



*Celebrating  
60 Years of  
AAUW-Buffalo Branch  
Book Sales*



**Dedicated to all of our generous book contributors,  
hard-working volunteers,  
loyal customers, and sponsors.  
We couldn't have done it without you!**

**We look forward to our 2015 sale - our 61st - and,  
hopefully, many more!**

# **STORIES AND TALES OF THE BOOK SALE - 60 YEARS!**

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**Thanks to Janet Vine who said “I can do that” when someone said that we should put together the stories of the book sale over the years. She and Judy Weidemann did the research, solicited and wrote stories, and edited the text and, together with production assistant Betty Preble, put it together with pictures for this book. A labor of love and a fun project!**



Over the years, I had more than a passing acquaintance with the AAUW and its history in Buffalo, which goes back to 1890. With its mission to advance educational and professional opportunities for women and its moveable feast of interest groups, scholarships, student loans and support for high school girls, it seemed like a good fit for a retirement activity.

But to be honest, what I really wanted to do was work on that book sale. From a one-day sale in vacant downtown storefronts in the 1950s to a five-day event in suburban box stores in the 1990s, the sale has become an institution in the region and a favorite of customers and dealers from New England, the Midwest and Canada. Its nomadic home this year is in Burlington Plaza on Niagara Falls Boulevard in Amherst.

What attracts me and my colleagues, who spend eight months a year collecting, sorting and packing books and then putting in eight- to 10-hour days setting up and working at the sale, is an insatiable interest in books and the chance of discovering that rare and sometimes valuable book.

The consensus is that books are obsolete; that e-readers, iPads and electronic devices that have not yet been invented are destined to replace the printing press.

That may happen. But each year our donations, from private collections, educational institutions, libraries and bookstores, increase – in recent years from an estimated 100,000 to 150,000. And each year, thousands of people turn out to buy those books. Dealers compete for the leftovers.

That success encourages us to anticipate at least a 65th anniversary. Not just because we enjoy the process but because the rewards of all the hard work are so great. Sale proceeds augment our Buffalo Branch funds, resulting in the allocation of close to \$100,000 each year in scholarships, fellowships, interest-free college loans and grants and the Tech Savvy and Sister to Sister programs for middle and high school girls.

Virtual books may be the future. I can't quarrel with that. As Wendy Lesser points out in her delightful book, "Why I Read: the Serious

Pleasure of Books,” reading is a highly individual act. “No one will ever do it precisely the way you do.”

The way I do requires the touch and feel of a real book and the comfort of knowing there are many more within arm’s reach.

My husband and I have collected books for more than the 60 years the sale is celebrating. The overflowing bookshelves in most rooms of our house might suggest hoarding. I admit that not being able to part with many is a bit scary. Kindles please many readers, but I don’t think they can duplicate the experience of browsing in a bookstore or library and finding that book you must have.

That happens to me often, and most memorably when I discovered Ian Thompson’s “The English Lakes – A History.” No e-reader could replicate this gorgeous book. A beautiful binding, lavish reproductions of engravings, paintings and photographs, distinctive typography and a narrative that flows from the pen of a masterful writer make this read an aesthetic as well as an intellectual experience. That promise of discovery is what curious readers who come to our sale every year anticipate. Fortunately for them, their success will be a lot less expensive.

Pat Swift MacClennon, taken from “My View,”  
published in the The Buffalo News May 13, 2014



## LOOKING BACK AT THE AAUW BOOK SALE

It is fair to say that the AAUW Book Sale has become a community tradition. The sale, started 61 years ago, has worked its way into the list of Buffalo events to be looked forward to each year.

It is appropriate that AAUW, the American Association of University Women, would have a book sale as its fund raiser. After all, it is an organization of college-educated women whose mission, among others, is to promote literacy and education for all. A few years ago, Ruthe Sicherman, one of the founders of the book sale wrote a short history of the sale entitled "The Book Sale and How It Began."

The first sale was held on April 23, 1955, and the grand sum of \$209.72 was raised. The one-day sale was attended mainly by the members. The inventory was a few hundred books hurriedly collected. What a contrast to the current sale which attracts thousands of customers from the area and dealers from many places along the eastern seaboard. Contrast the one-day sale also to a five-day sale with nine months of preparation behind it.

