

WCU becomes a top spider spot

CULLOWHEE (AP) — What do Harvard, Cornell, the University of Florida and Western Carolina University have in common?

Spiders.

More specifically, they are recognized as owning the top four university collections of spider literature in the United States, says Dr. John McCrone, dean of Western Carolina's School of Arts and Sciences.

McCrone, an arachnologist (spider specialist), says Western Carolina joined the august company recently when Swiss-born pharmacologist Dr. Peter N. Witt donated his personal collection of spider literature to the university.

The collection, valued at more than \$2,500, contains about 150 volumes of rare spider literature published in Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States from 1738 to the present.

Among the volumes are serials, children's

books and scholarly monographs, including current publications and rare, historic books illustrated with hand-painted, color plates.

Witt also gave the university about 50 black-and-white photographs of unusually constructed webs spun in his laboratory by spiders under the influence of drugs.

The collection will be housed in Hunter Library's special collections department.

Witt, who recently retired from spider research and a 15-year career as chief of research for the N.C. Department of Mental Health at Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh, is known for his research into the effects of LSD, marijuana and other drugs on spiders' web building.

Witt said he gave his collection to Western Carolina because two friends, Crone and Dr. Frederick Coyle, were doing research on the spider there and because he wanted the col-

lection to stay in North Carolina.

"I also wanted to get these kinds of stimulating things into a place that's not exactly in the center of academic life like the Research Triangle is," said the 63-year-old scientist in a telephone interview from his Knightdale farm, where he raises goats and produces goat cheese.

"I think (the collection) will attract graduate students and get other students interested," he said. "The goal of my life is that when I die, more people will be interested in spiders."

University officials said they hoped to add to the collection to make it even more attractive to students and visiting scholars.

Dr. James Lloyd, Western Carolina special collections curator, said he is trying to buy more manuscripts and rare books on spiders in the out-of-print market.