



Book of the Month

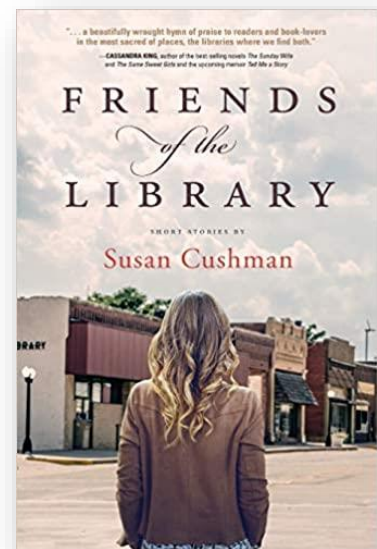
***Friends of the Library* by Susan Cushman**

Book Review by Peggy Bates, Friends of the Starkville Library Board Member

Recently our Friends of the Library hosted a Zoom meeting of Books and Authors with Susan Cushman. Susan is a native of Jackson and has lived and raised a family in Memphis with her husband. After her children were grown and starting lives of their own, she began to concentrate on her special talent, writing. In the past 10 years she has published a memoir, two novels, a book of short stories, and a couple of anthologies. *Friends of the Library* is her book of short stories that I checked out of our library.

When Susan was on book tour with her first novel, *Cherry Bomb*, she traveled throughout north Mississippi visiting bookstores and libraries to publicize her work. She is a very engaging woman, interested in people, and willing to share her experiences and insights with her audience. She also loves to hone her craft by participating in workshops and conferences. So, when she returned home from the tour she thought, what if I write about all the places that I visited on my tour with each town evolving into a story of its own with its own fictional characters and issues. The compilation of those stories became *Friends of the Library*.

The main character, Adele Covington, who is part Miss Marple, psychologist, and cheerleader rolled into one, is a writer on book tour who has a knack of connecting with someone in her audience. Over a cup of coffee, or lunch, or just a quiet park bench, Adele allows the person to open up about issues in their lives, such as eating disorders, Alzheimer's, adoption, cancer, spiritualism, or domestic abuse. These issues are handled sensitively and non-intrusively, allowing the person to work through them toward a good resolution. The chapters/vignettes are short and stand alone.



One of the fun things about this book is that it is part travelogue. Each town is showcased with three or four facts or places of interest to charm the reader. The Starkville episode, “Jeanne,” praises the Friends, mentions the MSU baseball heritage and serves lunch in the Cotton District, among other things. One of her stories set in Senatobia is about a couple who met on the campus of Ole Miss. That couple became the focus of her second novel that was published this year, *John and Mary Margaret*. I’ll let you know how that one turns out.

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