

# Marble Columns



Newsletter of the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library

## *A Real Mystery from the Blackstone Library*

### *Spring Book Sale*

#### Children's Books

Friday, 5/14—Sunday 5/16

#### Adult Fiction

Friday 5/21—Sunday 5/23

#### Hours:

Friday & Saturday 9am—2pm

Sunday 11am—3pm

#### At River Run Business Park

59 School Ground Road

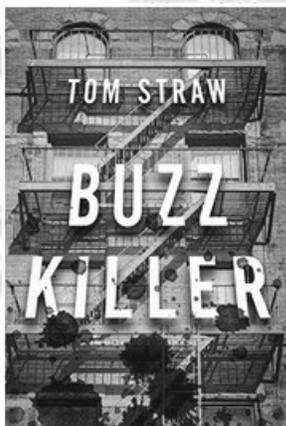
#### MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

**For the Annual Fall Book Sale on the Green—September 30 through October 3, 2021**

Books are available year round on our **Virtual Book Cart** on the library's website at [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org)

Have you ever visited the mezzanine level of the Blackstone Library—the area where study desks are prominent under a low ceiling? This is where author Tom Straw penned much of his first novel, *The Trigger Episode*, in 2000. He loved “his perch up in the carrels” and spent many productive hours there. Tom does have a home office in Branford where he writes but continues to write anywhere inspiration will lead him.

Subsequently, writing as Richard Castle, he authored his first seven Nikki Heat novels: *Heat Wave*, *Naked Heat*, *Heat Rises*, *Frozen Heat*, *Deadly Heat*, *Raging Heat*, and *Driving Heat*, all of which became New York Times bestsellers. *Buzz Killer*, another



crime novel, is Tom Straw's first book under his own name.

There is a correlation between Richard Castle, aka Tom Straw, and the Richard Castle character of the ABC-TV series. Straw wrote ghost novelizations of his Nikki Heat mysteries with their own plots for the now retired Castle series.

Tom Straw is also an Emmy- and Writer's Guild of America-nominated TV writer and producer having written and produced *Night Court*, *Parker Lewis Can't Lose*, *Dave's World*, *Grace Under Fire*, *Cosby*, *Whoopi*, and *Nurse Jackie*.

As Tom told me during an email interview, his novels begin with an idea that won't let go. Tom mostly writes detective fiction. He tends to outline first to plant fair clues and red herrings for the reader. This requires knowing a bit of where it's all going. Tom says he does “a lot of re-writing” following a first draft. He is proud of the fact that his editors marvel at his manuscripts because of the effort he has put into them. He views that as the author's job. Straw also subscribes to the

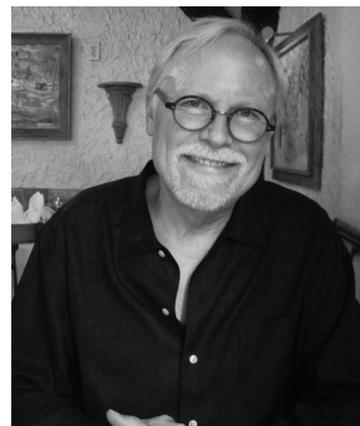


Photo of the author by Jill Kremetz

Nathaniel Hawthorne maxim, “Easy reading means damn hard writing.”

Recently Tom wrote a manuscript for his next novel, a spy thriller with the quality of his Richard Castle best-sellers. That manuscript has been optioned by a major Hollywood studio, and he is currently writing the pilot episode for the planned TV series. Publication date of the novel is pending as is the series debut.

Tom Straw's books can be purchased through Amazon or reserved through the Blackstone Library.

-Alpha Coiro

# In Memoriam



## *With Much Gratitude...*

After decades of hard work and dedication to the Friends, the Board is losing two prominent members. Hatsie Mahoney is a past president and Paula Harrington is a former membership chair/assistant treasurer. As part of the wheelhouse of the Board of Directors, both were visible in all aspects of fund-raising. Their presence will be missed.

