

Friends Trends

A PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE JEFFERSON PUBLIC LIBRARY

NO. 42

April 2014

Focus on a Friend FOJPL President Chris deVillasana

by Peg Phelps

Chris deVillasana is a native New Orleanian, having been raised in mid-city. Chris graduated from Warren Easton High School, attended UNO, and earned his degree in mathematics from Loyola University.

After completing college, Chris joined the Air Force as a communications electronics technician. He worked as a ground radio technician, handling both ground to ground and ground to air systems. He spent time as an electronics instructor at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, and served as electronics instructor team chief for several Air Force bases. In the 1970s, he made several trips to Viet Nam.

Chris retired from active duty, but just could not stay away from the Air Force, so enlisted in the Air National Guard, where he served from 1982 until 1997. After retiring from the National Guard, he went to work in sales for General Electric in New Orleans. Two years later, he joined Bell South as a communications engineer, a situation that fit better with his military experience. And in 1995 Chris went to work as an engineering manager for what was to eventually become Verizon Wireless, where he stayed, working through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, until his retirement in 2007.

Chris avers that his wife insists that he always clean out some of his books in order to acquire additional books. In the fall of 2007, this requirement led him to the Friends old sorting center on Riverside Drive to make a donation. While there, he chatted with several of the volunteers, and mentioned that he had recently retired and was looking for a volunteer opportunity. Little did Chris know where that desire would lead him! Since it was almost time for the fall



Chris deVillasana at his usual task--moving boxes of books in the Sorting Center.

book sale, Chris came to that event and helped with the set-up and the sale. After experiencing the book sale, he was hooked, and came to help at the sorting

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The Friends of the Jefferson Public Library

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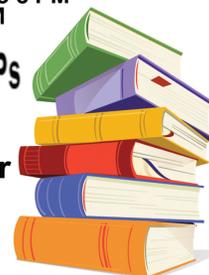
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Mission

The Friends of the Jefferson Public Library is an independent, nonprofit organization of civic-minded volunteers. We support the Jefferson Parish Library by promoting library awareness, providing needed unbudgeted items for all its branches through fund raising, and participating in literacy programs.

Address and Phone

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Web Site

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Friends Trends

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Photo Shoot



Readers of this newsletter may be familiar with the "Read" posters that appear at Jefferson Parish libraries around National Library Week, which this year is April 13-19. The posters, created by the library's Marketing Department, feature JPL staff in a variety of surroundings. This year the Friends will also be on a poster. Above, library director Marylyn Haddican poses with some Friends, seated next to Maria Tujague. Behind them are, from left: Ailleen Janney, Peg Phelps, Judy Zawislak, and Chris deVillasana. Trey Green of the Marketing Department is shown setting up the shot, which was photographed by Daniel Gitlin.

We're on FACEBOOK!!!

Check out the "Friends of the Jefferson Public Library" Facebook page!

"Like" us on Facebook to get our reminders and updates on the latest happenings and Friends events!"



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Facebook

Friends' Favorites

by Annette Centanni

(An ongoing feature highlighting our volunteers and the books that influenced their lives.)

Joan Fontaine. Joan has three favorite authors: John Grisham, Nicholas Sparks, and Janet Evanovich. "I've read almost all of their books," quips Joan. "All three writers hold my interest, but when I'm reading Grisham, nothing else gets done. I don't want to put the book down." Joan says that Grisham's novels are both suspenseful and timely, with characters she either likes or doesn't. There is no middle ground! Grisham is intense reading, however, and absorbing up until the last page. Her favorite is *The Pelican Brief*, because of its New Orleans setting, but she's looking forward to *The Inferno*. She's heard that it's a great read!

Joan says that while she loves Sparks as a novelist, she has now read so many that they have become predictable. The exception is *The Best of Me*, published in 2011, which kept her guessing until the end. All of his novels, particularly *The Notebook*, however, "make me think what I would do if I had to make the same choice."

Janet Evanovich has created characters and situations so funny that Joan has to laugh out loud. "I can just picture them all," says Joan. Once, her son came into the room to find out what she was howling about. "I thought you had the television on," he remarked. Besides being funny, Evanovich offers mystery, romance and easy-reading fiction all in one.

