The Southeastern Librarian

Volume 63 | Issue 2 | Article 7

4-7-2015

The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood

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Sarah comes to UNC from the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, where she was research services coordinator. She has also worked as an order specialist for the Duke University Library.

She holds a B.A. in German and international studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an M.S.I.S. from UNC’s School of Information and Library Science.

The University Library is also pleased to announce the appointment of Tim Shearer as Director of Library and Information Technology (LIT), effective May 1.

Tim will lead a comprehensive technology program for the Library and will manage the LIT department, including planning, budgeting, and setting policy for information technology. He will represent the Library on select campus committees, including the University Information Technology Executive Council, and will maintain collaborative relationships with organizations that provide information technology services to academic institutions and libraries.

Tim was most recently the head of software development within the LIT department. He has also held the positions of head of the Core Application Development Team and Web access librarian at the UNC Library.

He holds a B.A. in English and psychology from UNC, and an M.S.L.S. from UNC’s School of Information and Library Science.

BOOK REVIEWS


Cocuyo (glowing click beetle, common to both South Florida and Cuba, which displays a blue glow at night similar to Fireflies)

Richard Blanco, fifth inaugural poet of the United States with an impressive bibliography of award winning books and poetry, writes a loving memoir of growing up in Miami, struggling to bridge two cultures and coming to terms with being gay in a community that esteems machismo. Born in Spain, immigrating with his Cuban exile family to Miami after a brief stay in New York, Prince of Los Cocuyos is a tribute to his family and culture written with humorous insight and charm.

Recalling his childhood with droll, engaging stories of his family, the author captures the uneasy and delicate symbiosis which exists between immigrants and their adopted country. Relating his attempt to entice his grandmother to shop at the local “Winn D eezee” instead of the neighborhood Cuban grocery is delightful, as he introduces her to easy cheese from a can and uses all his
wiles to induce her to conduct all her shopping at the American supermarket.

"Riqui" and his brother Carlo, both bilingual, are the family's ambassadors to American culture, but the boys are immersed in Cuban traditions and customs at home, cementing their heritage. A particularly entrancing account is provided of the family's excursion to Disney World to see "El Ratoncito Miguel". Though surrounded by American popular culture and excess, the mother insists on bringing Cuban food for their stay set to the endless beat of Cuban hits from the fifties and sixties.

The grandparents, especially, exert a strong influence on Richard, endowing him with an understanding of family connections and a way of life lost with their move to the States. From his abuelo's attempts to create a menagerie of farm animals at home, to his abuela's insistence he develop more manly interests and put aside his artistic, creative pursuits, the author portrays his internal struggle to please both his family and himself.

With his first job working at the Cuban grocery store, El Cocuyito, the memoir assumes a more somber tone as the author relates his struggles to understand and identify himself as gay in a culture that prizes masculinity. Conforming to family expectations, he consents to be the partner of the store cashier's daughter for her quincinera - a special celebration for a girl's fifteenth birthday. Participating in the festivities and serving as prince consort for the day allows him to bask in his family's approval. Friendships with a coworker and another Cuban refugee, however, help him to understand his preferences and appreciate both cultures which have shaped him, but also to assert his needs in finding his own way.

Spanish is liberally sprinkled throughout the book, but easily understood in context; enough to give the reader the experience of what it must have been like growing up bilingual when your family speaks one language and your adopted country another. Written with love and affection, the memoir is ultimately an homage to Richard Blanco's close-knit family and their indelible influence on who he is today.

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This brief memoir is a labor of love, written by Claude Sullivan’s youngest son, a healthcare architect, an attorney and rabid Wildcats fan (author of 100 Things Wildcat Fans Should Know & Do Before They Die). The focus of the narrative is Sullivan’s short life and career as the “Voice of the Wildcats” and the Wildcats basketball and football programs he covered. The work does not attempt comprehensive coverage of the “rise of modern sportscasting” but rather hints at broader changes based on anecdotal evidence of Sullivan’s approach to the craft and business of reporting sports.

Sullivan was known for his colorful and engaging play-by-play commentary, but his painstaking, thorough pre-game preparations supported his seemingly spontaneous performances. There are some tidbits about and interesting photos of Sullivan’s early and skilled use of various technologies, e.g., “mobile broadcasting” from his car, using ticker tape, calling games on radio based on live TV broadcasts or play-by-play telegraph messages issued from Madison Square Garden. He also invented several simple but functional pieces of equipment to aid in spotting or tracking players during games. He is credited with pioneering “coaches’ programs,” i.e., regular interview shows with coaches, now an integral part of sports news.

Sullivan’s various endeavors represented his commitment to constructing the “hub and spokes” of a professional “wheel,” continually adding different spokes so that his wheel would continue to spin even if one spoke should fail. He took extra gigs in radio drama and news reporting in the early days to supplement meager pay. Sullivan foresaw new possibilities in the business of sports as well and developed successful sports broadcast networks as a major spoke. He broadcast internationally for the Armed Services Network. He also organized international tour groups, broadcasting from Europe, Russia, and Middle East.

As a matter of personal and professional interest, Sullivan was one of the first Americans to visit the Soviet Union in 1956. He was shown alleged state of the art Soviet broadcasting equipment, which Sullivan found substandard compared to what he used daily in Louisville. Prior to a planned second trip to Russia in 1957 United States naval