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The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 3 n. 3,
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My Favorite Author

Something I learned early on in being a parent was that children like to define who their parents are; and they do it in terms they understand. Do you like dogs or cats better? What is your favorite food? What is your favorite color? And a parent has to have answers for such questions. Since my daughter was old enough to talk, my favorite color has been green. She is now in seventh grade and still makes sure any gift she gives me or craft she creates in my name is predominantly hued in the green family. I like green well enough.

One expects such questions from children. What one doesn't expect is to be asked so often by adults a question like 'who's your favorite author?' But because of my ongoing contact with a reading public, I am asked all the time. I recently (just this morning) decided that from now on, I will cite Mark Twain as my favorite author.

I have read most of Mark Twain. I have read *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* a few times; and I have read and reread passages of my favorite work by Twain, *Roughing It*, as often as I have read various books of the Bible.

But there are some of his works that, because of their titles or the silly movies made out of them, I have put off reading. One such is *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. This story was made into a movie in 1931 (a vehicle for Will Rogers), and 1949 (Bing Crosby, crooning his way through Medieval England), and several other times. It is a mistake to judge this book on the merits of bad movies.

Though the premise is silly and strained, it sets up a situation in which Twain can lambaste early monarchies and the early days of the hegemony of the Church with his singular grasp of irony and penetrating sarcasm. He has fun with petty 'Kings' whose kingdoms are so small 'you can stand in the middle of them and throw bricks into the next kingdom.' He characterizes the Knights of the Round Table as dull, superstitious, gullible liars.

I haven't finished reading the book. I don't know where it will take me. I'm sure that literary scholars may criticize it as having an unlikely premise and too many unbelievable situations, or something of the sort. I only know that I am sitting up at night, laughing out loud, pausing only to consider Twain's trenchant observations about honor, truth, and the freedom of the individual.

Many people who are otherwise great readers eschew older books. In the library profession we like to say that every book is new until you've read it. If you haven't treated yourself to a book by Mark Twain in a while, you're overdue for a surprise.

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Upcoming Public Forums: Tell Us What You Think!

For the past year the Library has been in a planning mode. We have done a community survey, we had several meetings of a Strategic Planning Committee, and we have finished a draft of a Long-Range Plan for the next five years.

Now we'd like to hear from more of you. During November we will hold two meetings to get input on the various ideas we have been talking about to implement our plan. New services, changes to our existing library building, new funding for the library: we have discussed all of these things, and we'd like to know what you think about them.

The first meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 14th. This meeting will focus on services to adults.

The second meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Thursday, November 15th, and will focus on services to children. All library users and interested members of the Webster Groves community are invited to attend and take part in this valuable planning exercise. There is no need to make a reservation, but if you have any questions, please call library director Tom Cooper at (314) 961-3784, or e-mail tcooper@wgpl.org.

November in the Children's Room



November 29th: Join us for our first-ever Pajama Story Time with Miss Laurene, 7:30 p.m.

All ages welcome, come dressed in your PJs, and bring your favorite stuffed friend!

- * Tuesday, November 13: Storytime and crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, November 14: Storytime and crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, November 15: Storytime and Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Monday, November 19: Storytime and Crafts with Miss Michelle – 2 p.m.
- * Wednesday, November 21: Storytime and Crafts with Miss Michelle – 2 p.m.
- * Tuesday, November 27: Storytime and Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, November 28: Storytime and Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, November 29: Storytime and Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Library Hours

Monday-Thursday 9 am to 9 pm
Friday and Saturday 9 am to 4:30 pm
Sunday 2 pm to 5 pm

The library will be closed Sunday, November 11th and Monday, November 12th in observance of Veteran's Day.

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *Run*, Ann Patchett
2. *Book of the Dead*, Patricia D. Cornwell
3. *Bridge of Sighs*, Richard Russo
4. *Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert
5. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini
6. *Playing for Pizza*, John Grisham
7. *The Almost Moon*, Alice Sebold
8. *Deceptively Delicious*, Jessica Seinfeld
9. *T is for Trespass*, Sue Grafton
10. *You've Been Warned*, James Patterson
11. *Pandora's Daughter*, Iris Johansen
12. *Bones to Ashes*, Kathy Reichs

Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

There is no meeting of our Book Discussion Group in December.

Staff Favorites: November, 2007

1. *In My Hands: Memoirs of a Holocaust Rescuer*, Irene Gut Opdyke (Adult Non-fiction)
2. *Chasing Kangaroos*, Tim Flannery (Adult Non-fiction)
3. *Shipwrecks*, Akira Yoshimura (Adult Fiction)
4. *Team of Rivals*, Doris Kearns Goodwin (Adult Non-fiction)
5. *Fido* (DVD)
6. *Speaking of Faith*, Kirsta Tippett (Adult Non-fiction)
7. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Mark Twain
8. *Tom Thomson in Purgatory*, Troy Jollimore (Adult poetry)
9. *An Ice Cold Grave*, Charlaine Harris (Adult Mystery)
10. *Sneaky Chef: simple strategies for hiding healthy foods in kids' favorite meals*, Missy Chase Lapine (Adult Non-fiction)

17th Annual Pumpkin Decorating Contest

The votes are in and here are the results of this year's contest. It was an eventful year, the first time we had a special category for staff members to enter, and with not one but two entries spilling off the shelves and splattering on the floor. Not a pretty sight, nor a particularly pretty odor. We will have to consider how to safeguard against such catastrophes next year.

1ST PLACE WINNERS



PARENT/CHILD CATEGORY:

'Doggie' by Alex Cohen



AGES 2-5 CATEGORY:

'Wilbur' by Molly Knackstedt



AGES 6-8 CATEGORY:

'Posh Squash' by Ellen Seeser



STAFF CATEGORY:

'Tree!' by Roberta Singer

The winner in the Ages 9-13 Category was 'Annie' by Hannah Biggs, but Annie was one of the pumpkins who fell off the shelf before we could get a picture.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this fun fall tradition. All entries receive a runner-up prize. Drop by the Children's Room to get yours.



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