

Expanding your horizons through Waukesha Reads

By Mayor Shawn Reilly

I need to thank former Mayor (and teacher) Larry Nelson, who spearheaded the Waukesha Reads program in 2007, for my assignment of having to write a book report on this year's Waukesha Reads book.

"Lab Girl" by Hope Jahren is an outstanding book that provides insights that I think will change how we view our world.

Thank you to Larry Nelson for bringing the wonderful Waukesha Reads program to our community and a grudging thank you for the opportunity to write this book report.

I likely would not have picked "Lab Girl" to read on my own. I would have looked at the cover and read the notes and determined that the book was not for me. I love to read but I do not have

many hours available to devote toward reading for enjoyment. One of the benefits of Waukesha Reads, however, is that it



Reilly

leads us to read books we otherwise would not. Each year Waukesha Reads picks a different book and those who participate expand their reading horizon and, hopefully, expand their knowledge. Taking the time to read a book that I otherwise would not have, provided me with enjoyment and with an expanded view of our world.

This book is wonderfully written. There were parts where I was flabbergasted at Hope's beautiful descriptive writing ability. For example, Hope and her friend Bill

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spent countless hours talking about work but also talking about the foibles of graduate students. Describing one discussion about an unsuccessful graduate student, Hope writes: "Anticipating the singular catharsis that comes from conspiring in something despicable, Bill and I provoked each other with feigned erudition." This sentence is amazing! Say it out loud for a good laugh.

"Lab Girl" shows that while much has been learned about our world, there are still secrets to be discovered. Hope Jahren views science not as the work of any one individual but as the work of many people over countless generations each building upon the knowledge gained by prior scientists. To her, being a scientist is being a living part of a collective. Even though our scientific knowledge has been greatly expanded through generations of scientific exploration, this knowledge is not static, it will continue to grow through the generations of scientists.

"Lab Girl" is an autobiographical story of a scientist, but it is also a story of an extremely complicated individual. Hope's life as a scientist started in rural Minnesota, the daughter of a physics and earth science professor. She grew up playing in a lab and it is the lab where she is most comfortable her whole life. You learn how difficult it can be to commit your life to studying the earth sciences. The work can be physically grueling and even tedious. There is very little private investment in this endeavor, and therefore, these types of scientists basically

scrounge for the limited funds made available through universities. Whether you will be able to continue working after your short-term funding runs out is always a concern.

Being a woman in a male-dominated field also created additional problems for Hope. Through all her trials however, Hope's burning desire to study plants and unlock their secrets kept her going.

This book is not just about science though. Hope Jahren also explores grief, friendship, family, mental illness and the beauty of hard work. Hope Jahren shows us that all life is complicated, not just human life, but all life. She shows that life is messy, beautiful, scary, tedious ... and hundreds of other adjectives.

"Lab Girl" teaches us about plants and science and provides us with knowledge we otherwise would not have received. That alone is a good reason to read this book. Another reason to pick up this book, however, is that Hope shows that we can become adults without ceasing to be children. This book reminds us that "both life and love are like butter, and do not keep they both have to be made fresh every day."

Waukesha Reads has a 13-year history of fostering a love of reading and bringing us together as a community. Please be a part of these great community events. Information can be obtained at our award-winning library, where you can pick up a flyer with all the events. If you cannot make it to the library, visit www.waukeshareads.org to read about the events and programs.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45 Says

1 Thomas further
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heroine DOWN

5 To-do list 1 Polynesian

11 Not busy idol

12 Like 2 Perfect
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13 Boat 3 Be free of
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14 Boutiques 4 Phone

15 For all photo
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17 Dessert 6 "You fell
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18 Blackjack 7 Steamy
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22 Velocity follower

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16 Nourished 30 Tiny

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22 Location 37 Golf

23 Dessert pegs

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