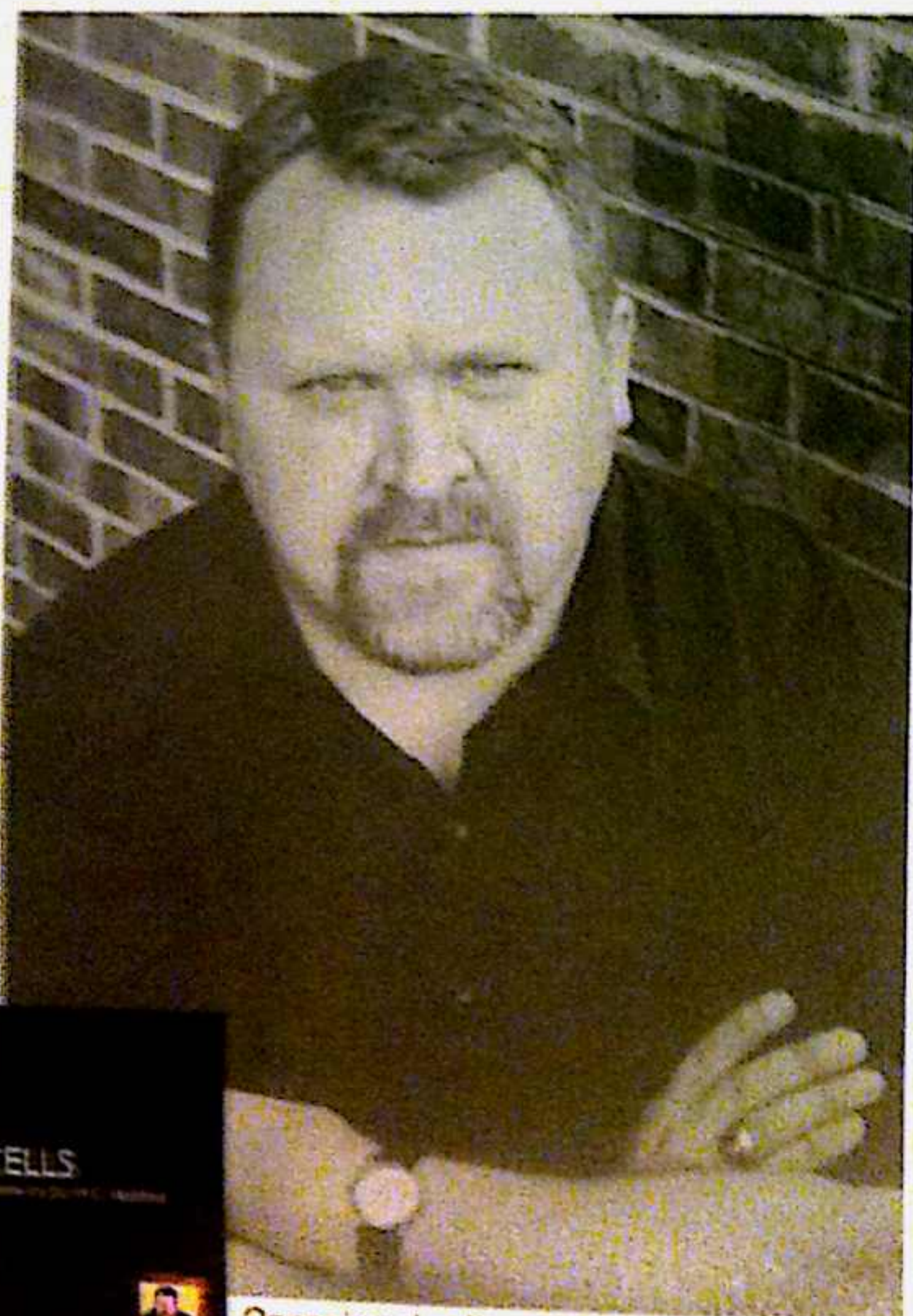


**"I fought against what I viewed as a certain amount of rigidity in the class. I should have been learning about the craft of writing, but instead I was hurting myself by trying to do it on my own, outside of the structure being provided."**



Occasional editor, bookstore manager, and professor Scott Holstad says he's always a poet.

## A Poet Day to Day

**Scott Holstad publishes a new volume of poetry, his 15th**

Scott Holstad (Knoxville '90) has published his 15th volume of poetry, *Cells*, which deals with his struggle with bipolar disorder. His poetry collection, *Places*, published in 1996, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in literature. Holstad, who lives with his wife, Jennifer Mitts (Knoxville '93, '01), on St. Simons Island, Georgia, chatted via e-mail with *Tennessee Alumnus* about the life of a poet.

**Q: How do you spend a typical day? Do you write for a certain time each day?**

**A:** I get up mid-morning, if my cats will let me sleep. Make coffee, check out the Internet. Run some errands. I typically spend the afternoons writing, revising, studying, researching, and submitting to publishers and magazines.

**Q: What are your professional ambitions? Is publishing the next book enough or is there a larger goal?**

**A:** My next book—my 16th collection of poetry, called *Confessions*—is due to be published around this summer (2005). I plan for it to be my last book of poetry, at least for quite a while. My contract with my publisher—Atlanta's PBP—has an option clause for three more books. I want to write some nonfiction. I have three books outlined in my head and have already done some work on the first two. The first will be a collection of literary essays. The second will be a small book on how to get poetry published. The third will be my memoirs. I expect that will take quite some time to write.

**Q: Did your experience at UT help you as a poet?**

**A:** I took one creative writing class, from Art Smith [professor of English]. I did terribly! At the time, I blamed Art. In retrospect, it was my own fault. I fought against what I viewed as a certain amount of rigidity in the class. I should have been learning about the craft of writing, but instead I was hurting myself by trying to do it on my own, outside of the structure being provided.

However, it ended up helping me, because it gave me a tremendous impetus to make myself an accomplished poet. Perhaps on my own terms, yes, but still, I had zeal. For some time, I would send copies of magazines back to Art with poems I had written for him—that had done poorly in class—published in their pages. Wasn't that juvenile? Art was gracious, and I've come to really respect him. I feel that, if it weren't for my rebellion against Art Smith and my friendship with Marilyn Kallet [professor of English], I wouldn't have been nearly as successful as I've been.

[Kallet] has been so supportive, for which I'm terribly grateful. She even wrote a back-cover blurb for the new book, *Cells*. She and I have exchanged copies of our books. We've seen each other read our poetry in public. I'm grateful for her friendship.

*Cells*, \$19.95 paperback. Available at bookstores and online retailers *Amazon.com*, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Borders, and Target.