

Opinions

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Stephen Milligan

I promised I wouldn't buy any new books – and that's mostly true

At the beginning of the year, you might recall, I set myself a challenge in an effort to at least make a small dent in my never-ending backlog of books. Given my inability to stop acquiring books faster than I consume them, I decided to put an arbitrary pause on the former to try and encourage quicker progress on the latter.

So, I promised myself I would no longer buy any new books this year until I had read 100 books I previously owned before the beginning of 2021.

I have done a fairly job of sticking to that. I bought one or two books that I excused as simply upgrading

existing books I owned — replacing a ratty old paperback with a nice hardback, in each case. Since I rid myself of the older copy, my store of books did not increase ultimately, which I told myself meant they didn't really count toward my prohibition.

I got a few books for my birthday, but I didn't buy those myself, so those didn't count, either.

I might have cheated once or twice with a book from a thrift store, but hey, no one ever said this would be easy.

I have, however, most definitely read more books than I have bought this year, which was the primary point of all this.

So far, I have read 53 books since the beginning of 2021 that I had

purchased prior to the end of 2020, which puts me slightly more than halfway to my goal.

I have, to be fair, prioritized the shorter volumes so far to maximize production. I read all six Oz books of L. Frank Baum's original output I missed when I was younger, none of which took me more than a couple of hours to complete, for instance. There were also a few graphic novels in there and, so far, two James Bond novels — Ian Fleming didn't waste space on extraneous prose, believe me.

Still, there were a few fat books of essays and criticism in there, some short story collections, a couple of mystery novels and quite a few fantasy epics I needed to catch up on, so it hasn't all been upgraded pic-

ture books, I promise.

The problem is, I'm running out of short books. It only took me three months to get to the midway point of my goal, but without any more 200-pagers in my collection, it'll be a bit more challenging to stick to that pace on the 500-, 600- and 700-page doorstops still in my path.

I do have a host of Tarzan books I haven't read yet, though, and those aren't terribly long. I'm more likely to tackle those next than "Don Quixote," at least.

I gotta hurry, either way. I'd like to be done by summer vacation so I can stock up on new books wherever I go this season.

Stephen Milligan is the news editor of The Walton Tribune. His email address is stephen.milligan@waltontribune.com.

Emily Hayes

Rearranging furniture, and rearranging my life

My teenage daughter spent a good chunk of her spring break last week cleaning out the bottom floor of our house.

The past nine months have shown our family moved to Georgia with far too much stuff, and the sheer amount of clutter has hindered our ability to fully enjoy that bonus space. So out went the junk, and what is left I plan to rearrange.

My daughter hates when I rearrange. It's one of her most dreaded words. Once a year, without fail, I get an urge to freshen things up, see if there's a better way for a room to function, see if there's something that needs more focus — or less. It's usually not every room at once, although that's not a complete impossibility.

My thought process begins with a single piece of furniture, and goes a little something like this:

"If the office shelf was against that back wall and out of the main area, the traffic would flow more smoothly downstairs. And since Cora isn't using that smaller room for a playroom, why not move the office in there, then move the treadmill out with the TV, plus we can move the record player next to the big comfy chair and all the bookshelves together on one wall and we can have the media room I envisioned when I first looked at the house and then we can finish hanging records on the walls and then everything will be in its magic spot and the room will be more simple and my life will be more simple and everything in the house will flow much more easily and thus my life will flow much more easily ..."

Yep. Something like that. It may sound silly, but rearranging my home feels a little like New Year's Day. There's a fresh start, and the new positioning opens up new ways of moving, and those



new ways of moving open up new ways of doing other small

things and it can end up having a snowball effect.

I do my personal organizational systems in a similar way. For years I've used a Happy Planner for my family calendars and various lists, and I stay pretty on top of things. But about once a year, without fail, I get an urge to freshen things up, see if there's a better way for my days to function, see if there's something in my life that needs more focus — or less.

Recently I found a notebook system that directs me to plan out my monthly goals, then break them down into weekly goals, then each morning I distinguish my few priority tasks — those tasks that work toward my defined goals — apart from my basic to-do list, which can take up most of my time and make me feel busy, yet not accomplished.

Game changer.

Have I tried other systems before? Of course. Have they always made my life easier? Of course not. But sometimes a new way sparks new thinking — even if it doesn't ultimately become the greatest way ever.

In all areas of my life, I try to be open to the possibility there might be a better way. A more profound way to reflect upon my day, a more efficient drive to pick up the girls from school, a more flavorful way to cook salmon, and a more proficient way to budget and track expenses. It might seem on the surface that I'm a little Angelica Schuyler and will never be satisfied. But it's not that way at all. It's more about the hope that comes only from an open heart ... and an open floor plan.

Emily Hayes is an advertising consultant for The Walton Tribune. Her email address is emily.hayes@waltontribune.com.

Letter to the editor



Piedmont Walton Hospital opened in 2018. David Cannon | Special to The Tribune

An open letter about my care at Piedmont Walton

Editor's note: A former patient of Piedmont Walton Hospital submitted this open letter to the hospital's CEO, Larry Ebert, to the newspaper.

Dear Mr. Ebert:

You are one fortunate man to work with such fine people at your wonderful hospital. Walton County needs to know what a good hospital we have. I know a good hospital when I see one because I have been a patient in five area hospitals and my husband was in seven.

Today, one of your employees, Miquel Little, volunteered on his off time to bring me a huge suitcase that was left behind. To Madison! It had all my insulin pump equipment.

I had left him gas money at security, but he refused to take it. I was so overwhelmed by his kindness and generosity. What a good soul!

Also, Kathy Timm helped organize his endeavor. If you don't know what a jewel she is, you should. She's one of the finest people I know.

I got really sick, suddenly, and went to your Emergency Department. That

Get more

In the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the community turned out to support health care heroes at Piedmont Walton. Read more about this support in Visions, our annual progress edition. **Coming April 28.**

whole crew was impressive. After an X-ray, I was wheeled into emergency surgery. God placed Dr Nathaniel Hill there at the right time to literally save my life. What an incredibly kind and competent surgeon! He looked me in the eye and listened and explained better than any of the many surgeons I know. He's incredibly skilled because he had to remove, re-route, and clean an abdomen that had exploded in the grossest fashion. I am so grateful to be alive. Dr. Hill is my hero.

Additionally, I was cared by a nursing staff that has improved incredibly from years past. Did you train them at Disney? Their customer service skills were better than any bigger hospital in the area. Anke, especially, was an angel in the middle of the night. I may not have her name quite right.

Other names stand out despite the fog of anesthe-

sia: Soumini, Tatiana, Samantha, Haley Witcher, Jessica, Amber, Sweet Shelby, June, Liz, Ian, Irene, Jazz, and that sweet, sassy April Austin. These folks went above and beyond to help me get well. They also took the time to talk to me about their backgrounds, which were varied and fascinating.

One other person to note was the kindest, most tender person who draws blood in the middle of the night. I think his name is Pierre. He had a technique that caused no pain. Thank him for me, please.

Our hospital compliments our community. It responds with care and compassion to all crises, especially during the pandemic.

I hope I never need your services ever again, but if I do I know I'll be in good hands. My compliments to all your doctors, nurses, and support personnel.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Yancey
Monroe

Submit letters to the editor by email to david.clemons@waltontribune.com, or by writing Editor and Publisher David Clemons at The Walton Tribune, P.O. Box 808, Monroe, GA 30655. Letters must be signed with the writer's address and telephone number, for verification purposes.