

Celebrating Milestones Through Books

By Laura Stoll

One of the many challenges we have faced during the pandemic is the need to cancel or postpone some of life's major events. Weddings, funerals, and school reunions have been rescheduled and even holidays like St. Patrick's Day and the Fourth of July will be recognized at another time this year.

For many families, late spring and early summer are a time when many celebrations seem to happen. My family is no exception. While I'm disappointed that we won't be able to gather together to commemorate these special occasions, we can transport ourselves to more normal times through a good book.

Both of my children have spring birthdays and it was a struggle to make their days feel special without the ability to go out or to share them with friends and family. One of their favorite authors, Wendy Mass, wrote a book called *Leap Year*, which is about the unique experience of having a birthday on February 29. Being born on a day that only happens once every four years sounds just about as fun as a global pandemic. Mass' story is a good reminder to all of us that birthdays should be celebrated, no matter when they fall on the calendar.

My husband and I celebrate our wedding anniversary at the end of May. Last year, we took a trip to Cape Cod and spent a quiet time reading, walking the beach, and eating wonderful meals. If I can't go back to Cape Cod in person, I know I can take a virtual trip to the Cape and Islands with one of my favorite authors, Elin Hildebrand. In *Beautiful Day*, readers travel to the picturesque island of Nantucket for a wedding filled with romance and drama. You'll feel like one of the guests sipping champagne and eating oysters by the shore without the stress of your own big day.

We have other family birthdays in June and I know that my dad and I would like nothing more than to eat a delectable dessert. *The Ghirardelli Chocolate Cookbook* offers numerous recipes for cookies and cakes that look delicious. *Martha Stewart's Cakes* provides easy-to-follow instructions for baking all kinds of sweet treats. If you decide to try a new recipe, please let us know and we'd be happy to serve as taste-testers.

I was able to have a wonderful conversation with my mom on Mother's Day, which is not quite the same as being together. She shared some of her latest quilting projects with me and I decided that since I haven't inherited her sewing talents, I can at least read about it. In *The Oysterville Sewing Circle* by Susan Wiggs, women gather to talk and sew but the gathering grows into a support group of friends. The historical fiction novel *The Gown* by Jennifer Robson tells the story behind the women who sewed Princess Elizabeth's wedding gown in 1947.

For the past two years, I have been taking classes for my Masters of Science in Information Science (a fancy new way to say I'm studying to become a librarian) and I was very much looking

forward to my graduation ceremony in mid-May. If I had able to nominate a speaker for the ceremony, I would have chosen one of my favorite authors, Anna Quindlen. Her book *A Short Guide to a Happy Life* is the published version of a graduation speech she gave at Villanova University in 2000. What I like most about Quindlen's writing is the way she encourages me to see everyday life as a monumental moment, writing, "Consider the lilies of the field. Look at the fuzz on a baby's ear. Read in the backyard with the sun on your face. Learn to be happy."

If you need me this spring, I'll be sitting in the sun in my backyard doing some reading in my cap and gown, my diploma at my side.