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**Sara Flanigan Carter**, shown at home, was an author whose second novel won the Townsend Award in 1989. Two of her books were made into Lifetime TV movies, and she also wrote screenplays. Family photo

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**TUCKER**

# Sara Flanigan Carter, 75, author of two novels

By **HOLLY CRENSHAW**  
hcrenshaw@ajc.com

After St. Martin's published her first novel, "Sudie," Sara Flanigan Carter went out and bought a how-to guide on writing books. It prompted a self-effacing confession.

"I'm glad I didn't read it before I wrote mine," she said in a 1990 Atlanta Journal-Constitution article, "or I never would have tried. It looked too hard."

Twice divorced and with four children, Ms. Carter already knew plenty about things that were hard. She'd grown up poor in Dacula, tiptoed around childhood land mines of racism and molestation, worked menial jobs and cared for her disabled sister.

Late at night, after cleaning apartments all day, the 50-something woman started sitting on her bed and filling up spiral-bound notebooks in long hand, forging the raw material of her hard-scrabble life into a

duced "Sudie and Simpson" and "Wildflowers," the Lifetime movies based on her books.

"When I first read 'Sudie,' I just about fell over," he said. "It was really a miraculous thing, almost like she'd written the book by mistake, but she said it just flowed through her."

"But Sara was soulful and spiritual, and she loved deeply and cared deeply and somehow had a gift for getting all those feelings on paper. I think the texture of the woman was what made the writing so good."

Hollywood brought contact with stars such as Lou Gossett Jr., Patricia Arquette, Reese Witherspoon, Sara Gilbert, Beau Bridges and Diane Keaton. But her agent, Irene Jurczyk of Asheville, N.C., said Ms. Carter looked on the hubbub with wry amusement.

"She was just hysterical," Ms. Jurczyk said. "She came back from Hollywood and said the whole place was run by 14-year-olds."

Ms. Carter's ability to inhabit her characters' minds may have been her greatest gift, Ms. Jurczyk said.

"She had this remarkable ability to get inside a child's head, almost like she could co-experience something. I'm sure watching children run through a sprinkler, for instance, that Sara with her exquisite mind could feel it with them."

Survivors include two sons, Mike Schulman of Clarkston and Richard Schulman of Tucker; another daughter, Heidi Burger of Alpharetta; a brother, Jim Flanigan of Monroe; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

"I couldn't wait to get home to find out what was going to happen in the story," she said.

Writing under her maiden name, Sara Flanigan, she produced "Sudie," her visceral reaction to the hateful rhetoric that followed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

Her second novel, "Alice," won a Townsend Prize in 1989 and both were made into enormously successful Lifetime TV movies. She wrote screenplays, infused her writing with the redemptive power of love and never cleaned apartments again.

Ms. Carter, 75, of Tucker died Tuesday of complications from a stroke at DeKalb Medical Center. The funeral is 10 a.m. today at Tom M. Wages, Lawrenceville Chapel.

After she graduated from Tucker High School, she moved to California and back before finding her voice as a writer.

"Writing was her way of fixing things that were disturbing to her growing up," said her daughter Julie Wofford of Stone Mountain.

"She was able to take things that had touched her or things that had hurt her and turn them around."

Ms. Carter, her daughter said, was a natural-born storyteller who worshipped "To Kill A Mockingbird" and could mesmerize a room with her narrative flair.

Still, it was a shock when she produced a novel, said her friend Dick Freed of Boulder Creek, Calif., who co-pro-

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BRANDON, Willie L.

## DEATH NOTICES

**GEORGIA**

**VALLA WELLS HEARN, 98, of Pal-**  
metto died Thursday, Funeral, 2  
Circle died Thursday, Funeral,  
2 p.m. Saturday, Social Circle  
First Baptist Church; Meadows  
Funeral Home.  
**SANDRA MOBLEY, 60, of Monroe**  
died Thursday, Funeral, 11 a.m.,  
Saturday, Meadows Funeral  
Home.  
**MARY WHITAKER WALKER, 72, of**  
Monroe died Thursday, Funeral,  
11 a.m. Saturday, Monroe First  
Baptist Church; Arthur Bowick  
Funeral Directors.

**FULTON COUNTY**

**CARRIE LOU HARRIS, 86, of**  
Douglasville died Monday,  
Funeral, noon Saturday, Golden  
Memorial United Methodist  
Church; Simpson & Daughters  
Mortuary.

**DOUGLAS COUNTY**

**F.E. "BUD" MARKHAM, 84, of**  
Newnan died July 28. Memo-  
rial service, 11 a.m. Tuesday,  
Forest Lawn Cemetery; Mckoon  
Funeral Home.

**BRENDA LESLEY, 61, of Newnan**  
died Wednesday. The body was  
cremated. Memorial service, 2  
p.m. Saturday, Jones Funeral  
Home.

**GWETA COUNTY**

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