



February 2021

# NEWSLETTER

## MODESTO LIBRARY CELEBRATES 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

By Maree Hawkins

### Calling All Memories!

Congratulations to the Modesto Library, or actually the building at 15th and I Streets. Fifty years ago the building was dedicated and opened to the public on Nov. 13, 1971. An anniversary like that calls for a celebration!

Throughout the year we'll highlight stories about the building and events such as the April 29, 1970 groundbreaking; why a new library building was important to the community and comments on the building then and now. If the library is able to offer full services sometime this year, FOML might even be able to do some on-site celebrating.



*The walls go up! Construction of the 62,000 sq. ft. Modesto Library began in 1970 and was completed in November 1971.*

Living in the time of a pandemic provides a reality check since research is more difficult without a full access library. Compounding the research issue is the fact that The Modesto Bee from the 1960s and 1970s has not been digitized. Microfilm it will have to be once the library is fully accessible.

### You can help!

Your help is needed to locate a staff member or volunteer who worked in the McHenry Library at 14th and I Streets and then moved to the new building in 1971. Please spread the word to your friend network. We'd also like your library memories including the first time you visited the current building, questions about the building, and story ideas. Contact me at [mareehawkins@comcast.net](mailto:mareehawkins@comcast.net).

### A Look Back at Modesto Library History



Libraries could be found in Modesto as early as 1884 with a series of free reading rooms. In 1905 the Rodgers Free Reading Room merged with a reading room sponsored by the Women's Improvement Club of Modesto to form the Modesto City Library. The library was funded by \$120 from taxation and \$1,000 from fees on the town's pool hall operators. Oramil McHenry's 1906 bequest of \$20,000 and partial ownership of three downtown properties led to the building of the Modesto Library (aka McHenry Library or McHenry Memorial Library) at 14th and I Streets. That library opened on April 29, 1912.

A spacious facility at the time, by the '20s the library had outgrown the space. A \$30,000 addition was completed in 1927-28. Modesto's population grew from 4,034 residents in 1910 to 9,241 in 1920 and just kept increasing. It tripled from 1950 to 1970 when the population reached 61,712.

The county purchased a bookmobile in 1951 to provide book access to more people and improvements were constantly being made to the McHenry Library and its services, including a drive-up book return, film usage and the rental of long-play records (LPs, remember those!). But there just wasn't room to expand the physical footprint of the McHenry Library.

FOML Co-President Pat Glatcke recalls that the April 19, 1970 groundbreaking coincided with Modesto's 100th

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### The "New" Library's Librarian

Oscar Smaalders, the Stanislaus County Librarian from 1968 until his retirement in 1982, was at the forefront of leading staff and the community through the library building project.



Born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 1924, he lived in Nazi-occupied Holland during WW II. This shaped his life-long views as a pacifist. After the war he attended the Netherlands Maritime Academy and sailed internationally on Dutch merchant ships. On a 1947 voyage to the United States, he left his ship in New Jersey and entered the country as an undocumented immigrant. He found his way to Peoria, IL, where he graduated from college with an economics degree and master's in international relations and later master's in library science from USC.

His 2019 obituary noted that he was not afraid to speak his truth, even if it meant clashing with community norms or his employer, the county board of supervisors. He was one of the first members of the Modesto Peace/Life Center. He advocated for the rights of migrant workers in the Central Valley, sponsored photography exhibits at the library and made sure bookmobile served migrant labor camps. It was also noted that he was passionate about peace, social justice, and the welfare of the earth.

Oscar retired from the county library in 1982 and moved to Lopez Island, Washington where he continued his activism for more than three decades. He died in 2019 at the age of 95.

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Friends of the Modesto Library. Copies may be requested by emailing [info@modestolibraryfriends.org](mailto:info@modestolibraryfriends.org). The Friends of the Modesto Library is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit registered in California. All contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. (ID#77-0038333)

The Friends promotes goodwill and community support for the Modesto Library, stimulates public awareness of Modesto Library needs, and seeks sources of cultural and educational programs for the Modesto Library. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of March, June, September and December and are open to all members or interested individuals.

