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Volunteers, donors keep Burlingame's library thriving

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A World War II veteran has donated thousands of hours to the Burlingame Library Foundation for nearly 30 years, part of a program of volunteers like him who help fill gaps in needs.

Roger Krakow will be 100 years old in a few weeks, but it doesn't stop him from giving back to the community. He helps organize, price and send out donated books the foundation sells. Every year, it's about 60,000 books. The foundation then uses those funds for library renovation projects or other needs.



Roger Krakow walks amongst the books at the Burlingame Library that will be sold to raise funds.

“It is a very, very satisfying job because you are dealing with nice people, dealing with books, and it keeps me active,” said Krakow, who added he tries to volunteer two to three times a week.

Krakov said he is blessed to have a very fortunate life. He grew up in Davenport, Iowa, on the Mississippi River. Krakow enlisted in the U.S. Army in December 1942 when he was 18. At one point during his training, he lived in an empty library. Krakow trained to be a mechanic but saw the airplanes taking off on the other end of the field and decided he wanted to participate in the fun. He took a test, passed and became a navigator for the Army's De Havilland DH 98 Mosquito aircraft, the fastest plane in the world at the time, he said. Krakow traveled the world during his time in the service.

"It was quite an adventure," Krakow said. "Everyone was in it together."

Shortly after his military service, he attended Cornell University, where he studied and earned a degree in hotel management. Krakow eventually reached California, where he ran a small hotel for 50 years in San Francisco.

The foundation was first started in 1995 by some volunteers and Alfred Escoffier, the librarian at the time. Krakow said he was introduced to the foundation nearly 30 years ago by helping his wife, who organized a party for the library's new addition.

Since then, Krakow has been an integral part of the foundation, foundation Executive Director Sarah Simson said.

"He is such a treasure, and I feel so lucky to know him, and for the organization's lifetime, he has been there helping," Simson said.

The foundation has 15 bookselling volunteers and 18 members of the Board of Directors. Volunteers like Krakow come in regularly to sort, list, price and sell books online and for bi-annual book sales, in which Krakow is heavily involved, Simson said.

Krakov has been busy lately preparing for the library's sales in the Lane Room Oct. 12, 14 and 15. Books are between 50 cents and \$2.

The foundation looks for creative ways to fundraise. It's hosting a Frank Sinatra event 5:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 22, in the library. Author Tom Santopietro, who wrote several books about Sinatra, will be sharing some behind-the-scenes-type stories. Musician Tony DeSare will be covering some of Sinatra's songs during the event.

Simson said tickets are on sale for \$75 online, and the proceeds go toward the library, which needs some renovating. The foundation accepts cash, stocks and donated books. Last year, the foundation gave the library more than \$150,000, she added.

"In this community," she said, "we are fortunate to have people who are generous with their money."

Visit Burlingamelibraryfoundation.org for ways to donate or volunteer.