Michael Sykes, 77, most recently of Fitchburg, MA and formerly of Branford, passed away peacefully on February 28, 2021 after an illness. He was the son of Herbert and Charlotte Sykes. While living in Branford he worked for the Town in the human resources department. Michael also immersed himself in civic organizations, volunteering tirelessly at the Branford Historical Society, Community House and served many years as President of Friends of the Blackstone Memorial Library. In 2000 he was honored by the Town for his volunteer work including spearheading the annual Friends of the Blackstone Library Book Sale.

Another icon of the literary world, while not a Branford resident, and passing on March 25, 2021 at the

astounding age of 104, was Beverly Bunn Cleary. She was one of America's most successful authors for children and young adults and was mourned by those who remember Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits, Otis Spofford, and Beezus and Ramona Quimby (as well as Ribsby, Socks and Ralph S. Mouse) some of whom have become immortalized on Broadway and in movies.

"I think children want to read about normal, everyday kids. That's what I wanted to read about when I was growing up," Cleary told NPR's Linda Wertheimer in 1999. Over 91 million copies of her books have been sold worldwide since her first book was published in 1950.



*Michael Sykes*

In 1939, she graduated from the School of Librarianship at the University of Washington with a second bachelor's degree in library science and accepted a year-long position as a children's librarian in Yakima, Washington.

# New Membership Software

The Membership Committee of The Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library has been busy working on our new membership software package. As our membership has grown, there has been a need to upgrade from keeping our membership records on an Excel spreadsheet to a more dynamic software to better communicate with our members.

After extensive research, the committee selected **Wild Apricot** as the new software.

Some of the features the software provides are:

- Emails to our members and contacts announcing activities and events
- Event registration
- Online and mobile payments
- A dedicated Friends' website

**Wild Apricot** is a cloud-based membership management and communication system used by business and trade associations, chambers of

commerce, nonprofits, charities, clubs and community organizations. It supports organizations from a few members to 15,000 members in size.

**Wild Apricot** was rated in the 2020 Top 20 Membership Software by Captera for its functionality and pricing. The software was recommended by FOCL (Friends of Connecticut Libraries) and is used by many other Friends groups in the region.

*Judy Stebbins*

# Upcoming Programs

## Cutting the Cord: Saying Goodbye to Cable

*May 13 @ 2 - 3:00 pm*  
Dealing with cable can be a pain, but trying to find an alternative can be equally frustrating. If you've had enough of cable and need some guidance for making your next move, come to our class on cutting the cord! We'll discuss all the most popular streaming services and devices so you can decide which one is right for you!

## Virtual Branford Forum: Immigration Law

*May 16 @ 2 - 3:30 pm*  
The Branford Forum, a community organization that brings nationally renowned figures to the Shoreline, is returning to the Blackstone Library for a series of virtual conversations.

## Birdscaping: Home Sweet Habitat

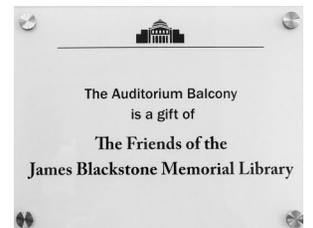
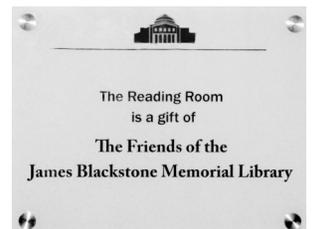
*May 22 @ 2 - 3:00 pm*  
Looking to kickstart your spring gardening? This beautifully illustrated program explores the importance of creating welcoming habitats for birds through thoughtful landscape choices, including native plants vital for food and nesting sites. Learn about the benefits and joys of creating beautiful layered gardens designed to bring avian performers right into your own backyard. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library*

