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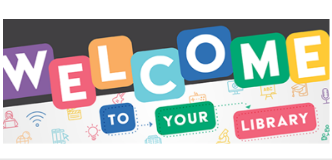
FRIENDS OF THE LARKSPUR LIBRARY

Among Friends

October 2023



Interview with Damon Hill, our new Larkspur Library Director

Why/when did you decide to become a librarian?

As a child, the public library was nearby and I went frequently throughout my life from children's programs, to experiencing my first computer, hanging out with my teen friends, and getting books that tried to satisfy my curious mind. The school and university library also provided a place to meet people, work alone, and provide a wealth of materials.

After college I taught high school and realized I wanted to do something else but wasn't sure what "it" would be. One summer day I was with friends in a local park. A library employee I saw at the library walked by, and it hit me like a bolt of lightning that I should be a librarian.

You live in Petaluma. What do you listen to on your drive to/from Larkspur?

If I drive to work, I will usually listen to an eclectic range of music depending on the traffic. I enjoy jazz, country, reggae, classical Indian, rock, and hip-hop.

If I take the train and bike I will listen to an audiobook on Libby. Generally, I enjoy non-fiction titles in biography, history, philosophy, or current social issues.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a college town called Cedar Falls, Iowa. I moved to Tucson, Arizona for library school and moved to Oakland in the mid-90s.

Are Larkspur library patrons the same as others you've dealt with? If different, how?

At our core, library patrons are all very similar even though they come from diverse backgrounds and age ranges. They come to the library in person or online to connect with something they need at a moment in their lives.

There is something special about the Larkspur Library community Everyone I have encountered in my first few months has been welcoming, thoughtful, and thankful for what the library provides. The small-town character of the town has allowed me to meet many people and have meaningful conversations.

Larkspur also has the most active and engaged groups I've ever worked with. The Friends of the Larkspur Library, The Commons Foundation, the Larkspur Library Foundation, and the Library Board have all been supportive and engaged.

The Commons Foundation's president Ann Morrison's conversation with new Larkspur Library director Damon Hill

TCF: We are happy to have you as Larkspur's Library Director. Can you share with us your library experience and background?

Library Director Hill: For the past 20-plus years, I've worked for the Marin County Free Library in several roles starting at the Corte Madera branch as Head of Reference, then as a manager at the Civic Center / Anne T. Kent California Room. For the past few years, I served as Library Service Manager, where I held various roles, including overseeing several branch remodel projects, as well as overseeing public communications and technology-based initiatives. Prior to Marin, I served as Youth Services Librarian in Oakland and Contra Costa County and briefly taught high school before being drawn to libraries.

TCF: What is your vision for Larkspur's 21st-century library?

Library Director Hill: The Larkspur Library will be a cultural hub that celebrates and inspires the community through engaging diverse programs, showcases local talent, and provides a platform for the public to connect and learn. The 21st-century library will emphasize lifelong learning by providing extensive in-person and online learning opportunities, in addition to access to various digital and print resources.

We will collaborate with other local organizations, institutions, and businesses. The space will be flexible and welcoming, accommodating activities such as extensive programs, community gatherings, group study work, and a cozy, safe nook for contemplation. The library will be responsive to the community's needs, and I look forward to hearing from residents about what they need from their new Library.

TCF: What book recommendations do you have for us?

Library Director Hill: I recently finished Larkspur Past and Present and would highly recommend it to anyone who hasn't had an opportunity to read it. I believe it's hard to know where you are going unless you have a strong foundation on what has occurred previously.

Demon Copperhead *by Barbara Kingsolver is a beautifully written book, even though it is sometimes dark.* An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us by *Ed Yong. It was fascinating and humbling to read about how animals can experience and perceive the world.*

In addition to Ann's Q&A, here is the July 7 story from the Marin IJ announcing Damon's new position, headlined "Veteran Marin librarian gets Larkspur post."

Larkspur has named Damon Hill, a veteran Marin librarian, as the next director of the city's library.

Hill, 52, of Petaluma joins Larkspur after more than 23 years in the Marin County Free Library system. He replaces Franklin Escobedo, who vacated his position as the Community Services Director in February.

Escobedo was paid $123,136 annually and managed the library and recreation departments. After his departure, the city separated the departments.

Hill's annual salary will be $149,680. He will start the job Tuesday as the city gears up to construct a new library.

