



KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

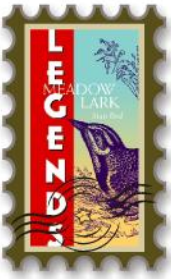
Frank Marshall Davis (1905-1987)

Frank Marshall Davis was born in Arkansas City, Kan., in 1905. Growing up in rural Kansas, Davis experienced a great deal of racism and turned to blues music for escape. At the age of 17, Davis moved to Wichita to attend Friends University, later transferring to the journalism school at Kansas State Agricultural College (Kansas State University). It was in college that Davis found his voice through poetry and published his first poems.



In 1927, Davis moved to Chicago where he began writing articles and short stories for magazines and newspapers. He moved again to Atlanta in 1930 where he served as editor for a semiweekly newspaper. During his time as editor, the Atlanta Daily World became the first successful black daily paper in the country.

Davis' poetry was recognized by Frances Norton Manning, who then introduced Davis to Norman Forge. Forge published Davis' first collection of poetry, "Black Man's Verse," in 1935. Davis used free verse to mimic the blues and jazz music he had become familiar with in Kansas to express his opinions on racial advancement, politics and other cultural issues of the time by chronicling the lives of a group of blacks buried in a cemetery. The collection was a critical success, and Davis published his second work "I Am the American Negro" just two years later.



From 1935 to 1947, Davis served as editor for the American Negro Press. Concurrently, Davis started a photography club, worked for numerous political parties, and participated in the League of American Writers. With the encouragement of authors such as Richard Wright and Margaret Walker, Davis completed his third and final collection, "47th Street." This work chronicles life on Chicago's South Side and is written less for one race than for one voice of one class.

In 1948, Davis left Chicago for the Hawaii territory. At this point in his life, he was well respected for his writings but also being watched by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the House of Un-American Activities Committee because of his willingness to speak out against Jim Crow laws and in support of free political expression. In Honolulu, Davis proceeded to raise his five children and write for the Honolulu Record.



During the 1960s and '70s, Davis' work was rediscovered by those contributing to the Black Arts Movement. In 1978, Davis put out his final volume, "Awakening, and Other Poems." Davis passed away in 1987. His autobiography "Livin' the Blues: Memories of a Black Journalist and Poet" was published posthumously in 1992, along with "Black Moods: Collected Poems" in 2002.

Davis is remembered for his 30 years of journalistic contributions as well as his voice for the African-American community during the Depression, World War II and Chicago's Black Renaissance. In 2007, a collection of essays, columns and news pieces written by Davis will be published.

