

# Rochester Public Library



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## June 2011

### Libraries Change Lives



#### A patron of all four library buildings

Reading was a part of his life from his early childhood, in his travels and his times in Rochester. [more](#)



#### Library's New Look

There was a slight disturbance in the library for a few weeks in May. As a result, changes have made to the lobby and adjacent space. [more](#)

#### Friends of the Library Rochester Fest Book Sale

Wednesday, June 22 • 9:30 am - 8:30 pm

Thursday, June 23 • 9:30 am - 7:00 pm

#### Unusual and Special Book Sale

Wednesday, June 22 • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Thursday, June 23 • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Rochester Public Library, 101 2nd ST SE, Rochester, MN 55904

Phone: 507-328-2300 • Fax: 507-328-2384 • [www.rochesterpubliclibrary.org](http://www.rochesterpubliclibrary.org)



## A Patron of all four library buildings

*by John Hunziker*

I spent a very pleasant two hours recently talking with Luther Thompson who lives at Sunrise Cottages. Luther was in the library in mid-March and was telling Greg Sauve in the Reference Department that he has checked out books from all four of the Rochester Public Libraries.

Luther was born in Illinois in 1922 and moved with his family to Rochester in 1924. Luther's father was a PhD. in bacteriology and worked with Drs. McGath and Sandford in the original Mayo Clinic building, where the Siebens Building is today. He remembers sitting

in the leather chairs waiting for his father, and walking by the original Central School where the Mayo Building is today, on the way to visit his father. He also has memories of seeing Dr. Will and Dr. Charlie as they walked around.

The family lived first on Center Street and then moved to the edge of town at that time: 1517 6th Street SW. He began school at Lincoln School, where the United Way is today and then went to Fowell, and graduated from Rochester High School.

His earliest memories of the first Rochester Public Library (1898-1937) were of finding a blue paper-covered book written in German dated 1794; he wonders if it is still around; I can't find it.

He went to Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, on the recommendation of Dr. Hewitt, a good friend of his father. Unfortunately World War II interfered. Luther joined the Merchant Marines which he described as over-the-road trucking, but on water. The Merchant Marine ships were classified as Liberty Ships and mostly hauled cargo. He sailed around the world twice hauling that cargo. He took horses to Poland in 1942 and when he went back in 1946 all of them had been eaten. He was on the John A. Donald in 1943 shipping Sherman tanks to Russia. One broke loose of its moorings in the hold, which made for some interesting times. The ship also bent its propeller in the ice and they were stranded for the winter. Vodka helped while spending the winter in the village of Archangel as did what books they could find. He missed the availability of a library. There were a number of close calls and narrow escapes in those waters owing to Axis ships' hunting cargo ships. They saw burning ships but weren't shot. In 1945 he was hauling farm machinery to Africa and ended up in Cape Town for eight weeks owing to illness; the ship left without him. He finished his Merchant Marine career as a 3rd Mate, which was a deck officer. He was on two other Liberty Ships: the Julien Poydras and the Charles M. Schwab; he was also on the Victory Ship, the Virginia City Victory.

## Libraries Change Lives *continued*

He returned to the States in 1948, planning to return to Wesleyan but ended up moving to Boston and graduating from Harvard with degrees in fine arts and museum work. He was a guide and research assistant in Sturbridge Village and then went to the Henry Ford Museum in Greenfield Village where he worked as a research assistant in auto, glassware and carriages.

Sailing stayed in his blood and in 1953 he was sailing the Great Lakes on the ship Ironwood which was built in 1902, hauling pig iron from Detroit to Cleveland. He spent a summer working in a Detroit shipyard as an electrician.

Luther returned to Rochester in 1954 and worked at Dayton's in the silverware department. He really was a hands-on hardware and mechanics kind of guy, though, and went to work for Clint Marti selling Oldsmobiles as a salesman and parts person. One of his special memories was purchasing a 1953 MG-TD from Marti as his personal car. His co-workers made fun of him about the MG and he told them, "You don't get in it, you put it on." He drove cars back and forth to Texas for Marti and sold a Rolls Royce while he was in Texas and received a \$300.00 commission from the dealership, which was a lot of money in 1956.

He then worked as a parts man for Low Motors in Rochester, bought a 1960 Porsche 1600 S and also lived in some apartments at Maywood at that time.

He then moved to the Cable, Wisconsin area, purchased a small piece of property and moved an 1890s log cabin to the property and ran a youth hostel for the Telemark Lodge, outside of Cable, for three years.

In 1971, he moved to Forestville and lived above, and ran, the Meaghan Store for 15 years. Next, was working in the Scanlon House Bed and Breakfast in Lanesboro, the Victorian House restaurant and Mrs. B's.

A cat did him in. He went out for the cat, stumbled and fell down some concrete steps which busted him up some and he decided it was time to retire. He spent 10 years in Dexter with a friend and moved into Samaritan Bethany Heights in 2000. He has been at Sunrise for the past two years.

Reading was a part of his life from his early childhood, in his travels and his times in Rochester. He still reads from a collection of Rochester Public Library books that are delivered to Sunrise Cottages. He showed me a copy of Elbert Hubbard's *Little Journeys* that is in his collection along with a 1910 copy of *Self Propelled Vehicles* and an 1851 copy of *Melodeon without a Master*, which is music for a melodeon, which he also owns. I am going to work with him to see if we can get more books and authors that he likes delivered as part of the collection.

Luther is only the third person I have been able to talk with who has memories of all of the Rochester Libraries. If there are more of you that would share your stories, call me at 507-328-2343.

John Hunziker, Communications Manager, Rochester Public Library

# Library's New Look



**The area between the Public Service Desk and the Fiction Movies and Music desk during construction.**



**The area between the Public Service Desk and the Fiction, Movies and Music desk after construction.**



**The new Fiction, Movies and Music desk.**



**The new display area in the lobby.**

There was a slight disturbance in the library for a few weeks in May. As a result, changes have been made to the lobby and adjacent space. The large desk where the self-checks used to be was removed and the floor underneath was repaired. A new desk replaces the temporary banquet tables that the self-checks sat on. It will accommodate one handicapped accessible self-check unit. A smaller Fiction, Movies and Music desk was installed. Permanent shelving for the reserve materials was built. Although the location of the library catalog computers has shifted, the number of computers for searching the library's holdings remains the same.

A keystone in this change is adding more self-check units because of the generosity of the Friends. The additional self-check units will make it more convenient for patrons to check out materials themselves. Currently, there are often lines for the self-check units. When the change is complete, there will be five new self-check units.

The new self-checks will not only provide for two more stations for people to check out materials, but every unit will also have more features than the old ones:

- Each unit will have a credit card swipe enabling people to pay fines and fees at the self-check unit
- The new units are smaller, eleven inches narrower, than the current self-check machines.
- The units are touch screen and will support multiple languages.
- Patrons will be able to see their account information (and even print it or email it) right from the self-check.
- Receipts will be optional.

All the changes are being made to serve the community better. None of this would have happened without your generosity!