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## Nehalem Bay Life

### ***Our Library--A Community of Friends and Readers***

**Judith Sugg<sup>1</sup>**

Have you ever wondered why our small village is home to a fully staffed library when so many other communities lack such a vital resource? It is a remarkable story of cooperation among three local communities, dedicated citizens, and a supportive county library system.

#### **From bookshelves in the 1930s to the library's dedication 1987.**

In 1930, Johanna Lane, Ben Lane's wife,<sup>2</sup> donated some books to the Manzanita community with the goal of starting a public library. The couple kept the books in their real estate office on shelves built by Ben. Ms. Van Groos, acting as the local librarian, managed the space and organized children's story hours. The nascent library's circulation of books more than doubled (from 100 to 250) in just a year. Salem and Portland libraries donated more books, and the Neighborhood Club of Nehalem covered the cost of transporting them to the library.

By 1933, Pine Grove Community House had opened its new building, which provided a new and expanded space/location for the fledgling library. When the Oregon State Library Board began to encourage countywide library systems after WWII, Pine Grove members supported the idea that their local library room could be a branch of a more extensive system.

Eventually, the number of books and borrowers using the new county library branch overwhelmed the cramped space (currently the kitchen) in the Pine Grove building. This stimulated a community discussion about the need for a dedicated library building. A thousand-dollar donation in 1978 provided seed money for a new home

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Sugg is a psychologist and a Director of the North Tillamook Library Board

<sup>2</sup> Ben Lane was the son of Manzanita founder Edmund Lane. See the [October 2021 issue](#) with Mark Beach's article on the early Nehalem Bay pioneers: "Railroad spurs Tillamook coast development frenzy—in 1911."

for the library. When the fund grew to \$5,000, the Manzanita city manager and mayor proposed locating a modest building on city-owned property. In 1984, Manzanita golf course owner Ted Erickson<sup>3</sup> presented a building plan to the city council, prompting the council to form a citizens' Steering Committee to explore the library idea. The city later pulled out of the effort when the proposed building size grew beyond what the city was willing to support.

Not to be discouraged, Steering Committee members formed a new nonprofit group in 1985--the North Tillamook Library Board (NTLB), with representatives from Manzanita, Nehalem, Neahkahnie, and Wheeler. The NTLB identified two adjacent lots on Laneda as the ideal site. Lloyd and Myrtle Hoffman donated one lot; the other was purchased using the \$5,000 city fund supplemented by additional fundraising. Architect Tom Bender presented the NTLB with sketches for a 1600 sq. ft. building with a reading room, children's room, meeting room, and an art display area. However, since the Oregon Library Association required 2000 square feet as the minimum size for their grants, the committee revised the building plans - to safeguard its ability to obtain grants as part of its fundraising effort.



The story of how our library raised the funds to construct and maintain the building is a colorful, social, and (literally) delicious story. The library's financial underpinnings rest on Garden Club dahlia sales, pancake breakfasts, progressive dinners, a pub crawl, wine tastings, sales of T-shirts, books, book bags, a VFW dinner, and a read-a-thon, along with memorial donations and contributions from the public. In just six months,

the organizers raised more than 90% of the needed funds, showing the strong community support for a library. The county library helped with a nearly \$100,000 grant. Local builder John Cardwell won the construction contract. On a rainy day in July 1987, Governor Neil Goldschmidt officiated at the opening of the new branch.

### **Just what are Friends for?**

The community commitment and energy that raised the construction funds continues today. The [North Tillamook Library Friends](#) (NTLF, or "Friends") is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, which ensures that the structure functions

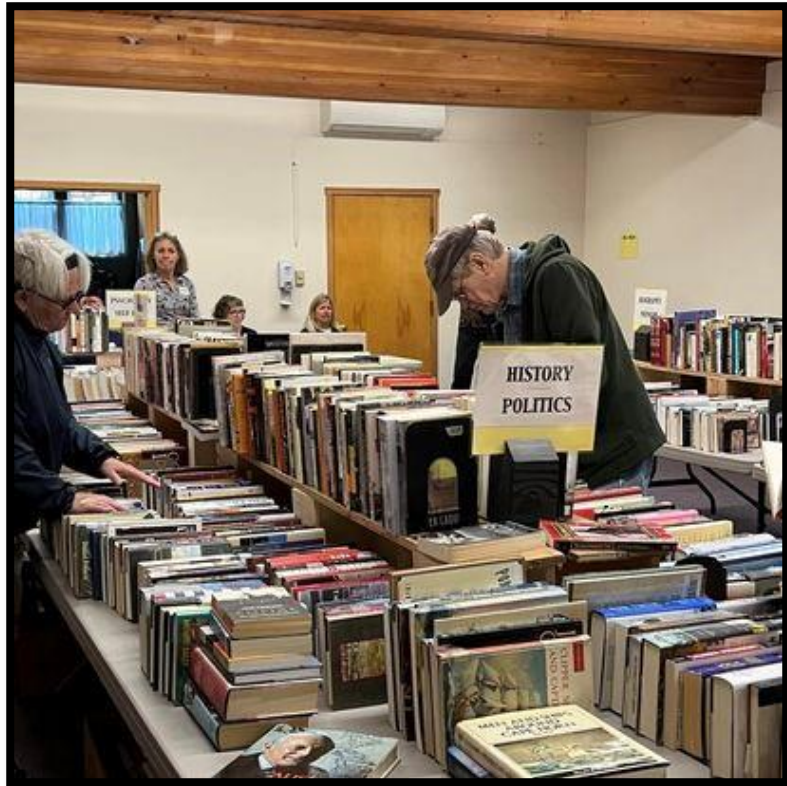
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<sup>3</sup> See the [October 2022 issue](#) for a history of the golf course.

well and the grounds are maintained.<sup>4</sup> NTLF gets no money from the county or state government; it relies on membership donations and fundraising. Many residents know of the Friends through the annual book sale fundraiser on Memorial Day weekend in Manzanita.

