

July 2022

"Great Lives" Biography Book Group Brookfield Public Library 2022-23

Books are available at the Circulation Desk about a month before the meeting. Anyone interested in reading and discussing biographies is welcome!

Monday, August 22, 2022 **1:00pm** **Harnischfeger Room**
***A Woman of No Importance: the Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win WWII* by Sonia Purnell**

In 1942, the Gestapo sent out an urgent transmission: "She is the most dangerous of all Allied spies. We must find and destroy her." This spy was Virginia Hall, a young American woman--rejected from the Foreign Service because of her gender and her prosthetic leg--who talked her way into the spy organization dubbed Churchill's "ministry of ungentlemanly warfare," and, before the United States had even entered the war, became the first woman to deploy to occupied France. At a time when sending female secret agents into enemy territory was still strictly forbidden, Virginia Hall came to be known as the "Madonna of the Resistance," coordinating a network of spies to blow up bridges, report on German troop movements, arrange equipment drops for Resistance agents, and recruit and train guerilla fighters. Even as her face covered WANTED posters throughout Europe, Virginia refused order after order to evacuate. The breathtaking story of how one woman's fierce persistence helped win the war. (Publisher and Polaris summary)

Monday, September 26, 2022 **1:00pm** **Harnischfeger Room**
***Come Fly the World: the Jet Age Story of the Women of Pan Am* by Julia Cooke**

Required to have a college education, speak two languages, and possess the political savvy of a Foreign Service officer, a jet-age stewardess serving on iconic Pan Am between 1966 and 1975 also had to be between 5'3" and 5'9", between 105 and 140 pounds, and under 26 years of age at the time of hire. Cooke's intimate storytelling weaves together the real-life stories of a memorable cast of characters as they embraced the liberation of their new jet-set life. (Polaris summary)

Monday, October 24, 2022 **1:00pm** **Harnischfeger Room**
***Vanderbilt: the Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty* by Anderson Cooper**

When eleven-year-old Cornelius Vanderbilt began to work on his father's small boat ferrying supplies in New York Harbor at the beginning of the nineteenth century, no one could have imagined that one day he would, through ruthlessness, cunning, and a pathological desire for money, build two empires-- one in shipping and another in railroads-- that would make him the richest man in America. His staggering fortune was fought over by his heirs after his death in 1877, sowing familial discord that would never fully heal. By 2018, when the last Vanderbilt was forced out of The Breakers-- the seventy-room summer estate in Newport, Rhode Island, that Cornelius's grandson and namesake had built-- the family would have been unrecognizable to the tycoon who started it all. Moving from the hardscrabble wharves of old Manhattan to the lavish drawing rooms of Gilded Age Fifth Avenue, from the ornate summer palaces of Newport to the courts of Europe, and all the way to modern-day New York, this book recounts the triumphs and tragedies of an American dynasty unlike any other. (Polaris summary)

Monday, November 28, 2022 **1:00pm** **Harnischfeger Room**
***The Real Elizabeth: an Intimate Portrait of Queen Elizabeth II* by Andrew Marr**

Elizabeth II, one of England's longest-reigning monarchs, is an enigma. In public, she confines herself to optimistic pieties and guarded smiles; in private, she is wry, funny, and an excellent mimic. Now, for the first time, one of Britain's leading journalists and historians gets behind the mask and tells us the fascinating story of the real Elizabeth. (Amazon summary)

December NO MEETING

Monday, January 23, 2023 **1:00pm** **Harnischfeger Room**
***Hank and Jim: the Fifty Year Friendship of Henry Fonda and James Stewart* by Scott Eyman**

Henry Fonda and James Stewart were two of the biggest stars in Hollywood for forty years. They became friends and then roommates as stage actors in New York, and when they began making films in Hollywood, they roomed together again. They got along famously, with a shared interest in elaborate practical jokes and model airplanes, among other things. Fonda was a liberal Democrat, Stewart a conservative Republican, but after one memorable blow-up over politics, they agreed never to discuss that subject again. Fonda was a ladies' man who was married five times; Stewart remained married to the same woman for forty-five years. Both men volunteered during World War II and were decorated for their service. This is not another Hollywood story, but a fascinating portrait of an extraordinary friendship that lasted through war, marriages, children, careers, and everything else. (Polaris summary)