Judy Zawislak: *The Orchardist* by Amanda Coplin is Judy Zawislak's choice of a novel to recommend. It is the debut novel of an extraordinary young author who writes of her native territory, the Pacific Northwest, specifically the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. "*The Orchardist* is not only my choice," states Judy, but was "rated one of the best books of

the year by multiple sources." It tells the story of an older, lonely, set-in-his-ways bachelor who has lived on his family's land most of his life, cultivating his fruit trees and selling the produce. He is gentle, peace-loving, content, and for the most part, satisfied with his lot in life. One day, two abused teenage children, one obviously pregnant, wander onto his property seeking food and shelter, and set his world a-spinning. The relationships that develop produce a soft and subtle story of companionship and compassion. The old bachelor opens up his heart and finally lets the world in. But be warned, further states Judy, "The climax is chilling!"

Judy also recommends three other novels she has read: *Black Swan Green* by David Mitchell, a coming-of-age story of a 13 year old boy; *The Good Thief*, by Hannah Tinti, a novel that features an orphan, thief and benefactor and reads just like Charles Dickens; and *The Tiger's Wife* by Tia Obrecht. This is a fantasy story within a modern day narrative that takes place in the Balkans, and presents a compassionate, yet mystical, perspective on the real price of war. "The author was just 26 when she wrote *The Tiger's Wife*," says Judy. "I found her to be an extraordinary young writer."

Judy's last recommendation is a book of short stories called *Friendship, Courtship, Marriage*, by Alice Munro, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Unlike most short stories in which there is little character development, Munro's characters are fully developed. One of the short stories was even made into a heartbreaking movie which starred Julie Christie.

Rosemarie Goetz. *The Bells are Ringing (Es Lauten Die Glocken)* by Carl Ludwig Schleich is one of the favorite books Rosemarie has reminisced upon over the years. It is a little volume she found among her father's books after his death. She read it in the original German, and she claims it had a

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The Shadow Knows (and TELLS) All

Spring Greetings, fellow Friends with a nose for gossipy news! I have much to share with you, so will plunge right in to keep you abreast of all that is going on.

MIA: Sightings of some regulars have been few and far between; I speak of our Income Tax experts, **Robert Campos**, **Mary Ellis Hasseltine**, and **President Chris deVillasana**, who yearly help clients report to their Uncle Sam. I'm told that some of their dear clients present themselves with paper bags full of little slips of paper. **Chris'** all-time favorite is the little lady who sat down to do battle, then whipped out a sandwich to fortify herself for the task. One Wednesday, **Robert**, who was stationed in the hallway at the library, stormed in, wolfed a snack, let off some steam, then calmly went back to work. It was funny to witness, but not funny for **Robert**. **Mary Ellis**, **Chris** and **Robert**, we look forward to hearing some of your best stories.

Sorting Sorties: **Peg Phelps** called Workday Mondays throughout the month of January; she regularly had quite a few takers. These workers cleared out an overabundance of library weeds that had been clogging an inside hallway, and tackled a formidable mountain of donations that had been forming mid-floor. **Diane Davey** and **Ted Blohm** were a welcome sight when they returned from their winter vacation to help with all of this heavy hauling and relocating.

Harris Jenson, a Tuesday-only volunteer, came in unexpectedly on a Thursday, and threw everybody off! He had to reintroduce himself to some of the Thursday people he rarely gets to see. **Meade Phelps**, now officially retired, has

been sighted on occasion hauling books on a dolly, or slipping in to retrieve Peg's van and leaving his truck.

Monie Mouton appeared one day in mid-Mardi Gras sewing season. She just had to take a break from sewing hundreds of float and truck costumes.

There were two lovely Barnes & Noble donations this spring, which had sorters squealing in delight like kids at Christmas! One of the many boxes contained Legos, which were quickly donated to the Library Lego Club. The Friends have been funding this enterprise to help keep the library's youngest clients occupied while their parents browse.

