

# The Mayflower Log



WINTER 2021 VOLUME 21, NUMBER 1

## Escape to books

Residents share their favorites

When the pandemic hit in March, many Mayflower residents retreated to their libraries or borrowed books, re-reading old favorites, pulling out unread books, or somehow finding new ones. Here is just a sampling of books our residents have recommended



**Sue Ahrens:** *Home Front*, by Kristin Hannah. This is a story about a couple who is struggling with a marital estrangement that is further complicated when she is deployed to Iraq and he is left dealing with things at home and their daughter.

**Joan Baker:** *Sophie's World*, by Jostein Gaarder. The plot is a philosophy professor explaining the developing philosophical thought from early myths to Freud. It's a re-read for me, triggered by a page from my daily calendar.

**Beryl Clotfelter:** *Lost City of the Monkey God*, by Douglas Preston, is a true story of the discovery of a lost city in the Guatemalan jungle and the difficulties exploring it. Much of the book deals with diseases of those tropics and a discussion of the possibility of pandemics arising and moving north because of global warming. Very timely!

**George & Sue Drake:** *The Giver of Stars*, by Jo Jo Moyes. We love it and you will too. It is set in the Kentucky hills/mountains in the Berea region (frequently mentioned), in the 1930's and features a traveling library (by horse) to the hill people.

**Gail Greenwald:** My quiet life of the pandemic has allowed me to read several "series" of books. I purchased *Jack*, by Pulitzer Prize winner Marilynne Robinson when it came out in September, and now I have re-read *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila*. I highly recommend her rich character studies and sensitive story telling.

**Gerry Guenther:** *Metropolis*, by Phillip Kerr. I got a little burned out on nonfiction and turned toward a mystery. Ironically, it's set in 1928 Germany, and amidst the murder-solving is a sense of Germany heading toward authoritarianism. The current state of affairs in the U.S. was not far from my mind as I read. So much for fiction!

(Continued on p. 2)

## Escape to books

(Continued from p. 1)

**Nancy Hendrickson:** *The Splendid and the Vile*, by Eric Larson, is the saga of Churchill, family, and defiance during the Blitz. It shows how Churchill taught the British “the art of being fearless” during a year of relentless bombing. His eloquence, courage, and perseverance bound a country, and family, together.

**Chris Hunter:** *The Back Wing*, by Mike Befeler. A quietly delightful, silly murder mystery set in a retirement home populated by a shape-shifter who transforms into a quite nice chesterfield couch, a werewolf who loves playing Frisbee, a witch who magically “de-pants” irritating normals, a toothless vampire who gums her friends, and “regular” folk. Unserious throughout, hilarious in parts.

**Loren Kolpin:** *Andrew Jackson and the Miracle of New Orleans*, by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger. Based on an historical event that changed America and is not well known. Regardless of your opinion of Andrew Jackson, you will enjoy his leadership and grit.

**Peggy Kolpin:** *The Choice*, by Edith Eva Eger. One of the summer reading suggestions from Bill Gates. In his words it is “partly a memoir and partly a guide to processing trauma.” The author is an Auschwitz survivor and the book shows how she chose to handle tough situations. She is still on the faculty of the University of California system at age 93.

**Jean Libbey:** Many of you who watch the PBS News Hour will be familiar with David Brooks, a regular contributor to that program. Brooks wrote *The Second Mountain*, which focuses on ways to remain grounded and to find motivation to develop meaningful activities in the midst of virus-initiated isolation.

**Bill McNally:** *Alexander Hamilton*, by Ron Chernow. The book is a moving and insightful account of Hamilton’s life from boyhood as a poor orphan in the West Indies through the Revolutionary War to becoming a founder of democracy in America.

**Karen McNally:** *The Body: A Guide for Occupants*, by Bill Bryson. An explanation of how the body works in easily understood language. At times the book is delightfully funny.

**Howard Raffety:** *Countdown 1945: The Extraordinary Story of the Atomic Bomb and the 116 days That Changed the World*, by Chris Wallace. The book reports on the period from the ascendance to the presidency of Harry Truman to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

**Catherine Rod:** In Pat Barker’s well-written *The Silence of the Girls*, a slave woman tells the story of Achilles and the Trojan War. I liked the way the book provides the perspective of women who are casualties of conflict.

**Iann Velhuizen:** *Caste*, by Isabel Wilkerson. This is an eye-opening story of people and history that underlies a rigid hierarchy of human rankings. The author shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day. Wilkerson additionally wrote *The Warmth of Other Suns*, also a must-read.

