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My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian

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My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

A peek inside the personal library of a librarian

by Ru Story-Huffman

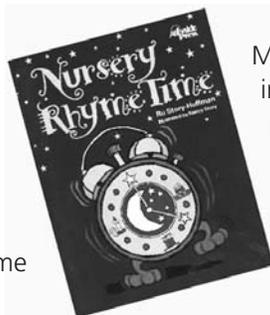
My personal library began when I was in first or second grade, in my parent's dining room. I gathered all my Scholastic Book Club paperback books, designed a library and made my family check out books. I must have been a mean librarian, because I distinctly remember making my sister return her book later that same day. I told her if she did not return her book, I was going to charge her a fine of a chocolate candy bar. A classic case of foreshadowing with that one. The chocolate that is, not the mean librarian.

Fast forward to my freshman year of college, when I began working in libraries. My primary job was to type card catalog cards on an old electric typewriter that today would make our students ask, "What in the world is that thing?" It was nothing for Miss Dorothy, the cataloger, to whip out 25 subject headings for one book. As I was supporting myself while going to school, books were a luxury, so I became one of the library's biggest patrons. When the library had its annual book sale, I purchased books for 10 cents each that I stored in old wooden crates that traveled with me for nearly 10 years.

Over the years, I started purchasing more and more books. This past July, my family and I moved to Georgia, where both my husband and I are faculty at Georgia Southwestern State University. While loading our moving van, my middle son remarked on the number of boxes that were labeled "books." I knew I had a lot of books but didn't realize just how many until I packed them all and moved.

I was recently reunited with my books, after having them in storage for three months. Each time I opened a box of

books, I found old friends. I unearthed my old nursery rhyme books from the writing of my first book, *Nursery Rhyme Time*. I found my special collection of cookbooks, some published in the 1920s, that I discovered in an old trunk in the basement of a house that I once rented. My landlord didn't want the trunk, or its contents, so the cookbooks became mine, including "Mabel's" notebook of handwritten recipes. I've often wondered about Miss Mabel and her life, and I hope she knows her cookbooks are safe on my bookshelf. I've had those cookbooks since 1980, have hauled them across five states, and don't intend to part with them now.



My personal library also includes titles that fall into the Southern humor and literary genres and includes books by Celia Rivenbark, Louis Grizzard, Clayton Sullivan and the young adult author Mildred D. Taylor. There are titles that belong to my husband, as we are an equal opportunity bookshelf-sharing couple, with biographies of Bear Bryant and collections of poetry. I can't forget my college William Shakespeare text and old dictionaries, including the one I had in second grade.

I love my eclectic collection of books, and each provides me with a memory of an event, person or scent, as I swear I can smell Miss Mabel's Chicken Casserole each time I open her notebook. Anyway, I still can't purchase every book I'd like to. That would necessitate evicting my family due to lack of space. Don't wanna go there. I really don't. It wouldn't be pretty. ►►

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