"I'm really excited," Hill said. "One of the things that drew me to coming to Larkspur from the county was the new library project. It's a fabulous team. I feel privileged to be part of it."

Hill has worked as a branch manager and public services manager for the county library system. Most recently he was library services manager.

Hill is responsible for spearheading projects to make county library branches more modern and accessible. He was involved in the recent opening of the Fairfax Library Garden and helped with a recent upgrade of the Corte Madera Library.

Hill obtained a master's degree in library and information sciences from the University of Arizona and a bachelor's degree from the University of Northern Iowa.

City Manager Dan Schwarz said Hill has the right experience, especially as the city prepares the plans for the new library at The Commons property on Rose Lane.

"His passion for community engagement and dedication to meeting the needs of library patrons will be instrumental in creating innovative programs and services for the city of Larkspur," Schwarz said.

The most recent project estimate comes to $13 million, said Julian Skinner, Director of Public Works. That cost includes the new library with an option for additional community space at the site.

Hill said he will work with staff and the community to ensure that the new library meets the standards of a modern library.

"It's about understanding what the community needs are," Hill said.

The library plan is partially funded with a $5.2 million state grant that carries a 2026 project deadline. In addition to the grant, the Commons Foundation has raised $5.3 million for the library construction and $1 million for site improvements such as infrastructure and lighting. They are currently seeking an additional $1 million for landscaping and outdoor spaces.

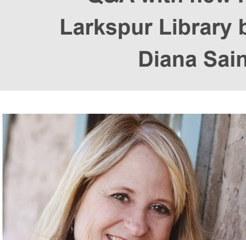
The library will be 6,845 square feet. In addition to space for its collection, it will have a multipurpose room, several breakout rooms, and flex space for a children's area.

The city solicited contractors through a "request for qualifications," which allows city officials to review, vet,
and score applicants.

The city received nine qualification statements and will soon receive proposals from the three highest scoring teams, Skinner said.

Project bids are expected to be considered in October. Skinner said construction is planned to begin in summer 2024.

Q&A with new Friends of the Larkspur Library board president, Diana Saint James



As new president of the FOL, what changes will you/the group make?

Our group of volunteer board members is wonderful, so I feel very lucky to be taking on this task. I'm delighted to be part of this dedicated and enthusiastic team. Among us we have so much collective knowledge and creativity that I'm eager to hear everyone's ideas. After two years of board work focused on the successful fundraising for the new Larkspur Library and hosting two huge TouchTrucks events, we will be refocusing our priorities in the year ahead on the needs of the current library. We've asked our new Library Director Damon Hill for a wish list for the library. We're eagerly awaiting the list as he consults with his staff and likely regular patrons too.

Do we have any upcoming events?
New (to us) events? We are planning our annual Holiday Tea for our FOL members and their friends on Sunday, December 3, from 1-2 pm at Book Passage in Corte Madera. Store owner Elaine Petrocelli personally shares her lively recommendations for holiday gift books for all ages. We enjoy tea/coffee and home baked holiday cookies, and it is a great opportunity to connect with others who love books as much as we do. We also heard that the City of Larkspur's Recreation Department may host a pumpkin patch in 2024 and we'd love to be one of the sponsors - maybe with Halloween story times, costumed book characters, and book treats? We're open to other ideas too.

What is the future of the FOL? What would you like our future to be?
I'd like to see more young people and families get involved with the library. Friends of Larkspur Library is hoping to create a parent advisory group to share their ideas with us for serving children, teens and parents at the current library and the new library, to be completed by 2025. I'd love to see new people join our board, helping us create this newsletter, and planning fun events.

How will FOL help with the new library?
Hall Middle School and Redwood are already right in the new library's backyard, and we need to be very ready to smoothly meet their needs. Plus St. Patrick's and Marin Primary families are just a short bike path's ride away too. We also hope to continue our partnership with The Commons Foundation and help with ideas and fundraising for the landscaping and outdoor spaces at the new library. We also need to make sure that all the library's current dynamic programming can transfer over to the new library smoothly.

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

Toward a New Library: More news from Ann Morrison and The Commons Foundation

Join the Landscaping Campaign

TCF is working to ensure the community has inviting and attractive outdoor spaces surrounding the new library so that patrons can read a book, gather with friends, engage in a study program, or simply enjoy the beauty and the view of Mt. Tam.