(Continued on p. 3)

## The MRA Library Committee's role

During the pandemic, reading has become especially important to many of us. When the Mayflower Library was allowed to reopen in July, choosing books from its collection became one of the few MRA activities that was able to carry on in a close to normal fashion. Having put book buying on hold for several months, we went into high gear to provide new reading material for the Mayflower residents. D'Ann Kelty is our primary book buyer, in consultation with her co-chair, Katherine McClelland. The focus of the buying during this time has been on new fiction. We try to buy books in large print when we can, but that has become more difficult as Large Print is often published only in paperback, which does not hold up well in a library setting. Through the generous help of Drake Library, we now have a connection with a

Large Print publisher that caters to libraries and is willing to take small orders such as ours. Hopefully you will see more Large Print books in the new year.

How are the titles chosen? It is a bit "seat of the pants." We get recommendations from Book Pages, Book-of-the Month, Goodreads, and ads that now come to our Facebook pages because we have clicked on other ads, etc. Residents recommend books, and even better, residents donate new books that they have loved and want to share. About a third to a half of each new booklist has been coming from donations.

*Katherine McClelland and D'Ann Kelty*

---

## Escape to books

*(Continued from p. 2)*

Many of our contributors enthusiastically named two selections (see brief list below of additional recommendations). With such a wide variety, it should be easy for anyone to find a tempting new title. Some will be available from the Mayflower library or the Drake Library, or perhaps from the owner.

**Sue Ahrens**—*The Alice Network*, by Kate Quinn. WW I, a female spy and a socialite.

**Chris Hunter**—*The Thursday Murder Club*, by Richard Osman. Retirement home.

**Loren Kolpin**—*Walk the Wire*, by David Baldacci. An FBI consultant, fracking.

**Peggy Kolpin**—*Woman of Troublesome Creek*, by Kim Michele Richardson.

**Karen McNally**—*Anxious People*, by Fredrik Backman. Bank robber; a saving hope.

**Catherine Rod**—*An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good*, by Helene Tursten. Escapist.

**Iann Velhuizen**—*An American Marriage*, by Tayari Jones. The past, going forward.

## Welcome Dan and Jill Kaiser

Two long-time Grinnell residents, Dan and Jill Kaiser, have recently moved into Pearson. These two valued community members seem set to continue their positive impact on Grinnell.

Dan served as a professor of Russian history at Grinnell College, and Jill worked for years as an elementary school teacher who



spearheaded the Reading Recovery program in the Grinnell public schools.

Their two children attended Grinnell public schools. Their daughter, Nina, is the founder of The Practice San Francisco, a collaboration teaching children and new parents how to foster mental health; she and her husband have two sons and live in California. The Kaisers' son, Andrew, works in the Human Resources Department of the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration; he and his wife have two sons and live in the District of Columbia.

Dan and Jill met while both attended Wheaton College in Illinois. As Dan was working toward his PhD in Russian and Byzantine history at the University of Chicago, he and Jill lived in the USSR for ten months; then they lived in Cambridge, MA, where Dan did research and Jill worked at Harvard's development office. During

these years the couple accompanied a number of tour groups, including Smithsonian Associates and college and university tours, to the USSR. These tours included two treks across the entire country by train on the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

After receiving his degree and doing post-doc work, Dan heard of a job at Grinnell College, where he was interviewed by members of the History Department including Don Smith, currently also a resident of Mayflower.

Meanwhile, Jill devoted her career to teaching for the Grinnell-Newburg system. During a sabbatical in the United Kingdom, Jill was inspired when she attended a presentation by Marie Clay, the founder of the Reading Recovery program. Returning to Grinnell, Jill was able to get the program introduced in this district and taught in that program until her retirement in 2008.

Dan retired from the faculty in 2013. Since then he's devoted most of his spare time to local Grinnell history. He is the author of two blogs that delve into local history: "Ricker House Chronicles" and "Grinnell Stories." Early in 2020 the Grinnell Historical Museum published a dozen of Dan's stories in a small book entitled *Grinnell Stories: African Americans of Early Grinnell*. He hopes to be able to continue his local history investigations and to continue as a board member for the Grinnell Historical Museum.

Mayflower welcomes these two accomplished new residents.

*Judy Hunter*

## The MRA in 2020

The Mayflower Residents Association (MRA) is described in the new Bylaws as a volunteer organization devoted to welcoming new Mayflower residents and providing them with educational, recreational, social, and spiritual opportunities. Beginning in mid-March, these activities were severely curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic. The activities of the Forum, Lyceum, Library, Social, Mini-Gift Shop, Chapel, and Audio-visual Committees abruptly ceased. The threat also halted several other MRA-supported activities such as basketball game rides, shopping trips, Bucket Courses, movies, and Sunday services. Other committees such as the Green Team, Log, Memorial, Nominating, Treasure Chest, and Hospitality continued their work, as best they could, with some new methods and practices. Even the Council and Town Meetings of the MRA were suspended, and access to facilities and services in the Health Center was cut off. We became isolated. Gradually, however, the great spirit and inventiveness of Mayflower residents began to make a comeback.

