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High Plains Library District

CommUNITY

AUGUST 2024

BRING BACK THE BROWSE

PAGE 7

HIGH PLAINS LIBRARY DISTRICT

Marian Poeppelmeyer Interview

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What do you have to say about our newsletter? Think about this as our Letters to the Editor option. If you have something to say about our newsletter, head to mylibrary.us/letters to get your feedback in the right hands.

Interview: **Marian Poeppelmeyer**

On November 1st, 1955, United Air Lines Flight 629 exploded high above northern Colorado, about 8 miles east of Longmont, killing all aboard.

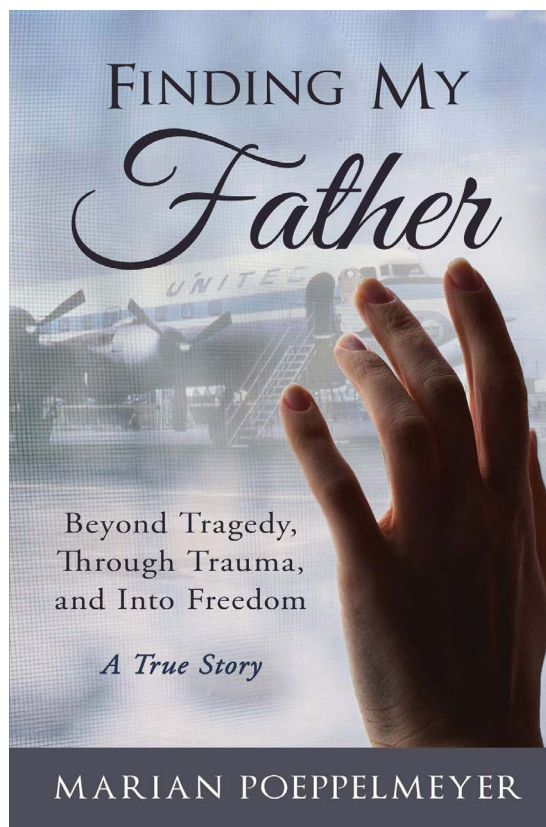
A short time later, investigators discovered that the explosion was intentional, that John Gilbert Graham had placed a package of dynamite in his mother's luggage before she boarded Flight 629. His motives seem to have been a combination of resentment towards his mother as well as plans to collect a life insurance payout.

In just over a year's time, Graham was caught, convicted, and executed for his crime.

It's a story that long-time residents of Weld County know a bit about, maybe just a few of the facts, maybe something about how this was a landmark case that changed air travel forever. But there's a lot more to the story because in every tragedy of this type, there are countless people we may not hear from, people whose lives are forever changed.

Marian Poeppelmeyer is one of those people. Marian's father, Marion Pierce Hobgood, was one of the passengers aboard Flight 629.

In her book, *Finding My Father*, Marian writes about her experience growing up without her father, coming to terms with the cruel actions of her father's killer, and trying



to find peace between the big headlines and deeply personal aspects of the bombing of Flight 629.

HPLD is hosting Marian for two events, one at Carbon Valley Regional Library on Wednesday, August 14th, and one at LINC Library Innovation Center on Thursday, August 15th. We'd love for you to attend, and we did a short interview with Marian so that you can hear a little more about her story and what to expect from her upcoming events.

HPLD: Your story has a lot to do with Flight #629, which was bombed in midair over Weld County in 1955, because your father was a passenger aboard the flight. Tell us a little bit about your perspective as someone

who has such a close, personal connection to such a big, shocking tragedy.

Marian Poeppelmeyer: Overall, in most every mass killing or violent crime, media attention swirls around the crime itself and the criminal. However, it's the families of the victims that are always forgotten. They are left to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. Economically and emotionally, their lives are forever changed by the ripple effects of the loss and trauma.

In the case of Flight 629, the hundreds of heroic acts, way beyond the call of duty, performed by the hundreds of

ordinary everyday citizens, have also been forgotten and lost. They experienced trauma differently than my mother and my family.

On a personal level, it's very painful. My dad was gone forever and remained a mystery. His loss left a deep void – a crevasse – in my life. My mother was left instantly widowed with a 15-month-old and another baby on the way (me), and feared how she would even survive.