**Mail:**  
FOML  
P.O. Box 4565  
Modesto, CA 95352-4565

**Online:**  
[ModestoLibraryFriends.org](http://ModestoLibraryFriends.org)

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Many thanks to  
**ditto's**  
for printing our  
newsletter

## PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

For those of you with a serious case of COVID Fatigue, you are not alone! Our hope is that you have found ways to stay healthy, active and engaged during this long, long pandemic. The Library has been a virtual haven for many, offering online programs, activities and services during this painful time. Tens of thousands of books have been checked out using Contactless Checkout and library staff are finding creative ways to serve readers. This year will mark the 50th birthday of the Modesto Library building. Starting with this issue, we'll present stories and photos from the past half-century. We'll also be asking you for your stories, so dust off your library memories and get ready to reminisce!



In service, Pat and Denise

## More Friends of the library means more support for the library

By Ellen Dambrosio

While recently reviewing the minutes from a 2008 Board of Directors meeting, I was reminded that FOML had only 30 to 40 dues-paying members each year back then. We've worked hard in the past decade to increase our membership and, while it's not as high as we'd like in a city the size of Modesto, we did end 2020 with 147 members—a marked improvement over 2008!

To keep our membership growing, we rely on library supporters like you to pay dues to the Friends each calendar year. Memberships for individuals, couples, and families start at just \$25, while business memberships start at \$100. Dues are used to fulfill funding requests for Modesto Library. Your generosity this year will fund the following, and maybe more.

- Children's programming
- Adult programming
- Book club materials for the Juvenile Justice Center
- Professional development opportunities
- Display cabinets for the Children's Dept.
- Book giveaways at public outreach events

We are very grateful to the 54 members who have already paid their 2021 dues. In fact, they have all received a small token of our appreciation in the mail. To encourage others to also pay early in the year, we are offering this same gift to everyone who joins or renews by the end of February. Don't miss out! Renew today! ■

### In Memory of...

**Pat Glattko** made a donation in memory of **Hebe Beard**.

**Denise Godbout-Avant** made donations in memory of **Peter Finley** and of **Jim Enochs**.

**David Dolan and Sonya Dolan** made a donation in memory of their wife and mother, former director of the Stanislaus County Library System, **Starrett Kreissman**.

### Welcome New Members!

**Katherine Baxter**   **David & Sonya Dolan**   **Deirdre McGrath**  
**Tammy Menezes**   **George Partridge**   **Beth Thompson**

### A Look Back at Modesto Library History

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anniversary. The new library was funded through a federal revenue sharing program. At that time, and up until the library sales tax began in 1994, each city in the county contributed to branches located in their city. The city joined the county library system in 1911, left it 1954 and rejoined in the mid-60s. The City of Modesto raised the funds for the new library building and then turned over all library services to the County. However the parking lot remained city property. ■

# IMAGINATION LIBRARY REBOOT

By Anne Britton

A child ready to enter kindergarten is primed for success. Books are the “ready to go” tool. In 2015, FOML supported the pilot Imagination Library effort at three schools with a \$1,500 donation and renewed their support in 2018 and again in 2020.

The presence of Dolly Parton’s national program here in Modesto was organized under the Stanislaus Community Foundation’s 5-year *Stanislaus Reads!* initiative. For \$25 a year the program mails children an age-appropriate book every month free of charge between birth and their fifth birthday. The presence of books in the home supports the fundamental skills needed in life for academic, social and emotional development.

With the evolution of *Stanislaus Reads!* to the *Cradle to Career* effort, Imagination Library has moved to a more permanent phase. The Stanislaus County Office of Education offered to administratively support this project county-wide. FOML Board member Anne Britton has joined the steering committee in an advisory role.

