

## New Library is on Schedule

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pace, putting the project slightly ahead of schedule at the end of November. Recent accomplishments include completion of all exterior metal stud framing, all exterior sheathing, and insulation, plywood decking, and membrane roofing for the lower roofs.

In September, Ben Gibson was hired by the City of Homer to act as the "Owner's Representative" for the new library construction project. Basically, this means keeping a close eye on every aspect of the project to ensure that work proceeds as smoothly as possible. In effect, Ben has become the hub of a wheel that includes other City staff, the construction crew and managers, the Library Advisory Board, and major federal funders. Anne Marie Holen of the City of Homer interviewed Ben recently to gain his perspective on the project.



**AMH: Other than the money, why did you want the job of Owner's Representative?**

BG: To be involved in the creation of the new library, which is something the community has wanted for a long time. The singular aspect of a public library is that the whole community has ownership over it.

**AMH: What is your assessment of the project now?**

BG: It's going along better than we could have hoped. There are always uncertainties going in, but at this point we're not worried about surprise budget numbers or anything like that, which means we can incorporate some of the nicer touches the community has wanted to see.

**AMH: What are you hearing from the members of the broader community?**

BG: Everybody's really excited about the new library. I took a school group through

there a couple of weeks ago, and the kids and parents all thought it was great. The kids were especially interested in the bathrooms. Others like the additional offerings that the library will provide with the new facilities. Still others like it because they can see it will have some unique character and touches that make it a bit of Homer, such as the cedar logs at the entry, the 1% for Art projects, and the finely crafted woodwork on the reading bar.

**AMH: What has been the biggest challenge?**

BG: I'd say the biggest challenge has been balancing all the widely disparate views that people in this community have about the best way to do things. Finding a middle ground can be difficult. I know you can't please everyone, but at the same time, I appreciate the input.

**AMH: What are you particularly pleased with?**

BG: I'm really pleased to be working with this particular contractor, Jay-Brant. Their helpfulness in solving problems and the level of care with the job is pretty exceptional, and it makes it a lot more of a cooperative project with everyone involved.



**AMH: What kind of progress is anticipated over the winter months?**

BG: In December we'll close in the building, install temporary windows, and then turn on the boiler and heat the building up slowly.

Then the electrical/mechanical contractor will come in. While that work is going on inside, crews will keep working outside on the siding. The drywall/finisher will probably get started in February or March.

Right now only the shell of the building is complete and the community support and excitement is palpable. Once we install the actual finishes—the circulation desk, the reading bar, the children's window seats, the study rooms—one can only imagine the excitement.

Interview by Anne Marie Holen

For updates on the new library construction and more photos, visit the FHL website at [www.friendshomerlibrary.org](http://www.friendshomerlibrary.org)

Volunteer  
Spotlight



Terri and Selina Mach are two members of the Mach family, a group of hardworking, spirited volunteers who dedicate their "larger than life" energy to Friends of the Library fundraisers each year. If you've been to the Bowl-A-Rama or the Salmon Bake, you've seen the Machs—Terri was zipping all around to keep the event moving smoothly, John was assembling the Salmon Bake booth and Melanie and Selina were hauling supplies. FHL and the Homer community are lucky to have the Machs.



The New Homer Library capital campaign is over and the building project is underway, so now FHL is turning its sights to new and creative ways to ensure that our community uses and enjoys its new facility to its utmost potential. You can help! Of course there are numerous volunteer opportunities, but one important way of contributing is by making a monetary gift to The Friends of the Homer Public Library Endowment Fund. This fund was

## FHL Endowment: Thinking Ahead

established in 2004 to provide the Friends a permanent stream of income in the form of earnings on the principal of the fund.

The fund's earnings are at present being rolled back into the principal, the larger the earnings available to FHL each year. Down the road that will change. FHL is committed to growing its fund to a size that will provide financial sustainability through its earnings for the organization, allowing the Friends to concentrate on providing volunteer and financial support for programs that enrich the library experience. Your tax-deductible gift to the FHL Endowment fund is a gift in perpe-

tuity, one that lasts beyond the lifetime of the donor. The fund will be managed efficiently and invested wisely for the long-term benefit of the Homer Public Library by the Homer Foundation.

As a special incentive, the first 100 contributors of \$100 or more to the fund will have the name of their choice placed on a book spine on the bookshelf quilt made for FHL by a local quilter. This quilt is currently on display at the library. It will be permanently housed in the Pratt Museum's quilt collection and displayed periodically at the new library. To contribute call Claudia Haines at 235-9042.

Written by Ann Keffer

FHL's Annual Membership Drive is on now!  
Join at [www.friendshomerlibrary.org](http://www.friendshomerlibrary.org)  
or by stopping by the Homer Library.

Check it Out!  
Books, Films and Such

*The Great Fire*, by Shirley Hazzard, is the author's first book in over 23 years, and one of the best novels I have read in a long time. The winner of the 2003 National Book Award for fiction, it is a story about the exhausted aftermath of World War II, of mostly-decent people trying to understand themselves and the world after the inertia of war has faded. It follows a British soldier, Aldred Leith, as he travels around the East and researches a book about China.

He meets a pair of remarkable young siblings, Helen and Ben, and their developing friendship provides a much-needed lifeline for each of them. The book's characters are uncomfortable victors in the land of the defeated—a assortment of American, Australian and British citizens who have survived the war, but have been significantly changed by the experience. For each, the end of the war is only the beginning of a long struggle to regain a sense of purpose and decency in their lives.

At its heart, the novel is about resilience, regeneration, and surviving inhumanity. Those who expect the story to describe a specific fire (as I admit I did) or other specific cataclysm might be disappointed. The novel isn't about the horror of war

itself, but about what it does to the people who survive it.

*The Great Fire* is also a romantic story. The growing love between two of the characters provides a strong ribbon of hope that winds through post-war destruction and alienation. The author narrates with such restraint, however, that their relationship doesn't feel saccharine or unrealistic.

The prose is spare and elegant, and poetic in a straightforward, accessible way. Hazzard's skillful writing and sympathetic commentary make *The Great Fire* a book that will stay with you long after you have put it down.

Reviewed by Amanda Gibson

