



The **BOOK MENDER**

**With skilled hands and a little glue,
Grant Poole keeps the books of the
Manhattan Public Library in pristine
condition for the community to enjoy.**

Story by Lucas Shivers
Photos by Michael Henry

Peering over his bifocal glasses, Grant Poole swabs glue over broken book spines with skilled hands. At 97 years old, Poole restores damaged covers, pages, and sections of numerous books at the Manhattan Public Library.

"I wouldn't be surprised if I've been doing this for more than 20 years," Poole says. "I can fix up about anything. It's amazing what a little bit of glue can do."

Volunteering more than 525 hours to fix over 2,680 books in 2018 alone, Poole has been a steady presence in the library's collections department. His work requires attention to detail and precision and fulfills his lifelong purpose of learning and supporting others.

"He's worked here longer than most of us," says Linda Knupp, Manhattan Public Library director. "He has been able to manage all of the book mending for years. Grant has the process down more than anyone. He helps our books last longer. He's got the talent, skill and interest. All of the staff enjoy working with him."

TAKING OFF

Poole grew up in Manhattan and attended Briggs School (a primary school about 15 miles south of town) and Manhattan High School.

After graduating from MHS in 1941, Poole began at Kansas State University. "Then the war came along, and I ended up in the Army," Poole says. "I figured I should be in the Army, but my folks didn't. I ended up joining the air corps through the Army."

Although he still planned to graduate from K-State, the Army decided they needed him sooner and sent him to Mississippi State for six months of flight school. Poole was later sent to radio school in Wisconsin, to electronics school in Illinois, and eventually to Florida to serve on a base. "I often wondered what made a radio, and I had a chance to find out," Poole says.

The GI Bill (Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944) provided benefits to veterans returning from war, which included tuition for those attending trade schools or college. This funding helped Poole continue his education at the California Institute of Technology; he attended CalTech for two years and later returned home to his farm near Manhattan.

Poole then picked up work on the ranch with his family's registered Hereford cattle, eventually returning to K-State after the price of beef went down. He received a degree in education and taught high school in Dwight for two years and then in the physics lab at K-State's Caldwell Hall. Poole also crafted molds and dental prosthetics at a local dental practice for nearly 15 years.

FAMILY MAN

Poole met his wife, Mary Pick, in the Big Apple as the war waged on both fronts. "When I was in training, a buddy and I got a furlough to New York," Poole says. "My friend had an aunt named Mary, who invited me to go to a Broadway show. I liked her right away, and we got together."

Poole and Mary dated long-distance while he awaited orders in Alabama to go to Japan in the mid-1940s. The war ended not too long after, and Poole returned home in one month. He and Mary married and began their family. "We have three children; two girls, Pamela and Kathy, and a boy, Joe," Poole says. "I was tickled to death for my kids."

Poole's dedication to serving others is evident in his life story.



Poole's family has since grown to include seven grandchildren and many great-grandchildren; he enjoys watching his expanding family's successes across the globe with various work projects and is excited for their future prospects. "I've got a lot of relations all over, but as long as I can hack it, I love being in Manhattan," Poole says.

Mary passed away 13 years ago; Poole still lives on his family farm. "I've always lived on the farm," Poole says. "I didn't think I could possibly live there on my own, but then I asked myself, 'why not just continue?'"

A LOVE OF THE LIBRARY

Poole developed a connection to the public library early in life. "Way back when I was in high school, I would ride into town for school with my cousin," Poole says. "I would walk to the library and wait for him to finish nearly every day. I got used to going to the library, and I always enjoyed it."

Poole began to work for the Talking Books Project at the library following his career with the dental practice. The talking books project, a predecessor to audio books, used the radio and technician skills from Poole's earlier years in the Army.

Poole's good nature and kindheartedness allow him to connect with others at the library.

"He never fails to say hello. He builds a strong sense of community to take time to interact with all of us. He's a solid part of the team," says Madison Ogle, public relations and development coordinator for the Manhattan Public Library.

Poole's determination to face challenges head-on is evident daily with examples such as choosing the stairs over the elevator. "I don't know how long I can do it, but I still walk the three flights of stairs every day, and I'm pretty well worn out when I get to the third floor," Poole says. "If I didn't have this job, I'd be in awful shape. It's great for me."

Poole exemplifies the values of the greatest generation as he inspires his coworkers daily with his strong work ethic and service to others despite aches and pains. "My back bothers me and gives me trouble," Poole says. "I walk like I'm drunk. If I can walk 5 minutes, I'm doing great. So I like to sit and I get along. This is a great job for me. I enjoy doing this."

Poole has spent a lifetime serving others, whether his country, community, or family. His work at the library continues fulfilling this purpose and allows him to stay connected with the community. "My folks died in the rest homes, and I know they hated every minute of it," Poole says. "I didn't want to do that if I could keep from it. My job at the library gives me something to do nearly every day. It's a good thing, and it helps out."

Volunteering more than 525 hours to fix over 2,680 books in 2018 alone, Poole's steady presence has been a staple to support the library's collections department.