

VIEWS *from the* WOODS

Hitchcock Woods
FOUNDATION

The Aiken Horse Show ... As Welcome as Spring Itself

The spectacular 96th annual Aiken Horse Show will take place on March 30 to April 1 at the Show Grounds in the Hitchcock Woods. The Hitchcock Woods Foundation and the Aiken Horse Show Committee work diligently to preserve the historic character of this community event. People have been making lasting memories of the Aiken Horse Show since its founding in 1916 by Louise Hitchcock.

The judge of this year's show is Ms. Susan B. Schoellkopf, who has owned and operated SBS Farms in Buffalo, New York, for over 30 years. Susan has trained four USEF High Score Award Hunters.



Throughout the years, she has also trained top equitation riders to multiple major wins. Susan has served as a USEF "R" judge at Devon, Thermal, Palm Beach, Kentucky, Junior Hunter Finals, New England Medal Finals, and other top shows around the country.

If you haven't yet experienced the Aiken Horse Show, please join the tradition. Admission for the brunch on Saturday and the luncheon on Sunday are available through the Foundation office. Detailed information for exhibitors and spectators alike is available at AikenHorseShow.org. For questions, please call the Foundation office at (803) 642-0528.

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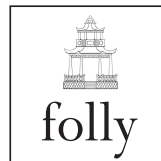


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Hitchcock Woods Recognized with National Award

In January, at its annual members meeting and awards ceremony at the Pierre Hotel in New York City, the Masters of Foxhounds Association jointly awarded the Hitchcock Woods Foundation and the Aiken Hounds with the **Hunting Habitat Conservation Award**. This award recognizes organizations that have made significant and enduring contributions toward the preservation of rural countryside and its flora and fauna.

The award is cosponsored by the Masters of Foxhounds Association and *The Chronicle of the Horse*, which published a six page article in the February 6 & 13, 2012 issue. The article features the history of the Hitchcock Woods and the Aiken Hounds, as well as the stewardship of the Woods and the culture of Aiken.

Accepting the award on behalf of both organizations was Linda Knox McLean, trustee of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation and Jt.-MFH of the Aiken Hounds. In the photo are: MFHA first vice president MFH Dr. John Van Nagell, Linda Knox McLean, MFH J.W.Y. Martin Jr. of the MFHA Conservation Committee, Jt.-MFH Joey Peace of the Aiken Hounds, and Molly Sorge, associate editor of *The Chronicle of the Horse*.



Vol. 5, No. 2
Winter 2012

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Collective Appreciation for Retiring Trustees

With the Hitchcock Woods Foundation's Board of Trustees, the March board meeting always concludes a "service year" and begins a new one. As the current service year ends, the Foundation expresses gratitude to three retiring board members: Iris Freeman, Lee Dane, and Dacre Stoker. This issue of *Views from the Woods* features Dacre and Lee. The next issue will feature Iris.

Dacre Stoker, Trustee

Dacre Stoker has served on the Board of Trustees since 1994. During this time, he served two terms as President, worked closely with the Forest Manager, attended hundreds of meetings, parked cars for special events, and cut firewood to supplement



Dacre Stoker's quiet contributions to the Hitchcock Woods will be felt for many years to come.

Foundation income. On many occasions, he searched for missing horses (and the occasional person) at all hours of the day and night. He was comfortable doing whatever was necessary to support the mission of the Foundation.

Dacre's contributions to the Foundation are too numerous to name, but there are a few that clearly stand out. For an intensive 10 month period in 2005, he chaired and championed a special committee created to study and develop the Visitors Guidelines which now appear on the Foundation's website. He helped to create the Woods Watch Volunteer program, which include a County and City integrated protocol for emergency response. He organized the "Run for the Woods" for 11 years, helping to encourage and educate compatible running in the Woods.

Dacre said he can't decide what he enjoys most about the Woods. "I love the fact that I can walk or jog in a peaceful, beautiful and safe natural area so close to where I live," he said. "I have really enjoyed my interaction and friendship with fellow board members, who all have shared an immense passion for our wonderful resource." Reflecting on a specific milestone for the Foundation, he said, "I am tremendously relieved that the City has been able to begin in earnest to address the severe stormwater damage within the Woods."

In his last month of serving on the Board, Dacre wrote the parting thoughts below.

"As I drive around the perimeter of the Hitchcock Woods, I see Aiken, an expanding city. Looking to the sides of each road, on one side are houses, and plenty of them. However, on the other side, I see the Woods, where there is less signage, less concrete, less roads, and less traffic. The presence of the Hitchcock Woods means a lot of things to me, but one of them is that its presence means the absence of many other, less desirable things.

