

CONCORD READS 2016

“When Books Went to War”

The Stories That Helped Us Win World War II

Author Molly Guptill Manning will be in Concord April 21

CONCORD---Community members, book lovers and history buffs are invited to read the New York Times best seller “When Books Went to War,” this year’s selection for the city-wide literary event “Concord Reads.” The book, now available in print and electronic form through the Concord Public Library, tells the little-known story of an extraordinary effort that brought millions of free books to American troops during World War II. Critics have praised [“When Books Went to War”](#) as a “highly readable” and engrossing account that offers “a fresh perspective on the trials of war and the power of books.”

Author Molly Guptill Manning will be at the Red River Theatres on April 21 at 7 p.m. to discuss her work with host Laura Kiernan and answer questions from the audience. The event, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the [Concord Public Library Foundation](#) and its community partners, including The Concord Monitor and the Lincoln Financial Group, which provided funds to supply extra copies of the book for library patrons.

Concord Reads was launched 14 years ago by a small group of local residents who teamed with the public library to forge community connections by encouraging citizens of all ages and backgrounds to read and discuss the themes and ideas in the same book. According to the American Library Association, “One Community, One Book” programs have been established nationwide as communities “embraced the notion of civic unity through the reading of literature.” Find out more about Concord Reads on the [Concord Public Library](#) website.

The story of “When Books Went to War” begins with librarians who were outraged at the Nazis’ campaign that burned and banned millions of books in Europe during World War II. In what Manning describes as “the largest book drive in American history,” librarians collected

more than 20 million donated books to be sent to soldiers and sailors overseas. The War Department and the publishing industry followed with a unique program that produced 120 million small, lightweight paperback books that could be carried by soldiers and sailors during the war effort. Known as “Armed Services Editions” (ASEs), these unique books, which launched a new paperback industry, were treasured by the troops who found them to be a source of comfort and relief from the fear, and sometimes the boredom of wartime service. A recent [editorial in the Concord Monitor](#), described the impact:

“The books were often a serviceman’s only form of entertainment and only way, for a time, to transport oneself beyond the horror of war. They were often a soldier’s first experience of reading for pleasure, a habit that lasted long beyond the war’s end. “

Copies of “When Books Went to War” are available at the Concord Public Library in print, large print and audiobook, and the e-book can be downloaded through the library's website at www.concordpubliclibrary.net . A selection of Armed Services Edition (ASE) books is now on display at the Concord Public Library.

An interview with local World War II veteran Gordon McKinnon about his memories of reading ASE books during his military service is now available on Concord Community Television (CCTV) Channel 22 every Thursday at 2 p.m.; Friday at 1 p.m.; Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and, starting March 9, Wednesday at 6 a.m. Live streaming of the interview is also available on the same schedule at <http://www.yourconcordtv.org/channels-and-content/channel-22-live/>.

The interview, conducted by Laura Kiernan, was produced by the Concord Public Library Foundation in partnership with CCTV and volunteer videographer Dan Walsh.

For further information about Concord Reads 2016 and “When Books Went to War,” contact Laura Kiernan at lkiernannh@gmail.com.

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