

SAM VENABLE

SUMMARY INTRODUCTION

Sam Venable has written for the Knoxville News Sentinel since 1970, first as outdoors editor and since 1985 as a columnist specializing in humor. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and author of 13 books. His most recent book is “To Retire? Or Not To Retire?—A Geezing Humorist’s Quest for Answers.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sam Venable (b. May 24, 1947) is a humor columnist for the Knoxville (TN) News Sentinel. He assumed that position in 1985 after serving as the newspaper’s outdoors editor for fifteen years. In September 2014, he retired from daily duties at the News Sentinel but continues to write a twice-weekly column for the Features section.

Sam is a native of Knoxville. He is a 1969 graduate of the University of Tennessee with a B.S. in journalism—“the perfect college degree for a professional smart-ass,” he insists—and minor studies in forestry and wildlife management. Prior to joining the News Sentinel’s staff, he worked as a police reporter and feature writer for the Knoxville Journal and the Chattanooga News-Free Press.

Sam is a member of the East Tennessee Writers Hall of Fame (Class of 2009) and Tennessee Journalism Hall of Fame (Class of 2014). Winner of more than three dozen state, regional and national writing awards, Sam has been widely published outside the newspaper field. He sold his first magazine article as a senior in college and since has compiled more than 150 periodical credits to his record.

In 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2005, his humorous commentaries were judged “best in state” by the Tennessee Press Association. Twice, (2010 and 2012) he won the 11-state Southeast “Green Eyeshade” humor-writing award from the Society of Professional Journalists. “Fragments of Hate,” Sam’s six-part News Sentinel series during Black History Month in 2014, won the Sigma Delta Chi feature reporting award from the Society of Professional Journalists, the Investigative Reporting award from the Tennessee Press Association, and was a Pulitzer Prize nominee.

Sam is the author of thirteen books:

- “An Island Unto Itself: The Story of Little Pecan”
- “A Handful of Thumbs and Two Left Feet: Sam Venable’s Best Outdoor Stories”
- “Two or Three Degrees Off Plumb: Sam Venable’s Unique Look at Life”
- “One Size Fits All and Other Holiday Myths: A Walk Through the Four Seasons with Sam Venable”
- “I’d Rather Be Ugly Than Stupid...and Other Deep Thoughts”
- “From Ridgetops To Riverbottoms: A Celebration of the Outdoor Life in Tennessee”
- “Mountain Hands: A Portrait of Southern Appalachia”
- “Rock-Elephant: A Story of Friendship and Fishing”
- “You Gotta Laugh to Keep from Cryin’: A Baby Boomer Contemplates Life Beyond Fifty”
- “Someday I May Find Honest Work: A Newspaper Humorist’s Life”
- “Warning! This Product Contains Nuttiness: A Fun Look at the Bizarre World in which We Live”
- “How to Tawk and Rite Good: A Guide to the Language of Southern Appalachia”
- “To Retire? Or Not To Retire?—A Geezing Humorist’s Quest for Answers”

He has been a contributing author for numerous other books, including:

- “The Great Duck Misunderstanding: The Very Best of American Fishing and Hunting Humor”
- “The Tennessee Encyclopedia”
- “The Encyclopedia of Appalachia”
- “150 Southern Fishing Hotspots”
- “Fireside Waterfowler”

Sam also wrote the new introduction for Carson Brewer’s classic collection about the Great Smokies, “A Wonderment of Mountains,” and has been the subject of articles in such publications as Southern Living magazine and “The Encyclopedia of Appalachia.”

In recent years, Sam has become popular as a comedic entertainer. He delivers his bizarre look on a wide variety of topics: everything from how to speak “hillbillyeze,” to the insanity of ever-present warning labels, as well as coping with the nutty life in which we live, and the perils of growing older. Also, he has teamed with three other entertainers—TV personality Bill Landry, singer/storyteller Elizabeth Rose, and hillbilly funnyman Jim Claborn—on the “Talk Is Cheap” comedy tour, playing at venues throughout the region.

In his spare time, Sam enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking and swimming. His wife, Mary Ann, also is a native Knoxvillean and a graduate of UT. She is a retired computer training specialist. They have two grown children, Clay and Megan, plus daughter-in-law Kim Venable and son-in-law Benny Smith—all of whom are UT graduates—and three grandchildren: Max, Lucy and Ella Kate.