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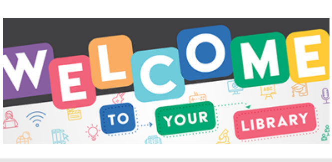
FRIENDS OF THE LARKSPUR LIBRARY

Among Friends

Fall 2021



Close Up: Coreen Hester, Member of the Friends of the Library Board

Coreen Hester's long and distinguished career in education can be divided into three segments of ten years each. First, she spent ten years as a teacher, then administrator at Branson. During that decade, she met her husband, Weston, a professor of engineering at Berkeley, and they had two children, Tyler and Molly, and the family lived in Sleepy Hollow in San Anselmo.

When Weston unexpectedly died in his 40s, Coreen returned to school administration. She rented out her house (it's still being rented) and moved to England with her children to become head of the high school at the American School in London for two years.

ASL students range from pre-K through high school, come from 60 countries, and speak 45 languages. But the school is especially appealing to American ex-pats, who frequently live in one country for a few years and then move to another, and who want "the continuity of America education" for their children. "So we had an American curriculum."

After two years at the American School of London, Coreen returned to the Bay Area to become head of school at The Hamlin School in San Francisco, where she stayed for 10 years. At which point, she was offered the position as head of school at ASL. "Ten more years of London. The capstone of my professional experience. A friend said it was like a working vacation."

Coreen lived in Sleepy Hollow when she was at Hamlin, and she lives in Corte Madera now, renting while her house is still rented out. One reason she chose Larkspur over Sleepy Hollow was its proximity to SFO. And airport access is necessary for Coreen — on the day of a Friends of the Library meeting in May, she left early to catch a plane to Pasadena where she would consult with independent school administrators on staffing.

From Larkspur, she has been consulting for independent schools globally (she advised the American Embassy School in New Delhi, as well as schools in Milan, Prague, and more). "Then Covid changed everything. Our searches are on Zoom now, and I only travel to places as close and easy as Los Angeles."

It was after she left London for the second time that she came to Larkspur — "a new chapter" — at the same time a veteran Marin person and a newcomer. In an attempt to "build community," Coreen joined a choir in Mill Valley ("It's interesting to do something as an adult that you did as a child"), a church in San Anselmo, a Corte Madera-Larkspur book club, and the Friends of the Larkspur Library.

The Corte Madera-Larkspur book club had been together for more than 20 years when she was invited to join two years ago. Once, she remembers, in London, she hosted a literary discussion for parents on *The Scarlet Letter*. After the first few minutes, a surprised participant asked, "Are we really going to talk about the book?" At the new book club, after a little socializing, they always talk about the book. Prior selections include *Beartown, The Warmth of Other Suns, The Ocean at the End of the Lane,* and *This Tender Land*. Club members choose the books a year at a time, with each member proposing/lobbying for two books. Then everyone votes — for as many books as she wants.

Her son and daughter, who had the benefit of the family adventure in London, went to high school at Branson and college at Stanford and Harvard respectively. Her son, Tyler, lives in Richmond ("I can't believe we live so close"), where he is the vice principal of the Michelle Obama Elementary School. "He was part of Teach for America and has a real commitment to helping underserved children." Her daughter, Molly, was an Irish scholar before she realized that she was "born to be an engineer." She is now a mechanical engineer for Amazon in Boston, "who speaks Irish."

Welcome to Larkspur, Coreen — lucky us!

How Friends of the Library President Barbara Friday Spent Her First Saturday in October

Do you have a Saturday afternoon routine? Mine always includes a good lunch and a long walk at the settling ponds near McGinnis Park. However, the first Saturday of this month, October 2nd, I had the distinct pleasure of visiting our beloved Larkspur Library in person. What a treat! It felt like I had stumbled into a treasure hunt. Although I knew that it wasn't the case, I felt like I was the first to view the many tantalizing options in the refreshed collection of books and DVDs. I was greeted warmly by new and treasured longtime staff. I saw a mom and child building a big pile of books from our children's collection. I watched dear library regulars walk into the main area with smiles as broad as mine.

Visiting Larkspur Library in person on Saturday afternoons will surely become a regular part of my Saturday routine. Won't you join me?

