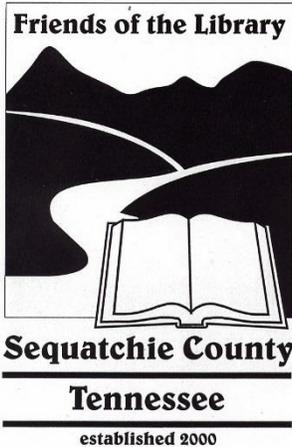


SEQUATCHIE COUNTY LIBRARY LIGHTS

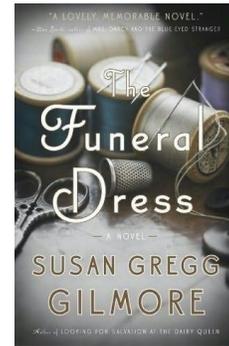
Fall 2013

October 2013



*A great
community
deserves a great
library.*

A Visit to the Past, the
Spartan Industries Reunion
& *The Funeral Dress* Book
Signing



On September 19, Susan Gregg Gilmore, a nationally known author, and former Spartan Industries workers shared memories with relatives, guests, and Friends members.

How often does a book signing feature a hearse, funeral wreaths, an abandoned factory and hosts and hostesses in black? On September 19, the Friends of the Sequatchie County Library sponsored the book signing of *The Funeral Dress* written by Susan Gregg Gilmore, a native Tennessean and nationally recognized author. The event was also a homecoming and reunion for those who once worked for Spartan Industries, locally known as the “shirt factory,” their family members, and other guests. The number of attendees exceeded 300 persons and more than 250 books were sold and signed.

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The event had a funeral theme because its principal character, a woman named Emmalee, a factory worker, unexpectedly loses a friend and important supporter to death and decides to make her a funeral dress. The reunion and homecoming became part of the event because, although the book is set in the fictional town of Cullen, Tennessee, it is based loosely on the Spartan Industries plant in Dunlap and upon the lives of the women who worked there. Ms. Gilmore hopes her book will encourage preservation of the local history associated with the shirt factory, for example, an oral history project to preserve the story of how the factory came into existence and how its existence transformed the lives of the men and women who worked there.

In preparing to write *The Funeral Dress*, Ms. Gilmore spoke to many former Spartan Industries employees. She learned how critical the factory was in the life of local residents, particularly women, who had few to no employment opportunities before the factory came to town. At the time the factory was founded no industry existed in the Sequatchie Valley, and none had existed since 1927, when mining operations in Dunlap, Tennessee, were shut down due to falling coal prices and the onset of the depression. Local residents, led by a businessman named Marion "Red" Williams, found the financing and bought the equipment to start the factory. After the factory opened, local teachers noticed children who were formerly barefoot and came to school wearing the same shirts everyday suddenly had shoes and two shirts each. The factory closed in the seventies, and until very recently, it was occupied by Dunlap Industries. Dunlap Industries moved to a new location in Dunlap, and the factory is now abandoned, awaiting a new owner and new ventures.

Ms. Gilmore, who previously wrote *Looking for Salvation at the Dairy Queen* and *The Improper Life of Bezellia Grove* has roots, not only in the South in general, but here, as well. "My mother's people have always lived in the Sequatchie Valley, so I had already decided to set my book there," says Gilmore. "The book was inspired by a family photo - a 1970 Kodak photo of my aunt and uncle, who lived in a single-wide trailer off Harrison Bay Road for more than 50 years. When I came across that, I thought about what that must have been like to be a grown woman who had raised a family and lived a lifetime in a trailer."



The turnout for this event was amazing.



Susan Gregg Gilmore, who was delighted with the reunion and the book signing, described it as unique in her experience. The guests kept her very busy signing books for almost two and a half hours.

While working on the book, Ms. Gilmore made many visits to the Sequatchie Valley in the company of Vallerie Hixson Greer, who grew up here and who proved to be an excellent guide on Ms. Gilmore's visits to Dunlap's past. "The father of one of my best friends ran the Spartan plant," says Greer. "One of the employees was the mother of a very good friend. Susan interviewed her for hours. It was very interesting and fun to listen to her, to hear stories I had never heard before." Among others, Ms. Gilmore spent many hours interviewing Marea Barker, a former shirt factory seamstress who died before *The Funeral Dress* was published. "There is definitely some of Marea Barker in Leona -- master seamstress, kind heart. I loved talking with her. She was never bored in 27 years of lapel making. She only spoke about the friendships and community," recalls Ms. Gilmore.

In the book, set in the sixties, the lead character Emmalee is a poorly educated, motherless teenager on her own with a new baby. Leona, the older seamstress, who sits by her side at the local shirt factory where

both women work as collar makers, offers Emmalee a place to live. Leona dies tragically before this can happen.

"A funeral dress would be the most personal thing Emmalee knew how to do for her. Emmalee never had anything, she put clothes together from whatever she could find from a church basement. So to her, that was important -- one nice thing to spend eternity in." explains Ms. Gilmore.