Who are these Friends?

The Friends are a membership organization composed of about 330 individuals, families, and businesses. Members primarily come from the library's service area, although a quarter are outside this region. Eight percent have primary addresses outside of Oregon. Memberships are kept affordable: \$10 for individuals, \$15 for families, and \$10 for businesses, so anyone connected to the library can be a part of its support. Donations exceeding membership dues contribute to the



Friends' financial stability. These have included large bequests from visitors who see the value of a library in Nehalem Bay even if they don't reside here. Since the NTLB's formation, over 120 community volunteers have served on the Friends Board. Board Directors place a high value on being good stewards of the library and promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

### **A strong partnership.**

The same year the library building was finished (1987), the [Tillamook County Library](#) (TCL) system signed a contract with NTLF under which TCL manages the staff, sets library policy, and provides materials, media, and books for the North Tillamook Branch in Manzanita. It sponsors the free Wi-Fi available in the building and parking lot. For its part, NTLF owns and maintains the facility. While a bit complicated, the relationship between TCL and NTLF has benefitted the county system and library patrons. The library's meeting room is open for general use, and for 36 years, librarians have provided a personal touch for borrowers, library members, residents, and visitors.

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<sup>4</sup> The governing body of the "Friends" is North Tillamook Library Board (NTLB).

## Our current library leaders.

Betsy Chase is the current President of the Friends Board. She views the library as a reflection of the community as a place to meet, study, research, read, and learn. Chase credits her mother with her love for the library and commitment to



community service. "My mother instilled an appreciation for visiting the library to select new books every week--even while camping all summer." During her career in public education and school district administration in a fast-growing suburb of Minneapolis, she found time to serve for eight years on the county library board. Friendships brought her to Oregon, where Chase held several government positions, including Operations Manager for Economic and Urban Development for the Portland Development Commission (now called [Prosper Portland](#)). Chase met her future husband in 2010, and because they lived at opposite ends of the Portland metro area, it was natural to start discussing the possibilities of a move.

On a visit to the coast, Chase remembers turning the bend on Highway 101 and discovering the sweet town of Wheeler. At the time, Chase marveled at the town's vistas but never imagined that she would end up living in a home with Nehalem Bay and Neahkahnie Mountain outside her windows. But she did! She and her future husband found a place that needed finishing touches, including a new garden, and the two of them began a slow transition to Wheeler. They married in 2013 on Short Sand Beach.

After moving to Wheeler, Chase and her husband became involved with the Emergency Volunteer Corps of Nehalem Bay. Because of her love of libraries and her experience with the library board in Minnesota, Chase applied to fill a Tillamook County Library Board vacancy in 2014. She was appointed by the Tillamook County Commission and reappointed to two four-year terms, including a stint as chair. This county board, responsible for developing library policies and procedures, acts as an advisory board to the County Commissioners.

While on the county board, Chase attended NTLB meetings in Manzanita as a liaison. She says she was impressed by the competence, collaboration, and quality of the NTL Board. Given her organizational experience and long-term involvement with Tillamook County Library Board, Chase had a unique perspective. Thus, when the current chair was unable to complete his term, Chase stepped in as board member and chair in January 2023.

The director of the Tillamook County Library system (TCL) based in Tillamook is Don Allgeier. Allgeier was the Director of Operations at the Multnomah County Library, and he brings 20 years of experience and master's in public administration

to his position. Allgeier lives in Rockaway Beach and regularly visits TCL's [branches](#). He singles out the branch in Manzanita for providing a beautiful natural setting that merges with the natural space around the building, inviting visitors inside. Plus, "the staff there love the patrons, and I hear that reflected in the love the patrons show for the staff at the branch."

Despite recent [attacks on libraries and librarians](#), Allgeier is confident about the future of libraries. He expects that "libraries will continue to evolve their services to meet the changing needs of our communities. That includes providing more services to help people struggling with the digital divide and supporting community growth. It also means making sure the library stays convenient for people to use." Lastly, he hopes that "libraries will embrace proactively supporting community information needs by identifying new ways to get people the most accurate information."



### **The value of the library**

So, what is a "good" library? Chase says her thinking has evolved: A good library has something for everyone of any age and interest. Public libraries are a community investment contributing to lifelong learning, the local area's future, and economic development. "As a traveler, I've learned that our country has public libraries – free to all – more extensively available than most other nations worldwide. Libraries in America have long been a cornerstone of democracy, supporting an educated citizenry. Professional librarians bring the expertise to build and maintain a collection reflecting community needs and interests. As concierge and curator, they match materials to our personal quests."

The biggest challenge for the Friends of the North Tillamook Library Branch is to continue the stewardship that has provided the funds and the volunteers to ensure the library's building is safe, attractive, and welcoming. This fall, the NTLB will update its strategic plan. It is already recruiting new board members, volunteers, and members.