

# Memories of the Vaughn Public Library (VPL):

*Compiled by Vaughn Public Library Director, Shirley Miller*

*November 2013*

Recently, present and former Vaughn Public Library, Friends of the Vaughn Library, Vaughn Public Library Foundation Board Members, former Library Directors and Library Staff were asked to answer a few questions about the library.

Responses were received from:

Jim Trojanowski (**JT**), Library Director from 1993 to 2004 and current member of the Vaughn Public Library Foundation Board;

David Brostrom (**DB**), Former Library Board Member, Manager at NWLS, and Library Director from 1987- 1992;

David Pauli (**DP**), Library Director from 1982 to 1986;

Ward Simpson (**WS**), Library Board Member from 1997 to 2009 and President from 2003 to 2009;

John Eyerly (**JE**), Library Board Member from 2002 to 2011 and President from 2009 to 2011;

Jim Skerik (**JS**), Library Board Member from 2009 to 2011, Vice President and later President in 2011;

Simon Spartalian (**SS**) Library Board member since 2011 and Library Board President since 2012;

Terry Torkko (**TT**), Library Board Member and Vice President from 2011 to 2013;

Janet Bewley (**JB**), former Library Board Member (2009 to 2010) and current member of the Vaughn Public Library Foundation;

George Rydberg (**GR**) member of the Friends of the Vaughn Library Board since 2010 and President of the Friends of the Vaughn Library Board since 2013;

Joyce Neumann (**JN**) former President and Secretary of the Friends of the Vaughn Library Board and current member of the Friends of the Vaughn Library Board, a life-time Friend of the Vaughn for over 30 years;

Shirley Midthun (**SM**) Library Staff member from 1985 to 2007;

Kathy Draughon (**KD**) Library Assistant and library employee since 1994;

Rachel Lee (**RL**) Library Page and library employee since 2009;

Dorothy Whiting (**DW**) former Library Board Member and library employee since 1987. Dorothy is known as Granny Goose at the library.

## ***What do you LOVE about VPL?***

**JT:** I love the people that make the library: staff, trustees, friends, and most of all the patrons. They are the library, not the building that houses it or the furnishings or the computers.

**DB:** You get to know everyone who uses the library because the community is small and closely-knit.

**DP:** I loved the VPL for many reasons, but mostly because of the very personal service we were able to give the customers. After being there for only a short time, I felt that I knew most of the regular customers very well. And with a staff of only 6 people, I had a lot of opportunity to be on the public desk and have many face to face interactions.

**WS:** I loved the intimate connection that I always felt between the VPL and the community. Because it was located in the heart of the downtown, it was part of the day to day life of the community. And because of the usage, it serves as an anchor to the business community. (*For a presentation I did back in 2007 we documented average foot traffic of 52 patrons per hour in the course of a 56 hour week. That is over 2,900 people per week walking Main Street to get to the Vaughn*). Clearly the Vaughn plays a critical role in the life of the community. It is loved by everyone and used heavily. Like the Black Cat and the Golden Glow Cafe, it is one of the places where people in the community go on a regular basis.

**JE:** The Vaughn is a busy, vibrant place that is a hub of activity for downtown and the entire community.

**JS:** The tremendous service the library provides for the people of Ashland and the surrounding area.

**SS:** The VPL is special like all libraries - it is a place where information is free and the imagination is unfettered.

**TT:** The historic downtown building and the high level of activity inside.

**JB:** I love the Vaughn Public Library because it steadfastly provides free, unfettered access to uncensored information for all people.

**GR:** I love the fact that we, the people of Ashland, have a well-equipped, knowledgeably staffed, well run, library. The library has to be as diverse as the people it serves and I believe the Vaughn Public Library does that with flying colors during a time when the pressure to lower the standards is tremendous because of budget concerns.

**JN:** I love the Book Nook, the staff, the welcoming warmth, the Children's section and Granny Goose, books and newspapers.

**SM:** The friendly staff and availability of many materials. Also, many programs offered to the public. There's something about the atmosphere when you come in, it's warm and welcoming.

**KD:** The variety of materials available for everyone. The opportunity for people to meet, visit with one another and include the library as a vital part of their daily lives. The art work created by community members that makes our library an interesting and inviting place.

**RL:** The people that work here. I think we truly enjoy what we do, which is interacting with and helping the people of Ashland.

**DW:** Because it's here and accessible for all ages.

***If you could put a comment into a time capsule, what would you like to say about VPL?***

**JT:** You've treasured this library for 125 years. I wish I could be with you in my future -- your present -- to see what amazing things you have done with it.

**DB:** It was an honor to work at the Vaughn Library during a time when we were the only public library in the Midwest to receive a special grant to rekindle an interest in poetry -- an initiative called "POETS IN PERSON." It was sponsored by the American Library Association, National Endowment for the Humanities and National Public Radio. Northland College Professor Lee Merrill and Vaughn Library Director David Brostrom spearheaded the project with the guidance of the state Humanities Council in Madison.

**DP:** Well, in the time capsule, I would say that the VPL gave me a chance to try out my first job as a library director. It certainly was a learning experience. I would also want to comment on the renovation that was completed under my stewardship and that of a wonderful library board and supportive city council. I do believe that the 1982 renovation was the beginning of a renaissance for the Vaughn. During my tenure, circulation went up from about 50,000, to over 100,000. I was pleased to see how the public responded to the improvements in the building and the service.

