

Mississippi author Greg Iles signs new novel

‘Natchez Burning’
not an ‘escape
from reality’

By JENNIFER LENAIN

Special to the Sun Herald

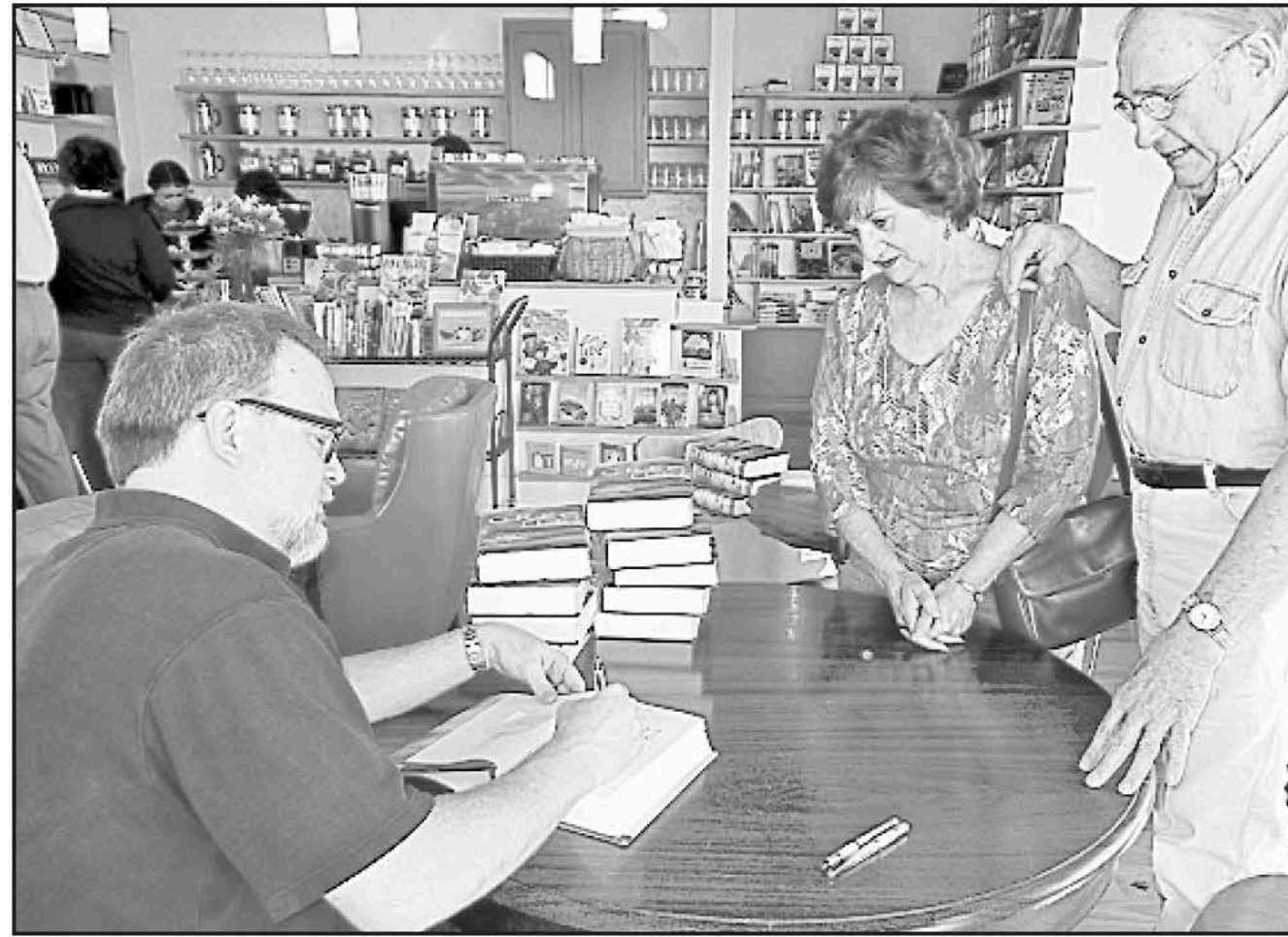
PASS CHRISTIAN — “Natchez Burning” created a hot spot in the Pass for Mississippi novelist Greg Iles.

Hundreds of Iles’ fans flowed through Pass Christian Books to meet the author and have their copies of “Natchez Burning” signed.

Lucy Stevens said, “I’ve read all of his books.” She’s now reading “Natchez Burning.” “It’s real rich and detailed, I’m really enjoying it.”

Iles autographed 600 copies at Pass Christian Books. Owner Scott Naugle said fans were lined up an hour before the event.

“I’m always surprised when I show up to a book signing,” Iles said. “When you’re



JENNIFER LENAIN/SPECIAL TO THE SUN HERALD

Greg Iles signs copies of his novel ‘Natchez Burning’ for Bette and Glenn Huffman of Pass Christian on Saturday at Pass Christian Books.

in Mississippi, you can’t go anywhere without seeing someone you know.”

Margaret Jean Kalif had five books for Iles to sign. “I’m a big fan and have been a fan since his first book came out,” she said.

The first of a trilogy, the novel has received lots of attention and even “gener-

ated a lot of Hollywood interest,” Iles said.

“It is thinly fictionalized versions of murders in Mississippi in the ‘60s,” he said.

“This book is about the forgotten victims; the regular folks that were in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Not pulling a single punch

when dealing with issues of race, Iles said, “I wrote this book the way the world is, not the way it ought to be.”

Iles said he knew the book would become a series when he was “one week from deadline and a truck hit me going 70 miles per hour.”

Iles said it was after “waking up from being in a coma for eight days, I decided that I’m just going to tell a story the way it needed to be told.”

When it came to research, Iles said he wasn’t focused on that. “I grew up in Mississippi, so I didn’t have to do research, I just lived it. It’s almost like writing an autobiography.”

It took Iles five years to write “Natchez Burning.” He said the other two books in the trilogy are already drafted.

“If you want a book to escape from reality, then this book isn’t for you,” Iles said.