Emmalee decides to make Leona's burying dress, despite disapproval from those who believe the unmarried Emmalee should not design a dress for a Christian woman - or care for a child on her own. With every stitch, Emmalee struggles to do what is right for her daughter and to honor Leona the best way she can, finding unlikely support among an indomitable group of seamstresses and the town's funeral director.



Led by Karen Fletcher and Becky Johnson, the Friends transformed the vacant Spartan plant into a museum for the night's festivities.

An event like the book signing, reunion and homecoming would not be possible without the enormous effort of and support by many individuals. Very early in the spring a committee was formed led by Library Chair Susan Greer. Committee members included: Betty Worley, Library Director; Karen Fletcher; Cricket Garren; Vallerie Greer; Rachael Hixson; Nina Hunt; Becky Johnson; Linda Johnson; Sandy Johnson; Pamela Ryle; Suzanne Spicer; Grace Steele; Valerie Segura; Vicki Swan; and Lucy Szelengiewicz.

While everyone worked very hard to make the event a success, some special efforts deserve recognition. One of the first tasks the Friends on the committee undertook was to locate still-living shirt factory workers, photographs, and memorabilia. Karen Fletcher was primarily responsible for identifying and locating the workers or, for those workers who were deceased, their surviving family members. She was tireless in building upon the former workers already known to her to locate

more and more former workers. Also, Karen and Becky Johnson were so delighted when Karen discovered some Spartan Industries bin boxes at Serenity Pointe, like bloodhounds following a scent, they searched for more until they discovered a storehouse full of Spartan Industries equipment and items. They were so excited they promptly hauled trucks full of the items back to the now abandoned factory and arranged them to create an instant museum to make the event even more special for former factory workers and their families. Linda Meck matted photographs for the photographic display. Local merchants were also very generous in supporting the event. Among the supporters and sponsors are: Ed Brown; Carson Camp; Keith Cartwright, County Executive; Dan Ewton; The Friends of the Sequatchie County Library; Flowers & Thyme; Happy Bottom Office Services; Dwain Land, Dunlap Mayor; Ann Smith and family; Walters' Flowers & Gifts; and The Cookie Jar. The efforts of all who helped make this event so special and so meaningful are deeply appreciated.



The Friends members who hosted the event shown with author Susan Gregg Gilmore and the antique hearse provided by Dan Ewton. The photograph was taken in front of the former Spartan plant, now vacant.



On September 5, Friend member, Terry Earnest, evoked the sights and sounds of the battle of Chickamauga.

Terry Earnest gave a very interesting, well-researched, and well-organized presentation on the Chickamauga Battle, fought almost 150 years earlier. He brought home to his listeners how what was technically a Confederate victory really amounted to a tragic, almost totally senseless waste of lives on both sides of the battle. While the battle may be described as a Union defeat, because the battle concluded with a retreat of Union forces back to Chattanooga, the Confederate army did not pursue them, and the gain and loss of military objectives during the battle meant nothing to the ultimate outcome of the war.

Terry presented a vivid picture of the days of battle, September 19-20, 1863, and of troop movements during the battle. He told his audience about how personal relationships, the inability of commanders to observe battlefield conditions, and poor communications affected the battle's outcome.

Although Terry presented many interesting stories about the commanders and their behavior during the battle, perhaps the most interesting story he shared with his audience was how the battle presented a lost opportunity for the Confederates to see Lincoln's hopes for a second presidential term dashed. If the Confederates had realized a decisive victory, Lincoln might well have lost the 1864 presidential election, and history might well have had a quite different outcome.



On June 7, Friend members visited the Button Willow Theatre in Whitwell, Tennessee.

All work and no play would make the Friends a very dull group. Thus, a tradition has evolved that the Friends skip their monthly business meeting every June and instead do something entertaining. This past June the entertainment chosen was a visit to the Buttonwillow Theatre in Whitwell, Tennessee.

For those of you who have never visited, it is well worth attending the performance. Plus, you are fed down home and tasty food, prepared from recipes in Jefferson Davis's wife's cookbook. The performance is held in a little converted church. There is not a bad seat in the house. You sit at long tables to eat and watch an entertaining and informative play about the Civil War written and performed by the owner and his wife. If you are not already an expert on the Civil War, you will definitely learn facts unknown to you before seeing the play.

The Friends who saw the performance were: Reba and Randall Childress; Mary Ruth Dunleavy; Lorna and Terry Earnest; Karen Larramore; Ava and Tom Navin; and Lucy and Ed Szelengiewicz.



Civil Rights Lectures

A committee of the Friends of the Sequatchie County Library is working on civil rights history presentations supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. One of Sequatchie County High School's former teachers, Henry Camp, is part of the committee. One of the ideas under discussion is, with the permission of SCHS, having one of the presentations at the SCHS auditorium sometime this fall for students studying history and English. The presentation would be approximately one hour long. The present plan for the first presentation is to show excerpts from a video, *The Abolitionists*, already shown on public television, followed by a brief discussion led by a historian and a panel of teachers. The Committee hopes to involve other area high schools and teachers, as well. For a look at some of the resources available on this subject visit:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/teachers-resources/abolitionists-guide/>.

