

YOU'VE GOT MEL – MAY 2007

MEL-O NITES IN MERIDA – Friday, JUNE 1, 2007

The next party will be held at the Library from 7:00 to 11:00 pm. We appreciate the donation of botanas (appetizers). As always there will be a cash bar! This is a public event, so bring along some friends to mingle with the other nationals and internationals present.

#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

How can I make a case for supporting MEL, when suffering in our community and throughout the world cries for our compassion?

We must be compassionate or we are lesser human beings -- we must seek ways to help victims of Hurricane Katrina, prevent and search for cures for cancer, AIDS and Alzheimer's and prevent cruelty to animals. The support of Alberga San Jose over many years and the recent out pouring of support for Brazos Abiertos is a stunning manifestation of selfless compassion and we encourage the community's continued support. Compassion is a powerful emotion. It derives, I believe, from our capacity to identify with other people. This capacity to put ourselves in the other person's shoes causes us to feel the pain the other person is feeling and we are moved to help alleviate the pain.

Motives for support of a library are more diverse and ambiguous. Oh, compassion may play a part. Visit the library on Saturday mornings and see the pleasure and education the children gain from the "Story Hour". That alone would move some of us. Many support the library because it is important for our own satisfaction. We need books and we enjoy the events bringing Yucatecans and newer residents together. Still, I think there is a more important yet more subtle reason for our support of the library. The reason is not as powerful as seeing a friend suffer from breast cancer, but, deep down inside, I think that we understand that our culture shapes the depth of our humanness. Perhaps we have a vestigial memory of civilization in the dark ages before the printed word brought on the age of enlightenment. Arguably the printed word is the greatest advancement of civilization since human beings learned to speak. Maybe I am over-reaching but I think we do understand that a culture in which books are readily accessible -- in which knowledge, wisdom and literature is shared and the exchange of ideas encouraged -- is a richer, healing culture in which folks understand one another and themselves better.

We folks who grew up somewhere else chose to live here because of the rich culture. How then do we participate?

Maybe the best way we show respect for the indigenous culture is through sharing something quieter, more noble and more enduring than our materialism and media entertainment -- The Merida English Library.

Soon, you will be receiving a letter from me asking for your support of the library. This is part of the annual fund drive, which supports many of the MEL's programs. Also the board of directors has declared the month of July to be FOOD FOR THOUGHT MONTH. During the month of July we are asking members to invite guests to dinner parties and asking their guests to contribute 500 pesos per couple to the MEL. These funds will go to the construction of a new pavilion this summer at the rear of the garden. Stop by and see a power point show of the plans.

Grant Spradling, President.

#### 2007 FUND RAISING DRIVE

Please watch your email for the latest on our Annual Fund Drive – GREAT EXPECTATIONS. We are counting on YOU, our membership, to continue the momentum, which we have built up these last few years!

#### MEMBERSHIP

Our membership continues to grow. In the first five months of this year, we have added 55 new members, bringing to almost 421 the number of current memberships. Counting the family members who have access to our materials, that amounts to almost 600 individuals! I am very pleased with the number of people renewing their memberships. Those, whose membership expired this month, can expect to get a notice soon about their need to renew. We are on the verge of making some major changes here at MEL and we need your continued support. If you are unsure when your membership expires, please give us a call at 924-8401.

#### CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

Story Hour continues Saturday mornings at 10 am. Sangeeta Isvaran will not be available, as she has taken on some new undertakings. Erin Nolan will be here to share stories with the children for the next few weeks.

#### HOUSE AND GARDEN TOURS

Our weekly House and Garden Tours are done until next fall. Many thanks to all who attended and to Keith Heitke for putting on so many miles on the

streets of Merida this past season! After Keith buys some new shoes, the tours will resume in November.

## PLANT SALES

With Spring in the air (up north that is) it is time to get on with your planting. The Library has a myriad of plants for sale at just 15 pesos each! These are great plants even though we cannot tell you their names...LOL. Many thanks to Lynn Roberts and Luis Abdala for keeping us stocked with plants all year round.

## NEW LOGO MERCHANDISE and NEEM PRODUCTS

Sam Woodruff has completed a new whimsical logo for MEL merchandise, as we have run out of aprons and book bags and magnets. We hope to add some T-shirts in the Fall. We need the name of a good silk screener in Centro, if anyone has any suggestions. At the same time, we need to locate someone willing to sew 20 or so aprons and book bags, which will also carry the new logo.

Don't forget that we still carry a line of NEEM products. The Botanical Outdoor Oil is especially useful this time of year!

## PAUL HARTLEY'S BOOK REVIEWS

A Fountain Filled With Blood, Julia Spencer-Fleming.

A series of gay-bashings has occurred in a small town in northeast New York beyond Saratoga in the Adirondacks. The local Episcopal curate, Clare Fergusson, and her friend the police chief investigate. We all know someone who seems to have the ethical side of life figured out. Not that it is any easier for her to do the right thing than the rest of us, but she does have a keen sense of what that is. Not propaganda, just a search for light in a very dark place. Careful plotting, not like *The Maltese Falcon*, where it takes a half hour of Bogie talking very fast to lay it out, but things you don't expect right up to the last page.

Heretic, Bernard Cornwell.

It used to be stories had bad guys who were handicapped by their badness, and good guys could deliver a happy ending. Lone Ranger, Perry Mason, Three Musketeers. More recently, bad guys are highly organized, have unlimited funding, and if the good guy survives at all, it's sheer luck or conflicts among the villains. Hannibal Lecter, *Die Hard*, *Braveheart*. This is that latter kind of story set in 14th century southern France, a Grail pursuit.

