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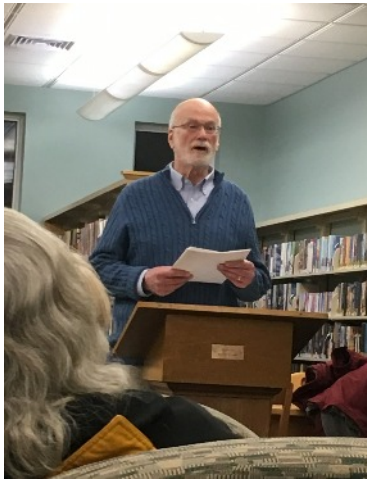
ASSOCIATION MEETING MEMBERS' UPDATE

January 2019



Poetry Alive and Well at TFL

- Tom Lyford



Wesley McNair



JT Curran and son, Jason



Two examples of the robust audiences
TFL has been blessed with in 2018

Poetry indeed made an impressive comeback in Dover-Foxcroft during the final quarter of 2018 with a total of three programs, each attended by its own satisfyingly robust audience. People from a large swath of central and northern Maine attended our *Maine Poetry Express* Workshop and Community Reading in October. Former Maine Poet Laureate, Wes McNair of Mercer, drew the expected large crowd at the end of November, and local poet and Dover-Foxcroft neighbor, JT Curran and son Jason, wowed a lively audience with their multimedia delivery on December 13th.

Maine Poetry Express is a program of the Maine Humanities Council and the Maine State Library, formed to bring Maine poetry and poets to local libraries and their communities. Community members are guided to select Maine poems, practice to perform those poems in a workshop with Millinocket poet Paul Corrigan, and then host a community poetry-reading event the following evening. Although perhaps a bit daunting for people of various walks of life to read publicly for the first time, it turned out to be an immensely satisfying and confidence-building event. One of the highlights: the youthful enthusiasm of the night's youngest reader, Foxcroft Academy freshman Nathanael Brown. To top things off, published poets JT Curran and I were invited to read a few as well.

Former Maine Poet Laureate Wesley McNair's return to TFL was much like visiting with an old friend. He read selections from his latest volume, *The Unfastening*, while at the same time offering insights into his creative process. "In a dark time, unfastened by loss and despair, how does one find one's way back to the world again?" asked McNair. "This book seeks to answer this question through poems of sorrow, and hope, and joy." McNair is one of New England's most celebrated contemporary poets, author of nine volumes of poems, and has been selected for a United States Artists Fellowship as one of America's "finest living artists."

Last though definitely not least, we were graced with the poetic wit and wisdom of JT Curran, artfully accompanied on keyboard by his son, Jason. Now, some of us have known JT as a musician (his resume begins with "has performed since high school where he sang doo-wop with fellow crooners in the Philadelphia-based quartet, *The Violators*"). Some may always remember him as an educator and counselor, but those who caught his gig at the library likely left thinking of him as a crisp and relevant poet who made us quietly giggle at the easily-identifiable peccadilloes of his youth. Listening to the hip, nostalgic pieces from his book, *Beyond the Road*, we were treated to the sharp memories of the people, places, and events that have shaped the philosophical bent of his wry and likeable poems. But what made this performance truly special was the added infusion of his son's musical accompaniment. JT's poetry is lean and delivered with a beatnik-like coffee-house back beat of its own, but when Jason deftly laid down his comfortable wisps of recognizable classics, old standard standards, and modern hits, the readings magically went three-dimensional.

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Mystery Man

- Kim Brawn

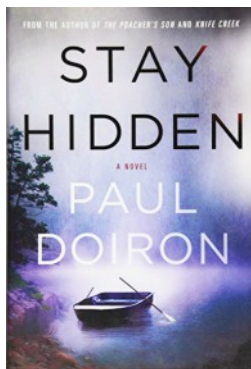
Best-selling Maine author Paul Doiron spoke to a packed house in November as part of TFL's James Brown Lecture Series. Fans of his Mike Bowditch mysteries were delighted to hear him read from his latest work, *Stay Hidden*.

Doiron confessed to being somewhat "snobby" in the past about what he read—he consumed all the great works of literature while an English major at Yale and yearned to be a "literary novelist." An avid Agatha Christie and Sherlock Holmes fan when he was younger, Doiron, former Editor in Chief of *Down East Magazine*, credits his girlfriend, now wife, with introducing him to contemporary mysteries. He was impressed and inspired by how good they were...enough so, that the seed was planted. Whether you call them mysteries, thrillers, or crime novels, his characters, narratives, and style have fascinated readers.

I chatted with two people who attended the popular event. (Full disclosure: these two people are my parents.) "I haven't read any of his books, but now I will," said Judy Brawn who liked how he "opened it up to questions" and found him to be "very personable." "He was relaxed and friendly," added Roger Brawn, who has read all nine in the series and enjoyed learning about his research methods and choices of Maine settings and geography.

Doiron told an excited crowd of almost 50 that the 10th book in his Maine game warden series, titled *Almost Midnight*, will be published in July. After the talk, many people eagerly lined up to buy Doiron's books from Gibran Graham, of the Briar Patch bookstore in Bangor.

(BTW, it's pronounced *Dwarren*.)



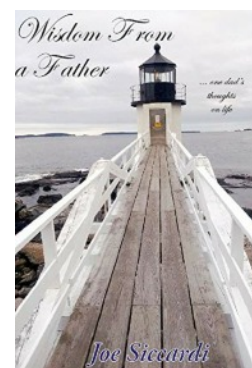
Wisdom from a Father

- Tom Lyford

"I'm just an ordinary guy walking along on this journey called life. My comments are always filtered through the lens of Judeo-Christian values," writes Joe Siccardi on the back cover of his second book, *Wisdom from a Father: One Dad's Thoughts on Life*. His first venture in publishing, *Heaven Shining Through*, is a novelette dealing with the spiritual healing in a troubled mother-daughter relationship.

