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Speech Assignment
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TUSCLOOSA -- A man from Missouri sat on his chair with a shotgun on his lap after a reporter from the Associated Press knocked on his door asking about his past. The Missouri man, Buck Nelson, drifted into his past and thought about the death of his dog, Bo, and a man by the name of Bob Solomon who visited long ago. However, Bo and Bob Solomon are not real people; they are aliens in a story written by Andy Duncan.

Award-winning science fiction and fantasy writer Andy Duncan read and discussed his story "Close Encounters" at Gorgas Library to promote his new book "The Pottawatomie Giant and Other Stories." Duncan read his story about Buck Nelson and his encounters with Bob Solomon and Bo at his book event hosted by the Honors College.

Former Dean of the Honors College Robert Halli introduced Duncan to the attendees. Halli hired Duncan to teach science fiction writing for the University of Alabama Honors College.

"Andy is one of the funniest people I have ever met," said Halli. "He's a brilliant teacher and an amazing writer."

Duncan revealed his interesting writing style when he read his story "Close Encounters," which includes a commercial break in the middle of the passage. His creative science fiction writing style pulled listeners into his story who were not originally interested in the genre. Amy Hicks, a student from the University of Alabama, had never heard of Duncan and was not looking forward to listening to the science fiction reading.

"I expected it to be nerdy," said Hicks. "But it was humorous and captivating. I can see how I'd like to hear more. I was glad I came."

After reading his story, Duncan discussed why he decided to pursue writing science fiction as a living. He said that it began when he was a kid. He read his own fair share of science fiction novels, said Duncan.

“I thought I outgrew it,” said Duncan.

When Duncan attended North Carolina State University, his professor realized Duncan’s potential after reading his papers. His professor’s name was John Kessel, a renown science fiction writer. Kessel told Duncan about the opportunities of the genre and pushed him to begin writing again, said Duncan.

“It was so much more diverse and strange,” Duncan said. “I had to do it again.”

With this start, Duncan began to write several short stories. He wrote about alternate universes such as his novella about Gen. George S. Patton titled “Fortitude.” He also wrote about alien encounters where he often used his southern background to his advantage.

“My heritage makes me a lot stranger, gives me a lot more material, and a broader range of language,” said Duncan.

Since Duncan began writing, he has tasted success with his several nominations for the Neptune, the sci-fi version of the Oscar’s; however, he does not believe that publishing his award-winning books are his greatest accomplishments. He takes more pride in his wife.

“My greatest accomplishment is, well, marrying Sydney,” Duncan said. “And she hasn’t killed me yet is my second.”