

Metro & State

Shopping | Classifieds | Cars | Homes | Jobs | Subscribe

Austin American Statesman
statesman.com

WACHOVIA EXTRA FREE CHECKING. If it were a toy, the batteries would be included.
 Now, Get up to \$150 with a new checking account. **OPEN AN EXTRA FREE CHECKING ACCOUNT HERE >>>**

Dining out tonight?

Welcome, Larry L. - Member Center | Log out



E-MAIL THIS PAGE

PRINT THIS PAGE

MOST E-MAILED ARTICLES

Norman Mailer: older, but no less provocative

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist thrills audience at UT with a stimulating talk.

Search

Site/Web Google

Yellow Pages

Classifieds

Jobs

Cars

Homes

Place an Ad

statesman.com

Home

News

Weather/Traffic

Sports

Longhorns

Business

Life

Health & Beauty

Opinion

XLent

Travel

Columnists

Multimedia

Obituaries

Austin360

Calendar

Music

Movies

Recreation

Restaurants

Connections

Lifestyles

XLent

Buy & Sell

By Patrick Beach
AMERICAN-STATESMAN
STAFF
Thursday, April 28, 2005

Walking with a cane and joking about the simple words that vanish from his 82-year-old mind, Norman Mailer, one of postwar America's most highly decorated novelists and public intellectuals, proved during a talk at the University of Texas on Wednesday that he was no more prone to pull a rhetorical punch than he was as a much younger man.

"Given the near-desert quality of much of Texas, it ends up with some of the bravest people and some of the most godawful people the United States produces, and I do think that George W. Bush belongs in the second category," Mailer told the crowd, to hoots and applause.

Except for a sole vocal Republican who said she'd read all Mailer's books but nonetheless found what Mailer had to say about the president "totally disgusting," the more than 400 people in the crowd at the B. Iden Payne Theater seemed to welcome Mailer like a sometimes cranky, sometimes meandering but always stimulating older relative. For more than 90 minutes, Mailer — who's won a National Book Award and two Pulitzer Prizes — talked about writing, God, America, moral relativism and where Jean-Paul Sartre went wrong.

Advertisement

Digital Phone

UNLIMITED

Local & Long Distance

As low as
\$39.95 month

[learn more](#)

TIME WARNER CABLE



Sung Park /AMERICAN-STATESMAN
(enlarge photo)

Among the topics Norman Mailer discussed Wednesday night were President Bush and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.

Shopping
Classifieds
Jobs
Cars
Homes
Statesman Store
Advertise With Us
Resources
Customer Service
Archives
Corrections
Member Center
E-mail Newsletters
Subscriber Services
Internships
Newspapers in
Education
Partners

► Electronic Edition

► Statesman Photos
For Sale



The only thing he refused to talk about was his novel in progress, the first 700-page section of which he'd finished in draft form. He said he started the project after preparing to write the sequel to "Harlot's Ghost," his mammoth CIA novel, and then put it aside.

But not a word about the current project. "Any of you who really want to be novelists, do your best not to talk about your books, even if your ego is starving."

On Sartre, Mailer was more forthcoming, giving the crowd a sample of an essay titled "Existentialism: Does It Have a Future?" to be published soon in The Nation.

The French philosopher was brilliant, Mailer argued, but he was also "the man who derailed existentialism" because of his atheism, which Mailer called "a locked cell."

Mailer — whose books include "The Executioner's Song," "Advertisements for Myself" and "Oswald's Tale" — said he could not believe in a God that was all good and all-powerful but preferred to see the deity as an imperfect artist.

"The best parents," he observed, "are not in complete control of their children." Since the publication of his first novel, "The Naked and the Dead," more than 50 years ago, Mailer has long been regarded as a literary — and literal — streetfighter and one of his own greatest admirers.

He answered critics who accused him of laboring under a messiah complex with his 1997 novel, "The Gospel According to the Son," his retelling of the four gospels in Jesus' voice. Reviewers piled on the book as a catastrophic indulgence. But in a reading from "The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing," Mailer told of the book's beginnings, when he began to reread the Gospels in a hotel.

"It may be the greatest story," Mailer recalled thinking, "but it's abominably written."

Mailer's appearance came after UT's Harry Ransom Center announced this week that it will acquire, for \$2.5 million, Mailer's more than 10-ton literary archive. That works out to about \$125 a pound, or the going rate for shitake mushrooms at Whole Foods Market.

Ads by Google

Zora Neale Hurston

"Their Eyes Were Watching God" and other fiction in a 1000-page volume
loa.org

Buy Philosophy Cosmetics

Free shipping and get 5% back Great Selection - Easy Returns
www.beauty.com

\$300/Hr in Bexar County?

21 Side-by-side Comparisons of Fun Jobs Paying Up To \$300/Hour.
FunJobsReview.com



E-MAIL THIS PAGE



PRINT THIS PAGE



MOST E-MAILED ARTICLES

Back to top

Advertise Online or in Print | Subscribe to the newspaper | make us your Homepage
Presented by The Austin American-Statesman. Contact us. Corrections. Site Requirements.
Please read our Privacy Policy. By using this site, you accept the terms of our Visitor Agreement.
Copyright 2001-2005 Cox Texas Newspapers, L.P. All rights reserved.

Sta
T

► Tea
New
Begin

► Pra
Dent
south

► Mcl
McLe
Syste

► Pra
Dent
south

► 40
Grow
of wa

► MA
ENTI
WE'F
FUN

VIE

File

Metro & State

Shopping | Classifieds | Cars | Homes | **Jobs** | SubscribeAustin American-Statesman
statesman.com

WACHOVIA EXTRA FREE CHECKING. If it were a toy, the batteries would be included.

Now as low as \$1.50 with a new checking account. **OPEN AN EXTRA FREE CHECKING ACCOUNT HERE >>**

Minimum \$100. WACHOVIA

Advance your Career with a Business Degree

Welcome, Larry L. - Member Center | Log out



E-MAIL THIS PAGE

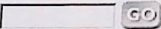


PRINT THIS PAGE



MOST E-MAILED ARTICLES

Search



Site/Web Google

Yellow Pages

Classifieds

Jobs

Cars

Homes

Place an Ad

statesman.com

Home

News

Weather/Traffic

Sports

Longhorns

Business

Life

Health & Beauty

Opinion

XLent

Travel

Columnists

Multimedia

Obituaries

Austin360

Calendar

Music

Movies

Recreation

Restaurants

Connections

Lifestyles

XLent

Buy & Sell



Sung Park /AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Among the topics Norman Mailer discussed Wednesday night were President Bush and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.

Ads by Google

Crawford Texas Gifts

Memorabilia, gifts and info from President Bush's hometown
www.WesternWhiteHouseGifts.com

Houston College

Continue your Education today. Research schools & request info.
www.collegesurfing.com

San Antonio

Travelers Rank the Top Hotels & We find you Great Rates & Deals
www.HotelSuperPortal.com



E-MAIL THIS PAGE



PRINT THIS PAGE



MOST E-MAILED ARTICLES

Back to top