For the first 25 years, AAUW never paid for a site. Those persuasive AAUW members were always able to obtain a donated site. One year the site of the former Dixie Hat store was donated. The display stands made excellent spots for displaying the special collectible items. As time went on, the city was abandoned as a site for the sale. Benderson Development Company was willing to donate free sites to us thanks to the suggestion from Dick Rich, husband of one of our members. All the Benderson sites available were in the suburbs. Another plus of moving to the suburbs was that because the sites were located in plazas, ample parking was available. However, we reluctantly left the city. It was a difficult decision because the purpose of the sale was two-fold. Of course the sale was a money-making effort. The purpose also was to make low-priced books available to those who might not be able to afford new books. It seemed to AAUW members that would be more true of some city dwellers.

In the early years of the sale, the Sealed Bid Auction was a great attraction. Mollie Fleysher and Ruthe Sichermann valiantly worked all year long to obtain interesting articles for this part of the sale. I have several treasures from that time. One is a signed photo of Shirley Chisholm, who ran for Vice-President of the United States in 1972. She received

152 votes at the Democratic National Convention that year. Her campaign was short lived, however. Included with the photo is a signed copy of the bill Ms. Chisholm introduced along with Bella Abzug in the House of Representatives in 1975 to provide \$10 billion to fund Child Care Services. This bill was vetoed by President Nixon.

I also bid on an engraving of the White House signed by Patricia Nixon. I know I didn't bid much on the engraving. I was surprised when I was the high bidder.

In those days I was the collector of treasures in the South Towns for the Sealed Bid Auction. I picked up a beautiful painting donated by Thomas Aquinas Daly, a now nationally recognized painter who lived in Eden. I bid on his work, but it went for a very high price – considerably higher than my bid.

The Sealed Bid Auction was finally abandoned. There were a few years when there were drawings for gifts to the sale. Lois Meyer moved from Buffalo to Camillus, New York. She needed to downsize and gave us two framed photographs taken by Dr. Joseph Manch, a superintendent of the Buffalo Schools. The same year we found that a book of Dr. Manch's photographs and poems had been donated. This made an appealing package to be raffled.

Jan Vine, who comes from the Albany-Saratoga Springs area donated a large framed poster of the 2003 winner of the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes, Funny Cide. Funny Cide came from a Saratoga Springs Farm and the poster was signed by his owners and trainer. I was the lucky winner of that



piece, but gave it to my friend, Joan Eschner who often hosts a Kentucky Derby Party.

Someone donated a doll dressed as a Suffragist in purple, gold and white. A member of the League of Women Voters Buffalo/ Niagara won it, and the doll now is on display at the League offices in Buffalo. After the Sealed Bid Auction ended and the sale had expanded greatly, more attention was paid to the collectible section. This section has been under the direction of some very capable members – Cathy

Weiss, Judy Clare doing the children's collectibles, and now Janet Ostrow, former owner of Premier Gourmet. Janet's merchandising skills have surely paid off for us here. The collectible section is a treasure trove of specially priced books. The local interest section always has books on local history. Local authors are featured. We often have copies of Elbert Hubbard's Scrapbooks. A publication I know well, The Roycroft Review, is always represented, at a fair, albeit not a high price.

Judy Clare keeps an eagle eye out for valuable children's books. She even scours what the sorters put in the garbage. A year or so ago, while looking through garbage to be disposed of, she found a copy of Pinocchio from the 1920s. It was in bad shape, but Judy researched it and found that it was worth several hundred dollars, even in its poor condition.

Judy Weidemann





**M**y earliest memories of the book sale were in the 1970s when the book sale was held in a vacant store located in downtown Buffalo. The member who was in charge of the set-up must have been a retired Army Sergeant; she barked out the commands and had everyone jumping to get the set-up done before we were scheduled to open. There were 45 categories for the books; each category had a table chair who had to stay until her table was set up. No wonder it took 90 calls for me to get 45 volunteers to take this job!

As our book donations increased, the store fronts became too small to house all of our collection. We rented the Convention Center for the sale and also rented a few rooms at the YWCA to store, sort, and price books. First we sorted the books into categories, packed them in boxes, stored them, and later got them out again to individually price each book. What we were thinking? Also, we hired men and male high school students to move the boxes. God forbid that a woman would pick up a box---she would certainly end up with back problems. While at this location in 1981, we had a parade on the day we moved the books from the YWCA to the Convention Center. Mayor James Griffin led the parade with a marching band following. Our members dressed in old-fashioned clothes. The books were loaded on carts, wagons, baby buggies, anything with wheels, and off we went down the street to our sale location. The mayor also signed a declaration stating the week to be AAUW Book Sale Week. In recognition our 100th year celebration in 1990, we once again “dressed for the occasion” wearing Ellen DeWind’s period costumes that she designed and made for us to wear at the book sale.

