuscripts for the publisher.

It was quite a change for her when she finally accepted the services of an agent, deciding after many years that perhaps a professional could negotiate a better book contract than she could herself. And eventually she also employed an assistant, a business manager. And she allowed researchers to dig out the facts and details that were so necessary to her meticulously detailed books.

She faced the reality that her forte was writing and that she should devote her time to her craft rather than spend precious time on details which could be handled for her by others.

And businesswoman that she was, everything she wrote was incorporated into a book. The articles she wrote many years ago for Coastal Illustrated were collected and published as "At Home on St. Simons." The diary she kept while working on a novel became another book, "Diary of A Novel." Letters from readers became the material for another volume. And in between the many novels that she wrote on her big nonelectric Underwood, (she said that battling with that typewriter was part of her creative process) she continued to write her inspirational, non-fiction books, using the many events that starred her life as the wellspring for her thoughts and writing. Not only the happy occasions but also the tragic events in her life were woven into the books which helped many readers develop new insight into their own personal problems.

Plagued in later life by various ailments, Genie did not let physical discomfort keep her from [writing \(.aifc 71k\)](#). Her goal on New Year's Day each year was to be doing the thing she most enjoyed - writing - "Because," she told me, "I believe that whatever you do on New Year's Day is what you'll be doing all year through."

And true to her dedication to her work, Genie at age 79 finished what is now her last book only a few short weeks before her death on May 28th. "The Waiting Time" is now available in hardcover and paperback.