With best wishes and gratitude for your continuing support,
Barbara

The Commons Foundation
Fund, Build and Sustain A New Larkspur Library

Welcome Back – Progress Over the Summer

Three major City developments have propelled us this summer toward the goal of funding and building a new modern Larkspur library:

1. In June, the State passed a budget that included a matching grant program for public library capital needs;
2. In July, the City announced they had received a $1M gift from the State for the Library (not related to the matching grant program);
3. In August, the City announced that they will be vacating City Hall due to building integrity issues and the Council expressed a consensus that the library would not move back into the building later.

Moving Forward
One, the City is committed to moving out of City Hall and may not be moving the library back in; and two, the City now has financial resources it can use to pay for moving out and possibly help with the new building in terms of paying for infrastructure (utilities and parking).

However, there are many unknowns at this point and the City will hold a series of public meetings to discuss all of the ramifications of a plan to move out of City Hall.

Learn More - Stay Informed

5 Reasons Why Libraries Are Essential to Have

The Princh blog has an interesting and timely posting on why libraries are essential. In summary they list five reasons:

1. Libraries maintain history, and more importantly, truth.
2. Libraries offer free educational resources.
3. Libraries help to build communities.
4. Libraries are transparent with all the services they provide.
5. Libraries contribute to increasing economy.

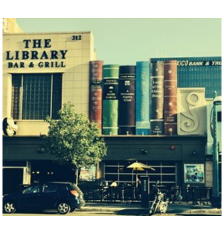
The Larkspur Library has a long history of upholding these values and doing it with both high touch, person-to-person help, and access to technology. As we work together to address the City's issues to facilitate moving out of City Hall, it is important to remember that libraries provide essential public service; we have managed to stay open through the pandemic and the demand for those services will continue to grow in the coming years.

What Can You Do?

Monitor and participate in the public process to discuss and plan the City's move out of City Hall and the future plans of the library. To attend the future City Council meetings that have the City Hall issue on the agenda go to:
https://www.ci.larkspur.ca.us/288/Agendas-and-Minutes

The instructions to attend a City Council online meeting are included in every agenda.

The Library Bar & Grill, Central Avenue, Albuquerque, New Mexico



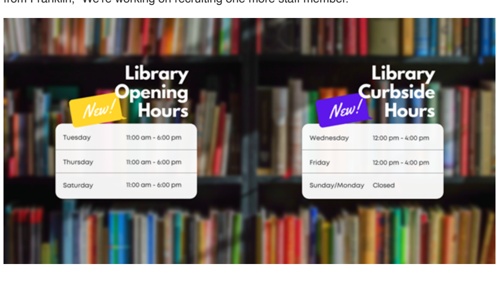
A library themed restaurant!

Book titles:

Gone with the Gin,
Tequila Mockingbird,
A Midsummer Night's Drink, The Wrath of Grapes,
Lord of the Onion Rings, and
Partying 101.

New Faces, New Hours

We all welcome Librarian Jessica Brandi, Part-time Library Aide & Recreation Aide Alison Wilson, and Jess Roesche, Library Aide, to the staff of the Larkspur Library. Even better news from Franklin, "We're working on recruiting one more staff member."



Thanks to increased staff, the library is now open Saturday from 11 AM to 6 PM.

Thank you so much to Franklin and Teresa for double-handedly keeping the library open and functioning during the worst of times.

National Library News

"T-shirt asking, 'What's more punk than the public library?' raises $100K for D.C. branch"

by Justin Wm. Moyer, September 4, 2021, *Washington Post*

The story in brief: "When supporters of D.C.'s Mt. Pleasant Library printed shirts that said, 'What's more punk than the public library?' earlier this year, they thought they would sell 50. Instead, they've sold 7,000, made $100,000 and started a viral campaign that's redefining a community resource typically associated with shushing.