HPLD: I wanted to ask you about some of the locations you visited as part of this. First, Flyteco Tower, which is a brewery and restaurant on the site of the former Stapleton Airport, from which Flight #629 took off. Tell us a little bit about your experience there.

MP: I learned that Flyteco Tower, a family-oriented restaurant was opening up at the old Stapleton Airport in 2022, around the time of our first trip to Denver. So, I contacted the owners of Flyteco Tower and introduced myself. The restaurant wasn't opened yet in time for our visit, but the owners graciously opened the doors for a private tour with my husband and I. They took us up onto the rooftop and showed us the runway where my dad's flight took off from. It was yet another point in resolution, as I, in my mind, waved good-bye to my dad. None of the passengers or crew could have known it was their last flight. Nor could the air traffic controllers who determined that it was Flight 629 that went down and sounded the alarm.

I recommend everyone visit this three-story restaurant, built by pilots, for pilots, with an aviation theme. They brew their own beer, too! I can't say enough about the owners, they are kind, gracious, and have created a great place with good food for the public. They love history, too.

HPLD: You also made a stop at the Armory in downtown Greeley, and it sounds like there are new things happening there as well. Can you tell us a little about that?

MP: The State Armory in Greeley is also a must for anyone to visit. Registered as a historical building, it is rich in history, has unusual stories and unique décor, some of it from Hollywood. In World War I, it was a military training facility. By 1955 it would have been a dance hall. The night of Flight 629, though, it became a makeshift morgue, the last resting place for the bodies until they were released to their families for burial. So, as the FBI began to identify the individuals, ambulances ran back and forth throughout the next day. For me, again, another further point of resolution and healing.

Again, unless I had undergone tremendous healing from the death of my dad, I could not have made this historic visit to Denver and Weld County in 2022 and could not have handled a tour of the Armory without being an emotional wreck.

HPLD: When you contacted people in the process of writing your book, like those at Flyteco or the Armory, and told them a little bit about your story and your plans, what have their reactions been like?

MP: When I researched for my book, I didn't think of going to Weld County – I thought it was too far away and costly. I also didn't know exactly where in Weld County the plane went down, nor did I know anyone. So, I delved into anything I could find on Flight 629 through the internet. I also came upon the 50th anniversary documentary (2005) done by CBS4 Denver reporter, Rick Sallinger. I wrote Rick Sallinger and thanked him for remembering Flight 629. I told him why it meant so much to me. He contacted me immediately and introduced me to Rick Tittle of Milliken. Rick Sallinger also said if I was ever able to come out, to let him know.

Soon after, ABC7 Denver reporter Jeff Anastasio contacted me. From there, doors opened up for me to speak and share my heart and story. So, yes, I was pleasantly surprised at the warm welcome by anyone I spoke to.

HPLD: You met several people who were on the ground when the plane exploded, and many of them, as teenagers, went out into the fields and found, covered, and protected the victims' bodies. Tell us a little about some of these folks and what they're like all these years later.

MP: My husband and I made our first huge road trip to visit the beet fields, only knowing Rick Tittle, Rick Sallinger, and Jeff Anastasio. I am very thankful for all of them. Prior to coming, I garnished the courage to contact Conrad Hopp, thanks to Rick Tittle who knew Conrad, not knowing if he would even want to talk with me. Conrad and Martha Hopp,

residents of Firestone, are probably the only known eyewitnesses and the first onto the beet fields that night. We met for the first time, and it was incredible – I could finally thank people – the forgotten and unsung heroes – for what they did that night. It was a memorable meeting and our hearts have been knit ever since. Conrad is a big teddy bear, and Martha a dear sweet woman. Conrad and Martha brought healing to me, and he has said that I brought healing to him after all these years of suffering from what they saw and experienced. We represent two other sides of the story of Flight 629 that were never told. That of a surviving family member and that of a "rescuer." It's beautiful.

HPLD: I took this excerpt from your website:

In that moment, I had a choice - to choose life or death. Hanging onto that hate would imprison me forever, bringing death. Choosing life meant doing the impossible. Frodo fought that same choice.

My mission? To completely forgive the murderer.



And, the evil ring that held power over me? Hate, anger, and their companions - bitterness and resentment. I knew it was now or never or I'd be forever swallowed by those evil entities...