The book sale stayed status quo until the year we only cleared around \$200 due to many expenses and non-completion of all the sorting and pricing of books. Judy Weidemann was serving her first term as president (1994-1995) and called on Sharon Rich and myself (both serving as President Elect) to start an ad-hoc committee to discuss the possibility of an alternative fund raiser. We met with many of the past book sale chairs and decided that no other fund raiser could raise as much money as the book sale, and more importantly, since AAUW is dedicated to education, making books available at a good price is essential for our educational goals. We then began the revision of the book sale—making the sorting and pricing easier, and looking for ways to cut our expenses. Jackie Trace brought up the idea to ask for donations for our

expenses—the location, tables, bookmarks, etc. We were finally able to get a free vacant store for our sale with the help of Sharon’s husband, Dick Rich, who had a connection with Benderson. We never knew until March or April where we would be located, but for many years, Benderson came through with a vacant store for us. The locations were out of the city and many members thought that we wouldn’t get the “traffic” as we did in the downtown business sector, but that proved to be a fallacy. We were able to get the book marks for free, tables reduced in price, and help from Americorps in picking up large deliveries of books and moving the books to the sale site. Paying for help was discontinued, and we received much support from family members and friends. Books were then stored in members’ garages and basements. Getting books out of basements was a chore, but we lined people up the stairs and just passed the books to the next person on the stairs. Barb Engler called this the “senior workout,” and truly it was mostly seniors doing the physical labor since our younger members were at work. We rented a truck to pick up from all our collection sites. One year, I ended up driving the large truck (our male volunteers must have been busy) along with Judy Weidemann. At a light a truck pulled up next to us; the men looked over at us and burst out laughing. I guess they didn’t expect two women to be driving a moving van.

Our members were very resourceful. One year, while sorting the books in the storage area of the store, we noticed that there were two sawhorses across the beams, at least 15 feet or more above us. If only we could get the sawhorses down, we could make a table with a plank of wood to sort books. In no time at all, Superwoman Ann Hicks, shimmed up the side of the steel book shelves and got the saw-horses down for us. No job was too hard for us to tackle.

Some of our sale locations were a “sight to behold”, but with a lot of cleaning and enough buckets to place around the store to collect rain from the leaks in the roof, we survived. We also had to deal with our animal friends---one year we had birds nesting in the rafters—that was another thing to clean up. A squirrel decided to take a look at our books one year and left without buying one. He left empty boxes strewn around the room from his jumping on top of the boxes to escape from the women trying to chase him out. One year when we had exceptionally hot weather, we discovered that our air conditioning didn’t work. Members brought in their own fans to solve the problem.

Opening day was fascinating to watch as the book dealers ran into the

sale like children running into an amusement park, and head to their favorite category after waiting in line for more than one hour. They sat in corners, under tables, anywhere to study their “find.” Years ago, they had paper lists of books they were looking for. More recently, they came in with their laptops to browse their book list.

Bunny Blackstone



## SHORT TALES

**B**unny (Grace ) Blackstone was head, heart, and soul of the book sale for many years. Among other fine qualities she possessed, was decisiveness. When a plan occurred to her, she would stick to it. For a number of years, the library at SUNY Buffalo donated large quantities of books to the sale. One year we received an unusually large donation. Several volunteers with cars were recruited along with Eddie Eschner, who owned a red pick-up truck. The volunteers went to UB and loaded the many boxes of books into the available cars and into Eddie's truck. We formed a caravan from UB to the sale site at another location in Amherst. Bunny and I were in the first car right behind the red truck. We followed the truck closely so that we would all arrive at approximately the same time to unload the boxes. As we traveled down a residential street in Amherst, the truck suddenly turned into a driveway. Both Bunny and I were puzzled. Bunny popped out of the car and said to the driver of the red truck, "Why are you stopping here?" The gentleman, not our Eddie Eschner, said, "I live here." Bunny had followed the wrong truck! Leaving the "red pick-up driver" shaking his head, we pulled out of his driveway and headed to the sale site.