Some sports items have come in, too, donated by Dr. Jack Andonie, friend of **Meade and Peg Phelps**. Look for an autographed LSU baseball and a picture of LSU coach Paul Mainieri, to be auctioned at the April 10 Big Book Sale.

Ouida Prieur and **Harris Jenson** have teamed up for a new task farmed out from **Peg**, who claims to be "cutting back" on her 800+ yearly hours with the Friends; they will now be pasting labels on all of the mail-out postcards for General Meetings and for the book sale. They love it because it is a sitting-down-and-talking kind of job!

Other noteworthy happenings: In mid-February, the lunch bunch got a good laugh at **Aileen Janney's** story about her dog **Skeeter's** failure to remind her to bring a lunch. It seems, **Skeeter** KNOWS when her Center day is and expects a slice of the apple she always brings. When **Skeeter** forgot to bark, **Aileen** left sans lunch and was "forced" to eat only snacks, no big sacrifice at our table! In February, also, quiet **Ann Buchel** let out a good shriek; she had

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We find good homes for used books.

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center, where he became a regular.

In the spring of 2010, Chris received a phone call from Patricia Cox, who asked him to consider running for president of the Friends. Since he had not been with the group very long, the whole idea came as a complete surprise to him. With assurances from Patricia that she and the rest of the board would help and support him, he agreed to run. Chris has now served two successful terms as president, a position from which he will retire at the end of May, 2014.

The planning and subsequent move from Riverside Drive to the Friends' current sorting center at the East Bank Regional Library in November of 2011 was, in his opinion, by far the most important accomplishment of Chris' tenure in office. The sorting operation was moved from a building where there were numerous small rooms to a building where there is one large room. Chris planned the move, and with the help of several of the other volunteers, figured out how to set up the old library shelves which were provided to the Friends. Just seeing how much everyone loves the new location gives him a great deal of satisfaction.

His second most important achievement, according to Chris, was negotiating the new Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Jefferson Parish. This agreement spells out how we work with the Parish, and is essentially our license to do business.

For his work with the Friends, Chris was named Volunteer of the Year in June of 2012.

Chris says that he finds the Friends to be one of the friendliest and most well-run organizations with which he has ever been involved. There have always been other volunteers ready to help and advise him in his endeavors. Today you will find Chris holding board meetings, moving packed boxes around, and packing the science fiction books, a favorite category of his. He also handles the book cart at the Harahan Branch Library.

Chris and his wife, Hilda, live in River Ridge. They are the parents of two daughters and have one granddaughter.

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profound and lasting effect on her way of thinking. The author, born in the mid 1800's was both a philosopher and a surgeon. In one chapter, he described how a teacher showed a child how all knowledge is contained in a square. He picked up a stick and drew a square in the sand, then divided it into four squares. He then showed the child how all the letters and the numbers fit in the square. (Think of how numbers on a digital clock are formed, and you will realize how ahead of his time this Schleich was!) Another chapter explains how the greatest gift a parent can give a child is to let him go, in order for him to be able to pursue his dreams. Rosemarie says that the title refers to how one's brain reacts when it catches on to a new idea. A bell goes off!

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

--Sir Francis Bacon

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found \$40.00 in a book! **Ouida P.**, ever ready with a quip, quickly piped up, "That was the book I just brought back this morning!" Likely story, **Ouida**, but the **Shadow** CAN buy the story about **Skeeter** and the apple! In mid-March, **Aileen** found a \$20.00 bill of her own in a religion book.

More Sorting stories: Just mention you are on the lookout for a certain kind of children's book, for instance a bulldozer or a dinosaur book for a favorite grandson, and you're likely to be inundated with responses. This happened to me recently; **Mary Lou Spanja**, **The Redhead** and **Maria Tujague** soon had books piled high enough for **Edward's** delight, and **Granny Shadow** had to surrender all of her pin money to our widely grinning treasurer, **Peg**.

The **Howat** ladies, **Maureen** and **Judy**, **Mary Anna Lightner**, **Joan Fontaine**, **Diane Pittman** and **Marie Breerwood** have either been keeping a low profile, or the **Shadow** has been going into the center on the wrong days to catch them at some mischief. They must have all gotten A's in conduct during their school years, is all I can fathom!

