

Feeling *bookish*?

You never know what you might discover at these book sales

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By Lisa Reisman
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GUILFORD - It was a rain-driven September afternoon at the Guilford Free Library and three women were at a conference table clapping with glee.

Longtime Guilford resident Clare Conover, along with her brother and sister-in-law, had just trudged past them, rubber boots squeaking, weighed down by dripping canvas tote bags packed with books.

The three women - Guilford book sale volunteers Gitta Morris and Charlotte Currier, as well as co-chair Jane Marshall - were discussing the upcoming Friends of the Guilford Library Book and Bake Sale to take place Friday, Sept. 23 through Sunday, Sept. 25.

They didn't know that many of the books had come from the Homestead on 465 Clapboard Hill Road, a property built in 1842 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, where Conover's family had lived. Like many of the residents who have given books to the Library sale over the years, Conover was downsizing.

They just get excited when they see people bringing in books they no longer need for others to enjoy. "It makes it a community affair," Jane Marshall explained.

A few of the dedicated corps of 22 volunteers who work year round have since unpacked,



Guilford Friends of the Library volunteer Jane Marshall of Guilford sorts through the booty (books!) for the library's book sale this weekend. Photo by Arnold Gold. Above and below, a treasure trove of vintage, classic, children's and simply used books collected for the sale.

categorized, and priced Clare Conover's donations, adding them to the more than 35,000 books, as well as puzzles, sheet music, CDs and DVDs, that will be available to the public this weekend. Many are in perfect shape; others are a perfect read. Some are beach books

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that could use a deeper tan.

These days, books line the floors and walls of the library's back rooms. Stacks of biographies sandwich themselves between cookbooks and gardening books. Children's books bravely poke their narrow spines against thrillers.

So packed is the storage space in the library itself that boxes of books have spilled into the adjacent Friends' House. There, Bente Hierholzer of Guilford, who created the library at the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts in Old Lyme, spends several hours each day in a gentle sunlit alcove, rescuing abandoned and homeless art books and preparing them for proper introduction to the public.

"It's a lot of work," said the sprightly Hierholzer, "but it's worth it. Some of these are quite wonderful."

Bente Hierholzer's exertions, along with those

of her fellow volunteers, help the book sale bring in between \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year. Added to which have been the innovative efforts of co-chair Sally Leighton, who has raised thousands of dollars by recognizing valuable books that are donated and selling them online.

Those proceeds go directly back to the library for book purchases, staff training, and special programs. With devastating budget cuts by towns around the state and country, the book sale has grown more important than ever, according to Gitta Morris.

That said, given the state of the economy and the rising popularity of e-books, the success of book sales each year is hardly a given. How library book sales, both in Guilford and Branford (whose own sale also falls this weekend) have nonetheless continued to prosper isn't hard to fathom, said Marshall,

who's happily contributed her expertise for 17 of the Guilford Library book sale's 30-year existence.

One reason: in the last three decades, the price of most things has skyrocketed. Take a look at



Guilford Friends of the Library volunteers. Photo by Arnold Gold

gasoline, groceries and, not least, new books. But there is one constant: 50-cent paperbacks and hardbacks for \$3 to \$4 at the September library book sales.

Add to that the character of a used book. A well-thumbed paperback

might lack the glossiness of a Barnes & Noble hardcover or the downloadable ease and portability of a Kindle, but it's a mark that the book has been well-read—if not necessarily well-loved.

It also has a story (pun intended). A photograph or old receipt used as a bookmark. A love letter. A carton of books might likewise offer a glimpse into someone else's world. That's what happened when Gitta Morris was sorting through a

box that included "How to Raise Your Child" and "How to Live Through Your Divorce."

Not to mention the sheer fun of the hunt on the day of the event. That's the beauty of a book sale, said Currier. You never know what you might find. "It's like you're at a buffet and there's something you've always wanted to try but never had the chance."

That kind of enthusiasm extends to the younger generation. For volunteer Shelley Brewer, the highlight of the book sale is "seeing kids, still in their soccer uniforms, clutching dollar bills and racing through the children's book section, looking, looking, looking."

One year, a little boy couldn't find his mother and was desperate for a book. Brewer slipped him a dollar.

Which nicely sums up the neighborly mood that annually attends the event. Amid the rustle of pages and exclamations of discovery, "people

stop and talk and catch up," said Jane Marshall. Individuals and businesses contribute food, plates, and napkins for the bake sale. Even the Bishop's Orchards strawberry boxes the books are packed in year after year are local.

"It's a great way to support the library while recycling literature," said Morris, eyeing the half-dozen or so rain-dappled tote bags of books just donated by Clare Conover. "And for people who love books, you can't find a better deal."

Editor's note: sale hour: Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and Sunday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. 67 Park Street, Guilford. 203-453-8282.

Branford book sale hours: Thursday, 5 to 8 p.m. (preview night for members); Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 3 p.m. (Sunday will be "fill a bag" for a flat rate of \$10.) Branford Green. 203-488-1441.