

SUMMER MUSINGS

SHARON VIRTS



My Trip to the Northern Neck

The past several months have been a whirlwind of travel, restoration, and fighting for independence. In March, Scott and I started on yet another journey when we closed on an 1811 historic home in downtown Leesburg, Virginia known as the Lynch House. We've renamed the property the Eliza House after Eliza Thompson, the woman who bravely fought a 13-year court battle for her ownership of the home after her husband was killed in the Civil War.

You can follow along with the journey on our [Facebook](#) page.

Early last month, Scott and I embarked on a Lower Mississippi River Cruise (a surprise Christmas gift from him) and headed from Memphis to Baton Rouge on the American Queen Steamboat. When I was writing *Masque of Honor*, I became obsessed with learning more about Jack McCarty's trip to the Great Mississippi River and Natchez. Our trip was filled with history lessons. For me, I was most impressed by the battlefields of Vicksburg. I learned that at the time of the Civil War, there were only three cities that had bridges that crossed the Mississippi River: Memphis, New Orleans, and Vicksburg. With Union forces controlling both Memphis and New Orleans, Vicksburg's location made it a critical stronghold for the

Confederacy and a key target for the Federals. General Grant began his siege of Vicksburg in mid-May 1863. On July 4, the Confederates finally surrendered, giving the Union control of the Mississippi River and, in essence, cleaving the South in two.

What I never realized was the surrender at Vicksburg occurred only one day after Lee retreated from Gettysburg. Had Lee not been allowed to escape, but instead had been boxed in and forced to surrender, would the Civil War have ended there? If so, perhaps Virginians and so many others would not have suffered another two years as the war drug on and on. The war was not about the enslaved but about tariffs, trade, and taxation - all of which we still fight about today. As we approach Independence Day, we must keep in mind the war that we've been fighting over. We are not socialists but people of freedom and we must continue to defend that freedom and our Independence.

John





Have me Join Your Book Club!

I had a blast joining the Creighton Farms Book Club a few weeks ago to discuss *Masque of Honor*. The ladies of Creighton Farms, local to Leesburg, loved hearing my thought process for character development and how I came to imagine Lucinda Lee and the other women of Masque. Is your book club discussing *Masque of Honor*? I'd love to join! Sign up to have me at the discussion via Zoom or in person!



Sign Up



"If life were predictable it would cease to be life, and be without flavor."

-- Eleanor Roosevelt

#ReadWithSharon

My book club members have had a busy few months reading our latest [#ReadWithSharon](#) book club picks. In April we read and discussed *Yellow Wife* by Sadeqa Johnson - a harrowing story of an enslaved woman forced to barter love and freedom while living in the most infamous slave jail in Virginia. In May, we did *West with Giraffes* by Lyda Rutledge - a favorite across the board. This month, we are reading *The Nature of Fragile Things* by Susan Meissner. With so many great historical fictions planned to come out this Summer, I'm still deciding on picks for the upcoming months. Here's what I have in mind:

JULY

When the Stars Go Dark by Paula McClain

AUGUST

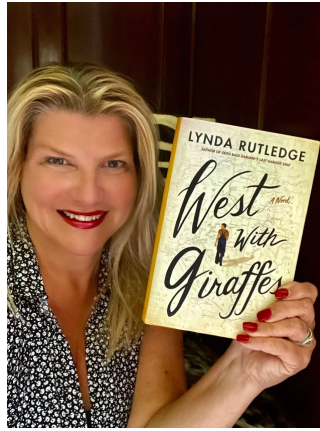
The Island Queen by Vanessa Riley

I've also had my eye on *The Light at Midnight: A Historical Thriller Set during the Holocaust* by Tom Reppert that came out in November and Chanel Cleeton's latest: *The Most Beautiful Girl in Cuba*.

Have a preference? Join my [#ReadWithSharon](#) Book Club and let me know!

Don't forget to check my [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) page for details on my [#ReadWithSharon](#) reading selections.





[Sign Up](#)



From my Kitchen to Yours: Cherry Cobbler

Summertime is for all of our favorite fresh fruits...like cherries! And what better way to enjoy them than in a sweet but light cobbler! This Old Fashioned Cherry Cobbler is one of my favorites - and it's great any time of the year!

[Get the Recipe](#)



Author Spotlight: Thomas Sowell

Recognized as an American economist, social theorist, and senior fellow at the Hoover Institute, Thomas Sowell is known for his writing on economics, history, social policy, ethnicity, and the history of ideas. Over the past three decades, he has taught economics at various colleges and universities, including Cornell, Amherst, and the University of California at Los Angeles.

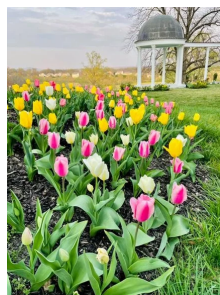
In 2002, Sowell was awarded the National Humanities Medal and the following year he received the Bradley Prize for intellectual achievement. He has written over 40 books and is praised for his plain language and readable style.

[Learn More](#)

"The most basic question is not what is best, but who shall decide what is best." - *Thomas Sowell*

Selma Gardens

Selma's gardens have been breathtaking this year! After four years of restoration to the house and property, my gardens are finally beginning to look like they've been here forever. Not to mention the 1,000 tulips that we planted last fall that are in full bloom! Follow the link to see more.



[See Selma's Gardens](#)



WWW.SHARONVIRTS.COM



Sharon Virts, Selma Mansion, Leesburg, VA 20176, United States, www.sharonvirts.com

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