Forgiving your father's murderer seems like a very tall order. What were some of the first steps you took in the direction of forgiveness?

MP: To be honest, I didn't want to forgive the murderer. When all my repressed emotions exploded in my forties, I couldn't even say his name and didn't want to. After all, I was justified, right? Didn't he take my dad away from me and my family? And, didn't he get the death penalty? I had a strong faith and knew I needed to forgive, but could not bring myself to forgive the man who killed my dad. So, what steps did I take?

I didn't take any, but I did turn to God and asked Him to help me along my healing journey. Since I didn't want to — God gently pushed and nudged me towards being willing to forgive and break free from the bitterness, hate, and anger I held in my heart. He knew what would bring the freedom I so desperately needed and wanted. Ultimately, I asked for His grace (His help) to do what I could not do by myself. You know what? He did!

If I say more, it would spoil the book's ending!

HPLD: Can you share anything about your father, maybe a short anecdote or personality quirk, that would help us understand the kind of person he was?

MP: Growing up, my stepfather never allowed my mother to talk about my real biological dad. So, my dad was a huge mystery to me. Over the course of my adult years, I learned bits and pieces. Everyone who knew him would tell me, "He was the most kind, forgiving and loving man ever." He loved life, he danced with my mom, he and she climbed mountains and skied. Recently, I came across a resume of his: he did indeed work on early microwave and radar technology both in the army in WW2 and for Philco. So, when I look at my microwave oven every day, I think of him!

My father's mother doted on him and always feared him flying around the country, but I learned that he would continually say, with his deep southern accent, "Ma, I know my maker, I'm not afraid of flying. When He says it's time to go, I'll be ready!"

Side note: Philco, who sent my father on that trip, had a choice between my dad going to Oregon or another man. Philco knew my dad was expecting another baby, but sent him instead anyway. I think my dad was "ready" and the other man wasn't. It's the only answer that makes sense to me.

HPLD: Your mother, raising two kids on her own in the 50s, must have been a strong person. What might have been some of her sources of strength?

MP: My mom's faith kept her strong. She told me that, during the year before, their Methodist Adult Sunday School class studied the book *The Will of God* by Leslie Weatherhead, who came from England after WW2 to bring healing and resolution to America. It was as if God was preparing her, she said.

When I heard her story for the first time in 1997, she said that Nancy, my sister (who will be here in August with me) and I gave her a reason to live. She could not go on living except for us, she said.

She never carried a bitter or angry bone in her. In 1997, that same day she told her story, she said her heart went out to the killer's wife and that she had baby like Nancy and I. This is the legacy my mom left me. She was full of grace and mercy to all, and fun-loving.

My mother told me in 1997: "There was not a couple more in love with each other than your dad and I...and not a day has gone by in 42 years that I have not thought of your dad."

HPLD: Such a personal story seems like it might be difficult to write about. Did you feel any fear about baring your feelings to the world in writing this book?

MP: YES! Unequivocally YES! I had much fear and trepidation when writing my book. I cried so much as I wrote it. How do I bear my heart? People here in Columbus who have known me for decades knew nothing about my dad or my healing journey. I was afraid, but I knew I had to write it. I knew I had to be authentic, honest, and gut level transparent. You'll see that I researched various topics to write my chapters (Scenes) to explain my experiences and back my writing. But at the same time, I wanted to write my story in such a way that anyone reading the book could be healed and encouraged for their own lives. I didn't want it to be just about me — nor any plain "how to get over trauma manual." I wanted everyone to know there is hope for whatever they may be facing in life.

HPLD: We'd love for people to come to your upcoming library events at LINC and Carbon Valley Regional Library in early August. What else can you tell us about these events that might entice people to come and spend the evening hearing your story?

MP: I'll not just discuss Flight 629, but I'll provide a heart-to-heart talk on how this trauma affected our family and how we survived. I call this the ripple effect of trauma. I'll bring artifacts of my father, historic newspaper reprints, and even pieces of debris of the plane that Mayor Whitlow of Mead gave me. We'll do a question and answer, too. It'll be a message of hope, healing, and inspiration.

[**Details about the event at Carbon Valley Regional Library on Wednesday, August 14th, here.**](#)

[**Details about the event at LINC Library Innovation Center on Thursday, August 15th, here.**](#)

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Bring Back the Browse!

