Summer 2015

Friends of Dacus Library

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South Carolina naturalist Rudy (Rudolph) Mancke brought a part of his world to Winthrop University’s Dinkins Auditorium on April 14 before more than 85 Friends of Dacus Library, faculty, students, and assorted citizens.

Mancke entertained and enlightened the crowd with his collection of natural artifacts, using snake skins, turtle shells and animal skulls as props. He noted that he never killed to collect a specimen, jokingly observing that most of his collection was “DOR—Dead on the Road.”

Best known for his ETV program “Nature Scene,” Mancke said that as a naturalist he “studies the world of nature and marvels at it.” At age nine, he read a book entitled “The Life of John Muir” in which the pioneer environmentalist was quoted as saying, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

He thought: Is that so? Thus started his career of discovery.

The naturalist observed that he was often contacted to identify specimens. “The key questions to answer were: What is it and how does it fit into this world?” Mancke said. “Learning the relationship and interconnectedness of things is the key...Knowledge is powerful stuff.”

Everything is recycled in the universe, he said, and that life forms are made up of elements from the stars. “People are a part of something bigger than themselves,” he added.

Mancke told interesting tales about his family members and some popular myths they related about nature. He remembered being disturbed as a child at finding a turtle shell because the turtle had died. His mother comforted him, saying, “The turtle did not die, but just shed its shell.” He later found that was not so.

He related that an uncle, who was a farmer, had a dead corn snake (also known as a red rat snake) with a lump in it and said, “Look at the size of the ear of corn in that snake.” He told his uncle that snakes did not eat corn and proceeded to cut it open to find out. It, of course, had a field rat inside. Mancke cut open the rat, and there was his uncle’s precious corn. After that his uncle never killed another Corn Snake.

His grandmother often told him about some natural phenomena: “It won’t kill you, but it will ruin your life.” She used that adage when speaking of a rattlesnake’s rattler. She maintained that its bite was poisonous, which was true enough, but she also believed it was “poison at both ends” and “poisonous particles came off its rattler.” That is false, Mancke said. The real purpose of a rattler is as a warning, originally meant to prevent being stepped on by the American bison.

Life and death are all a part of the “recycling process” of nature, Mancke said. If you did not know if something in nature is poisonous, then just avoid it, so “you won’t end up being recycled early.”

Mancke concluded that he felt fortunate to have an opportunity to work at something he loved. In the process, he discovered that “the natural world is incredible!”
BEACH HOUSE RAFFLE PLANS TO PROCEED

Because the Friends of Dacus Library did not receive a raffle authorization from the South Carolina Secretary of State’s Office until June 3, 2015, we have decided for an official launch of the beach house raffle ticket sales on October 5, the time of the Annual Meeting. This will give us a reasonable amount of time not only for distribution and sale of tickets, but will make possible a drawing in the Spring term, well before the summer vacation season of 2016. The winner will then have a number of options for possible stays at the North Myrtle Beach house. The house in question is being made available by the generosity of Judge Henry Woods and his wife Gale Teaster-Woods, Electronic and Continuing Resources Librarian at the Dacus Library. Both are longtime supporters of the Friends of Dacus Library. We will issue six tickets per membership with a goal of selling a minimum of 200 tickets at $100 each.

Above: Rudy Mancke Chats with Dean of Library Services Mark Herring at April 14 Event in Dinkins Auditorium

Above: Shots of Some Specimens. Right: Mancke Shows Antler and Skull of Whitetail Deer
It’s Been Hot, and So Have We!... Dean Herring

If you live in the South, you expect summers to be hot. I have lived in the South all my life (Tennessee, mostly) and recall summers without air-conditioning. I even remember hotter summers than this with air-conditioning. Even so, unless you’ve been in Antarctica, this summer has been hot! Yes, thank you, Captain Obvious.

But just so you’ll know, Dacus has been sizzling, too! For most people who work outside academe, summers (not to mention spring, fall and winter) are pictured as lazy days for academics (cue: “Summertime, When the Livin’ Is Easy”). Some—perhaps too many politicians—have visions of us sitting beside resort retreats sipping mint juleps while waiting for the fall semester to begin. Now, I’m sure there must be an academic somewhere who does just that, but I haven’t met her personally. For those of us who work in Dacus, we have been burning up the stacks, so to speak, getting ready for the fall semester.