"Carlos Izurieta, president of Mt. Pleasant Library Friends, a nonprofit organization that supports the public library, said fellow library supporters made the first shirt for him in March as a gag birthday gift. Growing up attending punk shows and playing in bands, Izurieta saw many links between a genre that prides itself on do-it-yourselfism and a public institution that provides free resources to one and all…"

What the Friends are Reading and Recommending

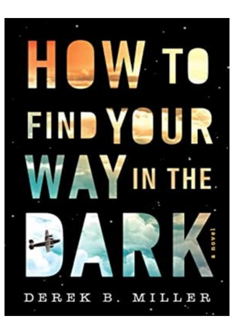
Jim

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michelle Richardson

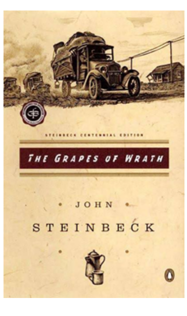
I generally don't read a novel unless someone puts it in my hand, although historical novels are easier for me to get into. And since I grew up in western Kentucky, reading this book was quite easy. The novel is about the WPA's program titled Kentucky's Pack Horse Library Project, where single women on horseback took books into the coves and hollers of Appalachia for the hill folks to read. (Married women were supposed to stay home and tend to the family.) The book also goes into detail about Kentucky's blue-skinned people, a most unusual story. Even though I grew up in Kentucky, I knew nothing about the horse library project or about the blue-skinned people. The good news is that I didn't need a translator to read the dialect. The book is a good read, filled with little-known history. Give it a try.

Alice

How to Find your Way in the Dark by Derek B. Miller, author



Not a book, but an author this time: Derek B. Miller. I discovered Miller's *Norwegian by Night* in *The New York Times* review of his newest book, *How to Find your Way in the Dark,* which features Sheldon, the extraordinary 80-something hero of *NBN* when he is 12. Sheldon really is extraordinary, and *Norwegian at Night* was fabulous, *America by Day* better, but only as the second book in this series. I've now read three of Derek Miller's and just actually BOUGHT (in paperback) his latest. I'm turning into an evangelist for Derek Miller. Next up: *American by Day*, which starts exactly where *NBN* ends. In between, Miller wrote *The Girl in the Green Dress*, about other characters that share the marvelous humanity and intelligence that Miller characters possess. No wonder Richard Russo is quoted on the back cover of *How to Find Your Way in the Dark*— Russo also knows the secret to writing irresistibly appealing, marvelously flawed, fully formed characters.



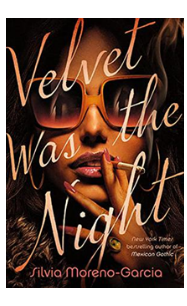
Barbara

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

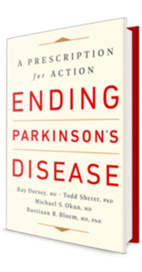
I encourage mature readers to reread this amazing work with the benefit of their life experience and historical perspective. So many of the issues we face in the second decade of the 2000s are the same issues that the poor, the homeless, the refugee, and the "other" faced in the late 30s in 1900. In rereading, you will feel that the greatest contribution one can make to humanity is to recognize it in the faces of the "other."

Dulcy

Velvet was the Night by Silvia Moreno-Garcia



Set in Mexico City in the 1970s, this dark mystery follows the converging paths of 30ish low-level secretary Maite, whose desires in life are staked out in her romance comics, and Elvis, a young thug who wants to emulate his wealthy employer. The plot twists through the harsh and ugly politics of Mexico's Dirty War. There's lots of rain and murk, betrayal and violence in this aptly labeled noir, but both Maite, who loves jazz, and Elvis, who makes himself learn a new word every day, possess a lightness of soul to keep them bright in a reader's mind after the novel's last word.



Carrie

Ending Parkinson's Disease by Ray Dorsey

This book is a very concise and thorough explanation of the history and scientific understanding of some of the causes of Parkinson's disease, as well as a review of currently limited treatment options. "Neurological disorders are the world's leading cause of disability. And the fastest growing of these conditions is not Alzheimer's but Parkinson's disease." The authors outline multiple factors influencing higher rates, including chemical and pesticide exposure, head trauma and some genetic links. The paraquat pesticide shows dramatic links to Parkinson's (as did Agent Orange for Vietnam Vets).