Wisdom of a Father, on the other hand, consists of 52 short essays (updates from his blog posts) each detailing an observation about people, places, and things that have affected, or at least made an impression on, his life: his cat, 9/11, breast cancer, a cop's flashing lights in the rearview mirror, movies, and "swear jars" to name a few. They are stand-alone vignettes, so they can be picked up and read in any order, but the fact that there are fifty-two of these small chapters means that one may be read once a week if desired. Each chapter is uplifting, provides food for thought, and concludes with a gem to remember.

Joe, a recent Maine transplant, has worked in the newspaper industry all his life, "including stops in New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Washington DC, Maryland, New York,." He is retired and lives in Dover-Foxcroft.



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Little SoHo

- Kim Brawn

Fans of art and photography got quite an eyeful at TFL thanks to the inspiring works of Steve Maines, the Milo Art Guild, and watercolorist Rogan Taylor. It's like having our own gallery with a new exhibition each month!

October showcased the amazing talents of Abbot resident Steve Maines. Known in the area as a portrait photographer, Steve has also traveled the world taking photos for various relief organizations. His stunning images and expansive collection captivated patrons.



November gave us an incredible array of artwork from the gifted Milo Art Guild (members who exhibited were: Barb Hamlin, Joan Henderson, Gayle LaVallee, Ellen MacMillan, Linda Moe, and Wilma Stanchfield). The group gathers every Thursday at the Milo Free Public Library to learn different techniques with various teachers (or work on their own) using watercolor, acrylics, colored pencils and pastels. There was so much to take in: landscapes, seascapes, florals, and wildlife in styles ranging from impressionistic, realistic or abstract, to whimsical and decorative.

December offered us the gifts of local watercolorist Rogan Taylor. With scenes from Colorado, Maine, and his native Zimbabwe, his pieces resonated and intrigued us all.



Steve Maines' Photography



Milo Art Guild



Art Walk

- Kim Brawn

"When I see a blank page, the paintbrush calls me," explained Rogan Taylor, TFL's December artist of the month, during his recent Artist Talk. He took his audience on a walking tour of his paintings displayed in the library and recalled how he developed his passion for watercolors when he was in his mid-30s while still living in his homeland of Zimbabwe. He and other artists who attended shared tips and techniques. Rogan was born in South Africa, grew up in Zimbabwe, moved to Colorado in 2007 and currently lives in Dover-Foxcroft. He is the pastor at the Abbot Evangelical Free Church.



Rogan Taylor



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All That Glitters

- Kim Brawn



The Maine Humanities Council's Let's Talk About It Series, "The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today?" wraps up its successful run next month. The book discussion group's reading list included *The Devil and the White City* by Erik Larson, *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton, and *The Gilded Age* by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, the book from which the term was derived.

So, what was the *Gilded Age*? The quickie version: the era in late 19th-century America marked by rapid economic growth and industrialization, materialism, consumerism, and wealth, along with poverty and inequality—with lots of corruption thrown in. Sound familiar?

Pierre Gaudion, who participated, described the topics as "well-chosen" and called the books "interesting and informative reads." TFL's director Greta Schroeder found that moderator and historian David Richards, who is also the director of the Margaret Chase Smith Library in Skowhegan, provided historical insights and perspective, adding an extra element to the proceedings. Case in point, Helen Fogler, TFL's former director, told me that she loved learning about the life and times of Edith Wharton.

Material World

- Kim Brawn

Creative Kids Art Time is a new bi-monthly program (1st & 3rd Wednesday) that lets kids ages two and up explore different art materials, ideas, and techniques. TFL's Michelle Fagan didn't want this to be the usual craft time: "I wanted to let them be creative, try new things—we're not afraid to be messy," she laughed. So far, around 10 kids have attended each session. Everyone, parents and children alike, seems "happy and very pleased." Whether it's molding clay, painting with q-tips, or ditching the q-tips for markers, it's a fun way to spark their interest in art and express their creativity. "It's not about making something perfect," explained Michelle.



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Michelle's BRAINchild

- Kim Brawn



To celebrate Dover-Foxcroft's Halloween BooNanza and the bicentennial of Mary Shelley's gothic, sci-fi classic *Frankenstein*, TFL's Michelle Fagan created Dr. Frankenstein's Mad Science Escape Room. The goal: to get the monster's brain out of a locked box by solving puzzles, to bring him to life.

"We had a great turnout—everyone enjoyed it," Michelle said of the almost sixty people (of all ages) who accepted the challenge. Planning, prepping, and executing this event required a lot of work but Michelle said that "the reaction and excitement made it all worthwhile." (Apparently, Dr. Giggles stole the show!) Next time, Michelle will team up with STEM Guide Alicia Millette for a possible Harry Potter-themed escape room. (I'm sure tricksters George & Fred Weasley are already plotting away!)



HoHoHo

- Kim Brawn

Right after Thanksgiving many patrons love to feast on and indulge in Christmas & holiday books and DVDs, anxious to savor that special spirit as long as possible. TFL's Michelle Fagan treks downstairs and, like Santa, returns with cart after cart of Christmas favorites that will fly off the shelves and displays as quickly as we replace them.

How we celebrated the season: from trivia night with *A Wicked Christmas Carol's* writer/director Bobby Keniston and cast members, to ornament-making with Ms. Michelle as part of Hometown Holidays, to reading a new Hanukkah picture book, to the perfect poinsettia from Pat and Dan Juska, to colorful cookies at Dover Cove Farmers Market, to festive Finestkind wreaths, and to our decked-out tree--*Whew!!!!*