Now **all** county zip codes are activated to register children in every corner of Stanislaus. Including the flagship ABC Project in Turlock, *Imagination Library of Stanislaus County* has nearly 2,000 children registered and participating.



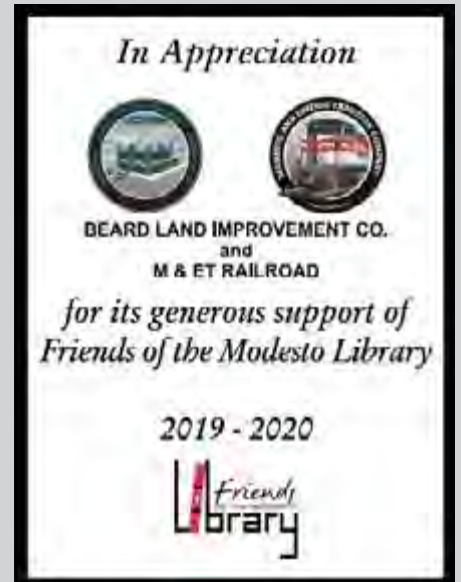
Enrollment is dependent on donations. In December 2020 the FOML board authorized a new donation to allow more Modesto children to enroll in the program. With unanimous support, \$1,000 was donated to put more books into the hands of more Modesto children. The opportunity was especially welcome in the era of COVID, when regular library and Friends book giveaways like Día de los Niños/Libros have been cancelled or curtailed.

Your FOML membership dues and contributions made our donation possible. Thank you for helping FOML support the mission of the library. You can visit <https://bit.ly/3qvdDlq> if you would like to make a more personal contribution to this effort or to get involved. ■

## In Appreciation

By Denise Nordell

One thing this dratted pandemic has revealed is the generosity of our community. Aware that our fundraising efforts – and therefore our ability to support the library – had been gutted, our friends at Beard Land Improvement Co. and M&ET Railroad asked if they could help. And help, they did, with a \$5,000 donation to help offset our losses due to COVID. The gift will help us make good on our promises including furnishings for the children’s department, books for outreach events, and program materials. A plaque will hang in the Children’s Department to show our gratitude. Thank you!



## Barnes & Noble gift cards for sale

Neither COVID nor cold, rainy weather kept the Friends from taking advantage of one of the few fundraising activities that were possible this year! Our 2-day presence at Barnes & Noble resulted in nearly \$2,500 in gift cards that are now available for purchase. Contact Jonaca Driscoll (209) 526-8271 to purchase \$25 gift cards. The money goes straight into the Friends coffers to support Modesto Library programs.



## Scholastic Sale benefits kids and FOML

Both the Friends and the community benefited from the November online Scholastic Virtual Book Fair. More than \$2,300 worth of books from the book sale went into Christmas presents for the Soroptimists’ Giving Tree. Total credit earned for FOML was just a few dollars short of \$700. Thank you to all the shoppers who turned out – online! – for the sale and to Anne Britton who coordinated the sale.

# Book Clubs – An American Tradition

By Judy Pierce, member of The Pleiades + One Book Club

From Anne Hutchinson as she traveled by sea to the New World, to Benjamin Franklin discussing political readings, to Oprah Winfrey's book club, Americans have been gathering for almost 400 years to discuss books. Today it is estimated that there are more than 5 million book club members in the United States. Most of these clubs have 10 or more members and 70% to 80% of the clubs are all females.

So, what is happening today with our local book clubs? Let's take a look at what they are reading, how they are discussing their books, and other items about this old and worthy tradition.

In Stanislaus County most book clubs have between 6 and 10 participants. They are usually women, share friendships and are between the ages of 50 and 85. The norm is to meet on a monthly basis. Some groups choose to skip the summer months while other elect to not meet in December. Before COVID entered our lives, the groups would meet at restaurants, often those with a theme from their book, or at participants' homes. One group even took Amtrak to Sacramento for lunch as they discussed the theme of business lunches! Now most groups have gone to virtual meetings and have found an advantage to this. Members that have moved are once again able to participate. Some clubs have decided on names that reflect their commonalities such as "Women of Words."