## Best Seller Book Club

*May 29 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm*  
Have you ever thought about joining a book club? It's a fun way to get connected, make new friends, and read more books! In the Best Seller Book Club, we'll be reading and

discussing newly released, highly rated books from a wide variety of genres. This month we're reading *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Somewhere out beyond the edge of the universe there is a library that contains an infinite number of books, each one the story of another reality. One tells the story of your life as it is, along with another book for the other life you could have lived if you had made a different choice at any point in your life. While we all wonder how our lives might have been, what if you had the chance to go to the library and see for yourself? Would any of these other lives truly be better? *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

*Registration is required for all programs. Call 203.488.1441 ext. 318, or visit our website [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org).*



# Friends Donate \$30,000 to Library



Pictured here are Barbara Barrett, Friends Vice President, Al Bertoline, Friends President, Beth Law, Board of Trustees President, and Karen Jensen, Library Director. *Photo by Diane Puchalski*

The Friends of the Blackstone Library were able to present the library with a special gift of \$30,000. This gift is being made in honor of the Blackstone librarians and the wonderful work they did through the pandemic. This gift is in addition to the funds the Friends donate each year that support the library and its various programs and services. The additional funds were raised through the mini-sales held in the River Run warehouse, and also through the very successful online sales, which exceeded expectations this year. Thank you to all the hard-working volunteers who made this possible.

When you are next in the library, you may notice two plaques in honor of the Friends—one at the entrance to the Reading Room on the first floor, and one at the entrance to the Auditorium Balcony on the second floor. The plaques were placed to recognize the Friends gift of \$50,000 toward the recent renovation.

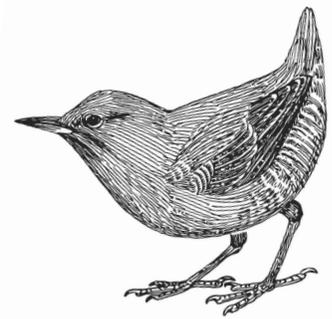
*Photos by  
Diane Puchalski*



**Friends of the  
James Blackstone Library**  
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## From the President

### **Board of Directors 2020—2021:**

Alfred Bertoline, President  
Barbara Barrett, Vice President  
Jonathan Grande, Treasurer  
Judy Stebbins,  
Assistant Treasurer  
& Membership Chair  
Ellen Carucci, Secretary  
Alpha Coiro  
Robert DiGioia  
Jonathan Clark  
Joe Genua  
Mary Hally  
Paula Harrington  
Hatsie Mahoney  
Andy McKirdy  
Pam Roy  
John Smith  
Callista Stoddard  
Carol Titcomb  
Helen Wong  
  
Karen Jensen, Library Director  
Member Ex-Officio

Happy Spring to Everyone!

It is a wonderful time of year, and the Friends of the Blackstone Library have several special celebrations and fun activities scheduled over the next few months including:

April – the Board of Directors of the Friends voted to donate an additional \$30,000 grant to the Library. This was made possible due to the incredible efforts of our members and volunteers in making our fall mini-book sale and our continuing online and virtual book sales highly successful operations. The grant will be presented to Karen Jensen, Library Di-

rector, and the Trustees at a special ceremony this month.

May – Our Spring mini-book sales are scheduled for May 14 – 16 (Children's books) and May 21 – 23, 2021 (Adult sale) and will be held at our River Run storage facility. Plenty of openings are available for members and volunteers to lend a hand before. Please call Joe Genua (Book sale Chairman) 203-506-5750 or email [friends@blackstonelibrary.org](mailto:friends@blackstonelibrary.org) indicating your willingness to help.

June – The Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Blackstone Library will be held on

June 15, 2021 at 5:30pm. We are hoping for a hybrid approach with an in-person meeting at the Library and a zoom meeting. This will be a fun celebration of all the efforts made by our members and volunteers during the past year. Please mark your calendars and plan on joining us.

Thank you for your continuing good work for the Friends and the Library.

*Alfred Bertoline  
President*