



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“Paperback book prices: Thin books 25¢. Thick books 50¢.”

-Thrift store sign in Franklin, N.C.

I recently spent some time in North Carolina and Georgia, partly to visit my granddaughter and partly to travel the roads of these beautiful states. As usual, I stopped at local libraries - I like to see how the collections are arranged, what programs they offer and what books are highlighted.

It was particularly interesting to visit the library in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, because there were no DVDs or videos on their shelves. When I asked about this, I was told that there wasn't space for them, although with a new addition coming up, the issue may be reexamined. This was in great contrast to the library in Franklin. There, rows and rows of videos and DVDs occupied a substantial section near the circulation desk.

As I thought about this, I realized I have become accustomed to providing all sorts of audio-visual materials for our library users. They are extremely popular and in the library world, it is good to provide the

materials the community wants. Yet, I can't help thinking about that library in Chapel Hill, where there was one of the biggest collections of picture books I have ever seen. There was also a neat little alcove, just for children who wanted easy readers. It is a library about books and perhaps it is the old-fashioned part of me that is happy it exists.

While in Charlotte, North Carolina, I visited the Charlotte Museum of History. The brochure I picked up there quotes *Creative Loafing* (an Atlanta weekly newspaper), which calls the museum “the most entertaining one-stop, two-hour history lesson in the Piedmont.” It was not only entertaining, but beautifully laid out and welcoming. I particularly loved the displays of basic tools and implements, such as spinning wheels, seed planters, hand cranked coffee grinders, wool carders and a hand-sewn cloth doll. There was even something called a “velocipede,” from 1900 - it preceded

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the tricycle.

It was the simplicity of these items that attracted me. They are so uncomplicated and so well made that one can immediately understand how they were created. I like the idea that when a tool was needed, it was invented, not purchased. Even the weapons – the swords and the 1855 double-barreled shotgun from the confederate cavalry – were charming and straightforward.

Interestingly, I had a chance to learn more about rifles when I went to the North Carolina state fair. At the exhibit called Village of Yesterday, I talked to Robert Hill, a man who makes long rifles. These amazingly fine-looking handmade wooden rifles fire only one bullet at a time. Robert showed me how the gun works: Gunpowder, followed by the bullet, using a ramrod, then a small amount of gunpowder goes into the pan near the trigger. As he talked, he used

several familiar expressions, which have become part of our daily speech. “Lock, stock and barrel”; “flash in the pan” (when the gunpowder in the pan ignites); and, “half-cocked” – when the gun shouldn’t go off. I even got to hold one of the rifles – it took all my strength to hold it steady.

The other part of traveling that I like is the chance to read. I took several paperback mysteries with me, but I found that as I relaxed, I was more attracted to the hardback novel I had stuck in my suitcase at the last moment. This was another book recommended to me and I loved it, also. Melissa Bank’s *The Wonder Spot*, which is written in the first person, filled my head with a voice that was funny and personal, and it was the perfect accompaniment as I drove along winding mountain roads, flanked by the glorious trees of autumn.