

Between the Bookends

by Nancy Burch, Librarian  
Vernonia Public Library



Just over twenty-four years ago, in August of 1988, I was interviewed by library board members DeDe Webb, Claudine East, Bob Sargent and Mercedes Proehl, as a possible replacement for librarian Sandy Nimz. I then returned home and anxiously awaited a phone call telling me of the board’s decision. This position had become vacant at a rather crucial time in my life, as Errold had been living and working in Vernonia for a year while I was still living and working in Newport. This arrangement of driving back and forth on weekends was not working, and we were faced with making decisions that would have been far from ideal. So, I was thrilled beyond belief when a phone call from Claudine East gave me the news that I would become Vernonia’s next librarian. That twenty-four years has given me the opportunity to serve the citizens of Vernonia while experiencing the difficulties and pleasures of living in this unique community. In short, these past years in Vernonia have been exceedingly rewarding and I am grateful to that original library board, all of the succeeding ones, library patrons, and city staff for having been given this opportunity to serve as librarian. As of September 1, 2012, my position will now be part time, as an assistant to interim librarian Jennifer Moloney. At least for the time being, I will continue to write these articles for *The Independent* and include a little library nostalgia as well as book reviews, and events taking place in the library. Dirk and Noni Andersen as well as Clark and Rebecca McGaugh have my eternal gratitude for allowing me freedom to communicate with readers of this paper. It has always felt like I was just talking to people through these articles.

While on vacation this past week, I read four remarkable, but different novels. Portland resident Amanda Coplin has written a beautiful debut novel, *The Orchardist*, set at the turn of the twentieth century in the rural Pacific Northwest. William Talmadge tends to apples and apricots as if they were loved ones, until the lonely harmony of his life is disrupted by two feral, scared, and very pregnant teenage girls. Just as the girls begin to trust him, men arrive with guns, setting Talmadge on an irrevocable course to save them and to

reconcile the ghosts of his own troubled past. Set in rural North Carolina, Wiley Cash’s first novel is told in 3 voices: Jess, who wanted to protect his mute brother, Stump; Adelaide, the town midwife who knew the evil that controlled the church and tried to protect the children from it; and Clem, the town sheriff with sad and unspeakable burdens of his own to bear. When Stump snoops and sees something he shouldn’t, events follow that have disastrous consequences. *A Land More Kind Than Home* is a powerful novel filled with love, forgiveness, sadness, tragedy and pure evil.

*The Prophet* by Michael Koryta is a crime novel, a suspense novel, and a novel about football and family relationships. (How many times will you find all of those topics in one novel?) In the center of the story are the Austin brothers, one a down-and-out parole officer and the other an upstanding high school football coach. Their small Ohio town is torn apart by terror as persons associated with the local high school football team turn up missing or dead. As details emerge that connect the crime to the Austin brothers, the two must resolve their troubled issues of the past and unite to stop a killer

My favorite—the one that moved me to tears is *The Light Between Oceans*, by Australian novelist M. L. Stedman. Following four harrowing years spent serving on the Western Front during World War I, Tom Sherbourne takes a job as the lighthouse keeper on isolated Janus Rock where the supply boat comes only once a season and shore leaves are granted every other year. To this secluded island, Tom brings a young wife, Isabel. After several years, during which Isabel has been unable to have children, a boat washes ashore carrying a dead man and a living baby. Against Tom’s better judgment, they claim the baby girl as their own and name her Lucy. When they return to the mainland after two years, they find that their choice in keeping Lucy has caused devastation to another, thus creating a difficult moral dilemma for the couple. This is a beautifully descriptive novel with extraordinarily compelling characters.

Book discussion will be on Monday, September 24 at 5:30 with Francine Rivers’ novel, *The Last Sin Eater*, as the

topic. Movie night on Thursday, September 27 at 6:30 will feature the corresponding film.

Friends of the Library will meet Tuesday, October 2 at 6:30.

Special displays of challenged or banned books will be in the library from September 30 to October 6, 2012. This is a week designated by the American Library Association that celebrates the First Amendment freedom to read. Each year the ALA receives hundreds of reports on books and other materials that were “challenged”. Titles range from the *Bible* to John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, with the most “challenged” titles being those in the *Harry Potter* series of fantasy books by J. K. Rowling. An informal discussion of challenged and banned books will take place Thursday, October 6 at 6:30 in the library. The public is encouraged to attend.

Also, be sure to mark your calendars for Saturday, October 20 at 4:00 p.m. for a discussion in the library of “From Print to Pixels”. This is an Oregon Humanities program which will ask the questions: “In what ways do e-books change the act of reading and, as reading becomes a predominantly digital experience, what effects might this have on writing and our interactions with information overall?” This is a very pertinent topic today, as a recent report showed that Amazon sold more e-books than print books.

**Vernonia Public Library:** 701 Weed Avenue  
**Hours:** Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Tues., Thu. 1:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  
Sat. 10 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
**Preschool Story Time:** Mondays, 10:30 a.m.  
**Phone:** 503-429-1818

All are invited to Toastmasters club contest of speeches


Columbian Toastmasters, a chapter of Toastmasters International, will be holding their club contest on Thursday, September 20, at 12:00 p.m., at Americas Best Value Inn (formerly the Village Inn) on Hwy. 30 in St Helens. This is an opportunity for you to see how a Toastmasters club can improve your speaking, speech giving skills, and confidence, as well as providing you with an hour or more worth of free entertainment.

Competing in the humorous speech contest will be Miles Wickstrom of Vernonia, Ronda Holdridge of Columbia City, and Peggy Helgersen of Scappoose. These talented speakers should keep everyone in stitches throughout their short speeches. Following the formal speeches, three contestants will compete in table topics, a fast and often outrageous story telling event. Each contestant will be given the same topic, and challenged to give a one- to two-minute response, always with hilarious results.

Contestants for table topics will be as follows: Frank Hupp of Columbia City, Blanch Katz of St. Helens and Leslie Seeberger of Vernonia. The winner of each contest will speak at the area contest on Wednesday, October 3, beginning at 6:45 p.m. at the Canterbury Park 2nd floor conference room, 1335 3rd Ave, in Longview, Washington. Two winners from each contest will then move on to the Northern Division contest, on October 20, at the Clark Public Utilities District Building.

The public is very much welcome and encouraged to attend these events. Please feel free to come by, meet the speakers, and enjoy the contest. For more information on the contest or the Columbia Toastmasters call 503-429-0532 or visit us at <http://6421.toastmastersclub.org> .

Columbia Toastmasters meets every Thursday at noon at America’s Best Value Inn, 535 South Columbia River  
**See Toastmaster, page 14**



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or  
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**Domestic Abuse**  
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or  
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