To donate to the new landscaping campaign, please visit the new website: www.thecommonsatlarkspur.org. Thank you!

August 2023 New Library Project Updates

In May, the City of Larkspur sent out its Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Prospective Design-Build Entities for the Larkspur Library and Community Space Project.

The following finalists have been invited to respond to the Request for Proposal (RFP) Phase 2 of Larkspur's New Library to provide details of their proposed interior and exterior design features:

- Allen Construction + Noll Tam Architects
- BN Builders + RNT Architects
- Bogard Construction + Jayson Architecture

Design and project development is anticipated to take six to nine months followed by 18 months of construction. The city plans on opening the new library by the end of 2025.

New TCF website

Please visit the new website at www.thecommonsatlarkspur.org.

FOL Participation in Fourth of July Parade

Kathy Green and son, Jack, whose stage-name is Larky,
at the Larkspur Library float

Larky with fans

FOL Table in Downtown Larkspur

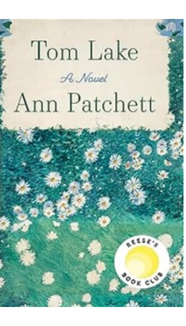
Wine Stroll

Dulcy, Dyan, and Diana manned the FOL table, alongside Kathy Green of The Commons Foundation. We chatted with nice people, introduced Damon to passersby, handed out sparkling water/chocolates/stickers, and collected some email addresses. A number of people also scanned new library cards through their phones using a clever flyer Damon had set up for that purpose. Fun night!

Friends' Book Recommendations

Dyan

Tom Lake
by Ann Patchett

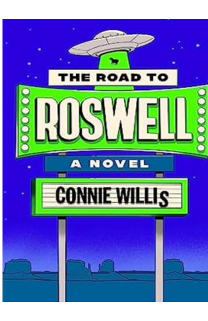


Three daughters in their twenties gather one summer to help their parents pick cherries from the family orchard. They all beg their mother to tell them about her youthful relationship in her twenties during a summer theater production of *Our Town* with the now-famous actor, Peter Duke in the town of Tom Lake.

The story she tells spans not only that summer but her life as a young woman growing into adulthood. It's the story of choices we make, wise and foolish, that shape who we are as well as the people who significantly shape us.

Alice

The Road to Roswell
by Connie Willis



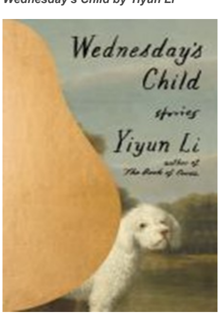
This is a funny, charming book about alien abduction. The alien in question is called Indy (from the Indiana Jones character) because of his proficiency with his whip-like antennae. I re-read *Blackout* and *All Clear*, both of which I have read many times, about a group of time-traveling Oxford history students who end up in London and England during the Blitz. Then I read for the first time Passage about near death experiences, enlivened by a last word quote before each chapter. My fave: "To die would be an awfully big adventure" — Broadway producer Charles Frohman quoting from his friend J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan just before he went down on the *Lusitania*.

Jim

Wisdom of the Wild
by Sheri Mabry

I've always liked Nature. I've even learned to like spiders. Imagine that! So it was a natural reflex for me to pick up the book, *Wisdom of the Wild*. The book looks and feels like a children's book, and I guess it is for anyone between 8 and 80 plus (I fall into the last category). Mabry writes a brief summary of many features found in Nature: birds, bees, bats, butterflies, flowers, trees—everything in Nature. Then briefly describes their unique character which she says is their gift to us. Next, she asks the reader to CONSIDER that gift, then to personally CONNECT to it and finally make an AFFIRMATION about the gift. This is a most unusual book, and if you like being in Nature, give it a try.

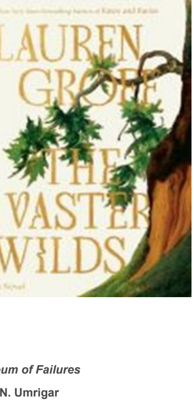
Damon
Wednesday's Child by Yiyun Li



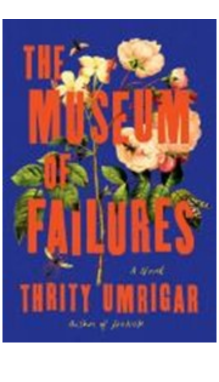
An enjoyable new collection of 11 short fiction stories with elegant prose. The characters feel authentic and have a certain air of mystery. It deals with loss, alienation, aging, and the strangeness of contemporary life--by the award-winning, and inimitable, author of *Book of Goose*.

