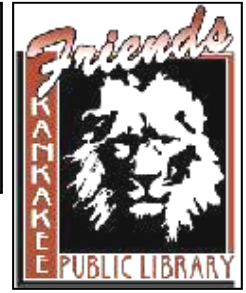


FRIENDS OF THE KANKAKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY



BOOKMARKS

from the president's pen . . .

-Elio Torchia, President of the Friends

Greetings

The season of lights, gifts and love soon will be upon us. Friends, no matter the season, bring us all of these attributes lighting our lives with gifts of love. So it is that the Friends' board wants to tell you how much the support of all the Friends of the Kankakee Public Library is appreciated. Without you the exciting programs planned by the Library staff would not have happened or will happen in the future. The book sale at the Fall Art Stroll went successfully on a lovely autumn day. Our treasurer, Hal Berg, reported that the Friends' tallied \$353 in sales between noon and 4PM. Kudos go to Burma



Happy Holidays!

Mathews and her husband, Rick Braun, for storing our books to be sold, then transporting them to the sale. Burma also managed the book sale all day. Friends volunteers who generously helped that day: Joe and Carol Bowman who helped transport books and set-up, Carol Oberlin and Hal Berg who manned the sale table for the whole book sale, Barb Sharp who loaned us the tables, and Sharon Schiller who was our "shelf recovery" person during the afternoon. Vickie Romein and Arlene Bartolini were there to pack up the unsold books after the sale. Thanks to Linda Bishop for the loan of a dolly to transport the heavy boxes of books before and after the sale. Thanks to Cindy Fuerst, our director, and her husband, Bruce Matthews, for setting up and taking down the tents that day. Last but not least we thank any and all who stopped by to browse and buy at the sale.

Inside our newsletter, editor Mary Costanza has written a report on our fine September program with Christopher Benson. He spoke movingly and eloquently on the tragedy of Emmett Till. Regrettably our October

program had to be canceled because of Ana Castillo's medical emergency. The hope is to reschedule her talk. Library staff is busy organizing and planning for the winter and spring programs. The Friends' board and Library staff would much appreciate your thoughts and ideas on authors that we could possibly invite for a program.

Under the same topic of hearing from Friends, our newsletter editor would strongly encourage you submit book reviews or poems you find meaningful. People are always interested to learn what other book lovers enjoy. What better place to share than our newsletter! Our newsletter editor's email address for submitting your reviews and thoughts is: bookswoman@yahoo.com

Let us hear from you and soon .

*-Elio
Torchia*

Emmett Till, Mamie Till-Mobley, hate crimes and the civil rights movement— Christopher Benson provides perspective on transformative moment

Dr. Christopher Benson gave a stimulating talk to those who attended the Friends Author Program on Thursday, September 25. His book, [The Death of Innocence: The story of the hate crime that changed America](#), which was written by Mamie Till-Mobley, the mother of Emmett Till with Benson's help. *Death of Innocence* is the winner of the 2004 *BlackBoard Nonfiction Book of the Year Award* and the 2003 *Robert F. Kennedy Book Award Special Recognition*.

Fourteen-year-old Emmett Till lived with his mother in Chicago. In the summer of 1955, on August 25, Emmett Louis Till, her only son, while visiting family in Mississippi, was “kidnapped, tortured, and murdered at the hands of white racists.” His body was found three days later in the Tallahatchie River. It was said that Emmett had whistled at a white woman—no black man or child for that matter, did that. Not in the Deep South.

Dr. Benson described the six months he worked alongside Mother Mobley before she died. The story of Emmett Till is told in her words adding to the horror of the story; she expresses her unimaginable pain and grief over Emmett's outrageous death. When his body arrived in a crate at Union Station on the *City of New Orleans*, it was sealed by the state of Mississippi. To remove the seal was punishable by law; she removed it. How she forced herself to keep her emotions in check when she first saw her son—she wanted the world to see her dignified in her suffering. Emmett's head and face were beaten so badly that Mrs. Mobley could not identify him by his face. But she knew his ankles, his knees, his hands... She wanted the world to see what those white boys had done to her precious child; she insisted that he be on view in an open casket. In covering the story the Chicago Tribune would only print a doctored photo of Emmett Till — the Trib concluded that a picture of the actual body was simply too horrible to show to the public.

Estimates say that as many as 100,000–250,000 people came to view Emmett Till over the four days he was laid out. Mrs. Mobley realized the her son's death and mutilation was having an effect on the country. Benson explained that because of her strength and determination the civil rights movement had its beginning right there. Indeed, Rosa Parks said that when she refused to go to the back of the bus in Montgomery later in December, 1955, she thought of Emmett Till.

Dr. Benson commented on the trial of the two men, Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam, arrested for the murder. Emmett's relatives, having witnessed these two men with Emmett, gathered their courage and testified in court. Nevertheless and not surprisingly, both men were acquitted. Benson described how black and white journalists covered the trial. White as well as black reporters began to see the struggle of black Americans for simple justice.

