

Alamance Reads selection a moving read.

“The Pleasure was Mine” by Tommy Hays. St. Martin’s Griffin, 2005. \$12.95, 255 pages.

The secret is finally out. After a selection process lasting almost a year, the title for Alamance Reads 2010-2011 has been announced, and it is “The Pleasure was Mine” by Tommy Hays.

“The Pleasure was Mine” tells the story of retired house painter Prate Marshbanks whose wife of fifty years, Irene, is slowly succumbing to the effects of Alzheimer’s. He has made the difficult decision to place Irene in an assisted living facility, and he’s dealing with the constant worry of whether she’s being properly looked after and guilt over leaving her in a home.

His son Newell, a well-respected artist, calls Prate with the news that he’s been invited to be artist-in-residence at Penland, a center for craft education in the Blue Ridge Mountains, for six weeks, and Prate reluctantly agrees to keep his nine-year-old grandson Jackson for the summer.

Having lost his mother in a car crash a few years previously, Jackson is a quiet, serious child whom Prate just doesn’t quite understand or know how to relate to, and their summer together looms ahead like an interminable burden. But as the summer progresses, and Prate and Jackson learn how to live with each other, they both begin to come to terms with the circumstances of their lives.

As Prate’s story is told, his memories mapping out the story of his life with Irene, it is evident just how much he is losing by the slow deterioration of his beloved wife, and how difficult it is to allow others to assist him.

At first glance, “The Pleasure was Mine” seems to be a story about Alzheimer’s and how it affects a family, but that is an entirely too simple description. “Pleasure” is about the relationships between fathers and sons, and husbands and wives, and friends and neighbors. It’s about how those around us can shape who we are. It is a beautifully written novel, and it is going to be an excellent choice for Alamance Reads.

You can pick up a copy of “The Pleasure was Mine” at any Alamance County Public Library either to check out or to purchase for \$5. For more information about Alamance Reads visit www.alamancereads.com.

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