

EDITORIAL & COMMENT

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.

William Arthur Ward

A Place Of Safety And Discovery

LIBRARY, Continued from page 1

There were two indoor places I liked: Cliff Knox's Pool Hall in the basement under the Latchis Theater on Lamson Street (long gone today) and the Keene Public Library on West Street (still around). I got a good part of my education in both places. I'll save my comments on the pool hall for another time.

I can sum up my experiences at the Keene Public Library in two words: safety and discovery. Experience taught me that you weren't going get into a fight in the library, and you weren't going to be scolded. So in my kid-brain it was a safe place. More important it was a place of discovery.

Two events stick out in my mind.

One occurred when I was very young, maybe the first time I was in the library – I dunno. What I remember is wandering up that grand stairway in the original library building into what was then the children's section. The sight of all those books lit me up, though I'd never actually read a book that I particularly liked. My literary preferences were for magazines and comic books. It was the visual spectacle of the display of the books that excited me. Some angel must have led me to a particular book that day. I opened it in the middle and found my name, "Ernest." A wow! echoed in my head.

I sat cross-legged on the floor and started at the beginning and was immediately entranced. The book was *Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann David Wyss. I don't know how long I spent sitting on the floor reading, but it was the beginning of a lifelong habit. Flash ahead a decade and you would have found me at the Keene State College Library sitting on the floor reading the *Collected Letters of Mark Twain and William Dean Howells*, a book that I discovered in my random way as a stacks-browser and that influenced me to embark on a life of writing literary fiction. (Not a good choice if you want to make big money, but for some people very satisfying.)

The second event at the Keene Public Library occurred in a reading room when I was around age 12. It was a Saturday morning and I had gone to the library to do homework and browse the stacks in search of... discovery. When a girl about my own age sat beside me and engaged me in conversation. I was knocked off my pins. I had no sisters, there were no girls my age in my neighborhood, and girls were segregated by seating and playground at my school, so talking to a girl was a strange and thrilling experience.

Her name was Connie Priest. We talked about the books we liked. It was my first discussion relating to literary matters, and I liked it. I still like it. She recommended Nancy Drew mysteries. I confessed that I was too embarrassed to take a book out of the library that featured a girl protagonist. She understood and checked the book out in her name.

This relationship went on for, I dunno, maybe three or four Saturdays. We would talk about books, and Connie would check out a Nancy Drew mystery for me. I loved those books, though I was very careful to make sure that my male friends did not know that I was reading books about girls. I fell in love with Nancy Drew. No doubt I was actually in love with Connie Priest, but I wasn't ready for anything

like that. So Nancy Drew would have to do. That's one thing that literature does for you: allows you to sample experiences you're not ready for in real life.

One Saturday Connie Priest did not show up or maybe for some reason I couldn't come that day – I can't remember. Anyway that was the end of that. I never spoke another word to her, and it wasn't until decades later that I realized that the brief encounters I'd had with a girl in the Keene Public Library were an important part of my intellectual and personal growth.

In 2009 my wife Medora and I returned to the Monadnock Region and built a house. That was also the year my graduating class at Keene High School held its 50th reunion. I was hoping to reunite with my old friends, John Westcott, Bill Sullivan, Norman Arsenault, Bernie Stroshine, etc. But I also tagged myself with an errand. I was hoping that Connie Priest would attend the reunion, so I could thank her for what she had done for me oh so many years. Alas, it wasn't to be. Connie had passed away.

So that is my story of events that occurred long ago. But what about today and tomorrow for the Keene Public Library? The answer is that Keene's library, and indeed libraries everywhere, are more important than ever, not just for young people coming of age, but for everyone. They've become community centers as well as repositories for books. Keene's plans to expand the library's facilities are on the cutting edge of a national movement.

To get an outside view of Keene's plans to expand the library, I asked Michael York, acting commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Cultural Resources in Concord. He believes the new center envisioned for Keene, to link the current library buildings on West Street, will serve as a model for future libraries not just for the state but for the country.

