

Captivating Saga Expiates 1960s Mississippi Newspaper Influence

Life goes on, with hope for the future—thanks to the agitators.

JACKSON, Miss., Feb. 3, 2026 - Mid-State Publishing Company and its imprint, Bull Bay, announce release of “The Agitators: A Reminiscence,” a powerful new work of historical fiction about biased media influence on systemic oppression in a rural Mississippi county.

The narrator, Shadrach Greenwood, sits on the courthouse steps in Carrollton, Mississippi, while he gazes at the town square’s Confederate flag flapping in the breeze. He reminisces about the adventures he had 50 years ago with teen friends Matthew and Penny while the adults around them fought over social matters.

In 1968, Penny rides her pony to the town square. Matthew pleads with his parents for a motorcycle. Shadrach pushes back on adults enforcing racial norms. The three hope a ruling on integration will allow them to attend school with their friends in the fall.

Sam, the newspaper publisher and father of teen Matthew, unwittingly fuels the community’s divisions through biased opinion pieces. Interactions with a Black cotton farmer, public school administrators, and even Shadrach pressure Sam to report on local issues differently. He resolves to use his influence to repair divisions and improve community relations. In an impetuous attempt to unite his town, Sam convinces a Hollywood studio to use Carrollton as the location for a movie based on William Faulkner’s “The Reivers: A Reminiscence.” However, when a violent group learns of the diverse cast coming to town, long-simmering tensions boil over and crosses burn.

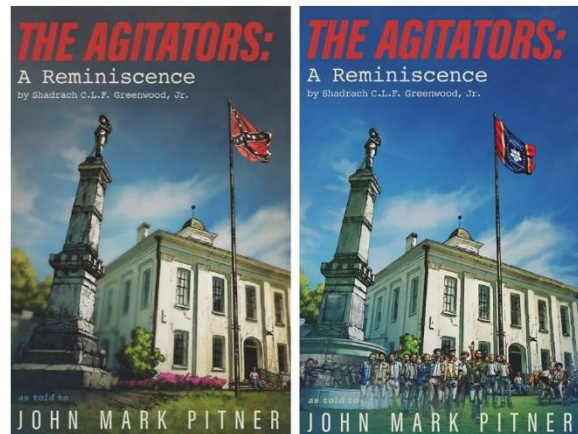
“The Agitators: A Reminiscence” is a fast-paced, dialog-driven story written in a style that induces visualization and evokes cinematic imagery. The novel vividly illustrates how—decades before social media—local newspapers in small rural communities could inflame passions, influence opinions, and drive consequential change. Historical events, often involving racial justice leaders who were labeled “agitators” at the time, are presented through the clever use of original newspaper clippings. The narrator interrupts his own omniscient point of view periodically to address the reader and recount how these important events affected him. In these moments, he uses clippings from 1886 through 1968 in conjunction with typewritten essays he wrote as a teen as proof of his reminiscences, often to startling effect. Through it all, the novel reminds readers life goes on, with hope for the future, thanks to the agitators.

About the Author

John Mark Pitner grew up in Carrollton, Mississippi, where he spent his teen years developing a keen sense of adventure, building elaborate treehouses, and writing for his father’s newspapers. John writes stories inspired by his Mississippi roots, combining humor and adventure while exploring how historical events and generational conflicts shape the lives of his characters.

About the Book Cover

Original cover art for “The Agitators: A Reminiscence” was created by 2024 Eisner Award-winner Tony Washington. Two cover art images are integral to the story—the first depicts the Confederate relics the narrator sees today from the courthouse steps, while the second conveys his idea of a modified memorial for every Mississippian. Hardcover editions have both artworks—one on the dust jacket and the alternate cover on the case laminate binding.



About the Publisher

Bull Bay is an imprint of Mid-State Publishing Company. The publisher is committed to supporting local, independent bookstores and has elected to use Ingram Content Group and an American-based offset printer for production.

The author is available for interviews and appearances.

Learn more at theagitatorsbook.com.

Book Details

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