An early sign of resilience occurred near the end of April. Two parties among the residents suggested that the MRA might consider raising a bonus fund to say thank you to the staff for keeping us free of COVID-19 infections. As the time for the annual appeal for the MRA budget approached, the MRA officers realized that, due to the pandemic, we were spending very little of the MRA budget. In fact, we thought that next year's budget could be funded with the estimated surplus of this year plus the accumulated surplus in the MRA account. Accordingly, with the unanimous consent of the Executive Council, on June 1 a letter of appeal was sent to all

residents not to fund the MRA budget but to create a bonus fund for the staff. The result was a total of \$22,095 that was distributed among the regular and part-time staff to express the thanks and encouragement of the residents. The President received over a hundred expressions of thanks from the staff for these gifts.

The residents with the help of the staff have pioneered new ways of carrying on our former activities. One of the first was the use of Zoom and our PC's or phones for open Executive Council and Town Meetings of the MRA in July. The Council meeting had about 50 attendees, and the Town Meeting attracted about 100. The new mode had the benefit of making documentation, minutes, agendas, etc., more accessible to all residents, and the disadvantage of making voting quite clumsy. Participation seemed to be more vigorous than before. Also notable is the relaunching of both Chapel and Sunday morning services on Zoom, and restoration of use of the book and movie collections by the Library Committee.

The Forum and the Lyceum programs are currently working to find new means of carrying on their activities, and most of the other committees are doing their work with electronic communications. The MRA particularly commends the inventive work of the dining staff, who have created special dinners at a distance, new ways of ordering and delivering food, and cautious use of the Buckley dining room.

While we all ache for our previous activities and connections to restore our community, we are heartened by the strengths and commitments that have enabled us to move in the right direction.

*Gene Wubbels, President*

## BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

From January 2, 2020 until December 31, 2020,  
twenty-one names have been added  
to the Book of Remembrance:

**Howard William "Bill" Arms**

**Elaine M. Lewis**

**Janet Ione Mowry "Jan"  
Williams**

**Roger Eugene Long**

**Bernard "Bernie" Kay Ulm**

**Russell Paul Schuchmann**

**John Richard Schild**

**Norman Van "Timer"  
McCombs**

**Arthur Melvin Heimann**

**Carl E. Vinall**

**Edward O. Colliton**

**Grace Kathleen Heffner**

**Katherine Irene Arment**

**Mary Ellen Lynch**

**Gretchen Godby Isenberg**

**Ada Coleen McGriff**

**Mary Ellen Lemke**

**Esther Van Wyk**

**Allen Leroy Blom**

**Doris R. Vander Leest**

The Memorial Committee is notified of a resident's death. At that time, a letter is sent to the next of kin expressing condolences, telling them that a \$50 gift has been sent from the MRA to the Mayflower Human Needs Endowment Fund in memory of their loved one. The Book of Remembrance is found outside the Carmen Center.

*Tommy Haas*

---

## Chance Chat

He and I were assigned seats D and E, Row 21,  
flying to Denver.

A young well-dressed business man was how he  
appeared to me.

"Traveling for business?" I asked.

*"In a manner of speaking" he responded. "I'm going to  
Denver to audition for the rodeo circuit."*

"May I ask what you do that requires an audition?"

*He replied, "I use my vacation to perform as a  
rodeo clown."*

"You distract bucking horses and whirling bulls  
away from riders?"

*"Yup. I run around wearing a clown face, a funny hat  
and a bright baggy costume. I jump in a barrel if  
necessary."*

"You must have had some really close calls and  
exciting times!

Is there one that stands out to you as  
particularly memorable?"

*(He pondered my question for a minute or two  
before replying.)*

*"There was one rodeo that had a section just for  
handicapped kids.*

*I looked up and all those kids were laughing. I made them  
all laugh! Yup, that was probably  
the most memorable rodeo of them all."*

**By Mayflower resident Warren Reinecke, from *Neighborhood Labyrinth, Selected Poems***



Steve Langerud, Executive Director  
616 Broad Street  
Grinnell, IA 50112  
641-236-6151  
[www.mayflowerhomes.com](http://www.mayflowerhomes.com)

Nonprofit  
organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**

**Log Staff**

Char Ewan  
Marge and John Graves  
Judy Hunter  
Betty Moffett  
Bill Pollak  
Mary Schuchmann  
Gene Wubbels  
Photos by Bill Pollak