The Netherlands is seeing rates of Parkinson's decline, which is perhaps in direct relation to banning paraquat and other dangerous pesticides. Other chemicals such as TCE show similar links to Parkinson's.

The book is a call to action: to increase National Institutes of Health research funding; advocacy to ban use of certain pesticides and chemicals; and a focus on cleaning up contamination sites/Superfund sites. (Looking at the map of Superfund sites for Silicon Valley was shocking.) This is a book written by several leading medical experts in the field, one of whom serves on the admirable Michael J. Fox Foundation. The other outspoken advocate for Parkinson's research was the founder of Intel, Andy Grove, who has since died from Parkinson's. One interesting development is smart phone-based apps that help to detect early Parkinson traits like changes in the gait of a person.

Dyan

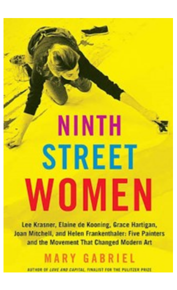
Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard

This remarkable book reveals the decades-long research and discoveries of Suzanne Simard, professor of forest ecology at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry. She grew up in the rain forests of British Columbia, child of loggers, and knew the land intimately. One of her first jobs was working for the forest industry, whose goal was to plant as much of the fastest growing, most profitable trees on cleared land. Their assumption was that clear cutting the fields and replanting single trees in abundance would achieve the most profit.

As she studied in the field, Simard began to realize the health of the forest depended on many kinds of trees and plant life to mutually benefit growth. She devised multiple, rigorous experiments to test her theory and found that "not only do saplings draw nutrients from fungal webs in the soil that they are directly connected to, but that trees of different types can shuttle resources back and forth to each other through these intermediaries."

So radical were her findings, they were rejected by the timber companies as well as scientists in the field. But she persisted. Doing further research with her graduate students and other collaborators, their findings revealed a vast communications system just below the soil that allows trees to send water, carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients to places where they're most needed as well as to pool resources to protect against infection and warn against coming threats. Simard established that the forest's oldest trees, deemed "Mother Trees," are "bound in a tight relation to the seedlings connected to their fungal web and are able to recognize which trees in that web are related to them and which are not, and are able to preferentially send more resources to those individuals who are their kin."

For an astonishing film view of how these fungal networks operate, see "Fantastic Fungi" on Netflix. Simard's well-documented discoveries show the way healthy forests will thrive. The future of our forests depends on it.



Catherine

Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell and Helen Frankenthaler — Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art by Mary Gabriel

The title of this book comes from an iconic month-long 1951 art show on Ninth Street that established New York as the worthy art successor to war-torn Paris. Though nothing was sold at this event that showcased 72 artists, the exhibit catapulted names like Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, and Robert Rauschenberg to fame as Abstract Expressionists, soon to become the mainstays of museums and art collections for generations. Less known were the women artists in the show whose stories are highlighted in this book.

Mary Gabriel writes about five of these women, two of whom were married to celebrated artists in the show – Elaine de Kooning to Willem and Lee Krasner to Jackson Pollock. She zeros in on these five, separated in age by twenty years in some cases, because "each of these characters represented an important chapter in the development of Abstract Expressionism." Though none of these women would have appreciated being categorized as "women painters," each has come into her own, their fame often soaring with feminist sentiments and a rising interest in women artists. While most toiled in near poverty in the early parts of their careers, each eventually achieved fame, solo shows, and enormous financial success. Joan Mitchell's work is currently the focus of a world premier retrospective at SFMOMA, presenting over 80 of her works that will travel to Baltimore next spring. Helen Frankenthaler's work is currently on display in London at the Gagosian Gallery.
As the fame of these women artists increased along with their financial success, so too did their philanthropy. Several of these women, all now deceased, have become philanthropic powerhouses through foundations established by their estates that provide fellowships and opportunities for future generations of artists throughout the world.

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Mission Statement

The Friends are a dedicated group of members who raise money for library programs, plan events, and work as ambassadors to the community for the Larkspur Library.

The Friends of the Larkspur Library are committed to supporting the library's programs, cultural events, books, and materials. We strive to instill the love of reading and the excitement of learning in library patrons of all ages.

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