

A return to the streets of Maycomb

By Mayor Shawn Reilly

Like many, I read "To Kill a Mockingbird" during high school. What I could recall of the book was that one of the main characters was a lawyer named Atticus Finch, that the story revolved around a man being unjustly accused of a crime, and that the book provided a vivid portrayal of how pervasive prejudice and race-based hatred was during the 1930s.

What I did not recall was "To Kill a Mockingbird" pulled you into a specific time and place and made you feel like you were a character in the story. You become one of the residents of the tired town of Maycomb, where the days seem longer than 24 hours. You get to know Jem, who broke his arm when he was nearly 13. You meet Scout, the storyteller, whose mother died when she was 2. Scout was a fighter. Her father told her to "try fighting with your head for a change ... it's a good one, even if it does resist learning."

Charles Baker Harris (Dill) is introduced early in the book. His name was longer than he was and his "hair was snow white and stuck to his head like duck fluff." You meet Calpurnia, the Finch's cook. Calpurnia "was all angles and bones; she was nearsighted; she squinted; her hand was as wide as a bed slat and twice as hard." Calpurnia was in charge of Jem and Scout and she was in charge of the Finch house.

While reading, you imagine that you live on the same street as Miss Maude, a "widow, a chameleon lady who worked in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men's coveralls, but after her five o'clock bath she would appear on the porch and reign over the street in magisterial beauty."

Your teacher is Miss Caroline Fischer who was no more than 21 years old and smelled like a peppermint drop. She was from northern Alabama and "North Alabama was full of Liquor Interests, Big Mules, steel companies, Republicans, professors, and other persons of no background."

You share in the mystery of Boo Radley. Boo was a recluse, but Scout, Jem and Dill schemed during most of the story to lure him out of the Radley place. You picture in your mind the Radley place, right next door to the Finch house. It was once white but now darkened to the color of the slate yard around it.

You experience Maycomb: "Maycomb was an old town ... in rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square," and "men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum."

In south Alabama there are no clearly defined seasons: "summer drifts into autumn, and autumn is sometimes never followed by winter, but turns to a days-old spring that melts into summer again."

You experience the racial hatred of the time. You hear and believe Atticus when he tells Jem that "in our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins."

When you finish the book, you cannot help to think about the issues explored in this story. One issue is that there are great injustices in our world. Another is that it is noble to protect those that need protection. You fight for what is right and you don't back down even when it means you and the ones you love will suffer. Atticus Finch could see the good in all people. He taught his children to see the world from another's viewpoint in order to understand them. He believed that most people are nice when you finally see them from their shoes.

I thank the Waukesha Public Library for spearheading Waukesha Reads as it brings our community together in a very special way. I ask everyone to consider being a part of this great community event.



Reilly



Upcoming Waukesha Reads events

By Andrea Fencel

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — Waukesha Reads was created in partnership with the National Endowment of the Arts to boost reading and community involvement. This year's featured book, "To Kill A Mockingbird" by Harper Lee, was chosen to celebrate the 10th year of Waukesha Reads.

Upcoming events next week include:

- **Monday Night Movies:** a film about the 1965 Selma, Alabama marches for equal voting rights will be shown at 6:30 p.m. on Monday. The movie is rated PG13 and will be shown at the Waukesha Public Library, 321 Wisconsin Ave. For more information contact 262-524-3682.
- **Soap Carving for Teens:** grades 7-12 are welcome to carve soap at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday at the Waukesha Public Library Teen Zone on 321 Wisconsin Ave. Snacks and supplies will be provided. For more information contact 262-524-3682.
- **Northern Mockingbird – the Great Mimicker:** Rick Fare from the Hoy Audubon Society will be discussing northern mockingbirds and the bird's influence on literature, music, folklore and politics. The event will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at the Waukesha Public Library.

For more information contact 262-524-3682.

- **Harper Lee: From Mockingbird to Watchman:** a documentary viewing will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the Waukesha Public Library. The documentary discusses Lee and both of her novels. Doughnuts and coffee will be provided. Call 262-524-3682 for more information.

■ Explore the Night Skies:

at 9:30 a.m. individuals can learn how the constellation nicknamed the Drinking Gourd helped runaway slaves find their way north.

At 11 a.m. individuals can attend a program highlighting the stars. Admission is \$4 for the 11 a.m. program.

The events will be held on Oct. 15 in the Charles Z.

Horwitz Planetarium at the Retzer Nature Center on S14- W28167 Madison St. in Waukesha. For more information visit 262-896-8423.

- **The Big Blue Ball – Children's Theater:** an original musical with interactive focus on the environment and diversity. This event will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Oct. 15 at the Waukesha Public Library in the Children's Room. For more information call 262-524-3692.

■ Jem's Box of Treasures:

kids can decorate a box and go on a scavenger hunt at the Waukesha Public Library from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Oct. 15. For more information call 262-524-3682.

Book discussions

- A discussion of "To Kill A Mockingbird" will be held at 2 p.m. on Monday at Avalon Square, 222 Park Place in Waukesha. Call 262-5471060 or email jeantrumpy@gmail.com for more information.

- Another discussion of "To Kill A Mockingbird" will be held at 7 p.m. on Oct. 13 at the Waukesha Public Library. The discussion will be held by County Board Supervisor Larry Nelson.

Desserts will be provided by Allo! Chocolat. For more information call 262-5243682.

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