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Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.

Society for Advancement of Poynter Library.

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Exception to the rule

The primary subject of this newsletter is our annual fiction contest.

This literary contest has been conducted by SAPL since 1986, and we are proud of our efforts to encourage fledgling student writers from all of USF’s campuses. Over the years the results have been quite remarkable, and we started printing all three award winners’ entries two years ago to showcase their work.

This year, you will find only one story printed. The explanation for this can be found in the accompanying article by Joyce Van Horn, member of SAPL’s Fiction Contest Committee. It reflects the committee’s desire to maintain the high standards set previously, and their commitment to the contest in the future as a way of promoting those high standards of creativity and writing skill.

The committee’s proposal to take this action was approved by the SAPL Board at its last meeting in November. We believe the contest is one of SAPL’s most successful projects in its ongoing support of the mission of Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.

Another proposal approved at the board meeting was the purchase of a photo-quality printer for the library. This is in keeping with a longstanding practice of SAPL to provide monetary support to our student writers.

A fallow year for fiction

A great short story can transport us to a place we’ve never been.

It can pluck emotions that might have grown dormant in our busy hearts. It can make us sing — or cry — or smell popcorn.

The past winners of the SAPL-sponsored Fiction Contest have created stories of high quality. These well-crafted, well-written stories have set the standard for the contest. With respect for these previous winners, and a sincere desire to maintain their high level of achievement, the contest committee members have elected to withhold 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes this year.

An honorable mention goes to Ryan Misener for his creative story, Ben Deadly, P.i.: Deadly Manuevers. Misener is a business major who attends classes at USF St. Petersburg.

There are years when the fields must lie fallow. Our esteemed judge of this year’s contest, Gabriel Horn, left us with the following entreaty.

I quote Gabe’s remarks in their entirety: “As we accept this fallow year as a natural occurrence, we, the contest committee, look forward to the rich, creative short stories of the 2001 contest.”

— Joyce Van Horn

Joyce Van Horn wrote this article on behalf of the Bayboro Fiction Contest Committee that includes herself as well as Teddy Ageeles, Niela Eliason and Rita Gould.

By Ryan Misener

Ben Deadly, P.i.: Deadly Manuevers

“It’s better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all.”

Bull poopie! When you lose someone you love, it’s a heartbreaking experience that changes your life forever, or at least a couple of weeks. I should know. It happened to me.

Most people have human friends. Others have pets. Still others have wicked half-human, half-animal crossbreeds that prey on bugs and rodents in dark, damp cellars. I, on the other hand, had Mr. Quackers.

Mr. Quackers was like any other seven-foot-tall duck who talked. He smoked cigars, watched soap operas, and enjoyed the occasional alcoholic beverage. He spoke with a Brooklyn accent, which was odd due to the fact that he was from Toledo. He hand-quilted doilies in his spare time, and of course, like all mallards, he was Communist (although he preferred the term “Socialist”).

Mr. Quackers and I did everything together. From handing out anti-Democracy pamphlets outside the neighborhood Piggly Wiggly, to making fun of old people in the park, the two of us were inseparable. He used to tell me that if there were more people like me in the world, he would have no need for his handgun. Mom and Dad

See STORY on page 3
2001 bodes well for Poynter Library

The year 2001 that epitomized “the future” in Stanley Kubrick’s 1968 movie is finally upon us. 1968 introduced the famous Space Odyssey, but it also marked the founding of the first library for the brand-new Bayboro Campus. What a transformation the past 33 years have seen!

The original library, under the direction of Doris Cook, consisted of just a few hundred books in two small rooms of an old Merchant Marine facility. A computer was just a glint in the eye of a staff member tediously filing catalog cards. Students diligently recorded their research notes on index cards, while longing for one of the self-service copy machines just coming into common use.

Who could have imagined our sparkling new building, with over 100 computers, humming copy machines and printers, and a collection of almost 200,000 volumes? Who could have imagined the day when the library’s own resources are joined by books and journals available electronically or borrowed effortlessly from libraries across the world?

Poynter Library of today would have seemed almost as futuristic in 1968 as Kubrick’s space ship.

The library staff is again looking into the future, participating in the university-wide strategic planning process requested by our new USF President Judy Genshaft. In the next five years, we anticipate three new strategic directions. First, we must shape our collections and services to meet the needs of USF St. Petersburg’s expanding curriculum and student body.