Judy Weidemann



**B**unny Blackstone was a steam roller with a bunny softness. She called me one year to make signs for the book sale. I told her I had a broken ankle and was in a wheelchair. But, my hands and arms were okay. Bunny said, "Fine. I'll send someone to pick you up." She sent a van! At the book sale site, I stood on one leg to make signs. AAUW makes accommodations for the disabled!

Ruth Auer

**F**or many years we have displayed blown-up pictures of newspaper clippings from past book sales at the sale site. The branch is fortunate to have our records archived at UB. There we have access to copies of many notable events in our history. The book sale has always had excellent press coverage, so we have many good pictures of the events and the leaders of the book sale. Our book sale customers enjoy looking at these historic posters as they browse the sale. A few years ago, a handsome, young black man came to the sale. On the wall was a picture of his grandmother, Alberta Ford, one of our early African American members. Alberta had not been in Buffalo for many years and in fact had died by the time her grandson came to the sale. You can imagine the grandson's delight in finding his grandmother on our wall. He didn't know that Alberta had been a member of AAUW Buffalo Branch, much less a leader of the book sale that he was patronizing.



Judy Weidemann

We made an excellent exchange with Dr. Don Birdd a few years ago. Don, a legendary retired science professor at SCNY at Buffalo, called me to ask if there might be old science textbooks available from the AAUW Book Sale.



He was looking for the textbooks to put in the science curriculum lab at SCNY at Buffalo so that students could see science curricula and methods from the past. Incidentally the lab is named for Dr. Birdd. I told him that while we ask that people don't donate textbooks, some textbooks do find their way into the sale. We usually discard them because they don't sell. At the time that Dr. Birdd asked about the textbooks, we were looking for a science table chair. I thought this could be a good

exchange; science textbooks for taking the table chair job. Dr. Birdd agreed.

Dr. Birdd continues to look for old science textbooks and has found some interesting ones. He continues to be chair of the science table at the book sale. His wife Laurene helps him with this job. It was a very good bargain for both sides, I believe.

Judy Weidemann





## AAUW Buffalo Branch and Jacquie Walker

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AAUW's Annual Used Book Sale energized the committee of experienced women getting ready to celebrate this milestone in 2004. During their brainstorming, they came up with the idea of inviting a local woman television news anchor to co-chair the event. Perhaps this would lead to better media coverage. They decided to call upon the community-minded Jacquie Walker, WIVB – Channel 4's popular news anchor. Jacquie accepted with pleasure and worked well with our team. Everyone found her to be gracious, generous and dynamic in bringing our story to the local television audience. The previous year's sales totaled under \$40,000. We thought a lofty (perhaps unreachable) goal of \$50,000 for our 50<sup>th</sup> year would bring excitement to all our volunteers. Lo and behold, the final tally showed we grossed over \$67,000! This was a huge jump in sales. Of course, we attributed it to the many efforts of not only our hard-working members, but also to Jacquie showing the public what a huge assortment of nicely categorized books were available for their purchase at very reasonable prices. She stressed that all proceeds would be used for scholarships and educational programs for women.



In the years following 2004, other local TV personalities were invited to co-chair our sale. With varying degrees of commitment, they allowed their names to be associated with our scholarship book sales. As 2008 was approaching, Mary Kellner (the hard-working but outgoing chair) was asked to recommend a local media person who might be willing to work on our behalf again. She thought it would be to our benefit to try to get Jacquie to return as co-chair. Having worked with her before, Mary agreed to con-

tact Jacquie and extend a warm invitation. It was a fortuitous day when Jacquie accepted! One of her passions is community service, and she liked the kind of community service we were doing. Love of education was instilled into her and her sister by their parents. Alt-

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though unable to afford college educations, her parents “believed in the power of education to uplift, enlighten, and inspire.” To our continuing delight, Jacquie has been willing to be part of our book sale and will be as long as she is able. As of this writing, she is preparing for her ninth year of working side-by-side with Buffalo Branch, AAUW!

In 2009 the committee, urged by Judy Clare, looked for a way to honor Jacquie for her stellar devotion to us. We also wanted to demonstrate to the public that their supporting dollars really did provide scholarships for local women. Thus, the AAUW---Jacquie Walker \$5000 scholarship was born with the blessing of our executive board. To quote Jacquie in her acceptance of this honor, “I am flattered beyond belief...! I believe we all have an obligation to serve our community in any way we can.” This scholarship stresses community service and academic achievement. Since 2009 we have been privileged to read applications from dozens of amazing young women who provide us with the inspiration to continue working hard to raise money to fund this and other scholarships.