(Benson mentioned a young reporter David Halberstam who was at the trial and wrote an account; it was later published in his book “The Fifties.”) The NAACP gained credibility across America—this case was so obviously an outrage. Benson noted that at least two things grew out of the torture and murder of Emmett Till: an awareness of injustice against African Americans igniting the civil rights movement in the United States, and an explosion of a white backlash in the South with the “Ku Klux Klan revived as white businessmen in suits.”

Television coverage of the subsequent outrageous behavior of white law enforcement against blacks who had come out to protest across the Deep South after Emmett Till was a huge factor in putting the issue before the world. “Things would never be the same again. No one could plead ignorance. Everyone had to take responsibility for what our society had become. Anyone who did anything to make it happen...or did nothing to stop it. There could no longer be innocent bystanders. For an entire nation, the murder of Emmett Till marked the death of innocence.” (*Death of Innocence*, p. 200)

Christopher Benson shared with the audience how his favorite place since he was 10 was in a library. It was actually in the downtown Chicago Public Library where he discovered Emmett Till in an old Jet magazine complete with pictures. This was his introduction into race relations. Currently, Dr. Benson teaches African American Studies courses on hate crimes and on race and the press at the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign (with a special examination of Emmett Till coverage). Answering a question on hate crimes, Dr. Benson replied that because these crimes are more vicious and psychologically painful, and since the crime not only affects the person attacked but extends to a larger group to which the victim belongs, a hate crime deserves a special designation for prosecution and punishment.



Friends of the Kankakee Public Library

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Mary Costanza. . . BOOKMARKS Editor



On behalf of all the Friends of the Kankakee Public Library, I want to give our heartiest congratulations to Cindy Fuerst, our director, on her new position as Library Director of the Vernon Area Library District in Lincolnshire, Illinois. Their happy gain is our sad loss. It is very hard to have her leave us. Her influence is evident in the modern, well-functioning library we have today. She skillfully made the transition from an out-of-date turn of the century library to the latest technology available to libraries today. She has been a creative, enthusiastic director who has always given her support to the Friends in its growth. In fact without her suggestions and willing support we wouldn't be where we are today. So we wish her Godspeed and continued success in her career.

Evie, President of the Friends

Upcoming Friends programs

FRIENDS AUTHOR PROGRAM: Thursday, January 22, 7:00 p.m., @ the library. Dr. Richard Colling, Olivet Nazarene University professor will discuss his provocative book, Random Design.

Dr. Colling has served as professor and chairman of the department of biological sciences at ONU for the past 25 years. Recognized for his outstanding teaching and leadership, and for his service to the community, he believes "that the university should be a place where open, honest inquiry nurtures a strong resilient faith." He writes about his many years of experience at the cusp of science and Christian education.



Copies of Dr. Colling's books will be on hand at the program. For more information on this dedicated professor and his book, please go to random-designer.com.

February Friends Program: To be announced.

FRIENDS AUTHOR PROGRAM in March on Thursday March 12 at 7:00 p.m. @ the Library. Friends speaker for October, **Ana Castillo**, was not able to speak because of an emergency medical condition. She has graciously agreed to be our speaker in March. Please look for more information in the Spring issue of *BOOKMARKS*.



Run
Ann Patchett
(2007)

Here is a book with a wonderful story; yet to explain its plot line is not easy. At the heart of the novel is a sculpted statue of the Virgin Mary with red hair. Around this statue the story is stocked with great characters: a disgraced former mayor of Boston, Bernard Doyle, and his wife Bernadette, who bears a striking resemblance to the Virgin. This exceptional piece is a binding force in the lives of her family; indeed, it appears to be another member of the family. Other characters include the Doyle's 33 year- old-son Sullivan, his two adopted sons, college students Tip and Teddy; a woman whose identity is initially unknown and her 11 year old daughter.

They have all just attended a political gathering on the campus of Harvard, where Jesse Jackson had given a speech. During a fierce snow-storm the woman appears out of nowhere and pushes Tip out of the path of a large SUV , saving his life. However, the large vehicle clips Tip's ankle and breaks it. The woman herself is seriously injured and as the ambulance takes her mother to a hospital, her daughter looks for a ride in order to be with her. The Doyle family reluctantly takes her with them when they follow with Tip to the same hospital. The fact that the two young men are African-American, as are the woman and her daughter, leads the reader into the life of a complex, sometimes conflicted family whose wit and intelligence transcend any stereotypical expectations.

The "little boys," as they are called, were adopted by Bernard and Bernadette Doyle who had a child of their own, Sullivan, but wanted to fill their big house with many children—"two beds to a room." After several miscarriages the Doyles find Teddy, five days old, and take him home. Bernadette then receives a call from the agency telling her that the birth mother has changed her mind, not that she wants Teddy back, but she wants to see that her two boys are raised together and wonders whether the Doyles would also like to adopt her older son, Tip, four-

teen months old.

Bernadette has four happy years with her sons when she dies from cancer. Bernard is devoted to the boys; he takes them to the beach nearly everyday in the summers, while Sullivan stays in his room.

The woman injured at the scene of the accident and her precocious daughter become surprisingly significant characters in the story.

