

Bug Man

The way we were

Thursday, June 13, 2013

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Entomology Professor G. Thomas Fisher was better known by his epithet of “bug man” - - not only because he taught basic entomology, but because when he taught he became the insects. “I try to make the insects I discuss in class hop out of the book and manifest themselves right before my student’s eyes. And I do this by becoming the praying mantis flying across the room or the black widow spider climbing up a thread.”

His mimicry techniques included effortlessly molding his deep, resonant voice into a wide repertoire of intonation and impersonations.

Fisher's rich expressive voice was, in fact, the product of years of musical training. When he wasn't imitating the sounds of bugs, he was singing professionally including as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic and in recital at Carnegie Hall. However, at UNH his musical ability was probably most widely recognized for those times when he taught the alma mater to his classes. The week before Homecoming, Fisher would surprise the class by handing out mimeographed sheets of the words. He would sing it through once to familiarize the students with the melody, and then whip out his pitch pipe to tune them. At first there were snickers and only the faintest warblings from his dubious chorus. But soon, by sheer force of enthusiasm, a lustily singing Fisher had them roaring through both verses.

Most of the students react positively to Fisher's unorthodox lesson. "They come up after class and tell me that they appreciate someone finally teaching it to them. Most say they probably would never have learned the Alma Mater if I hadn't taught it in my class."

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