September Book Sale

Once again, the fall book sale was a resounding success, largely because a silent auction is part of the fall sale. The silent auction items were particularly appealing for this sale, and the Friends Book Sale committee thanks everyone for their generous contributions of items, but particularly for their generous contribution of volunteer time. We raised about \$2800!

Soon leaves will begin to fall. *Prepare for the cool days ahead by checking out a few good books, like these newly arrived at the library.*



The Mayan Secrets (A Fargo Adventure) by Clive Cussler & Thomas Perry

Husband-and-wife team Sam and Remi Fargo are in Mexico, when they come upon a remarkable discovery—the skeleton of a man clutching an ancient sealed pot, and within the pot, a Mayan book, larger than anyone has ever seen. The book contains astonishing information about the Mayans, about their cities, and about mankind itself. The secrets are so powerful that some people would do anything to possess them—as the Fargos are about to find out. Before their adventure is done, many men and women will die for that book—and Sam and Remi may just be among them.

The Road from Gap Creek by Robert Morgan

This novel is a sequel to Robert Morgan's *Gap Creek*, published in 1999, set in the Appalachian South, which followed Julie and Hank Richards as they struggled through the first year and a half of their union. The latest novel answers readers' questions about their later years and tells their story and the stories of their children through the eyes of their youngest daughter, Annie. Through Annie, we watch as the four Richards children create their own histories, lives that include both triumphs and hardship in the face of the Great Depression and then World War II.

It Happens in the Dark by Carol O'Connell

The reviews called it "A Play to Die For," after the woman was found dead in the front row. Not so funny the next night, when another body was found—this time the playwright's, his throat slashed. Detective Kathy Mallory

takes over, but no matter what she asks, no one seems to be giving her a straight answer. The only person—if “person” is the right word—who seems to be clear is the ghostwriter. Every night, an unseen backstage hand chalks up line changes and messages on a blackboard. And the ghostwriter is now writing Mallory into the play itself, a play about a long-ago massacre that may not be at all fictional. “MALLORY,” the blackboard reads. “TONIGHT’S THE NIGHT. NOTHING PERSONAL.” If Mallory cannot find out who is responsible, heads will roll. Unfortunately, one of them may be her own.

The Kill List by Frederick Forsyth

In Virginia, an agency bearing the bland name of Technical Operations Support Activity, or TOSA has one mission, to track, find, and kill those so dangerous to the United States they are on a short document known as the Kill List. Added to the Kill List is a new name: a terrorist of frightening effectiveness called the Preacher, who radicalizes young Muslims abroad to carry out assassinations. One of the kills is a retired Marine general, whose son is TOSA’s top hunter of men. He has spent the last six years at his job. He knows nothing about his target’s name, face, or location. He realizes his search will take him to places where few could survive. But the Preacher has made it personal now.

The Whole Enchilada by Diane Mott Davidson

Goldy Schulz knows her food is to die for, but she never expects one of her best friends to actually keel over when she is leaving a birthday party Goldy has catered. At first, everyone assumes that all the fun and excitement of the party, not to mention the rich fare, did her in. But what looks like a coronary turns out to be a generous serving of cold-blooded murder. And the clever culprit is just getting cooking. When a colleague—a woman who resembles Goldy—is stabbed, and Goldy is attacked outside her house, it becomes clear that the popular caterer is the main course on a killer menu. With time running out, Goldy must roll up her sleeves, sharpen her knives, and make a meal out of a devious murderer, before that killer can serve her up cold.

Tell No Lies by Gregg Hurwitz

Daniel Brasher has always been something of a disappointment to his old-money aristocratic San Francisco mother. Daniel left his high-paying job as a money manager to marry his community organizer wife and work at a job he loves, leading group counseling sessions with recently paroled ex-cons. Now he’s ready to move on and start a private practice. But before he leaves, he finds an envelope in his department mailbox—one intended for someone else that was placed in his slot by accident. Inside it is an unsigned piece of paper, a note that says only “admit what you’ve done or you will bleed for it. you have 'til november 15 at midnite.” The deadline has already passed and the person to whom the envelope was addressed was brutally murdered. But this first warning is only the beginning.

The Highway by C. J. Box

When two sisters, Gracie and Danielle, set out across a remote stretch of Montana road to visit their friend, little do they know it will be the last time anyone might ever hear from them again. The girls—and their car—simply vanish. Former police investigator Cody Hoyt has just lost his job and has fallen off the wagon after a long stretch of sobriety. Persuaded to investigate the disappearance, he begins the drive south to the girls’ last known location. The majestic landscape is the hunting ground for a killer whose viciousness is outmatched only by his intelligence. And he might not be working alone. Time is running out for the girls... Can Cody Hoyt battle his own demons and find this killer before another victim vanishes on the highway?

LIBRARY HOURS AND INFORMATION

HOURS: Monday, 8am-5:30pm

Tues. & Wed., 8am-5:00pm

CLOSED THURSDAY

Friday, 8am-4:30pm

Saturday, 8am-Noon

Betty Worley,
Library Director
Donna Moore,
Assistant Director

The Friends Meetings
Second Tuesday of Every
Month at 4:30pm*

*Ask Librarian to confirm meeting date before attending

THE SEQUATCHIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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