keynote speaker  WINSTON GROOM

Friday, September 21, 7:30pm

Miller’s Banquet Facility, 307 6th Street, Charleston

“If you see a line, go stand in it, probably can’t hurt nothing” is a sample of the pithy wisdom of Forrest Gump by Gump’s creator, Winston Groom.

Winston Groom took the publishing world by storm when his 1986 novel Forrest Gump flew to the top of the New York Times bestseller list and stayed there for 21 weeks. It has sold over 2.5 million copies in the United States alone on the heels of its blockbuster movie adaptation starring Tom Hanks.

Born in 1943, Groom grew up in Mobile, Alabama. In 1965 he graduated from the University of Alabama and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army. He served in Vietnam with the Fourth Infantry Division from 1966-1967 when he was honorably discharged with the rank of Captain. He then spent the next eight years working as a reporter and columnist for the Washington Star before becoming a full-time author.

In addition to Forrest Gump and Gump & Co., Groom has authored many books of fiction and non-fiction, including Better Times Than These, Gone the Sun, Only and the award-winning As Summers Die, which was made into a movie starring Bette Davis. He is also the co-author of Conversations with the Enemy, a non-fiction account of the experience of an American POW in Vietnam, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. The prize-winning Shrouds of Glory is a meticulous history of the little known Western Campaign of the Civil War, inspired by tales of his great-grandfather who fought for the Confederate Army. A Storm in Flanders, his riveting World War I history, was published in 2002, followed by his World War II history book, 1942: The Year That Tried Men’s Souls, published in 2005. Patriotic Fire, his history of Andrew Jackson and Jean Lafitte at the Battle of New Orleans, was published in 2006.

Groom has made numerous television appearances on shows such as PBS’s Frontline and CBS’ Sunday Morning. He is also in demand on the lecture circuit, not only because of Forrest Gump, but also for his history books.

Groom’s keynote address will focus on his friendship with Jones, the significance of his work and his influence on later war novelists. At the time Groom was writing his Vietnam War novel, Better Times Than These, he discussed the work with Jones and their mutual friend, the late Willie Morris.

He believes as Forrest says, “Always be able to look back and say, ‘At least, I didn’t lead no humdrum life.’”

Biographical Information prepared by American Program Bureau.

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