Snacks 'n' such: **Judy Zawislak**, like the aforementioned A-in-conduct gals, is a hard-working, pretty quiet type of person, but the **Shadow** knows a little secret about her. On all of the Working Mondays **Judy** came in to sort, she didn't bring lunch in order to go home and eat with husband **Lou**. She always took time, however, to enjoy a sweet snack and chat with the lunch bunch. The little secret is that she loves extra globs of icing on her king cake. Oh, **Judy**, what feet of clay! **Judy** has taken over **Peg's** job as "food solicitor" for the March General Meeting, this time, maybe forever? **Aileen J.** was also busier than usual shopping

for extras at Sam's because of the larger-than-normal crowd that came for Bob Breck's appearance on March 19.

On to Amazon: The Amazon crew, with its Monday/Wednesday schedule, always sings its own saga. The past three months have been especially busy with sales exceeding \$5,000 per month. Some Monday mornings, **Paulette Mauterer** works up a frenzy trying to get all of the weekend sales packed and mailed. **The Redhead**, who has a key, assists by letting **Paulette** in as early as she desires; but **Paulette** always gets a head start at home. She often prints out her packing slips at home, sometimes at 2:00 AM when she has a bout of insomnia just thinking about the 30 books she has to get out.

Also part of the Amazon crew now, new volunteer **Harriet Huddleston** has made a good start in learning to list. She has been training mainly on library weeds. Recently, **Cindy Elsensohn** was summoned out of retirement by "the other J.D." to repair some library-donated genealogy books that are popular sellers, but needed face lifts. Thanks, **Cindy**, for answering the summons.

Recently, more shelf space was opened up with the sale of a huge, six volume set of Sigmund Freud companions that was listed a number of years ago. It sold for over \$240.00. Since it weighed 38 pounds, **Joan Demers**, who packed the set, had to call husband **Rick** for backup. **Joan**, ever mindful of the cost of packing materials, sent them off in a cut-down, improvised (but sturdy) cardboard box!

With sorting in a slump, good books to list on Amazon have been scarce for the last couple of weeks. **Rosemarie Goetz** and **Diane Schleifstein** have been seen scrounging for prospects. At one point, **Janice Paine** was
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forced to re-learn to list books, since even she had run out of premium DVDs to list. **The Shadow** knows that **Rodney and Maria T.** and **Sue Hellwig** are feeling the worry of “job security,” since they are the ones who feed likely books to the listers, thus are feeling the pinch. After the backlog had been cleared out on Working Mondays, sorting hit a slump. **The Shadow** sincerely hopes donations pick up soon, since the mere mention of another book drive strikes fear into the heart of our mostly unflappable president, **Chris**.

At the Store: Manager **Patricia Cox** was thrilled to welcome a new volunteer with an education pedigree, **Glenn Gennaro**. **Glenn** is a retired counselor/teacher (Jesuit and Redemptorist) and principal (St. Clement of Rome). With his people skills, **Glenn** should be an asset to the store.

The store did extremely well during 2013, selling approximately 745 books and 400 gift items per month. The average monthly income was \$3,100, impressive, considering the average sale rarely exceeded \$10.00. At present, the hot item is spring and summer

There is No Frigate Like a Book

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!

--Emily Dickenson

garden flags, which sell for \$10.99.

About Raise a Reader: **Sandra Blount** and crew continue to pack about 350 bags per month to distribute in hospitals. They have recently obtained new bags for their enterprise. They keep their mission alive as long as they have enough board books and two-pocket folders. Their workdays have been moved to Monday.



Julia Hathaway and her big sister Rose show off their St. Patrick's Day outfits.

And finally, there is joyful news for all to share: the Friends have become honorary aunts and uncles to **Anna and Robert Campos'** new grandchild, little **Julia**. Ask **Robert** to share some of the pictures of her, as well as big sister **Rose**, on that fancy phone of his! He's more than willing!

Until next time,

Your friendly Shadow

We find good homes for used books.