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WILD TREES PRESS

PRESS RELEASES

1984-1986

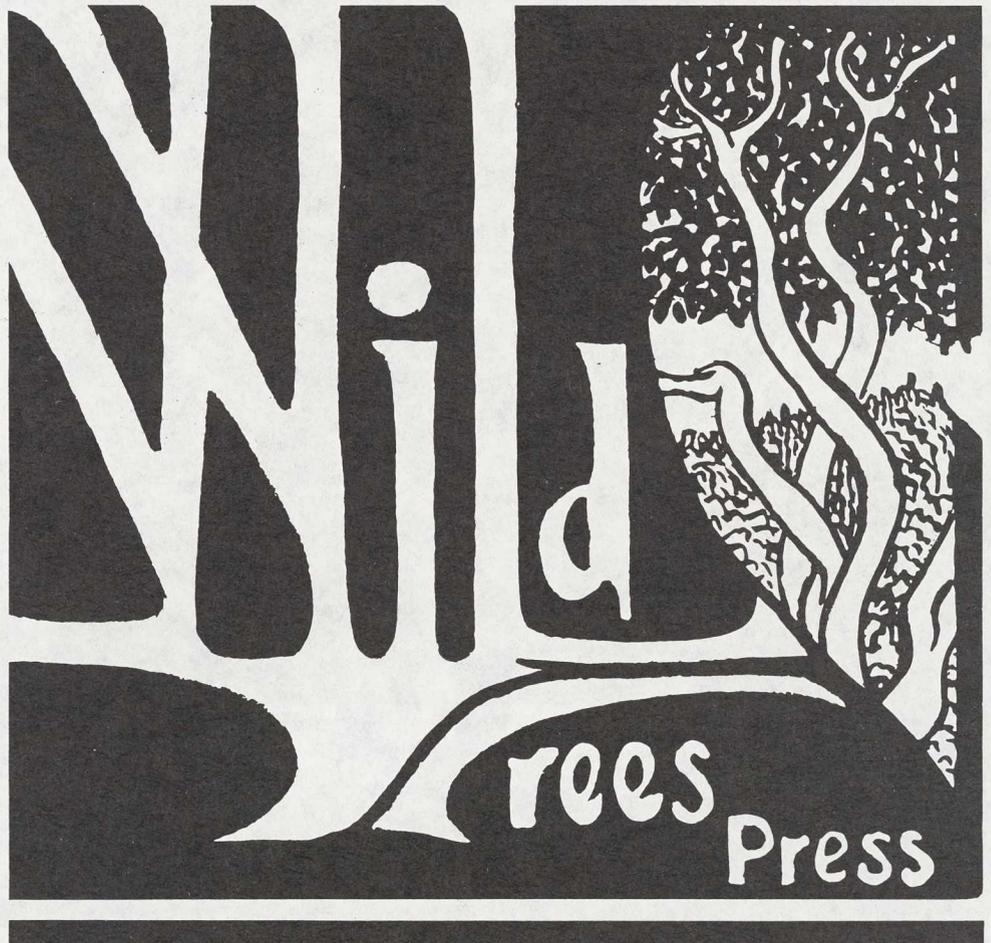
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WILD TREES PRESS

One spring weekend in 1979, Robert Allen and Alice Walker set out for the Mendocino coast. Alice was looking for a place where Celie, Shug and the other characters in a novel that she was struggling to write, would like enough to want to live. Their recalcitrance and complaints had forced her to leave what they called "the noise, chaos and confusion of Manhattan." According to Robert, "We had already driven over and rejected a good part of California—including San Francisco, Porterville and Grass Valley—when somebody suggested we take a look at the town of Mendocino."

After seeing the town, the only message Alice got from those of her characters that bothered to appear at all, was a collective and resounding "Are you kidding?"

Driving back to San Francisco, in something of a state of despair, Alice suggested they take another look at the little valley they had passed through on their way to the coast. They did, and the rest is literary



history. Celie, Shug, Nettie, Harpo and Sofia all agreed that they could be quite happy in Anderson Valley; and Alice's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Color Purple* was written there in, what was for her, a record nine months.

By the time the book was completed though, nobody wanted to leave.

"So we started looking for land," Alice recalls. "We loved the valley, it reminded me a little of Georgia. We had also

made lots of friends. The valley is incredibly rich and all sorts of things are grown. We decided to grow books.

Wild Trees Press was formed as a partnership in February of 1984, and in many ways represented a kind of natural evolution and creative coming together for Alice and Robert. Both had been involved in various aspects of publishing for over 15 years prior to their decision to launch the press.

Robert is author of two books:



(Left to right): Belvie Rooks, Alice Walker, Robert Allen

the '60s primer, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Doubleday, 1969), and *Reluctant Reformers: The Impact of Racism on American Social Reform Movements*, published in 1974 by Howard University Press (paperback edition, Anchor Press, 1975). During the '60s Robert also worked as a staff correspondent for the *New York Guardian*. Prior to the establishment of Wild Trees Press and his taking over full time as General Manager, he had been Editor of *The Black Scholar* and Chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at Mills College.