For many, many years, Buffalo Branch has selected a local woman to be honored as our Achievement Award winner. In the year 2010, Jacquie Walker was selected by our branch for this honor because of her dedication to the community and her excellence in broadcasting. A perusal of her biography will reveal numerous awards and honors. In my opinion, a more deserving woman would be hard to find. Pat Swift MacClennan, our veteran publicity chair and journalist in her own right, described Jacquie as “our cheerleader, our mentor and our best friend.” Everyone who has had the pleasure to work with, talk with, or exchange e-mails with her has found her to be a “Forever Friend”! Long may she cross the thresholds of our book sale sites.



Judy Clare



## BOOK BUYER BITS

When the book sale was at Medaille College, I was sitting near the door when a family with a number of children came in. As they came through the door, the mother turned to the children and said, “We are not going to buy back the books we just donated.”

Barbara Olandt

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Don’t remember the year. We were at the Tri-Main Center and had an 11<sup>th</sup> edition Encyclopedia Britannica, which we had advertised for sale. A gentleman came early the first day and asked at the door if we still had the EB. He would pay the entry fee if he could buy it. In the course of conversation with him, we determined that he already had an 11<sup>th</sup> edition, but he had two sons who were fighting over who was going to get it. Family crisis solved. Thank you, AAUW.

Jill Brown

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His name was Vito, he said. Tottering and rocking as he walked, this older gentleman walked up to my cashier’s spot with a bag in hand, smiling as he moved. As he dug his dollars out of his well-worn pocket, he told me he was 92 years old and still loved to read. I smiled at this disclosure. He loves the book sale and would be back again the next day. Then he teetered on looking self-satisfied with a bag full of books.

Marilyn Carmichael

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One enthusiastic shopper that Judy Weidemann and I saw day after day at our 2014 book sale was budding novelist Beverly Allen (her pen name) whose second book— For Whom the Bluebell Tolls— in her Bridal Bouquet Shop Mystery Series was published that fall.

Janet Vine

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This is heaven if you love books!

Anonymous buyer

I was straightening up the cookbooks midway through the sale, when I heard a gasp from near the end of the section. A woman had found one of those “community/church/organization” fundraising cookbooks—an old one, with handwriting rather than typing from Birmingham. It was the same one she had at home – and included recipes from her own mother! She had given a copy long ago to one of her children, but hers was tattered, and she was absolutely thrilled to find one she could give her other child. She was on her cellphone for the next 20 minutes or so telling her friends of her great find!

Betty Preble – 2013 sale

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I was standing in line waiting for an author to sign her latest book at the 2013 Bouchercon mystery convention in Albany, New York. Looking at the nametag of the woman behind me, I saw that she was from Lockport. So I asked her if she had ever been to the AAUW book sale in Buffalo.

“Oh, yes!” she said. “In fact, my husband called in sick at work so we both could attend on opening day.”

The day of the sale they were having a wonderful time, browsing through the books on one table when she suddenly looked up and her husband had disappeared. She saw cameramen from various news channels filming the sale, but she couldn’t see him anywhere. She felt a moment of panic.

Then looking down toward the floor, she saw him crouched under one of the tables. “What are you doing down there?” she asked.

He replied, “I can’t be seen on TV.”

Janet Vine

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One of the things I find rewarding about working at the sale is the excited look on the young readers as they show you the books that they found. This year, when I asked a boy of about 4 or 5 years if he found any good books, he enthusiastically replied, “Oh, yes, and I even found some puzzles!!” His smile was captivating. It is refreshing to know children are engaging their brains by reading and doing puzzles.

Carol Golyski – 2013 sale

One gentleman said he found a 1996 airline boarding pass purchased by a Clive Barker for a flight from California to Michigan in a book by English author/film director Clive Barker. Our books do go on long journeys.

Janet Vine

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An enjoyable part of working at the AAUW Book Sale is chatting with the customers. Usually the talk centers on books one shouldn't miss, wonderful "finds" at the book sale, the magnitude of the sale and the amount of work involved to put on the sale. During Book Sale 2014, several of the workers met Barbara Nelson and heard a most interesting story. The story was about her high school student, Barack Obama.

