THE PLEASURE OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE FRIENDS BOOKSTORE

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Soon after I retired as a busy librarian in a high school and middle school, my life seemed too quiet, and sitting and reading and quilting all day in an easy chair was not good for me at all. After six months, I was stiff and sore each time I chose to quit the sedentary choices I had made. So I made two life changing decisions in the spring of 2010. I was going to find a way besides gardening to exercise each day and I would find a volunteer job that used my skills gained after almost 30 years in the library profession.

I found that free Silver Sneakers exercise was offered at Macedonia Rec Center, which was close to my home, and I walked into the Friends of the Library shop at the Hudson Library and volunteered. I soon was exercising four days a week and was volunteering one day a week with a retired pilot and a retired Morse Control executive. At first we were just busy sorting, shelving books and talking about our favorite genres to read. Next, we were discussing improvements that we saw could be made easily, and next, one of my now friends and I offered our services to direct the volunteer effort. The former volunteer coordinator had done it for years, had some health issues, and was relieved by our offer.

So here are how friendships happen: soon I was making some suggestions for ways we could have books more organized, how we could make sure the stock always was changing and how to arrange and have categories of different types of books for easy shopping. Also, I was asked to be on the Friends Board as secretary. As this was happening, I began to work more days at the library and justified missing exercise especially when COVID hit and I wanted to stay well. And exercising as a volunteer was definitely increasing, with the schlepping of boxes of books, bending and shelving and stretching. Friendships were also developing with the different days of work, training new people, mourning the loss of some of the older volunteers. My health and life got better, and the stiffness went away.

The discovery of books that one never knew or had seen is part of the pleasure of volunteering too. One book that came in perhaps 3 years ago was When Books Went to War, the Stories That Helped Us Win World War II by Molly Guptill Manning. This was a fascinating story of how the ALA (American Library Association) started a drive to collect book for the soldiers, sending them free to our American troops, gathering more than 20 million hardcover donations. But more was needed, so in 1943 the War Department and publishing industry stepped in with a program that eventually sent 120 million inexpensive editions, small enough for the soldiers’ pockets. I held onto this book, hoping that someday perhaps one of the small books would be donated.

This is the serendipity of the story! One day I was working with several others and we were exclaiming to each other about a very old atlas that had just been donated and deciding whether it was saleable. It was shabby with a ragged spine and we decided it probably wasn’t worth saving, and I put the large book in the recycle box, suddenly I spotted a very small book underneath. It was one of the small volumes that were part of the War Department’s Program, Twin Sombreros by Zane Grey. It had looked yellow and old, and the other sorter had not known about the now 80-year-old book and WW II program. I was ecstatic to have in my hands one of the books that had made the journey and survived.

The two books are displayed on the top shelf of the cabinet that offers “Old and Unusual” books, magazines, sheet music that have been donated. Please ask to see either book but handle the novel by Zane Grey with care; it has had an amazing journey. (Neither book is for sale.)
If you would like to become involved with the Friends of the Hudson Library, please contact me, Beverly Dorson, Chair of the Volunteers, at dorsonb@gmail.com or 330.687.9455.