This fine novel, smartly written, presents a remarkable family and glimpses of honest and genuine affection throughout.

Oh, what a plot is woven ...
Highly recommended -Mary Costanza

A POET FRIEND

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
tingling

strings

And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who
smiles as she

sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious master of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter out-
side

And hymns in the cozy parlor, the tinkling piano our
guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamor
With the great black piano appassionato. The glam-
our

Of childish days is upon me, my manhood
is cast

Down in the flood of remembrance, I
weep like a child

for the past.



D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

Director's comments

A privilege to serve people of Kankakee

I have had the honor of being the Director of the Kankakee Public Library for nearly fourteen years so it is with mixed emotions that I announce I am resigning at the end of this year. It is time for me to take the next step in my career. I have accepted the position as Library Director of the Vernon Area Library District in Lincolnshire, Illinois.

This Library and this community have been very good to me. I am so very proud of the library team we have in place, the community partnerships that we have developed, and what we have been able to accomplish for the people of Kankakee. When I began in 1995, it sounds rather sad but our Library had no Friends. Today our Friends of the Library group is a vital organization that boasts over

150 members, produces this quarterly newsletter and provides funding and support for many of our public programs. I am confident that what we all worked so hard to achieve will continue to grow and thrive.

It has been a privilege to serve the people of Kankakee; to work with the Library Trustees, the City Administration, with our talented Library Staff, and with the Friends of the Library. Thank you for being my friend, and for the opportunity to be a part of something truly exceptional.

Happy Reading,

Cindy

Let's talk books...

At this busy time of year books are thought of more as gifts than as a "what am I going to read now?" proposition.

Still we should know what is out there in the improbable event that we can actually read a good book amid the holiday hustle and bustle.

Oprah's latest pick, "The Story of Edward Sawtelle" by David Wroblewski received very good reviews. It is long, 562 pages, it is a debut novel and the word on the street is encouraging. It is on several best seller lists. It's central character is a mute boy and his special breed of Sawtelle dogs, seeking an explanation for a suspicious death.

In nonfiction, a tale of "Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World" by Vicki Myron holds a place on the New York Times Best Seller list. A gentle, poignant story of a kitten found frozen in a library's overnight book drop. He was saved by library staff and lived a long, and, yes, happy life with books and dear people.

For more good books and gift ideas, check the readers advisory publication *Book Page*, which Friends gave to the Library as a gift.. It is available at the front desk @the library. Give it a look.



OUR READERS WRITE

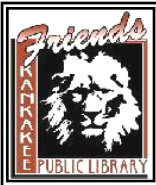
Soldier's Heart
Elizabeth Samet
(2007)

Elizabeth Samet tells of her experiences over the span of ten years as a civilian English professor at West Point. She tackles questions, such as "why literature for future Army officers?", with such skill and vigor that I almost felt actively enrolled in her class. Her literature references just about had me running to our library. But it's not all philosophical exploration — the cadets are the real heart of this book. These young men and women, who shortly after graduation, will likely find themselves in a combat zone, are brought to life through her insightful anecdotes.

This is such an engaging, yet serious book. I did not select this book (it was a gift), but I put it ahead of my "to read" stacks. How opportune. This was the best book I've read in the last few years.

-submitted by Hal Berg

This is Hal's first book review sent to BOOK-MARKS. We sincerely hope it is not his last. We would like to receive your review, poem or story. Please email me your work: bookswoman@yahoo.com. Thanks.



BOOKMARKS

NEWSLETTER
OF THE FRIENDS

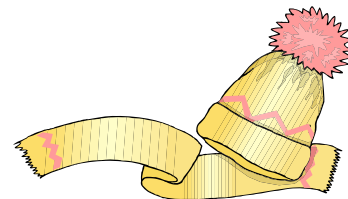
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FRIENDS EVENTS

WINTER 2008-09

FRIENDS SHIRTS

Perhaps you have noticed the attractive polo shirts worn by Friends volunteers at the recent book sale during the October Art Stroll in downtown Kankakee. The polo shirts were made up for Friends by Premium Specialties. The short-sleeved stone colored shirt with dark green lettering is made of a very comfortable fabric. Those who purchased them are happy with the handsome result.

If you would like to order one, please let Burma Mathews or another board member know. The price is \$23.00. We need to order at least 12 at a time, so your name would be added to a list until we have 12 names,

I look forward to wearing mine at future book sales and other Friends events.

-Burma Mathews

DECEMBER

! There will be no Friends Board Meeting or Author Program in December

JANUARY

! -21, Wednesday, Friends Board Meeting, 5:00p.m. @ the library

! -22, Friends Author Program with Dr. Richard Colling, who wrote the book, Random Design, 7:00p.m. @the library (see page 3 for more information)

FEBRUARY

! -18, Wednesday, Friends Board Meeting, 5:00 p.m., @ the library

! Friends Author Program has yet to be announced.

Bring a sense of belonging to your life in the new year— JOIN FRIENDS! Good people, good conversation about good books, good times—hope to see you in '09! It's a good thing.