"The Hitchcock Woods itself, as well as the staff and Board of Trustees, are in great shape. We have a management plan in place to ensure the health of the flora and the fauna. In addition, we have a conservation easement in place to protect the Woods for future generations. The policies and procedures now in place assure that the board and staff operate in a professional and efficient manner.

"If you are reading this article, then you probably already know that it is expensive to do all the things that the Foundation does to maintain these wonderful Woods. I encourage you to help spread the word, donate what you can, either monetarily or by offering sweat equity at one of the events that help raise operating funds, or perhaps support the endowment fund."

Lee Dane, Trustee

The recent article in *The Chronicle of the Horse* characterized the Hitchcock Woods perfectly, from the long equestrian history to the highlights of current modern management. Almost 20 years ago, I joined the board of the Foundation somewhere in the



Lee Dane with Roo, the Wonder Dog, described by Lee as "truly an extraordinary hunting dog"

middle of this evolution. When I first joined, there was no paid staff, there was no cohesive management, nor was there any higher level of protection for Hitchcock Woods other than the efforts of a determined volunteer board. But there was an increasing awareness on the part of board members that all of these things were becoming necessary.

The outcome of a lot of hard work, much of which I had a part in, included the first conservation easement accepted by the South Carolina Heritage Trust Program, an effort that created some heartburn on both sides. The Board's concern was loss of autonomy, the Heritage Trust people feared that this independent group would damage the very environment we all

wanted to protect, and drew up an easement that was overly burdensome. But after a lengthy negotiation, a conservation easement was signed and recorded. The easement should forever protect the extraordinary resource that is the Woods from incursions other than those allowed, while trusting the board to manage the property we all love.

One of the requirements of the easement was the development of a management plan. Aiken's own Stephanie Wilds put together a blue ribbon team of her professors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and did the field work to create a plan that has enabled the Foundation to manage the Woods on a unit by unit basis, recognizing the extraordinary diversity of these 2,100 acres. The plan built on both field trips for board members to such well managed forests as the Savannah River Site and long term work by volunteers – Bill Brockington among them, who had inventoried plants and fauna found within the Woods. The final plan was overwhelmingly supported. The current burning regime, timbering to improve the health of the forest, and even trail location and maintenance all depend on the management plan.

During my tenure as a board member, I led the committee that created the conservation easement, and served on the Woods (now Forestry) Committee, which oversaw the management plan and its implementation. This committee is now in the throes of overhauling the plan to enable more precise management of the Woods with tools such as GIS and timber inventory added to the history of each unit. I also served on the Endowment, Stormwater and Wildlife committees. Obviously my passion has been the environment.

The Board is an effective blend of long time institutional memory and energetic new ideas. And the Board is now supported by a truly dedicated and highly professional staff. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with them all. Knowing that the Woods are in good hands, I can accept that my family's

Continued on the next page

Silent Auction Funds the Care of the Woods

Since 2005, silent auctions have garnered over \$230,000 for the care of the Hitchcock Woods and its uses. So ... don't think for a moment that your once cherished but now unused item has no purpose. Give it a new, appreciative home and help the Woods at the same time.

Maybe you have an item in the house, attic, or barn that could raise funds for the Hitchcock Woods Foundation. Something you simply don't need or want anymore just might be someone else's treasure.

The silent auction is always a highlight of the Aiken Horse Show. Please bring your items by the Foundation office at 444 South Boundary Avenue by March 23.

Visit Our Websites
hitchcockwoods.org
&
aikenhorseshow.org

Lee Dane, *(Continued from the previous page)*

disintegration (physical, not marital!) demands that I resign from the Board.

I will look back with fondness on my time on the board as I check out the Woods for those special moments and places that catch the eye and the heart; the kalmia in full bloom, red buds on the slope above Barton's Pond, the flocks of migrating warblers singing along the trails by the Stable on the Woods. And I know they will be there not only for me, but for generations to come.

Loblolly Pine? Clearing Up the Mud

Thanks to the curiosity of a daily walker in the Woods, here are some thoughts as to how the loblolly pine got its name.

The word loblolly has various meanings. One of those meanings is mud puddle or mire. Several have speculated that the loblolly pine got its name from the large scales and deep furrows on its bark. The textural bark somewhat resembles the bed of a dried-up puddle or pond, with wide fissures of cracked mud. Perhaps you can envision the similarities.

The loblolly pine reaches prodigious size in wet areas, but it also grows well in dry upland areas. Visitors can see fine examples of this species throughout the Woods.



THE MISSION OF THE HITCHCOCK WOODS FOUNDATION IS TO:

- protect and preserve the Hitchcock Woods in a natural and ecologically healthy state,
- maintain and manage historic and traditional equestrian and pedestrian uses, and
- foster education and research on the history and resources of the Woods.