

ZORA HURSTON, 57, WRITER, IS DEAD

**Author in Negro Folklore
Was Praised for 8 Books—
Studied Haitian Voodoo**

FORT PIERCE, Fla., Feb. 4 (AP)—Zora Neale Hurston, author, died in obscurity and poverty on Jan. 28, it was reported today. Her age was 57.

She was working on a book entitled "The Life of Herod the Great," when she suffered a stroke almost a year ago. She died in Fort Pierce Memorial Hospital.

Miss Hurston was said to have used the "Mr. Republican" tag for the late Senator Robert A. Taft in a biographical article she wrote for The Saturday Evening Post. She was among the first to use the term. She also wrote for Warner Brothers Studio in Hollywood, Calif., and was a librarian at the Library of Congress in Washington.

Had Critical Success

Miss Hurston was among the foremost writers of Negro folklore in the United States. Her eight books and numerous short stories and articles in magazines were well received by the critics. If she did not achieve a commercial success, that was the fault of the reading public, not Miss Hurston, the critics felt.

Lewis Gannett placed her "in the front rank, not only of Negro writers, but all American writers."

Miss Hurston was at her best in writing folk tales in the Negro dialect of the deep South. Her expression had the rich, rude poetry of "The Green Pastures," and was said to be more authentic, since it was written by a Negro.

Perhaps her best novel was her first, "Jonah's Gourd Vine," published in 1934. It was the story of a Negro Baptist preacher in the deep South, an alternately good and sinful man, who flourished like the gourd vine until God prepared a worm that smote the gourd so that it withered on the ground.

Miss Hurston drew material from her own childhood environment. She was born on Jan. 7, 1903, in Eatonville, Fla., the first incorporated, all-Negro town in the United States. Her father was John Hurston, a carpenter and Baptist preacher. After her mother died when Zora was 13, the child was "passed around the family like a bad penny." A white woman, who had employed her as a maid, sent the bright girl to Morgan Academy in Baltimore, then to Howard University. She won a scholarship to Barnard College, from which she graduated in 1928.

Aide to Fannie Hurst

For the next four years, Miss Hurston did graduate work in anthropology at Columbia under the noted Prof. Franz Boas. Then she worked as secretary to Fannie Hurst, popular novelist.

After her first novel, she published a book of folk tales, "Mules and Men," in 1935. In that year, she received a Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship. For the next two years, she lived in Haiti, studying voodoo rites on a Guggenheim Fellowship. Out of this experience came a book, "Tell My Horse."

Meanwhile, another novel, "Their Eyes Were Watching God," had appeared in 1937. In 1939, she produced "Moses: Man of the Mountain," a retelling of Exodus as though Moses were a Negro witch-doctor fighting God's battle against Pharaoh.

Her autobiography, "Dust Tracks on a Road," published in 1942, was described by John Chamberlain in The New York Times as "saucy, defiant, high-pressure . . . as vivid as a poinsettia, as beautiful as jasmine and as vulgar as a well-ligured fish-fry."

In that book, Miss Hurston reiterated that the race question always left her completely unmoved. She said she never felt bitterness at being born a Negro nor had she ever suffered from severe discrimination. Indeed, in New York she was the "sacred black cow of the Social Register crowd," she said.

In the Nineteen Thirties and Forties, she wrote articles for The Saturday Evening Post and other magazines. In recent years, she was attached to the North Carolina College for Negroes at Durham, as drama instructor.

Her last book, "Seraph on the Sunawee," was published in 1948.



1942

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