Second, we will increase our teaching and outreach efforts to our students so they can best use both the print resources in the physical library and electronic resources of the Internet. Finally, we want to make our services and special collections better known and more widely used as a cultural resource for St. Petersburg and Pinellas County.

The future looks bright, both for USF St. Petersburg and Poynter Library. This semester, Society for the Advancement of Poynter Library members will assist in the process of selecting a new library director. Two events are being planned for the upcoming months, SAPL’s annual meeting and a February celebration of two new special collections centering on Norman Jones and Ernest Ponder.

Notable novels of 2000 will be appearing in “Recreational Reading,” courtesy of SAPL’s annual gift to enhance our literature collection. As we have been since its founding in 1984, we will continue to be grateful for SAPL’s support and encouragement.

EXCEPTION from page 1

Two new collections donated to library

A library reception planned for Sunday, Feb. 25, from 3-5 p.m., will introduce two recent donations to Special Collections.

The Norman E. Jones Papers contain the work of a photographer, publicist, and journalist who lived in St. Petersburg from 1955 until his death in 1990. His son, Norman E. Jones, Jr., assembled the papers and contributed them to Special Collections. For almost 20 years, beginning in 1956, Norman E. Jones wrote a column called “Let’s Talk Politics” to various black newspapers throughout Florida. He also produced his own radio program on two Tampa stations, and WTOG televised the Norman E. Jones Show on Channel 44.

Active in politics for over 50 years, Jones became a supporter of George Wallace and chaired the National Black Citizens Committee for Wallace in 1972. The Jones Papers contain original typescripts of his numerous newspaper articles as well as 40 audiotapes.

A second collection features writings, family memorabilia, photographs, and clippings collected by Ernest Ayer Ponder, who taught at Gibbs and Lakewood high schools from the mid-1940s until his retirement in 1979. A devoted teacher, he also directed the noted Gibbs St. Cecelia Choir. Until his death in 1998, he was active with the Area Agency on Aging and the Pasco-Pinellas Silver Haired Legislative Delegation. His widow, Clara Ponder, also a teacher and community leader, donated the collection to the library.

These two collections are significant resources for the history of the black community in St. Petersburg. Although Jones and Ponder expressed their civic activism in very different ways, both were devoted to the study of African-American history and its power to educate and transform younger generations. Norman E. Jones, Jr., and Emmanuel Stewart, retired principal of Gibbs High School, will attend the library event and discuss the lives and legacies of these influential men.

— Kathy Arsenault
I've always been a reader. Little Women, The Bobbsey Twins, The Big Cage were books that I remember reading in grade school. The neighbors had a collection of The Bobbsey Twins and I must have read 30 of the children's classic novels. I went through Little Women twice or maybe three times and loved Clyde Beatty's non-fiction treatise on the circus.

"If you don't stop that reading," my mother would yell from the kitchen, "you're going to ruin your eyes." Sure enough, by the time I was 45, I was wearing bifocals.

I remember suffering through gym class, known today as Phys. Ed., giving away my "ups" because I had no interest in hitting softballs. I would painfully count the minutes until gym class was over and I could go to library period. The librarian was Miss B. Bereson, a tall, thin mature woman in soft print dresses and oxford shoes tied tautly over her arched insteps.

She was tough, but I always felt sheltered in the Asbury School library in Denver, Colo. To this day, however, I'd rather be in trouble with the police department than with the library. The librarians might take my card away.

Bookstores are a major interest, too. Whether it's a small independent store or a big one, I'm often in bookstores.

The coffee shop bookstores are good for meeting friends. We'll sit and yadda, yadda, yadda for an hour or more over one coffee. However, I rarely get out for the price of java. There will always be at least one book I must have, or a magazine that is essential. The conversation over coffee is books, old books, new books, books read and unread, books written and unwritten.

There are two reasons to read. One is for information and the other is for entertainment. Whether books, newspapers, magazines or street signs, reading is one of the joys and one of the necessities that stay with us from childhood.

This summer, I was running out of space and had to buy two new bookcases. A child visiting our home asked, "Is this a library?"

A longer version of this column first appeared in the St. Petersburg Times.
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