**WS:** The Mission of the VPL is "to be the community's gathering place that provides access to information, resources, and endless possibilities for all." I pray that it continues to fulfill that mission in your time as well as it did in mine.

**JE:** The VPL has served the Ashland Community for 125 years with a commitment to providing quality material and meeting space for the public.

**JS:** Knowledge is a great gift. Give it freely and in abundance.

**SS:** I'd like to put an e-reader in a time capsule, loaded with our patron's favorite books.

**TT:** Survived the first 125 years through thick and thin. Still is here and remains an integral part of the Ashland extended community.

**JB:** The Vaughn is the home and hearth of civil society for the Ashland community. Back in the day, the Vaughn took pride in being relevant, and fought

tooth and nail for every penny in order to have the most current technology. Regardless of the changing delivery systems, the Vaughn always knew its primary mission was to further democracy by keeping people informed and educated.

**GR:** If I were putting something in a time capsule I would put in a small group of pictures of our library and an explanation of what one is because I don't believe in another 100 years libraries will exist in this form. Everything will be wireless and no books or hard copies of anything. People will get there information at home on a hand held device or even smaller and project it on to whatever they want.

**JN:** The VPL is a Free Public Treasure and it plays a critical part in our democracy.

**SM:** How vital the library (VPL) is to the community for people of all ages.

**KD:** The Vaughn has been an important and vibrant part of the downtown for many years and is used by many people, young and old throughout the year.

**RL:** VPL is a special place in our community. It's a place where anyone and everyone can come, no matter their age, weight, gender, income, etc., and be treated equally. The library is a place that provides so many opportunities to learn, explore, and grow.

**DW:** VPL and the Presbyterian Church (*across Vaughn Avenue from the library*) have been the core of my existence.

## ***Any Special memories you'd like to share about the library?***

**JT:** The excitement of young children during Granny Goose. Reading to a class of students visiting the library. Helping someone find just the right book. I have so many memories that bring a smile to my face from my time at Vaughn Library even though it has been nearly ten years since I worked there.

**DB:** I especially recall how great it felt to help turn kids into readers! While I was there, the Library established many Read-a-thons, Granny Goose storytimes and collaborations with the public schools and other community nonprofits.

**DP:** I remember working on a puppet play with my oldest daughter and presenting to kids in the meeting room. What fun that was! While I was in Ashland, I met two lifelong friends, David Brostrom and Mike Cross. What a blessing they have both been to me.

**WS:** There are so many. Serving cookies on Library nights and being late for library board meetings because there was a line at the check-out counter. *(Eventually I learned to wait until after the meetings to check out my materials.)* Working my way through a very crowded library to get to the shelf I wanted because there was a program going on that I had forgotten about. The paper mache person reading a newspaper. The many, many positive and supporting comments we received from the community when we explored expansion at the time of the closing of Oien's furniture next door. Sitting in on a session with Granny Goose. But mostly, my memories of the Vaughn are the smiling faces of children and adults, patrons and staff and the warm greetings shared with friends.

**JE:** Many fond memories for VPL sponsored activities for kids and families. Lectures and presentations, I believe that the VPL has improved the quality of life in Ashland with the many activities and events that it has coordinated through the years.

**JS:** The commitment of the director, staff and board have stayed the course for 125 years. Let's keep it going for another century.

**SS:** My favorite memory of the library is cheering on the Cruisin' the Corridor participants all of whom ran for fun, for their health and for the health of our library. Thanks, folks!

**TT:** I was a crew leader for the (2010) census and held almost daily meetings in the newspaper alcove since there were no available rooms. Granny Goose was across the hall. The excited chatter and large eyes of the young children coming to see Granny....precious.

**JB:** One cold, drizzly fall day, I saw two young people on the sidewalk, leaning against the icy brick wall of the library, diligently clicking onto laptops. They were making use of the library's free wi-fi. We will never know if this helped

them get into college or log onto Facebook, but either way, the library made a difference in their lives, and gave them something they otherwise could not afford.

**GR:** Every time I walk into the library I remember all the good times as a kid that I spent in a library. I go down the rows of books and can remember where my favorite sections were in my local library. When I see the little kids tables I wonder did I ever really sit at those but I did by the hour, reading kids' books and looking at pictures. It is an experience that every person should be able to have - unlimited free reading material.

**JN:** My Mom loved her books and her library and read to us regularly. That was way back when you walked an hour each week to get to your library. I too, treasure my library. It's a "TREASURE" in capital letters and it is FREE! That is amazing! It's a "FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY TREASURE" and it is such an important part of our democracy! Over the years, the Friends of the Vaughn (FVL) has supported many programs for children, teens and the general public that might not have otherwise been funded... We're still here, still volunteering in the Book Nook, still providing programs of interest for the public and still excited about our "Free Public Library" in Ashland, WI.

**SM:** It was a unique place to work as all the employees worked and supported each other even when we were without a director. We all took such an interest in promoting the library.

**KD:** Seeing people excited when a book they've been waiting for is in, seeing the kids come to the desk with a sparkle in their eye and they chat with me about the books they're going to read. Really connecting with a child during a program and seeing families enjoy themselves during our big programs (Truly Remarkable Loon, Summer Reading, etc.).

**RL:** There are so many memories, but I would say that in general, I've loved getting to know the people of our community.

**DW:** Seeing the children every week. I'm into the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of story time attendees. It's fun!