Let me tell you about the bookstore of my dreams.

You might think, being a librarian, that my ideal bookstore is organized, modern, well-lit, clean, and generally, er, pleasant.

But it's not.

Because while those bookstores photograph well, and while those bookstores are great when you are looking for a specific title, there's something...sterile about the experience. Something that makes you feel like the store was designed and organized using big data to calculate exactly where the movie tie-in copies of *Dune* should be stocked to maximize sales.

Those bookstores have their place, but the missing element is that I never feel like I'm going to walk in and find something new. I never feel like I'm going to find out about a type of book I've never considered before, or that I'm going to uncover some forgotten pulp horror gem about, I don't know, a chainsaw that gains sentience and goes on a rampage, and the only one who can stop it is a man with the magical power to create rust with his mind!

What the big bookstores are missing is the human touch. The bookstore of my dreams is a little chaotic. Yes, there might be a pile of books in the middle of an aisle, and, yes, you might think those books are going to be shelved very soon, but when you come back 6 months later, the pile is

in the exact same spot.

The bookstore of my dreams has stuff in the window that has been completely destroyed by the sun. Just obliterated.

The bookstore of my dreams is probably run by a cantankerous, but lovable, old guy who has a soft spot for cats and epic fantasy sagas and no intention of ever creating an online storefront.

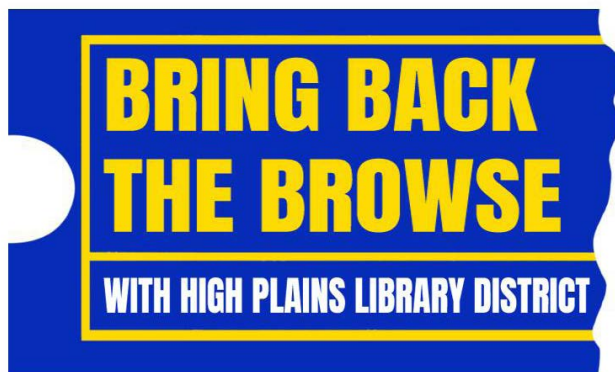
The bookstore of my dreams does not have an inventory, and there's no computer to look things up. You just have to walk around.

There's treasure, and like all treasures, it has to be hunted.

And that hunt for the perfect book is the biggest part of this whole thing. Because that's gone from my life, and I miss it dearly.

I miss browsing. I miss going to Blockbuster, or Hollywood Video, or Toddy-O-Video (I think that's what it was called, you longtime Greeley residents) and just kind of looking around.

I miss walking the perimeter of the rental store, checking out what's new, and then asking for a voucher so I could rent something that was "guaranteed" to be in stock. This happened to me exactly once, and I, as a 13 year-old boy who enjoyed movies with exploding heads, got a voucher to rent *Hope Floats*, a romcom that did not feature anyone's anything exploding.



I miss walking the horror aisle and being terrified by the cover for [Dolls](#).

I miss buying music this same way, trying to calculate the best return on investment based on hearing maybe 2 singles on the radio.

I miss browsing bookstores this way even more than I miss the Blockbuster.

This is where the library comes in.

We can still have this browse-y experience at the library. It's still available. AND, it's a bit more fun because it's free.

The first step in this direction, bringing back browsing, is [a little corner of our website that we've been working on in secret](#). That's right, think of this as a hidden room. You walk over to a bust of Shakespeare, tilt the head back to reveal a red button, and BOOM, a bookcase slides over, and you walk into the secret area. Which, in this case, contains another bookcase, but let's not take the analogy too far.

The second step is where we turn things over to you: I love how many people use the library to get what they're looking for. I love that you all put things on hold and get exactly what you want quickly and efficiently.

And I'm asking you to consider using the library in another way as well.

Next time you go to the library to pick up your holds, take 10 minutes, and give yourself this task: *I'm going to leave with a book that I pull off the shelf.*

It can be something you've vaguely heard of before, it can be something you've never seen, it can be a book you were supposed to read in high school and never did and somehow managed to crank out a short paper on.

It can be anything, but the idea is that you find it by browsing.

