



At the recent annual meeting of the Friends of the Beaufort Library, Geni Flowers-Buquet received the Mabel Runnette award for extraordinary service to the Friends organization and the library.

Geni started out as a volunteer with the Friends in the middle 90's helping with the annual book sale. As a member of the Friends board, she served as President and then Book Sale Chairman for twelve years. Geni helped establish the Friends book store at the Scott Street branch library and served as first manager of the store. She rotated off the board two years ago to focus on her job as Interim Director of the USCB library, where she has been a librarian for 23 years.

Books are her life. As a child growing up in Beaufort, the downtown library on Scott Street was her favorite haunt. She went on to earn a Masters degree in Library Science and spent the years since then immersed in books and helping book lovers.

The Mabel Runnette Award is named for a librarian with the Beaufort library who went to Washington DC in 1940 to ask for books and money to make up for materials that were taken from the library during the Civil War.

After the Civil War, there were several Congressional attempts to repay Beaufort for the loss of its library. Records show that a joint resolution by a "Mr. Butler" to the Committee on the Library

failed in Washington in 1893. In 1940, Senator James F. Byrnes of South Carolina called for \$10,000 "as partial compensation" but his effort also failed.

As Beaufort Township Librarian, Runnette went to Washington in the same year and after considerable lobbying, she arranged for Beaufort to receive proceeds from the sale of duplicate volumes from the Congressional Library to used book dealers (the deal yielded \$6,000 for the Township Library over fifteen years). A token restitution occurred at last in 1950, when the S. C. State Library Board secured a partial repayment from the federal government for the Beaufort Township Library, with the aid of Senator Burnet Maybank. It is reported that when Library of Congress officials asked Ms. Runnette if she would like extra copies of *Gone with the Wind*, she replied with pluck "No, but we can give you copies of *Sea Island Lady*".

The Mabel Runnette award was created in 2004 by the Friends as a way of thanking special volunteers for their service. Flowers-Buquet is the seventh recipient of the award, whose honorees are recognized on a plaque hanging in the lobby of the Scott Street library.

Previous recipients include: 2004 - Elizabeth Caldwell; 2005 - Dave Peterson and Fred Wilson; 2006 - Boy Scout troops that work with the annual book sale; 2007 - Hank Cuthbert; 2010 - Barbara Banus and her sisters.

The Annual Meeting of the Friends which was held at Penn Center also featured two luminaries from the civil rights era, Dr. Emory Campbell and Judge Joseph McDomick, who shared stories of local efforts in the 1960's to make racial integration a reality.

Photo above: Geni Flowers-Buquet (right) with Friends President Marilyn Harcharik