Plus, seven of our library staff's most anticipated new books:

The Vaster Wilds
by Lauren Groff



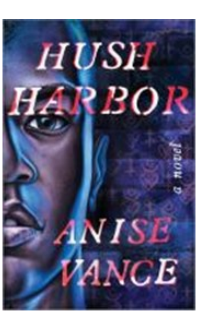
A taut and electrifying novel from celebrated bestselling author Lauren Groff, about one spirited girl alone in the wilderness, trying to survive.



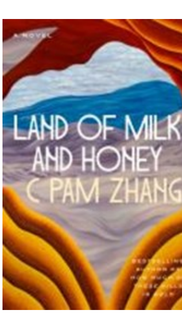
The Museum of Failures
by Thrity N. Umrigar

A riveting story about uncovering family secrets and the power of forgiveness, set in India and the United States, from the bestselling author of Reese's Book Club pick, *Honor*.

Hush Harbor
by Anise Vance



A resistance group takes America's racial reckoning into its own hands in this powerful, stirringly original debut novel.



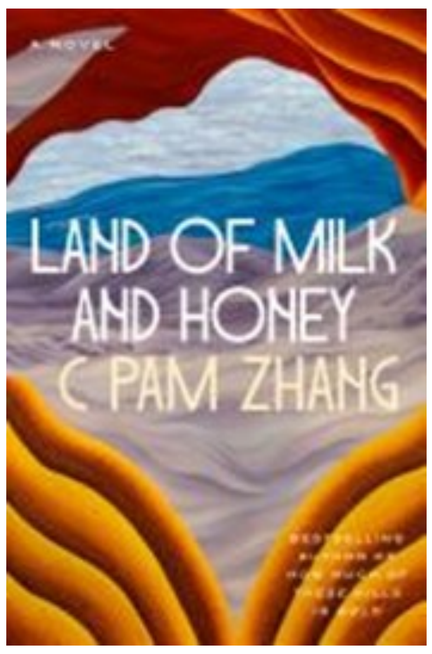
Land of Milk and Honey
by C Pam Zhang

The award-winning author of *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* returns with a rapturous and revelatory novel about a young chef whose discovery of pleasure alters her life and, indirectly, the world.

Normal Rules Don't Apply
by Kate Atkinson

A dazzling collection of eleven interconnected stories from the bestselling, award-winning author of *Shrines of Gaiety* and *Life After Life*, with

of *Shrines of Gaiety* and *Life After Life*, with everything that readers love about her novels –the inventiveness, the verbal felicity, the sharp observations on human nature, and the deeply satisfying emotional wallop.



The Pole

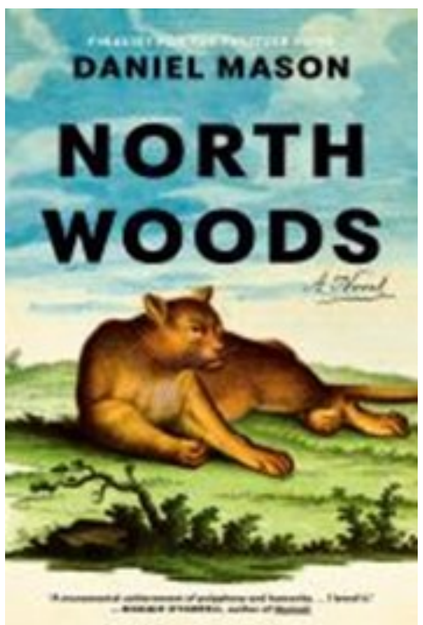
by J. M. Coetzee

Renowned for his sparse yet powerful prose, J. M. Coetzee is unquestionably among the most influential--and provocative--authors of our time. A psychologically readable novel about love and the mutability of human relationships.

North Woods

by Daniel Mason

When a pair of young lovers abscond from a Puritan colony, little do they know that their humble cabin in the woods will become the home of an extraordinary
succession of human and nonhuman characters alike.



The Friends of the Larkspur Library

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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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