July 2022

Monday, February 27, 2023

1:00pm

Harnischfeger Room

***Hidden Figures: the American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly**

Before John Glenn orbited the earth or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of dedicated female mathematicians known as "human computers" used pencils, slide rules and adding machines to calculate the numbers that would launch rockets, and astronauts, into space. Originally relegated to teaching math in the South's segregated public schools, they were called into service during the labor shortages of World War II, when America's aeronautics industry was in dire need of anyone who had the right stuff. They answered Uncle Sam's call, moving to Hampton Virginia and the fascinating, high-energy world of the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory. Even as Virginia's Jim Crow laws required them to be segregated from their white counterparts, the women of Langley's all-black "West Computing" group helped America achieve one of the things it desired most: a decisive victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and complete domination of the heavens. (Publisher summary)

Monday, March 27, 2023

1:00pm

Harnischfeger Room

***The Woman All Spies Fear: Code Breaker Elizebeth Smith Friedman and Her Hidden Life* by Amy Greenfield**

Elizebeth Smith Friedman had a rare talent for spotting patterns and solving puzzles. These skills led her to become one of the top cryptanalysts in America during both World War I and World War II. She originally came to code breaking through her love for Shakespeare when she was hired by an eccentric millionaire to prove that Shakespeare's plays had secret messages in them. Within a year, she had learned so much about code breaking that she was a star in the making. (Polaris summary)

Monday, April 24, 2023

1:00pm

Harnischfeger Room

***Maiden Voyages: Magnificent Ocean Liners and the Women Who Traveled and Worked Aboard Them* by Sian Evans**

During the early twentieth century, transatlantic travel was the province of the great *ocean liners*. It was an extraordinary undertaking made by many women, whose lives were transformed by their journeys between the Old World and the New. Some travelled for leisure, some for work; others to reinvent themselves or find new opportunities. They were celebrities, migrants and millionaires, refugees, aristocrats and crew members whose stories have mostly remained untold-until now. *Maiden Voyages* is a fascinating portrait of these women as they crossed the Atlantic. (Publisher summary)

Monday, May 22, 2023

1:00pm

Harnischfeger Room

***Eva Braun: Life with Hitler* by Heike Gortemaker**

In this groundbreaking biography of Eva Braun, German historian Heike Görtemaker reveals Hitler's mistress as more than just a vapid blonde whose concerns never extended beyond her vanity table. Twenty-three years his junior, Braun first met Hitler when she took a position as an assistant to his personal photographer. Capricious, but uncompromising and fiercely loyal—she married Hitler two days before committing suicide with him in Berlin in 1945—her identity was kept secret by the Third Reich until the final days of the war. Through exhaustive research, newly discovered documentation, and anecdotal accounts, Görtemaker turns preconceptions about Eva Braun and Hitler on their head, and builds a portrait of the little-known Hitler far from the public eye. (Polaris summary)

Monday, June 26, 2023

1:00pm

Harnischfeger Room

Selection Meeting for the 2023-24 season. Cast your votes!

Monday, July 24, 2023

1:00pm

Harnischfeger Room

***The Woman They Could Not Silence: One Woman, Her Incredible Fight For Freedom and the Men Who Tried to Make Her Disappear* by Kate Moore**

1860: The enemy sits across the table and sleeps in the next room. Threatened by Elizabeth's intellect, independence, and outspokenness, her husband of twenty-one years is plotting against her and makes a plan to put her back in her place. One summer morning, he has her committed to an insane asylum. But most disturbing is that Elizabeth is *not* the only sane *woman* confined to the institution. There are many rational women on her ward who tell the same story: *they've* been committed to keep them in line. Elizabeth is about to discover that the merit of losing everything is that you then have nothing to lose. (Publisher summary)