Yesterday, Willie Morris died. Willie lived in our nation's greatest artists has passed away. The American people with sad news. One of our most important writers and essayists has left us. He was a voice for the better angels in us all. He addressed the tough issues of the day and refused to cave in to conventionality. Willie Morris grew up in Yazoo City. We know about small town America in the 1950's because Willie told us about it. He told us about childhood friends like Bubba and Henjie. And he let us remember the loving wags and pants of childhood pets like his beloved dog Skip. We remember an America that only children can recall: an America of simple dreams poised to enter the turbulent period we call the sixties. Willie's memories were our memories—Christmas with Uncle Percy in Jackson, the smell of turkey and talk of baseball, high school football on cool autumn nights, and those first dates with sweaty palms and nervous laughs. How can we thank Willie Morris enough for putting our memories on paper? Willie gave us the sixties as a student at the University of Texas and as a Rhodes Scholar in England. We came of age with Willie as he re- called campus ramblings and long road trips. Willie Morris told us about the reality of America and being a young person finding his place in the greater American family. We see ourselves seeking to understand and find our places in the words of Willie. When Willie Morris became editor of Har- per's Magazine, he was the youngest to do so in their history. He led Harper's through the late 1960's and early 1970's with courage and honesty. He addressed the tough issues of the day and refused to cave in to conventionality for the sake of getting along. We met Truman Capote, Bill Styrnon, and so many others through Willie's essays. In broadening his world, ours was enlarged as well. Following his years in New York, Willie be- came Writer-in-Residence at Ole Miss and fin- ished his years in Jackson. His commitment in encouraging a new and a rebirth of Mississippi's collective nature was impactful and profound. He mentored and gave us new Southern writers like Donna Tartt. Willie made us laugh at ourselves. He brought us together as one. I think Willie Morris let us embrace our Southernness in the context of being a member of the entire American family. In his prose, Willie was honest about himself and his culture. Yet while embracing the truth, Willie made us proud of our accomplishments, our potential and ourselves. He was a visionary who could make the past alive and relevant while caring for the people and events of the present. We will always remember and have Willie Morris at our side. We will read the pages of North Toward Home, The Courtship of Marcus Dupree, My Dog Skip, and his many other books and essays with a reverence and real- ization of our place in the world. Willie Morris was our bridge between past and present, and our voice for the better angels in us all. He always will be.