The book clubs have various ways of selecting the books they read. Many groups have a member select the book of their choice and then become the facilitator for the discussion. Other groups submit the names of books that they've read and once a list is compiled, the group votes on which books will make their yearly list. The types of books included may vary from books on social issues, to books that are uplifting, those that are timely political books, historical fiction, non-fiction and even the classics. It is all up to the book club members.

## *What do these two famous people have in common?*



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*Book clubs have held strong during the COVID lockdown.*  
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Book clubs have held strong during the COVID lockdown. Why? The reasons are many. Members say the camaraderie has been even more important. Checking up on each other and giving support has been critical. They also state that

many books they've read have led to discussion of life issues, political issues, and diversity. A book club whose members pride themselves on reading books about justice, inclusion, diversity, and equality say it encourages discussions that allow readers a safe place to disagree with each other and to question in a safe way. All agree that even with like backgrounds books have given them a chance to express their different perspectives. Through it all, friendships have grown stronger.

What books were read in 2020? **My Grandmother's Hands** (the insight into trauma and the impact); **The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek** (the story of the "blue people" of Kentucky and the brave women

who used literacy to overcome bigotry); **Have You Seen Luis Velez?** ( the story of friendship, aging, loss, and kindness); **Born Crime** (Trevor Noah's memoir of his unlikely path from apartheid in Africa to the desk of the Daily Show with a criminal act: his birth); **Chief Inspector Armand Gamache** (a series of books by Louise Penny); **In the Country of Women** (a memoir of three generations of women whose blood combines to create three biracial daughters); and finally **Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents** (discusses the unwritten caste system that shapes America).

Here's to another 400 years of book clubs and all the pleasure they bring. ■

## *Friends of the Modesto Library Annual Meeting*



Friends of the Modesto Library's annual meeting will take place online on Wednesday, Mar. 3 at 3:30 p.m. Board copresidents Denise and Pat will present an overview of the past year. All FOML members as well as the public are invited to attend. FOML members in good standing are eligible to vote for the 2021-22 slate of Board officers. Login information will be sent to members and will be available at [modestolibraryfriends.org](http://modestolibraryfriends.org).

# Book Clubs – Beyond Your Neighborhood

By Judy Pierce

Book club opportunities abound in our digital world. These digital book clubs give readers opportunities to connect with people from all parts of our country and from all walks of life. Here are a few of the old favorites plus some new, up and coming choices.

## 1. Stephen Curry Underrated Book Club



Begun in 2020 by NBA Golden State Warriors star, Stephen Curry, this club has a cost of \$20 a month and focuses on “underrated authors and stories.” Members get a hardcover book and access to online discussion groups moderated by Curry or other celebrities such as Malala Yousafzai or Richard Branson. Books selected so far include **The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates** and **A Most Beautiful Thing: The True Story of America’s First All-Black High School Rowing Team** by Arshay Cooper. Join the club through [literati.com](http://literati.com)

## 2. Jenna Bush Hager’s Today Show Book Club - Read with Jenna



Each month Jenna introduces a new book to read and discuss on a segment of the Today Show. So far, she has introduced readers to 24 books. As you read, you will find conversation starters posted on

Today’s Instagram page under Read with Jenna or on Today’s webpage under Read with Jenna. The January 2021 selection is **Black Buck** by Mateo Askaripour. Her selections often include author chats.