"The plans for the new library campus show a clear understanding that libraries will continue to have an ever expanding role in our communities and that we need to plan for those new activities," York said. "The new campus complex will take four buildings built at different times to maintain their original character while at the same time providing for new services and activities; this is not an easy task, but the planning for this has brought together library staff, the public, architects and planners to pull off this challenge.

"In her many years as Director of the Keene Public Library, Nancy Vincent has always had an eye on the future and the ability to bring people together to plot the future and make the library responsive to the needs of the community. The building as it is envisioned will be a model for libraries across the country."

Taking on this volunteer job as honorary chair of the Keene Public Library Campaign is my way of paying, if partially, my debt to the idea of the library, a place of safety and discovery for everyone. To the authors who have instructed and entertained me over the years, to the librarians who have helped me with my research and who never scolded me when I was a kid, to the many friends I've broken bread with while we argued about books, and to Connie Priest, thank you.

Seth Clark Memorial Golf Tournament

The 12th annual Seth Clark Memorial Golf Tournament will take place on Sunday, July 30th at the Bretwood Golf Course, located on East Surry Road in Keene, with a shotgun start at 8 a.m.

Community members and interested tournament participants may consider a tax-deductible donation to sponsor a hole in the amount of \$175.

A steak and chicken cookout will begin immediately after the tournament. The tournament's entry fee is \$120 and includes greens fees, a cart, cookout, and prizes.

Clark passed away on September 3, 2005, at the

age of 21 from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. He loved sports and was a four-year varsity starter at Monadnock, where he received MVP and All-State Honorable Mention his senior year.

The money raised will go to local sports programs to assist them in furthering their endeavors and to give back to the community. The proceeds may also be used in making improvements to the football fields.

Those interested in donating can mail a check to: Seth Clark Memorial Fund, c/o James Ells, P.O. Box 3, Spofford, NH 03462. Raffle items are also sought.

Pink Martini Plays The Colonial

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Pink Martini still tours the world – singing in 22 languages. In 2014, the group was inducted into both the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame and the Oregon Music Hall of Fame. Pink Martini songs appear in

such films as *Nurse Betty*, *Josie and the Pussycats*, *Tortilla Soup*, *Hitch*, and on television shows such as *Dead Like Me*, *The Sopranos*, *The West Wing*, and *Castle*.

For more details or tickets, call 603-352-2033 or visit www.thecolonial.org.

MYSTERY PHOTO

from THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY

This c.1910 photo shows a gathering on the shore of what Cheshire County lake?



The first person to answer the question correctly at 9 a.m. or after on Friday will receive a \$10 Gift Certificate from the Marco Polo Gardens. Call The Monadnock Shopper News, West Street in Keene, at 603-352-5296. You may win only one contest every three months. Only one call per person per week. No walk-ins, please.



(Prepared by the Historical Society of Cheshire County)

There was no winner of last week's Mystery Photo contest. The photo was taken in Troy.

TALES OF HOPE

Keene Family Sells Lemonade On June 10th To Fight Childhood Cancer

The MacKays, a Keene family, will host its Annual Lemonade Stand fundraiser outside of Keene Kickboxing at 233 Marlboro Street on Saturday, June 10th from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The four MacKay kids will sell freshly squeezed lemonade and snacks to benefit Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF). This year, they hope to raise \$1000, which will fund half a week of childhood cancer research.




The MacKays first heard about ALSF after watching Chef Alex Guarnaschelli compete for the foundation

on the *Food Network* television show, *Chopped*. When Jen MacKay's young daughter, who was three at the time, wanted to hold a lemonade stand, they thought donating the proceeds to ALSF was a perfect fit.

Alex's Lemonade Days is a national event that grew out of Alex's front yard lemonade stand. Held every June, an estimated 10,000 volunteers will host over 2000 Alex's Lemonade Stands around the nation, making a difference for children with cancer.

The Monadnock Shopper News

welcomes letters, especially those pertaining to an article we've published. Because space is limited, please keep letters to 500 words or less.

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