Before becoming Publisher of Wild Trees Press, Alice's published works included two collections of short stories; three volumes of poetry; a

biography of Langston Hughes for children; a Zora Neale Hurston reader; and three novels, including *The Color Purple*. She also worked several years as a fiction editor at *Ms.* magazine.

In December 1984, Wild Trees Press published its first book, *A Piece of Mine* by J. California Cooper. *A Piece of Mine* is a short story collection depicting the struggles and foibles of Black women and men in a small town community. With 10,000 copies in print the book has been widely reviewed.

Wild Trees Press's second publication, *Escape From Billy's Bar-B-Que*, by JoAnne Brasil, published October 15, 1985 with an initial press run of 3,000 copies, sold out three

weeks prior to its official publication date, and is now in its second printing. A wryly humorous novel about the coming of age in the late '60s of a young, working class, southern white woman, it chronicles her adventures from Phoebus, Virginia to Boston and finally to Brazil. According to *Publishers Weekly*, "Brasil has written a brilliant story about the way people talk, the way they feel..."

Wild Trees Press's motto of "publishing only what we love" has met with favorable critical response and its first two books have been serialized and reviewed in *Essence*, *Ms.*, *Mother Jones*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Bloomsbury Review*, and many other newspapers and publications.

A third publication, *Condor and Hummingbird* by Charlotte Mendez, is scheduled for publication on April 15, 1986. Set in Bogota, Colombia, it is a richly textured story of growth and bonding between three women. Written with a movingly lyrical—sometimes mythical—quality, it is a novel about the human spirit made resilient by faith in the ancestors and love for one's sisters.

According to Wild Trees Publicist Belvie Rooks, "While each of our three publications appears on the surface to be very different, what they all have in common is an authenticity of voice and vision that represents something of the richness and diversity that is the real America."

alice walker
publisher

ROBERT allen
GENERAL manager

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Belvie Rooks
415 864-5821

A PIECE OF MINE:
New Short Story Collection
by J. California Cooper

Wild Trees Press is pleased to announce publication of its first book, A PIECE OF MINE, a collection of short stories written by J. California Cooper. Narrated with zest and humor, these twelve tales, none of them previously published, depict the struggles and foibles of black women and men in a small town community.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker calls these stories "wise and exhilarating." In a Foreword to the collection Walker writes: "In its strong folk flavor, Cooper's work reminds us of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Like theirs, her style is deceptively simple and direct, and the vale of tears in which some of her characters reside is never so deep that a rich chuckle at a foolish person's foolishness can not be heard."

J. California Cooper is the author of 17 plays, many of which have been produced and performed on the stage, public television, radio and college campuses. Her plays have been anthologized, and in 1978 she was named Black Playwright of the Year for her play, "Strangers", which was performed at the San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts. Ms. Cooper lives in Oakland, California, and is the mother of a daughter, Paris Williams. This is her first collection of short stories.

Wild Trees Press was formed in 1984 by Alice Walker and Robert Allen, former editor of THE BLACK SCHOLAR. In the small press tradition of "publishing only what we love," Wild Trees Press is devoted to bringing out works that evidence high literary quality and social insight.

A PIECE OF MINE (Original Paperback Edition)
130 pages, \$7.95, ISBN # 0-931125-00-6
Publication date: December 15, 1984

Order from: Bookpeople, 2929 5th St., Berkeley, CA 94710
or from: Publishers Group West, 5855 Beaudry St.,
Emeryville, CA 94608

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Robert Allen
415 430-2080

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NEW - ALICE WALKER NOTE CARDS

Wild Trees Press is pleased to introduce a beautiful eight-image photographic note card series featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker.

The series offers an intimate view of the life of Ms. Walker, and through her touches the lives of millions of other women and men. Beginning with a classic 1930s photograph of her parents, the series includes a fine portrait of Alice at age six, several recent photo studies of her (three of which have appeared on book covers, and in popular magazines), with her daughter, and with her mother in a California Redwood park. The text with each photo is an apt quotation (prose and poetry) selected from her works on the basis of its appropriateness and appeal.

These cards will draw immediate attention from the millions of Alice Walker's avid readers in the USA and Europe. Her novel, *THE COLOR PURPLE*, for which she won the Pulitzer Prize and an American Book Award, has already sold over one million copies, and is still on best-seller lists. There are English, French, Dutch and Spanish editions of the book, and it soon will be made into a feature-length film for general distribution. Almost a million copies of other books by Alice Walker are now in print. Her latest book of poems, *HORSES MAKE A LANDSCAPE LOOK MORE BEAUTIFUL*, released in October by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, had pre-publication sales of over 20,000. The book's dust jacket carries a photo of her which is also included in the note card series (and is separately available as a quality 20x30 inch, four-color poster). Early responses indicate that her readers, who often display the enthusiasm and loyalty of fans, will create a strong demand for the cards.

The cards will also appeal to a broad and growing audience of individuals who seek cards presenting sensitive, attractive images of women and black people.

For more information write to: Wild Trees Press
P.O. Box 378
Navarro, CA 95463
USA



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