

Libraries

2-20-23

Being basically book, or maybe word people, we all undoubtedly have many libraries in our past. When I was a child, the local public library, just off of Westcott Street, was housed in an old three story wooden building that must have been someone's home years before. It was one of those places with a front porch entry including lots of steps. From today's viewpoint, it was totally inaccessible to anyone with a physical challenge, but that certainly didn't occur to me as a small child scampering up the stairs.

The books were not in one large space, but separated out among what once was probably the living room, dining room, etc. If I recall correctly, the children's books were in what must have been the dining room. I think the kitchen was still closed off and could possibly still have been used by the staff for their morning coffee and lunch breaks. Such a thing never occurred to me then. I just know that where the kitchen would logically been, the door was always closed. What had probably been the living room had adult books and reference material, specifically an encyclopedia. I spent time there exploring self-assigned topics such as Pompeii. Not too surprisingly, the city build a new library a couple blocks away, on one floor, accessible to all, but never with the same charm for me.

At Nottingham High School, I gravitated to the library, a large, bright space on the second floor. I discovered that if you volunteered in the library you could get out of study hall. Bingo. I was in! Mostly I spent time in a windowless workroom off of the main room repairing books. It was a skill that guaranteed that I would always be selected as one of the volunteers. I think I may have gone to a total of two study halls over three years in the high school.

Sooo... When I arrived in college – you guessed it- my work study job was in the library. I went to Boston University which is a large, urban campus. However, I worked in the much smaller Sargent College library, the college where I attended most of my classes, down the street from the main campus, overlooking Commonwealth Avenue. The building had started its life as a car dealership

before the university bought it in the mid '50's to house Sargent College when it moved over from Cambridge where it was mainly a women's physical education school. Along the way they added physical therapy which was my major. At the new building they added occupational therapy to the offerings starting with my graduating class of 1965. I earned all of my spending money working there for all four years of college.

I left working in libraries behind when I left college and only took up that role again after I retired. At that point I needed to fill my time in new ways. I took the Master Gardener course and volunteer work is required to maintain your MG status. I gravitated to library work. No surprise there. I started volunteering at the library at Olbrich Gardens. Almost 20 years and about 1500 hours later, I'm still there. I've also met many wonderful people who are interested in book, plants, and Olbrich in general. It was a very good choice. Apparently libraries, by this time, are just in my blood.