Barbara went to Hawaii to be a bridesmaid in her college friend's wedding. She stayed on to teach English at the high school in Honolulu. One of her memorable students was Barack Hussein Obama whom she called "Barry." Barbara remembers Barry vividly. She describes him as easy to know, and likable. He was a good student and a good listener. She remembers a particular discussion well. She put this question to the class, "What is most to be feared?" Various answers came from the students. One suggested being lost. Another said total darkness. Still another said power. Barry, sitting with his long legs crossed, after a long thoughtful period finally said, "words." With that the class exploded in a discussion from that perspective. Words can indeed uplift or destroy. I wonder if President Obama has ever reflected on that opinion given in the high school class long ago. It was a prescient statement given all that the President has had to face in his life. The father of Barbara's good friend in Honolulu was Dr. Stanley West. One day she had lunch with him. He casually mentioned that he had just delivered a baby to two college kids. The mother's first name was Stanley – a name in Dr. West's family and in Barbara's. He said that he thought Stanley was an unusual first name for a woman as indeed it was. He then went on to say that she named the baby Barack Hussein Obama. A name he thought was pretty, but a name we know has brought the president some controversy.

Judy Weidemann

**D**uring the 60<sup>th</sup> book sale, a man entered looking for A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. He had just seen the DVD, and now wanted to read the book, but wasn't sure of the author's name. Was it Betty Smith? We agreed it was. I escorted him to the table where he might find it. I asked everyone there to let me know if they saw the novel. Within a minute or two, we found two copies. He decided which one he desired and was about to leave, when a man, who had been watching our search, came over and talked to the man for several minutes. Curious as to what he had been telling the man, I went over to ask him. He had told the man the book was basically true though the author would often elaborate. His father had known Betty Smith. They both grew up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn and attended the same German Methodist Church. They would surreptitiously exchange essays on Sunday mornings. Unlike Betty Smith, his father, Henry Refschneide, left school at age 13 to work. Eventually he changed his name to Harry Reiff. Later, he obtained three degrees from Harvard, including his doctorate. He became an expert on international law and wrote International Treaty Law of the Sea, which is still in use by the maritime industry. For 38 years he was a history and government professor at St. Lawrence University. For a number of years, his son, an art history professor at SUNY Fredonia, had been interviewing his dad in order to write a book, Teacher, Scholar, Mentor: Dr. Harry Reiff, about his life. It was going to be published by the St. Lawrence University Press the next month, in June.

Janet Vine

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**I**'m a member of AAUW because of Pat and Paul MacClennon. They would come into my store, Premier Gourmet, and say, "You know, you would really enjoy AAUW and the book sale." Shortly after I sold the store, I became active in the book sale and joined AAUW. The moral of this story is to keep promoting AAUW!

Janet Ostrow

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**O**n May 31, 2013, I took a break from the book sale and went home for dinner. Switching on the TV for the nightly news, I heard that mystery writer Cynthia Riggs, who lives on Martha's Vineyard, was getting married to Dr. Howard Attebery. They had met 62

years before at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego when Riggs was 18, a student at Antioch College in Ohio. Ten years her senior, Dr. Attebery fell in love with her, but she had a boyfriend back home and left in the fall to return to college. That summer he did protect her from the other men at the institute who played all sorts of jokes on her. She'd write notes in code to him on paper towels, and he'd reply in code. During the intervening years they each married and had children. After 25 years of marriage, she got a divorce and turned to writing mysteries to support herself and her daughter. In January 2012, at age 80, she received a mysterious package, which contained a packet of paper towels with one new towel written in code that read, "I've never stopped loving you." Her girl friends on the island thought this was the most romantic thing they had ever heard of. They encouraged her to pursue the mystery. Remembering that Howard had once worked as a dentist, she contacted the California Dental Association and found his address. Thus began a correspondence between them. Because he was in poor health, she traveled to California. Howard met her at the train station with a long-stemmed red rose and a sign bearing their code for hugs, kisses, and passion. He drove her to his house and within an hour asked her to marry him, and she said yes. I had never read any books by Cynthia Riggs. But returning to the book sale, I looked at a table that had two books on it that definitely did not belong there. I picked them up to return them to the mystery section. On the way, I looked at the covers. One of them was a Martha Vineyard Mystery: Shooting Star, by Cynthia Riggs. It was a signed copy! What serendipity! Of course I bought the book.