## 3. Oprah’s Book Club

Begun in 1996, Oprah only recommends four books per year. To date, Oprah has recommended 86 books to over 53,000 members. 2020 suggested readings included **Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents** by Isabel Wilkerson and **Water Dancer** by Ta-Nehisi Coates Club membership is free and readers are able to receive information on discussions. Go to [www.oprah.com/app/books.html](http://www.oprah.com/app/books.html)

## 4. Reese Witherspoon’s Book Club



Reese launched her book clubs in 2017 and has one for adults and one for Young Adult novels. Each month she selects a book with a woman at the center of the story. Her January 2021, selection is **Outlawed** by Anna North. It is set in the Old West and explores fertility, gender, race, and sexuality. You can subscribe to Reese’s book club by going to [hello-sunshine.com](http://hello-sunshine.com)

## 5. Good Morning America’s Book Club

This book club has a monthly selection. After the book has been selected and announced, readers may join in conversations on the

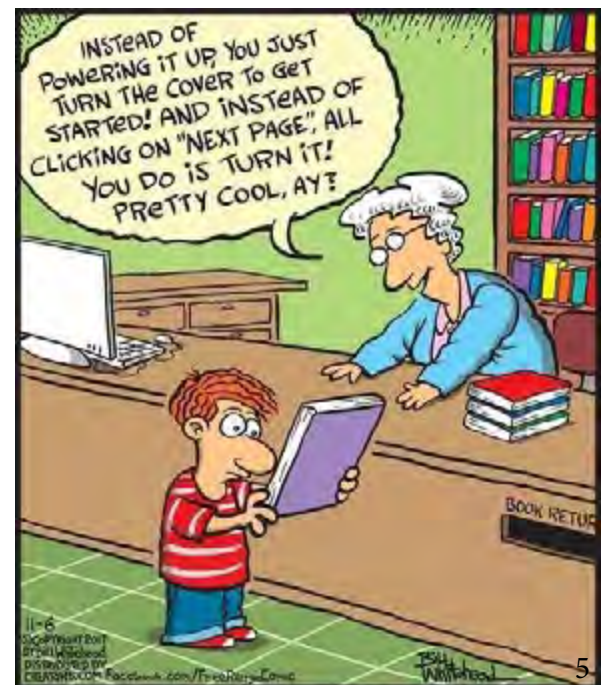
GMC Instagram account, @gmabookclub. The January 2021, selection is **The Push** by Ashley Audrain. This debut novel has been described as a nonputdownable novel that will leave readers guessing to the end.

## 6. PBS NewsHour-New York Times Now Read This Book Club

This digital book club selects books monthly that help make sense of our world using fiction, memoir, history, and more. The January 2021 selection is **Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self Delusion** by Jia Tolentino. Discussions with authors and questions for reflection are available through Facebook or Twitter. Go to [PBS.org](http://PBS.org) for further information.

## 7. Barnes & Noble’s Book Club

This book club began in 2018 as a free in-store book club. With the COVID restrictions it is currently a virtual book club. The January 2021 selection is **Better Luck Next Time** by Julia Claiborne Johnson. The virtual discussion is scheduled for February 2, at 7 p.m. Contact your local Barnes & Noble or go to [BarnesandNoble.com](http://BarnesandNoble.com). ■





PO Box 4565  
Modesto, CA 95352-4565  
ModestoLibraryFriends.org

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## Join the Friends Today!

Friends of the Modesto Library provides funds to enhance the programs and services at the Modesto Library. Dues are paid on a calendar-year basis (Jan. 1-Dec. 31). Please select a membership level and indicate the amount of your donation.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for giving us your email. It reduces our expenses and lets us keep in touch.

We publish the names of new members in our quarterly newsletter.

If you prefer your name NOT be printed, please check this box .

Join FOML:

New Member  Renewing Member  Returning Member

Sign me up for

Reader (\$25 - \$49) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Storyteller (\$50 - \$99) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Novelist (\$100 - \$249) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Bestseller (\$250 - \$499) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Classic (\$500 - \$999) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Epic (\$1,000 and above) \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Method of payment:  cash  check # \_\_\_\_\_

If paying by check, make payable to FOML. Provide information on form, then mail to:

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