



St. Mary's College of Maryland

at Historic St. Mary's City

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The Mark Twain Lecture Series on American Humor and Culture Presents

"Funny in Farsi"
By Bestselling Author Firoozeh Dumas

Friday, Feb. 13, 8 P.M.

(Photo attached)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Press Release #09-016

(St. Mary's City, MD) Jan. 30, 2009 – Author and humorist Firoozeh Dumas will deliver this year's Mark Twain Lecture on American Humor and Culture on Friday, Feb. 13 at St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM). The talk, "Funny in Farsi," named for her bestselling memoir, will be at 8 p.m. in the Auerbach Auditorium of St. Mary's Hall on the college campus. The talk is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Ben Click at baclick@smcm.edu or 240-895-4253.

"Two years ago we offered a talk by a Twain biographer, the following year a talk by a Twain scholar," Click said. "This year we're offering a talk by someone *like* Twain--a humorist."

Mark Twain once said, "Nothing so liberalizes a man and expands the kindly instincts that nature put in him as travel and contact with many kind of people." Dumas has had her share of travel and interactions with colorful characters, growing up in Southern California after immigrating from Iran at the age of seven. In 2004 she published *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian* (Random House), recounting that period of her life. The book was on the *SF Chronicle* and *LA Times* bestseller lists and was a finalist for the PEN/USA award in 2004. It was also a finalist in 2005 for an Audie Award for best audio book.

Dumas was also a finalist for the prestigious Thurber Prize for American Humor, the first Middle Eastern woman ever to be nominated. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter called *Funny in Farsi*, "A humorous and introspective chronicle of a life filled with love—of family, country and heritage." Dumas's latest memoir, *Laughing without an Accent* (Villard), was published in May 2008.

"Firoozeh has said that reading Mark Twain is part of the Iranian education, and for most Iranians, Twain *is* American literature," said Click, professor of English at SMCM and organizer of the Twain lecture series.

The Mark Twain Lecture Series on American Humor and Culture began in 2007, with inaugural speaker and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Ron Powers, author of *Mark Twain: A Life*. Last year's lecture was delivered by Robert Hirst, who for the past 35 years has served as general editor of the Mark Twain Project and curator of the Mark Twain Papers, a collection of Twain's private works.

The talk is sponsored by The Mark Twain Lecture Series on American Humor and Culture; the Center for the Study of Democracy; the SMC Student Programs Board; Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; and the Arts Alliance of St. Mary's College of Maryland.

St. Mary's College of Maryland, designated the Maryland state honors college in 1992, was founded in 1840 as Maryland's "monument school" commemorating the state's first capital. It is the state's only public honors college, offering "an Ivy-level College with a public-school price tag" (*Newsweek*).

Some 2,000 students attend the college, which has the highest graduation rate for all Maryland public colleges and universities, and an SAT average for student admissions of 1252. The school's waterfront campus along the St. Mary's River in Southern Maryland is home to the 2007 National Intercollegiate Sailing Association Women's, Sloop and Team champions.

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Photo Caption: Firoozeh Dumas, author of *Funny in Farsi*.
Credit: Photo courtesy of Steven Barclay Agency