Janet Vine



## Book Detectives

Working on collectibles for the 49<sup>th</sup> book sale, I came across two huge, leather-bound volumes entitled Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean: Made under the Direction of the Secretary of War, in 1853-4. What caught my attention when I opened each book was the bookplate. It featured a drawing of a skull of a steer. Beneath the drawing was the name "Frederick Remington." Could these books have once been owned by the American artist/sculptor Frederick Remington?

I phoned the rare book room of Buffalo and Erie County Library to make an appointment. Bringing one of the volumes, plus a book that contained the drawing by Remington that was on the bookplate, plus signatures of the artist, I sought their confirmation. However, I soon learned that establishing provenance of works of art or a signature is difficult as there are so many art forgeries. However, the librarians did connect me with the secure website they use regarding rare books so I could see what the book might be worth based on condition.

My curiosity was not satisfied. If the volumes had belonged to Frederick Remington, they deserved to reside in the Remington Museum. I phoned the museum in Ogdensburg and spoke to the curator. He said they had given the titles of the books they were looking for to book dealers in New York City, so they wouldn't be interested in what I had. I told him we priced books so dealers would buy them. Thus the price would be less than our selling them to a dealer who would double or triple the price. Did the museum have all ten volumes of said work? AAUW had volume IV, which focused on botany, and volume VIII, which focused on zoology. After checking, he admitted those were the two volumes they were lacking. Would we be willing to donate them to the museum? I told him that was not possible since the books had been given to us to raise money for scholarships for women and girls in the Buffalo area. I proposed that I would have a reliable dealer appraise them and get back to him. We sold the volumes to the museum for \$200 apiece, plus \$50 for shipping.

The curator finally told me that when Remington died and before the museum was built, the local library in Ogdensburg was given the books to keep until the museum opened. The library had book sales. Some of the Remington collection probably was sold for just a few dollars.

Both the curator and I were very pleased with the outcome. That same year I found a small advertising booklet for a striped toothpaste made by Colgate. The story and pictures reminded me of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. The author/illustrator was Ruth Plumley Thompson. A stamp/postcard dealer in Albany made an offer of \$10, without even seeing the booklet. Using Google, I learned that Ruth Plumley Thompson, who was the editor of a children's magazine, took over writing the Oz books after Frank Baum, the original author, died. Based on the number of full-page drawings, and the number of pages of the story, Bunny and I priced the booklet accordingly. It sold the first day of the sale for \$20!

Janet Vine

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Early in my career as a book sale volunteer, my husband distributed a newsletter in our neighborhood asking for used books to donate to the



AAUW book sale. Several people donated. Of course, I went through all the books to see if there were any specially priced books. I found The Lolly-Madonna War, by Sue Grafton. It clicked in my mind that she wrote the A, B, C mystery novels. We got a price on the book, and it sold on the first day for \$250. Of course, I was very happy.

Roberta Ross

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One of our volunteers, Ron Gilmore, saw a book, written in 1875, written by the 19<sup>th</sup> wife of Brigham Young, which was an exposé of Mormonism. It had been placed among sociology books that would sell for just a dollar. He sensed it was worth a lot more. He did some research and priced the book at \$200. It sold at that price! Thanks Ron!

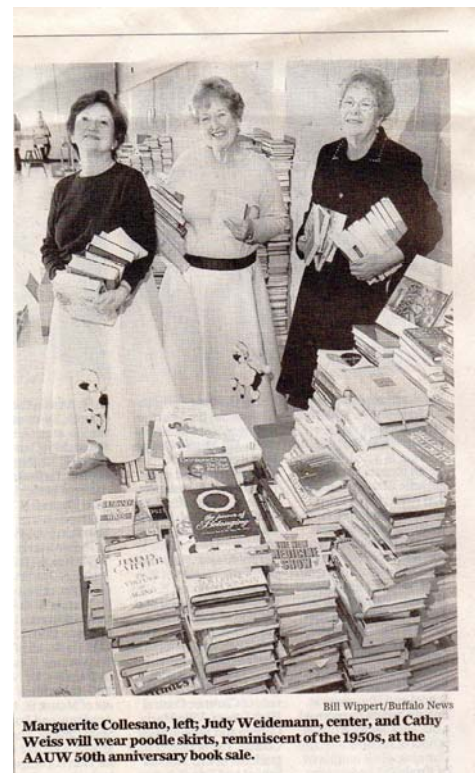


**Y**ou just never know what will turn up while we are sorting. Sometime in the spring of 2014, a volunteer opened a box of donated books and picked up a heavy copy of The Winds of December, by Dorschner and Fabricio. It's the story of the 1958 Cuban revolution against Batista led by Castro. When the book was opened, we found a surprise. Beginning at page 39, the center of the pages had been cut out to make a hiding space for jewelry. I took the pieces to Scherer's on Main Street, and Richard was fascinated with them. When he examined them, he said that the gold in the earrings and necklaces was worth about \$120, and the 3 sterling pins were not antique but old enough that a collector might value them at about \$25-\$50 each. They will be offered to our members, and then sold for the best offer. Another boost for our sale bottom line!