A few communications back, I mentioned we were changing out our automated catalog, what librarians refer to as an integrated library system. It sounds easy, I’m sure, but believe me, this is no easy task. We moved about 325,000 electronic records from one system to another. But it wasn’t just electronic records for books. We also moved over 6,000 records for patrons. Bear in mind that each of these records has many other records attached to them, such as if the item is checked out, and to whom, where they live, if there is an email, what i is, and so on. The occasion for glitches is, well, ad infinitum.

No computer change is easy, and migrating from one system to another for a library is one of the hardest things that can be done. In fact, it’s much easier to take a collection that has never been automated and move it to an automated status than it is to move from one system to another. Having done both, I speak from weary experience.

But we are at the end of the tunnel, and we think that the light we see is not a train. We are still feverishly fixing all the hiccups that occurred, but we’re closing in on the end of the affair. In a migration of this size and complexity, one would normally expect a certain percentage of problems. We ended up with about 7%; not at all bad, but still a heck of a lot of work.

The staff have been exceptional, working all day long on various problems, running first two systems, and then finally, on 1 July, switching over to the new one. Everyone has done a tremendous amount of work. But much of it was shouldered by our implementation team, especially Gale Teaster and Nancy White. They not only had to troubleshoot all aspects of the plan but listen to me drone on about being on task, on time, and under budget (they did all three!). We’re all exhausted, but now that we’re close to closing out the problems—not all of which will be completed before fall semester—we’re trying to catch our breath before students arrive.

Will you notice much? Yes, a little. The system looks a bit different, but searching is just about the same. The biggest difference you’ll notice is that you can now do a search of all our books and databases in one search. (If you encounter a problem, please let us know about it.) You can also search what is called WorldCat, a gigantic database of tens of millions of items held by libraries all over the world.

So, if you see us looking a bit more bedraggled than usual, you’ll know why.

Oh. And should you see me hanged in effigy for inflicting this on staff, there’s no need to worry. I will enter the witness protection program soon enough.
ANNUAL MEETING, ELECTIONS, LIFE INDUCTIONS ON OCTOBER 5

The annual meeting of the Friends of Dacus Library will take place at 6 p.m., October 5 in Tuttle Dining Room, McByrde Hall. The speaker will be popular science author Sam Kean. His topic will be “Brains, Genes, Spoons: The Stories of Science.” Tickets to the event are available from Sec.-Treasurer Ronnie Faulkner (faulknerr@witnhrop.edu or 803-323-2262). Tickets are free to members and cost $20 for non-members.

Kean, as indicated in the previous newsletter, has had three bestselling popular science titles: The Disappearing Spoon (2010), The Violinist’s Thumb (2012), and The Tale of the Dueling Neurosurgeons (2014). He is an entertaining and informative public speaker.

Three persons will be stepping down from the Friends Board: Alice B. Coleman, Cindy Nigro, and Paul Nigro. We appreciate their valued service. The following will be voted on as replacements: Marsha Bollinger, Nancy Davidson, and Joyce Simpson. Jane White and Janet Gray have agreed to continue as chair and vice-chair, respectively. Candidates will officially assume their positions effective January 1, 2016. As provided for in the bylaws, the Secretary-Treasurer is not elected and Dr. Faulkner will continue in that capacity.

Based on their contributions to the Louise Pettus Archives, the recommendation of Dean Mark Y. Herring, and the unanimous vote of the Board of the Friends of Dacus Library, the following individuals will be inducted as Life Members at the meeting:

Betty R. S. Buff of West Columbia, who made a gift to support the work of the Pettus Archives especially as it relates to the history of women and women’s organizations, had a long association with the South Carolina Family and Community Leaders (SCFCL, formerly SC Extension Homemakers Council), South Carolina Master Farm Homemaker’s Guild, Country Women’s Council USA, and several other women’s groups. She has donated papers to the Archives of the groups she has been an integral part of, including the National Volunteer Outreach Network (NVON). The Archives has had a relationship with her for close to 30 years.

Julie Epting of Columbia, has funded a project to identify and create biographical sketches of the Winthrop alumnae who served as cryptographers and in other capacities in the Armed Forces during WWII and, when possible, to conduct oral history interviews. Mrs. Epting’s mother-in-law was a 1909 graduate of Winthrop. She gave a treasure-trove of Winthrop related material to the Archives belonging to her mother-in-law, as well as WWII Navy service-related items belonging to her late husband, David Epting, Jr.
Membership Application: The Friends of Dacus Library (Mail to address in box below)

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In memo line of check write:
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Your contribution receipt will provide specific information about any benefit that would affect your tax deductible gift.