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Capsules from Addresses of Featured Speakers

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Capsules from addresses of featured speakers

Engel's "The Dickens Nobody Knows"

Dr. Elliot Engel put on his usual stellar presentation, lecturing on the life and times of Charles Dickens. For those who have heard an Engel lecture it seems in vain to summarize in print because Engel's theatrical delivery is as important as the content itself. Dressed in period costume, Engel opens up with the line, "Dickens was far more fascinating than anything he ever wrote. The most fascinating thing? Charles Dickens earned \$68 million in his life in today's dollars and is the number one selling author that we still study in school. And how did he do it?" We are hooked from the beginning and Engel begins his tale of how Dickens received his first big break as a writer with the *Pickwick Papers*. Dickens' money making genius is due as much to his knack for promotion as to his writing talents. The *Pickwick Papers* were initially sold as serial paperbacks using cheap newsprint to keep the cost low. As the popularity of each volume grew it dawned on Dickens that he could re-release the sets as a hardbound volume. As soon as his last installment was complete his publisher produced the limited edition *Pickwick Papers* in a single hardbound volume with gold gilded pages. It sold tremendously. Dickens then hired runners to go door to door in London and buy up the original newsprint editions of the *Pickwick Papers*, which by then were stashed in attics and closets. He produced a *Collectors Edition Pickwick Papers* using the original newsprint pages bound into a single volume. It was an instant best seller. Dickens had thus succeeded in selling the same story three times, and in many cases to the same readers. Another fascinating fact: Dickens was the first fiction writer to use a child as a central character. Engel points out that virtually every novel Dickens wrote after and including *Oliver Twist* featured either a sick child, a mistreated child or a dying child. Dickens was smart enough to know that children make a good story and a great draw. Engel continued with additional vignettes of the marketing genius of Charles Dickens. For more information about Dr. Elliot Engel go to <http://www.mediaconsultants.com/ee.htm>

Dori Sanders Shares Life Stories

Popular southern author Dori Sanders shared some of her life stories, opening with a confession that she is more comfortable on a tractor than she is writing. Her family has been farming on the same land since 1915. Her father would tell her as child "If you can read you can go anywhere." Sanders own version of her father's wisdom is "Reading prepares the minds and teases the reader's curiosity. Chance prepares only the favored mind." Dori shared a childhood memory of watching a funeral procession and how it inspired her to write her first novel, *Clover*. It was the faces of the persons in the automobiles as they passed by, particularly that of a young African-American girl and an older white woman, that formed a lasting impression. Inspiration for her second novel was more earthly – she had forgotten to pay the income taxes from royalties on the first novel and needed cash! In both of these novels food plays a big part of the story, and in fact is a big part of her life. Having noticed, her editor convinced her to write a cookbook. This is when the contrast between big-city publisher and country girl writing recipes on the back of an envelope becomes humorous. The publisher hired a food editor, who asked questions such as "What pan size should the cook use?" To which Dori says "use one big enough to hold the ingredients!" Next question . . . How long should you cook it? Dori's response: "long enough to cook the food." The worst question is "How many will the dish serve?" To which Dori says smiling "it depends on who is eating!" Dori is currently working on an autobiography of her childhood. It is largely a story of her father who, with 10 children to care for, did not have a lot of time for each individual child. He was so busy that when Dori or one of her siblings complained to Daddy, his response was to put it in writing and leave a note on his desk. He would then conduct mock courtroom hearings to settle disputes between siblings. It is clear from her tone that she held her father in high respect. In closing, Dori shared with pride that her classic novel *Clover* is now available in over six foreign languages. Dori Sanders has transcended to international prominence.

Freedman Speaks Out on Better Salaries

ALA president Maurice Freedman gave a rousing address on the importance of increasing salaries in the profession now, and not waiting for it to happen gradually over time. Dr. Freedman is traveling the country speaking to a number of library association conferences this year with his message, the centerpiece of his presidency. First and foremost, librarians must move past their own perception of themselves as selfless dedicated workers who are willing to accept any rate of pay because of a higher sense of “doing good” within society. Second, librarians must promote a better understanding of what they accomplish in their daily work. A common refrain we hear about our work, that “we must read a lot each day”, must be met by enlightening others of the increasing complexity of the work of librarians, and the knowledge and level of education necessary to perform at a professional level. Lastly, librarians must all contribute to the cause for gender pay equity. Women have been discriminated against in a number of ways for too long, compensation being just one way. Freedman stressed the importance of taking action and not just talking about the issues. He advocates use of the “Better Salaries Toolkit” that has been produced by ALA’s “Better Salaries and Pay Equity for Library Workers Taskforce”, available at http://www.ala.org/pio/advocacy/better_salary_toolkit.pdf. Freedman emphasizes that one of the chief elements in developing a successful campaign is for the library to conduct salary surveys at the local level, comparing the work of librarians and library staff with positions requiring a comparable skill set. With data in hand, we move toward a more proactive posture that is generally better received than simply making pleas for better pay. Freedman’s speech was emotional but very proscriptive in laying out concrete formulas and strategies, something that has generally been missing from the salary equity dialog.

Charlestonian Robert Jordan Reflects on the Life of a Writer

Introduced by Citadel Library Director Angie LeClercq, author Robert Jordan is a native of

Charleston and Citadel Class of '74 graduate. He majored in Physics and upon graduating went on to serve two tours of duty in Vietnam. He is the most widely published author from the Citadel, and in addition to his most popular works has also written historical novels and a western. Jordan is best known for his “Conan” and “Wheel of Time” series. In his address Jordan shared some memories from childhood and early adulthood, first describing his love of books and his 13,000 volume library. As a boy he knew he was going to be a writer even before he could read, by the tall tales he would tell his family and neighbors. Every room in his parents’ house except the dining room and bathroom held books. The first book he remembers partially reading was *White Fang*, after which he went on to Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. He received his first library card at age six and spent considerable time in public libraries as a child. Small boys wandering in the adult section got noticed, he recalled, but by lingering in the reference section he would not be confronted. He educated himself in the reference section of the Charleston County Library. At age five he wanted to be writer but by the age of nine he had learned that writers did not make much money, so his interests broadened. After his Vietnam tours he took a position as a physicist with the U.S. government, thinking this would lead to a well-paying position in private industry, after which he would find the time to write. A serious knee injury at age 30 however changed his life. During recuperation he experienced a revelation that if he was ever going to write seriously now was the time, and so his writing career began. Jordan closed his formal remarks by philosophizing that writers (good writers) have one of the few chances of immortality. Painters and sculptors can be copied but a writer’s name is always attached to his work. The problem is that you don’t know while you are alive if you are any good! If people are reading his books 100 years from now, Jordan figures he will be judged as a good writer. Jordan expressed his thanks to the librarians in the audience for supporting his works and entertained questions for a lengthy period.