Barbara Carier

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**I**n 2013, a 1645 Bible in German sold for \$300! Another great find.





## **“What Do You Do With All the Leftover Books?”**

This question has been asked and answered in many different ways over the years. One way has always been to offer charities the opportunity to come in at the close of the sale to select books that meet their purposes. All they have to do is call in advance and bring a letter on official letterhead indicating the organization is non-profit. Frequently, not one children’s book remained when the charities had gone. Large print books have been sought by assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Surprisingly, in 2014, only one charity came to select from the remaining books. This has been puzzling to us, but perhaps we can find a way to encourage them to return.

For some years past, various dealers have offered to purchase our leftovers for \$100 and up. Members have usually packed up these books when the sale was over.

In 2009, we had the dilemma of needing to be out of our site, and no one came forward interested in our books. Thrift store organizations which send their trucks around for donations were contacted by our committee. Goodwill would take our cookbooks and children’s books, but nothing else. St. Vincent de Paul Society would take anything , but we had to deliver. Fortunately, we only had about 50 boxes of books remaining. Our members and “good guys” went to work and caravanned those boxes to their final destination.

The next year an “angel” unexpectedly called us, wanting all our leftover books! Not only did our angel Josh want our books, he would send a large truck from his company headquarters in Indianapolis and men to help pack and load them up! He represented a business with the endearing name of GIGGIL (Green is Good-Good is Less). They wanted to expand their business beyond Indiana, and found us through the website *booksalefinder.com* where we listed our sale and a telephone contact. GIGGIL had a goal of supporting charities like ours and keeping useful books out of landfills. Not only would they take our leftover books, they would list selected books on the internet and give us a percentage of their profit. How could we refuse? Some of our members were very skeptical of this “scheme.” (Would they really show up?) Also, Josh wanted us to guarantee a minimum of 12,000 books, which we had to refuse. How could we predict how many books would be left? He would take our discarded boxes of books also, so we let them accumulate. In the end we had about 14,000 books for GIGGIL. Josh

became a telephone friend as plans were finalized. He even flew to Buffalo so he could visit Niagara Falls! All fears vanished when that huge semi arrived at our site. Josh had rented a forklift and pallets, and purchased huge cardboard boxes called gaylords. Members and GIGGIL men went to work side by side. How exciting to see all those tables emptied quickly and ready to be picked up by Able Tables! We were all believers! To top it off, every month a check would arrive from GIGGIL. By the next sale, we had earned an additional \$2000.

The next fall we received a call from the owner of a Niagara Falls bookstore wanting to donate the entire contents of his store, as he was going out of business. This was just before Thanksgiving, and he needed to be completely out by the end of the month. Did we want them? Yes! Could we pack them up and store them in time? No! GIGGIL came to the rescue! We called them and asked if they would like to pick up a bookstore full of mostly unused books. They agreed and could do it that very weekend. The owner had also offered us all of the shelving units and makeshift tables. Again, where would we store them? We selected a few boxes of books for our sale and a few small items of furniture. GIGGIL took those items as well as the books, as they could use them in their warehouse. More checks began coming in. Thank you GIGGIL!

All good things must come to an end, and Josh informed us that GIGGIL would no longer pick up our books—their costs didn't justify doing so. That is, unless we were willing to let them come in before the sale and hand-select books. This is called "cherry-picking," and our sale has attracted dealers from all over because we do not allow the practice.

The next year, a savvy book sale helper perused Craigslist. Lo and behold, someone was looking to obtain books. She contacted him and informed him of our sale. Thus, a three-year relationship ensued with Mark Gamble of Great Lakes Books and his Published Material Solutions, LLC. Mark and his employees not only purchased books at our sale, but also took all of our leftovers, paying up to \$1000. Again, the economics of handling large quantities of used books did not work out for this company.

Every year we again search for ways to answer that time-worn question—"What do you do with all the leftover books?"

Judy Clare



