

JOHN GRISHAM, a native of Jonesboro, Arkansas, is the author of 25 books, including numerous legal thrillers. He grew up in Southaven, Mississippi, and though he originally dreamed of a career as a professional baseball player, he received a bachelor of science in accounting at Mississippi State University in 1977. He then went on to earn a juris doctor degree from the University of Mississippi's law school in 1981.

Grisham practiced law for nearly a decade in Southaven, specializing in criminal defense and personal injury litigation. In 1983 he was elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives and served until 1990.

Grisham spent three years working on his first novel, getting up at 5 a.m. in order to write before work. "A Time to Kill" was published in 1989. His next novel, "The Firm," spent 47 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list and became the bestselling novel of 1991. His next book, "The Pelican Brief," also hit number one on the list, and the book that followed, "The Client," debuted at number one, confirming Grisham's reputation as master of the legal thriller. Grisham is one of only three authors to sell two million copies of a book on a first printing.

Since 1988, Grisham has written one novel each year. There are more than 250 million of his books in print worldwide, translated into 38 languages. Nine of them have been turned into motion pictures. Grisham's latest book, "The Confession," was published in October 2010. His first collection of short stories, "Ford County," appeared in 2009, and "The Innocent Man," published in 2006, was his first work of nonfiction.

When he's not writing, Grisham devotes his time to numerous charitable causes, including his Rebuild The Coast Fund, which has raised \$8.8 million for Gulf Coast relief in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. His childhood passion for baseball continues unabated. He serves as commissioner for his local Little League and has no fewer than six ball fields built on his properties where he has hosted more than 350 kids on 26 Little League teams. Grisham also serves on the Board of Directors for the Innocence Project, an organization dedicated to exonerating the innocent through DNA testing after they have been convicted.

Grisham's ties to Carolina are substantial. He spoke at two North Carolina Literary Festivals held on the campus in 1998 and 2009, and he was the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Commencement speaker in 2010, the same year that his wife, Renee, received her bachelor's degree from UNC. His daughter, Shea, graduated from UNC in 2008.

For outstanding accomplishment in the field of American literature, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is pleased to confer on John Grisham the degree of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.