Because browsing is fun. Browsing is about discovery. It's about more than just the transaction of book buying, it's about the thrill of tracking something down. It's about having a deeper connection with your library and everything on the shelves.

Try it. I think you'll love it.

Oh, and [you can get Hope Floats from HPLD](#), by the way. [I'd go with Scanners instead](#), but we've discussed my taste level.

Oh,
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Award-Winning App: *The Results!*

As discussed in our last issue, we opened up an awards submission process and took all of your feedback in order to give [our app, HPLD2Go](#), the chance to win a sweet award that'd let us promote HPLD2Go as an "award-winning" app.

To this end, we created Pete's Award of Bombastic Distinction and Greatness! And Also Prestige!

After opening up the first annual Pete's Award of Bombastic Distinction and Greatness! And Also Prestige!, we DID get one submission from you, the people, and it reads as follows:

HPLD's CRM department of public announcements, provider of awesome marketing information and swag (especially beer coozies with the library logo)! Please check out the website, app, and events calendar to see the creativity and excitement that is your library!

Now, this puts us in a pickle, pickles being the food that is most often used to describe a tricky situation, probably because pickles are kind of great while also being kind of disgusting (describe a pickle, see what I mean. "It's a little too salty, kind of vinegar-y, soaked in a jar like a lab sample, crunchy but also soggy...").

The revolting pickle here is that CRM is the team responsible for marketing the app, so the app winning the award WOULD help us, but if the app wins, our department loses!

How did this happen!?

After much deliberation, discussion, and a trip to look at the 7-11 pickle selection, we made a decision.



First Place for Pete's Award of Bombastic Distinction and Greatness! And Also Prestige!:

HPLD's CRM Department!

Second Place for Pete's Award of Bombastic Distinction and Greatness! And Also Prestige!:

HPLD2Go!

Honestly, it's a win-win. CRM gets an award, AND the app is still, technically, award-winning. Second-place-award-winning, but still! Maybe we can call it "Award-Winning*?"

So, I am proud to present our CRM department with the grand prize, which is this really large canister of taco seasoning that I accidentally bought two of. Okay, I actually accidentally brought THREE of these due to user error on King Soopers' online pickup ordering system...let's not get into one of my many failings, I'm trying to bask in glory, here.

And as for the app — excuse me — as for the AWARD-WINNING* app, we have updated the app's webpage to include its award-winning status and will now refer to it properly from here forward.

Congratulations to, well, us, CRM, as well as to HPLD2Go.

Maybe next year, HPLD2Go, and keep your head held high: There's no shame in losing to the best. The best at winning awards, anyway. Perhaps not the best at correctly ordering groceries.



LIBRARIES Visit www.MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours for library hours

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2650 West 29th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Carbon Valley Regional Library

7 Park Avenue
Firestone, CO 80504
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Centennial Park Library

2227 23rd Avenue
Greeley, CO 80634
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Eaton Public Library

132 Maple Avenue
Eaton, CO 80615
(970) 454-2189

Erie Community Library

400 Powers Street
Erie, CO 80516
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Farr Regional Library

1939 61st Avenue
Greeley, CO 80634
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Fort Lupton Public & School Library

370 S. Rollie Avenue
Fort Lupton, CO 80621
(303) 339-4089

Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

400 S. Parish Avenue
Johnstown, CO 80534
(970) 587-2459

Milliken Location of the Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

1109 Broad Street
Milliken, CO 80543
(970) 660-5039

Hudson Public Library

100 S. Beech Street
Hudson, CO 80642
(303) 536-4550

Kersey Library

332 3rd Street
Kersey, CO 80644
1-888-861-READ(7323)

LINC Library Innovation Center

501 8th Avenue
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Nantes Library

703 Birch Street
Gilcrest, CO 80623
(970) 737-1035

Northern Plains Public Library

216 2nd Street
Ault, CO 80610
(970) 834-1259

Outreach

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Greeley, CO 80631
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Platteville Public Library

504 Marion Avenue
Platteville, CO 80651
(970) 785-2231

Riverside Library & Cultural Center

3700 Golden Street
Evans, CO 80620
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Hazel E. Johnson Research Center at the City of Greeley Museum

714 8th Street, Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 350-9220

Poudre Learning Center

8313 West F Street, Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 352-1267

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