To give the flavor, a callous brute sends two of his henchmen to cut the throat of a sick relative so he can take his property, and when taxed with the crime, he claims the right to trial by combat, hacks his accomplices to death with a sword, thus "proving" himself innocent of the murder. This carnival of treachery, brutality, sadistic torture and raw butchery leaves the reader rooting for the Plague to erase these affronts to the name of Mankind. Is this how depraved we have become? I cannot recommend this book. Of course, it was a best-seller, and Hollywood will probably make it into a movie in order to depict its barbarians in explicit detail.

Dark of the Sun, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

A vampire story, but he is a gentleman (doesn't steal blood, talks his victims into giving it to him). Set in 535 when the Krakatoa volcano exploded, blasting a deep-water channel between Sumatra and Java and blanketing the planet with debris for two years, resulting in famine, disease, death to millions, and dire social disruption. Franciscus leaves his trading company on the China coast and travels overland to his home soil in Transylvania. The tone is not one of horror so much as a historical exploration of how people deal with privation, fear and suspicion of foreigners (makes our life in Yucatan seem so easy!), at a time when primitive communications/travel meant nobody really knew what was going on. I'd recommend it. (Part of a series.)

Psmith in the City, P G Wodehouse.

Psmith (the P is silent) gets his first job in The City (Americans would say on Wall Street). He has an unerring grasp of the faults and failings of those around him, and, sincerely committed to making the world a better place, tries to help them overcome these. He is baffled to find that many positively refuse to improve themselves. Plenty of comedy here, but also I found much that was very touching. It is a little surprising that this book was first published in 1910! As to the chapter on cricket, can anybody out there explain to me the scoring in cricket? It seems a very civilized game: players wear nice clothes, don't get dirty, serious injuries are unheard-of, and there are no bench-emptying brawls that disfigure basketball, baseball, and rugby. But scoring is a mystery to me.

NEW ACQUISITIONS FOR MEL

At the recommendation of the Acquisitions Committee, we have purchased the following titles to enhance the Maya, Merida, Yucatan History collection-

Foster Handbook of Life in the Ancient Maya World  
Lanyon Malinche's Conquest  
Perera Unfinished Conquest  
Tedlock Breath on the Mirror  
Whittington Sport of Life and Death : The Mesoamerican Ballgame

Our members have contributed the following titles –

Coben The Innocent  
Deaver Devil's Teardrop  
Freedman Killing in the Valley  
Grisham An Innocent Man (non-fiction)  
Halpern Winter's Tale  
Higgins Without Mercy  
McGee So Sings Blue Deer  
Roberts Three Fates  
Sandford Hanged Man's Song  
Smith 2 ½ Pillars of Wisdom  
ETC.

New Children's Books in English and/or Spanish!

Diego (ES) Dwarf Wizard of Uxmal (E)  
El Arbol (S) Buenos Noches Luna (S)  
Woman Who Outshone the Sun (ES) Angel's Kite (ES)  
Calavera Abecedario (Day of the Dead) (ES) Dream Carver (E)  
Las Posadas (Hispanic Christmas) (E) Mario's Mayan Journey (E)  
Secrets in Stone (Maya Hieroglyphics) (E) Looking for Jaguar (poetry) (E)  
Home for Navidad (E)

THIS JUST IN...30 NEW LARGE PRINT BOOKS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Thanks to the generosity of Susan Webster Union County Public Library, Monroe, NC. Check them out!

COMMUNITY NEWS!

The US Consulate has a new link for you where you will find all kinds of wonderful information. The link is [www.merida.usconsulate.gov](http://www.merida.usconsulate.gov)

Did you know the Centro post office has moved? It is now located on Calle 53 between 52 y 54! I found out the hard way...

The International Women's Group Calendar can be accessed by following this

link – [www.calendar.yahoo.com/merida\\_iwc](http://www.calendar.yahoo.com/merida_iwc)

The Men's Group meets at 9:00 am the first and third Tuesday of the month at Bistro Kaapej (above Benedetti's Pizza) at the corner of Calle 29 and Prolongacion Montejo. Contact Roger at 924-6792. All are welcome!

Community Calendar - Tired of trying to figure out when all of those Library and community events are taking place? We have put together a calendar of events from June 2007 to June 2008 of various events – MEL, IWC, Men's Group, Brazos Abiertos, etc. If you know of any worthwhile community event, which should be on our calendar, please contact us ASAP. The Calendar will be ready by mid-June....

#### ADMINISTRATOR'S RAMBLINGS

If you have not visited the MEL Web site for a period of time, I invite you to do so again! That's [www.meridaenglishlibrary.com](http://www.meridaenglishlibrary.com). With the kindness and co-operation of Ellen and Jim Fields at Eclectic, the site has been updated. You can now go there and read the latest edition of You've Got MEL and other interesting things about the Library. Soon, we will be adding a calendar with community events so you can plan ahead (as mentioned above). If our plans work out, you can apply for a membership, renew your membership and make a donation to MEL online! We are exploring PayPal, which allows our members to renew memberships online. This will make it more convenient for the members who are in the US and Canada to keep current. Members will not have to come into MEL to renew. It also provides an opportunity for visitors to the site to make donations to MEL, directly from their bank account or with a credit card.

THE SERVICE IS NOT YET AVAILABLE! We will inform you when it does come online.

Reg Deneau  
Administrator  
MEL